

Drafting QBs Boom or Bust

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Quarterback Position

From 2005-2025, there has been 54 QBs taken in the first round, making it the most drafted position in that round

Why?

Getting the right guy under center can completely turn a franchise around

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Introduction

- First-round QBs are high-risk, high-reward draft picks
- Goal: Identify patterns in Elite, Solid Starter, and Bust outcomes
- Examine if pre-draft data can predict success

Data

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Measuring Success



Elite

- Career longevity
- High level of play (pro bowl Caliber)

- Aaron Rodgers
- Patrick Mahomes
- Josh Allen



Solid starter

- Multiple seasons started
- Mild success
- Stable starter

- Jared Goff
- Jordan Love
- Kyler Murray



Bust

- Injury Prone
- Few games started
- Little to no success

- Jamaricus Russell
- Johnny Manziel
- Trey Lance

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Defining Success

Elite

- 6 or more seasons as starter
- Multiple Pro Bowl/All pro
- >80 PFF grade

Solid

- 3-5 seasons as starter
- 70-85 PFF grade

Bust

- Less than 3 seasons as starter
- <70 PFF Grade

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14.5% Elite

38.7% Solid

46.8% Bust

- Very high percent of these highly drafted players don't end up panning out

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Boom Traits

- QBs with experience running multiple systems in college
- Drafted to a winning team
- Winning teams in college
- Experience running a pro style system

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Bust Traits

- Low accuracy in college
- Less than 2 years as a starter
- Scheme-propped production (extreme spread offenses)
- Poor performance under pressure

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Inconclusive stats

- Combine: speed and mobility
 - No apparent correlation to success in the league
- College drafted from
 - Top tier college programs don't generate elite QBs at a much better rate than less prestigious programs

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Biggest Factor for success

Landing spot:

- Good coaching scheme
 - Mahomes-Reid
- Well established O-Line
 - Helps run game
 - Caleb Williams year 1 to year 2
- Good supporting cast can mask poor QB performance
- Many of the elite QBs were taken in the middle of the first, likely due to the teams drafting them not being horrible

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Is QB performance predictable?

Yes... to an extent

- Predicting quarterback success is possible, but never perfect
 - A players measurables help but at the highest level of draft prospects fail to differentiate the greats from the busts
- Analytics can identify risk levels, highlight high-floor traits, and flag red-flag profiles, but no model can fully account for development, injuries, or organizational chaos.
- Projecting quarterbacks is about reducing uncertainty – not eliminating it.
- If the draft were solved, that would completely remove its importance.

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Is The QB Position Overvalued? (Yes)

- QBs are drafted early even when the class is weak, leading to forced picks and high bust rates.
- Rookie QBs rarely succeed on bad rosters: poor O-line, no weapons, and unstable coaching sabotage development.
- History shows mid-tier QBs can win with strong teams (2017 Eagles, 2015 Broncos, 2000 Ravens, 2022 49ers).
- Elite teams elevate average QBs more often than elite QBs elevate bad teams.
 - Jimmy Garoppolo vs Philip Rivers
- Building the roster first lowers risk then adding a QB into a stable, talented environment boosts their odds of hitting.
- Teams waste resources chasing “saviors” instead of building depth, leading to repeat cycles of failure.
 - Cleveland

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