

Headline: Panthers on the prowl for the big leagues

Byline: Sean McQuillan, Staff Writer

Social: Staff writer Sean McQuillan covers the 2025 Pitt Football Pro Day.

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The NFL Draft is less than a month away, and Pitt football players displayed their measurements and skills in front of 32 NFL scouts at the 2025 Pitt Football Pro Day. A handful of strong performances saw players potentially raise their draft stock weeks before the big day. Senior kicker Ben Sauls was the highlight of the day. The combine came to a stop when Sauls' trainer announced that his kicking display was about to begin. Sauls had a 2024 season to remember, going perfect on PATs — 44-for-44 to be exact — and 21-for-24 on field goals, with one blocked. He made his first 13 attempts before missing a 47-yard field goal in the second quarter of the 48-25 loss to then-ranked No. 20 SMU on the road in Week 10.

Coming into pro day, all eyes were on Sauls. It is nearly impossible for kickers to get drafted to an NFL squad. However, Ben Rolfe of Pro Football Network released his seven-round [mock](#) draft and has the Baltimore Ravens taking Sauls in the seventh round with the No. 245 overall pick.

He missed his first attempt of the day from 33 yards out and then proceeded to nail ten kicks in a row, wrapping up the display with his longest kick of the day coming from 58 yards.

Eight NFL special teams coordinators showed up just to see Sauls in action. While he's not a guaranteed draft pick, he's got a good shot. He knew that spending his entire college career in an NFL stadium would give him an edge when it mattered most.

"Sure, it's not the only reason I'm turning heads, but let's be real — it's a game-changer," Sauls said of his time at Acrisure Stadium. "I came in knowing this place was special ... Shoutout to Alex Kessman, who always said, 'If you can kick here, you can kick anywhere.' That stuck with me, and honestly, it's been a solid flex on the résumé."

Next was senior safety Donovan McMillon, who was recently named to the Chuck Bednarik Preseason Award Watch List. He checked in at 6-foot-1 and 203 pounds and clocked an impressive 40-yard dash time of 4.48 seconds, which would have ranked seventh at the NFL Combine for his respective position. He added a 35-inch vertical jump and pushed 21 reps on the 225-pound bench press.

However, despite racking up back-to-back 100-tackle seasons — something no Pitt player had done since [Scott McKillop in '07 and '08](#) — safety McMillon didn't get the golden ticket to the NFL Combine. That just meant Pitt's pro day was his time to shine.

"The whole process is basically people telling you what you can't do," McMillon said. "But I keep my head up, stay patient ... and when the spotlight's on, that's when I do my thing."

In 2024, Pitt's senior left tackle, Branson Taylor, took a hit to his potential NFL future with an injury, but he has since recovered and has raised some eyebrows amongst NFL scouts. He got the invite to the Combine but had to sit out due to his October setback. Fast forward to Wednesday, and the big guy — standing at 6-foot-6 and tipping the scales at 315 pounds — was back in action, looking surprisingly nimble for a guy that size — running a 5.26 second 40-yard dash. This would have placed him as the 25th-best for the offensive lineman group at the NFL Combine in Indianapolis — a very impressive accomplishment for the former captain, who has recovered from his previous season-ending injury.

During his training, Taylor took full advantage of his time with former teammate Carter Warren, who also missed his 2022 season and ended up in the NFL.

"I spent hours in his room, bombarding him with questions about the Combine, pro day, interviews — basically everything under the sun. I was just soaking up all his wisdom," said Taylor.

Senior captain and linebacker Brandon George might've made more money in a single pro-day workout than anyone else on the field. The 6th-year senior, who had his best college season in 2024, took full advantage of his first and only season as a starter, setting personal bests with 80 tackles, six tackles for loss, two sacks, and three forced fumbles.

But college stats don't always get you drafted, and George — who didn't get the call for the 2025 NFL combine — was determined to turn this pro day into his audition. And, boy, did he deliver. With 28 reps of 225 pounds on the bench and an unofficial 4.65-second 40-yard dash, he outperformed any linebacker at the combine. Talk about making a statement.

"I feel like I showed my athleticism," said George. "Even at 246 pounds, I can still move. It's just another day in the office."

From 2009 to 2022, Pitt's linebacker room was like the Sahara Desert — no one got drafted. The drought lasted from Scott McKillop to SirVocea Dennis, who broke the streak in 2023. Now, George gets his shot, and thanks to him, there's a whole crop of future linebacker stars at Pitt who will probably be showing up at pro days for years to come.

"I think it's all credit to the coaching staff," said George on the linebacker revival. "You're going to see a lot of guys coming through in the next few years, hitting these tests, and probably showing out in Indy. The room's about to get crowded with talent."

Senior tight end Gavin Bartholomew was among the players selected for the NFL Scouting Combine, where he participated solely in the speed drills. He recorded a 4.70-second 40-yard dash and a 1.59-second 10-yard dash, ranking fourth and eighth at his position, respectively. Measuring in at 6-foot-4, 249 pounds, Bartholomew has surely grown, and coach Pat Narduzzi was not shy when admitting that seeing his growth has continued to be truly admirable.

"You just sit here and you're talking about when you recruit him and recruiting Gavin off of Zoom during COVID, not seeing him live and looking at that high school tape, which wasn't very good, and turning into the player he is today, it's gratifying," Narduzzi said.

Senior wide receiver Konata Mumpfield recorded 96 receptions for 1,389 yards and 10 touchdowns during the 2023 and 2024 seasons in Pittsburgh. Before that, the 6-foot-1 receiver had 121 catches for 1,302 yards and nine touchdowns at Akron between 2021 and 2022.

At Pitt's pro day, his ankle was not fully healthy, and he ran route drills and nothing more.

Mumpfield is typically projected to be selected as a Round 5-6 pick. Had he recorded a faster 40-yard dash time than his 4.60 mark, he might have placed his draft stock projection for an earlier round.

Since 2020, only Clemson, with 26, has pumped more ACC talent into the NFL than Pitt, and you better believe Narduzzi isn't shy about bragging. The Panthers have sent 18 players to the big leagues in that span, edging out Miami and Florida State with 16 and 17 respectively. Now, those Florida schools are out here flashing their top-20 recruiting classes like VIP passes, while Pitt rolls up with a blue-collar roster — and still churns out pros like a draft factory.

In less than a month's time, we'll see what happens in Green Bay, where Pitt players hope to

hear their names called on the biggest stage.