

CORNERS VS SAFETIES: A BRIEF ANALYSIS by Tony Villiotti

In past analyses **DRAFTMETRICS** has grouped corners and safeties into one category as defensive backs. With the recent expansion of its data base, **DRAFTMETRICS** is now able to look at corners and safeties individually and did so for the 1991 through 2010 drafts. A more in-depth analysis will be undertaken later this year.

It is generally believed that corner back is a more valuable position, and requires a more unique set of skills, than does safety. Draft patterns tend to bear this out. During the study period almost 100 more corners were selected than safeties during the first four rounds of the draft. From rounds five through seven the numbers selected are about even.

The following table shows a comparison of various factors by round for corners and safeties and then combined. The following information is shown in the table:

- Number of players drafted
- Percentage of rookie starters
- Percentage of players who start for at least one season
- Percentage of players who play at least one NFL season

Round	Corners				Safeties				Combined			
	# Drafted	Rookie Starters	Start 1 yr +	Play 1 yr +	# Drafted	Rookie Starters	Start 1 yr +	Play 1 yr +	# Drafted	Rookie Starters	Start 1 yr +	Play 1 yr +
1 st	78	54%	90%	100%	29	55%	100%	100%	107	54%	93%	100%
2 nd	72	28%	74%	100%	67	33%	87%	100%	139	30%	80%	100%
3 rd	75	17%	43%	99%	53	15%	49%	96%	128	16%	45%	98%
4 th	76	9%	38%	92%	59	10%	48%	97%	135	10%	42%	94%
5 th	75	4%	17%	88%	70	11%	41%	89%	145	8%	29%	88%
6 th	61	2%	13%	74%	70	10%	27%	86%	131	6%	21%	80%
7 th	69	4%	13%	70%	71	7%	32%	86%	140	6%	23%	76%
8 th +	19	5%	21%	58%	20	15%	35%	60%	39	10%	28%	59%

Some observations:

- Although nearly three times more corners are selected, corners and safeties selected in the first round are about equally successful on a percentage basis
 - There is a 50/50 chance of a first round defensive back being a rookie starter
 - A starter is someone who starts at least eight games in a season
- Virtually every defensive back chosen in the first three rounds will make an NFL roster
 - Only three third round choices did not and two of those were 2010 draftees who were injured and missed the 2010 season

- The percentage of safeties who become started at least one season is higher than corners in every draft round
 - This is much more pronounced in rounds five through seven
 - 30 of 205 corners draftees started at least one season
 - 71 of 211 safety draftees started at least one season
 - Every safety drafted in the first round started at least one season
- The overall conclusion is that corners are more highly valued but that safeties are the less risky pick