

2023 NFL BETTING GUIDE



photos by USA Today Sports Images

COMING TO YOU TO

Let me begin with something I never expected to write. Las Vegas, Nevada is hosting the next Super Bowl. On February 11, 2024, the NFL's biggest game, Super Bowl LVIII, is coming to Allegiant Stadium—just across Interstate 15 from the gambling capital of the world, the Las Vegas Strip.

Finally, after decades of hypocrisy, the NFL is admitting what Jimmy the Greek knew all along—that betting on games helped drive the NFL to Number 1 in fan appeal in the United States.

So who will meet in the Vegas Super Bowl?

DraftKings' odds say it will be a rematch between reigning champ Kansas City and NFC title holder Philadelphia.

History says otherwise. In the 57 previous Super Bowls, only once have the same two teams played in back-to-back Super Bowls.

In 1993 and 1994, the Dallas Cowboys defeated the Buffalo Bills 52-17 and 30-13. In other words, the Chiefs and the Eagles face historical resistance, and you have a chance to cash a lucrative ticket.

Using DraftKings, we begin with AFC championship odds. +330 Chiefs +500 Bills +550 Bengals

The AFC's big three play each other. On November 5th, the Bills are in Cincinnati, and come December, both travel to Kansas City

for showdown games against the Chiefs. Perhaps you want an AFC long shot.

+1100 Jets, Dolphins, Ravens +1200 Jaguars

My only advice would be to avoid the Dolphins, not because they are a bad team but because their schedule looks brutal. Two division games against both the Bills and the Jets, a European meeting with the Chiefs, and road games in Philadelphia and Baltimore. Ouch!

In the NFC, DraftKings makes the Eagles a heavy favorite.

+250 Eagles +425 49ers +600 Cowbovs

Even if there isn't a Super Bowl rematch in Las Vegas, the Eagles and Chiefs will meet Monday night, November 20th, in Kansas City, a game that will produce one of the highest TV ratings of the regular season. The Eagles also host the 49ers on December 3rd in a rerun of the one-sided NFC title game. Hopefully, the 49ers will have a healthy quarterback this time around. The NFC longshots:

+1000 Lions

- +1100 Seahawks
- +1300 Saints (somebody has to win the NFC South!)

Good luck! Hope you cash a ticket or two because That's What It's All About!

BOOKMAKERS' TAKE ON THE JETS

by Matt Youmans

When something is new, it's usually exciting. Most people typically get a thrill from the feel of a new relationship, the look of a new vacation destination, and the smell of a new car, to offer a few examples. Few things excite the betting public more than an old quarterback moving to a new team, and this year's example is Aaron Rodgers joining the New York Jets.

Which team is winning the summer popularity contest on the NFL futures board? "The bettors like the Jets, of course," DraftKings sportsbook director John Avello said. "But I didn't like Aaron Rodgers last year. Is this the new, improved Rodgers? I don't know."

At 18-1 odds to win the Super Bowl, the Jets are the seventh choice on the DraftKings board behind the Chiefs (+600), Eagles (+650), Bills (+900), 49ers (10-1), Bengals (11-1) and Cowboys (14-1).

There are plenty of other ways to bet the Jets – to win the AFC East (+270), to win the conference (11-1), and to go Over the win total (9.5) – for those who are seeing green and getting excited about Rodgers' new team.

South Point sportsbook director Chris Andrews said it has been "no surprise" to see the public jumping on the Jets. However, the first wave of sharp action he took was Under the win total of 10, which he adjusted to 9.5 (Over -140).

"The sharp guys usually bet Under or pass," Andrews said. "I'm taking the Jets seriously. Let's face it, the defense was pretty good last year. I'm not sure the offensive line is all that good, but I think Rodgers can do enough."

Rodgers, who turned 39 in December, did not do enough to get Green Bay to the playoffs last season. He threw 12 interceptions, his highest total since 2008, and the Packers finished 8-9.

"Rodgers was (crappy) last year," Avello said.

So when the crap hit the fan, Rodgers was gone. He emerged from a darkness retreat and announced a desire to play for the Jets, who last reached the playoffs in the 2010 season and have not won a title since Joe Namath's guarantee paid off in Super Bowl III in 1969.

Rodgers' lone Super Bowl win, which came with the Packers in February 2011, is a fading memory. Still, he is one of the league's elite quarterbacks, and his presence will instill confidence in a young Jets team that finished with a six-game losing streak and a 7-10 record. The bright side, as Andrews said, was a defense that ranked fourth in the NFL in scoring.

It's not crazy to think Rodgers can be the final piece to the Jets' puzzle. Tom Brady was exactly what the Buccaneers needed when he moved from New England to Tampa Bay as a free agent in 2020.

At the time, many Las Vegas bookmakers, including John Murray at the Westgate SuperBook, laughed and mocked the public for enthusiastically betting on the Buccaneers to win the Super Bowl before Brady's first season with a new team.

"We didn't have an appreciation for how good that team was around Brady," Murray said. "We definitely underestimated how bad the NFC South was, but the Buccaneers didn't win the division, and it was an incredible run in the playoffs."

A year after going 7-9 with Jameis Winston at quarterback in 2019, Tampa Bay made the playoffs as a wild-card team, and Brady did win his seventh Super Bowl, going through Rodgers in Green Bay along the way.

"It's not going to be the same with Rodgers in the AFC East because that's a really good division," Murray said. "I don't like the Jets. I never like those teams that are popular with everybody. I also think that Rodgers just looked lousy last year."

While there is some symmetry with Brady and Rodgers, the obvious difference is Brady's postseason track record is unmatched, and Rodgers' playoff performances have been mostly underwhelming in recent years.

The link between Rodgers and Brett Favre, another one-time Super Bowl winner with the Packers, is more relevant. After his relationship with Green Bay management deteriorated in 2008, Favre was traded to the Jets. He spent one year in New York, and the team missed the playoffs with a 9-7 record. Favre finished the season with 22 touchdown passes and 22 interceptions and was released in 2009 before playing his final two years for the Vikings.

Rodgers is not going to be beating up on the Bears anymore. Take a deep dive into the schedule, and it appears the wiseguys have the right idea by initially betting the Jets' win total Under 10.

