

## TRADE WARS by Tony Villiotti

### SUMMARY

#### Purpose

All NFL trades from 1990 through 2009 were studied to determine 1) whether there are any historical lessons to be learned, 2) the proclivities of each NFL team in the trade market and 3) whether any NFL teams have been particularly successful or unsuccessful in the trade market.

#### Background

- There were 985 trades from 1990 through 2009
- 85% of the trades were (1) players exchanged for draft choices and (2) trade-ups
- Most frequent traders: Packers, Patriots, Cowboys, Raiders, Dolphins
- Least frequent traders: Bengals, Giants, Texans, Bills, Cardinals, Titans

#### Players For Draft Choices

- 45% of all trades are Players for Draft Choices
- 25% of the 441 trades involved choices in the first three rounds
- Trade outcomes vary by round – you get what you pay for
  - 1<sup>st</sup> round outcomes: 59% positive, 14% negative, 27% neutral
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> round outcomes: 38% positive, 28% negative, 34% neutral
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> round outcomes: 29% positive, 34% negative, 37% neutral
- QBs are the position most often traded for in rounds 1-3 but are the most risky
- WRs are the second most popular trade position and are the safest bet
- Most successful traders: Chiefs, Jets
- Least successful trader: Ravens

#### Trade-Ups

- 40% of all trades are Trade-ups
- 50% of Trade-Ups occur in the first two rounds of the draft
- Trade outcomes:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> round: 50-50 chance that trade will have a positive outcome
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> round: Less than 50% chance of a positive outcome
- Most frequent traders: Patriots, Cowboys, Packers
- Least frequent traders: Bengals, Giant, Bills, Texans
- Most successful 1<sup>st</sup> round trade-ups: Panthers, Patriots, Seahawks, Cowboys
- Least successful 1<sup>st</sup> round trade-ups: Eagles, Redskins, Raiders

#### Player for Player Trades

- 6% of all trades are Player for Player trades
- Trades are seldom significant

## **INTRODUCTION**

In *Team Building: A Primer*, **DRAFTMETRICS** analyzed the methods by which NFL rosters are built. That analysis indicated that players acquired in trades accounted for only about 6% of all games started in the NFL from 1990 through 2009. *Team Building: A Primer*, though, did not consider the impact of transactions where a team “trades up” to improve its draft position. Players taken with such selections were included as being acquired through the draft, which is by far the predominant means of acquiring players (accounting for 56% of all starts versus 29% by veteran free agents). In *Trade Wars*, **DRAFTMETRICS** does include trade-ups as an inherent part of its analysis of trade activity.

A complete listing of all 985 trades made from 1990 through 2009 is included in the “Data Bases” section of this website. **DRAFTMETRICS** acknowledges that some trades that occurred during the study period may have been overlooked due to the nature of the available data. A variety of sources were used to accumulate the trades and **DRAFTMETRICS** continues to look for evidence of additional trades. Any overlooked trades will be added to the data base when discovered.

For purposes of this article, **DRAFTMETRICS** studied all trades made during the 1990-2009 time period. Each trade was placed into one of the following categories.

- Players exchanged for one or more draft choices (441 trades)
- Trade-ups that improve a team’s draft position (394 trades)
- Players exchanged for other players (62 trades)
- Players exchanged for a combination of players and draft choices (53 trades)
- “Past Considerations” trades(26 trades)
  - No such trades have been made since 1999
- Consideration provided for signing a coach (4 trades)
- Other, including 3 three-way trades (5 trades)

It is recognized that the evaluation of more recent trades could change as the careers of the involved players evolve. Evaluations are done as of the end of the 2009 season.

This article will focus on the two most frequent types of trades, which account for 85% of all trade transactions, while also touching briefly on player for player trades. **DRAFTMETRICS** will determine 1) whether there are any historical lessons to be learned, 2) the proclivities of each NFL team in the trade market and 3) whether any NFL teams have been particularly successful or unsuccessful in the trade market.

## **AN OVERALL LOOK AT TRADE TENDENCIES OF NFL TEAMS**

**DRAFTMETRICS** reviewed the number and types of trades made by each NFL team. There is a wide variation in the level of trade activity. The teams involved in the most trades were the

Packers (119), the Patriots (106), the Cowboys (100), the Raiders (97) and the Dolphins (95). The teams involved in the fewest number of trades are the Bengals (17), the Giants (17), the Texans (21), the Bills (32), the Cardinals (34) and the Titans (34). The following table lists each NFL team and their types of trade transactions:

