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## Power Rankings

Presented By

# NFL Power Rankings, Week 12: Eagles stay at No. 1, while Chiefs slip; Broncos continue steady climb

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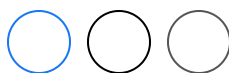


As we close in on Thanksgiving, it's time to start clearing our plates a bit.

We're approaching the time when teams start to be mathematically eliminated from the postseason, but just because 1-9 Carolina hasn't yet been officially knocked out doesn't mean I'm expecting a run any time now.

It's a different story with the four-, five- and six-win teams -- a subset that includes more than half the NFL currently. Those are the teams I'm really talking about. Some are very much in the [playoff race](#). Others are facing dire reality.

[Week 11](#) began Thursday night with the Bengals [dropping](#) to 5-5 and [Joe Burrow](#) being [lost for the season](#). Cincinnati's 5-5, so all hope isn't lost, but ... let's be realistic: It's not looking great. Then Sunday, the Jets fell to 4-6 (in 14th place in the AFC), with [Zach Wilson](#) being [benched](#). Maybe [Aaron Rodgers](#) can take [all the time](#) he needs to rest his Achilles now. The 4-6 Chargers have their quarterback, but they're in the same boat:



On the flip side, the desperate Bills' [win over the Jets](#) saved their season for now, with Buffalo still very much in it at 6-5. And how about those barnstorming Broncos, winners of four straight to get to 5-5? Those who buried them following the [70-20 loss to Miami](#) or when they reached 1-5 are looking silly now, as Denver and Indianapolis have outside chances to make the postseason. Also, you can't slam the door on the 4-6 Rams and Packers right now.

But after [Week 12](#)? Chances are, I'll be able to lop a few more teams off my list of actual contenders. While that might not square up perfectly with a [week of thanks](#) and giving, it's the cold dish of reality served annually at this time of year in the NFL.

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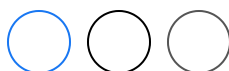
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**NOTE:** Up/down arrows reflect movement from [the Week 11 Power Rankings](#).

Rank	<b>Philadelphia Eagles</b>
<b>1</b>	9-1
—	

It was neither easy nor pretty, but the Eagles overcame a 10-point deficit to [defeat the Chiefs](#) by winning the second half in all three phases. The offense had very little going early outside of [D'Andre Swift](#) ground gains and a few shots to [DeVonta Smith](#). But on a night when [A.J. Brown](#) had one catch and might have been [responsible](#) for [Jalen Hurts'](#) interception, Philadelphia delivered two crucial TD drives in the second half. Hurts [ran](#)



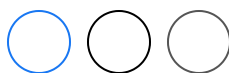
spot, giving up 10 points in a pre-halftime blitz, but after that, it was lights out. Twice in the fourth quarter, the Chiefs drove well into Philly territory, and twice the Eagles held them without points. And don't forget [Britain Covey's](#) return yards, especially his [26-yarder](#) that kick-started the third-quarter TD drive. This was a statement victory, style points be damned.

Rank	<b>Baltimore Ravens</b>
<b>2</b>	8-3
1 ▲	

The [Mark Andrews injury](#) is a cruel twist of fate for a team that, in spite of Week 10's [meltdown loss to Cleveland](#), still has looked like a Super Bowl-caliber group more often than not this season. The Pro Bowl tight end had been their rock, a steady source of production. That's gone, but Baltimore's hopes aren't. TE [Isaiah Likely](#) has been a bit of a ghost this year in the pass game (nine catches in 11 games), but he looked like an emerging weapon last season, so I am not discounting him. Plus, after [Odell Beckham Jr. 's breakout game](#) and touchdowns [from Nelson Agholor](#) and [Rashod Bateman](#) (not to mention, a [Zay Flowers](#) TD that was called back), [Lamar Jackson](#) really does have an array of pass catchers to lean on.