Based on the opponents' winning percentage of .545 last season (a combined record of 155-129-3), the Jets draw the NFL's sixth-toughest schedule. That's not always the most accurate way to grade strength of schedule, so also consider the number of playoff teams from last season (nine) on this 17-game schedule and some other factors.

In the first six weeks, Rodgers and the Jets will face a firing line of quality quarterbacks – Buffalo's Josh Allen (Week 1), Dallas' Dak Prescott, New England's Mac Jones, Kansas City's Patrick Mahomes, Denver's Russell Wilson and Philadelphia's Jalen Hurts.

The Jets also have two especially challenging short-week scenarios on the schedule. After hosting the Bills and Chargers on Monday nights in Weeks 1 and 9, the Jets hit the road to play the Cowboys and Raiders in Weeks 2 and 10, respectively.

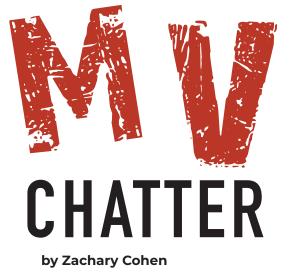
Rodgers is not the best quarterback in his new division – Allen has earned that status – and the top two quarterbacks in the AFC are Mahomes and the Bengals' Joe Burrow.

"It's a big leap the Jets are being asked to make, and the AFC is so much better than the NFC," Murray said. "The Bills are kind of a forgotten team. Going into the playoffs, I think Buffalo was the highest power-rated team in the league. Everyone is talking about the Chiefs, Bengals and Jets. I think it's interesting how under the radar the Bills are now."

The Jets went 2-4 in division games last season, and it requires a leap of faith to predict they will be any better than 3-3 this season. Don't forget the Patriots own a 14-game winning streak against the Jets.

Rodgers appears rejuvenated in New York, where fans and media are celebrating his arrival and dreaming of a postseason paradise. This is the honeymoon phase.

Sharp money says the Jets will need Rodgers at his MVP-level best to win nine or 10 games and reach the playoffs, which seems the bestcase scenario. The reality is your Super Bowl futures bet is better off in the hands of Mahomes, Allen or Burrow.



Last season, Patrick Mahomes took home the second Most Valuable Player award of his six-year NFL career. Mahomes did it by throwing for 5,250 yards with 41 touchdowns and only 12 interceptions while adding another 358 yards and four touchdowns on the ground. Mahomes' Kansas City Chiefs were the top-seeded team in the AFC, going 14-3 on the year and ultimately earning a 38-35 win over the Philadelphia Eagles in Super Bowl LVII.

Mahomes is once again favored to win this award, and it's hard to argue with his candidacy. However, it's also difficult to ignore voter fatigue. Aaron Rodgers won back-to-back MVPs in 2020 and 2021, but that is something that has only happened six times in NFL history – with Peyton Manning being responsible for two instances.

Voters generally want to try and spread things out to create new narratives, and it's not like there's a shortage of options when looking for players that can win. The talent pool at the quarterback position is incredibly rich these days, with multiple teams having signal-callers that are capable of taking home an award like this one.

WHO IS THE BEST OF THE BUNCH WHEN IT COMES TO THE CHALKIER OPTIONS?

Mahomes is listed at +700 to win MVP next season, with Joe Burrow (+750), Josh Allen (+800) and Jalen Hurts (+800) sitting right behind him. We already made a small case for why Mahomes isn't the right pick here, but are any of them worth a play? We can get behind a bet on Allen.

Last year, Allen was the preseason favorite to win MVP. The 27-year-old ultimately failed to get the job done, but he still turned in an MVP-worthy season. Allen threw for 4,283

yards with 35 touchdowns and 14 picks last year, and he also rushed for 762 yards with seven touchdowns. Those numbers were good for third place in MVP voting, and there are reasons to believe that Allen will play a lot better in 2023-24.



Not many people want to come out and say it, but the Bills' receiving core wasn't all that good last season. Sure, Stefon Diggs is a bonafide Josh Allen

superstar, but Gabriel Davis didn't live up to expectations as the team's second wideout. And Buffalo really seemed to miss having a target-eating option in the short-tointermediate portion of the field. But the Bills ended up using the 25th pick in the 2023 NFL Draft on tight end Dalton Kincaid. The Stanford product has all the makings of a Pro Bowl-caliber player, and he should open up this offense in a whole new way.

NFL

With Kincaid in the mix, it wouldn't be surprising if Allen were to cut down on his interceptions while also doing a better job of increasing his passing efficiency. And when you combine that with his ability to run the football, it's hard not to love him as an MVP bet.

IS AARON RODGERS WORTH BETTING IN HIS FIRST SEASON WITH THE JETS?

After 18 seasons with the Green Bay Packers, Rodgers was traded to New York in the offseason. He'll enter the year with a lot of eyeballs looking in his direction, and that's a good thing as long as he can perform at a high level.

Rodgers threw for 3,695 yards with 26 touchdowns and 12 interceptions last season, and he did so with a miserable supporting cast. Rodgers' top wideouts were Allen Lazard and rookie Christian Watson, who entered the league with concerns over how soon he'd be able to produce. Now, he'll be throwing to a legitimate star in Garrett Wilson, and Lazard comes over as the team's second-best wideout. The Jets also have guys like Corey Davis, Mecole Hardman Jr., Denzel Mims and Randall Cobb in the mix. So, there's depth at the wide receiver position, and Rodgers should be able to take advantage of that. New York also has talent in the backfield, which will only make things easier on the passing game.

Rodgers has a lot of familiarity with the system New York is putting in place, as Nathaniel Hackett was essentially handpicked to be the future Hall of Famer's offensive coordinator. The two loved working with one another in Green Bay, and Hackett is going to build everything around Rodgers' strengths. That means there won't be much of a learning curve here. Rodgers should be ready to rock from day one.

If New York wins 10 or 11 games and ends up in the playoff picture, how can Rodgers not be the pick to win this thing? Everybody loves a good story, and this would definitely qualify as one. So, while there are reasons to doubt Rodgers' ability to turn in an MVP-worthy season at this point in his career, just remember that narratives drive voting. And if Rodgers is in the conversation, his name might carry enough weight to push him to a win. At +1400 odds, you might want to bank on that.

