



OFFENSIVE THREAT

The rapport between Tiger quarterback **Drew Lock** and new offensive coordinator Derek Dooley will do much to shape the season. Will they be close enough to go far?

➤ MARK GODICH, BJ '79

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**TIGER
FOOTBALL
2018**

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DREW LOCK

is sitting in a windowless meeting room in the Mizzou Athletics Training Complex. It is the last Thursday of April, which means it is also the first day of the NFL draft, which means it would be perfectly understandable if the mind of an **All-SEC quarterback with a bazooka for a right arm** were wandering 600 miles to the southwest in Arlington, Texas. It is a quarterback-rich draft, a lottery loaded with potential franchise cornerstones. Heck, Lock very well could be one of those guys.

Just not this year.

"IT'S THE LOYALTY I HAVE TO THIS UNIVERSITY and this state," he says matter-of-factly of the decision he made in January to return for his senior season.

So on this day he will finish homework, maybe sneak out to the range with teammates and hit some golf balls. He will fire off congratulatory texts to friends and former Tigers on their newfound fame. He will not watch the draft, not even on a night when four quarterbacks will be snapped up in the first 10 selections.

"I'm going to live in what I'm doing right now," Lock says. "I'm going to focus on the path I'm taking and stay that course."

The plan is coming together. The ebullient kid with the stylish locks is on the road to graduation, on schedule to earn a degree in sport management in December. It's a major that, given the position he plays and the work it demands, seems appropriate. On Saturdays in the fall, he is a game manager, his every throw dissected, his every decision scrutinized. It's been like that for three seasons now, Lock learning on the fly as a freshman while enduring an absolute beating, showing flashes of star power as a sophomore, lighting up the SEC with a conference-record 44 touchdown

passes as a junior. Nobody would have blinked had he declared for the draft, considering the riches that awaited and facing the prospect of working with a new offensive coordinator for the third time in four seasons. But the tone of his voice says he's excited to be back, undeniably confident he made the right decision. The way Lock sees it, he has some unfinished business.

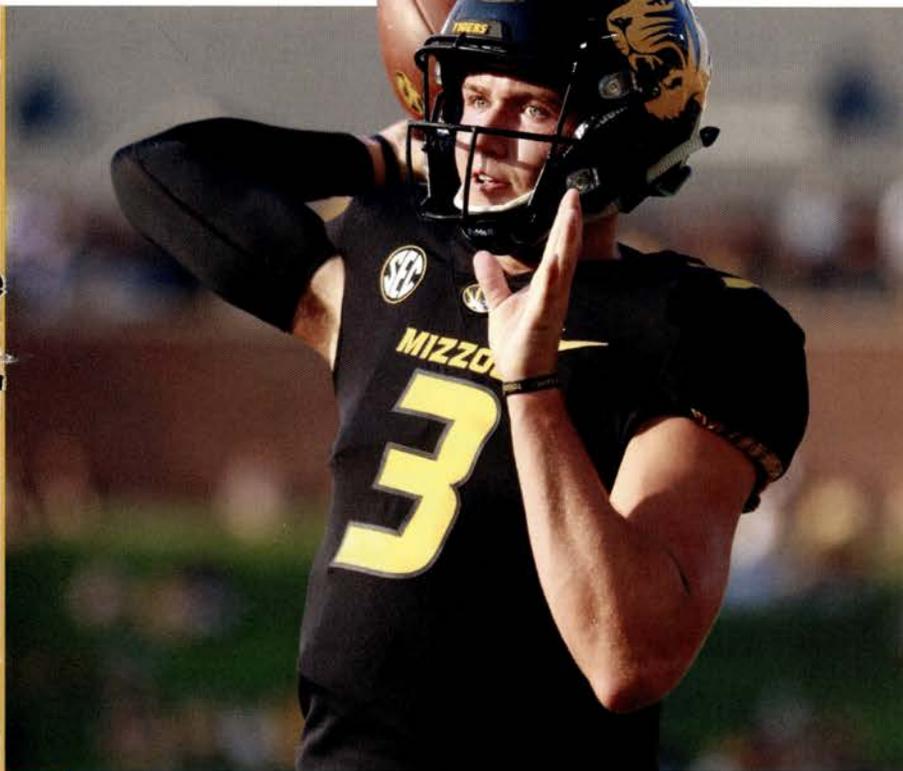
"I wanted to do something all of us seniors, all of the guys on this team are going to remember," he says. *"Wow, I was part of that. I was part of something special."*

