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DYNASTY LEAGUE FOOTBALL

2014
ROOKIE DRAFT GUIDE

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 2014 NFL 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

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 2014 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. For now, consider this a free gift for being a Premium Subscriber.

Enjoy!

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BOWL GAME OBSERVATIONS
AUTHOR: ANDY MILEY, POSTED 12/23–1/11

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. There will be much more in-depth, thought-provoking discussions later in the off-season. I am listing these players alphabetically.

Davante Adams, WR FRES ST

This young receiver has great chemistry with his quarterback Derek Carr. Adams catches the ball at its highest point (as you could see from his touchdown catch over the cornerback) and is a big physical receiver (6' 2" 212 lbs) who reminds me a bit of Brandon Marshall as he glides around and swats smaller defenders out of his way. He has good footwork and has a great sense of where he is on the field at all times. For the majority of his routes, he got separation despite great coverage. He can catch contested passes with someone on his hip pocket when it is unavoidable and hopefully learn how to defend himself, as he took a vicious spear shot on a quick pass that he fully extended himself. Adams needs to be mindful not to lose concentration near the end zone as he read the pattern wrong which led to an interception.

Derek Carr, QB FRES ST

David Carr's younger brother instantly reminds you of his brother when he played for the Texans. He has a big arm which he uses to push the ball down the field and is quite the emotional leader. Carr has decent footwork, but took every snap from the shotgun which helps him see the field quickly. He was either extremely accurate or way off. It is because he throws to a spot on the field he expects his receivers to be. I'm a little concerned as the young quarterback doesn't anticipate how complicated defensive coverages work. Carr seemed to be very comfortable running bootlegs to split the field in half making his job easier. Hopefully he can go to an offense that can run the ball better than Fresno State as the USC defense could just pin their ears back and go after him.

Crockett Gilmore, TE COL ST

The 6' 6" 255 lb senior tight end was certainly not the best athlete on the field, but he was everywhere. Gilmore lined up in the backfield, as a traditional tight end, and in the slot. He was better at pass blocking than as a run blocker as he struggled to seal the cut-back lane. I was impressed with the many different routes he ran and he got targeted in the end zone only to be knocked down by a defensive back with no penalty 9he could have caught the pass with his frame and size). Gilmore struggled to gain separation when safeties covered him, but had modest success (four receptions for 44 yards) when the tight end went against linebackers. If he wants to have NFL success, Gilmore will need to attack the ball with his hands and not body catch as well as use his 6' 6" size as a weapon.

Marqise Lee, WR USC

The talented junior wide out looked great running deep patterns as he could gain separation in a few steps most of the day. Lee knows how to use the sidelines as an extra blocker and caught a lot of short swing out passes only to break them for longer gains. On his first touchdown of the day, he showed good concentration grabbing the ball between two defenders. His health is concerning as he left the game a few times, once was to re-wrap his knee and ankle in the first quarter. Lee played a bit more physical than usual as he used a stiff-arm and swatted away a few defenders in stride. He tries to run block, but the wide out isn't very effective. His most impressive catch and run of the game was on a third and thirteen play where he ran across almost the entire width of the field in stride. It looked like he broke a few ankles on the way to the end zone for a 40 yard touchdown. He isn't my top wide receiver, but Lee is still in my top three.

Kahlil Mack, LB BUF

I was quite impressed with this powerful, pass rushing, outside linebacker who forces fumbles like no one else this season. Mack anchors his spot along the line of scrimmage and then will simply disregard whomever is in his path on the way to the ball. He applies pressure with either a spin move, bull rush, or just leaps in the air to swat down passes. But the fierce play maker doesn't stop there as he glides down the line of scrimmage looking for weaknesses to expose not only in the passing game, but the running game as well. When one defender gets assigned two or three blockers and offensive plays are run on the opposite side to avoid that said defender, that is a game changer and that is how San Diego State defended him. Mack flows so well to the ball, sheds blockers with the quickness and agility as the offensive play makers he is chasing down. After seeing him play, Mack is up there on my defensive stud board with Clowney and Barr.

Adam Muema, RB SD ST

Perhaps the San Diego State uniforms are slimming, but Muema does not look to be 5'10" 205 lbs. The young back is not a very physical runner, but more of a quick twitch scat back. Despite his impressive bowl game stats (230+ combo yards and three touchdowns), I do not think he could become a starting NFL running back with his lack of strength and power. Yes, he runs quite well outside, gets low, and has good footwork. But the more effective short yardage running back for the Aztecs was their fullback. Muema has an explosive burst with a nice jump cut who can shake and bake with the best of them, but he tried to show off too much. He always looked for the long run, instead of taking what was there for him. The NFL might not be as forgiving.

Branden Oliver, RB BUF

While most draft pundits will be more impressed with Muema's numbers, I became a fan of Oliver's more modest night of 130 combo yards and a receiving score. He has a low center of gravity, steps up and pass blocks well, takes some big hits, and shows some wiggle while he keeps on chugging along. There is a smoothness and patience to him along with his shoulder shake that reminds me of Fred Jackson. Oliver knows how to get small in the hole and would somehow squirt out of the pile for another couple of yards. His determination was on display when he took a short dump off pass at the ten yard line, threw out a powerful stiff-arm and darted into the end zone.

Brandin Cooks, WR ORE ST

It was easy to see from the first offensive play that Cooks is special. He took a reverse almost 30 yards, uses great angles, makes defenders miss and throws in a stiff-arms for good measure. Defenses had to account for where he was as the wide out got sent in motion quite a bit, lined up in the slot and on both sides of the formation. The young receiver is very explosive in space, starting and stopping quickly, while the defense tried to tackle where they thought he should be, not where he was. Cooks catches the ball at its highest point and always made the reception with his hands, never letting the ball into his body. He does a great job getting separation and glides around the field effortlessly (much like the duck who glides on top of the water, but kicks like hell underneath). Despite quadruple coverage in the end zone, Cooks caught a short touchdown pass with great concentration. He doesn't add anything in the run blocking game as he would look to hit the deepest of defenders on every play. I'm excited to see more of his tape and to see which team drafts Cooks.

Vintavious Cooper, RB ECAR

Don't be fooled by his almost 200 rushing yards against Ohio. Cooper is not a powerful, NFL ready back. The young back needs to be in space, sinks his hips well, and reads rushing lanes. He has quick feet, a nice little stutter step, but his game got assisted by his offensive lines wide stances and a tired defense. Cooper might be a decent change of pace back or could perhaps find a job as a returner in the NFL. East Carolina did not use him in any goal line or short yardage situations. He reminded me a bit of former Utah State's Kerwynn Williams, who also shined last year around this time and only had a cup of coffee with the Colts this season.

Scott Crichton, DE ORE ST

The young defensive end applied pressure early using a combination of a bull rush, spin moves and swim moves. It is very important for any NFL defensive lineman to have combinations of moves as it makes them more difficult to block. Crichton has a quick first step, gets penetration from the snap of the ball which becomes quite disruptive even in the running game. I was impressed with his early strip sack in the end zone that resulted in a defensive touchdown as he just blew by the offensive tackle in two quick steps. He does play a bit hot and cold as when the play goes on his side, the defensive end fights to get to whomever has the ball. When the play develops on the other side, Crichton lessens his effort and got caught not setting the edge on a reverse that ended up going for a bigger gain than it should have. He does get a little over-aggressive as the defensive end got called for a few offside penalties. Crichton is a top six rookie defensive lineman option.

Ryan Grant, WR TUL

The young receiver went in motion a lot to exploit the best matchup coverage. He gets good separation running deeper routes, but he is by no means a speedster, Tulane flip-flopped between two quarterbacks and this did not seem to matter to the wide out. Grant had the awareness to cut his deeper routes short and come back to his quarterback, but looked lost at times when asked to run block. There were a few times he let the ball come to his body, while most of the time the receiver would snare the ball with his out-stretched hands. I was impressed with his arm strength as Grant threw a rope 50 yards down the field on a reverse, but unfortunately it resulted in an interception. There were a few outstanding one-handed receptions in traffic and another that he skied above two defenders to make an amazing catch to get his team in scoring position. Grant tends to be very precise with his routes as the receiver would stop and wait for the ball to get there. This could tip-off better defenders in the NFL.

Justin Hardy, WR ECAR

The young receiver is not much of a physical player as he got manhandled a few times, but he is quick out of his breaks. He has soft hands, great body control, and runs good short to intermediate routes. Even with limited separation, Hardy made a few contested catches and almost came up with a poorly thrown worm burner on the two yard line. The wide out could become an NFL WR3-4 (not fantasy, at least right away) but there is upside for more. I want to watch more of his games to get a better feel for his game.

Rashaad Reynolds, S/CB ORE ST

Reynolds forced me to write about him as the young defensive back was everywhere! His first big splash play of the game was when he scooped up a Crichton forced fumble for an early touchdown. He was at the right place at the right time to make the play – this would be his theme for the entire bowl game. He was good in coverage as he knocked the ball out of the receivers' hands at the last possible moment on two occasions. He always kept the play in front of him whether it was a long pass or a run play. Reynolds made sure he tackled the catch on every play, not letting the ball carrier get past him. It was his second big play that was the most impressive as he picked up a forced fumble and raced down the sidelines 70 yards for his second score of the game untouched. Reynolds may not be the best defensive back coming out this year, but he should make an impact.

Tyler Tettleton, QB OH

It is never a good thing when the starting quarterback is splitting time with a more athletic backup, especially when the backup is Derrius Vick. Tettleton lined up in the shotgun to see the entire field and was most comfortable bootlegging to the right. The young quarterback got rattled under pressure and fluttered the majority of his passes. His footwork is a mess as he throws off-balance and rarely set his feet. Tettleton does not have a very strong arm and he threw behind his receivers quite a bit. He was quite animated and seemed a bit jumpy in the pocket. I'm not sure how he will fit in the NFL.

Aaron Donald, DT/NT PITT

Donald is a big, powerful fire hydrant of a man. He is very explosive off the snap with quick feet and uses his strong trunk. The defensive lineman has great leverage to push multiple members of the offensive line backwards and keep them away his body. This caused the opposing quarterback a lot of pressure and opened up a lot of rushing lanes for the other defenders. Bowling Green blocked Donald with at least two, and sometimes three, linemen. The Pittsburgh coaches lined the young lineman up in the one, two, and five gaps trying to put him in the best places to cause havoc. He does a good job getting his arms up to disrupt the passing lanes. The offensive line wore on him as the game went on and Donald showed a little too much of a fiery, mean streak. When the game was on the line, this play maker used a swim move from the defensive end spot to sack the quarterback with less than a minute in the game to end the Falcons chances. If your league starts a DT spot, keep an eye on him as this Donald won't get trumped.

Ra'Shede Hageman, DT MINN

Hageman is a converted tight end with athleticism that jumps off the screen. He uses good leverage and forces his blockers to carry his weight wearing them down. His quickness off the line gets him good initial pressure despite spending the majority of the time double teamed. The defensive tackle plays the run and pass equally well, but could stand to get out of his stance a little lower. The swim move and the bull rush are his pass rushing techniques that he is quite impressive using. Hageman is best suited to play a four man front.

Gator Hoskins, TE MARSH

He is not a traditional tight end even though he did line up beside the tackle as well as in the slot. Unlike most tight ends, Hoskins ran deeper routes as he reminded me of Miami Dolphins' Charles Clay with his athleticism. The young tight end handles physical coverage well, but blocks more like a wide receiver, just getting in front of his man and leaning a bit. Hoskins does a good job of pretending to block and then sneaks out for the pass. The receiver catches the ball in stride, has a little wiggle to his game, and can carry defenders on his back when nearing the goal line. In the red zone, he ran two quick half circle routes that both resulted in touchdowns. Hoskins has a good catch radius as he skied above defenders to get a few passes and caught a couple more off his hip. I came away very impressed.

Jordan Lynch, QB N-ILL

There is little chance that Lynch will play quarterback in the NFL, but I am not sure what his position should be outside of a gimmick player/fullback. The young signal caller is best when he is bootlegging to his right as it cuts the field in half for him and he has a chance to set his feet before throwing. Otherwise his passes tend to flutter beyond 15 yards down the field. Lynch usually makes quick decisions about where to go with the ball, but does not sense backside pressure well. In the two games scouted, I don't believe I have seen him take a single snap from center. As a read option quarterback, Lynch is less talented than Tim Tebow or Jake Locker, but perhaps he can succeed in the NFL if he isn't married to the idea that he is strictly a quarterback. When Lynch carries the ball, he has good foot quickness, breaks arm tackles, has strong leg drive and gets a bit squirmy in a pile. He seems athletic enough to learn how to catch and block, but needs to prove to teams he can.   8

Bishop Sankey, RB WASH

The young back has good leg drive and is a very smooth runner who seldomly gave defenders much to hit. While he was more explosive running to the outside, Sankey was efficient with the ball in between the tackles and becomes the low man in short yardage situations. His ability to take good angles and quick burst were on display on both of his rushing touchdowns as he opened up his hips and ran to daylight. The young back has soft hands, uses good vision as he usually bounces away from his first hit. Sankey needs to do a better job picking up his feet near the line of scrimmage as he got caught up in the trash at times. He would best fit in a West Coast offense.

Austin Seferian-Jenkins, TE WASH

The young tight end did not get targeted much during the bowl game, but made the most of what he got. He shows good body control, contorting to make a difficult sideline catch. Austin Seferian-Jenkins ("ASJ") tracks the ball well in the air, brings it down with his strong hands and had a knack of getting behind his coverage. He lined up all over the formation: at traditional tight end, in the slot, out wide, and as a wing back where he was used as a lead blocker. It took a lot of force to bring him down as he has a good center of gravity and power. As far as effort goes, ASJ played hot and cold so he needs to be more consistent. He is quite quick off the line as his best play was a short 16 yard post pattern that he caught in the end zone. The defensive back barely put a finger on him and ASJ was gone. He will be an exciting player in the NFL.

Jerome Smith, RB SYR

The 6' 217 lbs. back plays bigger than his size as he looks all shoulders and no neck. Smith runs close to the ground while lowering his shoulders to deliver punishment. He possesses good balance, sinks his hips while galloping down the field, and he does not go down easily. He is versatile as he has soft hands, steps up to take on pass rushers and lines up in the slot running a few tight end type pass patterns. On one play he would look like a battering ram and then on the next, Smith would use his quick feet and bust out a jump-cut. The young back looks like he could be a part of a RBBC situation at the next level, but I'm not sure he could become a starter in the NFL.

Brandon Coleman, WR RUTG

The big 6' 6" 220 lbs. wide receiver is a physical, long strider. He does a good job of tracking the ball in the air and can come down with a bucket catch near the sidelines. Coleman turns his hips well and shields the defender from the ball. He demonstrated these skills when he stuck his feet in the back of the end zone for a Rutgers touchdown. Despite his size advantage, the young wide receiver engaged in a few hand fights with his coverage, losing quite a few. I like the way he fully extends for the ball, though he's not very graceful and needs to work on his balance.

Damien Copeland, WR LOU

Copeland adjusts well to passes in the air as he caught a few that were thrown behind him. He did battle with the pigskin at times as he lets it get into his body instead of catching it cleanly. When Bridgewater hit Copeland in stride, he accelerated through the reception to gain extra yardage. He locates the ball quickly in the air despite physical coverage and shortens his routes to come back to his quarterback. Copeland is not big enough to be more than a slot receiver in the NFL, but he should find success on a pass happy team.

Eric Ebron, TE UNC

Ebron is an athletic tight end who can line up in the slot, on the outside, as well as at the traditional tight end spot. He runs smooth, precise pass patterns and sinks his hips to get in and out of breaks much like a wide receiver. He is a willing blocker, but is not very effective and may be better used as a move tight end. It is concerning that Ebron likes to get airborne hurdling over defenders as he was caught once mid-air and was bounced off the turf. He catches the ball in stride while adjusting to the ball in the air regardless of its placement. He has a good sense of balance and showed some power, swatting linebackers and safeties out of his way. His only scoring opportunity went for naught as he lost concentration on a deep pass and dropped the ball between two defenders. Ebron is the most impressive tight end I have seen so far in these bowl games.

Cody Hoffman, WR BYU

The senior wide out almost declared last season and despite some troubled times, Hoffman shined against Washington. He finished with 12 catches for 167 yards lining up primarily in the slot and occasionally outside. The young play maker uses his 6' 4" 210 lbs. frame well as he boxes out defenders, consistently beats the jam, sinks his hips, and is quite agile for a man his size. He is more of a traditional team wide receiver two as he does not have demon speed, but he does the dirty work underneath including diving for worm burners. Hoffman usually makes the first defender miss, adjusts his body to make the difficult catch, and concentrates to secure the ball in double and triple coverage. He gets to the ball in full stride, has amazing balance, and always keeps his feet churning. The wide out goes all out on every play, showing full extension. He kept fighting until the final second in the bowl game.

Kareem Martin, DE UNC

Martin played both defensive end spots as well as bouncing inside to defensive tackle. He gets good penetration, has a quick first step, and keeps his arms up when the quarterback attempts to throw. There were a few times he was caught off-balance as Martin seemed to do too much lunging instead of getting his hips behind him and powering through. The defensive end looked spectacular when he split the guard and tackle on his way to scoring a safety. It was a continuous swim move with a splice of power. Martin is a more impressive pass rusher than a run stopper, but he did have a nice stop near the goal line when the powerful lineman crashed down the line of scrimmage to hit the running back for a loss.

Stephen Morris, QB MIA

The senior quarterback had an abysmal night, completing less than 50% of his passes against Louisville. He was plagued with quite a few drops by his receivers, though he did display good chemistry with his tight end Clive Walford. When Morris had time in the pocket, he stepped up and hit Walford in stride. The quarterback has a strong arm with good ball placement when given four seconds or more in the pocket. He made quick decisions, but took a beating from the aggressive defense. Morris became more frustrated as the game went on and started forcing the ball, and hanging the ball up as he did not have time to set his feet. He will need time to develop at the next level.

Kyle Van Noy, OLB BYU

This athletic outside linebacker breaks on the ball with amazing speed while keeping an eye on the quarterback. He gets good pressure on the signal caller with his speed and agility, as he dips underneath the offensive tackles that try to block him. Van Noy can keep up with running backs and slot receivers in pass coverage, but that is not his strength. He did his job shedding blockers to seal off the outside rushing lane. His best play of the game was when he got great penetration on a fourth and one play on the three yard line. Van Noy swam past the tight end and then the offensive tackle to smash the running back for a nine yard loss. A three-four team will make him an anchor for their team in the NFL.

Stephon Tuitt, DE ND

Talk about running hot and cold, you might find a picture of Tuitt in the dictionary. The defensive end gets good initial penetration, but doesn't always anchor the spot against the ball running his way. He played both end spots and looked more comfortable rushing on the left side. Tuitt just flat-out missed a few tackles that he should have made due to being off-balance and not aware of how the ball was flowing. There were a few flashes in the game as he knocked down the offensive tackle making his way to tackle the running back in the two gap. Then in the final two minutes of the game, Tuitt used a combination of a swim move and bull rush to sack the quarterback twice. He looks more like a situational rusher than a starter to me at the next level.

Jeremiah Attaochu, LB GT

Attaochu usually lines up as an outside linebacker, but will occasionally put his hand down and rush as a defensive end. He has a nice inside swim move he uses with a good initial burst to get into between the tackle and the guard. The backer seems to get tangled up and overpowered with the offensive tackles on run plays.   I wish Attaochu did a better job sealing the edge when they run to his side. He shows a lot of hustle as he will trail plays going to the opposite side as he cleans up missed tackles. Attaochu also covers the screen game well.

Teddy Bridgewater, QB LOU

I'm not sure there isn't a more exciting or discussed player in college football right now. It was only in the first series that the young signal caller looked human when he got sacked in the end zone as he did not feel the backside pressure. After that, Bridgewater never looked back. He moves well in the pocket, rolls away from pressure, squares his shoulders, sets his feet and throws accurately. He hits his receivers in stride and seemed unfazed when his best receiver, Davante Parker, rolled his ankle in the first quarter as he simply looked for the next open receiver. He can fit the ball into tight coverage and tends to overthrow passes giving his receivers a chance to make a play. When facing pressure, Bridgewater steps up in the pocket and is a willing runner if no one is open down the field. He took good angles when running with the ball and does a good job not letting the defense hit him head on. The ultra-talented Bridgewater should be the target for all quarterback needy teams, NFL and dynasty squads alike.

Jeremy Gallon, WR MICH

I'm an admitted Michigan fan and love the athletic skills the diminutive playmaker (5' 8" 183 lbs.) displays on the field. He gets used in the reverse game a lot. Gallon has the shiftiness and ability to sink his hips to catch the defense off guard. He lines up on the outside and in the slot while outmaneuvering away from the jam. He fully extends himself to make receptions, grabbing the ball in stride, while keeping an eye on the yard marker. More physical defensive backs knock him around a bit, but he has good balance to take advantage of over-aggressive ones. Gallon tracks the ball well in the air and makes adjustments mid-stream to secure the catch. Don't underestimate his athleticism as he threw for a two point conversion catching the defense unaware. The young receiver could begin his NFL career as a returner, then wow a team for more playing time.

Josh Huff, WR ORE

He had a productive night against Texas finishing with over 100 yards and a touchdown. Huff lined up in the backfield beside the quarterback and was also spread out wide. He fully extends to catch the ball, usually making the reception in stride and does a great job creating separation from the defensive backs. His scoring play was a shovel pass that he ran like a running back weaving down the sidelines and hurdled his way into the end zone. Huff made a few tough catches in the middle of the field and took the punishment for them. I like what I see and am eager to see which NFL team drafts him.

Jackson Jeffcoat, DE/LB TEX

This athletic defender lined up all over the formation: defensive tackle, defensive end, inside and outside linebacker. He has a great initial first step he used to pressure the quarterback. Near the goal line, Jeffcoat swatted the ball out of the quarterback's arm, but the ball got recovered by Oregon. The young defender got stronger as the game went on, causing more havoc in the backfield. He is decent in coverage, but I see him as more of a rush outside linebacker due to his size in a 3-4 system. Jeffcoat did fine against the run, but needs to improve there if he wants to be an every down linebacker in the NFL.

DeVante Parker, WR LOU

Maybe it's me, but I was impressed with what I saw from this young wideout in his three quarters of work that featured nine receptions for 142 yards and a touchdown. Parker has great chemistry with Bridgewater as he would come back to him when his quarterback was under pressure. He used his body to shield the ball (using every inch of his frame), while leaping above his coverage and catching it at its highest point. Parker made the first man miss with a little wiggle, caught the ball with his huge hands in stride and would contort his body to make incredibly difficult receptions. He has amazing concentration to come down with the pass regardless of double coverage and defenders being draped all over him. The NFL is ready for him, if he is ready for the NFL.

De'Anthony Thomas, RB ORE

While watching Thomas, I was reminded of Reggie Bush in his New Orleans Saints years. He plays limited snaps while being used more as a receiver in the slot than a running back and did most of his damage in space. He showed good vision and patience on his kick returns and inside runs. He has very quick feet that he uses to change direction, shows good balance and sees the field well. Thomas ran a wheel route that almost connected for a big gain as he has a great wiggle, sinking his hips, to get away from defenders. There were a few plays he got behind the defense, but had to slow down to get to the passes. I'm not convinced he will be an every down player in the NFL, but he should be very productive as a fantasy starter.

Jace Amaro, TE TEX TECH

This all-star lines up in the slot as well as a traditional tight end, but he doesn't do much blocking. When he runs a pass pattern, Amaro looks like an oversized wide receiver because he adjusts well to the ball in the air, makes the catch in stride and creates separation with his quickness. Despite seeing the best coverage, the tight end slipped behind the defense for eight receptions for 112 yards in his bowl game. Even when Amaro has a defender on his hip, he came down with contested catches and always fought for extra yardage. He boxes out people with his big frame and strength like no one else in his class. If you are in a premium tight end league, keep an eye on where Amaro goes as he could be worth a first round rookie selection.

Ka'Deem Carey, RB ARI

This was the first time I was able to see this explosive back and he was very impressive as it appeared he could break one to the house on every touch. Carey exploded through the hole on his first play for a 12 yard gain, but put the ball on the carpet. He calmed down enough to run the ball 27 times for 169 yards with two touchdowns in his bowl game. He gets low in the hole, keeps his feet driving and slashes thru the line of scrimmage. Carey has great vision, finds his cut back lane and runs to daylight with his quick feet. Also included in his arsenal are spin moves, a good center of gravity and never giving the defense much to hit. This back steps up to attack pass rushers and delivers hits onto his would-be tacklers. Carey might be a sleeper to many dynasty owners, do not let that happen to you.

Mike Davis, WR TEX

This wide receiver came into the game less than 100% healthy and the Texas strategy to run the ball did not help his cause. Davis blocked well down the field for the run and pass games alike. His first catch of the day was a spectacular grab with great extension, but uneventful as it went for two yards as the defense swarmed all around him. He gets great releases of the line, and adjusts well to the ball in the air. He had two huge opportunities to make big plays down the field: one was a terrible overthrow that went for naught and the other one was a pass that Davis let slip through his fingertips. If he would have been able to get to either target, Davis would have scored a 40-yard plus touchdown. The wide receiver made one long pass play, but it was shortened as he double caught the ball which caused him to break stride.

Jaelen Strong, WR ASU

Every play I watched him, I became more impressed with his gritty play. The wide receiver fully extends for the ball, catches it at its highest point, and has the ups to hover him above everyone else. He slips press coverage, catches in stride, and is willing to make difficult catches in the middle of the field. Despite all that Strong only finished with four receptions for 28 yards for the game. He made an impressive downfield catch that got overruled due to the refs thinking he pushed off (replays showed that he didn't). On another play that the wide receiver got a step, he got yanked down by the arm, but somehow that didn't get called. I am not sure if he will declare for the NFL in 2014, but he is certainly worth keeping an eye on.

 Will Sutton, DT ASU

This big mammer jammer has a good first step and very powerful legs. He looks and plays like a fire hydrant, built low to the ground with a lot of undercarriage. Sutton has a good motor and kept it running throughout the game against double teams for much of the time. He penetrated the line of scrimmage many times, eventually wearing down the offensive line to a little nub. Sutton had three of his four stops in the fourth quarter which included two tackles for loss. The big man even came within inches of blocking a punt. If you are in a DT required league, remember the name.

Logan Thomas, QB VA TECH

The senior signal caller did not go out how he wanted in his last college game. He made some quick decisions, stepped up in the pocket, and when that collapsed, Thomas ran to daylight. Yes, his injury shortened performance (he didn't make it to halftime) got overshadowed by Brent Hundley's awesome day, but the Hokies quarterback showed grit, split double coverage on a long toss, and got gang tackled after a long run. In this year's class, that might be enough to get him a few years to develop in the NFL. If you play in a deeper league (16 teams or more), keep an eye on him.

Eric Ward, WR TX TECH

The wide receiver is a big, muscular player who is quite the physical runner. Once he has the ball in his hands, I'm not sure if he wants to run past the defender or over him. Hit him low or not at all. Despite his physical nature, he is not a good blocker. Ward looks good in space, has quick feet, and uses the sidelines to his advantage. His balance is not his greatest quality as he had difficulty adjusting to the ball in the air.

Andre Williams, RB BC

He is a strong, powerfully built back at 6', 227 lbs. with legs as big as Hall of Famer Earl Campbell's in his heyday. I almost thought he was a fullback when I first saw him on the field. Williams finished the game with less than three yards a carry (76 yards total), but ended up with a short yardage touchdown. He has a good forward lean, craves contact and possesses phone booth quicks. He needs to pick up his feet and run with more balance as he ran too upright. Williams could be destined to be a short yardage back/fullback in the NFL as he caught a pass with his stomach and fell down shortly after.

Jared Abbarederis, WR WISC

The senior wide receiver did not have a very impressive bowl game as he finished with three catches for 27 yards. He looked like a possession NFL receiver. Abbarederis ran clean routes, fought for extra yardage, and was a solid run blocker. The Badgers sent him in motion to try to create separation, but his hands were inconsistent as he caught the ball as much with his body as with his hands. Abbarederis will need some time to develop to be a weapon in the NFL.

Anthony Barr, OLB UCLA

This highly regarded tweener outside linebacker/defensive end rushed from both the left and right sides. He uses either a swim move or a spin move to get good initial penetration. His balance and anticipation are not what they should be as he missed running backs coming his way. The tweener got blocked usually in one on one situations, never really forcing a double team. If Barr is going to play the edge in the NFL, he will need to anchor his spot against the run and create more pressure as a pass rusher. The backer kept blockers away from his body so he could flow towards the ball and he does a good job trailing plays down the field, cleaning up tackles. I'm not sure how dominant Barr will be in an NFL uniform when he faces seasoned, talented linemen.

Odell Beckham Jr, WR LSU

The wide receiver suffered limited opportunities finishing with two receptions for 35 yards in the bowl game due to Zach Mettenberger's absence. He got great separation down the field, but got overthrown by the backup quarterback on one play and just missed on a poorly thrown worm burner on another. Beckham reaches the ball at its highest point and laid out for an amazing one-handed sideline catch, showing incredible balance and concentration. It was a brilliant double move that made that catch possible. Beckham looks more like a solid WR3 on an NFL team, but certainly flashed enough to be considered for a taxi squad on your dynasty squad.

Jadeveon Clowney, DE SC

Clowney in second half was a better player than he was in the first half. The defensive end got pushed around early on running plays and took about a quarter to get a feel of what Wisconsin did offensively. He has a quick first step that he uses to gain penetration into the backfield creating pressure and does a great job of getting his arms up which knocked down a few passes. When the defender hurdled his would-be blocker, his helmet got in the way of an arrant throw that knocked the ball in the air causing it to be intercepted. Clowney uses either a spin move or just swims around whomever is trying to block him. There were a few plays that he got passed around between the tight end, tackle, guard, and even fullback trying to keep him away from sacking the quarterback. He is very athletic for a defensive lineman as he dropped back into pass coverage, unsuccessfully, as the back caught the touchdown pass while Clowney held him. The defensive end's motor was fine in this game as he would run down plays on the other side of the field even using some offensive linemen as a blocking sled. He is the best defensive player in this class, bar none.

Mike Evans, WR TEX A&M

Evans is a big bodied, passionate wide receiver at 6' 5" 225 lbs. While he did not have an outstanding game (four catches for 72 yards) like his quarterback did, however the young receiver showed enough. The wide out adjusts well to the ball in the air as he had to reach behind for a pass thrown at his hip in stride. He just missed making a great catch in the back of the end zone as he could only get one hand on the pigskin. Evans gets separation with his speed and quickness with a little shoulder shake tossed in. The receiver made a gauntlet combine like catch right at the sidelines as he just stopped, spun around 180 degrees, and caught the ball without the corner realizing what had happened. Evans is a top five rookie wide receiver option depending on where he lands.

C.J. Fiedorowicz, TE IOWA

The senior athletic tight end had a decent game (four receptions for 46 yards) in his bowl game. He is not the best inline blocker, but does enough to be dangerous and occasionally splits out in the slot for the Hawkeyes . Fiedorowicz has soft hands and runs good routes. He has a little swim move than he uses to get off the line of scrimmage. If you want to see effort, this tight end has it in spades. He fully extended his body trying to make a lot of poorly thrown passes and took a lot of punishment whether he caught the ball or not. Fiedorowicz is a lesser Zach Miller, solid dependable, but may not always be fantasy relevant.

Jarvis Landry, WR LSU

This LSU receiver also suffered by the hands of the LSU backup quarterback as he only finished with two catches for 21 yards. He caught the ball between defenders at its highest point, gets good separation, and is quite slippery once he secures the reception. LSU called on Landry to use his big arm as he attempted a 40+ yard rainbow toss to Beckham that did not connect. There were at least three occasions that the wide receiver missed out on a spectacular play due to a poorly thrown pass. I need to watch more tape this junior as he showed enough to get me intrigued.

Johnny Manziel, QB TEX A&M

Good old "Johnny Football" put on quite the show against Duke. His team got down early and he rallied them back. I'm not sure how good a leader he is as it looked like he angered more teammates than he inspired when he shouted at them and grabbed them by the facemask. Let's talk about what he did on the field. Manziel is an improviser as he actually loves it when the play breaks down so he can dance around the pocket with his cat-like balance and reflexes. He tosses the ball up for his receivers to get to under instead of throwing precise passes. This quarterback has awful footwork. He rarely sets his feet before he throws and makes up for this in college with his strong arm, but the NFL is not as forgiving with accuracy. Manziel is very quick, sinks his hips as he runs, and uses his great downfield vision as both a runner and a passer. When the quarterback scrambles, he carries the ball very loosely almost daring defenders to separate him from the ball. I think he could become a very good pro quarterback if he overcomes his prima donna attitude and inspires through leadership much like a former strong-armed Hattiesburg, Mississippi resident. Johnny is no Brett, but they both had enough skill to overcome unorthodox playing habits, well Brett did. But will Johnny?

Blake Bortles, QB UCF

The quarterback is a big, athletic player who ended up hurting Baylor with his strong arm and feet. The junior ran for over 90 yards and a touchdown, but don't call him Manziel just yet. He looked more like a skinnier Ben Roethlisberger running down the field. Bortles was fairly accurate and has a good sense of pressure. The young signal caller had some difficulty reading coverages that resulted in one interception and a tipped ball caused another. He settled down after that keeping his passes on the shorter side (within five to fifteen yards), while finding weaknesses in the defense to exploit. Bortles steps up in the pocket, and sets his feet before he throws. He likes to bootleg to one side of the field so it cuts his target area in half. If he leaves college for the NFL, I will have him a touch above Manziel, but well behind Bridgewater.

Darqueze Dennard, CB MICH ST

He impressed me from the first snap of the Michigan-Michigan State game and did nothing to dissuade me in his bowl game. Sure we don't know how fast he is, but this physical corner makes his presence felt. Dennard plays his receiver man to man, face to face at the line of scrimmage. He tackles the catch as he doesn't let his man behind him and hits him hard immediately. There were a few times he gets his hands on the receiver past the initial five yards, but he disguises it well. His run support can be a little sloppy as he missed the running back at the line of scrimmage and chased him down for a 20+ yard gain that could have gone for an 86 yard touchdown. Dennard successfully blitzes from the edge getting a piece of the quarterback. He is the best corner I have seen all year and will see plenty of action with the team that drafts him, so count him as a DB2 or CB1 in corner required leagues.

Tyler Gaffney, RB STAN

The young back has quick feet, bounces off first contact and can run to daylight in a hurry with his initial burst. He has a good center of gravity, uses phone booth quicks and catches the ball well. His problem is that he lacks power, gets knocked around in pass protection and gets driven back in short yardage situations. Gaffney almost got tackled for a safety when the Spartans run blitzed him. The young back needs his offensive line to create a crease and if it's not there, he isn't going anywhere even if he breaks out a spin move. He looks like a change of pace NFL back to me or perhaps a returner.

Storm Johnson, RB UCF

The young back had an impressive bowl game averaging over six yards a carry and scoring three touchdowns. Johnson is a slasher with open hips who easily finds the cut back lane. He has good downfield vision that he uses to set up his blockers while showing a good burst of speed. Although he is a better inside runner, the back does some damage outside as well. I like the way he swatted away some of the defenders to gain extra yards! Ball security is a bit of a concern as he carried the pigskin away from his body and got it stripped away during the game. Johnson runs a little high for my taste, but he could be a good NFL back.

Tevin Reese, WR BAY

If DeSean Jackson had a younger brother with braided hair, it could be Reese. The receiver is overly skinny, but explosive much like D-Jax. He gets good separation weaving in and out of breaks, while catching the ball in stride with soft, pillow-like hands. His quarterback had some difficulties delivering the ball to him though. Reese had a step on his defender in the back of the end zone that missed high. On another play, the receiver tried to slow down as the pass was thrown short despite him having two steps on his coverage. He was bullied down the field at times and shoved to the ground in the end zone by bigger corners. Reese digs down low for passes and has decent hands, but will need to have space created for him to be successful in the NFL. He will either be a slot receiver or a prolific returner.

Lache Seastrunk, RB BAY

This young back has good balance and downfield vision. He uses his quick feet and strong powerful legs to bounce plays outside. Seastrunk tries to play bigger than he is, but looks a bit lost in pass pro and takes a beating. He was tackled with a nasty horse collar, but came back into the game a series later. When he gets a crease, he can make the first guy miss with a sweet jump cut and explode downfield in a hurry. Seastrunk is one of my favorite backs in this class, think Gio Bernard with less wiggle and little receiving experience (caught nine passes last season, none this season).

Shayne Skov, LB STAN

The backer had either an off game or he has a great press agent. Skov looked a step slow, got caught up in the trash at the line of scrimmage and missed a lot of players trying to hit them high. When he did make the tackle, it was at the ankles. The linebacker does not step up and attack the blocker in the run game, so much so that he reminded me of a catcher's mitt. Skov, however, does not give up on the play as he trails behind to sneak in the tackle. All was not lost when he created pressure as a pass rusher on delayed blitzes and stripped the ball out to set up the Spartans in the red zone to help seal their win against Stanford. I doubt I draft Skov in any of my IDP leagues, but he remains an interesting player.

Calvin Barnett, DT OK ST

The stout defensive tackle had a good showing in his bowl game with three tackles, three assists and a sack. Most of his production was in the fourth quarter as he wore the offensive line down with his good motor never letting up on the field (he chased a few plays 15 yards down the field, unheard of with a man his size). Barnett lined up and down the defensive line from the zero gap all the way to the four gap. The lineman got good initial penetration, threw offensive linemen around and has a low center of gravity that makes him hard to push around. Barnett uses a swim move, spins, or old-fashioned brute strength/power to get past his blockers. He was either double teamed or at least chipped on every play. Barnett has some of the best athletic skills to be a successful defensive lineman, but better than that he has the heart. Defensive tackle required leagues make note of him.

Hasean Clinton-Dix, S ALA

Better known as "Ha Ha", this safety usually plays over the top, but does a great job securing the edge against the running game especially the option. He is a solid tackler, takes good angles, knows what he sees, and plays instinctively. Clinton-Dix does a decent job in coverage and although he had good position to make the play, receiver Jalen Sanders got a step on him to sneak the ball across the goal line. The defensive back sees the field well and kept everyone in front of him. Clinton-Dix could be a top ten fantasy defensive back in the right defense.

Kony Ealy, DE/DT MISS

This athletic defensive lineman didn't jump off the screen as much as his counterpart Calvin Barnett. What became quite obvious within the first three series is that Missouri was a better defense with Ealy on the field. The majority of Oklahoma State's offensive production occurred while Ealy was on the sidelines. He gets a great first step, creates pressure immediately, possesses amazing balance and flows well to the ball using good agility and vision. The lineman is a bit more versatile than most as he dropped back in coverage a few times and plays the run almost as well as he plays the pass. Ealy dipped his shoulder and ran through the offensive tackle on the way to sack the quarterback twice in the same series. He keeps on attacking and if he can't get to the signal caller, Ealy would try to swat the ball. In the right scheme he could be a monster.

A.J. McCarron, QB ALA

The senior quarterback might want to reconsider appearing at the Senior Bowl after having a somewhat productive, but rough bowl game. He is very accurate with quick short passes, but I wasn't impressed with how he set his feet before throwing the ball downfield. McCarron has a decent arm, but can float the ball at times. He made a few nice touch bucket throws throughout the game, but became unraveled when he faced pressure. In the NFL, the defenses are better than the Oklahoma Sooners! When the offensive line gave him time, he had time to see down the field and find coverage weaknesses. Occasionally, the young quarterback escaped for a few yards rushing, but did not look very athletic doing so. McCarron showed heart trying to fight through adversity, but stumbled late in the game with a under-thrown ball for a pick six and then a strip sack that got returned for a touchdown with less than a minute left in the game. I see him as more of a project quarterback that could be developed down the line like Matt Schaub.

C.J. Mosley, LB ALA

The young linebacker flows quickly to the ball, sees the entire field better than most, takes good angles and is a solid tackler. Unfortunately I did not see a strong point of attack linebacker who could shed blocks and make the tackle. He was blocked by the fullback or a pulling lineman quite a bit on runs for my taste. As a blitzer, Mosley applied pressure and forced the quarterback into making bad throws. He played well in pass coverage so much so that I consider Mosley to be more of a big safety than a linebacker. I need to review more of his games to see if this was an outlier or this is just how he plays.

Michael Sam, DE MISS

This defensive lineman took the long road to make a good impression. While he does have a quick first step, gets penetration and keeps his arms up to knock down passes, Sam was not making much of an impact in the game. He pressured the quarterback, but was better against the run. When Ealy and Sam were on the field together, the defense was more dangerous. With just a little over a minute left Sam made the biggest impact on the game. The defender strip sacked the Oklahoma State quarterback and the ball was scooped up and returned for a Missouri touchdown. I need to watch a few more of his games to see a more consistent player that I can trust.

Jalen Saunders, WR OK

The young wide out was all over the field against the mighty Alabama defense. He fully extends to make the catch, runs sharp routes and is willing to get a physical at times. For a smaller framed player, he blocked well and gave as good as he got fighting for the ball. The Sooners used him all over the field: in the slot, split out wide and even on an option pitch where he threw a nice stiff-arm. Saunders got a step and good position on "Ha-Ha" for his first touchdown reception of the game and followed it up with a nice high sideline catch and tip-toe into the end zone for his second. He was not without fault as he bobbled a ball in the air that got intercepted and muffed a punt (he recovered it). Saunders reminds me a lot of T.Y. Hilton, another skinny play maker who plays a bit unevenly.

Tajh Boyd, QB CLEM

The senior quarterback looks bigger than his 6' 1" 225 lbs. frame. He had a tremendous effort against Ohio State finishing with over 500 yards of offense and accounting for six total touchdowns. Boyd has good footwork, steps up in the pocket, makes quick reads and slings the ball without hesitation trying to hit his receivers in stride. The signal caller was fairly accurate in 2013, completing over 68.5% of his passes. He possesses a strong arm, has good timing with his receivers (especially Watkins) and is built to adjust to pressure in the pocket. Boyd looked his best rolling to his right and hitting Watkins on a frozen rope for a 34 yard touchdown. His running is almost as impressive. He ran up the gut on a third and two play for a 49 yard touchdown. On the way there, the quarterback broke two tackles and screamed down the sidelines. Boyd is a patient runner, but is willing to run if nothing is there as his 127 yards in the bowl game will attest. The senior did not have a perfect bowl game as he tried to jump over a defensive back and float the ball to Watkins, but the defender intercepted the pass in the end zone. He also tried to force the ball late in the game and got picked again nearing giving Ohio State a way to win. Boyd is a top five rookie quarterback option, but may need some NFL seasoning before he plays. He and Russell Wilson are similar players, but Wilson has more poise and is a smidge better at reading defenses.

Carlos Hyde, RB OSU

The senior running back certainly did his part accounting for over 150 combined yards with two touchdowns. He was bottled up at the beginning of the game, but became stronger as time went along. Hyde is a patient runner with good vision, strong legs, and a powerful trunk. The young back did a job good pass blocking as he fired out to attack his man and can sneak out on a pass pattern with his soft hands (he had two very successful wheel routes). Hyde keeps his legs churning, gets low in the hole, and can be slippery at times. You could see his explosiveness when he broke a 30 yard run from a fourth and inches play down to the four yard line with a nice high step towards the end of the run. On the next play, Hyde leapt over the line of scrimmage to score. Hyde could be the number two option in rookie drafts behind Watkins but will depend on where he lands.

Braxton Miller, QB OSU

The junior quarterback had a mixed game against Clemson. He is a very athletic player with quick feet who is willing to run the ball. Miller had two touchdown runs, his first was an amazing 33 yard run where he ran down the sidelines, starting and stopping to make the defense miss. His second run was a three yarder that he used Hyde as a human shield to hit pay dirt. These two rushes were effective, but his other 16 carries went for a total of negative one yard. While he did complete 66% of his passes, the majority of those throws were within five to fifteen yards down the field. Miller threw behind receivers, got several passes tipped at the line because he does not arch his passes, and occasionally overthrew wide open receivers due to pressure. The signal caller was more successful using play action to freeze the defense and is more accurate without the defense in his face. He does not sense backside pressure well. Miller took a few shots to his midsection in the fourth quarter. This seemed to slow him down and prevent him from fully extending himself to aim the ball. The junior quarterback accounted for two turnovers (a fumble and interception) in the last 3:12 minutes of the game that put it out of reach for the Buckeyes. Miller reportedly decided to go back to school, but plans can change. I think he could develop into an NFL starter in a year or two, but he needs to work on his arm strength and pocket presence.

Sammy Watkins, WR CLEM

Every time I watch this explosive playmaker, I come away more impressed. Watkins lined up in the backfield, as an outside receiver and as a kickoff returner. Not only did he look like a natural in each spot, he almost broke long touchdowns in the two roles he isn't known for. The play maker sinks his hips, has amazing burst, starts and stops quickly which causes defenders to fly right by him. He is a strong, physical player who blocks well and runs thru arm tackles. The majority of the time it takes two defenders or the sidelines to stop him, until his knee acts up. Watkins twisted his knee while he blocking down field and did come back to finish the game. As a receiver, he catches the ball out front, never breaking stride, fully extending and catching it at its highest point in single, double, or triple coverage. Watkins takes short bubble screens and screams down the sidelines. His best play was an unabated full sprint from the line of scrimmage where he got behind the entire defense and caught a 34 yard touchdown pass. But if you prefer his 30 yard touchdown pass that he caught in double coverage, I don't blame you. Watkins' name needs to be mentioned in the same regard as Calvin, A.J., or Julio if his knee holds up.

Kelvin Benjamin, WR FSU

The young wide receiver is an impressive sight standing at 6' 5' and 234 lbs, however he looks more like a tight end than a wideout. His first half was not very impressive with two targets and zero catches. Benjamin does not have a traditional place to line up as he split out wide, near the line of scrimmage in a bunch set and was sent in motion. The receiver's first grab of the night was a short hook as three defenders crashed down on him to make the tackle. He has a huge catch radius as he reached down low to keep a drive going on a critical third down play and skied to the ball to win Florida State a National Championship boxing out the cornerback. Benjamin adjusts well to the ball in the air, contorts his body, and if he can, catches the ball in stride. His big hands surround the pigskin as he gets to it at the highest point. Like most wideouts, he suffers from concentration lapses and occasionally lets a defensive back get between him and the ball. While I liked most of what I saw, I wonder about his mental resiliency. I need to review more games to get a better feel for him.

Devonta Freeman, RB FSU

While he is on the small side for a running back (only measuring in at 5' 9" 180 lbs), he showed plenty of explosion against Auburn. He sunk his hips, found creases and used his quick feet to slash his way against a good defense. He doesn't give defenders much to hit, uses good balance and lean while keeping his legs chopping. I don't see Freeman becoming a true NFL workhorse, but he possesses enough athleticism and soft hands to be a productive third down/change of pace back like Danny Woodhead. He needs to improve his pass blocking, but was surprisingly a good run blocker helping out his quarterback by creating a running lane. I am concerned about his maturity as his gesture to the opposing team's sideline caused a 15 yard penalty, but hopefully the young back can learn from that.

Jordan Matthews, WR VAN

The ultra-talented receiver had a fantastic first half of five receptions for 143 yards and two touchdowns – too bad he couldn't add to that in the second half. Matthews is a big, physical wide out with good leaping ability who gets separation on almost every play. He catches the ball away from his body, fully extends himself in stride as he catches the ball at its highest point. His physical nature is on display as he fights for extra yardage, throws stiff-arms to keep defenders away from his body, and as he blocks people down the field during rushing plays. Matthews had three amazing plays of note: 1) a bubble screen that he broke down the sidelines, bobbing and weaving, for a 50 yard touchdown, 2) a one-handed grab with the safety holding onto his other arm for dear life deep down the field and 3) a full post pattern sprint off the line of scrimmage where no one touches him and he snags an over the shoulder catch for another 50 yard touchdown. His quarterback, Patton Robinette, in the game was the backup and completed one other pass to a different receiver. Out of his 19 pass attempts over 12 of them went to Matthews. I am excited about what the young receiver can do and will review more of his games to get a better feel about his talent level.

Tre Mason, RB AUB

This Heisman finalist put on a show for a national audience with 35 touches, 207 combined yards and two touchdowns (one on the ground and the other in the air). He has quick feet, loose hips and ran with patience and power. Mason squares up his shoulders and runs behind his pads delivering as many hits as he received. He is a better inside runner who uses his fullback to decide where and when he will make his first cut. Mason adjusted his style of running to the situation as when Auburn needed a short gain, he got low and fell forward churning his legs to get the first down. When the Tigers needed a play, Mason burst through the line, threw a shoulder shake, used a few stutter steps and found the cut back lane in a hurry, just like he did on his 37-yard touchdown with under two minutes left in the game. His college offense rode his back for the majority of the game and an NFL team can do the same. While Mason isn't my top rookie back, he is in the conversation for my top five.

Telvin Smith, LB FSU

This tall, lanky linebacker reminded me a bit of good old Jack Lambert out there. It was more the visual than his play as it has been a long time since I had seen a linebacker so skinny. Smith attacks the line of scrimmage, tackles well and gets good penetration from mostly the inside linebacker spot, although he did play a little outside as well. He flows well to the ball, but sometimes over pursues. He also looked decent in pass coverage and hustles to the ball. Smith will need to bulk up to be an effective linebacker in the NFL, but the skills are there. He is just outside of my top five linebackers right now.

James Wilder Jr, RB FSU

This back was a non-factor in this crucial game, because he was used so sparingly (he only had three carries for 21 yards). Wilder has a quick first step, finds the cut back lane, but leaves his feet too much. I'm going to give him an incomplete, but why was Wilder used the least out of the three backs? If Wilder declares for the NFL, I will watch more of his games to flush that out.

DEVELOPING ASSETS: WHAT IF?
AUTHOR: RYAN MCDOWELL, POSTED 1/11

With the college season now over, it's time for dynasty owners to fully turn their attention towards the upcoming NFL draft and their subsequent dynasty rookie drafts. It's never too early to plan and prepare or learn a little more about the incoming class of rookies. And a deep class it is!

During this season of preparation, one activity I especially enjoy is reading NFL mock drafts and thinking about the impact that would be felt across the league and dynasty leagues if these predictions came to fruition. I have seen many say that mock drafts this early are a waste of time, and while many of the player and team matchups won't work out the way they are predicted, it is still a fun way to pass the time and learn about these players at the same time.

One mock draft I especially enjoy reading is the full seven round mock draft periodically put together by Matt Miller of Bleacher Report. One of these such drafts was posted a couple of weeks ago (late December) and I thought it would be fun to see how dynasty rookie drafts might play out if the NFL draft went just the way Matt sees it going.

A couple of notes before we begin. Matt wrote this mock draft nearly two weeks ago. Because of this, some players he mocked at certain picks have decided to return to school, while some who were not included have elected to leave a year early. For the basis of this mock draft, I have assumed Matt nailed each and every one of these picks. Here's what could happen.

1.01 Sammy Watkins, WR STL (2nd overall pick, 1st round)

Wide receiver Sammy Watkins out of Clemson lands in St. Louis after the Rams use the second overall pick to take yet another wide receiver. Remember, last year they selected Tavon Austin with a top ten pick. This is not the ideal landing spot for Watkins, but it doesn't hurt him enough to move him out of the top overall spot.

1.02 Marqise Lee, WR SF (24th overall pick, 1st round)

This draft is so balanced, and as a result there are many fine options for the second pick, but in San Francisco, Marqise Lee will line up alongside Michael Crabtree to give quarterback Colin Kaepernick one of the league's top receiving duos. Lee's value has taken a hit over the past season due to injuries and poor quarterback play, but we've seen this story before, right Keenan Allen?

1.03 Tre Mason, RB JAX (39th overall pick, 2nd round)

Since Matt wrote this mock, the National Championship game was played and the nation saw running back Tre Mason go to work. The junior looked good for most of the game and lands in the ideal spot as Jacksonville says goodbye to Maurice Jones-Drew and Mason has a chance to start from day one.

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1.04 Lache Seastrunk, RB CLE (71st overall pick, 3rd round)

For much of the past season, Baylor running back Lache Seastrunk has been considered the top running back prospect, but others have seemingly caught up to him with some strong play down the stretch. The Browns had absolutely no running game this season and have to be looking for some balance in their offense. Seastrunk is another rookie who could see extensive playing time from the jump.

1.05 Jordan Matthews, WR DET (45th overall pick, 2nd round)

I mentioned in this week's Dynasty Stock Market that the Lions are likely to draft a wide receiver with an early round pick and Vanderbilt wide receiver Jordan Matthews has been called the most pro-ready of the deep receiver class. Being able to line up beside Calvin Johnson would be a dream come true for Matthews and would help his dynasty value spike early.

1.06 Carlos Hyde, RB HOU (65th overall pick, 3rd round)

Ohio State senior running back Carlos Hyde is yet another runner that is landing in a perfect spot. The Texans will have Arian Foster back from his injury, but backup Ben Tate will be moving on via free agency and Foster will need to be replaced himself within the next couple of seasons. Hyde impressed and gained value in his final college season as the workhorse back for one of the top teams in the country.

1.07 Kelvin Benjamin, WR PIT (46th overall pick, 2nd round)

After Antonio Brown, the Steelers have few options at the wide receiver position. While the team drafted Markus Wheaton last season, he did little as a rookie and is still somewhat of an unknown. Kelvin Benjamin is the big athletic target that could dominate the red zone for Pittsburgh.

1.08 Davante Adams, WR BAL (48th overall pick)

Former Fresno State wideout Davante Adams lands in a similar spot as Benjamin- a traditional power lacking at the wide receiver position. With Jacoby Jones a possible cap casualty, Adams should see playing time immediately and could become the team's top receiving option sooner than we expect.

1.09 Mike Evans, WR NYJ (18th overall pick, 1st round)

Texas A&M wide receiver Mike Evans is the second wideout selected in Matt's mock draft, but landing with the Jets and quarterback Geno Smith could be enough to cause him to tumble down rookie draft boards. While I am not confident in the Jets' offense either, falling this far makes Evans a huge value.

1.10 Eric Ebron, TE MIA (19th overall pick, 1st round)

There has already been much debate about which of the top three tight ends will be the best fantasy option. They are so closely ranked that the teams that draft them will play a large role in determining early dynasty value. In Matt's mock, Eric Ebron is the first off the board and we follow suit here. It would be interesting to see how the yet to be hired offensive coordinator uses Ebron along with Charles Clay.

1.11 Ka'Deem Carey, RB NYG (74th overall pick, 3rd round)

We go back to the running backs with Arizona back Ka'Deem Carey going to the Giants. With the uncertainty of both Andre Brown and David Wilson due to checkered injury history, the Giants have to be concerned and adding a back in the draft makes perfect sense. With the assumption that Brown will be re-signed, Carey is unlikely to start, but could be part of a committee early on.

1.12 Bishop Sankey, RB MIA (81st overall pick, 3rd round)

A year ago, Lamar Miller was expected to be the future at the running back position, but after his second full season, the team, and his dynasty owners are having some serious doubt that he will turn into a fantasy starter. Adding Sankey to the mix with Miller and Daniel Thomas could play out like what we saw in St. Louis this past season, with Zac Stacy taking the job from a pair of ineffective backs.

2.01 Austin Seferian-Jenkins, TE SEA (32nd overall pick, 1st round)

Austin Seferian-Jenkins entered the season as the hands down top tight end prospect, but some off the field issues and tremendous play of a pair of surprising tight ends in Ebron and Jace Amaro knocked down Seferian-Jenkins' stock quite a bit. The Seahawks should know the University of Washington product well and head coach Pete Carroll is never afraid to give a player a second chance. The Seahawks have a pair of capable tight ends in Zach Miller and Luke Willson, but they are lacking a playmaker like ASJ.

2.02 Teddy Bridgewater, QB HOU (1st overall pick, 1st round)

The first overall pick falls to the second round of this rookie draft as quarterbacks are often ignored in favor of playmakers at the skill positions. This would be a bargain for Teddy Bridgewater as he could be considered a top ten dynasty quarterback as early as draft day. There is an excellent chance he could start immediately and he already has a top pair of receivers in Andre Johnson and DeAndre Hopkins.

2.03 Jace Amaro, TE KC (23rd overall pick, 1st round)

The third tight end to come off the board is Jace Amaro and lands with the Kansas City Chiefs. The Chiefs drafted Travis Kelce last season, but he missed the entire year after undergoing microfracture surgery. The Chiefs' offense will continue to run through Jamaal Charles, but adding some pass catchers for Alex Smith is a priority this off-season.

2.04 Odell Beckham, WR CLE (28th overall pick, 1st round)

LSU wide receiver Odell Beckham is an underrated player who could surprise and do exactly what Matt has predicted, become a first round pick. We all know now that the plan in Cleveland last season was to pass, pass and pass some more as Josh Gordon exploded and Greg Little disappointed. The team is clearly looking for an upgrade at the second wide receiver spot, but until we know the coaching staff, it's difficult to evaluate this pick.

2.05 Johnny Manziel, QB CLE (4th overall pick, 1st round)

One of the most publicized players in many years is former Heisman Trophy winner Johnny Manziel. After putting his talents on display in the Texas A&M win, Manziel's draft stock seemed to skyrocket and many draft analysts and fans are projecting the Browns to use the fourth overall pick on their next quarterback. Manziel is obviously an exciting player to watch and his rushing ability adds to his fantasy value in most leagues. Again, like Beckham, its difficult to fully analyze this pick until the Browns make some hires.

2.06 Allen Robinson, WR NE (30th overall pick, 1st round)

One of my favorite wide receivers in the draft is Allen Robinson from Penn State who end up in the suddenly crowded receiving group of the New England Patriots. The Pats did everything they could to fill the holes left after last off-season and added a trip of rookies in Aaron Dobson, Josh Boyce and Kenbrell Thompkins. Each of the three had some varying levels of success, but each will be expected to contribute, along with veterans Julian Edelman and Danny Amendola. Robinson would have to scratch and claw to earn any early playing time.

2.07 Brandin Cooks, WR CAR (29th overall player, 1st round)

This is a pick I have projected myself recently. It is clear that the Carolina Panthers need to add a receiving threat for quarterback Cam Newton, but the question entering the off-season is do they try to replace Steve Smith or add a big-bodied wideout. With this pick of speedy Brandin Cooks, they would clearly be trying to replace Smith. I would greatly prefer the Panthers target a player like Adams, Robinson or Benjamin.

2.08 Donte Moncrief, WR IND (60th overall player, 2nd round)

The Indianapolis Colts receiving depth chart has been a tough one to figure this season. At times, they seem to have a deep group filled with high upside talent, but at times those same players are struggling and the team is languishing the loss of Reggie Wayne. Wayne returns next season, and TY Hilton and Da'Rick Rogers will as well, meaning little playing time early on for a rookie. Donte Moncrief is somewhat raw and was overshadowed by a true freshman this past season. Allowing him time to sit and learn would not be a bad thing at all.

2.09 Marion Grice, RB ATL (99th overall player, 4th round)

Marion Grice is one of the best pass catching running backs in the draft and with Steven Jackson getting up there in years, the Falcons have to think about his replacement soon. I'm not sure if Grice can be an every down back, but he can be a contributor. I wonder if this pick would spell the end of Jacquizz Rodgers in Atlanta.

2.10 Charles Sims, RB TEN (139th overall pick, 5th round)

Another team that will be on the look out for a running back is the Tennessee Titans, who are likely to part ways with former All-Pro Chris Johnson this off-season. Veteran Shonn Greene will get a shot to be the team's starter, but Charles Sims is another acclaimed pass catcher out of the backfield and could help form a respectable duo for the Titans.

2.11 Andre Williams, RB NYJ (80th overall pick, 3rd round)

Let's face it, the New York Jets are a mess. They have their quarterback of the future, we think, in Geno Smith and in this draft, they've already added a wide receiver in Evans, so it's time to turn to the running back position. The team does have Chris Ivory, whom they traded for last off-season, but he was unspectacular and fits better in a timeshare situation. Big Andre Williams, the Heisman finalist fits the bill as the power back to Ivory's speed.

2.12 Jay Ajayi, RB OAK (171st overall pick, 5th round)

Running back Jay Ajayi is one of my favorite runners, though he's only a redshirt sophomore (and has yet to declare for the draft). The Raiders offense is another team that has many holes to fill. They've experimented at quarterback this year and came away basically empty handed, while running back Darren McFadden again dealt with injuries. He'll be finding a new team this off-season and while the team does have returning rookie Latavius Murray, he is no sure thing either. Adding some competition in the form of Ajayi is just what the Raiders need.

DEVELOPING ASSETS: WHAT IF, SESSION TWO
AUTHOR: RYAN MCDOWELL, POSTED 2/8

Last month, Matt Miller, the NFL Draft Lead Analyst for Bleacher Report, posted a full seven round NFL mock draft. Based on this mock draft, I wrote and article called What If? (which you likely just read) in which I gave you a look what a dynasty rookie draft might look like if Matt's predictions were the reality. Now that the Super Bowl has ended and the NFL off-season has begun, Matt has just released an updated version of his mock draft and I though I should do the same. If you compare, you'll notice a lot of changes in both of our mocks and there will be even more changes over the next 88 days as we count down until the NFL draft.

As a reminder, I have completely followed Matt's seven round mock draft and this rookie mock is more about possible landing spots and how the players' value would be affected, not the likelihood of a team taking a specific player.

Finally, since last month's article, I've had the chance to participate in and follow several rookie mocks drafts, so I feel like I have gained some understanding regarding how many of these players are viewed in the dynasty community.

1.01 = Sammy Watkins, WR TB (7th overall pick, 1st round)

At this point, I'm not sure I love any of the situations I've seen as a possible landing spot for former Clemson wide receiver Sammy Watkins, but he should be the top overall rookie pick regardless. With the Buccaneers, Watkins could have a chance to start right away, especially if the rumors of Tampa Bay parting ways with Mike Williams prove true.

