

Philadelphia Eagles

Philadelphia Eagles: Is CB Asante Samuel Overrated? The Statistics Disagree

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By
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When football fans evaluate the best cornerbacks in the NFL, the names that come up almost always include Darrelle Revis and Nnamdi Asomugha as 1A and 1B, in whatever order.

That said, Asante Samuel has performed just as well, if not better, than both of these cornerbacks during his last three years with the Philadelphia Eagles.

In fact, many football fans and so-called “experts” often see Samuel as a player who covers up his so-so coverage and poor tackling skills with eye-grabbing interceptions.

About Samuel, CBS's Pete Prisco says, "I say it every year here: Good player, not great. Big-time gambler. He makes plays, but he also gives up a bunch."

In reality though, Samuel’s ability to stay with opposing wide receivers is nearly unrivaled and his tackling prowess is underestimated.

According to *Football Outsiders'* advanced metrics, no cornerback has been better in specific situations than Samuel. In 2009 and 2010 he ranked first in the NFL in stop rate against the pass with percentages of 63 percent and 71 percent, respectively. Furthermore, he allowed a ridiculous 3.2 yards-per-pass average in 2010, easily the best in the league.

The most common criticism of Samuel, by far, is his supposed inability to tackle receivers after the catch, but this bad reputation likely stems from Samuel’s neck injury that he valiantly endured for most of the 2009 season. Besides, the statistics say otherwise. Samuel allowed just 1.9 yards after the catch, good enough for fourth best in the league.

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Equally impressive is the discipline and concentration Samuel exhibits on the field. After all, he committed only three penalties last year for a total of 29 yards.

These numbers suggest that Samuel is a bona-fide black hole for opposing offenses. He can stay with his man deep, make sure tackles and play within the rules of the game.

And let’s not forget about what he is known best for: his playmaking ability. Samuel’s uncanny ability to make timely interceptions still remains his greatest strength. He recorded nine picks in 2009 and led the NFC with seven in just 11 games last season, including two thrown by Peyton Manning.

Above all though, the best evaluation of a cornerback’s ability is how well he forces the opposing quarterback and offensive coordinator to game-plan against him.

In fact, many football fans praise Revis and Asomugha by citing that quarterbacks hardly ever throw at them, and rightly so. Often ignored, though, is that Samuel received fewer targets than Revis last year, and Samuel’s 36 targets were the closest to Asomugha’s league-best 31.

These numbers add up to one indisputable fact: Asante Samuel is an underrated cornerback.

It seems odd to state that a four-time Pro Bowler, three-time All-Pro and two-time Super Bowl champion has been underrated, but with all the attention focused on Revis and Asomugha, Samuel has been forgotten as one of the best corners in the league.



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Where the Eagles' Cornerbacks Are Ranked Hint: you can use arrow keys to navigate through this channel.