

Combined Offense / IDP Rookie Draft Board 2.0

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The consensus rookie rankings at Footballguys are one of the strongest features we produce each season. Despite embedded commentary however, the consensus rankings are light on context. If you look carefully, you can see tiers, but it can be difficult to compare players within their position and across multiple positions.

Knowing that Player X is the consensus RB3 is clear from the rankings. Knowing how nearly Player X was to being ranked RB2 or RB6, or how Player X compares to the WR5 or TE1 or LB2 is often much less clear. I prefer a more visual approach, one that tiers players by position but also shows the value of one position relative to another across my draft board.

**The first version of this feature is based on limited information. Coaching comments, mini-camp observations, debate within the fantasy community and the clarity that comes from testing this board in my own drafts will bring changes to future versions.

**I build this draft board with the following league parameters in mind: 12-14 teams, PPR and balanced IDP scoring, and full IDP lineups that include defensive tackles and cornerbacks. The commentary that follows the draft board will sometimes address modifications for leagues that provide bonuses for tight end scoring, big play IDP systems, etc.

**There may be more than 12-14 players listed in a given draft round. That's a function of the tiering approach. It's also a natural reflection of the wide range of ADP valuations we always see as a rookie draft moves into the deeper rounds.

**This board reflects my personal drafting philosophy. I prioritize upside over safety within tiers and I'm willing to accept a higher bust risk in all rounds. I also prefer to draft players who are likely to be successful sooner if other variables are equal. And I'm not afraid to trust my evaluations of defensive players and draft a second tier IDP over a third tier offensive prospect -- regardless of positional scarcity.

The draft board is designed to be read both top to bottom and left to right. Each position is tiered from top to bottom in its own column. Separations in the column represent relative tiers and the players are ranked by preference within those tiers. Relative value between positions can be tracked from left to right. The "suggested" draft rounds are based on my view of a player's value, with some consideration given to keep the number of players with a given draft round grade to a reasonable total.

Positional commentaries can be found after the draft board. The most recent commentary will be in [BLUE](#) at the end of each section. Also, you can download an expanded, modifiable Excel spreadsheet of this draft board [here](#).

	QB	RB	WR	TE	DT	DE	LB	RUSH LB	CB	S
1		G Bernard L Bell E Lacy Z Stacy	C Patterson T Austin D Hopkins							
	EJ Manuel G Smith T Wilson	M Ball M Lattimore J Franklin C Michael ^	K Allen R Woods M Wheaton ^ J Hunter A Dobson	T Eifert			A Brown			
2				T Kelce J Reed Z Ertz			A Ogletree K Minter ^			
	R Nassib M Barkley T Bray	K Davis A Ellington M Gillislee ^ J Randle ^	J Boyce S Bailey Q Patton M Goodwin D Rogers ^			D Jordan E Ansah	M Te'o K Alonso			
3	M Glennon		C Johnson ^ M Wilson ^ T Williams	V McDonald						J Cyprien K Vaccaro
		S Taylor						B Mingo J Jones J Collins *		S Williams M Elam
4			C Fuller R Swope C Harper M Harrison K Stills T King	G Escobar D Sims ^		T Carradine * Q Smith D Jones D Moore	M Mauti N Johnson K Greene G Hodges ^			E Reid DJ Swearingen JJ Wilcox TJ McDonald S Thomas
5	M Scott Z Dysert L Jones	R Burkhead K Williams ^		L Toilolo ^ C Gragg R Otten		M Hunt			D Milliner X Rhodes ^	
		M James S Ware			S Richardson S Lotulelei S Floyd S Williams	M Goodman D Taylor	V Williams	C Lemonier S Montgomery T Williams	DJ Hayden D Trufant L McFadden D Gratz	T Mathieu P Thomas J Evans B Rambo D Harmon T Jefferson J Slaughter
6-7 FA	R Griffin S Renfree	D Robinson M Maysonet R Graham K Barner J Jamison M Harris	A Sanders J Brown K Davis K Thompkins M Davis Z Rodgers P Ashford A Lemon	M Rivera R Griffin J Cunningham	K Short J Hankins B Logan	L Edwards C Washington M Buchanan	K Reddick Z Gooden J Jenkins T Powell	B Jenkins C Thomas	D Slay J Taylor S Commings	

The Big Picture

There's no consensus 1.01 in rookie drafts this year. I expect that will drive much of the discussion about this year's rookie draft rankings, but it's not the whole story. I think there will also be wide variance among the 1.02 and 1.10 picks. Blame the Green Bay Packers for taking two of the most attractive running back prospects -- players that aren't nearly as attractive on the same Aaron Rodgers led spread offense and who dropped at least a full round further than expected. Blame the so-so landing spots of Cordarrelle Patterson and DeAndre Hopkins. Or blame size and/or durability questions for the more talented skill position players. Whatever the reasons, it's a year without clarity in the top tiers.