**Table: Trade Participation by Team**

| Team        | Player For Choice | Trade-Up | Player For Player | Combo | Other | Total | Rank |
|-------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| 49ers       | 25                | 40       | 4                 | 1     | 5     | 75    | 10   |
| Bears       | 25                | 22       | 3                 | 5     | 0     | 55    | 19   |
| Bengals     | 7                 | 5        | 4                 | 1     | 0     | 17    | 31   |
| Bills       | 19                | 9        | 3                 | 0     | 1     | 32    | 29   |
| Broncos     | 37                | 26       | 4                 | 10    | 4     | 81    | 6    |
| Browns      | 21                | 19       | 8                 | 2     | 3     | 53    | 21   |
| Bucs        | 40                | 23       | 4                 | 1     | 3     | 71    | 12   |
| Cardinals   | 19                | 11       | 2                 | 2     | 0     | 34    | 27   |
| Chargers    | 30                | 22       | 2                 | 4     | 0     | 58    | 18   |
| Chiefs      | 33                | 14       | 2                 | 3     | 2     | 54    | 20   |
| Colts       | 19                | 19       | 2                 | 2     | 0     | 42    | 25   |
| Cowboys     | 37                | 52       | 5                 | 2     | 4     | 100   | 3    |
| Dolphins    | 46                | 32       | 8                 | 8     | 1     | 95    | 5    |
| Eagles      | 28                | 38       | 6                 | 5     | 1     | 78    | 8    |
| Falcons     | 32                | 22       | 4                 | 6     | 1     | 65    | 15   |
| Giants      | 7                 | 8        | 1                 | 1     | 0     | 17    | 31   |
| Jaguars     | 15                | 24       | 3                 | 1     | 0     | 43    | 24   |
| Jets        | 34                | 27       | 9                 | 7     | 4     | 81    | 6    |
| Lions       | 27                | 29       | 4                 | 4     | 0     | 64    | 16   |
| Packers     | 41                | 43       | 14                | 6     | 15    | 119   | 1    |
| Panthers    | 15                | 18       | 1                 | 2     | 2     | 38    | 26   |
| Patriots    | 37                | 56       | 3                 | 3     | 7     | 106   | 2    |
| Raiders     | 45                | 40       | 1                 | 3     | 8     | 97    | 4    |
| Rams        | 47                | 20       | 4                 | 5     | 1     | 77    | 9    |
| Ravens      | 28                | 32       | 3                 | 1     | 6     | 70    | 13   |
| Redskins    | 34                | 30       | 3                 | 5     | 0     | 72    | 11   |
| Saints      | 33                | 22       | 6                 | 6     | 2     | 69    | 14   |
| Seahawks    | 27                | 25       | 3                 | 5     | 1     | 61    | 17   |
| Steelers    | 22                | 19       | 0                 | 1     | 2     | 44    | 23   |
| Texans      | 7                 | 9        | 4                 | 1     | 0     | 21    | 30   |
| Titans      | 18                | 15       | 0                 | 1     | 0     | 34    | 27   |
| Vikings     | 27                | 17       | 4                 | 2     | 0     | 50    | 22   |
| Total       | 882               | 788      | 124               | 106   | 73    | 1973  |      |
| # of Trades | 441               | 394      | 62                | 53    | 35    | 985   |      |

For any accountants reading this, the total of 1973 represents 985 trades times 2 teams per trade plus 3 trades that included 3 teams.

## **PLAYERS FOR CHOICES**

The most common type of NFL trade is the exchange of players for draft choices, representing 45% of all the trades made during the study period. The 441 “Players for Choices” (PFC) trades involved 527 draft choices along with 454 players. **DRAFTMETRICS** considers each PFC trade to fall into one of three categories – 1) the aggressive pursuit of frontline players, 2) the trading of “spare parts” where one team’s excess player is another’s team’s backup or starter and 3) the trading of problem players (e.g., the Steelers trading Santonio Holmes for a 5<sup>th</sup> round choice).

The **DRAFTMETRICS** analysis focuses solely on trades in the first category. About 25% of the PFC trades involved draft choices in the first three rounds of the draft. Drawing a somewhat arbitrary line, **DRAFTMETRICS** placed all 110 trades involving choices in the first three rounds into the “aggressive pursuit” category”.

Each of the 110 trades was then analyzed and described as having a “positive”, “neutral” or “negative” outcome based on the performance of the player received in the trade as compared to the players selected with the draft choice or choices exchanged for the player. (A neutral outcome indicates that about equal value was exchanged.) For example, Jeff George was traded to the Falcons for draft choices that turned out to be Bryant Young, James Bostic and Marvin Harrison. This was graded as a negative outcome for the Falcons.

In theory, a PFC trade should be significantly less risky than drafting a player because a team is trading an unknown commodity (a draft choice) for a player who has already performed in the NFL. The following table provides information on the trades in each of the first three rounds, including the outcome of the trades from the perspective of the team acquiring the player. Judging the outcome is, by necessity, pretty subjective, but was done as fairly as possible by **DRAFTMETRICS**.

**Table: Outcome by Draft Choice Traded**

| Round           | # of Trades | % of All Trades | Trade Outcome |          |         |
|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|---------------|----------|---------|
|                 |             |                 | Positive      | Negative | Neutral |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> | 29          | 6.6%            | 17            | 4        | 8       |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> | 40          | 9.1%            | 15            | 11       | 14      |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> | 41          | 9.3%            | 12            | 14       | 15      |
| All             | 110         | 24.9%           | 44            | 29       | 37      |

These results reinforce the belief that you get what you pay for -- trading a 1<sup>st</sup> round choice gets better results than trading a 3<sup>rd</sup> round choice. Furthermore, the results show that only a quarter of all trades have a negative outcome. This is consistent with the belief that PFC trades should be less risky than drafting a player.

**DRAFTMETRICS** next categorized the trades by playing position within each of the rounds to determine if there were any noteworthy trends. The following table shows the results of this analysis.