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PART OF THE LURE IN COMING BACK is that, when he steps onto Faurot Field (and perhaps even into a huddle!) for the season opener against Tennessee-Martin on Sept. 1, Lock will see the faces of a slew of familiar and talented teammates. Mizzou led the SEC in total offense and scoring last season, and with all but one starter returning, there's every reason to believe this unit will be, well, special. The line, anchored by right tackle Paul Adams, returns intact. All-America candidate Albert Okwuegbunam, who caught 11 touchdown passes last year as a redshirt freshman, is among a trio of big targets at tight end. Although leading receiver J'Mon Moore is now with the Green Bay Packers, the Tigers have depth and deep threats on the outside. And the ground game will be fueled by Larry Rountree and Damarea Crockett, a pair of physical, punishing backs.

Enter Derek Dooley, the man tasked with making things go. Mizzou's new offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach grew up around football. His father, Vince, was the legendary coach at Georgia. Derek, 50, was the coach at Louisiana Tech and Tennessee before spending the past five seasons as the wide receivers coach of the Dallas Cowboys. A lawyer in a previous life, he is entering his 23rd year in the profession, but (in case you



† Dooley has maintained a low profile as he has put his touches on what is expected to be a high-powered offense.



† On track to graduate in December, Lock is also getting an early education on how an NFL offensive system operates.

haven't heard) calling plays and schooling quarterbacks have never been in his job description. He can light up a room with his storytelling, he has a quick wit, and he never seems to be at a loss for words. Yet when asked about his lack of experience for the new role, Dooley pleads no contest.

"There's nothing I can say that's going to convince people who think this is a bad hire that it's a good hire," he says. "I have to do what I'm capable of and rely on my experience in all these different roles and put the players in the best position they can be to be successful. It's pointless to try and say anything."

Dooley punctuates the last sentence with a chuckle, before adding, "You know what I mean?" He gets it — the reaction unrelenting to his being entrusted with an explosive offense and a potential first-round draft pick. In the end, his success will hinge largely on how well he and his offensive staff teach, instructing players not just on doing things but on doing them the *right* way. To illustrate, he riffs on a seemingly simple pass pattern:

"You can run a 12-yard curl route and you know how to do it, but how do you do it well? How do you do it versus press [coverage]? How do you do it versus off [coverage]? How do you finish the catch when the guy is driving off of you? All of those little things are the difference in having a successful offense and not having one.

"These guys have picked up what to do easily. And they should. Now it's a question of how you do it well. It takes a lot of reps and a lot of film study

and a lot of walk-throughs and a lot of teaching. It just takes time."

For his part, Dooley goes about his business, studying film, getting to know his personnel, installing and tweaking his system, inundating his quarterbacks with information. (So immersed in his work and not wanting to draw attention to himself, Dooley declined requests to sit for a photo for this story.) His offense will feature some things he incorporated with the Volunteers and the Cowboys, but he's not scrapping everything the Tigers ran last season. Given the success they enjoyed, he acknowledges that would be foolish.

"People want to create this myth that we're putting in all this [new] stuff," Dooley says. "We're really not. It's just different than what they've been used to."

Here's what will be markedly different: The offense won't play at the same breakneck pace that Mizzou fans became accustomed to over the past two seasons. In terms of time of possession, last year the Tigers ranked 128th of the 129 teams that played in the Football Bowl Subdivision. The quick-strike scoring drives were nice, but too many games featured Missouri on the short end of a lopsided clock, particularly against better opponents. The 30-second three-and-out is being retired from the offense.

