



## NFL Draft 2015 Scouting Report: RB Melvin Gordon, Wisconsin

*\*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.*

If you've read any of my previous writings on Gordon, or listened to me on that recent podcast, then you already know I'm a little 'negative' on **Melvin Gordon**. Allow me to further shape this argument, because I don't want you to think that we feel Gordon will 'bust' in the NFL, or assume he is a fraud of an NFL prospect. I realize that Gordon belongs in the NFL and is a possible NFL starter. He has the athleticism and performance data which shows he belongs in the NFL.

My main point on Gordon (since Sept. 2014) has been that he is more human than superstar...and in that sense he causes some serious NFL-valuation concerns—because so many people have his value jacked sky high. There is no one walking the planet who thinks **Melvin Gordon** is 'bad' for the NFL, but the problem is that there are not many who feel Gordon is just 'good'. The majority of analysts have locked-in that he is a 'no-doubt' franchise RB in the NFL. We think that's a reach. Allow me to state our statistical (next section), and our logical reason (this section) why...

I don't see 'it', on tape. I just don't.

I see that Gordon is a very good college RB. He has terrific instincts to go along with 4.5+ speed. He deftly navigates blocking at the point of attack, and springs through the right spaces...you saw it time and again on tape. You also saw that it was the Wisconsin O-Line on tape...the team/O-Line that keeps launching RB prospects into the NFL with a ton of fanfare, only to have the RBs not live up to the hype at the next level—**Montee Ball** and **James White** most recently. Just a few seasons ago, **Montee Ball** rushed for 33 TDs on over 6.0+ yards per carry in a season. He was the *greatest thing* anyone had ever seen back then, pre-draft...but what do you think about him now?

**Montee Ball** is not an NFL bust. He's just not as 'special' as everyone surmised. He is solid/good for the NFL. He works fine. He's just not a high-end, franchise RB. He's an ordinary 215+ pound, 4.5+ runner...just like **Melvin Gordon**...and both blew up the world in the same college running *system*.

I write 'system' on purpose. We keep falling all over ourselves identifying and labeling passing-based 'systems'...**Mike Leach** was a mad scientist at Texas Tech, or **June Jones** at Hawaii, or the run-pass fast paced style at Oregon. Those 'systems' jacked up numbers for individual players but has yet to mean as



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much for the same players transitioning to success in the NFL. In that same thought process, why will we not fully acknowledge that there exists a pure running game 'system' in college that puffs up RB prospects greater than they are? The best run 'system' we've seen since the Oklahoma-Nebraska wishbone days...the Wisconsin Badgers O-Line dominant scheme.

The whole thing with Gordon can be seen on tape in his simple runs off-tackle. The hole is usually gaping. When it is, the 4.5+ Gordon flies through it with a head of steam, and it's up to defenses with 4.8-4.9 speed DBs to try to catch him. I saw it time and time again in the Big-Ten last season with Gordon...and others. Michigan State's **Jeremy Langford** was terrific in 2014 (1,500+ yards and 22 TD rushing), and he would have produced 2,000 yards rushing and 27 rushing TDs as a Big-Ten runner had he been given the ball as many times as Gordon touched it in 2014. Langford is also not special but is heading to the NFL. Langford is also very fast (faster than Gordon), and had much college success running the ball through wide-open holes when they were afforded.

You do want a fast guy to run through holes in the NFL...that's the purpose of having a speedy RB. However, NFL defenders are just as fast, and there are not as many gaping holes available. When it's not as 'easy' in the NFL, the issue for judging these one-dimensional RB prospects becomes—what else ya' got?

What if there isn't a hole? What else do you offer me besides speed through a hole?

*Do you have elite agility to take the ball another direction if the line is jammed?* Gordon did not measure with elite agility, and I've seen him get swallowed up against good defenses when he tries to (and he is used to having his way with lesser defensive talent). Depending upon what tape you watch Gordon makes that cutback against most college defenses, but against an elevated defensive competition he faced—he did not fare as well.

*Do you have amazing hands out of the backfield?* Gordon has appeared in 40 career games versus D1 teams and has caught just 18 passes in those 40 games. Some of that is 'system' (heavy run game). Some of that is he has shaky hands. He's not incompetent as a receiver, but he is not naturally gifted either. *\*Speaking of hands, how much worry do you have knowing Gordon fumbled seven-times last year, losing six of them?*

*Do you possess a massive size that just pushes NFL bodies for extra yards, and are you a goal-line threat?* Gordon is a muscular, but slender-ish 6'0"/+215...who probably plays closer to 210-pounds in reality (bulked up for Combine). He is not pushing piles as much in the NFL. He also tends to get pushed back in pass-blocking situations in college—it may be because of his smaller/thinner lower body.

Gordon's probably a little faster than the NFL Combine revealed because I think he did try to add some weight to impress teams. He came in at 215-pounds, where 210-pounds is more normal...and 210-pounds is a bit of an NFL-wasteland for a 4.5+ runner with solid agility. Not possessing the amazing 4.3+ speed to blow by NFL defenders, but also not having enough frame/mass to move tacklers either is a huge NFL issue for a RB prospect. This is where we are at with Gordon: good enough to play in the NFL,



and succeed, but is not a star with multiple uses. He has to be on a team that jams him the ball off-tackle and opens holes...and he will get you as many yards as the hole allows. He won't be a major breakaway runner (speed-wise), not a clever pass catcher, nor a major goal-line threat.