IS TREVOR LAWRENCE READY TO MAKE A PUSH?

Last season, we debated whether Justin Herbert was ready to join the league's elite and contend for MVP. This year, Lawrence is the young gun that seems poised to make the leap. The 23-year-old threw for 4,113 yards with 25 touchdowns and only eight picks last season, and he also performed at a high level in the postseason.

Jacksonville now gets Calvin Ridley back from a season-long suspension for sports gambling. In Ridley, Christian Kirk, Zay Jones and Evan Engram, Lawrence has one of the better groups of pass catchers in football. The former Clemson star should benefit from Ridley's presence immediately.

Lawrence will also simply be better with this being his second year in Doug Pederson's offense. Lawrence dealt with all kinds of nonsense in his rookie season, with Urban Meyer being one of the most disastrous oneyear coaches in NFL history. Lawrence needed stability, and Pederson brought that, getting the absolute best out of the young signal-caller.

In Lawrence's second year under center, the Jaguars became a playoff team and the quarterback became a Pro Bowler. But Lawrence will be expected to take another sizable step forward in his third pro season, and it's not out of the realm of possibility that he joins the MVP conversation.

At +1400 odds, you can do a lot worse than taking a flier on this play. Lawrence also has the luxury of playing one of the easiest schedules in football. He should easily lead the Jaguars to the top of the AFC South standings, and anything more than that is just gravy.

ARE THERE ANY DARKHORSE PICKS WORTHY OF CONSIDERATION?

Two darts that might be worth throwing are Geno Smith (+3500) and Russell Wilson (+3500).

Smith is coming off a year in which he unexpectedly threw for 4,282 yards with 30 touchdowns and only 11 interceptions. And while a lot of

people expected Seattle to draft his successor in the 2023 NFL Draft, the team went defense with its first selection. Then, the Seahawks got Ohio State Buckeyes wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba later in the draft.

Smith now has one of the most explosive groups of receivers in the league, with Smith-Njigba joining the highly productive duo of DK Metcalf and Tyler Lockett. This offense should be a lot tougher to defend next season, and Smith should be a lot sharper in his second full year as a starter. He also should be rather confident after having signed a three-year, \$105 million deal after the season. Smith is no longer looking over his shoulder. This is his show, and the Seahawks have a lot of faith in him.

Perhaps Smith's ceiling is making the Pro Bowl, as he did in the 2022 season. But at these long odds, it might be worth putting a quarter-unit on this and hoping for a bit more. It's hard to ignore just how bad the NFC might be next season, so a better-than-expected year for Seattle just might put Smith in the mix.

As for Wilson, it's hard to put into words how big of a failure last season was. "Mr. Unlimited" proved to be nothing but limited in his first year with the Broncos, but let's not overlook the fact that Hackett looked completely overwhelmed in his first year as the team's head coach. And Wilson also showed up to Denver in pretty lousy shape.

Wilson now has one of the game's brightest offensive minds calling plays for him, as the Broncos brought in Sean Payton during the offseason. Payton has had success with short, immobile quarterbacks before, so even if Wilson never regains his athleticism, there's still hope he can be effective in this offense. But Wilson has also done a lot of work on his body since the season ended, which should help him regain some of his ability to extend plays.

The Broncos have a ton of talent at the wide receiver position, so it isn't crazy to think that this can become an explosive offense again. The question is whether Denver has a shot at becoming a playoff team in a stacked division – and conference. The team will need to do so in order for Wilson to have a chance of winning. But if he does look like the Wilson of old, Denver should be a much better team. With that said, it isn't the worst idea in the world to bet on this. Payton wouldn't have taken the Broncos job if he didn't believe Wilson could be fixed.

SHOULD ANY NON-QUARTERBACKS BE CONSIDERED?

The short answer is no, not really. The last time a quarterback didn't win MVP was in 2012 when Adrian Peterson — who somehow still isn't officially retired — rushed for 2,097 yards and 12 touchdowns for the Minnesota Vikings. Since then, there have been some special seasons out of plenty of running backs and wide receivers, but that gears more towards the Offensive Player of the Year award.

If Cooper Kupp didn't bring home the MVP after catching 145 passes for 1,947 yards and 16 touchdowns in 2021, it genuinely feels impossible for a skill position player to win this again. However, if there's anybody worth betting, it's Christian McCaffrey at +8000.

In no way is this us touting McCaffrey as a good pick to win the award. But if you are absolutely desperate for a non-quarterback play, this is it. The San Francisco 49ers still have a strong offensive line, and Kyle Shanahan will find all sorts of ways to get McCaffrey touches. The 49ers also have a lot of question marks at the quarterback position, which puts a lot on the shoulders of the two-time Pro Bowl running back.

Last year, in 17 games split between the Carolina Panthers and 49ers, McCaffrey ended up rushing for 1,139 yards with eight touchdowns. He also finished the season with 85 receptions for 741 yards and five scores. McCaffrey was unstoppable once he arrived in the Bay Area, too. So, with a full season of playing in this offense, he could put up astronomical numbers. And he'd deserve a lot of the credit if San Francisco were to be one of the NFC's elite teams again.

STEVE MAKINEN'S POWER RATINGS

TEAM	POWER RATING
KANSAS CITY	30.5
PHILADELPHIA	30.0
BUFFALO	29.0
CINCINNATI	29.0
SAN FRANCISCO	28.5
DALLAS	28.0
JACKSONVILLE	27.0
BALTIMORE	26.5
NY JETS	26.5
MIAMI	25.5
DETROIT	25.0
LA CHARGERS	25.0
CLEVELAND	23.5
DENVER	23.5
MINNESOTA	23.5
NY GIANTS	23.5
PITTSBURGH	23.5
SEATTLE	23.5
NEW ENGLAND	23.0
NEW ORLEANS	23.0
GREEN BAY	22.5
ATLANTA	22.0
CHICAGO	22.0
LAS VEGAS	22.0
CAROLINA	21.5
LA RAMS	21.5
TENNESSEE	21.5
INDIANAPOLIS	20.5
WASHINGTON	20.5
TAMPA BAY	20.0
HOUSTON	19.0
ARIZONA	17.5



CAROLINA PANTHERS

HEAD COACH: FRANK REICH (1ST) OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: THOMAS BROWN DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: EJIRO EVERO

BY WES REYNOLDS

Carolina has gotten way too used to having new quarterbacks and new head coaches. This year, they have both with No. 1 overall pick Bryce Young and Frank Reich. Andy Dalton was signed to backup and mentor Young, so he may start early in the season. Miles Sanders, off a Pro Bowl season, was also signed from Philadelphia to replace Christian McCaffrey at running back. Sanders has more of an opportunity to be a three-down back in this offense though with Chuba Hubbard and Rasheem Blackshear backing him up.

