

TURNOVERS = DIVORCE

Turnovers can have a huge impact on games and on a team's season. They can also lead to many misleading final scores and make or break a season.
BY PHIL STEELE

This article was in my very first magazine back in 1995 and really got me hooked on uncovering different metrics to help me forecast how teams will fare the next year. That year I went back and looked at three years worth of information on teams that had double-digit turnovers the previous year. The data from those three years showed that teams that benefitted from double-digit turnovers one year had a weaker or the same record 75% of the time. The opposite was true for teams off a season with a negative double-digit turnover ratio also with a 75% success rate.

That first magazine was just 192 pages and printed on black and white newsprint. There have been many changes in the world since 1995 and a lot of changes with the magazine, which is now full color and almost double the size. There has been one constant over the 32 years and that is the results of the Turnovers Equals Turnaround article which continues to hit at least 70% on a yearly basis. If anything, the results are getting stronger as the last fourteen years 87 teams have benefitted from +14 turnovers or more. The next season they had the weaker or same record 85% of the time. **The last three years 26 teams made the Going Up Box and only one of the 26 had a weaker record for a success rate of 96%!** The last two years 40 teams have made the Going Down box and only 11 improved their record.

In the last eight years there have been 85 teams in the Going Up Box. Only 15 of those teams had a weaker record the next year with the box going 60-15-10. In 2023 Arizona St was -11 in turnovers and went from 3-9 to the College Football Playoff! The last 8 years there were 80 teams in the Going Down box and 55 had a weaker record. That means the Going Up and Going Down boxes combined have gone 115-34-16 the last 7 years, a success rate of 79.4%.

GOING UP

FCS Teams with -9 or more Turnovers last 9 years

TOTAL	IMPROVED/SAME	IMPROVED	SAME	WEAKER
122	99 (81.1%)	84 (69%)	15 (12.2%)	23 (18.8%)

Teams that suffered bad breaks the year before are usually headed for better fortune the following season. In the past 35 years, there have been 425 teams that finished the season minus double-digits in TO's. Of those 416 teams, 287 (68%) have had better records the next year! **Teams with a negative double-digit TO ratio have had the same or stronger records 78% of the time since 1991.**

In my nine years of research for the FCS the numbers were even a little stronger. There have been 122 teams in that span that were coming off a season of -9 turnovers or more and the chart above shows you a 81.1% success rate! Teams at -13 or more had a 88% success rate and those at -16 or more were at a 93.3% success rate! Teams with -9 TO' are actually 28-5 85% the last 4 years and last year just 1 of the 12 teams that made the Going Up box had a weaker record (St Francis)!!

Let's take a look at some teams who had terrible luck (a lot of TO's) in one year then drastically improved the next year without those negative TO's.

Austin Peay was 0-11 in 2016 but were -11 in TO's. In 2017 they were net 0 in TO's and improved all the way to 8-4 under Will Healy.

Indiana St was -13 in turnovers in 2017 and went just 0-11. The next year they were actually +9 in TO's and improved all the way up to 7-4! The Stock Market Indicator and TO's would both have had them regressing in 2019 and they dropped back to 5-7.

Incarinate Word was -16 in TO's in 2017 and just 1-10 but +4 in TO's in 2018 and improved to 6-5.

In '22, Idaho, Western Carolina and Prairie View A&M were all off season of - double digit turnover and all 3 managed to go from a losing record to a winning record!

Last year Youngstown St was in the Going up box and went from 4-8 to the playoffs!

As mentioned above even teams that were -5 in turnovers or more had a 77.9% success rate in having either a stronger or the same record the next year.

In the box to the left is this years Going UP teams that had the worse turnover luck last year. And check out my blog on July 27 for the complete

TURNOVER	MARGIN
Portland St	-15
NC A&T	-15
Samford	-14
Valparaiso	-14
Fordham	-13
Central Arkansas	-12
Incarinate Word	-11
Utah Tech	-11
Bryant	-11
Tennessee St	-10
Albany	-10
Stetson	-10
Northern Iowa	-9
Southern	-9
East Texas A&M	-9
Murray St	-9

GOING DOWN

FCS teams with +7 or more Turnovers last 8 years

TOTAL	WEAKER/SAME	WEAKER	SAME	IMPROVED
173	127 (73.4%)	104 (60.1%)	23 (13.2%)	46 (26.5%)

Teams that benefitted from double-digit turnovers the previous year rarely get a repeat of that good fortune. In the last 36 years, 534 teams have had plus double-digit turnovers. Of those 534, 345 have had weaker records the following year (65%). Only 147 teams (27%) have improved their record and the other 43 (8%) finished with the same record. **Teams with a positive double-digit TO ratio have had the same or weaker records 73% of the time since 1990.** If we tighten the parameters to +14 TO's over the last fourteen years, just 13 (15%) of those 87 teams have had an improved record. Here a look at my FCS research.

THE LAST 9 YEARS College Teams with +10 or more Turnovers				
TOTAL	WEAKER/SAME	WEAKER	SAME	IMPROVED
93	69 (74.1%)	60 (64.5%)	9 (10.1%)	24 (25.8%)

In my nine years of research for the FCS the numbers are very similar. For the 33 teams that benefitted from +14 or more in TO's the previous year 22 had a weaker record, 4 had the same and only 7 improved for 78.8% success. Above I show the +10 which is the normal cut off but it is surprising that teams that had +7 to +9 had a great success rate with 58 of 80 teams having a weaker or the same record (72.5%) and that is why they are listed above in the box.

Here are some examples. In 2017 Southern Utah was 9-3 but +11 in TO's. The next year they fell to 1-10 with a -4 TO margin. In 2021 E Tenn St was +13 in TO's and were 11-2. In 2022 they were just +2 in TO's and fell to 3-8.

In 2018 Colgate was +15 in TO's and 10-2. In 2019 they went to -2 in TO's and were just 4-8. In 2021 Eastern Washington was 10-3 (+12 TO's) but dropped to 3-8 last year.

Last year Incarnate Word was +13 in Turnovers is 2024 and made the playoffs going 11-3 but last year flipped to -11 in Turnovers (see Going Up Box this year) and fell to just 6-6 despite being +49 ypg.

In the box to the left is this years Going Down teams that has the best turnover luck last year and might not be as fortunate this year. Tarleton St benefitted from an amazing +29 in Turnovers last year!

TURNOVER	MARGIN
Tarleton St	+29
UTRGV	+16
Montana St	+16
Montana	+14
Dayton	+13
Wofford	+12
San Diego	+12
Youngstown St	+11
Villanova	+11
Alabama St	+11

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