

About PFF

PFF GRADES

LEARN ABOUT PFF PLAYER GRADES

PFF grades have become synonymous with player performance in both the NFL and college football over the last 10-plus years, but what goes into creating those player grades?



WHAT WE DO

The PFF grading system evaluates every player on every play during a football game. We believe that #EveryPlayCounts and that attention to detail provides insights and data that cannot be found anywhere else. The grading system was founded on the principle of grading “production” rather than traits or measurables, but perhaps a better way to describe it is a player’s “contribution to production” on a given play.

Did the quarterback make a great throw, but it was dropped? The quarterback contributed to positive production and will receive a positive grade for that effort, even though the receiver let him down, earning a negative grade along the way.

The benefits of this style of grading are numerous. Taking every play into consideration allows for a larger sample size of data to tell the proper story rather than just a highlight reel of plays that we tend to remember, for better or worse. We also work to eliminate bias by not caring about the level of player who is being graded, so whether it’s the best tackle in the league missing a block or one of the worst, the same grade is given. Preconceived level of ability has no

VIEW NFL PLAYER GRADES

By Position

By Team

VIEW NCAA PLAYER GRADES

By Position

F.A.Q.

What is a PFF grade?

PFF assigns a grade for every play to each player during a football game. Each grade is reviewed at least once, and usually multiple times, using every camera angle available, including All-22 coaches’ tape.

READ MORE ABOUT PFF PLAYER GRADES



[How PFF grades quarterback play](#)

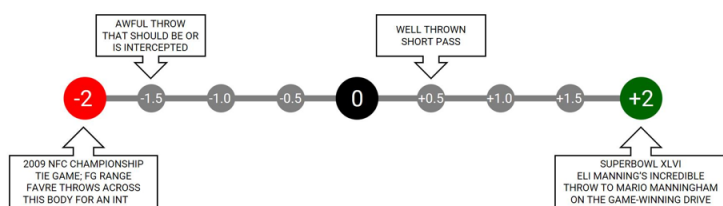
PFF’s Steve Palazzolo explains what goes into PFF’s quarterback grades.

impact on the grading system. This style has worked well in unlocking undervalued gems through the years, while also not being swayed by player hype if it is undeserved.

THE GRADING SCALE

Each player is given a grade of -2 to +2 in 0.5 increments on a given play with 0 generally being the average or “expected” grade. There are a few exceptions as each position group has different rules, but those are the basics. The zero grade is important as most plays feature many players doing their job at a reasonable, or expected, level, so not every player on every play needs to earn a positive or a negative.

At one end of the scale you have a catastrophic game-ending interception or pick-six from a quarterback, and at the other a perfect deep bomb into a tight window in a critical game situation.



Each position has its own grading rubric so our analysts know how to put a grade on the various expectations for a quarterback on a 10-yard pass beyond the sticks or what the range of grades might look like for a frontside offensive tackle down blocking on a “power” play.

There is then an adjustment made to the “raw” grades to adjust for what the player is “expected” to earn given his situation on the field. For instance, a player’s grade may be adjusted down slightly if he plays in a situation that is historically more favorable while a player in more unfavorable circumstances may get an adjustment the other way. We collect over 200 fields of data on each play, and that data helps to determine what the baseline, or expectation, is for each player on every play.

Each grade goes into a specific “facet” of play in order to properly assess each player’s skillset. The facets include passing, rushing, receiving, pass blocking, run blocking, pass-rushing, run defense and coverage. Special teamers also have their own facets of kicking, punting, returning and general special teams play. Facets are important in order to have a clear view of where a player’s strengths and weaknesses lie.

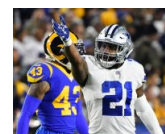
A collection of grading examples across all facets of play is included on this page.

WHO IS DOING THE GRADING?



[How PFF grades receivers](#)

PFF’s Steve Palazzolo explains what goes into PFF’s receiving grades.



