

[NFL Shop](#)[Watch Games](#)[News Home](#)[Podcasts](#)[Injuries](#)[Transactions](#)[NFL Writers](#)[Series](#)

## Power Rankings

Presented By

# NFL Power Rankings, Week 16: Surging Bills looking DANGEROUS; Steelers plummet into bottom half

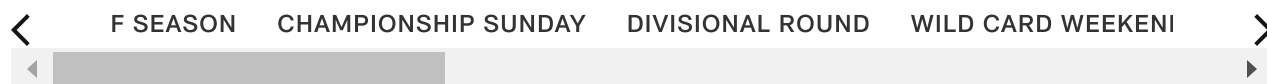
Published: Dec 19, 2023 at 09:22 AM



**Eric Edholm**

Lead Draft Writer

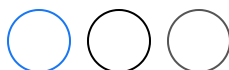




We've reached a point in this NFL campaign where we safely can ask: How many great teams are there this season?

The 49ers and Ravens, the top two teams in my current pecking order, certainly qualify by 2023 standards. The next five on my list -- Dallas, Miami, Philadelphia, Kansas City and Detroit -- all have enjoyed moments of greatness mixed with patches of inconsistency, but I'll push them through.

Things get a little dicey after that. But in the Year of the Backup QB, if there's a team outside the top seven that has the clear potential to join that top tier, it's certainly the Bills. Impressive back-to-back wins [over the Chiefs](#) and [Cowboys](#) have reminded everyone of what Buffalo's best football looks like, even if the 8-6 record naturally drags the team down. That said, the Bills' six losses were by a combined 26 points. Their eight wins were by 151 points.



The Bills now find themselves in the unusual situation of being higher in this week's Power Rankings (eighth) than they sit in the AFC playoff standings ([ninth](#)). That's a reflection of how well they're playing *right now*.

There's a chance they could miss the playoffs. But if the Bills *do* get in, they might be the most dangerous wild-card team since the 2020 Buccaneers, who won three road playoff games en route to a Super Bowl title.

## RELATED LINKS

[The First Read: One reason for hope for nine bubble teams still in NFL playoff hunt; top MVP candidates](#)

[New England Patriots' loss to Chiefs a microcosm of a lost season](#)

[2023 NFL season, Week 15: What We Learned from Sunday's games](#)

**NOTE:** Up/down arrows reflect movement from the [Week 15 Power Rankings](#).

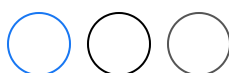
Rank

1

**San Francisco 49ers**

11-3

It's nice to have a solid but unremarkable showing and still beat a division foe on the road [by 16](#) -- and it easily could have been more. The 49ers [locked up the NFC West](#) and are steamrolling toward [the No. 1 seed](#) in the conference. This coming Monday's game [against the Ravens](#) will be a terrific playoff tune-up, but the 49ers had better hope that DTs [Javon Hargrave](#) and [Arik Armstead](#) can return from [injury](#) because the run defense was lacking in their absence against the Cardinals. Arizona ran for more than 100 yards in each half against the 49ers, with its two longest gains in the game -- [49](#) and [44 yards](#) -- coming on the ground. That's a significant part of Baltimore's formula for victory, so San Francisco has a chance to address one of the few big concerns with the team prior to the postseason.



2

11-3

Somehow, [Lamar Jackson](#)'s value to this team went up [Sunday night](#), as the Ravens weathered a tight first half and pulled away late. Jackson was great again, but the [season-ending knee injury](#) to [Keaton Mitchell](#), who had carved out an important role over the last two months, is pretty notable. The offense still has some threats, but on Sunday evening, [Odell Beckham Jr.](#) had as many drops as catches (one apiece), while [Zay Flowers](#) was held to one reception. That won't happen most games, and tight end [Isaiah Likely](#) stepped up with a big performance, but it does highlight the fact that the Ravens aren't exactly teeming with playmakers with TE [Mark Andrews](#) and Mitchell out. But then again, Baltimore has a strong defense led by DT [Justin Madubuike](#), who has been an absolute beast. Even with injuries, this is a strong roster and a balanced operation. Monday's [showdown with the 49ers](#) will be a terrific measuring-stick game, with both teams [headed to the playoffs](#).

