

NFL draft: Here's why UCLA TE Greg Dulcich impresses teams

By Eric He
Daily Bulletin
April 27, 2022

Greg Dulcich loves walking NFL teams through his 75-yard catch-and-run touchdown against LSU in September.

It was the signature play of Dulcich's time at UCLA in one of the Bruins' biggest wins of 2021. LSU bit hard on the perfectly designed play action and Dorian Thompson-Robinson threw a strike in the middle of the field to a wide-open Dulcich.

The St. Francis High grad juke'd past a defender along the sideline and eluded two more at the goal line for a highlight-reel touchdown that most tight ends only dream of finishing, with the Rose Bowl erupting.

"I got a lot of open field," Dulcich said on NFL Network last week. "That's what I do."

That play exemplifies why Dulcich is expected to be one of the first tight ends chosen in the NFL draft, which begins Thursday in Las Vegas. Dulcich's solid hands, deceptively quick speed and ability to add yards after the catch has his draft stock in good position. Most mock drafts have either Dulcich or Colorado State's Trey McBride atop the list of tight ends, with Dulcich likely slotted to be selected in the second or third round.

Three years ago, it was unclear if Dulcich even had a future at UCLA, much less the NFL.

The Glendale native was a walk-on, redshirted his freshman year and barely played his first two seasons, mostly appearing on special teams and as a reserve wide receiver.

Dulcich weighed just 210 pounds at the time, and with established tight ends like Caleb Wilson and Devin Asiasi ahead of Dulcich on the depth chart, he figured receiver would be the best position to get playing time. After Asiasi turned pro in 2020, Dulcich put on some pounds and made the switch to tight end in his third year, quickly establishing himself as one of the team's top offensive weapons.

Dulcich said at his Pro Day at UCLA last month that his story as a walk-on has been a point of discussion when he meets with NFL teams.

"A lot of teams appreciate that work ethic and it gets a lot more buzz around me, which is cool," Dulcich said.

Dulcich – now 6-foot-4 and 243 pounds, sporting a mustache and long, curly hair – was second in the nation among tight ends last season with an average of 17.3 yards per catch and ranked seventh at his position with 725 receiving yards. That followed a breakout 2020 campaign in which he was second in the Pac-12 in receiving yards and touchdowns.

Dulcich's rise on the depth chart at UCLA earned the respect of his teammates, especially his fellow tight ends.

"Greg Dulcich, he was a great inspiration," Bruins fifth-year tight end Michael Ezeike said. "He set the tight end standard for each and every one of us."

Playing in a pro-style offense and under a former NFL coach in Chip Kelly helped Dulcich in interviews with teams.

"They're impressed by how well I know our whole offense," Dulcich said during his Pro Day last month. "It's pretty pro-style look, the things that we run and you talk to teams like, 'You wouldn't imagine how many guys we talk to and they just don't really have as good of a grasp as you guys.'" And that's a credit to Coach Kelly."

Dulcich's versatility could also endear him to teams looking for a tight end who can do more than catch and block. Dulcich told CBS Sports HQ before the draft combine last month that Kelly jokingly asked Dulcich to change his position on the roster to SAK – or Swiss Army Knife.

"That was what was cool about what we did at UCLA as tight ends. We were asked to wear a lot of hats," Dulcich said. "I was in the wing, I was a true tight end, split out, played fullback even a little bit, which was a lot of fun. Teams definitely appreciate that, and that's what I'm all about: doing it all."

Most scouting reports note blocking as Dulcich's biggest weakness, specifically technique and hand placement – with a caveat that Dulcich has been playing full-time as a tight end for only two years.

Dulcich, who has met with three-quarters of teams since his Pro Day, said last month that he doesn't look at mock drafts and would be happy to play on any NFL team. But he has noted that he models himself after San Francisco 49ers tight end George Kittle, calling him the "cream of the crop" and adding that "it would be awesome" to play with for 49ers given the similarities in playcalling.

No matter where Dulcich lands, he will have a strong chance to continue his inspirational journey in the NFL.

"It's been a lot of fun," Dulcich said on NFL Network. "It's been exciting. When you take a step back and appreciate the process for what it is, it's been really awesome."