Rank	<b>Detroit Lions</b>
<b>3</b>	8-2
1 ▲	

[Jared Goff](#) threw three picks Sunday [against the Bears](#), though two of them were a little fluky, as [one was tipped](#) and another spawned from contact that [might have been defensive pass interference](#). Still, Goff also had two *other* passes that easily could have been picked, including one that might have been a long pick-six by Chicago CB [Jaylon Johnson](#). It felt like the Bears threw way more pressure at the Lions than expected, which threw off the rhythm of the passing game. But unlike some others, I saw this win as a *positive* for Detroit. Almost everything went against the Lions in this game. They were minus-three in turnovers and trailed by 12 points with less than four minutes left ... yet they found a way to win. This should be the type of game that makes us respect Detroit *more*.

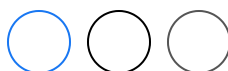




After two impressive performances, including Sunday's [win over Tampa Bay](#), this team looks ready for a season-defining stretch from Thanksgiving through Christmas. The 49ers have [a pair of games](#) against the reeling Seahawks sandwiched around [the NFC Championship Game rematch](#) in Philly. After that, they head on the road [to face a revived Cardinals team](#) before [hosting the Ravens](#) in what could be a late-season Super Bowl preview in Santa Clara. [Brock Purdy](#) has six TDs and 11 incomplete passes over the past two games. The defense has returned to form, allowing the Jaguars and Bucs to total 508 combined yards and forcing six turnovers against them, although the [season-ending injury](#) to [Talanoa Hufanga](#) is a big one. Still, this team is humming again with its nearly annual autumn heat wave. Healthy Kyle Shanahan teams have been hard to beat in November and December.

Rank	<b>Kansas City Chiefs</b>
<b>5</b>	7-3
3 ▼	

You can't turn the ball over twice in the red zone and drop umpteen passes -- each one more crushing than the last -- and expect to win against a team as good as the Eagles. The Chiefs' defense turned in a first-class effort, even if it wore down a bit late, and [Patrick Mahomes](#) and [Isiah Pacheco](#) made enough plays. This [loss](#) is going to sting, if for no other reason than it served as a reminder that the Chiefs' pass catchers -- even [Travis Kelce](#) on Monday -- have been a net disappointment this season. Kelce had a drop and [a fumble](#). [Justin Watson](#) had at least three drops, including one on Mahomes' [final attempt](#). But if [Marquez Valdes-Scantling](#) just catches [that late deep ball](#), perhaps none of the other miscues matter. The Chiefs were the better team on Monday until they weren't.



Rank

6

**Miami Dolphins**

7-3

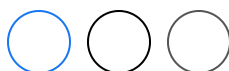
The offense moved the ball Sunday but struggled to score, failing to reach the end zone in eight drives (not counting the first- and second-half enders) to close out the game. Miami had three giveaways, plus two other quasi-turnovers (missed field goal and on downs), and lost RB [De'Von Achane](#) to injury [again](#) after just three snaps. The Dolphins also had a scare when [Tyreek Hill](#) briefly left the game, although they scored a touchdown with him in the locker room and Hill returned later. This [win](#) was more about Miami's defense, which forced three second-half INTs and shut out the Raiders after halftime. [Jalen Ramsey](#) has been *more* than advertised, [picking off](#) two [deep shots](#) from [Aidan O'Connell](#), including the game-clincher in the end zone late.

Rank

7

**Dallas Cowboys**

7-3



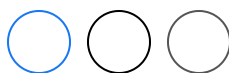
This was a businesslike win [over Carolina](#), and [two](#) home [games](#) await before the big [rematch with Philadelphia](#) (which is also at Jerry World). The trick, obviously, is to avoid [a Cardinals type of loss](#). But the Cowboys have been so dominant in Dallas this season, they figure to have the edge over both the Commanders on Thanksgiving and the suddenly-slumping Seahawks coming in on a short week, with [Geno Smith](#) and [Kenneth Walker III](#) currently ailing. [Dak Prescott](#) is playing his best football. The pass-catching group is dangerous. [Tony Pollard](#) is humming again. The defensive front seven's had too many games with poor run fits, but the group's pressuring and covering well. There are times this looks like a Super Bowl team. We might not find out until *Philly: Round 2*, with the 'Boys likely needing to win that massive showdown if they want to steal the division.

