

The Gut Check's RB Scouting Analysis

Name: **School:** **Opponent:** **Surface:**
Height: **Year:** **Score:** **Climate:**
Weight: **Date:** **Location:** **Temperature:**

Overall Score:

Power Score :

- Leg power, drives through arm tackles [1pt]:
- Effective stiff arm [1pt]:
- Initiates contact, runs behind pads, and punishes defenders [1pt]:
- Good body lean/Finishes runs [3pts]:
- Gains yards after contact/second-third effort runner [7pts]:

Balance Score :

- High performance in adverse conditions [1pt]:
- Maintains balance when hit head-on [1pt]:
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BHandling Score :

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- Demonstrates ball security [3pts]:
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Elusiveness Score

- Effective lower body jukes while on the run [3pts]:
- Effective upper body jukes while on the run [1pt]:
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- Effective lateral movement [3pts]:

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- Effort with assignments [3pts]:
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- Makes difficult catch [1pt]:
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- Consistently catches ball with hands and without juggling [1pt]:
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Durability Score :

- Missed fewer than 10% of opportunities to play [1pt]:
- Performs at high level while playing with an injury [1pt]:
- No chronic injuries (Two or more injuries to same body part) [1pt]:
- No injuries requiring extensive rehabilitation [7 pts]:

Game Stats

Attempts:
Rush Yds:
Ist Downs:
Rush Tds:
Target:
Rec:
Rec Yds:
Rec Tds:
Fumbles:
Broken Tackles:
BLKs Assigned:
BLKs Made:

Player: Laurence Maroney

Date: 9/24/2005

Opponent: Purdue

Overall Strengths: Maroney added 10 pounds to his body in the offseason. He is coming off two, 1000-yard seasons as a part-time back sharing time with Marion Barber III. He plays behind an offensive line filled with talented prospects (two Sr. guards and a Sr. center--two of them all-conference players) and excellent coaching. This offensive line system employs lighter players of an average weight less than 300 lbs. Offensive line coach Mitch Browning was even quoted by ESPN as saying "Fat guys cannot play in our system." Like Bush, Maroney returns kicks for his team. Maroney dies hard on his runs by gaining yards after contact because of excellent balance. Maroney is a very capable workhorse back that can play on every down. The Minnesota RB has the speed and cutting ability more stylistically similar to O.J. Simpson than say Marshall Faulk or Barry Sanders. This still makes him a dangerous open field runner, but one that won't consistently make big plays solely on his own steam. Maroney should develop into a feature back with pro bowl potential.

Overall Weaknesses: The overall grade on Maroney may slip a bit because his offensive line is so good that it disguises some of his weaknesses, much like Wisconsin's line and Brian Calhoun. I wonder how elusive Maroney will be with his cutbacks in tighter spaces in the pros. He has more room to set up a move in college. He has good speed, but he doesn't have sudden, start-stop moves like small backs and returnmen. He can occasionally make a move of this kind, but not consistently. Maroney's blocking efforts were inconsistent and he was definitely more physical in this game as a runner than he was in the Wisconsin match up. If Maroney doesn't become a successful starter in the NFL, it may have a lot to do with lack of effort more than lack of skill.

Power: On Maroney's second carry, he bounced the play outside to the left with an excellent start-stop lateral move and then promptly stiff armed three players in a row. He knocked the first one out of the play, the second player to the ground, and the third he warded off until driven out of bounds for a five-yard gain on a play that would have been at best, a 1-2 yard gain for most backs. Moreover, Maroney has an effective stiff arm with either hand. On a third down play in the first series, Maroney took a pitch to the right. When two blockers missed their assignments, Maroney had to slow down and change direction. In the process, he had to stiff arm a defender approaching him in pursuit, and the stiff arm knocked the LB to the ground. He has used the stiff arm five times successfully in two series. Maroney has the best stiff arm I've seen of any college back this year. In this game Maroney made contact and finished his runs aggressively by punishing defenders before the play ended. When the situation required tough yards inside, Maroney demonstrated the ability to be a good after contact runner. He doesn't lose much momentum with attempted arm tackles to his legs or upper body. He also knows how to lean forward in tight spaces to gain 4 yards. After watching this game and before his effort against Wisconsin, I thought Maroney could be one of the better inside runners of this RB class. At the very least, Maroney demonstrates he has the skills to be a good inside runner.

