Opening—

In honor of the first day of the 2020-2021 NFL Season we decided to take a look at the leading players in interceptions and sacks. Football is a game where the outcome is easily changed with one big play. The biggest plays that influence the game are typically an interception or a sack. Interceptions happen when a member of the opposing team gains control of the ball mid-throw from the quarterback of the offensive team. This play can have many outcomes: loss of yards, turnovers, and even a touchdown. During Superbowl 49 the Seattle Seahawks were in the endzone for the winning score. Russell Wilson threw to a receiver for a touchdown, but the ball was intercepted by Malcom Butler from the New England Patriots. This single play lost the Seahawks the game and the Patriots won yet another Superbowl.

Interceptions—

The data sets that we gathered from Kaggle.com had every player from 1989 to present. In this data we were able to find the top ten players by numbers of interceptions. We found Janoris Jenkins to be the leading interceptor leading to touchdowns in the league with 14. In his rookie season, he had 3 interceptions to touchdowns and 4 total interceptions. Terence Newman is tied for the lead in interceptions with Asante Samuel. They both have 50 total interceptions. Newman had 5 interceptions and 77 solo tackles in the 2010 season alone. In 2006 Samuel had 10 interceptions.

Sacks—

We gathered data from Kaggle.com to gather the leading players in sacks from 1989-present. We discovered that Terrell Suggs has the most sacks out of any position with 197 sacks. The player with the second most sacks is our very own Carolina Panther, Julius Peppers with 152 sacks who is a native to the state of North Carolina. A sack can change the momentum of any offensive drive. Sacking the quarterback can lead to a loss of yards, fumble or even a safety or touchdown.

Conclusion—

The offense is typically viewed as the scorers on any football team, but games can be won or lost by the defense alone. Superbowl 50 between the Carolina Panthers and Denver Broncos was a game of defenses. Both teams played poorly in the offense and the better defensive team won the Superbowl.