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Power Rankings

Presented By

NFL Power Rankings, Week 13: Steelers crack top 10, while Lions tumble out of top five

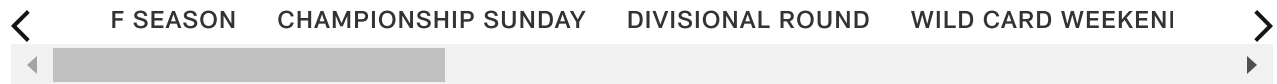
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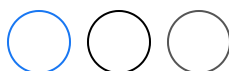




The league's only one-win team [fired its coach](#). The only one-loss team recorded its [second thrilling comeback](#) of the week. The Carolina Panthers and Philadelphia Eagles couldn't feel more disparate at this moment, with the former undertaking yet another leadership change and the latter bouncing back from [a Super Bowl loss](#) as well as any team in recent seasons.

Yet, the Eagles [lost to the Jets](#) earlier this season, and the Panthers [beat the Texans](#). Parity is kind of wild.

Oh, and the other team on a five-game win streak along with the Eagles? That would be the white-hot Denver Broncos, who not that long ago had as many wins as the Panthers. Now, the Broncos are trying to barnstorm their way [into the playoffs](#), facing a three-game road gauntlet. But they'll have to leapfrog the sneaky Colts, who were 3-5 before a three-game winning streak of their own.



So what we're saying is that the Power Rankings have had a few makeovers since Halloween, they underwent another one this week and we're carving out room for several more through the holiday season. If the 2023 NFL campaign has taught us anything, it's to remain nimble in this space.

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NOTE: Up/down arrows reflect movement from the [Week 12 Power Rankings](#).

Rank

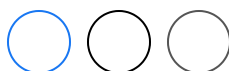
1

Philadelphia Eagles

10-1

—

Once again, the Eagles were outplayed for long stretches by a talented foe, and once again, they came out with a victory. Last week delivered two of the more emotional and meaningful nonconference victories a team can nab, with [Jalen Hurts](#) leading just as many second-half TD drives as Philadelphia needed to win [on Monday](#) and then [Sunday](#). The Eagles were down 10 points in the third quarter at Arrowhead in Week 11's Monday nighter. They were also down 10 points to the Bills on Sunday, but [James Bradberry made a play](#), and that was enough to shift the game back in Philly's favor. Sure, the Eagles needed about 14 more things to go their way after that, and the defense had to get off the field a few times to secure the win. As it was, they gave up 505 yards and were on the field for 92 plays in the rain.



Rank

2

Baltimore Ravens

9-3

—

The Ravens have led at the start of every fourth quarter this season. They've hit the bye [in the No. 1 slot](#) in the AFC and own [a 1.5-game lead](#) in a division where two other teams have lost their starting quarterbacks and the third isn't exactly blown away by its QB1. But for whatever reason, Baltimore has a nasty habit of leaving the door open late, sometimes against inferior teams. Sunday night ended with [a win](#), but the Ravens gave the Chargers all kinds of chances to steal the game. This has happened in victories [over the Bengals](#) and [Cardinals](#), and it certainly was a problem in losses [to the Colts](#), [Steelers](#) and [Browns](#). Yet the Ravens [stomped the Lions](#) and [Seahawks](#). Perhaps this won't be a problem, but it's currently one of the few fissures in the fortress, as the Ravens are clearly in the hunt for their first Super Bowl in more than a decade.

Rank

3

San Francisco 49ers

8-3

1 ▲

The division crown isn't completely sewn up, but it's getting there. The 49ers have dominated the NFC West lately, winning 10 straight games against their most familiar foes. The next mantle is [the NFC's No. 1 seed](#), with the Eagles on tap this week [in Philadelphia](#). San Francisco has work to do to catch Philly, but winning Sunday would be a *huge* step in that direction. This team has completely realigned itself after the three-game losing streak, winning the past three comfortably by double digits. Nearly every hole we poked in the Niners during the skid has been answered since, headlined by [Brock Purdy](#)'s reemergence and the rediscovery of the pass rush. Now they catch Philadelphia at a fascinating juncture, with the Eagles coming off an emotional seven-day span that included comeback wins [over the Chiefs](#) and [Bills](#). Will the 49ers be the next late-game victim, or are they due to end Philly's magic run?

