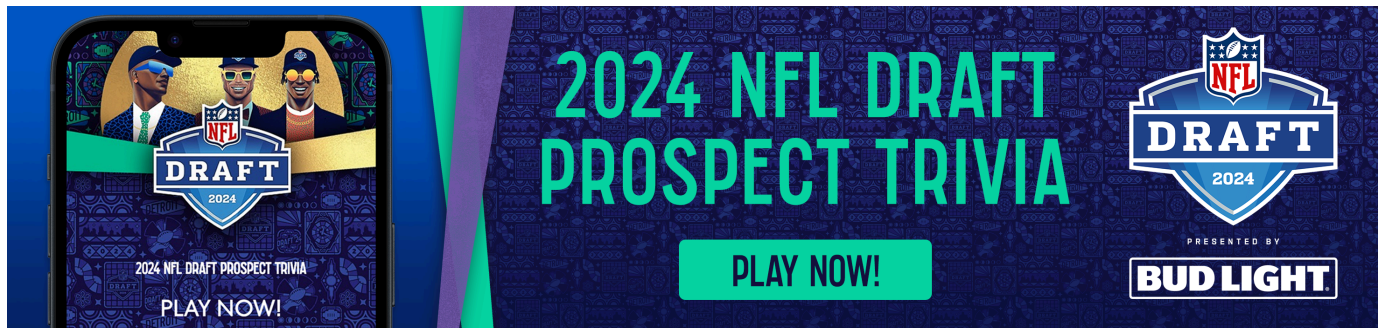


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Power Rankings

Presented By

NFL Power Rankings, Week 15: Cowboys crack top three; Broncos reach new high for 2023 season

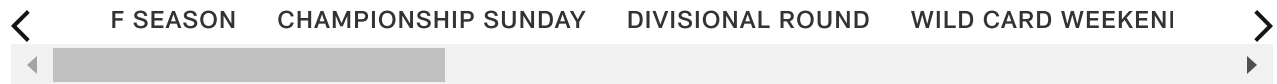
Published: Dec 12, 2023 at 10:40 AM



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Lead Draft Writer



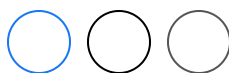


The NFC East will feature a double-digit winner that must go on the road for the [postseason](#). The NFC South has three teams vying for a home playoff game, all sitting at 6-7.

Such is the reality of the divisional format, which not only grants playoff berths for all division leaders but also doesn't reseed the teams, giving the top four slots (and a home playoff game) to the division winners. That's why the [Eagles' loss to the Cowboys](#) felt so gigantic Sunday night.

Ask yourself: How many teams can we truly trust right now? Our Nos. 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 squads from [the last edition of the Power Rankings](#) all fell in Week 14 -- a stunning late-season blight for the supposed heavyweights of the league, even if a few of their opponents were pretty respectable.

As a result, plenty of division races remain tight with a lot left to sort out in the NFL's



postseason berth. That's about all you can ask for as a football fan: Give me chaos for as long as possible leading up to [the first week in January](#), when it all gets settled.

It makes for harder, messier work in the Power Rankings sphere, but fear not: Complaining about my order on social media remains your afforded right. I wouldn't dare strip you of that.

On to the ranks ...

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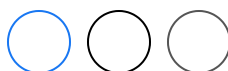
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NOTE: Up/down arrows reflect movement from the [Week 14 Power Rankings](#).

Rank	San Francisco 49ers
1	10-3
—	

The funny thing about Sunday's [double-digit win](#) over the rival Seahawks? San Francisco's offense was actually very hot and cold, looking mortal for stretches and then, *BOOM!* Someone just busts off a big play, and all is right in the 49ers' world. [Brock Purdy](#) held everything together. [His INT](#) could be blamed on [Brandon Aiyuk](#), who also [had a fumble](#) later ... though the stud wideout *did* chip in 126 receiving yards. In fact, all of the Niners' top playmakers put up numbers, and Purdy's [54-yard TD pass to Deebo Samuel](#) should end the silly narratives around the quarterback's downfield



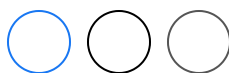
defense. CB [Charvarius Ward](#) (groin), DT [Javon Hargrave](#) (hamstring) and LBs [Dre Greenlaw](#) (hip) and [Oren Burks](#) (knee) all left the game, with only Greenlaw re-entering. San Francisco was already playing without DT [Arik Armstead](#), so if you're looking for an Achilles' heel on this juggernaut -- with Baltimore on tap [in two weeks](#) -- it might be this.