Rank

3

**Dallas Cowboys**

10-4

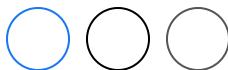
Prior to kickoff in Buffalo, the Cowboys [secured a playoff spot](#). Unfortunately, that ended up being the high point of Sunday. [Losing to the Bills](#) was never going to kill the season and all the positive momentum of the past few months, but it was the way it happened that raised some [serious concerns](#). Giving up 266 yards and three TDs on the ground to Buffalo revealed what could be the blueprint to beating Dallas in the playoffs. DT [Johnathan Hankins](#) was missing for this game, but it's wild to think he was the difference. In the Cowboys' four losses this season, they've allowed 767 rush yards on 153 carries (5.0 average) and nine TDs. In their 10 wins, opponents have run the ball 232 times for 877 yards (3.8 average) and only four TDs. This week's opponent, [Miami](#), can run it. So can Detroit, Dallas' [Week 17 assignment](#). These are critical games for a team that still is jockeying for the No. 1 seed, yet suddenly it faces a major issue that is threatening to challenge the whole operation. The Cowboys shouldn't have lost Sunday's game as one-sidedly as they did.

Rank

4

**Miami Dolphins**

10-4



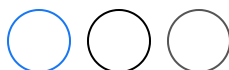
The Dolphins' bizarre [Week 14 loss](#) to the Titans still stings, but Sunday's [dismantling of the Jets](#) was a welcome response from a team that has a contender's record but faces plenty of questions about its credentials among the top tier. It was a big game for [Tua Tagovailoa](#) and [Jaylen Waddle](#), who showed the offense could hold its own *without* [Tyreek Hill](#) and *with* the Jets taking away Miami's run game. But there was an even bigger statement from a defense that has lost multiple starters to injury in recent weeks. Even against a feckless Jets offense, allowing a net of 4 first-half yards (and only 103 for the game) was the kind of performance this group needed heading into a closing stretch against three heavyweights: [Dallas](#), [Baltimore](#) and [Buffalo](#), the last of which could decide the AFC East in Week 18. We've been begging for a quality victory this season. Here is Miami's chance.

Rank	<b>Philadelphia Eagles</b>
<b>5</b>	10-4
1 ▼	

[Jalen Hurts](#) was playing after dealing [with an illness](#), Matt Patricia was [taking over defensive play-calling duties](#) from Sean Desai and the Eagles were facing a desperate Seattle team [on the road](#), so there were some tangible hurdles to overcome on Monday night. But Philadelphia was also taking on a backup quarterback, and the Eagles certainly knew how big this game was. For the first 58-ish minutes, Patricia's defense responded in a big way with [Darius Slay](#) out, allowing 205 yards in Philly's best effort in months. The final two minutes didn't go as well, with [Drew Lock](#) driving 92 yards for [the go-ahead TD](#) and Hurts [being picked](#) for a second time in a nightmare of a fourth quarter. This wasn't the catastrophe of a loss that some will make it out to be. Had the Eagles won, I might have bumped them over Dallas. Instead, they slipped a little. They're still in decent shape to take the NFC East, but the defensive issues haven't gone away.

Rank	<b>Kansas City Chiefs</b>
<b>6</b>	9-5
—	

This didn't feel like a great [win](#), no matter how you spin it. Yes, Bill Belichick has a



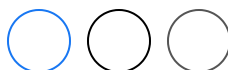
season, and the Chiefs almost let them back in the game late despite New England moving the ball more than 29 yards on a drive only twice. [Kadarius Toney](#) had another maddening mistake, [dropping a pass that led to a pick](#). It's like [Week 1](#) all over again, and it came on the heels of Toney's [infamous offensive offside penalty](#). [Travis Kelce](#) dropped a TD. [Rashee Rice](#) had a big game, but also had a critical penalty early. The running backs in place of [Isiah Pacheco](#) and the defense were Kansas City's saviors in another game lacking in artistic merit.