"We're still going to push the ball and control the tempo but not always go as fast as they did," says Dooley. "We're still going to spread 'em out, but we'll also have an ability to pack it down a little bit if we want to. I think the biggest thing is having a little more flexibility and versatility."

It's no secret the offensive coordinator and quarterback are joined at the hip, and there's an added sense of urgency in a transition year. Lock worked for a season with Josh Henson and for two years under Josh Heupel, which means he is learning his third offense and third "language" since setting foot on campus in the summer of 2015. However, a single meeting in January with the newly hired Dooley helped cement his decision to return. "I think I can speak for all of the quarterbacks when I say this has been one of

2018 MISSOURI FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Sept. 1: UT-MARTIN

Sept. 8: WYOMING

Sept. 15: at Purdue

Sept. 22: GEORGIA

Oct. 6: at South Carolina

Oct. 13: at Alabama

Oct. 20: MEMPHIS (Homecoming)

Oct. 27: KENTUCKY

Nov. 3: at Florida

Nov. 10: VANDERBILT

Nov. 17: at Tennessee

Nov. 23: ARKANSAS

"It's the loyalty I have to this university and this state," he says matter-of-factly of the decision he made in January to return for his senior season.

— Drew Lock



† Lock opened 2017 by throwing for a school-record seven touchdowns against Missouri State, and by the end of the season, he owned the SEC mark for TD passes, with 44.

“There are very few offenses in the SEC I would consider to be high-octane. If it becomes a score-athon, which team would you favor other than Missouri?”

— ESPN analyst
Greg McElroy

our favorite springs,” Lock says. “I’ve had a blast with Coach Dooley. He brings a different energy than most coaches. He cracks some jokes where you can get some giggles in, but he knows exactly when he needs to turn it back and get serious.”

Dooley was already duly impressed with Lock’s talent — “He’s got NFL size and an NFL arm” — and he’s been just as thrilled with how his quarterback has bought into learning the new system, soaking it all in and asking for more. “We put in more than I ever dreamed we would before spring,” Dooley says. “That was simply a function of the investment he put in, learning it and executing it on the practice field. As long as he kept understanding it and executing it, I was going to keep pushing him. If he hadn’t been able to pick it up so quickly, we wouldn’t have put so much in.”

Lock, whose father, Andy, and grandfather Jerry played for the Tigers, notes his development has been accelerated and enhanced because he has had to learn the systems and languages of three outstanding coaches. He mentions the array of personnel groupings the offense will roll out, the expanded tree routes his receivers will be running, that he’s being tutored by a coach with an NFL background. He’s excited about the possibilities. And why wouldn’t he be? He’s getting an NFL indoctrination

while he gears up for his final college season.

“I can just tell you I’ve learned a lot,” Lock says. “It’s been super fun. [Dooley] makes it fun for me. He’ll draw up a play and show us clips from Dallas as to why they ran the sweep, why they ran it against the Giants or why they’re running it against Green Bay to where you can correlate what he’s talking about with big-time ball, with Jason Witten running routes, [Cole] Beasley running routes and Dez [Bryant] running routes. Tony’s [Romo] throwing the ball; Dak’s [Prescott] throwing the ball. Having such a high-level example of what you need to be producing every day at practice is really cool to set a high standard for yourself.”

Arm strength has never been an issue, and in 2017 Lock showed a marked improvement in delivering the deep ball. Now he’s striving to perfect the intermediate throws, to work the middle of the field and to find holes in the zone. Not to be overlooked is the decision-making that comes with the position, an aspect quarterbacks must master to succeed. Mizzou Coach Barry Odom has said on more than one occasion that Lock needs to play better than he did a season ago. Better as in eliminating the occasional reckless throw. The Tigers, you see, led the SEC in another key statistic last season — and not in a good way.

Their 25 turnovers were three more than any other team in the conference. For the dozens of darts that Lock delivered, there was the occasional misguided missile. They are the kind of throws that can kill momentum, if not the opportunity to win.

