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DYNASTY LEAGUE FOOTBALL

2015
RUNNING BACK REPORT

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Introduction

In 2013 I created the True Points metric as a new means of evaluating the league's running backs. The premise was simple – I wanted to know which ball carriers were most efficient with the ball in their respective hands, thereby removing touchdowns and the point-per-reception from the equation. It was essentially a way of gauging a player's fantasy floor at what has inarguably become the league's most volatile position.

In my opinion the True Points has proven to be a successful barometer of a running back's future on both ends of the spectrum. As such, I had intended to perform the same analysis again for the top-50 PPR running backs in 2014. However, given the many statistical variables that go into a ball carrier's evaluation, I decided to expand the concept.

Enter the 2015 DLF Running Back Report.

In the pages that follow I've attempted to look at nearly every facet of the performances of the top-50 PPR running backs from last season. This study will contain my yearly True Points summary, but also much more. Included additionally within are the following:

-A points-per-touch breakdown of each running back's ceiling

-Assessing the repeatability of a player's performance, thereby calculating his room for growth or statistical deterioration

-Calculating the effect's of a running back's offensive line, as well as his strength of schedule

-Performing each of the above analyses as top-50 rankings, as well as separating the players by their weekly volume

-Ranking the players based on the above criteria

-Summarizing each individual player's 2014 season, as well as offering a future prognostication

All told I've attempted to put forth a ball carrier appraisal that truly covers all the angles, and should serve as both an explanatory and predictive measure. I sincerely hope our DLF followers enjoy it and are able to utilize it to their advantage in their respective leagues.

Finally, this undertaking wasn't completely a one-man operation. The offensive line and strength of schedule measures were taken from the evaluators at Pro Football Focus, who do a great job with their positional summaries. I also want to thank a pair of my DLF brethren, **Scott Fish** and **George Kritikos**, who were instrumental in both the data collection and normalization for multiple portions of this study.

So with that in mind, let's get to it!

A 2014 True Points Summary

As mentioned in the preamble, I created and utilized the True Points metric starting with the 2012 season, and then replicated the analysis last year as well. You can find the initial evaluation here, and the 2013 rendition here, along with the subsequent discussion. As the first step in the Running Back Report, I want to again utilize the True Points metric to detail the "fantasy floor" of the 2014 PPR top-50 ball carriers.

As a reminder, the True Points calculation is fairly straightforward. A running back's PPR points are totaled, and then the points from touchdowns and the point-per-reception are subtracted out. From there the subsequent value can be divided by the ball carrier's total amount of touches, yielding True Points Per Touch (TPPT).

As for why I initially utilized the True Points metric, I'll quote my past self from the initial installment:

"…In a fantasy vacuum there's nothing wrong with including the points derived from scoring and catching the ball, but one has to ask the question – does it really tell you anything about a running back's skill?

Let's first consider touchdowns. Sure, there will always be players like **Adrian Peterson** and **Arian Foster** who are locks for double-digit scores and most all of the goal-line opportunities. For the rest of the running back population, however, scoring chances are generally more unpredictable. In my opinion, you don't want to rely on your running back's fantasy points coming from touchdowns.

Next are receptions, which inject an even more egregious bias into a player's fantasy stat-line (again, assuming PPR scoring). Catching the ball is a skill, no doubt, but are all receptions created equal? Whether it's a 60-yard catch-and-run or a quick screen where the player is thrown for a loss, the same one point is added to a player's fantasy score. This lack of differentiation doesn't do anything to reflect upon a player's actual skill…"

The above is essentially a roundabout way of why using the True Points metric to discern a ball carrier's floor is key. If all else fails and a player fails to reach his upside, we still want to know fantasy greatness is possible. So without further adieu, let's see who fit that bill in 2014!

The following table lists the PPR top-50 running backs of 2014 in descending order according to TPPT (rightmost column). It also includes each player's PPR rank for comparison, as well as the pertinent statistics.

Player	Team	PPR Rank	Att.	Yards	Rec.	Yards	Total TD's	PPR Points	True Points	Touches	TPPT
R. Helu	WAS	31	40	216	42	477	3	129.3	69.3	82	0.845
D. Sproles	PHI	25	57	329	40	387	6	147.6	71.6	97	0.738
T. Riddick	DET	47	20	51	34	316	4	94.7	36.7	54	0.680
P. Thomas	NO	34	45	222	45	378	3	123.0	60.0	90	0.667
L. Bell	PIT	1	290	1361	83	854	11	370.5	221.5	373	0.594
L. Murray	OAK	50	82	424	17	143	2	85.7	56.7	99	0.572
B. Rainey	TB	40	94	406	33	315	2	117.1	72.1	127	0.568
A. Bradshaw	IND	22	90	425	38	300	8	158.5	72.5	128	0.566
S. Vereen	NE	20	96	391	53	447	5	166.8	83.8	149	0.562
CJ Anderson	DEN	11	179	849	34	324	10	211.3	117.3	213	0.551
J. Forsett	BAL	8	235	1266	44	263	8	244.9	152.9	279	0.548
E. Lacy	GB	5	246	1139	42	427	13	276.6	156.6	288	0.544
L. Miller	MIA	9	216	1099	38	275	9	229.4	137.4	254	0.540
B. Cunningham	STL	32	66	246	45	352	4	128.8	59.8	111	0.539
J. Charles	KC	7	206	1033	40	291	14	256.4	132.4	246	0.538
J. Hill	CIN	10	222	1124	27	215	9	214.9	133.9	249	0.538
A. Foster	HOU	6	260	1246	38	327	13	273.3	157.3	298	0.528
M. Lynch	SEA	4	280	1306	37	367	17	306.3	167.3	317	0.528
D. Murray	DAL	2	393	1845	57	416	13	361.1	226.1	450	0.502
M. Forte	CHI	3	266	1038	102	808	10	346.6	184.6	368	0.502
D. Freeman	ATL	49	65	248	30	225	2	89.3	47.3	95	0.498
J. Stewart	CAR	24	175	809	25	181	4	148.0	99.0	200	0.495
F. Jackson	BUF	18	142	526	66	501	3	186.7	102.7	208	0.494
G. Bernard	CIN	16	168	680	43	349	7	187.9	102.9	211	0.488
J. McKinnon	MIN	48	113	538	27	135	0	94.3	67.3	140	0.481
R. Bush	DET	42	76	297	40	253	2	107.0	55.0	116	0.474
T. Mason	STL	30	179	765	16	148	5	137.3	91.3	195	0.468
J. Bell	DET	13	223	860	34	322	8	200.2	118.2	257	0.460
F. Gore	SF	21	255	1103	11	111	5	162.4	121.4	266	0.456
C. Johnson	NYJ	39	155	663	24	151	2	117.4	81.4	179	0.455
R. Hillman	DEN	43	106	434	21	139	4	102.3	57.3	127	0.451
D. Robinson	JAX	38	135	582	23	124	4	117.6	70.6	158	0.447
L. Blount	NE	45	125	547	10	54	5	100.1	60.1	135	0.445
I. Crowell	CLE	33	148	607	9	87	8	126.4	69.4	157	0.442
R. Jennings	NYG	29	167	639	30	226	4	140.5	86.5	197	0.439
C. Ivory	NYJ	23	198	820	18	123	7	154.3	94.3	216	0.437
A. Morris	WAS	17	265	1074	17	155	8	187.9	122.9	282	0.436
B. Oliver	SD	26	160	582	36	271	4	145.3	85.3	196	0.435
M. Ingram	NO	14	226	964	29	145	9	193.9	110.9	255	0.435

L. McCoy	PHI	12	315	1319	29	155	5	206.4	147.4	344	0.428
A. Ellington	ARI	19	201	660	46	395	5	181.5	105.5	247	0.427
M. Asiata	MIN	15	164	570	44	312	10	192.2	88.2	208	0.424
B. Sankey	TEN	44	152	569	18	133	2	100.2	70.2	170	0.413
S. Jackson	ATL	28	190	707	20	148	6	141.5	85.5	210	0.407
K. Davis	KC	37	134	463	16	147	7	119.0	61.0	150	0.407
T. West	CLE	41	171	673	11	64	5	114.7	73.7	182	0.405
T. Richardson	IND	36	159	519	27	229	3	119.8	74.8	186	0.402
D. McFadden	OAK	35	155	534	36	212	2	122.6	74.6	191	0.391
A. Williams	NYG	27	217	721	18	130	7	145.1	85.1	235	0.362
A. Blue	HOU	46	169	528	15	113	3	97.1	64.1	184	0.348

I'll note now that all my commentary will be saved for the individual player profiles, when I can summarize each running back's season given the full set of facts. As such, I'll jump directly to the TPPT evaluation using a volume-based approach.
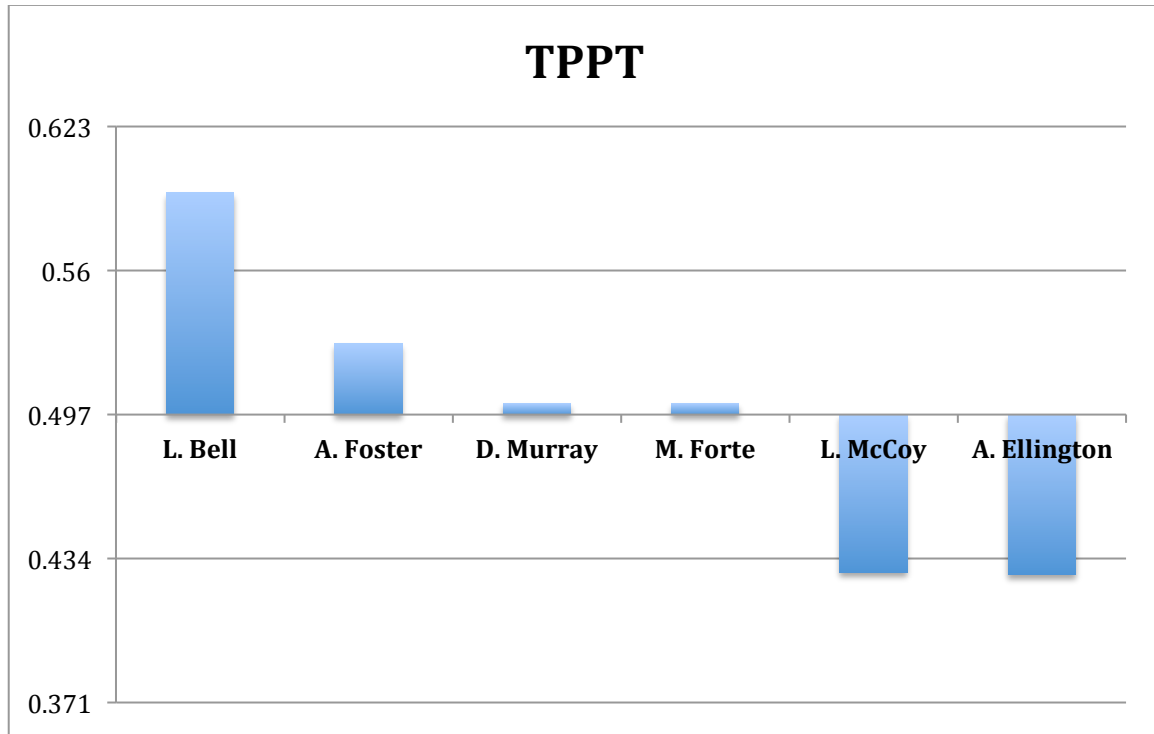
In my opinion it's imperative to separate the ball carriers by touches per game, as it allows us to effectively compare apples to apples. In other words, while Washington's **Roy Helu** (now a Raider; each player's 2014 team will be used for this study) led the TPPT study, he only averaged 6.3 touches per game – it's intrinsically unfair to compare him directly to a workhorse like Pittsburgh's **Le'Veon Bell**. As such I've separated the running backs into four categories – greater than or equal to 20.0 touches per game, 15.0-19.9 touches per game, 10.0-14.9 touches per game and under 10.0 touches per game.

Let's see the results of this segregation, starting with the bell-cows:

Player	TPG	TPPT
L. Bell	23.3	0.594
A. Foster	22.9	0.528
D. Murray	28.1	0.502
M. Forte	23.0	0.502
L. McCoy	21.5	0.428
A. Ellington	20.6	0.427

Note that the table above is sorted by TPPT in a descending manner, and that the touches per game (TPG) are also included for each player. The average for the six ball carriers above was calculated out to be 0.497 TPPT, with a standard deviation of 0.063 TPPT. These numbers are important as I'll next display the results graphically – the baseline for each graph is akin to each group's TPPT average, and each subsequent mark of delineation is equal to a single standard deviation (either above

or below the average). This helps to provide a pictorial perspective as to how each running back stacks up to his direct peers.

TPPT

Value	L. Bell	A. Foster	D. Murray	M. Forte	L. McCoy	A. Ellington

(chart with y-axis values: 0.623, 0.56, 0.497, 0.434, 0.371)

Again, I'll let the numbers speak for themselves here, and save my opinions for the individual player profiles. Next, let's look at the second grouping of running backs:

Player	TPG	TPPT
CJ Anderson	15.2	0.551
J. Forsett	17.4	0.548
E. Lacy	18.0	0.544
L. Miller	15.9	0.54.0
J. Charles	16.4	0.538
J. Hill	15.6	0.538
M. Lynch	19.8	0.528
J. Stewart	15.4	0.495
G. Bernard	16.2	0.488
T. Mason	16.3	0.468
J. Bell	17.1	0.460
F. Gore	16.6	0.456
R. Hillman	15.9	0.451
R. Jennings	17.9	0.439
A. Morris	17.6	0.436
M. Ingram	19.6	0.435

The average for this grouping of 16 players was found to be 0.495 TPPT with a standard deviation of 0.045 TPPT. The graphical analysis is shown below:
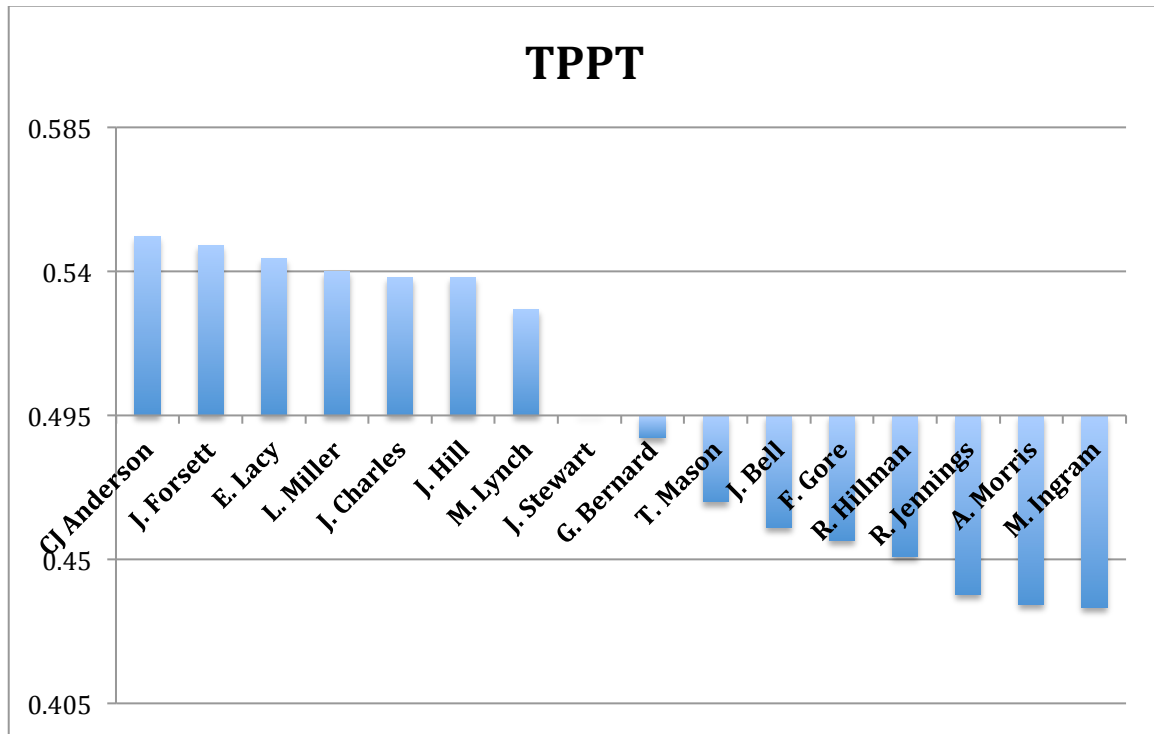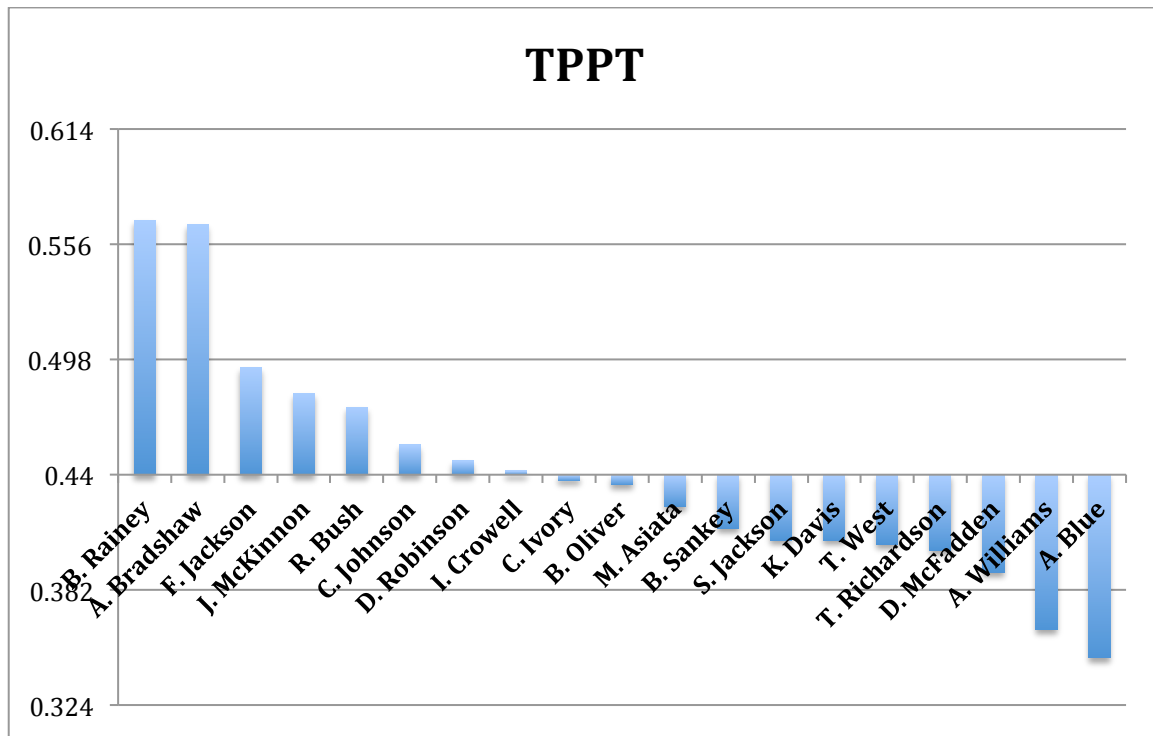

