

EXPOSURE



HOMETOWN HERO

Beyond the sport: Marcus McMaryion

Story by [Fresno State](#)

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Marcus McMaryion travels down Highway 99, driving south toward Dinuba. His eyes are on the road, squinted slightly in the Central California sun.

With one hand on the wheel, the Dinuba native leads his teal Chrysler past fields of yellow crops.

"Being away from home and coming back, you have such a greater appreciation for everything about the Central Valley," says Marcus.

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Hometown hero



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SMALL TOWN, BIG DREAMS

As he drives past local orchards, he reflects on his hometown.

“Dinuba is a small, tight-knit community, for sure. I remember when we got a Walmart — it was kind of the big highlight,” he jokes.

Now, Marcus is something of a local hero.

He is the starting quarterback for Fresno State and a graduate student studying kinesiology - sports administration. He joined the Bulldogs in 2017 after earning his bachelor’s degree in public health from Oregon State University.

In a few short months, Marcus earned an All-Mountain West honorable mention and led the Bulldogs through a number of historic victories.

Seeing himself on local billboards is humbling. His friends joke with him, calling Marcus the “pride of the Valley.”

“I’ve always found myself shying away from that kind of stuff. But I

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watching the game because you grew up in Dinuba,” he says. “It just motivates me that much more.”



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OUT OF THE VALLEY AND BACK AGAIN

Marcus began playing football at 7 years old. His high school football coach, Kevin Scharton, remembers his first memory of Marcus.

“I was out here on a Saturday watching youth football, and I saw this little guy as quarterback taking control of the offense,” Kevin says. “There was something special about him... It’s something that really can’t be taught.”

After graduating from high school, he was offered athletic scholarships for several Division I schools. He chose to attend Oregon State. When he was heading into his redshirt junior season in 2017, he made the decision to transfer to Fresno State and play for the Bulldogs.

“I had a lot of ups and downs at Oregon State, but I wouldn’t change anything for the world,” he says. “I think things all happen for a reason, and it came back full circle.”

Coming back home to play for the Bulldogs was an easy, albeit quick, decision, Marcus says.

“Just the history and caliber of the quarterbacks that Coach [Jeff] Tedford has coached in the past — it’s kind of a blatant opportunity,” he says. “That was definitely something that drew me to Fresno State.”