You'd like to have **Melvin Gordon** on your NFL team...you just don't want him if the team is using a top 50-100 pick to do so.

### Melvin Gordon, Through the Lens of Our RB Scouting Algorithm:

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In the past two seasons, Gordon has produced huge yardage totals...and he has earned 'star' accolades from it. Some of it comes from Wisconsin's system. Some of it comes from a heavy workload. Some of it comes from Gordon's talents. It's easy to point toward his record-setting games, and look past the games where he faced the stiffest competition.

If you look back to 2013 and 2014, Gordon had six matchups with teams possessing more NFL-like defensive talents: vs. Auburn, South Carolina, LSU, BYU and Ohio State 2x. His numbers vs. those six teams: 125 carries for 770 yards (5.7 yards per carry) and 4 TDs (3 TDs vs, Auburn). Solid, but not surreal numbers.

Of that six-team group, he really knocked around Auburn (253 yards and 3 TDs...on 34 carries), but was held in check, for the most part, in the other tougher matchups (99 carries for 517 yards and 1 TD on 5.2 yards per carry in the other five games).

I vividly remember watching Gordon versus Ohio State (2014 and 2013) and BYU (2013). They had no real issue containing Gordon in their games. Gordon looked lost against Ohio State last year. I really remember the 2013 BYU game watching OLB/DE **Kyle Van Noy** handle Gordon in the open-field—Van Noy was the #40 pick in the draft last season. Gordon tried to change directions several times against BYU, and Van Noy was not having it when he was around. OSU toyed with Gordon—he only picked up yards when there was a clean hole to run through. When there was congestion, Gordon was helpless...and when he tried to bolt another direction, OSU gobbled him up.

Even in his big game against Auburn in their bowl game...I never watched Gordon and was 'wowed'. He does a great job dancing through a hole, and can fly through an open one, but outside of that there isn't much there. You can succeed in the NFL as a 4.5+ runner with instincts, but I bet against you being a star...and thus I'm not wasting a high draft on finding out.

If we found out that Gordon was a 4.3s 40-time runner at the NFL Combine, then my whole outlook would change...but he's not. Even a low 4.4s would make a little more sense for the NFL, but he ran a 4.52 with a weak 10-yard split (1.63) and average agility. There was nothing about his NFL Combine workout to get excited about...nothing to make you wonder if my read on tape was too pre-biased. I



didn't love Gordon like everyone else the first time I studied him for an article in September 2014...and was not shocked at all when his NFL Combine numbers verified my instincts. He's not the 'next coming'. Gordon is an NFL-worthy RB prospect in most every way...but is not a future NFL star in any way that we measure.

The Historical RB Prospects to Whom Melvin Gordon Most Compares Within Our System:

**Kevin Smith** was a really nice prospect coming out of college, and was a nice pro...but he had multiple injuries that ripped his career away. Gordon as the next **Kevin Smith (minus injuries)** would not be a bad thing at all—it's just not as 'sexy' a comp as most people would give today.

...and 'No', **Melvin Gordon** is not the next **Jamaal Charles**. That should never be said by football analysts again.

**Bishop Sankey** is a reminder here too—being great in college, but a little undersized for the pros, doesn't necessarily mean you walk into the NFL as a star. Sankey is a far superior athlete compared to Gordon, and was the top RB taken in last year's draft...and he struggled to get out of the gates as an NFL rookie. It's becoming tough sledding for RBs who are NOT both great athletes AND over 220+ pounds in the NFL.

<u>RB Score</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>	<u>Power Metric</u>	<u>Hands Metric</u>
7.83	Gordon	Melvin	Wisconsin	2015	6	0.5	215	4.37	10.83	7.76	3.85
7.10	Smith	Kevin	C. Florida	2008	6	1.1	217	3.94	5.00	7.29	7.02
9.84	Sankey	Bishop	Washington	2014	5	9.4	209	5.69	12.89	11.47	7.82
7.82	Wilson	David	Va Tech	2012	5	9.5	206	4.88	5.45	5.68	5.10
6.37	Starks	James	Buffalo	2010	6	2.1	218	3.55	5.52	6.16	7.91
5.86	Seastrunk	Lache	Baylor	2014	5	9.1	210	5.03	8.27	4.85	1.39
6.43	Morency	Vernand	Oklahoma St	2005	5	9.5	212	3.72	5.20	7.57	0.94
5.63	Cornett	Tim	UNLV	2014	6	0.2	209	2.64	1.83	5.04	6.96
5.26	Darkwa	Orleans	Tulane	2014	5	11.0	212	0.61	0.34	5.28	8.92



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*\*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.*

### **2015 NFL Draft Outlook:**

Well, most everyone seems pretty convinced that **Melvin Gordon** is going to be a 1st-round draft pick. I'd like to say that he won't be, but some team in the middle of the draft, one that eschews metric studies and goes more for highlight reels, is going to fall in love here. I don't think you take him in the top-75, but I bet he goes top-25 overall.

If I were an NFL GM, I really have no interest because of the price tag. I could have had **Jerrick McKinnon** or **Bishop Sankey** in the 2nd-round or later last year. I could get **David Johnson** in the 2nd-