Rank	<b>Detroit Lions</b>
<b>7</b>	10-4
—	

This was the get-right game the Lions needed, and even though it was a slog early on [against the Broncos](#), it was also poetic. It required the defense, which had taken its share of lumps in recent games, to hold its water early as the offense was getting preheated in the first quarter. But even as the defense softened a bit, [Jared Goff](#) and [Sam LaPorta](#) eventually got it going with three TD connections, and [Jahmyr Gibbs](#) showed just how potent he can be when he gets in a groove. It was a stunning display of offensive prowess after that unit had been waning of late, especially considering it came against a Denver defense that was among the league's better units in recent weeks. Now the Lions are [tantalizingly close](#) to the postseason bid they narrowly missed out on last year. Their issues might not be magically cured, but they're a lot less concerning now.

Rank	<b>Buffalo Bills</b>
<b>8</b>	8-6
2 ▲	

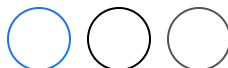
After [James Cook](#) sidwinded his way through the Cowboys' defense for [his second touchdown](#) of the day early in the fourth quarter, FOX's Greg Olsen perfectly summed up these current Bills: "In the event this team makes the playoffs, I don't care if they're the four seed, the seven seed -- I don't think it matters. I don't know anybody in the AFC that feels good coming here or having the Bills [come to their house]." At 6-6,



ranking here reflects just how dangerous this team is right now after [stomping](#) a Cowboys club that had won five straight, beating those opponents by an average of more than 23 points. Miami had better hope it clinches the AFC East before it faces the Bills in [Week 18](#).

Rank	<b>Cleveland Browns</b>
<b>9</b>	9-5
1 ▼	

While [Joe Flacco](#) struggled through his worst game with Cleveland, the Browns rode their dominant defense. [Justin Fields](#) stung them a few times early, and Flacco's first two picks led to 14 points, but the Browns clamped down when they needed to. Several defensive reserves made game-changing plays amid [a slew of injuries](#), and the offense finally woke up late, despite the Bears swallowing up their run game and despite the offensive line taking another hit with the loss of LG [Joel Bitonio](#). TE [David Njoku](#) scored the Browns' [first points](#) with less than 5 minutes left in the second quarter. When Cleveland tried to go back to Njoku in the end zone late in the third quarter, Flacco's pass [was intercepted](#). But from that point on, Njoku dominated. He caught six passes for 86 yards in the fourth quarter, including [a 34-yard catch-and-run](#) that set up the game-winning field goal, and stopped for a costly offside penalty with





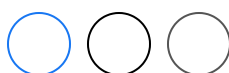
less than two minutes left. It was yet another [miracle finish](#) in Cleveland. How the Browns are doing this is anyone's guess.

Rank	<a href="#">Jacksonville Jaguars</a>
10	8-6
1 ▼	

They made a host of errors early [against the Ravens](#) and ended up leaving 13 points on the board by halftime -- two missed field-goal attempts and a potential touchdown blown at the end of the second quarter due to [poor clock management](#) and execution. It capped a wicked three-game losing streak for the see-saw franchise, replete with ill-timed penalties, mental lapses and blown assignments. Now a three-game divisional lead is gone. [Trevor Lawrence](#) has shown incredible toughness in not missing a single start -- even when it looked dicey twice this season. But he had some regrettable errors against Baltimore, coughing up [an unforced fumble](#) in the red zone (one of two in the game) and mishandling the late first-half possession, stalling out inside the 5-yard line as the clock ran out. The questions are mounting in Jacksonville.

Rank	<a href="#">Houston Texans</a>
11	8-6
1 ▲	

After Sunday's [overtime win](#) over the Titans, with [Case Keenum](#) stepping in for [C.J. Stroud](#), all possibilities exist for the Texans: win the AFC South, make the playoffs as a wild-card team or miss the postseason tournament entirely. At this moment, [they're one spot out](#), ahead of Buffalo in the AFC wild-card picture but behind both the Colts and Jaguars in the AFC South race. "Gritty" might be one way to describe Sunday's win; "fortunate" might be another. The Titans raced to a 13-0 lead, and Houston kept settling for field goals and enduring long offensive droughts. The absence of Stroud, [Nico Collins](#) and [Tank Dell](#) clearly hurt, but [Devin Singletary](#) had a huge outing, and [Noah Brown](#) and [Dalton Schultz](#) both made game-changing catches. The Texans' defense also deserves major kudos for holding Tennessee to 204 total yards and three second-half points without [Will Anderson Jr.](#) and [Blake Cashman](#) playing. But the real test comes [Sunday against Cleveland](#), with Stroud Watch kicking into high gear this week.







