

# AARON SCHATZ'S FTN FOOTBALL ALMANAC

2025

CUTTING EDGE  
**DVOA**  
METRICS

THE MOST  
ACCURATE NFL  
TEAM PROJECTIONS

**300+**  
FANTASY FOOTBALL  
PLAYER PROJECTIONS

"FTN incorporates factors that others don't, leading to quality and nuanced stats. they're a helpful resource for anyone to think deeper and smarter around football."  
- John Harbaugh, Head Coach of the Baltimore Ravens

"For serious fans of the game,  
FTN Football Almanac is indispensable"  
- Mina Kimes, ESPN

# **AARON SCHATZ'S**

# **FTN FOOTBALL ALMANAC**

**2025**

**Edited by Aaron Schatz**

Layout and Design by Vincent Verhei

Fantasy Football Projections by Jeff Ratcliffe

with

Alex Bickle • Cale Clinton  
Bryan Knowles • Tyler Loechner  
Rivers McCown • Dan Pizzuta  
Mike Tanier • Robert Weintraub

Cover by Justin Redler

Copyright 2025, FTN Network Group, Inc.

**ISBN: x**

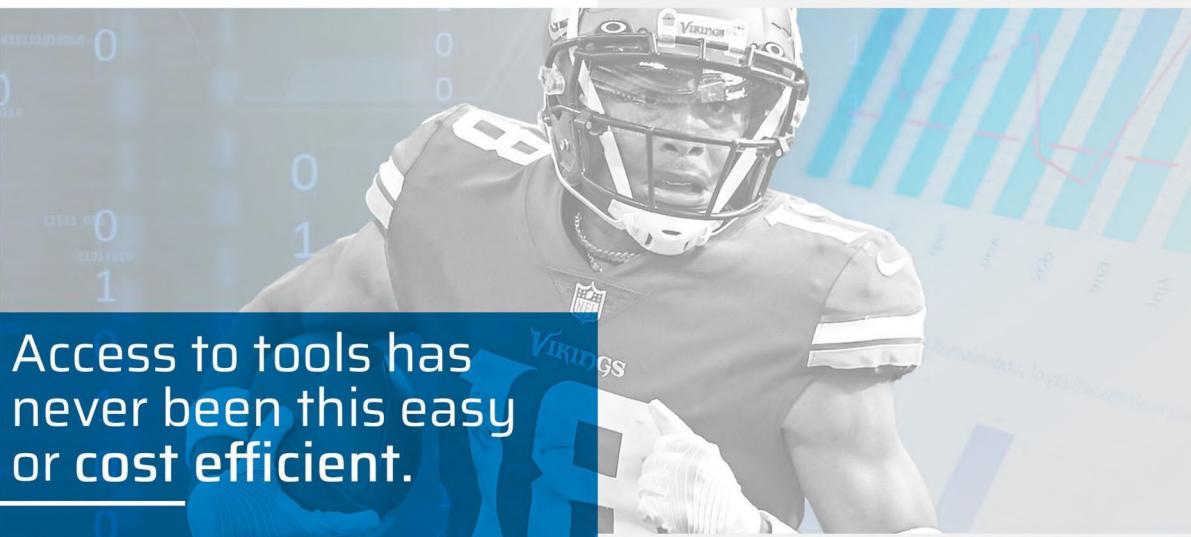
All rights reserved

Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise), without the prior written permission of the copyright owner listed above.





www.ftndata.com



Access to tools has never been this easy or cost efficient.

FTN helps small and large businesses operate more efficiently and at a lower cost. We work directly with our partners to customize API feeds, supply easy to use plug and play front end designs, and automate the process for quick and easy use. Save money and improve your user experience with reliable, trusted, and in depth proprietary data.

## WHY YOU NEED FTN TOOLS



**750+**

NFL Data Points



**20+ Years**

Historical Data



**50%**

Less expensive than the competition

## Trusted by

CAESARS  
SPORTSBOOK

ACTION ⚽

SPOTLIGHT  
SPORTS GROUP

PICKSWISE

EV ANALYTICS

THE BLITZ

FANTASY  
ALARM

SABER  
SIM

huddle

RAZZBALL

THE  
TOP  
guys

### Sports Betting Models, Tools & Feeds

- 10+ years of proven winning models
- Includes NFL, NBA, MLB, CBB, CFB and PGA
- Real time updates throughout each day as news and injuries occur

### White Label Tools

**CONTACT US** [Frank@ftnnetwork.com](mailto:Frank@ftnnetwork.com)



# Table of Contents

Introduction.....	vii	Indianapolis Colts .....	101
Statistical Toolbox.....	ix	Jacksonville Jaguars .....	108
Pregame Show .....	xxvii	Kansas City Chiefs .....	115
The Year In Quotes .....	xxxii	Las Vegas Raiders.....	123
Full 2025 Projections .....	xxxix	Los Angeles Chargers.....	131
<b>NFL Teams</b>		Los Angeles Rams.....	139
Arizona Cardinals .....	1	Miami Dolphins .....	147
Atlanta Falcons .....	9	Minnesota Vikings .....	155
Baltimore Ravens .....	16	New England Patriots .....	162
Buffalo Bills .....	24	New Orleans Saints.....	170
Carolina Panthers .....	32	New York Giants.....	178
Chicago Bears.....	39	New York Jets .....	186
Cincinnati Bengals .....	47	Philadelphia Eagles.....	193
Cleveland Browns.....	55	Pittsburgh Steelers .....	201
Dallas Cowboys .....	65	San Francisco 49ers .....	209
Denver Broncos .....	73	Seattle Seahawks.....	217
Detroit Lions.....	80	Tampa Bay Buccaneers.....	225
Green Bay Packers .....	87	Tennessee Titans .....	232
Houston Texans.....	94	Washington Commanders .....	239

<b>NFL Players</b>		<b>Further Research</b>
Quarterbacks . . . . .	247	FO Rookie Projections . . . . . 378
Running Backs . . . . .	276	Top 25 Prospects . . . . . 382
Wide Receivers . . . . .	309	Fantasy Projections . . . . . 387
Tight Ends . . . . .	357	Statistical Appendix . . . . . 392
2025 Kicker Projections . . . . .	376	Author Bios . . . . . 413
2025 Fantasy Defense Projections . .	377	

# Introduction

The Philadelphia Eagles' victory in Super Bowl LIX was a victory for the rise of analytics in the National Football League. But it was a complicated victory.

The Eagles are best known for the “tush push,” their nigh impossible-to-stop play that consistently converts on short-yardage opportunities. The football analytics world has been arguing for teams to go for it more often on fourth-and-short for over 20 years now. The Eagles do that, and they do it successfully. It’s what they are known for, to the point where they only need to get 9 yards on every first down because they can feel confident that they will convert if it comes down to fourth-and-1.

Of course, there’s nothing really that new under the sun. The Eagles were on the forefront of the league’s move towards more aggressive, smarter strategy when they won Super Bowl LII after the 2017 season. And the Eagles were in fact not the most successful team at converting fourth downs last season. That would instead be their rivals, the Washington Commanders.

The Eagles are also on the forefront of analytics when it comes to how they build their team. Since we began doing football analytics with the website Football Outsiders in 2003, we have been lobbying teams to “win from the lines out,” not from the perimeter in. Obviously, the quarterback is usually the most important player on the field, and the Eagles got plenty of value out of wide receivers and cornerbacks on their way to a Super Bowl championship. But the heart of the team was on the offensive line and the defensive front.

The Eagles also use analytics in how they manage economics, as one of the teams on the vanguard of using void years to massage the salary cap.

On the other hand, the highest-profile player for the 2024 Philadelphia Eagles was a running back, Saquon Barkley. He won the Offensive Player of the Year award and was widely considered an MVP candidate. Here we are, constantly writing about how running backs are overrated in importance in the NFL, and the Eagles win it all led by a highly paid running back in a year where older free agent running backs made a huge impact for multiple teams.

Perhaps one of the lessons of 2024 is that the football analytics world has underestimated the importance of star running backs. Or perhaps the lesson is that the value of star running backs changes depending on the rest of the team that surrounds them. Either way, we’ll pivot and assimilate that new information into our analysis. The goal of football analytics has never been to create an unassailable orthodoxy. The goal is to understand the game of football better. That’s the main goal of football analytics, whether you are managing a team in the NFL trying to win a Super Bowl or just managing your fantasy football team and trying to beat your friends for bragging rights.

At its heart, the football analytics revolution is about learning more about the intricacies of the game instead of just accepting the boilerplate storylines produced by insipid pregame

shows and crotchety old players from the past. It’s about not accepting the idea that some guy “just wins.” It’s about understanding that the “skill players” aren’t the only guys on the team with skills. It’s about gaining insight into the complexity behind the modern offense, and why just shoving the ball into the line hoping to gain yardage is usually a bad idea. It’s about understanding the dramatic way that strength of schedule affects the way we see a team’s performance. It’s about figuring out which player skills translate from college to the pros, and which skills just produce meaningless scoutspeak.

Yes, there are a lot of tables of numbers in this book, but words are the meat of our analysis; numbers are just the spice. There’s a rumor that stat analysts don’t watch game tape. In reality, stat analysts watch more tape than a lot of other writers, and *a lot* more tape than the average fan. We take everything we learn off the tape, synthesize it with the statistics, and deliver it to you.

Everybody who writes about football uses both statistics (whether they be basic yardage totals or more advanced stats like ours) and scouting (whether scouting reports by professionals or just their own eyes). The same goes for us, except that the statistical portion of our analysis is far more accurate than what you normally see from football coverage. Those numbers are based on three ideas:

**1) Conventional football statistics are heavily dependent on context.** Down and distance, field position, the current score, time left on the clock, the quality of the opponent—all of these elements influence the objective of the play and/or its outcome. Yet, the official NFL stats add together all yardage gained by a specific team or player without considering the impact of that particular yardage on wins and losses. In addition, filtering out bits of luck and random chance can help us figure out which teams are more likely to play better for the rest of the season, or even in the following season.

**2) On any one play, the majority of the important action is not tracked by the conventional NFL play-by-play.** We wrote this book in partnership with FTN Data and therefore we have FTN Data’s game charting on every single NFL regular-season and postseason play. We know how many pass rushers teams send on each pass, how often teams go three-wide or use two tight ends, how often teams use a play-action fake, and which defensive backs are in coverage, even when they don’t get a tackle in the standard play-by-play.

**3) A player’s production in one year does not necessarily equal his production the next year.** This also applies to teams, of course. Even when stats are accurate, they’re often extremely variable from year to year and subject to heavy forces of regression to the mean. Field goal percentage, red zone performance, third-down performance on defense, interceptions and fumble recoveries—these are but a few examples. In

addition, the age curves for football players are much steeper than in other sports. Old players break down faster, and young players often improve faster. Many football analysts concentrate on looking at what players did last year. We'll talk about that as well, but we're more interested in what players are going to do *this* year. Which performances from a year ago are flukes, and which ones represent long-term improvement or decline? What will one more year of experience do to this player's production? And how will a player's role change this year, and what does it mean for the team?

As with our past books, Aaron Schatz's *FTN Football Almanac 2025* starts off with "Pregame Show" (reviewing the most important research we have done in past books) and "Statistical Toolbox" (explaining all our stats). Once again, we preserve the ridiculousness of the football season for posterity with another version of "The Year in Quotes" and we introduce you to some of the more promising (and lesser known) young bench players with our 19th annual list of Top 25 Prospects chosen in the third round or later.

Each NFL team gets a full chapter covering what happened in 2024 and our projections for the upcoming season. Are there reasons to believe that the team was inherently better or worse than its record last year? What did the team do in the offseason, and what does that mean for the team's chances to win in 2025? Each chapter also includes all kinds of advanced

statistics covering 2024 performance and strategic tendencies, plus detailed commentary on each of the major units of the team: offensive line, defensive front, defensive secondary, and special teams.

"Skill players" (by which we mean "players who get counted in fantasy football") get their own section in the back of the book. We list the major players at each position alphabetically, along with commentary and a 2025 fantasy projection from FTN Fantasy's Jeff Ratcliffe.

Please remember that all our predictions are based on a range of possibilities. Very few people expected the Eagles to rebound from their terrible second half of 2023 and win the Super Bowl. Very few people expected the Commanders to surge with a rookie quarterback and make it to the NFC Championship Game last year. Something fun and exciting is going to happen this season, something all our numbers can't accurately predict. A team we expect to finish last is going to the playoffs. Some undrafted running back will win fantasy leagues off the waiver wire. That's part of the fun of football.

As always, we hope our book is entertaining while it helps you raise your level of football expertise, win arguments with your friends, and dominate them in your fantasy leagues.

Aaron Schatz  
Auburn, MA  
July 14, 2025

# Statistical Toolbox

After over 20 years of writing about football analytics, some of our readers are as comfortable with DVOA and DYAR as they are with touchdowns and tackles. Yet to most fans, including our newer readers, it still looks like a lot of alphabet soup. That's what this chapter is for. The next few pages define and explain all the unique NFL statistics you'll find in this book: how we calculate them, what the numbers mean, and what they tell us about why teams win or lose football games. We'll go through the information in each of the tables that appear in each team chapter, pointing out whether those stats come from advanced mathematical manipulation of the standard play-by-play or tracking what we see on video with FTN game charting.

We've done our best to present these numbers in a way that makes them easy to understand. This explanation is long, so feel free to read some of it, flip around the rest of the book, and then come back. It will still be here.

## Defense-Adjusted Value Over Average (DVOA)

One running back runs for three yards. Another running back runs for three yards. Which is the better run?

This sounds like a stupid question, but it isn't. In fact, this question is at the heart of nearly all the analysis in this book.

Several factors can differentiate one three-yard run from another. What is the down and distance? Is it third-and-2, or second-and-15? Where on the field is the ball? Does the player get only three yards because he hits the goal line and scores? Is the player's team up by two touchdowns in the fourth quarter and thus running out the clock, or down by two touchdowns and thus facing a defense that is playing purely against the pass? Is the running back playing against the porous defense of the Carolina Panthers, or the stalwart defense of the World Champion Eagles?

Conventional NFL statistics value plays based solely on their net yardage. The NFL determines the best players by adding up all their yards no matter what situations they came in or how many plays it took to get them. Now, why would they do that? Football has one objective—to get to the end zone—and two ways to achieve that, by gaining yards and achieving first downs. These two goals need to be balanced to determine a player's value or a team's performance. All the yards in the world won't help a team win if they all come in six-yard chunks on third-and-10.

The popularity of fantasy football only exacerbates the problem. Fans have gotten used to judging players based on how much they help fantasy teams win and lose, not how much they help *real* teams win and lose. Typical fantasy scoring further skews things by counting the yard between the one and the goal line as 61 times more important than all the other yards on the field (each yard worth 0.1 points, a touchdown

worth 6.0). Let's say Justin Jefferson catches a pass on third-and-15 and goes 50 yards but gets tackled two yards from the goal line, and then Aaron Jones takes the ball on first-and-goal from the two-yard line and plunges in for the score. Has Jones done something special? Not really. When an offense gets the ball on first-and-goal at the two-yard line, they are going to score a touchdown five out of six times. Jones is getting credit for the work done by the passing game.

Doing a better job of distributing credit for scoring points and winning games is the goal of **DVOA**, or Defense-adjusted Value Over Average. DVOA breaks down every single play of the NFL season, assigning each play a value based on both total yards and yards towards a first down, based on work done by Pete Palmer, Bob Carroll, and John Thorn in their seminal book, *The Hidden Game of Football*. On first down, a play is considered a success if it gains 45% of needed yards; on second down, a play needs to gain 60% of needed yards; on third or fourth down, only gaining a new first down is considered success.

We then expand upon that basic idea with a more complicated system of "success points," improved over the past four years with a lot of mathematics and a bit of trial and error. A successful play is worth one point, an unsuccessful play zero points with fractional points in between (for example, eight yards on third-and-10 is worth 0.54 "success points"). Extra points are awarded for big plays, gradually increasing to three points for 10 yards (assuming those yards result in a first down), four points for 20 yards, and five points for 40 yards or more. Losing three or more yards is -1 point. Interceptions average -4.5 points, with an adjustment for the length of the pass and the location of the interception (since an interception tipped at the line is more likely to produce a long return than an interception on a 40-yard pass). A fumble is worth anywhere from -1.3 to -3.0 points depending on how often a fumble in that situation is lost to the defense—no matter who actually recovers the fumble. There is a bonus given for a touchdown that acknowledges that the goal line is significantly more difficult to cross than the previous 99 yards (although this bonus is nowhere near as large as the one used in fantasy football).

(Our system is a bit more complex than the one in *Hidden Game* thanks to our subsequent research, which added larger penalty for turnovers, the fractional points, and a slightly higher baseline for success on first down. The reason why all fumbles are counted, no matter whether they are recovered by the offense or defense, is explained in the essay "Pregame Show.")

Every single play run in the NFL gets a "success value" based on this system, and then that number gets compared to the average success values of plays in similar situations for all players, adjusted for a number of variables. These include down and distance, field location, time remaining in game, and the team's lead or deficit in the game score. Teams are always compared to the overall offensive average, as the team

made its own choice whether to pass or rush. When it comes to individual players, however, rushing plays are compared to other rushing plays, passing plays to other passing plays, tight ends to tight ends, wideouts to wideouts, and so on.

Going back to our example of the three-yard rush, if Player A gains three yards under a set of circumstances in which the average NFL running back gains only one yard, then Player A has a certain amount of value above others at his position. Likewise, if Player B gains three yards on a play on which, under similar circumstances, an average NFL back gains four yards, that Player B has negative value relative to others at his position. Once we make all our adjustments, we can evaluate the difference between this player's rate of success and the expected success rate of an average running back in the same situation (or between the opposing defense and the average defense in the same situation, etc.). Add up every play by a certain team or player, divide by the total of the various baselines for success in all those situations, and you get VOA, or Value Over Average.

Of course, the biggest variable in football is the fact that each team plays a different schedule against teams of disparate quality. By adjusting each play based on the opposing defense's average success in stopping that type of play over the course of a season, we get DVOA, or Defense-adjusted Value Over Average. Rushing and passing plays are adjusted based on down and location on the field; passing plays are also adjusted based on how the defense performs against passes to running backs, tight ends, or wide receivers. Defenses are adjusted based on the average success of the *offenses* they are facing. (Yes, technically the defensive stats are "offense-adjusted." If it seems weird, think of the "D" in "DVOA" as standing for "opponent-Dependent" or something.)

The biggest advantage of DVOA is the ability to break teams and players down to find strengths and weaknesses in a variety of situations. DVOA can be separated not only by player, but also by down, or by week, or by distance needed for a first down. This can give us a better idea of not just which team is better, but why, and what a team has to do in order to improve itself in the future. You will find DVOA used in this book in a lot of different ways—because it takes every single play into account, it can be used to measure a player or a team's performance in any situation. All Pittsburgh third downs can be compared to how an average team does on third down. Russell Wilson and Jameis Winston can each be compared to how an average quarterback performs in the red zone, or with a lead, or in the second half of the game.

Since it compares each play only to plays with similar circumstances, it gives a more accurate picture of how much better a team really is compared to the league as a whole. The list of top DVOA offenses on third down, for example, is more accurate than the conventional NFL conversion statistic because it takes into account that converting third-and-long is more difficult than converting third-and-short, and that a turnover is worse than an incomplete pass because it eliminates the opportunity to move the other team back with a punt on fourth down.

One of the hardest parts of understanding a new statistic

is interpreting its scale, or what numbers represent good performance or bad performance. We've made that easy with DVOA. For each season, ratings are normalized so that 0% represents league average. A positive DVOA represents a situation that favors the offense, while a negative DVOA represents a situation that favors the defense. This is why the best offenses have positive DVOA ratings (last year, Baltimore led the NFL at 35.2%, one of the best ratings ever) and the best defenses have negative DVOA ratings (with Philadelphia on top at -16.2%).

The scale of offensive ratings is wider than the scale of defensive ratings. In most years, the best and worst offenses tend to rate around +/- 30%, while the best and worst defenses tend to rate around +/- 20%. For starting players, the scale tends to reach roughly +/- 40% for passing and receiving, and +/- 30% for rushing. As you might imagine, some players with fewer attempts will surpass both extremes.

Team DVOA totals combine offense and defense by subtracting the latter from the former because the better defenses will have negative DVOA ratings. (Special teams performance is also added, as described later in this section.) Certain plays are counted in DVOA for offense and not for defense, leading to separate baselines on each side of the ball. In addition, although the league ratings for offense and defense are always 0%, the league averages for passing and rushing separately are *not* 0%. Because passing is more efficient than rushing, the average for team passing is always positive and the average for team rushing is always negative. However, ratings for individual players only compare passes to other passes and runs to other runs, so the league average for individual passing is 0%, as are the league averages for rushing and the three separate league averages for receiving by wide receivers, tight ends, and running backs.

Some other important notes about DVOA:

- Scrambles count in DVOA as passing plays instead of rushing plays.
- Only four penalties are included in DVOA. Two penalties count as pass plays on both sides of the ball: intentional grounding and defensive pass interference. The other two penalties are included for offense only: false starts and delay of game. Because the inclusion of these penalties means a group of negative plays that don't count as either passes or runs, the league averages for pass offense and run offense are higher than the league averages for pass defense and run defense.
- Aborted snaps and incomplete backwards lateral passes are only penalized on offense, not rewarded on defense.
- Adjustments for playing from behind or with a lead in the fourth quarter are different for offense and defense, as are adjustments for the final two minutes of the first half when the offense is not near field goal range.
- Offense gets a slight penalty and defense gets a slight bonus for games indoors.

How well does DVOA work? Using correlation coefficients, we can show that only actual points scored are better

than DVOA at indicating how many games a team has won (Table 1) and DVOA is more stable from year to year than either wins or points scored (Table 2).

(Correlation coefficient is a statistical tool that measures how two variables are related by using a number between 1 and -1. The closer to -1 or 1, the stronger the relationship, but

fact that the defense is more likely to score next.) Our studies have updated this concept to reflect the actual likelihood that the offense or defense will have the next score from a given position on the field based on actual results from the past few seasons. The line that represents the value of field position is not straight, but curved, with the value of each yard increasing as teams approach either goal line.

Our special teams ratings compare each kick or punt to league average based on the point value of the position of the kick, catch, and return. We've determined a league average for how far a kick goes based on the line of scrimmage for each kick (almost always the 35-yard line for kickoffs, variable for punts) and a league average for how far a return goes based on both the yard line where the ball is caught and the distance that it traveled in the air.

The kicking or punting team is rated based on net points compared to average, accounting for both the kick and the return if there is one. Because the average return is always positive, punts that are not returnable (touchbacks, out of bounds, fair catches, and punts downed by the coverage unit) will rate higher than punts of the same distance which are returnable. (This is also true of touchbacks on kickoffs.) There are also separate individual ratings for kickers and punters that are based on distance and whether the kick is returnable, assuming an average return in order to judge the kicker separate from the coverage.

For the return team, the rating is based on how many points the return is worth compared to average, based on the location of the catch and the distance the ball traveled in the air. Return teams are not judged on the distance of kicks, nor are they judged on kicks that cannot be returned. As explained below, blocked kicks are so rare as to be statistically insignificant as predictors for future performance and are thus ignored. For the kicking team they simply count as missed field goals, for the defense they are gathered with their opponents' other missed field goals in Hidden value (also explained below).

Field goal kicking is measured differently. Measuring kickers by field goal percentage is a bit absurd, as it assumes that all field goals are of equal difficulty. In our metric, each field goal is compared to the average number of points scored on all field goal attempts from that distance over the past 15 years. The value of a field goal increases as distance from the goal line increases. Kickoffs, punts, and field goals are then adjusted based on weather and altitude. It will surprise no one to learn that it is easier to kick the ball in Denver or a dome than it is to kick the ball in Buffalo in December. Because we do not yet have enough data to tailor our adjustments specifically to each stadium, each one is assigned to one of four categories: Cold, Warm, Dome, and Denver. There is also an additional adjustment dropping the value of field goals in Florida (because the warm temperatures allow the ball to carry better).

The baselines for special teams are adjusted in each year for rule changes such as the introduction of the special teams-only “k-ball” in 1999, movement of the kickoff line, and the 2016 change in kickoff touchbacks. Baselines have also been adjusted each year to make up for the gradual improvement of kickers over the last two decades. We had to completely re-do the

**Table 1. Correlation of Various Stats to Wins, 2012-2023**

Stat	Offense	Defense	Total
Points Scored/Allowed	0.761	-0.660	0.904
VOA (no opponent adjustment)	0.737	-0.604	0.886
DVOA	0.714	-0.586	0.874
Yards Gained/Allowed	0.562	-0.350	0.664
Yards Gained/Allowed per Play	0.525	-0.322	0.666

**Table 2. Correlation of Various Stats from Year to Year, 2012-2023**

Stat	Correlation
DVOA	0.475
Yardage Differential	0.456
VOA (no opponent adjustment)	0.442
Point Differential	0.432
Pythagorean Wins	0.422
Yards per Play Differential	0.391
Wins	0.379

the closer to 0, the weaker the relationship.)

## Special Teams

The problem with a system based on measuring both yardage and yardage towards a first down is what to do with plays that don't have the possibility of a first down. Special teams are an important part of football and we needed a way to add that performance to the team DVOA rankings. Our special teams metric includes five separate measurements: field goals and extra points, net punting, punt returns, net kickoffs, and kick returns.

The foundation of most of these special teams ratings is the concept that each yard line has a different expected points value based on the likelihood of scoring from that position on the field. In *Hidden Game*, the authors suggested that each additional yard for the offense had equal value, with a team's own goal line being worth -2 points, the 50-yard line 2 points, and the opposing goal line 6 points. (-2 points is not only the value of a safety, but also reflects the fact that when a team is backed up in its own territory, it is likely that its drive will stall, forcing a punt that will give the ball to the other team in good field position. Thus, the negative point value reflects the

kickoff methodology on the fly during the 2024 season because of the new dynamic kickoff, and we'll have to do the same thing during the 2025 season because the touchback has been moved to the 35-yard line.

Once we've totaled how many points above or below average can be attributed to special teams, we translate those points into DVOA so the ratings can be added to offense and defense to get total team DVOA.

There are three aspects of special teams that have an impact on wins and losses, but don't show up in the standard special teams rating because a team has little or no influence on them. The first is the length of kickoffs by the opposing team, with an asterisk. Obviously, there are no defenders standing on the 35-yard line, ready to block a kickoff after the whistle blows. Historically, some teams deliberately kicked short to avoid certain top return men, such as Devin Hester and Cordarrelle Patterson. We included adjustments to give teams extra credit for field position on kick returns when kickers were deliberately trying to avoid a return. This doesn't seem to be an issue with the new dynamic kickoff.

The other two items that special teams have little control over are field goals against your team, and punt distance against your team. Research shows no indication that teams can influence the accuracy or strength of field goal kickers and punters, except for blocks. As mentioned above, although blocked field goals and punts are definitely skillful plays, they are so rare that they have no correlation to how well teams have played in the past or will play in the future, thus they are included here as if they were any other missed field goal or botched punt, giving the defense no additional credit for their efforts. The value of these three elements is listed separately as "Hidden" value.

Special teams ratings also do not include two-point conversions or onside kick attempts, both of which, like blocks, are so infrequent as to be statistically insignificant in judging future performance.

## Defense-Adjusted Yards Above Replacement (DYAR)

DVOA is a good stat, but of course it is not a perfect one. One problem is that DVOA, by virtue of being a percentage or rate statistic, doesn't take into account the cumulative value of having a player producing at a league-average level over the course of an above-average number of plays. By definition, an average level of performance is better than that provided by half of the league and the ability to maintain that level of performance while carrying a heavy workload is very valuable indeed. In addition, a player who is involved in a high number of plays can draw the defense's attention away from other parts of the offense, and, if that player is a running back, he can take time off the clock with repeated runs.

Let's say you have a running back who carries the ball 250 times in a season. What would happen if you were to remove this player from his team's offense? What would happen to those 250 plays? Those plays don't disappear with the player,

though some might be lost to the defense because of the associated loss of first downs. Rather those plays would have to be distributed among the remaining players in the offense, with the bulk of them being given to a replacement running back. This is where we arrive at the concept of replacement level, borrowed from our friends at Baseball Prospectus. When a player is removed from an offense, he is usually not replaced by a player of similar ability. Nearly every starting player in the NFL is a starter because he is better than the alternative. Those 250 plays will typically be given to a significantly worse player, someone who is the backup because he doesn't have as much experience and/or talent. A player's true value can then be measured by the level of performance he provides above that replacement level baseline, totaled over all of his run or pass attempts.

Of course, the *real* replacement player is different for each team in the NFL. Last year, the player who was nominally the backup in Pittsburgh (Jaylen Warren) ended up with a higher DVOA than starter Najee Harris. Sometimes a player such as Raheem Mostert will be cut by one team and turn into a star for another. On other teams, the drop from the starter to the backup can be even greater than the general drop to replacement level. (The 2011 Indianapolis Colts will be the hallmark example of this until the end of time.) The choice to start an inferior player or to employ a sub-replacement level backup, however, falls to the team, not the starter being evaluated. Thus we generalize replacement level for the league as a whole as the ultimate goal is to evaluate players independent of the quality of their teammates.

Our estimates of replacement level are computed differently for each position. For quarterbacks, we analyzed situations where two or more quarterbacks had played meaningful snaps for a team in the same season, then compared the overall DVOA of the original starters to the overall DVOA of the replacements. We did not include situations where the backup was actually a top prospect waiting his turn on the bench, since a first-round pick is by no means a "replacement-level" player.

At other positions, there is no easy way to separate players into "starters" and "replacements," since unlike at quarterback, being the starter doesn't make you the only guy who gets in the game. Instead, we used a simpler method, ranking players at each position in each season by attempts. The players who made up the final 10% of passes or runs were split out as "replacement players" and then compared to the players making up the other 90% of plays at that position. This took care of the fact that not every non-starter is a freely available talent.

As noted earlier, the challenge of any new stat is to present it on a scale that's meaningful to those attempting to use it. Saying that C.J. Stroud's passes were worth 190 success value points over replacement in 2023 has very little value without a context to tell us if 190 is good total or a bad one. Therefore, we translate these success values into a number called "Defense-adjusted Yards Above Replacement," or DYAR. Stroud was seventh among quarterbacks with 1,103 passing DYAR. It is our estimate that a generic replacement-level quarterback, throwing in the same situations as Stroud, would have been worth 1,103 fewer yards. Note that this doesn't mean the re-

placement level quarterback would have gained exactly 1,103 fewer yards. First downs, touchdowns, and turnovers all have an estimated yardage value in this system, so what we are saying is that a generic replacement-level quarterback would have fewer yards and touchdowns (and more turnovers) that would total up to be equivalent to the value of 1,103 yards.

## Problems with DVOA and DYAR

Football is a game in which nearly every action requires the work of two or more teammates—in fact, usually 11 teammates all working in unison. Unfortunately, when it comes to individual player ratings, we are still far from the point at which we can determine the value of a player independent from the performance of his teammates. That means that when we say, “In 2024, Josh Jacobs had rushing DVOA of 6.4%,” what we really are saying is, “In 2024, Josh Jacobs, playing in Matt LaFleur’s offensive system with the Green Bay offensive line blocking for him and Jordan Love selling the fake when necessary, had a DVOA of 6.4%.”

DVOA is limited by what’s included in the official NFL play-by-play or tracked by FTN Data game charting. We’ve made a lot of progress over the years in processing old seasons of play-by-play to create DVOA. When we wrote our first book, we only had DVOA for the years 1998 through 2004. Over time that has expanded to include 47 seasons, from 1978 through 2024.

DVOA is limited by what’s included in the official NFL play-by-play or tracked by our game charting partners (explained below). Because we need to have the entire play-by-play of a season in order to compute DVOA and DYAR, these metrics are not yet ready to compare players of today to players throughout the league’s entire history. However, we’ve made a lot of progress over the years in processing old seasons of play-by-play to create DVOA. When we wrote our first book, we only had DVOA for the years 1998 through 2004. Over time that has expanded to include 45 seasons, from 1979 through 2023.

In addition, because we need to turn around DVOA and DYAR quickly during the season before charting can be completed, we do not have charting data such as dropped passes incorporated into these advanced metrics.

## Pythagorean Projection

The Pythagorean projection is an approximation of each team’s wins based solely on their points scored and allowed. This basic concept was introduced by baseball analyst Bill James, who discovered that the record of a baseball team could be very closely approximated by taking the square of team runs scored and dividing it by the sum of the squares of team runs scored and allowed. Statistician Daryl Morey, now general manager of the Philadelphia 76ers, later extended this theorem to professional football, refining the exponent to 2.37 rather than 2.

The problem with that exponent is the same problem we’ve had with DVOA in recent years: the changing offensive levels in the NFL. 2.37 worked great based on the league 30 years ago, but in the current NFL it ends up slightly underprojecting teams that play high-scoring games. The most accurate method is actually to adjust the exponent based on the scoring environment of each individual team. Kansas City games have a lot of points. Pittsburgh games feature fewer points.

This became known as Pythagagenport when Clay Davenport of Baseball Prospectus started doing it with baseball teams. In the middle of the 2011 season, we switched our measurement of Pythagorean wins to a Pythagagenport-style equation, modified for the NFL.<sup>1</sup> The improvement is slight, but noticeable due to the high-scoring teams that have dominated the last few years.

Pythagorean wins are useful as a predictor of year-to-year improvement. Teams that win a minimum of one full game more than their Pythagorean projection tend to regress the following year; teams that win a minimum of one full game less than their Pythagorean projection tend to improve the following year, particularly if they were at or above .500 despite their underachieving. The New Orleans Saints had the worst Pythagorean luck in 2023, going 5-12 despite 6.8 Pythagorean wins. Denver and Tampa Bay each went 10-7 despite underperforming their Pythagorean projections by more than a win apiece. On the other side of the ledger, the Kansas City Chiefs went 15-2 despite just 10.2 Pythagorean wins. By the Pythagorean projection, the Chiefs were the most overachieving team in NFL history. (See table in Kansas City chapter, page 115.) Other teams which outperformed their Pythagorean projections by at least one win included Minnesota, the Los Angeles Rams, Detroit, Houston, and Philadelphia.

## Adjusted Line Yards

One of the most difficult goals of statistical analysis in football is isolating the degree to which each of the 22 men on the field is responsible for the result of a given play. Nowhere is this as significant as the running game, in which one player runs while up to nine other players—including not just linemen but also wideouts and tight ends—block in different directions. None of the statistics we use for measuring rushing—yards, touchdowns, yards per carry—differentiate between the contribution of the running back and the contribution of the offensive line. Neither do our advanced metrics DVOA and DYAR.

We do, however, have enough play-by-play data amassed that we can try to separate the effect that the running back has on a particular play from the effects of the offensive line (and other offensive blockers) and the opposing defense. A team might have two running backs in its stable: RB A, who averages 3.0 yards per carry, and RB B, who averages 3.5 yards per carry. Who is the better back? Imagine that RB A doesn’t just average 3.0 yards per carry, but gets exactly 3 yards on every single carry, while RB B has a highly variable yard-

<sup>1</sup> The equation, for those curious, is  $1.5 \times \log((PF+PA)/G)$ .

age output: sometimes 5 yards, sometimes minus-2 yards, sometimes 20 yards. The difference in variability between the runners can be exploited not only to determine the difference between the runners, but the effect the offensive line has on every running play.

At some point in every long running play, the running back passes all of his offensive line blocks as well as additional blocking backs or receivers. From there on, the rest of the play is dependent on the runner's own speed and elusiveness and the speed and tackling ability of the opposing defense. If Saquon Barkley breaks through the line for 50 yards, avoiding tacklers all the way to the goal line, his offensive line has done a great job—but they aren't responsible for the majority of the yards gained. The trick is figuring out exactly how much they are responsible for.

For each running back carry, we calculated the probability that the back involved would run for the specific yardage on that play based on that back's average yardage per carry and the variability of their yardage from play to play. We also calculated the probability that the offense would get the yardage based on the team's rushing average and variability using all backs *other* than the one involved in the given play, and the probability that the defense would give up the specific amount of yardage based on its average rushing yards allowed per carry and variability.

A regression analysis breaks the value for rushing yardage into the following categories: losses, 0-4 yards, 5-10 yards, and 11+ yards. In general, the offensive line is 20% more responsible for lost yardage than it is for positive gains up to four yards, but 50% less responsible for additional yardage gained between five and ten yards, and not at all responsible for additional yardage past ten yards.

By applying those percentages to every running back carry, we were able to create **adjusted line yards (ALY)**, a statistic that measured offensive line performance. (We don't include carries by receivers, which are usually based on deception rather than straight blocking, or carries by quarterbacks, although we may need to reconsider that given the recent use of the read option in the NFL.) Those numbers are then adjusted based on down, distance, situation, opponent and whether or not a team is in the shotgun. (Because defenses are generally playing pass when the quarterback is in shotgun, the average running back carry from shotgun last year usually gains roughly 0.25 yards more per carry than other carries. Last year, the numbers were 4.60 yards per carry for runs from shotgun compared to 4.15 yards for other carries.) The adjusted numbers are then normalized so that the league average for adjusted line yards per carry is the same as the league average for running back yards per carry. Adjusted line yards numbers are normalized differently in each season, so that normalization is based on that year's average for running back yards per carry rather than a historical average.

The NFL distinguishes between runs made to seven different locations on the line: left/right end, left/right tackle, left/right guard, and middle. Further research showed no statistically significant difference between how well a team performed on runs listed as having gone up the middle or past a guard, so

we separated runs into just five different directions (left/right end, left/right tackle, and middle). Note that there may not be a statistically significant difference between right tackle and middle/guard either but pending further research (and for the sake of symmetry) we still list runs behind the right tackle separately. These splits allow us to evaluate subsections of a team's offensive line, but not necessarily individual linesmen, as we can't account for blocking assignments or guards who pull towards the opposite side of the line after the snap.

## Success Rate

Success rate is a statistic for running backs that measures how consistently they achieve the yardage necessary for a play to be deemed successful. Some running backs will mix a few long runs with a lot of failed runs of one or two yards, while others with similar yards-per-carry averages will consistently gain five yards on first down, or as many yards as necessary on third down. This statistic helps us differentiate between the two.

Since success rate compares rush attempts to other rush attempts, without consideration of passing, the standard for success on first down is slightly lower than those described above for DVOA. In addition, the standard for success changes slightly in the fourth quarter when running backs are used to run out the clock. A team with the lead is satisfied with a shorter run as long as it stays in bounds. Conversely, for a team down by a couple of touchdowns in the fourth quarter, four yards on first down isn't going to be a big help.

The formula for running back success rate is as follows:

- A successful play must gain 40% of needed yards on first down, 60% of needed yards on second down, and 100% of needed yards on third or fourth down.
- If the offense is behind by more than a touchdown in the fourth quarter, the benchmarks switch to 50%, 65%, and 100%.
- If the offense is ahead by any amount in the fourth quarter, the benchmarks switch to 30%, 50%, and 100 percent.

The league-average success rate in 2024 was 50.2%. Success Rate is not adjusted based on defenses faced and is not calculated for quarterbacks and wide receivers who occasionally carry the ball. Note again that our calculation of success rate for running backs is different from the success rate we use as a basis for DVOA, and other success rate calculations you may find across the Internet.

## Approximate Value

Approximate Value is a system created by Doug Drinen of Pro Football Reference. The goal is to put a single number on every season of every NFL player since 1950, using a very broad set of guidelines. The goal is not to make judgments on individual seasons, but rather to have a format for studying groups of seasons that is more accurate than measuring

players with a very broad brush such as “games started” or “number of Pro Bowls.” Skill players are rated primarily using basic stats, while offensive linemen and defensive players are rated in large part based on team performance as well as individual accolades and games started. Advanced stats such as DVOA or game charting metrics are not part of this system. It is obviously imperfect—“approximate” is right there in the name—but it’s valuable for studying groups of draft picks, groups of players by age, and so on. The system is introduced and explained at <https://www.sports-reference.com/blog/approximate-value-methodology/>.

## Expected Points Added

Expected Points Added (EPA) seeks to measure the value of individual plays in terms of points. This is done by calculating the expected average next score before and after each play based on a number of variables including down, distance, field position, and remaining timeouts. This is similar to the system of expected points that underlies our special teams methodology. A freely available model for EPA has become popular for football analysis on the Internet in recent years, and that model is used in a few places in this book.

## 2025 Win Projection System

In this book, each of the 32 NFL teams receives a **2025 Mean Projection** at the beginning of its chapter. These projections stem from three equations that forecast 2025 DVOA for offense, defense, and special teams based on a number of different factors. The system starts by considering the team’s DVOA over the past three seasons and, on offense, a separate projection for the starting quarterback. We also incorporate a measure that’s based on the net personnel change in DYAR among non-quarterbacks (for offense) and the net change in Approximate Value above replacement level (for defense). Certain positions carry more weight than others. Other factors include coaching experience, recent draft history, certain players returning from injury, and turnover rates.

These three equations produce precise numbers representing the most likely outcome, but also produce a range of possibilities, used to determine the probability of each possible offensive, defensive, and special teams DVOA for each team. This is particularly important when projecting football teams, because with only 17 games in a season, a team’s performance may vary wildly from its actual talent level due to a couple of random bounces of the ball or badly timed injuries. In addition, the economic structure of the NFL allows teams to make sudden jumps or drops in overall ability more often than in other sports.

The projection system was rebuilt before the 2024 season using the years 2012-2023 as our data set. These DVOA projections have a correlation coefficient with actual DVOA of .640 and a correlation coefficient with actual wins of .578. By comparison, the previous year’s point differential has a correlation to wins of .427, and the previous year’s win total has a correlation of just .379.

The next step in our forecast involves simulating the season 50,000 times. We plug each team’s mean DVOA projection into an equation that takes the season game by game, determining the home or road team’s chance of winning each game based on DVOA as well as home-field advantage. A random number between 0 and 100 determines whether the home or road team has won that game. The simulation was programmed by Mike Harris.

We use a system we call a “dynamic simulation” to better approximate the true distribution of wins in the NFL. When simulating the season, each team had 2.0% DVOA added or subtracted after a win or loss, reflecting the fact that a win or loss tends to tell us whether a team is truly better or worse than whatever their mean projection had been before the season. Using this method, a team projected with 20.0% DVOA which goes 13-4 will have a 38.0% DVOA entering the playoffs, which is much more realistic. This change gave us more projected seasons at the margins, with fewer seasons at 8-9 or 9-8 and more seasons at 14-3 or 3-14. The dynamic simulation also meant a slight increase in projected wins for the best teams, and a slight decrease for the worst teams. However, the conservative nature of our projection system still means the distribution of mean projected wins has a much smaller spread than the actual win-loss records we will see by the end of December. We will continue to experiment with changes to the simulation in order to produce the most accurate possible forecast of the NFL season in future years.

## Game Charting Data

Each of the formulas listed above relies primarily on the play-by-play data published by the NFL. When we began to analyze the NFL, this was all that we had to work with. Just as a television broadcast has a color commentator who gives more detail to the facts related by the play-by-play announcer, so too do we need some color commentary to provide contextual information that breathes life into these plain lines of numbers and text. We added this color commentary with game charting.

Game charting data in this book comes from two different sources:

- Since we partnered with FTN in 2023, most of our game charting now comes from FTN’s data set.
- Occasionally you will also find some charting data in this book from our friends at Sports Info Solutions.

Game charting is significantly easier now that the NFL makes coaches’ film available through NFL+ on NFL.com. This tape includes sideline and end zone perspectives for each play, and shows all 22 players at all times, making it easier to see the cause-and-effect of certain actions taken on the field. Nonetheless, all game charting is still imperfect. You often cannot tell which players did their jobs particularly well or made mistakes without knowing the play call and each player’s assignment, particularly when it comes to zone coverage or pass rushers who reach the quarterback

without being blocked. Therefore, the goal of game charting is *not* to “grade” players, but rather to attempt to mark specific events: a pass pressure, a blown block, a dropped interception, and so on.

We emphasize that all data from game charting is unofficial. Other sources for football statistics may keep their own measurements of yards after catch or how teams perform against the blitz. Our data will not necessarily match theirs. Even the different companies we use for data have a number of disagreements, marking different events on the same play because it can be difficult to determine the definition of a “pressure” or a “dropped pass.” However, any other group that is publicly tracking this data is also working off the same footage, and thus will run into the same issues of difficulty and subjectivity.

## How to Read the Team Summary Box

Here is a rundown of all the tables and stats that appear in the 32 team chapters. Each team chapter begins with a box in the upper-right hand corner that gives a summary of our statistics for that team, as follows:

**2024 Record** gives each team’s actual win-loss record. **Pythagorean Wins** gives the approximate number of wins expected last year based on this team’s raw totals of points scored and allowed, along with their NFL rank. **Snap-Weighted Age** gives the average age of the team in 2024, weighted based on how many snaps each player was on the field and ranked from oldest (Miami, first at 27.8) to youngest (Green Bay, 32nd at 25.3). **Average Opponent** gives a ranking of last year’s schedule strength based on the average DVOA of all 17 opponents faced during the regular season. Teams are ranked from the hardest schedule of 2024 (Cleveland) to the easiest (Miami).

**Total DVOA** gives the team’s total DVOA rating, with rank. **Offense, Defense, and Special Teams** list the team’s DVOA rating in each category, along with NFL rank. Remember that good offenses and special teams have positive DVOA numbers, while a negative DVOA means better defense, so the lowest defensive DVOA is ranked No. 1 (last year, Philadelphia).

**2025 Mean Projection** gives the average number of wins for this team based on the 2025 Win Projection System described earlier in this chapter. Please note that we do not expect any teams to win the exact number of games in their mean projection. First of all, no team can win 0.8 of a game. Second, because these projections represent a whole range of possible values, the averages naturally tend to drift towards 8.5 wins. Obviously, we’re not expecting a season where no team goes 4-13 or 13-4. For a better way to look at the projections, we offer **Postseason Odds**, which give each team’s chance of making the postseason based on our simulation, and **Super Bowl Appearance** odds, which give each team’s chance of representing its conference in Super Bowl LX. The average team will make the playoffs in 43.8% of simulations and the Super Bowl in 6.3% of simulations.

**Projected Average Opponent** gives the team’s strength of schedule for 2025. This number is based not on last year’s record but on the mean projected DVOA for each opponent. A positive schedule is harder, a negative schedule easier. Teams are ranked from the hardest projected schedule (New York Giants, first) to the easiest (San Francisco, 32nd). This strength of schedule projection does not consider which games are home or away, or the timing of the bye week.

The final column of the box gives the team’s chances of finishing in four different basic categories of success:

- On the Clock (0-5 wins; NFL average 17%)
- Mediocrity (6-8 wins; NFL average 33%)
- Playoff Contender (9-11 wins; NFL average 33%)
- Super Bowl Contender (12+ wins; NFL average 17%)

The percentage given for each category is dependent not only on how good we project the team to be in 2025, but the level of variation possible in that projection, and the expected performance of the teams on the schedule.

You’ll also find a table with the team’s 2025 schedule placed within each chapter, along with a graph showing each team’s 2024 week-to-week performance by single-game DVOA. Black dots represent wins, white dots represent losses, and a shaded dot represents a tie. The second, dotted line on the graph represents a five-week moving average of each team’s performance, displaying a longer-term view of when teams were improving and declining. After the essays come statistical tables and comments related to that team and its specific units.

## Weekly Performance

The first table gives a quick look at the team’s week-to-week performance in 2024 (Table 3).

This includes the playoffs for those teams that made the postseason, with the four weeks of playoffs numbered 19 (wild card) through 22 (Super Bowl). All other tables in the team chapters represent regular-season performance only unless otherwise noted.

According to the first line of this table, Cincinnati opened the 2024 season with a 16-10 loss to New England. This game is listed with a Post-Game Win Expectancy (**PGWE**) of 15%. PGWE asks the question: based on the total stats each team put together, how often would we expect this team to have won the game? PGWE considers VOA splits (without opponent adjustments) as well as total plays and penalties. For example, looking at the total stats of the Week 1 New England at Cincinnati contest, we would expect Cincinnati to win the game only 15% of the time. The team with the higher PGWE does not always win the game, as you can see from Cincinnati’s Week 2 loss to Kansas City despite a PGWE of 70%. The most surprising win of 2024 by PGWE was Tampa Bay’s 20-16 victory over Detroit in Week 2. The Lions outgained the Buccaneers 463 yards to 216 yards and the Buccaneers had a PGWE of just 3.4%.

Returning to our sample table, **YDF** and **YDA** are net yards

**Table 3: 2024 Bengals by Week**

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	NE	L	15%	10	16	224	290	-2	-37%	-18%	16%	-2%
2	at KC	L	70%	25	26	320	286	+2	15%	-6%	-21%	0%
3	WAS	L	40%	33	38	436	356	0	27%	64%	23%	-14%
4	at CAR	W	80%	34	24	373	375	0	-3%	4%	9%	2%
5	BAL	L	46%	38	41	442	520	0	40%	25%	-11%	4%
6	at NYG	W	50%	17	7	304	309	0	-15%	-10%	7%	2%
7	at CLE	W	99%	21	14	223	336	+2	-3%	-18%	3%	18%
8	PHI	L	0%	17	37	280	397	-2	-41%	11%	35%	-17%
9	LV	W	98%	41	24	373	217	+1	25%	23%	-6%	-4%
10	at BAL	L	21%	34	35	470	389	-1	12%	26%	12%	-2%
11	at LAC	L	14%	27	34	452	435	+1	-12%	18%	15%	-15%
12	BYE											
13	PIT	L	3%	38	44	375	520	-2	-37%	11%	60%	12%
14	at DAL	W	87%	27	20	433	322	+1	15%	30%	11%	-4%
15	at TEN	W	99%	37	27	370	374	+2	9%	5%	-5%	0%
16	CLE	W	100%	24	6	326	273	+2	39%	20%	-16%	3%
17	DEN	W	89%	30	24	499	329	0	15%	30%	12%	-3%
18	at PIT	W	88%	19	17	314	193	-1	36%	-9%	-32%	12%

on offense and net yards against the defense. These numbers do not include penalty yardage or special teams yardage. **TO** represents the turnover margin. Unlike other parts of the book in which we consider all fumbles as equal, this only represents actual turnovers: fumbles lost and interceptions. So, for example, the Bengals forced two more turnovers than Kansas City in Week 2 but turned the ball over two more times than New England in Week 1.

Finally, you'll see DVOA ratings for this game: **Total DVOA** first, then offense (**Off**), defense (**Def**), and special teams (**ST**). Note that these are DVOA ratings, adjusted for opponent, so a loss to a good team will often be listed with a higher rating than a close win over a bad team. For example, the Bengals have positive DVOA for their Week 5 loss to Baltimore but negative DVOA for a Week 6 win over a poor New York Giants team.

## Trends and Splits

Next to the week-to-week performance is a table giving DVOA for different portions of a team's performance, on both offense and defense (Table 4).

**Total DVOA** gives total offensive, and defensive DVOA in all situations. **Unadjusted VOA** represents the breakdown of

**Table 4: Cardinals Trends and Splits**

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	8.4%	11	-0.6%	14
Unadjusted VOA	9.3%	11	4.3%	16
Weighted Trend	8.9%	11	0.7%	17
Variance	2.8%	2	6.8%	26
Average Opponent	-0.1%	19	3.3%	3
Passing	24.4%	13	4.6%	15
Rushing	-0.2%	9	-7.4%	19
First Down	8.7%	9	0.8%	16
Second Down	7.2%	10	-3.5%	14
Third Down	9.5%	11	1.5%	17
First Half	12.5%	9	7.4%	22
Second Half	4.4%	12	-9.5%	10
Red Zone	0.4%	15	-7.2%	13
Late and Close	5.7%	17	7.0%	17

play-by-play considering situation but not opponent. A team whose offensive DVOA is higher than its offensive VOA played a harder-than-average schedule of opposing defenses; a team with a lower defensive DVOA than defensive VOA played a harder-than-average schedule of opposing offenses.

**Weighted Trend** lowers the importance of earlier games to give a better idea of how the team was playing at the end of the regular season. The final four weeks of the season are full strength; moving backwards through the season, each week is given less and less weight until the first three weeks of the season, which are not included at all. **Variance** is the same as noted above, with a higher percentage representing less consistency. This is true for both offense and defense: Arizona, for example, was very consistent on offense (2.8%, second) but not very consistent on defense (6.8%, 26th). **Average Opponent** is the same thing that appears in the box to open each chapter, except split in half: the average DVOA of all opposing defenses (for offense) or the average DVOA of all opposing offenses (for defense).

**Passing** and **Rushing** are fairly self-explanatory. Passing DVOA includes quarterback scrambles. Rushing DVOA still includes designed runs by quarterbacks as well as handoffs and broken plays.

The next three lines split out DVOA on **First Down**, **Second Down**, and **Third Down**. Third Down here includes

**Table 5: Buccaneers Five-Year Performance**

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rk	Off	Rk	Def	Rk	ST	Rk	Off AGL	Rk	Def AGL	Rk	Off Age	Rk	Def Age	Rk	ST Age	Rk
2020	11-5	11.2	12.2	492	355	+8	26.8%	4	17.4%	3	-12.4%	5	-2.9%	26	12.4	1	18.2	2	27.7	3	26.3	17	26.1	14
2021	13-4	12.2	12.5	511	353	+10	23.9%	4	24.2%	1	-2.0%	13	-2.4%	27	34.4	9	46.9	22	28.5	1	27.1	4	26.4	9
2022	8-9	7.1	7.4	313	358	-2	0.7%	14	0.6%	18	-4.0%	11	-4.0%	31	67.5	27	46.4	23	28.0	1	26.8	8	25.9	19
2023	9-8	9.2	7.5	348	325	+8	-1.2%	18	-3.6%	20	-2.4%	14	0.0%	18	24.6	14	26.9	12	25.7	30	26.3	21	25.2	31
2024	10-7	11.1	10.0	502	385	-5	9.0%	11	12.3%	7	1.2%	16	-2.1%	26	32.4	16	43.3	20	25.6	29	26.4	19	25.6	26

fourth downs on which a team runs a regular offensive play instead of punting or attempting a field goal. **First Half** and **Second Half** represent the first two quarters and last two quarters (plus overtime), not the first two months and last two months of the regular season. Next comes DVOA in the **Red Zone**, which is any offensive play starting from the defense's 20-yard line through the goal line. The final split is **Late and Close**, which includes any play in the second half or overtime when the teams are within eight points of each other in either direction. (Eight points, of course, is the biggest deficit that can be made up on a single possession, a touchdown and two-point conversion.)

## Five-Year Performance

This table gives each team's performance over the past five seasons. (Table 5). It includes win-loss record, Pythagorean Wins, **Estimated Wins**, points scored and allowed, and turnover margin.<sup>2</sup> Estimated wins are based on a formula that estimates how many games a team would have been expected to win based on performance in specific situations, normalized to eliminate luck (fumble recoveries, opponents' missed field goals, etc.) and assuming average schedule strength. The formula emphasizes consistency and overall DVOA as well as DVOA in a few specifically important situations. The next columns of this table give total DVOA along with DVOA for offense, defense, and special teams, and the rank for each among that season's 32 NFL teams.

The next four columns give the adjusted games lost (AGL) for starters on both offense and defense, along with rank. Our total for starters here includes players who take over as starters due to another injury and then get injured themselves, such as quarterback Jameis Winston for Cleveland last season. We also count players who would have started if not for injury; for example, Elijah Mitchell counts for San Francisco in the weeks that Christian McCaffrey was also injured. And our total includes important situational players who may not necessarily start, such as pass-rush specialists and slot receivers. Adjusted games lost was introduced in *Pro Football Prospectus 2008*; it gives a weighted estimate of the probability that players would miss games based on how they are listed on the injury report. Unlike a count of "starter games missed," this accounts for the fact that a player listed as questionable who does in fact play is not playing at 100% capability. Teams are ranked from the fewest injuries (2024: Baltimore on both offense and defense) to the most (2024: New Orleans on offense, Detroit on defense).

## Individual Offensive Statistics

Each team chapter contains a table giving passing and receiving numbers for any player who either threw five passes or was thrown five passes, along with rushing numbers for any players who carried the ball at least five times. These numbers also appear in the player comments at the end of the book

(except for runs by wide receivers). By putting them together in the team chapters we hope we make it easier to compare the performances of different players on the same team.

Players who are no longer on the team are marked with an asterisk. New players who were on a different team in 2024 are in italics. Changes should be accurate as of July 1. Rookies are not included.

All players are listed with DYAR and DVOA. Passing statistics then list total pass plays (**Plays**), net yardage (**NtYds**), and net yards per pass (**Avg**). These numbers include not just passes (and the positive yardage from them) but aborted snaps and sacks (and the negative yardage from them). Then comes average yards after catch (**YAC**) based on charted receptions, not total pass attempts. The final three numbers are completion percentage (**C%**), passing touchdowns (**TD**), and interceptions (**Int**).

It is important to note that the tables in the team chapters contain a few adjustments, while the tables in the player comments later in the book contain official NFL totals, at least when it comes to standard numbers like receptions and yardage. This results in a few differences between the two:

- Net yardage for quarterbacks in the team chapter tables includes the lost yardage from sacks and intentional grounding penalties. Aborted snaps are considered as run plays.
- Tables in the team chapters omit kneeldowns from run totals and clock-stopping spikes from pass totals.
- "Skill players" who played for multiple teams in 2024 are only listed in team chapters with stats from that specific team; combined stats are listed in the player comments section.

**Table 6: Patriots Passing**

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
D.Maye	-103	-15.4%	371	2047	5.5	5.3	66.8%	15	10
J.Brisett*	-235	-32.4%	178	712	4.0	4.7	59.4%	2	1
J.Milton*	116	53.6%	29	226	7.8	3.3	78.6%	1	0
J.Dobbs	10	-7.9%	48	333	6.9	3.2	69.6%	2	2

Rushing statistics start with DYAR and DVOA, then list rushing plays and net yards along with average yards per carry and rushing touchdowns. The final two columns are fumbles (**Fum**)—both those lost to the defense and those recovered by the offense—and Success Rate (**Suc**), explained earlier in this

**Table 7: Vikings Rushing**

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
A.Jones	57	-3.4%	255	1138	4.5	5	3	51%
C.Akers*	-12	-13.5%	64	297	4.6	1	0	47%
T.Chandler	-30	-22.1%	56	182	3.3	0	0	39%
S.Darnold*	1	-11.7%	44	206	4.7	1	3	-
J.Mason	52	-0.5%	153	789	5.2	3	3	50%

<sup>2</sup> For 2022, the Pythagorean Wins and Estimated Wins for Buffalo and Cincinnati are both based on 16 total games rather than 17.

chapter. Fumbles listed in the rushing table include all quarterback fumbles on sacks and aborted snaps, as well as running back fumbles on receptions, but not wide receiver fumbles.

**Table 8: Broncos Receiving**

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
C.Sutton	166	2.7%	135	81	1081	13.3	2.2	8	60%
D.Vele	126	15.1%	55	41	475	11.6	3.1	3	75%
M.Mims	43	-1.7%	53	39	503	12.7	11.9	6	75%
T.Franklin	-101	-37.4%	53	28	263	9.4	5.8	2	53%
L.Humphrey*	-40	-23.5%	45	31	293	9.5	6.2	1	69%
J.Reynolds*	38	11.4%	19	12	183	15.3	2.9	1	63%
T.Sherfield	41	47.2%	9	8	83	10.4	5.0	1	89%
L.Krull	-9	-13.9%	23	19	152	8.0	3.5	0	83%
A.Trautman	7	-2.1%	22	13	188	14.5	7.5	2	59%
N.Adkins	39	29.7%	15	14	115	8.2	5.4	3	93%
G.Dulcich*	-51	-78.8%	12	5	28	5.6	3.0	0	42%
E.Engram	-36	-15.9%	64	47	365	7.8	3.2	1	73%
J.Williams*	-15	-17.9%	70	52	346	6.7	7.6	0	74%
J.McLaughlin	-33	-38.2%	27	24	76	3.2	7.0	2	89%
M.Burton	22	16.9%	10	10	65	6.5	4.1	1	100%
J.K.Dobbins	-73	-47.7%	39	32	153	4.7	6.2	0	84%

Receiving statistics start with DYAR and DVOA and then list the number of passes thrown to this receiver (**Plays**), the number of passes caught (**Catch**) and the total receiving yards (**Yds**). Yards per catch (**Y/C**) includes total yardage per reception, based on standard play-by-play, while yards after catch (**YAC**) is based on information from our game charting project. Finally, we list total receiving touchdowns, and catch percentage (**C%**), which is the percentage of passes intended for this receiver which were caught. Wide receivers, tight ends, and running backs are separated on the table by horizontal lines.

## Performance Based on Personnel

These tables provide a look at performance in 2024 based on personnel packages. These packages are based on how a player is listed on the roster, not where he lines up in the for-

**Table 9: NFL Offensive Performance by Personnel Group, 2024**

Pers.	Plays	Pct	Yds	DVOA
11	20920	62.2%	5.7	5.8%
12	7340	21.8%	5.6	6.6%
21	2065	6.1%	6.1	8.3%
13	1069	3.2%	4.8	-4.0%
22	573	1.7%	5.1	-1.9%
612	384	1.1%	3.6	-17.6%
611	292	0.9%	4.5	-16.8%
02	153	0.5%	5.4	11.2%
10	146	0.4%	4.7	-15.1%
01	140	0.4%	6.0	3.0%

mation; a tight end lined up wide is still counted as a tight end and not a wide receiver. There are four different tables, representing:

- Offense based on personnel
- Offense based on opponent's defensive personnel
- Defense based on personnel
- Defense based on opponent's offensive personnel

Most of these tables feature the top five personnel groupings for each team. Occasionally, we will list the personnel group which ranks sixth if the sixth group is either particularly interesting or nearly as common as the fifth group. Each personnel group is listed with its frequency among 2024 plays, yards per play, and DVOA. Offensive personnel are also listed with how often the team in question called a running play instead of a pass play from given personnel. (Quarterback scrambles are included as pass plays, not runs.)

Offensive personnel are given in the standard two-digit format where the first digit is running backs and the second digit is tight ends. You can figure out wide receivers by subtracting that total from five, with a couple of exceptions. Plays with six or seven offensive linemen will have a three-digit listing such as “611” or “612.” Any play with a non-quarterback taking a direct snap from the quarterback position was counted as “Wildcat.”

When defensive players come in to play offense, defensive backs are counted as wide receivers and linebackers as tight ends. Defensive linemen who come in as offensive linemen are counted as offensive linemen; if they come in as blocking fullbacks, we count them as running backs. Quarterbacks who line up at another position are counted as wide receivers except for Taysom Hill, who is counted as a tight end.

We do not list personnel data based on the number of defensive linemen and linebackers. This is because of the difficulty in separating between the two, especially with a simplified designation of players as defensive linemen or linebackers based simply on who has a hand on the ground. There are just too many hybrid defensive schemes in today’s game: 4-3 schemes where one or both ends rush the passer from a standing position, or hybrid schemes that one-gap on one side of the nose tackle and two-gap on the other. Therefore, defensive personnel are listed in only five categories:

- Base (three or four defensive backs)
- Nickel (five defensive backs)

**Table 10: NFL Defensive Performance by Personnel Group, 2024**

Pers.	Plays	Pct	Yds	DVOA
Nickel	21858	65.0%	5.6	-0.4%
Base	7822	23.3%	5.4	0.2%
Dime+	3667	10.9%	6.1	2.1%
Goal Line	262	0.8%	2.1	2.4%

- Dime+ (six or more defensive backs)
- Goal Line (short-yardage situations)

11, or three-wide personnel, is by far the most common personnel group in the modern NFL. It was used on 62.2% of plays last season. After 11 personnel came the standard two-tight end set 12 personnel (21.8% of plays) and the more traditional 21 personnel (6.1%). Defenses lined up in Base on 23% of plays, Nickel on 65% of plays, Dime+ on 11% of plays, and Goal Line on 1% of plays. Table 9 lists the average performance from the ten most common offensive personnel groups in 2024. Note that because we don't track personnel grouping on penalties, those negative plays are all missing from this analysis, so the average offensive DVOA for measuring personnel groups is 5.0% rather than 0.0%. In Table 10, which shows the same numbers from the defensive perspective, the average DVOA is still 0.0%.

## Strategic Tendencies

The Strategic Tendencies table presents a mix of information garnered from a number of sources, including standard play-by-play, publicly available Next Gen Stats data, and charting from FTN Data. It gives you an idea of what kind of plays teams run in what situations and with what personnel. Each category is given a league-wide **Rank** from most often (1) to least often (32) except as noted below. The sample table shown here lists the NFL average in each category for 2024.

The first column of strategic tendencies lists how often teams ran in different situations. These ratios are based on the type of play, not the actual result, so quarterback scrambles count as "passes" while quarterback sneaks, draws and option plays count as "runs."

We've made a change for this year's book. Instead of raw run/pass ratio, these numbers now represent Run Rate Over Expected (RROE) based on the model of expected pass/run ratio that is part of the NFLfastR statistical package. Note on Table 11 that the average team ran more often than the model would otherwise suggest in most situations in 2024, with runs on 1.7% more plays than expected overall.

**Runs, all** gives RROE for all plays and **Runs, first down** gives RROE for just first downs. **Runs, second-and-long** is the percentage of runs on second down with seven or more yards to go, giving you an idea of how teams follow up a failed first down. **Runs, power sit.** is the RROE on third or fourth down with 1-2 yards to go, or at the goal line with 1-2 yards to go. **Runs, behind 2H** tells you how often

teams ran when they were behind in the second half, generally a passing situation. **Runs, ahead 2H** tells you how often teams ran when they were ahead in the second half, generally a running situation.

The final entry in the first column gives the percentage of each offense's plays that were coded as **Run-Pass Options** by FTN charters.

The second column gives information about offensive formations and personnel.

The first three entries detail formation, i.e. where players were lined up on the field. **Form: Single Back** lists how often the team lined up with only one player in the backfield, **Form: Empty Back** lists how often the team lined up with no players in the backfield, and **Form: Multi Back** lists how often the team lined up with two or three players in the backfield.

The next three entries are based on personnel, no matter where players were lined up in the formation. **Pers: 3+ WR** marks how often the team plays with three or more wide receivers. **Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL** marks how often the team plays with either more than one tight end or more than five offensive linemen. **Pers: 6+ OL** marks just plays with more than five offensive linemen. Finally, we give the percentage of plays where a team used **Shotgun** or **Pistol** in 2024. This does not count "Wildcat" or direct snap plays involving a non-quarterback.

The third column shows how the defensive **Pass Rush** worked in 2024.

**Rush 3/Rush 4/Rush 5/Rush 6+**: The percentage of pass plays (including quarterback scrambles) on which FTN recorded this team rushing the passer with three or fewer defenders, four defenders, five defenders, and six or more defenders.

**Edge Rusher Sacks/Interior DL Sacks/Second Level Sacks:** These numbers list how often sacks came from each level of the defense. Second-level sacks combine sacks from off-ball linebackers plus sacks from defensive backs.

The fourth column has more data on the use of defensive backs.

**4 DB/5DB/6+ DB:** The percentage of plays where this defense lined up with four, five, and six or more defensive backs.

**Man Coverage:** The percentage of passes where this defense was in some sort of man coverage, according to FTN. This does not include plays marked with "combination" coverage, or an indecipherable combination of man and zone.

**Middle of Field Closed (MOFC):** This designation lists how often the defense lined up with a single high safety in the middle of the field. This includes plays where the coverage

**Table 11: Average Strategic Tendencies, 2024**

Runs vs. Expected	Rk	Formation	Rk	Pass Rush	Rk	Secondary	Rk	Strategy	Rk	
Runs, all	+1.7%	--	Form: Single Back	74%	--	Rush 3	4.4%	--	Play Action	23% --
Runs, first down	+2.4%	--	Form: Empty Back	8%	--	Rush 4	70.1%	--	Offensive Motion	49% --
Runs, second-long	-1.6%	--	Form: Multi Back	18%	--	Rush 5	19.2%	--	6+ DB	11% --
Runs, power sit.	+4.9%	--	Pers: 3+ WR	64%	--	Rush 6+	6.2%	--	Man Coverage	44% --
Runs, behind 2H	+2.4%	--	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	30%	--	Edge Rusher Sacks	51.2%	--	Avg Box (Off)	6.08 --
Runs, ahead 2H	+1.6%	--	Pers: 6+ OL	3%	--	Interior DL Sacks	29.0%	--	Avg Box (Def)	6.08 --
Run-Pass Options	3.6%	--	Shotgun/Pistol	77%	--	Second Level Sacks	19.8%	--	MOFC	56% --
									Offensive Pace	31.49 --
									Defensive Pace	31.45 --
									Go for it on 4th	1.11 --

shell was marked as Cover 1, Cover 3, or Cover 9. The opposite designation, Middle of Field Open (MOFO), includes plays marked as Cover 0, Cover 2, Cover 2 Man, Cover 4, or Cover 6. Plays listed as combination or unknown coverage were not included in the calculations.

**CB1 on WR1:** This is new for 2025, replacing “CB by Sides” from previous books. It tells the same story. For each team, we looked at the qualifying cornerback who covered the opposition’s WR1 on the highest percentage of snaps. Note that this may not be the cornerback who the public considers CB1. Baltimore, for example, had Brandon Stephens covering WR1 on 33% of his coverage snaps but Marlon Humphrey covering WR1 on only 23% of his coverage snaps. Therefore, the CB1 on WR1 number for Baltimore is 33%. (They ranked 19th.)

**S/CB Cover Ratio:** This is our attempt to track which teams like to use their safeties as hybrid safety/corners and put them in man coverage on wide receivers. This ratio takes all pass targets with a defensive back in coverage, and then gives what percentage of those targets belonged to a player who is rostered as a safety, ranging from Houston (36%) to Buffalo (9%). Note that FTN Data charting had fewer targets assigned to safeties in coverage in 2024 compared to past years.

Finally, in the final column, we have some elements of game strategy.

**Play action:** The percentage of pass plays (including quarterback scrambles) which began with a play-action fake to the running back. This percentage does not include fake end-arounds unless there was also a fake handoff.

**Offensive motion:** The percentage of offensive plays which began with a man in motion before the snap.

**Average Box:** These items list the average number of men in the box faced by each team’s offense and the average number of men in the box used by this team’s defense, according to FTN charting.

**Offensive Pace:** Situation-neutral pace represents the seconds of game clock per offensive play, with the following restrictions: no drives are included if they start in the fourth quarter or final five minutes of the first half, and drives are only included if the score is within six points or less. Teams are ranked from quickest pace (Washington, 29.4 seconds) to slowest pace (Tennessee, 34.9 seconds).

**Defensive Pace:** Situation-neutral pace based on seconds of game clock per defensive play. This is a representation of how a defense was approached by its opponents, not the strategy of the defense itself. Teams are ranked from quickest pace (Carolina, 30.1 seconds) to slowest pace (Buffalo, 32.9 seconds).

**Go for it on fourth:** This is the Aggressiveness Index (AI) introduced by Jim Armstrong in *Pro Football Prospectus 2006*, which measures how often a team goes for a first down in various fourth down situations compared to the league average. A coach over 1.00 is more aggressive, and one below 1.00 is less aggressive. Coaches are ranked from most aggressive to least aggressive. Coaches have become so much more aggressive on fourth downs since 2018 that three years ago we had to recalculate the baselines that represent average for Aggressiveness Index. The AI you’ll find in this book features those new base-

lines calculated from just the last seven seasons.

Following each strategic tendencies table, you’ll find a series of comments highlighting interesting data from that team’s charting numbers. This includes DVOA ratings split for things like different formations, draw plays, or play-action passing. Please note that all DVOA ratings given in these comments are standard DVOA with no adjustments for the specific situation being analyzed. The average DVOA for a specific situation will not necessarily be 0%, and it won’t necessarily be the same for offense and defense. For example, the average offensive DVOA on play-action passes in 2024 was 24.8%, while the average defensive DVOA was 18.6%.

## How to Read the Offensive Line Tables

All offensive linemen who had at least 150 snaps in 2024 (not including special teams) are listed in the offensive line tables along with the position they played most often and their **Age** as of the 2025 season, listed simply as the difference between birth year and 2025. Players born in January and December of the same year will have the same listed age.

Then we list games, games started, snaps, and offensive penalties (**Pen**) for each lineman. The penalty total includes declined and offsetting penalties. Then comes the FTN count of blown blocks on runs (**Run BB**) and pressures allowed (**Press**). Pressures is a term that encompasses sacks, quarterback knockdowns, and hurries. Any time an offensive lineman blew a block that helped lead to one of these events, he was registered with a pressure allowed. We also list the **Rate** of pressures allowed, which is pressures allowed divided by estimated snaps on pass plays, and then each player’s **Rank** at his position. Players are ranked if they had at least 400 snaps last season. Players who played multiple positions are ranked at the first position listed. There are 36 players ranked at left tackle, 32 at left guard, 36 at center, 35 at right guard, and 37 at right tackle.

We have a metric to mark bad plays but we don’t have a metric that consistently marks good plays. Pressures and blown blocks allowed should not be taken as the end all and be all when judging individual linemen. These are simply two metrics that go into the conversation.

As with all player tables in the team chapters, players who are no longer on the team have an asterisk and those new to the team in 2025 are in italics.

The second offensive line table lists the last three years of our various line stats.

The first column gives standard yards per carry by each team’s running backs (**Yds**). The next two columns give adjusted line yards (**ALY**) followed by rank among the 32 teams.

**Power** gives the percentage of runs in short-yardage “power situations” that achieved a first down or touchdown. Those situations include any third or fourth down with one or two yards to go, and any runs in goal-to-go situations from the two-yard line or closer. Unlike the other rushing numbers on the Offensive Line table, Power includes quarterbacks.

**Table 12: Colts Offensive Line**

Player	Pos	Age	G/ GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/ GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
Q.Nelson	LG	29	17/17	1083	11	4	20	3.3%	18	D.Tucker	RG	25	14/7	464	1	7	13	5.0%	33
B.Raimann	LT	28	14/14	856	5	6	22	4.6%	15	M.Glowinski*	RG	33	5/5	355	3	3	13	6.6%	--
B.Smith	RT	29	12/12	731	12	9	28	6.9%	31	T.Bortolini	C	23	12/5	351	0	6	3	1.5%	--
R.Kelly*	C	32	10/10	601	1	6	5	1.5%	3	W.Fries*	RG	27	5/5	268	1	1	3	2.0%	--
M.Goncalves	RT/LT	24	17/8	566	1	5	18	5.7%	24										
Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont		
2022	4.20	4.32	22	58%	29	16%	12	1.20	17	0.60	24	60	9.2%	28	30.1%	24	27		
2023	4.34	4.10	19	54%	31	19%	22	1.15	16	0.82	8	41	7.1%	15	28.0%	14	27		
2024	4.46	4.02	28	64%	20	20%	26	1.09	25	1.09	5	32	6.2%	11	31.4%	17	25		
2024 ALY by direction:		Left End: 2.66 (31)				Left Tackle: 4.47 (12)				Mid/Guard: 4.23 (24)				Right Tackle: 3.45 (29)				Right End: 3.70 (19)	

**Stuff** gives the percentage of runs that are stuffed for zero or negative gain. Since being stuffed is bad, teams are ranked from stuffed least often (1) to most often (32).

**Second-Level (2Lev) Yards and Open-Field (OpFld)** Yards represent yardage where the running back has the most power over the amount of the gain. Second-level yards represent the number of yards per carry that come five to ten yards past the line of scrimmage. Open-field yards represent the number of yards per carry that come 11 or more yards past the line of scrimmage. A team with a low ranking in adjusted line yards but a high ranking in open-field yards is heavily dependent on its running back breaking long runs to make the running game work, and therefore tends to have a less consistent running attack. Second-level yards fall somewhere in between.

The next five columns give information about pass protection. That starts with total sacks, followed by adjusted sack rate (**ASR**) and its rank among the 32 teams. Some teams allow a lot of sacks because they throw a lot of passes; adjusted sack rate accounts for this by dividing sacks and intentional grounding by total pass plays. It is also adjusted for situation (sacks are much more common on third down, particularly third-and-long) and opponent, all of which makes it a better measurement than raw sacks totals. Remember that quarterbacks share responsibility for sacks, and two different quarterbacks behind the same line can have very different adjusted sack rates.

Next comes **pressure rate**: this is the percentage of pass plays where FTN has marked pass pressure, combining sacks, QB knockdowns, and hurries. All three years listed are based on FTN numbers rather than numbers from our past books. The average league pressure rate was 27.3% in 2022, 29.4% in 2023, and 30.8% in 2024.

We've listed pressure rate allowed in the offensive line section but it's important to be aware that quarterbacks share responsibility for pressure rates, just like with sacks.

Finally, continuity score (**Cont.**) tells you how much continuity each offensive line had from game-to-game in that season. It was introduced in the Cleveland chapter of *Pro Football Prospectus 2007*. Continuity score starts with 51 and then subtracts:

- The number of players over five who started at least one game on the offensive line;
- The number of times the team started at least one different lineman compared to the game before; and
- The difference between 17 and that team's longest streak where the same line started consecutive games.

No team had a perfect continuity score of 51 in 2024. Baltimore had the highest score at 46 and New England had the lowest score at 18.

Finally, underneath the table in italics we give 2024 adjusted line yards in each of the five directions with rank among the 32 teams. The league average was 4.39 on left end runs (**LE**), 4.31 on left tackle runs (**LT**), 4.53 on runs up the middle (**MID**), 4.20 on right tackle runs (**RT**), and 3.91 on right end runs (**RE**).

## How to Read the Defensive Front Tables

Defensive players make plays. Plays aren't just tackles—interceptions and pass deflections change the course of the game, and so does the act of forcing a fumble or beating the offensive players to a fumbled ball. While some plays stop a team on third down and force a punt, others merely stop a receiver after he's caught a 30-yard pass. We can measure opportunities in pass coverage thanks to the FTN game charting data.

Defensive players are listed in these tables if they meet one of two baselines:

- 1) at least 20 plays during the 2024 season, or
- 2) at least eight games with 25% of the team's defensive snaps in those games.

Defensive players who were with two teams last year are only listed with the final team they played with but stats include both teams.

### Defensive Linemen/Edge Rushers

As we've noted earlier in this toolbox: as hybrid defenses

**Table 13: Eagles Defensive Front**

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run					Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Ds rpt
J.Carter	24	DE	16	831	48	6.1%	22	38	19	12	33	79%	29	1.9	26	4.5	11	34	6
M.Williams*	26	DE	17	501	25	3.0%	87	18	12	1	18	61%	82	2.7	58	5.0	5	26	2
M.Ojomo	24	DE	17	388	20	2.4%	--	9	2	4	18	50%	--	2.8	--	0.0	5	14	0
J.Davis	25	DT	17	388	29	3.5%	--	25	6	5	23	83%	--	2.1	--	1.0	0	4	2

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run					Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Ds rpt
J.Sweat*	28	OLB	16	622	43	5.5%	38	35	15	0	31	74%	44	3.4	83	8.0	9	37	2
N.Smith	24	OLB	16	546	40	5.1%	46	24	12	1	24	54%	93	3.0	68	6.5	4	25	2
C.Harris*	30	OLB	13	472	23	3.2%	91	18	8	3	18	83%	16	3.2	76	3.0	4	11	1
B.Graham*	37	OLB	11	311	22	4.1%	70	18	12	6	15	73%	48	1.3	9	3.5	3	18	1
B.Huff*	27	OLB	12	285	13	2.2%	--	11	5	1	10	80%	--	2.6	--	2.5	1	16	0
A.Ojulari	25	OLB	11	392	28	4.9%	51	23	11	4	19	79%	29	1.8	23	6.0	3	21	0
J.Uche	27	DE	13	249	23	3.6%	--	12	6	4	13	46%	--	4.3	--	2.0	1	9	0

become more popular, it becomes more and more difficult to tell the difference between a defensive end and an outside linebacker. What we do know is that there are certain players whose job is to rush the passer, even if they occasionally drop into coverage. We also know that the defensive ends in a two-gapping 3-4 system have a lot more in common with run-stuffing 4-3 tackles than with smaller 4-3 defensive ends.

Therefore, we have separated defensive front players into three tables rather than two. All defensive tackles and defensive ends from 3-4 teams are listed as **Defensive Linemen**, and all ranked together. Defensive ends from 4-3 teams and outside linebackers from 3-4 teams are listed as **Edge Rushers**, and all ranked together. Most 4-3 linebackers are ranked along with 3-4 inside linebackers and listed simply as **Linebackers**.

The tables for defensive linemen and edge rushers are the same, although the players are ranked in two separate categories. Players are listed with the following numbers:

**Age** in 2025, determined by 2025 minus birth year, plus position (**Pos**) and the number of defensive **Snaps** played in 2024.

**Plays (Plays)**: The total defensive plays including tackles, assists, pass deflections, interceptions, fumbles forced, and fumble recoveries. This number comes from the official NFL gamebooks and therefore does not include plays on which the player is listed in coverage by FTN but does not appear in the standard play-by-play. Special teams tackles are also not included.

**Percentage of team plays (TmPct)**: The percentage of total team plays involving this defender. The sum of the percentages of team plays for all defenders on a given team will exceed 100%, primarily due to shared tackles. This number is adjusted based on games played, so an injured player may be fifth on his team in plays but third in **TmPct**.

**Stops (Stop)**: The total number of plays which prevent a “success” by the offense (45% of needed yards on first down, 60% on second down, 100% on third or fourth down).

**Defeats (Dfts)**: The total number of plays which stop the of-

fense from gaining first down yardage on third or fourth down, stop the offense behind the line of scrimmage, or result in a fumble (regardless of which team recovers) or interception.

**Broken tackles (BTkl)**: The number of broken tackles recorded by FTN game charters.

The next five columns represent runs only, starting with the number of plays each player made on **Runs**. Stop rate (**St%**) gives the percentage of these run plays which were stops. Average yards (**AvYd**) gives the average number of yards gained by the runner when this player is credited with making the play.

Finally, we have pass rush numbers, starting with standard NFL **Sack** totals.

**Hit**: To qualify as a quarterback hit, the defender must knock the quarterback to the ground in the act of throwing or after the pass is thrown. We have listed hits on all plays, including those nullified by penalties. (After all, many of the hardest hits come on plays cancelled because the hit itself draws a roughing the passer penalty.) Our count of hits does not add in sacks; that count is referred to elsewhere as “knockdowns.”

**Pressures (Press)**: The number of pass pressures for this defender. This number adds together plays with sacks, quarterback hits, and hurries.

**Disruptions (Ds rpt)**: This stat combines two different but similar types of plays. First, plays where a pass rusher forced an incomplete pass or interception by hitting the quarterback as he was throwing the ball. These plays are generally not counted as passes defensed, so we wanted a way to count them. Second, plays where the pass rusher batted the ball down at the line of scrimmage or tipped it in the air. These plays are usually incomplete, but occasionally they lead to interceptions, and even more rarely they fall into the hands of offensive receivers. As with the “hit in motion” disruptions, some plays counted as tips by FTN Data were not counted as passes defensed by the NFL.

Defensive linemen and edge rushers are both ranked by percentage of team plays, run stop rate, and average yards per run tackle. The lowest number of average yards earns the top rank (negative numbers indicate the average play ending behind

**Table 14: Steelers Defensive Front**

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall					vs. Run				Pass Rush			vs. Pass												
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTKl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
P.Queen	26	ILB	17	1090	136	15.9%	24	64	24	15	68	53%	71	3.7	38	1.0	7	14	52	8.6%	48	40%	50	8.6	58	7	0
P.Wilson	25	ILB	17	492	74	8.7%	69	30	8	5	34	50%	74	4.4	76	0.0	2	4	32	11.7%	55	41%	49	5.9	10	2	1
E.Roberts*	31	ILB	17	478	46	5.4%	86	28	7	7	36	64%	27	3.1	17	1.0	3	9	17	26.2%	70	47%	31	9.4	68	0	0
M.Harrison	27	ILB	15	372	46	6.1%	83	27	7	12	36	58%	49	2.9	7	2.0	2	3	12	7.1%	--	50%	--	7.2	--	0	0

the line of scrimmage). Defensive linemen and edge rushers are ranked if they played at least 40% of defensive snaps in the games they were active. There are 92 defensive linemen and 101 edge rushers ranked.

## Linebackers

Most of the stats for linebackers are the same as those for defensive linemen. Linebackers are ranked in percentage of team plays, and also in stop rate and average yards for running plays specifically. Linebackers are ranked in these stats if they played at least five games and played 35% of defensive snaps in the games they were active, with 87 linebackers ranked.

The final nine columns in the linebacker stats represent pass coverage.

**Targets (Tgts):** The number of pass players on which FTN game charters listed this player in coverage.

**Coverage DVOA:** This new metric measures every play where the linebacker in pass coverage, counting plays as failures whenever the receiver being covered makes a catch with a successful gain. It is described further in the section on the Secondary below.

**Success rate (Suc%):** The percentage plays of targeting this player on which the offense did not have a successful play. This means not only incomplete passes and interceptions, but also short completions which do not meet our baselines for success (45% of needed yards on first down, 60% on second down, 100% on third or fourth down).

**Yards per pass (Yd/P):** The average number of yards gained on plays on which this defender was the listed target.

**Passes defensed (PD) and interceptions (Int)** come from the NFL totals.

These stats are explained in more detail in the section on secondary tables. There are 78 linebackers ranked in the pass coverage stats, based on hitting one of two minimums: 16 charted passes with fewer than eight games started, or 12 charted passes with eight or more games started. As a result of the different thresholds, some linebackers are ranked in standard stats but not pass coverage stats or vice versa.

## Further Details

Just as in the offensive tables, players who are no longer on the team are marked with asterisks, and players who are new to this team for 2025 are listed in italics. Defensive front player statistics are not adjusted for opponent.

Numbers for defensive linemen and linebackers unfortunately do not reflect all of the opportunities a player had to make a play, but they do show us which players were most ac-

tive on the field. A large number of plays could mean a strong defensive performance, or it could mean that the linebacker in question plays behind a poor part of the line. In general, defensive numbers should be taken as information that tells us what happened on the field in 2024, but not as a strict, unsatisfactory judgment of which players are better than others—particularly when the difference between two players is small (for example, players ranked 20th and 30th) instead of large (players ranked 20th and 70th).

After the individual statistics for linemen and linebackers, the Defensive Front section contains a table that looks exactly like the table in the Offensive Line section. Rushing numbers are for all opposing running backs against this team's defensive front. As we're on the opposite side of the ball, teams are now ranked in the opposite order, so the No. 1 defensive front is the one that allows the fewest adjusted line yards, gives up the lowest percentage of conversions in short-yardage power situations, and has the highest adjusted sack rate. Directions for adjusted line yards are given from the offense's perspective, so runs left end and left tackle are aimed at the right defensive end and (assuming the tight end is on the other side) weakside linebacker.

## How to Read the Defensive Secondary Tables

The first few columns in the secondary tables are based on standard play-by-play, not game charting, with the exception of broken tackles. Age, total plays, percentage of team plays, stops, and defeats are computed the same way they are for other defensive players, so that the secondary can be compared to the defensive line and linebackers. That means that total plays here includes passes defensed, sacks, tackles after receptions, tipped passes, and interceptions, but not pass plays on which this player was in coverage but was not given a tackle or passed defense by the NFL's official scorer.

The middle five columns address each defensive back's role in stopping the run. Average yardage and stop rate for running plays is computed in the same manner as for defensive linemen and linebackers.

The third section of statistics represents data from FTN game charting. We do not count pass plays on which this player was in coverage, but the incomplete was listed as Thrown Away, Batted Down, or Hit in Motion. Screens and Hail Mary passes are also not included.

**Targets (Tgts):** The number of pass plays on which game charters listed this player in coverage.

**Table 15: 49ers Defensive Secondary**

Secondary	Age Pos	Overall						vs. Run						vs. Pass												
		G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTKl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int	
D.Lenoir	26 CB	15	923	94	12.7%	4	40	17	13	38	50%	31	4.4	16	88	20.4%	26	8.3	-21.8%	19	53%	34	5.8	5	9	2
J.Brown	25 SS	17	886	83	9.9%	58	36	15	11	42	48%	17	5.9	28	18	4.4%	45	6.3	-34.0%	5	72%	1	4.1	5	6	1
M.Mustapha	23 FS	16	756	76	9.6%	63	24	5	9	55	29%	64	7.4	49	6	1.7%	--	13.0	-59.8%	--	100%	--	-0.2	--	5	1
C.Ward*	29 CB	12	695	61	10.3%	24	21	4	5	24	50%	31	4.7	22	52	16.0%	72	11.7	10.0%	71	38%	88	6.9	32	7	0
R.Green	25 CB	17	675	73	8.7%	50	27	11	2	23	17%	88	6.9	58	71	22.5%	17	11.1	-9.3%	38	52%	41	6.2	16	13	1
I.Yiodom*	29 CB	17	486	50	5.9%	--	16	6	4	18	39%	--	6.2	--	41	18.1%	--	11.6	-0.9%	--	46%	--	9.0	--	6	1
T.Hufanga*	26 SS	7	308	38	11.0%	42	12	5	4	22	45%	21	5.9	26	5	3.5%	--	9.4	9.2%	--	20%	--	10.0	--	0	0
T.Brown	28 CB	13	290	24	3.6%	--	7	1	2	8	50%	--	3.5	--	22	15.6%	--	12.2	27.6%	--	27%	--	11.0	--	1	0

Year	Pass D Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	4	-18.3%	6	1.2%	17	2.5%	20	-14.7%	6	10.5%	23	-5.3%	13	-38.4%	1
2023	4	1.2%	17	-36.6%	2	-7.9%	11	-11.8%	10	-16.2%	8	-12.2%	6	-2.4%	17
2024	10	-8.2%	13	12.4%	23	-11.4%	5	-2.9%	18	-9.0%	12	-7.2%	10	-0.5%	14

**Target percentage (Tgt%):** How often the defensive back was targeted when he was on the field. We divide the total number of targets by an estimate of how many passes the defender was on the field based on his snap count and the number of charted passes in the games where he was active, not including plays listed as Uncovered.

**Average depth of target (aDOT):** The average distance in the air beyond the line of scrimmage of all passes targeted at this defender. It does not include yards after catch and is useful for seeing which defenders were covering receivers deeper or shorter. This is also often referred to as “Air Yards.”

**Coverage DVOA:** This is a new metric created during the 2023 season using FTN Data charting. Defensive backs are rated based on the results of every play where they are listed in coverage. If the receiver being covered is not targeted, it is treated the same as passes where the covered receiver does not make a successful play (incomplete or a very short gain). This gives us a metric which measures both the ability to avoid being targeted by opposing quarterbacks and the ability to stop successful passes when the defender is targeted. Coverage DVOA is adjusted for the opponent based on which receiver is being covered and is also adjusted for whether the receiver is in the slot or lined up wide. Like other defensive DVOA numbers, 0% represents average and a lower coverage DVOA is better with above-average ratings coming in below zero.

Like other coverage charting stats, coverage DVOA is very inconsistent from season to season. However, it seems to be more “real” for cornerbacks as opposed to safeties and linebackers. Nonetheless, we’ve given the numbers for players at all three positions (cornerbacks, safeties, and linebackers) because we think it’s an interesting new metric.

**Success rate (Suc%):** The percentage plays of targeting this player on which the offense did not have a successful play. This means not only incomplete passes and interceptions, but also short completions which do not meet our baselines for success (45% of needed yards on first down, 60% on second down, 100% on third or fourth down). Defensive Pass Inter-

ference is counted as a failure for the defensive player similar to a completion of equal yardage (and a new first down).

**Yards per pass (Yd/P):** The average number of yards gained on plays on which this defender was the listed target.

**Passes defensed (PD) and Interceptions (Int)** represent the standard NFL count for both stats.

Cornerbacks need either 45 charted passes or eight games started with at least 30 charted passes to be ranked in the defensive stats, with 93 cornerbacks ranked in total.

Because of a change in FTN’s charting methodology, there were fewer targets charted with safeties in coverage in 2024 compared to previous years. Therefore, in this year’s book we’ve separated the rankings for safeties in total plays vs. coverage stats, similar to linebackers. Safeties are ranked in the play-by-play stats if they played at least 40% of team defensive snaps in the games where they were active, with 92 safeties ranked. Safeties are ranked in the pass coverage stats if they had either 16 charted passes or eight games started with at least 12 charted passes, with 63 safeties ranked.

Just like the defensive front, the defensive secondary has a table of team statistics following the individual numbers. This table gives DVOA figured against different types of receivers. Each offense’s wide receivers have had one receiver designated as No. 1, and another as No. 2. (Occasionally this is difficult, due to injury or a situation with “co-No. 1 receivers,” but it’s usually pretty obvious.) The other receivers form a third category, with tight ends and running backs as fourth and fifth categories. The defense is then judged on the performance of each receiver based on the standard DVOA method, with each rating adjusted based on strength of schedule. (Obviously, it’s a lot harder to cover the No. 1 receiver of the Minnesota Vikings than to cover the No. 1 receiver of the New England Patriots.) **Pass D Rank** is the total ranking of the pass defense, as seen before in the Trends and Splits table, and combines all five categories plus sacks and passes with no intended target.

The “defense vs. types of receivers” table should be used to analyze the defense as a whole rather than individual players. The ratings against types of receivers are generally based on

defensive schemes, not specific cornerbacks, except for certain defenses that really do move one cornerback around to cover the opponent's top weapon (i.e., New England or Denver). The ratings against tight ends and running backs are in large part due to the performance of linebackers.

In addition, we list each team's numbers covering receivers based on where they lined up before the snap, either wide or in the slot. The "vs. Other WR" number has sometimes been misrepresented as measuring coverage of slot receivers, but in the modern NFL, the team's No. 1 or No. 2 receiver will often be working predominantly out of the slot, while other receivers will switch back and forth between the two positions. The listing of coverage of wide receivers in the slot also includes wide receivers lined up tight in a tight end position.

These numbers will be different from the "defense vs. receivers" numbers listed on our website because they are based on the same concepts as the new coverage DVOA metric. The defensive DVOA vs. types of receivers listed in this book considers both how often these types of receivers were targeted by opponents and how much success the defense had when covering those receivers.

altitude, and then switch the sign to represent that good special teams by the opponent will cost the listed team points, and bad special teams will effectively hand them points. We have to give the qualifier of "usually" because, as explained earlier, certain returners such as Cordarrelle Patterson have affected opposing special teams strategy—so far this is not an issue with the new kickoff rules—and a handful of the missed field goals are blocked. Nonetheless, the "hidden" value is still "hidden" for most teams, and they are ranked from the most hidden value gained (Tampa Bay, 16.5 points) to the most value lost (Baltimore, -17.9 points).

We also have methods for measuring the gross value of kickoffs and punts. These measures assume that all kickoffs or punts will have average returns unless they are touchbacks or kicked out of bounds, then judge the kicker or punter on the value with those assumed returns. We also count special teams tackles; these include both tackles and assists, but do not include tackles on two-point conversions, tackles after onside kicks, or tackles of the player who recovers a fumble after the punt or kick returner loses the ball. The best and worst individual values for kickers, punters, returners, and kick gunners (i.e. tackle totals) are listed in the statistical appendix at the end of the book.

## How to Read the Special Teams Tables

The special teams tables list the last three years of kick, punt, and return numbers for each team.

The first two columns list total special teams DVOA and rank among the 32 teams. The next two columns list the value in actual points of field goals and extra points (**FG/XP**) when compared to how a league average kicker would do from the same distances, adjusted for weather and altitude, and rank among the 32 teams. Next, we list the estimated value in actual points of field position over or under the league average based on net kickoffs (**Net Kick**) and rank that value among the 32 teams. That is followed by the estimated point values of field position for kick returns (**Kick Ret**), net punting (**Net Punt**), and punt returns (**Punt Ret**) and their respective ranks.

The final two columns represent the value of "**Hidden**" special teams, plays which are usually based on the performance of opponents without this team being able to control the outcome. We combine the opposing team's value on field goals, kickoff distance, and punt distance, adjusted for weather and

## Administrative Minutia

Receiving statistics include all passes intended for the receiver in question, including those that are incomplete or intercepted. The word passes refers to both complete and incomplete pass attempts. When rating receivers, interceptions are treated as incomplete passes with no penalty.

For the computation of DVOA and DYAR, passing statistics include sacks. We do not include kneeldown plays or spikes for the purpose of stopping the clock. Some interceptions which we have determined to be "Hail Mary" plays that end the game (or the first half) are counted as regular incomplete passes, not turnovers. Aborted snaps and blown handoffs are not counted as either passes or runs for the purpose of DVOA splits.

Statistics generated by FTN Data charting may be different from totals compiled by other sources.

Unless we say otherwise, when we refer to third-down performance in this book we are referring to a combination of third down and the handful of rushing and passing plays that take place on fourth down (primarily fourth-and-1).

**Table 16: Falcons Special Teams**

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	2.5%	5	1.6	13	0.7	20	3.2	8	-0.8	18	8.4	1	11.3	3
2023	-2.9%	27	-2.5	18	-1.1	22	-2.3	26	-4.3	24	-5.4	30	-11.1	30
2024	-4.1%	29	-18.6	32	0.0	17	-2.5	22	-3.5	26	2.6	8	-8.4	28

# Pregame Show

It's now been 22 years since we launched the original Football Outsiders website in 2003. In that time, we've done a lot of primary research on the National Football League, and we reference that research in many of the articles and comments in the *FTN Football Almanac 2025*. New readers may come across an offhand comment in a team chapter about, for example, the idea that fumble recovery is not a skill, and wonder what in the heck we are talking about. We can't repeat all our research in every new edition of our book, so we start each year with a basic look at some of the most important precepts that have emerged from football analytics research. You will see these issues come up again and again throughout the book.

Our various methods for projecting NFL success for college prospects are not listed below but are referenced at times during the book. Those methods are detailed on page 378.

## You run when you win, not win when you run.

If we could only share one piece of anti-conventional wisdom with you before you read the rest of our book, this would be it. The first article ever written for Football Outsiders was devoted to debunking the myth of "establishing the run." There is no correlation whatsoever between giving your running backs a lot of carries early in the game and winning the game. Just running the ball is not going to help a team score; it has to run successfully.

There is also no evidence that more runs early in the game create the opportunity for longer gains late in the game, i.e. the so-called "body blows" thesis. And there is no evidence that passing the ball too frequently puts the defense on the field too much and tires it out.

Why does nearly every beat writer and television analyst still repeat the tired old-school mantra that "establishing the run" is the secret to winning football games? The biggest issue is confusing cause and effect. There are exceptions, but for the most part, winning teams have a lot of carries because their running backs are running out the clock at the end of wins, not because they are running wild early in games.

A sister statement to "you have to establish the run" is "team X is 8-1 when running back John Doe runs for at least 100 yards." Unless John Doe is possessed by otherworldly spirits the way Adrian Peterson was a decade ago, the team isn't winning because of his 100-yard games. He's putting up 100-yard games because his team is winning.

At this point, it's hard to figure out why so many commentators and fans still overrate the importance of the running game. One problem has always been history. Older NFL analysts and fans came of age during the 1970s, when the rules favored the running game much more than those in the modern NFL. We used to have to explain that optimal strategies from 1974 are not optimal strategies for today. But this would seem to be a smaller problem now than it was 20 years ago; most current NFL analysts played the game in the

1990s or beyond, when the game was heavily pass-centric.

Another issue may be a confusion of professional football with other levels. As you go down the football pyramid, from NFL teams to FBS to FCS to Division II and so on, all the way down to high school, at every level further down the running game becomes more important. Strategies that win on Saturday do not necessarily win on Sunday.

## A great defense against the run is nothing without a good pass defense.

This is a corollary to the absurdity of "establish the run." With rare exceptions, teams win or lose with the passing game more than the running game—and by stopping the passing game more than the running game. Ron Jaworski used to put it best: "The pass gives you the lead, and the run solidifies it." The reason why teams need a strong run defense in the playoffs is not to shut the run down early; it's to keep the other team from icing the clock if they get a lead. You can't mount a comeback if you can't stop the run.

## Running on third-and-short is more likely to convert than passing on third-and-short.

On average, passing will always gain more yardage than running, with one very important exception: when a team is just one or two yards away from a new set of downs or the goal line. On third-and-1, a run will convert for a new set of downs 36% more often than a pass. Expand that to all third or fourth downs with 1-2 yards to go, and the run is successful 40% more often. With these percentages, the possibility of a long gain with a pass is not worth the tradeoff of an incomplete that kills a drive.

This is one reason why teams have to be able to both run and pass. The offense also has to keep some semblance of balance so they can use their play-action fakes—you can't run a play-fake from an empty set—and so the defense doesn't just run their nickel and dime packages all game. Balance also means that teams do need to pass occasionally in short-yardage situations; they just need to do it less than they do now. Teams pass roughly 60% of the time on third-and-2 even though runs in that situation convert 20% more often than passes. They pass 68% of the time on fourth-and-2 even though runs in that situation convert twice as often as passes.

## You don't need to run a lot to set up play-action.

Of course, the idea that you have to run a little bit so play-action will work doesn't mean you have to run as often as NFL teams currently do. There's no correlation between a team's rushing frequency or success rate rushing and its play-action effectiveness over the course of either a single game or an entire season. That doesn't mean there wouldn't be a correlation at an extreme run/pass ratio, but we have yet to see an NFL team that even comes close to what that extreme might be.

### **Standard team rankings based on total yardage are inherently flawed.**

Check out the schedule page on NFL.com, and you will find that each game is listed with league rankings based on total yardage. That is still how the NFL “officially” ranks teams, but these rankings rarely match up with common sense. That is because total team yardage may be the most context-dependent number in football.

It starts with the basic concept that rate stats are generally more valuable than cumulative stats. Yards per carry says more about the quality of the running game than total yardage, completion percentage says more than just a quarterback’s total number of completions. The same thing is true for teams; in fact, it is even more important because of the way football strategy influences the number of runs and passes in the game plan. Poor teams will give up fewer passing yards and more rushing yards because opponents will stop passing once they have a late-game lead and will run out the clock instead. For winning teams, the opposite is true. For example, which team had a better pass defense last year: Carolina or Baltimore? According to the official NFL rankings, the New York Giants (3,580 yards allowed on 548 passes and sacks, 6.5 net yards per pass) had a better pass defense than the Denver Broncos (3,752 yards allowed on 669 passes and sacks, 5.6 net yards per pass).

Total yardage rankings are also skewed because some teams play at a faster pace than other teams. For example, last year Dallas (5,567 yards) had nearly as many yards on offense as Kansas City (5,570 yards). However, the Chiefs were the superior offense and more efficient; they gained that yardage on only 163 offensive drives while the Cowboys needed 185 offensive drives.

### **A team will score more when playing a bad defense and will give up more points when playing a good offense.**

This sounds absurdly basic, but when people consider team and player stats without looking at strength of schedule, they are ignoring this. In 2023, for example, Dak Prescott had better standard stats than Josh Allen (yards per attempt, completion rate, touchdowns and interceptions) but Allen had the higher DVOA in part because Prescott played a much easier schedule. A more recent example: last season, the New Orleans Saints gained slightly more yards per play (5.27) than the Jacksonville Jaguars (5.25). Jacksonville had the better offense by DVOA in part because the Jaguars played the league’s hardest schedule of opposing defenses while the New Orleans schedule of opposing defenses ranked 31st. The Jaguars were 17th in offensive DVOA, and the Saints ranked 23rd.

### **If their overall yards per carry are equal, a running back who consistently gains yardage on every play is more valuable than a boom-and-bust running back who is frequently stuffed at the line but occasionally breaks a long highlight-worthy run.**

Our brethren in the baseball analytics world believe that the most precious commodity in baseball is outs. Teams only get

27 of them per game, and you can’t afford to give one up for very little return. So imagine if there was a new rule in baseball that gave a team a way to earn another three outs in the middle of the inning. That would be pretty useful, right?

That’s the way football works. You may start a drive 80 yards away from scoring, but as long as you can earn 10 yards in four chances, you get another four chances. Long gains have plenty of value, but if those long gains are mixed with a lot of short gains, you are going to put the quarterback in a lot of difficult third-and-long situations. That means more punts and more giving the ball back to the other team rather than moving the chains and giving the offense four more plays to work with.

The running back who gains consistent yardage is also going to do a lot more for you late in the game, when the goal of running the ball is not just to gain yardage but to eat clock time. If you are an Eagles fan watching your team with a late lead, you don’t want to see three straight Saquon Barkley stuffs at the line followed by a punt. You want to see a game-icing first down.

A common historical misconception is that our preference for consistent running backs means that “DVOA metrics believe that Barry Sanders was overrated.” Sanders wasn’t just any boom-and-bust running back, though; he was the greatest boom-and-bust runner of all time, with bigger booms and fewer busts. Sanders ranked in the top five in rushing DYAR six times (first in 1990; second in 1994 and 1997; third in 1989 and 1996; and fifth in 1995).

### **Rushing is more dependent on the offensive line than most fans realize, but pass protection is more dependent on the quarterback himself than most fans realize.**

Some readers complain that this idea contradicts the previous one. Aren’t those consistent running backs just the product of good offensive lines? The truth is somewhere in between. There are certainly good running backs who suffer because their offensive lines cannot create consistent holes, but most boom-and-bust running backs contribute to their own problems by hesitating behind the line whenever the hole is unclear, looking for the home run instead of charging forward for the four-yard gain that keeps the offense moving.

Further research has shown that rushing success is also heavily dependent on scheme as well as how the defense sets up against the play, particularly how many men the defense puts in the box (i.e., in between the offensive tackles). Research from 2019’s NFL Big Data Bowl suggested that the results of a running play can be almost entirely predicted using the movement of the blockers and defenders, without needing to consider the identity of the running back at all. It’s research like this that’s given birth to the popular Twitter saying that “running backs don’t matter.” That’s a bit of an extreme; it’s more likely that running backs matter a little bit, but much less than NFL wisdom has historically believed, and most of the differentiation between different backs comes from their skills in the passing game.

In addition, “running backs don’t matter” is sometimes mistaken for the idea that the running *game* doesn’t matter.

The latter is a bit of an analytical strawman, even if analytics has shown that the running game is less important than the passing game.

As for pass protection, some quarterbacks have better instincts for the rush than others and are thus better at getting out of trouble by moving around in the pocket or throwing the ball away. Others will hesitate, hold onto the ball too long, and lose yardage over and over. Sack rates and pressure rates have strong correlation from year-to-year even when a quarterback changes teams in between seasons.

Note that “moving around in the pocket” does not necessarily mean “scrambling.” In fact, a scrambling quarterback will often take more sacks than a pocket quarterback, because while he’s running around trying to make something happen, a defensive lineman will catch up with him.

#### **Shotgun formations are generally more efficient than formations with the quarterback under center.**

Last season, offenses averaged 5.70 yards per play from shotgun or pistol compared to 5.11 yards per play with the quarterback under center. Numbers for previous seasons are similar. This wide split exists even if you analyze the data to try to weed out biases like teams using shotgun more often on third-and-long, or against prevent defenses in the fourth quarter. Shotgun offense is more efficient if you only look at the first half, on every down, and even if you only look at running back carries rather than passes and scrambles.

It’s hard to think of an axiom of football analytics that has been better assimilated by the people running NFL teams since we started doing this 20 years ago. In 2001, NFL teams only used shotgun on 14% of plays. Five years later, in 2006, that had increased slightly, to 20% of plays. By 2012, shotgun was used on a 47.5% of plays (including the pistol, but not counting the Wildcat or other direct snaps to non-quarterbacks). In 2016, the league as a whole was up to an average of 64.4% of plays from shotgun or pistol. Last year, that average was 70.6%.

There’s an interesting corollary here which we are just starting to study, because there does seem to be one split where offenses are *less* efficient from shotgun: play-action. Last year, for example, offenses averaged 7.49 yards per play when using play-action from under center compared to 7.27 yards per play when using play-action from a shotgun formation. (In 2023, surprisingly, offenses averaged the same yards per play on play-action whether the quarterback was under center or in the shotgun, but this looks like a one-year blip.) A number of teams that are near the top of the league in play-action usage, such as the Lions and Vikings, are also near the bottom of the league in using shotgun. That said, the rise of the run-pass option also means that there are a number of teams that are near the top of the league in both play-action and shotgun, such as the Commanders and Colts.

#### **The total quality of an NFL team is four parts offense, three parts defense, and one part special teams.**

There are three units on a football team, but they are not of equal importance. Work by Chase Stuart, Neil Paine, and

Brian Burke suggests a split between offense and defense of roughly 58-42, without considering special teams. Our research suggests that special teams contributes about 13% to total performance; if you measure the remaining 87% with a 58-42 ratio, you get roughly 4:3:1. When we compare the range of offense, defense, and special teams DVOA ratings, we get the same results, with the best and worst offenses roughly 130% stronger than the best and worst defenses, and roughly four times stronger than the best and worst special teams.

#### **Offense is more consistent from year to year than defense, and offensive performance is easier to project than defensive performance. Special teams are less consistent than either.**

Nobody in the NFL understood this concept better than former Indianapolis Colts general manager Bill Polian. Both the Super Bowl champion Colts and the four-time AFC champion Buffalo Bills of the early 1990s were built around the idea that if you put together an offense that can dominate the league year after year, eventually you will luck into a year where good health and a few smart decisions will give you a defense good enough to win a championship. (As the Colts learned in 2006, you don’t even need a year, just four weeks.) Even the New England Patriots, led by a defense-first head coach in Bill Belichick, were more consistent on offense than on defense during their long run of success from 2001 to 2019.

#### **Field goal percentage is almost entirely random from season to season, while kickoff distance is one of the most consistent statistics in football.**

This theory, which originally appeared in the *New York Times* in October 2006, is one of our most controversial, but it is hard to argue against the evidence. Measuring every kicker from 2018 to 2022 who had at least 20 field goal attempts in each of two consecutive years, the year-to-year correlation coefficient for field goal percentage was an insignificant (and negative) -.05. Jason Myers of Seattle is a great example. In 2018, he had a Pro Bowl season for the Jets and connected on 92% of field goals, which got him a big contract in Seattle. In 2019, he declined to just 82%. In 2020, he rebounded and hit all 24 of his field goal attempts with no misses. The next year, he was back down to 74% including two misses from inside 40 yards. And then in 2022, Myers connected on 92% of his field goals.

On the other hand, the year-to-year correlation coefficient for touchback percentage from 2018 to 2022, with a minimum of 20 kickoffs in each of two consecutive years, was .48. The same players consistently used to lead the league in kickoff distance. However, this skill became completely different with the introduction of the low-impact “dynamic kickoff” last season and the changes to the touchback for this season.

#### **Teams with more offensive penalties generally lose more games, but there is no correlation between defensive penalties and losses.**

Specific defensive penalties of course lose games; we’ve all

sworn at the television when the cornerback on our favorite team gets flagged for a 50-yard pass interference penalty. Yet overall, there is no correlation between losses and the total of defensive penalties or even the total yardage on defensive penalties. One reason is that defensive penalties often represent *good* play, not bad. Cornerbacks who play tight coverage may be just on the edge of a penalty on most plays, only occasionally earning a flag. Defensive ends who get a good jump on rushing the passer will gladly trade an encroachment penalty or two for ten snaps where they get off the blocks a split-second before the linemen trying to block them.

In addition, offensive penalties have a higher correlation from year to year than defensive penalties. The penalty that correlates highest with losses is the false start, and the penalty that teams will have called most consistently from year to year is also the false start.

#### **Recovery of a fumble, despite being the product of hard work, is almost entirely random.**

Stripping the ball is a skill. Holding onto the ball is a skill. Pouncing on the ball as it is bouncing all over the place is not a skill. There is no correlation whatsoever between the percentage of fumbles recovered by a team in one year and the percentage they recover in the next year. The odds of recovery are based solely on the type of play involved, not the teams or any of their players.

Let's take the New Orleans Saints as an example. In 2022, the Saints recovered only 6 of 15 fumbles on defense (40%). In 2023, the Saints recovered 9 of 12 fumbles on defense (75%). Then in 2024, the Saints recovered only 3 of 12 fumbles on defense (25%).

Fumble recovery is equally erratic on offense. In 2022, the Washington Commanders recovered 13 of 20 fumbles on offense (65%). In 2023, that dropped to 6 of 15 fumbles on offense (40%). Then in 2024, the Commanders were back up to recovering 9 of 14 fumbles on offense (64%).

Fumble recovery is a major reason why the general public overestimates or underestimates certain teams. Fumbles are huge, turning-point plays that dramatically impact wins and losses in the past, while fumble recovery percentage says absolutely nothing about a team's chances of winning games in the future. With this in mind, our DVOA and DYAR metrics treat all fumbles as equal, penalizing them based on the likelihood of each type of fumble (sack, rush, aborted snap, etc.) being recovered by the defense.

Other plays that qualify as "non-predictive events" include two-point conversions, blocked kicks, and touchdowns during turnover returns. These plays are not "lucky," per se, but they have no value for predicting future performance.

#### **Field position is fluid.**

As discussed in the Statistical Toolbox, every yard line on the field has a value based on how likely a team is to score from that location on the field as opposed to from a yard further back. The change in value from one yard to the next is the same whether the team has the ball or not. The goal of a

defense is not just to prevent scoring, but to hold the opposition so that the offense can get the ball back in the best possible field position. A bad offense will score as many points as a good offense if it starts each drive five yards closer to the goal line. A corollary to this precept: The most underrated aspect of an NFL team's performance is the field position gained or lost on kickoffs and punts.

#### **The red zone is the most important place on the field to play well, but performance in the red zone from year to year is much less consistent than overall performance.**

Although play in the red zone has a disproportionately high importance to the outcome of games relative to plays on the rest of the field, NFL teams do not exhibit a level of performance in the red zone that is consistently better or worse than their performance elsewhere, year after year. The simplest explanation why is a small(er) sample size and the inherent variance of football, with contributing factors like injuries and changes in personnel.

#### **Injuries regress to the mean on the seasonal level, and teams that avoid injuries in a given season tend to win more games.**

There are no doubt teams with streaks of good or bad health over multiple years, and we have found some correlation from year-to-year in each team's level of injuries. However, teams who were especially healthy or especially unhealthy, as measured by our adjusted games lost (AGL) metric, almost always head towards league average in the subsequent season. Furthermore, injury—or the absence thereof—has a huge correlation with wins, and a significant impact on a team's success. There's no doubt that a few high-profile teams have resisted this trend in recent years. The Detroit Lions, for example, led the NFL in defensive AGL and still had the No. 1 seed in the NFC. However, the seven teams with the most overall AGL all missed the playoffs last year. Meanwhile, eight of the 11 teams with the lowest overall AGL made the playoffs.

#### **By and large, a team built on depth is better than a team built on stars and scrubs.**

Connected to the previous statement, because teams need to go into the season expecting that they will suffer an average number of injuries no matter how healthy they were the previous year. You cannot concentrate your salaries on a handful of star players because there is no such thing as avoiding injuries in the NFL. The game is too fast and the players too strong to build a team based around the idea that "if we can avoid all injuries this year, we'll win."

#### **Running backs usually decline after age 28, tight ends after age 29, wide receivers after age 30, and quarterbacks after age 32.**

This research was originally done by Doug Drinen (former editor of Pro Football Reference) in 2000. A few players have had huge seasons above these general age limits, particularly at the quarterback position, but the peak ages Drinen found

still apply to the majority of players.

As for “non-skill players,” research we did in 2007 for *ESPN The Magazine* suggested that defensive ends and defensive backs generally begin to decline after age 29, linebackers and offensive linemen after age 30, and defensive tackles after age 31. However, because we still have so few statistics to use to study linemen and defensive players, this research should not be considered definitive.

**Championship teams are generally defined by their ability to dominate inferior opponents, not their ability to win close games.**

Football games are often decided by just one or two plays: a missed field goal, a bouncing fumble, the subjective spot of an official on fourth-and-1. One missed assignment by a cornerback or one slightly askew pass that bounces off a receiver’s hands and into those of a defensive back five yards away and the game could be over. In a blowout, however, one lucky bounce isn’t going to change things. Championship teams—in both professional and college football—typically beat their good opponents convincingly and destroy the cupcakes on the schedule.

*Aaron Schatz*

# The Year In Quotes

## LIKE PICKING YOUR FAVORITE KID

*"I want to vomit every time I hear 'No. 1 receiver.' It drives me crazy. That's something you guys talk about. I think we've got a lot of them."*

—Green Bay Packers head coach Matt LaFleur had no interest in naming a true No. 1 wide receiver after building the team's entire receiving corps—Christian Watson, Romeo Doubs, Jayden Reed, and Dontayvion Wicks—out of Packers draft picks. LaFleur will make that even easier in 2025 after the Packers spent two more draft picks on wide receivers. (Ryan Wood, USA TODAY via X)

## GEORGE KITTLE ON THE SNEAKER BEAT

*"Before we begin. So, you guys are out there at every practice. You guys watch us all the time, but there's a special teams period where I catch some footballs and I like to observe you guys, and you guys really need to up your sneaker game. It's absolutely atrocious. I got some Vomeros. Those are fire. Grant wears Vans every single day. New Balances? They look like Vans. Yeah, those are Vans. It's okay, but you wear those every day, so I need to switch those up. But I observe all your guys' shoes, and I'm disappointed in you guys as a community. So, we could up those please. It's Year 8 guys, let's figure this out together."*

—San Francisco 49ers tight end George Kittle took some time during a training camp session to roast the shoe selection of the 49ers media. (49ers via X)

## SISYPHUS WOULD FIT RIGHT IN ON THE SAINTS COACHING STAFF

*"I'll leave the metaphors to you guys, alright? What is a metaphor? Like what is the official definition of a metaphor?"*

—New Orleans Saints head coach Dennis Allen is either looking for new ways to describe this Saints team, or he needs to put down the playbook in favor of a real book. (The Coach-speak Index via X)

## JUST KEEP IT ON THE FIELD

*Reporter: "You're so into the NFL. You know your Raiders. I can tell right here. How are you feeling with the team this year?"*

*Young Raiders fan: "We're not going to the Super Bowl. I already know it. I already know it."*

*Reporter: "We got a realistic Raiders fan here ... what is it going to take for the Raiders to have a successful season, do you think?"*

*Young Raiders fan: "Not to get arrested."*

—The bar was already low for a rebuilding Raiders team in 2024, but for young Raiders fans, their whole life has known nothing but Raiders misery. (Awful Announcing)

## GOAT VS. GOAT ACTION

*"At the end of the day, I feel like I'm better than Patrick Mahomes because of my IQ of the game. I know he's right now, the best in the league. I know he's more accurate. I know he has all these intangibles. But when it comes to flag football, I feel like I know more than him."*

—As we approach the 2028 Summer Games in Los Angeles, we'll be hearing more discussions about whether NFL players will be participating as members of the United States' Olympic Flag Football team. One of the critics in that stance is current U.S. flag football national team quarterback Darrell Doucette. The national team has not lost a game during an international tournament since Doucette joined the team, per their website. Mahomes responded to the quote by posting a GIF of 50 Cent saying "What he say f\*\*\*k me for?" (TMZ Sports)

## HONESTY IS NOT ALWAYS THE BEST POLICY

*"Uh, decent. Got two touchdowns. Nah, I'm joking."*

—Indianapolis Colts quarterback Anthony Richardson kept it light following a rough performance in the team's final pre-season game. He finished the afternoon 8-for-14 for 86 yards, a touchdown, a fumble, and a pick-six against the Bengals. (James Boyd, The Athletic via X)

*"Tired, ain't gonna lie."*

—Later in the season, Richardson reverted back to brutal honesty when asked why he exited a game mid-drive. (Mike Chappell, Fox 59 via X)

## DRIP SMARTER, NOT HARDER

*"Ima be real mine fake asf I won't even waste your time!"*

—After a video from the Titans social media team diamond-testing players' jewelry for authenticity, Dallas Cowboys edge rusher Micah Parsons came clean about his own accessories. (Micah Parsons via X)

## THE CHICAGO KING CAVALIERS

*"I think we got to a point now where [Odunze is] able to take a jump because he can play multiple spots. I think he's got the mentality ... he wants to learn. But he's got some dog. He's a quiet dog. He's not one of those guys that's woofing really loud. But when it comes time to get that bone, he's gonna make sure he's in there to get it."*

—Chicago Bears wide receiver coach Chris Beatty may be the first person to modify the "that dog" turn of phrase, making for a very unique compliment to wide receiver Rome Odunze. (ESPN)

**BUCKLE UP**

*"At one point people thought seatbelts were fucking stupid."*

—Indianapolis Colts tight end Kylen Granson was one of the earliest adopters of the Guardian Caps as a full-time measure. While players in the past have called it ugly, Granson's concussion from the prior season made safety a priority over looks. (James Boyd, The Athletic via X)

**DRIVING A HARD BARGAIN**

*"I'm not gonna lie, I made it a little bit more difficult than it needed to be at the end."*

—San Francisco wide receiver Brandon Aiyuk admitted that negotiating for his four-year, \$120-million extension was probably a little too intense. (Jake Hutchinson, Hutch Report via X)

**IT'S ME, HI, I'M THE PROBLEM, IT'S ME**

*"None of those teams wanted to get rid of me... Things had to shake because I kind of wanted them to shake."*

—Houston Texans wide receiver Stefon Diggs has moved around a lot these last few seasons, having since joined the New England Patriots. Every move he's made, though, has been his decision, at least in his mind. (B/R Gridiron via X)

**THE YEAR IN NFL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS**

*"Man, I do not want to go to Brazil. They already told us not to leave the hotel... NFL, why do y'all want to send us somewhere where the crime rate is this high?"*

—Philadelphia Eagles cornerback Darius Slay had some harsh comments for the country of Brazil as the league prepared to play the league's first game in the country as the league's season opener. Eagles players were reportedly instructed not to leave their hotel, a claim disputed by assistant general manager Jon Ferrari. (Sports Illustrated)

*"I want to apologize to anyone I offended, that wasn't my intention. I'm looking forward to playing in your beautiful country and i've heard yall are very passionate just like our amazing Eagles fan. Just a few more days, can't wait!!!!"*

—Slay later walked back the comments with his own post. (Darius Slay via X)

*"Dear people of Brazil my name is Darius SlayTON I play WR for the Giants i am innocent"*

—New York Giants wide receiver Darius Slayton had to clear the air after catching some strays in the entire interaction. (Darius Slayton via X)

**THE YEAR IN JIM HARBAUGH**

*"I just wasn't ready for it. I thought it was a moment to like, 'Hey, let's go get this.' Dap up. But he hit me a couple times, and I thought that was it. And then he kept going back for more. I'll be much better the next time."*

—Los Angeles Chargers quarterback Justin Herbert's big celebration with head coach Jim Harbaugh ended up being half-hug, half-series-of-slaps-all-over-Herbert's-body. (Daniel Popper, The Athletic via X)

*"There's not a gene in his body I wouldn't immediately trade for."*

—Harbaugh on Herbert, after going to the team's equipment staff to ask for a pair of Herbert's exact sneakers. (Popper, The Athletic via X)

*"Like Moses, I'm gonna die leaning on my staff."*

—Harbaugh, referencing his coaching staff. (Jeff Sversky via YouTube)

*"It's called atrial flutter... 2-0 in arrhythmias."*

—Harbaugh on leaving a game to seek medical treatment. (ESPN)

*"Blue twisted steel."*

—Harbaugh's description of his muscles, flexing after telling reporters his cardiologist told him that he has "the heart of an athlete." (Popper, The Athletic via X)

*"Bill Belichick always talks about the middle eight in a football game, there's a middle eight in a season too. Six, seven, eight, nine, those are important games. The only joke I know is why was six afraid of seven? Because seven ate nine. Six, seven, eight, nine, those are big games."*

—Harbaugh on the importance of the middle of the season. (Alex Insdorf, Bolt Beat via X)

*"When people are giving you accolades and compliments and telling you you've arrived, kick them in the shins. You kick them right in the shins, that's what you do. Those accolades could come from people you don't know. They could come from the media. Could come from teammates, could come from friends, could come from your own family. They're trying to make you soft. Kick 'em in the shins."*

—Harbaugh makes an argument for and against positive reinforcement, claiming that it helps some and pacifies others. The shin-kicking directive came from Harbaugh's college coach, Bo Schembechler. (Insdorf, Bolt Beat via X)

*"I think when he talked about remembering the day that he was born. It was probably the day that he told us the whole story and how he remembered looking out the window. I think it was a cold, snowy day. I really hope he does remember that. That'd be pretty cool."*

—Herbert on when he knew Harbaugh was a different kind of coach. (NFL via X)

**LEAVING IT ALL OUT THERE**

*'Yeah, I asked Malik [Willis] why he didn't throw the ball on that third down. He told me that Josh [Myers] threw up on the ball. I was like, 'That's the first time I have ever heard that.' Matter of fact, the official came over to me, Shawn [Hochuli] came over to me and said, 'We saw your center throw up on the ball. Do you want us to take him out next time?' I said absolutely, please do that. I mean you're talking about a critical situation. And it's third down and I've never had a throw with vomit on a football. I don't know. I don't think Malik probably didn't appreciate that.'*

—Green Bay Packers head coach Matt LaFleur had a unique explanation for why backup quarterback Malik Willis tucked and ran on a third-and-long. (Green Bay Packers via X)

**WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO, JUST THROW IT TO HIM?**

*"As a quarterback, obviously, you're going through your reads. Sometimes the ball goes to him, but that's not my job. I have a sense and a feel for guys when they don't get the ball and when they are getting the ball, but I leave that up to [OC Drew Petzing]. He tells me, 'Don't worry about that type of stuff. Just keep playing your game and get the ball to where the ball is supposed to go."*

—Arizona Cardinals quarterback Kyler Murray argued that it wasn't his responsibility to get the ball to wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr., who finished the team's season opener with one catch on three targets for 4 yards. (GoPHNX.com)

**A LONG LOOK IN THE MIRROR**

*"Scoring points."*

—New York Giants head coach Brian Daboll had an incredibly low bar for what he wanted his offensive identity to be. (Connor Hughes, SNY via X)

**FIN-STICUFFS**

*Reporter: "Did Tua fight you about going on IR?"*

*Mike McDaniel: "I would hope if he fought me I'd be bruised up because I'm not that physically imposing."*

—Miami Dolphins head coach Mike McDaniel is lucky that when players and coaches “go at it,” they don’t literally go at it. (Andrew Siciliano, NFL Network via X)

**YEAH! THAT'S OUR JOB!**

*"[David Tepper] wanted Bryce Young as the No. 1 pick. And sold on Christian McCaffrey, DJ Moore, Brian Burns. Look at Baker Mayfield, Sam Darnold. Look at coaches. Steve Wilks, Frank Reich, Matt Rhule. He's run them all off! He's making the decisions. He has got to listen to his football people and quit playing fantasy football."*

—NFL Fox commentator Jimmy Johnson went off on Carolina Panthers owner David Tepper amid the current state of the franchise. (Awful Announcing via X)

**FOOLPROOF**

*"Tails never fails."*

—New York Giants defensive tackle called the team’s coin toss, using some tried and true logic.

*"God damn."*

—Lawrence, after the coin landed on heads. (Dan Duggan, The Athletic via X)

**BUSINESS IS BUSINESS**

*"As the game went on, there were some individuals made business decisions, so we'll make business decisions going forward as well."*

—Las Vegas Raiders head coach Antonio Pierce set the tone for the season after a brutal loss to the Carolina Panthers. (Ari Meirov, 33rd Team via X)

**WHEEEEEEE I'M FLYING!**

*"Yeah, I was floating in the air, I was literally laughing the entire time."*

—Detroit Lions running back David Montgomery described what it was like to be hoisted about seven extra yards by a herd of Texans defenders. (Rachel Hopmayer, CBS Detroit via X)

**WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT**

*"Go son! Go son! Go son! Unhook the trailer! Unhook the trailer, G\*ddamnit! Dallas, you slow motherf\*\*\*er. I'm sorry... I'm happy... I promise."*

—Philadelphia Eagles tackle Jordan Mailata’s motivation for a 60-yard catch-and-run by tight end Dallas Goedert was a little harsh, but it came from a good place. (NFL Films via X)

**HE'S NO JIM BROWN**

*"Sometimes it's better to just let them fail... Hopefully, if this is something he wants to do, he'll get better at it."*

—Donna Kelce, mother to Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce, wouldn’t have had the highest Letterboxd review for Kelce’s acting debut in *Grotesquerie*. (ESPN via X)

**JOE COOL: GENERATIONALLY COOL**

*"[Anthony Richardson's] mom is eight days older than I am, so there's no chance in the world he thinks I'm cool."*

—Indianapolis Colts quarterback Joe Flacco knows he’s old, but he keeps winning games, so teams keep him around. (NFL on CBS)

**HONEST MISTAKE**

*"I just gave the game ball to somebody else. I feel awful."*

—Detroit Lions head coach Dan Campbell really beat himself up over the fact that he failed to give a game ball to quarterback Jared Goff after setting an NFL record for most passes thrown without an incompletion in an NFL history. (Colton Pouncey, The Athletic via X)

**WE NEED MORE PLAYER-COACHES**

*"For what? I thought he called a great game. As coaches, we can't go out there and make the plays. It's a two-way street. So, you know, you guys can sit here and point the finger all you want. That's fine. Point it right at me. I can take it, OK? I can take it. So whatever you wanna ask me, say, whatever, write, go ahead."*

—After an 0-4 start and a question about whether he would strip offensive coordinator Press Taylor of play-calling duties, Jacksonville Jaguars head coach Doug Pederson accidentally presented us with an interesting idea: which coaches in the league could actually hold their own on the field? (NBC Sports)

**PLEASE DO NOT LET THE RECORD SHOW THAT I HAVE LOST THE LOCKER ROOM**

*"No, I have not lost the locker room."*

—Doug Pederson responds to reports that suggested he is losing the locker room in the least guilty way possible. (Eugene Frenette, Jacksonville.com via X)

**THE GRASS ISN'T ALWAYS GREENER**

*"Any place with grass—except Green Bay. Their grass stinks."*

—The Athletic's annual anonymous player survey asked players which stadiums were the best to play in. While grass fields were overwhelmingly favored, one player in particular wasn't a fan of Lambeau Field. (The Athletic)

**THE TOMLINISMS ARE RUBBING OFF**

*"You're never just going up there with a Cheesecake Factory menu and he says, 'Hey, here you go buddy.' They'll take it, call what you want. I mean, that's not fair to the player."*

—Pittsburgh Steelers offensive coordinator Arthur Smith borrowed a page out of Mike Tomlin's book to describe how much freedom quarterback Justin Fields has to make in-game changes.

**I'M IN YOUR WALLS**

*"I bought his house... I can't wait to tell him your house looks drastically different."*

—Buffalo Bills offensive guard Dion Dawkins has unlocked new levels of trash talk, looking forward to a matchup against Jerry Hughes after purchasing his home.

**HE'S GOT TO CATCH ONE EVENTUALLY**

*"I need some (targets) in the beginning of the f\*\*\*king game, too. S\*\*\*t is getting f\*\*\*king crazy for me. I gotta get the ball a little earlier in the game, so I can be in the game."*

—Tennessee Titans wide receiver Calvin Ridley argued he needed even more work following a 0-for-8 performance in a loss to the Indianapolis Colts. (AtoZ Sports Nashville)

**WE NEED TO FIND WHOEVER'S RESPONSIBLE**

*"Our basics are not in order."*

—Dallas Cowboys head coach Mike McCarthy identified a problem with the team that someone on the Cowboys should probably solve. (Calvin Watkins, Dallas News via X)

*"He definitely gets more touches."*

—McCarthy on Rico Dowdle, who saw five carries in a game one week after a career performance. (Garrett Podell, CBS Sports via X).

**THINK OF THE FANTASY OWNERS! THE GAMBLERS! THE FANS!**

*"I just watched a fantasy owner drop down to the ground in Walmart."*

—New York Jets cornerback Sauce Gardner saw a fan react in real time to the news that edge rusher Hasson Reddick would end his holdout and sign a restructured contract with the New York Jets. (Sauce Gardner via Instagram).

**THE YEAR IN JAMEIS WINSTON**

*"We have a joke that when [Jameis Winston]'s calling plays, it sounds like he's got a surprise to tell."*

—Cleveland Browns running back Jerome Ford said that the team's backup quarterback adds a little bit of whimsy to the pre-snap huddle. (Bleacher Report via TikTok)

*"You can't say the sky's the limit when people are on the moon."*

—Winston, in part of a conversation about his goals for the NFL season. (Good Morning Football)

*"I know I'm better than this. I'm praying for the Lord to deliver me from pick-sixes."*

*"It's so hard to describe. It's just like, like, how I'm talking right now he'll be talking just like this. And it's just the random thoughts that come to his head, and they just come out. It's like 'We were talking about a slant. How did we get to Kentucky Fried Chicken?' Just hard left. I can't think of an exact example, but that's how best I could describe. It's just a random hard left. But then he comes right back on topic. Am I tripping? Are you tripping? It's so hard to describe."*

—New York Giants wide receiver Darius Slayton on adjusting to Winston's brain. (ESPN NFL via Instagram)

**HOLD YOURSELF TO THE STANDARDS OF YOUR HEROES**

*"Maybe he'll appreciate that. Maybe he won't because of how we're playing on defense."*

—Seattle Seahawks head coach Mike Macdonald revealed he once dressed as Bill Belichick, a presence he could have used to coach up the team defense midway through the year. (John Boyle, Seahawks.com via X)

**STOOL AND UNUSUAL**

*"This is going to be a crappy day, pun intended."*

—New Orleans Saints interim head coach Darren Rizzi kicked off his tenure feeling a little too comfortable, willing to overshare that he clogged the toilet in the coaches' locker room one morning. (Mike Triplett, NewOrleans.Football via X)

**THEY DON'T CALL IT 'HOME FIELD DISADVANTAGE'**

*"We do know where the damn sun is going to be in our own stadium."*

—Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones still doesn't think that the natural light of sunsets at Cowboys games creates an issue for his own players. (TheScore via X)

**F\*\*\*K IT, TUBA DOWN THERE SOMEWHERE**

*"If nobody is open, the tuba player is in Row 4. Put that ball right in the tuba."*

—New England Patriots offensive coordinator gave a very colorful description to quarterback Drake Maye on when and how to throw the ball away. (Mike Reiss, ESPN via X)

**GETTING 1% BETTER EVERY DAY**

*"I haven't thrown the ball underhand or chest-passed it, so that's an improvement."*

—Tennessee Titans quarterback Will Levis has seen plenty of improvement since returning from injury. Just look at all these normal, not-insane throws! (Ari Meirov, 33rd Team via X)

**VOICE RECOGNITION**

*"Malik Nabers was yelling 'Y'all f\*\*\*king calling plays like I ain't out there.' Big yikes."*

—A Giants fan account attempts to relay potentially frustrating moment from the rookie receiver, picked up on the broadcast's field mics.

*"That was actually me."*

—New Orleans Saints safety Tyrann Mathieu quickly clarified that it was in fact a moment of trash talk from the other team instead of an internal breakdown. (Tyrann Mathieu via X)

**BRACING FOR THE ELEMENTS**

*"Kyler Murray: 'I've played in cold weather before. How cold is it supposed to be?'"*

*Reporter: "35."*

*Murray: "... Sh\*t."*

—Cardinals quarterback Kyler Murray, born and raised in Texas, who played his college days in Oklahoma and now resides in a domed Arizona Stadium, who thought he was prepared for the harsh, unforgiving winters of ... Carolina. (Bo Brack, PHNX Sports via X)

**A GAME CHECK CAN BUY YOU A LOT OF COSTCO HOT DOGS**

*"Whenever I got the call, I wasn't hungry no more."*

—Atlanta Falcons quarterback Michael Penix Jr. received the news that he would be starting for the Falcons in Week 16 while shopping at Costco. He was specifically waiting in line to buy a \$1.50 hot dog but didn't end up purchasing it after hearing the news. (NFL.com)

**BUT WHAT'S HIS RUSHING YARDS OVER EXPECTED?**

*"Joe Buck: 'Najee Harris has rushed for 1,000 yards all four seasons in the league.'"*

*Troy Aikman: "I can't tell you how little that impresses me."*

—ESPN's Monday Night Football booth wasn't particularly impressed with the rushing stats of Pittsburgh Steelers running back Najee Harris. They don't grow 1,000-yard rushers on trees, Troy. (Cole Smith, Vikings Wire via X)

**ADD IT TO THE GOODREADS**

*"My teammates call it, 'The Recipe.' It's got a lot of points in there. It's got a lot of mental game, a lot of mental parts about it. For me, this game is mental. I choose to believe I can do anything and everything, but I've got to make sure my mental's good. Something like how I refresh every drive. Regardless of whether I score a touchdown or drop a pass, I go back to that book every drive, refocus. Nothing matters, nothing happened, re-lock back in."*

—Philadelphia Eagles wide receiver A.J. Brown got caught reading a book called *Inner Excellence: Train Your Mind for Extraordinary Performance and the Best Possible Life* while on the sidelines of the Eagles' wild-card win over the Green Bay Packers. (The Athletic)

**WHATEVER GETS THE JOB DONE**

*"Age is just a number. I've been saying that ever since I was a little kid, trying to get older women."*

—Minnesota Vikings running back Aaron Jones has embraced a cold tub routine and worked with a soft tissue specialist to try and turn back the clock on his career. (Ben Goessling, Minneapolis Star-Tribune via BlueSky)

### WHAT ABOUT THE LAST 30 YEARS WOULD MAKE THAT SURPRISING, JERRY?

*"This is a shocker to be here at this Super Bowl and not have the Cowboys here."*

—Cowboys owner Jerry Jones seemingly forgot his team hasn't even gotten to the game that gives his team a shot at the Super Bowl since the 1990s. (The Athletic NFL via X)

### THE ART OF THE (MARKET-SETTING QUARTERBACK) DEAL

*"If this has any impact on the cap, let's find a way to not do that."*

—Buffalo Bills quarterback Josh Allen told his agent that he had no interest in hampering the team's salary cap with his six-year, \$330-million extension. (The Athletic NFL via X)

### YOU DON'T KNOW BALL, NFL OWNERS

*Louis Riddick: "Mel, the draft has spoken."*

*Rece Davis: "Yelling at the NFL about it is not productive!"*

*Mel Kiper: "The NFL has been clueless for 50 years when it comes to evaluating quarterbacks! Clueless!"*

—ESPN draft guru Mel Kiper Jr. was absolutely beside himself watching Colorado quarterback Shedeur Sanders' slide stop at the Browns' 144th overall pick. Sanders was considered a potential first-round pick before falling to the fifth round. (ESPN)

### THE ROOKIE QUARTERBACK SUMMER BLUEPRINT

*"Work out, stay in the playbook, and throw the f\*\*k out of the ball."*

—Tennessee Titans rookie quarterback and No. 1 overall pick Cam Ward has a pretty standard offseason ahead of him as the new top signal-caller in town. (TennesseeTitans.com)

### DO WHAT WORKS FOR THOSE BEFORE YOU

*"You see that, dad? They got Bass Pro Shops right there. Easy access. I'm going to be on my Matt Light timing. Hunting right behind the stadium."*

—New England Patriots rookie tackle Will Campbell noticed a Bass Pro Shops in the distance during his official visit to Gillette Stadium following the 2025 NFL draft. Campbell will likely take after another former Patriots tackle Matt Light, who got permission from Patriots owner Robert Kraft to bow hunt behind the stadium for most of his franchise tenure. (New England Patriots)

### TURTLE TIME

*"Trina is going to come to Dallas once I get everything settled. It takes a lot to transport the terrarium. When I was training in Dallas, I had my dad fly all the way from Connecticut. He met me in Dallas, and we drove eight hours all the way to Tuscaloosa because I didn't want them to go without their tank for too long. So, Trina will be coming to Dallas soon, but we just got to be strategic with it."*

—Dallas Cowboys rookie offensive lineman Tyler Booker has a lot of affairs to get in order before heading down to Texas, the biggest of which will be the transport of his pet turtle, Trina. (ESPN)

### THE YEAR IN BRUTALLY HONEST SCOUTING REPORTS

*"Speed, that's about it. He can run straight—run jet sweeps and just run straight. He can't do too much else, so that's about it."*

—Cincinnati Bengals cornerback Cam Taylor-Britt on Kansas City Chiefs wide receiver Xavier Worthy. (ESPN)

*"Yes and no. Respectfully, I'm not Garrett Wilson. Teams play me totally different."*

—Minnesota Vikings wide receiver Justin Jefferson, when asked about what he could learn from how the 49ers covered New York Jets wide receiver Garrett Wilson. (@VikingzFanPage via X)

*"Nah."*

—Pittsburgh Steelers wide receiver George Pickens either had a high standard for his Pittsburgh offense, or he had zero faith in his team when asked if the offensive growth he's seen from the team makes him optimistic for the future. (TheScore via X)

*"I watch Patrick Mahomes. Patrick Mahomes doesn't do anything I didn't do. Nothing."*

—NFL legend Fran Tarkenton has been watching the tape on Mahomes, and it seems like his floor is "Hall of Famer." (The Athletic)

*"No, he does not."*

—Mike Tomlin when asked if Russell Wilson has the ability to escape the rush the same way Justin Fields did when he started. (Albert Breer, MMQB via X)

*"He is a beast. He's quick, he's fast, he's rocked up, he's thick."*

—Las Vegas Raiders tight end Brock Bowers gave his first impressions of rookie running back Ashton Jeanty. (ESPN NFL via Instagram)

## xxxviii THE YEAR IN QUOTES

### I DO MY OWN STUNTS

*"It definitely made me respect someone like Tom Holland who does superhero movies and is strapped in all the time. It's definitely harder than you think."*

—Philadelphia Eagles running back Saquon Barkley was hooked up to a harness to recreate his iconic backwards hurdle for Madden 26. Apparently, it was much easier to do in the moment on-field than it was to recreate in a studio. (ESPN NFL via Instagram)

*"It was a 180 move, so it would be cool if I could do a full 360."*

—Barkley on whether he can top the show-stopping move he put up last year. (Jayson Buford)

### WHERE HOME AND ROAD QUARTERBACKS GO TO DIE

*"I think it's a good opportunity to put him in the graveyard."*

—Cleveland Browns edge rusher Myles Garrett on Aaron Rodgers joining the Pittsburgh Steelers—an intimidating quote until you realize how Garrett decorates his home for Halloween. (ESPN NFL via Instagram)

### AARON RODGERS, KING OF SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

*"I've been in the darkness. You've got to go in there. Make peace with it."*

—New York Jets quarterback Aaron Rodgers referred to a loss to the New England Patriots as “a moment of darkness,” going on to touch on the team’s offensive woes with a thousand-yard stare. (Ben Volin, Boston Globe via X)

*“I’m talking about these experts on TV who nobody remembers what they did in their career. So in order for them to stay relevant, they have to make comments that keep them in the conversation. That wasn’t going on in 2008, 2009. The SportsCenter of my youth, those guys made highlights so much fun. And that’s what they showed on SportsCenter. Now it’s all talk shows and people whose opinions are so important now and they believe they’re the celebrities now, they’re the stars for just being able to talk about sports or give a take about sports, many of which are unfounded or asinine, as we all know. But that’s the environment we’re in now.”*

—Rodgers went off on a rant about the state of media at sports hubs like ESPN while on *The Pat McAfee Show*, a show that broadcasts on ESPN. (Awful Announcing)

*“It might be something like that. It might be some sort of curse you have to snap as well.”*

—When asked if the Jets culture lacks a “winning gene,” Rodgers dips into his old bag of witchcraft and suggests something far more sinister. (Rich Cimini, ESPN via X)

*“I’ve never been released before. Being released would be a first. Being released by a teenager would also be a first. ... I find the comedy in all of it. If that happens, phenomenal. It’s a great story.*

—Rodgers on the potential of being cut by the Jets. Rodgers is referencing a story that broke midseason that Jets owner Woody Johnson’s grandson, Brick, had a surprising amount of influence in the Jets’ decision-making processes. (Cimini, ESPN via X)

*“That guy needs to stay in California, go somewhere and chew on bark and whisper to the gods out there.”*

—Pittsburgh Steelers Hall of Fame quarterback Terry Bradshaw wasn’t too excited about the prospect of Rodgers potentially joining the Steelers for what is likely his final season. (103.7 The Buzz)

### THE FUTURE IS NOW, OLD MAN

*“That young boy Jared Verse? I’m cool. I’m good. I never gotta see that man again.”*

—Five-time Pro Bowl tackle Terron Armstead credited Los Angeles Rams edge rusher Jared Verse as one of the top reasons for retirement. (Logan B. Robinson, Sports Illustrated via X)

### QUOTE OF THE YEAR

*“Thank you for believing in me.”*

—What Philadelphia Eagles running back Saquon Barkley reportedly told Howie Roseman in the closing moments of Super Bowl LIX. After being allowed to walk by the New York Giants, Barkley set the single-season record for most combined regular-season and postseason rushing yards, becoming the first player to record 2,500 rushing yards in a full season, picking up an AP NFL Offensive Player of the Year award along the way. (The Athletic via X)

*Compiled by Cale Clinton*

# Full 2025 Projections

The following table lists the mean DVOA projections for all 32 NFL teams. We also list the average number of wins for each team in our season simulations, along with how often each team made the playoffs, reached the Super Bowl, and won the NFL Championship.

## Full 2025 Projections

Team	Avg Wins	Postseason Odds			Mean DVOA Projections								Schedule	
		Make Playoffs	Reach Super Bowl	Win Super Bowl	Total DVOA	Rk	Off DVOA	Rk	Def DVOA	Rk	ST DVOA	Rk	Average Opponent	Rk
BUF	11.9	88.5%	26.1%	14.7%	19.3%	3	16.8%	2	-2.9%	8	-0.4%	23	-3.6%	27
BAL	11.8	89.0%	31.2%	19.1%	24.1%	1	18.6%	1	-4.3%	5	1.1%	2	0.8%	15
SF	11.2	79.7%	17.7%	8.6%	13.7%	6	15.1%	4	0.3%	19	-1.1%	30	-5.4%	32
DET	10.7	76.9%	22.2%	12.1%	20.4%	2	9.4%	6	-10.5%	1	0.4%	12	3.6%	6
KC	10.6	74.6%	15.2%	8.1%	15.9%	4	11.1%	5	-2.9%	9	1.9%	1	2.5%	8
WAS	10.6	74.1%	17.4%	8.9%	15.9%	5	15.2%	3	0.1%	17	0.8%	7	1.4%	12
DEN	9.5	57.5%	5.6%	2.5%	5.4%	10	-1.3%	18	-7.0%	2	-0.3%	21	-0.4%	18
PHI	9.4	57.4%	9.1%	4.4%	11.0%	7	6.8%	9	-3.4%	6	0.8%	6	4.2%	2
TB	9.4	63.6%	6.9%	2.8%	3.8%	12	7.4%	8	2.2%	23	-1.4%	31	-3.2%	26
ARI	9.2	50.7%	4.7%	2.0%	3.0%	13	0.3%	17	-3.2%	7	-0.6%	24	-2.2%	24
CIN	9.1	51.4%	4.9%	2.2%	5.6%	9	8.9%	7	4.0%	27	0.7%	8	2.2%	9
LAR	9.1	49.9%	5.2%	2.1%	4.8%	11	6.5%	10	2.7%	25	1.0%	5	0.4%	16
JAX	9.0	54.7%	3.7%	1.4%	-0.6%	17	-2.6%	19	-1.8%	12	0.2%	14	-3.7%	28
GB	8.9	47.5%	5.5%	2.3%	6.3%	8	4.5%	11	-1.4%	14	0.4%	13	3.1%	7
MIA	8.8	44.9%	2.6%	1.0%	-1.6%	18	4.3%	12	5.8%	29	-0.1%	16	-2.8%	25
HOU	8.5	47.6%	3.5%	1.4%	0.5%	15	-4.1%	21	-4.5%	4	0.1%	15	1.0%	13
Team	Avg Wins	Postseason Odds			Mean DVOA Projections								Schedule	
		Make Playoffs	Reach Super Bowl	Win Super Bowl	Total DVOA	Rk	Off DVOA	Rk	Def DVOA	Rk	ST DVOA	Rk	Average Opponent	Rk
ATL	8.4	43.7%	2.6%	0.8%	-4.3%	21	3.8%	13	7.4%	31	-0.7%	27	-3.9%	30
LV	8.3	38.6%	2.1%	0.8%	-2.2%	19	-3.7%	20	-2.2%	11	-0.6%	25	-0.3%	17
NE	8.1	32.8%	1.2%	0.4%	-7.9%	25	-6.8%	25	1.6%	22	0.5%	11	-3.8%	29
CHI	7.9	31.3%	2.4%	0.9%	0.7%	14	2.7%	14	3.1%	26	1.1%	3	4.0%	3
MIN	7.9	32.0%	2.4%	0.9%	0.0%	16	1.0%	15	0.1%	18	-0.9%	29	3.8%	4
SEA	7.9	29.6%	1.5%	0.5%	-5.0%	24	-5.9%	23	-0.3%	16	0.6%	10	-1.1%	21
LAC	7.8	31.0%	1.4%	0.5%	-4.6%	22	0.9%	16	5.1%	28	-0.4%	22	0.8%	14
DAL	7.7	28.7%	1.7%	0.6%	-3.3%	20	-4.8%	22	-1.7%	13	-0.1%	17	2.0%	10
PIT	7.7	29.5%	1.3%	0.5%	-4.6%	23	-6.3%	24	-0.7%	15	1.0%	4	1.6%	11
IND	6.8	22.1%	0.6%	0.2%	-12.6%	27	-10.5%	27	1.1%	21	-0.9%	28	-0.8%	20
TEN	6.3	16.4%	0.3%	0.1%	-17.4%	29	-8.1%	26	7.0%	30	-2.4%	32	-2.1%	23
NYG	6.1	12.1%	0.4%	0.1%	-11.5%	26	-10.7%	29	0.5%	20	-0.3%	19	4.4%	1
CLE	6.1	11.7%	0.1%	0.0%	-13.7%	28	-18.3%	31	-5.0%	3	-0.3%	20	3.7%	5
NO	6.1	13.3%	0.1%	0.0%	-20.0%	31	-17.4%	30	2.4%	24	-0.3%	18	-3.9%	31
NYJ	5.9	9.7%	0.1%	0.0%	-19.3%	30	-22.3%	32	-2.4%	10	0.6%	9	-0.6%	19
CAR	5.5	9.5%	0.1%	0.0%	-22.1%	32	-10.7%	28	10.7%	32	-0.7%	26	-1.8%	22



# Arizona Cardinals

2024 record: 8-9

Total DVOA: 8.8% (12th)

Pythagorean Wins: 9.0 (14th)

Offense: 8.4% (11th)

Snap-Weighted Age: 26.1 (26th)

Defense: -0.6% (14th)

Average Opponent: 3.2% (6th)

Special Teams: -0.2% (18th)

2025 Mean Projection: 9.2 wins

On the Clock (0-5): 7%

Postseason Odds: 50.7%

Mediocrity (6-8): 32%

Super Bowl Odds: 4.7%

Playoff Contender (9-11): 43%

Proj. Avg. Opponent: -2.2% (24th)

Super Bowl Contender (12+): 18%

**2024:** Flying high in November, only for it to turn out to be a winter mirage.

**2025:** Playoffs in Glendale once again—but this time, featuring the Cardinals!

**C**ardinals fans are getting tired of having their hopes dashed. In 2024, it was a four-game win streak from mid-October until their bye week that got Arizona fans thinking that yes, this was their year. The streak improved them to 6-4, a game atop the NFC West. Kyler Murray, who hadn't really been consistent since before his hamstring pull in mid-2021, was on a roll, sitting third in passing DVOA and finally beginning to move like he had before his 2022 ACL tear. The defense, in the second year under Jonathan Gannon, had risen from the worst in the league in 2023 to an above-average unit. Perhaps they were a bit fortunate to have won as many games as they did, but the fact remains that they *had* won them, they were coming up on what looked like the easiest part of their schedule, and they were favored to win the NFC West for the first time since 2015.

And then the bottom fell out. Losses in five of their last six games didn't just knock them out of the lead in the division, but out of the playoffs entirely. This isn't the first time this has happened, either—while 2024 was arguably the most promising season, the Cardinals collapse late nearly every year. No team in football has seen its fortunes fade quite so easily over the back half of the season in recent years. Since 2021, the Cardinals' win percentage has dropped by more than .200 between games 1-9 and games 10-17, by far the most in the league (Table 1).

This late-onset Kingsburitis understandably has Cardinals fans frustrated. When the heat of the desert summer becomes the ... well, still heat of the desert winter, the Cardinals wilt. With that pattern continuing under Gannon's regime, ques-

tions started popping up left, right, and center. Does the Cardinals' history of one-score losses indicate that they can't play in the clutch? Was Gannon's conservative play calling costing them win probability? Did a lack of investment in free agency before 2024 doom them? Can Murray succeed in the fourth quarter? Maybe, just maybe, the Cardinals aren't *Built to Win*, whatever that means.

This isn't entirely fair. 2024 was a significant step forward for the Cardinals—their best season since 2021, and their second best since 2015. They doubled their win total in Gannon's second campaign and actually improved as the year went on, results be damned. More to the point, we think that this is a team on the rise, with Gannon's work on defense paying dividends. Two years ago, it was the worst in the league. Last year, it was middling. This year? We have them projected in the top 10, dragging an acceptable-if-uninspiring offense into the midst of playoff contention. Maybe we're just priming Cardinals fans to have the rug snatched from underneath their feet once more, but we are on board with a Cardinals renaissance in 2025.

Let's start with Gannon's defense, as that's the projection that will raise the most eyebrows. Staking them in the top 10 is a bold claim, but that's what Gannon was brought in to do. We don't want to just let 2023 be a complete write-off year, but the jump from 2023's defense comprised primarily of holes to 2024's functional unit was stark. Their pass defense DVOA jumped from 29.2% to 4.6%, and while some of that came from an increase in sacks, their overall pressure rate actually remained near the bottom of the league at just 25%. Instead,

## Biggest Declines in Second Half of the Year, 2020-2024

Team	W-L Gm 1-9	Win Pct	DVOA	W-L Gm 10-17	Win Pct	DVOA	Win Diff	DVOA Diff
ARI	23-22	0.511	-1.2%	12-27	0.308	-9.9%	-0.203	-8.6%
PIT	30-14-1	0.678	7.8%	20-19	0.513	0.3%	-0.165	-7.5%
ATL	21-24	0.467	-12.5%	12-27	0.308	-5.5%	-0.159	7.0%
TEN	24-21	0.533	-8.1%	15-24	0.384	-13.4%	-0.149	-5.3%
BAL	31-14	0.689	29.5%	23-16	0.590	22.6%	-0.099	-6.8%
MIN	28-17	0.622	4.5%	21-18	0.538	-10.8%	-0.084	-15.3%
NYJ	15-30	0.333	-15.6%	10-29	0.256	-18.0%	-0.077	-2.4%
CHI	17-28	0.378	-18.2%	12-27	0.308	-6.8%	-0.070	11.5%
PHI	29-15-1	0.656	9.2%	23-16	0.590	6.5%	-0.066	-2.8%
DEN	20-25	0.444	-11.8%	15-24	0.385	-0.3%	-0.060	11.5%

## 2025 Cardinals Schedule

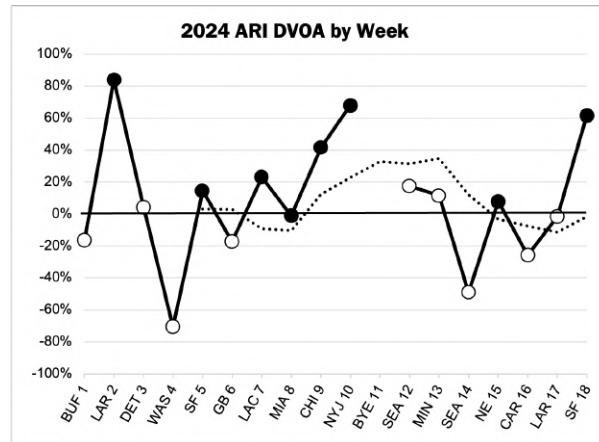
Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	at NO	7	GB	13	at TB
2	CAR	8	BYE	14	LAR
3	at SF	9	at DAL (Mon.)	15	at HOU
4	SEA (Thu.)	10	at SEA	16	ATL
5	TEN	11	SF	17	at CIN
6	at IND	12	JAX	18	at LAR

you can give credit to a back seven which held up even when the pass rush couldn't get home. The Cardinals ranked seventh with a 27.2% DVOA when they failed to get pressure thanks to stingy coverage in the back.

Garrett Williams was tremendous, ranking in the top 10 in cornerback DVOA, but he was only the biggest highlight. Budda Baker bounced back from a disappointing 2023, Max Melton came on strong as the year went along, and the entire secondary basically kept plays in front of them and prevented daggers. The Cardinals ranked sixth in DVOA against No. 1 receivers and fourth against tight ends, and allowed just four touchdowns of 20 or more yards, one off the league lead. There were certainly soft points and they could be cut to ribbons underneath, and their 49% success rate allowed was third worst in the league. But they kept plays in front of them and forced opponents to march down the field. They didn't crumple the way they so often did two years ago, and they could sit back in coverage and not expect an immediate failure. Their DVOA when rushing just four improved from 27.1% to -0.3%, and they didn't absolutely have to get pressure to have a good play. Gannon spends a lot of time with the secondary in practice, and it certainly appears to be working.

The run defense also became stingier, despite still being second worst with a 23.0% avoided tackle rate and a league-worst 3.1 win yards after contact allowed per attempt.<sup>1</sup> While Arizona had problems when running backs got to the second level, they did a much better job stopping rushing plays before they got going to begin with. Arizona ranked 18th in power success and seventh in stuffed rate, a year after ranking 21st and 31st in those same stats. We don't want to portray last year's Cardinals defense as worldbeaters or anything, but they saw the third-biggest improvement between 2023 and 2024, jumping 17.9% in DVOA, and that's the foundation for why our projections like them so much in 2025.

And remember, this was a battered and bruised version of the Cardinals' defense. Arizona had 72.9 defensive adjusted games lost in 2024, which ranked 29th. They had 38.8 on the interior defensive line alone, a new all-time record. Justin Jones missed 14 games with a triceps tear, Bilal Nichols missed 12 with neck and finger injuries, and Darius Robinson's calf strain kept him out until December. Arizona also lost 27.3 games from their edge rushers, with BJ Ojulari and Dennis Gardeck both missing significant time. To fight through those front seven injuries and still show substantial



improvement is a credit to Gannon and coordinator Nick Rallis, as well as the depth they have assembled.

Out of necessity, they had to go away from their preferred style some last season. In Philly, Gannon sat his backfield back in match coverage, rotated out a zillion different pass rushers on the front four, and had the linebackers between them drop and rally to the ball, keeping plays in front of them. Without reliable talent in the trenches, Gannon and Rallis have had to pull out every stunt, disguise, blitz, and front they can find. Gannon's blitz rates in Philadelphia were around 19%. That shot up to 24.1% with Arizona last season. The Cardinals used Cover 0 third most of anyone in the league at 6.4%. They played a lot more single-high safety looks as well, and they actually blitzed out of both single- and two-high looks, something Gannon rarely did in Philly. Their stunt rate jumped from 14.9% to 33.3% and their rate of disguised coverages jumped from 22% to 38%, per Oliver Connolly's charting on his blog "The Read Optional." It was a defense much more willing to throw anything against the wall and see what sticks than Gannon defenses traditionally had been. Desperation is, at times, the mother of invention.

That may not be necessary in 2025, although we'd hate to see all the creativity get wiped out due to added talent. Many of those injured players are back, so it's addition by attrition. Nichols, Robinson, and Jones are all expected to return in the front seven rotation, and it's unlikely that the Cardinals will be quite so injury-prone in back-to-back years. These things do tend to regress towards the mean.

But it's also addition by *addition*. Cardinals fans may have had a point last offseason when they complained the team wasn't doing enough to bring in talent to boost the roster, but not this year. Arizona doled out \$180 million in free agent contracts, with at least four new starters in the front seven. They spent their first five draft picks on the defensive side of the ball, including two of the top 10 defensive players on the consensus big board. If Gannon and Rallis could cook with what they had to work with last season, imagine what will happen with some premium ingredients added to the mix?

Part of the reason that the Cardinals had to scheme up so much pressure last season was a lack of players who would

<sup>1</sup> Defined as yards after either contact or missed tackles.

just win one-on-one, especially in the interior. Returning like a conquering hero is Calais Campbell, the franchise legend who has roamed the rest of the league before coming home. He brings with him 68 pass pressures over the last two seasons, ranking in the top dozen for interior linemen in both 2023 and 2024. Dalvin Tomlinson has 38 of his own over the past two years, an impressive rate for a nose tackle. Then you add first-round pick Walter Nolen, who had 6.5 sacks last season at Ole Miss and has flashed the athleticism and play strength you need to get after the quarterback in the pros, and you have gone from a liability to arguably the strongest position group on the roster. It's certainly a short-term boost with Campbell and Tomlinson both on the wrong side of 30, but assuming Nolen and Darius Robinson develop, Arizona has a plan going forward too. This top four matches up with any other interior line in the NFL in 2025. Maybe you prefer a Jeffrey Simmons and T'Vondre Sweat in Tennessee or Jonathan Allen and Javon Hargrave in Minnesota, but this group is in that discussion. Take what you got last year from Arizona's defense and add an interior pass rush, and you have a top-10 defense right there.

And that's not all Arizona added, of course. Josh Sweat reunites with Gannon on the front line. Their two years working together in Philly saw Sweat make the Pro Bowl one year and rack up 11 sacks the next. The Cardinals haven't had a pass rusher top 60 pressures since Chandler Jones in 2019, and Sweat gives them a chance to break that streak this year. Will Johnson (Michigan) fell to the second round because of injury concerns, but if he's healthy, he was the top pure corner in the 2025 draft and would be an insane value. I don't think anyone would have batted an eye had Arizona taken him with their first-round pick, but getting both Johnson and Nolen in the same class? Yowza. That's before getting into adding depth and role players such as Akeem Davis-Gaither, Jordan Burch, and Cody Simon. They have built the structure, and now they're loading it with talent.

We do believe this is going to work, and that's pushing the Cardinals projection high. More importantly, this *has* to work for Gannon's sake. While there was improvement last year, the Cardinals were still just an 8-9 team, and the number of coaches who could survive three losing seasons can be counted on one hand with fingers left over. Arizona has made this investment on his side of the ball, and it needs to pay dividends, right now. The Cardinals don't need to be a Super Bowl contender, or even necessarily make the playoffs, but some of this potential needs to become something tangible that Gannon and general manager Monti Ossenfort can hang their hats on. They have been given the tools to succeed. If they can't, there will certainly be talk about finding the next guy who *can*. It's a "prove it or get out" sort of year in the desert.

And speaking of which, let's turn our attention to the offense and Kyler Murray, shall we?

Murray had his best year since 2021, and his second-best year overall by our numbers. Ninth in passing DYAR, 12th in passing DVOA, with top-five rushing value to boot. That's

something you can absolutely live with if that's who you are week in and week out, and yet...

Murray can be one of the more frustrating quarterbacks to watch. When he's on, he's up there with anyone else in the league—only Lamar Jackson, Josh Allen, and Jared Goff had more than Murray's four games with at least a 50% passing DVOA. Put on film of Murray against the Rams or Jets and you see a dual-threat weapon dancing away from defenders, extending plays, and turning potential failures into chunk plays either with his arm or legs. Watch him the next week against the Lions or Seahawks, and he's throwing into double coverage, absorbing sacks like crazy, and throwing back-breaking pick-sixes. His floor last year was higher than it was in 2023 thanks to having an extra year of recovery time from his ACL tear, but that game-to-game variance makes you tear your hair out watching him.

In 2024, it was frustrating because Murray seemed to come up short in key situations. While he was 12th in overall passing DVOA, that fell to 17th when pressured, 19th in the fourth quarter or overtime, and 30th in third-and-long situations. That made him feel much worse than he actually is. These are high-leverage situations, and coming up short there hurts a team much more than making a bad play on first down.

These sorts of small sample size splits do tend to bounce around somewhat, but Murray has been worse on third-and-longs in three of the last four seasons and is one of five quarterbacks to see his passing DVOA drop by at least 100% under pressure in each of the last three seasons.<sup>2</sup> So while Murray isn't necessarily wrong when he says the Cardinals were a "couple plays away from being a 10-win team," these sorts of struggles in high leverage moments have become part and parcel of the Murray package. One-score games typically revert to the mean over time, but Arizona is 16-26-1 in one-score games since they drafted Murray in 2019, fourth worst in the league. Murray's personal record is slightly better at 16-21-1, but still: Arizona hasn't had a winning-record in one-score games since Carson Palmer retired in 2017, the longest such streak in the NFL. Quarterbacks get too much blame when their team loses and too much credit when their team wins, but the data shows that Murray has fairly consistently come up short when his team has needed him the most.

This isn't to say Murray is a bad quarterback or that Arizona needs to replace him. It was refreshing to see him rebound after a couple of poor seasons to look like an upper-half starter once again, even with the inconsistencies and a lack of overall explosiveness. He's far from the only quarterback to have struggled in one-score games—the Ravens haven't had a winning record in one-score games since 2019 and no one's suggesting they dump Lamar Jackson anytime soon. If we're right about the defense improving, Arizona should look like world-beaters when Murray is on form and will likely be able to grind out some ugly victories on days when he's not on fire. Maybe Murray hasn't lived up to the expectations of a first overall pick or to the potential of his \$230-million extension from 2022, but players better than Murray aren't freely

<sup>2</sup> The five quarterbacks are Murray, Jared Goff, Geno Smith, Matthew Stafford, and Jalen Hurts.

available. Murray is good enough to be the quarterback of a contending team.

But what if we're wrong, and the Cardinals *aren't* contenders in 2025? Murray's extension has played out to the point where it would be financially conceivable to trade him next season—just \$18 million in dead money and cap savings of \$35 million. If the Cardinals scuffle once more, and Michael Bidwill decides to blow everything up and start over, it's not inconceivable that Murray would be shipped out to a team more in win-now mode. It really is a prove-it year for Murray then as well—if he's good enough to be a starter but not good enough to be a build-around player, and the Cardinals are bad, it'd be best for all parties to draw a line here and move on.

It would help Murray if his passing-game weapons take a step forward in 2025. Trey McBride has staked his claim as one of the best tight ends in the game, but the wide receivers need to improve. Marvin Harrison Jr. didn't quite live up to the pre-draft hype in his rookie season, finishing 58th in DVOA and sixth among qualified rookie receivers. He's far from a bust, and wideouts often take a year before fully breaking out, but it was odd to see Harrison used as a decoy for much of the year, stretching the field so McBride could eat underneath.

Don't knock what works, with McBride looking fantastic in the space Harrison was opening up, but Harrison was considered the top wideout prospect in last year's draft in part because of his ability to eat lots of volume and produce in all three levels of the field. We'd hope to see a step forward in his chemistry with Murray in 2025, but also to see Drew Petzing get him some more short and medium routes to work with. Harrison's most frequently targeted route in 2024 was a deep go (22 out of 117), with double-digit deep outs and deep corners as well. A fuller package of plays and some more creativity for someone you spent a top-five pick on would be nice to see. And even if Harrison does take that expected step forward, Arizona still needs someone else to step up and be that third option in the passing game. Michael Wilson dropped

from an 18.2% DVOA in 2023 to 1.4% last season, devolving into a sort of a boundary-only player. With Wilson hanging on the outside and Harrison running deep route after deep route, the middle of the field was all McBride, all the time—34% of Arizona's targets in the short or intermediate part of the field went to McBride, fourth-highest rate in the league. That's not necessarily unusual for a tight end, but it usually belongs to a tight end with a receiving corps that's struggling, someone in Travis Kelce's position. Having so much of the passing game revolve around one guy when you have a top-five pick lining up for you is not ideal.

We have enough faith in the receiver corps to improve and supplement Arizona's strong rushing attack to project their offense to be just about average. An average offense plus a good defense leads to a playoff contender and the next step forward in a successful rebuild. It's also not too hard to sell us on the ceiling being even higher. If Murray is more consistent, if the highly drafted defensive players live up to their hype immediately, if the addition of so much talent into the pass rush goes even better than we expect? There's a chance for something special here.

2025 is the 100th anniversary of the Cardinals' first NFL championship, a controversial one marred by recruiting some high school players to pretend to be their opponents one week, but a title notwithstanding. We would be surprised if they celebrated that anniversary with their first title since leaving Chicago in the 1960s, but we're significantly higher on them than the general consensus. Have hope, Cardinals fans! You have been burned repeatedly in recent years, but this year, this time, we think Arizona will manage to finish a full season as a relevant team.

And if all this potential turns out to be another mirage, wilting away in December once more? Well, at least you can throw everyone out the door and start over with yet another clean slate in 2026.

Bryan Knowles

## 2024 Cardinals by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	at BUF	L	3%	28	34	270	352	0	-16%	3%	20%	1%
2	LAR	W	100%	41	10	489	245	0	84%	30%	-50%	3%
3	DET	L	4%	13	20	277	373	0	4%	7%	3%	0%
4	WAS	L	0%	14	42	296	449	0	-71%	-21%	44%	-5%
5	at SF	W	66%	24	23	358	384	+2	14%	4%	-11%	-1%
6	at GB	L	1%	13	34	303	437	-2	-17%	-12%	1%	-4%
7	LAC	W	52%	17	15	326	395	+1	23%	12%	-7%	4%
8	at MIA	W	61%	28	27	389	377	0	-1%	26%	27%	0%
9	CHI	W	100%	29	9	350	241	-2	42%	2%	-31%	8%
10	NYJ	W	100%	31	6	406	207	+1	68%	37%	-30%	1%
11	BYE											
12	at SEA	L	25%	6	16	298	285	0	17%	4%	-11%	3%
13	at MIN	L	59%	22	23	406	273	-1	11%	13%	-8%	-9%
14	SEA	L	0%	18	30	356	409	-2	-49%	-5%	33%	-11%
15	NE	W	98%	30	17	395	311	+1	8%	7%	1%	2%
16	at CAR	L	43%	30	36	382	392	-2	-26%	3%	37%	8%
17	at LAR	L	41%	9	13	396	257	-2	-2%	-8%	-9%	-3%
18	SF	W	100%	47	24	393	436	+3	61%	39%	-21%	1%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	8.4%	11	-0.6%	14
Unadjusted VOA	9.3%	11	4.3%	16
Weighted Trend	8.9%	11	0.7%	17
Variance	2.8%	2	6.8%	26
Average Opponent	-0.1%	19	3.3%	3
Passing	24.4%	13	4.6%	15
Rushing	-0.2%	9	-7.4%	19
First Down	8.7%	9	0.8%	16
Second Down	7.2%	10	-3.5%	14
Third Down	9.5%	11	1.5%	17
First Half	12.5%	9	7.4%	22
Second Half	4.4%	12	-9.5%	10
Red Zone	0.4%	15	-7.2%	13
Late and Close	5.7%	17	7.0%	17

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rk	Off	Rk	Def	Rk	ST	Rk	Off AGL	Rk	Def AGL	Rk	Off Age	Rk	Def Age	Rk	ST Age	Rk
2020	8-8	9.1	7.6	410	367	0	0.7%	14	-0.7%	17	-1.9%	14	-0.6%	19	34.8	15	60.9	28	27.2	10	26.9	6	26.5	6
2021	11-6	10.6	9.7	449	366	+12	10.7%	10	3.6%	14	-7.6%	7	-0.4%	20	40.0	12	52.4	26	28.0	5	26.4	15	27.4	2
2022	4-13	5.7	5.0	340	449	-5	-20.3%	29	-12.5%	27	6.8%	26	-1.0%	20	79.4	30	34.5	15	27.9	2	25.9	22	27.3	2
2023	4-13	5.3	5.6	330	455	-1	-20.4%	29	-4.5%	21	17.3%	32	1.5%	11	40.6	23	59.5	30	26.2	20	25.3	30	26.2	17
2024	8-9	9.0	9.4	400	379	-3	8.8%	12	8.4%	11	-0.6%	14	-0.2%	18	31.8	14	72.9	29	26.3	23	26.0	24	25.9	21

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

ARI Offense					ARI Offense vs. Opponents					ARI Defense					ARI Defense vs. Opponents										
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA
11	51%	6.1	13.1%	24%	Base	27%	6.0	19.3%	46%	Base	18%	5.2	-7.6%	11	63%	5.7	-5.0%	12	19%	5.4	3.5%	21	10%	6.6	7.4%
12	29%	6.3	15.8%	51%	Nickel	61%	5.9	4.3%	41%	Nickel	61%	5.8	0.0%	12	21%	6.0	5.4%	21	10%	6.6	7.4%	612	3%	6.0	11.1%
13	14%	6.3	27.0%	62%	Dime+	11%	7.0	48.1%	17%	Dime+	21%	6.0	5.4%	22	1%	4.9	1.3%								
612	2%	3.9	-20.3%	76%	Goal Line	1%	2.3	-1.0%	40%																
23	1%	2.2	-51.3%	55%																					

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected		Rk	Formation		Rk	Pass Rush		Rk	Secondary		Rk	Strategy		Rk
Runs, all	+1.8%	16	Form: Single Back	81%	4	Rush 3	6.2%	4	4 DB	18%	25	Play Action	26%	9
Runs, first down	-0.2%	21	Form: Empty Back	6%	28	Rush 4	69.6%	17	5 DB	61%	25	Offensive Motion	38%	29
Runs, second-long	+1.1%	12	Form: Multi Back	14%	23	Rush 5	18.9%	18	6+ DB	21%	1	Avg Box (Off)	6.01	25
Runs, power sit.	+2.8%	19	Pers: 3+ WR	52%	27	Rush 6+	5.3%	20	Man Coverage	41%	26	Avg Box (Def)	5.81	32
Runs, behind 2H	+5.6%	9	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	48%	3	Edge Rusher Sacks	40.2%	27	MOFC	55%	22	Offensive Pace	31.34	16
Runs, ahead 2H	+3.2%	10	Pers: 6+ OL	3%	11	Interior DL Sacks	34.1%	7	CB1 on WR1	31%	25	Defensive Pace	31.77	21
Run-Pass Options	1.5%	30	Shotgun/Pistol	78%	16	Second Level Sacks	25.6%	8	S/CB Cover Ratio	21%	11	Go for it on 4th	0.85	27

Arizona was at the bottom of the NFL with just 106 penalties, including declined and offsetting. 🏈 Arizona led the NFL by throwing 34% of targets to tight ends. 🏈 Arizona had the league's biggest DVOA gap between running from shotgun (5.7 yards, 14.6% DVOA) and running with the quarterback under center (4.1 yards, -22.7% DVOA). This counts runs by running backs only, not runs by Kyler Murray. 🏈 The Cardinals were poor defending against deep passes for the second straight year, finishing 27th after ranking 32nd in 2023. They were much better (12th) against passes below 16 air yards. 🏈 Arizona led the league in dime defense after ranking just 26th the year before; use of dime went from 3% to 21% of defensive snaps. 🏈 Jonathan Gannon went from the most aggressive coach in the league on fourth downs in 2023 to one of the most conservative coaches in the league in 2024.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
K.Murray	880	11.9%	570	3616	6.3	5.3	69.0%	21	11
J.Brissett	-235	-32.4%	178	712	4.0	4.7	59.4%	2	1

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
J.Conner	136	4.8%	236	1094	4.6	8	2	52%
K.Murray	118	21.9%	70	577	8.2	5	4	-
T.Benson	33	4.4%	63	291	4.6	1	1	52%
M.Carter	1	-8.0%	35	131	3.7	1	0	60%
E.Demercado	71	72.4%	24	223	9.3	1	0	50%
D.Dallas	10	15.9%	9	49	5.4	0	0	67%
G.Dortch	2	-33.1%	5	31	6.2	0	1	-
C.Tune	-44	-124.7%	5	-2	-0.4	0	1	-
T.Jones*	18	98.7%	4	55	13.8	1	0	50%
J.Brissett	-12	-27.8%	12	64	5.3	0	1	-

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
M.Harrison	84	-3.4%	116	62	885	14.3	2.4	8	53%
M.Wilson	83	1.4%	71	47	548	11.7	2.8	4	66%
G.Dortch	16	-8.4%	50	37	342	9.2	7.9	3	74%
Z.Jones	43	30.3%	11	8	84	10.5	2.4	0	73%
S.Fehoko	-12	-21.6%	16	6	106	17.7	2.7	0	38%
T.McBride	123	4.7%	147	111	1146	10.3	4.6	2	76%
E.Higgins	33	12.1%	24	20	172	8.6	4.5	2	83%
T.Reiman	-8	-22.8%	7	6	37	6.2	4.8	0	86%
J.Conner	80	11.3%	55	47	414	8.8	10.3	1	85%
E.Demercado	2	-11.3%	20	16	104	6.5	5.9	0	80%
M.Carter	6	-4.5%	11	11	57	5.2	6.6	0	100%
T.Benson	29	67.1%	6	6	59	9.8	13.0	0	100%

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
H.Froholdt	C	29	17/17	1078	9	6	16	2.5%	21	T.Colon*	RG	27	17/7	386	1	4	8	3.4%	--
E.Brown	LG	29	17/17	1070	2	5	18	2.8%	7	J.Williams	RT	28	6/6	343	0	4	11	5.3%	--
P.Johnson	LT	24	14/14	865	7	2	22	4.2%	14	W.Hernandez*	RG	30	5/5	280	2	0	3	1.8%	--
K.Beachum	RT	36	16/12	742	5	1	15	3.4%	4	J.Barton*	OT	30	4/2	157	0	0	3	3.2%	--
I.Adams	RG	25	15/5	462	4	2	11	4.0%	25	J.Curhan	LG	27	10/2	261	3	0	10	5.9%	--

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont
2022	4.13	4.22	27	76%	6	16%	10	1.10	26	0.48	27	46	7.0%	15	23.8%	7	19
2023	4.76	4.19	17	77%	4	23%	28	1.52	2	0.98	4	42	7.4%	19	28.4%	17	29
2024	4.97	4.65	10	61%	28	16%	12	1.45	2	1.02	7	30	6.0%	10	24.5%	1	25

2024 ALY by direction: Left End: 3.81 (26) Left Tackle: 5.83 (1) Mid/Guard: 4.86 (7) Right Tackle: 4.31 (14) Right End: 2.13 (31)

The Cardinals' offensive line got some help from Kyler Murray returning for a full season. While their caused pressure rate rose a little, going from 14.8% to 17.5%, their *uncaused* pressure rate plummeted from 13.6% to 7.0%, as Murray was less likely to run himself into trouble than Joshua Dobbs was the year before. As a result, they jumped from 17th to first in pressure rate allowed, despite their injuries. 🏈 Paris Johnson took a significant step forward across the board, cutting his pressure rate allowed by 25% and nearly cutting his penalties in half. 🏈 Jonah Williams was in and out of the lineup with knee injuries, the first games he had missed since his rookie season. He was effective when he played and Arizona says he's healthy now, but Kelvin Beachum was re-signed, just in case. 🏈 Isaiah Adams would have led all guards in ESPN's run block win rate if he had played enough snaps to qualify. He's set to start at right guard this season. 🏈 Evan Brown was the weak link on the line, especially in the running game. The Cardinals did re-sign him to a two-year deal, important because Will Hernandez is not on the team. It's a little surprising that Arizona didn't bring in competition for Brown or Adams, however.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
L.J.Collier	30	DE	17	590	31	3.6%	73	22	5	6	25	64%	73	2.8	70	3.5	2	16	1
D.Stills	26	DE	16	534	43	5.2%	35	33	8	6	35	77%	33	2.6	53	4.5	2	20	1
R.Lopez*	28	DT	16	467	31	3.8%	68	25	6	10	26	77%	34	2.6	55	1.0	2	9	3
N.Jones	27	DE	12	261	29	4.7%	--	17	5	5	22	50%	--	4.7	--	3.0	1	6	1
K.Tonga*	29	DT	13	229	22	3.3%	--	17	5	4	21	81%	--	1.8	--	0.0	0	3	0
C.Campbell	39	DE	17	615	56	6.9%	16	49	19	7	45	84%	10	2.1	33	5.0	7	35	7
D.Tomlinson	31	DT	16	610	26	3.4%	78	23	12	7	19	84%	11	0.9	1	3.0	14	21	1

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
Z.Collins	26	OLB	17	602	57	6.5%	22	38	11	6	39	67%	70	2.3	37	5.0	2	23	1
B.Browning	26	OLB	13	379	19	2.8%	95	16	10	7	12	92%	3	2.6	51	2.0	2	18	0
J.Okwara*	28	OLB	13	286	19	2.8%	--	14	4	4	10	90%	--	2.0	--	1.0	2	7	1
D.Gardeck*	31	OLB	7	207	22	6.1%	26	13	8	1	12	42%	101	3.3	82	3.0	1	8	1
J.Luketa	26	OLB	10	188	18	3.5%	--	14	5	1	15	73%	--	1.5	--	3.0	1	6	0
J.Sweat	28	OLB	16	622	43	5.5%	38	35	15	0	31	74%	44	3.4	83	8.0	9	37	2

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush			vs. Pass									
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
K.White*	29	ILB	17	1018	139	15.9%	25	67	24	14	85	53%	71	3.9	56	2.5	5	13	33	-5.5%	27	33%	66	9.2	65	3	1
M.Wilson	27	ILB	16	763	80	9.7%	64	39	10	6	45	58%	53	4.2	68	3.0	4	11	25	-10.6%	18	36%	63	7.0	28	5	1
K.Barnes*	27	ILB	17	205	34	3.9%	--	14	7	1	20	50%	--	3.2	--	2.0	0	4	7	2.4%	--	29%	--	9.1	--	0	0
O.Pappoe	25	ILB	16	131	22	2.7%	--	10	2	2	8	25%	--	6.3	--	0.0	0	2	16	30.6%	73	44%	40	6.7	22	2	0
A.Davis-Gaither	28	OLB	17	535	81	9.2%	67	36	10	6	43	53%	69	4.1	63	0.0	1	6	28	-4.5%	30	32%	67	7.5	40	4	1

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk			
2022	4.68	4.41	19	60%	2	23%	3	1.38	27	0.96	25	36	6.1%	25	29.0%	10			
2023	4.62	4.87	32	70%	21	13%	31	1.33	31	0.68	19	33	6.0%	30	25.5%	29			
2024	4.69	4.38	18	68%	18	20%	7	1.45	30	0.90	25	41	7.4%	15	25.0%	29			
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 4.18 (12)				Left Tackle: 4.44 (22)				Mid/Guard: 4.28 (10)				Right Tackle: 4.77 (26)		Right End: 4.42 (23)	

Would someone, somewhere, please like to make a tackle? For all the improvement in Arizona's defense last season, they allowed 10.4 average YAC on passes at or behind the line of scrimmage—close to the worst figure in the NFL—and a league-worst 3.1 yards after contact per rush in 2024. Their 23.0% avoided tackle rate—missed tackles plus jukes in the run game—ranked 31st as well. The prodigal son returns! Calais Campbell may no longer be the elite player he was when he left Arizona in 2016, but he's still a great interior force, especially in the run game. Campbell is a key member of a rotation rather than an every-down player at this point in his career, but when you can add the sixth-highest overall stop rate among interior linemen, you jump at that chance. Dalvin Tomlinson sees Campbell and raises: he had the fourth-highest stop rate last season. He led the NFL with just 0.9 yards on his average run tackle. It's a heck of a talent influx. Darius Robinson didn't suit up until Week 13 thanks to a calf injury. He didn't look great in limited action, but the former first-round pick deserves a mul-ligan and a healthy offseason to see what he can actually contribute. First-round pick Walter Nolen (Mississippi) may not start from Day 1 after Campbell and Tomlinson were added, but he won't stay deep in the rotation for long. 14.5 TFLs and 6.5 sacks in 2024 are pretty crazy numbers for an interior lineman. His first-step quickness leads to tons of production. Josh Sweat comes in from Philadelphia to reunite with Jonathan Gannon. He may only have one 10-sack season, but he's usually near the top of the league in pressures, with 37, 50, and 46 in the last three years. Baron Browning came to Arizona in a midseason trade. It has been quite a while since Browning could be relied on for a full season, as he hasn't topped 500 defensive snaps since 2022. His pressure rates have been quite good, and he could be quite a bargain on his new deal, if he can find a way to stay on the field. Third-round pick Jordan Burch (Oregon) had the seventh-highest SackSEER projection. Large for an edge, he's surprisingly more of a speed rusher than the power guy you'd expect from looking at him—he had a 4.67s 40. He's a little inconsistent, but his traits are great and there's plenty of upside here with some development. Akeem Davis-Gaither comes from Cincinnati to replace the departed Kyzir White. Davis-Gaither has started just 11 games in five seasons, although seven came last year. It seems far from clear that he's ready to take on a full-time starting job, though averaging a full 1.7 fewer

yards allowed per target than White is something he can hang his hat on. ⚡ It may be Cody Simon who ends up replacing White in the long run. The fourth-round pick out of Ohio State was defensive MVP of the National Championship Game and Rose Bowl, and he was one of four players in FBS to have 100 tackles and seven sacks. His coverage skills are passable, and the job is there for the taking if he adapts quickly to NFL speed. ⚡ Mack Wilson is one of only eight linebackers to have double-digit negative coverage DVOAs in both 2023 and 2024.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run						vs. Pass											
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
B.Baker	29	SS	17	1067	169	19.4%	1	66	27	24	83	46%	20	5.2	15	31	6.2%	29	7.3	8.9%	32	42%	44	6.9	30	5 0
J.Thompson	27	FS	15	944	101	13.1%	19	21	7	6	50	22%	84	10.7	90	23	5.2%	36	7.3	12.9%	37	35%	52	6.6	23	3 0
S.Thomas	25	CB	17	820	53	6.1%	80	16	5	5	14	36%	69	7.0	61	55	14.2%	86	12.8	-1.7%	51	47%	68	8.8	80	6 0
G.Williams	24	CB	16	781	67	8.2%	58	27	10	7	27	37%	65	7.0	62	58	15.7%	77	8.6	-27.0%	10	64%	3	5.9	6	9 2
S.Murphy-Bunting	28	CB	15	728	57	7.4%	70	23	10	11	17	47%	41	5.6	38	57	16.6%	69	12.3	1.4%	56	35%	91	10.1	91	5 3
M.Melton	23	CB	17	565	50	5.7%	85	15	8	10	10	20%	87	10.9	89	45	16.9%	67	9.9	1.1%	54	51%	52	8.8	77	5 0
D.Taylor-Demerson	24	FS	17	258	40	4.6%	--	18	9	4	20	40%	--	5.2	--	4	3.3%	--	5.0	-10.3%	--	50%	--	5.0	--	5 0
Year	Pass	D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk									
2022	21		-38.5%	1	-18.0%	5	21.8%	29	-13.0%	7	-10.7%	10	31.6%	32	39.4%	32										
2023	31		23.9%	27	-8.6%	11	13.1%	28	29.8%	31	-20.0%	6	16.1%	29	15.8%	26										
2024	15		0.3%	17	-21.8%	3	2.9%	19	-6.6%	13	-6.8%	15	-16.1%	6	19.1%	30										

Scott Hanson and NFL RedZone directors hate this one neat trick: the Cardinals allowed only 20 passing touchdowns and had just nine interceptions in 2024. That's 29 "highlight-reel" type plays, fourth fewest in the league, and only the Jets had a lower rate than Arizona's 5.4%. ⚡ Second-round pick Will Johnson slipped in the draft because of injury concerns. He reportedly had a knee injury that required surgery at some point and missed much of his final season at Michigan with turf toe and a shoulder injury. If he's healthy, and by all accounts he is, Johnson should be a steal—a projected top-10 pick found at pick 47. Johnson is built to order from an ideal cornerback catalogue—big but still fluid, with a ballhawk mentality. He should be CB1 from Day 1. ⚡ Garrett Williams was the only corner to finish in the top 10 in coverage DVOA, yards allowed per target, and success rate. ⚡ While our numbers liked Max Melton a little more than the film guys did, there's certainly room for improvement. His 1.1% coverage DVOA ranked 12th out of 17 qualified rookie corners. ⚡ Fifth-round pick Denzel Burke had 51 starts at Ohio State, most in school history, as he was a starter as a true freshman. He's strong and willing to step in and make tackles, which means he's probably going to find a home on special teams as a rookie. ⚡ The Cardinals made sure to lock up Budda Baker to a long-term deal before 2024 was even over. Baker led all safeties with 38 run stops and had 18 more tackles than any other defensive back. He flies all over the field. ⚡ Jalen Thompson is entering the last year of his deal. He didn't intercept a pass for the first time since 2020, and there's a chance Dadrian Taylor-Demerson passes him on the depth chart before Arizona has to re-up him.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	-1.0%	20	-2.0	20	2.1	11	-2.4	23	-4.3	26	1.2	14	5.2	10
2023	1.5%	11	3.4	12	1.0	12	-1.1	22	3.2	11	1.3	11	5.0	10
2024	-0.2%	18	2.2	12	-3.3	25	0.7	13	-0.5	15	0.1	15	-6.6	25

Matt Prater was not re-signed, so Chad Ryland takes over as full-time kicker. That is a downgrade. Prater had +3.0 points of field goal value in 2024 to Ryland's -0.7, as Ryland missed three kicks and had a field goal and extra point blocked last year. However, Ryland was slightly better on kickoffs, with a lower touchback rate. (With the new dynamic kickoff, touchbacks are negative value plays for the kicking team, especially now with the touchback moved to the 35 for 2025.) ⚡ The Cardinals' 2024 punting stats were brought down last year by Ryland and Michael Palardy. Blake Gillikin was worth 5.0 points of gross punting value when healthy, which ranked eighth in the league. ⚡ DeeJay Dallas and Greg Dortch should handle returns once again. Dallas was the more successful of the two, scoring the first touchdown in dynamic kickoff history.

# Atlanta Falcons

2024 record: 8-9

Total DVOA: -7.3% (20th)

Pythagorean Wins: 7.7 (19th)

Offense: 4.4% (14th)

Snap-Weighted Age: 27.4 (4th)

Defense: 7.5% (29th)

Average Opponent: -1.2% (20th)

Special Teams: -4.1% (29th)

2025 Mean Projection: 8.4 wins

On the Clock (0-5): 13%

Postseason Odds: 43.7%

Mediocrity (6-8): 39%

Super Bowl Odds: 2.6%

Playoff Contender (9-11): 37%

Proj. Avg. Opponent: -3.9% (30th)

Super Bowl Contender (12+): 11%

**2024:** Paying Kirk Cousins more but enjoying him less? It may be because his right ankle is fossilized!

**2025:** Do you wish to respawn? You will lose most of your progress from last year.

The Falcons run their franchise like newbies playing their first 4X strategy game.

For the uninitiated: the four X's in what are also called "grand strategy" video games (such as *Civilization*, *Crusader Kings*, or *Stellaris*) stand for eXpand, eXplore, eXploit, and eXterminate. Such games start you off as the leader of some empire or faction. You are tasked with building a military and infrastructure, engaging in wars and diplomacy, and ultimately controlling a map and dominating rivals through brute force, scientific achievements, or some other means.

Running such empires is a little like running an NFL team: you spend resources like money and draft picks to improve, your coaching staff acts like a "government" which can provide bonuses, Sunday's games are like territorial battles, and so forth. The Super Bowl is a "victory condition" that is countless hours of careful preparation away.

Grand strategy games are too dense and complicated to come with an instruction booklet, so newcomers generally plow right in, building cities and attacking neighbors as they figure out what the buttons do. Fortunately, such games also tend to be forgiving in their early stages. You can play for hours and enjoy some measure of success while making far-from-optimal choices.

The NFL is also forgiving: revenue sharing, the salary cap, the draft, and other mechanisms ensure that while a doofus decision-maker might mire a team in last place, he can't mismanage them into bankruptcy (though the Saints front office keeps trying) or accidentally blow up the stadium.

A 4X gamer can spend many happy hours noodling away at a little empire. But if you keep randomly building and shooting stuff you discover—the explosive way—that better-optimized opponents unlocked the Manhattan Project while you were still mastering archery. No worries! Just start over and apply what you learned to a new game!

The Falcons are like gamers who never figure things out. They have been tossing resources willy-nilly, adopting and abandoning strategies on the fly, and generally operating in sandbox/tutorial mode since Tom Brady nuked them in Super Bowl LI. They play with the difficulty sliders set to "toddler" in the NFC South, so it often looks like they are making temporary progress. But if the Falcons played in AFC North Deity Mode, they would never survive the Stone Age.

The Michael Penix/Kirk Cousins situation is a fine example

of the Falcons' n00bs-flailing-at-*Europa-Universalis* long-range tactical acumen. Everyone knows quarterbacks are important, just as everyone approaching a strategy game knows that artillery is essential for sieging an opponent's defenses. So the Falcons signed Cousins at great expense in the 2024 offseason. Then they drafted Penix with the eighth overall pick. In gamer terms, they loaded up on artillery—not bothering to apply any "reduced-price weaponry" boosts—while their peasants were starving for edge rushers.

Doubling up on Cousins and Penix was a defensible tactic in 2024: long-range quarterback plan, mentor and apprentice, blah blah blah. The true newbie moment arrived in the 2025 offseason, after Penix ousted Cousins from the starting job. Instead of engineering whatever trade they could manage for Cousins, the Falcons ate a \$10-million roster bonus for the 2026 season by keeping him and his \$40-million cap number on the payroll. That's right: the Falcons will still be paying Cousins next year, regardless of what happens this year.

At press time, it appeared that Cousins would enter training camp as the most expensive backup in NFL history. In gaming terms, this is like not only keeping World War I-era artillery in the arsenal through the age of stealth bombers and drone strikes, but also spending lavishly on the custom-wrought cast iron and bronze parts needed to maintain it.

Penix was the fourth offensive skill-position player selected by the Falcons with a top-10 pick in the 2021-through-2024 drafts. Kyle Pitts (fourth overall, 2021) and Bijan Robinson (eighth overall, 2023) were fine examples of suboptimal resource management. Both Pitts and Bijan were collegiate superstars, but first-round tight ends rarely live up to their draft status, and you probably know the whole deal with running backs. Sure enough, Pitts is now an object lesson about the perils of over-investing in a toolsy college tight end, while Bijan is doing what outstanding running backs do on mediocre teams: racking up fantasy stats while barely impacting the standings.

Wide receiver Drake London (eighth overall, 2022) was a more justifiable pick than Pitts or Bijan, and he has grown into a serviceable focal point for a passing game. The problem is that the Falcons have faced a glaring pass-rush deficiency for a decade. They haven't finished higher than 23rd in adjusted sack rate since 2016. They have not had a defender record double-digit sacks since Vic Beasley that same year. No defender has notched more than 6.5 sacks in the 2020s so far.

## 2025 Falcons Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	TB	7	at SF	13	at NYJ
2	at MIN	8	MIA	14	SEA
3	at CAR	9	at NE	15	at TB (Thu.)
4	WAS	10	at IND (GER)	16	at ARI
5	BYE	11	CAR	17	LAR (Mon.)
6	BUF (Mon.)	12	at NO	18	NO

The Falcons tried to solve what had grown into an institutional pass-rush crisis by drafting second-day projects (Arnold Ebiketie, Zach Harrison), and by adding creaky mercenaries (Matthew Judon, Bud Dupree) instead of drafting one of the apex-predator sack specialists that are typically on the board when they are loading up on first-round skill-position talent. Their lack of pass rush weakened the entire defense and forced an offense built for ball control into shootout mode during rare matchups with quality opponents. *Why aren't my city's costly universities and academies pumping out scientific advancements? It's because your city has no food; you forgot to build farms, you dingus.*

The Falcons finally figured out in April's draft that they really, really needed to commit serious resources to their pass-rush problem. So they drafted ultra-athletic, versatile Georgia defender Jalon Walker 15th overall. Great work, fellas. Then they traded their first-round pick next year, plus their second-rounder this year, to move up for speedy-but-semi-motivated Tennessee edge James Pearce. Two edge rushers for the price of three! And both of them are projects! Brilliant!

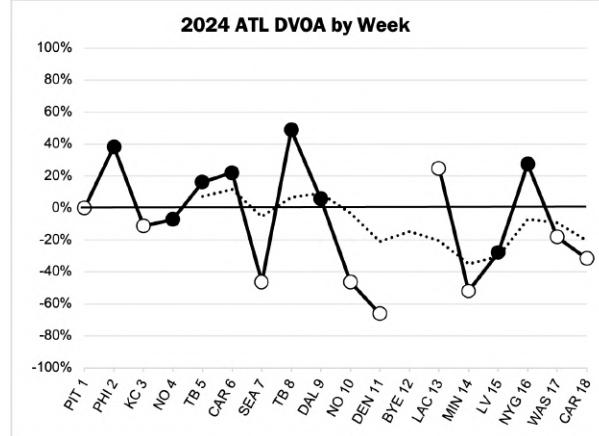
*Tool tip: You are squandering money and draft picks that you might need to solve other problems in the future! Are you sure you need two first-round rookie edge rushers, two quarterbacks, and three high-first-round skill position players?* The Falcons click YES.

*Are you really sure? Because some units will be disbanded due to a lack of resources, including Grady Jarrett and Drew Dalman!* The Falcons turn off the tool tips.

Jarrett had been one of the Falcons' best defenders and a mainstay in the locker room since Super Bowl LI. Dalman was one of the anchors of the offensive line. Neither loss is devastating; Jarrett turned 32 in April and Ryan Neuzil played well at center when Dalman was hurt last year. But those departures, plus some others (Judon, Justin Simmons) roughly offset the rookie arrivals. The Falcons are treading water. Their offensive veterans are all in their prime. Their defensive veterans aren't very good. Their hope for improvement resides almost entirely with Penix.

Penix was supposed to spend all of last season on the bench while the Falcons enjoyed/experienced/endured a typical season from Cousins. A typical Cousins season is usually just enough to barely propel a team into the playoffs if it gets lucky in a few one-score games. But in the mid-major NFC South, a team with second-quartile quarterbacking can rule as emperors. (Just drive south on Interstate 75 to Tampa.)

Unfortunately, Cousins' 2023 Achilles injury robbed him



of what little mobility he once had. Cousins was able to efficiently distribute the ball from a stationary platform early in the year, when the Falcons rode some narrow wins to a 6-3 start. But defenses eventually figured out he was a sitting duck. Opponents began blitzing right up the middle, knowing Cousins was likely to fling panicky interceptions if pressured. After Week 9, the Falcons were a surprising sixth in pass offense DVOA. In Cousins' final five starts, Weeks 10 to 15, they ranked 28th.

The Falcons offense became increasingly limited: Bijan runs, quick hitters from the shotgun, almost nothing else. Cousins threw eight interceptions and zero touchdowns during a four-game losing streak, mixing in lots of deflected passes and sacks which looked like they could have been avoided. The Vikings, who never need an excuse to blitz up the middle, coaxed two interceptions from their former quarterback in a Week 14 42-21 blowout. Cousins mustered just 117 passing yards in a 15-9 victory over the lowly Raiders the next week, and he was so gimpy that even his efforts to hand off or play-fake looked labored and out-of-kilter. Penix took over for the final three games, with the Falcons still in the playoff chase.

Penix threw exactly 100 passes in his three starts; his other five pass attempts came in early-season cameos. Penix faced defenses that ended the season ranked 28th (Giants), 22nd (Commanders), and 32nd (Panthers) in DVOA. Our metrics place him precisely one yard above replacement level for those three games, largely because of opponent adjustments. Penix led a blowout victory against the Giants and overtime losses to the Commanders and Panthers. The latter losses eliminated the Falcons from playoff contention.

You may have watched YouTube videos praising Penix's performance in those final starts. He indeed delivered some fine throws, made some good decisions, and remained calm under pressure in tight games. But we are talking about 100 passes: 43 of them of 5 air yards or less, just 19 of them on third/fourth down with 7 or more yards to go, 13 of them in the red zone, zero of them when trailing by more than a touchdown, and (again) zero of them against a top-20 defense. This is not a sample large enough to draw firm conclusions from. Desmond Ridder also looked impressive in late-season long relief in 2022; Penix is a better prospect than Ridder, but a skepticism check is always healthy when projecting stardom

based on some fourth-down conversions against the Panthers.

Penix inherits a familiar supporting cast that is built to be competitive right away. Bijan is a high-percentage yardage muncher who should keep the Falcons ahead of the sticks. Tyler Allgeier is a solid changeup. London is a credible possession target. Darnell Mooney can be a productive skinny YAC guy. Pitts ... looks great in shoulder pads. Four-fifths of the line that helped Cousins to conceal the fact that he was bolted to the ground returns in 2025. Assuming he displays the better-than-baseline competence he flashed in 2024, Penix should have the protection and weapons he needs to keep the Falcons offense near league average.

Defense is a greater concern. Rookie edge rushers who aren't Myles Garrett-tier prospects tend to be long-term solutions, not insta-fixes for a team that only squeezed out 31 sacks against an array of hapless quarterbacks last year. Jarrett was fading, but his departure still leaves a hole in a run defense that allowed 120.6 rushing yards per game and 4.5 yards per carry in 2024. The top contributors on the back end—cornerbacks AJ Terrell and Mike Hughes, safety Jessie Bates, linebacker Kaden Elliss—arent getting any better, and some (Terrell) aren't as great as their reputation. The Falcons defense will probably be just as consistently weak this year as it was last year.

Why are the Falcons like this? The answer can be found in a related question: Did you notice that no single Falcons decision-maker was specifically named in the first 1,500 words of this essay? Can you imagine an Eagles essay that doesn't mention Howie Roseman? A Cowboys essay without Jerry Jones? A Chargers essay without Jim Harbaugh? Who is really in charge in Atlanta? Where does the buck stop?

Arthur Blank is not a tipsy plutocrat like Jones, but he appears to be a pretty handsy meddler behind the scenes. Rich McKay's fingerprints can be found on most of the Falcons' biggest decisions—he used everything short of holy water to ward Bill Belichick away from the organization last off-season—but his day-to-day role is hard to pin down. Terry Fontenot is the general manager, but McKay is the five-star general manager or something. Failed Bears executive Ryan Pace has been lurking somewhere in the front office for three years. Head coach Raheem Morris is a defense-first coach who exercises little personnel control. Offensive coordinator Zac Robinson is a standard-issue Mini McVay calling plays for offensive personnel handed down from Arthur Smith.

When reporters ask salient questions like *Why not trade Cousins for literally anything?* or *Is Pearce really worth two first-round picks?*, Fontenot is usually tasked with answering them. Blank steps up when explaining why the Falcons passed

on Belichick or didn't take a cursory swipe at Lamar Jackson in 2023. McKay sits back and feels the tremors in his web. Morris was the one who benched Cousins, but it felt like he needed three layers of management to sign off on the decision.

The woeful NFC South creates its own set of distortions. When a team plays a mid-major schedule for years, it becomes hard to self-scout players such as London, Bijan, Terrell, or the stalwarts on the offensive line. Sure, they're good. But none of the home-grown Falcons have ever appeared in a playoff game. The Falcons have never beaten the Patrick Mahomes Chiefs, Josh Allen Bills, or Lamar Jackson Ravens. They never beat Tom Brady's Bucs. They haven't faced the 49ers since 2022 or the Lions since Dan Campbell turned the franchise around. The "big wins" that Falcons veterans have been a part of—last year's Week 2 comeback against the Eagles, a similar Week 2 comeback against the Packers in 2023, various early-season nail-biters against the Bucs—weren't exactly championship-caliber tests of strength.

In other words, it's hard to evaluate how even the Falcons' best players will fare if they are ever removed from their climate-controlled hothouse. The Falcons may be purposely building a wild-card also-ran in ways even DVOA cannot quite tease out.

Atlanta will once again face a soft schedule this fall: the fourth-easiest schedule in the NFL per our projections. The Falcons are unquestionably better than the Saints and Panthers, and they possess enough talent to split with the Bucs and go 5-1 in the NFC South, which should then keep them in the playoff chase come December, which could lead to another set of strange decisions (contract extensions will soon loom for London, Bijan, and conceivably Pitts) in 2026.

With no clear decision-maker exercising any apparent long-range vision, and with a schedule that makes directionless mediocrity look more palatable, the Falcons often operate less like a gamer playing a 4X strategy game than the AI-controlled *opponent* in such a game. Choices seem to come from a drop-down menu of predictable responses to immediate inputs. The AI in such games generally isn't designed to play to win, just to provide a semi-challenging obstacle for the gamer.

That's the Falcons in a nutshell: You have to work to beat them each year, but not all that hard. And while playing a 4X game can be fun even if you just build a medium-sized empire that doesn't rival Ancient Rome or Tang Dynasty China, watching the Falcons bumble along year after year is like watching *someone else* play a strategy game that they are not very good at. And that is no fun at all.

Mike Tanier

## 2024 Falcons by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	PIT	L	43%	10	18	226	270	-3	0%	-13%	-14%	-1%
2	at PHI	W	87%	22	21	385	365	+1	38%	45%	6%	0%
3	KC	L	9%	17	22	311	345	0	-11%	-12%	0%	0%
4	NO	W	27%	26	24	315	366	+1	-7%	-11%	10%	14%
5	TB	W	61%	36	30	550	333	0	16%	37%	9%	-12%
6	at CAR	W	100%	38	20	423	335	+1	22%	22%	8%	8%
7	SEA	L	1%	14	34	369	339	-3	-46%	-12%	23%	-11%
8	at TB	W	97%	31	26	394	432	+3	49%	48%	-6%	-5%
9	DAL	W	89%	27	21	310	378	-1	5%	14%	0%	-8%
10	at NO	L	21%	17	20	468	365	-1	-46%	-2%	22%	-23%
11	at DEN	L	0%	6	38	226	400	-1	-66%	-36%	29%	-1%
12	BYE											
13	LAC	L	96%	13	17	350	187	-3	25%	-14%	-49%	-10%
14	at MIN	L	0%	21	42	496	433	-3	-52%	14%	60%	-6%
15	at LV	W	76%	15	9	261	249	+2	-28%	-40%	-12%	0%
16	NYG	W	100%	34	7	329	234	+2	27%	4%	-30%	-7%
17	at WAS	L	36%	24	30	337	412	0	-18%	-3%	12%	-3%
18	CAR	L	30%	38	44	537	425	-1	-32%	22%	47%	-7%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	4.4%	14	7.5%	29
Unadjusted VOA	6.9%	14	9.0%	28
Weighted Trend	2.0%	16	10.3%	30
Variance	6.6%	22	6.9%	27
Average Opponent	0.1%	20	-1.8%	24
Passing	15.4%	16	15.6%	27
Rushing	7.1%	5	-3.6%	24
First Down	4.5%	11	5.8%	22
Second Down	1.1%	16	-3.7%	13
Third Down	9.3%	12	28.2%	32
First Half	13.4%	6	15.9%	28
Second Half	-5.2%	19	-0.8%	18
Red Zone	-5.3%	17	19.4%	31
Late and Close	7.1%	16	9.0%	19

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rank	Off	Rank	Def	Rank	ST	Rank	Off AGL	Rank	Def AGL	Rank	Off Age	Rank	Def Age	Rank	ST Age	Rank
2020	4-12	7.5	6.7	396	414	+3	-3.9%	19	-0.9%	18	2.3%	19	-0.7%	20	13.1	2	35.0	15	27.8	2	26.1	22	26.4	9
2021	7-10	4.7	4.7	313	459	-6	-27.1%	30	-13.2%	27	12.9%	31	-1.0%	22	17.4	1	30.7	11	26.5	17	26.8	11	26.2	14
2022	7-10	7.9	8.1	365	386	-4	-4.0%	19	8.0%	8	14.5%	31	2.5%	5	30.9	14	28.2	8	26.1	24	25.6	28	26.7	8
2023	7-10	7.0	5.5	321	373	-12	-18.6%	28	-9.8%	24	5.8%	24	-2.9%	27	6.4	1	29.9	14	26.0	25	26.8	14	26.9	4
2024	8-9	7.7	7.3	389	423	-6	-7.3%	20	4.4%	14	7.5%	29	-4.1%	29	28.4	12	15.8	3	27.1	9	27.9	3	27.0	7

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

ATL Offense					ATL Offense vs. Opponents					ATL Defense					ATL Defense vs. Opponents				
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA		
11	87%	6.2	13.7%	39%	Base	16%	4.8	-12.9%	38%	Base	25%	5.7	11.9%	11	65%	5.9	7.2%		
12	9%	3.9	-21.7%	76%	Nickel	71%	5.9	12.2%	50%	Nickel	64%	5.7	6.2%	12	16%	4.7	3.2%		
21	2%	4.7	-36.0%	62%	Dime+	13%	7.9	14.6%	13%	Dime+	10%	5.7	2.1%	21	6%	7.2	32.8%		
														13	5%	4.0	-7.4%		
														22	2%	5.6	23.7%		

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected		Rk	Formation		Rk	Pass Rush		Rk	Secondary		Rk	Strategy		Rk
Runs, all	+7.2%	4	Form: Single Back	79%	6	Rush 3	12.3%	1	4 DB	21%	18	Play Action	14%	32
Runs, first down	+13.2%	1	Form: Empty Back	4%	32	Rush 4	64.2%	26	5 DB	64%	19	Offensive Motion	65%	4
Runs, second-long	-7.8%	26	Form: Multi Back	17%	15	Rush 5	17.8%	20	6+ DB	10%	15	Avg Box (Off)	6.02	21
Runs, power sit.	+15.6%	5	Pers: 3+ WR	87%	1	Rush 6+	5.8%	18	Man Coverage	52%	16	Avg Box (Def)	6.11	15
Runs, behind 2H	+9.4%	1	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	10%	32	Edge Rusher Sacks	46.8%	21	MOFC	59%	13	Offensive Pace	29.87	3
Runs, ahead 2H	+11.0%	4	Pers: 6+ OL	0%	27	Interior DL Sacks	27.4%	19	CB1 on WR1	46%	5	Defensive Pace	31.91	24
Run-Pass Options	2.1%	25	Shotgun/Pistol	85%	5	Second Level Sacks	25.8%	7	S/CB Cover Ratio	17%	21	Go for it on 4th	1.39	5

The Falcons recovered 16 of 20 fumbles on offense but only five of 16 fumbles on defense. The Atlanta plummeted from No. 1 (62%) to No. 32 (10%) in the use of big offensive personnel with either two tight ends or six offensive linemen. They also dropped from second (27%) to dead last (14%) in use of play-action on passes. Despite the changes in offensive philosophy, the Falcons led the NFL in usage of pistol formations for the third straight season. They used pistol 34.6% of the time in 2024 with Miami second at 29.2%. (This went up to 40.9% of plays in the three Michael Penix starts.) For the whole season, the Falcons had 5.7 yards per play and 14.4% DVOA when they were in pistol. The Falcons were one of three teams, along with the Rams and the Commanders, who ran more often when opponents were in nickel (50%) than when opponents were in base (38%). The Falcons used just three pass rushers 50% more often than any other defense. Although they allowed more yards per pass with the standard four pass rushers (5.7 vs. 6.2), they also had a better DVOA with four (17.0% vs. 6.9%). Atlanta's defense had a league-low adjusted sack rate of 2.3% on third and fourth downs. Rivals New Orleans and Atlanta benefited the least from opponent dropped passes in 2024, with a 2.4% drop rate against each defense.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
K.Cousins	493	5.2%	477	3313	6.9	5.6	67.6%	18	16
M.Penix	1	-11.0%	109	761	7.0	4.4	58.1%	3	3

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
B.Robinson	323	15.3%	303	1434	4.7	14	1	61%
T.Allgeier	100	7.1%	137	644	4.7	3	0	61%
J.McClellan*	18	23.9%	13	32	2.5	0	0	38%
K.Cousins	-93	-181.6%	12	8	0.7	0	6	-
R.McCloud	47	65.3%	10	79	7.9	0	0	-
M.Penix	-7	-40.0%	5	14	2.8	1	0	-

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
D.London	236	6.1%	158	100	1271	12.7	3.3	9	63%
D.Mooney	271	17.9%	107	65	998	15.4	4.2	5	61%
R.McCloud	8	-11.5%	87	62	686	11.1	5.4	1	71%
K.Hodge	31	19.6%	12	7	131	18.7	12.7	1	58%
K.Pitts	0	-7.3%	74	47	602	12.8	5.8	4	64%
C.Woerner	-26	-41.6%	12	7	46	6.6	3.0	0	58%
B.Robinson	79	7.6%	71	60	425	7.1	8.8	1	85%
T.Allgeier	17	16.0%	13	13	88	6.8	7.2	0	100%

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
J.Mathew	LT	33	17/17	1118	8	4	18	2.9%	4	K.McGary	RT	30	16/16	1041	3	8	28	4.8%	14
M.Bergeron	LG	25	17/17	1105	12	10	15	2.4%	5	R.Neuzil	C	28	17/8	577	6	2	7	2.2%	17
C.Lindstrom	RG	28	17/17	1099	8	3	15	2.4%	9	D.Dalman*	C	27	9/9	554	3	5	5	1.6%	5

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont		
2022	4.85	4.68	5	66%	17	15%	5	1.38	6	0.87	13	37	8.7%	27	28.2%	21	28		
2023	4.07	3.99	24	55%	29	19%	20	1.20	14	0.55	20	40	8.0%	23	25.5%	6	37		
2024	4.66	4.71	6	65%	19	15%	6	1.47	1	0.62	20	32	5.6%	5	24.9%	3	36		
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 4.76 (8)				Left Tackle: 4.73 (8)				Mid/Guard: 5.05 (3)				Right Tackle: 4.38 (12)		Right End: 4.72 (7)	

Left tackle Jake Matthews, left guard Matthew Bergeron, right guard Chris Lindstrom, and right tackle Kaleb McGary all return for their third season together; Matthews, Lindstrom, and McGary have all been at their positions for the Falcons since 2020. This is a solid veteran unit that performed the football equivalent of chaining themselves to a sequoia so the loggers couldn't chop it down in 2024. These guys can play. However, McGary, in the final year of his contract, was a no-show early in voluntary minicamps. Ryan Neuzil will replace Drew Dalman (now in Chicago) at center. Neuzil started eight games in relief of Dalman last year, all when Kirk Cousins was at quarterback and opponents such as the Vikings started blitzing the A-gap almost every down just for funzies. Neuzil fared very well under the circumstances. He signed a two-year contract extension at the end of May. Depth is a bit of a question mark, although there are some veterans such as Brandon Parker (ex-Raiders) and Elijah Wilkinson (on his second stint with Atlanta).

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run				Pass Rush						
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
G.Jarrett*	32	DE	17	744	53	6.0%	24	41	16	6	44	75%	39	1.5	13	2.5	11	24	1
D.Onyemata	33	DE	17	567	46	5.2%	36	32	9	2	40	65%	69	3.4	84	3.0	2	12	1
E.Goldman*	31	DT	17	331	16	1.8%	--	9	1	8	15	53%	--	2.6	--	1.0	2	5	0
K.Street	29	DT	13	280	15	2.2%	--	10	5	1	12	58%	--	1.9	--	1.0	0	6	0
Z.Harrison	24	DE	17	268	28	3.2%	--	22	6	1	21	81%	--	2.5	--	1.0	1	11	2
T.Graham	27	DE	10	193	12	2.3%	--	9	1	2	12	75%	--	2.3	--	0.0	1	2	0
R.Orhororo	24	DE	8	148	11	2.6%	--	6	2	0	9	67%	--	2.9	--	0.0	1	4	0
M.Fox	31	DE	17	577	28	3.2%	82	20	7	2	23	65%	67	3.2	81	3.5	2	15	1

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run				Pass Rush						
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
M.Judon*	33	OLB	17	655	46	5.2%	44	32	19	7	28	61%	84	3.4	85	5.5	5	15	4
A.Ebiketie	26	OLB	17	543	40	4.5%	59	26	10	1	23	57%	90	4.0	95	6.0	6	27	3
L.Carter*	30	OLB	13	409	29	4.3%	66	15	5	4	20	70%	61	3.2	74	0.0	3	5	0
J.Smith-Williams*	28	OLB	10	306	24	4.6%	56	18	9	2	16	81%	26	0.8	4	1.0	1	0	0
D.Harris	30	OLB	9	216	12	2.6%	--	8	1	1	8	75%	--	4.1	--	0.0	1	3	0
L.Floyd	33	DE	17	606	43	5.1%	47	31	11	4	27	67%	70	2.8	60	8.5	6	36	2

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run				Pass Rush				vs. Pass										
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
K.Elliss	30	ILB	17	1095	153	17.3%	12	77	22	13	88	59%	47	4.5	78	5.0	11	34	39	15.2%	61	38%	58	8.5	56	3	1
N.Landman*	27	ILB	13	544	81	12.0%	54	40	7	6	53	57%	58	3.8	46	0.0	0	1	23	12.5%	57	30%	70	8.3	55	1	0
T.Andersen	26	ILB	7	285	45	12.3%	50	18	5	4	29	41%	85	5.2	83	0.0	1	1	20	33.4%	74	65%	3	4.7	3	1	1
D.Deablo	27	MLB	14	689	64	9.0%	68	32	5	10	30	73%	6	3.7	39	1.0	3	10	29	3.7%	41	41%	47	6.4	20	2	0

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk							
2022	4.45	4.98	31	73%	26	11%	32	1.26	22	0.45	5	21	4.0%	32	20.2%	31							
2023	3.81	3.86	7	57%	4	23%	4	1.12	13	0.51	13	42	6.8%	23	29.0%	17							
2024	4.37	4.49	21	69%	20	17%	18	1.31	25	0.56	5	31	5.7%	30	23.4%	31							
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 4.35 (16)				Left Tackle: 4.36 (18)				Mid/Guard: 4.71 (22)				Right Tackle: 4.26 (17)				Right End: 3.93 (17)			

Kaden Elliss became the best player on a very weak defensive front last year. Elliss, another product of the New Orleans Saints defensive farm system (see: Trey Hendrickson, Zack Baun), improved in coverage as the year wore on, with an interception of Jayden Daniels in Week 17. He also began blitzing over a dozen times per game by season's end as part of the Falcons' endless quest to generate even a meager pass rush. Jalon Walker and James Pearce Jr. have joined that quest. Elliss had positive things to say about Walker during minicamp. "Man, he's explosive," Elliss said. "Today I saw him a few times during team reps, and I know it wasn't full pass rush ... but darn it, that man's get-off is nice." Walker played a hybrid linebacker position at Georgia, but it sounds like the Falcons will use him as a traditional edge rusher. Pearce ran a 4.47s combine 40 and recorded 17.5 sacks in his final two seasons at Tennessee, but there were questions about his effort and coachability entering the draft. Pearce was arrested at a traffic stop in 2023, but it sounds like one of those incidents that spiraled out of control. The Falcons issued the usual assurances about the thoroughness of their background check. "We did a lot of work with on him on the field and off the field and felt great about the man that he is and the player that he is," said defensive coordinator Jeff Ulbrich. Newcomers on the Falcons defensive front include mercenary edge-rusher-for-hire Leonard Floyd, who should be effective in rotation with the first-round rookies; journeyman rotational lineman Morgan Fox; and toolsy former Raiders linebacker Divine Deablo, who can run very fast in a straight line but cannot cover a toddler with a blanket. The departure of Grady Jarrett left a void at defensive tackle for a team that allowed 4.5 yards per carry last year. The Falcons were in such a hurry to trade up for edge rushers that they did not bother to fill it.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall					vs. Run					vs. Pass														
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD Int		
J.Bates	28	SS	17	1095	112	12.7%	22	45	22	15	47	36%	39	6.6	36	25	4.7%	41	7.2	-12.0%	15	64%	8	4.8	6	10	4
AJ Terrell	27	CB	17	1085	72	8.1%	59	24	8	10	27	30%	80	8.9	79	78	14.7%	84	11.2	-16.3%	24	50%	58	7.8	55	6	2
J.Simmons*	32	FS	16	1017	69	8.3%	69	27	9	12	32	31%	55	9.1	80	16	3.2%	56	8.8	-5.0%	18	69%	3	5.2	8	7	2
D.Alford	28	CB	16	723	91	10.9%	14	38	15	10	22	32%	76	7.1	63	85	24.1%	8	8.9	13.5%	76	40%	85	8.1	62	11	0
M.Hughes	28	CB	15	720	72	9.2%	42	30	15	10	23	48%	39	6.0	46	49	13.9%	87	11.0	10.5%	72	39%	87	8.4	69	6	0
C.Phillips	24	CB	16	407	40	4.8%	--	20	9	4	8	63%	--	6.4	--	35	17.6%	--	8.9	10.6%	--	57%	--	8.0	--	5	1
J.Fuller	27	FS	9	575	55	10.9%	44	12	1	8	40	23%	81	8.1	64	7	2.9%	--	9.1	18.4%	--	14%	--	11.9	--	1	0
Year	Pass	D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk										
2022	31			23.8%	29	23.2%	29	10.6%	27	14.5%	28	15.4%	26	17.9%	27	-13.3%	9										
2023	30			-4.2%	12	12.0%	21	-3.8%	12	-21.0%	5	32.2%	31	21.4%	31	12.0%	24										
2024	27			10.5%	22	-8.2%	12	4.6%	23	13.7%	25	-15.8%	7	0.4%	16	23.9%	31										

All four of the top Falcons cornerbacks from 2024 return this year. That's at least 25% good news. 🔮 AJ Terrell often shadows the opponent's top receiver, even playing find-a-Thielen in the slot against the Panthers at times. Opponents generally avoid him. He's a hesitant tackler, and he hasn't developed into the All-Pro he looked like he would be three years ago, but Terrell's biggest shortcoming is that he can only cover one receiver at a time. 🔮 Mike Hughes and slot corner Dee Alford resigned at the start of free agency, and the Falcons seemed genuinely excited to retain Hughes. Alford lingered on the free agent market for a few weeks before returning. He weighs just 175 pounds and matches up poorly against bigger slot receivers and tight ends. Clark Phillips, who played well on the outside in some packages, will push Alford in camp. "We're going to give it a rip," Raheem Morris said of Phillips' move inside. 🔮 Jessie Bates still plays at a high level. He missed the Pro Bowl last year, which will happen when you play for the Falcons. But few defenders in the NFL are better at anticipating a truly stupid quarterbacking decision, a useful skill when playing in the NFC South. Bates lined up in the slot more often than usual late last season, probably to prevent Alford mismatches. He's at his best when cherry-picking in shallow centerfield. 🔮 Third-round pick Xavier Watts will replace Justin Simmons at strong safety. Watts was outstanding at diagnosing plays and jumping routes at Notre Dame. "He's very instinctual like Jessie Bates," Morris said. Jordan Fuller, who was dreadful in Carolina last year, is also in the mix, because every weak NFC South team needs at least one player the Rams got rid of as part of their rebuilding program.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	2.5%	5	1.6	13	0.7	20	3.2	8	-0.8	18	8.4	1	11.3	3
2023	-2.9%	27	-2.5	18	-1.1	22	-2.3	26	-4.3	24	-5.4	30	-11.1	30
2024	-4.1%	29	-18.6	32	0.0	17	-2.5	22	-3.5	26	2.6	8	-8.4	28

Get ready for a kicker battle, *Falcons style*. Younghoe Koo endured a wicked slump midway through last season, eventually landing on IR with a hip injury. His competitor in 2025? Lenny Krieg, who kicked for the Berlin Adler of the German Football League and the Stuttgart Surge of the European League of Football while attending graduate school and selling real estate. Krieg worked out at South Florida's pro day, and the Falcons liked what they saw enough to sign him to a three-year, \$3-million contract. That's right: a three-year contract for a guy who, per Josh Kendall's profile of Kreig for The Athletic, never kicked a football until he was 22 years old and practiced on fields without uprights. The winner of the Koo/Krieg competition gets to kick in a dome for a team with a veteran offense and cushy schedule, so Lenny Kreig might well end up as your fantasy kicker! *Prost!* 🔮 The Falcons signed Jamal Agnew, who missed all of last season after breaking his leg late in the 2023 season, to challenge Ray-Ray McCloud and fourth-round rookie Billy Bowman for the return jobs. Apparently, they couldn't find any particularly fleet-footed joggers in Dusseldorf worthy of a three-year contract. 🔮 Bradley Pinion is a perfectly acceptable punter but the Falcons have had below-average punt coverage for three straight seasons.

# Baltimore Ravens

2024 record: 12-5	Total DVOA: 41.4% (1st)	2025 Mean Projection: 11.8 wins	On the Clock (0-5): 0%
Pythagorean Wins: 11.9 (3rd)	Offense: 35.2% (1st)	Postseason Odds: 89.0%	Mediocrity (6-8): 7%
Snap-Weighted Age: 26.3 (22nd)	Defense: -8.1% (6th)	Super Bowl Odds: 31.2%	Playoff Contender (9-11): 35%
Average Opponent: 0.4% (17th)	Special Teams: -1.9% (23rd)	Proj. Avg. Opponent: 0.8% (15th)	Super Bowl Contender (12+): 58%

2024: The best team by DVOA fails to get over the hump.

2025: The projected best team by DVOA tries to get over the hump.

Last year was supposed to be different. It was different. But it still ended the same. The Baltimore Ravens finished the 2024 season first in DVOA. They also did that in 2023 ... and in 2019. Since 2014, no other team has finished first in DVOA even twice.

We're projecting Baltimore to do it a fourth time in 2025. This is undoubtedly one of the best teams of the modern era.

Despite that overwhelming sustained team success, there have been no Super Bowl appearances, never mind a Lombardi Trophy. These Ravens have only gotten to the AFC Championship Game once. So, what's the deal?

There is a certain amount of bad luck that goes into this type of run given the quality of competition the Ravens have faced in the conference. There is one other team that has finished in the top three of DVOA as often as the Ravens finished first, and they also play in the AFC. Yet, that team (the Buffalo Bills) isn't even the one that has won three of the past six Super Bowls and been the AFC representative in five of them.

Baltimore's average DVOA from 2020 to 2024 is the second highest in a five-year stretch for a team that has not appeared in a Super Bowl during the DVOA era. Shift that five-year stretch back a season and the 2019-2023 Ravens rank fourth. But they're not alone. The Bills' 2020-2024 stretch ranks first, and the 2019-2023 Bills rank sixth. (See table in the Buffalo chapter; the Ravens are hurt by a 2021 season when they ranked 20th in DVOA despite having more top overall finishes in that time span.) The Ravens aren't just fighting against a Chiefs dynasty; they're also fighting against another contender just as worthy inside the same conference.

That means *everything* needs to break right for a team like the Ravens to get to where they want to go, even when they're the best team. It looked as if that was going to be the case last year for a Baltimore squad that did not appear to have any significant weaknesses by the time the playoffs came around. That was one of the biggest differences between this version of the Ravens and the previous ones that excelled in the regular season but fell short in the playoffs.

In 2018, the Chargers matched the Ravens' speed by leaning into a dime defense. The following season, as the No.1 seed in the Divisional Round, the Ravens suffered three turnovers and two fourth-down stops against the Titans while allowing Derrick Henry to run for 195 yards. In the 2020 Divisional Round, the Bills heavily blitzed Lamar Jackson, which

resulted in three sacks, a pick-six, and just 34 rushing yards on nine attempts from the quarterback in a 17-3 Buffalo win.

We can skip over the 2022 wild-card loss to the Bengals because it was a Tyler Huntley game, but it set the stage for future Ravens losses. That meeting was decided on a fluke turnover when a potential go-ahead touchdown from the 1-yard line turned into a fumble recovery for a touchdown and the game-deciding score for Cincinnati. After the 2023 season, the Ravens made it to the AFC Championship Game against the Chiefs. On a second down with the Ravens trailing 17-7 at the start of the fourth quarter, Jackson found Zay Flowers with space a few yards in front of the end zone. Flowers dove and stretched his arms out to cross the goal line but lost the ball before reaching the end zone and it resulted in a touchback for the Chiefs. On the following drive, Baltimore got back into the red zone, but Jackson forced a ball to Isaiah Likely that was intercepted. Two unforced errors came on a night when Patrick Mahomes did not make a mistake, finishing with a QBR of 91.3.

Then came a Divisional Round loss to the Bills this past season. Buffalo jumped out to an early lead thanks to effective blitzing in the first half. The Ravens hung in the game, only to be undone by more mistakes. Early in the fourth quarter with Baltimore down five, Mark Andrews tried to avoid a tackle after a long reception, only to have the ball knocked out, which led to a Buffalo field goal. On the final drive, down eight, Jackson went 7-of-8 for 80 yards with a 24-yard touchdown to Likely that brought Baltimore within two points of a tie with just over a minute and a half remaining. On the two-point conversion, Jackson rolled out to the right and put a pass right on Andrews' chest, but it was dropped. The Ravens lost 27-25.

If you're looking for a common thread here, especially across the past three seasons, it's difficult to find one other than *a bad play at the worst time*. The solution could be as simple as *hey, stop doing that*. But it's a more common occurrence than it should be for a team of Baltimore's quality. It has been true for some of these playoff losses, and the Ravens are also usually good for a strange letdown game during the regular season.

Over the past four seasons, Baltimore is 9-4 when favored by more than a touchdown. Those four losses are tied for the most with the Bills (27 games) and Buccaneers (17 games), while the 0.692 winning percentage is the lowest among nine

2025 Ravens Schedule					
Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	at BUF	7	BYE	13	CIN (Thu.)
2	CLE	8	CHI	14	PIT
3	DET (Mon.)	9	at MIA (Thu.)	15	at CIN
4	at KC	10	at MIN	16	NE
5	HOU	11	at CLE	17	at GB
6	LAR	12	NYJ	18	at PIT

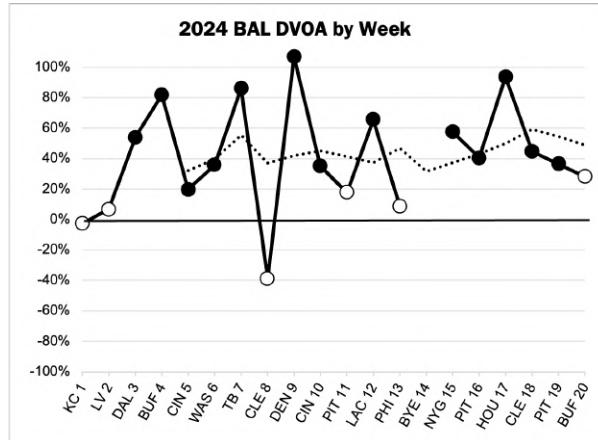
teams with 10 or more such games in that span. In 2024, they lost a Week 2 game to the Raiders and a Week 8 game to the Browns, two teams that combined to win fewer games than the Ravens during the regular season. Those losses forced Baltimore to play that Divisional Round matchup in Buffalo instead of at home.

If there is one loose commonality in the game plans of the last two playoff losses, it might be that the Ravens relied too heavily on the quarterback as a passer. In a league built around superhero quarterback play, other teams have found a way to take the load off those quarterbacks until necessary. Mahomes has become a relatively boring quarterback until third downs and the fourth quarter. Josh Allen just had his best year while having the most complete team around him and a reliable running game. Against Baltimore, Buffalo had a pass rate under 50%, and when he did throw, Allen's average depth of target was less than 3 yards downfield.

There was some discussion that Baltimore had abandoned the run against the Chiefs after only having six rushing attempts by a running back in the first half, though that exact criticism doesn't hold up under rewatch due to the RPOs called that were correctly pass attempts on the field. Still, calling those RPOs put a lot on the quarterback's plate to both make the right call and execute the throws when there. Against the Bills, the traditional ground game struggled and with Buffalo often using linebacker Matt Milano as a spy, the Ravens punted on even trying anything with the designed quarterback run game. The initial plans put a lot on the passing game and then even more when the Ravens started trailing.

It's hard to blame them because that quarterback is really good. Coming off an MVP season in 2023, Lamar Jackson got better.

Jackson had always been underrated as a pocket passer, but he excelled there in 2024. It was a perfect combination of player development and scheme evolution in Year 2 under offensive coordinator Todd Monken that resulted in Jackson's league-leading 71.5% DVOA from a clean pocket. Jackson had a newfound patience in the pocket that allowed him to hang in and wait for something meaningful to come open. Jackson's rate of throws to a first read dropped from 60.1% in 2023 to 54.1% in 2024, but the results were much better with smarter decisions. On those clean pocket plays, Jackson threw to a wide-open receiver (5 or more yards of separation) at a league-high 20.8% rate while he threw into tight coverage just 18.8% of the time, which was the sixth-lowest rate among quarterbacks. Much of that stemmed from throws to



the middle of the field, where Jackson put up 94.9% DVOA, first among full-time starters. It wasn't waiting to see something come open, it was knowing when it would and making the most of those throws.

Add that to all the things Jackson had already brought to the table. He was first in DVOA under pressure, not only putting up positive DVOA (14.5%) but having the highest mark under pressure since 2010. Jackson had more plays outside of the pocket in 2024, which might sound counterintuitive with his improvement as a pocket passer, but he was more deliberate with his pocket movement and knowing when he should or shouldn't move from it. His 88.8% DVOA outside the pocket was easily the highest among quarterbacks with the same gap between him and second place as between second and 15th. When he ran, Jackson was second among quarterbacks in rushing DYAR with the most runs of 10 or more yards and most avoided tackles.

Jackson was deserving of the MVP award and was voted as the first-team All-Pro quarterback, but Josh Allen was voted as the league MVP. While splitting that vote was odd, Jackson and Allen splitting the past two MVPs makes sense, even if the reverse order would have been more representative of the given seasons.

Adding Derrick Henry was a force multiplier to the offense, and his 1,900-yard rushing season as a free agent signing would have gotten more attention if not for Saquon Barkley's 2,000-yard season under similar circumstances. With Henry in the backfield, there was no right answer for the defense on zone reads. The Ravens got some more use out of pistol formations, and there was an evolution in the under-center offense; Henry had the most under-center rushing attempts and was the only back to have 1,000 yards from under center. Having that aspect of the run game available opened up more under-center passing and play-action. Jackson had more under-center dropbacks in 2024 (79) than he did the previous two years combined (71).

Henry was an effective closer with a league-high 298 rushing DYAR in the second half of games; Jahmyr Gibbs (209) was the only other back to clear 200. His 52 avoided tackles in the second half would have ranked 10th among running backs in full games. The 30-year-old again defied regression and age curves to put up one of his best seasons in a diverse run game

while he led the league in rushing touchdowns. Henry signed for two years and \$16 million last offseason but received a two-year extension after the season and is now under contract until his age-33 season in 2027.

The offense was building up, but the defense needed to reset. Mike Macdonald left to become the head coach of the Seattle Seahawks, defensive backs coach Dennard Wilson went to Tennessee, and defensive line coach Anthony Weaver went to Miami. Former Ravens linebacker Zach Orr was the internal promotion to fill Macdonald's place.

Early results were uneven. Through the first 10 weeks of the season, Baltimore was 23rd in DVOA against the pass. In that span, Baltimore faced the third-highest aDOT and the fifth-highest rate of attempts against them that travel 20 or more air yards. No team had given up more deep completions.

Massive changes don't often come after wins, but the Ravens had a reportedly fiery team meeting following a 35-34 win over the Bengals in Week 10. While Baltimore came out on top, the defense allowed 264 yards and three touchdowns to Ja'Marr Chase. There was a significant change in defensive deployment in Week 11 that helped spark a turnaround. Do-it-all safety Kyle Hamilton, who had played more in the slot and the box during the first half of the season after he excelled there in 2023, was moved back to a full-time deep safety.

Of course, Hamilton didn't just sit back as a deep safety after the change. Baltimore had the third-highest rate of defensive disguise from pre-snap to post-snap coverage, and Hamilton playing as one of the safeties who could play into that rotation instead of starting in the slot or box made those rotations more effective. Even when he did play the slot, the Ravens were more comfortable using him as a weapon throughout the defense. There was a play in Week 17 against the Texans when Hamilton lined up in the slot, dropped to the intermediate middle of the field, noticed a deep crosser running behind him, and got in front of the throwing lane for an interception.

Moving Hamilton wasn't just a one-move-fixes-all; the domino effect impacted the entire unit. A struggling Marcus Williams was also taken out of the lineup and replaced by Ar'Darius Washington. That safety duo deterred deep passing with opponents only throwing deep on 9.7% of attempts and completing them 22.7% of the time, both top-five rates over the second half of the season. Moving Hamilton back also changed the cornerback rotation for the better. With Hamilton out of the slot, Marlon Humphrey went from playing inside 35% of the time to 64%. That opened up more snaps on the outside for first-round pick Nate Wiggins, who finished the season with 13 passes defensed and one of the lowest completion rates allowed among cornerbacks. Better coverage allowed the pressure to be more effective, going from 15th in pressure rate during the first half of the season to seventh. The ball was getting out quicker and shorter, which allowed the second level to rally to the ball.

The Ravens were one of the league's best run defenses

throughout the season and did so while running one of the highest rates of light boxes in the league. The look of those boxes constantly changed. A lot of that had to do with the presence of Roquan Smith. Few linebackers meant more to the look and structure of a defense than Smith. According to Next Gen Stats, Smith lined up in the A-gap on 119 snaps, second-most for a linebacker. He had 32 pass-rush snaps and 80 coverage snaps from that pre-snap alignment. His 80 coverage snaps were second behind Minnesota's Blake Cashman. Some of that put too much responsibility on Smith's plate early in the season as he was trying to cover up some of the deficiencies in the second level. But once the defense started clicking, Smith played looser and quicker. From Week 11 on, everything clicked. The Ravens were first in DVOA against the pass and second in defensive DVOA overall.

Most of that defense is coming back. Washington is expected to miss the 2025 season with a torn Achilles suffered during a workout in May, but he'll be replaced by rookie first-round pick Malaki Starks. Starks played all over the secondary at Georgia and presents similar versatility to Hamilton, which could open more options on the back end.

The defensive front keeps improving, too. Baltimore finished seventh in adjusted sack rate while Odafe Oweh (17th) and Kyle Van Noy (18th) were both in the top 20 among edge rushers in pass rush win rate. Second-round pick Mike Green joins the rotation, and there's plenty of time for the annual veteran addition who signs a month after this book is published and puts up eight sacks.

Baltimore entered last season coming off a No. 1 ranking in DVOA but facing a ton of turnover. They still repeated on top of the DVOA tables, and there is far less turnover coming into 2025. The biggest potential loss could have been Ronnie Stanley, but the Ravens re-signed him for three years and \$60 million before free agency officially started and the tackle market blew up.

We have the Ravens projected to be the top team in DVOA again. But even that doesn't give them a clear-cut run to the Super Bowl. Because of the schedules, the Bills come out with the most projected mean wins, which brings up the possibility of the Ravens once again ranking as the best team yet going without a bye in the playoffs.

Typically, a team this good for this long will eventually break through for a Super Bowl win. The past two seasons have been fifth and seventh in all-time DVOA. The path is not getting any easier and while the Ravens aren't at the tipping point yet, sooner or later the fight to be this good for this long becomes the main battle. A great quarterback and a stellar defense will always put a team in championship contention. Baltimore continually finds itself there. But the Ravens are also well aware that contention and championship are two very different endings.