Rank	
8	<b>Jacksonville Jaguars</b>
—	7-3

This was exactly the kind of bounce-back game you wanted to see from the Jaguars after getting [mauled](#) at home by the 49ers. And it was exactly what [Trevor Lawrence](#) and [Calvin Ridley](#) needed, too. Did you realize they entered Sunday with nine TD passes and two TD receptions, respectively? While that connection has been erratic this season, it was brilliant [against the Titans](#). Lawrence hit Ridley on [two TD passes](#) and ran in [two more scores](#), turning in his cleanest, most prolific game of the season. The Jaguars' defense also had a fine game, allowing just 82 first-half yards and not yielding a scoring drive until they were up 27-0. The 49ers game made us question Jacksonville's credentials, but this victory helped answer some of those lingering worries.

Rank	
9	<b>Cleveland Browns</b>
—	7-3

The Browns passed their first test A.D. ([After Deshaun](#)), although it wasn't easy, as they failed to gain more than 19 yards on a play all game, ultimately edging past the Steelers, [13-10](#). [Dorian Thompson-Robinson](#) was far cleaner in this game than he was in his first start back [in Week 4](#), leading field goal drives at the ends of both halves, connecting on 10 passes combined over those two marches. The fifth-round rookie also





and a defense that can take over games, the Browns have the look of a team no one wants to face in cold-weather months. Cleveland is improbably 7-3, and there's a clear path to the postseason ahead.

Rank

**10****Houston Texans**

6-4

—

[C.J. Stroud](#) threw [a first-half interception](#), but in spite of the pressure the Cardinals were throwing at him, Stroud was generally rolling through the first three quarters, guiding the Texans on three touchdown drives of 60-plus yards. That's the level we've come to expect from the precocious rookie, who has mostly been lights out -- especially when the lights are brightest. So that's why it was so shocking to see Stroud implode in the fourth quarter, continually leaving the back door cracked open for the Cardinals to steal one. Houston's defense finished the game with three straight fourth-down stops after Arizona had crossed midfield. It was a good team victory, which will be DeMeco Ryans' bottom line here. It's good to know the Texans can survive a spell and finish off a game where Stroud briefly plays like a rookie.

Rank

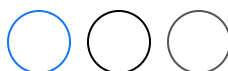
**11****Buffalo Bills**

6-5

3 ▲

When a team takes a drastic measure, such as [a midseason coordinator firing](#), what it *can't* do is come out and look worse in the very next game. Thankfully, new offensive coordinator Joe Brady's debut was a success, overseeing the Bills' most impressive offensive showing in a few games. It wasn't the potency we saw from Buffalo in Weeks 2 through 4, but very good overall, even if things warmed up slowly. The Bills certainly will take [the 32-6 win](#) over the Jets, as they're still [in the playoff race](#) at 6-5, but the upcoming schedule is no joke. The true tests will come on the road [against the Eagles](#) and [Chiefs](#) over the next two games, with a Week 13 bye in between. Win those, and Buffalo can make a real statement. But that's quite the ask from a team that hasn't won a road game since [Week 3 at the Commanders](#). A *lot* has changed since then.

Rank

**Seattle Seahawks**



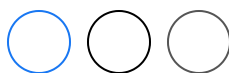
Everything since the Week 5 bye has been a struggle for Seattle, with [Geno Smith](#) getting hurt on Sunday during one of his better recent games. And unlike in Smith's pre-bye injury game [against the Giants](#) back in Week 4, backup [Drew Lock](#) offered little help in his showing [against the Rams](#). Then Smith returned and almost pulled off the late comeback, but you have to [make your field goals](#). Head coach Pete Carroll [is optimistic](#) that Smith will play against the 49ers [on Thursday night](#), which is good news, but the injury timing couldn't have been much worse on Sunday. Also poorly timed: the Seahawks' 12 penalties for 130 yards, even if the Rams tried their best to match them. The two most painful flags came on late third-down stops: the DPI against [Devon Witherspoon](#) -- a call Carroll [took issue with](#) -- and the illegal use of hands penalty against [Riq Woolen](#). Both gave the Rams first downs, and they scored on both drives. That's how a sneaky-big game slipped away.