**Table: Trade Outcome by Playing Position**

| Position        | 1 <sup>st</sup> Round | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Round | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Round | Total | Positive | Negative | Neutral |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------|----------|----------|---------|
| Quarterbacks    | 10                    | 3                     | 11                    | 24    | 9        | 11       | 4       |
| Running Backs   | 1                     | 4                     | 7                     | 12    | 4        | 4        | 4       |
| Wide Receivers  | 10                    | 8                     | 4                     | 22    | 11       | 1        | 10      |
| Tight Ends      | 0                     | 4                     | 1                     | 5     | 3        | 1        | 1       |
| Offensive Line  | 2                     | 4                     | 5                     | 11    | 6        | 3        | 2       |
| Defensive Line  | 5                     | 10                    | 5                     | 20    | 9        | 5        | 6       |
| Linebackers     | 1                     | 1                     | 3                     | 5     | 1        | 1        | 3       |
| Defensive Backs | 0                     | 6                     | 5                     | 11    | 2        | 3        | 6       |
| Kick Returners  | 0                     | 1                     | 0                     | 1     | 0        | 0        | 1       |
| Total           | 29                    | 41 (1)                | 41                    | 111   | 45 (1)   | 29       | 37      |

(1) There are only 40 2<sup>nd</sup> round trades but one trade involved two players being exchanged for a draft choice.

**DRAFTMETRICS** observations are as follows:

- Teams are willing to overpay and take more risks to acquire a quarterback.
- The number of transaction involving wide receivers was surprisingly high
- Trading for a wide receivers is the least risky PFC trade
  - This could mean that either teams are “underpaying” for wide receivers or veteran wide receivers performance is more predictable than other positions.
- The low number of trades for offensive linemen was somewhat surprising

Finally, **DRAFTMETRICS** looked at the trade outcomes for each NFL team. A table reflecting the results is included on the next page. Observations are as follows:

- 3 teams (Bengals, Giants and Steelers) didn’t acquire any players by trading picks in the first three rounds
  - Before any Steelers fan jumps all over me, the Bettis trade is considered a “combination trade” and is not included in the PFC trades as the Steelers received Bettis and a 3<sup>rd</sup> round choice for a 2<sup>nd</sup> rounder and a 4<sup>th</sup> rounder
- 8 teams (Broncos, Chiefs, Cowboys, Dolphins, Falcons, Raiders, Ravens, Redskins) account for nearly half of the trades
- The Chiefs were the most successful traders, with a positive outcome in 5 of their 6 trades and a neutral outcome in the 6<sup>th</sup>
- The Ravens were the least successful, with a negative outcome in 4 of their 6 trades

**Table: Outcome by NFL Team from Perspective of Team Acquiring Player**

|           | # of   | Trade Outcomes |          |         |
|-----------|--------|----------------|----------|---------|
|           | Trades | Positive       | Negative | Neutral |
| 49ers     | 2      | 0              | 1        | 1       |
| Bears     | 1      | 0              | 1        | 0       |
| Bengals   | 0      | 0              | 0        | 0       |
| Bills     | 4      | 2              | 1        | 1       |
| Broncos   | 6      | 2              | 1        | 3       |
| Browns    | 1      | 0              | 0        | 1       |
| Bucs      | 4      | 2              | 1        | 1       |
| Cardinals | 4      | 1              | 0        | 3       |
| Chargers  | 3      | 2              | 0        | 1       |
| Chiefs    | 6      | 5              | 0        | 1       |
| Colts     | 4      | 1              | 2        | 1       |
| Cowboys   | 6      | 3              | 2        | 1       |
| Dolphins  | 8      | 2              | 3        | 3       |
| Eagles    | 3      | 2              | 0        | 1       |
| Falcons   | 8      | 1              | 3        | 4       |
| Giants    | 0      | 0              | 0        | 0       |
| Jaguars   | 1      | 1              | 0        | 0       |
| Jets      | 4      | 3              | 0        | 1       |
| Lions     | 3      | 1              | 0        | 2       |
| Packers   | 1      | 1              | 0        | 0       |
| Panthers  | 1      | 0              | 1        | 0       |
| Patriots  | 3      | 2              | 1        | 0       |
| Raiders   | 6      | 2              | 2        | 2       |
| Rams      | 4      | 2              | 1        | 1       |
| Ravens    | 6      | 1              | 4        | 1       |
| Redskins  | 7      | 3              | 1        | 3       |
| Saints    | 5      | 1              | 2        | 2       |
| Seahawks  | 2      | 1              | 1        | 0       |
| Steelers  | 0      | 0              | 0        | 0       |
| Texans    | 1      | 0              | 1        | 0       |
| Titans    | 2      | 1              | 0        | 1       |
| Vikings   | 4      | 2              | 0        | 2       |
| Total     | 110    | 44             | 29       | 37      |

The following table summarizes the trade activity for the NFL teams for the first three rounds versus all other rounds and in total. “Bought” indicates that a team acquired a player. “Sold” means the team traded a player in exchange for draft choices.

