



## NFL Draft 2021 Scouting Reports: RB B.J. Emmons, Fla. Atlantic

*\*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.*

### NFL 2021 Scouting Report: RB B.J. Emmons, Florida Atlantic (By Ross Jacobs)

R.C. pre-report note: I had Emmons on a 'to do list' to further study -- on my list of off the beaten path prospects from the 2021 NFL Draft. You'll see how/why Emmons was on that list. I thought I saw something here, so I had Ross Jacobs conduct his scouting study of him to compare our notes and see what we might have here.

First, you'll read/see Ross's report (which gives an excellent, quick background of the history here) and what he saw for the future...followed by my post-Ross report notes on what I was seeing.

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#### **Ross Jacobs' Scouting Report:**

When RC asked me to take a look at **BJ Emmons**, I had no idea what to expect. I've never even heard the guy's name before so I'm already wondering why he's interested. Did he crank out a monstrous pro day workout? No, his pro day was ok, NFL worthy certainly, but nothing special. Did he put up big numbers at a tiny college? Uhh no, his best statistical season was 2019 when he put up 51 carries for 237 yards and 6 TD's. What is going on here?!

Buckle up for this one folks, it's going to be a long one.



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It turns out **BJ Emmons** originally attended Alabama in 2016 as the #2 RB recruit in the nation and the #36 overall player. As a freshman in Tuscaloosa, he was listed as co-third string with **Josh Jacobs** behind **Bo Scarbrough** and **Damien Harris**. Illustrious company.

Emmons mixed it up with the other three backs, rotating carries for 7 weeks. Things seemed to be going ok until Emmons sustained a Lisfranc injury to his foot during a routine practice before the LSU game. He had a plate inserted into his foot and was out the rest of the season.

In February 2017 Emmons underwent a second, pre-scheduled surgery to remove the plate.

He was a limited participant during spring practice and was held out of the spring game by **Nick Saban** as a precaution. By this point he had fallen down the depth chart below **Josh Jacobs** through no fault of his own. The arrival and subsequent buzz around #1 overall high school recruit **Najee Harris** put the final nail in the coffin of BJ's time at Alabama.

Emmons transferred from Alabama to tiny Hutchinson Community College in Kansas where he played the 2017 season. While there he rushed for 694 yards and 10 TDs on 150 carries.

In 2018 Emmons signed a letter of intent to play for Florida Atlantic but reported academic issues kept him from enrolling. Instead, he announced he was taking a year off from football to watch his former high school team play and finish his remaining courses online. I found some speculation that he had some off-field/character issues here or possibly even back in high school with his recruitment by Georgia, but I wasn't able to find anything solid. As best I can tell he might have got caught smoking weed in high school but again it's unsubstantiated. He seems to be a pretty good kid from what I can tell. Maybe he hasn't always made the best decisions, but I don't see anything major to be worried about. He's clearly worked hard along the way and seems to have been humbled by the experience.

Emmons finally enrolled at FAU in January 2019, rejoining Lane Kiffin, his offensive coordinator at Alabama. He hadn't played a game since the fall of 2017. His first game was against Ohio St. and he broke his ankle on his very first carry.

Three months later in November Emmons returned to the lineup against UTSA and rotated in with two other backs. He would compile 50 carries for 236 yards and 6 TDs over the four full games he played in 2019.

Emmons was looking to be the main carry back in 2020 and finally get his once promising career back on track, but he was again injured in his first game on just his 4<sup>th</sup> carry. He would miss the next two games before returning against Western Kentucky. In a shortened season Emmons finished with a meager 33 carries for 103 yards and a lone TD.

So, we have a guy talented enough to share carries with multiple future high NFL draft picks finishing up his career at FAU with barely any stats and very little game tape to study mostly due to several poorly



timed injuries. Every time he looked to have things moving the right direction he got hit with another one.

So can the guy play? We know he was hanging with the big boys at Alabama, and his pro day was ok but not exactly the stuff of legend.

### **Pro Day Results:**

5' 11.5", 215 lbs

4.59 40-time, 36" vertical, 10' broad

21 bench reps, 4.14 shuttle, and a nice 6.89 3-cone

Those numbers are NFL worthy for sure although it's fair to wonder if the multiple leg/foot injuries have robbed him of a little bit of speed. And normally I would mentally bump that 40-time up to a 4.64 or so, but I do think he has legitimate mid 4.5 speed. Again not ideal but enough to get the job done.

There isn't very much tape on Emmons obviously. The guy only averaged 40 carries a season for his career. But what I could find seems to show a potentially solid NFL back. Emmons is not afraid to run the ball inside. He's actually quite a tough runner and does not go down easily. He seems to consistently be able to grind out an extra yard or two just on effort. He also has some pretty shifty moves as evidenced by his agility numbers. He's not going to hit many home runs, but he is good at making the first guy miss and churning out doubles. Emmons never caught many passes during his career, but he seemed to have fairly decent hands for it. I saw nothing to suggest he wouldn't at least be a capable receiver in the NFL.

The first player my mind jumped to when I saw him run was Kareem Hunt and it honestly caught me off guard at first but after checking Hunt's combine numbers it's actually a pretty good physical comparison. Hunt checked in an inch shorter, 216 lbs, ran a 4.62, 36 1/2" vertical, and 119" broad. His agility numbers were far worse than Emmons however. Now I'm not saying Emmons is Hunt 2.0. Hunt had some ridiculous production at Toledo. Emmons might or might not have. We'll never know because of all the injuries he sustained. What I can say is that he has a little of that Hunt magic where he just seems to get the job done and pick up a few more yards that you thought weren't there. He's a little faster and shiftier than Hunt, but I'd say Hunt is more elusive and hard to bring down with arm tackles. Emmons will lower his head and bull through contact like that as opposed to sliding off it like Hunt did. Both guys have very good vision though and play smoother than their athletic testing would suggest. I would describe them as natural football players.