NFL Draft Preview 2022: UCLA Football Tight End Greg Dulcich

By Sam Connon

SI.com

April 25, 2022

The NFL Draft is taking place in Las Vegas this weekend, and a handful of Bruins are set to hear their names called.

While there aren't any projected first round picks coming out of UCLA football this year, there are 14 players waiting in the pool. The Bruins have had six players picked in the past three NFL Drafts combined, and they could have that many fly off the board in 2022 alone.

All Bruins is breaking down scouting reports, stats and predictions for the biggest names who could go the highest, starting with tight end Greg Dulcich.

Stats

2018: 3 GP, 1 reception, 6 yards

2019: 11 GP, 8 receptions, 105 yards, 1 TD

2020: 7 GP, 26 receptions, 561 yards, 5 TD (All-Pac-12 Second Team)

2021: 12 GP, 42 receptions, 725 yards, 5 TD (All-Pac-12 First Team, John Mackey Award Semifinalist)

Measurements

Height: 6-foot-4

Weight: 243 pounds

Arms: 33 3/8 inches

Hands: 9 7/8 inches

40-Yard Dash: 4.69 seconds

Bench Press: 16 reps

Vertical Jump: 34 inches

Broad Jump: 122 inches

3-Cone Drill: 7.05 seconds

20-Yard Shuttle: 4.37 seconds

What The Experts Are Saying

Dane Brugler, The Athletic: "Overall, Dulcich needs continued maturation as a blocker, but he is explosive as a pass-catcher with a good-sized catch radius and separation burst before and after the catch. He projects best as an "F" tight end in the NFL with mismatch value."

Lance Zierlien, NFL.com: "Move tight end with some vertical talent who can't be expected to add much as an in-line blocker. Dulcich is a long-legged, duck-footed runner who is faster than he looks, averaging 17.6 yards per catch for his career. He can improve as a route-runner but might have three-level potential as a pass-catcher. He's urgent and determined, adding extra yardage after the catch. He has a decent catch radius and tracks it well, but lacks desired body control for tougher catch adjustments down the field."

Kevin Hanson, Sports Illustrated: "Dulcich is a smooth and athletic weapon in the passing game, as you might expect from a converted wide receiver. He has an extra gear to stretch the seam and pull away from defenders with his run-after-catch and tackle-breaking ability as well. Over the past two years, Dulcich has combined for 68 catches for 1,242 yards and 10 touchdowns and averaged 18.3 yards per reception. It wouldn't surprise me if Dulcich ended up as the first tight end off the board next month."

Tony Pauline, Pro Football Network: "He's more of a move tight end but has the frame to get stronger and develop into a blocker. Dulcich comes with tremendous upside, has starting potential, and could be a special player at the position two years down the road."

Drew Crabtree, Last Word on Sports: "In a class of athletic tight ends, Dulcich will certainly find a home and carve out a solid NFL career as a receiving threat. During his career, Dulcich continued to improve yearly, finally ending as a legitimate prospect. To start, Dulcich will be utilized as a pass-catching threat until he can develop his run-blocking abilities. Dulcich projects as a solid to plus starter at the next level. As a rookie, Dulcich will likely be part of 12 personnel packages to pair with a more complete tight end to disguise their intentions. If he's in and the offense is in 11 personnel, it's a sure tell."

Rankings

The Athletic: TE 2, No. 80 overall

Sports Illustrated: TE 2, No. 90 overall

CBS Sports: TE 4, No. 106 overall

Sporting News: TE 6, No. 88 overall

Prediction

Dulcich is the exactly the kind of explosive, receiving-first tight end that the NFL is all-in on right now. While he doesn't boast the straight-line speed or unbelievable athleticism as other prospects, his tape and in-game production show that he can get into space and convert on big opportunities. Whether it was

his 75-yard touchdown against LSU or his over-the-shoulder 30-yard score against Cal, Dulcich has proved he can make plays no matter the situation, coverage or competition, even if his blocking isn't top-tier. After showing out at the Reese's Senior Bowl and settling into the conversation at the NFL Scouting Combine, Dulcich asserted himself as a true top-five tight end in the draft class. Many teams will have him as the top tight end on their board, so where he goes will depend a lot on need and fit once the late second round arrives.

The Denver Broncos dealt Noah Fant away in the massive package that helped them reel in Seattle Seahawks quarterback Russell Wilson, robbing them of the tight end they picked in the first round of the 2019 draft. Denver still boasts a late second and two third-rounders, though, and Dulcich is a prime candidate for them to select with the first of those third-round picks.