The third grouping contains the 19 players who averaged between 10.0-14.9 touches per game:

Player	TPG	TPPT
B. Rainey	10.6	0.568
A. Bradshaw	12.8	0.566
F. Jackson	14.9	0.494
J. McKinnon	12.7	0.481
R. Bush	10.5	0.474
C. Johnson	11.2	0.455
D. Robinson	12.2	0.447
I. Crowell	10.5	0.442
C. Ivory	13.5	0.437
B. Oliver	14.0	0.435
M. Asiata	13.9	0.424
B. Sankey	10.6	0.413
S. Jackson	14.0	0.407
K. Davis	10.0	0.407

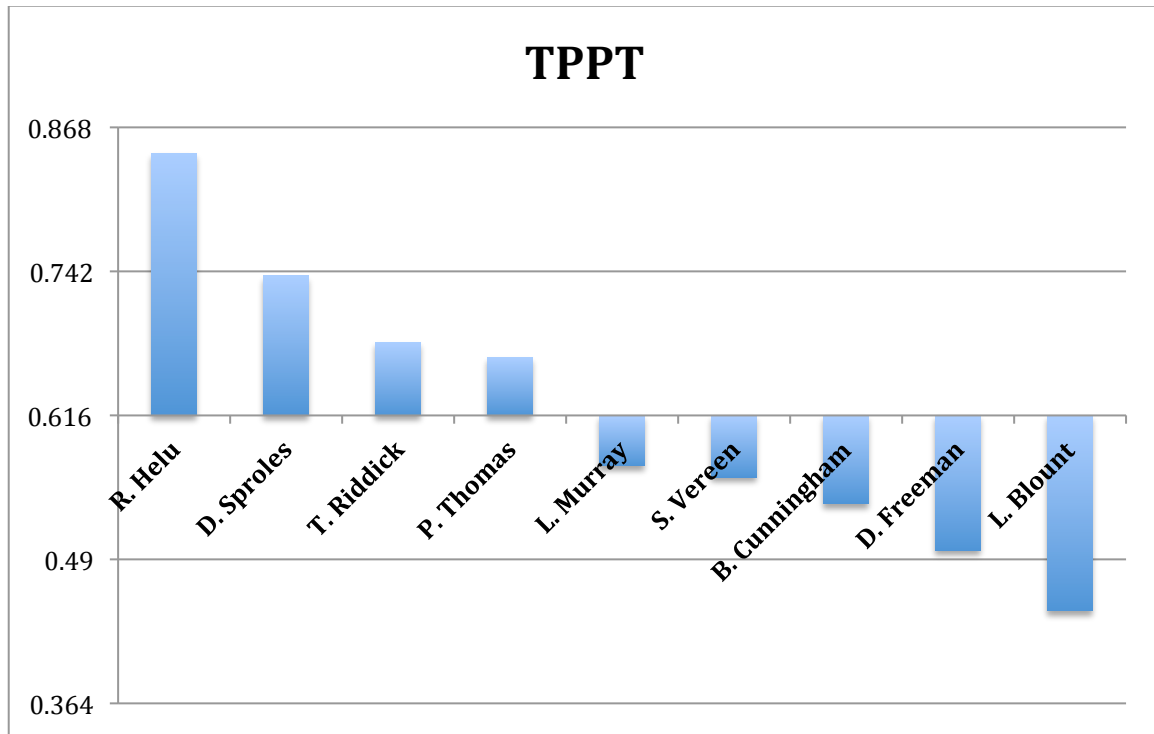|		
T. West	13.0	0.405
T. Richardson	12.4	0.402
D. McFadden	11.9	0.391
A. Williams	14.7	0.362
A. Blue	11.5	0.348

The average for the players above was tabulated to be 0.440 TPPT with a standard deviation of 0.058 TPPT. The graphical summary is shown below:

TPPT

0.614

0.556

0.498

0.44

0.382

0.324

B. Rainey, A. Bradshaw, F. Jackson, J. McKinnon, R. Bush, C. Johnson, D. Robinson, I. Crowell, C. Ivory, B. Oliver, M. Asiata, B. Sankey, S. Jackson, K. Davis, T. West, T. Richardson, D. McFadden, A. Williams, A. Blue

Finally, let's take a look at the final category consisting of players who touched the ball fewer than 10.0 times per contest:

Player	TPG	TPPT
R. Helu	6.3	0.845
D. Sproles	6.5	0.738
T. Riddick	4.2	0.680
P. Thomas	8.2	0.667
L. Murray	9.9	0.572
S. Vereen	9.3	0.562
B. Cunningham	6.9	0.539
D. Freeman	5.9	0.498
L. Blount	9.0	0.445

The average for this grouping was found to be 0.616 TPPT with a standard deviation of 0.126 TPPT. The graph can be found below:

TPPT

0.868	
0.742	
0.616	
0.49	
0.364	

R. Helu D. Sproles T. Riddick P. Thomas L. Murray S. Vereen B. Cunningham D. Freeman L. Blount

As I alluded to before, the True Points metric is an excellent indicator of a running back's floor, but it remains merely one piece of the puzzle. Speaking to the opposing view, we should also want to know more about each ball carrier's ceiling, a topic I'll cover explicitly in the next section.

Points-Per-Touch and Discerning a Running Back's Ceiling

While the previous section helped evaluate each running back's ability with the ball in his hands, thereby factoring out extraneous means of scoring, it failed to illuminate the opposite end of the spectrum. Sure, by virtue of removing points from touchdowns and the point-per-reception we revealed each player's "true" talent, but fantasy football isn't scored solely by yards-per-carry and yards-per-reception. Given that, I next want to look at each player's rate of scoring when all the elements are considered.

Yes, you can go to just about any fantasy website and find each running back's PPR finish at the conclusion of the season. While that is obviously an important qualifier, I once again wish to dig deeper. In order to do so, I'll once again utilize another efficiency metric, points-per-touch (PPT).

The derivation of the PPT metric is easy – simply divide a player's total PPR points by his number of touches (carries plus receptions). The quantifier then depicts exactly what it sounds like, a ball carrier's fantasy efficiency on a per-touch basis. Let's once again start with the top-50 PPR running backs aggregated in a single list, shown in descending order according to PPT (rightmost column), and once again including all the pertinent statistics:

Player	Team	PPR Rank	Att.	Yards	Rec.	Yards	Total TD's	PPR Points	Touches	PPR PPT
T. Riddick	DET	47	20	51	34	316	4	94.7	54	1.754
R. Helu	WAS	31	40	216	42	477	3	129.3	82	1.577
D. Sproles	PHI	25	57	329	40	387	6	147.6	97	1.521
P. Thomas	NO	34	45	222	45	378	3	123.0	90	1.367
A. Bradshaw	IND	22	90	425	38	300	8	158.5	128	1.238
B. Cunningham	STL	32	66	246	45	352	4	128.8	111	1.160
S. Vereen	NE	20	96	391	53	447	5	166.8	149	1.119
J. Charles	KC	7	206	1033	40	291	14	256.4	246	1.042
L. Bell	PIT	1	290	1361	83	854	11	370.5	373	0.993
CJ Anderson	DEN	11	179	849	34	324	10	211.3	213	0.992
M. Lynch	SEA	4	280	1306	37	367	17	306.3	317	0.966
E. Lacy	GB	5	246	1139	42	427	13	276.6	288	0.960
M. Forte	CHI	3	266	1038	102	808	10	346.6	368	0.942
D. Freeman	ATL	49	65	248	30	225	2	89.3	95	0.940
M. Asiata	MIN	15	164	570	44	312	10	192.2	208	0.924
B. Rainey	TB	40	94	406	33	315	2	117.1	127	0.922
R. Bush	DET	42	76	297	40	253	2	107.0	116	0.922

A. Foster	HOU	6	260	1246	38	327	13	273.3	298	0.917
L. Miller	MIA	9	216	1099	38	275	9	229.4	254	0.903
F. Jackson	BUF	18	142	526	66	501	3	186.7	208	0.898
G. Bernard	CIN	16	168	680	43	349	7	187.9	211	0.891
J. Forsett	BAL	8	235	1266	44	263	8	244.9	279	0.878
L. Murray	OAK	50	82	424	17	143	2	85.7	99	0.866
J. Hill	CIN	10	222	1124	27	215	9	214.9	249	0.863
R. Hillman	DEN	43	106	434	21	139	4	102.3	127	0.806
I. Crowell	CLE	33	148	607	9	87	8	126.4	157	0.805
D. Murray	DAL	2	393	1845	57	416	13	361.1	450	0.802
K. Davis	KC	37	134	463	16	147	7	119.0	150	0.793
J. Bell	DET	13	223	860	34	322	8	200.2	257	0.779
M. Ingram	NO	14	226	964	29	145	9	193.9	255	0.760
D. Robinson	JAX	38	135	582	23	124	4	117.6	158	0.744
L. Blount	NE	45	125	547	10	54	5	100.1	135	0.741
B. Oliver	SD	26	160	582	36	271	4	145.3	196	0.741
J. Stewart	CAR	24	175	809	25	181	4	148.0	200	0.740
A. Ellington	ARI	19	201	660	46	395	5	181.5	247	0.735
C. Ivory	NYJ	23	198	820	18	123	7	154.3	216	0.714
R. Jennings	NYG	29	167	639	30	226	4	140.5	197	0.713
T. Mason	STL	30	179	765	16	148	5	137.3	195	0.704
J. McKinnon	MIN	48	113	538	27	135	0	94.3	140	0.674
S. Jackson	ATL	28	190	707	20	148	6	141.5	210	0.674
A. Morris	WAS	17	265	1074	17	155	8	187.9	282	0.666
C. Johnson	NYJ	39	155	663	24	151	2	117.4	179	0.656
T. Richardson	IND	36	159	519	27	229	3	119.8	186	0.644
D. McFadden	OAK	35	155	534	36	212	2	122.6	191	0.642
T. West	CLE	41	171	673	11	64	5	114.7	182	0.630
A. Williams	NYG	27	217	721	18	130	7	145.1	235	0.617
F. Gore	SF	21	255	1103	11	111	5	162.4	266	0.611
L. McCoy	PHI	12	315	1319	29	155	5	206.4	344	0.600
B. Sankey	TEN	44	152	569	18	133	2	100.2	170	0.589
A. Blue	HOU	46	169	528	15	113	3	97.1	184	0.528

From here, we can once again sort the results in a volume-dependent manner. The players will be differentiated in the same manner as in the last section, with the graphical analyses shown similarly as well. Once again, let's start with the workhorse ball carriers:

Player	TPG	PPR PPT
L. Bell	23.3	0.993
M. Forte	23.0	0.942
A. Foster	22.9	0.917
D. Murray	28.1	0.802
A. Ellington	20.6	0.735
L. McCoy	21.5	0.600

The average for the grouping above was found to be 0.832 PPT with a standard deviation of 0.148 PPT. Using the same methodology as before, we can now take the tabular date above and summarize it graphically:
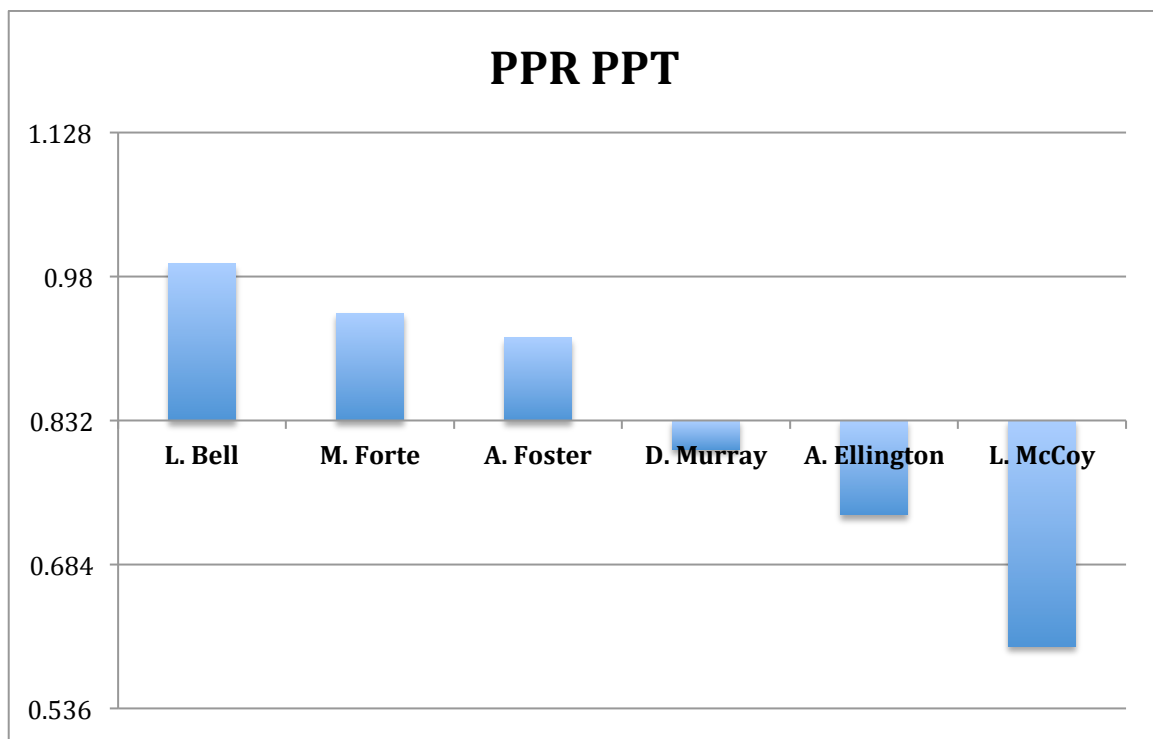

Next, let's look at the running backs who averaged 15.0-19.9 touches per game:

Player	TPG	PPR PPT
J. Charles	16.4	1.042
CJ Anderson	15.2	0.992
M. Lynch	19.8	0.966
E. Lacy	18.0	0.960
L. Miller	15.9	0.903
G. Bernard	16.2	0.891
J. Forsett	17.4	0.878

J. Hill	15.6	0.863
R. Hillman	15.9	0.806
J. Bell	17.1	0.779
M. Ingram	19.6	0.760
J. Stewart	15.4	0.740
R. Jennings	17.9	0.713
T. Mason	16.3	0.704
A. Morris	17.6	0.666
F. Gore	16.6	0.611

The average for the 16 running backs above was calculated to be 0.830 PPT with a standard deviation of 0.126 PPT. Once again, we can view this data pictorially as well:
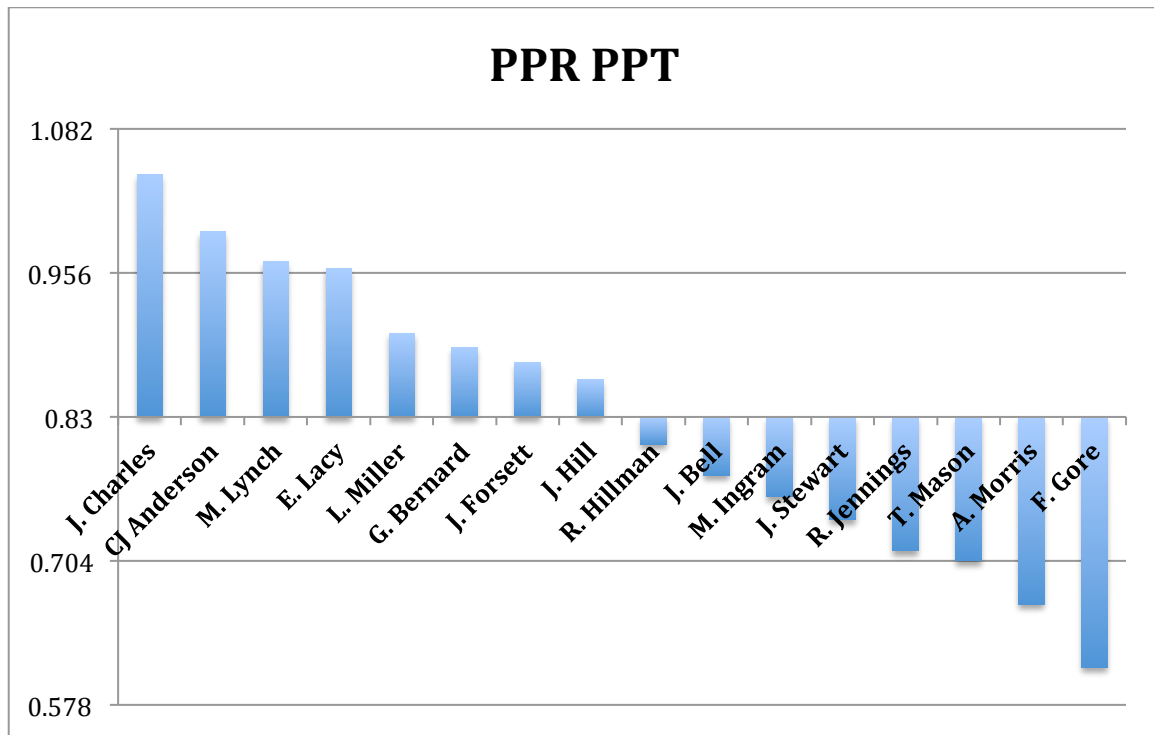
The data from the 19 members comprising the third grouping can be seen as follows:

Player	TPG	PPR PPT
A. Bradshaw	12.8	1.238
M. Asiata	13.9	0.924
B. Rainey	10.6	0.922
R. Bush	10.5	0.922

