

The Final Exam: 2008 NFL COMBINE

Once again the best college football players faced off in Indianapolis to determine the biggest, fastest and strongest



Photo: East Carolina University SID



Photo: University of Richmond SID

The fastest 40-yard dash at the 2008 NFL Combine was 4.24 by running back Chris Johnson of the University of East Carolina. Johnson also had the third-best broad jump for his position: 10'10".

Wide receiver Arman Shields of the University of Richmond had the highest results in two events. He had the fastest 20-yard shuttle with 3.96, and the best 60-yard shuttle with 10.87, the only athlete to break 11 seconds in the test. For his position Shields also had the third-best vertical jump at 37.5, the second-best broad jump with 10'8", and second-best 3-cone drill with 6.67.

It's been said that numbers don't lie. If that's true, then the numbers produced at the NFL Combine will tell scouts much about an athlete's potential to play at the highest levels of the game.

Of course, the athletes who run the fastest, jump the highest and lift the most weight do not always make the best football players. But professional football is a big-money game, and

franchise owners want to get as much information about their potential players as possible before spending millions of dollars, often on just a single player. That is why the NFL Combine, held



The best vertical jump was 39" by running back Carl Stewart of the Auburn University. Also, for his position he tied for the best broad jump with 11'2" and tied for the most reps with 30.

Photo: Todd Van Ernst, AUA

annually in late winter in Indianapolis, Indiana, is such a big deal that ESPN televises the highlights of the event and results are reported in all other forms of news media.

What is especially appealing about the Combine is every athlete competes on an equal playing field, under the exact same conditions. So those quarterbacks who couldn't put up the big numbers due to an inexperienced offensive line or a tough schedule can really shine at this event – or at least get some serious attention from the pro scouts who may not have paid much attention to them during their final college seasons.

The Combine is such an important event that many athletes practice the tests for months before, often enrolling in special programs run by professional strength coaches to help them prepare. And the emphasis on these tests has even trickled down to the high school level, with major

athletic companies such as Nike sponsoring these events for the best high school athletes.

The tests are divided into the major positions: Quarterbacks, Running Backs, Wide Receivers, Tight Ends, Offensive Line, Defensive Line, Linebackers, Defensive Backs, and Specialists (i.e., Kickers and Punters). Although many of the tests have changed since the Combines were first held, Table 1 shows the tests that are currently used and what they measure. In addition to undergoing these tests, each player is put through position-specific drills, team interviews, an IQ test, body measurements including bodyfat percentage, flexibility tests and a thorough injury evaluation.

Primarily due to better conditioning programs at a younger age and emphasis on practicing the tests, the results continually get better at the NFL Combine. As proof, let's compare the results of three tests performed at the

2002, 2006 and 2008 NFL Combines in major positions (Table 2).

Many athletes, due to injury or the specific requirements of their position, may decide not to participate in a specific test. For example, this year only one quarterback decided to test on the bench press. Some athletes who had exceptional performances in college may decide to skip the testing, confident that their results are enough to satisfy their future employers. Running back Darren McFadden of the University of Arkansas, who placed second for the past two years in the Heisman, could have skipped the Combine and still have been assured a first-round pick in the NFL Draft. He elected to participate anyway and, to no one's surprise, ran a blazing 4.33 in the 40.

Sure, there's more to football than just numbers, but if there's one thing you can count on, the NFL Combine is here to stay! **BS**

TABLE 1

NFL Combine Tests

TEST	MEASURES
40-Yard Dash	Speed and Explosiveness
Bench Press	Upper Body Strength
Vertical Jump	Explosiveness and Leg Power
Broad Jump	Explosiveness, Quickness and Leg Power
20-Yard Shuttle	Lateral Quickness, Coordination and Change of Direction
60-Yard Shuttle or Long Shuttle	Speed, Endurance
3-Cone Drill	Lateral Quickness, Coordination and Change of Direction





Photo: UA SID

Photo: UO SID

One of the premier positions in the NFL is running back, and two notable participants in the 2008 NFL Combine were Darren McFadden (left), who had the second-best 40 for his position with 4.33; and Jonathan Stewart, who had the second-best vertical jump for running backs with 36.5'.

TABLE 2

NFL Combine: 2002 vs. 2006 vs. 2008

POSITION	YEAR	40 (seconds)	20-YD SHUTTLE (seconds)	VJ (inches)
Quarterbacks	2002	4.59	3.87	38.5
	2006	4.35	4.07	39.5
	2008	4.55	4.19	33.5
Running Backs	2002	4.42	3.93	42
	2006	4.39	4.07	38.5
	2008	4.24	4.18	39
Wide Receivers	2002	4.31	3.76	41.5
	2006	4.32	3.97	38
	2008	4.31	3.96	38.5
Tight Ends	2002	4.59	4.10	38.5
	2006	4.38	4.01	42
	2008	4.55	4.14	38
Offensive Line	2002	4.69	4.19	37.5
	2006	4.88	4.36	35
	2008	4.99	4.47	30.5
Defensive Line	2002	4.47	4.19	40.5
	2006	4.43	4.08	42
	2008	4.45	4.21	35.5
Linebackers	2002	4.51	3.83	42
	2006	4.40	3.96	42.5
	2008	4.47	3.98	36.5
Defensive Backs	2002	4.39	3.86	41
	2006	4.30	3.81	41.5
	2008	4.31	4.07	38.5

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JUNIOR	Boys	8.25	5.5	3.2	0.4	3.1	3.3	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8
	Girls	8.50	5.2	3.0	0.3	2.80	3.00	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
	All American	8.00	5.00	3.0	0.3	2.80	3.00	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
SENIOR	Boys	8.25	5.5	3.2	0.4	3.1	3.3	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8
	Girls	8.50	5.2	3.0	0.3	2.80	3.00	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
	All American	8.00	5.00	3.0	0.3	2.80	3.00	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
COLLEGE	Boys	8.00	5.00	3.0	0.3	2.80	3.00	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
	Girls	8.00	5.00	3.0	0.3	2.80	3.00	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
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JUNIOR	Boys	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30
	Girls	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30
	All American	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30
SENIOR	Boys	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30
	Girls	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30
	All American	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30
COLLEGE	Boys	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30
	Girls	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30
	All American	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30	1:30

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JUNIOR	Boys	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	Girls	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	All American	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
SENIOR	Boys	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	Girls	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	All American	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
COLLEGE	Boys	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	Girls	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	All American	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

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