

# Close Wins, Close Losses by Phil Steele

Much like a stock broker, my job is to find value. As with every article, the trends I'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.

I use a touchdown or less as a base for my 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. I 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 Arizona Cardinals had 2 close wins and 5 close losses finishing with -3 "net" close games. Conversely, the Miami Dolphins had 8 close wins and 2 close losses finishing with +6 "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 15 years there have been 397 FBS teams in this category and 76.8% have had the same or better record the next year. As that number increases from two, the percentages improve. To illustrate, 73 teams from that same time span have had 4+ net close losses with 87.6% having the same or better record the following season.

I then looked at how college teams perform the season after having multiple net close wins. In the last 14 years, 417 teams have had 2+ net close wins, with 74.3% 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 74 of 87 times or 85.1%.

I was excited to translate this to the NFL. Originally I started using -2 or more net wins, but the results weren't overly illustrative in the NFL so I changed the baseline to -3 or more. Since 2008 there have been 52 teams that were -3 or more net close wins (more close losses than wins) with 44 having posted better or the same record (84.6%). The '16 Chargers became just the 4th team over the last 9 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 81 times the last 8 seasons. Out of the 81 times, 51 times the team's record was weaker (63.0%) while being weaker or the same 84.0% of the time. In 2014 Detroit and Green Bay both finished +5 net close wins & both finished with worse records LY. This year Houston and Miami come in with +6 net close wins, but topping them is Oakland at +7. The Raiders will have to win more than 12 games this year to keep the +7 net close wins as the outlier.

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 32 times with the teams record moving as expected 24 times (75.0%) and moving as expected or staying the same 27 times (84.4%).

## Last 8 Years -3 or more Close Games

	Total Last 8 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	2	2	0	0	100.0%
-6 Net Close Games Previous Yr	3	3	0	0	100.0%
-5 Net Close Games Previous Yr	6	5	1	0	83.3%
-4 Net Close Games Previous Yr	18	14	4	0	77.8%
-3 Net Close Games Previous Yr	22	18	3	1	86.4%
<b>-3 or More Net Close Games</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>84.6%</b>

2016 Close Win	2016 Close Loss	2016 Net Close Games
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LA Chargers	1	8	-7
Philadelphia	0	6	-6
Chicago	1	6	-5
Jacksonville	3	8	-5
Buffalo	2	6	-4
Carolina	2	6	-4
Cincinnati	1	5	-4
Cleveland	1	5	-4
San Francisco	1	5	-4
Arizona	2	5	-3

Going Up

New Orleans	5	7	-2
Denver	2	3	-1
LA Rams	4	5	-1
Minnesota	2	3	-1
NY Jets	3	4	-1
Atlanta	4	4	0
Baltimore	6	5	+1
Indianapolis	5	4	+1

Green Bay	5	3	+2
New England	3	1	+2
Pittsburgh	4	2	+2
Seattle	5	3	+2
Tampa Bay	6	4	+2
Washington	5	3	+2
Detroit	8	5	+3
Kansas City	6	3	+3
Tennessee	6	3	+3
Dallas	7	2	+5
NY Giants	8	3	+5
Houston	8	2	+6
Miami	8	2	+6
Oakland	8	1	+7

Going Down

## BEST OF THE BEST TEAMS WITH -3 OR MORE CLOSE GAMES FROM '13-'16

Team	Year	Close Games	Wins Next Yr
Tampa Bay	'14	-8	+4
Houston	'13	-7	+7
NY Giants	'15	-5	+5
San Diego	'15	-5	+1
Cleveland	'15	-4	-2
Dallas	'15	-4	+9
Atlanta	'13	-4	+2
Washington	'13	-4	+1
Chicago	'14	-4	+1
Seattle	'15	-3	+0.5
NY Jets	'14	-3	+6
Detroit	'13	-3	+4
Oakland	'14	-3	+4
Pittsburgh	'13	-3	+3
Tennessee	'14	-3	+1
NY Giants	'14	-3	0

## BEST OF THE BEST TEAMS WITH +3 OR MORE CLOSE GAMES FROM '13-'16

Team	Year	Close Games	Wins Next Yr
Denver	'15	+6	-3
Carolina	'15	+5	-9
Detroit	'14	+5	-4
Green Bay	'14	+5	-2
NY Jets	'13	+4	-4
San Francisco	'14	+4	-3
Indianapolis	'13	+4	0
Arizona	'15	+3	-5.5
Indianapolis	'15	+3	0
Dallas	'14	+3	-8
San Diego	'14	+3	-5
Carolina	'13	+3	-5
Denver	'14	+3	0
New England	'14	+3	0
New England	'13	+3	0
Arizona	'14	+3	+2
Cincinnati	'14	+3	+2

## Last 8 Years +2 or more Net Close Games

	Total Last 8 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	1	1	0	0	100.0%
+6 Net Close Games Previous Yr	2	1	1	0	0.0%
+5 Net Close Games Previous Yr	9	9	0	0	100.0%
+4 Net Close Games Previous Yr	14	10	1	3	92.9%
+3 Net Close Games Previous Yr	20	11	4	5	80.0%
+2 Net Close Games Previous Yr	34	19	7	8	79.4%
<b>+2 or More Net Close Games</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>84.0%</b>

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