

## In Search of an Edge

# When tenths of a second can mean tens of thousands of dollars, combine prep becomes serious business

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On a laptop spreadsheet at the NFL scouting combine last Saturday, nutritionist Amanda Carlson detailed Brian Leonard's diet for an average day at the Athletes' Performance facility in Tempe, Ariz., where Leonard, the fullback out of Rutgers, had spent the previous seven weeks. Large bowl of oatmeal and scrambled egg whites for breakfast, 533 calories. Turkey wrap and baked chips for lunch, 933 calories. Lean meat, beans and vegetables for dinner, 799 calories. Energy bar and fruit at night, 400 calories. Add two 24-ounce "recovery shakes" and two three-ounce "energy-shooters" around his two workouts, plus 110 ounces of water (one ounce per two pounds of body weight) -- giving him a total daily intake of 4,388 calories -- and eight hours of sleep, and you have Leonard's precombine regimen.



Leonard worked out for seven weeks in Arizona to add muscle and drop fat, then clocked the fastest time of any fullback in Indianapolis.  
Todd Rosenberg

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Leonard, whose goal was to get faster and prove to NFL scouts he could be an every-down back, added 8.6 pounds of muscle in Tempe, decreasing his body fat from 12.1% to 9.6%. At Indianapolis he lowered his time in the 40-yard dash to 4.55, best among fullbacks at the RCA Dome, and led all backs with 28 repetitions in the 225-pound bench

press. "This training and nutrition helped me prove that teams looking at me as just a blocking fullback won't be getting the most out of me," Leonard said on Saturday night, while standing in a hotel suite that had been converted into a two-floor spa for some of the company's 60 combine clients.

On the first floor players grazed on a vast spread of healthy food, including turkey and tuna wraps, protein bars, raw vegetables and fresh fruit. Upstairs, speed coach Darryl Eto stretched Oklahoma State wideout D'Juan Woods on a massage table, prepping him for his 40-yard dash the next day. Leonard waited his turn for a rubdown.

This was not your father's combine. With workout centers for college prospects in Arizona, California and, soon, northern Florida, Athletes' Performance is one of several outfits capitalizing on the burgeoning industry of draft preparation. About 70% of the 350 players who performed for scouts and coaches in Indianapolis spend from two weeks to three months working with trainers, nutritionists, speed coaches and media coaches. Agents foot the bills -- up to \$15,000 per player -- and with good reason: When a client moves up in the draft it means a richer contract. "There's no telling how bad a combine I would have had if I hadn't trained like this," said Delaware tight end Ben Patrick, who ran the third-fastest time for a tight end last weekend. "It's worth every penny."