

Ladd Biro's Top 50 Running Backs

Rankings are based on each player's projected position by the end of the 2007 season. This is a value ranking, NOT a recommended draft order. Certain players may be drafted significantly higher or lower based upon their perceived value to other owners. Stats are from 2006.

Levels		Elite	Near Elite	Solid	Marginal	Insurance Only	Updated: 8/6/07	
Rank	Player	Team	GS	Rush Yds	Rush TDs	Rec Yds	Rec TDs	
1	LaDainian Tomlinson	SD	16	1,815	28	508	3	The crème de la crème of fantasy RBs, in the rich tradition of Marshall Faulk and Priest Holmes in their heyday. There is no excuse for bypassing him with the 1st overall pick.
2	Steven Jackson	STL	16	1,528	13	806	3	Emerged as a prolific fantasy workhorse in '06, and poised for another outstanding season. Virtually risk-free as the No. 2 overall selection.
3	Larry Johnson	KC	16	1,789	17	410	2	His holdout is beginning to sound serious, and Priest Holmes' return introduces another intriguing factor. Perhaps most worrisome are the aging and depleted offensive line and the unsettled QB situation. The Chiefs could struggle to reach the red zone, hurting LJ's TD production.
4	Joseph Addai	IND	0	1081	7	325	1	There is little reason to fear that he will share carries again this season. Dominic Rhodes is gone, and no other back on the roster appears to have the talent necessary to force Addai off the field. He will be the Steven Jackson of '07.
5	Willie Parker	PIT	16	1,494	13	222	3	A top 5 pick should be able to win 2-3 weekly matchups for you virtually on his own. Parker fits the bill. He also has proven to be a scoring machine inside the red zone, so don't believe those who predict that Davenport or Barlow will poach goal-line carries.
6	Travis Henry	DEN	13	1,211	7	78	0	Say what you will about Mike Shanahan, but when he has a RB that fits his rushing style, he pounds him (see Terrell Davis, Clinton Portis). If Henry stays healthy, 2007 should be his best year ever. Don't be surprised if he ranks among the Top 5 RBs by year's end.
7	Frank Gore	SF	16	1,695	8	485	1	Gore may have trouble replicating his outstanding rushing total in '07, but his scoring production should improve. And if you are drinking the 49ers' Kool Aid, you have to believe he'll be an elite fantasy star. Keep an eye on his broken hand, though.
8	Shaun Alexander	SEA	10	896	7	48	0	Lingering concerns about the foot that plagued him in '06 have hurt his draft stock. But prior to '06, he had never missed a game due to injury. A healthy Alexander can still be an elite fantasy performer.
9	Laurence Maroney	NE	0	745	6	194	1	The only worry is returning from a shoulder injury. If he's 100%, he'll flirt with 1,500 yards and 15 TDs. While there's no telling how the passes will be divvied up in New England, there's little doubt that Maroney will get the bulk of the carries. Don't count on much from him as a receiver though.
10	Brian Westbrook	PHI	14	1,217	7	699	4	As with his QB, the only thing not to like about Westbrook is his injury history. But he can carry your team when he's healthy and the Eagles are clicking.
11	Rudi Johnson	CIN	15	1,309	12	124	0	His 3.8 ypc average in '06 was the lowest of his career, sparking great speculation that promising rookie Kenny Irons will eat into his carries, much like Chris Perry did in '05. Rudi has 12 TDs in each of his last three seasons, but has virtually no role in the receiving game.
12	Willis McGahee	BAL	14	990	6	156	0	Can he do more behind the Ravens' line than he did behind the Bills'? We'll soon see, but it's a fair bet that his improved attitude will lead to more consistent effort. Most importantly, he won't have to share carries, which is becoming increasingly rare in today's NFL.
13	Edgerrin James	ARI	16	1,159	6	217	0	Another talented back that underperformed in '06 and may be overlooked in '07. Finally got on track during the last month of the season, and stands to improve his stats with an upgraded OL and an explosive offensive cast around him.
14	Cedric Benson	CHI	0	647	6	54	0	Can Benson handle 20+ carries per game? Perhaps not for the next 10 seasons, but in 2007, the answer should be affirmative. Look for a breakout season for the undisputed starter in an offense that relies on its running game to set the tempo.
15	Reggie Bush	NO	8	565	6	742	2	Deuce McAllister remains the starting RB, but Bush won't be on the sidelines often. I'd love him as my RB2, but it's very risky to rely on him as a first-round pick.