But that's not all bad. If you feel strongly that Tavon Austin or Gio Bernard or another prospect is a cut above his peers, it may cost you less to move into the top 2-3 picks and draft him. If you have a top pick and are looking to move down but not out of range of the top tier skill position players, you have a much wider target range than the usual 1.04-1.06 cut off point. And if you end up "stuck" with a high first round pick, it's not the end of the world. There may not be a clearly elite player, but you'll be getting a high floor player as a consolation prize.

A few things caught my eye after I finalized the draft board. First, I'm higher on the middle tiers at the running back position than usual. Though it's standard to see 10 or more backs taken in the first two rounds of most rookie drafts, it's rare that I'll grade that many as worthy of a second round pick or better. Some of that is undoubtedly due to the shallow third tier of wide receiver prospects, but I like this year's group of backs to be productive over time. Second, what looked to be a very deep group of defensive end prospects dried up quickly, with four players I thought had third round potential before the draft now likely to get a linebacker classification. That necessitated a new column this year -- the Rush Linebacker group. Finally, I've given a draftable grade to more tight ends, quarterbacks and safeties than ever.

One final big picture note: I think the fifth - seventh rounds are littered with high upside prospects so take your shots. But don't turn down a pick in a higher round in 2014 or an established veteran with immediate value for a pick after the third round unless you can't live without your lottery tickets.

Version 2.0: I've field tested this draft board in two deep, competitive leagues. I think the big picture thoughts held up well. But I've moved a handful of offensive players up a tier, realizing that I like some of the upside wide receiver prospects better than the mid-tier defensive prospects. I've also changed the positional classification of some of the defensive prospects and made minor changes throughout the board in response to mini-camp news and post-draft coaching comments.

Quarterback

I believe any of the three players I've tiered together at the late first - early second turn -- E.J. Manuel, Geno Smith and Tyler Wilson -- have QBBC potential or better. I've slotted Manuel and Smith slightly higher than Wilson on the strength of upside. But I'm confident that Wilson has the highest floor. If you're convinced that one of this group has an odds-on shot at QB1 value, move him up into mid-first round consideration. The next tier consists of four quarterbacks without an immediate path to a starting job. I've ranked Ryan Nassib highest, but he's a true developmental prospect in the Ryan Mallett mold. Some may have Matt Barkley ranked near the top tier, but I'm not sold he's a long term starter. The same goes for Mike Glennon, who I don't see forcing the issue in Tampa Bay with Josh Freeman playing for a new contract.

If you're looking for a late round developmental prospect, I like Matt Scott. There's some talent there and the depth chart is favorable. I'm generally not a fan of handcuffing quarterbacks, but Sean Renfree and Ryan Griffin are talented prospects who will be learning behind fundamentally sound quarterbacks in high-powered passing offenses. If you're a Matt Ryan or Drew Brees owner, their rookie backups are a wise investment.

Version 2.0: Early draft returns suggest I'm higher on Tyler Wilson and lower on Matt Barkley than the consensus. I still think Wilson belongs in the top tier, but you won't have to pay a premium to get him. I'm still not willing to draft Barkley on situation alone, however. It makes sense to elevate Barkley due to the possibility that he may play sooner, but I don't think he's a clearly better investment than Ryan Nassib or even Tyler Bray, who I've been able to get in the later rounds.

Running Back

I want to rank Gio Bernard a half tier higher than the crowd. He's an every-down talent with a favorable depth chart behind a solid offensive line. But the Marvin Lewis administration strongly believes in (and has heavily used) a veteran lead back with size. BenJarvus Green-Ellis is no stud, but neither was Cedric Benson or Rudi Johnson. I'm not certain Bernard ever gets more than 225 touches in Cincinnati. There's enough of a chance that I have him atop the running back tiers, but that's due to his talent and the concerns I have with the other backs with a first round grade. Le'veon Bell has the best claim to the top spot. He's not supremely talented but he's going to get opportunity and get it quickly. Eddie Lacy would've been the top back on this list had he not fallen to the late second round, prompting more questions about his work ethic and durability. It doesn't help that the Packers also added Johnathan Franklin, another back I liked as a potential top tier fantasy talent before the draft.