F. Jackson	14.9	0.898
I. Crowell	10.5	0.805
K. Davis	10.0	0.793
D. Robinson	12.2	0.744
B. Oliver	14.0	0.741
C. Ivory	13.5	0.714
S. Jackson	14.0	0.674
J. McKinnon	12.7	0.674
C. Johnson	11.2	0.656
T. Richardson	12.4	0.644
D. McFadden	11.9	0.642
T. West	13.0	0.630
A. Williams	14.7	0.617
B. Sankey	10.6	0.589
A. Blue	11.5	0.528

The average for the players above was determined to be 0.756 PPT with a standard deviation of 0.168 PPT. The data is shown visually below:
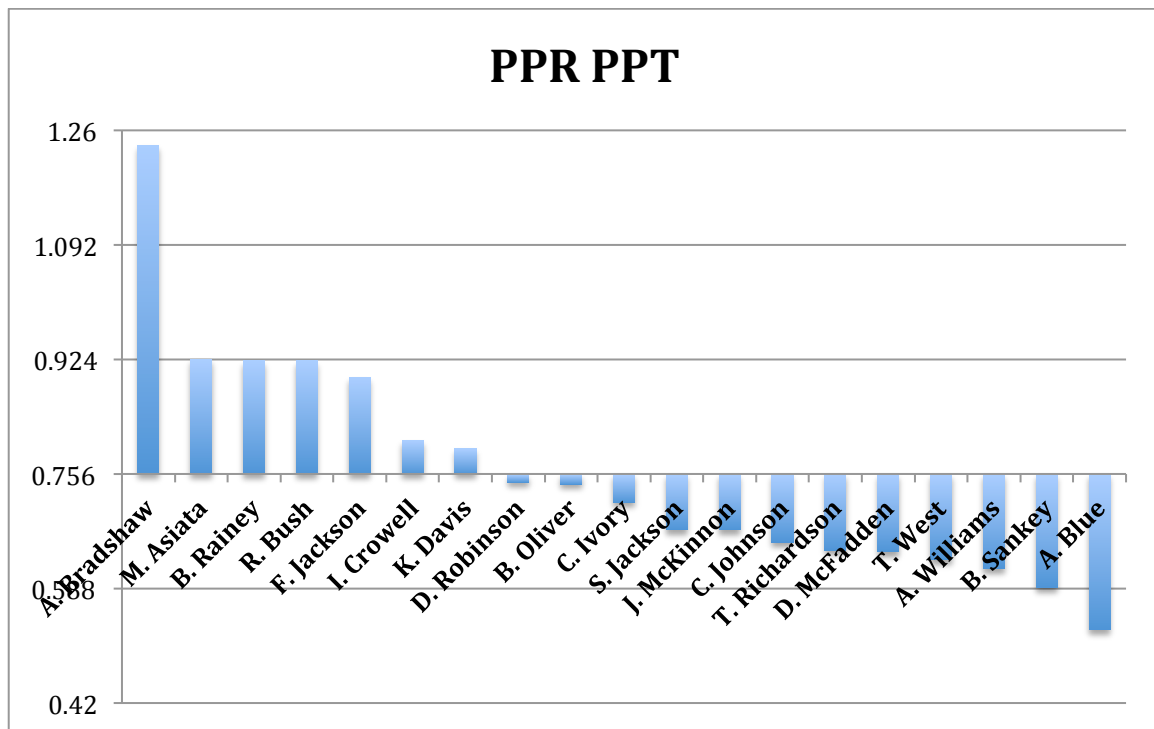
Once again, we'll conclude with the final grouping, comprised of the players who averaged fewer than 10.0 touches per game:

Player	TPG	PPR PPT
T. Riddick	4.2	1.754
R. Helu	6.3	1.577
D. Sproles	6.5	1.521
P. Thomas	8.2	1.367
B. Cunningham	6.9	1.160
S. Vereen	9.3	1.119
D. Freeman	5.9	0.940
L. Murray	9.9	0.866
L. Blount	9.0	0.741

The average for these nine players was determined to be 1.230 PPT with a standard deviation of 0.348 PPT. The graphical summary is shown below:

PPR PPT
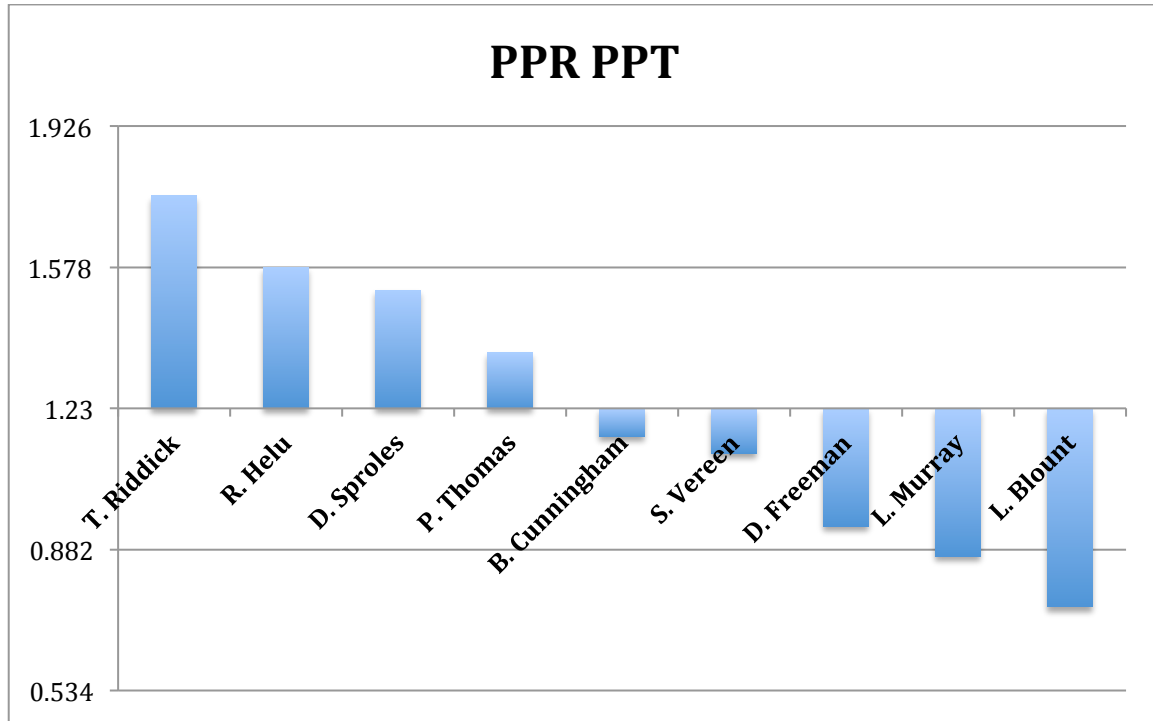
Now that we have both the TPPT and PPT data in hand, we can combine the two to figure out just how repeatable each player's 2014 season just might be. Onto the next section!

Assessing Fantasy Repeatability

As I stated when I concluded the previous section, bridging the gap between the TPPT and PPT metrics can actually give us a glimpse as to whether or not a running back is likely to put forward a repeat performance the following year. The first section, utilizing True Points, showed us what each player's fantasy floor is when touchdowns and the point-per-reception are removed from the equation. The previous section, using points-per-touch, then showed us the ceiling of each player's efficiency. This begs the logical follow-up – just how close were the two?

Backtracking to the first section, and repeating myself once again, the reason I invented the True Points metric was because I prefer to own running backs who can make their hay with the ball in their hands. Extrapolating this thought, I'd like to see the running backs on my roster derive the majority of their points-per-touch from gaining yards, not touchdowns or the point-per-reception. And while some may disagree and prefer the upside factor, I nevertheless believe it's important to find the TPPT ratio within the PPT.

To do so, I simply took each player's TPPT value, divided by his PPT value and then multiplied by 100. The resultant percentage shows what I described in the previous paragraph, but more importantly paints a larger picture. Larger percentages mean it's more likely the player in question will not only repeat his statistics the following year, but also shows the aggregate numbers have room for improvement contingent upon a greater amount of touchdowns and receptions.

Put differently, if there's a small gap between a player's ceiling and floor, it's more likely he'll produce at the same rate in the future. If the distance between the two is larger, it stands to reason the player in question will either have to increase his rate of gaining yardage, or keep up his scoring/PPR abilities. So with all that said, let's see how the numbers look for the top-50 PPR ball carriers of 2014.
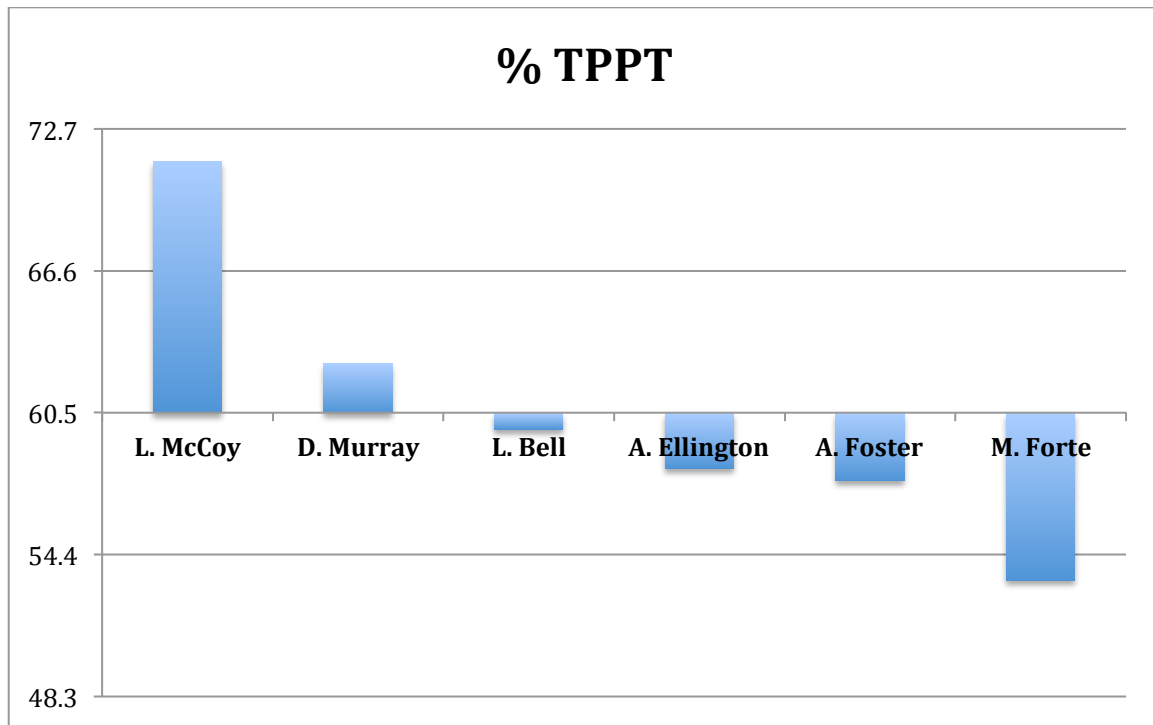
Player	TPPT	PPR PPT	% TPPT
F. Gore	0.456	0.611	74.6
J. McKinnon	0.481	0.674	71.4
L. McCoy	0.428	0.600	71.3
B. Sankey	0.413	0.589	70.1
C. Johnson	0.455	0.656	69.4
J. Stewart	0.495	0.740	66.9
T. Mason	0.468	0.704	66.5
L. Murray	0.572	0.866	66.1
A. Blue	0.348	0.528	65.9
A. Morris	0.436	0.666	65.5

T. West	0.405	0.630	64.3
D. Murray	0.502	0.802	62.6
J. Forsett	0.548	0.878	62.4
T. Richardson	0.402	0.644	62.4
J. Hill	0.538	0.863	62.3
R. Jennings	0.439	0.713	61.6
B. Rainey	0.568	0.922	61.6
C. Ivory	0.437	0.714	61.2
D. McFadden	0.391	0.642	60.9
S. Jackson	0.407	0.674	60.4
D. Robinson	0.447	0.744	60.1
L. Blount	0.445	0.741	60.1
L. Bell	0.594	0.993	59.8
L. Miller	0.540	0.903	59.8
J. Bell	0.460	0.779	59.1
B. Oliver	0.435	0.741	58.7
A. Williams	0.362	0.617	58.7
A. Ellington	0.427	0.735	58.1
A. Foster	0.528	0.917	57.6
M. Ingram	0.435	0.760	57.2
E. Lacy	0.544	0.960	56.7
R. Hillman	0.451	0.806	56.0
CJ Anderson	0.551	0.992	55.5
F. Jackson	0.494	0.898	55.0
I. Crowell	0.442	0.805	54.9
G. Bernard	0.488	0.891	54.8
M. Lynch	0.528	0.966	54.7
R. Helu	0.845	1.577	53.6
M. Forte	0.502	0.942	53.3
D. Freeman	0.498	0.940	53.0
J. Charles	0.538	1.042	51.6
R. Bush	0.474	0.922	51.4
K. Davis	0.407	0.793	51.3
S. Vereen	0.562	1.119	50.2
P. Thomas	0.667	1.367	48.8
D. Sproles	0.738	1.521	48.5
B. Cunningham	0.539	1.160	46.5
M. Asiata	0.424	0.924	45.9
A. Bradshaw	0.566	1.238	45.7
T. Riddick	0.680	1.754	38.8

With those numbers in hand, let's once more take a look at the data when separated by workload, starting with the heavy hitters:

Player	TPG	TPPT	PPR PPT	% TPPT
L. McCoy	21.5	0.428	0.600	71.3
D. Murray	28.1	0.502	0.802	62.6
L. Bell	23.3	0.594	0.993	59.8
A. Ellington	20.6	0.427	0.735	58.1
A. Foster	22.9	0.528	0.917	57.6
M. Forte	23.0	0.502	0.942	53.3

The average for the data above was found to be 60.5% with a standard deviation of 6.1%. Continuing the trend of the previous sections, let's once again provide a visual component to the data above:

Next, let's move to the second collection of running backs:

Player	TPG	TPPT	PPR PPT	% TPPT
F. Gore	16.6	0.456	0.611	74.6
J. Stewart	15.4	0.495	0.740	66.9
T. Mason	16.3	0.468	0.704	66.5
A. Morris	17.6	0.436	0.666	65.5
J. Forsett	17.4	0.548	0.878	62.4

J. Hill	15.6	0.538	0.863	62.3
R. Jennings	17.9	0.439	0.713	61.6
L. Miller	15.9	0.540	0.903	59.8
J. Bell	17.1	0.460	0.779	59.1
M. Ingram	19.6	0.435	0.760	57.2
E. Lacy	18.0	0.544	0.960	56.7
R. Hillman	15.9	0.451	0.806	56.0
CJ Anderson	15.2	0.551	0.992	55.5
G. Bernard	16.2	0.488	0.891	54.8
M. Lynch	19.8	0.528	0.966	54.7
J. Charles	16.4	0.538	1.042	51.6

The average for 16 ball carriers above was calculated to be 60.3% with a standard deviation of 5.9%. The graphical analysis is shown below:
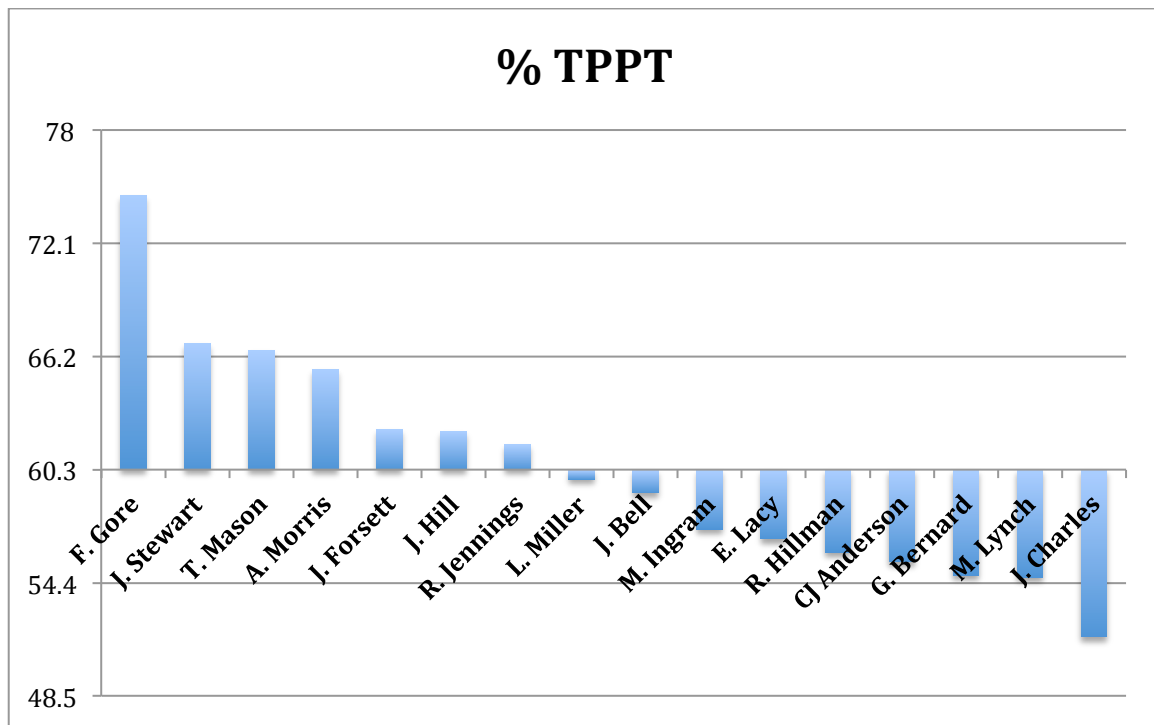
Continuing, the data for the third grouping of ball carriers can be seen here:

Player	TPG	TPPT	PPR PPT	% TPPT
J. McKinnon	12.7	0.481	0.674	71.4
B. Sankey	10.6	0.413	0.589	70.1
C. Johnson	11.2	0.455	0.656	69.4
A. Blue	11.5	0.348	0.528	65.9

T. West	13	0.405	0.630	64.3
T. Richardson	12.4	0.402	0.644	62.4
B. Rainey	10.6	0.568	0.922	61.6
C. Ivory	13.5	0.437	0.714	61.2
D. McFadden	11.9	0.391	0.642	60.9
S. Jackson	14.0	0.407	0.674	60.4
D. Robinson	12.2	0.447	0.744	60.1
B. Oliver	14.0	0.435	0.741	58.7
A. Williams	14.7	0.362	0.617	58.7
F. Jackson	14.9	0.494	0.898	55.0
I. Crowell	10.5	0.442	0.805	54.9
R. Bush	10.5	0.474	0.922	51.4
K. Davis	10.0	0.407	0.793	51.3
M. Asiata	13.9	0.424	0.924	45.9
A. Bradshaw	12.8	0.566	1.238	45.7

