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Power Rankings

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NFL Power Rankings, Week 6: Eagles vault back up to No. 2, Lions hit top five, Jaguars crack top 10

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It was a tide-shifting week in the NFL, with the 49ers laying an early claim for NFC supremacy via <u>a dominant win</u> over the Cowboys. The irony here is that the only other unbeaten team in the NFL through five weeks is the Eagles, who <u>crushed the quarterback-crippled Niners</u> in the NFC Championship Game nine months ago.

Who's the better 5-0 team? That won't be officially tested until they meet in Philadelphia in Week 13, but it's hard right now to go against a San Francisco team firing on all cylinders.

We also saw some shockingly *unimpressive* performances in Week 5. Is this suddenly Bill Belichick's worst Patriots team ... ever? To find out how far the Patriots have sunk - and where the rest of the league checks in -- read on.



The First Read: Bandwagons to hop on/off following surprising Week 5; must-see showdown in Week 6

Chaos conference: Examining the crowded field of a muddied AFC through five weeks

2023 NFL fantasy football waiver wire, Week 6: RB Emari Demercado, WR Josh Downs among targets

NFL stats and records, Week 5: Dolphins continue to light up scoreboard, climb record books

2023 NFL season, Week 5: What We Learned from Raiders' win over Packers on Monday night

2023 NFL season, Week 5: What We Learned from Sunday's games

NOTE: Up/down arrows reflect movement from the <u>Week 5 Power Rankings</u>.

San Francisco 49ers
5-0

If there were <u>Brock Purdy</u> doubters still lingering, <u>Sunday night</u> should have muzzled those folks a bit. The 49ers are just clicking right now offensively, and as long as Purdy has a healthy Four Horsemen -- <u>CMC</u>, <u>Brandon Aiyuk</u>, <u>George Kittle</u> and <u>Deebo Samuel</u> -- it's going to be *lights out* against most defenses. Kyle Shanahan seemed to be having a blast, emptying the bag against a highly touted Dallas defense. But it's also time to trumpet the achievements of San Francisco's D, which hasn't missed too many beats since DeMeco Ryans left the coordinator post. The Niners lead the league in turnover differential (+7, tied with Tampa Bay) and points allowed per game (13.6). They might not be unbeatable, but it's going to take a pretty strong effort to get them right now.

Philadelphia Eagles
5-0

The Eagles are a delightfully imperfect team at a perfect 5-0 after <u>beating the Rams</u>. It's not always remarkably pretty, at least not by the standard set by the 2022 Eagles, but



Sirianni has proven he'll take almost any worthy chance presented to him, it can compensate for a lot. What kind of a team takes the ball 32 seconds before halftime at its own 25-yard line expecting to score -- and then *does*, on a "Brotherly shove," as the game clock expires? The same team that calls QB draw on third-and-9, fully knowing it will go for it on fourth down if needed. The schedule toughens considerably, though, so the execution can't remain lukewarm forever.



Two third-quarter touchdown drives -- one with Travis Kelce, one without -- helped the Chiefs get out of Minnesota with a W, even though they struggled to put the game away. Kelce's heroics aside, that might be the kind of game Kansas City will have to master this season. Outside of the thrashing of the Bears in Week 3, the other four games were one-score affairs that came down to a late possession. That's reminiscent of how the 2019 Chiefs won, battling through nine one-score games (with a 5-4 record) en route to their first Super Bowl title since 1969. They'd be fine going the blowout route instead, I am sure, and it could happen again soon, with two matchups upcoming vs. Denver. But learning to win hard-fought games in tough circumstances is never bad.