As for the receiving corps, this unit has been completely remade with Adam Thielen coming from Minnesota to play the slot. D.J. Chark will be the primary speed guy with Terrace Marshall Jr, tight end Hayden Hurst, and secondrounder Jonathan Mingo expected to contribute immediately.

Most rookie quarterbacks do not get the luxury of having an offensive line that returns all five starters, but Young has that here, especially 2022 first-rounder Ikem Ekwonu having finally solidified the left tackle spot.

DEFENSE

Carolina also switches from a 4-3 defense to a 3-4 under new defensive coordinator Ejiro Evero, who comes in after serving in the same position at Denver last year. The Panthers need to discover another pass rusher opposite Brian Burns who had a career-high 12.5 sacks last year. This will be a make-orbreak season for 2020 first-rounder Derrick Brown to show more production.

Inside backer Shaq Thompson restructured his deal and is a leader on defense. Perhaps the 3-4 will bolster some of his lost production as he and rover Jeremy <u>Chinn can line up closer</u> to the line of scrimmage to help stuff the run game.

If Jaycee Horn can stay healthy (having missed half of his games in his first two seasons), this is a good secondary. C.J. Henderson and Donte Jackson also must stay healthy because there are good ball skills with this group. Veterans Vonn Bell and Xavier Woods also come in as free agents.

Outlook

The Panthers have been searching for a quarterback ever since mid-2018 when T.J. Watt drilled Cam Newton's throwing shoulder. Matt Rhule went 11-27 mainly because he could never find the right quarterback. Neither Teddy Bridgewater, Sam Darnold, nor Baker Mayfield worked. Now they will eventually turn to rookie Bryce Young and let Frank Reich, Carolina's first starting quarterback in the franchise's first season back in 1995, work with and develop him. This is the best long-term approach because free agency has not worked. The Panthers will be underdogs in their first six games, but the organization looks to be heading in a better direction. Nevertheless, this is still a rookie quarterback with a new coaching staff and a new defensive scheme. There is high potential for a bad start to the season and a respectable finish.

SEASON WIN TOTAL PLAY

	stev PO	ve makinen's WER RATIN	NG	21.5 (#25 OF 32)
	DATE		E . Line	SERIES TRENDS
	9/10	at Atlanta	+2	UNDERDOGs are on 6-0 ATS streak in CAR-ATL rivalry
	9/18		+1.2	The L5 games of the NO-CAR rivalry went UNDER the total
Ş	9/24	at Seattle	+4.9	OVER the total is 7-0 in CAR-SEA series since '15
	10/1	MINNESOTA	+0.5	OVER the total is 5-1 in L6 MIN-CAR h2h matchups
	10/8	at Detroit	+5.9	UNDERDOGS are 7-2 ATS in L9 of DET-CAR h2h series
	10/15	at Miami BYE WEEK	+7.1	MIAMI is 5-1-1 ATS all-time versus Carolina
	10/29	HOUSTON	-4.4	CAROLINA has won L4 ATS vs. Houston
	11/5	INDIANAPOLIS	-2.6	ROAD TEAMS are on 5-1 ATS run in IND-CAR series but lost LT
	11/9	at Chicago	+3	UNDERDOGS are 5-0 ATS in L5 of CAR-CHI series in Chicago
	11/19	DALLAS	+5.1	FAVORITES are on 5-0 ATS streak in DAL-CAR h2h series
	11/26	at Tennessee	+3.1	All three prior CAR-TEN games in Tennessee went UNDER the total
	12/3	at Tampa Bay	+0.3	TAMPA BAY has won L4 SU & ATS hosting Carolina
	12/10	at New Orleans	+3.3	CAROLINA is 5-1 ATS in L6 trips to New Orleans
	12/17	ATLANTA	-0.3	UNDERDOGS are on 4-0 ATS run in ATL-CAR series in Carolina
	12/24	GREEN BAY	-0.3	OVER the total is 4-0 in L4 of GB-CAR series in Carolina
	12/31	at Jacksonville ·	+7.5	FAVORITES have won L4 ATS in CAR-JAC h2h series
	1/7	TAMPA BAY	-1.9	UNDER the total is 7-3 in L10 of TB-CAR rivalry in Carolina
	≤ 2			



2023 ODDS



FIELD **1.2 / -0.4** (HOME/ROAD)

2022 STATS AND RANKS

		OFFI STAT	ENSE RANK	DEF STAT	ENSE Rank
	Points Per Game	20.4	20	22	19
	Yards Per Point	15	12	15.9	12
	Plays Per Game	57.4	32		
	Time of Possession	28:26	32		
	3rd Down Conv. %	31.7%	30	41.1%	23
	Total Yards Per Game	306.2	29	350.2	22
	Yards Per Play	5.3	17	5.4	16
	Rush Attempts Per Game	28.4	12		
	Rush Yards Per Game	130	10	122.6	18
	Yards Per Rush Attempt	4.6	14	4.3	12
	Pass Attempts Per Game	26.9	29		
	Completion %	58.4%	31	66.0%	23
	Passing Yards Per Game	176.2	29	227.5	22
	Yards Per Pass Attempt	7.1	12	6.7	20
	Turnovers	1.2	8	1	27

CAROLINA IS 10-0 OVER (LAST 10 GAMES) - AFTER A BYE





HEAD COACH: ARTHUR SMITH (3RD) **OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: DAVE RAGONE** DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: RYAN NIELSEN

BY WES REYNOLDS OFFENSE

Atlanta is going to run the ball and run it frequently. The Falcons ranked third last season in rushing offense (2,718 yards). Smith ran the ball regularly in Tennessee with Derrick Henry and is doing the same with one of the better stables of backs in the league. Tyler Allgeier ran for over 1,000 yards as a rookie. Cordarrelle Patterson ran for 695 and eight touchdowns, and they added Bijan Robinson (Texas) with the eighth overall pick.