Rank	Baltimore Ravens
2	10-3
—	

[Lamar Jackson's MVP campaign](#) isn't hurting after his heroic effort [against the Rams](#), which included a thrilling TD drive (with the scoring pass [going to rookie WR Zay Flowers](#)) and successful two-point conversion (also [thrown to Flowers](#)) to give the Ravens a late lead, before [Tylan Wallace's pinch-hit punt-return TD](#) ultimately sealed the deal in overtime. With the win and [Miami's loss](#) on Monday night, Baltimore owns [the AFC's No. 1 overall seed](#) while also leading the AFC North by two games, though Sunday wasn't easy. In fact, that was arguably the most this Ravens defense has been stressed all season -- as evidenced by the 37-31 final -- but there were enough big plays on that side not to stress too much about a unit that has played far more good football than bad. And Jackson helps widen the margin for error when he plays like he did in Week 14, stinging the Rams time and time again with his legs and arm. One way or another, we badly need a [Joe Flacco-Lamar Jackson](#) showdown in the playoffs. If the NFL scriptwriters are any kind of benevolent folk, they'll ensure this happens.

Rank	Dallas Cowboys
3	10-3
1 ▲	

For a guy who was [on the operating table](#) a few days before, Mike McCarthy looked pretty healthy loping over to call timeout prior to [the touchdown](#) that gave Dallas a 24-6 halftime lead over rival Philadelphia. McCarthy called all the right shots in that opening half Sunday night, converting on [a 60-yard field goal](#) in the first quarter and successfully pulling off the rare [TD-notching challenge](#) at the goal line in the second quarter. Things simmered down after that, but in the end, the Cowboys sent a big message that they are indeed serious contenders for both the NFC East crown and [the No. 1 overall seed](#)



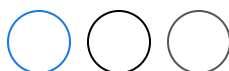
[Buffalo](#) and [at Miami](#), so the work isn't yet done, especially with the Eagles' [remaining schedule](#) a lot more favorable.

Rank	Philadelphia Eagles
4	10-3
1 ▼	

Save for the end-of-game kneeldown by San Francisco [in Week 13](#), Philadelphia's defense allowed points on 10 consecutive drives (nine TDs and one field goal) for a stretch over the past two games. The Eagles gave themselves life in the third quarter against the Cowboys [on Sunday night](#), forcing a [Dak Prescott](#) fumble and [returning it for a touchdown](#). But Dallas had three takeaways of its own, stripping the Eagles' three best offensive playmakers: [Jalen Hurts](#), [A.J. Brown](#) and [DeVonta Smith](#). In the first meeting with the Cowboys, the Eagles fumbled three times ... but recovered all three, allowing Philly to escape with [a 28-23 win](#). Pummeled in the past two weeks, though, the Eagles are suddenly in danger of letting the division (and [the No. 1 seed](#)) go to someone else. A year ago, the Eagles were playing their best ball with the playoffs looming. Now, they're just trying to weather the team's gauntlet of a schedule and get to the tournament. As things stand at the moment, they'd have to go to some southern city for the first round of the playoffs.

Rank	Miami Dolphins
5	9-4
—	

For months, we've complained about the Dolphins not beating any quality teams. Now we can ding them for their [stunning home loss](#) to the Titans, who entered Monday with an 0-6 road record. [Tyreek Hill](#)'s ankle injury kept him off the field for a large chunk of the game, and Miami also lost C [Connor Williams](#) to a knee issue. But there's no excuse for losing to Tennessee after holding a 14-point lead with three minutes to go at home. The Dolphins' offense was just in a funk most of the night, factoring in the two gift touchdowns the Titans gave them via [a muffed punt](#) and [a fumble](#). A [Miami fumble](#) and two field goals led to a 2-for-5 red-zone night, and the Dolphins had another field goal [blocked](#). Then the Fins' defense, which had been so good all night, cracked on the final two drives, allowing [Will Levis](#) to march the Titans 75 and 64 yards to outscore Miami 15-0 in the final 160 seconds. It was just an ugly, ugly loss and a huge blow to the