Rank 4	Miami Dolphins 4-1
2 🔺	

This wasn't <u>Tua Tagovailoa</u>'s best outing, with <u>his pick-six</u> making it appear to be a much closer game than it really was. The Dolphins' supporting cast is so good, though, that they still <u>beat the Giants comfortably</u>. <u>Tyreek Hill</u> is on pace for 2,213 receiving yards, which is almost 250 yards more than Calvin Johnson's current single-season NFL record (1,964). That's great, but the news that <u>De'Von Achane</u> (seven TDs in four games) <u>will miss multiple weeks</u> with a knee injury stings. Thankfully, the defense came up with the kind of performance on Sunday that should boost its confidence, even taking into account the star-crossed nature of the Giants' offense. Vic Fangio's bunch needed that after being worked over <u>in Week 4</u> by the Bills. Miami gets a wounded Panthers team <u>in Week 6</u>. Then the fun really starts before the Week 10 bye: at the





The Lions <u>dropped 42</u> on the Panthers *without* <u>Amon-Ra St. Brown</u> or <u>Jahmyr Gibbs</u> (and others), which only enhances what they've accomplished through Week 5. Even though it came against winless Carolina, this victory shouldn't be overlooked. Good teams take care of business against lesser teams. Doing so convincingly despite the absence of key contributors on both sides of the ball is the hallmark of a *great* team. It's OK to say it aloud -- the Lions are now in that category. They've won 12 of 15 games dating back to 2022, <u>triumphing at Arrowhead</u> and <u>Lambeau</u> this season and becoming the clear-cut NFC North faves. Even with defensive injuries mounting -- poor <u>Emmanuel Moseley</u> is the latest, having suffered a second torn ACL in <u>as many years</u> -- the Lions have a great chance to end a 32-year playoff-win drought.



I'm willing to buy a little into the notion that waiting to fly to London until Friday made it tough for the Bills to adjust to the time difference. The offense that scored 30-plus points in three straight weeks was lagging until a pair of too-little-too-late fourth-quarter TD drives. Falling like that and sustaining more injuries on defense (Matt Milano and DaQuan Jones were both lost) made this one a double gut punch. With Tre'Davious White going down the week prior, this good defense is in tough shape, even with Von Miller returning on Sunday. Getting Greg Rousseau back eventually should boost the pass rush, but the big plays allowed in coverage were troubling. I still have the Bills ahead of the Jaguars, despite the loss. Why? Because the Bills have the stronger body of work overall and could be favored in a playoff rematch, even in Jacksonville



Even with Week 1's solid convincing victory over Atlanta Lthink Sunday was the first

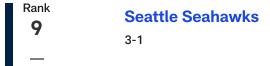


underperforming unit, frankly, prior to ringing up 474 yards and 29 first downs <u>against</u> <u>Buffalo</u>, even with <u>Trevor Lawrence</u>'s three fumbles (two lost). And I'm not ignoring the fact that he and his team have fumbled at too high a rate, and the sacks keep racking up. But getting that big-play potency back was pretty key, and it was fueled by <u>Calvin Ridley</u> and <u>Travis Etienne</u> -- just as it was meant to be. The defense has been mostly stout, but the offense had to find a little mojo.

Rank
B Dallas Cowboys
3-2

A rough loss to the Cardinals in Week 3 was followed by a laugher win against the Patriots in Week 4, then a full-on tail-whipping from the 49ers. What do we make of this team after the past three weeks? Dak Prescott had an awful night on Sunday, as did Tony Pollard, who disappeared after his first-quarter fumble. Even the fallback defense was tarred and feathered, to the point where it's fair to challenge that unit's lofty reputation. The 49ers stood up to Dallas' toughness and pushed back -- several times into the end zone. The Cowboys face old friend Kellen Moore and the Chargers in prime time this coming Monday, and you can bet that Moore took close notes on what Kyle Shanahan achieved Sunday. Will Dallas bounce back? Or limp into the Week 7 bye at 3-3?





The Seahawks floated into their Week 5 bye week with a rousing defensive performance against the Giants. If there was only one negative to racking up 11 sacks, it was that it overshadowed the improvements Seattle has made in run defense through four games. The Seahawks are allowing 1.7 yards per carry less than they did last season, when they were pushed around by opponents up front. If there's a concern in the 3-1 start, it's that they're not good enough on third downs -- on either side of the ball. But assuming Geno Smith is fine and the downfield passing game gets cooking again, the Seahawks should be in decent shape. And they don't face the vaunted 49ers until Weeks 12 and 14, so there's time to get things in order.



