

BIG PLAYS MEAN BIG REWARDS

Over the past few seasons, a team’s ability to produce big plays has had a lot to do with producing wins. Last season, clubs that generated more came away with a win 70 percent of the time.

“We spent a lot of time talking after last season in terms of the things we need to do to improve our chances of moving the football, scoring more points and winning more football games,” says Texans coach **DOM CAPERS**. “Being able to have more big-play potential was certainly one of those.”

Along with winning the turnover battle, consistently producing “big plays” is key to producing wins. Last year, five of the six teams that had the most “big plays” had winning records, and four of them went to the playoffs, with Minnesota only missing the postseason on the final play of the year – on a big play, Arizona’s **JOSH MC COWN** to **NATE POOLE** for a 25-yard TD.

Records of teams that produced more big plays (25-yard passes/15-yard runs) than their opponents over the past 10 seasons, and the top teams in the category in 2003:

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>T</u>	<u>PCT.</u>	<u>TEAM</u>	<u>BIG PLAYS</u>
1994	100	80	0	.556	*Seattle Seahawks	64
1995	116	78	0	.598	Minnesota Vikings	63
1996	127	72	0	.638	*Kansas City Chiefs	62
1997	127	82	2	.608	*Baltimore Ravens	60
1998	122	78	0	.610	*Philadelphia Eagles	57
1999	114	83	0	.579	San Francisco 49ers	57
2000	140	76	0	.648	*Made playoffs	
2001	139	71	0	.662		
2002	150	60	1	.714		
2003	92	39	0	.702		
TOTALS	1,227	719	3	.631		

RETURN A PICK FOR A TD, RACK UP A WIN

It’s a game-changer, a momentum shifter and in some cases – a real back-breaker. It’s the interception returned for a touchdown. For teams that score them, happy Sunday evenings and cheerful Mondays usually follow.

Since 1970, teams that return an interception for a touchdown are an astounding 937-277-3 (.771).

“It’s a tremendous confidence boost for the defense,” says St. Louis safety **AENEAS WILLIAMS**, who is tied with Pro Football Hall of Fame safety **KEN HOUSTON** for the second-most career INT-TDs with nine. “Every time I intercept the ball, all I think about is returning it for a score. When I got into the pros, I understood the dynamic impact of running an interception back. It feels great and it feels like it changes the complexion of the game.”

The Super Bowl champion New England Patriots led the NFL last season with five touchdowns on interception returns. Of the top five teams to post the most INT-TDs in a season, all finished at .500 or better and four advanced to the playoffs:

<u>TEAM</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>INT-TDs</u>	<u>RECORD</u>	<u>SEASON RESULT</u>
Seattle Seahawks	1998	8	8-8	Missed playoffs
St. Louis Rams	1999	7	13-3	Won Super Bowl XXXIV
Seattle Seahawks	1984	7	12-4	AFC Divisional Playoff
Kansas City Chiefs	1992	6	10-6	AFC Wild Card
Minnesota Vikings	1992	6	11-5	NFC Wild Card



BROWNS BOAST SUB-10 CATCH STREAK

The Indianapolis Colts’ **MARVIN HARRISON** caught 14 passes for 138 yards against the Browns in Cleveland on the final Sunday of the 1999 season. Four years have passed and the Browns now own an NFL-best streak of 64 games without allowing an individual opponent 10 or more receptions. Next on the list are last year’s Super Bowl teams New England (51) and Carolina (36).

Residing in the AFC North, Cleveland faces some of the game’s best receivers twice per season in Baltimore’s **TODD HEAP**, **CHAD JOHNSON** of Cincinnati and Pittsburgh’s **HINES WARD** – all of whom are NFL All-Stars.

So, how do the Browns contain them?

“I don’t know if we contain them fully,” says Browns defensive backs coach **TODD BOWLES**, who is entering his fourth season as a Cleveland assistant. “We try to limit teams to certain passes at certain times. You never completely shut those guys down.

“On different parts of the field in certain situations, teams like to run certain routes. We aim to take away their favorite pass plays and make them throw to another receiver. We try to take away the first option. It doesn’t always work, but we have a pretty good handle on it.”

Bowles, 41, earned three Super Bowl rings as a defensive back with Washington (1987, 1991) and San Francisco (1989). He credits former Redskins defensive coordinator **RICHIE PETITBON** and defensive backs coach **EMMITT THOMAS** as well as his former 49ers defensive coordinator **RAY RHODES** for helping form his defensive philosophies. “Learning from them helped me decide to become a coach,” he says.

Longest active streaks of teams not allowing a 10-catch game:

<u>TEAM</u>	<u>NON-10 GAMES</u>
Cleveland Browns	64
New England Patriots	51
Carolina Panthers	36
Buffalo Bills	30
Pittsburgh Steelers	26