

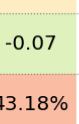
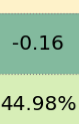
Week 1 @ Chicago

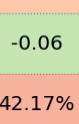
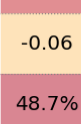
The NFL season is finally here. It's been over 9 months since the Titans played their final game of the 2023 season and much has happened with the franchise. The Titans moved on from Mike Vrabel and hired former Cincinnati Bengals offensive coordinator, Brian Callahan. Additionally, Ran Carthon and the front office brought in some new faces through free agency, trades, and the draft. Alas, week 1 of the regular season is here and we will be able to see how the pieces end up fitting together.

Overall Preview

We begin with a high-level preview of where the Titans and Bears finished the 2023 season. The Titans offense finished 20th in EPA/pass while finishing 12th in EPA/rush. Ultimately, this led to the signings of wide receivers Calvin Ridley and Tyler Boyd as well as center Lloyed Cusenberry. Additionally, the Titans were able to bolster their offensive line by drafting tackle JC Latham. While it will be difficult to predict how the offseason acquisitions will impact the offensive performance, using 2023 data, we can expect the Titans offense to have their hands full against a Bears defense that finished 19th in EPA/pass allowed and 2nd in EPA/rush allowed.

Defensively, the Titans struggled finishing 30th in EPA/pass allowed while finishing 21st in EPA/rush allowed. Fortunately, the Bears offense was not great while passing, finishing 24th in EPA/pass; however, the Bears had decent success while rushing finishing 9th in EPA/rush. The Titans defense vs Bears offense will be completely different in 2024 than 2023 with the Titans signing defensive backs Chidobe Awuzie and L'Jarius Sneed during free agency and drafting interior defensive lineman T'Vondre Sweat. Previous research has shown that defensive back performance is volatile; however, if Awuzie and Sneed are able to build on their 2023 seasons, then I would expect the Titans to cause issues for rookie quarterback Caleb Williams. Additionally, the Titans will look to Sweat for help in improving their 24th best pressure rate in 2023. On the other side of the ball, the bears have revamped their passing game by drafting Rome Odunze and former heisman winner Caleb Williams. They also were active in free agency by going out and signing former Chargers wide receiver Keenan Allen.

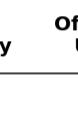
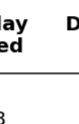
Offense vs Defense					
	Added	Stat		Allowed	
	0.02	EPA/Pass		0.04	
	-0.07	EPA/Rush		-0.16	
	43.18%	Success/Pass		44.98%	
	37.9%	Success/Rush		35.71%	
	39.6%	3rd Down Success		49.19%	
	7.43	3rd Down Distance		7.04	

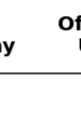
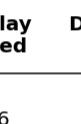
	Added	Stat		Allowed	
	-0.06	EPA/Pass		0.13	
	-0.06	EPA/Rush		-0.06	
	42.17%	Success/Pass		48.7%	
	38.74%	Success/Rush		42.08%	
	42.52%	3rd Down Success		44.44%	
	7.25	3rd Down Distance		6.29	

Personnel

In 2023, the Titans primarily played out of 11 and 12 personnel. I would expect more of this in 2024 because the Titans will interchangeably use their running backs giving one rest while the other is on the field. Fortunately for the Titans, the Bears had the most trouble against 11 personnel and had teams play 11 personnel at the 7th highest rate.

The Titans faced 11 personnel at the 10th highest rate while giving up the 4th most EPA out of 11 personnel. The Bears only played out of 11 personnel at the 24th highest rate and had about average productivity from this formation. I would expect the Bears to rely more on 11 personnel given the offseason acquisitions at wide receiver and the addition of Caleb Williams. This is an offense that is setup to have success in the passing game.