Sunday's loss hurt more than the <u>Week 3 stunner</u> against the Colts did, in my opinion. Sure, falling to a backup QB isn't ideal, but <u>Gardner Minshew</u> is decent, as are the Colts; plus, that game was straight-up fluky in a lot of ways. <u>Week 5?</u> The Ravens just *gave* Pittsburgh the win. They had chances to step on the Steelers' necks multiple times throughout, but dropped passes, turnovers (two <u>by Lamar Jackson</u> late) and special-teams breakdowns started the avalanche, with <u>Pickett-to-Pickens</u> finishing it. The Ravens are a good team. My suspicion is they'll snap out of whatever funk they're in and realize it. Maybe the trip <u>to London</u> will be cleansing. Or at least more cleansing than their <u>last trip overseas</u>.



Although the Week 3 loss to the Fagles is a stark reminder of what the Rucs looked like



back and like most of what we've seen from this team. Todd Bowles has quietly done an excellent job on the whole, reshaping a strong, hard-nosed defense and entrusting the offense to QB <u>Baker Mayfield</u> and offensive coordinator Dave Canales. The run game might be pretty dormant, but the defense has kept scores down enough with incredible red-zone work to give Tampa Bay chances to win most games. Can this formula continue? We'll likely find out during this fatter part of the schedule, with the next three opponents (vs. Lions, vs. Falcons, at Bills) upping the stakes.

Rank
12
Cleveland Browns
2-2

Everything about <u>Week 4</u>, from <u>Deshaun Watson</u> missing the game to the defense having its first real tough outing of the season, forced us to reevaluate this team on its Week 5 bye. San Francisco is <u>coming to town</u> Sunday, followed by road tests <u>at Indianapolis</u> and <u>Seattle</u>, and there are enough questions to wonder if this team is built to last. The lack of offensive consistency is the most pressing issue, and we just don't know if Watson and Kevin Stefanski have the magic formula. The <u>Nick Chubb</u>-less run game is a limiting factor right now, and there are concerns on the offensive line (<u>Jedrick Wills'</u> performance, a lack of depth). As good as the defense has been, it would behoove that unit to create more turnovers. This team needs all the possessions it can steal from opponents.

13 Los Angeles Chargers
2-2

The panic meter dropped after the team hit the bye at 2-2 with two straight victories. But reality sets in: The Chargers must play games in 13 straight weeks, and the remaining schedule includes the following foes: the Cowboys this coming Monday, the Chiefs in Week 7 (and Week 18), the Lions in Week 10, the Ravens in Week 12 and the Bills in Week 16. Close victories over the Vikings and Raiders don't inspire enough confidence that all is right in Chargerville heading into that stretch. The biggest worry is limiting explosive pass plays, and many of L.A.'s remaining opponents throw the ball pretty well. There's a long road ahead.

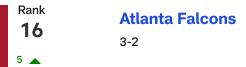


3-2

Well, *that* fixed the Saints' offensive problems, right? OK, so that might be a stretch, but it was good to see them stretch things out a bit early -- and for <u>Derek Carr</u> to hold up a week after he didn't look quite right -- against a supposedly quality Patriots defense. They went back to a more conservative approach after a while, but who can blame them? New England had basically given up by that point. When you have a defense capable of blanking (and frankly humiliating) an opponent in its home stadium, you can accept less-than-perfect play on the other side of the ball. This really was <u>a</u> good win, with myriad contributors on both sides.

Rank 15	Cincinnati Bengals
13	2-3
5 .	