The average for the running backs above was tabulated to be 59.4% with a standard deviation of 7.4%. The pictorial description can be seen below:
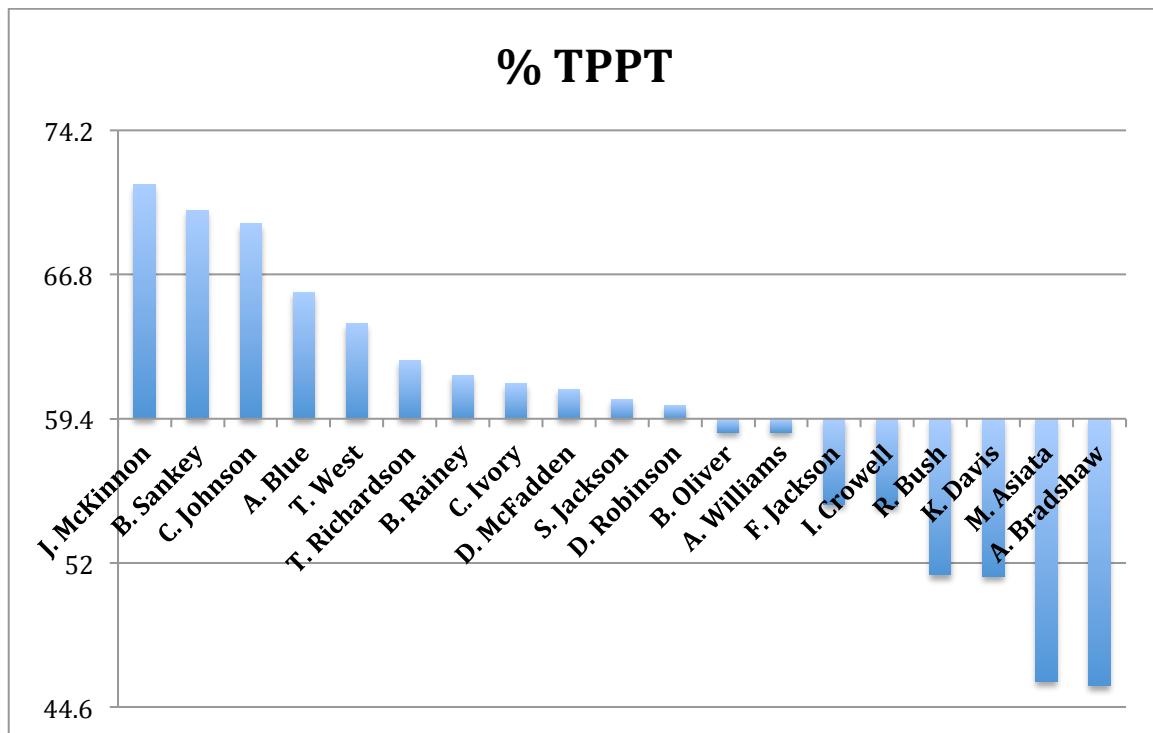
Lastly, let's once again detail the final grouping:

Player	TPG	TPPT	PPR PPT	% TPPT
L. Murray	9.9	0.572	0.866	66.1
L. Blount	9.0	0.445	0.741	60.1
R. Helu	6.3	0.845	1.577	53.6
D. Freeman	5.9	0.498	0.940	53.0
S. Vereen	9.3	0.562	1.119	50.2
P. Thomas	8.2	0.667	1.367	48.8
D. Sproles	6.5	0.738	1.521	48.5
B. Cunningham	6.9	0.539	1.160	46.5
T. Riddick	4.2	0.680	1.754	38.8

The average in the above table was determined to be 51.7% with a standard deviation of 7.9%. To conclude this section, let's look at the graph:
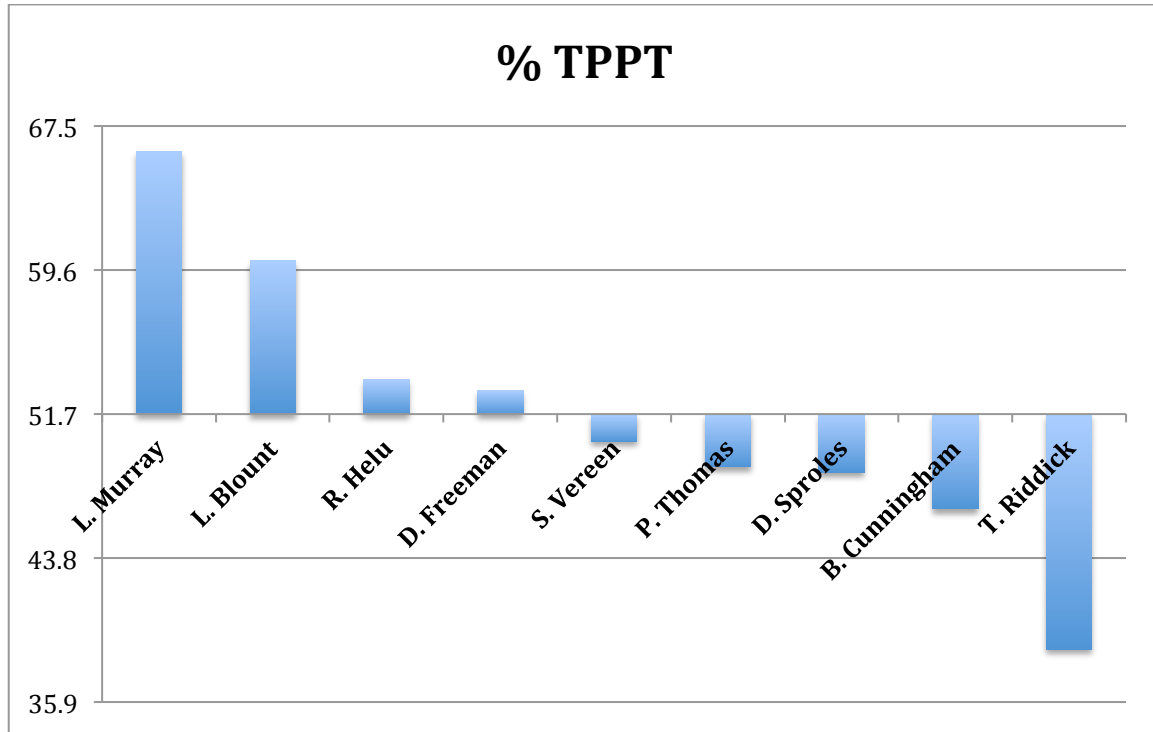
I believe the above has effectively bridged the gap between the first two sections, illustrating what we should expect when it comes to each player's likelihood of replicating his 2014 season. On a more macroscopic level, I also believe these first three sections effectively cover the traits inherent in each ball carrier. This, of course, begs the following questions – are there any outside factors influencing the results we've seen, and do we have a way of quantitating them? Let's keep digging...

Run Blocking and Strength of Schedule Influences

No matter the individual brilliance displayed by many of the NFL's stars, football is first and foremost a team endeavor. And in an ideal world each and every player would do their job to the best of their abilities on a consistent basis. Of course, not only is this impossible, but we also know not every positional option possesses the same level of skill. As such, it's reasonable to posit not every positional grouping comprising the league's 32 teams is created equal.

Continuing, when it comes to running backs it's fair to reason the biggest extrinsic factor in their success is the run blocking ability of the rest of the offensive unit. Be it the "big uglies" up front, the receivers on the perimeter or the bulldozing fullbacks and tight ends, it's very nearly a collaborative team effort to open up holes for the ball carriers. While this is not a direct indicator of run game success, it's nevertheless a very important component.

Given that, I pulled the run blocking grades (including both designed running plays and screen passes) from our friends at Pro Football Focus in order to create a sliding scale of effectiveness. For a short primer on how PFF tallies these scores, run blocking effectiveness is discerned from film study, and then subsequently graded on a cumulative basis to encompass all 16 games. Positive scores reflect an above average unit, while negative scores show the opposite.

What's more, PFF's grading represents a nonstandard distribution with a range from -50.8 through +85.7, resulting in an average score of -6.5. As such, the data was normalized to populate a range with limits of -1.0 and +1.0, with 0.0 representing the average, so as to provide a more standard data set. This was important for the subsequent calculations I'll describe later, but first I want to describe the second external factor considered – strength of schedule.

Once again I used PFF's data for each team's run defense, which they scored in a similar manner as described in the previous paragraph (-58.0 through +76.3, with an average of +3.4). From there, I calculated a run defense "strength of schedule" for all 32 teams by virtue of taking the average of the run defense scores for all 16 of their opponents (with each divisional rival counting twice). This data was again normalized to the population range of -1.0 through +1.0, with 0.0 again representing the average.

Once the normalized scores were tabulated, I multiplied each by a factor of 50 in order to achieve a set of weighted scores for each qualifier. The output is shown in the first five columns of the table on the next page:

Team	OL Score	OL Weighted Score	Run D Score	Run D Weighted Score	Weighted Total	% Multiplier
Philadelphia	0.939	46.975	-0.588	-29.391	73.366	26.634
Baltimore	0.488	24.400	-0.588	-29.391	53.791	46.209
Dallas	0.634	31.687	-0.349	-17.433	49.120	50.880
Houston	0.316	15.788	-0.408	-20.423	36.211	63.789
San Francisco	0.505	25.266	-0.047	-2.344	27.610	72.390
Tennessee	0.009	0.449	-0.334	-16.722	17.171	82.829
Pittsburgh	0.119	5.953	-0.215	-10.742	16.695	83.305
Cincinnati	0.290	14.514	0.013	0.645	13.869	86.131
Jacksonville	-0.227	-11.373	-0.494	-24.693	13.320	86.680
Indianapolis	-0.012	-0.621	-0.266	-13.305	12.684	87.316
Tampa Bay	0.199	9.927	-0.027	-1.348	11.275	88.725
Cleveland	0.071	3.558	-0.147	-7.327	10.885	89.115
New Orleans	0.056	2.793	-0.007	-0.351	3.144	96.856
Chicago	0.313	15.635	0.275	13.741	1.894	98.106
Denver	0.024	1.213	0.007	0.360	0.853	99.147
Washington	-0.223	-11.170	-0.218	-10.885	-0.285	100.285
Minnesota	0.107	5.341	0.124	6.197	-0.856	100.856
Seattle	-0.122	-6.125	-0.064	-3.198	-2.921	102.921
N.Y. Giants	-0.289	-14.431	-0.184	-9.177	-5.254	105.254
Carolina	-0.196	-9.794	-0.087	-4.337	-5.457	105.457
Detroit	-0.132	-6.583	0.033	1.641	-8.244	108.244
Atlanta	-0.350	-17.488	-0.147	-7.327	-10.161	110.161
St. Louis	-0.214	-10.711	-0.007	-0.351	-10.360	110.360
New England	0.108	5.392	0.374	18.723	-13.331	133.331
N.Y. Jets	-0.183	-9.131	0.266	13.314	-22.445	122.445
Arizona	-0.366	-18.304	0.169	8.474	-26.778	126.778
Kansas City	-0.169	-8.469	0.411	20.574	-29.043	129.043
Green Bay	-0.062	-3.118	0.611	30.538	-33.656	133.656
Oakland	-0.407	-20.342	0.289	14.452	-34.794	134.794
Buffalo	-0.452	-22.584	0.392	19.577	-42.161	142.161
San Diego	-0.447	-22.330	0.534	26.695	-49.025	149.025
Miami	-0.326	-16.316	0.676	33.812	-50.128	150.128

With each weighted score in hand and factored to the same 50x degree, I was next able to combine them for an aggregate score summarizing the extraneous factors with which a running back was faced. To do so I took the "OL Weighted Score" and subtracted the "Run D Weighted Score" to obtain the "Weighted Total." The reason for the subtractive function was simple – positive OL scores represented a boon to the ball carrier, as did negative Run D scores. Subtracting a large, negative value

from a large, positive value would result in an even larger, positive value, subsequently quantifying the level of "assistance" each running back received.

From there, I subtracted each "Weighted Total" from 100.000, resulting in the ultimate "% Multiplier" shown in the rightmost column. As for my rationale here, a score of 100.000 would have represented the highest possible combination of OL/Run D assistance. Therefore the difference between each team's score and the theoretical limit showed what essentially amounted to a quantified degree of difficulty. As an example, with the lowest possible multiplier of 26.634%, the Philly running backs had it 73.366% easier than the average.

On the other side of the coin, since there were negative values in play there was the potential for multipliers calculated to be higher than the 100.000% average. Using Miami as an example, their negative Run Blocking score and large, positive Run D score showed they were essentially at a 50.128% *disadvantage*. As such, this was reflected in the resultant % Multiplier of 150.128%, which was the largest calculated for all 32 teams.

Now at this point you're probably wondering why I'm doling out an arithmetic lesson. Getting back to the crux of the matter, I want to use the numbers from the table on the previous page in order to create a weighted score for each of the top-50 PPR running backs. The only trick left was figuring out precisely the right way to do so.

As I think I've described adequately by now, I'm a believer that there exist both intrinsic and extrinsic factors in a running back's success. To me, the former remains more important as individual skill should always trump all, but the latter needs to be accounted for as well. While that distinction is an important one to make, I still needed to choose which metric to bastardize in order to achieve the end result.

As the PFF grades ultimately boiled down to how a ball carrier was either aided or hindered in gaining yardage, I chose the True Points metric as common denominator. From there, I increased each player's True Point value by the "% Multiplier" from the table above, and used the resultant number as two parts in a five-part scale. The other three parts were each player's initial True Point total, reiterating my belief that the individual skill should trump all else.

The ensuing 3:2 mix now accounted for all the elements of the equation, including a player's ability, the ability of his teammates and also his strength of schedule. I've dubbed this new metric "Harris Points Per Touch," or HPPT's for short, based on fictional Cleveland Indians pitcher Eddie Harris from the movie Major League. For those who don't recall, or who haven't seen the movie, veteran Harris would put nearly any fluid or balm possible on his body to doctor up his pitches, clearly taking every element of the equation into account. In his honor, below are the HPPT's (descending, rightmost column) for the PPR top-50 2014 running backs:

Player	Team	TPPT	% Multiplier	Weighted TPPT	HPPT (3:2 Mix)
R. Helu	WAS	0.845	100.300	0.847	0.846
T. Riddick	DET	0.680	108.200	0.736	0.702
P. Thomas	NO	0.667	96.900	0.646	0.659
L. Murray	OAK	0.572	134.800	0.771	0.652
L. Miller	MIA	0.540	150.100	0.811	0.648
E. Lacy	GB	0.544	133.700	0.727	0.617
J. Charles	KC	0.538	129.000	0.694	0.600
S. Vereen	NE	0.562	113.300	0.637	0.592
F. Jackson	BUF	0.494	142.200	0.702	0.577
B. Cunningham	STL	0.539	110.400	0.595	0.561
L. Bell	PIT	0.594	83.300	0.494	0.554
CJ Anderson	DEN	0.551	99.100	0.546	0.549
B. Rainey	TB	0.568	88.700	0.504	0.542
A. Bradshaw	IND	0.566	87.300	0.494	0.537
M. Lynch	SEA	0.528	102.900	0.543	0.534
B. Oliver	SD	0.435	149.000	0.648	0.520
D. Freeman	ATL	0.498	110.100	0.548	0.518
D. Sproles	PHI	0.738	23.600	0.174	0.512
J. Hill	CIN	0.538	86.100	0.463	0.508
J. Stewart	CAR	0.495	105.500	0.522	0.506
M. Forte	CHI	0.502	98.100	0.492	0.498
C. Johnson	NYJ	0.455	122.400	0.557	0.496
R. Bush	DET	0.474	108.200	0.513	0.490
T. Mason	STL	0.468	110.400	0.517	0.488
J. McKinnon	MIN	0.481	100.900	0.485	0.483
C. Ivory	NYJ	0.437	122.400	0.535	0.476
J. Bell	DET	0.460	108.200	0.498	0.475
A. Ellington	ARI	0.427	126.800	0.541	0.473
G. Bernard	CIN	0.488	86.100	0.420	0.461
K. Davis	KC	0.407	129.000	0.525	0.454
A. Foster	HOU	0.528	63.800	0.337	0.452
R. Hillman	DEN	0.451	99.100	0.447	0.449
R. Jennings	NYG	0.439	105.300	0.462	0.448
D. McFadden	OAK	0.391	134.800	0.527	0.445
L. Blount	NE*	0.445	98.300	0.437	0.442
A. Morris	WAS	0.436	100.300	0.437	0.436
J. Forsett	BAL	0.548	46.200	0.253	0.430
M. Ingram	NO	0.435	96.900	0.422	0.430
M. Asiata	MIN	0.424	100.900	0.428	0.426
D. Robinson	JAX	0.447	86.700	0.389	0.424

S. Jackson	ATL	0.407	110.100	0.448	0.423
I. Crowell	CLE	0.442	89.100	0.393	0.422
F. Gore	SF	0.456	72.400	0.330	0.406
D. Murray	DAL	0.502	50.900	0.256	0.404
T. West	CLE	0.405	89.100	0.361	0.387
B. Sankey	TEN	0.413	82.800	0.342	0.385
T. Richardson	IND	0.402	87.300	0.351	0.382
A. Williams	NYG	0.362	105.300	0.381	0.370
A. Blue	HOU	0.348	63.800	0.222	0.298
L. McCoy	PHI	0.428	23.600	0.101	0.297

Blount's numbers were an average of his time with Pittsburgh and New England

As has already been done with the other quantifiers, let's look at the Harris Points in a volume-dependent manner, starting with the high-usage runners:

Player	TPG	HPPT
L. Bell	23.3	0.554
M. Forte	23.0	0.498
A. Ellington	20.6	0.473
A. Foster	22.9	0.452
D. Murray	28.1	0.404
L. McCoy	21.5	0.297

