There are no cupcakes on the schedule, no guarantees that the team he fields will be any better than the one he takes over.

Chip Kelly made his bones as a football coach by doing things fast.

By most standards, though, his leap into the NFL was agonizingly slow.

The Philadelphia Eagles finally got their man Wednesday when Kelly reversed course and agreed to replace the fired Andy Reid. The news came as a shock to most in Oregon, where Kelly was last reported to be busy recruiting and getting the new uniforms ready for next season.

It took a while, but in the end the lure of the NFL won out over job security and fame in the Pacific Northwest. It almost always does with coaches who learn early in their careers that the best way to the top is to keep climbing the ladder.

But there's a reason Kelly couldn't bring himself to say yes to the Cleveland Browns, rebuffed

the Buffalo Bills and initially turned the Eagles down when they first came begging for him to sign. There's a reason he went back to Oregon, seemingly ending his flirtation with the NFL for the year.

Because no matter how good college coaches are - and Kelly was superb in four seasons at Oregon - winning games on Saturdays is not a guarantee for success in the NFL.

Nick Saban found that out when he left LSU for the Miami Dolphins in 2005. After two mediocre seasons in Miami, he couldn't leave town fast enough when Alabama came courting with an offer to return to the college ranks.

Now he's got three BCS championships at Alabama, a statue of himself outside the stadium and a reputation as a genius in the college ranks. All that while still making NFL-type money coaching the Crimson Tide.

"I kind of learned from that experience that maybe (college) is where I belonged," Saban said earlier this month when he returned to Miami to win the BCS title in the same stadium where he coached the Dolphins. "And I'm really happy and at peace with all of that."

Steve Spurrier seems plenty happy at South Carolina, too, just like he once was in Florida. He won a national championship with the Gators and might have stayed there for life had the Washington Redskins not come calling with what was then the richest coaching contract in NFL history.

The head ball coach went 12-20 in two seasons, losing 10 of his last 12, including a home shutout against Dallas that had fans pelting the sidelines with snowballs in disgust. Spurrier was so eager to get out of Washington that he quit before he could be fired, giving up the remaining $15 million left on his contract.

"Maybe someone else can do better," Spurrier said then. "It's a long, tough grind, coaching in the NFL."

It is, and there's only so much a college coach can do to prepare for the job. The Xs and Os are all mostly the same, but the parity in the NFL is why coaches spend 16 hours a day almost every day trying to find some way to get an edge on the opposition.

Like those before him, Kelly will go from worrying about recruiting to worrying about a salary cap. He'll go from dealing with college kids who don't have two quarters in their pocket to dealing with millionaires with entourages. He'll go from being able to fool other teams with his offense to being able to fool no one.

And he'll have to do it with no NFL experience at all. Before moving to Oregon six years ago, Kelly's biggest job was offensive coordinator at New Hampshire. And while his record at Oregon is a gaudy one - 46-7 - the reality is he's only been a head coach for four years.

Unlike Kelly, Saban had some experience in the NFL before going to Miami, serving as a defensive backs coach in Houston for one year. Still, he struggled with the reality that the NFL is a very different beast.

"I had a very, very difficult time thinking that I could impact the organization in the way that I wanted to or in the way that I am able to in college," Saban said. "And it was very difficult for me. Because there is a lot of parity in the NFL. There's a lot of rules in the NFL."

That doesn't mean a college coach can't succeed in the NFL. Jimmy Johnson was new to the league when he took over in Dallas and went on to win back-to-back Super Bowls, while Barry Switzer followed him there to win a ring of his own. Jim Harbaugh didn't miss a beat in moving from Stanford to the 49ers and Pete Carroll has found success in Seattle after a remarkable run at Southern California.

Carroll, however, is in his third stint in the league after failing miserably with the Patriots and the Jets. And Harbaugh both played in the league and had a year as quarterbacks coach in Oakland, so the learning curve was not so steep.

Kelly inherits a team that has plenty of talent, along with a reputation for underachieving. He will undoubtedly install a version of the speedy Oregon offense in Philadelphia, and Michael Vick seems to be the perfect fit to run it.

The Eagles should be better next season, if only because it's hard to get worse than the team that sleepwalked its way to a 4-12 record this year.

But Kelly is taking a chance and it's a career chance. He goes from a school that is a perennial contender for the national title to a league where only the New England Patriots are perennial contenders for the Super Bowl.

There are no cupcakes on the schedule, no guarantees that the team he fields will be any better than the one he takes over.

And the trail is littered with coaches with big reputations who have gone before him and failed.