

Here is a comparison of my playoff predictions for weeks 8, 12, and 15 with the actual results from 2002. I've grouped them in two groups: a) playoff teams and b) teams I predicted had a good chance to make the playoffs, but failed.

PLAYOFF TEAMS

	Week 8	Week 12	Week 15
Oakland	0.266	0.645	0.769
Tennessee	0.187	0.408	0.957
Pittsburgh	0.725	0.706	0.817
NY Jets	0.008	0.289	0.091
Indianapolis	0.635	0.774	0.934
Cleveland	0.237	0.341	0.113
Philadelphia	0.887	0.933	1
Tampa Bay	0.9	0.986	1
Green Bay	0.995	0.999	1
San Francisco	0.857	0.926	1
NY Giants	0.177	0.271	0.273
Atlanta	0.483	0.889	0.826

TEAMS THAT LOOKED GOOD BUT FELL SHORT

	Week 8	Week 12	Week 15
Miami	0.782	0.743	0.886
New England	0.224	0.369	0.38
Denver	0.889	0.67	0.458
San Diego	0.933	0.608	0.338
New Orleans	0.924	0.83	0.901

At first glance, it appears that my program performed very well in the NFC, but pretty poorly in the AFC. In the NFC, by week 8 only half way through the season, five of my top six ranked teams eventually made the playoffs. However in the AFC, I had only correctly picked 2 of the eventual playoff winners. One could do that well picking at random without even looking at the records (expected correct = 16 teams/6 playoff spots = 2.6). Two of the eventual playoff teams (Jets and Browns) I had estimated only had about a 10% chance of making it on week 15 with only 2 weeks remaining in the season. However, I think this is a strength of my program. Eventually unlikely things happen. In this particular year there were 2 very unlikely playoff teams. My program provides a quantitative estimation of the likelihood of those extreme events happening.

Now lets look at how my program did in picking the favorites overall at each stage of the season. Before we do, lets consider what makes a good prediction. Suppose you started keeping track of how well the weatherman was doing. You started keeping track of the days when he predicted it would rain at an 80% chance. If you noticed that it rained

every day that he said there was an 80% chance of rain, you should conclude that his predictions are bad. Instead of an 80% chance of rain, he should be saying it was a 100% chance of rain on those days. A good prediction would mean 1 dry day for every 5 days that he predicted an 80% chance of rain. With this perspective, let's look at the performance of my program.

In week 8 there were 8 teams that I predicted had a 70% chance or better of making the playoffs. We would expect about 6 of these teams to make it and about 2 to fail. In actuality 5 made it and 3 failed. Considering the small sample size, this is acceptable performance.

In week 12 there were 9 teams that I predicted had a 70% chance or better of making the playoffs. We would expect about 6 or 7 of these teams to make it and the rest to fail. In actuality 7 made it and 2 failed. In this case the results were exactly what was expected.

In week 15 (only two weeks remaining in the season) there were 11 teams that I predicted had a 75% chance or better of making the playoffs. Let's pull the teams that had clinched a playoff berth from the evaluation. Of the remaining 7 teams, two missed the playoffs and the remaining teams made it. That is 5 out of 7 or 71%, which is pretty close to expected.

While the above comparisons are rough, and based on small sample size, I do think they show that my program is doing what it is advertised to do.