



The NFL begins play this week and that means even more people will be making wagers on sports. NFL betting is a much different animal than betting college football. The numbers are smaller and tighter, the talent gaps between the two teams provide less of an edge, and there really isn't much of a home field advantage in the NFL anymore as it pertains to the spread.

To the first point about smaller numbers, the biggest spread in Week One for the NFL is in the game between the Houston Texans and the Miami Dolphins. That number is currently between Texans -11.5 and -13.5. On very rare occasions, a game will go above two touchdowns, but -14 is normally the highest you will see during most weeks of the season. With the exception of a couple offshore sportsbooks still showing -10 or -10.5 for the Chicago Bears against the Indianapolis Colts, the Texans/Dolphins spread is the only one in double digits. That's a drastic change from college football, where there were several spreads that were above three touchdowns in Week One. Last season in the NFL, 48.8% of games were decided by seven points or less.

To the second point about talent gaps, this is a big deal when it comes to the NFL. Obviously, there are good teams and bad teams, but the matchups throughout the game aren't really that lopsided. There are still NFL offensive linemen going up against NFL defensive linemen. Not like in the collegiate game where you have a very good NFL prospect taking on a freshman defensive tackle or a SEC school taking on a Sun Belt Conference team. At the end of the day, all of these players are professionals and clearly have talent, otherwise, they wouldn't be where they are.

As far as home field advantage goes, in 2011, home teams were 123-122-11 against the spread. That's not to say that home field doesn't exist, as things like travel and weather certainly make a difference. Some teams, like the Saints, who went 8-0 against the spread at home in 2011, are tailored for their stadium conditions. Teams like the Bills, Browns, and Packers have more exposure to the harsh weather conditions of their home city. But, home field advantage

really isn't viewed the way that it used to be.

At this point, you may be wondering what some tips are for betting the NFL. For starters, key numbers are one of the biggest. I discussed key numbers in last week's post, but here's a brief overview. Key numbers in the NFL are 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13, and 14. You really won't get many spreads higher than that. If you want to take a favorite your best bet to has as many of those key numbers at your disposal as possible. The most ideal number to get is -2.5.

Think of it in terms of final scores. So many NFL games end 24-21, 17-14, 24-17, 21-10, 28-24 and so on. You want to be on the right side of those numbers and use half points to your advantage. Use the posted total to your advantage. The sportsbooks are really, really good at setting lines, all things considered. If you look at the spread and the total, you can get some clues. If a total is in the high 30s, they're expecting a low-scoring game. If the underdog is +7.5 and the teams are expected to play a low-scoring game, break the game down. If you think it will be close, then you obviously want the +7.5. If the favorite is going to dominate defensively and possibly win 24-10 or 24-3, you can take the favorite.

One of the best weapons as a bettor's disposal during NFL season is something called a Teaser Bet. Teaser bets have lower payouts than straight wagers and have to be combined with other games, but they can be very profitable if done correctly. The way a teaser works is simple. There are four teaser options at most sportsbooks. You can play a six-point teaser, a 6.5-point teaser, a seven-point teaser or a 10-point teaser. These are have various payouts depending on the number of teams in your bet and how many points you are teasing. **You must be at least two teams for a six, 6.5, or seven point teaser and three teams for a 10-point teaser.**

What happens in a teaser bet is that you can add one of the desired amounts of points to a spread. So, let's say that you like the Tennessee Titans against New England on Sunday, but you aren't real confident in betting them at +6. You can add six points to that number and make them +12, adding the key numbers of seven and 10. On the flip side of that, let's say that you think New England will win the game, but you aren't sure by how much. You can add six points to their spread and make them what's called a "pick (PK)". That means that they just have to win the game and it doesn't matter by how much.

The rule with teasers is that you always try to tease through three and seven. The hardest part is finding which games to pair together. At Todd Fuhrman's blog, Todd's Take, Justin Zovas wrote an article about teasers a couple weeks back. In it, he showed that teasing home teams

through three and seven [had a 10.57% return on investment](#) , and individual home teams won 76.1% of the time on a tease that went through three or seven. The overall success rate for teasing one team was 67.5%. Again, the difficult part is finding the right two teams to put together.

Here are some examples of both key numbers and games to look at teasing for Week One of the NFL slate:

Philadelphia -9 @ Cleveland; New Orleans -7 v. Washington

This is a prime opportunity. You're not going to find many people who believe that Cleveland Browns will beat the Philadelphia Eagles. Here, you can tease the Eagles through both seven and three with a 6.5-point teaser, making the Eagles -2.5. Nine is a relatively big spread in the NFL and it only takes one late Browns touchdown for all gamblers' worst nightmares – the backdoor cover. That happens when a team scores a late, “meaningless” touchdown, but it covers the spread. You give yourself a much better chance of a Philadelphia cover with a lower number.

New Orleans falls into the above criteria about teasing through seven and three at home. With a 6.5-point teaser, you would make New Orleans -0.5, which means that they just have to win the game to cover the spread. It is Robert Griffin III's first game and the Saints are ready to erase the bounty scandal from everyone's memory and cheer the city up following Hurricane Isaac's path of flooding and destruction. The Saints are also 19-5 at home over the last three seasons.

Seattle -2.5 @ Arizona

This game opened at a PK, which means that the spread was basically just picking the winner. Because money has poured in on Seattle, the line is now Seattle -2.5. Perception of Seattle is very high, as they have a pretty good defense, a good running back in Marshawn Lynch, and people have seen what Russell Wilson did in the preseason and think highly of that. On the flip side, the Cardinals do not have a solid QB, have issues at RB, and perception of them is low.

Seattle is currently below the key number of three, which means that if you want to bet Seattle, you should do so before you lose that number. If you like Arizona, the spread is trending up above three, which means you can wait on that number to go up to +3.5, and give yourself a better chance to win the bet.

St. Louis +7.5 (-135) v. Detroit

That line should give you some kind of indication about how valuable key numbers are. This specific sportsbook is making you pay an extra 25 cents of vigorish on St. Louis because of that half-point. Instead of the standard -110, where you bet \$110 to win \$100, you now have to bet \$135 to win \$100. At the same time, if you are not concerned about the extra half-point on Detroit's side, -7.5 is +115, so \$100 would return \$115.

Good luck and pick winners.