

Marecic Locked in with Browns

By Nate Ulrich
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BEREA: Owen Marecic's focus has not wavered since the day he reported to Browns training camp.

Perhaps nothing can break his concentration.

In an interview last week, Marecic was asked to list his expectations for his rookie season. He politely refused to indulge the reporter. After all, looking too far ahead could become a distraction.

"To be honest, I think we have lunch coming up, and then we have a workout right after that and then a walk through in the afternoon," he said. "Hopefully I can stay locked in on that walk through and do everything right."

So far, Marecic's "day-by-day, play-by-play" mantra has served him well. He has been playing fullback with the first-team offense since the Browns opened camp.

"He has done a very good job," Browns coach Pat Shurmur said. "It's hard to find him making a mental mistake. ... He has caught the ball well. When you watch the special teams drills, he does exactly what he is supposed to do. He is kind of one of those steady guys. I think that is an important attribute for a guy that's a fullback."

The Browns, who are to practice from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. today after taking Sunday off, selected Marecic in the fourth round (124th overall) of this year's draft. He is expected to succeed fan favorite Lawrence Vickers as the team's starting fullback.

Vickers, who was an unrestricted free agent, recently signed a two-year, \$3 million contract to join the Houston Texans. The Browns have not explained why they did not bring Vickers back.

"We have Owen, and Lawrence is in Houston," Shurmur said. "That's the story, really. We are glad Owen is here, and we wish Lawrence lots of luck."

This, however, is clear: The Browns believe the 6-foot, 245-pound Marecic is an ideal fit for Shurmur's West Coast offense. At Stanford University, Marecic, 22, played in a system akin to the one Shurmur uses.

"I think in terms of X's and O's, it's similar," Marecic said. "We ran the West Coast offense out at Stanford, so there are some similar philosophies. [There is] some different vocabulary, some different rules here and there.

"I'm gonna get in the playbook. I'm gonna try to fight off the complacency through camp and make sure I'm learning things correctly and doing things the right way."

Processing new information can be difficult for some NFL rookies, but Marecic shouldn't have any problems. As the only two-way starter in Division I Football Bowl Subdivision last season, Marecic proved he's not easily overwhelmed.

"I loved it," Marecic said of playing fullback and middle linebacker for Stanford. "I was very fortunate to have an opportunity to contribute so much to the team, and it was a lot of fun.

"[Playing both ways in college] never really crossed my mind coming out of high school [in Portland, Ore]. ... But as things progressed over the years, it's just something coach [Jim] Harbaugh wanted to try out, and it turned out well. It wasn't just me. It was the entire team. We had the talent to do it, and we had the coaching, intelligence and patience to do it."

Browns tight end Evan Moore was Marecic's teammate at Stanford for one season. Moore believes the Browns hit the jackpot by drafting Marecic.

"Nobody will outwork him," Moore said. "He's physical. He keeps his mouth shut and just gets it done. That's the kind of guy I know that they like around here, and I'm not surprised they're bringing him in. It's gonna be fun to watch him be able to contribute."

Marecic juggled football and demanding academic duties at Stanford. He graduated with a degree in human biology in June and has considered pursuing a career in the medical field.

But for now, Marecic won't let his thoughts dwell on anything other than football.

"Right now, I'm focused on making the team," he said.