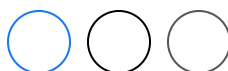
Rank

4

Kansas City Chiefs

8-3

1 ▲



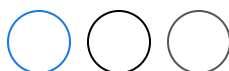
The offense got back in rhythm after the early 14-0 deficit to the Raiders, scoring four touchdowns in a five-drive span to build a two-score lead, and using more than three minutes of clock on the late field-goal drive that helped ice [a 31-17 win](#). The Chiefs got a big game Sunday from rookie receiver [Rashee Rice](#) and the most they've gotten from second-year wideout [Skyy Moore](#) since September. It was a start, and a mostly encouraging one, considering that the Chiefs committed zero turnovers, allowed just one sack and had only one clear dropped pass on [Patrick Mahomes'](#) 34 pass attempts. Defensively, Kansas City was bad for the first 20 minutes and great for the final 40. It wasn't a perfect effort, but it was a more-than-satisfactory bounceback after the

national [loss](#) to the Eagles.
Rank
5
Dallas Cowboys
 8-3
 2 ▲

[Dak Prescott](#) is on a six-game heater, averaging 312.3 passing yards per game with an 18:2 TD-to-INT ratio. I am not sure he's ever had a better six-pack of games at a more critical juncture for the team. A year ago at this time, Prescott was starting off an ignominious streak that would ultimately reach seven games with at least one pick. But ever since [the humiliating loss](#) at San Francisco back in Week 5, Dak's dialed in this season. He's *at least* an [MVP](#) dark horse at this point -- and could end up taking home the hardware if the Cowboys go nuclear down the stretch. Now is the time for folks who decried Mike McCarthy taking over play-calling duties to start the season to offer up their *mea culpa*, as you couldn't hope for much better results lately. Dallas hasn't been in a conference championship game in almost 30 years. Could this be the season?

Rank
6
Miami Dolphins
 8-3
 —

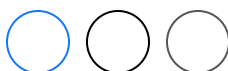
Black Friday turned dark when [Jaelan Phillips](#) went down with [a season-ending Achilles injury](#). That shouldn't negate the progress the Dolphins' defense has made since about Week 8, nor should it dismiss the seven sacks, two interceptions and momentum-changing, [99-yard touchdown](#) Vic Fangio's defense collected in [thrashing the Jets](#). The run defense and pass rush have been unquestionable strengths, and Phillips was a big part of that. He's certainly *not* an easy player to replace, either. That said, it was encouraging that [Emmanuel Ogbah](#), a disappointment since his [massive extension in](#)



come on, too, as has [Andrew Van Ginkel](#). The secondary is starting to play lights out. So, while the Phillips loss is big, Miami's ascending defense shouldn't just fall off a cliff without the stud edge rusher.

Rank	
7	Jacksonville Jaguars
1 ▲	8-3

[Trevor Lawrence](#)'s production hasn't been mind-blowing, but his third NFL season is emerging as a very good one, following a bit of a slow start. In [Sunday's win](#) over the Texans, Lawrence nearly threw for a career high in yards. Even factoring in the humbling 49ers loss [in Week 10](#), Lawrence has been at his best in recent games, with his confidence clearly rising when it comes to taking deeper kill shots. His massive second half against Houston helped the Jaguars hold off the Texans and maintain a strong edge in the AFC South, with six games left and only one more true powerhouse ([Baltimore in Week 15](#)) remaining on Jacksonville's schedule. There's bad news, too, with LT [Cam Robinson](#) out for [at least the next four games](#). We know what happened when he missed the first four, as the offense never quite reached peak form. The Jags are almost certainly [in the playoffs](#), but they can't afford to have the offense fall apart as we creep into December.



Rank

8

Detroit Lions

8-3

5 ▼

The lack of defensive plays hasn't been a season-long issue, but it has become a more chronic one of late. Seeing that unit struggle to stop the Packers [on Thanksgiving](#) wasn't a complete shock to anyone who has watched Lions football over the past two months or so. What was stunning was the lack of pass protection for [Jared Goff](#). Sure, the veteran QB was his own worst enemy and suddenly has become devastatingly turnover-prone, but the offensive line's breakdown against Green Bay was a surprise if you've been attuned to Detroit. Is that the way it's going to be from here on out? The truth is that the Lions can still lose a few games and win the division. But if they want to win their first playoff game in over three decades, these issues need fixing by January.