Other similar-ish players would be one of Emmons's teammates from Alabama, Damien Harris and the long forgotten Cierre Wood. Cierre is pretty close to Emmons athletically although he's probably straight



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line faster, but Emmons is definitely a tougher runner between the tackles. Harris is maybe a touch faster with his long speed, not quite as quick as Emmons, but also a little bit stronger and more physical (which is not a knock on Emmons at all). BJ falls somewhere in the middle of those three guys.

So, we have a highly rated RB out of high school that got injured early in his career and subsequently fell down the depth chart of the deepest group of talented backs in the country, transferred out but never got a chance to really show out because of more injuries, put up an ok pro day...why should we care? His profile says he's capable but probably not a star and he didn't get drafted so there's no reason to pay attention right?

Wrong. Let me explain.

Emmons was recently signed by the Seattle Seahawks, and because of this one particular landing spot I actually see some potential value down the road that could be available with Mr. Emmons. You might remember a couple of recent Seattle starting RB's by the names of Thomas Rawls and Chris Carson. Do these three have anything in common? Why yes, they do. Rawls stands 5'9" 215 lbs, ran a 4.65 at the combine, had a 35.5" vertical and 116" broad jump. He also went undrafted after only a single year starting at Central Michigan where he transferred because he wasn't getting playing time in a crowded Michigan backfield. Carson is 6'0" 218 lbs, ran a 4.58 40, and jumped 37" in the vertical and 130" in the broad. He was a 7<sup>th</sup> round pick by the Seahawks after never hitting 600 yards rushing in a single season at Oklahoma St. Both are tough, hard-nosed runners. Notice a pattern? Seattle seems to clearly have a formula they like with their RB's and it's worked out decently enough except for injuries to both guys (something else Emmons shares in common with them). I don't think this is a coincidence. I think there's a plan and that Emmons was brought in specifically because he fits what they are looking for.

Now I might have convinced you that Emmons is worth watching over the next couple years, but I want to be clear that I think he is worth monitoring immediately. Rawls led the team in rushing his rookie season after Christine Michael was traded, and both Robert Turbin and Marshawn Lynch were injured. Carson led the team in rushing with over 1,100 yards his second year in the league. The Seahawks clearly have no problem handing the ball to a late round or undrafted rookie if he proves he can handle it.

This isn't a likely scenario for sure, and even if everything were to fall into place I don't think Emmons is going to be the next **Terrell Davis**. But he's good enough to get the job done and would not be out of place at all. And if you remember the hype surrounding both those guys you get my ultimate point. Suppose the stars align and Emmons becomes the starter and succeeds. He's going to be worth a pretty penny that you can trade off for better assets. People will trip all over themselves to have the next great Seahawk RB (they did with both Rawls and Carson), especially one with the pedigree of Emmons. And this asset will cost you nothing in dynasty leagues because nobody knows who he is or what he could become other than us. Don't go grab him just yet, especially if you are short on bench spots, but be ready to pounce if and when the time comes.



**NFL Outlook:**

Emmons is a solid NFL hand for sure, but the reason I'm excited is because I see a clear opportunity ahead to pick him up for nothing and flip him for better assets. I am not at all proclaiming him the next Kareem Hunt or anything close. I like him. I think he's good, but there are lots of good running backs in the league. Tons of guys will suffice in a pinch and Emmons is most likely just one of those types. But because of the proclivity the Seahawks have shown for his particular profile I think this is an exploitable situation in the future. Keep one eye on the Seattle backfield and be ready to pluck him off waivers should the opportunity present itself. And then be ready to trade him away to whatever sucker thinks they are getting a star.

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**RC Scouting Notes:**

It is pretty impossible to get your arms around **B.J. Emmons'** scouting. Such a strange path to the year 2021...from top high school RB prospect (for some) at one time to a virtual nobody today -- a series of ill-timed injuries, coaching changes, transfers, off-field questions.

If you isolate away from the very real/obvious issues and just focus on his tape/ability...I see the same potential as Ross Jacobs did. I knew Emmons wouldn't be drafted, so I didn't rush to do extra work on him pre-Draft. Starting to watch more of his work now -- he is a legit NFL back.

How legit?

Ross Jacobs had some former Seattle names/comps that really make a lot of sense -- **Thomas Rawls** and **Chris Carson**, especially the Rawls comp -- Rawls was an undrafted rookie and had some red flags, and was forced into playing time his rookie 2015 and had four 100+ yard rushing games within his first 6 starts...including a 201-yard rushing game. He was thought to be 'the future' at one time and everyone was chasing him in FF 2015-2016 and some into 2017. Injuries, among other things, took his career away as fast/hot as it started. By the 2018 season, he was out of football.

Emmons, on tape, reminds me of **Cam Akers** -- not a breakaway speedster, but a little shifty/experienced/savvy enough as an interior runner...only Emmons, I believe, is tougher and shiftier than Akers. Emmons can be a bully with the ball in his hands, he's a very muscular back/athlete when you watch his tape.

Ross is also correct in assessing that if you start to buy into something being here with Emmons, then him getting with Seattle is a potential Fantasy opportunity. The Seahawks have the history of working

