NFL Draft 2018 Scouting Report: RB Josh Adams, Notre Dame

**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 thought it the first time I watched his tape pre-Combine…and I thought it again after a deeper study – **Josh Adams** is my favorite RB prospect in the 2018 NFL Draft. I know, by federal mandate, it's supposed to be **Saquon Barkley** or **Nick Chubb**. I'm not saying 'best', per se, just 'favorite'.

When I settled in for the full study of Adams, I wanted to find the flaws…maybe I was just too excited by my Adams pre-Combine preview session because he was the first RB I watched/studied (going alphabetically). No one else in football analysis is this high on Adams…why am I?

I planned on finding his issues/problems with a deeper study…but I only fell more in love.

I get that he's not as athletic as **Saquon Barkley**. I get that he's not as big/strong as **Royce Freeman**. I realize there are better RB talents 'on paper', and maybe in reality, but here's what **Josh Adams** brings to the party – Saquon may have elite athleticism, but Adams has elite running back skills…and what's 'elite skills' worth in the argument? What does that even mean?

You might roll your eyes at the 'elite skills' statement.

Because you can 'see' Barkley's 'wow' measurables, on paper, and you see his long runs/big plays on highlights reels (because that's all they ever play on him)…he feels like a god. However, Adams has more long runs on highlight tape than Barkley, but you don't 'see' them played on a constant loop on ESPN…and the analytics/measurables are not as exciting, so you don't believe. I get it. Plus, every scout in America proclaims Barkley *the greatest* and they never mention **Josh Adams**…and if they do it's more with a pat on the head. You question my scouting vision, perhaps. Those that know my work for a long time…you're now curious. Those that don't have as long a relationship, you might think I'm a loon.

What I bring to this 'running back skills' party… In his NFL Draft, I noted that **Jordan Howard** was one of the best 'running back technicians' I'd ever scouted on tape…and that his 'elite skill' (vision, timing, etc.) as a running back was what everyone was overlooking. The analysts loved **Jeremy Langford** more, because he was 'fast'. Other 'RB technicians' (who didn't have amazing pre-Draft measurables and/or who were starting to get written off in the pros as duds after a few seasons) who I've noted ahead of time from the tape and computer models in recent years, whether pre-draft or saw it/reported

it with them in the pros – **Le'Veon Bell**, **Doug Martin** (saw it the year he almost won the league rushing title/the year he lost the weight), **Jerick McKinnon** (he's showed it time and time again in the pros but never gets a sustained chance), and **Kareem Hunt**…to name a few, and **Jordan Howard** is one of my crowning jewels of RB scouting under the banner of 'elite skills' guys.

What I see…it's an odd…"*Hard to explain, but I know 'it' when I see it*" type of situation. It comes from 10+ years locked in a room constantly watching football games and tape.

There are some running backs who just defy measurables because they are so good at their craft. Conversely, there are RBs with all the physical skills in the world who are terrible running the ball; only good for darting through a big hole every so often. I think **Josh Adams** is one of those 'sixth sense'/master craftsman RBs. **Kallen Ballage** is an example of the opposite -- great measurables, terrible RB skills.

Let me (try to) share/explain what I see, and then address what the Adams detractors say…

First off, Adams's Pro Day confirms he has enough NFL athleticism – a 4.48 40-time and a 6.75 three-cone. Add a bit to the times for 'Pro Day homerism' and you still have a 6'2"/215 guy who runs in the 4.5s with a sub-7.0 three-cone. All basic boxes checked…and with his frame he has room to grow/add five pounds of muscle, which will be lethal if he can add bulk and keep his 4.5 speed and terrific agility.

Adams has what **Kareem Hunt** had…only in a bigger body – a surreal ability to shift his feet and escape hits in a muddy line of scrimmage or out in space. Some RBs don't have this skill…rare few have it on a level of a **Kareem Hunt** or **Josh Adams**. Some RBs are super-fast straight but labor to dodge/elude with elite feet. Adams moves like he has a radar system built in and with his hips on a swivel, he just effortlessly dodges tackles likes it's nothing. He's also tough like Hunt – when Adams senses the run is over, he goes with it and just finds a way to squeeze 1-2-3 extra yards after contact, where others RBs are stopped in their tracks or are trying to dance away and go backwards.

