

Close Wins, Close Losses

Much like a stock broker, our job is to find value. As with every article, the trends we've discovered in college football translate well to the NFL and it is no different when a professional team is coming off a season with multiple net close wins or net close losses.

We use a touchdown or less as a base for our calculation of a "close" win or loss, because if a team won or lost by a touchdown or less, they were usually just one play away from a different outcome. There are instances in which a game would be added or deleted. An example is if a team trailed by 13 points and scored a td on the final play, they were never within "one play" of winning. We also use the term "net" close games, which takes the close wins minus the close losses for a final "net" number. As an example, last year the Detroit Lions had 3 close wins and 7 close losses finishing with -4 "net" close games. Conversely, the Houston Texans had 8 close wins and 3 close losses finishing with +5 "net" close games.

In the FBS, when a team had 2+ net close losses, they were more fortunate in the following season. In fact, in the last 19 years there have been 485 FBS teams in this category and 76.9% have had the same or better record the next year. As that number increases from two, the percentages improve. To illustrate, 87 teams from that same time span have had 4+ net close losses with 88.5% having the same or better record the following season.

We then looked at how college teams perform the season after having multiple net close wins. In the last 19 years, 511 teams have had 2+ net close wins, with 73.7% having the same or weaker record in the following season. The more net close wins a team had, the higher chance of a weaker record: teams with 4+ close wins have had a weaker or the same record 92 of 101 times or 91.1%.

We were excited to translate this to the NFL. Originally we started using -2 or more net wins, but the results weren't overly illustrative in the NFL so we changed the baseline to -3 or more. Since 2008 there have been 77 teams that were -3 or more net close wins (more close losses than wins) with 64 having posted better or the same record (83.1%). The '16 Chargers became just the 4th team over the last 11 seasons to have -7 or more net close games.

When looking at teams that were +2 or more net close games (more close wins than losses), it's occurred 113 times the last 11 seasons. Out of the 113 times, 75 times the team's record was weaker (66.4%) while being weaker or the same 85.8% of the time. Last year Dallas came in with +6 net close wins, meaning they will have a 83% chance of having a weaker record than '18. They went from 10-6 to 8-8 moving that mark up to 85.7% heading into 2020.

When you look at both categories, those teams with +4 or -4 net close games have a noticeable jump in the success rate. Combined, it has happened 50 times with the teams record moving as expected 37 times (74.0%) and moving as expected or staying the same 42 times (84.0%).

Last 11 Years -3 or more Close Games

	Total Last 11 Years	Stronger Next Year	Weaker Next Year	Same Next Year	% BETTER or Same Next Yr
-8 Net Close Games Previous Yr	1	1	0	0	100.0%
-7 Net Close Games Previous Yr	3	3	0	0	100.0%
-6 Net Close Games Previous Yr	5	5	0	0	100.0%
-5 Net Close Games Previous Yr	9	7	2	0	77.8%
-4 Net Close Games Previous Yr	29	22	6	1	79.3%
-3 Net Close Games Previous Yr	30	24	5	1	83.3%
-3 or More Net Close Games	77	62	13	2	83.1%

2019 Close Win

2019 Close Loss

2019 Net Close Games

	2019 Close Win	2019 Close Loss	2019 Net Close Games	
Cincinnati	0	7	-7	Going Up
LA Chargers	2	9	-7	
Dallas	0	5	-5	
Detroit	3	7	-4	
Cleveland	1	4	-3	
NY Giants	2	5	-3	
Tampa Bay	3	6	-3	
Arizona	3	5	-2	
Carolina	2	4	-2	
Minnesota	2	4	-2	
Buffalo	4	5	-1	
Indianapolis	5	6	-1	
Jacksonville	2	3	-1	
Philadelphia	3	4	-1	
Washington	2	3	-1	
Atlanta	3	3	0	
Denver	4	4	0	
LA Rams	3	3	0	
Tennessee	3	3	0	
Kansas City	5	4	+1	
New England	4	3	+1	
Pittsburgh	6	5	+1	
Miami	4	2	+2	Going Down
San Francisco	5	3	+2	
Chicago	6	3	+3	
Las Vegas	6	3	+3	
Baltimore	5	1	+4	
NY Jets	5	1	+4	
Green Bay	6	1	+5	
Houston	8	3	+5	
New Orleans	6	1	+5	
Seattle	9	2	+7	

BEST OF THE BEST TEAMS WITH -4 OR MORE CLOSE GAMES FROM '15-'18

	Year	Close Games	Wins Next Yr
San Diego	'16	-7	+4
Cleveland	'17	-6	+7.5
Philadelphia	'16	-6	+6
Jacksonville	'16	-5	+7
NY Giants	'15	-5	+5
San Diego	'15	-5	+1
Carolina	'18	-5	-2
Dallas	'15	-4	+9
Carolina	'16	-4	+5
San Francisco	'16	-4	+4
NY Giants	'17	-4	+2
Baltimore	'17	-4	+1
Tampa Bay	'17	-4	0
Cleveland	'15	-4	-2
Jacksonville	'18	-4	+1
NY Giants	'18	-4	-1
NY Jets	'18	-4	+3

BEST OF THE BEST TEAMS WITH +4 OR MORE CLOSE GAMES FROM '15-'18

	Year	Close Games	Wins Next Yr
Oakland	'16	+7	-6
Houston	'16	+6	-5
Miami	'16	+6	-4
Carolina	'17	+6	-4
Pittsburgh	'17	+6	-3.5
Dallas	'18	+6	-2
Denver	'15	+6	-3
Carolina	'15	+5	-9
NY Giants	'16	+5	-8
Dallas	'16	+5	-4
LA Rams	'18	+5	-4
Arizona	'17	+4	-5
LA Chargers	'18	+4	-7
Miami	'18	+4	-2
New Orleans	'18	+4	0

Last 11 Years +2 or more Net Close Games

	Total Last 11 Yrs	Weaker Next Yr	Stronger Next Yr	Same Next Yr	% WEAKER or Same Next Yr
+8 Net Close Games Previous Yr	1	0	0	1	100.0%
+7 Net Close Games Previous Yr	2	2	0	0	100.0%
+6 Net Close Games Previous Yr	7	6	1	0	85.7%
+5 Net Close Games Previous Yr	12	12	0	0	100.0%
+4 Net Close Games Previous Yr	18	13	1	4	94.4%
+3 Net Close Games Previous Yr	28	15	5	8	82.1%
+2 Net Close Games Previous Yr	45	27	9	9	80.0%
+2 or More Net Close Games	113	75	16	22	85.8%

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