16	Thomas Jones	NYJ	16	1,210	6	154	0	Acquired via trade to be the workhorse back, Jones should have little trouble recording his third consecutive 1,200+ yard season. May have competition for goal-line carries, but he could easily out-perform his draft position.
17	Ronnie Brown	MIA	12	1,008	5	276	0	A major disappointment in '06, but he made strides in the second half of the season when his OL started gelling. There's no threat of sharing carries, so consider the underachiever a solid RB2, with plenty of potential to out-perform his draft position.
18	DeAngelo Williams	CAR	2	501	1	313	1	Look for a breakout performance from the second-year pro. The offense will be built around his rushing talents, and DeShaun Foster will quickly become an after-thought.
19	Clinton Portis	WAS	7	523	7	170	0	Injuries opened the door to Ladell Betts in '06, and it will be difficult to keep him off the field even when Portis is 100%. When that will be is anyone's guess. Portis is currently suffering from tendonitis in his right knee. If you can't help yourself from drafting him, grab Betts in the middle rounds as insurance.
20	Maurice Jones-Drew	JAX	1	941	13	436	2	After his sensational rookie season, Jones-Drew is being over-valued in most drafts. He is unlikely to unseat a healthy Fred Taylor as the starter, and it will be extremely difficult for him to replicate his '06 TD totals. Caveat emptor.
21	Adrian Peterson	MIN	*	*	*	*	*	The ultimate risk-reward pick. If his shoulder can handle the wear and tear of an NFL season, the sky's the limit. If not, he may be forced to undergo surgery and miss the majority of his rookie campaign. One thing's certain: The Vikes drafted him to make an immediate impact. Chester Taylor's recent injury only magnifies the opportunity.
22	Brandon Jacobs	NYG	0	423	9	149	0	Loved him as a goal-line poacher, but wary of his ability to be an every-down back. Don't be surprised if Reuben Droughns shares carries.
23	Fred Taylor	JAX	15	1,146	5	242	1	One of the most underrated RBs of his generation, a healthy Taylor can still run with the best of them. Expect the Jags to reprise the powerful 1-2 punch of Taylor and Jones-Drew, and for the veteran to reclaim more of the TDs poached by the rookie in '06.

24	Deuce McAllister	NO	13	1,057	10	198	0	He'll continue to yield carries to Bush, but Deuce will remain the starter and will amass the majority of the rushing yards and goal-line carries. A decent RB2 and outstanding bye-week starter.
25	Marion Barber III	DAL	1	654	14	196	2	Some predict he'll take over the starting role, but it's more likely he'll remain a change-of-pace back to Julius Jones. He'll be hard-pressed to tally 16 TDs again.
26	Ahman Green	HOU	14	1,059	5	373	1	Injuries and age are creeping up on him, but Green has a chance to be the workhorse in the Texans' rushing game. That counts for something, so consider him a steal in the middle rounds.
27	Julius Jones	DAL	16	1,084	4	142	0	With a new head coach and offensive coordinator, the once-dynamic Jones will have a chance to reclaim his role as the primary rusher. Marion Barber will continue to poach goal-line carries, but Jones will have ample opportunity to outperform his draft position.
28	Jerious Norwood	ATL	0	633	2	102	0	With Warrick Dunn out for most or all of the preseason, this is Norwood's chance to get a choke-hold on the position. But can he be a true workhorse with his smallish frame? Isn't that what they've always said about Dunn?
29	Marshawn Lynch	BUF	*	*	*	*	*	Only Anthony Thomas stands in the way of Lynch playing the workhorse role in his rookie season. That's reason enough to take a chance on him as a RB2 or RB3, but the Bills' offense may not give him many opportunities to score. Just ask Willis McGahee.
30	Tatum Bell	DET	13	1025	2	115	0	Sleeper alert: If Kevin Jones' Lisfranc injury keeps him sidelined through the preseason, as expected, Bell will seize the starting job, and may not give it back. He's an excellent fit in Mike Martz's wide-open offense.
31	Carnell Williams	TB	14	798	1	196	0	His solitary rushing TD is emblematic of his well-earned status as a fantasy bust in '06. Has nowhere to go but up in '07, but that's not saying much. You don't want to count on a Bucs RB in any given week.