Rank

6

Kansas City Chiefs

8-5

When was the last time you heard [Patrick Mahomes](#) or Andy Reid challenge an official's (correct) call after [a loss](#) like [they did on Sunday](#)? It felt strange, seeing two of the NFL's best competitors say that the referee needed to warn Reid about [Kadarius Toney](#) lining up offside when, really, the onus was on Toney to check with the line judge on that one. You want to gripe about [the lack of a call](#) late against the Packers? Be my guest. Have at it. But Sunday's grievance felt desperate and petty for a team that has been the league's preeminent organization over the past five years. To Reid's credit, [he reversed course on Monday](#), saying it was indeed Toney's responsibility to check with the official. The bottom line is that Kansas City's problems go far beyond a few unfavorable calls here and there. Mahomes' [opening-drive pick](#) killed a promising march, and the reigning MVP's just not playing great ball right now. Neither is a defense that had carried this club for much of the season. The way things are trending, Mahomes might be staring at his first road playoff game.

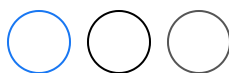
Rank

7

Detroit Lions

9-4

Even at 8-2, the Lions gave us plenty of reasons to be concerned, from [Jared Goff's](#) turnovers to the offensive line injuries and general defensive issues -- and none of those things have gotten better in the three games since. At 9-4, Dan Campbell's team is almost assured of earning a playoff bid, but Detroit logging its first postseason win since January of 1992 feels less likely by the day. There are still reasons for hope, and winning the division would help immensely, giving the Lions home-field advantage for at least one game. But they have allowed 26 or more points in five straight games and six of the past seven, struggling mightily with mobile quarterbacks throughout the season. When you look at the potential NFC playoff field, this is obviously a problem. The Lions need to find late-season answers in a hurry. Detroit looks nothing like it did earlier in the year.



Rank

8

2 ▲

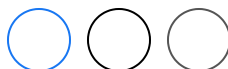
Cleveland Browns

8-5

[Joe Flacco](#) went 18-3 against the Browns. *For* the Browns, he's now 1-1 with [a tough loss](#) that was much closer than the final score suggests. And Cleveland's going to [ride him until the wheels fall off](#) after the 38-year-old led four TD drives -- one in each quarter -- and the late field-goal march to seal [a massive win](#) over Jacksonville. His arm strength and touch on downfield passes have unlocked a chapter of the Browns' playbook that was too often overlooked this season. Flacco *did* [turn the ball](#) over [twice](#) with 14-point leads, possibly costing his own team points on both possessions, and [Amari Cooper](#) coughed up [a fumble](#), too. But the Browns forced four Jaguars turnovers, converting the last two into second-half touchdowns. Even without star CB [Denzel Ward](#), Cleveland's secondary stepped up, forcing three interceptions ([two](#) by [Martin Emerson Jr.](#)) and 22 incomplete passes -- with Browns defenders getting their hands on 10 of those throws. The playoffs look very likely, although all four [remaining opponents](#) continue to play hard and will be tough outs.

Rank

0

Jacksonville Jaguars

The Jaguars' defense is reeling, having allowed backup quarterbacks to dice them up two weeks in a row. First [it was Jake Browning](#); then [Joe Flacco had his way](#) with Mike Caldwell's defense. Outside of [the strip sack](#), Jacksonville's pass rush was disappointing on Sunday, pressuring Flacco 12 times and hitting him thrice on 45 dropbacks. Sadly, the coverage and tackling were possibly worse. The offense certainly shares the blame with four turnovers, even though [Trevor Lawrence](#) gamely gutted through Week 14 with an ankle injury that many of us assumed would keep him out -- possibly for multiple weeks. But the QB's lack of chemistry with [Calvin Ridley](#) (four catches on 13 targets) and [Zay Jones](#) (five on 14 targets) hurt the team, as did Doug Pederson's hyper-aggressive game-management approach late. As is the case with many other AFC teams, the Jaguars' [postseason picture](#) has changed dramatically in a matter of just two weeks, even with the Colts and Texans also losing Sunday.

