

# That's So Browns

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12/8/2020

## The Browns are 9-3?

Yes, the Cleveland Browns are now 9-3. They are in a great position to make the playoffs and end the longest current playoff drought in the NFL. Yet those who have been watching the games—close wins and blowout losses—can't shake the feeling that this is *not* a very good team. Let's do some analysis of the Browns' net points to see just how much worse than their record they really are.

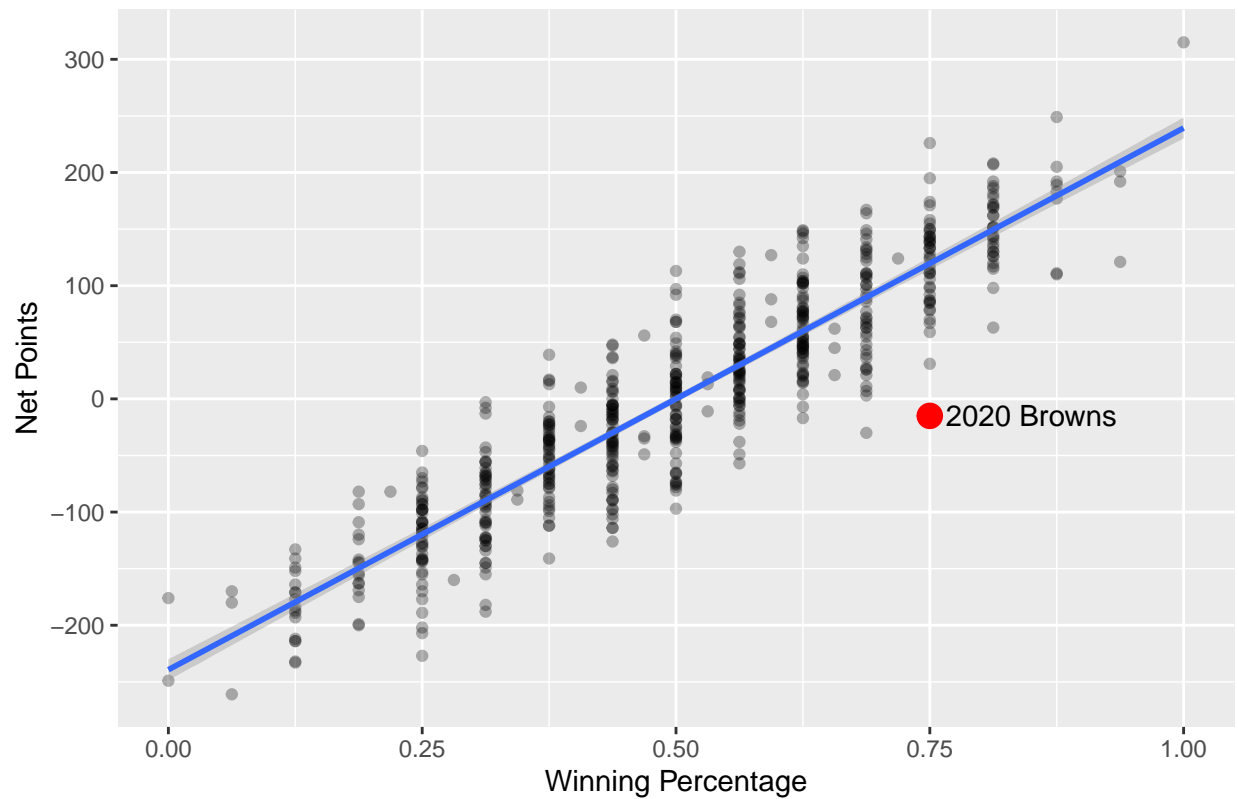
## Analysis

First, I import a dataset of the end-of-season NFL standings from 2002-2020. Since the 2020 season is still in progress, I remove those data points. With the remaining data, I model a team's net points as a function of their winning percentage. I then use this model to find the expected net points of the Cleveland Browns based on their current winning percentage.

The Browns currently have 9 wins and 3 losses for a winning percentage of .750. The model predicts approximately +120 net points for teams with this winning percentage. However, a quick look at the standings reveals that the Browns' *actual* net point value is -15. This means that the Browns are about 135 points below their expected net points! (Put another way: if we instead used net points to predict winning record, the Browns would be expected to have a losing record.)

What's more, we can compare the difference between actual and expected net points to that of previous NFL teams. The residuals of the model give us this exact information: how far above or below their expected net points are each of these teams' actual net points. If the current Browns were included in the model, their residual would be -135. This is 15 points lower than the lowest residual value in the model. Even more impressive, the Browns have managed to underperform (relative to their record) this much in just 12 games, 4 less than the full 16-game slate of every other team in the model.

Expected net points based on winning percentage (NFL, 2002–2019)



## Conclusions

What does this mean? The Browns are on pace to have the worst net point value based on their record of any team since at least 2002. In other words, they are not just worse than their record; no other team in this time frame was as bad as the Browns have been *relative to their record*.

However, there's another way of interpreting these results. Despite being outscored by opponents over 12 games, the Browns have managed to eke out 9 wins. This is either a *very* lucky team, or one that knows how to win close games. A silver—or perhaps brown—lining, if you will.