The Tampa Bay Buccaneers, without Rob Gronkowski's future up in the air, could be in the market to add a tight end, and the New York Giants and Cleveland Browns have seemingly had serious interest in Dulcich. The Broncos' fit seems like the cleanest, though, and the walk-on receiver-turned-premiere tight end prospect could be sticking in the West.

Greg Dulcich: Denver Broncos, No. 75 overall (Round 3)

UCLA TE Greg Dulcich on much ado about hairdo: 'I roll out of bed and look like this'

By Grant Gordon

NFL.com

April 18, 2022

Long hair and a long road have characterized Greg Dulcich's journey to the doorstep of the NFL.

Once a prospective quarterback in high school, he became a standout wide receiver only to walk on at UCLA as a tight end.

Now, with curled, shoulder-length locks, Dulcich's do has drawn as much acclaim as his rise on draft boards since the conclusion of his 2021 season with the Bruins.

"It's been busy for sure," Dulcich told NFL Network's MJ Acosta-Ruiz and David Carr Monday on NFL Total Access of the draft process. "It's been a lot of fun, it's been exciting. When you can kinda take a step back and appreciate it for the process of what it is, it's been really awesome."

Dulcich, 22, estimated he's communicated with "three-fourths" of the league's teams via Zoom meetings, flying out to visit with a few and some flying out to see him.

NFL Network Insider Ian Rapoport reported the Atlanta Falcons, Cincinnati Bengals, Green Bay Packers, Indianapolis Colts and Los Angeles Chargers have met with Dulcich, who NFL.com's Bucky Brooks has rated as his No. 2 tight end in the draft behind only John Mackey Award winner Trey McBride (Colorado State).

As a redshirt junior, Dulcich flexed his big-play ability to the tune of 42 receptions for 725 yards (17.3 yards per catch) and five touchdowns. Perhaps his greatest highlight was a 75-yard touchdown catch-and-run versus LSU. Dulcich was wide open off a crossing route and sprinted up the sideline before juking inside past a Tigers defender and then hurdling through a would-be tackler into the end zone 20 yards later.

"That was a cool play for sure and that's one that stands out and I'm excited to show any team whenever I get to meet with them, that one specifically," Dulcich said. "I got a lot of open field, that's what I do."

Indeed, it's Dulcich's ball skills, his guile in the passing game and willingness to work to improve his blocking that's impressive. It's what he's shown at the NFL Scouting Combine and since then that has truly begun to open eyes, though. After his showings in the gauntlet, route drills and 40-yard dash, Dulcich hauled in a spot on Nick Shook's 2022 All-Combine Team.

A first-team All-Pac-12 selection in 2021, Dulcich's production at UCLA has been backed by the raw abilities showcased prior to the draft. He believes they'll translate to the pro ranks just as they have at every level prior, because they'll be backed by his work ethic.

"It's just gonna be continuing to do what I do, just day in and day out, on and off the field. High-work-ethic kinda guy, that's what got me to this point and it's going to be what gives me success in the future," he said.

Prior to his days at UCLA, Dulcich starred at St. Francis High in La Canada, California under the tutelage of the late, great Jim Bonds (who was once a standout quarterback who backed up Troy Aikman at UCLA).

At 6-foot-4 and 210 pounds, Dulcich looked like he could be a prototypical quarterback, but he became a receiver whose field-stretching plays aided in St. Francis' run to a California Interscholastic Federation Southern Section Division III title game in his senior season. Dulcich had 127 yards and a touchdown on just four catches in his final high school football game, putting an exclamation point on a playoff run in which he had 490 receiving yards and seven touchdowns in four games.

It led Dulcich to the Bruins, where he got some reps early as a receiver but bulked up and settled in as a tight end.

"I walked on as a tight end, but like you said I was 210 pounds," Dulcich told Carr. "Once I put the pounds on, I got in the trenches and had a lot of fun."

Fun has been had by many who marvel at Dulcich's lengthy locks. The longhair look is a new one for the former Bruin and was a positive byproduct of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It was quarantine, so I figured, why not, no one's gonna see the awkward phase," he said. "And you know when else can I get away with it, other than when I'm 22 years old? So, I'm enjoying it while it lasts."