8-6

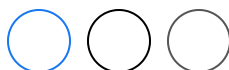
The Bengals are reinventing winning through adversity, finding new ways each week. Saturday's [wild comeback](#), spurred by [Tee Higgins' Catch of the Year candidate](#) to tie it late, was just the latest chapter -- and another unexpected one A.B. (After Burrow). [Jake Browning](#) started slow but ended up with 324 passing yards. He led three fourth-quarter touchdown marches and an overtime field-goal drive (without [Ja'Marr Chase](#)) to complete the comeback. Have you stuck with Cincy on this year's wild ride? From Super Bowl expectations to early-season struggles to beating the 49ers [by two TDs](#) to losing [Joe Burrow](#) to winning three straight and entering Week 16 as the [AFC's No. 6 seed](#). Chase is now [likely to miss some time](#) with a [shoulder injury](#), which feels like just the next hurdle to overcome.

Rank	<b>Indianapolis Colts</b>
<b>13</b>	8-6
2 ▲	

With the playoffs potentially hanging in the balance, the Colts received notable contributions from [D.J. Montgomery](#), [Tyler Goodson](#) and [Trey Sermon](#) -- none of whom were on the roster a few months ago. Most of it happened after the Steelers built a 13-0 lead, too, but the Colts weren't at all spooked. It was a terrific answer after the second-half performance in the [loss](#) to the Bengals. Now we wait to hear about the [Michael Pittman Jr.](#) (concussion) and [Zack Moss](#) (arm) injuries suffered in the win, plus any updates on [Jonathan Taylor's status](#). But this was low key a massive game for [Gardner Minshew](#). He has battled all season and kept the team competitive, with Indianapolis going 6-4 in his starts and 2-0 when replacing [Anthony Richardson](#) midgame. Yet Minshew had been a bit erratic and mistake-prone before Saturday, which is why [his three-TD performance](#) was a confidence builder. His passing stats (18-of-28, 215 yards) weren't eye-popping, but it felt like his best game of the season.

Rank	<b>Denver Broncos</b>
<b>14</b>	7-7
3 ▼	

The [midgame squabble](#) was the big moment in the Broncos' [blowout loss](#) at Detroit,



about it after the game. Even through the Broncos' baptismal hot streak, winning six of seven coming into Week 15, most of the games were tight and tense, and it's never quite felt like Payton has welcomed [Russell Wilson](#) into the Circle of Trust. It felt like Payton took out his frustration over a tough penalty that wiped out a touchdown on Wilson, but perhaps it's much ado about nothing. What appears more concerning is that, even with three winnable games remaining, the Broncos are [on the outside looking in](#) for the playoffs after being dominated from the second quarter on against the Lions.

Rank

**15**

3 ▲

**Tampa Bay Buccaneers**

7-7

This was their biggest win of the season, and it was [Baker Mayfield's best game](#) as a Buccaneer. He's played gamely all year, but the results have been uneven at times. Mayfield led the Bucs [to two nail-biter wins](#) prior to Green Bay, but completed 48.3 percent of his passes in both of them. Sunday [against the Packers](#), he was a stunning 22-of-28 passing for 381 yards -- the most since his rookie season -- and four TDs. Each TD pass went to a different receiver, and [Chris Godwin](#) had a [monster game](#) to kick this offense into another gear. The [late touchdown drive](#) to ice the contest felt like a graduation of sorts. It ended the Packers' threat, pushed the Bucs to a season-best 452 yards and gave them their highest point total in a win. They [lost 39-37](#) to Houston earlier this season, back when the Bucs were in the throes of their late-game woes. Have the past few games exorcized those demons?