That's good news for quarterback Desmond Ridder, who will make just his fifth start in the season opener. Ridder's spark at the end of the season should be good news for the pass catchers - Kyle Pitts and Drake London - that Atlanta drafted in the first round in 2021 and 2022. Smith also traded for Jonnu Smith, who was a staple in his offense during his time as Tennessee's offensive coordinator and will allow them to line up Pitts on the outside.

The offensive line also returns four starters and will be a force running the ball especially on the right side with former first-round picks guard Chris Lindstrom and tackle Kaleb McGary, who both ranked Top 5 at their positions per PFF. Jake Matthews is also solid at left tackle.

DEFENSE

While the offense was the best in the division last year, the defense was 30th in DVOA. The Falcons needed to get better up front and give Grady Jarrett some support, and they appeared to have done that with the additions of Calais Campbell, David Onyemata, Kaden Elliss, and Bud Dupree.

The Falcons allowed 231.9 passing ypg (25th in NFL), 7.29 yards per pass (29th), and 45.9% on third downs (31st). Enter Jessie Bates III from Cincinnati, who signed a massive deal and can line up anywhere. He allows Richie Grant, who is very good against the run, to line up closer to the line of scrimmage. A.J. Terrell is one of the better cover corners in the league. Atlanta also traded for former first-round corner Jeff Okudah, who started 15 games last year after only starting seven in his first two injury-plagued seasons. This secondary at least looks better on paper.

OUTLOOK

The Falcons have not made the playoffs in five seasons. Smith and general manager Terry Fontenot have worked diligently to get this team out of salary cap hell. The offense was the best in the division last year and should be better this year. They were also fifth in special teams DVOA, and the defense should be better. Atlanta ended up losing the second- and third-place divisional tiebreakers last season, which affords them the benefit of playing a last-place schedule this season. That means they'll be the only team in the division to face Arizona and the only team in the division to face Washington. Those matchups are worth a not insignificant amount of extra win probability compared to the slates to be faced by the Bucs (Philadelphia-San Francisco), Panthers (Dallas-Seattle) and Saints (Giants-Rams). There is also some value on the division price at around +250 to +275.

SEASON WIN TOTAL PLAY

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202	3 SCHED		SERIES TRENDS
9/10	CAROLINA	-2	UNDERDOGs are on 6-0 ATS streak in CAR-ATL rivalry
9/17	GREEN BAY	-1.1	HOME FAVORITES are on 4-0 SU & ATS run in GB-ATL series
9/24	at Detroit	+5	UNDER the total is 10-3 in ATL-DET h2h series since '98
10/1	vs. Jacksonville	+4.5	ATLANTA is on 5-1 SU & 6-0 ATS run vs. Jacksonville
10/8	HOUSTON	-5.2	HOME TEAMS have swept all five prior HOU-ATL matchups ATS
10/15	WASHINGTON	-3.6	WASHINGTON has won L3 ATS at Atlanta
10/22	at Tampa Bay	-0.6	OVER the total is 11-3 in L14 of ATL-TB h2h series
10/29	at Tennessee	+2.2	The L4 games of ATL-TEN h2h series went UNDER the total
11/5	MINNESOTA	-0.3	UNDER the total is 6-1 in L7 of MIN-ATL series in Atlanta
11/12	at Arizona BYE WEEK	-2.8	ARIZONA has won L3 ATS hosting Atlanta
11/26	NEW ORLEANS	+0.4	NEW ORLEANS is on 5-0 SU & 4-1 ATS run at Atlanta
12/3	at NY Jets	+6.1	The L3 games of ATL-NYJ series went OVER the total
12/10	TAMPA BAY	-2.7	OVER the total is 6-1 in L7 of TB-ATL series at Atlanta
12/17	at Carolina	+0.3	UNDERDOGS are on 4-0 ATS run in ATL-CAR series in Carolina
12/24	INDIANAPOLIS	-3.4	INDIANAPOLIS is 6-1 ATS in L7 vs. Atlanta
12/31	at Chicago	+2.1	CHICAGO is 4-0-1 ATS in L5 hosting Atlanta
1/7	at New Orleans	+2.4	UNDER the total is 8-2 in L10 of ATL-NO series at New Orleans
SCH	IEDULE 2		FIELD 15/0

SCHEDULE 22.08 STRENGTH (#31 toughest of 32)

2023 ODDS **ODDS TO WIN 24**(NFC SOUTH

28-1

ODDS TO

WIN NFC

65-1

RATINGS (HOME/ROAD)

2022 STATS AND RANKS

1.5 / U

		OFFENSE Stat Rank		DEFENSE STAT RANK	
Points Per Game	21.5	15	22.7	23	
Yards Per Point	14.8	11	15.9	11	
Plays Per Game	59.5	26			
Time of Possession	29:39	19			
3rd Down Conv. %	41.8%	10	45.9%	31	
Total Yards Per Game	318.6	24	362.1	27	
Yards Per Play	5.4	16	5.7	25	
Rush Attempts Per Game	32.9	1			
Rush Yards Per Game	159.9	3	130.2	23	
Yards Per Rush Attempt	4.9	4	4.4	18	
Pass Attempts Per Game	24.4	31			
Completion %	61.9%	25	66.3%	25	
Passing Yards Per Game	158.8	31	231.9	25	
Yards Per Pass Attempt	7.1	15	7	29	
Turnovers	1.2	8	1	27	

ATLANTA IS 12-3 ATS (LAST 15 GAMES) - AS AN UNDERDOG OF 10 OR MORE POINTS



TAMPA BAY buccaneers

BY WES REYNOLDS

OFFENSE

Due to the salary cap constraints that helped them get a Lombardi Trophy three years ago, Tampa Bay had to go the economical route in replacing Tom Brady. Baker Mayfield signed a one-year deal to compete with 2021 secondrounder Kyle Trask for the starting quarterback gig. The offensive staff was overhauled by Todd Bowles. Byron Leftwich was fired as offensive coordinator and Dave Canales comes in from Seattle after serving 13 seasons under Pete Carroll, most recently as QB coach/passing game coordinator.