[How PFF grades running backs](#)

PFF’s Steve Palazzolo explains what goes into PFF’s rushing grades.



[How PFF grades run defense](#)

PFF’s Steve Palazzolo explains what goes into PFF’s run-defense grades.



[How PFF grades pass-rushers](#)

PFF’s Steve Palazzolo explains what goes into PFF’s pass-rush grades.



[How PFF grades coverage](#)

PFF’s Steve Palazzolo explains how PFF grades coverage.



[How PFF grades run blocking](#)

PFF’s Steve Palazzolo walks through how we grade players in the run game and what goes into PFF’s run-blocking grades.



[How PFF grades pass protection](#)

PFF’s Steve Palazzolo walks through how we grade players in pass protection and what goes into PFF’s pass-blocking grades.

It is entirely possible that a player will have a season grade higher than any individual single-game grade he achieved because playing well for an extended period of time is harder to do than for a short period.

PLAYER RANKINGS

The grades allow for easy player comparisons, whether using an overall grade or a facet grade. While we believe the grade is an excellent baseline for how well a player performed his given role, we also believe the using the entire context is crucial when evaluating players. Perhaps a slot receiver had to play more than expected on the outside or a nose tackle was forced to play more three-technique than his coaching staff initially desired. Both players are being evaluated based on what they did, and that context is important when using the grades. PFF ELITE allows users to sort by player grades, but they can also see the simple and advanced stats that tell the story for each player.

Blocking & Allowed Pressures
 Blocking grades and allowed pressure stats for players who participated as run blockers or pass blockers or passers.

RANK	PLAYER	#	POS	#	TEAM	SNAP COUNTS				POSITION				GRADES			PRESSURES ALLOWED						
						SUM	PASS	PBLK	RBLK	LT	LO	C	RG	RT	TE	OFF	PBLK	RBLK	SA	HIT	MUR	PK	PEN
1	Ronnie Stanley	#79	T	14	BLT	938	0	470	468	930	0	0	0	0	25	87.2	93.3	75.3	0	1	5	6	5(1)
2	David Bakhtiari	#69	T	16	GB	1,075	0	684	391	1,098	2	0	2	2	1	78.4	89.3	66.3	2	7	26	35	11(0)
3	Lammy Tursi	#78	T	14	HST	915	0	588	327	945	0	0	0	0	0	75.8	89.0	69.0	3	0	17	20	18(2)
4	Jason Peters	#71	T	13	PHI	872	0	562	310	884	1	0	0	0	4	82.4	87.3	72.5	3	4	14	21	10(0)
5	Tevon Johnson	#72	T	15	NO	955	0	583	352	923	0	0	0	0	2	80.2	85.6	64.6	0	7	15	22	4(0)
6	Jake Matthews	#70	T	15	ATL	1,163	0	808	355	1,198	1	0	0	0	0	79.7	84.9	64.2	8	3	17	28	7(0)
7	Andrew Whitworth	#77	T	16	LA	1,097	0	710	387	1,330	0	0	0	0	0	73.8	84.7	65.3	1	3	25	29	14(1)
8	Anthony Castonzo	#74	T	16	IND	1,076	0	621	455	1,090	0	0	0	0	4	81.3	84.4	70.2	3	5	26	34	2(0)
9	Ryan Ranczyk	#71	T	16	NO	1,058	0	659	399	0	0	0	0	1,078	3	80.9	82.6	61.8	0	1	19	20	4(1)
10	Orilando Brown Jr.	#78	T	16	BLT	1,105	0	537	568	14	0	0	0	1,119	0	71.5	82.5	68.7	3	2	15	20	3(1)
11	Taylor Lewan	#77	T	12	TEN	711	0	411	300	734	0	0	0	0	1	73.4	82.1	71.2	2	3	6	11	10(0)
12	Mitchell Schwartz	#71	T	16	KC	1,046	0	692	354	0	0	0	0	1,059	1	84.0	81.2	77.0	0	5	15	20	5(1)
13	Matt Faler	#71	T	16	PIT	995	0	606	389	0	74	0	0	946	0	75.2	80.7	65.0	4	2	19	25	3(0)
14	Alexandro Villaverde	#78	T	16	PIT	995	0	606	389	1,017	0	0	0	0	3	74.0	80.4	59.8	2	6	28	36	10(3)
15	Taylor Moton	#72	T	16	CAR	1,106	0	736	370	37	0	0	0	1,073	13	76.0	78.0	67.0	5	3	21	29	6(2)
16	Tyron Smith	#77	T	13	DAL	882	0	531	351	889	0	0	0	0	0	76.5	78.0	67.0	1	6	23	30	8(1)
17	Garrett Bolles	#72	T	16	DEN	1,012	0	608	404	1,027	0	0	0	0	0	75.9	77.9	70.7	4	4	23	31	17(8)
18	Trent Brown	#77	T	11	OAK	582	0	326	256	0	0	0	0	595	0	69.1	77.8	63.4	1	1	9	11	5(1)
19	Donovan Smith	#76	T	15	TB	1,055	0	702	353	1,073	0	0	0	0	0	70.8	77.4	58.9	5	7	22	34	9(3)
20	Lane Johnson	#65	T	12	PHI	799	0	454	305	6	0	0	0	749	0	88.8	76.6	92.6	1	4	18	23	5(1)