The average for the grouping above was found to be 0.446 HPPT with a standard deviation of 0.088 HPPT. The graphical explanation can be seen on the next page:
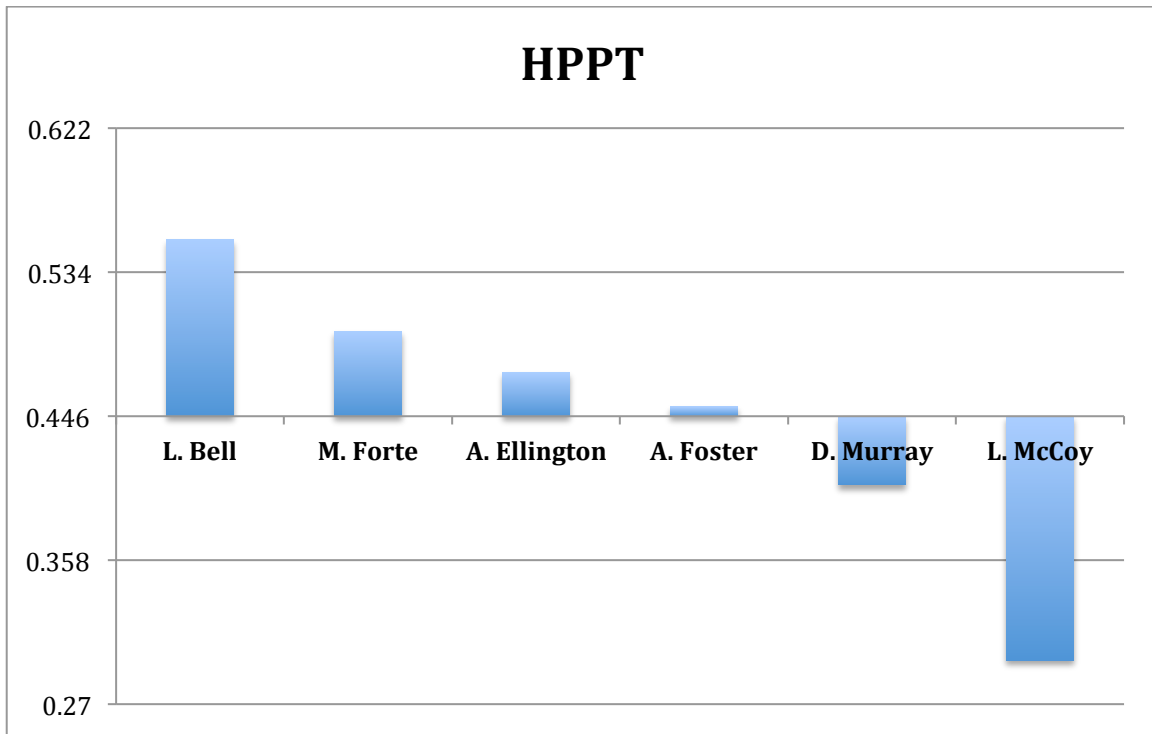
HPPT

Next, let's move onto the second ball carrier collection:

Player	TPG	HPPT
L. Miller	15.9	0.648
E. Lacy	18.0	0.617
J. Charles	16.4	0.600
CJ Anderson	15.2	0.549
M. Lynch	19.8	0.534
J. Hill	15.6	0.508
J. Stewart	15.4	0.506
T. Mason	16.3	0.488
J. Bell	17.1	0.475
G. Bernard	16.2	0.461
R. Hillman	15.9	0.449
R. Jennings	17.9	0.448
A. Morris	17.6	0.436
J. Forsett	17.4	0.430
M. Ingram	19.6	0.430
F. Gore	16.6	0.406

The average for this crew was calculated to be 0.499 HPPT with a standard deviation of 0.073 HPPT. The pictorial description is shown below:
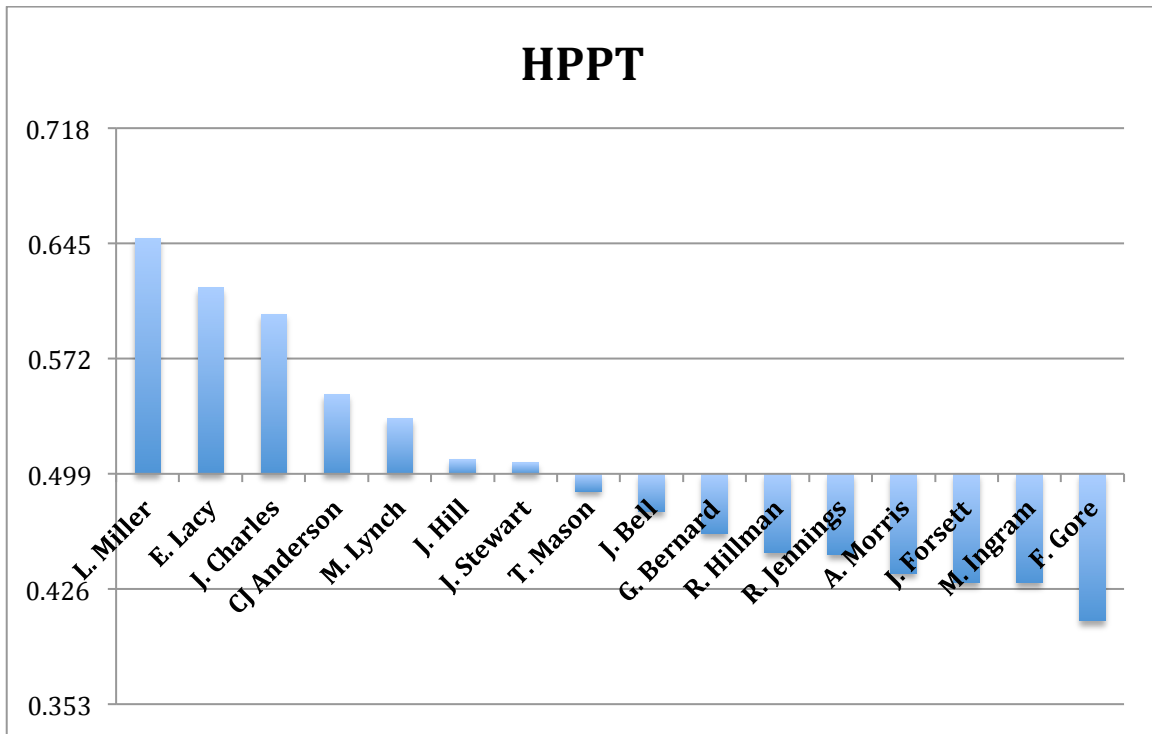
HPPT

Now, let's look at the third data set:

Player	TPG	HPPT
F. Jackson	14.9	0.577
B. Rainey	10.6	0.542
A. Bradshaw	12.8	0.537
B. Oliver	14.0	0.520
C. Johnson	11.2	0.496
R. Bush	10.5	0.490
J. McKinnon	12.7	0.483
C. Ivory	13.5	0.476
K. Davis	10.0	0.454
D. McFadden	11.9	0.445
M. Asiata	13.9	0.426
D. Robinson	12.2	0.424
S. Jackson	14.0	0.423
I. Crowell	10.5	0.422
T. West	13.0	0.387
B. Sankey	10.6	0.385
T. Richardson	12.4	0.382
A. Williams	14.7	0.370
A. Blue	11.5	0.298

The average for the players above was tabulated to be 0.449 HPPT with a standard deviation of 0.070 HPPT. The visual analysis is shown below:
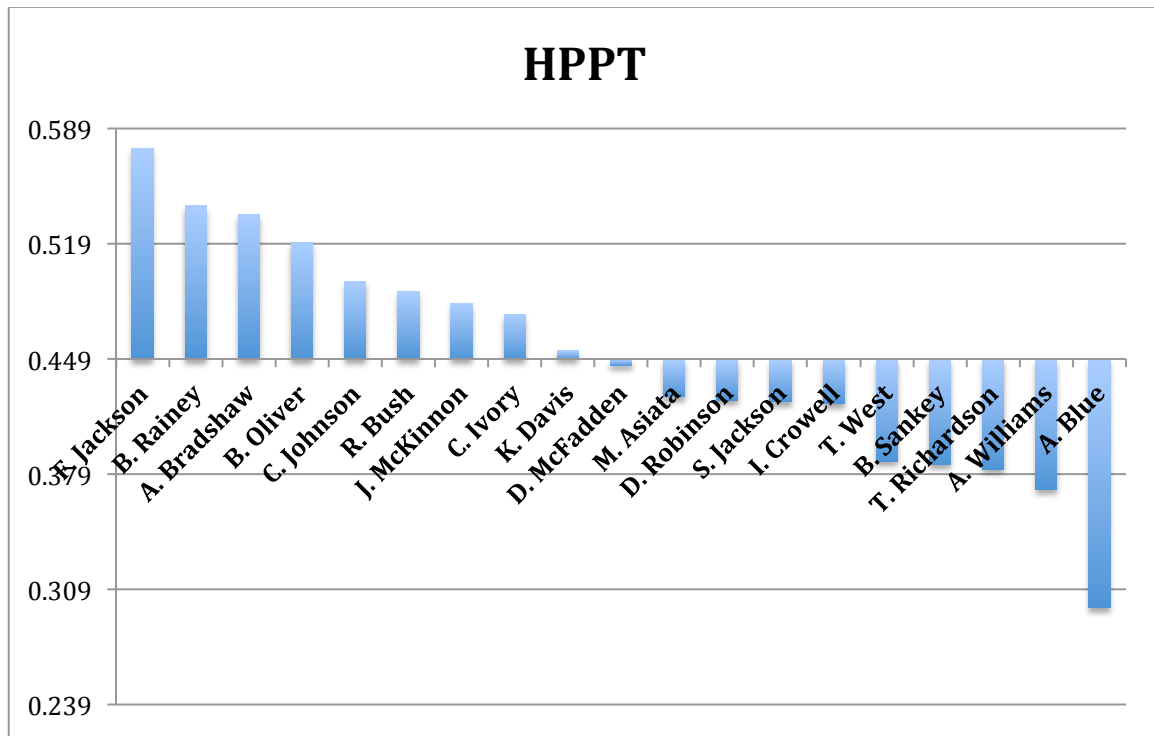
Lastly, we'll conclude this section with a look at the final nine ball carriers:

Player	TPG	HPPT
R. Helu	6.3	0.846
T. Riddick	4.2	0.702
P. Thomas	8.2	0.659
L. Murray	9.9	0.652
S. Vereen	9.3	0.592
B. Cunningham	6.9	0.561
D. Freeman	5.9	0.518
D. Sproles	6.5	0.512
L. Blount	9.0	0.442

Blount's numbers were an average of his time with Pittsburgh and New England

The average for the players above was determined to be 0.609 HPPT with a standard deviation of 0.121 HPPT. The graph can be seen on the next page:

HPPT

0.851	
0.73	
0.609	
0.488	
0.367	

R. Helu
T. Riddick
P. Thomas
L. Murray
S. Vereen
B. Cunningham
D. Freeman
D. Sproles
L. Blount
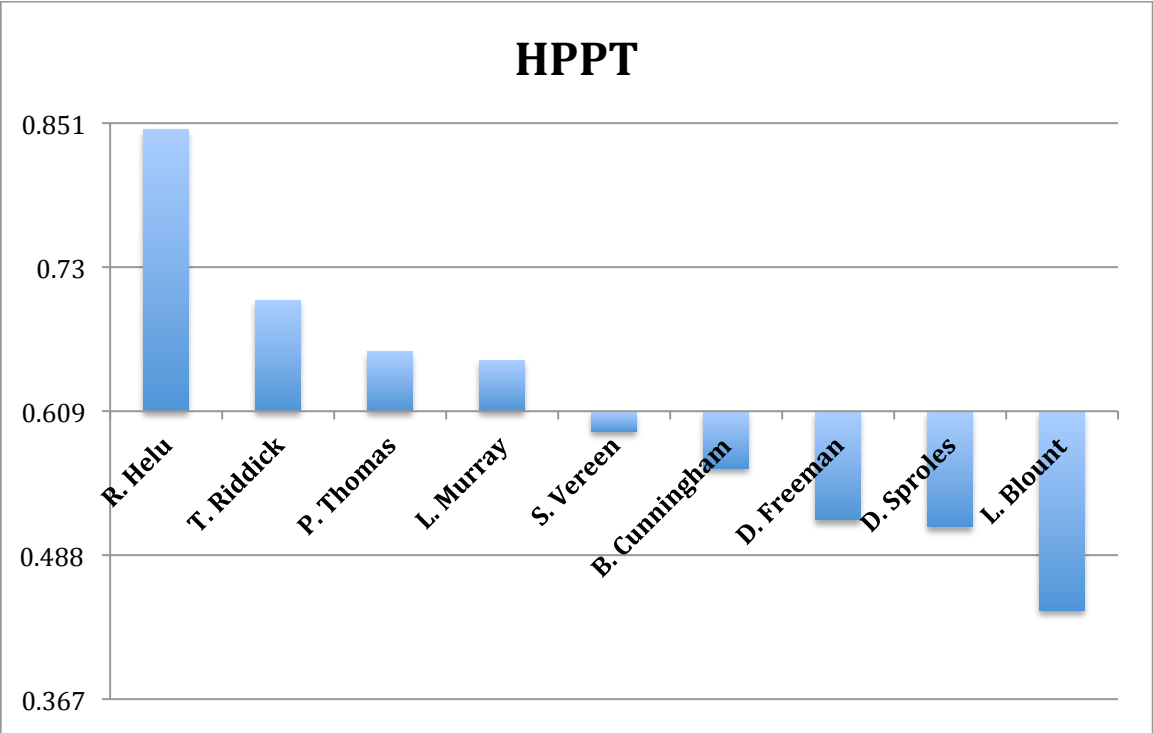
Player Rankings

Given the aggregate of the previous sections, we now have four unique quantifiers with which we can rank each running back. In order to do so we can simply take each player's overall rank versus his 49 peer's four each category and then average them together. The resultant totals can then be compared in order to discern just how good each ball carrier was in 2014, and also paint a picture of what we might see next year. Let's start with the PPR top-50 as a collective:

Rank	Name	TPPT Rank	PPT Rank	% TPPT Rank	HPPT Rank	Average
1	L. Murray	6	23	8	4	10.3
2	R. Helu	1	2	38	1	10.5
3	L. Bell	5	9	23	11	12.0
4	B. Rainey	7	16	17	13	13.3
t-5	T. Riddick	3	1	50	2	14.0
t-5	P. Thomas	4	4	45	3	14.0
t-7	E. Lacy	12	12	31	6	15.3
t-7	L. Miller	13	19	24	5	15.3
9	CJ Anderson	10	10	33	12	16.3
10	S. Vereen	9	7	44	8	17.0
11	D. Sproles	2	3	46	18	17.3
12	J. Charles	15	8	41	7	17.8
13	J. Hill	16	24	15	19	18.5
14	A. Bradshaw	8	5	49	14	19.0
15	B. Cunningham	14	6	47	10	19.3
16	M. Lynch	18	11	37	15	20.3
17	J. Stewart	22	34	6	20	20.5
18	J. Forsett	11	22	13	37	20.8
19	F. Jackson	23	20	34	9	21.5
20	J. McKinnon	25	39	2	25	22.8
21	D. Freeman	21	14	40	17	23.0
22	M. Forte	20	13	39	21	23.3
23	A. Foster	17	18	29	31	23.8
24	T. Mason	27	38	7	24	24.0
25	C. Johnson	30	42	5	22	24.8
26	D. Murray	19	27	12	44	25.5
27	R. Bush	26	17	42	23	27.0
28	J. Bell	28	29	25	27	27.3
29	G. Bernard	24	21	36	29	27.5
30	B. Oliver	38	33	26	16	28.3

31	C. Ivory	36	36	18	26	29.0
t-32	F. Gore	29	47	1	43	30.0
t-32	R. Hillman	31	25	32	32	30.0
34	R. Jennings	35	37	16	33	30.3
35	L. Blount	33	32	22	35	30.5
t-36	D. Robinson	32	31	21	40	31.0
t-36	A. Morris	37	41	10	36	31.0
38	A. Ellington	41	35	28	28	33.0
t-39	I. Crowell	34	26	35	42	34.3
t-39	M. Ingram	39	30	30	38	34.3
41	L. McCoy	40	48	3	50	35.3
42	B. Sankey	43	49	4	46	35.5
43	M. Asiata	42	15	48	39	36.0
t-44	S. Jackson	44	40	20	41	36.3
t-44	D. McFadden	48	44	19	34	36.3
46	K. Davis	45	28	43	30	36.5
47	T. West	46	45	11	45	36.8
48	T. Richardson	47	43	14	47	37.8
49	A. Blue	50	50	9	49	39.5
50	A. Williams	49	46	27	48	42.5

Next, we'll look at each player's ranking within his own tier. As such there won't be 50 total rankings for each quantifier, but only as many as are within each grouping. Let's start once again with the bell-cows:

Rank	Player	TPPT Rank	PPT Rank	% TPPT Rank	HPPT Rank	Average
1	L. Bell	1	1	3	1	1.5
t-2	M. Forte	4	2	6	2	3.5
t-2	A. Foster	2	3	5	4	3.5
t-2	D. Murray	3	4	2	5	3.5
t-5	A. Ellington	6	5	4	3	4.5
t-5	L. McCoy	5	6	1	6	4.5

Next up are the rankings for the second grouping:

Rank	Player	TPPT Rank	PPT Rank	% TPPT Rank	HPPT Rank	Average
1	L. Miller	4	5	8	1	4.5
t-2	E. Lacy	3	4	11	2	5.0
t-2	CJ Anderson	1	2	13	4	5.0
4	J. Charles	5	1	16	3	6.3
5	J. Hill	6	8	6	6	6.5
6	J. Forsett	2	7	5	14	7.0
7	J. Stewart	8	12	2	7	7.3
8	M. Lynch	7	3	15	5	7.5
9	T. Mason	10	14	3	8	8.8
t-10	J. Bell	11	10	9	9	9.8
t-10	G. Bernard	9	6	14	10	9.8
t-12	R. Hillman	13	9	12	11	11.3
t-12	F. Gore	12	16	1	16	11.3
14	R. Jennings	14	13	7	12	11.5
15	A. Morris	15	15	4	13	11.8
16	M. Ingram	16	11	10	15	13.0

And now onto the third leg of the rankings:

Rank	Player	TPPT Rank	PPT Rank	% TPPT Rank	HPPT Rank	Average
1	B. Rainey	1	3	7	2	3.3
t-2	F. Jackson	3	5	14	1	5.8
t-2	J. McKinnon	4	11	1	7	5.8
4	A. Bradshaw	2	1	19	3	6.3
5	C. Johnson	6	13	3	5	6.8
6	R. Bush	5	4	16	6	7.8
t-7	B. Oliver	10	9	12	4	8.8
t-7	C. Ivory	9	10	8	8	8.8
9	D. Robinson	7	8	11	12	9.5
10	M. Asiata	11	2	18	11	10.5
11	I. Crowell	8	6	15	14	10.8
12	K. Davis	14	7	17	9	11.8
t-13	S. Jackson	13	12	10	13	12.0
t-13	B. Sankey	12	18	2	16	12.0
t-15	D. McFadden	17	15	9	10	12.8
t-15	T. West	15	16	5	15	12.8
17	T. Richardson	16	14	6	17	13.3
18	A. Blue	19	19	4	19	15.3
19	A. Williams	18	17	13	18	16.5

Finally, we'll conclude this section with least frequently used runners:

Rank	Player	TPPT Rank	PPT Rank	% TPPT Rank	HPPT Rank	Average
1	R. Helu	1	2	3	1	1.8
2	T. Riddick	3	1	9	2	3.8
3	P. Thomas	4	4	6	3	4.3
4	L. Murray	5	8	1	4	4.5
5	D. Sproles	2	3	7	8	5.0
6	S. Vereen	6	6	5	5	5.5
t-7	B. Cunningham	7	5	8	6	6.5
t-7	D. Freeman	8	7	4	7	6.5
9	L. Blount	9	9	2	9	7.3

Individual Player Profiles

As I stated at the beginning of this study, I wanted to save the individual player breakdowns for when all the information was in hand. With four quantifiers, as well as two sets of rankings (aggregate and volume-based), I believe I'm now able to do just that. First, a quick primer…

The profiles will be ordered by descending rank (according to the top-50 collection), and will also include top-50 rankings and volume-based rankings (shown in parentheses) for each quantifier used, as well as to which group each player belongs. The groups are the same four that have been utilized throughout the study, based upon usage, and will ordered according to descending number of touches per game. All told this will allow me to present the full picture, helping explain the year that was, as well as what the future might hold.

