

Reynolds: Preseason MVP Analysis

RYAN REYNOLDS // AUG 19, 2025



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Last year’s MVP race was an abnormal one, as it did not have a traditional winner. Buffalo Bills quarterback **Josh Allen** won a very tight race against reigning MVP **Lamar Jackson**, who was himself a default winner against a weak field in 2023. Jackson had the more productive year, while Allen played for the more successful team, with the widely viewed worse supporting cast.

Legacy likely played a part in this race as well, as Jackson would have become a three-time MVP winner, despite being a quarterback who has never beaten a contending team in a playoff game. In some voters’ minds, it was likely hard to give the reigning Jackson his third MVP, despite that dubious playoff reality, before Allen got his first in a close race.

Before we dive into more takeaways from last year’s race, here are a number of trends related to who wins the NFL’s MVP award and why.

Leading into Week 1, any MVP updates will be dropped in the betting channel of our Discord.

MVP Trends

- Every NFL MVP since 2013 has been a quarterback.
- All but three of those quarterbacks played for the top seed in their conference.
- One of those three was last year’s winner, Allen, whose Bills finished 13-4 last season.
- In 2014, MVP **Aaron Rodgers**’ Packers were the No. 2 seed, but tied for the NFC’s best record.
- In 2016, MVP **Matt Ryan**’s Falcons were the NFC’s No. 2 seed with an 11-5 record.
- Ryan is the only MVP since 2013 whose team finished with fewer than 12 wins.
- Since 2007, RB **Adrian Peterson** is the only non-quarterback to win the NFL MVP.
- During that span, **Tom Brady**, **Peyton Manning**, **Patrick Mahomes**, Rodgers, and Jackson each won multiple MVPs.
- Brady and Manning each won three MVPs during that span, while Rodgers won four.
- Rodgers is the only back-to-back MVP winner during that span.
- Rodgers, Mahomes, and Jackson have collectively won six of the last seven MVPs.
- Along with team success, high rankings in touchdowns, QBR, Rating, and EPA have been the most consistent statistical indicators among recent MVP winners.
- EPA per play has been more consistent than total EPA, but both have been consistent indicators.

- Since 2013, **Cam Newton**, Allen, and Jackson's win in 2023 were the only MVP winners to fall outside the top three in Rating.
- Newton and Jackson are the only two during that span to fall outside the top three in QBR.
- Five MVP winners with Opening Day odds of +3000 or greater have won the NFL MVP since 2013, including five of the last 10.
- However, an expected preseason contender has won the MVP in each of the last four seasons.

Takeaways From 2024 MVP Race

I've been saying for years: It does not matter who you think will win an NFL award; what matters is who awards voters will vote for and why.

The importance of team success has been a hill I've been willing to die on for half a decade while covering the NFL MVP market.

Jackson's Ravens won 12 games as the No. 3 seed, while Allen's Bills won 13 as the No. 2. The legacy component likely swung some decisions, just as voter fatigue could have hurt Jackson as the reigning MVP. That said, we can infer from this race, as well as the data I've tracked for more than a decade, that seeding is more important than record, and team success is more widely valued by MVP voters than raw production.

What We're Looking for in an MVP Candidate

To make all of this simpler, ultimately we are looking for a quarterback who can receive the answer "yes" to both of these questions:

- Can they lead their team to a top-two seed in their conference?
- Can they lead the league's highest-scoring offense?

Whenever considering any quarterback in the MVP market, you need to be able to get the answer "yes" for at least one of those conditions to even consider a wager on them.

Given the results of last year's tight race, we can also view team success as more valuable than production.

The 2025 MVP Race

Perennial contenders Allen (+550), Jackson (+550), Mahomes (+650), and **Joe Burrow** (+650) create a sizable problem for every other AFC quarterback in this race, because for any other quarterback in the conference to win the MVP, they have to directly jump all four of those Hall of Fame talents. Long shots like **Bo Nix** (+3500) and **Drake Maye** (+4500) shouldn't be outright ignored, but I have no interest in betting on their situation within the context of how this race will be run.