Want to see who was the best pass protecting offensive tackle? The best run-stopping linebacker? It's all in [Premium Stats 2.0 as part of PFF ELITE](#).

Premium Stats allows you to not only rank players by position but also filter by teams, to compare the grades of just one team's cornerbacks, for example. We also combine defensive fronts and group players as either edge defenders, or interior defenders, to save confusion between 4-3 and 3-4 defensive fronts that in today's NFL are often in the same alignment by defensive technique, just from either a two- or three-point stance.

It's important to understand that PFF is not grading talent in these numbers, rather strictly performance on the field. Talented players can have bad games, runs, or even seasons, and often players without nearly as much talent can put together impressive play on the field. We are not necessarily telling you who the best players are. Our rankings are more of a performance evaluation and a reflection of how efficiently a player made plays in the time he was on the field.

GRADES VS. STATS

We aren't grading players based on the yardage they rack up or the stats they collect. Statistics can be indicative of performance but don't tell the whole story and can often lie badly. Quarterbacks can throw the ball straight to defenders but

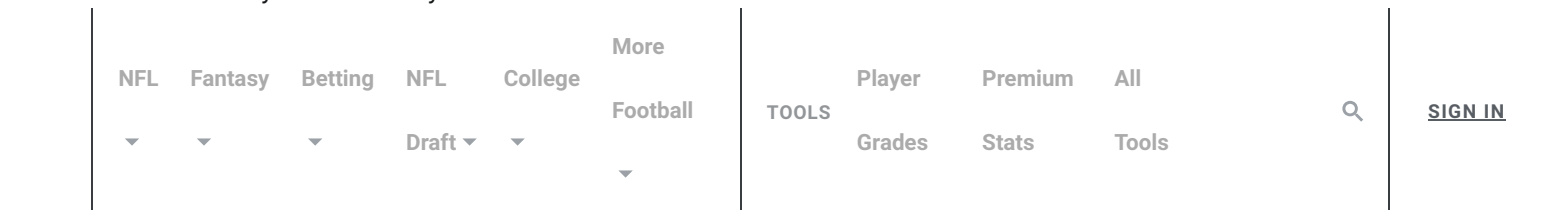
if the ball is dropped, you won't see it on the stat sheet. Conversely, they can dump the ball off on a sequence of screen passes and end up with a gaudy looking stat line if those skill position players do enough work after the catch.

PFF grades the play, not its result, so the quarterback that throws the ball to defenders will be downgraded whether the defender catches the ball to notch the interception on the stat sheet or not. No amount of broken tackles and yards after the catch from a bubble screen will earn a quarterback a better grade, even though his passing stats may be getting padded.

