

Tennessee State Player Draws Scouts to Pro Day

Contributed by LaVonte Young - Black College Wire
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Rodgers-Cromartie stands out at event

A crowd of more than 200 spectators, including about 20 scouts came to watch former TSU standout defensive back Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie's Pro Day workout on March 21.

Rodgers-Cromartie was a standout competitor at the NFL combine in February, showcasing the speed and agility that helped him become one of the top defensive backs in the draft.

On ESPN, Mel Kiper's most recent mock draft has Rodgers-Cromartie going to the New England Patriots at the seventh pick in the first round. Chris Steuber of Scout.com recently wrote, "Anytime a player comes from a small school you're always taking a chance selecting him in the early rounds. But Tennessee State's star CB Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie has proven this offseason that he's NFL-ready."

Rodgers-Cromartie continued to impress the scouts present at Pro Day. He did not participate in every event, but he did get a chance to wow the scouts with his agility in the cone drill.

He improved his time to 4.66, an honorable feat considering the weather's effect on the grass condition at Hale stadium. At the NFL combine last month he had the best time out of all the defensive backs with a time of 6.74.

In the short shuttle he recorded a time of 4.14 seconds. In the leaping portion of the workout, Rodgers-Cromartie recorded a 37 inch vertical; in the broad jump he recorded a distance of 10 feet, 11 inches. He is described on Souut.com as 6-feet-1.5, 183 pounds from Bradenton, Fla.

In the defensive back drills, the field was being torn up with every cut, which looked like it affected the players' abilities to come back and catch the ball.

"Coming out here with the field being damp and wet I think every one did well," Rodgers-Cromartie said. "Personally, I feel like I did a good job in the shuttle but in their defense back drills I felt like I did OK. The scouts told me I did good considering the conditions."

TSU head strength coach Chuck Losey said, "I thought Dominique had a great day. He showed them his ability to accelerate and his ability to change direction, which I feel are his two main assets."

With Rodgers-Cromartie bringing out the most scouts in recent history, it gave other former Tigers a chance to be seen by NFL scouts, such as offensive guard Eugene Banks, safety Jamar Landrum, full back Brandon Williams, and Lamar Divens, Shaun Richardson and Mark Drew.

Landrum played for the Tigers and signed as a free agent with the Pittsburgh Steelers in 2007, and most recently with the Jacksonville Jaguars, who sent him to play in NFL Europe.

Divens had a tough day. In his first 40 attempts he came up lame pulling his hamstring. He does know if this will affect his dreams of playing on Sunday.

"He still has a lot of time to get in shape," said trainer Derek Hill. "He still has time to work out in front of teams before the draft."

Richardson caught the attention of several scouts with his workout. During the season he showed that he was a force, recording seven sacks, but scouts got a chance to witness it firsthand. In his two attempts in the forty he ran 4.46 and 4.58, respectively.

"I think I surprise people with my whole work," said Richardson. "They had some question about my athletic ability and my ability to get to the ball and I think I touched on all of that."

"I thought Shaun had an excellent day," Losey said. "I think he shocked some people... in the broad jump and in the vertical. I think a lot of people were impressed with Shaun."

Banks got a chance to show the scouts--and his big brother--what he can do in the weight room, lifting 225 pounds in the bench drill. Banks lifted 225 pounds 31 times, which was the most of all participants.

But one thing that most of the scouts talked to him about was his weight. Currently, he is 409 pounds, which is little too heavy for the scouts' liking.

"I felt like I could have done better," Banks said. "It is always room for improvements. The one thing the scouts said to me is that I have to drop weight because right now I'm 409 pounds and they want to be around 350 to 360 pounds."

Banks' brother, K. Terdell Sands, plays for the Oakland Raiders. Sands knows what Banks is going through and praises his efforts.

"I'm proud of him," Sands said. "Seeing my little brother giving his best effort, I'm not mad at it. We both have things that we need to work on. We can do it together, he can work with his personal trainer and I can work out with my team in Oakland."

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LaVonte Young writes for The Meter, the Tennessee State University student newspaper, which originally published a version of this article.

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