Rank

**13****Pittsburgh Steelers**

6-4

The Steelers announced [the firing](#) of much-maligned offensive coordinator Matt Canada on Tuesday. Not exactly shocking news, considering Pittsburgh's well-documented offensive issues continued in [a 13-10 loss](#) to the [Deshaun Watson](#)-less Browns on Sunday. We'll see if this move jump-starts the Steelers' attack, but I still feel like the time is nigh to stop making excuses for [Kenny Pickett](#). Yeah, yeah -- I might have been [the voice](#) of [reason](#) before, but I am slowly seeing the light of the dark side. Struggling to get much of anything going in Year 2, Pickett just hasn't been seeing it or feeling it. We all caught the complaints before Canada's firing about the offensive design doing Pickett a disservice, but that felt similar to the [Mac Jones](#) excuses we heard in chorus last season, vis-à-vis Matt Patricia. (How's that working out this year in New England?) Even if the young quarterbacks' situations are different, the criticism is the same: justified. The Steelers have gone 6-4, often in spite of what the passing game has done. Maybe the play-caller shakeup helps, but it seems like the problem runs deeper here. Can [Jaylen Warren](#) play QB? Winnable games lie ahead, and the playoffs are a reasonable goal, but can the Steelers actually threaten anyone if they get into the tournament?



Rank

**14****Minnesota Vikings**

6-5

1 ▲

They had an opportunity to steal one in Denver, but they could only manage three points over their final four possessions, turning it over three times (INT, fumble, downs) in the final 18 minutes of the game. [Joshua Dobbs](#) had some moments early, and the run-game duo of [Alexander Mattison](#) and [Ty Chandler](#) was potent, but Mattison and Dobbs combined for three turnovers. Likewise, the defense took and gave, holding Denver to five field goals before allowing the game-winning TD drive in the final minutes. Kevin O'Connell has done a tremendous job with this team, and the Vikings remain firmly [in the playoff race](#) for now, but this was one that got away. They would have been 5-1 on the road had they pulled it off Sunday night.

Rank

**15****New Orleans Saints**

5-5

1 ▲

Your NFC South leaders are a curious lot. On paper, the Saints look pretty good -- and maybe the most likely team to finish first. But they're also surprisingly underwhelming compared to other contenders. New Orleans' wins have come against [Ryan Tannehill](#) (injured/benched), [Bryce Young](#) (struggling rookie), [Mac Jones](#) ([benched?](#) benchable?), [Gardner Minshew](#) (backup/lower-end starter) and [Tyson Bagent](#) (undrafted rookie backup). If the defense isn't quite as good as we thought -- especially against the run -- maybe the Saints can crank up a passing game that should be better. I'd like to see more targets for [Rashid Shaheed](#), and maybe the bye week gave [Juwan Johnson](#) more time to reacclimate after his midseason calf injury.

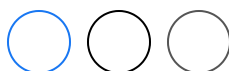
Rank

**16****Indianapolis Colts**

5-5

1 ▲

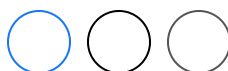
All of a sudden, if you look closely, the Colts making the playoffs isn't some pipe dream. At 5-5, they have work to do, but they're [currently](#) the second AFC team out of the playoffs behind only Buffalo on the bubble. Indianapolis comes out of the bye fresh to



suddenly don't look so daunting: [at Tennessee](#) and [Cincinnati](#). [Will Levis](#) has come back to earth after [his strong debut](#), with the Titans losing three straight, and [Joe Burrow's season-ending injury](#) sure makes the trip to Cincy easier. I predict [Jonathan Taylor](#) takes this team and carries it on his back, with [Zack Moss](#) as his brilliant understudy. If those two backs dominate, minimizing the [Gardner Minshew](#) factor a bit, the Colts could ride right into the postseason.

Rank	<b>Denver Broncos</b>
<b>17</b>	5-5
3 ▲	

In the past three games, Denver's defense has forced 12 turnovers -- that's more takeaways that six teams have produced *all season*. In related news, the Broncos are suddenly rolling, winning four straight after the 1-5 start. It should be noted the run defense has been a problem in the past couple games, but they're making it work. The offense moved the ball fairly well [against the Vikings](#), and though settling for five field goals (four in the red zone) will sometimes come back to bite a team, Denver finished it off with the late TD drive. It was [Russell Wilson](#) to [Courtland Sutton](#) again, their fifth straight game connecting for a touchdown and the second straight that they [did so in spectacular fashion](#). Four of the final seven games are on the road, but the Broncos have completely turned their season around.