**Table: All Player for Draft Choice Trade Activity by NFL Team**

|              | Rounds 1-3 |            |            | Rounds 4 and Higher |            |            | All Rounds |            |            |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|---------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
|              | Bought     | Sold       | Total      | Bought              | Sold       | Total      | Bought     | Sold       | Total      |
| 49ers        | 2          | 6          | 8          | 6                   | 11         | 17         | 8          | 17         | 25         |
| Bears        | 1          | 1          | 2          | 15                  | 8          | 23         | 16         | 9          | 25         |
| Bengals      | 0          | 3          | 3          | 2                   | 2          | 4          | 2          | 5          | 7          |
| Bills        | 4          | 5          | 9          | 5                   | 5          | 10         | 9          | 10         | 19         |
| Broncos      | 6          | 5          | 11         | 8                   | 18         | 26         | 14         | 23         | 37         |
| Browns       | 1          | 1          | 2          | 9                   | 10         | 19         | 10         | 11         | 21         |
| Bucs         | 4          | 8          | 12         | 14                  | 14         | 28         | 18         | 22         | 40         |
| Cardinals    | 4          | 1          | 5          | 6                   | 8          | 14         | 10         | 9          | 19         |
| Chargers     | 3          | 2          | 5          | 10                  | 15         | 25         | 13         | 17         | 30         |
| Chiefs       | 6          | 2          | 8          | 12                  | 13         | 25         | 18         | 15         | 33         |
| Colts        | 4          | 3          | 7          | 5                   | 7          | 12         | 9          | 10         | 19         |
| Cowboys      | 6          | 2          | 8          | 18                  | 11         | 29         | 24         | 13         | 37         |
| Dolphins     | 8          | 5          | 13         | 15                  | 18         | 33         | 23         | 23         | 46         |
| Eagles       | 3          | 3          | 6          | 11                  | 11         | 22         | 14         | 14         | 28         |
| Falcons      | 8          | 3          | 11         | 10                  | 11         | 21         | 18         | 14         | 32         |
| Giants       | 0          | 1          | 1          | 4                   | 2          | 6          | 4          | 3          | 7          |
| Jaguars      | 1          | 3          | 4          | 6                   | 5          | 11         | 7          | 8          | 15         |
| Jets         | 4          | 5          | 9          | 11                  | 14         | 25         | 15         | 19         | 34         |
| Lions        | 3          | 6          | 9          | 7                   | 11         | 18         | 10         | 17         | 27         |
| Packers      | 1          | 5          | 6          | 20                  | 15         | 35         | 21         | 20         | 41         |
| Panthers     | 1          | 2          | 3          | 11                  | 1          | 12         | 12         | 3          | 15         |
| Patriots     | 3          | 8          | 11         | 11                  | 15         | 26         | 14         | 23         | 37         |
| Raiders      | 6          | 4          | 10         | 13                  | 22         | 35         | 19         | 26         | 45         |
| Rams         | 4          | 6          | 10         | 19                  | 18         | 37         | 23         | 24         | 47         |
| Ravens       | 6          | 1          | 7          | 16                  | 5          | 21         | 22         | 6          | 28         |
| Redskins     | 7          | 2          | 9          | 17                  | 8          | 25         | 24         | 10         | 34         |
| Saints       | 5          | 4          | 9          | 14                  | 10         | 24         | 19         | 14         | 33         |
| Seahawks     | 2          | 3          | 5          | 16                  | 6          | 22         | 18         | 9          | 27         |
| Steelers     | 0          | 1          | 1          | 4                   | 17         | 21         | 4          | 18         | 22         |
| Texans       | 1          | 1          | 2          | 3                   | 2          | 5          | 4          | 3          | 7          |
| Titans       | 2          | 3          | 5          | 4                   | 9          | 13         | 6          | 12         | 18         |
| Vikings      | 4          | 5          | 9          | 9                   | 9          | 18         | 13         | 14         | 27         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>110</b> | <b>110</b> | <b>220</b> | <b>331</b>          | <b>331</b> | <b>662</b> | <b>441</b> | <b>441</b> | <b>882</b> |

“All Rounds” is the sum of “Rounds 1-3” and “Rounds 4 and Higher”

This table shows that certain teams, whether by design or chance, can be categorized as either buyers or sellers. Buyers tend to acquire players in exchange for draft choices, while sellers stockpile draft choices by selling excess talent.

The buyers include the Bears, Cowboys, Panthers, Ravens, Redskins and Seahawks. The sellers include the 49ers, Broncos, Lions, Patriots, Raiders, Steelers and Titans.

### **TRADING UP**

The second most frequent type of trade is “trading up” where a team improves its draft position in a round by acquiring another team’s draft choice. There were 394 trade-ups, representing 40% of all trades. In contrast to the PFC transactions, these trades are more likely to involve early round draft choices. The breakdown by rounds is as follows:

- 1<sup>st</sup> round – 107 trades or 27.2% of all trade-ups
- 2<sup>nd</sup> round – 89 trades or 22.5% of all trade-ups
- 3<sup>rd</sup> round – 48 trades or 12.2% of all trade-ups
- 4<sup>th</sup> round – 58 trades or 14.7% of all trade-ups
- 5<sup>th</sup> round – 47 trades or 11.9% of all trade-ups
- 6<sup>th</sup> round – 25 trades or 6.4% of all trade-ups
- 7<sup>th</sup> round and after – 20 trades or 5.1% of all trade-ups

Since the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> round transactions account for half the trades and have the greatest impact in terms of landing top players, **DRAFTMETRICS** focused its analysis on the 196 trade-ups occurring in those rounds.

The first question addressed was whether trading up has historically been a good strategy. Each trade was reviewed from the perspective of the team trading up with outcome categorized as “positive”, “neutral” or “negative”, just like the analysis in the preceding section. The performance of the player selected with the higher choice was compared to the performance of the players selected with the traded draft choices or players. For example, in 1990 the Cowboys traded with the Patriots to move up 10 spots and select Russell Maryland. The Patriots selected Pat Harlow and Jerome Henderson. The careers of Harlow and Henderson were compared to Maryland’s career and the Cowboys received credit for a positive result. The results were as follows:

- 1<sup>st</sup> round
  - 40 trades had a positive outcome
  - 37 trades had a negative outcome
  - 30 trades had a neutral outcome
- 2<sup>nd</sup> round
  - 28 trades had a positive outcome
  - 37 trades had a negative outcome
  - 24 trades had a neutral outcome