Rank

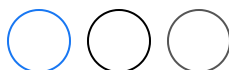
**16**

4 ▲

**Los Angeles Rams**

7-7

The offense and defense sort of yinged and yanged with how each unit played, as Los Angeles got out to a 20-0 lead early in the second half before having to hang on to win, [28-20](#). It was by no means a dominant performance against a bad Commanders team, but the job was done. The Rams also got [some help](#) from old friend [Baker Mayfield](#), and with [Carolina beating Atlanta](#), L.A. would be in [good shape](#) with two

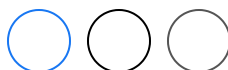


games in which the Rams have to mind their Ps and Qs. They've gone 4-1 since the bye, with two statement wins, two close wins and one respectably close [loss to the Ravens](#). But Sunday was a reminder that early mistakes, such as fumbles and red-zone errors, can open the door for lesser teams to steal a game. The Rams are not dominant, but they are well-coached and suddenly quite competitive.

Rank	
<b>17</b>	<b>Seattle Seahawks</b>
2 ▲	7-7

---

The Seahawks remain alive in the playoff hunt thanks to [Drew Lock](#)'s first game-winning drive in more than three years. Lock got word [he was starting](#) before kickoff, played a mostly smart and safe game (even with a late sack that almost cost him) and then delivered the dream drive of his career: 92 yards, 10 plays, 84 seconds. Things were looking a little dicey, but Lock delivered twice on third-and-10 -- first [for 34 yards to DK Metcalf](#), then for 29 more on [the gorgeous TD pass to Jaxon Smith-Njigba](#). The Seahawks couldn't get much going early on offense, but they just kept grinding away, holding the Eagles in check defensively. Lock [got emotional afterward](#) when talking about his opportunity, and Pete Carroll was in rare form celebrating his team and his QB, even if [Geno Smith](#) is expected back in the saddle this Sunday. No matter. The Seahawks [rediscovered a little mojo](#) Monday.



Rank

18

1 ▼

**Minnesota Vikings**

7-7

The [standings](#) and schedule seem to suggest that the Vikings have a statistically decent chance of making the postseason. But the quarterback regression is undeniable now; even Kevin O'Connell has called it a "week-to-week" operation, and I know exactly what he means. [Joshua Dobbs](#) gave the team a jolt, and then he crashed. [Nick Mullens](#) started [Saturday](#) and looked poised to deliver a huge road win. Instead, he finished with two picks deep in Cincinnati territory ([one to a 311-pound defensive tackle](#)) and should have thrown a pick-six, but the Bengals jumped offsides. That and a strange, late collapse by Minnesota's vastly improved defense did the Vikings in. This team sure could [use a guy like Jake Browning](#)! (Different context, but this joke reminds me of the line from *Major League* when the pitching coach says, "Wish we had him two years ago," to which the GM responds: "We did.")

Rank

19

3 ▼

**Green Bay Packers**

6-8

Packers fans have had a complicated relationship with their defensive coordinators over the years, but Joe Barry has become the center of focus for their ire during Green Bay's two-game slide (and even at points before that). The problems with the run defense have been debated ad nauseum, but [Sunday](#) provided a new talking point, as [Baker Mayfield carved up](#) the Packers' secondary. Pair that with the late-game breakdowns defensively [against the Giants](#), and you can see why the Packers' chances of [making the playoffs](#) have sunk like a stone over the past week-plus. Offensively, it has not been perfect, and Matt LaFleur has not had a healthy backfield in a long time, but he also hurt the Packers' chances by calling a bizarre challenge in the fourth quarter when it wasn't needed and settling for a field goal before watching Tampa Bay score a touchdown on the following drive to put it away. It's looking like this valiant run at the postseason might come up just a bit short.

Rank

20

**Pittsburgh Steelers**

7-7



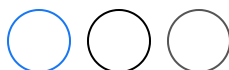
[Saturday's loss](#) was pretty much a deathblow to Pittsburgh's season, even if we should have known which way the wind was blowing after back-to-back [home losses](#) to [2-10 teams](#). This might temporarily boost [Kenny Pickett](#)'s stock; after all, everything started really spiraling out of control after he got hurt. But I don't think Pickett was going to rescue this team, as his limitations were part of the Steelers' offensive issues to begin with. The defense might have carried this squad to the seven wins, but it's falling apart at the wrong time, [especially in the secondary](#). This season started with playoff hopes, but there was always a smoke-and-mirrors quality to the wins and a stark reality in the losses, including three early-season beatdowns and three late-season breakdowns.

