



NFL Draft 2015 Scouting Report: RB T.J. Yeldon, Alabama

**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.*

Why do we do this? Why do we treat Alabama players as if they are so special? I mean, I get it—you made it to Alabama to play football...you are a special human walking planet earth. I wish I was talented enough to play for the Crimson Tide...or any team with any shade of the color red...or any shade of any color for that matter. Playing, and succeeding, in the SEC means you are a terrific football player, but can we please, as a draft analyst society, stop automatically racing every Alabama prospect to the higher end of the rankings each year? Some Alabama players deserve high praise, but more often than not it's a mediocre Crimson Tide prospect getting an extra push in the rankings.

Draft analysts jack up Alabama players at every position every year. They used to do it with USC players when the Trojans were hot years ago, now they do it with Alabama...and have done so for the past five years. They over rank them for the NFL Draft, and NFL teams follow suit and often get scorched more times than not. Alabama has fine players, but 3rd-rounders get treated as 1st-rounders, and 6th-7th-rounders get bumped to 3rd-4th-round status. It's seemingly a two-round 'hall pass' for Alabama prospects.

Enter **T.J. Yeldon**.

Yeldon is 220+ pounds and runs a 4.6+ 40-time with mediocre-to-poor agility measurements. There's a bunch of RB prospects hitting with that similar dossier. However, Yeldon went to Alabama...so he gets marched ahead of most all of them. ESPN has Yeldon ranked ahead of **David Johnson** (who is 100x the athlete that Yeldon is), and someone at the worldwide leader should be fired over that. Yeldon shouldn't be ahead of Johnson, or **Mike Davis**, or **Zach Zenner** for that matter. It's nonsense.

Don't get me wrong, Yeldon has an NFL-body with NFL-athleticism...he belongs in the NFL, but more as a 5th+ round RB selection, not a 2nd or 3rd-rounder. We shouldn't be arguing what team is the best fit for Yeldon, the curiosity should be whether he should be drafted or fall towards undrafted status.

What's so exciting here? His size? He has it, but so do many others. His feet? He has average speed running straight ahead, with measured weaker in agility making cuts. He's an average RB prospect with some nice size, and he is being pushed way too high on draft boards.



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His athleticism makes me yawn, but what I'm really not a fan of is his running style. He's a sizeable 226-pounds, but he doesn't use his size as a weapon. He plays a more of a finesse game. His highlight tape is filled with him running straight ahead through wide-open holes behind an all-star O-Line...and most of the time running very upright and crumbling on contact. Yeldon is not a bruiser. He is more generic—a straight ahead until there is no more straight-ahead style of runner. He's not lower his shoulder and moving people out of the way as his first reaction to congestion. I'm completely unimpressed by him...from the perspective that he is supposed to be this top-flight RB prospect. Give me **Zach Zenner** as the 220+ pound runner from this draft class with so-so speed, but huge output and high-energy/effort with his on-field play.

I don't mean to slam Yeldon so hard. I'm more ticked by his 'Alabama-hype push'. Yeldon is a very average RB prospect, but he is NFL-worthy. He could be a solid part of a RB-duo, where Yeldon is the 'thunder' part of a thunder-lightning team. However, Yeldon is not as aggressive a runner as the aforementioned **Mike Davis** or **Zach Zenner**. He also had fumble-questions from his 2013 season—five fumbles, and four lost. He has more questions than answers as a high-end NFL RB prospect.

NFL teams will not be as excited when they personally meet with him either. He isn't a 'bad' guy. He's just very quiet and unemotional...a wallflower in interviews. Nothing about Yeldon screams 'passion' or 'fire in the belly'. He acts subdued off the field, and he runs with limited aggression...not the 'beast' you might hope for.

An NFL team is getting a physical big runner with mediocre athleticism and decent hands, and a runner who shows risk of flopping in the NFL—he is easily tackled for his size, and he doesn't inflict punishment as a runner, plus he has had fumble issues. Some team is going to overpay for this.

T.J. Yeldon, Through the Lens of Our RB Scouting Algorithm:

Yeldon rushed for less than 60 yards in a game in seven of his final 13 games in college. He also ran for a mediocre 4.9 yards per carry in his final 10 games (after opening the season with three non-conference games). We pick at his rushing totals from 2014 because when you consider that Yeldon is supposed to be this great RB prospect, but ran mediocre for a team that tended to dominate the line of scrimmage.

Yeldon faced six top-50 run defenses in college football last season: Ole Miss, Miss State, Arkansas, LSU, Missouri and Ohio State. His averages per game against those six teams: 15.2 carries for 67.0 yards (4.4 ypc) and 0.50 TDs. Nothing special.

Yeldon had better output in some games in the 2013 season, but his big efforts/larger tallies came in games where he was shoved the ball 25 or more times in a game. You expect gaudy numbers for a nice,



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big college RB running behind Alabama's O-Line, and getting 25 or more touches in some games. I'm not belittling it as much as I am trying to show that's it not 'over the top' or radical in any way.

There's just no electricity in his game-by-game numbers...some of them just look good on the surface, but then considering his O-Line advantage and the output it's actually more toward disappointing. He was being nudged out by backup **Derrick Henry** towards season's end of his final college season.

Physically, we touched on it already—all mediocre across the board for a 225+ pound RB. There's no burning red-flags, which is good, but there are no 'green flags' either. He has a mediocre NFL profile overall...it's the profile of a backup or situational player, and nothing like a guy you would pop in the 3rd-round.

The Historical RB Prospects to Whom T.J. Yeldon Most Compares Within Our System:

None of the names on here evokes any excitement at all. **Rajion Neal** was a long-shot draft hopeful at best last year...and that's what Yeldon should be. He won't. He'll be taken top-100 as sure as I'm sitting here.

<u>RB Grade</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>Speed Metric</u>	<u>Agility Metric</u>
5.24	Yeldon	T.J.	Alabama	2015	6	1.2	226	-0.46	3.04	7.54	7.07
4.03	Neal	Rajion	Tennessee	2014	5	11.1	220	-1.61	-0.60	8.81	7.63
6.16	Ganaway	Terrance	Baylor	2012	5	11.4	239	-1.20	5.56	9.45	1.96
2.53	Houston	Cedric	Tennessee	2005	5	10.6	225	-0.59	-0.79	6.61	5.01
3.56	Boykin	Ryan	Ohio	2014	6	0.4	225	-3.70	1.00	8.31	4.40

**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.



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**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:

All the current trends show Yeldon will go top-120 in this draft, and I've already said my peace on it—it's a reach. He should go 150+ or possibly undrafted. He'll go top-120, possibly top-100 because of the crimson 'A'.

If I were an NFL GM, I'd like to have Yeldon as a power running prospect brought in for a look as a 7th-round pick. I'm not spending a top-150 pick here...not at all. Give me Mike Davis or Zach Zenner or a few other 'big' RBs as UDFAs before I take before Yeldon.

NFL Outlook:

Yeldon will be drafted to play. He likely sees action right away as a power runner as part of a backfield duo or trio. I think his new team will be frustrated by his lack of energy and hoped-for power from a guy who is a 225+ pound human. He'll get some touches, and maybe some short yardage TDs, but he'll not be a key workhorse. Injury could force 15+ carries a game and a 1,000+ yard season out of the blue, but under normal circumstances he is more of a backup not a front-line runner.



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