1.02 = Mike Evans, WR STL (13th overall pick, 1st round)

St. Louis grabbing a first round wide receiver would really surprise, even though they do own multiple picks. Mike Evans would provide quarterback Sam Bradford with a big target, which could make a good partner for the speed of Rams' top pick a year ago, Tavon Austin.

1.03 = Marqise Lee, WR BAL (16th overall pick, 1st round)

The Ravens desperately need some help at the wide receiver position. Even with Torrey Smith, the Ravens offense struggled without the injured Dennis Pitta and Anquan Boldin, who had moved on to San Francisco. A duo of Smith and rookie Marqise Lee should provide quarterback Joe Flacco with the chance to make another playoff run.

1.04 = Ka'Deem Carey, RB OAK (67th overall pick, 3rd round)

Former Arizona Wildcat running back Ka'Deem Carey seems to be gaining some traction as the favorite to be the top back chosen in rookie drafts. Ending up in Oakland would only help that as the Raiders will almost certainly part ways with former starter Darren McFadden over the off-season. While they have expressed interest in retaining Rashad Jennings, he is not a long-term option.

1.05 = Kelvin Benjamin, WR CAR (60th overall pick, 2nd round)

It seems like Panthers fans (and Cam Newton owners) have been dreaming of Carolina acquiring a big receiving target for years and Kelvin Benjamin might be the perfect fit for that offense. Benjamin has huge upside, with his only knock being his age – he'll be 23 years old as a rookie.

1.06 = Jace Amaro, TE NE (29th overall pick, 1st round)

The top three tight ends are all closely ranked so far early in the pre-draft process, so the teams there three talented players are selected by could play a large role in the order they are chosen in rookie drafts. If Jace Amaro is the selection of the New England Patriots at the end of the first round, not only would he be the favorite to be the top rookie tight end, but he could go in the mid-first round.

1.07 = Lache Seastrunk, RB NYG (109th overall pick, 4th round)

The dynasty value of former Baylor running back Lache Seastrunk has waivered a bit lately as other backs have begun to attract more attention from dynasty owners, but that value could rebound were he to end up as a New York Giant. While the Giants currently have some options at the position, namely Andre Brown and David Wilson, they can't feel too confident in either.

1.08 = Jordan Matthews, WR DET (45th overall pick, 2nd round)

Jordan Matthews has been deemed the most pro-ready of the wide receiver class and it has become a trend to mock him to the Detroit Lions, who are in great need of someone who can line up opposite of star Calvin Johnson and draw at least some of the attention of the defense. Matthews can do just that and the Lions would be a perfect match for his abilities.

1.09 = Allen Robinson, WR SF (30th overall pick, 1st round)

The 49ers will continue to look for offensive playmakers that can help them match up against the defense of the rival Seattle Seahawks. Allen Robinson dominated the Penn State offense during his career and would be a good compliment to Michael Crabtree, Vernon Davis and the gang in San Francisco.

1.10 Carlos Hyde, RB CLE (35th overall pick, 2nd round)

Carlos Hyde, formerly of Ohio State University, had a breakout year for the Buckeyes showing off his ability to break tackles and catch the ball out of the backfield. The Cleveland Browns lacked a running game last year, relying on Josh Gordon and Jordan Cameron to be their entire offense. In this scenario, the team adds the running back Hyde, along with some other offensive talent to come.

1.11 = Eric Ebron, TE NYJ (18th overall pick, 1st round)

I mentioned earlier how closely ranked the top tight ends are in this class, and in fact, it's Eric Ebron who is the first off the board in the NFL draft, going eighteenth to the New York Jets. The Jets desperately need playmakers on offense and Ebron could realistically lead the team in receiving as a rookie.

1.12 = Bishop Sankey, RB JAX (70th overall pick, 3rd round)

Bishop Sankey is a solid running back and though he's flawed, being chosen by the Jacksonville Jaguars is an ideal situation. It's presumed that veteran Maurice Jones-Drew will leave town, leaving unproven options. Obviously, Sankey is unproven as well at the NFL level, but should get a shot early on in his career.

2.01 = Tre Mason, RB NYJ (49th overall pick, 2nd round)

Another runner who could see early carries in his career is former Auburn running back Tre Mason, especially if he is selected by the New York Jets. The Jets running game was mediocre at best last year with Chris Ivory and Bilal Powell. Both have shown they cannot handle the full-time job, meaning Mason will have early value in dynasty leagues.

2.02 = Austin Seferian-Jenkins, TE BUF (41st overall pick, 2nd round)

The third of the trio of talented tight ends is Austin Seferian-Jenkins, who has experienced a bit of off-field trouble over the past year. Like Ebron, Seferian-Jenkins ends up in a great situation in which he could play a large role from day one with the Bills. With Stevie Johnson possibly on the way out and no receiving threat at tight end, ASJ rewards his owners immediately.

2.03 = Johnny Manziel, QB CLE (4th overall pick, 1st round)

One of the fastest rising players among dynasty owners is former Heisman winner Johnny Manziel. The same can be said for draft analysts, many of which have tabbed Manziel as their top overall player. Whether Manziel falls to the Browns with the fourth pick or goes number one overall to Houston, he should have the chance for playing time early on. With Cleveland, he already has a pair of excellent pass catchers in Josh Gordon and Jordan Cameron, and in this mock, the team is adding even more help on offense.

2.04 = Davante Adams, WR IND (58th overall pick, 2nd round)

One of my favorite wide receivers in this class is Davante Adams, formerly of Fresno State. In Indianapolis, Adams could be somewhat buried early on, playing behind Reggie Wayne, TY Hilton, and potentially, other young receivers. Though I would not consider Adams a project at the position, some time to sit back and learn could be beneficial long-term.

2.05 = Teddy Bridgewater, QB HOU (1st overall pick, 1st round)

Long considered the top incoming quarterback, Teddy Bridgewater falls behind Manziel in this mock due to Manziel's rushing ability. Like Manziel, Bridgewater would have the opportunity to start from day one and would also have some great weapons on offense, including Andre Johnson and DeAndre Hopkins. Once thought to be a lock to be a first round rookie pick, Bridgewater offers great value in the mid second round.

2.06 = Charles Sims, RB ATL (68th overall pick, 3rd round)

Charles Sims, formerly of West Virginia, is a great receiver out of the backfield, but I'm not so sure he can carry the load on a full-time basis. One of the oldest rookie running backs, his upside is limited, though he could get an opportunity relatively early in his career, depending on the future of veteran back Steven Jackson.

2.07 = Odell Beckham, WR KC (23rd overall pick, 1st round)

The first of the pair of former LSU wide receivers who are being so closely compared, Odell Beckham would be a great mid-to-late second round rookie pick, especially if he lands in Kansas City. While the weak arm of quarterback Alex Smith could limit Beckham's short term upside, there should be immediate playing time alongside veteran Dwayne Bowe.

2.08 = Brandin Cooks, WR CLE (26th overall pick, 1st round)

Brandin Cooks has proven to be an electric playmaker, but some are concerned about his size. The Browns have nothing at wide receiver behind Josh Gordon and any early round wide receiver could have dynasty value in short order.

2.09 = Jeremy Hill, RB STL (106th overall pick, 4th round)

Jeremy Hill is one of the most skilled running backs in the draft, but his off-field history, along with his likely role as the backup to Zac Stacy limits his short-term value. While this can often be overlooked in dynasty leagues, the depth of the class means there are plenty of other options in the early and mid-second round.

2.10 = Devonta Freeman, RB SD (121st overall pick, 4th round)

Like Hill, former Florida State running back Devonta Freeman does not land in the best situation. Not only did Ryan Mathews have an underrated season in 2013, but the team also loves Danny Woodhead and will continue to use him in the same way. Freeman has talent, but in this case, the situation hurts him and causes his fall to the end of the second round.

2.11 = Donte Moncrief, WR PIT (114th overall pick, 4th round)

The success of Donte Moncrief and this pick could come down to last year's rookie receiver Markus Wheaton. The Steelers selected Wheaton in the 2013 draft, but he played sparingly and his role for 2014 is unknown. If he can gain playing time and possibly even have a breakout season, Landry could be a third option in the passing game, at best.

2.12 = Jarvis Landry, WR JAX (39th overall pick, 2nd round)

With the off field concerns surrounding star wideout Justin Blackmon, the Jaguars have to explore adding some help at the position. Jarvis Landry had a solid career at LSU, outperforming teammate Beckham the past two seasons. I don't see him as a player who could step in immediately and start, but he is worth a stash and a late second round pick.

Editor's Note: With many of the early analysis articles, you may wonder what their value really is since much may have changed. In reality, it's up to all of us to take in all the information, assess what is fact and what is hyperbole, determine why someone's stock rose or fell over the past few months and adjust our own opinions accordingly.

Our goal with this guide is to give you as much informatoin as you can possibly digest so you can make the best decisions on draft day.

EAST/WEST SHRINE GAME REVIEW
AUTHOR: ANDY MILEY, POSTED 1/19

While most of the hard work got completed during the week, it all came to fruition on Saturday afternoon in St. Petersburg, Florida. The East West Shrine Game is a great event that helps out sick children and gives lesser known players an opportunity to get recognized for their athletic abilities. Many of these players can make an impact in the NFL and perhaps on your dynasty team this year or in the near future. Let's look at a few of the players that distinguished themselves during the game (I will list them in alphabetical order):

Zach Bauman, RB N ARIZ

He didn't get a lot of touches, but impressed when he did. Bauman has a nice shoulder shake which helps him get to the outside quickly. He is explosive, has quick hips, makes decisive cuts and takes what the defense gives him. The back sees the field well, possesses strong leg drive, and always falls forward. He could make an NFL team and rise up the ranks with injuries to a back field like Bobby Rainey did this past season.

Tim Flanders, RB SAM HOU

He started the game lined up at fullback, but looked more like Larry Centers as a receiver running routes than a bruising blocker. Flanders also lined up in the single backfield. This back has quick feet and powerful legs, and makes the first man miss while taking good angles. He has some wiggle, catches the ball well and shows good burst with the ball in his hands.

Jeremy Gallon, WR MICH

The receiver got good separation in the red zone and barely missed an early touchdown toss. He gets open downfield with his quickness and lateral agility. Gallon catches the ball in stride, uses a nice shoulder shake and fully extends to get to the ball. Despite his 5' 7" height, he can sky to get to the ball at its highest point. Gallon will make a good slot receiver who isn't afraid to make his living in the middle of the field and may work in the return game as well.

Jimmy Garoppolo, QB E ILL

It is certainly understandable why he was the offensive MVP of the Shrine Game. He has a quick release with mostly good decision-making abilities. The quarterback has great footwork and doesn't hold onto the ball too long. Garoppolo hits his receivers in stride, throws into tight windows, and has a strong enough arm. He looks like an NFL quarterback and will get the chance to impress more teams and scouts after securing a Senior Bowl invite.

Chandler Jones, WR SAN JOSE ST

Jones had the most prolific game of any receiver in the game. He made touch catches in traffic, came back to the ball and his quarterbacks. He has quick feet, catches the ball with his hands out in front, and uses a spin move to break away. Jones does a great job shielding the ball from the defender, fights for the ball, reads defenses well as he seems to get behind his coverage…a lot. Even when he bobbled the ball, Jones kept his focus making the catch while tip-towing the sideline. He is willing to get physical with his coverage and throws a few stiff-arms to break tackles.

Erik Lora, WR E ILL

The receiver has great rapport with his college quarterback Garoppolo which showed in the game. Lora catches the ball in stride, getting open in space as a slot receiver. He is a muscular guy to play the slot and catches the ball with his hands extended. Lora has quick hips, and could in the return game too.

Jordan Lynch, QB N ILL

Lynch had a good game to forget with two overthrows to begin the game, a few nice runs, and two interceptions. He looked more like an athlete than an NFL quarterback, so I would expect him to be converted to fullback or tight end. Lynch has quick feet and reads running lanes well, but seems uncomfortable under pressure in the pocket.

Jordan Najver, TE BAY

The tight end had a great week of practices and had one amazing play in the game. He got free in the middle of the field, made a diving catch, rolled thru that reception to get up and gallop down the field for a big gain. It will be interesting to see how Najver looks among his peers at the Combine.

Rajion Neal, RB TENN

The young back has a decent stutter step, seems to break every run outside, but also needs space to make plays. He has good hands and a decent jump cut, but was not a strong inside runner. Neal seems like an NFL Draft day three selection at best. I hoped for more from him.

Bernard Reedy, WR TOL

Reedy is a small, strong, and muscular receiver. He got open down the field with great separation, but body caught almost every pass. He sits down well in the zone and has good lower body strength to power-thru arm tackles. Reedy missed a catch at the one yard line as the ball went right through his arms as he tried to hug the ball into his body. He had an impressive touchdown catch in traffic that he used his helmet to secure the ball. If Reedy wants to get playing time in the NFL, he will need to use his hands instead of his body to secure the ball especially at his 5' 8" 174 lbs. size.

SENIOR BOWL ADVENTURE
AUTHOR: ANDY MILEY, POSTED 1/20-1/26

DAY ONE

I don't know what it is, but there is something pretty awesome about sitting in a room with hundreds of the best football minds this country has to offer. Looking around and seeing general managers, head coaches, offensive and defensive coordinators, really made me feel lucky to be a part of the Senior Bowl.

My adventure started the day before when I got on my third and final flight of the night from Chicago and as it turned out, I was on the plane with the majority of the Bears coaching staff on their way to Mobile.

The weigh-in/measurements part of the day is a necessary evil, but I was not a fan. They are made to parade in front of 500 scouts/media members/coaching staffs in their underwear. If there was something noteworthy I will mention it in my individual player notes. Now onward to my South and North practice notes listed in alphabetical order:

Jared Abbrederis, WR WISC

The powerfully built receiver was physical catching the ball, throwing off a defensive back hanging on him. He runs crisp routes, sinks his hips, and catches the ball out in front in stride with strong hands. There is something about him that reminds me of former Cincinnati Bengal TJ Houshmandzadeh. If anyone could be called the North's best receiver, it is Abbrederis.

Antonio Andrews, RB W KY

Move over Bobby Rainey, a better version of you is at the Senior Bowl. The running back is explosive, slippery between the tackles, and has loose hips. He also has good hands which he showed off making a one-handed reception and has a powerful build. I need to watch some of his game tape as I was impressed with this little known ball carrier.

Tajh Boyd, QB CLEM

He throws the ball quickly and mostly concentrated on throws within 15 yards. Boyd has decent footwork, but made an ugly underhanded pass that he should not have thrown. There are quite a few scouts here in Mobile that do not care for him, but I think he has a little bit of Russell Wilson magic to be successful in the NFL.

Derek Carr, QB FRES ST

The signal caller has sloppy footwork and throws the ball almost too quickly for his receivers to create space. He is very accurate with the first fifteen yards, but did nothing to improve his draft stock on the first day.

Kain Colter, WR NW

The former quarterback looked comfortable running pass patterns and showed decent hands. Since his conversion is still quite new, it might take time to get a good sense on his progress as a receiver.

Chris Davis, CB AUB

He manhandled almost every receiver who crossed his path. Davis breaks quickly on the ball and keeps the play in front of him at all times. The cornerback is also a good returner who has decent hands. Even on the sidelines, Davis fired up the rest of the secondary to make plays.

Mike Davis, WR TEX

The quite thin Texas wide out did not have a good practice. While he has quick feet, Davis rounded his routes, took too much time to break down and come back to the ball. He also let the ball come into his body instead of attacking the ball in the air. The receiver might be at best a WR4.

Shaquelle Evans, WR UCLA

This receiver catches the ball out in front of his body, and tracks the ball well downfield. He looks more like a WR3 than an every down starter and did slide in my eyes as he made a few more body catches than he should have.

David Fluellen, RB TOL

He has quick hips, squares his shoulders, and starts/stops on a dime. He has an explosive first step and is a good receiver out of the backfield.

Dee Ford, DE/LB

He is too small to play defensive end, but may transition well to an outside linebacker spot. Ford has a powerful build and looks explosive.

Jimmy Garoppolo, QB EA ILL

He did not look as poised as he was at the Shrine Game. The quarterback has good footwork, but seemed overwhelmed with the higher level of competition. Hopefully Garopollo can recover and make the most of his opportunity.

Ryan Grant, WR TUL
He has a good first step, had some concentration issues, but did not show a lot of burst while not distinguishing himself. He also fought the ball on its way to his hands today.

Robert Herron, WR WYO

He moved well side to side, and leapt up to attack the ball in the air. The receiver body caught too much for my taste and had issues creating separation. Many scouts believe in his skill set, so hopefully he will show more tomorrow.

Cody Hoffman, WR BYU

He looked like a stiff athlete who wanted to maul his coverage instead of outmaneuver them. I'm not sure if he has the speed and quickness to be more than a big slot guy at best as he has the hands, but not many moves after that.

Josh Huff, WR ORE

The thick, muscular receiver adjusts well to the ball in the air. He is quick in and out of his breaks, almost came down with a beautiful one-handed grab, and catches the ball well in traffic. Huff looked bigger in person than he did in his bowl game.

DaQuan Jones, DT PENN ST

The defensive lineman has a non-stop motor with good leverage and leg strength. He did his job well in the one-on-one drills. Jones exploded into the offensive line.

Arthur Lynch, TE Georgia

He made a lot of easy catches out in front of his body and looked athletic doing it. Not sure if he will be more than a TE2 in the NFL, though.

Jordan Matthews, WR VAN

The wide receiver looked explosive, was smooth, and possessed great body control to contort himself to make difficult catches. Skills such as climbing the ladder,and shielding the ball away from the defensive backs were on display by this receiver. He has a powerful punch to get separation at the line if he needs it. It was obvious with his body language that he hates losing matchups. The only corner that had an effect on him was Auburn's Chris Davis. They seemed to counteract each other well. The only other person who stopped Matthews the rest of the day was Matthews. He comes from a highly disciplined background and sought out the coaches to help improve his game.

Solomon Patton, WR FLA

Despite being quite small at 5' 9" 179 lbs, the wide receiver has glue on his hands as he caught everything his way. He has quick feet, looks like an ideal slot guy, who is great at making people miss. Patton tracks the ball well in the air and got used fielding punts too.

Jalen Saunders, WR OKLA

He is another very small, 5' 8" 169 lbs., receiver who is very quick and can gear down or crank up the speed almost instantly. Saunders is very agile, shows toughness in traffic, but got emotional when he missed passes. No way he can be anything more than a slot guy/returner in the NFL with his size as there is not a lot of room to grow.

Charles Sims, RB WV

An explosive back who keeps his feet chopping, fighting for extra yards on every play. He has quick feet with good vision and balance. Sims got a little sloppy with the ball knocking it into the air which almost caused an interception.

DAY TWO

Jared Abbrederis, WR WISC

The slim receiver has a good burst, catches the ball in front, and always makes the reception with his fingertips. He isn't afraid to make the difficult catch in traffic, and creates separation with crisp routes and good footwork. Abbrederis is the best North receiver in my eyes.

Antonio Andrews, RB W KY

Andrews improved on his great Monday practice with a better one on Tuesday. He did not let a single robber get past him in the pass blocking drill. The back kept his feet driving, so he might get the chance to be a three down back with a little seasoning. Andrews has quick hips, can start and stop on a dime, and uses good downfield vision to help him read running lanes and key on blocks.

Jeremiah Attaochu, OLB/DE

The defensive hybrid gets low, has a solid base, and can be quick while powerful in the same movement. Attaochu is great at getting to the quarterback whether he is lined up as a defensive end or an outside backer. He will do whatever it takes to bring the signal caller down.

Tajh Boyd, QB CLEM

The young signal caller seemed to overcompensate for the gusts of wind. He was less accurate today than he was the day before. Boyd threw the ball late at times as he felt pressure often. The shine has begun to dull on him in my eyes without a superstar for him to target.

Derek Carr, QB FRES ST

The quarterback looked better in the practices today. He seemed to trust his receivers to go out and find the ball in stride. Carr had better footwork, rolled out more, and an improved touch on the ball. He threw to where the receiver should be not where the receiver was to gain extra separation.

Chris Davis, CB/S AUB

While he did not have the shutdown day he had on Monday, Davis still held court taking care of receivers while playing press and man to man. The defensive back struggles a bit playing zone as he isn't as quick and agile as the players he is covering. Davis is also quite helpful in run game support.

Aaron Donald, DT PIT

The big man has quick, light feet that he uses to maneuver around the bigger offensive linemen while working the run and passing game with the same level of efficiency. He possesses good balance, and held his position when he got double-teamed. Donald got good initial penetration with his strong legs and backside. I don't think he is big enough to play at nose tackle, but should be a very productive defensive tackle in a 4-3 scheme.

CJ Fiedorowicz, TE IOWA

The first note of interest was Packers GM Ted Thompson spent a little time talking with him before practice started. The tight end is a fluid athlete who gets in and out of his breaks quickly. He caught the ball with his hands, not letting it get into his body. Fiedorowicz dropped a few receptions in the strong wind and always made up for it the next play.

David Fluellen, RB TOL

The back let the ball into his body early, but throughout the practice showed a big catching radius. He skied to get one throw and caught another off his hip. Fluellen was a prolific receiver in college and it showed today. The young back made quick cuts, read his blocks, and showed burst thru the line of scrimmage. He wants to be a more north and south runner, but sometimes gets caught wanting to break things too much outside.

Dee Ford, DE/OLB AUB

He was a force to be reckoned with as he has a quick first step. Ford gets underneath his blocker and shoves right thru them pressing the pocket immediately. This defensive play maker could be used as an outside linebacker in a 3-4 or as the ""Leo" in a 4-3 scheme.

Jimmy Garoppolo, QB E ILL

The signal caller moves around the pocket well while slinging the ball out quickly. The wind did not slow his passes down much despite his throws not being tight spirals. Garoppolo has good ball placement, but needs to work on dealing with pressure as he appeared tentative with pressure in his face.

Ra'Shade Hageman, DT MINN

The defensive lineman came out a bit stiff. He is rather tall for an interior lineman and get sometimes struggles getting low. Hageman got twisted up by a double-team, but he held his spot on the line of scrimmage with raw power and determination. When he is one on one, the defensive tackle keeps the offensive lineman off his body and flows better to the ball.

Robert Herron, WR WYO

The receiver started off the practice ice cold, but got down right impressive by the end of practice. He always makes catches with his fingertips, making the reception in stride. Herron is a strong runner, who has some juke to his game. The young receiver starts and stops quickly, creating separation and tracks the ball well deep.

Adrian Hubbard, OLB ALA

He is a very tall, very lean athlete. While his size helps him create good leverage, he looks unnatural playing the position. Hubbard uses a spin move to get around blockers, but does not have the natural force to make the tackle.

Josh Huff, WR ORE

He started off practice trying to field punts with multiple footballs in his arms. Of all the players that attempted to do that, the Oregon product was the best at it. Huff got used running reverses and was successful in space. He has good agility and quick feet. The receiver catches passes in traffic and uses good body control to contort himself to make difficult receptions.

Stanley Jean-Baptiste, S NEB

He is a supersized safety at 6' 3" 220 lbs. Jean-Baptiste flows well to the ball and hits hard. Even in the limited practices, you could tell that the safety caused pass catchers concern.

Jordan Matthews, WR VAND

He continued his high level of play to his second Senior Bowl practice. Matthews catches the ball crisply and usually in stride with outstretched hands. The wide receiver is technically sound and is a willing hand fighter to gain position. He awed the crowd with a few beautiful downfield receptions. Matthews made more of an effort to glide past defenders today.

Solomon Patton, WR FLA

The local kid did not have as impressive of a practice as he did on Monday. He fought the ball into his hands, seemed to affected by the wind, but is still as quick in a phone booth as ever. Patton runs crisp routes and can outmaneuver most defensive backs.

Michael Sam, DE/OLB MISS

Sam looks out of place as an outside linebacker, and when the moved him to inside backer, his game suffered more. He is an undersized outside pass rusher, who needs a clean path to the quarterback to be effective and I'm not sure how many times that is going to occur. Blockers got the better of him on most of his pass rushing attempts.

Charles Sims, RB WV

The running back has quick feet, good vision, and is explosive running thru the interior line. He does well in pass protection, can catch the ball out of the backfield, weaves away from danger, and can turn on a second gear when he needs it.

Telvin Smith, LB FLA ST

He is rail thin and I'm not sure what position he can play on the field. Smith couldn't get to the quarterback on designed pass rushes, overreacted to plays, and when he came close to making a tackle, he aimed high. He isn't quick enough to play safety so I'm not sure how Smith will fit on an NFL team.

Jordan Tripp, OLB MON

The outside backer showed great burst and initial penetration. His excellent motor and swim move with a hint of power, might get him a lot in the NFL. Keep an eye on him.

Kyle Van Noy, BYU

The linebacker has quick lateral movement and sees the field well. So well that he did not overeat to plays designed to pull him into the trash. Van Noy is a natural athlete with a good motor. He is explosive, can rush the quarterback if need be, and is decent in pass coverage always keeping an eye on the quarterback.

DAY THREE

Antonio Andrews, RB W KY

The young back has soft hands and impressed me with a one-handed catch that he made off balance. He was a fighter when it came to pass blocking drills as he never gave up. Andrews uses his quick feet, runs crisp routes and gaining separation from his coverage. He carries the ball well inside. The back did not finish the practice, but he looked fine standing on the sidelines.

Jared Abbrederis, WR WISC

The receiver made a habit of confusing his coverage by starting a route to the inside and then crossing up to break outside. I don't think I saw him catch the ball with anything but his hands, never letting it into his body. Abbrederis shows good body control, catches the ball well in traffic, and moves well laterally. Once again he was the best receiver in the North.

Derek Carr, QB FRES ST

He found players in stride, placing the ball in front of the receivers. Carr had better footwork and really appeared to be a leader who might get drafted by the end of the first round of the NFL Draft. According to Coach Bradley, he stood out in meeting with his leadership.

Will Clarke, DE/OLB WV

The tweener was explosive, and held his position when playing defensive end. He uses a combination of a power clubbing move and a quick spin to create space. Clarke moves quickly across the line of scrimmage and keeps his hands up trying to knock down passes if he can't get to the quarterback.

Aaron Donald, DT PITT

The defensive lineman flows well to the ball as he finds the ball carrier quickly. He does a good job disengaging blockers with tremendous leverage. Donald has strong leg drive to get penetration, stays low, and follows that up with a spin move to get around blockers. He keeps his hands all over the offensive linemen which lets him control where they are going. His high motor never stops. While Donald doesn't fit a 3-4 scheme, the defensive tackle will be a great, elusive playmaker in the right 4-3 system. He was well spoken in his press conference and is ready for the challenges of being undersized on the inside.

David Fluellen, RB TOL

He caught the ball well shielding the defender and looked better as a pass blocker, showing more effort than the day before. The running back has quick feet, loose hips, and reads his blocks to get the most out of his touches. Fluellen finds the cut back lane easily, breaks tackles, and refuses to go down easily.

Dee Ford, DE/OLB AUB

The defensive playmaker appeared to be unblockable for the majority of the day. He is quick of the edge, flowing well to the ball. Ford has a wacky, off-balance personality and tried to strip the pigskin from every ball carrier he met.

Jimmy Garoppolo, QB E ILL

He threw the ball with light feet and missed some throws deep. The quarterback battled adversity and overcame learning two new offenses. Garoppolo shows improvement in each practice and will have a great opportunity to increase his draft stock with a solid game on Saturday.

Ryan Grant, WR TUL

Grant does a great job catching the ball in stride. He make crisp receptions with his soft hands, and shows amazing body control. The receiver might have made the catch of the day as it was a deep bucket catch right on the sideline and the defender had no chance to stop him for a long touchdown.

Robert Herron, WR WYO

The receiver is most dangerous out of the slot with a free release as he can eat up space quickly. He has strong hands, and is willing to catch the ball in traffic. Herron breaks down quickly and gears up to full speed in the blink of an eye. He skies above the defensive back to make catches and adjusts well to the ball in the air. Every day he got better and Herron is just a sliver behind Abberderis in talent, but has the better build.

Josh Huff, WR ORE

The playmaker had a better practice than yesterday as well. Huff is a hands catcher with fluid hips who can make tippy toe receptions right at the sideline. The receiver gets to the highest point to make the catch, uses great body control, and has sideline awareness. I like him as a red zone threat and is a threat on reverses.

Stanley Jean-Baptiste, S NEB

He knocked down passes and played physical with the receivers. The safety has decent hands, and stays with tight ends in coverage. Jean-Baptiste looked better playing centerfield than in coverage even though Shane Hallam likes him more as a corner. The safety had a nice pass breakup in the corner of the end zone.

DaQuan Jones, DT PENN ST

Once again, this defensive lineman had a strong practice. Jones knocked his blockers off their feet and held his spot on the line of scrimmage forcing the play to go around him. He is a disruptive force who can use a swim move as easily as a bull rush. The defensive tackle has powerful legs, quick feet, and is always hustling.

Jordan Matthews, WR VAND

The best player at this event finally had a so-so day. We all know he has soft hands, good balance, tracks the ball well in the air, and is a fiery competitor. However, Matthews fought the ball on deeper throws and got disrupted on contested passes. He needs to redeem himself with a strong game to try to cement himself a spot in the NFL Draft's first round.

Kevin Norwood, WR ALA

This receiver went from my doghouse on day one (he dropped passes and looked off balance) to the high rise today. Norwood has good body control, fights for the ball, and looks like a competitor on every rep. He runs crisp routes and got wide open deep down the field. The crowd got behind this local kid today.

Solomon Patton, WR FLA

He adjusts well to the ball in the air, contorting his body around. Patton catches the ball in stride with his soft hands. The receiver knows where he is on the field at all times and finds a way to create separation. I knew nothing of this local player before I came here and now I think he could find a job in the NFL as a returner/WR4.

Charles Sims, RB WV

Charles SimsHe spent the beginning of practice fielding punts. Sims has quick feet and gets small in the hole. I like the angles the running back took and he never gave up on pass blocking drills even when he got knocked back. He possesses a good catch radius with a great sense of balance.

Marcus Smith, OLB/DE LOU

This was my first day really paying attention to this high motor defender. He has great lateral mobility while using his power and leverage to throw blockers off their feet. The transition to an outside backer is a little daunting for him as he struggled some covering receivers. Smith uses his hands as weapons against offensive linemen and flies down the line of scrimmage to make a play.

Will Sutton, DT AR ST

The defensive lineman is not strong at the point of attack. While he had a decent day one, Sutton has continued to slide in his efforts each day. He may be more of a reserve despite his big trunk.

Jordan Tripp, OLB MON

The athletic linebacker is a good pass rusher who uses a combination of a swim move and raw speed to get around blockers. He was one of the best outside linebackers in coverage and may surprise a few teams along the way. When you think of explosion around the edge, think of "Captain" Tripp(s).

Kyle Van Noy, LB BYU

He breaks down quickly to find the ball carrier using his quick feet and vision. Van Noy is versatile as he can rush the passer or stay back in coverage, doing a great job with either. The linebacker was the leader of the defense and will be a great addition to any NFL defense.

Jimmie Ward, S N ILL

The young, local safety has good ball skills, and does well in coverage. Ward got caught peaking into the quarterback a little too much though. He needs to adjust to the speed of the game, if he wants to make an impact in the NFL.

DAY FOUR

As I am told, this will be the final day that the media can view practices. The players are back to shells and helmets mostly running plays at half speed. Because there is not a lot more to gleam here, I will spend the majority of my time in this article reviewing and ranking these offensive players by their position.
Quarterbacks

1) Derek Carr, Fresno State

Carr is the most polished of the quarterbacks. He has good footwork, throws while well balanced and became more comfortable hitting his receivers in stride as the week went along. The signal caller has the necessary arm strength to make all the throws and plays like a leader out there. He did nothing here to hurt himself and is probably going to be selected in the first round of the NFL Draft. For us dynasty owners, I would not consider him until the late second or early third in fantasy rookie drafts.

2) Jimmy Garoppolo, East Illinois

Wow, what a two week whirlwind. First, the young quarterback had to learn a new system for the Shrine Game and then he was thrust in as a replacement option for Alabama's own AJ McCarron. Garoppolo is not a terrific athlete, but he steps up in the pocket and throws accurately. He gets better every day and should make a good developmental NFL and fantasy quarterback.

3) Tajh Boyd, Clemson

It was clear from the first practice onward that Boyd got a lot of help from the talented skill players he got the chance to play with at Clemson. He has a strong enough arm and good pocket awareness, but prefers to throw shorter passes. Many people consider him as a Russell Wilson-lite. I am not as convinced, but he is worth picking up for depth in dynasty leagues.

Running Backs

1) Charles Sims, West Virginia

Sims was the most complete running back here in Mobile. He has quick feet, good vision and reads blocks well getting small in the hole. He looked fine in pass blocking drills and catches the ball cleanly. Sims has a little wiggle to his game and was the most explosive back by far. Depending on where he goes, Sims might be a late first round rookie draft back.

2) David Fluellen, Toledo

He is a more north and south runner than Sims, but has even better hands. Fluellen reminds me a bit of Chicago Bears running back Michael Bush as he is a bigger back who tries to run like a smaller guy. He fights for extra yardage and has a burst once he clears the line of scrimmage. I would be looking to add him to my dynasty squad in the middle to late second round of rookie drafts.

3) Antonio Andrews, Western Kentucky

If you like Bobby Rainey, this back is even better than he is. Andrews has good vision, steps up to take on pass rushers and does not give up on the block. He is quicker than fast, has loose hips, and catches the ball well. Owners that draft him will need to be patient as he might start off as an RB4/returner to start his NFL carrier. I'm not sure he is draftable in leagues that have rosters of under 25 players.

Wide Receivers

1) Jordan Matthews, Vanderbilt

Matthews is the best skill player at this game, by far, but hasn't always played up to expectations. He has exceptional quickness getting in an out of breaks, tracks the ball well in the air, and can contort to make difficult catches. He can be disrupted by physical corners that spend a little time in his head. Matthews gets to the ball at its highest point and can make defenders miss him in the open field. He catches the ball cleanly, usually in stride. The wide out has good size at 6' 2" 209 lbs., but is not a huge receiver so he may slide down both NFL and dynasty rookie drafts into the late first or early second round.

2) Jared Abbrederis, Wisconsin

He was the most technically sound receiver here, bar none. The only time he didn't catch the ball cleanly was on an onside kickoff drill. Abbrederis is not the biggest guy here, nor is he the fastest, but he was magic finding open space and getting to the ball. He makes plays in traffic with guys hung all over him. I think he will be a better slot receiver, but he can play outside. With all the talent at wide receiver, Abbrederis should have huge value in the second round of your rookie drafts. He did suffer a knee injury and should be considered as questionable for the game on Saturday.

3) Robert Herron, Wyoming

The powerfully built wide out got better every single day. He started off each of the practices slowly, but adjusted his technique and concentration to be pushing Abbrederis as the second best receiver in Mobile. Herron has the foot speed and jukes to get a clean release off the line, regardless if he lines up in the slot or outside. He can start and stop on a dime while needing zero time to blast past defenders at full speed. He catches everything with his hands in stride and finds a way to come down with contested passes. His size at 5' 8" 193 lbs. isn't ideal, but he could be a great WR2 in a pass happy offense. He had a long touchdown catch in the back of the end zone early in today's practice. Herron needs to be scooped up in the second round of your rookie drafts.

4) Josh Huff, Oregon

He catches the ball well with his hands as he does not let it get into his body. Huff has fluid hips, and makes sharp cuts causing separation for him. If he needs to sky for the ball, he can get above most defenders and is willing to fight to come down with the reception. Huff always knows where he is on the field as he uses the sidelines well and can make the tippy toes catches to keep a drive going. The wide out with probably start out in the slot, but could be a decent WR2 in a year or two. I would look to acquire him in the late second to first half of the third round in rookie drafts with what he displayed here in Alabama.

5) Ryan Grant, Tulane

The receiver makes crisp receptions, has good body control with soft hands. He is not as explosive as the four receivers listed before him which takes him down a little bit in my eyes. Grant has a quick first step and if he sells his route short to the corner covering him, he can break loose deep as he demonstrated with a beautiful bucket catch. With the glut of rookie wide receivers, Grant should be available in the third to fourth round of most rookie drafts. Take him as a developmental guy.

6) Solomon Patton, Florida

He is undersized at 5'8" and 179 lbs., but has loose hips and a quick first step that make him hard to track once he gets off the line. He tracks the ball well in the air and uses his balance to keep on his feet despite his diminutive size. Patton runs crisp routes and would be ideal as a slot receiver. He would be an asset in the return game as well because of his great vision and lateral agility. Patton might not be a good option in leagues that do not reward return yardage.

7) Kevin Norwood, Alabama

The local receiver keeps on improving each and every day. He has quick feet and has a physical toughness that not every wide out his size has. I like the way he plucks the ball out of the air and the clean routes he runs. Norwood might take a year or two of seasoning before he becomes fantasy relevant, but is worth a late round pick.

Tight End

1.) CJ Fiedorowicz, Iowa

There were some injuries to the tight end position here in Mobile, but the one player who has stood out is Fiedorowicz. He catches the ball well with his hands and is athletic enough to maneuver around linebackers and stiffer defensive backs. I compare him to a guy like Mercedes Lewis, the Jacksonville Jaguars tight end who is a better blocker than receiver. He should be a successful on the line tight end who will be a solid, but unspectacular receiving option. Fiedorowicz should be taken in the third to fourth round of rookie drafts.

DAY FIVE

Thursday was the final day that the media could view a semi-meaningful practice. The players were back to shells and helmets mostly ran plays at half speed. In yesterday's article I ranked the offensive skill position players and the impressions they made. Because there is not a lot more to gleam from walk-through practices, I will spend this article reviewing and ranking these defensive players by their positions.
Linebackers/defensive ends (mostly outside rushers, unless indicated)

1) Kyle Van Noy, BYU

This linebacker is the best defensive player here, just beating out the undersized DT Aaron Donald. He flies to the ball with good vision and instinct. Van Noy tackles with force, wraps his arms, and takes the ball carrier down hard. He sheds blockers out of his way quickly while rushing the quarterback or playing the run. The linebacker is a leader and is better suited to play an outside linebacker spot, but can play inside backer as well. Van Noy is in my top five rookie fantasy linebackers.

2) Dee Ford, Auburn

I was not as familiar with this explosive play maker before the week started. Ford came to compete as he looked explosive on every play, flying around the ball, and kept his motor running non-stop. He has a quick first step, dips his shoulder underneath the offensive lineman, and darts to the signal caller. Ford could be huge in big play IDP scoring leagues as he loves to cause havoc.

3) Chris Borland, ILB Wisconsin

He had a solid week, so solid I forgot to write about him and his consistency. Sure he is undersized at 5'11" 243 lbs., but so was Miami's Zach Thomas. Borland flows well to the ball, almost moving as fast side to side as he does forward. The backer steps up and takes on his blocker, quickly sheds them with a forearm shiver, and makes the tackle. His vision is one of his best attributes as well as his competitiveness. He improved his stock this week and showed that his size should not be a concern. Borland should be a solid LB2 in tackle heavy leagues.

4) Jerry Attaochu, Georgia Tech

He looked like a monster in the weigh-ins all jacked up, but he backed it up in practice. The rusher gets low and is always around the ball. Attaochu did a good job disengaging from blockers with quick hands and keeps his feet. He would be a good LB3-4 in big play IDP leagues.

5) Marcus Smith, Louisville

The motor never stopped with him. Smith flows to the ball quickly as he is light on his feet and throws bodies out of his way. The defender reacts quickly to read the play and moves through the mass of humanity on the line of scrimmage almost effortlessly. I like him as an outside rusher, but he may in a 4-3 scheme as well.

6) Will Clarke, West Virginia

He is pretty big for an outside linebacker at 6'6" 271 lbs., so he might be playing a bit more as a three point stance rusher at defensive end. Clarke can anchor his spot on the line while getting a good initial burst across the line of scrimmage. The defender uses a variety of techniques to disengage from blockers to either sack the quarterback or bring down the ball carrier. After the big names are gone, remember Clarke.

7) Michael Sam, Missouri

I love his college production, but I am concerned with how he will hold up in the NFL. Sam is no defensive end at 6'1" 261 lbs. The North coaching staff tried him at both inside and outside backer. He did not look comfortable in either position, but he does have good lateral agility and flows well to the ball. The backer tends to get occupied by blockers, but has the vision and instincts to know where the play is heading. Sam may be ideal for a Leo position in a 4-3 defense that will give him the opportunity to rush the passer with less coverage responsibilities.

8) Jordie Tripp, Montana

Tripp was another pleasant surprise for me this week, my buddy Joe Everett elbowed me to make sure I got a good look at him. The undersized backer is explosive and athletic. He can rush the passer on the outside edge as well as cover a back on a passing route. Draft him late and watch him explode about half way into the 2014 season.

9) Trent Murphy, Standford

The hybrid player had a lot of success in college rushing the passer from both two and three point stances. In the interviews he gave, Murphy thought he could play both defensive end and outside linebacker, but at his size he will be forced to play outside backer only. He explodes off the line of scrimmage, but sometimes is a bit out of control. Murphy also needs to get better at dropping back into coverage. He is a developmental pick for me at this point.

Defensive Tackles

1) Aaron Donald, Pittsburgh

I first noticed Donald as he manhandled my Bowling Green Falcons in Pittsburgh's bowl game. He is stout even though he weighs a little less (288 lbs.) and is a bit shorter (6') than most defensive tackles. Donald has plenty of power and wiggle that he generates through his big backside. In drills, he swam or spun his way out of many double teams while maintaining balance. Even though Donald might not be on the field for every play, you will get 100% effort as his motor does not stop. He is an engaging player who was a leader in Mobile. He is a must draft in DT required leagues.

2) Da'Quan Jones, Penn State

Jones is the supersized version of Donald, not as quick, but just as explosive. He burst off the line into the blockers, either holding his position or knocking them back. Jones has good hustle, moves his feet quickly, and looks more like a defensive end than a defensive tackle. If you need a backup DT, draft him, you will not be sorry.

3) Ra'Shede Hageman, Minnesota

He is big, strong, and powerful holding up the point of attack well. I think he may be a bit oversized for the position at 6'6", 318 lbs. as he cannot get low enough in the trenches. Hageman occupies blockers, but has issues disengaging from them. He has a high motor and will wear down offensives line in time. The defensive tackle might be a much better real NFL player than a fantasy one.

4) Will Sutton, Arizona State

Sutton had a good first day and then slowly went down hill after that. He needs to get stronger at the point of attack and use his weight better as his footwork looked sloppy in practice. Hopefully he can improve on this as he has the size and trunk to be an effective run stopper in the NFL.

Defensive Backs

1) Stan Jean-Baptiste, Nebraska

This defensive back can play both corner back and safety. He is a mauler when it comes to pass coverage. Jean-Baptiste reacts well to the ball in the air, has good vision, and the instincts to sense where the play is going. He might start the league as a corner, but I can see converting him to a safety within his first three years. Jean-Baptiste would be a good target in any league starting defensive backs as he should get plenty of targets week one according to the rookie corner back rule.

2) Jimmie Ward, Northern Illinois

He was a fan favorite here. Ward has good ball skills, moves well in all directions, and put himself in positions to make plays. The safety is more than athletic enough to cover backs and tight ends. He had a nice pass breakup in Thursday's practice. I'm not sure he will be a starter from day one in the NFL, but he should be a solid special teams player who could evolve into a starting NFL and fantasy safety.

3) Chris Davis, Auburn

Davis flashed day one and then backed off a little bit as the week went on. He is a physical athlete that likes to disrupt receivers with an attempt at bump and run coverage. The corner plays best when he keeps the play in front of him as he is a solid tackler and can be helpful in the return game as well.

GAME DAY REPORT

Well, the long Senior Bowl week is almost over. Most of the NFL coaches and scouts have gone back to their team headquarters. The team meetings, practices, press conferences and hospital visits are finished. Now is the time to play. Who really stood out in actual game conditions? I will break down my thoughts from the press box in alphabetical order:

Antonio Andrews, RB W KY

He runs well behind his pads and can be a very effective power rusher and receiver. He was a volume back in college so he tends to start off slowly and work himself into the game. This might be an issue as I'm not sure if there is an NFL that would be willing to start him right away. Andrews is intriguing, so I would gauge his value to the late second early third round of rookie drafts at this time.

Chris Borland, LB WISC

The athletic linebacker was everywhere in the game. He covers potential receivers tightly out of the backfield and is a very hard hitter. For a stretch of two quarters it seemed like he was a part of every single tackle as he is always around the ball. His size means nothing to me as Borland can flow to the ball, disengage blockers and hit. If you are in tackle heavy leagues, he might be a LB1 this season!

Tajh Boyd, QB CLEM

He started the game off jittery as he was not comfortable in the pocket. His downfield passes missed the mark as he did not quiet his feet and throw with a solid base. The two interceptions were throws that should not have been forced. I think he needs to concern the defense with his legs to open up passes in the middle of the field instead of throwing check downs or bombs. Also Boyd looks a lot more comfortable in the shotgun. It may be in his best interest to sit behind a veteran quarterback for a year or two before he gets thrown to the wolves.

Derek Carr, QB FRES ST

Carr played a very poised game. He finds the open receiver, which was usually the one running underneath. He threw a nice underneath pass and let his tight end Gilmore do the hard work to rumble into the end zone. He has good footwork and missed out on two big throws, one of those was a flea flicker. Carr has a quick release, and moves well in the pocket, including rolling out.

Aaron Donald, DT PITT

The award winning superstar defensive tackle may have played his way into the first round. He was disruptive, constantly demanding double teams to contain him despite his 288 lbs. shell. If you play in DT required leagues, he is a must draft.

David Fluellen, RB TOL

The back gets low, moves the pile with fighting for extra yardage. He average over 5.5 yards per carry running north and south. Tacklers bounced off him and then the back would occasionally make them miss with a stutter step. Fluellen can catch the ball cleanly and pass blocks well. He even spun out of a tackle when he initially tried to run the defender over. I see him as a Green-Ellis type of player who could be a solid dynasty RB2 for a few years if he finds himself in the right situation.

Dee Ford, DE AUB

This athletic, superstar playmaker had a fantastic game where he sacked the quarterback on back-to-back plays. He gets a great jump on the center-quarterback exchange, almost getting across the line of scrimmage before the ball makes it from the ground into the signal caller's hands. If Ford isn't sacking the quarterback, he is getting his hands up to knock down the pass with a well timed leap. depending on what scheme he ends up with, Ford will be at least a dynasty DE2/LB2.

Jimmy Garoppolo, E ILL

His best pass of the game was an ill-advised one as he threw against his body on a rollout and made a nice throw. The young quarterback tries to take the check down pass first instead of looking to push the ball down the field. He just missed a few long passes where he put too much into the throw. Garoppolo needs to calm down a bit and work on the little stuff he does well like ball fakes. He is an ideal QB3 and should be drafted in the third round of rookie drafts.

Crockett Gilmore, TE COL ST

This replacement player ended up having the most prolific game of anyone as he caught five passes for 61 yards and a touchdown. Two of those catches went for 17 yards or more and he ran through people on the way to the end zone on Carr's rollout.

Jordan Matthews, WR VAND

Matthews had a rather quiet day with two receptions for 38 yards. Keep in mind one of those receptions was a 33-yard bomb he tippy-toed for a beautiful sideline catch. He may slip in rookie drafts with the influx of juniors, but sit back relax and get him later in the first or early second round. He may never be a Jerry Rice (WR1), but I have a feeling he will be at least a John Taylor (WR2).

Kevin Norwood, WR ALA

While the stadium and State of Alabama loved this receiver, Norwood is simply a decent developmental player who works hard. He looks good in open space and looks like a WR4 receiver at best. He snuck behind the defense for his wide open touchdown catch as he was wide open. His team attempted a trick play where Norwood got the ball on a reverse and then threw the ball into the end zone. Too bad this pass was picked off, but Norwood is a hard worker and might be a viable option in deeper dynasty leagues.

Jacob Pederson, TE WISC

In the fourth quarter, something clicked with this athletic tight end. He caught four passes for 46 yards in that quarter as the primary outlet receiver. Pederson does a good job shielding the ball from the defender and catches the pass with his hands outstretched from his body as many tight ends tend to body catch. After the first four rookie tight ends, the number five spot might belong to him.

Charles Sims, RB WV

The running back was quick to the outside, showing a lot of explosion. He reads his blocks well both as a running back and as a returner. Sims was not very active after the first quarter and may have been slowed down by injury. He should still be on fantasy radars starting in the second round in rookie drafts.

Chris Smith, DE ARK

Smith got penetration early in the game and got his hands up to knock down a third down pass. He appeared to be a better pass rusher than someone who helped out on run support.

Lorenzo Taliaferro, RB CC

The young back looked powerful bursting through the line of scrimmage. He has quick feet and has a slight jump cut, but Taliaferro is a better north and south runner. The runner constantly chops his feet and falls forward. Where he ends up will determine his value fantasy-wise.

James White, RB WISC

White was the best North running back of the game averaging over 5.6 yards per carry. He gets small, is very quick, but does not have the agility to make you miss. He sometimes runs straight into a pile without much of a plan or tries to dance too much. When White runs north and south, he can grind out yards, but I don't see him more than an NFL RB2 which would make him more of a taxi squad player to hold onto to see if he grows into a role.

2014 DRAFT: FIRST LOOK
AUTHOR: JEFF HAVERLACK, POSTED 1/20

Each year around this time I like to perform what I consider my "first look" at the upcoming draft as a whole, loosely examining the depth of the class with a focus on fantasy. Every year finds a draft with its own unique variables and specifics that sets it apart from any other. That's not to say that the stratification and depth within certain positions doesn't resemble prior year drafts, but it's important to analyze each draft as an individual, rather than apply a blanket analysis of sorts.

Through this exercise and analysis a fantasy coach can cross-reference the strength and weaknesses of the upcoming class with that of the draft picks held in order to discern the best use of those picks, be it through making a selection or, perhaps, trading away the pick for known production. The lay of your team when combined with your draft picks will suggest a course of action that emerges as the NFL draft unfolds. Whether you are able to rise above the allure of a 'sexy' pick and, instead, use the selection to address a need will be your challenge. While there's every possibility that the 'sexy' pick will pan out, there's far more potential that it will not. Remember my criticism of coaches selecting Ronnie Hillman in 2012? Read my words carefully here: Sex does not equate to fantasy production.

Let me start with a tip that I believe is well understood (at least after each draft) but so infrequently followed: Fantasy draft picks nearly always lose value AFTER the NFL draft. The reason I say "at least after each draft" is because we fantasy coaches believe each selection holds the potential of being the missing piece to our respective teams that will allow us to hoist that coveted league trophy. In reality, the NFL draft rarely unfolds as planned and teams in desperate need of players at all positions frequently go in a different direction, leaving those fantasy marquee names to fall, often times to teams that make a value selection without immediate need. The results are top names going to poor opportunities for immediate playing time and fantasy production. For this reason, it's not uncommon for fantasy teams at the top of the draft to select immediate production potential over skill and quality, allowing the more skilled players to fall down the draft – to teams in your league that are already more competitive at the bottom of each round. Yet we as fantasy coaches, can't help ourselves as the draft approaches. Fantasy impact can most certainly come from high picks in your draft, but the odds are against you. Just don't discount the opportunity of trading away any pick in your first round if you can secure production that can be in your starting lineup the following year from week one.

So at this early stage, how is 2014 shaping up? Let's take a look.

Quick View

An in-the-know fantasy coach doesn't need to look too deeply to understand that 2014 is not a year for running backs. There's certain to be difference makers that emerge from this year's rookies, but if you're the type that would much rather use your early draft selection on talent and not situation, then this is a good draft to stay away from if running back is your primary need. On the contrary, if you are receiver or quarterback needy, there are plenty of names to target this year. That said, recall that a fantasy choice of a wide receiver not taken within the first five selections of the NFL draft busts at a very high rate.

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Quick View (CONT.)

There are plenty of exceptions to this rule, but generally, wide receivers are nearly impossible to predict and will, most often, break your heart. 2014 has talent, but only a single player that projects well enough to carry a lot of intrigue and excitement. There's reason to be excited about the quarterback class and I'll cover that shortly. Tight ends are what tight ends usually are. Two athletic names top the list and deserve attention. In today's NFL that is now rewarding play-making athletes at the position, you may even bump them up in your rankings.

Overall, when surveying this year's class prior to the NFL draft, a selection in the bottom half of the first round is a great place to be. I see only a single near-elite player that teams should target which makes 1.01 the pick to own. Following that selection, the next half-round of selections will come down to your fantasy team's need and the sources you trust for scouting the available players. Just for the record here, I would put DLF's player scouting results with regard to ultimate fantasy performance up against anyone on the Net. When looking at this draft for fantasy impact, I much prefer a trade out of picks 1.02 through 1.05 without much thought or lost sleep. If you can secure a need with a younger productive veteran via trade, allow someone else to take the risk on a player that has yet to take a snap in the NFL. Tavon Austin, DeAndre Hopkins, Cordarrelle Patterson and Montee Ball are all nice young players, but that doesn't guarantee near-term fantasy performance. Great building blocks? Yes. But at least check your trade market to gauge if there's an owner willing to overpay for a chance to spin the wheel.

2014 is a year where talent will drop due to a large second tier of skill position players at the hands of coaches stepping up to select situation over talent. Patience will pay off in the second half of your first round.

Quarterbacks

My belief is that 2014 will indeed be the year of the quarterback. Early analysis points to four quarterbacks being taken in the first round of the NFL draft. I still have much tape to evaluate but early indications are that Teddy Bridgewater remains my top rookie at the position, and by a fairly wide margin. His stock has been sliding of late and, in some circles, Johnny Manziel has overtaken the top spot on the board. There are many reasons why I believe this is a mistake. Johnny "Football" is as intriguing as they come, as was Tim Tebow. Manziel has quarterback talent that Tebow never possessed but I can nearly guarantee that he will not overtake Bridgewater on my board. Blake Bortles' stock has been reacting much like a tech stock during the dot com bubble. He's got the prototypical size and quarterback tangibles that suggest success at the next level. His arm strength is passable and he looks the part. He'll likely be third at the position on my board. Derek Carr is a wild card though I still expect him to hear his name called in the first round of the NFL draft. He'll easily fall well into the second round of rookie drafts, but if you're looking for a young project player at the position, he'll be a good 'get' in the teens. Beyond these four, there's talen in Zach Mettenberger, Tajh Boyd and A.J. McCarron. Further tape study will follow on all these players so keep an eye for my individual position breakdown and review in the coming months.

Quarterbacks (CONT)

This class reminds me much more of the 2004 class than that of 2012. 2004 saw Eli Manning, Philip Rivers and Ben Roethlisberger selected in the first round. I think talent from this year's group could be much the same but not to the same degree or dynamic that was 2012 with Andrew Luck and Robert Griffin III. Ryan Tannehill was also a first round selection in that year and appears to be making progress as a mid-level quarterback in fantasy. In most all cases, quarterbacks tend to fall in fantasy drafts and this year will likely be no different, even if that shouldn't be the case due to the talent level present in other positions. Unless you play in a super-flex (two quarterback) league, you only start one quarterback and there isn't a lot of excitement with a selection of a young bench player with a high pick.

Running Backs

Make no mistake, there are names I like here. But players that I "like" are not players I would be selecting in the top five of a rookie draft unless I could find no trade partner. Even then, I would not be forcing a selection of a running back if I felt there was a receiver or a quarterback that had more NFL potential, which I believe is the case this year. Couple this with the fact that the running back by committee (RBBC) has reared its ugly head as it never has before in 2014, sapping the value of such names as Ray Rice, Arian Foster, Stevan Ridley, Shane Vereen, Alfred Morris and Chris Johnson. Even during this fantasy off-season, short as it has been, more NFL coaches have expressed a desire to work in more backs into their systems in order to utilize specialized talents and keep the backs fresh. This is a situation that fantasy owners must continue to follow and react to accordingly. If you play in a PPR format, you must identify those work-horse backs and elevate receivers. In non-PPR scoring formats, top receivers are closing (or have closed) the gap between themselves and running backs, who are typically heavily favored in early rounds.

Your top backs are likely to be Ka'Deem Carey, Tre Mason, Lache Seastrunk and Carlos Hyde. Other names are in the mix as well but I'm not prepared to give you an order until I view far more tape. What I can tell you is that there are no elite running backs in this class at first glance and I fully believe that for the second time in two years, there will be no running backs selected in the first round. A draft review as far back as 1970 finds that, with the exception of 2013, there hasn't been a single year in which at least one running back hasn't been selected in the first round. Should 2014 again follow suit, this signifies a trend folks. In 2011, only a single back (Mark Ingram) was chosen with selection #28. Like him or not, Mike Shanahan's strategy of finding top backs later in the draft has worked and is being adopted league-wide.

Wide Receivers

2014 has a chance to be the first year in which the first five picks in fantasy could all be receivers. I don't expect this will occur and then only in PPR formats, but the talent across all positions makes receiver the most valuable; there's little doubt that the top running back to a good situation will find their way into the first five selections.

Wide Receivers (CONT.)

Sammy Watkins is a near-lock to be the first selection in most all fantasy drafts. As the only true elite player when considering all skill positions, he rises to the top due most others being well behind in dynamic. With that in mind, know that I currently have Teddy Bridgewater as 1B to Watkins' 1A status and believe those that are lowering Bridgewater's value are missing the boat. More to come on this subject as more tape is reviewed.

Currently, along with Watkins, you can expect Mike Evans, Kelvin Benjamin, Marqise Lee and even Brandin Cooks to be coveted come draft day, both your's and the NFL's. Other names such as Davante Adams and Jordan Matthews are rising as well. Unlike previous years, there are a large number of big-bodied receivers headlining the position. As a fan of this characteristic in my receivers, I believe 2014 could be a banner year at the position. Remember, however, that no position busts quite like the wide receiver, so that must be factored.

Tight Ends

I typically don't spend a lot of time at the tight end position. Mostly because I have poor knees and my blocking is poor (queue the laugh track). So few become top names in fantasy and they're almost never selected in the first round of fantasy drafts. More recently, athletic tight ends are being utilized to a greater degree, making top players as valuable as many of the top receiver names. I don't suggest greatly over-drafting names at the position, but you need to watch NFL systems that utilize tight ends and be aware of the names being plugged into those systems. New England, Green Bay, New Orleans and Atlanta immediately come to mind, three of which ranking highly for a selection in 2014.

The two top names to follow this year are Eric Ebron and Jace Amaro. Amaro is the more prototypical player while Ebron's ceiling is higher in my opinion, as is his floor, lower. System selection will play a large role in my ultimate ranking. A tier behind both Ebron and Amaro is Austin Seferian-Jenkins. Truth be told, he appears to be more than a tier below the other two names, but I'll reserve my final opinion after more tape is viewed. In all likelihood, you won't be seeing these names selected until the second round of your rookie draft, with a few selections at the bottom of the first depending on team need.

Summary

Wrapping up, it appears as though 2014 is another year where the second four selections carry nearly as much player value as those at 1.02 – 1.05, especially if wide receiver isn't a glaring need. This is a perfect year for you to address your team's individual needs via trade if you own a higher selection, or simply choose best player available if your selection is in the second half of the first round. Wide receiver talent remains the strength of the class with quarterback talent providing intriguing value at lower selections. Unfortunately, for teams holding a high selection, meaning that they likely finished 2013 poorly, it doesn't appear to be a deep draft of productive quality fantasy players in the near-term outside of receiver phenom Sammy Watkins. Note, too, that Watkins does not carry the measurables typically seen in dominant receivers, possibly not even measuring 6' in height. I'm not ready to dub Watkins a fantasy star in the making.

DYNASTY STOCK MARKET: MIXING IN THE ROOKIES
AUTHOR: RYAN MCDOWELL, POSTED 2/7

This week, we began the February mock drafts and thanks to the folks at MyFantasyLeague.com, we were able to include the incoming rookie class of 2014. In preparation for the six mock drafts, which I knew I'd be a part of, I began to study my own rankings, along with the January ADP, looking for players I considered values in each area of the draft. Through this process, I began to consider where and how to value many of the top rookies which make up this strong class. I have been so caught up in thinking about and planning for my upcoming rookie drafts and how I would value each rookie in comparison to the fellow rookies in that class that I have given little thought to how to value all of the rookies when grouped with the current crop of NFL players.

There are multiple ways to approach this decision of where to place incoming rookies and it can be an overwhelming process if you are not confident in your game plan.

For example, if you own the 1.01 rookie pick and plan on taking Clemson's Sammy Watkins, you are likely to be inundated with some solid trade offers. You might have a list of seven wide receivers you would take in exchange for the pick. Does this mean Watkins should be your eighth ranked wide receiver? Common sense says yes, but it's not always that simple. You have to consider the current market value of the veteran player, which is very fluid.

Another thing to consider is where in a startup unproven rookies should be taken in comparison to the available veterans. For example, if I am picking in the fifth round of a startup draft, I could be facing a decision on who to grab as my WR3 – Torrey Smith or Mike Evans. With the assumption that Evans will be the popular pick at 1.02, I ask myself if I would prefer Smith or the 1.02 pick. For me, the pick is the hands down winner here, and that will often be the case. This relies on placing a rookie pick value on nearly all relevant veterans.

Anyway, back to the mock draft preparation.

To simplify things, I began to consider where in my current set of rankings some of the top rookies would be slated and here is what I came up with. I'll begin with my current rankings for the top players from each position and include an explanation of where I would currently rank some of the top rookies among those veterans. Also, a couple of things to remember. First, this is just my opinion and many of my fellow DLF writers would have very different rankings. Secondly, I build my team around youth at all positions, so if a rookie seems to be ranked higher than you might think, he probably is.