Rank

10

2 ▲

Buffalo Bills

7-6

They might remain 11th in the [AFC playoff pecking order](#), needing to pass four teams ahead of them right now, but the Bills remain a viable playoff contender at 7-6. Yes, Buffalo hosts red-hot Dallas [this coming Sunday](#), must go on the road twice more and still has to face the Dolphins and Patriots, who beat the Bills in [their first meeting](#). But the Bills [earned a win at Arrowhead](#) with [Stefon Diggs](#) having a poor outing by his standards (four catches, 24 yards) and with the defense being able to finish off the game, something it hasn't always done this season, even if it required a [penalty](#) to wipe out a Chiefs touchdown in the final minute-plus. There's plenty to gripe about, but [Josh Allen](#) made some big throws and [James Cook carried the offense](#) with a strong effort. Fifteen touches for the second-year back feels too low; Cook needs 20 per game. The Bills are far from perfect, but they remain dangerous.

Rank

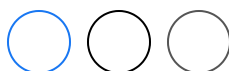
11

5 ▲

Denver Broncos

7-6

Somehow, some way, the Broncos only trail the Chiefs by one game in the AFC West --



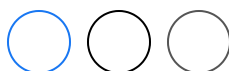
might have looked a few weeks ago. Denver's defense took a tiny step back in the [Week 13 loss](#) to the Texans, but the [Week 14 win](#) over the Chargers was a huge statement performance. The Bolts turned the ball over twice, were stopped five times on fourth downs and were 0 for 12 on third downs, as [Justin Herbert](#) was knocked [out of the game](#). The offense overcame some challenges, including a pick on [Russell Wilson's first pass of the game](#) (which was actually [Marvin Mims'](#) fault). That was the Broncos' first true turnover on an opening drive this season. They've mostly been very good, which makes their [first-drive-of-the-second-half struggles](#) perplexing. But otherwise, this team has been sneaky dangerous for a while, even if a lot of folks aren't ready to admit it.

Rank	Houston Texans
12	7-6
3 ▼	

The Texans started Sunday without WR [Tank Dell](#), TE [Dalton Schultz](#) and OT [Tytus Howard](#) ... and then left [a 30-6 loss](#) to the Jets with [injuries](#) to QB [C.J. Stroud](#) and WR [Nico Collins](#). It was an all-around awful day for a team that has managed to avoid those most of the season. Houston has lost two of its last three games, making the [road to the playoffs](#) that much harder. The fact that Jacksonville and Indy also lost was a saving grace, but the Texans' injury situation clouds the forecast for [this Sunday's game](#) in Nashville. This was the worst Houston looked offensively all season -- or, at the very least, since Week 1. The Texans' defense has been on its heels at times, but coming off a strong showing [against the Broncos](#) in Week 13, that unit should have played better against a Jets offense that hadn't looked very good over the past few months. Houston has shown ample improvement this season, but the young team could miss the playoffs now.

Rank	Cincinnati Bengals
13	7-6
5 ▲	

The Bengals [dominated](#) a game against a playoff contender, and [Jake Browning](#) once again was terrific overall, even taking into account [a poor pick-six](#) that briefly gave the Colts life just before halftime. Browning has now led Cincinnati to two consecutive 30-point showings, which even [Joe Burrow](#) didn't manage to do this season. The return of



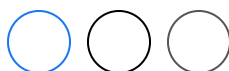
catches Sunday. The Bengals leaned on a terrific screen game and continued to get tight end [Tanner Hudson](#) involved, as Browning connected on 18 passes to nine different pass catchers. It was also a good day for a beat-up Cincy defense, which may have had its best showing since October. That group entered the game 32nd in yards allowed per game, but kept the Colts to two gains longer than 16 yards on Sunday.