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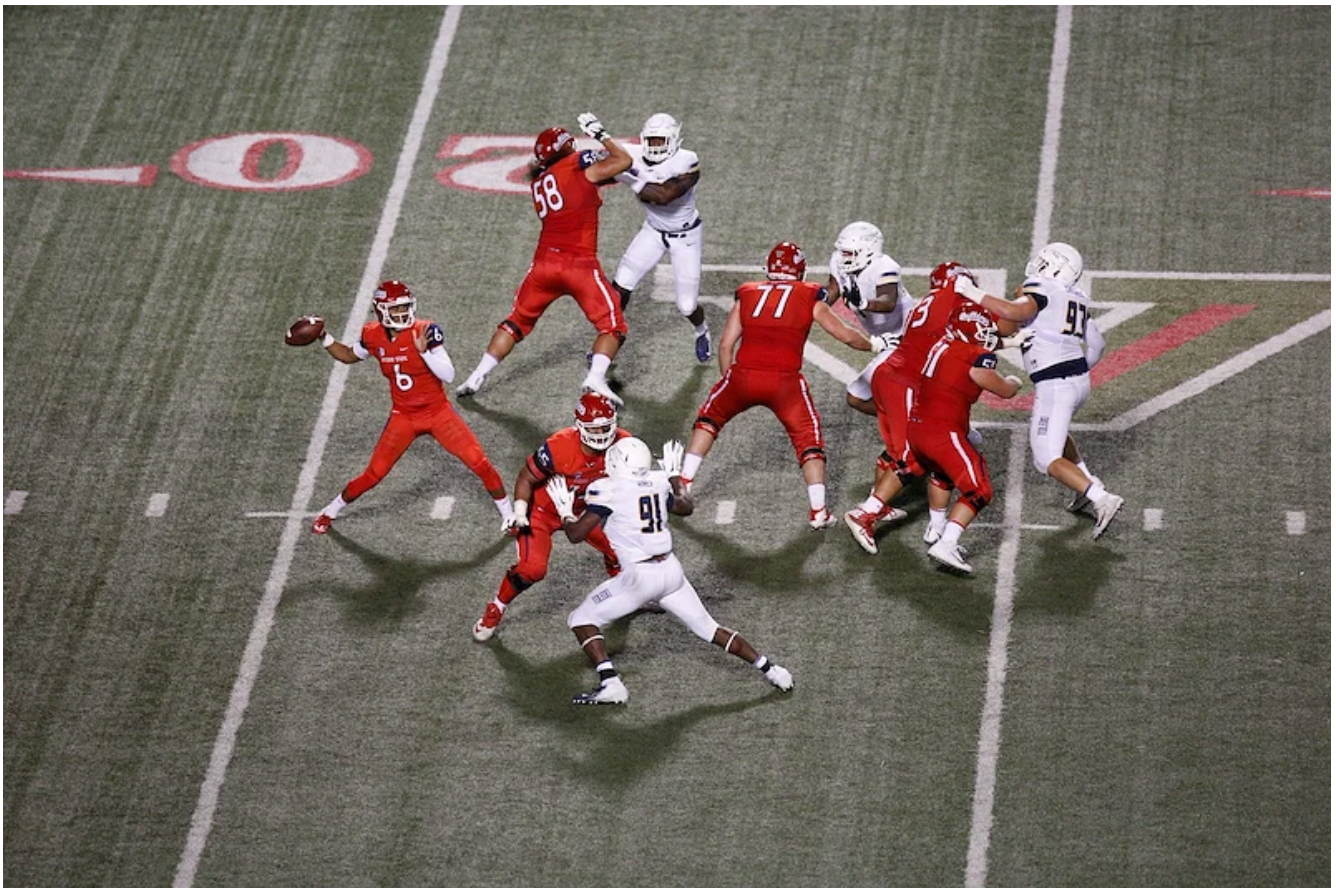
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THE BOOKISH TYPE

But football isn't his only focus. Marcus has always put academics first.

He was a studious child, his mother, Elizabeth, says. She recalls nights when he would fall asleep studying, and she would have to pull him away from his books. By the time he graduated from Dinuba High School, he had a 3.98 GPA and passed several advanced placement courses.

At Oregon State, Marcus earned his bachelor's degree in just three years.

"Both my husband and I impressed upon him that without his education, there will be barriers in life," Elizabeth says. "It just speaks to his character and his commitment, how he puts academics first."

Marcus' father agrees.

