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NFL DRAFT 2017 SCOUTING REPORT: RB JOEL BOUAGNON, NO. ILLINOIS

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NFL DRAFT 2017 SCOUTING REPORT: RB JOEL BOUAGNON, NO. ILLINOIS

**Our RB grades can and will change as more information comes in from Pro Day workouts, leaked Wonderlic test results, etc. We will update ratings as new info becomes available.*

**We use the term "Power RB" to separate physically bigger, more between-the-tackles-capable RBs from our "Speed RBs" group. "Speed RBs" are physically smaller but much faster/quicker, and less likely to flourish between the tackles.*

*Pronounced: Jo-ELL Bwon-NYO

The MAC Conference has some impressive football players/prospects in 2017. The conference is really starting to 'make some noise' more than just the '*always dangerous MAC*' label. The MAC has some big names for this draft. The best WR in the 2017 NFL Draft may be Western Michigan's **Corey Davis**. I think Toledo TE **Michael Roberts** could be one of the 3–5 best, possibly the best TE from this class in the long run. Toledo RB **Kareem Hunt** is very 'sneakily' one of the best RB prospects in this draft...he may belong in the top 3 all-around RB prospects in this class.

Northern Illinois RB **Joel Bouagnon** is one of the best RB prospects in this draft. Not a 'sure thing' prospect, and not among the top 5...there are flaws...but he has top 10 RB prospect skills, maybe top 5 RB prospect skills. Let me explain...

Let me start with the positives:

Perhaps only **Kareem Hunt** has more gifted feet among all the RBs in this draft. Not 'gifted' for speed or insane agility...it's something more subtle. Something analytics would miss on **Kareem Hunt** or Bouagnon...as it did for people scouting **Jordan Howard**, and to some degree why **Kenneth Dixon** is a terrific runner. There is something to be said for a combination of having elite vision PLUS shifty feet in a blink of an eye...almost like an effortless hop or bounce (like a rabbit), away from trouble/a tackler/congestion. It's something to behold on tape.

Most running back prospects do not possess the physical tools to move their feet so quickly. On top of that, most RB prospects do not have the vision and/or heart to run between the tackles. Rare is the running back that possesses all of these gifts simultaneously.

I can try to explain 'shifty feet' with words and not make much of a visual impact for you, so I want to show you a play from Bouagnon's 2016 game against Toledo. This

play starts at the 9:53 mark of the video. I want you to watch his simple 10+ yard run, but then go back and watch it 2–3 more times. The first watch is so rapid, so simple, that you could blow right past 'it'. *Drink it in* a few times to really see 'it'.

Move the bar to the 9:53 mark...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iFn7wCYdZrI&feature=youtu.be>

Bouagnon's vision to get through the hole is nice. His head is up, a hole/lane develops, and he finds it. It's the next move after that which is different, freakish if you will.

Once through the line of scrimmage and into the open field – that move he makes on the linebacker is breathtaking the more you watch it. Consider, Bouagnon never drops his head or changes speed (slowing to cut away or speeding up to 'get away') – his body language never changes, he stays at the same pace, and is balanced with his head up – and then he moves his feet so fast away from the linebacker that it's almost like watching a magician's sleight of hand. *How did he do that?* It happens so fast you could miss it. Moving away from trouble by 'sense' and having such 'shifty feet' that you never have to break stride or have to change gears – that's something I rarely see with any prospect at any position.

You know how good this move is? Watch it again a few times – now look at it from the perspective of the linebacker trying to make the tackle. He's so sure he has Bouagnon dead to rights but is smart enough not to try to tackle a 230-pound RB up high, so he just goes low to take his feet out from underneath him. What happened? The linebacker dove and literally grabbed air. That linebacker was in place to make that tackle and completely missed. If you pause the tape at 9:56...just hit pause and stare at it – you'd swear the linebacker has him dead to rights OR will at least hit him. You would never guess from the freeze frame at 9:56 that what will happen is the linebacker will completely whiff the tackle because Bouagnon vanishes into thin air on him. Also, note on the 9:56 freeze frame...there is nothing obvious that's open to Bouagnon's right-hand side...there's some congestion there. Bouagnon's going to simply float past that congestion as well.