In this regard, Lock is not alone. As an analyst at the SEC Network and ESPN, Greg McElroy has witnessed the scene time and again across the college football landscape. He also happens to know a thing or two about playing quarterback, having guided Alabama to the national championship at the end of the 2009 season. Before college, he succeeded some guy named Chase Daniel as a state-title-winning quarterback at Carroll Senior High School in Southlake, Texas. McElroy is a big fan of Lock's game and believes he was wise to return. Now he's curious to see how high he can take his game.

"That's one area where he can improve — understanding where to cut your losses," McElroy says. "Understand, too, that you are not Superman. As much as we all want to be Tom Brady, there are windows we can't throw it through."

It is a mindset that has already been ingrained in Lock. *Smart ball*, he calls it. "Taking care of the ball, burning a throw if I have to, not forcing it," he says. "Get to the next play. It's OK to punt."

Even for a senior who has started 33 games, it is a never-ending process. Yes, Lock has a creative playmaking ability, and he has shown repeatedly he can make plays under duress to bail out the offense. The trick comes in learning how to manage a game — from start to finish: negotiate negative plays, handle red-zone and four-minute and two-minute situations.

"On every play, he's got answers across the board on what to do when things break down," Dooley says. "Every situation brings a different sort of risk assessment. There are times when you make aggressive throws. But it also depends on the situation. That's not something you learn in a one-class session. It's something you talk about over and over, learning how to go through a game as a quarterback to put your team in the best position to win. I think he's embracing that."

In that regard, the coordinator and the QB already seem to be speaking the same language. It's a development that doesn't surprise McElroy. "You spend so much time with your offensive coordinator and quarterback coach that you start finishing each other's sentences," he says.

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HOW THIS TEAM STARTS ITS SEASON might well determine where it finishes. McElroy believes it is imperative to get out of the gate fast, that the Ti-

gers can ill afford to stumble early as they did a season ago, when they opened 1–5 before reeling off six straight wins and earning a bid to the Texas Bowl. A Sept. 15 trip to Purdue will be difficult, and then comes the meat of the schedule: a home game against Georgia followed by visits to South Carolina and Alabama on consecutive Saturdays. And for all the firepower on offense, there are questions on the other side of the ball, particularly in the secondary. The least of those concerns are up front, as D-Line Zou is as deep as it's been in several years. Like Lock, Terry Beckner, another All-America candidate, could have left for the NFL. But he too has some unfinished business.

During bowl preparations last December, Odom brought Beckner in front of the team and announced the defensive tackle had decided to return. "Terry wants to be part of something special," Lock recalls Odom saying, at which point all eyes shifted in the direction of a certain quarterback.

McElroy can see some real promise in these Tigers. He goes so far as to say, "I like 'em a lot." Make no mistake: He views Alabama, Georgia and Auburn as being a cut above the rest in the SEC. But beyond that, he expects a free-for-all as a half-dozen or so teams jockey for position behind the heavyweights. He believes Missouri has the potential to be that fourth team, and although many are tabbing South Carolina as the sleeper in the East, he can envision the Tigers in that spot.

"There are very few offenses in the SEC I would consider to be high-octane," says McElroy. "If it becomes a score-athon, which team would you favor other than Missouri?" He is quick to add, "There are games they're going to have to win that more resemble a Big 12 style than an SEC style, and that's fine. That's different. And I like that they're a little different."

For Lock and Dooley, it is a win-win opportunity. Already rated by some experts as the top quarterback in the 2019 draft, Lock has a chance to further enhance his standing. If the Tigers are winning, odds are it will be because the two guys who are joined at the hip are excelling in their roles.

That could make for something special.

