October 24th, 2010. It was a few days after my birthday and I was hoping for the final birthday gift – a Chicago Bears victory. Luckily, I was still in high school at the time so I had the privilege of watching the Chicago Bears play in full HD, a far cry from my college days when I had to find a pirated stream of Chicago Bears games. Despite 2010 being a solid season for the Chicago Bears, even advancing to the NFC Championship game, this particular Sunday was a tough game to watch.

The game started off with promise – second-year nickelback, DJ Moore returned an interception 54 yards for a touchdown. The offense, however, struggled. More specifically, Jay Cutler, struggled.

The troubles started early in the third quarter when Jay Cutler threw a pass to Devin Hester. Instead of cutting back towards the ball, Hester sat on the top of his route allowing DeAngelo Hall to jump the route and pick the ball. Later in the third, Cutler made an ill-advised throw off of his backfoot and telegraphed a throw that was picked off for a touchdown by DeAngelo Hall. Early in the fourth, backed up against his own end zone, Jay Cutler threw a short four-yard slant to Johnny Knox who failed to shed press coverage. The ball was easily caught, again, by DeAngelo Hall. To cap off the disastrous afternoon, with 2:23 left in the game and down three, Cutler threw an inaccurate deep ball that was picked off by one DeAngelo Hall.

Four Jay Cutler Interceptions. Four DeAngelo Hall picks. It tied the NFL record for picks by one player in a game.

After the game, Jay Cutler further stocked the ire of Chicago fans by saying, “I've played against him before, there's no reason to shy away from him. I mean, that's hard for me to say throwing four picks at a guy. But I'd still, if we had to play them tomorrow I'd go at him every time, if we could.”

That game was vintage Jay Cutler, “The Gunslinger.” Unafraid of throwing the deep ball regardless of consequences. Overconfident, perhaps to a fault, in their physical gifts. Unpredictable. Attitude.

The Chicago media would endlessly compare Jay Cutler to another gunslinger they knew pretty well – Brett Favre. In the snippet to the book, *Gunslinger: The Remarkable, Improbable, Iconic Life of Brett Favre,* the author, Jeff Pearlman, writes, “A towering figure on the field for two decades who breezed into the Hall of Fame, Brett Favre was one of the game’s last cowboys, a fastball-throwing, tobacco-chewing gunslinger who refused to give up without a fight.”

So, what is a “gunslinger?”

These two men, who were both described as “gunslingers”, endlessly tested defenses by throwing the deep ball over and over again, however ill-advised the throw might’ve been.

That got me thinking – who else can be called a “gunslinger?” To help me with this question, I took a look at this dataset: <https://www.kaggle.com/maxhorowitz/nflplaybyplay2009to2016>.

In this dataset, specifically, I looked at how quarterbacks reacted to throwing picks. The best way I was able to do this was to see what the average distance their pass after a pick was. My rationale is simple – a “gunslinger” is so supremely confident in their abilities that they’ll continue throwing the deep ball despite throwing an interception. In fact, some gunslingers might throw the ball as a way of refusing humble pie.

(Picture)

To help narrow down the group we’re looking at, I selected quarterbacks that had at least 100 pass attempts and more than 10 career interceptions. The results are interesting.

Trevor Siemian, the top of this chart, is well known for his arm strength but struggled at times with the deep ball. Second on this chart, however, is Bruce Gradkowski who was universally panned as having a “pea arm.”

What are your takeaways from this graph?

Feel free to browse the Github repo for various other graphs and analysis (including the effectiveness of playing under shotgun).

