

NFL Execs Believe Saquon Barkley, New York Giants, is the Best Running Back in the League Via ESPN Poll

Saquon Barkley edged out Carolina Panthers running back Christian McCaffrey and Dallas Cowboys running back Ezekiel Elliott.

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, July 13, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- There have been other running backs who have won the rushing title of the league in the two years since Saquon Barkley was drafted second-overall in the NFL Draft. Then there are other running backs who have earned All-Pro honors. But there's a widespread belief among professional football's brain trust that the New York Giants might just have the best running back in the whole league.



In a report for ESPN+, a collective of 50 executives of the league consisting of coaches, scouts and athletes were challenged to rate the Top 10 players in the whole league in 11 different positions for the 2020 season. One player was rated as the greatest in football when it came to running back, Saquon Barkley, who edged out Carolina Panthers running back Christian McCaffrey and Dallas Cowboys running back Ezekiel Elliott due to his nearly unlimited big-play potential and subsequent effect on rival defenses.

"Can score from anywhere on the field, and you feel that. That's rare," said an NFC executive.
"Can generate more big plays than anyone."

Barkley, the 2018 NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year, is coming off a rough season in 2019: while he was outstanding in the first and last few weeks of the season, his biggest trouble earned a year that was ruined by a severe ankle sprain in Week Three. This caused him to skip multiple games before returning to practice, possibly too early, and plodded across a lengthy string of Giants losses that he lost his signature blasting and evasiveness. Nonetheless, even in as few years in the game, Barkley still managed to have his second 1,000 + running yard season,

bringing him ahead of even McCaffrey, who in 2019 was just the third player in NFL history to gain over 1,000 receiving yards and 1,000 yards in a single season.

"Cutting ability, vision, contact balance — he's got it all," said an AFC executive. "Nothing he doesn't do."

"It turns out teams, they're more fearful of this guy than anybody else. He's got the speed, the power, the contact balance - This is a guy that opposing offensive coaches would stop studying their Microsoft tablet just to go watch this guy on the other side," said ESPN's Jeremy Fowler, who wrote the piece. "Veteran linebackers told me you have to put four players on him at one time, because he can break 80 yards at any moment. And so he got the edge over McCaffrey because for as great as he is, they say McCaffrey isn't as maybe sturdy or powerful, where Saquon has a little bit of everything."

While Barkley has even reached a Pro Bowl throughout his young career, he might not have been in a good spot to do everything he is genuinely capable of in the NFL, whether due to in-game scenarios focused against running or unimaginative coaching & schematics. This could well improve in 2020, when Barkley is poised for not just a complete season with quarterback Daniel Jones, but also a new head coach in Joe Judge and an established offensive coordinator in Jason Garrett, who managed some of the NFL's top rushing offenses when he was the Dallas Cowboys' head coach.

Former head coach Pat Shurmur seemed to love the inside zone runs, which, thanks mainly to the inconsistency of the Giants interior offensive line last year, resulted in 25 of Barkley's rushing attempts (out of 137 runs in between the guards or 18.2%) for zero or negative yardage. So imagine what kind of praise Barkley is going to get if new offensive coordinator Jason Garrett, as many are expecting, includes some outside zone runs, and lines Barkley up around the formation as a receiver, where he can score from anywhere on the field. These receiving opportunities could help the third-year running back have his most productive season yet.

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