The same is true for most positions. Statistics can be misleading. A tackle whose quarterback gets the ball out of his hands quicker than anybody else may not give up many sacks, but he can still be beaten often and earn a poor grade. Receivers that are targeted relentlessly could post big-time numbers but may offer little more than the product of a volume-based aerial attack.

Here's a great example from the 2016 season as to why grades and stats may not match up:

In 2016, Atlanta Falcons edge rusher Vic Beasley led the NFL in sacks in a breakout season for the NFC Champions, but he was only the 31st-ranked edge rusher in terms of PFF pass-rushing grade. Here are some of the things to note about how Beasley rated in our system:



make the play. PFF grading takes into account the quality of the play made to get the sack, and excellent plays to defeat blocks will be graded higher than sacks where the quarterback just happened to be flushed past a player as he was being blocked only to get taken down.

Pressures matter

All pass-rushers are trying to sack the quarterback, but even the best will only do so on around three percent of their snaps on the field. Hits and hurries combine with sacks to form a much more robust picture of total pressure generated.

Pressure that does not result in a sack is important too, as just pressuring the quarterback sees an average drop in passer rating of 32.0 points from 94.4 to 61.8 over the past 10 years. That's the equivalent of turning Ben Roethlisberger into Blaine Gabbert just by hurrying him in the pocket.

Beasley led the league in sacks, but he was just 18th even among edge defenders when it comes to total pressures. Compare that to a player like Oakland's Khalil Mack who led the league with 96 combined sacks, hits and hurries, and Beasley has a significant deficit in total pressure.

When we used our analytics to run numbers to find out just how valuable pressure was compared to sacks, our Expected Points Added data showed that a sack is worth around 2.1 pressures of any other kind. So, a player like Mack would only need to have had an extra 11 hits or hurries to have added more value as a pass-rusher than Beasley despite having five fewer sacks over the season. Mack, in reality, had 40 more pressures, and so had a significantly higher PFF grade than Beasley.

Run defense matters

Mack's overall grade of 95.2 was also far higher than Beasley's 74.2 because Khalil Mack was one of the best run defenders in the game, capable of shedding blocks and knifing into the backfield to blow up plays. Beasley wasn't nearly as accomplished in this area, an area that can get lost in all the talk of sacks but is counted in the PFF grading.

HOW DO WE USE IT?

The PFF grading dates back to 2006 for NFL and 2014 for college football, and we've gleaned many unique insights along the way. As mentioned, context is key as each position group comes with its own challenges when trying to isolate each player from a grading perspective. We understand that PFF grade is not perfect, but it's also a unique look at a player's production, and when paired with PFF's advanced data, it's one of the most powerful tools in the game. PFF grading is both descriptive and predictive, and in many cases, we've debunked myths about traditional stats, showing that the production grade is a better indicator of what happened on the field and what will happen going forward.

Season-level Player Grades are included with [PFF EDGE](#)

- PFF EDGE gives you access to the most popular Player Grades features, [and much more](#).
- Rankings by position, player grades and snap counts for the current season
- Grades for each facet of a player's game (receiving, run blocking, coverage etc.) on a 0-100 scale.
- Head to head matchup charts featuring multiple offensive and defensive formations.
- Full grades for each player in the NFL by team roster and position.

Game-Level Player Grades and Premium Stats 2.0 is included in [PFF ELITE](#)

- Premium Stats includes 0-100 grades for teams and players by week.
- PFF Signature Stats by position and week.
- Pre-snap position tables show how often a player lined up at each position per game.

- Historical game grades and performance data, including the playoffs, back to 2008.
- Grades for each facet of a player's game (receiving, run blocking, coverage etc.) on a 0-100 scale.
- PFF Greenline game projections [and much more](#).

Begin your journey into PFF Player Grades today. Choose the [subscription that suits you here](#).