Rank

18

6 ▼

**Cincinnati Bengals**

5-5

No matter how you spin it, [the Joe Burrow injury](#) is a near-fatal blow to the Bengals. Because even if [Jake Browning](#) is Kurt Warner 2.0, Cincinnati's still just 5-5 right now, in last place in a very competitive division with bad tiebreakers (0-3 vs. the AFC North, 1-5 vs. all AFC teams) and a [very tough schedule](#) with no gimme games left. On top of that, we don't know when WR [Tee Higgins](#) might be ready to go, and the banged-up defense has taken a step backward in the past two games, allowing 949 yards combined. A season that began with Super Bowl aspirations is suddenly on the brink. Browning handled himself OK in relief [on Thursday](#), and it will be a great story if he shines, but Cincy has ample work ahead.

Rank

19

1 ▼

**Los Angeles Chargers**

4-6

It's time to wonder if this team will ever break through under Brandon Staley. The Chargers have a talented and fairly balanced roster, but they're 4-6 this season (despite outscoring opponents by 21) and 23-21 overall under Staley -- and his lackluster defense has been a big reason why the Bolts have struggled. Five of this season's six losses have come by three points or fewer, and Los Angeles has experienced a late-game breakdown -- usually on defense -- in each one. That said, poor red-zone execution by the *offense* was probably the biggest reason why the Chargers [lost at Green Bay](#). That had been one of the few things they'd excelled at. Not on Sunday. L.A. went just 1-for-4 in the red area on Sunday, with two big drops [by Keenan Allen](#) and a fumble [by Austin Ekeler](#). Rookie [Quentin Johnston](#) also dropped what [could have been a 70-yard touchdown pass](#) in the final 30 seconds, sealing the Bolts' fate. More pain and shame.

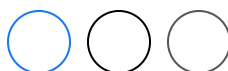
Rank

20

1 ▼

**Tampa Bay Buccaneers**

4-6



After a good showing [against the Titans](#), Tampa Bay's defense had a humbling outing on [Sunday](#). The unit was picked apart by [Brock Purdy](#), spared a bit by the 49ers going 2-for-4 in the red zone and 4-for-10 on third downs. But the Buccaneers allowed 400-plus yards for the fourth time in five games and didn't force a turnover for only the second time all season. The secondary was roasted for seven completions of 15 or more yards, including a [76-yard TD](#) and [catches of 40](#) and [37](#). [Jamel Dean](#) was injured on the long touchdown, one of three starting Bucs defenders to be hurt in the game, along with CB [Carlton Davis III](#) and LB [Lavonte David](#). QB [Baker Mayfield](#) hung tough, but he turned the ball over twice deep in San Francisco territory. Tampa Bay is still in [the NFC South race](#), but lost ground with the setback and two divisional foes on bye.

Rank

21

Las Vegas Raiders

5-6

Antonio Pierce suffered his [first loss](#) as interim coach, but the Raiders fought tooth and nail until the end and had plenty of shots to take the game in the second half. The Dolphins kept letting the Raiders hang around, but three [Aidan O'Connell](#) picks and a fourth-down stop after halftime did Las Vegas in. This is where the team is most vulnerable, when it needs the offense to take a big drive down the field and close it out. The defense, however, has kept up its end of the bargain for a few weeks now. The Raiders allowed 422 yards, with [Tyreek Hill](#) carving them up for a half, but Las Vegas matched Miami's three takeaways and kept the game close. At 5-6, the Raiders are running out of time, but give Pierce credit for keeping the team highly competitive.

Rank

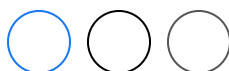
22

Green Bay Packers

4-6

4 ▲

Here we go again? The 2022 Packers sat in the very same seat this year's team occupies now, at 4-6 with a possible path to the postseason. Does it feel likely after an emotional win [over the Chargers](#)? Well, it does when you see that Green Bay is the first team out of the playoff field [on the NFC side](#), and the Vikings' [loss to the Broncos](#) didn't hurt. Believe it not, the Packers might even be able to get in with losses in the next two



over the Lions is really their best way to kick-start a run, which they couldn't finish last season with [Aaron Rodgers](#). Is [Jordan Love](#), who is playing his best ball of the season, capable? If he can somehow rally this team into the playoffs, the narrative on him will dramatically change.