Quarterback Rankings (Early in the draft evaluation process)

1. Andrew Luck, IND
2. Cam Newton, CAR
3. Aaron Rodgers, GB
4. Robert Griffin III, WAS
5. Matthew Stafford, DET
6. Russell Wilson, SEA
7. Colin Kaepernick, SF
8. Drew Brees, NO
9. Nick Foles, PHI
10. Matt Ryan, ATL
11. Peyton Manning, DEN
12. Ryan Tannehill, MIA
13. Tony Romo, DAL
14. E.J. Manuel, BUF
15. Tom Brady, NE

Teddy Bridgewater, Louisville

The former Louisville quarterback Teddy Bridgewater has been the presumed top quarterback and potential top overall pick for months, but as often happens during draft season, Bridgewater's game is being picked apart by amateur and professional draftniks. As a result of some of these flaws, such as footwork and his ability when out of the pocket, Bridgewater's dynasty value is taking a small hit. It appeared as though he would likely be a mid first round rookie pick, but with the emergence of other quarterbacks and the overall depth at other positions, it would now be somewhat of an upset if any quarterback is taken among the top twelve picks in a rookie draft. Bridgewater is one of the youngest quarterbacks available in the draft as he won't turn 22 years old until midway through his rookie season. That has to be a valuable asset to dynasty owners. I would currently rank Bridgewater as my QB10, behind Nick Foles and just ahead of Matt Ryan. A strong start to his rookie season, in which he has a strong chance to start from day one, could quickly move him up as high as QB4 overall.

Johnny Manziel, Texas A&M

I mentioned Bridgewater was among the youngest quarterback prospects in the upcoming draft, but the youngest relevant quarterback prospect is former Heisman winner Johnny Manziel, who just turned 21 in December. Manziel had some off the field concerns over the past year, but nothing that will affect him as a professional. He's also been praised for his intangibles, but there's plenty to like in his game as well. He has one thing Bridgewater lacks and that's the ability to gain yardage as a rusher. His no holds barred style reminds me of Robert Griffin III as he seems to invite contact. Though he had no serious injuries at College Station, I do have concerns about him taking big hits as a pro, thus I still rank him ever so slightly behind Bridgewater, but I am definitely coming around on him as a prospect and would not be surprised to see many dynasty owners opt for him over Bridgewater during rookie draft season. For now, I'll place Manziel directly behind Bridgewater, ranking him QB11 and moving Matt Ryan to QB12.

Here are my updated quarterback rankings (Early in the draft evaluation process)

1. Andrew Luck, IND
2. Cam Newton, CAR
3. Aaron Rodgers, GB
4. Robert Griffin III, WAS
5. Matthew Stafford, DET
6. Russell Wilson, SEA
7. Colin Kaepernick, SF
8. Drew Brees, NO
9. Nick Foles, PHI
10. Teddy Bridgewater
11. Johnny Manziel
12. Matt Ryan, ATL
13. Peyton Manning, DEN
14. Ryan Tannehill, MIA
15. Tony Romo, DAL

Tight End Rankings (Early in the draft evaluation process)

1. Jimmy Graham, NO
2. Rob Gronkowski, NE
3. Jordan Cameron, CLE
4. Julius Thomas, DEN
5. Tyler Eifert, CIN
6. Ladarius Green, SD
7. Jordan Reed, WAS
8. Zach Ertz, PHI
9. Vernon Davis, SF
10. Jason Witten, DAL
11. Dennis Pitta, BAL
12. Dwayne Allen, IND

Eric Ebron, North Carolina

Ebron was one of two tight ends to have a breakout college season and it couldn't have happened at a better time, with the disappointing seasons of the top two consensus tight ends entering the season. He has an ideal combination of size and speed and he's not a terrible blocker, as can often be said for incoming rookie tight ends.

After the top two tight ends, I see a tier where there's very little difference between TE3 and TE7. I would easily rank Ebron over the group of older and injured tight ends making up the bottom of my current TE1 tier. For now, I'll slot Ebron as TE8, immediately after Jordan Reed.

Jace Amaro, Texas Tech

Amaro put up some huge statistics for the Red Raiders over the past two years. He has better hands than Ebron and is more polished, though probably not quite as athletic. He is a solid blocker as well, meaning he could see the field immediately in his rookie season. While I slightly prefer Ebron, it's very close and I'll plug in Amaro after Ebron and before Zach Ertz, making him my TE9.

Austin Seferian-Jenkins, Washington

ASJ has everything you'd want from a tight end when you see him on the field. He's big and athletic, has solid speed and can make the tough catch over the middle. When it comes to his character and off the field concerns, his dynasty value takes some hits. He served a suspension at the beginning of the season for a DUI arrest and his work ethic has often been questioned. With two other strong options, that's enough to place him third on my list, yet his upside and natural ability still earn him a spot on this list. As the combine nears and we learn more about each of these prospects, I expect a bit of separation between them, but for now, I have them all ranked very closely. Seferian-Jenkins comes in as my TE10 as the third of the trio of top tight ends.

These additions leave me with a top twelve tight end group that looks like this:

1. Jimmy Graham, NO
2. Rob Gronkowski, NE
3. Jordan Cameron, CLE
4. Julius Thomas, DEN
5. Tyler Eifert, CIN
6. Ladarius Green, SD
7. Jordan Reed, WAS
8. Eric Ebron
9. Jace Amaro
10. Austin Seferian-Jenkins
11. Zach Ertz, PHI
12. Vernon Davis, SF

Running Backs

I am really down on our current options at running back, especially after the top seven in my rankings. After that group, I see a pretty significant tier drop and am just as likely to opt for a back ranked in the mid-teens as one at the end of my top ten. So, I as began to consider where I will value the rookies, I decided that I am more apt to take my chance on an unproven rookie rather than a veteran who has passed his prime.

RUNNING BACK RANKINGS (Early in the draft evaluation process)

1. LeSean McCoy, PHI
2. Giovani Bernard, CIN
3. Jamaal Charles, KC
4. Eddie Lacy, GB
5. Doug Martin, TB
6. Le'Veon Bell, PIT
7. CJ Spiller, BUF
8. Trent Richardson, IND
9. Shane Vereen, NE
10. Zac Stacy, STL
11. Adrian Peterson, MIN
12. Marshawn Lynch, SEA
13. Matt Forte, CHI
14. DeMarco Murray, DAL
15. Christine Michael, SEA
16. Ryan Mathews, SD
17. Alfred Morris, WAS
18. Marcus Lattimore, SF
19. Andre Ellington, ARZ
20. Ray Rice, BAL
21. Reggie Bush, DET
22. Montee Ball, DEN
23. Arian Foster, HOU
24. Ben Tate, HOU
25. Knowshon Moreno, DEN

Ka'Deem Carey, Arizona

I love the mixture of size and speed that we've seen from Ka'Deem Carey during his Arizona career. He can make impressive cuts and has been compared to Le'Sean McCoy thanks in part to that ability. I am a bit worried about his proclivity to look too hard for the perfect hole to run through rather than sometimes being satisfied with a short run or even a run for no gain. I am impressed with Carey's overall ability and he's currently my top rookie running back. I think he fits well towards the end of my second tier of running backs, which places him at RB15 behind the Cowboys DeMarco Murray.

Lache Seastrunk, Baylor

It seems like dynasty owners have been looking forward to the arrival of Lache Seastrunk into the NFL for years. In fact, I recently read a DLF article from 2010 mentioning the former Baylor back. For most of that time, he's been considered the top back in his class, though that designation is starting to be questioned by many as he is criticized for his lack of presence in the passing game and his ability to seemingly only break big runs, lacking consistency. Seastrunk has been called a change of pace back, and that might be true, but we've seen the dynasty value of those types of players, especially in recent years. Seastrunk comes in as my RB20, right behind sophomore back Marcus Lattimore.

There are many other rookie backs that I like quite a bit, but there is little separation between them. Because of this, they'll likely be ranked very closely in the RB25-35 range. This includes Carlos Hyde, Devonta Freeman and Tre Mason.

Here's what my updated top 25 running backs looked like early on with the addition of this pair of rookies.

1. Le'Sean McCoy, PHI
2. Giovani Bernard, CIN
3. Jamaal Charles, KC
4. Eddie Lacy, GB
5. Doug Martin, TB
6. Le'Veon Bell, PIT
7. CJ Spiller, BUF
8. Trent Richardson, IND
9. Shane Vereen, NE
10. Zac Stacy, STL
11. Adrian Peterson, MIN
12. Marshawn Lynch, SEA
13. Matt Forte, CHI
14. DeMarco Murray, DAL
15. Ka'Deem Carey
16. Christine Michael, SEA
17. Ryan Mathews, SD
18. Alfred Morris, WAS
19. Marcus Lattimore, SF
20. Lache Seastrunk
21. Andre Ellington, ARZ
22. Ray Rice, BAL
23. Reggie Bush, DET
24. Montee Ball, DEN
25. Arian Foster, HOU

Wide Receivers:

The wide receiver position is the complete opposite of the running backs, as I view it. I like to build my teams around wide receivers anyway, and when you add in the fact that the position is as deep as it's been in years, that seals the deal.

Here were my current top 25wideouts (Early in the draft process):

1. AJ Green, CIN
2. Dez Bryant, DAL
3. Julio Jones, ATL
4. Josh Gordon, CLE
5. Calvin Johnson, DET
6. Demaryius Thomas, DEN
7. Alshon Jeffery, CHI
8. Randall Cobb, GB
9. Cordarrelle Patterson, MIN
10. DeAndre Hopkins, HOU
11. Keenan Allen, SD
12. Antonio Brown, PIT
13. Percy Harvin, SEA
14. Michael Floyd, ARZ
15. Brandon Marshall, CHI
16. Torrey Smith, BAL
17. Rueben Randle, NYG
18. Justin Blackmon, JAX
19. Justin Hunter, TEN
20. Kendall Wright, TEN
21. Pierre Garcon, WAS
22. Michael Crabtree, SF
23. DeSean Jackson, PHI
24. Jordy Nelson, GB
25. TY Hilton, IND

Just like the wide receiver position as a whole, the incoming rookie class is very deep, along with being strong at the top. Also, similar to the running back position, the incoming rookie wide receivers are so closely ranked that many of them will begin their careers ranked well into the thirties and forties. Here are the players who are already cracking my top 25.

Sammy Watkins, Clemson

Like most dynasty owners, I consider Sammy Watkins of Clemson the top rookie wide receiver as well as the top overall rookie. Some are wondering if Watkins size will prevent him from entering the elite tier of wideouts, but he has above average speed, great hands and has shown from the beginning of his college career that he can dominate. I mentioned earlier that I don't hesitate to rank incoming rookies very highly. As you can imagine, that can often bite me, though I am rewarded in many cases. At this point, I'll rank Watkins as WR10, just ahead of his former teammate DeAndre Hopkins.

Marqise Lee, USC

Former USC wide receiver Marqise Lee was once considered the top dynasty prospect in this class by a long shot, then hit some hard times in southern California. In his final college season, he dealt with some nagging injuries and subpar play from his quarterback. Sound familiar? Yes, this past season's top rookie wide receiver, Keenan Allen is another player who was once the favorite to be the 1.01 rookie pick of his class, yet fell down the draft board due to injury concerns, along with inconsistent play during his final college season. I don't think he falls as far as Allen did in last season's rookie drafts, but he could still be a steal for you. I'll rank him as my WR17, right behind stud wideout Brandon Marshall.

Mike Evans, Texas A&M

I am not as sold on the pro potential of former Aggie wide receiver Mike Evans as many dynasty owners seem to be, but I still think his efforts alongside quarterback Johnny Manziel are enough to place him among my top twenty-five. Evans displayed some big play ability, but questions have arisen whether Evans made Manziel or Manziel made Evans. I see both as great prospects and valuable dynasty assets. Evans has the size to beat any defender to the ball and if he can run well at net week's NFL combine, his dynasty stock will skyrocket. For now, I'll rank him as my WR18, directly behind his rookie classmate Lee.

Jordan Matthews, Vanderbilt

There has been a lot of praise lately for Vanderbilt's Jordan Matthews, which is not surprising since he's the all time leading receiver in SEC history. That says a lot. Matthews is not the athlete that many of these players are, but he just gets the job done. He has a good combination of size and speed and is an excellent route runner. He has a reputation outworking everyone else, which NFL teams will obviously love. He has to land in the right spot to maintain this initial high ranking and I've often seen him mocked to the Lions in the second round. If that plays out, this ranking might be too low. I'll place him as my WR23, just ahead of Kendall Wright.

That's all of the rookies that make my current top twenty-five, but if we go much deeper, you'll find others like Davante Adams, Allen Robinson and Odell Beckham.

Finally, here were my new top 25 wideouts (Early in the draft proess):

1. AJ Green, CIN
2. Dez Bryant, DAL
3. Julio Jones, ATL
4. Josh Gordon, CLE
5. Calvin Johnson, DET
6. Demaryius Thomas, DEN
7. Alshon Jeffery, CHI
8. Randall Cobb, GB
9. Cordarrelle Patterson, MIN
10. Sammy Watkins
11. DeAndre Hopkins, HOU
12. Keenan Allen, SD
13. Antonio Brown, PIT
14. Percy Harvin, SEA
15. Michael Floyd, ARZ
16. Brandon Marshall, CHI
17. Marqise Lee
18. Mike Evans
19. Torrey Smith, BAL
20. Rueben Randle, NYG
21. Justin Blackmon, JAX
22. Justin Hunter, TEN
23. Jordan Matthews
24. Kendall Wright, TEN
25. Pierre Garcon, WAS

OFFENSIVE SKILL PLAYER PERFORMANCE REVIEW
AUTHOR: ANDY MILEY, POSTED 2/23

It's that time of year when NFL hopefuls dawn their multi-colored biker shorts and run around Lucas Oil Stadium. There are always small things to gleam from the Combine, but keep in mind the proof is in the game tape. Here are some thoughts for the offensive skill players by position in alphabetical order:

Tight Ends

I was not particularly impressed with any of the tight ends. Jace Amaro was the only top four tight end who participated in every drill. It was also disappointing to me that the NFL Network chose to show the Michael Sam press conference instead of the tight end gauntlet drills. Sam is a defensive end/linebacker and should be featured when the defender appears in drills.

Jace Amaro, Texas Tech

The tight end weighed a bit more than advertised at 265 lbs., but looked sloppy. He dropped some catchable passes and seemed uncomfortable out there. Amaro ran a slower 40 time than he played on film, but was strong enough in the bench press. Perhaps he is closer in skill level to a Dennis Pitta-type than originally thought.

Eric Ebron, North Carolina

He wowed us with a 4.6 40 time? That being said, the tight end was explosive and appeared to be the best athlete of his class.

CJ Fiedorwicz, Iowa

The former Iowa Hawkeye looked more like a blocker than a pass catcher in drills. He was off-balance at times and did not stand out.

Crockett Gilmore, Colorado State

He continued his successful off-season campaign with good hands in every drill I saw him partake in. Gilmore may not be a jacked muscular beast, but he is a good football player and might surprise a few NFL and fantasy teams.

Colt Lyerla, Oregon

The highly controversial tight end appeared fast and seems suited for a move tight end role, but had a few bouts of double catching. Some draftniks see him as an option for New England, but I doubt the Patriots would take a chance at that position with someone with questionable character.

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Troy Niklas, Notre Dame

The tight end did not run his 40 due to a strain, but competed in some of the passing drills. He found and caught the ball well while looking like a farm boy out there – rugged and ready to hit someone.

Austin Seferian Jenkins, Washington

Jenkins did not run his 40 due to a foot fracture per reports. The tight end adjusted well to the ball in the air, but did not look very consistent. It is quite reasonable his foot was bothering him.

Quarterbacks

Much like the tight ends, there was not a lot to get excited about as Teddy Bridgewater watched everything Johnny Manziel and Derek Carr also ran, but did not throw.

Blake Bortles, Central Florida

The signal caller has a strong arm and showed his competitiveness by competing. He did not impress or hurt his cause.

Tajh Boyd, Clemson

His performances without Watkins keep on getting bleaker. He showed off his big, inaccurate arm today. This effort did not improve anyone's thoughts on his NFL future.

Jimmy Garoppolo, Eastern Illinois

The senior quarterback did not stand out or hurt himself. He looks like a developmental quarterback for the NFL and your dynasty team, but do not expect much for the first two years.

AJ McCarron, Alabama

After snubbing the Senior Bowl, the tatted up senior put up a solid performance. He threw the ball accurately and showed decent footwork. McCarron could be on a team's radar that decidse to wait until the second or third round to go for a quarterback.

Wide Receivers

There is a lot of talent in this class. If I didn't mention a favorite of yours, that's fine as they just didn't stand out to me either in a good or bad way. If you're wondering, Jarvis Landry suffered a leg injury on his only 40 and did not compete after the injury.

Davante Adams, Fresno State

The argument is still out there whether he made Derek Carr a better player or Carr made him. While he ran a slower 40 time at 4.56, the wide out contorts well to the ball in the air, has soft hands, and tracks the ball well in the air. This might dampen some dynasty owners impressions, but don't let that happen to you.

Odell Beckham, LSU

In my eyes, this receiver got the biggest bump from the combine. He is an explosive, jacked up player who got faster as the day went on. Beckham uses good body control, has solid hand and is a smooth runner. His 4.43 40 time doesn't hurt either.

Kelvin Benjamin, Florida State

At 6'5" 240 lbs., he is a monster for defenses to cover. He catches the ball at its highest point, and also had a good gauntlet, but he is just not a smooth athlete. He might start his NFL career as a red zone specialist.

Martavis Bryant, Clemson

The wide out was more muscular than I thought, and had a solid 40 time of 4.42. He fought the ball at times, but was smooth running the gauntlet. Bryant is an intriguing late round player to consider in your rookie drafts.

Brandon Coleman, Rutgers

I was not impressed. He caught the ball awkwardly, fought the pigskin into his body, seemed robotic and rounded out his routes. Enough said.

Brandin Cooks, Oregon State

He had the best 40 time of the receivers with a 4.33 40. He just doesn't let the ball get into his body. Cooks is explosive, contorts himself to get to the ball, has great hands and always hustled running the drills. His performance moved him back into my top five wideouts.

Bruce Ellington, South Carolina

He showed good explosion, ran well in the gauntlet and caught with his hands, not letting the ball get into his body. He is still a good sleeper candidate.

Mike Evans, Texas A&M

He uses his big mitts to pluck the ball out of the air. Evans continued to remind Mike Mayock and others of Tampa Bay wideout Vincent Jackson, who knows how to use his body to make difficult catches. He ran a decent 40 at 4.53 for his size and remains entrenched as a top-two ranked rookie for me.

Robert Herron, Wyoming

He continued his successful off-season with a strong Combine showing. He is well put together, adjusts his body in mid-air to the ball and has a habit of high pointing the ball for an amazing catch. Herron should be a solid second or third round selection in rookie drafts depending on which NFL team drafts him.

Marqise Lee, USC

Out of all the big name receivers, Lee showed the most effort diving for passes and going all out on every drill. He is a muscular receiver who can contort himself to the ball and attacks it in the air at the ball's highest point. Lee might have dropped a few spots in NFL and fantasy drafts as he did not stand out athletically compared to Sammy Watkins, Evans and Cooks.

Jordan Matthews, Vanderbilt

Jerry Rice's cousin has natural hands and is a very fluid player. For some reason, he reminds me a bit of Eric Decker, as he is a solid receiver, but will probably be best used as a WR2.

Donte Moncrief, Mississippi

I thought his 2013 tape was not impressive, but he had a good showing at the Combine. Moncrief looked explosive, did not let the ball into his body and ran a great 40 for his size. Maybe the receiver is a top ten player at his position like Shane Hallam believes.

Tevin Reese, Baylor

The super skinny (163 lbs.) receiver showed up with impressive hands and can sky for the ball. He might be able to carve out a role as a returner and an occasionalWR3-4 slot receiver.

Paul Richardson, Colorado

The razor-thin receiver has good speed, attacks the ball and looks very fluid. Richardson needs to be in a spread offense like the Eagles run to be effective as I doubt he will be able to get off the line of scrimmage without a gimmick or two.

Allen Robinson, Penn State

The receiver uses his big body well. While Robinson can catch the ball, he lets it get into his body a little too much. I see him primarily used as a red zone threat initially.

Sammy Watkins, Clemson

This is the best wideout in this draft class, bar none. He is explosive, has great hands and is very much a technician. Don't confuse him with a Calvin Johnson, AJ Green, or Julio Jones as he doesn't have the size. Instead, think about him as a faster, stronger Antonio Brown with a little more wiggle.

Running Backs

Much like the receivers class, the running backs are quite deep and any runner who didn't stick out in good or bad way, I won't mention. Kapri Bibbs did not compete in the passing drills which is a red flag to me and Carlos Hyde injured his hamstring running his first 40 yard dash. Sure, they will both have pro days, but this is concerning.

Dri Archer, Kent State

The diminutive Archer ran a blazing fast 4.26 40. He is also razor-thin, has loose hips and is very explosive. Archer could be what we thought we were going to get with Ace Sanders last season.

Ka'Deem Carey, Arizona

Perhaps I was living under a rock, but I did not realize he had some altercations with the police as well as some domestic abuse issues. The muscular back was decent at everything, but does not have any elite skills. Carey ran a little slower than thought and fought the ball at times in the passing game.

Isaiah Crowell, Alabama State

The young back showed good athleticism, burst and speed. He had decent hands and may be a sleeper to watch in deeper leagues.

Tyler Gaffney, Stanford

He looked like a prototypical third down back. He has good speed, loose hips and catches the ball quite well.

Jeremy Hill, LSU

As I explained in my free side article about Hill, he is a very talented athlete who continued to impress in Indianapolis. He has quick feet, moves well for a bigger back with fluidity and has good hands. Hill impressed me the most of all the backs at the Combine.

Jerick McKinnon, Georgia Southern

The former quarterback was all that and a bag of chips out there. He is thick and athletic with freaky quicks. He ran a 4.41 40 and has great hands. McKinnon should be rising on the big boards of both NFL and dynasty owners.

Bishop Sankey, Washington

I saw a high effort back who ran with power and speed. He looks good in passing drills and he adjusts well to poorly thrown balls. He was in shape and ready to compete while Carlos Hyde wasn't. I may be flipping those two in my rankings real soon.

Lache Seastrunk, Baylor

While he didn't run the fastest 40, he had the best long jump and high jump in his position. Seastrunk is a fluid athlete who CAN catch passes despite not catching a pass this season. I saw nothing to change my mind, so he remains my number one ranked rookie running back.

Terrance West, Towson

He was bit thicker than I thought he would be. The big legged runner was light on his feet and was a high effort player in the drills. West is moving up my draft board quickly.

Andre Williams, Boston College

He looked like the same short yardage, power back who couldn't catch a cold in his 2014 bowl game. Mark Ingram is ten times the fluid athlete Williams is. I am staying far away.

DEFENSIVE SKILL PLAYER PERFORMANCE REVIEW
AUTHOR: ANDY MILEY, POSTED 2/25

It's that time of year when the NFL hopefuls dawn their multi-colored biker shorts and run around Lucas Oil Stadium. There are always small things to gleam from the Combine, but keep in mind the proof is in the game tape. Here are some thoughts for the defenders who stood out to me either in a good or bad way, listed by position in alphabetical order:

<u>Defensive Linemen</u>

Two of the higher ranked defensive linemen did not take part in the Combine. Dee Ford, who had a fantastic Senior Bowl week, had some back related medical concerns. When he got asked about it, let's just say his confidence overflowed. Stephen Tuitt's foot fracture prevented him to compete as well.

Jadeveon Clowney, South Carolina

The most talked about defender runs well for a big man with a 4.53 40-yard dash. He looked lean and muscular, jumped well, but did not do any of the football drills. Most of the premier rookie quarterbacks didn't do all the drills, so I am fine with Clowney choosing what he wanted to do in Indianapolis. He is a DL1 in any fantasy format.

Scott Critchton, Oregon State

The former Beaver displayed a good motor, used his hands well, moves well laterally and has quick feet. He presents value later in the draft both NFL and fantasy-wise.

Aaron Donald, Pittsburgh

His storyline just keeps on getting better from a standout season and Senior Bowl week to the Combine. The talented, muscular defensive tackle has big legs and loose hips. He is explosive off the line, has good balance and benched 225 lbs. 35 times which will come in handy maneuvering around offensive linemen.
He continued his successful off-season campaign with good hands in every drill I saw him partake in. Gilmore may not be a jacked muscular beast, but he is a good football player and might surprise a few NFL and fantasy teams.

Kony Ealy, Missouri

He looked thick, showed quick feet and has good balance. I think he will be a better 4-3 defensive end as I don't see him being able to cement the edge in a 3-4 scheme.

Ra'Shede Hageman, Minnesota

The defensive tackle is so tall (6' 6") for the position. He plays a bit too high and looks quite stiff in drills. Perhaps he can be moved up and down the line, including defensive end, to maximize his leverage.

Jackson Jeffcoat, Texas

The son of Jim Jeffcoat looks to be a man without a position. He had an injured plagued college career. Jeffcoat is too thin at 247 lbs. to play defensive end and runs too upright with tight hips to play outside linebacker. Maybe he could be a situational pass rusher, but he will need to bulk up to at least his dad's playing weight of 275.

Timmy Jernigan, Florida State

The former Seminole uses his hands well, possesses a big trunk and is hard to move. He has amazingly quick feet for his size, plays with leverage and uses good balance. Jernigan is another must for all defensive tackle leagues.

DaQuin Jones, Penn State

He is thick and moves well with a smoothness. The defensive tackle is explosive off the ball, uses his hands to keep blockers away from his body and could be used in a pinch at defensive end.

Kareem Martin, North Carolina

This athletic defensive end moves quickly, gets small through the line and has loose hips. He did well against good competition in college and not many people are talking about him. He could be a nice steal in your drafts.

Louis Nix, Notre Dame

He is a mountain of a man with a big belly and a bigger backside. The defensive tackle moves well in tight spaces and uses his explosive, powerful hands to keep defenders away from his body. Nix might be more of a space eater than a fantasy play maker, though.

Michael Sam, Missouri

The weight of the world looked upon him on Monday. He has short area explosion, but has stiff hips. Sam had a disappointing 4.91 40 time and did not look especially athletic. He looks like a situational pass rusher who will need to play special teams early in his career.

Chris Smith, Arkansas
He was an impressive looking jacked-up monster. Smith has quick feet, good balance and is very fluid moving around the field. The defender looks more like an outside linebacker than a defensive end to me.

Linebackers

Only one linebacker of note, Shayne Skov, did not compete at all due to a calf strain according to his twitter account. Also Ryan Shazier did not run or partake in any football drills, but did jump and bench.

Anthony Barr, UCLA

The former running back/wide receiver has the speed, explosion and quick lateral agility that you want in a defender. He just doesn't look all that comfortable as a defender yet. I think he will become a fantastic player in the NFL and on your dynasty squad, but it is going to take time.

Chris Borland, Wisconsin

He's short for his position, but he makes up for it with power and quick feet. There are few athletes who are deserving of the term "explosive in a phone booth," but that is Borland. He isn't the fastest in the 40, but can move around or through blockers to get to the ball carrier. Borland will be a terrific middle or weak side linebacker.

Max Bullough, Michigan State

First he gets suspended for the Rose Bowl, then he shows up heavy for the Shrine Game and now he looks stiff and slow at the Combine. I am dropping him in my rankings.

Christian Jones, Florida State

This muscular linebacker shows fluidity, has quick hips and uses a good combination of punches and swim moves in the drills.

Khalil Mack, Buffalo

The former Buffalo Bull has a very explosive lower body and has a very muscular build. He looked a bit stiff at times, but rallied in pass coverage drills. The outside linebacker did nothing to undermine him as my number two rated defender behind Clowney.

CJ Mosley, Alabama

He looked long and lean, but did not run the 40 yard dash. Mosley has good agility, quicks and is very fluid. I get more of a Troy Polamalu vibe from him than a Mike Singletary one. Regardless of what position he fills, Mosley is an impact player.

Trent Murphy, Stanford

I liked him better at the Senior Bowl. Murphy looked skinny, had small legs and tight hips. The decision for him to cut weight to get faster made him less powerful. His value will rest entirely on what team selects him.

Telvin Smith, Florida State

A razor-thin linebacker doesn't work in the NFL. Yes, Smith is fast, fluid and looks great in defensive passing drills, but so do safeties.

Jordan Tripp, Montana

One of my favorite players from Mobile had a good Combine. He has good vision, shows lateral quickness and good speed. Tripp looked right at home with the nation's best.

Kyle Van Noy, BYU

The athletic linebacker can play anywhere: inside, outside, middle. He shows high effort and uses good technique to disengage from blockers with either a strong punch or swim move.

Defensive Backs

All the defensive backs were there save for safety Jimmie Ward who had a foot injury and was not allowed to compete in Indianapolis.

Ha Ha Clinton-Dix, Alabama

He looked more like a free safety than a cornerback. He is fluid, has loose hips and breaks well on the ball.

Darqueze Dennard, Michigan State

The former Spartan is explosive and has good hands. He is a physical corner who will not out run receivers, instead he will cover them closely with strength and position. Dennard might not be a great DB1/CB1.

Pierre Desir, Lindenwood

He is long and lean. Desir tracks the ball well, flips his hips and has quick feet. This small school prospect should find a home on a defensively starved team.

Kyle Fuller, Virginia Tech

This corner looked very smooth as he doesn't have any wasted motion. He has loose hips and quick feet that help him adjust to quick receivers. I expect he will see a lot of targets year one, making him a great CB2.

Justin Gilbert, Oklahoma State

He might be the gem of his class. Gilbert is thickly built, runs well (4.37 40 yard time) and has a low center of gravity. The young corner is also a returner with good hands, so keep an eye out for him in leagues that reward return yardage.

Stanley Jean-Baptiste, Nebraska

This defensive back is quite big for his position and plays quite physically. He is a former wide receiver with only 18 games as a corner. Jean-Baptiste has great hands and can sky for the ball. I'm not sure if he would be a better corner or a safety.

Lamarcus Joyner, Florida State

He wasn't as fast as I had thought, but he adjusts well to the ball in the air. Joyner isn't afraid to fight for the ball and breaks on the ball quickly.

Calvin Pryor, Louisville

This defensive back also ran a bit slow at 4.58. He has loose hips and is quite fluid in his movements. Pryor seemed a little out of his element to me. He might be a little of a work in progress.

Bradley Roby, Ohio State

The former Buckeye corner is very athletic, has good vision and adjusts quickly to the ball. He ran a good 40 time of 4.39 and has the biggest legs of any of the defensive backs. I'm not sure if he is a true CB1, but he can be one of the best from this class.

Jason Verrett, TCU

He was one of the fastest (he ran a 4.38 40) at his position. While he isn't the tallest corner, Verrett is an ideal slot corner with quick feet that breaks quickly on the ball. The high effort corner is explosive, but always under control on the field. He may be overlooked in some leagues, but he should see plenty of time early with his ball skills.

WIDE RECEIVER COMBINE ANALYSIS
AUTHOR: JACOB FELDMAN, POSTED 4/4-4/7

Late every February, several weeks after the Super Bowl is complete and just as our withdrawals for the NFL are almost at the point where our significant others think we might be cured of our addiction, the NFL combine rolls around. We flood to the TV and our computers to watch the new crop of rookies run, jump, catch and lift. We even get excited about seeing how they are built, which is really a strange thing when you think about it!

The major problem with the combine, other than our wives and others not understanding why we care about it since it "Isn't real football," is we often don't know what we learned. Obviously we know that faster and stronger is better, but how much does it matter? If someone runs a 4.3 second time in the 40 yard dash but then turns around and only jumps 30 inches in the vertical jump and runs a 4.5 second time in the 20 yard shuttle does that matter? The short answer is yes, but the better question is how much does it matter?

For the last few years I've been trying to help answer those questions by sifting through the combine data and trying to lend a little statistical assistance to the wide receiver and running back groups. In the past few years this has taken on several different formats, but I decided to restructure everything for this year. The goal was to help fix some of the issues I wasn't very happy with for the past few years in hopes of getting even more accurate reflections of the players to watch, and I feel much better about the results.

Here's what I did:

Statistical Method

Since the goal of the combine for both NFL teams and fantasy owners alike is to try and figure out which of the incoming rookie class have what it takes to be at least a starter on an NFL team, it is important to compare them to that group. For that reason, I took the group of wide receivers who have been at least WR2s at some point over the last few seasons and used them as a baseline. I went back and pulled up all of their combine data and calculated the mean and standard deviation for each of the various drills.

Here's where it gets a little bit more technical. I then took the official combine times for the various drills for the 2014 rookie class and calculated the z-score for each of those drills using the mean and standard deviation from the baseline group. The z-score, for those not familiar with it, is calculated by taking the value (in this case the time or measurement of the 2014 rookie) and subtracting the mean of the baseline group from it. That number is then divided by the deviation of the baseline group. The z-score represents the number of standard deviations a value is away from the mean. In a data set which is normally distributed, which all of the combine drills are, 68% of all data should be between z-scores of -1 and 1, 95% of all data should be between z-scores of -2 and 2, and only 2.5% of all data greater than a z-score of 2 while an additional 2.5% of data is less than a z-score of -2.

What does all of these mean to those who doesn't really care much about statistics? It simply means the majority of all data, 68% to be exact, will be somewhere between a z-score of -1 and 1 for all of the drills. Scores between 1 and 2 or between -1 and -2 will be rarer but are not uncommon. Anything outside of that range is going to be quite rare though and either means they are severely deficient if they are on the negative end or elite if they are on the positive end.

Once the z-score was calculated for each of the drills, all of the z-scores for each individual were added together to get a composite score. Since a score of zero is the norm and the baseline group was fantasy WR2s or better, any rookie with a positive score is actually more physically gifted than the average of the baseline group. Anyone with a negative score is less physically gifted than the average of the baseline group.

Baseline Data

As mentioned previously, I used a group of veteran wide receivers, 36 in total, who have been WR2s or better in fantasy leagues over the last few years. This list of veterans included the obvious elite receivers such as Calvin Johnson, Julio Jones, AJ Green and Dez Bryant as well as less athletic but equally productive players such as Antonio Brown, Wes Welker and Eric Decker. I have even included new comers who produced at that level such as Alshon Jeffery.

I looked at a total of nine different values for each of the veterans and each of the rookies, assuming they participated in the drill or measurement. Here are the nine I considered, why I considered them, and the mean score for the baseline group:

Height – Bigger receivers are bigger targets. If someone is 6'5", they don't need to run as fast or be as agile as someone who is 5'9". Mean: 73.25 inches (6'1.25")

BMI (body mass index) – Instead of just using weight, which would largely be proportional to height, BMI is a more accurate measurement of how well built someone is, which is more important than just weight. Mean: 27.427

Hand Size – Receivers with larger hands have shown a tendency to make more sure handed catches and to have fewer drops. Mean: 9.5 inches

Arm Length – Longer arms means a larger catch radius. Mean: 32.5 inches

40 Yard Dash – The headline act of the combine, the 40 yard dash is all about straight line speed or long speed as it is sometimes called. Mean: 4.472 seconds

Vertical Jump – Measures lower body explosiveness and the ability of the receiver to go up and get a jump ball. Mean: 36.75 inches

20 Yard Shuttle – Measures the ability of the receiver to accelerate and decelerate. Mean: 4.246 seconds

Three Cone Drill – This tracks the ability of the receiver to keep their speed up while changing direction which is extremely important in route running. Mean 6.957 seconds

Disclaimers

No statistical study would be complete without a few disclaimers!

1)   This score does not represent a complete picture of a prospect, merely a snap shot. This score merely reflects how well their physical size, runs and jumps compare to the baseline group. There is no attempt to neither quantify nor include extremely important items such as route running, work ethic, mental focus, or anything else of that nature.

2)   A high score is not a prediction of success in the NFL. It merely means that player has physical tools that compare favorably to NFL receivers who have been at least fantasy WR2s. Likewise, a negative score does not predict failure in the NFL. It merely means that player's physical tools are slightly below the average of the baseline group.

3)   One of the best indicators of success for a NFL receiver is being selected in the first round of the NFL draft, especially in the first five or six picks. These receivers are successful at a much, much higher rate than those taken anywhere else. Outside of the first round, draft position doesn't matter much. In fact, the success rate for second round receivers is very near the success rate of seventh round receivers. Give those taken in the first round a little boost.

4)   Smaller receivers are at a slight disadvantage in this type of study; however, this is also an accurate reflection of the struggles they will face in the NFL. Life is more difficult if you are a receiver until six feet tall than if you are taller. You need to be faster, quicker, and more efficient because you don't have that added cushion of size.

5)   All data came from the combine and the official measurements. Sometimes players just have a bad day at the combine and drastically improve at their pro day, but it isn't fair to just take the best score. In order to have a level playing field for all players only measurements from the combine were used.

The Results

It is time for the moment you've all been waiting for, the results for the 2014 draft class. There aren't any super elite scores this year, meaning there isn't anyone like Calvin Johnson (9.677 score), Julio Jones (8.899 score) or Andre Johnson (6.888). There are quite a few very good prospects with their scores in parenthesis.

Great (Scores between 2 and 6. V-Jax, Alshon Jeffery, Demaryius Thomas and Larry Fitzgerald range):

Odell Beckham (5.512)

Jeff Janis (4.910)

Bruce Ellington (3.645)

Donte Moncrief (2.911)

Brandin Cooks (2.593)

Mike Evans (2.451)

Quincy Enunwa (2.342)

It was a bit of a surprise to me that Beckham was the top performer. As I mentioned earlier, smaller receivers tend to suffer in this type of metric. The fact that a 5'11" receiver scored this high, leading the draft class, says an awful lot about the talent. Beckham had elite times in the shuttle and three cone drill as well as being above average in everything else except height and slightly below the norm in his broad jump.

The other names that jump out to most people are going to be the other big named receivers such as Evans, Cooks and Moncrief. Evans gained very high marks for his size, especially his draft class leading wingspan with 35.125 inch arms. Combine that with speed drills within one deviation of the norm and you get a great prospect with size to spare. Cooks was on the other end of the spectrum, losing points for size but gaining major points for his speed drills, especially the best ever 3.81 second 20 yard shuttle. Moncrief had nice straight line speed and very good explosion in the jumps while having smaller hands and arms than average. I'll have more on these guys in a follow up article.

Janis is a small school prospect who might be more athlete and less of a football player. He played division II and had very nice production there. Unfortunately, I think it was mostly because he was just a superior athlete and a big body at 6'3" and almost 220 pounds. He isn't a great route runner and struggled to catch the ball at times (only 9 inch hands could be to blame). He also tended to shy away from contact and struggled to make catches when there were bodies around him. Reports are that he's a high character player though, which means some of those issues might be able to be coached out of him. I think his chances of being a fantasy starter are slim, but you could do a lot worse with a late round flier.

Ellington was nearly identical to Beckham in almost all of the drills. The only difference is that Ellington is about two inches shorter and has smaller hands and arms. Ellington definitely has the physical tools to be in the NFL. The problem I have with Ellington is I think he's pretty raw. He doesn't run very nice routes and gets beat at the point of the catch quite a bit. He has a large frame for his height but he still gets pushed around quite a bit by defenders. He's another player to watch later in your draft.

Enunwa only ran the 40 yard dash at the combine, so his score is a bit incomplete at this point in time. He has nice size and ran a very respectable 4.45 second time in the 40 yard dash. It would have been very interesting to see him run the shuttle and cone drills because one of the major concerns about him is his ability to change directions. This bleeds into his sometimes ineffective route running skills. He does a great job of winning at the point of the catch and out muscling defenders though. It will be interesting to see what NFL coaching will do to him. I'm not sure if his struggles running routes are due to lack of coaching or just being very tight. We'll definitely find out!

Good (Scores between 0 and 2. Dez Bryant, Dwayne Bowe, Mike Wallace and Keenan Allen range)

Allen Robinson (1.917)

Jordan Matthews (1.707)

Mike Campanaro (1.180)

Damian Copeland (0.936)

Cody Latimer (0.866)

The big names in this group are of course Robinson and Matthews, both of whom were neck and neck with each other on most draft boards a few months ago. Since that time, Matthews has slowly pulled ahead in the eyes of most. In terms of combine numbers, Matthews has the edge in terms of size in every way except for build. Matthews was also faster in the 40 yard dash and kept his speed better while changing directions. Robinson was more explosive though and had better acceleration. All in all, they are still pretty close, but I give a slight edge to Matthews personally.

Campanaro is an undersized receiver out of Wake Forest. He showed very good burst and change of direction ability in the drills as well as respectable explosiveness in the jumps and a nice time in the 40 yard dash. The problems for Campanaro come down to his 5'9" height and his 30" arms, the lowest of the entire combine. It shows up in his game as well. From what I saw, he really struggled against press coverage and had a very limited catch radius. On the bright side, he does run very nice routes when he can get off the line unencumbered and knows how to play the position.

Copeland is another undersized receiver with a slim build, small hands and short arms. His speed is good, but not great. How did he end up with this kind of score then? Copeland showed elite acceleration and change of direction skills in the combine. His shuttle run was exceptional and his three cone drill was one of the best in the last ten years. Unfortunately, he isn't as good in pads as he is in shorts. He struggles to run routes, can't make a catch in traffic, and has a history of injuries. He could be a return man, but I think that's about it for him.

Latimer didn't participate in any drills at the combine and makes the list simply because he has better than average size. We aren't really sure how good he would test out, but from what I saw he has nice leaping ability and nice hands, but he is far from a natural route runner and seems to have average speed at best. I don't see much upside here even with his size.

That's really for the positive group, which means now it is time for the other side of the coin. As I mentioned before, receivers in these groups are not doomed to fail. In fact, quite the opposite is true. Several of them will be extremely successful in the NFL. With a zero sum system like this, nearly half of the top receivers in the NFL need to have negative scores. Of course the closer to zero a player is in this group the better their chances of success. There also seems to be a cut off around -6. The only NFL receivers who have posted at least WR2 numbers and had a score lower are Randall Cobb (his score of -7.176 was due to a terrible combine day that didn't accurately reflect his abilities) and Antonio Brown (-6.512 was mostly due to his small stature). No one else is below that point, so I won't spend much time with anyone below that mark.

Respectable (Scores between -2 and 0. Reggie Wayne, Greg Jennings, Brandon Marshall and Steve Smith)

Bennie Fowler (-0.041)
Davante Adams (-0.146)
Martavis Bryant (-0.147)
Sammy Watkins (-0.529)
Devin Street (-0.584)
Marquise Lee (-0.686)
Albert Wilson (-1.258)
Kevin Norwood (-1.577)
Robert Herron (-1.616)
Kelvin Benjamin (-1.649)
Marcus Lucas (-1.844)

Keep in mind that players in this group, even though they have a negative score, are still extremely athletic. The negative score simply means they are slightly below the average of the top receivers in the game today. If you look at the names of the veterans listed, you see some extremely successful players. Don't doubt these players for an instant; they just need to have another part of their game that makes up for slightly lower athleticism. This could be the size of Marshall, the competitive drive of Smith, or the route running of Wayne.

The biggest names on this list include the biggest names in this draft class, both the literal big man in Benjamin and the figurative one in Watkins. Lee and Adams also make their appearance in this group of names. I'll spend more time addressing these four in a later article so let's focus on some of the lesser known names on this list.

Fowler's score and all of his measurements were almost right on the average of the baseline group. That would be a good thing except when I look at his college games he seems like a very average college receiver, not an average NFL receiver. He doesn't have any glaring holes as his routes are okay, his speed is adequate, he catches the ball fairly well and he has decent explosiveness. Unfortunately they are all just slightly above average at best. Combine that with his work ethic being questioned from time to time and we might be looking at someone who will never reach his full potential.

Bryant is a player who is starting to become a popular sleeper in dynasty circles and his has the chance to rise up boards as the hype builds. The college teammate of Sammy Watkins, Bryant is a bit of a size-speed freak as he checks in at 6'4" and ran a 4.42 second 40 yard dash. Unfortunately he has a relatively lean build and smaller hands and arms than his height would suggest. He is also mostly a straight line burner and loses a lot of speed when changing directions. Overall he is a raw prospect who needs to work on the finer points of playing the position such as route running and making sure handed catches. He also has some character concerns. Even as the hype builds, he isn't worth more than a third round flier at this point.

Street is another big receiver, but he's extremely lean. Add in slightly below average speed and his score doesn't look quite as good anymore. Aside from his height, Street's long arms and good shuttle time inflated his score a bit to compensate for his build and slower straight line speed. He is a high character guy and a team leader with nice hands. Unfortunately, his game lacks polish. He struggles to gain separation and can't handle the press due to his lean build. I don't see much to merit drafting him at this point in time.

Wilson is very short with small hands and short arms. However he had one of if not the best build of any of the wide receivers in this draft class. He's rock solid. He has good straight line speed, but just about everything else is very average. He unfortunately struggles to catch the ball at times and has some work ethic and character concerns. The small school prospect is going to be lucky to see much playing time in the NFL as best case scenario is competing for the third or fourth receiver slot.

One of the more polished of the lesser known receivers in this group is Norwood. He is another tall but lean receiver with shorter than expected arms. On the bright side, he does possess very soft and strong hands and knows how to run routes in an NFL system. He is a high character player who knows how to play the position. With his size and physical abilities, he could turn into a solid possession and/or slot receiver in the NFL but he'll likely need to add a bit more muscle to help him handle NFL defenders.

Herron was one of the darlings of the college all-star game season. He is a short receiver with very short arms, but he is lucky enough to have large hands and a very solid build. He has decent speed and explosiveness, but in college he was very hesitant to go over the middle of the field and risk taking a big hit. To me his best chance to see the field on an NFL team is as a deep threat with the role of trying to take the top off of defenses.

The last one of this group is Lucas. He is a tall, long armed receiver with okay but not great size for his height. He doesn't possess very good speed which has made many wonder if he will be asked to put on some weight and possibly transition to tight end of an H-back role. I think that is probably his only chance of seeing the field on Sundays and even then he is a long term project and not worth drafting.

Struggled (Scores between -2 and -4. Justin Blackmon and Percy Harvin)

Shaq Evans (-2.238)
Ryan Grant (-2.480)
Tevin Reese (-2.480)
Josh Huff (-3.206)
Jared Abbrederis (-3.985)

In order to land in this score range it means one of a few different things. Either they missed a few drills like Percy Harvin, had one of the drills where they fell flat on their face, or they are just below average from a physical stand point across the board. Either way, it is at this point where the cards start to be stacked against the players. The chances of any of this group making a fantasy worthy impact is starting to become rather slim. Chances are none of these players or at most one of them will successfully make the leap forward at the next level.

Evans is another receiver who is starting to gain a little bit of buzz as a potential sleeper. From a physical standpoint, he doesn't have any glaring holes or stellar attributes. His height, hands, arms, jumps, and straight line speed are all slightly below the average of the baseline group while his build and acceleration are slightly better. That meshes with what I see when I watch his games. He seems very average and could be a contributor to an NFL team, but I think it is likely to be as a possession receiver and the third receiver on his team. The fantasy upside could be limited.

Grant is an interesting combination. He is shorter and relatively lean with especially short arms. He is also severely lacking in straight line speed for a receiver and doesn't seem to be very explosive. However, he can stop and start quite well and what speed he does have he can carry through cuts and turns extremely well as evidenced by one of the best three cone drills at the combine. This meshes with his game tape. He does possess a very good set of hands, but I'm not sure he has the skill set to be anything more than depth on an NFL roster.

Reese is a workout warrior with an extremely thin frame. He's 5'10" but only 163 pounds. He was physically manhandled in college and will get utterly destroyed by NFL corners. There are concerns about what role he would play as he can't beat press coverage and is likely to be cut in half by linebackers and safeties over the middle of the field. His 8.625 inch hands were the third smallest for a receiver at the combine and one of only four with under 9 inch hands. Translation for all of this, look elsewhere for your flier.

Huff did not participate in all of the combine drills and if he did, he probably would have been even lower than his current score. The only measurement that had him on the plus side of the docket was his relatively thick frame for his 5'11" height. Aside from that he was below average across the board. He is a better football player than athlete, but I still think he is subpar in terms of NFL talent.

If I had to pick one player who was going to be successful out of this grouping, it would without a doubt be Abbrederis. His score is the result of a lean frame, only 195 pounds at 6'1", and a poor vertical jump. Without those measurements, he would have been in the positive side of the metric with good height and measurements as well as very nice times in the shuttle and three cone drills. He does need to add some muscle, both to his upper and lower body, to help him fend off the press and to give him a bit more explosiveness off the line, but he is otherwise a very polished receiver with very good hands. For those who don't know the story, he was a first team all-state quarterback and defensive back in high school before walking on to the Wisconsin team. They asked him to switch to receiver and a few years later he is walking away as one of the school's best ever at the position. His character and work ethic are supreme which makes me think he will find a way to work his way onto the field at the next level. The raw talent level might limit his upside to WR3 in fantasy leagues, but he's one to watch.

Not their day (Scores under -4. TY Hilton, Wes Welker, Randall Cobb and Antonio Brown)

Jeremy Gallon (-4.205)
Chris Boyd (-4.433)
TJ Jones (-4.742)
John Brown (-5.026)
Austin Franklin (-5.213)
Cody Hoffman (-5.293)
Matt Hazel (-5.370)
Walt Powell (-5.414)
Paul Richardson (-5.441)
Brandon Coleman (-6.050)
Isaiah Burse (-7.092)
Willie Snead (-7.154)
Jarvis Landry (-8.007)
L'Damian Washington (-8.641)
Corey Brown (-9.303)
Jalen Saunders (-9.579)
Allen Hurns (-10.122)
Josh Stewart (-12.372)

It isn't a surprise to me or anyone else who stops to think about it that the largest group is going to be the bottom group. After all, the vast majority of all rookies don't end up being players of relevance to the fantasy world. Many of them don't even become relevant in the NFL world. The players on this list are severely lacking what it takes to be fantasy relevant. The only players whom I might consider even giving a passing thought to on this list are those in the mold of the four veterans I listed. Those players who are undersized, since this metric seems to downgrade them a bit too much, but possess something that is at an exceptional level. Players in the Welker, Brown, Cobb, or Hilton mold.

Keep in mind that anyone below a -6, regardless of anything else, is extremely unlike to make any noise in the NFL outside of the return game. With 18 receivers on this list, I'm not going to talk about all of them, but let me highlight the issues with a few of the bigger names on the list.

Chris Boyd was a highly regarded prospect at Vanderbilt before he landed himself in more than a little hot water due to some off the field issues. He has good height at 6'4" and showed great hands in college (when he was allowed to play), but he showed up to the combine much too thin for his height and seemed out of shape. His extremely slow time in the 40 yard dash (4.73 seconds) was also a poor showing and it was the only drill he did. I think it is fairly likely that he goes undrafted and might not even be signed as a post draft free agent.

The six foot tall Richardson had a nice career at Colorado but I don't see his game translating very well to the NFL. He is extremely thin at only 175 pounds and has very small hands. He is basically a straight line burner whose likely role in the NFL is as a return specialist. I can't see him spending much time as a wide receiver at his size and with below average catching ability and average route running. He just doesn't fit the bill.

The tallest receiver at the combine, the 6'6", Coleman definitely has height and wingspan. Unfortunately, that is about all he has in terms of this metric. Everything else was significantly off the baseline group, especially his ability to keep his speed up when changing directions. Some are bound to be seduced by his size, but I see a sluggish route runner who lacks explosiveness and fights with his hands quite a bit when making catches. I don't see the same upside here that some others do.

A few months ago, there was a bit of debate between which of the LSU receivers, Beckham or Landry, would have the better NFL career. I don't think there is anyone who would even entertain that discussion anymore. While Beckham lit up the combine, Landry put in one of the worst showings of any receiver. He had one of if not the worst showings in the 40 yard dash, vertical jump and broad jump of any receiver in the field. Had he competed in the shuttle run or three cone drill he might have been one of the worst in those as well. He's a better football player than he showed at the combine, but it is tough to completely ignore how terrible his combine was. There were always questions about his athletic ability and the combine seemed to answer all of them in a negative way.

These are my top receivers for the 2014 draft class, without knowing what teams they are going to be playing for in the fall. The draft can of course change things, but from a pure talent perspective these are my top players. They are in order of their scores using my combine analysis metric.

Odell Beckham (5.512)

I was more than a little shocked to see Beckham in the top spot, especially by over a 2 point margin over the next closest receiver and 2.6 points over the next receiver in my top ten. In fact, Beckham's score is higher than all NFL receivers not named Calvin Johnson, Julio Jones, or Andre Johnson. A score at this level is rare, and the fact that the score was produced by a receiver less than six feet tall makes it even more special. If you put any stock in physical abilities, you need to be looking long and hard at Beckham.

Odell Beckham (5.512) (cont.)

He is a little shorter than what we normally see out of a top wide receiver, but he is very solidly built and has the hands and arms of a receiver several inches taller. His 40 yard dash time of 4.43 seconds is faster than most and his jumps also showed above average explosion. The real measurements that separate Beckham from the group are his 20 yard shuttle and three cone drill times. Both of his times were in the top 2.5% of NFL wide receivers. This means he has elite acceleration and deceleration abilities. He is also elite in his ability to keep his speed up while changing directions.

When you watch Beckham play, you can see all of these traits rising to the top. He shows good but not great speed vertically but is extremely fluid in and out of breaks. He is also very quick off the line and excels at getting around press coverage with his change of direction and acceleration skills. His route running could stand to see a little refinement and due to his size he does lose some contested balls. He could stand to add a little bit more muscle to his frame to help with the contested balls, but even without it the upside is huge.

Donte Moncrief (2.911)

The size-speed freak landed second on this list of my top ten prospects. Moncrief has nice height at 6'2" and a very nice build for that height at 221 pounds. His 4.40 second time in the 40 yard dash is really good for his size and he showed very good explosiveness in the jumps, showing off his physical abilities. While none of his measurements were in the elite range or even in the near-elite range, none of the others were much below average. He does have small hands and is slightly below average in the shuttle and three cone drill, but that's about it in terms of physical knocks against him.

The biggest concerns for Moncrief come up in his 2013 game film. In 2012, he was a beast and seemed to be very quickly rising up the ranks of the college wide receivers. He didn't live up to the hype in 2013. He struggled running routes and going over the middle of the field. He also fought a lot of balls and either caught them in his body or dropped them outright. He also didn't win nearly as many contested balls as you would like someone of his size to do. Fortunately, a lot of this can be fixed. He is still young and if a coaching staff can get back the player from 2012 and improve upon that framework, they could have a player with a chance to be the top target on a team. He isn't going to be elite, but the upside is pretty high. Think a bigger, more explosive Pierre Garcon for an upside. There is some risk involved because there are a lot of things to fix.

Brandin Cooks (2.593)

Cooks was one of the biggest breakouts of the combine. Of course anyone who knew much about Cooks heading into the combine fully expected him to be near the top of the list of combine performers. My biggest fear heading into the combine was that Cooks would measure smaller than his college listing, as a lot of college players tend to do. Fortunately, he still checked in at 5'10" and his 189 pound weight is acceptable for his height. As you might expect from someone of his height, his arms are short but he does have fairly large hands.

Of course where he really shined was in the speed department. His 4.33 time in the 40 yard dash was one of the best times for the entire combine. It got better though when he stepped onto the field for his shuttle run. His 3.81 second time in the 20 yard shuttle run is beyond elite and one of the best ever at the combine. In other words, his ability to stop and start is better than any starting receiver in the NFL. Add in the near elite straight line speed and change of direction abilities and you get someone who is extremely dangerous on the field.

In college, Cooks was one of the most prolific receivers in 2013. His quickness, elusiveness, and acceleration were definitely on display. The only real knock against him boils down to his size. He struggles to go up and get balls and he does get jammed at the line of scrimmage from time to time. He also has a small catch radius thanks to his shorter arms. I'm not sure he has the frame to put on more muscle without losing speed, so his role is slightly in question. Is he a slot receiver or an outside receiver? Either way, he's a prospect with massive upside.

Mike Evans (2.451)

Evans is without a doubt the best of the big bodied receivers in this draft and it isn't even close. Anyone else who is 6'2" or taller pales in comparison to him. His 6'5" tall frame checks in at a solid 231 pounds. Add in a combine best wingspan and you get a player with the size of the great Megatron. Unfortunately he doesn't quite have the speed of Megatron. That isn't saying that his speed is poor, it just isn't on the same near elite level as the best receiver in the game. Evans clocked in at 4.53 seconds in the 40 yard dash which is a very respectable time for someone of his size. All of the rest of his drills were right around the average for the baseline group, which were the fantasy WR2s or better for the last few years.

When you watch Evans on tape, his strength and leaping ability become clear pretty quickly. He can go up and get the ball with the best of them which you would expect from a converted basketball player. His route running isn't great, which could just be a product of the Johnny Manziel offense he played in, but he'll need to improve it to be truly effective in the NFL. He isn't going to burn past defenders and has only average acceleration, but with his size he should still stand a very solid chance at being at least a WR2 in fantasy leagues. If he can refine his route running, he could easily jump up to the WR1 ranks.

Allen Robinson (1.917)

A few months ago, Robinson was in the discussion for the fourth receiver in this draft class if you asked most 'experts'. Since then opinions on how have slowly been cooling off while the opinions of several other receivers have been taking off, causing Robinson to slide into the bottom half of the top ten receivers on most boards. At the combine, he measured in with fairly good size at 6'2" and 220 pounds. His hand and arm size were both pretty average as well. The item that stuck in most people's minds is the image of him running a 4.6 second time in the 40 yard dash. While that is definitely not good, it is only a part of the picture for his combine. After all, he still had the fifth highest score for his combine performance! He was actually above average in his jumps and near elite in his shuttle run.

What does all of that mean for Robinson? He has nice size, good explosiveness, and great acceleration/deceleration. He's just lacking top end speed. If there is one item that is slightly overrated in the NFL it is straight line long speed. How often does any NFL player run in a straight line for 40 yards? Robinson has a quick first step, runs nice routes, and has the ability to go up and get balls. He also excels at winning at the point of the catch. He isn't the fastest, but he'll make a great possession receiver at the next level. Don't discount him too much just because of his straight line speed.

Jordan Matthews (1.707)

Matthews is the other receiver who seemed to be neck and neck with Robinson for the fourth receiver on the board a few months ago. Like Robinson, he has fallen down boards a little bit as of late, mostly due to other receivers rising up. Matthews made a lot of noise during Senior Bowl practices, but he failed to show up big during the actual game. Personally, I put more stock into the practices than the game itself, but it was still a little disappointing he didn't do much.

Matthews has some nice height to him at 6'3" and comes with very large hands and long arms. He's a little bit underweight though at 212 pounds and it could lead to him getting pushed around a bit in the NFL if he doesn't bulk up just a little bit. His speed drills were almost exactly on the average of the baseline group but just slightly above, so he'll fit into the NFL very nicely from that side of things. The jumps were just slightly below average, but they were also very close.

When you watch him play, you see a polished route runner who isn't afraid to go over the middle or make the tough catch. He shows good hands the majority of the time though a few throws do get into his body when he loses focus. Much like Robinson, he did struggle to create separation from time to time, forcing him to win contested balls, which he usually did. He isn't going to be the top receiver on a team, but he has the ability to be a very solid complement.

Davante Adams (-0.146)

In terms of combine performance and physical match for the NFL, there is a fairly big gap between Matthews and the others previously mentioned and Adams. That isn't to say Adams or any of the players below had a bad combine as a score of zero would be exactly average for fantasy WR2s or better, it just means he isn't above average like the others. In the size department, the 6'1", 212 pound receiver was very average with the exception of very small hands. He showed very nice leaping ability and was able to carry a lot of speed when changing direction, but his top end speed as well as his acceleration was a little lacking. At his size I would have liked to see something a little faster than 4.56 seconds in the 40 yard dash.

During games, he had the benefit of playing with one of the better college quarterbacks, which makes it a little bit difficult to effectively grade him at times. He did show the ability to go up and get balls when needed though and did a very nice job of catching the ball with his hands, even though they are smaller than ideal. He was a great red zone target and did a nice job of tracking down long throws, but he definitely seemed to lack some of the explosiveness you like to see from receivers who are a little bit on the smaller side. He seemed to take a long time to get up to speed at times and was jammed more often than I expected. He is a little raw in terms of running routes, but there is also some upside here. He could be a solid complimentary receiver in the NFL.

Sammy Watkins (-0.529)

The best receiver in the 2014 draft class didn't set the world on fire at the combine, but that wasn't expected of him. Watkins isn't the top receiver in his class because of his physical attributes. He isn't the physical specimen in the Calvin Johnson or Julio Jones type of mold. For that reason, he isn't a receiver at their level. Instead he's a step down from them. He probably won't ever be a top five wide receiver in the NFL. He just isn't built like that, but he is a very talented, very skilled receiver who should be a fantasy WR1 for years to come.

In terms of the combine, Watkins is almost the exact average of the top fantasy WRs in terms of size, speed, and explosiveness. His 6'1", 211 pound frame isn't big but certainly isn't small either. The best news for Watkins is he is a better football player than he showed at the combine. His 4.43 second time in the 40 yard dash is slightly faster than average, but he seemed to play even faster than that. When you watch him on the field, he is definitely a nearly elite playmaker. He is one of the best players with the ball in his hand that we have seen in recent years. He caught an awful lot of screen passes and short crossing routes but still averaged 14.5 yards per catch. You don't do that without being a dynamic athlete.

Marqise Lee (-0.686)

When Lee was a Freshman and chose to go to USC, he was talked about as potentially being the next Calvin Johnson. Ever since then, his stock has slowly been falling. Heading into the 2013 season, he was thought of as a very good but not quite elite prospect. Between poor play on the field around him and an assortment of injuries, his stock has slipped even more since this time last year.

