

The Final Exam 2006 NFL Combine

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



Michael Jordan had movie-star looks and was one of the most amazing athletes in the world. His quickness, agility and jumping prowess made him a virtual magician on the court. Larry Bird has a face that only a mother could love and had the athleticism of a ham sandwich. Despite these differences, both were considered two of the greatest basketball players in the world.

The point of this comparison is to emphasize the idea that there is more to being a good athlete than simply being able to perform well in fitness tests. That's why you play the game. But if you're an NFL owner and are willing to invest millions of dollars in a single player, you want to look at every variable that could influence athletic performance. Hence, the popularity of the NFL Combine, held in late winter in Indianapolis, Indiana. At the NFL Combine nobody cares how many sacks you made, yards you gained or post-season honors you received. The Combine is a test of raw talent: how fast you run, how high

you jump and how strong you are. If you're LenDale White, you're going to have your vertical jump tested; if you're Maurice Claret, you're going to run the forty. And it's quite a show, with ESPN televising the highlights and other news media providing instant results and analysis. The Combine is unique in that all the pro teams can observe the best college draft picks in an equal setting and under the same conditions. It takes place in a four-day period, and it's quite an amazing atmosphere. Some call the event a meat market. Some are convinced the results are overrated. Regardless of the critics, those select college players who are invited to participate take the event seriously, as do their potential employers in the NFL.

In fact, many athletes practice the events for months before, even going so far as to enroll in special camps 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. Many websites, such as NFL.com, have posted all the results of the events, divided into these major positions: Quarterbacks, Running Backs, Wide Receivers, Tight Ends, Offensive Line, Defensive Line, Linebackers and Defensive Backs. As for Kickers and Punters, well, they must get tested someplace else. Although many of the tests have

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
Cone Drill	Lateral Quickness, Coordination and Change of Direction



The fastest 20-yard shuttle at the event was 3.81 by Tennessee's Jason Allen. (UT SID)



Some athletes do not participate in the Combine if they are assured a high draft pick, such as Texas's Vince Young. On his pro day, Young ran the 40 in 4.57. (Texas SID)

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 body-fat 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 both the 2002 and 2006 NFL Combine in major positions (Table 2).

Table 2: NFL Combine: 2002 vs. 2006					
		40	SHUTTLE	VJ	BROAD JUMP
Quarterbacks	2002	4.59	3.87	38.5"	10'
	2006	4.35	4.07	39.5"	10'8"
Running Backs	2002	4.42	3.93	42"	10'6"
	2006	4.39	4.07	38.5"	10'5"
Wide Receivers	2002	4.31	3.76	41.5"	10'10"
	2006	4.32	3.97	38"	11'1"
Tight Ends	2002	4.59	4.1	38.5"	10"
	2006	4.38	4.01	42"	10'8"
Offensive Line	2002	4.69	4.19	37.5"	10'1"
	2006	4.88	4.36	35"	9'4"
Defensive Line	2002	4.47	4.19	40.5"	10'9"
	2006	4.43	4.08	42"	10'9"
Linebackers	2002	4.51	3.83	42"	10'6"
	2006	4.40	3.96	42.5"	11'
Defensive Backs	2002	4.39	3.86	41"	10'10"
	2006	4.30	3.81	41.5"	11'1"

As you can see, virtually across the board players today can perform much better in terms of speed, agility and jumping ability. Some of these results are just amazing. The idea of a 300-pound-plus lineman running a 50-yard dash under 5.0 seconds was unheard of even a few years ago. The day of the big, slow lineman is over. There are even 250-pounders running 4.5 or bet-

ter with 35-inch vertical jumps. And if you get a chance to watch the Combine, one thing you'll notice is the excellent running technique of so many athletes — even the big men. We noticed that the BFS start was being used by all positions.

If you're a football player and you think you have what it takes to play in the pros, you might want to log on to

some of the many Combine websites and study these results closely to see what you're up against when your turn comes around. If you're a coach and have doubts about the times for the forty claimed by athletes from other schools, here's your chance to learn the truth and separate those who "walk the walk" from those who only "talk the talk." **BFS**



Brett Elliott
LC SID

The One Who Got Away

One of the criticisms of the NFL draft is that often some amazing athletes do not get invited because they attended a smaller school. Such is the case with Brett Elliot of Linfield College, a Division III school in Linfield, Oregon. In leading his team to a 23-1 record over the past two seasons and a Division III championship in 2004, Elliot threw 110 touchdown passes, 8,614 yards, and broke 31 school records. His efforts earned him the Melberger Award and the Gagliardi Trophy, which are presented to the most outstanding players in Division III colleges. In 2003 Elliot transferred to Linfield College from the University of Utah after he lost his starting job to Alex Smith (Smith became the number one draft pick in 2005). Elliot, who graduated with a degree in communications, says that if he can't break into the NFL, then he will try for a position in the Canadian Football League or the Arena League.



Alex Smith
UofU SID

Run *Faster!* Jump *Higher!*



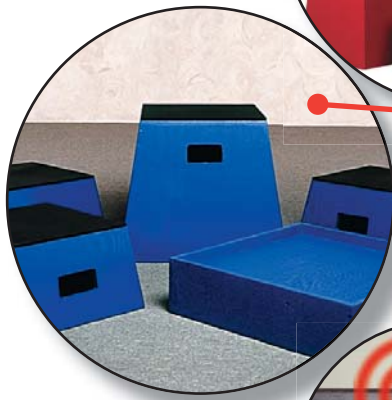
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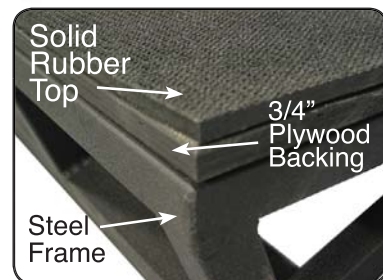
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