

Conference abstract

Athletic Performance at the NFL Scouting Combine after Arthroscopic Meniscus Surgery

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INTRODUCTION

Meniscus surgery is common and debilitating in National Football League (NFL)-bound athletes. Although statistical performance has been demonstrated after surgery, functional performance as measured at the NFL combine is not well defined. The purpose of this study was to determine the functional performance, production scores, athleticism scores, overall scores, and draft position of NFL combine participants after meniscus surgery compared with a matched control group. We hypothesized there would be no difference in functional performance or graded scores between meniscus surgery athletes compared with controls.

METHODS

NFL-caliber athletes with previous arthroscopic meniscus repair or meniscectomy who participated in the NFL Scouting Combine between 2014-2024 were compared with a control group. Data included the 40-yard dash, 10-second split, vertical, broad jump, shuttle, 3-cone drill, production, athleticism, and overall scores, prospect grades, and draft position.

RESULTS

48 subjects were included in the repair group; 43 subjects were included in the meniscectomy group with the same number of controls after matching. Compared with con-

trols, meniscus repair players had significantly slower 3-cone drill (7.40 ± 0.43 vs 7.20 ± 0.38 seconds; $P=0.018$) and shuttle drill (4.51 ± 0.26 vs 4.38 ± 0.26 seconds; $P=0.016$) as well as lower athleticism (69.74 ± 12.95 vs 76.13 ± 11.28 ; $P=0.012$) and overall scores (70.95 ± 14.22 vs 77.47 ± 8.30 ; $P=0.007$). There was no significant difference in 40-yard dash ($P=0.439$) or vertical ($P=0.559$). Meniscectomy players had a significantly slower shuttle compared to controls (4.45 ± 0.31 vs 4.34 ± 0.18 seconds; $P=0.047$) and lower athleticism (69.62 ± 12.53 vs 76.67 ± 10.84 ; $P=0.007$) and overall scores (70.59 ± 10.56 vs 75.24 ± 9.52 ; $P=0.035$). There was no significant difference in 40-yard dash ($P=0.164$) or vertical ($P=0.108$). There was no significant correlation between combine performance and time from surgery.

CONCLUSIONS

While overall athletic performance remained largely unaffected by arthroscopic meniscus repair or meniscectomy, specific drills such as the 3-cone and shuttle drills demonstrated significant declines, suggesting a negative impact on agility and quickness. Metrics used to score NFL prospects were also inferior in the meniscus repair and meniscectomy groups. These findings highlight the potential effects of meniscus surgery on athletic performance, underscoring the need for surgeon guidance on expectant post-surgical functional deficits for NFL-caliber athletes.

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