

Top NFL Rookies to Watch

Written by Yolande Y. Lezine, Sports Editor
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Here is a look at the potential impact of first-year players as we begin our season-long analysis of the race for Rookie of the Year.

Robert Griffin III-QB Washington Redskins: The Heisman Trophy winner enters the nation's capital with lofty expectations. He even won his first-preseason game last week against the Buffalo Bills. With a big arm and running ability, Griffin should get off to a good start in Mike Shanahan's offense.

Andrew Luck-QB Indianapolis Colts: Luck made it look easy in his preseason opening win over the weekend. He will look to be the third consecutive No. 1 pick and quarterback to win the top rookie honors. He is certainly ready to take over an NFL team, and there shouldn't be much of a learning curve. Both Luck and Griffin will be monitored closely throughout their careers, and the comparison begins with the race for Rookie of the Year.

Trent Richardson-RB Cleveland Browns: Trent Richardson hopes to be back soon after having his knee scoped. A running back hasn't won Rookie of the Year since Adrian Peterson in 2007, but Richardson has a shot. The best running back in the draft will be a workhorse in Cleveland and enters the season as the team's top playmaker.

Mark Barron-S Tampa Bay Buccaneers: Barron, a teammate of Richardson at the University of Alabama, dominates the Defensive Rookie of the Year category. Play-making safeties have done well as rookies in the NFL, so Barron should star right away for the Bucs and be very successful.

Morris Claiborne-CB Dallas Cowboys: The Cowboys traded up to get the draft's best cover man, and like Patrick Peterson a year ago, Claiborne could improve his resume by returning kickoffs. He has the potential to be great and should thrive in coordinator Rob Ryan's defensive scheme.

Michael Floyd-WR Arizona Cardinals: Floyd, considered to be the draft's top receiver, will line up opposite Larry Fitzgerald. The physical Floyd should have an opportunity to put up quality numbers. A lot depends on the quarterback situation in Arizona, but Floyd will get his chances

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in the desert.



Justin Blackmon-WR Jacksonville Jaguars: Blackmon didn't start his NFL career off great! He got negative publicity after a DUI arrest. However, he was a beast at Oklahoma State and he will head to the Jags as the No. 1 target at wide receiver. He is arguably the best playmaker outside of RB Maurice Jones-Drew.

Luke Kuecly-LB Carolina Panthers: The former Lombardi Award winner was considered to be one of the safest picks in the NFL draft. He led the Boston College Eagles in tackles, and also won several other collegiate defensive awards. He should eventually start for the Panthers defense.