Zac Stacy and Montee Ball are a half tier behind Bernard, Bell, and Lacy in a clear case of my valuing ceiling over floor. I think Stacy and Ball have an excellent shot at RB2 value as soon as this season. I'm just not convinced either have top ten upside. I'd really like to push Marcus Lattimore higher. He flashed elite talent, seems to have the special set of intangibles necessary to overcome his devastating knee injury, and went to a team perfectly designed to ease him into a major role when he's ready. But I'm nervous about the PCL/LCL combination and it's hard to invest a first round pick in a player who you won't see a return on investment until 2014, if

at all. The first real test of this draft board will be when I'm sitting with the 1.07 pick and forced to decide between Stacy, Ball and Lattimore.

Joseph Randle intrigues me. I'm still a fan of DeMarco Murray, but the durability concerns can't be denied. I may still be seeing too much in the Dallas offense, but he'll be my primary target in the mid to late rounds at this position.

Version 2.0: I'll usually trust my first instinct even if I find I've ranked a player much higher than his consensus. I'm reluctant to drop him unless I discover I've clearly missed something. So, even though I'm seeing Zac Stacy as a consensus second round pick, he keeps his mid-first round grade here. I don't think Daryl Richardson or Isaiah Pead are more than complementary players and I think Stacy will get a shot at 200+ touches sooner than later.

I've also moved Christine Michael, Mike Gillislee and Joseph Randle up a tier each. I've always been slow to recognize the early second – mid third range as the right area for backs who don't have an immediate depth chart opportunity but the talent to take advantage of their situation when the opportunity does come. These three deserve higher consideration than I originally gave them.

Wide Receiver

I was surprised to see I'd given so few receivers third round grades or better. Last year, I had 16 receivers with a top 40 grade. This season, there are just twelve with only seven in the Top 25. I'm worried that I may be underrating the players I've tiered into the later rounds, but I'm disappointed in the draft position and depth chart situation of players like Markus Wheaton, Quinton Patton, Da'Rick Rogers and Mark Harrison. Sleeper options that I was turned onto while reading Matt Waldman's RSP like Kenbrell Thompkins, Perez Ashford and Marquess Wilson also have major uphill battles to make a roster much less earn enough playing time to support fantasy value.

I'm in full agreement with the consensus top three rookie receivers, but my preference for the highest ceiling player has Cordarrelle Patterson over Tavon Austin on my board. Patterson has some technical issues and a questionable quarterback situation, but could be a 140+ target, double digit touchdown talent. Sam Bradford targeted Danny Amendola 100 times in 11 games last season, but I'm not certain Austin has an elite ceiling from the slot. It's close, however, and I find no fault with Austin as the 1.01 pick. DeAndre Hopkins is a stud, but could have limited opportunity in an offense that should continue to run through Arian Foster and Andre Johnson for the next 1-3 seasons.

I could put all four second tier prospects on the same line. Justin Hunter has the highest upside, but he scares me. Keenan Allen is my favorite receiver in the group, but his health worries me as does nearly everything about the San Diego offense right now. I've been lured by the upside of the New England X receiver position for years but keep getting burned. Dobson has upside, but the recent New England history of identifying and developing receiver talent outside the hashmarks is frightening. Not so frightening that I'm willing to look past Tom Brady and the 140 targets Brandon Lloyd got last year, however. Robert Woods is the highest floor prospect in this tier, but I'm not seeing elite upside.

I think the third tier may be the sweet spot for value, assuming I've not underrated the entire group. Wheaton and Patton were pre-draft favorites, but it could be Josh Boyce or Stedman Bailey who surprise and outproduce rookie teammates drafted in an earlier round. Da'Rick Rogers is a boom-bust lottery pick whose ADP is a huge unknown. If I were certain that a trashed hotel room was the main cause of his not being drafted, I might have given him a fourth round grade. Charles Johnson is going to be hard to ignore in the late rounds as a high upside prospect in the Green Bay offense.

Version 2.0: While I'm reluctant to drop players I like on first instinct, I'm very willing to move a player up on my board. Markus Wheaton is a good example. I liked Wheaton before the draft but allowed my appreciation for Antonio Brown and Emmanuel Sanders to cloud my thinking when putting Version 1.0 together. Wheaton should've been included in the second tier from the start.

