

MARIOTA WILL LIKELY START AT A BOTTOM-TIER NFL TEAM

Like many UO graduates, Marcus Mariota needs a job. But Marcus won't be reading *Eugene Weekly's* help wanted ads. He will wait for the National Football League draft to learn where he will be working.

The draft, scheduled for April 30 to May 2 at the Auditorium Theatre in Chicago, is when the 32 teams in the NFL pick college players and gain the rights to sign them to contracts. Fortunately, Mariota put together one of the best college seasons ever, so he is likely to be picked early in the draft and signed to a really big contract — last year's first pick, Jadeveon Clowney, will earn more than \$5 million a year over the next four years. Unfortunately, that means Mariota is likely to be picked by a team that was really bad in 2014. The worst teams draft first, so the Tampa Bay Buccaneers — who won only two games last season — hold the first pick.

Whatever team picks Mariota will hold the sole rights to sign him to a contract, so teams won't be bidding against each other for his services. But don't worry about Mariota — rookie salaries are essentially set by the NFL's collective bargaining agreement, and his rookie contract will pay him many millions. And, if he is successful in the NFL, he can make really big money — top players earned more than \$20 million in 2014.

Some "experts" predict Marcus will be the first pick in the draft, while others project him going as low as the number six pick. Before the draft, lots of NFL teams will be studying films and measuring, testing, poking and prodding Mariota to try to figure out if he will be a star in the NFL. But the draft is more art than science — this year's Super Bowl will match no. 199 pick Tom

Brady of the New England Patriots against no. 75 pick Russell Wilson of the Seattle Seahawks.

So, where will Mariota end up? It's anybody's guess, but we can probably rule out the only team in the Pacific Northwest — the Seattle Seahawks. The Hawks are pretty happy with their quarterback, who has already won one Super Bowl and will try to add another next month. The teams holding the top six picks are Tampa Bay, the Tennessee Titans, Jacksonville Jaguars, Oakland Raiders, Washington and the New York Jets.

Former Oregon coach Chip Kelly coached Mariota at Oregon and knows what he can do. So, will Chip's Philadelphia Eagles get a shot at Mariota? Unlikely, because the Eagles don't pick until number 20, and the Ducks star is likely to be long gone by then. The Eagles could trade with other teams to move up to an earlier pick, but that would be a bold, unconventional gamble. Chip? — *Bern Johnson*

Former Oregon coach Chip Kelly coached Mariota at Oregon and knows what he can do. So, will Chip's Philadelphia Eagles get a shot at Mariota?



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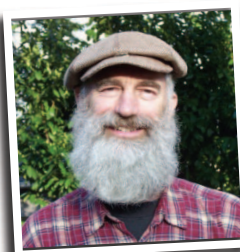
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