Ball Handling: Maroney generally tucks the ball under his left arm, but on pitches to the right, he ran with the ball in his right arm. With either hand, Maroney demonstrates good ball control. He tucks the ball tight against his arm with very little space between his elbow and body, even when he is in the open field--a time when most backs tend to loosen up after passing through the first wave of defenders. Maroney does a nice job covering up the ball both hands when necessary.

Elusiveness: Maroney can make the quick lateral move or sharp cut, but he's more of a one-cut, downhill runner. Maroney's longest run today was a 27-yarder in the first quarter that started from inside Minnesota's five-yard line on first down. The guard and center pulled to the right, and created a huge opening. Maroney can't make sharp cuts at full speed, but his start-stop moves and balance after contact is very reminiscent of Edgerrin James skills prior to his ACL injury. He's a shifty back with excellent balance. He does have a good slide step that helps him make changes of direction while still heading up field and elude pursuit from an angle over the top. On a draw play with a little more than a minute left, Maroney did show that with enough open space around him, he can make a hard cut at full speed but this doesn't work for him behind the line of scrimmage as much as it does in the open field. He made a defender approaching him straight ahead, dive for air as he gained another 10 yards with such a cut. Maroney had a good 10 yards of space around him to speed without contact prior to encountering the defender. Maroney made an unbelievable lateral cut 90 degrees to the left on a play starting up the middle and he was going full speed and cut without slowing down. This was on his 34th carry. If he gets at least 4-5 steps to accelerate, he can make sharp changes of direction that can kill you in space.

Balance: First carry on the opening offensive play of the game was for a first down. The left guard pulled and double teamed the Boilermakers highly regarded DE and there was a huge opening up the middle. Maroney gained seven yards before a defender made contact. The most impressive part of the run was his ability to maintain his balance when the CB grabbed his angle and he was hit head on by a safety and still lean forward for another 3 yards and a first down. The defense began to make good adjustments to the blocking schemes towards the end of the first quarter, but Maroney routinely showed good balance even on minimal gains. Maroney keeps a low pad level when making contact and this makes him an effective tackle breaker in short yardage situations. Converted at least three short yardage run plays in the 1st QTR.

Speed: Maroney has very good straightline speed and a good burst for his size. He's a difficult back to catch from behind when moving at full speed and can break a run the distance when there's an opening.

Blocking: Maroney's first assigned block was to a DT that came free on a short out to the WR. Maroney went low to the legs, but didn't do the sloppy dive that other poor-blocking RBs half-heartedly do when attempting to cutblock. This was a solid, effective block that was high enough that the DT couldn't jump out of the way or get airborne and block the pass. To open the 3rd QTR Maroney did give a half-hearted effort on a DE by telegraphing his dive to the point it looked like a flop. The designed offensive play was a quick pass but even so, this lack of effort could have caused a blindside sack if the QB decided not to throw the ball. He dove at the legs of a DE on a short pass, but missed badly--a lackluster effort to avoid contact but appeared as if he was making the attempt.

Vision: Maroney has good vision. He sees the openings outside, and will bounce plays in that direction. Sometimes it is difficult to judge his overall vision because the offensive line is so good. The third run of the game was a sweep to the left with the guard and center pulling. The linemen did so well, Maroney had the first down before a defender could touch him. The offensive line opened huge lanes in this game. The offensive line was responsible for getting him at least 5-10 yards without contact on several plays in the first quarter. These plays included a 10-yard gain in the first quarter from a bunch formation stretch play. Maroney does a nice job of weaving through his blocks. He had 91 yards off 10 carries in the first quarter. Maroney made a dramatic cutback at 90 degree angle to the left, something I had not seen him do before. Not only was the move great, but the vision to see the opening was excellent. As the game progressed, running lanes narrowed a bit and Maroney showed more patience waiting for holes to develop. He demonstrated the ability to shorten his steps leading to the LOS and then slipping through the opening for a solid gain or ride the hip of his lead blocker. Although he gained significantly fewer yards in the second half, his runs were still meaningful and productive.

