



## 2020 NFL Draft Scouting Report: QB Cole McDonald, Hawaii

*\*Our QB grades can and will change as more information comes in from Pro Day workouts, leaked Wonderlic test results, etc. We will update ratings as new info becomes available.*

*Our Quick Hit (QH) scouting reports are a modified/shorter version of our full-scale reports. On these Quick Hits, I look at a lesser amount of tape and write a shorter amount of flowy words – these are usually designed more for sleeper prospects that I want to get more acquainted with and if something really jumps out, I'll go deeper. It's just me trying to get in and get out and deliver the pertinent notes to you for your consideration and for review later if they start to make waves in a year or two.*

*I'll do a chunk of these pre-Draft and then more after the Draft, going through the players that caught my attention in the draft (because of how high they were taken) or that I stumble across in training camp or the preseason that catch my eye.*

*Most of my notes on these Quick Hits will be short and sweet bullet points versions of our full-scale reports. Enjoy...*

I've been wanting to take a third, deeper look at Hawaii QB **Cole McDonald's** tape for months...because I instantly saw 'things' I liked on his tape pre-Draft, and the 'things' McDonald was doing was different than what most of the QB prospects in the 2020 NFL Draft were doing – namely shredding defenses in a 'run and shoot' offense but also showing the ability to run the ball at a higher level...running 'big' with speed and authority.

But I'd only completed minor tape preview work on him pre-Draft and ran analytics on him for a pre-Draft grade, but I wanted to go deeper on him in this era of NFL teams looking for these types of QBs now – guys who can throw and run, and run so well you are willing to forgive some lacking pocket skills. He flashes on tape in an instant.

I also realize he played for Hawaii in the very 'giving' wide open passing game...and that helps QBs look good, and it's something (run and shoot offenses) NFL scouts abhor, for some reason (which is why they all missed **Gardner Minshew** staring them right in the face), but they shouldn't have...but NFL scouting is stuck in the dark ages, so it's not unexpected. McDonald getting overlooked by the NFL scares me little on whether he is talented or not. 90%+ of NFL scouts wouldn't know QB talent if it punted them in the crotch on the hour every hour.

McDonald is a unique bird...



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He's got a leader's personality. Beloved by coaches and teammates. High character, high effort.

He got no D1 offers until very late in the HS recruiting process, and then Hawaii offered. He played sparingly as a freshman. He took over the team as a sophomore/2018 and threw for 36 TDs/10 INTs but just 58.9% Comp. Pct. and rushed for 4 TDs – and it was revealed after the season McDonald played the 2018 season with an MCL injury and fought through internal bleeding. In that context, his 2018 season was pretty remarkable.

In 2019, McDonald was fully healthy and completed 63.8% of his passes with 33 TDs/14 INTs and rushed for 7 TDs...leading Hawaii to a 9-win season and bowl victory over BYU.

McDonald earned an NFL Combine invite and became an interesting 7th-round pick for the Tennessee Titans. He's poised to be a backup to multiple ACL injury history **Ryan Tannehill**...McDonald landed in one of the better situations for a 7th-round pick to try to get on the field.

I watched several games of his 2019 tape and am ready to share my notes on what I think I saw.

### **Game Tape Notes...**

-- People are going to gravitate to three things/thoughts on McDonald...

- 1) *"He's just a typical run and shoot QB."*
- 2) *"He's only interesting because he can run the ball (a 4.58 40-time) pretty well."*
- 3) *"He's got a funny throwing motion".* And scouts don't like it.

My responses would be...

- 1) 'Run and shoot' QBs/style doesn't matter if the QB has superior talent. Most college QBs of note come from 'favorable' situations. You don't think Tua (or any recent Alabama QB) benefits from Saban, an all-star O-Line, an all-star defense, and all-star RB group, and an all-star WR group?

**Patrick Mahomes** and **Baker Mayfield** were slighted for being in 'QB friendly' systems too. NFL scouts like **Sam Darnold** types – all pocket/pro style trained, docile personality, safe passers...and in a few years in the NFL they get washed out as 'average at best' in the NFL (see: **Mark Sanchez** and all the other supposedly great USC QB prospects like **Matt Leinart**). Is a systemic scout/exec problem in the NFL.

- 2) McDonald can run the ball, and that adds juice to all this. But the running should not distract you from...



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3) McDonald is a much better passer than given credit. He's written off by 'run and shoot' and 'runner' but he's not a run-first guy, he's a new-era passer used to up-tempo and looks a little funny in his delivery (looks like **Philip Rivers** 'pushing' his throws).

-- McDonald has enough arm for the NFL. His passes look funny, but they get where they need to go at all kinds of speeds.

-- McDonald is excellent at finding open receivers in a spread-out passing game. **Kliff Kingsbury** would love him...I don't know why Arizona didn't think to take him as a backup to Kyler. McDonald is like Kyler, stylistically/seeing the field – McDonald is just not as physically or mentally (reading situations) gifted as Kyler. They're similar in that the moment a receiver is open McDonald is on the money to him...he slices and dices defenses in a 'streetball' atmosphere. **Sam Darnold** or **Daniel Jones** would die in a faster paced, faster decision passing game.