Mike Evans and Chris Godwin are still one of the league's best receiving duos and tight end Cade Otton could have a breakout campaign. Rachaad White split carries with Leonard Fournette last season but is now the primary feature back for a unit that was the worst in the NFL with 3.4 ypc.

Up front, Tristan Wirfs shifts from right to left tackle to replace Donovan Smith. Ryan Jensen returns as the anchor at center. 2022 second-rounder Luke Goedeke likely takes over at right tackle. However, the two other spots on the OL are up for grabs.

DEFENSE

Although the Bucs have many salary cap issues, they were able to re-sign linebacker Lavonte David and corner Jamel Dean. Shaq Barrett also returns after missing half of last season with a torn Achilles. The defense should still be solid although it is aging.

Vita Vea (6.5 sacks last year) will have to shoulder more of the load up front for a run defense that has slipped from the elite units over the past few years. Calijah Kancey (Pitt) was drafted in the first round this spring to help out Vea. Greg Gaines was signed from the Rams and will be moved from tackle to end in the 3-4 scheme. Logan Hall disappointed last year as a rookie but did bulk up in the offseason.

Devin White is David's running mate at inside backer. More is expected out of 2021 first-rounder Joe Tryon-Shoyinka from a pass rush standpoint.

Carlton Davis, along with Dean, are both high-priced corners, so more takeaways are expected. Antoine Winfield Jr returns to his safety role along with Ryan Neal, who was signed from Seattle.

OUTLOOK

After three consecutive playoff appearances, back-to-back NFC South titles, and a Lombardi Trophy, the Buccaneers are heading into the great unknown as Brady's second retirement seems final. There are remnants of the Super Bowl-winning squad from three years ago, but this team is at a crossroads between retooling and rebuilding. Bowles is clearly on the hot seat, although he was not able to select his own staff having taken over for Bruce Arians with Arians' coaching staff. While Brady's production declined, the team will miss his leadership and will have to rely on either a third-year backup or Baker Mayfield, who is on his fourth team in six years. Tampa also draws a first-place schedule having to face other division winners like Philadelphia, Buffalo, San Francisco, which will be difficult for a team in transition. A bad start could lead to a lot of these veterans thinking about their next move.

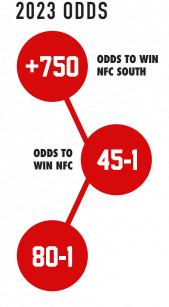
SEASON WIN TOTAL PLAY

<u>SS</u>			
STE	VE MAKINEN	'S	20.0
PU	WER RA	IING	20.0 (#30 OF 32)
201	23 SCHEDI		
	OPPONENT	ULL Est. Line	SERIES TRENDS
9/10	at Minnesota	+5.6	TAMPA BAY is 7-2 ATS vs. Minnesota since '01
9/17	CHICAGO	-0.4	TAMPA BAY is 8-4 ATS hosting Chicago since '96
9/25	PHILADELPHIA	+7.7	HOME TEAMS have won L3 ATS in PHI-TB h2h series
10/1	at New Orleans BYE WEEK	+4	ROAD TEAMS are on 5-1 ATS run in TB-NO h2h series
10/15	DETROIT	+2.7	ROAD TEAMS are 7-1 ATS in L8 of DET-TB h2h series
10/22	ATLANTA	+0.6	OVER the total is 11-3 in L14 of ATL-TB h2h series
10/26	at Buffalo	+11.6	HOME FAVORITES are 6-0 SU & 5-0-1 ATS in TB-BUF series since '00
11/5	at Houston	+0.5	HOME TEAMS are 4-1 ATS in L5 of TB-HOU h2h series
11/12	TENNESSEE	-0.4	TENNESSEE is on 6-1-1 ATS run versus Tampa Bay
11/19	at San Francisco	+10.6	SAN FRANCISCO is 6-2 ATS in L8 hosting Tampa Bay
11/26	at Indianapolis	+2.5	OVER the total is 6-1 in L7 of TB-IND h2h series
12/3	CAROLINA	-0.3	TAMPA BAY has won L4 SU & ATS hosting Carolina
12/10	at Atlanta	+2.7	OVER the total is 6-1 in L7 of TB-ATL series at Atlanta
12/17	at Green Bay	+5	TAMPA BAY is 6-3-2 ATS in L11 visits to Green Bay
12/24	JACKSONVILLE	+4.3	FAVORITES have won L5 ATS in JAC-TB series after five L's
12/31	NEW ORLEANS	+2.1	NEW ORLEANS has won L5 ATS at Tampa Bay
1/7	at Carolina	+1.9	UNDER the total is 7-3 in L10 of TB-CAR rivalry in Carolina
\frown			$ \land \land$

FIELD

RATINGS

SCHEDULE **23.57** STRENGTH (#21 toughest of 32)



(HOME/ROAD)

1.8 / 0.4

2022 STATS	AND	RAN	IKS	
	OFFE STAT	NSE RANK	DEF STAT	ENSE RANK
Points Per Game	18.4	25	21.1	13
Yards Per Point	18.8	31	15.4	18
Plays Per Game	68.2	1		
Time of Possession	29:06	27		
3rd Down Conv. %	37.4%	21	36.9%	6
Total Yards Per Game	346.7	15	324.3	9
Yards Per Play	5.1	25	5.1	10
Rush Attempts Per Game	22.7	32		
Rush Yards Per Game	76.9	32	120.7	15
Yards Per Rush Attempt	3.4	32	4.5	19
Pass Attempts Per Game	44.2	1		
Completion %	66.4%	7	63.9 %	15
Passing Yards Per Game	269.8	2	203.6	9
Yards Per Pass Attempt	6.3	30	6.1	7
Turnovers	1.3	14	1.2	20

TAMPA BAY IS 16-9 OVER (LAST 25 GAMES) AT HOME - AGAINST TEAMS WITH 40% OR LESS WINNING



NEW ORLEANS

HEAD COACH: DENNIS ALLEN (2ND) OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: PETE CARMICHAEL JR. DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: JOE WOODS

BY WES REYNOLDS

The Saints have declined from winning 13 games in 2019, to 12 in 2020, then nine in 2021, and finally seven last season mainly due to not being able to find a quarterback to fill Drew Brees' shoes. They believe they have finally found one in Derek Carr, who comes in on a four-year, S150 million deal. Perhaps Carr has a great season here and is motivated knowing that a team is excited to have him as their quarterback. However, Pete Carmichael Jr. represents Carr's fifth offensive coordinator as a pro. Carr's four previous seasons in Year One of a new offensive coordinator currently stand as his four worst seasons in passer rating, completion rate, yards per attempt and passing yards per game. Carr went 22-40 (35.4%) as a starter in those four seasons compared to 41-39 (51.3%) in all other seasons.