You knew eventually things would start clicking offensively for the Bengals. I thought Joe Burrow might be feeling healthier after watching the way he moved on the opening-drive TD pass against Arizona. I was sure of it when he scrambled for 10 yards late in the third quarter. That was a huge development, as was Burrow continually feeding his guy, Ja'Marr Chase, with success. The defense did enough to get by, but this was no get-right outing for that unit, despite logging two INTs (one a pick-six) and three sacks. The tackling and run fits were kind of gross, which has become a bit of a chronic issue lately. The bigger test is this Sunday against Seattle, which loves to pound the ball. If the Bengals can withstand the Seahawks' rush and have another big day throwing it, they might still be in this thing.



<u>Desmond Ridder</u> delivered the performance <u>on Sunday</u> that some critics said he couldn't, which was a huge development for this team. He made several big throws, but none were bigger than <u>the 23-yarder</u> to <u>Drake London</u> with under a minute remaining -- after a low snap, and with pressure in Ridder's face. From there, the Falcons just had to



Ridder, London, <u>Kyle Pitts</u>, <u>Bijan Robinson</u> and Atlanta's underrated defense playing big roles in the victory. We'd still love for the Falcons to score more points, but they are 3-2, and aside from Tampa <u>in Week 7</u>, none of their opponents before their Week 11 bye are currently above .500. Atlanta is back in good shape to contend for the NFC South crown.

Rank 17	Indianapolis Colts
17	3-2
9 🔺	

On the one hand, things are very much looking up. The Colts have logged three wins in four games, and <u>Jonathan Taylor</u> is back with a <u>big new contract</u>. On the other hand, <u>Anthony Richardson</u>'s early-career injuries are reaching a concerning level. It's nice to have perhaps the NFL's best backup QB in <u>Gardner Minshew</u>, who has indeed been the ideal reliever. But Richardson has now suffered three different injuries in a four-game span, and the AC joint sprain in his right shoulder is <u>expected to cost him</u> a month-plus. It's a catch-22: Richardson's running might be his most dangerous quality, but the more he runs, the more he's exposed to injury. If the Colts can keep pace over the next five games, they'll still be in decent shape to contend for the AFC South title. Shane Steichen deserves early Coach of the Year sentiment for what he's done so far.



Even after the slow start offensively, including a bad Jordan Love interception, it still felt like the Packers had every shot to win the game. Because they did. And the second-half script started out perfectly: First, the pretty pick by Rudy Ford; then the AJ Dillon drive, where the 247-pound back just willed the Packers into the end zone. The defense hung tough, even if it did allow the go-ahead touchdown drive. But Love really struggled to connect with his receivers most of the night and finished with three back-breaking interceptions. The most concerning part: The ball never really came close to reaching Love's intended target on any of the three picks; they were just poor decisions and/or throws. The execution has to sharpen.



Rank 19

New York Jets

2-3

The Jets took the pitch count off of <u>Breece Hall</u>, and *boom:* He ran for a career-high 177 yards and looked incredible in the open field <u>against Denver</u>. The defense was a little hot and cold, but almost everything after halftime was terrific. That unit has the potential to be more consistently dominant, and statements like the late <u>scoop-and-score</u> can help elevate the swagger. <u>Zach Wilson</u> does a lot of little things well, sometimes very well. But two mistakes in high-leverage situations cost the Jets points against the Broncos, as did the other red-zone breakdowns. It wasn't a discouraging performance, but New York must find ways to get <u>Garrett Wilson</u> more involved. Hall and *peak* Garrett Wilson make the Jets dangerous.

Pittsburgh Steelers
3-2

I can't spare the details of how the Steelers actually arrived at 3-2, with some wild swings of play -- and, you know, a -31 point differential. You have to admire the team's toughness and creativity, finding inventive ways to win games. But I don't imagine that this bye week will include a getaway to Cabo. My guess is Pittsburgh knows there's a lot of work to be done. Nine days ago, Mike Tomlin was talking about <u>big changes</u>. Yet here they are, atop the AFC North -- for now.