These results indicate that trading up is a 50-50 proposition in the first round with plenty of examples of both success and failure. The following trades are examples of some of the successful trade-ups:

- Cowboys move up 4 spots in a trade with the Steelers to draft Emmitt Smith in exchange for draft choices that were used to select Eric Green and Craig Veasey
- Falcons move up 11 spots in a trade with the Patriots to draft Bob Whitfield in exchange for draft choices there were used to select Tony Smith, Tony Sacca and Frankie Smith (who collectively started 10 NFL games)
- Chiefs move up 5 spots in a trade with the Titans to draft Tony Gonzalez in exchange for draft choices that were used to select Kenny Holmes, Scott Sanderson, Keith Poole and Dennis Stallings
- Redskins move up 5 spots in a trade with the Bears to draft Champ Bailey in exchange for draft choices that were used to select Cade McNown, D'Wayne Bates, Warrick Holdman and Jerry Wisne

And giving equal time to the bad trades, here are among the worst:

- Chargers move up 1 spot in a trade with the Cardinals to select Ryan Leaf in exchange for Eric Metcalf, Patrick Sapp and draft choices used to select Andre Wadsworth, Corey Chavous and David Boston
- Bengals move up 4 spots in a trade with the Panthers to draft Kijana Carter in exchange for draft choices that were used to select Kerry Collins and Shawn King
- Eagles move up 5 spots in a trade with the Bucs to draft Mike Mamula in exchange for draft choices that were used to selected Warren Sapp and, ultimately, Derek Brooks
- Chiefs move up 2 spots in a trade with the Cowboys to select Ryan Sims in exchange for draft choices used to select Roy Williams, Derek Ross and Zuriel Smith.

Regarding trade-ups in the second round, history would indicate that teams would be better off just staying put as there are more negative than positive outcomes. There are unquestionably successful trade-ups, (i.e., 49ers trading up to draft Ricky Watters in exchange for draft selections used to pick Lamer Rogers and Rob Carpenter) but the negative outcomes outnumber the positives. Several glaring ones are the Patriots trading up 16 spots to select WR Chad Jackson, while Greg Jennings was selected by the Packers in the spot vacated by the Patriots. Similarly, the Steelers moved up six spots to take DB Richard Colclough, allowing the Colts to select Bob Sanders with the choice received from the Steelers.

The table on the following page shows the trade up and, conversely, the trade down activity of all NFL teams. There is a wide range in the level of trade-up/trade down activity in the first two rounds among NFL teams. Some highlights are as follows:

- Most active in trading up: 49ers (13 trades), Patriots (13), Cowboys (12), Lions (11)
- Least active in trading up: Bengals (1), Texans (1), Bills (2), Titans (2)
- Most active in trading down: Cowboys (20), 49ers (11), Patriots (11)
- Least active in trading down: Bill (2), Giants (2), Jaguars (2)
- Main wheeler-dealers: 49ers, Cowboys, Patriots

The following table shows the tendencies of all NFL for various rounds of the draft and overall. A listing in the “Trade-Up” column indicates a tendency to trading up in the draft. Appearing in the “Trade-Down” column shows a tendency to trade down in the draft. The balanced column shows a balanced approach with no bias toward either trading up or trading down.

**Table: NFL Teams Categorized by Approach to Trading Up or Down**

|                                 | Trade-Up  | Trade-Down   | Balanced  |
|---------------------------------|---|--|---|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Round           | Bucs, Jets, Packers, Panthers, Raiders, Ravens, Redskins, Saints                      | Bears, Browns, Chargers, Dolphins, Rams, Seahawks, Titans  | 49ers, Bengals, Bills, Broncos, Cardinals, Chiefs, Colts, Cowboys, Eagles, Falcons, Giants, Jaguars, Lions, Patriots, Steelers, Texans, Vikings |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Round           | Bills, Broncos, Browns, Chargers, Falcons, Jaguars, Lions, Patriots, Vikings          | Bears, Bucs, Cowboys, Packers, Panthers, Ravens, Saints, Titans  | 49ers, Bengals, Cardinals, Chiefs, Colts, Dolphins, Eagles, Giants, Jets, Raiders, Rams, Redskins, Seahawks, Steelers, Texans                   |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> Round and After | 49ers, Browns, Chargers, Colts, Giants, Lions, Raiders, Rams, Saints, Titans, Vikings | Bears, Bucs, Cardinals, Dolphins, Eagles, Falcons, Packers, Patriots, Redskins, Seahawks, Steelers, Texans | Bengals, Bills, Broncos, Chiefs, Cowboys, Jaguars, Jets, Panthers, Ravens   |
| All Rounds                      | 49ers, Bills, Browns, Chargers, Colts, Giants, Jets, Lions, Raiders, Vikings          | Bears, Bucs, Cardinals, Cowboys, Dolphins, Eagles, Packers, Patriots, Seahawks, Texans, Titans             | Bengals, Broncos, Chiefs, Falcons, Jaguars, Panthers, Rams, Ravens, Redskins, Saints, Steelers  |