The Saints have beefed up their running game to help Alvin Kamara, who still faces a likely suspension at some point for the incident in Las Vegas at the 2022 Pro Bowl, with Jamaal Williams, who led the NFL with 17 rushing touchdowns last season, and drafting Kendre Miller (TCU) in the third round. Michael Thomas agreed to return at a reduced salary but are his best days behind him having dealt with injuries and disciplinary issues the last three seasons? If so, then Chris Olave and Rashid Shaheed will need to improve even more on their solid rookie seasons.

Up front, the top eight OL from last year return, but left tackle Trevor Penning had multiple foot injuries in his rookie season last year, and this quality veteran group may be showing some signs of age.

DEFENSE

The Saints were fifth in total defense for 2022, but both defensive coordinators – Ryan Nielsen and Kris Richard – left in the offseason. Dennis Allen will still call the plays, but he brings in Joe Woods from Cleveland to be the new DC. The run defense was 24th in 2022, and the Saints are rebuilding their interior with 2023 first-rounder Bryan Breese (Clemson).

Second-rounder Isaiah Foskey (Notre Dame) will replace the inconsistent Marcus Davenport on the opposite side of Cameron Jordan.

New Orleans should still be strong against the pass (2nd – 184.4 ypg; 48 sacks – 5th). Marshon Lattimore is a lockdown corner but missed ten games with an abdominal injury last year. This is a talented group with Lattimore, Paulson Adebo, Alontae Taylor, Marcus Maye, and Tyrann Mathieu, but they need to force more turnovers having only generated 14 takeaways.

OUTLOOK

Carr is by far the most proven quarterback in the NFC South, but Dennis Allen has not proven to be a winner as a head coach having a 15-38 record. The 7-10 record in 2022 was Allen's best career record. Carr makes New Orleans the rightful favorite in the division, but 9.5 wins seems to be a bigger ask with a coach that has never had a winning season and a quarterback yet again working with a new offensive coordinator.

SEASON WIN TOTAL PLAY

STEVE MAKINEN'S POWER RATING 23	8 (#19 OF 32)
2023 SCHEDULE	

DATE	OPPONENT	Est. Line	SERIES TRENDS
9/10	TENNESSEE	-3.4	ROAD TEAMS have won L5 ATS in TEN-NO matchups
9/18	at Carolina	-1.2	The L5 games of the NO-CAR rivalry went UNDER the total
9/24	at Green Bay	+1.9	OVER the total is 9-2 in NO-GB h2h series since '95
10/1	TAMPA BAY	-4	ROAD TEAMS are on 5-1 ATS run in TB-NO h2h series
10/8	at New England	+2.1	NEW ORLEANS is 6-3 ATS vs. New England since '92
10/15	at Houston	-2.6	HOME TEAMS are 4-1 ATS in prior NO-HOU matchups but lost LT
10/19	JACKSONVILLE	+1.3	NEW ORLEANS has won L5 ATS vs. Jacksonville
10/29	at Indianapolis	-0.6	NEW ORLEANS has won L4 ATS vs. Indianapolis
11/5	CHICAGO	-3.4	NEW ORLEANS is on 6-0-1 ATS run hosting Chicago
11/12	at Minnesota	+2.5	NEW ORLEANS is 7-2 ATS in L9 vs. Minnesota
50	BYE WEEK		
11/26	at Atlanta	-0.4	NEW ORLEANS is on 5-0 SU & 4-1 ATS run at Atlanta
12/3	DETROIT	-0.3	NEW ORLEANS is on 7-2 ATS run vs. Detroit
12/10	CAROLINA	-3.3	CAROLINA is 5-1 ATS in L6 trips to New Orleans
12/17	NY GIANTS	-1.9	The L7 games of NYG-NO series in New Orleans went OVER the total
12/21	at LA Rams	+0.2	HOME TEAMS are 9-1 ATS in L10 of LAR-NO h2h series
12/31	at Tampa Bay	-2.1	NEW ORLEANS has won L5 ATS at Tampa Bay
1/7	ATLANTA	-2.4	UNDER the total is 8-2 in L10 of ATL-NO series at New Orleans

SCHEDULE STRENGTH (#32 toughest of 32)

2023 ODDS



FIELD **1.8 / 0.5** RATINGS (HOME/ROAD)

2022 STATS AND RANKS

			ENSE	DEFENSE		
	Points Per Game	STAT 19.4	RANK 22	STAT 20.3	RANK 9	
	Yards Per Point	17.2	26	15.5	15	
	Plays Per Game	59.7	24			
	Time of Possession	29:31	21			
	3rd Down Conv. %	40.2%	15	41.6%	24	
	Total Yards Per Game	333.8	19	314.8	5	
	Yards Per Play	5.6	10	5	3	
	Rush Attempts Per Game	27.4	14			
	Rush Yards Per Game	116.6	19	130.5	24	
	Yards Per Rush Attempt	4.3	22	4.5	20	
	Pass Attempts Per Game	30.1	26			
	Completion %	66.0%	10	60.1%	3	
	Passing Yards Per Game	217.2	16	184.4	2	
	Yards Per Pass Attempt	7.8	5	5.8	3	
	Turnovers	1.5	27	0.8	30	

NEW ORLEANS IS 10-0 ATS (LAST 10 GAMES) ON ROAD - IN THE SECOND GAME OF THE SEASON VS. OPPONENT

WASHINGTON commanders

HEAD COACH: RON RIVERA (4TH) OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: ERIC BIENIEMY DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: JACK DEL RIO

BY DAVE TULEY

While the Giants were an overachieving surprise team in 2022, the same could be said of the Commanders in their first season after shedding the lame "Football Team" name. Washington finished 8-8-1 with the tie coming vs. those playoff-bound Giants while also giving the Eagles their first loss of the season in Week 9. They only missed the playoffs due to a three-game losing streak after their Week 14 bye. They're still regarded as the worst team in the NFC East as DraftKings has them 11-1 to win the division as well as 40-1 to win the NFC and 65-1 to win the Super Bowl with an Over/Under Season Win Total of 6.5.