Let's get started with our number-one entry!

Latavius Murray, RB OAK

Group: Four
PPR Rank: 50
Aggregate Study Rank: 1/50 (4/9)
TPPT Rank: 6/50 (5/9)
PPT Rank: 23/50 (8/9)
% TPPT Rank: 8/50 (1/9)
HPPT Rank: 4/50 (4/9)

Murray is an interesting case, as the 50th ranked PPR running back in 2014 led the overall study but finished only fourth (out of nine) in his sub-group. The former can best be explained by the likely repeatability of his statistics – as he ranked sixth and 23rd in his TPPT and PPT ranks respectively, his % TPPT rank stood at eighth overall (nearly two standard deviations above the average). The next closest member of group four (LeGarrette Blount) was 22nd, and the third member (Roy Helu) was 38th. When the total number of ranks (within group four) was diminished to nine, this disparity lessened greatly.

Regardless, Murray checks many of the boxes owners are looking for in a viable fantasy running back. His TPPT and % TPPT numbers are exemplary, and his PPT value was above average, especially considering a low amount of receptions and touchdowns. Adding in Oakland's poor offensive line and tough strength of schedule, as evidenced by an HPPT ranking of fourth, his potential becomes even more appealing. The newly signed Helu (and Trent Richardson, in theory) will

provide competition, but Murray is in much better shape than he was at this point last year.

Roy Helu, RB WSH

Group: Four
PPR Rank: 31
Aggregate Study Rank: 2/50 (1/9)
TPPT Rank: 1/50 (1/9)
PPT Rank: 2/50 (2/9)
% TPPT Rank: 38/50 (3/9)
HPPT Rank: 1/50 (1/9)

Though Murray edged him out for the overall crown, Helu claimed the group four title with ease (see the explanation above), a full two points above the next closest competitor. Looking at his aggregate scores, it's not hard to see how this happened. He led the pack in both True Points and Harris Points, while nearly doing the same for PPT – impressively, all three values were at least one standard deviation above the group four average.

The biggest red flag for Helu is the likelihood of repeatability, as he was only 38th in terms of the % TPPT metric. As under half of his 82 touches were carries, it's easy to see how that happened – however, he was still above the average in this metric, checking in at third in the group. The sum of these numbers renders the newest member of the Black Hole as a very attractive trade target, and his value should only grow with increased usage – as mentioned above, there are no guarantees Murray (or Trent Richardson) beats him out. I'd look to buy low now before the onset of training camp.

Le'Veon Bell, RB PITT

Group: One
PPR Rank: 1
Aggregate Study Rank: 3/50 (1/6)
TPPT Rank: 5/50 (1/6)
PPT Rank: 9/50 (1/6)
% TPPT Rank: 23/50 (3/6)
HPPT Rank: 11/50 (1/6)

I've argued previously that maintaining efficiency becomes more difficult with increased usage. To that point, note the disparate averages across the board for group one versus group four – with the "lightweights" generally serving more as niche players, it's no surprise they're able to make the most of their touches. All told, this makes Bell's 2014 campaign even more impressive, as he checks in as the third-rated ball carrier in this study.

Not only did he put forward exemplary marks in the overall rankings, he led group one in three of the four quantifiers. In fact, his values for TPPT, PPT and HPPT were all at least one standard deviation above the average for the bell-cow 'backs, while his likelihood of repeatability was also above average. Though he was aided, if only minimally, by the help of his O-Line and the strength of schedule, these results are nevertheless beyond impressive.

Continuing, Bell was easily the biggest miss of last year's True Points study, as he put forward a pedestrian rookie season. However, a lot has clearly changed, as the 2014 breakout is now widely considered dynasty football's most valuable running back. It's a good thing pencils have erasers, because I was dead wrong about Bell – as supported by the numbers, he's an extremely remarkable player.

Bobby Rainey, RB TB

Group: Three
PPR Rank: 40
Aggregate Study Rank: 4/50 (1/19)
TPPT Rank: 7/50 (1/19)
PPT Rank: 16/50 (3/19)
% TPPT Rank: 17/50 (7/19)
HPPT Rank: 13/50 (2/19)

While I generally try to stick to the numbers and save the editorializing for my "opinion" pieces, I have to confess I'm floored by Rainey's overall ranking. After all, this is a player who was third on his own depth chart towards the end of the season, following the return of rookie **Charles Sims**. With that said, there are some potential explanations.

First and foremost, Rainey was a superb receiver, averaging 9.5 yards across his 33 receptions. He also produced a large portion of his yards (38.7%) over an early-season two-game stretch, while functioning more as a passing-down back later in the year. This combination of early success and subsequent sparse usage likely helped in aiding his total numbers, as he was never really given much opportunity for regression to hit.

With that said, Rainey picked up yards in chunks and caught enough passes to boost both his TPPT and PPT rankings, while also making his season replicable. His Harris Points dipped some due to above average run blocking, but Rainey was still routinely a cut above (generally at least one standard deviation) within his group. All told, speaking statistically Rainey had a great season, and could be a bit of a sleeper for 2015 if he can get on the field.

Theo Riddick, RB DET

Group: Four
PPR Rank: 47
Aggregate Study Rank: t-5/50 (2/9)
TPPT Rank: 3/50 (3/9)
PPT Rank: 1/50 (1/9)
% TPPT Rank: 50/50 (9/9)
HPPT Rank: 2/50 (2/9)

With only 54 touches on the season, Riddick snuck into the ranks of the top-50 due to his sublime efficiency at catching and scoring the ball. To those points, 34 of his touches were receptions (where he averaged 9.3 yards-per-catch), and he managed to produce four touchdowns, or one per every 13.5 times he handled the ball. This resulted in a mind-boggling 1.754 PPT, a total that lapped the entire field and was nearly 1.5 standard deviations above his peers in group four. Riddick's TPPT and HPPT were also exemplary, and in both the aggregate and within his group he was above average for both metrics.

Unfortunately this brings us to the other side of the coin, one which is akin to scratched up, worn down penny where someone drew devil horns on the profile of Honest Abe. Given his propensities above, it's not shocking to find 61.2% of his PPR points came solely from touchdowns and the point-per-reception, giving him the worst % TPPT value (38.8%) amongst all players studied, a value that was 1.5 standard deviations below the group four average. Put simply, it's extremely unlikely Riddick will repeat such an effectual performance, and as such he'll likely need to accrue more touches (entirely possible with the recent release of Reggie Bush) to remain fantasy relevant.

Pierre Thomas, RB NO

Group: Four
PPR Rank: 34
Aggregate Study Rank: t-5/50 (3/9)
TPPT Rank: 4/50 (4/9)
PPT Rank: 4/50 (4/9)
% TPPT Rank: 45/50 (6/9)
HPPT Rank: 3/50 (3/9)

Death, taxes and Pierre Thomas putting forward fantasy-viable numbers. Indeed, despite missing five games Thomas still finished as a low-end RB3, largely on the back of his per-touch efficiency (a recurring theme for the members of group four). To that point, his TPPT, PPT and HPPT numbers were all exemplary in the aggregate study, while above average within his group. Though he didn't do any one thing in a transcendent manner (none of his group values were more than 0.5 standard deviations above the average), Thomas essentially did everything well, and was only

slightly below the % TPPT average for group four. Thomas won't be back in New Orleans, and at the time of this writing still hasn't signed elsewhere, but once he does I'd expect a continued role as a third-down back on steroids.

Lamar Miller, RB MIA

Group: Two
PPR Rank: 9
Aggregate Study Rank: t-7/50 (1/16)
TPPT Rank: 13/50 (4/16)
PPT Rank: 19/50 (5/16)
% TPPT Rank: 24/50 (8/16)
HPPT Rank: 5/50 (1/16)

Miller is a guy on whom I'm slowly but surely beginning to come around. As evidenced by the numbers above, despite his 15.9 weekly touches and status in group two, Miller was nearly as efficient as the lesser-used players ranked above him in this study. This stems largely from a high floor and relatively high ceiling – including Miller being one standard deviation above his group's TPPT average – as well as an above average shot at repeatability. Miller also possesses one gigantic trump card over the rest of the field.

Based on Miami's combination of poor offensive line play and tough strength of schedule, they led this study with a 150.100% multiplier in the Harris Points component. Because of this, Miller's HPPT were near the top of the aggregate ranks, and a whopping *two* standard deviations above his group average. This serves to accentuate Miller's already above-average efficiency, lending to the possibility that he could be even better come 2015 – his finish as a 2014 PPR RB1 was clearly not a mirage.

Eddie Lacy, RB GB

Group: Two
PPR Rank: 5
Aggregate Study Rank: t-7/50 (t-2/16)
TPPT Rank: 12/50 (3/16)
PPT Rank: 12/50 (4/16)
% TPPT Rank: 31/50 (11/16)
HPPT Rank: 6/50 (2/16)

Lacy's numbers across the board look incredibly similar to Miller's above, so it should come as no surprise they share the same aggregate rank, and are differentiated by just one slot within group two. Expanding upon that point, Lacy was among the top-12 in TPPT and PPT in the aggregate rankings, thereby equating to aberrantly high finishes (at least one standard deviation above the average)

within the group for those two metrics. Replicability could pose a concern, but truth be told Lacy's group finish of 11th wasn't terribly far below the average.

Akin to Miller once again, Lacy truly shines in the Harris Points metric, as the Packers' combination of OL play and strength of schedule provided the young running back with a multiplier of 133.700%. This leads me to believe "Fat Eddie" has the potential to be even better in 2015 should the extraneous factors align in his favor. Given the totality of the above, my dynasty ranking of the overall RB2 for Lacy carries even more merit.

CJ Anderson, RB DEN

Group: Two
PPR Rank: 11
Aggregate Study Rank: 9/50 (t-2/16)
TPPT Rank: 10/50 (1/16)
PPT Rank: 10/50 (2/16)
% TPPT Rank: 33/50 (13/16)
HPPT Rank: 12/50 (4/16)

The group two "turkey" (three strikes in a row, for those who don't follow bowling) is rounded out by Anderson, the young Denver ball carrier who finished as the PPR RB11 despite starting only seven games on the year. He achieved this largely on the back of his ability to rack up yards, receptions and touchdowns in chunks, as evidenced by his top-10 finishes in both the TPPT and PPT metrics. Within his group he ranked first and second respectively for the afore-mentioned quantifiers, easily finishing at least one standard deviation above the average.

He hits a bit of trouble as it relates to the likelihood of repeatability, as barely over half (55.5%) of his points came from gaining yards, ranking 13th in group two. His Harris Points were essentially a wash, as Denver neither gained nor lost any significant advantage as it related to OL/SoS. Though the "Peyton Bump" is very real, Anderson nevertheless ran laps around his backfield compatriots – as supported by the numbers he should be viewed as a top dynasty option at the position.

Shane Vereen, RB NE

Group: Four
PPR Rank: 20
Aggregate Study Rank: 10/50 (6/9)
TPPT Rank: 9/50 (6/9)
PPT Rank: 7/50 (6/9)
% TPPT Rank: 44/50 (5/9)
HPPT Rank: 8/50 (5/9)

Vereen rounds out the aggregate top-ten as the fifth member of group four, once again highlighting importance of receptions and touchdowns for players who don't receive a large volume of touches. In fact, within his group Vereen's numbers across the board were below average when compared to his counterparts, though not remarkably so. Ultimately Vereen functions as an efficient player who would be hard-pressed to replicate his performance should his role change, but also one who could likely mitigate that with a larger and more consistent workload – now a member of the New York Giants, that has become a very real possibility due to the uncertainty of the backfield. I believe the move helps his value, and I'd be looking to buy.

Darren Sproles, RB PHI

Group: Four
PPR Rank: 25
Aggregate Study Rank: 11/50 (5/9)
TPPT Rank: 2/50 (2/9)
PPT Rank: 3/50 (3/9)
% TPPT Rank: 46/50 (7/9)
HPPT Rank: 18/50 (8/9)

Another name, another group four running back. Functioning as more of a well-rounded running back in Philly, Sproles' 1.4:1 run/catch ratio was his highest since 2009. He was also highly efficient with these touches, putting forward top-three aggregate values for both the TPPT and PPT metrics (each roughly one standard deviation about the group average), with the latter coming largely on the strength of his six scoring plays. This leaves the idea of repeatability in question, as more than half of his points came from touchdowns and receptions, a fact which is evidenced in his total and group % TPPT ranks. Another massive red flag was the combination of Philly's dominant offensive line and the collective of poor run defenses they faced – all told the Eagles had the smallest HPPT multiplier out of all teams at a lowly 23.600%. The combination of these final two metrics, as well as Sproles' light usage, would've left me reticent with regards to spending a significant chunk of capital on the aging ball carrier *before* the Iggles signed DeMarco Murray and Ryan Matthews. Now? His fantasy relevance might just be over.

Jamaal Charles, RB KC

Group: Two
PPR Rank: 7
Aggregate Study Rank: 12/50 (4/16)
TPPT Rank: 15/50 (5/16)
PPT Rank: 8/50 (1/16)
% TPPT Rank: 41/50 (16/16)
HPPT Rank: 7/50 (3/16)

Though Charles fell a bit from his #6 TPPT ranking in 2013, he remains a force of efficiency. While his yards-per-reception dipped some (along with receiving volume in general), he continued his trend of averaging at least 5.0 YPC, something Charles has now done every season in his seven-year career. His scoring ability (14 touchdowns) remains sublime, and is reflected in a first-place finish within group two for the PPT metric, nearly two standard deviations above the average. Though this adds some question to his ability to replicate, it should be noted Charles has averaged 55 receptions and 16.5 scores over the two years **Andy Reid** has been in charge of the Chiefs. Adding in Kansas City's tough strength of schedule and subpar offensive line, Charles should receive another boost should these factors deviate to the norm in 2015 – as it was, his HPPT were 7th best in 2014. Though Charles remains "old" according to the conventional running back standard, there's little reason to believe he'll slow down anytime soon.

Jeremy Hill, RB CIN

Group: Two
PPR Rank: 10
Aggregate Study Rank: 13/50 (5/16)
TPPT Rank: 16/50 (6/16)
PPT Rank: 24/50 (8/16)
% TPPT Rank: 15/50 (6/16)
HPPT Rank: 19/50 (6/16)

Hill's place directly following Charles in both the aggregate and group studies presents a nice juxtaposition between the old and new guards, although they achieved their rankings in different fashions. Hill was more solid all around, but he didn't do anything to separate himself from the other ball carriers. With that said, his likelihood of repeatability appears to be higher, given his lesser reliance upon receptions and touchdowns – an increase in the former especially could vault him even higher in the PPR pecking order. His Harris Points saw a slight rankings dip largely based upon Cincy's good offensive line, but he still remained above average here as well. Though he'll need to worry about teammate **Gio Bernard** siphoning away touches, Hill's strong and well-rounded rookie season leaves him as a phenomenal dynasty asset.

Ahmad Bradshaw, RB IND

Group: Three
PPR Rank: 22
Aggregate Study Rank: 14/50 (4/19)
TPPT Rank: 8/50 (2/19)
PPT Rank: 5/50 (1/19)
% TPPT Rank: 49/50 (19/19)
HPPT Rank: 14/50 (3/19)

One of the prevailing schools of thought as it relates to NFL success is that a player needs to be really, really good with at least one thing. For Bradshaw in 2014, that trait was simple – he scored the ball a whopping *eight* times on a mere 128 touches. Don't get me wrong, Bradshaw was also extremely efficient in space, as evidenced by his TPPT ranks (two standard deviations above his group median), but his PPT was 1.64x his compatriots' average. Not shockingly this leads to a large chance of Bradshaw not replicating his 2014 output, a likelihood furthered by the fact he got help both from his offensive line and the scheduling committee. Even with that, Bradshaw remains a strong "buy" candidate given his current price of a firm handshake – at least until he gets hurts again.

Benny Cunningham, RB STL

Group: Four
PPR Rank: 32
Aggregate Study Rank: 15/50 (t-7/9)
TPPT Rank: 14/50 (7/9)
PPT Rank: 6/50 (5/9)
% TPPT Rank: 47/50 (8/9)
HPPT Rank: 10/50 (6/9)

I was actually a bit higher than most on Cunningham in the off-season, and viewed him as a strong arbitrage play/handcuff for **Zac Stacy** owners (or those who wanted to extort Zac Stacy owners). And while the prophecy of Stacy falling off the face of the fantasy earth came true, it was rookie Tre Mason who reaped the rewards, not the player I'm currently profiling. That said, Cunningham was still an effective COP back, finishing as a FLEX RB in PPR largely on the back of his receiving prowess and efficiency. With Stacy essentially mothballed, Cunningham remains a strong play for a team lacking great receiving options, and would be even better if he had better OL play and faced a weaker schedule (see the slight discrepancy between TPPT and HPPT). However, until that comes to fruition, he remains towards the lower end of the group four players.

