

Devin Hester: An Undisputed Hall of Famer

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Introduction

Devin Hester was drafted in the 2006 NFL Draft by the Chicago Bears in the second round with the 57th overall pick.

Devin Hester was the Bears' starting returner in his rookie year, returning 47 punts for 3 touchdowns and 20 kickoffs for 2 touchdowns. His dynamism and impact was immediate for Chicago.

Although Hester played as mainly as a return man, he also featured as a wide receiver, totaling over 3000 receiving yards and 16 receiving touchdowns.

In his 12-season career, he played with Chicago for 8 years. He also played with the Atlanta Falcons for 2 years.

Achievements¹

Accolades:

- NFL 100 (All time Top 100 NFL Players)
- NFL Hall of Fame All-2000s Team
- NFL Hall of Fame All-2010s Team
- 3x NFL All-Pro
- 4x NFL Pro Bowl Selections

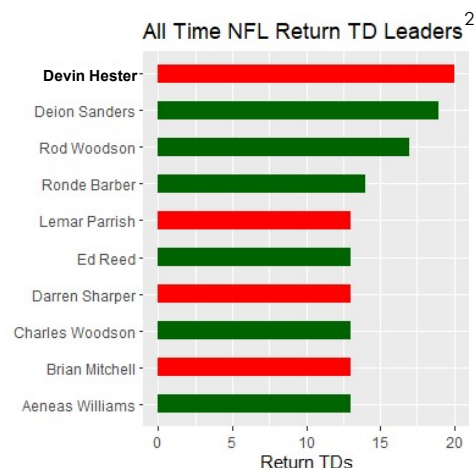
Accomplishments:

- Most career return touchdowns (20)
- Most return touchdowns in one season (6 in 2006, 2007)
- Only player to return opening kickoff for a touchdown in the Super Bowl (2006-07)
- Top 50 in career all-purpose yards
- Top 10 in career total return yards
- Top 10 in career yards per return

The Greatest Returner Ever

Hester is widely regarded as the best return man of all time. He holds the record for most return touchdowns in a season with 6 (twice, in 2006 and in 2007), while the second most in a season is 4 by a multitude of players.

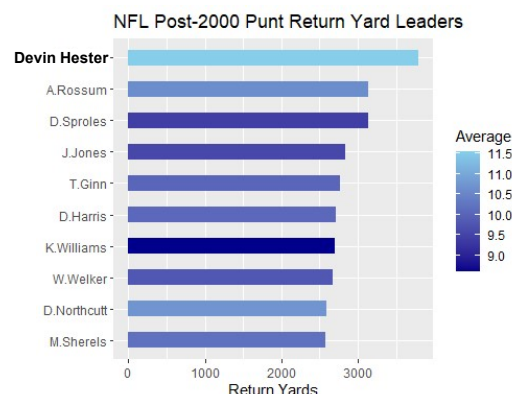
Along with this, he holds the record for most career return touchdowns, highlighted below. Players highlighted in green are in the Hall of Fame, those in red are not.



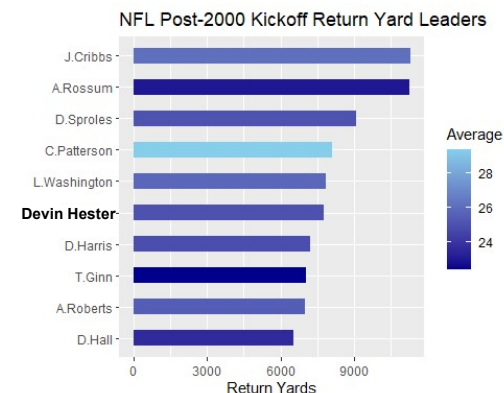
Additionally, many important to the league believe Hester should be inducted. Deion Sanders has publicly stated that it is "the most idiotic thing [he has] ever seen in his life," when talking about how Hester is not in the Hall of Fame.³ Also, Dan Pompei, one of the members on the Hall of Fame selective board, states, "Even in a fewer amount of snaps or a fewer amount of touches, he had a greater impact than the large majority of players in the history of the NFL."⁴

Modern Greatness

When comparing Devin Hester to modern day return-men (post-2000), we see that he is the best returner of recent times. Hester not only has the most punt return yards in recent history (3788), he is also miles ahead in yards per punt return (11.5), showing off his efficiency.



As can be seen below, Hester has the 6th most kickoff return yards since 2000 with 7759, while averaging 25 yards per return. Though he does not have the best kickoff return numbers, he is clearly one of the greats in this category as well.



Other Considerations

Many of the arguments against Devin Hester being in the Hall of Fame state that as a returner, he didn't do enough to impact the game. However, Jeff Rodgers, long time NFL special teams coordinator, disagrees. Rodgers states, "There's been nobody like him in my generation," and "He was really the first guy that you really game-planned for," when talking about Hester's dynamic return ability.⁵

Many teams were scared to even let him get the ball, punting or kicking out of bounds to avoid him. Hester was still able to put up all-time numbers when teams would avoid giving him the ball. Without a doubt, Hester changed the game, and is a true Hall of Famer.

Conclusion

Devin Hester should certainly be in the NFL Hall of Fame. His accolades and achievements alone are enough to show he is the greatest return man of all time. Additionally, many people important to the NFL vouch for Hester to be in, including Deion Sanders and Dan Pompei. Finally, Hester was able to put up all-time numbers when teams would avoid giving him the ball.

References

¹https://www.pro-football-reference.com/players/H/HesDe99.htm#all_leaderboard

²<https://www.statmuse.com/nfl/ask/most-career-return-touchdowns-by-1-player-in-nfl-history>

³<https://www.nbcsports.com/chicago/bears/deion-sanders-calls-devin-hesters-exclusion-hof-idiotic#:~:text=Deion%20Sanders%20calls%20Hester's%20HOF%20exclusion%20idiotic&text=%22How%20can%20Devin%20Hester%20not,the%20bathroom%20on%20fourth%20downs>

⁴<https://www.chicagobears.com/news/examining-why-hester-fell-short-of-hof-outlook-for-next-year>

⁵<https://www.nbcsports.com/chicago/bears/what-was-it-coach-against-devin-hester-you-hold-your-breath>