



NFL Draft 2016 Scouting Report: RB Darius Jackson, E. Michigan

**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.*

At his Pro Day, running back **Darius Jackson** ran a 4.40 40-time with a fantastic 41" vertical to go along with a high-end 11'1" broad jump. He also pounded out 20 reps on the bench press, while running terrific agility times in the three-cone drill. All this fantastic pre-draft showing has gotten Jackson is him being mentioned as a 'draft sleeper' for Draftniks, with national websites still asleep on him – ESPN lists him #30 among RB prospects (as of this writing), and not among their top 350 prospects overall. Credit to CBS for moving him to #17 among RB prospects, and #198 overall.

All I can think of when I see the nonreaction to his Pro Day – I wonder what would've happened had **Darius Jackson** been invited to the NFL Combine, and produced these kinds of numbers? The TV commentators would've gone wild, he would've been the talk of the running back class that day, and his draft stock would've likely pushed towards more of a fifth-round status.

I can't also help but wonder – if **Ezekiel Elliott** produced these kind of measurables, is there a pick number greater than #1 overall that fawning football analysts could have assigned to him? Could Elliott have been the first pick ranked at #0, or something else befitting *the greatest running back in modern history*? If Elliott had really produced these kinds of numbers, he'd actually be worthy of his mainstream draft status as a top 10–20 overall prospect today. However, when **Darius Jackson** produces these results at a Pro Day it just means analysts have to move him from a UDFA...to a seventh-round/UDFA projection.

OK, so what do we want to make of this? I know what many of you are thinking. Visions of a **David Johnson 2.0** are dancing in your head. After all, they are frighteningly similar comparing Jackson's Pro Day to Johnson's NFL Combine. The NFL mostly missed how great Johnson was as a prospect, so is the same thing playing out here with Jackson? It's a legit question...

Darius Jackson: 4.40 (40-time), 1.56 (10-yard), 20 bench reps, 41.0" vertical, 11'1" broad, 4.29 shuttle, 6.87 three-cone.

David Johnson: 4.50 (40-time), 1.57 (10-yard), 25 bench reps, 41.5" vertical, 10'7" broad, 4.25 shuttle, 6.82 three-cone.



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If you consider Jackson getting some *home cooking* at a Pro Day...the measurables are still pretty similar, eerily so. However, after looking through the data, and watching some game tape of **Darius Jackson**, my first response is no, he's not the next **David Johnson**. Honestly, I'm having a hard time figuring out exactly what we should think about Jackson.

How does a guy with this kind of athleticism wind up at Eastern Michigan, and do nothing for three seasons before starting to produce as a senior? I'm not saying anything against Eastern Michigan. I would just think someone with this kind of physical skill winding up at a mid-major school would absolutely destroy the depth chart for EMU, and then go on to crush the MAC conference. Neither of those things came true.

Jackson kicked around as a backup/second fiddle for three seasons, and then became a good MAC conference running back in 2015. He was not a great MAC running back, but a good one. **Zurlon Tipton** destroyed this conference a couple years ago (when he was healthy). **Thomas Rawls** was incredible in his one-year move to the MAC conference in 2015. **Darius Jackson** finally got his chance in 2015, and he was pretty good...but not great...not even close to special.

Jackson's tape looks pretty decent, but I wasn't overwhelmed. He has the speed, the strength, and the agility to be a legit NFL running back. I just never saw an 'it' factor. I saw a guy who looked like every other 'good' MAC conference running back over the past couple years. He didn't look like any of the better MAC conference running backs I've scouted the past few years.

When I first did a little pre-scout work on Jackson prior to the NFLPA Collegiate Bowl, I thought he was pretty good. Someone to keep an eye on. He ran tentative, hesitant at the NFLPA game. He looked unsure. He looked like he belonged physically, but not mentally. I kind of wrote him out of my mind, pigeonholing him as a UDFA guy who could make the fringes of the NFL...and then I see his **David Johnson**-like workout, and I have to go back to the drawing board.