**Table: Trade Up and Trade Down Activity by Round for Each NFL Team**

|           | 1st Round |      | 2nd |      | 3rd |      | 4th |      | 5th |      | 6th |      | 7th |      | 8th |      | Total |      |       |
|-----------|-----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-------|------|-------|
|           | Up        | Down | Up  | Down | Up  | Down | Up  | Down | Up  | Down | Up  | Down | Up  | Down | Up  | Down | Up    | Down | Total |
| 49ers     | 7         | 6    | 6   | 5    | 3   | 1    | 3   | 2    | 1   | 0    | 2   | 1    | 2   | 0    | 0   | 1    | 24    | 16   | 40    |
| Bears     | 1         | 4    | 1   | 5    | 0   | 0    | 1   | 4    | 1   | 1    | 0   | 1    | 0   | 3    | 0   | 0    | 4     | 18   | 22    |
| Bengals   | 1         | 2    | 0   | 1    | 1   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 2     | 3    | 5     |
| Bills     | 2         | 1    | 3   | 1    | 0   | 1    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 1   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 6     | 3    | 9     |
| Broncos   | 3         | 3    | 3   | 1    | 2   | 1    | 1   | 4    | 3   | 1    | 1   | 1    | 1   | 1    | 0   | 0    | 14    | 12   | 26    |
| Browns    | 2         | 4    | 3   | 0    | 1   | 0    | 3   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 2   | 2    | 2   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 13    | 6    | 19    |
| Bucs      | 4         | 2    | 1   | 4    | 0   | 2    | 3   | 1    | 0   | 2    | 0   | 2    | 1   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 9     | 13   | 22    |
| Cardinals | 2         | 2    | 1   | 2    | 0   | 1    | 1   | 1    | 0   | 1    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 4     | 7    | 11    |
| Chargers  | 1         | 3    | 6   | 0    | 2   | 0    | 2   | 1    | 4   | 0    | 2   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 1   | 0    | 18    | 4    | 22    |
| Chiefs    | 3         | 3    | 1   | 1    | 0   | 0    | 1   | 1    | 1   | 1    | 0   | 1    | 1   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 7     | 7    | 14    |
| Colts     | 1         | 2    | 3   | 3    | 1   | 1    | 3   | 0    | 3   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 2   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 13    | 6    | 19    |
| Cowboys   | 8         | 9    | 4   | 11   | 1   | 2    | 1   | 4    | 6   | 1    | 2   | 2    | 0   | 1    | 0   | 0    | 22    | 30   | 52    |
| Dolphins  | 1         | 4    | 4   | 4    | 2   | 3    | 2   | 3    | 2   | 1    | 2   | 0    | 0   | 4    | 0   | 0    | 13    | 19   | 32    |
| Eagles    | 4         | 6    | 3   | 2    | 2   | 5    | 4   | 3    | 0   | 5    | 0   | 1    | 0   | 3    | 0   | 0    | 13    | 25   | 38    |
| Falcons   | 4         | 4    | 4   | 1    | 0   | 0    | 1   | 0    | 0   | 4    | 0   | 1    | 2   | 1    | 0   | 0    | 11    | 11   | 22    |
| Giants    | 2         | 1    | 1   | 1    | 2   | 0    | 1   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 6     | 2    | 8     |
| Jaguars   | 2         | 1    | 3   | 1    | 2   | 4    | 1   | 2    | 3   | 2    | 2   | 1    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 13    | 11   | 24    |
| Jets      | 7         | 3    | 3   | 3    | 2   | 4    | 1   | 1    | 1   | 1    | 1   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 15    | 12   | 27    |
| Lions     | 3         | 2    | 8   | 3    | 5   | 1    | 1   | 0    | 3   | 1    | 1   | 1    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 21    | 8    | 29    |
| Packers   | 5         | 3    | 1   | 5    | 4   | 5    | 2   | 7    | 3   | 3    | 1   | 1    | 1   | 2    | 0   | 0    | 17    | 26   | 43    |
| Panthers  | 4         | 2    | 1   | 4    | 2   | 1    | 1   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 1   | 2    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 9     | 9    | 18    |
| Patriots  | 6         | 8    | 7   | 3    | 1   | 8    | 5   | 5    | 1   | 6    | 1   | 3    | 0   | 2    | 0   | 0    | 21    | 35   | 56    |
| Raiders   | 6         | 0    | 5   | 4    | 4   | 0    | 5   | 2    | 3   | 1    | 4   | 1    | 4   | 1    | 0   | 0    | 31    | 9    | 40    |
| Rams      | 2         | 4    | 0   | 1    | 2   | 2    | 4   | 1    | 2   | 1    | 0   | 1    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 10    | 10   | 20    |
| Ravens    | 7         | 4    | 3   | 5    | 3   | 1    | 0   | 5    | 1   | 2    | 1   | 0    | 1   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 16    | 17   | 33    |
| Redskins  | 6         | 4    | 3   | 2    | 2   | 1    | 1   | 5    | 2   | 4    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 14    | 16   | 30    |
| Saints    | 5         | 2    | 0   | 4    | 1   | 1    | 1   | 2    | 3   | 1    | 1   | 0    | 1   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 12    | 10   | 22    |
| Seahawks  | 3         | 8    | 3   | 2    | 1   | 1    | 1   | 0    | 0   | 4    | 1   | 0    | 0   | 1    | 0   | 0    | 9     | 16   | 25    |
| Steelers  | 2         | 2    | 4   | 3    | 0   | 0    | 2   | 1    | 1   | 2    | 0   | 2    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 9     | 10   | 19    |
| Texans    | 1         | 2    | 0   | 1    | 0   | 1    | 0   | 2    | 0   | 2    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 1     | 8    | 9     |
| Titans    | 2         | 5    | 0   | 4    | 1   | 0    | 2   | 0    | 1   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 6     | 9    | 15    |
| Vikings   | 0         | 1    | 4   | 2    | 1   | 1    | 4   | 1    | 2   | 0    | 0   | 1    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0    | 11    | 6    | 17    |
| Total     | 107       | 107  | 89  | 89   | 48  | 48   | 58  | 58   | 47  | 47   | 25  | 25   | 19  | 19   | 1   | 1    | 394   | 394  | 788   |

**DRAFTMETRICS** also reviewed the outcomes for each NFL team that traded up in the draft with the results reflected in the following table.