Dan Pizzuta

## 2024 Ravens by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	at KC	L	18%	20	27	452	353	0	-3%	29%	25%	-7%
2	LV	L	94%	23	26	383	260	0	7%	6%	-6%	-5%
3	at DAL	W	100%	28	25	456	412	+1	54%	51%	-5%	-1%
4	BUF	W	100%	35	10	427	236	0	82%	23%	-52%	7%
5	at CIN	W	54%	41	38	520	442	0	20%	33%	12%	-2%
6	WAS	W	98%	30	23	484	305	-1	36%	35%	0%	1%
7	at TB	W	100%	41	31	508	481	+1	86%	68%	-15%	3%
8	at CLE	L	38%	24	29	387	401	+1	39%	25%	53%	-11%
9	DEN	W	100%	41	10	396	319	+1	107%	71%	-30%	6%
10	CIN	W	79%	35	34	389	470	+1	35%	34%	4%	5%
11	at PIT	L	46%	16	18	329	303	-2	18%	5%	-21%	-9%
12	at LAC	W	97%	30	23	389	285	0	66%	59%	-6%	1%
13	PHI	L	45%	19	24	372	252	0	8%	23%	-1%	-15%
14	BYE											
15	at NYG	W	100%	35	14	445	236	0	58%	39%	-8%	11%
16	PIT	W	98%	34	17	418	315	+1	41%	38%	-8%	-5%
17	at HOU	W	100%	31	2	432	211	+1	94%	54%	-46%	-6%
18	CLE	W	100%	35	10	437	230	+2	45%	19%	-30%	-4%
19	PIT	W	100%	28	14	464	280	0	36%	52%	12%	-4%
20	at BUF	L	36%	25	27	416	273	-3	28%	31%	8%	6%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	35.1%	1	-8.1%	6
Unadjusted VOA	33.5%	1	-5.2%	6
Weighted Trend	37.0%	1	-10.9%	4
Variance	3.8%	8	6.3%	25
Average Opponent	-1.8%	5	-1.9%	25
Passing	72.1%	1	-0.4%	8
Rushing	18.8%	1	-21.3%	4
First Down	30.3%	1	5.7%	21
Second Down	30.9%	2	-23.2%	1
Third Down	54.3%	1	-11.0%	8
First Half	34.4%	1	-8.1%	4
Second Half	35.8%	1	-8.1%	12
Red Zone	45.6%	1	-26.6%	1
Late and Close	35.6%	2	25.8%	31

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rank	Off	Rank	Def	Rank	ST	Rank	Off AGL	Rank	Def AGL	Rank	Off Age	Rank	Def Age	Rank	ST Age	Rank
2020	11-5	12.0	9.9	468	303	+4	22.2%	6	4.8%	11	-10.1%	6	7.4%	2	37.4	16	22.2	6	25.0	32	26.5	12	26.8	4
2021	8-9	8.4	7.3	387	392	-11	-2.6%	20	2.4%	16	10.0%	28	5.0%	1	103.2	32	88.0	31	26.7	15	27.0	8	26.9	4
2022	10-7	9.6	11.8	350	315	+4	21.0%	5	7.9%	9	-9.1%	8	4.0%	3	44.5	21	58.1	29	26.6	17	26.7	10	25.8	23
2023	13-4	13.5	14.3	483	280	+12	45.5%	1	19.1%	4	-23.3%	1	3.2%	3	38.8	21	32.5	16	27.0	7	26.4	19	26.3	14
2024	12-5	11.9	13.0	518	361	+6	41.4%	1	35.2%	1	-8.1%	6	-1.9%	23	7.7	1	8.6	1	26.3	24	26.5	17	25.8	24

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

BAL Offense					BAL Offense vs. Opponents					BAL Defense					BAL Defense vs. Opponents						
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA
12	32%	7.9	62.2%	36%	Base	34%	7.1	35.9%	66%	Base	17%	5.3	-17.2%	11	65%	5.7	-3.8%				
11	28%	6.6	39.5%	29%	Nickel	54%	7.0	43.1%	42%	Nickel	65%	5.3	-5.3%	12	21%	5.6	-0.5%				
21	19%	7.1	31.7%	64%	Dime+	11%	7.1	58.8%	7%	Dime+	17%	6.1	-4.4%	21	4%	4.9	-16.5%				
22	12%	6.6	22.5%	75%	Goal Line	1%	1.1	36.2%	83%	Goal Line	1%	1.7	-33.9%	612	2%	1.3	-82.4%				
20	4%	6.4	12.5%	59%										13	2%	2.9	-15.3%				

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected		Rk	Formation		Rk	Pass Rush		Rk	Secondary		Rk	Strategy		Rk		
Runs, all	+6.8%	5	Form: Single Back	68%	28	Rush 3		2.8%	18	4 DB		16%	29	Play Action	27%	8
Runs, first down	+6.4%	7	Form: Empty Back	4%	31	Rush 4		78.4%	4	5 DB		65%	18	Offensive Motion	48%	15
Runs, second-long	+2.2%	10	Form: Multi Back	28%	4	Rush 5		16.0%	28	6+ DB		17%	5	Avg Box (Off)	6.23	7
Runs, power sit.	+25.0%	2	Pers: 3+ WR	33%	32	Rush 6+		2.8%	30	Man Coverage		52%	14	Avg Box (Def)	6.12	13
Runs, behind 2H	+2.9%	15	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	48%	2	Edge Rusher Sacks		55.7%	9	MOFC		60%	11	Offensive Pace	31.94	23
Runs, ahead 2H	+11.4%	3	Pers: 6+ OL	3%	10	Interior DL Sacks		23.6%	24	CB1 on WR1		33%	19	Defensive Pace	31.06	11
Run-Pass Options	2.6%	20	Shotgun/Pistol	77%	20	Second Level Sacks		20.8%	16	S/CB Cover Ratio		24%	8	Go for it on 4th	1.02	17

The Ravens have ranked first or second in how often they ran the ball in short-yardage “power” situations for seven straight years. Lamar Jackson faced a big blitz of six or more pass rushers more often than any other quarterback in the league (11% of passes). His performance did drop a bit when he faced more pass rushers, with “only” 7.2 yards per play against six or more (compared to a league average of 6.3). Baltimore was near the top of the league in how often they threw to the receiver we had designated as WR2, 25.5% of targets. We designated Rashod Bateman as WR1 and Zay Flowers as WR2 because—and this may be a surprise—most opponents would assign their top cornerback to cover Bateman rather than Flowers. The Ravens were the only team not to use 11 as its most common personnel group in 2024. Baltimore was near the top of the league in using dime defensive personnel after they were dead last in 2023. This was closer to 2022, when they ranked 10th. The Ravens ranked fifth in defensive DVOA with the standard four pass rushers (-6.6% DVOA) but 27th with five or more pass rushers (20.5% DVOA). Their pressure rate with four (29%) was almost the same as their pressure rate with five or more (30%). One of the things you would expect to be consistent is which defenses perform well against deep passes. Well, think again, at least in the case of the Ravens. In 2022, Baltimore ranked 31st in pass defense against passes of 16 or more air yards. In 2023, that improved to second in the league. Last year, it was back down to 27th. The Ravens faced fewer wide receiver screens than any other defense in 2024.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
L.Jackson	1848	49.6%	492	4009	8.1	6.6	67.5%	41	4
C.Rush	74	-7.6%	320	1748	5.5	5.0	60.9%	12	5

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
Z.Flowers	184	8.0%	116	74	1059	14.3	6.3	4	64%
R.Bateman	234	28.7%	72	45	756	16.8	4.1	9	63%
N.Agholor	7	-9.5%	29	14	231	16.5	6.1	2	48%
T.Wallace	57	52.7%	12	11	193	17.5	11.5	1	92%
D.Johnson*	-27	-86.0%	5	1	6	6.0	1.0	0	20%
D.Hopkins	128	7.1%	81	56	610	10.9	1.9	5	70%
M.Andrews	302	60.8%	69	55	673	12.2	3.4	11	80%
I.Likely	91	16.5%	58	42	477	11.4	6.1	6	72%
C.Kolar	39	43.7%	11	9	131	14.6	8.4	1	82%
J.Hill	131	42.1%	51	42	383	9.1	10.4	3	82%
D.Henry	95	57.9%	22	19	193	10.2	11.4	2	86%

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
D.Henry	537	29.2%	325	1920	5.9	16	3	60%
L.Jackson	183	18.5%	125	893	7.1	4	6	-
J.Hill	32	7.7%	48	228	4.8	1	0	44%
K.Mitchell	-14	-30.8%	15	30	2.0	0	0	40%
R.Ali	-1	-12.0%	10	31	3.1	0	0	50%
Z.Flowers	30	22.0%	9	56	6.2	0	0	-
C.Rush	-102	-104.2%	18	17	0.9	0	7	-

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/ GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/ GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
D.Faalele	RG	26	17/17	1107	6	7	24	4.1%	30	R.Rosengarten	RT	23	17/14	933	4	6	40	8.1%	36
T.Linderbaum	C	25	17/17	1094	8	9	16	2.8%	26	A.Vorhees	LG	26	15/3	268	4	1	1	0.7%	--
R.Stanley	LT	31	17/17	1089	12	3	32	5.6%	21	J.Noteboom	RT/LT	30	4/4	220	3	1	12	9.3%	--
P.Mekari*	LG	28	17/17	998	12	3	24	4.6%	30										

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont	
2022	4.92	4.35	21	65%	19	18%	23	1.39	5	1.08	5	38	8.1%	22	26.5%	13	28	
2023	4.66	4.43	6	79%	3	15%	7	1.15	18	1.05	3	41	8.2%	25	32.1%	25	27	
2024	5.55	4.75	3	77%	2	16%	10	1.39	7	1.66	1	24	4.9%	4	33.9%	25	46	
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 5.25 (3)				Left Tackle: 4.79 (6)				Mid/Guard: 4.71 (11)				Right Tackle: 4.62 (8)		Right End: 4.25 (10)

There were major offensive line changes before last season, but this year the Ravens will return four of five starters. Re-signing Ronnie Stanley was a big deal for Baltimore, keeping a solid veteran in place at left tackle for what now looks like a bargain after the contracts given out to lesser left tackles during free agency. Despite higher pressure rates, Stanley was 12th in ESPN's pass block win rate, highlighting the difference between success within 2.5 seconds of the snap and holding blocks for an extended period for a quarterback like Lamar Jackson. The Ravens have one of the league's most diverse run games and that starts with what Tyler Linderbaum can do in the middle. The Ravens ran the highest rate of counter runs, were fifth in power, and 10th in outside zone. Linderbaum was also fourth among interior linemen in pass block win rate. Baltimore had to decline Linderbaum's fifth-year option because the overall lineman price would have made Linderbaum the highest-paid center

on the option alone. Look for the Ravens to get a long-term extension done with the former first-round pick soon. ⚡ Roger Rosengarten had some ups and downs as a rookie, but the second-round pick was able to use his play strength as a plus in the run game. He ranked second among tackles in run block win rate. ⚡ Daniel Faalele took over the right guard spot after moving from tackle and winning the job in training camp. There were rough moments, but he improved as the season went on and was named a Pro Bowl alternate after playing nearly every offensive snap. ⚡ 2023 seventh-round pick Andrew Vorhees is expected to be the starter at left guard after playing around a quarter of the offensive snaps in 2024. He won the starting job out of training camp, but the now-departed Patrick Mekari replaced him after an early-season injury. ⚡ Third-round pick Emery Jones Jr. (LSU) was a college tackle but could move inside to guard because of struggles with edge rushers. A shoulder injury will sideline him until training camp.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
N.Madubuike	28	DE	17	812	44	5.1%	38	36	18	4	32	78%	32	1.9	25	6.5	9	39	1
T.Jones	26	DE	17	600	42	4.9%	46	30	10	1	39	72%	50	1.9	21	1.0	3	26	0
B.Washington	29	DT	15	450	23	3.0%	86	20	3	3	18	83%	13	2.2	37	2.0	1	9	2
M.Pierce*	33	DT	11	231	21	3.8%	--	13	5	2	12	50%	--	3.8	--	2.0	1	12	1
B.Urban*	34	DE	13	196	22	3.4%	--	17	1	0	18	78%	--	2.9	--	0.0	0	2	2
J.Jenkins	36	DT	17	609	48	5.6%	28	31	7	9	43	60%	84	3.0	73	1.0	2	11	4

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
O.Oweh	27	OLB	17	636	39	4.6%	57	35	15	2	22	91%	4	2.0	27	10.0	13	42	1
K.Van Noy	34	OLB	16	631	43	5.3%	42	32	21	4	20	60%	85	3.6	89	12.5	9	45	2
T.Robinson	26	OLB	17	485	33	3.9%	73	22	7	2	23	61%	83	3.7	92	3.5	8	16	0
D.Ojabo	25	OLB	13	275	9	1.4%	--	8	2	5	6	83%	--	3.5	--	2.0	4	15	0

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush			vs. Pass									
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
R.Smith	28	ILB	16	992	158	19.6%	2	84	21	10	90	64%	25	3.1	18	1.5	2	6	49	-5.0%	29	45%	36	7.8	48	4	1
T.Simpson	24	ILB	17	656	74	8.6%	70	34	5	2	48	48%	82	4.1	64	1.5	4	6	23	-9.6%	20	48%	28	6.2	15	4	0
M.Harrison*	27	ILB	15	372	46	6.1%	83	27	7	12	36	58%	49	2.9	7	2.0	2	3	12	7.1%	--	50%	--	7.2	--	0	0
C.Board*	30	ILB	17	168	21	2.5%	--	9	6	1	10	40%	--	4.8	--	1.0	0	2	7	-6.6%	--	29%	--	7.4	--	1	0

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk			
2022	3.94	4.29	14	66%	13	18%	17	1.15	11	0.40	4	48	8.2%	6	25.4%	24			
2023	4.47	4.20	17	61%	7	17%	17	1.20	21	0.87	26	60	9.7%	2	28.8%	18			
2024	3.46	4.11	12	54%	2	21%	6	0.88	1	0.24	1	54	7.7%	11	29.8%	21			
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 3.03 (2)				Left Tackle: 4.75 (27)				Mid/Guard: 3.95 (4)				Right Tackle: 4.48 (21)		Right End: 4.50 (24)	

Nnamdi Madubuike did not match the sack or hit totals from his breakout 2023 season, but he still finished fifth among interior defensive linemen in pressures. He also finished with just one fewer tackle for loss than he did in 2023, with a bigger impact in the run game. He was tied for eighth among defensive linemen in run defeats. ⚡ Travis Jones only has 3.5 sacks through his three-year career, but there were flashes of development in his game during the 2024 season, especially as a pass rusher. Similar to Madabuikie, Jones was much more effective creating pressure (ranked 23rd among interior linemen) than he was bringing the quarterback down. He was also 22nd in run defeats. ⚡ Kyle Van Noy does a little bit of everything for the defense. Next Gen Stats had him with 17 quick pressures, while we also had him charted with a league-high 13 clean-up pressures, four more than the next defender. Van Noy also plays a big part in Baltimore's sim pressures with his ability to drop back in coverage while a second-level defender joins the pass rush. ⚡ Odafin Oweh was ninth among all defenders with 26 knockdowns while he doubled his career-high in sacks from five to 10. He'll be playing on his fifth-year option in 2025. ⚡ Second-round pick Mike Green (Marshall) should see the field often as a rookie given that Van Noy and Oweh each only played around 55% of the defensive snaps last season. Green revealed at the NFL combine that he had been accused of sexual assault once in high school and another time at the University of Virginia before he transferred to Marshall. Green denied any wrongdoing and Ravens general manager Eric DeCosta claimed Baltimore looked into the allegations "very thoroughly" and

“got as much information as we could.” That’s why college football’s 2024 sack leader and SACKSEER’s No. 3 prospect was available with the 59th overall pick. Trenton Simpson didn’t have the smoothest transition into the starting lineup next to Roquan Smith and was benched in December, but one thing he did have going for him was his strong tackling, with just two broken tackles on the season. Fourth-round pick Teddye Buchanan (California) and undrafted free agent Jay Higgins (Iowa) could push for playing time as Smith’s running mate. Baltimore leaned into dime personnel more in 2024, which kept Smith as the only off-ball linebacker on the field.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run							vs. Pass										
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int	
B.Stephens*	28	CB	17	1047	80	9.3%	40	27	12	8	11	55%	24	4.9	26	109	19.8%	32	14.1	15.2%	81	42%	82	9.5	86	10	0
K.Hamilton	24	FS	17	1044	116	13.5%	12	59	18	8	51	59%	3	4.5	5	49	8.9%	15	5.4	18.3%	41	49%	31	5.6	12	9	1
M.Humphrey	29	CB	16	903	82	10.2%	25	43	22	9	14	64%	14	3.4	6	86	18.1%	53	7.5	-23.6%	18	55%	25	6.7	26	15	6
A.Washington	26	SS	17	727	70	8.2%	70	31	14	4	21	52%	9	5.2	14	32	8.4%	19	7.2	19.4%	42	47%	37	7.5	34	8	2
N.Wiggins	22	CB	15	679	45	6.0%	82	25	12	3	6	50%	31	6.0	43	76	21.2%	22	12.4	-24.3%	15	63%	4	6.7	25	13	1
M.Williams*	29	FS	11	601	35	6.3%	83	5	2	2	8	13%	91	8.8	72	5	1.6%	--	15.0	-3.6%	--	60%	--	6.0	--	2	0
T.White*	30	CB	11	404	27	4.8%	--	11	5	2	10	30%	--	7.4	--	28	14.0%	--	12.8	17.0%	--	50%	--	9.3	--	5	0
E.Jackson*	32	FS	11	381	31	5.6%	88	7	3	4	12	33%	47	5.8	25	8	4.0%	--	14.3	36.1%	--	38%	--	15.3	--	1	0
C.Awuzie	30	CB	8	373	30	7.7%	--	10	1	3	11	18%	--	6.4	--	27	16.7%	--	9.8	-3.2%	--	48%	--	7.4	--	4	1
J.Alexander	28	CB	7	361	23	6.6%	--	9	2	5	4	25%	--	11.5	--	33	18.7%	--	10.2	-44.7%	--	52%	--	8.1	--	7	2

Year	Pass D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	9		-11.4%	11	11.4%	24	1.3%	19	-11.5%	8	19.0%	28	-14.4%	6	0.9%	17
2023	1		-26.7%	7	-19.8%	6	-15.1%	3	-21.2%	3	-23.3%	4	-23.7%	2	-10.1%	12
2024	8		26.8%	28	-9.5%	8	-20.6%	2	6.7%	24	-17.5%	6	-7.0%	11	3.5%	17

Comments in this section should go beyond, “isn’t [player name] cool?” but man, isn’t Kyle Hamilton cool? There aren’t many players who could play at an All-Pro level in the slot one year and be a defense-saver by moving to deep safety midway through the next. Hamilton had 12 pressures, all of them charted as unblocked. With Ar’Darius Washington lost for the season, first-round pick Malaki Starks (Georgia) becomes a necessary immediate impact player next to Hamilton. Starks bounced between deep safety and the slot at Georgia and that versatility should pair well with Hamilton. According to Match Quarters/Field Vision, the Ravens had the third-highest rate of disguised middle of the field looks, and the interchangeability between Hamilton and Starks could make that an even more important part of their strategy in 2025. Marlon Humphrey was voted first-team All-Pro as a slot corner, where he made plays all over the field. Humphrey tied a career high with 15 passes defensed while setting a career high with five tackles for loss. There were some concerns about the small frame of Nate Wiggins (182 pounds) but he played press on 30% of his coverage snaps and forced tight windows or got a hand on the ball often. Chidobe Awuzie, Jalyn Armour-Davis, 2024 fourth-round pick T.J. Tampa, and rookies Robert Longerbeam (fifth round, Rutgers) and Bihal Kone (sixth round, Western Michigan) could compete for the other outside corner spot. Awuzie only played seven games with the Titans and was released after one year of a three-year deal, but he played well in man coverage during his limited 2024 snaps and should fit in with Baltimore’s aggressive scheme on the outside. Longerbeam is high-motor but undersized for the outside at 5-foot-11, 175 pounds; Kone is taller (6-foot-1) with good technique but he’s penalty-prone and can lack quickness. Jaire Alexander signed in mid-June after being released from Green Bay. The former Packer was great when he was on the field in 2024 (-44.7% coverage DVOA) in seven games, but he had 12.1% coverage DVOA during his seven games in 2023. General cornerback inconsistency, as well as his injury history, brings high variance to what the addition of Alexander could mean.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	4.0%	3	8.8	2	1.9	15	5.2	6	3.4	10	2.0	12	-6.0	23
2023	3.2%	3	3.1	13	3.1	6	2.1	5	-3.3	22	11.6	1	-9.2	29
2024	-1.9%	23	-5.1	27	-3.5	26	0.2	15	1.5	13	-3.1	24	-17.9	32

Baltimore's drop to 23rd in special teams DVOA represented the team's first time outside of the top 10 since 2011. ⚡ Justin Tucker's release was a "football decision" after he was accused of inappropriate sexual behavior by 16 massage therapists from eight spas and wellness centers around the Baltimore area, as discovered by *The Baltimore Banner*. As a kicker, Tucker started losing his superhuman leg when he only went 1-for-5 from 50 or more yards in 2023. He followed that up by hitting just 73.3% of his field goals in 2024, along with two missed extra points. ⚡ Sixth-round pick Tyler Loop (Arizona) is the favorite to replace Tucker, with undrafted free agent John Hoyland (Wyoming) as his competition. Loop was under 80% on field goals in his final two collegiate seasons but did hit a 62-yard field goal in November. ⚡ Jordan Stout punted a few too many into the end zone (his 10.9% touchback rate was seventh highest) and not enough inside the 20 (40%), but Baltimore still came out 13th in net punting value. The Ravens also had the sixth-lowest rate of drives that ended in a punt. ⚡ Four players returned a punt for the Ravens last season and only Tylan Wallace returns. He had an 11.2-yard average on six returns but had a 67% fair catch rate. ⚡ Rookie sixth-round pick LaJohntay Wester led college football in punt return yards (278) and average (19.9) with a touchdown in 2023 at Florida Atlantic and added another punt return touchdown last year with Colorado. ⚡ Justice Hill and Keaton Mitchell are the two most experienced kick returners on the roster. Each had a long return during the season. Mitchell was the main returner in the playoff game against the Bills and could be more explosive another year removed from his ACL tear. ⚡ One reason why the 2024 Ravens were better in DVOA than in standard metrics was "hidden" special teams. The Ravens ranked third in punt value against and second in field goal value against. Kickers missed only three field goals against Baltimore, plus one the Ravens blocked, and missed no extra points.

# Buffalo Bills

2024 record: 13-4	Total DVOA: 22.8% (4th)	2025 Mean Projection: 11.9 wins	On the Clock (0-5): 0%
Pythagorean Wins: 11.9 (4th)	Offense: 20.7% (2nd)	Postseason Odds: 88.5%	Mediocrity (6-8): 7%
Snap-Weighted Age: 26.6 (12th)	Defense: -4.7% (11th)	Super Bowl Odds: 26.1%	Playoff Contender (9-11): 34%
Average Opponent: -2.4% (24th)	Special Teams: -2.7% (28th)	Proj. Avg. Opponent: -3.6% (27th)	Super Bowl Contender (12+): 59%
<b>2024:</b> Nightmare déjà vu cycles.			
<b>2025:</b> Operation Copy The Eagles. (On Defense.)			

In Buffalo, Groundhog Day now arrives in January.

Buffalo's latest run feels eerily familiar: elite, electric, and always one step short. For nearly half a decade now, the Bills have fielded an excellent team led by an MVP-caliber quarterback while enjoying the undying support of a loyal, table-breaking fan base. Yet every season seems to end the same way, with a crushing defeat at the hands of Patrick Mahomes and the Kansas City Chiefs.

It falls flat to simply call the 2025 Bills a "Super Bowl or bust" squad, because the truth is that Buffalo has been Super Bowl or bust for years. It's now teetering the line between urgency and panic. Not that there's any shame in being as good as they are (or in losing to Patrick Mahomes in the playoffs), but this era of Buffalo football is coming dangerously close to what the Bills went through in the 1990s. There has never been a team that has been better over a five-year period without making it to a Super Bowl, either by total wins or by average DVOA (Table 1).

**Table 1. Best Average DVOA over Five Years with No Super Bowl Appearance**

Year	Team	DVOA	W-L
2020-24	BUF	28.0%	61-22
2020-24	BAL	25.5%	54-30
2017-21	NO	25.2%	58-23
2019-23	BAL	24.9%	56-27
2016-20	NO	24.6%	56-24
2019-23	BUF	23.5%	58-24
2006-10	PHI	22.0%	48-31-1
2007-11	PHI	21.1%	46-33-1
1978-82	SD	20.1%	48-25
2014-18	KC	20.0%	54-26

*Not listed: the 1973-78 Los Angeles Rams were 66-19-1 over a six-year period, mostly before DVOA ratings begin in 1978.*

Buffalo has proven they can be great. Now they need to take a class trip to the Wu Shi Academy—the Mortal Kombat school—to work on their finishing move.

We'll start on the offensive side of the ball, which has been

and will remain Buffalo's strength. Buffalo's 2024 offense was spectacular. They finished second in the league in scoring at 30.9 points per game and set multiple franchise records in the process, including most points, most touchdowns, and most rushing touchdowns. They became the first team in league history to score over 30 rushing and passing touchdowns in the same season. Balance in its purest form. Thanos would be proud.

Quarterback Josh Allen capped the season with the AP NFL MVP award. (You can argue he should have won it in 2023!) Allen had two MVP moments: a bulldozing, game-winning touchdown run against the Chiefs, and the trifecta in the snow against the 49ers (throwing, running, and receiving a touchdown in the same game).

Allen was elite at every level, dissecting defenses with short throws (25% DVOA) as well as intermediate (68% DVOA) and deep shots (78% DVOA). He truly picked apart the left side of the field (45% DVOA vs. 15% on the right side). He even dramatically reduced his interceptions, throwing six in 2024 versus 18 in 2023. In other words, there are no safe harbors for opponents. Allen can beat you anywhere on the field. And that's not even mentioning his legs! He has now scored 27 rushing touchdowns over the last two seasons. If he scores 10 or more rushing touchdowns again in 2025, he'll pass Cam Newton for most by a quarterback in NFL history.

Oh, and he's squarely in his prime at 29 years old. The Bills are still golden at the most important position in football. And they should remain golden when it comes to supporting him, as every key offensive starter returns, including the entire offensive line and coordinator Joe Brady.

That continuity up front is huge. This line led the NFL in pass protection last year, allowing the lowest adjusted sack rate in the league (3.3%). While no Buffalo player made the All-Pro team in 2025, two of their four Pro Bowlers were on the offensive line (tackle Dion Dawkins and center Connor McGovern). The unit has now allowed the fewest sacks in the NFL in back-to-back seasons. (It helps to have someone as tough to tackle as Allen back there, but still, this offensive line is #good.)

One of the few offseason critiques from fans was aimed at the Bills' wide receiver depth. After the team's playoff exit, a loud contingent clamored for a splashy new target for Allen. General manager Brandon Beane had other ideas—and he

## 2025 Bills Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	BAL	7	BYE	13	at PIT
2	at NYJ	8	at CAR	14	CIN
3	MIA (Thu.)	9	KC	15	at NE
4	NO	10	at MIA	16	at CLE
5	NE	11	TB	17	PHI
6	at ATL (Mon.)	12	at HOU (Thu.)	18	NYJ

wasn't shy about defending them. In an April radio interview on WGR 550, Beane unleashed an impassioned (and expletive-filled) defense of Buffalo's receiving corps, reminding everyone that this offense had led the entire NFL in points scored (when including playoffs) and scored 30-plus in eight straight games ... all without Stefon Diggs.

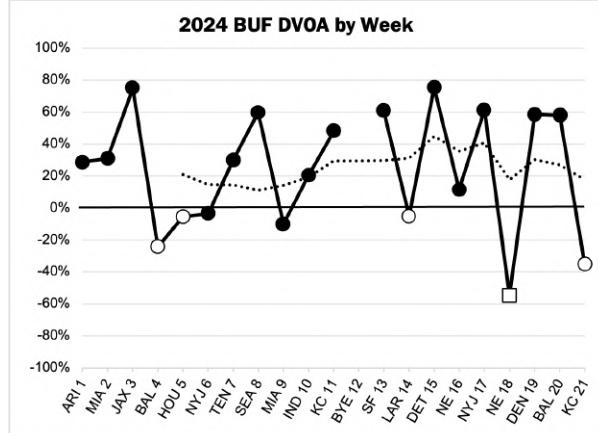
"Bitching about wide receiver is one of the dumbest arguments I've ever heard," Beane said, while also not-so-subtly reminding Buffalo fans that they aren't the best judges when it comes to roster-building by pointing out they didn't want Allen back in 2018 and 2019. His message was clear: Trust the guys we have. They're doing just fine.

So, instead of making a big-ticket receiver acquisition, Buffalo stayed the course. They parted ways with veteran Amari Cooper, allowing him to walk in free agency after his 2024 trip to Buffalo suggested that he's over the hill. In his place, the Bills added a pair of younger, mid-tier receivers: Joshua Palmer and Elijah Moore.

Palmer finished 58th among wide receivers with 71 DYAR. There's nothing spectacular about Palmer's game, but he's reliable and experienced as a complementary option. Moore, a former second-round pick with blazing speed (4.35s 40), had a career-high 61 receptions for 538 yards in Cleveland in 2024. However, a closer look reveals that Moore ranked dead last in DYAR (out of 91 qualifying receivers) and 89th in DVOA (-37.4%). At just 25 years old, Moore is a reclamation project with upside, maybe. Buffalo hopes a better quarterback and system can unlock the playmaker the Jets once thought they drafted, but he's most likely just a Curtis Samuel insurance policy.

But it's not difficult to understand why Buffalo fans have grown frustrated with the receiver room. There's no "boom" player, and tight end Dalton Kincaid took a huge step back in Year 2. Mack Hollins, now in New England, led the team in receiving touchdowns. Adding Palmer and Moore just feels like more of the same.

While it's hard to argue against the overall success of the 2024 offense, the Bills do need Kincaid and Keon Coleman to both step up. Coleman, a 2024 second-round pick, is the prime wild card. As a rookie, he showed flashes of big-time potential, turning 29 catches into 556 yards, good for 19.2 yards per reception (third in the NFL). Coleman's advanced metrics were encouraging for a rookie, as he ranked 45th in DVOA and 47th in DYAR. He ranked second among qualifying receivers in YAC above expectation. However, Bills fans likely hope he'll develop into more of an every-down player and not



just a deep-shot one-trick pony. Perhaps he'll just be Christian Watson 2.0, but the hopes are certainly higher.

Kincaid's regression was a tough pill to swallow. His DYAR ranked 44th out of 49 tight ends and he posted a -17.7% DVOA, 43rd at the position. But the team still clearly believes in him. Kincaid led Buffalo in first-read target share (8.5%). This bridge isn't burned yet, and I think you can make the case that Buffalo's success in the run game led to less need for Kincaid (he runs about 60% of his routes from the slot).

And you might think of their new \$60-million man, Khalil Shakir, as one of the better chain-movers in the NFL, but the reality is that he had only 35 first downs last year, which ranked 41st among receivers. But he *is* good (zero drops on 100 targets!). He just wasn't on the field enough. With his new contract, we can expect Shakir to play more than the 49.7% of the snaps that he played in 2024. (Note: This wasn't just a Shakir "problem"—Buffalo rotated all receivers heavily last year.)

In the end, Beane is right: The receiver room is good enough to win now. But we won't fault any Bills fans for longing for those explosive plays with Diggs.

We have spent a long time on the receivers because that's where all the hullabaloo has been this offseason, but it's the backfield that made a real splash in 2024. You can argue that the primary reason the Bills' receiving cast worked and the team didn't miss Diggs is because James Cook and company took a huge step forward. The Bills discovered they have a burgeoning star in the backfield.

Cook emerged as one of the league's most effective runners, racking up 1,009 rushing yards and 16 touchdowns, tying for the NFL lead in rushing TDs, and even tying a Bills franchise record for scores on the ground. He finished with 18.1% rushing DVOA (third) behind only Derrick Henry and Jahmyr Gibbs. At 5-foot-11 and 190 pounds, Cook doesn't look like a traditional workhorse, but his slashing running style and breakaway speed make him a threat to rip off a big gain on any play. He scored five explosive rushing touchdowns (10-plus yards), third in the NFL, and he added .049 EPA per attempt (sixth). Aided by the threat of Allen rushing and the elite offensive line, Cook enjoyed 2.2 average yards before contact per attempt—fifth in the NFL.

Buffalo also has depth at running back. Behind Cook, vet-

eran Ty Johnson returns as a change-of-pace option with receiving skills and burst, and 2024 rookie Ray Davis rejoins the fold. Among all running backs, Johnson had the fifth-best success rate (53.7%) in the NFL last year. Meanwhile, Davis had a 24% avoided tackle rate, which ranked 13th (just ahead of Derrick Henry) among running backs with at least 100 attempts. Buffalo quietly ranked top-five in DVOA last season and might be even better in 2025 with all key players returning.

While the offense appears to be all roses heading into 2025, the other side of the ball is where things are unclear. It's no secret why the Bills fell short in 2024, and the front office addressed it with a singular focus this offseason. The defense wasn't quite championship-caliber when it mattered most, and Buffalo's brain trust responded by flooding the defense with new talent.

The Bills used five straight picks on defenders to open the 2025 NFL draft, an extraordinary investment that speaks volumes regarding where this coaching staff sees the holes. First came cornerback Maxwell Hairston in the first round to bolster the secondary, along with corner Jordan Hancock in the fifth round. Rounds 2, 3, and 4 were all spent on the defensive line to bolster the pass rush.

Buffalo hopes Hairston will assume the mantle Tre'Davious White (back in Buffalo!) held for so long. He may be able to ease into it, though, as cornerback Christian Benford returns after a dominant second year. He ranked fourth in pass coverage DVOA (-40.5%), allowed just 6.1 yards per pass (14th lowest), and 2.7 average yards after the catch (ninth fewest). If Hairston is able to immediately step into even a serviceable CB2 role as a rookie, Buffalo's secondary is going to be strong in 2025.

Joey Bosa hasn't recorded a double-digit-sack season since 2021, but as a rotational player coming in on obvious passing downs, Bosa has a chance to be a big-time free agent signing if his health allows for it. He recorded two sacks in just 54 snaps in Weeks 1 and 2 before an injury last year. On top of this, Buffalo returns Ed Oliver and Greg Rousseau, who combined for 86 pressures last season.

The Bills also added Michael Hoecht from the Rams on a three-year deal, but he's more of a versatile option than a pure pass rusher. He has lined up all over the defensive line and even as a linebacker at some points during his career.

The picture being painted is clear: Buffalo is loading up on the defensive line. They'll be able to throw waves of fresh legs at opposing quarterbacks all season long. After seeing how the Philadelphia Eagles man-handled the Chiefs in the Super Bowl with just a four-man rush, it's really hard to argue against Buffalo's approach this offseason.

To be fair, Buffalo's 2024 defense was not bad by any stretch; it was just inconsistent, and not at the same level as the offense. In coordinator Bobby Babich's first year at the helm, the unit finished around the top 10 in several categories. They allowed 368 points (21.6 per game, 11th in the NFL)

and were a ball-hawking, opportunistic defense that led the league by forcing a turnover on 18% of opponent drives. They logged 16 interceptions (tied for seventh) and 18 forced fumbles (fourth)—an aggressive, playmaking style that often set up Allen and the offense on short fields. But such a turnover rate is unsustainable and doesn't show year-over-year stickiness. Buffalo's defense ranked 11th in DVOA for 2024, but would have slipped to 15th if turnovers were removed from the equation. In other words: decidedly average.

There were moments late last season that plainly exposed the defense as the weakness. In the AFC title game, the Bills surrendered 32 points to Mahomes and the Chiefs, including two scoring drives and an end-the-game drive in the fourth quarter to ice it. In December shootouts, Buffalo's defense yielded 44 points to the Rams and 42 to the Lions. Those aren't numbers a Super Bowl contender wants to see. The late-season slippage was enough for Beane & Co. to hit the HELP button on reinforcements.

Now the question is how quickly these new pieces can gel with the Bills' established core, and whether the defense can take the leap from "good and opportunistic" to elite. There are plenty of reasons for optimism. We already mentioned the return of Rousseau and the reinforcements on the pass-rushing front, and we haven't even mentioned that the heart of the defense—Matt Milano—is back in the fold after losing much of 2024 to injury. Milano's sideline-to-sideline range was sorely missed in stretches last year.

Babich never had this many toys in his toolbox in 2024. While turnover luck may not bounce their way as often, the retooled defense should more than make up for it. If Babich can blend the newcomers with the incumbents effectively, there's a strong chance Buffalo's defense jumps from good to great.

And if that happens? The Bills will have no obvious weakness. We have nitpicked throughout this article, but we really shouldn't overlook the fact that this is—verifiably—one of the best teams in football. Things just haven't fully broken right for them yet.

In fact, Buffalo is not the only AFC team this is happening to right now—just ask the Ravens! We have two historically great teams that aren't even making it to the Super Bowl, let alone winning it. And sometimes great teams with great players go painfully long stretches of time before it happens. Don't forget that the Tom Brady-led Patriots went from the 2005 to 2015 NFL seasons without a Super Bowl win.

The AFC remains completely stacked. With Allen, Mahomes, Lamar Jackson, and Joe Burrow all in the same conference, some great teams are forced to fall short.

"Football is a game of inches" is a saying for a reason, and Buffalo is putting themselves inches away from winning it all every year. That's not a guarantee that it will happen, but it's a guarantee that they will have a real chance.

## 2024 Bills by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	ARI	W	97%	34	28	352	270	0	29%	30%	-7%	-9%
2	at MIA	W	99%	31	10	247	351	+3	31%	18%	-20%	-6%
3	JAX	W	100%	47	10	388	239	+2	75%	34%	-37%	5%
4	at BAL	L	0%	10	35	236	427	0	-24%	-18%	-8%	-15%
5	at HOU	L	28%	20	23	276	425	+2	-5%	0%	2%	-3%
6	at NYJ	W	94%	23	20	359	393	+1	-4%	38%	29%	-13%
7	TEN	W	100%	34	10	389	289	+2	30%	17%	-15%	-2%
8	at SEA	W	100%	31	10	445	233	+1	60%	19%	-33%	8%
9	MIA	W	39%	30	27	325	373	0	-10%	23%	48%	15%
10	at IND	W	96%	30	20	415	361	+2	20%	-9%	-30%	-1%
11	KC	W	97%	30	21	366	259	+1	48%	31%	-15%	2%
12	BYE											
13	SF	W	100%	35	10	372	239	+3	61%	40%	-26%	-6%
14	at LAR	L	11%	42	44	445	457	0	-5%	58%	35%	-28%
15	at DET	W	99%	48	42	559	521	+1	75%	69%	-13%	-6%
16	NE	W	78%	24	21	324	379	+2	11%	4%	-1%	6%
17	NYJ	W	100%	40	14	348	281	+3	61%	20%	-34%	8%
18	at NE	L	9%	16	23	259	309	+1	-55%	-21%	33%	-1%
19	DEN	W	100%	31	7	471	224	0	59%	36%	-13%	10%
20	BAL	W	64%	27	25	273	416	+3	58%	44%	-10%	4%
21	at KC	L	1%	29	32	374	368	+1	-35%	1%	38%	2%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	20.7%	2	-4.7%	11
Unadjusted VOA	24.0%	2	-3.0%	10
Weighted Trend	22.9%	2	-0.4%	13
Variance	6.0%	20	7.0%	29
Average Opponent	1.1%	26	-1.2%	23
Passing	46.6%	2	4.3%	14
Rushing	7.4%	4	-16.8%	8
First Down	6.3%	10	-12.6%	6
Second Down	31.9%	1	-3.8%	12
Third Down	30.6%	3	9.4%	27
First Half	22.7%	3	12.0%	26
Second Half	18.5%	3	-22.6%	2
Red Zone	26.7%	2	-10.5%	8
Late and Close	10.9%	14	-3.2%	7

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rk	Off	Rk	Def	Rk	ST	Rk	Off AGL	Rk	Def AGL	Rk	Off Age	Rk	Def Age	Rk	ST Age	Rk
2020	13-3	10.9	12.1	501	375	+4	27.0%	3	15.3%	4	-5.8%	11	5.9%	4	28.9	8	34.2	13	26.4	22	26.8	7	26.5	7
2021	11-6	13.3	11.0	483	289	+8	27.3%	2	7.8%	9	-19.6%	1	-0.1%	19	19.3	3	23.4	5	26.9	9	27.0	5	26.5	8
2022	13-3	12.2	15.1	455	286	0	38.9%	1	19.8%	2	-14.1%	2	5.0%	1	9.0	2	59.1	31	27.1	9	26.4	14	27.0	4
2023	11-6	12.2	10.8	451	311	+2	24.2%	3	20.2%	3	-3.4%	12	0.6%	15	6.6	2	50.5	27	26.5	17	27.5	3	26.5	9
2024	13-4	11.9	11.3	525	368	+24	22.8%	4	20.7%	2	-4.7%	11	-2.7%	28	12.3	3	43.8	21	26.6	15	26.7	13	26.2	17

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

BUF Offense					BUF Offense vs. Opponents					BUF Defense					BUF Defense vs. Opponents				
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA		
11	57%	6.4	35.6%	29%	Base	26%	6.1	28.1%	53%	Base	12%	5.1	-5.8%	11	59%	5.7	-4.8%		
12	14%	6.6	34.9%	52%	Nickel	64%	6.3	24.7%	41%	Nickel	78%	5.6	-4.4%	12	23%	5.8	-1.6%		
611	7%	6.6	18.6%	66%	Dime+	9%	5.9	44.9%	17%	Dime+	9%	5.9	-2.6%	21	8%	5.4	3.0%		
21	7%	5.5	-3.7%	74%	Goal Line	1%	3.9	36.4%	57%					13	3%	2.5	5.2%		
612	4%	3.6	-17.4%	78%									22	2%	6.9	-37.6%			

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected	Rk	Formation	Rk	Pass Rush	Rk	Secondary	Rk	Strategy	Rk					
Runs, all	+1.7%	19	Form: Single Back	78%	8	Rush 3	2.9%	17	4 DB	11%	32	Play Action	18%	27
Runs, first down	+5.4%	11	Form: Empty Back	11%	7	Rush 4	76.7%	7	5 DB	78%	1	Offensive Motion	51%	13
Runs, second-long	-10.2%	29	Form: Multi Back	10%	28	Rush 5	13.6%	31	6+ DB	9%	17	Avg Box (Off)	6.08	14
Runs, power sit.	+9.6%	11	Pers: 3+ WR	61%	21	Rush 6+	6.8%	13	Man Coverage	40%	28	Avg Box (Def)	5.93	30
Runs, behind 2H	+8.1%	2	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	34%	11	Edge Rusher Sacks	66.2%	4	MOFC	51%	28	Offensive Pace	31.87	22
Runs, ahead 2H	-1.2%	21	Pers: 6+ OL	14%	1	Interior DL Sacks	18.9%	28	CB1 on WR1	29%	31	Defensive Pace	32.93	32
Run-Pass Options	5.7%	4	Shotgun/Pistol	74%	23	Second Level Sacks	14.9%	25	S/CB Cover Ratio	9%	32	Go for it on 4th	1.78	2

The Bills had the league's best fumble recovery luck in 2024, although a 62% recovery rate is not extreme. They recovered seven of nine fumbles on offense, 14 of 26 fumbles on defense, and both fumbles on special teams (not including muffs). The Bills' run/pass ratio trends stay constant from year to year, including more runs than usual when behind in the second half and fewer runs than usual in second-and-long situations. The Bills led the league with 58.1% DVOA from an empty backfield, although they ranked just eighth with 7.1 yards per play. Buffalo was last in the league throwing just 15% of targets to the players we had designated as WR1, usually Keon Coleman in the first half of the season and then Amari Cooper after the trade. The Bills led the league in usage of six offensive linemen and were better on these plays than they had been in 2023, going from 4.9 yards per play and -7.7% DVOA in 2023 to 6.0 yards per play and 15.6% DVOA in 2024. For the third straight year, the Bills were better running from one-back sets (7.4% DVOA) compared to two-back sets (-17.1% DVOA). Yards per carry were similar but the DVOA gap was the second largest in the NFL behind Houston. Connected: Buffalo's running game was particularly sensitive to opponent box counts. The Bills had 4.8 yards per carry (12.6% DVOA) against lighter boxes of six or fewer, 4.7 yards per carry (-2.3% DVOA) against seven-man boxes, and 3.6 yards per carry (-12.2% DVOA) against heavy eight-man boxes. Buffalo climbed from 43% (26th) to 66% (fourth) in the percentage of sacks that came from edge rushers. The Bills defense ranked 29th against the pass on third and fourth downs but ranked fourth against the run. Buffalo was 26th in defensive DVOA before halftime and second after halftime. For the third straight year, the Bills played less base defense than any other team.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
J.Allen	1221	26.9%	496	3657	7.4	6.5	63.8%	28	6
M.Trubisky	40	14.8%	26	179	6.9	7.8	73.1%	2	0
M.White	-44	-91.1%	11	28	2.5	10.7	27.3%	0	0

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
K.Shakir	102	0.8%	100	76	821	10.8	7.9	4	76%
K.Coleman	106	11.4%	57	29	556	19.2	7.4	4	51%
M.Hollins*	112	15.1%	50	31	378	12.2	2.9	5	62%
C.Samuel	-61	-29.6%	46	31	253	8.2	5.2	1	67%
A.Cooper*	64	13.2%	32	20	295	14.8	2.6	2	63%
M.Valdes-Scantling*	-38	-70.4%	9	2	26	13.0	3.0	0	22%
E.Moore	-190	-37.4%	102	61	538	8.8	2.2	1	60%
J.Palmer	71	0.3%	66	39	584	14.7	2.5	1	60%
D.Kincaid	-50	-17.7%	75	44	448	10.2	6.2	2	59%
D.Knox	59	18.0%	33	22	311	14.1	4.3	1	67%
Q.Morris*	-1	-9.1%	8	5	36	7.2	4.4	1	63%
J.Cook	90	26.8%	38	32	258	8.1	8.1	2	84%
T.Johnson	146	78.7%	25	18	284	15.8	9.4	3	72%
R.Davis	87	60.6%	19	17	189	11.1	9.6	3	89%

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
J.Cook	239	18.1%	207	1009	4.9	16	1	55%
R.Davis	36	-0.9%	113	442	3.9	3	0	49%
J.Allen	190	20.6%	94	539	5.7	12	0	-
T.Johnson	40	12.8%	41	213	5.2	1	0	66%
C.Samuel	-2	-47.1%	5	14	2.8	0	0	-
M.Trubisky	-17	-66.3%	5	12	2.4	0	1	-

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/ GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/ GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
O.Torrence	RG	25	17/16	1013	7	4	21	3.6%	23	S.Brown	RT	27	15/15	932	16	7	25	4.6%	10
D.Edwards	LG	28	16/16	977	5	6	16	2.8%	8	A.Anderson	OT	26	17/4	291	5	2	1	0.6%	--
C.McGovern	C	28	16/16	961	2	9	17	3.1%	30	R.Van Demark	OT	27	14/2	199	0	5	7	6.1%	--
D.Dawkins	LT	31	16/16	961	14	4	23	4.1%	13	K.Green	RG	27	17/1	178	0	2	8	7.1%	--

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont		
2022	4.87	4.42	13	77%	4	17%	16	1.36	7	1.13	3	33	5.9%	7	20.7%	4	23		
2023	4.43	4.74	3	75%	6	13%	1	1.28	8	0.59	15	24	4.5%	1	28.0%	13	51		
2024	4.59	4.68	8	68%	13	18%	22	1.32	9	0.86	9	14	3.3%	1	27.0%	6	36		
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 4.65 (14)				Left Tackle: 5.12 (3)				Mid/Guard: 5.04 (4)				Right Tackle: 3.33 (30)		Right End: 3.81 (17)	

Buffalo rolls out the same five men who just led the NFL in fewest sacks allowed for the second straight year. Left tackle Dion Dawkins and center Connor McGovern both earned Pro Bowl nods, and all five linemen played at least 90% of the snaps. ⚡ McGovern switched from left guard to center in 2024 and had some struggles against interior pressure, ranking 30th among centers (3.1% pressure rate allowed). Some of this is a byproduct of Josh Allen escaping the pocket, but both Dawkins (14) and right tackle Spencer Brown (16) were penalized more than you would like to see. ⚡ On the ground, this unit helped unlock one of the league's better rushing attacks. The unit ranked eighth in adjusted line yards, but when the holes didn't open quickly, Buffalo's run game was prone to negative plays (18% stuff rate, 22nd). ⚡ It goes without saying that this unit benefits greatly from having Allen behind them, but it is a solid group. Buffalo's biggest concern is injury, as there's not much proven depth beyond the starting five. Buffalo added late-round depth in the 2024 NFL draft (center/guard Sedrick Van Pran-Granger and tackle Tyler Grable), but as rookies, they only played meaningful snaps in a meaningless Week 18 game. Buffalo added guard Kendrick Green (ex-Texans) to a one-year deal in free agency, but he has only played 386 snaps over the last two seasons.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
E.Oliver	28	DT	14	603	29	4.1%	62	24	11	5	19	84%	11	1.8	18	3.0	10	25	1
D.Jones	34	DT	16	546	24	2.9%	89	19	6	6	16	75%	39	2.6	57	2.5	5	13	2
D.Carter	25	DT	11	315	15	2.7%	90	11	6	2	13	69%	59	1.2	5	0.0	3	5	0
A.Johnson*	31	DT	15	306	21	2.7%	--	15	2	3	17	71%	--	2.2	--	0.5	1	7	0
Q.Jefferson*	32	DT	12	254	14	2.3%	--	11	5	2	11	82%	--	2.4	--	2.0	2	10	0
L.Ogunjobi	31	DE	15	494	41	5.4%	30	28	7	4	37	68%	62	2.7	60	1.5	5	11	0

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
G.Rousseau	25	DE	16	735	56	6.9%	16	43	26	8	36	75%	39	1.5	14	8.0	20	61	10
A.J.Epenesa	27	DE	17	612	40	4.6%	55	33	14	7	27	89%	5	1.7	20	6.0	5	23	2
D.Smoot*	30	DE	11	322	14	2.5%	99	13	6	7	8	100%	1	0.1	1	1.5	4	9	1
V.Miller*	36	DE	13	279	17	2.6%	--	15	7	1	11	82%	--	2.1	--	6.0	2	33	0
C.Toothill*	29	DE	14	249	19	2.7%	--	12	4	3	15	60%	--	5.3	--	1.0	1	7	0
M.Hoecht	28	OLB	17	639	57	6.5%	23	35	12	6	36	72%	55	2.5	47	3.0	2	21	1
J.Bosa	30	OLB	14	456	22	3.1%	93	20	12	2	16	88%	9	2.4	43	5.0	8	28	1

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush				vs. Pass									
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
T.Bernard	26	MLB	13	749	107	16.2%	22	56	20	12	60	67%	18	3.1	12	1.0	3	8	46	-1.4%	34	46%	34	8.2	54	3	2
D.Williams	24	OLB	17	649	114	13.2%	45	58	15	6	69	61%	41	4.9	81	0.0	2	10	49	60.7%	78	47%	32	6.8	24	0	0
B.Spector	27	OLB	11	291	37	6.6%	82	11	7	5	14	57%	57	3.5	29	1.5	0	2	20	-22.8%	6	35%	64	9.9	69	0	0
J.Andreessen	25	MLB	13	114	20	3.0%	--	9	3	0	7	57%	--	5.1	--	0.0	1	1	8	8.2%	--	63%	--	4.4	--	0	0
S.Thompson	31	ILB	4	245	35	15.6%	--	20	5	6	27	59%	--	3.1	--	0.0	1	0	13	-17.8%	--	46%	--	4.8	--	0	0

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk					
2022	4.35	3.79	3	60%	3	25%	1	1.38	26	0.98	26	40	6.7%	21	24.6%	26					
2023	4.44	3.79	5	76%	30	23%	3	1.26	27	1.05	30	54	8.8%	4	31.5%	10					
2024	4.43	3.95	5	53%	1	25%	2	1.28	24	1.05	31	39	7.1%	20	33.3%	9					
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 3.89 (7)				Left Tackle: 3.31 (1)				Mid/Guard: 4.40 (14)				Right Tackle: 3.47 (7)			Right End: 2.84 (5)		

The defensive line is the deepest it has been in the Allen era. The team spent three of their first four picks in the 2025 draft on SEC linemen: defensive tackles T.J. Sanders (Round 2, South Carolina) and Deone Walker (Round 4, Kentucky) with edge rusher Landon Jackson (Round 3, Arkansas) sandwiched between to juice the pass rush. Sanders is going to primarily play the 3-tech (more of a pass rusher) despite Ed Oliver already holding down that position, according to GM Brandon Beane, but he could play some 1-tech (more of a run stuffer) snaps as well. Jackson scored a 9.78 Relative Athletic Score (RAS) at the combine, which ranks 46th out of 2,012 defensive ends since 1987. Meanwhile, Walker has the size of a nose tackle (6-foot-7, 344 pounds) but the skills of a pass rusher. He had 7.5 sacks in 2023, although a back injury limited him to just 1.5 last season. That injury will keep him out of (or limited in) offseason work. Along with the rookies comes the addition of Joey Bosa on a one-year deal, effectively taking over the veteran pass-rushing role that Von Miller once filled. The Bills also added versatile depth with ex-Ram Michael Hoecht, who has played both linebacker and along the line throughout his career. The biggest piece of the puzzle should be the healthy return of linebacker Matt Milano, who has only played nine games since his 2022 All-Pro season. He's particularly strong in pass coverage, including -62.9% coverage DVOA in 2023. The linebacker depth from last year returns, but nobody in this unit ranked in the top 10 in any significant category last year. However, it's a young group; every player outside of Milano is 27 or under, led by Terrel Bernard (26) and Dorian Williams (24).

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run						vs. Pass												
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int	
C.Benford	25	CB	15	933	73	9.6%	35	30	8	3	21	38%	61	7.3	66	55	11.7%	92	10.2	-40.5%	4	47%	67	6.1	14	10	2
D.Hamlin	27	SS	14	874	93	13.0%	21	28	11	8	43	28%	66	8.0	60	14	3.2%	57	11.4	-2.0%	19	71%	2	6.7	28	5	2
R.Douglas*	31	CB	15	830	63	8.2%	57	24	13	5	22	55%	24	4.4	17	56	13.3%	89	10.8	6.3%	63	41%	84	8.8	76	5	0
T.Rapp	28	FS	14	778	88	12.3%	23	24	8	4	48	29%	62	8.8	74	9	2.3%	--	10.2	-31.5%	--	56%	--	6.7	--	6	2
T.Johnson	29	CB	12	646	70	11.5%	10	31	7	3	29	62%	16	5.9	41	62	19.0%	41	5.9	7.1%	65	42%	83	8.0	61	5	2
C.Lewis	28	CB	17	595	66	7.6%	65	32	17	12	17	71%	6	5.5	36	52	17.3%	64	6.3	1.5%	57	46%	73	7.1	33	4	1
C.Bishop	23	FS	16	358	36	4.4%	--	9	4	6	19	21%	--	8.9	--	7	3.9%	--	5.0	-8.3%	--	43%	--	6.7	--	2	0
K.Elam*	24	CB	13	305	27	4.1%	--	14	5	0	8	50%	--	7.6	--	33	21.4%	--	9.6	33.6%	--	64%	--	6.8	--	2	0
J.Ingram	28	CB	17	211	22	2.5%	--	16	11	2	9	100%	--	1.7	--	20	18.8%	--	7.4	-24.2%	--	65%	--	6.2	--	4	2
T.White	30	CB	11	404	27	4.8%	--	11	5	2	10	30%	--	7.4	--	28	14.0%	--	12.8	17.0%	--	50%	--	9.3	--	5	0

Year	Pass	D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	2			22.6%	27	-11.1%	10	-0.2%	16	1.4%	17	10.8%	24	-34.2%	2	-12.1%	11
2023	9			-34.7%	5	6.3%	19	-17.4%	2	-30.6%	2	5.7%	24	0.0%	16	-3.7%	16
2024	14			23.5%	26	7.2%	21	-11.9%	4	-11.0%	7	26.0%	29	-8.9%	9	28.0%	32

First-round cornerback Maxwell Hairston (Kentucky) will eventually assume the mantle that Tre'Davious White (who returns to Buffalo) held for so long. But he may be able to ease into it, given the breakout year that Christian Benford had in 2024. Benford ranked fourth in pass coverage DVOA (-40.5%), allowed just 6.1 yards per pass (14th lowest), and 2.7 average yards after the catch (ninth lowest). Nickelback Taron Johnson disappointed a bit with a down year. He finished outside the top 60 in every major advanced metric category: DVOA, yards per reception, success rate, and yards after the catch. Damar Hamlin played a much larger role in 2024 alongside Taylor Rapp. Rookie Cole Bishop was forced into a starting role in the AFC Championship Game, but he led the team in tackles in the contest and performed well overall. That's a promising sign for the secondary's depth. Jordan Hancock was a two-year starter at Ohio State and played both nickelback and safety. He arrives with more relevant experience than a typical fifth-round rookie. This unit struggled against elite offenses and the Bills attempted to address those concerns with draft picks and the return of White.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	5.0%	1	3.3	11	3.1	6	11.8	2	6.8	6	0.2	15	3.4	11
2023	0.6%	15	-0.6	16	1.5	11	-2.3	27	0.4	17	4.3	7	-16.7	32
2024	-2.7%	28	-2.4	21	-5.9	31	-2.3	21	-6.3	30	2.7	7	4.2	12

Tyler Bass is an average NFL kicker, coming off two straight years of going 24-for-29 on field goals. He missed a league-high five extra points last season (one blocked). The Bills ranked fifth worst in kickoff return value allowed, though some of that is because they were second behind Detroit with 102 kickoffs. Punter Sam Martin is out, replaced by either Jake Camarda or Brad Robbins. Before 2024, Camarda had positive gross punting value in Tampa Bay and was unfairly blamed for negative net value because the Bucs allowed big returns. Last year, he dealt with some shanks and some bad directional punts, which got him benched and then cut. Robbins was subpar as a rookie after the 2023 Bengals drafted him in the sixth round, with -6.1 points of gross punt value below average. He missed last season with a quadriceps injury. Undrafted rookies do not often get traded in training camp, but the Bills sent a sixth-round pick to the Jets last August for a seventh and cornerback/return man Brandon Codrington. Codrington was good on punt returns and mediocre on kick returns. Ty Johnson and Ray Davis each returned a few kicks as well.

# Carolina Panthers

2024 record: 5-12	Total DVOA: -32.9% (30th)	2025 Mean Projection: 5.5 wins	On the Clock (0-5): 52%
Pythagorean Wins: 4.4 (31st)	Offense: -11.6% (24th)	Postseason Odds: 9.5%	Mediocrity (6-8): 38%
Snap-Weighted Age: 26.9 (9th)	Defense: 19.2% (32nd)	Super Bowl Odds: 0.1%	Playoff Contender (9-11): 10%
Average Opponent: 0.5% (16th)	Special Teams: -2.1% (25th)	Proj. Avg. Opponent: -1.8% (22nd)	Super Bowl Contender (12+): 1%

**2024:** Another five-win season, but it was more like an eight-win season if you count *moral* victories!

**2025:** It turns out that moral victories do not really count.

**D**ead cats don't bounce very far.

We cannot confirm this—we have not conducted experiments; there is no Dead Cat DVOA—but it makes intuitive sense. Toss a dead cat from a tall building, watch it hit the sidewalk, and the results will be more *splat* than *boing*. That's what statisticians are trying to tell you when they use the “dead cat bounce” metaphor in economics and elsewhere: they are referring to a small, brief adjustment when a phenomenon being measured reaches rock bottom, not a force with any upward propulsion or momentum.

(If you find this introduction tasteless, blame old statisticians. It also helps to imagine the dead cat in question as a cruel sociopath who had it coming, which should not be hard if you ever lived with one.)

The late felines in question here are the 2024 Panthers. They were dead on arrival entering last season. They cycled through Matt Rhule, Steve Wilks, Frank Reich, and Chris Tabor as official or interim coaches in 2022 and 2023, then hired little-known Buccaneers offensive coordinator Dave Canales to take over the NFL's least appealing job. Dan Morgan, a former Panthers linebacker with some experience in the Bills front office, replaced Scott Fitterer as general manager. Morgan, with impulsive owner David Tepper lurking as the meddler behind the curtain, traded top edge rusher Brian Burns to the Giants and let core defenders like Frankie Luu and Jeremy Chinn depart as free agents. Meanwhile, Bryce Young finished dead last in passing DYAR as a rookie, after Fitterer and Tepper had traded what would have been the top pick in the 2024 draft to acquire him. Young's top weapon was Adam Thielen, who caught 103 passes in 2023 but turned 34 before the start of the 2024 season.

The Panthers lost their first two games by a combined score of 73-13. Young was benched for Andy Dalton after completing just 55.4% of his passes, averaging just 4.4 yards per attempt, tossing three interceptions, and generally looking like a seventh grader who stole the real quarterback's jersey. Dalton threw three touchdowns in a win over the Raiders, and it appeared that we would never see Young again.

Dalton, however, soon slid back to sub-mediocrity, then injured his thumb in a car accident. Young returned, with everyone saying all the right things about how well he handled his demotion and what a learning experience it was. And lo, the cadaverous kitties did bounce, going 4-5 after a 1-7 start, with

Young improving from the worst quarterback in the league by a wide margin to ranking somewhere among the bottom 10.

Let's examine the details of the Panthers' bounce a little more closely:

**Week 9: Panthers 23, Saints 22.** The Panthers came back to hand the Saints their seventh straight loss; Saints coach Dennis Allen was fired the next day. The game-winning drive featured a 22-yard pass interference penalty to set up a 15-yard Chuba Hubbard touchdown run.

**Week 10: Panthers 23, Giants 20 (OT).** The Giants came back from a 17-7 deficit to force overtime, but Tyrone Tracy fumbled deep in Panthers territory once they got there, setting up a game-winning field goal.

**Weeks 12-14: Losses to the Chiefs/Buccaneers/Eagles by a combined 12 points.** All three games were legitimately close but also strange in their own ways. The Panthers went 5-of-7 on fourth-down conversions against the Chiefs and Eagles, and a combination of fourth-quarter playground-style highlights and pass-interference penalties kept the Panthers within range of the two Super Bowl participants. The overtime loss to the Buccaneers was a certified NFC South slopfest full of Baker Mayfield interceptions and shanked punts.

**Week 16: Panthers 36, Cardinals 30 (OT).** After a blowout at the hands of the Cowboys (Micah Parsons and company registered six sacks and forced two Young fumbles), Young enjoyed one of the best games of his career. He threw for 158 yards and two touchdowns, ran for 68 yards and a third touchdown, and earned 48.7% DVOA for the Cardinals passing offense. Hubbard ran for 50 yards on two carries in the second Panthers overtime possession to hand the freefalling Cardinals their fourth loss in five games.

**Week 18: Panthers 44, Falcons 38 (OT).** After the Panthers were blown out in their rematch with the Buccaneers, Young threw for 251 yards and three touchdown passes against an opponent that needed a win to stay alive in the playoff chase. Young completed five passes in the overtime drive that ended with a Miles Sanders touchdown run.

## 2025 Panthers Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	at JAX	7	at NYJ	13	LAR
2	at ARI	8	BUF	14	BYE
3	ATL	9	at GB	15	at NO
4	at NE	10	NO	16	TB
5	MIA	11	at ATL	17	SEA
6	DAL	12	at SF (Mon.)	18	at TB

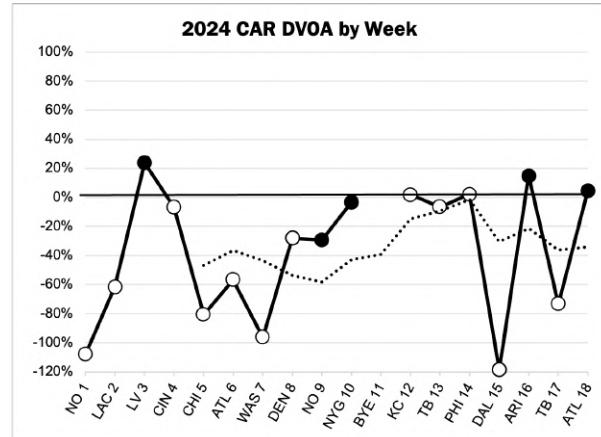
To summarize: the Panthers' late-season bounce consisted of four wins, three in overtime against opponents that finished the season with losing records, plus three close-call losses against playoff teams, as well as two blowout losses. Even the wins over fellow bottom-feeders were nip-and-tuck affairs. Not exactly the stuff of legend and fable.

Decades of evidence reveal that late-season surges like the one the Panthers experienced in 2024 rarely carry over into the next season. One reason why is that many such surges, like this one, were not very surge-like. In fact, the Panthers experienced a similar uptick when Wilks replaced Rhule and led them to a 6-6 stretch at the end of the 2022 season. Beating fellow featherweights in close games doesn't predict better things to come; it reveals that you are still a featherweight.

The Panthers organization appears to disagree. The team focused on player retention during free agency, signing cornerback Jaycee Horn to a four-year extension while making smaller deals to keep Dalton, fellow cornerback Mike Jackson, center Austin Corbett, tight end Tommy Tremble, and others. Retaining Horn was a wise move for a team that was too eager to let young defenders walk instead of paying them last offseason, and Dalton has an excellent rapport with Young. But some of the retentions were odd. Why keep stone-handed fourth receiver David Moore around for an extra year? Younger receivers can contribute just as much on special teams. What function will 30-year-old journeyman nose tackle Shy Tuttle serve on a rebuilding team that made him worth re-signing? The implicit answer: *The Panthers think they are rebuilt, not rebuilding.*

Some of the Panthers offseason rhetoric was also a little over-optimistic. When acknowledging that the Panthers had trade discussions with the Seahawks about DK Metcalf, Canales claimed that there may be a go-to big-play receiver already on the roster. "I think we've got that guy. I think it's Xavier Legette," Canales said. "It's up to the coaches to just continue to develop him and let him grow at his pace."

Legette flashed some promise last season. There's nothing wrong with gassing a guy up in April. And the Panthers hedged their Legette bet by drafting Metcalf-shaped Tetairoa McMillan with the eighth overall pick. Still, the Panthers still operated with an odd lack of urgency in free agency and the draft. Safety Tre'veon Moehrig was their splashiest addition. McMillan was their only significant skill-position upgrade. The Panthers added some veteran role players on defense (Bobby Brown, Patrick Jones) and skill-position depth on Day 3 of the draft (Jimmy "No Relation" Horn, Trevor "Yes Rela-



tion" Etienne), but role players and late-round depth generally aren't much help to 5-12 teams.

Young, of course, is the lynchpin of any Panthers improvement plan. He was comically unplayable for most of 2023 and before his benching last year. He was undeniably better in the second half of last season, but he still finished the season far below replacement level. Young could still be improving, but his teensiness invites a type of skepticism which often takes the form of snarky sportswriters referring to him as "teensy."

Per Pro Football Reference, Young's Bad Throw Percentage of 22.3% was the second worst in the NFL, behind only Anthony Richardson (28.0%). Young's Bad Throw Percentage in 2023 was a league-worst 21.5%, so he hasn't really improved in this area: one pass out of every five is uncatchable.

Young threw away 32 passes, per FTN Data, tying Caleb Williams for the highest total in the NFL. Other sources provide different (but always high) throwaway totals, because it can be hard to distinguish between a throwaway and a bad throw when Young floats balloon-trajectory passes along the deep sideline. Young did NOT have a high batted pass rate (just two passes, per FTN), though some of his most off-kilter passes looked like attempts to whiz the ball past a defender's armpit.

Young enjoyed a clean pocket on 67.2% of dropbacks last season, a slightly below-average figure on par with the protection Joe Burrow or Brock Purdy received. Young's numbers under pressure weren't bad: a 47.2% completion rate (22nd among starters), 7.3 yards per attempt (fifth!), a 16.8% sack rate (14th lowest). Young developed a knack for narrow escapes from pressure and downfield miracles last year. The Panthers' near-upsets of the Eagles and Bucs were largely fueled by such plays.

It sometimes appeared that stronger opponents were toying with Young a bit. The Chiefs, for example, rushed six or more defenders 10 times against Young. He responded with nine completions, 131 yards and one touchdown, getting sacked just once. The Buccaneers rushed Young 28 times with five or more defenders in the Week 13 nailbiter, an excessive total even for Todd Bowles. Young responded with 13 receptions on those plays for 160 yards, plus two scrambles. The Bucs eased back on their blitzing when they stomped the Panthers in Week 17.

There was more to Young's relative late-season success than schoolyard highlights against jailbreak blitzes. He has become an accurate medium-range touch passer. He's not as skittish in the pocket as he was as a rookie, though the only way he could have been more skittish was by hiding under a pile of towels in the locker room. The Panthers averaged 5.1 yards per carry on first downs (fourth in the NFL; better than the Lions), and Young looked comfortable when Canales dialed up lots of rollouts and quick passes when the Panthers were ahead of the sticks.

So Canales, Hubbard, and a better-than-its-reputation offensive line kept Young from facing too much pressure against weaker foes, and Young responded well against blitzes from tougher foes. Sounds promising. Yet it sometimes looked like there were types of passes—sideline out routes in the 10- to 15-yard range, for example, which must be delivered on a rope—that Young will never, ever be able to execute. And the Panthers went three-and-out on 27% of drives, the third-worst figure in the NFL. If Hubbard got stuffed or Young threw a bleacher ball on first-and-10, Canales often coached like he was resigned to punt.

It would be easier to buy into Young's development if the Panthers had done more than make mostly cosmetic changes to a defense which finished last in rushing DVOA, 31st in passing DVOA, last in adjusted line yards, 27th in adjusted sack rate, 30th at stopping opponents' No. 1 receivers (Jaycee Horn was hurt part of the year, and also gambles a bit), 31st against deep passes, last against passes over the middle, 31st on first downs, 30th on third downs, 30th in the red zone ... you get the idea.

Moehrig should pull the pass defense toward league average, but there's a long way to go. The Panthers released Jadeveon Clowney, their top pass rusher in 2024, before the start of spring minicamp. Newcomer Patrick Jones (12 career sacks), D.J. Wonnum (four sacks after returning from a 2023 injury last year), and second-round pick Nic Scourton (five sacks at Texas A&M) will be the top edge players. The nickel corner position behind Horn and Jackson looks like a hole-in-zone completion waiting to happen. The new faces on the interior defense are probably not difference-makers. Bobby

Brown and Christian Rozeboom were rendered expendable when the Rams started making early-round draft picks again, while Tershawn Wharton was a serviceable clean-up sack specialist when positioned next to Chris Jones.

Even if McMillan learns quickly and Legette improves significantly, Hubbard and Adam Thielen will again be among Young's top playmakers. Thielen caught a modest 48 passes last year, but every single one of them was a contested 17-yard grab on third-and-16. (Thielen actually converted 15 third or fourth downs.) Hubbard churned out a 56% success rate, though he missed the last two games of the season with a calf injury, and he lost three fumbles (one in overtime to give the Bucs that Week 13 victory). Everyone else in the playmaker corps is either a rookie, a second-year player with a short sizzle reel, or named "Tommy Tremble."

The fact that Thielen, Hubbard, and Horn remain the biggest names on the Panthers roster should hammer home how early the team is in its rebuilding cycle. The Panthers aren't a team full of young stars that is starting to add missing pieces. They're a team that hopes Young, Legette, and others *become* young stars. They needed surprising seasons by veterans such as Clowney and Thielen to beat the Giants and Saints last year. Their youngish star-like veterans—Horn, Hubbard, left tackle Ickey Ekwonu, defensive lineman Derrick Brown—are few and far between, and also at or near their peaks. And there is a very high probability that Young will max out as a pesky bottom-tier starter.

Hence our very pessimistic win projection. The Panthers improved from "almost historically dreadful" to "generically dreadful" in 2024. Some fans—and perhaps the Panthers brain trust itself—think that upward-sloping trendline will carry them at least toward division-title contention this year; it's just the NFC South, after all. But NFL teams do not follow linear models, and our models know it.

The Panthers still have a massive amount of rebuilding to do. The hardest work is still ahead of them. Which is why it's very troubling to watch them operate as if the hardest work is already finished.

Mike Tanier

## 2024 Panthers by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	at NO	L	0%	10	47	193	379	-2	-108%	-67%	26%	-16%
2	LAC	L	0%	3	26	159	349	+1	-62%	-64%	2%	5%
3	at LV	W	99%	36	22	437	331	+1	24%	22%	2%	3%
4	CIN	L	20%	24	34	375	373	0	-7%	0%	12%	5%
5	at CHI	L	0%	10	36	292	424	-3	-81%	-30%	46%	-4%
6	ATL	L	0%	20	38	335	423	-1	-57%	-19%	29%	-9%
7	at WAS	L	0%	7	40	180	421	-2	-96%	-58%	31%	-8%
8	at DEN	L	1%	14	28	284	400	0	-28%	-25%	8%	5%
9	NO	W	9%	23	22	246	427	-1	-29%	-4%	32%	7%
10	NYG	W	52%	20	17	306	342	+2	-4%	-12%	-5%	3%
11	BYE											
12	KC	L	48%	27	30	334	391	0	2%	11%	12%	3%
13	TB	L	34%	23	26	367	445	+1	-7%	-1%	-4%	-10%
14	at PHI	L	25%	16	22	302	292	-1	2%	6%	5%	1%
15	DAL	L	0%	14	30	235	410	-3	-119%	-66%	54%	1%
16	ARI	W	57%	36	30	392	382	+2	15%	32%	14%	-3%
17	at TB	L	0%	14	48	204	551	0	-73%	-24%	28%	-21%
18	at ATL	W	70%	44	38	425	537	+1	4%	37%	35%	2%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	-11.6%	24	19.2%	32
Unadjusted VOA	-11.8%	25	21.6%	32
Weighted Trend	-4.3%	19	20.9%	32
Variance	11.2%	32	3.1%	4
Average Opponent	0.8%	23	1.0%	12
Passing	-4.7%	28	24.5%	31
Rushing	-6.2%	15	14.1%	32
First Down	1.4%	13	21.9%	31
Second Down	-19.4%	27	13.6%	30
Third Down	-22.5%	27	22.9%	30
First Half	-4.6%	21	30.7%	32
Second Half	-18.7%	26	6.1%	29
Red Zone	-6.0%	19	17.1%	30
Late and Close	11.3%	13	11.7%	23

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rk	Off	Rk	Def	Rk	ST	Rk	Off AGL	Rk	Def AGL	Rk	Off Age	Rk	Def Age	Rk	ST Age	Rk
2020	5-11	6.6	6.5	350	402	+1	-3.6%	18	1.0%	16	5.5%	23	0.8%	16	34.1	14	38.9	16	26.8	13	25.2	30	25.9	18
2021	5-12	5.7	4.2	304	404	-13	-23.6%	27	-21.5%	31	0.6%	18	-1.6%	24	43.5	18	37.2	18	25.9	26	25.7	25	25.8	21
2022	7-10	7.7	6.6	347	374	-4	-11.8%	25	-11.1%	26	2.6%	20	1.9%	8	25.0	8	29.1	12	25.5	30	25.8	25	26.0	17
2023	2-15	3.5	1.3	236	416	-9	-35.3%	32	-27.5%	31	6.5%	25	-1.2%	23	58.5	27	62.0	31	26.2	23	27.2	5	26.2	16
2024	5-12	4.4	5.0	341	534	-5	-32.9%	30	-11.6%	24	19.2%	32	-2.1%	25	45.4	24	69.6	28	26.4	20	27.4	6	26.8	9

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

CAR Offense					CAR Offense vs. Opponents					CAR Defense					CAR Defense vs. Opponents										
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA
11	74%	5.5	-2.4%	29%	Base	18%	4.4	-13.1%	54%	Base	21%	5.3	13.6%	11	62%	6.4	17.9%	12	22%	6.0	25.8%	21	7%	6.0	8.0%
12	15%	4.2	-24.0%	49%	Nickel	68%	5.4	-4.6%	37%	Nickel	66%	6.2	16.6%	21	3%	7.6	43.0%	21	7%	6.0	22.9%	20	3%	6.7	22.9%
611	5%	4.5	-11.9%	89%	Dime+	13%	6.1	6.4%	5%	Dime+	12%	7.6	43.0%	612	2%	4.7	34.0%	612	2%	5.1	4.7%	22	2%	5.1	4.7%
21	2%	3.3	-26.3%	52%	Goal Line	1%	1.3	-11.8%	50%	Goal Line	1%	5.4	64.8%	21	7%	6.0	8.0%	21	7%	6.0	8.0%	20	2%	5.1	4.7%

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected		Rk	Formation		Rk	Pass Rush		Rk	Secondary		Rk	Strategy		Rk
Runs, all	+2.2%	14	Form: Single Back	75%	16	Rush 3	1.7%	26	4 DB	20%	22	Play Action	22%	18
Runs, first down	+3.7%	13	Form: Empty Back	13%	4	Rush 4	69.2%	18	5 DB	66%	14	Offensive Motion	36%	30
Runs, second-long	-0.6%	17	Form: Multi Back	13%	27	Rush 5	25.2%	7	6+ DB	12%	13	Avg Box (Off)	6.02	23
Runs, power sit.	-2.2%	26	Pers: 3+ WR	76%	7	Rush 6+	4.0%	26	Man Coverage	54%	12	Avg Box (Def)	5.96	29
Runs, behind 2H	+4.8%	11	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	22%	24	Edge Rusher Sacks	51.6%	16	MOFC	66%	3	Offensive Pace	32.24	26
Runs, ahead 2H	-2.6%	24	Pers: 6+ OL	7%	4	Interior DL Sacks	28.1%	17	CB1 on WR1	36%	17	Defensive Pace	30.13	1
Run-Pass Options	4.8%	7	Shotgun/Pistol	76%	21	Second Level Sacks	20.3%	17	S/CB Cover Ratio	18%	19	Go for it on 4th	1.16	14

Carolina ranked fourth running the ball but 30th passing the ball on first downs. Then they somehow ranked dead last in DVOA running the ball on second downs (but 24th passing). For the second straight year, the Panthers were dead last in average yards after the catch, last in both YAC on passes behind or at the line of scrimmage (7.2) and passes beyond the line of scrimmage (3.1). Carolina uses its safeties interchangeably, and the Panthers are at the bottom of the league in the gap between where the top two safeties make their plays. The Panthers had the worst DVOA in the league against passes in the middle of the field, and they were 31st against deep passes of 16 or more air yards. Only Dallas and Washington faced a higher rate of passes to opposing WR1s.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
B.Young	-185	-17.9%	413	2217	5.4	4.1	60.9%	15	9
A.Dalton	-116	-21.7%	167	952	5.7	4.3	66.3%	7	6

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
X.Legette	-33	-17.6%	84	49	497	10.1	2.3	4	58%
A.Thielen	195	27.6%	62	48	615	12.8	3.2	5	77%
D.Johnson*	-47	-22.4%	58	30	357	11.9	2.9	3	52%
D.Moore	-3	-13.2%	57	32	351	11.0	1.9	3	56%
J.Coker	136	23.7%	46	32	478	14.9	5.3	2	70%
J.Mingo*	-83	-51.8%	26	12	121	10.1	5.3	0	46%
J.Sanders	6	-5.2%	43	33	342	10.4	5.8	1	77%
T.Tremble	-6	-10.0%	32	23	234	10.2	5.4	2	72%
I.Thomas*	-28	-73.8%	6	3	7	2.3	2.0	0	50%
C.Hubbard	-124	-54.7%	54	43	171	4.0	5.7	1	80%
M.Sanders*	-58	-49.9%	30	24	148	6.2	6.3	1	80%
R.Dowdle	33	-1.8%	49	39	249	6.4	7.0	3	80%

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
C.Hubbard	228	12.3%	250	1195	4.8	10	1	56%
M.Sanders*	4	-6.7%	55	205	3.7	2	0	45%
B.Young	79	27.4%	38	255	6.7	6	1	-
R.Blackshear*	16	22.3%	15	80	5.3	0	0	53%
M.Boone*	9	5.7%	13	51	3.9	0	0	62%
J.Brooks	-3	-16.2%	9	22	2.4	0	0	33%
A.Dalton	6	8.0%	7	38	5.4	0	0	-
X.Legette	8	-22.0%	6	24	4.0	0	0	-
R.Dowdle	132	5.3%	235	1079	4.6	2	3	53%

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
R.Hunt	RG	29	16/16	967	6	4	18	2.9%	15	B.Christensen	C/LT	29	17/6	399	3	8	9	3.5%	--
D.Lewis	LG	28	16/16	943	6	5	13	2.2%	2	A.Corbett	C	30	5/5	292	1	2	5	2.7%	--
I.Ekwonu	LT	25	15/15	910	12	2	35	6.0%	24	C.Zavala	G	26	17/2	198	2	1	2	1.6%	--
T.Moton	RT	31	14/14	847	1	7	27	5.0%	17	Y.Nijman	RT	29	16/3	187	1	3	11	9.2%	--
C.Mays	C	26	11/8	495	4	0	8	2.5%	23										

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont
2022	4.56	4.56	9	69%	14	16%	11	1.19	20	0.87	12	36	7.7%	20	27.9%	18	43
2023	3.64	3.68	28	62%	22	20%	24	1.02	25	0.45	28	65	10.5%	30	33.2%	28	20
2024	4.54	4.73	4	71%	6	15%	4	1.24	16	0.75	14	36	6.2%	12	28.7%	12	25

2024 ALY by direction: Left End: 4.69 (11) Left Tackle: 3.88 (23) Mid/Guard: 4.91 (6) Right Tackle: 4.89 (3) Right End: 4.54 (8)

The starting line of Ickey Ekwonu, Damien Lewis, Austin Corbett (or Cade Mays), Robert Hunt, and Taylor Moton does a fine job run blocking, and it can protect Bryce Young when the Panthers offense stays ahead of the sticks. Chaos reigns, however, when opponents can dial up blitzes and esoterica because it is third-and-long and/or the Panthers are playing catchup. Ekwonu will go weeks where he lives up to his talent and sixth overall draft status, then have whole games where it looks like he's almost avoiding contact with his defender. Ekwonu also committed a dozen-penalty sampler of holds and false starts last year. Hunt often whiffs on quicker interior linemen; the next time he cleanly blocks Calijah Kancey may be the first. Stunts and slants can cross everyone up, which may be why the Panthers brought back the oft-injured Corbett after a bicep injury; Mays played well at center in relief, but the line calls may have suffered, and Hunt in particular pushed for Corbett's return. Oh, and Young makes unpredictable adjustments in the pocket, perhaps because he cannot see past his blockers, and occasionally stumbles when starting to scramble. Neither of those traits makes life any easier for his linemen. In summary, this veteran-heavy line has significant deficiencies, but the Panthers invested a ton of resources in it: Lewis, Hunt, and Moton will eat up \$67 million in cap space. At least there's stability, which on the offensive line has a quality all its own.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
A.Robinson	30	DE	16	762	80	8.9%	4	42	13	6	67	48%	91	4.0	91	5.5	2	19	1
L.Ray	28	DE	16	627	41	4.6%	55	20	2	1	38	50%	90	3.9	89	1.0	1	5	0
S.Tuttle	30	DT	15	610	49	5.8%	25	26	2	4	43	47%	92	4.4	92	0.0	1	5	2
D.Williams*	33	DE	12	337	16	2.4%	--	12	2	1	12	75%	--	3.5	--	0.5	4	10	0
N.Thurman*	30	DT	9	240	19	3.8%	--	12	2	2	19	63%	--	4.0	--	0.0	0	0	0
T.Wharton	27	DT	17	667	31	3.7%	71	26	11	2	18	83%	13	2.4	46	6.5	5	24	4
B.Brown	25	DT	17	472	45	5.1%	39	29	7	0	42	64%	72	2.8	67	0.0	1	6	1

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
J.Clowney*	32	OLB	14	652	50	6.4%	24	35	15	5	34	65%	76	2.8	62	5.5	5	41	5
D.J.Wonnum	28	OLB	8	454	38	8.5%	6	19	7	3	30	43%	99	5.7	100	4.0	2	21	1
DJ Johnson	27	OLB	14	393	45	5.7%	--	28	6	5	39	62%	--	3.9	--	0.5	0	4	1
C.Gill*	28	OLB	10	221	21	3.7%	--	4	0	1	18	22%	--	5.2	--	0.0	5	2	0
J.Windmon	24	OLB	8	127	20	4.5%	--	11	2	4	10	40%	--	3.1	--	1.5	0	4	0
P.Jones	27	OLB	15	459	39	5.0%	50	34	15	2	24	88%	9	2.0	26	7.0	6	23	1

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush			vs. Pass									
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
J.Jewell	31	ILB	12	797	103	15.3%	29	52	17	15	63	54%	66	3.6	34	3.5	0	5	33	-23.7%	4	52%	20	7.7	45	7	1
T.Wallace	22	ILB	13	583	62	8.5%	72	20	7	5	36	31%	86	5.8	86	1.0	0	3	12	8.4%	47	25%	76	16.8	78	0	0
S.Thompson*	31	ILB	4	245	35	15.6%	--	20	5	6	27	59%	--	3.1	--	0.0	1	0	13	-17.8%	--	46%	--	4.8	--	0	0
C.Wooten	26	ILB	5	212	29	10.3%	60	7	2	8	20	25%	87	6.1	87	0.0	0	1	11	47.9%	--	27%	--	16.4	--	0	0
C.Cherelus	27	ILB	13	158	21	2.9%	--	9	0	8	16	44%	--	4.6	--	0.0	1	2	4	-2.7%	--	75%	--	4.0	--	0	0
C.Rozeboom	28	ILB	17	828	136	15.5%	26	64	11	16	82	54%	68	4.0	58	1.0	0	10	39	17.6%	64	38%	59	9.3	66	4	1

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk			
2022	4.38	4.20	9	78%	31	19%	12	1.21	16	0.87	22	35	6.1%	27	26.0%	22			
2023	4.37	4.50	30	67%	15	17%	15	1.20	20	0.83	23	27	6.2%	29	24.2%	32			
2024	5.19	5.51	32	69%	21	10%	32	1.51	32	0.76	15	32	6.2%	27	22.7%	32			
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 4.76 (22)				Left Tackle: 5.15 (30)				Mid/Guard: 5.56 (32)				Right Tackle: 5.56 (31)		Right End: 6.66 (32)	

The Panthers are one of four teams in pro football history to allow over 3,000 rushing yards in a season. Their 179.8 rushing yards allowed per game was the highest figure since the Falcons allowed 182.3 yards per game during the strike-impacted 1987 season. The Panthers addressed their issues on run defense by getting totally swole on the defensive line. Bobby Brown lists at 332 pounds, fifth-round pick Cam Jackson at 328. Derrick Brown, returning from a torn meniscus that erased most of last season, lists at 320. Incumbent lineman A'Shawn Robinson also lists at 320. Fellow incumbent Shy Tuttle weighs a more reasonable 300 pounds, while newcomer Tershawn Wharton is at 280. General manager Dan Morgan said he wants “big, long, physical guys” on defense. His acquisitions over the last two years definitely meet the first criteria. The Panthers not only finished last in adjusted line yards in 2024 but stuffed opposing rushers on just 10% of rushes, the league’s lowest figure. Girth and depth on the line should help significantly: Robinson and Tuttle were often overmatched last year, and backups such as LaBryan Ray were even easier to push around. Brown was taking things slowly at the start of minicamp, and D.J. Wonnum was also limited due to a “flare up” in his back. Wonnum suffered a quadricep injury while playing for the Vikings on Christmas Eve of 2023. Surgery led to MRSA complications, then blood clots, erasing the first half of his 2024 season. The Panthers are hoping Wonnum can be one of their primary edge rushers. Patrick Jones, another former Viking, is also slated for a major role on the edge. Jones’ seven 2024 sacks include two of Daniel Jones and two of Will Levis, with much of his production schemed up by Brian Flores (two unblocked sacks, two on stunts). Jones suffered a knee injury in Week 17 of 2024; Morgan must be addicted to Vikings defenders who get hurt at Christmastime. Given that Wonnum and Jones are the top Panthers edge rushers, second-round pick Nic Scourton (Texas) and third-round pick Princely Umanmielen (Ole Miss) should have no trouble earning playing time. Scourton led the Big Ten in sacks for Purdue in 2023 before playing more of a containment role for Texas A&M last year; Umanmielen is a lighter, more explosive pass rusher (244 pounds) but SackSEER projections did not like his poor 3-cone time. The Panthers ranked 32nd at stopping second-level rushing yards and 31st at defending passes over the short middle in 2024, two signs of an issue at linebacker. The Outlaw Josey Jewell meets Morgan’s

big-long-physical criteria but is not nearly as good as Morgan was when he played linebacker for the Panthers. Trevin Wallace showed some promise as a third-round rookie last year, and Morgan grabbed Christian Rozeboom (a liability in coverage late last season) when he realized the Rams were done with him. But Panthers fans who stop to ask how many of the players listed in this segment could start for the Bills or Eagles probably won't like the answer.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run						vs. Pass												
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
X.Woods*	30	SS	17	1218	125	13.1%	20	32	10	13	66	23%	80	8.5	67	23	4.5%	42	5.1	-52.8%	2	57%	17	3.9	4	6	3
M.Jackson	28	CB	17	1205	92	9.6%	32	38	17	9	22	36%	67	5.0	27	102	20.1%	28	12.0	14.6%	79	38%	89	9.8	90	16	2
J.Horn	26	CB	15	1036	81	9.6%	33	41	12	7	36	53%	28	7.5	68	78	17.9%	54	11.2	-11.9%	32	54%	30	6.0	8	13	1
J.Fuller*	27	FS	9	575	55	10.9%	44	12	1	8	40	23%	81	8.1	64	7	2.9%	--	9.1	18.4%	--	14%	--	11.9	--	1	0
D.Richardson	25	FS	14	401	52	6.6%	--	19	4	4	25	48%	--	5.2	--	15	8.9%	--	11.9	-40.3%	--	47%	--	9.1	--	2	1
N.Scott	30	SS	10	325	28	5.0%	91	7	2	5	9	33%	47	8.6	70	12	8.8%	--	9.3	-15.9%	--	58%	--	5.7	--	2	0
C.Smith-Wade	23	CB	14	301	37	4.7%	--	13	5	4	20	35%	--	8.9	--	19	15.0%	--	7.5	-33.9%	--	58%	--	4.1	--	1	1
D.Jackson*	29	CB	9	280	25	4.9%	--	10	3	9	10	40%	--	6.7	--	21	17.8%	--	7.2	34.7%	--	43%	--	6.4	--	2	0
T.Moehrig	26	SS	17	1101	114	13.3%	16	48	21	11	55	49%	15	5.7	22	31	5.9%	31	4.6	-0.3%	21	48%	34	7.0	31	10	2

Year	Pass	D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	22		11.8%	22	11.8%	25	27.5%	30	26.2%	31	-0.3%	17	-11.8%	7	-4.1%	14	
2023	17		27.9%	29	-20.2%	5	-9.3%	10	27.3%	30	-48.3%	1	8.7%	26	-31.3%	1	
2024	31		46.8%	32	10.0%	22	-10.1%	6	25.7%	31	-5.6%	17	13.7%	26	-5.2%	12	

Safety Tre'von Moehrig plays guitar. Classic rock guitar! "I just love that kind of Nirvana music, Red Hot Chili Peppers," he said at his introductory press conference. "I'm like 'Damn, I love the sound of it.' I just want to learn how to play it." Let's just pencil in Moehrig as the Panthers 2025 MVP now. Moehrig was trapped playing safety for the Raiders, who wanted to use him as an all-purpose defender but were often forced to play him at free safety to protect the rest of their defense. Now he's stuck with the Panthers who ... oh, he'll figure it out. Moehrig said that the Panthers told him he could be their "Swiss army." He left off the word "knife" when speaking, probably by mistake, but it's possible that Dan Morgan asked him to be an entire military unit defending the Alps. Jaycee Horn spent most of last season on an island. He's a big corner who doesn't match up well with speedsters, and he gave up some easy deep shots to Quintin Johnston and Rashid Shaheed, among others. He also committed seven pass interference penalties and three defensive holds. Horn has All-Pro talent, and the talent-poor Panthers were wise to give him an extension, but he's turning into something of a perma-prospect. Veteran Mike Jackson returns as the other outside cornerback. Chau Smith-Wade, a diminutive 2024 fifth-round pick, is the likely nickel defender. Demani Richardson, a 2024 UDFA who looked pretty good until he got matched up against Drake London a few times (whoopsie!) in last year's season finale, is penciled in at free safety. It's starting to appear as though the Panthers are not a very good football team.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	1.9%	8	7.1	6	-1.8	25	1.6	11	10.2	3	-7.2	32	17.7	2
2023	-1.2%	23	-2.9	20	-3.5	28	2.1	6	-1.8	19	-0.3	16	-3.3	20
2024	-2.1%	25	-3.3	25	4.2	6	-6.2	32	-3.2	25	-2.4	20	-2.7	21

The Panthers chose not to re-sign kicker Eddy Piñeiro, who has a very respectable career field goal percentage of 88.1%. Fair enough: Piñeiro lacks a huge leg, and Dave Canales did not appear to trust him much from 50 or more yards. So the Panthers replaced Piñeiro with Matthew Wright, who kicked for the Titans, Chiefs, and 49ers during various crises last year, the Panthers very briefly in 2023 (he missed one field goal), the Chiefs and Steelers in 2022, the Jaguars ... you get the idea. Florida State UDFA Ryan Fitzgerald, who went 13-for-13 in 2024 and drilled a 59-yarder against Notre Dame in Dublin, will get every opportunity to win the job. Punter Johnny Hekker also moved on (to the Titans), which makes sense: rebuilding teams don't need 35-year-old punters. The Panthers replaced him with ... Sam Martin, a 35-year-old punter. Rahim Blackshear led the NFL with 31 kickoff returns last year and handled punt returns as well. He'll battle rookies Trevor Etienne and Jimmy (no relation to Jaycee) Horn for the return roles. Kicker and returner may be the most interesting battles in Panthers camp this year. And that is a real problem.

# Chicago Bears

2024 record: 5-12

Total DVOA: -12.7% (25th)

Pythagorean Wins: 6.7 (23rd)

Offense: -13.1% (27th)

Snap-Weighted Age: 26.5 (15th)

Defense: 3.7% (22nd)

Average Opponent: 4.1% (3rd)

Special Teams: 4.1% (5th)

2025 Mean Projection: 7.9 wins

On the Clock (0-5): 16%

Postseason Odds: 31.3%

Mediocrity (6-8): 44%

Super Bowl Odds: 2.4%

Playoff Contender (9-11): 33%

Proj. Avg. Opponent: 4.0% (3rd)

Super Bowl Contender (12+): 7%

2024: *Blame Matt Eberflus and Shane Waldron*, by Carl Williams (with Seth Wickersham). Now available in trade paperback.

2025: In Ben Johnson, EPA, and a Whole New Offensive Line We Trust.

**B**en Johnson is currently the NFL's Smartest Man. That's a title bestowed upon the hottest newcomer to the coaching ranks, the offensive coordinator who hasn't done anything stupid yet. It comes with a parking spot and a gift certificate for free coffee.

The NFL's Smartest Man should not be confused with the NFL's Best Coach, currently Andy Reid, who replaced Bill Belichick, who is now College Football's Sugariest Daddy (formerly Bobby Petrino). Reid is brilliant but has done stupid things, like giving Kingsley Suamataia a starting job at left tackle last year. Johnson has not done anything stupid yet. That Jameson Williams gadget pass in the playoff loss to the Commanders? Totally Dan Campbell's idea, maybe.

Also, the NFL's Smartest Man is almost always a newly promoted *offensive* coordinator. New defensive coordinators are anointed NFL's Manliest Leader of Men. The one attempt to break with tradition resulted in Brandon Staley. No one wants to live through that again.

Johnson coordinated Lions offenses which finished seventh in DVOA in 2022 (when he and Campbell were still lifting the program from the quagmire), fifth in 2023, and third in 2024. He nearly took the Commanders head-coaching job last off-season but had a *Final Destination* premonition before boarding a plane to Reagan National. (*Those BASKETBALL guys will be the death of me!*) Johnson's system resuscitated Jared Goff's career, made a superstar out of slot receiver Amon-Ra St. Brown, and gave the Lions offense an identity as a throwback running-and-play-action steamroller. There's no denying his gifts as a system-installer, game-planner or playcaller. Hiring him may have been the best thing the Bears organization has done since the Super Bowl Shuffle.

Caleb Williams is the NFL's First True Gen Z QB. Well, perhaps the second: Bryce Young is pretty Gen Z, and he's still technically an NFL quarterback. Williams has tremendous talent but powerful *Dad drove me to the job interview and is waiting in the parking lot* energy, not to mention some fashion choices (painted fingernails, bejeweled cell phone cases) that give the NFL's Manliest Leaders of Men the heebie-jeebies.

Williams' Gen Z peccadillos were old news before Seth Wickersham reignited them in his new book *American Kings: This is About Quarterbacks, Not Politics, I Swear*. (Actually *American Kings: A Biography of the Quarterback*. Modern publishers have no flair.) Wickersham reveals that Williams'

father Carl did not want him to play in Chicago, "where quarterbacks go to die." Carl Williams consulted with labor lawyers, looking for ways to beat the system. The father and son considered a stint in the NFL before being told that, no, a cheat code for beating the draft was not hiding in plain sight for them to exploit.

"The rookie cap is just unconstitutional," Carl Williams said, adding that the collective bargaining agreement was "the worst piece of shit I ever read." Carl also considered publicly criticizing the Bears and the city of Chicago in an effort to dissuade Ryan Poles from drafting his son; Caleb wisely told dad that he "wasn't ready to nuke the city."

Coach Prime is starting to sound like a non-meddlesome and easy-to-work-with fellow, isn't he?

Caleb Williams inevitably signed with the Bears, started 17 games for them and endured 68 sacks. Matt Eberflus, 2022's NFL's Manliest Leader of Men, got the axe late in the season, but not before firing offensive coordinator Shane Waldron and replacing him with passing game coordinator Thomas Brown. The Bears then promoted Brown again to replace Eberflus, elevating former weight-room sanitizer (wide receivers coach, actually) Chris Beatty to interim-interim coordinator.

According to Wickersham's book, the Bears' various and sundry coaches gave their rookie quarterback no guidance on how to watch film. "No one tells me what to watch," Caleb Williams told his dad, who told Wickersham. "I just turn it on."

There is a lot to unpack in that statement, starting with the fact that it's a third-hand story about son through father via Wickersham. Practically the whole NFL weighed in on the Caleb Wasn't Taught How to Watch Film debate in May. Most opinions landed somewhere on the spectrum between Robert Griffin (Rough paraphrase: *Teams should spoon-feed their young quarterbacks and tuck them in at night*) and Kurt Warner (*Pull yourself up by your bootstraps, whippersnapper*). It's plausible that Williams' third-string coordinators lost track of how much coaching Williams needed and how little he was getting. But it's also plausible that Carl was exaggerating a bit to nuke the city.

Also, Caleb could have knocked on someone's office door and said, "Hey coach, what should I be focusing on when watching film this week?"

Anyone who has ever experienced a *no one taught me how*

## 2025 Bears Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	MIN (Mon.)	7	NO	13	at PHI (Fri.)
2	at DET	8	at BAL	14	at GB
3	DAL	9	at CIN	15	CLE
4	at LV	10	NYG	16	GB (Sat.)
5	BYE	11	at MIN	17	at SF
6	at WAS (Mon.)	12	PIT	18	DET

to tie my shoelaces! moment with an employee/student/child Caleb's age can relate to how wide the communication/expectation gap across generations has become. Quarterbacks of the past arrived in the NFL with film deficiencies; Brett Favre had to ask his backup what a nickel defense was after several years in the league. Back in the day, however, fans and sportswriters were more likely to chuckle about Favre's lack of preparation and curiosity than publicly indict Mike Holmgren for not providing enough remediation.

Johnson's job is to fix Williams. One of his first tasks, thanks to Wickersham's warhead, was public damage control. "I don't know what's gone on prior to him joining the organization, but he is very proud to be a Chicago Bear," Johnson said on Colin Cowherd's podcast after the Wickersham book's release. "That's what our conversations have included. He's really excited to get to work right now and be the best version of himself for 2025." Johnson's minicamp statements struck a similar tone. *What's done is done. Caleb loves playing for the Bears. He absolutely does not expect me to chew his food for him.*

With Johnson, Williams, and his father presumably on the same page, Johnson can now set about fixing a Bears offense which has been broken since, depending on how high you set your standards, roughly 1956. Johnson's formula for success, beyond teaching Williams what the pause and rewind buttons do, actually involves a formula. Johnson proved savvy enough about analytics to talk about the importance of Expected Points Added during an interview at the winter owner's meetings.

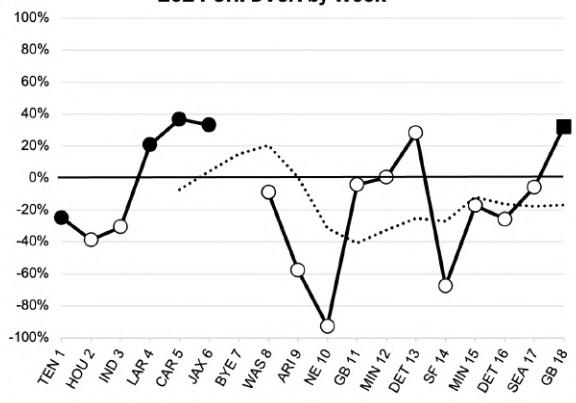
"The way I understand it right now from our analytics team, the EPA in the passing game is really one of the most critical factors in determining wins and losses," Johnson said, noting that he thought turnovers or takeaways were more important metrics five years ago. "So whatever team has the higher passing game EPA at the end of the game, they generally win that game. It's over 80% of the time."

"How do we help inflate that number? Higher completion percentage, more run after catch opportunities. That's not to say we're not going to take our shots down the field and look for big, explosive plays ... but there's a lot of ways we can get that done."

Again: lots and lots to unpack!

First, Johnson listens to his analytics department. Hooray! Second, he has some comfort with EPA, which is a close cousin of DVOA, built from the same blueprint but by different hands, and lacking opponent adjustments. So hooray again!

2024 CHI DVOA by Week



Math-savvy readers, however, may have noticed a causality problem when Johnson noted that the team with the higher passing game EPA is more likely to win. Teams don't win because their EPA was high. They win because they pass effectively and stop opponents from passing effectively. EPA merely measures that effectiveness! This isn't nearly the "Teams that run the ball 30 times win 90% of the time" fallacy, which has cause and effect exactly backwards. It's more of a prediction-versus-postdiction issue: passing EPA can tell you who won but is not as great at determining who *will* win, because it depends on such a wide array of fluctuating variables.

The "inflate that number" remark further muddles things. EPA can't be "gamed." A team improves its passing EPA by building a better offense, and it lowers opponent's passing EPA by building a better defense. Searching for shortcuts to boost passing EPA in the hopes of winning 80% of games is pretty faulty logic. If the Smartest Coach in the NFL said the same things about DVOA, we would ... sit quietly and bask in the attention and validation. And possibly reach out politely behind-the-scenes to his analytics team. But we'd exchange chuckling emails among the *Almanac* writers.

Nerd bullying aside, at least Johnson didn't say "Stats are for losers" or "We plan to run the football, even when the opponent expects it." (The Cowboys chapter is coming in just a few pages.) The underpinnings of the plan Johnson hinted at are sound. He wants to emphasize shorter throws, maximize yards after the catch, and greatly reduce sacks.

That's just what Johnson did in Detroit. Jared Goff posted the fourth-highest single-season completion percentage in history at 72.4%. (Tua Tagovailoa led the league by posting the third-highest rate ever at 72.9%). Goff's average depth of target of 6.3 yards tied for the third-lowest figure in the league among qualifying quarterbacks. Goff benefitted from 6.8 yards after catch per completion, the highest figure in the league. Goff endured 30 sacks but was pressured on just 25.9% of dropbacks, the 11th-best figure among qualifying quarterbacks per FTN, even though every opponent knew that the best way to beat him was to rattle him.

Shorter passes usually result in fewer sacks. Who knew? Well, Shane Waldron and his various replacements knew. Williams threw 164 passes at or behind the line of scrimmage, more than any quarterback besides Patrick Mahomes and

Bo Nix. Increase the air yards threshold to 5 yards and Williams attempted 319 such passes, fewer than Goff (344) but still ninth in the NFL. The Waldron Gang wanted to protect Williams and make him more efficient by emphasizing short passes and YAC, just like Johnson plans to do.

The problem for Williams as a rookie is that all that micro-passing produced 106 failed completions, second to Bo Nix with 126. (A failed completion is one which fails to gain 45% of needed yards on first down, 60% on second down, or 100% on third or fourth down.) Third-and-long inevitably came for Williams, and he took 23 sacks on 123 dropbacks when it was third or fourth down with 7 or more yards to go.

Anyone who watched Williams last year knows that he can complete swing passes, fire accurate fastballs to a wide-open first read, and produce some Houdini highlights when scrambling. But Williams only threw to his first read on 36.5% of dropbacks per FTN, the second-lowest figure in the NFL (ahead of Deshaun Watson). When Williams didn't like what he saw, he often entered a fugue state: hesitating, pump-faking, pondering, drifting, sometimes scrambling after it was far too late.

Keep in mind that Williams' top targets last year included veterans DJ Moore, Keenan Allen, and Cole Kmet, plus 2024 first-round pick Rome Odunze. These are receivers who know how to get open. Heck, Moore has built his entire career on being the go-to guy for inexperienced and/or inaccurate quarterbacks.

On the other hand, gutting the offensive coaching staff did Williams no favors. There were times late in the year when the Bears offense looked like it hadn't practiced together and plays had been drawn from a hat. Perhaps no one was watching any film. There's a difference between building a cohesive system around short passes and YAC, like Johnson did in Detroit for years, and a depleted coaching staff shrugging its shoulders and ordering lots of screens and swing passes, which is what Bears coaches appeared to be doing by December.

Improving the offensive line is an obvious way to cut a quarterback's sack rate. The quality of the Bears pass protection in 2024 varied from "not as bad as you think" to "pretty dreadful" based on who was healthy. Things really fell apart when left tackle Braxton Jones and left guard Tevin Jenkins were hurt late in the year, at just about the time when the 20th caller to 670 The Score was being promoted to offensive coordinator.

Johnson thoroughly overhauled the offensive line. He kept Jones and right tackle Darnell Wright but replaced the inconsistent Jenkins with reliable Chiefs veteran Joe Thuney, signed Falcons center Drew Dalman to replace stopgap Coleman Shelton at center, and replaced Nate Davis with Jonah Jackson, who played for Johnson in Detroit.

Investing heavily in the offensive line: why hadn't the Bears tried this before? Because they had! Davis was a major free agent signing in 2023. Jenkins was a former second-round pick, Jones a fifth-rounder, and Wright a first-rounder. The Bears brought in veterans such as Lucas Patrick and Dan Feeney to reinforce the offensive line in recent years. Some of their past reinforcements were over the hill or not as effec-

tive as advertised, but Thuney turns 33 and both Dalman and Jackson are coming off 2024 injuries. The underlying problem with the Bears pass protection has been that Williams, and Justin Fields before him, were such tentative and wonky decision-makers that The Hogs would have had trouble protecting them.

The Bears, in short, are doing the same things on offense but expecting different results because they have hired The Smartest Man in the NFL. That's fine. Johnson is an upgrade over Eberflus, whose staff was in chaos long before the Great Offensive Coaching Purge. Williams is not yet too far gone. Offensive firepower has been accumulating for years, with first-round tight end Colston Loveland (Michigan) and mercurial tackle-breaking receiver Luther Burden III (Missouri) arriving in the draft to give Johnson and Williams more YAC capability. Our projection system thinks the Bears offense will be better than league average in 2025. Bears fans might think they are watching The Greatest Show on Turf.

Meanwhile, former Saints head coach Dennis Allen is the new Bears defensive coordinator. "We want to be an attacking, aggressive style of defense," Allen said at his introductory press conference. And with that, we take back everything snippy we said about Johnson's EPA analysis.

Allen uses man coverage more than Eberflus did. He has the cornerbacks for it: Jaylon Johnson, Tyrique Stevenson, and Kyler Gordon, plus Jaquan Brisker as a playmaking, versatile safety.

Run defense will be more of an issue. The Bears allowed 4.8 yards per rush in 2024. Largely as a result, their defense ranked 30th in DVOA on first-and-10. A great secondary can only help so much when the opponent is always ahead of the sticks, and also when the offense is always punting on fourth-and-15.

Grady Jarrett was signed to beef up the run defense, but he turned 32 in April. The Bears face the Lions twice and Josh Jacobs twice this year, plus Saquon Barkley, Christian McCaffrey, Derrick Henry, and Ashton Jeanty, as well as the men who block for them. A porous run defense is likely to sabotage their efforts elsewhere.

The Bears have been a popular "poised for a breakout" team for many years. Fields always looked one step away from going Super Saiyan, even if closer inspection revealed he was three or four steps away. The Bears often made splashy trades and signings, whether to add playmakers for Fields (DJ Moore), bolster the defense (Montez Sweat), or just add draft picks for future splashes (the Bryce Young trade, which brought Moore, Williams, and Wright). But Fields never developed, and Eberflus' staff never looked like the right coaches to develop him. Some analysts expected Williams to have the season Jayden Daniels had in 2024, but again: there were fundamental flaws with the fit.

Johnson is this year's splash. He comes with credibility, authority, and vision. Williams will now get real coaching in a proven system. The NFC North title is likely out of reach, and even a wild-card berth may be hard to come by due to the Bears' brutal schedule. But there are other indicators of success for the Bears to shoot for: the first 4,000-yard or

30-touchdown passing season in franchise history, Williams' sack total cut in half, some success against divisional rivals (the Bears are 5-19 in divisional play since 2021), and the development of an actual quarterback prospect, something Bears fans have not really experienced since Jim McMahon. And McMahon didn't so much develop as fracture into something jagged and beautiful.

So, NFL's Smartest Man: do you take this Zoomer, to have and to hand-hold, to teach how to watch film, to cope with your wacky in-laws, in YAC and in sacks?

And Gen-Z QB: do you take this Boomer (actually a Millennial who turned 39 in May), to honor and obey his coaching, to work and to learn, to cleave from the bosom of your family and trust in his guidance, until better than Goff you become?

Then let the Johnson-Williams marriage begin. We'll know how it's going by January. Either that, or in a Seth Wicker-sham tell-all published in 2028.

Mike Tanier

## 2024 Bears by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	TEN	W	72%	24	17	148	244	+2	-25%	-46%	-7%	14%
2	at HOU	L	3%	13	19	205	310	-1	-39%	-48%	-6%	3%
3	at IND	L	39%	16	21	395	306	-1	-31%	-26%	-6%	-11%
4	LAR	W	79%	24	18	264	322	+2	21%	8%	-4%	9%
5	CAR	W	100%	36	10	424	292	+3	37%	17%	-23%	-3%
6	JAX	W	100%	35	16	373	278	+1	33%	20%	-19%	-6%
7	BYE											
8	at WAS	L	17%	15	18	307	481	-1	-9%	-14%	10%	14%
9	at ARI	L	0%	9	29	241	350	+2	-58%	-47%	5%	-6%
10	NE	L	1%	3	19	142	328	+1	-93%	-74%	20%	2%
11	GB	L	2%	19	20	391	366	+1	-4%	34%	36%	-2%
12	MIN	L	2%	27	30	398	452	0	0%	24%	23%	-1%
13	at DET	L	15%	20	23	301	405	+1	28%	20%	-6%	2%
14	at SF	L	0%	13	38	162	452	0	-68%	-36%	37%	5%
15	at MIN	L	3%	12	30	284	329	0	-17%	-18%	2%	3%
16	DET	L	1%	17	34	382	475	-2	-26%	-7%	21%	2%
17	SEA	L	20%	3	6	179	265	0	-6%	-33%	-16%	11%
18	at GB	W	41%	24	22	224	367	0	32%	-8%	-7%	32%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	-13.1%	27	3.7%	22
Unadjusted VOA	-14.6%	28	5.5%	22
Weighted Trend	-8.7%	24	7.7%	28
Variance	9.7%	30	3.3%	6
Average Opponent	-1.5%	6	2.7%	5
Passing	-1.7%	26	4.2%	13
Rushing	-12.8%	25	3.2%	31
First Down	-15.1%	28	14.2%	30
Second Down	-9.0%	24	4.1%	22
Third Down	-15.8%	24	-16.3%	6
First Half	-12.6%	29	13.3%	27
Second Half	-13.6%	23	-7.7%	13
Red Zone	0.6%	14	-16.7%	4
Late and Close	-9.8%	24	-3.1%	8

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rk	Off	Rk	Def	Rk	ST	Rk	Off AGL	Rk	Def AGL	Rk	Off Age	Rk	Def Age	Rk	ST Age	Rk
2020	8-8	8.1	7.5	372	370	-4	-2.3%	16	-12.1%	26	-7.2%	8	2.6%	8	40.2	18	46.9	20	26.6	20	27.5	2	27.2	3
2021	6-11	5.8	5.3	311	407	-13	-8.6%	22	-11.4%	24	-0.8%	15	2.1%	7	30.5	7	49.1	24	26.8	13	27.0	6	26.8	6
2022	3-14	5.0	4.7	326	463	-2	-27.3%	30	-8.0%	24	19.3%	32	0.0%	16	48.7	24	26.4	7	25.9	26	26.0	21	26.2	13
2023	7-10	8.0	7.2	360	379	+3	-7.1%	22	-6.5%	22	0.8%	17	0.2%	17	29.3	18	21.2	7	25.9	27	25.6	27	25.8	22
2024	5-12	6.7	6.7	310	370	+8	-12.7%	25	-13.1%	27	3.7%	22	4.1%	5	13.0	4	27.3	9	26.3	22	26.6	15	26.5	12

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

CHI Offense					CHI Offense vs. Opponents					CHI Defense					CHI Defense vs. Opponents				
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA		
11	73%	5.0	-0.1%	26%	Base	19%	4.0	-21.8%	50%	Base	20%	5.9	0.1%	11	64%	6.2	2.6%		
12	19%	3.9	-23.8%	56%	Nickel	67%	4.9	-4.8%	34%	Nickel	76%	6.1	4.8%	12	24%	6.6	13.2%		
13	3%	2.9	-42.8%	78%	Dime+	13%	4.8	2.0%	13%	Dime+	4%	6.5	14.4%	21	5%	4.4	0.2%		
01	1%	4.8	14.6%	27%	Goal Line	1%	1.0	13.7%	71%					13	3%	5.8	-7.3%		
613	1%	1.1	50.1%	89%									612	2%	3.1	-37.3%			
10	1%	3.1	-47.5%	63%									22	1%	4.6	-3.5%			

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected	Rk	Formation	Rk	Pass Rush	Rk	Secondary	Rk	Strategy	Rk					
Runs, all	+1.9%	15	Form: Single Back	76%	11	Rush 3	1.4%	28	4 DB	19%	23	Play Action	18%	29
Runs, first down	+4.0%	12	Form: Empty Back	8%	13	Rush 4	74.3%	9	5 DB	76%	2	Offensive Motion	46%	17
Runs, second-long	+0.4%	14	Form: Multi Back	16%	18	Rush 5	19.9%	15	6+ DB	4%	32	Avg Box (Off)	5.89	32
Runs, power sit.	+2.8%	20	Pers: 3+ WR	75%	8	Rush 6+	4.4%	23	Man Coverage	42%	24	Avg Box (Def)	6.01	26
Runs, behind 2H	+0.8%	24	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	24%	21	Edge Rusher Sacks	41.3%	26	MOFC	60%	12	Offensive Pace	31.56	18
Runs, ahead 2H	-1.1%	19	Pers: 6+ OL	1%	22	Interior DL Sacks	31.3%	10	CB1 on WR1	32%	23	Defensive Pace	31.25	13
Run-Pass Options	4.6%	9	Shotgun/Pistol	77%	17	Second Level Sacks	27.5%	4	S/CB Cover Ratio	16%	24	Go for it on 4th	1.27	8

The Bears fell from seventh in 2023 to 29th in 2024 in frequency of using play-action. The Bears threw a league-leading 26.0% of the time to the player we designated as WR2, usually Keenan Allen. Chicago ranked second behind Miami in how many wide receiver screens they used, but they had -20.0% DVOA on these passes with 5.3 yards per play. The Chicago defense ranked second against the pass on third and fourth downs but 23rd against the run. The Bears ranked No. 1 in defensive DVOA when sending five or more pass rushers, but only 26th with the standard four pass rushers. Chicago ranked fifth in DVOA using man coverage but 22nd using zone, even though it was near the top of the league in how often it used zone. The Bears defense was 28th in DVOA against deep passes of 16 or more air yards, but fourth against shorter passes. The Bears recovered 13 of 19 fumbles on defense, but they also lost two muffs on special teams, which is rare. The Aggressiveness Index number listed is for Matt Eberflus; Thomas Brown had a very high 2.19 in a very small sample.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
C.Williams	-32	-11.9%	626	3065	4.9	5.3	63.0%	20	6

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
DJ Moore	3	-12.4%	140	98	966	9.9	6.0	6	70%
K.Allen*	5	-12.2%	121	70	744	10.6	3.4	7	58%
R.Odunze	0	-12.7%	101	54	734	13.6	4.7	3	53%
D.Carter*	-1	-13.5%	14	9	72	8.0	3.6	0	64%
O.Zaccheaus	77	3.5%	64	45	506	11.2	6.3	3	70%
D.Duvernay	0	-12.3%	16	11	79	7.2	5.7	0	69%
C.Kmet	109	21.9%	55	47	474	10.1	3.9	4	85%
G.Everett*	-44	-63.6%	13	8	36	4.5	5.1	0	62%
D.Smythe	-70	-65.6%	17	9	53	5.9	1.8	0	53%
D.Swift	56	5.5%	52	42	386	9.2	9.6	0	81%
R.Johnson	20	6.9%	20	16	104	6.5	6.0	0	80%

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
C.Shelton*	C	30	17/17	1122	3	9	23	3.1%	32	L.Borom*	LT	26	8/4	330	2	2	27	12.6%	--
D.Wright	RT	24	16/16	1022	7	2	34	5.1%	19	J.Curhan*	LG	27	10/2	261	3	0	10	5.9%	--
M.Pryor*	RG	31	17/15	1006	6	4	21	3.2%	17	J.Thuney	LG	33	17/17	1117	1	6	17	2.4%	4
T.Jenkins*	LG	27	14/14	738	4	5	15	3.1%	12	D.Dalman	C	27	9/9	554	3	5	5	1.6%	5
B.Jones	LT	26	12/12	720	7	4	28	6.0%	23	J.Jackson	LG	28	4/4	266	0	4	5	3.2%	--

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont	
2022	4.50	4.52	11	77%	3	14%	3	1.27	12	0.69	18	58	13.0%	32	37.1%	32	23	
2023	4.23	4.27	11	68%	14	16%	11	1.22	11	0.56	18	50	9.2%	26	36.9%	30	24	
2024	3.54	3.80	31	57%	29	18%	23	0.89	32	0.52	26	68	11.2%	32	33.4%	24	26	
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 4.28 (21)				Left Tackle: 3.02 (32)				Mid/Guard: 4.02 (29)				Right Tackle: 3.48 (28)		Right End: 3.16 (25)

Joe Thuney was one of the most talked-about offensive linemen in the NFL last year after moving from left guard to left tackle to mitigate the Chiefs' offensive line emergency. Thuney has earned three Super Bowl rings with the Chiefs and Patriots and played in two other Super Bowls. Because of his fame and experience, the Bears made him highly available to the media

during OTAs. So get ready for some quasi-informative Thuney quotes! 🗡 Left tackle Braxton Jones fractured his left fibula in late December. Jones may be limited at the start of training camp. Second-round pick Ozzy Trapilo (Boston College) and 2024 third-rounder Kiran Amegadjie (Yale) rotated at left tackle in Jones' absence. Trapilo is 6-foot-8—taller than the ideal prototype at a position where leverage and quickness matter—and slid from left to right tackle late in his college career. Amegadjie was an idiosyncratic Ryan Poles project: an Ivy Leaguer who missed most of his final season with a quad injury, then was unsurprisingly pushed around when pressed into service against the Commanders and Vikings. Thuney said that Trapilo “was working really hard, keeping his head down, listening, taking everything like a sponge.” He said Amegadjie “was another really hard worker, really smart guy.” Thuney’s thoughts, translated: *Uh-oh, Imma have to slide out to left tackle again if Jones doesn’t come back.* 🗡 Drew Dalman was an effective zone-scheme run blocker and adequate pass protector in three seasons as the Falcons starting center. Jonah Jackson was a drive-blocking guard for Ben Johnson’s Lions before signing with the Rams at center, then suffering a shoulder injury and getting benched in midseason. “Drew and Jonah are great guys,” Thuney said. “They work relentlessly—weight room, film room, every part of the game you can tell how passionate they are for the game.” Thuney’s thoughts, translated: *I met these guys, like, three weeks ago. We haven’t even blocked live defenders yet. Why don’t you folks go ask Caleb Williams whether he likes Chicago a few more times?* 🗡 Darnell Wright is entrenched at right tackle … unless he’s needed on the left side. “Anything’s on the table,” Johnson said about moving Wright to the left in case of a Jones emergency. Thuney was not asked to comment about Wright.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
G.Dexter	24	DT	15	617	52	6.9%	17	36	11	7	42	62%	79	3.0	75	5.0	15	25	1
C.Williams	27	DT	17	352	23	2.7%	--	13	4	4	20	50%	--	4.1	--	3.0	4	10	0
B.Cowart*	29	DT	15	335	26	3.5%	--	21	7	6	22	82%	--	2.0	--	2.5	1	5	0
A.Billings	30	DT	8	298	13	3.2%	83	11	3	3	11	82%	18	2.8	69	1.0	2	7	0
Z.Pickens	25	DT	9	228	19	4.2%	--	13	4	2	17	71%	--	3.3	--	1.0	1	5	0
G.Jarrett	32	DE	17	744	53	6.0%	24	41	16	6	44	75%	39	1.5	13	2.5	11	24	1

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
D.Walker*	31	DE	17	739	47	5.5%	37	37	14	5	38	82%	24	2.2	32	3.5	13	37	3
M.Sweat	29	DE	16	616	34	4.2%	67	27	14	2	25	76%	38	2.0	25	5.5	6	33	3
D.Taylor*	28	DE	16	375	34	4.2%	--	22	6	5	27	56%	--	4.1	--	3.0	6	19	1
A.Booker	23	DE	17	283	20	2.3%	--	16	7	5	14	86%	--	2.7	--	1.5	3	8	0
J.Martin*	30	DE	11	222	15	2.7%	--	13	6	3	11	82%	--	3.7	--	3.0	3	12	1
D.Odeyingbo	26	DE	17	745	31	3.3%	87	27	10	6	24	88%	9	0.9	6	3.0	13	35	2

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush					vs. Pass							
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
T.Edmunds	27	MLB	17	1056	118	13.8%	40	59	20	13	67	49%	77	5.0	82	1.0	2	0	50	-24.3%	3	66%	2	6.3	18	8	1
T.J.Edwards	29	OLB	17	1055	132	15.5%	27	73	26	9	68	66%	22	3.3	21	4.0	2	18	61	23.8%	69	44%	37	8.5	57	3	1
J.Sanborn*	25	OLB	17	235	34	4.0%	--	15	5	3	22	45%	--	5.7	--	1.5	1	5	6	-5.3%	--	33%	--	5.2	--	3	0

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk			
2022	5.05	4.73	26	76%	30	16%	23	1.38	28	1.16	30	20	4.8%	31	18.2%	32			
2023	3.70	3.71	3	63%	11	22%	5	1.12	11	0.48	10	30	5.5%	32	24.5%	31			
2024	4.93	5.02	31	76%	29	14%	28	1.43	28	0.88	24	40	7.5%	14	34.1%	8			
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 4.20 (13)				Left Tackle: 5.16 (31)				Mid/Guard: 5.33 (31)				Right Tackle: 4.62 (24)		Right End: 4.68 (25)	

Grady Jarrett posted his lowest totals of tackles for a loss in the run game (10) and pressures (24) in a season since 2016, not counting his injury-marred 2023. Jarrett, a starter for the 2016 Falcons Super Bowl team and Pro Bowler in 2019 and 2020, turned 32 years old in April. 🗡 Montez Sweat battled foot and shin injuries throughout last season, which partially explains his disappointing production. Sweat missed only one game but was often on a strict pitch count. There were whispers around the league that Sweat was going through the motions by the end of last season. Poles sought to squash those rumors during OTAs. “I don’t think there is anyone in this building working as hard as Montez Sweat right now,” Poles said. “He’s

pushing weight, he's getting strong, he's getting in shape. He's locked in like I've never seen him before." Poles' statements sound exactly as convincing as all the other *best shape of his life* statements in professional sports history have sounded. Gervon Dexter will likely rotate with Andrew Billings at the tackle spot beside Jarrett, with Dexter getting more playing time on obvious passing downs. Dexter has taken on a leadership role with the Bears; he gathered Jarrett and other defenders for an offseason workout/bonding session. Second-round pick Shemar Turner (Texas A&M), who will serve as Jarrett's understudy and may also play on the edge at times, is part versatile defensive lineman, part WWE heel. His college tape is full of extracurricular business, including the cheap shot to the jock he gave an Ole Miss lineman after the whistle in 2023. Aggies coach Mike Elko was eventually driven to distraction by Turner. "You can't have post-snap 15-yard penalties," Elko said of Turner in 2024. "They're killers. They're selfish ... I've got to find a different way to get that message across because it's clearly not working." Turner might have turned into a Bond-movie henchman if Matt Eberflus were still coaching the Bears with his trademark level of institutional control. Dayo Odeyingbo's total sack production for the Colts in 2024 consisted of 1.5 sacks each of C.J. Stroud (playing behind a balsa wood line) and Justin Fields. Odeyingbo also penetrated the Texans' line so quickly on one play that he essentially caught a handoff from Stroud to Joe Mixon. The 280-plus-pound Odeyingbo is more of a hustling all-purpose lineman than a traditional edge rusher. Some of his best plays came when lined up inside. T.J. Edwards and Tremaine Edmunds are expected to play almost interchangeable linebacker roles in Dennis Allen's defense. Edmunds had a huge advantage over Edwards in our coverage stats in 2024 and a smaller, but distinct, advantage in 2023. Fourth-round rookie Ruben Hypolite II was drafted far earlier than his position in the general consensus of mock drafts, but Chicago loved the 4.39s 40 he ran at Maryland's pro day.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall					vs. Run					vs. Pass														
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int	
K.Byard	32	FS	17	1056	137	16.0%	5	41	15	11	78	31%	58	7.9	59	22	4.7%	40	11.5	12.0%	35	36%	51	10.1	57	7	1
J.Johnson	26	CB	17	1032	61	7.1%	74	29	16	8	20	55%	23	4.8	24	53	11.6%	93	12.1	-36.0%	5	53%	36	9.1	84	8	2
T.Stevenson	25	CB	16	811	87	10.8%	16	33	12	9	33	36%	67	6.6	52	86	24.0%	9	11.3	11.5%	73	52%	39	7.6	49	12	2
K.Gordon	26	CB	15	725	80	10.6%	18	44	19	11	31	71%	5	3.1	5	52	16.3%	71	5.9	-1.7%	50	52%	44	8.1	63	5	0
J.Owens	30	SS	17	429	48	5.6%	87	14	5	10	27	33%	47	6.7	37	4	2.1%	--	20.0	-46.7%	--	50%	--	21.0	--	2	1
E.Hicks	26	FS	12	356	35	5.8%	86	6	1	3	22	14%	90	8.5	67	10	6.4%	--	16.8	-27.8%	--	50%	--	7.2	--	2	0
J.Brisker	26	SS	5	294	42	16.7%	2	19	9	3	21	57%	6	4.0	3	8	6.2%	--	11.1	67.7%	--	50%	--	8.4	--	2	1

Year	Pass	D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	32			24.0%	30	4.2%	19	-5.0%	13	3.9%	19	15.3%	25	-3.1%	14	28.4%	30
2023	20			-38.9%	3	-5.7%	13	1.9%	20	-9.4%	11	-20.3%	5	-14.9%	5	53.2%	32
2024	13			-36.3%	2	35.0%	32	-27.6%	1	-12.5%	5	-7.6%	14	14.1%	28	11.7%	25

Dennis Allen deploys man coverage more often than most defensive coordinators. Matt Eberflus was more of a Cover 3 guy. Jaylon Johnson sounded eager to make the switch when speaking during OTAs. "This year we're going to have a true opportunity to challenge guys, get up in guy's faces and really limit offenses," he said. "You're going to get some dogs running around making plays." Johnson also said that he wants to shadow the opponent's No. 1 receiver, something he didn't do last year. That may not happen: Allen was more of a "cornerbacks by sides" guy in New Orleans, and Tyrique Stevenson handled his share of tough assignments last year. The "CB1 on WR1" number (32%) in the Strategic Tendencies table actually represents Stevenson, who was covering WR1 slightly more often than Johnson (31%). The Bears faced a league-low rate of passes to opposing WR1s for the second straight season. Kyler Gordon signed a reported three-year, \$40-million extension in April, making him the highest paid slot cornerback in the NFL. Gordon is bigger than most slot defenders: perfect for covering Amon-Ra St. Brown and offering run support. Allen said during OTAs that he wants Gordon to compete for an additional role as an outside cornerback or safety. Stevenson appears to have the second cornerback slot locked down. The safety positions are another matter. Jaquan Brisker missed most of last season with the third diagnosed concussion of his NFL career. Brisker was back at full speed during OTAs. He's a speedy, versatile presence when healthy. Kevin Byard appeared rejuvenated at the start of last year but faded down the stretch. He turns 32 in August. Former seventh-round pick Elijah Hicks stepped up when Brisker was hurt, playing a pure free safety role so Byard could slide down to the box more often. Dime-package cornerback Terrell Smith also returns to give the Bears enviable secondary depth.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	0.0%	16	0.9	14	-3.4	26	5.5	4	-2.1	19	-1.1	20	5.3	9
2023	0.2%	17	7.7	7	4.5	3	0.5	12	-9.6	30	-2.0	21	3.5	13
2024	4.1%	5	2.8	11	3.3	9	3.7	7	5.3	7	6.6	4	-3.5	22

Cairo Santos was 8-of-9 from 50 or more yards but had three 40- to 49-yard attempts blocked in 2024. The blocks by the Packers in Week 10 (a would-be game winner) and Vikings in Week 11 appeared to be trajectory issues, not protection issues. The Bears signed rookie Jonathan Kim to provide a smidge of training camp competition. Kim was 19-of-21 for Michigan State last year, with six field goals in a homecoming victory over Iowa. The Bears signed two-time Pro Bowl return specialist Devin Duvernay, who was a standout for four seasons with the Ravens before spending 2024 lost in Jacksonville. Josh Blackwell returned a punt 94 yards for a touchdown against the Packers in the season finale and had two other 14-yard punt returns in just seven total attempts, so he may get a chance to compete with Duvernay. The touchdown came on a “trick” return, however—Blackwell started as a gunner but raced back to field a directional punt—and the Bears may consider him more valuable as an all-purpose special-teams ace. Tory Taylor tied for fourth in the NFL with 34 punts inside the 20-yard line as a rookie.

# Cincinnati Bengals

2024 record: 9-8

Total DVOA: 7.0% (13th)

Pythagorean Wins: 9.3 (13th)

Offense: 14.0% (5th)

Snap-Weighted Age: 26.5 (14th)

Defense: 6.4% (27th)

Average Opponent: -3.4% (27th)

Special Teams: -0.5% (20th)

2025 Mean Projection: 9.1 wins

On the Clock (0-5): 7%

Postseason Odds: 51.4%

Mediocrity (6-8): 33%

Super Bowl Odds: 4.9%

Playoff Contender (9-11): 43%

Proj. Avg. Opponent: 2.2% (9th)

Super Bowl Contender (12+): 16%

2024: Missed opportunity.

2025: "Golden" opportunity.

An eight-day stretch last December provided the blueprint for the 2025 Bengals and helped to identify the two most important people in the organization going forward. On December 9, the Bengals snapped a three-game losing streak on a Monday night in Dallas to electroshock their dying season and kickstart a five-game winning streak that would leave them just shy of a playoff berth. After beating the Cowboys, Joe Burrow used the postgame press conference to essentially tell the Bengals front office, "Re-sign Ja'Marr Chase and Tee Higgins this coming offseason, or else."

Chase won the Rookie of the Year in 2021 and has only gotten better since, so his retention was never really in doubt. But Higgins, beloved and excellent as he has been in Cincy, was presumed to be in his final season in stripes, too pricey for the Bengals to keep. Then Burrow thrust out his franchise quarterback chin to ensure the team would shell out big dollars for their No. 2 receiver, and he kicked in a demand for tight end Mike Gesicki's return as well. Longtime Bengals-watchers braced for the coming showdown that would clearly mark a watershed moment in the team's fortunes.

Cincinnati ownership, whose general *modus operandi* when it comes to contract demands from players is to slap on some noise-cancelling headphones and disappear into a darkness retreat, surprisingly gave in, bringing Higgins back for an average of \$31 million over four years, with nearly \$41 million guaranteed. They also made Chase the highest-paid non-quarterback in the league on the same day (and signed Gesicki back, too, albeit to a shorter, far cheaper deal). No one really doubted Burrow's import—he has already altered the franchise in multiple ways. But by forcing the retention of Higgins in particular, Burrow flexed harder than he ever had before, with the possible exception of when he attended the 2024 Paris Fashion Show in a backless blazer.

The Cincinnati passing attack is coming off an exceptional season that saw Chase win the receiving Triple Crown while Burrow led the league in touchdown passes. But with the 1-5-9 combination sucking up an outsized portion of the team's cap room, the ability of the team to be strong enough elsewhere to compete for championships may be hamstrung going forward, leaving it to Burrow to make even more magic happen.

Burrow might be helped by a more proficient run game. Cincy gathered some moss—Zach Moss, that is—by signing the ex-Colt to take over the featured back role last year,

only to see him go down halfway through the season with a neck injury. That cleared the path for the emergence of Chase Brown, who over the second half of the season was among the league's best—and most used—ballcarriers. But the Bengals' offensive line has holes, especially at guard, and is built for pass protection first. Even with Brown playing well, their rushing DVOA (-5.6%) wasn't very good. So, the Bengals almost always chose the pass over the run. Cincinnati was dead last in Run Rate over Expected overall and in pretty much every specific situation, from second-and-long to short-yardage on third down. When in doubt, they let Burrow chuck it, even when leading in the second half.

The Bengals brought in some help for Brown going into 2025, including a free agent (old friend Samaje Perine), a draft pick (sixth-rounder Tahj Brooks from Texas Tech), and Moss himself, surprisingly re-signed when the medical staff gave the okay. Ideally, a better run game will allow the Bengals to hold some leads and take the pressure off their leaky defense.

That brings us to the other crucial figure in Cincinnati, someone with a much lower profile than Joey Franchise. The team pretty much made up its collective mind to fire defensive coordinator Lou Anarumo after the December 1 debacle against Pittsburgh, when Russell Wilson, of all people, threw for 414 yards and three touchdowns in a 44-38 Pittsburgh win. (Wilson's next-highest yardage output in a game was 278.) That came as the finale of a three-week stretch during which the Bengals scored 34, 27, and 38 points against the Ravens, Chargers, and Steelers—and lost all three. Overall, the Bengals scored 25-plus points 11 times and somehow went 5-6 in those games.

Anarumo, the defensive coordinator known as "Loudini" for his bafflement of Patrick Mahomes and other top passers in playoff games, had a record much worse than his reputation. In six seasons with the Bengals, his defenses were strong for basically 23 games, stretching from the 2021 postseason run to the Super Bowl through the 2022 season and AFC title game defeat. During the rest of Anarumo's tenure, Cincy struggled to tackle, sack the quarterback, take the ball away, and otherwise make things difficult for enemy offenses (Table 1).

At the same time Anarumo was wetting the bed in Cincinnati, former Bengals linebackers coach Al Golden was coordinating the top defense in college football at Notre Dame. There was little doubt he was the chosen replacement, though

## 2025 Bengals Schedule

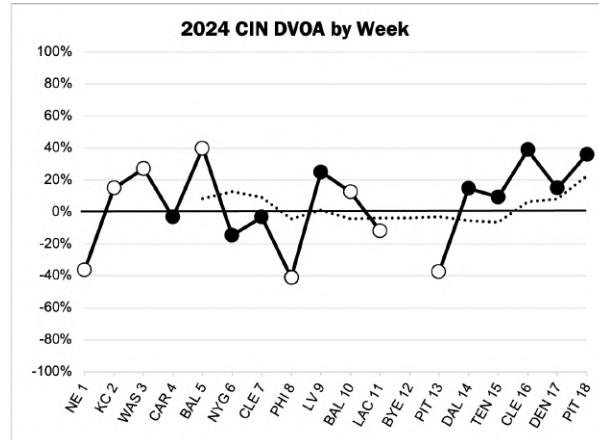
Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	at CLE	7	PIT (Thu.)	13	at BAL (Thu.)
2	JAX	8	NYJ	14	at BUF
3	at MIN	9	CHI	15	BAL
4	at DEN (Mon.)	10	BYE	16	at MIA
5	DET	11	at PIT	17	ARI
6	at GB	12	NE	18	CLE

the Bengals had to wait until the Fighting Irish lost in the National Championship Game to formally begin the Golden Era. He and head coach Zac Taylor are very close, and though Taylor went through the motions of interviewing other candidates, Golden was his first choice all along. “Al has a great football mind and will bring a smart, physical, aggressive approach to our defense,” Taylor said of his new coordinator.

That vote of confidence is nice, for few coaches are under as much pressure in 2025 as Golden; not even Taylor, whose failure to make the playoffs last year with an MVP-level season from his quarterback is rather unprecedented in recent NFL history. Golden is being asked to pull off a Vic Fangio-like turnaround even though he has never called defensive plays in the NFL, with a defense that doesn’t look much different from the unit that got Anarumo fired.

The Bengals are so confident in Golden that they spent the offseason doing precious little to make his job easier in terms of personnel. Their list of needs on the defensive side of the ball included a 3-technique penetrating tackle; much more pass rush off the edge; mobile, playmaking linebackers; another corner; and one or more safeties. What free agency and the draft brought was a solid run-stuffing nose tackle (T.J. Slaton), an edge rusher with just 4.5 collegiate sacks (first-round pick Shemar Stewart from Texas A&M), and—true to Golden’s linebacker love—a trio of linebackers, including Philly postseason hero Oren Burks and two draft picks from the Palmetto State, Demetrius Knight Jr. (South Carolina) and Barrett Carter (Clemson).

Otherwise, *bupkis*. No pass-rushing tackle, no veteran defensive backs, no proven edge rushers. That’s not even getting into the Trey Hendrickson saga, which involves the league’s sack leader in 2024 wanting more money after being criminally underpaid since signing with Cincy in 2021, one of the best free agent bargains in team—if not league—history. He is in the last year of a contract that pays him \$21 million in Annual Average Value, 11th among edge rushers (per Over The Cap) and just over half of what Myles Garrett will make with



his new deal. Hendrickson asked for a trade for the second straight offseason, and the Bengals went through the motions of exploring one, without ever coming close to dealing their best defensive player. Hendrickson told reporters in May he wouldn’t play without a new deal, which has yet to materialize at press time. Notably, Burrow did not demand the team re-sign Hendrickson, who enters his age-31 season in 2025.

So the onus is squarely on Golden to develop the young defenders upon whom the Bengals have spent an enormous amount of draft capital in the past few years. Counting Stewart and Knight this year, the team has now drafted 10 defensive players in the first three rounds since 2022. That includes Dax Hill, Myles Murphy, Cam Taylor-Britt, D.J. Turner, Jordan Battle, and Kris Jenkins, none of whom have been consistently good and several of whom regressed in 2024.

The game plan in Cincinnati has always been to offset the enormous paychecks written to their offensive stars by getting young, cheap, and mean on defense, in the same way Kansas City has. But the execution of this playbook has been a flop. Whether or not Anarumo is totally responsible for this is open to debate, but the message out of Cincy since his dismissal has been unequivocal: “Blame Lou!” Injury was certainly a factor, but it cannot be denied that many of the aforementioned young players had beef with Anarumo, winding up benched or in his doghouse, mainly due to their inability to adhere to Lou’s highly complicated game plans that, in retrospect, seemed to rely heavily on dearly departed safety Jessie Bates to work properly.

Player development was considered one of Golden’s strengths at Notre Dame, where his defenses surrendered just 16 points per game over the last two seasons (29 games). His Irish defenses were especially known for strong tackling, a fundamental facet of the game where the Bengals have struggled the last couple of seasons. Golden also favors man coverage, which Anarumo used just 44% of the time, and highly versatile players who can play in multiple spots, especially at his patented “Vyper” position, a hybrid edge/rover role that the havoc-creating Stewart could wind up playing with some seasoning. And, as you might expect from Golden’s linebacker infatuation, look for the Bengals to employ far more 4-3 defenses than the base 5-DB package Anarumo preferred (and ran 68% of the time, versus 21% with four defensive backs).

**Table 1. Cincinnati Defense under Lou Anarumo, 2019-2024**

Time Period	Games	DVOA	NY/Pass	Yd/Run
2019-2021 Reg. Season	49	6.8%	6.83	4.72
2021 Postseason and 2022	23	-10.9%	6.22	4.20
2023-2024 Reg. Season	34	6.4%	6.62	4.56

Golden doesn't have to transform the Bengals defense into the 1985 Bears for his new team to be successful. Just improving in key situations would make a world of difference. The unit was 23rd in third-down conversion rate and tied for 30th in allowing touchdowns in the red zone. Making a half-dozen or so more plays in those high-leverage spots could have meant the difference between making and missing the playoffs.

The Bengals were caught in a tug-of-war between two football truisms; "Treat victory and defeat for the imposters that they are," and "You are what your record says you are." In other words, Cincinnati looked and felt like a playoff team, and perhaps a title contender, especially when you gazed longingly at their superstar quarterback, top wide receivers, and elite edge rusher. They won five straight games to finish the season—the Bengals are 23-8 in December/January games under Taylor—and were the proverbial "team no one wants to face in the playoffs."

But they finished just 9-8 thanks to that poor defense, their usual clumsy September (conversely, Taylor is 1-11 in the first two games of the season over his six years as coach), and a crazy run of end-game misfortune. Somehow, some way, they missed the playoffs in a league that sends 44% of its teams to the postseason. Given the Bengals had, for once, a healthy and highly productive Burrow for a full year, that counts as an epic disaster.

The optimistic take is that the Bengals were plus-38 in point differential, while AFC champs Kansas City was plus-59—essentially, the Chiefs were one point per game better than Cincinnati, yet the Chiefs turned that into 15 regular season wins, six more than the Bengals. Six! Cincinnati found ways to lose that defied imagination. A one-point defeat at Arrowhead, when rookie safety Daijahn Anthony committed a pass interference on a fourth-and-16 heave to gift the Chiefs a victory, was emblematic of their year.

Cincinnati also blew a 10-point lead in the last five minutes to Baltimore, then fumbled the snap on a potential game-winning overtime kick in an excruciating loss; lost another heartbreaker to the Ravens when they failed on a late two-point conversion (during which two clear defensive penalties went

uncalled); and conjured a way to lose to the horrible Patriots in the opener, when backup tight end Tanner Hudson fumbled going in to the end zone in a six-point loss, among other mystifying defeats. The team's highlight film from 2024 should simply be called "What If?"

History could be on their side. No AFC North team has ever won the division title three consecutive seasons, which worked against the Bengals in 2023 and now could work for them, as back-to-back champs Baltimore attempt to defy history. Their other division rivals, Pittsburgh and Cleveland, have major quarterback issues. There are even religious omens at work. The last two times a new Pope arrived, in 2005 and 2013, the Bengals won the division title. Newly elected Pope Leo may be from Chicago, but his main constituency this fall will be 300 miles southeast.

Then there is the pessimistic take—the Bengals just went 9-8 while playing a schedule that included five games against the four worst teams in the league, and this season's schedule, one that includes the NFC North and AFC East, is far tougher, at least on paper. One can easily look at the team and note that they are basically paying more salary for the same roster that just turned in one of the most disappointing seasons in franchise history.

Our projection sees the Bengals as being roughly the same by DVOA as they were in 2024, with a similar win range. It is appropriate, then, that no team spent as much time tied as the Bengals, who led the NFL with an average of 14:54 deadlocked each game. Their 2025 fate has a coin flip element to it and will largely depend on whether or not those critical moments that went against the Bengals last season can be reversed in their favor. All they need to realistically accomplish is to make the playoffs, where they will always be dangerous with Burrow at the helm. They just need the two true powers in Cincinnati, Burrow and Golden, to ensure that happens.

If they do, the new DC will suddenly become a hot head coaching candidate and the quarterback should be in the MVP mix once again. If they don't, not even the Pope will be able to save Taylor's job.

Robert Weintraub

## 2024 Bengals by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	NE	L	15%	10	16	224	290	-2	-37%	-18%	16%	-2%
2	at KC	L	70%	25	26	320	286	+2	15%	-6%	-21%	0%
3	WAS	L	40%	33	38	436	356	0	27%	64%	23%	-14%
4	at CAR	W	80%	34	24	373	375	0	-3%	4%	9%	2%
5	BAL	L	46%	38	41	442	520	0	40%	25%	-11%	4%
6	at NYG	W	50%	17	7	304	309	0	-15%	-10%	7%	2%
7	at CLE	W	99%	21	14	223	336	+2	-3%	-18%	3%	18%
8	PHI	L	0%	17	37	280	397	-2	-41%	11%	35%	-17%
9	LV	W	98%	41	24	373	217	+1	25%	23%	-6%	-4%
10	at BAL	L	21%	34	35	470	389	-1	12%	26%	12%	-2%
11	at LAC	L	14%	27	34	452	435	+1	-12%	18%	15%	-15%
12	BYE											
13	PIT	L	3%	38	44	375	520	-2	-37%	11%	60%	12%
14	at DAL	W	87%	27	20	433	322	+1	15%	30%	11%	-4%
15	at TEN	W	99%	37	27	370	374	+2	9%	5%	-5%	0%
16	CLE	W	100%	24	6	326	273	+2	39%	20%	-16%	3%
17	DEN	W	89%	30	24	499	329	0	15%	30%	12%	-3%
18	at PIT	W	88%	19	17	314	193	-1	36%	-9%	-32%	12%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	14.0%	5	6.4%	27
Unadjusted VOA	13.2%	7	8.0%	26
Weighted Trend	14.9%	6	6.5%	25
Variance	4.5%	12	4.7%	14
Average Opponent	-0.5%	15	-3.8%	30
Passing	34.6%	4	13.7%	26
Rushing	-8.0%	16	-2.4%	27
First Down	14.2%	5	-1.8%	13
Second Down	12.9%	5	16.8%	31
Third Down	15.2%	8	5.5%	18
First Half	12.1%	10	10.2%	25
Second Half	16.0%	6	2.9%	23
Red Zone	1.3%	13	10.1%	26
Late and Close	26.6%	4	13.2%	25

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rank	Off	Rank	Def	Rank	ST	Rank	Off AGL	Rank	Def AGL	Rank	Off Age	Rank	Def Age	Rank	ST Age	Rank
2020	4-11-1	5.1	4.9	311	424	-7	-20.8%	30	-15.0%	28	8.3%	26	2.6%	9	39.0	17	49.9	21	25.6	27	26.3	18	26.2	13
2021	10-7	10.6	8.7	460	376	0	3.7%	16	1.4%	17	-0.6%	16	1.6%	8	31.9	8	31.3	12	25.8	28	26.0	23	26.2	13
2022	12-4	10.5	11.9	418	322	+6	20.9%	6	12.1%	4	-9.3%	7	-0.5%	18	28.1	11	28.4	10	25.2	31	26.1	20	25.9	18
2023	9-8	8.0	9.1	366	384	+10	4.3%	11	6.7%	11	5.5%	23	3.1%	4	16.6	7	12.3	3	26.7	14	26.2	22	25.6	26
2024	9-8	9.3	9.9	472	434	+4	7.0%	13	14.0%	5	6.4%	27	-0.5%	20	34.5	17	37.2	14	26.7	11	26.6	16	25.6	27

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

CIN Offense				CIN Offense vs. Opponents				CIN Defense				CIN Defense vs. Opponents					
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA		
11	60%	6.2	26.1%	27%	Base	19%	6.1	31.0%	45%	Base	22%	6.4	13.7%	11	61%	5.4	-0.2%
12	29%	6.2	23.0%	38%	Nickel	67%	5.8	14.6%	32%	Nickel	68%	5.6	8.5%	12	21%	6.2	13.6%
612	4%	2.3	-27.6%	88%	Dime+	12%	7.5	51.1%	5%	Dime+	9%	4.6	-41.4%	21	5%	7.3	24.3%
02	3%	5.9	-9.0%	0%	Goal Line	2%	-0.4	-37.8%	57%	Goal Line	2%	0.7	13.0%	13	4%	5.5	13.2%
13	1%	3.4	-63.0%	7%									22	2%	11.7	51.9%	
613	1%	-0.1	-58.4%	80%									612	2%	4.8	-27.8%	

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected	Rk	Formation	Rk	Pass Rush	Rk	Secondary	Rk	Strategy	Rk				
Runs, all	-8.7%	32	Form: Single Back	73%	22	Rush 3	7.4%	3	4 DB	21	Play Action	18%	28
Runs, first down	-5.2%	31	Form: Empty Back	11%	8	Rush 4	68.5%	19	5 DB	68%	Offensive Motion	48%	16
Runs, second-long	-16.9%	32	Form: Multi Back	16%	17	Rush 5	16.6%	26	6+ DB	9%	Avg Box (Off)	6.07	18
Runs, power sit.	-18.9%	32	Pers: 3+ WR	64%	18	Rush 6+	7.4%	11	Man Coverage	50%	Avg Box (Def)	6.08	19
Runs, behind 2H	-7.1%	32	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	39%	7	Edge Rusher Sacks	70.8%	2	MOFC	52%	Offensive Pace	31.99	24
Runs, ahead 2H	-8.1%	32	Pers: 6+ OL	5%	7	Interior DL Sacks	25.0%	22	CB1 on WR1	44%	Defensive Pace	31.19	12
Run-Pass Options	4.6%	10	Shotgun/Pistol	86%	3	Second Level Sacks	4.2%	31	S/CB Cover Ratio	12%	Go for it on 4th	1.32	6

Cincinnati is near the top of the league in using shotgun and they aren't very good when they don't. The Bengals were dead last with 3.7 yards per play and 29th with -18.1% DVOA from under-center formations. The Bengals had 32 dropped passes on offense, the most of any passing game in the NFL. The Bengals were the third-best offense in the league when losing and ranked fourth when tied but dropped to 22nd in DVOA when they had a lead. Cincinnati dropped from fifth in 2023 to 25th in 2024 in how often they used MOFC coverage. Once again, the Bengals faced a high rate of passes to opposing tight ends. They led the league in 2022, ranked fourth in 2023, and ranked second last year at 27%. Only the Rams were very slightly higher (by just 0.03%).

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
J.Burrow	1400	17.6%	699	4616	6.6	4.8	70.9%	43	9

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
J.Chase	469	20.1%	175	127	1708	13.4	6.2	17	73%
T.Higgins	259	15.3%	109	73	911	12.5	3.1	10	67%
A.Iosivas	138	14.2%	61	36	479	13.3	1.9	6	59%
J.Burton	-28	-35.7%	14	4	107	26.8	5.5	0	29%
T.Irwin*	-56	-70.3%	10	3	15	5.0	1.3	0	30%
M.Gesicki	92	10.1%	83	65	665	10.2	3.8	2	78%
T.Hudson	1	-6.5%	23	19	154	8.1	5.1	1	83%
E.All	4	-4.5%	22	20	158	7.9	4.4	0	91%
D.Sample	-27	-23.9%	22	20	109	5.5	4.1	1	91%
C.Brown	100	10.1%	65	54	360	6.7	6.0	4	83%
Z.Moss	71	30.7%	27	23	187	8.1	8.4	1	85%
K.Herbert*	-44	-93.7%	9	8	21	2.6	4.8	0	89%
S.Perine	109	39.6%	37	28	322	10.9	10.4	1	80%

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
C.Brown	126	4.1%	229	990	4.3	7	2	54%
Z.Moss	-92	-36.8%	74	242	3.3	2	2	39%
J.Burrow	63	25.3%	30	209	7.0	2	2	-
K.Herbert*	23	7.9%	28	114	4.1	0	0	57%
S.Perine	26	18.50%	20	92	4.6	1	0	60%

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/ GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/ GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
T.Karras	C	32	17/17	1137	4	4	22	2.8%	28	C.Ford	LT/LG	29	16/9	689	3	6	34	7.2%	32
A.Cappa*	RG	30	17/17	1133	1	8	42	5.4%	34	O.Brown	LT	29	11/11	637	8	3	15	3.5%	6
C.Volson	LG	27	17/15	985	8	4	30	4.5%	29	D.Cochran	OT	27	9/1	152	2	1	8	7.7%	--
A.Mims	RT	23	15/13	836	4	3	30	5.3%	21	L.Patrick	LG	32	11/10	563	7	6	9	2.7%	6

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont	
2022	3.98	4.38	16	65%	20	16%	13	1.06	29	0.45	28	44	7.0%	16	24.4%	9	45	
2023	4.07	4.05	23	59%	26	17%	12	1.15	17	0.57	16	50	7.7%	21	27.3%	11	51	
2024	4.07	4.39	15	61%	27	15%	2	1.07	27	0.54	24	48	7.2%	18	31.8%	19	27	
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 4.42 (18)				Left Tackle: 3.92 (20)				Mid/Guard: 4.49 (17)				Right Tackle: 4.86 (5)		Right End: 3.42 (22)

The Bengals got awful play from their guards, Cordell Volson and Alex Cappa, a weakness that hobbled the offense despite the success of Joe Burrow and his receivers. Cappa (42 pressures allowed) was cut, signing with the Raiders, and Volson (30 pressures and 8 penalties) will likely be replaced at left guard by third-round pick Dylan Fairchild. The Georgia product is a country-strong type with excellent pass-protection metrics, thanks in part to his wrestling background. Cincy's new offensive line coach, Scott Peters, immediately compared Fairchild to his former pupil in Cleveland, Wyatt Teller. The Bengals also brought back depth piece Cody Ford and signed Lucas Patrick from New Orleans. Along with Volson, they will enter into a Melee of Mediocrities with the grand prize being the right guard starting nod. Patrick is the clear front-runner; he was sixth in pressure rate allowed among guards, albeit with only 563 snaps due to multiple injuries. The team could clearly use a further upgrade here but doesn't seem interested to date. The Bengals' mammoth tackles played well when not banged up. Orlando Brown Jr. was having his best season as a left tackle when he suffered a broken leg, one he played upon in the last few weeks as Cincy made a playoff push. Rookie Amarius Mims flashed, particularly in pass protection, helped by his long arms and quick feet that belied his 6-foot-8, 330-pound bulk. However, he played with a broken hand and a bum ankle that limited him down the stretch, which led to a confrontation with ex-line coach Frank Pollack. (Mims is still around and Pollack isn't, so draw your own conclusions.) Despite the growing pains, Mims is by far the best lineman the team has drafted in recent seasons. The last home-grown lineman to get a second contract from the team was Clint Boling, picked in 2011. Mims

is a building block, if he can stay on the field. • Two young linemen from Miami, second-year center Matt Lee and rookie swingman Jalen Rivers, provide depth. Lee sits behind starting snapper Ted Karras, who like his backup is a strong pass-blocker who can get overpowered by behemoth tackles.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
B.J.Hill	30	DT	15	710	60	7.7%	10	44	12	5	50	72%	49	2.7	66	3.0	6	21	5
K.Jenkins	24	DT	15	497	31	4.0%	63	18	6	4	26	58%	87	3.0	71	3.0	2	5	1
Z.Carter*	26	DT	12	263	23	3.7%	--	18	3	1	20	75%	--	2.7	--	1.5	0	4	1
M.Jackson	24	DT	13	248	15	2.2%	--	12	3	1	13	85%	--	1.4	--	1.0	0	6	0
J.Tufele*	26	DT	13	243	16	2.4%	--	9	2	3	13	54%	--	2.7	--	0.5	2	7	1
T.J.Slaton	28	DT	17	427	30	3.6%	--	22	3	6	29	72%	--	2.0	--	1.0	2	9	0

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
T.Hendrickson	31	DE	17	825	52	5.9%	29	44	26	6	22	73%	53	2.1	29	17.5	17	70	6
J.Ossai	25	DE	17	576	47	5.3%	41	27	11	6	35	51%	96	3.5	88	5.0	11	31	3
S.Hubbard*	30	DE	14	523	43	5.9%	27	27	8	4	35	57%	88	3.3	77	2.0	7	10	2
M.Murphy	23	DE	13	353	21	3.1%	92	10	2	1	17	47%	98	3.6	90	0.0	4	16	1

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush				vs. Pass									
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
G.Pratt*	29	OLB	17	1078	149	16.9%	14	74	19	22	87	54%	65	3.9	50	0.0	4	5	54	-2.9%	32	46%	33	7.4	36	6	2
L.Wilson	29	MLB	11	745	105	18.4%	6	49	15	7	59	58%	55	3.7	37	0.0	5	7	25	-3.0%	31	28%	73	7.6	43	1	0
A.Davis-Gaither*	28	OLB	17	535	81	9.2%	67	36	10	6	43	53%	69	4.1	63	0.0	1	6	28	-4.5%	30	32%	67	7.5	40	4	1
O.Burks	30	ILB	17	147	31	3.7%	--	17	4	2	17	53%	--	3.9	--	0.0	0	1	10	19.1%	--	40%	--	5.4	--	1	0

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk			
2022	3.88	4.33	15	66%	11	19%	10	1.13	8	0.37	2	30	5.7%	28	28.8%	11			
2023	4.58	4.50	29	72%	24	13%	32	1.26	28	0.87	27	44	8.2%	9	30.5%	13			
2024	4.26	4.45	19	64%	13	17%	20	1.16	10	0.76	16	36	6.0%	29	30.1%	19			
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 3.95 (9)				Left Tackle: 4.71 (26)				Mid/Guard: 4.66 (21)				Right Tackle: 4.34 (19)		Right End: 3.12 (7)	

Cincinnati desperately needs some interior redecoration on the defensive side of the ball, similar to the offensive interior. The Bengals got subpar defensive tackle play for most of 2024 and didn't do much to overhaul the personnel in the offseason. Sheldon Rankins was signed last offseason to be the penetrating 3-tech that Cincinnati needed, but he started poorly, sulked and poisoned the locker room, and disappeared for the last two months with a mystery illness (reportedly spinal meningitis). Rankins was cut and returned to the Texans. • Cincy re-signed B.J. Hill to a solid contract, which is what Hill is—solid, dependable, but not a guy that offenses worry about. • The Bengals need a step forward from 2024 rookies Kris Jenkins Jr. and McKinnley Jackson. Both defensive tackles were injured early on and didn't show much, especially rushing the passer. Either one or both must add some penetration to his game, pronto, as inside push is sorely lacking. • The only addition to the tackle group is run-stuffing nose T.J. Slaton, who came over from Green Bay along with his position coach, Jerry Montgomery. • The presumption is that new coordinator Al Golden will use his ends as inside rushers on passing downs. That will certainly include first-rounder Shemar Stewart (Texas A&M), an incredibly athletic wrecking ball with a terrible record of finishing at the quarterback. Stewart had just 1.5 sacks in each of his three seasons in College Station. His initial role would seem to be setting the edge on run downs and kicking inside to raise Cain when necessary. Alas, Stewart is embroiled in a throwback contract showdown with the Bengals front office, mainly over technical language about an injury waiver, and has yet to practice as training camp looms. Leave it to the Bengals to skirmish with their controversial and raw draftee ahead of a season in which every pass rush will be crucial. As Stewart put it, "They would rather win arguments than win games." Stewart's camp could make this easier, for sure, but the whole thing scans as though after extending Ja'Marr Chase and Tee Higgins ownership is sending out a clear signal—we haven't changed *that* much. • Trey Hendrickson had 17.5 sacks to lead the NFL, while the rest of the team had just 18.5 sacks combined. Hendrickson's contractual unhappiness might lead to a holdout, but when and if he appears on the field, his production is about the only thing the Bengals can rely upon on defense. • Myles Murphy enters a make-or-break third season after doing little to justify

his first-round draft status. In 2024 Murphy struggled out of the gate with a knee injury that hampered him for much of the season. He stands to gain from the spotlight being focused on Stewart, by enemy linemen as well as frustrated fans. ⚡ Murphy's playing time was held back some by franchise icon Sam Hubbard, who continued to play despite limping around for most of the last two seasons on bad wheels. Hubbard, a Cincy native whose "Fumble in the Jungle" is an indelible play in Bengals history, retired after the season, and could easily run for Mayor of Cincinnati. ⚡ Joseph Ossai remains best known for his late hit on Patrick Mahomes that cost the Bengals the 2022 AFC title, but he flashed enough as a pass rusher in 2024 (five sacks, 31 pressures) to induce the Bengals to re-sign him rather than chase outside free agents. ⚡ Cam Sample lost 2024 to a torn Achilles, and his run defense on the edge was missed. Presuming he's healthy, Sample is a rotation player who will get plenty of snaps. ⚡ Middle linebacker Logan Wilson missed the last six games with a knee injury, but Golden loves him, and the 2025 defense will be built around his steady play. ⚡ Germaine Pratt and his 22 missed tackles may be replaced by second-round pick Demetrious Knight out of South Carolina. Knight is 25, married with two kids, and delivered DoorDash to make ends meet in college, so his maturity is unquestioned. A former quarterback, he was an athletic sledgehammer in Columbia, but he needs to make an immediate pro impact to justify his draft status. ⚡ Speedy fourth-rounder Barrett Carter from Clemson replaces reserve Akeem Davis-Gaither, who left in free agency, and should see action as the Bengals transition into more base looks under Golden. ⚡ Oren Burks was a no-name backup who played well for Philly in the postseason after Nolan Smith was injured. He is now a depth piece in Cincinnati, hopefully to be unleashed in the playoffs once again.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run						vs. Pass												
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTKl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int	
G.Stone	26	FS	17	1103	87	9.9%	57	19	9	15	38	18%	88	10.5	89	9	1.7%	--	10.3	-25.6%	--	56%	--	4.2	--	6	4
C.Taylor-Britt	26	CB	17	1039	93	10.6%	19	37	15	11	23	30%	78	10.7	88	99	19.7%	33	11.8	2.9%	58	48%	65	8.7	75	16	3
M.Hilton*	31	CB	16	739	78	9.4%	37	48	17	4	38	68%	9	2.6	3	52	14.5%	85	6.2	-4.6%	44	56%	20	6.8	29	5	1
V.Bell*	31	SS	17	708	53	6.0%	85	19	10	7	33	33%	47	5.2	13	19	5.5%	33	9.5	5.9%	29	63%	9	8.6	45	2	1
DJ Turner	25	CB	11	507	36	6.3%	--	12	6	2	5	20%	--	11.2	--	40	16.3%	--	13.6	-9.6%	--	50%	--	7.7	--	8	0
J.Newton	25	CB	17	504	36	4.1%	93	14	7	7	6	50%	31	4.3	14	47	19.3%	37	8.9	-15.8%	25	45%	78	8.4	70	7	1
J.Battle	25	SS	17	463	56	6.4%	81	23	4	6	30	47%	18	5.3	17	9	4.0%	--	8.4	-55.1%	--	67%	--	4.0	--	3	1
D.Hill	25	CB	5	264	27	10.4%	49	11	4	4	13	38%	34	5.7	21	21	16.4%	--	8.1	-5.4%	--	62%	--	6.5	--	2	0

Year	Pass D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	8	-13.4%	8	15.0%	27	8.1%	26	-2.1%	14	20.9%	30	-20.1%	3	-20.6%	3	
2023	19	-13.3%	11	7.6%	20	-9.5%	9	-4.8%	13	-5.2%	13	14.2%	28	-12.6%	10	
2024	26	-15.1%	9	-13.2%	6	7.8%	27	-11.8%	6	1.6%	21	11.1%	25	4.6%	20	

Big plays killed the Cincinnati secondary, as the Bengals allowed just 7.0 yards per pass attempt (14th in the NFL) but 30 touchdown passes at a 5.2% rate, both figures near the bottom of the league. ⚡ There were virtually no changes made in personnel, so the assumption is the talent was badly coached (although the lack of pass rush didn't help either). It is telling that when since-fired coordinator Lou Anarumo drastically simplified his game plans over the final third of the season, the unit played much better, albeit mainly against mediocre quarterbacks. ⚡ Cam Taylor-Britt had a mystifying season. His spectacular one-hand interception of Patrick Mahomes in Week 2 seemed to herald his step up into the elite class of corners, a trajectory he had been following over his first two seasons. But then he seemingly lost the ability to cover, or play the proper position in Anarumo's scheme, often winding up a dozen yards from where his man caught a pass. It was Steve Blass Disease, for cornerbacks. Benched repeatedly, he was still targeted 99 times by enemy passers, 31 more than in 2024. CTB's confidence and reputation took a major wallop, as did his Success Rate (48%). His return to form is crucial. ⚡ The Bengals exercised the fifth-year option on Dax Hill, who scarcely played as a rookie, was miscast as a post safety in Year 2, and was just reaching his potential as a boundary corner last year when he tore his ACL. Welcome to life in the NFL! If the speedy and agile Hill could ever play a full healthy season at corner he would make the Cincinnati defense look much better. At the moment, he looks likely to play yet another position, this time slot corner. He'll replace Mike Hilton, about the only Bengal to make any splash plays on defense in 2024 (17 Defeats). ⚡ Similarly, DJ Turner was starting to "get it" in his second season when he broke his collarbone and was lost for the year. Rookie Josh Newton filled in and had some good (-15.8% DVOA against) and bad (45% Success Rate) advanced metrics, as did second-year man DJ Ivey, coming off a torn ACL of his own. ⚡ So Cincy either has a trio of highly drafted, highly athletic corners who are about to come of age together and be terrific, or a trio of misfits who might tank the season, with little depth behind them. Al Golden, you're up. ⚡ Golden will also need to ramp up his safeties. Geno Stone was a free agent bust who struggled with poor angles and tackling (15 missed tackles), although he had

interceptions in three straight victories late in the year. The good news for Stone: the Bengals didn't replace him at free safety. The bad news: they made him take a \$1.6 million pay cut in order to stay, a slap in the face that in the olden timey days would have resulted in a duel.  Jordan Battle had a strong rookie season in 2023 at box safety but was ostracized by Anarumo and dogged it for a large portion of 2024. Late in the season he got it back together and is the presumed starter entering 2025. The safety position seems like an obvious place for a summer veteran signing.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	-0.5%	18	-1.9	18	2.0	13	-1.2	16	-3.8	25	2.1	11	-0.9	19
2023	3.1%	4	4.5	11	6.2	1	-0.4	17	1.6	15	4.5	6	-8.5	28
2024	-0.5%	20	-7.6	28	2.7	11	4.4	5	3.6	9	-5.9	31	-2.2	19

After signing a contract extension, Evan McPherson hit only 73% of his field goals last season and missed the final five games with a groin injury. Special teams coach Darrin Simmons specifically said the struggles were not all on McPherson's shoulders, and it's worth noting that the Bengals brought in UDFA William Wagner from Michigan to compete with incumbent Cal Adomitis for the long snapper position.  The kick and punt coverage teams are good, both allowing negative value on returns. Defensive back Tycen Anderson tied for the league lead with 10 tackles on punt returns. Rookie punter Ryan Rehkow was fine, which was a step up from previous poor seasons by Bengals punters.  Return man Charlie Jones was good on kick returns and bad on punt returns, but he was excellent on punt returns the year before so it's probably nothing to worry about.

# Cleveland Browns

2024 record: 3-14

Total DVOA: -39.9% (32nd)

Pythagorean Wins: 3.8 (32nd)

Offense: -31.7% (32nd)

Snap-Weighted Age: 27.4 (3rd)

Defense: 4.0% (25th)

Average Opponent: 5.6% (1st)

Special Teams: -4.2% (30th)

2025 Mean Projection: 6.1 wins

On the Clock (0-5): 42%

Postseason Odds: 11.7%

Mediocrity (6-8): 43%

Super Bowl Odds: 0.2%

Playoff Contender (9-11): 14%

Proj. Avg. Opponent: 3.7% (5th)

Super Bowl Contender (12+): 1%

**2024:** The worst transaction in NFL history mercifully ends.

**2025:** Stop me if you've heard this one before, but the Browns are rebuilding.

**A**dmitting defeat is never easy. There's a certain level of pride taken in the decisions you make—especially the ones that you truly own, the ones you stamp your name on. That especially rings true in a league where your job is justification, and your career is defined by decision-making.

That's why it was so shocking to hear Cleveland Browns owner Jimmy Haslam come out at the NFL owner's meetings in late March and say that the entire Deshaun Watson experiment was "a big swing and miss."

"Let's address the elephant in the room," Haslam told the media. "We took a big swing and miss with Deshaun. We thought we had the quarterback, we didn't, and we gave up a lot of draft picks to get him. So we've got to dig ourselves out of that hole."

Haslam went as far as to say the whole decision to send multiple first-round picks to Houston in exchange for Watson—who had 22 civil lawsuits of sexual misconduct levied against him at the time of the trade and received a fully-guaranteed five-year, \$230-million contract—was a move that "ends with [wife] Dee and I, so hold us accountable."

Was that "swing and a miss" obvious to everyone at this point? Absolutely. It has been a possibility since the moment Watson was moved to Cleveland. While many found the trade morally objectionable given the accusations against Watson, some in the media also questioned the Watson acquisition from a football perspective. As Watson returned from suspension, Sports Illustrated's Conor Orr posited that the whole thing could be "a living nightmare." He noted that Watson, who had sat out the 2021 season in its entirety before serving an 11-game suspension in 2022, was taking on a brand-new offense after mostly working in a facsimile of his college offense under Bill O'Brien. The Cover 3 defenses he thrived against for years were long gone, replaced by two-high shells and more disguised blitz packages.

Meanwhile, other general managers ignored Watson's fully guaranteed deal when negotiating with their clients, allowing it to become an outlier on the quarterback market. Only two extensions (Dak Prescott, 2024; Josh Allen, 2025) have even eclipsed Watson's total guarantees, while no other quarterback aside from Watson has even cracked \$150 million fully guaranteed. (Allen is next closest at \$147 million.)

Cleveland's fans never took kindly to Watson, either. The quarterback's tenure was bookended by boos. He received

them as early as his first season, and he was booed off the field last year as he was carted off the field with an Achilles injury in what was likely his last Browns appearance.

In every season Watson played in Cleveland, a backup quarterback outdueled him. Jacoby Brissett finished top-10 in DVOA among qualified quarterbacks in 2022, leading Cleveland to four wins over Watson's three. In 2023, five games of a 38-year-old Joe Flacco was all Cleveland needed to earn a playoff berth and secure Kevin Stefanski his second Coach of the Year award. Jameis Winston posting two wins to Watson's one in 2024 just added insult to injury.

There is no way to justify giving the most guaranteed money in the league to a quarterback who appeared in just 19 games over three seasons. It gets worse when you look at just how badly things bottomed out in the six full games Watson played in 2024. Watson was one of only 12 quarterbacks to put up a passing DVOA below -50% on at least 200 pass plays, going all the way back to 1978. His -0.26 EPA/play was the ninth worst by any quarterback through the first six weeks of the season since 2000. Despite appearing in just seven games, Watson's final tally of 33 sacks finished tied for 14th—more than quarterbacks who played a full schedule such as Jared Goff, Kyler Murray, and Matthew Stafford. The team's offensive success rate over the first three weeks was the lowest in franchise history since 2000. At one stretch during the Week 6 broadcast, Fox noted that Cleveland had failed to convert their last 26 third downs with Watson at quarterback. Over his final three games, Watson contributed to as many touchdowns as safety Rodney McLeod Jr., with two apiece.

Watson left the Browns utterly rudderless. Sure, Winston was able to plug in and provide some exciting moments. A 334-yard, three-touchdown performance in his first official start against the Baltimore Ravens helped Cleveland stop a five-game skid. He even set the franchise's passing record with a 497-yard heave-fest at altitude in a loss to Denver. Any fireworks just weren't going to be enough to provide any substance for this Browns team. Cleveland traded away wide receiver Amari Cooper (the first wideout with back-to-back 1,000-yard receiving seasons in franchise history and first player with multiple 1,000-yard seasons in a Browns uniform since Hall of Fame tight end Ozzie Newsome) as well as edge rusher Za'Darius Smith (second behind Myles Garrett on the team in sacks for the season despite recording just five). It was

## 2025 Browns Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	CIN	7	MIA	13	SF
2	at BAL	8	at NE	14	TEN
3	GB	9	BYE	15	at CHI
4	at DET	10	at NYJ	16	BUF
5	MIN (UK)	11	BAL	17	PIT
6	at PIT	12	at LV	18	at CIN

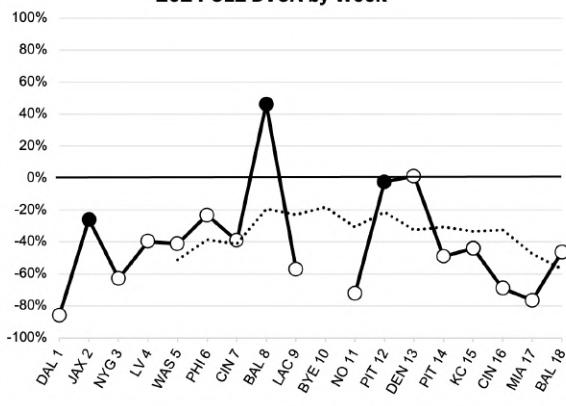
a clear white flag on the season, with Cleveland punting away any additional support on both sides of the ball in exchange for a shot at the future.

If the best time to change course was back in March 2022 when the trade with Houston went down, the second-best time is right now. The Cleveland Browns have officially turned the page on the Deshaun Watson era. While Watson remains on the roster by virtue of the loaded cannon that is his contract and the single-largest cap hit in franchise history, his role on the team beyond salary-cap anchor is likely over.

It was a weird rollercoaster of a three-year run. Frankly, it could spawn its own Tim Couch 2.0 jersey, with eight different quarterbacks getting starts over the three-year period. There were some bright spots. Brissett got to outduel Tom Brady in his Browns finale, capped off by a 45-yard dart to Cooper in overtime that set up Nick Chubb's game-winning touchdown. The Flacco Comeback Player of the Year run, while ending in a playoff blowout, was a fun rush for a franchise that has made the playoffs just three times in the 21st century. Alongside Winston's franchise-setting performance in Denver, Jerry Jeudy flirted with the Browns' single-game receiving record en route to eventually setting their single-season receptions record. Myles Garrett became the youngest player to ever hit 100 sacks, the face of a Jim Schwartz defense that at its best has been one of the top defenses in the NFL over the last two seasons. There was a point during the Watson era when it could be argued that Cleveland had one of the best non-quarterback rosters in football—a deep running back room and passing attack with a strong offensive line, an elite defensive line rotation, and one of the best secondaries in the NFL.

A streaky defense and some short-lived breakout performances do not make a competitive football team, though. The Browns finally learned that lesson, all but pulling the plug on this version of the roster. They cast off key contributors such as Nick Chubb and Dalvin Tomlinson, allowing the former to walk in free agency while cutting the latter. During free agency, they opted to quietly address areas that used to be their strengths, facing the reality of their current situation (both of their skill level and their cap issues). Cleveland re-upped along the defensive line, adding Maliek Collins to replace Tomlinson and bolstering edge depth with Julian Okwara and Joe Tryon-Shoyinka. They also signed multiple off-ball linebackers, adding Jerome Baker and Devin Bush to cobble together talent in the absence of Jeremiah Owusu-Koramoah, who will miss the entirety of the 2025 season after sustaining

2024 CLE DVOA by Week



a season-ending neck injury in Week 8.

Cleveland's draft strategy and subsequent haul arguably shows a Browns organization at its most honest and vulnerable. They deemed themselves unable to handle the responsibility of managing the development of two-way collegiate superstar Travis Hunter, instead opting for a trade back to a safe selection in Michigan defensive tackle Mason Graham. The humbling trade back secured Cleveland extra second- and fourth-round picks alongside a 2026 first. At least the Browns know that one phenomenal player won't fix them. Cleveland needs as many swings as they can get, and their final draft class showed as much. They took multiple swings at running back with Ohio State's Quinshon Judkins and Tennessee's Dylan Sampson, then did so again at quarterback with Oregon's Dillon Gabriel and Colorado's Shedeur Sanders. One of those positions is paramount to the Stefanski offense, while the other is one that the Browns have notoriously struck out on over and over again. Those moves alone scream that this is a team that needs to get this offense right, no matter how many tries it takes.

They didn't go totally overboard in their self-reflection, however. They refused to give into Garrett's very public trade requests. Garrett cited his "desire to win and compete on the biggest stages" as the reason to force the team's hand, seeking greener pastures and higher winning percentages. Cleveland never capitulated, instead opting to make him the highest-paid non-quarterback in the league at the time of his extension. While Garrett eventually went on to say that the deal has "never been about money" during his news conference, the Browns' reported ability to lay out a winning game plan to the star edge rusher was certainly made more palatable by a four-year, \$160-million contract with more than \$122 million in guaranteed money. There's a clear difference between being honest about where your franchise currently stands and making mistakes while you're wallowing in self-loathing.

This isn't going to be a sexy rebuild for Cleveland. The overkill in their quarterback room suggests as much. The Browns will bring five quarterbacks into training camp: the injured Watson, a 40-year-old Flacco, former Pittsburgh first-rounder Kenny Pickett, and two rookies in Gabriel and Sanders.

It should make for a fascinating quarterback battle. Let's start with Flacco, who didn't come close to his 2023 CPOY

run in one year with the Indianapolis Colts, falling from a 15th-best DVOA of 9.3% (second-highest finish of his career) to -8.0%, much closer to his play of the last decade or so. While there is a chance that Stefanski's quarterback-friendly offense could elevate the 40-year-old Flacco, he will now likely hold a bigger mentor role in this room while providing a decent safety net for this offense.

The real focus lies on Pickett, whom the Browns acquired fresh off a Super Bowl run as a backup from the Eagles in exchange for Dorian Thompson-Robinson and a 2025 fifth-rounder. He likely wins Cleveland's camp battle, although there's no telling who could be starting games by the end of the year. There are two schools of thought with Pickett. On one hand, he has never been particularly horrible. The statistics don't jump off the page in Pittsburgh—13 passing touchdowns in 24 games, never eclipsing 2,500 passing yards in either season as a majority starter—but it's the safe play that makes him viable. His relatively low interception rates at least kept his offense in the game, while his low success rate could mostly be chalked up to either playing in a Pittsburgh offense that lacked weapons and prominently featured Matt Canada or working alongside backups in garbage time in Philadelphia. While his 2024 efficiency with the Eagles served as a career low, his -17.3% DVOA came on just 46 plays. His time in Pittsburgh holds up much more favorably at 1.7% in 2022 and -7.7% in 2023. He never floated higher than the low 20s in DVOA or DYAR rankings, but a 15-10 record in starts over three years at least indicates that he gives Cleveland a shot at winning football.

The more pessimistic way to view Pickett is that two teams—both of whom made the playoffs in 2024—have moved on from the quarterback in favor of better options. The Steelers opted for two veteran castoffs, neither of whom are still on the roster. The Eagles chose Thompson-Robinson as a project Cleveland wasn't willing to ride out over a somewhat-solidified Pickett. At his best, Pickett can win you games. At his worst, he's a functional backup. Even if "backup" scares you off, "functional" is a moniker Cleveland has thrived on in the non-Watson snaps at quarterback these past few years.

Now we get to the fun part of this exercise: the rookies. Oregon's Dillon Gabriel has a ton of tread on his tires with six years of experience across three different college programs. His final year at Oregon was arguably his best, leading the Ducks to a Big Ten title en route to setting the FBS record for total touchdowns (189). However, Gabriel's arm is very much lacking, with quick game and checkdowns heavily inflating his completion percentage. Mel Kiper Jr. had Gabriel as the eighth quarterback on his board, while The Athletic's Dane Brugler wrote that the lefty had similarities to Tua Tagovailoa but had "a fighting chance to earn a backup role."

Then there's one of the most historic draft sliders of all time, Colorado's Shedeur Sanders. The high-end prospect was at best mocked to the first round and at worst was lauded with praise and reassurance as a prospect during his slide into Day 3 of the draft. The dissonance between what teams thought of Sanders and how the media perceived him rang at a blaring decibel level throughout the first two days of the draft process.

Kiper, one of his biggest backers, said on air that the league had been "clueless for 50 years when it comes to evaluating quarterbacks" during Sanders' freefall.

In reality, Sanders is probably somewhere between the lofty "best non-Cam Ward quarterback" label placed on him by draft analysts and the potential total draft exit that may have happened without Cleveland's intervention. He won't wow people out of the gate; he is a polished pocket passer who benefited heavily from a lot of the quarterback safety nets already incorporated into NFL offenses. He thrived on screens, checkdowns, and over-the-middle passing in college. While that won't win him any market-resetting deals, it should allow him to operate functionally in an NFL offense, occasionally taking shots while working the old march-down-the-field, death-by-1,000-cuts style of offense that helped his mentor Tom Brady win multiple Super Bowls.

Neither Gabriel nor Sanders excels at attacking downfield, but they might not need to based on the rest of the depth chart. The rest of this Browns team looks like it's back to basics, a roster better equipped to handle a true Stefanski offense of old, especially since Stefanski has taken back play-calling duties. Guard Joel Bitonio, the second-longest tenured Brown (behind Joe Thomas) since the team's 1999 return, says that the run game install feels much more like "a 2020, 2021 install of the outside zone with power schemes mixed in," per Cleveland.com. New offensive coordinator Tommy Rees is cut much more from Stefanski's cloth than Ken Dorsey was, emphasizing multi-tight end sets and run schemes with pulling guards.

Cleveland is one of just eight teams in the NFL that have given multiple running backs at least 75 carries in each of the last five seasons. Two new rookies should make that easy work for the Browns, with Quinshon Judkins flexing hard-hitting attitude running and Dylan Sampson bringing some undersized speed and home-run explosion. We shall see how Jerome Ford fits into the equation, but the serviceable-if-underwhelming third-year back has performed best in multi-back rotations (running alongside Kareem Hunt in 2023, then Nick Chubb and D'Onta Foreman in 2024). It might behoove the Browns to keep Ford around, anyway. Their best season by offensive rushing DVOA—not just in the Stefanski era, but since the franchise's return in 1999—came in 2021, when Chubb, Hunt, and D'Ernest Johnson all saw at least 75 touches.

Cleveland's tight end tandem of David Njoku and rookie Harold Fannin Jr. has the potential to make for a very solid 12-personnel offense. The offensive line, while somewhat thin in depth, looks like a step forward as the unit returns to health. Even though the group allowed the second-most sacks in the league (66) last year, a very similarly structured offensive line allowed 45 the year prior. Cleveland's line has only cracked 50 sacks allowed once since Stefanski came aboard, while 10 teams have broken that benchmark multiple times over that span.

The receiver room is, admittedly, still very much lacking since the fall-off and eventual departure of Cooper. Even with the addition of a name like Diontae Johnson, these receivers are not going to help elevate any of these quarterbacks on their

own. Jeudy flashed an ability to serve as a high-volume receiver working short routes and over-the-middle targets, but he thrives best on deep crossers and downfield play. Cedric Tillman quietly improved in his second season but had his season cut short by a concussion and has yet to take on a full season of a starter's workload. Johnson is on his fifth team in just over a calendar year; there should be no expectations associated with him. However, a lacking receiving group can be mitigated by a much more well-rounded offense in Cleveland. The improvements in other skill positions and a healthy offensive line playing more to its strengths can now make the Browns look closer to a competent offense than they were last year.

While the offense looks like it's starting to resemble something competent, the defense has taken a pretty significant step back from its 2023 high. Most of the major supplementary pieces on this roster from the last two years—once-essential non-Garrett defensive linemen such as Tomlinson and Za'Darius Smith, additional defensive back depth like Juan Thornhill, plug-in linebackers such as Anthony Walker and Sione Takitaki—are all gone. Even the grave uncertainty of Owusu-Kuramoah's future in the NFL draws some major concerns.

There are some elements of this defense that would at least allow this unit to be decent in 2025. Myles Garrett isn't going anywhere anytime soon, and he hasn't fallen short of double-digit sacks since his rookie season in 2017. Adding Mason Graham alongside Collins should make for some great run-stopping ability. That's a focus that will now fall more on the defensive line after losing a top-10 off-ball linebacker in both run stuff rate and average yards on run tackles in Owusu-Kuramoah. Browns linebackers should still be able to contribute in that regard, especially Mohamoud Diabate, who excelled as a run defender in 2024 but also struggled heavily with broken and missed tackles.

Cornerback remains one of the stronger units on the field in terms of top-end talent if Denzel Ward, Martin Emerson Jr., and Greg Newsome II can remain healthy, but the rotational depth this team once boasted has taken a significant step back. It doesn't help matters that all three players are coming off down years, with Newsome and Emerson arguably coming off the worst seasons of their young careers. Even Ward, who led the league in passes defended, tied his career high for the most yards allowed per target at 8.8.

However, there is evidence to suggest a rebound for this secondary. The 2024 Browns were just the seventh team since 2000 to post a bottom-five pass defense DVOA one year after finishing in the top five. In each of those cases, the team in question got back to at least a median level of play the next year (Table 1). Cleveland is the only one of these teams to carry over largely the same core over that three-year period. While the supporting cast of rotational defensive backs has changed, only one of six defensive backs to start at least 10 games over the last two seasons—safety Juan Thornhill—is no longer with the team. Cleveland's core of Grant Delpit, Emerson, Ward, and Newsome (who eventually was placed on injured reserve) all appeared in at least 13 games each of the last two seasons, a level of consistency only shared with the 2010-2011 Chargers.

**Table 1. Pass Defense from Top 5 to Bottom 5, 2000-2024**

Years	Team	Prev Yr DVOA	Rank	DVOA	Rank	Next Yr DVOA	Rank
2000	SEA	-9.3%	4	27.8%	29	10.5%	16
2001	TEN	-11.1%	5	27.7%	30	6.8%	19
2005	NE	-11.3%	4	21.5%	29	-3.7%	8
2011	SD	-6.8%	5	25.8%	31	9.4%	17
2021	WAS	-9.5%	3	23.1%	29	2.3%	16
2023	PHI	-19.4%	1	21.4%	29	-10.5%	2
2024	CLE	-24.4%	2	16.7%	28	--	--

In the midst of a near-total reinvention for a team that is no stranger to massive overhauls, two real questions remain with these Cleveland Browns. The first—and arguably the most difficult to answer at this juncture with no certainty at quarterback and holes in pretty major positions—is that even as they are in flux through 2025, what is the ceiling for this iteration of this team? The Browns' set up at this moment is far from ready to compete for a postseason push. That won't get easier in the coming years after the eventual release of Deshaun Watson, where they'll likely be eating dead money hits and void years through the 2029 season. Can a team hamstrung by that big of a cash sink really ever compete?

Moreover, even if they could, would a roster with this makeup—solid running back and tight end groups, cautious optimism at offensive line, and massive question marks at quarterback and wide receiver—even be able to make a postseason run, no matter how good the offensive scheme is? The Schwartz defense is one thing—Cleveland has excelled at being able to find some diamonds in the rough through free agency to make this system hum. Continuing to assemble strong pieces through the draft and on cost-effective contracts could get this defense back to a reasonable level. The offense, though, remains a completely different story. This team, as currently structured, is skewed to very safe offensive play. High-accuracy, low-aDOT play can certainly work—just look at Bo Nix last year, or a rookie Mac Jones in 2021. But both those teams had some decent help in place to facilitate that, either through defense-heavy spend on the roster or a boatload of toys for a quarterback to play with. Cleveland currently has some of one and very little of the other. Is there enough here for an offense to take real swings?

More importantly, what's the leash on this rebuild? Even with Haslam admitting total surrender on a move he leveraged heaven and earth to get done, this will be the second total rebuild under the Stefanski-Andrew Berry regime. Stefanski is a two-time Coach of the Year in the last five seasons, and Berry's tenure as Browns general manager has been defined by jumping through the hoops set up by the Watson deal. He has arguably been one of the better general managers in the league, save for being attached to one of the worst deals in modern NFL history. Deals on the margins—finding backup quarterbacks such as Flacco and Brissett who can win the Browns games in Watson's absence, savvy trades for high-im-

pact non-quarterback veteran talent, defensive plug-ins at all three levels—have defined Berry's tenure and kept this team afloat. The next step is manufacturing a winning roster, likely with even deeper cap hangups. The Browns are far away from that goal.

There's a part of this team that already makes 2025 feel like a lost season. The fact that beat reporters are posting daily passing stats from OTAs like it's a mid-August training camp session does not bode well for the state of this quarterback room. The receivers are lacking. Looking beyond this year, some of the team's biggest names—Njoku, Newsome, Emerson, every starting offensive lineman outside of Dawand Jones, to name a few—are set to hit free agency, and Cleveland is set to be \$35.4 million over the cap already, per Over-TheCap.com.

This roster may leave them with yet another top-three pick in a draft with more real NFL-caliber quarterback prospects. The hardest schedule in the league doesn't help matters (or it does, depending on how you look at things). Nothing Cleveland has done thus far should prohibit them from taking another bite at the quarterback apple in 2026. But how much more time does that buy Stefanski and Berry? Would yet another developing signal-caller reset the clock yet again on a duo that has put up with so much and has, frankly, done fairly well given the circumstances? What does success even look like for this team? There's a decent chance the 2026 roster is even worse than the current one.

Entering his sixth season in Cleveland, Stefanski is already the longest-tenured coach under Haslam's ownership and the

franchise's longest since Sam Rutigliano (1978-1984). He has yielded as many playoff berths as fourth-place finishes in that time, and this year is likely shaping up to be the team's first back-to-back fourth-place finish since Hue Jackson's notorious run. There is no doubt that Stefanski and Berry would be snatched up by another franchise if cut loose. There just has to be an understanding of what progress looks like in the Factory of Sadness. The narrative implications of those two Stefanski Coach of the Year seasons coming in Cleveland of all places likely played some part in him receiving the award. There's just the matter of whether the reputation Cleveland currently holds in the landscape of the league factors into any rash decision-making, or whether the Browns' standard of mediocrity affords a good coach-GM combo some additional leeway.

The next step after failure is committing to change. In that vein, there are two kinds of change. There are the New Year's resolutions—tasks taken on with the best of intentions but rarely permanent. Then there are the true rock-bottom moments, the moments where you look in the mirror and reevaluate who you are inside. The first is a fun change of pace and at best gives you a meaningful tweak or two to day-to-day operations. The other shakes you to your core, tears apart your identity, and spits you out a new person.

The wheels of change are once again in motion in Cleveland. How long they stay spinning will tell us a lot about the Cleveland Browns as an organization—and Haslam himself as an owner.

Cale Clinton

## 2024 Browns by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	DAL	L	0%	17	33	230	265	-2	-86%	-71%	2%	-13%
2	at JAX	W	41%	18	13	297	323	0	-26%	-28%	0%	2%
3	NYG	L	13%	15	21	217	340	0	-63%	-45%	26%	8%
4	at LV	L	21%	16	20	241	268	0	-40%	-28%	13%	2%
5	at WAS	L	0%	13	34	212	434	+1	-41%	-69%	-17%	10%
6	at PHI	L	2%	16	20	244	372	0	-23%	-6%	15%	-3%
7	CIN	L	1%	14	21	336	223	-2	-39%	-38%	-28%	-29%
8	BAL	W	62%	29	24	401	387	-1	-46%	31%	-4%	11%
9	LAC	L	1%	10	27	292	342	-3	-57%	-52%	-2%	-7%
10	BYE											
11	at NO	L	1%	14	35	443	473	+2	-72%	1%	42%	-31%
12	PIT	W	37%	24	19	304	368	-2	-2%	-9%	-10%	-4%
13	at DEN	L	43%	32	41	552	400	-1	1%	14%	9%	-4%
14	at PIT	L	1%	14	27	300	267	-2	-49%	-39%	0%	-10%
15	KC	L	0%	7	21	266	311	-6	-44%	-49%	-3%	1%
16	at CIN	L	0%	6	24	273	326	-2	-69%	-54%	11%	-4%
17	MIA	L	3%	3	20	276	280	-2	-76%	-55%	22%	1%
18	at BAL	L	0%	10	35	230	437	-2	-46%	-58%	-12%	-1%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	-31.7%	32	4.0%	25
Unadjusted VOA	-32.0%	32	7.4%	24
Weighted Trend	-29.4%	32	2.8%	18
Variance	8.7%	28	2.9%	2
Average Opponent	-0.7%	11	3.5%	2
Passing	-30.1%	32	16.7%	28
Rushing	-17.6%	29	-10.6%	15
First Down	-33.1%	32	2.7%	19
Second Down	-23.9%	30	3.2%	20
Third Down	-40.2%	32	7.5%	24
First Half	-31.9%	32	4.3%	17
Second Half	-31.6%	31	3.6%	24
Red Zone	-51.7%	32	10.7%	27
Late and Close	-9.0%	23	29.5%	32

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rk	Off	Rk	Def	Rk	ST	Rk	Off AGL	Rk	Def AGL	Rk	Off Age	Rk	Def Age	Rk	ST Age	Rk
2020	11-5	7.7	8.3	408	419	+5	1.2%	13	6.1%	8	1.2%	17	-3.7%	27	31.4	11	58.3	27	25.8	26	27.1	4	25.4	26
2021	8-9	7.9	9.6	349	371	-3	5.3%	12	3.2%	15	-4.0%	8	-1.9%	25	50.8	22	35.1	14	26.3	20	25.5	30	25.1	29
2022	7-10	7.9	9.4	361	381	-1	5.5%	10	5.8%	11	0.8%	16	0.5%	14	29.2	12	48.7	24	26.4	20	24.9	31	25.0	32
2023	11-6	9.4	9.5	396	362	-9	8.8%	8	-12.3%	28	-20.7%	2	0.3%	16	62.1	29	45.9	26	26.8	10	26.4	18	26.6	8
2024	3-14	3.8	1.9	258	435	-22	-39.9%	32	-31.7%	32	4.0%	25	-4.2%	30	56.5	30	50.0	23	27.8	3	27.1	7	27.4	5

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

CLE Offense					CLE Offense vs. Opponents					CLE Defense					CLE Defense vs. Opponents			
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	
11	72%	4.6	-26.5%	29%	Base	17%	4.9	-8.4%	46%	Base	33%	5.3	-1.2%	11	47%	6.1	14.5%	
12	16%	6.1	-4.0%	34%	Nickel	69%	4.6	-27.7%	31%	Nickel	53%	5.7	-1.6%	12	30%	6.0	4.8%	
10	3%	4.2	-38.2%	34%	Dime+	13%	4.3	-43.5%	11%	Dime+	13%	8.1	54.2%	21	9%	6.3	-2.8%	
611	2%	3.7	-26.7%	75%	Goal Line	1%	3.2	-42.4%	64%	Goal Line	2%	1.7	-2.3%	13	5%	3.5	-26.5%	
13	1%	2.4	-10.6%	38%										22	4%	3.5	-36.8%	

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected		Rk	Formation		Rk	Pass Rush		Rk	Secondary		Rk	Strategy		Rk
Runs, all	-0.6%	25	Form: Single Back	76%	12	Rush 3	0.9%	31	4 DB	29%	2	Play Action	22%	19
Runs, first down	-4.1%	30	Form: Empty Back	17%	1	Rush 4	68.2%	21	5 DB	53%	31	Offensive Motion	39%	28
Runs, second-long	-3.2%	20	Form: Multi Back	8%	32	Rush 5	19.3%	17	6+ DB	13%	11	Avg Box (Off)	6.01	24
Runs, power sit.	+11.6%	8	Pers: 3+ WR	78%	4	Rush 6+	11.6%	3	Man Coverage	58%	8	Avg Box (Def)	6.36	1
Runs, behind 2H	-1.5%	26	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	24%	22	Edge Rusher Sacks	64.6%	5	MOFC	71%	1	Offensive Pace	31.33	15
Runs, ahead 2H	-5.6%	29	Pers: 6+ OL	5%	8	Interior DL Sacks	17.1%	30	CB1 on WR1	38%	11	Defensive Pace	30.66	2
Run-Pass Options	3.8%	16	Shotgun/Pistol	82%	7	Second Level Sacks	18.3%	20	S/CB Cover Ratio	20%	14	Go for it on 4th	1.10	16

Cleveland used an extra offensive lineman about half as often as when they ranked No. 1 in that category in 2022 and 2023. The Browns led the league in empty backfields and were horrible on those plays, with 4.5 yards per play and a -48.1% DVOA. The Browns used only four defensive backs much more than the year before, probably because opponents were winning and running more often. However, not much changed as far as players being near the line of scrimmage, as the Browns were second in average box on defense in 2023 and first last year. Cleveland had a league-best 39% pressure rate when sending the standard four pass rushers. This was the second straight year Cleveland was No. 1 in using MOFC coverage. The Browns defense was much better when opponents were under center, with the biggest gap in the league in both DVOA (3.7% shotgun, -11.9% under center) and yards per play (5.8 shotgun, 4.5 under center). Cleveland was 31st in broken tackle rate on defense (18.2%). The Browns were the worst defense with 44.2% DVOA on plays we had marked as RPOs.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
J.Winston*	-96	-15.8%	319	1976	6.2	4.2	61.6%	13	12
D.Watson	-597	-51.1%	249	944	3.8	4.3	63.7%	5	3
D.Thompson-Robinson*	-635	-91.5%	126	339	2.7	4.1	54.0%	0	6
B.Zappe*	-117	-65.9%	32	165	5.2	6.3	51.6%	1	2
J.Flacco	55	-8.0%	266	1643	6.2	4.0	65.3%	12	7
K.Pickett	-18	-17.3%	46	258	5.6	2.3	59.5%	2	1

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
J.Jeudy	103	-3.6%	145	90	1229	13.7	4.3	4	62%
E.Moore*	-190	-37.4%	102	61	538	8.8	2.2	1	60%
A.Cooper*	-92	-34.8%	53	24	250	10.4	2.4	2	45%
C.Tillman	-21	-17.9%	49	29	339	11.7	3.6	3	59%
M.Woods	-27	-33.2%	17	7	65	9.3	5.0	0	41%
J.Thrush	-29	-64.1%	7	3	22	7.3	4.7	0	43%
D.Johnson	-89	-29.0%	67	33	375	11.4	2.8	3	49%
D.Carter	-1	-13.5%	14	9	72	8.0	3.6	0	64%
D.Njoku	-103	-23.5%	97	64	505	7.9	3.9	5	66%
J.Akins*	-11	-10.5%	58	40	390	9.8	4.4	2	69%
B.Whiteheart	-11	-22.1%	9	6	51	8.5	1.7	1	67%
J.Ford	-2	-14.7%	43	37	225	6.1	7.9	0	86%
P.Strong	-17	-30.5%	22	14	104	7.4	8.8	0	64%
N.Chubb*	-21	-43.2%	11	5	31	6.2	6.2	1	45%
D.Foreman*	9	10.2%	8	6	54	9.0	8.0	0	75%

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
J.Ford	73	8.8%	104	565	5.4	3	0	47%
N.Chubb*	-27	-14.7%	102	332	3.3	3	1	41%
D.Foreman*	-65	-28.6%	71	238	3.4	0	2	41%
D.Watson	-39	-36.5%	30	141	4.7	1	2	-
P.Strong	8	-0.5%	26	108	4.2	0	0	46%
J.Winston*	30	7.6%	24	84	3.5	1	0	-
D.Thompson-Robinson*	9	-2.1%	20	124	6.2	0	1	-
J.Kibodi*	4	11.6%	5	24	4.8	0	0	20%
K.Pickett	-15	-45.4%	7	17	2.4	1	0	-
J.Flacco	-11	-45.8%	6	29	4.8	0	1	-

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
J.Bitonio	LG	34	17/17	1177	6	2	29	3.6%	21	J.Wills*	LT	26	5/4	245	5	2	12	7.1%	--
E.Pocic	C	30	16/16	1072	6	7	14	1.9%	12	Z.Zinter	RG	24	17/3	233	2	0	5	3.1%	--
W.Teller	RG	31	13/13	884	6	4	20	3.3%	19	J.Hudson*	LT	26	4/3	222	2	1	15	9.9%	--
J.Conklin	RT	31	12/12	817	2	1	26	4.6%	11	M.Dunn*	RG	31	13/3	171	2	0	5	4.3%	--
G.Ifedi*	LT	31	15/7	538	5	6	27	7.3%	33	T.Jenkins	LG	27	14/14	738	4	5	15	3.1%	12
D.Jones	RT	24	10/8	511	9	1	23	6.6%	29	C.Lucas	LT	34	14/7	467	3	0	6	2.1%	2

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont	
2022	4.61	4.41	14	71%	13	21%	28	1.45	1	0.89	11	44	7.7%	18	28.2%	20	30	
2023	3.92	3.76	26	68%	14	23%	29	1.07	20	0.68	12	45	7.0%	14	30.9%	20	22	
2024	4.11	3.88	29	62%	26	21%	29	1.03	28	0.83	11	66	9.9%	31	34.0%	26	28	
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 2.58 (32)				Left Tackle: 4.11 (17)				Mid/Guard: 3.76 (32)				Right Tackle: 4.81 (6)		Right End: 3.74 (18)

The Browns offensive line cycled through injuries last year, with Joel Bitonio the only member of the unit to start all 17 games. In total, Cleveland featured 11 different starters over the course of the season. Dawand Jones, chosen in the fourth round of the 2023 draft, has now had season-ending injuries tank both of his first two NFL seasons. Jones went down with a knee injury in 2023 and a leg fracture in 2024. He also received arthroscopic knee surgery in the offseason to continue repairs from his rookie-year injury. Jones can play both sides of the line, starting five games on the right side and three on the left last season. The other likely starting tackle, Jack Conklin, has a similarly troubling injury history. Conklin has suffered multiple knee injuries before the age of 30, most recently tearing his ACL and MCL in the 2023 season opener. He missed four games last year to a hamstring injury as well. While Conklin is one of Cleveland's more consistent linemen when available, the best ability at the tackle position is availability, and Conklin has not played a full season since 2019. Bitonio played a career-high 1,177 snaps in his 11th, and it was a true decision as to whether he would return for a 12th. "At the end of the year, I was truly deciding if I wanted to play anymore," Bitonio said, per the Browns website. "We went through the process, and I was like, I could still play football at a high level. I still want to play football." Ethan Pocic is one of three Browns interior offensive linemen entering a contract year, and he is one who may need to prove himself in his fourth season with Cleveland. Pocic's seven blown blocks in the run game and 14 pressures allowed were both highs for the center since joining Cleveland in 2022. Cleveland signed a quality, versatile depth piece in Teven Jenkins. He has started at both guard spots over the

last two seasons and also played left tackle in his rookie season with the Bears. However, it's just a one-year deal, so he's not necessarily a replacement for one of the starters heading to free agency in 2026. Zak Zinter struggled heavily in pass protection as a rookie, allowing six sacks on just 143 pass-blocking snaps according to Sports Info Solutions. He served as the team's sixth offensive lineman/"heavy" tight end early in the season but was relegated to a special teams-only role by Week 12.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run				Pass Rush						
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
D.Tomlinson*	31	DT	16	610	26	3.4%	78	23	12	7	19	84%	11	0.9	1	3.0	14	21	1
S.Harris	34	DT	14	529	39	5.8%	26	35	11	3	31	87%	4	1.5	14	1.5	3	15	2
M.Hall	22	DT	8	232	13	3.4%	78	11	5	0	11	82%	18	1.4	12	1.0	5	13	0
M.Hurst*	30	DT	8	164	16	4.2%	--	11	7	2	15	67%	--	1.9	--	0.5	0	1	0
M.Collins	30	DT	17	717	33	3.9%	67	23	10	6	23	65%	67	2.5	51	5.0	8	37	1

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run				Pass Rush						
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
M.Garrett	30	DE	17	826	47	5.7%	32	42	26	4	30	83%	16	1.5	16	14.0	15	63	3
I.McGuire	24	DE	16	469	34	4.4%	62	29	13	3	30	83%	16	1.0	7	2.5	6	24	1
O.Okoronkwo*	30	DE	16	465	21	2.7%	96	15	7	4	12	83%	16	1.2	8	3.0	4	16	1
S.Kamara	28	DE	11	273	13	2.5%	--	8	2	2	12	67%	--	4.0	--	0.0	1	9	0
J.Tryon-Shoyinka	26	OLB	15	539	26	3.5%	84	19	7	5	12	75%	39	2.2	31	2.0	2	22	1
J.Okwara	28	OLB	13	286	19	2.8%	--	14	4	4	10	90%	--	2.0	--	1.0	2	7	1

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run				Pass Rush				vs. Pass										
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
J.Hicks	33	MLB	12	604	81	14.0%	37	46	16	4	43	67%	17	4.0	61	2.0	5	15	20	-14.8%	14	65%	4	13.3	77	4	0
M.Diabate	24	OLB	13	581	68	10.9%	58	40	9	10	45	73%	6	2.7	4	0.0	0	7	14	-13.6%	17	43%	42	4.5	2	3	0
D.Bush	27	OLB	16	497	77	10.0%	62	43	13	5	53	62%	36	3.8	45	1.0	1	0	7	-5.3%	--	43%	--	6.4	--	3	0
J.Owusu-Koramoah	26	OLB	8	463	63	16.3%	17	39	19	12	41	73%	8	3.0	10	3.0	1	13	15	-22.8%	5	40%	51	9.1	63	3	1
J.Baker	29	ILB	10	566	65	12.6%	48	34	8	8	36	61%	39	3.3	20	2.0	1	6	29	6.8%	46	48%	27	6.2	14	4	0

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk			
2022	5.00	4.88	28	61%	4	15%	27	1.33	25	1.05	27	34	7.0%	15	23.9%	29			
2023	4.39	3.25	1	60%	6	28%	1	1.25	26	1.32	32	49	8.1%	14	32.7%	4			
2024	4.11	3.68	1	63%	11	26%	1	1.18	12	1.00	29	41	7.9%	8	41.3%	1			
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 5.36 (28)				Left Tackle: 3.43 (3)				Mid/Guard: 3.70 (1)				Right Tackle: 2.88 (2)		Right End: 4.02 (19)	

After becoming the youngest player to reach the 100-sack milestone and the first player to record 14.0 sacks in four straight seasons, it's clear that Myles Garrett is a one-man wrecking crew. This season truly put the emphasis on the "one-man" part of that moniker, though. After the Browns traded away Za'Darius Smith, Garrett accounted for 25% of their defensive pressures (18 of 72) and half of their sacks (seven of 14) in the final eight games of their season. This is the second time in the last three years that Garrett has been the only player on the Browns roster with more than five sacks. Whoever plays opposite Garrett gets to be the beneficiary of all the attention that he draws. Isaiah McGuire immediately filled the gap following Smith's trade, peaking at a career-high 90% of total defensive snaps in Week 17 against the Dolphins and picking up sacks in two of Cleveland's final three games. Alex Wright had a strong season in 2023, accruing five sacks, two forced fumbles, and two pass breakups that year. He had his 2024 season cut short after just four weeks following a torn triceps in October. Don't sleep on Joe Tryon-Shoyinka, either. The outside linebacker lines up frequently on the edge, both in two-point stance and three-point stances, and he finished with at least four sacks on a deep Buccaneers roster in each of his first three seasons in Tampa Bay. Maliek Collins is as consistent an option at defensive tackle as Cleveland could get, given their cap budget. He has now racked up at least 20 pressures with three different teams and 5.0 sacks each of the last two seasons with Houston and San Francisco. Michigan defensive tackle Mason Graham will always be inextricably linked to Travis Hunter because of Cleveland's decision to trade down, but the 2023 Rose Bowl Defensive MVP and 2024 consensus All-American deserves some shine as a prospect on his own. A two-time conference champion in high school wrestling, Graham knows how to win through leverage, recording seven tackles for loss and 3.5 sacks in his final year with the Wolverines. The loss of Jeremiah

Owusu-Koramoah is going to be daunting to overcome, especially in a pass defense so dependent on linebackers for coverage assistance. Before finishing his 2024 run as a top-five linebacker in coverage by DVOA, Owusu-Koramoah finished the 2023 season with six passes defensed (fourth on the team) and two interceptions. 🔒 The one person who could certainly pick up some slack in that department is Jordan Hicks. While he does not excel as a run defender, he is one of the league's best in pass coverage. Hicks finished seventh in DVOA with the 2023 Vikings before his reunion with Jim Schwartz in Cleveland. The best season of Hicks' career came playing for Schwartz in 2016, including a career-high five interceptions and 11 passes defensed. 🔒 Cleveland native and former Ohio State Buckeye Jerome Baker signed a one-year deal with his hometown team this past offseason, an experience Baker has called "a dream come true." 🔒 Devin Bush finally found his stride again in Cleveland after falling out of favor in Pittsburgh and Seattle. His eight tackles for loss were his most since he finished third in Defensive Rookie of the Year balloting in 2019, and his abilities in coverage have taken modest steps forward. 🔒 Mohamoud Diabate has a real nose for the ball in the run game, but he struggles with tackles in the open field. 🔒 Carson Schwesinger has a bit of a smaller frame for an NFL linebacker, but his lightning-fast play speed and keen reaction time make the second-round rookie a perfect fit for Schwartz's defense. Schwesinger's 90 solo tackles at UCLA led FBS last year, and his 7.5 solo tackles per game were the most in FBS since 2020, per The Athletic's *The Beast* draft guide.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run						vs. Pass												
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
G.Delpit	27	SS	16	979	109	14.1%	9	55	20	9	63	59%	4	4.3	4	35	8.0%	20	10.8	5.2%	28	51%	23	9.6	54	1	0
M.Emerson	25	CB	17	829	85	10.4%	21	28	13	13	23	39%	53	9.7	84	95	25.7%	3	12.3	29.9%	89	48%	66	7.7	53	5	0
D.Ward	28	CB	16	759	68	8.8%	47	34	14	12	19	42%	50	7.2	64	80	23.7%	11	14.9	-9.8%	36	53%	38	9.5	87	19	2
G.Newsome	25	CB	13	575	32	5.1%	89	13	7	9	8	38%	62	6.8	55	51	19.9%	30	10.9	38.5%	92	49%	64	9.7	89	5	1
R.McLeod*	35	FS	17	568	41	5.0%	90	17	9	8	18	50%	12	8.1	62	18	7.1%	24	6.1	-19.7%	7	39%	50	6.6	25	5	0
R.Hickman	24	FS	14	463	46	6.8%	78	10	4	5	23	30%	59	7.7	55	4	1.9%	—	32.8	-11.5%	—	75%	—	1.0	—	1	0
J.Thornhill*	30	FS	11	401	52	9.8%	59	15	4	6	30	27%	72	10.0	88	9	5.0%	—	14.8	45.6%	—	56%	—	7.4	—	3	0
C.Mitchell	24	CB	17	372	25	3.1%	--	10	6	8	7	43%	--	6.0	--	33	19.9%	—	8.3	3.2%	—	55%	—	6.5	—	2	0
R.Jenkins	31	SS	13	550	52	7.8%	73	22	10	10	22	50%	12	6.1	30	20	7.5%	22	5.5	1.9%	23	65%	6	6.7	27	0	0
D.Kazee	32	SS	15	289	33	4.4%	--	8	5	1	11	9%	--	14.0	--	5	3.4%	—	15.6	108.7%	—	40%	—	15.6	—	2	1

Year	Pass	D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	12		-4.1%	12		23.2%	30	-16.5%	5	12.3%	26	-17.4%	3	-1.7%	16	7.5%	21
2023	2		-39.6%	2		-27.6%	3	2.9%	21	-21.2%	4	-17.7%	7	-25.4%	1	-8.4%	13
2024	28		33.3%	30		16.8%	27	12.0%	29	15.9%	27	37.3%	32	-13.1%	8	-11.3%	7

The Browns' secondary went into freefall in 2024. As noted earlier, Cleveland fell from second to 28th in pass defense DVOA last season. Much of that stemmed from some historically bad turnover results. The Browns were just the fifth team since the merger to record four interceptions or fewer in a single season. 🔒 This doesn't exonerate any of the Browns' top cornerbacks, though, who dominated in 2023 and all took steps back in 2024. Greg Newsome allowed a career-high 10.3 yards per target and had a career-low pass breakup total of five. Opponents scored nearly as many touchdowns against him in one year (four) as they had in the previous three combined (five). 🔒 One year removed from his breakout sophomore season, Martin Emerson's completion percentage allowed shot up from 35% to 60% while his pass breakups were slashed from 14 to five, leading to his per-target DVOA to fall from 10th among cornerbacks to 89th year-over-year. He also was a major piece of the interception regression, falling from four to zero. 🔒 Even Denzel Ward—whose 19 passes defensed led all of football—took a step back in coverage, with three dropped interceptions and a career-high 9.5 yards allowed per target. 🔒 Grant Delpit was great in stopping the run last year, but the numbers suggest his coverage was lacking, as he was near the bottom in the league in yards per target and average yards allowed after the catch. 🔒 With Rodney McLeod and Juan Thornhill gone, who can take over the starting free safety spot opposite Delpit? Ronnie Hickman flashed as a second-year UDFA after being forced to start in a pinch for an injured Thornhill in 2023. He started last season dealing with injury, taking a step back before settling into a more stable rotational role. Rayshawn Jenkins is more often used in the box than in the slot but has played considerable snaps at free safety in the past. Damontae Kazee slipped into a backup role in the final year of his three-year contract with the Steelers, then signed with Cleveland this offseason.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	0.5%	14	-7.1	28	2.7	8	-1.3	18	2.7	12	5.5	5	2.4	15
2023	0.3%	16	6.8	9	-0.8	20	0.0	15	0.0	18	-4.2	24	0.3	16
2024	-4.2%	30	-15.0	30	-1.7	23	-2.1	20	-2.9	24	-0.4	16	9.1	5

Dustin Hopkins connected on just 18 of 27 field goal attempts, making the Browns only the fifth team since 2010 to make two-thirds or fewer of their field goal attempts. Hopkins was stellar in his first season with the Browns in 2023, but his field goal percentage fell about 13 points below his previous career worst, and he went from 8-of-8 to 4-of-8 on kicks of 50 or more yards.

Trying a couple of different ways to juice the special teams performance, the Browns dismissed longtime long snapper Charley Hughlett and signed NFL field goal leader and former Lou Groza Award winner Andre Szymy. The one-time Syracuse kicker finished 19-for-21 on field goals for the St. Louis Battlehawks in 2024 with a long of 61 yards. No punter in the league got a bigger workout than Corey Bojorquez. His 89 punts, 4,387 total punting yards, and 84-yard longest punt all led the league in 2024. 36 of his punts landed inside the 20, third in the league. Bojorquez led the league in our gross punting metric, but the Browns were negative on net punting because of terrible punt coverage; only Tennessee allowed more value on punt returns. Cleveland could not figure out a consistent kick returner last season, with six different members of the Browns taking returns in 2024. The most effective was Jerome Ford, who took up the role in the back half of the season. In 2025, both return jobs will likely be taken by veteran DeAndre Carter, who came over from Chicago in free agency.

# Dallas Cowboys

2024 record: 7-10

Total DVOA: -11.6% (24th)

Pythagorean Wins: 5.7 (25th)

Offense: -12.3% (25th)

Snap-Weighted Age: 26.6 (13th)

Defense: 3.9% (24th)

Average Opponent: 2.5% (9th)

Special Teams: 4.6% (3rd)

2025 Mean Projection: 7.7 wins

On the Clock (0-5): 19%

Postseason Odds: 28.7%

Mediocrity (6-8): 44%

Super Bowl Odds: 1.7%

Playoff Contender (9-11): 31%

Proj. Avg. Opponent: 2.0% (10th)

Super Bowl Contender (12+): 6%

2024: Can't disappoint in the playoffs if you don't make it.

2025: A new era or more of the same?

The Dallas Cowboys love attention. Once that fact is accepted and the franchise is viewed through that lens, everything makes more sense. The spotlight is the priority and everything else falls from that. Any questions? You could watch *America's Team: The Gambler and His Cowboys*, premiering August 19 on Netflix.

At best, that need for attention has overshadowed the good moves made by the franchise. At worst, it has come at direct opposition to making more of them. Occasionally those two things go together, such as whenever it's time to negotiate a new contract extension.

Many forward-thinking teams around the league want to get potential top-of-the-market deals done as soon as possible. Not the Cowboys. Those negotiations will drag on. The idea behind getting contracts done early is that it allows the team to get ahead of the market, especially at premium positions where contract prices keep rising. It lessens the number of other contracts around the league that could get done first and impact the price. If done early enough, it also provides more years to stretch the payments across. Put simply, a four-year extension with one year remaining on the original contract allows a team to stretch that money over five years. The Cowboys don't tend to care to take those advantages and allow contracts to get done when they get done.

"We get criticized because we wait until the end or what you would call the end, and that is lining up for the first game," Jerry Jones told reporters in March. "It just happens that way. I've been one of the earliest out there on several contracts in my 35 years."

Outside of "several in 35 years" being a fairly low hit rate, this approach to contracts has started to weigh on how the Cowboys can build a roster. Dallas got an extension done with CeeDee Lamb as training camp ended last season and Dak Prescott got done on the eve of the regular season. While Lamb's contract came in just below Justin Jefferson with a \$34 million per year average, if done months earlier it could have come closer to \$30 million per year.

Prescott topped the quarterback market with a \$60-million average—\$5 million more per year than the next quarterback. It still stands as the highest quarterback contract by average annual value after a new Josh Allen extension put the 2024 NFL MVP at a \$55-million average, tying him with Joe Burrow and Jordan Love, rather than trying to top Prescott's figure. This came after

the previous Prescott extension followed a long, drawn-out process that involved two franchise tags and a ton of leverage for the quarterback's side in negotiations.

This is how the Cowboys do business. Expect a similar timeline for a new deal with Micah Parsons, who is scheduled to go into 2025 on his fifth-year option. Parsons has 52.5 sacks in his career, sixth for a player in his first four seasons since the merger, and is considered one of the best defensive players in the NFL. He deserves to be paid like it, too. Parsons has said he doesn't need to be the highest-paid player but there's now a \$40 million per year figure set by Myles Garrett that didn't exist when the offseason started. By waiting, not making Parsons the highest-paid defender could still cost more than it would have cost to make him the highest-paid player a year ago.

In isolation, that way of doing business could be ignored. So what if the highest-value franchise in sports must cough up a few million dollars more per year for its best players? But the problem lies in how the Cowboys allow that to impact the way the rest of the roster is built.

Last offseason, while preparing for the Lamb and Prescott deals, the Cowboys mostly sat out free agency while claiming a lack of cap space kept them from bringing players in. This past offseason, Jones said the Cowboys would be "selectively aggressive" in free agency, which turned out to be much more selective than aggressive.

Instead, the Cowboys have double-downed on either players who have been highly drafted or players they thought highly of coming into the draft—a "second draft" philosophy, an idea popularized in the NBA and brought over to the football discourse by ESPN's Bill Barnwell. Dallas has made this a go-to avenue for player acquisition. At the trade deadline, the Cowboys traded a fourth-round pick for Jonathan Mingo, a former second-round pick of the Carolina Panthers. As a rookie, Mingo had one of the worst receiving seasons ever by DYAR (his -230 was second only to 2006 Chris Chambers), but the Cowboys stuck to their pre-draft scouting report, hoping they could get more out of the former Ole Miss Rebel. Mingo had five catches and 46 yards after the trade.

This offseason, the Cowboys traded for former first-round picks cornerback Kaiir Elam and linebacker Kenneth Murray. Murray was the 23rd pick in the 2020 draft, six picks after Dallas drafted Lamb. Back then, the Cowboys chose to post his pre-draft interview on social media, based on how much he im-

## 2025 Cowboys Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	at PHI (Thu.)	7	WAS	13	KC (Thu.)
2	NYG	8	at DEN	14	at DET (Thu.)
3	at CHI	9	ARI (Mon.)	15	MIN
4	GB	10	BYE	16	LAC
5	at NYJ	11	at LV (Mon.)	17	at WAS (Thu./Xmas)
6	at CAR	12	PHI	18	at NYG

pressed Jones and others on the call. Elam was the 23rd pick of the 2022 draft, one selection before the Cowboys drafted Tyler Smith.

Trades can be a place where teams get good players at a discount, but neither Elam nor Murray has been great as a starter, and that quality of player is typically what is available on the free market. Those are the types of players the Cowboys tried to add as free agents. Dante Fowler, Solomon Thomas, and Payton Turner are all high draft picks with varying degrees of success. Fowler spent two years with the Cowboys before having one of his best seasons with the Commanders last year. Thomas had two of his best pass-rushing seasons while playing as a rotational piece on the Jets' defensive line. Turner was a first-round pick with New Orleans but has five sacks in four years.

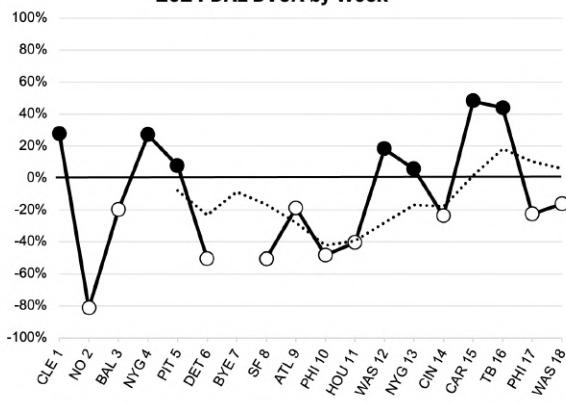
The biggest upside swing came later with the trade for George Pickens. Dallas sent a 2025 third-round pick to the Steelers, as well as a swap of 2027 fifth- and sixth-round picks, for the former second-round receiver. Pickens gives the Cowboys their best outside receiver since Amari Cooper. He is the type of outside vertical receiver who can stretch the defense and either give the Cowboys a legitimate deep threat that did not previously exist in the offense—Pickens led the NFL in targets and was 10th in DYAR on go routes in 2024—or open up the middle of the field for Lamb.

Pickens comes in with an already-defined role and the production to back it up, but the success of the other offseason additions hinges on the Cowboys providing a better landing spot and situation than the previous stops for these players. That would be supremely self-confident at any time, but is even more so now because for the first time in decades we might not really know what the Cowboys are.

Dallas has often been a team built around the stars. Those players have typically been enough to both keep this team with a high ceiling and a high enough floor. But when some of those players were hurt last season, the overall structure in place was not enough to stop Dallas from bottoming out. Given how the Cowboys have gone about signing those stars—and used that as cover to be less aggressive spending elsewhere—there's a smaller margin for error with building out the bulk of the roster. It's unclear if Dallas has created the type of environment where some of these players can find newfound success in a new location.

The Cowboys' overconfidence in their own process spread to their coaching search. When Mike McCarthy's contract expired, the Cowboys believed they could draw out the process and offer McCarthy a new deal on their terms. Reports suggest that negotiations reached a point where McCarthy no longer wanted to

2024 DAL DVOA by Week



entertain the discussions and walked away from the table. While other teams searching for head coaches were bringing in a wide range of candidates, including the hot names such as Detroit coordinators Ben Johnson and Aaron Glenn, the Cowboys stuck to a small group that included Robert Saleh, Leslie Frazier, Kellen Moore, and Brian Schottenheimer—two former defensive head coaches and the Cowboys' last two offensive coordinators.

Schottenheimer got the job—a move that was announced at 10 p.m. eastern on a Friday night—and that led to one of the strangest head coaching rollouts in recent memory. This included Jones telling Adam Schefter, “Brian Schottenheimer is known as a career assistant. He ain’t Brian no more. He is now known as the head coach of the Dallas Cowboys.” The introductory press conference featured Jones mentioning how big of a risk it was to hire someone with no head coaching experience multiple times. (*America’s Team: The Gambler and His Cowboys*, premiering August 19 on Netflix!)

It’s certainly possible that Schottenheimer is better suited to be a head coach than coordinator—that could be argued for his father Marty also—but part of the reasoning for promoting Schottenheimer was the continuity on offense, even though he did not call plays for the past two seasons under McCarthy. Yet almost immediately Schottenheimer wanted to distance himself from some of the stale and static offensive schemes McCarthy favored. During that introductory press conference, Schottenheimer gave a quick overview of what he wants to do while hitting the right modern offensive keywords. “I’m a big believer in cut splits. I’m a big believer in shifts and motions to distort things,” Schottenheimer said. “We’re going to do a great job of marrying our runs and our passes and make those look the same.”

So, the Cowboys like the idea of keeping things the same, while Schottenheimer appears to want some changes. Meeting somewhere in the middle could be good for everyone involved. We’re not far removed from Dak Prescott finishing as the second-team All-Pro at quarterback and second in MVP voting to Lamar Jackson in 2023. Prescott did a lot of heavy lifting in that offense with less schematic help than many of his peers received. In that season, Prescott had the sixth highest rate of throws into tight coverage (27.8%). Part of that comes from quarterback preference—no quarterback is more willing to throw to a covered seam—but it was also part of an offense that

didn't create many easy openings.

Without that field-stretching option, it became easier for defenses to sit on the slant to Lamb no matter how good he was at it. In 2023, Prescott targeted slants a league-high 57 times. He averaged 10.5 yards per attempt, completing 71% of them for 67.3% DVOA (12th) on those throws. Prescott finished with the 11th most throws targeting slants in 2024 despite only playing in seven games, completing 67% for 7.3 yards per attempt and 36.1% DVOA (24th).

Prescott felt the need to force more passes in 2024, and it was clear the quarterback was often pressing in an attempt to make something happen well before a midseason hamstring tear ended his year early. He finished with a 5.2% turnover-worthy pass rate, better than only Anthony Richardson, Jameis Winston, and Will Levis. While Prescott is the type of quarterback willing to test those tight windows, there is a difference between trying to thread the needle over a linebacker up the seam and throwing an obviously dangerous pass that leads to an interception. During the 2023 season, he only had a 2.7% turnover-worthy pass rate.

Opening up the field should have a positive impact for the quarterback in 2025. Even when struggling before his injury last season, Prescott ranked fifth in yards per attempt against split-safety coverages. However, it's not that Prescott didn't get the luxury of seeing those coverages often—he faced two-high at the seventh-highest rate—but rather that when teams sat in single-high, there was little the Cowboys could do. Prescott ranked 33rd in yards per attempt against single-high coverages and his 6.6% explosive play rate was the fourth lowest among quarterbacks. Defenses crowding the middle of the field left Prescott averaging 1.8% DVOA on throws over the middle, the lowest mark in the league.<sup>1</sup> The condensed nature of the passing offense was harder to overcome.

The hope is that more modern thinking and the addition of Pickens on the outside will give the offense and quarterback more options to attack. Pickens was ninth in yards per route run against single-high coverage last season and his 12 plays of 20 or more yards tied for fourth. FTN has a metric called created catches, which credits a receiver for difficult catches. Pickens had eight against single-high coverages last season, tied for second, more than any Dallas receiver had overall.

Defensively, the Cowboys move from the wild, aggressive nature of Mike Zimmer to a more what-you-see-is-what-you-get scheme from Matt Eberflus. Even if Eberflus doesn't present the same pre-snap deception or post-snap coverage changes, his defenses have been consistently good. The Bears' defense in the second half of the 2023 season was the main reason Eberflus was brought back as head coach in 2024, and even as things fell apart with his head coaching responsibilities, Chicago ranked 10th in defensive DVOA and fifth against the pass during the first half of last season.

Eberflus has a way of stressing fundamentals, which could be needed on each level of this defense. The focus on the spine of the unit should help the run defense that has struggled over the past few seasons. Osa Odighizuwa has been an underrated run defender during his career, though he's certainly better known

as a pass rusher, and athleticism could put him in a better spot to use his quickness off the line to win more often in the run game. Linebacker is the key position for this, using big and rangy players to win in coverage, fit the run, and tackle well.

If there is one way Eberflus has broken trend and gotten more aggressive, it's with a slot blitz. The Bears did not blitz often, but when they did send an extra rusher it typically came from the slot or an overhang defender. That was typically Kyler Gordon in Chicago; Gordon was fourth among cornerbacks in pressures last season with 11. That gave the Bears enough of a changeup in the pass rush to make up for a lack of traditional pressure. Chicago finally created some pressure last season but ranked 31st and 32nd in pressure rate during the previous two seasons. Dallas has been no worse than third in pressure rate since 2022, which means Eberflus has an advantage his defenses haven't had often on the defensive line.

The hallmark of an Eberflus defense has always been takeaways. Since 2019, when he took over as the defensive coordinator in Indianapolis, Eberflus defenses have finished in the top five of turnovers forced per drive more times (four) than they finished outside the top 10 (two). Cowboys corners have been aggressive in playing the ball when healthy, but that came with giving up big plays too, as was the case with Trevon Diggs in 2021 and DaRon Bland during his pick-six streak in 2022. At the height of Dan Quinn's defense, the chaos created with movement and alignments made turnovers a reliable piece of the puzzle in a way most defenses can't repeat. Eberflus has done something similar while limiting some of the big plays allowed.

Health could also be a big factor for this defense. Dallas was 24th in adjusted games lost on defense last season while missing players such as Parsons and Diggs for an extended period. When Parsons came back, the Cowboys had the eighth-best defense by DVOA from Week 10 until the end of the regular season.

There is still high-end talent on this roster. That has rarely been an issue for the Cowboys, for better or worse. For many years, that was enough—just enough to keep the team in contention. The Cowboys were reliable and known. But with the Eagles and Commanders rising, it's hard to argue the Cowboys are more than the third-best team in the division. While the Pickens trade brings upside, it was an outlier in strategy in player acquisition. That has forced the Cowboys to take swings and rely on some reclamation projects.

Maybe the Cowboys are as smart as they think, and their original evaluations of these players were correct. Players like Prescott and Parsons could be good enough to lift their respective units to contention. There's also a high chance that the depth of this roster never fully develops and the holes left by relying on rookies and second-draft additions are too much for the stars to cover up on their own.

For the first time in a while, we don't know exactly what the Cowboys are. Odds are we'll talk about them a lot as we figure it out, and that's a gamble the Cowboys are willing to make.

Dan Pizzuta

<sup>1</sup> The league-wide passing DVOA on passes up the middle was 41.6% last season; passes up the middle are much more efficient than passes to the sides.

## 2024 Cowboys by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	at CLE	W	100%	33	17	265	230	+2	27%	-19%	-23%	23%
2	NO	L	0%	19	44	353	432	-1	-82%	-22%	68%	8%
3	BAL	L	0%	25	28	412	456	-1	-20%	-5%	28%	13%
4	at NYG	W	91%	20	15	293	303	+1	27%	23%	5%	9%
5	at PIT	W	76%	20	17	445	226	-2	8%	1%	-7%	0%
6	DET	L	0%	9	47	251	492	-5	-50%	-52%	12%	14%
7	BYE											
8	at SF	L	0%	24	30	292	469	-2	-51%	-18%	26%	-7%
9	at ATL	L	11%	21	27	378	310	+1	-19%	-14%	11%	6%
10	PHI	L	0%	6	34	146	348	-3	-48%	-53%	-4%	0%
11	HOU	L	1%	10	34	388	391	-1	-40%	-21%	20%	1%
12	at WAS	W	93%	34	26	332	412	+2	18%	0%	-18%	-1%
13	NYG	W	99%	27	20	317	247	+2	5%	-5%	-20%	-10%
14	CIN	L	13%	20	27	322	433	-1	-24%	-8%	16%	1%
15	at CAR	W	100%	30	14	410	235	+3	48%	8%	-34%	6%
16	TB	W	79%	26	24	317	410	+2	44%	14%	-17%	13%
17	at PHI	L	0%	7	41	268	376	-4	-22%	-13%	7%	-2%
18	WAS	L	16%	19	23	378	269	+1	-16%	-17%	3%	4%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	-12.3%	25	3.9%	24
Unadjusted VOA	-12.8%	26	8.8%	27
Weighted Trend	-10.5%	25	-1.8%	10
Variance	3.9%	9	6.0%	24
Average Opponent	-0.6%	12	2.1%	7
Passing	0.3%	23	6.0%	16
Rushing	-11.2%	22	1.5%	29
First Down	-14.6%	27	8.0%	25
Second Down	-6.3%	22	4.2%	23
Third Down	-17.0%	26	-4.1%	13
First Half	-9.5%	25	5.4%	20
Second Half	-15.5%	25	2.5%	22
Red Zone	-47.4%	31	44.4%	32
Late and Close	0.4%	20	19.1%	29

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rank	Off	Rank	Def	Rank	ST	Rank	Off AGL	Rank	Def AGL	Rank	Off Age	Rank	Def Age	Rank	ST Age	Rank
2020	6-10	6.2	6.5	395	473	-3	-10.6%	22	-5.5%	24	8.4%	27	3.3%	7	75.6	29	42.9	18	25.2	31	26.3	15	26.2	11
2021	12-5	12.5	13.0	530	358	+14	29.3%	1	15.8%	4	-11.4%	4	2.1%	6	19.4	4	50.5	25	26.2	22	25.6	27	26.4	10
2022	12-5	11.7	10.8	467	342	+10	16.0%	7	3.6%	14	-10.6%	4	1.8%	10	45.1	23	34.7	17	26.1	25	25.8	23	25.8	22
2023	12-5	13.1	11.1	509	315	+10	19.1%	4	8.8%	9	-8.7%	5	1.6%	10	16.6	6	35.2	20	26.7	13	26.7	15	25.2	30
2024	7-10	5.7	6.7	350	468	-6	-11.6%	24	-12.3%	25	3.9%	24	4.6%	3	31.8	15	52.9	24	26.1	27	27.0	8	26.6	10

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

DAL Offense					DAL Offense vs. Opponents					DAL Defense					DAL Defense vs. Opponents										
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA
11	71%	5.2	-8.0%	30%	Base	15%	5.2	6.9%	40%	Base	23%	6.8	15.6%	11	64%	6.0	7.1%	11	64%	6.0	7.1%	11	64%	6.0	7.1%
12	11%	5.2	-0.2%	56%	Nickel	73%	5.0	-11.1%	38%	Nickel	69%	5.4	-2.7%	12	19%	6.1	-0.7%	12	19%	6.1	-0.7%	12	19%	6.1	-0.7%
21	8%	4.9	-1.8%	54%	Dime+	12%	6.4	5.4%	18%	Dime+	6%	9.0	38.2%	21	7%	6.4	1.1%	21	7%	6.4	1.1%	21	7%	6.4	1.1%
22	2%	4.8	10.1%	70%	Goal Line					Goal Line					Goal Line					Goal Line					
10	2%	5.3	-4.3%	13%																					
01	2%	6.1	60.7%	35%																					

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected		Rk	Formation		Rk	Pass Rush		Rk	Secondary		Rk	Strategy		Rk
Runs, all	+1.5%	20	Form: Single Back	77%	10	Rush 3	2.2%	23	4 DB	23%	16	Play Action	17%	30
Runs, first down	-1.1%	25	Form: Empty Back	9%	12	Rush 4	67.6%	23	5 DB	69%	8	Offensive Motion	45%	19
Runs, second-long	+4.6%	5	Form: Multi Back	14%	21	Rush 5	21.3%	10	6+ DB	6%	25	Avg Box (Off)	5.95	29
Runs, power sit.	+3.7%	18	Pers: 3+ WR	76%	5	Rush 6+	9.0%	8	Man Coverage	56%	11	Avg Box (Def)	6.16	8
Runs, behind 2H	+3.9%	13	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	16%	29	Edge Rusher Sacks	52.9%	13	MOFC	58%	17	Offensive Pace	30.12	4
Runs, ahead 2H	+2.6%	12	Pers: 6+ OL	1%	25	Interior DL Sacks	14.7%	31	CB1 on WR1	32%	22	Defensive Pace	31.55	18
Run-Pass Options	2.3%	23	Shotgun/Pistol	78%	14	Second Level Sacks	32.4%	1	S/CB Cover Ratio	13%	28	Go for it on 4th	1.20	11

Dallas was the most penalized team in the league including declined and offsetting penalties, but they were only 14th in the league with 921 penalty yards. Cowboys penalties included a league-leading 31 on special teams. The Dallas dropped from fifth to 30th in frequency of using play-action compared to 2023. No offense used play-action more often on second down than on first down but Dallas came the closest, with play-action on 24% of first-down passes and 20% of second-down passes. The Dallas threw 47% of passes to the right side of the field, higher than any other team, and 30% of passes to the left side, lower than any other team. The Cowboys led the league for the second straight year in using four or more wide receivers, although this was only 4.0% of offensive plays. The Dallas defense ranked sixth against the pass on third and fourth downs but 30th against the run. The Cowboys went from dead last in the league to No. 1 in second-level sacks, a combination of DeMarcus Lawrence's injury and Mike Zimmer's defensive style. They were led by DeMarvion Overshown (5.0), Donovan Wilson (4.5), and Eric Kendricks (3.0). The Cowboys had a big blitz of six or more defenders more than twice as often as they did the year before. Expect that to change with Matt Eberflus now in charge of the defense. The Cowboys were significantly better in nickel personnel compared to base or dime. Dallas had an average adjusted sack rate on first and second down (6.8%) and then led the league in adjusted sack rate on third and fourth down (13.7%). Cowboys opponents once again threw a lot of passes to No. 1 receivers; Dallas was first in this category in 2023 and then second in 2024 behind Washington. (Having Dallas and Washington on top of his category certainly says something about Malik Nabers and the Giants.) The Cowboys were poor in broken tackle rate (16.5%, 22nd) after leading the league with the lowest rate in 2023. Dallas was 11th in the league when using zone coverage but 27th when using man

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
C.Rush*	74	-7.6%	320	1748	5.5	5.0	60.9%	12	5
D.Prescott	76	-7.2%	305	1866	6.1	5.1	65.4%	11	8
T.Lance*	-44	-26.3%	45	243	5.4	6.0	61.0%	0	1
J.Milton	116	53.6%	29	226	7.8	3.3	78.6%	1	0

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
C.Lamb	80	-6.1%	152	101	1194	11.8	5.3	6	66%
J.Tolbert	132	7.4%	79	49	610	12.4	3.4	7	62%
B.Cooks*	-44	-22.6%	54	26	259	10.0	2.1	3	48%
K.Turpin	22	-7.3%	52	31	420	13.5	8.4	2	60%
J.Brooks	-38	-28.9%	30	12	177	14.8	3.1	1	40%
J.Mingo	-56	-54.0%	16	5	46	9.2	0.6	0	31%
R.Flournoy	-15	-26.3%	14	10	102	10.2	3.4	0	71%
G.Pickens	58	-5.5%	103	59	900	15.3	3.6	3	57%
P.Campbell	-11	-29.80%	8	6	30	5	1.5	1	75%
J.Ferguson	-176	-40.4%	86	59	494	8.4	5.2	0	69%
L.Schoonmaker	9	-3.6%	36	27	241	8.9	3.6	1	75%
B.Spann-Ford	-9	-16.4%	14	9	88	9.8	5.9	0	64%
R.Dowdle*	33	-1.8%	49	39	249	6.4	7.0	3	80%
H.Luepke	16	1.8%	16	12	111	9.3	7.0	0	75%
E.Elliott*	14	4.2%	15	12	69	5.8	8.1	0	80%
J.Williams	-15	-17.9%	70	52	346	6.7	7.6	0	74%

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
R.Dowdle*	132	5.3%	235	1079	4.6	2	3	53%
E.Elliott*	-13	-12.6%	74	226	3.1	3	1	47%
C.Rush*	-102	-104.2%	18	17	0.9	0	7	-
D.Vaughn	3	-3.4%	17	70	4.1	0	0	41%
K.Turpin	24	-8.6%	16	92	5.8	0	1	-
C.Lamb	28	-2.9%	14	70	5.0	0	0	-
H.Luepke	6	-0.4%	12	38	3.2	0	0	50%
D.Prescott	18	16.7%	11	56	5.1	1	0	-
T.Lance*	-7	-23.2%	11	41	3.7	0	0	-
D.Cook*	-15	-60.3%	8	20	2.5	0	0	38%
J.Williams	-64	-19.3%	139	513	3.7	4	2	48%
J.Milton	-5	-20.9%	7	14	2	1	1	-

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
T.Steele	RT	28	17/17	1171	7	3	46	6.2%	26	B.Hoffman	C	26	17/7	517	4	3	6	1.8%	11
C.Beebe	C	24	16/16	1061	3	3	18	2.7%	25	T.J.Bass	LG/RG	26	15/3	315	3	1	9	4.5%	--
T.Smith	LG	24	16/16	1055	7	6	19	2.9%	9	C.Edoga*	LT	28	5/4	228	2	0	6	4.2%	--
T.Guyton	LT	24	15/11	670	18	3	32	7.6%	34	A.Richards	OT	25	13/1	181	1	2	8	7.0%	--
Z.Martin*	RG	35	10/10	639	1	1	16	4.0%	27	R.Jones	LG	26	17/17	1078	7	12	25	3.8%	22

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont	
2022	4.42	4.37	17	77%	5	17%	17	1.22	16	0.93	7	27	4.7%	4	22.5%	6	37	
2023	3.85	4.24	13	76%	5	18%	15	1.08	19	0.45	27	40	6.8%	12	25.7%	7	30	
2024	4.14	4.60	11	70%	7	13%	1	1.20	18	0.33	30	38	5.9%	6	30.2%	14	25	
2024 ALY by direction:																		
Left End: 5.52 (1)				Left Tackle: 4.79 (7)				Mid/Guard: 4.62 (13)				Right Tackle: 3.98 (21)				Right End: 3.61 (20)		

With Zack Martin retired, the Cowboys have fully transitioned away from the dominant offensive lines that ruled through the final seasons of Tony Romo and early years of Dak Prescott, but they have put the resources into building this unit back up. There will be three first-round picks on the line this year as well as 2024 third-round pick Cooper Beebe at center. Tyler Booker (Alabama) is the latest first-round pick. Booker is a fluid mover for his size (6-foot-5 and 321 pounds) and was one of the best pass-protecting guards in this year's draft with a 0.5% blown block rate, according to Sports Info Solutions. Tyler Smith has emerged as one of the league's best young guards and made the Pro Bowl in two of his first three seasons. He ranked 10th among interior linemen in ESPN's pass block win rate. 2024 first-round pick Tyler Guyton struggled at left tackle as a rookie. He has hit the second-year improvement bingo—coming into offseason practices with a changed diet (no more Raising Cane's), more deliberate stretching before lifting, and getting tips from Martin and Tyron Smith. Terence Steele has been one of the league's top run-blocking tackles (ninth in run block win rate), but only three tackles allowed more pressures. Beebe transitioned from guard to center as a rookie and finished 12th among interior linemen in pass block win rate. Brian Schottenheimer was effusive with praise for Beebe during offseason workouts, noting the on-field communication has been impressive and "the command has been really cool to see" for someone new to the position. Klayton Adams comes in as the offensive coordinator under Schottenheimer after spending the previous two seasons as the Arizona Cardinals offensive line coach. The Cowboys wanted to focus on the run game with the coordinator hire and Adams helped oversee an Arizona line that was 10th in adjusted line yards last season.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
O.Odighizuwa	27	DT	17	860	48	5.6%	29	32	14	2	38	61%	83	3.5	85	4.5	19	38	2
M.Smith	24	DT	17	526	41	4.7%	50	26	6	4	36	64%	74	2.7	63	1.0	1	6	0
S.Thomas	30	DT	16	458	28	3.5%	75	19	7	4	19	63%	76	2.3	41	3.5	3	20	0

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
C.Golston*	27	DE	17	791	61	7.1%	13	46	18	9	41	73%	50	3.1	70	5.5	2	22	3
M.Parsons	26	DE	13	696	44	6.7%	20	33	18	6	25	68%	68	3.3	81	12.0	13	69	4
C.Lawson*	30	DE	15	401	15	2.0%	100	13	6	2	9	78%	32	2.3	40	5.0	8	26	1
M.Kneeland	24	DE	11	256	14	2.5%	--	10	6	5	12	75%	--	2.7	--	0.0	3	9	0
T.Wheat	26	DE	8	165	13	3.2%	--	9	3	1	10	70%	--	3.2	--	0.5	0	8	0
D.Fowler	31	DE	17	564	40	4.8%	53	30	18	9	22	68%	66	2.7	57	10.5	3	38	1
P.Turner	26	DE	16	335	23	2.7%	--	14	5	6	15	47%	--	3.7	--	2.0	1	6	4

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run				Pass Rush			vs. Pass											
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD Int	
E.Kendricks*	33	MLB	15	920	141	18.5%	5	79	19	12	100	61%	40	4.1	62	3.0	1	10	23	40.6%	76	39%	55	12.7	76	3	2
D.Overshown	25	OLB	13	709	91	13.8%	41	53	20	17	43	58%	50	3.4	23	5.0	1	19	34	55.7%	77	44%	38	10.5	73	4	1
M.Liufau	24	MLB	17	521	49	5.7%	85	28	11	6	28	71%	9	3.3	22	1.5	0	13	13	-7.0%	24	38%	57	6.7	23	3	0
D.Clark	25	OLB	14	163	25	3.5%	--	12	4	3	16	44%	--	4.5	--	0.5	0	2	8	-27.3%	--	63%	--	4.5	--	1	0
K.Murray	27	ILB	14	817	97	14.2%	35	50	15	7	50	58%	52	3.9	52	3.5	3	13	42	2.4%	39	50%	21	7.2	34	2	1
J.Sanborn	25	OLB	17	235	34	4.0%	--	15	5	3	22	45%	--	5.7	--	1.5	1	5	6	-5.3%	--	33%	--	5.2	--	3	0

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk			
2022	4.19	4.21	10	71%	23	18%	18	1.20	15	0.60	10	54	8.9%	2	33.1%	2			
2023	4.04	4.06	13	67%	15	21%	6	1.31	30	0.46	7	46	7.7%	18	33.6%	3			
2024	4.40	4.79	29	83%	32	13%	30	1.26	21	0.57	6	52	8.8%	2	37.6%	3			
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 5.14 (27)				Left Tackle: 3.98 (11)				Mid/Guard: 5.13 (30)				Right Tackle: 4.91 (27)		Right End: 4.00 (18)	

Having Micah Parsons sure makes creating a pass rush easier. Parsons was second in pressures despite only playing 13 games. Because of where he can line up, Parsons had 11 unblocked pressures, which were tied for second among edge rushers. While production vs. athleticism is a debate for many pass-rushing prospects now, second-round pick Donovan Ezeiruaku (Boston College) is a player who provided both. He tied for fourth in this draft class in pressures, per Sports Info Solutions, and his 16.5 sacks ranked second while he uses fantastic bend as a rusher (91st-percentile 3-cone and 92nd-percentile short shuttle). His wingspan (85th percentile) makes up for his lack of overall size (19th percentile height and 11th percentile weight) around the corner. Signing Osa Odighizuwa to a three-year, \$60-million deal before free agency opened might have been one of the best Cowboys moves given the \$26-million-per-year deal Milton Williams received as a free agent. Odighizuwa is only seventh months older and led all interior defenders in knockdowns last season. Mazi Smith has yet to develop into the run-stopper the Cowboys hoped for when he was drafted in the first round in 2023. Matt Eberflus noted his excitement to work with Smith back in February and there wasn't much competition brought in at nose tackle outside of seventh-round pick Jay Toia (UCLA). Linebacker is a key piece of the Eberflus defense, so he brought Jack Sanborn with him to Dallas. Sanborn developed into a nice third linebacker with the Bears and will likely hold the starting role until DeMarvion Overshown returns from injury. Overshown missed his rookie season after a torn ACL in the preseason and then tore his ACL, MCL, and PCL in December. Despite some missed tackles, the former third-round pick was breaking out in his second season, with his athleticism standing out. Reports indicate he is progressing well and could be back around Thanksgiving in a best-case scenario. Kenneth Murray has never fully translated his athleticism into consistent production at linebacker. He had his best year as a pass rusher in Tennessee but with the lack of blitzing from Eberflus, that might not be a considerable part of his game. 2024 third-round pick Marist Liufau (Notre Dame) and 2025 fifth-round pick Shemar James (Florida) provide depth. James has athleticism and range which helps with plays in the slot and as a blitzer.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run				vs. Pass														
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD Int	
J.Lewis*	30	CB	16	872	79	9.7%	31	38	17	6	27	33%	72	8.4	76	64	16.6%	70	8.3	-13.9%	28	56%	18	7.2	36	8	1
T.Diggs	27	CB	11	685	53	9.5%	36	24	8	8	17	29%	81	5.8	40	53	17.5%	60	10.1	-24.7%	12	57%	14	7.2	38	11	2
D.Bland	26	CB	7	436	46	12.9%	2	17	2	4	10	10%	92	9.5	82	52	26.9%	2	9.9	3.8%	61	44%	80	6.8	27	5	0
A.Oruwariye*	29	CB	7	286	32	9.0%	--	14	6	4	6	50%	--	4.7	--	33	26.1%	--	13.6	57.9%	--	42%	--	10.8	--	3	1
C.Carson	23	CB	6	252	31	10.2%	--	10	1	9	10	20%	--	6.5	--	32	28.7%	--	11.5	98.4%	--	41%	--	10.9	--	4	0
J.Butler	29	CB	5	160	26	10.2%	--	9	6	0	6	17%	--	11.7	--	22	31.0%	--	11.2	19.4%	--	45%	--	6.7	--	5	0
M.Hooker	29	FS	17	1063	86	10.0%	56	30	9	10	44	36%	38	8.5	67	12	2.5%	62	15.7	-28.2%	6	50%	26	6.2	16	5	2
D.Wilson	30	SS	17	1010	88	10.2%	53	43	15	12	51	43%	25	6.8	41	14	3.1%	58	4.7	26.8%	48	43%	43	11.1	60	5	1
K.Elam	24	CB	13	305	27	4.1%	-	14	5	0	8	50%	-	7.6	-	33	21.4%	--	9.6	33.6%	-	64%	-	6.8	-	2	0

Year	Pass D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	6		-16.5%	7	41.6%	32	-22.8%	2	2.6%	18	-14.9%	6	-11.0%	8	-17.3%	7
2023	7		-2.0%	13	-26.7%	4	-11.8%	5	-13.6%	8	-12.4%	9	-1.0%	13	-21.8%	4
2024	16		2.1%	19	17.8%	28	1.2%	17	19.4%	29	-15.7%	8	1.6%	17	11.0%	24

Trevon Diggs missed time in 2024 recovering from complications with his ACL injury suffered in 2023. There is no timetable for his return, but Diggs reported to mandatory minicamp to continue rehabbing after he chose to rehab away from the facility during the voluntary workouts earlier in the offseason. There had been some frustration from the team last season about how Diggs approached his rehab. 🗡️ Diggs isn't the only Dallas cornerback recovering from injury. Josh Butler (shoulder) and Caelen Carson (ACL) are both working their way back from injuries. Carson could be ready for the start of the season while Butler is not expected to be. 🗡️ Rookie third-round pick Shavon Revel Jr. (East Carolina) is also recovering from a knee injury that cut his final college season short. He reportedly suffered a setback, which could put the start of the season in jeopardy. He has length and athleticism but could use a little more technical refinement. 🗡️ Kaiir Elam only played on 27.6% of Buffalo's defensive snaps last season but opponents took advantage when he was on the field. Elam was targeted on an estimated 21.4% of his pass snaps and was susceptible to allowing big plays in coverage. He has lacked the twitch to stay with receivers after they break from the stem in their routes. 🗡️ DaRon Bland is the favorite to slide into the slot after Jourdan Lewis left in free agency. Bland suffered a stress fracture in his left foot during training camp and missed half of the season. He played fewer than 4% of his snaps in the slot last season. 🗡️ Safety is the part of the secondary that appears to be stable and consistent. Malik Hooker is a rangy deep safety who has been able to stay healthy with Dallas after injuries messed with his time in Indianapolis. Donovan Wilson can bounce from playing deep to the box and has been reliable on the field. Despite talk of him being a potential cap casualty this offseason, he enters his sixth year with the Cowboys. Markquese Bell and Juanyeh Thomas provide depth and could eventually push Wilson for playing time. Bell played as an undersized linebacker in Dan Quinn's defense during the 2023 season and while there were some flashes, playing linebacker responsibilities at 205 pounds did not go without its struggles. Thomas only played 94 defensive snaps last season but has received attention for his energy and versatility this offseason. He took some slot snaps in OTAs in an attempt to get more shots at playing time.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	1.8%	10	4.7	8	2.4	9	-2.4	22	1.7	15	3.0	8	-0.8	18
2023	1.6%	10	8.1	6	-0.8	19	3.0	4	2.5	14	-4.4	26	2.4	15
2024	4.6%	3	12.5	2	3.5	7	10.3	1	-3.9	27	2.2	10	-7.8	27

Brandon Aubrey missed a few more kicks than he did during his first season in Dallas but still has the biggest leg in the league. Aubrey's 14 made kicks of 50 or more yards, including a 65-yarder, set an NFL record. The fact the Cowboys sent him out to try 17 such kicks says as much about him as the made kicks do. His 47 overall attempts led the league. 🗡️ The punt team was a weakness on a team that otherwise ranked third in special teams DVOA. Dallas had coverage issues as the Cowboys allowed the sixth-most punt return yards. That spread into how many punts were returned as Dallas allowed the fourth-most returns (33). Bryan Anger was 13th in net yards per punt. 🗡️ KaVontae Turpin is an all-world returner. His 904 kick return yards and 33.5-yard average both led the league. Turpin had over 100 yards more than the next returner. He had a touchdown on both a kick return and a punt return and was first-team All-Pro. He was signed to a three-year extension worth \$18 million in March.

# Denver Broncos

2024 record: 10-7

Total DVOA: 16.2% (6th)

Pythagorean Wins: 11.5 (5th)

Offense: -0.6% (16th)

Snap-Weighted Age: 26.4 (19th)

Defense: -12.4% (4th)

Average Opponent: -1.6% (22nd)

Special Teams: 4.4% (4th)

2025 Mean Projection: 9.5 wins

On the Clock (0-5): 6%

Postseason Odds: 57.5%

Mediocrity (6-8): 29%

Super Bowl Odds: 5.6%

Playoff Contender (9-11): 45%

Proj. Avg. Opponent: -0.4% (18th)

Super Bowl Contender (12+): 21%

**2024:** Mediocre offense carried by a great defense.

**2025:** It's time for the offense to join the party.

The Broncos came into the 2024 season with low expectations. The decision to send first- and second-round picks to New Orleans for new head coach Sean Payton looked highly questionable after he and Russell Wilson led the offense to disappointing mediocrity in 2023. But last year, Payton put the doubts to bed. Led by Vance Joseph's defense, which likely would have won the Most Improved Unit award if such an award existed, the Broncos found themselves in the playoffs for the first time since 2015. It was a surprising success story, but not so surprising that they don't have staying power. The 2025 Broncos have divisional title aspirations and will look to become a real playoff contender, although history may not be on their side.

It's a tale as old as time in the NFL—a mediocre offense gets propped up by a strong defense, whipping the fan base into renewed optimism, only to watch the defense decline in the following season. We write about it in this book every year, that a great defense is more likely to regress than a mediocre offense is to improve. But is this always the case? Bo Nix was impressive in his rookie season and will look to take a step forward this year. Defensively, personnel turnover is often a reason for regression, but this defense has added more talent than it has lost. Can Denver be an exception to the rule and take the step from surprising playoff team to legitimate contender?

To get a better understanding of the challenge that lies ahead for Denver, it makes sense to look at similar teams over the past 10 years. Table 1 looks at teams with average offenses and great defenses and then explores how they performed the following year. (Table 1)

As theorized, four of these elite defenses regressed to bottom-10 defenses the following season. Last year's New York Jets and Cleveland Browns were also reminders that even the elite defenses that on paper should be just as good the following year can completely flip on that side of the ball. Meanwhile, only one of these teams, the 2018 Ravens, became an elite offense; 2019 was Lamar Jackson's first year as a full-time starter and his first MVP season.

Other offenses took smaller steps forward. The 2023 Cowboys got a full season of health from Dak Prescott after he played in just 12 games in 2022. The 2021 Rams had Matthew Stafford, replacing Jared Goff. You see the pattern here—outside of Cam Newton's 2018 Panthers and Kirk Cousins' 2019

Vikings (his second year in Minnesota), the improvements from these offenses appear driven by changes at the quarterback position. If Denver is going to make a jump on offense, it needs to be driven by the play of Bo Nix.

There were plenty of ways in which Nix impressed in his rookie season. He finished 16th in DYAR, just three spots below rookie phenom Jayden Daniels. He was the fourth-toughest quarterback to sack by adjusted sack rate and had a great pressure-to-sack ratio (which helps isolate the quarterback from the offensive line). He was fourth in the league in deep passing yards, eighth in FTN Fantasy's accuracy rate, and did all of this with the league's 24th best rushing attack by DVOA. That's a lot of good! Unfortunately, there was a troubling trend to the good: it mostly came against weak competition and in positive game scripts.