Rank	<b>New Orleans Saints</b>
<b>21</b>	7-7
1 ▲	

[Sunday's victory](#) marks a second straight comfortable win at home, but how much have we learned about New Orleans in that span? Similar to [Week 14's](#) game against Carolina, the Saints didn't make it a two-score lead until late in the third quarter, and that was after Giants QB [Tommy DeVito](#) had to leave for a short spell. But it was a positive development that [Derek Carr](#) had his cleanest, most efficient game in some time -- and it came without WR [Chris Olave](#) or RT [Ryan Ramczyk](#). Carr completed 23 of his 28 passes, and even with punts on three of the first four drives, the Saints showed better rhythm offensively. They also didn't hurt themselves with turnovers, red-zone collapses or penalties, even with two flags stalling one promising drive in the first half. That and a dominant defensive performance (seven sacks, 2-of-16 from the Giants on third down) was enough to keep New Orleans in the division hunt.

Rank	<b>Atlanta Falcons</b>
<b>22</b>	6-8
1 ▼	

The wild thing is, if they win out, the Falcons probably [make the playoffs](#). But asking them to string together three straight victories -- something they've never done with Arthur Smith as head coach -- despite two of those three games being on the road



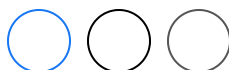
before Christmas. I mean, miracles do happen and all that, but seldom do they occur after such soul-stealing events as we witnessed [Sunday](#). One agonizing possession after the next, I kept saying, *This is where they turn the game around*, right up until [Desmond Ridder's late pick](#). I should have known. Even from his college tape, Ridder's ceiling has always felt clear to me, but I gave him credit for authoring game-winning drives in five of his first 11 NFL starts. Since then, Ridder has lost and regained his starting job, with his completion percentage going down and his INT percentage rising. And now the 24-year-old signal-caller is hitting the bench once again, as NFL Network Insider Ian Rapoport reported Tuesday morning that [Taylor Heinicke will start](#) Sunday's game [against the Colts](#).

Rank	<b>Las Vegas Raiders</b>
<b>23</b>	6-8
5 ▲	

The best way to rebound from [a shutout](#), they say, is dropping a [nine-TD bomb](#) on your opponent four days later. From (tied with) the fewest points scored to the most for the franchise ever, all in an 80-hour span. The Raiders are nominally in the [playoff race](#), but they need a perfect finish and a bunch of other things to happen to get in. But what that [63-21 game](#) told us was that Las Vegas has some young playmakers to keep eyes on. [Aidan O'Connell](#) did all he could to fend off [Jimmy Garoppolo](#) and give himself a chance to compete for the starting job next season. [Tre Tucker](#) woke up in a big way with a two-TD game after being held scoreless previously. TE [Michael Mayer](#), who had [a touchdown](#), has started to impact games more. [Dylan Parham](#) kicked in to center (in place of [Andre James](#)) and [Thayer Munford](#) moved to left tackle (with [Kolton Miller](#) out), paving the way for RB [Zamir White](#), subbing for an injured [Josh Jacobs](#). All encouraging developments.

Rank	<b>Chicago Bears</b>
<b>24</b>	5-9
1 ▼	

The defense has been on a turnover tear over the past four games, forcing 14 of them. Chicago had three interceptions of [Joe Flacco](#) on [Sunday](#), with [one pick-six](#) and [another INT](#) returned to the Cleveland 1-yard line, to bring its season total to 18 (second only behind the 49ers). Despite that, three sacks and a complete erasure of



fourth quarter. [Justin Fields](#) had 21 incompletions and was 7-for-19 passing for 65 yards after halftime. He also had a Hail Mary interception at the end of each half. The [second one](#) landed in the lap of [Darnell Mooney](#) for what could have been a game-winning touchdown, but the Bears wideout couldn't secure it, and the ball ended up in the hands of the Browns' [D'Anthony Bell](#). The brief flirtation with the [playoffs](#) isn't mathematically dead, but the playoffs aren't exactly flirting back, if you catch my drift.