I went back to the drawing board, and I'm still not moved. I mean, I know he's a good prospect. He might be better in the NFL with better blocking and surrounded by a better team... EMU was a combined 7-41 in **Darius Jackson's** four seasons there. I watched him face LSU in 2015, his stiffest test...he was OK, he held up well against an SEC defense. It's hard to figure how good or bad it was because his team was so physically overmatched. I thought **Darius Jackson** held his own – 19 carries for 66 yards and a short TD. Jackson ran tough, found/made extra yards on a few plays using physicality. He made some nice one-cut moves...it was good. Watching him in other games against lesser opponents than LSU...you could see how gifted he was, but he didn't explode off the screen. I was ahead of the free world on **David Johnson** scouting last year. I knew it the second I saw it. I'm not getting the same vibe with **Darius Jackson**. There are pieces to be interested in, but the puzzle is not complete – and I don't know if the issue is his team, or his heart...or both.

I do know this: you have to take seriously a RB with those Pro Day numbers and size. Jackson should be an easy top 10 RB prospect in this class...a true 'sleeper', because you don't know what you're going to



get – an upside surprise is on the table. If he went on to bust in the NFL, I would not be totally shocked. If he became the star RB of this 2016 draft class...I would not be shocked by that either. He's not our top-rated RB for 2016, but I could see a case where he might should be (in part, because it's a weak class). He's an enigma for me right now.

Darius Jackson, Through the Lens of Our RB Scouting Algorithm:

. You would think if Jackson was so gifted, he would have been better than 3rd in the MAC conference in rushing, and better than 8th in yards per carry. He rushed for only 90.7 yards per game last season...fine for college, but not a trumpet blast for greatness heading to the NFL. However, EMU had a second RB that was pretty good (**Shaq Vann**), and they ran him about one-third of the carries compared to Jackson's two-thirds. They also used Vann in the passing game more.

After catching five passes in their 2015 opener against Old Dominion, Jackson caught just 1.5 passes per game the rest of the season. Jackson had decent hands, but the team didn't really push him in the short passing game...and also the EMU program is a complete disaster it appears – so I'm not sure what to blame on Jackson, and what to blame on the football program in general.

Prior to 2015, Jackson played three seasons amassing only 508 yards rushing, 4.9 yards per carry. Stunning for a horrible team with no serious NFL skill player prospects. How Jackson wasn't a star day-one, I don't know...but I fear it's a problem.

Comparing Jackson's Pro Day to the RB group at the NFL Combine, he would have finished 2nd among all RBs in 40-time (tie), vertical leap, and broad jump. He would have been 3rd in the three-cone. He would have become a decent draft story coming out of Indy, had he been invited.

The Historical RB Prospects to Whom Darius Jackson Most Compares Within Our System:

There is more than a fine line between **Tyler Gaffney** or **Montario Hardesty** and **David Johnson**. **Tyler Gaffney** is a great call by the computer, as is Hardesty...big guys who were more finesse than power, nor ever showing an over-the-top 'it' factor. However, the presence of **David Johnson** on this list has to make everyone pause and consider.



RB Score	RB-Re	RB-ru	Last	First	College	Yr	H	H	W	Speed Metric	Agility Metric
7.859	7.83	7.90	Jackson	Darius	E. Michigan	2016	6	0.0	220	9.27	6.46
8.537	7.44	8.37	Gaffney	Tyler	Stanford	2014	5	11.4	220	8.80	11.51
8.466	6.09	8.32	Hardesty	Montario	Tennessee	2010	5	11.6	225	7.44	9.15
10.213	10.09	10.03	Murray	Latavius	C. Florida	2013	6	2.5	223	12.07	8.55
8.924	11.05	8.85	Johnson	David	No. Iowa	2015	6	0.5	224	9.13	8.98
8.781	6.67	7.52	Michael	Christine	Texas A&M	2013	5	9.8	220	8.34	16.40
8.932	4.16	7.80	Carter	Delone	Syracuse	2011	5	8.5	222	5.27	9.83

**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.