Rank	Pittsburgh Steelers
14	7-6
3 ▼	

The Steelers made history on *Thursday Night Football* when they completed a two-game homestand of defeats against teams with 10-plus losses, according to [NFL Research](#). On Sunday, they were rewarded by being bumped back into the [playoff field](#) - for now, anyway. The Colts and Texans losing pushed the Steelers into the top seven on the AFC side, but those three are only *half* of the AFC's *six* 7-6 teams currently. If there's a silver lining to the big picture, it's that at least three of those teams are without their original starting quarterback now. The fact that [Mitch Trubisky](#) struggled the way he did [against New England](#), compelling Steelers fans to demand an expeditious [Kennedy Pickett](#) return, shows the level of desperation. Pittsburgh's playoff viability likely depends on the next two games, [against the Colts](#) and [Bengals](#).

Rank	Indianapolis Colts
15	7-6
2 ▼	

Facing a Bengals team that had struggled to pass protect and stop the run coming in, the Colts figured to have a pretty good matchup as they continued their [run for the postseason](#). But Indianapolis' pass rush and run game were nowhere to be found in Cincinnati, and the Colts committed a slew of unforced errors in the [blowout loss](#). Indianapolis kept Bengals RBs [Joe Mixon](#) and [Chase Brown](#) more or less under wraps as runners, but each of them [ripped off](#) killer [long screens](#). There were also special-teams gaffes that cost the Colts, including missed field-goal and extra-point tries and [a muffed punt](#) that led to a Cincy field goal. This is exactly the kind of sloppy ball that will leave you home come playoff time. Still, Indianapolis' [schedule](#) lines up pretty well and



Rank

16

2 ▼

Green Bay Packers

6-7

After all the highs of the previous three weeks, the Packers turned back the clock Monday night, reprising the kind of [Jordan Love](#) performance that had fans pulling their hair out before his recent hot streak. Entering the contest riding a three-game stretch of turnover-free football, Green Bay gave it up three times, with Love [fumbling](#) and [throwing a pick](#) in consecutive possessions. The quarterback was just in a funk most of the night, making some poor decisions and missing throws, leaving a lot of points on the field. [Keisean Nixon's muffed punt](#) in the third quarter set up [a Giants TD](#), putting the Packers in chase mode. Love responded with two brilliant throws to [Malik Heath](#) late to take the lead, but the Packers' defense couldn't stop the Giants with less than two minutes left. How Green Bay didn't sack [Tommy DeVito](#) once is anyone's guess; Big Blue gave up an average of seven per game in the previous four.

Rank

17

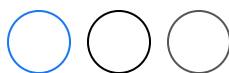
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Minnesota Vikings

7-6

Kevin O'Connell did not pull the bye-week trigger on a quarterback change -- but by the fourth quarter against the Raiders on Sunday, he'd seen enough, [benching Joshua Dobbs](#) for [Nick Mullens](#). And it worked -- kinda. Mullens was a more efficient thrower down the stretch, and a field goal was all Minnesota needed in [a 3-0 win](#). KOC now faces an interesting decision: Go back to Dobbs or give Mullens a shot? Like any good coach, he kept his options open, saying they're "a week-to-week offense at this point," which is especially true with [Justin Jefferson hurt again](#). But boy, this Vikings' defense is out to prove something. Ever since the Week 5 [loss](#) to the Chiefs, Brian Flores' group has been lights out. Shutouts are pretty darned rare; Minnesota's was just the fifth in the NFL this season, and there were only four in 2022. For that, the Vikings remain fascinating, warts and all.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Minnesota Vikings [will start quarterback Nick Mullens](#) against the Bengals on Saturday, NFL Network Insiders Ian Rapoport and Tom Pelissero



Rank

18

5 ▲

Tampa Bay Buccaneers

6-7

That's now two straight wins for the intrepid Buccaneers, living up to their name. They seldom make it easy, but somehow, Tampa Bay remains in the running for a [home playoff game](#). [Baker Mayfield](#) had less than 100 yards passing heading into the fourth quarter, but he threw two TDs and led three second-half scoring drives to help the Bucs take control of the game late. Mayfield owed a debt of gratitude to the defense and special teams for keeping Tampa in the game, [notching a safety](#) while also [forcing a near pick-six](#) and two missed field goals in the first half. The defense suffered a few coverage busts, but made enough big plays to [beat Atlanta](#) and keep the season alive. The Bucs' chances of winning the division would have plummeted with a loss. Much left to do, but it was a critical step.