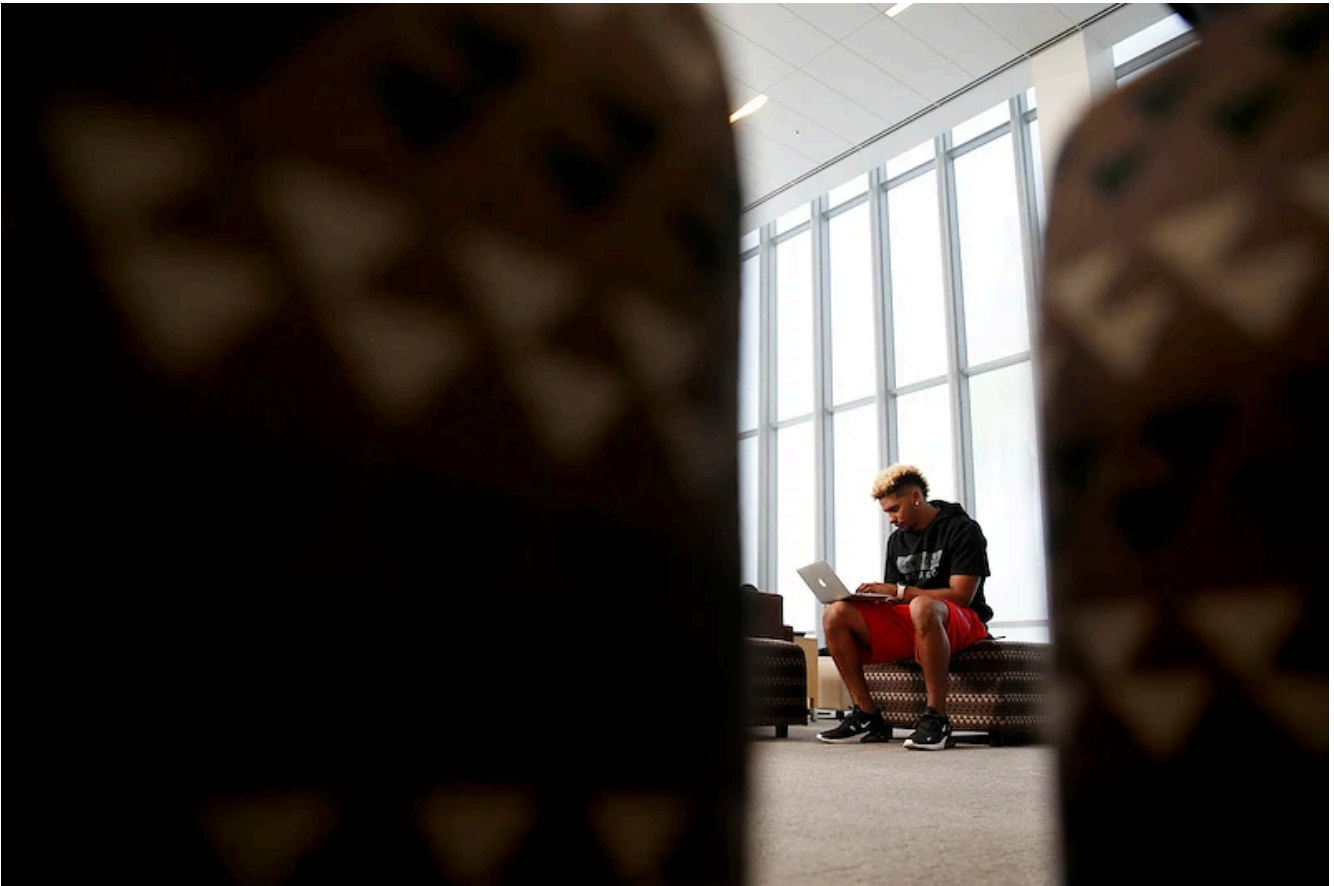
"That's the thing that is going to get him through life — academics," he says. "Education is a must."



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INSPIRING THE COMMUNITY

In his free time, Marcus does presentations at local schools and speaks with youth football teams. Elizabeth recalls a child from the Dinuba area suffering from leukemia who wanted to see Marcus play, but was too ill. Marcus visited the child to brighten her day.

“He’s not just a football player,” Elizabeth says. “He understands it’s more than a game. It’s about engaging the community and it’s about giving back.”

Marcus agrees. As he walks through his hometown, he wears his Bulldog gear proudly. On his jacket is a green “V” — a Fresno State Athletics symbol that represents the hard-working leaders and innovators of the Valley.

“It reminds us that as players, you represent a lot more than yourself,” he says. “You’re not just going out there representing your last name, but the whole Fresno State community. The whole Valley community.”



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“It’s all kind of surreal,” Marcus says. “Being back in my hometown now, playing in front of all my old coaches, family and friends.”



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Footnote: *Photos by Cary Edmondson, Story by Esra Hashem, Video by Domenick Satterberg — University Brand Strategy and Marketing*

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