At the combine, he measured in smaller than many had hoped across the board. He's 6'0" and a too lean 192 pounds. His hands are average sized, but his arms are a little bit on the short end. His top end speed was a little bit below average, but his jumps were an equal amount above average. His shuttle run was also in the near elite category. As a whole, he was slightly below average mostly due to his size.

When you look back over his college career, you see a receiver who has great burst and is very good after the catch. He also has an extremely high football IQ and seems to know what the defenders are going to do before they do it. This allows him to make plays from time to time that very few can make. There are some that wonder if his multitude of injuries last year were a sign he is going to struggle with durability throughout his career. He has the skills to be the top receiver on a NFL team, but there are some risks involved here.

Kelvin Benjamin (-1.649)

The biggest receiver in the draft class, Benjamin has a massive 6'5", 240 pound frame. Everything about his is big from his wingspan to his hands to the way he plays the game. Of course the downside of Benjamin is that he isn't an elite athlete and the combine showed that. His 40 yard dash time was 4.61 seconds, his three cone drill was 7.33 seconds, and his shuttle run was only 4.39 seconds. He isn't fast nor is he quick, but he is big. When you can stand flat footed and reach almost nine feet in the air, you don't need to be that fast.

If you watched the national championship game, you saw exactly who Benjamin is on the field. He can use his body to box out just about any defender. He can go up and over the top of defenses, and he is a mismatch no matter where he lines up on the field. On the down side, he isn't a great athlete and isn't a very smooth route runner. He also makes his fair share of mistakes from being in the wrong spot at the wrong time to just dropping passes that hit him right in the hands. He has the one thing you can't teach though, and that is a massive frame. I question what kind of role he'll have in the NFL outside of a red zone threat because he is pretty raw in terms of playing wide receiver. None the less, the upside is huge.

With all of this, I think it is only fair that I take a stab at ranking these ten players with everything that I've seen and done up to this point in time. These rankings will clearly change as the next month or so plays out and then of course the NFL draft. Here's my top ten for now. The gaps between the tiers are fairly significant while the gaps within the tiers are pretty small.

Tier 1:

1)   Sammy Watkins
2)   Mike Evans

Tier 2:

3)   Brandin Cooks
4)   Odell Beckham

Tier 3:

5)   Jordan Matthews
6)   Marqise Lee
7)   Allen Robinson
8)   Donte Moncrief

Tier 4:

9)   Davante Adams
10)   Kelvin Benjamin

RUNNING BACK COMBINE ANALYSIS
AUTHOR: JACOB FELDMAN, POSTED 4/16-4/19

Late every February, several weeks after the Super Bowl is complete and just as our withdrawals for the NFL are almost at the point where our significant others think we might be cured of our addiction, the NFL combine rolls around. We flood to the TV and our computers to watch the new crop of rookies run, jump, catch, and lift. We even get excited about seeing how they are built, which is really a strange thing when you think about it!

The major problem with the combine, other than our wives and others not understanding why we care about it since it "Isn't real football," is we often don't know what we learned. Obviously we know that faster and stronger is better, but how much does it matter? If someone runs a 4.3 second time in the 40 yard dash but then turns around and only jumps 30 inches in the vertical jump and runs a 4.5 second time in the 20 yard shuttle does that matter? The short answer is yes, but the better question is how much does it matter?

For the last few years I've been trying to help answer those questions by sifting through the combine data and trying to lend a little statistical assistance to the wide receiver and running back groups. In the past few years this has taken on several different formats, but I decided to restructure everything for this year. The goal was to help fix some of the issues I wasn't very happy with for the past few years in hopes of getting even more accurate reflections of the players to watch, and I feel much better about the results.

Now it's time to take a look at the running back class. Before I go any further, let me say that this type of metric isn't nearly as effective at analyzing running backs as it is at analyzing receivers. Running backs rely a lot of items it is very difficult to quantify. Characteristics such as balance, vision, patience, pad level and numerous other items. You can't get a read on those items from drills done by themselves in shorts. Nonetheless, the readers asked me to apply the same technique to the running back group just for one added piece of information and I'm happy to oblige them. Here's what I did:

Statistical Method

Since the goal of the combine for both NFL teams and fantasy owners alike is to try and figure out which of the incoming rookie class have what it takes to be at least a starter on an NFL team, it is important to compare them to that group. For that reason, I took the group of running backs who have been at least RB2s at some point over the last few seasons and used them as a baseline. I went back and pulled up all of their combine data and calculated the mean and standard deviation for each of the various drills.

Here's where it gets a little bit more technical.

THE ROOKIE DRAFT GUIDE
— POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS —

I then took the official combine times for the various drills for the 2014 rookie class and calculated the z-score for each of those drills using the mean and standard deviation from the baseline group. The z-score, for those not familiar with it, is calculated by taking the value (in this case the time or measurement of the 2014 rookie) and subtracting the mean of the baseline group from it. That number is then divided by the deviation of the baseline group. The z-score represents the number of standard deviations a value is away from the mean. In a data set which is normally distributed, which all of the combine drills are, 68% of all data should be between z-scores of -1 and 1, 95% of all data should be between z-scores of -2 and 2, and only 2.5% of all data greater than a z-score of 2 while an additional 2.5% of data is less than a z-score of -2.

What does all of these mean to those who doesn't really care much about statistics? It simply means the majority of all data, 68% to be exact, will be somewhere between a z-score of -1 and 1 for all of the drills. Scores between 1 and 2 or between -1 and -2 will be rarer but are not uncommon. Anything outside of that range is going to be quite rare though and either means they are severely deficient if they are on the negative end or elite if they are on the positive end.

Once the z-score was calculated for each of the drills, all of the z-scores for each individual were added together to get a composite score. Since a score of zero is the norm and the baseline group was fantasy RB2s or better, any rookie with a positive score is actually more physically gifted than the average of the baseline group. Anyone with a negative score is less physically gifted than the average of the baseline group.

Baseline Data

As mentioned previously, I used a group of veteran running backs (29 in total) who have been RB2s or better in fantasy leagues over the last few years. This list of veterans included the obvious elite rushers such as Adrian Peterson, Jamaal Charles, and LeSean McCoy. I also included recent breakout players such as Joique Bell, Eddie Lacy, LeVeon Bell and Zac Stacy. As I mentioned earlier, the running back metric isn't quite as good as the wide receiver one. While the wide receiver list was led by the players you would expect like Calvin Johnson, Julio Jones and Andre Johnson, the top running back was not Adrian Peterson. In fact he was ninth on the list, which is part of the problem. So much of what makes a great running back can't be measured, so keep that in mind. I looked at a total of eight different values for each of the veterans and each of the rookies, assuming they participated in the drill or measurement. Here are the eight I considered, why I considered them, and the mean score for the baseline group:

BMI (body mass index) – Instead of just using weight, which would largely be proportional to height, BMI is a more accurate measurement of how well built someone is, which is more important than just weight. For a running back, it often represents how durable they will be over their career. Often injured runners like Darren McFadden and CJ Spiller are two of the lowest on this list. Mean: 30.00

Speed Score - This metric has been growing in popularity over recent years and basically puts the speed of a player into context for their size. A 200 pound runner needs to be faster to succeed than a 235 pound runner. Some think of it as the force a runner has. Personally, if I could only useone metric to determine success of a running back, this would be it. Mean: 105.80

40 Yard Dash – The headline act of the combine, the 40 yard dash is all about straight line speed or long speed as it is sometimes called. For a running back, this helps give an idea of how many long runs they will make in the NFL and how often they will be caught from behind. Mean: 4.49 seconds

Vertical Jump – Measures lower body explosiveness of the runner. This is important when judging their ability to make cuts and explode out of them. Also measures lower body strength which can be a big deal in blitz pick-up. Mean: 34.40 inches

Broad Jump – Another measure of explosiveness but this one is more about the ability of the runner. Mean: 120.31 inches

20 Yard Shuttle – Measures the ability of the runner to accelerate and decelerate. Mean: 4.27 seconds

Three Cone Drill – This tracks the ability of the runner to keep their speed up while changing direction which is extremely important when turning the corner or running through the line. Mean 6.95 seconds

Bench Press - With running backs needing to power through tacklers as well as picking up defenders on a blitz, upper body strength is going to be important. Mean: 21.00 reps

Disclaimers

No statistical study would be complete without a few disclaimers!

1.) I've mentioned several other times that the score is not a complete picture of the player. This is even more true for the running back position. With key factors for success including items such as balance, vision, patience, timing and many others not being reflected in combine drills, there is a lot that is not reflected in this score.

2.) A high score is not a prediction of success in the NFL. It merely means that player has physical tools that compare favorably to NFL runners who have been at least fantasy RB2s. Likewise, a negative score does not predict failure in the NFL. It merely means that player's physical tools are slightly below the average of the baseline group. This is not an all encompassing rating nor is it meant to be a stand-alone predictor.

3.) The round a running back is drafted in does seem to be significant. The vast majority of running backs who were successful enough to be in the baseline group were drafted in the first three rounds of the NFL draft. In fact, 80% of them were. Where in those first three rounds seems to be less significant, but there is a very strong correlation between being a fantasy starter at the position and your NFL draft position. Don't be fooled too much by the whole late round running back spin and how easy it is to replace a running back line you sometimes hear. The stats don't back it up.

4.) All data came from the combine and the official measurements. Sometimes players just have a bad day at the combine and drastically improve at their pro day, but it isn't fair to just take the best score. In order to have a level playing field for all players only measurements from the combine were used.

5.) From a statistics standpoint, the biggest indicator of success in the NFL seems to be running backs selected in the first three rounds with a speed score of at least 105. Very few running backs who meet both qualifications fail in the NFL short of falling prey to injuries, which can't be predicted. That isn't a complete picture as there are some fourth round or later players who succeed and some successful early round picks do have speed scores below 105, but they are relatively rare. The majority of those exceptions (like Zac Stacy) scored well on this metric.

The Results

It is time for the moment you've all been waiting for, the results for the 2014 draft class. We'll cover the "good" and "great" scores today and the rest tomorrow. The numbers back up what a lot of us have been saying for weeks and months – this just isn't a great running back class. Most of the big names, the ones with college production and/or those qualities that we can't measure, are a little deficient in the areas we can measure. There are some rather intriguing sleepers to keep your eyes on though as potential under the radar guys, especially if they are drafted in the third round of the NFL draft.

Great (Scores above 2. Doug Martin, Reggie Bush, Chris Johnson, Zac Stacy range):

Jerick McKinnon (10.000)
Bishop Sankey (5.406)
Tre Mason (3.304)
Andre Williams (3.222)
Dri Archer (2.820)
Tyler Gaffney (2.114)

Much like with the wide receiver analysis, I'm going to address the biggest fantasy names in a follow up article. That means I won't be talking about players like Sankey, Mason and Williams in this article. I will be talking about players like Jerick McKinnon though!

Speaking of McKinnon, wow!

Prior to the combine, McKinnon wasn't on many radars. I know he wasn't on mine! He played at Georgia Southern and was originally a quarterback. His role then morphed into a read-option quarterback/wildcat running back. He doesn't have much experience playing as an NFL style running back, which means pass protection and playing in the passing game is going to be a significant issue in the NFL. He is a solidly built athlete at 5'9" and 209 pounds with one of the best combines ever for a running back. He was on top or at least top four on every drill, showing great speed, supreme strength, elite explosiveness, and surprising change of direction skills. He has the physical tools, but he is extremely raw and needs to learn how to be a traditional running back. He's an intriguing prospect, but patience will be required.

Archer is a favorite of many draft experts because of his 4.26 speed. That speed shot him pretty far up this metric as well, but it takes more than just speed to be a football player. The problem I have with Archer is based mostly around size. Chris Johnson ran his 4.24 second time in the 40 yard dash at 5'11" and nearly 200 pounds. Archer is only 5'8" and 173 pounds. He just doesn't have the size to be an NFL running back which is going to limit his fantasy value. I question his ability to hold up in pass protection at his size, which makes me wonder what kind of role he will have. He could be a Dexter McCluster type, but how many fantasy rosters is McCluster starting on? Archer will have more value to an NFL team than a fantasy team.

Tyler Gaffney is one of the more interesting surprises on this list. He is the next in the long line of very successful college running backs at Stanford like Toby Gerhart and Stepfan Taylor. To be honest, I probably discounted him a little bit because I'm starting to think it is the Stanford system that makes any running back look really good. In hindsight, that might not be fair because he's probably the best athlete of the bunch. He's definitely a better athlete than Taylor. He's slightly smaller than Gerhart, but the 5'11", 220 pound frame is nearly ideal for a running back. Not only does he have good size, but his speed and explosiveness are both above average for the baseline group. He lacks any kind of special characteristic though, which might limit him to a backup or committee style role. There is a slim chance he could turn into a Zac Stacy type of player, but Stacy has more wiggle. In the right situation he could be a solid third round pick in fantasy drafts as he is just outside of my top ten right now in the eleventh running back slot.

Good (Scores between 0 and 2. Adrian Peterson, Matt Forte, Jamaal Charles, Ray Rice range)

Lache Seastrunk (1.682)
Isaiah Crowell (0.942)
LaDarius Perkins (0.423)

The fact this tier is only three players, bringing the total number of running backs on the positive side of the metric to nine, says an awful lot about this running back class. With 33 running backs at the combine (not counting fullbacks), a good running back class would be in the middle teens. There just isn't much depth in this running back class, nor is there a very good top end. In fantasy leagues, this should be a very wide receiver heavy year because that's where the value is in 2014. If you really need a running back, you're best off trading your picks for a player already in the league in most cases. That isn't saying all of the running backs are terrible, just that the good ones will be few and far between, as well as having either limited upside or major question marks.

As far as this group is concerned, both Seastrunk and Crowell are in my top ten, so they will be discussed later. Perkins on the other hand is pretty far from it. A bit of a disappointment at Mississippi State this past year, Perkins saw his workload and playing time reduced a bit from 2012 as he shared the starting role. He is small, measuring in at 5'7" and 195 pounds, but is thickly built. He also has good speed, acceleration, and burst. The biggest credit to him might be his character and work ethic, both of which are extremely high. I highly doubt he is going to be anything more than a special teamer and a change of pace running back though. He has a well-rounded skill set, but none of it is going to get him noticed on an NFL team. He might be a quality part of an NFL team, especially for his locker room presence, but he isn't going to be on many fantasy rosters.

Okay (Scores between -2 and 0. Steven Ridley, Shonn Greene, LeVeon Bell range)

Terrance West (-0.226)
Tim Cornett (-0.475)
Henry Josey (-0.532)
Adam Muema (-0.566)
Charles Sims (-0.598)
Damien Williams (-0.790)
Marion Grice (-0.995)
George Atkinson (-1.253)
Lorenzo Taliaferro (-1.282)

There was some confusion with the wide receiver articles about exactly what a negative score means. It simply means that from a physical standpoint, the player isn't as physically gifted as the average weekly fantasy starter at the position. If you look at the veterans listed for this group, Ridley, Greene and Bell have all been solid fantasy assets and every week starters at some point in their career. However, they aren't the most physically gifted running backs in the game. Just because a player falls in this group doesn't mean they are bad. It just means they aren't a gifted athlete when compared to other starting running backs.

When looking at this group, a pair of big names finally appear with Sims and West. Both of them are in my top ten and will be talked about later. The scores for Grice and Muema are incomplete because they didn't participate in any drills, so I'm going to leave them out of the discussion as well and focus on the players who did participate in the combine.

Cornett had a pretty nice combine. He checked in at 6'0" and 209 pounds, which is a little lean for his height, but it isn't too bad. Running faster than a 4.5 is a pretty nice speed for his size, and he showed good burst in the drills as well. Unfortunately, very little of that seems to be true when he puts the pads on and plays in a game. He seems to have very little wiggle in the limited viewings I've made and he doesn't power through very many defenders. He'll be lucky to stay on an NFL roster for the whole season.

Josey is a player you want to see succeed after an absolutely terrible knee injury back in 2011. He destroyed pretty much every piece of tissue in his left knee (ACL, MCL, patellar tendon, and both menisci). Given the nature of the injury, it is amazing he even made it back, but it speaks to his character and work ethic. To do so and perform at a high level is even rarer. He's a smaller speed back, measuring in at 5'8" and 194 pounds with 4.43 wheels. His acceleration is what sets him apart, both at the combine and on tape, but durability has to be a question mark. His size is also going to limit him a bit, but he could be a player who surprises in the right system as a part of a committee.

Damien Williams is on the opposite end of the spectrum from Josey. Not only is Williams a bigger back at 5'11" and 222 pounds, but he also has major character red flags. He saw his playing time cut before he was suspended and eventually released from the team this year. He has great speed for his size and catches the ball very well, but he isn't as elusive as most of the good backs and didn't run with as much power as I expected given his size. With the red flags, he is going to be an end of roster player in the NFL and need to prove he can be trusted.

Atkinson is more of a workout warrior and return man than a true running back in my opinion. If he caught better, he might be better suited to a wide receiver role than running back. He has good speed for his size and has good explosiveness, but he doesn't have the cutting and elusiveness of an NFL running back. Look elsewhere.

When one of the fellow staffers first mentioned Taliaferro a few months ago, I honestly thought he was making up a random name. I assure you he is real and he's a very big running back. He's 6'0" and 229 pounds, but he plays like he's even bigger. He is pretty far from fast, but he's surprisingly agile given his size and he's a punishing runner. He is going to have a hard time turning the corner on outside runs in the NFL, but he could easily be the power part of a committee as he is a very effective inside runner. He also has a nice set of hands and has the strength to develop into a nice blocker. Keep an eye on his landing spot as he might be worthy of a late round flier on the right team.

The Rest (Scores under -2. Alfred Morris, Joique Bell, BenJarvis Green-Ellis range)

David Fluellen (-2.104)
Carlos Hyde (-3.125)
James White (-3.247)
Silas Redd (-3.292)
Devonta Freeman (-3.391)
Storm Johnson (-4.515)
Jeremy Hill (-5.007)
James Wilder (-5.434)
Kapri Bibbs (-5.955)
Ka'Deem Carey (-7.120)
Timothy Flanders (-7.413)
Alfred Blue (-8.093)
DeAnthony Thomas (-8.496)
Antonio Andrews (-10.932)
Jerome Smith (-11.850)

There are a lot of names here. The majority of the ones you haven't heard of before will be end of the draft or undrafted players in the NFL, so they won't belong on fantasy rosters. Let me focus on the others. Hyde, Hill and Carey are all in my top ten running backs and will be addressed in a follow up.

One of the more high profile runners in this group outside of my top ten is Freeman. A lot of people like him and he does have nice size at 5'8" and 206 pounds. Unfortunately, size is pretty much his only positive mark in this metric. For his size, he is slower, less agile and less explosive than the majority of the baseline group. When I watch Freeman on film, I see the same thing. He is a nice college back, but he isn't anything special. To me he has the look of a career backup who will struggle should he ever get the chance to step up. The best example of a career path would be Javon Ringer.

Johnson is another player you hear about from time to time as a potential third round sleeper on some people's fantasy draft boards. Based solely on his combine performance, Johnson is a little lean for his height and lacks some strength. He is also quite a bit slower than one would hope for, but he does have decent explosiveness. On film, Johnson shows good vision and is a nice one cut runner. He displays more power in his running than the combine would suggest, but is not a home run threat. He does a nice job of catching the ball but struggles in pass protection. I view him as more of a change of pace back than a starter, but there is a slim chance he could develop into a starter in a few years.

The third bigger name on this list who is outside of my top ten is Thomas. I've never been as high on Thomas or his former teammate LaMichael James as some others have been. I feel they are both similar in that they are incomplete players who happen to be great fits for the college game but don't have a role in the NFL. At 5'9" and only 174 pounds, he isn't faster enough or strong enough to play running back in the NFL. If you want a small burner for a running back, Archer is the much better choice.

These are my top ten running backs for the 2014 draft class, without knowing what teams they are going to be playing for in the fall. The draft can of course change things, but from a pure talent perspective, these are my top players. They are in order of their scores using my combine analysis metric.

Bishop Sankey (5.406)

Sankey isn't a player who is going to wow you with highlight reel runs or appear in a lot of sports center clips. However, he is a very solidly build 5'9", 209 pound prospect who does just about everything better than most. He might not be the fastest, the strongest or the quickest player in the class, but when you're near the top in almost all of those categories, you should have a productive NFL career.

His 4.49 second time in the 40 yard dash is dead on with the average of the baseline group, meaning he is good, but not great straight line speed. Where he really separates himself from the pack was with a class best 4.00 second time in the 20 yard shuttle, meaning he was able to get up to speed, stop, change direction and accelerate again faster than anyone else in the whole class. Combine that with significantly above average marks in strength, explosion and cutting and you have a back who could turn into an every week starter.

If you watch his games, you see a very complete running back. He can catch the ball, run inside and outside, break off 60 yard runs and move the pile at the goal line. Unlike a lot of the other running backs in this class, he played in a pro-style offense meaning his stats can actually be viewed as somewhat reliable. He's a career 5.43 yards per carry player with a little over 600 carries under his belt. He's the complete package. He might not be elite, but he's one of the best collection of skills in this draft at the running back position. He's also the rare running back in this class without injury or character red flags. I think it is a mistake if you're viewing him as a second round fantasy target. He should be one of the first running backs off the board at this point in time.

Tre Mason (3.304)

One of the most well-known running backs this past season in all of college football, Mason created quite the reputation when he rushed for 164 yards and one touchdown against Alabama, 304 yards and four scores against Missouri in the SEC championship game and 195 yards and one score on the ground in the National Championship game. Needless to say, he was a beast this year in college with 23 touchdowns and a 5.7 yard per carry average. Mason's time at the combine was equally impressive.

He measured in at a rather solid 207 pounds for his 5'8" height. It would be nice to see him about ten pounds heavier to help him take the beating at the NFL level, but it is still a very solid size for his shorter height. The 4.50 second time in the forty yard dash is right about where it should be while he checked in significantly above average on the jumps, showing off his explosiveness and burst.

During games he displayed good explosiveness and agility, making cuts in tight spaces and making defenders miss. He also showed enough power to run through bad tackles and displayed a violent, punishing running style. On the other side of the coin, he was used very infrequently in the passing game though and he also struggled with ball security from time to time. He held up very well with a massive workload the second half of 2013, but there are also some who question his durability at his current size. Personally, I think Mason has what it takes to be the majority part of a committee and to possibly grow into a three down back at some point in his career.

Andre Williams (3.222)

The 5'11", 230 pound running back out of Boston College looks every bit the part of an NFL running back. His 4.56 time in the 40 yard dash isn't ideal, but given his size it is pretty good. Fortunately, he showed a great first step and superior acceleration. He also performed extremely well in the jumps, showing off how explosive he actually is.

On the field, Williams was the leading rusher in all of Division I-A with 2177 yards on 355 carries. There are some who will point out a lack of quality competition, but you don't rush for over 2,000 yards without having talent. Williams is a powerful runner who can punish defenders. He has good vision and a great first step. Unfortunately he isn't the most elusive open field runner and I wonder how much he can create on his own. He didn't have a single reception in 2013, but he was better than most in pass protection. It isn't clear if his lack of receptions was purely scheme or because he lacks ability so they avoided the situation. He's definitely worthy of at least a two down role in the NFL, but he isn't a super dynamic runner.

Lache Seastrunk (1.682)

One of the more explosive running backs in college football over the last two years, Seastrunk managed over 7.5 yards per carry during his college career. He showed great explosiveness, very good speed, and agility that few possess. Part of that production was definitely aided by the system he played in though and it is fair to wonder how productive he can actually be in an NFL style running game. He also always seems to be seeking to homerun, leading to some poor choices from time to time. There are also questions about his ability in the passing game after he caught only eight passes in his entire career, though he did show the ability to make some catches at the combine. Some concerns about his character might also push him down draft boards a little bit.

Speaking of the combine, Seastrunk is a little lean at only 201 pounds and was lacking upper body strength. He was also a little slow for his size, running a 4.51 second time in the forty yard dash. However, his jumps were nothing short of elite for a running back. The lower body strength and explosiveness that he possesses explain why he was able to make some of the cuts he makes. It would have been nice to see him do the shuttle run and three cone drill to get a better idea of his burst and change of direction abilities, but he does have some elite characteristics. With that said, I do have enough question marks about his ability play in a pro style running game, ability to play in the passing game and character to drop him into my second tier of runners. He does have some intrigue, though.

Isaiah Crowell (0.942)

Speaking of character concerns and intrigue, Crowell definitely has them both. For those who don't know the story, Crowell was one of the top recruits in all of college football when he selected Georgia over almost every other division one program. That didn't last too long as he was arrested on felony weapon charges while rumors swirled of failed drug tests and allegations of him being immature and not a team player. He was forced down to the FCS ranks at Alabama State where he finished his college career. The good news for Crowell is he managed to keep himself out of trouble during his two years at Alabama State. I wonder if it was a product of having the spotlight removed from him or if he was truly humbled and has matured as a result of his previous issues.

At the combine, Crowell checked in at a very solid 224 pounds while measuring 5'11". His 4.57 second time in the forty yard dash was a little slower than expected and isn't ideal by any means, but it isn't terrible for his size. His 23 reps in the bench press showed good upper body strength while his jumps showed above average explosion in the lower body. He didn't compete in the shuttle or three cone drills which is unfortunate. It would have been nice to have those numbers to compare them to what he did in games.

Overall, there are a lot of questions about character off the field and his effort on the field. There are some signs during his games that he wasn't putting forth his full effort at all points in time. He went down way too easily at times while appearing to be a less than willing pass blocker. When he is trying you can catch glimpses of what made him one of the top recruits in the country. His vision and instincts are near elite. If he can mature, put in consistent effort on the field, and refine his game a bit he could be a steal of NFL and fantasy teams alike. Otherwise he could just be another Bryce Brown.

Terrance West (-0.226)

I've been one of West's greatest supporters for months now. The small school prospect is an underrated beast who is finally starting to get the credit he deserves. He's 225 pounds while standing 5'9" and looks even bigger. He easily has the size to play in the NFL. In terms of speed, the 4.54 second time in the 40 yard dash is adequate, especially if you factor in his size. His jumps were pretty close to the average of the baseline group meaning his explosiveness is on par with NFL starters, but isn't anything special.

Where West is special is when you watch him on the field. He led all of college football with a record setting 2,509 yards and 41 touchdowns in one season. For reference, that is several hundred more yards and more than double the touchdowns in Seastrunk's entire college career. Of course West did this in the FCS, but he utterly dominated the lower level of competition, which is exactly what you would want him to do. Working against him is the fact that the FCS isn't exactly known for producing starting running backs. In fact, the best they have done is backup level talents like Rashad Jennings, but it is important to remember West is the best there has ever been in the FCS.

What separates West from everyone else (aside from his size and power) is that short of Crowell, he probably has the best vision in this draft class. He has a feel for the holes before they open and has enough burst to power through them, knocking defenders out of the way. Where he falls a little short is in the open field. He isn't the most elusive back in space and isn't going to make too many defenders miss as he would prefer to just run them over. Against bigger defenders in the NFL it is fair to wonder if he'll be able to just run through people. I really like West as a middle round pick, but it is a huge jump from the FCS to the NFL.

Charles Sims (-0.598)

A lot of people have been comparing Sims to Matt Forte over the last few months. It is probably because it fits so well. Both are taller, lean running backs with upright running styles. They are both deceptively fast and excellent catchers. For Sims in particular, he is 6'0" and 214 pounds. Ideally he would be an inch or two shorter at that size. With 4.48 second wheels he has enough speed to play the position. He could stand to add a few pounds of muscle in his upper body to help in pass protection and the power running game, but he showed nice lower body explosiveness at the combine.

On the field, what separates Sims is he is easily the best pass catcher in this draft at the running back position. Quite honestly he runs better routes and is more of a natural hands catcher than several of the wide receivers in this draft as well, making him a potential PPR beast! When it comes to running with the ball, he shows enough elusiveness to make defenders miss and enough speed to run away from would be tacklers. That isn't to say he is perfect, because he isn't, but adding 5-10 pounds of muscle could solve a lot of his issues. He doesn't power through tackles the way you want and his pass blocking is more getting in the way than actually blocking. Overall, I really like Sims if he lands on the right team who uses their running backs to catch out of the backfield. He won't be quite as good as Forte, but he could be close.

Carlos Hyde (-3.125)

The 6'0", 232 pounder out of Ohio State is my top running back in this class. I know he isn't the flashiest and he didn't have a great combine, but I think he has the best chance to post RB1 numbers for the next few years out of this draft class. He's a beast on the field who destroys smaller defenders and tacklers who don't step up with sound fundamentals. He is surprisingly elusive in tight quarters and easily the best inside runner in this draft class. He has the ability to catch passes out of the backfield as well, making him a complete running back. With the size to be a true bell cow, he could easily be the best fantasy running back in this draft class.

In terms of the combine, I'm going to give Hyde a little bit of a pass after watching him pull up lame on his 40 yard dash run and not participating fully in the event. I believe he is more of a mid-4.5s runner than the 4.66 time he posted with the injury. He doesn't have breakaway speed nor is he the most elusive in the open field. That just isn't his game. He's a downhill runner who gets better late in the game and can absolutely take over.

There are definitely some questions that need to be answered about Hyde, though. The first are the character questions after he took some potential recruits to a campus bar and the group was accused of sexual assault. There have also been a few reports that question his dedication to the game and willingness to fully commit his lifestyle to being an elite athlete. If he can prove to NFL teams that there is nothing to worry about, he should be the first running back drafted in the NFL draft and should also be the first one taken in fantasy drafts in my opinion.

Jeremy Hill (-5.007)

A few months back, I was very high on Hill. I felt that he possessed an underrated skill set and could present a very nice value pick in the second round of fantasy drafts. Since that time I've slowly been souring a bit on him and the combine pushed me from the point of targeting him in the second round of drafts to most likely letting someone else take the risk.

Hill's combine was not very good. Notice the gap in the metric score between Hill and the next healthy running back on this list, Sims. Hill does have great size at 6'1" and 233 pounds, but his 4.66 second time in the forty was very underwhelming, even with his size in mind. He also showed poorly in the jumps, proving a lack of explosive power that I missed when I first watched him play games. His 20 bench press reps, while not terrible, were a little disappointing for someone of his size.

On the field, Hill looks like a powerful, downhill runner. He can break a few tackles and power through the holes that are there. However, he does seem to miss a few holes and isn't very elusive in the open field. He would be best in a one cut scheme where he just plants his foot and goes. Off the field is where the questions start to pile up. He has sexual misconduct convictions in his background as well as a battery charge. With active probation currently in effect, he is going to need to land on the right team in the right city to help him keep him out of trouble. He has some talent as a straight ahead runner and could be a solid early down back, but the number of question marks makes him quite the risk.

Ka'Deem Carey (-7.120)

In the interest of full disclosure, I've never been as high on Carey as a lot of other people were. I just didn't see the same electric talent as they did. Since the combine, I've dropped him even further down my list as a lot of the items I saw were confirmed by his performance. Carey has okay size at 5'9" and 207 pounds, but his 40 yard dash time just destroyed him. A 4.70 second time in the dash at his size is a disaster. Combine that with below average showings in every other drill and in my opinion you have a player who is lacking the physical tools required at the next level.

Arguably the most productive running back in college over the last two years, Carey leaves college with back to back 300+ carry, 1,880+ yards, and 19+ rushing touchdowns. On his career, he had 820 touches with 714 of them coming in the last two years. If you're someone who shied away from Montee Ball last year due to workload concerns, you need to look away from Carey as well. In terms of production, I'm of the camp that believes it had a lot to do with the system Arizona ran. The wide open, spread style created a lot of open lanes and didn't require him to make much happen or to even make many reads.

In the open field, Carey's lack of speed was pretty obvious. He also had only average elusiveness from what I've seen. I honestly don't see much, outside of his ability to catch passes that translates well to the NFL. When you toss in some off the field character questions you get a player who could slide down draft boards. I see Carey as a part of a committee, probably the minor part, and that's about it. But I'm lower on him than most.

How does all of this translate to my rankings of the top ten running backs in the 2014 class? Let's take a look. The first tier has my three running backs who are feel are ready to step in as three down backs in the NFL right away. The second tier are those who might need some time to make that transition out of a committee role or who have major question marks. Those in the third tier are similar to the second tier, but I feel they are less talented.

Tier 1
1) Carlos Hyde
2) Bishop Sankey
3) Charles Sims

Tier 2
4) Tre Mason
5) Lache Seastrunk
6) Isaiah Crowell
7) Terrance West

Tier 3
8) Andre Williams
9) Jeremy Hill
10) Ka'Deem Carey

ONE MAN'S ROOKIE RANKINGS WITH COMMENTARY
AUTHOR: STEVE WYREMSKI, POSTED 4/13

The Combine is behind us and the NFL Draft is less than a month away. Rookie drafts are starting (two in the books for me) and dynasty owners are hooked with a case of rookie fever. Rankings are still very fluid at this point, but it's clear this draft has a lot more depth than last year's.

Given Combine and pro day performances, here are how my rankings are shaking out. Keep in mind the rankings of certain players (i.e., Marqise Lee, Donte Moncrief, Jordan Matthews, etc.) do not align with the current thinking of the dynasty community. For receivers, their catch technique is huge. If a particular player traps the ball into his body and does not properly catch the ball away from his body with a fluid motion consistently, I will drop him in my rankings – that's a huge red flag for NFL potential in my eyes.

Note: Rankings are based PPR scoring (1 point across all positions); picks 5-15, in particular, are extremely fluid and will continue to be until the NFL draft concludes.

1.) Sammy Watkins, WR Clemson

Watkins is the bona-fide top rookie pick given his consistency throughout his college career. He's the safest pick given his college production, speed, size and athleticism. It's going to be difficult to bump him from this spot.

2.) Mike Evans, WR Texas A&M

Evans and Watkins are the clear top two picks headed into rookie drafts. Evans is a big physical receiver with a wide catch radius and soft hands who should excel at the next level.

3.) Brandin Cooks, WR Oregon State

Many will compare Cooks to Tavon Austin, but aside from being a speedy all-purpose weapon, Austin and Cooks are different players. Cooks is actually a bigger and much more polished receiver whose route running is more refined. Cooks is also 13 pounds heavier and two inches taller, so he is built more like Randall Cobb and Steve Smith than Austin.

Putting aside Cooks' size and polish, an undersold quality to his game is his ability to play both the inside and outside receiver positions. He's not receiving the same hype Austin did in 2013, but he should be. For me, he's the better prospect and I expect Cooks to have a better NFL career.

4.) Carlos Hyde, RB Ohio State

This is a big fella, but that's not all he has going for him. At 6'0 230 pounds, he flashes quality lateral agility, quick feet and fluidity on the field. Couple that with his underrated hands and he's a back who should be a top rookie pick if he lands in a decent situation. The one downside is his north/south style isn't terribly conducive to today's pass heavy game. Regardless, he should be the top back off the board in rookie drafts.

5.) Tre Mason, RB Auburn

The similarity with Marion Barber is uncanny. He runs with that same aggressive style. The question is whether he can hold up given the physical nature of his style and his size. He's on the smaller side at 5'8", 207 pounds, but he plays big. Mason exhibited nice explosion at the combine with his vertical and broad jump performances. I like him given his college production and potential to be an every down back, but durability is the big question given his style.

6.) Bishop Sankey, RB Washington

Sankey is a solid all around player as a dual threat on the ground and in the passing game (despite limited opportunities in college, he's shown soft hands). My main issue is he has bouts of indecisiveness and often dances behind the line of scrimmage. Because of that, I don't see him as a feature back. Despite that belief, given his speed and the fact his hands appear decent, I still believe he'll hold decent value in PPR leagues.

7.) Eric Ebron, TE North Carolina

Ebron is the perfect prospect given the success of similar receiving tight ends. He lacks in the blocking department, but as we've seen, the more important aspect is the ability to create mismatches up the seam – that's exactly what Ebron can do. He still needs to improve his blocking, but his receiving ability and athleticism make him a top option in rookie drafts.

8.) Davante Adams, WR Fresno State

Underrated. Adams reminds me of Hakeem Nicks with the ability to stay healthy and on the field. Track speed is the concern with Adams, but he has ideal size and the natural hands to succeed at the next level. His ability to snatch the ball is one of the more appealing aspects to his game.

9.) Odell Beckham, WR LSU

Beckham tested well at the Combine and has shown improvement in his ability to catch the ball away from his body. Early on, he didn't flash that, but he's really improved in that area over the course of his college career. He needs to continue to apply that consistently to succeed at the NFL level. Additionally, despite the concern of many about his size, his build is adequate for an NFL receiver. He also is coming from a pro-style offense which will help significantly. If you're looking for more details on Beckham, Cian Fahey does an excellent job of breaking Beckham's game down in this article. 110

10.) Charles Sims, RB West Virginia

Sims is receiving a lot of support from draft pundits as of late with the Matt Forte comparisons. He's quickly becoming a favorite 'sleeper' for many as a potential dual threat. Important in PPR leagues, Sims is a solid pass-catcher given that he posted over 200 receptions in his four-year college career at Houston and West Virginia. In short, he's an all-around back who comes with solid NFL potential.

11.) Lache Seastrunk, RB Baylor

Seastrunk has some serious lower body strength. Like Mason, he exhibited great explosive ability at the Combine. However, there are a few concerns. First, he really disappointed with his 40 time at the combine. In addition, hasn't been very involved in the passing game to date. His college offense also created huge running lanes in the spread offensive scheme. Will that translate? It's definitely a concern. He has the natural talent and ability to be a solid complementary back and potentially a lead back, but he needs to improve before becoming a consistent NFL contributor. That currently slates him as a mid-to-late first rounder.

12.) Allen Robinson, WR Penn State

Robinson isn't the game changer you'd expect from a receiver his size and his 4.60 combine performance will end up limiting his upside. His production at Penn State was phenomenal with over 1,000 yards in his past two seasons, but given the lack of speed, he appears to be destined to be a solid number two receiver with limited upside. He appears to be a relatively safe option.

13.) Kelvin Benjamin, WR Florida State

Benjamin is certainly an intriguing prospect with a high ceiling given his 6'5" 230 plus pound frame and enormous 84-inch wingspan. However, he's already 23, drops passes frequently and exhibits inconsistent play. If he can become more consistent and eliminate the drops, Benjamin could ultimately excel. While the physical attributes are there, though, he could very well bust. He's the perfect boom or bust candidate.

14.) Marqise Lee, WR USC

Lee's size (too slight), durability and hands are concerning. He makes some nice catches, but there are too many instances where he uses his body to catch the ball in traffic. He also has some "alligator arms" action happening. I don't view him as a player with stud potential and believe he will struggle at the NFL level given these factors.

15.) Isaiah Crowell, RB Alabama State

Crowell is a premium talent with an extracurricular background that may kill his stock. He started his college career at Georgia, played quite well, but was arrested on a weapons charge which ultimately led brought him to Alabama State. The positive thing for Crowell is that the charges were dropped and he doesn't have a criminal record, but it's still on the minds of NFL executives as many asked him about the 2012 arrest.

He's a top talent in this class and because of that, he's a risk-reward pick who could pay off handsomely. His draft round selection will be key as it will show just how much NFL teams buy Crowell's story on his off the field issues. If he's drafted early day three or sooner, he'll shoot up my rankings. If he goes undrafted given the off-the-field issues, he'll drop like a rock. On talent alone, he's up at the top of this class.

16.) Jace Amaro, TE Texas Tech

Another receiver-heavy tight end, Amaro should be used in the NFL much like he was used in college – split out wide in the slot. A 49ers scout reportedly told Amaro he resembles Vernon Davis. Stepping foot into the Combine and leading his fellow tight end participants in virtually every category certainly helps with that comparison. With over 100 receptions and 1,000 yards receiving in his final college season, Amaro projects as a joker tight end who is a perfect option for a second receiving tight end. He'd be a great addition to the Patriots, for example, to fill the Aaron Hernandez role and to complement Rob Gronkowski.

17. Jeremy Hill, RB LSU

Hill has character concerns (one sexual battery and two simple battery arrests) and he also ran pretty slow at the combine with a 4.66 40-time. At a similar size, Andre Williams ran a full tenth of a second faster (4.56). The good thing for Hill is he plays faster on the field than the track. Hill runs angry, but isn't terribly elusive which may relegate him to a hammer/closer type role in the NFL.

18. Terrance West, RB Towson

West comes with a nice backstory having spent a year out of football in search of a college football program after being raised in a rough Baltimore city. He continues to beat the odds and now appears to be NFL bound. This surfacing of West's talent isn't out of the blue, though. He was recruited by both Clemson and Maryland, but couldn't get eligible to play at that level. Because of that, he landed at Towson and tore up the lower level competition to the tune of 2,500 plus yards and 42 touchdowns…last season. He posted 4,800 plus yards rushing and 84 touchdowns in his three-year career at Towson. Some may shrug that off given the competition, but keep in mind this kid put up 22 for 79 yards in a competitive game with LSU. Imagine if he hand a comparable power-house offensive line.

West possesses prototypical running back size at 5'9", 225 pounds, makes quick decisive cuts at the line of scrimmage and runs with power. He remains an underrated dynasty option given the overemphasis of his college competition. My belief is that West will come of the board in the NFL draft earlier than expected given his better than anticipated 40 time at the Combine and his natural on-field abilities.

19. Martavis Bryant, WR Clemson

Bryant doesn't have a tremendous amount of production from his time at Clemson, but his measurables are compelling. Many compare him to Stephen Hill given the athleticism and potential, but he catches a heck of a lot better than Hill ever did. That's not to say he doesn't struggle with drops, but he's much better than Hill was in this aspect of their game. He's a boom-bust candidate and worth a relatively high pick given his potential. He does carry the 'better in shorts than pads' concern – so we need to be aware of that as we head into the draft.

20. Austin Seferian-Jenkins, TE Washington

Once believed to be the slam-dunk top tight end prospect, expectations have since tempered. ASJ has the basketball background many NFL teams cover, but he hasn't progressed as much as expected. He still needs to play more consistently and is not a great blocking tight end. That said, he possesses the unique size/speed combo many NFL teams are currently targeting.

21.) Bruce Ellington, WR South Carolina

Prior to the combine, Ellington wasn't really on my radar. His combine performance had me jump back to watch some of his college games. There's no question he's athletic, but he's definitely on the shorter side. At 5'9", 197 pounds, he possesses a very similar build to Brandin Cooks and Randall Cobb. He's another receiver who exhibits solid pass catching ability with the tendency to catch with his hands away from his body. Size and route running ability continue to be the points posed against Ellington. Given the success of Cobb and other smaller compact receivers, that shouldn't be a big concern.

As far as the route running ability, that's a refined craft that players work on throughout their career. Now that Ellington is focusing on football alone and has ditched the basketball dream, you would expect his route running to improve. He's another receiver who is currently underrated.

22.) Blake Bortles, QB Central Florida

Bortles has the prototypical size, but is still raw. He still needs some work on his mechanics. With that said, he arguably has the highest ceiling of any quarterback in this draft. Patience will be needed though.

23.) Donte Moncrief, WR Mississippi

Moncrief is a physical freak with terrific measurables. He excelled at the Combine, but his hands are a big question mark. Typically, I'd be all over a player with these measurables, but he either uses his body too much to catch or exhibits inconsistent hands and poor form. Watch his combine workout and you'll view this awkward form for yourself. The upside is there with Moncrief, but the hype surrounding his physical attributes reminds me of Stephen Hill. He continues to tumble down my rankings the more I watch his college play.

24.) Derek Carr, QB Fresno State

Carr possesses a big arm that should hopefully serve him better than his brother. His experience in a pro style offense in one of his seasons at Fresno State helps his cause, as does his strong natural arm. He's a very safe pick.

25.) Teddy Bridgewater, QB Louisville

Big time concerns continue to surface for Bridgewater. Most recently, his pro day was a "disaster." It sounds like the former 'sure thing' at the NFL level is taking a value nose dive. The question is whether teams are pushing this as a smokescreen. Time will tell, but his hype is probably bigger than his ultimate production will be.

26.) Johnny Manziel, QB Texas A&M

Manziel is a polarizing prospect. His style fits the current trend of dual-threat quarterbacks, but he does have some shortcomings. Specifically, he needs to improve as a pocket passer. He was able to get away with inconsistencies as a traditional passer in college, but he may not be as fortunate in the pros. We saw that with Colin Kaepernick this past season where defenses forced him to pass and locked up his running lanes. The same is going to be done with Manziel and if he can't overcome that and improve in the pocket, he may not live up to the already lofty expectations.

27.) Cody Latimer, WR Indiana

Latimer is an underrated receiver. His physical ability, hands and measurables are up there with some of the better receivers in this draft class. He proved that at his pro day late last month. However, there isn't much dynasty buzz surrounding Latimer. Expect him to be a popular sleeper come rookie draft time.

28.) Jordan Matthews, WR Vanderbilt

Matthews makes some tough catches, but I view him as a mediocre prospect. He has average size (i.e., not ideal / not small and compact) and he's not terribly athletic. I don't expect him to fizzle, but I also don't expect him to be a top reliable fantasy receiver long-term. He's not a player I'll be targeting in rookie drafts as I view him as a better NFL receiver than fantasy option.

29.) Troy Niklas, TE Notre Dame

Niklas has only played tight end for two years, but he's excelled in that short time. He's not as athletic or a consistent receiver compared to Amaro and Ebron, but he's more of a true tight end than the others. He's much more physical and willing to engage with a defensive lineman, though, so he could see a bit of time inline as compared to the other two prospects. He still has room to improve given the limited experience at the position which makes him an intriguing prospect.

30.) Andre Williams, RB Boston College

Another ground and pound type runner, Williams is about the same size as Hyde and Hill. However, he doesn't show the same lateral agility and isn't as fluid a runner as Hyde. He's certainly a powerful back, but may be better suited for non-PPR leagues as he has only a handful of receptions in his career. Williams, if he lands in a favorable spot a la-LeVeon Bell, could end up shooting up draft boards, though.

31.) Jerick McKinnon, RB Georgia Southern

McKinnon played against lower lever competition, but he possesses many of the natural skills you look for in a running back. He doesn't have ideal size, but the rest is there. His combine measurables were off the charts and his college production supports those numbers. He's not being drafted too high yet and represents a great later round pick with tremendous upside.

32.) Devonta Freeman, RB Florida State

Speed is the main concern with Freeman. That's no small item, but otherwise, Freeman possesses many of the skills you look for in a running back – size (i.e., bulk), lateral agility, quick burst, and solid hands.

33.) Shaq Evans, WR UCLA

His measurables aren't dazzling, but Evans is one of my favorite sleepers who can be acquired very cheaply. He has nice size at 6'1", 213 pounds and appears to play faster than his 40 time. His college production leaves much to be desired and he is often inconsistent, which are big knocks to his prospects. If he can get his concentration issues under control, he has a shot to produce at the next level.

34.) Jeff Janis, WR Saginaw Valley State

A combine hero with solid small school production, Janis is another popular sleeper. The concern is that Janis looks good in shorts, but is tentative on the field. You could do worse with your sleeper pick.

35.) Paul Richardson, WR Colorado

Richardson is fast, but he's small. Despite the speed, with his slim stature he's likely to have issues creating separation at the NFL level against some of the more physical corners. I view his size and inconsistency catching the football as factors that will limit him to a reserve role.

36.) Jarvis Landry, WR LSU

Average. There isn't much more to Landry. He has decent size, but his combine 40-time of 4.77 kills his prospects for me. Overweighting of the 40-yard dash? Maybe, but despite his college production, he's not a special player to begin with.

37.) Ka'Deem Carey, RB Arizona

A popular developmental pick last summer, Carey's speed is a big concern. Scouts have been talking about his speed deficiency since February and continue to talk about it. That and the fact the scheme he comes from hasn't produced many successful running backs historically leads him to the bottom of these rankings. I'll be avoiding him.

BIG TEN PROSPECTS: ALLEN ROBINSON AND JARED ABBREDERIS
AUTHOR: DAN MEYLOR, POSTED 1/15

I'm a Big Ten football fan. Actually, I'm a Wisconsin fan, as many of you know from my article on Montee Ball back in April. So I guess technically I can't be a fan of the entire conference, but I can be a Big Ten follower.

Because I'm only interested in the Big Ten, I really don't watch the other major college conferences. When the Badgers aren't on, I'd much rather watch Iowa take on Northwestern than any ranked matchup from the SEC, ACC, Big 12, PAC-12 or any other conference in the country. In fact, if my memory (and my notes from the season) serve me right, of all the games I watched this year, only a couple didn't feature a Big Ten school.

There are negatives to being so committed to watching one conference. The biggest being that when it comes to scouting all the draft eligible college football players as a whole, I'm way behind at this point in the process and certainly not qualified to give an informed opinion on most of them.

The one positive is that I'm more than qualified to share my thoughts about the players making the leap to the pros from my favorite conference. Over the next couple weeks I'll be doing just that. To start off, let's cover a couple wide receivers.

Allen Robinson, WR PSU

I'll admit, before last season I'd never heard of Robinson. In my defense, he caught only three passes for 29 yards as a true freshman. Then, he burst onto the scene in 2012, catching 77 passes for 1,018 yards and 11 touchdowns as a sophomore. He capped off the season by winning the Big Ten Richter-Howard Receiver-of-the-year award and being named first team All-Big Ten.

In 2013, he took things to another level. He hauled in 97 passes for 1,432 yards and six touchdowns. In the 12 games the Nittany Lions played, he caught at least seven passes in all but two and had eight 100-yard games (and another with 98 receiving yards.) Once again, he won the Richter-Howard Receiver-of-the-year award but didn't stop at being named All-Big Ten. He earned seven All-American honors as a junior including being named to the first team by CBSSports.com and the Sporting News and was also named as a semifinalist for the 2013 Biletnikoff Award.

As a pro prospect, Robinson is my favorite the Big Ten has to offer. He was successful despite defenses tirelessly trying to stop him in 2013. Constantly double teamed, he always drew the best corner his opponent had to offer, yet he always came through despite the attention he garnered.

Another area Robinson excels in is in the screen game. He was used often on bubble screens and was excellent after the catch – plays that reminded me on more than one occasion of Demaryius Thomas after catching the wide receiver screen from Peyton Manning. His longest reception of the season was a 65-yard quick pass in the right flat against Ohio State, where he immediately reversed field against the over-pursuing defense, and weaved through tacklers for a score.

Robinson was often used as a slot receiver in college, but has the size (6'3, 210 pounds) to be a consistent playmaker on the outside at the next level. He's a good route runner, handles himself well around the sideline and has proven to be a great target around the goal line.

If there's a weakness in Robinson's game, it's probably his straight line speed. Many expect him to run the 40-yard dash in 4.5 to 4.6 seconds at the combine. While he's not a burner, he's more than fast enough to become a number one NFL wideout. Another issue that has been brought up by some is ball security. I only saw him fumble once (against Michigan) and I still think he was down before the ball came out.

Some also question his low touchdown total this year. Those who do, obviously didn't see the Nittany Lions play much in 2013. He was constantly underthrown on deep routes, forcing him to slow down to make the catch and giving defenders time to make up ground and make the tackle. If he's proven anything to me over the last two seasons, it's that he can be a playmaker in the red zone. He simply didn't play with a consistent enough quarterback to take advantage of all his skills this past season.

The more I watch Robinson, (who's easily my favorite dynasty prospect out of the Big Ten this year), the more I like him. He should be picked in the first round of the NFL draft, as well as dynasty drafts, and develop into a very good number one receiver for an NFL team and potentially a WR1 for dynasty owners.

2013 Games watched: Syracuse, Michigan, @ Ohio State, Illinois, @ Wisconsin

Jared Abbrederis, WR WISC

If you haven't seen Abbrederis play, you should. He's pretty good.

Abbrederis originally arrived in Madison as a walk-on. He was a scout team quarterback his first year on campus but saw some playing time as a redshirt freshman. He caught 20 passes for 289 yards and three touchdowns in 2010. He then broke out when Russell Wilson arrived at Wisconsin in 2011. Abbrederis led the team in receiving yards with 933 on 55 catches. He also hauled in eight touchdowns, all while finishing third in the country, averaging 15.8 yards per punt return as a redshirt sophomore. Over the next two seasons, Abbrederis was the main receiving threat for the Badgers, catching 127 passes for 1,918 yards and 12 touchdowns. Along with Robinson, he was named as a first-team All-Big Ten wide receiver at the end of both seasons. In his final season at Wisconsin, Abbrederis was the only wide receiver the Badgers could count on. He caught 78 passes as a senior. The rest of the wide outs on the roster combined for just 30 receptions. Although he benefited from a very strong running game, he always faced the oppositions best cover man and consistently made plays despite the defense keying on him.

Abbrederis' biggest quality is his route running and technique. He's excellent out of his breaks, particularly when running out-routes and when coming back to the quarterback, and constantly finds the open spot in zone coverage. Most receivers get open with quick feet and by wasting very little motion in their hips at the top of routes, which Abbrederis also does well, but he also uses a convincing head fake when making his breaks, helping him get open on a consistent basis.

The Badgers' coaching staff moved Abbrederis around the formation often in an attempt to get him matched up against different defenders. He played in the slot, as well as out wide, but excelled when working outside the numbers. Many have suggested that he'll be forced to play inside at the next level due to his quick feet, solid route running and relatively small stature, but that shouldn't be the case.

Although many remember him for the big plays he made in the play-action game, much of Abbrederis' damage was done after the catch in college, often being called upon to run drag and crossing routes. He's not the biggest receiver (he's listed at 6'2", 190 pounds), but consistently brakes tackles by defensive backs. He also has a nose for the first down marker, rarely running a route short of the sticks.

At the end of the day, Abbrederis isn't going to wow anybody with his size, speed or ability to jump over defenders like Calvin Johnson. He's going to be consistent in every facet of the game, give 100% at all times and always make the smart play.

Overall, I think Abbrederis has a bright future in the NFL. Some have questioned whether he'll be drafted, but I have an extremely hard time believing that after watching him for four seasons. I believe he should be selected between round three and five and will likely start his career as a third or fourth NFL wide receiver. Dynasty owners in deep enough leagues to stash players for a couple years should keep a close eye on where he ends up. He's a smart player with very reliable hands that works hard and wants to be a starting NFL wide receiver. His upside is most likely as a number two NFL wide out, but I wouldn't bet against him to do just that.

2013 Games watched: All of them

BIG TEN PROSPECTS: CARLOS HYDE AND C.J. FIEDOROWICZ
AUTHOR: DAN MEYLOR, POSTED 2/1

Earlier, I highlighted two of the best wide receivers in the Big Ten, Allen Robinson and Jared Abbrederis. I'll now cover two more prospects from my favorite conference. One of which everybody knows about, and another who may be flying under the radar. Let's get right to it.

Carlos Hyde, RB Ohio State

hydeIf somebody were to ask me what I thought about Carlos Hyde a year ago, I wouldn't have given a very favorable opinion of him. Although he rushed for 970 yards (5.2 YPC) and 16 touchdowns as a junior, he looked slow and lazy, and reminded me so much of former Iowa tailback Shonn Greene that I hardly considered him to be an NFL prospect at all.

Over the off-season, Hyde didn't do much to change my opinion of him. He was arrested due to an incident with a woman in a bar. Although he was never prosecuted in the case, Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer suspended Hyde for the first three games of the 2013 season.

After serving his suspension, Hyde was used sparingly in the Buckeyes' 76-0 beat-down of Florida A&M. He handled the ball only six times in the game. Then Ohio State entered Big Ten play with a battle against Wisconsin. He carried the ball 17 times for 85 yards and didn't look overly impressive throughout the game. Just like his play as a junior, he only got what was blocked and didn't look a guy that liked contact. He was stopped twice on short yardage opportunities. Once on fourth and one and the other at the goal line.

After that game, I was confident in my outlook of Hyde. Starting a week later on a rain-soaked field at Northwestern, that opinion started to change ever so slightly.

He was a bruising runner that night against the Wildcats, always lowering his head to get extra yardage. Most impressively, he was quick and decisive. I'd never seen him attack the line of scrimmage like he did on that soggy field. He carried the ball 26 times for 168 yards and three touchdowns while adding a career high four receptions for 38 yards. It was the best overall game I'd seen Hyde play and the first of nine straight 100-yard games he had to finish his career in Columbus.

On the season, he tallied 208 carries for 1,521 yards (7.3 YPC) and 15 touchdowns and added 16 receptions for 147 yards and three more scores in 11 games. Rather impressive numbers when you consider that he did it while facing some of the toughest competition the country has to offer against the run. The Buckeyes faced five teams ranked in the top-36 in the nation in rushing defense over the final ten games of the season and two of those teams finished in the top-five (Michigan St. and Wisconsin).

Over that stretch, Hyde showed the powering style I liked so much in the game against Northwestern relatively often, but reverted to his old ways as a soft ball carrier far too frequently for my liking, hesitating in the backfield and going down on first contact way too much.

I'm extremely conflicted when trying to grasp Hyde's potential as an NFL runner. Even though he's listed at 6 feet tall and 240 pounds, he doesn't use his size to his advantage and isn't the attacking, downhill runner you'd like to see when looking at a tailback of his stature.

In Hyde's defense, most of his carries came out of the read-option, which doesn't give the running back an opportunity to get his momentum going towards the line of scrimmage. He was often asked to carry the ball while going east and west and that didn't always allow him to get a head of steam and run behind his pads.

What may be the most maddening part of Hyde's game may be the inconsistency he'd often demonstrate, particularly with his vision. It wouldn't be uncommon for him to show hesitation when trying to choose a running lane, ricochet off a blocker and be taken down by an arm tackle on one play. Then, on the very next snap he'd display brilliant anticipation, quickly shift his feet and blast through a hole, falling forward with excellent leg drive for a first down.

With all that said, Hyde improved dramatically between his junior and senior seasons. He displayed excellent agility and a quick burst inside the tackles, something he didn't demonstrate nearly as often in 2012. He has extremely quick feet which allows him to jump-cut into a hole with ease. For his size, he's nimble. He showed the ability to cut sharply, making defenders miss in the open field.

The most impressive demonstration I saw of his open field ability came against Michigan on a third quarter carry. He took a read-option handoff off left tackle where the safety had him lined up. He stepped towards the middle of the field and put his right foot in the ground, suddenly bursting down the left sideline for 30-plus yards. The tackler didn't even touch him.

Many have questioned his blocking and how that will affect his ability to get on the field at the next level but I see him as an above average pass blocker and he has the size to get even better in the NFL. Many have also been critical of his pass catching ability but I didn't see him drop a pass or make a mistake in the passing game in the games I watched. In my opinion, he simply wasn't asked to contribute enough out of the backfield to judge his prowess in that area.

Overall, Hyde is physically gifted. He has the body of, and has shown at times that he can be a bruising, attacking tailback, yet he has the athleticism and footwork of a back much smaller than he is. If he continues to improve, as he did as a senior, and becomes more consistent in his play, he has the potential to become an effective every down ball carrier at the next level.

Playing in the zone-read system with Braxton Miller over the last couple seasons hasn't been the ideal fit for Hyde. He belongs in a power running offense where he's primarily used as a downhill runner inside the tackles.

If he ends up in such a situation and showcases himself well over the next couple months, dynasty owners will be moving him up their draft boards, possibly as high as the middle of the first round. Personally, I see his fantasy upside as an RB2. And that's just not worth a first round pick in rookie drafts.

2013 games watched: Wisconsin, @ Northwestern, Iowa, Penn State, @ Michigan, Michigan State (Big Ten Title Game), Clemson (Orange Bowl)

C.J. Fiedorowicz, TE Iowa

If you're looking for the next Jimmy Graham or Rob Gronkowski, keep looking. C.J. Fiedorowicz isn't in the mold of the downfield threats we've become accustomed to seeing over the last handful of seasons. That's not to say he can't be an effective NFL tight end and contribute to fantasy teams, however.

I became a fan of Fiedorowicz during his junior season at Iowa in a game at Michigan towards the end of the year. He caught eight passes that afternoon for 99 yards and dominated as a run blocker. He ran excellent routes and used his big frame very well to keep defenders away from the football and make space to make the catch. Mostly he was used on short out routes and crossing patterns that day, but his good hands and dominating blocking were quite eye popping.

After the 2012 season ended, Fiedorowicz considered entering the 2013 NFL draft. Coming off a 45 reception season where he racked up 433 yards but only one touchdown, he decided instead to return to Iowa for his senior year.

With the lack of playmakers in the Iowa offense entering the season, I thought Fiedorowicz would be a featured part of the Hawkeyes' offensive game plan on a weekly basis but that was hardly the case. When the season kicked off, the Iowa coaching staff seemed hell bent on using him as an extension of the offensive line. Because he's such a dominant blocker, they didn't ask him to use his receiving skills very often during the first five games of the 2013 season. Over that span, he caught only eight passes for 77 yards and one touchdown.

Then he started getting opportunities in the red zone. He caught touchdowns in five of the next seven games. Overall, he tallied only 30 receptions for 299 yards as a senior, but he did haul in six touchdowns.

Dynasty owners shouldn't be fooled by the relatively meager numbers Fiedorowicz put up in 2013. He may as well have put on a jersey with a number in the sixties for much of the season as he was used as a blocking tight end far too often. When he was used in the passing game it was in third down situations, which he excelled in, and around the goal line where he converted nearly every time I saw him called upon.

When you see Fiedorowicz's physical attributes, it's easy to see why Kirk Ferentz and the rest of the Iowa coaching staff saw him as an asset in the running game and even as a pass blocker. He's listed at 6'7, 265 pounds and is incredibly physical at the line of scrimmage. He's a mauling blocker at the point of attack and is relentless down the field in the running game, an attribute that NFL coaches will love and is sure to help him get on the field early in his career.