Allen benefits from an easier schedule than the other top AFC contenders, as he and Jackson will square off in Week 1 on Sunday Night Football. If the Bills win that game, they have a very soft schedule up until their Week 9 tilt with Kansas City.

Speaking of the Chiefs, they face the Chargers, Eagles, and Ravens within the first four weeks of the season. From there, they have seven more games against 2024 playoff teams through the rest of the schedule. An interesting component with Mahomes: Public perception is widely down on him for the first time since his first year as a starter heading into Opening Day, so if the Chiefs start slow despite Mahomes being productive early, there may be a buying opportunity here in the first quarter of the season.

The Ravens face the Bills, Lions, and Chiefs within the first four weeks of the season with nine more games against teams with a win total of 8.5 or greater.

Outside of his two premium wide receivers, Burrow doesn't have a very good supporting cast in Cincinnati, whose defense could realistically end up as the worst in the league. On top of that, our Brandon Thorn has the Bengals' offensive line ranked 30th. It's hard to see Burrow's Bengals finishing as a top-two team in the AFC, but if they do, it will be Burrow who carries them to that outcome.

Jayden Daniels (+750) is the fifth favorite in this race, followed by **Jalen Hurts** (+1700). Daniels is already widely viewed as the best quarterback in the NFC, but his supporting cast isn't even close to what Hurts enjoys in Philadelphia. The Eagles are the clear top team in the NFC, but they are less reliant on their quarterback than any other contender in the league.

The dynamic between Philadelphia and Washington, paired with the four best veteran quarterbacks in the league all playing in the AFC, creates a situation where several mid-range long shots are worth considering in the NFC:

- **Baker Mayfield** (+2500)
- **Caleb Williams** (+2800)
- **Brock Purdy** (+3000)

Mayfield had an MVP-adjacent 2024 campaign, and his Bucs play in one of the two most winnable divisions in the league. Tampa opens the year with two road games, against rival Atlanta and Houston. Through Week 7, the Buccaneers also face the Eagles, 49ers, and Lions. Tampa could easily start 3-4 or worse, but on the flip side, if they have success through this stretch, their second-half schedule is much easier, and Mayfield will likely have some important wins against other contending teams.

Williams is volatile until proven otherwise, but he's a dynamic talent who will enjoy massive upgrades in coaching and in Chicago's offensive line this season. The NFC North is stacked, but the conditions

Williams has this year give him a realistic path to a breakthrough season, which is why he's not a bigger long shot in this race, as I wish he was.

Purdy was a late-season contender in 2023 before a primetime, Christmas night meltdown against Jackson's Ravens. That said, Purdy has already produced at an MVP level, and his 49ers have the league's easiest schedule. San Francisco is not as loaded as they were when Purdy led them to the Super Bowl in 2023, but he's a very solid option in the +3000 range. If I were an oddsmaker, I'd have Purdy around +1800 in this market.

Jordan Love (+2500) and **Jared Goff** (+3000) are both technically bettable at their current prices. The Lions' roster didn't meaningfully improve and they lost both coordinators this offseason, giving them a clear path to a step back. Both Love and the Packers themselves would need to jump at least one full level to be a real factor in this race.

Kyler Murray (+2800) and **Dak Prescott** (+3000) have both spent time as an MVP favorite at the mid-season point in the past, but it's nearly impossible to envision either of their teams contending for the top two spots in the NFC given their middling rosters.

If **Matthew Stafford** (+3500) is given a clean bill of health before Opening Day, he'd belong in the Mayfield, Williams, and Purdy cluster, but that would be a surprise at this stage.

If you want a deep long shot, Vikings quarterback **JJ. McCarthy** (+6000) will benefit from a tremendous supporting cast and one of the best overall coaching staffs in the NFL. McCarthy is the biggest unknown mentioned in this article, but last year Minnesota head coach **Kevin O'Connell** got MVP-adjacent play out of **Sam Darnold**. Outside of Mahomes landing in Kansas City with **Andy Reid**, no active quarterback began their career in a better situation than McCarthy finds himself in.

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