Nix was seventh in the NFL in DYAR and 10th in DVOA with a lead of any kind. In one-score games, he was 15th in DYAR and 16th in DVOA. And when trailing, he was 30th in both DYAR and DVOA. This is a gigantic red flag. Offensive success in the NFL is often about being able to throw the ball

**Table 1: Can Mediocre Offenses Improve While Elite Defenses Remain Strong?**

Yr	Tm	W-L	Off	Rk	Off Y+1	Rk	Def	Rk	Def Y+1	Rk
2016	ARI	7-8-1	-2.6%	19	-13.8%	27	-12.4%	2	-12.0%	4
2016	NYG	11-5	-3.9%	21	-10.6%	25	-9.6%	4	10.0%	29
2016	SEA	10-5-1	-0.7%	16	0.2%	15	-9.8%	3	-3.4%	10
2017	CAR	11-5	0.3%	14	7.3%	10	-11.5%	5	6.8%	26
2017	JAX	10-6	-1.6%	17	-20.3%	30	-16.6%	2	-9.1%	5
2018	BAL	10-6	0.9%	13	23.8%	1	-10.1%	4	-13.3%	4
2018	CHI	12-4	-0.8%	16	-10.3%	25	-28.1%	1	-8.4%	8
2018	MIN	8-7-1	-2.2%	20	3.7%	11	-11.5%	3	-12.1%	5
2019	MIN	10-6	3.7%	11	5.4%	9	-12.1%	5	7.0%	25
2019	NE	12-4	1.9%	16	-5.3%	23	-21.1%	1	5.5%	24
2020	LAR	10-6	2.6%	14	10.3%	8	-15.3%	3	-12.1%	3
2022	DAL	12-5	3.6%	14	8.9%	9	-10.6%	4	-8.9%	5
2024	DEN	10-7	-0.6%	16	--	--	-12.4%	4	--	--
2024	MIN	14-3	3.0%	15	--	--	-15.5%	2	--	--
2024	PHI	14-3	4.8%	13	--	--	-16.2%	1	--	--

## 2025 Broncos Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	TEN	7	NYG	13	at WAS
2	at IND	8	DAL	14	at LV
3	at LAC	9	at HOU	15	GB
4	CIN (Mon.)	10	LV (Thu.)	16	JAX
5	at PHI	11	KC	17	at KC (Thu./Xmas)
6	at NYJ (UK)	12	BYE	18	LAC

when the opponent knows you must throw the ball.

This trend continues when looking at down and distance splits, too. Nix was 18th in DYAR and 19th in DVOA on second-and-long or third-and-long. When looking only at third-and-long, he dropped to 18th and 21st, respectively. And the hidden truth in all of this is that all these splits say one other thing: Nix only succeeded against the worst opponents.

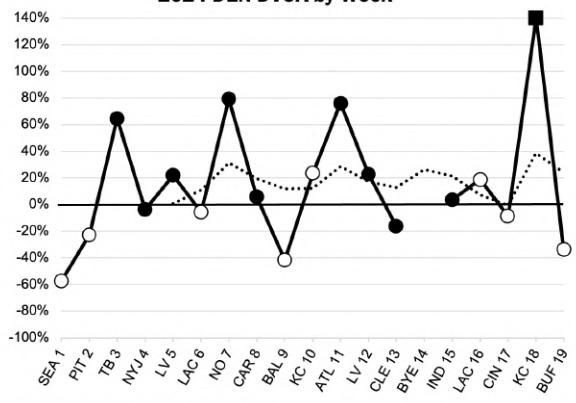
The Broncos averaged 14.3 points against teams with a negative defensive DVOA, including the playoff loss to Buffalo but not the Week 18 game against the Chiefs backups. On the other hand, the Broncos averaged 29.5 points against teams with a positive defensive DVOA and then scored another 38 against the Kansas City backups.

Simply removing Week 18's game against the resting Chiefs would move Denver's offense down to -4.9% offensive DVOA, which would have been 18th. Their defense would also drop, although the rank would still be sixth.

It's going to be an uphill battle for Denver to get there, but it's not without precedent, even for teams not making a change at quarterback. The 2019 and 2020 Bills narrowly missed the qualifications for the list of teams above because they weren't good enough in 2019. Yet, after bringing in Stefon Diggs, Josh Allen became Josh Allen and the Bills went from 22nd to fourth in offensive DVOA. If Nix doesn't take the step this year, Denver would be wise to give him a Diggs-like weapon on the outside to try and unlock his full potential. Plus, they do have one other thing working for them. Their schedule is on the easier side once again despite having to play the NFC East. They can thank the AFC South for that. This won't help them win a playoff game, but it will help them in their quest to make it to the playoffs for a second straight year.

Given Nix's struggles in obvious passing situations, step one is improving the ground game, because better down-and-distance will lead to a better performance from Nix. The offensive line did their job last year; the Broncos were first in ESPN's run block win rate and 13th in adjusted line yards but 23rd in running back yards per carry and 27th in open-field yards. All three backs posted negative rushing yards over expected according to Next Gen Stats, and it was Nix who led the team in rushing DYAR. It's no surprise that Denver used second-round draft capital on a running back (and let Javonte Williams walk in free agency) by selecting RJ Harvey. Harvey is lightning-fast, providing a burst and explosiveness this run game was sorely lacking, but he also brings to mind two similarly small-in-stature backs who previously played for Sean Payton: Alvin Kamara and Darren Sproles. Whether he

2024 DEN DVOA by Week



can live up to the comparisons long-term, let alone in Year 1, remains to be seen, but the vision is there for Harvey to ignite something on the ground that Denver did not have in 2024.

Broncos running backs also caught 75 passes, and Williams tied for seventh among backs in receptions. If a majority of those throws are going to a guy who can do serious damage in space, that's a meaningful upgrade. However, it's no guarantee that Sean Payton will play Harvey as much as we'd like. This could easily turn into a scenario where the fantasy community is screaming "Free Harvey!" every week as veteran addition J.K. Dobbins out-touches him. If Harvey wants to make sure that's not the case, he needs to improve his pass protection and let the big plays come naturally instead of trying to turn every touch into a home run.

The receiving corps returns all wide receivers and upgraded with the addition of Evan Engram. No team in the league got less production from the tight end position than Denver. It was so bad that not a single tight end for Denver even had enough targets to qualify for the DYAR leaderboard (they combined for 8 DYAR). Engram didn't have a great year in 2024, but his 1.6 yards per route run still doubled Lucas Krull, Denver's "most productive" tight end.

A big part of Denver's offense was the quick passing game, designed to get the ball into the hands of playmakers as quickly as possible, allowing them to make plays in space. Marvin Mims Jr. was exceptional in this role, averaging 3.5 YPWR on screens, quick outs, and swing passes (on 31 targets). Lil'Jordan Humphrey and Troy Franklin were not. They saw 17 and 14 of these targets, averaging 1.2 and 0.9 YPWR. Even in a down year, Engram averaged 1.5 YPWR on such targets. He was even better in 2022 and 2023 in this area. Replacing those Humphrey and Franklin touches with Engram touches will have a similarly subtle yet meaningful impact on the offense as replacing the Williams receptions with Harvey receptions. If nothing else, these are the types of plays that help keep Denver out of the obvious passing situations where Nix struggled in his rookie season.

Of course, these marginal improvements on the offensive side of the ball only have a chance to get Denver over the hump of a playoff victory if the defense remains strong. On paper, this defense got better. They brought in Dre Greenlaw and Talanoa Hufanga from San Francisco to start at inside

linebacker and safety, respectively, and used their 20th overall draft pick on Jahdae Barron, a stud cornerback out of Texas who excelled in the slot but could also potentially play on the outside in base defensive packages. Riley Moss was picked on mercilessly by Buffalo in the Wild-Card Round after being exposed by Cincinnati in Week 17, so at the very least, Barron will have a chance to earn that spot. Regardless, as if defenses needed to fear throwing the ball even more against this defense, the Broncos have now added a dynamic slot corner to a secondary with Patrick Surtain II, the reigning Defensive Player of the Year. Personnel additions aren't the only reasons to think this defense can repeat, or even improve upon, its 2024 performance.

The Broncos were third in adjusted line yards allowed and first in defensive rush DVOA. They were 12th in DVOA against deep passes, 11th in DVOA against short passes, and fifth in defensive pass DVOA. They were second in pressure rate, first in adjusted sack rate, and 14th in average time to pressure. They had no weak links, no weaknesses that opposing teams could sniff out in time. The Broncos were good on

every level and good at complementing each other. The pressure rate vs. time to pressure is a perfect example of that. They blitzed at the seventh highest rate, something they could do because they forced a lot of obvious passing situations and because they trusted their secondary. This helped them create quick pressure, but they still weren't elite in this regard. However, pressure was able to get home time and time again because the secondary didn't give opposing quarterbacks any throwing lanes. Our projection system isn't just optimistic; it believes this can be the best defensive team in the league.

This *should* be a fun and exciting season for Broncos fans. They should win plenty of games, once again by margin in a lot of them. A better, more explosive ground game will help, as will the addition of Engram. But ultimately, it's all about Nix. Can he be the same quarterback against the league's best teams as he is against the league's weakest? Not the same production level, just the same accuracy, decision-making, and poise. If he can, then this team can make noise.

Alex Bickle

## 2024 Broncos by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	at SEA	L	0%	20	26	231	304	-1	-57%	-51%	23%	17%
2	PIT	L	2%	6	13	295	251	-2	-23%	-12%	11%	1%
3	at TB	W	99%	26	7	352	223	+1	65%	6%	-47%	11%
4	at NYJ	W	82%	10	9	186	248	0	-4%	-26%	-31%	-8%
5	LV	W	99%	34	18	289	330	+3	22%	6%	-5%	12%
6	LAC	L	3%	16	23	316	350	-2	-6%	-10%	-4%	1%
7	at NO	W	100%	33	10	389	271	+1	79%	25%	-42%	12%
8	CAR	W	99%	28	14	400	284	0	6%	-10%	-15%	0%
9	at BAL	L	0%	10	41	319	396	-1	-42%	-24%	18%	0%
10	at KC	L	80%	14	16	260	300	0	23%	13%	-20%	-10%
11	ATL	W	100%	38	6	400	226	+1	76%	27%	-43%	6%
12	at LV	W	81%	29	19	325	369	+2	23%	0%	-17%	5%
13	CLE	W	57%	41	32	400	552	+1	-16%	2%	26%	7%
14	BYE											
15	IND	W	92%	31	13	193	310	+2	4%	-48%	-42%	9%
16	at LAC	L	28%	27	34	355	380	+1	19%	32%	21%	9%
17	at CIN	L	11%	24	30	329	499	0	-9%	-2%	8%	2%
18	KC	W	100%	38	0	479	98	0	141%	59%	-82%	1%
19	at BUF	L	0%	7	31	224	471	0	-34%	-14%	9%	-11%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	-0.4%	16	-12.4%	4
Unadjusted VOA	0.7%	16	-13.3%	1
Weighted Trend	6.0%	13	-11.6%	3
Variance	7.9%	26	9.4%	32
Average Opponent	0.9%	25	-0.3%	20
Passing	15.8%	15	-5.2%	5
Rushing	-12.1%	24	-24.2%	1
First Down	0.4%	14	-17.0%	2
Second Down	-4.3%	21	-14.0%	3
Third Down	4.1%	14	-1.5%	16
First Half	4.3%	14	1.8%	12
Second Half	-5.9%	20	-26.0%	1
Red Zone	12.5%	7	-16.3%	5
Late and Close	-11.0%	26	0.2%	10

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rk	Off	Rk	Def	Rk	ST	Rk	Off AGL	Rk	Def AGL	Rk	Off Age	Rk	Def Age	Rk	ST Age	Rk
2020	5-11	4.9	5.6	323	446	-16	-19.0%	28	-18.2%	30	-1.3%	15	-2.1%	24	50.2	23	58.2	26	25.3	30	26.8	8	25.4	27
2021	7-10	8.9	7.0	335	322	+1	-7.7%	21	-1.4%	19	2.3%	21	-3.9%	30	42.0	14	76.1	30	26.1	23	26.9	9	25.6	24
2022	5-12	6.3	6.7	287	359	-1	-13.2%	26	-12.5%	28	-2.8%	13	-3.4%	29	94.3	31	54.3	28	27.4	6	26.9	7	26.0	16
2023	8-9	7.0	6.1	357	413	+4	-11.9%	24	-1.6%	19	12.1%	30	1.8%	9	21.8	12	35.9	21	27.3	4	26.9	10	26.4	11
2024	10-7	11.5	9.7	425	311	+5	16.2%	6	-0.6%	16	-12.4%	4	4.4%	4	19.1	5	26.8	8	26.7	14	26.1	23	26.4	15

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

DEN Offense					DEN Offense vs. Opponents					DEN Defense				DEN Defense vs. Opponents			
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA
11	59%	5.5	5.7%	27%	Base	26%	5.3	4.4%	46%	Base	28%	5.0	-10.0%	11	63%	5.3	-8.4%
12	14%	5.4	8.2%	57%	Nickel	62%	5.6	5.6%	38%	Nickel	61%	5.4	-6.2%	12	23%	5.1	-15.6%
21	7%	5.8	4.9%	58%	Dime+	10%	5.0	-17.5%	8%	Dime+	10%	4.4	-48.5%	21	7%	5.3	-12.7%
13	3%	3.6	-33.1%	47%	Goal Line	1%	0.8	-9.5%	77%	Goal Line	1%	0.7	-67.9%	22	3%	4.0	-33.4%
22	3%	5.1	7.2%	69%									13	2%	4.6	-8.1%	
01	3%	8.8	40.9%	6%									20	1%	7.8	30.7%	
612	3%	3.1	-34.0%	79%													

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected	Rk	Formation	Rk	Pass Rush	Rk	Secondary	Rk	Strategy	Rk					
Runs, all	-0.9%	26	Form: Single Back	72%	24	Rush 3	4.3%	10	4 DB	25%	6	Play Action	27%	6
Runs, first down	-0.1%	20	Form: Empty Back	7%	19	Rush 4	59.7%	28	5 DB	61%	23	Offensive Motion	36%	31
Runs, second-long	-3.9%	23	Form: Multi Back	21%	10	Rush 5	25.8%	5	6+ DB	10%	16	Avg Box (Off)	6.16	10
Runs, power sit.	-5.1%	28	Pers: 3+ WR	65%	15	Rush 6+	10.1%	6	Man Coverage	64%	1	Avg Box (Def)	6.13	12
Runs, behind 2H	+6.9%	5	Pers: 2+ TE/6 OL	29%	17	Edge Rusher Sacks	54.0%	11	MOFC	60%	10	Offensive Pace	30.61	7
Runs, ahead 2H	-0.4%	16	Pers: 6+ OL	7%	3	Interior DL Sacks	32.5%	9	CB1 on WR1	52%	3	Defensive Pace	31.38	16
Run-Pass Options	4.9%	6	Shotgun/Pistol	73%	25	Second Level Sacks	13.5%	27	S/CB Cover Ratio	16%	23	Go for it on 4th	1.22	10

Although the Broncos ranked third in how often they used six offensive linemen, they were not very good on these plays, with just 3.9 yards per play and -26.3% DVOA. Denver passed the ball on 38% of plays with six offensive linemen, the highest rate for any of the 18 teams that used six linemen more than 20 times. The Broncos were near the bottom of the league in how often they threw to their WR2, 10.8% of targets. We had Josh Reynolds designated as WR2 early in the season and Troy Franklin later in the season. This was the third straight year where Denver ranked in the bottom three for use of motion on offense. The Broncos ranked second in frequency of play-action on second down (33%) and first in frequency of play-action on third down (8%) even though they were close to average in frequency of play-action on first down (39%). It will not shock you that Denver was once again near the bottom of the league in how often opponents threw to their No. 1 wide receivers. Only Chicago and Pittsburgh were lower. The Broncos ranked second in DVOA with the standard four pass rushers but dropped to 20th with five or more pass rushers. Denver was the only team with a better pressure rate with four pass rushers (38.9%) than with five or more (38.7%). Denver ranked 29th against passes up the middle, compared to fifth against passes to the offensive left and ninth against passes to the offensive right.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
B.Nix	506	2.2%	590	3577	6.1	5.5	66.4%	29	11

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
C.Sutton	166	2.7%	135	81	1081	13.3	2.2	8	60%
D.Vele	126	15.1%	55	41	475	11.6	3.1	3	75%
M.Mims	43	-1.7%	53	39	503	12.7	11.9	6	75%
T.Franklin	-101	-37.4%	53	28	263	9.4	5.8	2	53%
L.Humphrey*	-40	-23.5%	45	31	293	9.5	6.2	1	69%
J.Reynolds*	38	11.4%	19	12	183	15.3	2.9	1	63%
T.Sherfield	41	47.2%	9	8	83	10.4	5.0	1	89%
L.Krull	-9	-13.9%	23	19	152	8.0	3.5	0	83%
A.Trautman	7	-2.1%	22	13	188	14.5	7.5	2	59%
N.Adkins	39	29.7%	15	14	115	8.2	5.4	3	93%
G.Dulcich*	-51	-78.8%	12	5	28	5.6	3.0	0	42%
E.Engram	-36	-15.9%	64	47	365	7.8	3.2	1	73%
J.Williams*	-15	-17.9%	70	52	346	6.7	7.6	0	74%
J.McLaughlin	-33	-38.2%	27	24	76	3.2	7.0	2	89%
M.Burton	22	16.9%	10	10	65	6.5	4.1	1	100%
J.K.Dobbins	-73	-47.7%	39	32	153	4.7	6.2	0	84%

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
J.Williams*	-64	-19.3%	139	513	3.7	4	2	48%
J.McLaughlin	57	3.7%	113	496	4.4	1	0	52%
B.Nix	96	8.8%	77	444	5.8	4	1	-
A.Estime	22	-1.4%	76	310	4.1	2	2	54%
M.Mims	8	-23.5%	13	42	3.2	0	0	-
T.Badie	34	73.2%	11	86	7.8	0	0	55%
M.Burton	-1	-11.1%	7	8	1.1	1	0	57%
B.Watson	0	-6.8%	4	10	2.5	0	0	75%
J.K.Dobbins	100	3.3%	195	905	4.6	9	0	45%

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/ GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/ GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
B.Powers	LG	29	17/17	1088	6	6	23	3.4%	19	L.Wattenberg	C	28	13/13	824	5	3	9	1.8%	10
Q.Meinerz	RG	27	17/17	1088	5	7	11	1.6%	2	A.Forsyth	C	26	17/4	290	0	2	3	1.7%	--
G.Bolles	LT	33	17/17	1068	15	2	25	3.8%	7	M.Peart	OT	28	17/2	191	1	3	6	5.0%	--
M.McGlinchey	RT	30	13/13	847	6	5	30	5.7%	23	A.Palczewski	OT	26	14/3	180	1	2	6	5.4%	--
Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont		
2022	4.13	4.35	20	69%	14	18%	19	1.15	23	0.58	25	63	10.0%	30	30.4%	25	24		
2023	4.03	4.21	15	70%	12	19%	21	1.21	12	0.56	19	52	9.3%	27	38.9%	31	47		
2024	4.07	4.53	13	67%	15	18%	16	1.25	14	0.44	27	24	4.4%	2	28.5%	10	35		
2024 ALY by direction:			Left End: 5.10 (4)			Left Tackle: 5.47 (2)			Mid/Guard: 4.53 (16)			Right Tackle: 4.40 (10)			Right End: 3.37 (23)				

It would be hard to overstate how well the Broncos offensive line played in 2024. As a unit, they were first in ESPN's pass block win rate and run block win rate. Mike McGlinchey and Garrett Bolles were sixth and seventh, respectively, in pass block win rate among offensive tackles. Luke Wattenberg, Quinn Meinerz, and Ben Powers were second, third, and fifth respectively in pass block win rate among interior offensive linemen. Ben Powers was first in run block win rate among interior offensive linemen. He was the only Bronco in the top 10 of run block win rate, so their team success in that metric was a product of their ability to work together. The Broncos were first and fifth in pass block and run block win rates in 2023, as well, albeit with a slightly different group of players. The offensive line was only 13th best in adjusted line yards, but they did have a favorite run concept—they were third in adjusted line yards on outside zones. Given RJ Harvey's size, vision, and burst, this outside zone strength could be a perfect fit. Bo Nix was pressured at the ninth-lowest rate among qualified quarterbacks, and his average time-to-pressure was the 12th highest. He averaged the fifth-highest time-to-throw. Since he had the fourth-lowest adjusted sack rate, this was not an indication that he was holding the ball too long, but rather an indication that he was taking the time the offensive line afforded him. Nix was blitzed at the 10th-highest rate, making these numbers even more impressive. Nix also ranked third in the NFL in scrambles behind fellow rookies Jayden Daniels and Caleb Williams. Part of his development will be using his legs to extend plays and find receivers downfield instead of quickly lowering his eyes and running. The continuity and strength of the offensive line provides an ideal environment for that growth to occur.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
Z.Allen	28	DE	16	964	62	7.4%	13	54	25	12	45	89%	2	1.2	8	8.5	33	59	1
J.Franklin-Myers	29	DE	17	533	40	4.5%	57	35	14	2	29	86%	7	1.2	6	7.0	10	39	0
M.Roach	27	DT	17	489	43	4.9%	47	34	11	11	35	80%	23	2.1	35	2.5	5	18	2
D.J.Jones	30	DE	17	465	45	5.1%	41	37	4	6	40	80%	23	1.9	22	1.0	1	13	5
J.Jackson	27	DE	17	310	17	1.9%	--	12	1	3	13	69%	--	2.8	--	1.0	1	10	0

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
J.Cooper	27	OLB	17	820	59	6.7%	19	46	21	8	35	83%	22	2.3	38	10.5	9	54	1
N.Bonitto	26	OLB	17	708	51	5.8%	31	37	21	12	26	62%	81	3.0	67	13.5	12	49	3
J.Elliss	22	OLB	17	434	32	3.6%	--	22	10	1	15	80%	--	1.8	--	5.0	0	20	2
D.Tillman	27	OLB	12	242	22	3.5%	--	16	8	4	16	69%	--	2.5	--	5.0	2	23	2

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush				vs. Pass									
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
C.Barton*	29	ILB	17	1053	109	12.3%	51	60	14	6	63	62%	37	4.1	66	1.5	0	13	38	-14.7%	15	39%	53	10.0	70	5	2
J.Strnad	29	ILB	17	676	72	8.1%	74	49	18	11	41	66%	23	3.2	19	3.0	1	13	33	9.4%	52	48%	26	7.4	38	3	0
A.Singleton	32	ILB	3	190	32	20.5%	--	20	6	5	22	73%	--	3.9	--	0.0	2	2	10	24.0%	--	40%	--	6.9	--	1	1

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk			
2022	4.45	4.69	24	74%	29	14%	28	1.16	12	0.77	18	36	6.6%	23	26.3%	20			
2023	5.21	4.76	31	51%	1	16%	23	1.34	32	1.27	31	42	8.2%	8	28.0%	20			
2024	3.86	3.88	3	62%	10	23%	3	1.05	5	0.64	8	63	9.6%	1	38.8%	2			
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 5.01 (25)				Left Tackle: 3.94 (8)				Mid/Guard: 3.83 (2)				Right Tackle: 3.72 (9)		Right End: 3.15 (10)	

Like the offensive line, the Denver defensive front was stellar in ESPN's win rates based off Next Gen Stats tracking. The Broncos were second in pass rush win rate and eighth in run stop win rate. Nik Bonitto was 15th in pass rush win rate for edge rushers and finished third in total sacks with 13.5. Zach Allen was third in pass rush win rate and tied for first (with Chris Jones) in total pressures for interior defensive linemen. D.J. Jones and Malcolm Roach, rotating nose tackles in the base 3-4, were second and seventh, respectively, in run stop win rate among interior defensive linemen. John Franklin-Meyers starts opposite of Allen and while he didn't flash the same boxscore upside as Allen, he's arguably an even better all-around player. Jonathan Cooper rounds up the starting pass rushers as the other outside linebacker. He tied for 12th in sacks with 10.5. There are no superstars on this front, but they're all good, they're all productive, and they're all returning for 2025. Denver even used the draft to add depth and athleticism to this group with Sai'vion Jones (LSU) in Round 3 and Que Robinson (Alabama) in Round 4. Both are edge rushers, but only Jones is likely to make an impact this coming season with his NFL-ready explosiveness. Alex Singleton is the closest thing to a weak link in the front seven, especially when asked to drop into coverage. He is, however, strong against the run. Dre Greenlaw has been brought in to play alongside Singleton and Greenlaw is amongst the best middle linebackers in the game. He's excellent against the run and above average in coverage. This defense was already third in adjusted line yards allowed and first in defensive rush DVOA, so the addition of Greenlaw makes them downright scary to try to run the ball against. The defensive front and secondary work perfectly together. By being so stout against the run, they force opponents into obvious passing situations, where both the secondary and pass rush thrive. They allowed a 27.6% success rate on first-down rushes, best in the league by four percentage points. On second- or third-and-long, the Broncos had 31 sacks and a 13.0% adjusted sack rate, both best in the NFL. Their 39.1% pressure rate in these downs and distances was second best. Interestingly, they were only 17th in average time-to-pressure in this split. This pattern emerges when looking at first downs, too. They led the league in first-down sacks with twenty, first-down adjusted sack rate at 9.1%, and first-down pressure rate at 34.2%. Yet, they were 18th in average time-to-pressure despite blitzing at the fifth-highest rate. There's no mystery here. The pass rush dramatically benefits from the elite coverage in the secondary. Not only does the strength of the secondary allow them to bring extra rushers, but it prevents open throwing lanes, forcing opposing quarterbacks to hold the ball longer than they'd like.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age Pos	Overall					vs. Run					vs. Pass														
		G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTKl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int	
P.J.Locke	28 SS	15	1000	75	9.6%	62	21	9	8	26	35%	44	7.3	46	20	3.9%	50	4.4	42.1%	58	45%	40	5.4	10	2	0
P.Surtain	25 CB	16	978	56	6.7%	76	27	9	0	12	58%	19	8.2	74	64	12.9%	91	8.4	-42.6%	2	52%	47	5.7	4	11	4
B.Jones	27 FS	16	975	125	15.0%	7	49	19	12	53	38%	36	7.0	44	33	6.7%	27	6.8	14.9%	38	48%	33	7.5	33	10	3
J.McMillian	25 CB	17	870	91	10.3%	23	44	20	8	23	52%	29	4.5	19	102	23.1%	12	7.6	-4.5%	45	61%	7	6.2	19	10	2
R.Moss	25 CB	14	835	94	12.9%	3	39	14	10	26	38%	58	6.6	54	96	22.7%	14	12.3	41.0%	93	52%	43	7.3	39	8	1
L.Wallace*	30 CB	13	307	30	4.4%	--	11	6	1	5	40%	--	7.2	--	26	16.7%	--	10.4	16.8%	--	38%	--	10.5	--	2	0
D.Key	28 FS	17	251	25	2.8%	--	6	5	1	10	30%	--	4.9	--	7	5.5%	--	12.0	-5.1%	--	29%	--	13.7	--	0	0
T.Hufanga	26 SS	7	308	38	11.0%	42	12	5	4	22	45%	21	5.9	26	5	3.5%	--	9.4	9.2%	--	20%	--	10.0	--	0	0

Year	Pass D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	10	-13.1%	9	-8.1%	12	-19.5%	3	-17.8%	5	-11.9%	7	3.2%	21	-0.4%	15	
2023	25	0.9%	15	13.7%	23	1.2%	18	5.3%	18	6.0%	25	33.5%	32	13.3%	25	
2024	5	-23.8%	6	6.2%	20	6.2%	25	-3.8%	16	-1.7%	18	-28.2%	2	19.0%	29	

The secondary revolves around Patrick Surtain II. Vance Joseph was extremely willing to put Surtain in tough spots, knowing how good he is. Denver tied with Detroit for the highest man coverage rate and blitzed a lot. They also routinely gave the other corners help, almost always leaving Surtain on an island. The addition of Jahdae Barron in the slot should help them give more help to Riley Moss, the weak link in the secondary. He ranked dead last in coverage DVOA in 2024. Kris Abrams-Draine and Damarri Mathis will try to steal the second outside corner job from Moss; both were more effective, albeit in limited playing time. 📺 Denver ranked third in DVOA in zone coverage, but 20th in man coverage, so it's possible that we'll see a shift towards zone in 2025. This is also likely why they spent a first-round pick on Barron. Having one weak link instead of two in coverage is a huge upgrade. 📺 This secondary is known for its coverage prowess, but they're also excellent against the run. It would be easy for Surtain, especially, to claim he's too important to put his body on the line against the run, but he's an absolute dog instead. Even Abrams-Draine and Mathis brought a consistent aggressiveness against the run. Moss better watch out; they're coming for his job. It's fair to question if the rookie slot corner can support the run as well as these more established guys, but Barron was used as a box safety and hybrid corner/linebacker at times in college, so he's at least prepared mentally for the job. 📺 There's more personnel turnover at safety, but largely, this defense has more continuity than most. Talanoa Hufanga struggled in coverage after returning from injury for San Francisco last year, but he was his usual self against the run. That makes him a great fit opposite Brandon Jones, who was good against the run but elite in coverage. The Broncos were 12th in DVOA allowed vs. deep passes. Considering how often they blitzed and how much man coverage they played instead of the two high shells that so many defenses are employing to take away deep passes, that's impressive. Jones was a big reason why.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	-3.4%	29	-2.8	22	0.9	19	-9.1	32	-0.5	17	-6.7	30	-15.2	32
2023	1.8%	9	-6.1	27	-1.1	21	0.8	10	8.7	4	7.4	4	5.2	9
2024	4.4%	4	7.6	5	1.7	12	1.3	10	3.2	11	9.3	2	-2.5	20

The Broncos spent a sixth-round draft pick on Jeremy Crashaw, a punter out of Florida. He's an Australian with a rugby background and a big leg. He was considered the most powerful of the punters on the board so we can expect some booming punts at Denver's elevation. 📺 Speedster Marvin Mims handled return duties last year and is expected to do the same this year. Denver was in the top 10 for both kick and punt returns, so if Mims becomes too important of an offensive piece to be tasked with return duties, it would hurt Denver's special teams. 📺 Wil Lutz improved in his second season with the Broncos, particularly on kickoffs.

# Detroit Lions

2024 record: 15-2	Total DVOA: 34.9% (2nd)	2025 Mean Projection: 10.7 wins	On the Clock (0-5): 2%
Pythagorean Wins: 13.0 (1st)	Offense: 19.9% (3rd)	Postseason Odds: 76.9%	Mediocrity (6-8): 15%
Snap-Weighted Age: 26.7 (11th)	Defense: -9.5% (5th)	Super Bowl Odds: 22.2%	Playoff Contender (9-11): 44%
Average Opponent: 2.7% (8th)	Special Teams: 5.5% (1st)	Proj. Avg. Opponent: 3.6% (6th)	Super Bowl Contender (12+): 39%

2024: Nigh-historic regular-season excellence, bumbling playoff pratfall. Wait ... is this the *Ravens* chapter?

2025: They're not changing much. Why would they?

The 2024 Lions were better than you remember.

Last year's Lions defeated opponents by scores such as 47-9, 52-14, and 52-6. When they needed to beat the Vikings—a 14-win team seeking a first-round playoff bye in the season finale—they knocked the self-esteem right out of their division rivals in a 31-9 blowout. Their only regular-season losses were close calls against the Buccaneers and Bills, both playoff teams.

The Lions led the NFL with 33.2 points per game in 2024, the highest figure since the Ravens also scored 33.2 points per game in 2019. The Lions' scoring differential of +13.1 points per game was also the highest since the 2019 Ravens (+15.6).

The Lions held the fifth-highest DVOA rating through Week 12 in modern NFL history, placing them in the same company as teams such as the 1985 Bears and 2007 Patriots. They fell off late, but not by much, and injuries were the obvious culprit. The Lions defense suffered 86.5 Adjusted Games Lost to injuries, the sixth-highest total since 2001, with Aidan Hutchinson pictured on the cover of their Tolkien-length injury reports. None of the other teams on the 21st-century most-defensive-injuries lists also found themselves on the same lists as teams like the 2007 Patriots. In fact, none of them even finished over .500 (Table 1).

The Lions you remember, the team that got sucker punched by the Commanders in the playoffs and couldn't claw back onto

their feet, was without opening-day defensive starters Hutchinson, Carlton Davis, Alim McNeill, Kyle Peko, and Derrick Barnes, plus Marcus Davenport, Malcolm Rodriguez, Emmanuel Moseley, and second-round pick Ennis Rakestraw, four defenders expected to play major roles entering last year's training camp. Linebacker Alex Anzalone and safety Ifeatu Melifonwu had only recently returned to the lineup. The makeshift Lions defense survived for months by blitzing judiciously, crossing their fingers with mercenaries of dubious value (Za'Darius Smith helped a bit; Jamal Adams and Kwon Alexander did not), and by outscoring opponents in the first half so they could run the football down their gullets in the second.

The Lions you remember, the ones that coughed up 45 points to a wild-card upstart, were poised to take a 14-3 lead on the Commanders when Jared Goff got strip-sacked on third-and-1 in the red zone. The fumble sparked a chain-reaction nightmare. Jayden Daniels found Zach Ertz on fourth-and-3 near the goal line. Terry McLaurin took a routine screen pass 59 yards. Goff air-mailed a pick-six. Dyami Brown outran Terriion Arnold on a deep crosser. Goff underthrew Jameson Williams in the end zone just before halftime. Daniels danced away from Lions blitzes. Josh Paschal whomped Daniels after a routine handoff to give the Commanders 15 free yards. And, most memorably, Williams threw an interception on a fourth-quarter gadget play, with the Lions trailing by 10 points.

There's a lot to unpack from the Commanders loss: Goff's futility when pressing, the team's lack of composure as things went sideways, Dan Campbell's signature hyper-aggressiveness curdling into counterproductivity. But the Lions looked like an excellent team, albeit a self-destructive one, right up until the moment Williams chucked that wobbler in the general direction of Jamhyr Gibbs' tuchus.

Ah, but the memory plays tricks, and "offseason needs" narratives can snowball like a Divisional Round playoff upset. The severity of the Lions' defensive injury rash was masked by the good health of their offense, which finished 2024 with the second-fewest injuries in the NFL, per AGL. Hutchinson was the only superstar to get injured, so a crisis that forced the Lions to scrape the bottom of their practice squad was usually summarized as "Hutch and some other guys," minimizing just what a feat it was for the Lions to clinch a first-round bye under such circumstances. The offseason Lions storyline was soon distilled all the way down to *this team needs another edge rusher*.

**Table 1. Worst Defensive AGL, 2001-2024**

Year	Team	AGL	W-L	Def DVOA	Rk
2021	NYJ	101.3	4-13	16.8%	32
2018	TB	91.4	5-11	16.4%	32
2021	BAL	88.0	8-9	10.0%	28
2020	SF	87.9	6-10	-9.8%	7
2016	CHI	87.5	3-13	6.1%	24
<b>2024</b>	<b>DET</b>	<b>86.5</b>	<b>15-2</b>	<b>-9.5%</b>	<b>5</b>
2022	TEN	85.6	7-10	1.7%	19
2015	NYG	85.6	6-10	10.7%	29
2019	NYJ	83.7	7-9	-4.1%	13
2024	LV	79.1	4-13	1.7%	18
2020	NYJ	77.3	2-14	4.3%	21
2024	SF	76.2	6-11	-1.6%	13

## 2025 Lions Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	at GB	7	TB (Mon.)	13	GB (Thu.)
2	CHI	8	BYE	14	DAL (Thu.)
3	at BAL (Mon.)	9	MIN	15	at LAR
4	CLE	10	at WAS	16	PIT
5	at CIN	11	at PHI	17	at MIN (Thu./Xmas)
6	at KC	12	NYG	18	at CHI

Fair enough. That's a reasonable take. The Lions certainly missed Hutchinson during the final two-thirds of the season and could have used him against the Commanders. And what defense *wouldn't* benefit from a half-dozen more sacks? But the Lions' perceived need at edge rusher took on its own gravitational pull during the winter hot stove season. Most likely landing spot for Joey Bosa? The Lions. Trey Hendrickson is disgruntled? The Lions should trade for him. Writing a mock draft? Just mock an edge rusher to the Lions, or hallucinate something really juicy like a blockbuster trade for Micah Parsons.

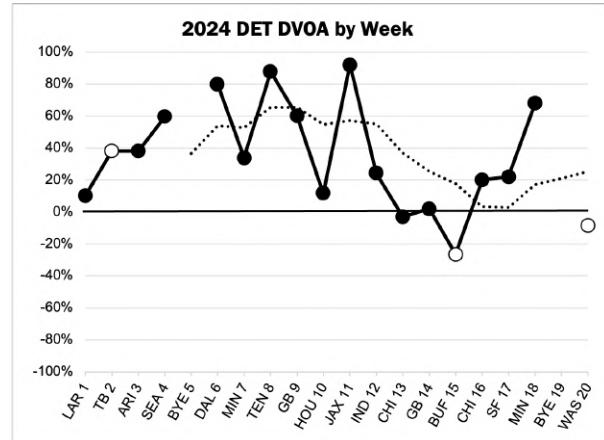
By the time Lions general manager Brad Holmes spoke to the media at the scouting combine, the Lions' "need" for an edge rusher had become a fan obsession. Holmes sounded a little like an exasperated kindergarten teacher explaining why the class cannot eat candy for lunch every day. "There's not a lot of those guys available," Holmes said, his eyes glazing over from the repetitive questioning. "Just because we lost a star pass rusher due to injury, that doesn't mean that other teams are going to say, 'Hey, we have a star pass rusher. I know you lost one, but we have one. Would you like to have this one?'"

And so free agency passed without the Lions adding an edge rusher. Then the first five rounds of the draft passed without the Lions adding an edge rusher, though they did select Ohio State defensive tackle Tyleik Williams, nicknamed "Kung Fu Panda," in the first round. Boise State sixth-round pick Ahmed Hassanein, a bit of a project (he grew up in Egypt), was the Lions' only addition to its edge rusher corps.

Oh, Holmes didn't sit around and do nothing to improve the pass rush. He re-signed Davenport, Barnes, Al-Quadin Muhammad, Levi Onwuzurike and some of the really obscure depth-chart denizens (Pat O'Connor, Mitchell Agude) who made cameos during the injury crisis.

Onwuzurike, an interior defender who often slid outside during Hutchinson's absence, is arguably the best player of the returnees. He recorded 28 pressures in 2024. Muhammad, a useful situational edge rusher for the Colts for many years, had a few big games last year, including five pressures of Sam Darnold in the season finale. Davenport is the biggest name of the bunch: a Jadeveon Clowney-shaped athlete who never lived up to the potential that made the Saints trade two first-round picks for him.

Meanwhile, McNeill (once he returns from a late-season ACL injury), Williams, and D.J. Reader, with Onwuzurike in a swing role, will form a stout interior defensive line. Opponents will only be able to double-team Hutchinson so often



with a rotation of these guys rushing up the gut. And Paschal has shown promise as the beefy anvil to Hutchinson's hammer. Throw in a solid linebacker corps headlined by Jack Campbell and Anzalone, and the Lions will field a darn good defensive front that will both pressure opposing quarterbacks and remain stout against the run.

The secondary should also improve. Arnold grew from a human penalty flag into a decent starter as a rookie, Ennis Rakestraw will be healthy enough to add depth. Dependable free agent acquisition D.J. Reed replaces the oft banged-up and mildly disgruntled Davis.

Adding Bosa or Tank Lawrence would not have hurt, and the Campbell/Holmes administration is cashing in on some benefit of the doubt by relying so heavily on in-house players. But remember how good the Lions were with half of the guys from the last four paragraphs on injured reserve: Detroit still stands to gain a lot of ground on defense simply by getting healthy.

The other big Lions offseason stories—and sources of fan agita—were the departures of coordinators Ben Johnson to the Bears and Aaron Glenn to the Jets. Both have been hot head-coaching candidates for two years. Johnson, who nearly became the Commanders head coach before a last-second change of heart in 2024, earned supergenius cred as the architect of Campbell's offense and the refurbisher of Goff. Glenn, who appeared to be on thin ice early in his Lions career, polished his CV by keeping the defense afloat during last season's injury plague.

Johnson and Glenn cannibalized Campbell's staff. Glenn tagged passing game coordinator Tanner Egstrand as the Jets' offensive coordinator and tight ends coach Steve Heiden for their offensive line. Johnson got receivers coach Antwaan Randle El and some lower-level assistants in the divorce. The Lions retained special teams coordinator Dave Fipp, defensive coordinator (formerly linebackers coach) Kelvin Shepherd, quarterbacks coach Mark Brunell, offensive line coach Hank Fraley, and others, but Campbell was forced to look outside the organization for a new offensive coordinator in order to prevent brain drain.

John Morton and Campbell were assistants on Sean Payton's Saints staff in 2016. (So was Glenn.) Morton became Todd Bowles' offensive coordinator for the 2017 Jets, where

he was saddled with Josh McCown, Bilal Powell, Jermaine Kearse, and Robby Chosen as his core offensive battery. Tossed back into the assistant pool, Morton landed on Jon Gruden's staff just in time for the Antonio Brown chaos and Gruden's slow-motion meltdown. Campbell hired Morton as a "senior assistant" in 2022, when the Lions turned the corner. Payton then picked Morton up as his passing game coordinator for the Broncos. Morton helped Payton and Joe Lombardi craft the offense that turned Russell Wilson into Checkdown Charlie and then transformed rookie Bo Nix from a walking screen-pass dispensary into a playoff-caliber game manager.

"I'm not changing much," Morton said at the start of training camp. "I mean, why?" It's hard to argue with his reasoning. Morton is a 55-year-old career second lieutenant, but any coordinator would look like a downgrade from Johnson. Morton at least understands his assignment.

The other new offensive voice in Detroit is David Shaw, who enjoyed early success as Stanford's head coach in the 2010s but couldn't keep pace with all heck breaking loose in college football in the 2020s. Shaw was a candidate to coach the Broncos when they hired Payton—a Broncos minority owner and influential Stanford alum whose name rhymes with Bondaleeza Trice is rumored to have pushed hard for him—but ended up with a front office role instead. Shaw's Stanford teams were known for their Christian McCaffrey- and Bryce Love-fueled running games, making him an odd choice as the passing game coordinator. Shaw will likely serve as more of a facilitator for Morton, Brunell, and Campbell.

All the fussing about the offensive staff is important because Johnson's offense was such a precision-tuned machine, custom built around both the Lions' best assets (their offensive line, running backs, and slot players) and Goff's specific strengths and weaknesses.

Detroit used play-action on 34.6% of all dropbacks in 2024, the highest figure in the NFL. The Lions ranked sixth in 2023 and fifth in 2022. Last year, they threw just 183 passes along the sidelines, the lowest figure in the league, according to Sports Info Solutions. The league listed 27.5% of their throws in the "short middle" of the field, with no other offense above 22.4%. The Lions' average depth of target of 6.6 yards was the third lowest in the NFL in 2024; they also had the third-lowest depth of target in 2023 at 6.9 yards.

Meanwhile, the Lions running game relied largely on outside zone runs (second in the NFL behind the Falcons), but with a kitchen-sink assortment of counters and pulling-line-man concepts sprinkled in to take advantage of the talents of Penei Sewell and other blockers, and of course of Gibbs and David Montgomery.

Many of the statistical splits listed above are the logical re-

sult of an offense built around the league's best offensive line, a great slot receiver in Amon-Ra St. Brown, the Sonic-and-Knuckles backfield, a solid tight end in Sam LaPorta, and a veteran pocket passer. The fact that the Lions spent so many second halves icing wins also impacts those splits: it's easy to rely on outside zone runs and play-action dump-offs when leading by three scores. But what happens if the Lions find themselves in more close games? What happens if Morton and Shaw indeed have to make changes?

The answer, according to our projections, is that they won't and they shouldn't. The offensive coaching departures are accounted for by our system, but the Lions return every offensive starter except Frank Ragnow and Kevin Zeitler, as well as many key role players. Glenn's departure is also an issue, but the Lions will be getting so many defensive starters back that the returns will offset any slippage. The 34-31 and 31-29 wins over tougher opponents from 2024 will be replaced by wins by scores more like 27-20. Weaker opponents will still be pulverized.

The playoff collapse against the Commanders left the Lions with three lingering intangible worries. One is that Campbell is too aggressive of a gambler, calling (or at least signing off on) risky trick plays at inopportune moments. (Think: the *I'm going for two no matter how often we're penalized* sequence against the Cowboys in 2023.) The second is that Goff remains a big-game bungler, a concern dating back to before his Super Bowl LII performance with the Rams. The third is that Lions are still haunted by the Curse of Bobby Layne; or less poetically, that the players themselves feel the crushing weight of decades of failure as they approach the Super Bowl. These worries fed each other in that playoff disaster: coaches got too aggressive, leading to a Goff mistake, leading to defenders gambling and committing dumb penalties, leading to another Goff mistake, leading to a ridiculously over-aggressive play call. There may be legitimate reasons to doubt the Lions next January, and to study the point spread and injury report carefully before big Sunday night showdowns in Kansas City and Philadelphia.

According to our projections, however, the Lions are outstanding enough in all three phases to produce lopsided victories that are safely out of reach of a quarterback blunder or coaching quirk. And Campbell is scarier than any imagined curse. The Lions should easily reach the playoffs and be one of the teams to beat when they arrive there. All they have to do is be roughly as great, and a little healthier on defense, compared to last year.

Though, if they had just signed Joey Bosa ... oh, never mind.

Mike Tanier

## 2024 Lions by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	LAR	W	64%	26	20	363	387	0	10%	2%	-5%	4%
2	TB	L	97%	16	20	463	216	-1	38%	-4%	-39%	3%
3	at ARI	W	96%	20	13	373	277	0	38%	9%	-25%	4%
4	SEA	W	96%	42	29	389	516	+2	60%	68%	15%	6%
5	BYE											
6	at DAL	W	100%	47	9	492	251	+5	80%	32%	-52%	-4%
7	at MIN	W	87%	31	29	391	383	0	34%	26%	0%	8%
8	TEN	W	100%	52	14	225	416	+4	88%	7%	-23%	58%
9	at GB	W	98%	24	14	261	411	+1	60%	32%	-21%	7%
10	at HOU	W	56%	26	23	345	248	-3	12%	-13%	-26%	-1%
11	JAX	W	100%	52	6	645	170	+1	92%	50%	-42%	-1%
12	at IND	W	99%	24	6	390	268	0	24%	0%	-15%	9%
13	CHI	W	85%	23	20	405	301	-1	-3%	11%	6%	-9%
14	GB	W	18%	34	31	391	298	0	2%	10%	12%	3%
15	BUF	L	1%	42	48	521	559	-1	-26%	24%	42%	-8%
16	at CHI	W	99%	34	17	475	382	+2	20%	36%	19%	4%
17	at SF	W	76%	40	34	439	475	+2	22%	47%	33%	8%
18	MIN	W	99%	31	9	394	262	-2	68%	17%	-49%	2%
19	BYE											
20	WAS	L	17%	31	45	521	481	-5	-8%	9%	14%	-3%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	19.9%	3	-9.5%	5
Unadjusted VOA	20.6%	3	-5.4%	5
Weighted Trend	22.5%	3	-4.2%	7
Variance	4.6%	14	8.0%	30
Average Opponent	-2.0%	4	1.0%	11
Passing	33.5%	6	-7.5%	4
Rushing	12.1%	2	-13.3%	10
First Down	24.7%	2	-13.0%	5
Second Down	10.2%	8	2.0%	19
Third Down	25.8%	4	-21.8%	2
First Half	25.1%	2	0.8%	10
Second Half	14.3%	7	-19.6%	4
Red Zone	22.7%	3	-19.7%	2
Late and Close	19.9%	6	-2.4%	9

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rk	Off	Rk	Def	Rk	ST	Rk	Off AGL	Rk	Def AGL	Rk	Off Age	Rk	Def Age	Rk	ST Age	Rk
2020	5-11	4.8	5.6	377	519	-9	-19.2%	29	-1.5%	19	19.7%	32	1.9%	11	32.5	12	51.1	22	26.8	14	26.6	10	26.1	16
2021	3-13-1	4.9	4.7	325	467	-4	-25.8%	29	-16.5%	29	10.6%	29	1.3%	10	61.6	27	60.8	28	24.9	32	25.8	24	25.1	30
2022	9-8	9.1	9.2	453	427	+7	5.7%	9	11.2%	7	7.2%	27	1.8%	9	70.0	28	38.8	19	25.7	27	24.8	32	25.5	25
2023	12-5	10.2	10.8	461	395	0	17.0%	7	13.8%	5	-3.2%	13	0.0%	19	24.6	13	42.1	23	26.2	21	25.5	29	26.1	19
2024	15-2	13.0	13.5	564	342	9	34.9%	2	19.9%	3	-9.5%	5	5.5%	1	10.1	2	86.5	32	27.7	4	25.6	29	26.6	11

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

DET Offense					DET Offense vs. Opponents					DET Defense					DET Defense vs. Opponents										
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA
11	55%	6.7	28.5%	36%	Base	28%	6.5	28.4%	47%	Base	39%	5.5	-12.9%	11	66%	6.3	-7.4%	12	23%	5.1	-16.5%	21	5%	8.1	34.5%
12	33%	6.3	19.4%	55%	Nickel	64%	6.3	19.6%	46%	Nickel	53%	6.1	-5.6%	13	2%	2.7	-54.7%	611	1%	3.2	-33.3%	22	5%	8.1	34.5%
612	5%	4.8	18.4%	74%	Dime+	7%	6.4	28.4%	31%	Dime+	7%	6.6	-15.2%	23	7%	2.7	-54.7%	21	5%	8.1	34.5%	24	23%	5.1	-16.5%
13	4%	5.8	39.1%	56%	Goal Line	1%	2.9	52.5%	38%					24	18%	1.1	33.3%	22	1%	3.2	-33.3%	23	2%	2.7	-54.7%
21	2%	5.7	-40.5%	37%																					

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected		Rk	Formation		Rk	Pass Rush		Rk	Secondary		Rk	Strategy		Rk		
Runs, all	+3.4%	9	Form: Single Back	74%	18	Rush 3		3.3%	15	4 DB		36%	1	Play Action	35%	1
Runs, first down	+1.6%	16	Form: Empty Back	6%	22	Rush 4		59.5%	30	5 DB		53%	30	Offensive Motion	59%	6
Runs, second-long	+10.4%	1	Form: Multi Back	20%	12	Rush 5		24.9%	8	6+ DB		7%	23	Avg Box (Off)	6.27	3
Runs, power sit.	+7.9%	13	Pers: 3+ WR	56%	24	Rush 6+		12.3%	1	Man Coverage		63%	2	Avg Box (Def)	6.31	2
Runs, behind 2H	+2.5%	16	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	43%	6	Edge Rusher Sacks		48.6%	19	MOFC		59%	15	Offensive Pace	30.66	8
Runs, ahead 2H	-2.2%	23	Pers: 6+ OL	6%	5	Interior DL Sacks		27.0%	20	CB1 on WR1		36%	16	Defensive Pace	31.34	15
Run-Pass Options	2.5%	21	Shotgun/Pistol	64%	32	Second Level Sacks		24.3%	11	S/CB Cover Ratio		18%	18	Go for it on 4th	1.95	1

Detroit used the pistol on just 1.6% of plays, the fewest of any offense in the NFL. (This was the first year we have tracked where every NFL team used the pistol on at least a handful of plays.) The Lions had only seven dropped passes according to FTN Data charting, the lowest figure in the NFL. The Lions offense ranked second in adjusted sack rate on first and second down (4.6%) but 20th with double the adjusted sack rate on third and fourth down (9.3%). The Detroit pass defense faced more deep passes (16 or more air yards) than any other defense, 24% of passes. The Lions ranked first in DVOA on shorter passes but 15th on deep passes. The Lions were dead last in the league in how often opponents threw to running backs, just 12.0% of passes. They were also last in 2021 and 2022 and they were 31st in 2023. Detroit led the league with 184 broken tackles although they were second behind Green Bay in broken tackle rate. For the second straight year, Detroit excelled against wide receiver screens, allowing just 4.1 yards per play with -48.5% DVOA. For the fourth straight year, Detroit was better against runs from two-back sets (3.9 yards, -25.9% DVOA) than runs from one-back sets (4.3 yards, -13.8% DVOA). The Lions were near the top of the league in use of man coverage and ranked third in DVOA in man coverage compared to 12th in zone. The Lions defense ranked second against the pass in the red zone but 26th against the run.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
J.Goff	1536	29.8%	567	4395	7.8	6.8	72.8%	37	11
H.Hooker	-10	-28.6%	10	53	5.3	5.0	66.7%	0	0

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
J.Gibbs	457	35.2%	250	1412	5.6	16	0	57%
D.Montgomery	189	13.9%	185	775	4.2	12	2	56%
C.Reynolds	-11	-17.3%	31	139	4.5	0	1	58%
J.Goff	-6	-16.6%	19	71	3.7	0	0	-
J.Williams	44	46.2%	11	61	5.5	1	0	-
J.Jefferson*	-4	-21.2%	6	22	3.7	0	0	83%
S.Vaki	-24	-99.4%	6	14	2.3	0	0	33%

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
A.St. Brown	419	24.6%	141	115	1263	11.0	3.6	12	82%
J.Williams	191	12.5%	93	58	1001	16.9	8.3	7	64%
T.Patrick	104	18.7%	44	33	394	11.9	4.3	3	75%
K.Raymond	63	24.7%	22	17	215	12.6	8.1	2	77%
A.Robinson*	-8	-26.5%	7	3	30	10.0	1.3	0	43%
R.Bell	-21	-54.6%	6	2	22	11	1.0	0	33%
S.LaPorta	138	16.5%	83	60	726	12.1	5.7	7	72%
B.Wright	34	22.5%	16	13	100	7.7	5.8	2	81%
K.Yeboah	3	-2.6%	8	5	47	9.4	6.8	1	63%
J.Gibbs	152	26.7%	65	52	517	9.6	11.0	4	83%
D.Montgomery	150	52.2%	38	36	341	9.5	10.1	0	95%

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
P.Sewell	RT	25	17/17	1145	5	2	19	3.0%	3	K.Zeitler*	RG	35	16/16	1048	2	5	14	2.5%	11
G.Glasgow	LG	33	16/16	1081	7	11	19	3.2%	14	T.Decker	LT	32	14/14	895	4	4	25	5.1%	18
F.Ragnow*	C	29	16/16	1060	6	5	8	1.4%	2	D.Skipper	LT	31	17/5	323	1	5	17	9.7%	--
Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont		
2022	4.52	4.66	7	65%	20	17%	18	1.22	15	0.91	8	24	4.2%	2	24.6%	10	28		
2023	4.79	4.77	1	65%	18	15%	5	1.32	5	0.94	6	31	5.6%	4	26.4%	8	22		
2024	4.93	5.08	1	70%	9	15%	7	1.43	3	0.95	8	33	5.9%	7	26.2%	4	24		
2024 ALY by direction:			Left End: 4.67 (12)			Left Tackle: 4.98 (5)			Mid/Guard: 5.64 (1)			Right Tackle: 4.97 (2)			Right End: 4.02 (16)				

Frank Ragnow's June retirement caught the football world by surprise, but the Lions clearly saw it coming. They drafted Tate Ratledge, a three-year starter at guard for Georgia, and began giving him reps at center at the start of OTAs. They also drafted LSU's Miles Frazier, another three-year SEC starter at guard, in the fifth round. Graham Glasgow subbed for Ragnow against the Seahawks in Week 4 last year and for three games in 2023. He's the favorite to be Ragnow's immediate replacement, with the rookies competing to replace Glasgow. Also in the mix at guard is Christian Mahogany, who is not the love child of Diana Ross and Billy Dee Williams but would be much cooler if he was. He is expected to either push Glasgow or replace Kevin Zeitler (now with the Titans) at right guard. Mahogany missed the first half of his rookie season with mononucleosis (that's what you get for kissing Sam Darnold, pal), but he was impressive when subbing for Glasgow in Week 16 and Kevin Zeitler in the playoffs. Left tackle Taylor Decker, right tackle Penei Sewell, and super-sub Dan Skipper will all return in 2025. Sewell sounded like a man with a mission at the start of May minicamps: "I just wanted to get bigger and stronger while maintaining my speed and

conditioning.” Uh-oh. His workout secret? “It’s just moving the big weights fast.” That sounds like plyometrics. It also sounds like a recipe for winning the new Protector of the Year Award. No matter how swole Sewell gets, however, the Lions are likely to feel the impact of the loss of Ragnow, a four-time Pro Bowler and all-time tough guy and tone-setter.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
L.Onwuzurike	27	DT	16	635	28	3.7%	69	23	5	4	21	81%	22	2.2	39	1.5	14	28	1
A.McNeill	25	DT	14	632	26	4.0%	65	21	9	4	20	80%	23	1.4	11	3.5	4	27	2
D.J.Reader	31	DT	15	508	24	3.4%	76	22	6	2	20	90%	1	1.9	20	3.0	5	8	2
P.O'Connor	32	DT	12	236	13	2.3%	--	10	4	3	12	75%	--	1.3	--	1.0	0	13	0
R.Lopez	28	DT	16	467	31	3.8%	68	25	6	10	26	77%	34	2.6	55	1.0	2	9	3

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
Z.Smith*	33	DE	17	618	36	4.4%	63	26	15	5	23	65%	74	2.7	58	9.0	8	44	1
J.Paschal	26	DE	14	549	21	3.2%	90	18	7	3	17	88%	8	0.7	3	2.0	6	33	1
A.Muhammad	30	DE	9	255	11	2.6%	97	9	4	4	5	60%	85	3.4	86	3.0	3	15	1
A.Hutchinson	25	DE	5	280	19	8.1%	--	15	10	2	11	64%	--	2.9	--	7.5	10	23	1

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush			vs. Pass									
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
J.Campbell	25	OLB	17	974	130	16.3%	19	74	22	10	83	67%	16	3.5	30	1.5	4	11	36	-14.1%	16	33%	65	10.4	72	5	0
A.Anzalone	31	OLB	10	608	67	14.3%	34	36	13	9	25	56%	62	5.3	84	1.0	4	7	49	14.8%	60	61%	7	4.8	5	5	0
D.Long*	29	OLB	13	352	43	7.0%	79	23	9	11	22	82%	1	1.9	1	0.0	0	4	18	39.3%	75	22%	77	8.7	59	0	0
T.Nowak	27	OLB	14	332	20	3.1%	87	11	6	2	10	60%	44	3.1	12	2.0	2	12	4	-73.1%	--	50%	--	4.0	--	1	1
M.Rodriguez	26	OLB	10	318	40	8.5%	71	23	4	1	21	67%	18	4.0	59	2.0	0	2	14	2.5%	--	50%	--	5.9	--	1	0
G.Stuard	27	OLB	17	229	37	4.0%	--	26	7	3	28	71%	--	3.3	--	0.0	0	0	14	7.7%	--	64%	--	3.4	--	0	0

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk			
2022	4.75	4.39	18	67%	15	20%	7	1.31	23	1.12	29	39	6.9%	19	27.8%	13			
2023	3.47	3.84	6	58%	5	19%	13	0.93	3	0.29	2	41	7.4%	20	36.5%	1			
2024	4.18	4.03	9	77%	30	18%	16	1.04	4	0.83	23	37	6.3%	26	29.2%	24			
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 5.98 (32)				Left Tackle: 4.04 (13)				Mid/Guard: 4.18 (9)				Right Tackle: 2.80 (1)		Right End: 3.13 (8)	

Aidan Hutchinson was leading the NFL with 23 pressures when he fractured his leg in Week 6. He remained the league leader until Week 9, when several defenders finally passed him. Most remarkably: the Lions had their bye in Week 5, so Hutchinson was already one game behind most of his peers. Hutchinson was able to participate in individual drills at the start of May minicamps. Coaches gave encouraging reviews. “He looks really good,” said line coach Kacy Rodgers, per Justin Rogers at Detroit Football Network. “I’m sitting here just imagining what this guy went through, what he worked on to get back in case they made it to the end last year and didn’t. Then to see where he is right now is just, this guy, he’s a trooper pro.” Defensive tackle Alim McNeill suffered a torn ACL in Week 15 and is likely to miss the start of the season. First-round pick Tyleik Williams is McNeill’s likely replacement, though the Lions are stacked with defensive linemen who saw playing time during last year’s injury crisis. Linemate D.J. Reader provided an encouraging update on McNeill’s progress at the start of minicamp. “Spirits are high. . . He’s very happy. I mean, he’s got a lot of money, kinda hard to be upset. But he’s super happy, man, and working his ass off to get back.” Second-year linebacker Jack Campbell was one of the few Lions defenders to stay healthy for all 18 games last year. Campbell, a one-dimensional thumper who could not be trusted in coverage as a rookie, thrived in an expanded all-purpose role. Alex Anzalone spent May vague-posting on social media instead of attending minicamp. He’s scheduled to make \$6 million on the final year of his contract in 2025. Anzalone missed six games with a broken forearm last year but played the wild-card loss in a soft cast. The Lions signed much-traveled journeyman Zach Cunningham—a starter for the Texans from 2017 to 2020 and the Eagles for part of 2023—in late May, probably as an insurance policy/message for Anzalone. Let’s wrap with a spring tradition: an encouraging health update on Marcus Davenport, the former Saints first-round pick who looks like Groot but snaps like dry kindling. “He’s had some setbacks in his career,

but I watched that player take no days off this offseason,” defensive coordinator Kelvin Sheppard said. “He’s been here just as long as the coaches have, and putting in the work, and his body looks different right now.” Davenport recorded five pressures in his one-and-a-half healthy 2025 games.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run							vs. Pass										
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
K.Joseph	25	FS	17	1085	94	11.8%	31	30	19	3	37	38%	35	9.7	85	9	1.5%	--	11.4	-17.6%	--	44%	--	7.4	--	11	9
T.Arnold	22	CB	16	948	69	9.2%	43	27	7	5	12	50%	31	6.4	49	102	19.8%	31	12.6	5.3%	62	56%	19	7.8	56	10	0
B.Branch	24	SS	16	917	125	16.7%	3	61	27	11	50	58%	5	4.8	8	59	11.8%	5	9.8	37.4%	56	39%	48	8.3	42	16	4
C.Davis*	29	CB	13	697	67	11.0%	12	35	14	8	22	64%	15	4.4	17	86	22.7%	15	9.4	-4.2%	46	55%	26	7.6	51	11	2
A.Robertson	27	CB	17	629	58	7.3%	71	33	15	7	11	82%	2	3.5	7	84	24.6%	7	11.5	7.2%	66	63%	5	6.5	23	8	0
D.J.Reed	29	CB	14	880	74	10.4%	20	30	10	8	29	31%	77	7.6	70	72	18.5%	48	13.6	8.6%	69	56%	21	8.0	59	10	0
A.Maddox	29	CB	17	345	24	2.9%	--	12	4	0	4	25%	--	3.8	--	24	13.8%	--	10.3	3.4%	--	63%	--	5.2	--	5	0

Year	Pass D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	23		19.7%	25	17.7%	28	2.7%	21	1.0%	16	30.3%	31	17.4%	26	-25.5%	2
2023	16		17.0%	24	15.0%	25	15.6%	30	7.1%	20	34.6%	32	-11.8%	7	-6.5%	14
2024	4		-9.4%	11	-2.9%	14	3.4%	20	-15.8%	4	19.5%	25	-28.7%	1	4.1%	18

Kerby Joseph, one of the scant handful of Lions defenders to survive the entire 2024 season, became the franchise’s first All-Pro safety since Yale Lary in 1962. The Lions rewarded Joseph with a reported \$86-million extension in April. Joseph sees his league-high nine interceptions in 2024 as a goal to surpass. “I got nine, I gotta get 10, get some sacks in there,” he said after signing the new deal. D.J. Reed, a steady starter for the Jets from 2022 to 24 and Seahawks in 2020 and 2021, replaces Carlton Davis at cornerback. Reed played right cornerback for most of his career, while Davis played almost exclusively left cornerback for the Lions, but that’s an easy problem to sort out. (Terrion Arnold may switch sides.) Reed sounds fully committed to playing for the Lions; he posted on social media that he might get a tattoo of Detroit area code 313 if the Lions win the Super Bowl. Or, you know, you could get a Lions logo and/or a Lombardi Trophy instead of an obscure three-digit number, D.J. Arnold led the NFL with 167 penalty yards as a rookie. He committed seven pass interference fouls, three defensive holds, and one facemask penalty. Eight of his 11 total penalties were committed through Week 4, however, and he improved as the season wore on, notably shutting down Jordan Addison in Week 18. Brian Branch will start alongside Joseph at safety. Ennis Rakestraw, who was hurt for much of his rookie season, will back up Armstead and Reed, with Amik Robertson and former Eagles super-sub Avonte Maddox competing for/sharing the nickel role.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	1.8%	9	-5.2	27	1.4	18	5.4	5	0.1	16	7.8	3	7.4	6
2023	0.0%	19	-4.0	24	1.9	10	-0.7	20	0.5	16	2.1	9	-0.2	17
2024	5.5%	1	5.3	9	0.6	15	4.2	6	9.4	4	9.6	1	5.9	8

Detroit led the NFL in special teams DVOA with a balanced unit that was above average in all five areas. Rookie gunner Sione Vaki was a particular standout. The Lions also committed a league-low eight penalties on special teams. The Lions have executed 12 fake punts or field goals since Dave Fipp took over as special teams coordinator in 2021. The Lions attempted just two fakes in 2024, however. The fakes were more common in 2021 and 2022, when the Lions were still climbing out of the basement and also had the element of surprise on their side. That doesn’t mean opponents should let their guard down, however. Jake Bates led the NFL in extra points (64) and extra point attempts (67) as a rookie. It’s great to be the kicker on an offensive juggernaut. It’s even greater to draft the kicker for an offensive juggernaut onto your fantasy roster. Kalif Raymond has returned two punts for touchdowns in the last three seasons. Raymond had a 90-yard touchdown and a 64-yard return against the Titans last year, plus 12 returns of 10 or more yards against NFL-caliber competition. Punter Jack Fox rebounded and ranked sixth in gross punt value after a down 2023.

# Green Bay Packers

2024 record: 11-6

Total DVOA: 24.5% (3rd)

Pythagorean Wins: 11.5 (6th)

Offense: 17.3% (4th)

Snap-Weighted Age: 25.3 (32nd)

Defense: -7.0% (7th)

Average Opponent: 2.8% (7th)

Special Teams: 0.2% (15th)

2025 Mean Projection: 8.9 wins

On the Clock (0-5): 9%

Postseason Odds: 47.5%

Mediocrity (6-8): 34%

Super Bowl Odds: 5.5%

Playoff Contender (9-11): 41%

Proj. Avg. Opponent: 3.1% (7th)

Super Bowl Contender (12+): 15%

**2024:** The best third-place wild-card also-rans you have ever seen.

**2025:** The best second-place wild-card also-rans you will ever see.

**I**magine building, on purpose, the best NFL team you possibly can without a traditional top wide receiver, double-digit sack specialist, or shutdown cornerback.

Instead of a go-to wide receiver in the Ja'Marr Chase or Justin Jefferson mold, your team will have a vast committee of young, pesky slot YAC guys and tall jump-ball boundary specialists, plus some toolsy young tight ends. One of the slot guys might be extra-elusive and post some Pro Bowl-caliber metrics, but he'll only get about six targets per week because he's not very good at normal wide receiver stuff.

Instead of a screaming-off-the-edge Watt/Bosa/Parsons type, your defense will field a deep committee of beefy 270-plus-pound power rushers and quick-footed interior linemen. You know: the types of defenders who generally thrive in support of a Watt/Bosa/Parsons type.

At cornerback, your team can have a former Pro Bowler who is healthy for about seven games per year but eats up the cap space of a Jalen Ramsey or Marlon Humphrey. During his frequent absences, you must get by with failed prospects and good-not-great veteran try-hards.

To keep things interesting: this team cannot have a big-name left tackle, either. Its most decorated offensive lineman must be a guard who bounces around to other positions to cover for injuries.

Where do this team's resources go? Well, let's say it's just recovering from a minor cap crisis caused by the contentious departure of a Hall of Fame quarterback. But your hypothetical team can spend as much money as it likes in free agency at positions such as running back and free safety. It can also really spend on retaining those chonk defenders and versatile guards.

You might imagine such a team thriving with an All-Pro quarterback or flailing with some rookie or journeyman. So let's give them a young veteran with a streaky, high-risk playing style who has staked out a spot just on the fringe of superstardom.

How would you expect this oddly configured team to perform? You might guess that the streaky quarterback, young playmakers, effective running game, and stout-up-the-middle infrastructure would easily overwhelm weaker competition. You might also conjecture that the lack of talent at high-leverage positions would be a real problem against tougher opponents; this team has no one to make the big catch or sack when it's needed most.

And that, dear readers, is the tale of the 2024 Packers, who went 11-1 against the bulk of their schedule but 0-6 against the Lions, Vikings, and Eagles (including a playoff loss), the three teams they absolutely had to beat.

The 2024 Packers were solid top-to-bottom statistically. You can see their rankings in our little inset boxes: top 10 in rushing and passing DVOA, top 10 in rushing and passing defense, top 10 in adjusted line yards and sack rate, top 10 in defensive ALY and at stopping opponents' No. 1 receivers, even a respectable middle-of-the-pack special teams rating. The Packers had several considerable strengths and no obvious, crippling weaknesses.

Rewatch their wild-card loss to the Eagles, however, and you'll see a team that was almost custom-built to fall just short of contention.

You'll see the Packers blitzing like barbarians to generate pressure, only for Jalen Hurts to outrun Rashan Gary for first downs. You'll see Jordan Love looking for Dontayvion Wicks for a big play up the sideline, only for Darius Slay to play the ball in the air better than Wicks for an interception. You'll see Jayden Reed motioning all over the field and the parking lot before the snap in search of mismatches because, for all his gifts, he's not yet the dependable route runner the Packers need when it's time to convert third-and-medium. You'll see Love delivering a perfect strike to defender Zack Baun, though if you look carefully you will see Tucker Kraft slip while running to the spot Love expected him to reach.

Or you can rewatch the Week 17 loss to the Vikings. You'll see Sam Darnold finding time in the pocket to find his third-through-fifth reads. You'll see Reed unable to haul in a catchable pass on a fourth-and-2 drag route and unable to snatch a contested catch from Byron Murphy on third-and-9. You'll see Bo Melton playing far too significant an offensive role. You'll see a team that doesn't look ready to play a playoff-important game against a division rival that also should have been a little out of its depth.

The Packers, especially down the stretch, were a team without the not-so-secret sauce: that guy who can wreck the opponent's game plan, the one who cannot be blocked or covered on a whiteboard.

The good news here is that the 2024 Packers really did appear to be a go-to wide receiver, elite edge rusher, or top cornerback away from being Super Bowl contenders. The bad

## 2025 Packers Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	DET	7	at ARI	13	at DET (Thu.)
2	WAS (Thu.)	8	at PIT	14	CHI
3	at CLE	9	CAR	15	at DEN
4	at DAL	10	PHI (Mon.)	16	at CHI (Sat.)
5	BYE	11	at NYG	17	BAL
6	CIN	12	MIN	18	at MIN

news is that they may have gone 0-for-3 on acquiring what they needed in the offseason.

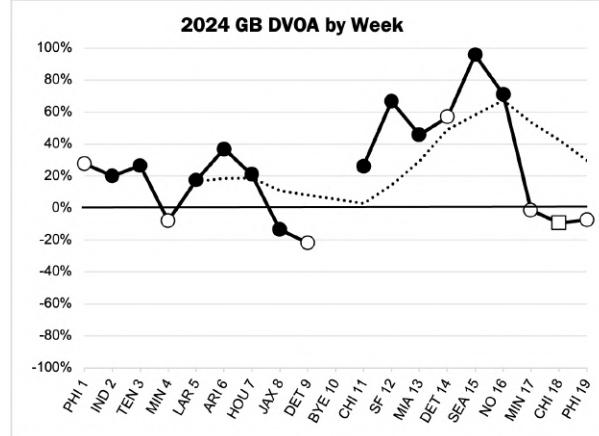
First-round pick Matthew Golden does not look like a likely future focal point of the passing game. Golden, the third receiver taken in a weak receiver draft, was part of a deep rotation of playmakers (Isaiah Bond, Gunner Helm, etc.) at Texas. He has 4.29 speed but isn't all that big. He flashes outstanding route running capability but limited YAC potential on shorter routes. Golden will start his career as yet another committee receiver, which is not a bad thing: his presence should keep the stone-handed Wicks and mediocre Melton off the field. (Third-round pick Savion Williams of TCU may replace Wicks as the superhero-shaped square peg off the bench.)

Reed or Romeo Doubs could still develop into true WR1 types. Doubs looks the part and has his moments as a well-built vertical threat, but he suffered two concussions and a brief midseason bout of diva behavior in 2024, and his abilities to snag contested catches and off-target throws leave something to be desired. Reed is pure joy with the ball in his hands but suffered six drops and a long midseason disappearance from game plans which, coupled with his always-in-motion role, suggests that Matt LaFleur didn't trust him to just line up against a cornerback, get open, and secure the football.

At edge rusher, the Packers still have Gary, who is rugged and relentless but whose highlight reel features too high a percentage of plays where his blocker tripped over his own feet (Texans, naturally), or the snap flew over the quarterback's head (Bears), plus some coverage sacks (Eagles, playoffs). Kingsley Enagbare is Diet Gary; most of Enagbare's 2024 sacks came against Will Levis and Sam Howell. Lukas Van Ness, the 13th overall pick in 2023, is Diet Enagbare. Linebacker Edgerrin Cooper emerged as perhaps the Packers' best pure pass rusher late in his rookie season, but he's an off-ball linebacker whose talents will usually be needed elsewhere.

The most noteworthy newcomer among the pass rushers is fourth-round pick Barryn Sorrell (Texas) who, like Gary, Enagbare, and Van Ness, is thicker and less speedy/bendy/juicy than the current prototype. Sorrell will likely occupy the spot in the rotation vacated by Preston Smith, whose AARP card was forwarded to him in Pittsburgh at last year's trade deadline.

Nate Hobbs, the Packers' semi-splashy offseason free agent acquisition, is almost exclusively a slot cornerback. Hobbs looked like a budding superstar in 2021, but the coverage metrics for slot defenders vary considerably based on the circumstances surrounding them (the Raiders were bad) and the receivers they face. Hobbs' arrival should push Keisean Nixon to



the outside and provide additional options for coverage against Amon-Ra St. Brown. It does not solve the problem of covering Justin Jefferson types well enough that star safety Xavier McKinney can do something besides play deep centerfield.

And then there's Jaire Alexander. He played just seven games each in 2022 and 2023 and four in 2020. His availability is often uncertain for weeks at a time. His cap number entering the offseason was \$24.6 million. The Packers wanted to trade Alexander but could not find a partner. Alexander refused to take a pay cut early in the offseason. It appeared as of mid-May that he would acquiesce to remain in Green Bay. As of the start of minicamp, LaFleur was still speaking of Alexander using the vague platitudes he used to reserve for Aaron Rodgers. As it turns out, the Packers finally parted ways with Alexander in early June. With Alexander gone and semi-bust Eric Stokes banished to Vegas, the Packers could end up dangerously thin at cornerback.

The Packers could still slip past the Lions and other NFC oligarchs—despite their over-reliance on young 'n' fun receivers, burly/pokey edge rushers, and safeties/slot guys in the secondary—if Love plays the way he did during the final eight weeks of the 2023 season. But Love endured a complicated follow-up to his breakout campaign. He strained his right MCL late in the season opener against the Eagles on a slick soccer field in Brazil. He may have rushed back too soon from the injury, because he was blooper-prone for much of October and early November, and a pulled groin further hampered him for a while. Love settled down late in the season, but his best performances came against teams such as the 49ers and Saints who were dealing with catastrophic injury situations. Love suffered an elbow injury in the season finale against the Bears, then threw three interceptions against the Eagles in the playoffs.

Love is tricky to evaluate. He threw just eight regular-season interceptions, but several of them were ugly, and FTM charged him with 15 turnover-worthy throws. But Love also suffered a dropped pass rate of 4.9%, sixth highest in the NFL, and he didn't get much help on 50-50 balls.

Love's deep-passing metrics are ordinary: his 36.7% completion rate on deep throws of 20 or more air yards ranked 18th, between Bryce Young and Kyler Murray. But Love threw deep a lot: only gonzo bomber Anthony Richardson (22.7%) threw a higher percentage of his passes 20 or more yards (16.2%) than

Love did. Love's mechanics can look wonky and his decision-making almost hallucinogenic at times, but the injuries may have fouled up his footwork and delivery a bit, and Love's most creative impulses sometimes combine the best elements of Brett Favre and Patrick Mahomes.

Of course, Love is also a sixth-year veteran from the same draft class as Joe Burrow, Jalen Hurts, and Justin Herbert, yet still a somewhat inexperienced starter. It's hard to tell how much development he has left, and he hasn't established enough of a baseline to gauge whether his October slump last year was the result of injury or something that's likely to happen whenever he starts pressing. The safest assumption is that Love will remain a high-volatility risk-taker hovering near the top of the NFL's second quartile of starters.

Love, in other words, would benefit from a real go-to receiver or a defense that makes things harder on his opponents.

The Packers have one crucial indicator pointing upward: one of the youngest rosters in the NFL. Their snap-weighted age of 25.2 was the lowest in the league in 2024. Their receivers and tight ends are mostly third- or fourth-year players, plus two high-round rookies. All of their incumbent starters on the offensive line except Elgton Jenkins arrived in the 2022 draft, and the bench is full of even younger players, including second-round pick Anthony Belton (N.C. State).

The Packers defense isn't quite as youthful as the offense, but there's plenty of young talent scattered around: Cooper, Enagbare, Van Ness, versatile lineman Karl Brooks, erratic-

but-gifted linebacker Quay Walker, single-malt safety Evan Williams. McKinney turns 27 in September, while Hobbs turns 26 in June: when the Packers sign a big-name free agent, they wisely grab ones just off their rookie contracts.

Evaluated as a rebuilding team still healing from a bitter divorce from their former franchise quarterback, the Packers are just doing fine. They are still adding pieces and auditioning promising young starters for starring roles.

The 2025 Packers, in that respect, are victims of their 2023-2024 success, which set expectations higher than they would have been had the team curled up in a fetal ball for a year after Rodgers' departure. Rodgers himself, meanwhile, set the bar high for over a decade, so Packers fans are a little burned out on playoff losses. And Rodgers' perpetual grievances (*WHERE IS MY GO-TO RECEIVER?*) have embedded themselves into the Cheesehead subconscious.

The Packers will likely spend another year on the NFC's wild-card tier. But it will be worth it if Reed, Doubs, or Golden becomes a guy Love can always look to on third-and-8; if someone else becomes the hammer to Gary's anvil; if someone plays like (healthy) Alexander at cornerback; or, most importantly, if Love strings together 17 franchise-quarterback worthy games. This is what it looks like when a team avoids a painful rebuilding cycle. It may not be completely satisfying, but it's much better than the alternative.

Mike Tanier

## 2024 Packers by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	at PHI	L	23%	29	34	414	410	+2	28%	34%	1%	-5%
2	IND	W	95%	16	10	383	338	+2	20%	17%	-5%	-2%
3	at TEN	W	97%	30	14	378	237	+3	26%	24%	-4%	-2%
4	MIN	L	5%	29	31	465	374	-1	-8%	13%	12%	-9%
5	at LAR	W	62%	24	19	328	370	+1	17%	-3%	-21%	0%
6	ARI	W	99%	34	13	437	303	+2	37%	23%	-11%	2%
7	HOU	W	68%	24	22	277	197	-3	21%	11%	-13%	-4%
8	at JAX	W	72%	30	27	422	390	+1	-13%	6%	22%	2%
9	DET	L	2%	14	24	411	261	-1	-22%	-19%	-1%	-4%
10	BYE											
11	at CHI	W	98%	20	19	366	391	-1	26%	53%	31%	4%
12	SF	W	100%	38	10	325	241	+3	67%	14%	-41%	12%
13	MIA	W	100%	30	17	388	375	+1	46%	25%	-10%	11%
14	at DET	L	82%	31	34	298	391	0	57%	40%	-15%	2%
15	at SEA	W	100%	30	13	369	208	+1	96%	41%	-52%	2%
16	NO	W	100%	34	0	404	196	+2	71%	18%	-45%	8%
17	at MIN	L	11%	25	27	271	441	0	-1%	10%	16%	5%
18	CHI	L	59%	22	24	367	224	0	-9%	6%	-3%	-19%
19	at PHI	L	3%	10	22	302	290	-4	-7%	8%	0%	-15%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	17.3%	4	-7.1%	7
Unadjusted VOA	15.4%	5	-4.8%	7
Weighted Trend	17.8%	4	-10.6%	5
Variance	3.1%	4	5.2%	18
Average Opponent	-2.9%	2	-0.7%	21
Passing	38.4%	3	0.4%	9
Rushing	7.7%	3	-17.4%	7
First Down	14.6%	4	1.0%	18
Second Down	21.9%	3	-10.3%	6
Third Down	14.7%	9	-16.6%	5
First Half	17.5%	4	1.4%	11
Second Half	17.0%	4	-14.0%	9
Red Zone	18.7%	5	6.0%	24
Late and Close	41.6%	1	0.5%	12

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rk	Off	Rk	Def	Rk	ST	Rk	Off AGL	Rk	Def AGL	Rk	Off Age	Rk	Def Age	Rk	ST Age	Rk
2020	13-3	11.2	11.6	509	369	+7	28.4%	2	25.0%	1	-6.1%	10	-2.7%	25	52.1	26	21.0	4	28.1	1	25.2	31	25.3	29
2021	13-4	10.5	11.1	450	371	+13	16.8%	7	19.2%	2	-2.4%	12	-4.9%	32	54.4	25	25.6	7	27.6	6	25.5	29	25.1	28
2022	8-9	8.5	7.4	370	371	+2	-0.8%	15	5.7%	12	6.1%	25	-0.5%	17	25.8	9	26.1	5	27.5	5	26.3	19	26.2	14
2023	9-8	9.4	8.1	383	350	0	1.7%	13	12.9%	6	8.2%	27	-3.0%	28	38.9	22	42.2	24	24.6	32	26.1	24	25.5	28
2024	11-6	11.5	12.7	460	338	+12	24.5%	3	17.3%	4	-7.0%	7	0.2%	15	19.7	6	26.4	7	25.0	32	25.5	31	25.4	29

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

GB Offense					GB Offense vs. Opponents					GB Defense					GB Defense vs. Opponents						
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA
11	68%	6.7	27.9%	40%	Base	27%	5.2	9.6%	52%	Base	24%	5.4	-7.6%	11	66%	5.2	-8.9%				
12	25%	5.5	3.8%	62%	Nickel	64%	6.6	24.2%	52%	Nickel	70%	5.3	-5.7%	12	21%	5.7	5.5%				
21	6%	6.1	24.4%	77%	Dime+	9%	7.8	42.4%	10%	Dime+	5%	5.3	-27.7%	21	5%	5.8	-7.2%				
										Goal Line	1%	0.3	-4.0%	13	4%	4.4	-4.4%				
														22	1%	0.1	-118.7%				

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected		Rk	Formation		Rk	Pass Rush		Rk	Secondary		Rk	Strategy		Rk		
Runs, all	+7.8%	2	Form: Single Back	73%	20	Rush 3		4.3%	12	4 DB		23%	13	Play Action	22%	16
Runs, first down	+11.1%	2	Form: Empty Back	6%	23	Rush 4		77.1%	6	5 DB		70%	7	Offensive Motion	63%	5
Runs, second-long	+4.5%	6	Form: Multi Back	21%	11	Rush 5		14.1%	29	6+ DB		5%	28	Avg Box (Off)	6.20	9
Runs, power sit.	+10.6%	10	Pers: 3+ WR	69%	13	Rush 6+		4.5%	22	Man Coverage		34%	31	Avg Box (Def)	6.10	17
Runs, behind 2H	+6.2%	7	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	25%	20	Edge Rusher Sacks		48.9%	18	MOFC		56%	18	Offensive Pace	32.87	28
Runs, ahead 2H	+2.9%	11	Pers: 6+ OL	0%	28	Interior DL Sacks		23.3%	26	CB1 on WR1		38%	10	Defensive Pace	30.97	10
Run-Pass Options	9.0%	1	Shotgun/Pistol	80%	10	Second Level Sacks		27.8%	3	S/CB Cover Ratio		24%	6	Go for it on 4th	1.17	13

The Packers led the league by using max protect blocking on 12.7% of passes. This is defined as seven or more blockers with at least two more blockers than pass rushers. 🔥 For the second straight year, the Packers were significantly better running from one-back sets (4.7 yards, 11.4% DVOA) compared to multi-back sets (4.3 yards, -10.5% DVOA). Possibly connected: Green Bay led the league in how often they ran when opponents were in nickel (52% of plays). 🔥 Green Bay not only led the league in plays we marked as RPOs but they were excellent on those plays, with a 35.3% DVOA that was the highest for any team with at least 20 marked RPOs. 🔥 As you would expect from a team with a lot of wide receiver depth and no real WR1, the Packers led the league by throwing to “other receivers” (i.e., not WR1 or WR2) on 36% of targets. In fact, this was the highest receiving share for “other receivers” dating back to 1999, the first year our stats track “types of receivers.” The Packers have led the league in this stat for three straight seasons. 🔥 Green Bay led the NFL with a 20.7% broken tackle rate on offense. 🔥 Green Bay’s “CB1 on WR1” actually represents Carrington Valentine, who was the Packers cornerback most often covering the opposition’s top wideout. Even when healthy, Jaire Alexander only covered the player we identified as WR1 on 31% of snaps, way down from his league-leading 51% in 2023. 🔥 Packers opponents threw a league-high 22% of passes to running backs (tied with the Chargers). 🔥 The Packers allowed 10.4 average YAC on passes at or behind the line of scrimmage, close to the worst figure in the league, but ranked eighth allowing just 3.5 average YAC on passes beyond the line of scrimmage. 🔥 The Packers were only tied for an average of 7:50 each game, the lowest figure in the league.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
J.Love	993	22.7%	439	3289	7.5	6.2	63.1%	25	11
M.Willis	110	19.9%	62	513	8.3	6.9	74.1%	3	0

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
D.Wicks	-37	-18.7%	76	39	415	10.6	3.6	5	51%
J.Reed	281	34.0%	75	55	857	15.6	6.9	6	73%
R.Doubs	195	20.1%	72	46	601	13.1	2.9	4	64%
C.Watson	100	10.7%	53	29	620	21.4	5.1	2	55%
B.Melton	-24	-31.1%	17	8	91	11.4	0.9	0	47%
M.Heath	40	26.1%	13	10	97	9.7	2.3	2	77%
M.Hardman	-2	-14.4%	14	12	90	7.5	8.3	0	86%
T.Kraft	179	32.0%	70	50	707	14.1	9.1	7	71%
L.Musgrave	-10	-24.2%	10	7	45	6.4	2.6	0	70%
J.Jacobs	104	28.3%	43	36	342	9.5	11.2	1	84%
E.Wilson	-21	-47.7%	14	11	48	4.4	9.0	1	79%
C.Brooks	-5	-21.9%	13	11	69	6.3	8.6	0	85%

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
J.Jacobs	197	6.4%	301	1329	4.4	15	4	53%
E.Wilson	113	16.7%	103	502	4.9	4	0	61%
C.Brooks	32	10.8%	36	183	5.1	1	0	67%
J.Reed	60	19.0%	20	163	8.2	1	1	-
J.Love	-12	-24.2%	18	83	4.6	1	3	-
M.Willis	33	27.2%	16	142	8.9	1	0	-
B.Melton	27	23.4%	8	54	6.8	0	0	-
M.Lloyd	-5	-30.5%	6	15	2.5	0	0	17%
M.Hardman	48	148.2%	5	62	12.4	1	0	-

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/ GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/ GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
R.Walker	LT	25	17/17	1075	9	1	36	6.5%	28	S.Rhyan	RG	25	17/17	963	6	12	20	4.0%	28
E.Jenkins	LG	30	17/17	1071	9	5	10	1.8%	1	J.Morgan	OT	24	6/1	186	1	3	8	8.3%	--
Z.Tom	RT	26	17/17	1070	8	7	27	4.9%	15	A.Banks	LG	28	13/13	775	5	10	18	3.8%	23
J.Myers*	C	27	16/16	1008	3	5	13	2.5%	22										

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont	
2022	4.69	4.85	2	66%	18	14%	2	1.44	3	0.64	21	32	5.9%	6	21.0%	5	28	
2023	4.07	4.37	8	62%	23	15%	3	1.04	23	0.48	26	30	5.7%	5	22.0%	2	35	
2024	4.55	4.72	5	63%	24	15%	3	1.31	10	0.68	18	22	4.7%	3	28.4%	8	39	
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 4.82 (6)				Left Tackle: 4.33 (15)				Mid/Guard: 4.81 (8)				Right Tackle: 5.13 (1)		Right End: 4.06 (15)

Elgton Jenkins did not attend voluntary minicamps, forgoing a \$500,000 workout bonus. Jenkins is expected to move to center to replace Josh Myers this year and is angling for a little sweetener in his contract. Jenkins started at center against the Lions in Week 9 last year and has moved to center and both tackle spots at various times in his six-year Packers career, always filling in admirably. He is signed through 2026. The Packers have lots of future cap space earmarked for him and other veterans, and they are also loaded with early draft picks on their bench, two factors which may impact their negotiations with Jenkins. Aaron Banks, signed from the 49ers to replace Jenkins at left guard, shared his free agent experience with the media in May. “I didn’t get a lot of contact from my agent until the window opened on that Monday,” Banks said. “He hit me and was like, ‘Hey we got good news. Think cheese.’ So, I was like, ‘All right, deal’s done.’” Banks arrives with a reputation as a 320-plus-pound road grader. He and Jenkins should be a much better run-blocking tandem than Jenkins and Myers were. And if Banks is happy with an agent who speaks in riddles, that’s his business. When asked if Rasheed Walker was a guaranteed starter at left tackle entering OTAs, line coach Luke Butkus responded: “Rasheed Walker is a left tackle for the Green Bay Packers.” Note that Butkus did not say “THE left tackle.” Walker was phenomenal on running plays, with just one blown block by FTN Data charting, but he ranked 28th among left tackles in pressure rate allowed on passes. He may be pushed for the job by mammoth second-round pick Anthony Belton, but there’s good news for Walker: Belton was getting cross-trained at right tackle and guard early in OTAs. Right guard Sean Rhyhan and right tackle Zack Tom will reprise the roles they played well in 2024. Jordan Morgan, last year’s first-round pick, can play both tackle and guard; he battled a shoulder injury throughout the season before getting shelved in December. Jacob Monk, a fifth-round pick in 2024, took some first-team reps at center during Jenkins’ absence.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
K.Clark	30	DE	17	686	39	4.6%	54	31	9	4	33	82%	18	1.9	27	1.0	4	0	2
K.Brooks	25	DE	17	442	26	3.1%	84	23	10	4	13	85%	9	2.2	36	3.5	2	21	2
T.J.Slaton*	28	DT	17	427	30	3.6%	--	22	3	6	29	72%	--	2.0	--	1.0	2	9	0
D.Wyatt	27	DE	14	362	23	3.3%	81	20	9	2	15	87%	5	1.0	2	5.0	5	23	0
C.Wooden	25	DE	13	234	22	3.4%	--	13	2	1	18	61%	--	2.7	--	0.0	2	5	2

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
R.Gary	28	OLB	17	639	48	5.7%	34	38	15	5	39	74%	43	2.1	28	7.5	8	39	1
K.Enagbare	25	DE	17	511	38	4.5%	60	27	12	5	28	64%	77	2.6	54	4.5	3	26	1
L.Van Ness	24	OLB	17	428	30	3.6%	--	20	10	3	24	71%	--	2.6	--	3.0	5	22	1

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush				vs. Pass									
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
Q.Walker	25	ILB	13	747	103	16.0%	23	39	17	8	51	51%	73	3.6	33	2.5	0	12	29	-15.0%	13	31%	69	8.1	52	2	0
I.McDuffie	26	ILB	17	699	97	11.5%	56	49	13	11	48	67%	18	3.5	28	0.5	2	9	44	18.1%	65	32%	68	7.7	47	3	0
E.Wilson*	31	ILB	17	558	65	7.7%	77	31	13	16	37	59%	46	3.6	32	2.0	2	8	24	-28.9%	2	25%	75	11.2	74	2	1
E.Cooper	24	ILB	14	491	81	11.7%	55	50	25	12	43	70%	13	2.7	5	3.5	3	13	31	-21.3%	8	74%	1	4.7	4	4	1

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk							
2022	4.91	5.11	32	67%	17	13%	30	1.46	30	0.77	19	34	6.9%	17	29.8%	5							
2023	4.16	4.26	20	69%	19	17%	16	1.22	22	0.60	15	45	8.3%	6	30.8%	11							
2024	4.08	3.99	8	58%	4	20%	9	1.19	14	0.78	18	45	7.1%	19	33.1%	10							
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 3.33 (5)				Left Tackle: 4.68 (25)				Mid/Guard: 4.05 (6)				Right Tackle: 5.66 (32)				Right End: 2.85 (6)			

Rashan Gary is a stout run defender who earned a Pro Bowl berth in 2024, but he's miscast as the top edge rusher on a playoff team. Edgerrin Cooper's 17 tackles for a loss in the running game ranked seventh among all NFL defenders. Cooper also developed into a solid coverage defender and nasty situational blitzer, with 13 pressures on just 48 pass rushes. Not bad for a second-round pick who started the 2024 season with a tiny defensive role. Cooper played at around 230 pounds last year but has bulked up to 240 for 2025. "Now he knows what it's going to take to stay healthy in this long season," defensive coordinator Jeff Hafley said. "You can tell he's dedicated that time into caring for his body." Quay Walker has improved steadily since his 2022 rookie season, when he was a guy who ran really fast and blew assignments. Walker is now a steady tackler, and he was dependable enough in coverage to follow some receivers into the slot in 2024, though Nate Hobbs' arrival should allow him to abandon that role. The Packers signed sixth-year perma-prospect Isaiah Simmons to replace Walker as the guy who runs really fast and blows assignments. Former 13th overall pick Lukas Van Ness failed to record a sack after Week 14, producing just eight pressures down the stretch. Van Ness' roster spot may be guaranteed this year, but the fifth-year option on his rookie contract is not. Fourth-round pick Barryn Sorrell's sack totals (15.5 in three seasons at Texas) and measurables won't blow anyone away, but he has a reputation as a max-effort grinder. Sorrell's college economics professor Michael Brandl even endorsed him, sharing on Facebook that he and Sorrell met for weekly Zoom office hours to keep his grades from slipping. "So when you hear Barryn talk about his work ethic in interviews, let me reassure you: that is not just hype. He works his butt off," Brandl said. Fifth-round pick Collin Oliver missed all but two games of 2024 with a foot injury. He's a "go get ball" type who runs fast and slams into anything in his way, and his long/broad jump results at the combine (39 inches and 10-foot-6, respectively) suggest some pass-rush juice. Kenny Clark, who turns 30 in October, posted his lowest sack and pressure totals since 2016. Fellow interior linemen Karl Brooks and DeVontae Wyatt, meanwhile, have not been able to develop past situational/rotational status. Sixth-round pick Warren Brinson backed up Wyatt at Georgia and is a similar nimble-footed interior pass rusher, though not nearly as good.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall					vs. Run					vs. Pass														
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTKl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int	
X.McKinney	27	SS	17	1067	96	11.4%	38	27	18	5	41	27%	71	9.1	78	18	3.5%	55	8.9	7.5%	30	39%	49	9.3	52	11	8
K.Nixon	28	CB	17	1020	95	11.3%	11	42	19	7	23	39%	53	5.2	32	86	17.3%	63	8.7	-4.7%	43	55%	24	6.0	7	7	1
J.Bullard	23	FS	15	786	86	11.5%	36	31	8	10	29	52%	11	5.8	24	40	10.4%	7	5.9	12.1%	36	28%	59	8.8	49	1	0
E.Stokes*	26	CB	17	588	41	4.9%	91	9	4	3	9	33%	72	6.3	48	62	21.6%	19	10.8	9.8%	70	52%	46	6.0	10	0	0
C.Valentine	24	CB	15	547	35	4.7%	--	16	4	3	11	64%	--	4.3	--	31	11.6%	--	8.4	-31.4%	--	39%	--	8.9	--	5	2
E.Williams	24	FS	13	474	50	7.7%	74	23	7	9	22	55%	8	5.0	10	12	5.2%	--	9.0	-5.8%	--	50%	--	7.2	--	3	1
J.Alexander*	28	CB	7	361	23	6.6%	--	9	2	5	4	25%	--	11.5	--	33	18.7%	--	10.2	-44.7%	--	52%	--	8.1	--	7	2
N.Hobbs	26	CB	11	556	54	9.7%	--	23	9	7	22	36%	--	9.9	--	43	16.2%	--	5.5	-8.3%	--	56%	--	6.7	--	5	1

Year	Pass D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	15	-3.3%	14	-25.9%	3	-0.1%	17	-11.5%	9	-5.8%	15	-2.2%	15	-6.9%	13	
2023	26	3.5%	18	29.9%	31	-9.5%	8	10.7%	22	-1.9%	16	0.5%	17	1.8%	19	
2024	9	-23.9%	5	-15.4%	5	0.2%	15	-8.6%	9	-22.2%	3	-1.0%	14	7.0%	23	

Only the Eagles defense (-27.7% DVOA) was more effective at preventing deep passes than the Packers defense (-20.0%) last year, and Xavier McKinney deserves much of the credit. Opponents only completed 15 passes of 20 or more air yards against the Packers, the third lowest total in the NFL. ••• Nate Hobbs played almost exclusively in the slot as an eye-opening rookie in 2021. The Raiders moved him outside in 2022, and his coverage metrics immediately tailed off. They moved him back inside (for the most part) in 2023 and 2024. Defensive coordinator Jeff Hafley said that he plans to use Hobbs both inside and outside. “He’s had a lot of success inside, and I thought his tape outside was equally as good,” Hafley said. It’s unclear what tape Hafley watched, or if he was watching through *sick of waiting for Jaire*-colored glasses. ••• Javon Bullard and Evan Williams enjoyed solid rookie seasons. Williams was effective enough as a deep safety to allow McKinney to play a more diverse role. Bullard was overmatched at times as a slot cornerback last year but can handle most box-safety assignments. ••• Let’s see, we covered the deep safety/slot guy group, plus the expensive vaporware. Oops … almost forgot the outside cornerbacks! And so did the Packers! Keisean Nixon will be one outside corner, with Carrington Valentine taking the other spot once Hafley gives up and slides Hobbs back to the slot. Valentine began pressing and struggling against Vikings and Eagles receivers late in the year; he’s best suited to a dime role. Nixon, on the other hand, is ultra-athletic and versatile, and he just earned a three-year \$18-million contract extension. So there is nothing to worry about with Nixon. Or is there?

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	-0.5%	17	2.6	12	-4.4	27	11.8	1	-11.3	31	-1.1	19	8.2	5
2023	-3.0%	28	-5.4	26	-0.4	18	0.9	9	-4.8	25	-6.3	31	7.0	5
2024	0.2%	15	0.2	16	4.5	5	1.2	11	-0.9	18	-4.1	26	-8.9	29

Keisean Nixon, an All-Pro return man in 2022 and 2023, no longer wants to return kickoffs now that he is a starting cornerback. The Packers signed return specialist Mecole Hardman and drafted Texas Tech gadget player Savion Williams, so that won’t be an issue, right? “In my mind, he’s always going to be in the mix, and we’ll see how it works out,” special teams coordinator Rich Bisaccia said in OTAs, noting that Nixon was “not in a very good mood” when discussing kickoffs after the Packers’ playoff loss. Gosh, it feels like the Packers sometimes go out of their way to drum up needless offseason controversies. ••• The Packers re-signed kicker Brandon McManus, who replaced the struggling Braydon Narveson last October. McManus was the subject of a lawsuit alleging sexual assault; the suit was dismissed last September, and the NFL found insufficient evidence for league discipline. ••• Daniel Whelan finished in the middle of the pack in punting statistics but delivered three punts each inside the 20-yard line in nip-and-tuck victories over the Colts and Jaguars while averaging 56.8 yards per punt in a tight win over the Texans. Whelan also retrieved a wild snap and managed to boot a 35-yarder against the Bears in the season finale. The Packers kept Whelan as a restricted-rights free agent.

# Houston Texans

**2024 record:** 10-7

**Total DVOA:** 5.3% (16th)

**Pythagorean Wins:** 8.5 (16th)

**Offense:** -12.3% (26th)

**Snap-Weighted Age:** 26.4 (17th)

**Defense:** -15.3% (3rd)

**Average Opponent:** -2.2% (23rd)

**Special Teams:** 2.3% (8th)

**2025 Mean Projection:** 8.5 wins

**On the Clock (0-5):** 12%

**Postseason Odds:** 47.6%

**Mediocrity (6-8):** 38%

**Super Bowl Odds:** 3.5%

**Playoff Contender (9-11):** 39%

**Proj. Avg. Opponent:** 1.0% (13th)

**Super Bowl Contender (12+):** 12%

**2024:** An offense comes off the bloom.

**2025:** What does building an offensive line entirely out of reinforcements do?

It was after the second day of the draft, and a somewhat punchy Nick Caserio laid out this challenge to Houston media in a late-night presser: “The whole perception, well, you need this position, you need that position, I mean, that’s made up, we don’t approach it that way. ... This whole concept of drafting for need, honest to God, I don’t even know what it means.”

The media was curious why the Texans had not invested more on the offensive line through the end of the third round. They had selected Aireontae Ersery in the second round after trading out of the first round and a chance to draft Josh Simmons, who later went to the Chiefs at 32. Ersery would represent the only Texans draft pick used on an offensive lineman in 2025.

In Year 5 of Caserio’s stewardship, it’s hard to say that the offensive line has ever been appreciably good. It’s always had Laremy Tunsil, at least until this offseason when Tunsil was sent packing to Washington for a package of draft picks headlined by a 2026 second-rounder. But even beyond extensions for Tunsil, the Texans have thrown resources at the problem en masse. They spent heavily on Shaq Mason after acquiring him in a trade from the Buccaneers. They lavished a huge contract on Tytus Howard. Over the past three years, Caserio has spent the 15th pick on Kenyon Green (trading down and eschewing Kyle Hamilton and Jordan Davis), the 62nd pick on Juice Scruggs, and the 59th pick on Blake Fisher. The Texans spent \$52.3 million in cap space on offensive linemen in 2024, which ranked sixth in the NFL.

For their investment, they got a unit that held back the entire offense. The adjusted sack rate spiked from 7.8% to 9.1%, creating third-and-longs that the Texans didn’t have the firepower to get out of. The Texans have never been able to run the ball efficiently with Caserio as general manager—their 27th-place DVOA finish in 2024 was their highest finish since 2019. Joe Mixon ran well and had some key grind-out-the-clock moments against the Jaguars before the bye (in the game that kept the Texans from feeling any real divisional sweat down the stretch) and against the Chargers and Chiefs in the playoffs. But Mixon couldn’t do anything about the fact that this team couldn’t block for him. NFL Next Gen Stats have Mixon with only 3.8 expected yards per carry last year, tied for the fifth-lowest rate in the league, and he finished sixth in stacked boxes faced among qualified running backs. He outgained the

expected numbers by 0.3 yards per carry despite relatively few breakaway runs. Only 59.4% of C.J. Stroud’s dropbacks came with clean pockets per FTN StatsHub, the lowest rate among qualifying quarterbacks other than Deshaun Watson.

The resulting upheaval looks like this: Tunsil traded, Mason released, Green sent to Philadelphia as part of the C.J. Gardner-Johnson deal, offensive coordinator Bobby Slowik and offensive line coach Chris Strausser fired. Other than Ersery, the Texans patched on an assortment of low-end Band-Aids. Cam Robinson is here after a disjointed season where he was benched in Jacksonville and sent to Minnesota as a midseason replacement for the injured Christian Darrisaw. 33-year-old Laken Tomlinson is here after a few lost years in Seattle on a bad offensive line. Trent Brown tore his patellar tendon three games into the season and is now 32, but at least he used to be a Patriot. The Vikings were happy to shed the last year of Ed Ingram’s rookie contract after he was benched and dreadful, and the Texans accepted it for ... reasons? Let’s go with “reasons.”

Which is a long way to say: What the Texans don’t have in quality, they make up for in sheer numbers. Outside of Robinson at left tackle—his \$12-million deal probably pot-commits him to the starting spot—and Howard at either right tackle or left guard, you could give us any combination of names that will start for the Texans in Week 1 of this season and all we could do is accept that you may be right. When it comes to the Houston offensive line, the most oft-repeated word this offseason has been “competition.”

Beyond that, Stefon Diggs was lost to a torn ACL in Week 8. Tank Dell struggled coming off his offseason gunshot wound and only truly started to look like himself in Week 16, the same week he suffered a devastating knee injury that will likely sideline him for the entirety of the 2025 season. Nico Collins went on IR after Week 5 with a hamstring injury, taking almost two months to return. The wideout corps that had seemed so promising not only never showed like it did on paper, it also arguably was never fully healthy.

Deposing Slowik just a year after he had multiple head-coaching interviews was a fascinating decision and a departure from how the Texans have normally operated. It’s one thing to get rid of an obvious lame-duck coach in one season—the entire Jack Easterby Era operated on blaming lame-duck coaches—but another to can someone who had a well-regarded 2023 and had been figured out schematically

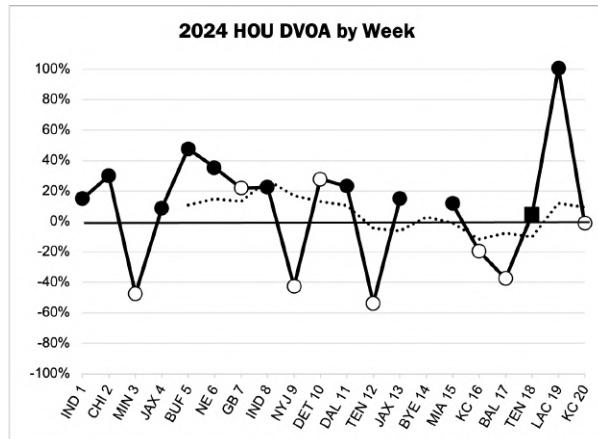
2025 Texans Schedule					
Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	at LAR	7	at SEA (Mon.)	13	at IND
2	TB (Mon.)	8	SF	14	at KC
3	at JAX	9	DEN	15	ARI
4	TEN	10	JAX	16	LV
5	at BAL	11	at TEN	17	at LAC
6	BYE	12	BUF (Thu.)	18	IND

on pass-protection calls in 2024. As hard as it was to watch this offense last year, it's not like the Texans weren't still winning games. There are teams that would have given Slowik an offseason to figure out what went wrong and how to fix it. The Texans apparently are no longer one of those teams.

The other important bit of business for the Texans is how they change the offense schematically under former Rams tight ends coach Nick Caley, their new offensive coordinator whom Caserio worked with in New England. Teams with well-regarded defensive head coaches often wind up here—if an offensive playcaller has both experience and skill, he usually winds up as a head coach. The Buccaneers, for one example, have vaulted mostly unknown offensive coordinators to head coaching positions in back-to-back seasons. The Texans are hoping Caley shows enough this year to justify that. We haven't really seen enough of how it will play out on the field to give you a good lean yet—his press conferences were dry and full of “put our players in the best position to win” claptrap. The one major clue we have gotten is C.J. Stroud thanking Caley for giving him more “ownership” of the offense. Stroud told reporters in April before the draft that he was “taking control and [doing] a little more pre-snap, having tools to put my guys in the best position. That is something that we really didn’t work on these last two years.” The part where the spikes went into Slowik’s back aside, those sound like good sound principles to enact in an offense.

Our numbers have the Texans offense rebounding somewhat in 2025. As bad as it feels for this offensive line to not have a single sure-fire star, it plumbed deep enough depths to still trigger potential regression. Adding a reliable second target in Christian Kirk helps, and importing the entire Iowa State receiving corps via the draft should keep Stroud from lacking downfield targets when he gets time. It's not like Stroud played poorly for most of last season—even in losing to the Chiefs, he hit plenty of big throws. The combined supporting cast just was not enough for him to reach the heights we were talking about before the 2024 season.

But the Texans were able to maintain their status atop the AFC South because the defense took a huge leap forward. They went from 16th in DVOA in 2023 to third last year, and they were third in both pass defense DVOA and rush defense DVOA. The Chiefs didn't win the Super Bowl, as you all know, but they almost didn't get there in the first place on account of scoring just 23 points against the Texans in a game where they rushed for 2.3 yards per attempt and completed zero passes to non-Xavier Worthy wideouts. The distance be-



tween this Texans team and the first conference championship game in franchise history was just a couple of Azeez Al-Shaair blown coverages against Travis Kelce.

We're projecting a small bit of regression from the defense. Have you met us? Regression is what we prescribe for most big jumps. Houston was sixth in turnovers forced per drive, a stat that tends to regress. Most of the teams that leap like this are subject to the Plexiglass Principle and tumble back to Earth a bit in the next season (Table 1).

**Table 1. Defenses Climbing from Average to Top 5, 2011-2024**

Year	Team	W-L	DVOA Y-1	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DVOA Y+1	Rk
2011	SF	13-3	-1.4%	15	-16.6%	2	-16.5%	2
2013	NYG	7-9	2.1%	19	-11.9%	5	6.4%	24
2014	DET	11-5	-2.9%	15	-14.2%	3	-2.7%	13
2015	KC	11-5	-0.6%	17	-14.1%	5	-3.6%	14
2017	JAX	10-6	-2.8%	16	-16.6%	2	-9.1%	5
2018	BUF	6-10	1.7%	16	-15.8%	2	-8.4%	9
2018	CHI	12-4	0.5%	14	-28.1%	1	-8.4%	8
2019	NE	12-4	-0.1%	14	-21.1%	1	5.5%	24
2019	PIT	8-8	-0.1%	15	-15.3%	3	-18.9%	1
2022	PHI	14-3	2.7%	23	-13.3%	3	11.4%	29
2023	CLE	11-6	0.8%	16	-20.7%	2	4.0%	25
2024	HOU	10-7	0.0%	16	-15.3%	3	--	--

Over the last 15 years, similar defenses decline in the third year more often than not. That's what the projection system is banking on, even if the 2011 49ers and 2019 Steelers show what the best-case scenario looks like for Houston.

On the surface, there's not a lot to be concerned about on that side of the ball. Ryans can scheme ‘em up with the best in the NFL. Derek Stingley Jr. finally had a breakout season and was rewarded with a massive contract extension. Will Anderson Jr. had 11 sacks in just 14 games and combined with Danielle Hunter to bully most offensive lines. The only defenders with more than 300 snaps who aren't returning are journeyman safety Eric Murray and special teams-focused backup linebacker Neville Hewitt. It's a deep defensive line

rotation that had solid rotational pieces such as Derek Barnett and Mario Edwards Jr. return. They re-added Sheldon Rankins into the mix after a down 2024 with the Bengals that he mostly spent on the NFI/illness list. The defensive back room is both young and strong, adding Gardner-Johnson to start next to Calen Bullock at safety. Third-round pick Jaylin Smith of USC will compete with oft-injured veteran Jimmie Ward for the nickel role.

You can squint and see how the offense could improve while the defense maintains last year's lofty standing, and that's certainly what the Texans are hoping will happen. What's more likely is that the defense gives back whatever offensive gains the Texans see, and the team on the whole runs in place. This is one of those situations where we can't tell the projection system "oh, but Nick Caley has experience with Sean McVay" and have it spit out Rams-esque offensive numbers without any real proof. The unknown is the unknown for a reason.

If the Texans are able to cobble together an offense worthy of Stroud and combine it with last season's defense, they'll be a stronger threat than they were last year—although still more likely "in the AFC contender conversation" rather than some sort of superteam that overtakes the Ravens, Bills, and Chiefs in the hierarchy. And if they don't, well, they'll be playing at 3:30 central time on Saturday to open the playoffs in the annual Texans Invitational.

This is a crucial year for the Texans. Stroud's about to become expensive and force some conversations about what is most important for the team going forward, and that's going to cut some of the slack they have been working with in roster building. The Tunsil trade is a pre-emptive strike towards

that, one where they found an older player whom they didn't want to extend expendable. It's also a hard sell to a fan base that was born watching David Carr get slaughtered. The idea that you need to protect the young quarterback gets interesting when you never developed a worthwhile replacement for Tunsil, let alone stood up the rest of a successful offensive line. It's hard to destroy Caserio for these issues because he has hit several picks at other positions: picking Collins in the third round and having him develop into what he is today is a large feather in one's cap. But there needs to be a step beyond regression to improve this line into a championship-caliber one, and the raw components are either unproven or of little demonstrable quality. Also, this is Caley's first coordinator job, and Cole Popovich's first solo offensive line coach job. An unquestioning belief that this line will be good is a step into the realm of magical thinking.

Despite how good Tunsil has been, the Texans have needed an offensive line improvement for a long time. Drafting for need, Mr. Caserio, is when you pick some players that the team can't do without, because the incumbents are bad enough at their jobs that the upgrade in replacing them is worth more than following a draft board. And being a good general manager means understanding who those players are rather than having a major blind spot about how a good offensive line should work. We're about to find out if that blind spot transcends major upheaval. If it doesn't, given the quick move to fire Slowik, the next snippy press conference answer from Caserio might come as an employee of a different organization.

Rivers McCown

## 2024 Texans by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	at IND	W	88%	29	27	417	303	+1	15%	15%	-3%	-3%
2	CHI	W	97%	19	13	310	205	+1	30%	-27%	-39%	18%
3	at MIN	L	0%	7	34	296	274	-2	-47%	-45%	-12%	-14%
4	JAX	W	90%	24	20	435	313	-1	9%	12%	5%	2%
5	BUF	W	72%	23	20	425	276	-2	48%	-5%	-39%	14%
6	at NE	W	100%	41	21	368	291	+3	35%	11%	-22%	2%
7	at GB	L	32%	22	24	197	277	+3	22%	-10%	-24%	8%
8	IND	W	97%	23	20	363	303	+1	23%	-2%	-24%	0%
9	at NYJ	L	7%	13	21	322	293	0	-43%	-21%	11%	-11%
10	DET	L	44%	23	26	248	345	+3	28%	-29%	-52%	4%
11	at DAL	W	99%	34	10	391	388	+1	23%	6%	-19%	-2%
12	TEN	L	2%	27	32	260	369	+1	-54%	-48%	10%	4%
13	at JAX	W	94%	23	20	326	373	+1	15%	-2%	-11%	6%
14	BYE											
15	MIA	W	89%	20	12	181	224	+3	12%	-33%	-40%	5%
16	at KC	L	2%	19	27	311	375	-2	-19%	-5%	17%	2%
17	BAL	L	0%	2	31	211	432	-1	-37%	-43%	5%	10%
18	at TEN	W	94%	23	14	374	314	0	5%	-8%	-18%	-5%
19	LAC	W	100%	32	12	429	261	+1	101%	20%	-73%	8%
20	at KC	L	20%	14	23	336	212	0	-1%	9%	-5%	-15%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	-12.4%	26	-15.3%	3
Unadjusted VOA	-10.3%	24	-11.6%	3
Weighted Trend	-15.5%	26	-12.8%	2
Variance	4.2%	10	4.1%	10
Average Opponent	1.2%	27	-0.8%	22
Passing	-1.4%	25	-9.8%	3
Rushing	-14.4%	27	-22.5%	3
First Down	-3.0%	18	-14.0%	4
Second Down	-22.9%	29	-17.3%	2
Third Down	-14.3%	22	-14.7%	7
First Half	-2.6%	17	-16.5%	2
Second Half	-23.8%	28	-14.2%	7
Red Zone	-22.2%	26	-4.3%	16
Late and Close	-21.0%	29	-12.6%	3

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rk	Off	Rk	Def	Rk	ST	Rk	Off AGL	Rk	Def AGL	Rk	Off Age	Rk	Def Age	Rk	ST Age	Rk
2020	4-12	6.1	5.1	384	464	-9	-13.6%	24	4.6%	12	17.1%	31	-1.0%	21	15.5	3	42.7	17	26.9	12	26.3	14	26.1	15
2021	4-13	4.0	4.3	280	452	+3	-24.1%	28	-20.4%	30	5.1%	24	1.3%	9	53.4	24	28.9	8	27.1	8	26.4	16	26.8	5
2022	3-13-1	4.9	3.3	289	420	-1	-28.4%	31	-24.5%	31	7.8%	28	4.0%	2	41.9	19	28.4	9	26.6	16	26.6	12	26.9	6
2023	10-7	9.2	8.7	377	353	+10	3.1%	12	1.0%	14	0.0%	16	2.2%	7	106.6	32	52.5	28	26.6	16	27.0	9	27.3	2
2024	10-7	8.5	8.9	372	372	+9	5.3%	16	-12.3%	26	-15.3%	3	2.3%	8	45.7	25	43.3	19	26.5	19	25.9	26	27.6	2

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

HOU Offense					HOU Offense vs. Opponents					HOU Defense				HOU Defense vs. Opponents			
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA
11	63%	5.2	-9.0%	26%	Base	29%	4.7	-10.5%	53%	Base	18%	4.7	-13.8%	11	61%	5.3	-14.1%
12	32%	5.4	-4.4%	52%	Nickel	64%	5.5	-3.4%	32%	Nickel	75%	5.0	-18.0%	12	25%	5.3	-16.6%
21	2%	7.5	72.4%	53%	Dime+	8%	4.9	-25.0%	5%	Dime+	7%	8.2	14.9%	21	5%	6.0	-6.4%
13	2%	5.6	-6.0%	71%										13	3%	4.0	-13.8%

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected	Rk	Formation	Rk	Pass Rush	Rk	Secondary	Rk	Strategy	Rk
Runs, all	-1.1%	27	Form: Single Back	71%	27	Rush 3	1.7%	25	4 DB
Runs, first down	-2.7%	27	Form: Empty Back	8%	17	Rush 4	71.6%	14	5 DB
Runs, second-long	+6.4%	3	Form: Multi Back	22%	9	Rush 5	19.7%	16	6+ DB
Runs, power sit.	-13.2%	30	Pers: 3+ WR	64%	17	Rush 6+	6.9%	12	Man Coverage
Runs, behind 2H	+0.4%	25	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	34%	12	Edge Rusher Sacks	63.3%	6	MOFC
Runs, ahead 2H	-1.9%	22	Pers: 6+ OL	1%	23	Interior DL Sacks	23.5%	25	CB1 on WR1
Run-Pass Options	2.2%	24	Shotgun/Pistol	71%	27	Second Level Sacks	13.3%	28	S/CB Cover Ratio
									Go for it on 4th
									0.91
									22

Houston had a big gap between running against a light box and running the rest of the time, which was a big problem because the Texans didn't face as many light boxes as other teams. Only 41% of their runs came against a box of six or fewer, the lowest figure in the NFL. The Texans had 5.4 yards per carry and 2.3% DVOA on these runs compared to 3.6 yards per carry and -21.2% DVOA on other runs. The Texans were the only offense other than Miami to face MOFO coverage more than half the time. They ranked 30th in DVOA against MOFO coverage compared to 21st against MOFC coverage. Houston had -38.1% DVOA on RPOs, the lowest for any team in the NFL. As strong as the Texans defense was overall, they were dead last in the NFL allowing 6.1 average yards after the catch. The Texans led the league in S/CB coverage ratio, as they often used three safeties with Calen Bullock to go along with some combination of Jimmie Ward, Jalen Pitre, and the departed Eric Murray. Houston had the biggest gap between the average play made by the top two safeties, as Bullock's average play came after 13.6 yards and Pitre's average play came after just 5.1 yards. Murray and Ward were around 8.0 yards.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
C.J.Stroud	-158	-15.5%	583	3309	5.7	5.0	63.4%	20	12
D.Mills	1	-10.7%	38	194	5.1	3.6	55.6%	0	0

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
J.Mixon	57	-2.9%	245	1016	4.1	11	0	44%
D.Pierce	42	19.6%	40	293	7.3	2	1	43%
C.Akers*	-42	-39.5%	40	147	3.7	1	1	33%
C.J.Stroud	-5	-15.0%	40	242	6.1	0	3	-
D.Ogunbowale	-14	-18.7%	30	112	3.7	0	0	37%
J.J.Taylor	-1	-9.9%	10	44	4.4	0	0	50%
T.Dell	0	-38.2%	9	43	4.8	0	0	-
N.Chubb	-27	-14.7%	102	332	3.3	3	1	41%

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
N.Collins	206	14.1%	99	68	1006	14.8	5.4	7	69%
T.Dell	104	3.4%	81	51	667	13.1	3.2	3	63%
S.Diggs*	78	3.1%	64	47	496	10.6	3.9	3	73%
J.Metchie	-33	-24.6%	37	24	254	10.6	2.9	1	65%
R.Woods*	-50	-34.9%	30	20	203	10.2	3.7	0	67%
X.Hutchinson	-22	-23.1%	26	12	117	9.8	3.1	0	46%
C.Kirk	30	-4.7	47	27	379	14	4.2	1	57%
J.Watson	59	12.0%	32	22	289	13.1	3.1	2	69%
D.Schultz	-57	-17.7%	85	53	532	10.0	4.0	2	62%
C.Stover	-18	-20.6%	22	15	133	8.9	6.3	1	68%
J.Mixon	25	-5.1%	52	36	309	8.6	10.0	1	69%
D.Ogunbowale	21	1.2%	28	19	198	10.4	8.8	1	68%
C.Akers*	-6	-30.8%	7	4	16	4.0	2.8	1	57%
N.Chubb	-21	-43.2%	11	5	31	6.2	6.2	1	45%

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
L.Tunsil*	LT	31	17/17	1028	19	5	27	4.1%	12	B.Fisher	RT	22	15/5	337	1	1	21	9.8%	--
T.Howard	RT	29	16/16	1018	3	8	34	5.2%	20	Kend.Green*	RG	27	17/1	178	0	2	8	7.1%	--
S.Mason*	RG	32	15/15	933	3	10	22	3.7%	24	L.Tomlinson	LG	33	17/17	1097	5	4	23	3.2%	13
J.Scruggs	C/G	25	13/13	873	5	8	17	3.1%	31	C.Robinson	LT	30	17/17	999	12	4	47	7.7%	35
Keny.Green*	LG	24	12/9	583	6	16	20	5.4%	32	E.Ingram	RG	26	16/9	580	2	5	17	4.8%	32
J.Patterson	C	26	15/9	548	1	4	6	1.7%	8										

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont
2022	3.80	3.90	31	67%	16	19%	26	1.01	30	0.62	22	38	6.4%	13	28.6%	22	32
2023	3.63	4.09	21	48%	32	20%	27	1.00	26	0.41	29	47	7.8%	22	28.1%	15	26
2024	4.41	4.12	24	69%	12	23%	31	1.19	21	1.10	4	54	9.1%	27	37.2%	32	27

2024 ALY by direction: Left End: 4.02 (24)      Left Tackle: 4.00 (19)      Mid/Guard: 4.34 (21)      Right Tackle: 3.97 (22)      Right End: 3.36 (24)

It's not often we make it to the unit comments having already built out the bulk of the offensive line battle, but here we are. Tytus Howard has been horrendous inside at left guard in almost every year the Texans have tried him there, and he again was at best up-and-down after having to pull that move in 2024. This will not stop the Texans—nothing can stop the Texans from doing this to themselves—but at least Howard was less of a liability at the position than he was in 2023. It's something to look on with resignation at this point, as the war is already over. 🤦 Jarrett Patterson has been a roughly league-average center since being selected in the sixth round in 2023. He sharply curtailed his blown run blocks in 2024, from 11 in just 463 snaps to four last year. He's solid as a pass protector one-on-one, but it's hard to look at his pressure rate and Houston's unblocked pressures and come away thinking it wasn't at least partially on Patterson. 🤦 After two years, it's hard to know for sure what to think of Juice Scruggs. He's on the Howard Position Change Train, with stops at center and left guard last year after only playing left guard in 2023. He was drafted as a center, and it's possible that Scruggs winds up at right guard this time around. There was improvement in 2024, but not enough to comfortably say Scruggs is a starting-caliber player. 🤦 Blake Fisher's rookie season was a rough watch, with average-at-best games and some rough lowlights against the Chiefs in the Divisional Round. He'll get a chance to play this year if he wins a camp battle, but it's surprising for a second-year player picked in the second round to look up and see so many players as potential competition: Cam Robinson, Trent Brown, and second-round rookie Aireontae Ersery (Minnesota). And that's not even counting Howard. This is a unit that only Marie Kondo ("I love mess!") could enjoy.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run				Pass Rush						
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
T.Settle	28	DT	17	625	31	3.7%	70	25	12	0	24	79%	28	1.1	4	5.0	5	22	1
M.Edwards	31	DT	13	465	33	5.2%	37	24	7	3	26	65%	66	3.4	83	3.0	6	20	3
F.Fatukasi	30	DT	11	308	24	4.5%	58	19	7	1	21	76%	36	1.6	15	1.0	3	6	0
T.Togiai	26	DT	8	249	30	7.7%	11	22	5	6	22	68%	61	3.1	80	1.5	0	9	0
K.Hinish	26	DT	10	231	12	2.4%	--	7	3	2	12	58%	--	3.2	--	0.0	0	0	0

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run				Pass Rush						
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
D.Hunter	31	DE	17	766	49	5.9%	30	43	19	2	31	84%	15	1.6	19	12.0	12	66	5
W.Anderson	24	DE	14	561	39	5.7%	35	32	23	5	22	77%	34	1.4	13	11.0	7	34	3
D.Barnett	29	DE	16	390	26	3.3%	--	21	6	1	21	76%	--	3.2	--	5.0	4	23	0
D.Autry	35	DE	10	314	16	3.3%	89	11	5	4	7	71%	56	6.9	101	3.0	3	20	4
D.Taylor	28	DE	16	375	34	4.2%	--	22	6	5	27	56%	--	4.1	--	3.0	6	19	1
C.Toohill	29	DE	14	249	19	2.7%	--	12	4	3	15	60%	--	5.3	--	1.0	1	7	0

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run				Pass Rush				vs. Pass										
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD Int	
H.To'oTo'o	24	OLB	15	830	107	14.6%	33	55	16	17	62	55%	64	4.2	70	1.5	0	7	23	-9.2%	21	52%	17	8.0	50	3	1
A.Al-Shaair	28	MLB	11	573	74	13.7%	42	48	14	6	49	69%	14	2.9	8	2.0	5	9	28	6.3%	44	64%	5	6.6	21	4	0
N.Hewitt*	32	MLB	17	341	52	6.2%	--	31	7	4	37	57%	--	4.9	--	0.0	1	1	7	-47.7%	--	86%	--	4.4	--	3	1
C.Harris	24	OLB	3	172	20	13.6%	--	8	2	4	11	36%	--	4.5	--	1.0	0	3	14	83.8%	--	43%	--	12.1	--	0	0
E.J.Speed	30	OLB	15	1010	145	17.7%	11	73	26	28	78	64%	26	3.6	31	0.0	1	6	58	17.5%	63	40%	52	7.7	46	5	1

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk
2022	5.21	4.77	27	73%	28	19%	13	1.66	32	1.16	31	39	6.9%	18	27.0%	18
2023	3.35	3.41	2	71%	22	24%	2	0.99	4	0.39	4	46	7.6%	19	32.1%	7
2024	3.93	3.86	2	64%	12	19%	11	1.07	6	0.68	11	49	8.6%	3	32.6%	11
2024 ALY by direction:	Left End: 3.16 (3)			Left Tackle: 3.38 (2)			Mid/Guard: 3.90 (3)			Right Tackle: 5.49 (30)			Right End: 3.14 (9)			

There are better collective pass rushes, but it's hard to think of a better one-two edge punch at the moment than Danielle Hunter and Will Anderson Jr. It's also hard to think of a player who has capitalized as much on free agency as Hunter has recently, taking home an almost fully guaranteed deal last offseason and netting merely \$54.1 million out of \$55.1 million guaranteed on an extension this offseason. Anderson isn't eligible for extension until next offseason but has already said all the right things about wanting to be a Texan for life, and there is a strong assumption that the two sides will hammer out a deal in 2026 as long as the status quo remains in place. The former No. 3 overall pick has 18 sacks in two seasons and won Defensive Rookie of the Year in 2023—it's still hard to justify the trade-up cost the Texans had to pay the Cardinals to select him, but it's also hard to imagine how his play could look any better than it has thus far. The only major additions to the Texans defensive line rotation are Sheldon Rankins and Darrell Taylor. Rankins missed most of 2024 on the NFI/illness list, but this is the same system that catapulted him into a coveted free agent in 2023. Taylor is three seasons removed from a 9.5-sack sophomore year and certainly adds to the unit's third-down juice. Expect Tim Settle Jr. and Folorunso Fatukasi to be the main players inside next to Rankins. Linebacker was an easy weak point for the Texans last year. The team paid market rate for Azeez Al-Shaair and he was a solid run stuffer but had some memorable coverage lapses. Henry To'oTo'o is ready but too light to be a top-tier inside player. Colts defector E.J. Speed flies to the ball but led the NFL in broken tackles last season. He only had 11 in 2023 and four in 2024, so perhaps he'll regress positively, but between these three and oft-injured Christian Harris the Texans are more aspiring to average-with-some-big-plays than dominance on the second level.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age Pos	Overall					vs. Run					vs. Pass													
		G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD Int	
D.Stingley	24 CB	17	1012	72	8.6%	51	42	22	9	19	47%	40	7.8	71	95	19.3%	36	13.6	-28.3%	8	65%	1	6.3	20	18 5
C.Bullock	22 FS	17	977	61	7.3%	76	14	6	7	21	10%	92	16.0	92	6	1.3%	--	11.7	-16.3%	--	33%	--	11.7	--	11 5
E.Murray*	31 SS	17	856	84	10.1%	54	32	8	12	42	31%	57	7.4	50	35	8.4%	18	9.9	4.2%	27	60%	12	6.7	26	10 1
K.Lassiter	22 CB	14	799	68	9.9%	29	35	13	5	26	46%	43	3.8	9	72	18.5%	46	13.0	-1.3%	52	64%	2	6.0	9	10 3
J.Pitre	26 SS	12	660	72	12.2%	26	43	18	18	30	73%	1	2.9	1	50	15.6%	3	6.7	-1.7%	20	56%	19	6.2	18	8 1
J.Ward	25 SS	16	461	52	6.6%	80	24	12	0	20	40%	29	3.8	2	28	12.5%	4	4.0	-86.7%	1	64%	7	3.5	2	4 2
D.Ross	29 CB	10	183	12	2.4%	--	4	0	2	1	0%	--	10.0	--	12	13.5%	--	10.1	19.0%	--	25%	--	10.3	--	2 0
C.J.Gardner-Johnson	28 SS	16	908	71	9.1%	66	29	17	11	31	35%	40	5.5	19	25	5.5%	35	5.8	33.3%	52	48%	35	5.0	7	12 6

Year	Pass D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	20	6.6%	18	-26.9%	2	-6.4%	12	5.1%	21	-27.3%	2	22.3%	28	11.5%	23	
2023	23	14.1%	22	-15.3%	8	7.6%	22	4.4%	17	-0.7%	18	13.5%	27	3.7%	20	
2024	3	-19.2%	7	5.3%	19	-4.3%	8	-1.2%	19	-14.9%	9	-17.9%	3	-20.9%	4	

Patrick Surtain may have won Defensive Player of the Year, but it was Stingley who led the league in our success rate rankings while finishing in the top 10 of DVOA allowed (to Surtain's second) and more than doubling Surtain's defeats total. That's not to say that Stingley deserved the award—a lot of players could have won the award last year—just to say that the two may not be as far apart as you think. The only major change in the secondary this year will be moving from Eric Murray to C.J. Gardner-Johnson as a No. 2 safety, which should push Jimmie Ward into a depth role at both nickel and safety. Gardner-Johnson is yet another big-play creator and should be free to use his instincts underneath with second-year player Calen Bullock playing as the primary deep safety. Jalen Pitre had his best season in 2024 prior to tearing his pectoral, though it was still a year of the boom-and-bust play we have become accustomed to with him. Pitre uses incredible instincts to diagnose the run game, but is an up-and-down tackler. Still, he carried a high success rate out of the slot as teams targeted him often early in the year. The Texans extended both Pitre and Stingley to long-term contracts this offseason. Kamari Lassiter struggled a bit on man coverage against Brian Thomas, and also in the Chiefs game ahead of Christmas when he was forced into the slot against Xavier Worthy. It was still a pretty successful rookie year for Houston's second-round pick, as he finished in the top 10 in yards per pass allowed. The Texans signed Ronald Darby but he abruptly retired during OTAs; Houston replaced him with former Raiders first-round pick Damon Arnette, recently playing in the NFL. Given how late he was signed, Myles Bryant and Tremon Smith are probably more likely to get run as depth corners than Arnette. Third-round cornerback Jaylin Smith (USC) rose in the pre-draft process because of a strong Senior Bowl week and a 4.45s 40 at the combine. He played outside for the Trojans in 2024, but still projects as a slot corner in the NFL who is surprisingly strong against the run despite smaller size (5-foot-11, 187 pounds). DeMeco Ryans has said that he "felt like [Smith] was already a Texan" on Smith's pre-draft visit.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	-1.9%	26	-4.3	25	2.3	10	4.1	7	-8.8	29	-3.5	25	2.8	12
2023	-3.1%	30	-5.2	25	-5.2	31	0.9	7	-6.2	28	-1.1	17	12.7	2
2024	-1.1%	21	-3.0	24	-5.4	29	3.2	8	-0.8	17	0.2	12	5.8	9

Kicker Kai'mi Fairbairn had a rough stretch by his standards in 2024, as he missed two field goal attempts inside of 30 yards for the first time since 2017. He also missed two field goals and an extra point in the playoffs and has hit just 71.4% of his field goal attempts in 14 playoff attempts. He still remains one of the league's better bets at the position for accuracy, but 2024 was not up to the standards of 2022 or 2023. The punter transition from Bill Burr (Cameron Johnson) to Tommy Townsend last offseason was mostly seamless. The Texans allowed a league-low 121 total yards on punt returns in the regular season. Dameon Pierce led the team in kickoff returns and that figures to be a feather in his cap as he attempts to retain a roster spot in 2025, but the team will need a brand-new punt returner after shedding Steven Sims and Robert Woods while losing Tank Dell to injury. This would seem to be a job for Braxton Berrios in 2025.

# Indianapolis Colts

**2024 record:** 8-9

**Total DVOA:** -7.1% (19th)

**Pythagorean Wins:** 7.3 (21st)

**Offense:** -5.1% (20th)

**Snap-Weighted Age:** 26.5 (16th)

**Defense:** 0.9% (15th)

**Average Opponent:** -3.3% (26th)

**Special Teams:** -1.1% (21st)

**2025 Mean Projection:** 6.8 wins

**On the Clock (0-5):** 31%

**Postseason Odds:** 22.1%

**Mediocrity (6-8):** 44%

**Super Bowl Odds:** 0.6%

**Playoff Contender (9-11):** 22%

**Proj. Avg. Opponent:** -0.8% (20th)

**Super Bowl Contender (12+):** 3%

**2024:** Tapped out.

**2025:** An actual spending splurge hopes to hide the void.

**C**olts owner Jim Irsay spent the better part of the last 25 years, for better or worse, being bold and defiant. Sometimes it came with weird undertones, such as when his Twitter account proudly boasted that “It’s time to let The Monster get out of its cage to feed!!!!!!!!!!!!” with what appeared to be a post-workout selfie. Sometimes it came with stunningly bringing in Jeff Saturday from a cushy ESPN analyst position in the middle of the season, with no head coaching experience outside of high school, and asking him to lead the Colts in the interim after firing Frank Reich. Sometimes it would be so hands-on that he’d push Carson Wentz directly out of the door after the door end to the 2021 season. You’ve heard of the phrase “marching to the beat of his own drummer”—Irsay likely would have fired the drummer if he didn’t think it was working out, then began marching on his own.

So this offseason felt a little weird for the Colts with Irsay stepping out of the spotlight. Chris Ballard was retained as general manager despite an eighth season that went nowhere. The Colts haven’t appeared in the playoffs or won 10 games since 2020 and haven’t won a playoff game since Andrew Luck retired. We’re partial to the idea that Ballard is more of a league-average general manager with a tendency to believe too hard in what he has than someone flailing against the wind, but the vote of confidence to keep him on despite four consecutive non-playoff seasons did not feel very Irsay-esque. Half of the league’s general managers weren’t even employed the last time the Colts made the playoffs. And since Irsay was found unresponsive in a December 2023 incident that police characterized as a suspected overdose, the owner had grown more reclusive. He hadn’t shown up to the owner’s meetings at any point this offseason.

Thus, it was not a total shock to find out close to press time that Irsay passed away in his sleep at the age of 65. The team will pass over to his daughters, with Carlie Irsay-Gordon likely to be the most involved in the day-to-day operations of the team. Irsay-Gordon offered the following as she took over: “We talked about not micromanaging people, but also, we have a standard here, and it hasn’t been good enough.”

Talking about the recently deceased is hard—it’s easy to steer into hagiography, and it’s easy to steer into a screed about everything they ever did wrong. But where I landed in thinking about Irsay is that America has plenty of nepotism babies, people who were born on third base by being born

into rich situations, and Irsay was one of them. Many of them do much more harmful things than Irsay did. Irsay seemed remarkably focused on only hurting himself—he went to rehab at least 15 times per his own admission to HBO Sports in 2023. He dreamed big and had convictions but ultimately was wrapped up in his team as any fan is. Irsay was a Colts lifer who hung out with Johnny Unitas in the locker room as he was growing up and someone who kept a large memorabilia collection of things such as Muhammad Ali’s boot from the “Thrilla in Manila” and Elvis Presley’s guitars. There’s a draw to me, even as much as it’s hard to imagine yourself in his shoes, in seeing Irsay just living the most unencumbered life a common fan could ever have. It comes with so many benefits, and it also comes with taking slings from people on your side for the team’s lack of championship success in the Peyton Manning window. It was the true fan life dialed up to 11.

We’re not saying that’s the best-case scenario when you’re born rich and insulated from consequence, but it probably isn’t far off. We all have the capacity to hurt others. Irsay was on the right side of issues such as Rush Limbaugh’s potential Rams ownership and getting Daniel Snyder out of the Commanders business.

And when it came to the hurt, he kept the blast radius localized.

\*\*\*

There’s a lot you can glean from a franchise guaranteeing Daniel Jones \$13.2 million to compete for a starting quarterback job. Let’s go over some of it.

It’s probably not a good sign for your incumbent rookie-contract quarterback that Jones is here. It’s definitely not a good sign for Anthony Richardson that Ballard and head coach Shane Steichen keep using the word “consistency” when discussing what’s going to win the starting quarterback job while declaring it an open competition.

Richardson being sidelined through most of OTAs and minicamp with AC joint soreness helped neither his case to win the job nor his case that he can stay healthy enough to remain the team’s starter. Even when he wasn’t taking himself out of games for an oft-criticized breather last year, Richardson missed time with back spasms, an oblique strain, and a foot injury.

## 2025 Colts Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	MIA	7	at LAC	13	HOU
2	DEN	8	TEN	14	at JAX
3	at TEN	9	at PIT	15	at SEA
4	at LAR	10	ATL (GER)	16	SF (Mon.)
5	LV	11	BYE	17	JAX
6	ARI	12	at KC	18	at HOU

Jones, on his third contract, is not really a Sam Darnold “Improve Massively Under New Coaching” candidate at this point. We know what he is, and we saw the best version of him for the 2022 Giants. If Richardson is about keeping Indianapolis’ offense weird and littering the field with long incompletions, Jones is about completing the wide-open passes that are generated for him and staring into space while taking sacks.

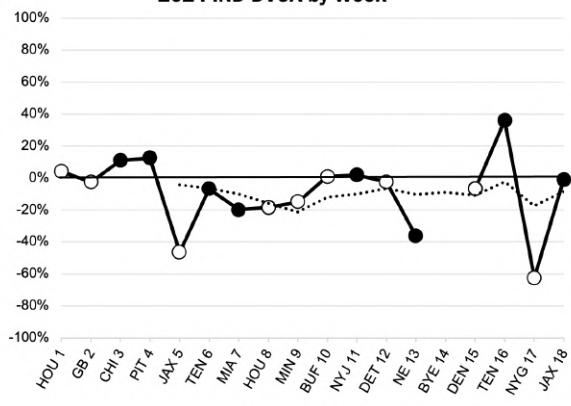
If your franchise is in a position where it looks at the available options and decides “quarterback competition that should be won by Daniel Jones” is the best position it can wind up in ... you may not be the New York Giants, but you are functionally becoming the New York Giants.

It isn’t exactly a surprise that the Colts haven’t quit Richardson. Two years and 15 starts doesn’t provide enough evidence to make a firm decision even if you can glean where this is leaning. The recent memory of Josh Allen going supernova in his third year—with the same obvious physical gifts that Richardson has—is fresh in everyone’s mind. Of course, one thing Allen did even when he was playing poorly was actually playing in football games. Allen also took a massive leap forward in his second year, nearly completing 60% of his passes. Richardson’s 47.7% completion rate was not only the worst in the NFL, but it was also 10 points behind any qualified quarterback last year and nearly 15 points behind Caleb Williams amongst full-time starters. Among recent draft picks, only Zach Wilson has even come close to a completion rate that bad, and even he managed to never go below 54.5% in a season. The last qualifying quarterback with a completion percentage under 50% was Tim Tebow in 2011.

Meanwhile, the Colts’ pillars continue to age. Quenton Nelson rebounded with a second-team All-Pro placement in 2024 but is entering his age-29 season. The Colts let 31-year-old Ryan Kelly take off in free agency. They only re-signed Braden Smith to play right tackle after a pay cut following a diagnosis of religious scrupulosity, a form of OCD that left him in an intensive mental health facility. DeForest Buckner missed real playing time for the first time in his career in 2024 and is entering his age-31 season.

And Ballard’s touch on draft picks has simply gone cold. They’re getting plenty of contributions from their picks—Bernhard Raimann is a solid starter, Josh Downs is a good receiver, Will Fries was a hit when healthy before he also fled to Minnesota—but they aren’t finding stars. Not having a first-round pick the year after trading for Carson Wentz didn’t help, and going down with the ship on Richardson would be catastrophic for Ballard’s career prospects. There’s plenty of

2024 IND DVOA by Week



evidence that drafting can be streaky: Look at John Schneider’s 2012 class, look at Mickey Loomis’ 2017 class, and look at what came around those two classes. But when the whole organizational philosophy is draft-and-develop, and the best player you have developed since 2020 is ... Downs (?), it’s hard to keep pace with other teams.

The Colts did make a few major changes this year, firing Gus Bradley as defensive coordinator and replacing him with former Bengals DC Lou Anarumo. And before free agency, we had a rare moment of Ballard self-realizing on the podium when he said: “If you look back at our good seasons, like [2020]. I mean, we trade for [DeForest] Buckner, we add Philip Rivers. [In 2021] ... we faltered at the end for some reasons, but we had made some moves then. We had signed Justin [Houston]. We had signed the right people. And then I just got, for whatever reason, in my thick head, ‘You know what, we’re going to really double down on our own guys.’”

The Colts did not go hog-wild this offseason, but they did provide a couple of quality starters to a secondary that badly needed them when they signed ex-49ers corner Charvarius Ward and Vikings safety Cam Bynum to major contracts. Anarumo’s scheme is expected to be big on coverage and versatility. If we’re being honest, the “Mad Scientist” had not exactly done much with the Bengals outside of the Super Bowl run, even before they cratered last season. The only cleanly above-average year they had is 2022. In the other seasons, Anarumo’s defenses finished (chronologically, by DVOA) 31st, 26th, 16th, 23rd, and finally 27th in 2024.

One reason to believe that maybe the Colts will do better by Anarumo is that funneling important interior assignments on run downs to Grover Stewart and Buckner should be loads better than handing them to B.J. Hill and a rookie Kris Jenkins. And one reason to believe they will do worse is that this team already finished second in the NFL in missed tackles in 2024 with 158 and now will apparently be building even lighter boxes. There’s some regression in our numbers about this because the missed-tackle rate wasn’t that bad in 2023 or 2022 and E.J. Speed alone missed 28 of those tackles. But replacement Jaylon Carlies came into the league as a 227-pound safety. It’s definitely an area you should have your eye on.

Of the Colts’ 13 Day 1 or 2 picks since 2022, only five were defenders. Nick Cross, Laiatu Latu, and JuJu Brents will be

joined by second-rounder JT Tuimoloau and third-rounder Justin Walley this year. We can still dream about Latu's potential, but other than that we have a safety who didn't start until his third season, the guy that Ward is replacing, and a couple of rookies.

That brings us back to the offense, which is the real reason we have a poor projection on this team. It may strike you as somewhat unfair that we have such a low offensive projection given the fact that the Colts finished 20th in offensive DVOA with one of the wOAt completion rates of this era starting the majority of games at quarterback. In 2023 they finished at 1.9% DVOA, 13th in the league, despite mostly starting Gardner Minshew. The computer does indeed still hold 2022—when the Colts finished last in offensive DVOA—against them, even though Steichen wasn't here for that. But even if we put less emphasis on it, the projection doesn't suddenly think the Colts will be above average with Daniel Jones under center. Drafting Tyler Warren does indeed help things for the long term. But in the short term, teams that draft a receiver or tight end this high tend to take a step back first.

Other than that, there are a lot of little things that are adding together to create a negative offensive environment. The offensive line turnover matters quite a bit—we can't even enjoy the Will Fries bump after he played well in 2024 before breaking his leg, since he's off to the Vikings. Neither quarterback comes out all that well in our projections. They lose a home game to Europe this year. While you can look at the Colts receiver room and see good, Adonai Mitchell's rookie year was incredibly bad. Michael Pittman Jr. dealt with a back fracture and played through it poorly. Alec Pierce is effectively a one-

trick pony, and that trick is running as fast as possible down the field and hoping the ball appears. Is Daniel Jones the right quarterback for him? Jones completed 37% of his deep balls in 2024 which, if you can believe it, was an upgrade from the 2023 season where he completed only 25% of them and was so hesitant to even attempt a deep ball that he managed only 20 attempts in six games.

Just last year, the Colts were a very popular sleeper team to make a leap in the AFC. It's never fun to write the essay for a team like that—one where popular conception runs into our computer's reality with a crash and a thud. If you're wrong, you get heckled by a fan base which hangs your nonprophetic words like a banner. And if you're right, there's no victory parade, just an eerie silence. We imagine this year's projection won't come with quite the same level of shock. But it's yet another year where we're answering whatever clarion calls for Colts optimism exist with a firm shake of the head.

There are outcomes to this where the Colts find 2022 Jones, marry him with a defense that isn't quite ready to fade yet, and ride that to the fringe of playoff contention. It's still (mostly) a weak AFC South. The schedule is not dire. Jonathan Taylor is probably not talked about enough anymore when it comes to the conversation about best backs in the NFL.

But the trend? The trend is that, as Irsay-Gordon said, this hasn't been good enough. It hasn't been good enough for a while. Jones is emblematic of nothing so much as of wasted seasons where we squint and sort of believe it can all come together. And in this case, he unfortunately makes a perfect Colt.

Rivers McCown

## 2024 Colts by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	HOU	L	12%	27	29	303	417	-1	4%	27%	29%	6%
2	at GB	L	5%	10	16	338	383	-2	-3%	-2%	-3%	-3%
3	CHI	W	61%	21	16	306	395	+1	11%	-17%	-22%	6%
4	PIT	W	69%	27	24	358	404	+2	12%	19%	-2%	-9%
5	at JAX	L	4%	34	37	447	497	+1	-46%	-7%	31%	-9%
6	at TEN	W	90%	20	17	269	241	0	-7%	-8%	8%	9%
7	MIA	W	56%	16	10	284	337	+1	-20%	-18%	5%	3%
8	at HOU	L	3%	20	23	303	363	-1	-18%	-20%	10%	12%
9	at MIN	L	4%	13	21	227	415	+1	-15%	-14%	-4%	-6%
10	BUF	L	4%	20	30	361	415	-2	1%	-33%	-23%	11%
11	at NYJ	W	83%	28	27	332	253	-1	2%	-13%	-4%	11%
12	DET	L	1%	6	24	268	390	0	-2%	-12%	-14%	-5%
13	at NE	W	34%	25	24	253	422	-1	-36%	-9%	26%	-2%
14	BYE											
15	at DEN	L	8%	13	31	310	193	-2	-7%	-32%	-34%	-9%
16	TEN	W	99%	38	30	458	307	+2	36%	26%	-17%	-7%
17	at NYG	L	4%	33	45	446	389	-3	-62%	15%	57%	-21%
18	JAX	W	87%	26	23	429	319	+1	-1%	2%	-3%	-6%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	-5.1%	20	0.9%	15
Unadjusted VOA	-4.8%	20	0.9%	11
Weighted Trend	-5.5%	21	0.1%	15
Variance	3.3%	5	5.3%	19
Average Opponent	-1.0%	8	-4.8%	31
Passing	2.7%	22	11.8%	22
Rushing	-1.2%	10	-10.9%	14
First Down	-2.0%	17	-10.9%	8
Second Down	-14.7%	26	11.5%	27
Third Down	2.6%	15	5.6%	19
First Half	-3.7%	19	8.3%	23
Second Half	-6.6%	21	-6.7%	14
Red Zone	-19.2%	25	4.9%	23
Late and Close	-14.9%	27	-4.7%	4

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rk	Off	Rk	Def	Rk	ST	Rk	Off AGL	Rk	Def AGL	Rk	Off Age	Rk	Def Age	Rk	ST Age	Rk
2020	11-5	10.2	9.9	451	362	+10	13.9%	9	5.3%	10	-6.6%	9	2.0%	10	46.3	21	26.6	8	27.6	4	26.0	25	25.7	22
2021	9-8	10.7	9.7	451	365	+14	9.3%	11	5.6%	12	-3.3%	11	0.4%	14	51.7	23	44.8	21	26.9	10	26.4	17	26.4	11
2022	4-12-1	4.7	4.7	289	427	-13	-29.3%	32	-26.2%	32	1.3%	17	-1.9%	26	9.2	3	43.8	22	26.5	19	27.0	5	25.8	21
2023	9-8	8.0	7.9	396	415	+2	-3.8%	20	1.9%	13	2.6%	20	-3.1%	30	59.1	28	25.5	10	25.6	31	26.1	25	25.8	23
2024	8-9	7.3	7.1	377	427	-3	-7.1%	19	-5.1%	20	0.9%	15	-1.1%	21	35.1	18	54.7	25	26.5	16	26.4	20	26.4	13

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

IND Offense					IND Offense vs. Opponents					IND Defense					IND Defense vs. Opponents			
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	
11	71%	5.5	0.2%	39%	Base	22%	5.7	2.9%	57%	Base	28%	4.2	-12.9%	11	63%	6.3	8.5%	
12	26%	6.4	2.4%	57%	Nickel	69%	5.7	-1.1%	45%	Nickel	66%	6.2	7.3%	12	25%	5.1	1.2%	
13	2%	3.0	-69.7%	64%	Dime+	9%	5.7	-11.1%	4%	Dime+	5%	6.9	3.1%	13	3%	3.6	-30.6%	
														21	3%	4.9	-11.6%	
														612	2%	2.1	-37.1%	

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected		Rk	Formation		Rk	Pass Rush		Rk	Secondary		Rk	Strategy		Rk		
Runs, all	+7.7%	3	Form: Single Back	84%	2	Rush 3		2.8%	19	4 DB		28%	4	Play Action	29%	4
Runs, first down	+6.2%	8	Form: Empty Back	7%	21	Rush 4		77.6%	5	5 DB		66%	15	Offensive Motion	41%	25
Runs, second-long	-3.9%	24	Form: Multi Back	10%	30	Rush 5		13.8%	30	6+ DB		5%	29	Avg Box (Off)	6.07	17
Runs, power sit.	+23.7%	3	Pers: 3+ WR	72%	10	Rush 6+		5.9%	17	Man Coverage		43%	22	Avg Box (Def)	6.07	20
Runs, behind 2H	+5.6%	8	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	28%	19	Edge Rusher Sacks		45.8%	23	MOFC		56%	20	Offensive Pace	29.77	2
Runs, ahead 2H	+13.9%	1	Pers: 6+ OL	0%	28	Interior DL Sacks		33.3%	8	CB1 on WR1		38%	13	Defensive Pace	31.63	19
Run-Pass Options	5.1%	5	Shotgun/Pistol	90%	2	Second Level Sacks		20.8%	15	S/CB Cover Ratio		17%	22	Go for it on 4th	1.18	12

Only Green Bay threw a higher percentage of passes to “other wide receivers,” i.e., the receivers we did not designate as WR1 or WR2. But the Colts were 29th and 30th in the percentage of passes thrown to tight ends and running backs, respectively. Passes to tight ends will go up significantly this season. 🏈 Anthony Richardson went from an above-average DVOA and 7.7 yards per play against a standard four pass rushers to the second-worst DVOA in the league (ahead of only Deshaun Watson) and 3.8 yards per play with five or more pass rushers. 🏈 Indianapolis is near the top of the league in using the shotgun and they aren’t very good when they don’t. The Colts were 31st in both yards per play (4.0) and DVOA (-21.1%) from under-center formations. 🏈 The Colts moved up from 15th to fourth in how often they used play-action on passes. 🏈 Indianapolis was significantly better in base defense (-12.9% DVOA) compared to nickel (7.3% DVOA). 🏈 Only the Dolphins had more missed tackles on defense than the Colts; they ranked 27th in broken tackle rate. 🏈 It’s small sample size, but this was the second straight year where the Colts’ pass defense improved significantly when sending a big blitz of six or more pass rushers. 🏈 Colts games didn’t feature many penalties, as the Colts were 30th with 112 penalties themselves and tied for last with 102 penalties by their opponents.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
A.Richardson	-213	-23.6%	276	1690	6.1	6.2	48.3%	8	11
J.Flacco*	55	-8.0%	266	1643	6.2	4.0	65.3%	12	7
D.Jones	-124	-16.4%	366	1898	5.2	4.4	64.1%	8	6

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
M.Pittman	7	-11.9%	111	69	808	11.7	3.8	3	62%
J.Downs	84	-2.4%	107	72	803	11.2	5.5	5	67%
A.Pierce	302	42.2%	69	37	824	22.3	3.2	7	54%
A.Mitchell	-108	-38.1%	55	23	312	13.6	4.2	0	42%
A.Dulin	-3	-17.6%	8	2	67	33.5	21.5	1	25%
K.Granson*	-48	-31.3%	31	14	182	13.0	7.8	0	45%
M.Alie-Cox	-2	-8.6%	22	12	152	12.7	4.1	1	55%
A.Ogletree	18	11.9%	14	9	109	12.1	5.6	1	64%
W.Mallory	-12	-32.8%	8	4	29	7.3	1.0	0	50%
J.Taylor	-26	-29.2%	31	18	136	7.6	8.3	1	58%
T.Goodson	-18	-36.8%	15	11	61	5.5	6.1	1	73%
K.Herbert	-50	-96.1%	11	10	25	2.5	4.4	0	91%

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
J.Taylor	166	4.0%	303	1431	4.7	11	2	47%
A.Richardson	52	-0.1%	79	489	6.2	6	6	-
T.Sermon*	-36	-22.3%	56	159	2.8	2	0	48%
T.Goodson	18	5.5%	32	153	4.8	1	0	47%
J.Flacco*	-11	-45.8%	6	29	4.8	0	1	-
A.Dulin	37	99.5%	5	45	9.0	0	0	-
D.Jones	55	3.7%	59	274	4.6	2	0	-
K.Herbert	29	6.6%	36	130	3.6	1	0	58%

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/ GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/ GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
Q.Nelson	LG	29	17/17	1083	11	4	20	3.3%	18	D.Tucker	RG	25	14/7	464	1	7	13	5.0%	33
B.Raimann	LT	28	14/14	856	5	6	22	4.6%	15	M.Glowinski*	RG	33	5/5	355	3	3	13	6.6%	--
B.Smith	RT	29	12/12	731	12	9	28	6.9%	31	T.Bortolini	C	23	12/5	351	0	6	3	1.5%	--
R.Kelly*	C	32	10/10	601	1	6	5	1.5%	3	W.Fries*	RG	27	5/5	268	1	1	3	2.0%	--
M.Goncalves	RT/LT	24	17/8	566	1	5	18	5.7%	24										

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFId	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont		
2022	4.20	4.32	22	58%	29	16%	12	1.20	17	0.60	24	60	9.2%	28	30.1%	24	27		
2023	4.34	4.10	19	54%	31	19%	22	1.15	16	0.82	8	41	7.1%	15	28.0%	14	27		
2024	4.46	4.02	28	64%	20	20%	26	1.09	25	1.09	5	32	6.2%	11	31.4%	17	25		
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 2.66 (31)				Left Tackle: 4.47 (12)				Mid/Guard: 4.23 (24)				Right Tackle: 3.45 (29)		Right End: 3.70 (19)	

With the caveat that he's a little older than you'd think already, left tackle Bernhard Raimann has been exceptional for the Colts over the past few years. He missed three games last season and essentially missed a fourth with a concussion, and the Colts were absolutely waxed without him on offense by the Vikings, Bills, and Lions. They did manage to beat the Jets, but, yeah, #OLWinz. Raimann is entering the final year of his rookie deal and is already generating slop Google News results like "Why Haven't the Colts Extended Their \$1.3 Million Left Tackle?" He's (somehow) entering his age-28 season. Tabbed to replace Ryan Kelly inside, 2024 fourth-rounder Tanor Bortolini got plenty of experience last year during Kelly's missed starts. Kelly he wasn't, but there's a chance he can be a passable pivot right away. To replace Will Fries at right guard, the Colts are moving 2024 third-rounder Matt Goncalves inside. It's almost impossible for us to get a read on offensive line competitions before camp, but Steichen said Goncalves had "done a really nice job" in the early offseason activities. Goncalves' ability to pass protect could be a big differentiator on the inside while he gets more acclimated to run plays. Fourth-round tackle Jalen Travis, as you would expect from a Colts pick, has the physical tools. He ran a 5.14s 40-yard dash at the combine and showed a 4.94 short shuttle at his pro day despite being 6-foot-7, 341 pounds. Travis was a Princeton transfer who finished his college career at Iowa State and showed exceptional pass-protection skills. He played well enough against the Big 12 schedule that we think he could hold his own on an island outside, but the Colts will have to get his run technique corrected in the pros. While Braden Smith was brought back following his OCD episode, he may be competing with Travis sooner rather than later. Quenton Nelson: Still really damn good at football. Even at his best, he still generated plenty of penalties, so don't read too much into that number as him getting slower or less reliable.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
G.Stewart	32	DT	17	690	77	8.3%	5	65	21	9	66	85%	8	1.3	9	3.5	2	11	3
D.Buckner	31	DT	12	578	61	9.3%	3	50	12	6	47	79%	30	2.5	50	6.5	7	28	5
R.Davis*	28	DT	17	349	16	1.7%	--	12	3	2	14	71%	--	2.6	--	0.0	0	2	0
T.Bryan*	29	DT	17	340	21	2.3%	--	14	6	0	18	67%	--	1.9	--	1.0	1	2	0
N.Gallimore	28	DT	14	264	19	2.6%	--	10	1	1	19	53%	--	3.8	--	0.0	1	3	0

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
D.Odeyingbo*	26	DE	17	745	31	3.3%	87	27	10	6	24	88%	9	0.9	6	3.0	13	35	2
K.Paye	27	DE	15	666	42	5.1%	45	34	20	2	26	77%	35	2.5	45	8.0	6	33	0
L.Latu	25	DE	17	618	33	3.5%	81	19	8	11	22	55%	92	3.0	69	4.0	8	29	3
T.Lewis	30	DE	10	355	24	4.4%	64	20	7	5	22	82%	23	1.4	11	1.5	2	8	0

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush				vs. Pass									
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
Z.Franklin	29	MLB	17	1156	179	19.2%	3	92	30	21	99	64%	29	3.4	24	3.5	1	9	58	-15.2%	12	38%	60	9.3	67	6	2
E.J.Speed*	30	OLB	15	1010	145	17.7%	11	73	26	28	78	64%	26	3.6	31	0.0	1	6	58	17.5%	63	40%	52	7.7	46	5	1
J.Carlies	24	OLB	10	242	37	6.8%	80	18	3	1	21	48%	83	4.1	67	1.0	0	1	13	-52.6%	--	69%	--	6.0	--	1	0
G.Stuard*	27	OLB	17	229	37	4.0%	--	26	7	3	28	71%	--	3.3	--	0.0	0	0	14	7.7%	--	64%	--	3.4	--	0	0

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk			
2022	4.06	4.02	6	65%	7	21%	4	1.01	5	0.89	23	44	7.8%	9	26.2%	21			
2023	4.04	4.29	22	56%	2	20%	10	1.13	14	0.62	17	51	8.1%	13	27.5%	22			
2024	4.18	4.28	15	59%	6	19%	13	1.20	15	0.73	14	36	6.1%	28	25.5%	27			
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 3.27 (4)				Left Tackle: 3.94 (9)				Mid/Guard: 4.60 (19)				Right Tackle: 4.41 (20)		Right End: 3.37 (12)	

Laiatu Latu flashed a lot of talent in his first season. He battered the Bears in Week 3, had an excellent game against a skilled Lions line in Week 12, and showed the power and technique necessary to be one of the NFL's best run defenders on the edge. He's never going to make pass rushing look pretty—he's just not a bender—but he has enough of an idea of where his pass-rush moves are going that he can win anyway. He's the single most important player for the Colts this season unless we pretend that Anthony Richardson has "elite quarterback" in his range of outcomes. Latu has a chance to finish this year as one of the ten best edge players in the NFL, but it all has to come together. 🔥 We'll give Zaire Franklin this: We have also said things in podcasts that have come back to haunt us. However, his statement on his *In The Trenches* show wherein he said he wanted to play a team that "we're going to spank like the Giants or some (expletive)," then mimed intercepting Daniel Jones could not have aged more poorly. At least he's good for some McAfee beef. 🔥 Has Kwity Paye been a bad first-round pick? We would argue not. But he has not been better than an adequate pass rusher, and he simply doesn't generate many pressures despite solid sack numbers overall. The Colts were sold enough on him as a fixture that they thought to spend a first-rounder on Latu in 2024. They were sold enough on giving him an extension that they drafted Ohio State edge JT Tuimoloau in the second round this past year. Tuimoloau had a huge senior season with 12.5 sacks and another nine tackles for loss on top of that; he'll probably start as the third rusher and eventually take Paye's job in 2026. 🔥 Despite the overall poor numbers by the Colts run defense, there was nothing wrong with DeForest Buckner or Grover Stewart in the middle. Stewart did have a notably high broken tackle number (nine) compared to 2023's four, but he wasn't the main issue here. 🔥 Samson Ebukam missed the entire 2024 season with a torn Achilles suffered in the build-up to training camp. He was a more productive pressure creator in 2023 than Paye, but we'll have to see if all his burst is back. 🔥 The vacated spot next to Franklin—the one that used to belong to podcast mate E.J. Speed—will be held by second-year player Jaylon Carlies. Carlies dealt with an ankle injury in the middle of the season last year after moving from safety to linebacker and is also recovering from offseason shoulder surgery. The Colts do not have much in notable depth behind the pair with Grant Stuard off to the Lions. The only other defender to play more than one snap at linebacker for the Colts last year is 2022 UDFA Segun Olubi, who had 21 snaps against the Dolphins in the Week 7 game Carlies left.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall					vs. Run					vs. Pass														
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTKl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int	
N.Cross	24	SS	17	1155	150	16.1%	4	57	23	13	84	40%	28	6.3	32	36	6.9%	25	7.3	31.3%	51	53%	20	7.5	35	5	3
J.Jones	23	CB	17	1145	112	12.0%	7	50	12	12	38	61%	17	4.7	23	99	19.2%	38	10.1	-2.8%	48	46%	71	7.7	52	12	2
J.Blackmon*	27	FS	16	1083	90	10.3%	52	20	9	10	44	25%	75	9.9	87	12	2.5%	63	19.8	51.4%	59	33%	57	16.4	63	4	3
K.Moore	30	CB	15	1012	85	10.4%	22	51	18	14	36	67%	10	4.0	10	70	15.3%	80	8.2	-24.2%	16	51%	51	5.4	3	7	3
S.Womack	26	CB	17	672	45	4.8%	92	25	12	5	12	67%	10	6.8	56	52	17.2%	66	12.3	-9.6%	37	60%	9	8.7	74	9	2
C.Bynum	27	FS	17	1032	106	12.0%	28	30	14	8	40	30%	60	7.2	45	22	3.9%	51	7.5	8.6%	31	45%	39	6.5	22	10	3
C.Ward	29	CB	12	695	61	10.3%	24	21	4	5	24	50%	31	4.7	22	52	16.0%	72	11.7	10.0%	71	38%	88	6.9	32	7	0
Year	Pass	D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk										
2022	19		22.4%	26	-4.5%	14	-17.6%	4	-10.3%	10	15.7%	27	2.3%	20	11.8%	24											
2023	18		14.2%	23	-2.5%	14	-11.5%	6	14.9%	25	-25.5%	3	-0.5%	15	0.8%	18											
2024	22		-10.2%	10	-25.1%	2	7.4%	26	-6.8%	12	-12.0%	10	26.2%	32	-8.9%	9											

Now here's the unit that got big upgrades. Charvarius Ward is here off a down 2024 season, but one that at least makes plenty of sense as he was emotionally devastated by the death of his young daughter. "It took everything physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually ... it took all of that every day for me to just come here and be able to practice," Ward told 49ers beats in January. "I wasn't even going to meetings half the time because my social battery was so low. I just didn't want to be around people." Ward allowed a -10.6% DVOA in 2023 despite drawing an estimated 24.5% of the 49ers' targets, and the Colts are hoping he can bounce back to that.  Bynum comes in as the new primary deep safety off a down year of his own in coverage—he allowed a -8.1% DVOA in 2023—but he's the rare deep safety that can really attack the run and the Colts are hoping he'll help shore things up there.  2025 third-round Justin Walley (Minnesota) was a surprise pick, the 27th-ranked corner in Dane Brugler's *The Beast* draft guide with a sixth-round grade from NFL.com's Lance Zierlein. Ballard defended the pick by saying: "Let me tell you this, he's got a wrist (injury) right now. He broke his wrist. In a time when people don't want to work out. I mean, we have guys ducking it. He does everything with a wrist and runs 4.37, with a cast on his wrist. He does everything, every drill, and it shows up on tape." It would certainly seem like outside would be where Walley would wind up early, given JuJu Brents' inability to stay healthy and the lack of anybody better than Jaylon Jones to hold down the outside opposite Ward. Jones held his own in his sophomore season, but he fell from 6.7 yards per pass allowed in 2023 to 7.7 last year.  Finally unshackled from the bench, Nick Cross made a decent run-stuffer but was picked on rather easily in coverage. Meanwhile, nickel Kenny Moore II was one of the biggest broken tackle offenders on the team, missing 14 to just 51 solo tackles—and unlike the aforementioned E.J. Speed regression, Moore had 11 blown tackles in each of the previous two years as well. Moore's still a stellar slot cornerback, but the size that made him a UDFA does show up when teams can run the ball down Indy's throat.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	-1.9%	26	-4.3	25	2.3	10	4.1	7	-8.8	29	-3.5	25	2.8	12
2023	-3.1%	30	-5.2	25	-5.2	31	0.9	7	-6.2	28	-1.1	17	12.7	2
2024	-1.1%	21	-3.0	24	-5.4	29	3.2	8	-0.8	17	0.2	12	5.8	9

Some kickers stay with teams for decades. Some kickers wind up like Matt Gay. After two years with the Colts that were well below his three-year peak in Los Angeles, the Colts dumped Gay and ate some dead cap. 2024 UDFA Spencer Shrader, who kicked for three teams last year and was perfect on five attempts (the longest try was 45), will battle Temple UDFA Mad-dux Trujillo for the job in August.  Ashton Dulin finished fourth in the league with six punt stops (defined as tackles to prevent an above-average punt return) if you're wondering why he might continue holding a spot on the bottom of the wideout depth chart in a crowded building.  Punting was less of a problem than it had been in the previous two seasons thanks in part to Dulin's coverage. Rigoberto Sanchez has not handled kickoffs since tearing his Achilles ahead of the 2022 season, but he was fourth in gross punting value last season at 7.6 points of estimated field position. That's a big upgrade from 2023's -0.6 points.  2024 fifth-round wide receiver Anthony Gould had the most total returns on the Colts last year, though Josh Downs returned more punts and Tyler Goodson returned more kicks. None of the Colts returners were particularly good or bad.

# Jacksonville Jaguars

**2024 record:** 4-13

**Pythagorean Wins:** 5.5 (26th)

**Snap-Weighted Age:** 26.1 (27th)

**Average Opponent:** -4.4% (30th)

**Total DVOA:** -17.7% (26th)

**Offense:** -2.1% (17th)

**Defense:** 18.6% (31st)

**Special Teams:** 3.0% (6th)

**2025 Mean Projection:** 9.0 wins

**Postseason Odds:** 54.7%

**Super Bowl Odds:** 3.7%

**Proj. Avg. Opponent:** -3.7% (28th)

**On the Clock (0-5):** 8%

**Mediocrity (6-8):** 33%

**Playoff Contender (9-11):** 43%

**Super Bowl Contender (12+):** 16%

**2024:** The most talented team in franchise history wins four games.

**2025:** Not really a rebuild, not really a win-now roster, and yet it plays in the AFC South.

Trying to encapsulate the whirlwind offseason that the Jaguars just had feels daunting, so let's start in January. Jacksonville fired head coach Doug Pederson, who had arguably been a Dead Coach Walking since Week 11's 52-6 loss to the Lions. But they had retained embattled general manager Trent Baalke, for the time being. It was a move that made absolutely no sense on its face. Baalke's roster had sputtered out, and free agent moves for Arik Armstead, Mitch Morse, Darnell Savage, and Gabriel Davis last offseason did absolutely nothing to help. Rarely do you see the league's well-sourced talk so brazenly about someone's job, but FOX's Jordan Schultz had multiple sources reporting that the Jaguars would struggle to attract a top head coach if they kept Baalke. Quotes he posted on X: The Everything App after it emerged that Baalke was staying included "What has he done to survive two head coaches?" and "The job is not as coveted with Trent there."

And while the #sources do not get everything right, they did get this right. The Jaguars looked to be teetering on the edge of Robert Saleh leading the pack of their head coaching search as we hit noon eastern on January 22. Coveted Lions offensive coordinator Ben Johnson, who had interviewed with the Jaguars, had just inked his contract with the Bears. And Buccaneers offensive coordinator Liam Coen backed out of a second interview with the Jaguars because Tampa Bay was prepared to extend him to one of the largest coordinator contracts in the NFL so long as he didn't take a second interview in Jacksonville.

Finally, Jags owner Shad Khan had to relent. Hours after Coen decided to pull the plug on the second interview, Khan abruptly fired Baalke. In something that came together with both the espionage and slapstick elements of a *Metal Gear Solid* sequel, the Jaguars secretly got Coen on the phone to get a second interview together. Coen never told the Buccaneers about his plans, and the plot spilled deeply enough into sourced hands that Coen's wife had to clarify that a) they were actually spending some of that day taking their son to an autoimmune specialist, and b) this wasn't an excuse to not talk to Buccaneers management. It also didn't have anything to do with malfunctioning nanomachines. About 20 hours later, *La Li Lu Le Lo*, Coen was officially the head coach of the Jacksonville Jaguars, granted the power to hire his own general manager. Call him Big Boss, because this is Coen's Outer Heaven. Khan ripped out the guts of his organization for a

39-year-old who had never been a head coach at any level and had just one season calling plays in the NFL.

And it's hard to argue that it was a bad move, because finally excising the organization of Baalke has that much positive value all on its own.

The Jaguars seemed content to mostly muddle around making small improvements this offseason after hiring DOGE cosplayer James Gladstone as general manager. There was no Toby Gerhart-sized albatross to try to fix things, though in its place were several curious deals. Patrick Mekari got \$20 million in guarantees even though 2024 was the first year he was ever a full-time starter, and Robert Hainsey got \$10 million in guarantees despite losing the Buccaneers center job to a rookie in training camp. Jourdan Lewis and Eric Murray were brought in to fix the secondary even after spending the 2022 and 2023 seasons, if not the 2024 season, as problems. There went another \$30 million guaranteed. Johnny Mundt and Hunter Long signed almost the exact same one-year deal to help this team's blocking at tight end. You overpay for people in free agency, and it's not like the Jaguars didn't have some money to spend. None of these are cap-crippling deals. It's just hard to look at any of these players as building blocks so much as stopgaps, and on paper this would seem like a team that could use some building blocks. Most reasoned NFL media went with the idea that the Jaguars were supposed to eat some vegetables this year, draft Michigan defensive tackle Mason Graham fifth overall, and figure out where they were in 2026.

Instead, the day before the draft it became obvious that Jacksonville was the mystery team that was trying to trade up to No. 2 overall. In a deal that was agreed to on April 7, the Jaguars sent the fifth overall pick, the 36th overall pick, and their 2026 first-round pick (along with a few Day 3 swaps in Jacksonville's favor) to the Browns to move up to No. 2 overall and select obvious No. 1 prospect Travis Hunter, whom they announced as a wide receiver.

You don't have to go too far back or even leave the division to find the most recent example of a bold trade for a non-quarterback top-three pick. The Texans dealt their 2024 first-round pick in 2023 to move up for Will Anderson. At the end of the day, they won the division, and they were able to avoid the worst-case downside cost. Through two years, Anderson has clearly played like a high-end first-round prospect. Since the

## 2025 Jaguars Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	CAR	7	LAR (UK)	13	at TEN
2	at CIN	8	BYE	14	IND
3	HOU	9	at LV	15	NYJ
4	at SF	10	at HOU	16	at DEN
5	KC (Mon.)	11	LAC	17	at IND
6	SEA	12	at ARI	18	TEN

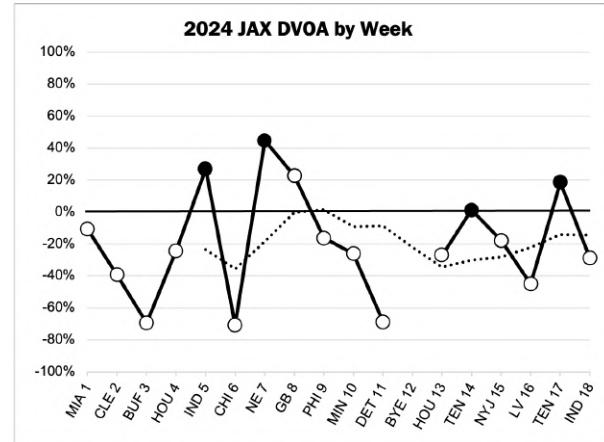
Texans also selected C.J. Stroud in the same draft, the argument was that they wouldn't desperately need the draft capital the next year because they didn't need a quarterback anymore.

You can see shades of that painting on the Hunter trade. The Jaguars have Trevor Lawrence, so do they need a quarterback again any time soon? (Well, let's come back to that one.) And while Hunter is not affecting the quarterback, he plays two incredibly important positions in modern football and, if his body can hold up to the beating, is able to play them both. "If there's an opportunity to be bold," Gladstone told The Athletic's Michael Silver in a piece about the trade-up where Silver was embedded in the Jaguars War Room, "we won't flinch." Khan is quoted as saying: "We've been great at stockpiling picks. And when it gets right down to it, what do you have to show for it? We need difference-makers. That's what we got."

The Jaguars have predictably sort of mulled Hunter around both the offense and the defense in rookie minicamps, but we think that if you look at their direct quotes on the topic, you should take it very seriously that they want to play him on both sides of the ball. In his press availability with Hunter after the first round, Gladstone invoked altering "the trajectory of the sport itself." We like Mason Graham a lot, but nobody ever claimed drafting him was going to change the way we talk about football someday. (The boldest claim Andrew Berry made about him was that he was "one of the more dominant trench prospects in this year's class.")

What we can't tell you with any real reliability is "what does this look like?" The NFL hasn't had a real two-way player for multiple seasons since Chuck Bendarik in the early 1960s.<sup>1</sup> In an era of hyper-specialization where every group has a position coach with very little crossover between them, the Jaguars are learning what Hunter is capable of exactly as quickly as we are seeing it happen. Hunter is by all accounts an extremely bright player and we have no doubts about him mentally getting everything, but the ability to play both sides of the ball entails a lot. Scheme—and how many meetings one player can take in a week—is a part of it. Feel, instincts, and presence are a major part of it. Fatigue, of course, is a major factor. This is a black box from the outside, one that we're probably not going to understand until the middle of the season at the earliest.

For the sake of our projections, we are counting Hunter as both a defensive back and a wide receiver. This actually tips



the Jaguars' projection down a little bit on offense because offenses that draft a top wideout or tight end often take a little hit in Year 1, then go up more in their second year. (The effect of Brian Thomas Jr. in Year 2 counters this drop for Jacksonville.) On defense, we would not project them as well as we currently do if Hunter doesn't play full-time. We would wager that he is more likely to wind up as a full-time wideout and part-time defensive back than the other way around based on how the Jaguars have emphasized him learning the offense first in rookie camps, but there's not a lot to embrace full confidence in when we're dealing with such a historic outlier. It's unsatisfying to write "we guess we'll see" in a book that attempts to be an accurate forecast of the 2025 NFL season. But we guess we'll see.

Then there is the franchise quarterback. Lawrence did not exactly play up to that standard in his 10 starts last year, as he finished with a -2.3% DVOA. It was not unforeseeable that Lawrence would struggle with a rookie wideout, Davis, and an injured Christian Kirk as his top three receivers. Lawrence's average time to pressure was second lowest in the league at 2.22 seconds according to FTN StatsHub, on a line where Cam Robinson was benched and then traded. Baalke was bafflingly allowed to work on an in-season extension with Robinson's replacement and former backup left tackle Walker Little. 2023 first-rounder Anton Harrison has struggled to live up to his draft status in his first two seasons. And, of course, Lawrence got hurt again, needing an AC joint surgery that ended his season early and forced a lot of Mac Jones into Andrew Catalon's broadcast window.

That brilliant Lawrence sophomore season of 2022 gets further into the past every year, but it's also the one thing keeping us from completely giving up hope on Lawrence as a franchise quarterback. At some point with Lawrence, we enter into the fabled Ryan Tannehill discussion: "This quarterback clearly isn't bad, and his supporting cast has clearly been bad. But does that actually mean he's good?" And the answer is sort of murky from the outside. A place where the deep throws haven't been quite as good as you'd like them to be, and perhaps he's got a penchant for coughing up the ball at the exact

<sup>1</sup> Temporary two-way players have included Deion Sanders, playing cornerback and wide receiver in 1996, and Roy Green, playing safety and wide receiver in 1981.

wrong time. But if you catch the right game, you understand that he has every tool he needs to be successful and he just has to harness them all in the right order.

From the inside, of course, Lawrence has a five-year, \$275-million contract. The Jaguars won't reasonably be able to move on from him until at least 2027, so it doesn't matter. The most important bit of Khan's head-coaching search was figuring out how to fix Lawrence, and so, as Cohen said about Lawrence in his initial press conference to announce the hiring, "this will all be about Trevor right now."

Hooking Lawrence into the Baker Mayfield rejuvenation machine from 2024 should at the very least give us a good read on where he's at after two years muddling along with a disjointed Doug Pederson passing game and a rough Baalke roster. Brian Thomas Jr. instantly exploded on to the scene to give the Jaguars a No. 1 receiver. Dyami Brown offers the good parts of Gabe Davis (downfield threat, speed) without Davis' contract and current injury situation. It's impossible to turn an entire roster over in one offseason, of course. The offensive line is aspiring to be league-average rather than some source of hidden star-level talent. The running back room got an infusion of speed and receiving ability in Bhayshul Tuten and LeQuint Allen Jr., but there's no guarantee those players will get snaps right away over last year's unsatisfying Travis Etienne/Tank Bigsby combo. As big a game as Gladstone talked about getting Brenton Strange involved in the offense more, he wasn't exactly a TE1 last year. Coen's schematics, a better and more involved usage plan for Thomas, and whatever they can get out of Hunter are going to be key to the push

to get this offense out of the dark ages.

The Jaguars are sort of a weird team to project this year, and we say that as we list them as slight division favorites. They don't project to be appreciably above-average on offense or on defense. And yet, with the help of the second-easiest schedule in the league per DVOA, we're planting a fairly strong flag wherein they're ahead of Houston based on schedule and firmly in the wild-card picture. Some of that is about the state of the AFC wild-card race in DVOA's eyes—there is more mediocrity than greatness. Some of that is a projection system that looks at the 2023 defense (-4.2%, 10th in the league), then looks at the 2024 defense, and can't figure out how it got *quite* that dire. (Former defensive coordinator Ryan Nielsen is now a senior Bills defensive assistant after being part of two coaching staff firings in two years, if you're curious and/or a Jaguars fan who wants to send some feedback.)

This is a precarious position to be at without a 2026 first-round pick. We're predicting the Jaguars are going to sneak up on the competition in a cardboard box and find their way back to the AFC's middle class. But this is not a particularly deep team, and the clashing of bone and sinew doesn't leave much in the way of guarantees. Just as there are no guarantees with what we can say about Hunter, our numbers can see the middle of the AFC going quite a few different directions. In the best of those scenarios, the Jaguars give up a mid-first round pick and have a game-changing talent.

And if they don't? *Snaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaake!*

Rivers McCown

## 2024 Jaguars by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	at MIA	L	65%	17	20	267	400	-1	-11%	6%	16%	-1%
2	CLE	L	59%	13	18	323	297	0	-39%	-6%	19%	-14%
3	at BUF	L	0%	10	47	239	388	-2	-70%	-35%	30%	-4%
4	at HOU	L	10%	20	24	313	435	+1	-25%	12%	41%	4%
5	IND	W	96%	37	34	497	447	-1	27%	31%	16%	11%
6	at CHI	L	0%	16	35	278	373	-1	-71%	-28%	45%	3%
7	NE	W	100%	32	16	364	295	0	45%	30%	9%	24%
8	GB	L	28%	27	30	390	422	-1	23%	18%	4%	9%
9	at PHI	L	1%	23	28	215	447	-2	-16%	-13%	9%	5%
10	MIN	L	0%	7	12	143	402	0	-26%	-46%	-19%	1%
11	at DET	L	0%	6	52	170	645	-1	-69%	-39%	38%	8%
12	BYE											
13	HOU	L	6%	20	23	373	326	-1	-27%	9%	26%	-10%
14	at TEN	W	71%	10	6	291	272	-2	1%	-8%	-3%	7%
15	NYJ	L	33%	25	32	421	400	-2	-18%	21%	47%	8%
16	at LV	L	5%	14	19	308	314	-2	-45%	-13%	19%	-13%
17	TEN	W	94%	20	13	295	337	+1	18%	16%	7%	9%
18	at IND	L	13%	23	26	319	429	-1	-29%	-12%	22%	5%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	-2.1%	17	18.6%	31
Unadjusted VOA	-4.6%	18	16.9%	31
Weighted Trend	-0.3%	17	17.1%	31
Variance	5.8%	19	3.1%	5
Average Opponent	-3.0%	1	-6.6%	32
Passing	13.5%	18	35.0%	32
Rushing	-9.2%	17	-2.5%	25
First Down	-4.5%	21	24.3%	32
Second Down	3.8%	14	5.6%	24
Third Down	-6.6%	20	27.8%	31
First Half	-5.1%	22	18.5%	30
Second Half	0.6%	14	18.7%	32
Red Zone	-6.0%	18	0.9%	20
Late and Close	2.6%	19	17.1%	26

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rk	Off	Rk	Def	Rk	ST	Rk	Off AGL	Rk	Def AGL	Rk	Off Age	Rk	Def Age	Rk	ST Age	Rk
2020	1-15	3.7	3.6	306	492	-8	-31.1%	32	-14.2%	27	16.8%	30	-0.1%	18	18.9	6	44.4	19	26.1	24	24.9	32	25.0	31
2021	3-14	3.3	4.3	253	457	-20	-30.6%	31	-14.4%	28	12.1%	30	-4.2%	31	67.9	28	19.2	2	26.4	18	25.6	26	25.5	27
2022	9-8	10.0	8.5	404	350	+5	2.9%	12	6.0%	10	4.8%	23	1.7%	11	19.9	6	19.9	2	26.7	13	25.7	26	25.5	26
2023	9-8	8.7	8.9	377	371	-3	4.4%	10	-1.3%	18	-4.2%	10	1.4%	12	25.3	15	24.5	9	26.3	19	26.7	16	26.2	18
2024	4-13	5.5	5.9	320	435	-15	-17.7%	26	-2.1%	17	18.6%	31	3.0%	6	39.3	19	17.9	4	26.4	21	25.9	25	25.7	25

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

JAX Offense					JAX Offense vs. Opponents					JAX Defense				JAX Defense vs. Opponents			
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA
11	65%	5.7	5.9%	28%	Base	21%	4.6	2.0%	60%	Base	23%	6.2	24.5%	11	63%	6.0	18.2%
12	26%	5.2	-1.7%	52%	Nickel	71%	5.4	-0.2%	34%	Nickel	61%	6.3	19.9%	12	22%	6.6	22.6%
13	4%	4.2	6.4%	86%	Dime+	8%	7.0	27.6%	12%	Dime+	15%	5.3	-4.4%	21	5%	7.8	22.9%
612	1%	2.7	0.3%	100%						Goal Line	1%	6.1	40.3%	13	2%	6.3	23.8%
														22	2%	4.1	-4.7%

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected	Rk	Formation	Rk	Pass Rush	Rk	Secondary	Rk	Strategy	Rk
Runs, all	+3.0%	11	Form: Single Back	86%	1	Rush 3	4.3%	11	4 DB
Runs, first down	+7.6%	6	Form: Empty Back	4%	29	Rush 4	79.3%	2	5 DB
Runs, second-long	-6.0%	25	Form: Multi Back	10%	31	Rush 5	13.5%	32	6+ DB
Runs, power sit.	+11.1%	9	Pers: 3+ WR	67%	14	Rush 6+	2.8%	29	Man Coverage
Runs, behind 2H	+2.4%	17	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	33%	13	Edge Rusher Sacks	54.4%	10	MOFC
Runs, ahead 2H	+9.3%	6	Pers: 6+ OL	2%	16	Interior DL Sacks	30.9%	13	CB1 on WR1
Run-Pass Options	4.0%	15	Shotgun/Pistol	78%	15	Second Level Sacks	14.7%	26	S/CB Cover Ratio
									Go for it on 4th
									1.24
									9

Jacksonville increased its run/pass ratio over the previous year in pretty much every situation except second-and-long. The Jaguars ranked second in the league in DVOA throwing up the middle but 21st throwing to the right side and 29th throwing to the left side. The Jaguars blitzed nearly half as often in 2024 as they did in 2023. The Jacksonville defense ranked ninth against the pass in the red zone but 30th against the run. The Jaguars climbed from using man coverage 34% of the time in 2023 (29th) to 60% of the time in 2024 (fifth). They didn't change much in MOFC, so this was mostly a change from Cover 3 to Cover 1. Jacksonville faces a lot of passes to running backs on defense: sixth last year, third the year before, and first in 2022.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
T.Lawrence	241	1.1%	301	1905	6.3	4.8	60.8%	11	7
M.Jones*	166	-1.5%	276	1559	5.6	5.3	65.5%	8	8

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
B.Thomas	311	17.7%	133	87	1282	14.7	6.5	10	65%
P.Washington	44	-1.6%	51	32	390	12.2	3.4	3	63%
C.Kirk*	30	-4.7%	47	27	379	14.0	4.2	1	57%
G.Davis*	-69	-33.1%	43	20	239	11.7	1.9	2	48%
D.Duvernay*	0	-12.3%	16	11	79	7.2	5.7	0	69%
D.Brown	-16	-18.3%	40	30	308	10.3	7.3	1	75%
T.Irwin	-56	-70.3%	10	3	15	5.0	1.3	0	30%
E.Engram*	-36	-15.9%	64	47	365	7.8	3.2	1	73%
B.Strange	45	4.9%	53	40	411	10.3	4.6	2	75%
L.Farrell*	-25	-29.2%	17	12	67	5.6	2.5	0	71%
H.Long	2	-4.3%	9	7	60	8.6	4.3	0	78%
J.Mundt	14	0.7%	27	19	142	7.5	4.4	2	70%
T.Etienne	-2	-14.6%	52	39	254	6.5	7.6	0	75%
D.Johnson*	-22	-37.4%	19	12	96	8.0	8.4	0	63%
B.Bigsby	-16	-37.7%	12	7	54	7.7	9.1	0	58%

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
T.Bigsby	72	1.0%	168	766	4.6	7	3	50%
T.Etienne	6	-7.7%	150	558	3.7	2	1	47%
D.Johnson*	28	13.9%	32	143	4.5	0	0	50%
M.Jones*	14	-2.3%	23	95	4.1	1	1	-
T.Lawrence	40	14.9%	22	122	5.5	3	0	-
B.Thomas	28	52.5%	6	48	8.0	0	0	-

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
M.Morse*	C	33	17/17	1021	3	9	11	1.7%	9	C.Van Lanen	LT/RT	27	9/3	252	2	1	6	3.9%	--
B.Scherff*	RG	34	17/17	1013	2	3	11	1.8%	3	P.Mekari	LG	28	17/17	998	12	3	24	4.6%	30
A.Harrison	RT	23	16/16	943	4	5	25	4.3%	8	F.Johnson	LT	28	17/6	481	4	1	17	7.2%	31
E.Cleveland	LG	27	15/15	911	2	3	13	2.3%	3	C.Edoga	LT	28	5/4	228	2	0	6	4.2%	--
W.Little	LT	26	15/8	508	4	5	15	4.8%	16										

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont
2022	4.74	4.06	29	58%	28	24%	32	1.28	11	1.27	2	28	4.7%	3	20.0%	2	39
2023	3.49	3.50	31	61%	24	25%	32	0.91	30	0.51	23	41	6.3%	7	22.8%	3	25
2024	4.19	4.36	18	62%	25	17%	15	1.16	24	0.75	15	32	5.9%	8	24.8%	2	30
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 4.29 (20)		Left Tackle: 3.89 (22)				Mid/Guard: 4.47 (18)		Right Tackle: 4.86 (4)		Right End: 3.48 (21)			

Somewhere between Walker Little's successful takeover of the left tackle position in Week 7 and the end of December, Trent Baalke determined that the former second-rounder who has started more than 10 games in a season just once was worth a three-year, \$40.5-million extension with \$25 million in guarantees. It could work out for the Jaguars—2024 was Little's best year to date—but it's hard to call him a known quantity at this point. Former late first-rounder Anton Harrison had a rough start for the season, allowing a ton of pressures and sacks in Weeks 1 and 2 before turning it around. He feels more like a stopgap than a sure-fire starter at right tackle going forward at this point, but there's still time for him to transcend that reputation as he enters his third season. Ezra Cleveland, who came over in a trade from the Vikings last season before signing another quick-strike Baalke extension, acquitted himself fairly well in pass protection until the last few games of the year. He's not a great zone blocker and didn't show enough athleticism to pull effectively last year. You can do Better Than Ezra, but you could also do worse. 2025 third-rounder Wyatt Milum (West Virginia) is probably waiting in the wings behind Cleveland, as the Jaguars can get out of the contract with cap savings after this year. Robert Hainsey briefly was thrust into the sunlight in 2022 after Ryan Jensen's major knee injury left the Buccaneers starting him. He did fine with Tom Brady in 2022, less fine the year after, and then vanished to the bench after the Bucs selected Graham Barton in the first round. It sure feels like the Jaguars think they have something here—his \$7-million annual salary squeaks into the top 10 among centers. Another top-10 APY (this time among right guards) was landed by Ravens utility man Patrick Mekari, who has mostly played tackle the last few years but has experience at every position, even center in 2019 and 2020. He was mostly a left guard in 2024 after the Andrew Voorhees experiment wasn't yielding instant returns for the Ravens. Mekari is probably a better fit outside, but it's hard to argue that he won't bring value to the team with his versatility.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
D.Hamilton	28	DT	17	626	62	6.7%	19	49	8	4	60	80%	23	2.5	47	0.0	2	9	0
A.Armstead	32	DE	17	569	32	3.5%	74	25	7	3	23	70%	56	3.0	74	2.0	5	24	2
J.Ledbetter*	31	DT	15	441	38	4.7%	52	27	9	2	33	67%	63	2.1	34	2.0	2	7	0
M.Smith	23	DT	11	384	20	3.3%	80	14	5	0	12	58%	85	3.0	72	3.0	1	10	3
T.Lacy	26	DT	13	340	25	3.5%	--	13	2	2	22	59%	--	2.9	--	0.0	1	7	0
J.Jefferson	24	DT	8	151	13	3.0%	--	7	4	0	11	45%	--	3.5	--	1.0	0	1	1

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
T.Walker	25	DE	17	911	62	6.7%	18	50	17	9	45	78%	32	2.5	44	10.5	6	52	1
J.Hines-Allen	28	DE	16	821	47	5.4%	40	37	20	6	30	73%	48	2.4	42	8.0	13	51	3

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush			vs. Pass									
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
D.Lloyd	27	OLB	16	883	117	13.4%	43	53	12	11	72	49%	81	4.0	59	2.0	3	7	45	-9.8%	19	49%	23	7.0	29	4	1
F.Oluokun	30	MLB	13	815	115	16.3%	21	60	14	7	64	56%	60	3.4	27	1.0	0	5	54	20.3%	66	56%	14	7.1	31	7	1
V.Miller	26	MLB	15	481	77	9.4%	65	42	7	14	48	67%	18	3.9	55	0.0	0	1	25	8.9%	49	28%	74	12.4	75	3	0
C.Muma	26	OLB	17	259	30	3.2%	--	12	4	3	18	39%	--	6.2	--	0.0	0	0	10	20.5%	--	40%	--	6.0	--	0	0

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk			
2022	3.91	4.01	5	65%	10	20%	5	1.19	14	0.52	7	35	5.5%	29	29.6%	6			
2023	3.99	3.91	8	72%	23	20%	7	1.00	5	0.84	24	40	6.8%	24	26.9%	25			
2024	4.43	4.66	27	78%	31	17%	21	1.34	27	0.65	9	34	5.2%	32	24.9%	30			
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 4.55 (19)				Left Tackle: 5.12 (29)				Mid/Guard: 4.88 (26)				Right Tackle: 3.86 (14)		Right End: 3.81 (16)	

The two major building blocks remain major building blocks. Josh Hines-Allen is a set outside-and-rip-it rusher, and while he's not going to notch 17.5 sacks every year (as he did in 2023), his pressure rate is a better indication of how he played last year. Both Hines-Allen and Travon Walker saw a reduction in pressure rate as offenses keyed on taking them out of the game. NFL Pro's metrics saw Hines-Allen's time to pressure drop from 2.74 seconds in 2023 to 3.00 last year, while Walker's declined from 2.96 to 3.12. A more complete defensive plan would probably help these two find their 2023 form. In the narrow space between "free agent bust" and "free agent hit" exists Arik Armstead, who played more as an outside rusher because of the Jaguars' lack of options and didn't generally move the needle. He's still a stellar presence on the line, but the Jaguars would be better off letting him rush inside like he did with the 49ers. Jacksonville thinks they solved this issue by adding ex-Dolphins edge rusher Emmanuel Ogbah after the draft. That should push Armstead inside alongside 2024 second-rounder Maason Smith on passing downs. DaVon Hamilton will probably split time with Smith and play more on run downs, but Hamilton hasn't exactly been impressive in that role the last two years. This defensive line doesn't jump off the page, but it has a lot more depth than this team had to offer last year, even if some of it is reliant on Smith making a leap and Armstead and Ogbah remaining serviceable at an older age. All good things must come to an end and so Devin Lloyd and Chad Muma are entering the final year of their rookie contracts after being surprise Baalke reinforcements at the same position in 2022. The Jaguars passed on Lloyd's fifth-year option. Foyesade Oluokun is the best linebacker in Jacksonville, but he missed a month last year with plantar fasciitis. Ventrell Miller got some run while Oluokun was hurt and proved to be a fairly decent run-stuffer. We think Lloyd and Oluokun represent the best this roster can give on passing downs, with Miller on early downs to keep the peace between the tackles. Fourth-round rookie Jack Kiser (Notre Dame) is entering his age-25 season—the COVID-19 year and the transfer portal have made this more commonplace—and he will challenge the 26-year-old Muma for a roster spot.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run						vs. Pass												
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int	
A.Cisco*	25	FS	16	979	74	8.5%	67	21	12	14	33	27%	69	7.8	57	12	2.6%	61	4.6	36.4%	55	50%	24	3.8	3	7	1
M.Brown	26	CB	17	855	83	9.0%	46	38	15	7	21	67%	10	5.0	29	87	21.6%	21	10.6	27.1%	87	49%	62	8.9	82	8	1
T.Campbell	25	CB	12	767	65	10.0%	28	21	10	5	19	42%	50	5.4	35	48	13.3%	90	11.2	-10.1%	35	40%	86	9.2	85	6	0
D.Savage	28	SS	13	764	57	8.1%	71	18	8	11	34	26%	73	8.9	77	20	5.6%	32	10.6	-9.4%	16	60%	11	5.4	11	6	1
J.Jones	24	CB	17	699	48	5.2%	88	27	13	9	13	69%	7	6.5	51	52	15.8%	76	9.2	-12.6%	31	50%	56	7.1	34	8	1
A.Johnson	24	FS	17	684	74	8.0%	72	18	11	5	30	30%	60	8.9	76	29	9.0%	14	7.7	58.8%	60	41%	45	7.8	38	2	0
R.Darby*	31	CB	13	659	55	7.8%	62	20	8	5	10	50%	31	6.0	43	59	19.0%	42	10.7	28.0%	88	46%	74	8.8	81	9	0
A.Wingard	29	FS	8	215	17	3.9%	--	3	1	1	9	0%	--	8.8	--	8	7.9%	--	9.4	37.6%	--	63%	--	2.8	--	3	0
J.Lewis	30	CB	16	872	79	9.7%	31	38	17	6	27	33%	72	8.4	76	64	16.6%	70	8.3	-13.9%	28	56%	18	7.2	36	8	1
E.Murray	31	SS	17	856	84	10.1%	54	32	8	12	42	31%	57	7.4	50	35	8.4%	18	9.9	4.2%	27	60%	12	6.7	26	10	1

Year	Pass D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	29		7.2%	19	-4.6%	13	-0.6%	15	-5.4%	12	8.2%	22	15.4%	25	12.3%	25
2023	10		-25.0%	8	-13.4%	10	9.2%	24	-8.2%	12	-12.3%	10	-10.1%	8	27.8%	31
2024	32		7.5%	20	29.2%	31	-0.4%	13	18.3%	28	-6.7%	16	23.4%	30	17.8%	27

One of the things that puzzled even ardent Jaguars observers about signing Jourdan Lewis is that Jarrian Jones had a decent rookie year and spent almost the entirety of it playing slot corner, Lewis' primary position in Dallas since 2017. To some extent, the answer is simply “Travis Hunter can play outside,” but of course we’re not sure *how often* he’ll play outside just yet. Everything about how the Jaguars have approached this offseason would tell you that Lewis and Jones are two of their three best non-Hunter cornerbacks, but Jones was much less productive in college on the outside and Lewis hasn’t played there since he was a rookie. ••• Tyson Campbell again lost time to hamstring ailments but appeared to finally be getting back to full health at the end of the season. We haven’t seen the best of Campbell since 2022, but it’s pretty easy to draw a straight line between the injuries and his poor numbers. Now that he’s on a four-year extension signed before the season, the Jaguars are surely hoping for more in 2025 and 2026. ••• Former Packers first-rounder Darnell Savage, whom Trent Baalke handed a three-year, \$21.5-million contract to in an attempt to create a Swiss Army Knife, spent about as much time in the box and as a slot coverage player as he did deep. Despite the high success rates, we don’t have a lot of confidence in Savage as anything more than an underneath coverage player. ••• Murray has often been typecast as the kind of player that Savage is, with the ability to play the slot, the run defense to play in the box, and someone who can backpedal deep if needed. He doesn’t really do anything exceptionally well, but his versatility got him the job with the Jaguars as Andre Cisco’s replacement. You won’t believe the Jaguars have a type, but Caleb Ransaw, a fourth-round rookie, played heavy snaps for Tulane in the slot last year and also was used as an edge defender at times. His path to playing time probably lies in beating out Murray for a job, but he surely showed enough explosion to get there over the long term with a 4.33s 40-yard dash at the combine.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	1.7%	11	-0.8	16	-0.3	22	0.4	12	8.4	4	1.2	13	-10.1	29
2023	1.4%	12	-3.1	21	-4.4	29	0.5	11	13.1	1	1.5	10	2.8	14
2024	3.0%	6	6.4	7	-0.3	18	-4.6	29	10.1	3	4.5	6	-0.3	16

Rookie kicker Cameron Little had a spectacular debut season, going 27-for-27 on extra points and missing just two field goals. Both misses came from beyond 40, as he hit 13-of-15 from deep with a long of 59. The Jaguars allowed a league-low 274 yards on kickoff returns, but that’s mostly because there were only 10 attempted returns against the unit all season. ••• Punter Logan Cooke made the Pro Bowl and finished second-team All-Pro after putting a career-best 50 percent of punts inside the 20. The Jaguars responded by rewarding him with a four-year extension this offseason. ••• Last year’s main returner, Devin Duvernay, was released. Parker Washington would seem to be the first man up for the job after retuning both kicks and punts last year, while Tank Bigsby had some kickoff returns as well and 2024 fifth-rounder Keilan Robinson was drafted mainly as a special teams player by a previous regime. Travis Hunter certainly *could* return kicks, but he didn’t do it in college and it would be surprising if the Jaguars asked him to do it. Fourth-rounder Bhayshul Tuten returned kicks for Virginia Tech in 2023 and could also be part of the solution here.

# Kansas City Chiefs

2024 record: 15-2	Total DVOA: 14.9% (8th)	2025 Mean Projection: 10.6 wins	On the Clock (0-5): 2%
Pythagorean Wins: 10.2 (11th)	Offense: 10.8% (8th)	Postseason Odds: 74.6%	Mediocrity (6-8): 17%
Snap-Weighted Age: 26.3 (21st)	Defense: -2.9% (12th)	Super Bowl Odds: 15.2%	Playoff Contender (9-11): 44%
Average Opponent: 1.5% (13th)	Special Teams: 1.2% (12th)	Proj. Avg. Opponent: 2.5% (8th)	Super Bowl Contender (12+): 37%

2024: Elite three-peat feat meets defeat in tush-push ambush.

2025: Complacency defeated, but the holes still exist. Is the era of dominance over?

It's funny how the final moments of a season can put everything that came before them into a new light.

In recent years, the Kansas City Chiefs have garnered a reputation for sleepwalking their way through the regular season. They're the Chiefs, after all, the NFL's reigning dynasty. The Best Team in the League with the Best Quarterback, proven in Januarys and Februarys, not Septembers. And when we say "sleepwalking," we're talking about in the scale of giants, not the scale of the Giants—a Chiefs team running at 80% still beats most of the league on any given Sunday.

Kansas City took this to new levels in the 2024. On their way to a 15-2 season, they looked at times like they were trying to unlock an obscure video game achievement rather than just win football games. They never scored more than 30 points in a regular-season game. They had 11 one-score contests. They had a point differential of just +59, third in their own division. Their 14.9% DVOA was their worst of the Patrick Mahomes era, with that—and their estimated and Pythagorean wins, for that matter—being their worst since 2017. And they racked up a progressively crazier and crazier way to get those wins. The Ravens lost in the opener when Isaiah Likely's toe was out of bounds. Matthew Wright doinked the game-winning field goal in off the goal posts to clinch the division against the Chargers. Aidan O'Connell was not ready for the snap for the Raiders. They blocked Denver's chip shot field goal as time expired. All wins, and presumably items on some checklist to unlock a sweet new skin or a New Game+ mode.

Add it all up, and the Chiefs were the strongest overperforming team since the merger by Pythagorean wins compared to actual wins. (Table 1; they would rank second if we removed the Week 18 game where they sat starters against the Broncos).

No worries, however! The Chiefs were going to flip the switch in the playoffs, surely. You don't show all your cards early, especially on the sixth-oldest offense in football. Every year, like clockwork, the Chiefs play better in the playoffs. Since 2019, the Chiefs' season DVOA goes up an average of 3.7% when you include the postseason, with an increase every year, and their playoff DVOA had never been below 35%, even in some of their sleepier campaigns. Same deal in 2024, right?

Well, almost. Kansas City slipped past Houston and Buffalo but then were crushed by Philadelphia in one of the strongest defensive performances in Super Bowl history.

It's not that Chiefs fans weren't concerned about some of the issues the rest of the league was pointing out—the tight wins, the offensive line struggles, the run defense, the surprisingly mundane passing attack. But there was this sense of invulnerability that came with it, because none of these issues were *new*. The Chiefs struggled with all these things in 2022 and 2023, albeit to a lesser extent, and everything worked out fine and dandy at the end of the day. But now, with the shock of merely a *Lamar Hunt* trophy as opposed to their annual Lombardi, Chiefs fans began to look at their roster in new light. All good things must come to an end, after all. Is this the beginning of the Chiefs coming down to join the rest of us mere mortals?

Well, no, of course not. The Chiefs are projected as one of the top teams in the league, just like always. They're one of three teams projected in the top 10 in offense, defense, and special teams and remain, as always, one of the league's elite. But the silver lining of getting taken to the woodshed in the Super Bowl is that it brings a team's issues into sharp focus. Kansas City's ability to find answers to why they're not ticking quite as well as they used to will be the difference between the dazzling heights of a third Super Bowl win in four years or the plummeting lows of ... well, probably another AFC Championship Game appearance.

**Table 1. Largest Pythagorean Overperformance, 1970-2024**

Year	Team	W-L	Pct	PF	PA	Pyth Wins	Pyth Pct	Pyth Luck	Y+1
2024	KC	15-2	0.882	385	326	10.2	0.600	0.283	—
2022	MIN	13-4	0.765	424	427	8.4	0.496	0.269	7-10
1992	IND	9-7	0.563	216	302	5.1	0.319	0.244	4-12
2012	IND	11-5	0.688	357	387	7.2	0.450	0.238	11-5
1982	LARD	8-1	0.889	260	200	6.0	0.662	0.227	12-4
2004	PIT	15-1	0.938	372	251	11.5	0.719	0.219	11-5
2020	KC	14-2	0.875	473	362	10.7	0.666	0.209	12-5
1976	OAK	13-1	0.929	350	237	10.1	0.721	0.208	11-3
2020	CLE	11-5	0.688	408	419	7.7	0.483	0.205	8-9
2019	GB	13-3	0.813	376	313	9.8	0.611	0.202	13-3
2016	OAK	12-4	0.750	416	385	8.8	0.549	0.201	6-10
1999	TEN	13-3	0.813	392	324	9.9	0.616	0.197	13-3

## 2025 Chiefs Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	at LAC (Fri./BRA)	7	LV	13	at DAL (Thu.)
2	PHI	8	WAS (Mon.)	14	HOU
3	at NYG	9	at BUF	15	LAC
4	BAL	10	BYE	16	at TEN
5	at JAX (Mon.)	11	at DEN	17	DEN (Thu./Xmas)
6	DET	12	IND	18	at LV

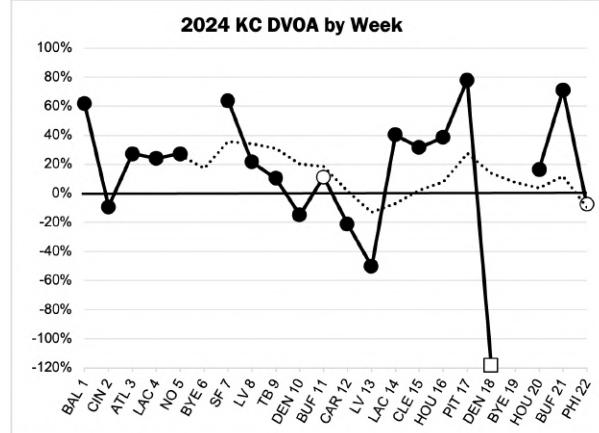
Step one is getting their offense back. The Chiefs have an eight-year streak of ranking in the top 10 in offensive DVOA, tied for the fifth longest of all time, but that used to be a top-five streak. Instead, they have sat in eighth the last two years, primarily because of pressure rate and explosive play rate—the twin shackles that have kept Mahomes in check. Both reinforce each other, both reared their heads again in the Super Bowl, and both have turned what was once an unstoppable force into something that's merely very good.

In 2024, Mahomes was under pressure on 34.5% of his dropbacks, ranking 34th out of 39 passers. While Kansas City has had protection problems before, it has never been that bad—the average from 2020 to 2023 was 28.4%, which would have ranked 15th last season. Mahomes is not absolved of all blame here, as his 2.61-second average time to pressure was seventh-longest in the league, but part of Mahomes game has always been extending plays and making something out of nothing. But “nothing” has been happening more and more frequently, which is why Mahomes led the league with 80 quarterback hits (not including sacks) in 2024 and 83 quarterback hits in 2023.

Over a third of Mahomes’ pressures from 2024 were the fault, at least in part, of a blown block by the left tackle, the highest percentage in the league. Kingsley Suamataia was a disaster with the third-highest pressure rate allowed among players with a least 100 pass protection snaps. Wanya Morris was subpar, ranking last among qualified left tackles with an 8.3% pressure rate. D.J. Humphries was rusty, and a pulled hamstring ended his year before he could shake off said rust. And while Joe Thuney did the best he could, he was playing out of position and was routinely beaten by Josh Sweat in the Super Bowl.

While the Chiefs have tried to address this problem before—drafting Suamataia and Morris, signing Donovan Smith and Jawaan Taylor in free agency—it has been a series of Band-Aids slapped onto the position. They have never really replaced Orlando Brown. The book on the Chiefs used to be never blitz Mahomes because it wouldn’t get there and he’d dice you up, but the offensive line play has gotten bad enough that blitzes are getting home and blowing up the offense. Mahomes averaged 6.9 yards per attempt against the blitz in 2024. In 2022, that was 7.5. In 2020, it was 9.2. The Kansas City offense has been collapsing in on itself as it has failed to protect its quarterback.

Kansas City has taken a belt-and-suspenders approach to fix the problem this offseason. In free agency, they handed former



49ers swing tackle Jaylon Moore a two-year, \$30-million contract. That’s a hefty price to pay for someone who has never had 300 snaps in a season, but Moore has been very solid the last two years in fill-in roles for San Francisco. His 3.0% pressure rate last season would have ranked fifth among left tackles if he had played enough snaps to qualify. The Chiefs then selected Josh Simmons, a potential top-10 pick who fell to the back of the first round because of a torn patella tendon, on the first day of the draft. When he’s healthy—and Kansas City believes that he *will* be in 2025—he’ll enter the starting lineup, with either he or Moore potentially replacing Taylor at right tackle. Add in Suamataia—whom the Chiefs always knew would be a project and will now likely start at left guard to replace the departed Thuney—and you have three live outs to find an answer at left tackle. Will all of them work? Probably not, but the Chiefs don’t need all of them to work. Just having one league-average tackle will free up plenty of room for Mahomes to work.

Of course, that won’t matter if Mahomes doesn’t have anyone to throw to, and that has been the other problem. Even when Mahomes gets free from pressure, he doesn’t have the same weapons to create big plays he used to. In 2023, this manifested itself as 107 failed completions, with a league-leading 59 thrown at or behind the line of scrimmage as Andy Reid and company tried to manufacture offense more than they have had to in recent years. They cut that out a little bit in 2024, finishing with 85 and 49, but Mahomes still finished under 7.0 yards per attempt and 10.0 yards per completion for the first time in his career. Only 8.4% of Mahomes’ pass attempts were deep throws, fifth lowest in the league. That’s down from 9.0% in 2022 and 11.9% in 2020. An offense which used to threaten to hit a deep bomb on every snap has been reduced to a more constrained dink-and-dunk system, and while it’s still effective, it’s no longer terrifying.

As a unit, Chiefs receivers had a 4.5% DVOA on deep targets, fourth worst in the league. Rashee Rice, who led the team with 58 receiving DYAR on deep targets, ranked 66th in the league—and, of course, he tore his LCL in Week 4. With no Rice and no Hollywood Brown for most of 2024, the Chiefs highest-volume deep targets were Xavier Worthy (-29.2% DVOA, ninth worst among wideouts with at least 10 deep targets) and Travis Kelce (-4.8% DVOA, third worst

among tight ends with at least 10 deep targets). The late arrival of DeAndre Hopkins (6.7% DVOA) gave them something halfway respectable downfield, but for the most part, there simply was not a downfield connection they could rely on, and so they didn't.

The Chiefs plan to solve this? Hope it solves itself. They did draft Utah State's Jalen Royals in the fourth round and brought in San Francisco's Elijah Mitchell for running back depth, but for the most part, the Chiefs are projected to have the exact same set of skill position starters as they did last year.

What they're counting on, then, is improvement and availability, and that's a mixed bag.

Worthy was a negative on deep passes over the course of the whole season, but he found another level in the postseason. After having just four games with positive receiving DYAR on deep shots in the regular season, Worthy led all receivers in the playoffs with five catches for 171 yards and two touchdowns on deep shots, for 99 DYAR and 237.5% DVOA. Those numbers do come with an asterisk, however, as more than half of that came in the fourth quarter of the Super Bowl with the Eagles having fully gone into celebratory mode—it's one thing to burn C.J. Gardner-Johnson deep, another to stunt on Tristin McCollum. Worthy saw his workload increase over the last two months of the season, but much of that was on shorter stuff. He was fourth in the league with 170 DYAR starting in Week 13, but his average depth of target was just 6.6 yards, 10th lowest among receivers with at least 15 targets over that back stretch. Take out the Super Bowl, and those numbers fall to 84 DYAR (19th) and 5.5 aDOT (seventh lowest). Worthy was touted as a field-stretcher coming out of Texas but we haven't seen that yet—instead, nearly 30% of his late-season targets came on wide receiver screens, with his speed being used after the catch, not before. Perhaps with Mahomes getting better protection, Worthy will be asked to run deeper routes, but it will take a pretty big shift in his usage for him to become the explosive play threat they're looking for.

It's also tough to hope for a rebound season from Travis Kelce. While Kelce was the third-most targeted tight end in the league, his production fell off a cliff in 2024. It was the first season where he had negative receiving DVOA and DYAR. Kelce had negative DVOA on every route type where he had at least 10 targets—hitches, digs, quick outs, crosses, and drags. Reid has suggested that Kelce just was overworked last season to make up for the injuries elsewhere. He had 940 snaps, his most since 2019. But he's just not as dynamic as he used to be. For three years in a row, the Chiefs have been feeding Kelce a steady diet of hitches and curls, and for three years in a row, he has been replacement level there. Dealing with a franchise legend and future first-ballot Hall of Famer losing a step is tough, but it's something he can't just shake off—his workload has to start going to Noah Gray. Giving Kelce 133 targets again would be insane. Giving him 100 targets is unwise. His tank isn't empty. He can still work his way into blank spaces in the defense when the field is open, ranking sixth with 62 DYAR and a 21.0% DVOA on targets between the 40s. But he needs to be more of a role player,

and not someone worth giving a full paragraph to at this point next year.

Instead, the Chiefs' hopes of being more explosive fall on the shoulders of the returning Rice and Brown, to the point where Brown was reportedly one of Kansas City's top priorities this offseason. The dream for the 2024 receiving corps was for Rice, Brown, and Worthy to be a three-headed monster, but the trio never played a single snap together. So, run it back, and generate deep shots out of sheer talent, right? Well, maybe not quite so fast. In 2023, only eight of Rice's 102 targets were deep, and he had the lowest depth of target for any qualified receiver at 4.8 yards. Brown's depth of target was much deeper, but he had just a -20.3% DVOA in Arizona with negative value no matter whether it was Josh Dobbs or Kyler Murray throwing him the ball. Mahomes is *slightly* better than that duo, but Brown has had negative DVOA ever since his rookie season; asking him to suddenly become the Tyreek Hill in this offense is a heck of an ask.

We don't want to overstress this point too much. Kansas City still has been a top-10 offense, and the tackle upgrades and improved availability from their key receivers should give them a boost in 2025. But the Chiefs don't compare themselves to the Broncos or Texans, league-average offenses. They're not even used to comparing themselves to the Ravens or Bills and the other elite offensive attacks in the league. When the Chiefs were on, they were *on*. The 2018 Chiefs had the fifth-best offensive DVOA in our database, stretching back to 1978, and every season from 2018 through 2022 ranked in the top 100. That's no longer the case, and it sometimes feels like we keep expecting a return to form that simply isn't going to happen.

This is, to a certain extent, inevitable for a dynasty. The Chiefs were so good on offense, and Mahomes covers up so many deficiencies, that they were able to spend most of their time and effort improving the defense, turning it from one that ranked in the mid- to low 20s when Mahomes took over to one that is reliably in the top dozen if not better. But that means that they left the offense to lie fallow a bit—70% of their draft capital from 2021 to 2023 was used on defense, and while they started to swing back the other way last year, it hasn't paid dividends yet. Swings and roundabouts.

As for that defense? It would be nice if they weren't getting run over quite so much.

The Chiefs were ninth in run defense DVOA last season, which is good, but that's mostly because the linebackers did a great job of bottling down running backs when they got to them. Up front, things are trickier—the Chiefs were 28th in power success and 23rd in stuffed percentage. So while the Chiefs ranked seventh in overall success rate allowed on running plays at 41%, they fell to 19th with three or fewer yards to go at 72%. You couldn't break too many long runs against Kansas City, but you could cloud-of-dust 'em into a first down more often than not. And this was before losing Derrick Nnadi and Tershawn Wharton in free agency. Chris Jones is great, but he is only one man.

The Chiefs have responded by adding two interior linemen known for pass-rushing prowess more than run stuffing: third-

round pick Omarr Norman-Lott from Tennessee and veteran Jerry Tillery from the Vikings. Those don't really move the needle here. Tillery's highest run stop rate over the last three years is just 64%, which would have ranked 75th in 2024. Norman-Lott is rangy as a run defender but can be bowled over. That leaves Mike Pennell taking on a larger role in 2025; he's solid, but a 34-year-old journeyman who has never hit 400 snaps in a season isn't an ideal solution to your run defense issues. It's a lot relying on a relatively fragile breaking point.

Tillery and Norman-Lott will help more with the pass rush, which was a sneakier need for Kansas City. The Chiefs ranked fourth with a 35% pressure rate in 2024, but that fell to 12th and 29% when not blitzing. Steve Spagnuolo dialed up blitzes 34% of the time, sixth in the league, and they were necessary to turn an above-average pass-rushing unit into a very good one. Jones and George Karlaftis both ranked in the top eight in quarterback pressures in 2024 and are as good a duo as you will find. But the third-leading pass rusher was the departed Wharton, who ranked 94th. The next-highest returning pass rusher was Felix Anudike-Uzomah, who ranked 151st. Mike Danna, theoretically the other starting edge rusher, ranked 188th. More support needed to be added, if only to give Spagnuolo more options on what to call.

The Chiefs hit on this in the draft multiple times. Norman-Lott should become a sub-package interior rusher immediately, and third-round pick Ashton Gillotte (Louisville) has a real chance to take the starting edge spot from Danna sooner rather than later. It's not enough to really stop the Chiefs from hav-

ing to rely on the blitz, but there's a good chance the two rookies will be among Kansas City's four or five pressure leaders right away, which would be a great find in the draft.

We could go on, if we really wanted to start picking nits—we haven't even mentioned Jaden Hicks stepping in for Justin Reid at strong safety!—but the point we want to really emphasize is that the Chiefs couldn't fix all their issues in one night. They prioritized the line on offense and the pass rush on defense, which are entirely reasonable decisions. And, especially on offense, they do have other outs just by hoping for improved health and performance from within. The plan is clear and in place; it'll just take some time to really patch up the cracks that have popped up over the last couple seasons.

But when we mention concerns about the 2025 Chiefs, it's because we're comparing them to the platonic ideal of the KANSAS CITY CHIEFS, the team of the 2020s and one of the best teams of all time. This year's Chiefs probably will not live up to that level, but they don't have to play *against* their 2018 selves, either. The Chiefs may have been a good team that had fortunate results in 2024, but they were still a good team. There's only so low the floor can be with Patrick Mahomes at quarterback, Andy Reid coaching, and players such as Chris Jones, Trent McDuffie, and Leo Chenal on defense. We would be surprised if this year's Chiefs lived up to their own standards. But we would not be surprised if they find themselves back in Santa Clara in February for yet another Super Bowl appearance.

Bryan Knowles

## 2024 Chiefs by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	BAL	W	82%	27	20	353	452	0	62%	36%	-28%	-2%
2	CIN	W	30%	26	25	286	320	-2	-9%	-21%	-11%	1%
3	at ATL	W	91%	22	17	345	311	0	27%	5%	-20%	3%
4	at LAC	W	85%	17	10	329	224	-2	24%	7%	-14%	4%
5	NO	W	99%	26	13	460	220	0	27%	24%	-7%	-3%
6	BYE											
7	at SF	W	100%	28	18	329	310	+1	64%	12%	-42%	10%
8	at LV	W	92%	27	20	334	228	0	22%	14%	-14%	-6%
9	TB	W	64%	30	24	384	284	-1	10%	18%	11%	4%
10	DEN	W	20%	16	14	300	260	0	-15%	1%	10%	-6%
11	at BUF	L	3%	21	30	259	366	-1	11%	16%	1%	-4%
12	at CAR	W	52%	30	27	391	334	0	-21%	2%	25%	2%
13	LV	W	15%	19	17	329	434	+1	-50%	-6%	48%	3%
14	LAC	W	84%	19	17	298	288	0	40%	15%	1%	27%
15	at CLE	W	100%	21	7	311	266	+6	32%	1%	-38%	-8%
16	HOU	W	98%	27	19	375	311	+2	39%	45%	8%	1%
17	at PIT	W	99%	29	10	389	364	+2	78%	50%	-28%	1%
18	at DEN	L	0%	0	38	98	479	0	-118%	-63%	48%	-7%
19	BYE											
20	HOU	W	80%	23	14	212	336	0	16%	16%	8%	9%
21	BUF	W	99%	32	29	368	374	-1	71%	44%	-20%	7%
22	KC	L	0%	22	40	275	345	-2	-7%	-28%	-23%	-3%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	10.8%	8	-2.7%	12
Unadjusted VOA	10.1%	9	3.8%	15
Weighted Trend	12.3%	9	4.0%	20
Variance	6.6%	23	7.0%	28
Average Opponent	-1.5%	7	0.3%	17
Passing	25.6%	11	6.5%	17
Rushing	-3.0%	12	-16.2%	9
First Down	9.1%	8	-1.4%	15
Second Down	3.3%	15	-0.9%	16
Third Down	25.7%	5	-7.7%	9
First Half	8.7%	12	4.5%	19
Second Half	13.2%	10	-9.2%	11
Red Zone	5.5%	10	-10.3%	9
Late and Close	15.9%	9	-3.5%	6

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rank	Off	Rank	Def	Rank	ST	Rank	Off AGL	Rank	Def AGL	Rank	Off Age	Rank	Def Age	Rank	ST Age	Rank
2020	14-2	10.7	12.0	473	362	+6	22.5%	5	21.2%	2	-0.7%	16	0.5%	17	50.7	24	14.5	1	27.1	11	25.9	26	25.8	20
2021	12-5	11.4	11.6	480	364	+4	20.4%	6	19.1%	3	2.4%	22	3.7%	3	17.7	2	20.9	3	26.0	24	26.3	18	26.0	18
2022	14-3	11.6	12.4	496	369	-3	26.8%	4	25.6%	1	-2.0%	14	-0.9%	19	23.7	7	24.3	3	25.6	29	25.2	30	25.4	30
2023	11-6	10.8	11.2	371	294	-11	17.9%	5	10.0%	8	-5.0%	7	2.9%	6	19.7	10	18.4	4	26.8	9	25.2	32	25.5	27
2024	15-2	10.2	10.5	385	326	+6	14.9%	8	10.8%	8	-2.9%	12	1.2%	12	42.2	22	28.2	11	27.3	6	25.7	28	25.4	30

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

KC Offense					KC Offense vs. Opponents					KC Defense				KC Defense vs. Opponents			
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA
11	49%	5.5	15.1%	29%	Base	19%	5.8	28.9%	41%	Base	25%	5.7	10.5%	11	59%	5.7	-1.1%
12	35%	5.7	20.3%	35%	Nickel	70%	5.1	9.9%	39%	Nickel	59%	5.0	-11.3%	12	17%	5.9	-0.8%
13	10%	4.8	1.5%	56%	Dime+	11%	6.8	28.0%	10%	Dime+	15%	6.9	10.3%	21	7%	5.1	-2.2%
22	1%	3.9	3.6%	69%	Goal Line	1%	0.6	-67.7%	60%					22	4%	3.6	-21.5%
02	1%	5.6	52.2%	10%										13	3%	4.2	-41.7%
621	1%	2.1	17.5%	89%										612	3%	3.5	-18.3%

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected	Rk	Formation	Rk	Pass Rush	Rk	Secondary	Rk	Strategy	Rk					
Runs, all	-5.4%	31	Form: Single Back	79%	7	Rush 3	6.2%	5	4 DB	24%	12	Play Action	22%	17
Runs, first down	-3.6%	28	Form: Empty Back	6%	25	Rush 4	59.4%	31	5 DB	59%	27	Offensive Motion	57%	8
Runs, second-long	-8.3%	27	Form: Multi Back	15%	19	Rush 5	25.5%	6	6+ DB	15%	8	Avg Box (Off)	6.12	13
Runs, power sit.	-0.5%	25	Pers: 3+ WR	50%	29	Rush 6+	8.9%	9	Man Coverage	60%	4	Avg Box (Def)	6.13	11
Runs, behind 2H	-2.7%	29	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	50%	1	Edge Rusher Sacks	38.5%	30	MOFC	45%	31	Offensive Pace	30.16	5
Runs, ahead 2H	-5.7%	30	Pers: 6+ OL	2%	15	Interior DL Sacks	37.2%	6	CB1 on WR1	29%	29	Defensive Pace	32.06	27
Run-Pass Options	6.0%	3	Shotgun/Pistol	81%	9	Second Level Sacks	24.4%	10	S/CB Cover Ratio	32%	3	Go for it on 4th	0.84	28

The Chiefs ranked second in offensive pace with a lead and dead last in offensive pace when trailing. They were one of only four teams with a slower paced offense when they were behind, and the only team where the difference was more than a second per play: 26.7 seconds per play with a lead and 29.0 seconds per play when trailing. This was significantly different than past seasons, as the Chiefs usually play fast when they're behind and slow when they're ahead. 🔍 Did it feel like the Chiefs had an all-or-nothing offense in 2024? They ranked No. 1 by running 6.85 plays per drive but also ranked 24th by going three-and-out 23.9% of the time. 🔍 Kansas City had the league's biggest gap in DVOA between runs from single-back sets (3.7 yards, -13.7% DVOA) and runs from multi-back sets (3.9 yards, 10.9% DVOA). 🔍 The Chiefs ranked 29th in DVOA on passes to the middle of the field, although they were better to the short middle (23rd) than the deep middle (30th). 🔍 Kansas City was at the top of the league in preventing missed tackles, with a league-leading 11.1% broken tackle rate on defense. However, the Chiefs were also at the bottom of the league in missed tackle rate on offense at 10.4%. 🔍 Kansas City was second in the league in "CB1 on WR1" in 2023 with Trent McDuffie covering the opposition's top wideout 49% of the time, but that dropped to 29% in 2024, which ranked 29th. 🔍 This was the second straight year where the Chiefs were very low in how often opponents threw to the middle of the field. Only the Jets and 49ers were lower. 🔍 The Chiefs had the league's smallest gap between defensive DVOA with pass pressure (29th) and DVOA without pressure (10th). 🔍 Opponents seem to slow things down against the Chiefs, as this was the third straight season where Kansas City ranked in the bottom six for situation-neutral pace by their opponents. 🔍 The Chiefs have ranked in the top 10 for penalties in five of the last seven seasons, but they were tied for 21st last season.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
P.Mahomes	779	7.7%	615	3689	6.0	5.9	67.7%	26	11
C.Wentz*	-31	-32.5%	23	96	4.2	5.7	63.2%	0	0
B.Zappe	-117	-65.9%	32	165	5.2	6.3	51.6%	1	2
G.Minskew	-131	-17.2%	332	1849	5.6	5.4	67.0%	9	10

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
X.Worthy	38	-7.8%	98	59	638	10.8	6.9	6	60%
D.Hopkins*	83	4.6%	59	41	437	10.7	2.6	4	69%
J.Watson*	59	12.0%	32	22	289	13.1	3.1	2	69%
R.Rice	96	27.5%	29	24	288	12.0	7.8	2	83%
J.Smith-Schuster	64	17.4%	26	18	231	12.8	8.6	2	69%
M.Brown	-7	-18.6%	15	9	91	10.1	5.1	0	60%
M.Hardman*	-2	-14.4%	14	12	90	7.5	8.3	0	86%
N.Remigio	-5	-23.2%	6	2	48	24.0	7.0	0	33%
T.Thornton	3	-7.1%	8	4	47	11.8	6.0	0	50%
T.Kelce	-57	-13.5%	133	97	823	8.5	3.5	3	73%
N.Gray	131	30.4%	49	40	437	10.9	5.3	5	82%
S.Perine*	109	39.6%	37	28	322	10.9	10.4	1	80%
K.Hunt	23	-2.4%	32	23	176	7.7	9.4	0	72%
I.Pacheco	-1	-15.1%	16	12	79	6.6	9.9	0	75%
C.Steele	-35	-71.0%	11	7	26	3.7	6.1	0	64%

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
K.Hunt	88	1.2%	200	728	3.6	7	0	57%
I.Pacheco	23	-2.4%	83	310	3.7	1	0	53%
C.Steele	-38	-22.7%	56	183	3.3	0	3	54%
P.Mahomes	102	38.6%	38	337	8.9	2	1	-
S.Perine*	26	18.5%	20	92	4.6	1	0	60%
X.Worthy	77	26.6%	20	104	5.2	3	0	-
M.Hardman*	48	148.2%	5	62	12.4	1	0	-
G.Minskew	-40	-60.1%	15	35	2.3	0	2	-

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
C.Humphrey	C	26	17/17	1117	1	8	11	1.5%	4	W.Morris	LT	25	17/11	734	10	6	39	8.3%	36
T.Smith	RG	26	17/17	1117	9	3	34	4.8%	31	M.Caliendo	LG	28	17/3	237	0	1	11	7.3%	--
J.Thuney*	LG	33	17/17	1117	1	6	17	2.4%	4	K.Suamataia	LT/RT	22	15/2	195	3	0	13	10.5%	--
J.Taylor	RT	28	16/16	1094	17	3	46	6.6%	30	J.Moore	LT	27	15/5	271	0	0	5	3.0%	--

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont
2022	4.49	4.82	3	55%	31	16%	9	1.24	14	0.64	20	26	4.8%	5	27.0%	14	34
2023	4.06	4.10	20	70%	11	18%	14	1.03	24	0.65	13	28	4.7%	2	28.3%	16	42
2024	3.65	4.47	14	64%	20	15%	5	0.91	31	0.18	32	41	6.7%	15	35.3%	28	37
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 3.44 (29)		Left Tackle: 3.36 (30)				Mid/Guard: 4.73 (10)		Right Tackle: 4.22 (17)		Right End: 4.22 (13)			

If we include the postseason, right tackle Jawaan Taylor tied for the league lead with 19 flags, making that back-to-back years where he's been the NFL's most penalized player.  Josh Simmons (Ohio State) will take over one of the two tackle spots sooner rather than later. He has experience at both left and right tackle, but is coming back from a season-ending knee injury and may not be fully up to NFL speed by Week 1. Speed is key—he's a fluid mover with very good slide quickness. If he heals fine, the Chiefs may have gotten a top-10-quality franchise left tackle at the end of the first round.  Kingsley Suamataia flopped as a rookie left tackle, benched after just two weeks. The Chiefs plan to kick him inside to guard to replace Joe Thuney—his best game of the season was in the Week 18 blowout playing guard, after all. Getting reps at an easier position and hoping he one day grows into the left tackle role is not a terrible Plan B.  While Kansas City traded Thuney away, they franchise-tagged Trey Smith to keep two-thirds of their fantastic interior line together. There was little chance of affording both of them, and Smith is significantly younger, but it also slightly prioritizes run blocking over pass blocking. Both Thuney and Smith are very good, but Smith regularly allowed more pressure than Thuney did, while Smith wasn't as effective opening rushing lanes.  Creed Humphrey made his first of probably many All-Pro teams. He finished sixth in ESPN's pass block win rate, had just one sack allowed, and had the fourth lowest pressure rate among centers with at least 400 snaps.

## Defensive Front

			Overall								vs. Run				Pass Rush				
Defensive Line	Age	Pos	G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
C.Jones	31	DT	15	771	37	5.0%	43	31	14	3	29	79%	27	2.2	38	5.0	16	59	0
T.Wharton*	27	DT	17	667	31	3.7%	71	26	11	2	18	83%	13	2.4	46	6.5	5	24	4
M.Pennel	34	DT	17	320	25	3.0%	--	19	4	0	21	71%	--	2.4	--	3.0	0	6	0
J.Tillery	29	DE	17	467	30	3.4%	77	19	4	2	26	62%	81	2.6	55	0.0	3	6	2

			Overall								vs. Run				Pass Rush				
Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
G.Karlaftis	24	DE	16	831	40	5.1%	49	31	15	3	25	68%	68	3.6	91	8.0	22	67	12
M.Danna	28	DE	13	496	42	6.5%	21	24	9	1	34	53%	94	2.8	62	3.5	4	12	1
F.Anudike-Uzomah	23	DE	17	332	27	3.2%	--	22	7	2	19	89%	--	1.3	--	2.5	4	15	1
J.Uche*	27	DE	13	249	23	3.6%	--	12	6	4	13	46%	--	4.3	--	2.0	1	9	0
M.Herring	28	DE	12	193	12	2.0%	--	9	1	0	11	82%	--	1.7	--	0.0	3	8	1

			Overall								vs. Run				Pass Rush				vs. Pass								
Linebackers	Age	Pos	G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
N.Bolton	25	MLB	16	941	112	14.1%	36	65	26	16	64	70%	11	3.7	40	3.0	4	13	44	-9.0%	22	43%	41	7.5	42	6	1
D.Tranquill	30	MLB	16	798	95	12.0%	53	54	12	12	58	71%	10	2.9	9	2.0	7	14	44	6.4%	45	39%	56	6.0	11	2	0
L.Chenal	25	OLB	17	445	56	6.7%	81	32	10	4	41	56%	61	3.0	11	1.0	1	15	11	-3.3%	--	55%	--	5.2	--	3	0

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk				
2022	4.29	4.47	21	67%	16	16%	22	1.32	24	0.52	6	55	8.9%	3	27.2%	17				
2023	4.57	4.35	25	80%	32	16%	24	1.15	16	0.93	29	57	10.2%	1	31.5%	9				
2024	3.78	4.30	16	75%	28	17%	23	1.03	2	0.42	2	39	7.2%	18	35.0%	4				
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 4.58 (20)				Left Tackle: 4.13 (15)				Mid/Guard: 4.38 (12)				Right Tackle: 3.01 (3)		Right End: 4.91 (28)		

The Chiefs allowed just 2.1 yards after contact in the run game, second best in the NFL. They fell to 17th with 2.1 yards before contact, hence being just ninth in rush DVOA, but they bottled backs up once they got to them. George Karlaftis had another solid season, finishing third in the league with 67 pressures. And yet, his pressure rate actually declined slightly. Part of the issue is the continuing search for a running mate, as Karlaftis was the only consistent source of edge pressure the Chiefs had. Mike Danna still flashes—see his four-pressure, one-sack day against Josh Allen in the AFC Championship Game—but is simply too inconsistent. A dozen pressures had him tied for 188th in the league. Third-round pick Ashton Gillotte (Louisville) had 50 pressures last season, eighth in the nation. His burst and speed are nothing to write home about, but his powerful initial punch gets the job done. Chris Jones remains the best pass-rushing tackle in football, taking a lot of pressure off those edge rushers. Don't let falling to single-digit sacks fool you—he still led all interior linemen with 59 pressures. Jerry Tillery comes from Minnesota to flesh out the rotation, though he'll likely remain behind Mike Pennel in the pecking order. Pennel's more of a true 1-technique anyway, while Tillery will shift outside more frequently. Second-round pick Omarr Norman-Lott (Tennessee) is a bit undersized at 291 pounds, but he gets quick penetration and can win his pass-rush snaps with speed and athleticism. He's probably just a rotational player for passing downs only but should contribute fairly early. Healthy once more, Nick Bolton set career highs in both run stops and defeats in 2024. It was no surprise the Chiefs didn't let the guy who anchors the center of their defense escape in free agency. Drue Tranquil's pass coverage success rate fell from 50% in 2023 to 39% in 2024, the third-largest drop for qualified linebackers last season. Leo Chenal is a great run stuffer and a force on special teams—he was the one who blocked that field goal against Denver—but there's always a chance of a replacement when you come down to the third base linebacker. Fifth-round pick Jeffery Bassa could press for snaps sooner rather than later. The Oregon product is a converted safety who flows downhill well.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run						vs. Pass												
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int	
T.McDuffie	25	CB	16	996	72	9.1%	44	38	16	2	10	80%	3	3.0	4	101	20.1%	29	10.2	3.3%	59	50%	54	6.5	22	13	2
J.Reid*	28	SS	16	974	94	11.9%	29	46	17	7	37	46%	19	5.5	18	35	7.1%	23	10.2	34.2%	54	46%	38	11.6	61	9	2
B.Cook	26	FS	17	974	82	9.8%	60	19	7	4	33	27%	69	8.8	73	15	3.0%	60	7.8	-8.6%	17	40%	46	9.4	53	5	2
C.Conner	25	FS	15	573	74	10.0%	55	36	18	9	26	62%	2	4.5	6	49	16.9%	2	7.2	10.3%	33	49%	32	8.7	48	4	2
N.Johnson	27	CB	16	494	56	7.1%	--	27	9	2	23	65%	--	3.8	--	42	16.8%	--	17.9	5.2%	--	52%	--	10.3	--	3	0
J.Williams	26	CB	17	411	36	4.3%	--	12	4	4	9	44%	--	3.6	--	27	13.0%	--	12.1	-24.3%	--	48%	--	5.6	--	6	0
J.Watson	27	CB	6	341	38	12.8%	--	15	8	3	13	69%	--	4.8	--	28	16.3%	--	10.3	-51.5%	--	46%	--	6.8	--	6	0
J.Hicks	23	FS	17	330	28	3.3%	--	15	9	2	11	36%	--	6.5	--	4	2.4%	--	12.3	7.7%	--	75%	--	6.5	--	5	3
C.Roland-Wallace	24	CB	17	194	30	3.6%	--	10	5	0	14	50%	--	5.5	--	14	14.3%	--	9.6	31.0%	--	29%	--	9.2	--	1	1
K.Fulton	27	CB	15	760	58	7.6%	66	29	9	1	13	69%	7	4.2	12	69	18.3%	50	11.6	13.6%	77	49%	63	8.2	65	7	1
M.Edwards	29	FS	8	191	13	3.2%	--	6	3	0	6	67%	--	4.8	--	3	3.0%	--	6.7	-36.8%	--	100%	--	3.7	--	1	0

Year	Pass D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	14		13.1%	23	-10.4%	11	-14.4%	6	-7.5%	11	2.9%	20	-1.4%	18	19.5%	29
2023	5		-29.2%	6	16.8%	27	-13.4%	4	-16.7%	6	1.2%	19	5.5%	23	-12.2%	11
2024	17		8.5%	21	-11.9%	7	1.3%	18	-18.9%	3	27.5%	30	5.2%	21	-23.5%	3

53.2% of targets against the Kansas City defense were charted as either open or wide open, meaning no defender was within 2 yards. That was the third-worst total in the league. Trent McDuffie was one of seven cornerbacks who faced at least 100 targets last season. His 6.5 yards per target allowed ranked second among that high-volume crowd. Kristian Fulton comes over from the Chargers hoping a change of scenery helps. He has been 77th and 88th in coverage DVOA the last two years but had better numbers in his first few seasons in the league. Third-round pick Nohl Williams (California) had seven interceptions last season and returned a kick for a touchdown. The latter is more likely to be relevant as a rookie, but he could beat Jaylen Watson for playing time in dime packages. With Justin Reid gone, Jaden Hicks is next man up at safety. Hicks had a strong rookie season, earning more and more playing time as the year went along, hauling in three interceptions and proving to be a solid thumper. They're big shoes to fill, but he seems up to the task. Bryan Cook acquitted himself well in his first season starting all 17 games. He's also one of the few Chiefs defenders who came out of the Super Bowl looking good, recording an interception and having a solid tackling day.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	-0.9%	19	-10.7	32	4.7	4	-6.5	30	11.0	2	-3.1	24	-13.7	31
2023	2.9%	6	11.0	2	3.2	5	-0.7	18	3.2	12	-1.5	19	-2.5	18
2024	1.2%	12	1.2	15	0.5	16	-0.4	17	4.0	8	0.9	11	5.7	10

The new rules giveth, and they taketh way. Kansas City had both their worst kickoff value and their best kick return value since 2020 in the first year with the dynamic kickoff. Harrison Butker was actually outperformed by his replacements. Butker earned -2.4 weather-adjusted field goal points. Matthew Wright and Spencer Shrader were both in the positives. Both outperformed him on kickoffs, too, though all of this is in small sample sizes. Matt Araiza's delayed debut in the NFL didn't quite live up to "punt god" standards, but it was broadly fine. He ranked 11th in gross punt value, better than what Tommy Townsend managed in 2023. With Mecole Hardman gone, Nikko Remigio is in line to be the primary punt and kick returner. Remigio took over when Hardman's knee locked up on him in December and was close to average on both kickoffs and punts.

# Las Vegas Raiders

2024 record: 4-13

Total DVOA: -19.6% (27th)

Pythagorean Wins: 5.3 (27th)

Offense: -17.8% (29th)

Snap-Weighted Age: 25.9 (31st)

Defense: 1.7% (18th)

Average Opponent: 2.2% (10th)

Special Teams: -0.1% (17th)

2025 Mean Projection: 8.3 wins

On the Clock (0-5): 13%

Postseason Odds: 38.6%

Mediocrity (6-8): 40%

Super Bowl Odds: 2.1%

Playoff Contender (9-11): 37%

Proj. Avg. Opponent: -0.3% (17th)

Super Bowl Contender (12+): 10%

2024: The same old struggles.

2025: The Tom Brady era begins.

The Raiders haven't won a division title or playoff game since 2002, the longest such drought in the NFL. Only twice in that span did they even have a winning record. Following the firing of Josh McDaniels in 2023, the Raiders made minimal changes, even hiring the interim head coach, Antonio Pierce, as the next head coach.

Pierce got the job as head coach because of the way the Raiders finished 2023. They won three of their last four games, all against divisional opponents, with Zamir White averaging 99.3 yards per game on the ground in that time. It seemed like Pierce inspired a level of physicality and toughness that could carry over into 2024. But that's not what happened. The Raiders were brutally bad from the start, particularly on offense: 30th in pass DVOA and 31st in rush DVOA. The defense and special teams were mediocre. Changes were desperately needed across the board.

This year is going to be a different story, and it's all because of Tom Brady.

Brady joined the team as a Limited Partner and Advisor in October of 2024. Less than a year later, this looks like a brand-new franchise. The first domino to fall was the firing of general manager Tom Telesco. On January 22, the Raiders hired John Spytek to be the new general manager. Spytek and Brady were teammates at Michigan and then a part of the Buccaneers organization together. It was in Tampa that Spytek made a real name for himself, especially as someone with an eye for talent, most recently hitting on Jalen McMillan and Bucky Irving.

Two days later, Pete Carroll was hired as Las Vegas' new head coach. Carroll cited Brady's presence as the reason his opinion of the Raiders' job changed into a favorable one. Brady and the team then traded for Geno Smith, a move clearly aided by Carroll's relationship with the 34-year-old quarterback.

So the Brady tenure is off to a good start. He has added a sense of credibility and respectability to the organization, attracted talent in the likes of Pete Carroll, and inspired the franchise's best player, Maxx Crosby, to sign a massive extension after years of trade rumors. But how well can this relationship between Brady and the front office work? And what can we learn from past instances of superstar players/quarterbacks in similar roles?

In the 21st Century, there have been three other notable

superstars who at least tried their hand in front office roles with NFL teams. John Lynch has been the 49ers' general manager/president of football operations since 2017. John Elway served as the Broncos' general manager from 2011 to 2020. Both Lynch and Elway are success stories, but the other superstar is not. Dan Marino was hired in 2004 as the senior vice president of football operations for the Dolphins, but he resigned only three weeks later. He was then re-hired in 2014 as a special advisor, a title he still holds today. Marino is an especially interesting comparison to make because in both 2004 and 2014, upon being hired to a front office position, he quit his broadcasting roles. Tom Brady is trying to do both an executive and a commentator, with nine years left on his broadcasting contract with FOX Sports.

Lynch has accomplished just about everything except a ring as a general manager. The 49ers have been to two Super Bowls and four Conference Championship Games. They have had four double-digit winning seasons and three 12-plus-win seasons. They have been widely regarded as one of the best rosters in football for years, but outside of the fact that he was once a great player, there's not a ton of similarity between Lynch's efforts and what Brady is trying to do. For one thing, Brady is not the general manager. For another, Lynch does not have the same level of aura that makes people want to join San Francisco just to work with him. He's just transitioned from great football player to great general manager.

Elway is a better comparison. After one year of Tim Tebow (including the walk-off Demaryius Thomas touchdown to beat the Steelers), Elway made his mark. He signed Peyton Manning, who made it clear that he would never have been a Bronco if not for Elway. He believed in Elway's vision and appreciated that the two of them could talk quarterback to quarterback about all things football. All of Elway's success as a general manager came from this signing.

Elway's tenure was successful. Five division titles, four 12-plus-win seasons, two Super Bowl appearances, and a ring. But when he didn't have a Hall of Fame quarterback, his teams struggled, ironically because he struggled to find the next "right guy" to play his old position. Elway's Broncos were 40-56 in six seasons without Manning, with their best season at 9-7 with Trevor Siemian in 2016. However, Elway also deserves credit for putting together a tremendous defense. Manning never wins his second ring if not for Denver's domi-

## 2025 Raiders Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	at NE	7	at KC	13	at LAC
2	LAC (Mon.)	8	BYE	14	DEN
3	at WAS	9	JAX	15	at PHI
4	CHI	10	at DEN (Thu.)	16	at HOU
5	at IND	11	DAL (Mon.)	17	NYG
6	TEN	12	CLE	18	KC

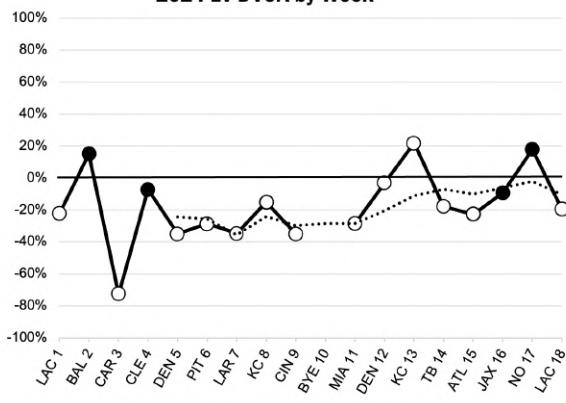
nance on that side of the ball. Thus, it would be unfair to say that Elway was successful solely because of his influence in landing Peyton Manning, but his presence was more impactful than his skills as a general manager. Since Brady doesn't even have the power of a general manager, he and the Raiders hope his presence will have similar effects on big-time free agents for years to come.