Unlike Dulcich's journey to the 2022 NFL Draft, the work he puts in on his hair takes little time.

"I roll out of bed and look like this," Dulcich said.

It's been a long road to get here, but it's getting shorter with the festivities in Las Vegas just days away. Heading into the upcoming NFL draft, Dulcich's hair and prospects are each looking good.

St. Francis High's Dulcich lands football scholarship at UCLA

By Charles Rich
Glendale News-Press
April 2, 2020

Greg Dulcich probably won't ever forget the day he turned 20.

The former St. Francis High football standout will have a lot of memories to share with his family and friends the rest of his life after he received a scholarship from UCLA after making the team his first two seasons as a walk-on.

Dulcich, a former All-Area player who helped St. Francis get to the CIF Southern Section Division III championship game in 2017, got confirmation about the scholarship offer after receiving a call from UCLA head coach Chip Kelly on March 26 while watching television at his home.

"Just awesome; the best phone call I've ever received," said Dulcich, a tight end who will be a redshirt sophomore next season. "Coach Kelly called and I thought he was just checking in with me on some things when he said I'd be on a scholarship. I was able to be with my family when the call happened and we were able to celebrate.

"I've been working very hard the last two seasons and UCLA wants the guys to do their best and they give you chances to see what you are capable of doing. I know I need to continue to keep on improving and carry that thought process into next season and be ready to contribute."

Dulcich, who graduated from St. Francis in 2018, caught eight passes for 105 yards and one touchdown last season. He had three receptions for 37 yards and one touchdown in a 23-14 nonconference home loss against San Diego State at the Rose Bowl on Sept. 7.

Overall, Dulcich has caught nine passes for 111 yards and one touchdown in 14 contests with the Bruins.

"I've tried to become faster and stronger," said Dulcich, a political science major. "I've worked closely with my position coach since I got to UCLA."

Dulcich also credited veteran St. Francis football coach Jim Bonds for providing encouragement. Bonds is a former UCLA quarterback.

"Coach Bonds taught me so much about the game and how to conduct yourself," said Dulcich, who caught 50 passes for 1,168 yards and 12 touchdowns during his senior season with the Golden Knights. "I called him to let him know about the scholarship and he was very happy for me. I don't know where I'd be if I didn't have the support I received at St. Francis and I'm very grateful."

Bonds, who played at UCLA from 1988-91, has served as St. Francis coach since 2000.

Bonds told Dulcich he was proud of his former player's accomplishment.

“He’s done everything that’s been asked of him by UCLA,” Bonds said. “To see him go from a walk-on player to getting a scholarship on his birthday is a great present.

“When he was at St. Francis, he led by example. Greg had a goal in his senior season to catch 50 passes for 1,000 yards. I had a lot of people asking me where Greg was going to college and I know UCLA is thrilled to have him. When I watch the UCLA games and I see him playing, it’s like watching your own son playing.”

UCLA is scheduled to begin the 2020 season Aug. 29 at home against New Mexico State.

Starring for UCLA was pie in the stomach, not sky, for Greg Dulcich

By Ben Bolch

L.A. Times

November 10, 2020

Try as she might, Greg Dulcich's mom can't seem to keep her freezer sufficiently stocked whenever her son is around these days.

Greg used to consume one of his favorite beef pot pies with the flaky crust per sitting, but that was before he went from walk-on wide receiver to one of college football's top tight ends.

His calorie count soared this past spring when he returned to his Glendale home after the COVID-19 pandemic largely shut down UCLA's campus. That meant Anna Dulcich had to make extra trips to Moffett's Family Restaurant & Chicken Pie Shoppe in Arcadia.

"When he was home," Anna said, "I had bought two dozen, and I think they were gone in less than a month."

Greg polished off two pies at a time as part of a new diet intended to help thicken his 6-foot-4, 220-pound frame. He also scarfed down breakfast burritos, grilled steaks and a birthday dinner of chili cheese dogs followed by chocolate cake with chocolate frosting.

Getting to his ideal weight wasn't as easy as chewing and swallowing.

Stranded at home, Greg had to scavenge for workout equipment. He and his father, George, pulled together some barbells and assembled a makeshift weight bench from plywood and other scraps. Greg went running in the morning, completed the workout routine prescribed by his strength coaches in the afternoon and even added his own custom exercises.

