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## Why data analysts like myself are cheering for Brock Purdy to win the Super Bowl

By Sheldon H. Jacobson      Feb 8, 2024

Brock Purdy doesn't have the draft pedigree of many Super Bowl quarterbacks but he's leading the 49ers to the championship game.

Data analysts like me like to uncover anomalies and unusual events revealed by the numbers. That is why I am excited about this year's Super Bowl between the San Francisco 49ers and the Kansas City Chiefs and rooting for the Niners to win.

Why?

Niners quarterback [Brock Purdy](#) hopes to do something that few quarterbacks have achieved: win a Super Bowl ring without the draft pedigree that most general managers believe is necessary to reach such lofty heights of success.

The data speaks for itself.

Since the 2000 Super Bowl, half of the 24 starting quarterbacks for the winners have been first-round draft selections. Even looking at the first three rounds, 15 of the 24 have been drafted in this group.

Tom Brady (drafted in the sixth round, 199th overall) has skewed these numbers, winning seven Super Bowls. The other non-first-round pick winners were the Philadelphia Eagles' Nick Foles in 2018 (third round, 88th overall), the Seattle Seahawks' Russell Wilson in 2014 (third round, 75th overall), the New Orleans Saints' Drew Brees in 2010 (second round, 32nd overall), the Tampa Bay Buccaneers' Brad Johnson in 2003 (ninth round, 227th overall) and the then-St. Louis Rams' Kurt Warner in 2000 (undrafted).

After Brady, only Ben Roethlisberger, Peyton Manning, Eli Manning and Patrick Mahomes have won [multiple Super Bowls since 2000](#), each winning two. With Mahomes in this year's game, he has a chance to win his third Super Bowl, placing him among the best of his generation. Of note is that as the [10th pick in the 2017 draft](#), Mahomes was the second quarterback chosen, behind [Mitchell Trubisky](#), chosen second overall by the Chicago Bears.

If Purdy wins his first Super Bowl, and the first for the 49ers since [Steve Young led them to victory in 1995 over the San Diego Chargers](#), he will be among the lowest-drafted quarterbacks to ever win the game. In fact, he was the [final pick in the 2022 draft](#), going 262<sup>nd</sup> overall, with eight quarterbacks picked before him.

Of course, being a first-round draft choice does not guarantee a Super Bowl victory. Quarterbacks like [Steve McNair](#) (third overall pick), [Kerry Collins](#) (fifth overall pick), [Donovan McNab](#) (second overall pick) and [Rex Grossman](#) (22<sup>nd</sup> overall) all reached the Super Bowl game, yet fell short of winning.

Teams place enormous emphasis on quarterbacks when building rosters that can win championships. That is why the top picks in the draft are often quarterbacks. Yet with half of the Super Bowl-winning quarterbacks not first-round draft picks, finding gems in later rounds is not only possible, it is reasonable to expect and far less expensive.

Brady stands out as the unequivocal anomaly. With seven Super Bowl wins (six with the Patriots, one with the Bucs), he skews the data. Yet diamonds in the rough exist. Even Jalen Hurts, the Eagles quarterback this season, was a second-round pick (53<sup>rd</sup> overall), with [four quarterbacks drafted before him in 2020](#). He has yet to win a Super Bowl.

Johnson (ninth round, 227<sup>th</sup> overall) and Warner (undrafted) stand out as conspicuous outliers for their Super Bowl wins. Yet football is a team sport. Having an effective offensive line can improve quarterback statistics on paper.

Then there is the Baltimore Ravens' Lamar Jackson, the presumptive 2023 NFL MVP, who was drafted [32nd overall in the 2018 draft](#). He also had four quarterbacks drafted before him.

Whether or not Purdy wins his first Super Bowl ring on Sunday, the takeaway is that quarterbacks who can lead a team to a championship can be found across the entire draft board. First-round picks certainly have the best odds of where to find such talent. Yet quarterbacks with intangible factors that statistics miss, or quarterbacks who are late bloomers, represent opportunities for snaring such people in later rounds.

Recall that Wilson was a third-round pick (75th overall) in the [2012 draft](#) yet won one Super Bowl and reached the game one other time. Many [pundits viewed him as too short to succeed in the NFL](#). His record clearly demonstrated the flaws in such views. In fact, among the five quarterbacks drafted before him, none ever reached the Super Bowl.

Even though the [49ers are favored to win their first Super Bowl in nearly 30 years](#), those rooting for the underdog will be standing behind them and Purdy. He is the feel-good story for every NFL hopeful that says where you are drafted need not dictate your success on the playing field. The data supports such an observation.

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