Then there's Marino. In the winter of 2004, he accepted a position as Miami's senior vice president of football operations. In doing so, he quit his broadcasting gigs with both CBS Sports and HBO, citing both a conflict of interest and the fact that his new role would require a major lifestyle change, one that left no room for broadcasting duties on the side. Three weeks later, he resigned from his position with the Dolphins, again citing the "major lifestyle change," this time saying it wasn't in the best interest of his family. Some, however, speculated that the real reason he resigned was because of the ambiguity of his role. The owner had created the position for him, but it was unclear how much decision-making power he wielded. Did he want total control? Did he want less responsibility (like his current position with the team) for a smaller change in lifestyle? In any case, he immediately returned to his position with HBO.

Marino's experience creates questions about what Brady's will look like. First, from an NFL fan's perspective, why doesn't Brady view his two jobs as a conflict of interest? He has limitations as to what he can say as a broadcaster to alleviate the issue, but none of us want to hear Brady with a muzzle; we want to hear everything he has to say. Whether it's criticism of officials, the league office, or players and coaches, we value Brady's input and therefore want to hear all his thoughts, not the 25% he's allowed to say. Second, why does Brady think he has the time to do both, and do both well, if Marino thought even the Dolphins' job would be too demanding in the end? Does this mean Brady doesn't expect to be that involved in day-to-day operations and decisions? Perhaps Brady views his role with Las Vegas as more of an offseason responsibility, leaving the team to its own accord once the season starts, thus eliminating a lot of the overlap.

All of this is to be determined, of course, but if the relationship between Brady and the Raiders ever sours, the fact that he's trying to do two things at once will likely be at the center of the divide for one reason or another. Either that, or the ambiguity of his role. In fact, what happens if Brady decides he doesn't have enough power, wants to be the general manager, but still says he'll continue as a broadcaster. Would the

2024 LV DVOA by Week



league be OK with that? Would Las Vegas? It's a fascinating dynamic, but for the time being, all we can do is evaluate what the Raiders will look like on the field.

Our projections expect immediate returns from the changes made. This has been a bottom-10 passing offense by DVOA in each of the past two years, finishing 30th a season ago. Geno Smith is a massive upgrade at quarterback even if he'll never be close to elite. He's also turns 35 in October, so it's not like he's the "quarterback of the future." His job is to begin the process of creating a winning culture in Las Vegas. And he has some pieces to help him do it.

The Raiders hit on two rookie offensive linemen last year, center Jackson Powers-Johnson and right tackle DJ Glaze. The unit was better than expected and could develop further as these youngsters improve. For Powers-Johnson, that means committing fewer penalties. He committed 14 penalties in 2024, the second most of any guard in the league. For Glaze, that means becoming as good of a pass protector as he is a run blocker. Stud left tackle Kolton Miller should be able to teach him a thing or two to help that development occur, as Miller is one of the premiere pass blockers in the game.

Brock Bowers headlines the skill-position players and is arguably the best tight end in football after just one season. The Raiders had one of the worst collections of running backs in the league last year, so not only is sixth overall pick Ashton Jeanty potentially one of the few backs in the league who can make a significant impact, but he's also replacing well-below-average players. And despite losing Davante Adams to the Jets last year, the receiver room is decent in Vegas. Jakobi Meyers is always open, Tre Tucker flashed big-play potential with his speed, and rookies Jack Bech and Dont'e Thornton Jr. are impressing at camp. Like Meyers, Bech (Round 2, TCU) is developing the reputation of getting open with ease while Thornton (Round 4, Tennessee) had Maxx Crosby himself making comparisons to Martavis Bryant because of Thornton's size/speed combination. Our projections have this offense as slightly below average, but if the offensive line takes a step forward, it could be pretty good.

On the other side of the ball, the Raiders could shock people. Defensive coordinator Patrick Graham and defensive line coach Rob Leonard both garnered interest for bigger coaching positions elsewhere this offseason, but both have returned for

at least one more go in their current roles. In 2024, the defense was on the wrong end of injury luck, but they still managed to finish 18th in defensive DVOA. With better projected health and some key personnel additions, our projections have this defense on the precipice of the top 10, powered by a great front. They ranked in the top dozen for both ESPN's pass block and run block win rates despite missing Crosby for five games and Christian Wilkins for 12 games. They're also getting Malcolm Koonce back from the torn ACL that forced him to miss the entire 2024 season. Koonce broke out in 2023 with eight sacks, and with Crosby and Wilkins requiring so much of the opponents' attention, he could have a massive year. The Raiders brought in two new starting linebackers in Germaine Pratt and Elandon Roberts, a new starting safety in Jeremy Chinn, and a new starting corner in Eric Stokes. Roberts was especially good in 2024, and Graham has talked about using Chinn as a chess piece all over the field.

The defense will also benefit from a more competent offense; they were given the second-worst field position in the league last season because the offense couldn't pick up first downs and struggled with turnovers. That is something the Raiders did not do defensively: generate takeaways of their own. They gave the ball the ball away at the fourth high-

est rate and took the ball away at the fourth lowest rate. For 2025's outlook, this is actually a good thing. Turnovers tend to regress to the mean, especially on defense, and all the pressure this front can create will certainly help that process along.

So what would a successful 2025 look like for the Las Vegas Raiders? How would it be defined? A nine- or 10-win season is well within the range of outcomes, which puts a playoff berth within reach. But the defining characteristic of this season will not be wins and losses. It will be whether the franchise restores respectability and begins the process of turning the Raiders into a team that players and coaches around the league want to be a part of. In fact, box score success could be an enemy of theirs this year. The more wins they have, the worse their draft position will be. The better the defense plays, the more likely they are to lose Graham to a head coaching gig. Their only superstar free agent signings in the last 20 years or so have been linemen (Trent Brown on offense in 2019, Christian Wilkins on defense in 2024). Brady's presence alone won't be enough to land big-name free agents. Like Manning joining Denver, they'll have to believe in the vision and direction of the entire organization.

Alex Bickle

## 2024 Raiders by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	at LAC	L	9%	10	22	296	316	-3	-22%	-22%	-1%	-2%
2	at BAL	W	6%	26	23	260	383	0	15%	-12%	-23%	4%
3	CAR	L	1%	22	36	331	437	-1	-73%	-36%	30%	-8%
4	CLE	W	79%	20	16	268	241	0	-7%	-9%	6%	8%
5	at DEN	L	1%	18	34	330	289	-3	-35%	-18%	15%	-3%
6	PIT	L	9%	13	32	275	293	-3	-29%	-18%	-9%	-20%
7	at LAR	L	6%	15	20	317	259	-3	-35%	-47%	-9%	3%
8	KC	L	8%	20	27	228	334	0	-15%	-22%	1%	8%
9	at CIN	L	2%	24	41	217	373	-1	-35%	-31%	14%	10%
10	BYE											
11	at MIA	L	5%	19	34	328	353	-1	-28%	-4%	26%	1%
12	DEN	L	19%	19	29	369	325	-2	-3%	-9%	2%	8%
13	at KC	L	85%	17	19	434	329	-1	22%	24%	-13%	-16%
14	at TB	L	8%	13	28	286	420	+1	-18%	-22%	6%	9%
15	ATL	L	24%	9	15	249	261	-2	-23%	-42%	-31%	-12%
16	JAX	W	95%	19	14	314	308	+2	-9%	-21%	-11%	1%
17	at NO	W	100%	25	10	388	269	+2	18%	-2%	-21%	-2%
18	LAC	L	2%	20	34	264	473	-1	-19%	-8%	18%	7%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	-17.8%	29	1.7%	18
Unadjusted VOA	-18.7%	30	4.5%	18
Weighted Trend	-15.5%	27	-0.4%	12
Variance	2.8%	3	2.9%	3
Average Opponent	0.7%	22	2.5%	6
Passing	-7.2%	30	8.3%	19
Rushing	-21.8%	31	-7.5%	18
First Down	-10.9%	26	-10.1%	9
Second Down	-21.3%	28	11.6%	28
Third Down	-25.4%	29	7.3%	22
First Half	-11.0%	26	3.0%	14
Second Half	-23.6%	27	0.3%	19
Red Zone	-24.4%	28	-2.2%	17
Late and Close	-31.6%	31	9.6%	21

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rk	Off	Rk	Def	Rk	ST	Rk	Off AGL	Rk	Def AGL	Rk	Off Age	Rk	Def Age	Rk	ST Age	Rk
2020	8-8	7.0	7.1	434	478	-11	-4.2%	20	4.2%	13	9.9%	29	1.5%	13	54.3	27	32.6	11	27.4	9	26.0	24	26.5	8
2021	10-7	6.8	8.9	374	439	-9	-0.4%	19	-0.5%	18	-1.0%	14	-0.9%	21	42.7	17	58.9	27	25.5	30	26.5	13	25.7	22
2022	6-11	7.9	7.2	395	418	-8	-6.5%	21	3.0%	15	10.7%	29	1.1%	12	39.0	18	49.0	25	27.0	10	26.3	18	26.3	12
2023	8-9	8.5	7.4	332	331	-2	-5.3%	21	-10.7%	27	-4.6%	8	0.9%	13	15.4	4	11.4	2	27.4	3	26.3	20	26.8	7
2024	4-13	5.3	4.4	309	434	-16	-19.6%	27	-17.8%	29	1.7%	18	-0.1%	17	39.7	20	79.1	31	25.4	31	26.5	18	25.5	28

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

LV Offense					LV Offense vs. Opponents					LV Defense				LV Defense vs. Opponents			
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA
11	53%	5.1	-15.8%	27%	Base	20%	4.2	-32.5%	51%	Base	21%	4.6	-16.0%	11	53%	5.9	6.0%
12	37%	5.0	-9.6%	34%	Nickel	65%	5.3	-3.3%	32%	Nickel	64%	5.8	5.7%	12	27%	4.9	-10.4%
13	4%	5.8	3.3%	49%	Dime+	14%	4.8	-38.1%	7%	Dime+	13%	6.3	12.0%	13	6%	5.3	-0.8%
612	2%	3.0	-45.5%	58%	Goal Line	1%	-0.7	-24.8%	71%	Goal Line	1%	1.5	25.7%	21	5%	7.6	24.5%
611	2%	3.6	-45.8%	81%									22	2%	7.8	40.1%	

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected	Rk	Formation	Rk	Pass Rush	Rk	Secondary	Rk	Strategy	Rk
Runs, all	+0.3% 22	Form: Single Back	75% 15	Rush 3	3.2% 16	4 DB	21% 20	Play Action	19% 25
Runs, first down	-3.9% 29	Form: Empty Back	6% 26	Rush 4	67.7% 22	5 DB	64% 20	Offensive Motion	53% 10
Runs, second-long	+3.3% 8	Form: Multi Back	19% 13	Rush 5	16.9% 25	6+ DB	13% 10	Avg Box (Off)	5.93 30
Runs, power sit.	+6.3% 14	Pers: 3+ WR	54% 25	Rush 6+	12.3% 2	Man Coverage	42% 23	Avg Box (Def)	6.06 21
Runs, behind 2H	-2.1% 28	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	46% 4	Edge Rusher Sacks	52.7% 14	MOFC	55% 21	Offensive Pace	31.87 21
Runs, ahead 2H	+2.3% 13	Pers: 6+ OL	5% 9	Interior DL Sacks	27.0% 20	CB1 on WR1	28% 32	Defensive Pace	31.78 22
Run-Pass Options	2.6% 19	Shotgun/Pistol	79% 11	Second Level Sacks	20.3% 18	S/CB Cover Ratio	19% 17	Go for it on 4th	0.86 26

Las Vegas had -61.4% DVOA with 2.4 yards per play from the pistol, the worst figures for any team that used pistol at least 5% of the time. The Raiders also had the lowest DVOA with an empty backfield, -65.6% DVOA with 4.2 yards per play. The Raiders threw only 8.1% of targets to the receivers we had designated as “other wide receivers,” in other words, not WR1 or WR2. This was the lowest figure of any team since the 2019 Eagles, who were at 7.5%. On the other hand, only Arizona threw a higher percentage of targets to tight ends. The Raiders went from using two tight ends or six linemen on 22% of plays in 2023 (25th) to 46% of plays last year (fourth). Las Vegas was at the bottom of the league with just 3.0 yards per carry and -70.6% DVOA when running on second-and-long. The Raiders ranked only 23rd in offensive pace in the first half of games but first in the second half. Las Vegas was once again near the bottom of the league in broken tackles: 30th in broken tackle rate after ranking 31st in 2023. The Raiders sent a big blitz of six or more pass rushers far more often than in 2023, going from 4.9% (20th) to 12.3% (second) despite the same defensive coordinator, Patrick Graham. Expect Graham to continue to keep his cornerbacks on sides, as Pete Carroll’s Seahawks never tended to have CB1 travel with WR1. Las Vegas had the league’s worst fumble recovery luck in 2024 by far, recovering only 24% of fumbles not including muffed kickoffs and punts. The Raiders recovered only three of 16 fumbles on offense and only three of 12 fumbles on defense, plus one kick return fumble.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
G.Minshev*	-131	-17.2%	332	1849	5.6	5.4	67.0%	9	10
A.O'Connell	102	-5.0%	252	1510	6.0	4.7	64.2%	8	4
D.Ridder*	-155	-34.9%	94	394	4.2	3.9	61.9%	2	1
G.Smith	369	-2.1%	626	3949	6.3	5.4	71.0%	21	15

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
J.Meyers	112	-1.7%	129	87	1027	11.8	3.3	4	67%
T.Tucker	-45	-19.8%	81	47	539	11.5	4.4	3	58%
D.Turner*	-36	-28.5%	29	16	158	9.9	5.2	1	55%
D.Adams*	24	-2.3%	27	18	209	11.6	2.5	1	67%
T.Marshall*	-5	-22.4%	6	3	41	13.7	1.3	0	50%
B.Bowers	121	4.8%	153	112	1194	10.7	5.3	5	73%
M.Mayer	-44	-27.5%	32	21	156	7.4	2.9	0	66%
H.Bryant*	8	4.4%	12	9	86	9.6	7.9	0	75%
I.Thomas	-28	-73.8%	6	3	7	2.3	2.0	0	50%
A.Mattison*	56	6.1%	48	36	294	8.2	8.7	1	75%
A.Abdullah*	87	18.5%	47	40	261	6.5	6.3	3	85%
Z.White	-7	-30.4%	8	6	30	5.0	8.3	0	75%
S.McCormick	-2	-18.0%	7	6	29	4.8	4.8	0	86%
R.Mostert	40	16.6%	23	19	161	8.5	7.7	0	83%

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
A.Mattison*	-83	-24.4%	132	420	3.2	4	1	36%
A.Abdullah*	16	-2.6%	66	311	4.7	2	1	50%
Z.White	-140	-62.0%	65	183	2.8	1	2	26%
S.McCormick	47	18.0%	39	183	4.7	0	0	54%
G.Minshev*	-40	-60.1%	15	35	2.3	0	2	-
A.O'Connell	1	-11.1%	14	38	2.7	1	2	-
T.Tucker	40	59.5%	9	44	4.9	1	0	-
D.Ridder*	-13	-42.6%	9	33	3.7	0	1	-
C.Collier	-17	-103.4%	5	12	2.4	0	0	40%
D.Turner*	31	96.6%	5	33	6.6	1	0	-
B.Bowers	10	-1.7%	5	13	2.6	0	0	-
R.Mostert	-82	-31.3%	85	283	3.3	2	2	39%
G.Smith	-4	-13.9%	38	236	6.2	2	4	-

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
K.Miller	LT	30	17/17	1075	7	2	47	6.5%	29	J.Meredith	RG/LG	27	14/8	574	3	4	11	2.9%	14
D.Glaze	RT	23	17/14	998	8	6	43	6.4%	27	C.Whitehair*	LG	33	12/3	221	1	0	2	1.4%	--
J.Powers-Johnson	LG	22	15/14	956	11	10	19	3.0%	11	T.Munford	LT/RT	26	14/4	201	0	1	6	4.4%	--
D.Parham	RG	26	15/14	882	3	9	19	3.2%	18	A.Cappa	RG	30	17/17	1133	1	8	42	5.4%	34
A.James*	C	28	13/11	702	2	3	8	1.7%	6										

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont	
2022	4.77	4.92	1	63%	23	15%	6	1.42	4	0.81	15	35	5.9%	8	28.2%	19	27	
2023	3.87	4.19	16	60%	25	18%	16	0.96	29	0.56	17	40	6.8%	11	25.4%	5	27	
2024	3.60	3.85	30	57%	29	19%	25	0.95	29	0.42	28	50	7.9%	21	32.2%	22	28	
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 4.77 (7)				Left Tackle: 3.61 (27)				Mid/Guard: 4.05 (27)				Right Tackle: 2.77 (32)		Right End: 1.65 (32)

Given how bad the Raiders offense was last year, the offensive line performance went under the radar. They were 17th in pass block win rate and 22nd in run block win rate. The Raiders were dead last in yards per carry, but it wasn't the fault of this offensive line. They will love blocking for Ashton Jeanty instead of Alexander Mattison. The Raiders were 20th in adjusted sack rate and 23rd in pressure rate, but Gardner Minshew deserves most of the blame. Among 40 qualified quarterbacks, Minshew was 30th in adjusted sack rate and 31st in pressure rate. Aidan O'Connell was seventh in adjusted sack rate and 17th in pressure rate. The Raiders released center Andre James to let Jackson Powers-Johnson move back to his natural position after playing both left guard and center last season. Dylan Parham played right guard but is now expected to move back to the left side. Parham and Powers-Johnson each had good seasons, but there was an interesting split in Las Vegas' success on the ground. Since left tackle Kolton Miller is their best lineman, the Raiders were 17th in DVOA, 22nd in EPA per rush, 28th in success rate, and 12th in explosive run rate on runs to the left but 32nd in DVOA, 32nd in EPA/attempts, 32nd in success rate, and 28th in explosive run rate on runs to the right. Their -64.7% DVOA on runs to the right was in its own tier of horrible, with no other offense worse than -30%. Right tackle DJ Glaze was also solid, especially in the run game, so the severity of the split is a bit difficult to understand, but it could become even more pronounced this season. The Raiders added Alex Cappa from Cincinnati and the presumption is that he'll start at right guard. He struggled in 2024, so Jordan Meredith, who filled in admirably throughout the year at both guard spots, will look to win the job from Cappa. If Cappa does win the

right guard position, the weak link of the line will be pass protection on the right side. Cappa was a disaster in pass protection last year, Glaze is still trying to fully adjust to the speed and strength of NFL pass rushers, and the two of them will be playing alongside each other for the first time. A point in Meredith's favor for the starting spot is that it would maximize continuity on the line from last season despite the shuffling positions. 🗡 If Cappa bounces back from his poor 2024 or Meredith starts and plays like he did a year ago, this could be a great line. Regardless, they're more likely to get noticed in front of Jeanty and Geno Smith than with the revolving doors of poor quarterbacks and running backs from a season ago. 🗡 The Raiders added depth and invested in the future of the offensive line with third-rounders Caleb Rodgers (guard from Texas Tech) and Charles Grant (tackle from William & Mary). Rodgers played tackle in college and has a versatile skill set, while Grant is viewed as a potential long-term answer if the Raiders are unable to extend or re-sign Miller.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
A.Butler	31	DT	17	858	67	7.8%	8	50	20	7	50	74%	45	1.9	24	5.0	4	27	1
J.Jenkins*	36	DT	17	609	48	5.6%	28	31	7	9	43	60%	84	3.0	73	1.0	2	11	4
J.Laulu	25	DT	17	475	38	4.4%	59	28	8	1	31	74%	43	3.1	78	1.0	2	8	2
Z.Carter	26	DT	12	263	23	3.7%	--	18	3	1	20	75%	--	2.7	--	1.5	0	4	1

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
M.Crosby	28	DE	12	768	50	8.2%	7	43	19	8	33	85%	12	0.6	2	7.5	14	52	6
T.Wilson	25	DE	16	525	27	3.3%	86	23	10	3	18	89%	5	1.5	15	4.5	5	28	0
K.Chaisson*	26	DE	15	508	34	4.5%	61	26	12	5	19	74%	46	2.8	64	5.0	3	24	1
C.Snowden	27	DE	16	406	43	5.3%	--	31	9	3	28	75%	--	3.3	--	1.5	5	13	4

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush			vs. Pass									
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
R.Spillane*	30	OLB	17	1095	165	19.2%	4	82	29	11	100	53%	70	4.3	73	2.0	1	13	51	-16.0%	11	45%	35	7.5	41	7	2
D.Deablo*	27	MLB	14	689	64	9.0%	68	32	5	10	30	73%	6	3.7	39	1.0	3	10	29	3.7%	41	41%	47	6.4	20	2	0
G.Pratt	29	OLB	17	1078	149	16.9%	14	74	19	22	87	54%	65	3.9	50	0.0	4	5	54	-2.9%	32	46%	33	7.4	36	6	2
E.Roberts	31	ILB	17	478	46	5.4%	86	28	7	7	36	64%	27	3.1	17	1.0	3	9	17	26.2%	70	47%	31	9.4	68	0	0

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk
2022	4.46	4.54	23	69%	18	17%	19	1.24	18	0.79	20	27	4.9%	30	25.7%	23
2023	4.18	4.48	28	64%	14	15%	26	1.23	23	0.43	5	46	8.1%	12	28.0%	19
2024	4.32	4.09	11	68%	18	19%	12	1.18	13	0.93	27	38	7.0%	22	29.1%	25

2024 ALY by direction: Left End: 5.55 (31) Left Tackle: 3.80 (6) Mid/Guard: 4.31 (11) Right Tackle: 3.58 (8) Right End: 1.20 (1)

The defensive front is Las Vegas' strongest unit, largely because Maxx Crosby is their best player. Crosby has finished in the top two for run stop win rate in each of the last two seasons and finished top 10 in pass rush win rate last year. Fellow superstar Christian Wilkins only played five games last year but had a career year in 2023 with 9.0 sacks and 39 pressures. When healthy, this is arguably the most dominant edge and tackle combo in the league. 🗡 Adam Butler was sixth among defensive tackles in run stop win rate last season. Butler and Crosby were one of only two edge-and-tackle combos in the league to both be top 10 at their respective positions in run stop win rate. (Green Bay's Rashon Gary and TJ Slaton were the other.) 🗡 Despite the injuries, Las Vegas finished 11th in adjusted line yards allowed and sixth in rush success rate allowed. Poor tackling in the secondary kept them from being better than 18th in rush defense DVOA. Look for that rank to improve dramatically this season, especially if they're healthy up front with Crosby, Wilkins, and Butler. 🗡 The two rotational edge defenders, Charles Snowden and Tyree Wilson, are both good against the run but lack pass rushing chops. This is part of why Malcolm Koonce's return could be so beneficial. He's the one guy on this front who specializes in rushing the passer, perfectly complementing the all-around greatness of Crosby and Wilkins and the run-stopping specialist Butler. 🗡 The Raiders depth was weak at defensive tackle, so they went back-to-back at that position in the fourth and sixth rounds of the draft (they had no fifth-round selection). Fourth-rounder Tonka Hemingway (South Carolina) could immediately be the first rotational piece behind Wilkins and Butler as a solid pass rusher, while sixth-rounder JJ Pegues (Mississippi) is more of a run-stopper. Pegues has unique bragging rights among defensive linemen: he had seven career rushing touchdowns at Ole Miss, oft used as a goal-line fullback.

🏈 Elandon Roberts will clean up any mess the defensive line leaves behind in the run game. He's one of the best run-fitting middle linebackers in the league and continues a clear theme on the defensive side: the Raiders want to stop early-down runs so they can rush the passer on second- and third-and-long. Roberts does struggle in coverage, as do outside linebackers Tommy Eichenberg and Germaine Pratt—both of whom are, you guessed it, strong against the run. Devin White, the other offseason addition to this linebacker crew, has a chance to win one of the starting outside spots as the best coverage guy in the group. He's trying to regain the type of form he had in Tampa Bay, where he was a second-team All-Pro selection in 2020. White thought he'd have a chance to revitalize his career in Philadelphia last season but never played a down with the Eagles. He instead played sparingly for Houston.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall					vs. Run					vs. Pass														
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int	
T.Moehrig*	26	SS	17	1101	114	13.3%	16	48	21	11	55	49%	15	5.7	22	31	5.9%	31	4.6	-0.3%	21	48%	34	7.0	31	10	2
J.Jones*	28	CB	17	1049	85	9.9%	30	41	19	16	23	43%	47	5.4	34	92	18.4%	49	10.8	-2.2%	49	47%	69	8.5	71	16	3
I.Pola-Mao	26	FS	17	954	90	10.5%	48	29	14	16	38	29%	65	9.7	86	18	4.0%	49	8.7	24.1%	45	50%	30	8.7	46	5	0
D.Richardson	24	CB	12	559	48	7.9%	61	15	3	2	14	43%	49	9.1	80	47	17.6%	57	14.0	21.0%	85	34%	92	11.4	93	3	0
N.Hobbs*	26	CB	11	556	54	9.7%	--	23	9	7	22	36%	--	9.9	--	43	16.2%	--	5.5	-8.3%	--	56%	--	6.7	--	5	1
J.Bennett	25	CB	10	461	34	6.7%	77	14	9	4	4	25%	84	6.0	43	46	20.9%	24	11.1	-24.4%	14	57%	16	6.8	28	8	0
D.Holmes	27	CB	16	298	33	4.1%	--	12	6	3	10	40%	--	4.1	--	36	25.3%	--	6.8	12.7%	--	39%	--	7.3	--	3	0
T.Harper	25	SS	15	191	20	2.6%	--	9	7	2	9	22%	--	6.1	--	6	6.6%	--	9.3	-15.2%	--	50%	--	16.8	--	2	1
J.Chinn	27	SS	17	1021	112	13.4%	14	47	19	8	67	39%	33	6.7	38	31	6.7%	26	10.3	34.2%	53	58%	14	6.3	19	5	1
E.Stokes	26	CB	17	588	41	4.9%	91	9	4	3	9	33%	72	6.3	48	62	21.6%	19	10.8	9.8%	70	52%	46	6.0	10	0	0

Year	Pass D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	30	27.8%	32	-15.8%	6	33.3%	32	8.4%	23	32.3%	32	-6.8%	11	31.3%	31	
2023	8	8.5%	20	-14.6%	9	1.0%	17	0.4%	15	-5.6%	12	1.2%	18	9.8%	23	
2024	19	-9.2%	12	18.4%	29	3.6%	22	-7.6%	10	21.5%	27	3.7%	19	4.8%	21	

The secondary is why the Raiders weren't better against the run last season. Despite ranking 11th in adjusted line yards allowed per rush, they were 27th in open-field yards allowed per carry. There's reason to believe the Raiders will improve in this regard. Pete Carroll's teams generally tackle well, and free agent safety Jeremy Chinn is a great addition. He can do everything: blitz, cover, take away the deep ball, and play like an extra linebacker in run fits. He'll have to be special, though, because the rest of the secondary leaves a lot to be desired. 🏈 Eric Stokes has disappointed relative to expectations of a first-round draft pick. Green Bay fans were especially frustrated by his invisibility in the box score. He recorded zero forced fumbles, interceptions, pass deflections, or tackles for loss last season. He has also battled injuries since being drafted. By most metrics that measure production allowed by the cornerback in some way, such as yards per target allowed, Stokes looked fine. But coverage DVOA tells a different story, ranking Stokes 70th out of 93 qualifying corners. That's partly because coverage DVOA accounts for the quality of receivers Stokes was up against. Even if healthy, Stokes isn't a great addition. 🏈 The other issue is in the slot. Nickel corner Darnay Holmes was terrible last year, leading to Las Vegas finishing dead last in success rate allowed to slot receivers. They also allowed the second most EPA and were 27th in DVOA against the slot. 🏈 The Raiders were vulnerable deep last season, finishing 24th in DVOA against deep passes. Chinn will help, as will Pete Carroll's influence, as his defenses are known for preventing explosive passes. 🏈 Carroll's zone-heavy tendencies fit well with what defensive coordinator Patrick Graham did in 2024. Las Vegas was 10th in zone coverage rate and 26th in man coverage rate. They were also much better in DVOA when in zone coverage, ranking dead last in man coverage. 🏈 Third-round pick Darien Porter has a wide range of outcomes, for this season and in the long run. He has the size and speed combination that Carroll loves in cornerbacks. He's 6-foot-3 and ran a 4.30s 40-yard dash. There's no question that Carroll looks at him and sees Richard Sherman- and Byron Maxwell-like traits. But Porter is raw. He was converted from receiver to cornerback at Iowa State, where he only started seven games in his career at corner. He primarily played special teams, where he will likely remain as a rookie. Porter's ability to help the secondary, both early in his career and long term, will depend on the coaching staff's ability to turn those physical traits into a technically sound corner.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	1.1%	12	8.4	4	2.0	12	-3.1	25	2.7	11	-4.1	27	21.4	1
2023	0.9%	13	-3.4	22	-1.6	24	-1.0	21	10.4	3	0.2	13	4.3	11
2024	-0.1%	17	-2.6	22	2.9	10	0.6	14	-1.1	19	-0.6	18	1.3	14

Kicker Daniel Carlson and punter AJ Cole are both returning to the Raiders in 2025. Carlson is fine, and Cole had a down year in 2024 but is usually one of the top punters in the league. The real story on special teams is the new kick and punt returner, Tommy Mellott. Mellott played quarterback at Montana State and was the Raiders' sixth-round pick in this year's draft. He won the Walter Payton Award at the FCS level, rushing for over 1,000 yards and 15 touchdowns and throwing for 2,700 yards and 31 touchdowns. He is off-the-charts athletic in every sense—speed, explosiveness, agility, he's got it all. The Raiders have converted him to wide receiver, but time will tell how much we get to watch of him on offense. There's even a chance he'll have some Taysom Hill-like packages, but we should get to watch him return punts and kicks, regardless.

# Los Angeles Chargers

2024 record: 11-6

Total DVOA: 12.6% (9th)

Pythagorean Wins: 11.3 (7th)

Offense: 7.5% (12th)

Snap-Weighted Age: 26.1 (25th)

Defense: -5.0% (9th)

Average Opponent: -3.4% (28th)

Special Teams: 0.1% (16th)

2025 Mean Projection: 7.8 wins

On the Clock (0-5): 19%

Postseason Odds: 31.0%

Mediocrity (6-8): 43%

Super Bowl Odds: 1.4%

Playoff Contender (9-11): 31%

Proj. Avg. Opponent: 0.8% (14th)

Super Bowl Contender (12+): 7%

2024: New year, new attitude, same first-round exit.

2025: Attacking the wild-card race with an enthusiasm unknown to mankind.

The first year of the Jim Harbaugh era in Los Angeles was filled with sound and fury. Harbaugh, as is his wont, rolled into town on a bandwagon composed entirely of superlatives, with enough flash and bang and sizzle to draw eyebrows and produce a laundry list of quotes designed to get sportswriters drooling. From boasting of his 2-0 record when having cardiac arrhythmias to comparing Justin Herbert to a human computer chip to quoting everyone from Nelson Mandela to Ric Flair to butchering a children's joke, Harbaugh brings with him an undeniable energy that you kind of can't help but watch, even if it has you rolling your eyes.

For the first time in years, his Chargers were really worth watching, too. Los Angeles finished in the top 10 in DVOA for the first time since 2018 and had their highest estimated win total since 2006. They certainly weren't consistent and struggled against their better opponents, finishing 2-6 against playoff teams. However, the defense jumped from 26th to ninth in DVOA, the offense shattered the franchise record with only nine turnovers, and there was a real feeling of buzz and optimism surrounding the team. Maybe it was just a contact high from the power of positivity oozing out of every Harbaugh press conference, but the new era for the Chargers had surely begun!

Cue another first-round playoff exit, as the Chargers still haven't managed to get past the Wild-Card Round since 2018. The more things change...

Still, positive momentum is positive momentum, and the Chargers hit the top end of reasonable expectations for them in 2024. But getting back to the top 10? That's one thing. Staying is another thing entirely. A strong run game and a good defense is a starting point, but there is still plenty of work to be done to make that jump from pleasant surprise to regular contender.

If you listen to Harbaugh, the Chargers are already there, of course. In an interview with Rich Eisen this offseason, Harbaugh spoke about his vision for the team, one that came to him in a dream:

*"I woke up the other day and said, 'Gotta get Justin Herbert to the Hall of Fame. Must get Justin Herbert to the Hall of Fame,'" Harbaugh told Eisen. "It's just one of those things where you wake up at 3:30, 4:00 in the morning, and sometimes that's when your best ideas come. You kinda process that, that would mean winning a couple Super Bowls. A lot of*

*people would benefit from that. That's a worthy goal. I think it's necessary that we get him surrounded with as many good football players to his level as possible."*

Setting aside for a moment the fact that "hey, we should try to win the Super Bowl" came to Harbaugh in a dream, there is a long way to go before Herbert is allowed anywhere near the Hall of Fame. But that's Harbaugh's enthusiasm for you—it's not enough to try to have a good season or try to win even one championship. No, it's about Hall of Fame busts and multiple titles and skipping ahead to the end of the story.

Well, we have experts here in translating Harbaughese to reality, so let's get to it. Have the Chargers really done enough to get not only past the wild-card mix, but into real contention?

One area where Harbaugh is absolutely correct is Herbert needing more help around him. "Herbert needs more help" has become a meme; it's an ongoing excuse for why Herbert hasn't taken that final step forward to join the tippy top of the quarterback rankings. Herbert hit high ranks of fifth in passing DYAR and sixth in passing DVOA in 2021. While 2024 was an improvement on his previous two seasons, he hasn't cracked the top three or anything. If Harbaugh really wants to get Herbert into the Hall of Fame, a league-leading season of *some* sort would seem to be in order. But like any good joke, the Herbert Needs Help Badly joke is based in a solid kernel of truth.

Los Angeles' passing attack bogged down at points—specifically, when they tried to *get* points. The Chargers ranked fourth in passing DVOA at 39.4% through the first 80 yards of the field. When things got to the red zone, however? That collapsed, falling to -5.1% and ranking 23rd. That 44.6% drop was the largest in the league as no one bogged down quite like the Chargers when the field got short. This is how you get held to 17 points or fewer seven times. Only three teams scored fewer than Los Angeles' 13 passing touchdowns in the red zone.

There are a number of culprits here. Josh Palmer had the worst DVOA of anyone with at least 10 red zone targets (-70.2%) but Will Dissly (-69.6%) and Josh Dobbins (-38.4%) weren't much help. Ladd McConkey was great and Quentin Johnston serviceable—and get ready to hear that a bunch of times—but neither is built like a short-yardage pass-game specialist. Red zone success does tend to revert to the mean, so perhaps plain better luck will give the Chargers more of a

## 2025 Chargers Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	KC (Fri./BRA)	7	IND	13	LV
2	at LV (Mon.)	8	MIN (Thu.)	14	PHI (Mon.)
3	DEN	9	at TEN	15	at KC
4	at NYG	10	PIT	16	at DAL
5	WAS	11	at JAX	17	HOU
6	at MIA	12	BYE	18	at DEN

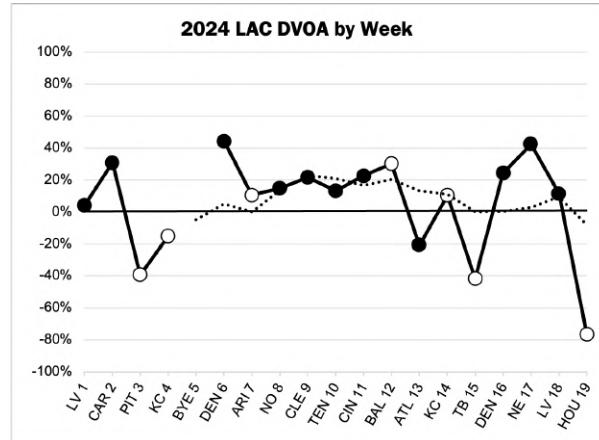
pass threat when they get towards the goal line in 2025. However, Chargers receivers simply had trouble winning their one-on-one matchups all over the field, and those problems were amplified when space started being at a premium.

McConkey was an absolute find, and as the Chargers grew more comfortable with him, their offense improved. Week 8 was McConkey's coming out party—the first of three 100-yard receiving days with a pair of touchdowns against New Orleans. Before that, the Chargers had an offensive DVOA of -6.6%, which shot up to 14.8% afterwards. Other than that, though, the Chargers didn't really have any receiver they could consistently rely on in crucial situations. Johnston took a step up from his rookie season, but was very hit-and-miss, with seven games below replacement level and eight games above it. Dally was just above average but had fewer than 500 yards and just two touchdowns. And the less said about the outside receivers, the better—Herbert led the league with a 72.1% DVOA throwing to the slot but fell to 18th at 24.0% DVOA when trying to throw to players lined up anywhere else.<sup>1</sup> It was McConkey or nothing, and it was just too frequently nothing.

Harbaugh and Greg Roman have looked at this, considered their options, and proceeded in the most Harbaugh and Roman way possible—they have boosted their running game.

Alright, we're being a little unfair. Mike Williams is back, now hopefully fully recovered from the 2023 ACL tear that ended his first stint with the Chargers. Los Angeles never found a physical downfield threat to replace Williams, and if he's back to full strength, he should at least open up more room for McConkey. He also should reclaim his role as Herbert's top target in the red zone, bringing the physicality to fight through tight coverage and win contested catches. The draft also brought in Tre Harris as a Palmer replacement. The Ole Miss product was sixth in our Playmaker Score projections and is a big target with contested-catch ability and YAC skills. Adding those two to McConkey and Johnston should give Herbert more ammunition to work with in his passing attack. And Tyler Conklin arrives as their top receiving tight end option, allowing them to actually use some 12 personnel this season. There's a lot of ifs and maybes there, but the pieces in the passing game are more interesting than they were 12 months ago.

But the Chargers most expensive free agent addition this



offseason? Guard Mekhi Becton, coming in from Philadelphia after revitalizing his career with the Super Bowl champs. Their second-most expensive offensive addition? Najee Harris, squeezed out of the running back room in Pittsburgh. Their highest draft pick? North Carolina's Omarion Hampton, the second-highest rated running back in BackCAST for 2025. That is the kind of personnel allocation you get from a coaching staff that started the year with a 5.0% Run Rate over Expected, ranked 23rd in rushing DVOA at -12.0% through seven weeks, and then changed gears out of necessity more than strategic planning. These are men who want to run the ball, dominate the line of scrimmage, and smash your face in, and for all Harbaugh's hyperbolic hyperventilating over Herbert, he remains who he has always been. This is who he was at Stamford, this is who he was in San Francisco, this is who he was at Michigan, and this is who he is now in Los Angeles. The Chargers are going to run the ball first, run the ball second, run the ball third, and then maybe see if there's an open receiver or two.

The 2025 Chargers' play calling should look more like the Chargers from the first half of last season rather than the last, as Harbaugh and Roman have brought in personnel to actually run the offense they want. Based on the NFLfastR model, the Week 1-7 Chargers were 5% more likely to run on first downs than the average team, which fell to 1% in the back half of the year. It was even starker on second downs—they were 17% more likely than the average team to run the ball on second-and-medium in the first half of the year, but 15% more likely to *throw* the ball in the back half as they washed their hands of the run game entirely. That's not Harbaugh football. The backfield of J.K. Dobbins and Gus Edwards ran for just 110.7 yards per game, the lowest total for a Harbaugh offense at the FBS or NFL level (Table 1). It's hard to imagine the 2025 Chargers being lower than that. Harbaugh's 49ers jumped 27.9 rushing yards per game between his first two seasons, while Stanford and Michigan averaged more than a 70-yard jump. More ground game is coming.

Our projections are not overly concerned with the Chargers' offense. It has them ranked just about where they finished in

<sup>1</sup> In case you're asking "how can a 24.0% DVOA be 18th, that sounds pretty good," remember that if we're measuring pass DVOA throwing to specific receivers, we're removing all the bad plays like sacks and plays without an intended receiver.

2024. It's not predicting a huge jump or anything; relying on Williams returning to his old self and rookies at running back and receiver will lower an average projection there. But all in all, our projections have the offense continuing to tick along. It's the defense that causes the forecast to throw a fit, with Los Angeles projected to tumble all the way to 29th. That seems like a huge drop—this is one of those projections where we bust out the old “some of these projections seem strange to us” note we give when there's something that goes against our own eye test. Let's try to carve into that some and figure out what's going on.

Some of the dip in the Chargers' projection is a regression to previous performance, as improving from 21st in defensive DVOA in 2022 and 26th in 2023 all the way up to ninth in 2024 was quite the jump. That runs into a bit of what we call the Plexiglass Principle—teams that see a significant increase one year tend to fall a little back the next. This effect isn't as big when there's a substantive reason for the change—such as, for example, Jessie Minter replacing Derrick Ansley as defensive coordinator—but large increases tend to be a combination of both better performance and better luck, only one of which is predictive.

There also are some warning signs that some of Los Angeles' success in their front seven last year might not be sustainable. The Chargers were sixth in sacks last year, but only 18th in pressure rate at 30%. It's unlikely that they'll be able to keep that sort of sack ratio up again, so if their pressure rate doesn't increase, their sack total is likely to fall. There are also worries about their run defense, even if they finished a respectable 17th at -9.1% last year. They were 26th in adjusted line yards and 26th in stuffed rate, but a surprising eighth in power success. The Chargers often got up and stopped opposing rushers on third- or fourth-and-short, but that's a sample size of just 35 plays. Overall, when they stacked the box, they allowed an average of 5.0 yards per attempt, worst in the league. They had issues elsewhere, too—they ranked 24th allowing 2.2 yards before contact and their 12.9% explosive run rate allowed was eighth highest. It was a boom-and-bust run defense, and that's tough to expect two years in a row. It's also worth noting that the Chargers had the sixth-easiest defensive schedule last season, so all of their numbers are a little inflated. These individual warning signs do add up.

Of course, the real issue here isn't the statistical warning signs. It's the missing men.

Joey Bosa is gone, and while he's a part-time pass rusher at this point, that's still 28 pressures and 13 quarterback hits out the door. Poona Ford is gone, and he was the Chargers' best run defender. Morgan Fox is gone, and he led the Chargers' interior linemen with 15 pressures a year ago. Kristian Fulton is gone, and that's 760 fairly consistent coverage snaps that need to be replaced. Add in Asante Samuel Jr., who remains unsigned after missing most of last season, and that's over 2,600 defensive snaps that need to be replaced in 2025. It's a tall ask.

The biggest concern comes on the interior replacing Ford and Fox. Tear Tart is going to be asked to do more, and he has flashed in the past, but he has only had one season with more than 350 defensive snaps in his career. Tart is a rotational run-

## Lowest Volume Rushing Attacks for Jim Harbaugh

Year	Team	YPG	YPA	W-L	Leading Rusher
2024	LAC	110.7	4.1	11-6	J.K. Dobbins
2007	STAN	111.2	3.0	4-8	Anthony Kimble
2011	SF	127.8	4.1	13-3	Frank Gore
2020	MICH	131.0	4.6	2-4	Hassan Haskins
2014	SF	136.0	4.6	8-8	Frank Gore
2013	SF	137.6	4.4	12-4	Frank Gore
2019	MICH	151.2	4.0	9-4	Zach Charbonnet
2012	SF	155.7	5.1	11-4-1	Frank Gore
2015	MICH	158.2	4.2	10-3	De'Veon Smith
2023	MICH	169.1	4.5	15-0	Blake Corum

stuffer, and asking him to take on a heavier workload doesn't necessarily mean he's going to continue to be effective. Both he and Da'Shawn Hand, fresh from Miami, are useful rotational cogs, not ideal front-line starters. Third-round rookie Jamaree Caldwell (Oregon) well be in the mix as well, and maybe last year's fourth-round pick Justin Egoigbe (Alabama) will actually find the field this year, but on paper, this is the weakest interior line in the league. They're going to need multiple players to take multiple steps forward, or they're going to find themselves pushed over once again up front.

We're a little more positive on replacing Bosa, or at least the player he has become over the past few years. Tuli Tuipulotu already beat Bosa in pressures last season, and while he needs to take a step forward and become more consistent, he has already made significant improvements between his first and second seasons. The Chargers would love fourth-round pick Kyle Kennard to take a significant chunk of Bosa's rotational role right off the bat; SackSEER didn't love him but it's hard to argue with his production at South Carolina on his way to being SEC Defensive Player of the Year. Between the two of them and Bud Dupree, the Chargers should be able to put up enough next to Khalil Mack to create a consistent pass rush.

As for the secondary? We love Tarheeb Still, who finished seventh with a -29.8% coverage DVOA as a rookie, and Derwin James needs no further introduction, but the two boundary corner spots are a little more questionable. Free agency brought in Donte Jackson and Benjamin St-Juste to battle with Cam Hart—and with James so frequently moving to slot corner in nickel packages, there's really one spot between the three of them to determine who plays across from Still. In a perfect world, that role goes to Hart, with the Chargers' pair of late-round 2024 draft picks solidifying the position. Hart did lead the league with just 5.0 yards allowed per target, but his DVOA was 11.5%, only good for 74th. That's still significantly better than St-Juste, but Jackson basically had the opposite profile to Hart. Jackson was 13th with a -24.6% DVOA, but 73rd with 8.6 yards per target allowed. Some of that comes from opponent adjustments, as Hart had easier coverage responsibilities than Jackson did. The Steelers faced the seventh-hardest defensive schedule in 2024, while the Chargers were 27th.

Jackson's value is too reliant on interceptions, with tackling and coverage both proving to be problems. Jackson has been more reliable for big plays in his career than Hart was last year, with no interceptions and just six passes defensed for the rookie. Hart's lack of ball production and hesitancy to close were concerns coming out of Notre Dame, but it's still more likely he has some positive regression there while Jackson comes back down towards his career averages. It's probably best for Los Angeles, in the long run, if Hart wins the other job, but it is a point of concern.

It would be nice if the Chargers had brought in some big solid name that we felt comfortable projecting to be a star. They entered the offseason with \$90.6 million in cap space after letting go of Bosa, but they mostly sat out the first wave of signing players. It's not that any of the deals they made were bad, and keeping both Mack and Tart was a good use of the resources they had. But outside of Becton, most of the players the Chargers brought in are fliers; low-cost, low-floor, high-ceiling shots.

The Chargers acted as if they were squidged up against the cap and had their hands tied. There was an opportunity here to make more of a statement on either side of the ball—either more weapons for Herbert in the passing game, or a stud or two to shore up a defense that saw a bunch of guys leave. They're trying to catch the Chiefs in the division, to bring themselves up to the level of the Ravens and Bills as real contenders. There's value in keeping your cap space flexible and

not over-committing. As of press time, the Chargers easily have the most cap space available in 2026, with nearly \$140 million to play with. That is not a terrible situation to be for a team that is trying to build up to be a regular contender. But if Harbaugh says that the goal for Los Angeles is to surround Herbert with “as many good football players to his level as possible,” this offseason was a failure for Los Angeles.

I do believe our defensive projections are overly harsh on Los Angeles. There's a world where the bottom falls out, they hit their floor, and are among the worst defenses in the league, but it's more likely that some of their replacements work out and some don't. It would be surprising if the Chargers were the top scoring defense once again, but “middle of the pack” seems more likely than “bottom five.”

But even if that's true, we're talking about a team that is, at best, in the wild-card hunt. The AFC West is going to be a tough beast to take down as long as Patrick Mahomes is Patrick Mahomes, and it doesn't feel like Los Angeles has done enough to close that gap this offseason. The team will look and play more like Harbaugh and company want, and continuing to mold it in their image should be a good thing for the long run. Nevertheless, this doesn't feel like it will be the legitimate championship contender Chargers fans have been waiting for since the days of Tomlinson and Rivers. Maybe hold off on that tacky gold jacket for Herbert just a while longer.

Bryan Knowles

## 2024 Chargers by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	LV	W	91%	22	10	316	296	+3	4%	-12%	-18%	-2%
2	at CAR	W	100%	26	3	349	159	-1	31%	-14%	-52%	-7%
3	at PIT	L	1%	10	20	166	346	+1	-39%	-31%	5%	-4%
4	KC	L	15%	10	17	224	329	+2	-15%	-24%	-5%	4%
5	BYE											
6	at DEN	W	97%	23	16	350	316	+2	44%	21%	-21%	3%
7	at ARI	L	48%	15	17	395	326	-1	11%	3%	4%	11%
8	NO	W	98%	26	8	378	366	0	15%	16%	-6%	-7%
9	at CLE	W	99%	27	10	342	292	+3	22%	2%	-21%	-2%
10	TEN	W	98%	27	17	309	289	0	13%	32%	23%	4%
11	CIN	W	86%	34	27	435	452	-1	23%	20%	-5%	-2%
12	BAL	L	3%	23	30	285	389	0	30%	29%	13%	14%
13	at ATL	W	4%	17	13	187	350	+3	-21%	-53%	-27%	5%
14	at KC	L	16%	17	19	288	298	0	10%	19%	4%	-4%
15	TB	L	0%	17	40	206	506	0	-42%	-10%	22%	-10%
16	DEN	W	72%	34	27	380	355	-1	24%	47%	28%	6%
17	at NE	W	100%	40	7	428	181	+1	42%	14%	-26%	3%
18	at LV	W	98%	34	20	473	264	+1	11%	19%	-4%	-12%
19	at HOU	L	0%	12	32	261	429	-1	-76%	-53%	18%	-6%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	7.5%	12	-5.0%	9
Unadjusted VOA	8.9%	12	-4.3%	8
Weighted Trend	13.7%	8	-1.1%	11
Variance	6.5%	21	4.3%	11
Average Opponent	0.8%	24	-2.4%	27
Passing	32.8%	8	-2.2%	6
Rushing	-10.4%	21	-9.1%	17
First Down	-1.7%	16	-4.6%	12
Second Down	10.7%	7	-4.3%	11
Third Down	19.3%	7	-6.7%	10
First Half	12.9%	8	-3.2%	7
Second Half	0.3%	15	-6.5%	15
Red Zone	-4.0%	16	-11.1%	6
Late and Close	3.6%	18	2.6%	13

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rk	Off	Rk	Def	Rk	ST	Rk	Off AGL	Rk	Def AGL	Rk	Off Age	Rk	Def Age	Rk	ST Age	Rk
2020	7-9	6.9	5.0	384	426	+3	-14.0%	25	1.4%	15	3.6%	20	-11.8%	32	45.6	20	63.4	29	25.6	28	26.3	16	25.2	30
2021	9-8	8.9	8.5	474	459	-1	3.9%	14	13.6%	5	7.3%	26	-2.4%	28	36.0	10	34.2	13	26.8	11	26.0	22	25.6	23
2022	10-7	8.7	8.0	391	384	+5	-1.4%	17	-0.4%	19	3.2%	21	2.2%	6	33.0	15	41.8	21	26.1	23	26.7	9	25.4	27
2023	5-12	7.0	8.3	346	398	0	-3.2%	19	0.2%	16	7.5%	26	4.1%	2	54.8	26	21.5	8	25.9	26	26.8	13	25.8	25
2024	11-6	11.3	10.2	402	301	+12	12.6%	9	7.5%	12	-5.0%	9	0.1%	16	22.3	9	41.9	18	25.6	30	26.7	12	25.9	22

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

LAC Offense					LAC Offense vs. Opponents					LAC Defense				LAC Defense vs. Opponents			
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA
11	58%	5.9	18.9%	26%	Base	32%	6.0	13.2%	52%	Base	14%	6.2	1.1%	11	63%	5.3	-8.1%
21	16%	5.5	-7.8%	59%	Nickel	58%	5.5	8.2%	37%	Nickel	66%	5.1	-9.2%	12	19%	5.7	1.5%
22	9%	5.6	-1.2%	77%	Dime+	10%	5.9	28.0%	19%	Dime+	20%	5.9	6.2%	13	6%	5.7	-2.3%
12	6%	5.0	14.4%	37%	Goal Line	1%	5.1	22.2%	83%	Base	26%	5.3	4.0%	21	5%	5.8	-7.1%
20	4%	7.0	48.5%	58%										22	2%	4.6	4.4%

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected	Rk	Formation	Rk	Pass Rush	Rk	Secondary	Rk	Strategy	Rk					
Runs, all	+1.2%	21	Form: Single Back	59%	31	Rush 3	4.4%	9	4 DB	13%	30	Play Action	30%	2
Runs, first down	+2.5%	15	Form: Empty Back	8%	15	Rush 4	71.8%	12	5 DB	66%	16	Offensive Motion	54%	9
Runs, second-long	-13.0%	31	Form: Multi Back	34%	2	Rush 5	20.4%	13	6+ DB	20%	2	Avg Box (Off)	6.20	8
Runs, power sit.	+27.3%	1	Pers: 3+ WR	64%	16	Rush 6+	3.4%	28	Man Coverage	39%	29	Avg Box (Def)	5.84	31
Runs, behind 2H	+0.9%	23	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	19%	28	Edge Rusher Sacks	56.7%	8	MOFC	49%	30	Offensive Pace	32.87	29
Runs, ahead 2H	+1.9%	15	Pers: 6+ OL	3%	13	Interior DL Sacks	18.9%	29	CB1 on WR1	36%	14	Defensive Pace	31.98	26
Run-Pass Options	1.9%	27	Shotgun/Pistol	75%	22	Second Level Sacks	24.4%	9	S/CB Cover Ratio	23%	9	Go for it on 4th	0.70	31

Is there something in the water in Los Angeles that prevents running backs from running routes? The Rams were dead last in the percentage of targets that went to running backs and the Chargers were 31st. 🏈 With Jim Harbaugh in town, the Chargers went from using multi-back sets on 12% of plays in 2023 (20th) to 34% of plays in 2024 (second). 🏈 You have to give Harbaugh points for being analytically sound on run/pass ratios, running a ton when it tends to work (short-yardage power situations) and not running when it tends to be very inefficient (second-and-long). 🏈 The Chargers had a remarkable reverse split against box counts. Most teams run better against fewer men in the box, but not the 2024 Chargers. They had 3.7 yards per carry (-17.3% DVOA) against light boxes of six or fewer, 4.1 yards per carry (-8.4% DVOA) against seven-man boxes, and 5.4 yards per carry (4.2% DVOA) against heavy eight-man boxes. 🏈 The Chargers' situation-neutral pace slowed down significantly compared to the pre-Harbaugh era, going from third in 2023 to 29th last season. 🏈 It was only 4.4% of plays, but the Chargers led the league in plays without a tight end on the field and had 48.5% DVOA on these plays. 🏈 Los Angeles ranked dead last in the league with only 47 offensive penalties (including declined and offsetting) and 279 penalty yards. 🏈 The Chargers defense was 21st in DVOA against deep passes of 16 or more air yards, but second against shorter passes, trailing only Detroit. 🏈 The Chargers defense was 24th in DVOA at home and second on the road. Note that this is interesting rather than meaningful, as these kind of home/road splits rarely carry over from year to year. 🏈 Chargers opponents threw a league-high 22% of passes to running backs (tied with the Packers).

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
J.Herbert	880	14.7%	541	3628	6.7	5.1	66.4%	23	3
T.Heinicke	-47	-113.9%	8	0	0.0	3.0	60.0%	0	0
T.Lance	-44	-26.3%	45	243	5.4	6	61.0%	0	1

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
L.McConkey	289	21.2%	113	82	1149	13.9	4.7	7	73%
Q.Johnston	149	8.4%	91	55	711	12.9	5.6	8	60%
J.Palmer*	71	0.3%	66	39	584	14.7	2.5	1	60%
D.Davis	10	-5.2%	17	13	112	8.6	9.2	2	76%
S.Fehoko*	-12	-21.6%	16	6	106	17.7	2.7	0	38%
J.Reagor	-31	-46.0%	12	7	100	14.3	3.7	0	58%
DJ Chark*	-35	-58.6%	10	4	31	7.8	1.8	1	40%
M.Williams	70	17.0%	34	21	298	14.2	1.6	1	62%
W.Dissly	48	4.7%	64	50	481	9.6	6.1	2	78%
S.Smartt*	36	19.7%	19	16	208	13.0	4.1	0	84%
H.Hurst*	-24	-36.0%	13	8	73	9.1	2.5	0	62%
T.Fisk	-16	-35.1%	8	7	39	5.6	3.0	0	88%
T.Conklin	-2	-7.6%	72	51	449	8.8	5.1	4	71%
J.K.Dobbins*	-73	-47.7%	39	32	153	4.7	6.2	0	84%
K.Vidal	4	-5.3%	9	5	62	12.4	7.4	1	56%
N.Harris	24	-4.90%	48	36	283	7.9	9.1	0	75%

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
J.K.Dobbins*	100	3.3%	195	905	4.6	9	0	45%
G.Edwards*	19	-4.2%	101	365	3.6	4	0	51%
J.Herbert	88	23.5%	46	334	7.3	2	2	-
K.Vidal	-31	-27.7%	43	155	3.6	0	1	33%
H.Haskins	-26	-21.4%	34	89	2.6	2	1	56%
D.Davis	13	-17.4%	12	39	3.3	0	0	-
N.Harris	32	-5.6%	263	1043	4	6	0	47%
T.Lance	-7	-23.2%	11	41	3.7	0	0	-

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
B.Bozeman	C	31	17/17	1057	3	4	20	3.2%	34	T.Pipkins	RG	29	15/15	838	4	4	28	5.6%	35
Z.Johnson	LG	26	17/17	1047	4	8	27	4.3%	28	J.Salyer	RG	25	17/4	340	2	3	8	4.0%	--
J.Alt	RT	22	16/16	1011	8	7	30	5.0%	18	M.Becton	RG	26	15/15	903	4	10	15	3.4%	20
R.Slater	LT	26	15/15	904	6	3	22	4.1%	10	A.James	C	28	13/11	702	2	3	8	1.7%	6

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont	
2022	4.00	4.23	26	72%	12	19%	27	1.08	27	0.60	23	39	6.0%	9	31.3%	26	26	
2023	3.45	3.58	30	55%	30	18%	17	0.76	32	0.49	24	43	6.4%	8	28.6%	18	39	
2024	4.06	4.13	23	68%	14	21%	28	1.07	26	0.75	13	44	8.1%	22	31.7%	18	32	
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 4.26 (22)				Left Tackle: 3.89 (21)				Mid/Guard: 4.37 (20)				Right Tackle: 3.89 (24)		Right End: 2.65 (28)

Jim Harbaugh football is smashmouth, run-forward football, and that requires an offensive line that can consistently bully at the line of scrimmage. The interior line was not up to snuff in 2024, as they finished 28th in stuffed rate and 30th in running back success rate. The tackles were more than fine, but the middle of the line needed a facelift. The Chargers are still waiting on the Chargers to extend Rashawn Slater, who is coming off the best year of his career. By waiting an extra season, the Chargers probably cost them \$6 million or \$7 million, as Slater should reset the tackle market after a year of major deals. Joe Alt made all the all-rookie teams and even picked up some Offensive Rookie of the Year votes. He was fourth among tackles in ESPN's pass block win rate. Mekhi Becton comes off a year rehabilitating his image with the Eagles to bolster Los Angeles' interior. Becton roughly halved his blown block rate and allowed just three sacks compared to 14 in his last season in New York. The Chargers won't provide Becton as much support as Philly did, but they're better off than the Jets. The Chargers are experimenting some with former first-round pick Zion Johnson at center, which tells you how his time at guard has been working out. He may still end up starting at left guard when all is said and done, but Los Angeles declined to pick up his fifth-year option, signed two interior linemen in free agency, and drafted Branson Taylor out of Pitt in the sixth round to add yet more competition. Consider Johnson's starting spot shaky at best as the Chargers revamp their entire interior line. At center, Johnson is competing with Bradley Bozeman, whom the Chargers re-signed to a two-year deal. Bozeman is notably weaker than Johnson as a pass protector, allowing more than 30 pressures in each of the last two seasons, so if Johnson can figure out the position, that would be an improvement.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
P.Ford*	30	DT	17	604	44	5.1%	40	36	13	4	31	74%	43	2.2	40	3.0	7	14	2
M.Fox*	31	DE	17	577	28	3.2%	82	20	7	2	23	65%	67	3.2	81	3.5	2	15	1
O.Ogbonnia	25	DE	17	505	37	4.3%	61	19	1	1	37	51%	89	3.7	86	0.0	3	8	0
T.Tart	28	DT	17	348	31	3.6%	--	22	6	4	25	68%	--	2.0	--	1.0	5	10	2
D.Hand	30	DT	17	563	32	4.0%	66	23	6	6	28	75%	39	2.0	28	1.0	3	11	1

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
T.Tuipolotu	23	OLB	17	732	40	4.6%	54	29	19	7	26	58%	87	3.1	71	8.5	9	33	3
K.Mack	34	OLB	16	616	48	5.9%	28	39	19	7	29	69%	64	2.7	56	6.0	9	45	10
B.Dupree	32	OLB	17	546	30	3.5%	83	23	9	4	19	63%	79	3.4	87	6.0	5	27	2
J.Bosa*	30	OLB	14	456	22	3.1%	93	20	12	2	16	88%	9	2.4	43	5.0	8	28	1

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				vs. Pass								
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
D.Henley	26	ILB	17	996	148	17.1%	13	74	20	15	82	49%	80	4.8	80	1.0	3	13	64	-7.1%	23	58%	12	6.9	26	8	1
D.Perryman	33	ILB	11	340	55	9.8%	63	31	3	13	34	65%	24	3.7	36	1.0	2	5	19	-5.4%	28	37%	61	6.1	12	0	0
T.Dye	29	ILB	17	318	52	6.0%	--	27	6	2	35	51%	--	3.2	--	1.5	0	3	14	5.4%	--	43%	--	6.3	--	0	0
J.Colson	23	ILB	11	218	29	5.2%	--	12	4	3	14	50%	--	6.0	--	0.0	1	3	14	2.2%	--	50%	--	7.3	--	1	0

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk				
2022	5.55	4.93	29	59%	1	16%	20	1.60	31	1.38	32	40	7.7%	11	27.4%	15				
2023	4.03	4.34	24	62%	9	16%	21	1.08	9	0.53	14	48	8.3%	7	27.4%	23				
2024	4.61	4.65	26	60%	8	14%	26	1.22	18	0.77	17	46	8.0%	6	30.3%	18				
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 3.97 (10)				Left Tackle: 4.37 (19)				Mid/Guard: 4.90 (27)				Right Tackle: 5.27 (29)		Right End: 3.71 (15)		

Reinforcements were needed up front even before considering the talent drain. The Chargers couldn't get pressure without blitzing, with a 50% pressure rate when sending five or more rushers but just a 23% pressure rate rushing four. They had the opposite problem in run defense, allowing a league-worst 5.0 yards per rush attempt when stacking the box. While Los Angeles cleared out much of their front, they made a priority to bring back Khalil Mack. His six sacks were a career low in a season where he was neither a rookie nor injured, but that doesn't mean he wasn't effective, finishing 22nd in total pressures. Tuli Tuipolotu actually led Los Angeles with 8.5 sacks last season. He'll need to up his pressure rate if he's going to be counted on as the full-time second pass rusher, but he has flashed potential. Fourth-round pick Kyle Kennard (South Carolina) won the Bronko Nagurski Trophy as the nation's top defender, with 15.5 TFLs and 11.5 sacks in 2024. A Kennard/Tuipolotu duo may be the future here. Da'Shawn Hand set a career high with 563 snaps last year for Miami. His stop rate ranked 61st among tackles, so he may be a starter out of necessity rather than talent. Otoito Ogbonnia had the second-lowest stop rate among interior linemen. He was the only qualified player to force just one defeat all season long. The Chargers are hoping a full offseason for Teair Tart will help him take on some of the load that Poona Ford leaves behind. Tart would have ranked just outside the top 60 in run stop rate if he had had enough snaps to qualify in 2024. Third-round pick Jamaree Caldwell (Oregon) is run-stuffing tackle, built like a nose tackle but able to fill in at the 1- or 2-technique as well. He's not really a pass rusher, but he can eat blocks and fill gaps to let other players flow around him. Daiyan Henley played through much of the season with a shoulder injury that eventually required surgery. With that context, ranking in the top 25 for linebackers in defeats and top 15 in successes is even more impressive. The ideal goal for the Chargers is for Junior Colson to take a step forward in Year 2 and be Henley's running mate. The Chargers re-signed Denzel Perryman just in case that doesn't work out, however.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run						vs. Pass											
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD Int	
D.James	29	SS	16	984	100	12.3%	25	41	19	4	48	35%	41	5.8	23	42	8.6%	16	4.9	-14.1%	11	52%	22	6.0	15	7 1
T.Still	23	CB	14	783	72	10.1%	26	25	17	8	18	22%	85	12.4	93	72	18.5%	47	10.3	-29.8%	7	53%	37	7.1	35	10 4
K.Fulton*	27	CB	15	760	58	7.6%	66	29	9	1	13	69%	7	4.2	12	69	18.3%	50	11.6	13.6%	77	49%	63	8.2	65	7 1
E.Molden	26	FS	15	760	79	10.4%	50	31	18	6	34	35%	42	6.4	34	15	4.0%	48	13.5	22.8%	44	27%	60	10.1	56	7 3
A.Gilman	28	FS	11	655	54	9.7%	61	16	7	5	21	33%	47	9.5	84	9	2.8%	--	9.0	33.0%	--	33%	--	10.6	--	4 1
C.Hart	25	CB	14	458	43	6.1%	81	20	8	5	8	38%	62	5.4	33	57	25.1%	5	8.9	11.5%	74	54%	27	5.0	1	7 0
M.Maye*	32	FS	15	405	43	6.0%	84	15	5	4	27	33%	47	6.9	42	8	4.0%	--	10.0	-68.6%	--	63%	--	7.4	--	3 1
J.Taylor	26	CB	15	352	26	3.4%	--	15	7	4	4	50%	--	3.3	--	26	14.9%	--	10.9	6.3%	--	58%	--	9.7	--	5 0
T.Jefferson	33	SS	8	224	27	6.6%	79	7	3	2	11	18%	89	8.5	66	3	2.7%	--	4.0	-10.1%	--	67%	--	9.3	--	0 0
D.Jackson	30	CB	15	780	46	6.1%	79	19	9	11	6	67%	10	3.5	8	73	18.5%	45	13.5	-24.6%	13	53%	33	8.6	73	8 5

Year	Pass D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	11		1.8%	16	-11.6%	9	6.3%	24	5.0%	20	-7.8%	12	-10.2%	9	-19.8%	4
2023	27		25.5%	28	3.1%	17	7.6%	23	17.9%	27	4.3%	21	3.4%	21	27.5%	30
2024	6		-3.5%	14	4.5%	18	-2.4%	12	5.0%	23	-8.3%	13	-17.0%	5	-40.9%	1

According to FTN Data charting, just 5.8% of targets against the Chargers secondary went to wide-open receivers, the lowest in the league. ⚡ Tarheeb Still wasn't even on the final Pro Bowl *ballot*, which seems crazy. Still may have allowed four touchdowns, but for a top-10 player in coverage DVOA not even to be listed among the candidates is a huge omission. ⚡ In large part because he was stuck guarding go routes most of the time, Donte Jackson allowed the 10th-most yards per reception of any qualified corner last year at 13.8. His coverage DVOA looks better because of opponent adjustments and five interceptions. ⚡ Cam Hart is one of just four players since 2022 to average five yards or fewer allowed per target. ⚡ Derwin James plays 20 to 25 snaps at slot corner a game in addition to lining up both as a deep and box safety. It's nice to have a chess piece like that, and even nicer when he ranks 11th in coverage DVOA among safeties, a significant improvement over 2023. ⚡ Alohi Gilman and Elijah Molden will both get plenty of work thanks to James' versatility. Gilman was hampered by a hamstring injury in 2024 and Molden just received a new, bigger contract, so it will be interesting to see which one ends up playing a bigger role this year.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	2.2%	6	3.6	10	3.2	5	-7.3	31	7.7	5	4.2	6	5.9	8
2023	4.1%	2	9.8	3	2.0	9	-2.5	28	5.9	6	6.8	5	-3.8	24
2024	0.1%	16	8.6	4	-2.9	24	-3.0	25	-2.4	23	0.1	14	-7.0	26

The Chargers had the unfortunate luck of facing fantastic punting in 2024. By our gross punt metric, punts against the Chargers were worth a total of 14.5 estimated points of field position before considering returns, more than twice what any other team faced. Opponents averaged 49.8 gross yards per punt, second in the NFL to San Francisco (50.1). The Chargers weren't last in "hidden" special teams value because kickers were below average against them. ⚡ Cameron Dicker missed three extra points, the first three misses of his career, but still finished fourth in FG/XP value at +8.6 points above expectation. ⚡ JK Scott's advanced numbers were better than his standard ones. He ranked 13th in weather-adjusted punt value at +2.5, compared to 23rd in yards per punt and 26th in punts downed inside the 20. ⚡ Not-so-dynamic: Derius Davis ranked fourth worst on kickoff returns among players with at least 10 attempts at -3.1 points worth of value. He was closer to league average on punts and was a second-team All-Pro in 2023, so his job isn't in jeopardy, but it's something to monitor.

# Los Angeles Rams

2024 record: 10-7

Total DVOA: 5.2% (17th)

Pythagorean Wins: 8.0 (17th)

Offense: 9.8% (10th)

Snap-Weighted Age: 26.2 (24th)

Defense: 4.4% (26th)

Average Opponent: 3.6% (5th)

Special Teams: -0.2% (19th)

2025 Mean Projection: 9.1 wins

On the Clock (0-5): 7%

Postseason Odds: 49.9%

Mediocrity (6-8): 33%

Super Bowl Odds: 5.2%

Playoff Contender (9-11): 44%

Proj. Avg. Opponent: 0.4% (16th)

Super Bowl Contender (12+): 16%

2024: From dead and buried to a playoff run ... again.

2025: C'mon, Grandpa, one more adventure.

For a division champion with a playoff win in their pocket, the Rams entered the offseason at a strange crossroads.

For the second year in a row, the Rams made a comeback from three games under .500 to make the playoffs. This time, sitting at 1-4, they waded through some bizarre rumors that would have them sending Matthew Stafford to Minnesota, won nine out of their next 11 games, won the division for the first time since 2021, and even gave the eventual Super Bowl champion Eagles a scare before finally bowing out in the Divisional Round.

It would be nice if the Rams would eventually have a year going wire-to-wire rather than starting off September and October by burying themselves in a big hole. But it's not how you start, it's how you finish, and getting to play extra football in January, advancing further than you did the year before, and building off last year's momentum to have your best team in three years? That's a successful season, even if the ending was still a bit disappointing. The future continues to look bright, too. If you ignore the quarterback position, Los Angeles was the second-youngest team in the league, as 2023's strong rookie class continued to have success and Jared Verte and Braden Fiske made splashes from 2024's class. It's great to be both young and good, and for the most part, that described the 2024 Los Angeles Rams.

And yet.

Matthew Stafford is still an effective quarterback, finishing 10th in both passing DYAR and DVOA in 2024. He also turned 37 in February, and his years in the league are numbered at this point. The very early warning signs of decline have begun to sneak in, if you're looking for them—a decrease in average depth of target, fewer highlight throws, more turnover-worthy plays, things like that. While he hasn't missed much time, he has fought through a laundry list of injuries over the past two seasons. He also was allegedly asking for a \$50-million contract, which is a big commitment to a player entering the age when his colleagues begin to run off a cliff. There was not going to be a better quarterback available for the 2025 Rams, especially with this year's weak draft class, but it's time for L.A. to start considering a succession plan for the passer who won them a Super Bowl.

There's a world in which the Rams decided to trade Stafford now, while he still has value—better to move on a year too early rather than a year too late. You run Jimmy Garoppolo or

a free agent like Aaron Rodgers for a year and use the draft capital you get for Stafford to let Sean McVay handpick the quarterback who will lead the Rams for the next decade. You cut the cord from the team where Stafford was the final piece for a title and embrace this new young core going forwards. The Rams even let Stafford's agent speak with other teams to see what sort of return they'd get for the aging quarterback.

Instead, however, the Rams have decided to stand pat. Stafford gives them the best chance to win football games right now and the roster is primed to compete, so why not run it back? Stafford and the Rams have structured this carefully, with guarantees kicking in for Stafford only when free agency begins next year—the Rams could cut him loose before that without a major financial penalty. Los Angeles has also maneuvered things so they have two first-round picks next year, for what's supposed to be a deeper crop of rookie passers. The Rams can cut bait at any time, and the next time the Rams are bad, they'll probably let Stafford go. But for now, they're strapping the old man in for one more run, looking for a deeper playoff push this season.

The idea of Stafford's last run defined the rest of Los Angeles' offseason, too. Shortly after Stafford re-signed, the Rams confirmed they were keeping Rob Havenstein and Tyler Higbee, both thirtysomething offensive starters who are on the last year of their contracts. That was just the prelude to their biggest splash, adding Davante Adams to what's probably the best receiving corps in the division. These aren't moves that get made if the Rams move on from Stafford. They're reloading moves. Yes, every year is make-or-break now based on Stafford's health and age, but the Rams are willing to gamble on it and run it back one more time.

And our projections have them finishing ... third in the division, seventh in the conference, 12th overall and right on the very brink of the wild-card race. That's slightly underwhelming and, if true, probably not worth delaying a rebuild and bringing Stafford back for one more season. That seems odd, doesn't it?

We know our projections are a little surprisingly harsh on the Rams. We still have them as an above-average team and in the thick of the playoff race, but the subjective power rankings around the media world tend to have Los Angeles in the bottom of the top 10, not threatening to fall out of the top half of the league entirely. Instead, we have the Rams' grizzled leader

## 2025 Rams Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	HOU	7	at JAX (UK)	13	at CAR
2	at TEN	8	BYE	14	at ARI
3	at PHI	9	NO	15	DET
4	IND	10	at SF	16	at SEA (Thu.)
5	SF (Thu.)	11	SEA	17	at ATL (Mon.)
6	at BAL	12	TB	18	ARI

stuck with his hands full trying to take the kids back to playoff football. What gives?

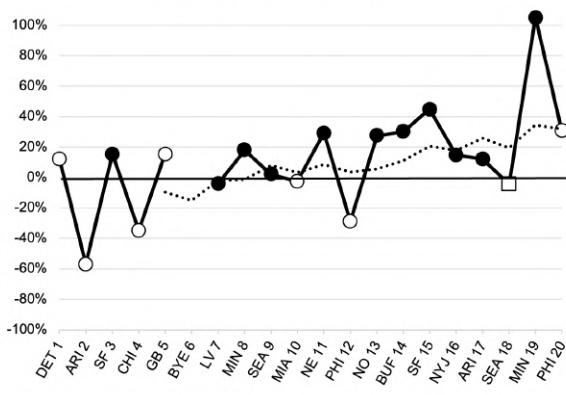
This is kind of where we were 12 months ago, honestly. In last year's *Almanac*, we talked about the Rams versus historical trends. Our projection for Los Angeles wasn't particularly flattering (ninth in offensive DVOA, 17th in defensive DVOA), but we talked about why the specific circumstances surrounding the Rams gave them a good chance to outperform our model. The usual response from a fan base to a bad projection is that our numbers are all well and good, but their favorite team is Built Differently in some way shape or form; that these are all just trends and patterns and that their team will be the one to defy the odds. And sometimes, that's right! Sometimes there are extenuating circumstances, and the typical patterns aren't predictive for one specific team. That's why we write these essays, after all, rather than just press a button on the DVOA-o-matic, spit out a spreadsheet of numbers, and wave them around as if they were tablets from the mount.

The offseason is the time for boundless optimism, and it's easy to focus on the positives and minimize the negatives when everyone is 0-0. Actually, the Rams slightly underperformed their projections last season, despite going on to win the NFC West. That being said, it's absolutely worth looking at just what the model doesn't like, because there is room for Rams fans to believe that their team is different, and that some things our projections don't care for won't matter in the long run. We're less optimistic about their potential than we were at this time last season, but that doesn't mean there aren't some very fair counterpoints Los Angeles can make to our numbers.

We have the Rams' offense projected as above average, but nothing particularly special. That's roughly where Los Angeles ended the season last year, 10th with a 9.8% offensive DVOA. But Rams fans are expecting to see some substantial improvement this season; treading water would be considered a major disappointment.

First of all, the Rams will presumably be healthier than they were last year. Los Angeles, especially early in the season, was a walking M\*A\*S\*H unit on offense. The Rams offense ranked 27th with 50.7 adjusted games lost. Most of that came up front, with Steve Avila, Jonah Jackson, Joe Noteboom, and Rob Havenstein all missing significant time, but Tyler Higbee also missed 14 games coming back from his torn ACL, and both Cooper Kupp and Puka Nacua missed significant time early in the season. The Los Angeles offense was mostly together starting in Week 11 against the Patriots, and as you might expect, that Rams offense looked better! From

2024 LAR DVOA by Week



Weeks 1 to 10, the Rams had a 2.8% offensive DVOA, which would have ranked 15th. From Weeks 11 to 17, that jumped to 18.5%, which would have ranked fourth. It was particularly notable in the passing game, where the Rams jumped from 19.4% to 43.3% in the back half of the year. It turns out, having your starting receivers and offensive line playing is good for your passing attack—these are the kind of observations you've come to expect from the experts at FTN.

The projections do consider improved health, of course. A full season from Puka Nacua, especially, is key—the Rams' offensive DVOA was 12.4% higher when he was playing, though some of that comes from his absence overlapping so many of the other players. While some players are inherently more injury-prone than others, teams that were especially unhealthy almost always head towards league average in the subsequent season. At the very least, the odds of the Rams having so many injuries happen at the same time again are low, and it's much easier to overcome losing one player than it is losing four or five starters at once.

That being said, not all of those injured players are coming back. Joe Noteboom is in Baltimore and Jonah Jackson in Chicago. Nor does "improved" health automatically mean everyone will stay healthy—Havenstein, in particular, is 33 and dealt with nagging, season-long injuries, the kind that might continue to pile up. It's also not like there's no signal from the rough start to the season, as Stafford, Alaric Jackson, Kevin Dotson, Kyren Williams, and Tutu Atwell all played significant chunks during the sluggish start to the year and are penciled in for starting roles in 2025 as well. We can dismiss the usual caveat that second-half performance isn't more predictive than first-half performance because of all of the injuries, but the model isn't throwing out the first half of the season entirely.

One player not penciled in for a starting role? Cooper Kupp. It's a difficult thing, letting go of a player who has done as much for the franchise as Kupp had for the Rams, but as Sean McVay put it, he would have been a "challenging fit" for the receiver room moving forwards. Kupp was made somewhat expendable by the emergence of Nacua—not that you don't want two good receivers on your team, but Nacua and Kupp are very similar players who fulfill the same basic role on an offense. With Nacua's stock only rising, injuries hampering Kupp in each of the past three seasons, and a player with Ad-

ams' track record available, making a change does make a fair amount of sense.

It's also not a move our model likes at all. Firstly, losing talent has historically hurt more than gaining talent helps, with issues with chemistry and fit meaning that not every major free agent splash ends up working. If you think Kupp and Adams are equally talented, then swapping them is a downgrade from a projection standpoint. Even worse, however, our model does not like Adams nearly as much as his reputation would suggest, as it has been several years since he had a standout season.

Neither Kupp nor Adams has hit triple-digit receiving DYAR or a positive DVOA since 2022. Over the last two years, however? Kupp has been the more reliable player. Kupp has 104 DYAR to Adams' 69, with an average DVOA of -5.8% to Adams' -10.0%. Kupp has more yards per target, a higher success rate, and a higher catch rate than Adams, as well. On the surface, Kupp has been the better player the last two years, and the model doesn't like it when you downgrade and get older at the same time.

We can dig a little deeper than that, though. First, health and volume matter. Route DVOA, which accounts for target share and workload, has Adams as a significantly better player over the last two seasons, with a DVOA of 37.5% to Kupp's 24.1%. Adams has also managed 1,755 offensive snaps the last two years to Kupp's 637. Even if you don't think Adams is better than Kupp, the best ability is availability, and Kupp hasn't managed a full season since 2021. There's also a limit to how much our stats can adjust for talent around a player, and it's more than fair to point out that while Kupp has gotten to catch passes from Matthew Stafford in Sean McVay's offense, Adams has been toiling with Aidan O'Connell, Jimmy Garoppolo, and the husk of Aaron Rodgers for five different coordinators over the last two years, including luminaries such as Nathaniel Hackett and Josh McDaniels. One of these environments is slightly more conducive to production, it's fair to say. The Rams didn't just sign Adams. They rescued him.

Perhaps even more important, however, is the role Adams will play in the offense, the sort of paths he opens up. Adams is the first quality X receiver the Rams have had since Odell Beckham Jr. tore his ACL; Allen Robinson and Demarcus Robinson were underwhelming in the role. He may not be the same player he was in Green Bay, but Adams still can create separation on the outside. Kupp certainly wasn't beating press-man coverage anymore; his DVOA fell to -23.4% against man last season. Adams' -5.9% wasn't world-beating or anything, but upgrading his quarterback play to the still strong-armed Stafford promises better results. Adams had more receiving DYAR last season than any Ram, not just Kupp, on both slants and go routes, and outperformed Kupp on digs—he's the superior player on in-breaking throws at the moment, and that's a staple of the McVay offense. Adams also does a better job beating coverage off the line or in one-on-one isolation situations, whereas Kupp benefited more from motion and scheme letting him carve zones apart. In short, Adams' skill set is complementary to Nacua's, while Kupp's was more duplicative. Variety in a passing attack is a great thing, and even if

you think Kupp will bounce back in 2025, Adams offers more to the Rams' attack than Kupp can as a WR2.

There are inherent dangers in counting on a 37-year-old quarterback throwing to a 33-year-old wide receiver to open up new offensive dimensions, but the potential is intriguing. Nacua, Adams, and Tutu Atwell make up the best receiving corps in the NFC West, and you can argue the offensive line is at the top of the division as well. That's a recipe for success if everything works as they hope. If I had to pick, I'd bet on the side of the Rams exceeding our offensive projections, risk or no risk.

The defensive side of the ball, however, is a different story.

The gap between the public perception of the Rams' defense and their actual performance in 2024 is fairly substantial. While most power rankings and ratings acknowledge that the cornerback corps has some question marks, there's a near-universal love for the front seven. It's not entirely unwarranted, either—Jared Verse was a deserved Rookie of the Year, and there's excitement about a young corps including Byron Young and Fiske. Supporters point to the seven sacks on Jalen Hurts in the Divisional Round, some momentum going into the back half of the year, and the youth on this side of the ball as something to get excited about, pushing the Rams' defense into the top half or even the top 10 of the league.

We don't really see it. This was a bad defense in 2024, and we're projecting it to be that once again this season. Yes, it's a young unit and developing players can all take significant strides, but this is a defense that has been less than the sum of its parts, and we don't see that changing much in 2025.

The Rams do get an average amount of pressure from their pass rush, ranking 14th at 31%. But to get that pressure, they almost have to commit extra bodies. They rank fifth with a 48% pressure rate when rushing at least five but fall to a below-average 27% when they just send four. Any benefit to sending those extra pass rushers goes away when you consider the weak secondary behind them; the Rams ranked 23rd with a 19.5% DVOA when sending five pass rushers and only dropped their yards per play from 7.0 to 6.8, racking up a few more sacks but paying by allowing more big plays. The Rams allowed a 12.7% explosive pass rate—passing plays that gained at least 20 yards—on plays where they successfully pressured the quarterback; only Washington was worse. Their 46.8% success rate allowed on plays where they got pressure? Worst in the league. Their 16.6% conversion rate, turning those pressures into sacks? Third worst. No one is denying that Verse and Young are an exciting young pass-rush duo, and you could make the case that they were a bit unfortunate that so many of their pressures didn't end up as sacks; there could be some positive regression coming for them. But the depth behind them is, at best, developmental, and the Rams only managed a -50.7% DVOA when they actually got pass pressure. Just having pressure doesn't mean anything if opposing offenses can withstand it.

Yes, this is more the fault of the secondary than it is of the front seven. 34.1% of pass attempts while the Rams were getting pressure went to open receivers (2 to 5 yards of separation), fourth most in the league. 11.9% more went to wide

open receivers, with more than 5 yards of separation, also fourth most in the league. That's nearly half of these attempts going to receivers with no one remotely close to them, the worst figure in the NFL (Table 2). When the Rams corners were in coverage, things weren't much better, with no Rams cornerback finishing in the top 40 in coverage DVOA. The more Los Angeles relied on their corners, the worse they got—they were 29th with a 42.0% DVOA on deep shots. There's more strength at safety, where Quentin Lake put up half-decent numbers filling in at the slot, but the Rams safeties are more effective tackling than covering. At time of writing, the Rams hadn't added anyone to their cornerback room at all—not even a flyer on an undrafted free agent. There's a reason they have been widely connected with a Jalen Ramsey reunion. When your biggest move of the offseason is re-signing Akhello Witherspoon, someone you benched midseason, then you have problems.

## Coverage Quality Behind Pass Pressure, 2024

Team	Coverage Quality					Total Open	DVOA
	Tight	Step	Closing	Open	Wide Open		
LAR	34.9%	6.3%	11.1%	34.1%	11.9%	46.0%	17.9%
KC	35.3%	8.4%	7.2%	33.4%	11.4%	44.8%	9.7%
SEA	48.8%	11.4%	11.4%	30.1%	13.0%	43.1%	-20.5%
DAL	25.8%	11.3%	11.3%	35.9%	6.9%	42.8%	-1.5%
MIA	34.2%	8.7%	9.9%	31.7%	10.6%	42.3%	3.8%
ARI	25.8%	14.0%	9.7%	34.4%	7.5%	41.9%	-4.3%
LV	35.7%	5.4%	9.3%	30.2%	11.6%	41.8%	-0.5%
LAC	29.1%	10.4%	11.9%	36.6%	5.2%	41.8%	-15.3%
MIN	32.4%	9.0%	13.8%	33.8%	7.6%	41.4%	-35.9%
IND	26.4%	5.7%	15.1%	32.1%	8.5%	40.6%	4.1%

Things get a little better when we turn to the run game, but not by much. The Rams are solid tacklers, which limited how much damage the run game could do against them, but they were weak at the point of attack. Fiske, especially, is a far better pass rusher than run stuffer, and it showed up when teams

attacked the interior. The Rams ranked 29th with just a 14% stuff rate, and 24th with 4.5 yards per carry allowed to running backs. This is another area where the penetration the line got didn't really translate itself into actual success. The Rams had just 61 TFLs in the run game, eighth fewest in the league. The Rams weren't going to let you run wild through their secondary, with a very respectable 10.3% explosive rate allowed, but if you needed a couple yards, you could consistently get them against Los Angeles. Here, at least, the Rams have made strides to address the issue, bringing Poona Ford in as a big run-package stuffer. They're paying for the career year there, which is always a little worrying, but Ford and Kofie Turner should provide more of a push-back against teams just pounding the rock in obvious run situations.

Where does this leave the 2025 Rams? Their statistical profile makes them an exciting, competitive team. The addition of Adams and some improved health means the passing attack should be more explosive, and a sacks-or-deep-shot defense is great for the neutral fan, at least. Expect the Rams to get plenty of time on NFL RedZone this year.

There's certainly a path to the Rams winning the division again and advancing further than our projections have them. What they really need is for Stafford to stay young and the defense to get older. There's a world where all of the twentysomethings on defense take a big stride, with the 2023 and 2024 draft classes restoring the Rams' defense to their Super Bowl-era glory days. There's a world where a grizzled Stafford once again shrugs off nagging injuries, stakes his claim as a top-five quarterback, and leads the Rams on a deep playoff run. But there's also the world where Father Time finally hits, and Stafford can't shrug off the nagging injuries he picks up. There's a world where the unaddressed holes in the defense remain fatal. The Rams have a borderline playoff projection, but that's really them balancing on a knife edge between being a serious contender in the NFC and the bottom falling out entirely.

The only thing we can really say for certain is that in 12 months' time, it will be really obvious what the Rams should have done with Stafford this offseason.

Bryan Knowles

## 2024 Rams by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	at DET	L	36%	20	26	387	363	0	12%	8%	-5%	-2%
2	at ARI	L	0%	10	41	245	489	0	-57%	-37%	22%	3%
3	SF	W	40%	27	24	296	425	+1	15%	26%	16%	5%
4	at CHI	L	21%	18	24	322	264	-2	-35%	1%	34%	-2%
5	GB	L	38%	19	24	370	328	-1	15%	6%	-10%	0%
6	BYE											
7	LV	W	94%	20	15	259	317	+3	-4%	-4%	-13%	-14%
8	MIN	W	91%	30	20	386	276	-1	18%	33%	17%	2%
9	at SEA	W	71%	26	20	366	424	+2	2%	3%	-18%	-19%
10	MIA	L	32%	15	23	327	238	0	-2%	-14%	-16%	-5%
11	at NE	W	99%	28	22	402	382	+2	29%	43%	7%	-7%
12	PHI	L	1%	20	37	290	481	-1	-29%	2%	24%	-7%
13	at NO	W	96%	21	14	322	327	0	28%	30%	4%	2%
14	BUF	W	89%	44	42	457	445	0	30%	46%	19%	3%
15	at SF	W	97%	12	6	302	191	+1	45%	-7%	-48%	4%
16	at NYJ	W	86%	19	9	242	321	+1	15%	17%	4%	1%
17	ARI	W	59%	13	9	257	396	+2	12%	-5%	-5%	13%
18	SEA	L	19%	25	30	403	336	-1	-4%	18%	40%	18%
19	MIN	W	99%	27	9	292	269	+2	105%	41%	-55%	10%
20	at PHI	L	62%	22	28	402	350	-2	31%	5%	-13%	13%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	9.8%	10	4.4%	26
Unadjusted VOA	8.2%	13	7.6%	25
Weighted Trend	14.0%	7	3.1%	19
Variance	4.6%	13	4.9%	17
Average Opponent	-2.4%	3	1.3%	9
Passing	28.8%	10	12.5%	25
Rushing	-2.6%	11	-5.0%	21
First Down	13.6%	6	8.6%	26
Second Down	12.5%	6	3.7%	21
Third Down	-1.8%	19	-2.1%	14
First Half	-3.9%	20	4.3%	18
Second Half	22.9%	2	4.6%	27
Red Zone	8.6%	9	-9.5%	10
Late and Close	28.2%	3	6.5%	15

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rk	Off	Rk	Def	Rk	ST	Rk	Off AGL	Rk	Def AGL	Rk	Off Age	Rk	Def Age	Rk	ST Age	Rk
2020	10-6	10.2	9.3	372	296	-3	12.0%	10	2.6%	14	-15.3%	3	-6.0%	30	17.3	4	28.3	9	26.6	19	26.1	20	24.9	32
2021	12-5	10.7	13.7	460	372	+2	24.9%	3	10.3%	8	-12.1%	3	2.5%	4	30.3	6	24.0	6	28.2	4	26.1	20	25.1	31
2022	5-12	6.3	6.3	307	384	-1	-13.3%	27	-10.7%	25	1.3%	18	-1.3%	23	106.6	32	40.0	20	27.7	3	26.9	6	25.5	24
2023	10-7	9.2	8.2	404	377	-3	-0.3%	17	12.2%	7	3.4%	22	-9.2%	32	15.5	5	10.9	1	27.1	6	25.6	28	25.4	29
2024	10-7	8.0	9.6	367	386	+6	5.2%	17	9.8%	10	4.4%	26	-0.2%	19	50.7	27	40.1	15	27.2	8	25.8	27	24.8	32

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

LAR Offense					LAR Offense vs. Opponents					LAR Defense					LAR Defense vs. Opponents										
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA
11	84%	5.7	14.2%	39%	Base	22%	5.5	11.4%	36%	Nickel	55%	6.0	7.0%	11	60%	6.0	2.0%	12	24%	5.2	7.8%	21	6%	5.2	-6.0%
12	14%	5.3	12.6%	61%	Nickel	70%	5.6	13.5%	46%	Dime+	18%	5.8	-4.4%	12	4%	8.7	39.3%	13	2%	4.0	-10.8%	22	2%	4.0	-10.8%
10	2%	5.2	-0.1%	10%	Dime+	8%	6.3	22.0%	19%	Goal Line	1%	2.1	10.2%												

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected		Rk	Formation		Rk	Pass Rush		Rk	Secondary		Rk	Strategy		Rk
Runs, all	+3.0%	12	Form: Single Back	73%	21	Rush 3	6.0%	7	4 DB	24%	9	Play Action	30%	3
Runs, first down	+0.5%	19	Form: Empty Back	4%	30	Rush 4	69.9%	16	5 DB	55%	29	Offensive Motion	77%	1
Runs, second-long	+4.3%	7	Form: Multi Back	22%	7	Rush 5	20.6%	11	6+ DB	18%	4	Avg Box (Off)	6.24	4
Runs, power sit.	+12.5%	6	Pers: 3+ WR	86%	2	Rush 6+	3.6%	27	Man Coverage	51%	17	Avg Box (Def)	6.11	14
Runs, behind 2H	+1.4%	20	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	14%	31	Edge Rusher Sacks	39.5%	28	MOFC	56%	19	Offensive Pace	31.24	13
Runs, ahead 2H	-1.1%	20	Pers: 6+ OL	0%	28	Interior DL Sacks	47.4%	2	CB1 on WR1	38%	12	Defensive Pace	32.29	31
Run-Pass Options	1.1%	31	Shotgun/Pistol	69%	30	Second Level Sacks	13.2%	29	S/CB Cover Ratio	33%	2	Go for it on 4th	0.99	18

The Rams offense was seventh passing the ball on first downs and third on second downs but dropped to 25th on third downs. On the other hand, the running game was much better on third downs (ranked third) than it was on first or second downs. Just like every other year, the Rams were dead last in throwing to running backs, just 10% of targets. They have been last for four straight seasons. Los Angeles was 20th in offensive DVOA before halftime, then improved to second after halftime behind only the Ravens. The Rams were much, much better when using play-action in 2024, with the largest difference in the league by DVOA and the second-largest difference by yards per play. They had 8.7 yards and 64.4% DVOA with play-action compared to 6.0 yards and 11.2% DVOA without it. The Rams' usage of play-action jumped from 18% of passes in 2023 (24th) to 30% last season (third). Although they didn't lead the league in 2024 (Green Bay did), the Rams were near the top of the league again by running the ball 46% of the time when opponents were in nickel. In fact, the Rams ran more often against nickel than against base (36% of plays). The Rams never use six offensive linemen. This seems to be a McVay tree thing, as Green Bay and Minnesota also never used six linemen last year while Tampa Bay and Atlanta did it a combined three times. The Rams defense faced a league-high 27% of passes to tight ends and a league-low 13% of passes to "other wide receivers" (i.e., not WR1 or WR2). The Los Angeles defense was sixth in the league in DVOA with MOFO coverage but 31st with MOFC coverage.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
M.Stafford	868	12.3%	544	3538	6.5	5.1	66.0%	20	8
J.Garoppolo	90	17.6%	44	319	7.3	8.6	65.9%	2	1

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
P.Nacua	255	17.6%	106	79	990	12.5	6.6	3	75%
C.Kupp*	15	-10.8%	100	67	710	10.6	4.0	6	67%
D.Robinson*	118	9.1%	64	31	505	16.3	2.3	7	48%
T.Atwell	124	11.7%	62	42	562	13.4	3.0	0	68%
T.Johnson*	-26	-20.9%	41	26	291	11.2	7.0	1	63%
J.Whittington	87	25.3%	28	22	293	13.3	9.2	0	79%
D.Adams	33	-9.9%	141	85	1063	12.5	5.6	8	60%
C.Parkinson	-16	-11.7%	49	30	294	9.8	5.3	1	61%
D.Allen	-46	-54.1%	13	6	39	6.5	3.5	0	46%
T.Higbee	-1	-8.7%	12	8	66	8.3	6.0	2	67%
H.Long*	2	-4.3%	9	7	60	8.6	4.3	0	78%
K.Williams	7	-10.9%	40	34	182	5.4	5.7	2	85%
B.Corum	29	41.3%	8	7	58	8.3	9.3	0	88%
R.Rivers	3	-4.2%	6	5	34	6.8	11.6	0	83%

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
K.Williams	170	3.6%	316	1299	4.1	14	5	52%
B.Corum	8	-5.4%	58	207	3.6	0	0	43%
R.Rivers	19	11.3%	22	99	4.5	0	0	55%
M.Stafford	-17	-29.9%	15	44	2.9	0	2	-
P.Nacua	41	19.6%	11	46	4.2	1	0	-

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
K.Dotson	RG	29	16/16	1024	2	1	11	1.8%	6	J.Jackson*	LG	28	4/4	266	0	4	5	3.2%	--
B.Limmer	C	24	16/14	917	8	4	13	2.4%	20	J.Noteboom*	RT/LT	30	4/4	220	3	1	12	9.3%	--
A.Jackson	LT	27	14/14	894	7	4	17	3.2%	5	J.Dedich	LG	25	13/3	206	1	1	6	5.0%	--
R.Havenstein	RT	33	11/11	684	5	2	14	3.5%	5	L.Bruss*	G	27	11/3	195	0	0	7	6.1%	--
S.Avila	LG	26	10/10	596	2	5	14	4.0%	25	C.Shelton	C	30	17/17	1122	3	9	23	3.1%	32
W.McClendon	RT/LT	24	13/5	331	2	1	10	5.2%	--										

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont	
2022	4.09	4.39	15	73%	11	18%	20	1.15	22	0.53	26	59	10.6%	31	32.5%	28	15	
2023	4.23	4.55	5	73%	7	16%	9	1.25	9	0.51	22	34	6.3%	6	26.5%	9	29	
2024	4.05	4.65	9	80%	1	15%	9	1.26	13	0.28	31	31	6.0%	9	31.9%	20	24	
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 4.31 (19)				Left Tackle: 3.37 (29)				Mid/Guard: 5.00 (5)				Right Tackle: 3.80 (25)		Right End: 5.99 (2)

The Rams had the fifth-highest adjusted games lost on the offensive line in 2024, with Steve Avila, Jonah Jackson, Joe Noteboom, and Rob Havenstein all missing significant time. With 11 different starters and eight line changes, the Rams had the third-worst OL continuity score of the year. With all that, it's impressive that the Rams were still in the top 10 in both adjusted line yards and adjusted sack rate. The Rams signed Alaric Jackson to a three-year extension before he could hit free agency this off-season. He allowed just one sack in 2024, and only two left tackles had both a better pressure rate allowed and more snaps than he

had. Jackson started having trouble with blood clots during the offseason and would be a major loss for the Rams. Havenstein was one of the players in limbo while the Rams decided what to do with Stafford, as you don't keep a 32-year-old injured tackle if you're rebuilding. He had to have both shoulders cleaned out this offseason, but says he'll be ready to go for training camp. The Rams had planned to move Avila to center last season to make room for Jonah Jackson, but injuries meant they ran out of time to really complete the experiment. Jackson being traded to Chicago squashes that move for now, but his position is in at least a little flux. Coleman Shelton returns from Chicago to fill the void at center, likely retaking his starting job from Beaux Limmer. Limmer was acceptable for a rookie injury replacement, but Shelton is a much steadier hand. Kevin Dotson isn't the best pass protector in the world, but his run blocking has been fantastic since he arrived in L.A. He has thrived in the simpler scheme the Rams run compared to the Steelers, and his success is a big part of the reason McVay's shift to heavier linemen has succeeded.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
K.Turner	26	DE	17	834	66	7.5%	12	56	18	7	49	82%	21	2.5	49	8.0	7	38	4
B.Fiske	25	DE	17	661	44	5.0%	42	37	15	8	29	76%	38	2.4	43	8.5	4	40	1
B.Brown*	25	DT	17	472	45	5.1%	39	29	7	0	42	64%	72	2.8	67	0.0	1	6	1
T.Davis	25	DE	16	299	29	3.5%	--	18	3	2	27	59%	--	2.9	--	0.5	0	4	0
N.Gallimore*	28	DT	14	264	19	2.6%	--	10	1	1	19	53%	--	3.8	--	0.0	1	3	0
P.Ford	30	DT	17	604	44	5.1%	40	36	13	4	31	74%	43	2.2	40	3.0	7	14	2

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
B.Young	27	OLB	17	844	63	7.2%	11	41	17	8	42	55%	91	3.8	93	7.5	7	35	2
J.Verse	25	OLB	17	834	68	7.7%	8	52	19	24	55	73%	53	2.7	59	4.5	15	64	4
M.Hoecht*	28	OLB	17	639	57	6.5%	23	35	12	6	36	72%	55	2.5	47	3.0	2	21	1

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush			vs. Pass									
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
C.Rozeboom*	28	ILB	17	828	136	15.5%	26	64	11	16	82	54%	68	4.0	58	1.0	0	10	39	17.6%	64	38%	59	9.3	66	4	1
O.Speights	24	ILB	17	419	68	7.7%	75	35	7	4	41	59%	48	3.9	48	0.0	0	3	19	3.2%	40	42%	44	7.4	37	2	0
T.Reeder	31	ILB	6	372	47	15.2%	30	21	3	7	26	58%	54	4.2	69	0.0	0	1	15	25.7%	--	47%	--	8.9	--	1	0
N.Landman	27	ILB	13	544	81	12.0%	54	40	7	6	53	57%	58	3.8	46	0.0	0	1	23	12.5%	57	30%	70	8.3	55	1	0

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk				
2022	4.25	4.28	13	65%	9	16%	20	1.13	9	0.68	14	38	7.5%	13	25.1%	25				
2023	4.09	4.28	21	67%	17	15%	28	1.14	15	0.47	9	41	7.1%	21	25.4%	30				
2024	4.52	4.63	24	65%	14	14%	29	1.23	19	0.69	12	38	7.1%	21	30.8%	15				
2024 ALY by direction:	Left End: 3.82 (6)				Left Tackle: 4.48 (24)				Mid/Guard: 5.01 (29)				Right Tackle: 4.03 (15)				Right End: 4.32 (22)			

The Rams saw their pressure rate when rushing at least five jump from 29% in 2023 to 48% in 2024. That was the biggest jump in the league by a huge margin, and basically explains their entire improvement in the pass rush a year ago. They were not significantly better when rushing just four, but blitzing became a strength. Jared Verse won Defensive Rookie of the Year despite just 4.5 sacks. That's low for an edge rusher, but it massively understates his performance. Not only was he a pressure machine, but he was a force in run defense, too—his 52 total stops were eighth among edge rushers. Tackling was a problem for the Rams' edge rushers. Verse led all edge rushers in broken tackles, and he and Byron Young combined for a 31.4% broken tackle rate. Third-round pick Josaiah Stewart is undersized at 6-foot-1 and 249 pounds but he's an explosive, aggressive pass rusher who led Michigan in both TFLs and sacks last season. The Rams have now had the rookie sack leader two years in a row, as Braden Fiske followed up Kobi Turner's feat from 2023. Turner's 17 sacks in his first two years are third most for a Ram in his first two seasons, behind Deacon Jones and Aaron Donald. Not shabby company, that. Poona Ford tied career highs for TFLs, quarterback hits, and sacks with the cross-town Chargers in 2024. The Rams are paying for the rebound season, but Ford should at least give them a second solid interior run defender out of their base package. Fifth-round pick Ty Hamilton (Ohio State) is an ox. He benched 35 reps of 225 pounds at his pro day, two more than anyone could manage at the combine. The Rams historically do not put much value on their linebacker corps, and 2025 is no exception. With Christian Rozeboom gone, the starting linebacking duo should be Troy Reeder and Omar Speights. Both had

below-average coverage DVOAs and sub-50% success rates in coverage, so the intermediate middle of the field is a weak point in the passing game. ⚪ Fifth-round pick Pooh Paul (Mississippi) could push for snaps immediately. Our old friend Doug Farrar says he gives off Fred Warner vibes, both in terms of reading running plays and running with defenders. He's lacking ideal size and needs to be a step more aggressive, but he might be the best option L.A. has in the middle of the field already.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run						vs. Pass											
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
Q.Lake	26	SS	17	1070	116	13.2%	17	40	12	7	54	33%	47	6.4	33	49	9.8%	9	9.0	-16.9%	9	61%	10	6.4	21	5 0
K.Curl	26	SS	16	981	88	10.6%	47	23	4	9	38	21%	86	7.4	52	19	4.2%	46	7.4	-36.7%	3	58%	15	7.2	32	9 0
C.Durant	27	CB	15	777	48	6.2%	78	16	9	7	15	27%	82	5.0	28	58	16.0%	73	12.7	0.4%	53	47%	70	7.2	37	8 1
D.Williams	32	CB	12	766	52	8.4%	54	23	8	5	15	53%	27	4.7	21	62	17.4%	62	14.2	-4.9%	42	58%	10	8.3	66	7 1
K.Kinchens	23	FS	17	514	63	7.2%	77	17	7	7	21	24%	77	9.1	79	12	5.0%	--	13.2	49.8%	--	33%	--	12.8	--	6 4
A.Witherspoon	30	CB	13	494	39	5.8%	84	16	7	7	9	22%	85	6.1	47	47	20.4%	27	9.4	24.7%	86	45%	77	8.4	67	9 1
J.McCollough	25	SS	17	335	44	5.0%	--	20	11	1	17	47%	--	6.8	--	18	11.5%	6	9.0	-13.6%	12	44%	41	7.7	37	4 4

Year	Pass D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	25		16.8%	24	25.0%	31	-12.2%	8	21.3%	30	-11.3%	9	-16.3%	5	3.3%	20
2023	21		22.6%	26	-0.6%	15	0.3%	16	13.4%	24	-3.4%	15	1.8%	20	-14.1%	8
2024	24		13.0%	24	-8.5%	10	-0.4%	14	23.7%	30	-33.6%	1	4.8%	20	2.2%	16

There's no shortage of stats which show the secondary to be a problem, and mostly an unaddressed one. The Rams allowed a 54.8% success rate in the passing game, second worst in the league. They had an 11.2% explosive pass rate, gave up 12 touchdowns of 20 or more yards, and allowed 3.9 YAC per attempt, all fourth worst in the league. ⚪ Darious Williams came off the best of Los Angeles' returning corners, but when he was beaten, he was beaten good. He allowed 13.4 yards per completion and only 15 qualified corners had fewer than his six defeats in pass coverage. ⚪ Ahkello Witherspoon was in and out of the lineup and was essentially benched in early December, then was re-signed to be the other starting boundary corner. While his season-long coverage stats were abysmal, he did look sharper in the postseason, only giving up a couple of checkdowns against both the Vikings and Eagles. The Rams need that Witherspoon, not the one they saw from September through November. ⚪ It'll likely be safety Quentin Lake filling in at slot corner most of the time in 2025. The Rams tried Cobie Durant there some last season, but he's really more of a boundary corner. Lake doubled his career-high snap count and was mostly effective. He's a big part of the reason why the Rams ranked first with a -33.6% DVOA against wideouts in the slot, while ranking 30th at 21.1% to players lined up anywhere else. ⚪ Kam Curl hasn't had an interception since 2020. He has had 3,675 defensive snaps in the last four seasons. The next highest total for a defensive back with no picks is 2,058 for Ronald Darby. ⚪ Kamren Kinchens had a boom-and-bust rookie year, hauling in four picks but also allowing four touchdowns in coverage. He gained more and more responsibilities as the year went along, and by December was arguably the best player in the Los Angeles secondary.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	-1.3%	23	10.9	1	1.5	17	-5.7	29	-12.5	32	-1.0	18	-4.0	20
2023	-9.2%	32	-17.7	32	-1.4	23	-1.2	23	-24.2	32	-4.3	25	10.4	3
2024	-0.2%	19	-2.3	20	-0.5	19	1.0	12	1.8	12	-1.2	19	3.2	13

Though they only ranked 19th in DVOA, the Rams improved all five aspects of special teams (field goals, kickoffs, punts, and kickoff and punt returns) from 2023. Being merely below average is a welcome change after they had one of the dozen worst special teams units in DVOA history the year before. ⚪ The Rams' punt coverage unit saw the biggest jump between 2023 and 2024. They went from allowing 16.7 points of return value to -0.6, with their opponents falling from 15.5 yards per return to 8.9. Tackling: it helps! ⚪ Part of the worry for kicker Joshua Karty coming out of college was a lack of week-to-week and year-to-year consistency, and some of that played out in 2024 with four misses from under 50 yards. Karty's strong leg did make him the seventh-best kicker from 50-plus yards with +4.4 weather-adjusted points, so if he can clean up the short stuff, things should be fine. ⚪ Jordan Whittington and Xavier Smith should return as, er, the returners. Whittington had positive value on kickoffs, but Smith had negative value on punts, so Britain Covey could challenge him for the role.

# Miami Dolphins

2024 record: 8-9	Total DVOA: -9.8% (21st)
Pythagorean Wins: 8.0 (18th)	Offense: -9.1% (22nd)
Snap-Weighted Age: 27.8 (1st)	Defense: 1.9% (19th)
Average Opponent: -6.0% (32nd)	Special Teams: 1.2% (11th)

2025 Mean Projection: 8.8 wins	On the Clock (0-5): 10%
Postseason Odds: 44.9%	Mediocrity (6-8): 36%
Super Bowl Odds: 2.6%	Playoff Contender (9-11): 40%
Proj. Avg. Opponent: -2.8% (25th)	Super Bowl Contender (12+): 14%

2024: The offense collapses.

2025: Forget faster, we'll settle for stronger.

**M**ike McDaniel debuted as the Miami Dolphins head coach in 2022 and immediately found offensive success. In 2023, the Miami offense took the league by storm with more speed than any one unit had ever possessed. Six of the 10 fastest speeds a ballcarrier reached in that NFL season belonged to Miami Dolphins, and three different Dolphins combined for these top speeds. Tyreek Hill had three of them, Devon Achane had two, and Raheem Mostert had the other. Jaylen Waddle wasn't even needed, and he had the fastest top speed on the team in 2022. The Dolphins were second in pass DVOA, third in rush DVOA, and second in overall offensive DVOA.

Last season was supposed to be more of the same, but the entire operation fell apart. Miami finished 22nd in offensive DVOA with a striking lack of explosive plays.

For McDaniel's entire tenure, this has been a team reliant on great offense. Their defenses have been ... fine? But our system hates the personnel losses this offseason on that side of the ball, so if Miami has any hope of bouncing back, the Dolphins offense will have to regain its form. Our system is optimistic, but the likelihood of that coming to fruition largely depends on *why* the 2024 offense underperformed. Did the now-31-year-old Tyreek Hill lose his elite speed? Did Tua Tagovailoa's recurring concussions force McDaniel into conservative play calling? A simple explanation would be that the offensive line was so bad that they weren't able to do the things Miami wanted to do. Unfortunately, there's a more disconcerting explanation. Defenses seem to have "figured something out" about Mike McDaniel's offense, particularly in the run game.

Miami's adjusted line yards fell from fourth in 2023 to dead last in 2024. For a running game predicated around speed, this is disastrous. Fast players like Mostert and Achane need room to run. When space is taken away from them, so is their advantage. But blaming the offensive line would be incomplete analysis. A hallmark of the McDaniel offense has been pre-snap motion. The Dolphins have been first in pass attempts and rush attempts with motion in each of the last two years. In 2023, with motion, they were third in success rate, first in yards per carry, first in EPA, and first in adjusted line yards. Without motion, they were 20th in success rate, 26th in yards per carry, 28th in EPA, and 19th in adjusted line yards. Motion before or at the snap—particularly with speedsters such

as Hill, Waddle, and Achane—was the key to their explosive running game.

But the Dolphins' success with motion cratered in 2024. They were 15th in success rate, 20th in yards per carry, last in EPA, and 28th in adjusted line yards. The offensive line is partially to blame here, which we can see in their even more disastrous numbers on runs without motion: last in success rate, yards per carry, and adjusted line yards, while 26th in EPA.

Overall, the 2023 Dolphins were second in the league with 1,264 explosive rushing yards, defined as gains on runs of 10 or more yards. Their nine explosive rushing touchdowns led the NFL. Achane and Mostert each eclipsed 500 explosive rushing yards with Achane scoring from distance four times and Mostert doing so five times. In 2024, they finished with just 848 explosive rushing yards (16th) and four explosive rushing touchdowns (tied for 12th). The explosiveness was still there in the running game to a degree; they just got less of it. They were 12th in open field yards per carry despite being 28th in total running back yards per carry. When they had daylight, these backs were still effective. The problem was that McDaniel's system and scheme wasn't covering up the weakness of the offensive line anymore.

It's also worth noting that the splits with and without motion largely did not exist in the passing game in either year. They were excellent with and without motion when passing in 2023, then mediocre with and without motion in 2024. The only area where the effect of motion seems significant is the explosive pass rate, defined here as passing gains of 20 or more yards. In 2023, the Dolphins were sixth in explosive pass rate with motion, 15th without. In 2024, they were 30th in explosive pass rate with motion, 18th without. This drop in explosive pass rate could also be a result of team's "figuring out McDaniel's offense," but it's more likely explained by Tagovailoa's drop in average depth of target from 7.6 yards (21st) to 5.7 yards (40th and dead last). It was a severe drop compared to his peers (Table 1).

Often, a drop in average depth of target results from a greater willingness to check the ball down instead of forcing the ball downfield. In 2023, Tagovailoa was 26th in the league with a 12.6% checkdown rate according to FTN Data charting. In 2024, he was fourth with a 16.6% checkdown rate. However, Tagovailoa was already unwilling to throw into tight coverage. His 18.8% tight window throw rate was already near the

## 2025 Dolphins Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	at IND	7	at CLE	13	NO
2	NE	8	at ATL	14	at NYJ
3	at BUF (Thu.)	9	BAL (Thu.)	15	at PIT (Mon.)
4	NYJ (Mon.)	10	BUF	16	CIN
5	at CAR	11	WAS (SPA)	17	TB
6	LAC	12	BYE	18	at NE

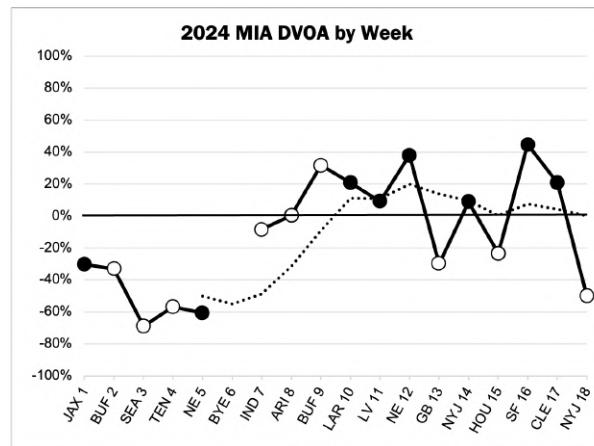
bottom of the league in 2023. It rose to 20.1% last year, but that was still near the bottom of the league.

So why was Tua throwing it short so often? Was it because the offensive line was even worse than before, because McDaniel didn't want Tua holding the ball and taking more hits because of his concussion issues, or because the deep routes just weren't open anymore?

The answer is likely some combination of all three, since Miami threw it deep less often and was less effective when doing so (Table 2).

While the drops in both volume and efficiency were severe, the drop in volume was more significant. If you can't protect the quarterback long enough for downfield routes to develop, you can't call plays that require downfield routes to develop. Perhaps, though, this isn't the full picture. ESPN's pass block and run block win rates show the Miami offensive line declining but not collapsing. Their pass block win rate fell from 14th to 28th and their run block win rate fell from 22nd to 26th. Again, it's fair to wonder if part of the reasoning here is that McDaniel was protecting Tua more than Tua was willing to protect himself (credit to Tua for being such a competitor). It's also fair to wonder if the 31-year-old Tyreek Hill has lost a step.

There's a bit of a "chicken or the egg" situation here. Tyreek Hill showing up three times in the fastest ballcarrier leaderboard's top 10 one year and then zero times in the top 20 the next is concerning. So is the fact that Hill's longest reception after Week 1 was 30 yards. For context, he had at least one reception over 30 yards in eight different games in 2023. Speed is necessary for generating explosive plays, but it's also true that explosive plays are necessary to post elite top speeds. Sa-



quon Barkley and Kevontae Turpin were the only players on last year's top 20 fastest speed leaderboard to record their top speeds on plays under 50 yards long.

There was a large league-wide decline in deep passing last season which made it tougher for wide receivers to make the fastest ballcarrier list. Receivers accounted for 12 of the top 20 speeds in 2023 but only five of the top 20 in 2024, so Tyreek's absence might not be such a bad sign. More encouraging evidence lies in his Open Score, an ESPN metric that, true to its name, measures how well a player gets open. Hill was nearly identical this past season to the Open Score he posted in 2023. If anything, it was Jaylen Waddle who struggled to get open more this past season, but he's only 26 so that's likely just randomness.

One other possible explanation for the lack of explosive passing stems from the struggles in the running game. The Dolphins' inability to generate anything on the ground hurt one of the key aspects of their passing game: play-action. Tua finished the 2023 season with 663 DYAR (second) and 50.4% DVOA (fourth) when using play-action. Both numbers fell out of the top 10 in 2024, as Tagovailoa posted 247 DYAR (14th) and 26.6% DVOA (11th) with play-action. Good, but far from elite. And of course, the explosive plays disappeared. Similarly, the opposite may be true. The lack of the downfield threat could have allowed defenses to ignore the motion to some degree, focusing more on the running game.

For Dolphins fans, the best-case scenario would be that opponents have not solved McDaniel's offense in any way and that the struggles were entirely on the offensive line. Because offensive lines can be upgraded! This is easier said than done, especially after left tackle Terron Armstead retired in April, but general manager Chris Grier has emphasized youth and physicality in his offseason moves. The vision is clear: an improved offensive line wakes up the ground game, which re-

**Table 1. Largest Drop in aDOT from 2023 to 2024**

Quarterback	2023 aDOT	2024 aDOT	Change
Tua Tagovailoa	7.65	5.69	-1.96
Deshawn Watson	9.32	7.43	-1.89
Will Levis	10.58	8.71	-1.87
Baker Mayfield	8.54	6.97	-1.57
Gardner Minshew	7.31	6.04	-1.28
Jalen Hurts	8.65	7.80	-0.85
C.J. Stroud	8.98	8.32	-0.66
Matthew Stafford	7.74	7.26	-0.48
Kyler Murray	7.30	6.83	-0.47
Joe Flacco	9.36	8.93	-0.43

**Table 2. Tua Tagovailoa Deep Passing (20-plus Air Yards)**

Year	Deep Attempts	Deep YPA	Deep DYAR	Deep DVOA
2023	107 (6th)	15.8 (3rd)	822 (1st)	114.4% (6th)
2024	54 (28th)	12.7 (12th)	196 (19th)	48.5% (19th)

invigorates the play-action passing game, both of which then produce the explosive plays the Dolphins became so used to seeing in 2022 and 2023. A stronger, more physical front that allows the skill guys to be great. And *fast*.

But the worst-case scenario is also possible: that the offensive line won't be much better and that teams now know how to defend McDaniel's system and the speed of this offense. For the Dolphins' sake, the offensive vision needs to become the reality, because the defense will likely struggle.

Our projection system is the lowest it's been on the Dolphins defense in years due to the personnel losses. Kendall Fuller and Jordan Poyer aren't superstars, but both are quality veterans in the secondary lost to free agency. The additional loss of Javon Holland forces Miami to replace both safeties for the 2025 season. Losing a 38-year-old on the defensive line doesn't sound like it should matter a ton, but Calais Campbell was still playing outstanding football. He was ninth in ESPN's pass rush win rate last year. Emmanuel Ogbah and Anthony Walker Jr. have also moved on, though only Ogbah was effective a season ago. The biggest move came at the end of June—superstar Jalen Ramsey and tight end Jonnu Smith (coming off a career year) traded to the Steelers in exchange for Minkah Fitzpatrick.

The Dolphins did address the losses up front in the draft. Kenneth Grant (Michigan), Jordan Phillips (Maryland), and Zeek Biggers (Georgia Tech) are all interior defensive linemen drafted with the same intent to improve physicality and toughness that the Dolphins showed this offseason on the offensive side of the ball. But again, Calais Campbell is a 6-foot-8 behemoth with a motor that never stops and as high of a football IQ as you'll find. Youth and physicality are great, but whether it can adequately replace Campbell's presence is another story.

The "solution" in the secondary is even less convincing. Ifeatu Melifonwu missed the first two months of the 2024 season with an ankle injury and played only three games. He was great in 2023 and as a converted corner has unique coverage skills for a safety, but whether he can regain that form remains to be seen. Ashtyn Davis didn't start for the Jets although he was effective when called upon, especially in the run game. He's yet another addition that's been brought in to address Miami's lack of physicality and toughness on both sides of the ball. And of course, losing your best player at a position that is already severely lacking in depth is devastating. The Fitzpatrick addition is an interesting one. His inclusion in the Ramsey trade was a surprise, not just because Pittsburgh had to include a player of his caliber, but because he's a safety. Miami was already low on cornerbacks and now they have no one who has earned the right to start at corner in the NFL. Fitzpatrick is a great player, but safeties can't cover the sins of their corners.

The best "addition" to the defense isn't an addition to the roster, but the return of Bradley Chubb to the field. As strong as Chubb is rushing the passer, he may be even better against the run, finishing eighth in run stop win rate in 2023 prior to his injury. This run-stopping dominance complements the rest of the defensive front well, since Zach Sieler and Chop Robinson bring more pass-rushing chops, each finishing near the top of their respective positions a season ago in pass rush win rate.

The story of this defense in 2025 could have boiled down to the superstars. If Bradley Chubb and Jalen Ramsey were transcendently good, and the defense was lucky with health (something Chubb and Ramsey have each struggled with at times), they could have been fine. Without Ramsey, given a defense that was already too reliant on its stars with little depth behind them, the offense better be ready to win high-scoring games.

There's a theme here on both sides of the ball. The premise is a good one: get more physical, get tougher, and let the great players be great. But there are a lot of "ifs" here, from the offensive line to the secondary and the health of the star players. And now that they're without Ramsey, there's also a lack of players capable of being great. A great premise needs good execution, and in that department, Miami seems to be failing.

They will get a bit of help from their schedule, though. Playing the Jets and Patriots twice helps, but the AFC East gets the additional bonus of playing the entire NFC South. Atlanta, New Orleans, and Carolina are all outside of our top 20 DVOA projections with New Orleans and Carolina competing for dead last. If the offense doesn't bounce back, Miami vs. New Orleans could be a battle for the top pick in the draft.

Tyreek Hill has ditched the 2,000-yard goal he has set in the past in favor of the more team-oriented "win a playoff game" goal. Barring a Josh Allen injury, that will probably need to start with a wild-card berth, but it's looking more and more like an unreasonable outcome for this team. If the offensive line is improved, their schedule will allow them to win games despite a poor defense. However, they'll be beating up bad teams. For several years now, this Dolphins team, even when good, has struggled against the other good teams in the league. For example, the Dolphins are 1-6 against the Bills in the last three years including a playoff loss. Other than the single win over Buffalo, the Dolphins' most impressive win in that time is either their 2022 Week 2 42-38 victory over Baltimore or their 2023 Week 16 22-20 victory over a 10-4 Dallas Cowboys team that went on to get embarrassed by Green Bay in the opening round of the playoffs in their own building.

So, while getting tougher and more physical is a necessary step towards beating the league's best teams, will they be able to climb that mountain this season? Probably not.

Alex Bickle

## 2024 Dolphins by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	JAX	W	35%	20	17	400	267	+1	-30%	-19%	19%	7%
2	BUF	L	1%	10	31	351	247	-3	-33%	-35%	-1%	1%
3	at SEA	L	0%	3	24	205	370	+2	-69%	-50%	20%	1%
4	TEN	L	2%	12	31	184	244	0	-57%	-65%	-6%	2%
5	at NE	W	49%	15	10	372	299	-2	-61%	-19%	25%	-17%
6	BYE											
7	at IND	L	44%	10	16	337	284	-1	-8%	-4%	-3%	-7%
8	ARI	L	39%	27	28	377	389	0	0%	13%	17%	5%
9	at BUF	L	61%	27	30	373	325	0	32%	37%	0%	-5%
10	at LAR	W	68%	23	15	238	327	0	21%	-29%	-36%	13%
11	LV	W	95%	34	19	353	328	+1	9%	22%	13%	1%
12	NE	W	100%	34	15	373	269	+1	38%	12%	-28%	-2%
13	at GB	L	0%	17	30	375	388	-1	-30%	-12%	16%	-2%
14	NYJ	W	82%	32	26	375	402	0	9%	29%	27%	7%
15	at HOU	L	11%	12	20	224	181	-3	-23%	-36%	-19%	-6%
16	SF	W	97%	29	17	381	374	+1	45%	31%	-5%	9%
17	at CLE	W	97%	20	3	280	276	+2	21%	-5%	-21%	5%
18	at NYJ	L	2%	20	32	334	375	-3	-50%	-40%	19%	9%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	-9.1%	22	1.9%	19
Unadjusted VOA	-5.8%	23	2.1%	12
Weighted Trend	-0.6%	18	-0.2%	14
Variance	9.3%	29	3.8%	8
Average Opponent	1.4%	30	-3.4%	28
Passing	9.4%	20	6.5%	18
Rushing	-18.5%	30	-4.6%	22
First Down	-6.6%	24	10.6%	28
Second Down	-2.7%	20	-3.1%	15
Third Down	-23.6%	28	-6.5%	11
First Half	-14.9%	31	3.4%	16
Second Half	-2.6%	16	0.5%	20
Red Zone	-23.3%	27	-1.9%	18
Late and Close	16.6%	8	18.0%	28

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rank	Off	Rank	Def	Rank	ST	Rank	Off AGL	Rank	Def AGL	Rank	Off Age	Rank	Def Age	Rank	ST Age	Rank
2020	10-6	9.8	8.1	404	338	+9	4.8%	11	-2.7%	20	-4.1%	12	3.3%	6	43.6	19	22.1	5	25.5	29	25.9	27	25.3	28
2021	9-8	7.6	6.5	341	373	0	-10.3%	23	-10.9%	23	-3.5%	9	-2.9%	29	42.2	15	8.7	1	25.5	29	26.3	19	26.3	12
2022	9-8	8.4	9.5	397	399	-7	8.8%	8	12.0%	6	0.1%	15	-3.1%	28	35.7	16	54.0	27	26.4	21	26.4	15	27.2	3
2023	11-6	11.0	10.9	496	391	+2	17.6%	6	20.9%	2	2.4%	19	-0.9%	22	48.2	24	27.9	13	26.9	8	27.1	6	26.8	5
2024	8-9	8.0	7.0	345	364	-5	-9.8%	21	-9.1%	22	1.9%	19	1.2%	11	52.5	29	58.5	26	27.1	10	28.5	1	27.9	1

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

MIA Offense				MIA Offense vs. Opponents					MIA Defense				MIA Defense vs. Opponents				
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA
11	39%	5.1	-1.6%	18%	Base	24%	4.2	-12.9%	64%	Base	23%	4.5	-4.3%	11	66%	5.4	3.5%
21	29%	5.4	-4.3%	55%	Nickel	64%	5.7	0.4%	33%	Nickel	69%	5.3	-0.5%	12	20%	5.3	0.2%
12	21%	4.9	-2.5%	45%	Dime+	11%	4.7	-16.3%	8%	Dime+	8%	8.1	46.6%	21	4%	6.7	17.1%
22	7%	5.2	-20.5%	57%										13	2%	7.0	30.5%
13	3%	6.4	-14.8%	42%										612	2%	3.1	-63.2%
														611	2%	5.1	-1.2%

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected		Rk	Formation		Rk	Pass Rush		Rk	Secondary		Rk	Strategy		Rk
Runs, all	+1.7%	18	Form: Single Back	47%	32	Rush 3	2.5%	20	4 DB	21%	19	Play Action	25%	11
Runs, first down	+5.7%	10	Form: Empty Back	15%	2	Rush 4	73.1%	11	5 DB	69%	10	Offensive Motion	76%	2
Runs, second-long	-2.6%	19	Form: Multi Back	38%	1	Rush 5	20.4%	14	6+ DB	8%	21	Avg Box (Off)	5.95	28
Runs, power sit.	-5.0%	27	Pers: 3+ WR	39%	30	Rush 6+	4.0%	24	Man Coverage	41%	27	Avg Box (Def)	6.01	25
Runs, behind 2H	+5.1%	10	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	32%	15	Edge Rusher Sacks	37.1%	31	MOFC	50%	29	Offensive Pace	31.81	20
Runs, ahead 2H	-3.1%	26	Pers: 6+ OL	0%	28	Interior DL Sacks	45.7%	3	CB1 on WR1	33%	18	Defensive Pace	31.83	23
Run-Pass Options	1.9%	28	Shotgun/Pistol	82%	6	Second Level Sacks	17.1%	24	S/CB Cover Ratio	14%	26	Go for it on 4th	0.89	24

Miami used the pistol 29% of the time, second in the league behind Atlanta. However, the Dolphins had just 5.1 yards per play with -12.9% DVOA on these plays. This was the third straight season where Miami was dead last in using single-back sets. A league-leading 73% of Miami carries came from multi-back sets, with the Chargers as the only other team above 60%. The Dolphins led the NFL in wide receiver screens and had 5.8 yards per play with 22.9% DVOA on those plays. The Dolphins also ran an above-average number of running back screens and were even better on those plays, with 7.1 yards per play and 93.4% DVOA. Only the Browns used empty backfield more frequently than the Dolphins, but Miami had just 4.5 yards per play and -16.8% DVOA on these plays. For the second straight season, the Dolphins offense faced MOFO coverage more than any other offense, 53% of pass plays. However, the Dolphins were much better against MOFO coverage, ranking seventh in DVOA compared to 31st against MOFC coverage. Miami's defense had the league's biggest gap between runs from single-back sets (4.7 yards per carry, 0.7% DVOA) and runs from multi-back sets (3.5 yards per carry, -21.9% DVOA). Miami's defense used much more zone coverage and MOFO coverage (i.e., Cover 2 or Cover 4) compared to the year before.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
T.Tagovailoa	652	12.5%	418	2713	6.5	5.8	73.3%	19	7
T.Huntley*	-242	-38.0%	147	747	5.1	4.1	65.6%	3	3
S.Thompson*	-114	-59.1%	39	143	3.7	4.0	63.6%	0	0
T.Boyle*	30	6.7%	26	153	5.5	5.9	60.0%	0	0

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
T.Hill	104	-1.9%	123	81	959	11.8	3.6	6	66%
J.Waddle	128	6.2%	84	58	762	13.0	4.0	2	70%
M.Washington	-3	-13.6%	36	26	223	8.6	4.7	0	72%
O.Beckham*	-65	-59.6%	18	9	55	6.1	1.6	0	50%
R.Cracraft*	13	7.8%	9	7	66	9.4	1.6	0	78%
N.Westbrook-Ikhine	107	10.3%	60	32	497	15.5	3.9	9	53%
J.Smith*	171	15.7%	111	88	884	10.0	5.8	8	79%
J.Hill	-37	-38.0%	19	12	100	8.3	4.8	0	63%
D.Smythe*	-70	-65.6%	17	9	53	5.9	1.8	0	53%
P.Brown	-22	-35.7%	12	8	65	8.1	3.8	0	67%
D.Achane	171	20.5%	87	78	592	7.6	8.5	6	90%
R.Mostert*	40	16.6%	23	19	161	8.5	7.7	0	83%
A.Engold	27	23.3%	12	11	96	8.7	6.9	0	92%
J.Wright	-26	-82.6%	6	3	8	2.7	2.7	0	50%
A.Mattison	56	6.1%	48	36	294	8.2	8.7	1	75%

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
D.Achane	76	0.1%	203	907	4.5	6	0	49%
R.Mostert*	-82	-31.3%	85	283	3.3	2	2	39%
J.Wright	-26	-18.9%	68	249	3.7	0	1	41%
T.Huntley*	5	-8.3%	24	123	5.1	2	2	-
J.Wilson*	-15	-29.7%	16	57	3.6	0	0	44%
T.Tagovailoa	-18	-48.7%	11	39	3.5	0	3	-
A.Engold	-33	-55.7%	10	17	1.7	1	2	60%
T.Hill	25	20.5%	8	53	6.6	0	0	-
M.Washington	20	38.0%	5	25	5.0	1	0	-
A.Mattison	-83	-24.4	132	420	3.2	4	1	36%

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
A.Brewer	C	28	17/17	1138	8	11	14	2.0%	14	K.Lamm*	RT	33	15/7	511	1	9	5	1.6%	1
R.Jones*	LG	26	17/17	1078	7	12	25	3.8%	22	P.Paul	LT/RT	24	17/3	337	5	2	13	6.3%	--
L.Eichenberg	RG	27	17/14	1035	9	11	26	4.1%	29	L.Borom	LT	26	8/4	330	2	2	27	12.6%	--
T.Armstead	LT	34	15/15	820	3	12	14	2.8%	3	J.Daniels	RG	28	4/4	208	0	3	3	2.6%	--
A.Jackson	RT	26	8/8	540	5	4	14	4.2%	7										

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont	
2022	4.48	4.60	8	56%	30	17%	14	1.30	10	0.77	16	35	6.3%	11	27.2%	15	25	
2023	5.48	4.67	4	58%	27	17%	13	1.54	1	1.52	1	31	5.3%	3	21.7%	1	19	
2024	3.96	3.69	32	51%	32	27%	32	1.27	12	0.77	12	43	7.4%	19	27.9%	7	29	
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 3.76 (27)				Left Tackle: 4.07 (18)				Mid/Guard: 3.93 (31)				Right Tackle: 3.99 (20)		Right End: 2.52 (29)

The weakness of the offensive line doesn't show up in traditional pressure and sack rate analysis because the Dolphins were the least-blitzed team in the league, and because Tua Tagovailoa had the fastest average time to throw for the second consecutive season. There has been an offseason emphasis on the offensive line, but it may not be enough to create real change, especially in the passing game. General manager Chris Grier brought in James Daniels from the Steelers, a run-blocking

“mauler” who also brings stability to the interior against the pass rush. Second-round rookie Jonah Savaiinaea (Arizona) will compete for the other starting guard position with another run-blocking specialist, Liam Eichenberg. Savaiinaea should be able to win the spot. The new guards join center Aaron Brewer, who was Miami’s best and most consistent offensive lineman a season ago. Brewer has already spoken glowingly about the addition of Daniels. The interior of this offensive line *should* be vastly improved. ⚡ The tackles remain a huge question mark. Terron Armstead was still playing at an elite level when healthy, so his loss is potentially catastrophic. Right tackle Austin Jackson is formidable but finding quality play from 2024 second-round pick Patrick Paul, new addition Larry Borom from Chicago, or anyone else potentially competing for the left tackle job will be brutally difficult. ⚡ Everything about this new-look offensive line, from the type of big, physical run blockers that they brought in, to the fact that the strength is now the interior and the weakness is the tackle spots, screams that Miami wants to run the ball this year.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
Z.Sieler	30	DE	15	748	57	8.0%	6	45	24	9	36	69%	58	2.4	44	10.0	8	34	2
C.Campbell*	39	DE	17	615	56	6.9%	16	49	19	7	45	84%	10	2.1	33	5.0	7	35	7
D.Hand*	30	DT	17	563	32	4.0%	66	23	6	6	28	75%	39	2.0	28	1.0	3	11	1
B.Jones	28	DT	17	481	24	3.0%	88	20	5	6	22	86%	6	1.1	3	0.0	4	16	0

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
E.Ogbah*	32	DE	16	733	51	6.7%	17	40	21	2	36	83%	16	1.3	10	5.0	5	36	2
C.Robinson	22	OLB	17	565	30	3.7%	76	24	15	7	13	85%	13	2.2	34	6.0	9	43	4
T.Bowser*	30	OLB	9	277	11	2.6%	98	4	1	2	4	50%	97	4.0	96	0.0	0	7	0
Q.Bell	29	OLB	17	257	24	3.0%	--	16	4	5	17	76%	--	1.6	--	1.0	0	4	0

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush				vs. Pass									
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD Int	
J.Brooks	28	ILB	17	1039	148	18.3%	7	77	25	21	77	68%	15	3.8	47	3.0	4	19	65	20.9%	67	57%	13	7.4	39	6	0
T.Dodson	27	ILB	17	855	113	14.0%	38	59	16	12	53	70%	12	2.7	3	2.0	3	9	32	-21.8%	7	59%	10	4.1	1	6	3
A.Walker*	30	ILB	14	516	68	10.2%	61	26	7	13	31	61%	38	4.3	74	1.0	0	3	26	16.3%	62	15%	78	10.1	71	2	1
K.J Britt	26	ILB	14	613	73	10.4%	59	32	7	7	47	49%	79	3.9	53	0.5	0	4	17	0.3%	37	29%	71	8.9	62	1	0
W.Gay	27	OLB	15	277	25	3.1%	--	13	4	5	11	45%	--	4.1	--	2.0	0	5	13	-76.6%	1	54%	16	8.8	61	3	0

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk			
2022	3.68	3.87	4	65%	8	20%	6	0.92	3	0.66	12	40	6.8%	20	24.4%	28			
2023	3.83	3.99	11	73%	26	15%	27	0.92	2	0.50	11	56	8.5%	5	34.6%	2			
2024	4.38	4.34	17	71%	23	17%	19	1.26	22	0.80	20	35	6.9%	23	34.1%	7			
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 4.98 (24)				Left Tackle: 3.82 (7)				Mid/Guard: 4.47 (16)				Right Tackle: 4.54 (23)		Right End: 3.35 (11)	

Miami was 17th and 18th in ESPN’s pass rush and run stop win rates, despite missing Bradley Chubb all season. Without Chubb, it was the interior of the front that excelled. Calais Campbell (ninth) and Zach Sieler (17th) were both in the top 20 for pass rush win rate among defensive tackles. Kenneth Grant, the 13th overall pick, will start in Campbell’s old spot. Big shoes to fill, literally and figuratively, but Grant has superstar upside. “I’m a culture changer,” Grant told reporters this spring. ⚡ Miami was seventh in pressure rate, aided by the ninth-highest blitz rate, but they struggled to turn those pressures into sacks. They were 23rd in adjusted sack rate. Sieler had 10 sacks but the Dolphins got little sack production from edge rushers. Chop Robinson led the team’s edge rushers with six sacks, one ahead of Emmanuel Ogbah (now in Jacksonville). This is the area where the defense saw the biggest drop-off from 2023, when they were second in both pressure rate and adjusted sack rate with the 10th-highest blitz rate. Optimists can point to Chubb’s return as a reason why Miami can regain a successful pass rush. He was 15th in the NFL with 11 sacks in 2023. Pessimists can credit Vic Fangio for the 2023 pass-rush success, especially after he turned the Eagles into the best defense in the league and won a Super Bowl, and question whether Chubb will be the same player that he was a couple years ago. ⚡ Another potential explanation for the poor sack-per-pressure ratio is that Miami was worse in coverage. Given the personnel turnover in the secondary, and the potential further loss of Jalen Ramsey if Miami trades him, it could be an uphill battle for this front to get to the quarterback more often in 2024. ⚡ Tyrel Dodson and Jordyn

Brooks are an underrated inside linebacker pairing. Dodson excels in coverage, while Brooks excels against the run. Brooks was 10th in tackles last year, playing 98% of Miami's defensive snaps. Brooks did miss 21 tackles, though, a team high. That's largely a product of being around the ball enough to finish in the top 10 for tackles, but it's also something he'll look to clean up in 2025. 🔥 Brooks wasn't the only issue, as the Dolphins had the highest missed tackle rate in the league at 21.3%, more than three percentage points worse than any other defense. This team has been criticized for being soft in the past few years, largely because of their lack of success in cold weather, but their tackling issues are even better evidence of their lack of toughness. Grant and the other rookies can't fix this issue on their own, in part because the problem was bigger in the secondary than it was up front.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run						vs. Pass												
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int	
J.Ramsey*	31	CB	17	1027	71	8.8%	49	33	13	10	21	57%	21	4.0	11	70	13.6%	88	8.2	-17.7%	22	50%	55	6.6	24	11	2
J.Poyer*	34	SS	16	964	101	13.3%	15	24	8	12	54	28%	67	7.4	47	15	3.1%	59	6.5	2.8%	24	40%	47	9.1	51	3	0
J.Holland*	25	FS	15	854	66	9.3%	64	24	10	11	31	42%	26	7.5	54	19	4.4%	43	3.8	4.0%	26	53%	21	5.8	14	4	0
K.Kohou	27	CB	15	708	53	7.4%	67	21	8	11	13	15%	90	9.9	86	69	19.5%	35	8.0	-13.7%	29	55%	23	6.1	15	8	2
K.Fuller*	30	CB	11	556	57	10.9%	15	21	7	4	15	47%	42	5.1	30	48	17.2%	65	9.9	-3.4%	47	52%	42	6.9	31	7	0
S.Duck	25	CB	14	358	36	5.4%	--	19	7	5	11	45%	--	7.5	--	36	20.1%	--	9.6	27.1%	--	53%	--	6.8	--	4	0
M.Fitzpatrick	29	FS	17	1083	100	11.7%	32	25	16	7	35	23%	79	9.3	82	24	4.4%	44	7.0	17.9%	40	21%	61	8.4	44	4	1
A.Davis	29	SS	15	261	34	4.5%	--	16	8	5	16	50%	--	5.8	--	11	9.5%	--	5.7	59.3%	--	55%	--	8.1	--	2	2

Year	Pass D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	26	-11.4%	10	9.4%	22	3.7%	22	5.9%	22	-11.5%	8	23.2%	30	17.1%	28	
2023	22	29.4%	30	-15.6%	7	12.2%	25	11.6%	23	5.2%	23	17.8%	30	-21.1%	5	
2024	18	-2.2%	15	-8.6%	9	3.5%	21	-3.3%	17	0.5%	19	23.7%	31	4.4%	19	

Miami's secondary was average last year against the pass. They were 18th in pass defense DVOA, 16th in success rate, and fifth in explosive passing yards allowed. However, there was an interesting split. In games without Tua Tagovailoa, Weeks 3-7 and 17-18, they were much better: first in success rate allowed, first in yards per attempt allowed, second in EPA per dropback, and second in explosive passing yards allowed. Their pass defense DVOA in these weeks was a bit less impressive because of opponent adjustments but still ranked 10th at -3.2%. The problem here is that opposing offenses knew that they could play an extreme risk-averse style of offense against them in these weeks, as Miami only averaged 11.4 points per game without Tua. In games Tua played, Miami's pass defense was 30th in success rate allowed, 22nd in yards per attempt allowed, 27th in EPA per drop back, and 15th in explosive passing yards allowed. Their pass defense DVOA in these weeks was 11.4%, which ranked 22nd. The defense still deserves some credit for their play in games without Tua, but it's a noteworthy trend, nonetheless. Should Tua miss time again this season, it will be interesting to see if opposing offenses take the same strategy. 🔥 Despite superstar Jalen Ramsey's presence, the Dolphins didn't really stand out in their performance against No. 1 wideouts. They were 27th in man coverage rate, which prevented Ramsey from shadowing too much, but Anthony Weaver had him move around the field more than he has in the past. They replaced Xavien Howard, who will continue to haunt them this season in the form of dead cap money, with Kendall Fuller, but he turned out to be just a one-year rental. They were going to miss Fuller even if Ramsey returned. Now, they're in big trouble. 🔥 The collection of cornerbacks left in Miami is largely unproven. Kader Kohou was good in coverage as the slot corner but was a liability in the run game. He missed 11 tackles last year, second among the returning Dolphins. Since slot corners are closer to the backfield, it's a big boost to the defense when they can help in run support. Storm Duck, Cam Smith, and Ethan Bonner have struggled on the field and given no indication that they can be solid NFL corners, while Isaiah Johnson (a 2024 UDFA from Syracuse) and fifth-round rookie Jason Marshall Jr. (fifth-round pick from Florida) have yet to take snaps at the NFL level but could be thrust into immediate action. 🔥 A side effect of being such a poor tackling team is that personnel changes must address the issue at positions that ideally would be prioritizing other skill sets. Jordan Poyer and Javon Holland missed the third- and fourth-most tackles on the team last year and are now gone. Ashtyn Davis tackles well and is great in run support, but he wasn't a starter with the Jets for a reason. To be fair to Davis, he held up well in coverage when given an opportunity, so perhaps this is a better-than-anticipated addition. He and newly acquired Minkah Fitzpatrick will also look to help Miami improve against deep passes, where they finished 26th in DVOA last year. But with Ramsey traded, they won't be able to make up for the limitations of the cornerbacks. Miami didn't exactly exude safety depth, but it's odd that they got a deep safety in return for Ramsey instead of a replacement cornerback. Still, Fitzpatrick is a much better player than anyone could have reasonably expected Miami to get in the deal (trades like that usually include draft capital as the most valuable return). He's an all-around stud with great instincts and feel for the game.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	-3.1%	28	-3.1	23	-5.5	29	-3.9	27	-2.5	21	-1.5	22	-4.7	21
2023	-0.9%	22	2.4	14	-6.8	32	0.9	8	-2.3	20	1.1	12	-6.7	25
2024	1.2%	11	4.4	10	3.4	8	3.1	9	-4.5	28	0.2	13	-1.0	17

Miami's kicker and return man should be the same in 2025. Jason Sanders and Malik Washington did their jobs well, but Miami sought an improvement in the punting department after finishing 28th in our net punt values. In comes Ryan Stonehouse, who helped Tennessee finish ... 32nd in net punting value. Miami is hoping he will bounce back, as his average punt distance fell by 3 yards in 2024 (from a strong 53.1 in both 2022 and 2023). Stonehouse has never been good at preventing return yards, so he also deserves at least part of the blame for the Titans' terrible punt coverage last year.

# Minnesota Vikings

2024 record: 14-3

Total DVOA: 16.1% (7th)

Pythagorean Wins: 11.1 (9th)

Offense: 3.0% (15th)

Snap-Weighted Age: 27.7 (2nd)

Defense: -15.5% (2nd)

Average Opponent: 1.3% (14th)

Special Teams: -2.3% (27th)

2025 Mean Projection: 7.9 wins

On the Clock (0-5): 18%

Postseason Odds: 32.0%

Mediocrity (6-8): 41%

Super Bowl Odds: 2.4%

Playoff Contender (9-11): 32%

Proj. Avg. Opponent: 3.8% (4th)

Super Bowl Contender (12+): 8%

2024: "Hello, my baby! Hello, my honey! Hello, my ragtime gal!"

2025: "Ribbit."

The Vikings are topsy-turvy contrarians from Opposite Land. They have been that way for nearly a decade. When they are supposed to be great, they're mediocre. When they are supposed to be mediocre, they win 13-plus games. When they're rebuilding, they contend. When they are supposed to be contenders, they look like they need to rebuild. When a Vikings starting quarterback gets injured, the backup becomes a sensation. When the starter is healthy, he's inevitably a mild disappointment.

The Vikings are avant garde artists whose preferred medium is football games decided by last-minute 50-yard field goals. They surf the crests of probability distribution curves and they're fueled by dilithium-crystal skepticism. As long as you think they are a fluke, they remain on a tear. But the moment you start to believe in them, they turn into Michigan J. Frog from that old Chuck Jones cartoon: they stop singing and dancing, making experts/bettors/fans look like nitwits for thinking that they ever could.

Sam Bradford got injured in Week 1 of the 2017 season. Disaster? Nope. Case Keenum came off the bench to lead 13 wins and a last-minute playoff miracle against the Saints. Then Vikings fans tempted The Fates by traveling to Philly and performing a Skol chant on the Rocky steps. The Eagles beat the Vikings 38-7 en route to the Super Bowl. The Vikings, you see, are The Fates' fidget spinner.

Kirk Cousins replaced Keenum in 2018, at great expense. Cousins stayed healthy and played at his established level for four years, leading a stable veteran roster. The results? Lots of forgettable .500-ish seasons, plus one playoff appearance that resulted in a quick 27-10 loss to the 49ers.

Kevin O'Connell and Kwesi Adofo-Mensah replaced Mike Zimmer and Rick Speilman in 2022, Cousins' fifth season with the franchise. The Vikings roster was old and in need of a refresh; Adofo-Mensah was clearly waiting for some back-loaded contracts to run their course so he could start making changes. The 2022 Vikings were statistically dreadful. They ranked 28th in DVOA. By our metrics, they should have won 5.9 games. Yet they won 13, going 11-0 in one-score games. Were they a Team of Destiny? Destiny was The Fates' sorority sister. The 2022 Vikings were only destined to lose to the dreary Giants in the playoffs.

Central tendency came after the Vikings with a grudge to settle in 2023. The Vikings started the season with three

straight one-score losses. Cousins briefly played some of the best football of his career and got them back to .500 before suffering an Achilles tear. Backup Jaren Hall then got injured in the first quarter of his first start. Catastrophe? *Have you been paying attention?* Third-stringer Joshua Dobbs, fresh off the airport shuttle after starting the season with the Cardinals, led wins over the Falcons and Saints by running plays he and O'Connell hastily rehearsed on the sideline.

The Dobbs alchemy proved fleeting, but a 7-10 finish finally gave Adofo-Mensah a chance to push the plunger on Cousins and lean into a youth movement. The Vikings drafted Michigan quarterback J.J. McCarthy, who of course got injured in the preseason opener. Backup Sam Darnold was a two-time washout fresh off a stint as Brock Purdy's seldom-seen quasi-mentor.

You know what happened: 14 wins, many of them narrow, and then—just as NFL content-churners were mulling a possible nine-figure Darnold extension and McCarthy trade—a signature pumpkin-turn just as the playoffs approached.

The preceding history lesson suggests that Vikings fans should rejoice about our low projections for the team. If DVOA really believed in the Vikings, THAT would be a reason to worry.

Still, we should probably walk through the reasons behind our low projection.

First, there's McCarthy. He threw exactly 17 passes in the 2024 preseason opener before tearing his right meniscus. He's essentially a rookie, and he could do little last autumn besides take notes in team meetings; the injury required two surgeries, the second in November. Our projection system treats him as a first-round rookie, and very few rookies perform like Jayden Daniels. Our metrics don't factor in any lingering injury impact, but they also don't factor in quotes about how sharp McCarthy has looked in minicamp or how hard he worked in rehab, because such quotes are just fan-pleasing white noise.

McCarthy takes over an offense that ranked just 15th in DVOA last year, despite the presence of Justin Jefferson, Jordan Addison, Aaron Jones, and (for the second half of the season) T.J. Hockenson. Our system likes the upgrades the Vikings made on the offensive line, but Darnold indeed played well for three months, and no projection system worth its kilobytes would project an offense led by an inexperienced, unknown quarterback into the top 10.

## 2025 Vikings Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	at CHI (Mon.)	7	PHI	13	at SEA
2	ATL	8	at LAC (Thu.)	14	WAS
3	CIN	9	at DET	15	at DAL
4	at PIT (IRE)	10	BAL	16	at NYG
5	at CLE (UK)	11	CHI	17	DET (Thu./Xmas)
6	BYE	12	at GB	18	GB

Meanwhile, our system has Brian Flores' defense sliding back toward the middle of the pack. That's a likely surprise to some readers, considering both Flores' reputation and the fact that the Vikings defense finished second in DVOA last year.

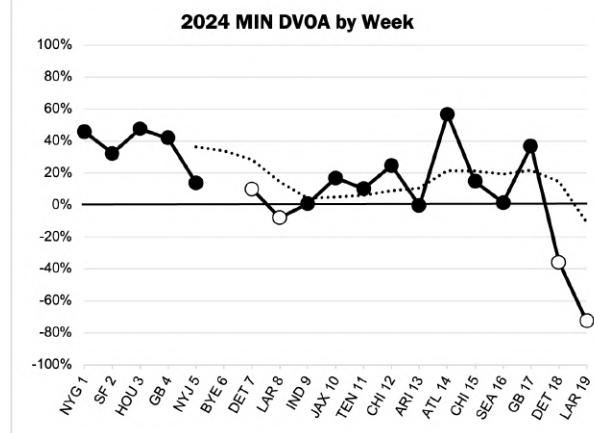
One reason is simple regression: defensive performances fluctuate from year-to-year, and the gravity of central tendency is built into our projections.

Takeaways and turnover differential, two highly volatile factors which fluctuate in tandem with overall defensive performance, are other reasons to anticipate a Vikings defensive backslide. The Vikings tied the Bills for the NFL lead with 33 takeaways. Their plus-12 turnover differential tied several teams for third in the NFL. A couple fewer tip-drill interceptions on defense and a McCarthy rookie blunder or three could cause a wild swing in the Vikings' fortunes.

Ah, but Flores' blitz-happy defense *causes* turnovers, right? Yes, Flores is the NFL's most creative and profligate blitzer. And yes, his blitzes caused mayhem last year. Per FTN Data, the Vikings blitzed on 42.4% of pass plays in 2024, second only to the Buccaneers. And that figure does not count many of Flores' exotic packages where only three or four defenders rushed the passer but they were the last three or four defenders you would expect.

Heavy blitzing, however, is a high-risk and situation-dependent tactic. It doesn't work well when the opponent is leading or winning the down-and-distance battle, as the Vikings discovered in the season finale against the Lions and their early playoff exit. Also, the Vikings defense ranked just 14th in pressure rate (29.1%), so the blitz-to-mayhem rate, while high, wasn't ideal. It's fun to watch Andrew Van Ginkel and Jonathan Greenard appear out of nowhere thanks to blitz-and-twist choreography to record sacks, but Myles Garrett rarely does that sort of thing because he doesn't have to. A defense that lives by the blitz runs an increased risk of dying by it.

Our projections don't like the changes the Vikings made on defense either. Replacing reliable veteran cornerbacks-for-hire Stephon Gilmore and Shaquill Griffin with a trio of question marks (Isaiah Rodgers, Jeff Okudah, and Mekhi Blackmon) was a net negative: when everyone else is attacking the quarterback, the cornerbacks really need to know what they are doing. Cam Bynum was a steady presence in a secondary that used lots of three-safety packages, but the Vikings had done nothing to replace him at press time. Again: when blitzing the house, you need to be able to count on the deep safety. Newcomers on the defensive line Javon Hargrave and Jonathan Allen are thirtysomething big names coming off



injury-marred seasons. Even if we credited Flores with early-Belichick-level genius points, it would be irresponsible to project a defense with role players and question marks at so many high-leverage positions back into the top five.

The Vikings also face the fourth-toughest projected schedule in the NFL in 2025, though we may be underestimating that figure a bit. Our system doesn't have a variable for back-to-back games in Dublin and London in what will be the quarterback's fourth and fifth career starts. In addition to the overseas games and usual Packers/Lions matchups, as well as showdowns with the NFC East and AFC North, the Vikings will face the Chargers in Los Angeles (as the avocado in an Eagles-Lions sandwich) and Seahawks in Seattle.

The Vikings faced the 14th-ranked schedule in 2024, and while they went 11-0 against non-playoff opponents, seven of those wins (of course) came by one score. They are a team that barely beat some weak opponents last year and they are about to face several tougher tests in 2025.

It's hard to analyze the Vikings without playing careful attention to all those one-score games. Vikings apologists may be tempted to argue that some of those games really weren't all that close. *The Vikings led the Packers 28-0 in Week 4!* Yes, and the score was 28-22 with 10:16 to play in the fourth quarter. Sorry, but that's a narrow win. *They led the Jets 17-0 in Week 5!* Yes, and the Jets drove down to the Vikings 26-yard line trailing by six late in the fourth quarter. That was also a narrow win, against a bad opponent. *The Colts only came within eight points on a field goal with 28 seconds left in Week 9!* OK, sure, but all close-game data contains examples like that. *Great teams find ways to win close games!* It's reasonable to expect a playoff-caliber team to be above .500 in close games, but not .900, which is what the Vikings went (9-1) in 2024.

We're mathematically savvy enough here at FTN headquarters to know how fickle probability can be. The Gambler's Fallacy reminds us that the Vikings are not "due" for anything. But it also tells us that a team that goes 11-0 in one-score games in one year and then 9-1 in such games two years later has been living on the far right edge of a normal distribution for several years, and that is statistically unsustainable. (The Vikings were a within-the-standard-deviation 6-8 in one-score games in 2023, though that 14-game total is nearly an outlier

in itself.) A projection system based on thousands of simulated seasons is going to have the Vikings going somewhere between 4-6 and 6-4 in close games in most of those seasons. That alone will nerf the projections before any virtual-rookie quarterbacks are added to the equation.

So there are a lot of indicators dragging the Vikings back toward .500 this year. That should not be surprising, because the Vikings are entering their fourth season in half-competing, half-rebuilding mode. Their Wanda Maximoff-worthy probability-bending hexes have kept expectations high and draft positions low, which has forced Adofo-Mensah to exercise a delicate touch with his roster overhaul.

The Vikings were actually the second *oldest* team in the NFL in 2024 per snap-weighted age. McCarthy's ascension and Gilmore's departure should make them younger in 2025, but there are still some older veterans (Jones, Allen, Hargrave, Harrison Smith, Harrison Phillips, new center Ryan Kelly) in key roles. Also, defenders such as Van Ginkel (30) and Blake Cashman (29) are older than you think. The Vikings aren't as over-the-hill as they were when the new regime took over, but they aren't really young up-and-comers either, despite McCarthy's presence. And recent drafts have produced at least as many misses (Andrew Booth, Lewis Cine, Ed Ingram) as hits (Addison, Ivan Pace as a rock star UDFA).

The Vikings themselves may not be sure who they are. How do you self-scout a team that has been in crisis mode at quarterback since November of 2023 and either turns into a whale or a potted plant based on the settings of its fourth-quarter

Improbability Drive? To their credit, Adofo-Mensah and O'Connell weren't fooled by 2022 and reacted quickly to last year's January collapse, rebuilding their offensive line while bidding Darnold a fond but unequivocal farewell. But you can understand why the Vikings at least batted their eyelashes at Aaron Rodgers for a few weeks in the offseason. When you keep rolling sevens, it must be tempting to really raise the stakes. The Vikings wisely and mercifully never got past the thought-experiment stage with Rodgers. Instead they will keep kinda-sorta rebuilding with McCarthy while also staring down a potential \$54-million cap deficit for 2026.

Perhaps this chapter has been overcompensating a bit. The oddsmakers' over-under for the Vikings hovered around 8.5 wins throughout the offseason, which is not too far from our projection. Wagerers could get the Vikings at +125 to reach the playoffs in early June, when the Patriots were at +120 and the Bears at +160. Neither the house nor the public expects another 14-win season from the McCarthy-led Vikings. Even Vikings fans may be more invested in McCarthy's development and long-term success than another year on the Tilt-a-Whirl, ending with a Monkey's Paw playoff berth.

So it appears that our projections line up with public opinion. Few people honestly believe in the 2025 Vikings as anything but an interesting also-ran with a new quarterback, awesome receivers and a berserker defense.

You may want to purchase your Super Bowl tickets now.

Mike Tanier

## 2024 Vikings by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	at NYG	W	100%	28	6	312	240	0	46%	8%	-37%	1%
2	SF	W	87%	23	17	403	396	0	32%	-9%	-36%	5%
3	HOU	W	100%	34	7	274	296	+2	48%	2%	-37%	8%
4	at GB	W	95%	31	29	374	465	+1	42%	15%	-32%	-5%
5	NYJ	W	88%	23	17	253	254	+1	14%	-31%	-42%	3%
6	BYE											
7	DET	L	13%	29	31	383	391	0	10%	21%	9%	-2%
8	at LAR	L	9%	20	30	276	386	+1	-8%	12%	22%	2%
9	IND	W	96%	21	13	415	227	-1	1%	2%	-18%	-19%
10	at JAX	W	100%	12	7	402	143	0	17%	-37%	-51%	3%
11	at TEN	W	99%	23	13	318	294	0	10%	2%	-10%	-2%
12	at CHI	W	98%	30	27	452	398	0	25%	28%	6%	3%
13	ARI	W	41%	23	22	273	406	+1	0%	6%	3%	-4%
14	ATL	W	100%	42	21	433	496	+3	57%	56%	-5%	-4%
15	CHI	W	97%	30	12	329	284	0	15%	2%	-18%	-5%
16	at SEA	W	55%	27	24	298	361	+2	1%	10%	16%	8%
17	GB	W	89%	27	25	441	271	0	37%	28%	-29%	-21%
18	at DET	L	1%	9	31	262	394	+2	-36%	-38%	-11%	-10%
19	at LAR	L	1%	9	27	269	292	-2	-73%	-54%	12%	-7%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	2.9%	15	-15.5%	2
Unadjusted VOA	2.4%	15	-8.2%	4
Weighted Trend	5.5%	14	-8.2%	6
Variance	5.8%	18	4.8%	16
Average Opponent	-0.3%	16	0.9%	13
Passing	24.7%	12	-12.8%	1
Rushing	-9.6%	20	-20.2%	5
First Down	-1.5%	15	-21.6%	1
Second Down	6.5%	12	-5.5%	9
Third Down	6.2%	13	-19.0%	4
First Half	2.4%	15	-8.9%	3
Second Half	3.5%	13	-22.0%	3
Red Zone	-10.9%	21	2.3%	21
Late and Close	10.4%	15	-14.9%	1

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rank	Off	Rank	Def	Rank	ST	Rank	Off AGL	Rank	Def AGL	Rank	Off Age	Rank	Def Age	Rank	ST Age	Rank
2020	7-9	7.0	6.4	430	475	-1	-11.0%	23	5.4%	9	7.0%	25	-9.4%	31	18.6	5	64.8	30	26.7	16	26.0	23	25.8	21
2021	8-9	8.5	8.9	425	426	+11	4.6%	13	5.1%	13	0.9%	19	0.4%	13	48.5	21	41.4	19	25.9	25	27.7	2	26.1	16
2022	13-4	8.4	5.9	424	427	+2	-15.2%	28	-5.5%	20	5.9%	24	-3.8%	30	16.0	5	34.5	16	26.4	22	27.6	3	25.4	29
2023	7-10	8.0	6.5	344	362	-12	-7.2%	23	-7.9%	23	-3.9%	11	-3.2%	31	28.4	17	32.0	15	26.4	18	26.9	11	25.9	21
2024	14-3	11.1	11.5	432	332	+12	16.1%	7	3.0%	15	-15.5%	2	-2.3%	27	46.8	26	18.5	5	27.2	7	28.3	2	27.4	3

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

MIN Offense					MIN Offense vs. Opponents					MIN Defense					MIN Defense vs. Opponents			
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	
11	59%	6.0	10.3%	25%	Base	28%	6.0	19.0%	51%	Base	25%	5.2	-18.6%	11	61%	5.5	-16.8%	
12	25%	6.3	13.8%	51%	Nickel	63%	6.0	10.8%	37%	Nickel	55%	5.6	-15.1%	12	28%	5.0	-20.2%	
21	13%	5.4	2.5%	60%	Dime+	8%	5.5	-40.2%	3%	Dime+	19%	5.5	-10.0%	13	4%	6.3	1.0%	
22	2%	5.4	21.8%	89%	Goal Line	1%	0.1	-39.4%	71%					21	3%	6.7	0.4%	
13	1%	1.7	-63.6%	78%										612	1%	3.5	-29.3%	

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected		Rk	Formation		Rk	Pass Rush		Rk	Secondary		Rk	Strategy		Rk		
Runs, all	-4.7%	30	Form: Single Back	72%	24	Rush 3		8.1%	2	4 DB		24%	11	Play Action	27%	5
Runs, first down	-0.8%	23	Form: Empty Back	6%	27	Rush 4		53.1%	32	5 DB		55%	28	Offensive Motion	52%	11
Runs, second-long	-11.8%	30	Form: Multi Back	22%	8	Rush 5		28.3%	2	6+ DB		19%	3	Avg Box (Off)	6.13	12
Runs, power sit.	-9.5%	29	Pers: 3+ WR	59%	23	Rush 6+		10.6%	5	Man Coverage		33%	32	Avg Box (Def)	6.04	22
Runs, behind 2H	-5.1%	31	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	28%	18	Edge Rusher Sacks		73.4%	1	MOFC		41%	32	Offensive Pace	30.38	6
Runs, ahead 2H	-5.4%	28	Pers: 6+ OL	0%	28	Interior DL Sacks		8.5%	32	CB1 on WR1		42%	7	Defensive Pace	31.71	20
Run-Pass Options	2.9%	18	Shotgun/Pistol	66%	31	Second Level Sacks		18.1%	23	S/CB Cover Ratio		28%	5	Go for it on 4th	0.83	29

Vikings opponents were called for a league-leading 166 penalties (including declined and offsetting) worth 1,185 yards. That included 15 defensive pass interference flags worth a league-leading 328 yards, nearly 100 yards more than any other offense. The Vikings were the worst offense in the league running in the red zone. Minnesota benefited from a league-high 25 dropped passes according to FTN Data charting, although this was only sixth in the league as far as drop rate. A few tendencies that are clear from defensive coordinator Brian Flores as you look at numbers year after year: lots of blitzes or light rushes of just three, lots of dime, and lots of zone coverage. It wasn't quite as extreme as in 2023 but all those blitzes mean that Vikings opponents love to throw screen passes. The Vikings faced a league-leading 49 wide receiver screens but had -19.9% DVOA with 5.9 yards per play on those passes, much better than their performance the year before. The Vikings also were in the top 10 for running back screens by opponents and were even better on those plays, with a league-best -63.3% DVOA and just 3.8 yards per play.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
S.Darnold*	910	12.3%	592	3943	6.7	4.9	66.7%	35	12
S.Howell	-144	-151.3%	18	3	0.2	1.4	35.7%	0	1

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
J.Jefferson	425	20.9%	154	103	1532	14.9	4.7	10	67%
J.Addison	206	13.3%	99	63	875	13.9	3.4	9	64%
J.Nailor	168	40.0%	42	28	414	14.8	3.8	6	67%
B.Powell*	9	-0.9%	10	7	71	10.1	1.7	0	70%
T.Sherfield*	41	47.2%	9	8	83	10.4	5.0	1	89%
T.J.Hockenson	58	6.6%	62	41	455	11.1	3.5	0	66%
J.Oliver	89	40.6%	28	22	258	11.7	5.9	3	79%
J.Mundt*	14	0.7%	27	19	142	7.5	4.4	2	70%
A.Jones	45	-1.1%	62	51	408	8.0	8.1	2	82%
C.Akers*	21	19.6%	11	10	52	5.2	7.2	2	91%
T.Candler	15	38.9%	6	6	42	7.0	8.8	0	100%
C.J. Ham	-21	-87.1%	6	5	35	7.0	5.8	0	83%
J.Mason	33	25.1%	15	11	91	7.7	4.9	0	79%

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
A.Jones	57	-3.4%	255	1138	4.5	5	3	51%
C.Akers*	-12	-13.5%	64	297	4.6	1	0	47%
T.Candler	-30	-22.1%	56	182	3.3	0	0	39%
S.Darnold*	1	-11.7%	44	206	4.7	1	3	-
J.Mason	52	-0.5%	153	789	5.2	3	3	50%

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
G.Bradbury*	C	30	17/17	1117	4	10	22	3.2%	35	C.Darrisaw	LT	26	7/7	392	4	1	12	5.0%	--
B.Brandel	LG	28	17/17	1117	11	11	32	4.7%	31	R.Kelly	C	32	10/10	601	1	6	5	1.5%	3
B.O'Neill	RT	30	17/17	1100	5	2	20	3.0%	2	J.Skule	RT/LT	29	17/5	361	1	0	15	6.8%	--
C.Robinson*	LT	30	17/17	999	12	4	47	7.7%	35	W.Fries	RG	27	5/5	268	1	1	3	2.0%	--
E.Ingram*	RG	26	16/9	580	2	5	17	4.8%	32	L.Watson	OT	27	4/4	190	8	2	5	4.4%	--
D.Risner*	RG	30	10/8	537	0	4	6	1.8%	4										

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont
2022	4.19	4.24	25	54%	32	24%	31	1.25	13	0.75	17	47	6.6%	14	29.7%	23	36
2023	4.05	4.24	12	65%	19	19%	23	1.31	6	0.48	25	47	8.1%	24	33.1%	27	22
2024	4.28	4.53	12	64%	22	18%	18	1.20	20	0.72	17	49	8.9%	25	34.2%	27	38
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 3.41 (30)				Left Tackle: 5.01 (4)				Mid/Guard: 4.74 (9)			Right Tackle: 4.01 (19)		Right End: 4.97 (4)

The left side of the Vikings offensive line collapsed late last season. Center Garrett Bradbury was a liability as a pass protector for much of the year. Left guard Blake Brandel began fading during the Week 14 squeaker over the Bears. Left tackle Cam Robinson, imported from Jacksonville after Christian Darrisaw underwent knee surgery, was awful in Week 18 and the Vikings' playoff loss. The problem was exacerbated by the feistier opponents the Vikings played down the stretch, and the added pressure accelerated Sam Darnold's transformation back into Shaggy from Scooby-Doo. The Vikings wisely overhauled their entire offensive line in the offseason. Will Fries was enjoying a breakout year at right guard for the Colts before fracturing his tibia. The Vikings won a bidding war against the Seahawks and Cardinals, signing Fries for a reported \$88 million. That's a lot of dough for the second most-famous guard on a non-playoff team coming off a significant injury. Kevin O'Connell said that while Fries was a limited participant in May minicamp, he was "more than likely" to be a full participant in training camp. Center Ryan Kelly, a stalwart starter for the Colts since the Andrew Luck era, suffered a knee injury last November but was back in the lineup by December. First-round pick Donovan Jackson was the Joe Thuney of college football in 2024. A career left guard at Ohio State, Jackson slid out to left tackle when Josh Simmons got injured, battling Abdul Carter to a decision and protecting Will Howard from mere mortal edge rushers en route to a national championship. Brandel is still on the roster, but any competition between him and Jackson at left guard will be nominal. Darrisaw was still on the mend from his October left ACL/MCL tear at press time, with O'Connell saying ever-so-positive-yet-noncommittal things about his progress. Justin Skule, who subbed at both tackle spots for the Buccaneers last season, replaced Darrisaw in minicamps. Jackson may be the team's long-term solution at left tackle. Right tackle and team captain Brian O'Neill will probably be the Vikings' only returning late-season starting lineman. But the 30-year-old O'Neill is due for an extension, and he spoke bluntly about the possibility that the Vikings might soon replace him for rebuilding/cost-cutting reasons. "They're not doing their job if they're not looking for my replacement at some point." Fortunately for O'Neill, the Vikings were too busy this offseason replacing everybody else.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
H.Phillips	29	DT	17	675	60	6.8%	18	43	7	3	51	71%	53	3.1	76	2.0	3	12	4
J.Bullard*	32	DE	17	574	44	5.0%	44	37	10	3	40	83%	16	1.8	19	1.0	2	7	2
J.Tillery*	29	DE	17	467	30	3.4%	77	19	4	2	26	62%	81	2.6	55	0.0	3	6	2
J.Redmond	26	DE	13	208	20	3.0%	--	18	10	0	13	92%	--	-0.2	--	1.0	0	4	1
J.Allen	30	DT	8	301	19	4.8%	49	14	5	3	13	69%	59	3.8	87	3.0	4	8	0

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
A.Van Ginkel	30	OLB	17	922	85	9.6%	1	57	31	9	40	63%	80	3.3	79	11.5	9	33	3
J.Greenard	28	OLB	17	918	62	7.0%	14	53	26	11	36	83%	16	1.6	18	12.0	12	55	6
J.Ward*	31	OLB	17	467	11	1.2%	101	11	5	1	7	100%	1	2.6	49	1.0	13	16	3
P.Jones*	27	OLB	15	459	39	5.0%	50	34	15	2	24	88%	9	2.0	26	7.0	6	23	1
D.Turner	22	OLB	16	300	18	2.2%	--	12	5	2	8	75%	--	2.6	--	3.0	2	10	1

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush				vs. Pass									
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
B.Cashman	29	ILB	14	895	119	16.3%	17	67	33	12	55	64%	29	3.1	15	4.5	6	31	46	4.1%	42	52%	19	6.3	19	8	0
I.Pace	25	ILB	11	414	70	12.2%	52	46	14	9	47	74%	4	3.1	14	3.0	4	12	17	-6.9%	25	41%	48	8.1	51	1	1
K.Grugier-Hill*	31	ILB	17	179	20	2.3%	--	11	2	2	7	86%	--	2.9	--	0.0	0	1	12	-37.5%	--	33%	--	5.4	--	3	2
E.Wilson	31	ILB	17	558	65	7.7%	77	31	13	16	37	59%	46	3.6	32	2.0	2	8	24	-28.9%	2	25%	75	11.2	74	2	1

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk			
2022	4.08	4.34	16	71%	24	18%	16	1.11	7	0.57	9	38	6.1%	26	24.5%	27			
2023	3.78	4.31	23	64%	13	14%	30	1.03	6	0.29	1	43	7.8%	15	27.8%	21			
2024	4.13	4.25	14	59%	7	17%	17	1.20	16	0.59	7	49	7.6%	12	30.7%	16			
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 4.30 (15)				Left Tackle: 4.47 (23)				Mid/Guard: 4.40 (13)				Right Tackle: 3.26 (5)		Right End: 4.27 (21)	

Brian Flores' defense led the NFL in pass-rush concepts which would require 800 words each to fully explain. Flores isn't truly satisfied unless he's overloading one side of the line AND sending pressure from the opposite side AND either stunting two stand-up edge rushers from the left side or sending Andrew Van Ginkel on a twist that looks like a cloverleaf freeway interchange on the right ... unless Flores is just *faking* all of those things, then only rushing three defenders. Flores favorites such as Van Ginkel, Ivan Pace, Blake Cashman, and Jonathan Greenard are best thought of as rooks and knights on his chessboard, not traditional edge rushers or off-ball linebackers. The Vikings produced a league-high five sacks while rushing just three defenders. On one memorable third-and-3 against the Lions in Week 7, everyone from Pace to the waterboy appeared to be blitzing, but only Greenard and two defensive tackles actually rushed Jared Goff, with everyone else dropping into a nightmarish eight-man zone best described as Tampa-2-Invert-Bathsalts. A baffled Goff stumbled forward in the pocket, only to be sacked by Pace, who was just hanging around in a middle zone looking for busywork. Van Ginkel recorded three sacks when unblocked, Patrick Jones two, Cashman and Harrison Smith one each. Sports Info Solutions recorded just 79 unblocked sacks across the entire NFL in 2024. Dallas Turner got stuck behind Van Ginkel and Greenard after the Vikings traded up to select him with the 17th pick in last year's draft, playing mostly in third-and-long packages. Neither Van Ginkel nor Greenard are going anywhere, so Turner will be stuck again. Exotic pressure packages often leave defenders out of position to stop the run, but the Vikings mitigate that problem through proper fundamentals. Opponents avoided just 52 tackles by Vikings defenders on running plays in 2024, the lowest total in the NFL. Pace and Cashman were particularly reliable in run defense, as were the safeties. Newcomers Jonathan Allen and Javon Hargrave will join Harrison Phillips on the defensive line. Allen's play began to slip last season before he suffered a pectoral injury. He returned late in the year and had a strong game against the Lions in the playoffs, but he's not the all-around defender he was a few years ago. The same likely applies to Hargrave, who was playing well for the 49ers before a Week 3 triceps injury last year, but whose double-digit sack seasons are behind him. Hargrave has always been most effective as a situational pass rusher, and Flores has never met a situation that didn't call for a pass rush!

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age Pos	Overall					vs. Run					vs. Pass														
		G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int	
B.Murphy	27 CB	17	1060	95	10.7%	17	37	21	8	18	39%	57	8.4	76	109	19.0%	40	11.6	-32.7%	6	50%	60	7.5	44	14	6
C.Bynum*	27 FS	17	1032	106	12.0%	28	30	14	8	40	30%	60	7.2	45	22	3.9%	51	7.5	8.6%	31	45%	39	6.5	22	10	3
H.Smith	36 SS	16	1011	97	11.7%	34	37	17	2	37	35%	43	7.8	56	26	4.8%	39	7.6	-13.5%	14	35%	53	8.0	40	10	3
J.Metellus	27 SS	17	991	108	12.2%	27	41	15	6	50	44%	24	4.7	7	52	9.7%	11	5.9	-16.4%	10	50%	28	7.6	36	5	2
S.Gilmore*	35 CB	15	864	65	8.3%	55	27	5	3	12	42%	52	5.9	42	87	18.6%	44	9.8	-13.4%	30	56%	17	6.2	18	9	1
S.Griffin*	30 CB	17	572	47	5.3%	87	19	9	3	8	38%	62	5.1	31	56	18.1%	52	12.1	-5.8%	41	50%	59	8.1	64	6	2
I.Rodgers	27 CB	15	328	28	3.8%	--	15	6	3	6	50%	--	5.3	--	27	16.4%	--	11.4	-19.7%	--	59%	--	6.2	--	4	0
Year	Pass D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk										
2022	27	27.6%	31	0.3%	16	6.0%	23	27.0%	32	-16.2%	5	-1.4%	19	0.8%	16											
2023	11	-1.1%	14	14.7%	24	19.9%	31	15.2%	26	5.1%	22	1.6%	19	6.5%	21											
2024	1	-17.0%	8	0.3%	16	-3.9%	9	-9.1%	8	-9.0%	11	-0.5%	15	-8.6%	11											

Brian Flores deploys dime personnel, with three cornerbacks and three safeties, as often as he can. He also uses a surprising number of two-deep coverage schemes, but good luck identifying such schemes pre-snap, when it looks like he's going to blitz with the entire locker room. ☀️ Byron Murphy established himself as the Vikings' best cornerback last year, earning a reported \$66-million contract in March. Murphy often shadows the opponent's top receiver, even into the slot, though (again) Flores uses tons of disguised coverages. ☀️ Josh Metellus is a box safety/inside linebacker/slot corner/edge rusher hybrid and frequent blitzer. Metellus was due for a contract extension and engaging in a minicamp "hold-in" at press time. He also made offseason news by earning a formal warning for violating the NBA Fan Code of Conduct by getting too rowdy at a Timberwolves game. Good thing he didn't try to blitz the Thunder's free-throw shooter. ☀️ Harrison Smith returns for his 14th season with the Vikings. Smith rotates between box and free safety. It goes without saying that Smith also blitzes frequently. ☀️ Mekhi Blackmon had an impressive rookie season in 2023, then tore his ACL on the first day of training camp last July. The Vikings were being extra cautious with Blackmon at press time, limiting him to individual drills. He's a likely starter at one of the outside cornerback positions. ☀️ Isaiah Rodgers and Jeff Okudah will compete with each other and Blackmon for the second and third cornerback roles. Rodgers signed with the Eagles after three solid seasons with the Colts, missed the whole 2023 season due to a gambling suspension, broke his hand at the end of 2024 training camp, returned to the field in a bit role, nearly cost the Eagles the playoff game against the Rams when he replaced injured Darius Slay and Matthew Stafford began licking his chops, then played sparingly in the Super Bowl. Okudah, the third overall pick by the Lions in 2020, missed nearly all of 2021 with a torn Achilles tendon and never reclaimed his potential. He played just six games for the Texans in 2024 due to a hip injury. ☀️ The one defender who Flores didn't slide all over his 5D chessboard over the last two years was free safety Cam Bynum, who left via free agency for the Colts. Jay Ward, a 2023 fourth-round pick with only 65 defensive snaps over the last two years, was the favorite to replace Ward, though Justin Simmons rumors/clickbait were flying at press time. Remember: a team that blitzes 35% of the time really needs someone in deep centerfield who knows what he's doing.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	-3.8%	30	-8.9	31	-8.4	31	6.4	3	-2.1	20	-7.2	31	0.6	16
2023	-3.2%	31	-9.0	29	-2.7	27	0.0	16	-3.4	23	-1.6	20	6.9	6
2024	-2.3%	27	-1.4	18	-1.5	22	-2.9	24	-1.5	20	-4.8	28	8.6	6

The kicking units are a low-key Vikings weakness. Commander Will Reichard missed four midseason games with a quad injury as a rookie. He then missed some important kicks down the stretch, including a 43-yarder in the narrow win over the Packers in Week 17, prompting rumors that he was still battling injuries. Reichard also ranked last in our gross kickoff values, partly because he had a high touchback rate and touchbacks now have negative value. ☀️ Ryan Wright ranked 24th in the NFL in net yards per punt and was dead last in our gross punting values in 2024. Oscar Chapman, an Aussie by way of Auburn, will push Wright in training camp and probably stick with the team as an International Player Pathway Program participant, meaning he doesn't take up a spot on the practice squad. ☀️ Isaiah Rodgers, Ty Chandler, Rondale Moore ,and others are candidates for the kick and punt return duties, but don't overlook UDFA Silas Moore, a 152-pound junebug who returned punts for touchdowns for both Oregon State in 2023 and Texas in 2024.

# New England Patriots

2024 record: 4-13	Total DVOA: -29.7% (29th)	2025 Mean Projection: 8.1 wins	On the Clock (0-5): 15%
Pythagorean Wins: 5.0 (28th)	Offense: -18.7% (30th)	Postseason Odds: 32.8%	Mediocrity (6-8): 43%
Snap-Weighted Age: 26.4 (20th)	Defense: 12.1% (30th)	Super Bowl Odds: 1.2%	Playoff Contender (9-11): 35%
Average Opponent: -1.2% (19th)	Special Teams: 1.1% (13th)	Proj. Avg. Opponent: -3.8% (29th)	Super Bowl Contender (12+): 8%

2024: Right quarterback, wrong coach.

2025: Right quarterback, right coach?

The post-Tom Brady era in New England has been rough. Nobody expected Mac Jones to be the next Brady or Jerod Mayo to be the next Bill Belichick, but they're just two examples of the constant disappointment this franchise has endured since 2019. Four losing seasons out of five, no playoff victories or division titles, and a quarterback carousel that, at times, even made Browns fans cringe. But a new era of Patriots football has arrived. Mike Vrabel and Drake Maye bring stability to the two most important "positions" in football, and New England is already showing a commitment to surrounding Maye with as much talent as possible. Our projection system thinks progress will be slow, but the foundation for the future is now in place.

The Patriots had four picks in the first three rounds of the draft. They started with a left tackle fourth overall, Will Campbell out of LSU. Next came TreVeyon Henderson in the second, a running back out of Ohio State who could be just as helpful in the passing game as he is on the ground. Then in the third round, they took Kyle Williams, a receiver out of Washington State, and Jared Wilson, a center out of Georgia. Four picks, all geared towards making Maye's development as seamless as possible.

This commitment to Maye is justified. He finished 31st in pass DYAR last season (out of 39 qualifying quarterbacks), but the supporting cast was to blame. The offensive line was a disaster, finishing 31st in ESPN's pass block win rate and 32nd in run block win rate. Maye had a high adjusted sack rate, finishing 35th, but it would have been even worse had he not posted the eighth-fastest average time to throw. Considering who he was throwing to, it's impressive that he was able to get the ball out so quick. Plus, when he did hold the ball, he often made the most of it with his legs. He was second in both scramble yards and scramble DYAR, only trailing fellow rookie Jayden Daniels in both categories. And he did so in only 12 games. Still, Maye can easily cut down on the sacks taken by checking down the ball more often; he was 34th in checkdown rate.

Maye's unwillingness to check the ball down is a consequence of his confidence in his own arm. In addition to the sacks, it also led to him posting the 11th highest turnover-worthy throw rate. But considering how often New England trailed, that's not the end of the world, especially if he can reign it in as the team improves. More importantly, the confi-

dence in his own arm is warranted. Maye was 23rd in DYAR when throwing into tight coverage (a big step up from 31st overall), 23rd in accurate-throw rate, and fourth in highlight-throw rate. When throwing deep, he was second in highlight-throw rate. The guy can sling it, and starting this year, he'll be surrounded by personnel that helps him do so successfully.

The Patriots will have three new starters on the offensive line, including Campbell. Morgan Moses comes over from the Jets to play right tackle, and the center will either be the rookie Wilson or veteran Garrett Bradbury, signed from the Vikings. The line should be better. Still, this must become an offense that can provide Maye with answers to quick pressure.

Demario Douglas, the team's best returning wide receiver, is only good at getting open quickly. He was 85th in average depth of target last season among 89 qualified receivers. Third-rounder Williams is more versatile, but he also uses his quick burst and sharp route running to get open quickly and make guys miss after the catch. If that description sounds like it could just as easily apply to Stefon Diggs, then you have noticed the pattern here. Those are three receivers who can win quickly in addition to the tight ends, Hunter Henry and Austin Hooper, who thrived with Maye at the helm. Josh McDaniels' offenses tend to use a lot of short-to-intermediate option routes, and all these guys fit that tendency perfectly. The big question is whether these receivers can win deep. McDaniels doesn't like to throw deep often, but the threat needs to be there or defenses can sit on the short and intermediate throws, leading to interceptions. Diggs' health, and how much he still has left in the tank, will be key to answering this question.

Those who doubt Diggs will point to the second half of his 2023 season in Buffalo as evidence that he was already falling off before his ACL tear. After posting 205 DYAR and 31.4% DVOA in the first nine weeks of the 2023 season, Diggs dropped to -42 DYAR and -21.3% DVOA in Weeks 10 to 18. He then added zero DYAR and -11.8% DVOA in the playoffs. He had 328 explosive receiving yards on the season, but only 58 from Weeks 10 to 18. One potential explanation for the drop-off is that teams adjusted the way they covered him (and Buffalo as a whole), with more two-deep shells. This is partially true, although this adjustment had already been taking place for over a year. Instead, it was Diggs' yards after the catch that went away. All 58 explosive receiving yards in the second half of the season came on deep passes. Yards af-

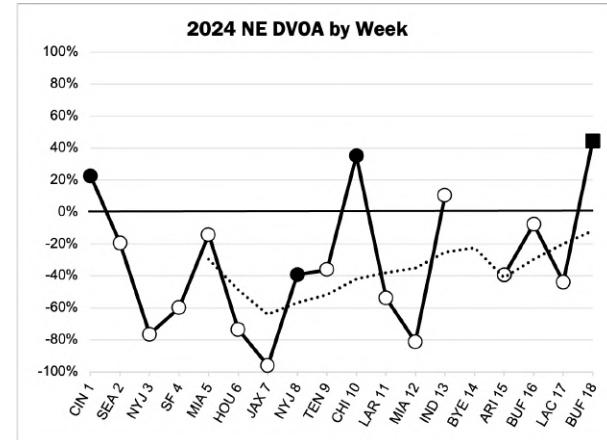
## 2025 Patriots Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	LV	7	at TEN	13	NYG (Mon.)
2	at MIA	8	CLE	14	BYE
3	PIT	9	ATL	15	BUF
4	CAR	10	at TB	16	at BAL
5	at BUF	11	NYJ (Thu.)	17	at NYJ
6	at NO	12	at CIN	18	MIA

ter the catch can be full of randomness, as one missed tackle can lead to a monster gain, but there's not much randomness in zero explosive after-the-catch plays. The only silver lining for Diggs in this regard is that he didn't catch as many balls in the second half of the season because his connection with Josh Allen had deteriorated, thus leaving him with fewer opportunities. Which ... is more like a dull gray lining than silver. Interestingly, however, this same pattern occurred in 2022. Both his YAC and explosive receiving yards halved in the second half of the season compared to the first nine weeks. Given how well he started the 2023 season, it's hard to argue that the drop in the second half of 2022 was evidence that he's washed.

Similarly, Diggs was effective with Houston last year before his season-ending injury. Through Week 8, he was 19th in DYAR, 45th in explosive receiving yards, and 35th in YAC—hardly superstar numbers, but way better than his second half of 2022 or 2023. Plus, he was competing with Nico Collins and Tank Dell for targets. To that point, Diggs was primarily used in the slot, but he was still effective out wide. He was 30th in DYAR and 30th in explosive receiving yards when aligned out wide despite lining up in the slot 54% of the time. He averaged 1.5 yards per route run in the slot, 2.5 out wide. And yes, he was even effective deep. He was 24th in deep receiving yards when lined up out wide despite how infrequently he was given those opportunities. If there's a reason to believe Diggs can still be the guy New England needs him to be, this is it. With Douglas and Williams both fitting more in the slot than out wide, Diggs will have to line up outside most of the time, so it's great to know he can still do so at a high level. But two questions remain: can Diggs still be effective as the No. 1 wideout, or was he benefiting in Houston from Collins' presence? Is he the same guy post-ACL tear? Neither of these questions can be answered before the season starts, but reports out of camp are surprisingly optimistic about how well he's moving.

Kyle Williams may also have some hidden ability to help stretch the field. He was incredibly productive last year at Washington State with a measly 7.5-yard average depth of target, giving him the reputation of someone who exclusively thrives short and after the catch. But the year prior, with Cam Ward as his quarterback, he had a 10.8-yard average depth of target. If defenses choose to leave him in one-on-one opportunities without help over the top, Williams can win quickly and turn those opportunities into explosive plays downfield. In any case, Williams will likely make an immediate impact



given his fit in McDaniels' system and the lack of quality competition other than Diggs (whose presence will help Williams once healthy). It will be interesting to see how the coaching staff uses these receivers.

It's difficult to predict what effect Vrabel will have on the offense. There's a good chance it looks nothing at all like the offenses he coached in Tennessee. For starters, he was a linebacker and then a defensive coordinator before he became the Titans' head coach, and thus was always more involved in the defensive side of things with Tennessee, letting his offensive coordinator at the time, Arthur Smith, run the show. But even any macro-level input he had would have been largely driven by personnel. Derrick Henry, A.J. Brown, and a good offensive line made a run-first, play-action-heavy offensive attack quite effective. But that kind of approach would clash with both the current personnel and the general McDaniels system. So expect Vrabel's impact to be more clearly seen on defense. And contrary to popular belief, Vrabel's Tennessee defenses were never elite (Table 1).

**Table 1. Tennessee Defensive DVOA Ranks under Mike Vrabel**

Year	Total	Pass	Run
2018	17	19	16
2019	17	20	15
2020	28	28	15
2021	10	11	14
2022	19	28	1
2023	18	24	10

We can't draw too many conclusions from his performance with Tennessee since it was just one team (it would be easier to judge him if he coached multiple teams with dramatically different rosters), but there's one clear trend here: Vrabel prioritizes stopping the run. The Titans averaged being 21st in pass DVOA under Vrabel compared to 12th vs. the run. In only one season were they better against the pass than the run, their lone season as a Top-10 defense. A lot of what Vrabel does against the pass sounds great on paper—he disguises coverages, mixes coverage schemes based on opponent more

than most, and simulates pressure more than he actually blitzes. But his over-emphasis on stopping the run has hurt his defenses. They were routinely gashed by play-action (Table 2).

**Table 2. Tennessee's Defense vs. Play-Action under Mike Vrabel**

Year	DVOA	Rk
2018	9.8%	10
2019	19.4%	19
2020	62.4%	32
2021	21.7%	23
2022	44.0%	30
2023	3.0%	8

This is a bit of a brain-twister. How is it that a coaching staff can understand how effective play-action is for their own offense, yet leave themselves so vulnerable to it on the defensive side? A lifetime as a linebacker surely has something to do with it. If this defense is going to outperform our projections, Vrabel will have to make an adjustment here. An optimistic view would be to say that Tennessee's eighth-place finish in DVOA vs. play-action in 2023 suggests that he already has, but that could just be variance since defensive performance vs. play-action is typically volatile. It's also worth noting that by EPA instead of DVOA, the Titans were even less effective against play-action.

On the bright side, New England did invest quite a bit in their defense this offseason. Their offensive focus in the draft was a long-term investment in Maye, but that was made possible by their defensive spending spree in free agency. Milton Williams, an interior pass rusher who thrived opposite Jalen

Carter in Philly, and Carlton Davis, an excellent corner who spent last year in Detroit after years in Tampa Bay, will both help the pass defense in a big way. Davis may prove to be especially important since he solves the issue of teams simply avoiding Christian Gonzalez. The Patriots also spent on linebacker Robert Spillane and pass rusher Harold Landry, both of whom played solid football a season ago. This should be a much-improved defense, but "much improved" from genuinely terrible is still far from good.

Vrabel's greatest strength as a coach appears to be building the culture. Reputations matter when it comes to instilling belief and buy-in from the players, which he should get in the New England locker room. That's something Jerod Mayo was unable to do. It's also a strength, not a weakness, that Vrabel lets his offensive coordinators run the offense instead of interfering where he's less knowledgeable. A good comparison is Dan Campbell. Campbell is widely regarded as one of the best coaches in football despite having a minuscule schematic identity compared to the likes of Kyle Shanahan or Sean McVay. Campbell has created a culture of success and belief in an organization that was starved for both. Vrabel will look to do the same in New England, and his average fourth-down aggressiveness, which was trending up in his final years in Tennessee, will look Campbell-esque compared to the conservative tendencies of Mayo and late-career Bill Belichick.

There are still plenty of "ifs" in the way of success. If Vrabel prioritizes stopping the pass, if Diggs is healthy and effective, if any of these receivers can win downfield, and if Drake Maye continues to develop. But for the first time in the post-Brady era, the Patriots are trending in the right direction. Just don't expect success to come quickly.

Alex Bickle

## 2024 Patriots by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	at CIN	W	85%	16	10	290	224	+2	23%	-9%	-25%	7%
2	SEA	L	11%	20	23	310	358	0	-19%	5%	20%	-5%
3	at NYJ	L	0%	3	24	139	400	-1	-76%	-57%	24%	5%
4	at SF	L	0%	13	30	216	431	-1	-60%	-63%	22%	25%
5	MIA	L	51%	10	15	299	372	+2	-14%	-1%	5%	-8%
6	HOU	L	0%	21	41	291	368	-3	-73%	-35%	31%	-7%
7	at JAX	L	0%	16	32	295	364	0	-96%	-41%	38%	-17%
8	NYJ	W	18%	25	22	248	336	0	-39%	-16%	20%	-3%
9	at TEN	L	28%	17	20	295	400	-2	-36%	-26%	28%	18%
10	at CHI	W	99%	19	3	328	142	-1	35%	-1%	-37%	-2%
11	LAR	L	1%	22	28	382	402	-2	-54%	-6%	48%	0%
12	at MIA	L	0%	15	34	269	373	-1	-81%	-53%	24%	-4%
13	IND	L	66%	24	25	422	253	+1	11%	14%	3%	0%
14	BYE											
15	at ARI	L	2%	17	30	311	395	-1	-39%	-14%	17%	-8%
16	at BUF	L	22%	21	24	379	324	-2	-8%	-10%	-2%	1%
17	LAC	L	0%	7	40	181	428	-1	-44%	-39%	12%	7%
18	BUF	W	91%	23	16	309	259	-1	44%	5%	-28%	11%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	-18.7%	30	12.1%	30
Unadjusted VOA	-16.9%	29	15.2%	30
Weighted Trend	-16.1%	28	10.3%	29
Variance	5.7%	17	5.5%	21
Average Opponent	0.6%	21	0.1%	18
Passing	-1.3%	24	24.2%	29
Rushing	-25.2%	32	-1.2%	28
First Down	-18.3%	31	13.3%	29
Second Down	-6.7%	23	9.9%	26
Third Down	-38.1%	31	13.5%	29
First Half	-12.1%	27	19.7%	31
Second Half	-24.7%	29	4.6%	28
Red Zone	-29.3%	30	11.2%	28
Late and Close	-10.5%	25	6.6%	16

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rank	Off	Rank	Def	Rank	ST	Rank	Off AGL	Rank	Def AGL	Rank	Off Age	Rank	Def Age	Rank	ST Age	Rank
2020	7-9	7.2	7.7	326	353	+3	-2.7%	17	-5.3%	23	5.5%	24	8.1%	1	83.5	31	51.3	23	26.4	23	27.3	3	27.5	1
2021	10-7	12.6	9.3	462	303	+7	16.0%	8	7.0%	10	-9.0%	6	0.0%	18	39.2	11	36.5	17	26.4	19	27.8	1	28.7	1
2022	8-9	9.0	8.3	364	347	+7	-1.2%	16	-7.6%	23	-10.6%	5	-4.3%	32	30.5	13	26.1	4	26.7	14	27.9	2	27.5	1
2023	4-13	4.5	5.3	236	366	-11	-15.9%	27	-17.2%	29	-4.4%	9	-3.1%	29	64.2	30	63.8	32	26.8	12	27.0	7	28.1	1
2024	4-13	5.0	4.9	289	417	-11	-29.7%	29	-18.7%	30	12.1%	30	1.1%	13	52.4	28	40.8	16	25.9	28	26.9	10	26.1	19

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

NE Offense					NE Offense vs. Opponents					NE Defense				NE Defense vs. Opponents			
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA
11	60%	5.1	-18.7%	32%	Base	18%	4.2	-14.1%	58%	Base	32%	5.1	8.0%	11	53%	5.4	6.7%
12	31%	5.0	-3.6%	37%	Nickel	70%	5.0	-14.6%	34%	Nickel	51%	6.3	16.6%	12	23%	6.2	25.9%
612	3%	4.2	-27.0%	82%	Dime+	12%	5.7	-8.5%	13%	Dime+	16%	4.5	0.2%	21	12%	6.0	21.2%
611	2%	4.0	-8.3%	75%						Goal Line	1%	3.3	48.0%	13	4%	4.7	9.5%
21	1%	4.9	-3.8%	33%										22	3%	3.9	-33.2%

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected	Rk	Formation	Rk	Pass Rush	Rk	Secondary	Rk	Strategy	Rk							
Runs, all	+2.2%	13	Form: Single Back	81%	3	Rush 3	4.5%	8	4 DB	28%	3	Play Action	17%	31		
Runs, first down	+5.8%	9	Form: Empty Back	9%	11	Rush 4	64.6%	25	5 DB	51%	32	Offensive Motion	39%	27		
Runs, second-long	+0.4%	13	Form: Multi Back	10%	29	Rush 5	24.5%	9	6+ DB	16%	6	Avg Box (Off)	6.07	15		
Runs, power sit.	+2.0%	21	Pers: 3+ WR	60%	22	Rush 6+	6.5%	14	Man Coverage	56%	10	Avg Box (Def)	6.15	9		
Runs, behind 2H	+3.7%	14	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	39%	8	Edge Rusher Sacks	51.8%	15	MOFC	66%	4	Offensive Pace	33.00	31		
Runs, ahead 2H	+7.1%	8	Pers: 6+ OL	6%	6	Interior DL Sacks	21.4%	27	CB1 on WR1	58%	1	Defensive Pace	32.28	30		
Run-Pass Options	6.6%	2	Shotgun/Pistol	77%	19	Second Level Sacks	26.8%	6	S/CB Cover Ratio	24%	7	Go for it on 4th	0.70	32		

Drake Maye really struggled with blitzes in 2024, going from 6.6 yards per pass with four pass rushers to 4.4 yards per pass with five or more. Only Anthony Richardson and Deshaun Watson had lower DVOA when facing a five or more pass rushers. The Patriots faced man coverage 59% of the time, second in the league behind Philadelphia, after leading the league at 57% in 2023. The Patriots had an imbalance on offense, throwing to the right side 45% of the time (third) but to the left side 31% of the time (30th). The Patriots had a league-worst -31.9% DVOA when running the ball with three or more wide receivers on the field. With Christian Gonzalez healthy and with a year of experience under his belt, the Patriots went from 31% (30th) to 58% (first) in “CB1 on WR1.” The Patriots recovered only two of 17 fumbles on defense.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
D.Maye	-103	-15.4%	371	2047	5.5	5.3	66.8%	15	10
J.Brissett*	-235	-32.4%	178	712	4.0	4.7	59.4%	2	1
J.Milton*	116	53.6%	29	226	7.8	3.3	78.6%	1	0
J.Dobbs	10	-7.9%	48	333	6.9	3.2	69.6%	2	2

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
D.Douglas	45	-6.1%	87	66	621	9.4	5.4	3	76%
K.Boutte	80	1.8%	68	43	589	13.7	3.5	3	63%
K.Bourne	22	-5.7%	38	28	305	10.9	3.4	1	74%
J.Polk	-127	-60.6%	33	12	87	7.3	1.1	2	36%
KJ Osborn*	-55	-52.7%	18	7	57	8.1	2.3	1	39%
T.Thornton*	3	-7.1%	8	4	47	11.8	6.0	0	50%
S.Diggs	78	3.1%	64	47	496	10.6	3.9	3	73%
M.Hollins	112	15.1%	50	31	378	12.2	2.9	5	62%
H.Henry	58	1.8%	97	66	674	10.2	4.1	2	68%
A.Hooper	57	7.7%	59	45	476	10.6	5.0	3	76%
R.Stevenson	-20	-22.3%	42	33	173	5.1	7.1	1	80%
A.Gibson	53	19.0%	30	23	206	8.7	8.9	0	79%
J.Hasty*	4	-7.5%	12	10	59	5.9	7.2	1	83%

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
R.Stevenson	-81	-17.8%	207	807	3.9	7	6	49%
A.Gibson	4	-7.9%	120	537	4.5	1	2	45%
D.Maye	84	21.3%	52	397	7.6	2	4	-
J.Hasty*	-21	-33.2%	20	69	3.5	0	0	45%
T.Jennings	-6	-22.7%	13	33	2.5	0	0	23%
J.Brissett*	-12	-27.8%	12	64	5.3	0	1	-
J.Milton*	-5	-20.9%	7	14	2.0	1	1	-
J.Dobbs	-11	-39.0%	8	25	3.1	2	1	-

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
M.Onwenu	RG/RT	28	17/17	1021	4	12	23	3.6%	22	L.Robinson	RG/LG	24	13/11	603	5	5	15	4.0%	26
D.Jacobs	RT	27	15/13	867	11	11	50	9.2%	37	D.Andrews*	C	33	4/4	194	2	2	3	2.5%	--
V.Lowe	LT	26	14/13	804	13	12	31	6.1%	26	S.Sow	G	27	12/1	155	1	0	5	5.1%	--
M.Jordan*	LG	27	12/11	685	2	7	14	3.2%	16	G.Bradbury	C	30	17/17	1117	4	10	22	3.2%	35
B.Brown	C	27	10/10	667	2	10	8	1.9%	13	M.Moses	RT	34	14/14	722	8	5	22	4.6%	9

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont
2022	4.67	4.36	19	59%	27	19%	25	1.31	9	0.99	6	41	8.4%	25	25.5%	11	30
2023	3.72	4.08	22	68%	13	20%	25	1.06	22	0.31	31	48	7.5%	20	27.5%	12	20
2024	4.01	4.05	27	55%	31	19%	24	1.16	23	0.63	19	52	9.3%	29	36.9%	31	18
2024 ALY by direction:		Left End: 3.83 (25)				Left Tackle: 3.14 (31)				Mid/Guard: 4.13 (26)				Right Tackle: 4.30 (15)			

The offensive line needed a makeover, and it got one. Will Campbell was widely regarded as the best lineman in the draft, even if many point to his lack of arm length as a reason to move him to guard. Mike Vrabel doesn't seem to care, so Campbell will start at left tackle. Campbell will likely be successful from go as a downhill run blocker, but the league's best edge rushers should take advantage of his lack of lateral quickness in pass protection for the time being. Fortunately, the Patriots have a handful of skilled pass rushers helping him in OTAs as well as new teammate Morgan Moses. Moses was part of another bad offensive line with the Jets last year, but his individual play was strong, particularly as a pass protector. Moses and Campbell make for a vastly improved tackle tandem versus what Drake Maye had in his rookie year. 🔵 Garrett Bradbury, another free agent addition, is expected to start at center. He's a great run blocker but a weak link in pass protection. Cole Strange returned late in the season from a knee injury and was good in pass protection but struggled in the run game. He's expected to start at left guard. It was a small sample size, but there's some concern that the injury hurt his ability to run block, which requires more mobility than pass protection. He was top-10 in run block win rate among interior offensive linemen in 2023. 🔵 Mike Onwenu was one of the lone bright spots on the line last year, even playing some right tackle when necessary. 🔵 Outside of Moses, every player on the starting offensive line has a specialty and at least a potential weakness. Since some are better in pass protection and others are better in the run game, it could mean that they all complement each other well. But it could also mean that they lack an identity as a line and struggle as a unit despite the new pieces. 🔵 Third-rounder Wilson is also capable of playing guard. He's extremely athletic but there are concerns about how well his size and strength will hold up against NFL defensive tackles. He has three paths to starting. Bradbury could struggle in camp, Strange could struggle in camp, or Wilson could show that his strength isn't an issue and that he's ready to use his athleticism to be effective on Day 1. 🔵 Last year's left tackle, Vederian Lowe, is mistake prone. He had his fair share of humiliating blown blocks, committed too many penalties, and was 26th in pass pressure rate allowed among left tackles. With a little more consistency, he could be a capable backup in what is sure to be a better unit overall.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
D.Ekuale*	31	DT	16	722	52	6.3%	21	34	5	6	47	64%	75	3.2	82	1.0	1	8	0
D.Godchaux*	31	DT	17	679	68	7.7%	9	48	2	8	64	70%	55	2.8	68	0.0	1	2	1
J.Pharms	29	DT	16	457	33	4.0%	64	20	4	3	29	62%	78	2.7	62	2.0	3	13	0
M.Williams	26	DE	17	501	25	3.0%	87	18	12	1	18	61%	82	2.7	58	5.0	5	26	2
K.Tonga	29	DT	13	229	22	3.3%	--	17	5	4	21	81%	--	1.8	--	0.0	0	3	0

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
A.Jennings	28	OLB	16	831	79	9.5%	2	56	15	12	70	71%	56	2.3	38	2.5	6	28	1
K.White	26	DE	17	829	61	6.9%	15	41	17	9	37	65%	75	2.9	65	5.0	11	41	7
D.Wise*	31	DE	15	408	31	4.0%	71	25	8	2	21	76%	37	2.4	41	5.0	3	17	1
Y.Ngakoue*	30	OLB	11	239	14	2.5%	--	11	4	1	10	80%	--	2.3	--	1.5	4	12	0
H.Landry	29	OLB	17	879	74	8.9%	4	57	21	5	51.0	78%	30.0	2.7	55.0	9.0	6.0	37	1
K.Chaissone	26	DE	15	508	34	4.5%	61	26	12	5	19.0	74%	46.0	2.8	64.0	5.0	3.0	24	1

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				vs. Pass								
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
J.Tavai	29	OLB	17	915	113	12.8%	46	50	14	10	71	49%	76	3.9	54	1.0	1	10	45	29.0%	71	29%	72	8.8	60	5	1
C.Elliss	26	OLB	16	513	77	9.3%	66	36	9	9	48	50%	74	5.5	85	1.5	3	8	21	30.6%	72	43%	43	8.0	49	5	1
R.McMillan*	30	ILB	11	266	44	7.7%	76	21	3	3	30	63%	31	3.9	51	0.0	0	3	9	6.1%	--	0%	--	12.6	--	1	0
S.Tikitaki*	30	OLB	11	194	18	3.2%	--	4	0	4	14	21%	--	4.3	--	0.0	0	0	5	13.5%	--	20%	--	10.8	--	0	0
R.Spillane	30	OLB	17	1095	165	19.2%	4	82	29	11	100	53%	70	4.3	73	2.0	1	13	51	-16.0%	11	45%	35	7.5	41	7	2
J.Gibbons	27	ILB	10	235	41	8.4%	73	17	4	3	24	42%	84	4.4	77	0.5	0	5	9	-9.2%	--	56%	--	8.0	--	0	0

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk			
2022	3.81	4.34	17	69%	19	13%	31	0.92	4	0.37	3	54	8.5%	5	29.4%	7			
2023	3.41	3.77	4	68%	18	15%	29	0.83	1	0.36	3	36	6.2%	28	30.3%	14			
2024	4.63	4.74	28	75%	26	17%	21	1.23	20	0.82	21	28	5.3%	31	25.3%	28			
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 5.36 (29)				Left Tackle: 3.76 (5)				Mid/Guard: 4.81 (24)				Right Tackle: 4.28 (18)		Right End: 5.47 (30)	

The defensive front was already a strength of this New England defense, even if “strength” is a stretch. They were 23rd in pass rush win rate and 16th in run stop win rate. They were also 13th in average time to pressure, so their lack of sacks can largely be blamed on the secondary. With their off-season additions, the front could be downright good. Christian Barmore dealt with blood clots in 2024, but he was great against the run in 2023, finishing 11th in run stop win rate among defensive tackles. Khyiris Tonga was brought in from Arizona and will man the middle on run downs. They’re joined by Milton Williams, who was an integral part of Philadelphia’s Super Bowl run. Williams is a premiere pass rusher, but his aggression can work against him in the run game. He could be a difference maker, but there is one question mark. Jalen Carter commands so much attention from defenses that Williams got tons of one-on-one opportunities. As the focal point of opposing offensive line in pass protection, he may have a tougher time. He wouldn’t be the first: Javon Hargrave had trouble matching his Philadelphia level of production in San Francisco when he was no longer lining up next to Jalen Carter or Fletcher Cox. This is a good landing spot for Williams though; New England likely won’t try to rein in his aggression since he’s the lone pass-rushing specialist on the defensive line. Harold Landry III has an interesting data divide. In his last three seasons (he missed 2022), he has averaged 10.5 sacks per year, a strong average. He was 18th last season with 9.0 sacks. By our charting, he was 43rd in total pressures last year with 37, which already puts him at a high sack-per-pressure ratio. Pro Football Reference, however, only credits him with 18 pressures, good for 79th. Pro Football Focus also graded him as an elite run stuffer but a poor pass rusher. Part of the divide between our pressure numbers and others is FTN’s generosity towards pass rushers in our definition of a “pressure.” However, given how high his sack-per-pressure ratio is already when using our pressure data, it’s shocking how few pressures others charted for Landry. There’s a good chance his sack numbers regress, but he can always be counted on to stop the run. Anfernee Jennings, the other starting edge defender, is also a better run defender than pass rusher. If nothing else, Mike Vrabel has the personnel up front to stop the run without the inside linebackers biting on every play fake. Robert Spillane might be even better than New England realizes—or perhaps this is why the Patriots went after him. Spillane was criticized at times for his coverage skills last season, but he covered a handful of the league’s best running backs, so his coverage DVOA

looks good after the opponent adjustment. Christian Elliss brings more balance to the linebacker crew as another well-rounded player. Both of these guys will be tested in coverage as opponents look to avoid the corners. 🔥 Fourth-rounder Joshua Farmer (tackle, Florida State) and fifth-rounder Bradyn Swinson (edge, LSU) have a good chance to earn pass-rushing snaps early on if they impress in camp. Some draftniks expected Swinson to go earlier on draft day and hopefully Mike Vrabel can improve his maturity issues. 🔥 K'Lavon Chaisson and Keion White are both edge rushers who will get plenty of reps in obvious passing situations as both have proven they can rush the passer effectively.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age Pos	Overall							vs. Run							vs. Pass										
		G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int	
C.Gonzalez	23 CB	16	978	70	8.4%	53	23	10	5	18	17%	89	9.2	81	88	19.5%	34	12.2	-18.9%	21	58%	11	6.0	12	11	2
K.Dugger	29 SS	13	759	83	12.3%	24	34	13	14	38	45%	22	5.1	11	30	8.6%	17	7.3	27.8%	49	43%	42	7.9	39	4	0
J.Jones*	32 CB	17	712	64	7.3%	72	21	8	4	15	27%	82	7.3	65	52	15.8%	74	10.7	15.1%	80	54%	31	9.0	83	6	0
J.Hawkins	28 FS	17	612	43	4.9%	92	8	3	4	27	22%	82	9.3	81	9	3.2%	--	6.3	17.7%	--	33%	--	6.4	--	1	0
M.Jones	27 CB	14	586	68	9.4%	38	30	14	3	15	60%	18	4.9	25	57	21.1%	23	13.7	7.8%	67	60%	8	8.4	68	10	1
M.Mapu	26 SS	10	486	48	9.3%	65	24	10	7	27	52%	10	4.8	9	22	9.8%	10	7.7	3.2%	25	50%	29	6.6	24	6	1
J.Peppers	30 FS	6	372	41	13.2%	18	17	6	2	22	41%	27	5.9	26	5	2.9%	--	3.4	-48.2%	--	20%	--	7.2	--	2	1
D.Pettus	24 SS	17	341	30	3.4%	--	13	6	1	16	50%	--	6.6	--	15	9.5%	--	8.7	-5.3%	--	60%	--	7.3	--	2	0
A.Austin	24 CB	9	234	14	3.0%	--	7	3	1	0	0%	--	0.0	--	22	20.4%	--	13.7	5.0%	--	55%	--	4.5	--	5	0
C.Davis	29 CB	13	697	67	11.0%	12	35	14	8	22	64%	15	4.4	17	86	22.7%	15	9.4	-4.2%	46	55%	26	7.6	51	11	2

Year	Pass D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	3	-35.3%	2	9.2%	21	-9.1%	10	-18.6%	3	2.5%	19	-9.5%	10	1.6%	19	
2023	15	-41.2%	1	5.8%	18	28.7%	32	6.8%	19	-11.1%	11	-0.6%	14	16.8%	27	
2024	29	19.1%	25	19.9%	30	-5.2%	7	4.0%	21	21.5%	26	7.7%	23	-5.0%	13	

Last year's defense had a glaring issue: the second outside corner. Christian Gonzalez is one of the best corners in the league already, but opposing teams were able to just avoid him. The Patriots were consequently the fourth-easiest matchup for opposing WR2s according to FTN's DVOA-adjusted fantasy points against (which is a great proxy for total production allowed). So the Patriots went out and got Carlton Davis. Davis was criticized for allowing big plays in Detroit, but they had zero pass rush and blitzed a ton once Aidan Hutchinson got hurt. Any corner would have failed at times in those circumstances. Overall, he was still very good. Davis and Gonzalez are instantly one of the best cornerback tandems in the league, and they're not the only studs in this secondary. 🔥 Marcus Jones first made a name for himself with his blazing speed as a return man, but he has become quite the nickel corner. He's good in coverage and a beast in run support. Vrabel will absolutely love him. And then there's Jabrill Peppers, an all-around playmaker who excels in both run support and coverage. Four of five starters in the secondary are great, but secondaries can often be defined by their weak link. 🔥 The other safety spot is the Achilles heel of the defense. Kyle Dugger really faltered last year, and Jaylen Hawkins and Marcus Epps don't offer an easy solution behind him. Dugger's struggles went beyond his typical coverage limitations. He also missed 14 tackles. Dugger had previously earned a reputation as an aggressive, hard-hitting safety who forced plenty of fumbles. His tackling struggles were likely an over-obsession with his ability to create takeaways. In any case, the Patriots believe in Dugger, as evidenced by the four-year extension they granted him. He was much better in years prior, and the hope is that as he cuts back on the ill-timed risks, his strengths will shine amidst the rest of this secondary. 🔥 The Patriots selected Craig Woodson in the fourth round, a safety out of California who also played both inside and outside corner as a Golden Bear. Woodson shares Dugger's downhill style and he may prove to have a coverage advantage over Dugger that makes it hard to keep him off the field. He has already impressed his teammates in camp, most notably Peppers.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	-4.3%	32	0.1	15	-20.6	32	0.3	13	-10.3	30	7.8	2	6.4	7
2023	-3.1%	29	-14.6	31	3.7	4	5.2	2	-2.9	21	-7.6	32	-7.8	26
2024	1.1%	13	-1.0	17	5.1	3	-2.6	23	-2.0	21	6.5	5	11.4	4

The Patriots spent a sixth-round pick on kicker Andy Borregales out of Miami. Borregales was good in the clutch and has elite range. 🎯 Marcus Jones is still one of the most dynamic punt returners in the league. His five punt returns over 20 yards were second in the league to Marvin Mims and his two returns of 40 or more yards tied for first with Khalif Raymond and Rashid Shaheed. The Patriots haven't let him return kicks since 2022 though, so Antonio Gibson is expected to handle those duties again. 🎯 Bryce Barinder had a good season on gross punt distance, but the Patriots' coverage teams gave back that value on returns. Kickoff coverage was better, and Brenden Schooler was chosen first-team All-Pro for special teams. 🎯 The Patriots were fourth in "hidden" special teams points, as opponents were worse than expected in both field goal accuracy and punt distance.

# New Orleans Saints

2024 record: 5-12  
Pythagorean Wins: 6.9 (22nd)  
Snap-Weighted Age: 27.1 (8th)  
Average Opponent: -2.9% (25th)

Total DVOA: -10.6% (22nd)  
Offense: -9.6% (23rd)  
Defense: 3.5% (21st)  
Special Teams: 2.6% (7th)

2025 Mean Projection: 6.1 wins  
Postseason Odds: 13.3%  
Super Bowl Odds: 0.2%  
Proj. Avg. Opponent: -3.9% (31st)

On the Clock (0-5): 41%  
Mediocrity (6-8): 43%  
Playoff Contender (9-11): 14%  
Super Bowl Contender (12+): 1%

2024: Two weeks of ecstasy followed by three months of agony.

2025: "Your franchise's roster has been sent to a collection agency due to delinquent payments."

They almost got away with it. Before Derek Carr retired, it looked like the Saints would escape serious consequences for four years of salary cap shell games.

The Saints, who were coming off three straight respectable, .500-ish seasons, started the 2024 season with blowout victories over the Panthers and Cowboys. Offensive coordinator Clint Kubiak deployed a throwback two-back attack that made maximum use of playmakers such as Alvin Kamara, Jamaal Williams and, yes, Taysom Hill. Carr operated effectively as a ball-distributing point guard. Veterans such as Cameron Jordan, Tyrann Mathieu, Demario Davis, and Marshon Lattimore kept the defense stable. DVOA's optimistic 9.7-win 2024 preseason projection for the Saints looked prescient: veteran team + creamy schedule = playoff contention, regardless of the price.

Then came stronger opponents, including the Eagles, Chiefs, Buccaneers, and Broncos, none of whom had any problem stopping Kubiak's offense. Injuries quickly piled up. The interior offensive line collapsed first: center Erik McCoy underwent groin surgery, while guards Cesar Ruiz and Lucas Patrick bounced in and out of the lineup. Carr missed three midseason starts with an oblique injury. He returned just in time to lead Chris Olave too far over the middle of the field, resulting in Olave's second concussion in a month. That ended the season for the Saints' top receiver. Cornerbacks Lattimore and Paulson Adebo were both gone by Week 8; Lattimore was traded to the Commanders at the deadline while nursing a hamstring issue that had bothered him for weeks. Rashid Shaheed tore a meniscus. Hill tore his ACL. Carr finally fractured his throwing hand in December and missed the final four games of the season.

The Saints would end the year with 87.3 Adjusted Games Lost to injuries on offense, the worst figure in the NFL. Overall, they suffered 114.6 AGL, the fourth-highest figure in the league.

Any team would be crippled by such injuries, but the Saints' misshapen payroll left them without many rank-and-file backups to fill holes. By season's end, rookie Spencer Rattler was throwing to receivers such as Mason Tippit, Dante Pettis, and Equanimeous St. Brown, with Shane Lemieux and Olisaemeka Udoh blocking for him: a dismal roll call of rookies, late-round picks from weak draft classes, and minimum-wage veterans who had previously been cast

aside by some of the NFL's worst teams.

Dennis Allen, one of the most nondescript NFL head coaches of recent memory, got fired early in the injury spree. Darren Rizzi led the Rattler Brigade through the motions in the second half of the year. Mickey Loomis retained his job, perhaps because he's the only one who knows which wires to snip on the team's many booby-trapped contracts. Kellen Moore, fresh from revitalizing the Eagles offense with his bold MOAR SAQUON tactics, was hired as the caretaker of Loomis' spooky hotel in the mountains. (More on Moore after we discuss the Saints' cap situation, which could take a few dozen pages.)

As "consequences" go for financial shenanigans that would make Charles Ponzi blush, one injury-exacerbated 5-12 season would be small potatoes. Heck, the Jets could do that time standing on their heads. The Saints began the 2025 offseason by noodling through another variation on their reliable veterans/easy division/revolving debt themes. They achieved solvency by converting salaries—most notably Carr's—into signing bonuses. They signed some token veterans (Justin Reid, Brandin Cooks) to signal to fans that dad still has enough money to prevent Christmas from being cancelled.

Then NFL Network's Ian Rapoport reported on April 11 that Carr was dealing with a potentially season-/career-threatening shoulder injury. Later reports suggested that some Saints coaches did not know about the injury until they heard it from Rapoport.

Rumors and recriminations ensued. How hurt was Carr? Who hid what from whom? Carr suffered a family tragedy in the midst of all the speculation and gossip, clouding and overheating the situation. Carr ended a month of speculation by announcing his retirement in May.

We will get to Carr's likely replacements in a moment. But first, look upon the Saints' salary cap expenditures for 2025, and despair:

- Derek Carr gave back his guaranteed 2025 salary, but he will still cost the Saints roughly \$20 million in dead cap space this year due to prorated salary bonuses.
- Marshon Lattimore will cost the Saints over \$31 million in dead cap space. Lattimore, as noted ear-

## 2025 Saints Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	ARI	7	at CHI	13	at MIA
2	SF	8	TB	14	at TB
3	at SEA	9	at LAR	15	CAR
4	at BUF	10	at CAR	16	NYJ
5	NYG	11	BYE	17	at TEN
6	NE	12	ATL	18	at ATL

lier, was traded to the Commanders for second- and fourth-round picks last November.

- Taysom Hill will cost the Saints just under \$18 million in cap space. Hill tore his ACL in December. There's still hope that the gadget specialist, who turns 35 in August, will be able to play in 2025. Oh, goody gumdrops.
- Ryan Ramczyk will cost the Saints \$12 million in dead cap space. Ramczyk officially retired due to chronic knee injuries in April. He restructured his contract before the start of the league year to help the team—Loomis' most prized possession is the eraser on his contract pencil—but his old bonus money is still on the books.
- Michael Thomas will cost the Saints over \$9 million in dead cap space. Thomas was last relevant in 2019.
- Jameis Winston will cost the Saints over \$7 million in dead space. Winston threw 334 passes in four seasons with the team. He played for the Browns in 2024 and will play for the Giants in 2025.

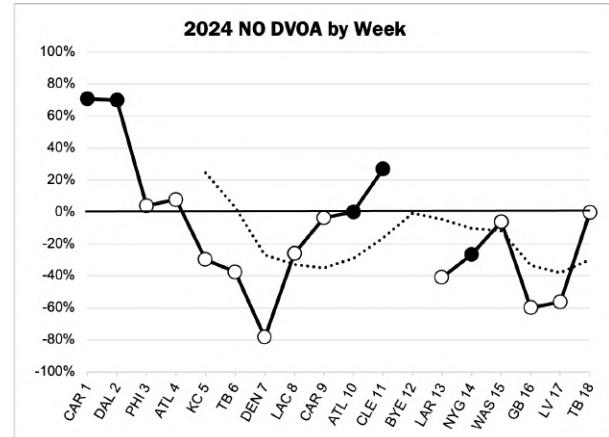
Let's see ... we're at about \$98 million in dead cap hits, plus Taysom. Throw in Jamaal Williams, whose services the Saints leased for two seasons, and we breeze past \$100 million in operating funds that will be squandered on players unlikely to play for the Saints ever again. That's over one third of the Saints total cap room for 2025.

But wait: there's more! Alvin Kamara will cost the Saints over \$10 million as a 30-year-old running back who provided replacement-level production in 2024. Cameron Jordan will cost nearly \$10 million; he turned 36 in July and is two years removed from his last Pro Bowl.

Scrolling down the Saints' ledger, we finally arrive at McCoy, with a cap figure of just over \$8 million. After adding up well over \$120 million in sunk costs and downward-trending investments, we have finally mentioned a Pro Bowl-caliber starter in his prime who is likely to actually play for the Saints. And McCoy, as mentioned earlier, is coming off season-ending hamstring surgery.

In summary, the devil has finally discovered that the Saints are dead, and they are nowhere near heaven.

Because news of Carr's injury developed after free agen-



cy, the Saints couldn't replace him with a veteran even if they scratched together the money to try. The ninth overall pick could have brought Shedeur Sanders or Jaxson Dart. But you know by now how the whole Shedeur fiasco unfolded, and the Saints must not have felt desperate enough to turn to Dart. (The Giants don't need cap debt to make terrible decisions.)

So the Saints drafted Texas offensive tackle Kelvin Banks ninth overall to fill one of the holes on their rickety line, then added Louisville quarterback Tyler Shough in the second round.

Shough will turn 26 early in the season. He is exactly one year older than Rattler; they share the same birthdate. He's about six months younger than 2023 fourth-round pick Jake Haener, who got benched in his one miserable start last year. Shough is older than Trevor Lawrence. He backed up Justin Herbert at Oregon for two seasons. He was in the middle of losing the Oregon job to Anthony Brown when he transferred to Texas Tech, where he battled injuries and bouts of ineffectiveness for three years before transferring again to Louisville, where he threw 23 touchdown passes for a 9-4 team.

If this were baseball, Shough would be a 25-year-old career minor leaguer who finally hit 25 homers for the AAA affiliate. He'll be battling Rattler for the Saints' cleanup spot.

It's worth taking a moment here to discuss the Saints' draft strategy, which for several years has been almost as incomprehensible and damaging as their cap strategy.

Loomis has several self-destructive draft habits. He loves to trade up, for example. The Saints acquired two first-round picks from the Eagles in 2022 in exchange for first-rounders in 2022 and 2023, a 2022 third-rounder, and a 2024 second rounder. They then traded one of those new first-rounders to Washington, plus third- and fourth-rounders in 2022, to move up a few spots for Olave, adding Trevor Penning with the other pick acquired from the Eagles. Olave is a potential superstar (when healthy), but Penning may lose his job to Banks this year, and sliding around to acquire both cost a total of four additional early- to middle-round picks.

Not all of Loomis' draft trade-ups are as splashy as the combo move he used to acquire Olave. Some are simply loopy. The Saints traded a fifth-round pick to the Bears in 2023 to move up 12 spots in the fourth round to select Hae-

ner. They traded fifth- and sixth-round picks in 2024 to move up a few spots in the second round for cornerback Kool-Aid McKinstry. They also traded a third-round pick in 2022 for cornerback Bradley Roby, who was already 29 years old and coming off two injury-marred years.

As a result of all the trade-ups, the Saints often end up with relatively few total draft picks. They selected just four players in 2020, six in 2021, and five in 2022. This year's draft was the first one in which the Saints have selected more than seven players since 2015. That is not normal: most teams end up with an extra pick or two in the draft now and then, whether through trades or the compensatory formula. But the Saints rarely benefit from the compensatory formula, because their veterans never leave, because they are chained to cap-manipulating void years. And when the Saints got a third-round compensatory pick for losing Trey Hendrickson, they tossed it into the Olave package.

Loomis has other draft quirks, and he indulged them again in April. There's the first-round offensive lineman who is more likely to be a starter than a star: Ramczyk (2017), Ruiz (2020), Penning (2022), and Talese Fuaga (2024), plus McCoy with the Saints' top pick (a second-rounder) in 2019. The hit rate here isn't bad, and Saints offensive lines are generally effective when not crippled by injuries: they ranked seventh in adjusted line yards in 2023, 12th in 2022. But McCoy is the only offensive lineman the Saints have drafted in the second or third rounds since Terron Armstead back in 2013. So they end up treading water, swapping out starters one at a time as they get injured or prove ineffective: Fuaga for Ramczyk, Banks for Penning or Ruiz. There's rarely any depth, so injuries to ordinary starters can be catastrophic, as they were last year.

Where do all of Loomis' mid-round picks go, if not to the offensive line? As we saw earlier, some are traded to move up in the draft. Others are invested in quarterback quasi-prospects such as Shough, Rattler, Haener, and 2021's Ian Book. Loomis keeps searching for a Drew Brees type in the draft: undersized (until the 6-foot-5 Shough), more of a touch-passer than a fastballer, already old. (Haener and Rattler, like Shough, arrived with long collegiate backstories.) Each mid-round lottery scratcher has been ineffective enough to force Loomis to try again.

Loomis also loves to draft toolsy developmental edge rushers: Trey Hendrickson (third round, 2017), Zack Baun (third round, 2020), Marcus Davenport (who cost the Saints their 2018 and 2019 first-rounders in a trade), Payton Turner (first round, 2021). Davenport and Turner never panned out and are now in Detroit and Dallas as role players. Hendrickson and Baun turned out to be late bloomers. Drafting late bloomers is a problem for a team that's always working around tens of millions of dollars of unavailable cap space and must be choosy about contract extensions for mid-tier players. So Hendrickson and Baun had All-Pro seasons for the Bengals and Eagles in 2024. Cornerback Paulson Adebo, who has flashed Pro Bowl upside amidst injuries, also fell outside the Saints 2025 operating budget and now plays for the Giants.

All of the draft trades, gambles, and goofy quarterback choices leave the Saints with a perpetual shortage of affordable talent, which is the one thing they need most due to their revolving cap debt. A few undrafted gems such as Shaheed and Carl Granderson have helped mask the problem, but unearthing UDFAs is not a sustainable strategy.

Into this multifaceted roster-mismanagement nightmare tumbles Moore, who built a stellar reputation as a purported offensive mastermind working for unpopular head coaches.

When the Cowboys offense clicked from 2019 through 2022, Moore received credit. When that Cowboys offense stalled, Jason Garrett and then Mike McCarthy were blamed. Moore failed to unlock Justin Herbert's Hall of Fame potential as the Chargers offensive coordinator in 2023, but Herbert's injuries and Brandon Staley's incompetence bore the blame. Moore was credited with making the Eagles offense more dynamic and unpredictable last year; the long early-season stretches when it was not-so dynamic and all-too predictable were Nick Sirianni's fault.

Moore could be an outstanding coach, mind you. But no one really knows what kind of head coach he will be after years as an assistant who was held to little accountability. Moore has an offensive philosophy which can be boiled down to *something something pre-snap motion something something*: anyone writing manifestos about his schematic details is actually writing about the McCarthy/Moore, Garrett/Moore, or Sirianni/Moore systems, or about a handful of Herbert-fueled wins over the 2023 Bears and Jets. In some respects, the Saints gig is perfect for Moore: if he can't turn things around, Loomis will (deservedly) be the culprit, and Moore can leap back into the coordinator pool unscathed.

Staley and Doug Nussmeier will be Moore's coordinators. Staley was a Vic Fangio disciple before his meteoric rise and fall with the Chargers. His genius cred is based on exactly one year (2020) as the Rams defensive coordinator, when he had peak Aaron Donald and Jalen Ramsey on his chessboard. Nussmeier followed Moore from Dallas to the Chargers to Philly to New Orleans as his quarterback coach, where he worked with three well-established young veteran quarterbacks. It's not a terrible staff, but it's full of coaches who looked fine when they had Prescott, Herbert, Saquon, Donald, Ramsey, and others to work with. The Saints possess zero players of such caliber.

Even before the announcement of the Carr injury, when we expected him to be the starting quarterback, the Saints had a mean projection of just 7.6 wins. Now it's around six. The days of veterans-and-schedule-fueled seasons (and projections) around .500 are gone; the veterans are too old, the youngsters too unimpressive, the roster too thin, the quarterbacks too likely to be sub-replacement level. The only thing the 2025 Saints really have going for them is the fact that the Panthers should be roughly as bad, but at least the Panthers have some upside with Bryce Young at quarterback.

As for the future, you will be unsurprised to learn that the Saints are already over the salary cap for 2026. Carr's cap number for next year is roughly \$36 million, and there's not a thing Loomis can do about it. Meanwhile, the void-

year prorated money for the never-ending Taysom, Jordan, Davis, and Matthieu contracts, plus some extra Ramczyk bucks, will eat up tens of millions of additional cap space: again, there are no more secret compartments for Loomis to stuff money into. Younger contributors such as Shaheed and Foster Moreau will become free agents (with void-year money hitting the books if they leave). Olave is due for an extension. Loomis will inevitably keep his job and get an-

other chance to dig his way out of the hole, as owner Gayle Benson and her ownership team appear to be more focused on the NBA's Pelicans and other properties.

In other words: if you thought the Saints suffered cap consequences *last* year and are still dealing with them *this* year, just wait until you see what's in store for them *next* year.

Mike Tanier

## 2024 Saints by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	CAR	W	100%	47	10	379	193	+2	71%	4%	-50%	16%
2	at DAL	W	100%	44	19	432	353	+1	70%	61%	-11%	-1%
3	PHI	L	22%	12	15	219	460	+1	4%	-11%	-10%	5%
4	at ATL	L	73%	24	26	366	315	-1	8%	-9%	-14%	3%
5	at KC	L	1%	13	26	220	460	0	-30%	-10%	17%	-4%
6	TB	L	2%	27	51	303	594	0	-37%	-40%	22%	25%
7	DEN	L	0%	10	33	271	389	-1	-78%	-41%	32%	-5%
8	at LAC	L	2%	8	26	366	378	0	-26%	-7%	12%	-7%
9	at CAR	L	91%	22	23	427	246	+1	-4%	5%	7%	-1%
10	ATL	W	79%	20	17	365	468	+1	0%	-6%	-4%	3%
11	CLE	W	99%	35	14	473	443	-2	27%	38%	28%	17%
12	BYE											
13	LAR	L	4%	14	21	327	322	0	-41%	-6%	28%	-7%
14	at NYG	W	86%	14	11	292	325	0	-27%	-20%	-8%	-14%
15	WAS	L	12%	19	20	245	326	-1	-6%	-25%	-18%	1%
16	at GB	L	0%	0	34	196	404	-2	-60%	-61%	0%	1%
17	LV	L	0%	10	25	269	388	-2	-56%	-42%	19%	4%
18	at TB	L	32%	19	27	292	395	+1	-1%	-4%	5%	8%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	-9.7%	23	3.5%	21
Unadjusted VOA	-5.3%	22	5.8%	23
Weighted Trend	-16.3%	29	7.7%	27
Variance	8.4%	27	4.4%	12
Average Opponent	2.2%	31	-0.1%	19
Passing	-5.8%	29	3.7%	12
Rushing	-5.1%	14	3.2%	30
First Down	-15.5%	29	3.9%	20
Second Down	-10.5%	25	1.3%	18
Third Down	2.2%	16	6.2%	20
First Half	5.1%	13	-2.3%	8
Second Half	-25.2%	30	10.0%	30
Red Zone	4.3%	11	-4.6%	15
Late and Close	-21.7%	30	23.2%	30

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rank	Off	Rank	Def	Rank	ST	Rank	Off AGL	Rank	Def AGL	Rank	Off Age	Rank	Def Age	Rank	ST Age	Rank
2020	12-4	11.4	11.8	482	337	+9	32.0%	1	10.4%	7	-18.1%	2	3.6%	5	29.9	10	19.2	3	27.4	8	27.5	1	26.7	5
2021	9-8	9.4	9.0	364	335	+7	1.9%	17	-12.4%	26	-14.1%	2	0.3%	16	76.5	31	30.5	10	26.3	21	27.1	3	26.1	15
2022	7-10	8.0	8.1	330	345	-11	-3.2%	18	-6.8%	22	-5.1%	9	-1.6%	25	57.2	26	32.5	14	27.4	7	28.0	1	27.0	5
2023	9-8	10.6	9.3	402	327	+11	1.0%	15	-0.6%	17	-0.8%	15	0.8%	14	26.0	16	19.5	5	27.8	1	27.6	2	26.8	6
2024	5-12	6.9	6.0	338	398	-2	-10.6%	22	-9.6%	23	3.5%	21	2.6%	7	87.3	32	27.4	10	26.7	12	27.7	4	26.1	20

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

NO Offense					NO Offense vs. Opponents					NO Defense					NO Defense vs. Opponents				
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA		
11	46%	5.4	-7.4%	27%	Base	37%	5.3	-6.1%	60%	Base	20%	6.1	13.3%	11	72%	6.2	2.6%		
12	22%	5.7	-6.2%	38%	Nickel	52%	5.3	-9.7%	29%	Nickel	64%	5.9	1.2%	12	15%	6.0	10.2%		
21	17%	5.4	-4.8%	58%	Dime+	10%	5.8	-4.7%	16%	Dime+	16%	6.5	7.3%	21	5%	5.6	-8.3%		
22	6%	3.0	-25.7%	68%	Goal Line	1%	7.4	83.2%	67%					13	2%	7.2	40.6%		
13	4%	4.8	-29.7%	47%									10	2%	3.4	-24.9%			

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected	Rk	Formation	Rk	Pass Rush	Rk	Secondary	Rk	Strategy	Rk
Runs, all	+4.9%	8	Form: Single Back	60%	30	Rush 3	6.2%	6	4 DB
Runs, first down	+3.6%	14	Form: Empty Back	10%	9	Rush 4	71.7%	13	5 DB
Runs, second-long	-0.2%	16	Form: Multi Back	29%	3	Rush 5	17.0%	24	6+ DB
Runs, power sit.	+8.9%	12	Pers: 3+ WR	34%	31	Rush 6+	5.1%	21	Man Coverage
Runs, behind 2H	+1.3%	21	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	35%	10	Edge Rusher Sacks	43.6%	24	MOFC
Runs, ahead 2H	+8.7%	7	Pers: 6+ OL	2%	17	Interior DL Sacks	28.2%	16	CB1 on WR1
Run-Pass Options	2.0%	26	Shotgun/Pistol	69%	28	Second Level Sacks	28.2%	2	S/CB Cover Ratio
							31%	4	Go for it on 4th
									0.89
									23

The Saints had 7.7 yards per play and 59.2% DVOA on 27 plays with Taysom Hill lined up at quarterback. The Saints led the league with 6.9 yards per carry and 41.4% DVOA when running on second-and-long. The Saints threw a league-high 26% of targets to running backs. The Saints dropped from 83% single-back formations (fourth) in 2023 to 60% (30th) in 2024, and they used multi-back formations about three times as often as they did the year before. The Saints ranked 25th in adjusted sack rate on first and second down (8.4%) but only Baltimore had a lower adjusted sack rate on third and fourth down (2.0%). Before halftime, the Saints ranked 13th in offensive DVOA and eighth in defensive DVOA. After halftime, the Saints ranked 30th on both sides of the ball. The “CB1 on WR1” number represents Marshon Lattimore before his injury and subsequent trade to Washington. The Saints defense ranked fourth against the pass in the red zone but 31st against the run. Rivals New Orleans and Atlanta benefited the least from opponent dropped passes in 2024, with a 2.4% drop rate against each defense. This was the fourth straight year where the Saints ranked in the top five for second-level sacks. The Aggressiveness Index number listed is for Dennis Allen, but Darren Rizzi was roughly the same (0.93).

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
D.Carr*	392	10.4%	287	2086	7.3	5.8	68.0%	15	5
S.Rattler	-400	-37.8%	249	1181	4.7	4.9	57.3%	4	5
J.Haener	-95	-42.6%	45	171	3.8	5.4	46.2%	1	1

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
A.Kamara	21	-6.4%	228	950	4.2	6	0	52%
J.Williams*	-36	-25.7%	48	164	3.4	1	0	46%
K.Miller	26	8.0%	39	148	3.8	1	0	49%
T.Hill	75	20.4%	39	278	7.1	6	0	-
J.Mims	-27	-40.8%	20	70	3.5	0	0	40%
S.Rattler	42	34.8%	17	142	8.4	0	1	-
D.Carr*	-17	-30.0%	15	68	4.5	1	1	-
C.Edwards-Helaire	4	-0.6%	13	46	3.5	0	0	46%
R.Shaheed	13	11.6%	6	29	4.8	0	0	-
J.Haener	0	-12.1%	5	28	5.6	0	0	-
C.Akers	-54	-22.6%	104	444	4.3	2	1	41%

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
C.Olave	74	8.7%	44	32	400	12.5	3.8	1	73%
R.Shaheed	41	0.6%	41	20	349	17.5	5.3	3	49%
M.Valdes-Scantling*	69	11.7%	35	17	385	22.6	8.1	4	49%
D.Pettis	-46	-35.7%	28	12	120	10.0	3.0	1	43%
C.Wilson	16	-4.9%	27	20	211	10.6	4.5	1	74%
M.Tipton	-76	-51.3%	26	14	99	7.1	1.9	0	54%
K.Austin	-30	-29.5%	22	11	151	13.7	3.4	0	50%
B.Means	21	5.4%	15	9	118	13.1	2.2	1	60%
B.Cooks	-44	-22.6	54	26	259	10	2.1	3	48%
J.Johnson	34	0.8%	66	50	548	11.0	4.2	3	76%
F.Moreau	93	23.8%	43	32	413	12.9	4.9	5	74%
T.Hill	-31	-22.8%	31	23	187	8.1	6.0	0	74%
A.Kamara	7	-12.4%	89	68	543	8.0	8.0	2	76%
J.Mims	-34	-46.8%	18	12	71	5.9	6.7	0	67%
J.Williams*	8	-0.7%	11	9	57	6.3	5.9	0	82%
K.Miller	-16	-47.1%	8	5	33	6.6	6.6	0	63%
C.Akers	15	1.8%	18	14	68	4.9	5.9	3	78%

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
T.Penning	RT	26	17/17	1082	12	8	31	4.8%	12	C.McGovern*	C	32	7/5	369	2	5	5	2.3%	--
T.Fuaga	LT	23	17/17	1071	10	7	31	4.8%	17	N.Saldiveri	LG	25	11/6	344	0	3	10	4.8%	--
C.Ruiz	RG	26	13/13	814	1	10	9	1.8%	5	S.Lemieux*	G	28	7/4	338	0	0	5	2.5%	--
L.Patrick*	LG	32	11/10	563	7	6	9	2.7%	6	E.McCoy	C	28	7/7	293	2	0	1	0.6%	--
L.Young	RG	28	17/5	393	1	4	14	5.9%	--	D.Radunz	RG	27	15/15	902	4	6	17	3.1%	16

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont	
2022	3.88	4.49	12	74%	9	16%	8	1.06	28	0.29	32	38	7.7%	19	20.5%	3	20	
2023	3.54	4.38	7	71%	10	19%	19	0.97	28	0.23	32	35	6.6%	9	24.8%	4	26	
2024	3.96	4.15	22	69%	11	22%	30	1.34	8	0.38	29	37	6.5%	13	32.6%	23	22	
2024 ALY by direction:		Left End: 4.67 (13)				Left Tackle: 4.59 (11)				Mid/Guard: 4.58 (15)				Right Tackle: 3.93 (23)				Right End: 2.50 (30)

The Saints opened minicamps with rookie Kelvin Banks taking first-team reps at left tackle. Taliese Fuaga, last year's first-round pick, grew into his role at left tackle as the season progressed but started minicamp back at right tackle, his college position. Trevor Penning, a 2022 first-round pick, has slid inside to guard. Kellen Moore did not want Penning's move inside to be viewed as a demotion, even though 99% of moves from tackle to guard are de facto demotions. "His physicality is what jumps off the tape, so we'll allow him to play fast, free and confident because when he plays like that, he's going to be a really, really good player," Moore said of Penning. Moore also pointed to the success of Mekhi Becton, who successfully moved from left tackle for the Jets to right guard for Moore's Eagles. Banks started at left tackle for three seasons at Texas, but many draft experts projected him as a guard. Granted, many draft experts project anyone who doesn't look and play like Orlando Pace as a guard, but Banks was a piledriving run blocker who needs more polish as a pass protector than the typical collegiate left tackle prospect. Moore plans to cross-train his linemen, so Fuaga could end up back on the left side. Or the Saints could protect their (likely) rookie starting quarterback with a rookie left tackle. That could be interesting. Center Erik McCoy and right guard Cesar Ruiz were back on the field for the start of minicamps after missing chunks of last season. The Saints squeezed Dillon Radunz into their budget for depth. Radunz was the Titans' answer to Trevor Penning: a smaller-program tough guy drafted a little too early who slowly slid from being the potential left tackle of the future to super-sub status to bargain-bin free agency. Radunz has played all four non-center positions in the NFL and could end up doing the same for the 2025 Saints.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Overall												vs. Run				Pass Rush			
	Age	Pos	G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt	
B.Bresee	24	DT	17	709	28	3.1%	85	22	14	8	16	63%	77	3.9	88	7.5	7	27	5	
N.Shepherd	32	DT	16	568	37	4.3%	60	24	4	3	34	65%	71	2.7	64	1.5	4	11	0	
K.Saunders	29	DT	13	461	46	6.6%	20	26	5	3	36	56%	88	4.0	90	2.0	3	8	2	
J.Ridgeway	26	DT	13	264	16	2.3%	--	12	2	4	15	73%	--	2.5	--	0.0	0	4	1	
D.Godchaux	31	DT	17	679	68	7.7%	9	48	2	8	64	70%	55	2.8	68	0.0	1	2	1	

Edge Rushers	Overall												vs. Run				Pass Rush			
	Age	Pos	G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt	
C.Granderson	29	DE	17	826	65	7.1%	12	54	17	13	50	84%	14	2.2	33	5.5	6	45	5	
C.Young	26	DE	17	742	33	3.6%	78	28	17	3	18	89%	5	1.4	12	5.5	15	44	3	
C.Jordan	36	DE	17	565	38	4.1%	68	29	9	6	26	73%	51	2.6	52	4.0	4	23	7	
P.Turner*	26	DE	16	335	23	2.7%	--	14	5	6	15	47%	--	3.7	--	2.0	1	6	4	

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run				Pass Rush				vs. Pass										
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
D.Davis	36	MLB	16	1092	143	16.6%	15	76	14	12	94	61%	42	3.7	35	2.0	2	9	43	-17.3%	10	42%	45	7.3	35	7	1
P.Werner	26	OLB	13	732	93	13.3%	44	48	6	9	53	49%	78	4.3	75	0.0	0	4	39	12.8%	59	59%	11	7.2	33	1	0
W.Gay*	27	OLB	15	277	25	3.1%	--	13	4	5	11	45%	--	4.1	--	2.0	0	5	13	-76.6%	1	54%	16	8.8	61	3	0

## 176 NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk
2022	4.47	4.44	20	70%	21	16%	24	1.24	19	0.72	17	48	8.7%	4	23.6%	30
2023	4.17	4.23	19	56%	3	17%	20	1.16	17	0.62	16	34	5.5%	31	26.1%	28
2024	4.85	4.99	30	68%	17	12%	31	1.43	29	0.78	19	39	6.7%	25	28.1%	26
2024 ALY by direction: Left End: 4.53 (18) Left Tackle: 4.87 (28) Mid/Guard: 4.97 (28) Right Tackle: 5.07 (28) Right End: 5.56 (31)																

Cameron Jordan is two days older than his head coach; Jordan turned 36 on July 10, Kellen Moore on July 12. Defensive coordinator Brandon Staley had Jordan lining up as a stand-up edge rusher at the start of minicamp, although Jordan has been more of a three-point-stance defensive end for most of his career. Nothing screams “logical plan” like asking one of the oldest players on the team to adjust to a new role which emphasizes speed over power. 🏈 Linebacker Demario Davis missed the first game of his 13-year career last season. Davis used to be one of the NFL’s top all-purpose linebackers, but he infrequently blitzes nowadays and has lost a step in coverage. He’s also older than Moore and Jordan, having turned 36 in January. 🏈 Linebacker Pete Werner had a good success rate in coverage but was targeted a lot when he was on the field. 🏈 Chase Young’s 5.5-sack comeback season deflates significantly the more you study it, which makes his reported \$51-million contract look, well, very Saints-like. Young had some moments where he flashed the agility and power that once made him the second overall pick in 2020. But he also generated lots of pressures by chasing Bryce Young around and harassing Drew Lock when Joshua Ezeudu was subbing for Andrew Thomas as the Giants’ left tackle. With Carl Granderson handling one edge position well and Jordan still in the Saints’ plans, Young may remain in a rotational role. 🏈 The Saints traded a 2026 seventh-round pick for Davon Godchaux, a 330-pound space-eating tough guy from the Patriots who turns 31 in November. So yes, the Saints somehow found a way to get older on their defensive front, though at least not older than the head coach this time. And someone named Godchaux is likely to end up in N’Awlins sooner or later.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run						vs. Pass												
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
A.Taylor	27	CB	17	1076	105	11.5%	9	41	16	15	31	35%	70	5.6	39	97	18.8%	43	10.7	20.7%	84	52%	49	8.8	78	16	0
T.Mathieu	33	FS	17	1016	69	7.5%	75	17	10	13	29	21%	87	8.9	75	9	1.9%	--	11.9	-9.7%	--	22%	--	19.4	--	7	3
W.Harris*	30	SS	13	861	78	11.1%	41	26	14	7	40	28%	68	6.8	40	27	6.5%	28	7.7	15.4%	39	59%	13	8.2	41	5	1
K.McKinstry	23	CB	15	680	47	5.8%	83	18	6	7	13	38%	58	9.6	83	58	17.8%	55	14.2	-15.7%	26	53%	32	8.8	79	6	0
J.Howden	25	SS	17	552	49	5.3%	89	16	7	1	24	29%	62	7.5	53	8	3.0%	--	9.5	-17.4%	--	25%	--	9.3	--	2	2
U.Amadi	28	FS	11	527	70	11.8%	30	33	16	7	25	40%	29	5.2	12	66	26.2%	1	8.1	26.5%	47	58%	16	6.7	29	7	0
P.Adebo*	26	CB	7	438	62	16.4%	1	19	12	7	18	11%	91	8.4	75	60	28.6%	1	12.7	18.2%	83	45%	75	8.6	72	10	3
J.Reid	28	SS	16	974	94	11.9%	29	46	17	7	37	46%	19	5.5	18	35	7.1%	23	10.2	34.2%	54	46%	38	11.6	61	9	2
I.Yiadom	29	CB	17	486	50	5.9%	--	16	6	4	18	39%	--	6.2	--	41	18.1%	--	11.6	-0.9%	--	46%	--	9.0	--	6	1

Year	Pass D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	5		-3.8%	13	-12.5%	8	15.0%	28	-1.1%	15	2.5%	18	-35.0%	1	-9.6%	12
2023	12		-23.1%	9	22.3%	29	-10.9%	7	-14.4%	7	15.2%	28	-4.6%	12	-21.9%	3
2024	12		-31.7%	3	-6.1%	13	0.7%	16	-22.0%	1	6.3%	23	22.7%	29	-8.8%	10

The safety positions are set: Tyrann Mathieu and newcomer Justin Reid are reliable, versatile veterans. The cornerback situation, however, is depressing. Kool-Aid McKinstry, coming off a lumpy-but-not-horrendous rookie year, will man one spot. Much-traveled Isaac Yiadom, who got picked on badly when pressed into service during the 49ers injury rash last year, returns to the Saints as a likely starter at the other position. That leaves former second-round pick Alontae Taylor as the frontrunner to play a robust role as Brandon Staley’s all-purpose nickel defender: think Jalen Ramsey with the Rams or Derwin James with Staley’s Chargers. Taylor has been mostly awful both outside and in the slot over the last three years but sometimes has impressive games against opponents such as the Panthers or Giants; the Saints employ a lot of defenders (Chase Young, Yiadom again) with similar profiles. Mathieu seems like a more likely candidate for a James/Ramsey role, but he has lost a step from his Honey Badger days, and one should never question Staley’s idiosyncratic brilliance. 🏈 Third-round safety Jonas Sanker (Virginia) is a run-fast, hit-hard wild man best suited to the box and special teams. Fourth-round cornerback Quincy Riley (Louisville) is already 24 years old but blanketed every receiver he faced during Senior Bowl week. Riley should push or replace Yiadom.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	-1.6%	25	-7.9	30	-1.5	24	-3.8	26	2.6	13	2.4	10	-6.4	24
2023	0.8%	14	-6.7	28	0.6	14	-3.6	31	4.5	9	9.5	2	23.0	1
2024	2.6%	7	1.4	13	5.6	1	-1.8	19	1.3	14	7.0	3	13.9	2

The Saints had very good luck on special teams in 2024. They faced a league-low average of 44.4 gross yards per punt while finishing 30th in field goal value against them, ahead of only the Buccaneers and the Chiefs. ⚡ Matthew Hayball and James Burnip will battle for the Saints punting job. You can't make this stuff up. Hayball ranked 32nd in the NFL in gross yards per punt as an undrafted rookie in 2024. The Australian-born Burnip, a UDFA this year, was Alabama's punter for four years. May the most affordable man win! ⚡ Rashid Shaheed returned punts and kickoffs at the start of last year and is penciled in as the primary return man for 2025, but is it a good idea for the Saints to rely on one of their top offensive players to handle such chores? Dante Pettis delivered a few long returns after Shaheed got injured and could stick as a full-time specialist. Kendre Miller also returned a few kicks last year. ⚡ J.T. Gray was chosen second-team All-Pro and led the NFL with 22 tackles on special teams. ⚡ Blake Grupe went undercover as a supermarket cashier in the offseason, surprising shoppers at a Rouses Markets in southern Louisiana with \$50 gift certificates. Most shoppers did not recognize Grupe, who looks a little like what *Abbott Elementary*'s Chris Perfetti might have looked like at age 15. Grupe has developed into a reliable kicker and led the NFL in both gross and net kickoff value last season. If Matthew Hayball showed up behind a cash register, shoppers might have ended up giving *him* gift certificates.

