



NFL Draft 2016 Scouting Report: RB Jordan Howard, Indiana

**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.*

Jordan Howard is one of my favorite running back prospects from this draft class, but he is not my highest-rated running back in this draft class, nor is he our computer scouting model's top choice.

Those of you that are **Jordan Howard** fans, and who have seen/studied many of the RB prospects in this draft class, will likely agree with me – there was probably no one grittier or more hard-nosed, as smooth or as savvy, or as punishing a runner of the ball, as Howard. There are always fans to be found in a running back who just smashes his opponents in the mouth with each carry.

If you just watch portions of **Jordan Howard** tape/highlights, and don't think about the context of the entire draft class, and prospects from prior draft classes...you could fall in love with Howard too easily. He is a pleasure to watch, a throwback. He is a 5'11"/230-pound bulldozer. And it's not just the fact that he deals out punishment to would-be tacklers, which is an attribute that many of us love in a running back. What I really love about Howard is he is one of the most patient runners in this draft class. Time and time again, on tape, you can see **Jordan Howard** taking his hand off and just move forward towards the designed hole, and then identify his spot and pop through it...and whoever is in his way is going to be worse for wear. It's a style that I personally love...and I have to be on guard that any bias for this doesn't cloud my overall assessment of the data.

You would think that with all the fawning praise on Howard, he would be our top RB prospect. My opening couple of paragraphs in their respective reports are much more favorable towards Howard than they are towards top-rated guys **Ezekiel Elliott** or **Derrick Henry**. But there's a problem with getting too excited about **Jordan Howard**, in terms of translation to the next level – Howard is not a physical, athletic force for the NFL.

Don't get me wrong – Howard belongs in the NFL. Hell, he may even lead the NFL in rushing in a given season...the NFL has seen limited runner **Alfred Morris** matter, so don't think I am saying Howard cannot be successful in the NFL. I think he will. I just believe he's not built for superstardom in the NFL, and that the other top RB prospects are just more physically gifted all-around. The other top guys have some advantages on how they can be used in the NFL, and in passing games specifically. Howard is a smarter, better, more powerful runner of the ball than they are, but he has limitations.



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When I watched Howard's game tape, I fell in love. The first game I had the pleasure to watch with him working was against Michigan in 2015. I chose the Michigan game for obvious reasons. The Wolverines had a fantastic defense in 2015, so when I saw Howard gashed them for 238 yards and two TDs, I was certainly curious. I thought maybe he had a lucky long run or two against Michigan to pump his totals. That wasn't it. Howard dominated a fantastic college defense that day, into/through overtime, because he is one of the smartest, toughest runners you're going to come across.

After the Michigan game, I was eager to take in all of the other games against top opponents like Ohio State and Michigan State. After watching more of Howard's tape, the sad reality started to set in. Howard is a limited running back. He moves east-to-west very poorly, in terms of it translating to the NFL. The NFL is going to need to use him between the tackles. He may be a Pro Bowl type talent between the tackles, but modern-day NFL teams cannot build an entire backfield around a limited runner like **Jordan Howard**. Well, maybe some teams/coaches will...but they shouldn't. Howard's going to have trouble swinging out for passes, and teams will not fear him running to the outside. You let Howard run straight ahead, and he might eat some opponents alive like a battering ram. Howard belongs in the NFL as part of a running back tandem or ensemble. He's not a three-down running back...not a superstar one anyway. He won't destroy his team/offense because of his limitations, but he's not going to take an offense to the next level on his own. Imagine **Marshawn Lynch**, only a slower **Marshawn Lynch**, with smaller hands.

You might be fine with that lesser version of **Marshawn Lynch**, and that's cool. I'd want **Jordan Howard** on my NFL team as well. I'm just setting the expectations – he's not an all-around stud, but he is a near-stud as a power runner. He belongs in the NFL, and he should be a starter in some capacity in the NFL. I just don't believe he should be a team's main/only starter... And the NFL is moving away from relying upon just one running back anyway.

One of the lingering issues with Howard is fear of injury. He missed several games last season with nagging injuries, and he runs into major collisions (started by him usually) too often. His NFL shelf life will be short if he takes on too many car crash carries.

Howard is a quality kid. He's mature, and not a diva. He's a bit of a throwback – quiet, humble, loves to play the game, and loves to deal punishment. He has the mindset you wish **Ezekiel Elliott** had. You wish Howard ran as fast as Elliott.