Because of his size, most wouldn't expect Fiedorowicz to show much athleticism, but that's not necessarily the case. Nobody will ever accuse him of having great burst, but he has long strides and moves very fluently after the catch and when in space. Make no mistake about it, he's not going to make many defenders miss in the open field but he has incredible balance for a player of his size and the power to go through tackles.

While in college, Fiedorowicz was primarily used on short to intermediate routes. He was often asked to run five to ten-yard outs and curl routes. Due to his lack a quickness, he didn't get a lot of separation but he used jukes and head fakes well at the top of his routes to get open. Once the ball was in the air, he displayed an innate ability to shield off defenders with his large body to make the catch. Most importantly, he has soft hands and a large catch radius, which will help him as a red zone threat on Sundays.

Fiedorowicz is one of my favorite players in the Big Ten. I have very little doubt he'll be a starting tight end in the NFL. Due to his blocking abilities and limitations stretching a defense, I could see him being a better NFL tight end than fantasy tight end, but he should absolutely be on dynasty owners' radar going into rookie drafts, especially those in deep or tight end premium leagues. Overall I think he has the upside equal to that of Heath Miller and that would be an excellent return late in rookie drafts.

2013 games watched: @ Michigan State, @ Ohio State, Wisconsin, Michigan, LSU (Outback Bowl)

BIG TEN PROSPECTS: JEREMY GALLON, JACOB PEDERSEN AND BRIAN WOZNIAK
AUTHOR: DAN MEYLOR, POSTED 2/3

Over the last couple articles, we've covered some of the best prospects coming out of the Big Ten this year including Allen Robinson and Jared Abbrederis as well as Carlos Hyde and C.J. Fiedorowicz, but there's still some talent worth noting. Let's get started.

Jeremy Gallon, WR MICH

There are many interesting prospects coming out of the Big Ten this year. Perhaps none are more thought-provoking from a fantasy perspective than Jeremy Gallon, who's relatively unknown to many that don't follow the conference closely. That may change as we get closer to the draft however.

As a fifth-year senior, Gallon caught 89 passes on his way to setting the school's all-time record for receiving yards in a season with 1,373. He also hauled in nine touchdowns on the year. It's rare that a wide-out can fly under the radar after putting up numbers like Gallon did in 2013, especially when that player has shined so brightly in big games.

In the Wolverines' first test of the season against the 14th rated Fighting Irish, Gallon set career highs with three touchdown catches and 184 receiving yards on eight receptions. His first touchdown of the evening was one of the most impressive catch-and-runs I saw all year. Running a simple 15-yard in route against Notre Dame's zone defense, he found the opening in the coverage, caught the pass, headed up field and took on three defenders, spinning away from all of them and gliding into the end zone.

Another example of Gallon's ability to come through in the spotlight came in his final game in the Big House against the third ranked Buckeyes. He caught nine passes for 175 yards and a beautiful touchdown on a jump ball over a much taller defender, C.J. Barnett. Although the pass was thrown behind him, he adjusted to it in the air very well and made the catch.

In his last collegiate game, the Buffalo Wild Wings Bowl against Kansas State, he came through once again. Even though the Wolverines struggled to get the ball downfield without starting quarterback Devin Gardner, Gallon was consistently open underneath. He played the part of a possession receiver out of the slot for much of the evening, catching nine passes for 89 yards. Perhaps most impressively, he threw a two point conversion late in the game on an end-around.

What's most remarkable about Gallon's season may be that none of the games mentioned here were his best of the season. In the middle of October against Indiana, he had the type of day that receivers can only dream about. He tallied 14 catches for a Big Ten single game record 369 yards and two touchdowns in Michigan's 63-47 win against the Hoosiers. Had it not been for the Wolverines' offense suddenly finding their running game late in the contest, he may have broken Troy Edwards' NCAA record for receiving yards in game (405).

The reason Gallon hasn't received the attention from draft pundits that other receivers who have put up similar numbers is most likely due to his size. He stands 5'8 and is listed at 184 pounds on the Wolverines' official website.

Gallon will have to make his living in the slot at the next level. Something he did regularly in college with success. Although many will be concerned about his size, or lack thereof, he plays much bigger than he looks. He seems to be fearless going across the middle and is always willing to leave his feet to make leaping catches. He also has shown the ability to adjust to the ball in the air on back-shoulder throws or arrant passes.

The most important thing about Gallon's game as he prepares to take on the role of a slot receiver in the NFL is that he runs excellent routes, especially on double moves and has a knack for finding the holes in zone defenses. Once he gets the ball in his hands he's incredibly effective, often looking like a punt returner while weaving through the defense. He's very quick and shifty, but doesn't lose speed while making moves in the open field. I also appreciate how he conducts himself off the field. He's humble, always gi ving credit to his teammates after his biggest games.

So if he's as talented as all of this indicates, you may be asking yourself why he isn't expected to be drafted on the first two days of the NFL draft. After all, Tavon Austin and Brandin Cooks both compare closely in size to Gallon. Austin was picked eighth overall last year and Cooks, from Oregon State, is expected to be drafted much earlier than Gallon this year.

It's simple, while he's incredibly quick, Gallon just isn't fast enough. Austin ran a 4.34 second 40-yard dash at the combine last year and Cooks is rumored to be shooting for a 4.4 second time. Gallon is expected to run it in the 4.5 second range.

Some have wondered if Gallon could be used in a similar role to that of Randall Cobb for the Packers, but he hasn't shown the ability to run the ball out of the backfield in college. He carried 16 times for 102 yards (6.4 YPC) in four seasons at Michigan, but most of them came on end-around and reverse plays.

Gallon also doesn't qualify as the returner that Cobb or many of the other receivers of his build do, averaging 20.6 yards per return as a part-time kick returner while in college and just 7.1 yards as a punt returner. As he was asked to take a bigger role on offense, he wasn't relied upon as much on special teams and didn't get as many opportunities. As I said earlier, he looks like a natural returner with the ball in his hands. I believe he could be a quality return man at the next level which would help him carve out a role early in his career.

Overall, Gallon isn't the perfect draft prospect but he absolutely doesn't get the credit he deserves. Most of that is due to his size but part may be due to him being relatively old for a player about to become a rookie - he just turned 24.

Although he'll go undrafted in most rookie drafts, dynasty owners in deep leagues with extensive rosters and large starting lineups should file Gallon's name away. While he'll most likely never be more than a team's second best receiving option, he'll become a dependable, chain-moving slot receiver at the next level much like Lance Moore, who he reminds me of constantly. For the price of an undrafted rookie free agent in dynasty leagues, he'll be well worth it.

2013 games watched: Notre Dame, @ Penn State, Indiana (2nd half), @ Iowa, Ohio State, Kansas State (Buffalo Wild Wings Bowl)

Jacob Pedersen, TE WISC

Wisconsin is renowned for producing NFL caliber offensive lineman and to a lesser extent, tailbacks. But another spot in the legue where you'll find quality former Badgers is at the tight end position. Owen Daniels, Lance Kendricks and Garrett Graham have all had success in recent years after leaving Madison. Jacob Pedersen is hoping to follow in those footsteps.

Of the trio of former Badgers mentioned, Pedersen compares closest to Daniels, who was drafted in the fourth round of the 2006 NFL draft by the Texans. Much like the Houston starter, Pedersen is a reliable pass catcher who knows how to get open, especially in zone coverage. He has good hands and although he isn't as athletic as Kendricks or Graham, he can occasionally stretch a defense on seam routes like he did on a 44-yard touchdown reception against Iowa this year.

As far as blocking goes, Pedersen is above average. Mostly, the Badgers used him as the motion tight end (or H-back) that would often lead through the hole on counters or try to set the edge on perimeter runs. He's listed as 6'5 and 240 pounds and uses his size well, always extending his arms to drive back defenders. Much better at the second level as a run blocker, he's not as effective when asked to go head-to-head with a defensive end on the line of scrimmage.

Over the past two seasons, Pedersen has been limited by the inconsistent quarterback play by Badgers signal callers, specifically sophomore Joel Stave who often missed open receivers and threw to his first read far too often. In 2013, he was second on the team behind Abbrederis with 39 receptions for 551 yards and three touchdowns despite missing two games due to injury. Those numbers would look much better had he played in an offense with the ability to get the ball downfield more, as evidenced by the eight touchdowns he caught as a sophomore with Russell Wilson leading the offense.

As a pro prospect, Pedersen is never going to be confused with Jimmy Graham or Rob Gronkowski. He's not especially athletic and will never be accused of being a dominant blocker. While he's not great at anything, he's seems to be good at everything. Dynasty owners should see his upside equal to Daniels and expect him to have a long, relatively successful career with low-end TE1 potential in 12 and 14 team leagues. He's another prospect that's unlikely to be drafted in most rookie drafts, but absolutely worth monitoring.

2013 games watched: All of them

Brian Wozniak, TE WISC

If you don't know much about Pedersen, you've probably never heard of Brian Wozniak. Penn State fans may remember him as the lumbering tight end that caught two touchdowns against them late in the season this past year, but he has the potential to be more than that in the NFL.

Let's get one thing straight before we go any farther. Nobody will be drafting Wozniak in rookie drafts. I'm only mentioning him for those in incredibly deep leagues that roster nearly every NFL player.

I won't say much about Wozniak other than that he's a dominating blocker at the line of scrimmage, almost to the point that he could be considered an offensive tackle and although he only caught 15 passes for 147 yards and four touchdowns over the last two seasons, he demonstrated soft hands as a receiver. It should also be mentioned that he's an incredibly hard worker and because of that, I fully expect him to make an NFL roster.

2013 games watched: All of them

In the final installment of the Big Ten Prospects series, I'll share my thoughts on Wisconsin tailback James White as well as some others that are making the leap to the pros.

BIG TEN PROSPECTS: JAMES WHITE, KENNY GUITON, KAIN COLTER AND TAYLOR MARTINEZ
AUTHOR: DAN MEYLOR, POSTED 2/6

We've covered the biggest names coming out the Big Ten already. For the final installment of Big Ten Prospects, we'll cover a few of the players we haven't talked about that are looking to be drafted in May and could make an impact for dynasty owners. Let's get right to it.

James White, RB WISC

James White has been playing in the shadows of premier running backs since his high school days in Florida. While at St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Fort Lauderdale, he shared the backfield with Giovani Bernard. When he moved on to Wisconsin, he backed up the all-time NCAA leader in rushing touchdowns, Montee Ball for three seasons. After Ball moved on to the NFL, sophomore sensation Melvin Gordon stole the spotlight for the Badgers. Even with all those names ahead of him on the depth chart, he put up some pretty impressive numbers.

As a senior in Madison, White carried the ball 221 times for 1,444 yards (6.5 YPC) and 13 touchdowns while chipping in 39 catches for 300 yards and two more scores. In 13 games in 2013, he rushed for more than 100 yards nine times (he ran for 98 yards against Illinois as well) and scored in all but three contests.

White ended his college career with the fourth-most rushing yards (4,015) in Wisconsin history. Only Ron Dayne, Ball and Anthony Davis tallied more in their time in Madison – that's pretty impressive when you consider that he only started 14 games in his career. He also averaged 6.2 yards per carry over the last four years, best among any Wisconsin tailback in the history of the program outside of his teammate Gordon, who's averaged 8.2 yards per tote over the last two seasons.

It's been proven countless times over the years that college success is no indication of future performance at the next level (especially when it comes to Badgers tailbacks), but White may have the skills necessary to make a smooth transition to playing on Sundays.

Of all the things White brings to the table, the most impressive might be his agility and knack for getting to full speed quickly after getting the ball in his hands. Like many Badgers runners before him, he's demonstrated very good field vision, always hitting the right hole and wasting no time getting north and south.

White showed countless times over the last few seasons that he can accelerate through a crease quickly and get to the second level of a defense in a blink. Once he reaches the linebackers, he consistently demonstrates good balance while changing directions and running to daylight.

White is also very good in the open field. He has enough shake to make defenders miss and has very good speed. In all the games I watched him play over the last few years, I can only recall seeing him caught from behind once. This past season against Iowa, linebacker Anthony Hitchens got the angle on him and made a shoestring tackle along the sideline. His speed isn't breathtaking, but it's hard to believe you'll see him lose a footrace very often, even against the elite talent he'll see in the NFL. It was reported during Senior Bowl week that he's expecting to run his 40-yard dash in the 4.4's.

While White has the vision, agility, acceleration and strait line speed of a quality NFL tailback, there are weaknesses to his game. His biggest flaw is his inability to break tackles. He gets taken down far too often by the first defender to get a hand on him. Always preferring to avoid contact and shake a defender rather than take him head on, he may struggle with the more athletic and even more powerful defenders he'll face on a weekly basis at the next level.

Another area that White struggles from time to time is in short yardage. Early in his career, while Ball was there, he wasn't asked to carry the ball around the goal line very often. In 2013, he got more opportunities. While he scored 13 times on the season, most of his touchdowns came from outside 5 yards. When the Badgers moved to within a couple yards of the end zone, he'd only score if the offensive line opened a hole. If they didn't, he wasn't able to move the pile. He doesn't seem to have the leg drive to force his way past the sticks or into the end zone.

At the next level, White most likely won't be asked to be a short yardage back. At least not immediately. He's listed at 5'10 and 195 pounds on Wisconsin's official website and wouldn't be wise to add much weight to that frame due to the potential to lose speed. Unfortunately, his shortcomings in short yardage could be the thing that keeps him from becoming an effective every down running back on Sundays.

Overall, White has the skills to forge a role in a rotation as early as his rookie season, most likely as a change-of-pace/third down back. Outside of his skills as a runner, he's also proven to be valuable in the passing game. He was called on as a receiver more as a senior than all three of the prior seasons and looked good in the process. The Badgers used the screen game under new head coach Gary Anderson much more than the previous regime and White looked good catching passes, displaying soft hands and the ability to get the ball downfield quickly.

Over his entire football career, White hasn't been used nearly as much as many tailbacks that are starting their NFL career. Before touching the ball 260 times as a senior, he hadn't finished a season with more than 170 touches in a season. I believe he's still improving as a runner and if he can get better at breaking tackles and driving his legs when in a crowd, he could prove to be a bargain for a team willing to take him late in the 2014 NFL Draft.

Dynasty owners won't see White selected very early in most rookie drafts unless he's drafted into an ideal situation where he's in line to get a lot of carries early in his career. He should absolutely be on the radar of owners in the late rounds of rookie drafts though. He has the skills to contribute early in his career as part of a rotation and could develop into a quality NFL tailback with RB2 upside. I think he compares favorably to Cardinals running back Andre Ellington, who entered the league as a sixth round pick out of Clemson last year. Many are already regretting passing on him late in 2013 rookie drafts.

Kenny Guiton, QB Ohio State

Even the biggest Ohio State fan didn't get to see Kenny Guiton play much in 2013 due to him starting only two games and attempting only 109 passes as a fifth-year senior. In limited action, he played very well.

On the season, Guiton completed 75 of 109 passes (68.8%) for 749 yards and 14 touchdowns and threw only two interceptions – that adds up to a 165.2 quarterback rating. On top of the passing numbers he posted, he also rushed for 330 yards on 40 attempts (8.2 YPC) and five more scores. Granted, he put up a majority of those numbers against San Diego State, Cal and Florida A&M which aren't powerhouses, but he posted them nonetheless.

Before you read any further, I have to admit I didn't watch either of Guiton's starts. I did see film on every pass he threw against Cal however (as well as watching him in the Buckeyes' come from behind victory against Purdue when Braxton Miller was hurt in 2012), and I came away very impressed.

Guiton showed pin-point accuracy, a relatively strong arm and the ability to throw an excellent deep ball each time I had the chance to watch him play. He also displayed impressive athleticism, consistently making plays outside the pocket both with his arm and legs. Additionally, he was unbelievable poised and made incredible decisions for a player with very limited playing time.

Of all the players that will show off their talents at the scouting combine or at pro days over the coming weeks, I am most interested in hearing how Guiton looks. If he looks good, he should hear his name called at the NFL Draft in May.

Dynasty owners, especially those in two quarterback leagues, should be monitoring Guiton as the draft approaches and into training camp. Due to his athleticism and strong play in limited snaps, I firmly believe he'll be drafted by an NFL team as a developmental quarterback and get an opportunity to play after studying, hopefully under an established signal caller. In the right type of dynasty league, he should be added for the same reasons.

2013 games watched: Wisconsin, @ Northwestern, Iowa, Penn State, @ Michigan, Michigan State (Big Ten Title Game), Clemson (Orange Bowl)

Kain Colter, WR Northwestern

During Senior Bowl week, I read multiple tweats mentioning Kain Colter as one of the impressive receivers in practice. Colter played primarily as a quarterback in his time in Evanston but has experience as a receiver for the Wildcats as well.

In his four years at Northwestern, Colter caught 63 passes for 683 yards and four touchdowns. Although he was officially listed as a quarterback, he played more like a running back. He ran for 2,180 yards on 449 carries (4.9 YPC) and 28 touchdowns in his career.

With the reports out of Mobile that Colter displayed very good hands and his ability to run with the ball, he makes an interesting receiver prospect going into draft season. Many will wonder if he can take the same path as Julian Edelman has with the Patriots, but very few have made such a transition and even Edelman took years to develop into the receiver he's become.

Colter also underwent ankle surgery last week, which will keep him from participating in the scouting combine and Northwestern's pro day. He's planning on putting on his own pro day before the draft to show his skills.

Although it's unlikely Colter ever makes a fantasy impact, dynasty owners should file his name away and check in on him around draft time. If he's as smooth catching the ball as many mentioned from the senior bowl and he develops his route running, he could surprise.

2013 games watched: Ohio State, @ Wisconsin, Michigan State

Taylor Martinez, QB NEB

Colter has committed to making the switch to receiver in the NFL, but Taylor Martinez, a similar player, hasn't done so just yet.

Martinez had his best season in 2012 when he led Nebraska to the Big Ten title game, completing 62% of his passes for 2,871 and 23 touchdowns while throwing 12 interceptions. This year, he was on pace to have a similar season. He completed 62.7% of his passes for 667 yards and ten touchdown while throwing only two interceptions in only four games. He missed a majority of the Cornhuskers' 2013 season with a foot injury.

Martinez was also very proficient on the ground in his time at Nebraska. One of the best overall athletes to come out of the Big Ten in years, he tallied 2,975 yards on 585 career carries with 31 rushing touchdowns for the Huskers.

As a pure passer, Martinez has holes in his game. He doesn't seem to be comfortable in the pocket and bails out of it very early. When he does find open receivers on slants and crossing patterns, he's inaccurate far too often to be successful at the next level. He also has a tendency to throw the ball off his back foot or across his body quite often.

Martinez is at his best when the play breaks down and he's forced to improvise. He can make defenders miss in the open field and outrun most opposing players, much like Colin Kaepernick. The comparison ends there however. He doesn't make good enough decisions and isn't accurate enough on the move to be as lethal as the 49ers quarterback.

It's been reported Martinez is expecting to be completely healthy for the Huskers' pro day on March 6th. It's unknown whether he's willing to make the switch to receiver. If he does, he'll have a much better chance at being successful in my opinion. Whether he does or not he's unlikely to make a fantasy splash for dynasty owners, but worth monitoring over the coming months.

2013 games watched: @ Minnesota

JEREMY HILL: BOOM OR BUST
AUTHOR: ANDY MILEY, POSTED 2/19

If you follow the draft community on twitter or anywhere else on the Internet, most people are warming up to the red-shirted sophomore running back Jeremy Hill. I decided to take the afternoon to watch four of his 2013 games against Arkansas, Auburn, Florida and Mississippi State to see what the #draft-twitter excitement was all about.

Before I get into what I saw on tape, Hill does not have very impressive intangibles. There were some accusations of sexual misconduct in high school with a 14-year-old that caused him to enter college a year late. He punched a fellow LSU student out at a local college bar last spring. Perhaps Hill was an immature guy and has grown out of this kind of behavior. Only NFL teams will get a good grip on that with the several interviews each team gets with him starting at the NFL Draft Combine this upcoming weekend. Dynasty owners will have to make their decision partly based on which NFL team takes him, either a team with issues such as the Dolphins or one with a strong locker room like the Patriots.

From the first minute of tape, it is clear to see that Hill is an explosive athlete who has good burst and acceleration. He is a very powerful, downhill runner. The other thing quite clear is that while he reads his blockers movements near the line of scrimmage, the back does not have the necessary vision to see more than five to ten yards down the field – this causes him to not get to the second level when the rest of his team doesn't get a hat on a hat.

Hill has decent balance despite running a bit too high. If he wants to be a better inside runner, he needs to get behind his pads and deliver punishment instead of just receiving it. There were too many times the defender was the low man in the hole and Hill let the defender into his body which caused him to slow down and at times get tackled too early. It is much harder to keep defenders off your body when you are 6' 2" than when you are five to six inches shorter. Hill runs with power and keeps his feet churning until the whistle blows. In the hundred plus carries I watched, he got knocked back less than ten times as he constantly fell forward for extra yardage. He will punish defenders with a nice stiff-arm and tries to deliver as much punishment as he takes. He isn't tentative in the hole and will take what yardage is available.

The young back reminded me a bit of Marcus Allen in the open space, but unlike Allen, Hill also had his share of ugly-looking runs. He does have great breakaway speed and looks amazing in space as I watched him break four or five 50+ yard touchdown runs to the outside. He puts his foot down and streaks down the field. It's a combination of his quick feet and lateral quickness that helps set up the runs in the open space. Hill can start and stop his body with the best of them. Unlike most backs, he cannot create his own space in tight spots because of his poorer than average vision.

His unlimited athleticism is scary – this man can hurdle over a defender, use a jump cut or a spin move to avoid the tackle, but will simply get caught up in the trash at the line of scrimmage. Once he gets the momentum, he is more difficult to get down than the X-Men's Juggernaut. The back is a more accomplished outside runner, but he can mix it up running between the tackles if he has a good o-line in front of him. When he needed to, the runner could get small in the hole, only to squirt out for a huge gain. Hill also shows rare hustle as he is always looking for the run to the house and sometimes ignores the first whistle after being brought down, gets up, and streaks towards the end zone.

Hill has long arms with decent hands and can make difficult receptions with defenders draped all over him. He looks good on swing out passes and wheel routes with his quickness and body control to adjust to the ball in the air. I am concerned he body catches almost everything as this limits his ability to break passes wide open as he has to concentrate on making the catch before he runs with the ball.

He is also not a back without problems, even outside of his off field issues. Hill is a very inconsistent pass blocker – sometimes he gets in a blitzer's face cutting them off from the quarterback and at other times he would simply whiff making no contact, whatsoever. All of this limits his use in an offense to start his NFL career as he cannot be trusted to help pass block. Ball security is another concern as Hill seems to carry the ball away from his body. He looks like a young Tiki Barber out there holding the ball like a loaf of bread. I would think a coach of Les Miles caliber would have tried working with him on that concern already. He also has a tendency to leave his feet for less than ideal situations. If it's the difference between scoring a touchdown or gaining the first down, it should be commended. However, Hill seems to leave his feet just to gain extra yardage and take more punishment than is necessary. Every back only has some many carries in them.

At the time of this writing, I have Hill in my top six rookie running backs and in my top twelve overall rookies. Much of his value will be determined by where he ends up, not only for the potential fantasy production aspect, but also the environmental factors that will shape him as a man.

WHO MADE WHO? THE MYSTERY OF DAVANTE ADAMS AND DEREK CARR
AUTHOR: ANDY MILEY, POSTED 3/18

Just like AC/DC's 1980's hit "Who made Who?" most dynasty owners want to know something this off-season. Was it the quarterbacking of Derek Carr or the receiving of Davante Adams (both of Fresno State) that made the other player better or were they equally as good. I'm here to tell you that at least 75% of the credit should go to the young wideout. The following article breaks down why I feel Adams may be one of the most underrated receivers in the NFL rookie pool and potentially in your upcoming rookie drafts.

The first thing that jumps off the screen is Adams will remind you of 49ers receiver Anquan Boldin. He's is 6' 1" and 212 lbs., while Boldin is also 6'1" at a slightly larger frame of 220 lbs. While both the former Bulldog and Boldin are very physical football players who are willing to do whatever it takes to win, that is where the comparison ends. The young receiver tends to lineup outside, spends a little time lined up in the slot and is occasionally sent in motion to create mismatches in the secondary. Adams steps up and attacks his defender in the run game as a blocker usually doing a good job of sealing them off from the play. He is also a willing blocker downfield once the ball gets caught by a teammate. It's the completeness of his game that will get him a lot of extra playing time as a rookie, which will in turn give his dynasty owners more scoring opportunities as he should never leave the gridiron.

Adams gets a good jump off the line of scrimmage with his powerful hands and strong upper body keeping defenders away from his body. He has great acceleration getting to full speed in about two steps. Adams uses his quick feet and loose hips to change directions quickly. If a defender gets too caught up with what Adams is doing with his upper body, they will be lost as the wideout loves to set up defensive backs with juke moves and shoulder shakes to create separation through deception. He will use any variation of a stiff-arm, spin move, swim move and/or power to get past any defenders in his way.

I recently watched three of his games against San José State, USC and Nevada. In every game, Adams would swat defenders out of his way causing them to lose balance. There are not many receivers who love contact and running through traffic, but Adams is one of them. Even though he only ran a 4.56 40 at the Combine, I believe he still has the speed to run "go" routes. If he needs to, he will outmaneuver most defensive backs. Adams might begin his career as a WR2 on a receiver needy team, but I believe he could eventually become an NFL and dynasty WR1 in a few years. Yes, he is that talented.

The rookie receiver can run a complete route tree as he excels at short screens along with the intermediate routes and deep routes. Adams is very effective with bubble screens as he makes the first defender miss and sometimes turns the screen into a ten yard plus play. It's his superior vision he uses to find creases and read his blockers' hips to get him to the open field where he is especially dangerous. His route running is crisp and he does a good job shielding the ball from the defender, making sure he has positioning to make the catch. Crossing routes are a staple for him as he loves to catch the ball in traffic. Adams has some of the best hands in his class as he will use any part of his body to secure the ball whether its one hand, two hands, off his body, or helmet, it doesn't matter – that takes an amazing amount of concentration to do.

I'm not saying Adams isn't a risk-taker as he likes to sometimes turn back three yards only to find a crease and create a 15 yard gain. Sometimes he just loses those yards, but it's the intensity and effort that is always there that makes him a special player. He generates most of his power and balance in his hips, so don't try to tackle him too high or too low, otherwise he will burst right past. He takes a lot of hard shots and spins away, not taking the full brunt of the hit. If his team needs three yards, he will usually get you four.

When you send Adams out for long passes, watch out. He tracks the ball well deep, catches it at its highest point and is willing to fully extend to make the reception sometimes several feet above. He does a great job attacking the ball in the air and is physical enough to knock defenders away from the ball mid-air. It's his nose for the end zone that makes him a huge scoring threat you need on your dynasty team.

Adams also does the little things that separate great receivers from good ones. He uses the sidelines as an extra blocker then tip-toes to make the difficult catch . Most of the time on deeper routes, Adams will simply wait until the last possible second to look for the ball catching the defender by surprise. It's very difficult to defend someone who isn't looking for the ball who can also stop and go as quickly as Adams does. His speed or lack thereof will concern plenty of potential dynasty owners, just don't let that be you.

Adams doesn't have the popular exciting name that the Mike Evans, Sammy Watkins, or Marqise Lee does. Heck, he isn't the huge monster (6'5" 240 lbs.) that Kelvin Benjamin is, either. He made a good, but not great quarterback prospect seem like he was NFL first round material – that makes me wonder what he could do on an offense that features other playmakers than himself. Adams is someone who should be available in most rookie drafts towards the end of the first round or beginning of the second. He represents good value for owners who were successful last year in their dynasty leagues.

ONE MAN'S THOUGHTS: ODELL BECKHAM JR.
AUTHOR: ANDY MILEY, POSTED 3/19

Every year during the NFL Combine, a few players start to creep up the boards who may have originally been considered afterthoughts. This offseason, Odell Beckham Jr. is one of those athletes who is making a late name for himself. I decided to go back and watch five of his 2013 games: Ole Miss, Georgia, Mississippi State, UAB and TCU to get a good perspective of what kind of athletic skills he possesses and assess if they transfer to the next level.

Although the former LSU receiver looks bigger on the screen, he is a muscular 5'11" 198 lbs. who ran a good, but not great 40 of 4.43 at the Combine. The wideout is a very versatile player as he can play on the outside of the formation, in the slot and returns both punts and kickoffs. Some people could see him as a WR1 in the NFL; however, I think he will be an excellent NFL and dynasty WR2.

Let's start with his special teams play. Beckham Jr. is a very dangerous returner because he runs with explosion, sees the field well and works with his downfield blockers to create space. He has a scary habit of turning his back to the defense to reverse his field on returns that cis ausing me a little pause, but the Hall of Fame great Barry Sanders turned his back all the time to the defense, so I won't dwell on it (and please I'm not comparing Beckham Jr. to Barry, just that they both like to turn their backs to the defense). Beckham Jr. is significantly better at returning kickoffs than he is with punts.

When the playmaker has the ball in his hands, he uses a strong stiff-arm to keep defenders off his body and is not shy about hand fighting – this helps him find more creases in the defense to exploit. Beckham Jr. sets up the coverage team to run one lane and quickly shifts his hips to explode down the field on another path. This cut back ability makes him downright nasty in the open field as he can start and stop making everyone fly right past him. Even after contact is made, Beckham Jr. keeps his feet chopping until he is on the ground or in the end zone.

As a receiver, Beckham Jr. is quick off the line and he does a good job shielding the ball from whichever defensive back is covering him. On almost every catch, he makes the first man miss. There were a few times when he let the ball into his body, but it appeared that it was more of the ball placement from the quarterback giving the receiver no other way to make the catch. He also has quick feet, almost "running back like," which makes him valuable as an occasional runner. The former Tiger was effective on reverses with his loose hips as he reads the offensive line's blocks well and was usually good for ten yards catching the defense off-balance.

The abilities that make him stand out as a receiver are the sudden burst, his quick juke moves, a hurdle every so often and his good center of gravity. Defenders are not sure what they are going to get when they go after him in the open field. I was surprised that Beckham Jr. was not used more often on short bubble screens as he just needs a sliver of space to maneuver. He always knows where he is on the field as he fights for first downs and uses the sidelines to his advantage. While he won't amaze you with his run blocking skills, he is a willing blocker who isn't afraid of mixing it up with defensive backs.

Beckham Jr. is just as dangerous as a downfield threat as he is within ten yards of the line of scrimmage. He runs tight, crisp routes and uses a double move or two to sell routes and then goes downfield. He breaks down quickly, tracks the ball well, adjusts to the ball mid-air, but will not overly amaze you with his catch radius. What I mean is Beckham Jr. does not dig down low for the ball, but is happy to catch anything from his hip to three feet above his head. He fully extends to make the reception in stride and keeps on running. He catches the ball at its highest point and has good leaping ability to make sure he has position versus the defender. There were several times where he came back to a poorly thrown pass only to make it look easy. He does a good job of getting both feet down on sideline throws and concentrating to make difficult catches. He has a tendency to catch the ball with his hands right in front of his facemask. I would prefer he moved his arms to the ball instead of just his body.

Beckham Jr. looks fantastic when he was in one on one coverage as he could blow past almost every corner he faced. It is even worse if you use zone coverage against him. He can get behind a defense and run to daylight if you allow the coverage to break down. However, it did not always look so good for him when his corner had a good safety providing help by bracketing the receiver. In his game against Ole Miss, Beckham Jr. got targeted deep on three passes at or near the end zone that were either broken up or intercepted. He got forced out of position and did not battle back into the play. In the NFL, a true WR1 will always see double or even triple coverage while WR2s and WR3s typically see one-on-one coverage. Beckham Jr. will eat up any one-on-one coverage. When LSU faced TCU, he went against college football's best slot corner in Jason Verrett and still had a productive day with five catches for 118 yards.

I'm excited about Odell Beckham Jr. as a dynasty WR2 as he has the speed, quickness, route running, and hands to be an impact player in the NFL. Depending on your rookie draft, he might be available at the back-end of the first round or beginning of the second round depending on which NFL team drafts him.

LACHE SEASTRUNK: HARD TO READ
AUTHOR: ANDY MILEY, POSTED 3/22

Throughout the 2014 draft player analysis discussions, there are only a few prospects who cause so much debate. If you watch ten or twelve of Lache Seastrunk's best runs, the running back has the look of a Hall of Famer, but that is why watching entire games is more important. I watched seven of his games from (West Virginia, Iowa State, Kansas and Central Florida from 2013; UCLA, Texas, Texas Tech from 2012) to get a better idea of what kind of back he is.

The former transfer from Oregon has decent size for a running back at 5'9", 201 lbs., but did not wow anyone with his 4.51 forty yard dash time at the Combine. When you review his college stats, a few things jump out at you – he has less than 300 career touches, ran for over 1,000 yards each of his two seasons and averaged at least 7.4 yards a carry with only nine career catches. The yards per carry stat is a bit misleading as Baylor ran a spread offense that did not ask Seastrunk to catch a lot of passes and gave him some big, wide lanes to run though. At the Combine, he caught the ball fine, but there is a huge difference between catching passes with no equipment or defense versus in a game situation, so it is definitely a slight knock to his game.

If you are looking for a big, strong, powerful runner, I would look at a back like Carlos Hyde as Lache Seastrunk isn't that type of player. When the former Baylor back ran inside without receiving much of an opening from his offensive line and scheme, he would get tackled at the line of scrimmage or shortly thereafter quite often. He has questionable leg strength and seemed to get arm-tackled or tackled high quite a bit once he was around a mass of humanity piled up at the line. This was especially true when he ran straight ahead. Seastrunk lacks head on power and tends to receiver more hits than he delivers. I have some doubts on how much of a pounding he can take with his limited collegiate touches.

It is concerning to see him let defenders into his body so much as he takes more of a pounding than he needs to play the position. Seastrunk is quite effective straight ahead when he is the low man in the hole, but more times than not he runs too high and gets tackled for a short gain. He needs to work on using a stiff-arm to keep defenders away from his body, instead of relying strictly on his foot frequency. He can get skinny in the hole at times as well. He does tend to hold the ball like a loaf of bread, which will get exposed by defenses in the NFL. As a pass blocker, he is nothing special as he sometimes doesn't set his feet and struggles to attack the blitzing defenders.

As an outside runner, Seatrunk puts up some impressive plays. He tends to bounce most of his runs outside, starts and stops his feet quickly, shows good balance, breaks out a few spin moves and can bounce off tacklers when he is in stride. He has an explosive burst he can use to jet past defenders, but has a bad habit of looking back to see if they are catching up with him. Don't worry, in the NFL, he will have a big screen monitor near the field that he can look at to see if a defender is close to him.

The key to the young back's success is his quick feet and loose hips. He makes the first guy take the wrong angle and dances around their tackle attempt. Seastrunk does not sell his stutter step with his upper body, which I feel is a mistake as he could create more space by making a defender anticipate his upper body going one way while his lower body goes a different way. He also travels too much side to side before he turns the play up field, if he put his foot down and exploded to daylight he would be more successful. Seastrunk can make anyone miss in the open field and when he does find the cut back lane, it is usually a touchdown.

Many scouts and television analysts have lauded his vision, but it seems to be a bit underdeveloped for my taste. While he moves well in a phone booth, the back struggles, at times, to find running lanes developing ten to twenty yards down the field. There were a few plays where he let the defense get penetration and he tried to outmaneuver them like Barry Sanders would by turning his back and trying wiggle out of harm's way. The problem with that is Seastrunk doesn't have the same speed, agility, balance or explosion of Sanders. Seastrunk needs to realize what he can and cannot do. He does get caught from behind a little too often as he sometimes hesitates too much trying to make the right decision.

I'm at a loss with how he will get used in the NFL. Seastrunk hasn't shown the ability to be a good pass blocker or catch the ball well, so it's hard to see him making an immediate impact on passing downs. However, that is where the back finding an open space using his quick feet and loose hips will be most effective. His struggles at running inside will hold him back as a two down runner as most defenses will try to string the play outside to trap him. At this time in his development, I question how effective a back he can be in the NFL. The skill set is there, but he could either become like DeAngelo Williams (a strong, quick twitch runner who doesn't catch or score much) or could end up like LaMichael James (a runner without a role in a run based offense). I think he will fall somewhere in between. Good luck sorting it out. Hopefully after the draft we will have a better idea of his role on the team that drafts him. Seastrunk could be scary with a team like the Eagles or Redskins.

BRANDIN COOKS: JUDGE ME NOT BY MY SIZE
AUTHOR: ANDY MILEY, POSTED 3/26

The next rookie receiver I would like to discuss is the speedster from Oregon State, Brandin Cooks. He is not one of the biggest players at his position (5'10" and 189 lbs.), however, he is one of the fastest as he clocked in at 4.33 at the Combine for his forty yard dash. I re-watched five of his 2013 games against California, Boise State, Washington, Stanford and Oregon to get a good handle of what he brings to the NFL and the impact the young receiver can create. Perhaps after this article, you will see why I have him in my top five receiver group.

Despite his size, Cooks lines up all over the field – on the outside, in the slot and gets sent in motion often to threaten defenses. More physical corners try to jam him at the line of scrimmage, but he has very quick feet and is quite slippery, so their impact on his initial burst is usually quite minimal at the line of scrimmage. He has a strong enough upper body to hand fight with any defensive back. With this quick release, Cooks excels at getting separation within five yards and most of the corners defending him get safety help over the top. Stanford and Oregon bracketed him with three or four defensive backs at times in their games. This was effective for the majority of the time, but Cooks can take any little opening and turn it into an explosive play. He is scary that way as it is a blend of his speed and agility with his great vision and anticipation. Remember, Yoda said, "Size matters not. Look at me. Judge me by my size, do you? Hmm? Hmm. And well you should not."

The young playmaker accelerates and stops almost instantly (hence the nickname "Sonic Boom") – this causes even the best corners issues as he always knows where the play is going. Cooks runs precise routes and uses a lot of little moves to throw the coverage off. He has a stutter step, throws in a few shoulder shakes, opens up his hips, spins around a time or two, or just explodes past his coverage. There were too many underthrown passes that if the ball had been placed in front of him that Cooks would have taken to the house. When the ball got thrown out in front, he would make the catch in stride and create a big play downfield. He is also willing to make the difficult catch in the middle of the field.

Cooks does not let the ball come into his body – instead he attacks the pigskin with his hands. He has good leaping ability and catches the ball at its highest point as well. He tracks the ball well in the air and adjusts his body to make the difficult catch. Cooks has an amazing catch radius you would expect from someone six inches taller. The bigger defensive backs like to take their shots at Cooks while he is in the air, but he never gives up on the ball. Sonic Boom is a more cerebral receiver than many would give him credit for as the wide out reads his coverage well and seemed to enjoy getting into the head of the corner covering him. Cooks concerns himself more with the catch than his health, which is a rarity these days. There are times where Cooks tries to make the spectacular one-handed catch, but he rarely comes down with those, despite his best efforts. If he has to go against CB1s in the NFL, he will struggle as they will be too physical and quick for him, but he will be a matchup nightmare with any team with a true WR1 as he will eventually out-maneuver single coverage.

The rookie receiver has a physical toughness that reminds me of a cross between Antonio Brown and a young Steve Smith. He boxes out his corner when he gets the chance, throws a stiff-arm with the ball in his hands and makes difficult catches with a defensive back in his hip pocket. Cooks got targeted a lot within the first five yards of the line of scrimmage a small bubble screens which take advantage of his burst and quick movement. If a defender did not get a hold of his hips, many times the receiver was gone in a cloud of dust. When a defender got a hold of him behind the line of scrimmage, it was very difficult for Cooks to wiggle away as he mostly got taken down for a loss in those situations. His balance is unreal, as I saw two defenders launch themselves at him knocking him back, but he simply braced his hand on the ground and spun away for a huge gain. If the Beavers wanted a big or important play, Cooks got targeted. In three of the five games I watched, he was thrown to on fourth down five times which is the most I can ever remember witnessing.

Adding to his receiving ability, Cooks is also a good runner on sweeps and reverses. He has a knack for making the first defender miss with his loose hips with the ball in his hands. He takes good angles and reads his blockers well, weaving in and out of danger. Cooks seems to have mastered the art of feeling the cutback lane as he reverses his field in the blink of an eye. As a runner, he does not give defenses much to hit and he keeps his feet chopping while looking more like a running back than a receiver. On rare occasions, Cooks lines up in the backfield and takes quick swing passes catching the defense off guard. Sonic Boom uses these same skills as a dangerous punt returner. It's his vision and feel for running lanes that makes that possible. The receiver is not an accomplished run blocker, but shows effort getting in front of defenders and staying with them until the runner is well past.

Cooks is more explosive than his fellow Beaver, last year's third rounder Markus Wheaton and should be counted on as a WR3 in dynasty this season. I envision him growing into a WR2 role within a year. His size is the only thing that may hold him back, but I believe he has enough tools (speed, quickness, lateral agility and vision) to make an impact on your dynasty squad as early as this year.

ROOKIE SPOTLIGHT: KELVIN BENJAMIN
AUTHOR: JEFF HAVERLACK, POSTED 4/2

Kelvin Benjamin, Florida St.
6'5"/240 Lbs.- 40: 4.61
Hands: 10 ¼"

First Impressions

With Sammy Watkins a sure-fire 1.01 selection and Mike Evans the odds-on favorite to lock down the 1.02 selection in most fantasy drafts, things don't really get interesting until pick 1.03 in rookie drafts. To wit, in my most recent rookie mock draft, I was randomly given the 1.03 selection and saddled with the most difficult decision in the first round.

On my board, selections 1.03 – 1.09, pre draft, are extremely close and with multiple names potentially worthy. Ultimately I selected Oregon State's Brandin Cooks, but I'm far less confident with that pick the more tape I watch of this year's rookie receivers. I felt it only fair to return to tape of my original 1.03 selection, Kelvin Benjamin.

A monster of a receiver at 6'5" and 240 lbs., Benjamin could easily play a move tight end role if needed. I say "easily" somewhat tongue in cheek as a move of that sort certainly would not be easy. But Benjamin has the size for such a move should a creative coordinator so desire.

Looking at Benjamin's impressive frame, the first thing I noted was his huge (10 ¼) hands. Big hands often equate to the ability to snatch the football well, secure the ball quickly and come down with difficult catches. Combine this with an enormous 35" wingspan and you have a player with what should be a huge catch radius. On the down side, Benjamin's weight obviously holds down his unpadded leaping ability as he could only muster 32.5" in the vertical jump during the NFL Combine, which was somewhat disappointing.

He did run a 4.61 forty, about as expected if not, perhaps, a tad quicker. For his part, I thought he looked faster than his timed 40 for what that is worth.

Benjamin only put together one solid campaign, hauling in 54 receptions for 1,011 yards and 15 touchdowns at Florida State. With productivity an important component for receiver evaluation at the next level, we'll need to see special ability on tape to suggest better pro numbers.

Tape Review

There's no doubt Benjamin is every bit of his 6'5" frame. This may seem to be a ludicrous statement, but he knows how to use his body to shield and gain ball leverage on defenders. Many large receivers aren't athletic enough to excel in this area. While Benjamin doesn't get top marks, he's more than adequate. Additionally, given his height, I'd like to see more high-point ability, where the receiver climbs the ladder to make the reception at the ball's highest point. Benjamin's size, when combined with his arm length, should more than provide a decided high-point advantage when needed. That all said, Benjamin shows a willingness to get airborne for a contested pass, but does not routinely climb the ladder to an impressive degree. I say "routinely" due to the fact Benjamin has shown the ability on occasion.

Large hands cannot be taught, but nor do they guarantee a level of strength at catching all surfaces of the ball or improvement in catch percentage. Hearing Benjamin sometimes fights the ball leading to dropped passes, I was keenly on the lookout for hand usage. First, I noted he has the ability to reverse his hands somewhat naturally, as well as rotating thumbs-out for balls at the waist or below, while naturally snatching thumbs-in when the ball arrived over the waist and on target. I didn't see many instances where Benjamin "fought" the ball, but his hands did show periods of inconsistency. When watching these cases again specifically for hands usage, I believe KB's issues are more in the area of concentration and discipline than due to catching mechanics. What does this mean? Just as James Jones has become a far better receiver after vying for the league lead in dropped passes in multiple years, so too will Benjamin need to put in work in this area – this is what we want to see with a young receiver allowing too many balls to hit the ground. Mechanics appear to be fine, but catching discipline will need to increase. Ability is present.

In the area of route-running, Benjamin is a 'rounder,' my term for receiver lacking suddenness at the top of his route(s). Instead of proper breaks at the top of routes, he tends to round and roll into the break. This is a lazy characteristic born out of a player used to gaining advantage via body-size or leaping ability. At the next level, he'll need to learn proper route-running characteristics in addition to far more limbs on the route tree. He also doesn't show a consistent desire to fight back toward the quarterback on hooks and out patterns. Combine this fact with being a 'rounder' and he has the potential to be chasing opposing cornerbacks down the sideline on their way to a pick-six.

Benjamin would seemingly fit best at a Z role, playing off the line of scrimmage to allow for space to be used to aid his big body vs. more physical NFL corners. Lacking suddenness off the line of scrimmage will allow these corners to get into Benjamin's body, disrupting his route and timing with the quarterback. Instances were present on tape that leads me to believe that more suddenness is in his tank, but is not yet consistently evident off the line at this point in his career.

Kelvin Benjamin tracks the ball well from his quarterback. He has a keen awareness about ball location and the ability to get his head around to provide for the best opportunity for a reception. His hand eye coordination is well above average and it's obvious he trusts his hands and awareness to bring down the tough balls, reacting well to outside-shoulder throws or adjusting to balls off-target. His catch radius isn't elite as of yet but he seems to have the ability for ascension in this area.

With the ball in his hands he's a load to bring down. Would-be tacklers taking poor angles or looking to torso tackle are in a for a rude awakening. Couple his size with a wide base (foundation) that is almost cat-like and a player with great balance results. Benjamin's feet often find their way into perfect spacing below his torso when leaping or absorbing first-contact, providing for after the catch run ability.

In the run game, his blocking needs serious refinement. Again, he seems to rely on his big frame to be the primary obstacle while not seemingly interested in gaining leverage on his opponent. Often times, he ends up holding or grabbing jersey after being beaten via poor mechanics. He should be much better in this area.

SUMMARY

When evaluating Kelvin Benjamin, I was sincerely hoping to find enough to clearly label him as a high-upside 1.03 fantasy selection. On the back of tape review, I cannot, with confidence, suggest him at 1.03 without a corresponding drop in value from a couple of names currently higher on my board (Brandin Cooks and Marqise Lee). But, his rare size, God-given characteristics and sufficient on-tape ability provide enough upside that he may slip into the top five rookie selections should his drafted situation be intriguing.

For now, Benjamin appears to be a 1.06 selection in 2014 fantasy drafts, +/- one position, a rating that may change as more receivers are reviewed. My gut is screaming at me that Kelvin Benjamin will be a player who develops into a fine pro. It's to his benefit that his draft stock currently sits as a late first round selection, read that as "a better team."

ROOKIE SPOTLIGHT: DAVANTE ADAMS
AUTHOR: JEFF HAVERLACK, POSTED 4/5

Davante Adams, WR Fresno St.
6'1"/212 Lbs.- 40: 4.56
Hands: 9"

First Impressions

adamsI've been a broken record thus far with my rookie analysis, at least as it relates to the lay of this year's draft class starting at selection 1.03. While I will eventually turn my focus to the running backs, I've set upon highlighting the potential fantasy first round receivers with the hope of demystifying the position should you be selecting at 1.03 through 1.10. There's going to be a world of opportunity if you have the guts and the research to shy away from a 'sexy' choice and replace it with an informed selection instead. I recently reviewed Kelvin Benjamin and Adams is next on my list. He'll be an intriguing selection in that he'll likely be available at the bottom of your first round, perhaps into the second round depending on his drafted situation.

Lets first take a look at his measured traits.

At 6'1" and 212 pounds, Adams has the size I look for at the position, if perhaps an inch or so shorter. Once a receiver eclipses the 6'0" range, I immediately start looking for 'larger' play and characteristics to boost his fantasy potential. Larger receivers just have a greater ability to be elite, but plenty of smaller receivers can be difference makers. But Adams doesn't catch my notice due to his size. As will be discussed a bit later in this article, Adams is an accomplished leaper. At the Combine, he secured a nearly 40" vertical jump. Somewhat disappointing is his surprisingly small hand size, measuring in at 9". It's far more important how he uses these hands than the measurement alone but there can be inherent limitations due to size. I was modestly disappointed with his timed forty at 4.56 and thought he had a chance to break 4.50 based on what I've seen on tape. That said, playing fast does eclipse timed speed, but I still give bonus points if a receiver can show both.

Turning my attention to his college productivity, it's impossible not to be impressed. How does a collegiate receiver improve on the 102 reception, 1,312 yard and 14 touchdown campaign Adams had in 2012? Well, his 131 receptions, 1,719 yards and 24 touchdowns in 2013 make that 2012 production look anemic. Combined in his final two years at Fresno State, he compiled 233 receptions, 3,031 yards and 38 touchdowns. Impressive beyond impressive. Competition was not noteworthy in the Mountain West and this must be taken into account.

Tape Review

Looking at game tape can be a mixed bag. I've watched most all tape on Adams I could find, some multiple times. The positives stick out as much as some of the negatives. He's a fine leaper able to consistently high-point the ball effortlessly. He's strong enough and uses good leverage to shield the defender to put himself in a catch-advantage position. Despite his small hands, he's largely a sure-handed receiver, dropping or double-catching few passes. He's quicker than he is fast which began adding up the more tape I watched. He's got a quick lateral step but more of a loping sprint that likely will limit his top-end speed. In receiving the ball, Adams exhibits beautiful hand position and a natural hand-catching motion. He snatches the ball as well as any receiver I've seen and, like his high-point ability, he does so effortlessly. His ability to snatch and tuck in one single motion allows him to get his shoulders up field, survey available space, prepare for contact and churn out yards after the catch. He's not mechanical in any way.

On the negative side, Adams is extremely raw in his route running and his route tree. In researching his routes, bubble screens came up time and again. Sure enough, the bubble screen and short come-back routes are his forte. He would seem to have more slant ability than he displayed but the shallow and deeper slants I did see run were enough for me to 'check the box' in this area of his tree. He'll likely be limited to a possession style role, but he has a natural feel for coverages and space enough to use angles to slip beyond the secondary on deeper patterns. I'm not ready to suggest he'll only be a possession receiver. He's young and has a good level of football IQ. Continuing on with negatives, his strength at the line of scrimmage is suspect and until he learns how to use his lateral agility to break jams, he'll be best used in an "off" position as a flanker, or potentially in the slot.

Character and leadership wise, I like what I've seen and heard from Adams. He's not a me-first player and always mentions his teammates when given an opportunity. He speaks well and obviously and commands attention. There's a lot to like in all areas of Davante Adams.

When looking at the first round opportunities, this draft has something for most, unless you have a great need at the running back position. I see little chance that a receiver like Adams, or the previously reviewed Kelvin Benjamin, will overtake other higher-profile players such as Brandin Cooks, Marqise Lee or even Odell Beckham. The hype on this third tier of receivers is just too defined and set currently. Given that someone in your league will step up to take at least one running back due to drafted situation, it's highly likely that we're talking about players that will be available starting at 1.07.

Make no mistake in that I feel Adams and Benjamin are in the mix for a higher selection, but both still trail the aforementioned names but enough of a level that I would not consider either before selection 1.06 and likely lower if I have need at tight end or quarterback.

Summary

For Davante Adams, he checks the box in enough categories that I feel he has a strong potential outplay his drafted position. Should his 40 time have been 1/10th of a second faster, he'd challenge Beckham on my list for a selection just beyond the middle of the first round. When speed at the receiver position is in-line, but quicker than 4.60, grading down for this alone is often a mistake. Time speed for Adams is still quick enough to make for an intriguing package.

In wrapping up my thoughts, "intriguing" is the term I fall back to when reviewing tape on Davante Adams. From character, to size, to game tape he's got enough boxes checked to provide great NFL upside. If you're able to secure him at the top of the second round, it's a gift. Even in the back half of the first round, there's enough present to warrant serious consideration. A good drafted situation with a notable quarterback should raise his value. He's a candidate to rise on my board when I conclude my receiver film study.

ROOKIE SPOTLIGHT: JARVIS LANDRY
AUTHOR: JEFF HAVERLACK, POSTED 4/7

Jarvis Landry, WR LSULandry
5'11"/205 Lbs. – 40: 4.77
Hands: 10 1/4"

First Impressions

LSU's Jarvis Landry has been an enigma ever since the NFL Combine wrapped up in February.

No one expected Landry to blaze a fast forty, wow with physical intangibles or otherwise create a buzz, but since he was touted in some circles as one of the most NFL ready receivers in this year's rookie class, he performed with many sets of eyes squarely upon him … and he disappointed. Until we see Landry's career unfold, the question will remain just how good can he be? I'll admit, after my first tape review prior to the Combine, I expected far better performance come February. His talent is obvious. But watching his Combine performance left me completely uninspired and confused. As an amateur scout, I do place far more emphasis on game performance than Mike Mayock's "Underwear Olympics" (as he calls it), but when a Combine performance demonstrates something completely opposite to that which I'm expecting to see, I cannot simply ignore it.

A quick review of his last two years of performance show increasing productivity in receptions, yardage and touchdowns, nearly doubling his yardage and touchdown totals from 2012 to 2013 – not stellar numbers in any area, but solid productivity for a receiver in the LSU system. He's young and will open up the NFL season still only 21 years of age (11/28/92)

Make no mistake here, fantasy 'experts' and NFL experts alike are quick to use each others' research and reviews as their own, often parroting each other to ridiculous extremes. It's human nature and very easy to do with today's social networks in play and each 'expert' trying to get a one-up on the competition. I can't emphasize enough that you MUST find resources that put in their own work, tape review and evaluation if you are going to use them as a trusted resource. If your 'expert' can't be accountable to their own methods, successes and failures, it's time to move to a new resource. Landry is the perfect example for what I'm talking about here. He's a player who I noticed on tape, wrote off following the Combine because of how poor a day he had, but because of those who I trust in the business continuing to emphasize his NFL skill-set, I have gone back to watch even more tape and with a much more focused eye.

For these reasons, I'm highlighting Landry in order to give all of our readers greater insight on the receiver and his prospects in the NFL. Anyone can focus on Sammy Watkins and Mike Evans, foretelling a high draft selection and fantasy stardom. But where we like to do a lot of our work is in the areas of fantasy rounds two, three and beyond. Receiver has always been my most successful position of scouting, leading to some great selections in rounds three and four. If you as a coach can draft a future WR1 after round two, you've struck gold. And it's very possible to do.

Let's take a look at Landry and some of his tangible measurements.

At 5'11" and 205 lbs., he has enough size to be a noteworthy receiver if he's able to successfully transition to the NFL. LSU has always been a good school for budding professional NFL players and Landry is another intelligent player who could perform far better than his size due to his football IQ. It may not help that teammate Odell Beckham Jr. continues to rise on draft boards after an off-season of high praise and even higher expectations. At the Combine, Landry could muster no better than a 4.77 40, concerning for all who took notice. Just as concerning was his 28.5" vertical jump, which impressed no one. His strength is only average as well. With his pro day approaching on 4/9, he'll be looking to increase those numbers significantly. This all said, many scouts and NFL talking heads have continued to beat the drum of Jarvis Landry, insisting that his performance numbers need not apply when you watch his game tape.

To his game tape we go.

Tape Review

One thing that really stands out to me is how polished he was as a route runner in both 2012 AND 2013. In fact, his skill-set is nearly identical for both years, leading me to believe his increased production came primarily from greater involvement in the offense rather than his pure development of routes and schemes. This is not a detraction for Landry, but more a statement about his early development.

The second thing that really stands out is Landry's toughness in all phases of the game. He exhibits very good possession receiver skills, especially with crossing and out patterns. He does not shy away from contact and shows a high degree of physicality. In a blocking role, he seeks out his assignment aggressively and establishes his hands inside the defenders pads very quickly. He blocks to a greater degree than his size would suggest due to pure will alone. His technique isn't flawless, but he will be a valued performer in this area at the next level.

Landry tracks the ball well and has a great level of hand-eye coordination, bringing in stretch receptions at a full sprint and making the occasional 'ridiculous' catch. Watch the replay at 15:38 on the video below for an example of this. Many have called Landry a natural hands-catcher. While I will not go as far to call him "natural" in this area, he is an adept hands-catcher, consistently snatching the ball well away from his frame. I believe his ball tracking and coordination are bordering on elite and this maximizes hands-catch opportunity. He does have some tendency to double-catch passes on occasion, but not enough to cause concern and, in most cases, still completes the reception.

In route running, he shows keen awareness of defensive positioning and set-up, selling the defensive back on a route that doesn't evolve, instead dipping his shoulder, dropping his hips and cleanly releasing to the inside or outside fluidly. He's one of the best short-to-intermediate route runners I've seen in some time. His fluidity is impressive. He stems his routes very well and gains separation that will be much needed at the next level. His toughness and fearlessness during and after the catch is noticeable and rare, especially again given his size. Many NFL experts will emphasize separation as the key trait needed for receivers to ultimately be successful. Separation can come from primarily two traits: 1) Speed and 2) Technique. Landry possesses the latter in spades. He has quick feet, fluid hips and uses his hands extremely well.

His leaping ability is not elite, but is far better than his disappointing Combine performance. In fact, I'm shocked he wasn't able to muster a greater vertical. In game footage, he is plenty capable of high-pointing a ball to, or away from, his frame to secure the reception. He shows a natural ability to locate and elevate to all passes within his radius.

Summary

Long speed, pure size and elite play-making ability are not characteristics that will come to mind when reviewing Jarvis Landry. But as a possession receiver in today's NFL, called upon to make tough receptions across the middle on key third down situations, he can be successful. I'll go one step further. My first tape review session did not adequately paint the picture of Jarvis Landry's potential. My second two sessions, with better focus, enabled me to see what many others have been talking about. In many situations, I drop my grades for those receivers of the "possession" style as their place in fantasy is often diminished. I believe doing so with Landry is going to be a mistake. He has more of an "it" factor than I've seen with a player of his particular make-up and I'm going to remain very intrigued if his drafted situation is one with an established and productive quarterback.

With current rookie mocks showing Landry a very late second or early third round selection, he exists purely in the range that tends to intrigue me. I won't reach for a player of his skill set, but will be excited to select him if he falls anywhere below the late-second round.

PRE-COMBINE ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT ONE
AUTHOR: JACOB FELDMAN, POSTED 1/22

This mock draft kicks off a full season of staff rookie mock drafts just for our premium subscribers! We will have mock drafts staggered throughout the off-season with rookie only mock drafts prior to the combine, just after the combine, prior to the draft, just after the draft, June, July and August. In addition to all of those, we will also toss in a few rookie only mock drafts with some alternate setups for those of you who play in leagues outside of the PPR leagues that are now the norm.

Here is a quick refresher on the guidelines given to our drafters before each mock begins:

1) Standard PPR scoring with normal lineup requirements
2) Draft order is randomly generated and no trades are allowed
3) Draft the best player available without any consideration for team need

Once the mock is complete, each drafter was asked to provide some comments about the player they drafted. In order to provide a second perspective on each selection, I will also provide some comments on each of the choices. I'll be the first to admit that we, and especially me, will get a few of these players wrong. This is especially true at this point in the year when the vast majority of us are just beginning our 2014 rookie evaluations.

The players in this mock, especially in the third round, are players that have caught our eye early in the process. There will be many changes as time goes on, both players shooting up and falling off our draft boards. A perfect example from last year is Le'Veon Bell. He wasn't drafted in the first of our initial mock draft last year but was a top four pick in our later mock drafts.

1.01 – Sammy Watkins, WR Clemson

Andy's thoughts: He is the most talented wide receiver in this class. He is explosive, fights for the ball, has fantastic hands and makes defenders miss. I have him in my top ten dynasty receivers regardless of where he lands. With the 1.01 rookie pick, I could not imagine going any other way.

My thoughts: It has been a long time since there has been a first overall pick in fantasy drafts who was virtually the unanimous choice this early in the draft process. I really don't know how anyone could go any other direction regardless of your league setup. I don't think Watkins is the same level of a prospect as Calvin Johnson, AJ Green, or Julio Jones but he is close. He is one of the most explosive receivers with size and hands that we have seen in a long time. It is extremely impressive he managed 14.5 yards per reception when almost 60% of his catches were within two yards of the line of scrimmage.

This was the easiest pick in the whole draft.

1.02 – Mike Evans, WR Texas A&M

Jeff H's thoughts: While I have concerns about Evans' speed, his size-playmaking dynamic cannot be ignored. I'm a sucker for bigger receivers (6'5"/224), especially if they can run, but I'll give Evans a pass because of his catch radius, physicality and ability to make plays. If he can run a 4.60 or better, he'll be an easy first round selection. I'll be watching his drafted situation and will subtract points if he falls to the New York Jets, but at least he'd be an immediate starter. Receivers have a very high bust rate in fantasy but size and situation can help immensely.

My thoughts: Evans might be the most complete receiver in this draft outside of his speed. He lacks the sheer explosiveness of Watkins but with his size and ability to go after the ball he is the easy number two choice out of this draft class right now. There will be an awful lot made out of his lack of straight line speed, but there are a quite a few top flight receivers who ran 4.5-4.6 seconds in the 40 yard dash such as Brandon Marshall, Dez Bryant, and Antonio Brown. If that is the only knock, I'm not worried.