Offense vs Defense					
	EPA/Play	Offensive Usage		EPA/Play Allowed	Defensive Usage
	0.07	19.1%		-0.08	11.57%
	-0.1	37.68%		0.01	45.18%
	-0.14	5.11%		-0.12	2.67%
	-0.24	3.33%		-0.32	3.56%

	EPA/Play	Offensive Usage		EPA/Play Allowed	Defensive Usage
	0.01	7.14%		-0.06	5.58%
	-0.05	39.51%		0.06	44.1%
	-0.14	16.54%		-0.02	13.43%
	-0.52	2.76%		-0.24	1.41%

Passing Heatmap

The Titans and Bears both struggled to pass the ball last year finishing 20th and 24th in EPA/pass, respectively. However, both offenses have revamped their passing games in the offseason which creates and intriguing matchup for both offenses. The Titans relied primarily on passing success either short or to the perimeter. Unfortunately, the Bears thrived on intermediate throws to the perimeter generating a league best 7 interceptions on throws outside and in between 10 and 20 yards.

As mentioned earlier, the Titans added Chido Awuzie and L'Jarius Sneed to aid their pass defense which generated a league worst 6 interceptions in 2023. Most of the issues were caused by the Titans inability to play zone coverage. While they had a league average EPA/pass in man coverage, the Titans ranked 30th in zone coverage.



TEN Offense				CHI Defense			
	left	middle	right		left	middle	right
20+	0.17	0.87	0.14	20+	0.47	-0.78	0.88
15-20	0.18	-0.05	-0.25	15-20	-0.16	0.41	-0.02
10-15	0.35	0.35	0.44	10-15	-0.42	0.62	0.03
5-10	0.25	0.5	0.22	5-10	0.19	0.03	0.41
0-5	-0.05	0.33	-0.08	0-5	0.15	-0.17	0.1
Behind LOS	-0.03	-0.59	-0.02	Behind LOS	-0.21	-0.06	0.06


TEN Defense				CHI Offense			
	left	middle	right		left	middle	right
20+	0.81	0.5	0.82	20+	0.1	0.93	0.3
15-20	0.79	0.73	1.13	15-20	0.2	0.58	0.37
10-15	0.52	1.17	0.13	10-15	-0.11	-0.88	-0.07
5-10	0.26	0.32	0.02	5-10	0.79	0.44	0.04
0-5	0.11	-0.01	0.04	0-5	-0.03	0.22	0.27
Behind LOS	-0.11	-0.66	-0.0	Behind LOS	-0.28	-0.59	-0.39

Route Tree

The Titans favored out and go routes while have most of their success on post and slant routes. I would expect the Titans to lean towards out routes in this game against the Bears because of the success from last season as well as the Bears struggling to defend this route. As seen above, the most success from out routes came in the 5 to 10 yard areas.

As for the Bears offense, they had a more diversified route tree with most of their success coming from cross routes which play in the Titans favor as they had the 12th best pass defense against the cross route.

Offense vs Defense									
	EPA/Play	Route %	Route	EPA/Play Allowed	Route % Faced		EPA/Play	Route %	Route
	0.99	1.0%	WHEEL	-0.65	0.41%		0.67	10.05%	CROSS
	0.55	5.97%	POST	1.27	3.48%		0.57	3.43%	SLANT
	0.3	5.22%	SLANT	0.46	6.13%		0.22	10.29%	GO
	0.23	14.68%	OUT	0.25	10.63%		0.21	14.22%	OUT
	0.21	14.43%	GO	-0.19	6.75%		0.18	14.95%	HITCH
	0.2	11.19%	CROSS	0.45	9.0%		-0.0	19.61%	FLAT
	0.15	10.2%	HITCH	-0.01	22.09%		-0.14	13.73%	SCREEN
	0.04	5.22%	IN	-0.27	9.82%		-0.32	1.96%	POST
	0.02	12.69%	FLAT	-0.03	13.5%		-0.37	2.45%	CORNER
	-0.02	11.44%	SCREEN	0.02	9.82%		-0.43	5.15%	IN
	-0.15	4.23%	CORNER	0.73	3.48%		-0.55	3.43%	ANGLE
	-0.19	3.73%	ANGLE	0.09	4.91%				