Even though I note my preference for upside earlier in the feature, sometimes I don't realize just how much risk I'm willing to tolerate until I put the board into practice. That was the case with Marquess Wilson and Charles Johnson, two boom-bust players to whom I gave high sixth round grades only to find myself considering alongside players with fourth round grades when I was on the clock. In past seasons, there have been linebackers and safer wide receiver prospects I've liked in that range which kept the boom-bust developmental wide receivers in the mid-fifth and later range. That's not the case this year. Both Wilson and Johnson have been moved up to reflect that.

Tight End

Tyler Eifert is a tier above Travis Kelce and Jordan Reed. Eifert becomes a top five prospect and Kelce and Reed could warrant late first round consideration in tight end premium scoring systems. I may be low on Zach Ertz; bump him into the second tier with Kelce and Reed if you like his situation better than I do. I think there's potential in Chris Gragg and Ryan Otten but don't see enough opportunity to give them fourth round grades. And I'm interested to see if Dion Sims can grow into a high floor TE2 in time with Ryan Tannehill. I'm not that enthused about Levine Toilolo despite the strong passing offense and likelihood that Tony Gonzalez leaves a hole in the depth chart in 2014.

Version 2.0: Like Stacy, I'm sticking to my first instinct on Jordan Reed. I like the fit and situation in Washington and, while I don't have Reed as high on my board as I did Aaron Hernandez two seasons ago, I think Reed will be used in a similar fashion. I also moved Dion Sims and Levine Toilolo up a tier in the later rounds.

Defensive Tackle

I think this group of defensive tackles is the deepest in years. But the deep supply works against the draft demand. If you must have Star Lotulelei, you'll probably have to take him in the fourth round. But I don't think he has elite pass rush upside and am not willing to pay that price. Sheldon Richardson is my favorite fantasy prospect, but there's a chance he'll be reclassified to defensive end if the Jets elect to rotate him heavily at the 5-technique.

Defensive End

This class went from being potentially flush with upside and as many as ten fourth round or better prospects to razor thin in a few hours on Thursday night. Dion Jordan narrowly edges out Ezekiel Ansah here, but Jordan will start his career as a nickel pass rusher and could eventually see reclassification if Miami decides he fits best in a Von Miller like role or moves to a 3-4 hybrid base. I'm a huge Datone Jones fan, enough that I'll consider him in the middle rounds despite his 3-4 responsibilities. You probably won't have to take Quanterus Smith in the fourth, but if he recovers fully from a November ACL tear and grows into his edge rushing capabilities, there's a gaping hole at RDE in Denver. There are lots of intriguing development prospects to track. Malliciah Goodman and Devin Taylor will start as situational pass rushers but could grow into every-down talents. Note that Jamie Collins is listed in the defensive end tiers for now. I'm basing all my feature articles on MFL classifications this season and the Rotoworld depth charts they use to make classification decisions currently list Collins at defensive end.

Version 2.0: I'll be a little ahead of Rotoworld here, but I've changed the positional classifications of Tank Carradine (from linebacker to defensive end) and Jamie Collins (from defensive end to linebacker) after hearing their coaches talk about their expected usage. I'm not certain I like Carradine as a 5-technique, but he'll get enough subpackage pass rush snaps to have more sacks than the usual 3-4 defensive end. There's also already some indication that Dion Jordan could be used as a linebacker in time. I haven't reflected that on my board, but be wary of that possibility down the line.

Linebacker

Somehow Arthur Brown was the sixth interior linebacker drafted, falling into the laps of the linebacker needy Baltimore Ravens who only had to trade up a few spots to grab him. He's the head of the IDP class this year and the only player with clear LB1 upside. I wrote before the draft that Alec Ogletree was best suited to 4-3 WLB and I like the fit in St. Louis. Unfortunately, he'll have to contend with James Laurinaitis for tackles and may not be instinctive or physical enough to run up enough tackles to be more than a high-variance LB3. Manti Te'o is a better player than he's given credit, but won't have the range to be an elite fantasy player.

I may be underrating Kevin Minter's upside, but I've actually rated him fairly highly given the thin ranks at wide receiver. I don't trust Kiko Alonso to hold up given his frenetic style but the draft slot suggests the Bills see him as an every-down player. Draft slot also implies a huge role for Jonathan Bostic in time in Chicago but I'm not buying it. The Bears talked up Bostic's speed scores and athleticism, but neither translated on tape and I don't think he's physical enough to be a box score stuffing middle linebacker. With D.J. Williams and Lance Briggs presumably locked into every-down roles, we won't get to see if Bostic can live up to that billing until 2014 anyway. I'd rather have Sio Moore, who should eventually push Nick Roach (or Kevin Burnett or Miles Burris at outside linebacker) aside and take over an every-down role in Oakland.

