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2020 COLLEGE & PRO FOOTBALL NEWSLETTER

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Home Field Advantage in the NFL – Historical, Recent & Current

Period	H/R GM	Home SU %	Ave Margin	HOME PS %	Ave Line	ARVL
1982-2019	9037	5203-3815-19 57.70 %	2.60	4331-4447-259 49.34 %	-2.46	0.14
1982-2001	4462	2593-1859-10 58.24 %	2.81	2167-2180-115 49.85 %	-2.55	0.26
2002-2019	4575	2610-1956-9 57.16 %	2.40	2164-2267-144 48.84 %	-2.38	0.02
2002-2005	1024	602-421-1 58.85 %	3.02	491-499-34 49.60 %	-1.25	0.55
2006-2009	1021	574-446-1 56.27 %	2.15	479-518-24 48.04 %	-2.64	-0.49
2010-2013	1018	585-431-2 57.58 %	2.77	493-491-34 53.35 %	-2.40	0.37
2014-2019	1512	850-657-5 56.40 %	1.90	702-758-52 48.08 %	-2.13	- 0.23
2017-2019	755	425-327-3 56.52 %	1.60	351-375-29 48.35 %	-2.04	- 0.44
2014	252	144-107-1 57.37 %	2.54	122-126-4 49.19 %	-2.40	0.14
2015	253	136-117-0 53.75 %	1.48	110-132-11 45.45 %	-2.18	-0.69
2016	252	145-106-1 57.77 %	2.60	118-126-8 48.36 %	-2.10	0.50
2017	251	143-108-0 56.97 %	2.50	126-114-11 52.50 %	-2.06	0.44
2018	253	152-99-2 60.56 %	2.34	119-125-9 48.77 %	-2.30	0.04
2019	251	130-120-1 52.00 %	-0.05	106-136-9 43.80 %	-1.74	- 1.79
2020	105	53-51-1 50.96 %	0.24	46-58--1 44.23 %	-1.77	-1.53

Prior to the start of the season there were debates and discussions as how the absence of fans at NFL games – or a minimum percentage of capacity in attendance at best – would impact home field advantage.

In a normal season the general thought is that the home field is worth three points to the home team. Most handicappers and bettors agree in general but also point to differences that vary by team. Better teams are considered to enjoy perhaps a 4 or 5 point edge while weaker teams may enjoy 1 or 2 points at most.

There are several ways to attempt an objective measure of home field edges but all are problematic given short seasons of just 8 home and 8 road games per team. But our research indicates that playing at home has been less of an advantage in recent seasons than historically.

The above chart presents 5 different sets of data dating back to 1982 that looks at how teams perform at home both SU and ATS, how the linesmakers account for the value of playing at home and how the perception of the public plays out and compares to the linesmakers' perceptions.

One thing is certainly true – home field advantage does exist. In all sports home teams generally win between 54 and 58 percent of their home games season after season. In the NFL since 1982 home teams have won 57.70 % of more than 9,000 games (excluding ties). Since Division realignment in 2002 the percentage has been nearly identical (57.16 % of more than 4,500 games). From 2014 through 2018 the % was 57.28 over 1,257 games, reaching a high of just over 60 % in 2018.

But things took a sharp decline in 2019 when home teams were just 130-120-1 SU, 52.00 %. Through 105 games this season home teams are 53-51-1 SU (50.96 %). Whether the past season and a half is just a short term blip is uncertain but the fact that home teams performed relatively poorly in 2019 (when there was no Covid) could suggest this season's follow up results may have little to do with the virus.

It's worth noting from the above chart how poorly home teams have performed ATS which many seasons below 50%. Over the full 38 seasons from 1982 through 2019 home teams covered just 49.34% in the more than 9,000 games – evidence that there's no home field edge when it comes to covering the pointspread.

Looking at the above chart 4 of the 7 columns are clear – Period Covered (1), Total Home/Road (i.e. non neutral site games) (2), SU Record of Home Teams (3) and ATS Record of Home Teams (5).

Columns 4, 6 and 7 are the ones of interest when trying to analyze objective measures of whether a home field advantage exists and, if so, to what extent and in what fashion.