1.03 – Marqise Lee, WR USC

Jeff B's thoughts: It's no secret that Marqise Lee had a very disappointing junior year following his spectacular Biletnikoff Award winning sophomore campaign. However, given that the entire USC football program came crashing down around him, Lee deserves the benefit of the doubt in this case. The bottom line is that he's a speedster and a playmaker with an NFL ready body. If he falls in the draft to a team with an established offense that can plug-and-play him as their WR2 (the Detroit Lions, for example), he could legitimately have a case as being worthy of being the number one overall selection in dynasty rookie drafts.

My thoughts: Lee might be this year's Keenan Allen. Much like Allen, he had a spectacular season the year prior to being draft eligible before falling on his face the year he could enter the draft. Like Allen, Lee struggled with injuries the year of the draft and was forced to deal with a mess at the quarterback position. Also like Allen, Lee's talent and potential are huge! Along with Evans and Watkins, Lee rounds out what is an unquestioned top three in this year's draft at this point in time. Letting any of them slip out of the top three is a mistake. No one else is in the top two tiers of rookies right now.

1.04 – Kelvin Benjamin, WR Florida St.

Brian's thoughts: At this point in the draft my top three wide receivers are off the board, but I really like Benjamin and his pro potential. At 6'5" and 230 pounds, he is a physical freak with unique size and speed combination. His ability to high point the ball and make difficult catches make him a prospect who pro teams love as a potential WR1. Some of Benjamin's draw backs include age (he will be 23 in February), lack of focus (dropping easy passes), and average speed (4.5-4.6). Benjamin will be an immediate red zone threat at the next level and if he can improve his route running and focus, he could be the next "big thing" in the NFL

1.04 – Kelvin Benjamin, WR Florida St. (CONT.)

My thoughts: At this point in time, after the big three, the draft board is wide open. You could make an argument for any one of at least nine players at this slot in the draft. It is going to take a few months of the pre-draft process to help shake out the third tier of rookies. While he is definitely in the discussion, I'm not as big of a fan of Benjamin as some others. His drops and lack of a run after the catch ability are concerning. I think that a lot of his big plays were a result of his quarterback buying a lot of extra time while Benjamin ran around until he finally got open.

1.05 – Jordan Matthews, WR Vanderbilt

My thoughts: This wasn't an easy pick to make. Like I said before, after the top three there are a multitude of players that could be picked. Matthews is the fourth receiver in my rankings at this point in time, a decent distance behind Lee and just barely ahead of Allen Robinson of Penn State. I also considered going with a different position, but there are so many question marks right now, especially at the running back position. Matthews is a big receiver, listed at 6'3" and 206 pounds and has been one of the most productive receivers in all of college football over the last two years while playing in a conference known for its defense.

Matthews is a hard worker that plays football the right way. He runs great routes, gets in and out of breaks cleanly, has soft hands, is a willing blocker, and does a nice job of adjusting to poorly thrown balls. The knock against him is that he isn't an exceptional athlete. He can jump but his top end speed as well as his ability to make defenders miss after the catch isn't anything special which could limit his upside a bit. None the less, his productivity and refinement in the passing game will make NFL teams notice.

1.06 – KaDeem Carey, RB Arizona

Tim's thoughts: Very difficult to select running backs at this point in the draft process. Probably more so than any other position, situation will impact running back draft positions in dynasty leagues. In the absence of knowing I selected Carey because he has the most balanced mix of speed, power and size.

My thoughts: Tim is absolutely right when he says running backs are difficult to draft right now. Even more so than most years, the draft order of running backs will be all over the board this year. When Melvin Gordon went back to Wisconsin it really hurt this running back class. As far as Carey goes, he is a bit on the small side but has been very durable while carrying a very heavy load (652 carries) over the last two years. He has ability for sure, but his off the field character issues are a definite concern and could make him slide a ways in the NFL Draft.

1.07 – Lache Seastrunk, RB Baylor

Ryan's thoughts: In rookie drafts, I always draft the best available player, with little attention paid to my team's needs. This would especially be the case in drafts taking place before the NFL draft. Lache Seastrunk has been considered the front runner to be the top rookie running back for quite a while, but now the field seems to be catching up to him. Seastrunk has a perfect mix of speed, power and elusiveness. There has been some recent criticism that Seastrunk was not involved in the passing game. While this is true, Baylor rarely throws to their running backs at all. I am confident that Seastrunk will prove a willing and able receiver once he's in the league.

My thoughts: If you asked five different fantasy writers who the top running back on their board is, it is very possible that you could get five different answers. Seastrunk is near the bottom of my top five running backs because I haven't been very impressed with his vision and I question his ability to be anything more than the speed part of a committee. He has exceptional speed, quickness to the edge, and might be the most explosive of the top running backs. He'll need more than speed and quickness at the next level. Like Ryan mentioned, the lack of participation in the passing game is a concern as are some minor character issues from his past in addition to the vision issues. On the right team, he could be a very valuable compliment though. His landing spot is going to mean more than most when it comes to his value.

1.08 – Bishop Sankey, RB Washington

Ghost's thoughts: I made this pick less because I am overly intrigued by Sankey and more because of the value he could present at this pick. I could see Sankey being a very decent running back for a team and maybe even a bell cow but not one that's going to break records or be an all-Pro every year. However, at the 1.08 pick being able to get a running back who could be a starter for his team is just too much to pass up.

My thoughts: There are a lot of people who feel Sankey might be the best back in this class. At 205 pounds and 5'10" he has good size and he was very productive at Washington with 3496 yards and 37 touchdowns on 644 carries during his time there. He also showed some ability in the passing game, hauling in about 30 catches each of the last two seasons. The problem is that physically he isn't special in any way. He reminds me a little bit of a smaller Shonn Greene in that respect. Like Ghost said, I don't think he'll be elite by any means, but he could be a solid RB2 for several years.

1.09 – Allen Robinson, WR Penn State

Mark's thoughts: I haven't put enough time into the 2014 draft to make too many selections confidently. However, I'm a Penn State homer and Allen Robinson is a player I've seen plenty of. He makes big plays in heavy coverage, has good hands and plays faster than he'll run at the combine. Playing in Bill O'Brien's NFL style offense can't hurt his prospects of early contributions as well. I think he's a very similar player to Jordan Matthews so to get him four picks later, feels like a bargain.

1.09 – Allen Robinson, WR Penn State (CONT.)

My thoughts: As I mentioned before, I went back and forth a bit with my selection and if I didn't take Matthews it probably would have been Robinson. Robinson is another big receiver at 6'3" and 210 pounds. Better yet, he does a good job of using his body to shield defenders and make plays. He is one of the better receivers in this draft when it comes to going after the ball when it is in the air. It will be interesting to see how fast he runs at the combine because a part of me wonders if he always had to shield defenders because he couldn't get separation. He's one to watch and easily in my top five receivers in a great receiver class.

1.10 – Teddy Bridgewater, QB Louisville

Karl's thoughts: I expect him to go first in the NFL draft, and he will be evaluated as heavily as any prospect ever. Many will wonder about his size (6'3" 191 lbs), but putting on weight at the NFL level is something that many quarterbacks have had to do. Tom Brady looked like an eighth grader when he came into the league. I compare Bridgewater to a young Aaron Rodgers. He has excellent field vision, extremely accurate and can pull down the ball to scramble for a first down when necessary. I could see him going as high as 1.03, so getting him at 1.10 is extremely good value.

My thoughts: If you followed last year's mock drafts, you know I'm not fond of spending first round picks on quarterbacks in traditional leagues. Superflex and two quarterback leagues are completely different, as are leagues with sixteen or more teams. With that said, this seems to be about the right spot to start considering Bridgewater if he goes to the Texans. Taking him at 1.03 as Karl suggests would be a major mistake in my opinion because there is just too much value there. I don't see Rodgers so much as I see a more polished Ryan Tannehill. I think this is another down year for the quarterback class with the ceiling for any of them being back end of the top ten.

1.11 – Jace Amaro, TE Texas Tech

Dan's thoughts: It's rare that a 6'5, 260 pound prospect gets picked in the first round of a rookie draft, but I firmly believe Amaro belongs here. Officially listed as a tight end, he played primarily out of the slot while at Texas Tech and put up some gaudy numbers. He caught 106 passes for 1,352 yards and seven touchdowns during his junior season with the Red Raiders. He has excellent hands and is an incredible route runner, especially considering his size. I wouldn't be surprised to see him fly up dynasty owners' draft boards over the next few months.

My thoughts: This is a tight end class that could rival the 2010 class. If you are in need of a starter in a year or two, this is your chance. If you haven't seen any of Amaro's games, you're missing out. He isn't blazing fast or overly athletic like a lot of tight ends, but his game reminds me an awful lot of Jason Witten. Amaro has spectacular hands and brings in just about anything that is within his massive frame. He does a great job of using his body to shield defenders and always seems to be in position to make the catch. There are some character concerns that go with him, which could cause him to slide, but he's extremely talente

1.12 – Tre Mason, RB Auburn

Scott's thoughts: Mason isn't the biggest player on the field, but lots of NFL stars are similar size, like Chris Johnson, LeSean McCoy or Jamaal Charles. Not a burner but runs hard, has solid vision, good lateral agility and is tough to bring down. Had huge games against the toughest competition, like Florida State, Alabama, LSU and Georgia. Mason had back-to-back 1000 yard seasons in the SEC, including 1800+ yards rushing and 24 total touchdowns in 2013. I'll take that at 1.12.

My thoughts: Mason is going to be a very interesting player to watch through the draft process. He had one of the best years rushing of any running back this year while on a very high profile team. That means he is going to get an awful lot of press and might end up being over hyped. He wasn't very involved in the passing game, but few were better on the ground. He has excellent quickness, does a good job of finding holes, and breaks a lot of tackles. He also showed great durability and had some massive workloads with seven games over 25 carries with a max of 46 carries for 304 yards against Missouri in the SEC championship game. He's great value at 1.12.

2.01 – Carlos Hyde, RB Ohio St.

Andy's thoughts: I have him in my top five rookies so getting him as the 13th pick overall is just silly. He runs with power, possesses good vision, uses good balance, and is a three down back. Many scouts are comparing him to Le'Veon Bell, but I think he would rather run over someone than around them.

My thoughts: The fact that Hyde is still available just goes to show the depth of the current draft class at this point in time. We are still in my third tier of rookies at this point. Like Andy, I have Hyde pretty high on my running back list and I'm surprised that he was the fifth running back drafted. Hyde is the only one of the top five that actually has traditional size for a running back. Combine that size with above average speed and quickness as well as pass blocking skills and you have someone that will see the field early and often.

2.02 – Eric Ebron, TE North Carolina

Jeff H's thoughts: Andy Miley sniped all my players with each pick in this three round draft. Granted that Watkins would be going first overall, however. I was hoping Ohio State's Carlos Hyde was going to fall to me here. At 2.02, though, I'm happy to land Ebron out of North Carolina. Ebron wasn't ultra productive for N.C., notching only eight total touchdowns in three seasons. He did secure 62 receptions for 973 yards in 2013. But he's better than his stats will show. He's a very athletic and fluid athlete who can climb the ladder to high-point the football. He can make the spectacular catch and follow it up with a blatant drop but in a league where athletic tight ends are flourishing, he's too good to let slip much beyond this selection.

My thoughts: Of the big three tight ends, Ebron might have the most upside of them. He is superior to them from an athletic stand point, but he is also significantly lighter and a few inches shorter. Ebron's game centers around his ability to not only get free from defenders with his speed and quickness but to go up and get the ball with exceptional leaping ability. He does need to work on his focus a bit and be more consistent. In some ways he is in the mold of Aaron Hernandez, without the off the field issues.

2.03 – Austin Seferian-Jenkins, TE Washington

Jeff B's thoughts: There were about six different players I considered taking with this pick – which makes me think the top of second round will be the sweet spot in rookie drafts this year – but ultimately I decided to go with the top tight end on my draft board in Austin Seferian-Jenkins. There are some red flags, specifically in regards to a DUI he got in the off-season that earned him a suspension from the team, but if there's a player in this draft class that has earned the title of "physical specimen", it's him. At 6'-6" and about 270 pounds, he's going to really impress NFL GMs at the combine and if he gets drafted into a system that will utilize his size, speed, and hands, we could be looking at a Rob Gronkowski clone.

My thoughts: Known as ASJ for short, he is the biggest of the top tight ends and definitely the best traditional tight end when it comes to playing in line and blocking. His size combined with hands and athleticism make the comparison to Gronkowski reasonable. There are multiple red flags as Jeff mentioned. The off the field mistakes are one of them. His effort and dedication have also been questioned by some at various points in time. While we still saw glimpses of his talent this past year he didn't look like the same player all the time. If his motor runs hot and cold in the pros, he's more likely to emulate Jermichael Finley than Gronkowski.

2.04 – Odell Beckham Jr, WR LSU

Brian's thoughts: Odell Beckham Jr a versatile and talented wide receiver. His dad is a former LSU running back and his mom was a track start at LSU. He was a top six wide receiver on my board due to his agility and athleticism. Beckham Jr. earned the Paul Hornung award for the nation's most versatile player. He finished with 2,222 all-purpose yards this season which is third in SEC history behind only Randall Cobb (2,396) and Darren McFadden (2,310). Beckham Jr is a great hands catcher and great speed (4.45) that allows him to create separation. At 6'0 and 192 lbs. he does not have ideal size for the position, but makes up for it with his route running and speed. Beckham Jr also finished the season with 1,100+ receiving yards and eight touchdowns

My thoughts: If you like big receivers, Beckham isn't for you. That doesn't mean he can't be successful. His size fits fairly well with players like Antonio Brown and Randall Cobb. He is also a dynamic playmaker. From a wide receiver stand point he has some things he needs to work on, which means he is likely to start his NFL career as a return man who slowly sees his role in the passing game expand. The team that he lands on will determine just how long it will be before he sees the field. Patience will be a huge deal with him from a fantasy owner stand point.

2.05 – Jeremy Hill, RB LSU

My thoughts: This pick might have a few of you scratching your head, but if you haven't heard about Jeremy Hill you need to go take a look. At 6'1" and 220 pounds, he is a big, powerful runner that can also play in the passing game. He has surprising speed and quickness for a player of his size with enough power to break a tackle and enough wiggle to make a defender miss. He could be the running back that suddenly jumps into the national spotlight after the combine much like Christine Michael did last year.

2.05 – Jeremy Hill, RB LSU (CONT.)

Unfortunately for Hill, his resume isn't all roses. He isn't the most consistent of players when it comes to effort. There were games where the first hit would bring him down almost every time. Then there would be games where it would take nearly the whole opposing team to get him on the ground. There are also some red flags in terms of character after he was suspended at the start of the 2013 season. He needs to be on your radar at this point though.

2.06 – Blake Bortles, QB UCF

Tim's thoughts: Could end up as the first QB off the board in the NFL draft, and will likely be a top-10 pick. That means he needs to be owned in all dynasty leagues. He has a powerful arm and a Big Ben type frame. There's a decent chance Bortles is a week one starter in the NFL.

My thoughts: Opinions on the big four quarterbacks in this draft are all over the place. There are definitely a lot of teams that need quarterbacks, but the value of those quarterbacks in fantasy will be very dependent on which team drafts them. As far as Bortles goes, he has the best size of the big four quarterbacks and a monster arm. He was also very accurate this past year, but he was playing against unproven competition for large parts of the season. He is also good with his legs. I would say the best comparison might be a more accurate version of Jake Locker.

2.07 – Davante Adams, WR Fresno St.

Ryan's thoughts: I was shocked when Fresno State wide receiver Davante Adams fell out of the first round and even more surprised when he lasted to me at 2.07. Adams is a big bodied target and is still young, just turning twenty-one years old. What he lacks in speed, Adams makes up for in his route running and ability to make the tough catch. I think by the time most rookie drafts start, Adams will be a first round pick.

My thoughts: Sometimes when you have a very good college quarterback and a very good college receiver it is a little tough to tell which one is making the other better. That is the way I feel with Fresno St this year. I get the sinking feeling one of either Adams or Derek Carr are just average, but I can't figure out which one. The combine could help with that, but we might end up guessing. When I look at Adams, I see a bigger Stedman Bailey. With the little bits of Adams that I have seen, I feel like the second round is the right place for him. There's just a lot of solid talent in this draft.

2.08 – Charles Sims, RB West Virginia

Ghost's thoughts: I honestly love this pick more than just about any in this draft. Sims is being tragically, TRAGICALLY undervalued thus far and could be on the tongues of many draftniks in the very near future as one of the top running back prospects in this draft. I would have taken him at the 1.08 pick but I honestly thought he had already been selected, imagine my surprise! Sims is everything you want out of a running back, he's got good size, he's quick, he's a great receiver out of the backfield and he can pass block. In short he's very polished and could step in and start on most NFL teams on day one. He's a true PPR running back who could be a bell cow and rack up the points. Being able to get him with the twentieth pick is incredible and I couldn't be happier.

My thoughts: I'm sure by now you're starting to notice a trend in our writers. They are all surprised their guy is still available. Part of this is the depth of this draft class while the other part is the wide range of opinions on a lot of prospects right now. Sims is drawing a lot of comparisons to Matt Forte right now because Sims is so prolific in the passing game. He is a little bit smaller than Forte, but his ability in the passing game definitely fits. Playing in the fast paced spread offense of West Virginia makes looking at his productivity a little difficult. He's a player I'm definitely watching at the combine and through the draft process and the other player I considered at my 2.05 pick.

2.09 – Devonta Freeman, RB Florida St.

Mark's thoughts: Freeman is another one of the few players I've actually watched a lot of. I came into the season more interested in his backfield partner, James Wilder Jr, but Freeman proved to be the more consistent back this season. He's built low to the ground and delivers a hit with every carry. He's not the shiftiest or the fastest running back in the draft, but has enough wiggle to be successful in the NFL. Like many rookies, landing spot will be crucial.

My thoughts: In this draft at this time I see one elite prospect, two near elite prospects, and then another 12-15 very good prospects. After those 15-18 players, the talent level seems to fall off the proverbial cliff. The middle to late second right seems to be right about where that is going to happen right now. All of the players from here on have question marks of one kind or another. When it comes to Freeman, he is very polished in pass protection for a college player and runs well between the tackles. Unfortunately he doesn't seem to be the most dynamic athlete though that might just be because of who was on the field around him. The rest of his teammates could make almost anyone look slow.

2.10 – Johnny Manziel, QB Texas A&M

Karl's thoughts: Manziel is the true wildcard in the NFL draft. Many have him pegged as a top five pick, while countless others don't believe he's worth a first round pick. I believe he has maturity issues, but more importantly he has many flaws on the field. He does have a competitive spirit and brings plenty of fan appeal. While that doesn't translate much to your fantasy team, it will get him plenty of opportunity. At 2.10 he seems like a bargain. While I'm not much of a believer in his abilities, I'm all for taking high upside guys late in the second round.

2.10 – Johnny Manziel, QB Texas A&M (CONT.)

My thoughts: There really isn't much I can tell you about Manziel you don't already know. He's one of if not the highest profile player in this draft because of the confidence (cockiness?) and charisma (arrogance?) he possesses. Opinions are all over the board on him and no one will be able to tell you what he'll end up becoming. He might be the biggest wildcard at the quarterback position since Tim Tebow. Someone will gamble big on Manziel at the NFL level. I'm not willing to gamble on him until about this point in fantasy drafts regardless of where he gets drafted.

2.11 – Donte Moncrief, WR Ole Miss

Dan's thoughts: I only watched Moncrief play once, but I was impressed. He caught six passes for 113 yards and a touchdown against Georgia Tech in the Music City Bowl in what turned out to be his last game for Ole Miss. After a standout season as a sophomore, he hauled in 59 passes for 938 yards and six touchdowns in 2013 before deciding to forego his senior season with the Rebels. I'm not sure if this is where he'll end up being taken in rookie drafts, but I feel good about selecting him here in January and look forward to watching more of him in the coming months.

My thoughts: At 6'3" and 225 pounds, Moncrief is a big bodied receiver. Unfortunately for him, his draft stock fell throughout his junior season as he didn't take the next step and might have even taken a step backwards from his sophomore year. He has excellent speed and quickness for his size, but he isn't very polished in the finer arts of playing the wide receiver position. He was inconsistent this year and also struggled anytime he was asked to run a route that took him away from the sideline. He's likely to get a lot of press at the combine due to his size and speed, but the more interesting part will be how he looks running the routes since he didn't do much of that at Ole Miss.

2.12 – Paul Richardson, WR Colorado

Scott's thoughts: Size is again an issue. Richardson is 6 ft 1 inch, and 170 lbs. He also suffered an ACL injury that wiped out his 2012 season. Still, Richardson is a play-maker. He had at least one 50+ yard reception in half his games last season. Plus, he made a beautiful one-handed catch against Oregon that showed off his hands. I'm not sure he will translate to the NFL, but at 2.12, I'll take a shot on his upside in a pass-happy NFL.

My thoughts: If you like quick twitch, explosive athletes, then you need to keep an eye on Richardson. He can fly with the ball in his hands. The best part is that he might not have been back to top form this past season. The problem is that with his current build I find it pretty difficult to think he's going to play receiver in the NFL. He would get utterly destroyed by NFL corners. Unless he can bulk up a bit without losing speed, I think he is destined to be a star returner but nothing else.

3.01 – Brandin Cooks, WR Oregon St.

Andy's thoughts: I have Cooks in my top six wide receivers so getting him as the 3.01 pick was even more ridiculous than Hyde as the 2.01. Sure he is a bit small for a starting NFL wide receiver at 5' 10", but he makes up with it with his quickness and fantastic hands.

My thoughts: Like Andy, I'm surprised Cooks was still available. My top three tiers at the wide receiver position have a total of five players. Cooks is in my fourth tier at this point in time with Kelvin Benjamin and Donta Moncrief. Considering that Benjamin went in the first, this is great value as Cooks shouldn't be the eleventh receiver taken in drafts. His size could make the transition difficult but if players like Randall Cobb and Antonio Brown can do it, there isn't any reason Cooks can't be successful.

3.02 – Marion Grice, RB Arizona St.

Jeff H's thoughts: A slow start and a notable finish defined Grice's 2013 campaign, ultimately ending with a somewhat minor lower-leg injury. In his last four games, he totaled no less than 94 yards per game while scoring four touchdowns including a 24/118/2 game against an underrated Oregon State team. Additionally, he averaged 176 all-purpose yards over the balance of the season including 50 receptions and six touchdowns. Grice is a multi-talented back with reliable hands and a good motor. In an NFL that is deemphasizing carry-the-load backs, Grice is a name whose versatility will be tough to keep off the field. It will be no surprise to me if Grice is the most production fantasy back three years from now.

My thoughts: Grice is a very versatile player that is above average at a lot of things but excels at very little. A lot of NFL teams would be happy to have him come in and help out on special teams and to be their backup running back, but I doubt he is going to get a fair shot at being a starter. The best case scenario for Grice would be as a change of pace back to a bigger running back.

3.03 – Isaiah Crowell, RB Alabama St.

Jeff B's thoughts: Isaiah Crowell's got a rap sheet a mile long and he might not even get selected in the NFL draft at all. However, he was a very highly recruited player coming out of high school and also very productive in his freshman year at the University of Georgia where he earned SEC Freshman of the Year. After being dismissed from the Georgia program, he seemed to have kept his nose clean in two seasons at Alabama State so there's at least some hope that he learned his lesson. This pick was a total flier and could very well end up being a huge bust for me but there wasn't anyone with as much upside as Crowell left on the draft board so I'm okay with taking the risk here.

My thoughts: As Jeff mentioned there are major off the field concerns with Crowell to the tune of two felony charges. Those are supposedly in the past at this point, but it is still going to make NFL teams hesitate quite a bit. In terms of his play, he wasn't very involved in the passing game, but did dominate lesser competition on the ground, which you would expect. He has great size for the position and is someone to watch on draft day. There is a chance that he could go in the late rounds due to off the field issues and very quickly rise after.

3.04 – Brandon Coleman, WR Rutgers

Brian's thoughts: Coleman had a very disappointing season at Rutgers finishing with 33 catches, 484 yards, and 3 touchdowns. Not the kind of numbers you would want to see from a guy that you want producing for your fantasy teams. Coleman had a great 2012 season with 43 catches, 718 yards, and 10 touchdowns. The 6"6" 220 pounds, Coleman has the body of a top receiver, but is lacking in other areas. His straight line speed does not allow him to create separation and his lapses in concentration cause him to drop easy passes. Coleman has all the physical attributes to be a great NFL player, but he may be lacking many mental attributes that may keep him from being a star.

My thoughts: We see a few players like Coleman each and every year. Guys that are big and very athletic, but they don't know how to play the position. Ramses Barden is a prime example from a few years ago while Tommy Streeter is a more recent example. The physical talent is there, but they struggle to learn how to be a wide receiver at the NFL level. I think Coleman is going to follow the same path, but if you're going for upside you could do worse.

3.05 – Terrance West, RB Towson

My thoughts: Who? What college is that? I know those were the two questions most of you said when you saw this selection. Why haven't you heard of him or his college? We are dropping down to the FCS ranks for this selection. Normally that isn't a good choice. There hasn't been a single starting running back to come out of the FCS schools in many years. There have been a few backups that have had moments to shine though such as Rashad Jennings.

Why would I waste a pick on West? He isn't just another FCS running back, he is the most prolific FCS running back in a very long time. He put together 2519 yards and 41 touchdowns on the ground just during the 2013 season. That's right, just one season not a career. Granted, the FCS isn't nearly the level of competition of the FBS, but you need to take notice when someone dominates to that extreme. He has ideal size for the position and definitely has some skills. He's a sleeper to watch through the draft process as he will likely be a late round pick in the NFL draft and in fantasy drafts. If we had four rounds in this mock, I would have waited until then to take him.

3.06 – De'Anthony Thomas, RB Oregon

Tim's thoughts: Undersized, super-fast RB. If he was larger, he'd be a much earlier pick. We're throwing darts at this point in an early mock, so I went with the player I believe has the highest upside left on the board.

My thoughts: Like his former teammate, LaMichael James, Thomas was a very good college player that doesn't fit in the NFL. There just isn't a role for Thomas on most NFL teams. If he's lucky, he'll end up on a team that will use him like the Saints use Darren Sproles, but I feel it is more likely he will be stuck as a tweener like Dexter McCluster and never truly be fantasy relevant. He has a lot of name recognition though and there is some upside in the right system, but I'm going to stay away from him unless he ends up on a team that has shown some offensive creativity in the past.

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3.07 – Jarvis Landry, WR LSU

Ryan's thoughts: It seems that every scout and dynasty owners felt the need to choose between the two talented LSU wide receivers- Jarvis Landry and Odell Beckham. While most side with Beckham, that should not be a knock on Landry, who led the team in receptions, yards and touchdowns. Landry has excelled on catching passes over the middle and is known for his large hands, making it a breeze to make tough catches in tight coverage. With the deep wide receiver class, Landry and a few others will fly under the radar, but will make those late round rookie picks more valuable than normal.

My thoughts: The whole Landry/Beckham debate reminds me a lot of the Tavon Austin/Stedman Bailey debate last year. In this case, Landry fills the role of Bailey in that he was the more productive college receiver and is a little bit bigger, but lacks some of the explosiveness of his teammate. Over all, I think the LSU receivers are a step down from the West Virginia pair from last year, but Landry could see some playing time on the right NFL team.

3.08 – Andre Williams, RB Boston College

Ghost's thoughts: By this point in most drafts you're picking up guys who are either falling into good situations or have a decent amount of upside. Admittedly Williams isn't a back that will be a team's only option at running back. A lot about him reminds me of LeGarrette Blount, he's a powerful rusher who doesn't shy away from contact but he's fairly one dimensional in that he isn't a huge threat to catch passes out of the backfield. However, similar running backs have made decent careers for themselves in the NFL and given the right opportunity Williams could do the same.

My thoughts: The Doak Walker Award winner for 2013, Williams was a definite surprise this year. He has great size for a running back at 6'0" and 225 pounds, and carried the ball at least 23 times in every game this season except for two. He had some minor durability issues in the past few years, but he has the look of a player that can be a very solid part of a committee. He would make a very interesting player to pair up with a smaller speed back like Giovanni Bernard or David Wilson.

3.09 – Derek Carr, QB Fresno St.

Mark's thoughts: I'll be honest, I'm not terribly familiar with Carr. Outside of his poor performances against USC, I didn't watch him this season. Instead, I'm going off Mock Drafts and what I've read from the NFL draft crowd on twitter. A projected first round pick in a year where a handful of teams will be looking at quarterbacks makes me optimistic that he'll at least get a shot at starting and have a long leash. The draftniks are impressed with his arm talents with some suggesting he has the best raw arm talent in the draft. On the downside, his pocket presence has come under fire and that's what I noticed most when watching him the few chances I got. At 3.09, it seems like a reasonable chance to take.

My thoughts: I'm honestly not sure how good Carr really is. He has the arm strength and touch of guys like Matthew Stafford and Jay Cutler, but he also has terrible throwing mechanics at times and makes a lot of mental mistakes just like they do.

3.10 – Richard Rodgers, TE California

Karl's thoughts: Rodgers isn't considered in the top tier of tight end prospects entering the NFL draft this year, but maybe he should be. The California product suffered through a couple of bad seasons recently in college, but was among the team leaders in receptions and yards this year. He is very athletic, and there is plenty of demand in the NFL for the next great tight end.

My thoughts: It is really difficult to tell how good Rodgers actually is because his team was terrible. He has the size and raw physical tools to fit into the athletic tight end mold that the NFL is moving towards, but 39 receptions for 608 yards and 1 touchdown doesn't do much for me. He belongs in the second tier of tight ends after the big three, but I think the gap between the two groups is extremely large. Rodgers is likely a multiyear project at the tight end position so make sure you're willing to wait on him.

3.11 – James Wilder Jr, RB Florida St.

Dan's thoughts: I have to admit that I don't know a lot about Wilder, other than what I saw from the limited action he got in the final two games he played at Florida State. He had to deal with nagging injuries as the season progressed but he finished the year with 81carries for 563 yards (7 yards per carry) and eight touchdowns as a junior. He's also had his fair share of run-ins with the law, being arrested at least three times since getting to Florida State. He should be able to carve out a role as a goal line back at the very least, which is worth taking a shot on at the end of round three.

My thoughts: I have a feeling the off the field legal troubles will make Wilder drop into the last rounds of the NFL draft if not all the way out of the draft. He has great size for the position but is pretty much a straight ahead runner. There isn't a whole lot of shake to his game, but he would be a great fit as a goal-line and short yardage back if he can keep his nose clean. Given his history, that is a pretty big if.

3.12 – Troy Niklas, TE Notre Dame

Scott's thoughts: Size doesn't matter with Niklas. His nickname is Hercules, and that's easy to see, given he is 6 feet 7 inches and 270 pounds. Hands aren't the greatest, but he is a converted linebacker, after all. I expected more from him as a blocker. Still, he is a project, with a ton of potential. He did take a 66 yard bomb against Temple for a touchdown, left two tacklers on the ground, then sped away from two defensive backs en route to the end zone. I'll take the massive upside in round 3.

My thoughts: The mammoth tight end probably should have stayed in college for another year to learn a bit more about playing tight end. As it stands right now, he's a project at the position, but he still fits into that second tight end tier with Rodgers. I think he's likely to be a blocker and red zone threat in the NFL, much like Joseph Fauria was this last year. However, Niklas has more athletic ability than Fauria and could actually become a full time tight end in a few years.

PRE-COMBINE MOCK DRAFT TWO
AUTHOR: JACOB FELDMAN, POSTED 2/20

This mock is designed to give you our impressions of the players prior to the combine measurements and performances. There are several players with question marks in terms of size, speed and just about anything else. The combine will definitely impact their standing in rookie drafts and could easily push them up boards if it is a good result or way down if they are shorter, smaller, or slower than expected. To help you with those changes, we will also do a mock draft a few days after the combine.

Here is a quick refresher on the guidelines given to our drafters before each mock begins:

1) Standard PPR scoring with normal lineup requirements
2) Draft order is randomly generated and no trades are allowed
3) Draft the best player available without any consideration for team need

Once the mock is complete, each drafter was asked to provide some comments about the player they drafted. In order to provide a second perspective on each selection, I will also provide some comments on each of the choices. I'll be the first to admit that we, and especially me, will get a few of these players wrong. This is especially true at this point in the year when the vast majority of us are just beginning our 2014 rookie evaluations.

The players in this mock, especially in the third round, are players that have caught our eye early in the process. There will be many changes as time goes on, both players shooting up and falling off our draft boards. A perfect example from last year is Le'Veon Bell. He wasn't drafted in the first round of our initial mock drafts last year, but was a top four pick in our later mock drafts.

1.01 – Sammy Watkins, WR Clemson

Ghost's thoughts: Watkins is the top player in this draft, very little is arguable about that. He has excellent receiving skills and is great after the catch.

My thoughts: I said this before, and I'll say it again. There isn't another choice at this pick at this point in time, regardless of your league setup. The only way that changes is if the combine turns up something disastrous, such as maybe him being 5'10". Short of that, he's the first pick in rookie drafts. If you need someone at a different position, trade this pick for a veteran or make the pick and trade Watkins later. I don't think Watkins is the same level of a prospect as Calvin Johnson, AJ Green, or Julio Jones, but he's close. He isn't the biggest, but he is one of the most explosive receivers we have seen in a long time. Think a bigger Tavon Austin or a more complete Cordarrelle Patterson. He managed 14.5 yards per reception when almost sixty percent of his catches were within two yards of the line of scrimmage.

1.02 – Marqise Lee, WR USC

Jeff B's thoughts: Lee is the number two player on my board, so this was a pretty easy decision. I expect him to test out very impressively at the NFL Combine and if he lands in a good spot in the NFL, he'll make owners of the 1.01 in their rookie drafts think long and hard about their decision. I still prefer Sammy Watkins at this point, but the difference between Watkins and Lee is much closer than the difference between Lee and Mike Evans in my book.

My thoughts: The gap between Lee and Watkins is a little bit larger in my book than it seems it is in Jeff's book. Maybe I'm falling prey to the same thing as Keenan Allen last year. Injuries and poor play around Lee definitely took their toll on him this year, much like Allen last year. I think Lee is a better football player than an athlete, so it will be interesting to see what he does at the combine. Right now I have him and Evans almost tied and the combine could help push one of them over the other.

1.03 – Mike Evans, WR Texas A&M

Karl's thoughts: I feel the 1.03 is the worst place to be in the rookie draft this year. Sammy Watkins is the consensus 1.01, and I still value Marqise Lee enough to be happy with him at 1.02. After those two, there are about eight players who I'd be perfectly content taking at 1.03. Evans seems like a prototypical NFL wide receiver. He has the size, hands and high point ability to make an impact in the league right away. Many dynasty owners will be on the edge of their seats to see what his official 40 time will be. Regardless of his official speed, his game is built on beating corners one on one.

My thoughts: I still feel like the major drop off in this draft is after the third pick, not before it like Karl says. I think Evans is right on par with Lee at this point in the process. The combine could easily make one of them shine much brighter than the other one. If Evans can show better than expected speed and agility at the combine, he could definitely shoot above Lee because Evans is the prototype of a top receiver in just about every other way.

1.04 – KaDeem Carey, RB Arizona

Scott's thoughts: Carey was incredibly productive at Arizona, with nearly 4,000 yards rushing, 44 total touchdowns and 62 receptions in two years. He's not the biggest (5'10", 196 lb), but plays bigger than his size, runs hard, always seems to get positive yards and is capable of the big play. He is agile and has good vision. I think his versatility and talent will fit current NFL offensive designs very well.

My thoughts: In my opinion, the fourth pick in this draft is where things really open up. There are really almost ten players who could reasonably be picked at this spot. If I own the 1.04 or 1.05 in just about any league and no running back separates themselves from the pack over the next few months, I'm definitely trying to trade this pick and pick up a later first plus something else. In terms of Carey, his size combined with a heavy workload over the last two years is a concern. The fact he earned a suspension is also a concern. He is a dynamic athlete through and could be a Giovani Bernard style of back in the NFL.

1.05 – Jordan Matthews, WR Vanderbilt

My thoughts: Like I said before, after the top three there are a multitude of players that could be picked. Matthews had a nice showing during Senior Bowl week and it locked him in as my fourth receiver for the time being. Granted, there is a pretty big gap between him and third, but he's looking pretty good right now. It is really tough to take a running back right now and too early for a quarterback in a traditional PPR league. That leaves Matthews or a tight end for me.

Matthews is a hard worker who plays football the right way. He runs great routes, gets in and out of breaks cleanly, has soft hands, is a willing blocker and does a nice job of adjusting to poorly thrown balls. The knock against him is he isn't an exceptional athlete. He can jump, but his top end speed as well as his ability to make defenders miss after the catch isn't anything special, which could limit his upside a bit. Nonetheless, his productivity and refinement in the passing game will make NFL teams notice.

1.06 – Eric Ebron, TE North Carolina

Ryan's thoughts: Once we know the landing spots, along with some more height/weight/speed data on each of these players, I think the top TE comes off the board closer to the end of the first round as some of the backs and receivers will gain some value. This early in the process though, I want somewhat of a safe pick and tight end Eric Ebron is one of the safest in the draft. A big and fast tight end, he has been compared to Aaron Hernandez, but only in the good ways. Ebron's blocking is fine and the team that drafts him won't be looking for a blocking tight end anyway, they're looking for that move tight end that is the recent trend in the NFL and Ebron should fit the bill.

My thoughts: Historically speaking, in the majority of leagues the top tight end does go somewhere in the late first round. I understand what Ryan is saying about the other positions rising above, but I really think the tight end position this year is special. It wouldn't be out of the question for both Ebron and Jace Amaro to go in the middle of the first round. Ebron is the better pure athlete at the tight end position but is a little on the smaller side. Hernandez is a very fair comparison in my opinion.

1.07 – Tre Mason, RB Auburn

Jeff M's thoughts: When evaluating running backs, I prioritize patience, pad level, vision and decisiveness above all else. Basically, I want the anti-Chris Johnson. Mason has all these attributes in spades. He wastes no time behind the line, vary rarely tries to bounce a run, and shows great agility and vision, especially in the second level. Add in violence atypical for his size and premium performance in the biggest games of 2013 and you have my fifth ranked player rookie drafts. Some worry about his size or lack of a true second gear, but none of those things has ever held back Ray Rice, to whom Mason compares very favorably.

My thoughts: I'm still not sure what to think about Mason. You can't argue with his production over this past year on some of the biggest stages and against some of the most difficult competition. With that said, he lacks a lot of the special qualities or the wow factor that some look for in running backs. He isn't the fastest, isn't the quickest, but he might be one of the most well rounded runners in the draft.

1.08 – Lache Seastrunk, RB Baylor

Andy's thoughts: Despite his zero reception total this season, Seastrunk is still the best running back in his class. The Baylor offense did not ask him to contribute in the passing game, but he has done it in prior seasons. He has the best combination of balance, speed and agility in his class. He has his downfalls as he does not have good vision and has not performed as well when facing the best competition. Even though Seastrunk isn't a bruiser, he can run with enough power and low to the ground to be an effective inside runner.

My thoughts: If you asked five different fantasy writers who the top running back on their board is, it is very possible that you could get five different answers. In the case of Seastrunk, Andy and I disagree. Seastrunk is near the bottom of my top five running backs because I haven't been very impressed with his vision, which I think is a major requirement for a top flight back. I question his ability to be anything more than the speed part of a committee. When you consider that he's a speed back without anything proven in the passing game, it could be tough for him to find his way onto the field early on.

1.09 – Kelvin Benjamin, WR Florida State

Dan's thoughts: In the January mock, I selected TE Jace Amaro with pick 1.10. I would have been just fine selecting him here as well until Benjamin got to me. It's hard to pass on a guy that is 6'5 and 235 pounds, looks to have an incredible catch radius and can reportedly run a 4.5 40-yard dash – that's enough to spark my interest, especially late in the first round. He caught 54 passes for 1,011 yards and 15 touchdowns during his redshirt sophomore year, his only season as a starter. And he caught the game clinching touchdown in the National Championship game. I know this year's draft is full of talent at receiver, but I was very happy to see him available at pick ten.

My thoughts: I think Benjamin is a prime target to be over-drafted in the early or middle of the first round because he was on such a high profile team and made the winning catch as Dan noted. However, late in the first round it is time to start thinking about him. As many coaches and scouts have said, you can't coach size. Benjamin definitely has that. I do question what he would have done if he wasn't on a team with one of the most dynamic quarterbacks and running games in college football this year. I also wonder about his speed and agility and if he'll be able to separate from NFL defenders on quicker routes instead of just going up and over them.

1.10 – Carlos Hyde, RB Ohio State

Tim's thoughts: Currently number two at the position on my board behind Ka'Deem Carey. He reinvented himself in his senior year and became a complete back. Other than some off-field concerns, Hyde is a solid prospect. Big bruising player, lacks elite speed but will be a solid goal line, short yardage back. Think LenDale White or Shonn Greene. Running back is a position that is very difficult to project until after free agency and the NFL draft – this group is tightly packed and situation matters more than normal.

1.10 – Carlos Hyde, RB Ohio State (Cont.)

My thoughts: I'm glad to see Hyde climb into the first round in this mock, which is where he belongs. Out of all of the running backs who were drafted in the first round of this draft, Hyde is the most complete in terms of size, skill set, and ability. Like Tim, I have Hyde in my top two running backs. On the right team, he could be a great fantasy asset. Upper end RB2 is a very realistic possibility if he ends up on the right team. I think it is very possible that by the time drafts roll around Hyde could be the first running back drafted in almost all leagues.

1.11 – Bishop Sankey, RB Washington

My thoughts: I was really hoping Hyde was going to fall to this pick because I think he is being way undervalued right now. Hyde is in my first tier of running backs for this draft while Sankey is currently in my second tier with a few others. There are a lot of people who feel Sankey might be the best back in this class, though I'm not one of them. I just feel he was the best option at this pick. The team that drafts him will make all of the difference in where he gets drafted in fantasy leagues.

At 205 pounds and 5'10", he has good size and he was very productive at Washington with 3,496 yards and 37 touchdowns on 644 carries during his time there. He also showed some ability in the passing game, hauling in about 30 catches each of the last two seasons. The problem is that physically he isn't special in any way. He reminds me a little bit of a smaller Shonn Greene in that respect. I don't think he'll be elite by any means, but he could be a solid RB2 for several years if he lands in the right spot.

1.12 – Jace Amaro, TE Texas Tech

Brian's thoughts: Amaro had a monster 2013 campaign catching 106 passes for 1,300+ yards and seven touchdowns. His 106 catches ranked him in the top 10 among all pass catchers (even ahead of Sammy Watkins). Amaro can lineup all over the field including the backfield. He has prototypical size for a tight end and likes to take on defenders by lowering his shoulder. Amaro does have a checkered background being arrested once for credit card abuse. He has character concerns off the field, but has the ability to be a great receiving tight end in the NFL.

My thoughts: This is a tight end class that could rival the 2010 class. If you are in need of a starter in a year or two, this is your draft with both Amaro and Ebron having very solid prospects in the NFL. If you haven't seen any of Amaro's games, you're missing out. He isn't blazing fast or overly athletic like a lot of tight ends, but his game reminds me an awful lot of Jason Witten. Amaro is fast enough and has spectacular hands, bringing in just about anything that is within his massive frame. He does a great job of using his body to shield defenders and always seems to be in position to make the catch. There are some character concerns that go with him as Brian mentioned, which could cause him to slide, but he's extremely talented. If teams are convinced the character issues were just youthful indiscretions, then he could still be drafted quite highly. If he is, he need to be a first round pick in fantasy drafts.

2.01 – Charles Sims, RB West Virginia

Ghost's thoughts: Sims has been moving up the charts lately in fantasy circles and I'm going to take a huge part of that credit. I've been telling anyone who will listen that this guy is something special and people shouldn't sleep on him. If he can land in a nice situation, look out. He's a great rusher and a threat to catch passes out of the backfield. I'd gladly take him in the second round and never look back.

My thoughts: Ghost can take some of the credit for Sims' rise up boards, but I think Senior Bowl week had something to do with it as well. Like Ghost, I really like Sims. I think he definitely belongs in the same breath as some of the other top running backs in this draft. The combine could easily make some others take notice of him and push him further up the boards. Sims is drawing a lot of comparisons to Matt Forte right now because he is so prolific in the passing game. He is a little bit smaller than Forte, but his ability in the passing game definitely fits. Playing in the fast paced spread offense of West Virginia makes looking at his productivity a little difficult. The combine will be big for him to see exactly how quick and fast he is.

2.02 – Allen Robinson, WR Penn State

Jeff B's thoughts: Robinson is a player who is growing on me quickly. When watching film of him, the thing that pops off the screen is how incredibly natural he is as a wide receiver. I'm not sure if he possesses the type of straight-line speed as the other receivers in this draft but he makes up for it with very nimble feet and supreme agility that allow him to create separation without laboring very hard. I'm very excited to see his combine and/or pro day as I anticipate he could skyrocket up draft boards with impressive showings.

My thoughts: Robinson is another player who is flying way below most radars at the moment. He's my fifth receiver by a pretty comfortable margin right now behind only the big three and Jordan Matthews. He is one of the best in this draft when it comes to winning contested balls at the point of the catch, which goes a long way in the NFL. I do have some questions, as for others like Jeff, about exactly how fast and quick he might be. A good showing at the combine would go a long ways towards answering these questions and making him a first round fantasy pick.

2.03 – Teddy Bridgewater, QB Louisville

Karl's thoughts: I'm not completely surprised to see Bridgewater at 2.03, but I would be beyond ecstatic to select him at this spot. Bridgewater is one of my favorite players of the 2014 draft. He doesn't do anything great, but he can do everything well. I compare his game to Aaron Rodgers. His intermediate game is what makes him a great prospect. He makes good decisions, and I'll take that over John Elway-type arm strength any day.

My thoughts: Bridgewater's fantasy stock is falling quickly right now due to all of the reports coming out where NFL teams prefer one of the other quarterbacks over Bridgewater. Personally, I think it is a little ridiculous. Bridgewater has been the top quarterback prospect for the last two years. While I don't know about Karl's comparison to Rodgers, I think Bridgewater has a very promising future in the NFL. He has the complete package other than having average arm strength. With that said, it wouldn't surprise me to see the top quarterback in this year's draft fall into the top of the second round though.

2.04 – Jeremy Hill, RB LSU

Scott's thoughts: Hill is a talented pure runner. He has excellent size (6'2" 235 lb) and speed, but didn't catch much with only 18 receptions in 2013. Boy can he run though. He abused Auburn for 184 yards and three touchdowns – not bad production considering he was playing in an LSU committee situation. Off-the-field issues will drop him, but he is a nice value in round two of rookie drafts since he possesses solid upside. I bet he rises into round one of rookie drafts after the NFL Combine.

My thoughts: I think I like Hill even more than Scott does. Along with Sims, I think Hill will be one of the fast risers after the NFL combine. Much like Ben Tate or Christine Michael, he is going to walk into the combine and light it up. NFL and fantasy fans alike will be in awe of his physical talents. The problem is of course the off the field risk. I think a lot of fantasy owners are willing to overlook that though, which could push his stock unrealistically high, just like Michael's, and cause some issues because physically he belongs with the top group of running backs but there are other concerns.

2.05 – Odell Beckham Jr, WR LSU

My thoughts: Beckham is a playmaker in the mold of Randall Cobb, Percy Harvin or Tavon Austin. He isn't quite on their level, but he can still be a very effective player in the NFL. Like most speed freaks, Beckham is likely to shoot up the draft boards after the combine, but his value in the NFL is going to be highly dependent on where he is drafted and how they use him. Much like what happened to Austin this past year, if Beckham ends up in a place with traditional playcalling that can't use Beckham's unique talents he could be the next Dexter McCluster.

Beckham also needs some quality coaching. He isn't very big and from a wide receiver stand point he has some things he needs to work on, which means he is likely to start his NFL career as a return man who slowly sees his role in the passing game expand. The team that he lands on will determine just how long it will be before he sees the field. Patience will be a huge deal with him from a fantasy owner stand point.

2.06 – Johnny Manziel, QB Texas Tech

Ryan's thoughts: I wasn't always a believer in quarterback Johnny Manziel. In fact, it wasn't until the last few games of this past college football season that I believed the former Heisman winner could be a starting quarterback in the league. Now, not only am I on board with Manziel as a starter, I can see him being an elite fantasy option. Chances are though, he (or Teddy Bridgewater) won't be first round rookie picks in dynasty leagues and though there will still be some very good fantasy options in the mid second round, grabbing a player who could be an elite fantasy starter is something you can't pass up.

My thoughts: Opinions on the big four quarterbacks in this draft are all over the place. There are definitely a lot of teams that need quarterbacks, but the value of those quarterbacks in fantasy will be very dependent on which team drafts them. Manziel is the ultimate wildcard at the position as well. He could be the next Tim Tebow or he could be the next Russel Wilson. No one really knows for sure, but there will be a whole NFL front office staking their current job on his success, so you know he's going to be given every chance to succeed.

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2.07 – Devonta Freeman, RB Florida State

Jeff M's thoughts: I love that Freeman was still on the board 18 picks into the draft because he is my third ranked rookie running back. While a bit less dynamic than my first round selection, Tre Mason, Freeman is even more compact and perhaps more powerful than Mason. He runs with great vision and shows little deceleration in and out of cuts. Freeman isn't exactly a burner, but plenty of players in the 4.55-4.6 range are effective NFL runners. Honestly, I hope he runs slow at the combine – maybe then I will be able to grab him in the third round instead of the second.

My thoughts: At this point in the process, I love the players who are available in the early second round, but there is a drop off as you get to the rest of the second round. I'm not as high on Freeman as Jeff is because he just seems very average to me in a lot of areas. He is very good in pass protection and runs well between the tackles. If he runs faster than expected at the combine, he could be a steal in drafts. However, I think he is most likely destined for the power part of a committee.

2.08 – Davante Adams, WR Fresno St.

Andy's thoughts: I was excited to get my sixth ranked receiver in the middle of the second round. This receiver might be the reason why his teammate Derek Carr will get drafted in the first round of the NFL Draft. While he isn't the biggest receiver, Adams long arms makes his catch radius as big as someone 6' 4" despite being two inches shorter. He did not run a complete route tree, but has the athleticism to adjust to the ball in the air and make silly, unbelievable receptions. Adams uses his body to shield the defender from the ball and can outleap almost anyone. An NFL team and your dynasty team might find fantasy gold this late in the draft with this selection.

My thoughts: Andy mentions Adams made Carr what he was. I get the feeling it was either that or the other way around. One of them made the other one look extremely good, but I have no idea which way it goes. The combine will help us to figure out who actually has the physical tools for the next level, but I do have some concerns about Adams. Like Andy mentions, he got by on his athleticism. In the NFL, everyone is a supreme athlete and Adams is going to need some time to adjust his game and learn how to run routes before he can be productive in the NFL. He's a great pick in the second round though and someone that could have a brief future for a patient fantasy owner.

2.09 – Austin Seferian-Jenkins, TE Washington

Dan's thoughts: I was planning on selecting Jared Abbrederis with this pick until ASJ got to me. Of the three tight ends at the top of this draft class, he's my least favorite due to his off the field issues along with concerns about his effort on the field. That said, he's still easily a top 20 pick in my opinion. He's listed at 6'6" and 276 pounds, is very athletic and has great hands. Couple those traits with his skills as a blocker and he has the potential to become a TE1 with top-five upside at the position. I'll gladly take that near the end of round two of any rookie draft.

2.09 – Austin Seferian-Jenkins, TE Washington (Cont.)

Dan's thoughts: I was planning on selecting Jared Abbrederis with this pick until ASJ got to me. Of the three tight ends at the top of this draft class, he's my least favorite due to his off the field issues along with concerns about his effort on the field. That said, he's still easily a top 20 pick in my opinion. He's listed at 6'6" and 276 pounds, is very athletic and has great hands. Couple those traits with his skills as a blocker and he has the potential to become a TE1 with top-five upside at the position. I'll gladly take that near the end of round two of any rookie draft.

My thoughts: The third of the top three tight ends, I think ASJ is a step behind the two who were selected in the first round of this mock draft. He is the biggest of the bunch by a fair amount while being almost athletic. That makes him a very tempting target for teams and fantasy owners alike. Some will compare him to Rob Gronkowski, but I think a more appropriate comparison would be Jermichael Finley. Much like Finley, the ability is there but the effort and mental side of the game are questionable. If an NFL team can get the best out of him, he is going to be a star.

2.10 – Brandin Cooks, WR Oregon State

Tim's thoughts: Probably limited to slot WR in the NFL due to his size. Not likely to be a weekly starter in 12-team standard leagues, but he will get drafted in all rookie drafts unless his situation is atrocious. Expect him to run a fast 40 time and push him up boards.

My thoughts: A great athlete and a supreme college football player, Cooks might be one of those players who reached his peak in college. His game at his size is a bit of a concern when we try to figure out how it translates to bigger and stronger cornerbacks in the NFL. Tim could be right in saying Cooks fits as a slot receiver, but that really isn't his type of game. I struggle trying to figure out where Cooks fits best at the next level, but I know he'll put on a show at the combine and get a lot of people excited.

2.11 – Donte Moncrief, WR Ole Miss

My thoughts: At 6'3" and 225 pounds, Moncrief is a big bodied receiver. Unfortunately for him, his draft stock fell throughout his junior season as he didn't take the next step and might have even taken a step backwards from his sophomore year. He has excellent speed and quickness for his size, but he isn't very polished in the finer arts of playing the wide receiver position. He was inconsistent this year and also struggled anytime he was asked to run a route that took him away from the sideline.

He's likely to get a lot of press at the combine because he is a bit of a size-speed freak, but the more interesting part will be how he looks running the routes since he didn't do much of that at Ole Miss. I think he is a prime candidate to have an Alshon Jeffery type of start to his career. I expect many owners to be disappointed with him during his rookie season, because he has the skill set to become a top flight receiver in the NFL if he works hard and learns how to play the position.

2.12 – Paul Richardson, WR Colorado

Brian's thoughts: Richardson does NOT have prototypical size for a wide receiver. At 6'1" and 170 pounds, he would likely be split in half or grow the largest set of alligator arms in the NFL if he was cracked going over the middle. Richardson has elite athletic ability and can make adjustments with his feet or in the air to make plays. He has a long frame that will allow him to add muscle, but how quickly he can add muscle to suppress the durability questions remains to be seen. Richardson can use his quick feet and speed to beat defenders outside the numbers with his first two steps. He is raw, but if he can improve his focus, weight and route running he could be a nice addition for any team looking to add a speedster to stretch the secondary.

My thoughts: If you like quick twitch, explosive athletes, you need to keep an eye on Richardson. He can fly with the ball in his hands. The best part is he might not have been back to top form this past season. The problem is with his current build I find it pretty difficult to think he's going to play receiver in the NFL. He would get utterly destroyed by NFL corners out wide and cut in half by linebackers or safeties over the middle. Unless he can bulk up a bit without losing speed, I think he is destined to be a star returner but nothing else.

3.01 – Isaiah Crowell, RB Alabama State

Ghost's thoughts: Crowell had the world in his hands at Georgia. He was already being anointed as a future star in the NFL, then he made a series of very stupid mistakes off the football field that cost him his spot on the team. He transferred to Alabama State and by all accounts has gotten his life together. On the field his skills are still incredible and some team is going to get an amazing steal in the NFL Draft when they take him. I want to be the owner of the fantasy team that takes a chance on him and gets rewarded down the line.

My thoughts: Crowell might be the Titus Young of running backs. The pure ability is supreme; maybe even the best of any running back in this draft. The character concerns are also probably the highest of any running back likely to be drafted. He wasn't used very much in the passing game, which could be a concern in today's passing league, but he might be able to figure it out as time goes on. He's a big risk, but that is what the third round is all about.

3.02 – Blake Bortles, QB Central Florida

Jeff B's thoughts: Bortles is my second favorite quarterback in this draft behind Teddy Bridgewater, so getting him in the third round feels like a steal. The comparisons to Jake Locker are fair when it comes to their size and running ability, but Bortles is a much more accurate passer than Locker has ever shown the ability to be. Situation might play a role for him, but with the number of quarterback-needy NFL teams drafting in the top ten, he's a virtual lock to be chosen high enough to warrant being the starter from day one.

My thoughts: Opinions on the quarterbacks are all over the board. At the current point in time, I'm not sure if I want any part of any of them aside from Bridgewater. Bortles and all the rest are incomplete quarterbacks in my eyes. Calling Bortles a more accurate Jake Locker is actually a very fair comparison in my eyes. I think that in the right system and playing with the right supporting cast, Bortles could be an upper end QB2 in fantasy leagues and he'll probably be a late first round or early second round pick in superflex leagues.

3.03 – Marion Grice, RB Arizona State

Karl's thoughts: Grice is a very versatile back. He makes great cuts in space and is excellent out of the backfield. I'll be very interested to see where Grice lands. If he can work on his pass protection, he can find playing time in his first two years. He doesn't have break away speed, but he is quick enough to make up for it.

My thoughts: Grice is a very versatile player who is above average at a lot of things, but excels at very few of them. A lot of NFL teams would be happy to have him come in and help out on special teams and to be their backup running back, but I doubt he is going to get a fair shot at being a starter due to his size and skill set. The best case scenario for Grice would be as a change of pace back to a bigger running back.

3.04 – Jarvis Landry, WR LSU

Scott's thoughts: Landry isn't the fastest wide receiver and he isn't the biggest (6'1" 195 lbs.), but he is a solid playmaker. He had only one productive year at LSU and that's not going to help. He also lacks the top end speed of his teammate, Odell Beckham Jr. In the end, he may not be elite, but could be a solid starter for NFL and fantasy teams. He reminds me of Victor Cruz. I like the value in round three.

My thoughts: The whole Landry/Beckham debate reminds me a lot of the Tavon Austin/Stedman Bailey debate last year. In this case, Landry fills the role of Bailey in that he was the more productive college receiver and is a little bit bigger, but lacks some of the explosiveness of his teammate. Overall, I think the LSU receivers are a step down from the West Virginia pair from last year, but Landry could see some playing time on the right NFL team. I don't think he'll ever be a Victor Cruz style of player, but he could be a dependable WR3 in fantasy in the mold of a Brian Hartline.

3.05 – Jared Abbrederis, WR Wisconsin

My thoughts: Since I live in the upper Midwest, I've known about Abbrederis for a long time now. He wasn't highly recruited coming out of high school and was actually a quarterback and defensive back during those years. He was also a multiple time state track champion. Instead of going to a smaller school, he went to Wisconsin as a walk on quarterback. He was transitioned to the wide receiver position and it was a natural fit. As a wide receiver and return man, he was one of the best that Wisconsin has ever seen.

A high character, high motor player, he is exactly the kind of player NFL front offices want in their locker room. At 6'2", he has the height to be a solid NFL receiver on the outside, but he needs to add a little bit more muscle to his frame if he wants to beat NFL corners. His hands and dedication to football are his real assets. He was a surprise for many at the Senior Bowl and I think he will surprise even more at the combine. It is only a matter of time before he starts to be talked about as a second round fantasy pick, which is where he belongs.

3.06 – Troy Niklas, TE Norte Dame

Ryan's thoughts: I don't like tight end Troy Niklas nearly as much as Ebron or Amaro, but he does have a leg up on them in one area. He's clearly the best blocking tight end prospect in the draft. He is also one of the bigger tight ends in the draft at 6'7", so it's no surprise that he lacks the above average speed of Ebron and others. Niklas is one of the more traditional tight end prospects, which means he should see early playing time, but won't make those plays that makes us think he's actually a wide receiver in a tight end's body.

My thoughts: The mammoth tight end probably should have stayed in college for another year to learn a bit more about playing tight end. As it stands right now, he's a project at the position, but he still fits into that second tight end tier. I think he's likely to be a blocker and red zone threat in the NFL, much like Joseph Fauria was this last year. However, Niklas has more athletic ability than Fauria and could actually become a full time tight end in a few years. He just needs to work hard to be a better receiver and learn how to run routes.

3.07 – Martavis Bryant, WR Clemson

Jeff M's thoughts: I am going to put myself out there and say that Bryant reminds of Randy Moss. They have the same build and long stride and they both compete for the ball when it's in the air. They both show great athleticism as well. And despite good hands, both have a frustrating tendency to let the ball get into their body at times. There are warts, as Bryant's game is wildly inconsistent and unrefined. He could also stand to pack on 15 pounds. Even if Bryant doesn't capitalize fully on his potential, the Clemson product should at least pose an immediate threat on deep throws and in the red zone.

My thoughts: I think it is dangerous to compare anyone to Moss or any other great, but I can see some of the similarities that Jeff is talking about in terms of height and athletic ability. He needs to bulk up and is very raw at the position. It could be a few years before he turns into anything fantasy owners need to take note of, but the potential is still there. Like Jeff said, expect him to be a situational receiver for a while as he tries to learn.

3.08 – Storm Johnson, RB Central Florida

Andy's thoughts: When you are in the third round, finding value is key and nothing screams more value than a running back in my top ten. Johnson is a slasher with open hips who easily finds the cut back lane. He has good downfield vision that he uses to set up his blockers while showing a good burst of speed. He has a few shortcomings as he can dance too much and runs a little high at times. Fumbling has been an issue as he carries the ball like a loaf of bread, but I believe that is correctable.

My thoughts: The Miami transfer only had a little over 300 carries in his college career, but he made the most of them. He showed great agility and acceleration for a running back of his size, 6'1" and 215 pounds. His vision in the open field is one of the best in the class, but he suffers a little bit of Bryce Brown syndrome as he runs side to side and dances way too much behind the line. If he can be coaches to get up the field faster, he could be a steal.