*About the author: Mark Godich is a 1979 graduate of the Missouri School of Journalism and the author of *Tigers vs. Jayhawks: From the Civil War to the Battle for No. 1* (Ascend Books, 2013). He was a senior editor at Sports Illustrated for 22 years, managing the NFL, college football and golf beats at various times. **M***



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— Drew Lock

On Their Shoulder Pads

Going back to his days as an assistant under Don James at Washington in the 1980s, Gary Pinkel always had an eye for **quarterback talent**. Never was that intuition more on display than during his 15-year run at Missouri, where he won 118 games, took the program to No. 1 in the country and twice came within a victory of playing for the national championship. Four quarterbacks. Three states. Drew Lock is following in the footsteps of a quartet of prolific quarterbacks. — **MARK GODICH**

16 Brad Smith 2002-05

Storyline: Committed to Toledo, Smith made a change of plans when Pinkel took the Missouri job in late 2000. After a redshirt year, Smith started all 48 games over the next four seasons and rewrote the Mizzou record book, electrifying fans with his speed, elusiveness and effortless stride.

Stat corner: Smith is the only quarterback in FBS history to pass for 8,000 yards and run for 4,000. He was also the first quarterback to pass for 2,000 yards and rush for 1,000 in a season — and did it twice.

Finest hour: He had games in which he ripped off more passing and rushing yards, but Smith's seminal performance came on the night of Oct. 12, 2003. He passed for 180 yards, rushed for 123 yards and three touchdowns, and scored on a 47-yard reception off a double pass in a 41-24 win over Nebraska. The victory snapped a 24-game losing streak to the Cornhuskers and reversed the fortunes of Mizzou football under Pinkel.

10 Chase Daniel 2005-08

Storyline: Saying a commitment was a commitment, Daniel rebuffed an 11th-hour overture from his home-state Texas Longhorns, and after a season of serving as Smith's understudy, he dazzled for three seasons. While throwing for 33 touchdowns against only 11 interceptions as a junior in 2007, he was named the Big 12 Offensive Player of the Year and finished fourth in the Heisman Trophy race.

Stat corner: After passing for 4,306 yards and completing 68.2 percent of his attempts in '07, both school records, Daniel went one better as a senior, with 4,335 yards and a 72.9 percent completion rate.

Finest hour: With the No. 1 ranking and a spot in the Big 12 title game on the line, Daniel led the Tigers to a 36-28 victory over rival Kansas on Nov. 24, 2007, at Arrowhead Stadium. On a bitterly cold night, he was flawless, completing 40 of 49 passes for 361 yards and three touchdowns.

11 Blaine Gabbert 2008-10

Storyline: The St. Louis product committed to Nebraska but had a change of heart after coach Bill Callahan was fired. A five-star recruit who was rated the top pro-style quarterback in the country, Gabbert played as a freshman behind Daniel and Chase Patton, then started for two seasons before leaving for the NFL. He was selected with the 10th pick in the 2011 draft by the Jacksonville Jaguars.

Stat corner: In his two seasons as a starter, Gabbert passed for 6,822 yards and 40 touchdowns. He holds the school record for lowest percentage of passes intercepted in a career.

Finest hour: No. 1 Oklahoma came to town on Oct. 23, 2010, and was greeted by Ghan McGaffie's 86-yard TD return of the opening kickoff. The teams traded punches until Gabbert put the Tigers ahead for good early in the fourth quarter with a 38-yard touchdown pass to Jerrell Jackson. Gabbert finished 30 of 42 for 308 yards in a 36-27 victory.

1 James Franklin 2010-13

Storyline: Although a decorated four-star recruit, Franklin arrived in Columbia from Denton, Texas, without much fanfare in 2010. Then, despite missing seven games over his last two seasons, he had one of the most efficient careers in program history. Franklin is arguably the most underappreciated quarterback to wear a Mizzou uniform.

Stat corner: At the time, the 3,846 yards of total offense that Franklin piled up as a sophomore trailed only the numbers that Daniel put up in each of his three seasons as a starter. Franklin ranks fourth on the career list, behind Daniel, Smith and Lock.

Finest hour: Henry Josey's 57-yard touchdown run against Texas A&M put the Tigers in the 2013 SEC championship game, but befitting his career, Franklin was the unassuming star who rallied his team three times. In his last game at Faurot Field, he passed for 233 yards and two TDs and ran for 80 yards in a 28-21 victory.

