

THE YPP FACTOR (YARDS PER POINT)

by Phil Steele

In my College Preview Magazine the last 21 yrs I've posted an article called The YPP Factor and it has been well received. Much like the Turnovers=Turnaround article, the system has had even greater success when I took the same concept I used for college football and transferred it to the NFL. The ypp (yards per point) concept is based on the amount of points a team scored per the amount of yards gained and conversely how many points the defense allows per yards allowed.

As I have stated in other articles, the NFL is a league of parity. I've done a lot of statistical research and found that teams that benefitted from outstanding ypp's one year usually had a weaker record the next season. The opposite was true for teams that had weak ypp's one year as they generally have a better record the next year. Let's start off with teams that had poor defensive ypp's. Going back to '99 there have been a total of 269 teams that allowed 14.6 ypp or lower. This means that teams allowed points more frequently than the NFL avg. Of those 269 teams, 180 of them improved their record the next season (67%)! To the right are 14 teams that have a 68% chance of improving after having a poor ypp of 14.6 or less last season.

As with most of the charts, I also looked at teams on the opposite side of the spectrum and the results have been nearly the same. Taking a look at the defensive ypp, I found teams that allow a point every 16.3 yards gained or higher do not get the same benefit the next year. Of the 233 NFL teams since

SINCE 1999 TMS WITH DEF YPP'S 16.3 OR HIGHER

Total	247
Weaker	148 (60%)
Improved	80 (33%)
Same	19 (7%)

S/'05 TMS WITH DEF YPP'S 18.5 OR HIGHER

Total	55
Weaker	44 (80%)
Improved	8 (14.5%)
Same	3 (5.5%)

GOOD D YPP GOING DOWN

SEA	16.7	PITT	15.7
PHIL	16.4		
LAR	16.1		
HOU	16.0		
NENG	15.7		

SINCE 1999 TMS WITH DEF YPP'S 14.6 OR LOWER

Total	269
Improved	180 (67%)
Weaker	67 (25%)
Same	22 (8%)

POOR D YPP GOING UP

NYJ	12.0	CIN	13.2
TEN	12.3	NORL	13.3
ARIZ	12.5	BUF	13.7
LVegas	12.5	DET	13.7
DAL	12.5	MINN	13.7
CLE	12.7	ATL	13.9

1999 that fell into this category, 247 have had a weaker record the next year (60%). A couple of examples are the Chicago Bears in 2001 who allowed a ridiculous 1 point for every 24.7 yds gained and were extremely fortunate to finish 13-3. The next year they went back to the NFL avg allowing a point for every 14.8 yards allowed and their record plummeted to 4-12. In 2009 the team with the best defensive ypp was Dallas. The Cowboys allowed 20.2 ypp and finished with an 11-5 record. In 2010 their ypp shrank to 12.9, the worst in the league, and they finished with a 6-10 record. I tightened the parameters and s/'05 found that teams which had a ypp of 18.5 or higher in one year had a weaker or the same record the next season 47 out of 55 times (85.4%). This year's list includes just two more teams that had a defensive ypp of 16.3 or higher and none of the teams last year hit that 18.5 plateau. I list the top 6 teams in the box to the left

Now let's look at the offensive ypp. Teams that had the most points scored on the fewest yards gained caught a lot of breaks and generally don't catch the same breaks the next season. Going back to 1999 there were 196 teams that had a ypp on offense of 14.15 or lower. Of those 196 teams, 149 (76%) had weaker or identical records the next season (9-1-1 last year!). Since 2003 the best off ypp was New England

SINCE 1999 TEAMS WITH OFF YPP'S 14.15 OR LOWER

Total	196
Weaker	135 (69%)
Improved	47 (24%)
Same	14 (7%)

S/'03 TEAMS WITH OFF YPP'S 13.30 OR LOWER

Total	82
Weaker	59 (72%)
Improved	13 (16%)
Same	10 (12%)

GOOD O YPP GOING DOWN

JAX	12.1	DET	13.2
SEA	12.4	BUF	13.3
PITT	12.6	BALT	13.3
IND	12.6	CIN	13.5
LAR	13.0	MINN	13.6
NENG	13.2	SF	13.7

S/'00 TEAMS WITH OFF YPP'S 17.45 OR HIGHER

Total	129
Improved	91 (71%)

POOR O YPP GOING UP

Las Vegas	17.3
New Orleans	17.4

with 11.17 in 2007 and they had five fewer wins in 2008. They were close again in 2010 finishing with an off ypp of 11.24 and dropped by a game in 2011. I wanted to sharpen the numbers even more so I looked at how teams have done following a season in which they had an offensive ypp of 13.30 or lower. I was surprised that it has occurred 82 times since 2003 and only 13 teams (16%) improved their record with 59 (72%) having a weaker record & 69 (84%) the same or weaker. This season, 15 teams fit into the 14.15 or lower standard for this system (EIGHT below 13.30).

Conversely, teams that moved the ball but had trouble getting in the end zone have high ypp's. Those teams generally become more productive on offense the next season and their record improves. Going back to 2000, there has been a total of 131 teams in the NFL that had an offensive ypp of 17.45 or higher. Of those 131 teams, 102 (78%) had the same or better record the next season with 93 (72%) having a stronger record. The 2012 Kansas City Chiefs had the worst number since I had been keeping track of the stat at 24.2 and went on to improve their record by an incredible 9 wins. The Oakland Raiders were the worst in 2006 at 23.4 and were +2 wins the following season. This chart has gotten stronger the last 6 years as in that span 27 teams have had a YPP of 17.4 or higher the previous year and out of those 27, 22 improved their record with only 3 having a weaker record and 2 having the same for a 88% success rate! This year no team qualifies but I list the top two to the left.

I've also been tracking teams that appeared on BOTH of the "Going Up" or "Going Down" sections and you can see those results

in the boxes shown below.

TEAMS IN BOTH GOING UP CATEGORIES

**2006-2025
42-7-9 (88%)**

This Year's Teams:

Las Vegas
New Orleans

TEAMS IN BOTH GOING DOWN CATEGORIES

**2006-2024
49-13-7 (81%)**

This Year's Teams:

Philadelphia
Seattle

I hope you enjoyed this article as much as I enjoyed writing it, as I love analyzing statistics. I will be doing other similar articles for both college football and the NFL on my website: PhilSteele.com. If you have any ideas or would like to add comments, check out the **Phil Steele fansite on Facebook** or follow me on **Twitter @philsteele042**.