Jordan Howard, Through the Lens of Our RB Scouting Algorithm:

Before he got to Indiana, Howard ran for 1,587 yards in 12 games in 2014 for Alabama-Birmingham...rushing for 100+ yards eight times in his final season at UAB (which then closed their football program, forcing him to transfer). In his final four games at UAB, he rushed for 186.3 yards and 1.5 TDs per game.

Howard was limited to nine games in 2015. He was hurt early in his ninth contest. His 2015 numbers (in essentially eight games) extrapolated over a 13-game season: 1,971 yards rushing and 15 TDs.

Howard caught only 24 passes in 32 career games/starts...he has not been a 'force' in the passing game. He appears to have decent hands, but it's hard to tell given his limited targets. He has smaller hands, and little numbers in the passing game over his career...it doesn't forebode well. Plus, it's just not his style to work heavy as a receiver flaring out of the backfield.

Howard ran for 140+ yards in a game in six of his eight games in 2015. He's run for 140+ yards in 10 of his last 12 full games worked.

His Pro Day work has measurements all over the board. He reportedly ran a 4.50–4.60 40-time, and a 7.00+ three-cone...supposedly, but the data is not conclusive across attendees. His measurables appear to be in the range of an NFL-worthy power runner it appears, but they seem like 'star' measurements.

The Historical RB Prospects to Whom Jordan Howard Most Compares Within Our System:

I like the **Carlos Hyde** comparison a lot, because it makes me wonder if the same upside exists. Hyde was a tubby, ineffective east-west runner in 2014, and then lost weight and became one of the best runners in the NFL in 2015. Hyde was a different running back after the weight loss. I wonder if Howard might possibly follow that path...not that Howard is overweight, but a 222-pound version of him may be a lot quicker than the 230+ one.



2016 NFL DRAFT SCOUTING REPORT

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<u>RB Score</u>	<u>RB-Re</u>	<u>RB-Ru</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>
7.723	5.60	8.18	Howard	Jordan	Indiana	2016	5	11.7	230	5.81	7.20	10.00
7.193	7.27	6.63	Hyde	Carlos	Ohio State	2014	5	11.6	235	1.05	9.96	8.64
9.093	3.36	8.80	Wells	Chris	Ohio State	2009	6	1.1	235	6.14	2.41	9.81
7.250	5.60	5.98	Houston	Stephen	Indiana	2014	5	10.2	230	3.00	3.97	9.11
8.413	3.54	6.93	Lacy	Eddie	Alabama	2013	5	11.0	231	-1.32	-0.02	10.31
5.660	3.24	4.43	Evans	Darren	Va Tech	2011	6	0.0	227	4.97	6.45	8.36
7.092	7.01	6.88	Zenner	Zach	S. Dakota St.	2015	5	11.4	223	3.08	6.00	9.71

**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.

2016 NFL Draft Outlook:

Jordan Howard's draft projections are all over the place. Some have him outside the top five overall RB prospects, while others have him well within the top five...more like in the top three. A few brave souls even promote him as the best running back prospect in this draft. I am a fan, and I'd love to say 'he's the best', but I have to hesitate when I look at the entirety of his prospect resume. He's lacking in certain areas which makes him more of a solid-to-good prospect, not a great/jaw-dropping one. I think an NFL team is going to fall in love with his style of play, like many fans and analysts have, so I bet Howard goes within the top 60 picks and does not fall to the third round. He should be legitimately discussed as the 'wildcard' top-ranked running back in this draft ahead of Elliott or Henry, and because of that he should get taken second round.

If I were an NFL GM, I would pass on **Jordan Howard** in this draft. Again, not that I don't respect the hell out of him and see a nice future for him. It's just that I would never spend a top 100–150 draft pick on a plain old 'good' running back prospect. It's stupid business management, a wasting of resources. Running back economics in the NFL demands that teams not take a running back in the top 100 of a draft unless they are super-special, like with **Todd Gurley** or **David Johnson**. Those guys were rare, and there's nothing like them in this draft. **Jordan Howard** is nothing like them either, but he's going to be a very good pro. I will wish him well, but I would not burn a high pick on a running back of his caliber.

NFL Outlook:

Howard's career will ebb and flow with how the coaching staff uses him. With teams moving more and more towards multi-dimensional running backs who have gifts in the passing game, a **Jordan Howard** style RB could be a 5–10-touch-per-game weapon among an ensemble. However, if he falls in with an old-school coach, he might see 15+ totes per game, and have a run game built around him potentially. Howard has something to offer the NFL, and fan perceptions of him will be based upon how much his offensive coordinator uses him.