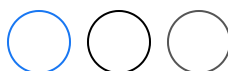
Rank

19

4 ▼

Seattle Seahawks

6-7



road games left. Seattle held [Geno Smith out of this game](#) so that he might have a chance to start against Philadelphia, but groin injuries can be tricky. [Drew Lock](#) looked pretty decent at times [against the 49ers](#) -- until the fourth quarter, that is. The return of [Kenneth Walker III](#) was positive, and he ripped off [a 27-yard beauty](#) of a catch-and-run, but the 'Hawks gave him just 12 touches. Even with some big plays, Seattle's defense (which lost CB [Devon Witherspoon](#) to [injury](#)) was shredded again, allowing 527 yards and eight plays of at least 25 yards. Maybe Geno can rally the Seahawks against Philly, but right now, this team's on track to go from 6-3 back in Week 10 to out of the playoffs.

Rank
20

Los Angeles Rams

6-7

—

The Rams will look back at the missed opportunities in their valiant [OT loss at Baltimore](#) and weep, as they were unable to get stops on either [Lamar Jackson's late TD pass](#) (on third-and-17) or the [two-point conversion](#). The secondary had a rough day overall, [allowing two busted-coverage TDs](#) in the first half. The Rams' offense was mostly terrific, and [Cooper Kupp](#) had his [biggest game](#) in more than a month, but four straight second-half punts prevented Los Angeles from seizing control when given the chance. The Rams certainly rued the third-down sack [Matthew Stafford](#) took in that range of the game immediately after the Baltimore [safety](#), knocking them out of field-goal range. L.A. can still get in the [playoffs](#), and the remaining schedule isn't overwhelming, but this felt like a missed opportunity to steal one against a quality opponent.

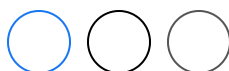
Rank
21

Atlanta Falcons

6-7

2 ▼

A win would have put the Falcons a game ahead, with a 4-0 mark in the division, but that's all gone now. Two missed field goals and a [safety](#) put them in a first-half hole. [Desmond Ridder](#) had some terrific moments ([often when throwing](#) to [Drake London](#)) and some awful ones, specifically an [INT deep in Falcons territory](#) that turned into a



afloat. But how long can the Falcons sputter along this way? They've tried a QB change; that didn't work. They've mostly played good defense this year, even with Sunday's late breakdowns. Yet their losses all feel similar, with drives unconverted and opportunities missed. If they fall short of the [playoffs](#), we can easily point to why.

Rank

22**New Orleans Saints**

6-7

—

[Sunday's win](#) over lowly Carolina ended a three-game skid and gave the Saints a puncher's chance at winning the [NFL's worst division](#) this season. But the vibes around this team have felt pretty bleak for some time now, manifested in a Superdome crowd that was very much able to contain its enthusiasm as the Saints struggled to put away the Panthers. This is New Orleans. This is a problem. Then again, it's hard to rev up the excitement, as [Derek Carr](#)'s arrival has failed to energize the offense. Carr and [Erik McCoy](#), both team captains, were seen [jawing at each other](#). We know Carr and his receivers haven't been on the same page often. Oh, and the run defense once again had a rough outing.

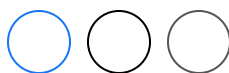
Rank

23**Chicago Bears**

5-8

2 ▲

At a summer cookout, one of the other dads asked me how many games the Bears would win this season. I said "seven to nine" felt reasonable. Of course, I ran into the same guy immediately after the 0-4 start, which made us both laugh. I hope I see him again soon. Since then, the Bears have gone 5-4 (including 2-2 with [Tyson Bagent](#)) and have completely changed the arc of the season. It's wild to say aloud, but if they win the final four games, the Bears have a decent shot of [making the playoffs](#). The defense did Sunday what it could not against the Lions in Detroit: close it out late. [Justin Fields](#) showed star potential at times against a beleaguered Lions defense, hitting [D.J. Moore](#) (who also had a [rushing TD](#)) for a [thrilling score on fourth-and-13](#) to pad the fourth-quarter lead. I presume the [win](#) also made it more likely that Fields, Matt Eberflus and Ryan Poles all are back next season for a team that suddenly has some serious momentum.