Rank
21
Houston Texans
2-3

The Texans did almost everything right <u>against the Falcons</u>, winning the turnover battle (2-0) and committing fewer penalties (7-5), with <u>C.J. Stroud</u> leading <u>a rousing TD drive</u> to take the lead with less than two minutes left on the road. That Stroud has begun his pro career throwing an NFL-record 186 straight passes without an INT and hasn't taken a sack since Week 2 is frankly incredible. If you want to gripe about Houston's defense giving up the game-winning drive, I won't blame you. But given the high level Stroud is playing at, it was disappointing the offense couldn't muster better than 4-for-13 on third downs or 1-for-3 on red-zone possessions. Maybe DeMeco Ryans is regretting kicking a field goal early on fourth-and-1. Either way, this team is farther along than I imagined it would be.

22 Los Angeles Rams
2-3

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recent games, despite an OT road win and two close losses to teams that entered the season as legit Super Bowl contenders. It feels like Los Angeles has not put together a complete game since Week 1, even with spurts of good football. Matthew Stafford has battled, the receiving corps looks to be in great shape and the defense routinely keeps opponents' scores under control. So why can't the Rams finish more drives and win more of these close games?



The Titans' seesaw season continued with <u>another road loss</u> following Week 4's <u>home victory</u>; they're now 0-3 outside Nashville. If there was a shocking takeaway from Sunday, it was that Indianapolis bullied Tennessee and kind of beat Mike Vrabel at his own game. Losing both lines of scrimmage while also losing the turnover battle *and* going 1-for-4 in the red zone is a tried-and-true path to defeat. I'd argue it was less stunning that <u>Derrick Henry</u> and the ground game stalled; we've seen that happen before. But what about the Titans' vaunted run defense? It was steamrolled by the Colts, who almost netted more rushing yards (193) in this game than Tennessee allowed in the previous three games combined (211).



Jimmy Garoppolo's struggles threatened to give the game away, but the defense stood as tall as it has in a while -- and it wasn't *all* Maxx Crosby, even though he was exceptional, per usual. Big plays also came from some off-the-radar suspects. The Raiders had one interception on the season entering Week 5. Robert Spillane had one in his career before Monday. So it figures that Big Game Bob snagged two Jordan Love passes, even if those only led to three Raiders points. Amik Robertson's end-zone pick in the final minute finished it off, with just enough help from the offense in key spots. Garoppolo's nightmarish third quarter will haunt me until next week, but the Raiders



Rank 25

Minnesota Vikings

1-4

They've lost eight fumbles and allowed every single opponent they've faced to score first, which at least partially explains how they're sitting at 1-4. So, do we take any solace from the fact that they were competitive against the Chiefs? It's very hard to when Justin Jefferson had a tough game and left with a hamstring injury, and it's even harder when the script plays out similarly to previous losses. A fumble on the first scrimmage play of the game, which no doubt was a point of emphasis all week in practice from Kevin O'Connell and his staff. ... Clock and game management errors. ... Offensive and defensive failures at key moments in a winnable game. That's a lot to clean up before facing the Bears on the road. And now the Vikings must move forward without their best player for at least the next four contests, as Jefferson is hitting injured reserve.

26 Washington Commanders
2-3

Winnable games lie ahead, but there are some really concerning trends that must end before harboring those thoughts. The high-profile defense is being gashed by big plays. Sam Howell is taking way too many hits. And the rookie class has provided little help, with first-round CB Emmanuel Forbes Jr. suffering through another tough outing last week. Arguably the most fixable of the issues is the defensive front. Dominating more and playing with more discipline on the D-line would help alleviate the secondary concerns. The Commanders' celebrated group of QB hunters is racking up pressures and sacks, but it hasn't taken over games enough. That unit is at least part of why Washington's defense has taken a step backward.