Marshawn Lynch, RB SEA

Group: Two
PPR Rank: 4
Aggregate Study Rank: 16/50 (8/16)
TPPT Rank: 18/50 (7/16)
PPT Rank: 11/50 (3/16)
% TPPT Rank: 37/50 (15/16)
HPPT Rank: 15/50 (5/16)

With regards to his group two numbers, Lynch essentially represents an anomaly in the study. This could be explained by the fact he was a mere 0.2 touches per game away from joining the ranks of group one, where he would've ranked second in three of the four quantifiers (excluding % TPPT) and second overall behind Le'Veon Bell. Of course, anyone who watched Lynch play during the season doesn't really need the gray area explained to them – he truly was his nickname, "Beast Mode," personified.

To that point, Lynch was well above average with regards to the TPPT, PPT and HPPT in the overall rankings, even if his group numbers dipped some on a relative basis. Despite that qualification, Lynch still exceeded the mean, even surpassing the PPT average by over a full standard deviation. This should come as no surprise, as his ability to score the ball (17 touchdowns on the season) was essentially added onto an already excellent TPPT value. There is some cause for concern as it relates to repeatability, but we now know Lynch will be back in the Emerald City for at least one more year – even if the touchdowns decrease he'll be a fantastic fantasy option.

Jonathan Stewart, RB CAR

Group: Two
PPR Rank: 24
Aggregate Study Rank: 17/50 (7/16)
TPPT Rank: 22/50 (8/16)
PPT Rank: 34/50 (12/16)
% TPPT Rank: 6/50 (2/16)
HPPT Rank: 20/50 (7/16)

Just when it seems like I've run out of mediums in which to heap praise on the mercurial Panthers ball carrier, an opportunity presents itself to extol Stewart's virtues once more. And extol I will, as Stewart put an end to his two-year run of mediocrity to seize the reigns of the Carolina backfield and simply *do work*. Not only that, but should he get the chance to function as the lead ball carrier once again, there's a fantastic chance he'll be even better.

J-Stew was above average in TPPT, a number that looks even better when the extraneous factors of the HPPT metric are invoked. His PPT was sub-optimal,

largely due to the fact he only scored four times on the year and saw his receptions-per-game diminish, but even with that he was still only reasonably below average. Perhaps most importantly, Stewart offers one of the highest floor/ceiling ratios in the game, suggesting should his scoring opportunities (and total workload) increase, we could be looking at a future PPR RB1. Especially given the price, Stewart has effectively swung the value pendulum back in the other direction and now represents a fantastic dynasty buy.

Justin Forsett, RB BAL

Group: Two
PPR Rank: 8
Aggregate Study Rank: 18/50 (6/16)
TPPT Rank: 11/50 (2/16)
PPT Rank: 22/50 (7/16)
% TPPT Rank: 13/50 (5/16)
HPPT Rank: 37/50 (14/16)

At least as it relates to the running back position, Forsett fought tooth and nail with CJ Anderson above for the title of the year's best waiver acquisition. He finished as the PPR RB8, and truth be told it wasn't a fluke – his TPPT was second-best within his group (over one standard deviation above average), and his likelihood of repeatability remains high, as shown by a superb % TPPT value. A relative lack of scores kept his PPT down, but that might not be an issue as he recently re-upped to stick around in Baltimore – with Marc Trestman now coordinating the offense, his reception total of 44 could and should see a modest bump. This would help mitigate any potential reversion to mediocrity by his OL (fourth best in the league) or a bump to the Ravens' strength of schedule as it relates to run defense (well below average in 2014). Simply put, acquiring guys like Forsett on the cheap, when veteran players are currently devalued, is what wins championships.

Fred Jackson, RB BUF

Group: Three
PPR Rank: 18
Aggregate Study Rank: 19/50 (t-2/19)
TPPT Rank: 23/50 (3/19)
PPT Rank: 20/50 (5/19)
% TPPT Rank: 34/50 (14/19)
HPPT Rank: 9/50 (1/19)

The old man just won't go down quietly. Despite his 34 years of age, Jackson again took the reigns in Buffalo and finished the season as a mid-range PPR RB2. He did so by virtue of picking up chunks of yards each time he touched the ball (third in his group, nearly one standard deviation above average), adding gobs of points via receptions (nearly one standard deviation above average for PPT in his group), and

doing these things despite terrible run blocking and an intense strength of schedule (first in his group for HPPT). His repeatability bears monitoring (well below average in % TPPT), especially with the recent trade for LeSean McCoy. But we've counted F-Jax out before, and he's made a fool of us over and over again – at the least he's worth owning as Shady insurance.

Jerick McKinnon, RB MIN

Group: Three
PPR Rank: 48
Aggregate Study Rank: 20/50 (t-2/19)
TPPT Rank: 25/50 (4/19)
PPT Rank: 39/50 (11/19)
% TPPT Rank: 2/50 (1/19)
HPPT Rank: 25/50 (7/19)

Though it took some time for the rookie to get acclimated, he quickly proved that a switch from his collegiate position of quarterback wouldn't be much of an impediment on the road to fantasy viability. McKinnon was well above average for the TPPT, % TPPT and HPPT metrics within his group, with his likelihood of repeatability very nearly leading the entire 50-player pack. To that point, the physical freak didn't score a single touchdown on the year, rendering it hardly surprising his PPT score was subpar. While he might never be a prolific scoring 'back, this will ultimately go down as a fluke, and I'd expect these numbers to rise in 2015. Factoring in the reasonable chance stud **Adrian Peterson** won't be back in purple next year and I'd look to make a play on the ascending sophomore.

Devonta Freeman, RB ATL

Group: Four
PPR Rank: 49
Aggregate Study Rank: 21/50 (t-7/9)
TPPT Rank: 21/50 (8/9)
PPT Rank: 14/50 (7/9)
% TPPT Rank: 40/50 (4/9)
HPPT Rank: 17/50 (7/9)

Yet another case where immediate looks can be deceiving, as the group four running backs "carry" with them (pun somewhat intended) higher expectations. Freeman is no exception, as he only touched the ball a mere 5.9 times per game, with roughly a 2:1 carry/catch ratio. This helped boost his overall PPT rank, but within his group he was nearly a full standard deviation below average. His TPPT were similarly reasonable in the aggregate, but also bottom basement within the lightweight category – the combination of these two metrics paints an ugly picture for his likelihood of repeatability. If there's any silver lining it's that he suffered through a well below-average offensive line, but the caliber of defenses he faced was also

lacking – on the whole it's nearly impossible to assert the "system" let him down. At the time of this writing the Falcons have yet to find him some competition, but I expect they'll address this need in the draft, and I'd be looking to sell high now.

Matt Forte, RB CHI

Group: One
PPR Rank: 3
Aggregate Study Rank: 22/50 (t-2/6)
TPPT Rank: 20/50 (4/6)
PPT Rank: 13/50 (2/6)
% TPPT Rank: 39/50 (6/6)
HPPT Rank: 21/50 (2/6)

Essentially the opposite of Freeman above, I'm okay with Forte's overall rank because, as mentioned earlier, efficiency typically drops as volume increases. Within his bell-cow tier Forte actually tied for second (okay, it was a three-way tie, but still), and showed extremely well with regards to the PPT and HPPT metrics (nearly a standard deviation above the average for the former). Of course, the drawback is that he's essentially locked into some sort of regression given that he set a *league record* for receptions by a running back with 102 on the year – adding in the departure of Marc Trestman and it's fair to expect a decline in PPT, although the **Brandon Marshall** trade should free up some targets. Hidden in his sublime passing game usage was a deterioration running the ball (just 3.9 YPC), although a tough slate of defenses is at least partly to blame. Nevertheless, contenders should be buyers – Forte remains the clear lead dog in the backfield and remains arguably the best receiving 'back in the game.

Arian Foster, RB HOU

Group: One
PPR Rank: 6
Aggregate Study Rank: 23/50 (t-2/6)
TPPT Rank: 17/50 (2/6)
PPT Rank: 18/50 (3/6)
% TPPT Rank: 29/50 (5/6)
HPPT Rank: 31/50 (4/6)

At this point in my career as a fantasy football pundit I'm long-outed as "Foster hater" – however, the goal here is to follow the numbers and present an unbiased opinion, and moreover I can't very well extol Forte's virtues only a paragraph ago while hating on the guy who tied him within his group. And truthfully, Foster exceeded my expectations – yes, he missed the time we knew he'd miss, but when he was on the field he simply produced. He was above average in TPPT and PPT (though not remarkably so), while also putting forward reasonable enough % TPPT and HPPT numbers considering his usage. The latter certainly gives me the most

pause, as Foster dropped 14 spots from TPPT to HPPT due to a strong OL and pathetic strength of schedule, but neither of those things are likely to change heading into 2015. I still believe it's a matter of when, not if, Foster breaks down, but owners might as well ride the lightning while it's still striking.

Tre Mason, RB STL

Group: Two
PPR Rank: 30
Aggregate Study Rank: 24/50 (9/16)
TPPT Rank: 27/50 (10/16)
PPT Rank: 38/50 (14/16)
% TPPT Rank: 7/50 (3/16)
HPPT Rank: 24/50 (8/16)

Yet another gift from the rookie class that just kept on giving, once Mason stepped in as the Rams' starter he didn't look back. While his numbers seem relatively paltry on the surface, his mediocre TPPT and PPT rankings can be explained fairly easily by the fact he hardly functioned in the passing game. To that point, just 16 of his 195 touches came through the air, and while it would be disingenuous to project pass-catching development upon a player (Alfred Morris, anyone?), this one seems likely to improve. And should said progression occur, Mason is already building on a firm foundation of replicability – his % TPPT stood at a robust seventh overall, and within his group he was more than a standard deviation above the average. With roughly a 1.1x bump projected from the HPPT and owners seeking running backs with high floors should look no further. I expect Mason to take a step forward in 2015.

Chris Johnson, RB NYJ

Group: Three
PPR Rank: 39
Aggregate Study Rank: 20/50 (5/19)
TPPT Rank: 30/50 (6/19)
PPT Rank: 42/50 (13/19)
% TPPT Rank: 5/50 (3/19)
HPPT Rank: 22/50 (5/19)

Perhaps the most surprising finding presented by this study is that the erstwhile CJ2K was actually a <gasp!> *average running back* last year. Indeed, with the exception of PPT (Johnson barely scored and only caught 24 passes), the former Titan was quite honestly respectable. He was about average with regards to TPPT (above average in group three), and that number was bolstered by the Jets' poor offensive line play and stout strength of schedule, as evidenced by a sizable bump when compared to the HPPT. Given the totality of this it would be fair to assume Johnson has a great chance at repeating, with only one small issue – he currently

doesn't have a place to call home. Should he get signed, and especially if it's by a team with a pulse (offense intended, Jets fans), he's actually a sneaky end-of-bench stash as a guy whose ceiling easily trumps his cost.

DeMarco Murray, RB DAL

Group: One
PPR Rank: 2
Aggregate Study Rank: 26/50 (t-2/6)
TPPT Rank: 19/50 (3/6)
PPT Rank: 27/50 (4/6)
% TPPT Rank: 12/50 (2/6)
HPPT Rank: 44/50 (5/6)

Perhaps you've read a thing or two about this guy during the off-season, eh? After accruing nearly 500 total touches last season (counting playoffs), Murray's future fate was one of great conjecture, especially given the seemingly deflated market for ball carriers. While that all shook down in what turned out to be a stunning result, we still need to start with the year that was.

And what a year it turned out to be, as Murray dispatched his injury-prone label en route to putting forward a very strong TPPT value given his workload, while also generating roughly average output as it related to PPT – again, for a guy who averaged over 28 touches per game, this was no small feat. Believe it or not, the combination of these two stats lend themselves to a strong likelihood of replication, as Murray was 12th overall in % TPPT, and second within group one.

It seemed like the good times would end there, since the combination of Dallas' ridiculous OL and the Cowboys' JV schedule provided Murray with a huge weekly advantage, but he somehow wound up with one of two teams, Philadelphia, that was *even better* in those regards. With mad scientist Chip Kelly at the helm, I have a tough time downgrading Murray's outlook at all, even if his volume were to decrease. Believe it or not, 2015 could be just as good.

Reggie Bush, RB DET

Group: Three
PPR Rank: 42
Aggregate Study Rank: 27/50 (6/19)
TPPT Rank: 26/50 (5/19)
PPT Rank: 17/50 (4/19)
% TPPT Rank: 42/50 (16/19)
HPPT Rank: 23/50 (6/19)

Never truly materializing as a feature back during his time in Detroit, Bush's production was largely dependent upon passing game involvement. Given that, it

was a shame to see a less-than-stellar TPPT ranking, which further manifested itself in a sub-optimal % TPPT listing. Similar to Freeman above, I want to see big numbers from ball carriers who derive a significant chunk of their value in the receiving game – Bush might just not have the legs anymore. His fit in SF as the third-down back is sensible enough, but I see little reason to assume he'll return to his previously efficient form on a worse offense, and in a tougher division.

Joique Bell, RB DET

Group: Two
PPR Rank: 13
Aggregate Study Rank: 28/50 (t-10/16)
TPPT Rank: 28/50 (11/16)
PPT Rank: 29/50 (10/16)
% TPPT Rank: 25/50 (9/16)
HPPT Rank: 27/50 (9/16)

Our second Lion in a row (at least as of last year), Bell's 2014 was nearly a carbon copy of his breakout 2013 campaign as it related to running the ball, albeit with more volume. Unfortunately, where he lagged was in the receiving game, with 19 fewer catches and nearly a yard-per-reception fewer – the combination of the two, along with a reduced rate of touchdown-scoring, essentially led to average numbers across this report. To that point, all of Bell's aggregate ranks stood between 25-28, while his group ratings filled the range of 9-11. Simply put, he didn't do anything particularly well or particularly poorly, and as such he has a reasonable shot of replicating come 2015. I'd hesitate to assert a soon-to-be 29-year-old running back will improve his efficiency dramatically, so the smart money is assuming we know what we have here – a solid all-around ball carrier who will get points so long as he gets touches.

Giovani Bernard, RB CIN

Group: Two
PPR Rank: 16
Aggregate Study Rank: 29/50 (t-10/16)
TPPT Rank: 24/50 (9/16)
PPT Rank: 21/50 (6/16)
% TPPT Rank: 36/50 (14/16)
HPPT Rank: 29/50 (10/16)

Though he stands just behind Bell in the aggregate rankings, and even tied him within group two, their paths to that point were significantly different. Whereas Bell was solid across the board, Bernard's PPT metric outpaced his other numbers, largely due to his 3.3 receptions per game and touchdown every 30 touches. Combined with an average TPPT rank, this led to a subpar % TPPT mark, highlighting tough odds of repeatability. Factoring in a lower HPPT rank (Cincy was

greatly aided by solid run blocking from their OL), and the totality of the numbers above are painted in definitive shades of gray. While functioning as the 1b to Jeremy Hill's 1a should help moving forward, Bernard's place in this study is a stark reminder that he might not wind up as we all envisioned following a surprising rookie year.

Branden Oliver, RB SD

Group: Three
PPR Rank: 29
Aggregate Study Rank: 30/50 (t-7/19)
TPPT Rank: 38/50 (10/19)
PPT Rank: 33/50 (9/19)
% TPPT Rank: 26/50 (12/19)
HPPT Rank: 16/50 (4/19)

If you haven't noticed by now, there's apparently something in the water in group three – for whatever reason, they appear to have lagged behind their counterparts in the other three collectives. Regardless, Oliver presents an interesting case – depending on the way you value the qualifiers used, you could come away with an incredibly favorable or harsh viewpoint, with everything in between. His TPPT were amongst the worst in the study (average for his group at least), with his PPT slightly better due to usage in the passing game. This led to average expectations of replicability, a case that can be further bolstered by the fact he got the second-highest HPPT bump (149%) due to the Chargers' combination of awful run-blocking and tough SoS – should San Diego improve in these facets, their ball carriers should reap the benefits. And with Ryan Matthews' surprising signing with the Eagles, Oliver is currently the biggest beneficiary – it remains to be seen what they'll do in the draft, but Oliver could eventually make for a sneaky buy-low.

Chris Ivory, RB NYJ

Group: Three
PPR Rank: 23
Aggregate Study Rank: 31/50 (t-7/19)
TPPT Rank: 36/50 (9/19)
PPT Rank: 36/50 (10/19)
% TPPT Rank: 18/50 (8/19)
HPPT Rank: 26/50 (8/19)

Ivory's story is largely similar to Oliver's above (no surprise as they tied within the group three standings) – his per-touch efficiency was largely unsatisfactory (below average in TPPT and PPT, due at least somewhat to a lack of involvement in the passing game), but his chances of repeating can be placed within a positive context. The latter stems from an above-average % TPPT ranking (61.2% of his fantasy points came through gaining yards), as well as a 10-spot bump between his TPPT

and HPPT. To that last metric, the Jets were a bad offensive team with poor run-blocking, and they played an above-average SoS – we've already seen this same bump with the afore-mentioned Chris Johnson. Aligning with Oliver one last time, Ivory stands as the lead dog in the backfield right now – this could change come draft time, but once again we have another player who could be construed as an interesting buy low candidate.

Frank Gore, RB SF

Group: Two
PPR Rank: 21
Aggregate Study Rank: t-32/50 (t-12/16)
TPPT Rank: 29/50 (12/16)
PPT Rank: 47/50 (16/16)
% TPPT Rank: 1/50 (1/16)
HPPT Rank: 43/50 (16/16)

Gore has one of the, if not *the* oddest profile amongst the running backs studied here. His TPPT was roughly average amongst the aggregate population, though he lagged behind his fellow group-mates. Part of this was due to a lack of receptions (just 4.1% of his total touches), a trend under now-deposed coach Jim Harbaugh that also manifested itself in a horrific PPT finish (nearly two standard deviations below the group average). That's where the script gets flipped – 74.6% of Gore's points came solely from yardage, a total that was over 3% higher than anyone else on the list, and roughly 2.5 standard deviations above his group's average. This means his output is highly repeatable, and given his new offense in Indy actually throws the ball to running backs (a less talented **Dan Herron** had 39 receptions in his nine starts, including playoffs) this should be more than enough to offset the drop-off in offensive line play. It's rare you can say this about a soon-to-be 32-year-old running back, but his dynasty value is actually on the rise.