What Adams is better than **Kareem Hunt** at, and is more like a poor man's **Le'Veon Bell** or like **Jordan Howard** – he has extreme patience and vision, waiting for things to open up and moving almost in slow motion…but then when he finds the sliver of an opening…'BAM' he explodes through for a gain you didn't think was there or busts a play wide-open by bursting through a narrow space shocking the defenders who slowed down into the fray. Adams's highlight reel at Notre Dame is filled with him exploding through small (and large) spaces and leaving defenders in the dust – his open field speed looks better than the 4.48/4.5+ 40-time speed 'on paper'.

The best thing I can do to show you what I see in my mind, two plays:

This one run against USC in 2017…it's a thing of beauty. Play it over and over again watching all the things that went into it and you'll be dazzled. Just the tape starting at the 1:05 mark. Note… This was against a top college team/athletes: (link) https://youtu.be/eex0xUl_Wfg?t=1m6s

Wanna fall in love with an RB prospect for 2018 not-named **Saquon Barkley**? Watch this, and can I say…I've been studying football and RBs for a decade now – this highlight reel is simply stunning, breathtaking…and I'm hard to impress as time goes on: (link) https://youtu.be/4CExutUCjio

Adams is stunning to watch at work. He really is.

Let me add – he has decent enough hands in the passing game. He wasn't used in the passing game consistently by offensive design, but I don't believe that was a commentary on Adams. When I watch him catch the ball he's more than competent…and he's catching a little more than just screens. I'm OK with his hands in the passing game (and wait until you see another stat on his 'hands' in the next section).

The big negative that analysts will use to throw cold water on him – "*Well, the Notre Dame O-Line was SOOO good*." They were. No denying that but anyone making that leap, to me, means a person hasn't really watched **Josh Adams** and/or they don't know what they're looking at because they are not a student of such things. No crime in that but I watched enough of Adams' work to know…he's different. He did get some nice holes from his O-Line but there were many times Adams made hay where there weren't any big openings. Adams is still a great RB no matter how good his blocking was…he's just lucky enough to get a bump from his O-Line into nose-bleed levels (good) of yards per carry in his career (more on that next section).

If you 'blame' the blocking for Adams – you're making a HUUUGGE mistake.

Off the field…more to love. A bright, friendly guy. A team captain. There are no issues off the field. Medically, he went through three years at Notre Dame just fine. He did tear his ACL as a junior in high school, so a small red flag there but he's been clean on everything injury-wise ever since.

I get that **Saquon Barkley** and **Nick Chubb** are the guys with all the draft momentum, so it seems odd to claim **Josh Adams** is as good/better than them because no one else is saying such things…but the NFL makes mistakes like this all the time. For whatever reason, Adams just doesn't have the draft love or buzz from the media, which is odd because they usually fawn over any Notre Dame hopefuls. The only thing I could think of is – if you push the Adams story too much, then it takes away from their fawning over the Notre Dame O-Line. It reminds me -- you know how no one cared about the Chicago Bears O-Line in 2016 when **John Fox** pushed **Jeremy Langford**, and the run game sucked. Once Fox was forced to give **Jordan Howard** touches…whaddya know…what a great O-Line (and they say that to take away the credit from Howard, who they were wrong about). Draft night will be filled with **Quenton Nelson** and **Mike McGlinchy** sloppy kisses -- and **Josh Adams** will be used as proof of how great they are…as if Adams is a stiff who benefitted from these two great O-Lineman.

I think some of the Notre Dame O-Line fawning can be reversed into **Josh Adams** making them appear better than they are.

Wrapping this section up: For those into such things – the day you read this, go note where the top viewed sites for the draft have Adams ranked. And then watch about 2-3 weeks from this release date

how Adams 'magically' moves up the rankings. We're going to move the market a little here, but they won't go far enough, per usual.

Josh Adams, Through the Lens of Our RB Scouting Algorithm:

Adams posted 6.9 yards per carry in 2017 season…6.7 ypc for his career.

Josh Adams did not fumble a ball in 206 carries in 2017. He only lost one fumble in his entire career (322 touches), and it was as a freshman.