Ave Margin is the average margin for the home team and it's generally averaged between +1.5 and +3.0 points per game. But look at how the average margin dropped in 2019 (negative .05 actually) and has been almost as low thus far this season (+ 0.24). Average margin is a good starting point and it can be said that prior to 2019 playing at home was worth just under a FG per game, on average.

Ave Line is the average line for the home team. Between 1982 and 2019 the home team, on average, was favored by 2.46 points per game. That's pretty close to the average margin for the home team, indicative of a pretty good job by the linesmaker globally.

ARVL is the Average Result Vs. The Line and is actually the difference between average margin and the average line.

Note that the numbers have been declining in general over the past half decade or so. An interpretation can be that teams have been better, in general, at playing on the road as coaches and organizations learn and adapt to the effects of travel, preparation, etc. that differ for road games than home games.

As mentioned above the NFL season is very short – just 16 games. It's impossible to draw firm conclusions about an exact home field advantage for each team. In theory you'd compare how Team A performs at home vs on the road. Unfortunately NFL teams only have 3 opponents each season that they play both at home and on the road. And because of the nature of the game and the key injuries that occur over the course of a season the team you face at home in September is often considerably different from that same team you face on the road in December.

The bottom line about home team or home field advantage can best be summed up as follows.

It's clear that teams have some advantage playing at home. That's reflected in the numbers above that show

home teams generally winning between 52 and 58% of their home games, a percentage that holds pretty close for all major sports. As a result most teams in all sports will have better home records than road records. But determining an exact value of that advantage is extremely difficult for football.

We have seen a decline in the 'raw' numbers shown above over the past half decade or so that suggest whatever the numeric 'value' of any home field advantage may be, it is decreasing. Since there is usually a lag between perception (home field advantage is worth 3 points) and reality (it may only be worth 1 or 2 points based on recent seasons) much of the wagering public will continue to back home teams more than road teams much as they back favorites rather than underdogs. Hence we see line movements that tend to push up prices on home teams and favorites more than they should be pushed up, creating opportunities for playing on undervalued road teams and underdogs.

COLLEGE SELECTION OF THE WEEK: IOWA - 2 ½ over Northwestern – Both teams opened their seasons last week. Iowa lost 24-20 at Purdue in a competitive game in which they outgained the Boilermakers by 1.1 yards per play. Northwestern, at home, beat up a weak Maryland team 43-3, dominating the stats in outgaining the Terps 537-207 with a 6.5-4.2 yards per play edge. The Wildcats are stepping up in class here. These teams traded 3 game winning streaks since 2013 with Iowa getting the triple revenge last season. The last 3 games in the series have been very low scoring (20-0, 14-10, 17-10). Both teams are well coached. Northwestern ran roughshod over Maryland last week, gaining 325 rushing yards. Iowa held Purdue to just 104 while for 195 in defeat. If Iowa needs added motivation it can remember home losses to Northwestern in the Wildcats' last two visits here. Iowa's win last season was on the road. It won't be a runaway but a solid Iowa win 23-17.

Other Featured College Selections

Notre Dame - 20 over GEORGIA TECH – There have been growing pains for coach Collins in his second season at Tech as well as some satisfying wins. Tech won at Florida State 16-13 to open the season – a win that appeared impressive at the time. Tech also had a solid home win over Louisville 46-27. Both foes are decent but not elite such as their foe is this week. Notre Dame is 5-0 and has held 4 of its 5 foes to under 14 points. Notre Dame has topped 40 points in 3 of the wins that include a 42-26 win over that same Florida State squad. True, the Irish did struggle to get by Louisville 12-7 but did outgain the Cardinals 338-219. Aside from the win over Louisville Tech's other 2 home games were 49-21 to Central Florida and 73-7 to Clemson. Notre Dame is allowing just 270 yards per game – 206 less than Tech. Of concern for Tech is an offense that's turned the football over and average of 3.0 times per game through 6 games. That's a lot of extra possessions given to the opposition. And Notre Dame's offense can take advantage. The Irish are allowing just 9.8 points per game, the Yellowjackets 41.2. Tech's other 2 losses have been by 17 (at Syracuse) and 21 (Boston College). The Irish may start slow but ultimately extend. Notre Dame wins 41-13.