**Table: Outcome of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Round Trade-ups by NFL Team**

| Team      | 1st Round |          |         | 2nd Round |          |         | Combined |          |         |
|-----------|-----------|----------|---------|-----------|----------|---------|----------|----------|---------|
|           | Positive  | Negative | Neutral | Positive  | Negative | Neutral | Positive | Negative | Neutral |
| 49ers     | 4         | 3        | 0       | 2         | 2        | 2       | 6        | 5        | 2       |
| Bears     | 0         | 0        | 1       | 0         | 1        | 0       | 0        | 1        | 1       |
| Bengals   | 0         | 1        | 0       | 0         | 0        | 0       | 0        | 1        | 0       |
| Bills     | 0         | 2        | 0       | 3         | 0        | 0       | 3        | 2        | 0       |
| Broncos   | 1         | 2        | 0       | 0         | 2        | 1       | 1        | 4        | 1       |
| Browns    | 0         | 1        | 1       | 1         | 2        | 0       | 1        | 3        | 1       |
| Bucs      | 1         | 1        | 2       | 0         | 1        | 0       | 1        | 2        | 2       |
| Cardinals | 0         | 1        | 1       | 0         | 1        | 0       | 0        | 2        | 1       |
| Chargers  | 0         | 1        | 0       | 3         | 3        | 0       | 3        | 4        | 0       |
| Chiefs    | 1         | 1        | 1       | 0         | 0        | 1       | 1        | 1        | 2       |
| Colts     | 0         | 1        | 0       | 0         | 1        | 2       | 0        | 2        | 2       |
| Cowboys   | 3         | 1        | 4       | 0         | 1        | 3       | 3        | 2        | 7       |
| Dolphins  | 0         | 0        | 1       | 4         | 0        | 0       | 4        | 0        | 1       |
| Eagles    | 0         | 2        | 2       | 1         | 1        | 1       | 1        | 3        | 3       |
| Falcons   | 3         | 1        | 0       | 0         | 2        | 2       | 3        | 3        | 2       |
| Giants    | 0         | 1        | 1       | 0         | 1        | 0       | 0        | 2        | 1       |
| Jaguars   | 1         | 1        | 0       | 1         | 0        | 2       | 2        | 1        | 2       |
| Jets      | 2         | 3        | 2       | 0         | 1        | 2       | 2        | 4        | 4       |
| Lions     | 1         | 1        | 1       | 4         | 3        | 1       | 5        | 4        | 2       |
| Packers   | 2         | 1        | 2       | 0         | 0        | 1       | 2        | 1        | 3       |
| Panthers  | 4         | 0        | 0       | 0         | 0        | 1       | 4        | 0        | 1       |
| Patriots  | 4         | 2        | 0       | 1         | 4        | 2       | 5        | 6        | 2       |
| Raiders   | 1         | 2        | 3       | 1         | 3        | 1       | 2        | 5        | 4       |
| Rams      | 1         | 0        | 1       | 0         | 0        | 0       | 1        | 0        | 1       |
| Ravens    | 3         | 2        | 2       | 2         | 1        | 0       | 5        | 3        | 2       |
| Redskins  | 1         | 4        | 1       | 1         | 2        | 0       | 2        | 6        | 1       |
| Saints    | 1         | 2        | 2       | 0         | 0        | 0       | 1        | 2        | 2       |
| Seahawks  | 3         | 0        | 0       | 2         | 1        | 0       | 5        | 1        | 0       |
| Steelers  | 1         | 0        | 1       | 1         | 2        | 1       | 2        | 2        | 2       |
| Texans    | 0         | 0        | 1       | 0         | 0        | 0       | 0        | 0        | 1       |
| Titans    | 2         | 0        | 0       | 0         | 0        | 0       | 2        | 0        | 0       |
| Vikings   | 0         | 0        | 0       | 1         | 2        | 1       | 1        | 2        | 1       |
| Total     | 40        | 37       | 30      | 28        | 37       | 24      | 68       | 74       | 54      |

The most successful teams in terms of “winning” early round trade-ups were the Dolphins, Panthers, Seahawks, Ravens and Titans. The least successful were the Redskins, Broncos and Raiders.

## **PLAYER FOR PLAYER**

**DRAFTMETRICS** also analyzed the 62 player for player trades and concluded the following:

- These trades are of relatively minor importance in building a team
- 29 of the 62 trades can be described as insignificant with very little value given or received
- 17 of the trades can be described as having a minor impact
  - In this context minor is receiving a player who was a part-time or short-time starter such as Vestee Jackson being acquired by the Dolphins in 1991
- 16 of the trades can be described as having a relatively significant impact
  - In this context, a player is received who starts for several seasons
- The most noteworthy players acquired in player for player trades are Joe Kelly (Jets), Roderick Jones (Bengals), Irv Eatman (Jets), Lester Archambeau (Falcons), Barry Minter (Bears), Troy Drayton (Dolphins), Joey Galloway (Bucs), Santana Moss (Redskins) and Laveranues Coles (Jets)