3.09 – James White, RB Wisconsin

Dan's thoughts: Once Abbrederis was selected, my attention switched to his college teammate, White. I've watched every game White has played in his career at Wisconsin and for the most part I've liked what I've seen. He's quick, elusive and good in the passing game, but does have weaknesses to his game, most notably his inability to break tackles. Like many tailbacks entering the league, his fantasy value will depend greatly on where he lands. He should be able to carve out a role as a third down/change of pace back early in his career and has the potential to handle a larger workload if he continues to improve as he has over the last two seasons in Madison. I'm pleased to get my hands on any player with that type of upside this late in the draft.

My thoughts: I have very mixed feelings about White. He definitely isn't as good former teammates Montee Ball or Melvin Gordon. He has been highly productive and had moments where he looked like a future pro. He is on the smaller side and he played behind one of the best run blocking lines in all of football. The fact that he seemed to only get what was blocked and often went down on first contact makes me concerned about his prospects in the NFL. I think he's a special teamer and backup running back, but that's about it at the next level.

3.10 – Colt Lyerla, TE Oregon

Tim's thoughts: We're deep in to crap shoot time at this point so why not really roll the dice? Lyerla had a chance to be a top-TE prospect in this class but squandered it with a series of off the field issues. Big and fast. Relatively good chance he goes undrafted in both the NFL and your rookie draft, but he could break out if given the chance and makes the most of it.

My thoughts: One of the true wildcards of this draft, Lyerla's situation could best be compared to that of Da'Rick Rogers from last year. Lyerla is a true physical talent, but he is also a headcase. He quit on his team in the middle of the season and also has a cocaine possession charge on his record. If he were stable mentally, the 6'4", 245 pound tight end could be a first round pick in both the NFL and in fantasy leagues. There are a lot of concerns about his desire to play and if he can be controlled at the next level. High risk, high reward pick. Perfect for the late third round.

3.11 – Terrance West, RB Towson

My thoughts: If you read the first mock draft, you know I put West into that draft as well just to get him a little bit of press. Late in the third round of fantasy draft is just about the perfect spot for him right now. I think a lot of people are going to suddenly take notice of him with the combine this weekend. He has a rare combination of size and speed. I like to think of him as a more productive, more durable Latavius Murray.

3.11 – Terrance West, RB Towson (Cont.)

The FCS doesn't have a very good history of producing NFL running backs, but West isn't just another FCS running back, he is the most prolific FCS running back in a very long time. He put together 2,519 yards and 41 touchdowns on the ground just during the 2013 season. That's right, just one season, not a career. Granted, the FCS isn't nearly the level of competition of the FBS, but you need to take notice when someone dominates to that extreme. He has ideal size for the position and definitely has some skills. He's a sleeper to watch through the draft process as he will likely be a late round pick in the NFL draft and in fantasy drafts. If we had four rounds in this mock, I would have waited until then to take him.

3.12 – James Wilder Jr, RB Florida State

Brian's thoughts: If the NFL is a place for pedigree, the Mannings play quarterback, the Matthews play Linebacker, the Winslows play tight end and Wilder's play running back. Wilder's father was an NFL running back for ten years for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and once had 492 touches for 2,200+ yards in a season. Wilder Jr. is a 6'2" 230 pound running back from Florida St. that was losing snaps to Devonta Freeman and Karlos Williams by the end of the season. Wilder Jr. runs with reckless abandon and the results were shoulder injuries and at least one concussion in college. He has the physical talent to be a solid running back with his frame. His running style leaves him exposed to injury against bigger, faster, stronger NFL players. I feel he is worth the risk at in the third round as he is likely a mid-round running back pick in the NFL draft.

My thoughts: I have a feeling the off the field legal troubles will make Wilder drop into the last rounds of the NFL draft if not all the way out of the draft. He has great size for the position but is pretty much a straight ahead runner. There isn't a whole lot of shake to his game, but he would be a great fit as a goal-line and short yardage back if he can keep his nose clean. Given his history, that is a pretty big if.

POST-COMBINE MOCK DRAFT
AUTHOR: JACOB FELDMAN, POSTED 3/23

The whirlwind that is the NFL Combine has come and gone. We've let the dust settle a bit and all of us have had enough to reflect upon what we have learned. For many, the NFL combine is the first time we get to actually see the 2014 NFL class, which also means it's a time when opinions about players can (and often do) change in drastic ways.

What makes it even more fun is we all look for different pieces of the puzzle when we look at the combine. Some look at body type and size, others look at the way a player is put together, a few of us are all about the numbers and data while there are still others who like to make note of the way a player moves or catches the ball. No matter what it is that impresses you the most, your opinions are probably different now than they were a month ago in the days leading up to the combine. For that reason, we bring you another edition in our series of DLF Team rookie mock drafts.

Here is a quick refresher on the guidelines given to our drafters before each mock begins:

1) Standard PPR scoring with normal lineup requirements
2) Draft order is randomly generated and no trades are allowed
3) Draft the best player available without any consideration for team need

Once the mock is complete, each drafter was asked to provide some comments about the player they drafted. In order to provide a second perspective on each selection, I will also provide some comments on each of the choices. From time to time we will disagree on a player. I'll be the first to admit that we, and especially me, will get a few of these players wrong. It happens! Keep in mind opinions about the players are very fluid and continuing to change as we do more analysis and more research.

1.01 – Sammy Watkins, WR Clemson
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: 1.01

Scott's thoughts: Play it again Sammy. No surprise here, although I think it's a lot closer than most might think with Mike Evans.

My thoughts: I said this before and I'll say it again. There isn't another choice at this pick at this point in time, regardless of your league setup. I think even if he gets drafted by the dreaded Raiders you still take him first overall. Good receivers on bad teams still produce fantasy results. We went through the same thing a few years back when Justin Blackmon was drafted by the Jaguars. If it wasn't for the off the field issues, Blackmon would be a top 15 dynasty receiver without much question. If you need someone at a different position, trade this pick for a veteran or make the pick and trade Watkins later. I don't think Watkins is the same level of a prospect as Calvin Johnson, AJ Green, or Julio Jones, but he is close. He isn't the biggest player, but he is one of the most complete receivers we have seen in a few years. He has the physical and the mental side of the game – that's rare in a rookie receiver these days.

1.02 – Mike Evans, WR Texas A&M
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: 1.03

Brian's thoughts: Youth, size and NFL potential make Mike Evans a hot rookie name in 2014. The Texas A&M product had a fabulous combine with a 4.53 forty yard dash and 37" inch vertical, combined with a massive frame measuring at 6'5" and 231 lbs. Evans had fabulous tape from the 2013 season and will only be 21 at the start of the 2014 NFL season. He is a great option to take as the number two pick in rookie drafts and may end up number one if Watkins lands in an "undesirable location."

My thoughts: I really like Evans and for the difference in trade market price right now between the 1.01 and 1.02, he might be the better value of the two. The argument could be made that due to the size difference (4 inches and 20 pounds), Evans is actually a better physical specimen than Watkins. I still think Watkins is the better prospect, regardless of landing spot. Still, I would be very happy to have either one on my roster.

1.03 – Brandin Cooks, WR Oregon State
Pre- Combine Mock Draft Selection: 2.10

Jeff H's thoughts: With 1.01 and 1.02 largely ordained in the church of fantasy football, 1.03 is where the mystery begins. There are, literally, eight or so players who could be taken at this selection depending on talent evaluation or fantasy team need. For me, the choice usually comes down to talent over situation. With the running back class less than exciting, at least with a high pick, the choice came down to Brandin Cooks and Marqise Lee. Lee was lighting up the collegiate ranks until 2013; he just couldn't overcome poor team and quarterback play. Meanwhile, Cooks continued producing at a ridiculously high level. While Lee has the bigger body, I just can't ignore Cooks' productivity. In 2012, Cooks amassed 1,151 yards and five touchdowns. In 2013, he recorded 128 receptions, 1,730 yards and 16 touchdowns. And as I've said many times, you couldn't ask for better character and drive. Toss in a 4.33 forty and I'm sold. I'm going against my normal reasoning here because Cooks is just too good to pass up.

My thoughts: This is where things start to get really interesting. As Jeff mentioned, you could make an argument for a large number of selections at this point in the draft. Cooks is definitely one of those, but I'm a bit surprised he was the one Jeff picked. I knew Cooks was going to fly up the rankings once people saw him run, I just didn't think it would be this far, this fast. He's not just lightning fast on the field, but his ability to change directions while maintaining speed as well as stop and start on a dime are nothing short of elite. In fact, his 20 yard shuttle was tied for the best all time at the combine! I'm still a little concerned about his size and how it will transition to the NFL, but larger than expected hands and the fact his exact measurements came out almost identical to the great Steve Smith have lessened those concerns a bit for me.

1.04 – Marqise Lee, WR USC
Pre- Combine Mock Draft Selection: 1.02

Ken K's thoughts: "Which Marqise Lee are we getting?" It's a simple question, but one every dynasty owner has to answer if they have a selection in round one. Is it the 2011 and 2012 version that set the world on fire or the 2013 version who battled injuries, poor quarterback play and had a ho-hum combine. If I'm right and get the "old" Lee, this is a steal.

Many will look at his 57/791/4 line from last season, combine that with his disappointing combine performance and feel Lee was overrated to begin with. To me, I see the 191 catches, 2,864 receiving yards and 25 touchdowns he scored his first two seasons as a Trojan and salivate at the possibility of getting the draft's best player at 1.04.

My thoughts: Prior to the combine, I had a top three of Watkins, Evans and Lee pretty much locked in before it opens up to one of several. After the combine, Lee fell out of that "locked in" top group. With Lee, we've had a bit of a Jekyll and Hyde affair. He was great his first two years, making some wonder if he was the next receiver to be an AJ Green-level of prospect. Then 2013 arrived and he hasn't looked the same. Maybe it was the perfect storm of a deteriorating team and injuries or maybe it was the fact that Robert Woods left, making Lee the focus of defenses. His combine was good, but not great. He didn't look like an elite prospect, but rather just a good one, which makes him likely to slide down boards a bit.

1.05 – Odell Beckham, Jr., WR LSU
Pre- Combine Mock Draft Selection: 2.05

Derek's thoughts: I'm in love with Beckham. While this pick is likely high based on current mocks, I foresee his stock rising considerably as we get closer to the draft. If he lands a prime spot, I wouldn't be surprised to see him as the 1.03.

My thoughts: Derek might be right on several accounts. Many will think he is a little off his rocker by selecting Beckham this high and mentioning him in the running for 1.03 seems a little extreme right now to most.

Personally, I think Derek is dead on.

Beckham might be a little on the short end for some, but his other dimensions are right on par with receivers several inches taller. He is also extremely fast, explosive, and possesses elite agility. I actually have Beckham (and others) ahead of Lee and extremely close to Cooks for the third wide receiver slot. The physical combination of size and speed Beckham possesses is actually the best combination out of the entire rookie class. Don't sleep on him!

1.06 – Eric Ebron, TE North Carolina
Pre- Combine Mock Draft Selection: 1.06

Dan's thoughts: There's only been one tight end selected in the first round of the NFL draft over the last three years – that's going to change. Ebron solidified his place as the top tight end in the draft while at the combine. He ran the second fastest 40 (4.60) and looked impressive catching passes during drills. More importantly, he looks like a nightmare for opposing defenses to cover when you watch film of him in college. Until we know where everybody ends up, he's safe to take in the middle of the first round in rookie drafts.

My thoughts: I don't see Ebron as a Jimmy Graham or a Vernon Davis, but he is the next step down. He has the talent and the physical tools to be what everyone hoped Jermichael Finley would become. His size is a touch under ideal and his blocking needs some work, but he is more than athletic enough to give NFL defenses fits, much like Julius Thomas did at times last year. Where Ebron goes in fantasy drafts will be more a product of which running backs and wide receivers gain or lose value in the NFL Draft, but Ebron will be a very solid and safe options in the middle of round one of fantasy drafts.

1.07 – Carlos Hyde, RB Ohio State
Pre- Combine Mock Draft Selection: 1.10

My thoughts: We didn't get to see very much of Hyde at the combine due to him pulling a hamstring during his first 40-yard dash, but between what I did see from him and disappointment in what some of the other running backs showed, Hyde has climbed to the top of my running backs ranks. One of the best things to like about Hyde is he is built for the part. In an age where the bell cow is dying, Hyde has what it takes to be that type of player for teams that still desire to have one.

Hyde isn't the fastest of running backs, but you wouldn't expect that out of someone his size. What he lacks in speed he more than makes up for with his running style. He runs with great power, falls forward and breaks a lot of tackles. He is built to take and deliver punishment down after down. When you combine natural hands with all that running ability, you get someone who can be a true three down running back in the NFL.

1.08 – Jordan Matthews, WR Vanderbilt
Pre- Combine Mock Draft Selection: 1.05

Jarrett's thoughts: One of the value yo-yos in this early process. Once thought to be a lock for a high first round rookie pick, questions about his YAC ability, physicality and ability to create separation have started to push his value down. He still ran in the 4.4s at the combine. In this deep receiver class, where there seems to be a consensus top two, then a large jumble after that, his value will likely depend on his ultimate destination.

My thoughts: Matthews had a very nice combine, but he was overshadowed by some spectacular showings from the likes of Cooks and Beckham. For that reason, I expected him to slide a little bit in this mock. In my opinion, he might represent the best value of the entire draft because he isn't flashy enough to stand out and is likely to be forgotten. In my own rankings, he is just a small step behind Cooks and Beckham and is a step above the likes of Lee and Kelvin Benjamin. Someone with his size and physical talents is going to have a nice NFL career.

1.09 – Ka'Deem Carey, RB Arizona
Pre- Combine Mock Draft Selection: 1.04

Ghost's thoughts: Still one of my favorite backs in the draft despite an underwhelming Combine performance. Carey has shown the ability to consistently get it done and gain the yards when it counts. I think he'll be one of the top backs selected in this class and there would be no way he comes back around to me in the next round.

My thoughts: Out of all of the high profile players who might be drafted in fantasy leagues, Carey might have been the one who I was most disappointed with post-combine. Calling his performance underwhelming is being very kind. His 40-yard dash time of 4.7 seconds at the combine and 4.66 at his pro day are red flags – that is slower than the likes of Shonn Greene, Alfred Morris and Montee Ball, all of whom were ripped apart by critics for their lack of speed after running a 4.6 at the combine before showing improvement at their pro days.

Carey also looked sloppy and slow with his cuts and at times fought the ball when he was trying to make catches. He didn't look like a future fantasy starter to me and what I saw made me feel like I need to go back and look at what he did. Right now, I'm going to disagree a bit and say I'm not sure he belongs in the first round.

1.10 – Allen Robinson, WR Penn State
Pre- Combine Mock Draft Selection: 2.02

Jaron's thoughts: After missing out on stealing Jordan Matthews by two picks, I went with the next wide receiver on my board. Though he won't be an elite playmaker, Robinson reminds me of Marques Colston with his combination of size and possession skills. A physical receiver who has proven he can win contested balls and be an asset in the red zone, Robinson has also been very productive despite the fact he will only be 21 years old as a rookie.

My thoughts: I go back and forth a bit on Robinson. Originally, I had him on par with Matthews, but he's slowly been falling off that level. His combine performance knocked him down a little bit as well in my eyes. He has nice height and good build, but his hands and arms are small for his height. He was also slower than I hoped, confirming my fear he was competing for so many jump balls because he struggled to get separation. At least he was winning those jump balls, though! The comparison to Colston, though he is several inches shorter and a little slower, is fair. Robinson is a receiver who is going to need to win at the point of catch because he's going to struggle to get separation in the NFL.

1.11 – Lache Seastrunk, RB Baylor
Pre- Combine Mock Draft Selection: 1.08

Jeff B's thoughts: I got double-sniped on this pick as Carey and Robinson were my preferences, but Seastrunk, the number two running back on my board, is still a nice consolation. Amongst this draft class, I firmly believe Seastrunk has the highest ceiling. He was a very good route runner and hands catcher in passing drills at the NFL Combine and his 4.45 speed in the 40-yard dash cements him as a bona fide three-down back at the NFL level. He might not start out as a three-down back, depending on where he lands, but if a team which covets Seastrunk's diverse skill set and has carries up for grabs snags him, the sky is the limit.

My thoughts: I feel a little better about Seastrunk's passing game ability after seeing him catch a few passes and run some routes at the combine. I still have concerns about his size and character as well as his vision and decision making when running with the ball. There are several like Jeff who have Seastrunk as a top two or three running back in this class, but he's in the second tier of this class for me. I see him as more of a committee back in the NFL, but if he shines in that role he could see an increased workload down the road.

1.12 – Davante Adams, WR Fresno State
Pre- Combine Mock Draft Selection: 2.08

Jeff M's thoughts: Adams has become one of my favorite targets in this year's crop of rookie wide receivers. He has good speed (4.56, 40) and size (6'1", 212 lbs) with big, soft hands and is a red-zone machine. In two years at Fresno State, Adams accumulated 233 receptions, 3,031 yards, and 38 touchdowns. I am well aware these insane sounding numbers were inflated by the offense he played in, but so were the college stats of a guy Adams is very similar to in the form of Michael Crabtree. I see him as a fairly safe pick with mid-range WR2 potential.

My thoughts: I always get a little concerned when there is a top flight receiver paired up with a top flight quarterback in college. One of them is making the other one look better than they really are (read this guide to find out who it may be). Sometimes it is easy for me to get a feel which way it is, such as Mike Evans making Johnny Manziel look better than he really is.

With Adams, it isn't as easy to tell and that concerns me a bit. I'm not quite sure how good he really is or can be. He does have decent size and okay speed, but I'm a little concerned about his hand size. He only has nine inch hands, which is a fair amount below the mean of the NFL for receivers. I've been seeing a strong correlation between hand size and success as an NFL wide receiver. It isn't conclusive, but it is a concern for me when a 6'1" receiver has some of the smallest hands in the whole class.

2.01 – Charles Sims, RB West Virginia
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: 2.01

Scott's thoughts: I like Sims. He reminds me a bit of Matt Forte. He is an excellent receiver, has good size for the position and good speed as shown by his 4.48 second 40-yard dash. He does have small hands, but it didn't stop him from catching 200+ passes in four years.

My thoughts: Sims is quickly turning into a DLF staff favorite with several of us leading the bandwagon right now. I think he definitely belongs in the top five running backs and is higher in my personal rankings than a few of the backs taken in the first round of this mock. The comparison we keep hearing is Matt Forte because Sims is so prolific in the passing game. As I've said before, he is a little bit smaller than Forte and goes down more easily, but his ability in the passing game definitely fits. He has a nice showing at the combine and I think his versatility will make him at least a top five running back by the time the draft rolls around.

2.02 – Donte Moncrief, WR Ole Miss
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: 2.11

Brian's thoughts: Moncrief is a little more raw than many of the players taken in round one, but his upside is significant and he has the body to be a true WR1 in the NFL. His 6'2" 221 lb. frame coupled with an official 4.40 forty yard dash (third among wide receivers), 39.5" vertical (fourth among wide receivers) and 132 inch broad jump (first among wide receivers) make him a physically gifted wide receiver. Moncreif has the ability to be special at the next level, but will need to be coached up. He is only going to be 21 at the start of the 2014 NFL season and has time to mature. He may end up in the late first round of rookie drafts in the right situation. I love his upside and I feel his best football is ahead of him.

My thoughts: A true size/speed freak at the wide receiver position, Moncrief has a lot of the key assets that can't be taught to a wide receiver. The issue is he has almost none of the assets that can be taught. He is one of the rawest receivers in this class, but if he lands on a well-run team, especially one with an established veteran to show him the ropes, he could turn into a solid starter in a year or two. If you're drafting Moncrief, you need to be very patient. He isn't going to do much as a rookie and maybe not even as a second year player, but the raw talent is there.

2.03 – Kelvin Benjamin, WR FSU
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: 1.09

Jeff H's thoughts: I wasn't necessarily planning on a second receiver early in the second round, instead believing one of the quarterbacks would fall. Well, the quarterbacks did fall, but Benjamin remained on the board. There is just no way he should be on the board at 2.03. Zero. In fact, Benjamin was firmly in the mix for my 1.03 selection. He's a huge specimen at 6'5", 240 lbs. He has 10 1/4" hands. Many were scared off due to speed concerns but Benjamin posted a 4.61 forty. While he posted the slowest mark of any of my top 12 rookie receivers, his size and catch radius more than make up for this time, which is NOT historically bad. Receivers such as Anquan Boldin and Larry Fitzgerald were in the 4.70 range, give or take. I expect Benjamin to be a late first round selection come May and if he slips to the bottom of your first round, don't question it, just make the selection.

My thoughts: Like Jeff, I was surprised Benjamin slipped into the second round of this mock draft. For me, he rounds out the bottom of my second tier in this draft, which would put him as my ninth or tenth best player overall. He isn't fast nor agile when compared to most receivers, but at his size you don't need to be. Someone with his size is going to be used by an NFL team. I don't know if I see a consistent starter when I look at Benjamin, but I do see someone who will have a role, be involved and be given a chance to grow. He has the size of Megatron, it is just too bad he doesn't move like him.

2.04 – Bishop Sankey, RB Washington
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: 1.11

Ken's thoughts: In a draft full of question marks at the running back position, I actually like Sankey more than most. He's not the fastest running back in this class, nor is he the best pass catcher, red zone threat, short yardage player or the most dynamic.

So, what gives?

To me, Sankey has one thing coaches are going to love in the NFL – toughness. On the season, Sankey averaged over 25 carries per game, dispelling the notion his size (5'10", 200 lbs.) limits his ability to be a workhorse. In fact, he had three games last season with at least 24 carries and he averaged a healthy 190 rushing yards in those contests.

Sankey is no volume runner and should be a nice producer at the next level. He's a complete player with few distinct strengths, but also no apparent weaknesses.

My thoughts: Throughout most of the draft process so far I've been a little higher on Sankey than most. Detractors of Sankey will point out he really doesn't excel at much of anything. He is more of a jack of all trades kind of running back. He reminds me a bit of Le'Veon Bell or Zac Stacy in that regard. In the right situation, Sankey could be a very solid asset. I would actually rather have him over more highly regarded prospects like Carey or Seastrunk right now.

2.05 – Teddy Bridgewater, QB Louisville
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: 2.03

Derek's thoughts: Even though the hype surrounding Bridgewater has died down a bit, I still believe he'll end up being an important fantasy quarterback in the coming years. With all of my targets at receiver off the board and with a general disinterest in this class of running backs, I'll take the best quarterback available.

My thoughts: The first quarterback goes off the board in the middle of the second round, which sounds about right in traditional one quarterback leagues. I also think it is right that Bridgewater is the first one drafted. Even with all of the media reports questioning the quality of the quarterbacks, I still think Bridgewater is the best of the bunch. He has the skill set you want and can run a team effectively. I don't see a super high upside for him, but he's the safest and a likely QB2 in fantasy leagues after a few years. Imagining a player with Eli Manning or Philip Rivers-type of production is a fair expectation.

2.06 – Jace Amaro, TE Texas Tech
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: 1.12

Dan's thoughts: Until a few weeks ago, Amaro was my top-ranked tight end. He's athletic enough to play in the slot, runs very good routes and is excellent at making contested grabs. Many have mentioned his off the field history as a red flag, but from what I've read, it sounds like teenage mistakes. Although I moved Eric Ebron ahead of him in my rankings (I chose him in the first round), I'm thrilled to take him in the middle of round two.

My thoughts: Like Dan, I had Amaro first in my tight end rankings by a small margin and flip flopped him with Ebron after the combine. The gap between the two is very small, but I see them as different types of tight ends. As mentioned in round one, I picture Ebron as a Julius Thomas-type while Amaro is more of a Jason Witten or Owen Daniels-type of tight end. He's more of the bigger body who uses positioning to defeat defenses. He is still athletic, it just isn't on the same level as Ebron.

2.07 – Jeremy Hill, RB LSU
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: 2.04

My thoughts: I expected Hill to go into the combine and light it up. Instead he went in and looked very average with a 4.66 second 40-yard dash and very underwhelming jumps. It was a big disappointment and given his character issues, it could be a major hit to his value. It will be interesting to see if he can improve on his numbers at his pro day. If he cannot, he's going to fall further down my rankings.

Using hindsight, this was probably a bit too early for Hill given his performance at the combine, but this could be the start of the fourth tier in this draft with the first tier being the first two picks, the second bring the next six to eight, and the third tier running from the late first through the middle of the second round. The combine left more questions about Hill than answers.

2.08 – Isaiah Crowell, RB Alabama State
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: 3.01

Jarrett's thoughts: I was actually surprised he fell to me here, as I've seen this athletic freak go much higher as he seems to be widely regarded as most physically gifted running back in this class. Character concerns will push him down both in the NFL and rookie drafts, but he has all the makings of a high upside later pick.

My thoughts: Opinions on Crowell will be all over the board on draft day. The character concerns are one of the highest in the entire draft, but so is his raw talent. By the time the NFL draft rolls around, it wouldn't surprise me to see Crowell being discussed as a late first round fantasy pick by some while others are viewing him as a third round pick. From a physical standpoint, he has what it takes outside of the passing game, where he wasn't used. It isn't clear if he can and just didn't or if he actually can't play a role in that aspect of the game. His effort is also questionable. If he can keep his nose clean and actually try, he is going to be a steal for NFL teams and fantasy owners alike.

2.09 – Tre Mason, RB Auburn
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: 1.07

Ghost's thoughts: His dad was in De La Soul, I mean come on! Who couldn't select him? In all seriousness, Mason is very shifty and can work his way through holes very well. His size may limit his time on the field, but I have faith his production will make up for it.

My thoughts: This was quite the drop from his 1.07 selection in our pre-combine mock draft. I think it is a product of just how vast the opinions are on Mason. Some look at him and his solid production at Auburn and see a future starter in the NFL. Others look at his size and style and think he's going to struggle at the next level. He showed nice explosiveness at the combine during the drills, but I'm still torn on him transitioning to the NFL. Earlier I compared him to a smaller Montee Ball without the passing game skills and I still think that fits.

2.10 – Devonta Freeman, RB Florida State
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: 2.07

Jaron's thoughts: A solid blocker with great ability as a pass catcher, at the very least Freeman should be an effective third-down running back in the NFL. I'm not expecting the Brian Westbrook comparison to necessarily come to fruition, but it gives us an idea on the type of his skill set he possesses. He could be part of a RBBC, but most running backs after the top tier will be. At the end of the second round, Freeman seems most likely to be trusted early on given his third-down abilities.

My thoughts: Honestly, I haven't really spent a lot of time looking at Freeman. It isn't because I'm lazy, it's more because every time I look at him, I don't really see anything of note. He just seems very 'blah' to me. He is a lot like Sankey in that he doesn't excel at anything except Sankey does everything better than Freeman does. I expect Freeman to be a committee back for his career, maybe getting a shot at a starting role due to injury, but I don't ever see him as more than a flex play in fantasy leagues. He's likely to have a long career as the second back on a team.

2.11 – Austin Sefarian-Jenkins, TE Washington
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: 2.09

Jeff B's thoughts: Despite the red flags which deservingly surround Seferian-Jenkins, I still believe he's the best tight end prospect in this draft class. As they say, you can't coach size, and ASJ (6',6", 270 pounds) has plenty of it and then some. He's been hampered by an injury thus far in the draft evaluation process, but once he's healthy, I expect he'll test out very well. He might not have the athleticism or as high of a ceiling as Eric Ebron, but it's very difficult to imagine a scenario where ASJ doesn't become a very productive NFL and fantasy player.

My thoughts: Jeff is way higher on ASJ than I am. He is a very distant third in my tight end rankings behind the top two players. The foot isn't a major concern for me from a long term perspective. I'm much more concerned about his desire and effort to be a top player in the NFL. He has the physical tools, but I don't know if he has the mental maturity or the drive to push himself to develop the skills he needs. I think it is actually fairly likely he could bust just because he doesn't want to put in the effort. He could also turn into another Brandon Pettigrew where the physical talents are there, but very average drive limits the upside.

2.12 – Jarvis Landry, WR LSU
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: 3.04

Jeff M's thoughts: Following a disastrous combine (4.77 (!), 40), I likely took Landry earlier than I should have. But because I wasn't so sure he'd be there at the end of the third, I went for it. Bad 40 time aside, Landry is perhaps the most polished receiver in this class. He is a great route runner with very good hand, plus run blocking ability and shows an aggressive fearlessness over the middle and in the red zone. Landry's ceiling isn't super high, but the floor isn't very low. Sometimes slow and steady wins the race.

My thoughts: Landry has good size and is a very polished receiver in terms of route running and catching the ball, but the combine showed some glaring holes in his resume. Landry just isn't physically on par with other NFL receivers. He is slow just about any way that you slice it from straight line speed to getting in and out of his breaks, to just about anything else. I think his ceiling might be as depth on an NFL team as someone who could possibly be the third or fourth receiver, but that might be about it.

3.01 – Troy Niklas, TE Notre Dame
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: 3.06

Scott's thoughts: He's an impressive physical specimen, but short on experience as a tight end. His combine performance was not very inspiring, but he is still a solid overall prospect with upside. His situation will have a huge impact on his value.

My thoughts: The mammoth tight end probably should have stayed in college for another year to learn a bit more about playing the position. As it stands right now, he's a project, but he still fits into that second tight end tier. I think he's likely to be a blocker and red zone threat in the NFL at first, much like Joseph Fauria was this last year. However, Niklas has more athletic ability than Fauria and could actually become a full time tight end in a few years. He just needs to work hard to be a better receiver and learn how to run routes.

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3.02 – Paul Richardson, WR Colorado
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: 2.12

Brian's thoughts: Let's start with the primary knock on Richardson and get that out of the way. His 6'0", 175 lb. frame is a little lean for NFL standards. His body may not hold up to the punishment of the NFL game. Richardson is a lottery ticket type draft pick that may boom or bust. In the right system Richardson could be a very effective slot receiver and return specialist. He has the speed to stretch defenses and was able to be very productive in an offense without much supporting cast. His game breaking ability could make him a solid NFL player. I LOVE his value in round three of rookie drafts.

My thoughts: I think Brian is dead on in terms of the main knock against Richardson. His size just isn't where it needs to be to play wide receiver in the NFL. However, if he is out in space he can be a solid weapon. I expect him to be a return specialist in the NFL in the mold of Ted Ginn or Devin Hester, just not quite that dynamic. I wouldn't expect him to be a wide receiver, but if you're looking for upside, he has it. I just think it is a pretty big long shot.

3.03 – Blake Bortles, QB Central Florida
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: 3.02

Jeff H's thoughts: I often shop at True Value, at least in rookie drafts. If, arguably, the top name in a skill position falls into the second or third round, you might as well just enter his name when I'm on the clock. The same can be said for Bortles here. While I have Teddy Bridgewater a hair higher than Bortles currently, there's a good chance Bortles will end up on top before my final rankings are done. Either way, Bortles is one of three interesting first round quarterbacks in 2014. I'd love to see him go to Houston or Cleveland, but in any case, as the most prototypical passer in the group, he's a safe bet to have a long career in the NFL. At 3.03, there's no barrier to the selection.

My thoughts: This is a very safe, "best player available" kind of pick. Bortles is going to be a first round choice in the NFL Draft. He has the talent and will have the situation to be a starter in the NFL – that is more than can be said for pretty much anyone else left on the board at this point in time. I still see him as a more accurate Jake Locker, which means he has QB2 type of upside. I don't think he has much chance to be an elite quarterback, but he's a very safe bet to be a fantasy backup at the position.

3.04 – Johnny Manziel, QB Texas A&M
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: 2.06

Ken's thoughts: At this point in the draft, you roll the dice and hope you get a steal. Johnny Manziel is this year's most polarizing player as it's nearly impossible to argue he has both the highest ceiling AND lowest floor.

In the end, Manziel is either going to further revolutionize the position and bring hope to a franchise or end up being a consistent guest star on "Keeping up with the Kardashians."

Getting a shot in the dark with Manziel in the third round? Sign me up.

3.04 – Johnny Manziel, QB Texas A&M (Cont.)
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: 2.06

My thoughts: The third round is all about fliers and Manziel definitely fits that category. The opinions on his fantasy prospects are just as widely spread as the opinions on his merits as an NFL quarterback. He could be the next Brett Favre, possibly right down to the substance abuse issues, or he could a narcissistic Tim Tebow. If the third round is all about upside and potential reward, this is what you want.

3.05 – Shaquelle Evans, WR UCLA
Pre-Combine Mock Draft

Derek's thoughts: Honestly, this is more of a gut pick than anything else. Evans possesses good speed and I liked what I saw out of him in my limited viewings of his college tape. In the third round, I'll roll the dice on him.

My thoughts: When I look at Evans, I see an undersized possession receiver. He isn't undersized in general, it's just that most possession receivers tend to be players with big catch radiuses who can go up for the ball if needed to ensure the third down and seven yards to go pass is caught. He is tough and seems comfortable going over the middle, but I don't see much that is too special about him from my limited viewings.

3.06 – Jared Abbrederis, WR Wisconsin
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: 3.05

Dan's thoughts: After a relatively humdrum combine where he ran a 4.50 second 40 and was only able to do four bench press reps, Abbrederis isn't moving up many draft boards – that could be a mistake, however. He's incredibly smart, runs excellent routes and has superb hands. He was a former walk on at Wisconsin and worked his way to becoming a two-time All-Big Ten selection. It'll likely take a couple years so he can build strength, but I have faith he'll become a quality WR3 for dynasty owners with WR2 upside.

My thoughts: I have been very high on Abbrederis for a long time. Part of it is his story is tough to beat. He was a walk-on quarterback who transitioned into one of the best wide receivers in the history of the Wisconsin program. His high character, high motor personality will make NFL teams fall in love with him. With that said, his combine was very average and a bit of a disappointment. I think in this case though, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts and he has a chance to be a very solid pro.

3.07 – Terrance West, RB Towson
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: 3.11

My thoughts: I've taken West in the third round of all of our rookie mock drafts thus far, so I'm starting to run out of new things to say about him. Late in the third round of fantasy draft is just about the perfect spot for him right now. His chiseled build and above average runs and jumps for his size undoubtedly will get him noticed by a few NFL teams. He has a rare combination of size and speed. I like to think of him as a more productive, more durable Latavius Murray.

There are concerns, though.

The FCS doesn't have a very good history of producing NFL running backs, but West isn't just another FCS running back, he is the most prolific FCS running back seen in a very long time. He put together 2,519 yards and 41 touchdowns on the ground just during the 2013 season. That's right, just one season, not a career. Granted, the FCS isn't nearly the level of competition of the FBS, but you need to take notice when someone dominates to that extreme.

He has ideal size for the position and definitely has some skills. He's a sleeper to watch through the draft process as he will likely be a late round pick in the NFL Draft and in fantasy drafts. If we had four rounds in this mock, I might have waited until then to take him. He could be someone who rises up the depth chart of an NFL team in the fall.

3.08 – Colt Lyerla, TE Oregon
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: 3.10

Jarrett's thoughts: Another character concern, high upside player. I'd much rather use my later rookie picks on players who have high ceilings and low floors as opposed to low ceiling/high floor guys.

My thoughts: One of the true wildcards of this draft, Lyerla's situation could best be compared to that of Da'Rick Rogers from last year. Lyerla is a true physical talent, but he is also a headcase. He quit on his team in the middle of the season and also has a cocaine possession charge on his record. If he were stable mentally, the 6'4", 245 pound tight end could be a first round pick in both the NFL and in fantasy leagues. There are a lot of concerns about his desire to play and if he can be controlled at the next level. Here's a high risk, high reward pick – perfect for the late third round by an owner looking for a lottery ticket.

3.09 – Brandon Coleman, WR Rutgers
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: Undrafted

Ghost's thoughts: With all the big receivers off the board very quickly, I'm going for the value route here. Picking Coleman in the third, I'll bet, will look like a steal down the road. He's a huge receiver who could really help a developing quarterback on the outside. He's the kind of receiver who you can throw a prayer up to and he could come down with it.

My thoughts: I'm not really a fan of Coleman. Yes, he is big and has decent speed for his 6'6" frame, but outside of that he doesn't fit the bill of a NFL receiver. He reminds me a little bit of a Kris Durham type of receiver. Someone who is best suited to being the third or fourth receiver on an NFL team and who can't effectively challenge NFL defenses enough to keep a starting role. I'm not sure he'll ever be a fantasy asset outside of super deep leagues.

3.10 – Marion Grice, RB Arizona State
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: 3.03

Jaron's thoughts: After taking Freeman in the third, I went with another running back with good blocking and pass-catching skills. In less than a full season, Grice caught 50 passes out of the backfield and led the nation in touchdowns most of the year. He won't be "the guy" on an offense, but is a versatile player who will contribute in many ways and does the little things well. His return abilities also give him an even better shot of sticking around.

My thoughts: Like a few of the other running backs who were drafted in the late second or early third round, I think Grice's upside is as a part of a committee. He had a nice year at Arizona State, but struggled running between the tackles and didn't fight off many defenders. I view him as a third down back or change of pace runner who plays a solid role on special teams, which would limit his upside a bit.

3.11 – Bruce Ellington, WR South Carolina
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: Undrafted

Jeff B's thoughts: His 4.31 unofficial 40-yard dash at the NFL Combine was blazing fast and he looked extremely athletic in the position drills. The only thing Ellington lacks is size, but because I view him as a top-tier prospect specifically as a slot receiver, that doesn't deter me much. His initial NFL career will mostly include kick returning, but as he learns some of the nuances to playing the slot, he should develop into a very nice player. I wouldn't draft him before the mid-third round in rookie drafts, but getting him here at the end feels like very good value in terms of risk-reward ratio.

My thoughts: I think this is about right for Ellington. I was surprised by his combine performance even if his 4.31 unofficial time was downgraded to a 4.45 official time. He is smaller, but built very thickly. He showed great acceleration and change of direction ability and will be an asset to an NFL team as a returner. He could also earn his way onto the field as a slot receiver and possibly produce some WR3/WR4 type numbers in that role.

3.12 – Tyler Gaffney, RB Stanford
Pre-Combine Mock Draft Selection: Undrafted

Jeff M's thoughts: Gaffney is a player who really raised his stock at the combine. He ran a 4.49 40 and really impressed in the three cone drill and 60-yard shuttle. This is all very contrary to the knocks on Gaffney, who has been pegged as a player who lacks initial burst and quickness in space. My take is that he is a strong, tough, physical downhill runner who could slide right into the early down and goal line portion of a backfield committee. The bonus is that if his combine showing ends up being more than just a mirage, this could end up being a late round steal.

My thoughts: A two sport athlete for most of his life, Gaffney joined the football program after a brief stint in the minor leagues. He is a good athlete, but more of a straight ahead runner than I would like to see. Like Jeff mentioned, I think he could be the downhill, power portion of a committee which would include goal line duties. His upside would be that of Mikel LeShoure in 2012, but it is unlikely he ever reaches that level.

POST-COMBINE MOCK RISERS AND FALLERS
AUTHOR: JACOB FELDMAN 3/29

In our recently published staff mock draft for the 2014 rookie class, there were definitely a few players who had the combine massively impact their stock one way or another. While this was just one draft and it is possible a player was overdrafted or drastically undervalued by our staff in comparison to the general community, I would like to believe our staff as a whole have a very good finger on the pulse of the dynasty community and we accurately reflect those views and opinions.

This article is going to take a little bit of a closer look at the players who saw a big jump up or down the draft when compared to their pre-combine selection. When I say big jump, I'm talking about more than just three or four slots in the draft as that could just be personal preference. I'm also going to ignore the players in the middle or late third round who went undrafted this time or who were undrafted previously and appeared there this time around.

The Risers

It isn't a coincidence that all four of the big risers in this draft come from the wide receiver position. In terms of fantasy positions, wide receiver is where the talent lies in this draft. While it doesn't have the super elite prospects of the 2011 draft class, it does have at least ten wide receivers who could come in and be productive starters on NFL teams as soon as this next season – that's easily double the number of a normal year, making some of the players going in the early second the equivalent of middle first round picks in other years. With relatively underwhelming running backs, there is a lot of like about the wide receivers. As fantasy drafts actually approach, I expect a few of the running backs to climb again due to the running back bias a lot of leagues possess, but the four players who rose up boards all belong at their new spots.

Brandin Cooks, WR Oregon State
Rose from 2.10 up to 1.03

Originally I had some concerns about Cooks. I knew he was a very prolific pass catcher in college and won the Biletnikoff Award in 2013, but his size worried me. In general, college players are listed at heights and weights that are a little bigger than reality – that had me pretty concerned heading into the combine. When he actually measured a little bigger than his listed numbers, I was much happier. His body type, build and weight for his size put him right on par with most of the best shorter receivers in the NFL. He also has bigger than expected hands for someone of his height, which never hurts! All in all, he is a pretty close size comparison to the great Steve Smith.

When you take away the concerns about his size and you add in his 4.33 wheels along with the ability to change direction and accelerate faster than just about anyone else in the NFL, you get a top three pick in rookie drafts. Cooks' 20 yard shuttle drill, which measures the ability of a player to accelerate, stop, change directions and accelerate again was the best in combine history and a very rare athletic feat. The combination of that stop and start ability with his straight line speed is going to make him a major threat on the outside and over the middle of the field in the NFL. Even though he's only 5'10", he has the tools to be a beast.

Odell Beckham, Jr., WR LSU
Rose from 2.05 up to 1.05

The tale of Beckham is fairly similar to the one for Cooks, just not quite as extreme. Beckham is one inch taller and almost ten pounds heavier than Cooks – that means he is still on the short side for an NFL receiver, but he is even more thickly built than Cooks. He also has larger than expected hands, bigger than most of the receiver who were several inches taller than him in fact. In terms of speed, Beckham definitely has it, not only in a straight line, but with elite ability to stop and start as well as the unique ability of keeping his speed through changes in direction – this will definitely help him to separate from NFL cornerbacks.

If you haven't read our recent article on Beckham, you should go read it. There is an awful lot to like about him. The only part I disagree on is I think he's going to go in the middle of the first round at the latest in a lot of fantasy drafts, not the end of the first or early second. He's currently fighting with Cooks for my third receiver and third player overall in this draft.

Davante Adams, WR Fresno State
Rose from 2.08 up to 1.12

Adams is a nice prospect, and I think he was probably a little too low at 2.08 in the pre-combine draft. However, I think him sneaking into the tail end of the first round might also be a little too high for him. In the intro I mentioned there are at least ten receivers with NFL starter talent in this draft and while Adams is definitely one of them, he is towards the back of that list for me. I think his value should put him right around the early to middle second round in rookie drafts.

At 6'1", Adams has decent height with a thick build and a wingspan of a receiver a few inches taller. His 4.56 second 40 yard dash is adequate but not great for someone of his size and his hands are extremely small for a receiver over six feet tall. The smaller hands typically indicate an issue with drops down the road, but that didn't play out in college as he was very good at bringing the ball in. He does have the ability to go up and get jump balls and does a very nice job of running routes. I think he has the makings of a solid possession receiver in the NFL. For another man's more detailed opinion on Adams, you can check out this article on him.

Donte Moncrief, WR Ole Miss
Rose from 2.11 up to 2.02

Much like Beckham and Cooks, those who have been doing this for a while knew Moncrief would shoot up draft boards after the combine. At 6'2" and 221 pounds, he is one of the bigger receivers in this draft class. With a 4.40 second 40 yard dash, he is also one of the fastest. He showed excellent lower body explosion in the jumps, posting some of the best distances in both the vertical and broad jumps. When you put them together, you get a very solid size-speed specimen who deserves a few more looks. The only knock against him from a physical perspective are the smaller hands. Even though he is four inches taller than Cooks, his hands are half an inch smaller.

On the field, Moncrief showed a ton of potential and promise in 2012. He was shaping up to be one of the best college receivers in the country for the 2013 season and a potential Biletnikoff finalist – that isn't how things played out, though. He didn't take that next step and might have even regressed a little bit during his final year in college. It is hard to tell exactly what was happening, but if an NFL team can get him back to where he was in 2012 and then get him to grow from there he could turn into an extremely good receiver in the NFL. He's a more raw prospect than any of the others on this list but he has a pretty high upside due to his physical tools.

The Fallers

With the strength of this draft (the wide receivers) rising up the boards, it is only natural that the majority of the fallers come from the other three positions. The running back class as a whole failed to impress at the combine, either pulling up lame during drills or just posting much lower than expected times or measurements. Let's take a more detailed look and see what there is to see.

Ka'Deem Carey, RB Arizona
Fell from 1.04 to 1.09

Let's sum up Carey's combine this way: When the best hand time at his pro day was a 4.66 second 40-yard dash and the headline reads Carey improved on his combine showing, you know it was bad. While the rest of his measurements weren't as poor, none of them were very impressive – that is in stark contrast to Carey being one of the most complete and most productive running backs of the last two years in college football.

I've never been as high on Carey as some others and didn't feel he belongs in the first few picks. Honestly, I'm not even sure if he belongs in the first round. It will depend on where he lands since running backs are so situational, but there is cause for concern with the young running back. While he was productive, both in the running and passing games, it is fair to wonder how much of that productivity was the system he was playing in. He isn't the most physically gifted athlete and there are some concerns off the field as well. I expect opinions to be all over the board on him, but I ultimately expect him to be a late first or early second round draft choice.

Kelvin Benjamin, WR Florida State
Fell from 1.09 to 2.03

As I mentioned in the pick by pick analysis, this one puzzles me. Benjamin did nothing at the combine that should have resulted in his stock slipping a bit. If anything, I expected him to slide up draft boards a bit once people got to see him with their own eyes and see just how big this kid is. He checked in at 6'5" and 240 pounds. He is very solid with a wingspan and hand size pretty on par with future hall of famer Larry Fitzgerald. While it might be true that the rest of his game doesn't compare with Fitzgerald's, there is still a lot to like about Benjamin.

Why might he have fallen then?

My guess is due to the concerns over his poor time in the 40-yard dash, his underwhelming jumps and his struggles to keep his speed while changing directions. Those items weren't ever a part of his game, though. When you can stand flat footed on the ground and reach almost nine feet in the air you don't need to be able to run a 4.4 time in the 40-yard dash. The combine did nothing to change my opinion of Benjamin as a solid prospect and elite red zone target. He's still in the middle of that pack of ten plus receivers I've been talking about.

Bishop Sankey, RB Washington
Fell from 1.11 to 2.04

Much like Benjamin, I'm puzzled by the drop in Sankey's stock. Out of the top running backs at the combine, Sankey might have actually had the best day of the bunch. At 5'9" and 209 pounds with 10 inch hands, he has adequate size. He had some of the best numbers of the entire running back group in terms of bench press, jumps, cone drill and shuttle run as well. He also ran under 4.5 seconds in the 40 yard dash. In other words, he did better than I expected he would and actually climbed up my running back rankings a bit.

There are only two reasons I can come up with for his drop in our draft. The first is people going away from the entire running back group in favor of receivers. With the four receivers making big jumps from behind Sankey to in front of him, he was going to fall a bit. The other reason is Sankey doesn't appear all that special to most. He played in the PAC-12, which doesn't get a lot of national press outside of Oregon and USC and he doesn't possess elite anything. He's just very good at almost everything, but I think he's going to end up climbing back into the first round.

Jace Amaro, TE Texas Tech
Fell from 1.12 to 2.06

I expected a little bit of a drop off in Amaro's perceived value when his 40-yard dash time was 4.74 seconds. While that certainly isn't a bad time for a 6'5", 265 pound player, it isn't quite on the level of Eric Ebron or any of the elite tight end prospects who are now tearing up the NFL. The slightly slower than expected time (I was expecting somewhere in the low to mid-4.6s) did result in me dropping Amaro from first to second on my tight end rankings, but the gap between the two was and still is pretty small.

The rest of Amaro's combine was pretty good (especially his bench press) and I'm not as concerned as most about his 40-yard dash time. He never did strike me as a super athletic tight end in the mold of Jimmy Graham. Instead, I view him as a powerful tight end who wins at the point of the catch and gains separation with route running skills instead of pure athleticism. Think of him as more of a Jason Witten style of player. While it isn't as flashy as the athletic tight ends, he can be just as effective at the next level. I still expect him to be a potential late first round pick in the NFL draft and he could climb back up fantasy draft boards in the next few weeks and months.

Tre Mason, RB Auburn
Fell from 1.07 to 2.09

I think Mason's 14 pick fall was more a product of him being overdrafted prior to the combine because of his name than anything else. Mason didn't (and still doesn't) belong in the first round of rookie drafts in my opinion. While he does have decent speed and power, he isn't overly explosive nor athletic. His size is good, but not great, though he has shown an ability to stand up to a heavy workload over the last few years.

I do have some concerns about how much the system helped his production at Auburn. All of the criticisms we normally hear about Alabama or Big 10 running backs fit here in that Mason was almost always running behind an offensive line noticeably better than the defense he was facing, leading to very large holes for him to run through on many occasions. His ball security is also a major concern with eight fumbles in two years. Some of this might be fixable, but his nine inch hands could also be partly to blame. He's a decent but not great running back prospect who is likely to go in the middle of the second round.

Jace Amaro, TE Texas Tech (cont.)
Fell from 1.12 to 2.06

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Johnny Manziel, QB Texas A&M
Fell from 2.06 to 3.04

This is the true wild card of the 2014 class, both in the NFL and in fantasy circles. There are situations in which he is a first round fantasy draft pick and others where he might not even be drafted in three rounds. His value is going to be all over the board, not only based on where he goes in the NFL draft, but also based on where people view his talents and abilities. It is hard to think of a player where there are a wider range of views.

Personally, I just don't think Manziel is going to transition to the NFL very well. He is a player who relied on good athleticism to extend plays and improvise. In the NFL when defenders are smarter and more athletic, I'm not sure how well that will work out for Manziel. I'm also not sure how NFL coaches are going to respond and react to a player who has a hard time following a game plan and executing. When your entire game is built around keeping the play alive, it is eventually going to fall apart. Then again, we said a lot of the same things about guys like Brett Favre, so who knows.

That's it for our look at this mock draft for now. We'll be back with another staff mock draft in about a month, just before the NFL draft gets under way! Thanks for reading.

ROOKIE BUST MOCK DRAFT
AUTHOR: DAN MEYLOR, POSTED 3/30

Most rookie mock drafts you see like to focus on the strengths of each prospect selected. This isn't one of those drafts.

You're probably used to hearing about how explosive and sure handed Sammy Watkins and Mike Evans are and how incredible Teddy Bridgewater's arm is. For good reason, we like to focus on the positives in each prospect's game and inform our readers why a specific player will propel your fantasy team to glory. In this mock however, we'll try to throw up the red flag on some of the weaknesses that our favorite rookies possess and explain which ones have the most potential to "bust."

There was only one rule for who was eligible for this three round, eight man mock draft. To make sure all players taken were relevant dynasty picks as any player selected had to have been taken in the first two rounds of any DLF rookie mock draft during this off-season. Players were taken based on the risk probability, meaning the riskiest players and most likely ones to bust went first. Let's get started with round one.

1.01 – Johnny Manziel, QB Texas A&M

Brian's thoughts: Maturity, improvisation, height and mechanics are all reasons Manziel could be a "bust." Not all short quarterbacks succeed in the NFL, but what separates Drew Brees and Russell Wilson from the rest is work ethic. Manziel may not be mature enough to take on the responsibility of being a franchise quarterback. His off the field issues were questions in college and that could escalate if Manziel starts making millions. His improvisation worked well in college using his legs to get him out of tough situations, but in the faster NFL, his smaller body may not hold up to multiple hits if he is always trying to escape the pocket and pick up yardage with his feet. His mechanics, especially his feet are a big concern. Manziel has a strong arm, but oftentimes loses velocity because he is falling onto his back foot or opens his body and it appears he is heaving the ball. The mechanics and foot work could lead to a lot of interceptions at the next level. Manziel has a lot of things to work on and it is apparent there is big boom/bust potential for him in the NFL as well as in fantasy football.

My thoughts: I completely agree with everything Brian mentioned above. On the field, Manziel was incredibly successful while at Texas A&M, but routinely adlibbed plays and consistently made inferiorly athletic defenders look silly. At the next level, he won't be able to turn his back from the line of scrimmage and pass-rushers that are much faster than the ones he faced as an Aggie and he certainly won't be able to throw off his back foot where ball-hawking defensive backs will make plays on balls that would be touchdowns at College Station.

I'm not quite as worried about Manziel's off the field antics as many others are. Most of his digressions can be written off as teenage mistakes he'll grow out of. I am concerned about where he (as well as any other quarterback) ends up. If he's drafted to be the savior of a dismal franchise like Cleveland or Oakland where there's the potential for routine coaching changes and consistent losing to start his career, things could go downhill fast. Brian's final sentence is correct. Manziel is the ultimate boom or bust prospect which makes him the ideal number one pick in this rookie bust mock draft.

1.02 – Jace Amaro, TE Texas Tech

Scott's thoughts: I'm not a scout, but I don't get the hype. He's a questionable pass blocker and even being used exclusively as a receiving tight end, he drops a lot of passes and fumbles. He won't last in the NFL if he can't hang onto the ball.

My thoughts: When the offseason started, I was a huge fan of Amaro. Now that I've seen more of him on film and watched him at the combine, I've cooled on him slightly. I still think he's a quality prospect, but I do have concerns about his game. While I haven't noticed the chronic ball security issues that Scott mentioned, he's not a strong blocker which could keep him off the field, especially at the beginning of his career, and he may not be as athletic as he appeared on film. When the college season ended, I thought he was a lock to be the next Dallas Clark. Now I'm starting to think he might not be quite to that level.

1.03 – Austin Seferian-Jenkins, TE Washington

My thoughts: He could be the next Rob Gronkowski, or he could be the next Jermichael Finley, Jared Cook or Brandon Pettigrew.

Of all the players available in this draft, Seferian-Jenkins was the one I most wanted to draft. While he possesses all the physical tools to become one of the premier tight ends in the NFL, he may be missing the most important trait – drive. It's been widely reported he lacks the motivation to be a top player at the next level and may have trouble handling the complexities of an NFL offense.

It's very easy to get hooked on his size (he's 6'6, 260 pounds), speed, athletic ability and hands, but dynasty owners should consider the risk in drafting a player with so much off the field baggage. While he has the physical skills to become a TE1 with top-five upside at the position, he also could become the next talented, athletic, pass-catching tight end who never realizes his potential.

1.04 – Kelvin Benjamin, WR Florida State

Ghost's thoughts: I honestly think Benjamin will do just fine in the NFL, but questions have undeniably been springing up since the National Championship game. He drops a lot of catchable balls and his route running isn't amazing. Some think the pro game may just be too much for him. I disagree, but the chance does exist.

My thoughts: Benjamin has the size all NFL teams and dynasty owners salivate over, but doesn't possess any of the other intangibles the best receivers in fantasy land own. His 40 time (4.61) at the combine proved that he has below average speed and his 32.5 inch vertical wasn't overly impressive considering his lower body strength. Add that to the drops the Ghost mentioned and you don't have a very safe rookie selection at all.

1.05 – Isaiah Crowell, RB Alabama State

Jacob's thoughts: Out of all of the high profile players in this draft, I think Crowell is one of the biggest risks. There are red flags all over the place, but you can't deny the talent. When legal troubles are mixed with failed drug tests, questions about his maturity and his inability to fit onto a team, you need to be concerned. Maybe he has grown up over his last few years at a smaller school, but it is fair to wonder if his lack of incidents was at least in part to the spotlight being removed from him. Once he's wealthy and in the NFL, will the old Isaiah come back? There are also some concerns on the field in regards to his ability to play in the passing game, but those are secondary when compared to the off the field concerns.

My thoughts: Crowell has a lot of talent. He was a five star recruit out of Carver high school, enrolled at Georgia and was named SEC Freshman of the Year by the Associated Press after running for 850 yards on 185 carries and scoring six touchdowns for the Bulldogs in 2011. Then he was dismissed from the team after being arrest for multiple felony firearms charges that were later dropped. He enrolled in Alabama State where he scored 30 touchdowns (albeit against lesser competition) over the past two seasons and kept his nose clean. Jacob's concerns are justified, but Crowell's off the field problems may be in his past.

1.06 – Marquise Lee, WR USC

Jeff M's thoughts: Lee is a small (192 lbs.) receiver who showed a tendency to get nicked up during a junior season that was much worse statistically than his breakout sophomore year. Even if I didn't mind the lack of progression in college, I prefer my small wide receivers to run a bit better than he did at the combine (4.52). I also like them to be younger than Lee will be (he turns 23 mid-season) for his rookie year. The final red flag is a poor red zone touchdown rate at USC.

My thoughts: Jeff made a relatively surprising pick when he selected Lee, who is considered a top-five rookie pick by many, fifth overall in the bust draft. He also made some good points about Lee's size and speed that should be noted by dynasty owners considering taking him that high. Couple those concerns with Lee's questionable durability as well as his difficulty getting off the line of scrimmage in press coverage and inability to break tackles and he may have the potential to "bust" after all.

1.07 – Blake Bortles, QB Central Florida

Eric's thoughts: The bust rate of first round quarterbacks isn't pretty. Any time you're dealing with a rookie signal caller you're more than likely dealing with a really bad team and most likely a new coaching staff on that really bad team. Bortles has parlayed a terrific senior season into possibly the first overall pick in the draft, a spot we all assumed would go to Teddy Bridgewater just a few short months ago. Bortles' size, 6'4" / 230 lbs, intrigues a lot of NFL teams. He's been compared to Ben Roethlisberger and Andrew Luck, but doesn't throw the deep ball as well as either one. Landing spot will go a long way here. If he goes to Houston with Bill O'Brien and has weapons like Andre Johnson, DeAndre Hopkins and Arian Foster at his disposal, he will have a chance. If he goes to Oakland (where talent goes to die), he's more likely to struggle.

1.07 – Blake Bortles, QB Central Florida (cont.)

My thoughts: I really don't understand those who think Bortles should go number one overall to Houston. He has a slow release and isn't very accurate when under pressure in the pocket. Some may like to compare him to Roethlisberger and Luck, but he doesn't throw it nearly as well as either of them and didn't play well against quality competition while in college. His size, arm strength and mobility make him an intriguing prospect, but those with fantasies he'll be a franchise saving signal caller from day one may have their dreams busted.

1.08 – Carlos Hyde, RB Ohio State

Jeff B's thoughts: Hyde was a very good college running back and was productive in the Urban Meyer offense. On film, he shows good power which gives him the ability to run through arm tackles and over smaller defenders. Unfortunately for Hyde, NFL defenses don't have the type of players he was able to exploit while in the Big Ten. It's not to say he won't be a productive NFL player, but without much dynamic ability of which to speak, Hyde's best case scenario is likely the career path which fellow between-the-tackle and former Big Ten running back Shonn Green has taken. The off-the-field issues are also very concerning with Hyde so a dynasty owner would be much better off investing in a player with higher upside even if it's a bit riskier.

My thoughts: As a big fan of the Big Ten Conference, I've watched Hyde play many times over the last two years. To put it clearly, the tailback I saw in 2013 for the Buckeyes was not the same one that wore that jersey in 2012. Hyde looked sluggish and lazy as a junior, making rumors of a lack of work ethic sound accurate. Then, after being suspended for the first three games of his senior season for his alleged part in an assault, he looked like a new player. For ten games, he was a punishing, downhill runner. Overall, there are concerns about availability (he missed at least two games in each of the last three seasons) and his drive to be successful, but if his NFL team gets the player who suited up for the Buckeyes in 2013, they'll be very happy. If they get the one from 2012, they'll likely have a "bust" on their hands.

2.01 – Ka'Deem Carey, RB Arizona

Brian's thoughts: Film alone will confirm Carey is one of the top running backs in the class. What is Carey missing? Carey lacks foot speed, burst and long range speed. He has the vision to run between the tackles, but will have issues getting to the edge and exploding up field for big gains. Carey has average size for a back who does not have explosive speed. At 5'10" and 207 pounds, Carey doesn't have the body type to be a "grinder" in the NFL, either. He does have some great film, but his attributes may not convert well to the speed of the NFL. Lastly, Carey has had some minor run-ins with the law including disorderly conduct and assault charges against his ex-girlfriend. These character issues may cause some teams to shy away from Carey.

My thoughts: There are two things that concern me most about Carey. First, Arizona's spread offense often lead to advantageous running lanes. He often faced seven (and sometimes six) man fronts while in Tucson, something that won't happen on Sundays. More than anything else, he has an upright running style that is sure to leave him vulnerable to vicious hits in the NFL and could cause durability issues. Couple that with the 820 touches he's tallied over the last three seasons and there's potential for danger.

2.02 – Brandin Cooks, WR Oregon State

Scott's thoughts: I like Cooks' speed and he is truly explosive. However, his size is a limiting factor. I didn't see much separation on deep routes, but again he has that big-time speed. I think he is more system dependent and would look great with the Eagles. He ran a lot of short passing plays in the flat. I'm not sure he will be anything more than a gadget player. Maybe a poor-man's Percy Harvin, but he might have trouble with NFL-caliber defenders. Too much risk for me to pick him in the top-10 of rookie drafts.

My thoughts: Everybody likes to talk about Cooks' abilities with his feet, but the limitations he has with his hands is the first thing that comes to mind for me. At the combine, he bobbled multiple passes which made me go back and watch some more film on him. He did the same thing there. While he doesn't drop a lot of passes, he has a tendency to double-catch balls which will be a problem at the next level. When you consider his deficiencies getting off the line in press coverage as well as his size, Scott may be right by saying he shouldn't be taken too high in rookie drafts.

2.03 – Tre Mason, RB Auburn

My thoughts: Don't get me wrong, I like Mason. I just think he could disappoint whoever drafts him. While he runs hard most of the time and has a unique ability to have his biggest games on the biggest stages (which could translate well to playing on Sundays), he plays down to his competition from time to time and doesn't always look interested in running between the tackles when there isn't a gaping hole. Instead, he'd side step in the backfield, sometimes taking a loss rather than getting up field to make positive yardage. Again, I like Mason. I just think there is too much risk in drafting him too high.