Most NFL running backs cannot pull off this play in the same fashion. Some can lower a shoulder into the mess and gain as many yards as they can with power and momentum. Some 4.3+ 40-time runners could go through the hole so fast that they find space before defenders can close. Rare are boxed-in runners in the middle of the storm who just 'vanish' from tacklers and find extra yards.

Notice Bouagnon finishes the run by taking tacklers with him for an extra yard or two. That's another thing that stands out about Bouagnon – he finds these cracks to run through and between his size, power, and shiftiness...he always finds a few extra yards between the cracks, and upon contact he's always falling forward. It's subtly impressive. It's impressive for any running back...maybe, more impressive knowing Bouagnon is 230 pounds and doing this.

Bouagnon's 40-time at his Pro Day wasn't great – 4.66. His three-cone was nice at 6.90. Not bad numbers for a 230-pounder, but not like 'wow'. However, there were 'wow' numbers with him, however. His 10-yard split was 1.56. His 20-yard split was 2.53. How impressive are those numbers? The only 230+ pound RB prospects who hit a 1.56 10-yard time, 2.55 or better 20-yard time, and went below 7.00 on the three-cone in the history of my database are **Jonathan Stewart**, **Jackie Battle**, and CFM legend **Mario Fannin**. Stewart, you know of. Battle produced some when finally given a shot late in his career, after years of being wasted trying to make him a fullback, and Fannin is one of the best athletes at RB I've ever studied – but two knee surgeries wiped him out.

Look at Bouagnon for another 10-20-60 seconds on tape. Does that look like a 230-pound human? He looks like 215–220. If Bouagnon ran those special times at 230 pounds...what if he went to 225 or 220? He might have the shiftiest feet we've ever recorded.

That's why I am excited about **Joel Bouagnon**.

What worries me about Bouagnon...

He had a terrific 1,285 yards/18 TD rushing season in 2015 and followed that up with a disappointing 885 yards/8 TD rushing season in 2016. A drop-off that I can't see the reason for on tape...much of it in reduced workload. Also, concerning...in both 2015 and 2016, Bouagnon ran for less than 5.0 yards per carry. That's not a good sign for such an elusive runner. His worst games came against the top opponents – Ohio State, Boston College, Boise State (2015 bowl), Wyoming 2016 bowl team with a decent defense...some of that ypc issue was the O-Line being overwhelmed, but some of that has to fall on Bouagnon...and at least make you pause.

There's reason to hesitate with Bouagnon, but there are several indicators that something special might be hiding here. For the draft price (likely undrafted), an NFL team should be all over this.

JOEL BOUAGNON, THROUGH THE LENS OF OUR "POWER RB" SCOUTING**ALGORITHM**

No fumbles in the past three seasons...and one in his entire career (as a freshman).
578 carries and 43 catches and no fumbles 2014–2016.

Scored 18 rushing TDs in 11 games to start 2015, and then had none in his final three games of 2015...and just 8 rushing TDs in all of 2016 – 8 rushing TDs his last 15 college games. Of the 8 rushing TDs, five of them came in one game (Bowling Green State 2016). Very odd pattern.

Minimally used in the passing game – mostly because he is a very good blocker. He stayed in to protect quite a bit. From what I see, he has decent+ hands. No reason for concern that I see. Caught 6 passes opening day 2016 versus Wyoming.

In 11 games in his career with 20 or more carries (all in 2015 and 2016), Bouagnon averaged 122.3 rushing yards on 25.0 carries (4.9 ypc) and 1.81 TDs per game.

PRO DAY NUMBERS...

