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DK Metcalf From Gridiron to the Track: Why Not?

Tara King Goldman, Author

In the NFL, wide receivers track down footballs and occasionally opposing team's safeties. Seattle Seahawk DK Metcalf is a competitor, so why not track down the world's fastest sprinters? Metcalf followed up on a challenge to test his speed against world-class sprinters at the USA Track and Field (USATF) Golden Games in Walnut, Calif., May 9.

The challenge erupted on Twitter during the 2020 NFL season in a game against the Arizona Cardinals when Metcalf ran over 22.64 mph to catch Cardinal safety Budda Baker. Metcalf managed to tackle Baker after sprinting 114.8 yards to keep the interception from becoming a touchdown. Metcalf could have gotten a speeding ticket if he was going that fast in his car in a school zone. Social media immediately began blowing up.

One tweet was a challenge from USATF .

"For everyone asking if we have a spot open on our relay team for @dkm14, @NFL players are welcome to come test their speed against real speed next year at the Olympic Trials," tweeted the USATF.

"See you there," Metcalf tweeted back postgame.

A move from the gridiron to the track provided Metcalf with his own lane to test himself. He looked physically different from the other sprinters. At 6-foot-4 and 235 pounds, he stood out amongst the much leaner sprinters standing beside him.

Metcalf settled into lane 2 of the second heat of the 100m race, bringing the attention that USATF has been lacking in recent years. He brought his style with him, wearing all black, a cross necklace, cross earrings and nose ring. With one of the largest wingspans for a wide receiver in the NFL, he filled the lane, each hand positioned against the 4-foot lane lines.

The last time Metcalf competed on a track was high school, where he ran in the 4×100 and 4×200 relays, and the 110m and 300m hurdles, in addition to the triple jump. At the combine, he was clocked at 4.33 in the 40-yard dash making him one of the fastest players in the NFL.

Metcalf's quick burst out of the blocks contradicted the track experts who hinted at this being the most challenging aspect of the run for someone not accustomed to sprinting. In the second half of the race, he fell to the back of the pack, finishing last in a photo finish.

Finishing 15 out of 17 world-class sprinters and posting the 84th fastest 100m time in the U.S. for the year is remarkable, even more so for someone coming off the gridiron and not training on a track all year. Metcalf ran an astonishingly fast 10.37 but missed qualifying for the Olympic trials before the summer Olympics in Tokyo.



Leon Lee

Aaron Levine, Q13 Fox Sports Director at KCPQ Seattle, was amazed that Metcalf exceeded the expectations of track experts who predicted a time closer to 10.6 instead of the 10.37 he clocked.

"Seeing him compete and keep up with most of the world-class athletes and top sprinters that the United States has to offer was really inspiring and impressive," Levine said via phone interview.

Robert Griffin III, former Ravens backup quarterback and currently a free agent, commented on the size difference between the NFL All-Pro and the world-class sprinters.

Metcalf "held his own and ran a 10:36 off of a couple of months of training while running against guys that weigh 50-70 pounds less than him. Wow," Griffin said via Twitter.

Will Metcalf become an influencer for others to test themselves? Testing acceleration in the off-season was open to all NFL players by the USATF challenge.

"I can absolutely see other NFL players testing themselves against the best. I think that D.K. was also very respectful and deferential to the process and learned specifically how fast he has to be and how much it actually takes to be one of the fastest in the world," Levine said.

Metcalf's focus may now be back on football, but do not rule out another attempt to test his acceleration and qualify for the Olympics in June. Kelly Sullivan, head coach of Seattle University Track and Field, noted that it took courage to move from one spotlight to another. Coach Sullivan offered insight into how Metcalf could shave off a few seconds and maybe qualify for the Olympic trials.

"He was pretty straight up and down and you can get a few tenths of a second or percentages of a tenth second just on your lean at the finish line. He is definitely legitimate," Sullivan said.

Along with a lot of track and field and football fans, Coach Sullivan would be excited to see Metcalf make another attempt at testing his acceleration on the track in June. There is still time to qualify for the Olympic trials. Why not.