

Linebacker with blazing speed and one hand was NFL combine's best story

Required Annotations		Student-Created Annotations		Summary / Questions / Reflection	
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Shaquem Griffin was 8 years old the first time he was held out of a football game. Football was for people with two hands, an opposing coach told him, and his left hand had been amputated four years earlier as the result of a painful health condition.

"That was the moment I realized I was always going to have to prove people wrong," Griffin wrote on the Players' Tribune website.

Griffin, a University of Central Florida player, has done that and more. He convinced even more doubters with attention-getting performances that led him to become the best story at this year's NFL scouting combine.

The professional football league's combine includes tests and competitions among college players who hope to be drafted into the NFL. It was held February 27 to March 5.

Shows His Strength And Speed For Scouts

Griffin, age 22, bench-pressed 225 pounds 20 times with the use of his right hand and a prosthetic device on his left wrist. That was only four repetitions off the pace of the combine's leader, West Virginia wide receiver Ka'Raun White. Then Griffin followed that up with a blazing, official time of 4.38 seconds in his first attempt at the 40-yard dash, and a 4.58 in his second.

How good was that? Well, the NFL Network reported that 4.38 seconds was the fastest 40-yard time by a linebacker at the combine since 2003. Linebackers are part of a football team's defense, which tries to keep the other team from scoring.

Performance Sends Stock Up For NFL Draft

After initially not being invited to the combine, Griffin's draft stock has gone up, with some now predicting he could be picked anywhere from late in the third to the fifth round at next month's draft. Richard Sherman, a football player for the Seattle Seahawks, tweeted that if Griffin isn't drafted in the first three rounds, "the system is broken." The draft has seven rounds.

Scouts, who look for talented players to add to their teams, told Sports Illustrated's Peter King and Albert Breer that they see Griffin going in the middle rounds of the draft. "Late third, early fourth," King wrote. "He can be the best special-teams player on any team early," and maybe have other roles right away, he said. Special teams players return kickoffs, handle field goal attempts and more.

Breer added, "A college scouting director told me on Sunday that he thinks Griffin leaves (the combine) a fourth-rounder, and I ran that by a couple other scouts and they agreed. To start, he can be a strong special teamer, and developmental linebacker, with a chance to grow into more."

"He's Shown He Can Be Productive At A High Level"

Rick Spielman, the Minnesota Vikings' general manager, told Bleacher Report's Doug Farrar that he didn't think Griffin having one hand should be a factor. "He's shown he can be productive at a high level against some high-level competition."

Griffin's twin brother, Seahawks player Shaquill Griffin, ran 4.38 seconds in the 40-yard dash a year ago and was drafted in the third round, as the 90th overall pick. He celebrated Shaquem's moment in the spotlight with a post on Twitter.

Major Surgery On Arm At 4 Years Old

It felt like everyone was talking about Shaquem and his road to the combine, a road that began with surgery when he was 4 years old. That's when doctors decided to amputate his left hand. He was in an extreme amount of pain and would have done anything to make it go away. He felt a searing pain in his hand, the result of a condition his mother suffered while pregnant, causing a membrane to wrap around his hand.

"It's a thin tissue you can barely see," Tangie, Griffin's mother, told the Los Angeles Times. "The doctor answered the questions and explained the options." It could be taken off with a needle during pregnancy, but even the slightest move could have harmed the twins, and it was possible one wouldn't survive, she said. "I was not going to take that chance."

Shaquem experienced serious pain whenever his fingers were touched or pressured. The night the family decided to move forward with surgery, he had hit his hand against the side of the bunk beds he shared with Shaquill, who is older by one minute. The day after surgery, he was playing football again, even though his arm had not healed yet.

"I Was Going To Play Football Regardless"

"I didn't care, I was going to play football regardless," he told the Times. "It was tough until I had my fingers removed, but after that I knew I was going to play again. The pain was gone." It didn't hurt when the ball hit, he said.

At the combine, he showed that he can catch passes that might come his way, too, and he had one interception last season. An interception is catching a pass that the quarterback of the other team meant for his own player.

Questions

- Which section from the article BEST explains HOW Griffin came to understand the obstacles that he would face in his quest to play professional football?
 - Introduction [paragraphs 1-4]
 - "Shows His Strength And Speed For Scouts"
 - "Performance Sends Stock Up For NFL Draft"
 - "He's Shown He Can Be Productive At A High Level"
- Read these four sentences from the article. 1. *Griffin, age 22, bench-pressed 225 pounds 20 times with the use of his right hand and a prosthetic device on his left wrist.* 2. *Then Griffin followed that up with a blazing, official time of 4.38 seconds in his first attempt at the 40-yard dash, and a 4.58 in his second.* 3. *Well, the NFL Network reported that 4.38 seconds was the fastest 40-yard time by a linebacker at the combine since 2003.* 4. *After initially not being invited to the combine, Griffin's draft stock has gone up, with some now predicting he could be picked anywhere from late in the third to the fifth round at next month's draft.* Which two sentences taken together provide the BEST evidence to support the idea that Griffin is objectively as talented in some areas as other NFL hopefuls?
 - 1 and 2
 - 2 and 3
 - 3 and 4
 - 1 and 4
- Which of these selections from the article would be MOST important to include in an objective summary of the article?
 - It felt like everyone was talking about Shaquem and his road to the combine, a road that began with surgery when he was 4 years old. That's when doctors decided to amputate his left hand.
 - He felt a searing pain in his hand, the result of a condition his mother suffered while pregnant, causing a membrane to wrap around his hand.
 - It could be taken off with a needle during pregnancy, but even the slightest move could have harmed the twins, and it was possible one wouldn't survive, she said. "I was not going to take that chance."
 - Shaquem experienced serious pain whenever his fingers were touched or pressured. The night the family decided to move forward with surgery, he had hit his hand against the side of the bunk beds he shared with Shaquill, who is older by one minute.
- Read the selection from the article: *"I didn't care, I was going to play football regardless," he told the Times. "It was tough until I had my fingers removed, but after that I knew I was going to play again. The pain was gone." It didn't hurt when the ball hit, he said.* Which CENTRAL idea of the article is MOST supported by the selection above?
 - The pain in Griffin's hand was the only thing that was preventing him from achieving greatness.
 - Griffin was determined not to let his amputation stand in the way of him achieving football greatness.
 - Griffin believes that the amputation of his hand is the main cause of his success as a linebacker.
 - Griffin is determined to demonstrate that losing a hand is not as big a deal as many people make it out to be.