Arizona Cardinals
1-4

This was a tough loss to swallow, because you knew the Cardinals were getting a



rough day of the season, and the defense allowed a <u>Tee Higgins</u>-less offense to continue to hammer the same play over and over: <u>Joe Burrow</u> to <u>Ja'Marr Chase</u>. The secondary situation is a bit of a mess: Arizona was already down <u>Budda Baker</u> (on IR) and lost <u>Jalen Thompson</u> midway through the game. The Bengals picked on CBs <u>Marco Wilson</u> and <u>Antonio Hamilton</u> (who <u>seems to have replaced</u> rookie <u>Kei'Trel Clark</u> as a starter) repeatedly. Hamilton also got banged up Sunday, and it feels like the Cardinals are having to patch holes on the back end every week. Not to mention, bell-cow RB <u>James Conner</u> is expected to <u>miss multiple weeks</u> with a knee injury.

Rank 28	Denver Broncos 1-4
_	

There were plenty of things worth pointing fingers at after the <u>loss to the Jets</u>, but it starts with Sean Payton. After all, Payton put the focus on himself with <u>preseason comments</u> that clearly played a role in <u>fueling the Jets</u> on Sunday. Was it arrogant? Meant to shield his players? Whatever it was, it has backfired tremendously in Payton's 1-4 start in Denver. That the Broncos reasonably could be 3-2 (and unreasonably, 4-1) is no solace when one loss came <u>by 50 points</u>. There have been too many self-inflicted errors to call this team a wolf in sheep's clothing. The offense went ice cold most of the second half against New York, and the run defense was chewed up once more. Back to square one.



The last two weeks have been the darkest stretch for this franchise in *quite* some time. Seeing Bill Belichick punt on fourth-and-3 from the Saints' 40-yard line in a 24-0 game in Foxborough was shocking. One of the greatest coaches in football history just seemed defeated. Two weeks in a row, the Patriots have had to bench <u>Mac Jones</u> for his own good. The season has gone from concerning to depressing, and I have very little hope that a banged-up defense is somehow going to come to the rescue. Until further notice, New England can safely be called one of the worst teams in the NFL, which is just strange to type. The fear factor is long gone.



Rank
30
Chicago Bears
1-4

Thursday's <u>rousing victory</u> was a bolt out the blue, but it did continue some of the offensive gains made in most of the <u>loss to the Broncos</u>, so there's evidence that things are developing on that side of the ball. <u>Justin Fields</u> now has enjoyed back-to-back banner games, and <u>DJ Moore</u>'s emergence gives Chicago a tangible strength. That said, the offensive line and backfield have issues, and the defense still needs to make strides, even after a mostly good performance at Washington. The good news is that the Bears have two straight home games against teams they can match up with (<u>Vikings</u> and <u>Raiders</u>) and they should get healthier in the secondary, with <u>Eddie Jackson</u>, <u>Jaylon Johnson</u> and <u>Kyler Gordon</u> set to return at some point.





I feel badly for <u>Joshua Ezeudu</u>, who was <u>apologizing for allowing a pummeling</u> of his quarterback (again) on Sunday. There's no way it's on one guy, especially not a 2022 third-round pick playing out of position at left tackle. But that's the state of the Giants' offensive line now, with the entire group having been spun through the blender with injuries and ineffectiveness. And the sack Ezeudu surrendered -- one of seven allowed by New York on Sunday, after it gave up 11 <u>in Week 4</u> -- did force <u>Daniel Jones</u> out with a neck injury. Injuries have ravaged the Giants' offense, and we're only in Week 6.

Quick, someone put <u>Darren Waller</u> in a bubble. This is awful.

Carolina Panthers

0-5

Anyone who took solace in the fact that the Panthers actually led in each of their first four losses was forced to admit after the fifth defeat that they were trying too hard. First, the bad news: This team isn't making the playoffs. No 0-5 team ever has, and Carolina gets the Dolphins in Miami this week. Now, the worse news: The Panthers don't own their first-round pick in the 2024 NFL Draft, which would be the first overall pick at the moment, and the quarterback they traded that pick to draft this year, Bryce Young, is struggling. He's turned the ball over at least once in each of his four starts, has taken 12 sacks and is averaging 5.2 yards per attempt. The Panthers would surely like to see more from him -- and quickly.

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