



24 HOURS WITH MELVIN GORDON

OUTSTANDING IN HIS FIELD

Former Wisconsin running back Melvin Gordon let *The Mag* tag along on March 10 and 11 for the scenes around his pro day in front of 28 NFL scouts. First up: a photo shoot at Camp Randall Stadium with UW's six other Big Ten athletes of the year. Gordon won't suit up in cardinal and white again, but he'll always be one of the state's favorite sons after the kid from Kenosha broke Badgers legend Ron Dayne's conference single-season rushing record with 2,587 yards in 2014. Gordon's next goal: to outrun another tradition—UW's seven first-team All-Big Ten backs since 1993 have combined for only 4,638 yards in 13 NFL seasons. As if that's not enough pressure, experts project him as the first running back taken on April 30; no back has gone in the first round since 2012. "It'd be special," Gordon says, "to get invited to Chicago, walk that stage and shake Roger Goodell's hand." But not before he puts on one more show in Madison. —ADAM RITTENBERG





MOVING ON, WISCONSIN

Gordon feels nostalgic at his old locker, but his focus quickly shifts to his NFL future. In early March, ESPN Insiders Mel Kiper and Todd McShay had Gordon headed to a team [Arizona at No. 24 or Dallas at No. 27] that will need him immediately. "I want to show that [UW backs] can be productive on that level—that's the goal," says Gordon, who'd be the first Badgers back to go in the first round since Dayne in 2000.

MARCH 10, 2 P.M. CT

6-8:30 P.M.

MARCH 11, 9:30 A.M.

BADGER COMFORTS

Gordon stays loose for an interview with Carolina [25th pick] by surprising his aunt Chevette Crockrom with skills picked up while he got hooked on last year's World Cup—and by unwinding in his room. "Obviously, you have a little nerves; you never know what they're going to ask," Gordon says. "You just go in and be you."



ALWAYS A GAMER

Former Wisconsin receiver Kenzel Doe is Gordon's training partner, close friend and NBA 2K rival. "He always uses LeBron," says Doe. "I play with the Warriors and kill him." They usually square off at Gordon's place, but the outcome shifts in the players' lounge. "I was blowing him out," Gordon says. "I had Toronto, shooting 3s all day. Money." Doe blames the console change.

WORTH THE WAIT

Before drills, the 6-foot-1 Gordon weighs in at 215.8 pounds, about a pound more than at the combine, where he ran a 4.52 40 and the 60-yard shuttle in 11 flat, tops among RBs. With such solid times, Gordon won't run at pro day, focusing instead on receiving [22 career catches, 19 in '14]. "His combine numbers were elite," says UW assistant strength and conditioning coach Jamil Walker. "So we've just been getting his legs back, light weight-room stuff and having a QB throw to him. We're being very cautious and smart."



9:45 A.M.

1 P.M.

**PARTING SHOTS**

Gordon's best friend back at Bradford High, former Michigan State corner Trae Waynes, took a break from his own draft prep to show support. "I knew he'd be at the show," says Waynes, whose 4.31 40 led all corners at the combine and who is projected by both Kiper and McShay to go 11th to the Vikings. Says Gordon of Waynes: "I knew he'd become this player. I'm proud of him." Gordon's mother, Carmen, reminisces about her son's past four years—and two days. "The process has been fun," she says. "Exciting and fun."



TO SEE MORE FROM BEHIND THE SCENES OF GORDON'S PRO DAY PREP, TUNE IN TO ESPN FOR DRAFT ACADEMY, AIRING APRIL 14 AT 7 P.M. ET