Rank

9

Pittsburgh Steelers

7-4

4 ▲

The very first scrimmage play of [Sunday's win](#) over the Bengals sent us a clear message: Things will be different offensively. [Kenny Pickett](#) dropped back and fired a pass right down the middle of the Cincinnati defense to [Pat Freiermuth](#). This was Freiermuth's second game back from a [hamstring injury](#) that had kept him out since Week 4 -- and in a pleasant development, he was actually *used* down the seam Sunday. That's an area of the field Pickett had roundly ignored most of the season. New play-caller Mike Sullivan led an attack that netted just 16 points, but the Steelers dialed up 424 yards of offense, the first time this season Pittsburgh has outgained an opponent -- and the Steelers nearly doubled the Bengals' output (222). We'll see if more points follow those yards next time out, but Sullivan had a good first outing in place of [the fired Matt Canada](#).

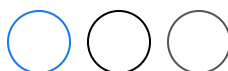
Rank

10

Cleveland Browns

7-4

1 ▼



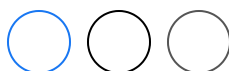
With another week comes another QB situation for Cleveland. [Dorian Thompson-Robinson](#) was playing relatively well when he [suffered a concussion](#) and left [Sunday's loss](#) to Denver. In came [PJ Walker](#), who connected on just 6 of his 13 pass attempts and was [sacked for a safety](#) late. Say what you will about Walker, but he did quarterback the important wins [over the 49ers](#) and [Colts](#) and would figure to be the first option this Sunday [against the Rams](#) if DTR can't go. But don't forget: Cleveland [also signed Joe Flacco](#) to the practice squad, and if things get dicey down the stretch, you can't rule out a fourth QB taking a start for the 7-4 Browns. They remain in [a better spot](#) to make the playoffs than to miss them, but QB uncertainty and a suddenly struggling run defense are cropping up at exactly the wrong time.

Rank	Houston Texans
11	6-5
1 ▼	

Coming up short [against the Jaguars](#) means the Texans have their work cut out for them if they want to [make the playoffs](#). This one stings because the Jags are more than a game up in the AFC South and currently hold the tiebreakers, with better division and conference marks. The Texans certainly had their chances to win, but some painful penalties on both sides of the ball really hurt. So did [C.J. Stroud](#)'s three second-half sacks, shaky coverage in the secondary ([Tavierre Thomas](#) had a forgettable game) and the missed field-goal tries at the end of each half by [Matt Ammendola](#). There's still a clear path to the postseason for Houston, but it starts with a win over 6-5 Denver [in Week 13](#) and might stretch all the way to the [Week 18 game](#) at Indianapolis.

Rank	Buffalo Bills
12	6-6
1 ▼	

Buffalo's [playoff hopes](#) are not dead, but they're fleeting after the Bills [couldn't pull off](#) what would have been an impressive road victory at Philadelphia in soggy conditions. [Josh Allen](#) put on his cape at times, and Joe Brady made some nice play calls, but it wasn't enough, thanks to: two missed kicks; Allen's [fourth-quarter pick](#); a few defensive breakdowns; some bad luck on the fumble/non-fumble front; and the [miscommunication with Gabe Davis](#) on the throw in overtime. Yep, a handful of plays killed the Bills' best offensive showing since [the Miami game](#) back in Week 4 and



followed by a home game [against the surging Cowboys](#). Each loss just feels existential now.

Rank

13

Indianapolis Colts

6-5

3 ▲

We gave you the premonitory playoff warning in [last week's rankings](#), and that was when the Colts were in the AFC's No. 9 slot. Thanks to Sunday's solid victory [over the Bucs](#) and losses [by Buffalo](#) and [Houston](#), the Colts have slid into the seventh and final [playoff spot](#) -- for now. Why hasn't there been more Shane Steichen Coach of the Year buzz? Perhaps it's because his offense has been tepid at times, even considering [the QB situation](#), and the Colts lost three straight games not long ago. But now they've quietly *won* three straight, with the [Jonathan Taylor-Zack Moss](#) duo [punishing Tampa Bay](#) for four quarters Sunday. [Michael Pittman Jr.](#) has been on a great clip since mid-October, too, and his free-agent price tag keeps going up with every big game he stacks ... But that's a conversation for another day. Right now, there's a playoff murmur in Indy.

