

VIKINGS

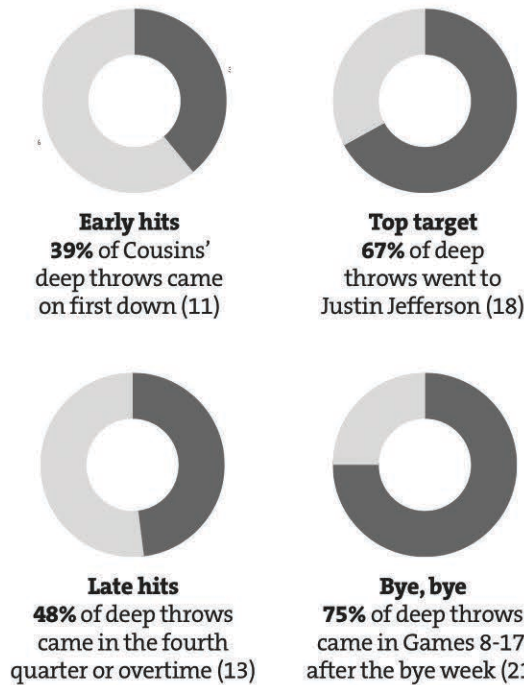
# Gaining a deep understanding

By STAR TRIBUNE STAFF

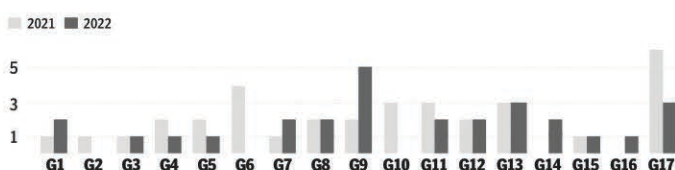
Vikings quarterback Kirk Cousins is coming off one of the most prolific passing seasons of his career. He threw for 4,547 yards, the second-highest total of his career, and according to an offseason report from NFL's Next Gen stats, he was the fifth-best deep passer in the NFL last season. A new coaching staff with head coach Kevin O'Connell's offensive philosophy played a factor, as did the frequency in which the Vikings trailed during the second half in 2022. A deep pass is often considered a throw traveling 20 yards or more in the air before completion. So how did Cousins fare on deep passes last season? Research by the Star Tribune found 28 completions by Cousins were of 20 yards or more, with Justin Jefferson the primary receiver.



**INSIDE THE NUMBERS**  
A closer look at the 28 deep passes Kirk Cousins completed in 17 games last season.



**HOW 2022 COMPARES TO 2021**  
Cousins actually completed more deep passes in 2021 (34), the season before O'Connell took the reins of the offense, with Mike Zimmer as his head coach and Klint Kubiak as his offensive coordinator. However, the total was boosted by six deep completions in the final game of the season (a 31-17 win over Chicago) that lifted the Vikings' record to 8-9.



**COMPLETED AIR YARDS**  
Kirk Cousins finished second in the NFL last season with 2,569 air yards (total yardage his passes traveled in the air), ahead of Patrick Mahomes and Tom Brady. It accounted for 56.4% of his total passing yardage.

Quarterback	Air Yds.	Pct.
1. Josh Allen	2,691	62.8
2. Kirk Cousins	2,569	56.4
3. Geno Smith	2,506	57.9
4. Patrick Mahomes	2,397	45.6
5. Tom Brady	2,379	50.6
6. Joe Burrow	2,319	51.8
7. Tua Tagovailoa	2,267	63.8
8. Justin Herbert	2,246	47.6
9. Jared Goff	2,151	48.4
10. Trevor Lawrence	2,111	51.3

Sources: NFL Next Gen stats, pro-football-reference.com, vikings.com

Photo by ABBIE PARR Associated Press