Josh Adams has had 13 career games where he's taken 16 or more carries in a game, and he's posted 100+ rushing yards 11 times in those games.

Against NC State's D-Line littered with 2018 draft prospects…Adams ran for 202 yards against them in 2017. The last two seasons against USC, Adams averaged 185.5 yards rushing per game.

On the downside… Against Georgia, LSU, Miami, and Stanford (most late in the 2017 season) – just 46.5 yards rushing per game. Against tougher defensive fronts, mostly late in 2017, Adams didn't have great yardage tallies. Watching those games tightly, because I thought this was where the hidden problem is with loving Adams…I actually fell more in love. Against defenses starting to stack against him and the O-Line not looking so good, Adams made some hay out of defenders constantly penetrating the backfield. The people that will say Adams was made by the O-Line, they will also point to these lesser-output games and go '*See! Adams isn't that good!*' but why isn't it the same for the O-Line?

Notre Dame had atrocious QB play, so defenses finally just sold everything out against the run late in the 2017 season. The O-Line can't block 8-11 defenders playing the run…and Adams can't rack up big plays when defenders are almost taking the ball out of his hands during his handoffs. The Notre Dame starting QB completed 49.5% of his passes in 2017…if you're wondering 'how bad?' he was. That's pretty awful for a top D1 school to have at QB. Adams carried this offense, this team to a top 5 or so ranking at one point.

2018 NFL Combine/Pro Day measurables…

6'1.5"/215, 33.75" arms, 9.25" hands

4.48 40-time, 6.75 three-cone, 4.8 shuttle (Pro Day)

18 bench reps (Combine), 34.0" vertical, 10'2" broad jump (Pro Day)

The Historical RB Prospects to Whom Josh Adams Most Compares Within Our System:

I fully expected to see **Latavius Murray** on this list, so I'm not shocked he's here. It's some of the other names on here that made me sit up at attention. Did not expect to see **David Johnson** or **Todd Gurley**.

Back to Latavius – Murray was a bigger, faster prospect but nowhere near as talented at his craft as Adams. The Johnson-Gurley-Murray comps…the reason why Adams grades lower/less than…Adams is smaller (215 pounds) but our system sees the potential for added bulk pushing Adams near that group of talent.

RB Score	RB-Re	RB-ru	Last	First	College	Yr	H	H	W	Speed Metric	Agility Metric	Power Metric
8.732	5.56	9.39	Adams	Josh	Notre Dame	2018	6	1.5	215	9.40	10.63	7.63
10.213	10.09	10.03	Murray	Latavius	C. Florida	2013	6	2.5	223	12.07	8.55	8.53
9.008	11.05	8.93	Johnson	David	No Iowa	2015	6	0.5	224	9.13	8.98	9.15
7.005	8.33	6.73	Washington	Dwayne	Washington	2016	6	1.1	223	7.95	8.04	6.29
7.385	3.68	7.48	Williams	Jamaal	BYU	2017	6	0.3	212	3.82	8.43	5.27
7.859	7.83	7.90	Jackson	Darius	E. Michigan	2016	6	0.0	220	9.27	6.46	7.06
10.391	10.42	10.24	Gurley	Todd	Georgia	2015	6	0.5	222	13.32	12.79	7.42

**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 starting in 2015. 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 starting in 2015. 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.

2018 NFL Draft Outlook:

Adams is not going to get any draft momentum, so I expect he'll be taken 125+ overall…as major steal. He will be drafted but not until later. The team that will reach for him is the Chicago Bears because their O-Line coach was a guy behind Notre Dame's line the last few years. He knows.

If I were an NFL GM, I'm all over Adams later in this draft. He's the **Jordan Howard** of this draft (late draft pick, overlooked, but then stars instantly when given the chance)…with **Latavius Murray's** body.

NFL Outlook:

It won't be easy because he's currently ignored by the ruling class (the football media and analysts). He'll likely be taken in the 4th round+ and taken as a backup, not as an expected impact guy. If he lands in the right spot and is given a chance…he's gold. He could wind up behind a **David Johnson** or **Le'Veon Bell** and we don't hear from him for a while. It's unfair, but it's how the draft game is played, typically.

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