# New York Giants

2024 record: 3-14	Total DVOA: -21.9% (28th)	2025 Mean Projection: 6.1 wins	On the Clock (0-5): 42%
Pythagorean Wins: 4.6 (30th)	Offense: -13.6% (28th)	Postseason Odds: 12.1%	Mediocrity (6-8): 42%
Snap-Weighted Age: 26.0 (28th)	Defense: 6.6% (28th)	Super Bowl Odds: 0.4%	Playoff Contender (9-11): 15%
Average Opponent: 1.6% (11th)	Special Teams: -1.7% (22nd)	Proj. Avg. Opponent: 4.4% (1st)	Super Bowl Contender (12+): 2%

2024: Danny Dimes flames out.

2025: The quarterback additions will continue until morale improves.

**W**hat does “improvement” look like in the NFL? If you ask the current members of the New York Giants leadership, you’ll get some different answers.

Evaluation starts early and often in the NFL. Following a 20-15 loss to the Dallas Cowboys in Week 4—the franchise’s seventh-straight loss to their division rival that solidified the Giants’ 1-3 start to the season—head coach Brian Daboll said there was “continual improvement of the results” against a Cowboys team that had beaten New York by a combined 89-17 in the team’s two 2023 matchups.

Fast forward to a check-in from general manager Joe Schoen after a 2-8 start, and he cited the team playing close games (finishing 1-5 in one-score games at the time of that quote and 1-8 on the season) and continued improvement from a young roster as a sign that the team was not “far off” from where they hoped to be.

By the end of the season, after announcing that both Schoen and Daboll would be returning for the 2025 season, an “out of patience” Giants owner John Mara gave an even more abstract answer for improvement in 2025: “I’m going to have to be in a better mood this time next year than I am right now.”

The Schoen-Daboll duo now has three full seasons under its belt, and the result is a team that has meandered its way to mediocrity. 2022 saw New York get off to a breakneck start, winning seven of its first nine games en route to its first winning season since Eli Manning’s retirement in 2016 and the first playoff win since Super Bowl XLVI, helping Daboll pick up a Coach of the Year title along the way.

That inaugural season overperformance gave New York a false sense of confidence, leading Schoen and Daboll to kick-start a fast-tracked competitive rebuild. After a smattering of talent adds and the re-signing of Daniel Jones to the tune of four years and \$160 million, the result was a milquetoast 6-11 season that led to the Giants’ decision makers quickly recognizing just how thin the team was in key areas.

2024 was a real bottoming out on all fronts. The defense now lacked key fixtures after Leonard Williams was traded away midseason and Xavier McKinney walked in free agency. Saquon Barkley signed with the division rival Philadelphia Eagles, a decision that will go down in infamy after Schoen and Mara’s internal deliberations about whether or not to keep him were aired out on national television—a moment so viral with such immediate comeuppance that it likely serves as the

main reason *Hard Knocks: Offseason* ended after its first year. Schoen and Daboll, for better or worse, were forced to lie in the bed they made themselves. The Giants remained deficient in too many areas to be a genuinely competent team, and it showed in their on-field product.

The marginal investments along the offensive line turned into marginal improvements—the Giants reduced their pressure rate allowed from 39.9% to 37.8% and slashed their sacks allowed from 85 to 48 year-over-year but still finished with the sixth-highest pressure rate allowed and 12th-most sacks given up in 2024. New York’s continued inability to recruit defensive back help led to an 11-game streak without an interception—the longest such streak of the Super Bowl era.

Major investments made in the last few seasons failed to pan out. The Giants’ 2024 splash acquisition of veteran edge rusher Brian Burns was fine, but giving up second- and fifth-round picks for good-not-elite edge play was too steep a cost on a team that had so many other holes. Investments on the youth front, like trading up one pick for rookie cornerback Deonte Banks in the first round of 2023, were not reflecting the development necessary to lift the team. In fact, Banks actively held the team back at major stretches of the season. He finished the year with one of the worst season-long performances among qualified cornerbacks and was benched after multiple callouts for lack of on-field hustle. The defense went on to finish in the bottom five of defensive DVOA for the second time in Daboll’s tenure. (In fact, the Giants haven’t finished higher than 21st in defensive DVOA since 2016.)

It wasn’t all bad. The Giants very clearly hit on nearly their entire 2024 rookie class. Malik Nabers quickly became a one-man offense for the Giants, setting both the franchise’s single-season reception record and the league’s rookie wide receiver receptions record with 109. His 1,204 receiving yards are the second most for a Giants rookie receiver behind only Odell Beckham Jr., showing that Nabers had all the characteristics of a true No. 1 wideout. Fifth-round rookie Tyrone Tracy’s 839 total yards of offense were second most by a Giants rookie running back behind the aforementioned Giant-hero-turned-rival Barkley. Safety Tyler Nubin and cornerback Andru Phillips both showed potential on defense, while Theo Johnson finished as the team’s top tight end despite having his year shortened due to a season-ending injury.

The Giants also grew up, metaphorically speaking, by de-

## 2025 Giants Schedule

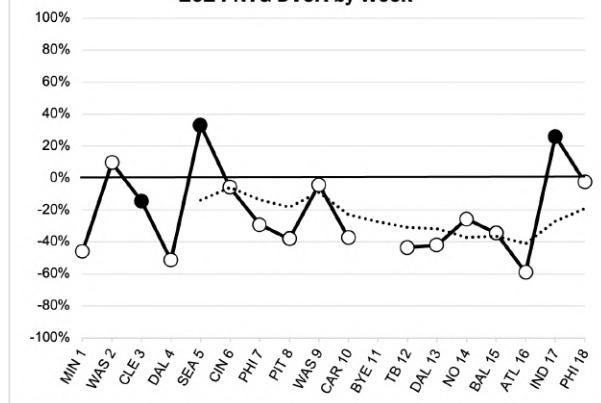
Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	at WAS	7	at DEN	13	at NE (Mon.)
2	at DAL	8	at PHI	14	BYE
3	KC	9	SF	15	WAS
4	LAC	10	at CHI	16	MIN
5	at NO	11	GB	17	at LV
6	PHI (Thu.)	12	at DET	18	DAL

finitively ripping off the Daniel Jones Band-Aid. Yes, it took a year and a half for New York to decide that this was going nowhere fast. Through five games of last season, Jones was statistically showing some improvement. His touchdown rate, adjusted yards per attempt, average depth of target, and passer rating were all at their highest since the Daboll era began in 2022, while his sack rate, interception rate, and bad throw rate were all at lows for the last three years. At some point, though, those improvements had to translate to wins. Even over that improved stretch, the Giants were 2-3. They ended up 3-13 in Jones starts after his new deal. The tape showed a skittish pocket navigator who lacked the confidence to routinely zip it into tight windows, despite the evidence highlighting his ability to do so. Jones had just been pressured too many times behind an inadequate offensive line. According to ESPN, a public search for a young quarterback (where open swooning over Jayden Daniels and interest in trading up with the New England Patriots at No. 3 overall were also immortalized on *Hard Knocks: Offseason*) added more pressure to Jones. It showed in his play. His completion rate fell to its lowest since 2000. While a late-season win over the Indianapolis Colts once again prevented New York from securing a top quarterback prospect, the process of getting rid of Jones was the right call.

The Giants kept talking about their “process” over the course of this offseason. Any evidence of a process doesn’t quite bear itself out on paper, at least to this point. Since that 7-2 start to their inaugural season, Daboll and Schoen’s teams are 12-30-1 in regular-season games with one playoff berth. After going 8-4-1 in one-score games during the first season, New York has gone 5-12 in the two years since. The Giants are 1-11 against the Cowboys and Eagles in division contests under Daboll. Concerted draft investments and veteran acquisitions have resulted in a team that is over-indexed in some areas, while others become money sinks as the team attempts to turn things around.

For as young as this team is, New York entered the offseason with a few cornerstone pieces on the roster. But the two biggest bona fide talents on board were both already on the team before Schoen and Daboll took over. Dexter Lawrence is a top-tier interior defensive lineman in the league, ascending to perennial Pro Bowl/All-Pro status at the time this new regime arrived. Andrew Thomas is a legitimately great talent at left tackle but has not played a full healthy season since Daboll’s first year with the team. Nabers, the only such prospect from the Daboll-Schoen cycle, has the makings of an all-

2024 NYG DVOA by Week



around receiver who can handle an offense being run through him—an asset that any quarterback in the league would want on his team. Beyond that, the Giants have some solid odds on a few lottery tickets from the last few drafts, though nothing is guaranteed. Tracy, Johnson, and Wan’Dale Robinson have all shown the makings of quality players at times offensively, while Kayvon Thibodeaux and Micah McFadden have done so defensively. Burns is a quality talent on the books long-term, as is Bobby Okereke. Re-signing Darius Slayton to a three-year deal gives the receiving room a fine veteran piece and a safety net as New York continues to experiment with young pass catchers.

More help seems to be on the way in New York, as well. The Giants were not afraid to spend money in the free agency market, supplementing this roster with veteran talent in an effort to give the team a fighting chance. The secondary has been overhauled with the additions of cornerback Paulson Adebo and safety Jevon Holland. Adding two veterans takes care of the team’s most obvious weakness on the defensive side of the ball, easing assignments for an extremely young defensive back corps which was tasked with a lot of responsibility in 2024. Bowen’s defense had the sixth-largest average defensive box in the league last season while also sending five pass rushers at the fourth-highest rate. On a defense that often used just four defensive backs, having the veteran presences of Adebo and Holland makes the unit better if only by bumping strength of assignment for each defensive back down a rung.

The Giants also had the third-highest consensus GPA from 2025’s draft grades, bringing in massive talent on both sides of the ball but especially prioritizing their defense. Abdul Carter and Darius Alexander could boost this defensive line into one of the league’s best. Penn State has a history of churning out quality defensive talent, but Carter stood in a league of his own. He became the program’s first double-digit-sack player since Carl Nassib in 2015 and the team’s first linebacker since Dan Connor in 2007 to post at least six sacks and 10 tackles for loss in a season. Alexander, chosen at the start of the third round, is a fascinating developmental prospect. In his last two years in Toledo, he recorded 13 tackles for loss, 7.5 sacks, eight passes defensed, and a 58-yard pick-six, bringing home top defensive lineman honors from this year’s Senior Bowl.

He's also a physical specimen at 6-foot-4 with a 300-pound frame, posting the third-highest bench performance (28 reps) among all defensive linemen and the fourth-fastest 10-yard split (1.72 seconds) among all defensive tackles at the combine. That being said, Alexander is still in need of some considerable development as a 25-year-old rookie, not producing significantly until later in his collegiate career.

Offensively, New York returns the entire starting lineup outside of the quarterback. The move is emblematic of a massive theme to the Giants offseason. The purpose of this offseason, more important than the shoring up of any individual position, was to find a quarterback. This team has been able to win with decent quarterback play—look at the first season with Jones, or the stretch of play in 2023 where Tommy DeVito was the quarterback of the hour.

After the decision to jettison Jones, the Giants tried to make sure they wouldn't burn another season with bad quarterback play. Average quarterback play, at the very least, was their best hope for improvement. After being connected to Matthew Stafford before his Rams return and having the team floated in early Aaron Rodgers discussions, New York was forced to cast a wide net for a new signal-caller. Russell Wilson and Jameis Winston both joined the team through free agency, then New York also traded up and drafted Jaxson Dart. It's likely one of the worst quarterback rooms in the league for the 2025 season—and yet it still may represent an upgrade over their 2024 room in the eyes of this staff.

The New York Giants are a team that—especially on offense—does not need elite talent to win games. 2022 saw Daboll turn Slayton into a top-20 receiver by DVOA and churn out career seasons from Richie James and Isaiah Hodgins. The third-year head coach is still a very creative playcaller, using motions and shifts to create advantageous matchups for Nubers throughout his rookie season. He revitalized the Giants' running back passing game with Tracy, often lining him out wide for shallow out-breaking routes as opposed to lining him in a more traditional screen set-up. Schematically, Daboll can still attack the weak points of defenses, knowing how to identify a defensive back group's weakness to double moves, vulnerabilities in the middle of the field, or exploiting the weak link in a defense's coverage chain. It's the kind of simplicity that helped Tommy DeVito pick up wins in 2023, and Drew Lock get a win in 2024.

That falls apart in the long term, though, when there's a bad quarterback in the mix. Defenses learned to smother New York's short passing game, and Jones' inability to work deep meant the passing game all but shriveled up. The Giants' only win of the season after the quarterback switch came when Daboll catered to a quarterback's strengths—Lock averaged 13.4 yards per attempt against the Colts, the highest in any Giants game in the last three years. He's not perfect, but Daboll is a coach who can make do as long as he has a competent quarterback at the helm. The only winning Giants season of the last five years also happens to be the only season New York finished with a positive passing DVOA.

The floor is undeniably raised here, beginning with Wilson. The 13-year veteran is somewhere between his highest highs in Seattle and his lowest lows in Denver. Wilson was a tale-of-two-quarterbacks last season, posting 12.9% DVOA with 12 passing touchdowns and three interceptions through his first seven games before finishing with -28.1% DVOA, three touchdowns, and two interceptions in his final four.

There is still some decent quarterback play in there, just like there is for the chaotic-neutral Winston. Winston landed with the Giants after first seeking out opportunities to start or serve as a bridge quarterback. At his best, he can technically do that. He's just a few years removed from a 5-2 run with the Saints. The reason he didn't get that real shot at a starting gig was the sheer, Winstonian volatility that only a member of the 30-touchdown, 30-interception club can provide. As a member of the Browns thrust into the spotlight following the Deshaun Watson injury, he both set the franchise's single-game passing record (497 yards) and posted three different three-interception games in seven starts.

The X-factor here is Dart. He thrived in a simple, quarterback-friendly offense under Lane Kiffin at Ole Miss, but also has some incredible athleticism and the arm to develop into a strong prospect. Dart has compared himself to a prototype in the mold of someone Daboll and Schoen are very familiar with: Josh Allen. ESPN's Jeremy Fowler said Daboll was "more excited about [Dart] than really any other quarterback since Josh Allen that he's worked with." He doesn't have the frame of Allen, but the arm and athleticism could allow him to fit that mold to a certain extent.

The only problem? Developing Dart into anything close to Allen will take time. That's something Schoen and Daboll don't have. The Giants are trying as much as they can to leverage for the now. They have veteran quarterbacks in place to win now, and they are making signings to compete right now. They all but have a playoff mandate from ownership to keep their jobs. Dart will take time to develop, and there is some logic to suggest that the old "we need an extra year, we've got a young quarterback to develop" shtick doesn't fly in Year 4 on the job.

At best, a Daboll scheme could squeeze enough talent out of whichever veteran quarterback wins the job to get the Giants to a winning record. At worst, the Giants have a decent floor of operation with a proven WR1, a strong running back room and defensive back unit, and an elite defensive line. That's more than either Wilson or Winston had last year. Maybe that's enough to boost this Giants team and save their job.

The name of the game at this stage really is quarterback, though. Right now, this Giants team looks scrappy, if undermanned. The talent floor may be just too high to place them in contention for an elite quarterback next year, and their eggs are pushed on Dart. For the sake of their jobs, Schoen and Daboll have to hope that either Dart is in fact their guy, or one of Wilson or Winston is enough to lift this team to the playoffs.

Cale Clinton

## 2024 Giants by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	MIN	L	0%	6	28	240	312	0	-46%	-39%	8%	2%
2	at WAS	L	70%	18	21	304	425	-1	9%	20%	0%	-11%
3	at CLE	W	87%	21	15	340	217	0	-15%	4%	-1%	-20%
4	DAL	L	9%	15	20	303	293	-1	-51%	-13%	35%	-3%
5	at SEA	W	94%	29	20	420	333	0	33%	21%	-11%	1%
6	CIN	L	50%	7	17	309	304	0	-6%	-7%	-16%	-15%
7	PHI	L	1%	3	28	119	339	0	-29%	-35%	-6%	0%
8	at PIT	L	0%	18	26	394	426	-1	-38%	-7%	21%	-11%
9	WAS	L	5%	22	27	326	358	-1	-4%	25%	23%	-6%
10	at CAR	L	48%	17	20	342	306	-2	-37%	-28%	8%	-1%
11	BYE											
12	TB	L	0%	7	30	245	451	0	-43%	-36%	14%	7%
13	at DAL	L	1%	20	27	247	317	-2	-42%	-36%	18%	11%
14	NO	L	14%	11	14	325	292	0	-26%	-22%	2%	-1%
15	BAL	L	0%	14	35	236	445	0	-35%	-19%	10%	-6%
16	at ATL	L	0%	7	34	234	329	-2	-59%	-72%	-12%	1%
17	IND	W	96%	45	33	389	446	+3	26%	27%	23%	22%
18	at PHI	L	2%	13	20	238	303	-1	-3%	-13%	-10%	1%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	-13.6%	28	6.6%	28
Unadjusted VOA	-14.4%	27	10.4%	29
Weighted Trend	-18.4%	30	7.2%	26
Variance	7.3%	25	2.2%	1
Average Opponent	-0.5%	14	0.8%	14
Passing	-4.7%	27	24.2%	30
Rushing	-12.1%	23	-12.6%	11
First Down	-6.5%	23	0.9%	17
Second Down	-28.3%	32	13.3%	29
Third Down	-6.7%	21	7.2%	21
First Half	-12.3%	28	9.1%	24
Second Half	-14.7%	24	3.8%	26
Red Zone	-28.0%	29	2.6%	22
Late and Close	-19.9%	28	9.6%	20

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rk	Off	Rk	Def	Rk	ST	Rk	Off AGL	Rk	Def AGL	Rk	Off Age	Rk	Def Age	Rk	ST Age	Rk
2020	6-10	5.7	6.2	280	357	0	-15.0%	26	-11.5%	25	5.2%	22	1.7%	12	50.9	25	53.5	24	25.8	25	25.6	28	25.9	17
2021	4-13	4.1	3.7	258	416	-8	-31.4%	32	-27.4%	32	5.3%	25	1.3%	11	73.5	30	35.6	16	26.6	16	25.4	31	26.1	17
2022	9-7-1	8.3	6.4	365	371	+3	-9.6%	23	2.5%	16	10.9%	30	-1.2%	22	44.7	22	58.2	30	25.7	28	25.3	29	25.4	28
2023	6-11	4.5	4.8	266	407	+12	-26.6%	30	-23.0%	30	3.0%	21	-0.6%	21	51.3	25	33.1	17	26.0	24	25.2	31	25.8	24
2024	3-14	4.6	4.5	273	415	-8	-21.9%	28	-13.6%	28	6.6%	28	-1.7%	22	28.8	13	41.5	17	26.5	18	25.2	32	26.4	16

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

NYG Offense					NYG Offense vs. Opponents					NYG Defense					NYG Defense vs. Opponents										
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA
11	74%	5.1	-5.3%	28%	Base	18%	4.2	-19.5%	45%	Base	25%	5.6	6.3%	11	66%	5.8	6.3%	12	19%	6.9	24.7%	12	19%	6.9	24.7%
12	17%	5.2	-10.6%	50%	Nickel	70%	5.0	-8.7%	38%	Nickel	67%	6.0	9.8%	13	8%	6.3	16.4%	21	8%	6.3	16.4%	22	3%	2.8	-36.2%
13	3%	3.2	-24.4%	79%	Dime+	12%	5.4	16.2%	12%	Dime+	8%	5.9	-14.2%	21	2%	3.4	-35.9%	13	2%	3.4	-35.9%	22	3%	2.8	-36.2%
21	2%	4.0	-32.3%	75%																					
10	1%	5.4	44.3%	27%																					

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected		Rk	Formation		Rk	Pass Rush		Rk	Secondary		Rk	Strategy		Rk		
Runs, all	+3.1%	10	Form: Single Back	75%	17	Rush 3		1.9%	24	4 DB		24%	10	Play Action	23%	14
Runs, first down	-2.4%	26	Form: Empty Back	12%	6	Rush 4		65.6%	24	5 DB		67%	13	Offensive Motion	41%	24
Runs, second-long	+8.2%	2	Form: Multi Back	13%	25	Rush 5		27.0%	4	6+ DB		8%	22	Avg Box (Off)	6.07	16
Runs, power sit.	+11.8%	7	Pers: 3+ WR	76%	6	Rush 6+		5.5%	19	Man Coverage		50%	18	Avg Box (Def)	6.18	6
Runs, behind 2H	+2.3%	18	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	22%	25	Edge Rusher Sacks		46.7%	22	MOFC		69%	2	Offensive Pace	32.01	25
Runs, ahead 2H	-3.6%	27	Pers: 6+ OL	2%	19	Interior DL Sacks		31.1%	12	CB1 on WR1		56%	2	Defensive Pace	30.74	3
Run-Pass Options	4.2%	13	Shotgun/Pistol	77%	18	Second Level Sacks		22.2%	12	S/CB Cover Ratio		20%	15	Go for it on 4th	1.41	4

The Giants ranked 26th by running 2.4% less than expected on first downs, but they ranked first by running 10.5% *more* than expected on second downs. The New York offense ranked third in the league, using max protect blocking on 10.0% of passes. This is defined as seven or more blockers with at least two more blockers than pass rushers. A league-low 3.7% of Giants carries came against heavy boxes with eight defenders. The Giants were last in the league, throwing only 11% of targets to tight ends. Oddly, the defense was also last in the league, as opponents threw only 17% of targets to tight ends. The Giants had the worst DVOA (-37.9%) for any offense that used at least 40 plays we marked as RPOs in 2024. In Pittsburgh, Russell Wilson averaged 5.5 yards per pass with four pass rushers but a league-high 8.9 yards per pass with five or more. However, this is not a split that Wilson had shown in past years, so it could just be random variation. The Giants on defense were fifth against the run on first downs but 30th against the pass. New York dropped from second (13.9%) in 2023 to 19th (5.5%) in 2024 when measuring how often they sent a big blitz of six or more pass rushers. Big Blue improved from dead last (6.2) in 2023 to eighth (5.0) in 2024 in average yards allowed after the catch. The Giants had the league's biggest gap between defensive DVOA with pressure (ninth) and without pressure (32nd). It will not shock you to learn that the Giants were last in average time of possession with a lead (3:12) and first in average time of possession while trailing (21:30).

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
D.Jones*	-124	-16.4%	366	1898	5.2	4.4	64.1%	8	6
D.Lock*	-254	-32.1%	192	968	5.0	5.7	59.8%	6	5
T.DeVito	-15	-15.6%	50	226	4.5	3.8	70.5%	0	0
T.Boyle*	-15	-18.8%	25	123	4.8	5.3	50.0%	1	1
R.Wilson	228	-1.5%	367	2252	6.1	5.2	64.3%	16	5
J.Winston	-96	-15.8%	319	1976	6.2	4.2	61.6%	13	12

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
M.Nabers	42	-9.6%	170	109	1204	11.0	4.2	7	64%
W.Robinson	-181	-29.4%	140	93	699	7.5	3.9	3	66%
D.Slayton	111	6.5%	71	39	573	14.7	3.2	2	55%
J.Hyatt	-32	-31.4%	19	8	62	7.8	0.8	0	42%
L.Humphrey	-40	-23.5%	45	31	293	9.5	6.2	1	69%
T.Johnson	2	-6.4%	43	29	331	11.4	5.1	1	67%
D.Bellinger	3	-4.4%	17	14	125	8.9	3.8	0	82%
G.Dulcich	-51	-78.8%	12	5	28	5.6	3.0	0	42%
T.Tracy	-22	-20.9%	53	38	284	7.5	7.4	1	72%
D.Singletary	-9	-21.1%	24	21	119	5.7	8.5	0	88%
E.Gray	20	19.1%	11	10	82	8.2	10.3	0	91%

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
T.Tracy	12	-7.1%	192	839	4.4	5	2	44%
D.Singletary	-12	-11.1%	113	437	3.9	4	2	48%
D.Jones*	55	3.7%	59	274	4.6	2	0	-
E.Gray	-25	-42.4%	14	31	2.2	0	1	29%
D.Lock*	40	48.7%	14	137	9.8	2	1	-
T.DeVito	-1	-15.1%	7	33	4.7	0	0	-
M.Nabers	-13	-81.8%	5	2	0.4	0	0	-
R.Wilson	42	8.6%	32	165	5.2	2	2	-
J.Winston	30	7.6%	24	84	3.5	1	0	-

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
G.Van Roten	RG	35	17/17	1125	4	7	20	2.8%	13	C.Hubbard*	LT	34	8/3	257	1	0	25	15.2%	--
J.M.Schmitz	C	26	15/15	987	3	5	13	2.1%	15	J.Kubas	G	25	5/3	198	2	0	5	3.9%	--
J.Eluemunor	RT	31	15/15	929	9	4	29	4.9%	16	A.Stinnie	LG	31	16/3	193	1	1	5	4.1%	--
J.Runyan	LG	28	13/13	845	5	2	23	4.3%	27	J.Ezeudu	LT	26	17/3	182	3	2	8	6.9%	--
E.Neal	RT	25	9/7	460	7	3	14	4.8%	13	S.Forsythe	RT	28	9/5	414	3	1	19	6.9%	32
A.Thomas	LT	26	6/6	419	3	1	11	4.1%	11	J.Hudson	LT	26	4/3	222	2	1	15	9.9%	--

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont	
2022	4.40	4.24	24	78%	2	18%	21	1.16	21	0.90	10	49	8.4%	24	34.0%	30	31	
2023	3.58	3.35	32	67%	16	23%	31	0.97	27	0.61	14	85	14.3%	32	39.0%	32	25	
2024	4.10	4.17	21	74%	5	15%	8	0.94	30	0.74	16	48	7.7%	20	36.0%	30	25	
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 3.55 (28)				Left Tackle: 4.72 (9)				Mid/Guard: 4.27 (22)				Right Tackle: 3.17 (31)		Right End: 4.90 (5)

The Giants offensive line has been one of the worst in the league in recent years. One year after allowing the worst caused pressure rate (28.0%) since we began tracking the stat in 2022, the Giants' 2024 caused pressure rate of 25.4% was third highest in the league. Right guard Greg Van Roten was the only Giants offensive lineman to play all offensive snaps—the first time he has ever done so—but the journeyman struggled his first year with the Giants, posting his highest blown block rate since 2021. Nonetheless, he provides a considerable amount of versatility, as he started the final two games of the season at center. What is the future for Evan Neal? At this point, it's either going to involve a different position or a different team. The Giants have already rejected his fifth-year option; Neal was on the outs before this when Jermaine Eluemunor was brought in as competition at right tackle. After getting back to health from offseason surgery, Neal was unable to crack the starting rotation until Eluemunor was forced to fill in for Andrew Thomas. With a healthy Thomas and Eluemunor returning, the Giants are planning to convert Neal to guard in a Mekhi Becton-esque gambit to save the former first-round Alabama prospect. It's a position Neal has not played since college. It's not that hyperbolic to say that the success of this offensive line—and, frankly, the Giants team at-large—is dependent on Thomas. In the last two seasons, the Giants are a pedestrian 6-10 when Thomas plays, but an abysmal 3-15 when he is off the field. Eluemunor was forced to convert from right tackle to left tackle midway through the season following Thomas' season-ending foot injury. It's a position he had played in the past, most recently as a spot convert for Las Vegas, but Eluemunor was reportedly frustrated by the conversion. He's back to the right side this year. Jon Runyan told the media after the season that he played the whole year with a separated shoulder, an injury he wasn't looking to get surgery on because he already had undergone an ankle surgery and a tight rope surgery for a separate high ankle sprain. Stone Forsythe never played more than 500 snaps in a season in any of his last four years with the Seattle Seahawks. Despite the limited playing time, he was tied for third on the team in pressures allowed in 2024.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
R.Nunez-Roches	32	DE	15	610	54	6.9%	15	39	6	3	46	72%	51	3.1	79	2.0	3	7	2
D.Lawrence	28	DT	12	552	45	7.2%	14	36	17	4	34	74%	46	2.1	32	9.0	6	20	1
E.Chatman	25	DE	17	423	21	2.4%	--	12	8	0	20	55%	--	3.7	--	1.0	2	4	0
D.J.Davidson	26	DT	12	262	23	3.7%	--	17	5	2	20	70%	--	2.5	--	2.0	0	4	0
J.Riley	27	DT	13	249	12	1.8%	--	10	4	3	12	83%	--	1.3	--	0.0	1	2	0
J.Ledbetter	31	DT	15	441	38	4.7%	52	27	9	2	33	67%	63	2.1	34	2.0	2	7	0
R.Robertson-Harris	32	DT	17	398	21	2.4%	--	17	7	4	17	82%	--	1.2	--	2.0	3	11	1

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
B.Burns	27	OLB	17	866	79	9.0%	3	59	26	9	54	74%	45	2.2	35	8.5	9	57	8
K.Thibodeaux	25	OLB	12	594	30	4.8%	52	24	17	8	19	74%	46	3.2	75	5.5	10	33	2
A.Ojulari*	25	OLB	11	392	28	4.9%	51	23	11	4	19	79%	29	1.8	23	6.0	3	21	0
T.Fox	27	OLB	11	207	12	2.1%	--	8	3	3	10	60%	--	2.3	--	1.0	2	6	0
C.Golston	27	DE	17	791	61	7.1%	13	46	18	9	41	73%	50	3.1	70	5.5	2	22	3

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				vs. Pass								
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
B.Okereke	29	ILB	12	736	96	15.4%	28	56	20	10	56	63%	33	4.3	72	2.0	0	7	40	11.4%	54	48%	29	6.2	13	3	0
M.McFadden	25	ILB	14	670	107	14.7%	32	59	16	10	69	64%	28	3.7	41	3.0	2	9	25	10.5%	53	44%	39	8.1	53	1	0
D.Muasau	24	ILB	15	435	55	7.1%	78	36	12	8	38	76%	2	3.1	16	0.0	1	2	9	-22.2%	--	67%	--	7.6	--	1	1
T.Summers	30	ILB	16	112	23	2.8%	--	13	3	2	15	73%	--	2.4	--	0.0	0	0	7	56.2%	--	29%	--	6.3	--	1	0
C.Board	30	ILB	17	168	21	2.5%	--	9	6	1	10	40%	--	4.8	--	1.0	0	2	7	-6.6%	--	29%	--	7.4	--	1	0

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk
2022	5.23	4.96	30	73%	26	14%	29	1.46	29	1.10	28	41	6.7%	22	28.7%	12
2023	4.59	4.45	26	74%	27	16%	22	1.29	29	0.86	25	34	6.4%	27	30.1%	15
2024	4.49	4.07	10	72%	25	19%	10	1.22	17	1.03	30	45	8.3%	5	31.1%	14

2024 ALY by direction: Left End: 4.28 (14)      Left Tackle: 3.96 (10)      Mid/Guard: 4.50 (18)      Right Tackle: 3.79 (12)      Right End: 2.29 (4)

Early on in OTAs, Bowen emphasized Abdul Carter's versatility; Carter has just a year of experience at edge rusher but a full career of off-ball linebacker experience at Penn State in the same vein as an early-career Micah Parsons. "Ultimately, we want to get our best 11 on the field, whatever way we got to maneuver to do that," Bowen said, per the team website. "We got to find ways to get the guys that can impact the game on the field." 🗡️ Regardless of what you think of the cost of the Brian Burns trade, one of the most undeniable parts of his game is his statistical consistency. Burns has churned out at least eight sacks in each of his last five seasons and posted at least 50 pressures in four of his last five seasons. Burns' 57 pressures were 12th in the league in 2024. 🗡️ Kayvon Thibodeaux feels like the odd man out in this edge rusher rotation, given Burns' multi-year contract that ranks in the top five among edge rushers in total guaranteed money and a renewed investment in edge talent via a No. 3 overall pick in Carter. New York picked up Thibodeaux's fifth-year option, but the edge rusher saw his defensive snaps take a hit toward the end of the season even as Azeez Ojulari went down with injury. Thibodeaux can still be part of a devastating Burns-Carter-Thibodeaux-Dexter Lawrence front (based on Bowen's reported plans to line up the edges opposite Lawrence in the interior) but it may not make sense for the Giants to hold Thibodeaux long-term given his inability to live up to his draft-day potential. 🗡️ Chauncy Golston signed a three-year deal with the Giants this past offseason, taking over Azeez Ojulari's supplementary edge rusher role. He saw a breakout year with the Cowboys amid their litany of injuries, seeing more snaps in 2024 than in the previous two years combined. 🗡️ As great a talent as Dexter Lawrence is, his 2024 season came with mixed results. He was able to set a career high with nine sacks, while his pressure total took a noticeable step back. Lawrence posted a career-high 2.9% sack rate—nearly doubling his previous high—and simultaneously had his worst pressure rate (9.6%) since 2020. 🗡️ Signed as a space-eating run stopper in 2023, Rakeem Nunez-Roches was meant to be a more situational plug-in before setting career highs in snaps played and games started. His rank in stop rate (51st) and average yards per run tackle (79th) were both below the league median (101 qualified interior defensive linemen). The veteran acquisitions of Roy Robertson-Harris and Jeremiah Ledbetter are the Giants' attempt to improve things opposite Nunez-Roches. 🗡️ Bobby Okereke saw an awkward transition into the Shane Bowen defense, as major areas such as pass coverage, pressures, and tackles for loss slipped. By the time he began to find a rhythm, he suffered a back injury that sidelined him the final five games of the season. He told the *New York Post* in late May that he hopes to develop a better relationship with Bowen in their second season together: "Especially being a guy who's a green dot player, you and the defensive coordinator should really be on the same page. The better our connection is, the better our relationship is, the better this defense plays and the better I'll play. That's a big reason I believe I played so well in my first year. Me and [departed defensive coordinator Wink Martindale] were on the same page a lot, and I feel that improved my play style. The more work I can do to build that relationship, the better for everybody." 🗡️ Micah McFadden is arguably one of the biggest success stories of the Schoen-Daboll administration thus far. A fifth-round selection of the 2022 NFL draft, McFadden was able to crack the starting rotation by midway through his rookie season. While he struggled in pass coverage following the shift to Bowen's defense, his nose for the ball is undeniable—he joins Landon Collins as the only Giants players since Tom Coughlin's departure with multiple 100-tackle seasons.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run						vs. Pass											
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD Int	
J.Pinnock	26	FS	16	978	86	10.4%	51	20	9	15	40	25%	75	11.6	91	16	3.7%	54	10.6	79.3%	62	50%	25	10.7	59	1 0
T.Nubin	24	SS	13	790	98	14.5%	8	31	11	6	56	39%	32	6.7	39	21	5.9%	30	9.3	24.9%	46	48%	36	8.7	47	1 0
D.Banks	24	CB	14	788	64	8.8%	48	24	7	4	13	54%	26	11.2	92	81	23.0%	13	12.1	36.6%	90	32%	93	11.0	92	12 0
C.Flott	24	CB	14	667	60	8.3%	56	27	12	5	23	52%	29	5.6	37	45	15.1%	81	9.4	3.6%	60	44%	79	7.5	43	7 1
A.Phillips	24	CB	14	616	72	9.9%	--	41	19	15	26	65%	--	3.0	--	36	13.1%	--	6.1	-12.9%	--	61%	--	9.1	--	1 1
D.Belton	25	SS	17	459	56	6.4%	81	20	9	5	26	35%	44	8.1	63	21	10.2%	8	7.8	-35.9%	4	33%	55	9.1	50	6 1
A.Jackson*	30	CB	14	427	33	4.5%	--	16	8	5	9	33%	--	8.3	--	38	19.9%	--	11.9	-4.7%	--	61%	--	6.4	--	5 0
N.McCloud	27	CB	15	225	24	3.1%	--	11	3	2	8	88%	--	1.5	--	17	16.8%	--	9.8	84.3%	--	35%	--	13.1	--	1 0
J.Holland	25	FS	15	854	66	9.3%	64	24	10	11	31	42%	26	7.5	54	19	4.4%	43	3.8	4.0%	26	53%	21	5.8	14	4 0
P.Adebo	26	CB	7	438	62	16.4%	1	19	12	7	18	11%	91	8.4	75	60	28.6%	1	12.7	18.2%	83	45%	75	8.6	72	10 3

Year	Pass D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	24	23.3%	28	-14.7%	7	-1.9%	14	9.3%	25	-9.2%	11	23.1%	29	-16.7%	8	
2023	13	18.3%	25	12.1%	22	1.5%	19	0.4%	16	24.0%	30	-6.7%	9	-14.4%	7	
2024	30	30.5%	29	14.1%	24	24.7%	32	38.3%	32	0.6%	20	-17.1%	4	15.4%	26	

This is where the Giants made their biggest splash in free agency, but their two biggest investments are also very injury-prone. Jevon Holland struggled with hand injuries for most of the 2024 season and double MCL tears in 2023, while Paulson Adebo is coming off a broken femur. 🗡️ While Holland is as young as much of the recently drafted members of the Giants

secondary, he brings an outsized amount of leadership for his age. Holland was a captain for three of his four seasons with the Miami Dolphins. 🔒 It's tough to say what you're going to get from Adebo on a given day. He's one of the league's best point-of-attack cornerbacks, generating 28 passes defended and seven interceptions over the last two years, co-leading the Saints in interceptions despite playing just seven games last season. Teams still manage to attack Adebo, though. When you adjust for him playing less than half a season in 2024, we estimate Adebo was targeted on a league-leading 29% of his pass coverage snaps. 🔒 To call Deonte Banks' season a "sophomore slump" is a wild understatement. Following his transition to a CB1 role, Banks finished 90th or worse among 93 qualified cornerbacks in DVOA (90th), coverage success rate (93rd), and yards per pass attempt (92nd). Beyond that, Banks was called out multiple times throughout the season for lack of hustle, and most of those instances—for example, not hustling after CeeDee Lamb on a 55-yard touchdown reception and jogging during a Jalen Hurts scramble—came in key divisional matchups. Banks was benched the week after the Hurts incident, during the second quarter of a matchup against the Pittsburgh Steelers that saw Banks get hurdled by Najee Harris. Banks may still have a shot at a starting role, though. In minicamps, he has been splitting starting reps with Cor'Dale Flott for the outside cornerback position opposite Adebo. 🔒 The Giants got a lot out of their rookie class, especially in the defensive backs room. Tyler Nubin was everywhere in his rookie season, accruing the second-most tackles all the team behind Micah McFadden. The 56 run plays he was involved in his rookie year were eighth among all safeties. In the slot, Andru Phillips led all Giants cornerbacks in passing DVOA allowed and scored an interception—a rarity in this room last year.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	-1.2%	22	8.6	3	0.0	21	-2.8	24	-6.1	27	-6.2	29	-10.0	28
2023	-0.6%	21	-11.1	30	3.0	7	-3.4	30	12.7	2	-4.6	28	3.8	12
2024	-1.7%	22	-1.8	19	-0.8	20	-1.7	18	-2.2	22	-2.6	21	6.8	7

The Giants had to scramble when Graham Gano went down on the opening kickoff of Week 2, forcing them to go for two and take fourth-down risks in a game that the Commanders eventually won with seven field goals. Both Gano and temporary replacement Greg Joseph finished below league average on field goal attempts. The 38-year-old Gano seems like his job is secure now that the only other kicker on the roster is international exemption and former Gaelic footballer Jude McAtamney. 🔒 Jamie "The Scottish Hammer" Gillan had his smallest workload since joining the Giants but arguably had one of the better seasons of his career. Just two of his kicks ended as touchbacks while his career-high 48.2% rate of punts inside the 20 was eighth in the NFL. 🔒 New York has options on kick and punt returns. The Giants re-signed Ihmir Smith-Marsette, one of seven players with a kick return touchdown last year. Smith-Marsette mainly served as a punt returner, with running back Eric Gray taking the majority of kickoffs. However, given his limited role as RB3 and the addition of Cam Skattebo, Gray's roster spot is not guaranteed. Dee Williams, a cornerback plucked off waivers from Seattle last December, is another possibility here.

# New York Jets

2024 record: 5-12	Total DVOA: -11.4% (23rd)	2025 Mean Projection: 5.9 wins	On the Clock (0-5): 44%
Pythagorean Wins: 6.7 (24th)	Offense: -5.9% (21st)	Postseason Odds: 9.7%	Mediocrity (6-8): 42%
Snap-Weighted Age: 27.1 (7th)	Defense: 3.5% (20th)	Super Bowl Odds: 0.1%	Playoff Contender (9-11): 13%
Average Opponent: -1.5% (21st)	Special Teams: -2.0% (24th)	Proj. Avg. Opponent: -0.6% (19th)	Super Bowl Contender (12+): 1%

**2024:** Who knew the day would arrive when Aaron Rodgers would be both mediocre and boring?

**2025:** Stop trying to make Fields happen. It's not going to happen.

It seemed like a good idea at the time. The Jets were coming off a 7-10 season. Robert Saleh had turned around the defense, which ranked sixth in DVOA in 2022. The problem was the offense, and more specifically the quarterback position. The Jets would fix the problem by trading for one of the all-time greats: Aaron Rodgers, 40 years old but only one year removed from two straight MVP seasons.

You know how it turned out. Rodgers tore his Achilles on the first drive of his first game. The Jets offense completely collapsed, finishing dead last in DVOA for 2023 and starting four different quarterbacks. Rodgers then returned in 2024, but he was mediocre on the field and a distraction off it. The defense finally declined after two straight strong seasons. Saleh was fired after five games. The Jets finished 5-12.

Rodgers often had a chance to win and failed. The Jets lost 10-9 to Denver when Rodgers couldn't score in the fourth quarter. He threw an interception to Stephon Gilmore in an attempted comeback against the Vikings. The following week, he threw an interception to Taron Johnson in an attempted comeback against the Bills. Even when Rodgers could make the fourth-quarter comeback, the defense couldn't hold onto it. Drake Maye led a comeback win for the Patriots against the Jets. Anthony Richardson led one for the Colts. Tua Tagovailoa came back on the Jets and then won in overtime.

At 2-4, even after firing Saleh, the Jets felt they still had the ability to compete. They traded a third-round pick for two-thirds of a season of Davante Adams, then won all of three games with him in the lineup. Now he's gone and Rodgers is gone. It's time to start over again for a team that hasn't had a winning record since 2015.

This new restart for the Jets has more of the same but also something different. First, the same: Once again, the Jets have hired a well-regarded defensive coordinator from one of the NFC's top teams. Aaron Glenn, fresh off four years as Dan Campbell's defensive coordinator in Detroit, gets his first shot as a head coach with the team he played for from 1994 through 2001. Despite their historical inability to find a quarterback and field a strong offense, the Jets sure do love their defensive coaches. Other than two years of Adam Gase, every Jets head coach since Bill Parcells in the late 1990s has been a former defensive coordinator or, in the case of Herm Edwards, a former defensive backs coach.

"Status quo is killer," owner Woody Johnson said to a group

of reporters at the NFL fall meetings, after firing Saleh. But hiring a defensive-minded head coach *is* the status quo for the New York Jets. How does Glenn differ from Saleh?

The Jets certainly hope that Glenn can manage a locker room better than Saleh. But it's hard to fault Saleh too much because he couldn't ride the Aaron Rodgers whirlwind. Glenn brings the gravitas of an ex-player, and he's well-regarded as falling midway between being a players' coach and being tough. We certainly hope that he brings Dan Campbell's aggressiveness along with him, since Saleh was one of the league's more conservative coaches over the last four seasons.

Glenn hasn't talked much about what kind of defense he wants to run for the Jets. He did make it clear that he would come up with a scheme built around his personnel, rather than trying to fit his personnel to a specific scheme. Glenn also promised to be better against the run and to get after the passer. The next head coach who does not promise those two things will be the first.

Glenn historically uses more man coverage than Saleh did in New York, so that's one change we might see. On the other hand, defensive coordinator Steve Wilks is the one who will call the plays, and he has generally been a zone-heavy coach. More blitzing is likely, as the Lions led the league last year in big blitzes of six or more defenders. Then again, one reason the Lions blitzed so much is that the injuries to their defense made it harder to rush the passer. The Jets hope they won't have a similar issue.

New York has a number of stars on the defensive side of the ball, which makes last year's mediocrity a real disappointment. Run defense was about the same, so the real problem was the collapse of the pass defense.

The Jets still got a pass rush, although from different players than the year before. Bryce Huff was gone and Jermaine Johnson got hurt, but Will McDonald blossomed with 10.5 sacks. Interior defensive star Quinnen Williams had more pressures than he did in 2023. The Jets went down a little bit in adjusted sack rate but their pressure rate was about the same. That's impressive considering that the big acquisition of Haason Reddick went completely sideways when Reddick held out into the season over contract issues.

The bigger problem in pass defense came in the secondary. Sauce Gardner simply wasn't the shutdown force he had been the previous two years, ranking just 64th in coverage DVOA.

2025 Jets Schedule					
Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	PIT	7	CAR	13	ATL
2	BUF	8	at CIN	14	MIA
3	at TB	9	BYE	15	at JAX
4	at MIA (Mon.)	10	CLE	16	at NO
5	DAL	11	at NE (Thu.)	17	NE
6	DEN (UK)	12	at BAL	18	at BUF

D.J. Reed also wasn't as good as his past self, and he's now gone to Detroit in free agency. At linebacker, neither Quincy Williams nor Jamien Sherwood was as good in pass coverage as C.J. Mosley had been in 2023. The Jets were about the same in deep coverage compared to their superior 2023 season, but they fell from second to 27th in DVOA against short passes (up to 15 air yards).

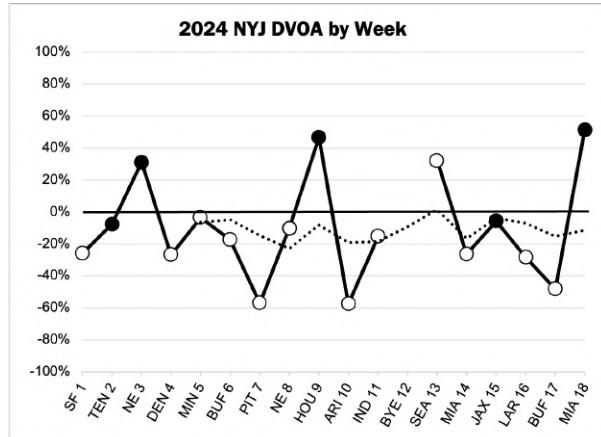
How will the Jets solve their issues with shorter passes? They have made a couple of curious free agent signings, starting with cornerback Brandon Stephens. When Baltimore opponents looked at the Ravens secondary last year, it was very clear: Stephens was the player with the big target on his back. He finished near the bottom of the league in DVOA, success rate, and yards allowed per pass. The Jets also signed Andre Cisco away from the Jaguars to play as the deep safety. He has been a well-regarded player but also had a bit of a down year in 2024, and the Jaguars ranked 30th in DVOA against deep passes.

The bigger hope for the Jets' secondary is simply regression and health. We write a lot about the natural inconsistency at the cornerback position, so it's easy for the Jets to hope that Gardner will rebound and Stephens will play better in 2025. It would also be nice to get a lot more out of Michael Carter, the nickelback who lost a ton of playing time to injuries last season: a nagging back problem, a hamstring that cost him two games, plus ankle and chest injuries. Carter, who finished fifth in coverage DVOA in 2023, managed to play 13 games but only got 286 defensive snaps in those games. That ranked eighth among Jets defensive backs.

Of course, the biggest difference between last year's Jets and this year's model will be at the quarterback position. In a bad year for first-round quarterback talent, the Jets didn't draft a young prospect to mold for their future. Neither did they sign a veteran hoping to recapture past glory. The Jets took a chance on both youth and failure. They took a chance on Justin Fields.

We all know Justin Fields' talents by now. First of all, the legs. The man makes some insane highlight runs. He rushed for over 1,000 yards in 2022. He has a strong arm and can really put zip on his throws. He's tough and willing to take big hits. He's a leader, well-liked by his teammates.

It also doesn't hurt that Fields came relatively cheap: two years, \$40 million, with \$30 million guaranteed. In terms of average annual value, Fields ranks 20th among quarterbacks. Out of veteran starters, only Russell Wilson and Daniel Jones—who may or may not be starters—are getting less money per year.



But the whole package has just never developed in the NFL. We have never seen the accuracy and the smart decision-making skills that were advertised when Fields came out of Ohio State. Last year in Pittsburgh, Fields had a slightly below average -4.2% passing DVOA. That was by far his best performance in the NFL so far. It came with a sample size of six starts. Before that, Fields finished 32nd, 34th, and 30th in passing DVOA in his first three NFL seasons. He took too many sacks. He never had a completion rate above 62%. The great highlight plays on the ground didn't make up for the failures putting the ball in the air.

We keep hearing about Fields showing flashes of his potential. But that's all they have been: flashes. There are two quarterbacks since 1978 who put up negative passing value by DYAR with at least 200 pass plays in each of their first three seasons and still developed into winning NFL quarterbacks. One was Phil Simms, and that was more than 40 years ago. The other was Sam Darnold, which brings up an important question: can Tanner Engstrand be Kevin O'Connell and unlock Justin Fields?

Engstrand, the new Jets offensive coordinator, comes from Detroit along with Glenn. Is he planning to run the offense they ran for Jared Goff in Detroit? Or something completely different? It had better be the latter, because Fields is a terrible fit for what Engstrand and Ben Johnson have been doing in Detroit.

The Lions offense is designed for an accurate pocket passer who can get the ball out quickly, preferably to the middle of the field. Fields is best outside the pocket and holds onto the ball much longer than Goff. Last year in Pittsburgh, Justin Fields was out of the pocket 26% of the time, including scrambles. The year before in Chicago, that was 27%. In 2022, it was a league-leading 38%. Jared Goff, by contrast, was out of the pocket 11% of the time last year, the third-lowest figure for a qualifying quarterback ahead of only Joe Flacco and Kirk Cousins.

Goff threw to the middle of the field more than any quarterback in the NFL. Fields has thrown to the middle a below-average 16% of the time in each of the last two years. Among qualifying quarterbacks in 2023, Fields ranked 31st in DVOA on passes to the middle. Last year, if he had enough passes to qualify, Fields would have ranked 32nd.

Last year, FTN Data had Goff with an average time to throw of 2.65 seconds. Fields was at 2.85 seconds. The year before, the difference was far larger: 2.50 seconds for Goff and 3.05 seconds for Fields.

An offense built for Justin Fields has to feature more bootlegs and RPOs. It needs to feature more passes to the boundary. No matter what Engstrand puts into the offense, Fields has to learn to get rid of the ball faster. In press availability during minicamps, Engstrand asserted that he'll be able to adapt to Fields' talents, saying Fields' dual-threat ability "just opens things up more, that's all. It just adds another layer to what we can do with where we're going on offense."

There's one place where the Lions offense excelled and the Jets should be pretty good, and that's the offensive line. The interior of the offensive line was already strong, and the Jets should now bookend those three players with two first-round picks. Olu Fashanu, taken 11th overall in 2024, started at both tackle spots in his rookie year. He'll be on the left side. Armand Membou, taken seventh overall in this year's draft, was rated higher than Will Campbell by some draftniks. He takes over the right side for departed veteran Morgan Moses.

The result should be better pass protection and a strong running game. The Jets only ranked 26th in rushing DVOA last year, but they have a talented one-two punch at running back with Breece Hall and Braelon Allen. Defenses' fear of Fields' mobility opens things up further for the running backs, which in turn opens things up downfield for Fields.

The rest of the offense is not optimized for Fields to succeed. Fields will have one outstanding receiver who truly stands out: his former Ohio State teammate Garrett Wilson. It's nice that the two players have chemistry from their younger days,

and Wilson is an all-around talent who constantly deserves attention from opposing defenses. But who else will Fields be throwing to? Josh Reynolds excelled for the Detroit offense in 2023, ranking eighth in DVOA, but he has never ranked higher than 40th otherwise and will now be 30 years old. Allen Lazard is best known as one of Aaron Rodgers' best buds and will also turn 30 late in the year. Malachi Corley looked like a strong slot weapon coming out of Western Kentucky but had three catches for 16 yards as a rookie. Fourth-round rookie Arian Smith (Georgia) is a sprinter much more than he's a route runner. And with Tyler Conklin gone, the Jets will be counting on a rookie tight end: second-round pick Mason Taylor, the LSU product and son of limited-time Jets defender Jason Taylor. At least Hall is a good outlet receiver for both screens and dump-offs.

So what are the Jets really playing for this year? The ceiling of Justin Fields is to be average, and even that level of play is unlikely. If the Jets can somehow get that play from their offense, and if the defense can rebound significantly, they could be a wild-card team. That's about as good as it might get. More likely, it's a rebuilding year where Fields shows that he just can't be an NFL starting quarterback while the Williams brothers get a year older on defense. The Jets will get their shot at another young quarterback in a much deeper quarterback class of 2026. They'll hope to develop that quarterback better than their other recent highly drafted quarterbacks.

This new restart for the Jets has some things the same and some things different, but it certainly looks like the things that are the same are going to win out. Same old Jets.

Aaron Schatz

## 2024 Jets by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	at SF	L	1%	19	32	266	401	-2	-26%	-15%	12%	1%
2	at TEN	W	73%	24	17	265	300	+2	-8%	4%	14%	2%
3	NE	W	100%	24	3	400	139	+1	31%	9%	-35%	-12%
4	DEN	L	18%	9	10	248	186	0	-27%	-36%	-14%	-6%
5	at MIN	L	12%	17	23	254	253	-1	-4%	-30%	-21%	6%
6	BUF	L	6%	20	23	393	359	-1	-17%	24%	26%	-15%
7	at PIT	L	0%	15	37	323	409	-2	-57%	-20%	19%	-18%
8	at NE	L	82%	22	25	336	248	0	-10%	10%	8%	-13%
9	HOU	W	93%	21	13	293	322	0	47%	24%	-10%	12%
10	at ARI	L	0%	6	31	207	406	-1	-58%	-28%	33%	3%
11	IND	L	17%	27	28	253	332	+1	-15%	-15%	2%	2%
12	BYE											
13	SEA	L	89%	21	26	258	259	0	32%	-22%	-20%	34%
14	at MIA	L	18%	26	32	402	375	0	-26%	12%	37%	-1%
15	at JAX	W	67%	32	25	400	421	+2	-6%	22%	22%	-6%
16	LAR	L	14%	9	19	321	242	-1	-28%	-1%	20%	-7%
17	at BUF	L	0%	14	40	281	348	-3	-48%	-49%	-2%	-2%
18	MIA	W	98%	32	20	375	334	+3	51%	17%	-48%	-14%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	-6.0%	21	3.5%	20
Unadjusted VOA	-4.7%	19	4.5%	19
Weighted Trend	-4.7%	20	4.3%	21
Variance	5.3%	16	5.9%	23
Average Opponent	-0.7%	10	-2.1%	26
Passing	7.5%	21	11.6%	21
Rushing	-13.8%	26	-5.4%	20
First Down	-3.8%	19	-11.0%	7
Second Down	-1.5%	17	17.3%	32
Third Down	-16.2%	25	9.0%	26
First Half	-7.9%	24	3.3%	15
Second Half	-4.2%	18	3.7%	25
Red Zone	-12.4%	22	-8.2%	11
Late and Close	11.6%	12	13.1%	24

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rank	Off	Rank	Def	Rank	ST	Rank	Off AGL	Rank	Def AGL	Rank	Off Age	Rank	Def Age	Rank	ST Age	Rank
2020	2-14	2.8	3.2	243	457	0	-30.0%	31	-20.4%	32	4.3%	21	-5.3%	29	46.6	22	77.3	31	26.7	18	26.1	21	26.3	10
2021	4-13	3.9	5.1	310	504	-13	-23.0%	26	-10.4%	22	16.8%	32	4.1%	2	57.1	26	101.3	32	26.7	14	25.3	32	25.9	19
2022	7-10	7.9	7.3	296	316	-7	-4.7%	20	-13.2%	29	-9.5%	6	-1.0%	21	77.5	29	8.6	1	26.9	12	26.5	13	26.1	15
2023	7-10	5.8	7.4	268	355	-6	-12.5%	25	-29.9%	32	-14.2%	3	3.1%	5	72.8	31	26.0	11	25.9	28	26.4	17	27.0	3
2024	5-12	6.7	6.7	338	404	-1	-11.4%	23	-5.9%	21	3.5%	20	-2.0%	24	25.9	11	59.0	27	27.8	2	26.8	11	26.4	14

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

NYJ Offense					NYJ Offense vs. Opponents					NYJ Defense				NYJ Defense vs. Opponents			
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA
11	71%	5.6	-0.1%	25%	Base	20%	4.6	-6.0%	45%	Base	28%	4.5	-11.2%	11	59%	5.3	7.6%
12	21%	4.6	-6.1%	58%	Nickel	69%	5.5	-0.1%	32%	Nickel	66%	5.5	9.5%	12	20%	5.3	-1.6%
21	5%	7.0	34.3%	44%	Dime+	11%	5.8	7.9%	14%	Dime+	6%	6.3	5.9%	21	8%	5.4	-0.7%
13	2%	4.0	-4.4%	50%	Goal Line	1%	2.6	-1.4%	71%	Goal Line	1%	5.3	33.1%	13	5%	3.3	-34.5%
														22	2%	11.2	64.5%
														611	2%	3.7	-22.5%

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected	Rk	Formation	Rk	Pass Rush	Rk	Secondary	Rk	Strategy	Rk					
Runs, all	-2.8%	29	Form: Single Back	77%	9	Rush 3	3.9%	13	4 DB	26%	5	Play Action	24%	12
Runs, first down	-1.0%	24	Form: Empty Back	9%	10	Rush 4	68.5%	20	5 DB	66%	17	Offensive Motion	45%	18
Runs, second-long	-3.4%	21	Form: Multi Back	13%	24	Rush 5	18.3%	19	6+ DB	6%	27	Avg Box (Off)	6.02	22
Runs, power sit.	-13.4%	31	Pers: 3+ WR	71%	11	Rush 6+	9.3%	7	Man Coverage	56%	9	Avg Box (Def)	6.22	5
Runs, behind 2H	-5.0%	30	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	24%	23	Edge Rusher Sacks	39.3%	29	MOFC	63%	6	Offensive Pace	31.45	17
Runs, ahead 2H	-6.6%	31	Pers: 6+ OL	1%	24	Interior DL Sacks	39.3%	4	CB1 on WR1	36%	15	Defensive Pace	31.92	25
Run-Pass Options	4.7%	8	Shotgun/Pistol	79%	12	Second Level Sacks	21.4%	14	S/CB Cover Ratio	21%	12	Go for it on 4th	1.59	3

The Jets were dead last in the league in using max protect blocking, defined as seven or more blockers with at least two more blockers than pass rushers. The Jets led the league with 72 defensive penalties, including declined and offsetting. The Jets defense was seventh in DVOA at home and 30th on the road. Note that this is interesting rather than meaningful, as these kind of home/road splits rarely carry over from year to year. The Jets ranked fourth in defensive DVOA when sending five or more pass rushers (-22.3% DVOA), but only 31st with the standard four pass rushers (29.6% DVOA). This was the fourth straight year where the Jets were very low in how often opponents threw to the middle of the field. Only the 49ers were lower in 2024, and the Jets were the lowest in 2021, 2022, and 2023. This doesn't seem to be an issue with the official scorers, as the Jets aren't at the bottom of the league for throwing up the middle on offense. New York was significantly better in base defense (-11.2% DVOA) compared to nickel (9.5% DVOA). The Aggressiveness Index number listed is for Jeff Ulbrich; Robert Saleh was much more conservative (0.73).

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
A.Rodgers*	237	-5.4%	624	3596	5.8	5.8	63.1%	28	11
T.Taylor	98	51.0%	22	119	5.4	4.0	77.3%	3	0
J.Fields	75	-4.2%	176	982	5.6	4.9	66.3%	5	1

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
G.Wilson	61	-7.9%	154	101	1104	10.9	4.4	7	66%
D.Adams*	9	-11.7%	114	67	854	12.7	6.4	7	59%
A.Lazard	152	18.4%	60	37	530	14.3	4.2	6	62%
M.Williams*	35	9.0%	21	12	166	13.8	2.0	0	57%
X.Gipson	-3	-17.1%	10	6	39	6.5	3.7	1	60%
M.Corley	-19	-61.4%	6	3	16	5.3	1.7	0	50%
T.Johnson	-26	-20.9%	41	26	291	11.2	7.0	1	63%
J.Reynolds	10	-7.3%	24	13	194	14.9	2.7	1	54%
T.Conklin*	-2	-7.6%	72	51	449	8.8	5.1	4	71%
J.Ruckert	-64	-41.3%	28	18	105	5.8	4.7	0	64%
K.Yeboah*	3	-2.6%	8	5	47	9.4	6.8	1	63%
S.Smartt	36	19.7%	19	16	208	13.0	4.1	0	84%
B.Hall	23	-8.3%	76	57	494	8.7	8.7	3	75%
B.Allen	39	11.9%	27	19	148	7.8	8.6	1	70%
I.Davis	33	30.8%	12	9	75	8.3	8.3	1	75%

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
B.Hall	-7	-9.4%	209	876	4.2	5	5	47%
B.Allen	47	3.0%	92	334	3.6	2	0	51%
I.Davis	56	39.2%	30	174	5.8	1	0	63%
A.Rodgers*	26	19.6%	17	111	6.5	0	0	-
J.Fields	15	-7.3%	58	270	4.7	5	4	-

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
J.Tippmann	C	24	17/17	1066	4	6	20	2.8%	27	T.Smith*	LT	35	10/10	592	6	3	24	6.1%	25
J.Simpson	LG	28	17/17	1019	7	5	22	3.2%	15	O.Fashanu	LT/RT	23	15/7	533	7	1	21	5.9%	22
A.Vera-Tucker	RG	26	15/15	915	5	5	12	2.0%	7	M.Mitchell	LT	26	10/2	224	1	5	5	3.4%	--
M.Moses*	RT	34	14/14	722	8	5	22	4.6%	9	J.Myers	C	27	16/16	1008	3	5	13	2.5%	22

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont	
2022	4.17	3.81	32	62%	24	22%	30	1.13	25	0.91	9	42	7.0%	17	27.6%	16	22	
2023	4.10	3.64	29	67%	16	23%	30	1.06	21	0.96	5	64	9.8%	28	32.0%	24	17	
2024	4.23	4.37	17	69%	10	18%	21	1.27	11	0.59	22	40	6.8%	16	28.4%	9	28	
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 5.50 (2)				Left Tackle: 4.12 (16)				Mid/Guard: 4.18 (25)				Right Tackle: 4.39 (11)		Right End: 4.23 (12)

The Jets dealt with some injuries at tackle last season but the interior offensive line was fairly healthy, with center Joe Tippmann and left guard John Simpson each starting all 17 games. New York finished in the middle of the pack in most of our line measures, although they were a bit lower in ESPN's Next Gen metrics: 23rd in pass block win rate and 29th in run block win rate. Now the Jets will go with youth at the tackles. Olu Fashanu impressed in his rookie season, although he needs to cut down on the penalties after getting flagged seven times in seven starts. His pass blocking was considered to be ahead of his run blocking when he came out of Penn State. Lance Zierlein of NFL.com listed his NFL comparison as Cam Robinson, and let's hope not. The new right tackle is Armand Membou, chosen seventh overall and considered by many to be the best tackle prospect in this year's draft. He's very athletic, testing well at the combine, and moves very well for his size (6-foot-4, 332 pounds). Membou played in a zone-heavy scheme at Missouri, so he fits what Jets offensive coordinator Tanner Engstrand will bring with him from Detroit. Right guard Alijah Vera-Tucker will be playing out his fifth-year option in 2025. He has developed into one of the NFL's better guards, especially in pass blocking. It's a bit of a surprise that Josh Myers signed a one-year deal with the Jets to be a backup after starting regularly in Green Bay. He told ESPN that he played the second half of last season with a torn pectoral muscle, which may be why he allowed more pressure than he did in 2022 or 2023. Because Tippmann can also play guard, Myers is essentially backing up all three interior line positions.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run					Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
Q.Williams	28	DT	16	724	37	4.6%	56	28	11	7	28	71%	52	2.0	29	6.0	12	38	1
J.Kinlaw*	28	DT	17	697	40	4.6%	53	29	9	4	34	71%	53	2.6	52	4.5	3	21	0
S.Thomas*	30	DT	16	458	28	3.5%	75	19	7	4	19	63%	76	2.3	41	3.5	3	20	0
L.Taylor	23	DT	14	261	25	3.5%	--	16	6	6	20	65%	--	2.3	--	1.5	3	9	1
B.Cowart	29	DT	15	335	26	3.5%	--	21	7	6	22	82%	--	2.0	--	2.5	1	5	0
P.Mathis	27	DT	12	257	18	3.1%	--	15	4	4	14	79%	--	1.8	--	0.0	0	7	1
J.Tufele	26	DT	13	243	16	2.4%	--	9	2	3	13	54%	--	2.7	--	0.5	2	7	1

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run					Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
W.McDonald	26	DE	17	758	31	3.6%	79	26	15	5	15	67%	70	4.7	98	10.5	13	59	5
M.Clemons	28	DE	17	625	34	3.9%	72	25	9	7	27	67%	70	3.4	84	4.5	6	21	2
H.Reddick*	31	DE	10	393	15	3.0%	94	10	6	1	11	64%	78	2.5	48	1.0	2	26	2

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run					Pass Rush			vs. Pass										
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
Q.Williams	29	OLB	17	1114	120	13.9%	39	81	23	19	75	75%	3	2.4	2	2.0	0	10	54	9.2%	51	50%	22	6.2	16	4	0
J.Sherwood	25	MLB	17	1065	157	18.2%	8	78	23	13	94	55%	63	3.7	42	2.0	0	12	35	-1.4%	35	49%	25	7.0	30	3	0

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk					
2022	4.22	4.24	12	66%	14	19%	14	1.14	10	0.71	16	45	7.7%	12	29.1%	9					
2023	3.96	3.93	9	73%	25	20%	9	1.11	10	0.64	18	48	9.3%	3	32.6%	5					
2024	4.07	4.46	20	75%	27	18%	15	1.27	23	0.48	3	43	7.8%	9	34.5%	6					
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 4.02 (11)				Left Tackle: 4.19 (16)				Mid/Guard: 4.78 (23)				Right Tackle: 4.48 (22)			Right End: 3.66 (14)		

Defensive tackle Derrick Nnadi lost his starting job with the Chiefs last season, but he's expected to be the starter next to Quinnen Williams for the Jets this year. Nnadi hasn't developed much past his rookie year, with problems holding up at the point of attack, so eventually the Chiefs gave most of his snaps to Mike Pennel. Nnadi is just part of the overhaul in the middle of the defensive line. There's all new depth featuring Byron Cowart (ex-Bears), Jay Tufele (ex-Bengals), and Phidian Mathis (ex-Commanders). Leonard Taylor III is also around; he was inconsistent in college but a useful pass rusher as an undrafted rookie. 2023 first-round pick Will McDonald IV blossomed in his second season, with 10.5 sacks. His 59 pressures tied for eighth in the NFL. He's bulked up in the offseason in hopes of improving his run defense and switched over to the No. 9 he wore at Iowa State. The Jets are unsure when Jermaine Johnson will be back from last year's Achilles tear—and more importantly, when he'll back at 100%. But they have already picked up his fifth-year option for 2026. Fifth-round pick Tyler Baron played in college at Tennessee and Miami; he's a versatile lineman who can move inside and out but his high motor is more impressive than his speed and athleticism. Linebacker Jamien Sherwood got a three-year, \$45-million contract to return to the Jets after he stepped into the Mike position for C.J. Mosley last year. Aaron Glenn has praised Sherwood's communication skills, telling the press that "the way he talks and reacts to all the players around him and the way they react to him lets you know he is a true quarterback of the defense." Quincy Williams' coverage metrics come out well except that he gets targeted more than almost any other linebacker in the league. That could be scheme or it could be Williams.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run						vs. Pass											
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD Int	
D.J.Reed*	29	CB	14	880	74	10.4%	20	30	10	8	29	31%	77	7.6	70	72	18.5%	48	13.6	8.6%	69	56%	21	8.0	59	10 0
A.Gardner	25	CB	15	880	58	7.6%	64	26	5	8	23	39%	53	7.9	72	58	14.9%	82	14.4	6.7%	64	55%	22	9.6	88	9 1
T.Adams	26	FS	15	766	88	11.6%	35	36	14	10	45	40%	29	6.2	31	27	8.0%	21	9.1	28.1%	50	30%	58	10.3	58	6 1
C.Clark*	30	SS	12	709	71	11.7%	33	18	9	5	39	23%	78	6.9	43	16	5.1%	37	5.1	20.3%	43	56%	18	5.8	13	2 0
I.Oliver	29	CB	17	578	59	6.8%	--	22	11	7	22	36%	--	5.0	--	32	12.5%	--	7.5	12.7%	--	44%	--	10.6	--	3 0
J.Mills*	31	FS	9	458	50	11.0%	43	20	7	7	24	38%	37	7.4	51	9	4.4%	--	7.4	-8.2%	--	67%	--	5.6	--	6 1
B.Echols*	28	CB	16	407	39	4.8%	--	12	4	7	14	57%	--	3.6	--	33	18.4%	--	16.7	10.2%	--	45%	--	7.2	--	3 2
M.Carter	26	CB	13	286	25	3.8%	--	13	6	3	8	63%	--	5.1	--	31	24.5%	--	6.9	5.3%	--	65%	--	5.8	--	1 0
A.Davis*	29	SS	15	261	34	4.5%	--	16	8	5	16	50%	--	5.8	--	11	9.5%	--	5.7	59.3%	--	55%	--	8.1	--	2 2
B.Stephens	28	CB	17	1047	80	9.3%	40	27	12	8	11	55%	24	4.9	26	109	19.8%	32	14.1	15.2%	81	42%	82	9.5	86	10 0
A.Cisco	25	FS	16	979	74	8.5%	67	21	12	14	33	27%	69	7.8	57	12	2.6%	61	4.6	36.4%	55	50%	24	3.8	3	7 1

Year	Pass D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	7		-26.2%	5	-35.6%	1	-9.1%	9	-29.8%	2	-7.4%	13	10.5%	24	8.5%	22
2023	3		-34.9%	4	-37.1%	1	-34.2%	1	-32.8%	1	-40.2%	2	-4.8%	10	19.8%	29
2024	21		41.7%	31	-8.5%	11	10.5%	28	4.8%	22	25.1%	28	-6.2%	12	-15.4%	6

Cornerback Sauce Gardner attended June minicamp even though he's still seeking a contract extension off his rookie deal. Gardner wants to be the highest-paid cornerback in the NFL, which would be about \$30 million per season. Local reporters expect Aaron Glenn to have Gardner follow the opposition's WR1 more often than he did in 2024. He ranked ninth in coverage DVOA in 2022 and then eighth in 2023 before falling to 64th last season. If Brandon Stephens struggles as he did in Baltimore, one alternative will be rookie Azareye'h Thomas. The Florida State product was sometimes considered a first-round possibility before falling to the third round for the Jets. He has average speed but intriguing size (6-foot-2), ball skills, and long arms to interfere with the catch. Tony Adams will start as one safety, probably playing more in the box than he did a year ago. Otherwise, the position has a lot of turnover. Out: Chuck Clark, Jalen Mills, and Ashtyn Davis. In: Andre Cisco and fourth-round rookie Malachi Moore. Moore was mostly known for his deep safety skills at Alabama, but he's not afraid to take on running backs despite his smaller size (5-foot-11, 196 pounds).

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	-1.0%	21	-1.0	17	1.8	16	-1.2	17	-8.5	28	3.4	7	10.3	4
2023	3.1%	5	8.6	5	5.5	2	-4.1	32	3.1	13	3.3	8	-3.5	21
2024	-2.0%	24	-15.1	31	4.6	4	5.6	3	-0.5	16	-5.2	30	-5.6	24

The New York Jets are an example of how special teams performance is inconsistent, as their overall special teams DVOA collapsed last season even though Xavier Gipson's performance on kick returns improved significantly. Gipson has now had one good year and one bad year on each type of return. Former second-team All-Pro Vikings returner Kene Nwangwu is on this roster as well. Expect camp battles for both the kicker and punter positions. Anders Carlson kicked for the second half of the year after the Jets waived the struggling Greg Zuerlein, but he was cut in June. Instead, the Jets signed 243-pound Harrison "The Thiccer Kicker" Mevis, a Missouri alum who hit 20 of his 21 field goal attempts for the Birmingham Stallions during this last UFL season. His competition will be UDFA rookie Caden Davis, who hit 42 of 52 field goals (81%) in two years at Ole Miss, including 17-of-24 from 40 or more yards. The punter competition pits Austin McNamara against Kai Kroeger. McNamara comes out of Texas Tech and spent 2024 in the Bengals camp, while Kroeger is a 2025 rookie out of South Carolina. Kroeger would be more fun, as he finished his college career having completed 7 of 10 passes on fakes for 205 yards and three touchdowns.

# Philadelphia Eagles

2024 record: 14-3

Total DVOA: 21.3% (5th)

Pythagorean Wins: 12.4 (2nd)

Offense: 4.8% (13th)

Snap-Weighted Age: 25.9 (30th)

Defense: -16.2% (1st)

Average Opponent: -3.5% (29th)

Special Teams: 0.3% (14th)

2025 Mean Projection: 9.4 wins

On the Clock (0-5): 6%

Postseason Odds: 57.4%

Mediocrity (6-8): 29%

Super Bowl Odds: 9.1%

Playoff Contender (9-11): 44%

Proj. Avg. Opponent: 4.2% (2nd)

Super Bowl Contender (12+): 21%

2024: Oh, I leave quite an impression.

2025: One Lombardi's cute, but two though?

This is a book about stats, data, and the measurable. But sometimes vibes matter. After a Super Bowl win, the Eagles are currently viewed as the model franchise—one that made all the right roster decisions and knew when to zig when the rest of the league zagged to build the best and most complete roster in the NFL.

However, it wasn't that long ago when vibes couldn't have been lower in Philadelphia. After a 10-1 start in 2023, the Eagles lost five of their final six regular season games and went one-and-done with a 32-9 loss to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in the Wild-Card Round. Both coordinators were replaced during the offseason with heavy (if not outright full) involvement from general manager Howie Roseman. Head coach Nick Sirianni, who was not calling plays, was basically the overseer of vibes, and things weren't going great. An August report from ESPN suggested the relationship between Sirianni and Jalen Hurts was fractured.

"The Hurts-Sirianni dynamic does not do as well when it's one-on-one, a team source said, requiring a third party to be prominently involved for the offense to run at a high level," read one line from the lengthy, detailed account of the disconnect between the coach and quarterback. There was a difference in opinion for the type of offense each wanted to run.

Enter Kellen Moore as the third party in charge of meshing those ideas and modernizing the offense.

While the vibes were bad on offense, at least the production was fine. There was enough talent to not completely bottom out on that side of the ball and the offense still finished 10th in offensive DVOA and 12th in weighted DVOA for 2023. That was not the case for a defense with less talent and worse results. When Matt Patricia is called in to be the solution, as he was when he was made the playcaller late in the season, the problem is beyond fixing.

Enter Vic Fangio as defensive coordinator. After years of the Eagles trying to copy the Fangio system from disciples such as Jonathan Gannon and Sean Desai, they instead finally went straight to the source.

The coordinator changes were accompanied by several player additions through free agency and the draft. None made a bigger impact than Saquon Barkley. A year after the NFL's running backs banded together like The Avengers to figure out how to change the way the league viewed paying players at the position, the answer ended up being "have one of the top

stars sign to a new team behind one of the league's best offensive lines and run for over 2,000 yards during the regular season."

Barkley's success after a three-year deal for \$37.8 million moved the Overton window for running back pay discourse. The \$12.6-million average annual salary slotted Barkley around where some No. 3 wide receivers were getting paid in free agency. Running back contracts are low because these players don't have a singular responsibility for the success of the run game. But even considering that, paying a WR3 price tag for one of the best players at the position is understandable. The return on investment was positive. After an Offensive Player of the Year season, the Eagles gave Barkley a two-year extension that pushes his new-money average to \$20.6 million. However, between the remaining years on the actual deal and the void years added to the contract, Barkley has a cap hit over \$14 million just once while the contract is active, in 2028.

There remains a bit of a misunderstanding of what Barkley was and what exactly he added to the offense. While Barkley's volume stood out, he was neither first in DYAR (fourth) nor DVOA (16th), in part because of opponent adjustments. What Barkley gave the Eagles was another path to explosive plays and a reason to not abandon the run. Barkley was known as a boom-or-bust runner from his time in college through his run with the Giants. That didn't change much in his first year with the Eagles, though there was a significant shift in how much the boom mattered compared to the bust. Barkley was stuffed on 17.1% of his rush attempts, which ranked 20th among running backs, but he more than made up for it with explosive runs. Barkley's 46 runs of 10 or more yards led the league, as did his 1,072 rushing yards on such runs. He had nine touchdowns of 10 or more yards, three more than the next running back.

It wasn't just that there was a threat of these big runs; they felt like an inevitability. These runs were often a death blow from the offense late in games. Barkley had a league-leading 578 rushing yards in the fourth quarter, and 366 of them came on explosive runs. He had five explosive touchdowns in the fourth quarter while no other back had more than two.

Barkley's presence flipped the math of what is expected from a run game and how the Eagles had previously approached offense. In previous versions of the Philadelphia

## 2025 Eagles Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	DAL (Thu.)	7	at MIN	13	CHI (Fri.)
2	at KC	8	NYG	14	at LAC (Mon.)
3	LAR	9	BYE	15	LV
4	at TB	10	at GB (Mon.)	16	at WAS (Sat.)
5	DEN	11	DET	17	at BUF
6	at NYG (Thu.)	12	at DAL	18	WAS

offense that relied on a heavy usage of RPOs, a stacked box was a call for throws to the outside—as simple as a pre-snap call could get. Now, there was still a shot at a big play on the ground instead. Barkley was still stuffed on 22.6% of runs with a stacked box, but he also averaged 5.7 yards per carry. That mark was 8.1 yards per carry and 43.0% DVOA on those runs in the fourth quarter. If Barkley got through the second level, with so many bodies near the line of scrimmage, there weren't many defenders deep to stop him. So much of the Barkley success during the season came from having the first defender with a shot at tackling him come further down the field. Barkley more than doubled his yards before contact per rush from 1.4 in 2023 to a league-leading 3.0 in 2024 (Table 1).

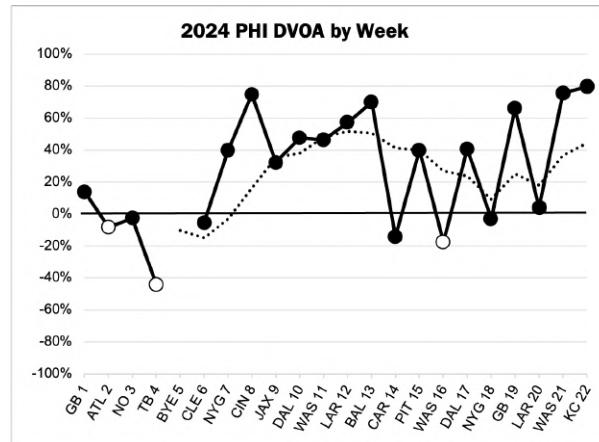
## Table 1. Yards Before Contact Leaders, 2024

Player	Team	YBfC	Rank	YAfC	Rank
Saquon Barkley	PHI	3.04	1	2.78	21
Jahmyr Gibbs	DET	2.78	2	2.86	15
Derrick Henry	BAL	2.46	3	3.45	3
Jonathan Taylor	IND	2.31	4	2.41	39
James Cook	BUF	2.23	5	2.65	28
Jaleel McLaughlin	DEN	2.19	6	2.20	43
Jerome Ford	CLE	2.11	7	3.33	5
Emmanuel Wilson	GB	2.08	8	2.80	20
Bijan Robinson	ATL	1.95	9	2.84	19
Aaron Jones	MIN	1.95	10	2.52	36

Minimum 100 carries

Philadelphia became the run-heaviest offense in the league with just a 42% pass rate on early downs. The threat of the run also helped open things up in the passing game when the Eagles dropped back, as did a more cohesive plan that eliminated many of the pitfalls that had previously plagued the offense. No longer was blitzing an automatic negative play for the offense. After finishing with -11.2% DVOA and seven interceptions against the blitz in 2023, Jalen Hurts improved to 7.1% DVOA and no picks against extra rushers in 2024. Hurts had some more hot routes and wasn't automatically trying to heave go routes down the sideline whenever a blitz came.

The passing plan wasn't always perfect—Philadelphia was only 14th in passing DVOA—but the “too much talent” idea was able to keep the offense going. When defenses wanted to get an extra body in the box and had to play single-high



coverages behind it, the Eagles threw to the outside, trusting the dominance of receivers A.J. Brown and DeVonta Smith in one-on-one matchups. Hurts faced the most single-high coverages in the league and averaged 10.1% DVOA against them, opposed to 0.2% DVOA against two-high. Hurts was fifth in DVOA when defenses played Cover 1 against the Eagles, which they did more often than one would think given the receiving talent on the outside. It was a pick-your-poison for opposing defenses. Often, the Eagles had enough juice on the ground to power through and at least hang in a game long enough for the big Barkley run to break. But in the biggest games, defenses dared Hurts to win. That was apparent late in Philadelphia's playoff run, especially in the Super Bowl. The Chiefs sold out to stop Barkley on the ground, holding him to just 57 yards on 25 carries, while Hurts had a 50.2% DVOA.

Of course, Philadelphia's standout unit in the Super Bowl and for most of the season was the defense. Historically, Vic Fangio has not immediately had success in Year 1 as a defensive coordinator. It has been more of a slow burn with the results kicking in by Year 2 after the system had been established. It probably helped that the Eagles had tried to reproduce a Fangio-lite defense and had a ton of talent on that side of the ball, so it wasn't a start from scratch.

It took just half a season for this defense to fully click, about the same time it took rookie second-round pick Cooper DeJean to break into the lineup full-time.

In Week 4, the Eagles gave up 33 points in a loss to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and sat at 2-2. After their Week 5 bye, they only gave up more than 23 points once, in a 36-33 loss to Washington in Week 17.

After playing a combined eight defensive snaps through the first four weeks, DeJean played 91% of the team's defensive snaps in Week 5 and kept his place as the starting slot corner for the remainder of the season. DeJean's presence solidified one of the biggest weaknesses on the defense for a unit that played in nickel 80% of the time. The Eagles finished fifth in DVOA against receivers lined up in the slot as the rookie held up in coverage and was an aggressive player going downhill, often chasing down plays in front of him against the run and the pass as a plus tackler.

DeJean wasn't the only singular standout, but he encapsulated how well the pieces on the Philly defense fit and worked

together. Fellow rookie Quinyon Mitchell paired well with veteran Darius Slay on the outside. C.J. Gardner-Johnson was brought back after spending a year with the Detroit Lions to be the box safety when the coverage rotated down from its two-high shell. Zack Baun signed a cheap one-year deal after starting his career as a part-time pass rusher in New Orleans and unexpectedly turned into an All-Pro off-ball linebacker who led all defenders in defeats.

Then there was the front four, the most dominating unit on this defense. By season's end, Jalen Carter was one of the most disruptive defensive players in the league, ripping through offensive lines either in one-on-one matchups or double-teams. Milton Williams broke through as a pass-rush threat next to him. After taking a pay cut last offseason, Josh Sweat had his best year on the edge, leading the team in knockdowns and sacks. Nolan Smith, a 2023 first-round pick, got his turn to be the No. 2 edge and had 6.5 sacks.

As a group, the Eagles only finished 26th in pressure rate, but that helps to underscore how everything in the Philadelphia defensive ecosystem worked together. The Eagles had the lowest blitz rate in the league because of the front four. When needed, that pass rush could get home, as it did in the Super Bowl by constantly pressuring Patrick Mahomes without sending a single blitz. Deception was still created by how often the Eagles sent sim pressures (sending four pass rushers but the fourth from a non-traditional spot). According to Field Vision tracking, the Eagles used sim pressures at the third-highest rate in the league (37.9%). That rusher was often Baun (17.6% pass rush rate per Next Gen Stats) but could also be DeJean or linebacker Nakobe Dean. Sending one of those players after the quarterback often either created a free rusher or allowed for a one-on-one mismatch in the rush. Panic set in for opposing quarterbacks, even if a pressure was not officially created. The Eagles had the sixth-fastest time to pressure (2.31 seconds) while offenses averaged the seventh-quickest time to throw against them.

Since the defense was forcing quick throws while mostly rushing four, Philadelphia often still had seven players back in coverage. Because of the talent in the secondary, Fangio turned his system up to 11. For the Fangio system and its offshoots, the idea of the two-high shell was predicated on the pre-snap look. The two safeties weren't giving anything away with alignment. But even Fangio's teams still majored in Cover 3 while throwing in some Quarters and Cover 6 looks to play an actual two-high defense. With the Eagles, there was no telling what the defense would do. Philadelphia had the second-highest rate of middle of the field disguises (starting in two-high pre-snap and rotating to single-high post snap or vice versa) per Field Vision, while playing with the middle of the field open at an above-average rate.

By the end of the season, this was easily the best defense in the league. By weighted DVOA, the Eagles defense had the biggest gap over the No. 2 team (9.5%) since the 2018 Chicago Bears (13.1%), a defense also coordinated by Fangio. If we removed the first month of the season, the Eagles' defensive DVOA of -23.7% from Week 6 through Week 18 would rank them as the eighth-best defense since 2000.

So, with everything going so well and this team reaching its peak by the end of the season with one of the most dominant Super Bowl performances we have seen in some time, why don't we have the Eagles as the undisputed, most-flawless, deepest, best team in the universe as they're widely perceived?

Let's start with the fact that we do still project the Eagles to be one of the most well-rounded teams in the league. They're one of three teams to project inside the top 10 of DVOA in all three phases. But those projections are still just inside the top 10 instead of at the top.

There are a few signs for defensive regression. The Plexiglass Principle is in play after the huge jump from the 2023 performance to what they did last season, even though a new coordinator and player additions led to that jump. While the offense gets the focus for the third-and-short success thanks to the Tush Push, the Eagles had the league's best rushing defense on third- and fourth-and-short (-40.6% DVOA), which typically regresses to the mean.

Philadelphia was also so much better on defense than the rest of the league that the gap is likely to close, even if the Eagles stay among the league's best. It's possible for the Eagles to remain a great defense and still fall short of the lofty bar set by the Super Bowl-winning group.

The defense was the fifth youngest by snap-weighted age but lost more talent than any other defense during free agency. Milton Williams and Josh Sweat were two major contributors and signed elsewhere. C.J. Gardner-Johnson was traded to Houston. Darius Slay is in Pittsburgh. Role players such as Oren Burks, who filled in at linebacker for Dean during the playoff run after Dean tore his patellar tendon in the Wild-Card Game against Green Bay, also left.

If the defense isn't the league's best, then the offense won't have the same margin for error to eventually let the talent come through. The offense will also have another new coordinator after Kellen Moore left to be the head coach of the New Orleans Saints. Kevin Patullo steps into that role as an internal promotion after spending the past four seasons as the pass game coordinator. He was also on staff under Sirianni for three years with the Indianapolis Colts. Continuity is nice, but that was also the justification for promoting Brian Johnson in 2023 after Shane Steichen was hired as the head coach in Indianapolis.

Moore's offense brought some much-needed fresh ideas that mixed in with what had already been in place under Sirianni. The Eagles more than doubled their motion rate on pass plays, going from one of the most static offenses in the league at 24.5% (30th) to 50.7% (16th). Spacing was improved as was the cohesion of the run and pass game with concepts meshed more than just RPO looks. It's unclear how much of the change will continue or if the Eagles will revert to a structure closer to what Sirianni and Johnson wanted to run before Moore arrived.

The offense is also likely to regress with turnovers. Hurts had the sixth-lowest interception rate among quarterbacks, but his 3.6% turnover-worthy throw rate ranked 23rd. He had a 3.7% turnover-worthy throw rate in 2023 when he threw 15 interceptions.

This isn't to suggest that everything broke the exact right way for Philadelphia last season and it will be impossible to reproduce. Really, the lesson that should be learned from the 2024 Eagles is the willingness to take so many shots that not all of them have to hit. The biggest free agent addition from last offseason was pass rusher Bryce Huff, signed to a three-year deal with \$34 million guaranteed. Huff stopped playing regularly by Week 9 and was a healthy scratch for the Super Bowl; he has already been traded away to San Francisco, highlighting Roseman's aversion to sunk costs. Another example: In the preseason, the Eagles sent a third-round pick to the Commanders for former first-round pick Jahan Dotson, who finished the regular season with 19 catches. The high-volume strategy works, especially when the Eagles are typically a year ahead of needing to make those swings. That's why Howie Roseman can take the best player available in the draft every year without worrying about having to fill an immediate need. It's why going out to sign a relatively expensive deal at a non-premium posi-

tion like running back can make a franchise-altering impact. The load-bearing pieces of the roster were already in place and the foundation is constantly getting checked on.

Entering 2025, the roster might not have the same leeway and a higher hit rate might be necessary. Huff's absence will be felt, with the only edge additions in free agency being Josh Uche and Azeez Ojulari. First-round rookie Jihaad Campbell might need to jump in right away at linebacker with Dean's status unclear. 2023 fourth-round pick Kelee Ringo, who has flashed when on the field, is in line to be a starter opposite Mitchell at cornerback. 2023 third-round pick Sydney Brown or second-round rookie Andrew Mukuba will have to fill in for the departed Gardner-Johnson.

The vibes are great right now, but the reality could be a bit tougher. Philadelphia's 2025 season will hinge on how well that's handled.

Dan Pizzuta

## 2024 Eagles by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	GB	W	77%	34	29	410	414	-2	14%	8%	-3%	3%
2	ATL	L	13%	21	22	365	385	-1	-8%	13%	24%	3%
3	at NO	W	78%	15	12	460	219	-1	-3%	-7%	-18%	-14%
4	at TB	L	0%	16	33	227	445	-2	-44%	-20%	20%	-4%
5	BYE											
6	CLE	W	98%	20	16	372	244	0	-5%	13%	17%	-1%
7	at NYG	W	99%	28	3	339	119	0	40%	1%	-34%	5%
8	at CIN	W	100%	37	17	397	280	+2	75%	37%	-20%	18%
9	JAX	W	99%	28	23	447	215	+2	32%	-8%	-38%	2%
10	at DAL	W	100%	34	6	348	146	+3	48%	-5%	-50%	3%
11	WAS	W	98%	26	18	434	264	+1	46%	21%	-32%	-7%
12	at LAR	W	99%	37	20	481	290	+1	57%	35%	-23%	-1%
13	at BAL	W	55%	24	19	252	372	0	70%	22%	-40%	8%
14	CAR	W	75%	22	16	292	302	+1	-14%	-8%	3%	-3%
15	PIT	W	99%	27	13	401	163	-1	40%	19%	-21%	0%
16	at WAS	L	5%	33	36	338	368	+3	-18%	-28%	-17%	-6%
17	DAL	W	100%	41	7	376	268	+4	41%	4%	-31%	6%
18	NYG	W	98%	20	13	303	238	+1	-3%	-15%	-17%	-5%
19	GB	W	97%	22	10	290	302	+4	66%	19%	-37%	10%
20	LAR	W	38%	28	22	350	402	+2	4%	-16%	-23%	-3%
21	WAS	W	100%	55	23	459	350	+4	76%	42%	-33%	1%
22	at PHI	W	100%	40	22	345	275	+2	80%	-1%	-73%	8%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	4.8%	13	-16.2%	1
Unadjusted VOA	9.5%	10	-11.8%	2
Weighted Trend	5.2%	15	-22.3%	1
Variance	3.5%	6	4.8%	15
Average Opponent	4.3%	32	0.5%	16
Passing	19.8%	14	-10.5%	2
Rushing	3.0%	6	-23.8%	2
First Down	3.5%	12	-16.7%	3
Second Down	8.6%	9	-12.3%	4
Third Down	1.5%	17	-20.6%	3
First Half	-3.0%	18	-17.3%	1
Second Half	13.7%	8	-15.1%	5
Red Zone	1.9%	12	-17.3%	3
Late and Close	20.7%	5	0.3%	11

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rk	Off	Rk	Def	Rk	ST	Rk	Off AGL	Rk	Def AGL	Rk	Off Age	Rk	Def Age	Rk	ST Age	Rk
2020	4-11-1	5.8	4.7	334	418	-10	-18.8%	27	-15.2%	29	1.9%	18	-1.6%	22	94.6	32	33.5	12	26.5	21	27.0	5	25.4	25
2021	9-8	10.0	9.4	444	385	0	3.7%	15	6.2%	11	2.7%	23	0.3%	15	46.4	20	29.5	9	25.4	31	27.0	7	24.7	32
2022	14-3	11.8	12.9	477	344	+8	27.8%	2	14.0%	3	-13.3%	3	0.5%	13	11.1	4	31.3	13	26.6	15	27.3	4	25.1	31
2023	11-6	8.6	9.4	433	428	-10	1.1%	14	8.3%	10	11.4%	29	4.2%	1	20.1	11	57.0	29	27.1	5	27.3	4	24.9	32
2024	14-3	12.4	11.3	463	303	+11	21.3%	5	4.8%	13	-16.2%	1	0.3%	14	22.5	10	11.2	2	26.5	17	25.6	30	25.2	31

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

PHI Offense					PHI Offense vs. Opponents					PHI Defense				PHI Defense vs. Opponents			
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA
11	62%	6.1	15.3%	39%	Base	26%	5.1	-6.3%	57%	Base	17%	4.0	-21.0%	11	72%	5.0	-15.2%
12	30%	5.1	2.8%	66%	Nickel	65%	6.1	14.3%	50%	Nickel	73%	4.9	-15.7%	12	16%	4.3	-17.2%
13	3%	9.6	10.9%	75%	Dime+	7%	6.9	39.3%	20%	Dime+	9%	6.1	-13.4%	21	6%	5.3	-5.3%
22	2%	4.5	1.0%	94%	Goal Line	2%	1.6	0.8%	86%					13	1%	2.5	-35.8%
21	1%	6.6	10.3%	63%									01	1%	4.9	7.3%	

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected	Rk	Formation	Rk	Pass Rush	Rk	Secondary	Rk	Strategy	Rk					
Runs, all	+8.3%	1	Form: Single Back	80%	5	Rush 3	1.4%	27	4 DB	16%	28	Play Action	23%	13
Runs, first down	+10.9%	3	Form: Empty Back	7%	20	Rush 4	79.0%	3	5 DB	73%	5	Offensive Motion	44%	21
Runs, second-long	+1.1%	11	Form: Multi Back	14%	22	Rush 5	17.3%	21	6+ DB	9%	20	Avg Box (Off)	6.35	1
Runs, power sit.	+17.9%	4	Pers: 3+ WR	62%	20	Rush 6+	2.2%	32	Man Coverage	61%	3	Avg Box (Def)	6.03	23
Runs, behind 2H	+6.9%	4	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	37%	9	Edge Rusher Sacks	53.7%	12	MOFC	62%	7	Offensive Pace	30.86	9
Runs, ahead 2H	+10.5%	5	Pers: 6+ OL	3%	14	Interior DL Sacks	28.0%	18	CB1 on WR1	30%	28	Defensive Pace	30.76	6
Run-Pass Options	4.1%	14	Shotgun/Pistol	86%	4	Second Level Sacks	18.3%	20	S/CB Cover Ratio	14%	25	Go for it on 4th	1.31	7

Most years in this book, we have a stat somewhere that says something about how time of possession doesn't matter because the leading team in time of possession was 8-9 or whatever. That was not the case in 2024, as the Super Bowl champion Eagles led the NFL with 32:23 average time of possession. The arrival of Saquon Barkley did not change the fact that the Eagles running game is very sensitive to box counts from the defense. Eagles running backs gained 5.6 yards per carry (5.9% DVOA) against a light box of six or fewer, 3.8 yards per carry (-1.4% DVOA) against a seven-man box, and 2.8 yards per carry (-42.5% DVOA) against a heavy eight-man box. There was a similar split in 2023. Philadelphia threw to the player we designated as WR1 (primarily A.J. Brown) on 32% of targets, second in the NFL behind the New York Giants. As usual, the Eagles threw to the middle of the field less often than any other offense. The Eagles offense faced more MOFC coverage than any other offense, 65% of passes where we could mark the coverage shell. They ranked similarly in DVOA against both MOFO and MOFC coverage. Philadelphia ranked seventh in DVOA against man coverage but 21st against zone coverage. No offense faced man coverage on a higher percentage of passes. The Eagles were fifth in offensive pace in the first half of games, then dead last in the second half. Philadelphia used the pistol 20% of the time, third in the league behind Atlanta and Miami. However, the Eagles had just 5.4 yards per play with -8.7% DVOA on these plays. Although the Chargers were slightly ahead of them in overall yards after the catch allowed, the Eagles led the league by allowing an average of -0.7 yards after the catch below expectation.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
J.Hurts	364	3.2%	398	2622	6.6	5.5	69.1%	18	5
T.McKee	85	17.9%	47	306	6.5	4.6	66.7%	4	0
K.Pickett*	-18	-17.3%	46	258	5.6	2.3	59.5%	2	1
D.Thompson-Robinson	-635	-91.5%	126	339	2.7	4.1	54.0%	0	6

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
A.J.Brown	357	33.4%	97	67	1079	16.1	5.3	7	69%
D.Smith	235	21.4%	89	68	833	12.3	4.4	8	76%
J.Dotson	-8	-16.0%	33	19	216	11.4	3.8	0	58%
J.Wilson	-44	-48.8%	15	5	38	7.6	3.0	1	33%
A.Smith	-19	-43.4%	9	7	41	5.9	3.3	1	78%
P.Campbell*	-11	-29.8%	8	6	30	5.0	1.5	1	75%
B.Covey	-19	-41.9%	8	7	34	4.9	4.0	0	88%
D.Goedert	-13	-10.8%	52	42	496	11.8	6.1	2	81%
G.Calcaterra	55	20.8%	30	24	298	12.4	5.3	1	80%
K.Granson	-48	-31.3%	31	14	182	13	7.8	0	45%
H.Bryant	8	4.4%	12	9	86	9.6	7.9	0	75%
S.Barkley	43	3.4%	43	33	278	8.4	7.4	2	77%
K.Gainwell*	4	-10.0%	22	16	116	7.3	6.8	0	73%

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
S.Barkley	251	8.6%	345	2005	5.8	13	2	55%
J.Hurts	91	-1.1%	129	640	5.0	14	4	-
K.Gainwell*	-47	-25.6%	75	290	3.9	1	0	28%
W.Shipley	-43	-46.9%	30	82	2.7	0	0	30%
K.Pickett*	-15	-45.4%	7	17	2.4	1	0	-
D.Thompson-Robinson	9	-2.1%	20	124	6.2	0	1	-

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
C.Jurgens	C	26	16/16	1068	5	9	9	1.7%	7	F.Johnson*	LT	28	17/6	481	4	1	17	7.2%	31
L.Dickerson	LG	27	16/16	996	7	3	16	3.3%	17	T.Steen	RG/LG	25	17/2	316	5	6	1	0.6%	--
L.Johnson	RT	35	15/15	937	6	6	18	3.9%	6	K.Green	LG	24	12/9	583	6	16	20	5.4%	32
M.Becton*	RG	26	15/15	903	4	10	15	3.4%	20	K.Lamm	RT	33	15/7	511	1	9	5	1.6%	1
J.Mailata	LT	28	12/12	802	5	4	21	5.3%	19										

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont	
2022	4.74	4.66	6	75%	7	15%	7	1.45	2	0.68	19	44	7.7%	21	26.4%	12	40	
2023	4.45	4.21	14	82%	1	14%	2	1.23	10	0.74	10	39	6.9%	13	30.5%	19	27	
2024	5.26	4.23	20	67%	17	17%	13	1.43	4	1.44	2	45	9.2%	28	30.5%	15	29	
2024 ALY by direction:			Left End: 4.19 (23)				Left Tackle: 4.33 (14)				Mid/Guard: 4.37 (19)				Right Tackle: 4.32 (13)			
															Right End: 3.09 (27)			

The Tush Push lives. We'll mention it here because as much as the push from behind is emphasized, it's about the angles and leverage created up front. The push from the line makes that play possible. 🚧 Lane Johnson (fifth) and Jordan Mailata (14th) were both in the top 20 of ESPN's pass block win rate among tackles, making them one of four tackle duos with both players on that leaderboard. Both were selected as the second-team All-Pro at their respective positions. Mailata has become a weaponized tackle in the run game, often pulling and getting into space at 365 pounds. 🚧 Cam Jurgens had the seemingly impossible task of replacing Jason Kelce at center, but moving from guard to his natural position left the Eagles with little drop-off in the middle of the line as he tied for 10th among interior linemen in pass block win rate. 🚧 Landon Dickerson led all linemen in Sports Info Solutions' Total Points and had one of the lowest blown block rates against the run. 🚧 It's Tyler Steen vs. Kenyon Green at right guard to fill in for the departed Mekhi Becton. Green came over from Houston as part of the C.J. Gardner-Johnson trade and is a former 15th overall pick. He has dealt with injuries and inconsistency throughout his career. This will be Steen's third straight camp battle for the right guard spot, though losing out to Jurgens and Becton doesn't look too bad in hindsight. Steen will have to clean up his game a bit. Despite the low playing time, his three holding penalties led the team.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run						Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt	
J.Carter	24	DE	16	831	48	6.1%	22	38	19	12	33	79%	29	1.9	26	4.5	11	34	6	
M.Williams*	26	DE	17	501	25	3.0%	87	18	12	1	18	61%	82	2.7	58	5.0	5	26	2	
M.Ojomo	24	DE	17	388	20	2.4%	--	9	2	4	18	50%	--	2.8	--	0.0	5	14	0	
J.Davis	25	DT	17	388	29	3.5%	--	25	6	5	23	83%	--	2.1	--	1.0	0	4	2	

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run						Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt	
J.Sweat*	28	OLB	16	622	43	5.5%	38	35	15	0	31	74%	44	3.4	83	8.0	9	37	2	
N.Smith	24	OLB	16	546	40	5.1%	46	24	12	1	24	54%	93	3.0	68	6.5	4	25	2	
C.Harris*	30	OLB	13	472	23	3.2%	91	18	8	3	18	83%	16	3.2	76	3.0	4	11	1	
B.Graham*	37	OLB	11	311	22	4.1%	70	18	12	6	15	73%	48	1.3	9	3.5	3	18	1	
B.Huff*	27	OLB	12	285	13	2.2%	--	11	5	1	10	80%	--	2.6	--	2.5	1	16	0	
A.Ojulari	25	OLB	11	392	28	4.9%	51	23	11	4	19	79%	29	1.8	23	6.0	3	21	0	
J.Uche	27	DE	13	249	23	3.6%	--	12	6	4	13	46%	--	4.3	--	2.0	1	9	0	

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run						Pass Rush						vs. Pass						
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
Z.Baun	29	ILB	16	939	154	19.7%	1	94	34	15	87	63%	32	3.4	26	3.5	1	13	52	-6.5%	26	63%	6	5.3	7	4	1
N.Dean	25	ILB	15	858	132	18.0%	10	79	26	10	88	63%	33	4.3	71	3.0	3	7	43	-1.2%	36	60%	9	5.9	9	4	1
O.Burks*	30	ILB	17	147	31	3.7%	--	17	4	2	17	53%	--	3.9	--	0.0	0	1	10	19.1%	--	40%	--	5.4	--	1	0
J.Trotter	23	ILB	17	104	20	2.4%	--	11	2	3	10	60%	--	5.8	--	0.5	0	1	4	-13.9%	--	50%	--	2.8	--	1	0

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk
2022	4.36	4.53	22	80%	32	15%	26	1.25	21	0.61	11	70	11.2%	1	33.5%	1
2023	4.02	4.17	15	79%	31	17%	19	1.19	19	0.47	8	43	6.8%	25	27.3%	24
2024	4.08	4.20	13	59%	5	18%	14	1.15	9	0.53	4	41	7.5%	13	30.6%	17
2024 ALY by direction:		Left End: 4.96 (23)			Left Tackle: 4.42 (21)			Mid/Guard: 4.17 (8)			Right Tackle: 3.12 (4)			Right End: 4.99 (29)		

Jalen Carter made the cover of this book for a reason. His full-season metrics undersell the world destroyer he became during the second half of the season and through the playoffs. The Eagles might not have been in the Super Bowl if not for Carter's back-to-back plays ripping through the Rams' offensive line and pressuring Matthew Stafford at the end of the Divisional Round. Carter's presence often pulled attention from opposing offensive linemen, which allowed Milton Williams to use his quickness to get to the quarterback. He was sixth in pass rush win rate among interior defenders but double-teamed at the lowest rate (50%) of anyone in the top 20. After playing 37% of the snaps last season, 2023 seventh-round pick Moro Ojomo will likely be the main Williams replacement. Despite zero sacks, Ojomo was quick off the line (Next Gen Stats had his get-off as faster than Carter's and Williams') and violent getting into the backfield. Fourth-round pick Ty Robinson (Nebraska) is built like a tree trunk and also has pass-rush juice. He was second in this class in pressures with seven sacks and four batted passes in his final college season. Jordan Davis had his fifth-year option picked up, as the Eagles are betting on more development from the former first-round pick. Nolan Smith emerged as a productive pass rusher but he suffered a torn triceps in the Super Bowl and had surgery to repair it. He's expected to be ready for the 2025 season, though offseason work may be limited. Philadelphia will have a deep rotation at edge rusher, though we'll see how much depth equals production. 2024 third-rounder Jalyx Hunt is expected to be the No. 2 behind Smith. Hunt started his rookie season as a healthy scratch in Week 1 and then averaged 26 defensive snaps per game in the playoffs, including half a sack in the Super Bowl. With Bryce Huff traded, veterans Azeez Ojulari and Josh Uche will be pass-rush specialists who could eat up snaps and provide depth as the Eagles rotate their edge rushers to keep them fresh. When is the last time we wrote excitedly about Eagles linebackers? Zack Baun was a revelation in his move to off-ball linebacker, leading all defenders in defeats. First-round pick Jihaad Campbell will at least start the season as the player next to Baun while Nakobe Dean recovers from his injury. Campbell can play off the ball but also move to the line of scrimmage to play off the edge. Last year, he rushed the passer on 23% of his pass snaps at Alabama.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run						vs. Pass												
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int	
Q.Mitchell	24	CB	16	955	58	7.4%	69	23	8	6	13	46%	43	6.9	59	76	15.8%	75	13.5	-19.2%	20	54%	29	6.2	17	12	0
C.J.Gardner-Johnson*	28	SS	16	908	71	9.1%	66	29	17	11	31	35%	40	5.5	19	25	5.5%	35	5.8	33.3%	52	48%	35	5.0	7	12	6
R.Blanksenhip	26	FS	15	821	84	11.5%	37	25	11	11	38	32%	54	7.8	58	16	3.9%	53	6.3	97.6%	63	19%	62	8.3	43	6	4
D.Slay*	34	CB	14	699	62	9.1%	45	27	13	4	13	38%	58	8.0	73	76	21.6%	20	11.0	-10.4%	34	57%	15	6.1	13	13	0
C.DeJean	22	CB	16	627	56	7.2%	73	30	12	7	13	46%	43	4.2	12	56	17.7%	56	6.8	-25.8%	11	63%	6	5.1	2	6	0
A.Maddox*	29	CB	17	345	24	2.9%	--	12	4	0	4	25%	--	3.8	--	24	13.8%	--	10.3	3.4%	--	63%	--	5.2	--	5	0
I.Rodgers*	27	CB	15	328	28	3.8%	--	15	6	3	6	50%	--	5.3	--	27	16.4%	--	11.4	-19.7%	--	59%	--	6.2	--	4	0
T.McCollum	26	FS	14	250	32	4.7%	--	9	2	5	15	33%	--	8.1	--	3	2.4%	--	12.3	51.6%	--	33%	--	9.0	--	2	0
A.Jackson	30	CB	14	427	33	4.5%	--	16	8	5	9	33%	--	8.3	--	38	19.9%	--	11.9	-4.7%	--	61%	--	6.4	--	5	0

Year	Pass	D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	1		-31.8%	4	-21.9%	4	-8.1%	11	-31.7%	1	-1.6%	16	-5.4%	12	12.8%	26	
2023	29		12.9%	21	30.0%	32	13.5%	29	22.4%	28	12.6%	27	5.1%	22	-16.1%	6	
2024	2		-1.7%	16	-44.7%	1	-3.6%	11	-20.1%	2	-17.6%	5	-15.9%	7	-18.9%	5	

Drafting Quinyon Mitchell and Cooper DeJean changed the trajectory of the Philadelphia secondary. Mitchell immediately became an impact outside corner whom defenses avoided. Among 113 corners with at least 200 coverage snaps, Mitchell was 16th in targets per coverage snap. He did not let plays get worse when passes were completed, with the lowest yards after the catch per reception allowed at the position (1.4). DeJean thrived in the slot during the second half of the season. He was one of four corners to be in the top 15 of both DVOA and success rate in coverage. The other outside corner spot is expected to go to Kelee Ringo, a 2023 third-round pick who has flashed when on the field (-25.5% DVOA in 2024), combining size (6-foot-2) and speed (4.38s 40). His main competition for the spot will be veteran Adoreé Jackson and rookie fourth-round pick Mac McWilliams (UCF). Per Sports Info Solutions, McWilliams had the lowest positive play rate allowed in zone cover-

age (18%) among this year's cornerback class. He also had eight tackles for loss.  Reed Blankenship will stay as the team's deep safety while the C.J. Gardner-Johnson replacement comes down to Sydney Brown or 2025 second-round pick Andrew Mukuba (Texas). Brown recovered from a torn ACL late in his rookie season but still couldn't move up the 2024 depth chart, spending time behind Tristin McCullum. Mukuba is a twitchy athlete who finds the ball and contact despite a 5-foot-11 and 186-pound frame. He has the versatility to play all over the secondary and played the slot on just over 9% of his snaps in 2024.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	0.5%	13	4.1	9	2.0	14	-0.3	14	-3.2	23	0.1	16	-6.7	25
2023	4.2%	1	11.2	1	-0.3	17	-3.2	29	7.3	5	7.5	3	-14.2	31
2024	0.3%	14	-2.9	23	1.6	13	0.1	16	3.3	10	-0.5	17	0.1	15

Jake Elliott was only 1-for-7 on kicks of 50 or more yards, with the lone make at just 50 yards after going 12-for-14 from that distance over the previous two seasons combined.  Braden Mann had the third-highest touchback rate and had a punt blocked but also finished 11th in net yards per punt.  Cooper DeJean was a dynamic punt returner (not to be confused with someone who returned dynamic kicks). His 10.1 yards per return ranked 11th among those with at least 10 punt returns, but with him likely putting more focus into defense in 2025, Avery Williams should take over most of that role. The Eagles listed Williams as a "return specialist" when he was signed this offseason. He had 20 punt returns and 15 kick returns for the Falcons last season.  Kenneth Gainwell and Isaiah Rodgers combined for 26 of the Eagles' 32 regular-season kick returns. Both are gone. Will Shipley had the best average of the group (28.8 yards) on six returns.

# Pittsburgh Steelers

2024 record: 10-7

Total DVOA: 6.3% (15th)

Pythagorean Wins: 9.4 (12th)

Offense: -5.0% (19th)

Snap-Weighted Age: 26.9 (10th)

Defense: -6.0% (8th)

Average Opponent: 0.9% (15th)

Special Teams: 5.3% (2nd)

2025 Mean Projection: 7.7 wins

On the Clock (0-5): 19%

Postseason Odds: 29.5%

Mediocrity (6-8): 44%

Super Bowl Odds: 1.3%

Playoff Contender (9-11): 31%

Proj. Avg. Opponent: 1.6% (11th)

Super Bowl Contender (12+): 6%

**2024:** My Kingdom for a Quarterback! (Cont.)

**2025:** My Kingdom for a Quarterback! (Cont.)

The Steelers are a franchise associated with winning Super Bowls as much or more than any other. But lately they have become more thought experiment than title contenders. The existential questions that surround the team are legion. How difficult can they make things on head coach Mike Tomlin as he attempts to maintain his streak of consecutive seasons without a losing record, now at 18? Has that streak become more important to Tomlin than postseason success? Is the undying loyalty Pittsburgh evinces to its head coaches still the way to go in the modern NFL? How many more years can the Steelers continue to put their large and highly loyal fan base through this before they revolt? How long before Tomlin, by far the league's longest-tenured coach, is at last removed or quits?

And most important, and directly influencing all of the above: How many stiffs can Pittsburgh line up at the most important position in the sport before they finally find a worthy successor to Big Ben Roethlisberger?

Tomlin's career bona fides are unquestioned, but it is a cold hard fact that Pittsburgh has not won a playoff game since 2016, their longest such drought since before the Bradshaw Era, aka the Dark Ages. In their last four playoff losses, the aggregate halftime score was Opponent 98, Pittsburgh 24. This despite employing two likely Hall of Fame defenders in edge rusher T.J. Watt and tackle Cameron Heyward. Tomlin's defense-first emphasis seems to be increasingly outmoded, even as the unit has finished outside the top 12 in DVOA just twice since 2015. That decade of play has resulted in a 3-7 postseason record, contradicting the cliche that Defense Wins Championships.

Since 2018, Roethlisberger's last good year, the Steelers have made a winning regular season and a first-round playoff defeat into a hard ceiling that at the same time represents a sizable achievement. Despite a revolving door of blah signal-callers, Pittsburgh made the playoffs in four of those six seasons, and of course they were still above .500 in the other two. (If the NFL had qualified seven teams for the postseason a few years ago, the Steelers would have made it in 2018 and 2019 as well.) That of course is a testament to Tomlin and his remarkable ability to keep his team winning games by any means necessary, despite the lengthy epoch without a star hurler—or even a solid one—at the helm.

Choose your favorite season when Tomlin squeezed a win-

ning record out of a squad bereft of quarterback. Perhaps 2019, when Roethlisberger was injured and missed almost the entire season, but the team won seven of eight before losing its final three to finish 8-8? How about 2021, when Big Ben could barely complete a pass, but great defense won the team three of its last four to sneak into the postseason at 9-7-1? The following year, when they won six of seven behind rookie Kenny Pickett to go 9-8? Or 2023, when Pickett capsized, leaving Mason Rudolph to find a way to win the last three games to finish 10-7?

Last season Pittsburgh employed at quarterback the back-yard wrestling mid-card tag team of Russell Wilson and Justin Fields, took 10 of its first 13 games with the help of a back-loaded schedule, then lost the final four to finish 10-7 before getting walloped in the Wild-Card Round yet again. Steelers diehards are increasingly frustrated, wondering what the long-term plan is, if there even is one. Just how stubborn can one front office be?

To answer that question, seemingly with middle finger upraised, Pittsburgh's intention for 2025 is to employ 41-year-old (42 in December) Aaron Rodgers and his quiet, introverted persona at quarterback. To further cloak the move in absurdity, Rodgers remained ensconced in Malibu, leaving the team in limbo (at least publicly) throughout the spring. When he at last bothered to sign with Pittsburgh, in early June, the feeling was less one of relief and more one of disappointment that Rodgers didn't fully commit to the bit by blowing into town a few hours before the opener.

For the second straight year, the Steelers completely emptied out the quarterback room, an event that is almost certainly without precedent for a team that went to the playoffs in both seasons. Both Wilson and Fields are now in New York, with the Giants and Jets, respectively. Neither were good in 2024, that's for sure. But replacing them with Rodgers, who was 24th in DVOA (-4.8%), had essentially the same advanced numbers as Wilson, "led" Gang Green to a 5-12 record, got his head coach and general manager fired, and comes with more baggage than the giant Unclaimed Baggage superstore in Alabama is more wishcasting than organizational plan. In addition, the Steelers have Rudolph, back on hand after a year in the Tennessee wilderness; newly drafted Will Howard, a sixth-round choice from Ohio State; and Skylar Thompson, hoping to stick as the backup to the backup to the backup. As

## 2025 Steelers Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	at NYJ	7	at CIN (Thu.)	13	BUF
2	SEA	8	GB	14	at BAL
3	at NE	9	IND	15	MIA (Mon.)
4	MIN (IRE)	10	at LAC	16	at DET
5	BYE	11	CIN	17	at CLE
6	CLE	12	at CHI	18	BAL

depth charts go, it's not exactly Drew Bledsoe and Tom Brady in 2001.

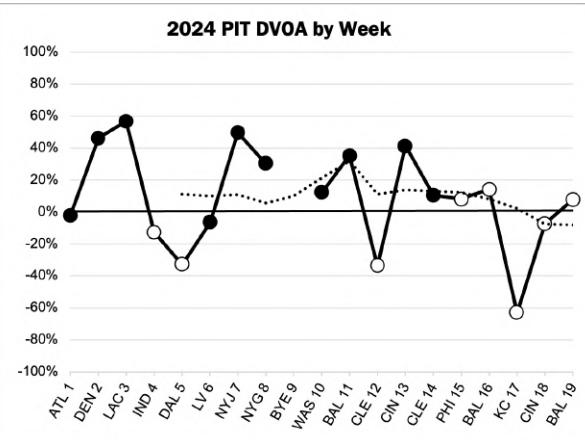
On the other hand, if the ultimate plan in Pittsburgh is for Tomlin to be so ruthlessly dissected on *The Pat McAfee Show* that he quits in disgust, then well played.

After letting running back Najee Harris walk in free agency and dealing troublesome wideout George Pickens to Dallas, the 2025 Steelers will begin the season without their leading passer, rusher, and receiver from the year before, which, according to Josh Dubow of the AP, makes them only the 14th team in the Super Bowl era to do so (Table 1). The previous 13 had a combined winning percentage of .364; only two had winning records, an all-important concern in Pittsburgh, and just one, the 2006 Saints, won 10 games (thanks to their new quarterback, Drew Brees).

**Table 1. Teams That Lost Top Passer, Rusher, and Receiver, 1978-2025**

Year	Team	W-L	DVOA Y-1	Rk	W-L	DVOA	Rk
1978	SF	5-9	--	--	2-14	-28.2%	28
1989	DET	4-12	-25.2%	28	7-9	-10.3%	24
1993	NE	2-14	-29.1%	27	5-11	-9.7%	22
1995	ARI	8-8	-17.0%	27	4-12	-19.8%	28
1995	HOIL	2-14	-19.9%	28	7-9	-10.8%	25
1998	BAL	6-9-1	2.6%	13	6-10	-8.9%	23
1998	SD	4-12	-25.9%	29	5-11	-23.9%	30
2002	BAL	10-6	-4.9%	22	7-9	-6.2%	24
2006	NO	3-13	-11.5%	25	10-6	8.4%	9
2008	CHI	7-9	-18.8%	30	9-7	-8.4%	24
2019	MIA	7-9	-9.7%	26	5-11	-14.9%	28
2021	DET	5-11	-1.5%	19	3-13-1	-16.5%	29
2023	CAR	7-10	-11.1%	26	2-15	-27.6%	31
2025	PIT	10-7	-5.0%	19	--	--	--

Pittsburgh begins with a baseline higher than most of those other clubs and shouldn't be a candidate to crater. Our mean projection for Pittsburgh is just 7.5 wins, which sounds dire until you recall that our mean projection was 7.4 wins a year ago, and they found a way to win 10 games. It wouldn't be shocking, given Tomlin's track record and the talent on the roster outside of quarterback, for Pittsburgh to find their way above .500 and even into the Super Duper Happy Fun Ball Wild-Card Weekend yet again.



Aside from Rodgers' arrival, the boffo aspect of the offseason was the trade of a second-round pick for Seattle wideout DK Metcalf. Metcalf is a bit less explosive and consistent than he used to be—though not much; and a bit less difficult and malcontented than Pickens—though not much. Pittsburgh immediately signed Metcalf to an extension, which signaled the coming departure of Pickens in loud, primary colors. The acquisition of a wideout via trade is a departure for the club, which has a rep as a sharp drafter of receivers. But given the me-first, clubhouse-poisoning attitudes of Antonio Brown, JuJu Smith-Schuster, Chase Claypool, Diontae Johnson and Pickens, the Steelers likely have drafted enough diva wideouts for the time being.

Wisely, Pittsburgh has spent most of its recent draft capital elsewhere. One of our original precepts at this metrics-based enterprise was that teams win by building from the lines out, not the perimeter in (and thank you, Philadelphia, for proving our point with such gusto in 2024). Over the last two seasons Pittsburgh drafted heavily along the interior of its lines, including this year's first-round draft pick, Derrick Harmon of Oregon, a defensive tackle who led all interior defensive linemen with 55 pressures according to Pro Football Focus. They also drafted two other Big Ten defensive linemen: edge rusher Jack Sawyer of Ohio State and nose tackle Yahya Black of Iowa.

Last year, the accent was on the offensive line, where the team took big uglies in the first (Troy Fautanu, a tackle who was injured for most of the year), second (Zach Frazier, who starred at center) and fourth (Mason McCormick, who started at guard) rounds. A return to health for Fautanu—as well as another second-year man whose rookie season was lost to injury, wideout Roman Wilson—could make the Pittsburgh offense much more interesting. The Steelers also added a bruising runner, Kaleb Johnson of Iowa, in the third round to replace the departed Harris and give the team a solid combo with Jaylen Warren.

Even with Rodgers in town, figure on Pittsburgh running it heavily. In 2024, his first year as Pittsburgh's offensive coordinator, Arthur Smith ran the ball far above the league average in any and all situations—first down, second-and-long, trailing in the second half, Wednesday afternoons between 3 and 5 o'clock, during solar eclipses—you get the picture. Given his

quarterbacks, that was hardly a surprise. The lone exception to that rule was run rate in power situations (short yardage and close-in goal line), where the Steelers were bottom-third. Yet their success rate in those situations was 18th overall, far better relative to the league than most of their other rushing DVOA numbers. That oddity was part of an overall vibe; Smith either lacked consistency with his game plans or didn't trust his personnel. Probably both were true to some degree, and it led to players such as Harris and Pickens vocalizing their disgust with the Steelers offense.

Smith also used tons of three-tight end formations (most in the NFL) and max-protect pass blocking (second most) in part because he loves Woody Hayes-style pigskin but also because the team was trying to make up for the loss of Fautanu's athletic bulk. Pittsburgh desperately needs to be less obvious on offense yet still wants to retain the ability to club opponents over four quarters, then hit a long pass over the defense to Metcalf. The offense's ability to consistently surprise opponents should determine how far the team can climb with Rodgers' best days long behind him.

Defensively, good players abound, although Watt's status is a question mark after he demanded a new contract in the spring. Entering the final year of his deal and his age-31 season, Watt wants to command money roughly equivalent to the enormous payday Cleveland bestowed upon Myles Garrett. The Steelers may not be willing to go quite that high, even for someone with Watt's pedigree. (Watt has 5.5 more career sacks than Garrett, for what it's worth.) The safe bet is that Watt will be in black and gold come opening day, regardless of the size of his checking account.

If the Steelers want to calm any worries about Watt's advancing age, they need look no further than Heyward, who contemplated retirement before deciding to return at age 35 to further demolish enemy offenses. With the big fella back for yet another season, the defense figures to be solid at all three levels. Veterans such as linebackers Alex Highsmith and Patrick Queen and newly acquired cornerback Jalen Ramsey are augmented by talented youngsters including nose tackle Keeanu Benton, edge Nate Herbig, linebacker Payton Wilson (one of our Top Prospects), and corners Joey Porter and Beanie Bishop. The unit projects to be in the upper part of the league once again; should the offense give them any kind of assistance the defense should only get better.

With apologies to Watt and Heyward, Pittsburgh's best player in 2024 may have been kicker Chris Boswell. The Steelers led the league in our placekicking values, six points of value higher than the second-place Cowboys. You have to go back to Justin Tucker in 2017 for a better output (Table 2). Boz was a remarkable 13-of-15 on field goals from 50 or more yards, an invaluable weapon for a team that struggled to score touchdowns. Taking into account the always difficult conditions at Acrisure Stadium, Boswell's 2024 looks even more

brilliant. One key to 2025 will likely be whether we see some regression. Regardless, with the self-immolation of Tucker and the decaying orbit of Cincy's Evan McPherson, the Steelers quietly employ the AFC North's best kicker.

**Table 2. Best FG/XP Value Over Expectation, 2000-2024**

Year	Team	Kicker	FG/XP
2016	BAL	J.Tucker	25.5
2009	OAK	S.Janikowski	21.8
2005	ARI	N.Rackers	19.6
2017	BAL	J.Tucker	19.0
<b>2024</b>	<b>PIT</b>	<b>C.Boswell</b>	<b>18.7</b>
2021	BAL	J.Tucker	18.0
2011	OAK	S.Janikowski	16.6
2003	IND	M.Vanderjagt	15.9
2002	NE	A.Vinatieri	15.6
2003	STL	J.Wilkins	14.7

Ah yes, the AFC North. Divisional games were an issue in 2024; the Steelers didn't play their first one until the Sunday before Thanksgiving, jamming the six rivalry showdowns into the final eight weeks (and that doesn't count the Wild-Card Game against Baltimore). They went 3-3, splitting with all three opponents (yes, even Cleveland), part of the reason for the team's ugly finish after starting 10-3. The balance is better this year, though they still have Baltimore twice in the last five weeks. The schedule also rotates in the tough NFC North, takes away a home game to play the Vikings in Dublin, and gives Pittsburgh an early bye (Week 5). Overall, their schedule projects to be the 12th hardest in the league—nothing a top quarterback would quaver at, but in this case, worth worrying about. Rodgers will have to contend with six of 2024's top nine teams by passing defense DVOA (more like six of eight, as the Steelers themselves were seventh).

Who knows? Maybe a tanned, refreshed, and ready Rodgers writes a final chapter to his Hall of Fame career and leads the team he bested to win his lone Super Bowl title on a deep postseason run. If he cannot, maybe Rudolph discovers the latter-career elixir that Baker Mayfield, Sam Darnold, Geno Smith, and other perceived busts have found, and turns in a solid season. Maybe Will Howard turns into Brock Purdy.

Unlikely as any of those outcomes might seem at the moment, they aren't any more implausible than the proud Steelers letting the quarterback position become such a question mark for such a lengthy period of time. And without one of those unlikely outcomes, we could be seeing the late stage of the Tomlin Era.

Robert Weintraub

## 2024 Steelers by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	at ATL	W	57%	18	10	270	226	+3	-2%	-32%	-20%	10%
2	at DEN	W	98%	13	6	251	295	+2	46%	18%	-38%	-10%
3	LAC	W	99%	20	10	346	166	-1	57%	13%	-33%	11%
4	at IND	L	31%	24	27	404	358	-2	-13%	-3%	15%	5%
5	DAL	L	24%	17	20	226	445	+2	-33%	-21%	11%	-1%
6	at LV	W	91%	32	13	293	275	+3	-7%	-24%	-7%	10%
7	NYJ	W	100%	37	15	409	323	+2	50%	16%	-16%	17%
8	NYG	W	100%	26	18	426	394	+1	30%	12%	1%	20%
9	BYE											
10	at WAS	W	69%	28	27	312	242	-1	12%	-2%	-15%	-1%
11	BAL	W	54%	18	16	303	329	+2	35%	-16%	-33%	19%
12	at CLE	L	63%	19	24	368	304	+2	-34%	-17%	12%	-5%
13	at CIN	W	97%	44	38	520	375	+2	41%	44%	-7%	-9%
14	CLE	W	99%	27	14	267	300	+2	10%	-4%	-10%	4%
15	at PHI	L	1%	13	27	163	401	+1	8%	5%	5%	9%
16	at BAL	L	2%	17	34	315	418	-1	14%	2%	2%	15%
17	KC	L	1%	10	29	364	389	-2	-63%	-33%	32%	2%
18	CIN	L	12%	17	19	193	314	+1	-7%	-27%	-24%	-4%
19	at BAL	L	0%	14	28	280	464	0	8%	18%	20%	10%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	-5.1%	19	-6.0%	8
Unadjusted VOA	-4.9%	21	-3.0%	9
Weighted Trend	-5.6%	22	-2.4%	9
Variance	4.3%	11	3.7%	7
Average Opponent	-0.2%	17	1.2%	10
Passing	12.4%	19	-1.3%	7
Rushing	-9.4%	18	-12.4%	13
First Down	-10.4%	25	-6.8%	10
Second Down	-1.5%	18	-4.9%	10
Third Down	-0.9%	18	-6.2%	12
First Half	-6.2%	23	2.4%	13
Second Half	-3.8%	17	-14.6%	6
Red Zone	-7.8%	20	-11.0%	7
Late and Close	-0.4%	21	-13.5%	2

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rank	Off	Rank	Def	Rank	ST	Rank	Off AGL	Rank	Def AGL	Rank	Off Age	Rank	Def Age	Rank	ST Age	Rank
2020	12-4	10.7	9.7	416	312	+9	15.0%	8	-5.3%	22	-18.9%	1	1.3%	14	29.1	9	26.1	7	27.4	7	26.7	9	25.8	19
2021	9-7-1	7.0	6.9	343	398	+2	-11.1%	24	-11.9%	25	-0.6%	17	0.2%	17	42.3	16	47.5	23	25.8	27	26.4	14	25.6	25
2022	9-8	7.3	8.9	308	346	+4	2.0%	13	1.5%	17	-3.0%	12	-2.4%	27	3.2	1	28.8	11	24.8	32	26.4	16	26.3	11
2023	10-7	7.9	10.5	304	324	+11	7.8%	9	0.3%	15	-8.0%	6	-0.4%	20	17.3	8	44.0	25	25.7	29	27.9	1	26.3	12
2024	10-7	9.4	9.6	380	347	+16	6.3%	15	-5.0%	19	-6.0%	8	5.3%	2	44.4	23	32.4	12	26.2	26	27.4	5	27.2	6

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

PIT Offense					PIT Offense vs. Opponents					PIT Defense					PIT Defense vs. Opponents				
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA		
11	52%	5.7	5.8%	34%	Base	30%	4.5	-13.4%	60%	Base	26%	5.5	0.8%	11	63%	5.5	-7.9%		
12	26%	5.5	8.4%	52%	Nickel	60%	5.5	6.0%	40%	Nickel	60%	5.5	-5.9%	12	25%	5.6	6.4%		
13	15%	3.3	-33.4%	63%	Dime+	9%	5.6	-8.3%	21%	Dime+	12%	5.9	-29.4%	21	4%	5.4	-50.8%		
21	3%	7.5	7.4%	38%	Goal Line	1%	1.5	65.8%	73%	Goal Line	2%	0.8	6.3%	13	2%	3.4	9.1%		
612	1%	2.6	-30.3%	64%									22	2%	5.5	-15.4%			

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected		Rk	Formation		Rk	Pass Rush		Rk	Secondary		Rk	Strategy		Rk
Runs, all	+5.7%	7	Form: Single Back	75%	14	Rush 3	0.8%	32	4 DB	23%	14	Play Action	27%	7
Runs, first down	+8.1%	5	Form: Empty Back	7%	18	Rush 4	70.9%	15	5 DB	60%	26	Offensive Motion	42%	23
Runs, second-long	+5.0%	4	Form: Multi Back	17%	14	Rush 5	17.1%	23	6+ DB	12%	12	Avg Box (Off)	6.24	5
Runs, power sit.	-0.4%	23	Pers: 3+ WR	52%	26	Rush 6+	11.3%	4	Man Coverage	46%	21	Avg Box (Def)	6.10	16
Runs, behind 2H	+7.4%	3	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	45%	5	Edge Rusher Sacks	62.5%	7	MOFC	64%	5	Offensive Pace	31.00	10
Runs, ahead 2H	+5.2%	9	Pers: 6+ OL	3%	12	Interior DL Sacks	31.3%	10	CB1 on WR1	41%	8	Defensive Pace	30.76	5
Run-Pass Options	2.9%	17	Shotgun/Pistol	69%	29	Second Level Sacks	6.3%	30	S/CB Cover Ratio	19%	16	Go for it on 4th	0.86	25

The Steelers climbed from 29th in frequency of play-action in 2023 (15%) to seventh in 2024 (27%). 🗑️ Pittsburgh ranked second in the league, using max protect blocking on 10.7% of passes. This is defined as seven or more blockers with at least two more blockers than pass rushers. 🗑️ The Steelers threw a league-low 11% of targets to the receiver we had designated as WR2, usually Van Jefferson. 🗑️ Pittsburgh led the league in how often they used three tight ends, but they were very poor (3.3 yards, -33.4% DVOA) from 13 personnel. 🗑️ Pittsburgh's pressure rate with four pass rushers (31.4%, fourth) was nearly as high as its pressure rate with five or more pass rushers (32.0%, 29th). 🗑️ This was the fourth straight year where Steelers opponents threw over the middle of the field a lot. 26% of passes against Pittsburgh went to the middle, second behind the Packers. This figure was even higher in 2021, 2022, and 2023. The Steelers ranked eighth in DVOA against passes in the middle of the field last season.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
R.Wilson*	228	-1.5%	367	2252	6.1	5.2	64.3%	16	5
J.Fields*	75	-4.2%	176	982	5.6	4.9	66.3%	5	1
A.Rodgers	237	-5.4%	624	3596	5.8	5.8	63.1%	28	11
M.Rudolph	-100	-17.5%	235	1459	6.2	4.5	65.2%	9	9
S.Thompson	-114	-59.1%	39	143	3.7	4	63.6%	0	0

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
G.Pickens*	58	-5.5%	103	59	900	15.3	3.6	3	57%
C.Austin	110	12.2%	58	36	548	15.2	4.2	4	62%
V.Jefferson*	5	-11.0%	40	24	276	11.5	3.3	2	60%
M.Williams*	35	24.9%	13	9	132	14.7	1.2	1	69%
S.Miller	-2	-15.8%	9	5	69	13.8	6.6	0	56%
DK Metcalf	114	0.7%	108	66	992	15	4.0	5	61%
R.Woods	-50	-34.9%	30	20	203	10.2	3.7	0	67%
P.Freiermuth	163	26.0%	78	65	655	10.1	4.3	7	83%
D.Washington	30	10.1%	25	19	200	10.5	6.6	1	76%
M.Pruitt*	-26	-43.2%	10	6	40	6.7	2.7	1	60%
C.Heyward	-2	-9.8%	8	6	40	6.7	1.2	1	75%
N.Harris*	24	-4.9%	48	36	283	7.9	9.1	0	75%
J.Smith	171	15.7%	111	88	884	10.0	5.8	8	79%
N.Harris*	24	-4.9%	48	36	283	7.9	9.1	0	75%
J.Warren	39	1.3%	47	38	310	8.2	8.3	0	81%
C.Patterson	32	30.3%	14	12	80	6.7	4.7	1	86%
K.Gainwell	4	-10.0%	22	16	116	7.3	6.8	0	73%
T.Sermon	-20	-35.1%	19	16	99	6.2	6.2	0	84%

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
N.Harris*	32	-5.6%	263	1043	4.0	6	0	47%
J.Warren	85	9.1%	120	511	4.3	1	1	50%
J.Fields*	15	-7.3%	58	270	4.7	5	4	-
C.Patterson	-15	-20.8%	32	137	4.3	0	1	47%
R.Wilson*	42	8.6%	32	165	5.2	2	2	-
A.Shampklin*	-16	-71.9%	6	17	2.8	0	0	17%
J.Ward	2	3.1%	5	22	4.4	0	0	60%
K.Gainwell	-47	-25.6%	75	290	3.9	1	0	28%
T.Sermon	-36	-22.3%	56	159	2.8	2	0	48%
M.Rudolph	-10	-19.2%	24	101	4.2	1	3	-
A.Rodgers	26	19.6%	17	111	6.5	0	0	-

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
D.Moore*	LT	27	17/17	1113	4	6	39	6.3%	27	I.Seumalo	LG	32	13/13	829	5	3	18	3.9%	24
B.Jones	RT	24	17/16	1073	10	7	43	7.3%	34	S.Anderson	LG	25	17/4	310	2	2	4	2.3%	--
Z.Frazier	C	24	15/15	976	4	2	7	1.3%	1	J.Daniels*	RG	28	4/4	208	0	3	3	2.6%	--
M.McCormick	RG	25	17/14	939	2	10	13	2.5%	12	R.McCollum	C	27	17/2	154	2	0	3	3.5%	--

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont	
2022	4.05	4.54	10	79%	1	15%	4	1.14	24	0.43	29	38	6.3%	12	27.7%	17	51	
2023	4.50	4.29	10	63%	21	18%	18	1.33	4	0.83	7	36	6.7%	10	32.9%	26	38	
2024	4.06	4.37	16	67%	18	18%	20	1.20	19	0.53	25	49	8.9%	24	35.8%	29	33	
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 4.53 (16)				Left Tackle: 4.41 (13)				Mid/Guard: 4.62 (14)				Right Tackle: 3.56 (27)		Right End: 4.24 (11)

Pittsburgh went heavy on the offensive line in the 2024 draft, with mixed results. The 20th overall pick, tackle Troy Fautanu, suffered a dislocated kneecap in the preseason, rushed back to the lineup for Week 2, and tore the MCL ligament in his other knee. “All I know is that I was crying, and I don’t cry too much,” Fautanu said about receiving his diagnosis. Presuming a return to full health, Fautanu slots in at right tackle this season. 🗑️ By contrast, the second-round pick, center Zach Frazier, had a superb rookie campaign, playing 975 snaps with just two blown blocks in the run game, one sack allowed, and an NFL-best pressure rate among centers. He used his wrestling background (Frazier was a four-time state champion in high school) and

explosive power to control enemy tackles. Yet another rookie, Mason McCormick, was forced into action when James Daniels was hurt, and he held his own at right guard. He looked like a fourth-rounder from an FCS school (South Dakota State) at times (10 run blocks blown), but he didn't get overwhelmed, he was good in pass protection (just 13 pressures allowed), and he's the undoubted starter now with Daniels in Miami. Veteran Isaac Seumalo is steady enough at left guard, though entering his age-32 season and with a sizable injury resume, the red flags are racing up the pole. The weak link may be left tackle Broderick Jones, who after being drafted in the first round in 2023 has failed to impress in his two seasons (43 pressures, 10 penalties in 2024), and faces uncertainty about his role moving forward. Jones is penciled in for a move from the right side to the left side, where he will replace departed veteran Dan Moore. Jones probably plays by default, due to a lack of depth. The backups are either retreads (guard Max Scharping, center Ryan McCollum) or never-weres (Dylan Cook, Calvin Anderson). A summer signing of another body could be in the offing.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
C.Heyward	36	DE	17	778	82	9.6%	2	65	25	4	60	73%	47	2.6	53	8.0	12	38	11
K.Benton	24	DT	17	641	42	4.9%	45	31	8	5	30	67%	63	2.7	58	1.0	7	17	5
L.Ogunjobi*	31	DE	15	494	41	5.4%	30	28	7	4	37	68%	62	2.7	60	1.5	5	11	0
M.Adams*	30	DT	11	188	14	2.5%	--	7	3	2	11	36%	--	5.2	--	1.0	0	4	0
D.Ekuale	31	DT	16	722	52	6.3%	21	34	5	6	47	64%	75	3.2	82	1.0	1	8	0

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
T.J.Watt	31	OLB	17	938	65	7.6%	10	55	31	11	45	80%	27	2.2	30	11.5	18	52	4
A.Highsmith	28	OLB	11	525	47	8.5%	5	33	14	2	35	69%	65	3.3	80	6.0	9	47	2
P.Smith*	33	OLB	17	469	32	3.8%	75	23	10	2	22	68%	66	2.5	45	4.5	1	21	0
N.Herbig	24	OLB	13	415	22	3.4%	85	18	10	1	13	77%	35	1.5	17	5.5	7	29	3

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush				vs. Pass									
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
P.Queen	26	ILB	17	1090	136	15.9%	24	64	24	15	68	53%	71	3.7	38	1.0	7	14	52	8.6%	48	40%	50	8.6	58	7	0
P.Wilson	25	ILB	17	492	74	8.7%	69	30	8	5	34	50%	74	4.4	76	0.0	2	4	32	11.7%	55	41%	49	5.9	10	2	1
E.Roberts*	31	ILB	17	478	46	5.4%	86	28	7	7	36	64%	27	3.1	17	1.0	3	9	17	26.2%	70	47%	31	9.4	68	0	0
M.Harrison	27	ILB	15	372	46	6.1%	83	27	7	12	36	58%	49	2.9	7	2.0	2	3	12	7.1%	--	50%	--	7.2	--	0	0

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk			
2022	4.27	4.22	11	61%	5	19%	9	1.25	20	0.66	13	40	7.2%	14	29.2%	8			
2023	4.23	4.21	18	64%	12	17%	18	1.12	12	0.75	22	47	8.2%	10	32.3%	6			
2024	4.10	3.93	4	67%	16	20%	8	1.11	8	0.72	13	40	6.7%	24	31.7%	13			
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 3.93 (8)				Left Tackle: 4.04 (14)				Mid/Guard: 4.06 (7)				Right Tackle: 3.77 (11)		Right End: 2.03 (2)	

Star edge rusher T.J. Watt is up to 108 career sacks, averaging 13.5 per year over his eight seasons. Hitting his regular output in 2025 would get him near the Top 20 on the all-time leaderboard and move him up tight on Cam Jordan, who enters 2025 with 121.5, for second on the active list behind Von Miller (129.5). T.J. needs seven sacks to pass his brother, J.J., for Watt family BBQ bragging rights. Watt gets plenty of help from Pittsburgh's other edges. Alex Highsmith's pass-rush numbers declined slightly, mainly due to the emergence of Nick Herbig, now entering his third season. That combo combined for 11.5 sacks and 76 pressures, allowing the Steelers to cut Preston Smith loose, and gives the club some leverage in negotiating a contract extension with Watt. Cam Heyward had one of the better age-35 seasons from a defensive lineman in recent history, including 25 defeats and 11 disruptions (passes batted plus hits that cause incompletions), only one off the league lead, to go with his eight sacks. Assuming he stays healthy (and Heyward has missed just 18 games in 14 pro seasons) a sharp decline seems unlikely. Derrick Harmon was drafted with the 21st pick to eventually replace Heyward, but in the meantime, he is slated to start at the other end position. Harmon is a big ole beast (6-foot-4, 310 pounds) with excellent penetration skills, ones that developed after he transferred from Michigan State to Oregon and reportedly lost about 40 pounds. Keeanu Benton mans the nose in Pittsburgh's 3-4 with aplomb, with fifth-round rookie Yahya Black from Iowa backing him up. Larry Ogunjobi and Montravious Adams are both gone, leaving depth a concern. After a nice rookie season splitting snaps with

since-departed Elandon Roberts, Payton Wilson is set to start full-time next to Patrick Queen at inside linebacker. Wilson fell in the draft due to concerns about his cartilage-free knees, but so far, so good. 🗡 In his first year with the Steelers, Queen was solid, if not quite as good as he had been with the Ravens while playing with Roquan Smith.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run						vs. Pass											
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
M.Fitzpatrick*	29	FS	17	1083	100	11.7%	32	25	16	7	35	23%	79	9.3	82	24	4.4%	44	7.0	17.9%	40	21%	61	8.4	44	4	1
J.Porter	25	CB	16	971	77	9.6%	34	24	9	7	21	33%	72	7.6	69	86	17.6%	58	10.8	-8.3%	40	44%	81	8.0	60	7	1
D.Elliott	28	SS	15	823	114	15.1%	6	51	13	3	56	50%	12	5.2	16	40	9.6%	12	9.1	1.6%	22	65%	5	5.2	9	6	1
D.Jackson*	30	CB	15	780	46	6.1%	79	19	9	11	6	67%	10	3.5	8	73	18.5%	45	13.5	-24.6%	13	53%	33	8.6	73	8	5
B.Bishop	26	CB	17	548	46	5.4%	86	23	18	6	6	50%	31	8.8	78	66	23.9%	10	9.6	-24.2%	17	52%	50	7.5	46	7	4
D.Kazee*	32	SS	15	289	33	4.4%	--	8	5	1	11	9%	--	14.0	--	5	3.4%	--	15.6	108.7%	--	40%	--	15.6	--	2	1
C.Sutton*	30	CB	9	256	18	4.0%	--	8	1	1	5	40%	--	5.4	--	28	21.7%	--	7.3	-6.0%	--	68%	--	4.0	--	3	0
C.Trice	25	CB	6	193	23	7.6%	--	6	2	2	5	40%	--	6.2	--	21	21.6%	--	6.6	29.2%	--	29%	--	7.8	--	2	1
J.Ramsey	31	CB	17	1027	71	8.8%	49	33	13	10	21	57%	21	4.0	11	70	13.6%	88	8.2	-17.7%	22	50%	55	6.6	24	11	2
D.Slay	34	CB	14	699	62	9.1%	45	27	13	4	13	38%	58	8.0	73	76	21.6%	20	11.0	-10.4%	34	57%	15	6.1	13	13	0
B.Echols	28	CB	16	407	39	4.8%	--	12	4	7	14	57%	--	3.6	--	33	18.4%	--	16.7	10.2%	--	45%	--	7.2	--	3	2
J.Thornhill	30	FS	11	401	52	9.8%	59	15	4	6	30	27%	72	10.0	88	9	5.0%	--	14.8	45.6%	--	56%	--	7.4	--	3	0

Year	Pass D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	18	-1.4%	15	1.3%	18	-14.4%	7	8.5%	24	-27.6%	1	5.2%	22	1.4%	18	
2023	6	-15.6%	10	-7.6%	12	-3.6%	13	-12.1%	9	-1.6%	17	-16.5%	3	7.9%	22	
2024	7	-41.5%	1	0.5%	17	20.6%	31	-0.4%	20	-19.1%	4	10.1%	24	-10.0%	8	

Here's a statistical conundrum: Pittsburgh was the best team against enemy No. 1 wideouts by DVOA, but top corner Joey Porter Jr. had a terrible success rate, and the general consensus was he took a step backwards in 2024. A closer look reveals Porter was very good by coverage DVOA (-20.3%) when he played top receivers, which was often (Pittsburgh was eighth in the league in CB1 guarding WR1), but struggled when matched up with other guys (4.7% DVOA, though to be fair his roughest games came against Tee Higgins, hardly your average WR2). Maybe Porter just needs the challenge? Coverage DVOA rewards defenders for preventing targets, so Porter was doing the job while mentally engaged. 🗡 Aged (entering age-34 season) but still effective (57% success rate) corner Darius Slay was signed from Philly in free agency to play opposite Porter. Big Play Slay had no picks during the 2024 regular season but he should help improve coverage that was 31st against "other wideouts" in 2024, though he is hardly a long-term solution. Donte Jackson had good numbers, but he has moved on to the Chargers. 🗡 The Steelers made a big trade at the end of June, bringing in Jalen Ramsey in exchange for Minkah Fitzpatrick. It has been a while since Ramsey (entering his age-31 season) has been an elite corner, but he can still play, as his -17.7% pass defense DVOA will attest. Pittsburgh played nickel less than most teams last season, but we should see it more with proven corners like Ramsey and Slay around. 🗡 Pittsburgh found a success story with undrafted free agent Beanie Bishop at slot corner. Bishop played for three colleges and was considered a one-year wonder by many because of a strong final year at West Virginia. He roared up the Pittsburgh depth chart in the summer and started from Day 1. Bishop led the secondary with 18 defeats and posted a strong coverage DVOA despite a ton of targets. His sticky coverage led to Pittsburgh ranking fourth against wide receivers in the slot by DVOA. 🗡 DeShon Elliott had a very good season in the box safety role against the run, missing just three tackles all year. The Steelers are annually near the top of the league in the gap between where the two starting safeties make their plays. Minkah Fitzpatrick (12.8 yards) was clearly the free safety and Elliott (7.1) clearly the strong safety. With Fitzie pulling an Irish goodbye, Juan Thornhill, late of the Chiefs, steps in as the free safety. 🗡 The secondary was already pretty lean after losing Jackson, Cam Sutton, and Damontae Kazee, and now the Fitzpatrick-for-Ramsey move highlights the lack of depth at safety. If injury strikes, Pittsburgh could be in trouble.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	-2.4%	27	-3.8	24	-7.2	30	2.2	10	1.9	14	-6.0	28	-11.8	30
2023	-0.4%	20	9.8	4	-2.7	26	0.3	14	-5.3	26	-4.4	27	5.3	7
2024	5.3%	2	18.7	1	-5.5	30	-3.3	26	15.9	1	2.5	9	11.7	3

Along with his fantastic placekicking, Chris Boswell also had positive gross value on kickoffs, but the Steelers ranked second in kick return value given up behind only Tennessee. That included 14 returns of 30 or more yards with no forced fumbles.

• Punter Cameron Johnston signed a three-year free agent contract before last season, then suffered a season-ending knee injury in Week 1. Reports out of minicamp had Johnston “booming the hell out of the ball,” so let’s assume that he’ll be back to replace the player who replaced him last season, Corliss Waitman. While the Pittsburgh kickoff coverage was poor, their punt coverage was the best in the league, with zero returns over 30 yards and four forced fumbles. The Steelers didn’t let a single punt return get inside their 40. • Cordarrelle Patterson is the best kick returner in NFL history but he did not fare well in the first year of the dynamic kickoff. Calvin Austin had a positive season on punt returns but may be needed more on offense. Seventh-round rookie cornerback Donte Kent returned punts at Central Michigan, with a touchdown in his final season, and will compete for both jobs.

# San Francisco 49ers

2024 record: 6-11

Total DVOA: 6.7% (14th)

Pythagorean Wins: 7.4 (20th)

Offense: 10.7% (9th)

Snap-Weighted Age: 27.3 (5th)

Defense: -1.6% (13th)

Average Opponent: 4.7% (2nd)

Special Teams: -5.6% (31st)

2025 Mean Projection: 11.2 wins

On the Clock (0-5): 1%

Postseason Odds: 79.7%

Mediocrity (6-8): 12%

Super Bowl Odds: 17.7%

Playoff Contender (9-11): 40%

Proj. Avg. Opponent: -5.4% (32nd)

Super Bowl Contender (12+): 47%

**2024:** The 49ers' Achilles heel turned out to often be an actual Achilles.

**2025:** Keep the superstars and change out the riff-raff, and you have a Super Bowl contender?

**S**hoot for the moon, for even if you miss, you'll end up amongst the stars.

There, having only packed the proper provisions for a short trip to the moon, you will gradually run out of both supplies and oxygen. You'll die a slow death, choking on your own carbon dioxide, as you're doomed to be a speck in the distance, visible from high-powered telescopes for decades, a monument to failure, bad luck, and poor planning that will live for far longer than you will.

Anyway, let's talk about the 2024 San Francisco 49ers, shall we?

The 49ers started last year with sky-high projections. This very *Almanac* noted that they were just the third team ever to have a DVOA projected more than 10 points over their nearest conference rivals, as they begged, borrowed, and stole to keep the band together for one last run at a title before they ran out of runway to the looming contract cliff. Having just lost the Super Bowl in overtime—something Kyle Shanahan has an inordinate amount of experience doing—it made sense on paper to avoid trading superstars, keep the band together, and try for one last run to glory.

Instead, the 49ers faceplanted. Their streak of either reaching the NFC Championship Game or missing the playoffs entirely has now stretched to 22 straight seasons, as they fell to 6-11 and far out of the playoff race, much less any championship hopes. And now, the financial realities of going all-in have come back to bite them—an expected situation, but one that stings when they didn't have anything to show for it last year. The talent exodus is extreme. Including special teams, the 2025 49ers have to replace nearly 10,000 snaps lost this offseason. That includes nearly 40% of their defensive snaps and key contributors to their recent run of success such as Deebo Samuel, Dre Greenlaw, Charvarius Ward, and Talanoa Hufanga. That's a huge amount of experience and talent headed out the door, leaving San Francisco in an awkward spot.

Don't call it a full-on reboot, but 2025 is a soft reset for the franchise. It's a tightening of the belt after years of paying top dollar to chase a Super Bowl title which never came. It's setting priorities for what the team will look like for the next two or three years, rather than optimizing things to win a title right here and right now. It was a bloodletting that was always in the plans, but it's one thing to plan for it, and another thing to have to experience it. With all that in mind, we're projecting

the 49ers to—one second, let me just take a sip of my drink here while I check our main tables...

...have the highest projected win total in the NFC and once again be in contention for the Super Bowl.

We're not the only ones high on the 49ers, of course. At time of writing, they're seventh in Super Bowl odds at about +2000, so Vegas certainly doesn't want to lose money on a rebound season for San Francisco. But the subjective power rankings around the Internet are, for the most part, much more pessimistic. They almost universally have the 49ers somewhere between 13th and 16th. Most go out of their way to reassure us that, yes, they still trust Kyle Shanahan to get the team to bounce back, but the outstanding question marks about health, the offensive line, and the defensive exodus keeps them from vaulting a team with a losing record out of the ranks of merely the above-average.

We have some of those same questions too, of course. While we think it's highly unlikely the 49ers do worse than their 6-11 record last year, there are a lot of potential snags and uncertainties that could derail San Francisco's trip back to towards the rank of contenders. It's a projection we talked about for quite some time, because yes, having a team coming off of a losing record rank first in the conference in win projections is something that raises even our eyebrows. And yet, by nearly every metric we have, the 2024 49ers were both better than their record and unlucky on top of it. Combine the screaming positive regression indicators and the league's softest projected schedule in 2025, and dive a little deeper into what those 10,000 missing snaps actually mean, and you get a very good team once again.

First thing's first: San Francisco was not as bad as their 6-11 record implied. The 49ers finished 2024 14th in DVOA, and were 10th before they shut down Brock Purdy for the last game of the season. That's generally the spot where you see a nine- or 10-win team if you prorate DVOA history out to 17-game seasons—good, but not great, teams that trundle along towards wild-card berths. But we can do a little better than that, even. We expect that during San Francisco's first home game of the year, they'll hold a little ceremony at halftime, proudly announcing that they were, in fact, the best 11-loss team in the history of DVOA (Table 1). Raise the banner high!

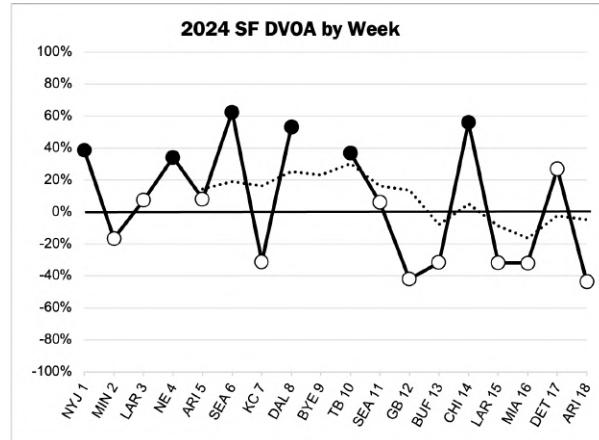
## 2025 49ers Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	at SEA	7	ATL	13	at CLE
2	at NO	8	at HOU	14	BYE
3	ARI	9	at NYG	15	TEN
4	JAX	10	LAR	16	at IND (Mon.)
5	at LAR (Thu.)	11	at ARI	17	CHI
6	at TB	12	CAR (Mon.)	18	SEA

The other teams high on that table didn't see much improvement the next year, with their average DVOA rising just 1.7%. But they saw an average of 4.1 more wins the next year while broadly being the same teams as before. Even if the 49ers do not improve on the field in 2025, they're likely to have better results just from the ball bouncing their way slightly more often. This is a team that had four losses with a Post-Game Win Expectancy of at least 24% (tied for most in the league), one that had a 2-5 record in one-score games, one that had the largest gap between their DVOA expected wins and their actual win total. If our projection seems high, it's because our baseline is much better than San Francisco's actual record in 2024.

But that's last year. The 2025 49ers will look substantially different from the 2024 squad, and it's not just those 10,000 missing snaps. The return of the walking wounded will go a great way to boosting San Francisco in 2025.

The 49ers led the league in adjusted games lost in 2024 at 141.2. The plague of injuries was simultaneously spread over the team as a whole *and* focused on several key positions, as there were enough injuries to cover both breadth and depth. They managed to have the second most games lost on offense and the third most on defense, with both platoons spending most of the second half of the year with a skeleton crew manning the roster. They had the second-most running back AGL of all time, with Christian McCaffrey's Achilles going from a minor preseason kink into a saga that involved flying to Germany for experimental medical treatment—only for him to end up tearing his PCL once he returned anyway. While CMC was out, the 49ers found time to have Elijah Mitchell, Jordan



Mason, and Isaac Guerendo all get hurt as well.

After a long offseason trade saga, Brandon Aiyuk's new contract ended with him blowing up his knee and missing the last half of the season, with both Deebo Samuel and Jauan Jennings missing multiple games—not to mention Ricky Pearsall getting shot, which didn't count against AGL because he wasn't expected to be a starter early but does kind of feel like it fits. Those big five players that were the driving force of their offense in 2023? San Francisco only got 57 snaps with McCaffrey, Aiyuk, Samuel, George Kittle, and Brock Purdy all on the field at the same time.

On the line, Trent Williams missed the back half of the season with an ankle injury. The defensive line saw Javon Hargrave tear his triceps in September. Dre Greenlaw missed most of the year recovering from the Achilles tear he suffered in the Super Bowl. Ambry Thomas missed the year with a broken forearm. Talanoa Hufanga tore ligaments in his wrist. Heck, even punter Mitch Wishnowsky suffered a career-threatening injury and was lost for the back half of the year. It's no wonder the 49ers went from fifth in DVOA at the midseason point to having a sub-5% Post-Game Win Expectancy in five of their last seven games. This was less the team that had gone to overtime in the Super Bowl in 2023 and more a collection of street free agents who happened to share the same taste in clothing.

The last time the 49ers were this injured? 2020, when they had an AGL of 161.6, plummeted to a six-win season despite ranking 12th in DVOA, and missed the playoffs a year after losing a close Super Bowl to the Chiefs. That, too, triggered a soft reboot, and when the calvary returned to health in 2021, the 49ers returned to the NFC Championship Game. The plan, then, is to just run that back this year. Let's put on our rose-colored glasses for a moment and make the *optimistic* case for the 2025 49ers.

Sheer regression to the mean and not having four or five injured guys at any given position will help, but the quality of the returning players helps too. While not everyone is coming back, McCaffrey swears up and down that he's fully healthy, and he has been the most impressive player on the field during OTAs. After last season, fantasy managers will need three signed affidavits from medical professionals as well as a blessing by both a young and old priest to believe that, but

**Table 1. Best Teams in DVOA History, 11+ Losses**

Year	Team	W-L	DVOA	W-L Y+1	DVOA Y+1
2024	SF	6-11	6.7%	--	--
2001	SD	5-11	5.2%	8-8	-4.0%
1996	BAL	4-12	1.5%	6-9-1	4.2%
2016	SD	5-11	-0.5%	9-7	6.2%
2012	DET	4-12	-1.0%	7-9	3.0%
1980	STLC	5-11	-2.3%	7-9	-14.2%
2023	LAC	5-12	-2.9%	11-6	12.6%
1990	DEN	5-11	-2.9%	12-4	0.7%
1983	NYG	3-12-1	-3.0%	9-7	0.3%
2003	JAX	5-11	-3.4%	9-7	-3.2%

a healthy McCaffrey is the afterburner that takes the 49ers offense to the next level, especially around the goal line. Ideally, the 49ers would use Guerendo a little more behind him to lessen his workload, but Klay Kubiak has said that the plan is to get CMC the ball as much as possible, presumably until the wheels fall off once more. Williams has no restrictions either, and he should return to provided much needed beef on the offensive line. While both McCaffrey and Williams are into the upper age players are successful at their positions, those two healthy players alone would be a massive boost to the offense. Not everyone will be ready to go to start the regular season—Aiyuk and safety Malik Mustapha may both start the year on the PUP list as they recover from their ligament tears—but the returning talent is exciting, and with any luck will be in full force as the 49ers turn to the second half of the season.

Also returning? Robert Saleh, fresh from surviving three years and change in New York. While his head coaching opportunity didn't go as he had hoped, his skills at turning a defense around were as strong as ever. Saleh's Jets ranked 32nd in defensive DVOA in his first year, and then sixth, third, and (in a partial 2024) 13th before getting caught up in the quagmire of the Aaron Rodgers implosion. Now, he's tasked with reshaping a 49ers defense that has been in decline for the past few seasons, especially in the run game—missed tackles and soft fronts were an issue even before last year's injurypalooza, with the 49ers falling from being a top-10 squad against the run every year between 2019 and 2022 to 15th in 2023 and 23rd last season. Saleh has said that San Francisco was the only team he would return to as a coordinator, and it turns out that the 49ers mostly kept his room intact just in case he had to come back home. They're still running the same basic scheme Saleh set up in 2017, and his old assistants Kris Kocurek and Johnny Holland are still running the front seven. Saleh should slide back in quite easily, bringing with him the tweaks and updates to his coverage schemes he tinkered with in New York, with little in the way of growing pains in terms of installing his system. He has been given the keys to the defense and asked to kickstart it back into a strength.

Saleh took those keys, shoved Shanahan in a locker on draft weekend, and went about reshaping the defense. No mid-round kickers or unnecessary running backs this year! San Francisco used their first five picks on the defensive side of the ball for the first time since 1981. Mykel Williams, Alfred Collins, and Nick Martin could all be Week 1 starters, with C.J. West and Upton Stout also likely to play sizeable roles early. Saleh also gets to reunite with a couple of players from his Jets teams, most notably Bryce Huff. Huff struggled in Vic Fangio's scheme in Philadelphia, being asked to play as an outside linebacker 60% of the time. With Saleh, at LEO with his hand in the dirt, Huff had 10 sacks and 47 pressures in 2023; a reunion could finally fill the gap as the complementary pass rusher to Nick Bosa that the 49ers have been seeking for years. The 49ers had somewhat let their defense fall fallow in recent seasons—they picked just four defenders in the first three rounds from 2021 to 2024 before taking four this year alone. This offseason was a much-needed talent infusion, and one should have pay immediate dividends in 2025.

The final piece to the optimistic outlook for San Francisco? Someone gifted the front office a calendar with the months of April and May included, letting them know that they could ink long-term contracts without them devolving into protracted training camp holdouts. While the 49ers let a lot of players go this offseason, they focused their resources on keeping their most vital stars happy and in house. And, for the first time since 2021, there will be no preseason drama about whether or not a star player will actually be on the roster come Week 1. The 49ers turned down a trade for George Kittle, making him the highest paid tight end in football. They gave Fred Warner a three-year extension after he gutted his way to yet another first-team All-Pro season despite playing the year on a fractured ankle. Most importantly, they signed Brock Purdy to a \$265-million extension, locking him in as their starting quarterback for at least the next three years. While Purdy may never quiet all of his critics, finishing seventh with a 15.3% passing DVOA in a season when all of his superstar teammates got hurt may have been his most impressive trick to date. He has firmly established himself as a second-tier quarterback in this system, and he got a second-tier contract to *stay* in this system. May wonders never cease.

So, the 49ers have kept the bulk of their stars in house, with a significant chunk of the lost snaps being role players or declining names. They have infused the defense with young talent and reunited with the coordinator who helped establish their defensive credentials to begin with. They're getting healthier. They were better than their record last season. And, since they have drawn the AFC and NFC South, they have the easiest projected schedule by a wide margin, a full 1.6% (TK) easier than second-place Atlanta. Of course their projection is super-high! With a very good offense and a not-terrible defense, San Francisco is set for another deep playoff run yet again.

But, if we're done admiring our Lombardi trophies and can step briefly into the Cohn of Pessimism, we can find reasons to doubt the sunny future our model predicts.

Some of the 49ers' losses were planned. For example, there was no way that both Deebo Samuel and Brandon Aiyuk were going to be on the roster with their deals, hence drafting Pearsall in the first round a year ago. But not all of them were. Losing Dre Greenlaw really hurts. The 49ers really missed him, and the fumbling around with De'Vondre Campbell and others in the middle of the defense last year was a disaster. That same pattern goes through the most painful losses this offseason—not necessarily players who were good last year, but players who have been good in the past and now can't return to playing well in San Francisco. A lot of institutional knowledge leaves when you're dumping 10,000 snaps, and even if many of those players are replaceable, *you still have to find replacements*. Charvarius Ward and Leonard Floyd weren't great in 2024, but there's certainly no guarantee that Bryce Huff or Tre Brown will be *better*. Nor does Deebo Samuel's down year automatically mean that Demarcus Robinson would be better than him in 2025. Especially on defense, there's a lot riding on rookies, gambles, and budget free agents to be major contributors immediately. I would expect there to be some

awkward shuffling early as half the starting defense is different from 2024, and if there are growing pains or busts among the young players being asked to be immediate contributors, things could get fairly ugly.

Losing those snaps also wrecks San Francisco's depth, which is dangerous for a team that is as injury-prone as they are—they have gone to a stars-and-scrubs model, which could hurt if the stars end up not starring. Injuries do regress back towards the mean, and it's improbable that the 49ers could be *as* hurt in 2025 as they were last year, but some players *are* more injury-prone than others, and some teams are more willing to accept and defy injury risk than others. The 49ers definitely fall into that latter category, taking chances on players with injury histories and running their aging stars hard. Since Shanahan took over in 2017, the 49ers have averaged 104.4 AGL, worst in the league. Counting on the team to be as healthy as they were in 2023 (34.5 AGL) is a fool's errand.

The offensive line is especially thin. The 49ers opted to spend most of their capital on improving the defense instead of finding replacements for Aaron Banks or Jaylon Moore. They are certainly more confident in the likes of Ben Bartch and Jake Brendel than we would be, but the real concern is what happens if and when someone gets hurt. Trent Williams is 37 and coming off of an ankle injury. Is Andre Dillard someone you want to count on at left tackle? Austin Pleasants? The 49ers will eventually need to find a young prospect on the line, but they keep kicking that can down the road. They have time, as the line is most likely acceptable for 2025,

but it means they're not ready should disaster strike now.

The depth questions fill in everywhere. If McCaffrey never gets back to full speed from his Achilles, can you count on the also-injured Guerendo or fifth-round pick Jordan James to carry the load? What if Aiyuk's ACL tear takes longer to heal and Pearsall's hamstring acts up again? Is Jacob Cowling or Jordan Watkins ready to be an impact starter in September? The lost snaps, plus years of missing draft picks thanks to the Trey Lance and CMC trades, mean that there's not heck of a lot behind the stars, and a lot of those stars have age concerns, injury concerns, or both. It's a golden façade held up by some rather hastily constructed scaffolding. There's a world in which a cascade of injuries at one position causes the entire house to crumble.

On the whole, though, we fully expect San Francisco to be deep in the playoff mix once more. They may not fully get back to the championship favorites they were in 2023, but it's not hard at all to see the path to this being a *very* good team. It's natural to be hesitant about declaring that about a team who had such a miserable November and December, but all the signs point to this being a full bounce-back year with the potential for more if they happen to get lucky. It's not crazy to think that they'll be in Levi's Stadium on February 8, playing in a hometown Super Bowl.

And hey, even if they miss, they could still end up drowning in the Bay. It'd be less painful than last year, at any rate.

Bryan Knowles.

## 2024 49ers by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	NYJ	W	99%	32	19	401	266	+2	38%	15%	-15%	8%
2	at MIN	L	13%	17	23	396	403	0	-17%	3%	-1%	-20%
3	at LAR	L	60%	24	27	425	296	-1	7%	26%	6%	-12%
4	NE	W	100%	30	13	431	216	+1	34%	1%	-49%	-15%
5	ARI	L	34%	23	24	384	358	-2	8%	0%	-8%	0%
6	at SEA	W	99%	36	24	483	358	+3	62%	55%	-16%	-8%
7	KC	L	0%	18	28	310	329	-1	-31%	-25%	0%	-6%
8	DAL	W	100%	30	24	469	292	+2	53%	29%	-17%	7%
9	BYE											
10	at TB	W	93%	23	20	413	215	-1	37%	37%	-18%	-18%
11	SEA	L	44%	17	20	277	289	0	6%	11%	8%	3%
12	at GB	L	0%	10	38	241	325	-3	-42%	-40%	0%	-2%
13	at BUF	L	0%	10	35	239	372	-3	-32%	-7%	17%	-7%
14	CHI	W	100%	38	13	452	162	0	56%	34%	-27%	-5%
15	LAR	L	3%	6	12	191	302	-1	-32%	-48%	-6%	10%
16	at MIA	L	3%	17	29	374	381	-1	-32%	13%	38%	-7%
17	DET	L	24%	34	40	475	439	-2	27%	71%	23%	-21%
18	at ARI	L	0%	24	47	436	393	-3	-44%	-12%	30%	-2%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	10.6%	9	-1.6%	13
Unadjusted VOA	11.0%	8	4.6%	20
Weighted Trend	8.6%	12	4.3%	22
Variance	9.9%	31	4.7%	13
Average Opponent	-0.9%	9	3.2%	4
Passing	32.9%	7	0.8%	10
Rushing	-3.8%	13	-4.3%	23
First Down	13.4%	7	6.4%	23
Second Down	6.6%	11	-10.8%	5
Third Down	11.7%	10	-1.7%	15
First Half	15.6%	5	-5.4%	5
Second Half	5.1%	11	1.7%	21
Red Zone	12.1%	8	12.6%	29
Late and Close	13.1%	11	7.7%	18

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rk	Off	Rk	Def	Rk	ST	Rk	Off AGL	Rk	Def AGL	Rk	Off Age	Rk	Def Age	Rk	ST Age	Rk
2020	6-10	7.6	8.3	376	390	-11	2.6%	12	-5.1%	21	-9.8%	7	-2.1%	23	78.7	30	87.9	32	26.7	17	26.2	19	26.2	12
2021	10-7	10.1	12.0	427	365	-4	21.3%	5	13.5%	6	-10.2%	5	-2.4%	26	45.0	19	74.5	29	28.2	3	26.8	10	26.6	7
2022	13-4	13.0	12.2	450	277	+13	27.1%	3	12.0%	5	-14.8%	1	0.2%	15	44.2	20	49.7	26	27.1	8	26.3	17	26.7	7
2023	12-5	13.2	14.0	491	298	+10	39.4%	2	31.8%	1	-9.6%	4	-2.0%	25	14.1	3	20.3	6	27.6	2	26.9	12	26.3	13
2024	6-11	7.4	9.0	389	436	-10	6.7%	14	10.7%	9	-1.6%	13	-5.6%	31	65.0	31	76.2	30	28.0	1	26.7	14	26.8	8

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

SF Offense					SF Offense vs. Opponents					SF Defense				SF Defense vs. Opponents			
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA
11	48%	6.1	12.2%	24%	Base	32%	6.8	18.9%	47%	Base	26%	5.7	11.6%	11	59%	5.3	-6.2%
21	35%	6.9	20.7%	50%	Nickel	55%	6.3	17.1%	39%	Nickel	69%	5.1	-11.0%	12	25%	5.6	5.4%
12	7%	5.4	-1.9%	64%	Dime+	12%	5.6	3.8%	20%	Dime+	5%	8.7	68.1%	21	6%	5.0	-15.0%
22	4%	5.2	-2.8%	69%	Goal Line	1%	3.4	-8.4%	56%					13	4%	6.6	16.0%
02	1%	9.5	84.2%	38%										22	2%	5.0	-1.1%
01	1%	10.8	94.6%	17%													

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected	Rk	Formation	Rk	Pass Rush	Rk	Secondary	Rk	Strategy	Rk
Runs, all	+1.8%	17	Form: Single Back	65%	29	Rush 3	1.4%	29	4 DB
Runs, first down	+0.9%	18	Form: Empty Back	8%	16	Rush 4	80.0%	1	5 DB
Runs, second-long	+3.1%	9	Form: Multi Back	27%	5	Rush 5	16.3%	27	6+ DB
Runs, power sit.	+4.9%	16	Pers: 3+ WR	51%	28	Rush 6+	2.3%	31	Man Coverage
Runs, behind 2H	+4.1%	12	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	15%	30	Edge Rusher Sacks	68.1%	3	MOFC
Runs, ahead 2H	-0.6%	18	Pers: 6+ OL	1%	20	Interior DL Sacks	29.2%	15	CB1 on WR1
Run-Pass Options	0.7%	32	Shotgun/Pistol	72%	26	Second Level Sacks	2.8%	32	S/CB Cover Ratio
									Go for it on 4th
									0.82
									30

The biggest shock for the 49ers was the lack of yards after the catch. The 49ers have been near the top of the league in YAC for every year of the Kyle Shanahan era, but they ranked just 13th with 5.3 average YAC in 2024. 🤔 Although the ratio wasn't as pronounced as it was in 2023, the 49ers have thrown more to the left than the right since Brock Purdy became the quarterback. They also ranked third behind Detroit and New Orleans by throwing 27% of passes to the middle of the field. 🤔 San Francisco averaged a league-leading 9.3 yards per play with play-action, although they ranked just fourth with 52.6% DVOA. 🤔 The 49ers were consistently better running from two-back formations compared to one-back formations until last season. They averaged 5.2 yards and 2.0% DVOA with one back compared to 4.5 yards and -10.5% DVOA with two backs. 🤔 The 49ers benefited from just 102 opponent penalties, tied for the bottom of the league, and got a league-low 624 penalty yards.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
B.Purdy	831	15.2%	481	3708	7.7	5.5	66.7%	20	12
J.Dobbs*	10	-7.9%	48	333	6.9	3.2	69.6%	2	2
B.Allen*	-66	-43.3%	32	197	6.2	6.8	56.7%	1	2
M.Jones	166	-1.5%	276	1559	5.6	5.3	65.5%	8	8

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
J.Jennings	185	8.6%	113	77	975	12.7	3.1	6	68%
D.Samuel*	37	-6.4%	81	51	670	13.1	8.3	3	63%
B.Aiyuk	17	-8.3%	48	26	374	14.4	4.1	0	54%
R.Pearsall	92	12.6%	46	31	400	12.9	3.7	3	67%
C.Conley*	-16	-29.4%	12	6	76	12.7	3.2	0	50%
J.Cowing	28	47.8%	6	4	80	20.0	6.5	0	67%
R.Bell*	-21	-54.6%	6	2	22	11.0	1.0	0	33%
D.Robinson	118	9.1%	64	31	505	16.3	2.3	7	48%
G.Kittle	426	59.1%	94	78	1106	14.2	6.7	8	83%
E.Saubert*	-8	-14.2%	15	11	97	8.2	2.9	1	79%
L.Farrell	-25	-29.2%	17	12	67	5.6	2.5	0	71
K.Juszczyk	50	14.9%	31	19	200	10.5	4.9	2	61%
C.McCaffrey	15	1.0%	19	15	146	9.7	6.5	0	79%
I.Guerendo	28	15.6%	16	15	152	10.1	7.1	0	94%
J.Mason*	33	25.1%	15	11	91	7.7	4.9	0	79%
P.Taylor	-42	-70.4%	11	3	25	8.3	6.3	0	27%

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
J.Mason*	52	-0.5%	153	789	5.2	3	3	50%
I.Guerendo	34	1.4%	84	420	5.0	4	0	48%
B.Purdy	96	15.9%	61	315	5.2	5	2	-
C.McCaffrey	46	14.6%	50	202	4.0	0	0	44%
D.Samuel*	29	-26.2%	42	136	3.2	1	0	-
P.Taylor	35	11.6%	39	183	4.7	1	0	51%
J.Dobbs*	-11	-39.0%	8	25	3.1	2	1	-
K.Juszczyk	-14	-86.1%	5	26	5.2	1	1	20%
M.Jones	14	-2.3%	23	95	4.1	1	1	-

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
D.Puni	RG	25	17/17	1078	7	7	16	2.5%	10	T.Williams	LT	37	10/10	649	4	4	16	4.1%	9
J.Brendel	C	33	17/17	1072	8	4	17	2.6%	24	J.Moore*	LT	27	15/5	271	0	0	5	3.0%	--
C.McKivitz	RT	29	17/17	1062	6	11	42	6.5%	28	N.Zakelj	LG	26	17/2	162	1	1	2	2.0%	--
A.Banks*	LG	28	13/13	775	5	10	18	3.8%	23										

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont		
2022	4.85	4.70	4	61%	26	18%	22	1.34	8	1.10	4	31	6.3%	10	24.1%	8	30		
2023	4.96	4.77	2	73%	7	15%	4	1.43	3	1.09	2	34	7.3%	18	31.0%	21	31		
2024	4.88	4.68	7	70%	8	18%	17	1.41	6	1.07	6	36	6.6%	14	31.3%	16	36		
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 5.05 (5)				Left Tackle: 3.82 (24)				Mid/Guard: 4.70 (12)				Right Tackle: 4.71 (7)		Right End: 5.21 (3)	

Trent Williams missed seven games in 2024, the most in his career if you exclude sitting out 2019 due to cancer and a soured relationship in Washington. When he plays, he's still one of the standard-bearers at the position. The 49ers had a 15.0% offensive DVOA with him on the field in 2024 and a 3.9% DVOA without him. Colton McKivitz is entering a contract year. Combine that with Williams' age and it's possible the 49ers' starting tackles for 2026 are currently not on the roster. McKivitz did have the best year of his career in 2024 and was much more confident in pass protection, but the future at the position is hazy at best. Dominick Puni is the latest 49ers' mid-round draft find. The rookie was a machine on running plays, adapting to the outside zone game at a position he never played in college like he was a natural. Pass protection was more of an adventure, but Puni has already solidified himself as a building block going forward. Left guard is a tossup between Ben Bartch, Spencer Burford, and Nick Zakelj. Zakelj will need to improve his run blocking, Bartch his pass protection, and Burford the everlasting memory of not blocking Chris Jones in the Super Bowl for the 49ers to feel comfortable with any of them. Pick your weakness. Jake Brendel is a solid run blocker, but only six centers allowed more pass pressure than he did in 2024.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run					Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
M.Collins*	30	DT	17	717	33	3.9%	67	23	10	6	23	65%	67	2.5	51	5.0	8	37	1
J.Elliott	28	DT	15	441	19	2.6%	91	16	5	5	18	83%	13	1.7	16	0.0	2	5	0
E.Anderson	23	DT	12	267	24	4.0%	--	19	3	1	22	82%	--	2.3	--	1.0	2	4	0
Ka.Davis*	27	DT	13	260	13	2.0%	--	7	2	1	10	50%	--	4.5	--	0.0	0	2	1
Kh.Davis	29	DT	12	209	12	2.0%	--	8	5	3	11	64%	--	1.9	--	1.0	1	5	0
K.Givens	28	DT	8	185	11	2.8%	--	11	3	1	7	100%	--	1.4	--	3.5	2	6	0

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run					Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
N.Bosa	28	DE	14	693	53	7.7%	9	38	19	9	33	70%	63	2.8	61	9.0	16	59	2
L.Floyd*	33	DE	17	606	43	5.1%	47	31	11	4	27	67%	70	2.8	60	8.5	6	36	2
S.Okuayinonu	27	DE	16	450	36	4.5%	58	26	10	2	28	75%	39	2.3	36	3.0	4	14	3
Y-Gross-Matos	27	DE	11	368	19	3.5%	82	12	7	7	14	57%	88	1.7	21	4.0	3	13	0
B.Huff	27	OLB	12	285	13	2.2%	--	11	5	1	10	80%	--	2.6	--	2.5	1	16	0

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run					Pass Rush			vs. Pass										
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
F.Warner	29	MLB	17	998	138	16.4%	16	76	25	18	77	62%	35	3.4	25	1.0	1	7	48	-21.2%	9	42%	46	6.9	27	7	2
D.Campbell*	32	OLB	13	719	81	12.6%	49	40	8	12	43	60%	43	3.9	57	0.0	1	3	36	5.0%	43	47%	30	6.8	25	2	0
D.Winters	25	OLB	15	398	43	5.8%	84	25	3	9	23	57%	59	3.8	43	0.0	0	1	23	22.6%	68	52%	18	6.3	17	4	0
L.Gifford	30	ILB	16	203	37	4.7%	--	16	8	2	22	45%	--	4.4	--	0.0	0	0	7	59.0%	--	14%	--	11.6	--	2	1

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk
2022	3.29	3.78	2	71%	22	18%	15	0.81	1	0.16	1	44	7.0%	16	27.8%	14
2023	4.13	3.97	10	76%	29	18%	14	1.04	7	0.73	21	48	7.8%	17	32.1%	8
2024	4.29	4.52	22	71%	24	16%	24	1.17	11	0.66	10	37	7.4%	15	29.6%	23

2024 ALY by direction: Left End: 4.72 (21) Left Tackle: 4.02 (12) Mid/Guard: 4.48 (17) Right Tackle: 4.73 (25) Right End: 4.86 (27)

The 49ers only ranked 23rd in pressure rate, but led the league with a -92.7% DVOA when they did get pressure. San Francisco only got pressure on 22% of snaps when Nick Bosa didn't get pressure himself, which would be worst in the league. Fortunately, Bosa ranked eighth in pressures last season and was fifth in ESPN's pass rush win rate. He needs running mates to clean up his pressures, but he remains one of the harder edge rushers in football to deal with. First-round pick Mykel Williams (Georgia) was fifth in our SackSEER projections, with his numbers dinged because he played through an ankle injury as a Bulldog. He's an elite edge-setter with a high ceiling and plenty of traits to develop. He should start from Day 1 and make an immediate impact. The 49ers entered the offseason with the weakest interior defensive line on paper. Their best name coming in was Kevin Givens, a rotational guy who managed six pressures a year ago. That's less than ideal. Jordan Elliott is the other returning starter, though he has only once topped 500 snaps in his career. While his stop rate wasn't bad, his 29% missed tackle rate was part of San Francisco's run defense problems. It's no wonder the 49ers used multiple early draft picks to shore up the position. Second-round pick Alfred Collins is a huge tackle who is great at gumming up running lanes. Texas allowed 2.9 yards per carry when he was on the field. His pass rush is more potential than realized, but he should start at the 1-tech sooner rather than later. Fourth-round pick C.J. West (Indiana) may also end up starting by the end of the year. West had 52 stops at or behind the line of scrimmage from 2021 to 2024, most among FBS defensive tackles. Despite playing with a fractured ankle from Week 4 onwards, Fred Warner earned his third straight first-team All-Pro nod. He was the third of the three big contracts the 49ers signed this offseason, and considering the state of the front seven last season, may have been the most important. Dee Winters is not a good run defender, but his coverage skills are better than his DVOA would suggest. He didn't give up more than 35 yards a game until the last two weeks, when the 49ers were eliminated and being held together by duct tape and hope. Third-round pick Nick Martin (Oklahoma State) missed most of 2024 with a knee injury but looked healthy this offseason. He has speed and athleticism out the yin-yang, but he is still raw when it comes to play recognition and the mechanics of the position. Dre Greenlaw's spot is wide open, so if Martin is both healthy and a quick learner, he may take that job sooner rather than later.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run							vs. Pass										
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int	
D.Lenoir	26	CB	15	923	94	12.7%	4	40	17	13	38	50%	31	4.4	16	88	20.4%	26	8.3	-21.8%	19	53%	34	5.8	5	9	2
J.Brown	25	SS	17	886	83	9.9%	58	36	15	11	42	48%	17	5.9	28	18	4.4%	45	6.3	-34.0%	5	72%	1	4.1	5	6	1
M.Mustapha	23	FS	16	756	76	9.6%	63	24	5	9	55	29%	64	7.4	49	6	1.7%	--	13.0	-59.8%	--	100%	--	-0.2	--	5	1
C.Ward*	29	CB	12	695	61	10.3%	24	21	4	5	24	50%	31	4.7	22	52	16.0%	72	11.7	10.0%	71	38%	88	6.9	32	7	0
R.Green	25	CB	17	675	73	8.7%	50	27	11	2	23	17%	88	6.9	58	71	22.5%	17	11.1	-9.3%	38	52%	41	6.2	16	13	1
I.Yiadom*	29	CB	17	486	50	5.9%	--	16	6	4	18	39%	--	6.2	--	41	18.1%	--	11.6	-0.9%	--	46%	--	9.0	--	6	1
T.Hufanga*	26	SS	7	308	38	11.0%	42	12	5	4	22	45%	21	5.9	26	5	3.5%	--	9.4	9.2%	--	20%	--	10.0	--	0	0
T.Brown	28	CB	13	290	24	3.6%	--	7	1	2	8	50%	--	3.5	--	22	15.6%	--	12.2	27.6%	--	27%	--	11.0	--	1	0

Year	Pass D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	4	-18.3%	6	1.2%	17	2.5%	20	-14.7%	6	10.5%	23	-5.3%	13	-38.4%	1	
2023	4	1.2%	17	-36.6%	2	-7.9%	11	-11.8%	10	-16.2%	8	-12.2%	6	-2.4%	17	
2024	10	-8.2%	13	12.4%	23	-11.4%	5	-2.9%	18	-9.0%	12	-7.2%	10	-0.5%	14	

No secondary was more reliant on pass-rush help than San Francisco's in 2024. Their DVOA on aimed passes fell from -48.8% with pressure to 35.4% without pressure, the largest drop in the league by quite some margin. That's a fall from the best pass defense in the league to one that was decidedly below average. 🤦 When Robert Saleh was listing the assets on the 49ers' defense, he first named Nick Bosa, then Fred Warner, and then hit Deommodore Lenoir third. Lenoir earned a major extension in the middle of 2024 as San Francisco planned their post-Charvarius Ward secondary. He may move to the outside more in 2025 after spending most of his rookie contract defending the slot, but he has shown he can handle either role. 🤦 Third-round pick Upton Stout (Western Kentucky) could be in line for some of those slot snaps if Lenoir heads outside. Stout didn't allow a touchdown in 409 coverage snaps over the last two years. At just 5-foot-8, there are concerns about his size, but not his competitiveness. 🏈 Renardo Green broke up 13 passes despite only starting half the year. That's a solid start as a rookie, but now he's going to have to fill Ward's shoes full-time. 🤦 If Lenoir continues to play in the slot in nickel, the leading option for third cornerback is Tre Brown. The ex-Seahawk would have ranked 88th out of 94 in coverage DVOA had he played enough coverage snaps to qualify, so that would be less than ideal. 🤦 One last blow from 2024: Malik Mustapha tore his ACL in Week 18, something we didn't learn about until the draft. Free agent addition Jason Pinnock (ex-Giants) may be in line to fill his role until he's back sometime around midseason. 🤦 Fifth-round pick Marques Sibley (Kansas State) could take advantage of Mustapha's absence as well. He ran the fastest 40 for a safety at the combine and is an aggressive run defender—perhaps too aggressive, as he can run himself out of plays on occasion. 🤦 Ji'Airy Brown was benched late in 2024, thanks to the rise of Mustapha and the return of Talanoa Hufanga. With Hufanga gone, Brown has been restored to the starting lineup, at least for now. The 49ers would love for him to look more like the player he was as a rookie, as there's not much of a Plan B here.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	0.2%	15	-5.1	26	-1.2	23	-1.5	19	3.5	9	5.5	4	2.5	14
2023	-2.0%	25	-2.8	19	-5.1	30	-0.7	19	3.3	10	-5.1	29	-3.7	22
2024	-5.6%	31	-11.0	29	-4.0	28	-5.5	31	-6.0	29	-3.0	23	-13.1	30

The 49ers got absolutely crushed by "hidden" special teams in 2024. Opposing punters averaged a league-leading 50.1 gross yards per punt and opposing kickers only missed one field goal attempt against the 49ers all year: Tyler Bass of the Bills missing a 49-yarder when the Bills were already winning 35-10 late in Week 13. 🤦 Jake Moody is back, at least entering training camp. He struggled in 2024, with his -13.8 points on field goals third worst in the league. He has changed his approach and been given a vote of confidence by new coordinator Brant Boyer, but San Francisco also brought in Greg Joseph to provide competition. Keep an eye on this one. 🤦 The 49ers released punter Mitch Wishnowsky, in part because of the back injury he suffered last season. Veteran Thomas Morstead comes in, most recently from Boyer's Jets. New York had a solid punt team last year, though that was more due to their coverage than it was to Morstead's leg. 🤦 With Deebo Samuel gone, the 49ers will need a new primary kick returner. Patrick Taylor is first in line, but this is wide open. Keep an eye on the tastefully named Malik Knowles, who led the Big 12 multiple times in kickoff return yards. Wide receiver Jacob Cowing returns punts but had a tough year as a rookie.

# Seattle Seahawks

2024 record: 10-7

Total DVOA: 2.2% (18th)

Pythagorean Wins: 8.7 (15th)

Offense: -3.9% (18th)

Snap-Weighted Age: 26.4 (18th)

Defense: -4.8% (10th)

Average Opponent: 3.7% (4th)

Special Teams: 1.3% (10th)

2025 Mean Projection: 7.9 wins

On the Clock (0-5): 18%

Postseason Odds: 29.6%

Mediocrity (6-8): 43%

Super Bowl Odds: 1.5%

Playoff Contender (9-11): 32%

Proj. Avg. Opponent: -1.1% (21st)

Super Bowl Contender (12+): 7%

**2024:** Ten wins and no playoff berth? Just another year for the worst good team in football.

**2025:** We must move forward, not backward; upward, not forward; and always twirling, twirling, twirling towards freedom!

**S**ometimes, “good enough” isn’t good enough.

The Seattle Seahawks were supposed to be blown up after the Russell Wilson trade, with the Geno Smith era being a full-on rebuild for the franchise. Instead, Seattle has been reasonably successful by most fair metrics. Over the last three years, the Seahawks have the 11th-most wins in the NFL at 28. They are 14th in average DVOA since 2022 at 2.4%. They have had three straight winning seasons, one of only eight teams that can make that claim. They usually don’t get blown out, ranking 14th with just 10 double-digit losses in the Smith era. No, there are worse fates in the world than being a fan of the Seahawks. They have a baseline competency that makes them the envy of franchises in Carolina or New York.

And yet...

No one grows up hoping that one day they’ll reach the lofty heights of 14th. The Seahawks are—and have been for years—the worst good team in the league. That 2.4% average DVOA? That’s the lowest positive total, with everyone below them in the negatives. Seattle’s high-water mark over the last three years was 5.1% in 2022; 19 teams have had at least one season better than that. Those three consecutive winning seasons have resulted in one playoff trip, a blowout loss to the 49ers in the 2022 Wild-Card Round. They have been stuck in NFL limbo, not bad enough to justify blowing everything up but not good enough to be relevant.

That’s the thing about being in limbo—they were here last year, too. Last year’s *Almanac* talked about Pete Carroll’s legacy, why it was time to move on, and why making the big move to bring in Mike Macdonald should pay dividends in the long run. Macdonald did drag the Seahawks’ defense kicking and screaming into the 2020s after some early growing pains, as their -4.8% DVOA was their best since 2016 and the twilight years of the Legion of Boom. But that was offset by a corresponding decline on offense under Ryan Grubb, which was their first negative offensive DVOA in nearly a decade and their worst total mark since their -10.9% in 2006. It all evened out in the wash, and Seattle was a bit unlucky to miss out on the postseason on the fifth tiebreaker, but the end result was the same. It was another winning season with no lasting long-term impact.

So, a year after making a huge offseason splash and change, let’s run it back! Seattle noticed they still had a baby left after getting rid of all that bathwater and absolutely gutted the of-

fense, getting rid of both the last vestiges of the Carroll era and the mistakes of the ill-fated Grubb tenure in one swift stroke. It’s a total clean slate for the offense, and the hope is that these changes, plus continued improvement on the defensive side of the ball, will snap the Seahawks out of the doldrums and make them a contender. Or, at the very least, send them crashing and flaming in a new direction, because even bottoming out would let them find a shiny new toy at quarterback for 2026.

Out with Geno Smith and Ryan Grubb. And DK Metcalf, and Tyler Lockett, and Laken Tomlinson for that matter—huge chunks of the offense gone. Clint Kubiak comes in to coordinate, Sam Darnold comes in to play quarterback, Cooper Kupp and Marquez Valdes-Scantling bring experience to the wideout corps and first-round pick Grey Zabel is in line to start at left guard. That’s a pretty severe facelift for a team that was in playoff contention last season. Seattle has four players not on the team last year penciled in for starting jobs on offense; the only teams with more are the Bears, Patriots, and Titans. These are not the sorts of offenses you want to be compared to!

The sliding doors moment for the team was the decision to trade away Smith and bring in Darnold. Giving up on a solid if unspectacular veteran and putting all your chips on a player coming off of a career year? If it works, it’s a genius bit of shifting of resources—getting simultaneously younger, cheaper, and better at the most important position in the game. If it doesn’t work, the Seahawks just voluntarily flung themselves back into quarterback purgatory. So that’s fun and exciting! Stay tuned for next year’s *Almanac*, where the correct decision will be clear thanks to the power of 20/20 hindsight.

Macdonald and Smith were always a little bit of an awkward fit. Macdonald never seemed crazy about the hand-me-down quarterback from the Carroll era. In between the standard patter about Smith being the quarterback, Macdonald managed to slip in a few noncommittal thoughts over the year they were together. That started from the beginning—in the aftermath of his hiring, Macdonald dodged questions about who his starter would be, saying “we’re always looking” and that he “probably can’t answer” whether both Smith and Drew Lock would have a future on the roster. It continued up until the end—when asked after the 2024 finale if Geno would return, Macdonald’s reply was a lukewarm “I guess, yeah.” Both of these quotes got cleaned up later, presumably after Macdonald

## 2025 Seahawks Schedule

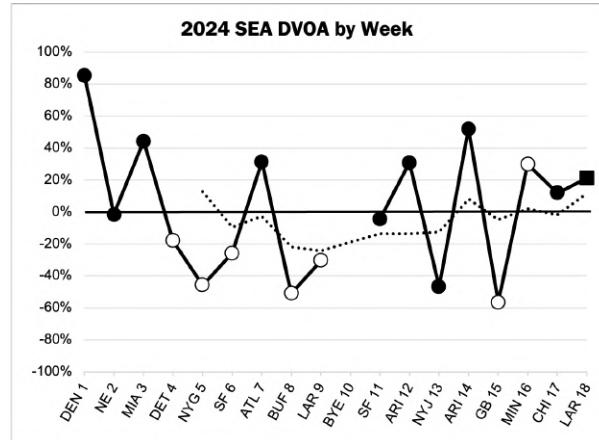
Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	SF	7	HOU (Mon.)	13	MIN
2	at PIT	8	BYE	14	at ATL
3	NO	9	at WAS	15	IND
4	at ARI (Thu.)	10	ARI	16	LAR (Thu.)
5	TB	11	at LAR	17	at CAR
6	at JAX	12	at TEN	18	at SF

had had a talk with the Seahawks' public relations department. Awkward, off-the-cuff phrasing from an ex-coordinator dealing with the attention that comes from being the head coach? Or a sign that no one gets excited about rebuilding an offense around a 34-year-old journeyman? Only Macdonald knows for sure, and he's not telling.

What we can say is that Geno has been a reliable but not thrilling hand in Seattle, ranking 12th, 13th, and 22nd in passing DVOA during his late-career renaissance. Throw out last year as an outlier because the offense broke, and that's above average but uninspiring. It fits nicely into that limbo of baseline competency that Seattle has found themselves in. Smith is a quarterback without obvious weaknesses but also without massive strengths. He can captain a good offense into good results, but he's not going to suddenly become a difference-maker at an age when quarterbacks start to fall off a cliff. If your goal is to either move up or down the standings, with either result being better than being stuck in the mid-card miasma, moving on from Geno makes perfect sense.

The question is whether it makes sense to move on from Geno for Sam Darnold, of all people. Paying for the career year is a rough ask of any free agent, but Darnold also has a track record of failure that makes you worry about him being a one-hit wonder. While Darnold has never been the bustiest of busts, flashing positive play here and there in both New York and Carolina, he had never qualified for our leaderboards with a positive passing DVOA until last season, his seventh in the league. He's not a young prospect with a limitless ceiling; he's refurbished goods that the Seahawks are hoping have been successfully upcycled.

There is some good news, historically—this kind of thing works more often than you might think. The track record



of quarterbacks who finally "got it right" after starting their careers with four or more seasons of below-average passing DVOA? It's not half bad (Table 1).

It turns out that if teams keep turning to you despite providing below-average play for multiple seasons, you're doing *something* right. Usually, that something needs to come out when combined with either a change of scenery, like Vinny Testaverde leaving Tampa Bay, or a change in coach, like Alex Smith getting Jim Harbaugh. If you're in a rotten situation, like anybody playing for the New York Jets over the last decade or so, getting out might just be the ticket to success. It doesn't always work out; about half of quarterbacks who get more starting opportunities after starting their career with four below-average seasons eventually produce something positive, while the other half continue to flounder. But when one of these quarterbacks finally does produce, he usually remains a reasonable NFL starter. The only player on Table 1 to be a one-hit wonder was Marc Wilson, and he was a backup on the quarterback-challenged 1987 Raiders, pressed into action out of desperation to earn his fifth qualifying season. The other five each had at least one top-10 season in them after their turnarounds, so there's history on Darnold's side to suggest he can at least continue to be passable going forward.

Darnold's case is even a little more interesting than that. While his performance with the Jets was worse than most of the other reclaimed quarterbacks, his breakout season was significantly better and also didn't entirely come out of nowhere. Although his 2021 season in Carolina was bad enough to get

**Table 1. Most Qualified Negative DVOA Passing Seasons Before First Positive Year**

QB	# Bad Seasons	Bad Start		First Good Year		Rest Of Career	
		Avg DVOA	Avg DYAR	DVOA	DYAR	Avg DVOA	Avg DYAR
Ryan Fitzpatrick	6	-11.8%	25	6.7%	383	1.3%	298
Vinny Testaverde	6	-16.4%	-95	8.4%	296	11.5%	639
Randall Cunningham	4	-14.1%	39	7.2%	607	14.0%	630
Jake Plummer	4	-16.3%	-119	9.5%	705	8.4%	527
Alex Smith	4	-25.1%	-234	3.3%	448	-0.9%	349
Marc Wilson	4	-16.9%	-124	5.8%	314	-31.4%	-355
Sam Darnold	4	-24.8%	-375	12.3%	910	--	--

him sent to the bench behind Baker Mayfield, he regained the starting job late in 2022 and put up a 23.2% DVOA in 147 passing attempts—not quite enough to make our leaderboards, but another data point in the “Darnold is for real” narrative.

You could look at it as being two and a half years since we last saw *bad* Darnold, *Jets* Darnold. The situation a young prospect finds himself in is so important for their development, and the Jets have been an ongoing tire fire since Mark Sanchez turned back into a pumpkin. A second chance in Carolina, a short stint at the Kyle Shanahan Center for Kids Who Can’t Throw Good, and a carefully stage-managed revival under Kevin O’Connell in Minnesota has resulted in an upcycled Darnold, slightly bent around the edges but more than passable for play.

However, just because some of Darnold’s flaws have been hidden the past couple of years doesn’t mean they’re not still there. The trouble the Seahawks are going to have is that they don’t have nearly the same capabilities to accentuate Darnold’s positives and hide his negatives that Minnesota did a year ago—and that even if Darnold really *has* turned a corner in his career, he may still be a worse fit for the 2025 Seahawks than Geno Smith would have been.

Let’s start with what the Seahawks do not have: Justin Jefferson. Darnold ranked sixth in DVOA on deep passes at 90.0% and fell to 13th on short passes because he got to feed Jefferson a steady diet of go routes, deep outs, and deep digs. Remove Jefferson from Darnold’s numbers, and his total passing DVOA last season drops from 11.5% to -4.6%. Only Justin Herbert (sans Ladd McConkey) and Jared Goff (minus Amon-Ra St. Brown) had a bigger drop-off among passers with at least 500 dropbacks. This isn’t to say Darnold was a Jefferson merchant or anything. It’s just that a ton of his value came from throwing deep shots to arguably the best receiver in the league. Darnold has always been something of a gun-slinger, consistently ranking higher on deep shots than short passes. So … who is he going to throw to?

Last year, the Vikings receiving corps had the best DVOA in the league on deep passes at 63.1%. The Seahawks were fairly strong as well, ranking eighth at 43.8%—but that was with both DK Metcalf (44.5%) and Tyler Lockett (40.4%) in the fold, neither of whom will be in Action Green this year. Jaxon Smith-Njigba did just have a breakout season and wasn’t too far behind the big two, but he can’t run every single deep route himself. By volume, you’d expect Marques Valdes-Scantling to get more deep route work, as he has devolved into a pure deep-shot specialist, but he hasn’t had a positive receiving DVOA since 2020 and was 54th out of 62 receivers with at least 20 deep targets with a -4.6% DVOA last year. Cooper Kupp was much better when he got open, but getting open was tougher for him in 2024 than ever before because years of lower body injuries have sapped his speed. The perfect world is for JSN’s breakout season to be repeatable, Kupp to be fully healthy, and Darnold to dot the deep middle of the field with the explosive crossing routes that were his bread-and-butter last season. That’s a lot to ask for.

To make time for those deep crossing routes, Darnold needs protection. The balloon burst on Darnold’s breakout year in

Week 18 and the playoffs, when his line collapsed and the pressure got to him. The Rams sacked him nine times, tying the playoff record, and he wasn’t much better in the potential division-clinching game the week before. Darnold had his two worst statlines of the season in Minnesota’s last two games, but it wasn’t like he had been smooth under fire *before* that. Darnold fell to 20th with a -59.1% DVOA when under pressure, and his -117.9% drop when pressured was 12th-largest in the league. Both of those numbers are better than the last time we saw Darnold as a starter, because his progress *is* real, but Darnold under pressure is bad news.

Seattle actually allowed a lower pressure rate than Minnesota did last season, but that’s because their tackles are passable. The interior line was a major concern coming in, hence Grey Zabel being taken in the first round, but that’s just one spot replaced, simply offsetting the loss of Laken Tomlinson. As of press time, Seattle is still shuffling deck chairs here, with some combination of Jalen Sundell, Olu Oluwatani, Christian Haynes, and Anthony Bradford rotating in and out at center and right guard. It’s a situation where having many options kind of means you have no options—this is not a group that inspires overwhelming confidence, and going out and getting a quarterback who struggles under pressure and putting him behind that line does not scream extensive forward planning. One thing that helped Darnold last season was his relatively high time to pressure—2.51 seconds, 11th longest in the league. Because pressure didn’t get on him quickly, Darnold could survive being one of four quarterbacks with a time to throw over three seconds—the line held up and Darnold could hit those deep shots. Interior pressure gets home faster, however, and Seattle’s 2.29 seconds to pressure last season was sixth fastest in the league. Seattle is going to need these unsung and underperforming parts to simultaneously take significant steps forward for this to work, or else this offense could be a disaster, no matter what happens at the skill positions. Changing Smith for Darnold is a downgrade in pocket mobility, and it may not be one Seattle can afford.

Tasked with taking all these desperate elements and making them work together is Klint Kubiak. Kubiak was the toast of the league in September, revitalizing the Saints offense with a combination of play-action passing, pre-snap motion, and outside zone running. They looked unstoppable … for two games, until injuries plus the combination of not getting to play Dallas and Carolina every week sent them hurtling back to earth. Still, even if that early pace couldn’t be kept up forever, Kubiak’s Saints had an offensive DVOA of 3.9% when Derek Carr started, so there was something there. More to the point, Kubiak and his staff have proven NFL chops, especially in the run game, that Ryan Grubb did not have, and the Seahawks offense will look different for it. Gone will be the pass-heavy, shotgun-based offense with quarterback autonomy at the forefront. In comes a high designed run rate and plenty of pre-snap motion and play-action to take pre-snap burden off Darnold and make the reads obvious. It’s going back to that proven Shanahan tree, something Darnold has had success in. The fit makes sense from that standpoint. It also raises hope that Kenneth Walker will get more involved in the receiving game, which would help

answer many of Seattle's questions in the red zone. Walker is no Alvin Kamara, but he had a 6.0% receiving DVOA last season, which raises to 27.0% if you take away screens. Kubiak gave Kamara a healthy dose of quick outs and hitches, and Walker could feast there.

There are still questions to be answered. Kubiak used two-wide sets 67% of the time in 2024, more than anyone outside of Baltimore. That would be the role for JSN and Kupp—but both of them have primarily been slot receivers in the NFL rather than winning along the boundaries. It's not the smoothest fit, and there may be some growing pains as they try to find a happy medium between Kubiak's system and personnel.

Then there's the overall scheme of the running game. The Saints ran the second-most outside zone in the league in 2024, but both Walker (-30.1%) and Zach Charbonnet (-13.5%) had negative DVOAs when running outside zone last season, significantly worse than their overall performance. There are just a lot of little points of friction yet to be addressed. Still, of the three major swaps on offense this year, we think the Kubiak-over-Grubb switch is more likely to be successful than Darnold-over-Smith or Kupp-over-Metcalf.

We have spent the majority of this essay focusing on the massive change on the offensive side of the ball. That's partially because offense is really what will make or break the Seahawks' season, but also because the defense under Macdonald seems to be just continuing the upward trajectory we saw in 2024. Bringing Kubiak in provides an experienced NFL voice to run the offense and lets Macdonald continue to focus and tinker on the defense that he shepherded from 28th to 10th in DVOA last season.

There isn't usually a correlation between second-half performance and next year's numbers, and that's a large part in why we have Seattle's defense projected just 16th in the league. Those struggles in the first nine weeks of the season did happen, and historically our projections are better when we look at a team's entire performance rather than focusing on whether they finished hot or not. However, general trends don't always override specific situations, and it feels logical that you could trust Seattle's late-season defensive improvement more than most.

It's not just the defense learning and growing comfortable in Macdonald's system, either. There were concrete personnel changes—trading for Ernest Jones and putting Josh Jobe and Tyrice Knight in the lineup, most prominently—that helped boost Seattle's performance later in the year. Flipping around the interior of their defense helped Seattle go from a -7.4% rush defense DVOA in Weeks 1-9 to a -20.3% mark over the

back half of the season, sixth in the league. The defense as a whole grew from being middling to start the year to downright good by the end as they grew more confident and more familiar with what they were being asked to do. It's always a good sign to see a coach be both willing to make changes to their system midstream when things aren't working, and also for those changes to pay immediate dividends. These aren't some vague "things slowed down" improvements—there were tangible and concrete changes that triggered Seattle's defense improving, and *those* are more likely to stick year-over-year.

The Seahawks bring back 13 of their top 14 defenders in snaps logged over the back half of the season, with the one exception being swapping Dre'Mont Jones for DeMarcus Lawrence. That level of continuity is promising, as is the fact that we have seen a Year 2 jump for Macdonald's defense before. His 2022 Ravens also started out slow but improved over the back half of the year and then jumped from ninth to fourth in DVOA in his second season. One previous data point does not guarantee a repeat in Seattle this year, but the soundbites of Ravens defenders in 2023 talking about how they were beginning to fully understand Macdonald's schemes are very similar to Leonard Williams and company praising the coaching staff to begin 2025. The model doesn't fully buy into it, but Seahawks fans have reason to be optimistic here. It is not likely to be the defense holding Seattle back in 2025.

It's a big swing on offense, and we admire big swings. Dramatic changes are both interesting to write about *and* have the chance to have dramatic results. Any movement to try to get out of the mediocre vortex Seattle has found themselves in in recent years has to be applauded. It will be interesting, if nothing else.

But we're not sold on the offensive moves actually improving the team for 2025. It looks like an overall talent downgrade on offense, with plenty of gambles—Darnold's 2024 being for real, Kupp being healthy and back to being a contributing player, the interior offensive line sort of shaping itself up. These gambles could all pay off, but it's a *lot* to ask for all of them to work at the same time. Our projections have the Seahawks falling to their lowest DVOA ranking since 2010, with the offense sputtering and the defense taking a step back. The error bars on this are larger than on many of our other projections, simply because there are so many moving parts in the offensive revamp. But for a franchise that has been stuck in "good enough," we think it's much more likely that it's the *good* part of that status quo that falls apart in 2025.

Bryan Knowles

## 2024 Seahawks by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	DEN	W	100%	26	20	304	231	+1	85%	33%	-60%	-8%
2	at NE	W	89%	23	20	358	310	0	-2%	4%	12%	7%
3	MIA	W	100%	24	3	370	205	-2	44%	5%	-51%	-12%
4	at DET	L	4%	29	42	516	389	-2	-18%	32%	44%	-5%
5	NYG	L	6%	20	29	333	420	0	-46%	-19%	27%	0%
6	SF	L	1%	24	36	358	483	-3	-26%	-8%	37%	19%
7	at ATL	W	99%	34	14	339	369	+3	31%	1%	-19%	11%
8	BUF	L	0%	10	31	233	445	-1	-51%	-44%	5%	-2%
9	LAR	L	29%	20	26	424	366	-2	-30%	-41%	-7%	4%
10	BYE											
11	at SF	W	56%	20	17	289	277	0	-4%	-1%	5%	2%
12	ARI	W	75%	16	6	285	298	0	31%	-11%	-34%	8%
13	at NYJ	W	11%	26	21	259	258	0	-47%	-29%	-18%	-36%
14	at ARI	W	100%	30	18	409	356	+2	52%	19%	-30%	2%
15	GB	L	0%	13	30	208	369	-1	-56%	-53%	19%	16%
16	MIN	L	45%	24	27	361	298	-2	30%	19%	-3%	7%
17	at CHI	W	80%	6	3	265	179	0	12%	-19%	-24%	7%
18	at LAR	W	81%	30	25	336	403	+1	21%	29%	9%	1%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	-3.9%	18	-4.9%	10
Unadjusted VOA	-2.5%	17	2.9%	13
Weighted Trend	-8.3%	23	-4.1%	8
Variance	7.2%	24	8.7%	31
Average Opponent	-0.5%	13	3.6%	1
Passing	14.9%	17	0.9%	11
Rushing	-9.5%	19	-12.6%	12
First Down	-4.7%	22	9.7%	27
Second Down	4.4%	13	-8.9%	7
Third Down	-14.9%	23	-24.0%	1
First Half	1.5%	16	-4.7%	6
Second Half	-8.4%	22	-5.0%	16
Red Zone	-13.9%	23	-4.8%	14
Late and Close	-4.5%	22	11.2%	22

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rk	Off	Rk	Def	Rk	ST	Rk	Off AGL	Rk	Def AGL	Rk	Off Age	Rk	Def Age	Rk	ST Age	Rk
2020	12-4	10.1	11.3	459	371	+4	21.0%	7	11.7%	6	-2.5%	13	6.8%	3	33.6	13	54.7	25	27.4	6	26.6	11	25.7	23
2021	7-10	9.3	9.7	395	366	+5	13.2%	9	12.1%	7	1.4%	20	2.5%	5	41.1	13	22.1	4	27.5	7	26.7	12	25.6	26
2022	9-8	8.7	9.2	407	401	+2	5.1%	11	4.8%	13	3.5%	22	3.9%	4	26.7	10	26.3	6	26.5	18	26.7	11	26.6	9
2023	9-8	7.5	8.5	364	402	+2	-0.1%	16	6.2%	12	8.2%	28	1.9%	8	32.8	19	33.8	18	26.2	22	27.0	8	25.9	20
2024	10-7	8.7	7.9	375	368	-6	2.2%	18	-3.9%	18	-4.8%	10	1.3%	10	39.8	21	32.7	13	26.7	13	26.4	21	25.8	23

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

SEA Offense					SEA Offense vs. Opponents					SEA Defense					SEA Defense vs. Opponents										
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA
11	78%	6.0	7.6%	25%	Base	16%	4.9	-11.9%	30%	Base	23%	5.8	8.1%	11	65%	5.4	-9.2%	12	17%	6.0	15.5%	21	9%	6.9	-0.1%
12	16%	4.7	-9.5%	55%	Nickel	63%	5.3	3.9%	38%	Nickel	68%	5.5	-8.6%	21	9%	4.6	-21.4%	22	3%	2.3	-46.1%	611	2%	6.6	20.6%
13	2%	0.9	-45.0%	68%	Dime+	20%	7.1	18.5%	20%	Dime+	9%	4.6	-21.4%	13	3%	5.9	35.0%	13	3%	2.3	-46.1%				
21	1%	3.2	-4.3%	82%	Goal Line	1%	1.8	-36.2%	38%	Goal Line	1%	5.9	35.0%												
613	1%	-0.8	-59.1%	88%																					

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected		Rk	Formation		Rk	Pass Rush		Rk	Secondary		Rk	Strategy		Rk
Runs, all	-2.7%	28	Form: Single Back	73%	23	Rush 3	3.5%	14	4 DB	18%	24	Play Action	18%	26
Runs, first down	-5.4%	32	Form: Empty Back	12%	5	Rush 4	73.2%	10	5 DB	68%	11	Offensive Motion	45%	20
Runs, second-long	-2.6%	18	Form: Multi Back	15%	20	Rush 5	17.2%	22	6+ DB	9%	18	Avg Box (Off)	5.93	31
Runs, power sit.	+0.5%	22	Pers: 3+ WR	79%	3	Rush 6+	6.0%	16	Man Coverage	52%	15	Avg Box (Def)	6.13	10
Runs, behind 2H	-2.0%	27	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	21%	27	Edge Rusher Sacks	43.2%	25	MOFC	52%	27	Offensive Pace	31.65	19
Runs, ahead 2H	-3.0%	25	Pers: 6+ OL	1%	21	Interior DL Sacks	38.6%	5	CB1 on WR1	31%	26	Defensive Pace	32.21	29
Run-Pass Options	4.4%	12	Shotgun/Pistol	82%	8	Second Level Sacks	18.2%	22	S/CB Cover Ratio	20%	13	Go for it on 4th	0.94	20

Seattle led the league with 86 offensive penalties, including declined and offsetting. The Seahawks' problems in the red zone weren't quite as bad as in previous seasons. They ranked 23rd in red zone offense after two straight years in the bottom five. Seattle led the league with 8.7 yards per play from an empty backfield (40.8% DVOA). The Seahawks had the NFL's biggest gap between running against light boxes compared to other boxes. Against six men in the box or fewer, Seattle had 4.7 yards per carry and 0.6% DVOA. Against seven men in the box or more, Seattle had just 2.2 yards per carry with -32.8% DVOA. Seattle also ran the most into light boxes: 77% of running back carries compared to a league average of 58%. Seattle led the league in running back screens but had a -14.0% DVOA on these passes (5.6 yards per play). The Seahawks had the league's largest "reverse split" on play-action. They gained only 5.6 yards per play with -11.6% DVOA when using play-action but 6.7 yards per play with 21.4% DVOA without it. On the other hand, the Seahawks had the league's biggest conventional split on defense against play-action. They allowed 8.5 yards per play with 47.4% DVOA on play-action but only 5.1 yards per play with -19.9% DVOA without it. Seattle's defense got better the more defensive backs they put on the field: 8.1% DVOA in base, -8.6% DVOA in nickel, and -21.4% DVOA in dime. The Seahawks recovered 13 of 16 fumbles on offense but only five of 19 fumbles on defense.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
G.Smith*	369	-2.1%	626	3949	6.3	5.4	71.0%	21	15
S.Howell*	-144	-151.3%	18	3	0.2	1.4	35.7%	0	1
S.Darnold	910	12.3%	592	3943	6.7	4.9	66.7%	35	12
D.Lock	-254	-32.1%	192	968	5.0	5.7	59.8%	6	5

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
K.Walker	-3	-9.0%	153	573	3.7	7	1	46%
Z.Charbonnet	52	0.1%	136	574	4.2	8	0	49%
G.Smith*	-4	-13.9%	38	236	6.2	2	4	-
K.McIntosh	38	20.5%	30	167	5.6	0	0	53%
J.Smith-Njigba	14	20.7%	5	26	5.2	0	0	-
S.Darnold	1	-11.7%	44	206	4.7	1	3	-
D.Lock	40	48.7%	14	137	9.8	2	1	-

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
J.Smith-Njigba	209	7.4%	137	100	1130	11.3	4.8	6	73%
DK Metcalf*	114	0.7%	108	66	992	15.0	4.0	5	61%
T.Lockett*	118	6.2%	74	49	600	12.2	2.7	2	66%
J.Bobo	31	9.2%	17	13	107	8.2	2.1	1	76%
C.Kupp	15	-10.8%	100	67	710	10.6	4.0	6	67%
M.Valdes-Scantling	30	-3.9%	44	19	411	21.6	7.5	4	43%
N.Fant	61	7.5%	64	48	500	10.4	5.8	1	75%
AJ Barner	56	14.1%	38	30	245	8.2	5.5	4	79%
P.Brown*	-22	-35.7%	12	8	65	8.1	3.8	0	67%
E.Saubert	-8	-14.2%	15	11	97	8.2	2.9	1	79%
Z.Charbonnet	13	-8.7%	54	42	340	7.8	8.6	1	81%
K.Walker	62	6.0%	53	46	299	6.5	7.9	1	87%

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
C.Cross	LT	25	17/17	1097	8	0	28	3.8%	8	S.Forsythe*	RT	28	9/5	414	3	1	19	6.9%	32
L.Tomlinson*	LG	33	17/17	1097	5	4	23	3.2%	13	A.Lucas	RT	27	7/7	409	6	1	19	7.0%	33
C.Williams	C	28	9/9	618	4	3	9	2.2%	18	S.Laumea	RG	24	6/6	358	4	3	11	4.6%	--
A.Bradford	RG	24	11/11	578	9	3	13	3.4%	21	M.Jerrell	RT	26	10/3	250	5	2	8	4.8%	--
O.Oluwatimi	C	26	12/8	438	2	4	7	2.4%	19	C.Haynes	G	25	16/0	167	2	1	5	4.5%	--

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont
2022	4.78	4.04	30	63%	22	21%	29	1.19	19	1.38	1	46	8.6%	26	31.5%	27	35
2023	4.14	3.99	25	63%	20	20%	26	1.20	13	0.74	11	38	7.2%	16	31.4%	22	24
2024	4.11	4.08	26	63%	23	21%	27	1.24	15	0.62	21	54	9.1%	26	30.0%	13	28

2024 ALY by direction: Left End: 4.44 (17) Left Tackle: 4.64 (10) Mid/Guard: 4.03 (28) Right Tackle: 4.11 (18) Right End: 3.11 (26)

While Seattle's interior line was a significant problem in 2024, their pressures given up did not quite match their reputation. Seattle guards and centers combined for 70 pressures allowed, only 10th-worst in the league. "Only" is doing a lot of work there, we know. First-round pick Grey Zabel (North Dakota State) has experience at both tackle positions and both guard positions, and he can likely play center in a pinch as well. With Seattle needing to upgrade three slots on their line, Zabel was a no-brainer selection. While he'll likely slot in at left guard, he can be moved around in case someone else breaks out in camp. He could stand to put on a little more mass, but he plays stronger than his size and has quick hands and feet. Christian

Haynes and Anthony Bradford will fight for the other guard slot, with Sataoa Laumea also in the mix. All three were quite bad last season, so someone is going to need to take a step forward for this not to be a massive liability. That's most likely to be Haynes, last year's third-round pick, but even getting below-average play out of right guard would be a big step up from 2024.  Olu Oluwatini is penciled in at center, where he was below average in both pass block win rate (92.4% vs. NFL center average of 93.8%) and especially in run block win rate (64.5% vs 72.8%).  The tackles are in much better shape. Charles Cross even became the first Seahawks draft pick to have his fifth-year option picked up, 12 years after it was introduced. Abraham Lucas, when healthy, is a solid right tackle, but he has played just 13 games in his last two seasons.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
L.Williams	31	DE	16	750	66	8.0%	7	55	26	3	47	79%	30	2.0	30	11.0	16	34	4
J.Reed	33	DE	17	680	47	5.4%	33	37	11	3	38	76%	35	2.7	65	4.5	12	26	3
B.Murphy	23	DT	14	457	35	4.8%	48	23	4	3	32	66%	65	3.1	77	0.5	0	14	0
R.Robertson-Harris*	32	DT	17	398	21	2.4%	--	17	7	4	17	82%	--	1.2	--	2.0	3	11	1
J.Hankins*	33	DT	17	390	31	3.5%	--	21	7	5	28	68%	--	2.4	--	1.0	1	4	0

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
D.Hall	24	OLB	17	674	36	4.1%	69	29	10	5	23	78%	31	3.1	72	8.0	14	41	1
D.Jones*	28	OLB	17	617	29	3.3%	88	20	9	2	21	71%	56	2.6	49	4.0	10	24	2
B.Mafe	27	OLB	15	608	43	5.6%	36	26	13	7	28	43%	100	5.5	99	6.0	6	38	4

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush			vs. Pass									
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
E.Jones	26	ILB	16	995	141	18.0%	9	70	21	10	94	57%	56	4.1	65	0.5	2	11	33	1.7%	38	39%	54	7.2	32	4	1
T.Knight	25	ILB	16	551	90	10.9%	57	40	7	6	52	54%	67	4.5	79	1.5	2	9	45	12.5%	58	49%	24	5.7	8	2	0

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk							
2022	4.66	4.70	25	64%	6	16%	25	1.18	13	0.96	24	45	7.8%	10	30.0%	4							
2023	4.45	4.19	16	75%	28	20%	8	1.25	24	0.92	28	47	6.9%	22	30.5%	12							
2024	4.64	4.65	25	56%	3	14%	27	1.34	26	0.83	22	45	8.3%	4	31.9%	12							
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 5.03 (26)				Left Tackle: 5.77 (32)				Mid/Guard: 4.60 (20)				Right Tackle: 3.77 (10)				Right End: 4.20 (20)			

When Seattle got pressure, they were one of the top defenses in the league. They had a -72.1% DVOA with pressure (which ranked fifth) and just 33.1% without it (18th).  Demarcus Lawrence's 2024 was a wash, with a Lisfranc injury costing him all but four games. Lawrence isn't the pass rush threat he was on his rookie deal, but he had 33 and 34 pressures in 2022 and 2023, 21st among NFL players in that two-year stretch.  Uchenna Nwosu underwent knee surgery this offseason, had his contract restructured, and may start the year on the PUP list. This after struggling through 2024 with MCL, thigh and wrist injuries. The uncertainty surrounding his availability makes bringing in Lawrence make even more sense, though providing insurance for one injured player with another one is worrisome.  Leonard Williams made the Pro Bowl and picked up some DPOY votes in his first full year in Seattle. He was one of just eight players with double-digit sacks and rush defeats, and he did that while playing the fewest snaps of that group.  The Seahawks are counting on Byron Murphy II being more than a rotational guy in Year 2. Murphy's explosiveness promised disruption, but he had just half a sack last season.  Jarrran Reed is probably due for some more sacks. He had just 4.5 sacks on 26 pressures in 2024, compared to 7.0 on 23 in 2023. He didn't get worse at finishing. He just had some poor luck.  Fifth-round pick Rylie Mills played both end and tackle at Notre Dame and produced in both positions. Unfortunately, he is coming off of a torn ACL and won't be back until midseason at the earliest, so he's unlikely to make much of a splash this season.  Tyrice Knight earned a starting job in Week 11 and kept it through the rest of the season. Teams often tested the rookie—his 45 targets were the most for any linebacker who started fewer than 10 games—but he came through mostly unscathed.  Ernest Jones finished 10th among linebackers in run stops. Bringing him in midseason was part of Seattle's late-season improvement on run defense. They jumped from -2.2% DVOA without Jones to -6.0% with him.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run						vs. Pass												
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int	
D.Witherspoon	25	CB	17	1104	107	12.2%	6	55	15	14	43	44%	46	7.3	67	83	15.5%	79	7.4	-16.8%	23	52%	45	7.4	40	9	0
J.Love	27	SS	17	1079	118	13.5%	13	45	16	8	61	34%	46	7.4	48	29	5.5%	34	6.6	-18.1%	8	66%	4	3.4	1	12	3
T.Woolen	26	CB	15	890	60	7.8%	63	24	10	6	17	35%	71	11.1	90	72	16.7%	68	12.6	-14.1%	27	54%	28	6.8	30	14	3
C.Bryant	26	FS	17	786	74	8.4%	68	22	12	4	27	22%	82	8.1	61	15	3.9%	52	6.3	38.8%	57	33%	54	10.1	55	6	3
R.Jenkins*	31	SS	13	550	52	7.8%	73	22	10	10	22	50%	12	6.1	30	20	7.5%	22	5.5	1.9%	23	65%	6	6.7	27	0	0
J.Jobe	27	CB	10	443	44	8.5%	52	19	8	4	10	30%	79	6.6	53	55	25.6%	4	11.2	15.2%	82	51%	53	7.8	57	7	1
T.Brown*	28	CB	13	290	24	3.6%	--	7	1	2	8	50%	--	3.5	--	22	15.6%	--	12.2	27.6%	--	27%	--	11.0	--	1	0
S.Griffin	30	CB	17	572	47	5.3%	87	19	9	3	8	38%	62	5.1	31	56	18.1%	52	12.1	-5.8%	41	50%	59	8.1	64	6	2

Year	Pass D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	17	-33.6%	3	12.8%	26	-25.0%	1	-18.2%	4	-16.3%	4	29.4%	31	17.0%	27	
2023	28	1.1%	16	21.5%	28	-2.1%	14	-0.7%	14	11.6%	26	6.2%	24	-4.2%	15	
2024	11	-30.8%	4	-1.1%	15	-3.7%	10	-4.8%	14	-29.7%	2	2.9%	18	0.3%	15	

The best Seahawks secondary since the Legion of Boom? Seattle's 1.0% pass defense DVOA was their best since 2015, and they were 12th with a 19.9% DVOA if we remove sacks. It's not as if Richard Sherman and Earl Thomas are back there or anything, but the improvement is real. 🏈 Devon Witherspoon was quieter as a sophomore than he was as a rookie, with no interceptions and about half as many passes defensed as in 2023. And yet his coverage DVOA improved, as did his success rate. It would be nice if the big plays returned this year, but he's a very solid corner with or without them. 🏈 There's a hint of boom-or-bust in Riq Woolen. Woolen is tied for the fifth-most interceptions (11) since he entered the league in 2022, but he's also tied for the 15th-most touchdowns allowed (12). The good certainly outweighs the bad, with his coverage DVOA improving by 17.6% last season, but you do have to put up with an occasional day where a Demarcus Robinson takes him to school. 🏈 Josh Jobe rose from the practice squad to the starting lineup last season. There are whispers and rumors that the Seahawks will try to replace him, with several veterans sitting out there on the market, but as of press time, Jobe's starting spot is still penciled in. 🏈 Julian Love was one of three safeties to be ranked in the top 10 in coverage DVOA, yards per pass allowed, and success rate in 2024. 🏈 Coby Bryant settled in at free safety after spending his first two seasons as a slot corner, stepping into the starting role in Week 7 and never giving it up. He looked better and more confident in 2024, and finding a position he owns might be part of that. 🏈 Second-round pick Nick Emmanwori (South Carolina) should start the year as the third safety, possibly with slot coverage duties. His range, speed, and length make him a promising coverage prospect, though he needs to improve on run defense to become an every-down player.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	3.9%	4	7.5	5	7.9	2	3.0	9	4.9	7	-2.7	23	-9.3	26	
2023	1.9%	8	-0.1	15	0.6	15	4.4	3	5.6	7	-0.2	15	-3.7	23	
2024	1.3%	10	10.7	3	-3.6	27	-3.7	28	8.7	5	-5.0	29	-5.2	23	

Seattle's special teams: a land of contrasts. The Seahawks ranked in the top five in both field goals and punts, taking home the coveted title of best scrimmage-kicking team in the NFC. However, they had the second-worst combined value on kick and punt returns, with only the Titans below their combined -8.7 points of value. 🏈 Jason Myers still has plenty of pop in his leg, as only Brandon Aubrey and Chris Boswell had more value from 50 yards or more in 2024. Myers also had positive value on kickoffs, but the Seahawks coverage gave back that value and more on returns. 🏈 The Seahawks made Michael Dickson the highest-paid punter in the league this offseason. Dickson ranked second in gross punt value last season and ranked fourth with 43.3 net yards per punt. 🏈 Fifth-round pick Tory Horton should get a crack at solving Seattle's return woes. Horton has 4.3s 40 speed and returned three punts for touchdowns at Colorado State. Veteran Steven Sims will also be in camp after playing for Baltimore and Houston last season.

# Tampa Bay Buccaneers

2024 record: 10-7

Total DVOA: 9.0% (11th)

Pythagorean Wins: 11.1 (8th)

Offense: 12.3% (7th)

Snap-Weighted Age: 26.0 (29th)

Defense: 1.2% (16th)

Average Opponent: 0.3% (18th)

Special Teams: -2.1% (26th)

2025 Mean Projection: 9.4 wins

On the Clock (0-5): 6%

Postseason Odds: 63.6%

Mediocrity (6-8): 29%

Super Bowl Odds: 6.9%

Playoff Contender (9-11): 45%

Proj. Avg. Opponent: -3.2% (26th)

Super Bowl Contender (12+): 20%

2024: Another Sun Belt Conference championship.

2025: Together again. Again.

**H**ooray! The Buccaneers are once again getting the band back together!

Chris Godwin is back. Godwin, who missed the second half of the 2024 season after an October ankle injury, was expected to be the belle of the free agent wide receiver ball. Instead, he signed a three-year, reported \$66-million contract to remain with the Bucs. Godwin told reporters that he faced a tough decision but chose to stay in Tampa because he didn't want to move his family now that he has a newborn son. The best time to lowball an in-house free agent is while his wife is painting the nursery.

Mike Evans is also back. Evans almost left as a free agent last offseason. He turned down at least one 2023 offer (from the Patriots) and chose to stay in Tampa for less money: two years at a reported \$41 million. The Bucs restructured Evans' contract for cap purposes in March. Godwin and Evans will enter their ninth season together.

Lavonte David is also back. The 35-year-old David, who has rather quietly assembled a strong Hall of Fame dossier, signed a one-year, \$9-million contract at about the time Godwin re-signed and Evans restructured. “[The Buccaneers] have been loyal to their guys,” David said at the signing. “It just becomes a mutual respect thing.”

Other members of the Buccaneers Mutual Respect Society include defensive linemen Greg Gaines and Anthony Nelson, guard Ben Bredeson, backup receiver Sterling Shepard, backup quarterback Kyle Trask, and others who re-signed with the Buccaneers rather than test free agency.

Also safely within the fold for 2025: defensive backs Antoine Winfield Jr. and Jamel Dean, left tackle Tristan Wirfs, and defensive tackle Vita Vea, all of whom, like Evans, Godwin, and David, were major contributors to the 2020 Super Bowl champions.

There you have them, folks: the 2025 Buccaneers, who look a lot like the 2023 and 2024 Buccaneers, who were still recognizably similar to the 2020 Buccaneers. Peak Baker Mayfield, with his ability to thrive within structure and rebranded “gritty leader” persona, even bears a slight resemblance to end-of-career Tom Brady.

So the Buccaneers will win the NFC South for the fifth straight year, possibly snipe some wild-card pretender and then lose in the playoffs to ... oh, let's say the 49ers.

The end. Let's start the Tennessee Titans chapter!

Oops, it appears that we have another 1,500 words to go. Perhaps we should interrogate our assumptions about the 2025 Buccaneers in a little more depth. Are they really that similar to past iterations of the team? Are they really a “sure thing” (with all the usual qualifiers) to win the NFC South? And are they just as sure a thing to tap out sometime before the NFC Championship Game?

## Are the 2025 Buccaneers really all that similar to past iterations of the team?

In many significant ways, yes.

Head coach Todd Bowles was the defensive coordinator for the 2020 Super Bowl run. His Buccaneers blitzed on 39.0% of passing plays that year, the fifth-highest rate in the NFL. Last year, Bowles’ defense blitzed 34.2% of the time, the third-highest figure in the league.

Bowles’ scheme has changed so little that some defenders are playing almost the exact same roles they played five years ago. Dean, for example, lines up almost exclusively at right cornerback. By the end of 2020, his second NFL season, he lined up almost exclusively at right cornerback. Winfield, per Sports Info Solutions, blitzed 48 times in 2020. He blitzed 52 times in 2023 and 38 times last season. David dropped into coverage 597 times and blitzed 83 times in 2020. He dropped into coverage 546 times and blitzed 135 times last year. Same guys, same roles.

Many of the 2020 defensive starters are gone, but they were replaced slowly and gradually. William Gholston was still on last year’s roster. Shaq Barrett stuck around through 2023. Replacements such as Nelson, Gaines, Calijah Kancey, Logan Hall, and Zyon McCollum have been rather seamlessly folded into the mix over the years.

Offensively, the Bucs have slowly drifted from Bruce Arians’ vertical attack to the Sean McVay-flavored short passing offense coordinated by Liam Coen last season. Coen loves the screen game—FTN Data numbers put the Bucs fourth in total screen passes last year, including second in running back screens—but so did Byron Leftwich when he was trying to keep Brady upright and get the ball into Godwin’s hands on the perimeter in 2021 and 2022. New offensive coordinator Josh Grizzard, who coordinated the Bucs passing game last year and spent two years on Mike McDaniel’s Dolphins staff, will likely keep Mayfield flinging micro-passes to his playmakers.

## 2025 Buccaneers Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	at ATL	7	at DET (Mon.)	13	ARI
2	at HOU (Mon.)	8	at NO	14	NO
3	NYJ	9	BYE	15	ATL (Thu.)
4	PHI	10	NE	16	at CAR
5	at SEA	11	at BUF	17	at MIA
6	SF	12	at LAR	18	CAR

Evans, meanwhile, will retain his timeless downfield role. He was targeted on deep passes (over 15 air yards) 34 times in 2020 and 33 times last year. Those numbers are cherry-picked, as Evans was targeted 54 times for deep passes in 2023. But there weren't many receivers playing the same role for the same team in 2020 that they are expected to play in 2025.

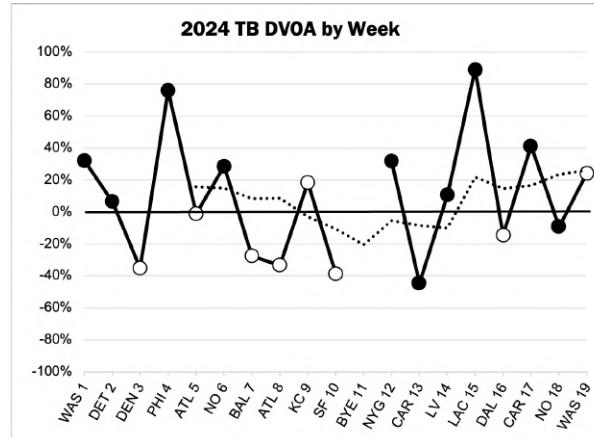
The newest innovation to Tampa Bay's offense last year was better-than-replacement-level rushing. Rookie Bucky Irving was eighth among running backs with 60 total broken and missed tackles. He added 19 more avoided tackles on receptions, the most of any running back by FTN Data charting.

It turns out that eluding defenders is better than plowing straight into them, the preferred tactic of Rachaad White and Leonard Fournette, neither of whom is (or was) Derrick Henry. Thanks to Irving's elusiveness, the Bucs ranked eighth in rushing DVOA in 2024 after finishing 28th in 2022 and 29th in 2023. The 2020 team ran the ball efficiently (10th in DVOA), but their ground game was a simplified and infrequently used counterpunch to their Brady-customized passing game.

Other than Irving, even the Buccaneers' other offensive newcomers look familiar. Rookie Jalen McMillan assumed a Godwin-like role late in the year and looked Godwin-like while doing so. Cade Otton is no Gronk, but he's an in-line tight end who blocks very well by modern standards and can operate as a second option and possession target in the passing game. All five starters will return in 2025 for an offensive line which, like the defense, has been slowly swapping out pieces for half a decade without sacrificing continuity.

The Bucs suffered very minor offseason losses. Joe Tryon-Shoyinka signed with the Browns, but he never developed into more than a rotational edge rusher. Center Robert Hainsey signed with the Jaguars, but he was benched in favor of first-round pick Graham Barton early in 2024. Linebackers K.J. Britt and J.J. Russell are gone, but the Bucs signed Anthony Walker to play beside David, and we have ventured pretty far down the roster when we start talking about a team's "other" off-ball linebackers.

The Bucs also made relatively minor offseason additions besides Walker. First-round pick Emeka Egbuka may be Evans' or Godwin's eventual heir, but he will fight for a fourth- or fifth-receiver role in 2025. Edge rusher Haason Reddick is a big name who lost his desire to play football after getting traded to the Jets last year: understandable, perhaps, but also a sign that he cannot be counted upon for another double-digit sack season like in 2020 through 2023. Still, Reddick should at least offset the loss of Tryon-Shoyinka.



In summary, the 2025 Buccaneers will come with all the standard features found on the 2024 model, which was a modest upgrade from the 2023 model, which was a reasonable facsimile of the geezer-pleasing 2020 deluxe touring edition. But are we talking about a luxury SUV or a more economical vehicle that just looks fancy?

### Are the 2025 Buccaneers really a "sure thing" (with all the usual qualifiers) to win the NFC South?

To summarize other chapters, the Panthers are an early-stage rebuilding team with delusions of grandeur, the Saints will be setting themselves on fire for the insurance money this year, and the heavenly hosts always laugh when the Falcons tell them their plans.

The Falcons could certainly challenge the Buccaneers—they swept them in 2024—but the Buccaneers are 20-10 in divisional games since 2020. There are far more reasons to expect the status quo than to anticipate a change in the balance of power.

### Are the 2025 Buccaneers just as sure a thing to tap out sometime before the NFC Championship Game?

This may be the most interesting question about the 2025 Buccaneers. Are folks who write them off as a mid-major powerhouse with an automatic tournament bid but zero chance of reaching the Final Four selling the Buccaneers short?

The Buccaneers beat the Commanders, Lions and Eagles last season. Granted, each victory comes with small asterisks:

- The Bucs beat the Commanders in the season opener, Jayden Daniels' first NFL start.
- The Lions outplayed the Bucs rather thoroughly, but the Bucs won on a Mayfield-to-Godwin bomb and several fourth-quarter fourth-down stops while nursing a four-point lead.
- The Eagles were without A.J. Brown, DeVonta Smith, and Lane Johnson on an 88-degree day with high humidity in Tampa.

Asterisks aside, the Bucs absolutely pummeled the depleted Eagles and beat the Lions when they were at full strength,

before the injuries to Aidan Hutchinson and the rest of the defense. The Commanders needed a last-second field goal to beat the Bucs in the playoffs. The Bucs easily defeated a weaker Eagles team in the 2023 playoffs. So why does it sound foolish to suggest that this team full of seasoned veterans could slip into the Super Bowl?

The “seasoned veterans” may be part of the perceptual issue. The Buccaneers still feel like a team in decline from the Brady years. The Commanders are on the rise, the Eagles and Lions at their peaks, the 49ers reloaded for a revenge tour. Even the Rams feel almost fully rebuilt, other than at quarterback, from their 2021 championship. The Bucs, meanwhile, look a little like classic rockers touring the state fair circuit without their lead singer.

It’s important to note that the Bucs, despite Evans’ and David’s agelessness, are not an old team. Their snap-weighted age of 26.0 gave them the fourth-*youngest* team in the NFL in 2024, younger than those up-and-coming Commanders, who will still be relying on codgers such as Zach Ertz and Bobby Wagner in 2025. Dean, Via, Winfield, and Wilfs were all very young during the Super Bowl run and are now in their primes. Mayfield, who has already lived a dozen lifetimes, turned 30 in April. Godwin, who entered the NFL as a fetus, is still only 29.

Recent drafts have brought a host of young starters and contributors: Irving, Otton, Kancey, Barton, YaYa Diaby, Cody Mauch, and others. Egbuka, McMillan, and Trey Palmer provide a succession plan for Evans and Godwin. Benjamin Morrison and Jacob Parrish, this year’s second- and third-round picks, may be ready for immediate roles in the secondary. The Bucs aren’t really Super Bowl leftovers trying to climb the hill one last time. They’re a young veteran team that also has gobs of playoff experience.

The Eagles, Lions, and Vikings still have better overall ro-

ters than the Bucs. The Rams, Packers, Commanders, and rebuilt 49ers are on roughly the same tier as the Bucs, and the Falcons aren’t *that* far behind. But no team in the NFL has an easier path to a home playoff game, which in turn means that no team enters the season with an easier path to the second round of the playoffs.

What Bowles, general manager Jason Licht, and the Bucs have done in the post-Brady era should not be trivialized. They gave their fans not just wins to enjoy and playoff games to attend but long-tenured stars such as David and Evans to root for: guys whose jerseys can proudly be worn to the tavern on game day forever.

The 2023-2024 Bucs also took the legacy of Super Bowl LV back from Brady to a degree. That 2020 championship was not just Brady’s final grace note or the work of some mercenaries for hire, but part of a sustained period of excellence for homegrown stars. Bowles has pivoted out of Arians’ shadow and now sends his offensive assistants out into the world as hot young masterminds. Licht has proven that a team built for short-term success around a living-legend quarterback could be rebuilt without some sort of purging/tanking drama. All it took was some mutual respect. And a state with zero income tax. And an easy division. But it’s wise to leverage all the resources at your disposal.

So let’s reintroduce the 2025 Buccaneers, not as a boring reskin of past versions of the team, but as a collection of future Hall of Famers, exciting up-and-comers, and scrappy survivors, led by an experienced and innovative head coach and assembled by perhaps the NFL’s most underappreciated general manager. They probably won’t reach the Super Bowl. But no team wants to hear their cannon blasts in mid-January.