2.04 – Bishop Sankey, RB Washington

Ghost's thoughts: By the end of the first round you've got to start making tough decisions. There is a lot to like in Sankey, but running backs who come into the draft highly rated do have a high failure rate. Sankey isn't a really good pass protector, so this may allow others to surpass him and take starting snaps.

My thoughts: While our second Husky to make this list has many positive qualities including his vision and running instinct,s he also has flaws, most noticeably his inability to break tackles. Far too often, Sankey was taken down on arm tackles or lost his balance after minimal contact. He also been criticized over the last two seasons for his struggles against quality competition. All-in-all, like many runners, where he ends up will be critical to Sankey's success. If he ends up in a zone-blocking offense, he'll likely be fine. If not, he could struggle.

2.05 – Devonte Freeman, RB Florida State

Jacob's thoughts: Unlike Crowell, my concerns for Freeman have nothing to do with off the field issues and everything to do with on the field ones. Every time I watch Freeman I come away thinking the same thing. It is basically an "Eh, that was okay" kind of feeling. There aren't any glaring holes in his game he can fix to become a better player and nothing really stands out for good qualities. He is what he is and that's about it. I think he's a special teamer and depth player in the NFL and that's all.

My thoughts: The thing that sticks out to me about Freeman is his lack of explosiveness. At the combine, he proved those fears to be true by running a 4.58 second 40-yard dash and posting average numbers in the vertical, three-cone drill and broad jump. He's never shown exceptional athleticism or any special qualities and could prove to be overhyped because of the talent around him in college.

2.06 – Jarvis Landry, WR LSU

Jeff M's thoughts: In contrast to my first round pick, Marqise Lee, Landry is a year younger and showed great college red zone production (both of these measurements show a strong correlation to small wide receiver success in the NFL). The problems began at the combine where Landry had perhaps the most disappointing showing at his position. He ran a dreadful 4.77 40-yard dash, posted the worst broad jump and second slowest vertical. Add to that an injury during his second 40 attempt where some are questioning the legitimacy and you have perhaps the fastest dropping stock of any wide receiver in the process.

My thoughts: Added to Jeff's comments about Landry's lack of size and disappointing speed, I have concerns about his lack of experience (he only started 12 games in his career) and inability to get separation from defenders while in college. His lack of quickness compiled with his route running that appears to be average at best will cause problems at the next level. Along with his inability to hit the homerun due to his long speed restrictions, we have the makings of a "bust" for whatever NFL team (or dynasty owner) that takes him.

2.07 – Sammy Watkins, WR Clemson

Eric's thoughts: With great expectations come greater risk. Watkins has so much pressure on him from the fantasy community already that anything less than an AJ Green type of season is going to be considered a disappointment. I love Watkins and I think he's going to be a great NFL and fantasy wide receiver. I also loved Tavon Austin and he can be had for pennies on the dollar compared to last year's price after what is being considered a terrible rookie campaign. His hype is nothing compared to Watkins'. I am in no way saying I believe Watkins is going to bust, but I think expectations for him are astronomical already.

My thoughts: I bet when Eric began preparing for his rookie drafts earlier in the offseason he never thought he'd have a chance to snatch up Watkins with the 15th overall pick. Even more so, I bet he didn't think he'd have a problem defending it. I too think Watkins will be an excellent pro, but as Eric stated, he has a lot to prove and the quicker he does it the better off for his fantasy value. I recently heard someone compare him to Marvin Harrison. Yeah, expectations are high. And with great expectations comes great responsibility.

2.08 – Mike Evans, WR Texas A&M

Jeff B's thoughts: Evans' massive 6'5", 225 pound frame allowed him to abuse the much smaller cornerbacks he faced in college. However, his biggest asset (his size) has held him back from learning a lot of the very important nuances which are the calling card for an NFL wide receivers to have long, productive careers. Evans certainly isn't a bad player by any means, but his lack of development in things like precise route running jumps out immediately on film. Most of Evans' big plays in college came as a result of Johnny Manziel's ability to elongate the play. He won't have that luxury in the NFL, unfortunately, and will eventually be forced to learn the techniques which he was never before required to.

My thoughts: Even in a rookie bust mock draft, Evans goes directly behind Watkins. He's got to be asking himself what it takes to go ahead of him. In all seriousness, Evans depended solely on physical gifts while in college. As Jeff pointed out, he's not a strong route runner which forced him to out muscle or out jump defenders for the ball. While that didn't help improve other parts of his game, he did develop good ball skills and jumping ability that will help him at the next level. Like Watkins, Evans will likely become a very good pro, but might take some time to realize his potential.

3.01 – Lache Seastrunk, RB Baylor

Brian's thoughts: Seastrunk is a runner with a lot of explosiveness and got by in college on pure speed and the ability to make defenders miss in the open field. This is the NFL, though. Seastrunk will have to get to the edge to in order to see the open field or have an offensive coordinator who can get to the ball to him in space. He will not win many battles between the tackles as he lacks the power and vision to create yards pushing the pile. Seastrunk also has issues in pass protection. He is often out muscled and will look to cut the blitzing defender rather than hold a block. Seastrunk was not part of the passing attack at Baylor recording only nine catches in 2012 and ZERO in 2013. This is a player who feasts on defenses in open space, but why wasn't he used in the passing game?

My thoughts: Seastrunk isn't an every down back. As Brian mentioned, he was rarely used in the passing game in college and doesn't pass block well. More than that, he dances in the backfield and constantly looks to run outside before running lanes open up on the inside. It's questionable if he'd succeed in a pro-style offense that doesn't feature the wide receiver sweeps and misdirection that made Seastrunk so effective while in college.

3.02 – Jordan Matthews, WR Vanderbilt

Scott's thoughts: I actually like Matthews, but this late in a bust draft, it's about tough choices for some good talent. Matthews has solid size for an NFL receiver, makes plays after the catch and I thought he showed a proficiency for big plays using a diverse skill set. He has good character. He didn't seem to play up to his 4.46 40-yard dash at the NFL Combine and it makes me wonder how he will translate to the NFL game. He is being drafted in the top five in some rookie drafts and I wonder if his upside is that of a solid, but not spectacular player. He may end up being a low-ceiling, high-floor player for dynasty formats.

3.02 – Jordan Matthews, WR Vanderbilt (cont.)

My thoughts: The biggest thing that jumped out to me while watching Matthews was his personality on the field, reminiscent of Terrell Owens. He looks to have a big mouth and likes to bark at defenders as well as teammates and referees. In order to get away with that on Sundays, he better have a big game to match it. With speed, strength and jumping abilities that aren't better than above average to go along with his diva personality and his propensity to drop passes from time to time, there's potential for Matthews to bust.

3.03 – Charles Sims, RB West Virginia

My thoughts: Sims displayed quickness and long speed after transferring to West Virginia from Houston last year, but never exhibited elite skills to prove he can be a full-time tailback at the next level. While he's shifty and fast, he doesn't possess much power and lacks the ability to break tackles, often losing his balance after first contact. He also has an upright running style that caused him to take big hits while in college which could make him susceptible to injuries in the NFL. With all that said, I like Sims to become a quality tailback at the next level, but he'll most likely have to share the backfield with another runner and could limit his fantasy upside.

3.04 – Teddy Bridgewater, QB Louisville

Ghost's thoughts: This pick was made right after Bridgewater had a widely reported poor showing at his pro day. There have been a lot of questions during the off season about Bridgewater and it seemed like a high risk/high reward pick to close out the draft for me.

My thoughts: Bridgewater has a very lean build. He's slender and long, which makes me wonder if he can handle the constant banging NFL quarterbacks have to deal with. Many compare him to Robert Griffin III, but the comparisons end at their physical stature. Bridgewater isn't close to the same athlete that RG3 is and an argument could be made that Griffin is more accurate and throws a better deep ball. Bridgewater also struggled when playing in bad weather while in college, which could become a problem if he's drafted by a cold weather franchise.

3.05 – Jeremy Hill, RB LSU

Jacob's thoughts: I honestly have no idea how he kept being passed over up until this point. Maybe the lines of communication were a little blurred, but if we are talking about players who I have concerns about falling flat on their face in the NFL, Hill is pretty far up my list. Not only are there character questions involving a fight outside of a bar and some sexual misconduct, but his combine was a pretty big disappointment. Maybe the combine performance was just a bad day, but if it was an accurate reflection of his physical abilities, I'm shocked. I expected him to grade out as being much faster, agile and explosive than he actually did. I need to go back and watch some more LSU games, but I'm definitely concerned about his prospects.

3.05 – Jeremy Hill, RB LSU (cont.)

JMy thoughts: Hill is a thick, downhill runner who has a little quickness to his game. He looks way better on tape than he did at the combine, but a 4.66 second 40-yard dash as well as his other relatively average numbers didn't go very far to proving he's more than a rotational tailback. Although he has the size to be a quality short yardage runner, he doesn't run behind his pads between the tackles and can't move a pile. He also lacks a third gear to run away from defenders when he breaks out of the pile. Overall, he looks to me like the type of back who is much better on game day than in shorts running the 40.

3.06 – Davante Adams, WR Fresno State

Jeff M's thoughts: Adams is one of my favorite players in the draft, but there are a handful of signs which point to potential bustville for the former Bulldog. A main sticking point for some is in differentiating what was most responsible for his output at Fresno State. It could simply be that Derek Carr and the offensive system carried Adams to his gaudy 233 receptions, 3,031 yards and 38 touchdowns over two seasons. It is also not out of line to suggest his slightly slow 40 time or lack of ideal physical strength could be an omen.

My thoughts: Adams is an incredibly raw talent at this point. He possesses some of the traits that make for a number one receiver, but has room to grow. While he has a knack for high pointing the ball and very good hands, many have pointed to his route running as a flaw in his game. He's also been criticized for his inability to get off of jam coverage. Personally, I think both of those weaknesses can be improved on with good coaching and some time in the weight room, but they're shortcomings nonetheless.

3.07 – Eric Ebron, TE UNC

Eric's thoughts: Ebron is the best tight end in this class in my opinion. He's fast, fluid and can catch anything. His comparison to Vernon Davis is spot on. Rookie tight ends rarely make huge fantasy impacts so, again, I worry about expectations and perceived performance. Everyone was expecting huge TE1 fantasy numbers from Tyler Eifert last season. He put up decent numbers, definitely not a bust, but people were disappointed. Patience is key with all rookies, but especially tight ends.

My thoughts: Almost all of the negatives associated with Ebron's game have to do with his blocking, where he struggles from time to time. While many dynasty owners might say that doesn't have anything to do with their fantasy team, I beg to differ. If he struggles in the run game, he'll most likely find himself off the field far too oftern and he can't help your fantasy team on the bench. NFL coaches like tight ends that can contribute to both the passing and running games and while it doesn't mean everything, it's worth paying attention to as dynasty owners.

3.08 – Donte Moncrief, WR Mississippi

Jeff B's thoughts: On tape, Moncrief resembles former New York Giants wide receiver Amani Toomer to some degree. He's a solid all-around player without any discernible skills that set him apart from the other receivers in this draft class. He kind of just does everything average to above average and while he may very well have a nice NFL career, he's not the type of player whose ceiling includes multiple Pro Bowls and fantasy WR1 type of production. Moncrief is a good prospect, but not the type of player a dynasty owners should bother taking until a middle rounds in a rookie draft.

My thoughts: At 6'2, 220 pounds, most would expect Moncrief to be a physical receiver who doesn't mind making catches in traffic or going up to make catches above his head. That's not the case, however. His biggest weaknesses are that he doesn't play as big as his size indicates and lacks the killer instinct to sky for jump balls. He also uses his body on far too many catches which could present a problem against better cover corners in the NFL and doesn't break tackles very well for a receiver his size. Without improvement in these areas, dynasty owners will worry less about him busting tackles and more about him straight up busting.

DRAFT DECADE: WIDE RECEIVER ANALYSIS
AUTHOR: JEFF HAVERLACK, POSTED 2/10

It's been a bit of time since I performed my last "Inside the Numbers" piece. If you've followed me for any length of time, you know these are annual pieces that look at a decade worth of NFL draft history relating to a single position. In most cases, I will only review the first round, although I have on occasion dipped into rounds two and three in order to find meaningful trends. Through this exercise, it's far easier to see just how impactful, or not, rookie picks can be toward building your fantasy roster. Quite often, the results are surprising.

For this exercise I'm revisiting the wide receivers. Every year as we reach the NFL Combine, our forums light up with fantasy owners dreaming of landing the next Calvin Johnson or Adrian Peterson. Questions continually roll into our article comment sections or email box about how best to utilize draft picks to one's advantage. As would be expected, the value of draft picks can fluctuate wildly year over year as each draft class possesses its own unique characteristics with regard to depth, talent and tiers. Combine that with the fluctuations that will occur following the NFL Draft, as players are drafted into their new situations and you can quickly end up with an enigma wrapped within a mystery as to just how valuable a rookie pick can, or will, be.

What if I told you that this exercise has proven building your team solely through the draft is largely a fool's folly? That's not to say a spin of the wheel on draft day can't provide a much needed spark to your roster, but if you expect to build your dynasty with rookie selections, you'll have to be very selective, use all of your resources … and be very lucky. The percentages don't lie. However, something has changed in the past four years (2009 – 2012) that is making this exercise more interesting.

Let's take a look at the last ten years of draft history related to the wide receiver position to see how things have played out. As has been the case since starting this series, I will leave out last year's draft as the rookies haven't yet had an opportunity to become fully accustomed to their teams, playbooks or the speed of the NFL. This helps, if even only a small amount, to normalize the percentages such that those appearing in the study have at least a year of experience before being included. So for this exercise, we are looking at years 2003-2012.

During this period, there were 38 receivers selected in the first round of the NFL Draft. Over this same period, there were 42 receivers selected in the second round.

Looking at those selected in the first round:

- 15 (39.5%) were selected within the first ten picks
- 7 (18.4%) were selected within the first five picks (there's a reason I break this out).

The seven receivers who were taken in the top five picks of the NFL Draft were:

Charles Rogers (#2, 2003)
Andre Johnson (#3, 2003)
Larry Fitzgerald (#3, 2004)
Braylon Edwards (#3, 2005)
Calvin Johnson (#2, 2007)
A.J. Green (#4, 2011)
Justin Blackmon (#5, 2012)

This is a relatively good list of players, showing that a receiver taken in the top five selections is a good bet. I can even make the case that both Rogers and Blackmon had elite talent and were only derailed due to drug related issues. There's still plenty of time and potential left for Blackmon, but the risks here are well known. For Rogers, a player who I drafted myself, I still recall his first NFL game against the Cardinals in which he scored two touchdowns. He would score only two more in his career. He had elite talent, speed and skills, but couldn't overcome work ethic and drug related demons. As for Braylon Edwards, his 2007 campaign saw 80 receptions, 1,289 yards and 16 touchdowns – totals he wouldn't approach again. He was a spot starter in fantasy, but just couldn't lock down any real level of consistency.

Here are a few other notable receivers along with their drafted information:

Roddy White (#27, 2005)
Dwayne Bowe (#23, 2007)
Hakeem Nicks (#29, 2009)
Percy Harvin (#22, 2009)
Jeremy Maclin (#19, 2009)
Michael Crabtree (#10, 2009)
Dez Bryant (#24, 2010)
Demaryius Thomas (#22, 2010)
Julio Jones (#6, 2011)
Kendall Wright (#20, 2012)
Michael Floyd (#13, 2012)

Without listing every receiver, I am going to classify each of the 38 as one of my four rating categories: Stud, Starter, Bench and Bust. The break down of the 38 receivers is as follows:

Studs – 8
Starter – 8
Bench – 3
Bust – 19

Of those eight studs, four of them came within the first five picks of the NFL Draft, and Julio Jones was selected at #6. Let's review some percentages now from the first round:

- 63% of studs were selected within the first six picks of the NFL Draft
- 21% chance of getting a stud from a first round wide receiver
- 8% chance of getting a stud selected after pick #6
- 42% chance the receiver will be at least a starter
- 50% chance the receiver will bust
- 58% chance the receiver will be no better than a bench player

I mentioned previously there has been an interesting development over the previous four years that has been noteworthy. Beginning in 2009, first round selected receivers have been far more productive than the five years previous. So much so, in fact, that the decade percentages have become far more favorable for receivers. Whether this is due to better scouting, size or perhaps better collegiate training, it's something that cannot be ignored. As a note, 2008 was the only year in which no receiver was selected in the first round. Over this period, 15 receivers were selected in the first round.

Just a couple of quick stats looking at the previous four years (2009 – 2012) only:

Studs – 4 (26.7%)
Starters – 6 (40%)
Bench – 1 (6.6%)
Bust – 4 (26.7%)

- 26.7% chance of getting a stud
- 66.7% chance a first round receiver will be at least a starter
- 26.7% chance a first round selected receiver will bust

As you can see, at least when only considering the four years of this period, receivers have become more productive. While this is not enough sample data to declare that the receiver field has materially changed, it will be something of interest to consider over the next five years of drafting, especially given the receiver-heavy status that 2014 looks to be.

If a wide receiver draft was akin to a Vegas game-table, it would offer the worst odds in the house. The previous five years is offering hope for the position, but even given that fact, there's still a 58% likelihood that your NFL first round receiver will rarely get off your bench, with a 50% chance of him busting completely. With the 2014 rookie draft heavy at the receiver position, a fantasy coach should temper his expectations, yet that isn't likely to occur. The draft provides too much allure and hype for most to allow reason to prominently factor.

For myself, I'll be looking to trade out of any relatively high rookie selection that doesn't equate to Sammy Watkins. And even a selection of Watkins outside of the top six selections in the NFL Draft, will offer more risk. It's what the numbers tell us. If you are receiver-needy, why not consider a trade for a productive receiver now, rather than spin the wheel?

DRAFT DECADE: TIGHT END ANALYSIS
AUTHOR: JEFF HAVERLACK, POSTED 2/20

Each year I like to turn back the clock and review the past ten years of the NFL draft related to a particular position. Through this exercise I'm able to determine how much justifiable excitement should exist, in reality, during draft season when run-away enthusiasm often rules the day with a particular player, position or the draft in general. To a large degree, through this effort, it's been easy to see that the NFL draft-day hype has been much more promise than production. Yet each year, we all do the same draft-day dance. And to date, I haven't examined the tight end position to this degree.

All this said, there's no question that the NFL draft remains an important part of augmenting your team. Whether it's the most important part is arguable. A well prepared fantasy coach can acquire draft picks into a deep draft to bolster his/er team, or trade them away for known production into a weak draft, allowing another coach to take the risk. Every year provides different-sameness.

In past years, I've focused on the quarterbacks, running backs and wide receivers with some very interesting results. Quickly summarized, what I've found is that the top quarterback off the board is as good a bet as there is in fantasy for being a productive player. The success rate of subsequently selected quarterbacks declines quickly. The top running back selected is a 50/50 proposition and first round running backs overall, while not a great bet, do carry a much better chance of being productive than those selected outside of round one. Wide receivers? Generally, unless taken within the first five picks of the NFL draft, they bust at an extraordinarily high rate. In fact, the position is a crap shoot, even for those drafted in the first round.

I've even looked at the "hit" rate of fantasy drafts by pick and round, finding no surprise that a high pick in the first round is the place to be. Outside of the top pick, the success rate for a draft selection falls quickly. Middle picks in the first round are somewhat close in productivity. Second round selections hit at a rate near 15%, give or take depending on various factors including number of teams in the league, fantasy coach ability (yes this does come into play) and the depth of the NFL draft. I smell an update of these numbers coming shortly.

Today's offering examines the tight end position. There's little argument that the position has taken on more fantasy significance as offensive coordinators around the league try to duplicate the success of the New England Patriots within their respective systems. In short, there's been a resurgence within the position and each year there seems to be at least a name ore two drafted very highly with the hope that they are the next Rob Gronkowski, Jimmy Graham or, veteran, Tony Gonzalez. There's no arguing that having a top tight end can give the fantasy coach a big edge on Sundays.

As I typically do, I will be leaving out the 2013 draft class for purposes of this exercise (see editor note below). For this positional review, I am going to move away from my regular individual categorization where I normally slot players into stud, productive or bust categories toward determining from what rounds the studs are primarily drafted; few tight ends obtain stud status. It can sometimes be a tricky proposition to rank the players correctly as many will have a single year of fantasy stardom or productivity, only to fall from grace very quickly in following years. I always err on the side of "productive" in situations like this. The goal here is to show the stratification of the productive or better players from the non-productive when considering the rookie draft moreso than it is to identify the studs within a position.

Editor Note: I am adding 2013 drafted tight ends into the listing for notation but not adjusting the percentage results below due to the few names that make the list.

Let's now take a look at the tight ends drafted from 2003-2012.

From this period, there have been 145 tight ends drafted, an average of 14.5 per year
There have been ten first round tight ends selected during this time frame
There have been 17 second round tight ends during this time period
There have been 23 third round tight ends selected during this time period
During this decade, only years 2011 and 2012 have seen no first round tight end selection
Looking at some of the names yields some interesting trends. Please note that just because a name appears on this list does not mean that he is a productive or better player. In some cases, his current situation suggests productivity.

First Round

Tyler Eifert (2013, #21)
Jermaine Gresham (2010, #21)
Brandon Pettigrew (2009, #20)
Dustin Keller (2008, #30)
Greg Olsen (2007, #31)
Vernon Davis (2006, #6)
Marcedes Lewis (2006, #28)
Heath Miller (2005, #30)
Kellen Winslow (2004, #6)
Benjamin Watson (2004, #32)
Dallas Clark (2003, #24)

Second Round

Zach Ertz (2013, #35)
Gavin Escobar (2013, #47)
Vance McDonald (2013, #55)
Coby Fleener (2012, #34)
Kyle Rudolph (2011, #43)
Lance Kendricks (2011, #47)
Rob Gronkowski (2010, #42)
Richard Quinn (2009, #64)
John Carlson (2008, #38)
Fred Davis (2008, #48)
Martellus Bennett (2008, #61)
Zach Miller (2007, #38)
Joe Klopfenstein (2006, #46)
Anthony Fasano (2006, #53)
Tony Scheffler (2006, #61)
Ben Troupe (2004, #40)
Kris Wilson (2004, #61)
Bennie Joppru (2003, #41)
L.J. Smith (2003, #61)
Teyo Johnson (2003, #63)

Third Round (Noteworthy Only)

Jordan Reed (2013, #85)
Dwayne Allen (2012, #64)
Ed Dickson (2010, #70)
Tony Moeaki (2010, #93)
Jimmy Graham (2010, #95)
Jared Cook (2009, #89)
Jermichael Finley (2008, #91)
Chris Cooley (2004, #81)
Jason Witten (2003, #69)
Visanthe Shiancoe (2003, #91)

Fourth Round (Noteworthy Only)

Aaron Hernandez (2010, #113)
Dennis Pitta (2010, #114)
Owen Daniels (2006, #98)

Rounds 5-7 Notables (Round)

Mychal Rivera (6)
Brandon Meyers (6)
Brent Celek (5)

Points of interest from this breakdown:

Ten (100%) of first round tight ends have been at least productive players
Six (35.3%) of 17 second round tight ends have been productive or better players
Six (26.1%) of 23 third round tight ends have been productive or better players
Three (13.6%) of 22 fourth round tight ends have been productive or better players
Two (2.7%) of 73 tight ends selected after round four were productive
26 (17.9%) of drafted tight ends have been at least productive

Given this breakdown of the tight end position as related to their drafted selection, there are a number of 'safe' take-aways that prospective drafters can use toward evaluating rookies within the position. Even young non-rookie tight ends will likely trend to these numbers, allowing a fantasy coach to target poor performing first-year players with the hope that they will eventually realize their potential.

More than any position reviewed previously, the tight end yields the safest first round selection results. If you have a need at the position, draft with confidence
Stud tight ends are distributed rather evenly over the first three rounds of the NFL draft
With a 35.3% productivity rate for second round NFL drafted tight ends, it's an adequate risk-reward play in the second round of rookie drafts

With a 26.1% productivity rate for third round NFL Drafted tight ends, it's an adequate risk-reward play in the late-third and fourth rounds of your rookie draft

Selecting any rookie tight end highly after NFL draft round three is a fool's folly. I have to admit, this exercise was eye opening on many levels. In no way did I expect that production of NFL first round drafted tight ends would be nearly guaranteed, at least over the past decade. In most all cases, the better teams in your fantasy draft will be drafting at or near the bottom of round one. While, normally, the 'hit' rate of rookie players descends quickly from picks at the top of round one, one could argue that a strong team's best move may be a selection of a NFL first round drafted tight end, due to the propensity of the player to be productive. It's not uncommon for fantasy rookie selections to bust at a rate of 80% entering the second round in fantasy. A shrewd fantasy coach may wish to play the odds here and I wouldn't blame him.

NFL DRAFT STUDY: RUNNING BACKS
AUTHOR: MIKE REARDON, POSTED 2/28

It may be unwise for a newly minted DLF staff writer to admit this, but I do not follow college football that closely. There just isn't enough time in my sports life for it. Every off-season, I happily tackle the task of getting familiar with the incoming rookie class by absorbing as much information as possible via articles, podcasts, forums and Twitter. I've come to trust certain websites and experts over the years, but there is always room for improvement, always something new to learn or another angle to take.

It was with that thought in mind that I decided to put together a bit of a research project with the aim of identifying some useful trends around the fantasy impact that different NFL rookies have. Specifically, I was curious about what correlation existed between a player's NFL draft position and his fantasy value. We all know that first round picks can bust and late round players can surprise, but how likely is each of those thing to happen? How much deference should be given to a player based solely fact the NFL deemed them worthy of a first round pick? How hard should we try to retain a roster spot for a fifth round wide receiver?

These are some of the questions I set out to explore, knowing full well ahead of time finding clear and complete answers was probably too much to ask. Still, after having digested the data I put together, I believe this kind of enquiry can provide some valuable historical context that would be good to keep in mind when deciding how to spend your rookie picks.

First, a brief outline of my methodology:

1)   I pulled NFL Draft information for all quarterbacks, running backs, wide receivers and tight ends drafted in the years 2004-2011.
2)   I pulled redraft average draft position data (ADP) from MyFantasyLeague for the years 2004-2013.
3)   I merged those two lists to create a list of every player drafted over this time period along with their ADP from years one, two and three of his career.

Since I'm trying to determine a player's value rather than just looking at his production, I felt ADP was the best measurement available. The problem with using production as an indicator of value is it is a one-dimensional measurement not necessarily reflective of a player's value in dynasty leagues. After all, according to the 2013 total point figures, Julio Jones is not a very valuable asset. Based on PPG, Christine Michael shouldn't be on a single roster.

ADP data, on the other hand, is an expression of how a pool of drafters felt about a player prior to the start of a season and thus is not distorted by injuries, playing time issues or other factors that might suppress a player's production, but not necessarily his dynasty value.

The use of redraft data is largely for pragmatic reasons as I do not think I would be able to find large samples of dynasty ADP from a decade ago. I would have liked to have been able to use dynasty data, but as I am comparing the value of players based on the NFL Draft round they were taken in, the format of the leagues I'm taking ADP data from is not entirely relevant as long as the same measuring stick is being used for all players. That said, when I get to the section discussing specific ADP values, just keep in mind that these numbers are on a redraft "curve."

Lastly, a three year window was chosen somewhat arbitrarily by me as I felt like this was a reasonable dividing line between when you should expect a return on your rookie pick investment. In my opinion, if a player hasn't returned some value to you in the first three years of his career, he was probably not a successful draft pick.

So, with that out of the way, let's jump into the data. For the purposes of this article, I'm going to discuss the findings for running backs only. The rest of the positions will follow in a second article that will have the benefit of not requiring another long, explanatory preamble.

First, a quick look at the data set I had to work with:

Running Backs Drafted By Round (2004-2011)

NFL Draft Round	Total	Draft Years (x3)
1	24	72
2	21	63
3	17	51
4	27	81
5	16	48
6	26	78
7	35	105
Total	**166**	**498**

This table shows the breakdown of how many running backs were drafted in each round over this period. The third column, "Draft Years," is simply the number of running backs multiplied by three. This is because each of the first three years of each player's career was treated as an entirely separate ADP data point.

So just as an example, there were 24 running backs drafted in the first round of the NFL Draft between 2004 and 2011. Taking the first three years of each of those players' careers, that means there are going to be 72 different opportunities for these players to register an ADP value, all of which will be used to put together a profile of the value of first round running backs as a whole.

The first question I wanted to know the answer to was how often running backs from each NFL Draft round were drafted in fantasy leagues in general. The table below shows the frequency with which running backs from each round registered an ADP in the top 240 in at least 5% of the sampled MFL leagues:

Draft Frequency
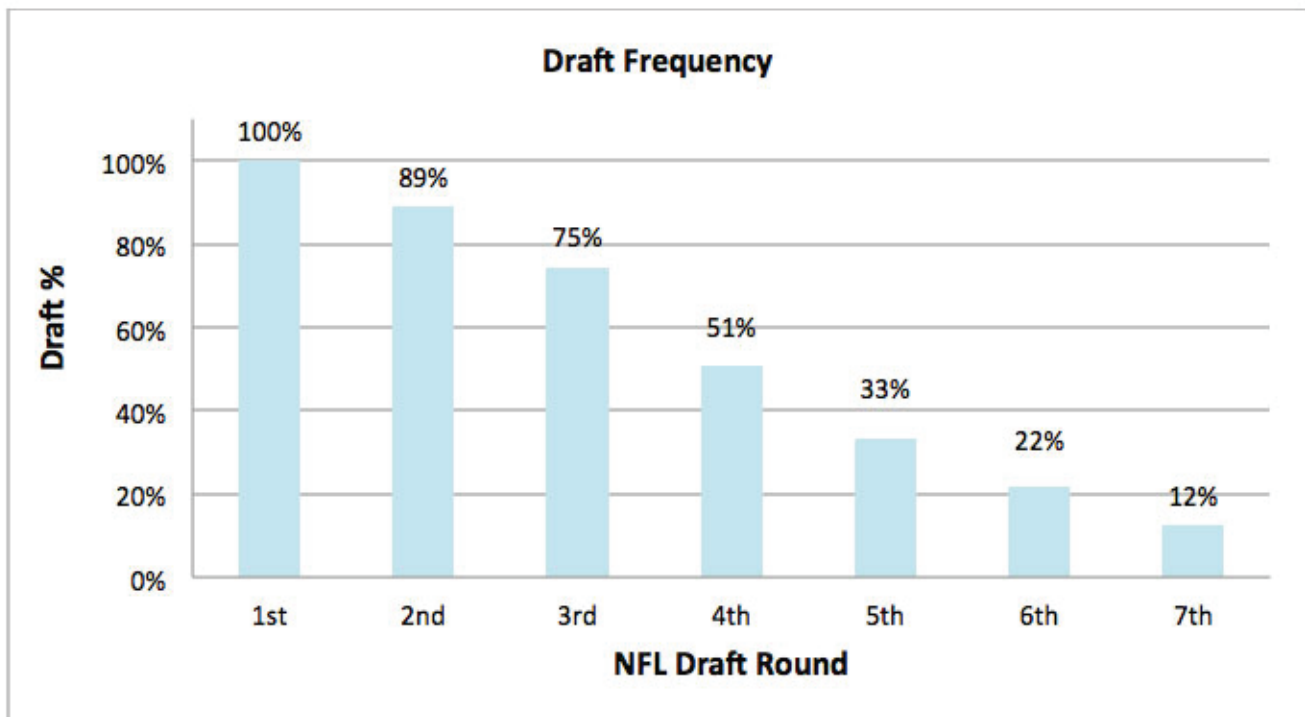
The data behaves how you would expect it to, with a steady decline as you get into later NFL Draft rounds. I certainly expected first round running backs to be drafted the most, but I was a little surprised they were taken 100% of the time. Again, this means that every running back selected in the first round of the NFL Draft was taken in fantasy drafts in each of his first three years in the league. Given the number of busts that occur across all positions in the NFL, I found this a little surprising. Remember, we're talking overall drafts, not just rookie versions.
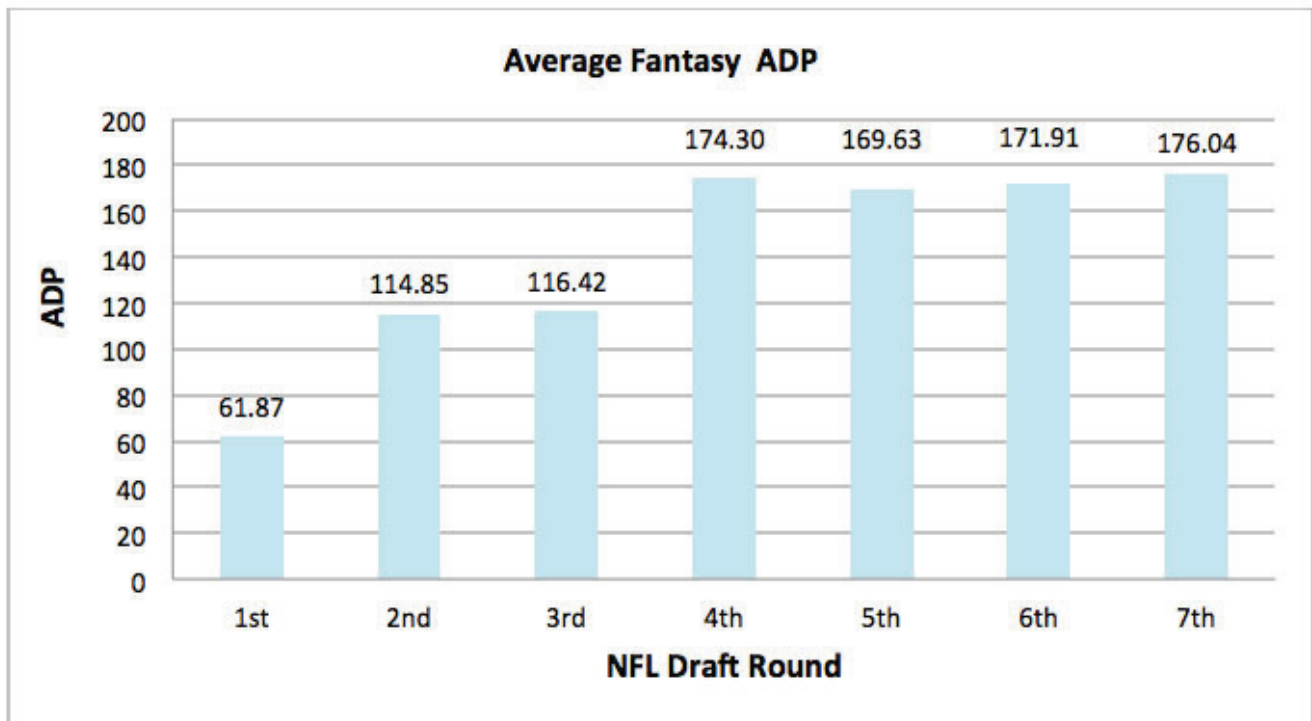
Overall, this information is not particularly useful on its own, but it provides some valuable context to the next part of the discussion dealing with actual ADP values.

The table below shows the average ADP for running backs drafted in each NFL Draft round. Remember, a player's ADP from each of the first three years of his career are treated as its own separate data point and thrown in together with all of the other data points.

Average Fantasy ADP

NFL Draft Round	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
ADP	61.87	114.85	116.42	174.30	169.63	171.91	176.04

There are a few interesting takeaways from this data, in my opinion:

First round running backs are a good bet

The gap between running backs drafted in the first and second round leaps off the page. Certainly I expected that there would be a difference, but it is larger than I would have anticipated. There was a 53 draft slot difference between these two groups, which works out to just about four and a half rounds in a 12 team fantasy draft.

Drilling down a little into the numbers, out of the aforementioned 72 opportunities the first round running backs had to register an ADP in this study, only 11 times (15%) did these players drop out of the top 100 in fantasy drafts. Only one of the 24 running backs, Chris Perry, finished out of the top 100 more than once (he actually did all three years).

Overall, the data suggests that, Trent Richardson notwithstanding, when an NFL team takes a running back in the first round, they're on to something. That player doesn't always go on to have a great career of course, but if nothing else, you will have a decent window in which that player has value in your dynasty league.

"Long shot" territory begins after the third round

The only gap larger than the one between first and second round is the one between third and fourth round. The difference between these two groups (58 draft slots) works out to just under six full rounds. It's also notable that the ADP of running backs drafted between rounds four through seven are almost the same, suggesting that fourth round running backs don't fare much better than seventh round ones.

Interestingly, while the ADP of the fourth and seventh round running backs is almost identical, the frequency with which they are drafted (refer back to the first table) is not. Fourth round running backs are drafted 51% of the time, while seventh round running backs are drafted just 12% of the time – this means that although the average value of running backs drafted in this range are pretty similar, we still draft the fourth round ones a lot more frequently. This data suggests that perhaps we shouldn't.

One important trend to note is that it is very obvious that late round running backs give you a dismal return for your investment. During this time period, a total of 104 running backs were drafted in this range, providing 312 opportunities for those running backs to be taken in fantasy drafts. Only three times (0.96%) was one of these players drafted in the top 100: Brandon Jacobs and Marion Barber in 2007, and Justin Forsett in 2010.

To put it another way, 97.2% of the running backs drafted in this range failed to register as a top 100 pick even once over the first three years of their career (if there career even lasted three years, which it probably did not in most cases).

Keep that in mind the next time someone offers you a late round rookie, saying you could be getting "the next Zac Stacy." It would be more accurate for him to say you're getting "a 2.8% chance of having the next Marion Barber."

Running backs drafted in the second and third rounds performed similarly, ADP-wise

Finally, the last, and perhaps most surprising trend in this data is that third round running backs have almost exactly the same average ADP as second round running backs. When you look over the names of the players taken in each of these rounds, it's easy to see why. The third round group includes a number of home run picks, like Jamaal Charles, Stevan Ridley, DeMarco Murray and Frank Gore. Each of these players had ADP's of the thirteenth round or later in their first year, but that quickly changed as their careers progressed. On the other hand, the list of second round running backs is weighed down by names like Tatum Bell, LenDale White, J.J. Arrington, Ryan Williams and Mikel LeShoure.

The question is what, if any, conclusion can be drawn by this seemingly counterintuitive trend?

The most likely explanation, I think, is once you get past running backs that are of high enough quality to warrant a first round pick by an NFL team, the next "tier" of running backs are more or less a crapshoot. Whatever perceived difference in quality that may exist between a running back drafted in the second and one drafted in the third is not significant enough to overcome variance caused by injuries, poor (fantasy) situations, and NFL teams simply getting it wrong.

While it would be foolish to downgrade players for being drafted in the second round instead of the third, perhaps the conclusion to be taken here from this trend is you should not heavily penalize players for being drafted in the third instead of the second. Based on this data, they have reasonably similar expected outcomes.

Closing Thoughts

For me, the information here will help me put some value-setting context around my rookie draft picks and assist me when choosing an actual player. I hope it will do the same for you. I have gathered this data for all of the offensive, fantasy-relevant positions and will move on to wide receivers next. Hopefully, as I finish up the other positions, the overall picture will continue to provide some useful information. Comparing the value of a first round running back to a second round running back interesting, I think, but it'll be even more so when I can compare a second round running back to a third round tight end, or a second round quarterback, etc.

Over the next couple of months, a lot of draftniks are going to talk about their late-round sleepers. Just keep in mind that historically, it appears that hitting on a late round running back is extremely rare. Allocate your picks and roster spot resources appropriately.

I FOUGHT THE LAW
AUTHOR: JACOB FELDMAN, POSTED 3/5

Every year around this time, when the attention turns towards the incoming rookies, we start to hear lots of phrases over and over. We of course hear about "potential," "upside" and "athleticism," but we also hear way too much about "character concerns" and "off the field issues." The latter two are, of course, the ones who make waves from time to time.

Just because a player earns one of these titles doesn't mean you need to steer clear of them. It does mean you need to carefully weigh the risk versus the reward, though. After all, players like Randy Moss, Brandon Marshall and Dez Bryant all had those labels. Then again, so did Titus Young and Aaron Hernandez. At the request of one of our twitter followers, Mike Beckley (@NFLLionBlood), I'm going to take a look back at the past and try to shed a little bit of light on exactly what some of the future rookies did to earn those titles to help you make the most informed decision possible as you look at these players.

It is important to note that not all players on this list are considered the same level of risks. In order to help at a glance, I've even each player a risk level. Players are listed in alphabetical order.

Jace Amaro, TE Texas Tech

Risk Level – Minor
Alleged Offenses – Fraud, Fighting during a game

One of (if not THE) top tight end in the draft class, Amaro isn't quite as squeaky clean as we would like to see from a top prospect. He has a pair of minor infractions in his past that hint at some immaturity, if not questionable decision making. During his freshman year, he was arrested and charged with credit card fraud. The charges were later dropped, but that shouldn't be a surprise considering it was a star college athlete and a minor charge. The other incident was when he was ejected from a game after punching a player on the other team.

Overall, I have very little concern about Amaro getting into trouble in the NFL. He might be a little naïve and immature, but he doesn't have any major issues. As long as he ends up in a team with some veterans to show him how to be a star, I'm not concerned.

Chris Boyd, WR Vanderbilt

Risk Level – Moderate
Alleged Offenses – Sexual misconduct, Interfering with an investigation

The former Commodore was expected to compete for the Biletnikoff Award this year. He then ended up suspended and eventually dismissed from his football team when he was charged with having knowledge of and trying to help cover up a rape that one of his teammates allegedly committed. It has since been revealed there is no proof Boyd was present when the crime was committed, but there are still some major questions about his morality and decision making. He'll face a stiff round of questioning from NFL teams, but he's still likely to be drafted if he can convince teams that he had very little if anything to do with the incident. He definitely has talent, but he needs to find some good teammates to keep him out of trouble.

Ka'Deem Carey, RB Arizona

Risk Level – Minor
Alleged Offenses – Domestic dispute

Shortly after the 2012 season, Carey was involved in a domestic dispute with his pregnant ex-girlfriend. He was charged with misdemeanor assault as well as disorderly conduct. The charges were later dropped by his ex-girlfriend, so he never faced any legal discipline but he did get hit with a one game suspension from his school. As Ray Rice is teaching us, domestic disputes can be a major issue, but aside from this one issue, Carey has been free from any other character concerns or off the field issues. I have no concerns about Carey in the NFL in terms of future suspensions or legal trouble, though I hope for his sake this is the one and only time he has an issue with a woman carrying his future child.

Isaiah Crowell, RB Alabama State

Risk Level – Major
Alleged Offenses – Weapons, drug test, maturity

One of the most highly recruited players out of high school during the 2011 recruiting season, Crowell made a lot of headlines when he picked Georgia over almost every other school in the country. That's part of why it was such a big deal when he was arrested on felony weapon charges and dismissed from the school. He had no choice but to drop down to the FCS to continue playing football. The gun charges were dropped because there was no solid proof they were Crowell's. Unfortunately, it wasn't his only issue. He also failed a drug test while at Georgia and there were numerous concerns about immaturity and his inability to handle the spotlight.

The good news about Crowell is he was incident free for the last two years while he was at Alabama State. In fact, some have even called him a model teammate. It isn't completely clear if the fall from grace woke him up or if his removal from the spotlight just made him more careful for a brief period. What will happen when he is suddenly wealthy is anyone's guess, but based purely on talent he may be the best running back in this class.

Jeremy Hill, RB LSU

Risk Level – Major
Alleged Offenses – Sexual misconduct, Battery

Much like Crowell, Hill is one of the best running backs in this draft from a physical stand point. However, he has his own fair share of off the field issues. When he was an 18-year old senior in high school, he was sexually involved with a 14-year old girl. The details vary depending on the source, but the age difference makes it a crime regardless of the details. He was assigned probation as a result. If that was the only incident, it could be considered youthful indiscretion.

During this past July, one of Hill's friends was in a dispute at a bar. When the other guy went to leave, Hill walked up behind him and struck him in the head. There was video evidence of the battery and Hill was again convicted, receiving more probation, which is still active today. While Hill's offenses might not be as severe in the eyes of the law as Crowell's, Hill's convictions and active probation make him a pretty big risk. He's going to need a strong coach and teammates to help keep him out of trouble in the NFL. In other words, if he goes to Miami or Oakland, I'm staying a long way away, even though I love the talent.

Carlos Hyde, RB Ohio State

Risk Level – Moderate
Alleged Offenses – Sexual misconduct, Contributing to delinquency of minors

Last summer, Hyde and some of his teammates were at a bar with some future recruits. For the record, Hyde was of legal age at the time, though not all of his teammates were. After that night, the police were approached by a woman who claimed Hyde had sexually assaulted her inside of the bar. Several weeks later, she refused to press charges in the incident. The only punishment Hyde faced was a three game suspension from his team. There are several poor choices made by Hyde with this incident. He took underage recruits to a bar and then allegedly assaulted a woman. This is the only known incident involving Hyde, but the fact Urban Meyer was his coach brings back memories of the issues Meyer had at Florida with the likes of Aaron Hernandez.

Colt Lyerla, TE Oregon

Risk Level – Major
Alleged Offenses – Cocaine

Based on just talent, Lyerla belongs in the discussion with Jace Amaro and Eric Ebron, maybe even ahead of them. Unfortunately, as we have seen over and over during the past few years, poor off the field choices can derail even the most promising career, especially when drugs are concerned. Shortly after the season started, Lyerla suddenly left his team, prompting many to speculate on his reasoning for such an action. The likely truth of the matter is that Lyerla had been arrested on cocaine possession and knew his time with the Oregon Ducks was at the end once they found out, so he quit.

Colt Lyerla, TE Oregon (cont.)

Lyerla is going to face a lot of questions about substance abuse and teams are going to question if there is an addiction issue. With the recent issues of players like Fred Davis and Justin Blackmon, NFL teams are going to take substance abuse a little more seriously. Plus, it stands to reason someone using cocaine is also doing other things. It stands to reason that cocaine isn't going to be someone's first venture into substance abuse. The talent is supreme though, which means he is likely going to be drafted.

Johnny Manziel, QB Texas A&M

Risk Level – Moderate
Alleged Offenses – Maturity, Partying, Fighting, Attitude

In my eyes, Manziel is the embodiment of the entitlement generation. He really didn't care about the established protocol, show respect to the past, nor believe he had to follow the rules. The success he had on the field instantly translated to him being untouchable in his mind and feeling he was larger than the team. He has more of a rock star or movie star mentality than that of a franchise quarterback. There have been numerous reports of his partying and drinking on campus and off. There have also been questions about the kind of teammate and leader he was on the field.

From a legal standpoint, Manziel has remained mostly clean. He was arrested for being involved in a fight back in 2012 and there could be some alcohol or other issues in the past that have been kept under wraps, but otherwise he is clean. The concern with him is more the attitude he carries, one that landed him in hot water at the Manning Passing Academy and with the NCAA.

Lache Seastrunk, RB Baylor

Risk Level – Minor
Alleged Offenses – Illegal Recruitment, Attitude, Transfer

The questions surrounding Seastrunk are more about questionable choices than about illegal activity. As far as we know, Seastrunk has been clean from a legal perspective. There are a lot of questions surrounding his recruitment out of high school by Oregon much like the past recruitments of Reggie Bush and Cam Newton. There are also some questions about his transfer from Oregon to Baylor and if they were in part due to him wanting to avoid a team imposed suspension for an undisclosed offense or if he just wanted to leave a team he didn't feel believed in him. There have also been some questions about his ability to accept coaching and being a good teammate, but these could be coming mostly from his former team.

Austin Seferian-Jenkins, TE Washington

Risk Level – Moderate
Alleged Offenses – Dedication to the game, DUI

One of the best tight end prospects heading into the 2013 season, ASJ fell off a little bit this year because he just didn't seem to be working very hard. His weight and conditioning became a bit of an issue this year and he really didn't seem to have a very high motor. His play definitely suffered and he didn't take the next big step that was expected of him. Combine this with a DUI arrest this past year and you have a combination or questionable dedication to the game with poor off the field choices. It is a mix that will make most NFL teams think twice even if he has the talent to be a Rob Gronkowski kind of player. He'll need to convince NFL teams he wants to be a star in the NFL and he doesn't have alcohol issues.

James Wilder Jr, RB Florida State

Risk Level – Major
Alleged Offenses – Battery of a Police Officer, Resisting arrest, Alcohol, Failure to appear in court, Maturity

Looking at this year's top draft prospects, Wilder is the one who best fits the description of "more of a headcase than a criminal." This is the same description I would give to guys like Brandon Marshall, Titus Young, and Da'Rick Rogers. The list of offenses is rather lengthy and daunting, but the majority of them aren't on par with weapon possession or drug use. He is someone who just makes really stupid choices and doesn't understand how to be an upstanding citizen.

The battery and resisting arrest stem from the same incident. His long standing girlfriend failed to appear in court and the police were sent to their home to arrest her. First, Wilder tried to hide her, but when the police found her, he pushed one of the officers which started a physical altercation. He was given probation and forced to attend court ordered work camps. He then showed up to one of these work camp days with alcohol in his system (a violation of the court ordered terms) and was arrested and detained. On an unrelated incident, he was found to be driving on a suspended license, but failed to appear in court on those charges, thus a third arrest.

Wilder doesn't seem to think the laws apply to him or seems to think he is smart enough to get away with breaking them, which clearly isn't the case. The issues are mostly minor, but the number of them could mean he will be a constant headache for the coaching staff. He could easily be someone who NFL teams need to keep a constant eye on, but I'm not sure his talent level is good enough for them to spend that kind of time and effort.

As you can see, there are a lot of issues with some of the better prospects in this draft. One thing to remember in the NFL is talent trumps everything. Aaron Hernandez is a perfect example. However, from time to time, behavior and character definitely catch up to a player and the team they belong to. It is very important to weigh the risk of a player with the potential reward and possibly even more important to keep those risks in mind moving forward. If your roster is filled with character concerns, it is very possible for you to go from best to worst with a few bad choices by your players. On the other side, a little bit of risk is a good thing. Choose wisely.

ROOKIE FEVER
AUTHOR: DR. SCOTT PEAK, POSTED 4/8

This is the time of year when dynasty addicts look forward to rookie drafts. The NFL Combine is in the books, pro days for the best prospects are underway and the NFL Draft is just around the corner. It's also the time when rookie picks gain value. But just how valuable are these rookie picks? Every year, dynasty owners get rookie fever, and it seems to be highly contagious. How can we prove rookie picks are worth the obsession, especially this time of year?

MyFantasyLeague.com (MFL) has an excellent database of rookie drafts spanning several years. I focused on rookie drafts from 2009, 2010 and 2011, as that gave us three years worth of data post-draft to draw some conclusions about dynasty production. The 2009 MFL database featured results of 151 rookie drafts, while 2010 and 2011 databases featured 205 and 244 rookie drafts. While individual leagues may vary, the MFL database represents the best representation for trends in rookie drafts and that's why we used it for this article.

Let's take a look at the first round of the 2009 rookie draft from MFL. I used a 12 team, PPR scoring league format:

2009 Rookie Draft				
	Pick	2009 Rank	2010 Rank	2011 Rank
Knowshon Moreno	1.01	18	18	79
Chris Wells	1.02	37	63	23
Michael Crabtree	1.03	60	36	28
Donald Brown	1.04	60	48	37
LeSean McCoy	1.05	32	3	2
Jeremy Maclin	1.06	36	14	31
Shonn Greene	1.07	66	43	20
Percy Harvin	1.08	24	22	8
Matthew Stafford	1.09	25	41	5
Mark Sanchez	1.10	24	19	10
Hakeem Nicks	1.11	33	8	12
Brian Robiskie	1.12	129	86	161

At first glance, there are some recognizable names on this list. LeSean McCoy is the only elite player on this list and Matt Stafford is a top ten dynasty asset at quarterback. Michael Crabtree and Percy Harvin are talented, but have a lengthy injury history. Half the players on this list have either been busts or failed to meet expectations (Knowshon Moreno, Chris Wells, Donald Brown, Shonn Greene, Mark Sanchez and Brian Robiskie). There were only seven top 12 finishes in three years (19%), and 16 total top 24 finishes (44%). In a 12 team league, only 19% of players drafted finished as a WR1, RB1 or QB1. Inexplicably, Sanchez finished with two top 24 finishes, and a top 12 season, yet he finds himself an NFL backup now.

Now, let's take a look at round two of the 2009 rookie draft:

2009 Rookie Draft				
	Pick	**2009 Rank**	**2010 Rank**	**2011 Rank**
Darrius Heyward-Bey	2.01	118	88	27
Kenny Britt	2.02	51	34	98
Brandon Pettigrew	2.03	24	8	6
Manual Johnson	2.04	0	178	0
Kevin Ogletree	2.05	130	163	125
James Davis	2.06	138	149	0
Josh Freeman	2.07	27	9	14
Glen Coffee	2.08	77	0	0
Richard Quinn	2.09	102	96	107
Demetrius Byrd	2.10	0	0	0
Zach Miller (JAC)	2.11	38	43	67
Curtis Painter	2.12	67	0	34

There isn't a single player from round two of the 2009 rookie draft who can be started for fantasy teams. Kenny Britt is the closest and his career has been marked by suspensions, arrests and failed expectations. There were just three top 12 finishes between 2009 to 2011 (8%), and just five total top 24 finishes in three years (13%). Brandon Pettigrew may be the best option for 2014 players and he is at best a TE2 now. There's not much to like in round 2 of this draft.

Let's see how the first round of the 2010 rookie draft turned out:

2010 Rookie Draft				
	Pick	**2010 Rank**	**2011 Rank**	**2012 Rank**
Ryan Mathews	1.01	32	7	30
Dez Bryant	1.02	50	19	4
Jahvid Best	1.03	20	42	0
CJ Spiller	1.04	59	27	6
Demaryius Thomas	1.05	95	64	5
Sam Bradford	1.06	20	31	18
Ben Tate	1.07	0	31	65
Montario Hardesty	1.08	0	73	88
Golden Tate	1.09	117	80	40
Arrelious Benn	1.10	84	82	166
Dexter McCluster	1.11	103	49	68
Jermaine Gresham	1.12	16	14	10

The 2010 rookie draft has two elite players (Dez Bryant and Demaryius Thomas). Players like CJ Spiller, Golden Tate and Ben Tate still have a shot to break out, while Ryan Mathews is a serviceable RB2, but may not reach his lofty draft status as a 1.01 pick. Jahvid Best had one decent season, but his career met an unfortunate end, while Sam Bradford and Jermaine Gresham have been a QB2 and TE2. Best, Montario Hardesty, Arrelious Benn and Dexter McCluster have been busts, though McCluster has some hope. There were just six total top 12 finishes in this group (2010-2012), or just 16%. There were 11 top 24 finishes, or 30%.

Here is round two of the 2010 rookie draft:

2010 Rookie Draft				
	Pick	2010 Rank	2011 Rank	2012 Rank
Jonathan Dwyer	2.01	138	113	40
Jimmy Clausen	2.02	0	0	0
Toby Gerhart	2.03	57	38	63
Mike Williams (TB)	2.04	16	36	19
Brandon LaFell	2.05	75	61	54
Tim Tebow	2.06	34	19	50
Aaron Hernandez	2.07	14	3	19
Emmanuel Sanders	2.08	87	100	66
Eric Decker	2.09	138	42	9
Colt McCoy	2.10	32	22	52
James Starks	2.11	113	41	83
Rob Gronkowski	2.12	11	1	5

There is one big name that stands out and that's Rob Gronkowski. Pick 2.12 is incredible value for an elite player and those who took Colt McCoy or Jimmy Clausen ahead of him must be kicking themselves. The top three picks of round two are busts and hopefully Toby Gerhart will finally give his owners a return on investment in 2014. Eric Decker is a legit WR2. Remaining players are either limited by injuries (Emmanuel Sanders), character concerns (Aaron Hernandez) or both (Mike Williams). Right now, at least six can be considered busts (Jonathan Dwyer, Clausen, Brandon LaFell, Tim Tebow, McCoy, James Starks). Five had top 12 finishes (13%), and three of those were from Gronkowski. There were 11 top 24 finishes (30%).

Let's take a look at the 2011 rookie draft:

2011 Rookie Draft				
	Pick	**2011 Rank**	**2012 Rank**	**2013 Rank**
Mark Ingram	1.01	45	41	64
AJ Green	1.02	17	3	4
Julio Jones	1.03	22	11	64
Daniel Thomas	1.04	50	48	49
Ryan Williams	1.05	0	99	0
Greg Little	1.06	47	51	73
Mikel Leshoure	1.07	0	18	155
Jon Baldwin	1.08	109	100	164
Cam Newton	1.09	4	4	6
Roy Helu	1.10	24	0	45
Shane Vereen	1.11	117	57	36
Delone Carter	1.12	70	91	0

Mark Ingram starts off the rookie draft for 2011 and he has been a bust. Fortunately, AJ Green, Julio Jones and Cam Newton are all top ten dynasty assets at their positions. The 2011 rookie draft looks like a boom-or-bust proposition, with mostly players who failed to reach expectations. There were six top 12 (16%) and ten top 24 performances (27%) between 2011 to 2013.

Let's see how the second round of the 2011 rookie draft looks:

2011 Rookie Draft				
	Pick	2011 Rank	2012 Rank	2013 Rank
DeMarco Murray	2.01	30	26	6
Randall Cobb	2.02	93	16	67
Torrey Smith	2.03	30	28	23
Leonard Hankerson	2.04	129	67	89
Blaine Gabbert	2.05	27	33	48
Kendall Hunter	2.06	44	60	65
Jake Locker	2.07	42	29	37
Titus Young	2.08	46	75	0
Lance Kendricks	2.09	37	23	32
Jacquizz Rodgers	2.10	59	29	33
Andy Dalton	2.11	16	12	3
Vincent Brown	2.12	99	0	76

The second round of the 2011 rookie draft offers one elite talent (DeMarco Murray), one with elite potential (Randall Cobb) and a solid WR2 with WR1 upside (Torrey Smith). Ironically, the highest consistently ranked player, Andy Dalton, may be unemployed if he can't win a playoff game and is generally valued as a QB2 in fantasy despite showing QB1 numbers two of the past three years. It is sobering that only three top 12 finishes were noted from 2011 to 2013 (8%), while seven achieved top 24 numbers (19%).

In summary, here are the top performances from rookie drafts 2009-2011:

Rookie Draft (Data range collected)	Top 12 Rank		Top 24 Rank	
	Round 1	Round 2	Round 1	Round 2
2009 (2009-2011)	19%	8%	44%	13%
2010 (2010-2012)	16%	13%	30%	30%
2011 (2011-2013)	16%	8%	27%	19%

There is much debate about value of rookie picks versus proven veterans. The data from rookie drafts 2009-2011 appear to show significant risk in relying on rookie picks to build a team. In 12 team leagues, using this data set, only 16% to 19% will have a top 12 finish to a season over the following three years, and that means the number of QB1, RB1, WR1 or TE1 seasons from rookies will be significantly limited. These results suggest using picks to acquire veterans with proven production is a more reliable proposition rather than taking chances on rookies. Even top three picks aren't safe, as just five top 12 performances were noted for picks 1.01, 1.02 and 1.03 from 2009 to 2011 rookie drafts (18%). In looking at round two rookie picks, only 8% to 13% will have a top 12 fantasy season at their positions.

Here is a summary of the top ten values for rounds 1 and 2 of rookie drafts from 2009 to 2011:

2009-2011		2010-2012		2011-2013	
Player	Points	Player	Points	Player	Points
Lesean McCoy	782	Rob Gronkowski	686	Cam Newton	1036
Percy Harvin	656	Dez Bryant	645	AJ Green	824
Hakeem Nicks	647	Mike Williams	600	Andy Dalton	813
Mark Sanchez	639	Sam Bradford	553	Julio Jones	575
Josh Freeman	612	Ryan Mathews	521	Torrey Smith	563
Jeremy Maclin	561	CJ Spiller	493	DeMarco Murray	553
Matthew Stafford	554	Aaron Hernandez	488	Randall Cobb	431
Michael Crabtree	459	Demaryius Thomas	467	Greg Little	386
Knowshon Moreno	438	Eric Decker	443	Jacquizz Rodgers	354
Brandon Pettigrew	432	Jermaine Gresham	439	Jake Locker	306

In rookie drafts 2009 to 2011, only four tight ends finished in the top 10 rookie picks (13%). Six running backs finished among the top ten (20%). Wide receivers dominated the most productive picks, with 13 finishing in the top 10 (43%). Next in line are quarterbacks with seven (23%).

A total of 25 running backs were drafted 2009-2011, and only six finished in the top ten rookie picks (24%). Wide receivers proved to be a productive position, with 28 drafted and 13 finishing in the top ten rookie picks (46%). Quarterbacks were taken 12 times, and were the most likely to finish in the top 10 with a total of seven (58%). Quarterbacks do have an advantage given their propensity to score more points compared to other positions. While quarterbacks had the highest success rate, only Newton and Stafford can still be considered elite. Tight ends had a solid 57% succeed, but the smallest sample size of 7 picked 2009-2011, and only one can be considered elite now (Gronkowski).

It seems like wide receivers are the safest rookie picks and that's notable as the 2014 draft looks to be plentiful at the wide receiver position.

My conclusions from this data set are:

1.) Rookie picks are overrated.

2.) Don't be shy about trading rookie picks for more established, productive veterans.

3.) The most reliable rookie picks are wide receivers.

4.) The second most drafted position, running back, carries the worst success rate for rookie picks. The 2014 running back draft class is looking less-than-stellar, so beware of taking too many shots on this position. Going running back heavy may not be the most efficient means of building a team. Trading rookie picks for established veterans may be a more efficient solution at running back.