Memphis + 6 ½ over CINCINNATI – Understandably flat last week, Memphis was still able to beat Temple and nearly cover as 14 point chalk. A week earlier the Tigers exorcized demons that had plagued them for many years by finally defeating AAC powerhouse Central Florida for their first win in their last 14 tries that included a pair of losses in each of the past 2 seasons that included a pair of conference championship games. Memphis has had similar success against Cincinnati, winning 5 straight including twice last season to capture the AAC title. Memphis was favored in all but one of the 5 victories and now comes an underdog against a familiar foe that is much stronger on defense than on offense. Cincy in 4-0 SU/ 2-2 ATS but has played a weaker schedule that includes South Florida, Army and FCS Austin Peay. Cincy is off a win at SMU, 42-13, in which the Bearcats outgained the Mustangs 439-290. Memphis also played at SMU but lost 30-27 despite a total yards edge of 585-549. This line appears too high. Memphis was +2 at SMU while Cincy was +1. That suggests Cincy should be, at most, a 4 point favorite here. Memphis' other loss was also on the road, by 2 points at UTSA. Cincy gets the win but in a competitive game. Cincinnati wins 31-28.

LOUISIANA TECH + 12 over Uab – Both programs have been money makers ATS over the past few seasons but each has started 2020 2-4 ATS. UAB has won 3 in a row against La Tech after Tech had won their first 5 meetings. Tech had been favored in prior matchups that include upset losses to UAB in 2017 and 2018. Last season UAB was finally favored over Tech, by 6, in a game that pushed with UAB winning 20-14. Tech has fared well as a double digit home dog against teams with comparable talent, going 6-2 ATS in that role against non-Power 5 teams since 1997. Based upon their early games, both teams are down a notch or two from last season with Tech struggling to find its rhythm on offense, normally a strength. UAB has not shown the consistency its shown the past 3 seasons after the program was revived in 2017. The stats do suggest UAB wins but asking for a double digit win is questionable. UAB wins but by just 34-28.

Best of the Rest (Opinions)

GA SOUTHERN - 5 ½ over South Alabama [1]	WYOMING + 1 ½ over Hawaii [2]
Michigan State + 24 ½ over MICHIGAN	UT San Antonio + 6 over FLA ATLANTIC
LOUISVILLE + 3 ½ over Virginia Tech	Coastal Carolina - 2 ½ over GEORGIA STATE
RUTGERS + 12 over Indiana	ILLINOIS + 7 over Purdue
San Diego State - 7 over UTAH STATE	BYU - 28 ½ over Western Kentucky
AIR FORCE + 14 over Boise State	SOUTHERN MISS - 1 over Rice
ARKANSAS STATE - 3 over Troy	BAYLOR + 2 ½ over Tcu
Central Florida - 2 ½ over HOUSTON	Lsu - 3 over AUBURN
Mississippi State + 31 over ALABAMA	New Mexico + 13 ½ over SAN JOSE STATE

The Rest (Leans)

Colorado State - 1 ½ over FRESNO STATE [1]	TULSA - 18 over East Carolina [2]
Minnesota - 20 ½ over MARYLAND [2]	SYRACUSE + 11 over Wake Forest
North Carolina + 6 ½ over VIRGINIA	Kansas State + 3 ½ over WEST VIRGINIA
Boston College + 30 ½ over CLEMSON	Charlotte + 10 over DUKE
Ohio State - 12 over PENN STATE	UNLV + 14 over Nevada Reno
Navy + 14 over SMU	OKLAHOMA STATE - 3 ½ over Texas
Wisconsin - 3 over NEBRASKA	Oklahoma - 14 ½ over TEXAS TECH
TULANE - 4 over Temple	UL Lafayette - 16 ½ over TEXAS STATE
Iowa State - 29 over KANSAS	Mississippi - 16 ½ over VANDERBILT
Appalachian State - 31 over UL MONROE	Arkansas + 12 over TEXAS A&M
Missouri + 13 over FLORIDA	KENTUCKY + 15 over Georgia

[1] Thursday, October 29

[2] Friday, October 30

Postponements/Cancellations

Marshall at Fla International

North Texas at UTEP.