Receiving and Routes: Maroney's first catch was a swing pass to the right flat. He body caught the ball, but did so on the run without a problem. Maroney's third catch was a seam route about 15 yards down the field. He caught a bullet with his back to the QB and with his hands. The moment he caught the ball, he saw the safety bearing down on him from two yards away. Maroney still held onto the ball after taking a hit. He juggled it a bit after the hit, but it was a solid smack right to the ball. He was quick enough to stop and spin away from the force of the attempted kill shot. Maroney really does a nice job catching the ball on short patterns out of backfield where he has the ball delivered to him in stride and his back to the QB. Maroney picked up a first down on a 3rd and 10 play in the 4th QTR on a short pass that anticipated Maroney's location and the ball was threaded into a fairly tight passing lane.

Durability: Maroney suffered some minor cramping after more than 35 touches in the game, but he still wound up with 51 touches overall--a career high in attempts and yardage. Clearly Maroney can carry the workload and perform even when fatigued.

Character: Maroney shared time for two years with Marion Barber III without any known problems. He could be seen congratulating his backup Gary Russell after a touchdown--Russell's 7th td in just three games. He also understands the concept of giving effort on plays where he is used as a decoy.

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Player: Laurence Maroney

Date: 10/15/2005

Opponent: Wisconsin

Overall Strengths: Maroney had a 100-yard first half on 20 carries, but he had a 94 yard run, and only gained 64 yards on his next 20 carries. He did have a second TD called back because the 15-yard run was sprung open on a hold. Despite his lack of great power Maroney has an excellent stiff arm. He is an elusive back with excellent vision and movement while running at full speed. Maroney isn't used extensively in the passing game, but he has shown some talent as a receiver that should develop over time. Maroney is the kind of player that can break the game open on one play.

Overall Weaknesses: Maroney doesn't naturally get low enough to gain tough yardage between the tackles. He runs upright between the tackles, which will make him prone to more punishment or make it tougher for him to convert in short yardage situations. He is not a powerful runner as much as he is a big-play threat. He still needs more work as a receiver to become an every down threat in the NFL. Maroney has the talent to be a superstar but the question is if he will have a strong enough comfort level with physical contact. If not, he could wind up a talented back up that teases fans and teammates alike.

Power: Maroney doesn't possess eye-popping power, but always seems to be falling forward. He does possess an excellent stiff arm, which he used to gain his first, 1st down in the opening quarter after making an impressive double move to get outside. He will lower his shoulder, but he doesn't appear to deliver the blow as much as prepare to take one. This happened on a 1st QTR run where the center pulled and took out one man, but Maroney found himself facing Sr. LB, Sanchez bearing down on him. Maroney lowered his shoulder but more or less leaned into the LB rather than popped him with a lick before Sanchez could wrap him up. He did drive his legs after getting wrapped up. He doesn't consistently get low enough in short yardage situations. He was a yard short on at least three opportunities for either a first down or touchdown. Lowers shoulder or head on inside run, but he does this too late and the result is he doesn't consistently accelerate into his hits as if he's the aggressor. He improved on this as he gained some confidence in the game. Maroney does have enough leg drive to power a defender backwards for a couple of yards as he did in the 3rd QTR. But his tendency to run upright doesn't maximize his size and speed to power through tackles. He leaves himself open to take full shots and not gain the tough yards NFL teams will expect him to gain. His best power move is a stiff arm, which he does very well with either arm.

Ball Handling: Maroney appears comfortable carrying the ball with either hand, but he doesn't switch the ball while on the run.

