



## NFL Draft 2016 Scouting Report: RB Ezekiel Elliott, Ohio State

*\*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.*

I have conflicting scouting notes on **Ezekiel Elliott**. He 'checks all the boxes'. I hate when analysts say that, but for me Elliott defines my version of 'checking all the boxes'...and my version isn't quite as glowing.

In my scouting notes, when watching Elliott on tape, I have no negative items written. He has NFL size, no doubt. He definitely has NFL straight-line speed with a 4.47 40-time. He has nice vision and instinct running the ball. He's a very willing, and very good blocker. He runs pretty strong/tough. He breaks arm tackles and pushes piles forward versus falling down like a bag of rocks upon contact. He can catch the ball well enough out of the backfield. I have no complaint with what I see on tape. I'm not blown away by anything, but I'm not repelled by anything either.

My version of 'checking all the boxes' is the fact that that's all Elliott does for me—'checks the boxes'. The boxes are definitely checked. He's an NFL-worthy running back without a doubt. However, I'm not putting any gold stars or emphatic checks in those boxes. Everything I see is 'good', which means everything overall is 'good'. His scouting score for us is 'good'. I know he's 'good'. What I don't think he is—is 'great'. There's nothing that I see that he does that I would classify as great. I'm not demeaning him for that, I'm just saying the running back that an NFL team is going to get here is a 'good', 'very good' one....so what's the price of a good/very good running back these days? Not a price I'm willing to pay for what analysts are proposing Elliott's going to cost.

For me, I'm not a little sour on Elliott just because I've painted him with a bland 'good' label. There's something about **Ezekiel Elliott** 'the person' that just rubs me the wrong way...which is more reason why I would not pay the hefty price for him.

I have observed him in interviews, and we've seen small flashes of it during his college career—the complainer, the entitled one. I've always gotten a vibe that Elliott walks around with an air of superiority that he's not fully worthy of...because he's 'good' not 'great'. TV analysts and radio hosts have made him out to be 'the next coming', when he's just 'pretty good'...better than **Melvin Gordon** (another mega-hyped runner), but not as good as **Todd Gurley** or **David Johnson**.



MARCH 1, 2016

What clinched this off-field red flag for me was observing Elliott at the NFL Combine. Elliott often wandered around the Combine field alone in his own little world...which isn't a crime, per se, but runs with the narrative. You could find him lying on the ground like he was asleep during the Combine events, like he was bored to be there; like it was beneath him. He was doing us all a favor by being there. He should have been walking around shaking hands and talking pros, etc. It's like a political campaign... 'shaking hands and kissing babies'. The cameras and the coaches in the stands were concentrating on him...a lot. When I saw him...he was never doing anything positive. He was staring into outer space, alone, or laying down on the ground.

When I watched him participate in the vertical jump, he came off to me as if he wasn't really giving 100%. I watched a lot of prospects concentrate and go through several gyrations to get themselves in the position and then really explode up into the sky for that crucial vertical...so much so that they would crash to the ground awkwardly and almost fall over because they were giving it 150%. Elliott approached the vertical as '*let me get this over with*' type of jumps...and they weren't very good leaps (as measured) as it was.

That's the other thing that bugs me about **Ezekiel Elliott**. He had an awful vertical leap. His broad jump was so-so. And because he is so superior to the rest of us mere mortals, he did not participate in the bench press or the agility drills—which I think he (his agent) was purposely ducking. Purposely ducking because he knew analysts would tear down his man-made mythology prospect status he's been given. It's super smart on his behalf, but because I don't trust him as far as I can throw him—I see it as a flaw. In our computer scouting models, we put in estimates for his bench press and agility times but erred a little more on the side of them being weaker rather than stronger. I don't think Elliott would duck out of drills he believed that he would show everybody up in...times and measurements he could brag about. The team that drafts Elliott may get a bag of beads they weren't aware of.

I'll be really interested to see if Elliott again ducks the agility and bench part of his Pro Day, with some kind of statement how he's going to stand on his NFL Combine numbers, as NFL lapdogs bark about how he doesn't need to run anyway because we all know how wonderfully fantastically amazing he is because of the tape. *Because NFL analysts always know talent when they see it—that's why they missed David Johnson by a mile in last year's draft, and still don't really realize how phenomenal he is even today.* Analysts are bought and sold on Elliott already, which means half the echo chamber NFL team management will be as well.

I think **Ezekiel Elliott** is a solid NFL prospect. I have no doubt that his drafting NFL team is going to force him all the carries a la **T.J. Yeldon** for Jacksonville last year, and **Melvin Gordon** for the Chargers last year as well. I think Elliott may be a little bit better than both of those guys, but not that much better. Elliott's going to produce something if he's given a full, nonstop workload. But will he be that franchise runner that people are still drooling over 5+ years from now? I don't think so.

*\*Note: I will update or redo portions of the scouting report if Elliott does participate in agility drills and the bench press at his Pro Day, and if those results are radically different than what we projected.*



### Ezekiel Elliott, Through the Lens of Our RB Scouting Algorithm:

You see the numbers from his last two seasons at Ohio State, and it blows your mind. Back-to-back 1,800+ yard seasons. 17 of his last 18 games with 100+ yards rushing, and 17 of his last 18 with at least one TD run...he was terrific....

