

# Evan Spencer looked like an NFL receiver at Ohio State's Pro Day: 'That was the goal'

Doug Lesmerises - Northeast Ohio Media Group

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COLUMBUS, Ohio -- Guys like Michael Bennett, Devin Smith, Jeff Heurman and Doran Grant were trying to better their NFL Draft stock at Ohio State's Pro Day on Friday.

A guy like Evan Spencer was trying to prove he deserves to have draft stock.

Bennett, Smith, Heurman and Grant were the four Buckeyes invited to the NFL Combine in February. For prospects like Spencer, offensive tackle Darry Baldwin and linebacker Curtis Grant, who didn't get the combine call, Friday's workout before personnel from all 32 NFL team was really their day.

And they seemed to do what needed to be done.

Baldwin hit 30 reps on the 225-pound bench press, OSU strength coach Mickey Marotti thought Grant had great focus and purpose and Spencer just looked like an NFL receiver.

"That was the goal," Spencer said in a phone call with Cleveland.com after Pro Day.

One scout said Spencer was one of the two Buckeyes that impressed him the most Friday, and Marotti said he was certain that Spencer will have a career.

"He ran well, he's big, he's strong, he's fast," Marotti said. "There's no doubt he'll make a team."

Spencer ran in the 4.4 range on his 40, saying he heard times between 4.38 and 4.48, while a scout said he had Spencer at 4.4 flat.

"I'm really happy with it," Spencer said.

At the NFL Combine, four receivers ran in the 4.3s. Eleven ran between 4.40 and 4.45, including Ohio State teammate Devin Smith, who went 4.42 and chose not to run again in Columbus. Spencer also did 20 reps on the bench press at 225 pounds (only three combine receivers did more) and had a vertical jump of 35 inches (which would have been lower-middle of the pack at the combine).

Smith finished his Ohio State career with 121 catches, 30 touchdowns and 2,503 receiving yards and at this point is projected by several NFL Draft analysts as a potential second-round pick with a shot at the first round.

Spencer caught 52 passes for seven touchdowns and 579 yards in his Ohio State career. He was more known for his blocking, and Urban Meyer talked during the Buckeyes championship season in 2014 about wanting to target him more.

But Spencer doesn't have production to fall back on. He does have that block against Alabama that took out two defenders to spring Ezekiel Elliott for the game-icing 85-yard run.

What that in mind, here's a comparison to remember. James Wright had no catches his senior season at LSU in 2013 while playing behind Jarvis Landry and Odell Beckham. He finished with 25 career receptions, yet was taken by the Cincinnati Bengals in the seventh round last year. He made the roster, contributed on special teams and made five catches as a rookie.

That's what Spencer is chasing, a football life. He's been doing it while working out at Performance Compound in Tampa, with Southern California receiver Nelson Agholor, among others.

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Spencer said his focus has been his explosiveness and getting in and out of routes. And he thought that work showed in his receiver drills Friday. He wanted to open some eyes about what he can do catching the ball. (No blocking drills Friday, sadly.)

"I think I did that," Spencer said. "I went from meeting with one team, the Bucs, to talking to pretty much everybody that was at Pro Day. I knew once I got out there and I got to showcase my talent, I knew I'd do really well. It was a matter of getting out there and doing it."

Spencer is back in Tampa now, continuing his training. He said he had no nerves about Friday because he knew what he could do. Now maybe NFL teams will see him in a new way.