Rank

**25**

1 ▼

**Tennessee Titans**

5-9

[The loss officially knocked them out](#) of the postseason, but even with the [upset win](#) at Miami in Week 14, the Titans weren't realistically making the playoffs this year. Too many things went wrong in the 3-7 start, which proved to be too big a hole from which to reemerge. [Will Levis](#) still has plenty to work on, but his steady improvement since earning the starting job has been tangible. I think he's at least given himself the chance to compete for the starting role in 2024, if not be the favorite come August. The appeal is obvious: He's young, cheap and talented. The Titans should be in terrific shape, [salary cap-wise](#), to spend money this offseason and fix the problem areas, and they're in line for a [top-10 pick](#) in the 2024 NFL Draft. If [Derrick Henry](#) has more 16-carry, 9-yard types of games down the stretch, [he might not be part of the rebuild](#). This is a pretty interesting team for a variety of reasons -- among them, who'll be back and who won't -- as the offseason draws closer.

Rank

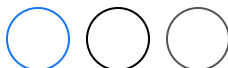
**26**

1 ▼

**New York Jets**

5-9

The Jets' season has been another failed mission, and yet we've sort of stuck around after the [Aaron Rodgers](#) injury because of these weird teasers along the way that maybe things could be better. [Beating the Bills](#) without Rodgers Week 1. The three-game win streak, including the [victory over the Eagles](#). The [slim possibility](#) that Rodgers might return. The [blowout win](#) over the playoff-hungry Texans in Week 14. Those kept hope afloat. But it's perhaps fitting that the Jets were [officially eliminated from the postseason](#) with Sunday's [30-0 loss](#), just as Rodgers is being cleared for the



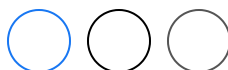


doing more self-damage. The season is now fully cooked, so the Jets can't hurt you or themselves any more. Changes are certainly coming next year, and how deeply they'll cut might not become clear for a few weeks, but this game was an awful résumé-builder for Robert Saleh.

Rank	<b>Los Angeles Chargers</b>
<b>27</b>	5-9
1 ▼	

---

It doesn't feel like the Chargers wanted to make [an in-season firing](#), but last week's [thrashing by the Raiders](#) necessitated a move on head coach Brandon Staley and GM Tom Telesco. It just wasn't working, pretty much from the [playoff meltdown](#) last January on, but there were signs before that, too. The entire season is a loss now, with several key players now facing offseason rehab, including QB [Justin Herbert](#). Having Herbert in tow for the prime years of his career will add to the appeal of the job, and the roster isn't in awful shape, even with some major contract decisions looming. The Bolts are also cruising toward a [top-10 pick](#) in April, and if this season has shown us anything, it's that [Patrick Mahomes](#) might not be immortal. Even still, those are wound-licking consolations right now that the Chargers hope might, mercifully, pay off one day.



Rank

28

1 ▼

## New York Giants

5-9

Hard to ding [Tommy DeVito](#) too much for [Sunday's loss](#), as the offensive line reverted to some old bad habits and his wide receivers did next to nothing for him when it was still a close game. DeVito probably was responsible for a few of the seven sacks, but he took some hard hits (one on which led to him being tested for a concussion) and kept battling throughout. He's positioning himself to be at least the favorite to be QB2 behind [Daniel Jones](#) next season, and nothing that happened Sunday should undercut that. It was good to see [Darren Waller](#) back and making an impact, but contributions from [Wan'Dale Robinson](#) and [Jalin Hyatt](#) have varied wildly week to week. It'd be nice if the Giants could showcase those two young wideouts down the stretch.

Rank

29

—

## Arizona Cardinals

3-11

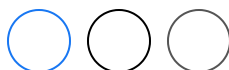
In spite of [losing by 19](#) and [16 points](#) in the two matchups against the 49ers this season, there were clear positives to be taken from each game, starting with the 399 yards of offense the Cardinals averaged. They threw for 257 yards in the first outing (without [Kyler Murray](#)) and ran for 234 in the second. Before the first meeting against the 49ers *next* season, Arizona might want to refurbish its defense. That unit ranks dead last in Next Gen Stats' defensive success percentage at 49.7 -- where the league average is 56.2 percent, and six teams are operating at over a 60 percent rate. The Cardinals are close to the bottom in pressure percentage (31.1) and are tied with the Vikings for the highest completion percentage against (69.6). Jonathan Gannon is a defensive guy, and he's gotten his team to play hard in Year 1, but the next step for improvement is clear, otherwise the Cardinals won't be able to beat teams such as the 49ers.