6'1.2"/230

4.66 40-time, 2.53 20-yard, 1.56 10-yard, 4.42 shuttle, 6.90 three-cone

20 bench reps, 34.0" vertical, 10'2" broad jump

Bouagnon's college numbers on CFB Reference: <http://www.sports-reference.com/cfb/players/joel-bouagnon-1.html>

THE NFL "POWER RB" THAT JOEL BOUAGNON MOST COMPARES WITH STATISTICALLY IN COLLEGE, WITHIN OUR SYSTEM:

A very interesting, eclectic group Bouagnon compares to within our analysis – some stars...some awesome 'on paper' but 'never were' in the NFL. I have to say, most of the names we see as potential comps are guys that seemed to have promise but flamed out in the NFL...some due to injury. There are some great names to get excited about, but a few more 'false hope' guys than 'for sure' guys. It's worth getting excited about but he's not a sure thing.

TABLE 480

RB-s Score	RB- Re	RB- Ru	Name	Name	College	Yr	H	H	Weight	Speed	Agility	Power
7.158	6.04	7.90	Bouagnon	Joel	No Illinois	2017	6	1.0	230	3.61	6.10	8.07
7.292	5.07	6.12	James	Mike	Miami, Fla	2013	5	10.4	223	4.98	3.64	9.97
10.434	10.01	10.55	Jackson	Steven	Oregon State	2004	6	1.4	231	7.87	6.09	7.51
6.540	5.73	6.52	Shead	Traylon	SMU	2014	6	2.0	225	7.51	7.24	6.90
5.660	3.24	4.43	Evans	Darren	Va Tech	2011	6	0.0	227	4.97	6.45	8.36
10.213	10.09	10.03	Murray	Latavius	C. Florida	2013	6	2.5	223	12.07	8.55	8.53
7.250	7.38	7.06	Henry	Chris	Arizona	2007	5	11.2	230	9.22	5.18	9.51
7.484	7.91	7.02	Fannin	Mario	Auburn	2011	5	10.4	231	14.59	8.27	6.19
8.421	7.40	8.03	Parmeale	Jalen	Toledo	2008	5	11.4	224	9.79	7.50	7.04

**A score of 8.50+ is where we see a stronger correlation of RBs going on to become NFL good/great/elite. A score of 10.00+ is more rarefied air in our system and indicates a greater probability of becoming an elite NFL RB.*

All of the RB ratings are based on a 0–10 scale, but a player can score negative, or above a 10.0 in certain instances.

Overall rating/score = A combination of several on-field performance measures, including refinement for the strength of opponents faced, mixed with all the physical measurement metrics—then compared/rated historically within our database and formulas. More of a traditional three-down search—runner, blocker, and receiver.

RB-Re score = **New/testing in 2017. Our new formula/rating that attempts to identify and quantify a prospect's receiving skills even deeper than in our original formulas. RB prospects can now make it/thrive in the NFL strictly based on their receiving skills—it is an individual attribute sought out for the NFL and no longer dismissed or overlooked. Our rating combines a study of their receiving numbers in college in relation to their offense and opponents, as well as profiling size-speed-agility along with hand-size measurables, etc.*

RB-Ru score = **New/testing in 2017. Our new formula/rating that attempts to classify and quantify an RB prospect's ability strictly as a runner of the ball. Our rating combines a study of their rushing numbers in college in relation to their offense and strength of opponents, as well as profiling size-speed-agility along with various size measurables, etc.*

Raw Speed Metric = A combination of several speed and size measurements from the NFL Combine, judged along with physical size profile, and then compared/rated historically within our database and scouting formulas. This is a rating strictly for RBs of a similar/bigger size profile.

Agility Metric = A combination of several speed and agility measurements from the NFL Combine, judged along with physical size profile, and then compared/rated historically within our database and scouting formulas. This is a rating strictly for RBs of a similar/bigger size profile.⁴⁵

2017 NFL DRAFT OUTLOOK...

Bouagnon is the #63 ranked RB prospect for CBS, and ESPN likes him as the #75 RB prospect. I'm pretty sure Bouagnon will not get drafted.

NFL Outlook: All depends on if he gets a fair shot or not. Odds are he won't, but RB injuries are so frequent, he will likely get an opportunity, but not really a fair/consistent shot unless he explodes instantly.

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