OFFENSE

Carson Wentz started the season as Washington's starting QB and led the Week 1 win over the Jaguars. They lost the next four games, and then he started in the Week 6 Thursday night win over the Bears, but he went on injured reserve with a fractured ring finger. The Commanders went on a 6-1 run, but that was behind Taylor Heinicke, who kept the starting job after Wentz was healthy. Then, Heinicke was benched in Week 16, with Wentz finishing the loss in San Francisco and then starting Week 17 vs. the Browns—a 24-10 loss that eliminated them from the playoff hunt. Rookie Sam Howell started the finale and beat the Cowboys 26-6 and looks like he'll be given the reins to start this season. He gets to work with new offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy from Kansas City.

Despite Heinicke's winning run, the Commanders still only averaged 18.9 points per game (ranked No. 24 in the league) and 330.3 yards (No. 20). They also had a rotating lineup of running backs with Brian Johnson Jr. (team-leading 797 rushing yards in just 12 games) and Antonio Gibson (546 yards). Terry McLaurin was the top offensive threat with 77 catches for 1,191 yards but just five TDs. WRs Josh Dotson and Curtis Samuel also contributed, with Samuel also coming out of the backfield. They're all back this season, and maybe the continuity will help Howell.

DEFENSE

The defense really carried the Commanders, as it kept it in most games despite the pedestrian offense. They allowed just 20.2 points per game (ranking No. 8 in the league) and 304.6 yards (No. 3). It was a team effort as no defensive starter was voted to the AP All-Pro team—though special teamer Jeremy Reaves did make the first team—and Chase Young returns from his torn ACL suffered in Week 10 of the 2021 season.

In Young's absence, defensive tackle Daron Payne led the Commanders with 11.5 sacks, with another DT Jonathan Allen adding 6.5. Leading tackler Jamin Davis (104 total tackles, 36 solo) returns. LB Cole Holcomb left for Pittsburgh via free agency, but Washington replaced him with Cody Barton from Seattle.

OUTLOOK

DraftKings has the Commanders' Over/Under Season Win Total at 6.5 with a little added juice on the Over at -120. Like the Giants, the Commanders overachieved last season and could be in for a regression, but if the return of Young improves an already steady defense, this team could continue to surprise. It could all come down to how Howell performs. He played great in the season-finale win vs. the Cowboys, though they didn't have anything to play for. Still, the fact this team upset the Eagles at full-strength and tied the Giants shows they could contend for the division title or a wild-card spot.

SEASON WIN TOTAL PLAY

<			20.5 (#28 OF 32)
202 date	23 SCHEDU opponent	JLE Est. Line	SERIES TRENDS
9/10	ARIZONA	-4.7	FAVORITES are on 4-1 ATS run in ARI-WAS h2h series
9/17	at Denver	+5.4	HOME TEAMS have won L4 ATS in WAS-DEN h2h series
9/24	BUFFALO	+6.7	BUFFALO is on 8-1 ATS run vs. Washington
10/1	at Philadelphia	+11.5	WASHINGTON is 9-4-2 ATS in L15 trips to Philadelphia
10/5	CHICAGO	-0.7	WASHINGTON is on 11-3 ATS run vs. Chicago
10/15	at Atlanta	+3.6	WASHINGTON has won L3 ATS at Atlanta
10/22	at NY Giants	+4.2	ROAD TEAMS are on 6-1 ATS run in WAS-NYG rivalry
10/29	PHILADELPHIA	+8.2	WASHINGTON is on 5-3 ATS run hosting Philadelphia
11/5	at New England	+5.3	NEW ENGLAND is 3-1-1 ATS in L5 versus Washington
11/12	at Seattle	+5.7	The L5 games of WAS-SEA h2h series went UNDER the total
11/19	NY GIANTS	+1.6	NY GIANTS are 4-1 SU & 5-0 ATS in L5 trips to Washington
11/23	at Dallas	+9.8	OVER the total is 7-1 in L8 of WAS-DAL series in Dallas but lost L
12/3	MIAMI	+3	UNDER the total is 6-1 in L7 of MIA-WAS h2h series
222	BYE WEEK	$\sum_{i=1}^{i}$	
12/17	at LA Rams	+3.4	WASHINGTON is 7-2 ATS in L9 road games versus Rams
12/24	at NY Jets	+7.8	NY JETS have won L4 ATS vs. Washington
12/31	SAN FRANCISCO	+6.4	UNDERDOGS are on 4-1 ATS run in WAS-SF h2h series but lost L
1/7	DALLAS	+6.5	L3 games of DAL-WAS rivalry in Washington went UNDER the tot



2023 ODDS



FIELD **1.6 / -0.2** RATINGS (HOME/ROAD)

2022 STATS AND RANKS

	OFF STAT	ENSE Rank	DEF STAT	ENSE RANK
Points Per Game	18.9	24	20.2	7
Yards Per Point	17.5	27	15.1	25
Plays Per Game	67.1	4		
Time of Possession	33:05	1		
3rd Down Conv. %	35.2%	25	31.9%	1
Total Yards Per Game	330.3	20	304.6	3
Yards Per Play	4.9	28	5.2	11
Rush Attempts Per Game	31.6	4		
Rush Yards Per Game	126.1	12	113.3	11
Yards Per Rush Attempt	4	28	4.4	16
Pass Attempts Per Game	32.6	20		
Completion %	62. 1%	23	59.9 %	2
Passing Yards Per Game	204.2	21	191.3	4
Yards Per Pass Attempt	6.8	22	6.3	10
Turnovers	1.4	17	1.1	26

WASHINGTON IS 2-13 ATS (LAST 15 GAMES) - VS. AFC EAST

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