

Pro Day breakdown: Jeff Tarpinian

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

When Iowa conducted its Pro Day back on March 21, it was an opportunity for the nine former Hawkeyes who went to Indianapolis, Ind., last month for the 2011 NFL Scouting Combine to improve their results in front of personnel from all 32 NFL teams.

This was also a chance for those like former linebacker Jeff Tarpinian, who weren't invited to Indianapolis, to show off for the same group of people.

On March 24, former Iowa defensive back Matt Bowen, who now writes for the *National Football Post*, [wrote about Tarpinian's results from five of the seven drills](#). Upon reading this, my gut feeling is that not only did Tarpinian's stock rise, but it just might be enough where even if he isn't drafted, he'll have a darn good shot at making an NFL roster.

[Like I did earlier in the week with the workout results of former wide receiver Derrell Johnson-Koulianos](#), I want to provide you all with perspective on Tarpinian's numbers and how they would have fared against linebackers who did get invited to the Combine and had the opportunity to work out there.

The only numbers not listed in Bowen's post were for the bench press and 60-yard shuttle.

First, let's examine Tarpinian's 40-yard dash time, which was reported as being between 4.48-4.55. Of the 32 linebackers invited to the Combine, 24 of them participated in the 40-yard

dash. Only two of those 24 linebackers recorded times in the range Tarpinian was clocked at – Illinois' Martez Wilson ran a 4.49, while Texas A&M's Von Miller had a 4.53.

To put this into perspective, Miller is considered by many of the draft gurus to be a top 5-10 pick in this year's draft and the first linebacker who will get selected. Wilson is also a linebacker considered to be a first-round pick.

Among the linebackers at the Combine who ran slower times than Tarpinian did at his Pro Day earlier this week include Ohio State's Brian Rolle and Ross Homan, Georgia's Justin Houston, Michigan State's Greg Jones, Tarpinian's former teammate at Iowa, Jeremiha Hunter, UCLA's Akeem Ayers, and Boston College's Mark Herzlich.

In the 20-yard shuttle, Tarpinian's times ranged between 3.85-4.15, according to Bowen. Only four linebackers at the Combine, including Miller, posted times in that range, with the fastest time being clocked at exactly four seconds by Cal's Michael Mohamed and Central Michigan's Nicholas Bellore.

Tarpinian reportedly had a 37-inch vertical leap, which is quite astounding for a linebacker. Connecticut's Scott Lutruss recorded a 38-inch vertical leap at the Combine, which was the highest number among all linebackers there that participated in the drill. Georgia's Akeem Dent had a 37.5-inch vertical leap, while Miller was recorded at 37 inches, the same as Tarpinian. Again, Miller is considered to be the best linebacker in this year's draft class.

Other notable vertical leap results at the Combine include Hunter at 31.5 inches, Wilson at 36 inches, Herzlich at 32.5 inches, and Jones at 31.5 inches also.

Next, there's the broad jump, where Tarpinian is reported to have recorded one of 10 feet, five inches. Miller's broad jump at the Combine was 10 feet, six inches, while Houston's was also 10 feet, five inches. Wilson's was 10 feet, four inches,

Dent's was 10 feet, three inches, and Hunter's was nine feet, eight inches.

The last drill where Tarpinian's results became public were in the three-cone drill, where he was recorded between 6.5-6.7 seconds, according to Bowen. Miller and Mohamed both posted times of 6.7, which were the two fastest times in this drill at the Combine.

[For complete results of how all linebackers fared at the 2011 NFL Combine, fftoolbox.com again has you covered.](#)

So with all this in mind, now the question becomes how this affects Tarpinian going forward.

First thing that needs to be addressed is why with some of these numbers Tarpinian posted at Iowa's Pro Day don't make him a higher draft prospect in the eyes of those who deal with all of this on a regular basis. Here, I suspect two reasons that kind of go hand in hand – injuries and lack of starting experience.

Tarpinian was competing with Hunter to start as one of Iowa's outside linebackers as a sophomore in 2008, but missed the first four games of that season due to injury. Hunter got the starting nod, and to his credit, never relinquished it.

As a result, Tarpinian found himself behind Hunter, Pat Angerer and A.J. Edds, and the majority of his contributions to the Hawkeyes came on special teams.

Last year, following the graduations of Angerer and Edds, Tarpinian was listed as the team's starting middle linebacker, replacing Angerer. The Omaha, Neb., native started three games against Iowa State, Arizona and Ball State before a stinger kept him on the sidelines, and he would then be replaced by a true freshman in James Morris.

After sustaining that injury, Tarpinian only appeared in five

more games for the Hawkeyes, with the lone start coming in the 2010 Insight Bowl against Missouri.

To make a long story short, if Tarpinian does find a spot on an NFL roster this year, it will have more to do with his instincts and what he can bring to a pro organization on special teams. This means that despite the numbers he reportedly posted at his Pro Day, he's not in the discussion with guys like Texas A&M's Miller or Illinois' Wilson.

But the numbers are not irrelevant, either. As I said at the beginning, if Tarpinian is fortunate enough to hear his name called during next month's NFL Draft, his Pro Day numbers will be a significant reason why.

It's data. It might not be data that determines just how good a football player he is necessarily, but when this data gets compared to that of other linebackers in this draft class, it's difficult to not be impressed.

The key will be health. I don't think there's any question Iowa would've been a much better team in 2010 if Tarpinian doesn't have that stinger. Before getting that injury, in a game the Hawkeyes lost at Arizona, he recorded a team-high 12 tackles, including seven that were unassisted. When healthy, he can play.

Even on special teams, he can be a solid player. One of the biggest plays of his Iowa career came playing kick coverage when he blew up Michigan's Darryl Stonum during a game against the Wolverines in 2009, his junior season.

As I mentioned when discussing Johnson-Koulianos earlier in the week, undrafted rookies won't be able to sign as free agents anywhere if the current NFL lockout doesn't end prior to April 28, when the 2011 NFL Draft takes place. I bring this up again because if Tarpinian isn't selected, and there's no end to the lockout at that point, he wouldn't be able to sign with a team until the lockout was over.

Whether Tarpinian gets drafted or not remains to be seen, but given the results of his Pro Day that we know, it's hard to believe he wouldn't get a shot somewhere to make an NFL roster, assuming he'd be able to do so.

Again, I hope this provides some sort of perspective on Tarpinian's chances, because they are definitely better today than they were last week.