

# Heisman winner Marcus Mariota is headed to the NFL

By Anne M. Peterson  
AP Sports Writer

**H**eisman Trophy winner Marcus Mariota, whose bold moves and leadership on the field brought the Ducks to the brink of a national championship before falling short, is leaving the University of Oregon early for the National Football League (NFL).

Mariota announced his long-awaited decision to forgo his senior season on Oregon's website. The team said he filed paperwork January 14, a day before the NFL deadline.

"I will miss being with my teammates," he said in a statement. "Being a part of this team was something special that I will always treasure."

Mariota has been the humble leader of Oregon's high-flying offense for three seasons. This season, the Ducks (13-2) defeated Florida State at the Rose Bowl in college football's first playoffs, but fell 42-20 to Ohio State in the national championship game.

The 6'4" dual threat from Hawaii won every major award he qualified for, starting with the Heisman, as well as AP Player of the Year, the Maxwell and Walter Camp awards, and Pac-12 Offensive Player of the Year. He also won the nation's top quarterback awards: the Johnny Unitas Golden Arm Award and the Davey O'Brien National Quarterback Award.

Mariota set a conference record for most touchdowns in a single season with 58; 42 via pass, 15 on the run, and a touchdown catch.

His passing touchdowns set a Pac-12 single-season record. He also set the conference's mark for career touchdowns with 136.

He threw at least one touchdown pass in all 41 college games he played in at Oregon, starting in every one of his appearances. And he's one of just four quarterbacks in the history of the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) to pass for more than 10,000 yards and run for more than 2,000 in his career.

"It's been an honor to watch Marcus develop over the last four years, and I'm excited to see what his future holds," Oregon coach Mark Helfrich said in a statement. "He's given this program everything we could have asked, and he'll be the standard by which others are judged. Mahalo."

Led by Mariota, Oregon finished No. 2 in this season's final AP rankings. Overall, the Ducks ranked third in the nation in total offense with an average of 547 yards per game. The Ducks' passing offense under Mariota was ranked 10th nationally with an average of 312.5 yards a game. Mariota's passer efficiency rating (181.7) topped the nation.

Mariota was known for his steady demeanor from the start. Off the field, he was shy and unassuming, but he stayed on the field following every game to shake hands and pose for pictures.



Mariota said before the season finale that he would trade his Heisman for a national championship, but it wasn't to be. In the final game he threw for 333 yards and two touchdowns.

"My main focus was to be a great teammate," he said following the game. "That's all I hoped to accomplish. I don't really care about legacies."

Mariota was a three-star recruit for the Ducks out of St. Louis High School in Honolulu. He is fiercely proud of his roots: His helmet facemask was designed to include the

**DYNAMIC DUCK.** Oregon Ducks quarterback Marcus Mariota runs for a touchdown during the Rose Bowl college football playoff semifinal game against the Florida State Seminoles at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California, on January 1, 2015. The Ducks won the game 59-20. (AP Photo/Ben Liebenberg)

numbers 8-0-8 in a nod to the state's area code, and following the national championship his family gifted him with stacks of leis that he wore in the locker room.

"I think you could argue that this was the best, if not certainly one of the top two or three greatest seasons in college football history," Helfrich said of Mariota following the game. "And then you add in the person and the legacy that he has from that standpoint, and there has never been one greater. None."

Three plays this season exemplified Mariota's ability to create on the football field.

Among his four touchdowns in Oregon's victory over Wyoming was an acrobatic second-quarter keeper where he somersaulted into the end zone over receiver Keanon Lowe and a Cowboys defender.

Then there was an inspired shovel pass to freshman running back Royce Freeman that gave the Ducks a key first down in a victory over then-No. 7 Michigan State.

And although the Ducks would lose 24-31 to Arizona on October 2, Mariota got creative to start the second quarter when he handed off to Freeman, who lobbed the ball back to Mariota for a 28-yard touchdown.

Spartan coach Mark Dantonio summed Mariota up this way: "What he does is lead. What he shows is toughness. And what he does is create."

Mariota's departure leaves the Ducks with uncertainty

*Continued on page 13*

su | do | ku

© Puzzles by Pappocom

		8		1		2	5	
	4	1			3			
					6		4	
4					1	5		
3	7						2	6
		5	2					9
	2		1					
			6			3	1	
	3	6		4		8		

Difficulty level: Medium #81254

**Instructions:** Fill in the grid so that the digits 1 through 9 appear one time each in every row, column, and 3x3 box.

Solution to last week's puzzle

Puzzle #34785 (Easy)

All solutions available at <www.sudoku.com>.

3	9	6	4	2	7	5	1	8
7	5	8	1	6	3	2	9	4
2	1	4	5	9	8	3	6	7
9	8	2	3	5	1	7	4	6
4	7	1	2	8	6	9	3	5
5	6	3	7	4	9	8	2	1
8	2	5	9	1	4	6	7	3
6	4	7	8	3	2	1	5	9
1	3	9	6	7	5	4	8	2

# 12 HOURS

after you quit smoking,  
carbon monoxide levels  
in your blood decrease  
to normal.

QUIT SMOKING TODAY.

CALL: 1.800.QUIT.NOW

quitnow.net/oregon

SMOKEFREE  
oregon