Rank

30

## New England Patriots

3-11



Had [Bailey Zappe](#) kept up a respectable first-half performance [against the Chiefs](#), piggybacking off the [win over the Steelers](#), perhaps we'd have something to talk about. Well, Zappe threw a [bad interception](#) that never should have gone to where it did, and the Patriots' self-inflicted errors (often penalties wiping out big plays) did them in, despite New England forcing three Kansas City turnovers and briefly making it a competitive game late. We can certainly turn our attention to the 2024 NFL Draft, where the Patriots currently sit in the [No. 2 slot](#), with the 3-11 Cardinals selecting third. The Panthers winning their second game of the season at least opened the door slightly for New England to slide into the top spot. But Bill Belichick has coached to win games and isn't stopping, so the Pats just as easily could slide out of the top five with eight other teams sitting at 5-9 or worse.

Rank

**31****Washington Commanders**

4-10

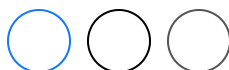
First-half [Sam Howell](#) was 7-for-16 passing for 52 yards, and the Commanders trailed 13-0 at the break. Then, after an impressive TD drive, Howell had a three-and-out and [an interception](#) and was pulled with Washington down 28-7 for [Jacoby Brissett](#), who brought the team back late [Sunday](#). Howell's season has been a strange one, with some truly impressive streaks and production for a first-year starter. His toughness and guts to attempt difficult throws can't be overlooked, and he's clearly flashed a playmaking knack. But there's no chance, no matter who the head coach is, that Washington goes into next season with only Howell and Brissett (or a similar-caliber player) vying for the starting job. Maybe it's a young benched starter from elsewhere or a draft pick, but Howell will be better served if he is truly pushed. Plus, not knowing what kind of an offense the 2024 Commanders might run, Howell isn't talented or efficient enough yet to be anointed into any role for next year.

Rank

**32****Carolina Panthers**

2-12

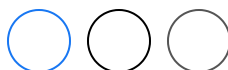
Kudos to interim coach Chris Tabor (who's a witty guy and a good football coach) on [Dub No. 1](#). He has a unique chance to pad his win total as a first-time head coach *and*



draft, but another win -- with [suddenly shaky Green Bay](#) and [Jacksonville](#) up next on the schedule -- and the Panthers could shift the [top of the draft order](#) completely, with the 3-11 Patriots and Cardinals nipping close behind. And win No. 2 for [Bryce Young](#) was mildly encouraging, highlighted by zero turnovers and a clock-draining, game-winning, 90-yard drive in the rain against a desperate team. The Panthers should have [money to spend](#) this offseason, and owner David Tepper is extremely eager to win, so imagining the Young we saw Sunday getting better blocking and having improved targets puts a positive (but realistic) spin on things.

## **Related Content**

---



TEAMS

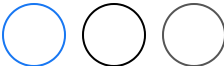
AFC NORTH

---

AFC EAST

---

AFC SOUTH



---

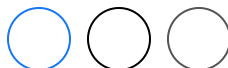
AFC WEST

---

NFC NORTH

---

NFC EAST



---

NFC SOUTH

---

NFC WEST

GENERAL & MEDIA INFO

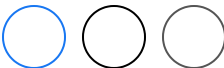
INITIATIVES

PLAYER SERVICES

MORE NFL SITES

---

Download Apps





© 2024 NFL Enterprises LLC. NFL and the NFL shield design are registered trademarks of the National Football League. The team names, logos and uniform designs are registered trademarks of the teams indicated. All other NFL-related trademarks are trademarks of the National Football League. NFL footage © NFL Productions LLC.

[PRIVACY POLICY](#)

[TERMS OF SERVICE](#)

[SUBSCRIPTION TERMS AND CONDITIONS](#)

[AD CHOICES](#)

[YOUR PRIVACY CHOICES](#)

[COOKIE SETTINGS](#)