**DRAFTMETRICS** next analyzed these transactions by NFL team and makes the following observations:

- The Packers are the most frequent trader in this category but the vast majority of their trades are of the insignificant variety.
- At the other end of the spectrum neither the Steelers nor the Titans have made any player for player trades
- No team has really benefitted substantially through player for player trades
- The Cowboys have probably fared the worst, being on the wrong side of three trades:
  - Traded Barry Minter and Vinson Smith, who went on to start a combined 109 games, to the Bears for Kelly Blackwell, Markus Paul and John Roper
  - Trading Kevin Mathis to the Saints for Chris Bordano
  - In the dumping of a problem player, traded Antonio Bryant to the Browns for Quincy Morgan

The following table shows player for player trade data for each NFL team:

**Table: Player for Player Trade Results by NFL Team**

| Team        | No Impact | Minor Impact |      |      | Major Impact |      |      | Total |
|-------------|-----------|--------------|------|------|--------------|------|------|-------|
|             |           | Won          | Lost | Even | Won          | Lost | Even |       |
| 49ers       | 2         | 0            | 1    | 1    | 0            | 0    | 0    | 4     |
| Bears       | 1         | 0            | 1    | 0    | 1            | 0    | 0    | 3     |
| Bengals     | 0         | 2            | 0    | 0    | 1            | 1    | 0    | 4     |
| Bills       | 1         | 0            | 1    | 0    | 0            | 1    | 0    | 3     |
| Broncos     | 2         | 1            | 0    | 0    | 0            | 0    | 1    | 4     |
| Browns      | 3         | 1            | 1    | 1    | 1            | 0    | 1    | 8     |
| Bucs        | 1         | 0            | 0    | 0    | 1            | 1    | 1    | 4     |
| Cardinals   | 0         | 0            | 1    | 0    | 0            | 1    | 0    | 2     |
| Chargers    | 2         | 0            | 0    | 0    | 0            | 0    | 0    | 2     |
| Chiefs      | 0         | 0            | 1    | 0    | 0            | 1    | 0    | 2     |
| Colts       | 1         | 1            | 0    | 0    | 0            | 0    | 0    | 2     |
| Cowboys     | 0         | 0            | 1    | 0    | 0            | 3    | 1    | 5     |
| Dolphins    | 5         | 1            | 0    | 0    | 1            | 1    | 0    | 8     |
| Eagles      | 3         | 2            | 1    | 0    | 0            | 0    | 0    | 6     |
| Falcons     | 2         | 0            | 1    | 0    | 1            | 0    | 0    | 4     |
| Giants      | 1         | 0            | 0    | 0    | 0            | 0    | 0    | 1     |
| Jaguars     | 0         | 1            | 0    | 1    | 1            | 0    | 0    | 3     |
| Jets        | 6         | 0            | 0    | 0    | 2            | 0    | 1    | 9     |
| Lions       | 1         | 1            | 1    | 1    | 0            | 0    | 0    | 4     |
| Packers     | 10        | 1            | 0    | 1    | 1            | 1    | 0    | 14    |
| Panthers    | 1         | 0            | 0    | 0    | 0            | 0    | 0    | 1     |
| Patriots    | 3         | 0            | 0    | 0    | 0            | 0    | 0    | 3     |
| Raiders     | 1         | 0            | 0    | 0    | 0            | 0    | 0    | 1     |
| Rams        | 1         | 0            | 1    | 1    | 0            | 1    | 0    | 4     |
| Ravens      | 2         | 1            | 0    | 0    | 0            | 0    | 0    | 3     |
| Redskins    | 1         | 0            | 0    | 0    | 0            | 1    | 1    | 3     |
| Saints      | 3         | 1            | 1    | 0    | 1            | 0    | 0    | 6     |
| Seahawks    | 2         | 0            | 0    | 0    | 0            | 1    | 0    | 3     |
| Steelers    | 0         | 0            | 0    | 0    | 0            | 0    | 0    | 0     |
| Texans      | 2         | 0            | 0    | 0    | 2            | 0    | 0    | 4     |
| Titans      | 0         | 0            | 0    | 0    | 0            | 0    | 0    | 0     |
| Vikings     | 1         | 1            | 2    | 0    | 0            | 0    | 0    | 4     |
| Total       | 58        | 14           | 14   | 6    | 13           | 13   | 6    | 124   |
| # of Trades | 29        | 17           |      |      | 16           |      |      | 62    |

**EVALUATING TRADES**

**DRAFTMETRICS'** original plan was to evaluate every trade and decide the winner of each trade and then develop a won loss record for every NFL team. Once the analysis was under way, however, it became obvious that this plan was impractical due to the trading and re-trading of draft choices.

Here's an example that perfectly illustrates this point:

- In 1990 the Patriots trade a 4<sup>th</sup> round pick to the Redskins for two 5<sup>th</sup> round choices
- The Patriots then trade one of the 5<sup>th</sup> round picks to the Broncos for a 4<sup>th</sup> round pick in 1991
- The Patriots then trade that 4<sup>th</sup> round pick to the Steelers for a 4<sup>th</sup> round pick and a 5<sup>th</sup> round pick
- They then trade the 4<sup>th</sup> round pick to the Raiders for a 4<sup>th</sup> round pick and a 5<sup>th</sup> round pick
- The Patriots use the 5<sup>th</sup> round pick to select Ben Coates

The Patriots should only receive credit once for acquiring Coates. The dilemma is which trade to associate with Ben Coates and then how you evaluate the trades that don't receive that credit.

**DRAFTMETRICS** has been unable to solve this riddle and is open for any and all suggestions.