EDITOR'S UPDATE: After publishing on Tuesday, NFL Network Insider Ian Rapoport reported that Jonathan Taylor [suffered a thumb injury](#) that will require surgery force him to miss a couple of weeks.

Rank

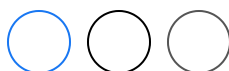
14

Seattle Seahawks

6-5

2 ▼

At 6-5, they're by no means in great shape, considering they now must [face the 8-3 Cowboys](#), [8-3 49ers](#) (who [stomped them on Thanksgiving](#) in Seattle) and [10-1 Eagles](#), with the first two on the road. Lose all three, and the playoffs might be toast. Win one, and there's still a lot of work to do. So that's what's facing a Seahawks team that hasn't looked quite right since October. Looking back, [getting swept](#) by [the Rams](#) will sting (especially that Week 11 clunker). The red zone collapse [against the Bengals](#) also will linger if the 'Hawks miss out on the postseason. The blowout losses [to the 49ers](#) and [Ravens](#) suggest this team will have a tough time rising up against a fierce array of



opponents down the stretch, especially if [Geno Smith](#) and the offense can't right their wrongs quickly.

Rank

15

2 ▲

Denver Broncos

6-5

The Broncos forced only one turnover in their first three outings -- and now, incredibly, they lead the NFL in takeaways with 22. Twenty-one of them have come in their past eight games, and a stunning 15 have been in the past four. Not shockingly, Denver's 0-3 start coincided with a turnover differential of minus-4 -- since then, the Broncos have gone 6-2, with five straight wins, while logging a turnover differential of plus-12. The defense has allowed nine scores in the past six games *combined*, looking unrecognizable next to the unit that gave up 10 TDs to Miami [in Week 3](#). Pair that with [Russell Wilson](#)'s excellent ball security (he's recorded zero picks in five straight games, with just eight turnovers on the season), and we can reasonably [talk playoffs](#) now. Four of Denver's final six games are on the road, including the next three, so this is no time for parades. But Sean Payton's first season already has been a success, thanks to the massive turnaround.

Rank

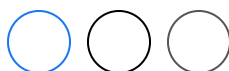
16

2 ▼

Minnesota Vikings

6-6

For three and a half quarters on Monday night, [Josh Dobbs](#) almost undid all the goodwill he'd earned since arriving in Minnesota. It wasn't *all* his fault, but Dobbs made some horrendous decisions in key moments. [The first pick](#) never had a chance. [The second](#) went off [Jordan Addison](#)'s hands but could have been thrown better. [The third](#) hit [K.J. Osborn](#)'s hands -- and it came on fourth down, so no harm, no foul. [The fourth one](#), Dobbs needed to eat it. It was a screen, and the Bears had it read. These were the kinds of plays Dobbs started making more often in his more recent starts in Arizona. There was some magic early in the desert, but it petered out. Is that playing out all over again in Minneapolis? Despite Minnesota finally putting together a touchdown drive to take the lead in the fourth quarter, Chicago ultimately marched back down the field for [the game-winning field goal](#). Now the Vikings' strange season has careened into the



Rank

17

2 ▼

New Orleans Saints

5-6

After a midseason flurry of productivity, the offense is back in slump mode. [Derek Carr](#) racked up 305 passing yards [against the Falcons](#), but he can't seem to get this team into the end zone. [His pick](#) and [Taysom Hill's fumble](#) in the red zone basically decided the game. New Orleans lost by two scores, but just as easily could have won by two. That speaks to the mediocrity of this team *and* the NFC South, which keeps things open for now. Carr just hasn't brought this offense together the way I imagined. The early-season OL issues can't be ignored, and it's hard to know who is to blame when Carr and his receivers aren't on the same page. The Saints need to fix the communication errors and red-zone woes fast, because this defense can't stop a good run game.

