

Receiver Bennie Fowler raises eyebrows with speedy time at Michigan State pro day

Detroit News
Feb 24, 2015



East Lansing — Cornerback Darqueze Dennard was the main attraction at Michigan State's pro day Tuesday, but another Spartans player certainly helped his stock.

Wide receiver Bennie Fowler ran the 40-yard dash in 4.39 seconds on both attempts, one scout said after conferring with the group of scouts at the event.

After each run, scouts looked around in disbelief.

And a few scouts hand-timed Fowler even faster: He said three scouts clocked him at 4.27 seconds.

"I don't know what I had (to eat), but it must've been good for me to run that fast," Fowler said. "I'm happy with my performance."

Fowler had career highs of 622 receiving yards and six touchdowns during his senior season for the run-first Spartans, and since the Spartans won the Rose Bowl, he has done everything possible to improve his draft stock. Once seen as a likely undrafted free agent, the Detroit Country Day standout was a late addition to both the Senior Bowl and NFL combine earlier this year.

He's also been training at the Performance Compound in Tampa, Fla., with Sammy Watkins, the former Clemson receiver who will be a top-10 pick in May's draft.

At the combine, the 6-foot-1, 212-pound Fowler officially ran the 40 in 4.52 seconds, a solid time.

With two runs below 4.4 at the pro day, though, Fowler only helped himself as he hopes to become a late-round pick.

He also did 18 reps on the 225-pound bench press, an event he skipped at the combine.

Fowler is by no means the first player to improve his combine performance at a pro day, and he said the Spartans facility was a lot more comfortable than Lucas Oil Stadium. Even though there are only about 2,000 people watching combine drills, Fowler said having all the NFL scouts around felt like having 66,000 people at the Big Ten championship.

"Maybe it was a little bit of nerves there," he said. "Being back at home, being around my boys and around the coaches, it just felt like home. It just felt good, and I was relaxed."

Bullough performs

Middle linebacker Max Bullough participated in the pro day despite being suspended for the Rose Bowl for an undisclosed violation of team rules.

"Max Bullough belongs at Michigan State," Spartans coach Mark Dantonio said.

Bullough improved his 40-yard dash time from the combine, from 4.78 to 4.75, and Dantonio doesn't expect his

Receiver Bennie Fowler raises eyebrows with speedy time at Michigan State pro day Cont...

Detroit News

suspension to hurt his stock.

“He’s a football player and he’s a very controlling factor on the field, so I think people understand that,” Dantonio said.

Bullough projects as a fourth- or fifth-round pick, according to Mayock, and can be a solid middle linebacker.

“He’s going to struggle in space a little bit in the NFL, but I think what he is is a two-down thumper,” Mayock said. “He’s a strong, tough kid with a ton of production.”

Small but strong

Linebacker Denicos Allen led the Spartans with 98 tackles last season, but didn’t receive an invite to the combine last month.

At 5-10, Allen is significantly shorter than the outside linebackers teams look for, but he wouldn’t be the first under-sized linebacker to be successful in the NFL.

Allen said he tries to model his game after Malcolm Smith, the Seahawks Super Bowl MVP who is 6-0.

“Size really doesn’t matter,” Allen said. “If you’re a playmaker, you’re a playmaker.”

Allen had a 29-inch vertical and ran the 40-yard dash in 4.76 seconds, neither great for someone his size.

He also had 26 reps on the 225-pound bench press.

NFL Network analyst Mike Mayock said he likes what he’s seen on tape of Allen even if the measurables aren’t great.

“He’ll still be in a camp, whether he gets drafted or not, and he’ll still get an opportunity,” Mayock said. “I think with his skill set he’s going to make a team on special teams and then try to work his way into the lineup.”

Also participating

Besides Dennard, Fowler and Bullough, safety Isaiah Lewis is the other potential pick from Michigan State.

Among the others who participated that could end up in camps were offensive lineman Fou Fonoti, defensive tackle Dan France, offensive/defensive lineman Micajah Reynolds and quarterback Andrew Maxwell.

Maxwell started 14 games during his career at Michigan State..

He said he’s hoping to follow in the footsteps of Matt Cassel, who never played a snap behind Heisman winners Carson Palmer and Matt Leinart at Southern Cal but has had a relatively successful NFL career.

... Former Spartans running back Javon Ringer and defensive tackle Brandon McKinney were at the pro day, hoping to make a return to the NFL after suffering injuries.

Receiver Bennie Fowler raises eyebrows with speedy time at Michigan State pro day Cont...

Kerry Capps - orangeaDeltwhiteNews

Feb 19, 2014

“My biggest concern is just what’s his mental makeup and how important is it to him when he gets a big paycheck to become the best player in football, or is he just going to be happy to be a millionaire.”

Mayock says he thinks quarterbacks Boyd, Shaw and Murray will get opportunities.

“Tajh Boyd had better arm strength than people think, good mobility, and won a lot of football games,” Mayock said. “He has some inconsistency on tape, but he’s a playmaker and I like that. He’s a guy I think you get mid to late in this draft and you can try to develop him, so I like him.

“I love Shaw’s toughness on the field, but I’m just not sure if his body type - if his training is going to warrant taking much of a beating. But I think he’ll get an opportunity.”

Murray, who suffered a late-season ACL injury, will attend the Combine, but won’t participate in drills. He expects to be ready to go by Georgia’s Pro Day on April 16.

Mayock sees Clemson’s Breeland and USC’s Hampton as mid-round picks.

“I think (Hampton’s) talent is in the second or third round range, but I don’t know if he’ll go that early,” he said. “The corner from Clemson (Breeland), I’m a little bit intrigued by because he’s long, he can run. I think he probably could have benefitted staying in school a little bit longer but I still think he’s probably going to go in the third or fourth round.”

Television coverage of the NFL Scouting Combine will begin on Saturday, Feb. 22, at 9 a.m. on the NFL Network.

ACC Players At NFL Scouting Combine

Quarterbacks: Tajh Boyd (CU), Stephen Morris (MIA), Bryn Renner (UNC), Logan Thomas (VT)

Running Backs: Devonta Freeman (FSU), James Wilder (FSU), Andre Williams (BC), Jerome Smith (SYR)

Wide Receivers: Sammy Watkins (CU), Martavis Bryant (CU), Devin Street (PITT), Kelvin Benjamin (FSU), Allen Hurns (MIA), Michael Campanaro (WF)

Tight End: Eric Ebrom (UNC)

Offensive Linemen: Brandon Thomas (CU), Russell Bodine (UNC), James Hurst (UNC), Seantrel Henderson (MIA), Brandon Linden (MIA), Morgan Moses (UVA), Bryan Stork (FSU), Matt Patchlam (BC)

Defensive Linemen: Kaleb Romsey (BC), Brent Urban (UVA), Jason Bromley (SYRA), Aaron Donald (PITT), Kasim Edeball (BC), James Gayle (VT), Timmy Jernigan (FSU), Kareem Martin (UNC)

Linebackers: Jeremiah Attaochu (GT), Christian Jones (FSU), Kevin Pierre-Louis (BC), Telvin Smith (FSU)

Cornerbacks: Bashaud Breeland (CU), Jemea Thomas (GT), Ross Cockrell (Duke), Antone Exum (VT), Dontae Johnson (NCS), Lamarcus Joyner (FSU), Dexter McDougale (MD), Jahari Price (UNC)

Safeties: Tre Boston (UNC), Terrence Brooks (FSU)

Specialist: Pat O’Donnell (MIA)