



The Issue. With the NFL combine and the NFL draft now over, it is an appropriate time to examine the kinds of assessments that are being done in the combine. On Thursday, March 11, 2010, ESPN.com reported that Florida's QB Tim Tebow had scored below average on the Wonderlic test, 20 out of a possible 50. The information came from a Palm Beach Post report comparing Tebow's score to different quarterbacks over the years. The Wonderlic is a 12-minute, 50-item test measuring an individual's learning and problem-solving abilities. The NFL has been using the Wonderlic test as one of the combine evaluations for a long period of time.

As a performance psychologist and mental skills trainer, I wonder about the utility of using such an IQ test with athletes. Does the Wonderlic really measure anything about the actual performance capabilities of an athlete? Of what relevance is a general IQ test to the physical and mental performance of athletes? Hard data demonstrating a significant relationship between college grades, the Wonderlic scores and athletic performance in the NFL is scant. If we are interested in the "mental characteristics" of athletes, wouldn't it be better to utilize measures of critical mental skills that have been proven to be essential for exceptional performance under pressure and in high stress situations?

The Data. Let's put Tebow's score into perspective. Let us examine recent and past QB results on the Wonderlic test and compare them to other quarterbacks in the NFL. Expanding on the comparisons made by the Palm Beach Post, we can compare these average, middle-of-the-pack NFL quarterbacks such as Alex Smith (40), Matt Leinart (35), Chris Weinke (29) and Kellen Clemens (35) to stars like Donovan McNabb (14), Terry Bradshaw (15), Vince Young (15), Steve McNair (15) and Pro Football Hall of Famers Dan Marino (16) and Jim Kelly (15). So where is the correlation between score and performance? If you look at the QB scores over the past 10 years, the desired relationship between a good Wonderlic score and NFL performance is elusive at best. It will be interesting to see how a 2009 standout QB in the combine, Matt Stafford, will do in the NFL. He scored a 38.

Solution. Let's get away from measuring "smarts" and go to measuring real mental skills for all sports, not just football. Skills like focus and concentration, emotional control and composure, reaction time, controlled thinking and working memory capacity, essential for learning and remembering the playbooks and the endless films. The good news is that today with all the new technologies in biofeedback and recent discoveries about the brain, these critical elements of *mental toughness* can be measured and developed! To *develop* the mind, you have to *train* the brain. And you have to do it the right way.

Give me a dozen players who have demonstrated these skills to a high level on the field and I will create a profile that can then be used to screen your combine players for real mental strength. Using advanced biofeedback technologies and new "train-the-brain" exercises, this "best" profile can be developed and then administered to any of the players being evaluated at the combine. No IQ test, no paper-and-pencil test, no head shrinking. Just real and relevant assessment of mental skills which are critical for exceptional athletic performance. Remember, to *develop* the mind, you have to *train* the brain!

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Apex Performance provides performance improvement services to military units, pro and college athletes and senior executives who need to build mental agility and mental toughness. APEX Performance provides training to deliver results on the core of leadership - self awareness, confidence, mental agility, and composure. Utilizing a combination of personalized development programs, follow-up coaching, and advanced sensory technology, APEX provides the tools and learning required to achieve sustainable peak performance.

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