

Passing efficiency of the New Jersey Devils

By Ryan Stimson Updated: May 8 at 1:00 pm

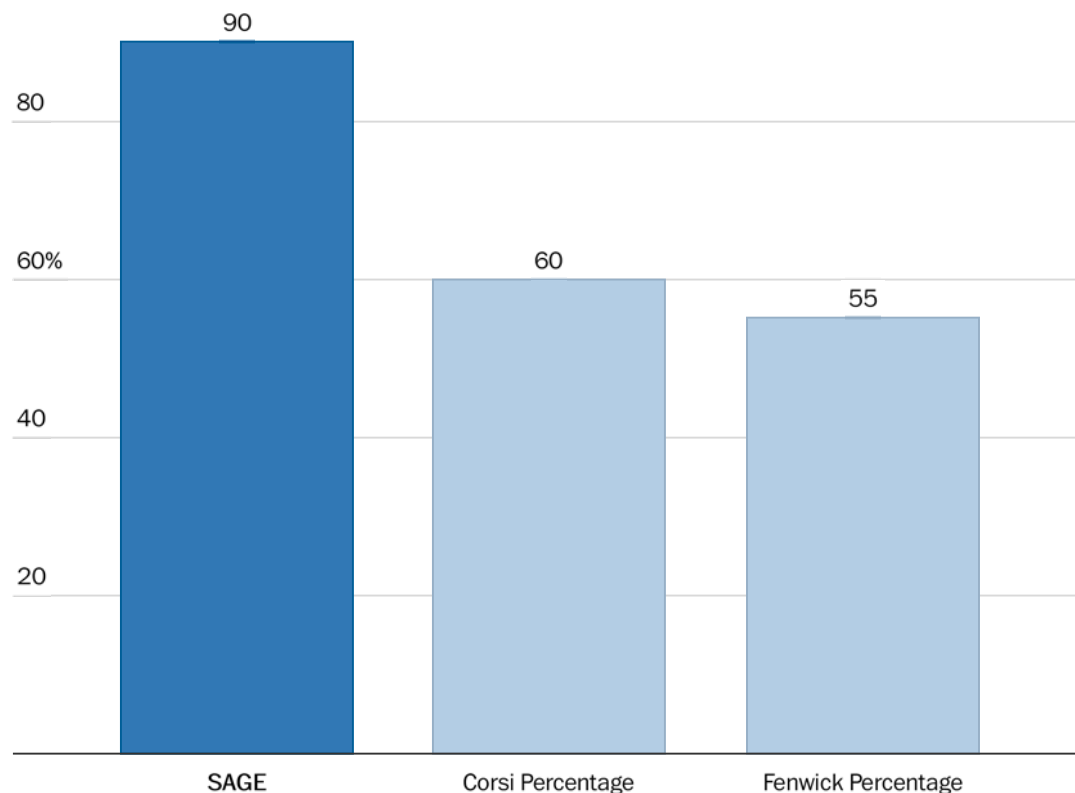
I tracked every pass, shot attempt, and shot generated by a New Jersey Devils [forward](#) and [defenseman](#) in even-strength situations during the 2013-14 season to identify who the true shot-generators were and how effective they may be.

By recording each pass that leads to a shot attempt (shots saved, missed, blocked and goals) separate from each pass that leads to a shot, we can isolate this phase of the game and identify which players and teams have a higher percentage of passes that lead to shots. I call it SAGE (Shot Attempt Generation Efficiency) and it is a way to measure the quality of a team's shot attempts.

Based on twenty New Jersey Devils games from January 30 to March 29, the team that was more efficient in SAGE won eighteen of these games, or a winning percentage of 90%. If we compare that winning percentage to the team that finished with a higher [Even Strength Corsi](#) (66.7%) or [Fenwick](#) (61.1%), it quickly becomes clear there is something to this phase of the game.

Correlation to Winning

20-game sample size of New Jersey Devils



[Get the data](#)

The formula is simply SG (Shots Generated via passes) / SAG (Shot Attempts Generated via passes) for a percentage of how many shots were generated from the attempts. Below you'll see the totals for the Devils and their opponents for the twenty games.

The Devils finished with a record of 9-9-2 (wins, losses, shootout losses) in the 20-game sample. Considering the stats point to a slight advantage to their opponents (49.7% to 48.2%), the Devils record supports that. One can quickly see the Devils, true to their puck possession stats like Corsi, controlled the greater share of SAG 660-to-529, or 55.5% of the shooting attempts off passing. They did generate more shots than their opponents, but were not as efficient.

However, the individual game totals are not always as close. See the table below for each game's result and SAGE for each team.

The Devils are also guilty of posting the lowest SAGE total in that game against the Rangers (28.2%). Now, that game finished 2-0

for the Rangers with an empty-net goal inside the final 10 seconds, but watching that game the Rangers seemed much better at getting their players into open areas of the ice and putting the puck on net.

New Jersey had a close win against the Leafs in March that helps explain why the Leafs stick around in games they are dominated in. While the Devils posted a 60%+ Fenwick rating, they were only 2% better than the Leafs in getting their shooting opportunities off of passes on net.

Coach Pete Deboer has instilled a system that emphasizes offensive zone time and cycling the puck down low. It looks good while watching the game, but if the average winning team posted a 55% SAGE rate and the Devils season rating was only 42.8%, it calls into question how efficient Deboer's system can be.

Ryan Stimson is a contributor at [InLouWeTrust](#) on SB Nation and has been a lifelong New Jersey Devils fan. He believes that the future of hockey analytics is in analyzing phases of the game to reveal tendencies of winning teams. Follow him on Twitter [@RK_Stimp](#)

© The Washington Post Company