Mike Tanier

## 2024 Buccaneers by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	WAS	W	99%	37	20	392	299	0	32%	17%	-11%	4%
2	at DET	W	3%	20	16	216	463	+1	6%	-20%	-25%	1%
3	DEN	L	1%	7	26	223	352	-1	-35%	-27%	7%	-2%
4	PHI	W	100%	33	16	445	227	+2	76%	48%	-30%	-2%
5	at ATL	L	39%	30	36	333	550	0	-1%	21%	28%	6%
6	at NO	W	98%	51	27	594	303	0	29%	25%	-22%	-18%
7	BAL	L	0%	31	41	481	508	-1	-28%	11%	30%	-8%
8	ATL	L	3%	26	31	432	394	-3	-33%	8%	43%	2%
9	at KC	L	36%	24	30	284	384	+1	18%	20%	2%	0%
10	SF	L	7%	20	23	215	413	+1	-39%	-15%	26%	2%
11	BYE											
12	at NYG	W	100%	30	7	451	245	0	32%	17%	-23%	-8%
13	at CAR	W	66%	26	23	445	367	-1	-44%	-26%	11%	-8%
14	LV	W	92%	28	13	420	286	-1	11%	17%	-3%	-10%
15	at LAC	W	100%	40	17	506	206	0	89%	45%	-28%	16%
16	at DAL	L	21%	24	26	410	317	-2	-14%	16%	28%	-2%
17	CAR	W	100%	48	14	551	204	0	41%	32%	-13%	-4%
18	NO	W	68%	27	19	395	292	-1	-9%	8%	12%	-5%
19	WAS	L	80%	20	23	284	350	-1	24%	13%	-9%	2%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	12.7%	7	1.2%	16
Unadjusted VOA	16.4%	4	3.2%	14
Weighted Trend	14.9%	5	4.4%	23
Variance	5.1%	15	5.5%	20
Average Opponent	1.2%	28	1.4%	8
Passing	34.4%	5	12.4%	23
Rushing	1.9%	8	-18.3%	6
First Down	18.8%	3	-1.7%	14
Second Down	-2.1%	19	0.3%	17
Third Down	24.9%	6	7.7%	25
First Half	9.6%	11	16.7%	29
Second Half	16.4%	5	-14.1%	8
Red Zone	19.9%	4	-8.1%	12
Late and Close	14.5%	10	-3.6%	5

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rk	Off	Rk	Def	Rk	ST	Rk	Off AGL	Rk	Def AGL	Rk	Off Age	Rk	Def Age	Rk	ST Age	Rk
2020	11-5	11.2	12.2	492	355	+8	26.8%	4	17.4%	3	-12.4%	5	-2.9%	26	12.4	1	18.2	2	27.7	3	26.3	17	26.1	14
2021	13-4	12.2	12.5	511	353	+10	23.9%	4	24.2%	1	-2.0%	13	-2.4%	27	34.4	9	46.9	22	28.5	1	27.1	4	26.4	9
2022	8-9	7.1	7.4	313	358	-2	0.7%	14	0.6%	18	-4.0%	11	-4.0%	31	67.5	27	46.4	23	28.0	1	26.8	8	25.9	19
2023	9-8	9.2	7.5	348	325	+8	-1.2%	18	-3.6%	20	-2.4%	14	0.0%	18	24.6	14	26.9	12	25.7	30	26.3	21	25.2	31
2024	10-7	11.1	10.0	502	385	-5	9.0%	11	12.3%	7	1.2%	16	-2.1%	26	32.4	16	43.3	20	25.6	29	26.4	19	25.6	26

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

TB Offense					TB Offense vs. Opponents					TB Defense					TB Defense vs. Opponents				
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA		
11	72%	6.3	14.7%	30%	Base	19%	6.5	21.4%	47%	Base	29%	5.9	4.3%	11	60%	5.7	4.0%		
12	17%	5.9	19.9%	62%	Nickel	72%	6.3	16.0%	40%	Nickel	64%	5.3	-1.3%	12	23%	5.1	-4.7%		
21	6%	8.4	60.8%	57%	Dime+	9%	7.4	39.4%	12%	Dime+	6%	6.2	-2.2%	21	7%	6.5	-4.2%		
13	3%	7.9	29.6%	83%						Goal Line	1%	2.8	32.4%	13	3%	4.3	-2.2%		
											22	3%	5.3						

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected		Rk	Formation		Rk	Pass Rush		Rk	Secondary		Rk	Strategy		Rk		
Runs, all	-0.5%	24	Form: Single Back	72%	26	Rush 3		2.2%	21	4 DB		25%	8	Play Action	20%	23
Runs, first down	-0.4%	22	Form: Empty Back	6%	24	Rush 4		59.7%	29	5 DB		64%	21	Offensive Motion	52%	12
Runs, second-long	-3.6%	22	Form: Multi Back	22%	6	Rush 5		31.6%	1	6+ DB		6%	26	Avg Box (Off)	6.14	11
Runs, power sit.	+5.8%	15	Pers: 3+ WR	73%	9	Rush 6+		6.4%	15	Man Coverage		34%	30	Avg Box (Def)	6.29	3
Runs, behind 2H	+1.7%	19	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	21%	26	Edge Rusher Sacks		26.1%	32	MOFC		61%	9	Offensive Pace	32.94	30
Runs, ahead 2H	+2.0%	14	Pers: 6+ OL	0%	26	Interior DL Sacks		52.2%	1	CB1 on WR1		31%	24	Defensive Pace	30.75	4
Run-Pass Options	1.8%	29	Shotgun/Pistol	73%	24	Second Level Sacks		21.7%	13	S/CB Cover Ratio		18%	20	Go for it on 4th	0.96	19

Tampa Bay used multi-back formations more than twice as often compared to the prior season. The Buccaneers were second in the league behind Seattle in how often they used running back screens, and these plays were insanely positive: 9.3 yards per pass with 102.2% DVOA. Tampa Bay threw to the right side more often than the left side despite ranking much better in DVOA on the left side (second) compared to the right side (19th). The Buccaneers ranked second in offensive DVOA against MOFO coverage behind only Baltimore, compared to 17th against MOFC coverage. Tampa Bay used significantly less dime coverage than the year before, going from 24% (fifth) in 2023 to 6% (26th) in 2024. The Bucs were third in fewest yards after the catch allowed on passes at or behind the line of scrimmage, but 24th on yards after the catch allowed on passes past the line of scrimmage. Tampa Bay was 29th in defensive DVOA before halftime and eighth after halftime.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
B.Mayfield	1114	16.8%	610	4247	7.0	6.0	71.4%	41	16

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
M.Evans	338	24.5%	110	74	1004	13.6	3.1	11	67%
C.Godwin	199	28.6%	63	50	576	11.5	7.0	5	79%
J.McMillan	119	12.3%	58	37	461	12.5	3.6	8	64%
S.Shepard	-29	-19.8%	51	32	334	10.4	3.1	1	63%
T.Palmer	30	4.2%	22	12	172	14.3	3.5	1	55%
R.Miller	10	-5.8%	20	12	128	10.7	4.6	2	60%
R.Jarrett	38	33.0%	11	9	124	13.8	2.0	0	82%
C.Olton	7	-6.1%	87	59	600	10.2	5.3	4	68%
P.Durham	34	34.7%	14	11	115	10.5	2.2	2	79%
D.Culp	18	46.7%	6	5	88	17.6	6.2	0	83%
R.White	131	27.4%	57	51	393	7.7	10.1	6	89%
B.Irving	107	21.9%	52	47	392	8.3	11.2	0	90%
S.Tucker	59	67.2%	12	9	109	12.1	11.7	1	75%

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
B.Irving	127	6.1%	207	1122	5.4	8	2	57%
R.White	2	-8.2%	144	613	4.3	3	2	53%
B.Mayfield	11	-8.3%	53	369	7.0	3	7	-
S.Tucker	52	15.8%	50	308	6.2	2	1	58%
S.Shepard	35	31.2%	8	69	8.6	0	0	-

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/ GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/ GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
C.Mauch	RG	26	17/17	1133	2	3	16	2.3%	8	T.Wirfs	LT	26	16/16	1016	8	2	11	1.8%	1
B.Bredeson	LG	27	17/17	1128	8	6	29	4.2%	26	L.Goedeke	RT	27	13/13	907	10	3	32	5.8%	25
G.Barton	C	23	16/16	1065	10	9	21	3.3%	36	J.Skule*	RT/LT	29	17/5	361	1	0	15	6.8%	--

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont	
2022	3.56	4.07	28	61%	25	19%	24	0.96	32	0.33	31	22	3.4%	1	17.4%	1	27	
2023	3.42	3.74	27	72%	9	15%	6	0.88	31	0.34	30	40	7.3%	17	26.6%	10	43	
2024	5.08	4.88	2	67%	15	16%	11	1.41	5	1.14	3	40	6.8%	17	26.2%	5	33	
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 4.69 (10)				Left Tackle: 3.64 (26)				Mid/Guard: 5.27 (2)				Right Tackle: 4.23 (16)		Right End: 6.18 (1)

All five starters return for the 2025 Buccaneers: first-team All-Pro left tackle Tristan Wirfs, guard Ben Bredeson, center Graham Barton, guard Cody Mauch, and right tackle Luke Goedeke. The Bucs suffered just 6.1 adjusted games lost to injuries on the offensive line, the eighth-lowest figure in the NFL. Swing tackle Justin Skule ate up most of those lost games, with six starts in relief of Goedeke and one in relief of Wirfs. The Vikings signed Skule, so the Bucs signed Charlie Heck, an on-and-off Texans starter at right tackle for several years who subbed (rather poorly) for Trent Williams at left tackle when all Heck broke loose for the 49ers at the end of last season. Just before we went to press, the Bucs announced that Wirfs had undergone knee surgery and would likely begin the season on PUP, so they'll be forced to depend on Heck right away. Barton, a left tackle at Duke, beat out veteran Robert Hainsey in training camp last year and started all but one game. "I liked the steadiness that Graham Barton showed as a rookie," Todd Bowles said at the end of the season. "Playing one of the toughest spots on the field, going against a Pro Bowler almost every week and just doing his job and coming to work every day with a lunch pail attitude. Making blitz adjustments and stunt adjustments aren't easy for a first-year center." The Bucs were very strong running up the middle, but Barton had a lot of penalties and pressures allowed for a center.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
V.Vea	30	DT	16	705	43	5.4%	32	30	15	2	34	62%	80	2.4	45	7.0	6	34	1
C.Kancey	24	DE	12	541	28	4.7%	51	24	16	1	17	82%	17	1.2	7	7.5	11	35	1
L.Hall	25	DE	16	539	29	3.6%	72	20	9	2	19	58%	86	2.7	61	5.5	5	19	2
G.Gaines	29	DT	15	395	17	2.3%	92	13	4	4	15	73%	47	1.3	10	1.0	3	6	0

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
Y.Diaby	26	OLB	17	785	54	6.4%	25	43	18	5	43	81%	25	0.9	5	4.5	18	52	0
A.Nelson	28	OLB	17	573	37	4.4%	65	19	8	3	21	52%	95	3.1	73	4.0	10	31	0
J.Tryon-Shoyinka*	26	OLB	15	539	26	3.5%	84	19	7	5	12	75%	39	2.2	31	2.0	2	22	1
C.Braswell	24	OLB	17	329	17	2.0%	--	12	3	2	11	82%	--	2.8	--	1.5	7	0	0
H.Reddick	31	DE	10	393	15	3.0%	94	10	6	1	11	64%	78	2.5	48	1.0	2	26	2

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run				Pass Rush				vs. Pass									
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
L.David	35	ILB	17	1078	128	15.1%	31	72	29	15	57	74%	5	2.7	6	5.5	1	28	55	11.7%	56	36%	62	7.7	44	6	1
K.J.Britt*	26	ILB	14	613	73	10.4%	59	32	7	7	47	49%	79	3.9	53	0.5	0	4	17	0.3%	37	29%	71	8.9	62	1	0
J.J.Russell	27	ILB	16	249	26	3.3%	--	13	2	4	12	58%	--	4.9	--	0.0	0	2	12	-11.2%	--	50%	--	7.9	--	1	0
S.Dennis	25	ILB	4	104	20	10.0%	--	10	7	4	7	29%	--	3.7	--	1.0	0	1	7	-11.5%	--	29%	--	9.4	--	0	0
A.Walker	30	ILB	14	516	68	10.2%	61	26	7	13	31	61%	38	4.3	74	1.0	0	3	26	16.3%	62	15%	78	10.1	71	2	1

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk				
2022	4.44	4.17	8	70%	20	20%	8	1.22	17	0.85	21	45	7.9%	8	26.9%	19				
2023	3.94	4.07	14	61%	8	19%	11	1.19	18	0.45	6	48	7.8%	16	26.5%	27				
2024	4.23	3.99	7	70%	22	21%	5	1.03	3	0.94	28	46	7.8%	10	34.5%	5				
2024 ALY by direction:	Left End: 4.39 (17)				Left Tackle: 3.63 (4)				Mid/Guard: 4.43 (15)				Right Tackle: 3.46 (6)				Right End: 2.12 (3)			

Anyone building Lavonte David's Hall of Fame dossier in six to 10 years—Someone nudge Ira Kaufman and show him this! We know you are reading this “JoeBucsFan”!—needs to reach out to the FTN staff, because we have some serious statistical muscle to apply to the case. Lavonte David has 415 career defeats, which ranks second among all players going back to 1991 behind Ray Lewis. David was still tied for sixth in defeats last year at age 34 and will move into first place if he has a similar season in 2025. David is also the all-time career leader in pass tackle stops: tackles after complete passes that still prevent a successful play for the offense. He has 320 of those, compared to Derrick Brooks with 275 and no other player with more than 240. YaYa Diaby ranked in the top 20 in pass pressures according to FTN charting, although his sack production dipped after recording 7.5 of them as a rookie in 2023. “Some of them were based off of just not getting off as fast as I want to,” said Diaby, referring to his quickness at the snap of the ball. “It was like a game of inches. If I get off the ball faster it’s going to be a closeout.” Haason Reddick recorded 50.5 sacks for the Cardinals, Panthers, and Eagles from 2020 through 2023. The Jets traded for him last April but failed to nail down a contract extension, because the Jets are stupid. Reddick held out until well into the season, then went through the motions for 10 games in New York for contract-vestment purposes. The Bucs signed Reddick to replace Joe Tryon-Shoyinka. Reddick’s one-year contract includes per-game bonuses to keep him from wandering off, which was a wise move: Reddick was a no-show at the start of voluntary minicamps. “I’m sure we’ll see him one of these days,” a clearly thrilled Todd Bowles said of his absence. Chris Braswell had a quiet rookie season as a second-round pick from Alabama, but coaches praised him during OTAs. A bit of an edge/off-ball hybrid, Braswell served as the third linebacker for a team that prefers to be in nickel as often as possible. Todd Bowles likes to blitz Braswell—granted, he likes to blitz everyone—and Braswell could see an increased role if Reddick takes another autumn staycation. The big—REALLY big—story of minicamp was the signing of 449-pound undrafted Florida rookie Desmond Watson to compete for a spot behind Vita Vea, Calijah Kancey, and other veterans. Watson possesses a little quickness and isn’t a bad leverage athlete; he can probably be a useful rotation tackle if he can slim down to 380 pounds or so. Todd Bowles insists that he did not sign Watson to stop the Tush Push. No one had the courage to ask Bowles if he signed Watson to *run* the Tush Push.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall					vs. Run					vs. Pass														
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTKl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int	
Z.McCollum	26	CB	17	1056	99	11.6%	8	40	21	11	24	33%	72	9.7	85	107	19.2%	39	12.5	-8.9%	39	53%	35	7.9	58	17	2
J.Whitehead*	28	SS	12	732	82	13.7%	11	33	9	6	47	49%	16	6.6	35	16	4.1%	47	8.4	11.4%	34	19%	63	13.6	62	3	0
J.Dean	29	CB	12	697	66	11.0%	13	26	5	6	9	56%	22	10.6	87	67	18.2%	51	10.9	-10.7%	33	45%	76	7.4	42	7	1
C.Izien	25	SS	14	697	78	11.1%	40	30	13	11	21	57%	6	5.9	28	34	9.2%	13	6.3	-13.5%	13	50%	27	6.2	17	3	1
T.Smith	24	CB	13	612	60	9.2%	41	33	15	10	16	75%	4	1.9	1	73	22.5%	16	8.5	-27.8%	9	58%	12	6.0	11	7	2
A.Winfield	27	FS	9	529	63	14.0%	10	17	8	6	29	31%	56	8.3	65	5	1.8%	--	10.4	-44.6%	--	40%	--	6.6	--	3	0
J.Hayes	26	CB	15	265	33	4.4%	--	9	1	4	11	27%	--	6.1	--	33	23.5%	--	10.5	43.8%	--	45%	--	6.1	--	3	0
K.Merriweather	26	SS	14	259	16	2.3%	--	5	3	3	2	50%	--	6.5	--	7	5.1%	--	7.4	16.0%	--	57%	--	7.1	--	1	0
T.Hill*	34	CB	8	236	33	7.4%	--	14	5	2	18	39%	--	6.2	--	18	18.1%	--	6.0	4.4%	--	50%	--	8.5	--	1	0
M.Edwards*	29	FS	8	191	13	3.2%	--	6	3	0	6	67%	--	4.8	--	3	3.0%	--	6.7	-36.8%	--	100%	--	3.7	--	1	0

Year	Pass	D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	13			4.4%	17	7.0%	20	7.5%	25	-2.8%	13	20.2%	29	-1.6%	17	-17.4%	6
2023	14			6.5%	19	-0.6%	16	12.3%	26	8.4%	21	1.6%	20	8.0%	25	-30.5%	2
2024	23			1.3%	18	-20.9%	4	5.3%	24	-7.3%	11	2.8%	22	14.1%	27	18.7%	28

Antoine Winfield Jr. missed four games with a sprained right ankle and four more with a sprained right knee. Winfield is one of the NFL's best all-purpose safeties when healthy, and Todd Bowles said that Winfield's presence is nearly as important on the practice field as on game day. "He runs everything," Bowles said, per JoeBucsFan.com. "Him and Lavonte [David] are probably two of the hardest practice players I've ever seen practice since I've been coaching." The Bucs are deep at cornerback. Jamel Dean is a fixture on the left side and had a very low target rate when he was on the field. Zion McCollum has grown into a capable starter on the right side; he was among the league leaders in passes defensed last year. Tykee Smith, who had an impressive rookie season, is a Winfield-shaped athlete who is being moved into a Winfield-shaped role as a multi-purpose slot defender. When Winfield was injured, Smith became the blitzy guy in the secondary. Second-round pick Benjamin Morrison looked like a potential future top-15 selection after intercepting nine total passes for Notre Dame in 2022 and 2023, but a hip injury sidelined him for most of 2024. Third-round pick Jacob Parrish looks like a slot ankle-biter but was effective playing outside at Kansas State. "He can't play outside 'in a pinch'—he can play outside," Bowles said in May, noting that Parrish was the fastest player at rookie camp. "I think he's an outside corner first and then a nickel second." Free safeties Christian Izien and Kaevon Merriweather may find their playing time squeezed out by Smith if he is not needed at cornerback. The Bucs signed Shilo Sanders as a rookie free agent. Sanders, older brother of Shedeur and son of Colorado's head football coach, did not inherit the family talent but made up for it by (somehow) being his family's most unapologetic showboat. Sanders is officially listed at safety, the position he played in college, where he could do the least harm. Sanders' best chance at earning a roster spot may be to stand behind Desmond Watson and hope no one notices him.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	-4.0%	31	-7.7	29	-5.1	28	-4.1	28	-3.5	24	-0.8	17	-9.7	27
2023	0.0%	18	7.3	8	2.1	8	-2.2	25	-5.7	27	-1.4	18	8.2	4
2024	-2.1%	26	5.8	8	0.8	14	-3.4	27	-11.4	31	-2.9	22	16.5	1

The Bucs cycled through three punters in 2024. Former fourth-round pick Jake Camarda struggled last preseason and kicked a few dying quails early in the year. Trenton Gill replaced him but wasn't much more reliable; Gill almost made Todd Bowles' head explode with a 22-yard shank from the Bucs 10-yard line in the Week 13 squeaker over the Panthers. Enter undrafted rookie Jack Browning, who fumbled a snap then hacky-sacked a roller about 40 feet downfield in the season finale against the Saints. The Bucs signed veteran Riley Dixon to replace Huey, Dewey, and Louie, then signed Edmonton Elks punter Jake Julien (who had a cup of Tim Horton's coffee at Patriots training camp in 2022) just in case anything happened to Dixon. Chase McLaughlin played for six different teams in his first four NFL seasons, with two separate stints with the Colts. He has settled down and become a model of reliability in Tampa Bay, going 15-of-18 from 40 to 49 yards and 24-of-30 from 50-plus yards in his last three seasons. Trey Palmer and Sean Tucker are likely to reprise their punt and kickoff return roles. Tampa Bay led the NFL in "hidden" special teams value primarily because opposing kickers were awful on field goals. Opponents missed 10 field goals against Tampa Bay, plus one that the Buccaneers blocked. The Bucs also faced bad punting, as opposing punters averaged 44.6 gross yards per punt, 31st in the NFL.

# Tennessee Titans

**2024 record:** 3-14

**Total DVOA:** -33.5% (31st)

**Pythagorean Wins:** 4.8 (29th)

**Offense:** -23.4% (31st)

**Snap-Weighted Age:** 26.2 (23rd)

**Defense:** 1.7% (17th)

**Average Opponent:** 1.6% (12th)

**Special Teams:** -8.4% (32nd)

**2025 Mean Projection:** 6.3 wins

**On the Clock (0-5):** 38%

**Postseason Odds:** 16.4%

**Mediocrity (6-8):** 43%

**Super Bowl Odds:** 0.3%

**Playoff Contender (9-11):** 17%

**Proj. Avg. Opponent:** -2.1% (23rd)

**Super Bowl Contender (12+):** 2%

**2024:** The collaboration franchise reaches the same page of a book nobody wants to read.

**2025:** The front office ties their careers to Cam Ward, for better or worse.

Last year, the Titans arrived on one key word together, and that was “collaboration.” Amy Adams Strunk wanted the team to be an “aligned and collaborative team across all football functions.” The thing that they collaborated to do was “spend heavily on short-term upgrades so that the team isn’t as bad as it was in 2023.” Calvin Ridley, L’Jarius Sneed, Lloyd Cushenberry, Tyler Boyd, Tony Pollard, Chidobe Awuzie, and Kenneth Murray were all brought in as free agents.

To say that the 2024 Titans were not productive for the future of the franchise was an understatement. Those free agent signings—as well as moving on from DeAndre Hopkins and Harold Landry—have left the team with \$36 million in dead money on their cap this year. The Titans have resorted to talking about Sneed like he’s an idea rather than a person. “Waiting for L’Jarius Sneed to show us he’s the player he’s been,” Titans coach Brian Callahan told reporters in June. Sneed played just five games last year while dealing with a long-term quad injury and is facing a lawsuit for shooting at someone parked at a car dealership. Cushenberry tore his Achilles after eight games. Ridley is entering his age-31 season and the Titans seemed pathologically unable to get him the ball—he had just 72 touches last year, ranking him outside of the top 100 in the league and putting him behind luminaries such as D’Onta Foreman and Audric Estime. For just these three players, the Titans are running up cap charges of \$64.8 million this year.

Pollard, to his credit, was mostly effective. But he was about the only one of the seven. Take that, people who say you can’t pay a running back!

When you spell all that out, it makes sense that the Titans parted ways with general manager Ran Carthon. It wasn’t his fault that the free agent signings and trades didn’t pan out, but there’s a reason most veteran signings and trades are not structured in the expensive way that the Titans structured Sneed and Ridley. Free agency is a hard game to win, and most teams take smaller bets. But the Titans could either meet those terms or not get the player, and the directive to win was largely from ownership.

It’s also not Carthon’s fault that Will Levis didn’t develop into a franchise quarterback. Like Malik Willis before him, the Titans were scooping up a player who fell in the draft and hoping there was something that everyone missed. You can say that Carthon’s picks haven’t developed as hoped so far,

but you also have to admit that it may be too soon to judge them. Peter Skoronski and JC Latham didn’t immediately become Pro Bowlers or anything close to it. But T’Vondre Sweat had a solid rookie season, and we’re talking about abbreviated classes following trades that left the Titans with no third-round pick in 2024 or fourth-round pick in 2023. It feels more like the grade should be incomplete if anything.

Carthon was pushed out to make way for a super-sized front office with, if you can believe it, even more collaboration than last year. It’s bad form to drop four new main characters halfway into a chapter, but we must take all of what the Titans give us. So when they fired Carthon, they introduced in the statement President and CEO Burke Nihill, who was quoted as saying: “Ran was hired into a very different job description than the one that exists today. Ran was hired for a general manager position that was very specific to the circumstances at the time, and the forecasting was the general manager would be able to partner very closely with the head coach, the existing head coach, and as the circumstances exist today, the general manager position is different.”

When you spell out what the Titans are doing, led by president of football operations Chad Brinker and their new general manager, former Chiefs assistant GM Mike Borgonzi, it doesn’t sound silly. The idea is to let Borgonzi handle the roster while several other high-ranking members of staff—including Nihill, Brinker, former Raiders GM Dave Ziegler, and (also) former Raiders GM Reggie McKenzie—handle other elements of the job. It is fundamentally doubling down on the idea of collaboration, but on a massive scale, while also creating a brain trust that goes beyond one person or idea. The Titans didn’t just send their GM and head coach to Cam Ward’s pro day. They sent Brinker, offensive coordinator Nick Holz, quarterbacks coach Bo Hardege, McKenzie, and Ziegler there. (And we’re not even going to name the scouts; there were caravans of Titans brass at this pro day.) Then they had another private workout with Ward that included ownership. This pick got the entire focus group treatment, and it marks a potential huge turning point for the franchise after Joe Milton beat the Bills in Week 18 to move Tennessee into the first overall selection.

Ward is a quarterback of the times, a young man who transferred from Incarnate Word to Washington State to Miami over a five-year college career. With the Hurricanes in his final

## 2025 Titans Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	at DEN	7	NE	13	JAX
2	LAR	8	at IND	14	at CLE
3	IND	9	LAC	15	at SF
4	at HOU	10	BYE	16	KC
5	at ARI	11	HOU	17	NO
6	at LV	12	SEA	18	at JAX

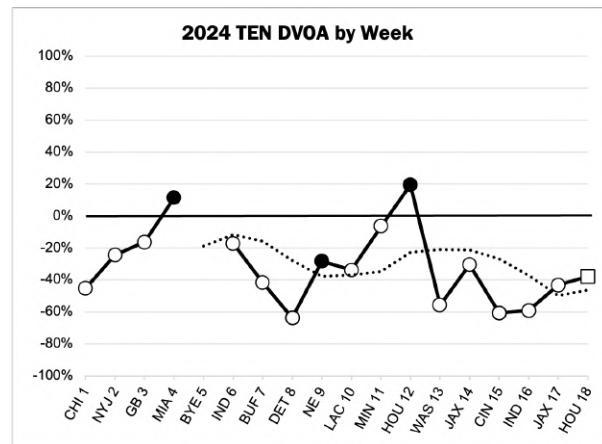
season, he led the nation in adjusted yards per attempt at 10.5, threw 39 touchdowns to only seven interceptions, and had a high (if not Jayden Daniels-esque) 67.2% completion rate. He was widely considered the top quarterback prospect in the draft—there were a few Shedeur Sanders holdouts, but not many—but was more of a top-10 fixture on the major public big boards than a sure-fire No. 1 overall pick. Scouts Inc. listed him seventh. Dane Brugler had him 13th. Daniel Jeremiah ranked him eighth. Former Football Outsiders writer Matt Waldman comped Ward’s game to that of Johnny Manziel.

QBASE, our rookie quarterback projection system, had Ward as a solid but not overwhelmingly great prospect as the No. 1 overall quarterback on the board. His 0.35 TDYAR/A is nearly the equal of Daniels from 2024. He ranks as the fourth-best prospect to come out per QBASE since the model was updated in 2021, just above Daniels and Bryce Young (Table 1).

**Table 1. QBASE Projections for First-Round Picks, 2021-2025**

Year	Team	Pick	Player	TDYAR/A
2021	JAX	1	Trevor Lawrence	0.73
2024	CHI	1	Caleb Williams	0.61
2021	NYJ	2	Zach Wilson	0.60 <sup>1</sup>
<b>2025</b>	<b>TEN</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Cam Ward</b>	<b>0.38</b>
2024	WAS	2	Jayden Daniels	0.34
2023	CAR	1	Bryce Young	0.33
2021	CHI	11	Justin Fields	0.26
2024	MIN	10	J.J. McCarthy	0.20
<b>2025</b>	<b>NYG</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>Jaxson Dart</b>	<b>0.20</b>
2021	SF	3	Trey Lance	0.18
2023	HOU	2	C.J. Stroud	0.13
2024	NE	3	Drake Maye	0.03
2022	PIT	20	Kenny Pickett	0.00
2024	DEN	12	Bo Nix	-0.08
2021	NE	15	Mac Jones	-0.14
2024	ATL	8	Michael Penix Jr.	-0.43
2024	IND	4	Anthony Richardson	-0.95

The easiest comparison to other recent quarterback prospects is the one with Daniels. Like Ward, Daniels transferred in the middle of his career—something that used to be a rarity and is now becoming more common in the transfer portal era.



Like Ward, Daniels had the blow-up senior season against the backdrop of an impressive-but-not-overwhelmingly good college career.

Unlike Ward, Daniels was completely ridiculous as a rusher in his senior season at LSU, where he ran 135 times for 1,134 yards and 10 scores. Ward—and it should be noted that sacks count as rushes in college statistics—rushed for 406 career yards in three years of FBS competition. That’s where the comparison falls apart a bit.

Exactly four Titans were signed to contracts of more than \$4 million per season in free agency and the two biggest deals went to former Lions and Bengals guard Kevin Zeitler and former Steelers left tackle Dan Moore. The Titans are moving Latham to right tackle to accommodate the signing of Moore to a four-year, \$82-million contract that would have looked ridiculous on its face before last season, when the Steelers had drafted Troy Fautanu 20th overall to replace him. Fautanu got hurt early in the season, Moore stepped back in, and while we wouldn’t say every metric loved him, ESPN’s pass block win rate had him ranked 11th among left tackles. Zeitler is entering his age-35 season and while he has remained very good, he’s at best a short-term replacement for Dillon Radunz.

Those signings tell you two things. One is that when you look at Ward’s college profile as a scrambling playmaker, the Titans truly feared him getting destroyed by bad offensive line play. Callahan publicly bemoaned the right tackle spot at several pressers last season, noting that the team hadn’t gotten much from it. Nicholas Petit-Frère, John Ojukwu, and Leroy Watson were the main members of the rotation. Only Ojukwu was asked back and he’ll be competing for a reserve spot. You also learn that as much of a good game as the Titans talked with elite offensive line coach Bill Callahan (Brian’s father), the team realized that they simply couldn’t willfully close their eyes and hope bad players became good anymore.

It is hard to believe that Ward is going to single-handedly elevate the Titans into something resembling a playoff team. But then again, we would have said the same thing about Daniels last year. Actually, we did. We literally said: “And while the 2024 Commanders won’t be very good, they will at least be very different. That alone is reason for optimism.” C.J.

<sup>1</sup> The COVID year was weird.

Stroud, too, had his turn elevating a down-in-the-doldrums Houston outfit into a playoff team in his rookie season, when we wrote: “It’s too unrealistic to expect anything [but growing pains] after the reset button gets pressed in such an extreme way.” I’m not bringing this up to knock our chapter writers—this was consensus-think. Nobody could imagine Daniels and Stroud having that kind of instant impact until they actually went out and did it.

And, likewise, with Ward somehow being the quietest No. 1 pick in history thanks to Sanders becoming the main story of the 2025 draft, almost nobody believes the Titans are going to do anything this year. Their over/under at most sportsbooks is about 5.5. We’re talking about a slow-played offseason where the Titans made gradual moves at best. Ward is throwing to Ridley, the age-33 season of Tyler Lockett off a down year, lifelong sacrificial X Van Jefferson, and a bushel of fourth-round picks. And that sounds damning until you think about how Washington’s second most-targeted wideout in 2024 was Olamide Zaccheaus.

The Titans defense remains pesky, if not stuffed with true difference-makers beyond Jeffery Simmons. Dre’Mont Jones was brought in to replace Harold Landry, and Cody Barton to replace the traded Murray. Dennard Wilson’s unit last year finished middle-of-the-pack in forcing turnovers despite facing the most rushing attempts in the NFL. Tilt the axis of the game more towards passing by generating fewer turnovers on offense, and you can see a world where they finish in the middle of the DVOA ranks in 2025.

If it sounds like this is a hard sell—well, it is. It is reliant on Ward having the same kind of instant impact as two of the best quarterback rookie seasons in NFL history. And we’re obviously, statistically, not willing to make that bet. We don’t think the Titans are guaranteed to live in the basement of the AFC South,

but only because we have a system that absolutely despises everything the Indianapolis Colts stand for. (The Colts also have a noticeably more difficult schedule than the Titans, who draw fourth-place teams such as the Saints and Browns instead of second-place teams such as the Falcons and Steelers.)

The other key factor that those quick turnaround teams had in common was a new coaching staff. The onus is absolutely on Callahan—who easily could have been tossed overboard in a league where Jerod Mayo only got one season—to make something of Ward quickly. Last year’s offense was turnover-prone, but not necessarily ghastly. The only team in the NFL to throw more than Tennessee’s 21 interceptions last year were the Browns, and other than the Browns and Titans, no team had more than 30 turnovers last year. Tennessee’s net yards per pass attempt was on par with offenses like Houston and Dallas, ranked 25th at 5.73 rather than being at the bottom of the league.

If those numbers don’t improve markedly with Ward this year, Callahan may find himself on the hot seat. You can excuse one year of bad performance with a quarterback whom Callahan clearly pumped up but couldn’t trust, but not being able to make real strides with Ward’s rookie season would be a major gut punch for the franchise.

Ward’s QBASE provides you with some sense that he has a chance to do that, despite the scouting community not being as in love with him as other recent prospects. But the Titans aren’t likely to pull a major turnaround right away. If you look at the numbers, teams don’t tend to do this without outlier seasons from their newest players.

Then again, after the last two years, we also can’t fully rule it out.

Rivers McCown

## 2024 Titans by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	at CHI	L	28%	17	24	244	148	-2	-45%	-35%	-24%	-35%
2	NYJ	L	27%	17	24	300	265	-2	-25%	-2%	10%	-12%
3	GB	L	3%	14	30	237	378	-3	-16%	-16%	2%	1%
4	at MIA	W	98%	31	12	244	184	0	11%	-32%	-42%	1%
5	BYE											
6	IND	L	10%	17	20	241	269	0	-17%	-17%	-4%	-4%
7	at BUF	L	0%	10	34	289	389	-2	-42%	-40%	-4%	-5%
8	at DET	L	0%	14	52	416	225	-4	-64%	-28%	-18%	-54%
9	NE	W	72%	20	17	400	295	+2	-28%	-4%	-2%	-25%
10	at LAC	L	2%	17	27	289	309	0	-34%	-2%	24%	-8%
11	MIN	L	1%	13	23	294	318	0	-7%	-9%	0%	3%
12	at HOU	W	98%	32	27	369	260	-1	20%	-7%	-29%	-2%
13	at WAS	L	1%	19	42	245	463	-1	-56%	-36%	15%	-5%
14	JAX	L	29%	6	10	272	291	+2	-31%	-39%	-5%	4%
15	CIN	L	1%	27	37	374	370	-2	-61%	-39%	19%	-3%
16	at IND	L	1%	30	38	307	458	-2	-59%	-29%	22%	-7%
17	at JAX	L	6%	13	20	337	295	-1	-43%	-21%	23%	1%
18	HOU	L	6%	14	23	314	374	0	-38%	-29%	16%	7%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	-23.4%	31	1.7%	17
Unadjusted VOA	-22.5%	31	4.3%	17
Weighted Trend	-25.3%	31	6.5%	24
Variance	1.9%	1	3.8%	9
Average Opponent	-0.1%	18	0.6%	15
Passing	-14.0%	31	12.5%	24
Rushing	-15.2%	28	-9.6%	16
First Down	-17.5%	30	6.9%	24
Second Down	-27.4%	31	-8.4%	8
Third Down	-28.2%	30	7.4%	23
First Half	-14.3%	30	6.5%	21
Second Half	-31.9%	32	-3.8%	17
Red Zone	-17.9%	24	7.8%	25
Late and Close	-33.2%	32	6.0%	14

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rk	Off	Rk	Def	Rk	ST	Rk	Off AGL	Rk	Def AGL	Rk	Off Age	Rk	Def Age	Rk	ST Age	Rk
2020	11-5	9.2	7.9	491	439	+11	-0.1%	15	13.8%	5	9.5%	28	-4.4%	28	27.8	7	29.7	10	27.5	5	26.5	13	27.3	2
2021	12-5	10.3	8.0	419	354	-3	-0.2%	18	-2.6%	20	-3.3%	10	-1.0%	23	29.7	5	43.7	20	28.4	2	26.0	21	26.9	3
2022	7-10	6.6	6.8	298	359	-3	-9.8%	24	-6.5%	21	1.7%	19	-1.5%	24	37.3	17	85.6	32	27.0	11	25.7	27	26.5	10
2023	6-11	6.6	5.8	305	367	-6	-13.4%	26	-10.1%	25	1.4%	18	-1.9%	24	37.6	20	38.1	22	26.6	15	26.1	23	26.5	10
2024	3-14	4.8	2.5	311	460	-17	-33.5%	31	-23.4%	31	1.7%	17	-8.4%	32	20.0	7	49.8	22	26.2	25	26.2	22	26.2	18

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

TEN Offense					TEN Offense vs. Opponents					TEN Defense				TEN Defense vs. Opponents			
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA
11	68%	5.1	-24.0%	30%	Base	26%	5.1	-10.1%	58%	Base	23%	4.8	6.0%	11	63%	5.6	1.2%
12	17%	5.6	8.9%	49%	Nickel	61%	5.1	-19.2%	37%	Nickel	72%	5.6	-0.8%	12	25%	5.0	-2.0%
612	5%	4.7	-31.1%	78%	Dime+	12%	5.3	-38.0%	10%	Dime+	4%	5.2	7.1%	21	6%	5.0	0.0%
13	4%	5.9	12.5%	55%	Goal Line	1%	5.2	25.7%	40%					13	3%	4.7	-6.4%
611	2%	3.4	-55.2%	77%										612	1%	6.3	61.8%

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected	Rk	Formation	Rk	Pass Rush	Rk	Secondary	Rk	Strategy	Rk							
Runs, all	+5.9%	6	Form: Single Back	76%	13	Rush 3	1.1%	30	4 DB	23%	15	Play Action	22%	20		
Runs, first down	+9.5%	4	Form: Empty Back	8%	14	Rush 4	74.5%	8	5 DB	72%	6	Offensive Motion	41%	26		
Runs, second-long	+0.3%	15	Form: Multi Back	17%	16	Rush 5	20.4%	12	6+ DB	4%	31	Avg Box (Off)	5.99	27		
Runs, power sit.	-0.5%	24	Pers: 3+ WR	69%	12	Rush 6+	4.0%	25	Man Coverage	54%	13	Avg Box (Def)	6.02	24		
Runs, behind 2H	+6.2%	6	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	31%	16	Edge Rusher Sacks	51.6%	16	MOFC	55%	23	Offensive Pace	34.90	32		
Runs, ahead 2H	+12.5%	2	Pers: 6+ OL	9%	2	Interior DL Sacks	29.7%	14	CB1 on WR1	30%	27	Defensive Pace	30.83	7		
Run-Pass Options	2.4%	22	Shotgun/Pistol	79%	13	Second Level Sacks	18.8%	19	S/CB Cover Ratio	12%	29	Go for it on 4th	0.92	21		

Each year from 2021 through 2023, the Titans ranked in the top three in YAC on passes at or behind the line of scrimmage. Last year, they ranked 27th with only 8.1 average YAC on these passes compared to an NFL average of 9.1. The Tennessee offense ranked 10th in the first quarter of games and then was the worst in the league from the second quarter on. The Titans ranked 28th passing in the red zone but third running in the red zone. The Titans were close to having the biggest gap in the league between performance with and without play-action, behind only the Rams. The Titans had 7.6 yards and 25.0% DVOA with play-action but 5.4 yards and -27.2% DVOA without it. The Titans benefited from a league-high 5.0% drop rate by opposing receivers. The Titans dropped from eighth (19%) to 31st (4%) in usage of dime personnel on defense.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
W.Lewis	-427	-32.0%	342	1853	5.4	4.9	63.1%	13	12
M.Rudolph*	-100	-17.5%	235	1459	6.2	4.5	65.2%	9	9
T.Boyle	15	-4.6%	50	276	5.5	5.6	54.0%	1	1
B.Allen	-66	-43.3%	32	197	6.2	6.8	56.7%	1	2

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
C.Ridley	57	-6.3%	119	64	1017	15.9	3.6	4	54%
N.Westbrook-Ikhine*	107	10.3%	60	32	497	15.5	3.9	9	53%
T.Boyd*	2	-12.3%	57	39	390	10.0	4.8	0	68%
D.Hopkins*	45	14.3%	22	15	173	11.1	0.2	1	71%
B.Oliver	21	18.0%	9	6	95	15.8	4.3	0	67%
T.Burks	-10	-28.3%	8	4	34	8.5	1.3	0	50%
T.Lockett	118	6.2%	74	49	600	12.2	2.7	2	66%
V.Jefferson	5	-11.0%	40	24	276	11.5	3.3	2	60%
C.Okonkwo	-37	-15.2%	71	52	479	9.1	4.7	2	74%
J.Whyle	-26	-17.0%	37	28	248	8.9	5.1	1	76%
N.Vannett*	31	14.3%	20	17	135	7.9	6.5	3	85%
T.Pollard	-57	-32.8%	57	41	238	5.8	5.4	0	72%
T.Spears	45	9.8%	35	30	224	7.5	8.5	1	86%

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
T.Pollard	30	-5.7%	260	1079	4.2	5	2	46%
T.Spears	5	-7.2%	84	312	3.7	4	0	45%
W.Lewis	-43	-30.5%	42	165	3.9	0	5	-
M.Rudolph*	-10	-19.2%	24	101	4.2	1	3	-
J.Chestnut	17	12.2%	22	102	4.6	0	0	45%
C.Ridley	28	32.1%	8	55	6.9	1	1	-

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
J.C Latham	LT	22	17/17	1094	10	10	36	5.5%	20	L.Cushenberry	C	28	8/8	499	2	2	9	3.0%	29
P.Skoronski	LG	24	17/17	1094	7	3	19	2.9%	10	J.Ojukwu	OT	26	11/4	264	3	2	6	3.8%	--
D.Radunz*	RG	27	15/15	902	4	6	17	3.1%	16	L.Watson*	OT	27	4/4	190	8	2	5	4.4%	--
D.Brunskill*	C	31	17/10	683	2	5	13	3.2%	33	D.Moore	LT	27	17/17	1113	4	6	39	6.3%	27
N.Petit-Frere*	RT	26	15/10	621	10	3	30	8.0%	35	K.Zeitler	RG	35	16/16	1048	2	5	14	2.5%	11

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont
2022	4.40	4.36	18	75%	7	17%	15	1.20	18	0.83	14	49	9.5%	29	33.7%	29	24
2023	4.26	4.16	18	80%	2	16%	10	1.16	15	0.80	9	64	11.4%	31	36.1%	29	22
2024	4.07	4.09	25	76%	3	18%	19	1.17	22	0.56	23	52	9.4%	30	32.0%	21	27
2024 ALY by direction:				Left End: 4.70 (9)				Left Tackle: 3.80 (25)				Mid/Guard: 4.01 (30)			Right Tackle: 3.75 (26)		Right End: 4.46 (9)

Left guard Peter Skoronski has survived two seasons in the NFL and took a step forward as a run blocker last year, dropping his blown block count from 12 (2023) to three. He's still maddeningly inconsistent in pass protection and when climbing to the second level. And, given the penalties, it wouldn't surprise us if he suddenly enters 2026 on the hot seat. The Titans have replaced literally every lineman around him over two years, and if Ward eats sacks by the bushel, it's going to have to be someone's fault. Fifth-year options aren't for everybody. 🏈 Brian Callahan said that JC Latham was "probably admittedly ... heavy at the end of last season." Latham really wore down in the second half, as he was pushed around by the Texans and Jaguars in pass protection after Week 11. He was always a more natural fit at right tackle in the eyes of the media draft community, so perhaps the move will be beneficial. 🏈 Lloyd Cushenberry was expected to be cleared medically in June or July. This is an area where the Titans can't really afford any kind of extended rehab or setback—last year's backup center Daniel Brunskill is gone, and penciling Corey Levin into the starting lineup in 2025 feels like a pretty dark place. 🏈 Beyond those three linemen and the two veteran additions we talked about in the main essay, Moore and Zeitler, the Titans added fifth-round rookie Jackson Slater out of Sacramento State. Slater was first-team All-American in 2024 for the Hornets, and he was part of the Bruce Feldman "Freaks List" at one point. He was impressive in pass protection but probably needs an acclimation year jumping from the Big West. 🏈 The Titans also signed no fewer than four stopgap veterans in Sam Mustipher, Brenden Jaimes, Blake Hance, and Olisameka Udoh. It'll be Bill Callahan's job to find one or two of them that can make the team and contribute as backups. Mustipher is probably the best bet after playing 2,500 snaps for the Bears from 2020 to 2022, but none of these players have had notably effective stretches to this point in their careers.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
J.Simmons	28	DE	16	807	79	10.1%	1	60	20	13	63	76%	36	1.7	17	5.0	5	28	5
T.Sweat	24	DT	17	699	51	6.1%	23	36	9	2	46	70%	56	2.5	48	1.0	2	19	0
S.Joseph-Day	30	DT	17	486	45	5.4%	31	40	11	5	41	88%	3	1.9	23	2.5	3	14	1
J.Lynch*	26	DT	17	244	22	2.6%	--	14	4	1	18	56%	--	2.2	--	1.0	1	3	2

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
H.Landry*	29	OLB	17	879	74	8.9%	4	57	21	5	51	78%	30	2.7	55	9.0	6	37	1
A.Key	29	OLB	16	735	43	5.5%	39	33	16	4	31	71%	59	1.8	22	6.5	9	36	2
J.Harrell	23	OLB	17	287	9	1.1%	--	6	2	3	6	83%	--	1.3	--	0.0	0	6	0
D.Jones	28	OLB	17	617	29	3.3%	88	20	9	2	21	71%	56	2.6	49	4.0	10	24	2
L.Carter	30	OLB	13	409	29	4.3%	66	15	5	4	20	70%	61	3.2	74	0.0	3	5	0

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall							vs. Run					Pass Rush				vs. Pass								
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
K.Murray*	27	ILB	14	817	97	14.2%	35	50	15	7	50	58%	52	3.9	52	3.5	3	13	42	2.4%	39	50%	21	7.2	34	2	1
J.Baker*	29	ILB	10	566	65	12.6%	48	34	8	8	36	61%	39	3.3	20	2.0	1	6	29	6.8%	46	48%	27	6.2	14	4	0
J.Gibbons*	27	ILB	10	235	41	8.4%	73	17	4	3	24	42%	84	4.4	77	0.5	0	5	9	-9.2%	--	56%	--	8.0	--	0	0
L.Gifford*	30	ILB	16	203	37	4.7%	--	16	8	2	22	45%	--	4.4	--	0.0	0	0	7	59.0%	--	14%	--	11.6	--	2	1
C.Barton	29	ILB	17	1053	109	12.3%	51	60	14	6	63	62%	37	4.1	66	1.5	0	13	38	-14.7%	15	39%	53	10.0	70	5	2

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	
2022	3.38	3.43	1	71%	24	23%	2	0.85	2	0.55	8	39	6.3%	24	27.3%	16	
2023	3.86	4.01	12	62%	10	19%	12	1.08	8	0.50	12	45	8.1%	11	29.7%	16	
2024	4.36	3.99	6	61%	9	23%	4	1.08	7	1.08	32	32	7.3%	17	29.8%	22	
2024 ALY by direction:																	
Left End: 2.83 (1)				Left Tackle: 4.31 (17)				Mid/Guard: 3.96 (5)				Right Tackle: 4.10 (16)				Right End: 4.85 (26)	

One thing you could say to start this section is that this unit doesn't have a 1A pass rusher on the edge. Another thing that might even be more true is that now that they have cut Harold Landry, they don't even have a 1B. Dre'Mont Jones had just 8.5 sacks in two years in Seattle and seemed a much better fit to be inside on passing downs in Denver earlier in his career. Second-round pick Oluwafemi Oladejo had just six sacks in his entire college career at UCLA, and while his explosion metrics were good enough to get a mid-tier SackSEER score (12.3 projected sacks in his first five years), nobody is counting on him to become an instant impact player at the position. Arden Key, as much of a mismatch as he can be at times, has just 12.5 sacks over the last two years in Tennessee. The Titans have built a powerful front with gap-controllers like T'Vondre Sweat and Sebastian Joseph-Day. They're going to give some offensive lines hell. But in a pure pass-rush situation, we're skeptical that they have much going for them beyond... 🤣 Jeffery Simmons can win inside one-on-one with the best of them, but entering his age-28 season, the Titans may have decisions to make going forward if they remain a poor team this year. They can shed a ton of remaining salary in a trade, and while Simmons has been elite, he hasn't exactly been in All-Pro range the last few years. He would make an interesting trade-deadline candidate should it come to that, though Nashville's venerable Paul Kuharsky wrote that he had "no sense" that Simmons was on the market this offseason. 🤣 Cody Barton's coverage numbers are what lets you know that interceptions are valuable—turning 38 targets into two turnovers can make up for a lot in DVOA's mind. He was much better in coverage in 2023 for the Commanders, ranking lower in yards per pass allowed and success rate, but one extra turnover (plus opponent adjustments) made it almost a wash for DVOA. Barton got a three-year deal that should give him a straight path to the roster in 2026 as well. 🤣 The spot alongside Barton is wide open, with each of Tennessee's other four main linebackers leaving in free agency or via trade. James Williams, a 2024 seventh-rounder, played 111 defensive snaps in the final four games of the year. Third-year UDFA Otis Reese is a special teams contributor who only played in three games last year on defense, though two of those were starts. The highest-drafted solution, 2024 fourth-rounder Cedric Gray, who missed most of the season with a shoulder injury, only received real playing time on defense in Week 16. We'd guess that Williams is in the lead for the spot based on that, but it's nothing more than a weak lean.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run						vs. Pass												
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int	
J.Brownlee	24	CB	17	913	83	10.0%	27	41	17	8	40	58%	20	4.4	15	69	17.5%	59	9.9	1.3%	55	52%	40	7.5	45	9	1
A.Hooker	27	SS	14	850	77	11.2%	39	31	14	8	43	44%	23	5.7	20	18	4.9%	38	8.2	66.5%	61	33%	56	6.3	20	9	5
R.McCreary	25	CB	15	653	51	6.9%	75	27	16	12	16	94%	1	1.9	2	58	20.5%	25	4.9	12.1%	75	36%	90	7.7	54	1	0
D.Baker	27	CB	17	628	41	4.9%	90	16	4	3	12	50%	31	4.5	20	40	14.7%	83	12.0	-44.6%	1	50%	57	7.4	41	5	0
D.Worley*	30	CB	9	459	54	12.3%	--	17	6	9	29	31%	--	6.2	--	11	5.5%	--	6.7	32.4%	--	55%	--	8.9	--	2	1
Q.Diggs*	32	FS	8	419	42	10.7%	45	14	4	5	23	26%	74	8.7	71	10	5.5%	--	6.0	54.6%	--	70%	--	4.5	--	0	0
M.Brown	26	FS	17	386	39	4.7%	--	15	2	1	18	39%	--	7.1	--	5	3.0%	--	21.4	-45.6%	--	80%	--	5.8	--	1	0
C.Awuzie*	30	CB	8	373	30	7.7%	--	10	1	3	11	18%	--	6.4	--	27	16.7%	--	9.8	-3.2%	--	48%	--	7.4	--	4	1
L.Sneed	28	CB	5	301	23	9.4%	--	9	3	2	11	64%	--	8.2	--	28	21.5%	--	16.0	8.2%	--	54%	--	7.2	--	0	0
X.Woods	30	SS	17	1218	125	13.1%	20	32	10	13	66	23%	80	8.5	67	23	4.5%	42	5.1	-52.8%	2	57%	17	3.9	4	6	3

Year	Pass D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	28	7.9%	21	-1.7%	15	31.7%	31	20.8%	29	3.4%	21	6.8%	23	-12.8%	10	
2023	24	46.0%	31	22.4%	30	13.0%	27	42.1%	32	-4.4%	14	-15.7%	4	-13.6%	9	
2024	25	10.6%	23	15.9%	26	-16.5%	3	-4.5%	15	8.2%	24	-1.8%	13	6.7%	22	

Well, are we pretending L'Jarius Sneed is going to be available, or are we looking at how things have gone so far in Tennessee? With the 2023 version of Sneed, the Titans have at least a little promise. Roger McCreary's numbers took a big hit last year, as he fell from a 2.3% DVOA and a 49% success rate in 2023, though he did have a great year as a run defender. He's entering the final year of his rookie contract in more of a prove-it situation. Jarvis Brownlee was an instant outside corner for the Titans, flashing in run defense and playing boundary corner often. He's a potential building block if he can take another step forward in Year 2. But after those two and Sneed, the depth at the position gets troublesome in a hurry. 2025 sixth-rounder Marcus Harris (Cal) looks like a potential McCreary replacement at nickel, and the team added four UDFAAs at the position, telling you they're not totally satisfied with Amani Oruwariye and Darrell Baker as the main backups. Baker's coverage DVOA is a bit kooky; he barely qualifies for the rankings and ends up No. 1 because for some reason he was very rarely targeted when he was on the field. When he was targeted, he was fairly average. Amani Hooker looks likely to play out the final year of his three-year, \$30-million extension signed before the 2022 season. The Titans used him more as a deep safety last year, and while the instincts are still strong, it doesn't seem like they're interested in renewing Hooker for a third contract before they see what 2025 brings. What could it bring? The Titans will want to find out what they have in Penn State third-rounder Kevin Winston Jr. Winston tore his ACL two games into last season and will likely be working through rust in training camp. If he struggles, Hooker will probably spend a lot of time next to veteran free agent signee Xavier Woods. Mike Brown is the main depth piece here, a younger player who played a decent enough deep safety last year that he would have been on our Top 25 Prospects list if he hadn't been on his second contract.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	-1.5%	24	-2.0	19	2.9	7	-1.9	21	-3.2	22	-4.0	26	-0.5	17
2023	-1.9%	24	6.1	10	0.3	16	-2.0	24	-10.7	31	-3.9	23	-3.1	19
2024	-8.4%	32	7.2	6	-9.0	32	-4.8	30	-31.4	32	-6.8	32	5.1	11

Long snapper Morgan Cox, now 39, is back, as he has been in every season since 2021. But other than that, *forget everything!* Joey Slye is the team's new kicker taking over for Nick Folk, and Johnny Hekker is taking over for Ryan Stonehouse at punter. Slye has a big leg and his coaches have trusted it—he has 20 attempts of 50 or more yards over the last three years. But he misses enough bunnies that he has averaged only 80.5% on field goals over the span. Hekker, a former All-Pro, was objectively one of the worst punters in the league the last two years, worth a combined -10.7 points in gross punt value. The good news? That figure is better than Stonehouse's -11.2 over the same span. The Titans have an abundance of potential returners, with fourth-round wideout Chimere Dike a new exciting option after averaging 11.3 yards per return on punts the last two years in the SEC (with Florida) and Big Ten (with Wisconsin). But every player that the Titans had returning kicks or punts last year is back and, really, whoever impresses the most in the returner competition might have a step up on claiming a roster spot in this logjam. Tyjae Spears and Julius Chestnut are likely safe, but Jha'Quan Jackson, Bryce Oliver, and Mason Kinney all could make sticking on the roster easier by staking claim to one of these jobs.

# Washington Commanders

2024 record: 12-5

Total DVOA: 11.6% (10th)

Pythagorean Wins: 10.6 (10th)

Offense: 13.3% (6th)

Snap-Weighted Age: 27.2 (6th)

Defense: 3.8% (23rd)

Average Opponent: -5.2% (31st)

Special Teams: 2.1% (9th)

2025 Mean Projection: 10.6 wins

On the Clock (0-5): 2%

Postseason Odds: 74.1%

Mediocrity (6-8): 17%

Super Bowl Odds: 17.4%

Playoff Contender (9-11): 44%

Proj. Avg. Opponent: 1.4% (12th)

Super Bowl Contender (12+): 36%

2024: How to jumpstart a contending franchise.

2025: Can you sustain a contending franchise?

In last year's *Almanac*, we listed Washington with a 36% chance of being On the Clock with five or fewer wins. That was about double their 19% odds of finishing with at least nine wins. Nobody expected this team to make it to the NFC Championship Game. The Commanders had finished the 2023 season with -28.7% DVOA, the second-worst mark for a team that made it to the conference championship in the following season, ahead of only the 1995 Jacksonville Jaguars in their first year of their existence.

There are many ways the 2024 Commanders season could have gone poorly. It was the first full season of a new ownership group that hired a defensive retread head coach after the hot young offensive coordinator turned them down. The rookie second overall pick at quarterback was in the hands of a former head coach whose offense had gotten static and predictable in his last NFL stop, while the college offense he had just coordinated was panned for its lack of structure. The free agent class was designed to swing for singles, with competent-enough veterans to fill in the massive holes along the roster.

Any one of those pieces could have disappointed. The magic about the 2024 Commanders is that *all of it* worked. The key to the 2025 Commanders is the team not being sold on the idea that everything will work that way again.

A great rookie quarterback can change the fortunes of a franchise. Jayden Daniels did just that. Daniels came off a Heisman Trophy-winning season at LSU, but there were still some concerns about his game. Daniels was a one-year wonder in his fifth collegiate season who didn't throw over the middle of the field often, took a high rate of sacks, and was a potential injury risk because of his slight frame. But Daniels also had one of the best deep balls in college football and was a dynamic runner, both on scrambles and designed runs.

Washington's plan on offense was to build a system that started with relying on Daniels' strengths and slowly built up to insulate the quarterback from those perceived weaknesses. A lot of that came from the evolution of Kliff Kingsbury as offensive coordinator. It felt as if every week there was a new layer added to the offense until it was the complete version that could win in almost any way by the end of the season.

Early in the season, the Washington offense used screens and RPOs in the passing game to control the pace and get the ball out quickly. If Daniels didn't like the read, he was encouraged

to run. That was also the strategy against pressure and when Daniels was moved out of the pocket. Scrambles turned into a big piece of the passing offense. Daniels had 72 scrambles on the season, 22 more than the next quarterback, and his 69% success rate on scrambles was the third highest among quarterbacks with at least 20 such plays. Over the past five seasons, only Josh Allen's 206 DYAR on scrambles in 2022 was higher than Daniels' 191 DYAR last year. Daniels had a league-high 12.0% scramble rate, and when pressured, that jumped to 16.6%. There have been quarterbacks who bail from the pocket at the first sign of pressure as an illustration of poor pocket management, but Daniels often was under control.

While Daniels still had a high sack rate overall, he only took a hit on 38.4% of pressures, which was the 10th lowest rate among quarterbacks. Moving the chains with scrambles allowed the Commanders to continually get the ball into scoring range and Washington scored on 52% of its drives, tied for second in the league.

As Daniels got more comfortable moving in and out of the pocket, when he was pressured became the time to big-play hunt. Daniels had the highest rate of explosive pass plays when pressured (16.2%) and his 17.2 yards per completion under pressure also ranked first. Getting the quarterback to that comfort level to let those plays rip was a clear plan in the rollout of the offense.

By Adjusted DYAR, Daniels finished just below C.J. Stroud for the fourth-best rookie season since 1978. Daniels had far and away the best rushing value of that group (Table 1).

So much of C.J. Stroud's rookie success came from the Texans screwing around on early downs and asking the rookie quarterback to bail them out on third downs. The commitment to an inefficient run game on early downs put Houston behind the sticks often. Stroud was able to put the offense on his back and make enough plays on third down to keep the offense moving. In Year 2, the lack of a plan and doubling down on that philosophy was too much to overcome. It's the type of letdown the Commanders want to avoid.

Washington was excellent on third and fourth downs, with a lot of Daniels magic to convert first downs. Normally in our book, when we give numbers for third down, we include fourth down. With the 2024 Commanders, it's important to separate the two. Washington was second in DVOA on third down (24.4%) but had 91.0% DVOA on fourth down. That

## 2025 Commanders Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	NYG	7	at DAL	13	DEN
2	at GB (Thu.)	8	at KC (Mon.)	14	at MIN
3	LV	9	SEA	15	at NYG
4	at ATL	10	DET	16	PHI (Sat.)
5	at LAC	11	at MIA (SPA)	17	DAL (Thu./Xmas)
6	CHI (Mon.)	12	BYE	18	at PHI

fourth-down figure was the highest for a team since 2012. In the past 15 years, no other team with at least 20 fourth-down attempts had a DVOA over 75% (Table 2).

While there could be regression there, the offense didn't solely rely on those late-down plays. The Commanders weren't the best first-down offense (20th in DVOA) but they seemed to have an answer on second down, no matter the distance. Washington was eighth in DVOA on second-and-short, sixth on second-and-medium, and third on second-and-long. That came from sequencing and having the right plays to take advantage of each situation.

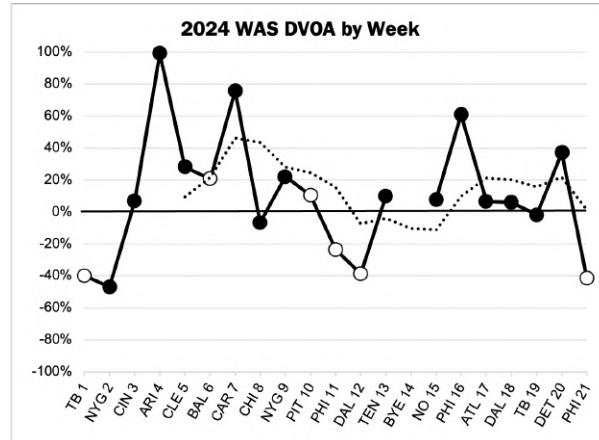
Even the fourth-down success wasn't just a line-up-and-sneak-it type of success. Washington often went empty to spread the defense out to give open throws and scramble lanes, used Daniels on bootlegs under center, and had a ton of misdirection in the traditional run game. It was one piece of how this offense evolved.

Kingsbury's staples were still present in the offense with modern updates. The Commanders went no-huddle on 62.8% of plays with the score between eight points, with the next-highest team at 27.9%. With Arizona, Kingsbury used that pace to keep the offense at one speed. The no-huddle was about getting plays off quickly and using the speed as the advantage. In Kingsbury's final season with the Cardinals, Arizona went no-huddle on a league-high 32.6% of one-score situations and ranked first in pace at 25.7 seconds per play.

**Table 1. Top Rookie QB Seasons by Adjusted DYAR, 1978-2024**

Year	Player	Team	Pass	Run	Adj
2016	Dak Prescott	DAL	1,302	121	1,556
2012	Russell Wilson	SEA	872	147	1,180
2023	C.J. Stroud	HOU	1,103	26	1,158
<b>2024</b>	<b>Jayden Daniels</b>	<b>WAS</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>1,044</b>
2004	Ben Roethlisberger	PIT	915	37	993
2012	Robert Griffin	WAS	727	109	956
2008	Matt Ryan	ATL	1,012	-40	927
1983	Dan Marino	MIA	885	-15	853
2011	Cam Newton	CAR	407	188	801
2020	Justin Herbert	LAC	861	-29	799
1998	Peyton Manning	IND	707	8	724
<b>2024</b>	<b>Bo Nix</b>	<b>DEN</b>	<b>506</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>708</b>

Adjusted DYAR multiplies rushing DYAR by 2.1 to better reflect the relative value of quarterback runs and passes.



Making speed the lone method of attack limited the menu of plays the Cardinals could run. When everyone is rushing to the line and staying in the same place, there are only so many plays available to an offense. Eventually defenses caught on, usually late each season, and there weren't many changeups to bring the advantage back to the offense.

While the Commanders ramped up the use of no-huddle and ranked first in situation-neutral pace, it wasn't the lone way the offense tried to gain an advantage. Washington only ranked eighth in seconds per play within one score and that relative gap allowed the Commanders to still use pace as a weapon but also change up the looks at the line to give the offense variations of what it could do. That also include more motion. Washington ranked 21st in the rate of motion used on pass plays, and when used before the snap the Commanders ranked eighth in success rate (opposed to motion at the snap, where they ranked 31st). That pre-snap motion to change the picture was just enough of a change to add another layer to what the offense could bring.

Because the Commanders still had a spread-out offense, Washington rarely ran into a stacked box. FTN Data charting has them running 73% of the time against six men in the box or fewer, second behind Seattle. But because of the run threat, especially including the quarterback, defenses still had

**Table 2. Best Fourth-Down Offensive DVOA, 2010-2024**

Year	Team	Att	FD	DVOA
2012	SEA	17	12	122.2%
2012	BUF	8	5	120.4%
2012	DEN	5	3	91.0%
<b>2024</b>	<b>WAS</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>91.0%</b>
2011	CAR	11	7	90.7%
2015	JAX	15	8	89.3%
2020	SEA	14	8	86.8%
2018	SEA	15	12	86.4%
2013	GB	13	10	84.7%
2013	PIT	14	9	81.1%
2020	ATL	27	16	74.3%
<b>2024</b>	<b>BUF</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>74.2%</b>

to keep an extra man around the line of scrimmage, so Daniels threw against the fourth-highest rate of single-high coverage in the league. Compare that to teams such as the Eagles or Ravens. Jalen Hurts got to pick against the highest rate of single-high coverage, but the Eagles ran into a stacked box of seven or more on 41% of runs. Lamar Jackson had the same rate against single-high as Daniels, but the Ravens faced a stacked box on 49% of runs.

The ground game was never likely to be an issue in Washington. While some of Kingsbury's passing schemes became stale in Arizona, one thing he was able to do was design a run game. The Commanders were second in success rate on non-scramble runs (46%) with a varied run game that meshed with screens and play-action.

The schematic advantage was nice, but the Commanders also got their best players making big plays. Terry McLaurin got the chance to play like a No. 1 receiver with a functional quarterback throwing him passes for the first time in his career. Zach Ertz looked refreshed and was a useful receiver over the middle of the field, able to move the chains.

Then there was Daniels coming through in the biggest moments. The late deep touchdown throw to McLaurin in Week 3 on Monday Night Football to seal the game against the Bengals. The Hail Mary in Week 8 against the Bears. A nearly perfect overtime drive to beat the Falcons in Week 17. Beating the Tampa Bay blitz in the Wild-Card Game. Thriving under pressure against the Lions in the Divisional Round. Daniels was third in passing DVOA in the fourth quarter and the Commanders were in enough games for that to matter.

Mistakes were often limited—though Daniels did have a below-average turnover-worthy throw rate, especially over the middle of the field—and his legs were often a get-out-of-jail-free card. Rarely did the game look too big for the rookie.

But the offense wasn't perfect and it heavily leaned on the mobility of the quarterback—something that became apparent during a midseason stretch when Daniels injured his ribs and could not extend plays or run as often as he did when healthy. There were also elements that weren't always available. For as good as Daniels was throwing the deep ball in college, it wasn't a big part of the Washington offense, and he only ranked 27th in the rate of throws that traveled at least 20 air yards.

With so much breaking right for the offense, the Commanders were proactive in bringing in reinforcements in an attempt to stave off any regression that might come. Washington started by trading a fifth-round pick to the San Francisco 49ers for Deebo Samuel. Samuel had his worst season in 2024 after reports that he came into camp in great shape. Samuel's yards per route run when lined up out wide dropped a full yard from 2023 to 2024 (2.4 to 1.4) while the Niners moved him inside more often to be a short-area slot receiver. But there are a lot of circumstances that led to that drop-off. Samuel contracted pneumonia prior to San Francisco's Week 7 game against Kansas City and only lasted a few snaps in the game. That was also the game in which Brandon Aiyuk tore his ACL. From Week 8 on, after pneumonia recovery and without Aiyuk on the field, Samuel's yards per route run out wide dropped from 2.3 to 0.9 while he played there more often, bumping his snaps

from 53.2% to 64.0%. His yards per route run from the slot also dropped a yard from 3.1 to 2.1 during that time.

Along with giving up a fifth-round pick, the Commanders took on the one year and \$17.5 million remaining on Samuel's contract. That was restructured through adding void years to the end of the deal. If this doesn't work out, Washington takes on a \$12.3-million cap hit next year without Samuel on the roster. But if the move works, the Commanders get a super No. 2 receiver to pair with McLaurin, and one who could be a queen-on-the-chess-board-type player in Kingsbury's offense. It's a sizeable bet.

A similar big bet was made along the offensive line. That was a unit where the whole played greater than the sum of its parts in 2024. Third-round pick Brandon Coleman impressed at left tackle but will now be moved inside to guard after Washington traded for Laremy Tunsil. The Commanders traded third- and seventh-round picks in 2025 and second- and fourth-round picks in 2026 in exchange for the left tackle and a 2025 fourth-round pick. Tunsil finished 10th in ESPN's pass block win rate but also led the league in penalties. The hope there is that a better structure within the offense—the opposite of whatever happened in Houston last season—can tamp down the pre-snap penalties and keep the plus blocking.

Washington made this type of bet in-season last year with the acquisition of Marshon Lattimore at the trade deadline. The Commanders traded third-, fourth-, and sixth-round picks in the 2025 draft to the Saints for Lattimore and a fifth-round pick. Lattimore had an impressive first half of the season in New Orleans, where he was not thrown at often. But a hamstring injury from before the trade made his early Washington tenure uneven, with multiple missed games and a poor performance against Mike Evans in the playoffs. During minicamp, Lattimore said he could tell he looked timid when looking back at the tape and that he feels more explosive with an off-season to recover.

The Lattimore trade was meant to be a boost for a defense that needed a jolt of talent and did not have the same success of outperforming the talent level. There were bright spots, such as Frankie Luu and Bobby Wagner in the middle as well as rookie cornerback Mike Sainristil. Washington finished 16th in weighted defensive DVOA but also ranked 22nd in variance and faced one of the easiest schedules that included a number of backup quarterbacks.

Dan Quinn's Dallas defenses were based around creating chaos and forcing turnovers, but the Commanders did not have the same luck. Only 8% of Washington's defensive drives ended in a turnover, tied for the fifth-lowest rate in the league. It wasn't for a lack of trying. The Commanders had some fun defensive looks that used Luu as a pass rusher, either as a blitzer or filling in as a fourth rusher while someone else dropped off the line. Yet, despite having some looks designed to kill those obvious passing situations, Washington was just 22nd in DVOA on third-and-long.

Those are the types of plays and creative strategies that the Commanders might need on defense after the offseason moves mostly focused on fortifying the offense. Money was spent on Javon Kinlaw, another former 49er with a connection

to Washington general manager Adam Peters, as well as the Lattimore addition, but that has left edge and safety as weaknesses on the roster.

This is a team that is still seventh in spending on both offense and defense, according to Over The Cap. The Arizona Cardinals are the only other team in the top 10 of both for the 2025 season. Despite being in the first year of a rebuild, the Commanders were the sixth-oldest team by snap-weighted age. The veterans were key to both the culture reset and the on-field product. But many of them came with short-term deals. Washington already lost players such as Jeremy Chinn and Dante Fowler Jr. on defense. With how aggressive the Commanders were in trades to acquire more talent, they were left with few draft picks to replenish the depth of the roster with cheaper rookie contracts. Washington only had two picks in the top 100 of this year's draft. First-round pick Oregon tackle Josh Conerly and second-round pick Ole Miss cornerback Trey Amos are likely to be starters and impact players in Year 1, but they almost have to be given the state of the roster.

That does create a thin line to walk in terms of taking ad-

vantage of a roster that can capitalize on the early, unexpected success from the first year with a rookie quarterback and having a long, sustained plan to build out this roster. Washington is already going into the 2026 draft without picks in the second or fourth round.

The long-term sustainability appears to be a future Commanders problem for now. This is a team that should be considered one of the best in the conference this season. We believe this offense has enough around the quarterback to sustain its high level of play from last year. If the defense sits around league average, which we have it projected to be, that should be more than enough to keep the Commanders competitive, if not more.

Expectations are high and deservedly so. A surprise conference championship appearance might be a high bar to clear, but there is talent and there is a plan. This is all new for Washington. With a quarterback this good this soon, the Commanders could have multiple shots at contention—why not take one now?

Dan Pizzuta

## 2024 Commanders by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PGWE	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	at TB	L	1%	20	37	299	392	0	-40%	-2%	21%	-17%
2	NYG	W	30%	21	18	425	304	+1	-47%	-9%	44%	7%
3	at CIN	W	60%	38	33	356	436	0	7%	23%	26%	11%
4	at ARI	W	100%	42	14	449	296	0	99%	65%	-22%	12%
5	CLE	W	100%	34	13	434	212	-1	28%	0%	-26%	2%
6	at BAL	L	2%	23	30	305	484	+1	21%	27%	14%	7%
7	CAR	W	100%	40	7	421	180	+2	76%	11%	-46%	18%
8	CHI	W	83%	18	15	481	307	+1	-7%	15%	14%	-7%
9	at NYG	W	95%	27	22	358	326	+1	22%	34%	16%	4%
10	PIT	L	31%	27	28	242	312	+1	10%	5%	3%	9%
11	at PHI	L	2%	18	26	264	434	-1	-24%	-6%	14%	-3%
12	DAL	L	7%	26	34	412	332	-2	-39%	2%	27%	-14%
13	TEN	W	99%	42	19	463	245	+1	10%	27%	12%	-4%
14	BYE											
15	at NO	W	88%	20	19	326	245	+1	8%	-8%	-18%	-2%
16	PHI	W	95%	36	33	368	338	-3	61%	19%	-29%	13%
17	ATL	W	64%	30	24	412	337	0	7%	11%	3%	-2%
18	at DAL	W	84%	23	19	269	378	-1	6%	11%	7%	2%
19	at TB	W	20%	23	20	350	284	+1	-2%	5%	14%	7%
20	at DET	W	83%	45	31	481	521	+5	37%	33%	-6%	-1%
21	at PHI	L	0%	23	55	350	459	-4	-41%	-1%	39%	-2%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	13.3%	6	3.8%	23
Unadjusted VOA	15.3%	6	5.4%	21
Weighted Trend	11.9%	10	0.2%	16
Variance	3.5%	7	5.7%	22
Average Opponent	1.2%	29	-3.7%	29
Passing	31.7%	9	9.5%	20
Rushing	2.5%	7	-2.5%	26
First Down	-4.2%	20	-5.1%	11
Second Down	21.1%	4	9.1%	25
Third Down	33.4%	2	12.0%	28
First Half	13.3%	7	-2.2%	9
Second Half	13.2%	9	10.0%	31
Red Zone	16.2%	6	-1.7%	19
Late and Close	19.0%	7	17.8%	27

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth W	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rk	Off	Rk	Def	Rk	ST	Rk	Off AGL	Rk	Def AGL	Rk	Off Age	Rk	Def Age	Rk	ST Age	Rk
2020	7-9	8.2	7.3	335	329	-4	-5.5%	21	-19.8%	31	-13.2%	4	1.1%	15	62.5	28	34.6	14	26.8	15	25.2	29	25.6	24
2021	7-10	5.9	6.6	335	434	-5	-11.4%	25	-3.0%	21	9.5%	27	1.0%	12	72.1	29	35.4	15	26.8	12	25.5	28	25.9	20
2022	8-8-1	7.8	6.6	321	343	-5	-7.5%	22	-13.9%	30	-4.4%	10	2.0%	7	52.0	25	36.9	18	27.6	4	25.8	24	25.9	20
2023	4-13	4.1	4.5	329	518	-14	-28.7%	31	-10.4%	26	16.0%	31	-2.2%	26	19.4	9	35.0	19	26.8	11	25.7	26	26.3	15
2024	12-5	10.6	9.6	485	391	+1	11.6%	10	13.3%	6	3.8%	23	2.1%	9	22.1	8	23.5	6	27.3	5	26.9	9	27.4	4

## 2024 Performance Based on Most Common Personnel Groups

WAS Offense					WAS Offense vs. Opponents					WAS Defense				WAS Defense vs. Opponents			
Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Run%	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA	Pers	Freq	Yds	DVOA
11	59%	5.9	14.7%	32%	Base	17%	5.4	19.8%	40%	Base	13%	5.7	9.0%	11	66%	5.4	2.4%
12	24%	5.9	20.3%	48%	Nickel	67%	5.7	9.6%	42%	Nickel	74%	5.5	2.9%	12	22%	5.9	6.7%
21	6%	8.6	53.0%	51%	Dime+	16%	7.4	52.2%	28%	Dime+	11%	6.0	3.1%	21	4%	6.8	16.4%
13	5%	4.5	27.6%	62%						Goal Line	1%	2.6	-1.7%	13	3%	5.5	-5.4%
20	1%	4.4	5.5%	67%										22	2%	6.6	12.6%
01	1%	4.9	-48.4%	44%										611	1%	2.9	-26.4%

## Strategic Tendencies

Runs vs. Expected	Rk	Formation	Rk	Pass Rush	Rk	Secondary	Rk	Strategy	Rk
Runs, all	-0.2%	23	Form: Single Back	73%	19	Rush 3	2.2%	22	4 DB
Runs, first down	+1.0%	17	Form: Empty Back	14%	3	Rush 4	62.7%	27	5 DB
Runs, second-long	-9.1%	28	Form: Multi Back	13%	26	Rush 5	27.3%	3	6+ DB
Runs, power sit.	+4.5%	17	Pers: 3+ WR	62%	19	Rush 6+	7.8%	10	Man Coverage
Runs, behind 2H	+1.3%	22	Pers: 2+ TE/6+ OL	32%	14	Edge Rusher Sacks	47.7%	20	MOFC
Runs, ahead 2H	-0.4%	17	Pers: 6+ OL	2%	18	Interior DL Sacks	25.0%	22	CB1 on WR1
Run-Pass Options	4.5%	11	Shotgun/Pistol	92%	1	Second Level Sacks	27.3%	5	S/CB Cover Ratio
									Play Action
									Offensive Motion
									Avg Box (Off)
									Avg Box (Def)
									Offensive Pace
									Defensive Pace
									Go for it on 4th

In general, passes up the middle are more efficient than those to the sides of the field. However, Washington was far better throwing to the sides. They were third in DVOA to the left, fourth to the right, and 30th to the middle. The quarterbacks may change, but this was the fourth straight year where Washington threw more to the right side (42%) than the left side (32%). This isn't some weird thing with the official scorers in Washington, because the same trend does not exist for the Commanders defense. The Commanders ranked sixth by forcing three-and-outs 23.4% of the time despite ranking 25th in yards allowed per drive. The surprisingly high rank in "CB1 on WR1" (47%) is based on Benjamin St-Juste; Mike Sainristil covered WR1 27% of the time and Noah Igbinoghene 16% of the time. The Washington defense was ninth in the first half of games and then fell to 31st after halftime. Washington was third in DVOA on passes at or behind the line of scrimmage but 27th in DVOA on passes beyond the line of scrimmage. Commanders opponents threw a league-high 31% of passes to their WR1s, although this is somewhat related to the Giants and Eagles offenses being the top two in this category.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
J.Daniels	681	9.1%	525	3330	6.3	5.4	69.2%	25	8
M.Mariota	198	56.4%	46	335	7.3	3.1	79.1%	4	0

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
T.McLaurin	339	24.3%	117	82	1096	13.4	3.6	13	70%
O.Zaccheaus*	77	3.5%	64	45	506	11.2	6.3	3	70%
N.Brown	123	12.9%	56	35	453	12.9	2.4	1	63%
D.Brown*	-16	-18.3%	40	30	308	10.3	7.3	1	75%
L.McCaffrey	0	-12.7%	24	18	168	9.3	5.4	0	75%
J.Crowder*	18	7.4%	13	9	72	8.0	1.2	2	69%
K.J.Osborn	-55	-52.7%	18	7	57	8.1	2.3	1	39%
D.Samuel	37	-6.4%	81	51	670	13.1	8.3	3	63%
Z.Ertz	112	11.5%	91	66	654	9.9	2.8	7	73%
J.Bates	-18	-27.6%	13	8	84	10.5	6.1	0	62%
A.Ekeler	85	24.3%	41	35	366	10.5	12.1	0	85%
B.Robinson	16	-1.6%	25	20	159	8.0	9.0	0	80%
J.McNichols	-31	-60.0%	12	9	27	3.0	3.7	0	75%

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
B.Robinson	38	-4.2%	187	799	4.3	8	2	49%
J.Daniels	173	10.7%	137	891	6.5	6	3	-
A.Ekeler	81	15.3%	77	367	4.8	4	1	52%
J.McNichols	73	22.7%	55	261	4.7	4	0	65%
C.Rodriguez	68	34.2%	35	173	4.9	2	0	74%
M.Mariota	-5	-18.1%	15	94	6.3	1	0	-
D.Samuel	29	-26.2%	42	136	3.2	1	0	-

## Offensive Line

Player	Pos	Age	G/ GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk	Player	Pos	Age	G/ GS	Snaps	Pen	Run BB	Press	Rate	Rk
S.Cosmi	RG	26	17/17	1162	11	7	10	1.4%	1	C.Lucas*	LT	34	14/7	467	3	0	6	2.1%	2
N.Allegretti	LG	29	17/17	1151	8	6	24	3.5%	20	M.Deiter	C	29	17/2	232	0	2	7	5.0%	--
T.Biadasz	C	28	15/15	946	3	7	12	2.1%	16	T.Scott	OT	31	17/1	192	2	2	7	6.1%	--
A.Wylie	RT	31	14/14	893	4	2	29	5.4%	22	L.Tunsil	LT	31	17/17	1028	19	5	27	4.1%	12
B.Coleman	LT	25	16/12	790	6	0	32	6.8%	30										

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk	Cont
2022	3.87	4.29	23	73%	10	14%	1	0.98	31	0.38	30	48	8.2%	23	35.2%	31	24
2023	4.26	4.33	9	58%	28	16%	8	1.28	7	0.54	21	65	10.3%	29	31.7%	23	32
2024	4.52	4.27	19	76%	4	17%	14	1.22	17	0.85	10	50	8.7%	23	28.5%	11	25

2024 ALY by direction: Left End: 4.55 (15) Left Tackle: 3.53 (28) Mid/Guard: 4.27 (23) Right Tackle: 4.41 (9) Right End: 4.77 (6)

Washington's offensive line exceeded all expectations based on the individual players in the starting lineup. Offensive line coach Bobby Johnson told Brandon Thorn on the Trench Warfare Podcast that there was a collective commitment to being versatile in the run game and being adaptable on a week-to-week basis. The Commanders were ninth in ESPN's pass block win rate and second in run block win rate. Washington was the only team to run outside zone on fewer than 10% of non-quarterback runs. Pairing a young quarterback with a good center has been a key to getting some of the best production, and the signing of Tyler Biadasz made an immediate impact. Biadasz was 19th among interior linemen in pass block win rate, and his versatility to reach and pull was an asset in the run game. Sam Cosmi has turned into one of the league's best guards after transitioning from tackle. He was fifth in run block win rate and had the lowest pressure rate allowed among guards. His timeline for full recovery is still unclear following his torn ACL in the Divisional Round, but he was on the field doing side work during minicamp. Last year, Brandon Coleman won the left tackle spot as a third-round rookie after an early-season rotation with Cornelius Lucas. He's expected to bump inside to left guard because of the Laremy Tunsil trade. Coleman was a better run blocker than pass protector and his explosiveness (Coleman was 90th percentile or better in the forty, vertical jump, and broad jump) could translate even better inside in Washington's run game. He played inside and outside during his time at TCU. First-round pick Josh Conerly Jr. is penciled in as the starter at right tackle. "JC's gonna be a dog," Tunsil told Washington reporters during OTAs. Conerly is switching sides after playing left tackle at Oregon. He's big and quick and uses his athleticism to get out in space as a blocker. By upgrading the potential starters, the Commanders also bolstered depth by having linemen who played starting snaps, such as Lucas and Nick Allegretti, now serving as backups.

## Defensive Front

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run					Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
D.Payne	28	DT	17	742	44	5.3%	34	35	14	7	35	74%	42	2.1	31	4.0	3	22	2
J.Newton	23	DT	16	515	45	5.7%	27	29	12	1	37	65%	70	2.4	42	2.0	6	14	3
J.Allen*	30	DT	8	301	19	4.8%	49	14	5	3	13	69%	59	3.8	87	3.0	4	8	0
S.Day	31	DT	12	272	25	4.2%	--	14	2	1	22	59%	--	2.9	--	0.0	1	5	1
J.Holmes	29	DT	16	265	18	2.3%	--	13	6	4	16	69%	--	1.3	--	2.0	1	8	0
P.Mathis*	27	DT	12	257	18	3.1%	--	15	4	4	14	79%	--	1.8	--	0.0	0	7	1
J.Kinlaw	28	DT	17	697	40	4.6%	53	29	9	4	34	71%	53	2.6	52	4.5	3	21	0
E.Goldman	31	DT	17	331	16	1.8%	--	9	1	8	15	53%	--	2.6	--	1.0	2	5	0

Edge Rushers	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run					Pass Rush					
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Dsrpt
D.Armstrong	28	DE	16	636	40	5.1%	48	31	14	8	26	73%	51	2.9	66	5.0	10	40	1
D.Fowler*	31	DE	17	564	40	4.8%	53	30	18	9	22	68%	66	2.7	57	10.5	3	38	1
C.Ferrell	28	DE	14	369	26	3.8%	74	18	7	2	20	70%	61	4.2	97	3.5	5	12	1
J.Jean-Baptiste	25	DE	12	194	13	2.2%	--	9	1	0	11	64%	--	2.8	--	1.0	1	6	0
D.Wise	31	DE	15	408	31	4.0%	71	25	8	2	21	76%	37	2.4	41	5.0	3	17	1
J.Martin	30	DE	11	222	15	2.7%	--	13	6	3	11	82%	--	3.7	--	3.0	3	12	1

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run					Pass Rush			vs. Pass										
			G	Snaps	Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Press	Tgts	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD	Int
B.Wagner	35	MLB	17	1072	136	16.3%	20	79	25	5	104	60%	45	3.8	44	2.0	5	9	26	9.0%	50	54%	15	9.2	64	4	0
F.Luvu	29	OLB	17	1059	106	12.7%	47	63	26	13	62	58%	51	3.9	49	8.0	6	31	23	-1.8%	33	61%	8	4.8	6	7	1

Year	Yards	ALY	Rk	Power	Rk	Stuff	Rk	2Lev	Rk	OpFld	Rk	Sacks	ASR	Rk	Press	Rk
2022	4.02	4.03	7	66%	12	19%	11	1.07	6	0.70	15	43	8.0%	7	32.9%	3
2023	4.41	4.45	27	70%	20	16%	25	1.25	25	0.70	20	39	6.6%	26	26.5%	26
2024	4.85	4.57	23	67%	15	16%	25	1.48	31	0.92	26	43	7.9%	7	29.9%	20

2024 ALY by direction: Left End: 5.45 (30) Left Tackle: 4.41 (20) Mid/Guard: 4.85 (25) Right Tackle: 3.84 (13) Right End: 3.40 (13)

On the surface, Javon Kinlaw's \$45-million contract was one of the biggest head-scratchers of NFL free agency. But the former 49er and Jet did rank 15th among interior defenders in pass rush win rate despite only six quarterback knockdowns. (Two of Kinlaw's 4.5 sacks were strip-sacks and a third was chasing a quarterback out of bounds with no hit.) Parting ways with Jonathan Allen could be a sign of belief in Jer'Zahn "Johnny" Newton. The 2024 second-round pick had eight knockdowns, which tied with Daron Payne for the most by an interior defender on the team last season. Newton didn't explode off the line (his 1.12s pass rush get off per Next Gen Stats was one of the slowest at the position, similar to slower, bigger-bodied run stuffers) but he missed nearly all of last year's offseason programs following Jones fracture surgery on both feet. Being a year removed from those procedures could bring back the quick first step Newton showed at Illinois. Payne has never come close to repeating his 11.5-sack season from 2022, but he remains a consistent disruptor who was 32nd among interior linemen in pressures. The edge group is where there's been a lot left to be desired. Dante Fowler left in free agency and was replaced by Deatrich Wise and Jacob Martin, two veterans who have served best as role players. Dorance Armstrong held up well in his jump from situational pass rusher to full-time starter even though his sack stats did not jump at the same rate as his playing time. Still, he has had at least 10 quarterback hits in each of the past four seasons. The best pass rusher on the team is arguably linebacker Frankie Luvu. Luvu rushed the passer on 39% of his pass snaps and was consistently in the backfield. There were plays when the Commanders had six defensive backs on the field but had Luvu down in the A-gap as a rusher, replacing either an edge or interior lineman. Having Luvu all over the field allowed Bobby Wagner to have a more specific role. Wagner is no longer the do-it-all linebacker of his peak but when he can go downhill and have specific coverage responsibilities, he can still excel. After five straight first-team All-Pro seasons, Wagner has been on the second team in each of the past four years.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run						vs. Pass											
			G	Snaps	Plays	Tm Pct	Rk	Stop Dfts	BTkl	Runs	St%	Rk	RuYd	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	aDOT	DVOA	Rk	Suc%	Rk	Yd/P	Rk	PD Int	
J.Chinn*	27	SS	17	1021	112	13.4%	14	47	19	8	67	39%	33	6.7	38	31	6.7%	26	10.3	34.2%	53	58%	14	6.3	19	5 1
M.Sainristil	25	CB	17	979	104	12.5%	5	40	16	9	30	43%	48	6.9	60	97	22.0%	18	10.5	13.7%	78	49%	61	7.6	50	14 2
Q.Martin	25	FS	16	943	84	10.7%	46	17	5	7	46	22%	85	9.5	83	8	1.9%	--	13.5	29.5%	--	25%	--	12.8	--	3 1
B.St-Juste*	28	CB	17	837	78	9.3%	39	22	6	6	27	37%	65	6.9	57	93	24.7%	6	11.0	37.9%	91	46%	72	7.6	48	7 0
N.Igbinoghene	26	CB	17	818	62	7.4%	68	24	7	11	23	39%	53	6.4	50	64	17.4%	61	9.3	8.1%	68	52%	48	6.4	21	7 0
M.Lattimore	29	CB	9	528	39	8.0%	60	15	5	1	13	8%	93	11.1	91	37	15.5%	78	12.6	-40.9%	3	57%	13	7.5	47	5 0
P.Butler	25	FS	17	399	38	4.6%	--	15	7	4	20	55%	--	5.1	--	6	3.3%	--	9.7	4.3%	--	67%	--	6.7	--	1 0
W.Harris	30	SS	13	861	78	11.1%	41	26	14	7	40	28%	68	6.8	40	27	6.5%	28	7.7	15.4%	39	59%	13	8.2	41	5 1
J.Jones	32	CB	17	712	64	7.3%	72	21	8	4	15	27%	82	7.3	65	52	15.8%	74	10.7	15.1%	80	54%	31	9.0	83	6 0

Year	Pass D	Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	WR Wide	Rk	WR Slot	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2022	16	7.8%	20	10.3%	23	0.8%	18	14.4%	27	-6.7%	14	-19.5%	4	-17.9%	5	
2023	32	60.0%	32	16.0%	26	-2.0%	15	26.8%	29	18.0%	29	-4.7%	11	19.2%	28	
2024	20	25.9%	27	15.8%	25	15.4%	30	14.5%	26	27.8%	31	5.7%	22	-34.2%	2	

Marshon Lattimore did not exactly deliver after he was traded to Washington, but his belief that a healthy offseason should improve his play is welcome news for a defense that struggled against outside receivers. Last year's second-round pick Mike Sainristil had to play outside more than expected (just 14% of snaps in the slot) and that led to some ups and downs in coverage. He had two big interceptions in the playoffs on top of his two in the regular season and 12 other passes defensed, which highlighted the ball skills he showed in college. He'll be the slot corner this year, where his size (5-foot-9) and aggression should play better. Trey Amos (Mississippi) was Washington's second-round pick and should be the starting outside corner opposite Lattimore. Amos excels at using his 6-foot-1 frame in aggressive press coverage. He had 18 pass breakups in his final college season and was one of the better-tackling cornerbacks in this class. If Amos isn't ready, the Commanders signed Jonathan Jones from the Patriots. Jones can be had for a big play occasionally but provides veteran cornerback depth that wasn't previously on the roster. Last year's starting slot corner Noah Igbinoghene also remains on the roster as depth. Will Harris was signed as a free agent to play strong safety, but he has played all over the secondary in his career. With Jeremy Chinn gone after just one season, Harris could take over his role, especially if the Commanders use more three-safety looks. Quan Martin revealed in April that he played through shoulder separations last season and had offseason surgery to fix the issue. He's the starting deep safety with ball skills and tackling technique that play well from depth. Texas Tech product Tyler Owens made the team as an undrafted free agent last season and played special teams, but he has a freaky wingspan (90th percentile) and explosion (95th-percentile vertical jump and 99th-percentile broad jump) that could make him interesting if he breaks into the safety rotation.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2022	2.0%	7	-2.2	21	5.0	3	-1.8	20	11.2	1	-1.4	21	-4.8	22
2023	-2.2%	26	-3.7	23	0.9	13	0.4	13	-7.2	29	-2.4	22	-8.2	27
2024	2.1%	9	-4.4	26	5.3	2	6.7	2	6.5	6	-3.1	25	-2.0	18

Tress Way only put two punts into the end zone for touchbacks while 44% of his punts landed inside the 20 (13th among punters). Washington signed Matt Gay after he was released by the Colts. Gay was perfect on extra points and field goals under 50 yards but went 3-of-9 on kicks of 50 or more yards. The Colts were also a team that had little interest in testing the dynamic kickoff. Gay's 83% touchback rate was the seventh highest among kickers. In Washington, Zane Gonzalez had a 30% touchback rate on kickoffs and Austin Seibert had a 23% rate, the fourth- and second-lowest rates in the league, respectively. Washington also had excellent kickoff coverage led by Jeremy Reaves and Nick Bellore. Reaves signed an extension through 2026 due to his special teams play, with nine solo and 11 assisted tackles plus a forced fumble on special teams last season. Austin Ekeler and Luke McCaffrey split kickoff return duties. Ekeler's 594 kick return yards ranked third in the NFL and he was named second-team All-Pro returner. However, McCaffrey had more value by our metrics, with 3.9 points of field position compared to 3.2 for Ekeler, and he took more kick returns in the playoffs. Olamide Zacchaeus and Jamison Crowder took all of Washington's punt returns. Neither is on the 2025 roster (Crowder remains a free agent). Fourth-round pick Jaylin Lane led the ACC in punt returns (24) and punt return yards (245) last season at Virginia Tech, including a 58-yard touchdown against Marshall.

# Quarterbacks

**O**n the following pages, we provide the last three years of statistics for the top two quarterbacks on each team's depth chart, as well as a number of other quarterbacks who played significant time in 2024. The top two quarterbacks on each team's roster are also listed with a 2025 projection provided by FTN's Jeff Ratcliffe. Ratcliffe's projections simulate every game during the season 10,000 times to establish baseline projections for each player based on past performance and this year's schedule.

It is difficult to accurately project statistics for a 162-game baseball season, but it is exponentially more difficult to accurately project statistics for a 17-game football season because of the small size of the data samples involved. With that in mind, we ask that you consider the listed projections not as a prediction of exact numbers, but the mean of a range of possible performances. What's important is not so much the exact number of yards and touchdowns we project, but whether or not we're projecting a given player to improve or decline. Along those same lines, rookie projections will not be as accurate as veteran projections due to lack of data.

Our quarterback projections look a bit different from our projections for the other skill positions. At running back and wide receiver, second-stringers see plenty of action, but, at quarterback, either a player starts or he does not start. We recognize that, when a starting quarterback gets injured in Week 8, you don't want to grab your *FTN Football Almanac* to find out if his backup is any good only to find that we've projected that the guy will throw 12 passes this year. Therefore, each year we project all quarterbacks to start all 17 games. If Drake Maye goes down in November, you can look up Joshua Dobbs, divide the stats by 17, and get an idea of what we think he will do in an average week. There are full-season projections for the top two quarterbacks on all 32 depth charts. You'll find projections which incorporate the possibility of injury in the fantasy appendix on page 387.

The first line of each quarterback table contains biographical data—the player's name, height, weight, college, draft position, birth date, and age. Height and weight are the best data we could find; weight, of course, can fluctuate during the offseason. **Age** is very simple: the number of years between the player's birth year and 2025, but birthdate is provided if you want to figure out exact age.

**Draft** position gives draft year and round, with the overall pick number with which the player was taken in parentheses.

In the sample table, it says that Justin Herbert was chosen in the first round of the 2020 NFL draft, with the sixth overall pick. Undrafted free agents are listed as "FA" with the year they came into the league, even if they were only in training camp or on a practice squad.

Next, we give the last three years of player stats. These numbers represent the regular season only. The majority of these statistics are passing numbers, although the shaded five columns on the right are the quarterback's rushing statistics.

The first few columns after the year and team (**Tm**) the player played for are standard numbers: games and games started (**G/GS**), offensive **Snaps**, pass attempts (**Att**), pass completions (**Cmp**), completion percentage (**C%**), passing yards (**Yds**), passing touchdowns (**TD**). These numbers are official NFL totals and therefore include plays we leave out of our own metrics, such as clock-stopping spikes, and omit plays we include in our metrics, such as sacks. (Other differences between official stats and skill player stats from the team chapters are described in the "Statistical Toolbox" introduction at the front of the book.)

The exception among these standard stats is **CPOE**, or Completion Percentage Over Expectation. The probability of a pass completion is calculated on each play based on numerous factors such as down and distance and location of the pass. There are multiple models of CPOE around the Internet and the numbers in our book come from our model, which removes passes that are marked "Thrown Away," "Batted Down," "Quarterback Hit in Motion," or "Miscommunication." In 2024, Jalen Hurts' actual completion percentage was 6.7% higher than his expected completion percentage, the best difference in the league. Anthony Richardson was last among qualifying quarterbacks at -10.4%.

The column for interceptions contains two numbers, representing the official NFL total for interceptions (**Int**) as well as FTN's metric for interception-worthy throws (**IWT**). For example, if you look at our sample table, Justin Herbert had only three interceptions and seven interception-worthy throws in 2024. An interception-worthy throw is defined by FTN as "a pass that has a high percentage chance to be intercepted. This could also be considered a 'catchable' pass for a defender, including balls batted into the air." Overall, there were roughly 1.5 times as many interception-worthy throws as there were actual interceptions in 2024, so a quarterback with 10 interceptions should be expected to have 15 interception-worthy

Justin Herbert		Height: 6-6		Weight: 236		College: Oregon		Draft: 2020/1 (6)		Born: 10-Mar-1998		Age: 27													
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR	
2022	LAC	17/17	1162	699	477	68.2%	3.5%	4739	25	10/20	8	6.0%	10	6.2	17	2.7%	18	667	12	54	147	0	-24.2%	-27	
2023	LAC	13/13	838	456	297	65.1%	1.0%	3134	20	7/18	4	6.3%	12	5.9	21	9.4%	14	661	16	52	228	3	-7.6%	12	
2024	LAC	17/17	1045	504	332	65.9%	0.9%	3870	23	3/7	6	7.7%	26	6.7	9	14.7%	8	880	8	69	306	2	23.5%	88	
2025	LAC		589	385	65.4%			4188	27	11	10					6.2	6.5%		70	310	3	2.1%			
2023:		18% Behind	52% Short	17% Mid	13% Deep		aDOT: 7.7 (20)	YAC: 5.3 (16)	ALEX: 1.8				2024:	15% Behind	46% Short	25% Mid	14% Deep	aDOT: 8.6 (10)	YAC: 5.1 (23)	ALEX: 2.1					

throws. This ratio was higher in 2022 and 2023, so there are more interception-worthy throws listed for those seasons.

The next column is fumbles (**FUM**), which adds together all fumbles by this player, whether turned over to the defense or recovered by the offense (explained in the essay “Pregame Show”). Even though this fumble total is listed among the passing numbers, it includes all fumbles, including those on sacks, aborted snaps, and rushing attempts. By listing fumbles and interceptions next to one another, we’re giving readers a general idea of how many total turnovers the player was responsible for.

Next comes adjusted sack rate (**ASR**) along with the player’s rank (**Rk**). This is the same statistic you’ll find in the team chapters, only here it is specific to the individual quarterback. It represents sacks plus intentional grounding calls per pass play (total pass plays = pass attempts + sacks) adjusted based on down, distance, and strength of schedule. For reference, the NFL average was 7.1% in 2022, 7.6% in 2023, and 7.3% in 2024.

The next two columns are Net Yards per Pass (**NY/P**), a standard stat but a particularly good one, and the player’s rank (**Rk**) in Net Yards per Pass for that season. Net Yards per Pass consists of passing yards minus yards lost on sacks, divided by total pass plays.

The four columns remaining in passing stats give our advanced metrics: **DVOA** (Defense-adjusted Value Over Average) and **DYAR** (Defense-adjusted Yards Above Replacement), along with the player’s rank in both. These metrics compare each quarterback’s passing performance to league-

average or replacement-level baselines based on the game situations that quarterback faced. DVOA and DYAR are also adjusted based on the opposing defense. The methods used to compute these numbers are described in detail in the “Statistical Toolbox” introduction at the front of the book. The important distinction between them is that DVOA is a rate statistic, while DYAR is a cumulative statistic. Thus, a higher DVOA means more value per pass play, while a higher DYAR means more aggregate value over the entire season.

To qualify for a ranking in Net Yards per Pass, passing DVOA, and passing DYAR in a given season, a quarterback must have had 200 pass plays in that season. 34 quarterbacks are ranked for 2022 and 2024 and 36 quarterbacks are ranked for 2023.

The shaded five columns on the right contain rushing statistics, starting with **Runs**, rushing yards (**Yds**), and rushing touchdowns (**TD**). Once again, these are official NFL totals and include kneeldowns, which means you get to enjoy statistics such as Kyle Trask carrying the ball 5 times for -4 yards. The final two columns give **DVOA** and **DYAR** for quarterback rushing, which are calculated separately from passing.

Jeff Ratcliffe’s projections for the upcoming season are listed in the italicized “2025” row, as detailed above. Again, in the interest of producing meaningful statistics, all quarterbacks are projected to start a full 17-game season, regardless of the likelihood of them actually doing so.

The final line below the 2025 projection represents data on how far the quarterback throws his passes. First, we break down charted passes based on distance: **Behind** (anything be-

## Top 20 QB by Passing DYAR (Total Value), 2024

Rank	Player	Team	DYAR
1	Lamar Jackson	BAL	1,848
2	Jared Goff	DET	1,536
3	Joe Burrow	CIN	1,400
4	Josh Allen	BUF	1,221
5	Baker Mayfield	TB	1,114
6	Jordan Love	GB	993
7	Sam Darnold	MIN	910
8	Justin Herbert	LAC	880
9	Kyler Murray	ARI	880
10	Matthew Stafford	LAR	868
11	Brock Purdy	SF	831
12	Patrick Mahomes	KC	779
13	Jayden Daniels	WAS	681
14	Tua Tagovailoa	MIA	652
15	Bo Nix	DEN	506
16	Kirk Cousins	ATL	493
17	Derek Carr	NO	392
18	Geno Smith	SEA	369
19	Jalen Hurts	PHI	364
20	Trevor Lawrence	JAX	241

Minimum 200 passes

## Top 20 QB by Passing DVOA (Value per Pass), 2024

Rank	Player	Team	DVOA
1	Lamar Jackson	BAL	49.6%
2	Jared Goff	DET	29.8%
3	Josh Allen	BUF	26.9%
4	Jordan Love	GB	22.7%
5	Joe Burrow	CIN	17.6%
6	Baker Mayfield	TB	16.8%
7	Brock Purdy	SF	15.2%
8	Justin Herbert	LAC	14.7%
9	Tua Tagovailoa	MIA	12.5%
10	Matthew Stafford	LAR	12.3%
11	Sam Darnold	MIN	12.3%
12	Kyler Murray	ARI	11.9%
13	Derek Carr	NO	10.4%
14	Jayden Daniels	WAS	9.1%
15	Patrick Mahomes	KC	7.7%
16	Kirk Cousins	ATL	5.2%
17	Jalen Hurts	PHI	3.2%
18	Bo Nix	DEN	2.2%
19	Trevor Lawrence	JAX	1.1%
20	Mac Jones	JAX	-1.5%

Minimum 200 passes

hind the line of scrimmage), **Short** (0 to 9 yards), **Mid** (10 to 19 yards), and **Deep** (20 or more yards). These numbers are based on distance in the air only and include both complete and incomplete passes. We also give average depth of target (**aDOT**) and average yards after catch (**YAC**) with the rank in parentheses for the quarterbacks who have enough pass plays to qualify. The final number listed here is **ALEX**, which stands for Air Less EXpected, and measures the distance of

each quarterback's average third-down throw compared to how many yards were needed for a first down. Anthony Richardson's ALEX of 5.3 means his average third-down pass was thrown 5.3 yards deeper than the sticks, the highest in the league; Deshaun Watson had the lowest ALEX of any qualifying quarterback at -2.2.

Several third- and fourth-string quarterbacks are briefly discussed at the end of the chapter in a section we call "Going Deep."

## Top 10 QB by Rushing DYAR (Total Value), 2024

Rank	Player	Team	DYAR	Designed	Scramble	Aborted
1	Josh Allen	BUF	190	60	130	0
2	Lamar Jackson	BAL	183	97	141	-55
3	Jayden Daniels	WAS	173	-1	191	-17
4	Kyler Murray	ARI	118	91	62	-35
5	Patrick Mahomes	KC	102	0	102	0
6	Bo Nix	DEN	96	3	110	-17
7	Brock Purdy	SF	96	22	108	-34
8	Jalen Hurts	PHI	91	46	88	-43
9	Justin Herbert	LAC	88	18	86	-16
10	Drake Maye	NE	84	6	145	-67

Josh Allen		Height: 6-5	Weight: 237	College: Wyoming	Draft: 2018/1 (7)	Born: 21-May-1996	Age: 29	
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att Cmp	C%	CPOE Yds	TD INT/IWT FUM ASR Rk NY/P Rk DVOA Rk DYAR Rk Runs Yds TD DVOA DYAR	
2022	BUF	16/16	1061	567 359	63.3%	0.9% 4283	35 14/34 13 5.9% 9 6.9 6 15.9% 5 1086 5 124 762 7 25.7% 227	
2023	BUF	17/17	1126	579 385	66.5%	3.3% 4306	29 18/25 7 4.5% 1 6.9 7 20.8% 5 1246 4 111 524 15 18.8% 203	
2024	BUF	17/17	968	483 307	63.6%	0.0% 3731	28 6/12 5 3.4% 1 7.4 5 26.9% 3 1221 4 102 531 12 20.6% 190	
2025	BUF		518	334	64.5%	3930 28 12 9	7.1 17.5% 114 581 11 26.7%	
2023:	13% Behind	51% Short	21% Mid	14% Deep	aDOT: 8.8 (4)	YAC: 5.1 (22)	ALEX: 3.6	2024: 20% Behind 44% Short 19% Mid 17% Deep aDOT: 8.3 (12) YAC: 6.5 (3) ALEX: 4.4

He finally won the MVP award, but the monkey on his back is only getting bigger. Can Allen win it all? Obviously, the answer is yes, he can. Now the question is really just whether or not he *will*. There's some wideout turnover, so Allen once again needs to ramp up chemistry with new offensive weapons while adapting to Joe Brady's evolved scheme that emphasized a more balanced approach last year. That doesn't just mean more rushing and less passing, but also balance in terms of ball distribution and play diversity. This next chapter of Allen's career will focus less on being awesome at football (that has been settled) and more on his leadership and ability to be the figurehead of a team that wins long-term, not just for a few short years. On the field, Allen's legs continue to be the most lethal weapon in football. His added 54.7 EPA on the ground in 2024, ahead of every other player in the league. (Not just every quarterback, *every player*.)

Tyson Bagnell		Height: 6-3	Weight: 213	College: Shepherd (WV)	Draft: 2023/FA	Born: 8-Jun-2000	Age: 25	
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att Cmp	C%	CPOE Yds	TD INT/IWT FUM ASR Rk NY/P Rk DVOA Rk DYAR Rk Runs Yds TD DVOA DYAR	
2023	CHI	5/4	305	143 94	65.7%	-3.3% 859	3 6/8 3 4.1% -- 5.6 -- -12.9% -- -17 -- 23 109 2 9.0% 26	
2024	CHI	4/0	13	2 2	100.0%	14.5% 11	0 0/0 0 0.9% -- 5.5 -- 32.4% -- 6 -- 6 -7 0 -- --	
2025	CHI		544	343	63.2%	3401 17 17 8	6.3 -12.9% 16 64 1 7.9%	
2023:	27% Behind	47% Short	19% Mid	7% Deep	aDOT: 5.9 (-)	YAC: 5.3 (-)	ALEX: -0.5	2024: 50% Behind 50% Short 0% Mid 0% Deep aDOT: 0.5 (-) YAC: 5.0 (-) ALEX: 0.0

The Bears chose not to retain a veteran mentor for Caleb Williams last year, a decision which probably only made things worse for Williams once all of his coaches were fired. Bagnell, the undrafted rookie who looked briefly good (then extendedly dreadful) in relief of Justin Fields in 2023, instead served as Williams' backup, rarely seeing the field. Bagnell will again serve as Williams' backup in 2025, though Case Keenum will be in the Bears quarterback room to tutor everyone in film-watching, and to tie shoelaces and wipe runny noses.

## 250 QUARTERBACKS

Jacoby Brissett		Height: 6-4	Weight: 235	College: North Carolina State										Draft: 2016/3 (91)		Born: 11-Dec-1992	Age: 33							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2022	CLE	16/11	787	369	236	64.0%	1.5%	2608	12	6/17	6	6.3%	14	6.3	14	13.0%	7	600	13	49	243	2	27.1%	107
2023	WAS	3/0	46	23	18	78.3%	12.3%	224	3	0/0	0	0.4%	--	10.2	--	93.4%	--	196	--	3	19	0	-19.7%	-1
2024	NE	8/5	351	161	95	59.0%	-6.0%	826	2	1/2	4	10.0%	--	4.0	--	-32.4%	--	-235	--	15	62	0	-27.8%	-12
2025	ARI		552	345	62.4%			3412	20	13	9					-13.1%				64	278	0	-12.2%	
2023:			12% Behind	52% Short	20% Mid	16% Deep	aDOT: 8.7 (-)	YAC: 3.9 (-)	ALEX: -2.3	2024:	18% Behind	56% Short	17% Mid	10% Deep	aDOT: 6.8 (-)	YAC: 4.7 (-)	ALEX: -0.3							

Brissett's -32.4% DVOA was his worst in a year where he threw at least 100 passes, and it would have ranked fourth worst in 2024 had he had enough attempts to qualify for our leaderboards. It has been a long time since he put up a top-10 DVOA with the Browns in 2022; he lacks mobility and that left him a sitting duck behind the Patriots' line last season. If there's one thing he can still do, however, it's avoid back-breaking mistakes. Brissett had just two turnover-worthy throws in 2024, for a rate of 1.2%. That was the best rate in football for anyone with at least 100 attempts. That's not a terrible skill to have for your backup quarterback.

Jake Browning		Height: 6-2	Weight: 209	College: Washington										Draft: 2019/FA		Born: 11-Apr-1996	Age: 29							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2023	CIN	9/7	469	243	171	70.4%	2.8%	1936	12	7/10	3	9.4%	28	6.5	11	11.7%	11	397	20	27	127	3	19.1%	49
2024	CIN	3/0	5	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0/0	0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0	0	0	--	--	
2025	CIN		671	414	61.7%			4484	31	16	11					5.6	-4.1%			46	216	2	10.3%	
2023:			25% Behind	41% Short	24% Mid	10% Deep	aDOT: 6.7 (34)	YAC: 6.5 (2)	ALEX: 2.5	2024:														

After Browning's high-quality substitute duty in 2023, it is no surprise that the Bengals re-signed him as their now proven back-up to the oft-injured Joe Burrow. It remains somewhat surprising that no team offered up a draft pick to see if the Browning Rifle could make it as a full-time starter, even in a bridge role. For 2025, Browning remains in stripes, and as ever, the fervent hope in Cincy is that he does not have to play, no matter how good a backup he is.

Joe Burrow		Height: 6-4	Weight: 215	College: Louisiana State										Draft: 2020/1 (1)		Born: 10-Dec-1996	Age: 29							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2022	CIN	16/16	991	606	414	68.3%	3.6%	4475	35	12/20	6	6.6%	17	6.5	9	10.9%	9	951	6	75	257	5	17.8%	103
2023	CIN	10/10	602	365	244	66.8%	-0.4%	2309	15	6/11	2	6.1%	10	5.5	26	4.4%	20	409	19	31	88	0	5.2%	17
2024	CIN	17/17	1132	652	460	70.6%	3.4%	4918	43	9/13	11	7.2%	22	6.6	11	17.6%	5	1400	3	42	201	2	25.3%	63
2025	CIN		671	465	69.3%			4917	37	13	11					6.4	14.2%			48	200	2	9.2%	
2023:			24% Behind	48% Short	19% Mid	9% Deep	aDOT: 6.6 (36)	YAC: 5.1 (24)	ALEX: 0.3	2024:	13% Behind	57% Short	21% Mid	9% Deep	aDOT: 7.1 (30)	YAC: 4.8 (32)	ALEX: 2.8							

Fed by numerous shootouts, Joe Shiesty had a high-volume season, leading the league in attempts, completions, yards, and touchdowns. All that action usually leads to inefficiency, but Burrow was fifth in DVOA and third in DYAR, with a career low in interception rate. He even tacked on a decent season running the football. At the same time, Burrow had a higher degree of difficulty than ever before. He threw just nine screen passes, fewest among starters in the league. His frequent magic acts of scrambling led to some incredible plays, including a touchdown pass thrown against the Browns while fully extended and parallel to the ground, but he was still sacked at a high rate. And of course, Burrow could seldom rely on his defense to make a stop. This was part and parcel to Burrow's displays of on-field and sideline frustration, a new wrinkle to his Iceman image, and felt incongruent to his otherwise superb season. Few players in the league, if any, can state, "L'Etat c'est moi" like Joey B, for better or worse. A little help from other facets of the ball club might be nice. Your fantasy team doesn't have these concerns, of course, and while our projection naturally sees a bit of fall-off from what may be Burrow's career statistical apogee, he is still obviously worth securing early in your draft.

Derek Carr		Height: 6-3			Weight: 215			College: Fresno State			Draft: 2014/2 (36)			Born: 28-Mar-1991			Age: 34																												
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR																					
2022	LV	15/15	946	502	305	60.8%	-2.0%	3522	24	14/27	4	5.3%	6	6.3	13	2.1%	19	431	17	24	102	0	6.5%	20																					
2023	NO	17/17	978	548	375	68.4%	2.5%	3878	25	8/11	7	6.6%	15	6.3	19	8.2%	17	709	14	32	40	0	-33.4%	-17																					
2024	NO	10/10	604	279	189	67.7%	3.8%	2145	15	5/7	3	3.6%	3	7.3	6	10.4%	13	392	17	17	71	1	-30.0%	-17																					
2023:	16% Behind			54% Short			17% Mid			13% Deep			aDOT: 7.8 (18)			YAC: 4.5 (34)			ALEX: 3.3			2024:			19% Behind			49% Short			16% Mid			16% Deep			aDOT: 7.8 (20)			YAC: 5.8 (10)			ALEX: 3.9		

DVOA always loved Carr more than just about anyone else, even his coaches. This was especially true in 2024, when DVOA loved Carr's early-season efficiency on YAC-friendly short passes and didn't know he was endangering Chris Olave with his beach balls over the middle. It was also true in 2023, a year Carr spent "adjusting" to a new system (television commentators could not stop making excuses for him) before getting medium-hot after the Saints were a lost cause. Carr and the Saints never appeared to be fully satisfied with one another, and his retirement may turn out to be a one-year sabbatical that allows both sides to walk away from a bad situation while saving face. What's clear is that Carr will not play in 2025: not only does his shoulder need some combination of surgery and rest, but he gave up a \$30-million guarantee by retiring, and the Saints hold his rights in reserve.

Kirk Cousins		Height: 6-3			Weight: 205			College: Michigan State			Draft: 2012/4 (102)			Born: 19-Aug-1988			Age: 37																												
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR																					
2022	MIN	17/17	1114	643	424	65.9%	2.7%	4547	29	14/31	7	6.7%	18	6.1	18	3.6%	17	668	11	31	97	2	-3.7%	10																					
2023	MIN	8/8	512	311	216	69.5%	3.2%	2331	18	5/8	7	6.0%	9	6.8	10	13.7%	10	532	17	14	25	0	-43.9%	-29																					
2024	ATL	14/14	913	453	303	66.9%	2.3%	3508	18	16/19	13	6.2%	15	6.9	8	5.2%	16	493	16	23	0	0	-181.6%	-93																					
2025	ATL		613	404	66.0%		4523	27	16	10			6.6		4.8%				41	72	2		-14.2%																						
2023:	16% Behind			52% Short			23% Mid			8% Deep			aDOT: 7.5 (27)			YAC: 4.6 (33)			ALEX: 2.5			2024:			17% Behind			46% Short			27% Mid			10% Deep			aDOT: 7.5 (21)			YAC: 5.6 (11)			ALEX: 0.2		

Now that Cousins has entered the easy-to-ignore stage of his career, who inherits the Quarterback Cooties? Who will be the long-time mid-tier starter with the chonky contract that fans love to hate? Derek Carr retired to avoid the cooties. Tua Tagovailoa may not last long enough to contract them. Jared Goff has either gotten over them or learned to live with them. Justin Herbert has diplomatic immunity. Trevor Lawrence can plead the "Jaguars Ruined Me" defense. Brock Purdy may be the most likely future victim: he now has a massive contract to go with Cousins-like traits and early-career success which provokes a degree of hyper-skepticism. Or perhaps the NFL community has evolved past the need to treat quarterbacks who don't make fans, fantasy gamers, and tape-grinders alike curl their toes with ecstasy like they have cooties. Nah.

A more meaningful question for fantasy managers: should you bench/waive other Falcons players if Cousins is thrust back into the lineup? Probably not. Bijan Robinson will still get force-fed. Drake London and Darnell Mooney will be about as useful as ever, even if they are just catching checkdowns in lopsided losses. The bigger question fantasy managers need to ask themselves: Do you really want to rely on any Falcons player except Bijan in the first place?

Andy Dalton		Height: 6-2			Weight: 220			College: TCU			Draft: 2011/2 (35)			Born: 29-Oct-1987			Age: 38																												
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR																					
2022	NO	14/14	736	378	252	66.7%	3.6%	2871	18	9/16	5	6.8%	19	6.6	7	6.6%	13	464	15	30	54	0	-26.2%	-16																					
2023	CAR	3/1	81	58	34	58.6%	-8.0%	361	2	0/1	0	4.8%	--	5.5	--	-1.9%	--	35	--	3	12	0	-6.0%	1																					
2024	CAR	6/5	306	160	106	66.3%	-3.1%	989	7	6/5	2	5.0%	--	5.7	--	-21.7%	--	-116	--	11	34	0	8.0%	6																					
2025	CAR		571	366	64.1%		3650	20	15	9			5.5		-13.6%				16	60	1		1.2%																						
2023:	16% Behind			47% Short			25% Mid			12% Deep			aDOT: 8.3 (-)			YAC: 3.8 (-)			ALEX: 1.1			2024:			18% Behind			53% Short			19% Mid			9% Deep			aDOT: 6.6 (-)			YAC: 4.3 (-)			ALEX: -0.3		

Dalton completed 26-of-37 passes for 319 yards and three touchdowns in a win over the Raiders after he replaced Bryce Young as the Panthers' starter in Week 3. He then faded slowly and steadily, week by week. Young replaced Dalton late in a 40-7 loss to the Commanders, but Young somehow managed to go 2-of-2 for -6 yards in mop-up duty, and he only got his job back when Dalton injured his hand when someone smacked into his family sedan when he (plus his wife and dog) were picking up the kids from school. The Panthers surveyed the offseason free agent quarterback landscape and signed Dalton to a new contract before they were forced to kick tires on some Cooper Rush type. Young apparently benefited from Dalton's mentorship. And it's a good thing that Young wasn't in the car with the Dalton family and pets that fateful day. Heaven knows that he would have fit.

<b>Jayden Daniels</b>		Height: 6-4	Weight: 210	College: Louisiana State										Draft: 2024/1 (2)		Born: 18-Dec-2000	Age: 25							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2024	WAS	17/17	1062	480	331	69.0%	2.4%	3568	25	9/12	5	8.9%	32	6.3	16	9.1%	14	681	13	148	891	6	10.7%	173
2025	WAS		573	389		68.0%		4255	30	13	11					6.3		9.2%		155	888	6	6.5%	
2024: 21% Behind 46% Short 22% Mid 11% Deep aDOT: 7.4 (24) YAC: 5.4 (16) ALEX: 1.2																								

As mentioned in the Washington team chapter, Daniels had one of the best scrambling seasons from a quarterback in recent memory. His 12% scramble rate was the highest in the league; only fellow rookie Drake Maye also had a scramble rate above 10%. For as electric as Daniels can be on the move, transitioning from runner to thrower outside of the pocket could be his next step in development. Daniels was just 23rd in DVOA on plays outside of the pocket. He should be given more credit to how he performed as a pure dropback passer. On plays inside the pocket without play-action, Daniels was ninth in DVOA. While Daniels had a higher-than-average sack rate, his mobility stopped the sacks from being back-breaking errors. We often see mobile quarterbacks backpedal and run themselves into deeper sacks, but Daniels used his legs to limit the damage and had the best DVOA on sacks (-2.2%) of any quarterback sacked at least 10 times.

<b>Sam Darnold</b>		Height: 6-3	Weight: 218	College: USC										Draft: 2018/1 (3)		Born: 5-Jun-1997	Age: 28								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR	
2022	CAR	6/6	377	140	82	58.6%	2.6%	1143	7	3/6	6	6.6%	--	7.3	--	23.2%	--	326	--	26	106	2	-53.3%	-55	
2023	SF	10/1	130	46	28	60.9%	-2.6%	297	2	1/1	3	11.6%	--	5.0	--	-0.7%	--	35	--	21	15	1	-32.8%	-13	
2024	MIN	17/17	1110	545	361	66.2%	4.4%	4319	35	12/16	8	8.8%	31	6.7	10	12.3%	11	910	7	67	212	1	-11.7%	1	
2025	SEA		627	401		63.9%		4435	26	16	10			6.1		-5.4%		72	263	2	-11.1%				
2023:			12% Behind	53% Short	23% Mid	12% Deep	aDOT: 8.4 (-)	YAC: 5.5 (-)	ALEX: 1.3				2024:	15% Behind	47% Short	24% Mid	15% Deep	aDOT: 8.5 (11)	YAC: 4.9 (30)	ALEX: 2.0					

The fear, if you're starting Sam Darnold, is that the ghosts will get him. We went over some of Darnold's pressure problems in the Seahawks chapter, but there's always room for another poltergeist in the proton pack. In his five qualified seasons, Darnold's DVOA drops an average of 107.9% when pressured, and only one of those years saw him dropping only by double digits. That being said, scheme and play design can go a long way into saving a quarterback from pressure, and Darnold has shown a real ability to decisively execute quickly within structure. His 68.8% DVOA on first-read throws was third in the league, and his 49 explosive plays on first-read throws led the NFL. That might be harder to duplicate without Justin Jefferson, but Darnold can put the ball into play if you give him an open look.

<b>Jaxson Dart</b>		Height: 6-2	Weight: 223	College: Mississippi										Draft: 2025/1 (25)		Born: 13-May-2003	Age: 22							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2025	NYG		607	372		61.2%		3991	22	15	10			5.6		-10.0%		83	379	4	0.6%			

There's a lot of emphasis placed on teams getting "their guy" in the NFL, and in sports in general. On paper, the Giants couldn't have a better example of getting their guy than what they have in Dart. Dart is an alum of the Manning Passing Academy, a program run by Giants Ring of Honor member Eli Manning alongside his brother Peyton. He also comes from the same school as Eli, breaking Manning's career passing yards record. Dart has also compared his style of play to Buffalo Bills quarterback Josh Allen, someone head coach Brian Daboll helped coach up from raw prospect to top-tier NFL talent.

There's a lot riding on Dart to be good in New York—and he is very much not a finished product yet—but Dart has a lot going for him. His willingness to strike deep (leading FBS in yards per attempt in 2024) and ability to run the ball (rushing for 1,500 yards in three seasons at Ole Miss) give him some exceptional athletic upside that New York has lacked at the quarterback position. He's also showed an ability to improve, upping his completion percentage his senior year and developing more comfort maneuvering a crowded pocket over the course of his collegiate tenure. Dart has worked well with less receiving talent as well, not dropping off after a losing one of the nation's top receivers Tre Harris to a groin injury midway through the season. Time will tell whether New York can make Dart a bona fide NFL starter, but initial signs have been promising. Daboll said Dart had an "excellent" spring, per ESPN, and Dart has already forced himself into more second-team reps than Jameis Winston during minicamps, per The Athletic.

Tommy DeVito																			Draft: 2023/FA	Born: 7-Aug-1998	Age: 27				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR	
2023	NYG	9/6	406	178	114	64.0%	-1.1%	1101	8	3/4	2	17.7%	36	4.2	35	-32.1%	34	-260	32	36	195	1	-15.0%	-4	
2024	NYG	3/2	91	44	31	70.5%	3.3%	257	0	0/0	0	12.0%	--	4.5	--	-15.6%	--	-15	--	8	32	0	-15.1%	-1	
2023:				21% Behind	53% Short	16% Mid	11% Deep	aDOT: 6.6 (35)	YAC: 5.1 (23)	ALEX: -6.2			2024:	15% Behind	60% Short	23% Mid	3% Deep	aDOT: 6.0 (-)	YAC: 3.8 (-)	ALEX: 0.0					

Just over a year after the Tommy Cutlets experience swept the New York tri-state area, DeVito is now likely the odd man out in the Giants quarterback room. The lone remaining quarterback from 2024 was unable to replicate the same magic that turned him into a month-long meme and looked more like the erratic backup quarterback that was benched after being unable to move the ball in back-to-back outings. DeVito caught a lucky break in 2023 during his three-game win streak, with his three games with a 100-plus passer rating coming against two of the seven worst defenses by defensive passing DVOA and an injured Patriots secondary. This year, DeVito caught starts against two quality defenses, with the only passing touchdown over that stretch coming from Tim Boyle in garbage time. DeVito can make do in a way that most other backups can, but the undrafted quarterback does not have the passing acumen or true athleticism to lead a team in a meaningful way.

Joshua Dobbs																			Draft: 2017/4 (135)	Born: 26-Jan-1995	Age: 30				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR	
2022	TEN	2/2	139	68	40	58.8%	-4.6%	411	2	2/3	4	6.9%	--	5.2	--	-21.0%	--	-45	--	8	44	0	30.9%	19	
2023	2TM	13/12	854	417	262	62.8%	-2.6%	2464	13	10/22	14	7.7%	24	4.9	32	-18.4%	29	-210	29	77	421	6	-3.6%	32	
2024	SF	2/1	81	47	32	68.1%	0.3%	361	2	2/1	2	4.3%	--	6.9	--	-7.9%	--	10	--	9	24	2	-39.0%	-11	
2025	NE		539	353	65.4%			3639	21	16	9			5.8		-9.1%				64	328	2	4.1%		
2023:				15% Behind	49% Short	24% Mid	11% Deep	aDOT: 8.1 (13)	YAC: 3.8 (36)	ALEX: 0.7			2024:	11% Behind	58% Short	24% Mid	7% Deep	aDOT: 8.1 (-)	YAC: 3.2 (-)	ALEX: 2.6					

After several games in 2023 where he flashed some potential, there was reason to believe Dobbs might perform well if given an opportunity in Kyla Shanahan's system. He only played one full game, a blowout loss to Arizona in Week 18, when he threw for over 300 yards and two touchdowns but also made a handful of mistakes. We'll never know if Shanahan could have turned him into a decent quarterback, and New England's offense isn't on par with Kevin O'Connell's Vikings or Shanahan's 49ers. Expect Dobbs to struggle if he has to fill in for Drake Maye at all.

Justin Fields																			Draft: 2021/1 (11)	Born: 5-Mar-1999	Age: 26				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR	
2022	CHI	15/15	917	318	192	60.4%	-0.8%	2242	17	11/25	16	14.4%	34	5.0	33	-34.5%	34	-541	34	160	1143	8	8.3%	169	
2023	CHI	13/13	829	370	227	61.4%	0.9%	2562	16	9/15	10	10.8%	32	5.5	27	-20.7%	30	-247	30	124	657	4	4.3%	99	
2024	PIT	10/6	408	161	106	65.8%	0.4%	1106	5	1/4	6	8.8%	--	5.6	--	-4.2%	--	75	--	62	289	5	-7.3%	15	
2025	NYJ		497	309	62.3%			3483	20	11	10			5.9		-10.7%				192	981	8	-15.3%		
2023:				19% Behind	50% Short	16% Mid	16% Deep	aDOT: 8.0 (16)	YAC: 5.4 (12)	ALEX: -0.8			2024:	12% Behind	59% Short	14% Mid	15% Deep	aDOT: 7.8 (-)	YAC: 4.9 (-)	ALEX: 0.2					

Let's break down some Justin Fields splits. He was one of the best quarterbacks last year on intermediate passes (10 to 19 air yards), but there's nothing like that in the larger sample size of his first three seasons. On the other hand, he does have a habit of playing better in the red zone compared to his performance otherwise. This was true last year as well as in Chicago; maybe it's related to how defenses have to react to the possibility he'll tuck it and run. We're projecting Fields to set his career high in net yards per pass, but he's still going to be a below-average NFL starter, and he's not going to be rushing for 1,000 yards either.

Joe Flacco																			Draft: 2008/1 (18)	Born: 16-Jan-1985	Age: 40				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR	
2022	NYJ	5/4	295	191	110	57.6%	-6.3%	1051	5	3/11	5	6.4%	15	4.8	34	-16.1%	29	-61	27	3	6	0	-28.9%	-3	
2023	CLE	5/5	346	204	123	60.3%	-4.0%	1616	13	8/14	4	4.9%	3	7.3	3	9.3%	15	272	23	9	2	0	-40.1%	-10	
2024	IND	8/6	467	248	162	65.3%	-0.5%	1761	12	7/10	4	7.3%	23	6.2	21	-8.0%	27	55	27	9	26	0	-45.8%	-11	
2025	CLE		547	343	62.6%			3980	25	16	8			6.5		-1.8%				33	124	4	7.1%		
2023:				12% Behind	50% Short	23% Mid	15% Deep	aDOT: 9.3 (2)	YAC: 5.5 (10)	ALEX: 2.0			2024:	12% Behind	48% Short	25% Mid	15% Deep	aDOT: 8.9 (4)	YAC: 4.0 (39)	ALEX: 1.3					

## 254 QUARTERBACKS

In the year 2025, hearing that Joe Flacco is the best of the four quarterbacks added this offseason probably might not instill a vote of confidence in your team's offense. Give the 40-year-old some credit, though. Coming in for Anthony Richardson midway through the season, Flacco was able to put up a career-high completion rate while reducing his interception-worthy throw rate. He posted the fifth-highest average depth of target among quarterbacks with at least 50 passing attempts, all while on a brand-new offense. Flacco now re-joins a team that he led to a playoff berth with a last-second sprint that helped him secure a Comeback Player of the Year award. He is very capable of managing an offense, and his experience and familiarity with Stefanski's system should open up avenues to any creativity this elder statesman is still able to muster up. Again, if Flacco wins this quarterback battle, it likely isn't a great sign for a Browns team that invested a healthy amount of capital via trade and draft selections, but Flacco has earned the right to be the league's second-oldest starting quarterback behind Aaron Rodgers.

Dillon Gabriel		Height: 5-11	Weight: 205	College: Oregon			Draft: 2025/3 (94)			Born: 28-Dec-2000			Age: 25											
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2025	CLE		497	306	61.6%		3269	16	14	8		5.5		-17.6%				53	268	3	5.0%			

One of the surprise slide-ups of the 2025 draft, the undersized quarterback has been described as a point guard—a quick distributor with great feel and peak awareness and patience. The Browns likely appreciated Gabriel's experience, too. No other quarterback has started more games than Gabriel's 63, and no other player has scored more with 189 total touchdowns. That being said, how much of that game can translate to the next level? Gabriel leaned heavily into quick game and checkdowns to pad his stats, and his deep balls are lacking the zip and placement to succeed against the NFL's tighter windows. Gabriel fits in an awkward Venn diagram, with the label of a developmental quarterback with the age and experience of a final product.

Jimmy Garoppolo		Height: 6-2	Weight: 225	College: Eastern Illinois			Draft: 2014/2 (62)			Born: 11-Feb-1991			Age: 34												
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR	
2022	SF	11/10	614	308	207	67.2%	-0.9%	2437	16	4/17	3	5.9%	8	7.2	3	30.4%	1	863	8	23	33	2	-14.8%	-3	
2023	LV	7/6	325	169	110	65.1%	0.2%	1205	7	9/11	1	7.8%	--	6.1	--	-16.5%	--	-64	--	20	39	0	-33.3%	-19	
2024	LAR	1/1	66	41	27	65.9%	-6.9%	334	2	1/1	0	6.9%	--	7.3	--	17.6%	--	90	--	2	5	0	-44.7%	-4	
2025	LAR		563	365	64.9%		3849	23	15	9			5.9		-2.5%				29	95	1	0.9%			
2023:	11% Behind	52% Short	28% Mid	10% Deep	aDOT: 8.1 (-)	YAC: 4.3 (-)	ALEX: 0.5		2024:	27% Behind	46% Short	17% Mid	10% Deep	aDOT: 5.4 (-)	YAC: 8.6 (-)	ALEX: 5.8									

Garoppolo saw his lowest amount of work since he was still backing up Tom Brady in 2015, throwing just 41 passes and only seeing action in the Week 18 backupalooza. For what it's worth, he looked good against the Seahawks' backups, certainly better than he looked in his short stint in Las Vegas. Garoppolo is a much better fit in Sean McVay's offense than he was in Josh McDaniels' square-peg-in-round-hole scheme, and he has shown a history of competent to very good play in a similar situation going back to San Francisco. He has only qualified for our leaderboards three times, but has ranked in the top 11 in DVOA each time. His tendency to throw interceptions over the middle and a lack of ability against pressure is why he's no longer a starter, but you could have worse options off the bench in an emergency.

Jared Goff		Height: 6-4	Weight: 217	College: California			Draft: 2016/1 (1)			Born: 14-Oct-1994			Age: 31												
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR	
2022	DET	17/17	1133	587	382	65.1%	-0.2%	4438	29	7/23	7	4.1%	2	7.0	4	24.8%	4	1467	2	29	73	0	-62.1%	-44	
2023	DET	17/17	1175	605	407	67.3%	1.1%	4575	30	12/18	6	5.4%	5	6.9	5	22.3%	3	1385	3	32	21	2	-21.3%	-7	
2024	DET	17/17	1113	539	390	72.4%	5.4%	4629	37	12/12	6	5.7%	11	7.8	2	29.8%	2	1536	2	35	56	0	-16.6%	-6	
2025	DET		562	386	68.8%		4455	31	13	9			7.2		20.2%				28	66	1	-7.8%			
2023:	18% Behind	52% Short	21% Mid	9% Deep	aDOT: 6.9 (32)	YAC: 5.3 (17)	ALEX: 0.0		2024:	19% Behind	52% Short	20% Mid	8% Deep	aDOT: 6.4 (36)	YAC: 6.8 (1)	ALEX: 0.3									

Goff has not missed a start in three years, playing in 55 straight regular and postseason games. He has thrown at least one touchdown in all but seven of those games. He has thrown at least two touchdowns in 30 of them. Goff has thrown for at least 200 yards in all but six of those games; one of the games where he came up short was last year's 52-14 win over the Titans, where he threw three quick touchdowns and essentially called it a day. Goff has had 17 total 300-yard passing games in the last three seasons, including last year's playoff loss. That's a credible figure for a quarterback who is often handing off to star

running backs while managing a lead. What you see is what you get with Goff: durability and reliability within structure, with occasional turnover sprees that never carry over into the next game. He's a reliable QB2 in fantasy, and while he's one of the uncool quarterbacks among film junkies, he always seems to earn the trust of some of the NFL's smartest coaches.

Taylor Heinicke		Height: 6-1			Weight: 210			College: Old Dominion						Draft: 2015/FA			Born: 15-Mar-1993		Age: 32											
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR						
2022	WAS	9/9	614	259	161	62.2%	1.4%	1859	12	6/23	7	6.8%	20	6.2	16	-8.8%	25	42	25	28	96	1	-28.1%	-19						
2023	ATL	5/4	271	136	74	54.4%	-6.7%	890	5	4/10	1	6.3%	--	5.9	--	-16.8%	--	-50	--	15	124	1	43.9%	34						
2024	LAC	4/0	22	5	3	60.0%	-11.6%	28	0	0/0	0	38.0%	--	0.0	--	-113.9%	--	-47	--	2	20	0	104.0%	7						
2023:	19% Behind		44% Short		24% Mid		13% Deep		aDOT: 8.5 (-)		YAC: 6.9 (-)		ALEX: 2.6		2024:		20% Behind		40% Short		40% Mid		0% Deep		aDOT: 6.4 (-)		YAC: 3.0 (-)		ALEX: 10.5	

The Chargers re-upped Heinicke to serve as their backstop should anything happen to Justin Herbert. Heinicke was a below-average but above-replacement level starter in Washington, and he fits in nicely as a break-glass-in-case-of-emergency option behind Herbert, someone who can fill in for a few games without the wheels falling off entirely. He's not more than that at this point, but a security blanket can have a long, lucrative career in the NFL. At the very least, he has to give you more confidence than Easton Stick.

Justin Herbert		Height: 6-6			Weight: 236			College: Oregon						Draft: 2020/1 (6)			Born: 10-Mar-1998		Age: 27											
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR						
2022	LAC	17/17	1162	699	477	68.2%	3.5%	4739	25	10/20	8	6.0%	10	6.2	17	2.7%	18	667	12	54	147	0	-24.2%	-27						
2023	LAC	13/13	838	456	297	65.1%	1.0%	3134	20	7/18	4	6.3%	12	5.9	21	9.4%	14	661	16	52	228	3	-7.6%	12						
2024	LAC	17/17	1045	504	332	65.9%	0.9%	3870	23	3/7	6	7.7%	26	6.7	9	14.7%	8	880	8	69	306	2	23.5%	88						
2025	LAC		589	385	65.4%			4188	27	11	10						6.2	6.5%		70	310	3	2.1%							
2023:	18% Behind		52% Short		17% Mid		13% Deep		aDOT: 7.7 (20)		YAC: 5.3 (16)		ALEX: 1.8		2024:		15% Behind		46% Short		25% Mid		14% Deep		aDOT: 8.6 (10)		YAC: 5.1 (23)		ALEX: 2.1	

A combination of a bum ankle and a feeling-out period with a new coaching staff limited how much Herbert could do early in the season. Herbert played through a high ankle sprain for much of September and October while Jim Harbaugh and Greg Roman leaned heavily on their run game, as is their wont. As such, over the first six games, Herbert was on pace for a very low-volume season—career lows in both attempts (27.3) and yards (194.0) per game, as well as just a 4.9% DVOA, which would have been his second worst. Starting in Week 8, however, a healthier Herbert started firing. From that point on, Herbert was eighth in passing DVOA at 19.0%, which would have been his career high had he started that way the first two months of the season. He was also closer to normal in attempts (30.9) and yards (246.0). Any quarterback in this system is going to see his raw numbers go down, but it was nice to see the new Chargers staff realizing halfway through the year that their quarterback is actually pretty good, and it's OK to throw the ball on occasion.

Hendon Hooker		Height: 6-3			Weight: 220			College: Tennessee						Draft: 2023/3 (68)			Born: 13-Jan-1998		Age: 27					
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2024	DET	3/0	33	9	6	66.7%	-6.7%	62	0	0/0	0	9.8%	--	5.3	--	-28.6%	--	-10	--	5	2	0	-39.2%	-3
2025	DET		534	341	63.8%			3642	22	15	9			5.9		-4.4%				58	259	3	13.7%	
																	2024:	11% Behind	67% Short	11% Mid	11% Deep	aDOT: 6.4 (-)	YAC: 5.0 (-)	ALEX: -1.3

Hooker went 1-of-2 for 19 yards in last year's blowout of the Cowboys, 2-of-3 for 6 yards in the blowout of the Titans, and then 3-of-4 for 37 yards in the blowout of the Jaguars. At that rate, Hooker will be ready to go 23-of-24 for 226 yards when the Lions really need him! But seriously, Hooker was a medical redshirt as a rookie in 2023 but earned an uncontested backup job last year, looking like a credible dual-threat quarterback and game manager in preseason action. He should be able to keep the Lions offense humming, while providing some rushing value, if called about for a week or two. Kyle Allen will challenge Hooker for a role in training camp but, c'mon, it's Kyle Allen.

## 256 QUARTERBACKS

Sam Howell		Height: 6-1		Weight: 220		College: North Carolina		Draft: 2022/5 (144)		Born: 16-Sep-2000		Age: 25												
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2022	WAS	1/1	66	19	11	57.9%	-3.7%	169	1	1/1	0	10.7%	--	7.2	--	-18.5%	--	-11	--	5	35	1	88.8%	26
2023	WAS	17/17	1061	612	388	63.4%	0.0%	3946	21	21/32	4	10.6%	31	5.1	31	-25.7%	32	-655	35	48	263	5	23.2%	79
2024	SEA	2/0	25	14	5	35.7%	-32.1%	24	0	1/1	0	21.4%	--	0.2	--	-151.3%	--	-144	--	1	2	0	-39.8%	0
2025	MIN		544	364	66.9%			3439	21	14	9			5.2		-11.6%				80	436	4	13.9%	
2023:			20% Behind	49% Short	18% Mid	13% Deep		aDOT: 7.6 (22)		YAC: 5.2 (18)	ALEX: 0.3			2024:	8% Behind	67% Short	17% Mid	8% Deep		aDOT: 5.9 (-)	YAC: 1.4 (-)	ALEX: -4.0		

The Vikings added Howell for a pick swap during the draft because they needed some kind of veteran presence behind J.J. McCarthy. Before Howell arrived, the entire Vikings quarterback room had 168 career pass attempts, and Howell nearly quadruples that as a grizzled veteran all of 25 years old. Howell didn't see the field much in 2024, and the Seahawks wish he would have seen it even less. Howell's -151.4% passing DVOA was the worst of anyone with more than one passing attempt last season. Four sacks and an interception to just five completions will do that.

Tyler Huntley		Height: 6-1		Weight: 205		College: Utah		Draft: 2020/FA		Born: 3-Feb-1998		Age: 27												
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2022	BAL	6/4	268	112	75	67.0%	2.6%	658	2	3/8	3	7.0%	--	5.3	--	-14.0%	--	-21	--	43	137	1	-34.6%	-50
2023	BAL	5/1	86	37	21	56.8%	-10.0%	203	3	0/1	0	9.1%	--	4.3	--	5.7%	--	42	--	15	55	0	10.3%	11
2024	MIA	5/5	314	133	86	64.7%	0.9%	829	3	3/7	6	11.2%	--	5.1	--	-38.0%	--	-242	--	26	135	2	-8.3%	5
2023:			18% Behind	53% Short	26% Mid	3% Deep		aDOT: 6.7 (-)		YAC: 3.7 (-)	ALEX: 1.1			2024:	18% Behind	42% Short	31% Mid	9% Deep		aDOT: 7.9 (-)	YAC: 4.1 (-)	ALEX: -2.8		

All five of Huntley's starts last season came against bad teams, and he still only managed two wins (against the Patriots and Browns) against three losses (to the Titans, Colts, and Jets). He took way too many sacks, and that can't be blamed on Miami's scheme or protection issues—Tua Tagovailoa, in the same environment, finished in the top 10 with a sack rate of just 5.0%. Even in Huntley's most productive season, 2021, he posted -72 DYAR and -16.7% DVOA. Huntley is currently a free agent, but if he's brought back to Miami, he'll compete with Zach Wilson for the backup quarterback position that has plagued Miami for years.

Jalen Hurts		Height: 6-1		Weight: 223		College: Oklahoma		Draft: 2020/2 (53)		Born: 7-Aug-1998		Age: 27												
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2022	PHI	15/15	1028	460	306	66.5%	3.6%	3701	22	6/12	9	8.1%	23	7.0	5	10.6%	10	703	10	165	760	13	3.2%	133
2023	PHI	17/17	1103	538	352	65.4%	4.2%	3858	23	15/20	9	6.6%	16	6.3	15	6.6%	19	662	15	157	605	15	4.5%	145
2024	PHI	15/15	934	361	248	68.7%	6.7%	2903	18	5/13	9	10.0%	36	6.6	12	3.2%	17	364	19	150	630	14	-1.1%	91
2025	PHI		439	290	66.2%			3305	22	10	8			6.5		8.5%				134	550	12	11.8%	
2023:			16% Behind	51% Short	19% Mid	14% Deep		aDOT: 8.7 (6)		YAC: 4.8 (31)	ALEX: 1.0			2024:	13% Behind	55% Short	21% Mid	11% Deep		aDOT: 7.8 (19)	YAC: 5.5 (12)	ALEX: 0.4		

When A.J. Brown was asked about what could be improved following a close 22-16 win over the Carolina Panthers, his response was "passing." That's usually not a good sign for the quarterback responsible, but that's the give-and-take with Hurts as a passer. There's not a lot of passing volume for this passing offense to start—Hurts averaged 24.1 attempts per game, higher than only Anthony Richardson's 24.0 among starters. That can make it tough to consistently win on the types of one-on-ones the Eagles like to take advantage of in the passing game. Meanwhile, Hurts led all quarterbacks in rushing first downs (62, seven more than the next quarterback), red zone carries (49, +10), goal-line carries (19, +8), and goal-line touchdowns (11, +5). But despite the short-yardage offense being nearly automatic, Hurts still finished with negative DVOA on third and fourth downs (-9.5%).

Lamar Jackson											Height: 6-2			Weight: 205			College: Louisville			Draft: 2018/1 (32)			Born: 7-Jan-1997			Age: 29	
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR			
2022	BAL	12/12	728	326	203	62.3%	-1.7%	2242	17	7/18	5	8.0%	21	6.0	20	5.5%	14	371	19	112	764	3	27.8%	221			
2023	BAL	16/16	1040	457	307	67.2%	3.1%	3678	24	7/13	11	8.1%	25	6.9	6	18.9%	7	951	9	148	821	5	4.4%	121			
2024	BAL	17/17	1074	474	316	66.7%	4.5%	4172	41	4/9	10	4.8%	6	8.1	1	49.6%	1	1848	1	139	915	4	18.5%	183			
2025	BAL		485	323	66.7%			4000	33	10	9									146	936	5	7.5%				
2023:			16% Behind	47% Short	23% Mid	14% Deep		aDOT: 8.7 (8)		YAC: 5.7 (6)	ALEX: 1.6			2024:	17% Behind	41% Short	25% Mid	16% Deep		aDOT: 8.8 (6)		YAC: 6.6 (2)	ALEX: 0.8				

Lamar Jackson is a two-time MVP, and his best season is one in which he didn't receive the award (at least by the AP; he was the PFWA MVP). Everything Jackson developed throughout his career got better in 2024. Defenses felt the need to play single-high against the Ravens because of the threat of the run with Jackson and Derrick Henry. Jackson saw single-high coverage 59.4% of the time, the fourth-highest rate in the league, and he averaged 8.0 yards per attempt, the second highest against the coverage. Overall, a league-leading 62.7% of Jackson's completions went for a first down or a touchdown. Despite his mobility, Jackson was only hit on 10.8% of his dropbacks, which was the seventh-lowest rate among quarterbacks.

Daniel Jones											Height: 6-5			Weight: 230			College: Duke			Draft: 2019/1 (6)			Born: 27-May-1997			Age: 28	
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR			
2022	NYG	16/16	1040	472	317	67.2%	1.9%	3205	15	5/17	6	8.5%	25	5.8	24	1.1%	20	396	18	120	708	7	23.5%	217			
2023	NYG	6/6	325	160	108	67.5%	-0.2%	909	2	6/8	4	15.7%	--	3.9	--	-56.4%	--	-536	--	40	206	1	-5.3%	14			
2024	NYG	10/10	677	341	216	63.3%	-1.8%	2070	8	7/8	4	7.7%	27	5.2	36	-16.4%	32	-124	32	67	265	2	3.7%	55			
2025	IND		511	388	75.8%			3417	20	14	9								80	486	5	20.8%					
2023:			15% Behind	61% Short	15% Mid	9% Deep		aDOT: 6.9 (-)		YAC: 4.1 (-)	ALEX: -2.1			2024:	16% Behind	53% Short	20% Mid	11% Deep		aDOT: 7.4 (23)		YAC: 4.4 (35)	ALEX: 0.0				

Benched by the Giants after 10 starts, Jones was released midseason to avoid New York having to pay his injury guarantees in 2026. Jones caught on with the Vikings for the rest of the year, eventually elevating to the active roster in their one playoff game. Tom Pelissero of NFL Network told a podcast in May that he believed Jones left guaranteed money on the table from Minnesota to join the Colts, preferring a better chance to start. Jones has never really developed as a player beyond cutting down on some of his inaccuracy and fumbling when Brian Daboll took over in New York. The quarterback has no deep ball and takes a lot of sacks, and now he's coming off his lowest yards per rushing attempt figure of his career after tearing his ACL in 2023. The Colts may get something more from him than they would have gotten out of Anthony Richardson this year, but that bar is so low that not even Hermes Conrad could limbo under it.

Mac Jones											Height: 6-3			Weight: 220			College: Alabama			Draft: 2021/1 (15)			Born: 5-Sep-1998			Age: 27	
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR			
2022	NE	14/14	830	442	288	65.2%	-0.6%	2997	14	11/19	5	8.4%	24	5.8	23	-10.1%	26	33	26	47	102	1	-13.2%	-2			
2023	NE	11/11	635	345	224	64.9%	-2.6%	2120	10	12/26	3	5.7%	6	5.4	29	-21.8%	31	-256	31	26	96	0	-10.9%	2			
2024	JAX	10/7	497	262	171	65.3%	-1.2%	1672	8	8/9	2	5.6%	10	5.6	30	-1.5%	20	166	23	28	92	1	-2.3%	14			
2025	SF		546	362	66.2%			3702	21	15	8								36	118	2	7.6%					
2023:			20% Behind	51% Short	18% Mid	10% Deep		aDOT: 7.0 (31)		YAC: 5.4 (11)	ALEX: 1.2			2024:	17% Behind	51% Short	21% Mid	11% Deep		aDOT: 7.4 (25)		YAC: 5.3 (19)	ALEX: 0.9				

Rumors during the 2021 draft had the 49ers considering Jones with the third overall pick. Four years later, he finally arrives. Jones looked more comfortable in Jacksonville than he had in his last two seasons as a starter in New England—a fresh start took some of the pressure off of him, and he wasn't terrible during his stint as an injury replacement, even if the Jaguars were just 2-5 in his seven starts. Still, his accuracy still leaves much to be desired. Our charting had him with a 71.6% accuracy rate, ninth worst in the league. Despite a decent average depth of target, only Deshaun Watson and Daniel Jones averaged fewer than Jones' 9.8 yards per completion. 57.1% of Jones' air yards were uncatchable, the third-highest rate in the league. On the plus side, however, he had a relatively low turnover-worthy throw rate and did a great job avoiding sacks when pressured.

Trevor Lawrence												Height: 6-6			Weight: 220			College: Clemson			Draft: 2021/1 (1)			Born: 6-Oct-1999			Age: 26	
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR				
2022	JAX	17/17	1096	584	387	66.3%	0.6%	4113	25	8/24	12	4.6%	3	6.4	11	13.0%	6	948	7	62	291	5	-4.7%	26				
2023	JAX	16/16	1047	564	370	65.6%	0.5%	4016	21	14/22	12	5.9%	8	6.3	16	8.7%	16	793	11	70	339	4	-0.3%	38				
2024	JAX	10/10	536	284	172	60.6%	-4.4%	2045	11	7/12	3	6.3%	17	6.3	17	1.1%	19	241	20	26	119	3	14.9%	40				
2025	JAX		577	368	63.7%		4052	24	14	9			6.3		0.3%			54	240	4			18.6%					
2023:	16% Behind			47% Short			23% Mid			14% Deep			aDOT: 8.5 (9)			YAC: 4.8 (30)			ALEX: 3.0			2024:			14% Behind			
																			47% Short			23% Mid			17% Deep			
																			aDOT: 9.4 (2)			YAC: 4.8 (31)			ALEX: 3.5			

Last year's Jaguars offense made the hard things easy and the easy things hard. Lawrence had +22.1 EPA on deep throws in the first nine weeks of the season, the fifth most in the NFL. But the Jaguars struggled to move the ball through the air regularly. Lawrence had a 10.6% DVOA on short passes—of every quarterback with more than 100 short pass attempts, that was sixth worst. And it was somehow miles worse than Mac Jones' 52.2% DVOA in the exact same offense! The Jaguars had one of the lowest throw rates in the league behind the line of scrimmage, as Lawrence attempted 3.8 of those per game. To put that into context, with Lawrence's new head coach, Baker Mayfield threw 117—second most in the league—and had a 14.8% DVOA on them to Lawrence's -5.8% DVOA.

The greater trend of Lawrence's career is still fairly strong as long as you consider last year an outlier, and there are reasons to believe it will be. His CPOE of -4.4% was way out of line with the previous two years when he was slightly above average (by our CPOE metric; the NFL Next Gen Stats metric has him slightly below average in those years). The lingering doubt is simply whether we can trust him to be healthy at this point, as he clearly played through injury in the end of 2023 and had surgery to repair his non-throwing shoulder in 2024 after being shut down midseason. Liam Coen should fix a lot of what ails Lawrence on paper, and so long as the offensive line is less porous than it was last year with the help of more imaginative play calling, Lawrence should be in a much better position to deliver QB1-caliber numbers in 2025. But, like Andrew Luck before him, we're starting to get concerned about how much punishment he has taken.

Will Levis												Height: 6-4			Weight: 229			College: Kentucky			Draft: 2023/2 (33)			Born: 27-Jun-1999			Age: 26	
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR				
2023	TEN	9/9	528	255	149	58.4%	-2.2%	1808	8	4/16	7	9.7%	29	5.8	23	-16.2%	28	-87	28	25	57	1	-26.9%	-14				
2024	TEN	12/12	621	301	190	63.1%	-2.5%	2091	13	12/20	10	11.8%	38	5.4	34	-32.0%	37	-427	38	45	183	0	-30.5%	-43				
2025	TEN		550	359	65.3%		3992	21	16	9			5.9		-10.0%			71	277	2			-12.3%					
2023:	20% Behind			38% Short			20% Mid			22% Deep			aDOT: 10.6 (1)			YAC: 5.0 (27)			ALEX: 2.3			2024:			18% Behind			
																			45% Short			22% Mid			15% Deep			
																			aDOT: 8.7 (8)			YAC: 4.9 (29)			ALEX: 4.4			

In last year's player comment for Levis, we noted his poor DVOA under pressure and when blitzed. His DVOA when blitzed improved from -35.1% to -32.8%, while his DVOA under pressure improved from -107.1% to -102.9%. At this rate, it will only take another 10 years before Levis erases all questions about him. It is worth pointing out that Levis dealt with a shoulder injury and was clearly playing through it at points, but Brian Callahan clearly didn't believe that was a big factor in his performance. Now a firm backup in Tennessee, the roundtable regime appeared to flirt with trading Levis before the draft, but apparently didn't get an offer they liked. Levis is probably the favorite to remain Tennessee's backup over Brandon Allen, but we wouldn't exactly put that in pen after last year. At least he'll always have the mayonnaise commercial.

Drew Lock												Height: 6-4			Weight: 228			College: Missouri			Draft: 2019/2 (42)			Born: 10-Nov-1996			Age: 29	
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR				
2023	SEA	4/2	145	76	48	63.2%	-4.3%	543	3	3/4	0	8.8%	--	6.2	--	1.5%	--	66	--	5	14	0	-14.8%	0				
2024	NYG	8/5	321	181	107	59.1%	-5.6%	1071	6	5/9	5	7.1%	--	5.0	--	-32.1%	--	-254	--	18	133	2	48.7%	40				
2023:	21% Behind			52% Short			11% Mid			16% Deep			aDOT: 8.4 (-)			YAC: 6.4 (-)			ALEX: 2.7			2024:			19% Behind			
																			51% Short			19% Mid			12% Deep			
																			aDOT: 6.2 (-)			YAC: 5.7 (-)			ALEX: 1.6			

Lock is back in Seattle after a one-year stint with the Giants. To say his time in New York didn't go well would be an understatement, as he was jumped by Tommy DeVito on the depth chart and then struggled when he was finally called upon. If anything, his -32.1% DVOA is flattering him, because he had one shockingly good performance against a deflated Indianapolis squad in Week 17. Take that one start out and Lock's DVOA falls to -53.8% on the year. Lock has an arm, and the Colts game showed that when everything falls into place, he can still occasionally make something happen. Unfortunately, he was more often part of the problem than part of the solution in New York.

<b>Jordan Love</b>		Height: 6-4			Weight: 219			College: Utah State			Draft: 2020/1 (26)			Born: 2-Nov-1998			Age: 27									
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR		
2022	GB	4/0	26	21	14	66.7%	-0.4%	195	1	0/0	0	0.0%	--	9.8	--	55.4%	--	95	--	1	-1	0	--	--		
2023	GB	17/17	1083	579	372	64.2%	-1.4%	4159	32	11/20	9	5.7%	7	6.4	12	19.0%	6	1219	6	50	247	4	-6.2%	12		
2024	GB	15/15	868	425	268	63.1%	-1.2%	3389	25	11/15	4	3.6%	2	7.5	4	22.7%	4	993	6	25	83	1	-24.2%	-12		
2025	GB		576	367	63.7%			4275	30	14	9			6.8		13.1%		49	197	3	0.0%					
2023:			18% Behind	47% Short	21% Mid	14% Deep		aDOT: 8.8 (5)		YAC: 5.2 (20)	ALEX: 3.5			2024:	17% Behind	47% Short	19% Mid	17% Deep		aDOT: 8.8 (5)		YAC: 6.2 (4)	ALEX: 4.7			

Love will probably be married by the time you read this. The lucky lady is Ronika Stone, who plays professional volleyball for the San Diego Mojo, a team which may be owned by an X-Men villain. Love proposed to Stone last summer at a castle in Tuscany. But prosciutto and parmigiano reggiano were reportedly not on the wedding menu: Love and Stone are food truck gourmands, so they planned to serve their guests In-N-Out Burger and (because of a sponsorship) Auntie Anne's Pretzels. Or at least that's what Love said on Kay Adams' podcast; perhaps he was just downgrading the menu to prompt Aaron Rodgers to RSVP "No, with regrets." When asked which of his less-than-sure-handed receivers he would trust to hold the wedding bands, Love chose Romeo Doubs. "I'm going to trust Romeo," he said, clearly having never read Shakespeare, but definitely having seen Jayden Reed try to hold onto anything at a critical moment. Love's wedding notices were overshadowed by Jalen Hurts' spring nuptials, but there's one question that neither Adams nor the society page of the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel dared to ask: would the Packers allow guests at Love's wedding to dance the Tush Push?

<b>Patrick Mahomes</b>		Height: 6-2			Weight: 225			College: Texas Tech			Draft: 2017/1 (10)			Born: 17-Sep-1995			Age: 30									
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR		
2022	KC	17/17	1031	648	435	67.1%	2.9%	5250	41	12/23	5	4.9%	4	7.5	2	26.5%	3	1752	1	61	358	4	24.3%	97		
2023	KC	16/16	1051	597	401	67.2%	1.0%	4183	27	14/21	5	4.9%	2	6.4	14	11.5%	12	898	10	75	389	0	44.4%	138		
2024	KC	16/16	1106	581	392	67.5%	0.8%	3928	26	11/15	2	6.2%	16	6.0	26	7.7%	15	779	12	58	307	2	38.6%	102		
2025	KC		654	406	62.1%			4453	28	15	7			6.4		12.1%				80	389	4	29.2%			
2023:			25% Behind	46% Short	18% Mid	11% Deep		aDOT: 6.7 (33)		YAC: 6.4 (3)	ALEX: 2.1			2024:	22% Behind	50% Short	18% Mid	10% Deep		aDOT: 6.4 (37)		YAC: 5.9 (7)	ALEX: 1.9			

You can, in fact, blitz Mahomes now. In 2020, Mahomes and the Chiefs had an 81.5% DVOA when defenses sent at least five rushers (no one else in the league was above 47.3%) as Mahomes shredded any defense that dared send extra guys to pressure him. Mahomes and the Chiefs were above 70% in 2018 and 2019, and above 40% in 2021 and 2022. But, be it because of the lack of offensive line talent, the missing speed element to his wideouts, or the fact that no one can maintain otherworldly efficiency forever, the Chiefs' passing DVOA against the blitz has fallen to 25.6% in 2023 and 27.0% in 2024. That's still above the league average, because at the end of the day he is still Patrick Freaking Mahomes. But it's no longer in the top 10, and last season he was behind luminaries such as Sam Darnold, Mason Rudolph, and Aidan O'Connell.

<b>Marcus Mariota</b>		Height: 6-4			Weight: 222			College: Oregon			Draft: 2015/1 (2)			Born: 30-Oct-1993			Age: 32									
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR		
2022	ATL	13/13	776	300	184	61.3%	0.1%	2219	15	9/16	8	8.7%	27	6.2	15	4.9%	15	333	21	85	438	4	3.7%	67		
2023	PHI	3/0	44	23	15	65.2%	1.7%	164	1	1/1	1	13.5%	--	5.9	--	-25.6%	--	-25	--	8	52	0	20.0%	18		
2024	WAS	3/0	100	44	34	77.3%	14.2%	364	4	0/0	0	6.3%	--	7.3	--	56.4%	--	198	--	18	92	1	-18.1%	-5		
2025	WAS		573	388	67.7%			3799	21	15	9			5.6		-2.7%				66	353	3	19.4%			
2023:			14% Behind	48% Short	29% Mid	10% Deep		aDOT: 7.7 (-)		YAC: 4.8 (-)	ALEX: 5.3			2024:	14% Behind	35% Short	37% Mid	14% Deep		aDOT: 9.5 (-)		YAC: 3.1 (-)	ALEX: 4.5			

Mariota needed to fill in when Jayden Daniels was forced to leave the Week 7 game against the Carolina Panthers early and he looked like peak Mariota. He was efficient and mobile, averaging 8.9 yards per attempt with two touchdowns and 34 yards on the ground. He had the fifth-highest DYAR among quarterbacks that week. After being benched by the Falcons in 2022 and having a lackluster season finale in 2023, the 31-year-old looked rejuvenated with his play time in 2024. The newly named Oregon Hall-of-Famer re-signed for a one-year deal to again back up Daniels, and he appears to fit well in the spread RPO/screen offense in Washington.

260 QUARTERBACKS

Drake Maye		Height: 6-4	Weight: 225	College: North Carolina										Draft: 2024/1 (3)		Born: 30-Aug-2002	Age: 23							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2024	NE	13/12	681	338	225	66.6%	1.6%	2276	15	10/14	9	9.5%	35	5.5	32	-15.4%	29	-103	31	54	421	2	21.3%	84
2025	NE		539	356		66.0%		3695	24	15	9					5.9		-5.0%		87	586	4	16.7%	
2024: 17% Behind 53% Short 19% Mid 10% Deep aDOT: 7.3 (27) YAC: 5.3 (20) ALEX: 0.9																								

Behind a horrible offensive line, throwing to bad wide receivers, Maye managed to impress in his rookie season. He wasn't perfect, holding the ball too long and refusing to check down as often as he should have. He consequently took too many sacks and had the 11th highest turnover-worthy throw rate. But the good was great. He was second in scramble yards, second in scramble DYAR, and fourth in highlight-throw rate. An improved offensive line and receiving corps should help accentuate his strengths and alleviate his rookie weaknesses.

The upgraded receiving corps will likely show up the most in Maye's splits against man coverage. He had -277 DYAR and -33.4% DVOA vs. man last season, but 128 DYAR and 2.8% DVOA vs. zone. Rookies often struggle most with zone when getting to the league, since zone success is more reliant on identifying coverage and knowing who *should* be open. Since we can easily blame his man struggles on his receivers' inability to get open, this split is encouraging. Stefon Diggs and Kyle Williams don't have to be great to be a major and meaningful upgrade. One of the more interesting questions from a statistical point of view will be whether Maye posts the same kind of scrambling numbers in Josh McDaniels' offense since McDaniels will want him to get rid of the ball so much quicker than he did last year.

Baker Mayfield		Height: 6-1	Weight: 215	College: Oklahoma										Draft: 2018/1 (1)		Born: 14-Apr-1995	Age: 30							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2022	2TM	12/10	649	335	201	60.0%	-4.8%	2163	10	8/25	9	10.4%	33	5.2	31	-20.5%	32	-221	32	31	89	1	-94.5%	-94
2023	TB	17/17	1100	566	364	64.3%	1.0%	4044	28	10/21	8	7.3%	22	6.3	17	7.6%	18	736	12	62	163	1	-21.4%	-23
2024	TB	17/17	1123	570	407	71.4%	2.2%	4500	41	16/21	13	6.8%	19	7.0	7	16.8%	6	1114	5	60	378	3	-8.3%	11
2025	TB		535	363		67.9%		4030	32	13	9					6.7		12.1%		59	311	3	-7.7%	
2023: 17% Behind 47% Short 21% Mid 15% Deep aDOT: 8.7 (7) YAC: 5.3 (15) ALEX: 2.3 2024: 21% Behind 46% Short 23% Mid 10% Deep aDOT: 7.0 (31) YAC: 6.0 (6) ALEX: 0.1																								

Mayfield's receivers recorded 2,439 yards after the catch; only Jared Goff's receivers ranked higher. Mayfield's 6.0 YAC per completion ranked sixth among NFL starters; his average depth of target of 7.0 yards ranked 31st. Mayfield threw deep passes of 20 or more air yards on just 9.8% of pass attempts, 29th in the NFL. The Buccaneers, meanwhile, faced the fifth-easiest defensive schedule in the NFL, and Mayfield was pressured on just 23.2% of dropbacks, the fourth-lowest figure among the 40 qualifying starters in the FTN database.

Mayfield may not be a "product" of his system/schedule in the pejorative sense, but his reputation has received a boost from playing in favorable circumstances. And you know what? He earned it after all the nonsense he endured in Cleveland and Charlotte! Mayfield's supporting cast and scheme won't change much this year, and the NFC South is still Cupcake Row. It's okay to enjoy a little feisty above-averageness.

J.J. McCarthy		Height: 6-3	Weight: 202	College: Michigan										Draft: 2024/1 (10)		Born: 20-Jan-2003	Age: 22							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2025	MIN		573	363		63.4%		4093	28	15	9					6.2		-0.1%		68	263	2	-11.2%	

Aaron Rodgers was linked to the Vikings throughout the early offseason. It sounded like mere scuttlebutt, but Kwesi Adofo-Mensah kept giving ChatGPT-worthy authoritatively vague responses when asked about the rumors, which naturally fueled them. Just as the Rodgers tale fizzled out, Seth Wickersham's book revealed that Caleb Williams wanted to play for the Vikings, not the yucky Bears. This story activated the Vikings media during a slow news cycle, and outperforming Williams is now McCarthy's unofficial 2025 side quest. The Vikings then announced a series of training-camp practices against the Patriots, which will place McCarthy on the same field as fellow sophomore Drake Maye, thus spawning another minigame. That's a lot of ancillary drama for a guy who hasn't thrown a meaningful professional pass yet but is taking over a team that won 14 games in 2024 with the NFL's version of Luigi Mario under center. What we know for certain about McCarthy is that he won the confidence of Jim Harbaugh, took center stage at The Big House, and never wilted in the college football championship spotlight. He can handle pressure. He's going to have to.

Tanner McKee			Height: 6-6			Weight: 231			College: Stanford						Draft: 2023/6 (188)			Born: 27-Apr-2000		Age: 25				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2024	PHI	2/1	89	45	30	66.7%	-4.4%	323	4	0/1	0	2.8%	--	6.5	--	17.9%	--	85	--	5	-1	0	20.8%	3
2025	PHI		474	287	60.5%		3192	19	16	8		5.8		-9.3%			58	254	2			6.0%		

McKee threw two touchdowns on four attempts when he came in for Kenny Pickett in Week 17. During a Week 18 start, McKee went 27-of-41 for 269 yards and two touchdowns, though it only came out to 26 DYAR. It's unlikely McKee is the next in line for the Eagles' Quarterback Factory, but the 2023 sixth-round pick showed enough that Philadelphia traded Pickett away and felt comfortable enough to let the third-year quarterback be the primary backup to Jalen Hurts.

Davis Mills			Height: 6-4			Weight: 225			College: Stanford						Draft: 2021/3 (67)			Born: 21-Oct-1998			Age: 27			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2022	HOU	15/15	855	479	292	61.0%	-3.0%	3118	17	15/31	8	6.2%	12	5.6	26	-16.8%	30	-181	31	32	108	2	-20.3%	-9
2023	HOU	6/0	53	39	18	46.2%	-20.3%	173	2	0/4	0	4.2%	--	3.9	--	16.4%	--	73	--	2	9	0	29.2%	3
2024	HOU	4/0	72	36	20	55.6%	-13.1%	212	0	0/0	0	5.4%	--	5.1	--	-10.7%	--	1	--	3	11	0	53.2%	8
2025 HOU			568	349	61.5%		3748	21	14	9		5.7		8.9%			29	107	1	0.1%				
2023:	11% Behind		54% Short		27% Mid		8% Deep		aDOT: 8.0 (-)		YAC: 4.1 (-)		ALEX: 0.0		2024:	9% Behind	63% Short	20% Mid	9% Deep	aDOT: 6.2 (-)	YAC: 3.6 (-)	ALEX: 1.7		

After the Texans placed Case Keenum on IR ahead of the season, Mills became the main backup. He appeared in relief of C.J. Stroud a few times—the longest of which was in Week 3 against the Vikings in a 34-7 loss—before piloting the Texans through a meaningless Week 18 game against the Titans. It was the second time Mills handed the No. 1 pick to a different team by beating an AFC South opponent in Week 18. The most notable thing he did in the game was attempt to dive for the goal line on a second-and-goal scramble only to wind up planting his helmet cage on the grass short of the plane. Mills is on a one-year deal for the 2025 season and his status as Texans backup going forward will likely depend on how enamored the team is with sixth-round rookie Graham Mertz.

Jalen Milroe		Height: 6-2			Weight: 225			College: Alabama					Draft: 2025/3 (92)			Born: 13-Dec-2002		Age: 23						
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2025	SEA			564	339	60.0%		3645	18	15	10		5.5		-14.6%			134	652	8	10.5%			

Milroe, the third-round pick out of Alabama, is far more developed as a runner than his is as a passer as he enters the league. He rushed for 20 touchdowns and 726 yards last year, and he averaged 4.2 yards per rush attempt in his college career. As a passer, however? Well, his NFL.com scouting report cites problems with accuracy, touch, decision-making, anticipation, foot-work, and delivery. Other than that, he's a finished product. Mike Macdonald interestingly said that Sam Darnold will get about 90% of the snaps this season, leaving the door open for Milroe to have a package of some sort. The comparisons to Taysom Hill would be inevitable, but it's not crazy to give Milroe some run plays in short-yardage and goal-line situations, where his existing skills can play some immediate dividends.

Joe Milton		Height: 6-5			Weight: 246			College: Tennessee					Draft: 2024/6 (193)			Born: 6-Mar-2000			Age: 25					
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2024	NE	1/0	61	29	22	75.9%	14.9%	241	1	0/0	1	3.6%	--	7.8	--	53.6%	--	116	--	10	16	1	-20.9%	-5
2025	DAL		510	292	57.1%		2769	22	15	9		4.6		-21.8%			115	690	8	14.2%				

In the regular-season finale, Milton replaced Drake Maye after one drive, and his play ignited the imaginations of many. Milton's 116 DYAR ranked seventh among quarterbacks that week, but it came against Buffalo backups. Milton is big and has a rocket arm, but he doesn't always know how to use it. But when it connects—as it did when on the run for a 48-yard touchdown pass to Kayshon Boutte—it looks really nice. The Cowboys traded fifth- and seventh-round picks for Milton to serve as the backup to Dak Prescott. While this won't be a challenge to Prescott as the worst TV pundits you know think it could be, it might turn out better than the trade for Trey Lance to fill the same role.

Gardner Minshew											Height: 6-1	Weight: 225	College: Washington State	Draft: 2019/6 (178)	Born: 16-May-1996	Age: 29								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2022	PHI	5/2	151	76	44	57.9%	0.9%	663	3	3/8	4	5.3%	--	7.8	--	17.0%	--	133	--	7	3	1	-75.1%	-21
2023	IND	17/13	972	490	305	62.2%	-0.4%	3305	15	9/22	8	6.9%	21	6.0	20	1.5%	22	426	18	34	100	3	-3.9%	12
2024	LV	10/9	564	306	203	66.3%	1.6%	2013	9	10/10	6	8.5%	29	5.6	31	-17.2%	33	-131	33	19	58	0	-60.1%	-40
2025	KC		621	386	62.1%			3601	22	13	10					4.9		-11.3%		80	389	4	12.4%	
2023:			14% Behind	55% Short	19% Mid	12% Deep		aDOT: 7.6 (24)		YAC: 5.1 (21)	ALEX: 1.1			2024:	21% Behind	54% Short	17% Mid	9% Deep		aDOT: 6.1 (38)	YAC: 5.4 (15)	ALEX: -0.5		

Somehow, it seems unlikely that the Chiefs brought Minshew in to be a bridge starter, the role he played in his previous two stops. Minshew arrives in Kansas City coming off of the worst season of his career by DVOA, in large part because he was king of the dump-offs in Las Vegas. Minshew's -2.4 ALEX was third-lowest in the league, and only Tua Tagovailoa had fewer than his 6.3 air yards per pass. That's at least one thing he has in common with Patrick Mahomes, as Kansas City has two of the bottom five passers in average depth of target from 2024 on their roster now. We suppose if you're going to a team that had 58 non-running back screens in 2024, a big arm isn't necessarily the first thing you're looking for. Minshew is a perfectly cromulent fill-in starter in case of a minor injury to Mahomes, and anything more than that will derail their season anyway.

Nick Mullens											Height: 6-0	Weight: 205	College: Southern Mississippi	Draft: 2017/FA	Born: 21-Mar-1995	Age: 30								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2022	MIN	4/0	54	25	21	84.0%	20.1%	224	1	1/2	0	1.5%	--	9.0	--	48.4%	--	101	--	4	8	0	-64.8%	-15
2023	MIN	5/3	244	148	100	67.6%	6.5%	1306	7	8/11	2	8.5%	--	7.5	--	-4.1%	--	71	--	10	25	0	-24.7%	-7
2024	MIN	4/0	7	2	2	100.0%	33.1%	38	0	0/0	0	-2.9%	--	19.0	--	319.4%	--	34	--	3	-2	0	--	--
2025	JAX		577	406	70.3%			3771	20	16	9					5.6		-6.8%		42	190	1	5.8%	
2023:			13% Behind	46% Short	23% Mid	19% Deep		aDOT: 9.4 (-)		YAC: 4.8 (-)	ALEX: -0.4			2024:	0% Behind	50% Short	0% Mid	50% Deep		aDOT: 12.0 (-)	YAC: 7.0 (-)	ALEX: 3.5		

The rare +5.1 EPA added on two attempts—both third-down dumpoffs to Aaron Jones that were converted—places Mullens ahead of Bo Nix, Geno Smith, and C.J. Stroud, among others. Mullens followed quarterbacks coach and new Jaguars offensive coordinator Grant Udinski to Jacksonville this offseason on a two-year deal. Mullens mixes competent backup accuracy with an inability to stop turning the ball over, making him a fine backup and also making it unlikely he actively threatens Trevor Lawrence's job.

Kyler Murray											Height: 5-10	Weight: 207	College: Oklahoma	Draft: 2019/1 (1)	Born: 7-Aug-1997	Age: 28								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2022	ARI	11/11	719	390	259	66.4%	2.4%	2368	14	7/17	8	6.2%	13	5.2	30	-6.6%	22	120	22	67	418	3	-8.8%	10
2023	ARI	8/8	538	268	176	65.7%	-1.7%	1799	10	5/6	7	6.8%	18	5.9	22	0.0%	23	201	24	44	244	3	-19.6%	-17
2024	ARI	17/17	1065	541	372	68.8%	2.7%	3851	21	11/11	8	6.0%	14	6.3	15	11.9%	12	880	9	78	572	5	21.9%	118
2025	ARI		552	375	68.0%			3896	23	13	9					6.3		2.5%		92	589	6	28.3%	
2023:			14% Behind	56% Short	19% Mid	11% Deep		aDOT: 7.4 (29)		YAC: 5.6 (8)	ALEX: 0.0			2024:	18% Behind	50% Short	20% Mid	11% Deep		aDOT: 6.8 (35)	YAC: 5.3 (21)	ALEX: 2.5		

We talked about Murray's inconsistency in the Cardinals chapter, and that's a lot of what's driving skepticism towards Murray's future as a franchise-level passer. The other problem, however, is a lack of explosiveness. Murray has now had three straight years with a touchdown rate under 4%. His 3.8% touchdown rate since 2022 ranks 24th out of 32 qualified passers, and most of the players below him are in the Sam Howell/Mac Jones/Zach Wilson tier, where teams have already given up on them. Murray also ranked just 26th in explosive pass rate at 7.9%, essentially tied with Mason Rudolph. Murray is a better player than those guys, but the lack of the big splash play is another reason he can be so frustrating to watch at times. The big-play potential is there, and we have seen him execute before. It just too often fails to fire. Rumors emerged during the draft that Michael Bidwill isn't Murray's biggest fan, and his contract is very reasonable to trade after this season. Stay tuned.

**Bo Nix**

Height: 6-2

Weight: 217

College: Oregon

Draft: 2024/1 (12) Born: 25-Feb-2000 Age: 25

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2024	DEN	17/17	1088	567	376	66.3%	-0.4%	3775	29	12/21	3	4.5%	5	6.1	25	2.2%	18	506	15	92	430	4	8.8%	96
2025	DEN		559	370		66.2%		3892	29	13	9				6.3		4.1%			91	438	4	4.4%	
2024: 24% Behind 44% Short 18% Mid 14% Deep aDOT: 7.3 (29) YAC: 5.5 (13) ALEX: 1.3																								

Nix was a big reason why Denver outperformed expectations last year, but he needs to be better in obvious passing situations and against better competition. Virtually all his success in 2024 came against positive DVOA defenses and/or on favorable downs and distance. He was also far better with a lead than when trailing (lots of overlap between this split and the quality of the defense). On a brighter note, he was third in scrambling DYAR and 10th in designed rushing yards among quarterbacks. We knew he could run in college, but we didn't know his legs would translate this well at the NFL level. Now that the Broncos have a more explosive running back in RJ Harvey, the threat of Nix keeping the ball could lead to some explosive runs that the offense dearly missed in 2024. Perhaps the most encouraging sign of all, though, was the fact that Nix finished eighth in accuracy rate. He did just about everything you want a rookie quarterback to do, he just didn't do those things against the teams or in the situations he'll need to in order to help Denver take the next step.

**Aidan O'Connell**

Height: 6-3

Weight: 210

College: Purdue

Draft: 2023/4 (135)

Born: 1-Sep-1998

Age: 27

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR		
2023	LV	11/10	641	343	213	62.1%	-2.1%	2218	12	7/12	4	6.3%	11	5.6	25	-7.6%	25	84	25	17	11	1	-28.6%	-15		
2024	LV	9/7	427	243	154	63.4%	-2.3%	1612	8	4/7	2	5.3%	8	6.0	27	-5.0%	23	102	24	21	30	1	-11.1%	1		
2025	LV		576	360		62.5%		3766	19	13	9			5.9		-4.8%			47	122	1	-19.9%				
2023:			15% Behind	54% Short		20% Mid	11% Deep		aDOT: 7.6 (23)		YAC: 5.0 (28)		ALEX: 0.8			2024:	15% Behind	56% Short	16% Mid	14% Deep		aDOT: 7.9 (18)		YAC: 4.7 (33)		ALEX: 0.8

O'Connell did a much better job than teammate Gardner Minshew last year at getting rid of the ball and avoiding pressure. He consequently gave the offense a chance to function and could potentially be an effective quarterback in an offense surrounded by talent. However, the Las Vegas offense is not on that kind of level and the fact that he was 28th in highlight-throw rate shows his inability to elevate an offense. The offense will take a hit if Geno Smith misses time.

**Michael Penix**

Height: 6-2

Weight: 220

College: Washington

Draft: 2024/1 (8)

Born: 8-May-2000

Age: 25

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2024	ATL	5/3	230	105	61	58.1%	-4.7%	775	3	3/3	2	3.3%	--	7.0	--	-11.0%	--	1	--	7	11	1	-40.0%	-7
2025	ATL		613	374		61.0%		4395	25	16	10			6.2		-6.0%			58	217	3	6.3%		
2024: 11% Behind 40% Short 28% Mid 21% Deep aDOT: 10.2 (-) YAC: 4.4 (-) ALEX: 6.6																								

Penix converted fourth-and-11 and fourth-and-10 situations—throwing a touchdown to Kyle Pitts in the latter—to force overtime against the Commanders in Week 17. He threw a 21-yard touchdown pass to Drake London on third-and-20 in the fourth quarter to tie the Panthers in Week 18. These were outstanding throws, but they had an inordinate impact on Penix's reputation; the Commanders conversions, in particular, came during a Sunday night game with playoff implications and all of the YouTube "let's break down QB film" influencers watching carefully. Our position on Penix is not that he's "bad" but that he remains almost as unknown a quantity as J.J. McCarthy, and that it's not safe to assume that the Falcons have upgraded at quarterback because Kirk Cousins was still reasonably effective last September and October. Penix's fantasy projection reflects the offensive stability around him. London, Bijan Robinson, and others (even Pitts!) could help him put up fine numbers for a team that staggers along near .500 all year. Heck, Matt Ryan made a very lucrative late career out of it.

Kenny Pickett												Height: 6-3			Weight: 220			College: Pittsburgh			Draft: 2022/1 (20)			Born: 6-Jun-1998			Age: 27			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR						
2022	PIT	13/12	804	389	245	63.0%	-0.9%	2404	7	9/15	4	6.6%	16	5.4	29	-7.7%	23	92	23	55	237	3	-5.4%	20						
2023	PIT	12/12	670	324	201	62.0%	-2.6%	2070	6	4/12	2	6.5%	14	5.4	28	1.7%	21	288	21	42	54	1	-27.0%	-23						
2024	PHI	5/1	134	42	25	59.5%	-1.3%	291	2	1/1	1	6.9%	--	5.6	--	-17.3%	--	-18	--	9	15	1	-45.4%	-15						
2025	CLE		537	336	62.6%			3673	22	15	9					6.0		-7.1%		67	312	3	-1.6%							
2023:	18% Behind			48% Short			23% Mid			11% Deep			aDOT: 7.4 (28)			YAC: 5.2 (19)			ALEX: 1.9			2024:			5% Behind					
																									63% Short	15% Mid	18% Deep	aDOT: 8.3 (-)	YAC: 2.3 (-)	ALEX: 0.6

Despite the criticism he's faced (and the deserved skepticism that comes from a first-round quarterback being on his third team before the end of his rookie deal), Pickett has never truly been bad by our numbers. Sure, his combined output in his game-and-a-half as the Eagles' backup quarterback led to the worst DVOA of his young career, but don't let that distract you from the fact that his lone start for the Eagles last year led to a career-high 119.6 passer rating (albeit on 15 total pass attempts). Pickett is a capable passer whose early years were suppressed in a middling Matt Canada offense. Don't exactly pencil him in to be the next Baker Mayfield or Sam Darnold just yet, but when placed in a quarterback-friendly offense like Stefanski's West Coast system and equipped with a decent offensive line, Pickett is a quarterback who can win games.

Dak Prescott												Height: 6-2			Weight: 238			College: Mississippi State			Draft: 2016/4 (135)			Born: 29-Jul-1993			Age: 32			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR						
2022	DAL	12/12	821	394	261	66.2%	-0.1%	2860	23	15/24	4	5.1%	5	6.6	8	8.3%	11	526	14	45	182	1	-1.7%	25						
2023	DAL	17/17	1115	590	410	69.5%	3.0%	4516	36	9/16	4	6.9%	20	6.8	9	18.3%	8	1246	5	55	242	2	7.5%	48						
2024	DAL	8/8	501	286	185	64.7%	-2.3%	1978	11	8/15	4	7.4%	24	6.1	24	-7.2%	25	76	25	13	54	1	16.7%	18						
2025	DAL		537	358	66.7%			3913	26	12	8					6.5		7.9%		36	143	2	4.6%							
2023:	14% Behind			53% Short			20% Mid			12% Deep			aDOT: 8.1 (14)			YAC: 4.8 (32)			ALEX: 2.1			2024:			16% Behind					
																									53% Short	20% Mid	11% Deep	aDOT: 8 (17)	YAC: 5.1 (25)	ALEX: 1.4

Even before Prescott suffered a hamstring injury that forced him out for the second half of the season, the results weren't close to what he had done in 2023. One thing that had been working for Prescott was his mobility. He had his best rushing DVOA and had three rushes for 30 yards in the Week 9 game when he got hurt. The passing offense didn't allow him the same space. During the first half of the year, 15.7% of Prescott's passes were broken up, which was the seventh highest rate among quarterbacks. On the plus side, Prescott had the 10th highest completion rate on passes of 20 or more yards (38.7%) and that was without a true deep threat. Now with George Pickens, there should be more opportunities for shots down the field.

Brock Purdy												Height: 6-1			Weight: 220			College: Iowa State			Draft: 2022/7 (262)			Born: 27-Dec-1999			Age: 26			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR						
2022	SF	9/5	380	170	114	67.1%	0.6%	1374	13	4/6	0	6.6%	--	7.1	--	21.5%	--	397	--	22	13	1	-22.1%	-8						
2023	SF	16/16	936	444	308	69.4%	5.6%	4280	31	11/17	6	6.8%	19	8.8	1	42.5%	1	1609	1	39	144	2	16.0%	47						
2024	SF	15/15	944	455	300	65.9%	1.7%	3864	20	12/15	7	6.8%	18	7.7	3	15.2%	7	831	11	66	323	5	15.9%	96						
2025	SF		546	367	67.2%			4676	28	14	9					7.6		20.4%		57	263	3	16.8%							
2023:	16% Behind			47% Short			26% Mid			11% Deep			aDOT: 8.3 (11)			YAC: 6.6 (1)			ALEX: 1.2			2024:			10% Behind					
																									51% Short	28% Mid	12% Deep	aDOT: 8.7 (9)	YAC: 5.5 (14)	ALEX: 2.0

Apparently, something in the NFL bylaws changed and allowed the 49ers to sign one of their stars to a contract before the end of training camp. Purdy and the 49ers quickly agreed on a five-year, \$265-million deal that might allow the quarterback to finally afford a time-share or something in the Bay Area. While Purdy's numbers were never going to match his hyper-efficient 2023, especially with San Francisco's injuries, he still found himself comfortably in the top 10 in basically every split and charting statistic we have. One area he didn't excel in, however? Touchdown rate, where he fell from 7.0% in 2023 to 4.4% last year. Purdy occasionally got caught trying to do too much in the red zone, ending up with just a 9.9% DVOA and a 44% success rate at the end of the field. Only 11 of his 35 passes into the end zone were caught, which ranked 33rd among qualified quarterbacks. Getting some of the stars at skill positions back will help that, and some positive regression is due to come his way, but if Purdy has an Achilles heel, it's trying to force something to happen when nothing is there.

Spencer Rattler		Height: 6-0			Weight: 211			College: South Carolina						Draft: 2024/5 (150)			Born: 28-Sep-2000			Age: 25				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2024	NO	7/6	396	228	130	57.0%	-7.7%	1317	4	5/11	5	8.5%	28	4.7	38	-37.8%	38	-400	37	18	146	0	34.8%	42
2025	NO			525	326	62.1%		3506	18	14	8			6.7		-13.6%				80	413	5	12.1%	

Rattler started three games as a rookie last October when Derek Carr was shelved with an oblique injury. The Saints were blown out by a combined 110-45 score in those three games; Jake Haener relieved Rattler in two of them. Haener initially got the nod when Carr broke his hand late in the season but was benched at halftime of his first start. Rattler nearly led a comeback against the Commanders, then started three games that the Saints lost by a combined 86-29 score. Rattler's college career had more ups and downs than a Russian novel. It was also nearly as long. Rattler will try to challenge rookie Tyler Shough for the starting job. If he somehow wins, the Saints are in unfathomably deep trouble for the long haul.

Anthony Richardson		Height: 6-4		Weight: 244		College: Florida						Draft: 2023/1 (4)			Born: 22-May-2002		Age: 23													
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR						
2023	IND	4/4	173	84	50	59.5%	-4.9%	577	3	1/3	3	8.2%	--	6.0	--	4.6%	--	87	--	25	136	4	5.1%	23						
2024	IND	11/11	620	264	126	47.7%	-10.4%	1814	8	12/15	9	5.1%	7	6.1	23	-23.6%	36	-213	36	86	499	6	-0.1%	52						
2025	IND		511	383	74.9%			3291	22	17	9					5.8	-6.9%			137	839	10	18.5%							
2023:	18% Behind		45% Short		23% Mid		14% Deep		aDOT: 8 (-)		YAC: 5.9 (-)		ALEX: -1.4		2024:		11% Behind		38% Short		27% Mid		24% Deep		aDOT: 12.3 (1)		YAC: 6.2 (5)		ALEX: 5.3	

Well, here's the thing: If your calling card is going to be that your arm is so preposterous that you can make every tough throw in the league, you can't have a -20.5% DVOA on deep passes. The only qualified quarterbacks who were worse by that metric were Spencer Rattler and Mac Jones. Richardson also carried the second-lowest DVOA on throws between 10 and 19 yards past the line of scrimmage, at 9.6%. So, you know, conceptually speaking: If you are a quarterback whose calling card is "I open up the entire field with my arm," it would behoove you to not be one of the worst in the league every time you throw deeper than 10 yards. Richardson was far and away the least accurate quarterback in the league in 2024. If he can aspire to merely having 40-grade accuracy instead of 20-grade accuracy on the scouting scale, there's enough to work with to make him a passable starter. That climb feels long from where things are right now.

Desmond Ridder		Height: 6-3			Weight: 207			College: Cincinnati						Draft: 2022/3 (74)			Born: 31-Aug-1999		Age: 26											
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR						
2022	ATL	4/4	271	115	73	63.5%	-2.8%	708	2	0/4	3	8.4%	--	5.3	--	2.7%	--	114	--	16	64	0	-51.9%	-38						
2023	ATL	15/13	850	388	249	64.2%	-0.2%	2836	12	12/22	12	8.4%	26	6.3	18	-8.8%	26	64	26	53	193	5	-25.0%	-32						
2024	LV	6/1	132	85	52	61.2%	-0.2%	458	2	2/3	3	11.5%	--	4.2	--	-34.9%	--	-155	--	9	36	0	-42.6%	-13						
2023:	16% Behind		47% Short		24% Mid		12% Deep		aDOT: 8.3 (10)		YAC: 4.9 (29)		ALEX: 0.9		2024:		9% Behind		60% Short		16% Mid		16% Deep		aDOT: 8.1 (-)		YAC: 3.9 (-)		ALEX: 1.5	

By the time Ridder got a chance last year, Davante Adams was already gone. His poor performance can consequently be forgiven to a degree, but we have yet to see anything else from him at the NFL level, so that's probably all we'll ever get from him. He's one of just six quarterbacks with an adjusted sack rate over 8.0% in each of the last three seasons. (Deshaun Watson, Russell Wilson, Malik Willis, Justin Fields, and Sam Howell are the others.)

Aaron Rodgers		Height: 6-2			Weight: 225			College: California						Draft: 2005/1 (24)			Born: 2-Dec-1983			Age: 42				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2022	GB	17/17	1068	542	350	64.6%	0.4%	3695	26	12/25	8	6.1%	11	6.0	21	0.3%	21	437	16	34	94	1	-13.5%	-1
2023	NYJ	1/1	4	1	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0/0	0	49.7%	--	-5.0	--	-193.0%	--	-25	--	0	0	0	--	--
2024	NYJ	17/17	1030	584	368	63.0%	-5.6%	3897	28	11/10	5	7.0%	21	5.8	28	-5.4%	24	237	21	22	107	0	19.6%	26
2025	PIT		612	392	64.0%		4153	25	14	9			6.0		-1.4%			22	95	1	6.0%			
																2024:	18% Behind	52% Short	18% Mid	12% Deep	aDOT: 6.9 (34)	YAC: 5.8 (9)	ALEX: 1.9	

What to say about the Prince of Darkness Caves that hasn't been said, over and over and over again? Rodgers mentioned "personal issues" being a factor in his not signing in Pittsburgh until June, but mainly remained close-mouthed this offseason, a departure for the man one national commentator called the "biggest Lookie-Lou in NFL history."

What will the Steelers get from Rodgers now that he has arrived at the Confluence? His 2024 counting numbers looked pretty good on the surface, though three games against Florida Men (two vs. Miami, one vs. Jacksonville) provided roughly a quarter of his yardage and a third of his touchdown passes. His third-down and red zone DVOA was significantly worse than that of either of Pittsburgh's 2024 quarterbacks, and he obviously doesn't offer the running ability of Justin Fields, nor the deep-ball flair of Russell Wilson. (Rodgers threw deep on 12% of his attempts and had an average depth of target of 6.9 yards; Wilson was at 15% and 8.0.)

One on-field factor Rodgers is surely looking at closely is the status of Pittsburgh's pass blocking. Rodgers, ironically enough, had better DVOA under pressure in 2024 than in his MVP season of 2021, -54.0% vs. -94.9%. Nevertheless, considering he turns 42 in December and lost 2023 to a sack-induced injury, protection is paramount, and the Steelers had dreadful numbers in that regard (24th in adjusted sack rate, 29th in pressure rate). So Rodgers will be examining Troy Fautanu's knee recovery and Broderick Jones' improvements with a magnifying glass ... which, given his advanced age, he may also need to read the team's playbook pretty soon.

Mason Rudolph		Height: 6-5	Weight: 235	College: Oklahoma State										Draft: 2018/3 (76)		Born: 17-Jul-1995	Age: 30								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR	
2023	PIT	4/3	199	74	55	74.3%	11.6%	719	3	0/2	3	6.9%	--	8.5	--	23.9%	--	182	--	10	8	0	-65.2%	-27	
2024	TEN	8/5	473	228	146	64.0%	1.7%	1530	9	9/9	5	5.9%	13	6.2	19	-17.5%	34	-100	30	25	106	1	-19.2%	-10	
2025	PIT		612	389	63.6%		4130	25	16	9		6.0		-3.1%					35	133	1	-3.9%			
2023:	21% Behind		46% Short		21% Mid		13% Deep		aDOT: 7.0 (-)		YAC: 7.7 (-)		ALEX: 3.5		2024:		14% Behind		52% Short		24% Mid		9% Deep		aDOT: 7.3 (28) YAC: 4.5 (34) ALEX: 2.4

The last time Steelers fans saw Rudolph was during the last three games of the 2023 season, all wins, and the ensuing wild-card loss in Buffalo. It was a surprisingly strong stretch of play, with Rudolph completing 75 of his 110 passes for 945 yards, with five touchdowns and one interception. The memory of that month was key to Rudolph's Return after a dismal season backing up Will Levis in Tennessee. Belief in Rudolph in certain precincts of the Steelers organization is far higher than the national chatter would have you believe. If the Aaron Rodgers Experiment flames out due to injury or poor play, the team will be counting on Rudolph to pick up where he left off back in 2023.

Cooper Rush		Height: 6-3	Weight: 225	College: Central Michigan										Draft: 2017/FA		Born: 21-Nov-1993	Age: 32								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR	
2022	DAL	9/5	341	162	94	58.0%	-5.5%	1051	5	3/6	2	3.9%	--	5.9	--	2.1%	--	145	--	9	6	0	-31.5%	-4	
2023	DAL	7/0	69	24	18	75.0%	6.2%	144	0	1/2	0	5.3%	--	5.4	--	-24.1%	--	-22	--	12	-5	0	55.3%	5	
2024	DAL	12/8	572	308	187	60.7%	-7.0%	1844	12	5/14	9	4.1%	4	5.5	33	-7.6%	26	74	26	26	18	0	-104.2%	-102	
2025	BAL		509	318	62.5%		3289	22	12	8		5.9		3.0%					56	155	1	-11.1%			
2023:	25% Behind		42% Short		8% Mid		25% Deep		aDOT: 9.0 (-)		YAC: 4.4 (-)		ALEX: 11.2		2024:		16% Behind		54% Short		19% Mid		11% Deep		aDOT: 7.0 (33) YAC: 5.0 (26) ALEX: 2.8

When Dak Prescott got hurt, Rush was the next man up for the Cowboys at quarterback. Given how the offense was struggling to function with Prescott behind center, there wasn't much that Rush could do to improve it once he got on the field. Rush actually had a higher touchdown rate and lower interception rate than Prescott but threw much shorter, with a yard difference in average depth of target, while he completed fewer passes. Defenses were also more willing to blitz Rush, sending an extra rusher 28.6% of the time compared to the 19.2% with Prescott under center.

Shedeur Sanders		Height: 6-1	Weight: 212	College: Colorado										Draft: 2025/5 (144)		Born: 7-Feb-2002	Age: 23							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2025	CLE		497	302	60.8%		3239	18	15	8		5.4		-18.8%					50	225	4	9.0%		

The story of the 2025 draft centers around the historic Sanders slide. At one point in the conversation for the top overall pick and eventually finding a consensus label as the No. 2 quarterback in the class and a bona-fide first-rounder, Sanders was having conversations about potentially being taken as a UDFA before Cleveland stopped his slide in the fifth round. The former Colorado quarterback who invigorated the program and helped lift the team into a national conversation now has his work cut

out for him to find playing time. Sanders is a smart pocket passer with good passing mechanics and an okay arm. His skill set works best in a quarterback-friendly timing-based offense. It's just a matter of how much Cleveland (or any team) wants to put up with the outsized attention placed on a developmental prospect. Sanders made headlines for receiving a mid-draft prank call while filming a two-day draft livestream/documentary through his brother's production company. He also has racked up two reckless speeding violations, doing 91 in a 65 mph zone and 101 in a 60. That's not going to help.

Tyler Shough	Height: 6-5	Weight: 225	College: Louisville	Draft: 2025/2 (40)	Born: 28-Sep-1999	Age: 26																		
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2025	NO		525	317	60.5%		3507	18	15	8			5.7		-15.3%				44	207	2	5.0%		

We cannot laugh off “overaged” prospects anymore, especially at quarterback. In years past, we could safely scoff at the likes of Brandon Weeden (drafted at age 27) or John Beck (26), and even a 23-year-old deserved the side-eye: if you were any good, why aren’t you already in the NFL? Now, the transfer portal and NIL money provide quarterbacks with an unassailable answer to that question: because I earned seven figures to start for Notre Dame instead of six figures to ride the bench as a mid-round pick, you dillweed.

OK, fine. But let's say a prospect spends his first two years on the bench, albeit behind a future NFL star (Justin Herbert), then ends up essentially losing his starting job to a future NFL guy (Anthony Brown), then portals from Oregon to a less-prestigious program (Texas Tech), then spends three years coping with a litany of collarbone, ankle, and non-throwing shoulder injuries before portaling to Louisville and leading them to a triumphant sixth-place finish in the ACC. Let's say this "prospect" is two weeks older than Trevor Lawrence. Is it safe to assume that his brief collegiate success at an age when most of his peers are coping with their quarter-life crises was a man-among-boys situation? Is it likely that a quarterback-desperate team just squandered a second-round pick on an injury-prone non-prospect who only looked poised and polished when he was facing teenagers? The answers to those questions are "Yes" and "Yes."

Geno Smith			Height: 6-3			Weight: 221			College: West Virginia						Draft: 2013/2 (39)			Born: 10-Oct-1990		Age: 35					
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR	
2022	SEA	17/17	1093	572	399	69.8%	4.4%	4282	30	11/29	8	8.7%	26	6.3	12	7.9%	12	764	9	68	366	1	4.1%	48	
2023	SEA	15/15	906	499	323	64.7%	1.8%	3624	20	9/20	5	6.8%	17	6.4	13	10.0%	13	722	13	37	155	1	-5.6%	10	
2024	SEA	17/17	1075	578	407	70.4%	4.4%	4320	21	15/26	9	8.8%	30	6.3	18	-2.1%	22	369	18	53	272	2	-13.9%	-4	
2025	LV			576	389	67.6%		4123	23	14	9								52	260	2	6.1%			
2023:	18% Behind			50% Short			20% Mid	12% Deep	aDOT: 7.2 (30)	YAC: 5.3 (14)	ALEX: 0.0		2024:	16% Behind	53% Short	17% Mid	14% Deep	aDOT: 7.0 (32)	YAC: 5.4 (17)	ALEX: 0.4					

Geno was second in the NFL in accuracy rate last year after finishing outside the top 30 in 2023. The change in accuracy can't be explained by a change in average depth of target, and his DYAR and DVOA were lower last year than in either of the prior two seasons (note that that means his two best years came under Pete Carroll). It's a tough dichotomy to explain. In Smith's breakout 2022 season, he was 20th in average depth of target. In each of the last two seasons, he has been outside of the top 30 in average depth of target. This stat often surprises people because when they think of those Seattle offenses, they think of DK Metcalf and Tyler Lockett chasing down deep balls. While he doesn't have the receiving talent in Las Vegas that he had in Seattle, Jakobi Meyers and Brock Bowers, both of whom excel in the short and intermediate areas, may better fit Geno's preferred style of play. Even rookie sensation Ashton Jeanty will allow Smith to get the ball to a playmaker quickly and in space. Working the short and intermediate throws will also help him lower his adjusted sack rate, which has been over 8.0% twice in the last three years.

Matthew Stafford			Height: 6-3			Weight: 220			College: Georgia						Draft: 2009/1 (1)			Born: 7-Feb-1988		Age: 37					
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR	
2022	LAR	9/9	534	303	206	68.0%	0.3%	2087	10	8/11	5	9.3%	30	5.6	27	-8.0%	24	69	24	13	9	1	-28.2%	-8	
2023	LAR	15/15	1000	521	326	62.6%	-1.6%	3965	24	11/13	0	6.4%	13	6.8	8	15.0%	9	951	8	21	65	0	-9.2%	2	
2024	LAR	16/16	1024	517	340	65.8%	0.4%	3762	20	8/16	6	5.9%	12	6.5	13	12.3%	10	868	10	30	41	0	-29.9%	-17	
2025	LAR			563	365	65.0%		4144	26	12	9					6.6		9.7%			30	62	1	-13.7%	
2023:	14% Behind		51% Short		23% Mid		12% Deep		aDOT: 8.0 (15)	YAC: 5.8 (5)		ALEX: 1.2		2024:		14% Behind		55% Short	20% Mid	12% Deep	aDOT: 7.5 (22)	YAC: 5.1 (24)	ALEX: 0.3		

Every year that Stafford fights off Father Time is another feather in his cap. He has been a top-10 quarterback in every year he has been healthy in Los Angeles, and if he can do that again, he'll join a fairly elite club. Only eight quarterbacks have had at least five seasons with a top-10 DVOA in their 11th season or later, in the second decade of their careers. It's all likely Hall of Famers, too—Tom Brady, Drew Brees, Peyton Manning, Warren Moon, John Elway, Brett Favre, Ben Roethlisberger, and Steve Young. Stafford will join them if he pulls that feat off in 2025. Mumblings about Stafford's Hall chances have grown as the end of his career nears, and while he's a solid candidate, he's far from a lock. A few more years of good performance into his dotage will certainly help, especially when you can put yourself in a class with those eight guys.

<b>Jarrett Stidham</b>		Height: 6-3		Weight: 215		College: Auburn						Draft: 2019/4 (133)		Born: 8-Aug-1996		Age: 29								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2022	LV	5/2	156	83	53	63.9%	3.0%	656	4	3/3	3	8.1%	--	6.6	--	6.3%	--	102	--	14	84	0	26.4%	29
2023	DEN	3/2	134	66	40	60.6%	-4.2%	496	2	1/3	1	9.2%	--	6.2	--	0.2%	--	52	--	9	8	0	-73.4%	-28
2024	DEN	3/0	14	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0/0	0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	4	5	0	53.9%	4	
2025	DEN		559	341	61.0%		3664	24	15	8			6.6		-9.6%			48	198	1	-1.5%			
2023: 21% Behind 41% Short 25% Mid 13% Deep aDOT: 8.9 (-) YAC: 8.4 (-) ALEX: 1.7																								

Stidham hasn't played meaningful snaps since 2020, the COVID season, when he was part of an oddball quarterback rotation with Cam Newton and Brian Hoyer in New England. Since then, he has only thrown 13 passes prior to Week 17, mostly playing out the string in pointless January games for the Raiders and Broncos. So not only does he have a sample-size issue when evaluating his data, but his data mostly comes from games that had little meaning. Scouts who foresaw Stidham's lack of success in the NFL pointed to his inability to see the field and come off his primary read. But the Broncos' only move at the quarterback competition was to bring in Sam Ehlinger from Indianapolis, so Stidham will likely be the one taking snaps in Denver should any misfortune befall Bo Nix.

<b>C.J. Stroud</b>		Height: 6-3		Weight: 218		College: Ohio State						Draft: 2023/1 (2)		Born: 3-Oct-2001		Age: 24								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2023	HOU	15/15	967	499	319	63.9%	1.5%	4108	23	5/15	8	7.5%	23	7.1	4	21.2%	4	1103	7	39	167	3	0.0%	26
2024	HOU	17/17	1035	532	336	63.2%	-1.6%	3727	20	12/16	6	9.4%	34	5.7	29	-15.5%	30	-158	34	52	233	0	-15.0%	-5
2025	HOU		568	365	64.2%		4250	26	13	9			6.4		1.9%			52	229	2	2.1%			
2023: 14% Behind 46% Short 28% Mid 12% Deep aDOT: 9.2 (3) YAC: 5.5 (9) ALEX: 2.2 2024: 18% Behind 44% Short 25% Mid 13% Deep aDOT: 8.3 (13) YAC: 5 (27) ALEX: 1.0																								

It is undeniable that Stroud did not have his best season, but it is also undeniable that it was the product of rough circumstances. You all know about the offensive line, but the offensive infrastructure was suffocating as well. Only two quarterbacks finished behind Stroud as he had -123 DYAR on throws behind the line of scrimmage. He gained 103 DYAR on those plays in 2023. Everyone saw the Bobby Slowik screen plays coming. Stroud was one of only five quarterbacks (Deshaun Watson, Anthony Richardson, Spencer Rattler, Daniel Jones) to have a negative DVOA on deep passes after finishing third in the NFL with a 150.2% DVOA on them in 2023. Houston's deep passing game never got unlocked after Week 5 with Nico Collins hurt, Stefon Diggs lost for the season, and Tank Dell laboring. And while he played through things admirably in 2024, Stroud faded badly down the stretch while getting banged up and used to playing fast. From Weeks 10 to 17 (he didn't start in Week 18), Stroud's -188 DYAR were the worst in the NFL outside of whatever was happening with Dorian Thompson-Robinson. Stroud came to the early offseason activities with a sore shoulder and didn't throw until later in May, but he seems to have suffered no long-term problems. His performance in the playoffs against the Chiefs speaks to how well he can play in spite of everything around him. But he's going to need to take a major step towards 2023 for the Texans to be more than a defense-first, grind-the-clock outlet in 2025.

Tua Tagovailoa															Draft: 2020/1 (5)	Born: 2-Mar-1998	Age: 27								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR	
2022	MIA	13/13	705	400	259	64.8%	1.4%	3548	25	8/22	6	5.5%	7	8.0	1	28.8%	2	1105	4	23	70	0	-36.7%	-17	
2023	MIA	17/17	1045	560	388	69.3%	3.5%	4624	29	14/21	13	5.1%	4	7.6	2	30.3%	2	1594	2	35	74	0	-115.3%	-128	
2024	MIA	11/11	717	399	291	72.9%	2.7%	2867	19	7/12	7	5.5%	9	6.5	14	12.5%	9	652	14	17	49	0	-48.7%	-18	
2025	MIA		601	421	70.1%			4569	28	14	9								28	84	1	-2.3%			
2023:	21% Behind	42% Short	25% Mid	12% Deep	aDOT: 7.8 (19)	YAC: 5.6 (7)	ALEX: 1.6		2024:	26% Behind	45% Short	21% Mid	8% Deep	aDOT: 5.7 (39)	YAC: 5.8 (8)	ALEX: 1.1									

Is there a quarterback whose team has relied on him to remain competitive more than Tua? Miami's offense is so reliant on timing and motion that it makes sense that any quarterback not getting consistent first-team reps in practice would struggle, but this also speaks to Tagovailoa's effectiveness. He's one of only three quarterbacks to be top 10 in DVOA in each of the past three seasons. (Josh Allen and Jared Goff are the others.) He has been top-12 in accuracy rate in each of the past three seasons as well. He's just consistently good. Even deep! In 2022, Tua was second in deep DYAR, first in deep DVOA. In 2023, he was first in deep DYAR, sixth in deep DVOA. Last year he took a step back, finishing 19th in both. He was 11th in accuracy rate on deep passes, so his deep struggles were more of a team issue than a Tagovailoa issue.

That said, criticism of Tua as a deep passer isn't entirely unwarranted. He's always near the top of the league in open separation rate when throwing deep and near the bottom in tight coverage rate when throwing deep. So, much of his success deep is because of a combination of Mike McDaniel's offense and the speed of Jaylen Waddle and Tyreek Hill, not his skill as a deep passer. And in 2024, the system didn't work as well. Pointing to two-high coverage rates as a potential explanation is inadequate. Yes, Tagovailoa faced the highest rate of two-high coverages in 2024, but he faced the third highest rate of two-high coverages in 2022 and the highest rate in 2023. Whether it's related to their dramatic drop-off in rushing success with motion or not, McDaniel and company need to figure out what adjustment opponents made in 2024 and how they can counter it.

Tyrod Taylor															Draft: 2011/6 (180)	Born: 3-Aug-1989	Age: 36								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR	
2022	NYG	3/0	32	8	6	75.0%	4.6%	58	1	1/1	2	25.6%	--	3.6	--	-51.4%	--	-29	--	5	70	0	20.7%	10	
2023	NYG	11/5	373	180	116	64.4%	2.4%	1341	5	3/4	4	8.8%	--	6.5	--	0.8%	--	143	--	38	197	0	-13.7%	-3	
2024	NYJ	2/0	36	22	17	77.3%	3.7%	119	3	0/1	1	0.7%	--	5.4	--	51.0%	--	98	--	3	13	0	-103.1%	-13	
2025	NYJ		497	314	63.3%			3191	18	12	8								51	263	2	5.2%			
2023:	9% Behind	61% Short	15% Mid	16% Deep	aDOT: 8.9 (-)	YAC: 5.0 (-)	ALEX: 3.9		2024:	29% Behind	57% Short	14% Mid	0% Deep	aDOT: 4.0 (-)	YAC: 4.0 (-)	ALEX: 0.8									

For a long time, Tyrod Taylor was one of the more underrated players in the NFL. Now he's perfectly rated when it comes to the conventional wisdom. Most fans probably think of Taylor as one of the league's top veteran backups but not somebody you want to trust running the offense for more than a couple of weeks at a time. And hey, that's exactly what he is! As you can see from his 2023 stats, Taylor is not a dump-off king like so many backup quarterbacks. He's willing to sling it.

Dorian Thompson-Robinson															Draft: 2023/5 (140)	Born: 14-Nov-1999	Age: 26							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2023	CLE	8/3	214	112	60	53.6%	-13.3%	440	1	4/8	2	4.4%	--	3.3	--	-28.5%	--	-125	--	14	65	0	-29.5%	-11
2024	CLE	7/2	208	118	61	51.7%	-14.8%	440	0	6/8	3	10.9%	--	2.7	--	-91.5%	--	-635	--	21	122	0	-2.1%	9
2023:	16% Behind	57% Short	24% Mid	3% Deep	aDOT: 6.3 (-)	YAC: 3.4 (-)	ALEX: -0.8		2024:	17% Behind	59% Short	15% Mid	9% Deep	aDOT: 6.1 (-)	YAC: 4.1 (-)	ALEX: 0.7								

Thompson-Robinson got two starts last season as Cleveland's third starting quarterback of the year. He moved into the starting lineup because Jameis Winston threw too many interceptions but was replaced because he didn't complete enough passes. He was pressured on 32.6% of his dropbacks and had -144.3% DVOA under pressure. Thompson-Robinson also went 0-for-10 on throws of 20 or more yards, the only quarterback with at least 10 such attempts and no completions. Traded to Philadelphia, where he may not make the roster.

Trask has thrown 254 preseason passes and 11 real passes in his four-year NFL career. The Bucs must really like what they see each preseason and in the quarterback room, because they re-signed Trask to back up Baker Mayfield for another year, albeit for a thrifty \$2.8 million. “Forever backups” like Trask rarely look like much when finally forced into the lineup, but Trask will have Mike Evans, Chris Godwin, Bucky Irving, and others to help him out if it ever happens, and he should be fine if all the Bucs need is someone to throw screen passes against the Saints.

Mitchell Trubisky			Height: 6-3			Weight: 222			College: North Carolina						Draft: 2017/1 (2)			Born: 20-Aug-1994			Age: 31									
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR						
2022	PIT	7/5	356	180	117	65.0%	1.2%	1252	4	5/11	0	5.9%	--	6.2	--	3.1%	--	172	--	19	38	2	-11.0%	1						
2023	PIT	5/2	202	107	67	62.6%	-1.6%	632	4	5/9	1	7.1%	--	5.2	--	-8.2%	--	22	--	16	54	2	-3.2%	8						
2024	BUF	9/0	102	26	19	73.1%	1.8%	179	2	0/1	1	1.6%	--	6.9	--	14.8%	--	40	--	17	1	0	-66.3%	-17						
2025	BUF			518	346	66.9%		3532	22	14	9					5.9	-0.6%			64	187	5	11.0%							
2023:	13% Behind		52% Short		19% Mid		15% Deep		aDOT: 9.2 (-)		YAC: 4.1 (-)		ALEX: 4.7		2024:		36% Behind		32% Short		20% Mid		12% Deep		aDOT: 5.5 (-)		YAC: 7.8 (-)		ALEX: 0.7	

Trubisky is back in Bills colors, but he's not coasting. He's locked in a QB2 duel with Mike White, with beat writers hailing White's quicker decisions and zip over Trubisky. Still, Trubisky has the advantage of having been on the team in 2024. Whether he wins the backup spot or not, one thing is for certain: the Bills hope the QB2 never has to do more than kneel down at the end of blowouts.

Cam Ward	Height: 6-2				Weight: 219				College: Miami (FL)				Draft: 2025/1 (1)				Born: 25-May-2002		Age: 23							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT	IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR	
2025	TEN			550	336	61.1%		3709	22	15	9		5.8		-8.9%			63	297	2	3.0%					

The media beat since Ward has been drafted has been very diligent—he is painted as someone who is the heartbeat of the squad. The kind of quarterback who watches film with his receivers before practice starts, and the kind of guy who has everyone's number in their phone and is readymade to be the team's unofficial CEO. He essentially got Miami UDFA receiver Xavier Restrepo signed to the roster on his own. As we discussed in the Titans chapter, Ward did not make it out of the pre-draft process as a set-it-and-forget-it No. 1 pick. The Titans picked him for need. Not just quarterback need, but also the need to establish a culture that does the things Ward does. We'd expect a more up-and-down rookie season from Ward than we would from someone such as Jayden Daniels, who could use his wheels to unlock the rest of his game. Ward has a good arm, is good at buying time, and knows how to make the magic happen. It's how fast the magic will have to happen at the NFL level that makes us believe there'll be a few lumps to take. He played relatively well when blitzed at Miami—that tells us that he can play sped up and gives us a little more optimism for his development.

Deshaun Watson			Height: 6-3			Weight: 223			College: Clemson						Draft: 2017/1 (12)			Born: 14-Sep-1995		Age: 30						
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR		
2022	CLE	6/6	387	170	99	58.2%	-3.8%	1102	7	5/10	1	10.5%	--	5.3	--	-16.6%	--	-64	--	36	175	1	24.2%	49		
2023	CLE	6/6	383	171	105	61.4%	-2.8%	1115	7	4/7	5	8.7%	--	5.5	--	-9.2%	--	22	--	26	142	1	10.6%	30		
2024	CLE	7/7	415	216	137	63.4%	-5.4%	1148	5	3/8	5	13.2%	39	3.8	39	-51.1%	39	-597	39	31	148	1	-36.5%	-39		
2023: 15% Behind			48% Short			22% Mid			15% Deep			aDOT: 9.7 (-)			YAC: 4.8 (-)			ALEX: 0.6			2024: 18% Behind			54% Short		
																					9% Deep			aDOT: 7.3 (26)		
																					YAC: 4.3 (36)			ALEX: -2.2		

What is there left to say about Watson that hasn't already been said? His 2024 passing DVOA was the worst by a qualifying non-rookie quarterback since JaMarcus Russell in 2009. In all three seasons he's played in Cleveland, Watson has been outperformed by a backup in both DVOA and DYAR. He's now suffered two separate season-ending injuries to his shoulder and Achilles in consecutive seasons. Watson has yet to adjust to a league whose defensive principles shifted significantly since Watson last played in Houston in 2020. His throw velocity has dropped, and he's posted two of the lowest aDOTs of his career in the last three years (while 2023 saw a career-high 9.2 aDOT, his 5.9 completed air yards per attempt was the third-lowest of his career). He can't scramble the way he once did, posting two of the lowest yards per attempt of his career—an Achilles tear won't help matters. There is nothing redeemable about his game to this point. While Watson should not have been allowed back in the league following two dozen counts of sexual misconduct levied against him, but he was given another opportunity. He has proceeded to descend into the worst quarterback in the league. Assuming the Watson era is over in Cleveland, nothing about his game has warranted a reason for another team to give him a shot.

Caleb Williams		Height: 6-1			Weight: 215			College: USC						Draft: 2024/1 (1)			Born: 18-Nov-2001		Age: 24					
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2024	CHI	17/17	1123	562	351	62.5%	-1.2%	3541	20	6/11	10	11.3%	37	4.9	37	-11.9%	28	-32	28	81	489	0	2.1%	53
2025	CHI			544	342	62.9%		3680	23	11	9			5.6		-4.4%				82	480	3	12.0%	

Williams' adjusted net yards per attempt by month in 2024: 3.5 in September; 7.8 in October; 4.8 in November; 5.3 in December and January. The Bears faced the Rams (without Cooper Kupp and Puka Nacua), Panthers, and Jaguars in October. Williams appeared to be turning the corner on his rookie season at the time, but it was mostly a schedule-assisted mirage, and his November backslide led to the Great Bears Coaching Purge of 2024. Williams also put up solid numbers against the Lions—590 yards, five touchdowns, and no interceptions in two games—but the Lions took 23-7 and 27-7 leads in those games before the Bears passing game woke up. Two of the first steps toward quarterback competency are looking good against dreadful opponents and picking apart prevent defenses, so Williams' moments of rookie success should not be scoffed at. There are just lots and lots of other steps ahead of him.

Malik Willis			Height: 6-1			Weight: 225			College: Liberty						Draft: 2022/3 (86)			Born: 25-May-1999		Age: 26				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR
2022	TEN	8/3	211	61	31	50.8%	-9.9%	276	0	3/4	3	13.0%	--	3.2	--	-67.6%	--	-228	--	27	123	1	-27.3%	-21
2023	TEN	3/0	22	5	4	80.0%	6.5%	74	0	0/0	1	43.4%	--	4.9	--	4.7%	--	9	--	5	21	0	-87.9%	-17
2024	GB	7/2	217	54	40	74.1%	4.9%	550	3	0/0	1	12.7%	--	8.3	--	19.9%	--	110	--	20	138	1	27.2%	33
2025	GB			547	362	66.3%		3502	22	16	9			5.5		-6.9%		71	410	7	30.7%			

Willis did an exceptional job piloting a highly customized Matt LaFleur game plan during a September relief stint against the Colts and Titans. In 54 attempts, Willis threw eight RPOs, five passes to targets behind the line of scrimmage, and only two (!!!) passes past the sticks; the Packers took early leads in both games, allowing Willis to mostly hand off and coast. Willis fumbled when clobbered by Kevin Byard during his Week 18 relief stint, offering a reminder of why the Titans soured on him. Willis is very talented and may be on a slow developmental track due to the rudimentary offenses he ran in college. LaFleur should be able to prop him up again for a few games if anything happens to Jordan Love.

Russell Wilson		Height: 5-11			Weight: 215			College: Wisconsin						Draft: 2012/3 (75)			Born: 29-Nov-1988			Age: 37										
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR						
2022	DEN	15/15	961	483	292	60.5%	-1.4%	3524	16	11/29	6	10.3%	32	5.9	22	-15.2%	28	-136	29	55	277	3	12.6%	60						
2023	DEN	15/15	938	447	297	66.4%	2.8%	3070	26	8/16	10	9.3%	27	5.8	24	-2.2%	24	286	22	80	341	3	14.5%	106						
2024	PIT	11/11	719	336	214	63.7%	2.4%	2482	16	5/6	5	9.0%	33	6.1	22	-1.5%	21	228	22	43	155	2	8.6%	42						
2025	NYG		607	399	65.7%		4494	24	13	10		6.2		15%	-0.6%				68	268	3	-1.3%								
2023:	26% Behind		45% Short		13% Mid		16% Deep		aDOT: 7.5 (25)		YAC: 5.8 (4)		ALEX: 2.1		2024:		17% Behind		53% Short		15% Mid		15% Deep		aDOT: 8.0 (16)		YAC: 5.2 (22)		ALEX: 4.2	

## 272 QUARTERBACKS

Wilson may not have the arm he used to have. His 8.0-yard aDOT was the second lowest of his career. To the Daboll-era Giants, though, Wilson represents a breath of fresh air. That 8.0 mark would represent the second-best mark of any quarterback to start under Daboll in the last three years behind only Tyrod Taylor (8.6 in 2023) and would match the highest of Daniel Jones' career.

Wilson had a “tale of two quarterbacks” season that you can read more about in the Giants chapter, but one thing that should be noted here is that Wilson’s performance was better when he was targeting deeper. Through his first seven starts, Wilson posted a 64.8% completion rating, 5.6% touchdown rate, and 1.4% interception rate while averaging an 8.2 aDOT and 8.87 adjusted yards per attempt. In the final four games of the season, Wilson finished with a 61.8% completion rating, 3.3% touchdown rate, and 1.6% interception rate while averaging a 7.3 aDOT and 5.7 adjusted yards per attempt.

Jameis Winston		Height: 6-4		Weight: 230		College: Florida State						Draft: 2015/1 (1)		Born: 6-Jan-1994		Age: 32														
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR						
2022	NO	3/3	196	115	73	63.5%	2.8%	858	4	5/10	3	10.2%	--	6.3	--	-19.1%	--	-64	--	5	16	0	-122.8%	-29						
2023	NO	7/0	76	47	25	53.2%	-8.2%	264	2	3/5	0	4.2%	--	5.1	--	-37.4%	--	-80	--	5	-6	0	--	--						
2024	CLE	12/7	504	296	181	61.1%	-1.6%	2121	13	12/17	5	7.5%	25	6.2	20	-15.8%	31	-96	29	25	83	1	7.6%	30						
2025	NYG		605	379	62.7%		4137	26	17	10			5.9		-7.1%				75	352	4	6.1%								
2023:	9% Behind		41% Short		26% Mid		24% Deep		aDOT: 13.0 (-)		YAC: 3.4 (-)		ALEX: 6.0		2024:		7% Behind		51% Short		29% Mid		13% Deep		aDOT: 8.9 (3)		YAC: 4.2 (37)		ALEX: 2.2	

Winston is the Item Box in a game of Mario Kart. You never know what you’re going to get when you run into him—it could be a game-wrecking Bullet Bill that changes the game (he had the fourth-highest aDOT in the league and nearly doubled Deshaun Watson’s touchdown rate), or it could be a Green Shell that bonks off a railing and hits you to spin you out of first place (he had the third-highest interception rate in the league). For better or worse, it’s what makes the game fun. It’s the reason why he has an online cult following among fans, and also the reason why no teams bit on Winston’s hope to be a starting quarterback or stopgap option during 2024 free agency. New York seems pretty set at quarterback, with Russell Wilson coming in as that potential one-year stopgap and Jaxson Dart being their heir apparent. Winston’s two-year, \$8-million contract probably locks him in as a safe third option ahead of Tommy DeVito. The impact of his personality should not be written off, though. Winston quickly won over teammates in Cleveland through motivational speeches, high effort, and determination, and he’s already doing so in New York. Darius Slayton called Winston “a wild card, just as a human being,” adding that his personality is “amazing,” per Sports Illustrated.

Bryce Young		Height: 5-10		Weight: 204		College: Alabama						Draft: 2023/1 (1)		Born: 25-Jul-2001		Age: 24														
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Att	Cmp	C%	CPOE	Yds	TD	INT/IWT	FUM	ASR	Rk	NY/P	Rk	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Runs	Yds	TD	DVOA	DYAR						
2023	CAR	16/16	1068	527	315	59.8%	-1.4%	2877	11	10/20	11	11.1%	33	4.0	36	-40.5%	35	-1078	36	39	253	0	19.2%	57						
2024	CAR	14/12	728	384	234	60.9%	-1.1%	2403	15	9/8	5	6.8%	20	5.4	35	-17.9%	35	-185	35	43	249	6	27.4%	79						
2025	CAR		571	350	61.3%		3656	23	14	9			5.5		-12.5%				59	329	4	19.8%								
2023:	14% Behind		51% Short		23% Mid		11% Deep		aDOT: 7.7 (21)		YAC: 4.1 (35)		ALEX: 0.5		2024:		15% Behind		45% Short		26% Mid		14% Deep		aDOT: 8.7 (7)		YAC: 4.1 (38)		ALEX: 2.3	

Josh Allen’s rookie-year passing DVOA and DYAR were -35.9% and -479 in 2018; his second-year figures were -11.8% and 34. Allen’s “third-year leap” is the great logical fallacy of our era, but one of the many misunderstandings surrounding Allen is the fact that he showed exceptional development during his second year. Bryce Young also improved from his first to second years, but he remained well below both Allen and replacement level. There’s a big difference between what Allen did from 2018 through 2020—which itself was historically unusual—and what Young has done so far, which looks more like a “nowhere to go but up” situation. There’s also a difference between a quarterback who looks like a member of the Justice League and one who looks like the small forward for Degrassi Junior High. Not to keep harping on Young’s teensiness, but when we start reaching for Russell Wilson-like exceptional cases to explain how Young can succeed at his off-the-rack prom tux dimensions AND for Allen-like exceptional cases to find reasons for optimism in his third year, well, we’re multiplying two rather small percentages together. When you do that, you get a percentage so tiny that Young could wear it as a boutonniere.

## Going Deep

**Brandon Allen, TEN:** One start in Lambeau last year was Allen's first since 2021—he wasn't great shakes or anything, but he completed 17 of 29 passes for 199 yards with a touchdown and an interception. After spending last year as San Francisco's co-Brock Purdy backup with Joshua Dobbs, Allen found a spot with Brian Callahan, his former coordinator in Cincinnati. He's likely in line to be the No. 3 quarterback for the Titans this year unless Will Levis is traded.

**Kyle Allen, DET:** Allen only got into a game for one regular-season play for the Pittsburgh Steelers last season, and now he moves on to the Detroit Lions. Last time he really played in the NFL, for the 2022 Texans, he put up -62.2% passing DVOA in two losing starts.

**Stetson Bennett, LAR:** Bennett served as the Rams' backup quarterback for the first two games in 2024 as Jimmy Garoppolo served a PED suspension. Bennett never saw the field, which is a blessing considering how poorly he has played in the pre-season; he's thrown eight interceptions in exhibition games over the last two years, two more than anyone else. Part of that is the Rams refusing to play starters. Part of it is, well, being Stetson Bennett.

**Tim Boyle, TEN:** Cut by the Texans before the season started, Boyle continued a notable trend of showing up to places where the quarterback room was on fire and bringing extra logs with him. He kept it at one interception last year between the Giants and Dolphins after throwing four for the Jets in 2023. Boyle will be with the Titans in training camp and likely spend 2025 on the league's tryout line in the hope of finding any situation that looks dire enough to actually play Tim Boyle.

**Sean Clifford, GB:** Clifford was unimpressive in training camp in 2023 and 2024, which is why the Packers pounced on Malik Willis when the Titans got tired of his sacks and fumbles at the end of the 2024 preseason. The Packers signed Canadian college standout Taylor Elgersma in May after an outstanding rookie camp, and Green Bay observers are expecting a spirited battle for the third quarterback spot. Or hoping for one, anyway.

**Quinn Ewers, MIA:** If Tua Tagovailoa misses time, the seventh-round rookie out of Texas could be Miami's best option. Like Tagovailoa, Ewers throws well to the middle of the field with excellent timing. This is also his drawback; he gets overconfident in his ability to anticipate and deliver into small windows, leading to ill-advised turnovers. Still, an offense that moves and then turns it over is preferable to one that stalls immediately, like Miami's has done whenever they have been without their starting quarterback in the past.

**Jake Haener, NO:** Haener mopped up two of Spencer Rattler's starts and only made it to halftime in his lone start for the Saints in 2024. He endured six sacks in 39 attempts, completing just 46.2% of his passes. Haener is supposed to be the undersized gutsy/pesky type. He may never get another chance to prove it.

**Jaren Hall, SEA:** Hall was waived by the Vikings last year to make room for Brett Rypien but found a home on Seattle's practice squad. Hall is a prototypical third-string quarterback—he has looked solid enough in preseason, he can run the scout team well, and then he had a -80.6% passing DVOA when forced into action for Minnesota as a rookie. He'll battle Drew Lock for Seattle's veteran backup slot this year.

**Will Howard, PIT:** Howard transferred from Kansas State to Ohio State with a remit to win or else, so he became Public Enemy No. 1 in Columbus following a poor performance in the Buckeyes' annual showdown with Michigan. Nothing shy of winning a national championship would reduce his villainy, which Howard did, leaning heavily on a superstar cadre of skill players around him. As a pro prospect, Howard brings enormous size and a run-first, put-my-head-into-the-garbage-disposal-if-need-be attitude that probably won't be enough to overcome his slow processing and average arm. But given Pittsburgh's quarterback situation, it wouldn't be surprising to see Howard on the field at some point, where his supporting cast will pale in comparison to what he had in college.

**Josh Johnson, WAS:** The Josh Johnson journey continues. Johnson started three games for Washington back in 2018 and since then he has played in the AAF and XFL and also bounced between backup roles and practice squads for the 49ers, Jets, Broncos, and Ravens. He threw three regular-season passes last year but as the QB3 in Washington, time on the field should not be expected.

**Case Keenum, CHI:** Keenum missed the entire 2024 season on injured reserve with a foot injury. After two years back in Houston, he signed a one-year deal with Chicago this offseason. Now 37, he's more of a coach than a player.

**Trey Lance, LAC:** Lance is now on to the journeyman flier stage of his career after putting up a -26.3% DVOA in his one start in 2024. He did flash some of the potential that once made him a top-three pick during preseason, showing off both his arm and his legs. But he also threw five interceptions, showing that his decision making has not improved. The Cowboys traded for Joe Milton rather than continue to carry Lance, who is now trying to cling on to a spot with the Chargers.

**Devin Leary, BAL:** Baltimore's 2024 sixth-round pick is still on the roster as the third quarterback behind Lamar Jackson and Cooper Rush. Leary was a sixth-year senior when he came out of Kentucky. The 25-year-old has a big arm but lacks consistent accuracy to make it matter.

**Riley Leonard, IND:** The former Duke quarterback transferred to Notre Dame in 2024, leading the Fighting Irish to the National Championship Game and adding 17 rushing touchdowns to his 2,861-21-8 college passing line. Leonard projects as the Sam Ehlinger replacement in Indy's quarterback room, meaning he better get to work on dispensing a selection of good motivational books to Anthony Richardson in a hurry. The long stint at Duke, above-average athleticism, and poor pocket vision and rhythm invite comparisons to Daniel Jones loudly.

**Kyle McCord, PHI:** McCord's quick release and short-area accuracy played better in the RPO-heavy Syracuse offense than they did at Ohio State. The sixth-round pick stands at 6-foot-3 and 220 pounds but wasn't much of a scrambler and was prone to getting some balls batted down at the line of scrimmage. He'll battle with Dorian Thompson-Robinson to be the third quarterback on the Philadelphia roster.

**Graham Mertz, HOU:** Mertz played in 16 games in his final two seasons at Florida after transferring over from Wisconsin, as he dealt with a fractured collarbone, a concussion, and a torn ACL. Despite this, the Texans drafted him in the sixth round. Mertz did sharply cut his turnover rate at Florida, throwing five interceptions in his past two years against 21 for the Badgers from 2021 to 2022. It's likely he'll get stashed on injured reserve for the first year of his rookie deal.

**Cam Miller, LV:** The most notable thing about this sixth-round pick out of North Dakota State is that Tom Brady endorsed the selection. Miller was All-State twice as a pitcher in high school, which gives you an idea about his arm talent, but unless Brady knows something we don't (which is entirely possible), Miller isn't likely to turn into much at the NFL level.

**Chris Oladokun, KC:** For the first time in his career, Oladokun got playing time in 2024—five offensive snaps, including one rush and one fumble. Oladokun has been praised in the past for his scout-team work, and has occasionally flashed in preseason, but his time in Kansas City may be coming to an end with Gardner Minshew and Bailey Zappe coming in this offseason.

**Kurtis Rourke, SF:** Hey, drafting a seventh-round quarterback worked out well for the 49ers once, why not run it back? Rourke played through an ACL injury in his last season in Indiana, so there's no questioning his toughness. Ball security is another matter, as Rourke suffered 21 interceptions and 22 fumbles in 48 career games. There's some grace under pressure and some solid second-level touch here, but accuracy, mobility, and decision making all remain in question. We'll repeat what we said when Brock Purdy was drafted: If Rourke sees the field at all for San Francisco, something has gone horribly wrong.

**Brett Rypien, MIN:** Rypien was last seen going 13-of-28 for 130 yards and an interception in a 20-3 Rams loss to the Packers in November of 2023. The Vikings traded for Sam Howell on draft weekend to compete with Rypien for the right to back up J.J. McCarthy. Our money is on Howell.

**Easton Stick, ATL:** When the Falcons signed Stick before the draft, their poor fans were like, "Maybe this means we are trading Kirk Cousins. Huzzah!" No, sorry: the Falcons were just bracing for a training camp in which Cousins won't eagerly take backup's reps, and/or acquiring a scout team version of Bryce Young or Taysom Hill. Stick was so awful in relief of Justin Herbert in 2023 that his arrival may have made Cousins *more* indispensable to the Falcons. If Michael Penix falters or gets hurt, Cousins can keep the team in its usual "almost playoff-worthy" lane. Stick would drive them straight into a culvert.

**Skylar Thompson, PIT:** Thompson has started a single postseason game, the same number as Mason Rudolph, who currently sits ahead of Thompson on the Steelers' depth chart. Big Sky had basically the same game, too—a wild-card loss in Buffalo during which he wasn't bad but also not good enough. At press time he remains on the Pittsburgh roster. Thompson will probably be on someone's roster in 2025, if not Pittsburgh's, but if he is playing that is a bad sign for the team that employs him.

**Clayton Tune, ARI:** You'll remember Tune from the 2023 season, where he led the Cardinals to their lowest yardage total since 1955. Since then, he has been kept mostly on mute, though he did manage to add another fumble in a late-game cameo appearance. The addition of Jacoby Brissett puts Tune's roster spot in serious jeopardy.

**Carson Wentz, FA:** Firmly in the journeyman backup stage of his career, Wentz got the start in Week 18 for Kansas City. He put up a DVOA of -44.9%, threw for fewer than 100 yards, and was sacked five times by a motivated Denver defense (though to be fair, the Chiefs wrapped any player even remotely relevant in bubble wrap before the game started). Although offseason rumors had the Browns and Vikings linked to Wentz, he is not currently on a roster, and he may need an injury somewhere to continue his career.

**Mike White, BUF:** White enters the 2025 season still vying for the QB2 spot behind Josh Allen. Signed last year from the Dolphins, White impressed over spring and minicamp and the race with Mitchell Trubisky was on. In the end, it probably doesn't matter much in terms of the AFC race. The losses would rack up quickly if anything were to happen to Allen, and Buffalo wouldn't be a Super Bowl contender regardless of who wins the backup job.

**Zach Wilson, MIA:** Now that he's in Miami, the former second overall pick claims he's being coached more than he ever was in New York or even in Denver last year. Maybe he's the long-awaited answer to who can effectively back up Tua Tagovailoa? Unlikely.

**John Wolford, JAX:** Every culture needs it's tone-setters, and thus Liam Coen's former charge with the Rams got a rare 53-man contract slot in February ahead of free agency. Wolford will likely hold the QB3 role for the Jaguars in 2025, assuming he can beat out Memphis UDFA Seth Henigan in training camp.

**Bailey Zappe, KC:** The Chiefs brought Zappe back to battle Gardner Minshew for their backup quarterback slot. The only year Zappe qualified for our leaderboards was 2023, when he had a -43.5% passing DVOA. That fell all the way to -65.7% in limited work for Cleveland a year ago, as he got the Week 18 start for the depleted Browns. Zappe spent a couple of months on Kansas City's practice squad in 2024 and so isn't starting from scratch in the system, but his odds of beating out Minshew for a slot on the 53-man roster are very slim indeed.

# Running Backs

In the following section we provide the last three years of statistics, as well as Jeff Ratcliffe's 2025 projection, for every running back who either played a significant role in 2024 or is expected to do so in 2025.

The first line contains biographical data—each player's name, height, weight, college, draft position, birth date, and age. Height and weight are the best data we could find; weight, of course, can fluctuate during the offseason. **Age** is very simple, the number of years between the player's birth year and 2025, but birthdate is provided if you want to figure out exact age.

**Draft** position gives draft year and round, with the overall pick number with which the player was taken in parentheses. In the sample table, it says that Derrick Henry was chosen in the 2016 NFL draft in the second round with the 45th overall pick. Undrafted free agents are listed as "FA" with the year they came into the league, even if they were only in training camp or on a practice squad.

Next we give the last three years of player stats. First come games played and games started (**G/GS**). Games played is the official NFL total and may include games in which a player appeared on special teams but did not carry the ball or catch a pass. We also have a total of offensive **Snaps** for each season. The next four columns are familiar: **Runs**, rushing yards (**Yds**), yards per rush (**Yd/R**) and rushing touchdowns (**TD**).

The entry for fumbles (**FUM**) includes all fumbles by this running back, no matter whether they were recovered by the offense or defense. Holding onto the ball is an identifiable skill; fumbling it so that your own offense can recover it is not. (For more on this issue, see the essay "Pregame Show" in the front of the book.) This entry combines fumbles on both carries and receptions. Fumbles on special teams are not included.

The next four columns give our advanced metrics for rushing: **DVOA** (Defense-adjusted Value Over Average) and **DYAR** (Defense-adjusted Yards Above Replacement), along with the player's rank (**Rk**) in both. These metrics compare every carry by the running back to a league-average baseline based on the game situations in which that running back carried the ball. DVOA and DYAR are also adjusted based on the opposing defense. The methods used to compute these numbers are described in detail in the "Statistical Toolbox" introduction in the front of the book. The important distinction between them is that DVOA is a rate statistic, while DYAR is a cumulative statistic. Thus, a higher DVOA means more

value per play, while a higher DYAR means more aggregate value over the entire season.

To qualify for ranking in rushing DVOA and DYAR, a running back must have had 100 carries in that season. Last year, 46 running backs qualified to be ranked in these stats, compared to 49 backs in 2023 and 42 backs in 2022.

Success Rate (**Suc%**), listed along with rank, represents running back consistency as measured by successful running plays divided by total running plays. (The definition for success is explained in the "Statistical Toolbox" introduction in the front of the book.) A player with high DVOA and a low Success Rate mixes long runs with plays on which he was stuffed at or behind the line of scrimmage. A player with low DVOA and a high Success Rate generally gets the yards needed, but rarely gets more. The league-average Success Rate in 2024 was 50.2%. Success Rate is not adjusted for the defenses a player faced.

We also give a total of broken tackles (**BTkl**) according to FTN Data charting. This total includes broken tackles on both runs and receptions. Yards after contact (**YafC**) measures how many yards a runner gained after making contact with any defensive player.

The shaded columns to the right of yards after contact give data for each running back as a pass receiver. Receptions (**Rec**) counts passes caught, while Passes (**Pass**) counts total passes thrown to this player, complete or incomplete. The next four columns list receiving yards (**Yds**), receiving touchdowns (**TD**), catch rate (**C%**), yards per catch (**Yd/C**), and average yards after the catch (**YAC**).

Our research has shown that receivers bear some responsibility for incomplete passes, even though only their catches are tracked in official statistics. Catch rate represents receptions divided by all intended passes for this running back. The average NFL running back caught 79% of passes in 2024. Unfortunately, we don't have room to post the best and worst running backs in receiving plus/minus, but you'll find the top 10 and bottom 10 running backs in this metric listed in the statistical appendix at the end of the book.

Finally, we have receiving DVOA and DYAR, which are entirely separate from rushing DVOA and DYAR. To qualify for ranking in receiving DVOA and DYAR, a running back must have 25 passes thrown to him in that season. There are 47 players ranked for 2024, 48 players ranked for 2023, and 51 players ranked for 2022.

Jeff Ratcliffe's projections for the upcoming season are

Derrick Henry			Height: 6-2	Weight: 247	College: Alabama		Draft: 2016/2 (45)				Born: 4-Jan-1994				Age: 31												
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	TEN	16/16	648	349	1538	13	4.4	6	-4.3%	29	60	27	48%	32	80	2.4	41	33	398	0	80%	12.1	5.6	19.7%	9	79	10
2023	TEN	17/17	558	280	1167	12	4.2	0	2.7%	21	135	18	47%	31	59	2.4	36	28	214	0	78%	7.6	1.4	-9.0%	30	10	31
2024	BAL	17/17	635	325	1921	16	5.9	3	29.2%	2	537	1	60%	4	84	3.4	22	19	193	2	86%	10.2	3.7	57.9%	--	95	--
2025	BAL		243	1345	12	5.5	2	26.1%						22	18	164	1	78%	9.4				24.6%				

listed in the italicized “2025” row, as explained further in the Statistical Toolbox at the front of the book. Be aware that projections account for the possibility of injury so workload projections may seem low for the top players.

It is difficult to accurately project statistics for a 162-game baseball season, but it is exponentially more difficult to accurately project statistics for a 17-game football season. Consider the listed projections not as a prediction of exact numbers, but the mean of a range of possible performances. What’s important is less the exact number of yards we project, and

more which players are projected to improve or decline. Actual performance will vary from our projection less for veteran starters and more for rookies and third-stringers, for whom we must base our projections on much smaller career statistical samples. Touchdown numbers will vary more than yardage numbers.

Finally, in a section we call “Going Deep,” we briefly discuss lower-round rookies, free agent veterans, and practice squad players who may play a role during the 2025 season or beyond.

## Top 20 RB by Rushing DYAR (Total Value), 2024

Rank	Player	Team	DYAR
1	Derrick Henry	BAL	537
2	Jahmyr Gibbs	DET	457
3	Bijan Robinson	ATL	323
4	Saquon Barkley	PHI	251
5	James Cook	BUF	239
6	Chuba Hubbard	CAR	228
7	Josh Jacobs	GB	197
8	David Montgomery	DET	189
9	Kyren Williams	LAR	170
10	Jonathan Taylor	IND	166
11	James Conner	ARI	136
12	Rico Dowdle	DAL	132
13	Bucky Irving	TB	127
14	Chase Brown	CIN	126
15	Emmanuel Wilson	GB	113
16	Tyler Allgeier	ATL	100
17	J.K. Dobbins	LAC	100
18	Kareem Hunt	KC	88
19	Jaylen Warren	PIT	85
20	De’Von Achane	MIA	76

Minimum 100 carries

## Top 20 RB by Rushing DVOA (Value per Play), 2024

Rank	Player	Team	DVOA
1	Jahmyr Gibbs	DET	35.2%
2	Derrick Henry	BAL	29.2%
3	James Cook	BUF	18.1%
4	Emmanuel Wilson	GB	16.7%
5	Bijan Robinson	ATL	15.3%
6	David Montgomery	DET	13.9%
7	Chuba Hubbard	CAR	12.3%
8	Jaylen Warren	PIT	9.1%
9	Jerome Ford	CLE	8.8%
10	Saquon Barkley	PHI	8.6%
11	Tyler Allgeier	ATL	7.1%
12	Josh Jacobs	GB	6.4%
13	Bucky Irving	TB	6.1%
14	Rico Dowdle	DAL	5.3%
15	James Conner	ARI	4.8%
16	Chase Brown	CIN	4.1%
17	Jonathan Taylor	IND	4.0%
18	Jaleel McLaughlin	DEN	3.7%
19	Kyren Williams	LAR	3.6%
20	J.K. Dobbins	LAC	3.3%

Minimum 100 carries

## Top 10 RB by Receiving DYAR (Total Value), 2024

Rank	Player	Team	DYAR
1	De’Von Achane	MIA	171
2	Jahmyr Gibbs	DET	152
3	David Montgomery	DET	150
4	Ty Johnson	BUF	146
5	Rachaad White	TB	131
6	Justice Hill	BAL	131
7	Samaje Perine	KC	109
8	Bucky Irving	TB	107
9	Josh Jacobs	GB	104
10	Chase Brown	CIN	100

Minimum 25 passes

## Top 10 RB by Receiving DVOA (Value per Play), 2024

Rank	Player	Team	DVOA
1	Ty Johnson	BUF	78.7%
2	David Montgomery	DET	52.2%
3	Justice Hill	BAL	42.1%
4	Samaje Perine	KC	39.6%
5	Zack Moss	CIN	30.7%
6	Josh Jacobs	GB	28.3%
7	Rachaad White	TB	27.4%
8	James Cook	BUF	26.8%
9	Jahmyr Gibbs	DET	26.7%
10	Austin Ekeler	WAS	24.3%

Minimum 25 passes

278 RUNNING BACKS

Ameer Abdullah											Draft: 2015/2 (54)					Born: 13-Jun-1993					Age: 32						
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	LV	17/0	175	4	20	0	5.0	0	18.1%	--	6	--	75%	--	2	4.0	32	25	211	1	78%	8.4	0.9	27.8%	5	61	14
2023	LV	17/0	216	15	89	0	5.9	0	49.7%	--	36	--	53%	--	4	3.3	24	19	131	0	79%	6.9	-1.0	6.1%	--	22	--
2024	LV	16/3	410	66	311	2	4.7	1	-2.6%	--	16	--	50%	--	20	2.2	47	40	261	3	85%	6.5	-0.4	18.5%	14	87	12

In Week 17, Abdullah ran for 115 yards on 20 carries in a 25-10 Raiders win over the New Orleans Saints. It was the first 100-yard rushing game in Abdullah's 10-year career. Las Vegas rewarded him by giving him the next week off. Just two weeks prior, he set another career high with 58 receiving yards against Atlanta. His 572 yards from scrimmage were his highest total since 2017, and he averaged 32.9 yards on nine kick returns as well, all while playing a regular part on the Raiders' kick coverage teams. It sure seems like Abdullah still has a lot to offer as a change-of-pace or third-down back and special teamer, but his contract expired at the end of the year and he remains unsigned as of press time.

De'Von Achane											Draft: 2023/3 (84)					Born: 13-Oct-2001					Age: 24						
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2023	MIA	11/4	300	103	800	8	7.8	1	49.1%	1	230	5	56%	6	36	3.3	37	27	197	3	73%	7.3	2.0	15.8%	11	65	13
2024	MIA	17/16	704	203	907	6	4.5	1	0.1%	24	76	20	49%	26	57	2.6	87	78	592	6	90%	7.6	0.6	20.5%	12	171	1
2025	MIA			185	861	7	4.6	2	5.8%								74	61	468	4	83%	7.7		24.1%			

It's standard for a hyper-efficient running back to take an efficiency hit when his volume doubles the following season, but not to the degree that Achane declined. In 2023, he dominated the NFL's Next Gen Rushing Yards Over Expectation per Carry stat, gaining an extra 2.87 yards per attempt. Christian McCaffrey was second with 1.32. But last year, Achane was near the bottom, losing 0.42 yards per rush. FTN's win yards, defined as yards after avoided tackle (whether the defender made contact or not), paints a similar story. Achane was first in 2023 with 4.1 win yards per attempt but dropped to 23rd in 2024 with 3.0 win yards per attempt. Did Achane get worse or did the scheme become less favorable for his skill set? In 2023, Achane was second to teammate Raheem Mostert in DYAR on rushes with any sort of pre-snap motion and first in DVOA. His 62.9% DVOA was more than double Mostert's 29.9%. Mostert's was second in the NFL. Achane averaged 4.2 win yards on these carries, second in the league. In 2024, Achane was 13th in DYAR on these carries and his DVOA fell to 0.3%, 19th best in the NFL. He was 16th in win yards per attempt on these carries. Achane made up for this by finishing first among running backs in receiving DYAR with nearly 600 receiving yards, but if Achane is going to be the home run hitter we saw in 2023, Miami needs to counter whatever adjustment opponents made last season.

Cam Akers											Draft: 2020/2 (52)					Born: 22-Jun-1999					Age: 26						
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	LAR	15/9	428	188	786	7	4.2	2	-10.7%	35	-17	35	54%	12	51	2.2	18	13	117	0	72%	9.0	3.3	6.9%	--	24	--
2023	2TM	7/1	139	60	167	2	2.8	0	-28.9%	--	-49	--	35%	--	10	2.3	12	11	70	0	92%	6.4	0.0	0.5%	--	10	--
2024	2TM	17/2	282	104	444	2	4.3	1	-22.6%	45	-54	42	41%	44	27	2.5	18	14	68	3	78%	4.9	-1.4	1.8%	--	15	--
2025	NO			13	57	0	4.4	0	-2.1%								3	2	18	0	77%	7.5		3.5%			

The Vikings traded with the Rams to get Akers midway through the 2023 season, then let him sign with the Texans last offseason, then traded again to add him before the deadline. Akers ripped off a 58-yard run while the season finale against the Lions was still close, but he has generally been a grinder for most of his career, even when getting a lot of carries in Los Angeles. Akers signed with New Orleans in June, but the Vikings will trade a conditional 2034 draft pick for him in mid-October.

Braelon Allen											Draft: 2024/4 (134)					Born: 20-Jan-2004					Age: 21						
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2024	NYJ	17/2	283	92	334	2	3.6	0	3.0%	--	47	--	51%	--	18	2.6	27	19	148	1	70%	7.8	1.2	11.9%	16	39	26
2025	NYJ			81	325	2	4.0	1	-1.9%								19	15	110	1	78%	7.6		7.3%			

When it comes to Allen's rookie season, the advanced metrics are complicated. Allen averaged less than a yard before contact on each run, but he was also near the bottom of the league in the Next Gen Stats Rushing Yards Over Expected model. So he wasn't getting good blocking, and he wasn't taking advantage of the blocking he was getting, and yet he had above-average efficiency by DVOA. Allen was the youngest player in the 2024 draft and led that class of backs in our BackCAST projections, so there's a lot of potential here. Breece Hall's contract status makes Allen a particularly interesting get for dynasty leagues.