The payoff was more than 17 extra pounds of muscle. Greg trumpeted his arrival as an NFL prospect Saturday by catching four passes for 126 yards and a touchdown during the Bruins' season-opening 48-42 loss to Colorado.

It was a performance that put a player who had not received any scholarship offers from major college programs out of St. Francis High in La Cañada Flintridge atop the Pac-12 Conference's receiving yardage leaderboard, ahead of USC's Drake London and Amon-ra St. Brown.

"A couple people told me, which was nice to hear," Dulcich, a redshirt sophomore, said. "But we're in the business of winning games, so that's what I'm focused on."

Dulcich's get-it-done mentality is part of the reason he doesn't consider himself a Cinderella story. He always believed he could do this, even if nobody else could.

He had more than 1,000 receiving yards as a high school senior, catching one touchdown pass in a CIF Southern Section championship game. Having the grades, football success and winning work ethic couldn't sway college coaches who were skittish about what they considered an undersized player.

"We'd get calls at times, and it would always be, 'Well, we'll stay in touch with you, Greg. You're doing a good job,' " George Dulcich said, recalling what coaches told his son, "but it didn't seem like anyone was really pulling the trigger."

That's when Greg learned that it always helps to have a Bruin in your corner. Jim Bonds, Dulcich's late high school coach, was a former UCLA quarterback who believed his star receiver could contribute at his alma mater. Bonds corresponded with UCLA coaches who had been tracking Dulcich. The Bruins offered a spot as a preferred walk-on.

Even then, Dulcich was torn. He appreciated the offer but considered himself a scholarship-worthy player. His older brother, also named George, told him to go prove it.

"George just basically said, 'You've got UCLA calling you, and they're telling you they want you to walk on and they like what they see on your form and everything else,' " Dulcich's father recalled of the exchange between his sons. " 'What are you waiting for? If you think you're good enough to be there, then go there and show them.' "

They were words that solidified Greg's decision to become a Bruin. He played sparingly as a freshman in 2018, making one catch. The next season involved a bigger role and increased production, including a 20-yard touchdown catch against San Diego State.

The exodus of tight ends Devin Asiasi, Jordan Wilson and Matt Lynch after last season created an opportunity for a high-wattage spotlight. Dulcich would move to tight end, but he wouldn't do it as a walk-on.

On his birthday in March, Dulcich took a call from coach Chip Kelly and learned he was being put on scholarship. Dulcich hung up the phone in his home, and bedlam ensued with his siblings and parents.

"He was jumping up and down — we all were," Anna Dulcich remembered, "jumping up and down and hugging and very excited about it."

Anna was especially proud given how hard her son had worked to overcome his high metabolism. There had been mornings when he would wake up, step on the scale and announce with dread that he had lost five pounds overnight.

"I'm like, 'Ugh,' " Anna recalled. "I wish I could lose five pounds by sleeping."

Greg had won over his coaches with a relentless approach that prompted Kelly to emphasize that his being put on scholarship was not a birthday present.

"His work ethic is off the charts," Kelly said, "so anything we put on Greg's plate, he eats up both literally and figuratively."

His parents were there to celebrate once more Saturday night at a nearly empty Folsom Field, watching their son flash the speed that makes him such a difficult matchup at his new size. Greg caught a pass from quarterback Dorian Thompson-Robinson at Colorado's 35-yard line late in the second quarter, outmaneuvered a defensive back and sprinted into the end zone.

"I just had one man to beat," Greg said of his career-best 52-yard touchdown. "One of my old coaches used to just tell me when you're out there you're just playing tag, so I kind of tried to go out there and play tag."

As he contemplated his emotions amid the bizarre scene, a wide swath of empty seats around him and his wife, George Dulcich didn't hold anything back. He stood up and cheered wildly.

Anna and George hugged their son after the game, everyone wearing masks to protect each other from the novel coronavirus. The parents returned home the next day, but Anna Dulcich would soon have to go shopping again. There was a son who needed more of his favorite delicacy.

Anna dropped off more beef pies Monday in Westwood, allowing Greg to savor every bite from his go-to eatery.

"They actually have chicken pot pies too," Greg said, "but I think their beef pot pie is the way to go."