Rank

23

1 ▲

Atlanta Falcons

4-6

Head coach Arthur Smith's decision to [turn back to Desmond Ridder](#) seems like the right move, but that doesn't guarantee it will work out. Ridder led four game-winning drives and appeared to be making some real progress earlier this season. He was his own worst enemy at times, though, whether he was taking sacks, throwing interceptions or fumbling the ball away. It feels like Ridder is often too tightly wound, and that might be a coaching issue. Yes, he's being asked at times to operate as a caretaker, but he's been better in got-to-have-it situations. This is a ground-based team, but taking some early-game play-action shots to [Drake London](#) and [Kyle Pitts](#) could do an offense good. Might even build the quarterback's confidence a bit, too.

Rank

24

3 ▲

Los Angeles Rams

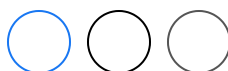
4-6

Down nine points in the fourth quarter at home, the Rams saved their scant playoff hopes with two scoring drives in the final eight minutes, a [huge interception](#) and some quality breath-holding on [Jason Myers' missed 55-yarder](#) in the waning seconds. This game, like the [OT winner](#) in Indy earlier this season, was a reminder that the Rams have a pretty darned good coach. Sean McVay hasn't had anything close to a full deck to play with, and even this season's sunniest projections always carried a measure of doubt with this team. A lot of that doubt surfaced during the three-game losing streak, along with [Matthew Stafford's](#) injury. But Sunday, the Rams scrapped their way to a [season-saving win](#) over a division foe -- and, at 4-6, they aren't as far out of the [playoff chase](#) as you might assume.

Rank

25

New York Jets



Robert Saleh benched [Zach Wilson](#) in a blowout, inserted [Tim Boyle](#) (who was worse) and said on Monday that Boyle [would start against Miami](#) this week in the ["Black Friday" game](#). Whether Boyle ends up starting one game or for the rest of the season, he's likely to struggle if the Jets' blocking continues to be horrific. And though Saleh's defense kept the Jets in Sunday's game for a half, I thought [Sauce Gardner](#) hurt his team. His hold in the end zone helped set up a Bills TD, and what looked like a frustration penalty -- unnecessary roughness for suplexing [Stefon Diggs](#) after the whistle had blown -- didn't help. Neither did Gardner's decision to undercut [Josh Allen's](#) pass to [Khalil Shakir](#) that ended up an [81-yard score](#). Basically, nothing is working well now, and the season is slipping away.

Rank

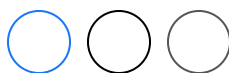
26

3 ▼

Washington Commanders

4-7

The Commanders have delivered one home victory, way back in Week 1 [against the Cardinals](#). That can't be what new owner Josh Harris wants to see, and it had head coach Ron Rivera answering questions [about his status](#) after an embarrassing [home](#)





threw three ghastly interceptions, the last of which was run back 56 yards for a [soul-crushing touchdown](#). If Rivera is to stop the bleeding, it's going to require some pretty big developments, and the Commanders visit the Cowboys [on Thanksgiving](#), then [host the Dolphins](#).

Rank

**27**

2 ▼

**Tennessee Titans**

3-7

Mike Vrabel's [job security is being questioned](#) after three straight losses. Vrabel is 51-41 as a head coach and has two postseason victories. I believe many teams would *love* to have him as head coach. But the Titans are now 3-14 over their past 17 games dating back to last season, when they were 7-3 entering Week 12 but dropped seven straight to hand the division to Jacksonville. It looks like Tennessee will miss the [playoffs](#) again following [Sunday's loss](#), and the lack of talent on the roster appears to be a big reason why. If the Titans lose seven straight this year, will Vrabel be able to keep his job? This offseason, the Titans are projected to have [more than \\$100 million in cap space](#) and plenty of draft ammo, so Vrabel will have motivation to try to rally [Will Levis](#) and Tennessee's defense to stay competitive.

