

VIKINGS JUSTIN JEFFERSON

More than a hit — a chart topper

Story by MARYJO WEBSTER and ANDREW KRAMMER
Photo by ANTHONY SOUFFLÉ • Star Tribune staff

Justin Jefferson's skyrocketing ascension reached new heights during the 2022 NFL season. Before it began, the Vikings superstar said he wanted to be known as the league's best receiver. He made a compelling case by leading in nearly every receiving category. By Thanksgiving night, Jefferson had passed Vikings legend and Hall of Fame receiver Randy Moss for most yardage in a player's first three NFL seasons. At age 23, he broke a record that stood for nearly 22 years with a leaping downfield grab through a Patriots double team of Devin McCourty and Jonathan Jones. Jefferson has broken numerous records in his brief but dominant pro career. His most impressive season yet — unanimous first-team All-Pro selection, Pro Bowler and Associated Press Offensive Player of the Year who also received Most Valuable Player votes — bolstered his feverish pursuit of the game's greats.

HEAVY WORKLOAD IN 2022

Few players, and no other receivers, shouldered a heavier burden for their team than Jefferson. He accounted for 28.3% of the Vikings' yards from scrimmage, trailing only a trio of running backs — Tennessee's Derrick Henry (36.1%), Las Vegas' Josh Jacobs (32.9%) and Cleveland's Nick Chubb (28.5%) — for the largest share for one team by one player.

1,833 yards

Justin Jefferson
• 1,809 yds. receiving
• 24 yds. rushing
• 17 games

720 yards

Adam Thielen
• 716 yds. receiving
• 4 yds. rushing
• 17 games

1,468 yards

Dalvin Cook
• 1,173 yds. rushing
• 295 yds. receiving
• 17 games

656 yards

K.J. Osborn
• 650 yds. receiving
• 6 yds. rushing
• 17 games

519 yards

T.J. Hockenson
• 519 yds. receiving
• 10 games

97 yards

Kirk Cousins
• 97 yds. rushing
• 17 games

HISTORIC FEAT

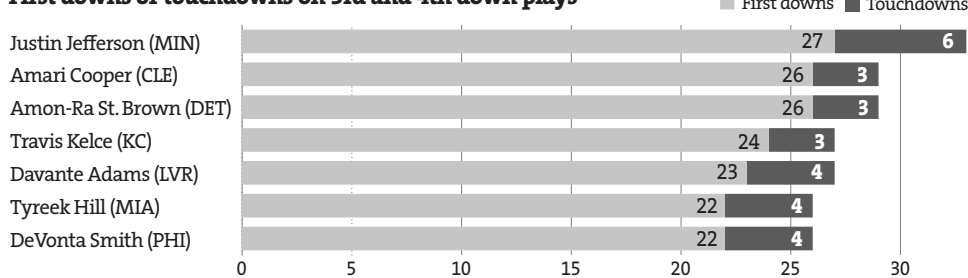
Jefferson claimed two Vikings franchise records in 2022 with 128 catches for 1,809 receiving yards, becoming the youngest player to lead the league in both — surpassing Packers receiver Don Hutson, who had held the mark since 1936.

CLUTCH PLAYS

THRIVED ON THIRD, FOURTH DOWN IN 2022

Even though the Vikings' final fourth-down pass in the playoff loss to the Giants didn't go his way, nobody was more productive this season in the league on third and fourth down. Jefferson led the NFL with 27 first downs and six touchdowns on third and fourth down, according to Pro Football Reference. The Browns' Amari Cooper and Lions' Amon-Ra St. Brown were the closest to matching Jefferson in those key moments. Jefferson often fueled the Vikings' eight game-winning drives — with quarterback Kirk Cousins tying the single-season NFL record set by Matthew Stafford in 2016 — with big plays while trailing or tied in close games. Jefferson's catches on third and fourth down included the one-handed, 32-yard grab to convert a fourth-and-18 in Buffalo; a 47-yard, third-down catch in Washington while trailing 17-7 in the fourth quarter; and a 17-yard, go-ahead touchdown against the Giants on third down with a few minutes left in the Dec. 24 win.

First downs or touchdowns on 3rd and 4th down plays

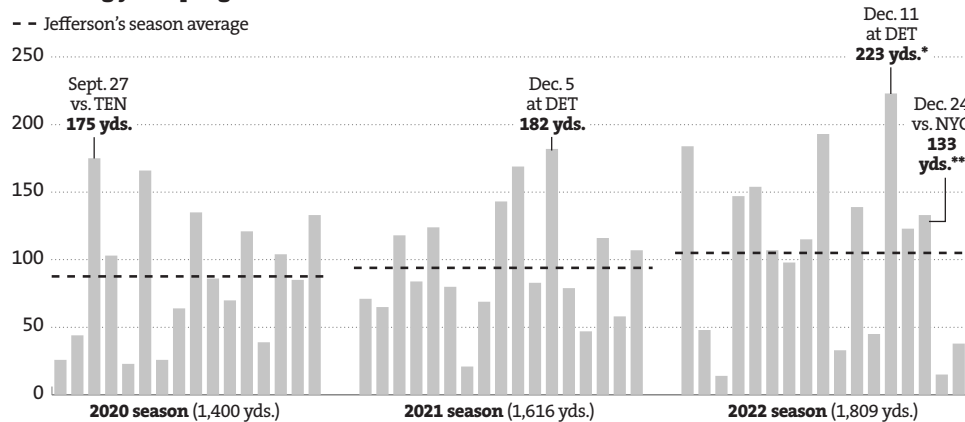


RECORD RE-SETTER

REACHED CAREER HIGHS IN YARDS THREE TIMES

From the jump, Jefferson carved up defenses with big game after big game. He reset his single-game career high three times, topping out with the Vikings' franchise record of 223 yards in a December loss in Detroit. After Jefferson had 133 receiving yards against the Giants on Dec. 24, he had topped the century mark 24 times in 48 career games. Jefferson holds the NFL record for most 100-yard receiving games in a player's first three and four seasons.

Receiving yards per game



* Jefferson broke Sammy White's franchise record for receiving yards in a regular game.
** Jefferson broke Randy Moss's franchise record for receiving yards in the regular season.

SHORT AND DEEP THREAT

As one of the NFL's most versatile threats, Jefferson consistently hit singles (a league-high 80 first downs) and home runs (a league-high 28 catches of 20-plus yards) to drive the Vikings offense. When the Vikings spread the ball around, they frequently turned to running back Dalvin Cook and tight end T.J. Hockenson, who gained more than 500 yards despite playing only 10 games for Minnesota.



LEGENDARY TRACK

ON A RAPID ASCENT TO 5,000 YARDS

Jefferson has sprinted out of the starting blocks of his NFL career, producing at a faster pace than anyone before him. Now he's closing in on modern cohorts — Odell Beckham Jr. (54 games) and Julio Jones (56 games) — to become the fastest player to 5,000 career receiving yards. Jefferson is 175 yards shy through 50 regular-season games. Jefferson has said he's chasing a Hall of Fame jacket and a Super Bowl ring. He's off to a faster start than anyone in Canton.

The fastest to 5,000