Rank

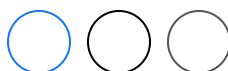
18

4 ▲

Green Bay Packers

5-6

The Packers are suddenly 5-6, and [making the playoffs](#) is not an unrealistic possibility at this point. In fact, Green Bay is one win ahead of its pace in 2022, when the Packers stayed in the playoff race until [a Week 18 loss](#). [Rashan Gary](#) and [Jordan Love](#) helped fuel the rousing [Thanksgiving victory](#) over the Lions, which is exactly how you want it as a Packers fan. Gary, who recovered from a torn ACL suffered last season, fell into a four-game sackless streak [around the time](#) that he signed a \$96 million contract extension, while Love threw 10 picks between Weeks 3 and 10. But both were humming in a big game, despite the team missing several key contributors on each side of the ball. You love to see that at this time of year.



Rank

19

4 ▲

Atlanta Falcons

5-6

The Falcons have yo-yoed from the teens to the mid-20s in the Power Rankings all season -- win or loss, back and forth -- and there's a reason for that. [Sunday's victory](#) marked a tick up in the right direction, as the team took an important step toward winning the NFC South. But two red-zone turnovers by the Saints -- both [tremendous plays](#) by [Jessie Bates III](#) -- were required for Atlanta to survive the game, even though the Falcons won by two scores. The run game has been the backbone of Atlanta's offense all season, as it was Sunday, with even [Cordarrelle Patterson](#) getting in on the action. [Desmond Ridder](#) had two rough interceptions, but rallied for two late scoring drives. It's the same formula we've seen time and time again. Will it be enough for the Falcons to take the division?

Rank

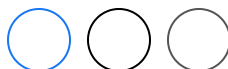
20

2 ▼

Cincinnati Bengals

5-6

Looking [Joe Burrow](#), it turns out, was a big deal. [Jale Brown](#) wasn't the sole reason



came up with the game plan might want to reconsider the run-pass ratio. Counting his two scrambles, Browning dropped back to throw 32 times, and the Bengals handed to [Joe Mixon](#) eight times. That's a 4:1 pass-to-run ratio, with Burrow and [Tee Higgins](#) injured. The Bengals crossed midfield five times, but scored just 10 points. Their longest, most promising drive came at the start of the second half, moving 57 yards and draining nearly six minutes of clock, but it ended with [a bad Browning pick](#) in the red zone. The Bengals led 7-3 at that point, but would go on to lose their third straight.

Rank

21

2 ▼

Los Angeles Chargers

4-7

With WRs [Mike Williams](#) and [Josh Palmer](#) out, the opportunity has been there for first-round pick [Quentin Johnston](#) to grab a share of the offense. But outside of some brief flashes, Johnston has been a disappointment. After a drop and a visit to the medical tent against the Ravens [on Sunday night](#), Johnston never reentered a close, winnable game. Likewise, [Michael Davis](#) has had a clear chance to show he was worth the \$25 million extension the team signed him to a few years ago, with the [J.C. Jackson](#) disaster ending via Jackson's [trade to the Patriots](#). But on Sunday, Davis sat in favor of [Deane Leonard](#). We can talk about coaching until we're (Chargers) blue in the face, but we'd need to have an earnest conversation about personnel, too. The 4-7 record can't all be blamed on Brandon Staley.

Rank

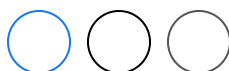
22

2 ▲

Los Angeles Rams

5-6

There's a glut of five- and six-win teams in the NFC right now, [all jockeying for](#) what will probably be two available wild-card spots (presuming the 10-1 Eagles or 8-3 Cowboys will take one), and the Rams are right back in the thick of it. It has been a strange season for sure, but the return of [Kyren Williams](#) and the unexpected [breakout game](#) from [Tyler Higbee](#) (after it was thought he might not play) [on Sunday](#) gave the offense the boost it needed. The Rams' defense had one of its finest efforts, and even against the Cardinals, that had to be a confidence-boosting performance for a group that's been put through the ringer a few times. There are two whopper road games left -- [at](#)