Rank

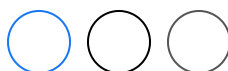
**28**

—

**Chicago Bears**

3-8

Sunday's performance offered virtually everything a Bears fan could have wanted to see from [Justin Fields](#) in his first game back from a thumb injury, with the third-year QB leading six scoring drives and playing mostly terrific football. His [TD pass](#) to [DJ Moore](#) was an absolute beauty, and Fields was a monster on the ground (mostly on designed runs), rushing for 108 yards. When he converted that third-and-14 in the fourth quarter, I assumed the Bears would go on to win, but then they drained just 26 seconds of clock on a three-and-out as Fields *just* missed the knockout punch late. The [strip-sack of Fields](#) in the final seconds also marred what was a pretty good day for a scorned Chicago offensive line, too. The Bears have come a long way, but they still have to be



Rank

29

2 ▲

**New York Giants**

3-8

[Sunday's victory](#) had to feel pretty good to Brian Daboll. The season has been an utter disaster, befallen by a rash of injuries, with the prior two losses featuring some [sideline incidents](#) and bickering among the players. That's never a good look, and it was nowhere to be found Sunday as the Giants' defense turned in arguably its best performance of the season, holding the Commanders to 19 points and forcing five turnovers, with a sixth one coming on special teams. Most importantly, the Giants' best defenders came to play after their unit had no answers the prior two games. Now Big Blue [hosts the wayward Patriots](#) in a winnable game and could enter the bye on a two-game win streak.

Rank

30

1 ▼

**Arizona Cardinals**

2-9

It's clear that while the Cardinals were a plucky team early in the season, they're suddenly pretty dangerous with [Kyler Murray](#) back, even if they couldn't finish off a fourth-quarter drive in [Sunday's loss at Houston](#). They might even win two or three more games down the stretch, as Jonathan Gannon -- come hell or high water -- reminded us on Sunday that he's going to absolutely [go for it on fourth downs](#) and play to win every game. The defense was mostly lost in the first half, but Gannon's group was pretty terrific after that, shutting down [C.J. Stroud](#) and the Texans despite losing three key defenders during the game: [Kyzir White](#) (headed to injured reserve), [Leki Fotu](#) (who had a great game) and [Antonio Hamilton](#) (on [his INT](#)). This is a fun team to keep an eye on now.

Rank

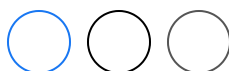
31

1 ▼

**New England Patriots**

2-8

Maybe [Mac Jones](#) keeps his job, [maybe he doesn't](#). But it would be fascinating to consider the Patriots' three other options. Yes, *three*. [Bailey Zappe](#) is the obvious Plan



The [bizarre late-game pick against the Colts](#) might not have helped his chances. But don't forget the Pats also have [Will Grier](#) (remember him?) as the third QB, plus [Malik Cunningham](#), who took QB and WR snaps in the preseason. If it's not Jones, I'd be fascinated to see Grier get a look. He had two forgettable starts for Carolina in 2019 and hasn't played in the regular season since. But Grier has hung around and had some big preseason performances, even if he's known for taking too many sacks. There's no magic elixir on the bench, but a change could be healthy.

Rank

**32****Carolina Panthers**

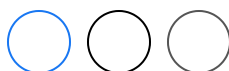
1-9

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If you want to win with [Bryce Young](#) right now, everything has to be pretty perfect. The offense must play turnover-free ball -- or have the defense extract more net takeaways. Carolina must play disciplined, ball-control football. You can see that's what the Panthers want to do, but some bad first-half penalties against Dallas threw a wrench into those plans. Young showed some nice things on the long, patient TD drive in the third quarter. But as soon as the Cowboys hit the gas pedal again, Young came unglued. He [threw a pick-six](#) and lost a fumble on a sack (one of seven he took), and that was the moment the pregame battle plans were immolated. [Sunday's loss](#) is yet another step backward after the win [over the Texans](#) and another painful reminder of how unlikely that lone W was for the Panthers.

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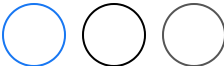


TEAMS

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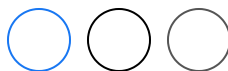
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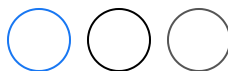
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