NFL SELECTIONS OF THE WEEK: SEATTLE - 3 over San Francisco – Seattle continues its pattern of close games decided late, entering this game off their OT loss at Arizona. San Francisco enters off a pair of impressive wins over the Rams and at New England but still sits last in the tough NFC West where all 4 teams have winning records. It's a tough spot for the 49ers with games against the Packers and Saints up next. A regression would not be surprising after their last 2 wins. It's a favorable spot for Seattle which returns to the road for their next 2 games, making this their lone home game between Weeks 5 and 11. Oh, and they have QB Wilson off a 3 interceptions game, the last of which set up Arizona's winning FG. Recall Seattle was stopped inches short of the goal line in Week 17 last season against the 49ers on this field that denied the Seahawks the NFC West title. A win offsets the Division loss in Arizona. Seattle wins 31-23.

Other Featured NFL Selections:

Indianapolis - 3 over DETROIT – Indianapolis is off its Bye that followed its 2 poorest defensive efforts of the season vs. Cleveland and Cincinnati. The Colts allowed 385 and 398 yards after holding each of their first 4 foes to under 270. Detroit's won back to back games and 3 of 4 with each win on the road. The Lions

are 0-2 SU and ATS at home. The rest should benefit the Colts with new QB Rivers and coach Reich able to tinker with adjustments to the offense. Despite the efforts in those last 2 games Indy's defense is well balanced, ranking #3 vs the run and #2 vs the pass. Detroit's offense has no special strength, ranking #18 via the run and #20 via the pass. Rest, matchups and a reasonable price. Indianapolis wins 30-20.

New Orleans - 4 over CHICAGO – New Orleans has won 5 straight against Chicago since 2011 (4-1) with 3 of the wins in Chicago including last season. The Saints have the much better offense with Chicago having a stingier defense. The Bears win ugly and have been outscored, outgained in total yards and outperformed on a yards per play basis. Eventually those negative fundamentals catch up with teams. The New Orleans defense is league average vs the pass but outstanding against the run. The Bears rank last in running the football, gaining just 84 yards per game with a below average pass attack. New Orleans all purpose back Hill has the versatility to keep Chicago's defense off balance. New Orleans wins 27-17.

Pittsburgh + 3 ½ over BALTIMORE – This is meeting #28 between the coaches. Baltimore's Harbaugh was hired in 2008, one season after Tomlin took over the Steelers. Baltimore has a 14-13 edge SU and is 12-11-4 ATS. Most of their early meetings were very close with 11 of the first 14 decided by 4 points or less. But 8 of the last 13 have been decided by 7 or more, 6 by double digits. The Ravens are rested and swept Pittsburgh last season when injured Steelers QB Roethlisberger missed both games. Against 3 common foes each has defeated Cleveland, Houston and Philadelphia with very similar statistics. Pittsburgh remains unbeaten (6-0 SU, 5-1 ATS) and has held all 6 foes to under 105 rushing yards. Baltimore's had trouble stepping up in class the past few seasons in big games. The lack of a large, raucous crowd could negatively impact Baltimore's defense on key third down plays when crowd noise is a factor. Pittsburgh wins 24-20.

Best of the Rest (Opinions)

CAROLINA - 2 ½ over Atlanta (Thursday)	Minnesota + 6 ½ over GREEN BAY
CLEVELAND - 2 ½ over Las Vegas	DENVER + 3 over L A Chargers

The Rest (Leans)

New England + 3 ½ over BUFFALO	Tennessee - 6 over CINCINNATI
N Y Jets + 19 ½ over KANSAS CITY	L A Rams - 4 over MIAMI
Dallas + 6 * over PHILADELPHIA	Tampa Bay - 10 ½ over N Y GIANTS (Monday

BYES – Arizona, Houston, Jacksonville, Washington

*** Projected Line**

Best of the NFL Totals

Minnesota/Green Bay OVER 54 ½	Tennessee/Cincinnati OVER 54 ½
Las Vegas/Cleveland OVER 53 ½	L A Rams/Miami UNDER 46
Pittsburgh/Baltimore UNDER 47	Tampa Bay/N Y Giants UNDER 46 ½

Money Line Recommendations

College:	UT San Antonio	LOUISVILLE	ILLINOIS	BAYLOR
Pro:	New England	SEATTLE	DENVER	Pittsburgh

NOTE: All Selections are picked to win Against the Spread (ATS). Unless otherwise indicated, HOME TEAMS are in CAPS. All material is provided as news matter only and is not to be used in violation of any Federal, State or Local law(s).