Tyler Allgeier											Height: 5-11 Weight: 225 College: Brigham Young			Draft: 2022/5 (151)			Born: 15-Apr-2000			Age: 25							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	ATL	16/7	497	210	1035	3	4.9	0	16.0%	5	222	5	52%	17	47	2.4	17	16	139	1	94%	8.7	2.6	41.2%	--	48	--
2023	ATL	17/3	360	186	683	4	3.7	0	-0.5%	27	65	23	49%	20	38	2.5	23	18	193	1	78%	10.7	4.0	15.2%	--	37	--
2024	ATL	17/0	287	137	644	3	4.7	0	7.1%	11	100	16	61%	3	31	2.9	13	13	88	0	100%	6.8	-0.5	16.0%	--	17	--
2025	ATL		114	523	3	4.6	1	2.8%									17	14	105	1	81%	7.7		13.5%			

Allgeier currently wears the Tony Pollard/Alexander Mattison mantle of Best Backup Running Back in the NFL. (David Montgomery is nominally a co-starter.) Allgeier's broken tackle rate and yards after contact in 2024 were nearly identical to those of Bijan Robinson, a reminder of how environment-dependent running back statistics are. Allgeier siphoned 13 carries inside the 10-yard line from Robinson (for three touchdowns), as the Falcons often used two-back sets in short-yardage situations. If aliens abduct Bijan before the start of the season, Allgeier could probably have a 1,200-yard season behind a veteran offensive line for a semi-capable sophomore quarterback. Adjust your fantasy draft strategies accordingly.

Saquon Barkley											Height: 6-0 Weight: 233 College: Penn State			Draft: 2018/1 (2)			Born: 9-Feb-1997			Age: 28							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	NYG	16/16	856	295	1312	10	4.4	1	0.2%	21	108	13	48%	30	55	2.1	76	57	338	0	75%	5.9	-0.3	-22.5%	43	-36	47
2023	NYG	14/14	717	247	962	6	3.9	2	-13.0%	42	-48	42	40%	47	42	2.5	60	41	280	4	68%	6.8	-1.2	-0.6%	19	45	18
2024	PHI	16/16	801	345	2005	13	5.8	2	8.6%	10	251	4	55%	10	71	2.8	43	33	278	2	77%	8.4	1.1	3.4%	24	43	24
2025	PHI		269	1469	10	5.5	3	15.6%									51	38	277	2	75%	7.2		5.6%			

Barkley didn't have the highest explosive play rate among running backs, but the inevitability of the big run constantly loomed over the Eagles offense. His nine touchdown runs of 20 or more yards were three more than the next running back. He only ranked seventh in avoided tackles, but that's partly because on some runs, he didn't need to avoid any. As mentioned in the Eagles chapter, Barkley led the league in yards before contact, and the mix between the league's best run blocking offensive line and a home run-hitting running back fueled a high-volume run game. There might not have been a better example than when the Eagles ran power. Barkley ran power on 17.1% of his rushing attempts and he averaged 7.7 yards per carry.

If you weren't reading our stats on FTN Fantasy all season, you may wonder how on earth Barkley finished only fourth in rushing DYAR. As we noted several times during the season, the Eagles played a very easy schedule of opposing run defenses in 2024. Barkley only faced a team in the top 10 of run defense DVOA three times: Baltimore, Tampa Bay, and Green Bay. He faced a team in the bottom 10 of run defense DVOA in nine different games. Derrick Henry, by comparison, only faced a team in the bottom 10 of run defense DVOA in four games.

Trey Benson											Height: 6-1 Weight: 223 College: Florida State			Draft: 2024/3 (66)			Born: 23-Jul-2002			Age: 23							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2024	ARI	13/1	137	63	291	1	4.6	1	4.4%	--	33	--	52%	--	19	3.0	6	6	59	0	100%	9.8	3.2	67.1%	--	29	--
2025	ARI		122	536	4	4.4	1	1.3%									27	21	152	1	78%	7.1		1.8%			

Benson was stuck behind James Conner for most of his rookie season—effective when he got a chance, but rarely used. Jonathan Gannon has been pumping Benson up this offseason, saying that he considers him and Conner both to be No. 1 backs, so maybe we'll see more of a committee this season. Benson and Conner had near-identical rush DVOAs and success rates, but Benson was slightly more explosive in his very small sample size. Benson's 15.9% explosive rate topped Conner's 14.4%, and he also had a lower stuff rate at the line. Conner did a better job avoiding tackles and extending plays, however; Benson ended up being more of a run-to-daylight guy in his first year.

Tank Bigsby			Height: 5-11 Weight: 215 College: Auburn										Draft: 2023/3 (88)					Born: 30-Aug-2001			Age: 24						
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2023	JAX	17/0	141	50	132	2	2.6	1	-24.3%	--	-36	--	42%	--	13	2.0	4	1	6	0	25%	6.0	-0.7	-97.7%	--	-21	--
2024	JAX	16/1	351	168	766	7	4.6	3	1.0%	22	72	22	50%	22	50	3.4	12	7	54	0	58%	7.7	1.1	-37.7%	--	-16	--
2025	JAX		158	679	6	4.3	1	0.3%									15	11	77	0	74%	6.7		-8.5%			

A few breakaway runs early in the season had Bigsby suddenly take hold of a big role in Jacksonville, but it mostly led to a slew of 10-40 lines as the Jaguars played out the string. That's more an indictment of Mac Jones and all the other Jaguars than anything Bigsby did wrong—he definitely outperformed Travis Etienne last year. His pass blocking is, uh, a work in progress, which should leave him as more of the head of a committee this year regardless of who joins him. But the broken tackle numbers and yards after contact are heavily in favor of Bigsby and we can't see Etienne getting many designed red zone plays compared to Bigsby.

Jaydon Blue			Height: 5-9 Weight: 196 College: Texas										Draft: 2025/5 (149)					Born: 8-Jan-2004			Age: 21						
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2025	DAL		116	473	3	4.1	1	-4.5%									27	22	147	1	80%	6.9		2.5%			

Blue was a receiving threat out of the backfield for Texas. He was targeted on 27% of his routes and was one of the few backs in this class with an average depth of target beyond the line of scrimmage (2.3). His quickness didn't translate to big running plays as his 9.7% rate of runs that gained 10 or more yards was one of the lowest in this draft class. But the fifth-round pick brings speed and elusiveness to the Dallas running back room that could get him on the field early.

Christopher Brooks			Height: 6-1 Weight: 223 College: BYU										Draft: 2023/FA					Born: 11-Jan-2000			Age: 25						
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2023	MIA	9/0	36	19	106	0	5.6	0	-39.9%	--	-21	--	37%	--	8	5.6	0	0	0	0	--	0.0	--	--	--	--	--
2024	GB	15/0	184	36	183	1	5.1	0	10.8%	--	32	--	67%	--	11	3.0	13	11	69	0	85%	6.3	0.0	-21.9%	--	-5	--
2025	GB		28	137	1	4.8	0	12.3%									3	3	17	0	100%	6.8		20.3%			

The Packers signed Brooks, who spent his undrafted rookie 2023 season with the Dolphins, off waivers last September, soon after MarShawn Lloyd suffered somewhere between his third and sixth injury. Brooks backed up Emmanuel Wilson backing up Josh Jacobs, earning occasional stray carries while seeing the bulk of his action late in blowouts. Lloyd should be back in 2025, and the Packers are overloaded with 220-pound bruisers. Brooks is the most likely the odd man out.

Chase Brown			Height: 5-10 Weight: 210 College: Illinois										Draft: 2023/5 (163)					Born: 21-Mar-2000			Age: 25						
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2023	CIN	12/0	93	44	179	0	4.1	1	-20.9%	--	-19	--	36%	--	14	3.0	15	14	156	1	93%	11.1	5.0	67.9%	--	65	--
2024	CIN	16/10	686	229	990	7	4.3	2	4.1%	16	126	14	54%	12	63	2.6	65	54	360	4	83%	6.7	-0.1	10.1%	18	100	10
2025	CIN		218	932	7	4.3	2	2.2%									66	54	363	3	81%	6.8		10.2%			

Brown waited until the season was well along until he became the Bengals' bellcow back, but he sure delivered when he got the nod. Brown had 1,350 yards from scrimmage, 11 touchdowns, and 226 DYAR on just 283 touches. In the season's second half, Brown emerged as one of the league's best backs, trailing just headliners Saquon Barkley and Derrick Henry in yards from scrimmage per game (116.3). He did it as Cincy's lone backfield threat, getting the ball on all but nine carries and receptions from the position between Week 9 and Week 17. (Perhaps inevitably, Brown missed the finale with injury.) Such a workload isn't really sustainable, so the Bengals drafted some help in Tahj Brooks and brought Zach Moss and Samaje Perine back into the fold to take some of the load. But Brown is numero uno in Cincy, make no mistake. He remains relatively little known and could be a fantasy steal come draft time.

**Michael Carter**

Height: 5-8 Weight: 201 College: North Carolina

Draft: 2021/4 (107)

Born: 7-May-1999

Age: 26

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	NYJ	16/10	436	114	402	3	3.5	1	-9.8%	33	-6	33	44%	40	25	2.3	54	41	288	0	76%	7.0	-0.2	-4.3%	29	27	29
2023	2TM	15/0	224	30	187	0	6.2	0	22.0%	--	36	--	43%	--	8	2.2	31	24	101	1	77%	4.2	-2.3	-19.0%	40	-8	40
2024	ARI	3/1	132	35	131	1	3.7	0	-8.0%	--	1	--	60%	--	7	2.3	11	11	57	0	100%	5.2	-1.6	-4.5%	--	6	--
2025	ARI			16	72	1	4.4	0	-1.4%								4	3	23	0	77%	7.5		2.7%			

Carter got his first start since 2022 with all of Arizona's top backs on injured reserve in Week 18, rushing 17 times for 43 yards and a score. There's value in a veteran who can come in and keep an offense moving even when everyone else is hurt, but not *that* much value. Carter might not make the 2025 Cardinals—James Conner and Trey Benson are locks and DeeJay Dallas contributes on special teams. That puts Carter up against Emari Demercado for maybe one more roster slot. If Carter does stick around, it will probably be in the same role he filled last year, sitting on the practice squad until injuries force Arizona's hand.

**Ty Chandler**

Height: 5-11 Weight: 210 College: North Carolina

Draft: 2022/5 (169)

Born: 12-May-1998

Age: 27

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	MIN	3/0	12	6	20	0	3.3	0	-61.9%	--	-13	--	33%	--	1	1.8	0	0	0	0	--	0.0	--	--	--	--	--
2023	MIN	17/4	307	102	461	3	4.5	0	2.4%	23	46	29	45%	37	23	2.5	25	21	159	0	84%	7.6	1.8	6.9%	15	30	21
2024	MIN	17/0	153	56	182	0	3.3	0	-22.1%	--	-30	--	39%	--	5	1.7	6	6	42	0	100%	7.0	0.8	38.9%	--	15	--
2025	MIN			39	150	1	3.9	0	-8.4%								7	5	38	0	80%	7.4		3.9%			

Chandler rushed 28 times for 117 yards and one touchdown in four September games as Aaron Jones' change-up, then rushed just 28 times for the rest of the year as he fell out of favor and behind Cam Akers on the depth chart. Chandler went 23-132-1 in a late-2023 loss to the Bengals during a Vikings injury emergency. That game is currently propping up Chandler's career statistics. He'll have to fight for the No. 3 role behind Jones and Jordan Mason.

**Zach Charbonnet**

Height: 6-1 Weight: 214 College: UCLA

Draft: 2023/2 (52)

Born: 8-Jan-2001

Age: 24

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2023	SEA	16/2	478	108	462	1	4.3	0	2.5%	22	53	26	54%	10	20	2.6	40	33	209	0	83%	6.3	-0.1	-10.1%	32	9	33
2024	SEA	17/6	568	135	569	8	4.2	0	0.1%	23	52	27	49%	29	49	3.0	54	42	340	1	81%	8.1	-0.2	-8.7%	34	13	34
2025	SEA			127	551	5	4.4	1	0.1%								44	34	271	1	77%	7.9		5.8%			

One of the benefits of Seattle's offensive line being so porous in 2024 was letting their running backs show off just how good they were at avoiding tackles. Charbonnet's 29.6% avoided tackle rate ranked third in the league, and he was in the top 10 with 3.0 yards after contact. He didn't always get off scot-free, however. Charbonnet was stuffed on 23.7% of his carries, fourth worst in the NFL. With Clint Kubiak coming in to run the offense, it will interesting to see how Charbonnet ends up used. The conventional wisdom is that Kenneth Walker is the more explosive of the two Seattle backs and better suited for Kubiak's system, but Charbonnet actually had a better explosive rate and a higher juke rate than Walker in 2024.

**Nick Chubb**

Height: 5-11 Weight: 227 College: Georgia

Draft: 2018/2 (35)

Born: 27-Dec-1995

Age: 30

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	CLE	17/17	660	302	1525	12	5.0	1	19.3%	1	340	1	52%	18	71	2.8	37	27	239	1	73%	8.9	2.4	14.3%	11	61	15
2023	CLE	2/2	54	28	170	0	6.1	0	28.9%	--	42	--	57%	--	9	3.1	4	4	21	0	100%	5.3	-1.8	23.2%	--	7	--
2024	CLE	8/8	236	102	332	3	3.3	1	-14.7%	42	-27	41	41%	45	15	2.0	11	5	31	1	45%	6.2	0.4	-43.2%	--	-21	--
2025	HOU			92	403	3	4.4	1	1.5%								22	17	127	1	78%	7.5		5.8%			

Chubb was one of the brightest spots for the Cleveland Browns during a dismal period of their franchise's history, joining the ranks of Joe Thomas, Myles Garrett, and Joel Bitonio as some of the franchise's best modern players. Among Browns running backs, he sits third all-time in career rushing yards (6,843) and rushing touchdowns (51) behind only Jim Brown and Leroy Kelly, both Hall of Famers and Ring of Honor members. How effective Chubb will be at his second destination is much harder to predict. 2024 saw him return from a devastating knee injury, when he tore his ACL, meniscus, and MCL in Week 2 of 2023.

## 282 RUNNING BACKS

His season was then shorted by a broken foot, but the ramp-up showed a major loss in the speed and explosion we were accustomed to seeing out of Chubb in his first six seasons. His 3.3 yards per attempt were nearly two yards below his previous career low (5.0). He also set career lows in yards before contact (1.7) and success rate (41%), as well as a general lack of involvement in Cleveland's passing game. Chubb's incentive-laden deal was a no-brainer flier for the Texans, as Chubb is a running back who can rank among the league's best at the peak of his powers.

James Conner		Height: 6-1 Weight: 233 College: Pittsburgh										Draft: 2017/3 (105)					Born: 5-May-1995				Age: 30						
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	ARI	13/13	663	183	782	7	4.3	3	6.0%	13	116	12	55%	7	42	2.1	58	46	300	1	79%	6.5	0.2	-3.4%	28	32	25
2023	ARI	13/13	533	208	1040	7	5.0	0	18.3%	5	230	4	49%	24	58	3.1	33	27	165	2	82%	6.1	0.2	-3.4%	22	20	28
2024	ARI	16/16	619	236	1094	8	4.6	4	4.8%	15	136	11	52%	18	87	3.0	55	47	414	1	85%	8.8	2.3	11.3%	17	80	14
2025	ARI		198	894	7	4.5	2	3.5%									40	35	279	1	86%	8.0		20.7%			

The best ability is availability, and Conner set a new personal best in 2024. For the first time in his career, he managed to last 16 games before getting hurt and missing the season finale. Conner is still going strong as he hits age 30, and nowhere is that more clear than in his continued ability to run through guys. Conner had a 28.0% avoided tackle rate—both broken tackles and non-contact forced missed tackles—which ranked sixth among qualified running backs. He added an extra 3.2 yards per carry after avoided tackles, eighth best in the league. Turning solid gains into big, explosive plays was the name of his game—his 34 explosive runs were tied for fourth in the league, behind the big trio of Saquon Barkley, Derrick Henry, and Jahmyr Gibbs. Conner isn't on the same level as those guys, but he has more than earned his plaudits.

James Cook		Height: 5-11 Weight: 190 College: Georgia										Draft: 2022/2 (63)					Born: 25-Sep-1999				Age: 26						
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	BUF	16/0	269	89	507	2	5.7	1	22.8%	--	117	--	55%	--	17	2.3	32	21	180	1	66%	8.6	0.7	2.3%	21	29	27
2023	BUF	17/13	634	237	1122	2	4.7	4	11.9%	12	201	8	57%	4	40	1.9	54	44	445	4	81%	10.1	2.3	37.7%	3	159	4
2024	BUF	16/16	485	207	1009	16	4.9	1	18.1%	3	239	5	55%	11	44	2.6	38	32	258	2	84%	8.1	0.7	26.8%	8	90	11
2025	BUF		205	960	10	4.7	2	9.6%									37	30	233	2	80%	7.9		11.9%			

Cook has taken a few strategic pauses leading into the 2025 season, starting with skipping voluntary OTAs as he seeks a mega-extension. He did report for mandatory minicamp, but the contract issue lingers. It has reached the “post the contract demands on Instagram for everyone to see” phase, and while it doesn’t seem like a blowup is imminent, this is definitely something to monitor. Cook quickly developed into one of the league’s better backs in 2024. After scoring just twice in both 2022 and 2023, Cook lit the NFL on fire with 16 rushing scores in 2024. His success is the primary reason why the Bills were able to run more and take some of the load off of Josh Allen’s shoulders. Cook enjoyed a pristine 2.2 yards before contact per attempt in 2024, good for fifth best in the NFL. With the entire offensive line returning for 2025, we should expect more of the same.

Blake Corum		Height: 5-8 Weight: 210 College: Michigan										Draft: 2024/3 (83)					Born: 25-Nov-2000				Age: 25						
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2024	LAR	17/1	119	58	207	0	3.6	0	-5.4%	--	8	--	43%	--	15	2.4	8	7	58	0	88%	8.3	2.2	41.3%	--	29	--
2025	LAR		100	403	3	4.0	1	-4.7%									9	8	58	1	82%	7.5		10.5%			

Corum had difficulty seeing the field as a rookie, in more ways than one. He only had more than 15 offensive snaps in one game and never had more than eight touches as the Rams relied heavily on Kyren Williams. When you’re the backup to the running back with the most snaps in the league, you’re not going to have a ton of opportunities to strut your stuff. When he did get the chance to carry the ball, Corum showed off his tackle-breaking prowess with a very respectable 22.4% avoided tackle rate. His issue, though, was that he averaged just 1.1 yards before contact, 12th lowest among rushers with at least 50 carries and a full half yard behind Williams. He has never been known for his wiggle, but you’d like to see him squeeze through a few more holes rather than running through defenders going forward.

**Isaiah Davis**

Height: 6-1 Weight: 220 College: South Dakota State

Draft: 2024/5 (173)

Born: 21-Feb-2002

Age: 23

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2024	NYJ	17/0	110	30	174	1	5.8	0	39.2%	--	56	--	63%	--	7	3.2	12	9	75	1	75%	8.3	0.9	30.8%	--	33	--
2025	NYJ		42	202	1	4.8	0	3.3%									10	8	60	0	78%	7.8		6.0%			

Isaiah Davis had very good rookie numbers in a small sample size, but he's stuck behind two very talented running backs on the depth chart. He's a big, physical back, known for his strength rather than his speed, but like Breece Hall and Braelon Allen he's also useful as a receiver. Rich Cimini reported in June that the Jets planned to feature all three backs in a run-first offense. We'll believe it when we see it.

**Ray Davis**

Height: 5-8 Weight: 220 College: Kentucky

Draft: 2024/4 (128)

Born: 11-Nov-1999

Age: 26

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2024	BUF	17/0	264	113	442	3	3.9	0	-0.9%	26	36	29	49%	27	30	2.8	19	17	189	3	89%	11.1	2.9	60.6%	--	87	--
2025	BUF		140	581	4	4.1	1	-2.5%									14	11	110	1	80%	9.8		34.1%			

Davis may be a backup, but he's more than just a benchwarmer. He scored three receiving touchdowns on just 17 receptions last year. Only three running backs in the NFL had more receiving scores than Davis (though many others also had three). He also ranked fourth in yards per reception out of all running backs (minimum 10 snaps) and his EPA per target ranked third among such backs. At nearly nine touches per game, Davis is an important piece to the overall puzzle in Buffalo. They do need him to step up from the 3.9 yards per carry average, though.

**Emari Demercado**

Height: 5-9 Weight: 215 College: TCU

Draft: 2023/FA

Born: 20-Jan-1999

Age: 26

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2023	ARI	14/2	292	58	284	2	4.9	0	3.0%	--	27	--	43%	--	14	2.9	30	21	119	0	70%	5.7	-1.6	-43.1%	48	-44	47
2024	ARI	13/0	164	24	223	1	9.3	0	72.4%	--	71	--	50%	--	11	7.0	20	16	104	0	80%	6.5	-1.1	-11.3%	--	2	--
2025	ARI		20	124	1	6.1	0	27.4%									9	7	44	0	76%	6.2		-6.9%			

While Demarcado was scarcely used as a rusher, he did see quite a bit of use as a receiver. He was James Conner's primary backup on passing downs and saw his DVOA improve significantly there from his rookie season. He's not irreplaceable or anything, but it is a niche that he has carved out for himself, and he's the best on Arizona's roster at it—especially because Arizona didn't add any external competition for him. Demarcado also has some pop in his legs; his 25% explosive run rate was second-most among running backs with at least 20 carries. We're talking a small sample size, but Demarcado does take advantage of the opportunities given him.

**AJ Dillon**

Height: 6-0 Weight: 247 College: Boston College

Draft: 2020/2 (62)

Born: 2-May-1998

Age: 27

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	GB	17/3	537	186	770	7	4.1	1	9.2%	11	147	8	57%	5	24	2.6	43	28	206	0	65%	7.4	0.5	-24.2%	45	-26	43
2023	GB	15/6	494	178	613	2	3.4	0	-10.5%	40	-16	40	51%	16	26	2.3	28	22	223	0	79%	10.1	3.7	29.9%	7	69	12
2025	PHI		27	113	1	4.1	0	-1.5%									3	3	18	0	78%	7.2		3.4%			

Dillon missed the entire 2024 season with a neck injury but has said he's good to go after signing a one-year deal with the Eagles. Dillon never fully became the reliable power back the Packers envisioned when they drafted him in the second round, but some of his hesitation at the line of scrimmage could be negated by the blocking of the Eagles offensive line, reducing negative plays. With Kenneth Gainwell moving on to the Steelers, Dillon is slotted in as the Saquon Barkley's primary backup ahead of 2024 fourth-round pick Will Shipley.

J.K. Dobbins			Height: 5-10 Weight: 215 College: Ohio State								Draft: 2020/2 (55)					Born: 17-Dec-1998				Age: 27							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	BAL	8/8	201	92	520	2	5.7	0	28.6%	--	142	--	58%	--	13	1.9	8	7	42	1	88%	6.0	0.2	40.9%	--	26	--
2023	BAL	1/1	30	8	22	1	2.8	0	15.2%	--	8	--	50%	--	1	1.9	3	2	15	0	67%	7.5	1.9	-10.2%	--	1	--
2024	LAC	13/11	533	195	905	9	4.6	0	3.3%	20	100	17	45%	39	42	2.8	39	32	153	0	84%	4.8	-1.9	-47.7%	45	-73	46
2025	DEN		108	473	4	4.4	1	1.3%									26	20	149	1	78%	7.5		5.4%			

Dobbins spent most of the 2025 offseason in limbo—the Chargers placed the rarely-used UFA tender on him, meaning they held his negotiating rights into late July, after our publishing deadline. That didn’t stop other teams from taking a crack at him, though it may have slowed down interest, as he was unsigned until mid-June when the Broncos finally picked him up. Dobbins did have the lowest rush and receiving DVOAs of his career, but considering he was coming back from back-to-back season-ending injuries, that’s perhaps understandable. He doesn’t have the same speed he used to, but he still showed he can be a useful part of a rotation.

Rico Dowdle			Height: 6-0 Weight: 215 College: South Carolina								Draft: 2020/FA					Born: 14-Jun-1998				Age: 27							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2023	DAL	16/0	247	89	361	2	4.1	0	-1.7%	--	25	--	51%	--	22	2.8	22	17	144	2	77%	8.5	2.4	27.3%	--	53	--
2024	DAL	16/15	636	235	1079	2	4.6	3	5.3%	14	132	12	53%	14	54	2.9	49	39	249	3	80%	6.4	-0.6	-1.8%	29	33	27
2025	CAR		88	386	3	4.4	1	-1.3%									33	26	176	1	78%	6.8		0.1%			

Dowdle rushed 56 times for 392 yards and one touchdown in a three-game stretch for the Cowboys against the Giants, Bengals, and Panthers: not exactly a Murderer’s Row of defenses. He also went 23-104-0 against the Eagles in Week 17, though the Cowboys force-fed him carries late in a blowout to push him past 1,000 yards. Dowdle looked like a replacement-level back before his late-season hot streak and was starting to turn back into one at year’s end. He’ll back up Chuba Hubbard, but Trevor Etienne will likely get many of the third-down touches, leaving Dowdle with the highly limited role he had for most of his Cowboys career.

Gus Edwards			Height: 6-1 Weight: 238 College: Rutgers								Draft: 2018/FA					Born: 13-Apr-1995				Age: 30							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	BAL	9/4	159	87	433	3	5.0	1	12.9%	--	87	--	61%	--	16	1.8	2	0	0	0	0%	0.0	0.0	-90.9%	--	-9	--
2023	BAL	17/9	470	198	810	13	4.1	3	14.6%	8	206	7	58%	3	29	2.4	13	12	180	0	92%	15.0	7.2	70.4%	--	55	--
2024	LAC	11/6	223	101	365	4	3.6	0	-4.2%	29	19	33	51%	20	19	2.6	5	3	6	0	60%	2.0	-4.0	-114.5%	--	-26	--

Edwards put up the lowest efficiency numbers of his career and played second-fiddle to J.K. Dobbins in the Chargers’ backfield in 2024. It’s not a huge surprise that the Chargers cut him in March, as 3.6 yards per carry isn’t exactly what they were looking for in their revamped running game. As of press time, he remains unsigned.

Austin Ekeler			Height: 5-9 Weight: 200 College: Western State								Draft: 2017/FA					Born: 17-May-1995				Age: 30							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	LAC	17/17	734	204	915	13	4.5	5	2.9%	15	103	15	50%	27	45	2.4	128	107	722	5	84%	6.7	0.5	2.9%	19	119	5
2023	LAC	14/14	630	179	628	5	3.5	5	-15.2%	44	-55	44	48%	28	37	2.3	75	51	436	1	69%	8.5	2.5	-11.1%	34	12	30
2024	WAS	12/6	409	77	367	4	4.8	2	15.3%	--	81	--	52%	--	20	1.9	41	35	366	0	85%	10.5	3.9	24.3%	10	85	13
2025	WAS		70	317	3	4.5	1	7.3%									42	35	304	1	82%	8.8		23.1%			

Ekeler served his role well as an all-purpose back who was able to fill in for carries and give the Commanders a receiving threat out of the backfield. He wasn’t a huge part of the offense—his 77 carries and 35 receptions were both his fewest since his rookie season—but he did carve out a nice role for himself when healthy. He was seventh in DYAR on screens and ran hot in the red zone with 34% DVOA and three touchdowns on five goal-line carries. He should provide more value as a kick returner, where he was second-team All-Pro, now that the touchback has moved to the 35-yard line and more returns are expected league-wide in 2025.

**Ezekiel Elliott**

Height: 6-0 Weight: 225 College: Ohio State

Draft: 2016/1 (4)

Born: 22-Jul-1995

Age: 30

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	DAL	15/14	558	231	876	12	3.8	0	-0.9%	24	77	22	49%	28	36	1.9	23	17	92	0	74%	5.4	-1.2	-22.8%	--	-12	--
2023	NE	17/5	539	184	642	3	3.5	2	-8.8%	37	-1	37	46%	36	36	2.1	65	51	313	2	78%	6.1	-0.4	-7.9%	29	20	27
2024	DAL	15/2	258	74	226	3	3.1	1	-12.6%	--	-13	--	47%	--	15	2.1	15	12	69	0	80%	5.8	-0.1	4.2%	--	14	--

The reunion with the Cowboys did not go how either side might have wanted, but it wasn't completely unexpected. Elliott's yards per carry have dropped each season since 2021. He converted three of his five goal-line carries into touchdowns, but overall he had -20.9% DVOA in the red zone and was out-carried by Rico Dowdle inside the 20. He was released by the Cowboys in January and signed with the Chargers practice squad as potential playoff depth, but he was not elevated for their game. He remains a free agent as of this writing.

**Audric Estime**

Height: 5-11 Weight: 227 College: Notre Dame

Draft: 2024/5 (147)

Born: 6-Sep-2003

Age: 22

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2024	DEN	13/1	138	76	310	2	4.1	2	-1.4%	--	22	--	54%	--	12	2.9	5	5	27	0	100%	5.4	-1.2	5.8%	--	5	--
2025	DEN		63	259	2	4.1	1	-4.2%									9	7	45	0	76%	6.9		-2.0%			

Did Estime "earn" a larger role as the season went on or did he simply benefit from Javonte Williams underperforming? Estime and Jaleel McLaughlin both finished with slightly positive rushing DVOA while Williams finished at -26.7%. Denver may have had a predictability issue in their run game last year. Over 65% of Estime's carries came on inside zone or man/duo blocking schemes. Only 9.2% of his carries were outside zone. For contrast, the Broncos used outside zone on 48.7% of McLaughlin's carries. Playing to the strengths of your players makes sense, but not to the extent that you tip your hand. Unfortunately for Estime, Denver getting less predictable probably means fewer snaps and carries for the second-year back, especially now that he's contending with rookie second-rounder RJ Harvey and J.K. Dobbins. He could carve out a short-yardage role, as he had a 90% success rate on 10 short-yardage carries, but that's about it.

**Travis Etienne**

Height: 5-10 Weight: 215 College: Clemson

Draft: 2021/1 (25)

Born: 26-Jan-1999

Age: 26

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	JAX	17/12	669	220	1125	5	5.1	4	0.8%	20	90	17	52%	16	61	2.2	45	35	316	0	78%	9.0	2.4	12.0%	12	63	13
2023	JAX	17/17	856	267	1008	11	3.8	0	-4.9%	33	43	30	45%	38	69	2.1	73	58	476	1	79%	8.2	1.6	22.7%	8	152	5
2024	JAX	15/15	494	150	558	2	3.7	1	-7.7%	35	6	35	47%	35	35	2.5	52	39	254	0	75%	6.5	-0.2	-14.6%	37	-2	38
2025	JAX		159	696	5	4.4	2	1.1%									38	29	219	1	78%	7.5		6.4%			

Should we discuss the fact that Etienne dealt with a hamstring injury early in the season? Of course we should. It was a main factor in Tank Bigsby's early-season involvement. Etienne mostly chaired the committee over the course of the season, playing 66% of the snaps before Week 5 and 63% of the snaps from Week 10 to Week 15 before the Jaguars shut it all down. But the people who drafted Etienne are not here anymore, and if Bhayshul Tuten is making a run at anybody's role in this committee, it's likely Etienne's. Etienne is probably better than he showed last year, but it would not be surprising if he was on the one-year contract circuit in 2026 after fading out of this offense quickly in 2025. He's not as explosive as most of his teammates and, simply put, the Jaguars don't need to feed him the rock anymore. His weird third-down running problem (-39.9% DVOA on 11 attempts in 2024, -39.1% DVOA on 26 attempts in 2023) remained, and there's almost no reason for him to handle red zone carries over Bigsby at this point unless Bigsby is tired. But the projections are more optimistic about a rebound.

**Trevor Etienne**

Height: 5-8 Weight: 198 College: Georgia

Draft: 2025/4 (114)

Born: 9-Jul-2004

Age: 21

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2025	CAR		49	198	1	4.0	1	-8.2%									13	10	72	1	77%	7.1		0.3%			

Etienne is one of the most ordinary collegiate all-purpose backs you'll ever see: a sure-handed dump-off target and slashing runner with just enough speed and elusiveness to be part of a committee backfield, first for a few years at Florida and then at Georgia last year. If his brother had not been a star at Clemson, Etienne probably would not have been a priority acquisition

## 286 RUNNING BACKS

for the Bulldogs, and he may also have gone undrafted. The Panthers reached for Etienne in the fourth round and likely have a third-down role carved out for him. He's the kind of player who ends up with 50 receptions for 310 yards or so, with lots of short catches at the ends of blowouts. If that sort of player floats your boat, you are either in a weirdly structured PPR league or you work in the Panthers front office.

Jerome Ford		Height: 5-10 Weight: 210 College: Cincinnati											Draft: 2022/5 (156)				Born: 12-Sep-1999			Age: 26							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	CLE	13/0	14	8	12	0	1.5	0	-73.1%	--	-18	--	25%	--	2	2.9	0	0	0	0	--	0.0	--	--	--	--	--
2023	CLE	17/12	629	204	813	4	4.0	1	-18.6%	46	-81	48	42%	44	39	2.8	63	44	319	5	70%	7.3	0.2	-0.2%	18	50	16
2024	CLE	14/6	526	104	565	3	5.4	0	8.8%	9	73	21	47%	33	30	3.3	43	37	225	0	86%	6.1	-0.5	-14.7%	38	-2	37
2025	CLE		70	332	2	4.8	1	4.0%									23	18	130	1	78%	7.2		3.7%			

Ford now finds himself in an interesting predicament in the Browns backfield. On one hand, he has improved in each of the last three seasons he's played with Cleveland. 2024 saw him post a 47% rushing success rate. He also finished fifth among all backs in Rushing Yards over Expectation per carry (1.1, per NFL Next Gen Stats). Overall, Cleveland put up a bottom-five rushing offense, but the growth Ford has shown is notable. However, Cleveland made a massive investment at running back in the draft, selecting both Quinshon Judkins and Dylan Sampson. Ford has always worked well in backs-by-committee scenarios, as he did last year. He re-negotiated his contract to remain with a Browns team that is already looking to turn the page.

D'Onta Foreman		Height: 6-0 Weight: 235 College: Texas											Draft: 2017/3 (89)				Born: 24-Apr-1996			Age: 29							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	CAR	17/9	353	203	914	5	4.5	1	-3.3%	27	44	28	50%	25	27	2.2	9	5	26	0	56%	5.2	-1.5	-42.8%	--	-15	--
2023	CHI	9/8	269	109	425	4	3.9	1	1.6%	24	46	28	52%	12	21	2.3	16	11	77	1	69%	7.0	0.3	8.0%	--	19	--
2024	CLE	11/3	195	71	232	0	3.3	2	-28.6%	--	-65	--	41%	--	6	1.9	8	6	54	0	75%	9.0	0.9	10.2%	--	9	--

It's tough to be a power back in the NFL when you can't power through people. Foreman is coming off the worst season of his journeyman career, with career lows in yards per carry (3.3) and rushing success rate (41%). The drop-off comes in part because of his inability to get through contact, with only six broken tackles on the season by FTN Data charting. A free agent at press time.

Kenneth Gainwell		Height: 5-9 Weight: 200 College: Memphis											Draft: 2021/5 (150)				Born: 14-Mar-1999			Age: 26							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	PHI	17/0	331	53	240	4	4.5	0	24.7%	--	85	--	66%	--	9	1.9	29	23	169	0	79%	7.3	0.3	5.3%	16	31	26
2023	PHI	16/2	442	84	364	2	4.3	3	-7.5%	--	4	--	46%	--	21	2.6	37	30	183	0	81%	6.1	-0.7	-3.2%	21	22	25
2024	PHI	17/1	301	75	290	1	3.9	0	-25.6%	--	-47	--	28%	--	24	2.5	22	16	116	0	73%	7.3	0.2	-10.0%	--	4	--
2025	PIT		39	162	1	4.1	0	-4.1%									9	7	52	1	80%	7.1		3.4%			

Gainwell started quickly as a rookie in Philly, thanks no doubt to some sturdy work by the studly offensive line. But not much has happened since, and he was not very efficient last season, with a meager 28% success rate and a lone touchdown. Gainwell (who has an incredible name for a running back) moved west across the Quaker State to Pittsburgh, where he will compete with third-rounder Kaleb Johnson to share carries with Jaylen Warren. Gainwell gives up several inches and 25 pounds to Johnson, so perhaps Gainwell should wear his Super Bowl ring to his next weigh-in to help make up the difference.

Jahmyr Gibbs		Height: 5-9 Weight: 202 College: Alabama											Draft: 2023/1 (12)				Born: 20-Mar-2002			Age: 23							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2023	DET	15/3	596	182	945	10	5.2	2	17.4%	7	194	9	46%	35	56	2.8	71	52	316	1	73%	6.1	-0.6	-7.5%	28	27	23
2024	DET	17/4	639	250	1412	16	5.6	1	35.2%	1	457	2	57%	5	82	2.9	65	52	517	4	83%	9.9	2.7	26.7%	9	152	2
2025	DET		225	1172	11	5.2	2	18.3%									61	45	407	3	74%	9.0		18.1%			

Gibbs averaged 2.8 yards before contact per attempt, second among running backs to Saquon Barkley (3.0) in 2024. He ran into stacked boxes with seven or more defenders much less often than Derrick Henry or Saquon Barkley. Gibbs would be a 1,000-yard back for any decent team, but the Lions scheme and offensive line made him a 2,000-total yard, 20-touchdown back. The Lions made minimal personnel changes on offense, so Gibbs remains a first-round fantasy pick. Just remember that David Montgomery siphons off some touchdowns, and 5.6 yards per carry is an unsustainably high figure.

Antonio Gibson											Draft: 2020/3 (66)			Born: 23-Jun-1998			Age: 27										
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	WAS	15/6	489	149	546	3	3.7	1	-16.7%	41	-52	40	50%	23	21	1.9	58	46	353	2	79%	7.7	0.3	11.6%	13	89	7
2023	WAS	16/2	473	65	265	1	4.1	3	3.7%	--	31	--	43%	--	25	3.1	59	48	389	2	81%	8.1	0.3	4.7%	17	63	14
2024	NE	17/3	359	120	538	1	4.5	2	-7.9%	36	4	36	45%	41	42	3.6	30	23	206	0	79%	9.0	2.1	19.0%	13	53	20
2025	NE			41	179	1	4.3	0	-2.0%								10	8	68	0	86%	8.1		19.4%			

Just because a running back used to play wide receiver doesn't always mean that he's effective in the passing game. But in Gibson's case, he is. He was also the more effective rusher for New England last season. Rhamondre Stevenson had fumbling issues, but Gibson also outproduced him in win yards per carry—defined as yards after an avoided tackle, whether the defender makes contact or not—4.1 to 2.8. In fact, Gibson led the entire NFL in win yards per carry. Gibson is in danger of being phased out with rookie TreVeyon Henderson (who shares a lot of the same traits) now in town and Stevenson still expected to be the lead early-down back, but Gibson was the better player last year. It shouldn't surprise anyone if Gibson carves out a role once again, even if that means he must overtake Stevenson on the depth chart.

DJ Giddens											Draft: 2025/5 (151)			Born: 26-Aug-2003			Age: 22										
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2025	IND			84	340	3	4.1	1	-6.8%										18	14	111	0	78%	8.1		6.3%	

Giddens mixes excellent receiving skills (58-679-4 in three seasons at Kansas State) with a surprisingly-built 212-pound frame. He ran a 4.43s 40-yard dash at the combine and has enough flashes on his college tape to suggest he can be at least a committee back in the pros. The tape, however, was inconsistent. He wasn't a great pass protector, and didn't really play as fast as his timed speed on every down. A focused Giddens can challenge for the Colts' third-down role behind Jonathan Taylor this season. But as a fifth-rounder, Giddens isn't guaranteed anything and will have to impress in camp to get the spot.

Tyler Goodson											Draft: 2022/FA			Born: 10-Nov-2000			Age: 25											
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	
2023	IND	6/1	50	13	87	0	6.7	0	43.4%	--	26	--	54%	--	0	1.9	9	6	34	0	67%	5.7	-0.2	-36.1%	--	-14	--	
2024	IND	16/0	132	32	153	1	4.8	0	5.5%	--	18	--	47%	--	6	1.8	15	11	61	1	73%	5.5	-0.7	-36.8%	--	-18	--	
2025	IND			9	40	0	4.5	0	1.2%									4	4	25	0	80%	7.0		0.3%			

Goodson ran 81 routes in 125 snaps, if you were wondering what the Colts believed his strengths are. Drops are a problem when he is not used as a pure outlet and he hasn't generated many broken tackles in the open field when given a chance. The Colts essentially gave him three games of run—Weeks 5 to 7, where he played between 38% and 48% of the snaps as Jonathan Taylor sat—then relegated him to one series a game or less. DJ Giddens will push for his role in training camp.

Isaac Guerendo											Draft: 2024/4 (129)			Born: 28-Jun-2000			Age: 25											
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	
2024	SF	16/3	227	84	420	4	5.0	1	1.4%	--	34	--	48%	--	21	2.6	16	15	152	0	94%	10.1	0.4	15.6%	--	28	--	
2025	SF			114	532	4	4.7	1	6.3%									15	11	100	1	77%	8.8		16.8%			

## 288 RUNNING BACKS

2024's Speed Score champ got more work than expected in his first season in San Francisco, handling 99 touches before he too was injured and missed time. Guerendo may not be Christian McCaffrey, but an above-average DVOA both on the ground and through the air is nothing to sneeze at; only 24 running backs managed that with double-digit opportunities both ways. His 5.8 yards per touch ranked ninth among running backs with at least 50 touches. Jordan Mason is gone, too, giving less competition for Guerendo behind the injury-prone CMC. All he has to do now is dodge Kyle Shanahan falling in love with a *different* mid-round running back this year...

Breece Hall			Height: 5-11 Weight: 217 College: Iowa State			Draft: 2022/2 (36)			Born: 31-May-2001			Age: 24															
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	NYJ	7/2	233	80	463	4	5.8	1	25.4%	--	110	--	51%	--	21	3.3	31	19	218	1	61%	11.5	3.5	-1.6%	27	20	31
2023	NYJ	17/16	667	223	994	5	4.5	2	-4.8%	32	33	32	41%	46	77	2.3	95	76	591	4	80%	7.8	1.3	10.8%	13	127	7
2024	NYJ	16/16	720	209	876	5	4.2	6	-9.4%	39	-7	39	47%	32	57	2.9	76	57	483	3	75%	8.5	1.1	-8.3%	33	23	30
2025	NYJ		225	975	7	4.3	2	-2.7%									55	41	344	2	74%	8.5		9.9%			

There have been plenty of rumors about the Jets sending Hall elsewhere, given that his rookie contract ends after the 2025 season. According to Hall, Aaron Glenn personally called him to tell him that the Jets were not trading him. After Hall's numbers fell in 2024, he told NFL.com, "I got to prove that I am the guy." Hall is still a good blend of size, power, and speed, and his broken tackles are a lot more about his strength than they are about juking guys and eluding traffic. We'll have to see how much work Hall loses to Braelon Allen and Isaiah Davis if the Jets do run more of a committee for their running backs.

Omarion Hampton			Height: 6-0 Weight: 221 College: North Carolina			Draft: 2025/1 (22)			Born: 16-Mar-2003			Age: 22															
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2025	LAC		213	918	8	4.3	2	1.3%									52	40	295	2	78%	7.3		5.1%			

In a world without Ashton Jeanty, Hampton would have been the darling running back of the draft. Second in BackCAST with a 4.46s 40 at 221 pounds, a solid blend of power and speed, a receiving threat, and a pass blocker? It's a match made in heaven for Jim Harbaugh as he looks to revamp the Chargers' running back room. From a fantasy perspective, the fact that Hampton is sharing a backfield with Najee Harris hurts, because Greg Roman does like to rotate his backs. He also, however, praises sticking with the hot hand, so if Hampton can excel early enough, he'll steal carries from Harris sooner rather than later.

Najee Harris			Height: 6-1 Weight: 242 College: Alabama			Draft: 2021/1 (24)			Born: 9-Mar-1998			Age: 27															
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	PIT	17/17	763	272	1034	7	3.8	3	-4.8%	30	42	29	47%	38	74	2.2	54	41	229	3	77%	5.6	-0.9	-9.8%	33	14	33
2023	PIT	17/17	569	255	1035	8	4.1	2	-2.4%	28	65	22	49%	25	56	2.8	38	29	170	0	76%	5.9	-0.4	-4.8%	25	22	26
2024	PIT	17/17	569	263	1043	6	4.0	0	-5.6%	31	32	30	47%	34	62	2.6	48	36	283	0	75%	7.9	1.1	-4.9%	31	24	29
2025	LAC		124	512	5	4.1	1	-0.5%									30	23	171	1	77%	7.3		4.7%			

Harris has topped 1,000 yards from scrimmage in each of the last four seasons, one of only 15 players and eight running backs to manage that level of consistency. If the best ability is availability, Harris is up there with the best of the best. However, Harris has had negative rushing and receiving DVOAs in all four of those seasons, and he's the only player in the league to manage that feat. His numbers aren't terrible, and there's reason to hope that behind a better offensive line and in a more functioning offense his efficiency numbers could improve. But he also has tough competition from Omarion Hampton in the Chargers' backfield, so buyer beware.

RJ Harvey			Height: 5-8 Weight: 205 College: UCF			Draft: 2025/2 (60)			Born: 4-Feb-2001			Age: 24															
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2025	DEN		205	849	5	4.1	2	-4.7%									56	43	335	2	77%	7.8		10.1%			

The second-rounder out of Central Florida couldn't have landed in a better spot. Harvey's elusiveness is his greatest asset, and it will play extremely well in an offense that finished 30th in win yards per carry. Sean Payton has a history of getting the absolute most out of small, shifty backs (think Darren Sproles and Alvin Kamara) and has spoken glowingly about Harvey. His biggest competition for touches and snaps is now J.K. Dobbins, but Harvey doesn't have the size to excel with a ton of carries anyway. He and Dobbins will likely share the early-down role with Harvey getting most of the passing-down work. Bo Nix had the 11th-highest checkdown rate and Denver was ninth in screen pass yardage to players out of the backfield last season. Payton has always had a good screen game and for the first time in Denver, he has the guy to maximize that element of the offense.

<b>TreVeyon Henderson</b>		Height: 5-10	Weight: 208	College: Ohio State	Draft: 2025/2 (38)	Born: 22-Oct-2002	Age: 23																				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2025	NE		226	934	7	4.1	2	-4.1%											40	30	202	1	76%	6.7		-3.8%	

Henderson averaged a massive 4.43 yards after contact in his last year at Ohio State. The second-round pick has the acceleration and speed to be one of the more exciting backs in the league, even drawing comparisons from scouts to Jamaal Charles. The fit isn't spectacular, though. Scouting reports suggest Henderson is better as a runner in zone-blocking schemes, but New England was 24th in inside zone rate and 18th in outside zone rate last season. The good news is it's a new coaching staff and a re-made offensive line, but the fit is also questionable in the passing game. Drake Maye does not like checking down and Henderson will be competing with both Rhamondre Stevenson and Antonio Gibson for opportunities. The expectation seems to be that Stevenson will be the early-down back with Henderson getting a lot of the passing-down work, but Gibson was the far better back in 2024 and shares a lot of traits with Henderson (good receiving back, elusive runner). Henderson's 2025 has a wide range of outcomes, from frustratingly uninvolved to breaking out as one of the league's game-breakers. Long-term, Henderson's ceiling is hard to overstate.

<b>Derrick Henry</b>		Height: 6-2	Weight: 247	College: Alabama	Draft: 2016/2 (45)	Born: 4-Jan-1994	Age: 31																						
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk		
2022	TEN	16/16	648	349	1538	13	4.4	6	-4.3%	29	60	27	48%	32	80	2.4			41	33	398	0	80%	12.1	5.6	19.7%	9	79	10
2023	TEN	17/17	558	280	1167	12	4.2	0	2.7%	21	135	18	47%	31	59	2.4			36	28	214	0	78%	7.6	1.4	-9.0%	30	10	31
2024	BAL	17/17	635	325	1921	16	5.9	3	29.2%	2	537	1	60%	4	84	3.4			22	19	193	2	86%	10.2	3.7	57.9%	--	95	--
2025	BAL				243	1345	12	5.5	2	26.1%									22	18	164	1	78%	9.4		24.6%			

Henry is going to run out of gas eventually, but you won't see us as the ones predicting when. As a 30-year-old back who had led the league in carries four times during his career, Henry still led the league in rushing touchdowns (16) and had a 1,900-yard season. If you want to know how much the rushing landscape changed in 2024, Henry led the league with 280 carries in 2023 yet did not with 325 carries last season. With Lamar Jackson alongside him in the backfield, Henry is in one of the most advantageous situations for a back. He was only stuffed on 13.8% of his rushing attempts, the fourth lowest rate among backs with at least 100 carries. He has typically been good at avoiding stuffed runs because of his size, but when he was stuffed on 15.7% of his attempts in 2023 (10th) he averaged 1.8 yards before contact per rush, compared to 2.5 yards this past season with Baltimore.

<b>Khalil Herbert</b>		Height: 5-9	Weight: 212	College: Virginia Tech	Draft: 2021/6 (217)	Born: 21-Apr-1998	Age: 27																						
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk		
2022	CHI	13/1	301	129	731	4	5.7	0	17.2%	3	128	11	47%	34	30	2.8			12	9	57	1	75%	6.3	-0.1	-17.4%	--	-2	--
2023	CHI	12/9	357	132	611	2	4.6	1	6.4%	16	80	21	49%	22	31	2.3			31	20	134	1	65%	6.7	0.3	-12.2%	36	3	36
2024	2TM	14/1	139	36	130	1	3.6	1	6.6%	--	29	--	58%	--	4	1.8			11	10	25	0	91%	2.5	-3.9	-96.1%	--	-50	--
2025	IND				35	139	1	4.0	0	-7.6%									6	4	26	0	60%	7.1		-20.1%			

Somehow Herbert always finds a way to be fantasy football relevant, but last year it was by omission. After the Bengals traded for him to replace the injured Zack Moss, they wouldn't trust him with a real role for weeks, turning Chase Brown into one of the most-volume heavy backs in the NFL. Herbert played just 24 offensive snaps in his first six games. A 20-69-0 line in a start against the Steelers in Week 18 did not exactly make Herbert a hot prospect in free agency. He'll play Jonathan Taylor's backup on the Colts this year in what we'll call the "Trey Sermon Role," which has led Sermon to exactly 91 carries and 353 snaps over the past two seasons. It'll take injuries for Herbert to be fantasy-relevant again. Unless it's again by omission.

290 RUNNING BACKS

Justice Hill	Height: 5-10 Weight: 195 College: Oklahoma State											Draft: 2019/4 (113)				Born: 14-Nov-1997				Age: 28							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	BAL	15/0	265	49	262	0	5.3	2	18.7%	--	55	--	59%	--	9	1.8	12	12	58	0	100%	4.8	-1.0	-13.7%	--	0	--
2023	BAL	16/5	436	84	387	3	4.6	1	12.8%	--	77	--	50%	--	25	2.3	39	28	206	1	72%	7.4	0.5	-23.1%	43	-19	43
2024	BAL	15/0	414	47	228	1	4.9	0	7.7%	--	32	--	44%	--	17	2.7	51	42	383	3	82%	9.1	2.0	42.1%	3	131	6
2025	BAL			41	197	1	4.8	1	9.6%								30	23	177	1	77%	7.8		7.3%			

With Derrick Henry taking over the bellcow role with the Ravens, Hill did not get a lot of time as a runner. He only carried the ball 47 times, his lowest total since 2020. But he was able to contribute as a pass catcher with career highs in targets, receptions, and yards. He was fourth in DYAR among running backs on wheel routes and seventh on screens. He'll likely continue to factor into the passing game but could end up splitting more time there with a healthy Keaton Mitchell.

Chuba Hubbard	Height: 6-1 Weight: 210 College: Oklahoma State											Draft: 2021/4 (126)				Born: 11-Jun-1999				Age: 26							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	CAR	15/2	275	95	466	2	4.9	1	11.4%	--	75	--	46%	--	12	1.8	18	14	171	0	82%	12.2	3.4	38.4%	--	49	--
2023	CAR	17/12	679	238	902	5	3.8	1	4.5%	19	139	17	47%	32	47	2.4	44	39	233	0	89%	6.0	-0.5	-15.8%	39	-5	39
2024	CAR	15/15	712	250	1195	10	4.8	4	12.3%	7	228	6	56%	8	57	3.0	54	43	171	1	80%	4.0	-2.3	-54.7%	47	-124	47
2025	CAR			229	1031	7	4.5	2	1.2%								51	41	234	1	80%	5.7		-10.2%			

Hubbard had three huge games last season: 21 carries for 114 yards and 5-55-1 receiving in the Andy Dalton-helmed Week 3 win over the Raiders; 28-152-1 against the Giants in Week 10; and 25-152-2 in the overtime win against the Falcons before straining a calf in Week 16. Hubbard also hovered around 100 yards when Dalton was at quarterback in Weeks 4 through 6. When Bryce Young returned, however, Hubbard mixed the big weeks mentioned above with lots of “jackhammer running back on bad team” stat lines: 15 carries or so, 50 to 70 yards, maybe a touchdown if the Panthers reached the red zone. He also did a fine job as an often-used pass protector, but that just ate into his target share. Hubbard has a featured role to himself in 2025 and is a capable grinder on early downs. His fantasy production, however, will depend on whether the Panthers can keep themselves from having to play catchup every week. Our projections aren’t too optimistic about that.

Jarquez Hunter	Height: 5-10 Weight: 209 College: Auburn											Draft: 2025/4 (117)				Born: 29-Dec-2002				Age: 23							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2025	LAR		136	555	4	4.1	1	-3.5%									14	11	75	0	80%	6.6		-2.5%			

Hunter, a fourth-round pick out of Auburn, is a run-after-contact machine. In 2024, he averaged 4.0 yards after contact, leading the SEC among rushers with at least 100 carries, and he is willing and able to bowl over defenders and smash through arm tackles and keep moving. Perhaps a bit *too* willing, if anything; he doesn’t really ever make tacklers miss and could stand to find a hole every now and again. He’s also not much of a pass catcher. But sometimes, you just need to flatten a guy, and Hunter might find himself with short-yardage and goal-line work fairly early in his career.

Kareem Hunt	Height: 5-11 Weight: 216 College: Toledo											Draft: 2017/3 (86)				Born: 6-Aug-1995				Age: 30							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	CLE	17/0	492	123	468	3	3.8	1	-4.1%	28	23	30	49%	29	29	2.3	44	35	210	1	80%	6.0	-0.5	-7.9%	32	14	32
2023	CLE	15/2	339	135	411	9	3.0	0	-0.4%	26	53	25	47%	30	9	1.8	21	15	84	0	71%	5.6	-1.2	-4.7%	--	10	--
2024	KC	13/8	477	200	728	7	3.6	0	1.2%	21	88	18	57%	7	37	2.1	32	23	176	0	72%	7.7	2.3	-2.4%	30	23	31
2025	KC		70	273	3	3.9	1	-2.2%									18	14	100	1	79%	7.0		1.8%			

If you’re looking for a high-floor, low-ceiling running back, your hunt is over! Hunt ranked seventh in success rate at 57%, but was third lowest in explosive rate at 5.5%, with just 11 rushes of 10 yards or more all season long. It’s a bizarre statistical split, with no one else coming remotely close to his combination of high efficiency and low upside. He got what was blocked

for him and very little else, with his 14.0% avoided tackle rate *also* ranking third worst in the league. Being almost never stuffed and very successful in power running situations is still a valuable portfolio, but you wonder if the Chiefs will try to reach for a little more boom out of the position in 2025.

<b>Bucky Irving</b>		Height: 5-10	Weight: 195	College: Oregon		Draft: 2024/4 (125)						Born: 19-Aug-2002			Age: 23												
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2024	TB	17/3	516	207	1122	8	5.4	2	6.1%	13	127	13	57%	6	79	3.5	52	47	392	0	90%	8.3	2.3	21.9%	11	107	8
2025	TB		242	1186	8	4.9	2	6.2%									49	39	313	2	80%	8.0		14.4%			

FTN uses “juke rate” to measure how often a rusher successfully jukes a defender. (It’s great when a stat contains exactly what it says on the label!) Irving’s juke rate of 5.8% was the highest of any player in the NFL with 100-plus rushes. His broken/missed tackle rate of 42.6% on receptions (per Sports Info Solutions), meanwhile, was best in the league among players with 50 or more targets. Irving is, in short, Elusive with a capital E. He’s also rather small, and the Bucs will be wise to keep him at or below 20 touches if they want to keep him healthy into the playoffs. Fantasy managers should be wary of his workload and mindful that elusiveness rates can fluctuate wildly and take rushing totals with them. Caveats aside, Irving looks like the young Brian Westbrook at times. He can help your fantasy team, but he may help the Bucs even more.

<b>Josh Jacobs</b>		Height: 5-10	Weight: 223	College: Alabama		Draft: 2019/1 (24)						Born: 11-Feb-1998			Age: 27												
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	LV	17/17	821	340	1653	12	4.9	3	12.0%	8	308	2	58%	4	74	2.8	64	53	400	0	83%	7.5	0.3	7.1%	14	75	11
2023	LV	13/13	600	233	805	6	3.5	3	-14.0%	43	-54	43	46%	34	35	2.1	54	37	296	0	69%	8.0	1.1	-3.4%	23	31	20
2024	GB	17/17	678	301	1329	15	4.4	4	6.4%	12	197	7	53%	13	93	2.9	43	36	342	1	84%	9.5	3.3	28.3%	6	104	9
2025	GB		238	1088	9	4.6	2	8.4%									45	36	288	2	79%	8.1		15.2%			

Jacobs would have been the prime example of what happens when a talented running back goes from a terrible offensive environment to a great one in 2024, except that Saquon Barkley and Derrick Henry were even primer examples. Jacobs finished second to Henry with 74 avoided tackles per FTN charting; Henry avoided 79. Jacobs rushed 40 times inside the 10-yard line after rushing just 22 times in similar circumstances for the 2023 Raiders: you cannot score goal-line touchdowns if your team cannot reach the goal line! Jacobs’ efficiency as a receiver even went up as he was the target of fewer helpless dump-offs. Jacobs is a high-mileage battering ram reaching the age where timing belts start to snap, so be wary if you see 20-carry, 60-yard stat lines early in the season. But the rest of the Packers offense should remain very good, and that can do wonders for a running back’s lifespan.

<b>Ashton Jeanty</b>		Height: 5-8	Weight: 211	College: Boise State		Draft: 2025/1 (6)						Born: 2-Dec-2003			Age: 22												
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2025	LV		274	1210	8	4.4	3	0.4%									79	62	466	3	78%	7.5		13.0%			

Talk about a perfect landing spot. Jeanty is one of the most complete, NFL-ready backs we have seen come out of college in years. The sixth overall pick out of Boise State was the highest draft pick at his position since Saquon Barkley went second overall in 2018. His contact balance is reminiscent of Alvin Kamara and the efficiency of his footwork would make even the likes of Kobe Bryant proud. Beyond that, nothing about him is physically elite, but he does everything well. He led the nation in rushing yards and forced missed tackles last year, and he’s just as effective as a pass catcher ... which is great, because Geno Smith is a running back’s dream quarterback. Kenneth Walker III and Zach Charbonnet combined for an insane 88 receptions last season. Smith’s low average depth of target and willingness to check the ball down means Jeanty will get a healthy share of both designed targets and checkdowns. There’s a good chance he’s one of the best and most productive backs in the league from Day 1.

<b>Kaleb Johnson</b>		Height: 6-0	Weight: 225	College: Iowa		Draft: 2025/3 (83)						Born: 14-Aug-2003			Age: 22												
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2025	PIT		200	826	7	4.1	2	-3.0%									30	22	155	1	74%	7.1		-5.2%			

## 292 RUNNING BACKS

Johnson is a bruising runner with patience, which should make him a good fit for Pittsburgh's outside zone scheme. He broke Iowa's school record with 23 touchdowns (21 on the ground) in 2024, even though he skipped the Hawkeyes' bowl game. He's not a great athlete, running a 4.57s 40 at the combine at 225 pounds (which placed him 15th in this year's class in Speed Score), and he tends to play a little stiff. Nevertheless, the path is clear for Johnson to begin as a secondary hammer to Jaylen Warren and take over as RB1 in 2026, if not before.

Roschon Johnson			Height: 6-0	Weight: 225	College: Texas	Draft: 2023/4 (115)	Born: 31-Jan-2001	Age: 24																			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2023	CHI	15/0	395	81	352	2	4.3	1	5.0%	--	42	--	48%	--	19	1.9	40	34	209	0	85%	6.1	-0.5	-10.7%	33	6	34
2024	CHI	14/0	272	55	150	6	2.7	0	1.7%	--	29	--	64%	--	12	2.0	20	16	104	0	80%	6.5	-0.7	6.9%	--	20	--
2025	CHI		93	330	5	3.5	1	-6.1%									25	20	129	1	78%	6.6		-4.9%			

The Bears had little use for a power back last year, because they were always trailing and it was usually third-and-20. Johnson scored six touchdowns on 10 carries inside the 10-yard line in 2024 (D'Andre Swift scored three touchdowns on 18 carries), and Ben Johnson often replaced Jahmyr Gibbs with David Montgomery in red zone situations, so Johnson may claim a share of this important situational role. That doesn't make Johnson all that valuable for fantasy purposes, but it does make Swift less valuable.

Ty Johnson			Height: 5-10	Weight: 210	College: Maryland	Draft: 2019/6 (186)	Born: 17-Sep-1997	Age: 28																			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	NYJ	17/1	173	30	160	1	5.3	0	5.5%	--	14	--	40%	--	12	4.0	24	12	88	0	50%	7.3	0.1	-46.7%	--	-41	--
2023	BUF	10/0	91	30	132	0	4.4	1	7.8%	--	20	--	70%	--	7	2.5	7	7	62	1	100%	8.9	2.6	71.4%	--	37	--
2024	BUF	17/1	316	41	213	1	5.2	0	12.8%	--	40	--	66%	--	7	2.8	25	18	284	3	72%	15.8	3.5	78.7%	1	146	4
2025	BUF		33	153	1	4.6	0	4.6%									14	10	114	1	72%	11.2		33.0%			

Johnson enters 2025 as the Bills' trusted Swiss Army Knife. After signing a two-year, \$4-million extension, he's locked in as one of the trio in Buffalo's backfield. Like teammate Ray Davis, Johnson scored three times through the air and is trusted on third downs and in passing situations. He actually bested both James Cook and Davis with 5.2 yards per carry last season. But Johnson only touched the ball about five times per game in 2024, putting him third in the pecking order.

Aaron Jones			Height: 5-10	Weight: 195	College: Texas-El Paso	Draft: 2017/5 (182)	Born: 2-Dec-1994	Age: 31																			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	GB	17/17	630	213	1121	2	5.3	5	16.5%	4	223	4	56%	6	63	2.8	72	59	395	5	82%	6.7	0.5	-0.7%	24	55	17
2023	GB	11/11	354	142	656	2	4.6	2	18.5%	4	170	10	63%	1	31	2.6	43	30	233	1	70%	7.8	1.8	-9.9%	31	10	32
2024	MIN	17/17	700	255	1138	5	4.5	5	-3.4%	28	57	24	51%	21	52	2.5	62	51	408	2	82%	8.0	0.7	-1.1%	27	45	22
2025	MIN		167	728	5	4.4	2	1.6%									54	41	316	2	76%	7.7		7.5%			

Jones averaged 80.3 rushing yards per game in September but just 56.7 yards per game in December and January. His yards-per-touch also peaked early in the year, and he fumbled four times (losing two) in November and December. So there were signs, including a lackluster playoff performance (13-for-48 rushing, 3-for-12 receiving), that Jones faded as the season wore on. The slow collapse of the Vikings offensive line late in the year may have been a factor, but it's best to exercise caution with a 30-year-old running back who is already defying the age curve. Jordan Mason could push Jones into more of a dual-headliner role.

Quinshon Judkins			Height: 5-11	Weight: 221	College: Ohio State	Draft: 2025/2 (36)	Born: 29-Oct-2003	Age: 22																			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2025	CLE		199	822	6	4.1	2	-4.7%									54	42	294	1	77%	7.0		0.6%			

The Browns won't get the most complete vision of what Judkins looks like as a runner until everyone gets pads on. Throw on any highlight cut-up of Judkins and you'll see a player who meets contact with eagerness. He has the speed to find space and create home-run gains against a defense, but the more impressive part of his game comes from a hard stuff arm, a lowered

shoulder, and a determination to stand upright. The combination of physicality and burst makes Judkins an exciting prospect in the Browns backfield.

Alvin Kamara			Height: 5-10 Weight: 215 College: Tennessee											Draft: 2017/3 (67)					Born: 25-Jul-1995			Age: 30					
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	NO	15/13	642	223	897	2	4.0	4	-14.2%	40	-52	41	55%	8	52	1.9	77	57	490	2	74%	8.6	1.7	-6.3%	31	34	24
2023	NO	13/12	558	180	694	5	3.9	0	12.1%	11	162	12	48%	26	38	2.0	86	75	466	1	87%	6.2	-0.2	-1.9%	20	59	15
2024	NO	14/14	641	228	950	6	4.2	1	-6.4%	33	21	32	52%	19	46	2.3	89	68	543	2	76%	8.0	0.5	-12.4%	36	7	35
2025	NO		174	739	5	4.2	2	-4.3%									84	63	466	1	75%	7.4		-0.9%			

Kamara rushed 80 times for 362 yards, 4.5 yards per carry, and five touchdowns, with 17-174-1 receiving, in four September games last year. That was when the rest of the Saints offense was relatively healthy and Klint Kubiak was making creative use of his playmakers. Kamara's production rose and fell over the rest of the year based on Derek Carr's health and the overall viability of the Saints offense; he eventually succumbed to a season-ended groin injury against the Commanders. Past coaching staffs often fell into a rut of force-feeding Kamara carries and targets when the rest of the offense was flailing. The current Saints offensive roster looks very rut-friendly. Kamara can still grind out replacement-level yardage, but he might be starting to buckle under the load.

MarShawn Lloyd			Height: 5-9 Weight: 220 College: USC											Draft: 2024/3 (88)					Born: 5-Jan-2001			Age: 25					
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2024	GB	1/0	10	6	15	0	2.5	0	-30.5%	--	-5	--	17%	--	1	1.5	1	1	3	0	100%	3.0	-3.6	-53.5%	--	-2	--
2025	GB		103	405	2	4.0	1	-6.3%									28	22	148	1	77%	6.8		1.7%			

Lloyd missed much of his rookie preseason with hip and hamstring injuries. He earned six carries in Week 2, then promptly suffered an ankle injury. Just as he was about to return from the IR? Appendicitis, which shelved him for the rest of the year. Meanwhile, Emanuel Wilson and Chris Brooks looked very good as change-up backs for Josh Jacobs. Lloyd was a Jacobs-like bruiser at South Carolina and USC, where his highlight reel often lived up to his first name. He should work his way into the Packers backfield committee. Step one will be getting onto the field.

Woody Marks			Height: 5-10 Weight: 208 College: USC											Draft: 2025/4 (116)					Born: 29-Dec-2000			Age: 25					
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2025	HOU		88	355	2	4.0	1	-7.4%									10	8	51	0	75%	6.7		-7.2%			

Jo'Quavious got the nickname "Woody" because he loved *Toy Story* as a kid and, per Dane Brugler's *The Beast*, wore a Woody costume for seven straight HALLOWEENS. That's right, he watched *Toy Story* as a kid. Feel old. A transfer to USC after four years at Mississippi State, Marks' receiving production in college was notable: He had 261 catches for 1,546 yards over five seasons, including 60 and 83 in his first two years as a Bulldog. The Texans traded up for him in the fourth round, giving up a future third-rounder to seal the deal. He seems to be a stab at replacing Dare Ogunbowale in the third-down role. It's possible that if Ogunbowale holds on to the role this year, Marks is essentially a healthy scratch for much of the season. But he should be regarded as part of the committee of the future given the trade-up and his obvious ability to catch the ball out of the backfield.

Jordan Mason			Height: 5-11 Weight: 223 College: Georgia Tech											Draft: 2022/FA					Born: 24-May-1999			Age: 26					
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	SF	16/0	82	43	258	1	6.0	0	16.6%	--	46	--	60%	--	6	2.4	0	0	0	0	0.0	--	--	--	--	--	--
2023	SF	17/0	99	40	206	3	5.2	0	30.1%	--	64	--	60%	--	8	2.8	4	3	31	0	75%	10.3	1.9	38.0%	--	9	--
2024	SF	12/6	378	153	789	3	5.2	3	-0.5%	25	52	26	50%	24	41	3.3	15	11	91	0	79%	8.3	0.4	25.1%	--	33	--
2025	MIN		178	815	6	4.6	2	5.6%									22	17	127	1	74%	7.7		2.2%			

## 294 RUNNING BACKS

Mason rushed for 447 yards and 4.9 yards per carry in the first four games of 2024, when he was filling in for injured Christian McCaffrey. He then disappeared behind CMC. Really disappeared, with just 12 carries in one four-game stretch, even though CMC looked like he could really use a little more rest. Mason returned when CMC went down for good, then suffered his own ankle sprain, mercifully excusing him from the rest of the 49ers lost season. Mason offers little as a receiver, which will create a logical division of duties with Aaron Jones, but he's a burly slasher with some tackle-breaking capability. Don't be surprised if he ends up eating into Jones' touches considerably, and possibly getting the bulk of the short-yardage carries.

Alexander Mattison		Height: 5-11 Weight: 220 College: Boise State				Draft: 2019/3 (102)				Born: 19-Jun-1998				Age: 27													
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	MIN	17/0	297	74	283	5	3.8	0	1.0%	--	30	--	47%	--	23	2.3	18	15	91	1	83%	6.1	-0.1	7.6%	--	19	--
2023	MIN	16/13	579	180	700	0	3.9	2	-17.0%	45	-62	46	47%	33	45	2.6	44	30	192	3	68%	6.4	-0.9	-24.4%	45	-26	44
2024	LV	14/7	444	132	420	4	3.2	1	-24.4%	46	-83	46	36%	46	28	1.9	48	36	294	1	75%	8.2	1.3	6.1%	21	56	19
2025	MIA			21	78	1	3.8	0	-10.0%								10	8	58	0	82%	7.1		4.6%			

Mattison claims that he was brought in to add physicality to a Miami offense predicated around speed. But Mattison was dead last in yards after contact per attempt last season. He was also dead last in avoided tackle rate. He's just not very good and it's hard to envision him having a role behind De'Von Achane and Jaylen Wright. Even rookie sixth-rounder Ollie Gordon out of Oklahoma State is more capable of being the bruiser to Achane's burst.

Christian McCaffrey		Height: 5-11 Weight: 210 College: Stanford				Draft: 2017/1 (8)				Born: 7-Jun-1996				Age: 29													
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	2TM	17/16	776	244	1139	8	4.7	1	1.4%	18	105	14	50%	22	56	2.4	108	85	741	5	79%	8.7	1.5	21.7%	8	218	1
2023	SF	16/16	812	272	1459	14	5.4	3	17.4%	6	324	1	56%	9	77	3.0	83	67	564	7	81%	8.4	0.9	38.0%	2	238	1
2024	SF	4/4	167	50	202	0	4.0	1	14.6%	--	46	--	44%	--	9	2.1	19	15	146	0	79%	9.7	0.7	1.0%	--	15	--
2025	SF			229	1024	7	4.5	2	3.7%								69	55	482	3	80%	8.8		25.2%			

Since 2019, McCaffrey has either been a Pro Bowler or had a season-ending injury every season. Last year was the first time the 49ers got the injured version of McCaffrey, with a slight twinge in his Achilles in training camp turning into a months-long saga of confusing injury reports, trips to Germany for special medical treatment, and ultimately 50 rush attempts in a brief return to the field midseason before being shut down with a PCL tear. He is, from all reports, better now and ready to go, with no restrictions or concerns in San Francisco. If only the same could be said for fantasy managers who are afraid of getting burned once more. If he's healthy, McCaffrey should return to being one of the top running backs in the game and a crucial receiving option that was missed in 2024, especially around the goal line. If, if, if.

Sincere McCormick		Height: 5-9 Weight: 205 College: UTSA				Draft: 2022/FA				Born: 10-Sep-2000				Age: 25													
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2024	LV	5/2	89	39	183	0	4.7	0	18.0%	--	47	--	54%	--	7	3.0	7	6	29	0	86%	4.8	-2.7	-18.0%	--	-2	--
2025	LV			31	148	1	4.7	0	3.7%								9	8	49	0	82%	6.6		0.7%			

Injuries to Alexander Mattison and Zamir White gave McCormick an opportunity in Week 11. He rushed for 64 yards on 12 carries and backed that up with 78 yards on 15 carries in Week 12. Back-to-back weeks of a greater than 5-yard per-carry average earned him a role even when Mattison returned in Week 13, but McCormick managed just 8 yards on seven carries against Atlanta and that was the last time he played in 2024. He's slow, small, and doesn't offer much in the passing game.

Jaleel McLaughlin		Height: 5-7 Weight: 187 College: Youngstown State				Draft: 2023/FA				Born: 13-Sep-2000				Age: 25													
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2023	DEN	17/3	193	76	410	1	5.4	0	31.0%	--	119	--	53%	--	27	2.4	36	31	160	2	86%	5.2	0.2	-11.3%	35	5	35
2024	DEN	16/5	296	113	496	1	4.4	1	3.7%	18	57	25	52%	17	26	2.2	27	24	76	2	89%	3.2	-2.4	-38.2%	44	-33	43
2025	DEN			57	252	1	4.4	1	-1.7%								20	16	97	1	82%	6.0		-2.7%			

McLaughlin was Denver's outside zone specialist—48.7% of his carries came on outside zones, the third highest rate in the league (behind both Falcons, Bijan Robinson and Tyler Allgeier). He had 40 DYAR and 10.7% DVOA on these opportunities, but the severe splits made Denver too predictable in the running game depending on which back was on the field. With J.K. Dobbins and rookie RJ Harvey now in town, it's tough to envision much of a role for McLaughlin. As the speedier back last year, you might think he could be an effective pass catcher, but his receiving efficiency numbers were quite poor.

Jeremy McNichols			Height: 5-9 Weight: 214 College: Boise State										Draft: 2017/5 (162)				Born: 26-Dec-1995			Age: 30							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2023	SF	3	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0	0	0	0	0.0	--	--	--	--	--	
2024	WAS	17/1	251	55	261	4	4.7	0	22.7%	--	73	--	65%	--	12	2.9	12	9	27	0	75%	3.0	-3.7	-60.0%	--	-31	--
2025	WAS		19	85	1	4.4	0	7.4%									4	3	21	0	79%	6.1		-7.0%			

McNichols was a nice change-of-pace back who was able to slide in when needed. His 55 carries and 261 yards were career highs after he didn't get a single regular-season carry in either 2022 or 2023. He's a favorite of general manager Adam Peters with two one-year stints in San Francisco. McNichols was also a useful special teams contributor with seven kick returns and 46% of the special teams snaps played. He re-signed with a one-year deal in March.

Kendre Miller			Height: 6-0 Weight: 220 College: TCU										Draft: 2023/3 (71)				Born: 11-Jun-2002			Age: 23							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2023	NO	8/0	112	41	156	1	3.8	0	11.6%	--	33	--	44%	--	7	2.5	11	10	117	0	91%	11.7	5.4	62.6%	--	42	--
2024	NO	6/2	104	39	148	1	3.8	0	8.0%	--	26	--	49%	--	16	3.0	8	5	33	0	63%	6.6	-0.6	-47.1%	--	-16	--
2025	NO		68	281	2	4.1	1	-6.4%									17	13	92	0	76%	7.0		-3.4%			

Miller, selected in the third round of the 2023 draft to fill the critical third running back role behind Alvin Kamara and Jamaal Williams for a team trapped in an eternal salary cap nightmare, has been sidelined by numerous injuries at various times during his uneventful NFL career. He started two games after Kamara's injury last year and rushed 11 times for 18 yards before suffering a concussion. Miller will battle Devin Neal and others for playing time.

Elijah Mitchell			Height: 5-10 Weight: 200 College: Louisiana										Draft: 2021/6 (194)				Born: 2-May-1998			Age: 27							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	SF	5/1	80	45	279	2	6.2	0	35.1%	--	86	--	73%	--	9	2.8	4	3	7	0	75%	2.3	-2.4	-6.1%	--	2	--
2023	SF	11/1	161	75	281	2	3.7	0	-4.7%	--	13	--	53%	--	12	2.6	8	6	14	0	75%	2.3	-3.1	-42.2%	--	-12	--
2025	KC		59	244	1	4.1	1	-2.5%									5	4	31	0	75%	8.1		3.3%			

Christian McCaffrey's injury was a fantastic opportunity for Mitchell ... or, at least, it would have been had Mitchell not suffered a hamstring injury in camp and missed the entire year on injured reserve. Mitchell has never played more than 11 games in a season, and he has missed 41 of 68 games during his career. To say he's injury prone is an understatement, but Mitchell has generally produced when he has been able to find the field. He has averaged 4.7 yards in his career and has been above a 50% success rate in every season so far, so there are far worse players to take a flyer on. But it's unclear what Mitchell does that Isiah Pacheco, Kareem Hunt, or Breshard Smith can't handle, so finding a role for him on the 2025 Chiefs is a little tricky. He doesn't play special teams and isn't much of a pass blocker, so he'll need to really bounce back to his 2020-2021 form if he wants to make the roster.

Joe Mixon			Height: 6-1 Weight: 220 College: Oklahoma										Draft: 2017/2 (48)				Born: 24-Jul-1996			Age: 29							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	CIN	14/14	624	210	814	7	3.9	0	6.1%	12	139	9	54%	10	30	2.0	75	60	441	2	80%	7.4	0.6	6.5%	15	88	8
2023	CIN	17/17	752	257	1034	9	4.0	0	4.7%	18	148	15	51%	15	53	2.1	64	52	376	3	81%	7.2	1.5	22.2%	9	134	6
2024	HOU	14/14	557	245	1016	11	4.1	0	-2.9%	27	57	23	44%	42	60	2.6	52	36	309	1	69%	8.6	2.2	-5.1%	32	25	28
2025	HOU		223	919	9	4.1	2	-0.3%									45	34	281	1	76%	8.2		7.6%			

## 296 RUNNING BACKS

Mixon proved to immediately be a good fit in Houston's outside zone; his problem was simply that the line didn't let him carry the team. NFL Pro noted that he was contacted behind the line of scrimmage on 60.8% of his runs outside the tackles, the second-highest rate in the league among qualifying backs. Mixon was reportedly in a walking boot in the early offseason on account of what KPRC2's Aaron Wilson described as an ankle injury. There's not much of a warning sign about Mixon dropping off—he was excellent last year despite unideal circumstances—but nobody wants to see their second-contract back come into the season hurt. We still expect the majority of the carries to go to Mixon, but Nick Chubb is a much more interesting challenger to Mixon's role than Dameon Pierce.

David Montgomery		Height: 5-11	Weight: 230	College: Iowa State	Draft: 2019/3 (73)	Born: 7-Jun-1997	Age: 28																				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk Suc%	Rk BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk		
2022	CHI	16/16	629	201	801	5	4.0	2	-0.3%	22	66	25	46%	39	42	2.3	40	34	316	1	85%	9.3	1.6	33.9%	2	97	6
2023	DET	14/14	453	219	1015	13	4.6	2	14.1%	9	222	6	56%	7	48	2.8	24	16	117	0	67%	7.3	1.6	0.9%	--	21	--
2024	DET	14/14	390	185	775	12	4.2	2	13.9%	6	189	8	56%	9	61	2.9	38	36	341	0	95%	9.5	2.8	52.2%	2	150	3
2025	DET			182	758	10	4.2	2	3.2%								39	32	256	1	82%	8.0		15.7%			

Montgomery rushed 33 times for 76 yards and 11 touchdowns inside the 10-yard line last season. He did not really cede his goal-line role to Jahmyr Gibbs until he was sidelined with an MCL tear late in the year. Montgomery's fantasy value depends largely on the Lions offense being so awesome that there are plenty of goal-line touches for two running backs, plus plenty of handoffs to go around when the Lions are coasting in the second half. Our projections don't see the Lions offense declining significantly, but you should be wary of drafting someone whose role could be downsized considerably at the first sign of trouble.

Zack Moss		Height: 5-10	Weight: 220	College: Utah	Draft: 2020/3 (86)	Born: 15-Dec-1997	Age: 28																				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk Suc%	Rk BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk		
2022	2TM	13/3	249	93	456	1	4.9	1	-10.3%	--	-6	--	48%	--	29	2.7	13	11	39	0	85%	3.5	-2.6	-46.6%	--	-29	--
2023	IND	14/8	531	183	794	5	4.3	0	11.8%	13	166	11	50%	17	32	2.3	37	27	192	2	73%	7.1	0.5	30.1%	6	80	11
2024	CIN	8/6	297	74	242	2	3.3	2	-36.8%	--	-92	--	39%	--	15	2.2	27	23	187	1	85%	8.1	1.6	30.7%	5	71	16
2025	CIN			50	194	2	3.8	1	-4.7%								11	9	52	0	79%	5.8		-8.6%			

Moss was signed last offseason to be Cincinnati's starting running back, but a scary neck injury and Chase Brown's emergence as lead dog threw his future into doubt. In April, Moss reworked his contract to remain with the Bengals. With Brown, Samaje Perine, and newly drafted Tahj Brooks around, Moss may have to work hard to earn those dollars, but if healthy and given reps he remains a quality backfield dual-threat. Fantasy stock advice: wait and see.

Raheem Mostert		Height: 5-10	Weight: 205	College: Purdue	Draft: 2015/FA	Born: 9-Apr-1992	Age: 33																				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk Suc%	Rk BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk		
2022	MIA	16/14	552	181	891	3	4.9	1	11.4%	9	154	7	55%	9	34	2.3	42	31	202	2	74%	6.5	-0.2	2.8%	20	40	22
2023	MIA	15/15	555	209	1012	18	4.8	4	25.8%	2	315	2	56%	5	58	2.9	32	25	175	3	78%	7.0	0.0	12.7%	12	43	19
2024	MIA	13/1	278	85	278	2	3.3	2	-31.3%	--	-82	--	39%	--	19	2.4	23	19	161	0	83%	8.5	0.8	16.6%	--	40	--
2025	LV			55	223	2	4.1	1	-3.1%								12	10	65	1	81%	6.5		-1.0%			

After Mostert's massive 2023 season in Miami, it seemed like the reunion with Mike McDaniel, his old coach in San Francisco, was destined for long-term success. But after another injury-plagued season (where he was far less effective), he now finds himself as Ashton Jeanty's backup in Las Vegas. The lack of production wasn't entirely his fault. His avoided tackle rate barely dropped and teammate De'Von Achane experienced an even larger drop in overall efficiency. Mostert was one of the best short-yardage backs in 2023 with a 66% success rate, but that success rate dropped to 39% last year on limited opportunities. Whether he's just a backup, is favored over Jeanty in short-yardage, or has to fill in for Jeanty at all this year, he could bounce back in a big way. He has even been effective as a receiver for the last three years.

**Devin Neal**

Height: 5-11 Weight: 215 College: Kansas

Draft: 2025/6 (184)

Born: 12-Aug-2003

Age: 22

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2025	NO		78	320	3	4.1	1	-7.3%											16	11	78	1	67%	7.3		-10.9%	

Neal rushed for over 1,000 yards in 2022, 2023, and 2024, leaving Kansas as the Jayhawks' all-time leader in rushing yards, scrimmage yards, touchdowns, and scoring. He lacks pure speed and ideal quickness, but he's reliable and has sure hands, a few wiggly jukes, and a punishing finish. Neal will never be a home run threat, but he should push past Kendre Miller for the primary backup role behind Alvin Kamara, who can no longer handle a heavy workload.

**Isiah Pacheco**

Height: 5-10 Weight: 216 College: Rutgers

Draft: 2022/7 (251)

Born: 2-Mar-1999

Age: 26

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk		
2022	KC	17/11	351	170	830	5	4.9	3	10.4%	10	137	10	60%	2	27	2.2			14	13	130	0	93%	10.0	4.1	46.3%	--	52	--
2023	KC	14/13	568	205	935	7	4.6	1	7.9%	15	151	14	52%	13	38	2.6			49	44	244	2	90%	5.5	0.1	-4.5%	24	26	24
2024	KC	7/6	218	83	310	1	3.7	0	-2.4%	--	23	--	53%	--	7	2.2			16	12	79	0	75%	6.6	0.9	-15.1%	--	-1	--
2025	KC		181	741	6	4.1	2	-1.1%											36	29	197	1	81%	6.8		4.5%			

While 2024 was by a wide margin the worst season of Pacheco's career, we can cut him a little slack—fracturing your fibula in September and working your way back onto the field is tough. In a very, very limited sample size, Pacheco had a 5.8% rushing DVOA before his Week 2 injury, which is roughly in line with his previous success. A -7.8% DVOA after coming back in November isn't the end of the world, and the degree of difficulty involved with rehab makes it more impressive he was able to find the field at all. Pacheco runs with violence, so there's always fear that another injury is right around the corner, and he may never see the 250 touches the Chiefs fed him in 2023 again—his fantasy peak may have come and gone. But in terms of actual football, it's reasonable to hope that with a full offseason to rest and recover, we'll see the pre-injury Pacheco on the field in 2025. The Chiefs could really use him.

**Cordarrelle Patterson**

Height: 6-2 Weight: 220 College: Tennessee

Draft: 2013/1 (29)

Born: 17-Mar-1991

Age: 34

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk		
2022	ATL	13/11	382	144	695	8	4.8	1	18.4%	2	170	6	60%	1	34	2.0			31	21	122	0	68%	5.8	-1.6	-33.6%	46	-33	45
2023	ATL	14/0	177	50	181	0	3.6	1	-19.9%	--	-23	--	44%	--	16	2.5			12	9	38	1	75%	4.2	-2.3	-12.7%	--	1	--
2024	PIT	13/1	110	32	135	0	4.2	1	-20.8%	--	-15	--	47%	--	11	3.5			14	12	80	1	86%	6.7	-1.7	30.3%	--	32	--
2025	PIT		11	47	0	4.3	0	0.2%											6	5	33	0	73%	7.0		-7.4%			

"Flash" Patterson was a kick returner occasionally masquerading as a wide receiver for much of his career; then Arthur Smith got a hold of him, and he became a kick returner occasionally masquerading as a running back. In 2024, his 12th NFL season (a raging success in and of itself), he wasn't really anything, save being an emotional support weapon for Smith to employ in Pittsburgh. Smith is back as offensive coordinator in western Pennsylvania, so Patterson likely will stick around for his baker's dozen season.

**Samaje Perine**

Height: 5-10 Weight: 236 College: Oklahoma

Draft: 2017/4 (114)

Born: 16-Sep-1995

Age: 30

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk		
2022	CIN	16/2	448	95	394	2	4.1	0	14.7%	--	90	--	54%	--	27	2.1			51	38	287	4	75%	7.6	1.2	3.0%	18	47	19
2023	DEN	17/1	360	53	238	1	4.5	3	23.1%	--	68	--	53%	--	22	2.8			56	50	455	0	89%	9.1	2.5	38.9%	1	163	3
2024	KC	17/0	296	20	92	1	4.6	0	18.5%	--	26	--	60%	--	6	1.9			37	28	322	1	80%	11.5	3.3	39.6%	4	109	7
2025	CIN		16	70	1	4.3	0	4.5%											15	12	97	1	81%	8.0		16.4%			

After two years away, Perine is back in Cincinnati to reclaim his passing-down duties. Perine is one of seven running backs to have a positive receiving DVOA in each of the past five seasons; only he and Christian McCaffrey have done that and also been above replacement level as a rusher in all five years. Perine is reliable and consistent as a receiving back, but he had trouble finding work in the Chiefs' backfield last season, despite their injuries and lack of production. In Cincinnati, he should have an easier time getting third-down and two-minute work just to let Chase Brown have a breather once in a while.

Dameon Pierce			Height: 5-10 Weight: 215 College: Florida						Draft: 2022/4 (107)				Born: 19-Feb-2000				Age: 25										
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	HOU	13/13	508	220	939	4	4.3	4	-11.6%	37	-29	37	47%	35	48	2.1	39	30	165	1	77%	5.5	-0.7	-17.0%	40	-7	40
2023	HOU	14/7	297	145	416	2	2.9	0	-30.6%	49	-126	49	39%	49	24	2.3	17	13	101	0	76%	7.8	0.6	8.3%	--	17	--
2024	HOU	11/0	111	40	293	2	7.3	1	19.6%	--	42	--	43%	--	14	4.3	4	2	2	0	50%	1.0	-6.2	-123.9%	--	-22	--
2025	HOU		44	227	1	5.2	0	13.1%									5	3	21	0	67%	6.7		-14.6%			

Pierce runs with power and fury—he had a 93-yard touchdown in mop-up duty against the Patriots and has averaged 35.3 yards per kick return with a touchdown and another 80-yard run over the past two seasons. But the Texans don't appear to trust him in zone packages and have now further muddied his path to the roster by signing Nick Chubb and drafting Woody Marks. He's a possible last-cuts trade candidate.

Tony Pollard			Height: 6-0 Weight: 209 College: Memphis						Draft: 2019/4 (128)				Born: 30-Apr-1997				Age: 28										
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	DAL	16/4	569	193	1007	9	5.2	0	1.9%	16	83	19	50%	26	35	2.6	55	39	371	3	71%	9.5	2.5	29.0%	4	128	4
2023	DAL	17/17	836	252	1005	6	4.0	3	-3.3%	30	58	24	52%	14	50	2.6	67	55	311	0	82%	5.7	-0.8	-29.5%	47	-60	48
2024	TEN	16/16	701	260	1079	5	4.2	2	-5.7%	32	30	31	46%	37	51	2.7	57	41	238	0	72%	5.8	-2.5	-32.8%	43	-57	44
2025	TEN		206	874	5	4.2	2	-2.2%									46	35	229	1	76%	6.6		-7.8%			

Interesting but not predictive: 34 NFL running backs got more than eight goal-line carries (inside the 5) last year. Pollard had only five, which means he had fewer than Trey Sermon, Gus Edwards, and Hassan Haskins. When we just lay it out there like that, it makes it sound like the Titans intentionally shied away from Pollard, but they simply had very few opportunities there. Pollard had five, Tyjae Spears had four, and Julius Chestnut took one. Relied on in a way few running backs still are last year, Pollard has mostly left his early Dallas efficiency in the past over the last two seasons. Brian Callahan again threatened a more even workload between Pollard and Spears in May OTAs. We'll believe that when we see it, but we don't expect Pollard to show much more than this in 2025. The Titans believe in him as a power back and he can grind out yards in a phone booth, but there's no superstar hiding here.

Bijan Robinson			Height: 5-11 Weight: 215 College: Texas						Draft: 2023/1 (8)				Born: 30-Jan-2002				Age: 23										
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2023	ATL	17/16	771	214	976	4	4.6	4	1.0%	25	84	20	44%	40	63	2.4	86	58	487	4	67%	8.4	2.0	6.4%	16	104	8
2024	ATL	17/17	861	304	1456	14	4.8	1	15.3%	5	323	3	61%	2	80	2.8	71	61	431	1	85%	7.1	0.4	7.6%	20	79	15
2025	ATL		256	1215	11	4.7	3	7.8%									67	52	406	2	79%	7.7		9.9%			

Robinson did everything he could to extend Kirk Cousins' career last season, which shouldn't be held against him. Staying ahead of the sticks was the Falcons' top offensive priority, because Cousins was likely to topple like a rotted-out oak tree if faced with third-and-long. Bijan averaged 5.2 yards per rush on 194 first-down carries; his 3.4 yards after contact per carry on first down led the NFL. Robinson's total targets and yards-per-catch, meanwhile, decreased from his rookie season, in part because he was forced to serve as a pass protector over 100 times last year to keep up-the-middle blitzers from yelling "Timber!" Bijan was solid in blitz pickup. May he never be asked to do so more than once or twice per game again.

Bijan is going to get the workhorse treatment again in 2025 as Raheem Morris and Zac Robinson try to simplify things for Michael Penix. He's worthy of the workload. How long he will be able to shoulder it is a question that probably won't have to be answered this season.

Brian Robinson			Height: 6-1 Weight: 228 College: Alabama						Draft: 2022/3 (98)				Born: 22-Mar-1999				Age: 26										
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	WAS	12/9	351	205	797	2	3.9	2	-13.1%	39	-39	39	53%	15	31	2.1	12	9	60	1	75%	6.7	0.6	4.3%	--	13	--
2023	WAS	15/15	496	178	733	5	4.1	4	-4.8%	31	29	33	48%	27	44	2.6	43	36	368	4	84%	10.2	4.6	22.1%	10	98	9
2024	WAS	14/13	505	187	799	8	4.3	2	-4.2%	30	38	28	49%	28	36	2.7	25	20	159	0	80%	8.0	1.0	-1.6%	28	16	33
2025	WAS		177	754	7	4.3	2	2.5%									27	21	157	1	79%	7.5		5.4%			

Robinson's full season did not match expectations set by a hot start. Robinson rushed for over 100 yards in two of Washington's first four games but then suffered an injury and was limited in Week 5. He only rushed for 100 yards once for the rest of the season. He had negative DVOA on runs that did not come against a stacked box, and his -4.4% mark was the sixth lowest among 26 backs with at least 100 such carries. "B-Rob's a guy who has played an incredibly high level," offensive coordinator Kliff Kingsbury said. "I thought early in the year when he was really healthy, he was what we expect him to be, and the focus this offseason has been great. He knows what this year means to him and can mean to us when he plays at that level."

Dylan Sampson		Height: 5-8	Weight: 200	College: Tennessee	Draft: 2025/4 (126)	Born: 14-Sep-2004	Age: 21																				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2025	CLE		73	297	2	4.1	1	-6.7%											21	17	118	1	82%	6.9		5.3%	

The Browns doubled up on running backs in the 2025 draft, and Sampson will compete with Jerome Ford for carries behind Quinshon Judkins. Sampson had 22 rushing touchdowns for Tennessee last season, breaking a Vols record that had lasted since 1929, and won SEC Offensive Player of the Year. The Browns see him as Lightning to Judkins' Thunder, and he's more likely to break tackles with agility while Judkins powers through them. The Browns also want him to do more receiving than he did at Tennessee.

Miles Sanders		Height: 5-11	Weight: 210	College: Penn State	Draft: 2019/2 (53)	Born: 1-May-1997	Age: 28																				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	PHI	17/15	673	259	1269	11	4.9	2	14.0%	6	252	3	59%	3	48	2.2	26	20	78	0	77%	3.9	-2.2	-40.4%	49	-41	48
2023	CAR	16/5	406	129	432	1	3.3	2	-19.7%	47	-61	45	40%	48	27	2.0	41	27	154	0	66%	5.7	-0.6	-19.2%	41	-12	41
2024	CAR	11/2	224	55	205	2	3.7	1	-6.7%	--	4	--	45%	--	12	2.2	30	24	148	1	80%	6.2	-2.5	-49.9%	46	-58	45
2025	DAL			59	246	2	4.1	1	-2.6%										12	10	61	1	82%	6.3		-0.6%	

Sanders split carries with Chuba Hubbard during his first year in Carolina and fell out of the rotation behind Hubbard last season. "These last two years, I don't really have much to say," Sanders said after he signed with Dallas. "I guess I'd say I handled the situation as best I could. There was a lot of things out of my control that I would not like to speak on and just keep it in house, so I'll just keep it at that." After finishing sixth in DVOA with the Eagles in 2022, Sanders hasn't been able to find the same room to run for explosive plays. Sanders only had a 5.5% rate of runs that went for 10 or more yards in 2024.

Trey Sermon		Height: 6-0	Weight: 215	College: Ohio State	Draft: 2021/3 (88)	Born: 30-Jan-1999	Age: 26																				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	PHI	2/0	8	2	19	0	9.5	0	135.7%	--	13	--	100%	--	1	2.0	0	0	0	0	--	0.0	--	--	--	--	--
2023	IND	14/0	108	35	160	0	4.6	0	10.1%	--	27	--	54%	--	2	2.8	6	3	13	0	50%	4.3	-2.6	-56.2%	--	-15	--
2024	IND	17/3	245	56	159	2	2.8	0	-22.3%	--	-36	--	48%	--	11	2.0	19	16	99	0	84%	6.2	-0.9	-35.1%	--	-20	--
2025	PIT			10	40	0	4.0	0	-4.6%										1	1	5	0	78%	7.0		-2.7%	

Sermon had a two-game stretch at Ohio State in 2020 during which he rushed for 331 yards in the Big Ten title game and then 193 more in the semifinal. In the National Championship Game however, he was injured on the very first play and saw no further action in a blowout defeat. His pro career since has been nondescript enough that those 120 minutes in college remain the only relevant thing to say about him. Sermon is now in Pittsburgh, his fourth team in five pro seasons. He has never been a main special teams contributor and that will hurt his quest to remain on rosters as he ages.

Devin Singletary		Height: 5-7	Weight: 203	College: Florida Atlantic	Draft: 2019/3 (74)	Born: 3-Sep-1997	Age: 28																				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	BUF	16/16	709	177	819	5	4.6	3	1.8%	17	80	20	54%	13	36	2.1	52	38	280	1	73%	7.4	0.7	-0.9%	25	40	21
2023	HOU	17/10	629	216	898	4	4.2	1	-6.2%	35	21	35	50%	19	39	2.4	38	30	193	0	79%	6.4	0.2	-4.8%	26	19	29
2024	NYG	15/5	380	113	437	4	3.9	2	-11.1%	40	-12	40	48%	31	30	2.6	24	21	119	0	88%	5.7	-1.0	-21.1%	--	-9	--
2025	NYG			43	176	1	4.1	0	-3.1%										9	8	54	0	86%	7.2		10.6%	

## 300 RUNNING BACKS

Singletary suffered a groin injury midway through the Giants' 2024 season, opening up the door for Tyrone Tracy to steal the starting job as a rookie. That being said, Singletary should still contribute consistently to a re-invigorated running back room, at a consistent rate at that. While 2024 was Singletary's first season posting a yards per carry below 4.0, he has never had below a 47% rushing success rate at any point in his career and provides consistent contributions as a screen outlet in the passing game.

Cam Skattebo		Height: 5-10 Weight: 225 College: Arizona State										Draft: 2025/4 (105)				Born: 5-Feb-2002				Age: 23							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2025	NYG		188	780	5	4.1	2	-3.8%						38	29	201	1	77%	6.8		-0.8%						

Skattebo is an absolute wrecking ball. Get the Arizona State product moving downhill and he becomes extremely difficult to take down. One of the more physical young runners in this class, his output as a runner makes him the perfect situational thunder to Tyrone Tracy's lightning. However, he likely works best behind a line that is able to open up some holes for him, something the Giants don't necessarily have. He can get caught behind the line of scrimmage if he's not able to ramp up to full speed. The best option to get Skattebo into space may be in the screen game. In 2024, he became the first FBS player with 1,500 rushing yards and 500 receiving yards in a single season since Christian McCaffrey.

Tyjae Spears		Height: 5-11 Weight: 195 College: Tulane										Draft: 2023/3 (81)				Born: 15-Jun-2001				Age: 24							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2023	TEN	17/1	558	100	453	2	4.5	1	4.5%	20	51	27	44%	41	40	2.4	70	52	385	1	74%	7.4	1.0	-5.7%	27	29	22
2024	TEN	12/1	320	84	312	4	3.7	0	-7.2%	--	5	--	45%	--	27	2.5	35	30	224	1	86%	7.5	0.9	9.8%	19	45	23
2025	TEN		114	461	4	4.0	1	-3.9%						42	33	248	1	78%	7.6		2.6%						

Dealing with soft tissue injuries for much of the year, Spears was inactive for four games and left several others early, including Week 17 against the Jaguars with a concussion. When he played, he still showed the burst that made him a third-round scatback in the 2023 class, but the Titans didn't exactly give him a full-time role or anything. He broke 10 carries three times in 12 games active, and outside of Weeks 16 and 17 when the season was in pure Evaluation Mode, Spears received over 10 snaps on the field for non-passing plays just once. Brian Callahan wants this to be a committee when he speaks, but when he acts, it feels like Spears is a third-down back and little more.

Carson Steele		Height: 6-0 Weight: 228 College: UCLA										Draft: 2024/FA				Born: 21-Oct-2002				Age: 23							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2024	KC	17/3	201	56	183	0	3.3	3	-22.7%	--	38	--	54%	--	8	2.1	11	7	26	0	64%	3.7	-2.7	-71.0%	--	-35	--
2025	KC		6	24	0	3.8	0	-6.3%						2	1	8	0	63%	6.8		-19.7%						

The fastest way into the doghouse as an undrafted free agent is turning the ball over. Steele was a starter for two weeks in September, getting 17 carries for 72 yards, 18 DYAR, and a 9.1% rush DVOA against Atlanta. Those kinds of numbers should have gotten him more work in Kansas City's scuffling backfield last season, but Steele fumbled three times in his first five games, losing two of them. After that, he didn't top 15 snaps again until the Chiefs emptied their bench in Week 18, with the shine fully being off the rose of the preseason star. Steele's chance to stick on the 53-man roster is as Kansas City's only fullback, even if he wasn't used that way last season.

Rhamondre Stevenson		Height: 6-0 Weight: 227 College: Oklahoma										Draft: 2021/4 (120)				Born: 23-Feb-1998				Age: 27							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	NE	17/7	699	210	1040	5	5.0	4	-0.7%	23	67	24	47%	36	65	2.7	88	69	421	1	78%	6.1	-0.3	-21.0%	41	-33	46
2023	NE	12/12	486	156	619	4	4.0	1	-2.7%	29	40	31	49%	21	34	2.3	51	38	238	0	75%	6.3	-0.4	-23.4%	44	-28	45
2024	NE	15/14	599	207	801	7	3.9	7	-17.8%	43	-81	45	49%	25	49	2.7	42	33	168	1	80%	5.1	-0.8	-22.3%	41	-20	40
2025	NE		142	576	4	4.1	1	-5.9%						26	19	125	1	76%	6.5		-5.8%						

It's hard to overstate how bad Stevenson's 2024 really was. The bad began with fumbling woes but continued throughout his entire game. Stevenson averaged 2.8 win yards per attempt (defined as yards after an avoided tackle, whether the defender made contact or not), 27th among qualified running backs. Teammate Antonio Gibson led the NFL with 4.1 win yards per attempt. Gibson was also far better as a receiver. Even though Stevenson caught 69 balls in 2022, he has been outside of the top 40 running backs in receiving DYAR and receiving DVOA in each of the last three seasons. It would be easier to argue that this was more of an indictment of the Patriots' offense than of Stevenson if Gibson didn't finish 20th in receiving DYAR and 13th in receiving DVOA last year. All indications are that Stevenson will have first dibs on the starting role, but with Gibson and rookie TreVeyon Henderson behind him, he'll need to be a much better player in 2025 or he'll be on the bench.

<b>Pierre Strong</b>			Height: 5-11	Weight: 215	College: South Dakota State			Draft: 2022/4 (127)			Born: 10-Dec-1998			Age: 27													
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	NE	15/0	51	10	100	1	10.0	0	82.7%	--	35	--	70%	--	3	2.2	7	7	42	0	100%	6.0	-0.9	-1.2%	--	5	--
2023	CLE	17/1	169	63	291	1	4.6	1	-6.7%	--	5	--	54%	--	10	2.9	8	5	47	0	63%	9.4	4.6	-32.3%	--	-8	--
2024	CLE	14/0	192	26	108	0	4.2	0	-0.5%	--	8	--	46%	--	5	1.7	22	14	104	0	64%	7.4	0.0	-30.5%	--	-17	--
2025	CLE			16	70	0	4.4	0	-3.8%								5	4	27	0	79%	7.2		2.3%			

At this point in his career, Strong's biggest utility comes in special teams, where he served as the Browns' main kick returner opposite Jerome Ford. As an actual running back, Strong has yet to break the mold, seeing just 89 carries across two seasons with Cleveland. Strong had just two games in 2024 with more than five carries, down from six the year prior. He now risks losing that opportunity to the pair of rookies Cleveland drafted this year.

<b>D'Andre Swift</b>			Height: 5-9	Weight: 215	College: Georgia			Draft: 2020/2 (35)			Born: 14-Jan-1999			Age: 26													
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	DET	14/8	393	99	542	5	5.5	1	15.3%	--	91	--	48%	--	27	2.5	71	48	389	3	69%	8.1	1.5	-0.4%	23	51	18
2023	PHI	16/15	630	229	1049	5	4.6	3	6.2%	17	144	16	56%	8	51	2.0	49	39	214	1	80%	5.5	-0.7	-20.5%	42	-18	42
2024	CHI	17/17	751	253	959	6	3.8	2	-13.9%	41	-57	43	45%	40	42	2.3	52	42	386	0	81%	9.2	1.7	5.5%	23	56	18
2025	CHI			211	846	6	4.0	2	-2.6%								40	32	260	1	79%	8.1		12.5%			

Swift averaged just 1.8 yards per carry in the Bears' first three games, then just 2.3 yards per carry from Week 12 on, when Bears coaches began disappearing down mineshafts. The Bears got a hard lesson on the perils of expecting a running back who thrived in ideal circumstances (the Lions and Eagles) to perform just as well for your rebuilding team and its rookie quarterback. The rest of the league learned this lesson years ago, but the Bears are slow on the uptake. Anyway, Swift is still under contract and generally adequate. Fantasy managers should be wary of Roschon Johnson eating into his playing time, particularly near the goal line.

<b>Jonathan Taylor</b>			Height: 5-10	Weight: 226	College: Wisconsin			Draft: 2020/2 (41)			Born: 19-Jan-1999			Age: 26													
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	IND	11/11	524	192	861	4	4.5	3	-1.3%	25	61	26	48%	31	38	2.4	40	28	143	0	70%	5.1	-0.9	-45.0%	50	-69	51
2023	IND	10/7	386	169	741	7	4.4	1	12.9%	10	158	13	49%	23	34	2.6	23	19	153	1	83%	8.1	1.7	17.8%	--	43	--
2024	IND	14/13	707	303	1431	11	4.7	3	4.0%	17	166	10	47%	36	56	2.4	31	18	136	1	58%	7.6	1.0	-29.2%	42	-26	42
2025	IND			282	1326	11	4.7	3	6.7%								33	24	183	1	71%	7.8		0.6%			

Taylor dropped the ball on the ground before he crossed the plane of the goal line in a key Week 15 loss against Denver, then came back from that mistake with a vengeance. He rushed for 520 yards and six touchdowns over the final three weeks of the season (*under breath: against the Giants, Titans, and Jaguars*) to salvage what had been a fairly pedestrian season up to that point. Taylor hurt his ankle in Week 4 and missed three weeks, and he had just five games over 100 rushing yards before Week 16. Anthony Richardson's inability to complete passes made Taylor fairly unproductive as a receiver as well. All the underlying metrics are still reading "elite back" at this point. He had +0.6 Rushing Yards Over Expected per carry despite not hitting many home runs. The broken tackle numbers aren't troubling in any way. But on an offense that looks a little gross, led by a former offensive guru who may have slipped some last year, and with Daniel Jones at quarterback ... we may need to get Taylor to the Eagles to see more than standard-fare RB1 numbers.

Patrick Taylor											Height: 6-2 Weight: 217 College: Memphis				Draft: 2020/FA				Born: 29-Apr-1998				Age: 27				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	GB	14/0	33	10	31	0	3.1	0	-19.5%	--	-5	--	50%	--	1	2.3	1	1	17	0	100%	17.0	10.0	189.7%	--	10	--
2023	GB	11/0	226	32	141	0	4.4	0	-0.4%	--	10	--	47%	--	8	2.8	17	11	49	0	65%	4.5	-1.7	-37.4%	--	-24	--
2024	SF	13/1	172	39	183	1	4.7	0	11.6%	--	35	--	51%	--	8	2.6	11	3	25	0	27%	8.3	0.7	-70.4%	--	-42	--
2025	SF			8	36	0	4.4	0	2.0%								2	2	11	0	79%	7.5		2.7%			

Taylor set career highs in carries, yards, yards per attempt, rush DYAR, and rush DVOA in 2024, becoming one of the last men standing in the 49ers' devastated running back room. That all sounds really great ... until you realize that 109 of his 183 yards came against the Cardinals in the last game of the season, one that didn't matter for either team. Take that out, and Taylor's stats fall to a -9.5% DVOA and -1 DYAR, essentially the very definition of replacement level. Taylor will be fighting with rookie Jordan James for the RB3 role, but the fact that Taylor is a regular contributor on special teams should at least clinch him a roster slot.

Tyrone Tracy											Height: 5-11 Weight: 210 College: Purdue				Draft: 2024/5 (166)				Born: 23-Nov-1999				Age: 26				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2024	NYG	17/12	651	192	839	5	4.4	4	-7.1%	34	12	34	44%	43	45	2.8	53	38	284	1	72%	7.5	0.6	-20.9%	40	-22	41
2025	NYG			147	641	4	4.4	1	-0.3%								34	25	192	1	74%	7.7		1.1%			

Tracy had one of the best rookie running back seasons in Giants history. Despite not starting until midway through the season, he ascended to the top role and became just the second Giants rookie running back to eclipse 1,000 yards from scrimmage. That being said, don't immediately pencil Tracy in as Saquon 2.0. Tracy ranked 15th worst in the league among qualified backs in Rushing Yards Over Expected per carry at -0.07, per Next Gen Stats. He also showed some consistent fumble issues throughout the season. Tracy was the eighth rookie running back since 2010 to cough up five fumbles in their rookie season, and the first since Ezekiel Elliott with the Cowboys in 2016. One can take solace in the fact that the fumble rate there is relatively low—of the eight, Tracy had the third-most touches behind Elliott (354) and Jeremy Hill (249). Entering Year 2, Tracy has a real chance to add a spark to this Giants offense, flexing an ability to line up in the slot on passing downs and work a route tree that expands beyond a simple screen game.

Sean Tucker											Height: 5-10 Weight: 205 College: Syracuse				Draft: 2023/FA				Born: 25-Oct-2001				Age: 24				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2023	TB	11/0	32	15	23	0	1.5	0	-42.0%	--	-19	--	27%	--	2	1.3	2	2	9	0	100%	4.5	-2.2	1.3%	--	2	--
2024	TB	17/0	112	50	308	2	6.2	1	15.8%	--	52	--	58%	--	11	2.8	12	9	109	1	75%	12.1	5.7	67.2%	--	59	--
2025	TB			46	227	1	4.9	0	8.4%								8	6	49	0	75%	8.5		10.4%			

Tucker went 14-136-1 in the Week 6 runaway over the Saints, when Rachaad White was out with a foot injury and Bucky Irving was not yet established as a true featured back. You might have expected Tucker to eat into White's playing time after that game, but Tucker is not a reliable receiver or pass protector, so White remained RB1B, with Tucker getting most of his carries in blowout wins over the Panthers and Chargers. Tucker is also the Bucs' primary kickoff returner, and new offensive coordinator John Grizzard the Wizard Lizard may use him in two-back personnel groupings at times. But Tucker will remain third in line for carries in the Bucs offense, which will place him roughly eighth in line when it comes to touches.

Bhayshul Tuten											Height: 5-11 Weight: 209 College: Virginia Tech				Draft: 2025/4 (104)				Born: 14-Feb-2002				Age: 23				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2025	JAX			146	596	3	4.1	1	-6.9%								35	26	189	1	75%	7.3		0.2%			

James Gladstone said that Tuten would be a priority for the Jaguars in his two interviews to become Jacksonville's general manager. (He revealed this to their in-house video team after the draft, of course.) Then Gladstone simply did what he said he would. At 206 pounds, Tuten is more in the classification of scatback, but plays with enough power that you sometimes forget he's not 220. He ran a 4.32s 40-yard dash at the combine and was a major factor in the passing game, snagging 91 balls for 892

yards and nine touchdowns between North Carolina A&T and Virginia Tech. Fourth-round rookie running backs don't often have the capital to take over an entire backfield instantly, but given the uncertain status of Travis Etienne's future in Jacksonville, Tuten could easily walk into 2026 as the more fantasy-relevant of the two backs in a split role with Tank Bigsby. And we're not sure that's the entirety of his ceiling, either.

Kimani Vidal		Height: 5-8 Weight: 215 College: Troy										Draft: 2024/6 (181)					Born: 28-Aug-2001			Age: 24							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2024	LAC	10/0	169	43	155	0	3.6	1	-27.7%	--	-31	--	33%	--	6	2.5	9	5	62	1	56%	12.4	1.9	-5.3%	--	4	--
2025	LAC			36	144	1	4.0	0	-3.8%								4	3	26	0	79%	7.7		8.9%			

Vidal's rookie season does not leave one overly optimistic about his long-term future. He struggled to see the field, earning just 43 carries and spending about half the year inactive despite some late-season injury problems in the Los Angeles backfield. When he did see the field, he wasn't productive either as a rusher or a receiver—he would have had the lowest rushing DVOA and success rate in the league had he qualified for the main leaderboards and would have been outside the top 30 in receiving as well. He also was overmatched in pass protection and played six total snaps on special teams, so there wasn't much in the way of hidden value. And all this is, of course, before taking into account that the Chargers just used a first-round pick on Omariion Hampton and brought Najee Harris in in free agency. It's reasonable to give Vidal another year of development; a bad rookie season doesn't necessarily mean there's no hope going forward. But it was, indeed, a bad rookie season.

Kenneth Walker		Height: 5-9 Weight: 211 College: Michigan State										Draft: 2022/2 (41)					Born: 20-Oct-2000			Age: 25							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	SEA	15/11	575	228	1050	9	4.6	0	-12.3%	38	-35	38	42%	41	50	1.9	35	27	165	0	77%	6.1	0.0	-11.5%	35	4	35
2023	SEA	15/15	502	219	905	8	4.1	1	-8.2%	36	4	36	47%	29	72	2.4	37	29	259	1	78%	8.9	2.7	9.3%	14	49	17
2024	SEA	11/11	469	153	573	7	3.7	1	-9.0%	38	-3	38	46%	38	60	2.9	53	46	299	1	87%	6.5	0.1	6.0%	22	62	17
2025	SEA			216	898	8	4.2	2	-3.0%								56	45	312	2	80%	7.0		6.5%			

DVOA doesn't like Walker as a rusher, but then, DVOA doesn't account for the fact that Walker is running behind the Seattle offensive line. Walker's 0.8 yards before contact were lowest in the league in 2024, and while Walker doesn't exactly go out of his way to avoid running through people, it doesn't help when your line is a turnstile, allowing defenders to get in your face before you have taken three steps. Walker also had the highest avoided tackle rate at 32.7%, so the fact that he even climbed to the ranks of the single-digit-negative DVOA should be regarded as a heroic effort in the face of terrible line play more than a failing on Walker's part.

Jaylen Warren		Height: 5-8 Weight: 215 College: Oklahoma State										Draft: 2022/FA					Born: 1-Nov-1998			Age: 27							
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	PIT	16/0	342	77	379	1	4.9	1	14.5%	--	75	--	55%	--	29	2.1	33	28	214	0	85%	7.6	1.1	27.2%	6	72	12
2023	PIT	17/0	518	149	784	4	5.3	4	8.2%	14	100	19	50%	18	67	3.3	74	61	370	0	82%	6.1	0.1	-13.5%	37	1	37
2024	PIT	15/0	447	120	511	1	4.3	2	9.1%	8	85	19	50%	22	33	2.9	47	38	310	0	81%	8.2	1.2	1.3%	25	39	25
2025	PIT			121	529	3	4.4	1	-0.7%								44	35	259	1	79%	7.5		10.9%			

The dreaded preseason injury literally hamstrung Warren in 2024; with the back of his leg hampering him early on, the Steelers back failed to build on his 2023 success, where breaking tons of tackles led to his best pro season. The fact he never could seize the starting role from Najee Harris (whom Pittsburgh let walk in free agency) said something, and now Warren is in the final season of his rookie deal. Unless he has a huge year, he doesn't appear to be in Pittsburgh's long-term plan. The drafting of Kaleb Johnson in the third round was writing on the wall in large capital letters. Warren averaged just 2.4 yards per carry in the red zone, and scored just once in four goal-line carries, so he isn't any kind of fantasy priority either.

Rachaad White																			Draft: 2022/3 (91)				Born: 12-Jan-1999				Age: 26			
Height: 6-0 Weight: 214 College: Arizona State																														
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk			
2022	TB	17/8	469	129	481	1	3.7	2	-10.1%	34	-9	34	51%	19	19	2.1	59	50	290	2	86%	5.8	-0.5	-1.0%	26	44	20			
2023	TB	17/17	861	272	990	6	3.6	3	-10.1%	39	-17	41	43%	43	66	2.1	70	64	549	3	91%	8.6	2.2	35.6%	4	189	2			
2024	TB	16/15	591	144	613	3	4.3	3	-8.2%	37	2	37	53%	15	30	2.8	57	51	393	6	89%	7.7	1.8	27.4%	7	131	5			
2025	TB		104	438	2	4.2	1	-4.0%									33	28	200	2	84%	7.1		14.7%						

White received 13 carries and six targets inside the 10-yard line last season, but none came from Week 16 through the playoffs: Bucky Irving took over White's goal-line role late in the year, eradicating White's last vestiges of fantasy value. White is a capable carry-muncher to keep Irving fresh, and he's a hard-nosed pass protector, which will help him stay in the running back committee. Replacement-level rushing is just fine when it comes from a durable, affordable, no-nonsense veteran off the bench.

Zamir White																			Draft: 2022/4 (122)				Born: 18-Sep-1999				Age: 26			
Height: 6-0 Weight: 215 College: Georgia																														
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk			
2022	LV	14/0	40	17	70	0	4.1	0	-23.0%	--	-11	--	41%	--	5	2.7	0	0	0	0	--	0.0	--	--	--	--	--	--		
2023	LV	17/4	229	104	451	1	4.3	1	-11.7%	41	-14	39	53%	11	10	2.8	19	15	98	0	79%	6.5	-0.2	-12.5%	--	1	--			
2024	LV	8/5	154	65	183	1	2.8	2	-62.0%	--	-140	--	26%	--	10	2.1	8	6	30	0	75%	5.0	-1.7	-30.4%	--	-7	--			
2025	LV		13	54	1	4.2	0	-1.2%									0	0	0	0	0%	0.0		-147.4%						

White averaged 99.3 yards per game in the final four weeks of the 2023 season. He entered the offseason with tons of hype and fantasy players drafted him as if he was a sure-fire starter for all of 2024. But last year was a disaster. White was horribly ineffective when on the field to start the year, then lost his job to an even more ineffective Alexander Mattison when he returned from a several-week injury. Now behind Ashton Jeanty and Raheem Mostert on the depth chart, he's going to have to scratch and claw for relevance.

Jamaal Williams																			Draft: 2017/4 (134)				Born: 3-Apr-1995				Age: 30			
Height: 6-0 Weight: 224 College: Brigham Young																														
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk			
2022	DET	17/9	460	262	1066	17	4.1	3	-2.1%	26	78	21	54%	11	21	1.9	16	12	73	0	75%	6.1	-0.6	-15.5%	--	-2	--			
2023	NO	13/4	324	106	306	1	2.9	1	-22.5%	48	-62	47	43%	42	7	1.7	20	18	62	0	90%	3.4	-2.5	-55.0%	--	-45	--			
2024	NO	14/1	178	48	164	1	3.4	0	-25.7%	--	-36	--	46%	--	6	2.3	11	9	57	0	82%	6.3	-0.8	-0.7%	--	8	--			

Williams was an obvious system product when he rushed for 1,066 yards and 17 touchdowns for the 2022 Lions. The Saints, however, can be oblivious to the obvious, so they signed Williams for two years at 3.1 yards per carry. Williams has an A+ locker-room reputation and could get one more chance as a leadership guy. He will eat \$2.3 million in Saints cap space this year, because #Saints.

Javonte Williams																			Draft: 2021/2 (35)				Born: 25-Apr-2000				Age: 25			
Height: 5-10 Weight: 220 College: North Carolina																														
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk			
2022	DEN	4/4	142	47	204	0	4.3	1	-16.5%	--	-15	--	51%	--	16	2.8	22	16	76	0	73%	4.8	-1.4	-35.2%	--	-25	--			
2023	DEN	16/13	493	217	774	3	3.6	1	-5.8%	34	25	34	41%	45	41	2.5	58	47	228	2	81%	4.9	-1.0	-25.2%	46	-38	46			
2024	DEN	17/11	574	139	513	4	3.7	2	-19.3%	44	-64	44	48%	30	28	2.4	70	52	346	0	74%	6.7	-0.3	-17.9%	39	-15	39			
2025	DAL		122	483	4	4.0	1	-4.9%									44	34	239	1	77%	7.0		1.6%						

After coming back from an ACL injury, Williams hasn't shown the same burst in the running game. Behind one of the league's best offensive lines, Williams only ran for 10 or more yards on 9.4% of his runs in 2024. He also lacked power running through bodies, with just 3.5 yards per carry against stacked boxes. However, he did find some room in the passing game. He led all running backs in DYAR on angle routes and had the most targets on that route. Rico Dowdle, who was the Cowboys' lead back last season, was fourth in DYAR on that route.

**Kyren Williams**

Height: 5-9 Weight: 202 College: Notre Dame

Draft: 2022/5 (164)

Born: 26-Aug-2000

Age: 25

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2022	LAR	10/0	141	35	139	0	4.0	0	-3.9%	--	6	--	40%	--	9	2.1	12	9	76	0	75%	8.4	2.0	16.2%	--	22	--
2023	LAR	12/11	678	228	1144	12	5.0	3	19.1%	3	273	3	62%	2	60	2.9	49	32	206	3	67%	6.4	0.7	-14.3%	38	-1	38
2024	LAR	16/16	888	316	1299	14	4.1	5	3.6%	19	170	9	52%	16	75	2.5	40	34	182	2	85%	5.4	-1.2	-10.9%	35	7	36
2025	LAR			264	1120	11	4.2	2	2.8%								34	26	171	1	78%	6.5		-2.6%			

Williams was the league's top workhorse last season. He led all running backs playing 80% of the Rams' snaps, getting 70% of their carries and 44% of their touches. Williams was already heavily used in 2023, and then L.A. opted to replace Royce Freeman and Darrell Henderson with more Kyren Williams. Despite receiving 88 more carries, however, Williams had fewer rushing DYAR last season as his efficiency numbers dropped pretty heavily—still above average, mind you, but the workload seemed to get to him. You'd expect Blake Corum to carry some of the load for him in 2025, but that's what we said about Corum as a rookie. Sean McVay likes running his top running back into the ground, so there should be plenty of volume for Williams once more so long as he stays in one piece.

**Emanuel Wilson**

Height: 5-10 Weight: 226 College: Fort Valley State

Draft: 2023/FA

Born: 8-May-1999

Age: 26

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2023	GB	7/0	36	14	85	0	6.1	0	20.1%	--	16	--	64%	--	3	1.6	5	4	23	0	80%	5.8	-0.3	3.0%	--	5	--
2024	GB	17/0	263	103	502	4	4.9	0	16.7%	4	113	15	61%	1	26	2.8	14	11	48	1	79%	4.4	-1.4	-47.7%	--	-21	--
2025	GB			32	151	1	4.7	0	8.5%								7	5	35	0	75%	6.4		-5.9%			

Thirty of Wilson's 103 carries came in fourth quarters when the Packers led by at least a touchdown. Another 14 carries came in Week 18, when Jordan Love suffered a minor injury and the Packers consigned themselves to their playoff fate. So we're looking at a bruising mop-up back, albeit an effective one. Wilson earned a crack at an increased role behind Josh Jacobs in 2025, but MarShawn Lloyd is returning from myriad injuries and has higher draft status. Throw in yet another big thumpy guy in Chris Brooks, and the Packers are deep in power runners. Draft a Jacobs "handcuff" at your peril.

**Jaylen Wright**

Height: 5-10 Weight: 210 College: Tennessee

Draft: 2024/4 (120)

Born: 1-Apr-2003

Age: 22

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Runs	Yds	TD	Yd/R	FUM	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	Suc%	Rk	BTkl	YafC	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	Yd/C	YAC	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk
2024	MIA	15/1	171	68	249	0	3.7	1	-18.9%	--	26	--	41%	--	20	2.7	6	3	8	0	50%	2.7	-4.0	-82.6%	--	-26	--
2025	MIA			104	428	3	4.1	1	-4.0%								23	17	134	1	75%	8.0		7.2%			

An absolute speed demon who will benefit if Mike McDaniel can figure out how to counter whatever defenses did to slow their running game last year. Wright had a higher explosive rush rate than teammates De'Von Achane and Raheem Mostert last year, so his lack of production can be easily excused. However, he was nowhere near as effective as those two as a pass catcher, which is where Achane made up for his lack of rushing production. If Miami's ground struggles continue in 2025, Wright's lack of pass-catching chops could prevent him from carving out a larger role for himself.

## Going Deep

**Rasheen Ali, BAL:** Baltimore's fifth-round pick in 2024 got on the field for 10 carries and 31 yards as a rookie. He also got four kick returns for 107 yards. His game speed could be enough to play on special teams and force the Ravens to keep four running backs on the roster.

**LeQuint Allen, JAX:** What jumps out are the receiving statistics. Allen caught 64-521-4 out of the backfield for Syracuse last year and finished with 848 career college receiving yards in three seasons in Jeff Nixon's scheme, often aligning out wide or in the slot. This wasn't lost on Liam Coen, who said Allen can catch the ball and was good in the screen game in early OTAs. Allen doesn't have a clear path to playing time in a crowded backfield, but any running back who can get hooked into Coen's screen game has a fantasy football pulse.

**Tyler Badie, DEN:** He only had 11 carries on the season, but nine of them went for 70 yards in Week 3 against the Buccaneers. After a long injury absence, Sean Payton claimed Badie would be a big part of Denver's game plan against Buffalo in the Wild-Card Round. But he only had two carries in that game and is now buried on the depth chart.

**Raheem Blackshear, CAR:** Blackshear led the NFL with 31 kickoff returns in 2024. All 15 of his carries, including a 26-yard run right up the gut against the Falcons, came in the final three Panthers games. Blackshear will battle Trevor Etienne and others for his return roles and roster spot.

**Mike Boone, FA:** Boone has averaged 5.0 yards per carry over a seven-year career as (mostly) a third running back. That's odd: he should either have gotten another chance as a committee back or fallen out of the league by now. Boone got a few touches for the Panthers when Chuba Hubbard and Miles Sanders were hurt late last year. He's a free agent at press time, so perhaps that was his last hurrah.

**Jonathon Brooks, CAR:** Brooks tore his right ACL while playing for Texas in November of 2023. The Panthers reached for him in the second round of the 2024 draft. He missed the first two months of the season, then got 12 touches in three games before tearing the same ACL again in Week 13 against the Eagles. Brooks suffered complications in his rehab and is out for 2025. Think of this example any time you start convincing yourself that the Panthers front office knows what it is doing.

**Tahj Brooks, CIN:** Due to the depth of the 2025 running back class, the highly productive Brooks—a bowling ball with elite patience and vision—fell to the Bengals in the sixth round after putting up over 3,000 yards and 27 touchdowns in two years at Texas Tech. Brooks could see plenty of action behind Chase Brown in Cincinnati, as he profiles as a cross between Brown and fellow Bengals back Samaje Perine.

**Julius Chestnut, TEN:** A 2022 UDFA, Chestnut was active for all 17 games for the first time in 2025, but it's very clear that his bread is buttered on special teams. He has 312 special teams snaps in three seasons compared to just 120 on offense, and he managed just 22 carries even with Tyjae Spears' injury issues, with the Titans instead turning Tony Pollard into a 1980s-style workhorse. Chestnut should compete for a roster spot, but he isn't someone who needs to be monitored for fantasy football purposes.

**Jacory Croskey-Merritt, WAS:** Eligibility issues kept Croskey-Merritt to just one game (106 yards and a touchdown) for Arizona in 2024 after he put up 1,190 yards and 17 touchdowns at New Mexico in 2023. The seventh-round pick is an upright runner with good long speed, but his lack of elusiveness outside of a jump cut limits his ceiling in the backfield.

**DeeJay Dallas, ARI:** Dallas was mostly used on special teams in 2024, highlighted by the first ever dynamic kickoff return touchdown. Dallas finished the year with +2.2 points worth of field position on kick returns, 14th in the league and seventh among players with double-digit returns. That remains his pathway to a roster spot at the moment, as he set a career-low with just nine carries for Arizona.

**Clyde Edwards-Helaire, NO:** Injuries, general ineffectiveness, and an anxiety disorder derailed Edwards-Helaire's Chiefs career. He resurfaced for 13 carries and three catches as part of a committee with Jamaal Williams and Jordan Mims as the Saints played out the string in Weeks 17 and 18. Edwards-Helaire left college with Alvin Kamara-like all-purpose threat potential. He will probably never reach it, but the Saints might as well give reclamation projects as many opportunities as they can.

**Ollie Gordon, MIA:** The sixth-round rookie from Oklahoma State could make some noise this season. Miami wants to be more physical in the run game, but Alexander Mattison is not that guy, pal. Gordon has the size and power to be that guy, complementing the blazing speeds of De'Von Achane and Jaylen Wright.

**Eric Gray, NYG:** The 2023 fifth-rounder has yet to catch on in New York, seeing just 31 carries and 18 targets in two seasons with the Giants. Gray's 29% rushing success rate was fifth worst among all running backs in 2024 with at least 10 carries. Gray does provide some utility; he's a decent pass-catching back and served as New York's lead man on kick returns throughout 2024. After the draft selection of Cam Skattebo, though, Gray may not have a spot on this roster.

**Hassan Haskins, LAC:** Haskins was fourth on the Chargers' depth chart at running back in 2024, but injuries to J.K. Dobbins and Gus Edwards, plus his special teams prowess, saw him get some decent playing time in December and January. His -21.4% rushing DVOA was sub-replacement level, so that's not his ideal role, but he did play nearly 300 special teams snaps and had a pair of return-stop tackles, so he could carve himself out a roster slot as a depth piece.

**Jamycal Hasty, NE:** Hasty seemingly has one big game each year, typically as a pass-catcher. He went 5-67-1 against Baltimore in 2022 and 5-49-1 against Jacksonville in London last year. Outside of those games, however, he hasn't done much of anything. With Rhamondre Stevenson, Antonio Gibson, and rookie TreVeyon Henderson ahead of him on the depth chart, Hasty is no lock to make the Patriots roster.

**Travis Homer, CHI:** Homer, once a charter member of the Seahawks' late-2010s overstuffed backfield committees, was active as a special teamer for 10 Bears games last year but received just nine offensive touches, six of them at the end of blowout losses to the Vikings and 49ers in Weeks 14 and 15. He was Shane Waldron's guy, and therefore may struggle to find a home on Ben Johnson's roster.

**Jordan James, SF:** A fifth-round pick out of Oregon, James is a bowling ball coming in to play the Jordan Mason role in the 49ers' backfield. James isn't a patient runner. He's compact and tough and looks to bowl people over, often times before his blocking is there to cover for him. He's not much in open space, but he has a deceptive lateral cut that can get him past initial penetration and keep plays alive. He's likely not more than a goal-line back, but he could carve out a role in the red zone.

**Jermar Jefferson, FA:** Jefferson ran for a 28-yard touchdown in a 16-16 tie with the Steelers as a Lions rookie way back in 2021. He spent the 2022 season on the practice squad and 2023 on various inactive lists due to a preseason injury. He then spent most of 2024 on the Lions practice squad before earning six carries when David Montgomery was hurt late in the year. Jefferson was a free agent at press time. Dan Campbell thought enough of him to keep him around for four years, so someone will probably give him a look.

**Terrell Jennings, NE:** Even in college at Florida A&M, Jennings' highest yardage total was just 679. The Patriots signed him after the draft but he spent most of the year on the practice squad. His only touches as a rookie came in garbage time, either late in a blowout loss to Houston in Week 6 or in a meaningless Week 18 game against Buffalo's backups.

**Velus Jones, NO:** The Bears reached for Jones in the third round of the 2022 draft, when Ryan Poles and Matt Eberflus appeared determined to build the worst possible receiving corps for Justin Fields. Jones, who was primarily a kick returner in six college seasons, turned out to be a fumble-prone disaster. He tried moving to running back, but neither the Bears nor the Panthers dared to trust him with the football in his hands. Jones enters camp at the bottom of the Saints' running back depth chart. Sometimes, Mickey Loomis really leans into his persona as the guy who just lost his shirt at the racetrack and is now searching the parking lot for accidentally-dropped winning bet slips.

**Phil Mafah, DAL:** Mafah, a seventh-round pick from Clemson, is a big power back who can hold up in pass protection. That alone could make him a useful rotation piece. But he doesn't offer much breakaway speed or production in the passing game.

**Damien Martinez, SEA:** Seventh-round pick Martinez is a BackCAST sleeper. The Miami back ranked fifth in our running back rankings with a score of +61.7%, thanks in large part to averaging over 6.0 yards per carry in three years of college ball. Martinez is primarily a straight-ahead runner, but he can make defenders miss. A 40 time of 4.51 seconds is not spectacular, but it's pretty good for a 217-pound power back. He will probably start the year on the practice squad for Seattle, but he could push Kenny McIntosh for a spot on the 53.

**Jase McClellan, ATL:** Jase McClellan was a committee back for all of his Alabama career. The Falcons drafted him in the sixth round in 2024. McClellan rushed five times for 17 yards at the end of the Week 7 blowout loss to the Seahawks and eight times for 15 yards at the end of the Week 11 blowout loss to the Broncos. Those were his only NFL carries to date. The Falcons did not rush to draft a better third running back in case something bad happens to Bijan Robinson and Tyler Allgeier and should be applauded for that decision.

**Kenny McIntosh, SEA:** McIntosh got his first NFL carries last season thanks to Kenneth Walker's ankle injury, and he impressed. His 20.5% rushing DVOA was sixth among players with at least 30 carries, and he would have been second with a 35.5% avoided tackle rate. He remains buried on the Seahawks' depth chart, but there are worse options to have as your RB3.

**Jordan Mims, NO:** Mims, a former UDFA who spent the summer of 2023 in Bills camp, has been bounding on and off the Saints' practice squad for two years. Multiple injuries pushed him into the running back rotation for a string of four-carry, 10- to 16-yard performances late in 2024. There's a crowd of running backs ahead of Mims on the Saints depth chart, a few of them actually good.

**Keaton Mitchell, BAL:** Mitchell continues to progress well from his knee injury. He moved well in offseason workouts and has shown the burst and acceleration that made him such an exciting player. But the problem is there might not be a lot of offensive snaps available behind Derrick Henry and Justice Hill. Mitchell could sneak onto the field for a few plays here and there to show off his home run speed, but a fully formed offensive role might be tough to logically pull off.

**Kyle Monangai, CHI:** Monangai led the Big Ten with 1,262 yards for Rutgers in 2023, then finished second in the conference with 1,279 yards in 2024. He's a straight-ahead wrecking ball who rarely caught a pass or even ran outside the tackles, but he thumped out 20-carry games when called upon and could deliver occasional Beast Mode highlights when he found a crease in the offensive line. Don't be surprised if he cracks the Bears backfield committee as a seventh-round rookie.

**Kalel Mullings, TEN:** A top high-school recruit as a linebacker, Mullings converted to running back for Michigan in the 2022 season. He only had 50 career carries up until 2024's 185-948-12 rushing line. He's a 225-pound thumper with only 10 career receiving targets. The Titans drafted him in the sixth round, but Mullings doesn't have a clear path to a roster spot behind Tony Pollard, Tyjae Spears, and do-it-all special teamer Julius Chestnut. If he does grab one, he'll likely be limited to early-down and goal-line work.

**Dare Ogunbowale, HOU:** Arike's brother. Ogunbowale ran 238 routes in 310 offensive snaps last year, and rushed on 30 of the snaps he wasn't running routes. He's a pure third-down back with special teams versatility. Fourth-rounder Woody Marks will push him for Houston's third-down duties in 2025.

**Craig Reynolds, DET:** Reynolds only received mop-up touches until David Montgomery's late-season injury. He then rushed 19 times for 88 yards in the final three Lions games, plus three catches (one of them a 26-yard scamper after a checkdown against the 49ers). Reynolds is entering his fifth season as the Lions' third running back, as well as a core special teamer. He's probably a replacement-level talent, but a replacement-level talent is likely to look pretty good if pressed into service behind the Lions offensive line.

**Ronnie Rivers, LAR:** Rivers got some late-season work when Blake Corum went down with a forearm injury, rushing 22 times for a career high 11.3% DVOA and 19 DYAR. He also became a regular contributor on special teams, so while he won't see many carries as the third back in the room, his roster spot is almost assuredly safe.

**Chris Rodriguez, WAS:** Rodriguez, a 2023 sixth-round pick, had a nice 34.2% DVOA on his 25 carries in 2024. He's a reliable enough runner who can find the right gaps in the blocking and not screw up the play. At 224 pounds, he's a bigger body who can still give some burst.

**Will Shipley, PHI:** The 2024 fourth-round pick from Clemson totaled 82 yards on 30 carries during the regular season but ripped off 77 yards on four carries during Philadelphia's final drive against Washington in the NFC Championship Game. He also worked in some kick returns during the regular season. He'll compete with AJ Dillon for the primary backup role behind Saquon Barkley.

**Brashard Smith, KC:** Seventh-round pick Smith from SMU is a converted wide receiver with little experience at the position, just 253 carries. He's small and not great at pass protection, either, but he's shifty, has good hands, and has both kick-return and punt-cover chops. Special teams is his path to the Chiefs' roster, or more likely, their practice squad.

**Sione Vaki, DET:** Vaki became one of the Lions' top special teamers as a fourth-round rookie in 2024. He could be on the Lions roster for the next decade. All six of his offensive touches, however, came at the ends of games that the Lions won by scores of 47-9 and 52-6.

**Deuce Vaughn, DAL:** There was a lot of excitement for the 5-foot-6 running back out of Kansas State, but the fifth-round pick has totaled just 40 carries and 110 yards over two seasons. The shifty back also played only 10% of the special teams snaps, so he might need to break through the crowded yet underwhelming running back depth chart in Dallas to stay on the roster.

**Trayveon Williams, NE:** In six seasons with the Bengals, Williams had just 62 carries. He's the backfield equivalent of Josh Johnson or Chase Daniel, minus the clipboard. In fairness, Williams was solid as a career special teams stalwart, and he made the occasional play when inserted into the offense, but not in 2024, when he was active every week without a single carry or reception. You would think Joe Burrow would have tossed him a screen pass in Week 18 just to get Williams on the board, but nah. Now in New England, where he's unlikely to make the roster.

# Wide Receivers

In the following two sections we provide the last three years of statistics, as well as Jeff Ratcliffe's 2025 projection, for every wide receiver and tight end who either played a significant role in 2024 or is expected to do so in 2025.

The first line contains biographical data—each player's name, height, weight, college, draft position, birth date, and age. Height and weight are the best data we could find; weight, of course, can fluctuate during the off-season. Age is very simple, the number of years between the player's birth year and 2025, but birth date is provided if you want to figure out exact age.

**Draft** position gives draft year and round, with the overall pick number with which the player was taken in parentheses. In the sample table, it says that Justin Jefferson was chosen in the 2020 NFL draft with the 22nd overall pick in the first round. Undrafted free agents are listed as "FA" with the year they came into the league, even if they were only in training camp or on a practice squad.

Next, we give the last three years of player stats. Note that rushing stats are not included for receivers, but that any receiver with at least five carries last year will have his 2024 rushing stats appear in his team's chapter. The top rushing wide receivers are listed in a table below.

First come games played and games started (**G/GS**). Games played represents the official NFL total and may include games in which a player appeared on special teams but did not play wide receiver or tight end. We also have a total of offensive **Snaps** for each season. Receptions (**Rec**) counts passes caught, while Passes (**Pass**) counts passes thrown to this player, complete or incomplete. Receiving yards (**Yds**) and touchdowns (**TD**) are the official NFL totals for each player.

Catch rate (**C%**) includes all passes listed in the official play-by-play with the given player as the intended receiver, even if those passes were listed as "Thrown Away," "Batted Down," or "Quarterback Hit in Motion." The average NFL wide receiver caught 64% of passes in 2024, while the average tight end caught 73% of passes.

Plus/minus (+/-) is a metric that we introduced in *Football Outsiders Almanac 2010*. It estimates how many passes a receiver caught compared to what an average receiver would have caught, given the location of those passes. Unlike simple catch rate, plus/minus does not consider passes listed as "Thrown Away," "Batted Down," "Quarterback Hit in Motion," or "Miscommunication." Player performance

is compared to a historical baseline of how often a pass is caught based on the pass distance, the distance required for a first down, and whether it is on the left, middle, or right side of the field. Note that plus/minus is not scaled to a player's target total.

Drops (**Drop**) list the number of dropped passes according to FTN Data charting. Our totals may differ from the drop totals kept by other organizations. Yards per catch (**Yd/C**) is a standard statistic.

Next, you'll find each player's average depth of target (**aDOT**) and rank (**Rk**). This is the average distance beyond the line of scrimmage on all throws to this player. Deep-ball specialists will rank high in this category (Alec Pierce of the Colts had a 22.8-yard aDOT, by far the most of any qualifying wide receiver) while players who see a lot of passes on slants and screens will rank low (Greg Dortch of the Cardinals had the lowest aDOT at just 4.3 yards).

Next we list yards after catch (**YAC**), rank (**Rk**) in yards after catch, and **YAC+**. YAC+ is similar to plus/minus; it estimates how much YAC a receiver gained compared to what we would have expected from an average receiver catching passes of similar length in similar down-and-distance situations. This is imperfect—we don't base YAC+ on what route a player runs, and obviously a go route will have more YAC than a comeback—but it does a fairly good job of telling you if this receiver gets more or less YAC than other receivers with similar usage patterns. We also give a total of broken tackles (**BTkl**) according to FTN charting.

The next four columns include our main advanced metrics for receiving: **DVOA** (Defense-adjusted Value Over Average) and **DYAR** (Defense-adjusted Yards Above Replacement), along with the player's rank in both. These metrics compare every pass intended for a receiver and the results of that pass to a league-average baseline based on the game situations in which passes were thrown to that receiver. DVOA and DYAR are also adjusted based on the opposing defense and include Defensive Pass Interference yards on passes intended for that receiver. The methods used to compute these numbers are described in detail in the "Statistical Toolbox" introduction in the front of the book. The important distinction between them is that DVOA is a rate statistic, while DYAR is a cumulative statistic. Thus, a higher DVOA means more value per pass play, while a higher DYAR means more aggregate value over the entire season.

Justin Jefferson			Height: 6-1		Weight: 198		College: Louisiana State				Draft: 2020/1 (22)		Born: 16-Jun-1999		Age: 26											
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	MIN	17/17	1079	184	128	1809	8	70%	+14.9	6	14.1	10.2	53	4.8	25	+0.2	12	20.7%	4	489	1	55.0%	5	28.8%	7	23%
2023	MIN	10/9	550	100	68	1074	5	68%	+7.8	1	15.8	12.6	26	3.8	45	-0.7	8	19.3%	10	258	14	63.2%	6	28.0%	13	29%
2024	MIN	17/17	1043	154	103	1533	10	67%	+4.4	6	14.9	11.6	40	4.7	29	-0.1	6	20.9%	12	425	2	56.4%	7	30.6%	3	26%
2025	MIN			172	114	1557	10	66%			13.7							10.6%								

## 310 WIDE RECEIVERS

To qualify for ranking in YAC, receiving DVOA, or receiving DYAR, a wide receiver must have had 50 passes thrown to him in that season. We ranked 91 wide receivers in 2024, 81 in 2023, and 85 in 2022. Tight ends qualify with 25 targets in a given season; we ranked 49 tight ends in 2024, 52 in 2023, and 48 in 2022.

The next two columns represent a relatively new metric we introduced in 2023: Route DVOA (**RDVOA**). Analysis in recent years has shown that it is better to measure receivers based on what they do on every route that they run, not just the routes where they are targeted. Now that we have route data from FTN Data charting, we have the ability to create a version of DVOA based on every route run instead of just targets. Routes where the receiver is not targeted are treated the same as incomplete passes in this analysis. The resulting Route DVOA does a better job of measuring the ability of receivers to get open as well as how good they are when tar-

geted. Route DVOA has a much larger range than standard receiving DVOA, with Puka Nacua leading the league at over 100% in 2024. Route DVOA is also more predictive than standard receiving DVOA, but we are listing both versions for each player table because we can't compare Route DVOA to any of our numbers prior to 2021.

Qualifying for ranking in Route DVOA is different than standard receiving DVOA. A wide receiver qualifies with 50 targets or 300 routes, and a tight end qualifies with 25 targets or 150 routes. Some wide receivers and tight ends will be ranked in Route DVOA and not in standard receiving DVOA. Route DVOA ranks 97 wide receivers in 2024, 91 in 2023, and 103 in 2022. There are 56 tight ends ranked in 2024, 54 in 2023, and 55 in 2022.

The final columns measure each player's role in his offense. Usage rate (**Use**) measures each player's share of his team's targets, adjusted for games played. For example, Chris

### Top 20 WR by Receiving DYAR (Total Value), 2024

Rank	Player	Team	DYAR
1	Ja'Marr Chase	CIN	469
2	Justin Jefferson	MIN	425
3	Amon-Ra St. Brown	DET	419
4	A.J. Brown	PHI	357
5	Terry McLaurin	WAS	339
6	Mike Evans	TB	338
7	Brian Thomas	JAX	311
8	Alec Pierce	IND	302
9	Ladd McConkey	LAC	289
10	Jayden Reed	GB	281
11	Darnell Mooney	ATL	271
12	Tee Higgins	CIN	259
13	Puka Nacua	LAR	255
14	Drake London	ATL	236
15	DeVonta Smith	PHI	235
16	Rashod Bateman	BAL	234
17	Jaxon Smith-Njigba	SEA	209
18	Nico Collins	HOU	206
19	Jordan Addison	MIN	206
20	Chris Godwin	TB	199

Minimum 50 passes

### Top 20 WR by Receiving DVOA (Value per Target), 2024

Rank	Player	Team	DVOA
1	Alec Pierce	IND	42.2%
2	Jayden Reed	GB	34.0%
3	A.J. Brown	PHI	33.4%
4	Rashod Bateman	BAL	28.7%
5	Chris Godwin	TB	28.6%
6	Adam Thielen	CAR	27.6%
7	Amon-Ra St. Brown	DET	24.6%
8	Mike Evans	TB	24.5%
9	Terry McLaurin	WAS	24.3%
10	DeVonta Smith	PHI	21.4%
11	Ladd McConkey	LAC	21.2%
12	Justin Jefferson	MIN	20.9%
13	Romeo Doubs	GB	20.1%
14	Ja'Marr Chase	CIN	20.1%
15	Allen Lazard	NYJ	18.4%
16	Darnell Mooney	ATL	17.9%
17	Brian Thomas	JAX	17.7%
18	Puka Nacua	LAR	17.6%
19	Tee Higgins	CIN	15.3%
20	Mack Hollins	BUF	15.1%

Minimum 50 passes

### Top 20 WR by Route DVOA (Value per Route), 2024

Rank	Player	Team	DVOA
1	Puka Nacua	LAR	113.4%
2	A.J. Brown	PHI	84.6%
3	Amon-Ra St. Brown	DET	64.2%
4	Nico Collins	HOU	63.9%
5	Mike Evans	TB	63.6%
6	Drake London	ATL	62.5%
7	Justin Jefferson	MIN	56.4%
8	Chris Godwin	TB	52.7%
9	Brian Thomas	JAX	48.7%
10	Jauan Jennings	SF	47.4%
11	Ladd McConkey	LAC	45.7%
12	Ja'Marr Chase	CIN	44.5%
13	Tee Higgins	CIN	43.8%
14	Malik Nabers	NYG	42.7%
15	Josh Downs	IND	42.5%
16	DeVonta Smith	PHI	40.0%
17	Tutu Atwell	LAR	37.1%
18	Terry McLaurin	WAS	36.8%
19	Zay Flowers	BAL	36.6%
20	Jayden Reed	GB	35.8%

Minimum 50 passes or 300 routes

### Top 10 WR by Rushing DYAR (Total Value), 2024

Rank	Player	Team	DYAR	Runs	Yds	TD	Rank	Player	Team	DYAR	Runs	Yds	TD
1	Xavier Worthy	KC	77	20	104	3	6	Puka Nacua	LAR	41	11	46	1
2	Jayden Reed	GB	60	20	163	1	7	Tre Tucker	LV	40	9	44	1
3	Mecole Hardman	KC	48	5	62	1	8	DJ Moore	CHI	38	14	75	0
4	Ray-Ray McCloud	ATL	47	10	79	0	9	Ashton Dulin	IND	37	5	45	0
5	Jameson Williams	DET	44	11	61	1	10	Sterling Shepard	TB	35	8	69	0

Minimum 5 carries

Godwin was targeted on 11.0% of the Buccaneers' targets last season, but he only played seven games. Adjusting for the 10 missing games gives Godwin a more accurate usage rate of 26.7%. The final column shows the percentage of each player's targets that came when he lined up in the **Slot** (or at tight end). Adam Thielen of the Panthers saw 83% of his targets from the slot, the highest rate among qualifying wide receivers, while Darius Slayton of the Giants had the lowest slot rate at 7%. Tight ends have an additional column listing how frequently they were split **Wide**, from a high of 28% (Sam LaPorta) to a low of 1% (Hunter Henry).

The definitions of "Slot" and "Wide" used by FTN Data charting are different from the definitions used by our previous data providers. "Slot" and "Wide" are now based on where players are lined up in relation to each other, not where they are lined up in relation to the hashmarks. For example, if three wide receivers are in a trips bunch that is tight to the formation, the outside receiver is marked as "wide" even though he is somewhat tight to the formation. This means that slot rates will be lower than what was listed in our past books.

Jeff Ratcliffe's projections for the upcoming season are listed in the italicized "2025" row, as explained further in the Statistical Toolbox at the front of the book. Be aware that pro-

jections account for the possibility of injury so workload projections may seem low for the top players.

It is difficult to accurately project statistics for a 162-game baseball season, but it is exponentially more difficult to accurately project statistics for a 17-game football season. Consider the listed projections not as a prediction of exact numbers, but as the mean of a range of possible performances. What's important is less the exact number of yards we project, and more which players are projected to improve or decline. Actual performance will vary from our projection less for veteran starters and more for rookies and third-stringers, for whom we must base our projections on much smaller career statistical samples. Touchdown numbers will vary more than yardage numbers. Players facing suspension or recovering from injury have those missed games considered.

A few low-round rookies, guys listed seventh on the depth chart, and players who are listed as wide receivers but really only play special teams are briefly discussed at the end of the chapter in a section we call "Going Deep."

Note that we do not fully separate the performance of a receiver from the performance of his quarterback, and one will affect the other.

Davante Adams		Height: 6-1		Weight: 215		College: Fresno State		Draft: 2014/2 (53)		Born: 24-Dec-1992		Age: 33														
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	LV	17/17	1044	180	100	1516	14	56%	-6.3	6	15.2	12.0	28	4.9	20	+0.6	19	4.0%	35	236	14	54.2%	6	32.5%	2	23%
2023	LV	17/17	963	175	103	1144	8	59%	-6.2	8	11.1	11.0	45	3.3	59	-0.8	3	-10.1%	65	36	58	43.5%	13	33.0%	2	13%
2024	2TM	14/14	792	141	85	1063	8	60%	-5.9	5	12.5	8.7	73	5.6	18	+1.0	11	-9.9%	71	33	68	31.5%	24	29.5%	5	49%
2025	LAR			123	77	1059	8	63%			13.7							8.5%								

Adams hasn't had a positive DVOA since 2022 and hasn't put up a positive receiving plus/minus since leaving Green Bay in 2021. He has sputtered a little in some terrible situations in Las Vegas and New York. He has still put up solid numbers based on volume—he's Davante Adams, of course you're going to throw his way!—and he was fifth in DYAR on go routes, so he can still bully his way past defenders downfield, but it hasn't been a great time outside of the green and gold. His move to Los Angeles puts him in his best situation since leaving Lambeau, though he's almost sure to see less volume as he plays veteran leader behind Puka Nacua. That's bad for your fantasy team, but probably good for his actual football value. In an ideal world, Adams is the true X receiver the Rams have never really had, winning at the goal line in ways that Nacua and Cooper Kupp never could. We'll see how that shakes out in reality.

Jordan Addison		Height: 5-11		Weight: 180		College: USC		Draft: 2023/1 (23)		Born: 27-Jan-2002		Age: 23														
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2023	MIN	17/14	921	108	70	911	10	65%	+5.4	4	13.0	12.9	23	3.7	49	-0.7	5	10.0%	28	193	21	6.8%	46	18.1%	45	19%
2024	MIN	15/15	818	99	63	875	9	64%	+6.0	1	13.9	13.7	12	3.4	61	-1.3	6	13.3%	24	206	19	16.7%	38	21.7%	39	29%
2025	MIN			105	65	843	7	62%			13.0															

Addison caught just one of six targets for 0 yards in Week 18 against the Lions, then just three of eight targets for 29 yards in the wild-card loss to the Rams, with Cobie Durant undercutting one route for an interception. Sam Darnold lobbed lots of uncatchable beach balls in those games, and Addison was often his target. Addison also sometimes disappeared when Nick Mullens or Joshua Dobbs was under center in 2023. The takeaway is that Justin Jefferson is going to catch 100 passes no matter what J.J. McCarthy's 2025 season looks like, but Addison needs semi-competent quarterback play to do his slippery-deep-threat thing. Of course, the Jefferson-Addison combo can also do wonders for a quarterback's apparent competence; even Darnold didn't turn back into a pumpkin until well after fantasy season was over.

## 312 WIDE RECEIVERS

Brandon Aiyuk			Height: 6-0			Weight: 200			College: Arizona State			Draft: 2020/1 (25)			Born: 17-Mar-1998			Age: 27								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	SF	17/17	1002	114	78	1015	8	68%	+2.1	4	13.0	10.2	50	4.8	24	+0.6	11	16.4%	9	262	12	27.5%	19	23.0%	26	31%
2023	SF	16/16	803	105	75	1342	7	71%	+14.8	2	17.9	14.0	13	4.8	29	+0.9	9	45.5%	1	487	2	77.5%	3	23.7%	22	24%
2024	SF	7/7	357	48	25	374	0	54%	-1.8	5	15.0	11.9	34	4.1	41	+0.1	3	-8.3%	68	17	70	11.6%	48	23.3%	31	34%
2025	SF			90	56	844	4	63%			15.0							8.4%								

The daily updates on the Aiyuk-to-Pittsburgh trade saga during last year's training camp were enough to drive a fan insane, especially when it ended up with Aiyuk getting basically the deal the 49ers should have offered him in April. Instead, Aiyuk missed all of the offseason, started off sluggish, and just when it looked like he was beginning to round into form, he tore his ACL and was lost for the year. Other than that, it has been great, thanks for asking. Aiyuk will almost certainly start the year on the PUP list and may not be ready until midseason, with San Francisco choosing to play it safe with him. While matching his 2023 production would be tough, a healthy Aiyuk remains San Francisco's best deep weapon, and they will miss him until he's ready to go.

Keenan Allen			Height: 6-2			Weight: 211			College: California			Draft: 2013/3 (76)			Born: 27-Apr-1992			Age: 33								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	LAC	10/10	515	89	66	752	4	74%	+9.5	0	11.4	8.7	67	3.9	45	-0.6	2	8.0%	27	146	28	40.9%	12	21.8%	32	64%
2023	LAC	13/13	779	150	108	1243	7	72%	+11.2	5	11.5	9.8	61	3.7	51	-0.4	10	10.3%	27	272	12	59.5%	7	31.9%	3	46%
2024	CHI	15/15	850	121	70	744	7	58%	-5.2	5	10.6	9.3	67	3.4	59	-1.0	3	-12.2%	75	5	75	9.3%	49	26.1%	17	43%

Allen went 23-278-2 for the Bears last December, so there may be a few drops left in the tank. But he was a disappointment for most of the year: he can no longer get consistent separation that isn't schemed up, and Caleb Williams was reluctant to throw to anyone who was not open by two steps. The Chargers were rumored to want Allen back throughout the offseason, but it's not like they don't have his phone number. Allen was one of the NFL's best slot possession receivers for many years, but such players don't generally last into their mid-thirties.

Tutu Atwell			Height: 5-9			Weight: 165			College: Louisville			Draft: 2021/2 (57)			Born: 7-Oct-1999			Age: 26								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	LAR	13/4	308	35	18	298	1	51%	-2.3	1	16.6	19.2	--	3.3	--	-0.7	1	3.9%	--	48	--	20.5%	--	9.3%	--	51%
2023	LAR	16/14	687	67	39	483	3	58%	-1.3	3	12.4	12.8	25	2.7	68	-1.8	3	-2.6%	51	58	54	-2.7%	55	13.4%	70	44%
2024	LAR	17/5	425	62	42	562	0	68%	+3.4	4	13.4	12.7	26	3.0	74	-1.5	0	11.7%	29	124	34	37.1%	17	11.5%	81	34%
2025	LAR		55	35	434	2	63%			12.4								0.8%								

Atwell should slide into the WR3 role opened up by Demarcus Robinson's departure. Atwell has been outperforming Robinson anyway over the past couple years, and it was odd that it was Atwell, not Robinson, who was seeing the bench more when both Puka Nacua and Cooper Kupp were both healthy. Atwell is both better at getting open and more reliable as a receiver than Robinson is, and he has been very efficient in relatively limited work. His 2.1 yards per route ranked 21st among wide receivers last season. He's ready for a heavier workload, and the Rams intend to give him all he can handle.

Calvin Austin			Height: 5-9			Weight: 162			College: Memphis			Draft: 2022/4 (138)			Born: 24-Mar-1999			Age: 26								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2023	PIT	17/1	374	30	17	180	1	57%	-1.5	0	10.6	13.3	--	4.3	--	-1.3	6	-18.7%	--	-16	--	-29.5%	--	6.7%	--	30%
2024	PIT	17/8	593	58	36	548	4	62%	+0.1	4	15.2	12.8	24	4.2	38	-0.6	1	12.2%	28	110	43	-12.3%	69	12.8%	75	62%
2025	PIT		47	28	393	2	59%			14.1								0.3%								

Austin is well-liked in Pittsburgh but largely unknown around the league, as seen when he was routinely disses or ignored completely in "here are the Steelers skill guys" discussions on NFL scream shows after the George Pickens trade. But the mighty mite was an effective enough slot guy in his second season. His size makes him less efficient in the red zone and deducts from his fantasy value as a result. With Roman Wilson back from injury and the amount of multiple-tight end sets Pittsburgh likes to use, it remains to be seen if Austin's workload will take a hit, and if his 2024 productivity can be sustained.

Elic Ayomanor			Height: 6-2			Weight: 210			College: Stanford			Draft: 2025/4 (136)			Born: 3-Jun-2003			Age: 22								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2025	TEN		53	33	410	3	62%			12.5							-1.2%									

Ayomanor had a third-round grade in Dane Brugler's rankings despite falling to the fourth round. He put together 1,844 yards in two seasons with Stanford before bolting for the draft and he has a tremendous all-around athletic profile. The only place to nitpick would be the 1.56s 10-yard split build-up speed. Ayomanor made several tough grabs for the Cardinal and should compete for real playing time on an unsettled Titans depth chart.

Rashod Bateman			Height: 6-1			Weight: 195			College: Minnesota			Draft: 2021/1 (27)			Born: 29-Nov-1999			Age: 26								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	BAL	6/5	190	28	15	285	2	54%	-3.0	6	19.0	13.4	--	8.9	--	+4.3	4	-4.9%	--	16	--	12.2%	--	16.9%	--	18%
2023	BAL	16/12	610	56	32	367	1	57%	-1.0	2	11.5	14.5	9	1.8	79	-2.0	3	-12.3%	69	2	69	-19.6%	73	12.3%	74	11%
2024	BAL	17/14	766	72	45	756	9	63%	+6.2	3	16.8	13.5	14	4.1	42	+0.4	6	28.7%	4	234	16	11.7%	47	16.0%	58	11%
2025	BAL		64	40	611	5	63%			15.3								14.2%								

Bateman hasn't turned into a high-volume No. 1 receiver like the Ravens might have hoped when he was taken in the first round, but he has developed into a meaningful piece of the passing offense. Bateman's 72 targets in 2024 were a career high in his first fully healthy season. Despite the relative lack of targets compared to other top receivers, his rank of 16th in DYAR among receivers highlights the high value of those targets. The nuance in his route running improved to find open space and holes in the zone, as he was 19th in yards per route run against zone coverage. He was also 19th in the rate of targets that were deemed "open," defined as two to five steps of separation from the defender. He was 11th in DYAR on deep throws to the outside. Bateman was extended on a three-year, \$36.8-million deal during the offseason, which puts him between Darnell Mooney and Darius Slayton by average annual value.

Jack Bech			Height: 6-2			Weight: 215			College: TCU			Draft: 2025/2 (58)			Born: 18-Dec-2002			Age: 23								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2025	LV		70	46	571	4	65%			12.6								3.5%								

Bech is someone we should all be rooting for. He lost his brother in the Bourbon Street truck attack last winter and had to navigate the draft process while in mourning. On the field, the second-rounder out of TCU plays more like a veteran than an incoming rookie. He's a polished route runner who understands leverage and how to make up for his lack of burst with efficient footwork. He consequently profiles as more of a slot receiver, but he was effective with an average depth of target of 13.3 yards in his final collegiate season. He should fit the Raiders well. Geno Smith wants to throw the ball in the short and intermediate areas, and Tre Tucker already checks the box of "field stretcher."

Kendrick Bourne			Height: 6-1			Weight: 205			College: Eastern Washington			Draft: 2017/FA			Born: 4-Aug-1995			Age: 30								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	NE	16/2	441	48	35	434	1	73%	+3.5	4	12.4	10.3	--	4.1	--	-1.3	3	-2.4%	--	38	--	-9.8%	--	9.7%	--	25%
2023	NE	8/5	371	55	37	406	4	67%	+1.4	2	11.0	10.4	53	5.5	17	+1.2	7	-9.4%	63	15	64	14.8%	37	21.8%	33	27%
2024	NE	12/9	456	38	28	305	1	74%	+2.3	0	10.9	9.3	--	3.4	--	-1.1	3	-5.7%	--	22	--	-29.2%	--	11.0%	--	13%
2025	NE		24	18	191	1	72%			10.8								7.3%								

Bourne kicked off the 2023 season with a six-reception, 64-yard, two-touchdown game against Philadelphia, and it looked like he might be poised for a big year. That turned out to be his best game of that season, but he was New England's clear No. 1 before tearing his ACL that October. Then Bourne wasn't the same guy last year. He struggled to create separation and only eclipsed 50 receiving yards once. Sometimes it takes players a full year after an ACL injury to find their old form, but Bourne will be hard-pressed to find enough playing time to do so with the Patriots' revamped wide receiver room.

“F\*ck it, Boutte is down there somewhere” doesn’t pack the same punch as the old Tyreek Hill-in-Kansas City memes, but Boutte was sixth in average depth of target last year. He caught a 40-yard touchdown in Drake Maye’s debut and combined for 12 receptions, 212 yards, and two touchdowns against Buffalo in Weeks 16 and 18. Unfortunately, those were the only highs of his season. Even on deep passes, he was only 68th of 90 qualified wide receivers in DYAR, with 16. It’s possible that he’ll still be used as an occasional deep threat this year, but he doesn’t even have the speed to suggest that he should be better on deep balls than he was last season.

Tyler Boyd			Height: 6-2				Weight: 203				College: Pittsburgh					Draft: 2016/2 (55)				Born: 15-Nov-1994				Age: 31		
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	CIN	16/14	797	82	58	762	5	71%	+4.7	1	13.1	9.2	62	4.3	37	+0.4	2	23.5%	2	234	16	-5.6%	54	14.5%	65	82%
2023	CIN	17/13	824	98	67	667	2	68%	+2.1	2	10.0	6.5	77	4.2	39	-0.7	9	-15.9%	71	-25	72	-16.2%	69	16.6%	58	76%
2024	TEN	16/8	635	57	39	390	0	68%	-1.5	1	10.0	7.5	81	4.8	27	-0.5	3	-12.3%	76	2	77	-33.8%	90	12.1%	78	75%

Boyd could only manage consistency in his lone season with the Titans—he managed to finish between 14 yards and 43 yards 15 times in his 17 games last year. Essentially replaced by Tyler Lockett, Boyd remains a free agent as we go to press and hasn't taken any visits that we know about. Trying to visit the terrible Google News hits about Boyd ("Tyler Boyd lights the fuse for Jets' offensive explosion, transforming dreams into championship realities" reads the headline for one of these) popped up phishing ads. Perhaps Boyd can catch on somewhere by getting some ransomware on Darren Mougey's computer. ("Click [HERE](#) to sign one receiver who caught some passes last year. If you don't we'll force you to talk about Aaron Rodgers for 15 minutes.")

Brown saw the second highest rate of man coverage on his routes (62.0%) behind only his teammate, DeVonta Smith (62.9%). Few cornerbacks can hang with Brown's size and speed in man coverage, and his 3.9 yards per route run against man coverage, second to Puka Nacua, is proof. He was seventh in DYAR on go routes despite a 39% catch rate on those targets. Brown doesn't get the same volume as other top receivers because of the general low passing volume of the Philadelphia offense—which is where some frustration can come from—but Brown is one of the most important receivers to a team's offensive scheme. Without Brown in the lineup from Weeks 2 to 4, the Eagles scored just 18.1 points per game.

The Gabe Davis replacement should be an interesting fit in Jacksonville's offense; even though he ran plenty of deep routes with the Commanders, he was rarely targeted on them. While we'd generally expect that to remain true in 2025—especially after Jacksonville drafted Travis Hunter—Brown did show some jets in the playoffs against Detroit and should be a fair complementary receiver for a year while the Jaguars see if any of their six UDFA wideouts can eventually take over a low-volume role.

Brown missed the first 14 games of last season with a shoulder injury, meaning the Chiefs' planned trio of Brown, Rashee Rice, and Xavier Worthy never played a game together. Brown was supposed to bring the explosive element to the Chiefs' offense, and his absence kind of neutered Kansas City's offense before the season even began last year. The fact remains, though, that we haven't really seen a healthy Brown catching passes from a starting quarterback since the first half of 2021 thanks to injuries in Baltimore, Arizona, and Kansas City. That's quite a long time ago at this point, but perhaps the deep threat who had six touchdowns in eight games to start 2021 has just been lying dormant, waiting to be healthy in a functioning offense. So let's run it back again; what's the worst that could happen?

Noah Brown			Height: 6-2			Weight: 225			College: Ohio State					Draft: 2017/7 (239)				Born: 19-Jul-1997				Age: 28				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	DAL	16/13	822	74	43	555	3	58%	-3.5	3	12.9	11.3	39	3.0	68	-1.1	5	0.8%	41	80	45	-6.8%	57	14.8%	63	43%
2023	HOU	10/7	463	55	33	567	2	60%	-0.4	3	17.2	12.2	30	6.8	5	+1.6	4	21.3%	7	154	32	27.8%	28	17.2%	54	34%
2024	WAS	11/9	470	56	35	453	1	63%	-0.2	2	12.9	13.4	16	2.4	83	-1.9	2	12.9%	25	123	35	26.7%	30	18.7%	48	21%
2025	WAS			46	28	357	2	62%			12.6							1.0%								

Brown's standout play of the 2024 season was catching the game-winning Hail Mary against the Chicago Bears, but his main role throughout the year was as a solid possession receiver who played outside opposite Terry McLaurin. He wasn't even with Washington until late August after he was released by Houston. Brown was a beneficiary of the space created in Washington's offense. He was fourth in yards per route run against zone coverage (2.9) but averaged under a yard per route again man coverage. Part of that is due to how Brown doesn't exactly finish off his routes to shake a defender. On 21.4% of his targets, a defender turned an open target into close coverage, which was the eighth-highest rate among receivers. Brown was carted off the field during a minicamp practice and the seriousness of the injury remains unknown.

The third-rounder out of Illinois has a deep highlight reel of contested catches. He has great ball skills, hands, and body awareness, but the reason he's always making contested catches is that he rarely creates separation. He's sort of a worse version of Courtland Sutton? He'll start the year no better than fourth on the Denver depth chart.

## 316 WIDE RECEIVERS

Burden forced 25 missed tackles at Mizzou in 2024 per Sports Info Solutions, the highest figure in the nation. He broke 11 tackles, and his avoided tackle rate of 0.6 per reception led the nation. Burden also broke 17 tackles and forced 16 misses in 2023. So Burden gets an A for contested catches, an A+ for YAC and maybe a C+ for route running. Unfortunately, he's working on his doctoral thesis on diva receiver behavior. Burden's college career is dotted with unsportsmanlike-conduct penalties and sideline helmet-slapping drama. It's easy to envision Burden in an Amon-Ra St. Brown-like role, but it's just as easy to envision him in Ben Johnson's doghouse or getting a phone call from Caleb Williams' father's lawyer after a sideline tantrum. The Bears are deep enough at wide receiver to make Burden earn every snap, which may help keep his attitude adjusted, but may also limit his fantasy value in 2025.

Ja'Marr Chase		Height: 6-0		Weight: 205		College: Louisiana State				Draft: 2021/1 (5)				Born: 1-Mar-2000				Age: 25								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	CIN	12/12	693	134	87	1046	9	65%	+4.1	2	12.0	9.5	57	4.8	22	+0.6	12	4.5%	32	190	20	39.7%	14	32.2%	3	24%
2023	CIN	16/16	890	145	100	1216	7	69%	+3.8	4	12.2	8.8	66	5.4	22	+0.1	13	10.6%	25	278	10	36.9%	18	26.4%	14	35%
2024	CIN	17/16	1054	175	127	1708	17	73%	+6.8	9	13.4	8.8	70	6.2	15	+1.6	17	20.1%	14	469	1	44.5%	12	27.7%	7	34%
2025	CIN		177	126	1622	13	71%			12.9								22.1%								

Distracted by a contract imbroglio, Chase's season started slowly—just 10-97-0 over the first two weeks. That makes his winning the wideout Triple Crown (leading the league in receptions, yards, and touchdowns) even more amazing. Despite nine drops, the most since his rookie year, he set a career high in catch rate. Chase has established himself as a threat to score every time he catches a pass, with nine of his 17 touchdowns on passes caught outside the end zone; he has 25 such scores in his four seasons, more than any other player in that span. His powerful build and elite speed ensured he also led the league in yards after catch, with 787. Chase's big season came in part due to the Bengals, while seeking out mismatches, moving him into the slot more than ever before—on nearly a third of his snaps, where he caught 45 balls for 480 yards. Our projection sees a drop in his numbers, mainly because they can't possibly go up, but Uno remains a high-value target in your fantasy draft, regardless of scoring system.

Jalen Coker		Height: 6-3		Weight: 213		College: Holy Cross				Draft: 2024/FA				Born: 30-Oct-2001				Age: 24								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2024	CAR	11/4	430	46	32	478	2	70%	+3.9	0	14.9	11.7	--	5.3	--	+0.9	3	23.7%	--	136	--	8.6%	--	14.1%	--	58%
2025	CAR		57	37	476	3	65%			12.9								2.1%								

Coker, an undrafted rookie from Holy Cross, caught a pass from Andy Dalton in Week 5 against the Bears, blasted through a tackle, and rumbled up the sideline for a 31-yard gain. Former second-round pick Jonathan Mingo was immediately given a Greyhound ticket to Dallas, and Coker took over as the Panthers' tall possession receiver. Coker doesn't get great separation but can haul in poorly placed throws and extends to snatch deep balls, two useful skills when dealing with Dalton and Bryce Young. Tetairoa McMillan's arrival will slide Coker down the depth chart, but he may find work on a receiver corps where Adam Thielen is getting old and Xavier Legette is growing to nose tackle proportions.

Keon Coleman		Height: 6-4		Weight: 215		College: Florida State				Draft: 2024/2 (33)				Born: 17-May-2003				Age: 22								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2024	BUF	13/12	598	57	29	556	4	51%	-3.1	5	19.2	15.3	5	7.4	7	+2.9	4	11.4%	30	106	45	2.1%	55	15.2%	64	10%
2025	BUF		76	42	698	6	55%			16.5								6.1%								

After an overall disappointing rookie season—capped off with just three receptions for 22 yards across three playoff games—there's a lot of pressure on Coleman to perform in 2025. The Bills spent a premium pick on the wideout, and the fan base won't wait three years for it to pay off. Coleman was good at what he did last year (deep targets), averaging 19.2 yards per reception, good for third best in the NFL. But Buffalo needs him to develop into more of an alpha, especially as he runs 90% of his routes from the outside. The difference between his regular DVOA and Route DVOA demonstrates that he was efficient when targeted but couldn't get open enough to earn a WR1 level of targets. There won't be anything easy for Coleman short and over the middle, and he needs to develop beyond just being a one-trick pony. The good news: Coleman bulked up in the offseason as he looks to assume that top-dog role the Bills so sorely need.

<b>Nico Collins</b>		Height: 6-4				Weight: 222				College: Michigan				Draft: 2021/3 (89)				Born: 19-Mar-1999				Age: 26				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	HOU	10/7	442	66	37	481	2	56%	-3.0	1	13.0	11.7	32	3.9	47	-0.5	3	-13.0%	73	-2	73	-1.0%	48	19.8%	39	11%
2023	HOU	15/10	668	109	80	1297	8	73%	+9.0	3	16.2	10.9	47	6.9	3	+1.8	21	37.2%	2	417	5	80.7%	2	21.7%	34	22%
2024	HOU	12/12	502	99	68	1006	7	69%	+3.0	3	14.8	10.9	53	5.4	23	-0.0	7	14.1%	23	206	18	63.9%	4	25.3%	21	23%
2025	HOU		127	86	1253	9	68%			14.5								17.4%								

Collins was looking like a fantasy football league-winner in early October, leaving after pulling his hamstring against the Bills on a long touchdown catch with a 32-567-3 line after five games. He wasn't quite as productive the rest of the season after an IR stint, despite being the clear lead option, as Houston's offensive line problems had been well-diagnosed at that point and the lack of Stefon Diggs let defenses key on Collins. Know that there is an extremely high upside case with Christian Kirk in town to take on that Diggs role and hopefully give the Texans more than they got in the back half of last season. On the other hand, Collins has missed multiple games in every season so far and it's far from a certainty that he'll give the Texans 17 games of production in 2025. The ceiling is high. The floor is probably something like 2024.

<b>Brandin Cooks</b>		Height: 5-10				Weight: 189				College: Oregon State				Draft: 2014/1 (20)				Born: 25-Sep-1993				Age: 32				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	HOU	13/13	657	93	57	699	3	61%	+0.4	4	12.3	11.3	38	3.6	51	-1.4	2	-6.9%	57	44	55	9.4%	36	22.2%	30	23%
2023	DAL	16/15	809	81	54	657	8	67%	+4.7	0	12.2	13.5	16	2.3	77	-1.3	4	12.4%	21	168	28	-7.9%	60	14.2%	66	31%
2024	DAL	10/9	471	54	26	259	3	48%	-5.8	0	10.0	11.6	41	2.1	88	-1.5	1	-22.6%	86	-44	85	-17.4%	75	14.8%	66	18%
2025	NO		59	34	403	2	57%			12.0								-13.6%								

Cooks missed four games in the middle of 2024 with an infection stemming from a minor knee procedure. He was an afterthought in the Cowboys' offense when he returned. Cooks' targets, receptions, and yards have declined every year for four straight seasons, and his yards-per-catch landed on the 10.0 Mendoza Line last year. Undersized boundary receivers in their early thirties don't pull out of such extended spirals. The Saints signed Cooks to a back-loaded contract and have penciled him in as their third receiver. Does his new contract have a void year for 2027? You bet your sweet bippy it does.

<b>Amari Cooper</b>		Height: 6-1				Weight: 210				College: Alabama				Draft: 2015/1 (4)				Born: 17-Jun-1994				Age: 31				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	CLE	17/17	978	132	78	1160	9	59%	+0.6	6	14.9	12.7	20	3.8	49	+0.1	5	15.8%	11	302	7	39.2%	15	26.3%	16	26%
2023	CLE	15/15	883	128	72	1250	5	56%	-3.1	4	17.4	14.6	7	3.8	47	-0.4	3	7.8%	31	207	19	34.7%	21	24.8%	18	20%
2024	2TM	14/10	587	85	44	547	4	52%	-8.5	3	12.4	13.8	10	2.5	81	-1.1	3	-16.9%	80	-28	81	-0.3%	60	18.9%	47	9%

Cooper struggled with a wrist injury after the Browns traded him to the Bills, but his advanced metrics were still clearly better with Josh Allen throwing him the football: 64 DYAR and a 63% catch rate for the Bills compared to -92 DYAR and a 45% catch rate for the Browns. He had more yards with the Bills despite 22 fewer targets. He struggled to get open compared to previous seasons, but it's still a bit curious that he's available on the free agent market as we go to press. He'll likely get a chance to go ring-chasing once a contender has an injury or two in July or August.

<b>Gabriel Davis</b>		Height: 6-2				Weight: 225				College: Central Florida				Draft: 2020/4 (128)				Born: 1-Apr-1999				Age: 26				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	BUF	15/15	926	93	48	836	7	52%	-4.5	3	17.4	15.4	2	3.0	69	-1.1	1	7.0%	28	146	27	-7.5%	60	19.5%	41	6%
2023	BUF	17/17	966	81	45	746	7	56%	+1.0	2	16.6	15.1	5	4.0	41	+0.1	9	12.2%	22	153	34	-12.6%	64	14.8%	62	21%
2024	JAX	10/9	410	43	20	239	2	48%	-5.1	0	12.0	13.5	--	1.9	--	-1.1	3	-33.1%	--	-69	--	-31.7%	--	13.8%	--	16%

Trent Baalke's latest blunder played 10 games for the Jaguars, only catching a touchdown (two actually) in a depantsing in London. He had seven deep targets in 10 games, caught two of them for 43 yards, and was a worse run blocker than you would have hoped based on his size. Then he went down with a season-ending knee injury. The Jaguars released him and are carrying

## 318 WIDE RECEIVERS

a \$5.7-million cap hit in 2025 and a \$14.6-million cap hit in 2026. Davis took quite a few visits in the offseason—the 49ers, Steelers, Giants, and Saints all brought him in for looks. But as we went to press, he was unsigned. A healthy Davis is probably worthy of a roster spot, just not as worthy of one as Baalke believed last year.

Tank Dell		Height: 5-10						Weight: 165						College: Houston						Draft: 2023/3 (69)						Born: 29-Oct-1999						Age: 26					
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot											
2023	HOU	11/8	494	75	47	709	7	63%	+1.7	2	15.1	14.6	6	3.2	61	-0.6	6	19.0%	11	187	23	43.1%	14	20.5%	38	20%											
2024	HOU	14/10	633	81	51	667	3	63%	+1.0	3	13.1	12.5	28	3.2	65	-1.8	4	3.4%	45	104	46	2.1%	54	18.4%	49	27%											
2025	HOU			14	9	114	1	63%			12.6																										

The reason scouts make such a big deal about NFL bodies isn't that they don't think Dell-sized players can play, it's that they worry about their longevity. Dell took a long time to come back in to form last season after being shot, looking a little slow to cut off patterns and only really rounding into form late in the season. He was having his best game of the year before a devastating knee injury in the back of the end zone against the Chiefs. The Texans are saying all the right things and obviously everyone involved (including us) are hoping for a terrific comeback in 2026. But there's little reason to expect him to play this year, and Houston went out and acquired Christian Kirk while drafting two receivers on Day 2. Dell had both his ACL and LCL repaired in separate surgeries this offseason. His recovery may not be finished until this time next year.

Stefon Diggs		Height: 6-0						Weight: 191						College: Maryland						Draft: 2015/5 (146)						Born: 29-Nov-1993						Age: 32					
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot											
2022	BUF	16/16	836	154	108	1429	11	70%	+10.2	3	13.2	11.4	36	3.9	46	-0.2	15	22.3%	3	434	2	65.7%	2	29.8%	5	30%											
2023	BUF	17/17	949	160	107	1183	8	67%	+2.1	6	11.1	10.7	52	3.7	50	-0.9	13	0.2%	45	163	30	35.4%	20	29.6%	9	33%											
2024	HOU	8/8	431	64	47	496	3	73%	+5.1	1	10.6	8.7	72	3.9	46	-1.0	3	3.1%	46	78	56	26.5%	31	24.5%	26	44%											
2025	NE			114	79	836	5	70%			10.5																										

Those dismissing Diggs as washed point to the second half of his 2023 season. His yards after the catch disappeared, his DYAR and DVOA tumbled, and his relationship with Josh Allen and the Bills forced a change. But he was one of the best receivers in the league for the first half of the year, and his 2022 season followed a similar pattern, albeit to a lesser degree. Then he was good with Houston prior to tearing his ACL. Most encouragingly, he was better out wide than in the slot, and effective deep (especially when lined up out wide). Regaining form immediately after an ACL injury is difficult, but if Diggs starts slowly, it won't be because he was already washed before the injury.

Greg Dortch		Height: 5-7						Weight: 175						College: Wake Forest						Draft: 2019/FA						Born: 29-May-1998						Age: 27					
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot											
2022	ARI	16/4	513	64	52	467	2	81%	+3.7	2	9.0	4.9	84	5.6	9	-0.1	10	-8.2%	64	21	66	-16.9%	74	10.6%	82	69%											
2023	ARI	16/4	397	41	24	280	2	59%	-1.6	0	11.7	9.8	--	6.3	--	+2.1	6	-10.1%	--	9	--	-9.2%	--	8.4%	--	30%											
2024	ARI	17/4	432	50	37	342	3	74%	+0.8	2	9.2	4.3	91	7.9	5	+1.7	10	-8.4%	69	16	71	-17.6%	76	9.6%	89	71%											
2025	ARI			27	20	181	1	73%			9.0																										

The fantasy hype of last offseason faded into reality very quickly for Dortch, as the much-lauded sleeper revealed himself to be a mediocre complementary slot guy. It's easy to see the dream with Dortch, who is shifty once he gets the ball in his hands. He was one of a handful of receivers to actually have positive value on wide receiver screens in 2024, catching 10 of them for a 24.5% DVOA and 23 DYAR on the league's least valuable route. It just kind of turns out that that's all he's good at; his DVOA drops to -13.7% if you exclude passes behind the line of scrimmage and to -40.7% if you look at passes that travel more than 5 yards in the air, third worst in the league. Being a Useful Screen Guy has its advantages, but there's a limit to how productive that can be.

Jahan Dotson			Height: 5-11				Weight: 184				College: Penn State				Draft: 2022/1 (16)				Born: 22-Mar-2000				Age: 25			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	WAS	12/10	651	61	35	523	7	57%	+0.8	3	14.9	14.0	7	3.9	44	+0.4	2	12.4%	18	121	34	-2.3%	50	16.1%	54	21%
2023	WAS	17/16	910	83	49	518	4	59%	-2.6	5	10.6	9.4	63	2.3	76	-1.6	2	-11.1%	66	10	66	-34.5%	79	13.7%	69	43%
2024	PHI	17/6	674	33	19	216	0	58%	-2.1	0	11.4	9.9	--	3.8	--	-2.0	4	-16.0%	--	-8	--	-61.5%	97	7.8%	--	15%
2025	PHI			30	18	191	1	59%			10.9							-10.7%								

The Eagles didn't get a third-round pick's worth of production from Dotson after acquiring him in a preseason trade, but he did have two big catches in the Super Bowl. Dotson was mostly out on the field to keep defenses in lighter personnel while the Eagles had three receivers on the field. He was on the field for 74% of the team's dropbacks, but only had a 6.7% target share. It's difficult to factor into the offense when A.J. Brown, DeVonta Smith, Dallas Goedert, and Saquon Barkley all get more attention. Dotson's agility and body control were traits that made him a first-round pick, but outside of a late-season stretch as a rookie, they haven't translated to the pro game. Maybe a full offseason with the Eagles will have him playing a bigger role, but probably not.

Romeo Doubs			Height: 6-2				Weight: 204				College: Nevada				Draft: 2022/4 (132)				Born: 13-Apr-2000				Age: 25			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	GB	13/7	529	67	42	425	3	63%	-1.8	6	10.1	9.5	60	4.5	31	-0.6	1	-19.5%	80	-35	80	-9.6%	65	16.0%	55	24%
2023	GB	17/16	845	96	59	674	8	61%	-2.4	3	11.4	12.1	31	2.3	78	-1.7	1	2.9%	41	125	37	-0.4%	52	17.8%	49	12%
2024	GB	13/12	660	72	46	601	4	64%	+0.1	4	13.1	12.8	22	2.9	75	-0.9	4	20.1%	13	195	22	30.4%	26	20.7%	42	16%
2025	GB			71	44	539	4	62%			12.3															

Doubs missed two games with one concussion last season and got knocked out of the playoff loss to the Eagles with his second. He also served a one-game team suspension for missing multiple practices early in the season. In between, Doubs went just 17-of-36 on targets of 10-plus yards. His hands are inconsistent, and he caught just 4-of-12 contested targets, per FTN Data charting. Doubs looks like a go-to receiver and flashes potential to be a formidable boundary deep threat. But if Matthew Golden develops quickly, Jaylon Reed takes the oven mitts off and/or Christian Watson gets healthy, Doubs could quickly get lost in the crowd.

Demario Douglas			Height: 5-8				Weight: 192				College: Liberty				Draft: 2023/6 (210)				Born: 8-Dec-2000				Age: 25			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2023	NE	14/7	481	79	49	561	0	62%	-3.6	3	11.4	8.2	70	6.9	4	+0.3	8	-20.3%	75	-48	74	7.8%	45	17.8%	51	68%
2024	NE	17/7	679	87	66	621	3	76%	+3.8	3	9.4	6.1	87	5.4	21	-0.2	10	-6.1%	62	45	62	-5.4%	64	17.7%	50	75%
2025	NE			50	34	382	2	68%			11.2															

If Douglas ever finds himself more than 20 yards downfield, he may not be able to find his way back to the line of scrimmage. That said, he's good at what he does. He was second on the Patriots to Austin Hooper in success rate last season. He'll likely start in the slot, but he needs to produce to stay on the field. The Patriots like two-tight end sets and with Kyle Williams and Stefon Diggs both effective out of the slot, New England can easily rotate Kendrick Bourne, Kayshon Boutte or Mack Hollins onto the field.

Josh Downs			Height: 5-9				Weight: 171				College: North Carolina				Draft: 2023/3 (79)				Born: 12-Aug-2001				Age: 24			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2023	IND	17/9	788	98	68	771	2	69%	+1.7	3	11.3	7.2	74	5.5	20	+0.5	11	-2.0%	49	79	48	-0.5%	53	17.7%	52	78%
2024	IND	14/8	602	107	72	803	5	67%	-3.5	5	11.2	6.9	83	5.5	20	+0.4	3	-2.4%	57	84	51	42.5%	15	26.1%	16	74%
2025	IND			103	69	818	4	67%			11.8															

Matt Harmon's Reception Perception website charted Downs' routes run for 2024 and found that 65.8% of the time he would be either running a nine route or breaking to the middle of the field. That isn't something we bring up to poo-poo the idea of Downs being a No. 1 receiver, just fascinating trivia. You rarely see route charts that are that one-sided. Downs caught 67% of

his targets last year, but a lot of that production came with Anthony Richardson sidelined. He had a 50-465-2 line in the seven games in which Richardson either started and left early or did not play. The line scores when Richardson played with Downs were: 3-22-0, 1-3-0, 4-109-1 (guess who caught a long touchdown pass), 5-84-1, 3-27-0, 3-32-0, and 3-61-1. If Downs can get consistent quarterback play out of Daniel Jones, we could see him take a big leap this year. If the Giants could get consistent quarterback play out of Daniel Jones, he'd still be a Giant.

Egbuka led Ohio State with 81 receptions last year, though freshman sensation Jeremiah Smith led the Buckeyes with 1,315 yards (to Egbuka's 1,011) and 15 touchdowns (10). Egbuka spent the early part of his career playing second fiddle to Marvin Harrison Jr. He often operated out of the slot for the Buckeyes—62 slot receptions in 2024—so we're talking about a senior No. 2 receiver who often lined up against collegiate safeties and nickel defenders, which should prompt a little skepticism. But not much is expected of Egbuka as he fights for targets and opportunities behind Mike Evans, Chris Godwin, and Jalen McMillan in 2025. Egbuka may have been a reach as the 19th overall pick, but the Bucs are playing the long game, hoping to groom him into another wide receiver they can keep around for a decade.

Evans posted the lowest yards-per-reception figure of his career in 2024, but he caught 67% of his targets, the highest figure of his career. Evans' deep-pass efficiency has faded, but he has become a very sturdy intermediate-range possession receiver. Part of the change is surely a concession to age, but part of it is schematic, and there's no reason to expect Evans to decline sharply in 2025. A 12th-straight 1,000-yard season would push Evans past Art Monk, Irving Fryar, Steve Largent, Andre Reed, and others, well into the all-time top 20 in receiving yards and into the range of hurdling over any future Hall of Fame logjams at wide receiver.

Flowers ruled over the middle of the field for the Baltimore offense, and his presence was a big reason why Lamar Jackson was able to excel throwing between the numbers. Flowers was third in combined DYAR on digs and posts. His stop-and-start ability was a highlight when he caught passes over the middle. At his size, Flowers was expected to be a slot player with that shiftiness, but he has won mostly on the outside with 63.7% of his snaps out wide. He's able to win from both alignments with 2.7 yards per route run outside and 2.2 from the slot. He was somehow the first Raven to reach the Pro Bowl as a wide receiver. Flowers injured his knee in the regular-season finale and was forced to miss both of Baltimore's playoff games.

In Week 7, Franklin was randomly the focal point of the Denver offense. He caught five passes for 50 yards against New Orleans, leading the Broncos with three first-read receptions. Star receiver Courtland Sutton played only 23 snaps, unrelated to injury, and had zero targets. Whether it was an experiment, an attempt to tank, or just a weird game plan, it was a turning point for the offense. The Broncos improved to 4-3 and from that point on, they were all business ... which meant Franklin was largely uninvolved for the rest of the year. The other highlight of Franklin's season came in Denver's playoff loss to Buffalo, when he caught a 43-yard touchdown on the opening drive (their only points of the game). There's no doubt that he's fast, and like Marvin Mims, Denver tried to get him the ball quickly in space, but Franklin was ineffective on those plays. He will need to take a leap like the one Mims took last season or he'll be phased out of the offense.

Chris Godwin		Height: 6-1			Weight: 209			College: Penn State			Draft: 2017/3 (84)			Born: 27-Feb-1996			Age: 29									
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkI	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	TB	15/13	880	143	104	1023	3	73%	+1.7	4	9.8	5.8	81	4.9	21	-0.3	3	-7.0%	58	64	50	13.9%	32	22.0%	31	66%
2023	TB	17/17	892	130	83	1024	2	64%	+2.8	3	12.3	9.1	65	4.5	32	-0.1	9	-1.8%	48	109	40	9.4%	44	23.3%	25	37%
2024	TB	7/7	399	63	50	576	5	79%	+3.8	1	11.5	5.8	88	7.0	8	+2.3	5	28.6%	5	199	20	52.7%	8	26.7%	12	61%
2025	TB		99	73	817	6	74%			11.2								13.9%								

Godwin played the Cooper Kupp role as the motion-slot guy in Liam Coen's designer-knockoff Sean McVay offense before getting hurt last year. Coen has been replaced by John Grizzard (and Kupp appears to be well into his decline), but Godwin soldiers on as a versatile "big slot" type who does his best work within 10 yards of the line of scrimmage. The Bucs suddenly have a lot of mouths to feed on offense, but Baker Mayfield targeted Godwin eight or nine times per game like clockwork early last year, and the Bucs didn't guarantee Godwin \$44 million in March just so he could tutor Emeka Egbuka.

Matthew Golden		Height: 5-11			Weight: 191			College: Texas			Draft: 2025/1 (23)			Born: 1-Aug-2003			Age: 22									
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkI	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2025	GB		93	57	757	5	61%			13.3								2.9%								

Golden caught 93% of the on-target passes thrown to him by Quinn Ewers and Arch Manning in 2024, with just three drops. Golden's average depth of catch was a robust 11.6 yards (stats via Sports Info Solutions), so he was hauling in those passes well downfield. Those are encouraging numbers because Ewers, for all his success, is something of a knuckleballer. Golden's college tape is full of him adjusting to floaters in the air and catching passes that are a little bit behind him, essential skills which other Packers receivers lack for hauling in Jordan Love's more imaginative throws. Golden is also an experienced kickoff returner, with two touchdowns when he played at Houston in 2023 and a long return negated by a penalty against Georgia last year, but the Packers are looking for a go-to guy, not a role player. Golden will get a chance to grow into that role, but he'll have to distinguish himself from the crowd. Holding onto a few difficult downfield catches would be a great way to start.

Marvin Harrison		Height: 6-4			Weight: 205			College: Ohio State			Draft: 2024/1 (4)			Born: 11-Aug-2002			Age: 23									
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkI	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2024	ARI	17/16	865	116	62	885	8	53%	-5.2	3	14.3	13.5	15	2.4	82	-1.5	0	-3.4%	58	84	52	3.8%	53	22.0%	37	24%
2025	ARI		129	76	1077	8	59%			14.2								0.2%								

Please, please, please let Harrison run a more complete route tree in 2025—or at least, let him do something else than run straight down the field and try to connect on long passes, because it was not working. Harrison was targeted on 22 go routes in 2024, putting up a -56.5% DVOA and -74 DYAR, third worst in the league. Harrison was very good on deep corner routes and productive on curls and drags, but the Cardinals seemed dead set on having him run straight down the field and trying to beat everyone over the top. Take those out, and his DVOA jumps from -3.4% to 8.8%. Please, Drew Petzing, we beg you—be even the tiniest bit creative with your first-round receiver this season.

## 322 WIDE RECEIVERS

Tre Harris		Height: 6-2				Weight: 205				College: Mississippi				Draft: 2025/2 (55)				Born: 28-Feb-2002				Age: 23				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2025	LAC			73	46	590	4	63%			12.8													2.8%		

A second-round pick out of Ole Miss, Harris finished sixth in our Playmaker Score ratings. He's a big target (6-foot-2) with all-around skills. He can break tackles, gain yards after the catch, has great body control, and can come down with contested balls. It's a little concerning that his best production came as a sophomore at Louisiana Tech rather than at Ole Miss; he had 15 touchdowns in 2022 but only 10 combined in the two years since then. But a series of nagging injuries can explain away a lot of that. A healthy Harris can be a threat on short hitches and deep go routes, opening up the middle of the field for Ladd McConkey to work. It's possible Harris takes over Quentin Johnston's starting wideout spot immediately, but he'll more likely start as the fourth receiver and try to work his way into the game plan.

Jayden Higgins		Height: 6-4				Weight: 210				College: Iowa State				Draft: 2025/2 (34)				Born: 15-Dec-2002				Age: 23				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2025	HOU			94	60	691	5	64%			11.5													-1.7%		

While he was presented by the draft media as more of a slow-developing option who might need work on his route running, Higgins impressed in early offseason work, leading most Texans beat writers to believe he'd have a real chance at the No. 2 role to open the season. It should be noted that most of those sessions aren't providing real NFL physicality and Higgins struggled to deal with press coverage at Iowa State. Despite that, Higgins has a pure outside X body with a 91st percentile wingspan. If Xavier Hutchinson is the bar outside, Higgins definitely has a chance to play right away. He just might be more Keon Coleman-level effective in his first season rather than anything that makes you want to blow the entire FAAB budget.

Tee Higgins		Height: 6-4				Weight: 220				College: Clemson				Draft: 2020/2 (33)				Born: 18-Jan-1999				Age: 26				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	CIN	16/14	757	109	74	1029	7	68%	+8.3	6	13.9	11.0	41	3.9	47	-0.4	3	18.9%	6	274	10	26.0%	20	19.6%	40	16%
2023	CIN	12/11	573	76	42	656	5	55%	-3.0	6	15.6	13.1	20	5.6	15	+2.1	5	17.5%	14	184	24	19.1%	32	18.3%	43	19%
2024	CIN	12/9	636	109	73	911	10	67%	+4.6	4	12.5	10.0	59	3.1	69	-0.0	8	15.3%	19	259	12	43.8%	13	25.3%	20	17%
2025	CIN			127	85	1059	9	67%			12.5													13.0%		

2024 was the first season Higgins finished behind teammate Ja'Marr Chase in DVOA since they were paired together, like a fine Pinot Noir and aged Gruyere, in 2021. But there was little doubt who was better on the money downs. Higgins had a 28.6% DVOA on third and fourth downs, comprising 36 targets, compared to Chase's -6.5% on 39 targets. Higgins' average yards per pass on those plays was a sky-high 10.7, with a 12.8-yard average depth of target, so it's not like they were throwing him bubble screens. Cincinnati's yards per pass attempt was nearly two yards higher (8.2 to 6.5) with Higgins playing as opposed to when he was out with injury, and Capital Tee also out-targeted Uno 109-to-107 in the games they played together. Alas, they weren't always together. Availability is the lone rub to Higgins' game, as he has missed time to injury in every season but his first, and was out for five games in each of the last two. Now that he is making the big money, the expectation will be that he remains his highly productive and efficient self across the entire schedule, not just two-thirds of it. The frequent missed time hampers his fantasy value, but only a little.

Tyreek Hill		Height: 5-10				Weight: 191				College: West Alabama				Draft: 2016/5 (165)				Born: 1-Mar-1994				Age: 31				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	MIA	17/17	800	170	119	1710	7	70%	+11.4	5	14.4	12.8	17	4.1	43	-0.9	9	15.5%	14	388	4	85.8%	1	30.6%	4	38%
2023	MIA	16/16	695	171	119	1799	13	70%	+11.2	7	15.1	10.8	50	5.5	18	+0.0	24	24.7%	4	514	1	117.5%	1	33.1%	1	36%
2024	MIA	17/17	906	123	81	959	6	66%	+4.1	2	11.8	11.3	48	3.6	52	-1.4	9	-1.9%	56	104	47	19.1%	37	21.5%	40	30%
2025	MIA			133	90	1157	7	68%			12.8												10.0%			

In 2023, Hill became the first receiver since Cooper Kupp in 2021 to eclipse 1,000 explosive receiving yards. But the explosive plays disappeared last year—he was 33rd in explosive receiving yards with 372. He was second in deep receiving yards in 2022, first in 2023 (nearly doubling second place), yet 14th last year. Still good, but not the same level of dominant. Interestingly, Hill was still effective against zone coverages. It was against man coverages that his production plummeted, from over 300 DYAR in 2023 to -1 DYAR in 2024. This of course led people to wonder if he still has his elite speed. But on June 13, he ran an official 100-meter dash in 10.15 seconds, 0.17 behind his personal record. Eighth place in the 2024 Olympic final was 9.91 seconds, so yes, Tyreek Hill still has his elite speed! ESPN's Open Score rated Hill in 2024 nearly identically to his 2023 self, so Hill's struggles were seemingly a result of Miami's offensive collapse. If Mike McDaniel can figure out how to counter the adjustments made around the league to his offense, Hill should have a nice rebound season.

Mack Hollins			Height: 6-4			Weight: 221			College: North Carolina						Draft: 2017/4 (118)						Born: 16-Sep-1993				Age: 32	
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	LV	17/16	1030	94	57	690	4	61%	-0.2	5	12.1	13.2	11	3.4	58	-0.5	6	3.4%	38	113	37	-15.9%	73	16.8%	52	15%
2023	ATL	13/3	345	30	18	251	0	60%	-0.1	2	13.9	12.5	--	3.1	--	-1.1	0	-7.0%	--	13	--	-10.0%	--	7.9%	--	23%
2024	BUF	17/13	721	50	31	378	5	62%	+0.7	0	12.2	13.2	20	2.9	76	-0.3	0	15.1%	20	112	40	-11.4%	67	10.5%	85	30%
2025	NE		23	14	169	2	60%			12.2																

Hollins is a wide receiver/tight end hybrid who earns playing time with his physicality as a run blocker. Last year was his best from a DVOA perspective as a pass catcher, too. He was especially effective in the red zone, leading Buffalo with 39 DYAR and 52.6% DVOA inside the 20. This makes intuitive sense, since he's a big-bodied receiver whose blocking pedigree is more useful the closer the Bills get to the opponent's goal line. It's surprising that Buffalo let him walk, and don't be surprised if he earns meaningful playing time under Mike Vrabel. Oh, and he's a weirdo. The only time he wears shoes is when he's on the football field.

DeAndre Hopkins			Height: 6-1			Weight: 218			College: Clemson						Draft: 2013/1 (27)						Born: 6-Jun-1992				Age: 33	
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	ARI	9/9	555	96	64	717	3	67%	+3.8	2	11.2	10.3	48	2.6	79	-1.7	7	-11.2%	71	11	70	25.9%	21	28.5%	10	21%
2023	TEN	17/16	758	137	75	1057	7	55%	-4.5	4	14.1	14.2	11	3.0	66	-1.4	12	-5.4%	55	78	50	37.6%	17	29.1%	10	23%
2024	2TM	16/8	533	81	56	610	5	70%	+5.1	1	10.9	11.5	43	1.9	89	-1.9	4	7.1%	39	128	31	30.4%	25	16.7%	55	20%
2025	BAL		58	38	487	5	65%			12.9																

Hopkins isn't going to be the dominant outside X receiver he was during his peak, but he won't have to be in this Baltimore offense. He's going to be the third receiver on the depth chart behind Zay Flowers and Rashod Bateman, though offensive coordinator Todd Monken said he views it more as having three starters at wide receiver rather than viewing Hopkins as a third receiver. After the trade to the Chiefs last season, Hopkins was a reliable but unspectacular receiver who was second on the team in yards and third in target share from Weeks 8 to 17. Hopkins was only on the field for 47% of the Kansas City pass plays in that span, and that could be the same type of playing time split he'll see in Baltimore with an offense that used the lowest rate of 11 personnel in the NFL. Hopkins had higher DVOA and yards per route run from the slot (41.0% and 1.9) than he did from the outside (-1.7% and 1.8). Hopkins ran 28% of his snaps from the slot with the Chiefs, and his ability to set up defenders and create separation with his routes could play well with more time there.

Travis Hunter			Height: 6-0			Weight: 188			College: Colorado						Draft: 2025/1 (2)						Born: 18-May-2003				Age: 22	
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2025	JAX		108	72	901	6	66%			12.5																

Drawing rave reviews for his energy early in the offseason, Hunter spent most practices with the offense and showcased the form that gave him a 96-1,258-15 season for Colorado last year, when he won the Heisman Trophy. The general gist of the media draft industry take on Hunter as a receiver is that he's not fully developed, but he is explosive in space with the ball and should develop further with more attention on it. He did have a habit of leaving his feet early on occasion, and he spent plenty of time trying to make too much out of nothing. As college stars will. There's absolutely nothing not to be bullish on about Hunter's talent. The only question is how his usage tree shakes out as the Jaguars try to get the most out of him as they possibly can. We'd bet on a large role on offense this year no matter what, perhaps one that can create an instant 1,000-yard season.

## 324 WIDE RECEIVERS

Andrei Iosivas		Height: 6-3				Weight: 210				College: Princeton				Draft: 2023/6 (206)				Born: 15-Oct-1999				Age: 26				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2023	CIN	16/1	266	25	15	116	4	60%	-1.8	3	7.7	8.6	--	2.3	--	-0.7	0	9.3%	--	45	--	5.3%	--	4.4%	--	16%
2024	CIN	17/8	892	61	36	479	6	59%	-1.7	4	13.3	12.0	31	1.9	91	-2.1	1	14.2%	22	138	29	-36.5%	91	10.1%	87	46%
2025	CIN		53	32	389	4	61%				12.2							0.1%								

In just two seasons, Iosivas has caught 10 touchdown passes on 51 receptions, a mind-boggling 20% touchdown rate. Cris Carter had a 12% touchdown-to-catch ratio, is in the Hall of Fame, and was described thusly: "All he does is catch touchdowns!" Yoshi won't be confused with CC any time soon; he struggles to create separation, has a mediocre catch rate, and makes most of his plays during Joe Burrow ad libs (A.I. is more *Groundlings* or *Second City* than *Saturday Night Live*). And for such a great athlete (Iosivas was an All-American heptathlete at Princeton), he doesn't wow anyone with his speed or power on the field. Still, as a deep cut in the Bengals passing game, he is valuable, especially on third down (47.7% DVOA and 9.9 yards per catch). Iosivas already has proven well worthy of the 206th overall pick in the 2023 draft. He's also the kind of player whose production isn't exactly reliable, so value him similarly in your fantasy draft.

Justin Jefferson		Height: 6-1				Weight: 198				College: Louisiana State				Draft: 2020/1 (22)				Born: 16-Jun-1999				Age: 26				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	MIN	17/17	1079	184	128	1809	8	70%	+14.9	6	14.1	10.2	53	4.8	25	+0.2	12	20.7%	4	489	1	55.0%	5	28.8%	7	23%
2023	MIN	10/9	550	100	68	1074	5	68%	+7.8	1	15.8	12.6	26	3.8	45	-0.7	8	19.3%	10	258	14	63.2%	6	28.0%	13	29%
2024	MIN	17/17	1043	154	103	1533	10	67%	+4.4	6	14.9	11.6	40	4.7	29	-0.1	6	20.9%	12	425	2	56.4%	7	30.6%	3	26%
2025	MIN		172	114	1557	10	66%				13.7							10.6%								

Jefferson was really excited to learn that NFL players may be allowed to play on the U.S.A.'s Olympic flag football team in 2028. "Just to think about the chances of playing in the Olympics and getting a gold medal is a dream, just reverting back to being a kid and watching the track-and-field meets, watching basketball win the gold medal," Jefferson said in May. "That's something that as a kid I always wanted to be a part of." As a country, we now need to make this happen: the world must be treated to the sight of Jefferson juking some flag-football hobbyist from Turkmenistan. Jefferson could likely bring home the gold with the Ghosts of Vikings Training Camps Past as his teammates: Case Cookus at quarterback, Jalen Reagor at the other receiver spot, Lew Cine as the token defensive guy. Heck, Brian Flores could coach the team! On second thought, Flores would blitz and cause an international incident. Anyway, Jefferson will catch another 100-plus passes for another 1,500-ish yards this season, making him one of the few things about the Vikings that won't be random, unpredictable, and weird. Just make sure he stays healthy for the next three years, Kevin O'Connell and company. Your nation is counting on it.

Van Jefferson		Height: 6-1				Weight: 200				College: Florida				Draft: 2020/2 (57)				Born: 26-Jul-1996				Age: 29				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	LAR	11/9	498	44	24	369	3	55%	-0.3	1	15.4	15.6	--	1.6	--	-2.2	1	15.2%	--	100	--	-6.3%	--	13.6%	--	33%
2023	2TM	17/9	621	43	20	209	0	47%	-3.9	3	10.5	15.7	--	1.3	--	-3.0	0	-38.7%	--	-88	--	-52.0%	90	8.2%	--	32%
2024	PIT	17/12	721	40	24	276	2	60%	-1.4	1	11.5	12.1	--	3.3	--	-0.8	3	-11.0%	--	5	--	-44.8%	95	8.8%	--	24%
2025	TEN		24	13	165	1	54%				12.6							-12.0%								

Jefferson is a loss leader. He played 721 offensive snaps and was targeted just 40 times all season, never more than five times in a game. And that isn't an anomaly—since 2022 he has been targeted 127 times in 1,840 snaps. He doesn't seem to be especially proficient at blocking, though he has a good X-receiver body and tries. He amounts to a stopgap for the Titans outside as they figure out what to do with their non-Calvin Ridley receiving positions. If Jefferson plays, he will be running some go or out routes to clear space for the rest of the receivers.

Jauan Jennings			Height: 6-3			Weight: 212			College: Tennessee						Draft: 2020/7 (217)				Born: 10-Jul-1997				Age: 28			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTKl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	SF	16/4	489	56	35	416	1	63%	-2.2	1	11.9	8.4	70	5.0	15	+0.6	4	-9.4%	68	14	68	-9.5%	64	11.6%	79	59%
2023	SF	13/2	361	33	19	265	1	58%	+0.2	0	13.9	10.2	--	4.7	--	-0.0	3	8.0%	--	52	--	-17.6%	--	9.4%	--	59%
2024	SF	15/10	689	113	77	975	6	68%	+5.4	4	12.7	10.0	61	3.1	72	-0.8	9	8.6%	34	185	24	47.4%	10	24.8%	24	46%
2025	SF			104	69	901	6	66%			13.1							7.7%								

Before 2024, Jennings was a fun fan favorite, a solid safety outlet on third downs who would occasionally flash a big game when opposing defenses were busy trying to shut down the cavalcade of stars San Francisco would roll out on offense. In 2024, with most of those stars hurt or ineffective, Jennings stepped up to be a full time WR1 and did a remarkable job. He led the team in routes, targets, catches, yards, and touchdowns, setting career highs in DYAR and DVOA despite seeing twice as much usage as ever before. Jennings is not your typical Shanahan receiver—he's the first qualified 49ers wideout to finish with a negative YAC+ since Emmanuel Sanders in 2019. He's better on deep routes rather than making something happen after he catches the ball, finishing sixth in the league with 60 DYAR on deep outs. He's still better suited to playing second fiddle in the passing game, but it's hard to imagine what the 49ers would have looked like without Jennings last season.

Jerry Jeudy			Height: 6-1			Weight: 195			College: Alabama					Draft: 2020/1 (15)				Born: 24-Apr-1999			Age: 26					
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	DEN	15/14	713	100	67	972	6	67%	+3.2	3	14.5	11.7	33	5.9	6	+0.7	10	17.0%	8	232	17	37.8%	16	21.0%	35	50%
2023	DEN	16/11	662	87	54	758	2	62%	+0.9	2	14.0	13.1	21	6.0	8	+0.8	13	-6.4%	56	43	57	0.2%	51	19.4%	41	54%
2024	CLE	17/16	1061	145	90	1229	4	62%	-4.0	8	13.7	11.1	51	4.3	35	-0.0	5	-3.6%	59	103	48	4.2%	52	22.9%	34	29%
2025	CLE			118	76	1041	4	64%			13.8							2.4%								

Jeudy had a pretty transformative season in his first year away from the Denver Broncos. Throughout his tenure in Denver, deep targets were a pretty heavy part of Jeudy's route tree make-up. Watch the film of last year's Browns, and you'll find a solid route runner seeing the vast majority of his work come on short and intermediate concepts. The deep balls were still there, obviously—just look at his near-record-setting revenge game in Denver. Those balls just became a bit more effective when setting up a more robust route tree underneath it. Despite the quarterback situation he was working with, Jeudy began to look like a complete receiver worthy of the first-round pick he was drafted with. He'll now have an even bigger challenge ahead of him, working with worse arms in a nearly barren wide receiver room.

Johnson was once a productive receiver who got open often but didn't get the most out of his ability because of some drop issues. His on-field play was not the focus in 2024 as he bounced around multiple teams. He was traded to the Panthers in the offseason, then traded to the Ravens after a falling out in Carolina. Baltimore released Johnson after six weeks and a suspension. He signed with the Texans and was released after a playoff win over the Chargers. Johnson saw nine targets between the Ravens and Texans. He's now in Cleveland, where the receiver room isn't that deep.

## 326 WIDE RECEIVERS

The one-time Playmaker Score binky got most of his playing time early in the season when Cooper Kupp and Puka Nacua were battling injuries. From Week 10 through Week 17, Johnson had only 59 offensive snaps and four catches. Then he played most of Week 18 as the Rams sat starters. Johnson has a reputation as a good route runner, although he doesn't really get much separation. He's good after the catch. Johnson is the favorite ahead of Arian Smith and Malachi Corley to be the Jets' fourth receiver—or third receiver if Allen Lazard ends up elsewhere.

Quentin Johnston		Height: 6-4				Weight: 215				College: TCU				Draft: 2023/1 (21)				Born: 6-Sep-2001				Age: 24				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2023	LAC	17/10	748	67	38	431	2	57%	-3.2	3	11.3	13.4	18	4.0	41	-0.8	5	-8.5%	60	24	63	-19.4%	72	11.6%	77	10%
2024	LAC	15/11	656	91	55	711	8	60%	-3.4	4	12.9	11.2	50	5.6	19	+1.0	13	8.4%	35	149	28	28.2%	29	20.9%	41	9%
2025	LAC		66	38	522	4	58%			13.7							-0.7%									

Johnston took a big step forward in Year 2, rising from the 60s into the top 40 in DYAR and DVOA. It would be hard for him not to have improved on his rookie year, mind you, with questions about his effort, hands, and general field awareness abounding, but it was nice to see him take that step forward with a new coaching staff and get away from the utter bust label. His deep DVOA jump was particularly notable, going from -4.5% in 2023 to 32.0% last season as he seemed to learn how to actually track balls in flight. That's great, but opportunities come and opportunities go. Johnston didn't exactly solidify his starting role full time, and those hands are still a problem—ESPN's receiving analytics gave him a Catch Score of 0, and we have him with a receiving plus/minus of -3.4. With Mike Williams returning to the fold and second-round pick Tre Harris pushing for playing time, Johnston could see his spot in the starting lineup—and possibly even the roster—vanish. He may need age to be on his side—Williams slowing down or Harris taking a while to adapt to the NFL—in order to match his 91 targets from a year ago.

Christian Kirk		Height: 5-11				Weight: 200				College: Texas A&M				Draft: 2018/2 (47)				Born: 18-Nov-1996				Age: 29				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	JAX	17/17	991	134	84	1108	8	63%	-0.5	7	13.2	9.1	63	4.3	39	-0.1	6	4.4%	34	178	23	14.3%	30	23.1%	24	75%
2023	JAX	12/12	585	85	57	787	3	67%	+4.8	2	13.8	10.4	54	4.3	36	-0.4	5	4.8%	34	123	38	26.1%	29	19.9%	39	77%
2024	JAX	8/7	337	47	27	379	1	57%	-1.8	1	14.0	13.7	--	4.2	--	-0.7	1	-4.7%	--	30	--	8.3%	--	18.8%	--	87%
2025	HOU		78	50	662	3	64%			13.3								2.8%								

A broken collarbone ended Kirk's season after Week 8. The Jaguars were set to release him, but the Texans pivoted a seventh-round pick to scoop him before the release. Kirk enters a big prove-it year after playing in just 20 games over the past two seasons. He's the clear No. 2 target in Houston at the start of the year behind Nico Collins, and C.J. Stroud loves to pound the middle of the field. It's a great match on paper. Kirk had played 17 games in the two years prior to 2023. We would expect Kirk to break the 1,000-yard barrier if he can stay healthy in 2025, but that's very much an open question after the last two years.

Cooper Kupp		Height: 6-2				Weight: 207				College: Eastern Washington				Draft: 2017/3 (69)				Born: 15-Jun-1993				Age: 32				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	LAR	9/9	530	98	75	812	6	77%	+7.1	3	10.8	7.3	74	5.5	11	+0.3	15	4.5%	33	132	30	48.5%	7	35.5%	1	46%
2023	LAR	12/12	710	95	59	737	5	62%	-3.6	3	12.5	8.2	69	5.5	19	+1.1	6	-0.8%	46	90	46	22.0%	31	23.8%	20	53%
2024	LAR	12/11	637	100	67	710	6	67%	-0.5	1	10.6	7.8	78	4.0	43	-0.7	7	-10.8%	72	15	72	26.2%	32	26.5%	15	67%
2025	SEA		94	63	699	5	67%			11.1								1.0%								

The biggest worry with Kupp would be if two years of lower leg injuries had sapped his ability to separate. Over the last two years, ESPN's analytics give him an Open Score of 41, 79th out of 97 qualified receivers. His receiving plus/minus of -4.0 in the last two years is 62nd out of 77 wide receivers with at least 100 targets, too. In the two years prior, his plus/minus of +24.4 was second to only Justin Jefferson, so this is a massive drop-off. Hopefully, Kupp will be fully healthy and more than just a shadow of the player he once was, but the 32-year-old's best days may well be behind him.

Lamb is one of the few receivers who splits his time nearly evenly between playing out wide and in the slot. While he has dominated in the slot throughout his career, his yards per route run outside (2.8) were way more than what he produced inside (1.9). Part of that comes down to the spacing in the Dallas offense. Lamb had a league-worst -119 DYAR on throws to the short middle of the field, with the next-worst player at -39. Lamb had 105 DYAR when lined up wide but -30 in the slot. When Lamb was in the slot, he saw closer coverage and had less room to move. With Lamb as the biggest and only real threat in the passing game, defenses knew exactly where to focus their attention. Because of that, Lamb posted negative DVOA on third and fourth downs and inside the red zone. However, Lamb's 2.8 yards per route run against single-high surpassed his 1.9 against two-high coverages. With Dak Prescott healthy and George Pickens added to the lineup, a more spread-out offense should allow Lamb more room to work.

Lazard was the one Jets receiver who stood out in DVOA, but that good number is probably as fluky as his bad number the year before. Lazard is a very average wide receiver who happens to be 30 years old and buddies with Aaron Rodgers. Both of those facts make it likely that he won't still be on the New York roster when the season begins. The Jets would rather give targets to younger receivers and trading or cutting Lazard would save them \$2 million. If he is still around for the 2025 season, he'll be fine.

Legette grew up around horses, owns a few of them, and served as the NFL's unofficial "correspondent" for the Kentucky Derby, where he discussed raccoon recipes with Guy Fieri. Legette also looked swole at Churchill Downs, which should make any Panthers fan who remembers the ever-expanding waistline of Kelvin Benjamin a bit nervous. Legette has potential as a Deebo-type screens-and-YAC guy, but he was utterly useless on deep routes last season (7-of-25 on targets of 15 or more air yards, with three drops), and the Panthers are talking him up as the potential focal point of their passing game. At any rate, Legette had better switch to low-calorie Impossible Raccoon unless he's planning a move to fullback.

## 328 WIDE RECEIVERS

The Seahawks cut Lockett this offseason rather than dealing with a \$30.8-million cap figure, and he signed with the Titans just ahead of draft day. Lockett's numbers have been in decline, something he attributed to "the politics of the game." He told Seahawks reporters after Week 18 that he "sacrificed a lot of stuff last year (in Seattle) for the better of the team." Lockett has been a fantastic receiver for many years, but this feels a lot like last offseason's Tyler Boyd signing for the Titans where they try to create a floor at receiver so they can work on the ceiling. Lockett is still fantastic at winning the ball in the air, but his average yards of separation (per NFL Pro) have declined from 3.5 in 2022 to 2.7 last year, making the entire onus of his viability become "winning contested balls" while he works in a few zone targets here or there.

Drake London			Height: 6-4			Weight: 215			College: USC			Draft: 2022/1 (8)			Born: 24-Jul-2001			Age: 24								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	ATL	17/15	819	117	72	866	4	62%	+0.1	1	12.0	10.6	45	3.1	63	-1.2	6	0.1%	42	119	35	40.9%	13	29.2%	6	24%
2023	ATL	16/16	860	110	69	905	2	63%	+0.7	2	13.1	11.7	37	2.7	67	-1.5	3	-2.3%	50	90	45	17.2%	33	23.1%	27	27%
2024	ATL	17/17	1032	158	100	1271	9	63%	+2.0	5	12.7	10.9	55	3.3	64	-0.5	12	6.1%	43	236	14	62.5%	6	29.3%	6	47%
2025	ATL			147	93	1194	8	63%			12.8							2.5%								

London caught 22 passes for 352 yards and two touchdowns (both in Week 18 against the Panthers) in Michael Penix's three starts. Kirk Cousins could not connect with London on deep passes (just 12 catches for 257 yards on 28 targets of 15 or more air yards), but London made himself useful as a chains-mover (18 first-down conversions on third/fourth downs) in Cousins' chuck-and-duck. London spent his first two seasons in Arthur Smith's offense with Marcus Mariota and Desmond Ridder at quarterback, which means that he has never had the chance to be a typical top receiver in a normal offense with a fully functional quarterback. His late-season chemistry with Penix offers hope that all that will change in 2025.

Luke McCaffrey			Height: 6-2			Weight: 198			College: Rice			Draft: 2024/3 (100)			Born: 2-Apr-2001			Age: 24								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2024	WAS	17/4	419	24	18	168	0	75%	+0.7	0	9.3	7.0	--	5.4	--	-0.3	1	-12.7%	--	0	--	-48.0%	--	4.9%	--	76%
2025	WAS			32	21	203	1	66%			9.7							-7.6%								

McCaffrey only had five games with three or more targets and he never topped 44 yards in a game while playing 36% of the offensive snaps. He only saw one target during Washington's playoff run. He ran 76% of his routes from the slot but averaged 0.8 yards per route run from that alignment. He was more of a special teamer as a rookie and he could continue to be a kick returner in his second season. McCaffrey only transitioned to receiver during his college career but appears to be picking up the position better in his second professional offseason. "I think naturally the biggest jump will be between Year 1 and Year 2," receivers coach Bobby Engram said during minicamp. "And I really like the speed and the way he's attacking the football out there right now. He's made some really tough catches."

Ray-Ray McCloud			Height: 5-9			Weight: 185			College: Clemson			Draft: 2018/6 (187)			Born: 15-Oct-1996			Age: 29								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	SF	17/2	286	25	14	243	1	56%	+0.8	2	17.4	11.8	--	6.6	--	+2.2	1	17.0%	--	53	--	-11.8%	--	4.9%	--	48%
2023	SF	12/1	209	15	12	135	0	80%	+1.1	1	11.3	6.3	--	7.3	--	+2.4	1	17.0%	--	36	--	-14.6%	--	4.5%	--	40%
2024	ATL	17/13	981	87	62	686	1	71%	+1.7	3	11.1	6.9	84	5.4	22	-0.5	5	-11.5%	73	8	73	-23.9%	86	16.0%	59	38%
2025	ATL			33	21	268	2	64%			12.7							2.4%								

McCloud caught 19 passes at or behind the line of scrimmage for just 101 yards as part of Operation Make Kirk Cousins Look Less Like a Scarecrow in 2024. He took over the primary slot role when Rondale Moore suffered a season-ending injury in early August and played well, but if the journeyman screens-and-reverses slot guy gets 87 targets in a season, it probably means that your offense is trapped in dink-and-dunk purgatory. McCloud remains the Falcons' primary slot receiver for 2025. If Mike Penix develops as planned, he'll be too busy throwing downfield to Drake London and Darnell Mooney to do much more than toss McCloud the occasional screen.

Ladd McConkey			Height: 6-0			Weight: 185			College: Georgia			Draft: 2024/2 (34)			Born: 11-Nov-2001			Age: 24								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2024	LAC	16/14	735	113	82	1149	7	73%	+7.6	2	14.0	10.1	58	4.7	30	+0.4	14	21.2%	11	289	9	45.7%	11	24.2%	28	66%
2025	LAC			116	79	1006	6	68%			12.8								10.2%							

In the latter half of 2024, the Chargers seemed to realize that throwing the ball was a good thing in the modern NFL, and that they had at least one wideout capable of catching things. McConkey had -4 DYAR in the first seven weeks of the season and 293 the rest of the way, starting with his breakout game against the Saints. He capped the year by setting a record for receiving yards in a playoff game for a rookie, with 197 against the Texans—a stat which both shows how good McConkey is and how little else was working for Los Angeles in the passing game. McConkey's 26.3% DVOA out of the slot was the most for anyone with more than 50 targets, and he was in the top four in DYAR on deep outs and drag routes. Now, if only the Chargers could find a reliable second receiver to pair with him...

Terry McLaurin			Height: 6-0			Weight: 210			College: Ohio State			Draft: 2019/3 (76)			Born: 15-Apr-1996			Age: 29								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	WAS	17/17	1063	120	77	1191	5	64%	+4.1	3	15.5	13.1	13	5.0	19	+0.2	10	20.0%	5	309	6	25.2%	23	22.9%	27	23%
2023	WAS	17/17	941	132	79	1002	4	60%	-1.1	1	12.7	11.7	36	4.4	34	-0.6	6	-3.7%	53	99	43	3.0%	48	22.4%	31	15%
2024	WAS	17/17	935	117	82	1096	13	70%	+10.4	0	13.4	13.2	19	3.6	57	-0.6	4	24.3%	9	339	5	36.8%	18	23.2%	32	21%
2025	WAS			115	75	1031	9	66%			13.7							15.7%								

McLaurin finally got a quarterback and his production soared. He was eighth in DYAR on deep throws to the outside, where his speed and body control have always played well but the catchable targets weren't always there. McLaurin was effective all over the field. He was third in DYAR on corner routes, highlighting his deep prowess, while he was also sixth in DYAR on slants. McLaurin wasn't just siloed to the outside left of the offense as previous Kliff Kingsbury receivers were, and that change in alignment helped spark a career-best season for a player who routinely put up 1,000-yard receiving seasons with poor quarterback play.

Jalen McMillan			Height: 6-1			Weight: 192			College: Washington			Draft: 2024/3 (92)			Born: 7-Dec-2001			Age: 24								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2024	TB	13/12	626	58	37	461	8	64%	+0.4	0	12.5	12.4	29	3.6	53	-0.5	2	12.3%	27	119	36	-13.5%	72	13.7%	69	35%
2025	TB			46	28	360	4	62%			12.7							1.6%								

McMillan started the 2024 season as a situational screens-and-bombs threat. A hamstring injury limited his playing time just as Chris Godwin's injury created a vacancy, but he assumed a Godwin-like role late in the year, going 24-316-7 in the Bucs' final five regular season games. McMillan caught 11 passes on 17 targets after going in pre-snap motion, so yes, we really mean it when we say "Godwin-like role." What will McMillan do with Godwin back? Probably go back to screens-and-bombs duty, with an emphasis on the "bombs" now that Mike Evans has aged into a possession role.

Tetairoa McMillan			Height: 6-5			Weight: 212			College: Arizona			Draft: 2025/1 (8)			Born: 5-Apr-2003			Age: 22								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2025	CAR		137	85	1028	6	62%			12.1								-5.8%								

McMillan went 90-1,402-10 at Arizona in 2023 and 84-1,319-8 in 2024, with quarterback issues and a "lower leg injury" accounting for the slight decline. He's a screens-and-bombs boundary target who caused 27 broken/missed tackles in 2024. He also dropped six passes, looked sluggish off the line at times (perhaps because that lower leg was still ailing him), and was hard to judge on deep passes with Noah Fifita throwing them every which way. McMillan was a first-round value on most draft boards but a bit of a reach with the ninth overall pick. He'll likely assume a similar (though smaller) role for the Panthers to the one he filled for the Wildcats, right down to watching sideline bombs sail over his head and out of bounds.

## 330 WIDE RECEIVERS

DK Metcalf		Height: 6-4				Weight: 235				College: Mississippi				Draft: 2019/2 (64)				Born: 14-Dec-1997				Age: 28				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	SEA	17/17	893	141	90	1048	6	64%	-2.3	5	11.6	11.3	37	2.4	80	-1.6	9	-7.9%	63	52	53	14.2%	31	25.5%	18	14%
2023	SEA	16/16	831	119	66	1114	8	55%	-2.2	2	16.9	12.9	24	5.6	16	+1.6	10	14.8%	20	275	11	30.6%	26	23.7%	21	10%
2024	SEA	15/12	832	108	66	992	5	61%	+0.4	3	15.0	13.7	13	4.0	45	-0.6	4	0.7%	51	114	39	1.4%	57	21.9%	38	8%
2025	PIT			120	71	1061	7	59%			14.9							4.8%								

Through six NFL seasons, DeKaylin Metcalf has tended to alternate very good seasons with just decent ones, but it has averaged into roughly 1,000 yards and eight touchdowns per year. His new team, Pittsburgh, will take that—they haven't had a wideout with those numbers since Diontae Johnson in 2021. Metcalf represents an upgrade over George Pickens, even leaving out Pick's tendency to explode in anger, frustration, or pique (Metcalf has some of those same traits, to be fair). DK's mammoth frame has never really translated into a great catch radius (his career catch rate is just 60%), but it should play well in the AFC North, and his willingness to block will fit in with Pittsburgh's run-heavy scheme. One can see a scenario where he (noisily) struggles to build an on-field relationship with Aaron Rodgers but becomes Mason Rudolph's favorite target, if it comes to that.

John Metchie		Height: 6-0				Weight: 195				College: Alabama				Draft: 2022/2 (44)				Born: 18-Jul-2000				Age: 25				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2023	HOU	16/0	310	30	16	158	0	53%	-4.6	1	9.9	8.9	--	5.3	--	-0.2	3	-37.6%	--	-61	--	-31.4%	--	5.6%	--	53%
2024	HOU	13/3	381	37	24	254	1	65%	-1.0	0	10.6	9.0	--	2.9	--	-1.5	0	-24.6%	--	-33	--	-39.3%	--	8.7%	--	54%
2025	HOU			14	8	94	1	60%			11.4							-9.0%								

Entering the final year of his rookie contract, Metchie received a lot of work while healthy down the stretch. He played at least 42% of the snaps in every game from Week 9 on as the Texans dealt with the Stefon Diggs injury. But he averaged just four targets a game and his body offered little as a run blocker. It's starting to feel like his life-changing lymphoma diagnosis has robbed us of seeing what Metchie could have been when he was drafted. The Texans took a pair of receivers on Day 2, effectively forcing Metchie to earn a roster spot. We'd expect him to be a potential trade candidate at last cuts in early September.

Jakobi Meyers		Height: 6-2				Weight: 200				College: North Carolina State				Draft: 2019/FA				Born: 9-Nov-1996				Age: 29				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	NE	14/13	690	96	67	804	6	70%	+4.3	5	12.0	10.3	47	3.6	53	-1.1	1	10.2%	25	179	22	34.6%	17	23.1%	25	50%
2023	LV	16/16	903	106	71	807	8	67%	-0.5	3	11.4	9.7	62	3.4	56	-0.8	5	8.1%	30	173	26	15.4%	36	21.3%	36	24%
2024	LV	15/15	898	129	87	1027	4	67%	+5.1	2	11.8	10.0	60	3.3	63	-1.0	7	-1.7%	55	112	41	13.7%	45	24.6%	25	34%
2025	LV			106	74	860	5	70%			11.7							7.1%								

Meyers doubled the number of 100-yard games he has had in his career from three to six in 2024. He's a bit misunderstood. His lack of speed and sharp route running make people think of him as a slot receiver, and he does spend a decent amount of time there. But he was far more productive from out wide. He had 27 receptions, 300 yards, 22 DYAR, and -5.8% DVOA in the slot. From out wide, he had 58 receptions, 728 yards, 103 DYAR, and 2.9% DVOA. Geno Smith will be the best quarterback he has played with since Tom Brady in his rookie season.

Marvin Mims		Height: 5-11				Weight: 182				College: Oklahoma				Draft: 2023/2 (63)				Born: 19-Mar-2002				Age: 23				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2023	DEN	16/7	384	33	22	377	1	67%	+1.9	1	17.1	16.0	--	7.0	--	+0.1	6	19.8%	--	83	--	-13.2%	--	7.4%	--	21%
2024	DEN	17/2	297	53	39	503	6	75%	+0.8	2	12.9	7.4	82	11.9	1	+4.0	7	-1.7%	54	43	64	34.3%	23	9.5%	90	43%
2025	DEN			77	49	626	4	64%			12.7							3.0%								

Fantasy players, rejoice! Mims was much more productive and involved in his second season. One may look at the massive drop in his average depth of target and conclude that he wasn't a deep threat in 2024, but that's not the case. He was targeted deep 13 times. He only caught three of them, but all three were touchdowns, combining for 169 yards. His 93-yard touchdown against the Browns was part of a fantastic finish to the season. All three deep receptions came from Week 11 on, and in these

final seven games, Mims had 434 yards, six touchdowns, 111 DYAR, and 31.4% DVOA. That includes 218 yards and three touchdowns on screens and swing passes, adding 43 DYAR and 13.8% DVOA on these targets. So, 387 of his 434 receiving yards in the last seven games either came deep downfield or behind the line of scrimmage. It took time, but Sean Payton figured out how to use Mims' blazing speed.

<b>Jonathan Mingo</b>		Height: 6-2			Weight: 220			College: Mississippi			Draft: 2023/2 (39)			Born: 20-Apr-2001			Age: 24									
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2023	CAR	15/14	910	85	43	418	0	51%	-10.3	2	9.7	10.8	48	3.6	54	-1.2	5	-47.2%	81	-230	81	-47.6%	89	18.3%	44	23%
2024	2TM	17/6	462	42	17	167	0	40%	-10.7	1	9.8	11.0	--	3.9	--	-1.8	0	-52.7%	--	-139	--	-50.0%	--	7.8%	--	29%
2025	DAL			19	10	123	1	53%			12.5							-13.7%								

Mingo didn't provide a lot after being traded to the Cowboys in midseason. He was only on the field for 29% of Dallas pass plays with a 5.4% target share from his first game in Week 11 through the end of the regular season. Mingo was considered the first read on 13 of his 18 targets (81.3%), hinting that the Cowboys tried to make an effort to get him the ball some times without it coming naturally within the progression of other plays. Of his 18 targets with Dallas, only five were charted as catchable by FTN, and he caught all five. Among 116 qualified receivers by ESPN's tracking metrics, Mingo ranked 115th in Open Score (27) above only Jahan Dotson (21).

<b>Adonai Mitchell</b>		Height: 6-2			Weight: 205			College: Texas			Draft: 2024/2 (52)			Born: 8-Oct-2002			Age: 23									
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2024	IND	17/7	383	55	23	312	0	42%	-7.4	2	13.6	14.0	9	4.2	39	-0.8	1	-38.1%	91	-108	89	-11.7%	68	11.1%	82	16%
2025	IND			55	30	431	3	55%			14.4							-7.2%								

(Looking at Mitchell's catch rate.) We think we figured out who Anthony Richardson was throwing to. Mitchell didn't exactly help Richardson out last year—he had his own lapses on the sideline and a highlight reel of drops and near-misses—but he had a weird season and is a weird fit for the Colts right now. He's built to be an X receiver, but they have Alec Pierce. So when Pierce, Josh Downs, and Michael Pittman all played, Mitchell was worked in slowly. Unfortunately for him, those same three players are all here this year, and nothing we saw from Mitchell's work in the slot screamed "this guy is taking a step forward." A player's first offseason with the team is often their most critical, and it's possible that Mitchell becomes more than this. But it's hard to understand how the Colts get him more involved this year given how little he showed in 2024.

<b>Darnell Mooney</b>		Height: 5-11			Weight: 180			College: Tulane			Draft: 2020/5 (173)			Born: 29-Oct-1997			Age: 28									
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	CHI	12/12	630	61	40	493	2	66%	+2.5	2	12.3	12.4	22	4.2	40	-1.1	1	-4.9%	54	38	58	-0.3%	46	24.2%	22	42%
2023	CHI	15/14	766	61	31	414	1	51%	-8.2	1	13.4	10.3	56	5.8	11	+0.7	3	-23.1%	77	-50	75	-40.4%	83	14.3%	65	61%
2024	ATL	16/16	988	107	64	992	5	61%	+3.4	2	15.5	12.7	25	4.2	36	-0.8	7	17.9%	16	271	11	29.9%	27	22.0%	36	29%
2025	ATL			91	55	811	5	60%			14.8							3.5%								

Mooney produced a steady string of stat lines in the four- to five-catch and 60- to 90-yard range last year, going 5-82-0 in Michael Penix's Week 16 start but missing most of his other two starts with a shoulder injury. He has always been productive when healthy and working with at least a replacement-level quarterback, but he didn't meet both conditions that often in four seasons with the Bears. Mooney's ability to consistently get open will aide Penix's development, but Mooney himself is a No. 2 wide receiver on a team with an inexperienced quarterback and a superstar running back, so his target share may be somewhat limited.

Years of making Kyle Allen, P.J. Walker, Justin Fields, Tyson Baggett, Caleb Williams, and the desiccated remains of both Cam Newton and Teddy Bridgewater look like capable quarterbacks may have finally taken their toll on Moore in 2024, as seen by his sharp decline in yards per reception. There are only so many tunnel screens, quick hitches, and motion waggles a receiver can run before he has used up his lifetime supply of YAC, and Moore doesn't appear capable of consistently getting downfield separation against tight coverage anymore. Theoretically, Moore is a prime candidate for the Amon-Ra St. Brown role in Ben Johnson's system, but Moore is not built like St. Brown, doesn't run routes like him, and has never been primarily a slot guy. Moore will probably retain his motion-YAC role to start the season, but he's likely to lose his target share to Luther Burden, Rome Odunze, and others as Johnson continues his overhaul. It would have been fun to see Moore paired with a quality quarterback in his prime just once over the last seven years. If it doesn't happen in 2025, it probably never will.

David Moore			Height: 6-0				Weight: 220				College: East Central (OK)					Draft: 2017/7 (226)				Born: 15-Jan-1995				Age: 30		
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2023	TB	7/0	105	7	5	94	1	71%	+0.8	0	18.8	7.0	--	12.4	--	+8.4	2	40.4%	--	31	--	27.4%	--	3.0%	--	43%
2024	CAR	17/5	568	57	32	351	3	56%	-3.2	3	11.0	11.0	52	1.9	90	-1.9	3	-13.2%	79	-3	79	-21.0%	82	11.0%	83	29%

Moore, a semi-useful third receiver for the Seahawks in the 2010s, spent three years bouncing around practice squads before surfacing in Charlotte and starting a few midseason games when Adam Thielen and others were unavailable. He ended the season as a fourth receiver, albeit one who was targeted a few times per game. Most rebuilding teams would say, “Thanks for getting us through that bind you creaky journeyman, but we plan to upgrade our receiver corps, so good luck in Tennessee or wherever!” The Panthers, however, called Moore at his cattle ranch in March and re-signed him to a one-year deal. Yes, Moore is a rancher, just as Xavier Legette knows his way around horse stables. If the Panthers ever give up trying to be a football team, they could stage one helluva competitor for *Yellowstone*.

The former second-rounder from Ole Miss has flashed at various points throughout his career, but nothing has clicked on a consistent basis as he's jumped from the Jets to the Browns and now to the Bills. Buffalo rotates its receivers often, and with no superstar on the team, we might see more Moore than you'd expect. Still, it's an uphill battle: Moore ranked dead last in DYAR among receivers last year. Buffalo structured his contract with that in mind. He'll earn \$2.5 million in guaranteed salary, but he could double it based on incentives.

For three years with the Cardinals, Moore was one of those nifty-shifty screens-and-reverses guys who are much more fun to control in Madden than to watch on a real NFL field. He was just elusive enough to keep getting targets but not elusive enough to do that much with him, and he never developed into anyone who could run real routes and make catches downfield. (Moore had just 31 total receptions of five or more air yards from 2021 through 2023.) The Falcons signed Moore as their slot trickster in 2024, but he tore his ACL in an August practice. Kevin O'Connell prefers his third receivers to be tough possession guys, and he has almost no real role for a fourth receiver, but maybe he wants to fiddle with a gadget guy in training camp just to see what it's like.

Malik Nabers		Height: 6-0			Weight: 200			College: Louisiana State			Draft: 2024/1 (6)			Born: 28-Jul-2003			Age: 22									
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2024	NYG	15/13	886	170	109	1204	7	64%	-2.5	10	11.0	9.6	64	4.2	37	-0.6	13	-9.6%	70	42	65	42.7%	14	35.1%	1	24%
2025	NYG		177	112	1396	9	63%			12.5								0.8%								

How much did the Giants passing offense run through Nabers in 2024? The Giants threw 35% of passes to the receiver we designated as WR1, a spot almost always held by the rookie. This was the highest figure since the Houston Texans threw 35% of passes to their WR1 (DeAndre Hopkins) in 2017. Since 2010, the only other team at 35% or higher was the 2012 Chicago Bears at 41% with Brandon Marshall at WR1. Nabers passed Terry Glenn and Anquan Boldin (165 each) to set a record for targets by a rookie receiver. The huge difference between standard DVOA and Route DVOA demonstrates how good Nabers was at getting open and drawing targets. We're expecting big things with slightly better quarterbacking in 2025.

Puka Nacua		Height: 6-2			Weight: 212			College: BYU			Draft: 2023/5 (177)			Born: 29-May-2001			Age: 24									
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2023	LAR	17/17	1000	160	105	1486	6	66%	+0.0	10	14.2	9.2	64	6.1	7	+1.6	17	11.3%	24	306	8	55.3%	11	28.8%	11	23%
2024	LAR	11/11	487	106	79	990	3	75%	+6.9	2	12.5	8.2	76	6.6	11	+1.2	17	17.6%	18	255	13	113.4%	1	30.2%	4	26%
2025	LAR		164	113	1461	7	69%			13.0								8.6%								

When Nacua was healthy last season, there were few more efficient receivers in football. His 3.5 yards per route run wasn't just most in the league, it was most by a huge margin—only three players were over 3.0, and Nacua was a full 0.2 yards ahead of A.J. Brown in second place. Nacua also had an insane workload, being targeted on nearly 37% of his routes. Our charting data only goes back so far, but that's reportedly the highest percentage in two decades for a player with at least 75 targets. That number is bound to go down with Davante Adams replacing an ineffective Cooper Kupp, and maybe a lighter workload will help him avoid the injuries that have plagued him the last two seasons. But it's hard not to drown him in targets, considering how much damage he does when the ball comes his way.

Jalen Nailor		Height: 5-11			Weight: 195			College: Michigan State			Draft: 2022/6 (191)			Born: 2-Mar-1999			Age: 26									
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	MIN	15/0	57	13	9	179	1	69%	+2.6	0	19.9	11.6	--	7.4	--	+2.8	2	42.4%	--	61	--	210.8%	--	2.3%	--	23%
2023	MIN	6/1	94	6	3	29	0	50%	-1.2	1	9.7	9.0	--	7.0	--	+0.7	1	-53.9%	--	-18	--	-60.7%	--	2.8%	--	33%
2024	MIN	17/7	573	42	28	414	6	67%	+0.9	4	14.8	11.6	--	3.8	--	-0.2	2	40.0%	--	168	--	-19.0%	79	7.9%	--	67%
2025	MIN		30	18	243	2	61%			13.2								2.1%								

Nailor has figured out that he's nearly invisible to defenders when on the field at the same time as Justin Jefferson and Jordan Addison. Most of Nailor's big plays in 2024 came after Sam Darnold sent the whole defense scampering after Jefferson just by looking his way, or by simply lining up next to Jefferson and running in his wake. Kevin O'Connell made sure not to kill the invisible goose by rarely scheming up plays for Nailor, making every target a little surprise. Nailor caught four touchdown passes on five targets inside the 10-yard line, again by being the guy running the shallow drag route at the 1-yard line while Jefferson took three defenders with him on a fade. Nailor's a fine third receiver—he's a willing blocker when called upon, and he'll take a hit over the middle of the field—but he's stuck in an only-so-many-touches situation, and now Rondale Moore could eat into his already-limited target share.

## 334 WIDE RECEIVERS

Jaylin Noel		Height: 5-10				Weight: 200				College: Iowa State				Draft: 2025/3 (79)				Born: 4-Sep-2002				Age: 23				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2025	HOU		63	41	451	3	66%			10.9								-3.0%								

Despite getting rave grades from most of the media draftsphere, Noel slid to the third round on account of a slender 5-foot-10, 200-pound build. He ran a 4.39s 40-yard dash at the combine, caught 80 balls for 1,194 yards and eight touchdowns in his final season at Iowa State, and was not the first Cyclones wideout the Texans drafted. He'll likely spend at least some of this year being an understudy for Christian Kirk, but Kirk has been dinged up each of the last few seasons and in theory Noel seems more immediately ready to contribute than Jayden Higgins is. Don't expect Tank Dell to strike twice, but we wouldn't be floored if Noel had fantasy football value at some point this season.

Rome Odunze		Height: 6-3				Weight: 215				College: Washington				Draft: 2024/1 (9)				Born: 3-Jun-2002				Age: 23				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2024	CHI	17/12	954	101	54	734	3	53%	-5.4	2	13.6	13.8	11	4.7	31	-0.1	6	-12.7%	78	0	78	-19.5%	80	19.1%	46	28%
2025	CHI		111	64	887	6	58%			13.8								-0.3%								

Odunze was a rookie vertical receiver on a team whose rookie quarterback had no idea what an open downfield receiver looked like and rarely had time to throw to the ones he successfully identified. Odunze caught just 5 of 23 targets of 20 or more yards, but he made himself useful on short catch-and-run routes and by working to get open during madcap Caleb Williams scrambles. Those of you mapping Ben Johnson's Lions offense onto the Bears should note that Odunze is a Jameson Williams analog. Don't expect Williams' 1,000-yard season right away, since Williams did not have his right away, but Odunze has the potential to be a high-impact screens-and-bombs guy.

Chris Olave		Height: 6-0				Weight: 187				College: Ohio State				Draft: 2022/1 (11)				Born: 27-Jun-2000				Age: 25				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	NO	15/9	607	119	72	1042	4	61%	+5.6	4	14.5	14.5	5	2.9	71	-1.1	3	3.8%	37	155	25	41.6%	10	27.8%	11	21%
2023	NO	16/11	814	138	87	1123	5	63%	+3.9	4	12.9	13.3	19	4.0	43	-0.4	4	3.4%	38	172	27	30.9%	25	25.2%	16	42%
2024	NO	8/8	315	44	32	400	1	73%	+4.1	0	12.5	10.3	--	3.8	--	-0.3	0	8.7%	--	74	--	37.4%	--	17.9%	--	30%
2025	NO		118	76	962	5	65%			12.6								-1.2%								

Behold, the closest thing the Saints have to a young superstar: a deep-threat receiver coming off a season marred by multiple concussions. Olave suffered one concussion in Week 6 and a more dramatic one in Week 9, when Derek Carr led him directly into a safety's wheelhouse with an overthrow. Carr always struggled to get the ball to Olave deep: they connected on just nine of 34 targets of 20-plus yards over the last two seasons. Olave, meanwhile, is ordinary at best at working the short middle of the field. Olave said in February that he feels 100% healthy, which is encouraging. But concussions will always be a worry, and Tyler Shough (and/or Spencer Rattler) is unlikely to be a more capable deep passer than Carr.

Josh Palmer		Height: 6-1				Weight: 210				College: Tennessee				Draft: 2021/3 (77)				Born: 22-Sep-1999				Age: 26				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	LAC	16/11	898	107	72	769	3	67%	+5.2	3	10.7	9.2	61	3.5	55	-1.0	7	-2.6%	49	87	42	-5.7%	55	17.1%	49	21%
2023	LAC	10/6	525	61	38	581	2	62%	+2.1	3	15.3	11.2	42	5.2	25	+0.1	3	-0.8%	47	57	55	-1.8%	54	16.8%	57	39%
2024	LAC	15/7	616	66	39	584	1	60%	+2.1	2	15.0	14.9	6	2.5	80	-2.2	0	0.3%	52	71	58	0.0%	58	15.7%	62	30%
2025	BUF		60	39	493	3	64%			12.7								4.1%								

Palmer brings polished route discipline and boundary versatility to the Bills after a productive four-season stint with the Chargers. Securing a three-year, \$36-million deal, Palmer is a lock to make the roster and feels like a solid roster fit in between players such as Keon Coleman and Khalil Shakir. Buffalo beat writers have noted that Palmer has already impressed this off-season. However, whether Palmer can become a true every-down threat feels like a stretch. He had many opportunities to show he could be a WR1 while Keenan Allen and/or Mike Williams were sidelined with injuries on the Chargers, and it never fully materialized. While Palmer is a solid player, he's unlikely to be the piece the Bills have been missing since Stefon Diggs left.