Rank
23**Las Vegas Raiders**

5-7

2 ▼

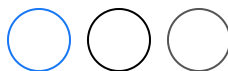
Though he was listed on the Raiders' injury report as doubtful with a knee injury, [Maxx Crosby](#) played 49 of a possible 60 defensive snaps, helping Las Vegas get out to a strong start [against the Chiefs](#) and sacking [Patrick Mahomes](#) on a big third down [early in the second half](#). The Raiders also received [a huge game](#) from [Josh Jacobs](#), who had the second-longest run of his career and topped 100 rushing yards for the second time in his past three outings. [Davante Adams](#) and [Jakobi Meyers](#) both chipped in readily. But it still wasn't enough to hang on against Kansas City, which outscored Las Vegas 31-3 over the final 40 minutes of the game. The Raiders' effort under interim head coach Antonio Pierce has been commendable. But the offense has been far too inconsistent to finish drives -- and that can't all be put on [Aidan O'Connell](#)'s head. Pierce needs to score more points if he is to secure the full-time job.

Rank
24**Tampa Bay Buccaneers**

4-7

4 ▼

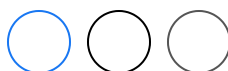
The Bucs aren't out of it, with their record at 4-7 and the Saints and Falcons both at 5-6. It's nice that Tampa has been in every game since the Week 5 bye, but the 1-6 streak has revealed some ugly trends. The defense has stopped taking the ball away and has experienced major tackling issues. Red-zone performance has been a problem on offense. Injuries haven't helped, either. [Baker Mayfield](#) made some gutsy throws [on Sunday](#), playing through [an ankle injury](#) that forced him to leave briefly, but he also had two costly turnovers that hurt his team on the road against a hungry Colts squad. The Bucs just seem to be four or five plays short of victory every week. Even with the obvious bright spots on offense, it's hard to get too excited about their chances of [getting in the Big Dance](#).

Rank
25**Chicago Bears**

It was by no means an "I'm the guy" performance from [Justin Fields](#), but give him a smidge of credit for coming back from the [two](#) fourth-quarter [fumbles](#) to lead the game-winning field goal drive on the road against a team [in the playoff hunt](#). The [36-yard shot to DJ Moore](#) was a well-schemed play and good throw on a night when Fields left a lot of meat on the bone. There were plays to be made, and he missed some big ones. Fields started the game 13-of-13 for 122 yards, making a few plays with his legs, but the Bears just couldn't find the end zone -- *all night long*. That said, [a win](#) is a win. Credit the defense for the four interceptions and the massive three-and-out after Fields' second fumble. Matt Eberflus has his team playing very hard and pretty well late in the season.

Rank	Tennessee Titans
26	4-7
1 ▲	

The Titans just know how to win games in Nashville, improving to 4-0 in non-London home contests [on Sunday](#) -- and they still have four more dates at Nissan Stadium. The playoffs almost certainly aren't [within reach](#), but Tennessee can finish strong and decide



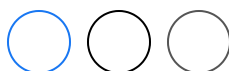
the final 30 seconds. He cooled off after that and almost got in some trouble trying to force the ball to [DeAndre Hopkins](#), but overall, Levis showed more positives than negatives, which is consistent with my season-long takeaway. He's arguably displayed more upside with the Titans than [Bryce Young](#) has with the Panthers, even if comparing the two situations is like comparing apples to kumquats.

Rank	New York Jets
27	4-7
2 ▼	

The last time the Jets traded for a quarterback from the Packers only for their season to crater, it cost people jobs. Head coach Eric Mangini was fired following his third season in 2008, and Brett Favre eventually was released after one hopeful but fruitless year in New York. The situation in present-day Jetsdom feels strangely similar. [Aaron Rodgers](#) still remains on track to return [in record time](#) from his Achilles injury, but to what end? Could he throw Robert Saleh -- in danger of logging a third straight losing season -- a lifeline? Could Rodgers somehow light a fire under this torched group? That might feel like a far-fetched proposition, with the Jets at 4-7 and almost certainly [out of the playoffs](#). Perhaps Rodgers sees a long-game purpose, rolling the momentum of a strong return into 2024, or maybe he wants to get *something* out of this campaign after the Jets sold out to cater to Rodgers' needs this past offseason. Either way, the hope of a potential Rodgers comeback is about the one big drama remaining for the Jets.