Rank

24

2 ▲

Tennessee Titans

5-8

Like Bob Dylan once sang, "When you got nothing, you got nothing to lose." Trailing by 14 late in the fourth quarter after [a pair](#) of [brutal turnovers](#) seemingly had handed the game to the Dolphins, the Titans stormed back to score [a quick touchdown](#), and Mike Vrabel went for two ([and got it](#)), tickling the fancies of analytics people everywhere. After a quick three-and-out from Miami, Tennessee marched 64 yards in just four plays to score the go-ahead touchdown before snuffing out Miami's last-gasp drive. Vrabel let [Will Levis](#) gun it out on Monday night, and even with the rookie's two turnovers leading directly to 14 Dolphins points, he delivered some big-time plays in the [stunning comeback victory](#). Levis threw for 327 yards, including 138 and his only TD pass in the fourth quarter. He also made a few scrambles and kept his composure, even when things went awry. There were few style points for the Titans in this one, but this was a Grade A spoiler job by Vrabel during his most frustrating season in Nashville. This has to be the most improbable victory of the entire regular season, given the late deficit, and a good response to [the OT loss at home](#) in Week 13.

Rank

25

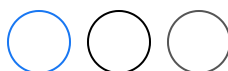
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New York Jets

5-8

It's hard to believe that [Zach Wilson](#) started the week with his coach knocking down a report that he [was hesitant](#) to reclaim the starting role and ended it with what might have been [his best start](#) in the NFL. Wilson [lost a fumble](#) up 14-0, temporarily letting the Texans back into the game, but that was about the only regrettable mistake from Wilson, who navigated the rainy conditions to throw for 209 yards and two TDs after halftime. All told, Wilson led three second-half TD drives despite [Garrett Wilson](#) being the only wide receiver with more than one reception [Sunday](#). I'm left to wonder: Could the Jets not have found ways to coax this level of play out of Wilson sooner? Did the benching motivate him properly? And what does this mean for Wilson's future? With the Jets likely to miss the playoffs, these are suddenly reasonable questions to mull.

Rank

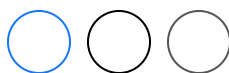
Los Angeles Chargers

Everything went wrong Sunday -- and yes, I've written that before in this space, but this time I *really* mean it. The offensive line was worked over (six sacks allowed), [Justin Herbert](#) was taken out with a [finger injury](#) and the feisty fans busted out multiple "Fire Staley" chants during the [24-7 loss to Denver](#), a game the Chargers never really threatened to win. It appears another season bearing so much hope is going to topple under its own weight. We know personnel changes are coming, with [Austin Ekeler](#) again hitting free agency and decisions to be made on some very pricey veterans. It's clear we're heading toward an offseason where everyone not named Herbert has to feel at least a little bit uneasy about their role. They can't keep running things back with their talent.

EDITOR'S UPDATE: NFL Network Insiders Ian Rapoport, Tom Pelissero and Mike Garafolo reported on Tuesday that [Justin Herbert will miss the rest of the season](#) following surgery to repair the broken index finger on his right (throwing) hand.

Rank	New York Giants
27	5-8
1 ▲	

Undrafted rookie [Tommy DeVito](#) has become a folk sensation overnight because it's a cool story and everyone loves when the local kid does good. "Tommy Cutlets" left a little meat on the bone early Monday, doing almost as much with his legs through three quarters (71 rushing yards) as he did with his arm (99 passing yards). DeVito had his entire family kissing each other after [his 26-yard run](#) to the Green Bay 1-yard line, with the Giants taking their first lead of the game one play later. After DeVito delivered [a perfect TD pass to Isaiah Hodgins](#) to put the Giants up eight late in the third quarter, Green Bay stormed back to take the lead in the fourth. But then DeVito's 32-yard pass to [Wan'Dale Robinson](#) -- who had a huge night -- set up [the game-winning kick](#). This game could serve as officiating teaching tape, from the [Saquon Barkley fumble](#) to the [Malik Heath](#) dropped TD and then the *actual* [Heath TD](#). It was just one strange play after another in the final five-plus minutes. But DeVito's heroics and the Giants' third straight win have put a nice spin on an otherwise-tough season.