Michael Mauti has every-down talent and a great depth chart opportunity in Minnesota if he can return to form after his third ACL injury. Vince Williams is the next player to be given a chance at developing into the Pittsburgh inside linebacker alongside Lawrence Timmons. And I still like the upside of Kevin Reddick, a base defensive thumper who signed with New Orleans as an undrafted free agent.

Version 2.0: The Arizona coaches apparently love Kevin Minter and see him as a potential every-down player while the San Diego staff has tempered expectations on Manti Te'o's coverage responsibilities. That, in addition to the Bills trading Kelvin Sheppard and opening the depth chart for Kiko Alonso, shuffles my top linebacker tiers. I've also moved Gerald Hodges up considerably. I'm not sold on him, but the Vikings made no post-draft moves to bolster their linebacker group and are openly discussing moving Erin Henderson inside. That move would put Hodges in a prime spot to start at outside linebacker and potentially grow into a solid IDP target.

Rush Linebacker

Barkevious Mingo, Tank Carradine, Bjoern Werner and Alex Okafor would likely all have tiered into the third round range had they been drafted into a defensive end role. I don't like Werner as a 3-4 OLB, but he's a matchup LB3 in big play scoring systems. Put Trevardo Williams and Brandon Jenkins on your big play watch lists.

Version 2.0: Jamie Collins joins the top tier here with the news that Bill Belichick will try him at linebacker. He won't be an elite pass rusher but he projects as a solid tackler. If he sees some base 4-3 SLB or 3-4 OLB snaps and gets edge rushing subpackage snaps, he could become a matchup LB3 with situational upside.

Cornerback

Like defensive tackle, cornerback is a deep position this year and supply should push down demand. Take Dee Milliner if you're corner shopping. He'll be tested opposite Antonio Cromarte in a division flush with pass-first offenses. D.J. Hayden, Desmond Trufant, Xavier Rhodes, and Dwayne Gratz fit the profile for fantasy production, but there are 8-10 more names worthy of watch lists in deep, CB-required leagues.

Version 2.0: Xavier Rhodes looks to get a chance to start right away and has a very favorable schedule in the early going. I've also moved Leon McFadden up a tier based on news that he'll get a head start on a starting job opposite Joe Haden.

Safety

I've been doing rookie drafts for nearly 20 years. I've never seen anything like the 2013 draft. There were at least ten above-average safety prospects in the draft and tons of depth chart opportunity around the league. With the possible exception of the draft's most elite talent -- Kenny Vaccaro, who was drafted into a crowded situation in New Orleans -- every one of those prospects was taken by a team with an open starting slot in the next two seasons.

Vaccaro could make Roman Harper expendable, but he'll hold value as an interchangeable safety with slot corner potential. It's the best of all worlds for box score potential -- think of a Eric Berry / Ronde Barber combo -- but you may not see him play every down until 2014. I nearly put Johnathan Cyprien above Vaccaro due to immediate upside, but Cyprien's coverage stats may never be elite. I love the fits for Shaun Williams and Matt Elam, but neither have elite all-around talent. Eric Reid would rank ahead of both but his projected opportunity behind Patrick Willis and NaVorro Bowman holds him back a tier. D.J. Swearinger has elite upside once the veteran duo of Danieal Manning and Ed Reed move on. He'll move up if he looks to get a Bryan Scott / Deon Grant like Big Nickel role. Keep an eye on J.J. Wilcox's development in Dallas and be ready to move on Shamarko Thomas as soon as his path to playing time opens in Pittsburgh.

Version 2.0: I've moved Johnathan Cyprien ahead of Kenny Vaccaro until it's clear how New Orleans plans on using Vaccaro. I've also seen Matt Elam as the first safety off the board in some leagues, but I prefer Vaccaro or Cyprien.

I'll be updating this feature multiple times during the offseason. The next update will likely come after the first mini-camp sessions are over and we get a better idea of how coaching staffs see their talent fitting into their schemes. Thanks in advance for any feedback as I work on refining the draft board in the coming weeks. Questions, suggestions and comments are welcome by email at bramel@footballguys.com or on Twitter at [@JeneBramel](https://twitter.com/JeneBramel).