...but so was **Carlos Hyde**...and Hyde had an even better, much better yards per carry in the same OSU offense. **Melvin Gordon** was better in the Big-10, much better...so was **Montee Ball**. **Tevin Coleman** was as productive as/more productive than Elliott on a worse team that didn't afford as many TD chances. In yards per carry, Coleman blew away Elliott on a less talented team across the board...playing many of the same opponents.

Elliott had one of the worst verticals and broad jumps among the RB group at his NFL Combine. He ran a nice 4.47 40-time, but his 10-yard split was mediocre at 1.58. The NFL Combine was not the help to Elliott that analysts are trying to jam down your throat because of the 40-time. I think it revealed a lot of weakness...weakness that makes him NFL-worthy, but not a first-rounder.

Elliott is a decent enough receiver in the passing game. He won't hurt a team there. He has nice-sized hands and catches fairly effectively. There are many RBs more competent at catching the ball in this draft class, but they are more specialists in the passing game. Elliott catches well enough to be a competent three-down running back.

### The Historical RB Prospects to Whom Ezekiel Elliott Most Compares Within Our System:

Our scouting models believe **Ezekiel Elliott** is a comparison to **Marcus Lattimore**, which is hard to picture because Lattimore never made it to the NFL. However, there are some striking similarities in their college time. I believe Lattimore was another hype machine college running back. A guy who was good/very good but was promoted into godlike state...much in the way **Melvin Gordon** was last year, and what I think **Ezekiel Elliott** has been as well. Again, all guys that belong in the NFL, and can do some good things, but at the end of the day they're not changing the world. How much of a price are you willing to pay for a 'really good' running back in 2016?



Perhaps, I look at it like a dealmaker. **Ezekiel Elliott** is a strong ‘B’ talent. But I’m not paying an ‘A+’ price for him at a position that is the least important in all the NFL. I’m not slamming Elliott’s talent, per se, as much as where his valuation is at.

<u>RB Score</u>	<u>RB-Re</u>	<u>RB-Ru</u>	<u>Last</u>	<u>First</u>	<u>College</u>	<u>Yr</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>Speed Metric</u>	<u>Agility Metric</u>
<b>8.389</b>	7.82	8.07	Elliott	Ezekiel	Ohio State	2016	5	11.8	225	9.49	7.37
<b>7.112</b>	8.28	7.24	Lattimore	Marcus	So Carolina	2013	5	11.6	221	6.51	8.05
<b>9.010</b>	6.22	8.62	Maroney	Lawrence	Minnesota	2006	5	11.7	217	7.72	7.40
<b>9.116</b>	3.41	8.88	Pierce	Bernard	Temple	2012	5	11.6	218	7.30	4.38
<b>5.673</b>	4.98	5.31	Anderson	C.J.	Cal	2013	5	8.0	224	6.17	5.14
<b>4.192</b>	7.06	3.64	Saine	Brandon	Ohio State	2011	5	11.3	220	11.40	6.40

*\*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 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 2016. 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 2016. Our new formula/rating that attempts to classify and quantify a 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.*

### **2016 NFL Draft Outlook:**

I know some NFL team is going to pay a hefty price in 2016 for **Ezekiel Elliott**, because the hype machine is full-tilt pushing him that way. If Elliott is taken higher in the draft than **Todd Gurley** was last year...it will be a travesty. The fact that Elliott will be taken much higher than **David Johnson** was last year is also totally ridiculous, but that Ohio State jersey carries a lot of weight, almost as much as an Alabama one does. We all make fun of the past run of Alabama running backs being nowhere near as good as what we were sold, but could someone tell me about the great recent Ohio State running backs? **Beanie Wells** and **Carlos Hyde**? Those OSU guys are NFL-worthy, good/very good running backs, but not franchise changers...as much as analysts tried to push them as such pre-draft. If I had to bet, I would say that Elliott falls to the #15-25th pick overall. I think Elliott's dodging of some of the NFL Combine events, and the poor measurements from ones he did, will catch up to him to some degree.

If I were an NFL GM, I certainly respect what **Ezekiel Elliott** brings to be NFL—he's going to be a really nice, solid, good NFL running back. What I am willing to pay for really good running backs is not a top 100 pick—and since Elliott will probably go in the top 10–15, I would for sure have no interest in participating.

### **NFL Outlook:**

I can't help but think about what a dud **Melvin Gordon**, and most of the Big 10 stud running backs of the past two seasons, have been when they hit the NFL. **Melvin Gordon, Tevin Coleman, David Cobb, Jeremy Langford**—all guys who blew away the Big Ten and got everyone excited pre-2015 NFL Draft, and then hit the NFL with a thud. My gut tells me **Ezekiel Elliott** is another one of those highly overrated Big-10 runners. He'll play, for sure, and be forced a ton of touches as a random soon-to-be-fired NFL coach throws his entire offensive lot in with Elliott; like the Chargers did with **Melvin Gordon** last year or the Jags did with **TJ Yeldon**. If Elliott's new team doesn't have a ton of weapons and a great offensive line along with him, he's going to be seen as a huge disappointment...like Gordon, like Yeldon. I just smell more hype than reality here. Not that Elliott won't be good, even if he is a B+ player, it won't be the A+ everyone has been blathering about.



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