Rank

28

4 ▼

Las Vegas Raiders

5-8

In one of the sadder offensive games in recent memory, the Raiders were the team that [lost](#). [Fumbling](#) in the red zone is seldom advised. A [late-game interception](#) also hurts, it turns out, as do five three-and-outs. You feel sick for the Raiders' defense, which was causing all kinds of problems for the Vikings (five sacks for a whopping minus-47 yards) and running on fumes by the end. It's fair to wonder if [Maxx Crosby](#) should even [be playing](#) right now, but he had two of those sacks and supplied a ton of pressure. Unfortunately, [Aidan O'Connell](#) has underwhelmed, and the offensive line had a tough game Sunday, too. It was just an all-around deflating performance for a team trying to fight for its interim coach. Things are looking bleak.

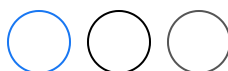
Rank

29

—

Arizona Cardinals

3-10



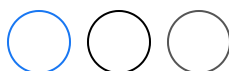
It was a quality bye week, one would assume, for the Cardinals. They got to enjoy their [road victory](#) over the Steelers and then sit back and watch the Patriots and Jets both win, potentially helping their [2024 NFL Draft positioning](#). Arizona has two first-round picks, its own and Houston's. The [Texans losing to the Jets](#) damaged Houston's chances of making the postseason, and if it misses, the Cardinals would receive a top-18 pick. The Patriots and Cardinals both carry 3-10 records into the home stretch, and though the Pats currently hold the No. 2 overall pick, that easily could shift over the final month. But Jonathan Gannon has coached like a man who wants to win, so it'll be fascinating to see how competitive the Cards are in these remaining games.

Rank	New England Patriots
30	3-10
1 ▲	

It's easy to say now, after [their first win](#) since Week 7, that the Patriots should have gone to [Bailey Zappe](#) earlier. I might have gone back as early as the [Week 5 shutout loss](#) to the Saints as the first time they reasonably could have (or should have) made a change. But then again, Zappe and [Mac Jones](#) are tied in home shutouts, 1-1, this season. That's all a bunch of what-ifs now. The what-might-be could be more interesting. The ESPN *College GameDay* broadcast from Foxborough was manna from heaven for the tea-leaf readers of Patriots Nation, carefully parsing the words of Robert Kraft and Bill Belichick, as well as the [specific wording of Pat McAfee](#). It was tremendous theater for those who like that sort of thing. And it also might mean less than nothing in the end, but it's just another reminder that a few wins down the stretch might not alter the vector the coach and owner are on in a lost season.

Rank	Washington Commanders
31	4-9
1 ▼	

No one reasonably could have expected defensive improvement following the trades of pass rushers [Chase Young](#) and [Montez Sweat](#), but the unit underachieved prior to that, too, leading to the [dismissal](#) of defensive coordinator Jack Del Rio and secondary coach Brent Vieselmeyer after the [blowout loss](#) to the Cowboys on Thanksgiving. According to Next Gen Stats, the Commanders have allowed 19 touchdowns on vertical routes this season, which is *eight* more than any other team. That is stunning



season with momentum and added talent this offseason, but the D regressed horribly. That, as much as anything, cratered Washington's season, even if the offensive mistakes tend to earn more attention.

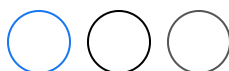
Rank

32**Carolina Panthers**

1-12

Interim coach Chris Tabor [vented](#) after Carolina's sixth straight loss, its second such streak this season, and [Bryce Young](#) said he's also ["sick and tired"](#) of all the losing. Everyone is. And the thing is, the Panthers aren't even that inventive in their losses, as most share familiar themes. Close game. Good defense. Had a chance. Yada, yada. But it's true! The defense really has held up its end of the bargain more often than not, and for the first 55 minutes [Sunday](#), it might have been the team's best defensive effort of the season. The run game was pretty productive (204 rush yards), but Young had maybe his worst start to a game this season, unable to get anything going beyond the short, quick stuff. Stop me if you've heard that before.

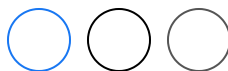
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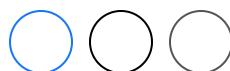
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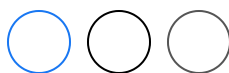
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