Ronnie Hillman, RB DEN

Group: Two
PPR Rank: 43
Aggregate Study Rank: t-32/50 (t-12/16)
TPPT Rank: 31/50 (13/16)
PPT Rank: 25/50 (9/16)
% TPPT Rank: 32/50 (12/16)
HPPT Rank: 32/50 (11/16)

Though Hillman's sudden (and brief) rise to fantasy viability will be remembered fondly as the glorious lightning strike it was, the truth is he was largely average when serving as Denver's lead back. After coming out of the gates hot (over 4.2 YPC in his first four starts), he wheezed his way to 2.7 YPC the rest of the way – coupled with limited success in the passing game and it's no surprise his TPPT and PPT

values were basically middling (below average in his group setting). Even if he should somehow wrest the job away from CJ Anderson, his odds of repeating are also below average, and the external factors (manifested in the HPPT) did little to help his case. It was a nice story for a few games, but I'd be looking to sell to the Anderson owner ASAP.

Rashad Jennings, RB NYG

Group: Two
PPR Rank: 29
Aggregate Study Rank: 34/50 (14/16)
TPPT Rank: 35/50 (14/16)
PPT Rank: 37/50 (13/16)
% TPPT Rank: 16/50 (7/16)
HPPT Rank: 33/50 (12/16)

A poorly kept secret was the poor play of the Giants' ball carriers in 2014 (we'll assess Andre Williams in a bit – he's well down the list). And despite his surprisingly good play as a Raider in 2013, Jennings was a definitive part of the problem – he averaged less than 4.0 YPC on the season, while missing five games and playing hurt in others. Perhaps that led to below average numbers in the TPPT and PPT metrics, but as a 30-year old RB it's again tough to predict some type of dramatic increase in efficiency. The HPPT also did very little to buoy his numbers. Yes, his performance is repeatable, but that's saying precious little – Shane Vereen is the guy to own in this backfield.

LeGarrette Blount, RB NE

Group: Four
PPR Rank: 45
Aggregate Study Rank: 35/50 (9/9)
TPPT Rank: 33/50 (9/9)
PPT Rank: 32/50 (9/9)
% TPPT Rank: 22/50 (2/9)
HPPT Rank: 35/50 (9/9)

It was a tale of two seasons for Blount, and truthfully it's a bit disingenuous that he's included with the lightweights of group four. Yes, this was true in Pittsburgh as he only recorded 65 carries across 10 games, but the script flipped upon his return to Foxboro. His carries per game jumped from 6.5 to 12, and his YPC also increased from 4.1 to 4.7. He still couldn't catch a cold in the passing game, but these numbers extrapolated would've looked a lot better in group three (or perhaps even group two if the volume came) than in group four. Regardless, the biggest thing we can glean from Blount's season is that he's likely to repeat it – this is evidenced by a slightly above average % TPPT rating, and also more anecdotally by the fact coach Bill Belilchick clearly trusts the guy. He's a very sneaky "buy" candidate.

Denard Robinson, RB JAX

Group: Three
PPR Rank: 38
Aggregate Study Rank: t-36/50 (9/19)
TPPT Rank: 32/50 (7/19)
PPT Rank: 31/50 (8/19)
% TPPT Rank: 21/50 (11/19)
HPPT Rank: 40/50 (12/19)

To be honest I was a bit surprised by D-Rob's numbers. While his 4.3 YPC were very good, a poor showing in the passing game (just 5.4 YPR) helped lead to a below-average TPPT value, and a low rate of touchdown scoring did the same to his PPT rating. While these were both above average with regards to the rest of group three, we've established by now that such things mean very little. Though the combination of those two metrics lends itself to an above average chance of replication, a Charmin-soft SoS actually pushed his HPPT value towards the bottom of the pack. When the totality of these previous sentences is combined with the Jaguars' flirtation with DeMarco Murray, it appears likely Robinson could be forced into more of a third-down role, making him a shaky dynasty investment.

Alfred Morris, RB WSH

Group: Two
PPR Rank: 17
Aggregate Study Rank: t-36/50 (15/16)
TPPT Rank: 37/50 (15/16)
PPT Rank: 41/50 (15/16)
% TPPT Rank: 10/50 (4/16)
HPPT Rank: 36/50 (13/16)

Similar to Robinson above, Morris' values for TPPT and PPT were on the negative side of the ledger (both over one standard deviation below his group's average), which should come as no surprise since he doesn't play in the passing game and only scored eight times despite handling 18 touches per game. On the other hand, ALF broke the 1,000-yard barrier for the third consecutive year, providing him with a solid RB2 floor – this is also evidenced in his exemplary % TPPT rating, which stood at tenth overall on the aggregate and fourth in group two (nearly one standard deviation above the average). His HPPT barely deviated from his TPPT, suggesting his numbers effectively were what we thought they were, which I suppose is something we can say about ALF in general – I'd love to have him as my RB2, but he's likely stretched as a fantasy RB1.

Andre Ellington, RB AZ

Group: One
PPR Rank: 19
Aggregate Study Rank: 38/50 (t-5/6)
TPPT Rank: 41/50 (6/6)
PPT Rank: 35/50 (5/6)
% TPPT Rank: 28/50 (4/6)
HPPT Rank: 28/50 (3/6)

I took this one on the chin this year, as Ellington was definitively "my guy" amongst the PPR RB1 hopefuls. We all know what happened next – he was hurt in training camp and simply didn't look right all year, as evidenced by a lack of explosive plays and broken tackles when compared to 2013. In fact, after nearly leading my True Points study last year, Ellington's TPPT value this year was near the bottom of both the aggregate study and first grouping, where he was a full standard deviation below average. He fared slightly better with PPT, largely due to roughly 20% of his touches being receptions, but on the season he still only managed five scores. At the very least this leaves him with an average chance of repeating these numbers in 2015, a prospect that's not overly exciting. The best news of the season for the young ball carrier was how bad the Cardinals run blocking was, as well as their incredibly tough schedule – this led to a 13-spot difference between his TPPT and HPPT values, the latter of which was essentially study-average. I'd like to see him get another shot in 2015, one where he's fully healthy to start the year, but rumors of a union with Adrian Peterson persist. Though I'm not yet giving up hope, this might simply go down as a "miss" from yours truly.

Isaiah Crowell, RB CLE

Group: Three
PPR Rank: 33
Aggregate Study Rank: t-39/50 (11/19)
TPPT Rank: 34/50 (8/19)
PPT Rank: 26/50 (6/19)
% TPPT Rank: 35/50 (15/19)
HPPT Rank: 42/50 (14/19)

Crowell is another whose rank comes as a surprise to me, although based on his game-by-game breakdown it's fair to assert he hit a rookie wall towards the end of the season. Perhaps it was a case of mismanaged expectations or "graduation goggles," but a second glimpse shows Crowell's season was truthfully nothing special. His YPC barely surpassed 4.0, and while he was efficient in the passing game he was hardly utilized there, hence the low TPPT. His PPT saw a bit of a bump largely on the back of his eight touchdowns (one every 19.6 touches), and he was nearly a half of a standard deviation above the group three average here. Unfortunately, this high rate of scoring also dragged his % TPPT down (0.5 standard

deviations below the group average), and this was bolstered by the fact the Browns had an above average OL and a below average SoS, as seen by a drop-off in HPPT. Ultimately, the numbers suggest we might like the idea of Crowell's running prowess more than it actually existed – he's an interesting dynasty option, but perhaps not as prolific as we'd hoped.

Mark Ingram, RB NO

Group: Two
PPR Rank: 14
Aggregate Study Rank: t-39/50 (16/16)
TPPT Rank: 39/50 (16/16)
PPT Rank: 30/50 (11/16)
% TPPT Rank: 30/50 (10/16)
HPPT Rank: 38/50 (15/16)

I know I'm trying to stay objective here, but I don't like Mark Ingram. Fortunately, as the antithesis of my guy Ellington, the numbers actually back me up this time. Simply put, Ingram was nothing special – his TPPT were in the bottom fifth of the aggregate study and dead last within his group (over one standard deviation below the average), largely because his YPC was nothing special and his 5.4 YPR average was truly weak. He received a bump in PPT (still below average in both studies) because he scored nine touchdowns, but this meant only 57.2% of his points came from yardage – as such it wasn't surprising to see a below average % TPPT rank. The HPPT were no help, as he was towards the bottom of both lists, and exactly one standard deviation below his group average yet again. Long story short, Ingram was inefficient with the ball in his hands, relied too much on touchdowns and even benefited marginally from his OL and strength of schedule. With the addition of the much more talented CJ Spiller to the backfield and I'm not sure Ingram even approaches his 2014 numbers – I'd sell high if you still can.

LeSean McCoy, RB PHI

Group: One
PPR Rank: 12
Aggregate Study Rank: 41/50 (t-5/6)
TPPT Rank: 40/50 (5/6)
PPT Rank: 48/50 (6/6)
% TPPT Rank: 3/50 (1/6)
HPPT Rank: 50/50 (6/6)

Bringing up the rear of group one with a year to forget is 2013 stud McCoy. For whatever reason, Shady simply couldn't approach his previous year's numbers, and his raw stats (yards, receptions and touchdowns) all declined precipitously. This led to terrible values for TPPT and PPT (one and one-and-a-half standard deviations below the group average, respectively), which if nothing else (and I quite literally

mean nothing else) means his likelihood of repeatability is extremely high. To that point, we've at least seen a much higher floor with McCoy in the past, so perhaps the % TPPT means more than if we're talking about a simply bad player (I'll have examples of precisely that later). Unfortunately, as mentioned with Darren Sproles earlier, the Eagles benefited more than any other team with regards to the HPPT metric, and as such McCoy had the lowest value measured out of every player in the study (and one of only two sub-0.300 numbers). Given his move to Buffalo it's fair to have reservations for a bounce-back, especially considering the Bills were on the opposite end of the HPPT spectrum with poor blocking and a ridiculous SoS. However, if nothing else we know new coach Rex Ryan will run McCoy into the ground, so some hope remains – but McCoy's 2014 season could perhaps go down as closer to the norm than his knockout 2013.

Bishop Sankey, RB TEN

Group: Three
PPR Rank: 44
Aggregate Study Rank: 42/50 (t-13/19)
TPPT Rank: 43/50 (12/19)
PPT Rank: 49/50 (18/19)
% TPPT Rank: 4/50 (2/19)
HPPT Rank: 46/50 (16/19)

Take McCoy above, subtract half of his touches and you essentially have Sankey. In addition to functioning poorly with the ball in space (evidenced by a bottom-tier TPPT metric), Sankey didn't score touchdowns or catch the ball, leading to a PPT ranking just a shade above the very bottom of the aggregate study. Like McCoy again, his likelihood of repeating is high, but given the sum of his stats that says precious little. Also akin to Shady, he looked even worse when HPPT were considered – we shouldn't be too quick to dismiss players after just a single season (see Bell, Le'Veon), but Sankey was aberrantly bad last year – he has some ground to make up.

Matt Asiata, RB MIN

Group: Three
PPR Rank: 15
Aggregate Study Rank: 43/50 (10/19)
TPPT Rank: 42/50 (11/19)
PPT Rank: 15/50 (2/19)
% TPPT Rank: 48/50 (18/19)
HPPT Rank: 39/50 (11/19)

Given his status as an "also-ran" in this study, it'd be easy to belittle the season that was for the "Purple Sloth." Truth be told, however, Asiata exists as a metaphorical "unicorn" at the bottom of this study, a player who just so happens to do one thing

really, really well – scoring the ball. Indeed, despite a lack of dynamic (as seen with his TPPT numbers), Asiata was able to function as a high-end PPR RB2 because of his ability to cross the goal line, something he did once every 20.8 touches. Adding in his 44 receptions and it was no surprise to see him finish toward the top of the pack with regards to PPT, a full standard deviation above his group three compatriots. The % TPPT numbers suggest a repeat isn't likely, but if Adrian Peterson moves on as expected, Asiata could very well function as the short-yardage and occasional third-down back for one more year (he recently re-upped for 2015). He's a plodding unicorn, but a unicorn nonetheless – I'd look to snag him on the cheap, especially in best-ball leagues.

Steven Jackson, RB ATL

Group: Three
PPR Rank: 28
Aggregate Study Rank: t-44/50 (t-13/19)
TPPT Rank: 44/50 (13/19)
PPT Rank: 40/50 (12/19)
% TPPT Rank: 20/50 (10/19)
HPPT Rank: 41/50 (13/19)

In the immortal words of Kenny Rogers, "you got to know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em, know when to walk away…" and – well – judging by Jackson's output in 2014, I don't know if he *can* run anymore, even if he knows when to. The venerable ball carrier's number were, suffice it to say, abysmal. He dwelled in the bottom ten for TPPT, PPT and HPPT, and despite that his chances of replicating his numbers are still merely average. As of the time of this writing he has yet to be picked up by another team after being cut by Atlanta, and there's a reasonable chance he might not be. I wouldn't give him a second thought.

Darren McFadden, RB OAK

Group: Three
PPR Rank: 35
Aggregate Study Rank: t-44/50 (t-15/19)
TPPT Rank: 48/50 (17/19)
PPT Rank: 44/50 (15/19)
% TPPT Rank: 19/50 (9/19)
HPPT Rank: 34/50 (10/19)

McFadden was essentially a worse version of Jackson above, putting forward a bottom-three number in TPPT and a bottom-seven value for PPT. He simply just doesn't have the trademark burst that used to typify his game, as evidenced by a sub-4.0 YPC value and a YPR statistic under 6.0. Unlike S-Jax, however, Run-DMC at least has the excuse that Oakland received the fourth highest multiplier in the HPPT metric, and as such McFadden's adjusted efficiency was able to climb from the ranks

of the truly horrible to the moderately mediocre. Coupled with his recent move to Dallas, a team boasting an elite OL and easier schedule, there remains a flicker of life in McFadden's dynasty stock. I'd personally use that to sell high (note: "high" is a relative term here), as I believe the Cowboys will ultimately upgrade the position in the draft.

Knile Davis, RB KC

Group: Three
PPR Rank: 37
Aggregate Study Rank: 46/50 (12/19)
TPPT Rank: 45/50 (14/19)
PPT Rank: 28/50 (7/19)
% TPPT Rank: 43/50 (17/19)
HPPT Rank: 30/50 (9/19)

One of the strangest fantasy myths currently circulating is the notion Knile Davis is a good running back. Simply put, he's not – he just finished his second year in a row under 4.0 YPC and only derives roughly half of his points from gaining yards, and just for good measure he puts the ball on the ground once every 38.5 touches (I know fumbles aren't a huge deal in fantasy, but this speaks to a severely deficient real-life skill set). None of his metrics were above average in the aggregate study, which is especially shocking for PPT considering he crossed the goal line, on average, once every 21.4 touches. Yes, the HPPT were kinder given the Chiefs', *ahem*, offensive constraints, but even still Davis was only in the 40th percentile here. You could do worse for a plug-and-play if Jamaal Charles gets hurt again, as at the very least we know the volume would be there – but I don't think Davis is Kansas City's running back of the future. Owners have undoubtedly missed their respective windows to sell at the apex of his value, but I'd be actively shopping him just in case Andy Reid and company seek an upgrade via the draft.

Terrance West, RB CLE

Group: Three
PPR Rank: 36
Aggregate Study Rank: 47/50 (t-15/19)
TPPT Rank: 46/50 (15/19)
PPT Rank: 45/50 (16/19)
% TPPT Rank: 11/50 (5/19)
HPPT Rank: 45/50 (15/19)

West is essentially a worse version of teammate Isaiah Crowell, but with a much better chance of replicating his numbers come 2015. To that point, when you only catch 11 passes and score only once every 36.4 touches, that's truthfully not saying a whole heck of a lot. West's TPPT and PPT were amongst the worst in this study, and he received no "help" from the Harris Points. Sure, it would be tough to envision

him doing worse come 2015, and I've certainly learned my lesson about burying rookie running backs after only one season, but I believe he is the second-most talented sophomore ball carrier on the roster – I'd be looking to trade with the Crowell owner and sell him on investing in the entirety of the Browns' backfield.

Trent Richardson, RB IND

Group: Three
PPR Rank: 37
Aggregate Study Rank: 48/50 (12/19)
TPPT Rank: 47/50 (16/19)
PPT Rank: 43/50 (14/19)
% TPPT Rank: 14/50 (6/19)
HPPT Rank: 47/50 (17/19)

See West above. The book has likely been written on Richardson at this point, as I'm not buying a move to Oakland somehow functioning as the backbone of his vindication story. T-Rich is pretty decent in the passing game and that's about it – he lacks vision and simply can't create space behind the line of scrimmage. Not surprisingly his TPPT metric is amongst the worst in the league, and he didn't procure enough receptions or scores to boost his PPT value substantially. As we've seen with a lot of this study's cellar dwellers, the odds of replicability are high, but again – should that excite us as owners? The bottom line is two franchises have now given up on the former third overall pick in the draft – he'll more than likely go down as a bust, both in real life and in dynasty football.

Alfred Blue, RB HOU

Group: Three
PPR Rank: 46
Aggregate Study Rank: 49/50 (18/19)
TPPT Rank: 50/50 (19/19)
PPT Rank: 50/50 (19/19)
% TPPT Rank: 9/50 (4/19)
HPPT Rank: 49/50 (19/19)

There are no moral victories here. It might read 49/50 for his aggregate rank (and 18/19 in group three), but Blue's numbers were arguably the worst of the bunch. He finished dead last in TPPT and PPT in the overall study, while doing only one spot better in the HPPT quantifier. He actually hit the trifecta within his group, finishing at the bottom for all three. He's a bad running back who might have provided you some points in a best-ball format if you bought the Arian Foster insurance, but otherwise he's JAG. Houston should look to upgrade the position in the draft.

Andre Williams, RB NYG

Group: Three
PPR Rank: 27
Aggregate Study Rank: 50/50 (19/19)
TPPT Rank: 49/50 (18/19)
PPT Rank: 46/50 (17/19)
% TPPT Rank: 27/50 (13/19)
HPPT Rank: 48/50 (18/19)

Williams is basically Blue with more volume and more touchdowns. He doesn't run with efficiency and can't catch a cold, so it should come as no surprise his TPPT and PPT values are well below average. He received no help from the Harris Points metric as the Giants were effectively an average team in this study when it came to the combination of OL play and strength of schedule. His repeatability is relatively low given how bad the other quantifiers were, which is quite possible the most damning thing we can say about the young ball carrier. Shane Vereen is the running back to own on the Giants, and Rashad Jennings isn't going away. Williams needs to take a "Giant" leap forward if he's to build upon his surprising finish as a PPR RB3 last year – bet the under.