Elusiveness: Maroney can sometimes execute an effective jump cut, but it's not the best part of his game. Generally he'll fall forward after making the cut, rather than maintaining his balance. His best moves come when he builds up speed. On his first down on a 3rd and 5 in the opening quarter, Maroney took a pitch to the left and after building up speed, he took a step inside of the oncoming LB and then dipped back to the outside. The dip froze the LB and got Maroney around the corner (with the help of a good stiff arm with his right hand). For a slasher, Maroney has good feet. He adjusts his strides to change direction but keep his speed of play fast enough to elude angles or actual players. Does a nice job with stutter steps to set up his acceleration past players.

Balance: Maroney did a nice job reversing his field on a run designed to go to the right when the defender got penetration. He had enough moves to turn a 4-yard loss into a significant gain.

Speed: Maroney has excellent speed. His quickness isn't superior, but if he has time to get started out of the I-formation, he's a threat to get outside or take it the distance through a decent hole up the middle. When he builds up speed, he is hard to catch. He looks like a back that gets faster as he has more room to run. He has three of the seven longest runs in Minnesota school history: 80, 80, and 94. Maroney took a 1st and 10 zone play to the right and as he was close to the edge, an LB came through untouched. Maroney remained patient for his tackle make a block with a stutter step, and then burst past the LB and through the hole for a 15-yard gain.

Blocking: Maroney doesn't make an effort to block on kickoffs when he doesn't receive the ball. Is he instructed not to make contact by the coaching staff? Possibly, but this would be still be surprising. With Minnesota's starting QB out with a shoulder injury, Maroney was kept in the backfield to pass block. He helped wall off a pass rushing DE that was about to turn the corner on the LT. Even so, Maroney could be seen looking behind him after making tentative contact in order to check whether the QB had gotten far enough out of the pocket for him to stop blocking. On a play fake, Maroney didn't follow through on a block. It didn't turn out to be necessary, but it's a bad habit. Goes low on every assigned block and wiffs each time because defenders expect it and his cut blocks are aren't high enough into the body.

Vision: Maroney has naturally excellent vision. On the first run of the game, he had to make a jump cut back to the inside when his pulling lineman fell down, allowing penetration into the backfield. Maroney found enough of an opening to gain a yard rather than lose three. I like that he is just as likely--if not more likely--to cut his runs back inside the tackles for positive yardage than to bounce plays outside. Nice patience on his first run of Minnesota's 3rd offensive series. Maroney stayed behind his blockers and faked a move inside before bouncing outside to gain 7 more

yards. Her reminds me of the way Larry Johnson or Priest Holmes run behind Kansas City's offensive line, because he has learned how to follow his blockers. The All-American center, Greg Eslinger does a great job pulling and leading run plays. Maroney gained nearly 20 yards on the opening drive of the 2nd QTR by following Eslinger up a very narrow hole and busting through for a first down, and nearly a touchdown. He took a pitch from the 6- yard line on the opening drive of the 3rd quarter, spotted a huge cut back lane developing, shortened his steps, and cut back into a lane nearly 10-yards wide at the 7-yard line. Maroney accelerated through the open field for 15 yards. As he was running, Maroney spotted a DB on his left with an angle on him. Maroney shortened his stride and cut to the left which completely took away the DB's angle, and left the player on the ground. Maroney accelerated past 4 more defenders that were originally in front of him and took the ball for 75 more yards and a score.

Receiving and Routes: Maroney dropped a swing pass out of the backfield. The ball was thrown over the DL's head but the DL was in tight coverage, and Maroney only made the attempt to catch it with one arm because of the the DL looming ahead of him. This should have been a fairly easy catch on a 3rd down throw.

Durability: No major injuries.

Character: His teammates call him Cool-Aid because of his laid back personality, but he seems to do some talking on the field. In fact he was warned by the NCAA for an excessive celebration after a score against Michigan the week before. He can get a little too vocal and might get baited early in his NFL career if he's not careful. Maroney takes a very blue collar approach to practice and has earned the respect of his teammates. I still don't understand why he doesn't put more effort into blocking when all this is said about him. he does share his knowledge and observations about the opposing team with his backups while on the bench.