-- However, McDonald has issues throwing over the middle...and that may be the flaw that does him in (he's already bet against...so any little crack in his armor is going to be used against him). He will throw into traffic...he tries to force plays. He thinks he can make plays on every throw. He can get away with that in the Mountain West but anytime he faced the PAC-12 he was turning the ball over – some of it guilty of trying to keep up against superior talented teams. Hawaii did stun Arizona in their 2019 opener, beating the Wildcats – McDonald had 4 TD passes, 378 yards through the air...and 4 picks.

-- Another wrinkle on throwing over the middle and turnovers...with Hawaii's fast break offense, defenses consistently dropped 8-9 in coverage and barely rushed the passer. McDonald will not likely throw into such mass coverage in the pros. He might find the pro game easier to throw in.

-- He's very comfortable in the pocket. He's not a scrambler creating plays/throws/runs...he likes sitting in the pocket and picking defenses apart.

-- He is a fast straight line runner. However, I noticed he really is not agile, rather stiff trying to juke defenders. He does not evade tacklers like a **Lamar Jackson** or any number of other running QBs. His run game is run fast straight...which with a 4.58 time, he can.

-- He has a lot of Kyler and Mahomes in him, just a lesser version as a passer...but that's still something to work with. Because being a lesser great QB...is still pretty good.



## Cole McDonald, Through the Lens of Our QB Scouting Algorithm:

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- Two PAC-12 games in 2019, vs. Arizona and Washington. 5 TDs/7 INTs.
- 4 TD passes in a game five of his 13 games in 2019.
- His first six starts of his career (2018): 24 TDs/2 INTs passing.
- 2019 bowl/final career game vs. BYU: 493 passing yards, 4 TDs/0 INT, 1 rushing TD...MVP.
- Rushed for 140 yards and 2 TDs vs. New Mexico in 2019, but never hit over 49 yards rushing in any other game in 2019.

### **2020 Combine Data:**

6'3"/215, 9.75" hands, 32.25" arms

4.48 40-time, 1.60 10-yard

4.52 shuttle, 7.13 three-cone

36" vertical, 10'1" broad

## The Historical QB Prospects to Whom Cole McDonald Most Compares Within Our System:

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McDonald is a difficult QB to match in our system...up-tempo passing success, high-end QB speed but didn't destroy opponents as a runner often. **Kyle Slotter** shows up as another guy who just tore college defenses apart and had a little juice in his feet.

**Derek Carr** was an up-tempo passer in college and he's a lot faster than people realize, but Carr has little interest in running the ball. McDonald is a more willing runner, but his heart is as a passer...like **Marcus Mariota** – they don't wanna run, even though they have high-end speed. McDonald is like a better Mariota, just Mariota was ahead of his time hitting the NFL. Mariota today coming out of college would have been a 5th+ round pick...not #2 overall.



<u>QB-Grade</u>	<u>LJax Rating</u>	<u>Last</u>	<u>First</u>	<u>Yr</u>	<u>College</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>Adj Comp Pct</u>	<u>Adj Yds per Comp</u>	<u>Adj Pass per TD</u>	<u>Adj Pass Per INT</u>
6.702	6.20	McDonald	Cole	2020	Hawaii	75.1	215	62.9%	12.5	15.8	39.3
7.754	3.34	Sloter	Kyle	2017	No. Colorado	76.8	222	63.3%	13.1	12.6	28.2
5.374		Smith	Geno	2013	West Va.	74.5	220	62.9%	10.3	16.6	54.1
6.179		Carr	Derek	2014	Fresno State	74.8	218	64.0%	10.3	15.3	86.7
7.557	7.12	Mariota	Marcus	2015	Oregon	76.0	211	65.4%	13.9	14.1	119.6

*\*'LJax rating' – new for 2020, as we re-do our grading systems to better identify/reward the spread offense QB prospects...looking for the runner-passer talents.*

*\*\*“Adj” = A view of adjusted college output in our system...adjusted for strength of opponent.*

*\*\*\*A score of 8.5+ is where we see a stronger correlation of QBs going on to become NFL good-to-great. A scouting score of 9.5+ is rarefied air—higher potential for becoming great-to-elite.*

*QB's scoring 6.0–8.0 are finding more success in the new passing era of the NFL (2014–on). Depending upon the system and surrounding weapons, a 6.0–8.0 rated QB can do fine in today's NFL—with the right circumstances...but they are not 'the next Tom Brady' guys, just NFL-useful guys.*

**2020 NFL Draft Outlook:**

Drafted #224 by the Titans.

**NFL Outlook:**

**Cole McDonald** is the kind of QB prospect that few pay attention to or expect anything from, but then shocks everyone in the preseason, etc., when he starts making plays. Fans will get interested. The NFL will try and stonewall/ignore him...he's going to have to be like **Gardner Minshew** – become the backup, and have the starter go down and thus get forced into playing time and then cash in on that. No way anyone gives McDonald a real/legit opportunity on purpose.

McDonald could be a shock in Tennessee in 2020 because Tanny goes down, or McD sits for years behind Tannehill and we all forget he exists.

We'll know how truly NFL-good McDonald is in the preseason when he plays many snaps, a la Minshew (starting QBs barely play in the preseason now).