32	Jamal Lewis	CLE	16	1,132	9	115	0	Managed to surpass 100 yards rushing in just two games last year behind the Ravens' OL. In the Browns' anemic offense, '06 will seem like the "good ole days." This offense won't give him many goal-line carries, either.
33	Brandon Jackson	GB	*	*	*	*	*	The odds-on favorite to win the starting job, he will likely be forced to share carries with Vernand Morency for much, if not all, of his rookie campaign. He doesn't have breakaway speed, so don't count on huge stats in his first year.
34	LenDale White	TEN	0	244	0	60	0	He has gotten his weight down and appears to be serious about claiming the starting job. But how valuable that position will be on a team that's unlikely to score much is another question. His QB may get more rushing scores than he does.
35	Chester Taylor	MIN	15	1,216	6	288	0	Didn't show enough to keep the Vikings from drafting the explosive Adrian Peterson, and won't have enough to keep the rookie off the sidelines for long. He may start in the early stages, but his carries will decline steadily as Peterson settles into his inevitable starting role.
36	Ladell Betts	WAS	9	1,154	4	445	1	Emerged from Portis' shadow and became a dominant fantasy producer in late '06. Will likely share carries (though not 50-50 if Portis is healthy), but Portis' lingering knee issues make Betts a very intriguing draft pick.
37	LaMont Jordan	OAK	8	434	2	74	0	The only thing worse than owning the Raiders' starting RB is owning one that shares carries. Jordan was a total bust in '06 even before he was injured, and now must contend with Dominic Rhodes when the latter returns from a 4-game suspension. Stay away.
38	Warrick Dunn	ATL	16	1,140	4	170	1	Surgery on a herniated disk will keep him out of the preseason, and possibly the early part of the regular season. If Jerious Norwood seizes the starting role in his absence, this could be the beginning of the end for the overachieving back whose heart has always been bigger than his body.
39	Kevin Jones	DET	12	689	6	520	2	There's no telling when, or even if, he will return from last year's devastating Lisfranc injury. If Tatum Bell gets off to a solid start, Jones sightings may be few and far between.
40	Adrian Peterson	CHI	0	41	2	88	0	Don't be surprised if "the other Peterson" makes some noise in '07 as Benson's primary backup. He could pick up some impressive garbage time stats in certain weeks, and will be a more-than-adequate replacement should the starter falter or resume his sulking.
41	DeShaun Foster	CAR	14	897	3	159	0	There's no way he can continue to hold off a healthy DeAngelo Williams. Foster's days as a starter are numbered, and that number isn't a high one.
42	Vernand Morency	GB	2	434	2	118	0	The starter for now, look for him to share carries with Brandon Jackson in the early going, and probably fade into the background by midseason.
43	Reuben Droughns	NYG	12	758	4	169	0	Will be ready should Brandon Jacobs be unable to step fully into Tiki Barber's workhorse role. But if Jacobs soars, Droughns will be the forgotten man.
44	Dominic Rhodes	OAK	16	641	5	251	0	Wouldn't be surprised if he steals the starting job from Jordan by midseason, but he'll be worthless while he serves a 4-week NFL suspension. Even as a starter, won't be roster-worthy for any but the most desperate fantasy teams.
45	Kenny Irons	CIN	*	*	*	*	*	Sleeper alert! If you draft Rudi Johnson, Irons is a mandatory handcuff. Otherwise, Irons is a sleeper worth targeting given all the rumblings in Cinci that Rudi isn't giving his all.
46	Michael Turner	SD	0	502	2	47	0	One twisted ankle removed from a chance at fantasy superstardom, LT's owners are playing with fire if they don't grab him in the middle rounds.
47	Leon Washington	NYJ	8	650	4	270	0	Flashed enough in '06 to earn more playing time this season. Won't have a chance to unseat Thomas Jones as the starter, but will get some third-down looks and mop-up duty should the Jets lead or trail significantly.
48	Correll Buckhalter	PHI	1	345	2	256	1	Given Brian Westbrook's injury history, he is important insurance if you invest your top pick in the Eagles' starter. But Buckhalter's injury-plagued career is even more worrisome than Westbrook's.
49	Chris Brown	TEN	3	156	0	4	0	The team doesn't want him to start, but he could see action if LenDale White continues to disappoint. That won't be enough to merit a roster spot on most fantasy teams.
50	Ron Dayne	HOU	6	612	5	77	0	Has a tendency to show up when you least expect him. If Ahman Green succumbs to injury, Dayne will be in high demand.