	EPA/Play	Route %	Route	EPA/Play Allowed	Route % Faced				
	0.67	10.05%	CROSS	0.16	10.07%				
	0.57	3.43%	SLANT	0.59	7.55%				
	0.22	10.29%	GO	0.58	12.13%				
	0.21	14.22%	OUT	0.34	12.13%				
	0.18	14.95%	HITCH	0.34	17.39%				
	-0.0	19.61%	FLAT	0.13	12.36%				
	-0.14	13.73%	SCREEN	-0.15	10.3%				
	-0.32	1.96%	POST	0.49	3.66%				
	-0.37	2.45%	CORNER	0.11	3.89%				
	-0.43	5.15%	IN	0.73	7.32%				
	-0.55	3.43%	ANGLE	0.21	3.2%				

The Titans added Calvin Ridley and Tyler Boyd during the offseason. They should expect Ridley to help out with hitch routes as he ranked 17th out of 87 pass catchers with 15 or more catches on hitch routes. He's also comfortable with this route as it was his most run route in 2023. As for Boyd, he had more success on in routes ranking 12th out of 74 pass catchers who ran 5 or more in routes.

The Bears added Keenan Allend through free agency. Allen's best route was the corner route in which he ranked 2nd out of 84 pass catchers that ran more than 2 corner routes. His most common route was the hitch route although he had about leage average EPA/reception on this route.

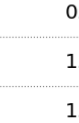

C.Ridley Route Tree			K.Allen Route Tree		
Route	EPA/Play	Route %	Route	EPA/Play	Route %
OUT	0.72	14.68	CORNER	2.51	3.33
HITCH	0.5	27.52	POST	0.79	4.67
SLANT	0.16	9.17	SLANT	0.6	16.0
GO	0.02	22.94	GO	0.52	12.67
CROSS	-0.05	11.01	OUT	0.48	18.67
SCREEN	-0.26	6.42	HITCH	0.2	19.33
IN	-0.39	0.92	FLAT	0.2	4.0
CORNER	-0.44	2.75	IN	0.15	8.0
POST	-0.62	4.59	SCREEN	-0.08	7.33
			CROSS	-0.25	5.33
			ANGLE	-0.76	0.67


T.Boyd Route Tree					
Route	EPA/Play	Route %			
IN	0.79	10.64			
POST	0.73	3.19			
OUT	0.27	12.77			
FLAT	0.24	8.51			
CORNER	0.11	2.13			
SLANT	0.02	14.89			
HITCH	-0.08	22.34			
SCREEN	-0.15	12.77			
GO	-0.33	4.26			
CROSS	-0.53	8.51			

Coverage

The Titans should expect a lot of cover 3 out of the Bears in week 1 as the Bears played cover 3 at the 4th highest rate in 2023. The Titans should be able to manage the zone coverage as they had about league average EPA/pass against cover 3.

As mentioned earlier, the Titans were not great in zone coverage which resulted in them playing almost as much cover 1 as cover 3 as they had more success in man coverage. The Bears ranked 13th against man coverage which could cause the Titans issues given that they could not rely on zone coverage as an alternative. However, the Bears also ranked 25th against zone coverage.

Offense vs Defense									
	EPA/Pass	Frequency Faced	Coverage	EPA/Pass Allowed	Frequency Played		EPA/Pass	Frequency Faced	Coverage
	0.9	0.18%	PREVENT	-0.71	0.92%		1.59	0.18%	2_MAN
	0.67	1.08%	2_MAN	-0.94	0.15%		0.43	4.59%	COVER_0
	0.64	1.98%	COVER_0	0.41	1.85%		0.11	10.6%	COVER_4
	0.42	9.37%	COVER_6	0.04	4.62%		0.09	25.09%	COVER_3
	0.14	10.81%	COVER_4	0.23	12.15%		0.03	15.19%	COVER_1
	0.1	26.31%	COVER_3	-0.0	29.85%		-0.09	13.96%	COVER_2
	0.03	15.5%	COVER_1	0.14	14.77%		-0.37	7.24%	COVER_6
	-0.13	8.83%	COVER_2	0.12	14.77%		-0.42	0.53%	PREVENT