Rank	New York Giants
28	4-8
1 ▲	

The Giants finally had a player top 100 receiving yards in a game this season! All it took was 12 weeks and three different quarterbacks. [On Sunday, Jalin Hyatt crossed the century mark](#) while catching passes from [Tommy DeVito](#) against the Patriots -- scenes from August reprised in late November. The two rookies stood tall, helping deliver a second straight victory amid a season of disappointment. Even taking into account the fluctuatons at QB this year, Hyatt's production has been a bit scattershot, but he can change a game with just a few grabs. Now, the question is whether Brian Daboll sticks with the improving DeVito or goes back to [Tyrod Taylor](#), who can come off injured



reserve in Week 14. That likely will be the talk of the Week 13 bye, which is a far better scenario than most 4-8 teams face.

Rank

29

3 ▼

Washington Commanders

4-8

The remaining five games of the 2023 season will be interesting, with the fates of virtually every important figure in the franchise (save the owner) potentially at stake. Is [Sam Howell](#) the QB of the future? The team could end up in a draft position where selecting a quarterback in 2024 is possible, so even an encouraging season from Howell won't necessarily assure his place in the team's plans. Will Eric Bieniemy be part of the franchise going forward? Until we know Josh Harris' plans [for head coach Ron Rivera](#) and the front office, it's nearly impossible to say, but it wouldn't be unprecedented for a holdover coordinator to remain even if (many) others do not. There are some promising elements for a rebuild here, including Howell's presence on a rookie salary, but there is a lot to figure out in the next six months or so.

Rank

30

—

Arizona Cardinals

2-10

This was a setback in the [Kyler Murray](#) Refurbishment Project, as nothing seemed to go right for the offense Sunday [against the Rams](#) after the opening-drive touchdown. Costly penalties, constant pressure and missed (easy) connections were a problem all day. These are the types of plays that will hinder Murray's development and the Cardinals' evaluation of him in these semi-important games down the stretch. Murray threw for almost half his yards in the fourth quarter with the Rams up big, didn't really scramble and was sacked four times, twice on third down. The run game in general wasn't working, and the Cardinals' defense had no answers for [Kyren Williams](#) and the Rams' offense. This was one of Arizona's worst efforts after a fair number of competitive outings.

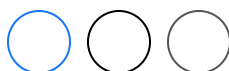
Rank

31

—

New England Patriots

2-9

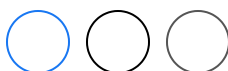


Whether Bill Belichick continues to coach in New England or not, the Patriots might end up with [a 2024 draft selection](#) high enough to consider quarterback options other than [Mac Jones](#) and [Bailey Zappe](#) next season. The current QB well has been spoiled, it appears, as the Pats sputtered away [another game](#) where the defense held its opponent to 10 points. Jones was benched (for the fourth time this season) in the second half, and after Zappe offered a ray of sunshine with a TD drive, he turned heel, throwing [a bad pick](#) into thick coverage. Maybe New England will go with Zappe down the stretch. Maybe it won't make a difference. These are Sisyphean matters at this point. A shockingly bad season has sunk further into the abyss. The Patriots are now 0-7 vs. teams outside the AFC East.

Rank	
32	Carolina Panthers
—	1-10

No one should have expected these Panthers to light up scoreboards week in and week out, but they haven't passed the 15-point mark since mid-October. Frank Reich -- whose expertise is in offense -- and [Bryce Young](#) clearly weren't making the kinds of strides one would hope for before the head coach [was dismissed on Monday](#). We're not sidestepping the talent problem; there are major limitations at receiver and on the offensive line. But even so, it's been frustrating to see the same station-to-station offense crawl up the field for one or two scoring drives and often squander a respectable defensive effort. Now Young is on to his second head coach, with yet another shift at offensive coordinator (Jim Caldwell will advise Thomas Brown, who regains the play-calling duties he had [earlier this season](#)). And Young very well could have a new combination to work with in a few months.

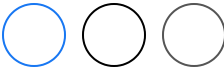
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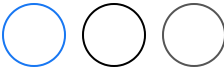
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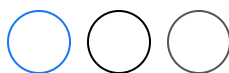
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