	EPA/Pass	Frequency Faced	Coverage	EPA/Pass Allowed	Frequency Played				
	1.59	0.18%	2_MAN	0.68	0.81%				
	0.43	4.59%	COVER_0	-0.17	3.4%				
	0.11	10.6%	COVER_4	0.33	18.12%				
	0.09	25.09%	COVER_3	0.24	19.58%				
	0.03	15.19%	COVER_1	0.19	17.15%				
	-0.09	13.96%	COVER_2	0.38	12.14%				
	-0.37	7.24%	COVER_6	0.23	2.75%				
	-0.42	0.53%	PREVENT	-0.09	0.16%				

Pass Catchers

Moving onto pass catchers, the Titans heavily used DeAndre Hopkins in 2023 as he had a 34% reception share. This ranked 10th out of 136 pass catchers with more than 50 receptions. Adding Calvin Ridley and Tyler Boyd should relieve some pressure from the 32 year old receiver as Ridley ranked 21st on this list.

For the Bears, they are retiring their most productive pass catcher in DJ Moore who saw a 35% reception share (7th highest). This pass catching unit is only getting better as they were able to add Keenan Allen in free agency who had the 22nd best EPA/reception out of 136 pass catchers with more than 50 receptions. Additionally, they will have the rookie, Rome Odunze, who ranked in the 73rd percentile in EPA/reception while at Washington.

TEN Best Pass Catchers			CHI Best Pass Catchers		
Player	EPA/Catch	Receptions	Player	EPA/Catch	Receptions
C.Moore	0.52	35	D.Moore	0.47	138
N.Westbrook-Ikhine	0.45	46	C.Kmet	0.36	90
D.Hopkins	0.14	137	D.Mooney	-0.08	61
C.Okonkwo	0.1	77	R.Johnson	-0.15	40
D.Henry	0.09	36	T.Scott	-0.35	32
T.Spears	-0.02	70	K.Herbert	-0.54	31

TEN New Receivers			CHI New Receivers		
Player	EPA/Catch	Receptions	Player	EPA/Catch	Receptions
C.Ridley	0.24	137			
T.Boyd	0.06	98	K.Allen	0.41	150

Rome Odunze			
Player	EPA/Catch	Receptions	Percentile
Rome Odunze	1.023	92.0	73.24

Rushers

Finally, I want to take a look into the run game for both teams. The Titans notably lost their workhorse back in Derrick Henry and will try to replace Henry with a committe backfield of Tyjae Spears and Tony Pollard. While Henry carried a bulk of the load, Spears was able to match Henry's efficiency when running the ball. As for Pollard, he had a down year in 2023 in which his volume increased from 36% of runs in 2022 to 54%. Hopefully he can regain his efficiency as his lowline is expected to decrease.

As for the Bears, they are losing their most efficient rusher in Justin Fields who handles a high percentage of the rushes for the Bears in 2023. However, they were able to add D'Andre Swift from the Eagles who was the 15th most effient rusher out of 72 rushers who had more than 70 rushes. This move will allow the Bears to save Caleb Williams some wear-and-tear as they will not have to rely as much on the quarterback run this year.

TEN Best Rushers			CHI Best Rushers		
Player	EPA/Rush	Rushes	Player	EPA/Rush	Rushes
T.Spears	-0.01	100	J.Fields	0.21	124
D.Henry	-0.01	280	K.Herbert	-0.01	133

TEN New Rushers			CHI New Rushers		
Player	EPA/Rush	Rushes	Player	EPA/Rush	Rushes
T.Pollard	-0.06	268	D.Swift	-0.0	239

Final Prediction

I predict the Bears to cover their -4 spread. While the Titans will be relying on young talent on offense, I think the Titans have too much ground to make up from last year's abismal defensive performance. Awuzie and Sneed were offensive signings; however, cornerback is a volatile position and both players have dealt with recent injuries which could limit their production. Additionally, this is a big year for Will Lewis and I am not yet confident in his sack avoidance which has been detrimental to his performance so far in his young career.