Tim Patrick		Height: 6-5				Weight: 210				College: Utah				Draft: 2017/FA				Born: 23-Nov-1993				Age: 32				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2024	DET	16/9	641	44	33	394	3	75%	+2.0	1	11.9	10.0	--	4.3	--	-0.0	5	18.7%	--	104	--	-17.8%	77	8.9%	--	18%
2025	DET			30	20	235	2	65%			12.0								2.8%							

After losing two full seasons with the Broncos to injuries, Patrick earned a very specific job with the Lions: be just credible enough a receiving threat on the outside to make sure that Amon-Ra St. Brown got matched up against a slot defender. Patrick did not beat his defenders deep for six explosive pass plays (20 or more yards); he surprised them. *Wait: Jared Goff is throwing deep to THAT guy?* Patrick earned a team-first reputation as a possession receiver in Denver before his right ACL and Achilles tendon betrayed him. If you need a starter to remain focused while running about 30 decoy routes per game, Patrick is your man.

Ricky Pearsall		Height: 6-3				Weight: 192				College: Florida				Draft: 2024/1 (31)				Born: 9-Sep-2000				Age: 25				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2024	SF	11/4	455	46	31	400	3	67%	+2.3	1	12.9	11.5	--	3.7	--	-0.8	0	12.6%	--	92	--	-3.5%	--	13.6%	--	28%
2025	SF			76	50	696	4	66%			13.9								8.6%							

Pearsall was shot in the chest on August 31 and was playing football on October 20. That's enough to make his rookie season a success, regardless of any numbers or efficiency notes. Pearsall looked better as he got more comfortable in the offense—his DVOA in his first five games was -2.5%, but rose to 21.6% in his last five. That placed him 13th among qualified receivers over the last month, which bodes well for Year 2. He'll be the 49ers' WR2 until Brandon Aiyuk is ready. His health is a concern—not the gunshot, his hamstrings. He had troubles with them in training camp both in 2024 and 2025, and while he's expected to play, having repeated strains every season is something to keep an eye on going forward.

George Pickens		Height: 6-3				Weight: 200				College: Georgia				Draft: 2022/2 (52)				Born: 4-Mar-2001				Age: 24				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	PIT	17/12	882	84	52	801	4	62%	+3.5	4	15.4	14.5	4	2.0	85	-2.4	5	15.7%	12	194	19	-9.7%	66	15.7%	58	13%
2023	PIT	17/16	929	106	63	1140	5	59%	+0.9	3	18.1	13.6	15	6.2	6	+1.8	14	5.1%	33	153	33	12.4%	39	22.0%	32	14%
2024	PIT	14/12	774	103	59	900	3	57%	-2.6	6	15.3	14.1	8	3.6	50	-1.4	9	-5.5%	60	58	60	16.3%	39	27.2%	10	28%
2025	DAL			105	64	927	6	61%			14.4								6.9%							

Pickens has a specific skill set, but he's quite good at what he does. He can make some of the highest degree of difficulty catches, even if there can be issues on some of the easier plays. He had 29 contested targets, which tied for the seventh most in the league. That's not much of a surprise given the verticality of the Pickens route tree. Only Malik Nabers (30) had more targets on go routes than Pickens (26), but no player had more receiving yards than Pickens's 328. Pickens had 15 contested targets on go routes and only four other players had at least 10. He was also one of two players, along with George Kittle, to have at least 15 catches of 20 or more yards but none of them result in touchdowns.

Alec Pierce		Height: 6-3				Weight: 211				College: Cincinnati				Draft: 2022/2 (53)				Born: 2-May-2000				Age: 25				
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	IND	16/12	725	78	41	593	2	53%	-5.9	2	14.5	11.8	31	2.8	75	-1.8	1	-10.5%	69	13	69	-23.0%	81	14.6%	64	1%
2023	IND	17/16	1090	65	32	514	2	49%	-4.4	1	16.1	15.6	2	3.0	65	-1.3	1	1.7%	42	78	49	-33.3%	78	12.6%	72	4%
2024	IND	16/13	817	69	37	824	7	54%	+3.6	3	22.3	22.8	1	3.2	66	-1.1	0	42.2%	1	302	8	13.0%	46	15.4%	63	8%
2025	IND			56	30	556	4	53%			18.7								6.5%							

Go down to the park with a friend, bring a football, run a go route as fast as you can, and have your friend chuck it in your general vicinity. You have accurately simulated Alec Pierce's 2024 season. Not only did Pierce lead the league in percentage of deep throws, but NFL Pro has George Pickens in second place by 14.6%. The difference between Pierce and Pickens is the same difference between Pickens and 38th-place finisher A.J. Brown. He's the one receiver in the Colts room that thrives under Anthony Richardson, for obvious reasons. If Daniel Jones starts the majority of the games, expect to see less Pierce involvement in the offense.

## 336 WIDE RECEIVERS

Michael Pittman			Height: 6-4			Weight: 223			College: USC			Draft: 2020/2 (34)			Born: 5-Oct-1997			Age: 28								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	IND	16/16	1065	141	99	925	4	70%	+1.8	6	9.3	7.0	76	3.5	56	-0.8	5	-13.2%	74	-6	74	-0.2%	45	25.7%	17	26%
2023	IND	16/15	991	156	109	1152	4	70%	+8.1	2	10.6	8.1	71	4.7	31	+0.1	5	-6.5%	57	77	51	37.9%	16	30.3%	5	18%
2024	IND	16/14	904	111	69	808	3	62%	-2.1	2	11.7	11.4	46	3.8	49	-0.9	4	-11.9%	74	7	74	7.3%	51	24.1%	29	24%
2025	IND		105	69	855	3	66%			12.3								-0.4%								

It doesn't show up in our Adjusted Games Lost numbers as strongly as it should, but Michael Pittman dealt with a back injury so severe last year that it was initially believed that injured reserve was an option. From Week 6 to Week 10, after aggravating what had already appeared to be a pre-existing issue, Pittman managed just a 13-165-2 line and missed a game. He started to pick it up thereafter, then had back surgery after the season. Back surgery is an inauspicious sign for a player's career, and Pittman's contract extension only runs through 2026, a year where the Colts can cut him and only pay \$5 million of his \$29-million cap hit. This is quite an important season for Pittman's NFL future. Hopefully his back will cooperate. We are more comfortable holding Josh Downs in fantasy football leagues.

Ja'Lynn Polk			Height: 6-1			Weight: 203			College: Washington			Draft: 2024/2 (37)			Born: 11-Apr-2002			Age: 23								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2024	NE	15/7	436	33	12	87	2	36%	-8.5	2	7.3	12.1	--	1.1	--	-2.7	0	-60.6%	--	-127	--	-61.4%	--	7.5%	--	21%
2025	NE		24	13	148	1	55%			11.3								-18.5%								

From Bethel Johnson to Chad Jackson to Aaron Dobson to N'Keal Harry to Tyquan Thornton, the Patriots have a long history of finding rough among the diamonds when targeting wide receivers early in the draft. After one season, it appears Ja'Lynn Polk is in severe jeopardy of adding his name to that list. His last game with more than one reception came against San Francisco in Week 4. September! He was a total afterthought for the rest of the season, catching only four of 20 targets for 26 yards from Weeks 5 through 18. Local reporters believe that a lot of Polk's problem was mental, so maybe the new offensive staff can help him get a reboot this season.

Kalif Raymond			Height: 5-8			Weight: 180			College: Holy Cross			Draft: 2016/FA			Born: 8-Aug-1994			Age: 31								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	DET	17/7	555	64	47	616	0	73%	+3.6	0	13.1	10.0	54	4.6	27	-0.6	4	5.1%	31	86	43	3.3%	43	11.2%	80	44%
2023	DET	17/3	348	44	35	489	1	80%	+4.0	1	14.0	8.8	--	6.1	--	+0.6	1	37.4%	--	154	--	20.4%	--	7.6%	--	52%
2024	DET	12/2	211	22	17	215	2	77%	+1.3	0	12.6	7.9	--	8.1	--	+1.7	2	24.7%	--	63	--	5.5%	--	6.2%	--	65%
2025	DET		26	19	221	2	71%			11.9								12.3%								

Raymond had another fine year as a punt returner but got caught in a numbers game in an offense with many mouths to feed. He missed five weeks with a foot injury, but even when he was available Raymond was rarely targeted, especially when it became clear that Jameson Williams had developed into more than just two-bombs-per-game guy. Raymond will battle Isaac TeSlaa and others for an offensive role in 2025. Punt returns should at least keep him on the roster.

Jayden Reed			Height: 5-11			Weight: 187			College: Michigan State			Draft: 2023/2 (50)			Born: 28-Apr-2000			Age: 25								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2023	GB	16/13	578	94	64	793	8	68%	+3.7	2	12.4	10.7	51	5.2	24	-0.4	9	9.7%	29	167	29	30.0%	27	18.0%	48	63%
2024	GB	17/10	685	75	55	857	6	73%	+3.2	6	15.6	9.7	62	6.9	9	+0.5	9	34.0%	2	281	10	35.8%	20	16.7%	56	63%
2025	GB		85	59	787	5	70%			13.3								16.2%								

Reed may be the NFL's worst great player. He can look like Tyreek Hill on Super Deeb Serum with the ball in his hands. But every ball that's not directly on his hands is a potential misadventure. He may have led the NFL in incompletions that weren't quite drops but also weren't great plays on catchable passes. Reed is also fumble-prone; his regular season essentially ended with Jaylon Johnson jarring the ball loose in Week 18 with what was more of a Peanut Slap than a Peanut Punch. Both Matt LaFleur and Jordan Love appeared to lose confidence in Reed at times last year, and even Reed's own mother (per Reed)

charged him with a first-quarter drop in Week 14 against the Lions, which resulted in a reduced target share. LaFleur will keep looking for ways to get Reed the ball using motion, screens, reverses, and other gadgetry, but the Packers hope Matthew Golden or a healthy Romeo Doubs will emerge as Love's primary target.

Josh Reynolds			Height: 6-3			Weight: 192			College: Texas A&M			Draft: 2017/4 (117)			Born: 16-Feb-1995			Age: 30								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	DET	14/11	625	59	38	479	3	64%	+4.7	1	12.6	11.7	34	3.0	67	-0.8	1	1.6%	40	74	46	-4.8%	51	12.9%	74	36%
2023	DET	17/13	832	64	40	608	5	63%	+1.8	1	15.2	11.1	44	4.3	37	+0.1	6	21.0%	8	188	22	-2.9%	56	11.7%	76	15%
2024	2TM	9/2	312	24	13	194	1	54%	-1.5	1	14.9	11.3	--	2.7	--	-2.2	1	-7.3%	--	10	--	-39.1%	--	8.7%	--	21%
2025	NYJ			27	16	196	2	60%			12.3							-7.0%								

Reynolds had a split season last year, suiting up for both Denver and Jacksonville with a gap in the middle because he suffered non-life-threatening injuries to his arm and the back of his head in a shooting in Glendale, Colorado, in October. (It's a complicated story, but he appears to have been the target.) He's tall with strong hands, and had his best season with Detroit in 2023, working with new Jets offensive coordinator Tanner Engstrand. The Jets signed him to a one-year deal for \$5 million.

Rashee Rice			Height: 6-1			Weight: 204			College: SMU			Draft: 2023/2 (55)			Born: 22-Apr-2000			Age: 25								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2023	KC	16/8	622	102	79	938	7	77%	+3.4	7	11.9	5.0	81	8.3	2	+3.0	9	15.3%	19	224	17	59.3%	8	18.1%	46	43%
2024	KC	4/4	155	29	24	288	2	83%	+1.9	1	12.0	6.0	--	7.8	--	+2.0	3	27.5%	--	96	--	108.7%	--	21.9%	--	50%
2025	KC			119	90	1044	8	75%			11.7							19.4%								

As of press time, we're still unsure if or when Rice will receive disciplinary action from his ongoing legal situation regarding his hit-and-run accident in 2024. Assuming that continues to be deferred as the court process continues, Rice's return to the field would be a boon for a Chiefs offense that struggled to hit big plays in 2024. Rice's Week 4 knee injury knocked him out for the rest of the season, but all signs point to him being full-go for Week 1. Rice was at 3.5 yards per route run before his injury, which would have been second behind Puka Nacua had he kept that up for the full season. Expect plenty of explosive YAC opportunities on slants and quick outs for as long as the Chiefs are legally allowed to take advantage of it.

Calvin Ridley			Height: 6-1			Weight: 190			College: Alabama			Draft: 2018/1 (26)			Born: 20-Dec-1994			Age: 31								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2023	JAX	17/17	993	136	76	1016	8	56%	-4.2	6	13.4	13.4	17	2.6	73	-1.4	4	3.1%	39	180	25	15.9%	35	23.0%	28	17%
2024	TEN	17/14	888	119	64	1017	4	54%	-3.9	3	15.9	15.8	3	3.6	51	-1.1	8	-6.3%	63	57	61	1.9%	56	23.1%	33	21%
2025	TEN			115	62	966	6	54%			15.5							-2.5%								

The Ridley rollercoaster in a nutshell: through five weeks, Ridley had 27 targets but only nine catches for 141 yards, including an unprecedented eight-target bagel against the Dolphins with 145 attempted air yards. After the Titans traded DeAndre Hopkins, Ridley spiked a 10-143-0 line against the Lions, but afterwards he only averaged four catches for 69 yards and 0.3 touchdowns per game in the final 10 games of the season. Cam Ward brings the promise of a better offense to Tennessee, perhaps one that will support Ridley as more than a borderline WR3 in fantasy football. But promises aren't always kept, and nothing about Ridley's production since returning from his gambling suspension has felt normal or easy to predict.

Demarcus Robinson			Height: 6-1			Weight: 202			College: Florida			Draft: 2016/4 (126)			Born: 21-Sep-1994			Age: 31								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	BAL	17/5	637	75	48	458	2	64%	-3.2	3	9.5	9.5	58	3.1	62	-1.1	3	-18.2%	79	-32	79	-6.9%	58	16.2%	53	9%
2023	LAR	16/4	396	39	26	371	4	67%	+2.1	2	14.3	12.3	--	3.4	--	-0.7	1	19.8%	--	99	--	0.9%	--	7.3%	--	10%
2024	LAR	17/17	892	64	31	505	7	48%	-1.9	1	16.3	15.5	4	2.3	84	-1.2	0	9.1%	33	118	37	-21.8%	85	12.2%	77	25%
2025	SF			35	20	316	2	56%			16.1							4.2%								

## 338 WIDE RECEIVERS

We're waiting to hear on a potential early-season suspension for Robinson, who had a DUI arrest in November. That would be rough for San Francisco, who hope Robinson will be their WR3 while Brandon Aiyuk is still working back from his ACL tear. Robinson's value is dependent on his speed, as he was used almost solely as a deep threat in 2024. Robinson's 15.5-yard average depth of target was fourth in the league in 2024—he ran more complete route trees in Kansas City and Baltimore, but Sean McVay basically sent him on repeated deep corners and go routes. 30% of Robinson's targets last season were deep routes, sixth most among receivers. Expect that to drop some if he sees regular usage in San Francisco.

Wan'Dale Robinson			Height: 5-8			Weight: 185			College: Kentucky			Draft: 2022/2 (43)			Born: 5-Jan-2001			Age: 25								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	NYG	6/3	229	31	23	227	1	74%	+1.3	1	9.9	6.2	--	5.5	--	+0.7	3	2.9%	--	38	--	29.7%	--	17.8%	--	71%
2023	NYG	15/8	641	78	60	525	1	77%	+4.1	2	8.8	5.3	79	4.8	30	-0.3	9	-7.0%	59	33	60	-3.4%	57	18.0%	47	68%
2024	NYG	17/7	857	140	93	699	3	66%	-7.2	5	7.5	4.7	90	3.9	47	-1.6	13	-29.4%	88	-181	90	-11.2%	65	24.8%	23	66%
2025	NYG			79	54	484	2	69%			9.0							-11.3%								

During training camp, Robinson mentioned that he envisions his usage changing considerably with the additions made at quarterback, noting that he'll likely be seeing more work outside and downfield. Thus far in his career, Robinson has maintained a decent role as a primary slot receiver with gadget potential. The numbers suggest he should likely stay in the interior, with a 22.2% DVOA differential between his performance in the slot (-22.3%) and his performance outside (-44.5%) in 2024. That being said, Robinson also emphasized how nice it's been to have a quarterback who can throw a deep ball that "just drops right in the bucket" in Russell Wilson, something that could give the undersized speedster some hope in growing his game.

Jalen Royals			Height: 6-0			Weight: 205			College: Utah State			Draft: 2025/4 (133)			Born: 18-Feb-2003			Age: 22								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2025	KC			56	35	406	3	64%			11.5							-0.2%								

A fourth-round pick out of Utah State, Royals had the fastest 10-yard split at the combine at 1.49 seconds. Not among wide-outs—among *all* prospects. That speed doesn't show up on tape, but Royals only had two seasons as a full-time player in college, so it's possible that the Chiefs can find a way to capture that burst. As is, Royals is more of a contested catch, body-control, fight-through-tackles guy. He may get a shot to return kicks, but he likely will just be a depth receiver as a rookie.

Curtis Samuel			Height: 5-11			Weight: 195			College: Ohio State			Draft: 2017/2 (40)			Born: 11-Aug-1996			Age: 29								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	WAS	17/12	850	92	64	656	4	70%	+3.0	1	10.3	6.8	77	4.5	32	-1.1	19	-4.2%	53	61	52	-9.3%	62	17.4%	47	61%
2023	WAS	16/13	571	91	62	613	4	68%	+0.6	1	9.9	6.9	75	4.2	38	-1.1	5	-6.6%	58	46	56	9.6%	43	16.5%	60	64%
2024	BUF	14/2	378	46	31	253	1	67%	-3.1	0	8.2	5.0	--	5.2	--	-1.3	4	-29.6%	--	-61	--	-18.2%	--	11.3%	--	49%
2025	BUF			31	21	194	2	67%			9.3							-8.9%								

Samuel, now entering his ninth year in the league and second with the Bills, didn't meet expectations in 2024. He was never going to replace Stefon Diggs, but Buffalo almost certainly expected more than the 253 yards and one score they received. Samuel ended up mostly just being a gadget player, and unless the Bills dramatically change plans for 2025, it's hard to see how that will be different in 2025—especially with Josh Palmer and Elijah Moore both added to the roster. Buffalo's offense does lend itself to more trickery than most NFL teams, however, so having a player like Samuel is not without its perks. He also suffered from pec and rib injuries over the second half of the season, so perhaps we're judging his final stats a little too hard.

**Deebo Samuel**

			Height: 6-0			Weight: 215			College: South Carolina			Draft: 2019/2 (36)			Born: 15-Jan-1996			Age: 29								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	SF	13/12	659	94	56	632	2	60%	-11.0	5	11.3	4.5	85	8.8	1	+2.8	36	-15.7%	75	-23	77	9.5%	35	24.7%	20	24%
2023	SF	15/15	708	89	60	892	7	67%	-2.7	2	14.9	6.7	76	8.8	1	+3.2	33	23.0%	5	240	16	38.2%	15	21.5%	35	20%
2024	SF	15/15	682	81	51	670	3	63%	-8.4	4	13.1	6.8	85	8.3	4	+1.9	25	-6.4%	64	37	67	-5.4%	63	17.6%	51	38%
2025	WAS			84	54	675	5	64%			12.4							6.1%								

Do not have your opinion of a wide receiver shaped by short clips of that player jogging through an install period at mini-camp. As mentioned in the Washington chapter, there are reasons to believe Samuel's disappointing 2024 was caused by a number of factors that should be fixed for 2025, including recovery from pneumonia during the season. Samuel should fit well into the short/RPO-style part of the Kliff Kingsbury offense that can get the receiver in space with yards-after-catch opportunities. Because of the quarterback's mobility, Samuel shouldn't see much man coverage. In 2023, Samuel saw zone coverage on 58% of his routes and averaged 2.8 yards per route run against zone. If healthy, Samuel could be a space eater that didn't exist in this Washington offense in 2024.

**Rashid Shaheed**

			Height: 6-0			Weight: 180			College: Weber State			Draft: 2022/FA			Born: 31-Aug-1998			Age: 27								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	NO	12/6	298	34	28	488	2	82%	+5.7	0	17.4	11.7	--	6.3	--	+0.7	4	44.1%	--	155	--	28.8%	--	9.7%	--	35%
2023	NO	15/8	604	75	46	719	5	61%	+0.5	1	15.6	14.6	8	3.3	58	-1.9	3	3.5%	37	96	44	-5.3%	58	14.6%	63	32%
2024	NO	6/5	286	41	20	349	3	49%	-3.3	0	17.5	18.2	--	5.3	--	+0.0	1	0.6%	--	41	--	23.4%	--	22.8%	--	38%
2025	NO			72	42	670	4	59%			15.8							2.9%								

Theoretically, Shaheed could play the DeVonta Smith/CeeDee Lamb role as a slot nightmare in Kellen Moore's offense. Shaheed is one of the fastest players in the NFL, capable of catching a deep safety flat-footed or turning upfield for major YAC after a shallow drag. But Shaheed has never demonstrated Smitty or Lamb's ability to work themselves open on shorter routes, and those receivers spent years developing chemistry with their very capable quarterbacks. Shaheed is also recovering from a meniscus tear that ended his 2024 season in October. Still, Moore and whoever quarterbacks the Saints will be looking for ways to get Shaheed the ball, because he's a threat to score a 50-yard touchdown any time he has it.

**Khalil Shakir**

			Height: 6-0			Weight: 190			College: Boise State			Draft: 2022/5 (148)			Born: 3-Feb-2000			Age: 25								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	BUF	14/2	275	20	10	161	1	50%	-1.6	1	16.1	10.6	--	7.4	--	+2.5	2	-0.5%	--	20	--	-20.1%	--	4.6%	--	62%
2023	BUF	17/10	604	45	39	611	2	87%	+8.1	1	15.7	8.9	--	7.2	--	+2.8	4	55.1%	--	240	--	11.9%	40	8.2%	--	91%
2024	BUF	15/9	586	100	76	821	4	76%	+3.3	0	10.8	5.8	89	7.9	6	+1.5	13	0.8%	50	102	49	35.8%	22	22.6%	35	68%
2025	BUF			100	75	811	4	75%			10.9							10.3%								

Shakir enters the 2025 season fresh off a four-year extension, embracing a leadership role in Buffalo's receiver corps. Known for crisp routes and reliable hands (he had no drops on 100 targets), he's thriving as a trusted target in Josh Allen's evolving offense. Both Allen and Bills staff speak highly of his versatility and constant effort to make the offense flow. The challenge with Shakir is whether or not we have already seen his ceiling, or if he can become more like Chris Godwin and really turn into a dominant player for 60 minutes out of the slot. Shakir did add .402 EPA per target—good for 23rd in the NFL and ahead of players such as Justin Jefferson, Jaxon Smith-Njigba, and Zay Flowers—so we're not going to fault Buffalo for finding a role that works perfectly for Shakir's skill sets. But there are clear gaps in his game, including the fact he had only three end zone targets all of last year. Shakir is essentially a non-factor once Buffalo gets near the goal line.

## 340 WIDE RECEIVERS

Sterling Shepard			Height: 5-10				Weight: 194				College: Oklahoma				Draft: 2016/2 (40)				Born: 10-Feb-1993				Age: 32			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	NYG	3/2	165	24	13	154	1	54%	-1.8	2	11.8	10.2	--	4.2	--	-1.0	1	-39.5%	--	-49	--	-15.6%	--	28.7%	--	24%
2023	NYG	15/2	143	22	10	57	1	45%	-5.0	2	5.7	7.3	--	3.3	--	-2.3	0	-56.8%	--	-70	--	-40.0%	--	5.1%	--	36%
2024	TB	14/5	509	51	32	334	1	63%	-1.7	2	10.4	9.3	68	3.1	71	-1.6	4	-19.8%	85	-29	82	-32.1%	89	10.8%	84	47%
2025	TB			23	14	146	1	60%			10.7							-10.7%								

Shepard appeared to be fading out of the NFL after several injury-plagued seasons with the Giants before revitalizing his career in Tampa Bay last year. Someone was always injured on the Bucs receiving corps, and Shepard provided savvy slot-guy production in relief of whomever was unavailable. The Bucs brought Shepard back for 2025 because they brought everyone back for 2025, but the receiver room is crowded, and Shepard does little that other, younger players cannot do much better.

Darius Slayton			Height: 6-1				Weight: 198				College: Auburn				Draft: 2019/5 (171)				Born: 12-Jan-1997				Age: 28			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	NYG	16/11	698	71	46	724	2	65%	+0.5	5	15.7	12.8	19	5.7	8	+1.5	3	13.5%	16	148	26	8.8%	38	15.9%	57	28%
2023	NYG	17/13	896	79	50	770	4	63%	+2.8	3	15.4	12.5	28	6.0	9	+1.1	9	10.4%	26	140	35	-16.4%	70	16.5%	59	20%
2024	NYG	16/13	872	71	39	573	2	55%	-2.8	2	14.7	13.3	18	3.2	67	-0.5	5	6.5%	40	111	42	-21.4%	84	14.0%	68	7%
2025	NYG			56	32	479	2	56%			15.2							-0.8%								

The closest thing the Giants have to an elder statesman, the 28-year-old Slayton is the second-oldest receiver in New York aside from the recently-acquired Zach Pascal. That seniority has been great for a Giants team that's benefitted off an extreme level of consistency over the years. In the Brian Daboll era, Slayton has posted at least a 100 DYAR and a positive DVOA in all three seasons—a feat otherwise only accomplished by Richie James (2022) during that span. Like James, Slayton had a career season during Daboll's inaugural 2022 campaign. It also coincided with the best quarterbacking Slayton had seen thus far in his Giants tenure.

DeVonta Smith			Height: 6-0				Weight: 170				College: Alabama				Draft: 2021/1 (10)				Born: 14-Nov-1998				Age: 27			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	PHI	17/17	1083	136	95	1196	7	70%	+5.0	3	12.6	9.8	55	5.2	13	+0.3	13	14.7%	15	280	8	27.9%	18	26.8%	15	33%
2023	PHI	16/16	1043	112	81	1066	7	72%	+10.0	3	13.2	12.1	32	3.6	53	-0.9	5	15.4%	18	246	15	9.6%	42	22.5%	30	36%
2024	PHI	13/13	801	89	68	833	8	76%	+10.7	2	12.3	9.1	69	4.4	33	+0.4	9	21.4%	10	235	15	40.0%	16	27.6%	8	42%
2025	PHI			109	80	914	7	74%			11.4							16.3%								

No receiver ran a higher rate of his routes against man coverage than DeVonta Smith. Despite that, Smith had the fourth-lowest rate of targets into tight coverage (15.4%). Some of that is due to Jalen Hurts choosing to target A.J. Brown if the coverage was close, but plenty of it is Smith winning against cornerbacks and creating separation in his routes. He's great at the catch point, too. Smith was second among receivers in receiving plus/minus at +10.7 this season, his second-straight season at +10 or better. He was nearly unstoppable on short routes, catching 46 of 51 targets (90.2%).

Jaxon Smith-Njigba			Height: 6-0				Weight: 197				College: Ohio State				Draft: 2023/1 (20)				Born: 14-Feb-2002				Age: 23			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2023	SEA	17/3	675	93	63	628	4	68%	-3.2	6	10.0	6.5	78	5.8	12	-0.5	8	-9.0%	62	26	61	-9.0%	62	17.0%	56	48%
2024	SEA	17/16	948	137	100	1130	6	73%	+8.3	2	11.3	8.7	71	4.8	28	+0.3	15	7.4%	38	209	17	13.9%	44	23.6%	30	82%
2025	SEA			137	94	1105	7	68%			11.8							4.3%								

With JSN likely to play on the outside more under Klint Kubiak, it's worth looking at his slot-versus-wide splits over the past couple seasons. In 2024, Smith-Njigba was better out wide, with a 17.4% DVOA to a 7.9% mark in the slot, but that's a sample size of 19 targets—no qualified receiver had a higher percentage of his targets come out of the slot than JSN did last season. In 2023, he was mostly split 50/50 between slot and wide, and his DVOA rose from -15.6% to -1.3% when split out wide, so at least there is some consistency in his improvement when split off from the line. Hopefully, his improvements in 2024 aren't limited to just slot work, and he'll be able to fit into Kubiak's new offense without many growing pains.

JuJu Smith-Schuster			Height: 6-1				Weight: 215				College: USC				Draft: 2017/2 (62)				Born: 22-Nov-1996				Age: 29			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	KC	16/14	765	101	78	933	3	77%	+6.6	3	12.0	7.4	73	5.9	7	+1.9	11	10.6%	24	185	21	9.0%	37	17.4%	46	37%
2023	NE	11/7	461	47	29	260	1	62%	-2.6	2	9.0	7.2	--	3.2	--	-1.9	0	-31.9%	--	-72	--	-19.7%	--	13.3%	--	36%
2024	KC	14/8	424	26	18	231	2	69%	-1.5	0	12.8	6.1	--	8.6	--	+2.8	3	17.4%	--	64	--	-31.9%	--	5.8%	--	36%
2025	KC			23	16	177	1	68%			11.4							6.5%								

When Rashee Rice, Hollywood Brown, and DeAndre Hopkins were all unavailable, the Chiefs turned to Smith-Schuster. In Week 5, Smith-Schuster had eight catches for 130 yards and 47 DYAR as the Chiefs just looked through their bench for anything they had, and he rose to the challenge. He then pulled his hamstring, missed some time, and managed just 84 receiving yards in the last eight games despite starting five of them. It's nice to know he's there, as he's better than most team's WR4 or WR5, but Chiefs fans would very much like him not to be a thing in 2025.

Amon-Ra St. Brown			Height: 6-0				Weight: 202				College: USC				Draft: 2021/4 (112)				Born: 24-Oct-1999				Age: 26			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	DET	16/16	832	146	106	1161	6	73%	+5.0	4	11.0	6.4	80	5.0	16	+0.6	7	11.0%	22	274	9	62.7%	3	27.3%	13	56%
2023	DET	16/16	1010	164	119	1515	10	73%	+5.9	4	12.7	7.8	72	5.6	14	+0.9	15	19.9%	9	422	4	68.0%	4	30.2%	6	57%
2024	DET	17/17	1010	141	115	1263	12	82%	+15.3	2	11.0	7.7	80	3.6	55	+0.2	9	24.6%	7	419	3	64.2%	3	26.8%	11	44%
2025	DET			136	104	1148	8	76%			11.0							16.7%								

St. Brown caught a league-high 12 passes inside the 10-yard line, nine of them touchdowns. Only Ja'Marr Chase (17) and Davante Adams (15) were targeted more times inside the 10. St. Brown also caught 52 passes for 569 yards and five touchdowns when the Lions were trailing, which is rather amazing because the Lions weren't trailing all that often; the 14 players with more catches when trailing than St. Brown all played for teams with losing records. The great thing about top-tier slot receivers is that they usually get fed no matter what. They catch play-action short stuff when their teams are leading and gobble up passes over the middle when trailing, and defenses are more likely to starve out the rest of the offense than risk letting someone like Jameson Williams catch a 60-yard touchdown while trying to stop 7-yard hitches. So look for St. Brown to keep taking everything the defense offers him, plus a little bit more.

Courtland Sutton			Height: 6-4				Weight: 216				College: Southern Methodist				Draft: 2018/2 (40)				Born: 10-Oct-1995				Age: 30			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	DEN	15/15	882	109	64	829	2	59%	-2.7	3	13.0	12.9	15	2.3	81	-1.9	4	-1.8%	48	93	39	9.7%	34	23.4%	23	12%
2023	DEN	16/14	782	90	59	772	10	66%	+4.0	6	13.1	12.5	27	2.6	70	-1.2	3	15.7%	16	211	18	24.6%	30	20.7%	37	22%
2024	DEN	17/13	936	135	81	1081	8	60%	+1.1	3	13.3	13.3	17	2.2	86	-1.7	2	2.7%	47	166	26	24.5%	33	25.0%	22	14%
2025	DEN			114	68	911	7	60%			13.4							1.9%								

A true alpha receiver. Sutton excelled in Bo Nix's rookie season, especially in situations where a No. 1 receiver is expected to win. He was ninth with 137 DYAR against man coverage (seventh in receiving yards), 16th with 130 DYAR against single-high (11th in receiving yards), and third with 198 DYAR on deep passes (11th in deep receiving yards). He led all wide receivers in contested catch rate. Sutton even thrived in second- or third-and-long, finishing 11th in DYAR despite Nix's struggles in those splits. He was not immune to the struggles when trailing, however. He was 68th overall in receiving DYAR when trailing with a -4.8% DVOA. There are several possible explanations. If Nix pressed and struggled when trailing, all his receivers would suffer. If defenses knew Denver had to throw and paid extra attention to Sutton, Nix didn't have the weapons elsewhere to make them pay. If Sutton can make the same impact on games when trailing as he does when tied or ahead, he'll be one of the best receivers in the game in 2025.

Isaac TeSlaa			Height: 6-3				Weight: 214				College: Arkansas				Draft: 2025/3 (70)				Born: 20-Feb-2002				Age: 23			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2025	DET			39	23	310	3	60%			13.3								0.1%							

## 342 WIDE RECEIVERS

It's pronounced Teh-SLAW, so no electric car puns please. PLEASE. After three seasons at Division II Hillsdale College, TeSlaa moved on for two seasons at Arkansas. He caught just 28 passes in his final season with the Razorbacks but averaged 19.5 yards per catch. He had a solid Senior Bowl week, then ran a 4.43s 40 with the strapping measurements listed above at the combine. TeSlaa is a likely candidate to eat into Tim Patrick's role as the boundary receiver who occupies outside cornerbacks so Amon-Ra St. Brown can line up against slot rандос. The tools and the high-effort reputation are there. But the targets, at least in 2025, probably won't be.

Adam Thielen			Height: 6-2			Weight: 195			College: Minnesota State			Draft: 2013/FA			Born: 22-Aug-1990			Age: 35								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	MIN	17/17	1042	107	70	716	6	65%	+2.1	3	10.2	10.2	51	2.2	82	-1.7	1	0.1%	43	111	38	-11.4%	68	17.0%	50	25%
2023	CAR	17/17	1046	137	103	1014	4	75%	+7.1	5	9.8	7.7	73	3.3	57	-1.3	5	-3.2%	52	101	42	12.6%	38	25.4%	15	61%
2024	CAR	10/10	429	62	48	615	5	77%	+9.0	2	12.8	11.4	45	3.2	68	-1.1	2	27.6%	6	195	21	29.5%	28	20.3%	43	83%
2025	CAR			67	49	547	4	74%			11.1							10.7%								

Anytime you see a clip of Bryce Young doing something both effective and normal as a quarterback—not a screen-and-run, not some scrambling miracle, not a bloop, just a 12-yard pass from the pocket or something—chances are that Thielen is Young's target. Thielen missed seven games with a hamstring last season, most of them Andy Dalton's starts. He returned for Young's trio of almost-upsets, catching 22-of-25 targets for 258 yards and one touchdown against the Bucs, Chiefs, and Eagles. He then caught five passes per week (with two touchdowns in the second meeting with the Bucs) down the stretch. Thielen turns 35 in August and survives by dusting slot defenders; the next half-step he loses to age or injury will be the one that knocks him out of the league. Ready or not, Young's training wheels may soon come off.

Brian Thomas			Height: 6-2			Weight: 209			College: Louisiana State			Draft: 2024/1 (23)			Born: 8-Oct-2002			Age: 23								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2024	JAX	17/16	821	133	87	1282	10	65%	+1.7	5	14.7	11.9	32	6.5	12	+1.5	10	17.7%	17	311	7	48.7%	9	25.5%	19	32%
2025	JAX			149	95	1349	8	63%			14.3							6.9%								

We warned you last year that “fourth receiver off the board” might be underselling Thomas. It turns out that while he can win deep, he also is pretty handy underneath as well, as the broken tackle total will attest. Perhaps the most impressive thing about this rookie season is ... it really took off under Mac Jones? No, really. Thomas averaged 11.7 targets per game over the last six weeks of the season, reeling in five touchdowns and 593 yards along the way. He did this playing without Christian Kirk or Trevor Lawrence, or even Evan Engram over the final four weeks. What's a player like this going to look like with, in theory, a healthy Lawrence, Travis Hunter, and an offense that isn't completely washed? That could be a question that raises or sinks ships in fantasy football in 2025.

Cedric Tillman			Height: 6-3			Weight: 215			College: Tennessee			Draft: 2023/3 (74)			Born: 19-Apr-2000			Age: 25								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2023	CLE	14/3	609	44	21	224	0	48%	-6.0	2	10.7	11.0	--	4.2	--	-0.1	3	-28.9%	--	-57	--	-38.8%	81	9.0%	--	27%
2024	CLE	11/6	432	49	29	339	3	59%	-0.7	2	11.7	11.5	42	3.6	54	-0.9	5	-17.9%	82	-21	80	-15.7%	73	12.1%	79	24%
2025	CLE			96	56	729	3	59%			12.9							-7.3%								

The immediate fallout from and transition out of the Deshaun Watson injury overshadowed the emergence of second-year wide receiver Cedric Tillman. After starting just one game through the first six weeks, going 3-for-5 for nine yards on targets over that span, Tillman had a breakout performance against the Cincinnati Bengals in his second start of the season. Over the next four weeks, he went on to average 12.6 yards per reception while catching 24 of 40 targets, catching 302 yards and three touchdowns. Tillman went on to be one of just 14 players all season to average at least 12 yards per reception on a 60% catch rate with at least 40 targets over a four-game span. Tillman was dealt a season-ending concussion in Week 12, but he now slots in to the Browns' starting receiver spot opposite Jerry Jeudy.

**Jalen Tolbert**

				Height: 6-1			Weight: 195			College: South Alabama				Draft: 2022/3 (88)			Born: 27-Feb-1999			Age: 26						
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	DAL	8/1	89	3	2	12	0	67%	+0.2	0	6.0	15.0	--	1.0	--	-2.2	0	-30.2%	--	-4	--	-75.0%	--	1.2%	--	0%
2023	DAL	17/6	477	36	22	268	2	61%	+0.1	1	12.2	14.1	--	1.5	--	-2.6	2	10.1%	--	64	--	-23.1%	--	6.1%	--	32%
2024	DAL	17/15	892	79	49	610	7	62%	+0.4	3	12.4	11.8	36	3.4	60	-0.5	1	7.4%	37	132	30	-12.8%	71	13.1%	74	37%
2025	DAL		43	27	353	3	63%			13.1								5.2%								

With the acquisition of George Pickens, Tolbert will move to a third receiver role, which could benefit him on the outside. Tolbert led the Cowboys in DYAR and DVOA and played as the team's lone deep threat. He wasn't enough of a threat for teams to take attention away from CeeDee Lamb, but he took advantage of the attention the top receiver commanded. That also spread to the red zone, where Tolbert was the only Dallas receiver to post positive DVOA. Now with Lamb and Pickens, Tolbert's ability to win on the outside could be more valuable with the other two receivers pulling defenders their way.

**Tre Tucker**

				Height: 5-9			Weight: 185			College: Cincinnati				Draft: 2023/3 (100)			Born: 8-Mar-2001			Age: 24						
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2023	LV	16/1	334	34	19	331	2	56%	+0.3	2	17.4	19.0	--	1.5	--	-3.6	4	8.9%	--	59	--	-5.1%	--	7.1%	--	19%
2024	LV	17/14	984	81	47	539	3	58%	-2.4	1	11.5	12.8	23	4.4	32	-0.8	2	-19.8%	84	-45	86	-42.7%	93	13.6%	70	23%
2025	LV		27	16	213	1	60%			13.1								-2.1%								

The wind sprint king of 2024, Tucker was eighth in "prayer yards," defined as uncatchable air yards. He had 681 prayer yards and only 336 catchable air yards. He was the only player in the top 10 of prayer yards with fewer than 500 catchable air yards and one of only two with fewer than 700. There's a real argument to be made that Tucker will be the biggest beneficiary of Geno Smith's arrival—unless he loses much of his playing time to rookies Jack Bech and Dont'e Thornton.

**DJ Turner**

				Height: 5-9			Weight: 205			College: Pittsburgh				Draft: 2021/FA			Born: 18-Jan-1997			Age: 28						
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	LV	9/0	21	1	0	0	0	0%	-0.9	1	0.0	-3.0	--	0.0	--	+0.0	0	-120.7%	--	-7	--	-87.2%	--	0.3%	--	0%
2024	LV	12/6	358	29	16	158	1	55%	-2.4	0	9.9	8.6	--	5.2	--	-0.2	6	-28.5%	--	-36	--	-47.3%	--	7.0%	--	67%

Turner gained fewer than 300 yards in four years at Maryland before moving to Pittsburgh as a grad transfer in 2020. He racked up 634 yards and three scores as Kenny Pickett's designated deep threat before going undrafted. The Raiders promptly signed him, and he spent the next three seasons bouncing back and forth between the practice squad and special teams. He finally got some playing time in 2024, most of it coming after the Davante Adams trade, but the Raiders quickly realized he doesn't belong on an NFL offense. Then he injured his knee against Kansas City in Week 13, ending his season. Turner has flashed some versatility as a kick returner and rusher (nine career carries for 59 yards and a touchdown), but he's undersized for a receiver and lacks the speed and burst to make up for it. Only time will tell if he finds a new team.

**KaVontae Turpin**

				Height: 5-9			Weight: 153			College: TCU				Draft: 2019/FA			Born: 2-Aug-1996			Age: 29						
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	DAL	17/0	62	2	1	9	0	50%	-0.5	0	9.0	6.5	--	5.0	--	+0.9	0	-42.6%	--	-4	--	-58.3%	--	0.4%	--	50%
2023	DAL	16/0	140	18	12	127	3	67%	-0.2	3	10.6	8.9	--	3.3	--	-0.3	6	20.7%	--	54	--	40.6%	--	3.4%	--	70%
2024	DAL	17/2	315	52	31	420	2	60%	-4.2	3	13.5	8.4	75	8.4	2	+2.4	7	-7.3%	65	22	69	21.7%	34	8.2%	91	71%
2025	DAL		22	13	186	1	61%			14.0								4.4%								

Turpin was more of a receiving threat than anyone had planned for during the 2024 season. His 52 targets were 32 more than he previously had in his first two seasons combined. It wasn't all short/gadget targets, either. His explosiveness showed (19.4% of his targets went for 20 or more yards) but the down-to-down consistency wasn't there, which led to negative DVOA. During the second half of the season, Turpin saw 6.4% of his routes out of the backfield and had 11 carries for 78 yards. Turpin isn't switching positions to running back, but head coach Brian Schottenheimer has been a fan of getting Turpin in the backfield more and using his skill set as a mismatch from that alignment.

## 344 WIDE RECEIVERS

Marquez Valdes-Scantling			Height: 6-4			Weight: 206			College: South Florida						Draft: 2018/5 (174)				Born: 10-Oct-1994				Age: 31			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	KC	17/11	777	81	42	687	2	52%	-5.0	5	16.4	14.2	6	2.9	73	-1.4	2	-1.4%	47	73	47	-22.5%	80	13.3%	73	30%
2023	KC	16/10	618	42	21	315	1	50%	-1.1	2	15.0	17.9	--	4.4	--	-0.6	2	-10.2%	--	8	--	-46.6%	88	7.7%	--	41%
2024	2TM	14/8	478	44	19	411	4	43%	-4.0	1	21.6	18.0	--	7.5	--	+3.7	1	-3.9%	--	30	--	-22.0%	--	10.4%	--	22%
2025	SEA			30	16	303	2	51%			19.6							7.3%								

Valdes-Scantling is brought in from New Orleans as a Guy Who Knows the System, a staple of any coaching change. While Valdes-Scantling had a negative receiving DVOA overall in 2024, that rose to 11.7% when he left Buffalo for New Orleans, where he was allowed to run wild and free in the secondary rather than trying to catch eight million shallow hitch routes. New Orleans MVS had an average depth of target of 18.6 yards, which would have been second-deepest for any wideout with at least 25 targets behind only Alec Pierce in Indianapolis. MVS as your chief deep threat is a bit of a step down from Justin Jefferson, but Sam Darnold does like airing out the deep ball, so there's a chance we'll get scattered highlight reel work from MVS in 2025.

Devaughn Vele			Height: 6-5			Weight: 210			College: Utah						Draft: 2024/7 (235)				Born: 12-Dec-1997				Age: 28			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2024	DEN	13/7	447	55	41	475	3	75%	+3.7	2	11.6	8.6	74	3.1	70	-1.0	1	15.1%	21	126	33	14.0%	43	13.2%	72	61%
2025	DEN			46	31	336	3	67%			11.0							-0.4%								

Vele was a close second to Courtland Sutton for the Denver lead in receiving DYAR and easily led the Broncos in receiving DVOA. The seventh-rounder emerged right away as Denver's zone-beater: he had 94 DYAR and 33.6% DVOA vs. zone (no other qualified teammate had positive DVOA against zone coverage). Since Marvin Mims and Sutton both thrive against man coverages, Vele plays an essential role. Like Sutton, Mims, and Bo Nix, Vele struggled to produce when Denver was trailing.

Jaylen Waddle			Height: 5-10			Weight: 185			College: Alabama						Draft: 2021/1 (6)				Born: 25-Nov-1998				Age: 27			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	MIA	17/17	785	117	75	1356	8	64%	+4.0	7	18.1	12.6	21	6.8	3	+2.1	8	30.8%	1	397	3	45.1%	8	21.2%	33	26%
2023	MIA	14/14	611	104	72	1014	4	69%	+1.8	4	14.1	10.3	57	5.8	10	+0.6	9	22.4%	6	288	9	58.6%	10	23.2%	26	26%
2024	MIA	15/15	793	84	58	744	2	70%	+2.7	3	12.8	10.2	57	4.0	44	-0.5	3	6.2%	41	128	32	-0.1%	59	16.9%	54	29%
2025	MIA			103	72	917	4	70%			12.8							9.8%								

Waddle's drop in DYAR wasn't quite as severe as Tyreek Hill's, but it was still a frustrating year to say the least. Waddle was similarly effective against zone and man coverages, which makes Hill's insane drop in production against man more perplexing. Perhaps it means teams committed to taking away Hill and daring Waddle to beat them, which he couldn't do? One thing that did remain consistent from past years is that Waddle was at his best on in-breaking routes. He had 137 DYAR and 34.2% DVOA on in-breakers. It was on all other routes that his production suffered.

Malik Washington			Height: 5-8			Weight: 191			College: Virginia						Draft: 2024/6 (184)				Born: 4-Jan-2001				Age: 25			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2024	MIA	14/3	414	36	26	223	0	72%	-1.0	2	8.6	5.9	--	4.7	--	-0.9	6	-13.6%	--	-3	--	-27.4%	--	7.8%	--	49%
2025	MIA			43	28	277	1	65%			9.9							-9.7%								

Washington finished strong, with 169 of his 223 receiving yards coming in the final four games of the season. He had 48 receiving DYAR and 18.4% receiving DVOA in this time. Many of his targets were designed to just get him the ball in space where he can take advantage of his burst and speed, as he's still pretty raw in the route running department. It's unlikely that he'll have a big role on offense in 2025, though he could be a dangerous weapon on special teams—he averaged over 30 yards on 14 kick returns in his rookie year.

Parker Washington			Height: 5-10				Weight: 204				College: Penn State				Draft: 2023/6 (185)				Born: 21-Mar-2002				Age: 23			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2023	JAX	9/1	239	21	16	132	2	76%	+1.7	0	8.3	8.3	--	2.1	--	-1.8	2	-1.7%	--	17	--	-40.0%	--	6.6%	--	77%
2024	JAX	17/7	584	51	32	390	3	63%	+0.2	3	12.2	11.7	37	3.4	62	-0.9	7	-1.6%	53	44	63	-26.2%	87	10.0%	88	36%
2025	JAX			33	20	239	1	62%			11.7															-5.3%

He notched his first career 100-yard game in Week 13 after Christian Kirk went down with an injury, and Washington essentially played it out the rest of the way as a starter. The new front office wasn't keen to give him a clear shot to the starting lineup as they blocked him with Dyami Brown, but Washington showed some workable traits as an ancillary option in an NFL passing game last year. He's undersized enough that the Jaguars shy away from putting him on the field on run downs, but with Travis Hunter's role up for interpretation as we go to press, it's possible that Washington gets a decent chunk of slot snaps and finds a Ray-Ray McCloud sort of role in this offense this year.

Christian Watson			Height: 6-4				Weight: 208				College: North Dakota State				Draft: 2022/2 (34)				Born: 12-May-1999				Age: 26			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	GB	14/11	507	66	41	611	7	62%	+2.4	3	14.9	14.6	3	6.4	4	+1.5	5	11.4%	21	133	29	41.1%	11	15.0%	61	37%
2023	GB	9/9	446	53	28	422	5	53%	-4.1	0	15.1	15.3	4	3.8	48	-0.4	4	3.8%	35	69	53	2.8%	49	17.8%	50	41%
2024	GB	15/15	555	53	29	620	2	55%	+0.2	2	21.4	17.9	2	5.1	26	+0.6	2	10.7%	31	100	50	20.6%	35	13.2%	73	29%
2025	GB			27	15	253	2	54%			17.5															7.8%

Watson caught 10 passes of 25 or more yards last season. Those receptions accounted for 67% of his total yardage. Watson tore his ACL late last season and is expected to miss a chunk of 2025. The Packers drafted Mattew Golden in the first round. The writing is on the wall for Watson, though one-dimensional players can make themselves very useful if that "dimension" is 25-plus-yard receptions.

Justin Watson			Height: 6-2				Weight: 215				College: Pennsylvania				Draft: 2018/5 (144)				Born: 4-Apr-1996				Age: 29			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	KC	17/5	494	34	15	315	2	44%	-1.3	2	21.0	18.7	--	4.0	--	-0.3	0	-0.5%	--	31	--	-41.3%	--	5.5%	--	38%
2023	KC	16/8	536	53	27	460	3	51%	-0.1	5	17.0	17.9	1	1.7	80	-2.8	0	5.7%	32	74	52	-6.3%	59	9.5%	81	37%
2024	KC	17/7	686	32	22	289	2	69%	+2.1	3	13.1	15.2	--	3.1	--	-1.2	0	12.0%	--	59	--	-48.6%	96	5.5%	--	34%
2025	HOU			13	7	102	1	57%			14.4														-1.8%	

Maligning the Chiefs' lack of a deep passing game has been a cottage industry over the last few years, and while Xavier Worthy definitely earned his share of the blame, Watson flew under the radar by catching just 1 of 7 deep targets for the Chiefs last year. He checked the Texans boxes of "looks fast" and "plays special teams," so they gave him a two-year contract this off-season. Watson has a path to a roster spot, but he's hardly a lock to make the 53 on what appears to be a fairly crowded depth chart.

Nick Westbrook-Ikhine			Height: 6-2				Weight: 211				College: Indiana				Draft: 2020/FA				Born: 21-Mar-1997				Age: 28			
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	TEN	17/13	777	50	25	397	3	50%	-3.1	3	15.9	13.1	12	4.3	38	+0.5	2	-7.3%	61	21	67	-36.5%	86	11.6%	78	67%
2023	TEN	14/9	611	45	28	370	3	62%	+0.7	1	13.2	12.3	--	3.8	--	+0.3	3	9.2%	--	77	--	-12.8%	65	11.3%	--	42%
2024	TEN	17/9	771	60	32	497	9	53%	-2.4	2	15.5	11.9	33	3.9	48	+0.6	5	10.3%	32	107	44	-21.0%	83	11.8%	80	23%
2025	MIA			46	26	376	3	56%			14.7														-1.6%	

Starting in October, Westbrook-Ikhine scored eight touchdowns in an eight-week stretch. With Will Levis and Mason Rudolph as his quarterbacks! He brings something to Miami's offense that Tyreek Hill and Jaylen Waddle lack: size. More of a possession receiver than a big-play guy, Westbrook-Ikhine produces against all coverage types, which theoretically will help take attention away from the speedsters. Having a real No. 3 receiver could prove pivotal for the Miami offense, especially with Jonnu Smith gone to Pittsburgh.

## 346 WIDE RECEIVERS

Jordan Whittington			Height: 6-1			Weight: 202			College: Texas			Draft: 2024/6 (213)			Born: 1-Oct-2000			Age: 25								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2024	LAR	15/3	278	28	22	293	0	79%	+1.0	0	13.3	5.4	--	9.2	--	+2.9	2	25.3%	--	87	--	45.7%	--	5.7%	--	21%
2025	LAR			37	25	275	2	67%			11.0							0.3%								

Whittington flashed briefly in the period where both Cooper Kupp and Puka Nacua were unavailable. Given two starts in Weeks 4 and 5, Whittington responded with 13 receptions for 151 yards, good for 37 DYAR and a DVOA of 12.9%. That's about all you can ask for in a small sample size—that, and gaining the trust of your quarterback. While Whittington didn't see the field much, he was frequently targeted when he was out there. The former sixth-round pick has a chance to take the third receiver slot from Tutu Atwell, but even if he doesn't, he has earned his spot as a trusted depth piece.

Dontayvion Wicks			Height: 6-1			Weight: 206			College: Virginia			Draft: 2023/5 (159)			Born: 16-Jun-2001			Age: 24								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2023	GB	15/6	458	58	39	581	4	67%	+1.8	2	14.9	11.5	38	5.4	21	+1.0	8	27.7%	3	195	20	34.6%	22	12.0%	75	34%
2024	GB	17/5	586	76	39	415	5	51%	-7.3	5	10.6	11.6	38	3.6	56	-0.2	6	-18.7%	83	-37	84	19.8%	36	16.2%	57	40%
2025	GB			60	34	412	4	56%			12.2							-8.0%								

Wicks had awful hands in college, and they have not gotten better in the NFL. Matt LaFleur used him as a big slot target on slants, curls, and underneath stuff; anything deeper was doomed to failure, because Wicks reacts to the ball in flight as if he's blindfolded and on rollerblades. Jaylen Reed is also granite-handed and loath to reach for anything slightly off-target, but Reed can turn any catch into a touchdown, while Wicks is an ordinary-at-best YAC guy. The greatest threat to Wicks' job is neither top pick Matthew Golden nor gravity, but third-round pick Savion Williams, who was also inconsistent as a receiver in college but at least looks like an action figure.

Jameson Williams			Height: 6-1			Weight: 180			College: Alabama			Draft: 2022/1 (12)			Born: 26-Mar-2001			Age: 24								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	DET	6/0	78	9	1	41	1	11%	-4.3	2	41.0	16.4	--	5.0	--	+1.4	0	-54.7%	--	-30	--	-40.3%	--	4.5%	--	11%
2023	DET	12/10	444	42	24	354	2	57%	-1.5	4	14.8	15.8	--	4.4	--	-0.7	6	-11.9%	--	2	--	-17.0%	--	10.2%	--	40%
2024	DET	15/11	826	93	58	1001	7	64%	-1.0	3	17.3	11.4	47	8.3	3	+2.3	7	12.5%	26	191	23	16.0%	40	20.0%	44	25%
2025	DET			95	57	947	6	60%			16.5							11.9%								

Williams caught 17 explosive passes which netted 20 or more yards, tying several receivers for the ninth-highest total in the NFL. When not taking the lid off opposing defenses, Williams kept busy by developing into a dangerous underneath receiver: a few of those 20-plus-yard catches began as shallow crossers. Williams also had four 10-plus-yard runs on end-arounds, plus the 61-yard touchdown run against the Commanders which foreshadowed his ill-fated attempt to throw a fourth-quarter flea-flicker. Williams has pretty clearly moved past his early-career injuries and dropsies. He's well-positioned to thrive as the designated deep threat on a team filled with other playmakers who can do the chains-moving dirty work. The Lions agree: they exercised the fifth-year option on Williams' rookie contract and appear eager to keep him around for a while.

Kyle Williams			Height: 6-0			Weight: 186			College: Washington State			Draft: 2025/3 (69)			Born: 13-Nov-2002			Age: 23								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2025	NE			58	36	531	4	62%			14.7							6.8%								

Get the ball in his hands and good things will happen. Williams is a perfect fit for Josh McDaniels' system, which emphasizes the quick passing game over the deep ball. He's a great route runner, but even better after the catch. His suddenness doesn't just make defenders miss; it allows him to turn short passes into explosive plays. Anyone who watches Patriots games regularly this season will have at least one instance where they think Stefon Diggs has the ball based on how the receiver is moving, only to realize it was actually Williams. He's not a huge downfield threat, but if teams challenge him to win deep by playing press coverage without safety help, he can win quickly at the line and make them pay. Given how good Drake Maye looked a year ago without a receiver of Williams' caliber, Williams could be one of the more productive rookies this season.

Mike Williams			Height: 6-3			Weight: 220			College: Clemson			Draft: 2017/1 (7)			Born: 4-Oct-1994			Age: 31								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	LAC	13/13	703	93	63	895	4	68%	+7.0	0	14.2	11.9	29	5.1	14	+0.9	6	17.4%	7	219	18	21.5%	25	17.5%	45	10%
2023	LAC	3/3	167	26	19	249	1	73%	+3.5	0	13.1	11.8	--	5.7	--	+0.2	3	10.3%	--	45	--	24.3%	--	23.5%	--	19%
2024	2TM	18/5	472	34	21	298	1	62%	+1.8	1	14.2	15.2	--	1.7	--	-2.3	0	14.7%	--	70	--	-43.2%	94	6.3%	--	17%
2025	LAC		44	28	421	3	63%			15.3								12.8%								

He's back! After spending last season with the Jets and Steelers, Williams returns to Los Angeles. It's always great to see a fan favorite return to the franchise where he put up big numbers, but Williams is also trying to salvage his career at this point. After missing most of 2023 with an ACL tear, he didn't see the field much in 2024—learning two new playbooks while recovering from a knee injury isn't the most optimal situation for a 31-year-old receiver to find himself in. Reuniting with Justin Herbert is bound to help at least some, though expecting Williams to be more than a third receiver who hauls in a couple of jump balls a game might be asking too much at this point. But what a story it would be!

Garrett Wilson			Height: 6-0			Weight: 183			College: Ohio State			Draft: 2022/1 (10)			Born: 22-Jul-2000			Age: 25								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	NYJ	17/12	884	147	83	1103	4	56%	-7.3	5	13.3	10.8	42	4.6	28	+0.1	20	-7.2%	59	64	51	23.1%	24	25.5%	19	34%
2023	NYJ	17/17	1008	168	95	1042	3	57%	-9.7	5	11.0	10.3	55	3.4	55	-1.1	15	-20.1%	73	-97	79	6.4%	47	30.1%	7	33%
2024	NYJ	17/17	1025	154	101	1104	7	66%	-3.0	4	10.9	9.4	65	4.4	34	-0.4	21	-7.9%	67	61	59	14.3%	42	26.6%	13	29%
2025	NYJ		142	90	1134	7	63%			12.7								-1.4%								

We all believe that Garrett Wilson is very talented and clearly held back by poor quarterbacks. Nobody really thinks that Wilson was the 59th-best wide receiver in the NFL last year, or even 42nd (to match his Route DVOA, which does a better job of accounting for his ability to draw targets). But ... what if Wilson isn't as good as we have all made him out to be? Last year, Wilson was tied for 84th out of the top 116 wide receivers in ESPN's receiver tracking metrics based on Next Gen Stats. The year before he was 39th. He impresses with his ability to get open, but really trails in their scores for catching the ball and gaining yards after the catch. Those Next Gen Stats aren't perfect—Deebo Samuel and Jameson Williams were down there near Wilson—but they're worth considering. We're all expecting Wilson to blossom into one of the league's top stars when he finally gets to play with a good quarterback. But he may not, and Justin Fields probably isn't that quarterback anyway.

Michael Wilson			Height: 6-2			Weight: 213			College: Stanford			Draft: 2023/3 (94)			Born: 23-Feb-2000			Age: 25								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2023	ARI	13/12	709	58	38	565	3	66%	+2.7	0	14.9	12.4	29	3.7	52	-0.5	4	18.2%	13	137	36	-10.8%	63	13.9%	67	21%
2024	ARI	16/13	822	71	47	548	4	66%	+2.3	3	11.7	11.6	39	2.8	77	-1.5	2	1.4%	49	83	53	-20.7%	81	14.8%	65	28%
2025	ARI		63	42	476	3	67%			11.4								-0.2%								

With Kyler Murray back and healthy, Trey McBride ascendant, and Marvin Harrison there to draw defenders, you assumed Wilson would have improved from his rookie year. Not so much, surprisingly, with his DVOA dropping by nearly 20% and losing over 50 DYAR despite 13 additional targets. He didn't top 60 yards in a game after Week 5, and he was far too often running anonymously down the sideline, not as involved in the game plan as he should have been. Is there a chemistry issue here? Wilson had a 44.8% DVOA with Josh Dobbs in 2023 and just -11.7% with Murray that season. His 1.4% DVOA with Murray in 2024 is a step forward, but hopefully, the two will find a way to get Wilson going without requiring a Passtronaut to send him to orbit.

Roman Wilson			Height: 5-10			Weight: 186			College: Michigan			Draft: 2024/3 (84)			Born: 19-Jun-2001			Age: 24								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2025	PIT		48	31	348	2	63%			11.4								-5.2%								

Pittsburgh's third-round pick in 2024 lost his rookie season to injuries, an ankle in preseason and a hamstring upon return. Without playing a snap, Wilson's import to the 2025 Steelers has only grown with the trade of George Pickens. Wilson is an explosive athlete and should do some business out of the slot once he polishes his route running. But he will have to stay off

## 348 WIDE RECEIVERS

the crutches and adjust to the pro game first. All that stands in his way of a starting role is journeyman Robert Woods and flea-like slot man Calvin Austin, so presuming he can stay on the field Wilson should play an important role in the Pittsburgh passing attack.

Robert Woods			Height: 6-0			Weight: 195			College: USC			Draft: 2013/2 (41)			Born: 10-Apr-1992			Age: 33								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	TEN	17/15	809	91	53	527	2	58%	-1.7	4	9.9	7.8	71	2.9	70	-0.7	0	-16.5%	78	-27	78	-7.7%	61	21.0%	36	36%
2023	HOU	14/11	666	75	40	426	1	53%	-6.4	2	10.7	9.8	60	3.2	63	-1.6	1	-20.2%	74	-44	73	-16.0%	68	15.9%	61	44%
2024	HOU	15/4	361	30	20	203	0	67%	-0.7	2	10.2	10.0	--	3.7	--	-1.7	0	-34.9%	--	-50	--	-40.6%	--	6.3%	--	42%
2025	PIT		36	21	222	1	59%			10.4								-14.3%								

Woods tore his ACL during the Rams Super Bowl season in 2021; since then, ironically, it has been nothing but mobility for the veteran wideout, bouncing to Tennessee, Houston, and now Pittsburgh, where the 33-year old is penciled in as a starter, at least before training camp. He has just three touchdown catches since the injury back in 2021. If he truly is a regular starter for the Steelers, that won't help the muddled quarterback situation much, if at all.

Xavier Worthy			Height: 5-11			Weight: 165			College: Texas			Draft: 2024/1 (28)			Born: 27-Apr-2003			Age: 22								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2024	KC	17/13	757	98	59	638	6	60%	-7.2	3	10.8	9.7	63	6.9	10	+1.3	11	-7.8%	66	38	66	-2.1%	61	17.0%	53	33%
2025	KC		101	66	826	7	65%			12.5								9.1%								

It may have been partially in garbage time, but Worthy's eight-catch, 157-yard, two-touchdown day in the Super Bowl gave him 87 DYAR, the fourth-best Super Bowl performance in our database and the best by someone not named "Jerry Rice". He would have preferred the ring, but ending your season with 20 minutes of big plays is far from the worst result a rookie could have. By the end of the year, Worthy was Kansas City's most reliable wide receiver, leading the team in receptions, yards, and touchdowns over the last seven games of the regular season. But his DVOA over that stretch was just 0.1%, so the scale of his breakout is somewhat overstated. Still, we saw some of the miscommunications and drops fade as the year went along, and positive momentum is positive momentum. The Chiefs hope he's just WR3 this season, building on his finish while not being asked to carry the entire passing attack on his shoulders.

Olamide Zaccheaus			Height: 5-8			Weight: 193			College: Virginia			Draft: 2019/FA			Born: 23-Jul-1997			Age: 28								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot
2022	ATL	17/13	737	61	40	533	3	66%	+1.3	1	13.3	12.8	18	4.8	23	-0.0	9	11.5%	20	118	36	1.4%	44	15.7%	59	61%
2023	PHI	17/1	471	20	10	164	2	50%	-1.1	1	16.4	10.4	--	5.2	--	+1.2	0	3.8%	--	26	--	-56.6%	--	3.8%	--	60%
2024	WAS	17/6	494	64	45	506	3	70%	-1.7	4	11.2	6.3	86	6.3	13	+0.9	10	3.5%	44	77	57	15.6%	41	12.5%	76	45%
2025	CHI		9	7	62	1	70%			9.4								-2.0%								

Zaccheaus is the NFL's reigning nondescript third wide receiver for hire. He was enjoying a typically irrelevant 2024 season until Noah Brown's injury thrust him into the Commanders' receiver rotation. He went 22-203-6 in his final three games but caught just six passes for 45 yards in three playoff games. Zaccheaus is a pro's pro who can help keep Luther Burden with the program and soak up clearing routes for other receivers. Oh, and he has become a reliable punt returner, which means we will be stuck writing player comments about him for at least another five years.

## Going Deep

**Nelson Agholor, FA:** Agholor has settled as a nice fourth receiving option who can stretch the field a bit. But with the Ravens staying mostly healthy in 2024, Agholor's role diminished. After his average depth of target dropped in 2023, it went back up to 13.3 in 2024. Even at 32 years old, that could be a useful role to fill for some team that needs a vertical option.

**Kevin Austin, NO:** Austin's Notre Dame career was checkered with injuries and multiple marijuana-related suspensions. He went undrafted in 2022, spent two years on the Jaguars practice squad, played briefly in the NFL, signed with the Saints, and ended up seeing regular playing time as all hell broke loose in the second half of the season. He's as likely as anyone to emerge from the Saints' pile of rummage-sale acquisitions with a role as a fourth receiver.

**Javon Baker, NE:** Out of the long list of unproductive Patriots wide receivers last year, Baker may have been the most underwhelming. His lone reception came in the final game of the season. Baker had a great final collegiate season at Central Florida, racking up 1,139 receiving yards on a massive 21.9 yards per reception, but he lacks the speed (4.54s 40-yard dash) to be an explosive playmaker at the NFL level.

**Junior Bergen, SF:** We have Deebo Samuel at home. Bergen, a seventh-round rookie out of Montana, is a gadget player with experience catching, running, and even passing the ball as a dual-threat quarterback in high school. More relevant for his immediate NFL future, Bergen tied an FCS record with eight career punt return touchdowns, averaging 16.7 yards per return. He'll be fighting Jacob Cowing not for offensive snaps but for a roster slot as a specialist.

**Braxton Berrios, HOU:** Berrios tore his ACL in early October against the Colts, ending his second season with the Dolphins with nary a catch to his name after a 27-238-1 line in 2023. Entering his age-30 season, Berrios offers return skills and capable-if-unexciting play out of the slot. He'll have to win a battle to stick with the Texans, but Houston values special teams ability greatly and Berrios offers something there in the way that, say, John Metchie III doesn't.

**Jake Bobo, SEA:** Seattle's receiver corps is in serious flux, so there's always a chance that Bobo could carve out a larger role in his third season. Bobo only has 32 career receptions, but he had a positive receiving DVOA in both of his NFL seasons and should at least get a chance to compete for a WR3 spot against Marquez Valdes-Scantling and Tory Horton. More likely, though, he'll continue seeing action only as an injury replacement.

**Jalen Brooks, DAL:** Brooks, a seventh-round pick in 2023, worked his way into the Dallas rotation as the Cowboys tried to figure out what to do on the outside. He served as the deep threat with a 13.6-yard average depth of target. Now deeper in the receiver rotation, his special teams contributions could keep him on the roster.

**Treylon Burks, TEN:** A Week 6 torn ACL ended Burks' third season with the Titans. What he had left before didn't exactly make a good impression on Brian Callahan, who emphasized that Burks would need to play special teams to stick on the roster last offseason. He finished with just eight targets, though he may have played a bigger role down the stretch after the Titans traded DeAndre Hopkins if he had been healthy. The white flag on the A.J. Brown boondoggle will be officially waved soon; this is merely the cursed final lap where Burks tries to get healthy enough to give the Titans anything in 2025.

**Jermaine Burton, CIN:** Burton fell to the third round in the 2024 draft on "character concerns," that nebulous scouting phrase that can mean just about anything. In Burton's case, it meant "Burn This Draft Pick." His rookie year was a complete disaster. He was thoroughly unable to master any element of being a professional, be it the playbook or simply showing up to walk-throughs and meetings. Burton was even evicted twice from his apartment rentals for non-payment. At this spring's combine, Bengals personnel honcho Duke Tobin was asked what Burton showed in his rookie season. "Nothing," was Sir Duke's succinct reply.

**Parris Campbell, DAL:** Campbell's speed has yet to translate to receiving production. He was never used much as a deep threat, but rather as an inefficient, short-YAC option. He only played nine special teams snaps in 2024, which will make it difficult for him to stick in Dallas as a back-of-the-roster receiver.

**DeAndre Carter, CLE:** A career journeyman who is now on his seventh team since joining the league in 2018, Carter has only seen more than 25 targets twice in his first seven years in the league. Where Carter has excelled is in the return game. On kickoffs, Carter was one of five players (min. 15 returns) to average at least 30 yards per return, finishing second highest in the league at 31.9. He also returned 17 punts in 2024, one of seven players last year to return at least 15 kicks and 15 punts.

**DJ Chark, FA:** Chark's only 1,000 yard-season was six years ago. His last season with positive DVOA was 2022, which was three years ago. That's a far cry from who he was in 2024, when he managed just four receptions in seven regular-season games, with Jim Harbaugh even outright stating that there were "some guys playing better than him" when asked if Chark would get more of a chance late in the year. Don't hold back, Jim, tell us what you really think. We think Chark is unlikely to make a roster this season.

**Efton Chism, NE:** A white slot receiver from Eastern Washington with tons of catches and a slow 40 time? Yes, this undrafted free agent was giving off big Cooper Kupp vibes in Patriots minicamps. Chism is slower than Kupp (4.71s 40 at the combine vs. 4.62s for Kupp) and shorter (5-foot-10 vs. 6-foot-2) but he caught 120 balls last year for 1,300 yards and 13 touchdowns, and the coaches spent all spring glowing Chism up. He could be the next Wes Welker or just some kid on the practice squad.

**Chris Conley, FA:** Despite the 49ers' laundry list of injuries at wideout in 2024, Conley barely saw any action—just 12 targets, with four of them coming in the backupalooza of Week 18. He has opted to retire to pursue his dream of making movies, heading to the University of Georgia to study. It seems a little bit late in your career to start breaking down film, but best of luck, Chris.

**Malachi Corley, NYJ:** Malachi Corley was a YAC monster at Western Kentucky, and the Jets could use a slot receiver like that. He's also a guy who had just three catches in his rookie year and was drafted by a previous administration, so his third-round draft pedigree is close to meaningless. So far, the biggest moment of his Jets career was dropping the ball right before he scored a touchdown against Houston on Halloween. Corley missed OTAs due to an undisclosed injury, which didn't help things.

**Britain Covey, LAR:** Covey was the main punt returner during his first two seasons with the Eagles and led the league with 417 punt return yards in 2023. Neck and shoulder injuries limited his playing time in 2024, as did the emergence of Cooper DeJean as Philadelphia's punt returner. Covey could now take that job with the Rams.

**Jacob Cowing, SF:** Cowing didn't get much playing time as a rookie in 2024, getting targets in just three games with one of them being the meaningless Week 18 contest. He also served as San Francisco's primary punt returner, where his -3.5 points worth of value ranked fifth worst in the league. That being said, the job is still likely his in 2025, and the 49ers are looking for a new gadget player with Deebo Samuel out of town. Coaches have been praising Cowing's work maximizing his speed this offseason, and while that probably won't lead to a major role on offense, don't be shocked if there's a new No. 19 running weird screens and swings out of the backfield for San Francisco this year.

**River Cracraft, MIA:** His career high, out of five seasons, is 121 receiving yards. From now until the end of time, white slot receivers who don't produce will be described as "the River Cracrafts of Julian Edelmans."

**Jamison Crowder, FA:** Crowder filled in when the Commanders needed receiver depth at the end of the regular season, playing at least 20 snaps from Weeks 15 to 18 but never topping 27 yards in a game. At 32, he doesn't have the shiftiness he once had as a slot option, but he could serve somewhere as a useful veteran presence in a wide receiver room.

**Derius Davis, LAC:** Davis is more of a returner than a wideout at this point. Any use on offense he gets is on gadget plays—five of his 17 targets were on swing routes out of the backfield, and most of the rest were shallow crosses or screens. He was a second-team All-Pro as a returner in 2023 but put up negative return value last season. He'll get a crack to improve those numbers—and find a way to turn a couple more negative-yard passes into YAC production—in 2025.

**Chimere Dike, TEN:** 4.34s 40-yard dashes will get you drafted. Dike never really actualized into a good football player at Florida due to what an offensive mess the program was. He also, per Dane Brugler's *The Beast* draft guide, had 16 drops in his past four years. Tennessee drafted him in the fourth round, and he could become a burner in certain packages for the Titans this year, but it's hard to see him developing past his rough edge quickly enough to be more than a body who can block in 2025.

**Devin Duvernay, CHI:** Duvernay made the Pro Bowl as a return man for the Ravens in 2021 and 2022. He still has value in that role but attempts by the Jaguars to get him the ball on offense in 2024 were downright depressing: his deep speed is ordinary, he doesn't track the ball well, and defenders saw his tunnel screens coming a mile away. A wide receiver hasn't washed out of the NFL until he has washed out of the Bears.

**Simi Fehoko, ARI:** Fehoko set career highs in offensive usage in 2024, by which we mean he had six catches for 106 yards and -12 DYAR before an injured elbow cost him the back half of the season. Fehoko even picked up his first two NFL starts, though he also had multiple games where he failed to draw a target. His biggest day was a three-catch, 45-yard outing against the Cardinals—could that be why Arizona brought him in? No. He's a gunner and coverage guy, and he will see work there if he makes the 53-man roster.

**Tai Felton, MIN:** Selected by Minnesota at the end of the third round, Felton is a 183-pound skinny legend who went 96-1,124-9 for Maryland in 2024, with much of that production coming on super-short passes (including 28 screens). Felton gets tossed aside on contested catches, but he's willing to take hits in traffic. He has some return experience and could stick as a WR4.

**Ryan Flournoy, DAL:** A 2024 sixth-round pick from Southeast Missouri State, Flournoy started one game but totaled just 10 catches for 102 yards as a rookie. At 6-foot-1 and 200 pounds, Flournoy looks the part of an outside receiver, but struggled with the jump in competition from college to the pros.

**Michael Gallup, WAS:** Gallup spent the 2024 season out of football after he retired. The former Cowboy never fully returned to normal after knee injuries disrupted a promising early career. Now attempting a comeback in Washington, Gallup has battled hamstring issues in minicamp, but if healthy, he could serve as a veteran depth piece to fill out the position group.

**Xavier Gipson, NYJ:** Gipson's challenge to make the Jets roster as an undrafted free agent was featured on *Hard Knocks* two years ago. He was used much more as a receiver than expected in his rookie season but had just six receptions for 39 yards and a touchdown last year. Zack Rosenblatt of The Athletic suggested in a May column that Gipson might have trouble making the team given the competition at the receiver position.

**Mecole Hardman, GB:** Hardman mostly returned punts for the Chiefs last season. Jet sweeps for 19 and 18 yards against the injury-ravaged 49ers were his only real offensive highlights of the season before a Week 11 knee injury shelved him through the playoffs. The last time Hardman left the comfort of Kansas City, he lasted five miserable games for the 2023 Jets before pouting his way back home. Hardman will compete for a role as a return man and gadget guy on a Packers offense that's well beyond its quota of unreliable ultra-talents. Look for Hardman to be returning punts for the Chiefs again by December.

**Malik Heath, GB:** Heath has spent two seasons as the Packers' fifth wide receiver. He saw semi-regular playing time because some member of the Packers receiver corps is always either hurt or in the doghouse. Heath will have to fight for a roster spot now that Matthew Golden and Savion Williams are on the roster. He's not a noteworthy special teams contributor.

**KhaDarel Hodge, ATL:** Hodge caught two passes for 67 yards, including a game-winning 42-yard overtime touchdown, when Drake London was injured against the Bucs in Week 5. He had almost no offensive role the rest of the season. Arthur Smith used to scheme up specific plays for Hodge—Arthur Smith was the kind of child who had an individual baggie for each of his Legos—but those days are over, and Hodge is almost exclusively a special teams ace these days.

**Jimmy Horn, CAR:** Horn, no relation to Jaycee or Joe Horn, weighed 174 pounds at 5-foot-8 at the combine but probably needed a triple order of smothered hash browns to get there. He finished fourth in receptions for Colorado in 2024, benefitting from coverage focused on Travis Hunter and others, which helped him get open in the middle of the field for a schoolyard offense. Horn also returned kickoffs and punts for the Buffaloes, and he returned a kickoff for a touchdown for South Florida in 2022. Return value will ensure a roster spot, but it's hard to imagine Bryce Young finding Horn downfield unless they both possess insect-like biochemical communication skills.

**Tory Horton, SEA:** Horton, a fifth-round pick out of Colorado State, fell in the draft because of the knee injury that cost him most of 2024. He's a size and speed guy—6-foot-2 and 196 pounds, who reportedly can run a 4.3s 40 when he's healthy. He lacks play strength and isn't going to beat press coverage, but he's a smooth route runner who works well in space and brings punt return credentials as well. He'll have a chance to win the return job immediately, and with Seattle's receiver room in flux, he could be WR4 or higher by the time the season is done.

**Lil'Jordan Humphrey, NYG:** The Giants acquired Humphrey coming off the biggest season of his career. Nearly half of all Humphrey's career production came in Denver in 2024, seeing 31 of 62 career receptions and 45 of 92 career targets. No one on the Giants current receiver depth chart currently matches up to Humphrey's 6-foot-4, 225-pound frame, but he'll likely need to provide more than a big body who mainly works short routes in order to carve out a larger role.

**Xavier Hutchinson, HOU:** Hutchinson saw a marked increase in playing time after Nico Collins went down in Week 5, playing at least 50 percent of the snaps in every game until Collins' return in Week 11. Once Tank Dell was officially ruled out in Week 15, Hutchinson was again the main replacement for his snaps. A willing special teamer and a solid blocker who can play the X, Hutchinson has enough versatility that we would be surprised if he didn't make the Texans roster. We just haven't seen much upside as a receiver so far outside of his four-catch, 52-yard playoff game against the Chiefs.

**Jalin Hyatt, NYG:** Hyatt is one of the bigger beneficiaries of the Giants staying pat at the receiver position this past offseason. There's now more opportunity for the 2023 third-rounder to do what he was drafted to do—catch deep balls. Those were tough to come by in his rookie season and nigh impossible to find in 2024, a season that saw him catch just eight passes with an aDOT of 19.1 (down from 21.0 the year prior). With a trio of deep passers now rostered, this make-or-break season for Hyatt could have a lot more upward potential.

**Trenton Irwin, JAX:** The “Crocodile Hunter” has been an NFL success story, if you take the big picture view. Undrafted, he sustained a six-year career with the Bengals, one that saw 46 catches and five touchdowns, before Cincinnati cut him loose last winter. Irwin’s relentless work ethic and smarts allowed him to stay in the league despite ultra-modest physical skills. Signed with Jacksonville in early June.

**Rakim Jarrett, TB:** Jarrett earned two starts for the Bucs when Mike Evans, Chris Godwin, and Jalen McMillan were all injured at midseason. The Bucs drafted Emeka Egbuka to make sure that never happens again. A former UDFA, Jarrett himself has been sidelined by various injuries over the last two seasons. Coaches appear to like him, so he may end up stashed on the practice squad.

**Tez Johnson, TB:** Johnson and Dillon Gabriel formed the cutest lil’ pitch-and-catch tandem you ever did see at Oregon; sit Johnson on Gabriel’s shoulders and toss an oversized Steelers jersey over them and they MIGHT just pass for DK Metcalf. Johnson also went 86-1,118-2-10 for Oregon when Bo Nix was his quarterback in 2023. Johnson looked great at the Senior Bowl but ran a 4.51s 40 at 154 pounds at the combine, earning him a one-way ticket to the seventh round of the draft. Johnson returned punts at Oregon and may challenge Trey Palmer for that role in Tampa Bay. He’ll never be more than a slot gadget guy, but the Buccaneers will probably never ask more from him than that.

**Charlie Jones, CIN:** Injuries have limited Jones as a pro wideout, but he has made an impact as a returner, scoring touchdowns on both punts and kickoffs in his first two seasons. Jones should stick around for his skills in the third phase, but entering his age-27 season, it’s now or never to make it as a pass catcher.

**Zay Jones, ARI:** Jones was targeted just 11 times despite running 157 routes. That 7.0% target rate was the lowest among wideouts with at least 150 routes run, so the most work for the fewest results in the league. He did put up a positive DVOA for the first time since 2021, so that’s something, but Arizona bringing him back does scream more about desperation than anything else. He’ll continue to fight Greg Dortch for the third wideout position, but Jones is a role player without a role at this point.

**KeAndre Lambert-Smith, LAC:** Fifth-round pick Lambert-Smith really is a product of modern college football. Not many players can say they led two different FCS teams in receiving, but Lambert-Smith did it for Penn State in 2023 and Auburn in 2024. His production is undeniable, but he lacks suddenness or strength and doesn’t provide much special teams value. He’s a potential YAC guy, but that will require either being schemed open or separating more than scouts seem to think he’ll be able to do in the pros.

**Jaylin Lane, WAS:** A fourth-round pick out of Virginia Tech, Lane should immediately contribute as a punt returner after leading the ACC in return yards. As a receiver, Lane was a short-range (7.5-yard aDOT) slot option who picked up 67% of his receiving yards after the catch.

**Dominic Lovett, DET:** This seventh-round pick was a slippery slot guy at Georgia for two seasons. Lovett was also productive at Mizzou in 2021 and 2022. He has some screen-and-go capability and will twist and leap for off-target downfield receptions. His best asset, however, may be his reputation as a pesky special teamer, which could help him stick on the Lions roster.

**Bub Means, NO:** Means bounced from Tennessee to Louisiana Tech to Pitt before producing some good college tape in 2023. He then recorded some impressive pre-draft workout numbers. Means caught all nine of his passes (for 118 yards and a touchdown) in October, when Chris Olave and Rashid Shaheed were injured. Means then suffered a high ankle sprain and was lost for the year. Means may get a chance to compete with Brandin Cooks for the third receiver role. He’s not an elite prospect, but he can play a little.

**Tommy Mellott, LV:** A human highlight reel waiting to happen. Mellott played quarterback at Montana State and was the Raiders' sixth-round pick in this year's draft. He won the Walter Payton Award at the FCS level, rushing for over 1,000 yards and 15 touchdowns and throwing for 2,700 yards and 31 touchdowns. They're trying to turn him into a slot receiver, but we could also see some Taysom Hill-like packages for him. Do yourself a favor and go watch some of his college highlights. He runs a lot like Taysom, but with a bit more "whoop!" (Chris Berman voice)

**Bo Melton, GB:** Kay Adams asked Jordan Love which of his receivers was best at this-or-that non-football activity during an offseason podcast. Christian Watson was the best at Olympic speed-walking, Romeo Doubs the most trustworthy ringbearer for Love's wedding, Jaylen Reed the best video gamer, Dontayvion Wicks the best at shutting down Jaire Alexander's trash-talk during practices, (Alexander sometimes practices? Who knew?) and Bo Melton, per Love, was the best at chugging beer. New Jersey is once again proudly represented.

**Ryan Miller, TB:** Not to be confused with Scotty Miller, who was Tom Brady's Julian Edelman surrogate in Tampa Bay, Ryan Miller is a heavy slot receiver who mostly ran tight end-type routes last year: quick outs, shallow crosses, the occasional seamer. He dropped two of 12 targets and let Jessie Bates undercut him for an interception on a flea flicker, so Miller may be relying on his special teams role to stay on the Bucs roster for 2025.

**Scotty Miller, PIT:** Miller has never been the same since a painful bout of turf toe took him down back in 2021; he re-signed with the Steelers as a back-of-the-roster type but will need to work hard to retain even that lowly slot.

**Konata Mumpfield, LAR:** A seventh-round pick out of Pitt, Mumpfield averaged 15.6 yards per catch last season. He's a developmental prospect, needing better awareness, focus, and discipline on his route running. However, he has shown playmaking ability, shaking off coverage and fighting through tight coverage to make contested catches. He's probably going to end up on the Rams' practice squad to begin with, with an outside chance of being the fifth wideout if he develops quickly.

**Nick Nash, ATL:** Nick Nash led the nation's wide receivers with 104 receptions, 50 of them within five yards of the line of scrimmage. He spent six seasons at San Jose State, the first three at quarterback and only 2024 as a full-time starter. There is some fun tape on Nash, but he's a soon-to-be-25-year-old mid-major possession receiver who ran a 4.57s 40 at the combine. Nash signed with the Falcons as a UDFA and generated some rookie camp buzz. He has a reasonable shot at cracking the roster.

**Bryce Oliver, TEN:** Active for most of the second half of the season, the 2024 UDFA was little used but did get a 32% snap share in the meaningless Week 18 game against the Texans that clinched the No. 1 pick for Tennessee. Anyone on this depth chart has a small chance to emerge in 2025—we're talking about Tyler Lockett and Van Jefferson in main roles—and Oliver seemed to have more of the Tennessee coaching staff's eye than most of the receivers who were here last year.

**K.J. Osborn, WAS:** Osborn was claimed off waivers by Washington in midseason after he was released by New England. He had just seven catches in seven games with the Patriots and did not mesh with the offense. His best role as a third/fourth option playing in the slot in a deeper receiving corps could work out in Washington given the rest of the roster.

**Trey Palmer, TB:** Palmer, who came on strong as a screens-and-bombs target late in 2023, got upstaged by Jalen McMillan last season. He's the Bucs' primary punt returner, but that may not be enough to preserve his roster spot, as the Tampa Bay receiving room is now extremely crowded.

**Zach Pascal, NYG:** Once upon a time, Pascal was a starting receiver for the Colts, but he hasn't done much over the last three seasons. Last year in Arizona, he mainly had a special teams role, playing just 68 offensive snaps with a whopping zero targets. Now 30, he signed with the Giants in the offseason.

**A.T. Perry, DEN:** The 6-foot-5 Perry made some big catches down the stretch for the 2023 Saints. The Broncos liberated him from the Saints practice squad last October, just when the Saints were running out of warm bodies at receiver. Perry will get a shot at making the Broncos roster as a tall boundary threat.

**Dante Pettis, NO:** The stone-handed, skinny, not-at-all elusive Pettis, having fallen off the back of dreadful Giants and Bears receiving corps in the 2020s, finally landed in New Orleans, where he received ("earned" is too strong a word) playing time during the Saints' late-season tire fire. He caught the Saints' final touchdown of the season in Week 18. That should have been the capstone to his career, but Pettis will be back in Saints camp this summer.

**Brandon Powell, MIN:** Powell is a sure-handed punt returner who started the 2024 season rotating with Jalen Nailor as the Vikings' slot receiver, slowly ceding snaps to him until Powell's offensive role was almost nonexistent. Rondale Moore will battle Powell to be Minnesota's rarely-used fourth receiver. Moore has only returned one punt since 2021. Advantage: Powell.

**Kaden Prather, BUF:** Prather is a raw but intriguing wide receiver prospect who played for West Virginia before transferring to Maryland. Drafted in the seventh round (240th overall), the 6-foot-4, 204-pound receiver brings a strong physical profile and vertical speed, having clocked a 4.46s 40-yard dash. His size and catch radius give him upside as a contested-catch threat, but concerns about his explosiveness, separation skills, and route polish kept him from rising higher in the draft. Buffalo views him as a developmental option with long-term potential.

**Jamaal Pritchett, NYJ:** The undrafted Pritchett led the Sun Belt with both 91 receptions and 1,127 receiving yards in 2024 at South Alabama. He's small but has 4.42s speed. Draft Network called him a creative playmaker who is elite after the catch, and he can line up in the slot or outside. Pritchett also has experience returning punts, so he's coming for Xavier Gipson's job.

**James Proche, TEN:** The former Ravens special teamer stuck with the Browns the last two years, returning 41 punts and 38 kickoffs. He has a chance to land a role with the Titans as their veteran returner, though it might be hard to stomach giving him that chance after they invested heavily in Day 3 wideouts in the 2025 draft.

**Jalen Reagor, LAC:** The Chargers grabbed Reagor off the street midway through 2024, added him to their practice squad, and eventually activated him as they were running out of options at wideout. His -46.0% DVOA on 12 targets was the worst of his career, though the lack of volume stopped him from setting a personal worst in DYAR. The lack of depth in the Chargers' receiving corps gives Reagor a chance to make the 53-man roster again this year, but he's not likely to see much action.

**Hunter Renfrow, CAR:** Renfrow missed all of 2024 with ulcerative colitis, a condition which wreaks havoc on the digestive system. He told reporters his weight had dropped to 150 pounds at one point. Renfrow caught 103 passes for the Raiders in 2021 but became a non-factor when Josh McDaniels took over, even though Renfrow looks like a prototypical McDaniels slot receiver. (Short pause for forced, tepid chuckles.) It doesn't sound like colitis impacted Renfrow's 2022 and 2023 seasons; he just wasn't getting open, and fumbles were also a problem. Renfrow is staging a comeback with the Panthers, who should be trying to get younger instead of fiddling with aging role players, but who are we to stand in the way of a feel-good story?

**Xavier Restrepo, TEN:** Cam Ward's favorite receiver at Miami fell out of the draft after a poor 40 time at his pro day, but he signed up with the Titans as an undrafted free agent. He's a strong possession receiver with a very respectable 45.7% Playmaker Rating. Restrepo was productive in college, with back-to-back 1,000-yard seasons and 17 total touchdowns in the past two years, and he has chemistry with Ward already.

**Tyler Scott, CHI:** Sometimes the Bears draft a wide receiver and he just disappears into the ether: Kevin White, Riley Ridley, Dazz Newsome, Velus Jones, and now Scott, a fourth-round pick in 2023 who caught just one pass in 2024. The Bears drafted Luther Burden and loaded the back of their offseason depth chart with veterans, which suggests Scott is simply no longer in their plans. Or they just forgot he existed; firing the entire coaching staff in midseason can really Swiss cheese a team's institutional memory. Anyway, the same fate can't possibly befall Rome Odunze, right? You know: the tall kid from Washington? The guy who was always leaping for Caleb Williams overthrows last year? You do remember him, right? Wait ... who were we talking about?

**Laviska Shenault, BUF:** Shenault hasn't had an incomplete pass thrown his way since January 1, 2023, meaning he has caught 17 straight targets. If he was still a wide receiver, that might even be a neat piece of trivia, but Shenault is a kick returner by trade at this point in his career and is just listed as a wideout because he has to be listed somewhere. Shenault did score a touchdown on a kickoff for Seattle last season, but he had -5.9 points of return value on his other 15 returns, which would have been worst in the league. He's a longshot to climb onto the Bills' roster.

**Trent Sherfield, DEN:** This will be Sherfield's sixth team in six years. His best year came in Miami, where he had 417 yards and two touchdowns. His rookie season in 2018 with Arizona was the only other year where he eclipsed 100 yards. The one thing he had in Miami was opportunity. Not just to play; he was surrounded by Tyreek Hill and Jaylen Waddle in a system that got him open. Sherfield will struggle to get playing time in Denver and when he does see the field, he'll struggle to produce.

**Ben Skowronek, PIT:** A “Look, defense—over here!” decoy that Arthur Smith will often employ as a pre-snap motion device, Skowronek is one of those fun guys to highlight on Twitter for his versatility while ignoring the fact that his forays into wide receiver, fullback, H-back, tight end, and special teams gunnery seldom make any sort of impact. He did recover a pair of fumbles while covering kicks in 2024, a feat that outstrips his 13 career receptions and three career carries. He could make Pittsburgh’s roster in 2025 just because his name sounds like he should be a classic Steelers player.

**Ainias Smith, PHI:** The 5-foot-9 fifth-round pick didn’t get a lot of work as a rookie, but he did have four catches for 35 yards and a touchdown in the regular-season finale. Philadelphia’s third receiver can be just for show given the other options in the passing game, but Smith couldn’t break though with Jahan Dotson giving little in that role anyway.

**Arian Smith, NYJ:** Track speed, baby! New York’s fourth-round pick was a sprinter at Georgia when he wasn’t playing football, and his 10 collegiate touchdown receptions averaged 36.5 yards apiece. Smith also had a grand total of 20 catches in his first four seasons for the Bulldogs before he had 48 catches for 817 yards a year ago. He needs to work on route running and tracking the ball, but damn, that speed plays.

**Dont’e Thornton, LV:** The fourth-round rookie out of Tennessee is 6-foot-5 with a 4.30s 40. It’s no wonder people have called him the “Al Davis pick” of Las Vegas’ draft. To have those measurables and only go in the fourth round tells you all you need to know about how early he still is in the developmental process. He only caught 26 balls for 661 yards in his senior year and both were personal bests. That 25.4 yards-per-reception average sure is fun, though.

**Tyquan Thornton, KC:** Thornton scored twice in Week 6 of the 2022 season, once on the ground and once through the air. He has only scored once since. He ran a 4.28s 40-yard dash, but that speed never translated into production the way he or New England would have liked. He never reached 1,000 yards in college either, so perhaps this shouldn’t be a surprise to anyone. He’s now fighting for a roster spot in Kansas City.

**Mason Tipton, NO:** It’s nearly impossible to keep straight all the rандос who caught passes for the 2024 Saints after Chris Olave and Rashid Shaheed got hurt. Tipton was a UDFA from Yale. Kevin Austin was the one who smoked too much weed in college, if there’s such a thing as too much weed. (Editor assigned to this author’s player comments: there is.) Dante Pettis is the one whose dad played centerfield for the Angels. None of them would be in a playoff-caliber team’s 2025 plans. Any or all of them could end up making the Saints roster.

**Devonte Walker, BAL:** Walker’s only catch as a rookie was a 21-yard touchdown against the New York Giants in Week 15. The 2024 fourth-round pick has impressed in offseason workouts with John Harbaugh stating, “all he does is show up and go 100mph.” Walker could use a little more refinement in his route running to make a real impact and he starts as the fourth wide receiver at best on a team that uses three-receiver sets at the lowest rate in the league.

**Tylan Wallace, BAL:** Wallace showed up with a massive three catches for 115 yards and a touchdown in Baltimore’s Week 10 game against Cincinnati after serving as a fringe-rotational receiver for most of the season. Overall, he played 25% of the offensive snaps and was a core special teams player.

**Tahj Washington, MIA:** Washington, a Miami seventh-round pick last year, spent his rookie season on IR and may not play any more in 2025 than he did in 2024. As a senior at USC, he had 1,062 receiving yards and eight touchdowns, but his 4.63s 40-yard dash makes him a peculiar fit in an offense predicated around speed.

**Jordan Watkins, SF:** A fourth-round pick out of Mississippi, Watkins is an undersized speedy guy. The ding on him was that he was schemed into success in college, but that matches what the 49ers do anyway, so that might work out. Watkins tied the SEC lead with nine touchdown receptions last season, but that’s because he had an eight-catch, 254-yard, five-touchdown day against Arkansas—a lot of eggs in that one basket. Watkins might get some early-season playing time with Brandon Aiyuk working back from his torn ACL. He and Jacob Cowling will fight for that and punt return duties.

**LaJohntay Wester, BAL:** Wester was a standout receiver and punt returner for Florida Atlantic in 2023 and did well enough at those spots after transferring to Colorado in 2024. He played 91% of his snaps in the slot for Colorado with a 20% target share. The sixth-round pick’s best path to playing time is in on special teams, fighting to be Baltimore’s main punt returner. Playmaker Score did have him as a bit of a sleeper, though.

**Ricky White, SEA:** White led UNLV in receiving in each of the last three seasons, but his path to immediate playing time comes on special teams. White was the Mountain West special teams player of the year in 2024 with four blocked punts. That's how you get a spot on the 53 as a seventh-round pick. He has a solid Playmaker Score for a seventh-rounder, too, and there's a world where he becomes a finely-tuned route running machine out of the slot. But he can work on that while he's crashing into punters.

**Savion Williams, GB:** The Packers love square-peg receiving prospects, and Williams may be the squarest: a 6-foot-5 converted quarterback that TCU used in a Wildcat gadget package they called "Frog." Williams looks like Christian Watson but plays like a cross between Jaylen Reed (lots of YAC, five drops on 87 targets in 2025, a route tree that's more of a fern) and Malik Willis (Wildcat option keepers and decoy plays, decent trick-play passer). Williams should push titanium-handed Don-tayvion Wicks off the back of the Packers receiver rotation and could end up getting a look as a quarterback sneak specialist.

**Cedrick Wilson, NO:** Wilson is a lean, replacement-caliber slot receiver who bounced from the Cowboys to the Dolphins before reinventing himself as a hustling special teamer for the Saints. Wilson bubbled up and down the offensive depth chart depending on who was injured in 2024, but he was never more than a mop-up receiver during blowouts. Wilson took a pay cut to stay in New Orleans for 2025, but he still has a \$500,000 void year tacked onto 2026. No player is insignificant enough to not contribute to the Saints' cap woes in some small way.

**Johnny Wilson, PHI:** Listed at 6-foot-6 and 228 pounds, Wilson is not built like a typical wide receiver. That size did not pose much of a mismatch as a rookie. Wilson ran 153 routes but averaged 0.2 yards per route run with -57.5% DVOA.

**Michael Woods, CLE:** Woods has had an arduous journey back to the playing field since being selected by the Browns in the sixth round of the 2022 draft. After a smattering of offensive work and special teams reps his rookie year, Woods tore his Achilles during independent offseason workouts and missed the entirety of the 2023 season. Later that year, he received a six-game suspension for a violation of the league's personal conduct policy. Finally able to claw his way back to playing in 2024, Woods had the best game of his career with a three-catch, 43-yard outing. It's emblematic of the rest of his career—Woods has shown flashes throughout his young career, but even those have come in minimal sample sizes. Could this be the year the Browns finally see what they have in Woods?

# Tight Ends

## Top 20 TE by Receiving DYAR (Total Value), 2024

Rank	Player	Team	DYAR
1	George Kittle	SF	426
2	Mark Andrews	BAL	302
3	Tucker Kraft	GB	179
4	Jonn Smith	MIA	171
5	Pat Freiermuth	PIT	163
6	Sam LaPorta	DET	138
7	Noah Gray	KC	131
8	Trey McBride	ARI	123
9	Brock Bowers	LV	121
10	Zach Ertz	WAS	112
11	Cole Kmet	CHI	109
12	Foster Moreau	NO	93
13	Mike Gesicki	CIN	92
14	Isaiah Likely	BAL	91
15	Josh Oliver	MIN	89
16	Noah Fant	SEA	61
17	Dawson Knox	BUF	59
18	T.J. Hockenson	MIN	58
19	Hunter Henry	NE	58
20	Austin Hooper	NE	57

Minimum 25 passes

## Top 20 TE by Receiving DVOA (Value per Target), 2024

Rank	Player	Team	DVOA
1	Mark Andrews	BAL	60.8%
2	George Kittle	SF	59.1%
3	Josh Oliver	MIN	40.6%
4	Tucker Kraft	GB	32.0%
5	Noah Gray	KC	30.4%
6	Pat Freiermuth	PIT	26.0%
7	Foster Moreau	NO	23.8%
8	Cole Kmet	CHI	21.9%
9	Grant Calcaterra	PHL	20.8%
10	Dawson Knox	BUF	18.0%
11	Isaiah Likely	BAL	16.5%
12	Sam LaPorta	DET	16.5%
13	Jonn Smith	MIA	15.7%
14	AJ Barner	SEA	14.1%
15	Zach Ertz	WAS	11.5%
16	Darell Washington	PIT	10.1%
17	Mike Gesicki	CIN	10.1%
18	Austin Hooper	NE	7.7%
19	Noah Fant	SEA	7.5%
20	T.J. Hockenson	MIN	6.6%

Minimum 25 passes

## Top 20 TE by Route DVOA (Value per Route), 2024

Rank	Player	Team	DVOA
1	George Kittle	SF	85.2%
2	Mark Andrews	BAL	63.6%
3	Jonn Smith	MIA	61.6%
4	Trey McBride	ARI	55.7%
5	Brock Bowers	LV	44.4%
6	Dallas Goedert	PHL	37.1%
7	Foster Moreau	NO	35.0%
8	Dalton Kincaid	BUF	33.6%
9	Will Dissly	LAC	30.8%
10	Taysom Hill	NO	28.1%
11	Isaiah Likely	BAL	27.4%
12	T.J. Hockenson	MIN	24.5%
13	Evan Engram	JAX	24.5%
14	Brenton Strange	JAX	22.6%
15	Travis Kelce	KC	22.5%
16	Noah Gray	KC	22.3%
17	Pat Freiermuth	PIT	22.1%
18	Zach Ertz	WAS	21.0%
19	Josh Whyle	TEN	20.3%
20	Sam LaPorta	DET	20.0%

Minimum 25 passes or 150 routes

### Jordan Akins

Height: 6-4

Weight: 245

College: Central Florida

Draft: 2018/3 (98)

Born: 19-Apr-1992

Age: 33

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2022	HOU	15/3	406	54	37	495	5	69%	+1.9	1	13.4	6.5	33	7.3	5	+2.5	4	14.6%	8	81	11	31.5%	8	11.2%	28	36%	13%
2023	CLE	17/4	231	23	15	132	0	65%	-0.9	2	8.8	4.7	--	3.9	--	-0.8	2	-21.3%	--	-20	--	-3.4%	--	3.8%	--	39%	4%
2024	CLE	17/6	456	58	40	390	2	69%	-0.7	0	9.8	6.0	31	4.4	33	-0.6	1	-10.5%	35	-11	35	-8.9%	35	9.0%	34	38%	16%

Akins' two seasons with double-digit positive DVOA production came in 2020 (12.4%, 15th among tight ends) as Deshaun Watson's top tight end and in 2022 often working as a low-aDOT option in Houston's offense. While he likely no longer holds much weight as a reliable TE1 in a team's offense (although he did serve as a plug-in for that role amid David Njoku's absences), Akins can still provide as an over-the-middle receiver, an area of the field where most of his diet of targets stems from. Still a free agent at press time.

### Mark Andrews

Height: 6-5

Weight: 250

College: Oklahoma

Draft: 2018/3 (86)

Born: 6-Sep-1995

Age: 30

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2022	BAL	15/15	787	113	73	847	5	65%	+2.4	3	11.6	10.0	4	3.3	42	-0.6	5	5.4%	20	94	6	65.0%	2	28.0%	1	66%	16%
2023	BAL	10/9	467	61	45	544	6	74%	+2.4	2	12.1	7.3	15	4.8	21	+0.8	8	22.1%	4	115	6	48.5%	2	21.4%	6	48%	15%
2024	BAL	17/13	682	69	55	673	11	80%	+10.5	1	12.2	10.9	2	3.4	46	+0.1	5	60.8%	1	302	2	63.6%	2	15.2%	18	56%	23%
2025	BAL		66	48	562	7	73%				11.6								30.9%								

## 358 TIGHT ENDS

The final image of Mark Andrews during the 2024 season was a drop on a two-point conversion that would have tied the game against the Buffalo Bills in the Divisional Round. That came after a fumble earlier in the game. All of that overshadowed how productive Andrews was during the regular season. He only had one drop during the regular season and was second among tight ends in receiving plus/minus. Andrews was second among all tight ends in DYAR and was fourth among all players in DYAR from the slot. His 99.7% DVOA to the short middle of the field was the highest among all players with at least 10 targets to that area.

Elijah Arroyo		Height: 6-4	Weight: 245	College: Miami (FL)	Draft: 2025/2 (50)	Born: 5-Apr-2003	Age: 22											
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass Rec	Yds TD	C%	+/-	Drop Yd/C	aDOT Rk	YAC Rk	YAC+ BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR Rk	RDVOA Rk	Use Rk	Slot Wide	
2025	SEA		51	35	362 2	69%		10.5				-3.0%						

Arroyo, a second-round pick out of Miami, should eventually replace Noah Fant in the starting lineup. He may even replace some of DK Metcalf's role, as Mike Macdonald has said that some Seahawks coaches thought that Arroyo could actually be an X receiver and run a full route tree. That's potential for the future, however; Arroyo had a knee injury which cost him all of 2022 and much of 2023, and it arguably hampered him 2024 as well. His traits are off the charts—very fast, with solid route running and excellent hands—but it might take a little bit before that translates into actual production.

AJ Barner		Height: 6-6	Weight: 251	College: Michigan	Draft: 2024/4 (121)	Born: 3-May-2002	Age: 23											
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass Rec	Yds TD	C%	+/-	Drop Yd/C	aDOT Rk	YAC Rk	YAC+ BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR Rk	RDVOA Rk	Use Rk	Slot Wide	
2024	SEA	17/6	501	38 30	245 4	79%	+1.0	3	8.2	3.6	47 5.5	16 +0.5	5	14.1%	14 56	21 9.2%	27 6.5%	43 26% 11%
2025	SEA		19	13	136 1	71%		10.3				-1.3%						

Barner never had more than 34 yards in a game as a rookie, but got more and more play time as the year went along, becoming nearly equal with Noah Fant down the stretch. Barner ended up with the better DVOA of the two and very nearly caught him in receiving DYAR, as he was the one who really gained the confidence of Geno Smith down the stretch. Geno is gone and Elijah Arroyo has joined the tight ends room, so just how the snaps will break down in Seattle is unclear. But tight ends are important in Clint Kubiak's scheme, with his Saints running 12 personnel more than anyone else, so there will be snaps to be had, and Barner's a better blocker than either Fant or Arroyo.

Brock Bowers		Height: 6-4	Weight: 230	College: Georgia	Draft: 2024/1 (13)	Born: 13-Dec-2002	Age: 23											
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass Rec	Yds TD	C%	+/-	Drop Yd/C	aDOT Rk	YAC Rk	YAC+ BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR Rk	RDVOA Rk	Use Rk	Slot Wide	
2024	LV	17/16	956	153 112	1194 5	73%	+2.2	6	10.7	6.1	30 5.3	19 +0.4	7	4.8%	22 121	9 44.4%	5 25.9%	2 51% 19%
2025	LV		146	107	1153 6	73%		10.7				9.1%						

Then only thing more impressive than finishing sixth in the NFL in receiving yards as a rookie tight end is doing so with horrible quarterback play. Bowers didn't just get there on volume, either. He was second to George Kittle among tight ends and first on the Raiders in explosive receiving yards. Perhaps most impressive of all was the variety of ways in which he succeeded. He was good against the blitz, good against man coverage, and good against zone. He led all tight ends in yards after the catch and was second among tight ends in deep receiving yards. He was first among tight ends in yards from the slot, second in yards out wide, and eighth in yards as an in-line or off-line tight end. Lastly, he was third among tight ends in DYAR and second in receiving yards as the first read but also led all tight ends in receiving yards when he was not the first read. When all is said and done, we could be talking about Bowers as one of the greatest to ever do it at the tight end position.

Tyler Conklin		Height: 6-3	Weight: 248	College: Central Michigan	Draft: 2018/5 (157)	Born: 30-Jul-1995	Age: 30											
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass Rec	Yds TD	C%	+/-	Drop Yd/C	aDOT Rk	YAC Rk	YAC+ BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR Rk	RDVOA Rk	Use Rk	Slot Wide	
2022	NYJ	17/16	861	87 58	552 3	67%	-1.1	5	9.5	7.1	23 4.9	23 +0.2	3	-16.3%	43 -48	46 -1.9%	27 14.7%	17 32% 6%
2023	NYJ	17/12	772	87 61	621 0	70%	+4.1	0	10.2	7.0	19 4.0	38 -1.0	4	-12.3%	43 -28	44 -1.0%	30 15.4%	18 58% 10%
2024	NYJ	16/15	805	72 51	449 4	71%	-0.3	1	8.8	5.0	43 5.1	25 -0.5	3	-7.6%	33 -2	33 -24.0%	45 12.7%	28 44% 8%
2025	LAC		56	39	367 3	70%		9.5				-1.2%						

Four tight ends have at least 50 receptions in each of the last four seasons: Travis Kelce, George Kittle, Dalton Schultz, and Conklin. Of the four, Conklin's the only one to have a negative receiving DVOA and DYAR in all four seasons, so while the volume has been there, the efficiency really hasn't. Conklin will play second fiddle in Los Angeles for this season, with Will Dissly being the top option at tight end, but willing blockers will always have a place on a Jim Harbaugh team. It's also worth noting that Conklin's -12.2% DVOA in the red zone was far better than any of Los Angeles' tight ends last season, so a goal-line role could be in the cards as well.

Will Dissly			Height: 6-4				Weight: 265				College: Washington				Draft: 2018/4 (120)				Born: 8-Jul-1996			Age: 29					
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2022	SEA	15/15	569	38	34	349	3	89%	+5.6	2	10.3	5.8	39	5.4	17	+0.7	1	39.6%	1	121	4	17.3%	13	7.9%	38	18%	8%
2023	SEA	16/14	381	22	17	172	1	77%	+1.2	1	10.1	2.8	--	7.1	--	+1.6	5	5.2%	--	17	--	-15.8%	41	4.2%	--	9%	0%
2024	LAC	15/8	540	64	50	481	2	78%	+2.1	3	9.6	4.6	44	6.1	8	+0.7	7	4.7%	23	48	23	30.8%	9	14.4%	21	27%	9%
2025	LAC			42	31	297	2	75%			9.5							4.1%									

Dissly's move to Los Angeles last season saw him set career highs in targets, receptions, and yards. His DVOA and DYAR did dip under the increased workload, but that's thanks to his role as Los Angeles' top checkdown option more than anything else. Take out quick outs and screens from all tight ends, and Dissly would move into the top 20 in DVOA. And, of course, it's a Harbaugh/Roman offense, so Dissly's solid run-blocking chops play into his usage as well. He should keep the top tight end slot over the recently added Tyler Conklin, though there's a chance rookie Oronde Gadsden could take over some of his receiving work if Gadsden hits his potential. Dissly's nothing exciting as a receiver, merely reliable, and so there's always a chance that someone with a little more pep could work their way past him in the rotation.

Evan Engram			Height: 6-3				Weight: 240				College: Mississippi				Draft: 2017/1 (23)				Born: 2-Sep-1994			Age: 31					
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2022	JAX	17/14	868	98	73	766	4	74%	+2.0	3	10.5	6.3	36	6.4	9	+1.2	5	7.3%	16	91	7	9.8%	21	17.1%	13	36%	21%
2023	JAX	17/15	917	143	114	963	4	80%	+9.4	8	8.4	5.2	40	4.5	27	-0.5	13	-4.7%	32	24	26	23.0%	10	23.5%	2	58%	19%
2024	JAX	9/9	363	64	47	365	1	73%	+0.4	1	7.8	5.9	33	3.2	47	-1.9	2	-15.9%	40	-36	40	24.5%	13	23.2%	5	48%	14%
2025	DEN			106	78	662	4	73%			8.5							-6.2%									

It's easy to nitpick Engram's value. He doesn't stretch the field, he hasn't been great after the catch since 2022, and he missed chunks of time early and late last season. But Engram is joining the least productive tight end room of 2024, so the opportunity will be there. And Denver should get him the ball. All told, 31 combined screens, quick outs, and swing passes went to Lil' Jordan Humphrey and Troy Franklin last year. They averaged 1.1 yards per route run on those targets, while even in a down year, Engram averaged 1.5 yards per route run on those same routes in Jacksonville. Engram also addresses one of Bo Nix's limitations: Nix struggled in obvious passing situations last year. In both 2022 and 2023, Engram led all tight ends in receiving yards on second- or third-and-long. He was top-five in DYAR in these splits as well. He fell down those leaderboards last year, but his DYAR and DVOA on second- or third-and-long was still a lot stronger than his overall DYAR and DVOA.

Zach Ertz			Height: 6-5				Weight: 250				College: Stanford				Draft: 2013/2 (35)				Born: 10-Nov-1990			Age: 35					
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2022	ARI	10/10	575	69	47	406	4	68%	+3.2	3	8.6	7.9	15	2.8	49	-1.7	3	-4.0%	27	15	27	5.4%	23	18.2%	12	55%	14%
2023	ARI	7/7	295	43	27	187	1	63%	-3.3	4	6.9	7.9	7	1.7	52	-3.1	0	-32.1%	49	-67	50	-3.3%	34	19.5%	9	48%	16%
2024	WAS	17/17	771	91	66	654	7	73%	+6.0	3	9.9	7.5	13	2.8	49	-0.9	1	11.5%	15	112	10	21.0%	18	17.7%	13	45%	13%
2025	WAS			74	52	486	5	70%			9.3							7.0%									

Ertz had a bit of a career resurgence at 34 years old with his most receptions and yards in a season since 2021, which was split between the Eagles and Cardinals. He was the favorite option for Jayden Daniels inside the red zone (team-leading 21 targets) which led to seven touchdowns inside the 20. He was eighth among tight ends in receiving plus/minus but, as has been the case for most of his career, not much happened after the catch. However, Ertz finished better than -1.0 YAC+ for the first time since 2021.

<b>Harold Fannin</b>		Height: 6-3			Weight: 241			College: Bowling Green			Draft: 2025/3 (67)			Born: 20-Jul-2004			Age: 21										
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2025	CLE		50	34	344	2	68%			10.1							-7.9%										

As far as on-paper talent goes, Fannin is up there with the best. He can handle a big offensive workload, more than doubling the next-highest pass catcher at Bowling Green in receptions (117, next highest was 49) and nearly tripling the next highest in receiving yards (1,555 to 569). Both marks led all of FBS. He split out wide often in the Bowling Green offense, showing the same athleticism he flexed at the combine. Now it's just a matter of making the leap from MAC football to the NFL. While he did shine in the few opportunities he had against Power Four opponents, the smaller frame may prevent him from being effective at the next level in physical blocking scenarios. At the very least, Fannin has the chance to be a strong offensive running mate for David Njoku in 12 personnel.

<b>Noah Fant</b>		Height: 6-4			Weight: 249			College: Iowa			Draft: 2019/1 (20)			Born: 20-Nov-1997			Age: 28										
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2022	SEA	17/16	660	63	50	486	4	79%	+4.2	0	9.7	6.4	34	4.4	30	-0.2	3	5.6%	19	53	17	10.7%	20	11.3%	26	21%	14%
2023	SEA	17/17	574	43	32	414	0	74%	+1.5	1	12.9	6.9	20	5.5	11	+0.9	4	13.9%	9	58	16	-11.7%	38	7.7%	37	23%	0%
2024	SEA	14/9	569	64	48	500	1	75%	+0.7	2	10.4	5.4	38	5.8	13	+1.0	6	7.5%	19	61	16	-2.3%	33	13.5%	22	46%	9%
2025	SEA		51	37	394	2	73%			10.7							2.3%										

While Fant's efficiency has improved in Seattle, he's had nowhere near the same volume as he had in Denver, where he was a focal point of the Broncos offenses. Fant's 500 yards last season were his most in a Seahawks uniform; he topped that mark every year in Denver. He has one touchdown in the last two seasons; he had at least three every season in Denver. There's a reason the Seahawks went out and used a second-round pick on a tight end! There were rumors that Fant would be traded or released, but he's still here and probably will be the Seahawks' leading pass-catching tight end for one more season. After that, his contract is up and he'll likely be moving on.

<b>Jake Ferguson</b>		Height: 6-5			Weight: 244			College: Wisconsin			Draft: 2022/4 (129)			Born: 18-Jan-1999			Age: 26										
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2022	DAL	16/8	430	22	19	174	2	86%	+1.8	0	9.2	3.5	--	6.5	--	+1.2	6	4.3%	--	17	--	29.9%	--	4.2%	--	14%	0%
2023	DAL	17/16	880	102	71	761	5	70%	+0.4	4	10.7	5.2	42	6.0	9	+1.1	13	3.0%	22	70	13	13.3%	17	16.6%	16	45%	6%
2024	DAL	14/14	616	86	59	494	0	69%	-4.3	3	8.4	4.2	46	5.2	23	-0.5	13	-40.4%	48	-176	49	-19.1%	41	16.5%	16	41%	8%
2025	DAL		80	57	544	3	70%			9.6							-2.1%										

After a productive first two seasons, Ferguson was the worst starting tight end by most metrics in 2024. It's not just that he finished last, it was how far last he was. His -176 DYAR was 94 worse than the next qualified tight end, and there was a bigger gap between Ferguson and the 48th-ranked tight end than between that tight end and the one ranked 28th. In fact, Ferguson had the lowest DYAR figure for a tight end in our database *ever*, going back to 1978. Head coach Brian Schottenheimer called Ferguson's season a "fluke" and Ferguson noted knee and concussion issues played a factor in his play. The health of Dak Prescott was also a factor. Ferguson went from 7.4 targets and 47.7 yards per game with Prescott to start the season to 4.9 targets and 22.9 yards per game without him.

## Worst DYAR Season for Tight Ends, 1978-2024

Year	Player	Tm	DYAR	Rec	Pass	Yds	TD	Yd/Rec	C%	Year	Player	Tm	DYAR	Rec	Pass	Yds	TD	Yd/Rec	C%
2024	Jake Ferguson	DAL	-176	59	86	494	0	8.4	69%	2010	Daniel Graham	DEN	-140	18	37	153	0	8.5	49%
2011	Marcedes Lewis	JAX	-161	39	85	460	0	11.8	46%	2004	Boo Williams	NO	-138	33	75	362	2	11.0	44%
2018	Ricky Seals-Jones	ARI	-158	34	69	343	1	10.1	49%	1997	Jamie Asher	WAS	-129	49	99	474	1	9.7	49%
1998	Freddie Jones	SD	-155	57	111	602	3	10.6	51%	2004	Stephen Alexander	DET	-129	41	76	377	1	9.2	54%
2020	Zach Ertz	PHI	-144	36	72	335	1	9.3	50%	1989	Jay Novacek	PHX	-129	23	53	225	1	9.8	43%

Terrance Ferguson		Height: 6-5			Weight: 255			College: Oregon			Draft: 2025/2 (46)			Born: 7-Mar-2003			Age: 22										
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2025	LAR		45	32	344	2	73%			10.6							6.9%										

The Rams traded out of the first round, so second-round pick Ferguson is their top selection of the 2025 draft. They needed pass catchers after the departure of Cooper Kupp, and their tight end room last season was a couple of tumbleweeds and a mannequin hastily dressed in a blue-and-yellow jersey, so there's opportunity for Ferguson to make an immediate impact. Rams tight ends had just 459 receiving yards last season, fewest in the NFL. Ferguson had nearly 600 yards last year at Oregon despite missing two games with an appendectomy. He is not a blocker, and he doesn't really run deep routes, but he's a strong short-yardage volume machine.

Pat Freiermuth		Height: 6-5			Weight: 258			College: Penn State			Draft: 2021/2 (55)			Born: 25-Oct-1998			Age: 27										
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2022	PIT	16/8	743	98	63	732	2	64%	-2.7	2	11.6	8.3	11	4.5	29	-0.0	9	3.0%	22	66	14	33.6%	7	18.8%	10	47%	8%
2023	PIT	12/9	474	47	32	308	2	68%	+2.1	0	9.6	6.6	24	4.5	26	-0.2	3	-4.4%	31	9	31	-0.9%	29	14.0%	20	45%	8%
2024	PIT	17/11	776	78	65	653	7	83%	+9.8	3	10.0	6.2	27	4.3	35	-0.2	3	26.0%	6	163	5	22.1%	17	17.1%	14	58%	16%
2025	PIT		66	50	472	4	76%			9.4							8.7%										

Freiermuth benefitted from the quarterback change one-third of the way into the season, going from 32 yards per game with Justin Fields to 42 yards per game with Russell Wilson. He put up big DVOA numbers in the red zone and on third/fourth downs, and he caught seven touchdown passes, the most since his breakthrough rookie season. He was also spurred on, at least in part, by a contract extension in September, putting any doubts about his immediate future to rest. In Arthur Smith's scheme, tight ends will always have a place, albeit generally blocking first.

Mike Gesicki		Height: 6-6			Weight: 245			College: Penn State			Draft: 2018/2 (42)			Born: 3-Oct-1995			Age: 30										
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2022	MIA	17/1	478	52	32	362	5	62%	-0.3	1	11.3	9.4	6	3.0	47	-1.1	1	0.4%	24	27	24	-12.4%	37	9.1%	33	44%	17%
2023	NE	17/10	530	45	29	244	2	64%	-1.3	0	8.4	8.5	4	3.0	49	-1.1	1	-19.7%	46	-35	45	-29.5%	49	8.2%	35	69%	24%
2024	CIN	17/3	523	83	65	665	2	78%	+6.1	5	10.2	7.4	14	3.8	42	-0.4	3	10.1%	17	92	13	12.8%	24	12.9%	26	71%	25%
2025	CIN		71	52	506	3	73%			9.8							4.8%										

Gesicki was named by Joe Burrow himself as a key figure to re-sign in the offseason, and what Joey Franchise wants, Joey Franchise gets. Gesicki recalled being home watching a Burrow interview when he was positively name-checked and responded "with the Leo DiCaprio meme—pointing at the TV and yelling 'that's me!'" Back with the Bengals in 2025, Gesicki will continue to play what is essentially a slot receiver role—only 4% of his 523 snaps came in-line in a traditional tight end position. And he will likely continue to be a steady target for when Cincinnati's more elite pass catchers are covered. Just don't go taking Burrow's endorsement as a reason to select Gesicki highly in your fantasy draft. He is more of a comfortable third/fourth option than a featured player.

Dallas Goedert		Height: 6-5			Weight: 256			College: South Dakota State			Draft: 2018/2 (49)			Born: 3-Jan-1995			Age: 30										
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2022	PHI	12/12	735	69	55	702	3	80%	+5.7	3	12.8	6.3	37	7.6	3	+2.4	4	36.0%	2	204	2	43.9%	6	19.6%	6	34%	11%
2023	PHI	14/14	809	83	59	592	3	71%	+0.3	1	10.0	5.4	38	5.4	12	+0.4	7	6.4%	14	75	10	13.7%	16	19.0%	11	43%	19%
2024	PHI	10/10	446	52	42	496	2	81%	+5.6	3	11.8	6.6	22	6.1	6	+1.5	2	-10.8%	36	-13	36	37.1%	6	20.9%	6	35%	19%
2025	PHI		78	61	660	3	79%			10.8							17.7%										

It was unclear if Goedert would return to the Eagles this offseason as he only had one year remaining on his contract with no guaranteed money. Goedert didn't sign an extension but rather agreed to an overall pay cut while the remaining \$10 million on his deal became guaranteed. Goedert only played 10 games in the 2024 regular season and finished with negative DYAR,

## 362 TIGHT ENDS

but he led all tight ends with 49 DYAR in the playoffs with 31.6% DVOA, and he led the Eagles in postseason receiving yards. Even after the potential parting of ways and Goedert reaching his age-30 season, his role remains unchallenged. Backup Grant Calcaterra isn't much of a blocker and the Eagles didn't add much at tight end behind them.

Noah Gray			Height: 6-3			Weight: 240			College: Duke			Draft: 2021/5 (162)			Born: 30-Apr-1999			Age: 26									
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2022	KC	17/8	597	34	28	299	1	82%	+2.3	1	10.7	5.0	43	6.5	7	+0.9	2	21.7%	4	66	15	-12.5%	38	5.5%	45	9%	12%
2023	KC	17/10	592	42	28	305	2	68%	+0.3	1	10.9	6.6	26	4.8	20	+0.0	5	-2.4%	28	14	28	-15.2%	40	6.9%	41	29%	21%
2024	KC	17/10	664	49	40	437	5	82%	+6.0	1	10.9	6.3	26	5.3	21	+0.5	3	30.4%	5	131	7	22.3%	16	8.4%	37	35%	8%
2025	KC			37	28	283	3	75%			10.2							12.9%									

Noah Gray, Chiefs TE1 in 2025? It may be time. With Travis Kelce beginning to finally show age, Gray took another step forward in 2024. He has now had back-to-back seasons in the top five in receiving DVOA, and he managed to climb into the top 10 in DYAR as well as he has been getting more and more work in the offense. Had Kelce retired this offseason, as rumors suggested, Gray would be an exciting top fantasy prospect! Instead, Gray is at best in a timeshare and most likely will at least start the year pretty firmly behind Kelce as the legend gets his due deference. Gray might even see his workload decrease from last year—the Chiefs ran a lot of two-tight end sets for most of the year because of the issues with their wide receivers, but Xavier Worthy, Rashee Rice, and Hollywood Brown all being healthy at the same time will probably limit that. If the Chiefs wanted to get their best five weapons on the field, Gray would probably see plenty of action. But supplanting a franchise legend isn't always that simple.

Hunter Henry			Height: 6-5			Weight: 249			College: Arkansas			Draft: 2016/2 (35)			Born: 7-Dec-1994			Age: 31									
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2022	NE	17/14	797	59	41	509	2	69%	+1.3	1	12.4	7.7	18	5.0	22	+0.4	1	10.4%	14	67	13	-6.6%	33	11.2%	27	41%	12%
2023	NE	14/10	664	61	42	419	6	69%	+0.5	4	10.0	8.8	3	1.9	51	-1.9	1	15.9%	6	91	9	13.2%	18	13.5%	23	49%	7%
2024	NE	16/16	835	97	66	674	2	68%	+3.1	2	10.2	7.0	17	4.1	38	-0.5	5	1.8%	25	58	19	12.4%	26	20.0%	9	64%	1%
2025	NE			77	52	544	4	67%			10.5							0.6%									

It's rare that 674 receiving yards are good enough to lead a team, but Henry did exactly that for the Patriots in 2024. As is often the case for tight ends, Henry was significantly better against zone; he posted 81 DYAR and 37.7% DVOA against zone compared to -46 DYAR and -18.2% DVOA vs. man. This split isn't entirely his fault, though. Since he was the primary threat in the passing game, when defenses played man, they could commit whomever they wanted to stopping Henry. With Stefon Diggs and Kyle Williams now commanding more attention than Kayshon Boutte and Kendrick Bourne ever did, Henry could get more mismatches when facing man coverage. It's also possible that he will simply see more zone as a result—New England faced the third highest rate of man coverage in the league.

Tyler Higbee			Height: 6-6			Weight: 255			College: Western Kentucky			Draft: 2016/4 (110)			Born: 1-Jan-1993			Age: 33									
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2022	LAR	17/17	888	108	72	620	3	67%	-7.3	6	8.6	3.0	48	5.6	15	+0.7	8	-8.4%	29	-8	33	23.1%	12	20.7%	5	16%	18%
2023	LAR	15/15	866	70	47	495	2	67%	-1.4	5	10.5	5.8	36	5.2	15	+0.9	0	-7.8%	40	-2	40	-4.2%	36	14.0%	19	27%	6%
2024	LAR	3/3	58	12	8	66	2	67%	-0.6	0	8.3	2.2	--	6.0	--	+1.4	0	-8.7%	--	-1	--	86.7%	--	12.2%	--	17%	0%
2025	LAR			43	30	273	3	70%			9.1							0.2%									

Higbee tore his ACL in 2023 and didn't make it back on to the field until Week 16 last year. He did get 10 targets in the Rams' playoff loss to Philadelphia, but he's 32 years old and hasn't had a season with positive receiving DVOA since 2021. There's every chance that his job goes to Terrance Ferguson by the time the season is over, though Higbee should be the leader to at least start the season as the top tight end in the lineup. It will be interesting to see if Sean McVay uses more two-tight end sets with Higbee and Ferguson, but only the 49ers and Falcons used fewer multi-tight end sets than the Rams did last year.

Taysom Hill				Height: 6-2			Weight: 221			College: Brigham Young					Draft: 2017/FA			Born: 23-Aug-1990			Age: 35						
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2022	NO	16/8	326	13	9	77	2	69%	+0.5	2	8.6	5.8	--	4.1	--	-0.4	14	2.9%	--	9	--	-29.6%	--	2.8%	-	23%	46%
2023	NO	16/7	425	40	33	291	0	83%	+3.4	1	8.8	5.2	41	4.0	39	-1.2	16	3.4%	20	27	24	-2.2%	33	7.3%	38	48%	18%
2024	NO	8/8	225	31	23	187	0	74%	-0.2	1	8.1	3.6	48	6.0	9	+0.4	11	-22.8%	44	-31	39	28.1%	10	13.0%	25	38%	25%

Think of the Taysom experiment as if it were an eccentric zillionaire's effort to prove that wombats can be sent into space. After half a decade and mountains of incinerated money, it turns out that wombats can indeed be sent into space. But why? What purpose could space wombats possibly serve? Shouldn't that money and energy have been spent on sending humans or robots into space, or on solving some problems closer to home? So yes, an obscure dual-threat college quarterback can be turned into a gadget-friendly RB4/TE3/WR5/PR2 and almost serviceable QB3. But ... the Saints should have been spending Taysom's salary (and ever-extending bonuses), roster spot, practice reps, and creativity on *finding and developing a starting quarterback*. The reason no other team seriously tries to turn someone like Trey Lance into a Taysom Hill is because no one really wants a Taysom Hill.

Hill tore his ACL in December. For the first time since the Mayflower landed, the Saints did not extend his contract in the offseason, opting instead to eat a big slice of his ridiculous contract. The Taysom Hill Era is nearly at its end, unless Sean Payton gets a wild hair for a space wombat in 2026.

Hockenson missed the first half of the 2024 season with an ACL/MCL tear he suffered on Christmas Eve in 2023. He caught eight passes for 72 yards in Week 10 against the Jaguars, then seven passes for 112 yards in Week 12 against the Bears, before settling into his role as the third option in a passing game with outstanding first and second options. Hockenson was targeted just once inside the 10-yard line in 2024 and zero times in his last five games of 2023, so his low touchdown total is a by-product of Kevin O'Connell's game-planning preferences. Hockenson's a heck of a player, but fantasy managers should be leery of tight ends who go a calendar year without even getting a crack at a goal-line gimme.

Like Hunter Henry, Hooper thrived against zone and two-high coverages. His three best games came against Miami, Chicago, and Buffalo. All three opponents were top-10 in zone coverage rate, and only Chicago (14th) was outside of the top 10 in two-high coverage rate. Hooper has got a type! The biggest issue for Hooper is that New England will likely decrease their two-tight end sets now that they have a real group of receivers.

Johnson led the Saints with nine receptions of 15 or more air yards in 2024. That's a testament to: a) Johnson's athleticism; b) the impact of the Chris Olave/Rashid Shaheed injuries; and c) the inability of any Saints quarterback to establish a credible medium-to-deep passing attack. Johnson is an awful blocker but a mismatch headache with tackle-breaking YAC capability. Kellen Moore may use him in a Jake Ferguson or Dallas Goedert-like role, moving him to the slot frequently so Foster Moreau can play for-real tight end and the non-Olave/Shaheed receivers can remain planted on the bench. It won't be enough to save the Saints from miserable quarterbacking, because it wasn't last year, but Johnson could put up some numbers.

Theo Johnson			Height: 6-6			Weight: 264			College: Penn State			Draft: 2024/4 (107)			Born: 26-Feb-2001			Age: 24									
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2024	NYG	12/11	683	43	29	331	1	67%	-1.3	3	11.4	6.7	19	5.1	24	+0.1	3	-6.4%	31	2	31	-26.0%	46	10.7%	30	42%	2%
2025	NYG		57	39	440	2	69%				11.3							0.3%									

Before going down for the season with a Lisfranc fracture, Johnson was a heavy favorite of the Giants offense. During his peak usage between Weeks 8 and 13, Johnson's 27 targets were second on the team outside the high-volume rookie Malik Nabers. From Week 14 onward, backup tight ends Daniel Bellinger and Chris Manhertz combined for just 16 targets in Johnson's absence. Considering the Giants used 11 personnel on 74% of offensive snaps (tied for fourth-highest usage in the league) Johnson should be a popular option for whoever New York anoints their next starting quarterback.

Travis Kelce			Height: 6-5			Weight: 250			College: Cincinnati			Draft: 2013/3 (63)			Born: 5-Oct-1989			Age: 36									
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2022	KC	17/17	914	152	110	1338	12	72%	+7.8	10	12.2	7.1	24	6.0	11	+1.9	23	15.2%	7	248	1	59.8%	4	24.7%	3	14%	15%
2023	KC	15/15	775	121	93	984	5	77%	+7.3	6	10.6	6.8	22	5.1	17	+0.5	8	12.7%	10	157	2	47.8%	3	22.8%	3	49%	24%
2024	KC	16/16	940	133	97	823	3	73%	+5.3	6	8.5	6.6	21	3.5	45	-0.9	2	-13.5%	38	-57	46	22.5%	15	24.3%	3	41%	27%
2025	KC		103	76	710	5	74%				9.4							6.3%									

ESPN's receiver scores claimed Kelce was the worst catching tight end in the NFL in 2024, giving him a Catch Score of 0. Our numbers disagree there, as we have Kelce with a +5.3 receiving plus/minus, meaning he caught more passes than expected thrown his way. But there's no doubt that Kelce is coming off a terrible year by his standards—his first ever year with negative receiving DVOA and negative DYAR. He has now set a career low in yards per reception in back-to-back years as well.

How do you get the most out of an aging Hall of Famer? Perhaps Kansas City should use him differently. They love throwing quick hitch routes to Kelce and letting him make something happen with the ball in his hands, but he has been below replacement level the last three years doing that as he's no longer as explosive after the catch.

Instead, perhaps they'll give the bulk of that every-down work to Noah Gray, and let Kelce save himself for bigger routes. Kelce still had a positive DVOA on deep outs and corners, and he still has enough wiggle and savvy to get himself open. Let him focus more on intermediate and deep stuff, and he may have one last hurrah left in him.

Dalton Kincaid			Height: 6-4			Weight: 240			College: Utah			Draft: 2023/1 (25)			Born: 18-Oct-1999			Age: 26									
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2023	BUF	16/11	699	91	73	673	2	80%	+8.6	2	9.2	5.9	35	4.3	31	-0.5	8	-3.2%	29	24	25	7.6%	21	17.6%	14	58%	15%
2024	BUF	13/9	471	75	44	448	2	59%	-7.0	2	10.2	7.8	11	6.2	5	+0.3	6	-17.7%	43	-50	44	33.6%	8	19.6%	10	55%	12%
2025	BUF		91	59	650	4	65%				11.0							-3.6%									

Kincaid is staring down a pivotal third season, and Bills brass are expecting a leap. He took a big step back in 2024 after a strong rookie season, and it doesn't help that he dropped Josh Allen's miraculous fourth-down throw in the AFC Championship Game. Kincaid played roughly 60% of his snaps from the slot in both 2023 and 2024, so don't expect a role change in 2025. We did see less of Kincaid last year as Buffalo ran the ball more, which lended itself to more snaps for Dawson Knox. Kincaid still flashed explosive ability, averaging 6.2 yards after catch per reception. That ranked third behind Tucker Kraft and George Kittle among tight ends with at least 50 targets last year.

**George Kittle**

Height: 6-4

Weight: 250

College: Iowa

Draft: 2017/5 (146)

Born: 9-Oct-1993

Age: 32

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTKI	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2022	SF	15/15	859	86	60	765	11	70%	+3.1	1	12.8	6.6	30	6.4	8	+1.7	8	22.6%	3	178	3	46.6%	5	19.4%	7	35%	6%
2023	SF	16/16	895	90	65	1020	6	72%	+4.9	4	15.7	9.5	2	7.4	3	+2.7	12	38.7%	1	268	1	53.0%	1	20.4%	8	30%	11%
2024	SF	15/15	808	94	78	1106	8	83%	+14.7	2	14.2	8.9	5	6.7	3	+2.3	10	59.1%	2	426	1	85.2%	1	20.9%	7	32%	8%
2025	SF		95	74	1007	7	78%				13.7							45.6%									

Apparently, something in the NFL bylaws changed and allowed the 49ers to sign one of their stars to a contract before the end of training camp. After very briefly flirting with a trade, the 49ers locked Kittle up to a four-year, \$76-million contract extension that makes him the highest paid tight end in football. Kittle was a godsend for the 49ers last season with so many of their top receiving options hurt or ineffective. Kittle's 426 receiving DYAR in 2024 was second all time for tight ends behind 2011 Rob Gronkowski, and his 59.1% DVOA was the fifth best ever—and the absolute best if you set the minimum at 75 targets. Kittle is also now just 0.1 behind Travis Kelce for receiving plus/minus in the 2020s, as Kittle has gotten better with Brock Purdy and Kelce has gotten worse with age. Assuming Kittle can stay productive throughout his new extension, he could run away with the All-Decade spot at tight end.

**Best DYAR Season for Tight Ends, 1978-2024**

Year	Player	Tm	DYAR	Rec	Pass	Yds	TD	Yd/Rec	C%	Year	Player	Tm	DYAR	Rec	Pass	Yds	TD	Yd/Rec	C%
2011	Rob Gronkowski	NE	461	91	125	1329	18	14.6	73%	1993	Shannon Sharpe	DEN	360	81	110	995	9	12.3	74%
2024	George Kittle	SF	426	78	94	1106	8	14.2	83%	1987	Mark Bavaro	NYG	343	55	73	865	8	15.7	75%
2020	Travis Kelce	KC	415	105	145	1416	11	13.5	72%	2017	Rob Gronkowski	NE	339	69	105	1084	8	15.7	66%
2000	Tony Gonzalez	KC	362	93	150	1203	9	12.9	62%	2009	Antonio Gates	SD	339	79	114	1157	8	14.6	69%
2010	Antonio Gates	SD	361	50	65	782	10	15.6	77%	1983	Todd Christensen	LARD	334	92	126	1255	12	13.6	73%

**Cole Kmet**

Height: 6-6

Weight: 260

College: Notre Dame

Draft: 2020/2 (43)

Born: 10-Mar-1999

Age: 26

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTKI	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2022	CHI	17/17	970	69	50	544	7	72%	+2.7	2	10.9	6.7	28	5.7	13	+0.8	5	11.4%	11	86	8	16.0%	14	19.0%	8	25%	10%
2023	CHI	17/17	878	90	73	719	6	81%	+8.5	0	9.8	6.3	31	4.0	40	-0.7	7	14.9%	8	129	4	34.8%	8	18.9%	12	45%	14%
2024	CHI	17/16	994	55	47	474	4	85%	+7.0	1	10.1	7.3	16	3.9	41	-0.5	2	21.9%	8	109	11	-8.2%	34	10.5%	31	55%	5%
2025	CHI		50	39	370	3	78%				9.5							11.8%									

Kmet should be effective in the Sam LaPorta role in Ben Johnson's Lions-flavored offense. Kmet operated out of the slot frequently last year but was an effective in-line blocker when called upon. He was effective on the type of block-and-release plays Johnson designed for LaPorta. The Bears just couldn't use such plays all that often, because they work best when opponents respect the run threat, and Bears opponents rarely respected the run threat. Kmet should also survive a challenge from first-round pick Colston Loveland, who will be limited at the start of camp due to January shoulder surgery. Johnson loves two-tight end formations, which will allow Kmet and Loveland to peacefully coexist for a year or two.

**Dawson Knox**

Height: 6-4

Weight: 254

College: Mississippi

Draft: 2019/3 (96)

Born: 14-Nov-1996

Age: 29

Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTKI	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2022	BUF	15/15	825	65	48	517	6	74%	+3.8	1	10.8	7.8	17	4.0	36	-0.4	4	11.5%	10	82	9	-14.5%	40	13.2%	23	42%	22%
2023	BUF	12/11	487	36	22	186	2	61%	-2.3	2	8.5	7.0	18	4.4	30	-0.5	1	-16.9%	45	-23	43	-20.6%	45	9.3%	31	33%	19%
2024	BUF	16/13	618	33	22	311	1	67%	+1.9	0	14.1	9.7	3	4.3	36	-0.5	0	18.0%	10	59	17	-22.3%	44	7.1%	40	26%	15%
2025	BUF		27	18	222	2	67%				12.3							9.2%									

Knox has faced criticism this offseason due to a combination of his hefty contract and the fact he's not viewed as the Bills' TE1, but the fact is that he played nearly 200 more snaps than Dalton Kincaid last season as Buffalo adopted more of a run-first approach. In fact, Knox out-snapped Kincaid in every game from Week 10 onward in 2024. Knox has obviously taken a big step back in the receiving department—his last two years combined don't even reach one of his typical seasons prior to Kincaid

joining the team—but there's something to be said about how he adapted to a new role in the offense. His days of 50 receptions for nearly 600 yards and double-digit receiving touchdowns are over, but there's no reason to believe Knox won't share the field with Kincaid just as much in 2025.

Kraft is a reliable underneath target and adequate run-blocker who consistently barrels through the first tackler he meets. He's a sure-handed receiver, though he did fumble twice last year. Kraft's fantasy value is limited, however, by Josh Jacobs, the Packers' deep receiving corps of talented misfits, and fellow tight end Luke Musgrave. Musgrave should be back from last season's ankle injury, but look for Kraft to keep his regular role, because Jordan Love needs someone to throw to whose scouting profile doesn't read, "Gosh, he's breathtakingly talented, buuuutttttt..."

Watching LaPorta can enhance your appreciation of what a true all-purpose tight end (as opposed to some Kyle Pitts type) brings to a run-oriented offense. LaPorta is effective enough as an in-line blocker to draw linebackers and slower safeties in coverage. Opponents lose track of him when he sets to block at the snap, resulting in tight end screens for big plays and the occasional sneaky seam route. The Lions sometimes used Dan Skipper as a sixth lineman and LaPorta as a wide receiver, and LaPorta was able to work the middle against cornerbacks while the other 10 defenders were thinking “run.” Will such creativity continue now that John Morton has replaced Ben Johnson? Who knows? But Morton has been hanging around the NFL for 20 years, and it doesn’t take much imagination to realize that the ultra-athletic tight end can outrun a linebacker caught flat-footed by play-action.

Likely ascended during his time filling in for Mark Andrews during the 2023 season, and he became a player that needed to be on the field more often in 2024. He was on the field for 59.3% of Baltimore's passing plays but was only able to manage an 11.6% target share based on how much the Ravens spread the ball around. Likely spent half of his snaps in the slot but was most dangerous when he was lined up off the line. He was the most targeted player on wheel routes (five) and had 135.8% on that route. Likely started the season with a nine-catch, 111-yard game against the Chiefs, and while he did not come close to matching those numbers for the rest of the season, he provides a receiving threat that could go off at any time.

The Bears raised eyebrows by selecting Loveland over flashy Penn State tight end Tyler Warren in the first round, but Ben Johnson knows what he is doing. (Ryan Poles may not know what he's doing, but let's allow Bears fans to revel in this offseason of optimism.) Loveland underwent shoulder surgery in January. He's likely to be eased into training-camp participation. That makes him an unlikely threat to take Cole Kmet's starting job in 2025. Johnson uses lots of two-tight end sets, however, and is likely to keep both Kmet and Loveland on the field when the Bears are ahead of the sticks and within hailing distance on the scoreboard. You shouldn't be seeking immediate fantasy value from a rookie tight end, anyway.

Michael Mayer			Height: 6-4			Weight: 265			College: Notre Dame			Draft: 2023/2 (35)			Born: 6-Jul-2001			Age: 24									
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2023	LV	14/12	602	40	27	304	2	68%	+0.8	2	11.3	5.7	37	6.1	8	+1.7	5	20.5%	5	71	12	-0.4%	27	9.0%	32	30%	13%
2024	LV	11/8	460	32	21	156	0	66%	-3.0	1	7.4	6.2	28	2.9	48	-1.4	2	-27.5%	46	-44	42	-36.3%	51	8.2%	39	47%	3%
2025	LV			37	26	240	2	70%			9.3							-8.3%									

The Raiders could run a ton of two-tight end sets this year. They want to get the ground game going, and behind Jakobi Meyers and Brock Bowers, they're not losing much by keeping other wide receivers off the field. Mayer showed off his athleticism after the catch in 2023 but struggled to get much going last year. Word out of camp has been overwhelmingly positive though, predicting a larger role in the 2025 offense. These kinds of reports tend to embellish quite a bit, but there's no denying Mayer's size and athleticism. If the opportunity is there, he could give the Raiders the unquestioned best tight end duo in the league.

Trey McBride			Height: 6-4			Weight: 246			College: Colorado State			Draft: 2022/2 (55)			Born: 22-Nov-1999			Age: 26									
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2022	ARI	16/13	599	39	29	265	1	74%	+0.3	0	9.1	6.3	35	4.0	35	-0.8	2	-10.6%	35	-8	34	-32.1%	52	6.6%	43	28%	8%
2023	ARI	17/12	786	106	81	825	3	76%	+5.9	2	10.2	6.2	33	5.2	16	+0.1	11	-1.4%	26	41	21	45.1%	4	19.4%	10	42%	8%
2024	ARI	16/16	934	147	111	1146	2	76%	+10.1	3	10.3	6.1	29	4.6	31	+0.1	10	4.7%	24	123	8	55.7%	4	29.6%	1	45%	9%
2025	ARI			142	106	1054	6	75%			9.9							2.9%									

McBride was very briefly the highest-paid tight end in football as Arizona locked up their budding superstar and the focal point of their passing game. Arizona's pass DVOA drops by nearly 10 points if you remove McBride's targets—and there were plenty of them. He had 25.7% of Arizona's targets, leading all tight ends and only behind Malik Nabers and Drake London including all positions. All that volume propelled him near the tops of nearly every counting category ... except for touchdowns. While his luck is bound to turn around at some point, McBride has just six touchdowns in his three years in the league. His 2.7% touchdown rate is the lowest among anyone with at least 200 catches in that time, and by a full percentage point at that. His -37.8% DVOA in the red zone last season was 36th among qualified tight ends; it's a weird hole in his otherwise fantastic game that's bound to get fixed at some point.

Foster Moreau			Height: 6-4			Weight: 250			College: Louisiana State			Draft: 2019/4 (137)			Born: 6-May-1997			Age: 28									
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2022	LV	15/14	745	54	33	420	2	61%	-2.0	2	12.7	8.4	10	7.2	6	+2.2	4	5.4%	21	42	19	-12.9%	39	10.8%	29	33%	19%
2023	NO	15/10	549	25	21	193	1	84%	+2.0	1	9.2	4.9	44	4.6	25	-0.2	1	5.8%	15	21	27	-3.6%	35	4.9%	49	16%	4%
2024	NO	17/17	752	43	32	413	5	74%	+3.4	0	12.9	9.2	4	4.9	28	+0.9	1	23.8%	7	93	12	35.0%	7	8.2%	38	28%	5%
2025	NO			20	14	155	1	68%			11.4							3.8%									

Moreau, who overcame non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in the 2023 offseason, is a sturdy in-line blocker and a reliable target on short passes. He never caught more than four passes or gained more than 50 yards in 17 starts last season, even though the Saints were fresh out of wide receivers in many of those games and could have used more production from their tight ends. Teammate Juwan Johnson generally catches more passes and runs deeper routes than Moreau, but Johnson makes Kyle Pitts look like Mike Ditka as a blocker. Moreau is a fine player of limited fantasy interest.

If Njoku can stay on the field for the Browns, he instantly becomes one of their best pass catchers. Battling through multiple ankle and knee injuries (as well as off-field burns from a backyard fire in 2023), Njoku has been banged up the last few seasons in Cleveland. Now he has the chance to return to a high-volume offensive weapon for the Browns. That coincides perfectly with a return to Stefanski's offense sans Deshaun Watson. Njoku's first three seasons (the third of which saw 11 games of Jacoby Brissett instead of Watson) produced Njoku's only three seasons of positive DVOA and double-digit positive DYAR. At the very least, whoever starts in Cleveland will lean heavy on Njoku and Jerry Jeudy as the core to this lackluster pass-catching group. But perhaps there's a chance that Njoku can return to his former role as one of the league's better offensive weapons.

Sixty-one of Okonkwo's 253 yards after the catch came on one play against the Texans where he was left wide open and untouched. The Callahan offense took Okonkwo away from being a big-play target, as he mostly worked underneath as a matchup-dependent play. Twenty-eight of Okonkwo's targets came in his last three real games of the season. (He played only three snaps against the Texans in Week 18.) He'll make an interesting free agent next year, as the Titans drafted Gunnar Helm in the fourth round and appear to like Josh Whyle enough to have him split time with Okonkwo. Okonkwo isn't a blocker, but he can do more than he showed this past season as a receiver.

Otton went 25-258-3 during one three-game October stretch in which the Bucs were suffering a wide receiver injury plague. He often lined up split wide during the crisis, then took over Chris Godwin's motion-slot role for a few weeks before Jalen McMillan was healthy/experienced enough to assume it, then went back to being a normal all-purpose tight end before suffering his own late-season knee injury. Otton's fantasy value is limited by his supporting role in an ensemble cast; even his goal-line value is nerfed by the presence of Mike Evans and emergence of Bucky Irving. But he's an outstanding player who is integral to the Bucs' success.

Parkinson had some fantasy hype last season as Tyler Higbee recovered from his torn ACL. Instead of breaking out as an every-week starter, however, Higbee was quickly embroiled in a time share with Davis Allen and Hunter Long, failing to receive more than two targets in all but one game after the beginning of November. He fell so far on the depth chart that he had only four snaps in the Divisional Round. It's hard to imagine him having too much of an impact on the 2025 season when he couldn't take advantage of the opportunities he had last season.

<b>Kyle Pitts</b>		Height: 6-6			Weight: 250			College: Florida			Draft: 2021/1 (4)			Born: 6-Oct-2000			Age: 25										
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2022	ATL	10/10	434	59	28	356	2	47%	-5.9	3	12.7	14.0	1	4.6	28	+0.6	3	-9.0%	31	-7	32	61.3%	3	25.8%	2	37%	34%
2023	ATL	17/15	728	90	53	667	3	59%	-1.2	1	12.6	11.3	1	2.5	50	-1.5	1	4.9%	18	71	11	16.5%	15	18.0%	13	52%	35%
2024	ATL	17/15	707	74	47	602	4	64%	-2.6	3	12.8	8.4	6	5.8	12	+1.3	7	-7.3%	32	0	32	-9.7%	37	13.5%	23	36%	22%
2025	ATL		70	44	576	4	63%				13.0							8.4%									

Kirk Cousins eventually lost faith in Pitts, who caught just six of 15 targets for 51 yards in Cousins' final four starts. It's unclear what took him so long. Pitts welcomed Michael Penix to the NFL by appearing to catch a touchdown pass, only to "whoops" an interception to a Giants defender as if he were a shortstop tossing to the second baseman for a force-out. Pitts may be the most disappointing non-quarterback in the NFL right now, but the Falcons are The Team That Sunk Cost Fallacy Built, so they picked up his fifth-year option before last season and will pay Pitts about \$11 million to be the sixth option in their offense again in 2025. Pitts still has theoretical mismatch potential and will have one or two big games per year against weak or injury-riddled defenses. Don't keep him on your roster just for those games. That's the sort of thing the Falcons would do.

<b>Ja'Tavion Sanders</b>		Height: 6-4			Weight: 252			College: Texas			Draft: 2024/4 (101)			Born: 27-Mar-2003			Age: 22										
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2024	CAR	16/8	531	43	33	342	1	77%	+1.1	3	10.4	6.7	20	5.8	14	+0.3	1	-5.2%	29	6	30	-21.1%	43	8.9%	35	50%	7%
2025	CAR		61	45	440	2	73%				9.9							-3.9%									

Sanders produced a few rookie highlights, including a 46-yard hurdling catch-and-run against the Saints, but also had several inexcusable drops on routine flat passes. He doesn't adjust to the throw well when the ball is in the air, which is a problem when chasing Bryce Young's alley-oops. Sanders looks big and strong enough to throw George Kittle into the sun, so he's going to get lots of extra opportunities, but no one wants a YAC specialist who drops the ball with no defenders within 10 yards of him. The Panthers re-signed Tommy Tremble, which means they will continue to ease Sanders along as more of a mismatch specialist than a starter.

<b>Dalton Schultz</b>		Height: 6-5			Weight: 242			College: Stanford			Draft: 2018/4 (137)			Born: 11-Jul-1996			Age: 29										
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2022	DAL	15/15	817	89	57	577	5	64%	-4.1	2	10.1	7.2	22	3.6	40	-0.3	3	-9.2%	32	-12	36	14.4%	15	18.4%	11	46%	7%
2023	HOU	15/8	739	88	59	635	5	67%	+0.1	1	10.8	7.6	10	4.4	29	-0.2	8	2.4%	23	55	18	24.4%	9	17.4%	15	33%	14%
2024	HOU	17/13	865	85	53	532	2	62%	-4.7	5	10.0	8.0	10	4.0	39	-0.4	8	-17.7%	42	-57	45	-16.6%	39	15.3%	17	26%	11%
2025	HOU		68	45	479	2	67%				10.6							-3.8%									

Schultz was absolutely woeful as a pass blocker last year, culminating in a performance where you can say he arguably helped the Chiefs on four of the eight sacks C.J. Stroud took in the Divisional Round. If Schultz hadn't cost money to release in 2025, he may have been gone already. Instead, he'll be more of the same for the Texans: A decent tertiary passing-game option who lacks explosion and is dinged up quite a bit more than you would like. It wouldn't be surprising if his snap share faltered this year as the Texans try to see what they have in Cade Stover.

## 370 TIGHT ENDS

Ben Sinnott		Height: 6-4			Weight: 247			College: Kansas State			Draft: 2024/2 (53)			Born: 14-Jun-2002			Age: 23										
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2024	WAS	17/2	311	5	5	28	1	100%	+1.0	0	5.6	1.8	--	3.8	--	-0.7	0	0.0%	--	3	--	-60.2%	--	1.0%	--	20%	20%
2025	WAS			39	28	276	2	72%			9.9							2.8%									

The 2024 third-round pick only had five catches as a rookie, but there has been a lot of hype around Sinnott's potential going into his second season. Dan Quinn singled Sinnott out as a second-year player stepping up in offseason practices. Even without much receiving production as a rookie, Sinnott had value as a blocker, and his versatility to line up in the backfield and as an H-back gave the Commanders offense some different looks in the run game. If Washington can build more passing plays out of that, Sinnott could become a useful passing-game weapon as a complementary receiver.

Jonnu Smith		Height: 6-3			Weight: 248			College: Florida International			Draft: 2017/3 (100)			Born: 22-Aug-1995			Age: 30										
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2022	NE	14/8	423	38	27	245	0	71%	-2.1	1	9.1	3.1	47	7.4	4	+1.1	6	-19.1%	44	-29	42	-6.0%	32	8.8%	35	21%	16%
2023	ATL	17/6	652	70	50	582	3	71%	+0.6	3	11.6	6.5	27	7.1	7	+1.9	11	4.0%	19	52	19	12.2%	19	13.6%	21	40%	20%
2024	MIA	17/6	626	111	88	884	8	79%	+5.9	4	10.0	5.1	42	5.8	11	+0.5	10	15.7%	13	171	4	61.6%	3	19.6%	11	38%	23%
2025	PIT			82	61	638	4	74%			10.5							12.1%									

Holy breakout, Batman! Smith had more receptions and yards last year than he had in 2022 and 2023 combined. As expected, Jonnu's production primarily came against two-high looks, benefitting from the way teams defended the speed of Tyreek Hill and Jaylen Waddle. He had -23 DYAR and -16.6% DVOA vs. single-high coverages, but 90 DYAR and 17.0% DVOA against two-high. His 518 receiving yards against two-high coverages was seventh overall in the NFL and first among tight ends. Now traded to Pittsburgh and reunited with Arthur Smith, who coached him in Atlanta two years ago. He'll be playing in a lot of two-tight end sets next to Pat Freiermuth.

Brenton Strange		Height: 6-4			Weight: 253			College: Penn State			Draft: 2023/2 (61)			Born: 27-Dec-2000			Age: 25										
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2023	JAX	14/4	307	9	5	35	1	56%	-1.2	0	7.0	7.6	--	5.6	--	+1.1	0	-34.2%	--	-16	--	-48.0%	--	1.7%	--	33%	11%
2024	JAX	17/10	575	53	40	411	2	75%	+1.1	1	10.3	6.4	25	4.6	32	+0.0	9	4.9%	21	45	24	22.6%	14	10.4%	32	51%	13%
2025	JAX			76	54	500	3	71%			9.3							-4.9%									

Jaguars general manager James Gladstone predicted that Strange would have a part in the offense "in a way we haven't seen yet" in his introductory press conference before the combine. Strange certainly showed a lot of flashes last year in his first extended run, looking comfortable catching the ball deep on out routes and hitches. Travis Hunter is here too, but with questions about how much usage to expect from him in his first season, there are scenarios where Strange winds up as the Jaguars' No. 2 target. He's a viable fantasy TE1 at this point, and his depth of target delivers him with a case to have a weekly ceiling that some other tight ends in his area can't reach. It's a Strange Condition and Gladstone is going to find out what he wanted to know.

Mason Taylor		Height: 6-6			Weight: 253			College: Louisiana State			Draft: 2025/2 (42)			Born: 8-May-2004			Age: 21										
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTkl	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2025	NYJ			67	47	474	3	70%			10.0							-4.0%									

Yes, Jason Taylor is his dad and Zach Thomas is his uncle. Taylor was playing for LSU as a true freshman in 2022 and last year became the first 100-catch, 1,000-yard tight end in school history. He's smooth when he catches the ball, adjusting well to the throw, and he can break tackles afterwards. He's also a better blocker than the other tight ends on the Jets depth chart, although he can still work on improving his blocking technique. He'll be the starter; just remember for fantasy football purposes that most rookie tight ends are not Brock Bowers—or even Tim Wright.

<b>Darren Waller</b>		Height: 6-6			Weight: 238			College: Georgia Tech					Draft: 2015/6 (204)			Born: 13-Sep-1992			Age: 33								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTKI	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2022	LV	9/6	346	43	28	388	3	65%	+2.3	0	13.9	13.3	2	2.9	48	-1.8	1	5.8%	18	39	22	11.1%	19	15.0%	16	49%	24%
2023	NYG	12/11	568	74	52	552	1	70%	+0.8	2	10.6	8.3	5	4.1	37	-0.5	2	5.1%	17	58	17	21.3%	13	22.3%	4	45%	39%
2025	MIA			54	38	389	3	70%										5.8%									

It's easy to point to Waller's low yards per reception during his year in New York as evidence that he's washed, but perhaps not. Daniel Jones and Tommy DeVito were horrendous, and Waller had his four best games with Tyrod Taylor at quarterback. That said, his 2021 and 2022 seasons in Las Vegas were also underwhelming, he's now had a full year out of football, and he turns 33 in September. Expectations should be low for Waller, but a resurgent year in an offense that just helped Jonnu Smith set career highs across the board isn't out of the question.

<b>Tyler Warren</b>		Height: 6-5			Weight: 256			College: Penn State					Draft: 2025/1 (14)			Born: 24-May-2002			Age: 23								
Year	Tm	G/GS	Snaps	Pass	Rec	Yds	TD	C%	+/-	Drop	Yd/C	aDOT	Rk	YAC	Rk	YAC+	BTKI	DVOA	Rk	DYAR	Rk	RDVOA	Rk	Use	Rk	Slot	Wide
2025	IND			83	57	618	4	68%																			

The clippings were very exciting. Chris Ballard said the last time he felt this good about a pick was Quenton Nelson. ESPN's Stephen Holder reported that the Colts were simply peppering the ball to Warren in their early offseason program. While Warren broke a ton of tackles in college, he favored physicality to do it and that may not be quite as effective at the NFL level, and Penn State also rarely used him as a deep receiver. Regardless, Warren seems like a very safe bet to throw up a bunch of 600- to 900-yard seasons over the duration of his rookie contract, and it's certainly possible that he'll do much better than that. We wouldn't be surprised if he became Indianapolis' No. 1 receiver by volume quickly this season, and he certainly feels like a freeroll in fantasy football drafts at his mid-summer ADP of around TE10.

## Going Deep

**Nate Adkins, DEN:** Being the least productive (by receiving yards) of the 2024 Denver tight ends is like being the least appetizing Brussels sprout. He did lead his position group in DYAR and DVOA, so maybe he should have been given more opportunity. He's a steady contributor to Denver's special teams, which could help him stick on the Broncos roster.

**Mo Alie-Cox, IND:** Brought back on a one-year deal just before the draft, Alie-Cox has been asked to run fewer and fewer routes by Shane Steichen over the last two years. This year, the Colts have just drafted Tyler Warren to get it off the table as quickly as possible. Assuming he makes it out of camp healthy, Alie-Cox will battle Will Mallory and Drew Ogletree for the No. 2 role behind Warren as the main blocker.

**Davis Allen, LAR:** Most of Allen's work came in one game against the Dolphins—five catches for 34 yards. Take that out and he had two receptions for 18 yards on the year, and that's despite starting five games and seeing his snap share jump 50% from his rookie season. His -54.1% DVOA was the third lowest for tight ends with double-digit targets. He'll hope to hold on as the Rams' TE3.

**Erick All, CIN:** All dropped to the fifth round in the 2024 draft due to a long injury history, then he provided an electric charge to the Bengals offense in the early part of the campaign, blocking with menace and catching with aplomb (20-of-22 for 158 yards). But taking the oft-injured guy is risky for a reason; All went down with a torn ACL in mid-October, and then quietly suffered a setback in January that will cost him the entire 2025 season (so don't be the "smart" fantasy drafter who grabs him in the late rounds). He'll be 26 by the time he next plays a real game, if he is fortunate enough to make it back at, uh, all.

**Gavin Bartholomew, MIN:** Bartholomew played four seasons for Pitt, maxing out at 38 catches in his final season. He's well-built and sure-handed with adequate blocking chops, but a sluggish runner with no real YAC juice. The Vikings made him a sixth-round pick based on his reputation as a team captain and locker room leader. He'll get a chance to stick in Johnny Mundt's old role, and on special teams.

**John Bates, WAS:** Bates signed a three-year contract for \$21 million with \$11.5 million guaranteed this offseason. That might seem like a lot for a player who had 13 targets last season, but Bates is going to be on the field because he can block. Man, can he block. The way Bates can motion and pull and keep his physicality opened up a lot in the Washington run game and is more than enough to keep him heavily involved in the offense even if not a lot of passes are coming his way.

**Daniel Bellinger, NYG:** Bellinger once looked like a promising young tight end for the Giants before breaking his jaw during his rookie season. Since that hot start to his rookie year, Bellinger has slipped into a secondary role and looked every bit of the Day 3 backup tight end he was drafted to be. There has been a considerable slip in his usage to the point where after Theo Johnson went down with injury—after averaging an 88% offensive snap share from Weeks 6 to 13—Bellinger only eclipsed 70% of snaps twice despite starting four of those last five games.

**Pharaoh Brown, MIA:** Entering his seventh year in the NFL, Brown has a career high of 208 receiving yards in a single season. This is already the fifth time he's changed teams, going from Seattle to Miami in the offseason, but he does bring something to the table: blocking. He's a big dude who blocks more like a lineman than a tight end, effective both in the run game and in pass protection. The only problem is he runs after the catch like a lineman as well.

**Harrison Bryant, PHI:** Best known to fantasy players as the guy who stole David Njoku's touchdowns. The Eagles signed Bryant when Dallas Goedert was questionable at best to be brought back, but Goedert agreed to a reworked contract in May that will keep him in Philadelphia, so there's no guarantee that Bryant makes the opening roster.

**Grant Calcaterra, PHI:** Calcaterra has a bit of a strange role in the Philadelphia offense. He's the second tight end on an offense that likes to make use of heavier personnel, but he's not known for his blocking. As a receiver, he's the fourth or fifth option when he's on the field. That leads to a lot of playing time but not a ton of action. He played at least 20 snaps in all four postseason games but saw only one target. But he did have 22.1% DVOA over his 30 targets during the regular season. The Eagles didn't do much at tight end this offseason, so Calcaterra should stay on the field in his role as the No. 2 tight end.

**Tanner Conner, MIA:** Conner went undrafted out of Iowa in 2022, and he's a tweener. He's not fast and quick enough to play wide receiver in the NFL like he did in college, but he's undersized for a tight end. Given Miami's pattern of small, fast skill-position players, if he's ever going to catch on somewhere, as a tight end for the Dolphins makes the most sense.

**Jalin Conyers, MIA:** An undrafted rookie who falls in between a big slot receiver and a tight end, a bit in the Mike Gesicki mold but with more heft. Conyers played for Texas Tech last season and Arizona State before that. His best college season was back in 2022 when he had 38 catches for 422 yards and five touchdowns. The Miami tight end spot is a mess after the Jonnu Smith trade, so he's got a shot.

**Payne Durham, TB:** Durham started two games and caught two short touchdown passes when Cade Otton was injured in Weeks 17 and 18. He earned regular playing time as a designated blocking tight end throughout the season, often serving as an effective pass protector when Otton was moonlighting as a de-facto wide receiver due to injuries. Durham is a sturdy role player and facial hair All-Pro who has already gone from cowboy 'stache to cop 'stache to hipster beard in his college and pro career, but he'll strictly be a decoy receiver on a team with so many playmakers.

**Mitchell Evans, CAR:** Evans suffered a broken foot at Notre Dame in 2022 and missed half of 2023 and part of 2024 with an ACL tear. He returned to have a sturdy season as a blocker and short-pass target. The Panthers drafted Evans in the fifth round to sit next to Jonathan Brooks in the MRI waiting room and laugh about how ridiculous it is for a team that wins five games per year to keep drafting obvious injury cases.

**Luke Farrell, SF:** Farrell is essentially a pure blocker. He only ran a route on 24.4% of Jacksonville's snaps despite playing on 36.3% of them. Only three tight ends in the league had a bigger gap between their total snaps and their route running. He's not a backup for George Kittle, but rather the replacement for Charlie Woerner the 49ers lacked in 2023. Kittle spent 13% of his pass snaps blocking in 2024, more than he had in either of the previous two seasons. Being able to count on Farrell could free up Kittle more in 2025.

**Thomas Fidone, NYG:** A seventh-round rookie from Nebraska, Fidone is a project. He saw just over 600 yards of career output in his two years of play. He's not a great route runner, and he can't produce much after the point of catch. That being said, he's got a big-if-underdeveloped frame and shined at the combine with 10-foot-6 broad jump, 39-inch vertical, and a 4.70s 40-yard dash. As Fidone grows his game, he can provide a great canvas to create an athletic offensive tight end. With Theo Johnson already occupying the top tight end slot, just don't expect Fidone to jump out of the gate immediately.

**Oronde Gadsden, LAC:** Gadsden is a receiver-to-tight end convert with an NFL pedigree. His father (also named Oronde) played for the Dolphins at the turn of the millennium. The Chargers are looking for a vertical pass-catching threat at tight end, and the fifth-round pick out of Syracuse just might be an answer. He's a nice big target who's used to big volume, with five 100-yard games last season. Can't block anyone, but that won't stop him from contributing.

**Kylen Granson, PHI:** Granson was part of the uber-athletic Colts tight end movement but never fully developed into an offensive weapon. He has failed to post positive DVOA in his first four seasons and has just one career touchdown on 136 targets. He did join the Colts during the Carson Wentz era and the quarterback play has not improved much since then, so maybe there's some untapped potential in a better offense, but a third receiving tight end with no blocking upside has a very small path to success.

**Jackson Hawes, BUF:** Hawes, a fifth-round rookie, is a physical 6-foot-4 and 253 pounds and has been referred to as a "sixth offensive lineman." Hawes is not explosive but is reliable and showed some short-area potential with four touchdowns on just 13 receptions in 2022. His physicality is appealing on special teams, too, which will likely help him earn the TE3 role and a spot on the roster.

**Gunnar Helm, TEN:** A standout in 2024, when he caught 60 of his 79 career receptions for 786 yards and two touchdowns at Texas, Helm slid into the fourth round as a reliable target without strong athleticism—he ran just a 4.84s 40-yard dash at the combine. The Titans will likely have him compete with Josh Whyle for the No. 2 tight end role behind Chig Okonkwo this year in camp, a matchup that usually favors the veteran. Helm would do himself a big favor by gelling with Cam Ward in camp.

**Elijah Higgins, ARI:** Higgins saw his offensive snap count more than double last season, starting six games and playing more than half the snaps in two of them. Being the pass-catching tight end behind Trey McBride, however, means that Higgins had little to do. He hit a 12.1% DVOA on his 24 targets, just falling short of qualifying for our leaderboards. Seeing his usage increase is a positive sign, and he played about half of Arizona' special teams snaps, so his roster spot is likely safe. Just don't expect him to light up any scoreboards anytime soon.

**Julian Hill, MIA:** The third-year tight end will compete with veteran Darren Waller for the starting job now that Jonnu Smith was sent out of Miami. Hill hasn't done anything to earn the opportunity yet in his brief career. He has 18 catches for 148 yards in 31 games played despite playing nearly half of the team's snaps last year. He's mostly on the field to block but given how involved Smith was in the passing game, he will likely need to expand his skill set if he wants to be the starter. This is especially true because if all he offers is blocking, then he's just a worse version of Pharaoh Brown.

**Tanner Hudson, CIN:** A journeyman who played college ball for the Southern Arkansas Muleriders, Hudson keeps hanging around the pros by doing what is asked of him—namely, hurl his body at defenders in multi-tight end sets and catch the occasional pass when defenses are too concerned with the big dogs in the Bengals attack. Hudson is trusted by the coaches and signed for 2025, but don't waste any fantasy prep time on him.

**Brevin Jordan, HOU:** Jordan tore his ACL in Week 2 against the Bears, but signed a one-year extension to remain with the Texans for the 2025 season. He became a sneaky-important factor in Houston's passing game in 2023 and will likely be as big a part of it in 2025 assuming he comes back healthy. So far, there's no expectation that he'll miss any time in the 2025 season on account of the ACL.

**Charlie Kolar, BAL:** Kolar has the misfortune of playing behind Mark Andrews and Isaiah Likely. He was on the field for 21% of Baltimore's snaps in 2024 but only saw 11 targets. However, he averaged 39.1% DVOA and 8.4 yards after the catch per reception. He's also a good blocker and special teams contributor. He missed four games with a broken arm but returned at the end of the regular season.

**Lucas Krull, DEN:** Krull showed flashes as a rookie, but not enough to prevent Denver from looking to upgrade at the position, which they did with Evan Engram. Krull's best chance of earning snaps will be to out-block Evan Engram so that he can play on running downs and potentially some in the red zone. Outside of Greg Dulcich, who only played four games, Krull was the only Denver tight end to not score and the only one to post negative receiving DYAR and DVOA. He's more athletic than the average tight end, but it seems he went undrafted for a reason.

**Luke Lachey, HOU:** You know you're dealing with an Iowa tight end when you read scouting report lines like "consistently catches the ball off his shoe tops or outside his frame." Lachey, Houston's seventh-round pick, dealt with a broken fibula in 2023 and a quad injury in 2024, but profiles as an end-of-roster receiving tight end without enough juice to be a fantasy football darling. Lachey is the son of Ohio State's radio network color commentator Jim Lachey and only played for the Hawkeyes after getting no scholarship offer from the Buckeyes. Now he gets to talk his crap to Cade Stover every day! Inspiring!

**Caleb Lohner, DEN:** If this seventh-round pick out of Utah ever gets playing time, be ready to hear all about how he's an ex-basketball player. Commentators love a tight end with a basketball background! Especially when he's 6-foot-7, the same height as Jimmy Graham. All four of Lohner's receptions last year were touchdowns, but he's a project to say the least.

**Hunter Long, JAX:** A hilarious inclusion in the 2023 Jalen Ramsey trade, Long proved his worth as a blocking tight end with the Rams over the past few seasons. He finally saw a good amount of playing time in 2024, playing over 93 offensive snaps for the first time in his career, and even added seven catches for 60 yards. He'll battle with Johnny Mundt for the main blocking tight end role in Jacksonville behind Brenton Strange after signing almost exactly the same one-year deal as Mundt.

**Moliki Matavao, NO:** A Saints' seventh-round pick from UCLA by way of Oregon, Matavao is a 6-foot-6 looks-the-part dude with sure hands. He's a lumbering runner but has potential as a blocking specialist. His roster-spot availability may depend on whether Taysom Hill is healthy.

**Johnny Mundt, JAX:** Mundt stands alone as he begins to block. My name is Johnny, he casually remarks. He's Mundt, he's Mundt, he's Mundt, he'll turn 31 in November. He's Mundt, he's Mundt, he's Mundt, his blocking you'll remember. Is this Mundt Going Deep out of my head? I think so. Is this Mundt making some bread? I think so. And that's all I have to say about that.

**Luke Musgrave, GB:** Musgrave got a few early-season starts during the Malik Willis era, when the ball rarely traveled more than five yards downfield. He suffered an ankle injury, tried to grunt through it, but eventually went on IR with torn ligaments. He returned for two late-season games and the playoff loss, but Tucker Kraft was by then firmly established as the starting tight end. Musgrave left college as a mega-talented project who caught just 22 passes in his best season and often battled injuries. Three years later, he's the same guy.

**Andrew Ogletree, IND:** The younger and better of the two Colts blocking tight ends, Ogletree ran just 151 routes in 439 offensive snaps last year. Mo Alie-Cox has the tenure, but Ogletree had a bit more thunder and, unlike Alie-Cox, wasn't an unsigned free agent for part of the offseason. We expect Ogletree to have the inside track for the No. 2 tight end role in Indianapolis this year.

**Josh Oliver, MIN:** Oliver started for the Vikings and often played 30-plus offensive snaps per game while T.J. Hockenson was injured. But he was targeted just eight times in the first seven Vikings games last year, enjoying a brief three-game 11-140-2 surge just after Hockenson's return but before suffering his own ankle injury. Oliver also played through a wrist injury for much of the season, which surely impacted his target share. He'll back up Hockenson again this year, provide great blocking, and rarely see the football.

**Tip Reiman, ARI:** The Cardinals used Reiman as a blocking tight end on about 40% of their snaps in 2024. He ran a route on only 37% of his offensive snaps, putting him third lowest among tight ends with at least 400 snaps, and he was the first read on just 14.3% of them, making him the most blocking of blocking tight ends in the league. The Cardinals clearly like him in that role, where he'll continue to draw roughly zero pass targets once more this year.

**Jeremy Ruckert, NYJ:** Three years since the Jets drafted him out of Ohio State, and things just haven't quite clicked for this local kid. He started nine games last year but had just 18 catches for just 105 yards. He hasn't had a touchdown in the NFL yet. He's not really a great blocker either, and he's now behind Mason Taylor on the depth chart.

**Drew Sample, CIN:** Sample has exactly 100 catches and four touchdowns across six NFL seasons, quality work as a late-round flyer or UDFA but hardly the production one expects or needs from a former second-round pick back in 2019. Nevertheless, Sample's solid blocking, either in line or as an H-back, has proven useful to Cincinnati's high-octane attack. And so his career plods along, with every start making his once-lofty draft status seem ever-so-slightly more worthwhile.

**Eric Saubert, SEA:** Saubert was brought in to San Francisco to replace Charlie Woerner as the 49ers' blocking tight end. Unimpressed, the 49ers let him go after just one season, with the Seahawks then becoming the 11th team of Saubert's nine-year career. Saubert's roster spot became jeopardized when Seattle drafted Elijah Arroyo, so he'll have to hope the Seahawks keep four tight ends, with one of them being a blocking specialist.

**Luke Schoonmaker, DAL:** The 2023 second-round pick out of Michigan got six starts in 2024 and was a bigger piece of the passing game. He was mostly fine considering the rest of the Dallas offense and had -5.2% receiving DVOA. Schoonmaker has entered OTAs injured the past two seasons, so this could be his first healthy offseason to make an impact and develop.

**Stone Smartt, NYJ:** Smartt averaged 13.4 yards per reception for the Chargers over the last two seasons and has a much better record than Jeremy Ruckert when it comes to moving the sticks. Like both Ruckert and fourth Jets tight end Zack Kuntz, Smartt is not really a great blocker.

**Durham Smythe, CHI:** Smythe, a Dolphins role player for many years, became their blocking tight end in 2024. He was targeted just 17 times all season, though he was often on the field for 15 to 30 snaps per game. This year, Smythe gets a chance to stick as the Bears blocking specialist behind Cole Kmet and Colston Loveland.

**Brevyn Spann-Ford, DAL:** An undrafted rookie out of Minnesota, the 6-foot-7 Spann-Ford saw 14 targets for 88 yards. He doesn't have the athleticism of top tight ends (he had a 17th-percentile 3-cone) but can use his bigger frame to create a mismatch. He was mostly a blocking tight end when he was on the field but got some run with the first team during offseason workouts.

**Cade Stover, HOU:** Before breaking his collarbone late in the season, Stover had started to see plenty of time as an ancillary piece. Stover was playing roughly half the snaps by Week 6, sometimes as a pseudo-fullback. It didn't lead to a major fantasy football role or anything like that, but Stover did catch a touchdown against the Titans in Week 12. He enters the 2025 offseason as the likely heir apparent to Dalton Schultz, albeit one without much of a history of NFL receiving production just yet.

**Adam Trautman, DEN:** If Trautman were bigger, he would just be an offensive lineman, because he's not adding much as a receiving threat. In five years in the NFL, he has yet to clear 300 receiving yards in a single season, but he's a dependable blocker and knows Sean Payton's system well enough to help other players on the offense due to his time with Payton in New Orleans.

**Tommy Tremble, CAR:** It should be illegal for Tommy Tremble and Rico Dowdle to exist on the same roster; their presence makes the Panthers sound less like a football team than an Aquabats tribute band. The totally tubular Tremble does everything a team could ask a No. 2 tight end to do—shallow crosses, rollout tosses in the flat, adequate blocking—except that he's the Panthers starter. Ja'Tavion Sanders should replace Tremble this year, but the Panthers signed Tremble to a two-year extension, so look for another 23 catches in 2025.

**Darnell Washington, PIT:** The most interesting thing to occur during Washington's two seasons in the league thus far was Steelers tight end coach Alfredo Roberts blurting out last fall that his blocking tight end weighed over 300 pounds. Pittsburgh made Washington the 93rd overall pick in the 2023 draft because of his receiving ability and agility relative to his size, but not at that enormity. The big fella increased his receiving numbers across the board in 2024, but then again, they had nowhere to go but up. This season is a key crossroads for Washington; either tight end worshipper Arthur Smith finds a role for him in the Steelers attack or Big D converts to the offensive line and lets his glutton flag fly.

**Josh Whyle, TEN:** Whyle pushed Nick Vannett for the No. 2 role often in the early season, starting four games and accumulating some dump-off targets. The Titans staff trusted Vannett's blocking a little more and thus he was a more consistent part of the game plan. With Gunnar Helm now in town, Whyle enters the third year of his rookie contract with a tenuous hold on the No. 2 spot on the depth chart behind Chig Okonkwo.

**Brock Wright, DET:** Wright caught four passes for 34 yards against the Cardinals in Week 3, when Sam LaPorta was limited due to a minor ankle injury. Wright was never targeted for more than two passes again in 2024, even when LaPorta missed Week 11 with a shoulder injury. Wright is a rugged blocker, and the Lions use lots of multi-tight end sets, but there are only so many footballs to go around.

# 2025 Kicker Projections

Listed below are our 2025 projections for kickers. Kicker effectiveness is inconsistent from one year to the next, so the major differentiator between kickers in our fantasy projections is the forecast of field goal and extra point opportunities that vary based on their offenses, schedules, and other contextual factors. That said, the projections do aim to estimate kicker ranges, which in turn influence the volume of their projected deep field goal attempts.

Kickers are listed with their total fantasy points based on two different scoring systems. For Pts1, all field goals are worth three points. For Pts2, all field goals up to 39 yards are worth three points, field goals of 40 to 49 yards are worth four points, and field goals over 50 yards are worth five points.

Note that field goal totals below are rounded, but “fantasy points” are based on the actual projections, so the total may not exactly equal ( $FG * 3 + XP$ ).

## 2025 Kicker Projections

Player	Team	XP	FG	Pct	50+	Pts1	Pts2
Jake Bates	DET	49	35-43	82%	7.3	154.5	177.8
Brandon Aubrey	DAL	35	35-41	84%	11.9	139.0	174.4
Cameron Dicker	LAC	40	34-38	91%	7.8	143.3	168.3
Ka'imi Fairbairn	HOU	38	34-39	87%	9.3	140.0	163.5
Chase McLaughlin	TB	41	32-36	90%	8.5	136.5	158.4
Tyler Loop	BAL	47	29-35	82%	5.9	132.7	151.9
Wil Lutz	DEN	43	30-35	86%	4.0	133.0	148.9
Chris Boswell	PIT	34	30-36	84%	7.8	124.6	147.5
Harrison Butker	KC	40	30-34	90%	4.4	130.8	145.7
Joshua Karty	LAR	42	28-34	83%	5.8	125.5	144.0
Younghoe Koo	ATL	40	28-36	79%	5.1	125.3	142.9
Matt Gay	WAS	42	28-32	87%	4.5	125.5	140.4
Tyler Bass	BUF	48	26-29	88%	3.9	125.4	139.9
Evan McPherson	CIN	45	26-31	83%	5.7	121.5	139.3
Brandon McManus	GB	43	25-30	84%	5.1	119.5	136.8
Jake Elliott	PHI	43	27-32	83%	3.5	122.5	136.1
Jake Moody	SF	40	27-34	79%	4.3	120.3	135.1
Jason Sanders	MIA	34	27-33	81%	6.5	113.6	132.6
Jason Myers	SEA	37	25-28	90%	5.0	111.6	128.3
Daniel Carlson	LV	31	27-31	87%	4.8	112.0	127.6
Cam Little	JAX	38	24-29	82%	4.9	109.5	125.2
Will Reichard	MIN	37	24-29	83%	4.9	108.1	123.4
Cairo Santos	CHI	36	24-29	82%	4.8	106.1	122.4
Graham Gano	NYG	33	22-26	87%	5.2	99.5	116.8
Andy Borregales	NE	35	22-27	82%	4.5	100.8	115.2
Blake Grupe	NO	32	23-26	86%	4.9	99.4	115.1
Chad Ryland	ARI	36	21-25	85%	3.0	99.7	110.8
Spencer Shrader	IND	44	18-21	83%	3.6	97.3	108.5
Dustin Hopkins	CLE	28	22-26	84%	3.7	93.8	108.3
Harrison Mevis	NYJ	34	19-22	83%	3.8	89.3	101.5
Matthew Wright	CAR	32	18-21	86%	1.5	85.8	92.9
Joey Slye	TEN	31	16-20	79%	3.1	79.2	89.5

# 2025 Fantasy Defense Projections

Listed below are our 2025 projections for fantasy team defense. The main elements of team defense projections are:

- Schedule strength is very important for projecting fantasy defense.
- Categories used for scoring in fantasy defense have no consistency from year-to-year whatsoever, except for sacks and interceptions.

Fumble recoveries and defensive touchdowns are forecast based on league averages, rather than the team's totals in

these categories from a year ago. This is why the 2025 projections may look very different from the fantasy defense values from the 2024 season. Safeties and shutouts are not common enough to have a significant effect on the projections. Special teams touchdowns are included.

In addition to projection of separate categories, we also give an overall total based on our generic fantasy scoring formula: one point for a sack, two points for a fumble recovery or interception, and six points for a touchdown. Remember that certain teams (for example, Kansas City) will score better if your league also gives points for limiting opponents' scoring or yardage.

## 2025 Fantasy Defense Projections

Team	Fant Pts	Sack	FR	INT	TD
DEN	116	43.3	8.0	15.3	4.3
PHI	115	44.4	10.7	16.2	2.8
MIN	109	42.2	9.4	15.5	2.9
CHI	103	45.6	9.1	11.4	2.8
LAC	103	40.3	8.8	13.7	3.0
BUF	103	38.3	11.2	13.8	2.4
BAL	102	38.2	8.6	13.6	3.2
PIT	100	38.2	9.9	14.6	2.2
CAR	97	44.1	11.1	14.0	0.5
DET	96	39.6	8.8	12.7	2.3
GB	92	38.2	8.4	11.7	2.3
SF	91	35.4	9.2	12.0	2.2
DAL	91	36.5	9.5	10.8	2.3
NYJ	90	45.7	7.2	9.4	1.9
ATL	88	35.6	8.3	11.1	2.3
LV	88	38.1	7.0	14.9	1.0
TB	87	38.4	8.3	11.9	1.4
NYG	87	39.6	8.2	10.6	1.6
HOU	87	38.1	7.6	11.0	1.9
WAS	86	36.5	7.7	12.7	1.4
CIN	86	39.0	8.2	8.5	2.2
KC	85	33.5	8.0	12.9	1.6
LAR	83	31.1	6.9	13.4	1.9
CLE	83	40.8	9.4	7.0	1.5
NE	82	29.0	7.2	11.7	2.5
ARI	80	36.1	6.6	12.1	1.0
SEA	79	34.5	7.8	10.6	1.2
IND	78	34.7	6.8	10.2	1.6
JAX	77	33.1	6.6	11.2	1.3
MIA	75	36.2	5.5	10.9	1.0
TEN	72	33.1	6.3	8.7	1.5
NO	71	34.2	6.1	8.9	1.2

# FO Rookie Projections

Over the years, our team has developed a number of methods for forecasting the NFL success of highly drafted players at various positions. Here is a rundown of those methods and what they say about players drafted in 2025.

## Quarterbacks: QBASE

In 2021, we introduced a new version of the QBASE (Quarterback Adjusted Stats and Experience) system which combines the original work done by Andrew Healy with the functional mobility model developed by Jeremy Rosen and Alexandre Olbrecht.

QBASE v2.0 analyzes all rookie quarterbacks chosen among the top 100 picks of the NFL draft since 2004. It uses regression analysis to determine which factors helped predict their career TDYAR/A, or total DYAR per attempt. This combines both passing and rushing value divided by total passes plus runs.

QBASE generates adjusted college performance as a composite of three college statistics: completion rate, rushing yards per attempt, and passing touchdowns per completion. Statistics are adjusted based on strength of schedule and strength of teammates. The latter element gives credit based on the draft-pick value of offensive linemen and receivers drafted in the quarterback's draft year as well as the projected draft position of younger teammates in 2026.

The measurement of past performance is then combined with two other factors: college experience and draft position. The latter factor accounts for what scouts will see but a statistical projection system will not, including personality, leadership, and projection of physical attributes to the next level.

QBASE also looks at the past performance of quarterbacks compared to their projection and using 50,000 simulations, produces a range of potential outcomes for each prospect: Elite quarterback (over 1.5 TDYAR/A, or roughly 1,000 or more DYAR in an average 17-game season); Upper Tier quarterback (0.75 to 1.5 TDYAR/A); Adequate Starter (0.0 to 0.75 TDYAR/A); or Bust (less than 0.0 TDYAR/A).

Here are QBASE projections for quarterbacks chosen in the top 100 picks of the 2025 draft.

Player	School	Team	Rd	Pick	TDYAR/A	Elite	Upper	Adequate	Bust
Cam Ward	Miami (FL)	TEN	1	1	0.38	17%	21%	25%	37%
Jaxson Dart	Ole Miss	NYG	1	25	0.20	12%	19%	26%	43%
Tyler Shough	Louisville	NO	2	40	-0.25	6%	12%	23%	59%
Jalen Milroe	Alabama	SEA	3	92	-1.00	1%	4%	13%	82%
Dillon Gabriel	Oregon	CLE	3	94	-0.61	3%	8%	18%	71%

These projections may differ from what ran online before the draft because they are based on actual draft position rather than projected draft position.

## Running Backs: BackCAST

BackCAST is our metric for projecting the likelihood of success for running back prospects in the NFL draft. Historically, a college running back is more likely to succeed at the NFL level if he has a good size/speed combination, gained a high average yards per carry, and represented a large percentage of his college team's running attack. Criteria measured include:

- Weight and 40-yard dash time at the NFL combine. BackCAST uses pro day measurements for prospects that did not run at the combine.
- Average yards per rush attempt, with an adjustment for running backs who had fewer career carries than an average drafted running back.
- A measurement of how much each prospect's team used him in the running game during his career relative to an average drafted running back in the same year of eligibility.
- Prospect's receiving yards per game in his college career.

BackCAST considers these factors and projects the degree to which the running back will exceed the NFL production of an "average" drafted running back during his first five years in the NFL. For example, a running back with a 50% BackCAST is projected to gain 50% more yards than the "average" drafted running back. BackCAST also lists each running back's "RecIndex," measuring whether the player is likely to be a ground-and-pound two-down back, more of a receiving back, or something in between. The higher the RecIndex, the better the back is as a receiver.

Here are the BackCAST numbers for running backs drafted in the first three rounds of the 2025 draft, along with the top five later-round picks.

Player	School	Team	Rd	Pick	BackCAST	ReclIndex
Ashton Jeanty	Boise St.	LV	1	6	114.9%	0.39
Omarion Hampton	N.Carolina	LAC	1	22	84.4%	0.11
Quinshon Judkins	Ohio St.	CLE	2	36	50.4%	-0.14
TreVeyon Henderson	Ohio St.	NE	2	38	47.7%	0.33
RJ Harvey	UCF	DEN	2	60	52.7%	0.28
Kaleb Johnson	Iowa	PIT	3	83	22.7%	-0.31
DJ Giddens	Kansas St.	IND	5	151	66.2%	0.21
Cam Skatkebo	Arizona St.	NYG	4	105	65.4%	0.89
Damien Martinez	Miami (FL)	SEA	7	223	61.7%	-0.12
Ollie Gordon	Oklahoma St.	MIA	6	179	53.9%	0.00
Devin Neal	Kansas	NO	6	184	24.6%	0.09

BackCAST was created by Nathan Forster.

### Edge Rushers: SackSEER

SackSEER is a method that projects sacks for edge rushers, including both 3-4 outside linebackers and 4-3 defensive ends, using the following criteria:

- An “explosion index” that measures the prospect’s scores in the 40-yard dash, the vertical jump, and the broad jump in pre-draft workouts.
- Sacks per game, adjusted for factors such as early entry in the NFL draft and position switches during college.
- Passes defensed per game.

SackSEER outputs two numbers. The first, SackSEER Rating, solely measures how high the prospect scores compared to players of the past. The second, SackSEER Projection, represents a forecast of sacks for the player’s first five years in the NFL. It synthesizes metrics with conventional wisdom by adjusting based on the player’s expected draft position (interestingly, not his actual draft position) based on pre-draft analysis by ESPN’s Scouts Inc.

Here are the SackSEER numbers for edge rushers drafted in the first two rounds of the 2025 draft, along with the top five later-round picks. Note that SackSEER for Jalon Walker is low in part because he was not a full-time edge rusher in college.

Name	School	Team	Rd	Pick	SackSEER Projection	SackSEER Rating
Abdul Carter	Penn St.	NYG	1	3	28.0	87.0%
Mykel Williams	Georgia	SF	1	11	19.6	33.3%
Jalon Walker	Georgia	ATL	1	15	17.9	15.2%
Shemar Stewart	Texas A&M	CIN	1	17	25.2	78.7%
James Pearce	Tennessee	ATL	1	26	19.3	58.9%
Donovan Ezeiruaku	Boston College	DAL	2	44	13.8	13.0%
JT Tuimoloau	Ohio St.	IND	2	45	16.3	67.1%
Nic Scourton	Texas A&M	CAR	2	51	15.4	45.7%
Oluwafemi Oladejo	UCLA	TEN	2	52	12.3	25.0%
Mike Green	Marshall	BAL	2	59	23.9	73.8%
Jordan Burch	Oregon	ARI	3	78	18.6	82.3%
Landon Jackson	Arkansas	BUF	3	72	16.8	81.7%
David Walker	Cen. Arkansas	TB	4	121	16.1	91.7%
Brady Swinson	LSU	NE	5	146	15.3	34.6%
Josiah Stewart	Michigan	LAR	3	90	13.1	45.1%

SackSEER was created by Nathan Forster.

**Wide Receivers: Playmaker Score**

Playmaker Score projects success for NFL wide receivers using the following criteria:

- The prospect's peak season for receiving yards per team attempt and receiving touchdowns per team attempt.
- Differences between this prospect's peak season and most recent season, to adjust for players who declined in their final college year.
- Rushing attempts per game.
- A binary variable that rewards players who enter the draft as underclassmen.
- A factor that gives a bonus to wideouts who played on the same college team as other receivers who are projected to be drafted.

Like SackSEER, Playmaker Score outputs two numbers. The first, Playmaker Score, represents a forecast of average receiving yards per year in the player's first five seasons, synthesizing metrics with conventional wisdom by adjusting based on the player's expected draft position. The second, Playmaker Rating, solely measures how high the prospect scores compared to players of the past.

Here are the Playmaker Score numbers for players drafted in the first two rounds of the 2025 draft, along with five later-round picks with high Playmaker Ratings.

Name	School	Team	Rd	Pick	Playmaker Score	Playmaker Rating
Travis Hunter	Colorado	JAX	1	2	642	87.8%
Tetairoa McMillan	Arizona	CAR	1	8	625	81.7%
Emeka Egbuka	Ohio St.	TB	1	19	377	53.7%
Matthew Golden	Texas	GB	1	23	574	69.2%
Jayden Higgins	Iowa St.	HOU	2	34	335	52.8%
Luther Burden	Missouri	CHI	2	39	556	86.1%
Tre Harris	Ole Miss	LAC	2	55	342	37.6%
Jack Bech	TCU	LV	2	58	230	37.0%
Ricky White	UNLV	SEA	7	238	212	75.2%
LaJohntay Wester	Colorado	BAL	6	203	159	73.0%
Elic Ayomanor	Stanford	TEN	4	136	330	69.9%
Kyle Williams	Washington St.	NE	3	69	235	68.2%
Pat Bryant	Illinois	DEN	3	74	222	56.9%

Playmaker Score was created by Vincent Verhei and then updated by Nathan Forster.

### Tight Ends: Travis

The Travis system projects the average receiving yards per year in a tight end's first five seasons. Criteria for Travis include:

- The player's peak season for receiving yards per team attempt.
- 40-yard dash time, either at the combine or a player's pro day.
- Age under 23 as of September of the player's rookie year.
- Expected draft position (not actual draft position) based on pre-draft analysis by ESPN's Scouts Inc.

Similar to Playmaker Score, Travis represents a forecast of average receiving yards per year in the player's first five seasons. Blocking is not considered.

Here are the Travis projections for tight ends chosen in the first three rounds of the 2025 draft, along with the top three later-round picks.

Name	School	Team	Rd	Pick	Travis
Colston Loveland	Michigan	CHI	1	10	539
Tyler Warren	Penn St.	IND	1	14	506
Mason Taylor	LSU	NYJ	2	42	381
Terrance Ferguson	Oregon	LAR	2	46	236
Elijah Arroyo	Miami (FL)	SEA	2	50	339
Harold Fannin	Bowling Green	CLE	3	67	315
Gunnar Helm	Texas	TEN	4	120	171
Oronde Gadsden	Syracuse	LAC	5	165	152
Mitchell Evans	Notre Dame	CAR	5	163	136

Travis was created by Aaron Schatz.

# Top 25 Prospects

Every year, we put together a list of the NFL's best and brightest young players ... who have barely played. Eighty percent of draft-day discussion is about first-round picks, and 10% is about the players who should have been first-round picks but instead went in the second round—particularly if they were quarterbacks.

This list is about the last 10%. It's a stab in the dark at players who may just come out of the woodwork and surprise you this year.

Everybody knows that Abdul Carter and Travis Hunter should be good. There's a cottage industry around the idea of hyping every draft's No. 1 quarterback as a potential superstar. But players don't stop being promising just because they don't make waves in their rookie seasons. This is a list of players who have a real chance to make an impact in the NFL despite their lack of draft stock and the fact that they weren't immediate NFL starters.

Previous editions of the list have hyped players such as George Kittle, Cooper Kupp, Mark Andrews, and Talanoa Hufanga before they blew up. The best names on last year's list were primarily defensive players including Cardinals cornerback Garrett Williams, Cowboys linebacker DeMarvion Overshown, and 49ers safety Ji' Ayir Brown. As always, our list had some solid starters who figure to make a lot of money in the future, and, well, some misses. These lists tend to be high-variance because by the definitions we have created here, we're trying to pick out guys who have barely done anything in the NFL so far.

The specifics of each year's list are heavily dependent on the depth of incoming draft classes. A couple of years ago, the list was filled with cornerbacks. Two years ago we had a surprising number of young quarterback prospects, led by Brock Purdy. This year is big on running backs and linebackers.

This is the 19th anniversary of the list. We're still relying on the same things: scouting, statistics, measurables, context, ceiling, expected role, and what we hear from other sources. The goal is to bring attention to players who are still developing in their second and third seasons, even after the draftniks have forgotten them. It's important to note that this list is not strictly about fantasy football (otherwise, there would be no offensive linemen on it) and career potential matters. It's not just a list for the 2025 season.

Here's our full criteria:

- Drafted in the third round or later, or signed as an undrafted free agent.
- Entered the NFL between 2022 and 2024.
- Fewer than 500 career offensive or defensive snaps (except running backs, who are allowed just 300 offensive snaps).
- Have not signed a contract extension (players who have bounced around the league looking for the right spot, however, still qualify for the list).
- Age 26 or younger as of when ages are listed below (September 1, 2025).

## 1 ER Jalyx Hunt, Philadelphia Eagles

241 defensive snaps, age 24.5, third round (2024)

Hunt was our SackSEER sleeper among edge rushers in the 2024 draft. His 86.4% SackSEER rating was second in the class behind Dallas Turner because of strong athletic testing numbers, although his sack projection was lower because of a lower projected draft position. It was a bit of a surprise when Hunt went to the Eagles in the third round instead of waiting for Day 3.

Hunt was a cornerback in high school and a safety at Cornell before transferring to FCS Houston Christian and moving to edge rusher. He's a high-motor, high-acceleration player who has only been a pass rusher for a couple of years, giving him plenty of room for growth as he improves his technique. Hunt had 1.5 regular-season sacks as a rookie with another 1.5 in the postseason. Josh Sweat is now in Arizona, so there's an opportunity for Hunt to become a starter opposite Nolan Smith and make a big impact in Vic Fangio's defense.

## 2 RB Trey Benson, Arizona Cardinals

137 offensive snaps, age 23.1, third round (2024)

Benson was third among running backs with a 21.1% Back-CAR in 2024, then had a very good rookie season in limited action: 4.4% DVOA with 3.0 average yards after contact. That would have ranked eighth if Benson had enough carries to qualify. Benson is a big back (6-foot-1, 223 pounds) and he had 19 broken tackles on just 69 touches. That's a strong 27.5% rate similar to stars such as Jahmyr Gibbs and Josh Jacobs. Benson also has receiving talent; he averaged over 11 yards per reception at Florida State and caught all six of his targets as a rookie for 59 yards.

What ranks Benson as the top running back on this year's Top Prospects list is his opportunity. He's currently sitting behind a 30-year-old James Conner, and the Cardinals have an easy out on Conner's contract after the 2025 season. Benson could be a major fantasy football force starting very soon.

## 3 FS Evan Williams, Green Bay Packers

474 defensive snaps, age 24.1, fourth round (2024)

Evan Williams is the first player who fits a common theme with this year's Top Prospects list: defensive players who fall just below our 500-snap maximum. Williams was a starter last year by Week 4, moving ahead of fellow rookie Javon Bullard who was selected two rounds before him. He qualifies for our list in part because of hamstring and quadriceps injuries which forced him to miss four regular-season games.

The aggressive Williams is a versatile player who can play deep, in the box, or even as a pass rusher. Williams led the Oregon Ducks in tackles for 2023, and that included 4.5 sacks. Last year, he helped the Packers to rank as the No. 2 defense in the league against deep passes (by DVOA). He also made his average run tackle after a gain of just 5.0 yards, one of the best figures in the league for a safety. Some scouting reports

criticized him for inconsistent tackling in college, but that wasn't a problem in Green Bay last season. He should be an even bigger part of the Packers defense in 2025.

#### **4 RB Braelon Allen, New York Jets**

**283 offensive snaps, age 21.6, fourth round (2024)**

The youngest player in the 2024 draft, Allen led all running backs in that class with a 69.7% BackCAST projection. He averaged a rushing touchdown per game at Wisconsin, and has the size and power to push the pile at 6-foot-1, 235 pounds. As a rookie, Allen averaged only 3.6 yards per carry but was good situationally, with 3.0% DVOA and a 51% success rate. He didn't get a lot of help from the Jets' blockers, averaging less than 1.0 yard before contact. There were fumble worries about Allen in college, but he didn't drop the ball once in his first year in the NFL.

The Jets are already planning on a larger role for Allen in 2025, and Breece Hall's contract ends after this season, which could make Allen the starter.

#### **5 LB Payton Wilson, Pittsburgh Steelers**

**492 defensive snaps, age 25.4, third round (2024)**

Wilson, who started four games last year for the Steelers, just barely gets under our snap limit for consideration. He's a three-down impact linebacker with sideline-to-sideline range and the most important thing an off-ball linebacker can have in today's game: pass coverage ability. Scouts Inc. called him a "first-rounder on tape" but he lasted until Round 3 because of knee injuries. Those injuries didn't seem to cause him any problems last season, and this year he will be the starter next to Patrick Queen from Week 1.

#### **6 CB Cam Hart, Los Angeles Chargers**

**458 defensive snaps, age 24.8, fifth round (2024)**

Hart started six games as a fifth-round rookie, and his advanced metrics are complicated. Somehow, Hart ended up first among qualifying cornerbacks with just 5.0 yards allowed per pass. This is particularly surprising since Hart didn't play much in the slot, where routes tend to be shorter. However, Hart ranked 27th with a 54% success rate and way down at 74th with 11.5% coverage DVOA. The problem is that he was targeted a ton when he was on the field, and there are heavy opponent adjustments because he spent much of his season covering guys such as Mason Tipton and Cedric Tillman instead of top outside threats.

No matter what DVOA says, it was a promising rookie season for the Notre Dame product. He's a bigger cornerback, 6-foot-3, who runs well for his size and reads receivers well in off coverage. He's not considered a ball hawk, as he had just two interceptions at Notre Dame and none last year for Los Angeles.

Hart tore his labrum during the wild-card loss to Houston but should be back for training camp. The Chargers hope that he can win the outside cornerback job opposite either Tarheeb Still, another 2024 fifth-round pick who played a lot in the slot as a rookie, or veteran Donte Jackson.

#### **7 G Tyler Steen, Philadelphia Eagles**

**387 offensive snaps, age 25.2, third round (2023)**

Steen started out as a defensive lineman at Vanderbilt, eventually transferring to Alabama and earning second-team all-SEC honors as the starting left tackle in 2022. He is penciled in as the Eagles' new starting right guard after a two-year apprenticeship in the School of Jeff Stoutland and the departure of Mekhi Becton to the Los Angeles Chargers. Steen had two starts last season and FTN Data charting only marked him with one pass pressure allowed. He plays with balance and changes direction well as a pass blocker. Run blocking is more of a question at this point, as Steen had a below-average run block win rate and our charting charged him with six blown blocks on run plays in his two starts a year ago.

#### **8 LB Omar Speights, Los Angeles Rams**

**419 defensive snaps, age 24.5, undrafted (2024)**

London Fletcher. Sam Mills. Zach Thomas. The history of the NFL is filled with great inside linebackers who were drafted late or went completely undrafted because they were thought to be undersized. It's going to take a lot for Omar Speights to follow in those illustrious footsteps, but he has already made his place in the NFL as the latest linebacker to have his intelligence and instincts overcome his size.

Speights was an All-Pac-12 linebacker at Oregon State and then did his final year at LSU before he went undrafted. The Rams' coaches were effusive about his maturity and hustle from very early on in camp. "He's a grown man, you feel him on game day," Sean McVay told the press. "He's got good concept recognition. He's a mature rookie." Defensive coordinator Chris Shula said about Speights, "He's very smart and doesn't make the same mistake twice. ... He's just a guy that's a pleasure to coach."

Speights began the year on special teams but got his first start on defense in Week 8. By the end of the year, he was playing roughly two-thirds of the defensive snaps in each game. He had only four broken tackles on the season and was good in pass coverage as well. For the Rams in 2025, Speights is now the sure thing; the question is not whether he will be starting, but who will be starting next to him, Troy Reeder or Nate Landman?

#### **9 G Isaiah Adams, Arizona Cardinals**

**462 offensive snaps, age 25.1, third round (2024)**

It looked like a bit of a reach when the Cardinals selected this Illinois product early in the third round of last year's draft, but he already started five games as a rookie. According to ESPN, Adams had a below-average pass block win rate, but his 77.9% run block win rate would have led all NFL guards if he had enough snaps to qualify. Adams is thick but athletic, getting into position well in the run game no matter whether he's pulling or laying down drive blocks. Like Tyler Steen, shorter arms were among the reasons Adams moved inside to guard at the pro level. He'll be Arizona's starting right guard this season.

**10** LB Jaylon Carlies, Indianapolis Colts  
242 defensive snaps, age 24.0, fifth round (2024)

Carlies played safety at Missouri and led the Tigers in tackles for his last two seasons. The Colts moved him to linebacker last year during training camp, and he eventually started six games in his rookie season. Somebody needs to play next to Zaire Franklin in the Colts' base defense, and Carlies is the guy who fits what Lou Anarumo wants the most: athleticism and coverage range. Carlies had a -52.6% coverage DVOA in limited time last season and also had just one broken tackle.

**11** RB Keaton Mitchell, Baltimore Ravens  
171 offensive snaps, age 23.6, undrafted (2023)

Mitchell exploded on the NFL two years ago when he took a late-game handoff and sped 40 yards past a group of Seattle defenders for an easy touchdown. In that game, which Baltimore won 37-3 in Week 9 of 2023, Mitchell had an incredible 138 yards on just nine carries. But we weren't too surprised. Mitchell was one of the highest-rated running backs in the class of 2023 based on our BackCAST projection system. Perhaps NFL teams let him go undrafted because they were concerned about his small size (5-foot-7, 179 pounds).

The Ravens are grateful that Mitchell chose to sign with them after the draft. Mitchell had 59.5% DVOA on 47 carries, setting a record for a running back with a minimum of 40 carries. Unfortunately, he tore his ACL against Jacksonville in Week 15, prematurely ending his rookie season. Mitchell didn't return until halfway through the 2024 season and he barely played, with just 15 carries for a disappointing 30 yards. The Ravens hope that he's all the way back in 2025 and can play lightning to Derrick Henry's thunder.

**12** ER Jonah Elliss, Denver Broncos  
434 defensive snaps, age 22.4, third round (2024)

Here's the latest member of the football-playing Elliss family, with three other brothers also in the NFL. Elliss was third among rookies with five sacks last season and was selected to the PFWA All-Rookie Team. He also made his average run tackle after a gain of just 1.8 yards.

Elliss was lauded for his technical skills coming out of Utah, which makes sense for a player whose father is a defensive line coach and brothers all play in the league. He's versatile with the ability to both move inside to rush on passing downs and to drop into coverage from the outside. He had a strong SackSEER rating of 50.6%, with 12 sacks and three passes defensed in his final year of college.

The main reason Elliss doesn't appear higher on our list is that he's a bit blocked from the starting lineup by Jonathon Cooper and Nik Bonitto, plus he broke his scapula in last year's wild-card loss to Buffalo and may not be cleared for the start of training camp.

**13** RB Ray Davis, Buffalo Bills  
264 offensive snaps, age 25.8, fourth round (2024)

Davis has an inspiring personal story, as he grew up in foster care after both his parents were incarcerated and credits Patrick Dowley from the Big Brothers Big Sisters program with

turning his life around. Davis rushed for 1,000 yards for three different schools before he got to the NFL and was fifth among 2024 running backs with a 13.5% BackCAST projection.

Davis is just 5-foot-8 but 220 pounds, giving him a low center of gravity and the ability to break tackles. He had 30 broken or missed tackles for a 23.1% rate, higher than teammate James Cook. Davis averaged less than 4 yards per carry but didn't get much help from the otherwise excellent Buffalo offensive line; he ranked 43rd out of 46 qualifying backs with just 1.2 average yards before contact.

Davis accelerates quickly once he makes a cut and is also an excellent receiver. He had 94 college catches, tracks the ball well, and flashes after the catch. Last year in Buffalo, he caught 17 of 19 targets for 189 yards and three touchdowns.

Cook is currently in the final year of his rookie deal and looking for an extension, so it's a definite possibility that the Bills will let him leave and hand the starting job to Davis beginning in 2026.

**14** WR Jalen Coker, Carolina Panthers  
430 offensive snaps, age 23.9, undrafted (2024)

Coker has NFL-ready hands and size, and Panthers legend Steve Smith dubbed him the best route runner in the draft before he even signed in Carolina. Coker went undrafted because of a perceived lack of speed—he ran a 4.57s 40 at the combine, for example—but that supposed lack of speed didn't stop him from putting up an 83-yard touchdown against the Cowboys in December. A product of Holy Cross (and a 2023 FCS All-American), Coker didn't make the Panthers' active roster until late September, but he finished the year with 136 DYAR and 23.7% receiving DVOA. The drafting of Tetairoa McMillan knocks Coker out of the starting lineup, but we still think there's a significant place for him in the Carolina offense. Many observers preferred Coker to first-round pick Xavier Legette in their rookie seasons, while slot receiver Adam Thielen turns 35 in August.

**15** LB Dee Winters, San Francisco 49ers  
458 defensive snaps, age 24.9, sixth round (2023)

Winters started 10 games for the 49ers last season, mostly because the 49ers usually started the game with three linebackers on the field, but he played fewer than 400 total snaps. That will change this season, as the departure of Campbell and Dre Greenlaw gives Winters regular playing time on the weak side, even in nickel. Winters has college experience at both inside and outside linebacker. He's a rangy run defender who closes well in a straight line, and he has both strong instincts on running plays and the ability to read the quarterback on passing plays. He fell to the sixth round in part because of size (5-foot-11, 227 pounds) and the worry that he could be too passive taking on blocks, but that hasn't been much of a problem so far in the NFL.

**16** RB MarShawn Lloyd, Green Bay Packers  
10 offensive snaps, age 24.7, third round (2024)

Lloyd was supposed to be Josh Jacobs' partner in the Green Bay backfield last year, but he ended up getting on the field

for all of 10 snaps. He had a number of injuries affecting his hip, ankle, and hamstring, plus a bout of appendicitis. Now the Packers are hoping that a healthy Lloyd can be a big part of their running game in 2025.

Lloyd explodes through the hole but also has the foot speed to sift through traffic or bounce a run outside. He's a compact back (5-foot-9, 220 pounds) with a low center of gravity, an ideal fit for the Packers' zone run scheme.

The biggest question about Lloyd going into last year's draft was why he ended up with fewer than 300 carries between two years at South Carolina and one at USC. After all, he averaged 7.1 yards per carry in his junior year. But college carries often carry a lot of signal, because it matters which back the coaches trust to be on the field. This was the reason why Lloyd came out with a slightly negative BackCAST projection. Ball security is also an issue for him.

We also considered putting another Packers back on our list, Emanuel Wilson. A 2023 UDFA, Wilson had 103 carries last year with a fantastic 16.7% rushing DVOA, fourth among qualifying backs. However, we think it's likely that Lloyd takes most of Wilson's job this year, so he's on our list and Wilson is off.

## **17** RB Isaac Guerendo, San Francisco 49ers 227 offensive snaps, age 25.2, fourth round (2024)

Guerendo was the Speed Score champion of the 2024 running back class, running a 4.33s 40 at the combine at 221 pounds. That made him the fastest back over 220 pounds since at least 2003. But there were some major questions about Guerendo coming into the NFL. Scouts felt he was more fast than explosive, and they didn't always see that speed on the field. And why didn't his coaches use him more in college? Guerendo struggled with injuries at Wisconsin, but even in his last year, he had only 64 carries. Then he transferred to Louisville, where he had 132 carries for 810 yards with 11 touchdowns in 2023. And yet, the Louisville coaches gave more carries to Jawhar Jordan (who went to Houston two rounds after Guerendo went to San Francisco).

Injuries in San Francisco gave Guerendo the chance to make it into the lineup, and he averaged 5.0 yards per carry in three games started near the end of the season before he suffered his own injuries, including a hamstring issue and a left knee injury in Week 18. He enters the 2025 season as the top backup to Christian McCaffrey.

## **18** C/G Tanor Bortolini, Indianapolis Colts 351 offensive snaps, age 23.2, fourth round (2024)

Bortolini is the latest in a long line of Wisconsin centers to enter the NFL, although in college he started games both on the interior and at tackle. Scouts felt Bortolini was fluid, fundamentally strong, and particularly skilled as a zone blocker. In five starts as a rookie, Bortolini did well in Pro Football Focus' grading system, although he was below average in ESPN's pass block and run block win rates. He had some issues with power-rushing interior defenders, but Colts offensive line coach Tony Sparano Jr. lauded Bortolini for his intelligence and ability to make protection adjustments before the

snap. Bortolini will likely be the Colts' starting center now that veteran Ryan Kelly is in Minnesota, although he'll need to compete for the job with veteran Danny Pinter.

## **19** CB Kelee Ringo, Philadelphia Eagles 311 defensive snaps, age 23.2, fourth round (2023)

Ringo hasn't gotten on the field much since the Eagles took him in the fourth round of the 2023 draft. Last year, he played at least 10 defensive snaps in only three games, and one of those was the Week 18 game where the Eagles rested starters. But he has shown promise in his limited playing time, with above-average coverage DVOA in both seasons. He's 6-foot-2 with 4.36 speed, so he has the physical tools to be a starting cornerback in the NFL. The knock on Ringo coming out of Georgia was inconsistency as well as slowness moving his hips and changing directions in coverage. Ringo and veteran addition Adoree' Jackson will compete in training camp for a starting job replacing Darius Slay.

## **20** LB Junior Colson, Los Angeles Chargers 218 defensive snaps, age 22.8, third round (2024)

It was a bit of a surprise when Colson didn't play much in his rookie season. After all, he was following Jim Harbaugh from Michigan to the Chargers. However, he was limited by an appendectomy in training camp and a strained hamstring at midseason. This year, the plan is for Colson to move past veterans Denzel Perryman and Troy Dye as the starting inside linebacker next to Daiyan Henley. Colson was considered a disciplined run defender when the Chargers drafted him a year ago. He has a good blend of speed, strength, and explosiveness. The biggest question might be his pass coverage, but he did a good job of limiting yards after the catch in college (and allowed just 5.6 average yards after the catch in the limited number of targets he was covering in 2024).

## **21** QB Joe Milton, Dallas Cowboys 61 offensive snaps, age 25.5, sixth round (2024)

Let's start with the arm talent. So much arm talent. Milton has one of the strongest arms in the NFL, right up there with Josh Allen. He moves around the pocket and extends plays, and he can scramble, with 299 rushing yards and seven touchdowns in his final year at Tennessee. He's also, by all accounts, an exemplary worker and teammate. However, Milton needs to develop going through his progressions and putting touch on his passes. In college, he often locked onto one receiver and forced the ball. Milton looked fantastic in his lone start for the 2024 Patriots, completing 22 of 29 passes for 241 yards in a win over the Buffalo Bills backups. But of course, the operative word there is "backups." When the Patriots dealt Milton to Dallas this offseason, reports stated that Milton wanted a better chance to compete for a starting job. Does he really have that behind Dak Prescott? At least he's a clear No. 2, which was not the case in New England after the Patriots signed veteran Joshua Dobbs.

## **22** ER Cedric Johnson, Cincinnati Bengals 83 defensive snaps, age 23.0, sixth round (2024)

The Bengals selected Shemar Stewart in the first round of this year's draft, but they already had the poor man's Shemar Stewart and his name is Cedric Johnson. Johnson had more college production than Stewart, but 19.0 sacks in four years at Ole Miss doesn't jump off the page. No, much like Stewart, Johnson was a favorite of our SackSEER projection system because he excelled in the explosion drills at the combine. He ran a 4.63s 40 with a 38-inch vertical and a 10-foot-2 broad jump. However, he fell to the sixth round on draft day because his tape just didn't show enough consistency shedding blockers and making plays on the quarterback. Johnson had a sack and four pass pressures in less than 100 snaps as a rookie. There's still a lot of upside here, and Johnson could get an opportunity in the Bengals' pass-rush rotation if Trey Hendrickson gets shipped out of town and/or Stewart is a disappointment.

## **23** DL Moro Ojomo, Philadelphia Eagles 456 defensive snaps, age 24.1, seventh round (2023)

Milton Williams signed a big-money contract with the New England Patriots, so meet his replacement in Philadelphia: Moro Ojomo. Both players are about the same size (6-foot-3, 290 pounds) but Ojomo hasn't quite had the success yet that Williams had early. Williams had six sacks in his first couple NFL seasons, while Ojomo has zero. However, Ojomo did manage five quarterback hits and 14 total pass pressures last season according to FTN Data charting. A native of Nigeria who played at the University of Texas, Ojomo is versatile enough to line up on the edge or at tackle (or, in Philadelphia, as a 5-tech end). He's strong enough to plow through blockers, but he fell to the seventh round because of a perceived lack of quickness and athleticism.

## **24** WR Luke McCaffrey, Washington Commanders 419 offensive snaps, age 24.4, third round (2024)

McCaffrey didn't get as much playing time as expected in his rookie season, finishing with 18 catches for 168 yards and -12.7% receiving DVOA. However, he entered the NFL with fantastic bloodlines and an 86.8% Playmaker Rating which

ranked eighth in the excellent 2024 receiver class. He had 992 receiving yards with 13 touchdowns in his last season at Rice, plus 15 carries for 117 yards. McCaffrey excels at making the first defender miss, working the middle of the field, and gaining yards after the catch. He's the poor man's Deebo Samuel, which is a problem because the Commanders just acquired the actual Deebo Samuel. But if Samuel gets hurt, don't be surprised if McCaffrey has success as his replacement.

## **25** CB Mekhi Blackmon, Minnesota Vikings 435 defensive snaps, age 26.5, third round (2023)

Blackmon started three games as a rookie two years ago and played a good amount overall, then lost his sophomore season to a torn ACL on the first play of training camp. "It's been a real good study year," he told reporters in January. Now Blackmon returns as the prospective starter opposite veteran Byron Murphy Jr. Blackmon was promoted as an aggressive man cornerback when he came out of USC, so it will be interesting how he fits into a Brian Flores defense that ranked last in the league in using man coverage in 2024. He did have eight passes defensed as a rookie, although those partly came because he was targeted a lot when he was on the field. He also had zero penalties, worthy of note because there were worries that Blackmon might be overly physical and draw attention from officials in the NFL.

### Honorable Mention

- SS Sydney Brown, Philadelphia Eagles
- WR Malachi Corley, New York Jets
- WR Troy Franklin, Denver Broncos
- ER Mohamed Kamara, Miami Dolphins
- DT Jonah Laulu, Las Vegas Raiders
- QB Tanner McKee, Philadelphia Eagles
- LB Ventrell Miller, Jacksonville Jaguars
- TE Cade Stover, Houston Texans
- G Andrew Vorhees, Baltimore Ravens
- WR Jordan Whittington, Los Angeles Rams

Aaron Schatz

# Fantasy Projections

**H**ere are the top 260 players according to projections from FTN's Jeff Ratcliffe, ranked by projected fantasy value (**FANT**) in 2025. We've used the following generic scoring system:

- 1 point for each 10 yards rushing, 10 yards receiving, or 25 yards passing
- 6 points for each rushing or receiving touchdown, 4 points for each passing touchdown
- 0.5 points per reception
- -2 points for each interception or fumble lost

Note that fantasy totals may not exactly equal these calculations, because each touchdown projection is not necessarily a round number. (For example, a quarterback listed with 2 rushing touchdowns may actually be projected with 2.4 rushing touchdowns, which will add 14 fantasy points to the player's total rather than 12.) Fantasy value does not include adjustments for week-to-week consistency.

The projections listed below for quarterbacks differ from those found in the quarterbacks section earlier in the book because they incorporate the possibility of injury and represent 15-16 games started rather than representing 17 games started. This puts the quarterback projections in line with the other projections which also incorporate the possibility of injury.

Players are ranked in order based on the marginal value of each player, the idea that you draft based on how many more points a player will score compared to the worst starting player at that position, not how many points a player scores

overall. We've reduced the marginal value of quarterbacks to reflect the general drafting habits of fantasy football players. We urge you to draft using common sense, not a strict reading of these rankings.

This year, we didn't include kickers and defenses in our master table. Obviously, if your league uses these positions, draft kicker and defense near the end of your draft using the kicker and defense projections given earlier in the book.

We've ranked players in seven league configurations:

- 0.5 PPR Rk: 12 teams, starts 1 QB, 2 RB, 2 WR, 1 TE, and 1 FLEX (RB/WR/TE).
- No PPR Rk: Same configuration, but no scoring for receptions.
- PPR Rk: Same configuration, but 1 point instead of 0.5 points for receptions.
- 3WR Rk: 12 teams, starts 1 QB, 2 RB, 3 WR, and 1 TE.
- 2QB Rk: 12 teams, starts 2 QB, 2 RB, 2 WR, 1 TE, and 1 FLEX (RB/WR/TE).
- 10 Tm Rk: Same configuration as 0.5 PPR but with 10 teams.
- 14 Tm Rk: Same configuration as 0.5 PPR but with 14 teams.

Our advice for Superflex leagues that use conventional scoring is to always consider a Superflex spot as a quarterback spot. The 2QB ranks should work for most Superflex leagues.

Projections updated throughout the preseason are available online with an FTN Fantasy+ subscription and can be found at <https://www.ftnfantasy.com/nfl/rankings>.

Player	Team	Bye	Pos	Age	PaYd	PaTD	INT	Ru	RuYd	RuTD	Rec	RcYd	RcTD	Fant	0.5 PPR Rk	No PPR Rk	PPR Rk	3WR Rk	2QB Rk	10 Tm Rk	14 Tm Rk
Ja'Marr Chase	CIN	10	WR	25	0	0	0	4	20	0	126	1622	13	305	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Justin Jefferson	MIN	6	WR	26	0	0	0	2	13	0	114	1557	10	271	2	8	2	2	5	2	2
Bijan Robinson	ATL	5	RB	23	0	0	0	256	1215	11	52	406	2	262	3	4	9	7	6	4	3
CeeDee Lamb	DAL	10	WR	26	0	0	0	14	81	1	115	1419	9	264	4	9	3	3	7	3	7
Jahmyr Gibbs	DET	8	RB	23	0	0	0	225	1172	11	45	407	3	262	5	3	10	8	8	6	4
Saquon Barkley	PHI	9	RB	28	0	0	0	269	1469	10	38	277	2	261	6	2	12	9	9	7	5
Ashton Jeanty	LV	8	RB	22	0	0	0	274	1210	8	62	466	3	258	7	6	8	10	10	8	6
Brock Bowers	LV	8	TE	23	0	0	0	6	27	0	107	1153	6	209	8	13	5	6	12	5	9
Puka Nacua	LAR	8	WR	24	0	0	0	11	60	1	113	1461	7	254	9	14	4	4	13	9	8
Malik Nabers	NYG	14	WR	22	0	0	0	5	30	0	112	1396	9	249	10	16	6	5	14	10	10
Trey McBride	ARI	8	TE	26	0	0	0	1	4	0	106	1054	6	193	11	22	7	12	16	11	15
Derrick Henry	BAL	7	RB	31	0	0	0	243	1345	12	18	164	1	236	12	5	29	16	17	13	11
Christian McCaffrey	SF	14	RB	29	0	0	0	229	1024	7	55	482	3	233	13	10	18	19	18	16	12
Brian Thomas	JAX	8	WR	23	0	0	0	5	37	0	95	1349	8	234	14	19	11	11	19	12	14
Jonathan Taylor	IND	11	RB	26	0	0	0	282	1326	11	24	183	1	230	15	7	31	21	20	17	13
De'Von Achane	MIA	12	RB	24	0	0	0	185	861	7	61	468	4	226	16	17	20	24	21	18	16
Sam LaPorta	DET	8	TE	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	85	939	8	181	17	24	13	14	23	14	21
George Kittle	SF	14	TE	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	74	1007	7	181	18	18	16	15	24	15	22
Bucky Irving	TB	9	RB	23	0	0	0	242	1186	8	39	313	2	224	19	11	30	25	25	21	17
Nico Collins	HOU	6	WR	26	0	0	0	1	5	0	86	1253	9	222	20	27	15	13	28	20	20
Josh Jacobs	GB	5	RB	27	0	0	0	238	1088	9	36	288	2	218	21	15	34	32	30	27	18

Name	Tm	Bye	Pos	Age	PaYd	PaTD	INT	Ru	RuYd	RuTD	Rec	RcYd	RcTD	Fant	0.5 PPR Rk	No PPR Rk	PPR Rk	3WR Rk	2QB Rk	10 Tm Rk	14 Tm Rk
Lamar Jackson	BAL	7	QB	28	3521	29	9	129	824	4	0	0	0	336	22	21	22	23	2	19	26
Kyren Williams	LAR	8	RB	25	0	0	0	264	1120	11	26	171	1	216	23	12	39	33	31	29	19
Amon-Ra St. Brown	DET	8	WR	26	0	0	0	5	29	0	104	1148	8	217	24	37	14	17	32	25	24
Drake London	ATL	5	WR	24	0	0	0	2	12	0	93	1194	8	216	25	34	17	18	34	26	25
Chase Brown	CIN	10	RB	25	0	0	0	218	932	7	54	363	3	215	26	20	32	34	35	30	23
Jayden Daniels	WAS	12	QB	25	3723	26	11	135	777	6	0	0	0	330	27	25	24	28	3	23	28
Josh Allen	BUF	7	QB	29	3621	26	11	105	535	10	0	0	0	330	28	26	25	29	4	24	29
A.J. Brown	PHI	9	WR	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	84	1257	8	214	29	31	21	20	36	28	27
T.J. Hockenson	MIN	6	TE	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	87	899	6	168	30	35	19	26	37	22	31
Tyreek Hill	MIA	12	WR	31	0	0	0	6	39	0	90	1157	7	208	31	38	23	22	39	31	30
Garrett Wilson	NYJ	9	WR	25	0	0	0	6	32	0	90	1134	7	204	32	42	26	27	40	32	35
Breece Hall	NYJ	9	RB	24	0	0	0	225	975	7	41	344	2	201	33	28	44	44	42	36	32
Tee Higgins	CIN	10	WR	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	85	1059	9	202	34	41	28	30	43	34	36
James Cook	BUF	7	RB	26	0	0	0	205	960	10	30	233	2	200	35	23	51	45	44	37	33
Jaxon Smith-Njigba	SEA	8	WR	23	0	0	0	6	36	0	94	1105	7	201	36	48	27	31	45	35	38
Jalen Hurts	PHI	9	QB	27	3260	21	10	132	542	12	0	0	0	311	37	36	35	39	11	33	41
Kenneth Walker	SEA	8	RB	25	0	0	0	216	898	8	45	312	2	199	38	30	45	47	47	38	34
Joe Mixon	HOU	6	RB	29	0	0	0	223	919	9	34	281	1	196	39	29	55	49	49	42	37
Chuba Hubbard	CAR	14	RB	26	0	0	0	229	1031	7	41	234	1	195	40	32	50	50	51	44	39
Terry McLaurin	WAS	12	WR	30	0	0	0	2	9	0	75	1031	9	195	41	45	36	35	53	39	42
Omarion Hampton	LAC	12	RB	22	0	0	0	213	918	8	40	295	2	193	42	33	54	52	54	46	40
Rashee Rice	KC	10	WR	25	0	0	0	2	12	0	90	1044	8	195	43	52	33	36	55	40	43
Mike Evans	TB	9	WR	32	0	0	0	1	8	0	74	1004	9	193	44	47	37	37	57	43	45
Joe Burrow	CIN	10	QB	29	4322	33	12	42	176	2	0	0	0	300	45	43	43	43	15	41	49
Marvin Harrison	ARI	8	WR	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	76	1077	8	191	46	50	38	38	60	45	46
Davante Adams	LAR	8	WR	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	77	1059	8	190	47	51	40	40	61	47	47
Alvin Kamara	NO	11	RB	30	0	0	0	174	739	5	63	466	1	188	48	49	46	59	62	49	44
Tetairoa McMillan	CAR	14	WR	22	0	0	0	7	37	0	85	1028	6	184	49	62	42	41	63	50	52
James Conner	ARI	8	RB	30	0	0	0	198	894	7	35	279	1	182	50	39	68	66	64	53	48
DJ Moore	CHI	5	WR	28	0	0	0	10	57	0	88	995	6	184	51	65	41	42	65	51	53
RJ Harvey	DEN	12	RB	24	0	0	0	205	849	5	43	335	2	181	52	46	65	70	66	56	50
DK Metcalf	PIT	5	WR	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	71	1061	7	182	53	54	48	46	67	52	55
David Montgomery	DET	8	RB	28	0	0	0	182	758	10	32	256	1	179	54	40	75	73	68	60	51
Travis Kelce	KC	10	TE	36	0	0	0	1	1	0	76	710	5	135	55	64	47	53	69	48	59
Baker Mayfield	TB	9	QB	30	3751	30	12	55	290	3	0	0	0	282	56	55	56	56	22	55	60
Bo Nix	DEN	12	QB	25	3586	27	12	84	404	4	0	0	0	281	57	57	58	58	26	57	61
TreVeyon Henderson	NE	14	RB	23	0	0	0	226	934	7	30	202	1	176	58	44	82	78	72	64	54
Ladd McConkey	LAC	12	WR	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	79	1006	6	178	59	69	49	48	73	58	57
Kyler Murray	ARI	8	QB	28	3569	21	12	84	540	5	0	0	0	278	60	58	59	61	27	61	63
Xavier Worthy	KC	10	WR	22	0	0	0	18	104	2	66	826	7	176	61	59	57	51	74	59	58
Patrick Mahomes	KC	10	QB	30	3981	25	16	71	348	4	0	0	0	276	62	60	61	62	29	63	67
Quinshon Judkins	CLE	9	RB	22	0	0	0	199	822	6	42	294	1	174	63	53	76	81	75	66	56
Evan Engram	DEN	12	TE	31	0	0	0	2	6	0	78	662	4	129	64	79	52	64	76	54	69
DeVonta Smith	PHI	9	WR	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	80	914	7	173	65	78	53	54	77	65	62
Brock Purdy	SF	14	QB	26	4104	25	12	50	231	3	0	0	0	272	66	66	67	73	69	73	70
Jameson Williams	DET	8	WR	24	0	0	0	12	76	1	57	947	6	171	67	61	69	55	78	67	65
Zay Flowers	BAL	7	WR	25	0	0	0	8	51	1	71	970	5	170	68	74	60	57	80	70	66
David Njoku	CLE	9	TE	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	67	636	5	125	69	76	62	71	81	62	75
Courtland Sutton	DEN	12	WR	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	68	911	7	168	70	75	64	60	83	73	70
Justin Fields	NYJ	9	QB	26	2775	16	9	153	782	7	0	0	0	266	71	73	72	74	38	78	79
Calvin Ridley	TEN	10	WR	31	0	0	0	6	39	0	62	966	6	167	72	71	71	63	84	75	72
D'Andre Swift	CHI	5	RB	26	0	0	0	211	846	6	32	260	1	165	73	56	99	96	85	83	64
Jerry Jeudy	CLE	9	WR	26	0	0	0	1	6	0	76	1041	4	166	74	90	63	65	86	77	74
Mark Andrews	BAL	7	TE	30	0	0	0	4	10	0	48	562	7	121	75	67	86	75	87	68	80
Tucker Kraft	GB	5	TE	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	54	628	5	120	76	70	79	76	88	71	81
Jonnui Smith	PIT	5	TE	30	0	0	0	1	3	0	61	638	4	120	77	73	77	89	72	82	82
Aaron Jones	MIN	6	RB	31	0	0	0	167	728	5	41	316	2	163	78	68	96	99	90	85	68
Travis Hunter	JAX	8	WR	22	0	0	0	9	48	0	72	901	6	163	79	91	70	68	91	80	76
Dallas Goedert	PHI	9	TE	30	0	0	0	3	11	0	61	660	3	118	80	84	77	82	93	74	83
Tony Pollard	TEN	10	RB	28	0	0	0	206	874	5	35	229	1	161	81	63	102	104	94	86	71
George Pickens	DAL	10	WR	24	0	0	0	3	16	0	64	927	6	163	82	80	74	69	95	81	77
Chris Olave	NO	11	WR	25	0	0	0	1	4	0	76	962	5	162	83	97	67	72	96	82	78
Caleb Williams	CHI	5	QB	24	3448	22	10	77	450	3	0	0	0	258	84	82	83	83	41	87	86
Dalton Kincaid	BUF	7	TE	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	59	650	4	116	85	87	81	87	97	76	87
Jared Goff	DET	8	QB	31	4044	29	11	26	60	1	0	0	0	256	86	89	89	90	46	90	89

Name	Tm	Bye	Pos	Age	PaYd	PaTD	INT	Ru	RuYd	RuTD	Rec	RcYd	RcTD	Fant	0.5 PPR Rk	No PPR Rk	PPR Rk	3WR Rk	2QB Rk	10 Tm Rk	14 Tm Rk	
Tyler Warren	IND	11	TE	23	0	0	0	4	19	0	57	618	4	114	87	88	90	91	98	79	94	
Drake Maye	NE	14	QB	23	3313	21	13	78	525	3	0	0	0	254	88	92	91	92	48	95	97	
Jordan Addison	MIN	6	WR	23	0	0	0	0	4	20	0	65	843	7	157	89	95	88	79	100	88	84
Juan Jennings	SF	14	WR	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	69	901	6	157	90	98	80	80	101	89	85	
Colston Loveland	CHI	5	TE	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	57	581	4	112	91	93	93	93	102	84	99	
Dak Prescott	DAL	10	QB	32	3862	26	12	35	141	2	0	0	0	252	92	96	94	94	50	101	100	
Jaylen Waddle	MIA	12	WR	27	0	0	0	0	4	18	0	72	917	4	155	93	104	85	84	104	91	90
Rome Odunze	CHI	5	WR	23	0	0	0	0	2	12	0	64	887	6	155	94	101	92	85	105	92	91
Jordan Love	GB	5	QB	27	3682	26	12	42	170	2	0	0	0	250	95	99	95	95	52	102	102	
Chris Godwin	TB	9	WR	29	0	0	0	0	1	6	0	73	817	6	154	96	109	84	86	106	93	92
Stefon Diggs	NE	14	WR	32	0	0	0	0	2	9	0	79	836	5	154	97	115	78	88	107	94	95
Jakobi Meyers	LV	8	WR	29	0	0	0	0	2	14	0	74	860	5	153	98	112	87	89	108	96	98
Justin Herbert	LAC	12	QB	27	3559	23	9	60	264	2	0	0	0	248	99	102	98	98	56	103	104	
Kaleb Johnson	PIT	5	RB	22	0	0	0	0	200	826	7	22	155	1	150	100	72	123	118	109	104	88
Trevor Lawrence	JAX	8	QB	26	3745	22	13	50	222	4	0	0	0	246	101	106	100	102	58	108	107	
C.J. Stroud	HOU	6	QB	24	3853	24	12	47	208	2	0	0	0	246	102	107	101	103	59	109	108	
Cam Skattebo	NYG	14	RB	23	0	0	0	0	188	780	5	29	201	1	148	103	81	120	121	110	111	93
Isiah Pacheco	KC	10	RB	26	0	0	0	0	181	741	6	29	197	1	147	104	85	122	124	111	113	96
Zach Ertz	WAS	12	TE	35	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	52	486	5	102	105	103	107	108	112	97	111
Jake Ferguson	DAL	10	TE	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	57	544	3	102	106	111	103	109	113	98	112
Kyle Pitts	ATL	5	TE	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	44	576	4	102	107	100	110	110	114	99	113
Hunter Henry	NE	14	TE	31	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	52	544	4	102	108	105	108	111	115	100	114
Deebo Samuel	WAS	12	WR	29	0	0	0	0	28	130	1	54	675	5	145	109	108	109	97	116	107	
Brian Robinson	WAS	12	RB	26	0	0	0	0	177	754	7	21	157	1	144	110	83	129	127	117	117	
Travis Etienne	JAX	8	RB	26	0	0	0	0	159	696	5	29	219	1	143	111	94	127	129	118	120	103
Khailil Shakir	BUF	7	WR	25	0	0	0	0	3	12	0	75	811	4	144	112	125	97	100	119	112	109
Jayden Reed	GB	5	WR	25	0	0	0	0	3	27	0	59	787	5	144	113	114	106	101	120	114	110
Jordan Mason	MIN	6	RB	26	0	0	0	0	178	815	6	17	127	1	141	114	86	135	130	121	122	105
Brenton Strange	JAX	8	TE	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	54	500	3	96	115	117	112	114	122	105	120
Josh Downs	IND	11	WR	24	0	0	0	0	1	5	0	69	818	4	141	116	127	104	105	123	116	116
Pat Freiermuth	PIT	5	TE	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	50	472	4	96	117	116	114	116	124	106	121
Matthew Golden	GB	5	WR	22	0	0	0	0	11	57	0	57	757	5	141	118	118	111	106	125	118	117
Isaiah Likely	BAL	7	TE	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	42	469	5	95	119	110	121	117	126	110	123
Michael Pittman	IND	11	WR	28	0	0	0	0	1	5	0	69	855	3	140	120	129	105	107	127	119	118
J.J. McCarthy	MIN	6	QB	22	3529	24	13	59	226	2	0	0	0	235	121	126	113	119	70	126	124	
Brandon Aiyuk	SF	14	WR	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	56	844	4	138	122	119	115	112	128	123	119
Mike Gesicki	CIN	10	TE	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	52	506	3	92	123	120	118	120	130	115	126
Tua Tagovailoa	MIA	12	QB	27	3968	24	12	25	73	1	0	0	0	233	124	130	116	122	71	130	127	
Zach Charbonnet	SEA	8	RB	24	0	0	0	0	127	551	5	34	271	1	135	125	113	130	137	131	129	115
Darnell Mooney	ATL	5	WR	28	0	0	0	0	1	5	0	55	811	5	136	126	121	119	113	132	124	122
Mason Taylor	NYJ	9	TE	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	47	474	3	89	127	122	126	125	133	121	130
Cooper Kupp	SEA	8	WR	32	0	0	0	0	2	11	0	63	699	5	134	128	133	117	115	134	127	125
Michael Penix	ATL	5	QB	25	3616	21	13	48	179	3	0	0	0	226	129	146	125	131	79	137	134	
Jayden Higgins	HOU	6	WR	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	60	691	5	129	130	137	124	123	136	131	128
Cade Otton	TB	9	TE	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	43	436	3	84	131	128	133	132	137	125	136
Dalton Schultz	HOU	6	TE	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	45	479	2	83	132	132	131	133	138	128	137
Bryce Young	CAR	14	QB	24	3172	20	12	52	286	4	0	0	0	224	133	150	128	135	82	141	139	
Ricky Pearsall	SF	14	WR	25	0	0	0	0	15	105	0	50	696	4	126	134	135	132	126	140	134	132
Keon Coleman	BUF	7	WR	22	0	0	0	0	1	7	0	42	698	6	125	135	131	138	128	141	136	133
Tyrone Tracy	NYG	14	RB	26	0	0	0	0	147	641	4	25	192	1	123	136	123	151	154	142	144	129
Juwan Johnson	NO	11	TE	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	42	447	2	79	137	134	140	138	144	132	144
Ja'Tavion Sanders	CAR	14	TE	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	45	440	2	78	138	138	137	139	145	133	145
Jaylen Warren	PIT	5	RB	27	0	0	0	0	121	529	3	35	259	1	120	139	136	149	158	146	147	131
Geno Smith	LV	8	QB	35	3537	20	12	45	223	1	0	0	0	218	140	160	134	141	92	148	147	
Cedric Tillman	CLE	9	WR	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	56	729	3	120	141	154	136	134	147	143	142
Chig Okonwo	TEN	10	TE	26	0	0	0	0	2	9	0	40	390	3	75	142	142	143	148	135	149	
Emeka Egbuka	TB	9	WR	23	0	0	0	0	2	9	0	48	642	5	119	143	151	141	136	149	145	143
Tyjae Spears	TEN	10	RB	24	0	0	0	0	114	461	4	33	248	1	118	144	141	153	162	150	151	135
Darren Waller	MIA	12	TE	33	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	38	389	3	74	145	143	146	144	151	138	150
Cole Kmet	CHI	5	TE	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	39	370	3	74	146	144	145	152	139	151	
Theo Johnson	NYG	14	TE	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	39	440	2	74	147	144	146	153	140	152	
Javonte Williams	DAL	10	RB	25	0	0	0	0	122	483	4	34	239	1	117	148	148	154	163	154	153	138
Tank Bigsby	JAX	8	RB	24	0	0	0	0	158	679	6	11	77	0	116	149	124	167	164	155	155	140
Matthew Stafford	LAR	8	QB	37	3565	22	11	26	54	1	0	0	0	214	150	166	139	148	99	156	155	
Tyler Conklin	LAC	12	TE	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	39	367	3	73	151	149	148	156	142	156	

Name	Tm	Bye	Pos	Age	PaYd	PaTD	INT	Ru	RuYd	RuTD	Rec	RcYd	RcTD	Fant	0.5 PPR Rk	No PPR Rk	PPR Rk	3WR Rk	2QB Rk	10 Tm Rk	14 Tm Rk	
Bhayshul Tuten	JAX	8	RB	23	0	0	0	146	596	3	26	189	1	115	152	140	159	169	157	158	141	
Rashid Shaheed	NO	11	WR	27	0	0	0	11	63	0	42	670	4	116	153	152	150	140	158	150	148	
Cam Ward	TEN	10	QB	23	3258	19	13	55	261	2	0	0	0	210	154	176	142	152	103	163	162	
Najee Harris	LAC	12	RB	27	0	0	0	0	124	512	5	23	171	1	112	155	145	165	172	159	161	146
Marvin Mims	DEN	12	WR	23	0	0	0	3	16	0	49	626	4	114	156	161	147	142	160	154	154	
Elijah Arroyo	SEA	8	TE	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	35	362	2	68	157	153	157	153	161	146	163	
Noah Fant	SEA	8	TE	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	37	394	2	67	158	158	156	155	162	149	165	
Rashod Bateman	BAL	7	WR	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	40	611	5	111	159	159	155	147	163	159	158	
Terrance Ferguson	LAR	8	TE	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	344	2	65	160	157	161	156	164	152	167	
Christian Kirk	HOU	6	WR	29	0	0	0	1	5	0	50	662	3	109	161	171	152	150	165	162	161	
Ray Davis	BUF	7	RB	26	0	0	0	140	581	4	11	110	1	108	162	139	184	179	166	168	153	
Trey Benson	ARI	8	RB	23	0	0	0	122	536	4	21	152	1	106	163	156	176	182	167	169	157	
Harold Fannin	CLE	9	TE	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	34	344	2	62	164	162	163	161	168	157	171	
Tre Harris	LAC	12	WR	23	0	0	0	2	9	0	46	590	4	107	165	172	158	151	169	165	166	
Rhamondre Stevenson	NE	14	RB	27	0	0	0	142	576	4	19	125	1	105	166	155	182	184	170	171	159	
Austin Ekeler	WAS	12	RB	30	0	0	0	70	317	3	35	304	1	104	167	173	168	185	171	173	160	
Tyler Higbee	LAR	8	TE	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	30	273	3	59	168	164	170	167	172	160	175	
Noah Gray	KC	10	TE	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	28	283	3	58	169	165	173	170	173	164	178	
Rachaad White	TB	9	RB	26	0	0	0	104	438	2	28	200	2	101	170	170	179	190	174	175	164	
Adam Thielen	CAR	14	WR	35	0	0	0	1	4	0	49	547	4	102	171	181	160	157	175	170	170	
Jack Bech	LV	8	WR	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	46	571	4	101	172	178	164	159	176	172	172	
Will Dissly	LAC	12	TE	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	31	297	2	56	173	174	174	173	177	166	183	
Ben Sinnott	WAS	12	TE	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	28	276	2	56	174	167	178	175	178	167	184	
Romeo Doubs	GB	5	WR	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	44	539	4	100	175	180	166	160	179	174	174	
J.K. Dobbins	DEN	12	RB	27	0	0	0	108	473	4	20	149	1	97	176	168	189	195	180	181	168	
Isaac Guerendo	SF	14	RB	25	0	0	0	114	532	4	11	100	1	97	177	163	196	202	181	184	169	
Quentin Johnston	LAC	12	WR	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	38	522	4	97	178	179	175	165	182	176	179	
Marquise Brown	KC	10	WR	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	43	530	4	97	179	189	171	166	183	177	180	
Jaydon Blue	DAL	10	RB	21	0	0	0	116	473	3	22	147	1	95	180	177	191	205	184	187	173	
Sam Darnold	SEA	8	QB	28	3123	18	11	51	186	2	0	0	0	193	181	203	162	180	129	188	190	
Xavier Legette	CAR	14	WR	24	0	0	0	4	18	0	44	513	4	96	182	193	172	168	185	178	182	
DeAndre Hopkins	BAL	7	WR	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	38	487	5	95	183	184	183	171	186	180	185	
Jarquez Hunter	LAR	8	RB	23	0	0	0	136	555	4	11	75	0	93	184	169	201	210	187	191	176	
Tyler Allgeier	ATL	5	RB	25	0	0	0	114	523	3	14	105	1	93	185	175	200	211	188	192	177	
Luther Burden	CHI	5	WR	22	0	0	0	10	64	0	42	495	3	93	186	195	181	174	189	185	188	
Kyle Williams	NE	14	WR	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	36	531	4	92	187	191	186	176	190	186	189	
Anthony Richardson	IND	11	QB	23	2039	11	9	96	542	6	0	0	0	188	188	221	169	186	135	198	196	
Rico Dowdle	CAR	14	RB	27	0	0	0	88	386	3	26	176	1	90	189	192	195	215	191	196	181	
Alec Pierce	IND	11	WR	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	30	556	4	91	190	183	190	177	192	189	191	
Michael Mayer	LV	8	TE	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	26	240	2	46	191	186	193	188	193	179	198	
Jaylen Wright	MIA	12	RB	22	0	0	0	104	428	3	17	134	1	88	192	182	205	218	194	200	186	
Roschon Johnson	CHI	5	RB	24	0	0	0	93	330	5	20	129	1	88	193	188	202	219	195	201	187	
Josh Palmer	BUF	7	WR	26	0	0	0	2	13	0	39	493	3	89	194	198	187	178	196	193	193	
Gunnar Helm	TEN	10	TE	23	0	0	0	0	2	0	23	233	2	44	195	185	198	192	197	182	199	
Austin Hooper	NE	14	TE	31	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	233	2	44	196	187	197	193	198	183	200	
Wan'Dale Robinson	NYG	14	WR	24	0	0	0	3	14	0	54	484	2	89	197	215	177	181	199	194	194	
Michael Wilson	ARI	8	WR	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	42	476	3	87	198	201	188	200	199	197		
MarShawn Lloyd	GB	5	RB	24	0	0	0	103	405	2	22	148	1	85	199	197	207	223	201	205		
Aaron Rodgers	PIT	5	QB	42	3156	19	11	17	72	1	0	0	0	182	200	247	180	200	139	206	204	
Dawson Knox	BUF	7	TE	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	222	2	41	201	190	208	201	203	190	205	
Nick Chubb	HOU	6	RB	30	0	0	0	92	403	3	17	127	1	83	202	196	218	228	204	209	195	
Jaylin Noel	HOU	6	WR	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	41	451	3	84	203	205	192	187	205	202	201	
Daniel Jones	IND	11	QB	28	2427	12	10	87	388	4	0	0	0	179	204	251	185	206	143	214	211	
Tyler Lockett	TEN	10	WR	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	41	450	3	83	205	210	194	189	206	203	202	
Ordone Gadsden	LAC	12	TE	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	162	2	38	206	194	216	208	207	195	212	
Jalen Coker	CAR	14	WR	24	0	0	0	3	11	0	37	476	3	82	207	204	199	191	208	204	203	
Luke Musgrave	GB	5	TE	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	191	1	37	208	199	211	209	209	197	214	
Jalen McMillan	TB	9	WR	24	0	0	0	11	84	0	28	360	4	80	209	202	210	194	210	208	206	
Pat Bryant	DEN	12	WR	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	35	411	3	79	210	217	204	196	211	210	207	
Dontayvion Wicks	GB	5	WR	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	34	412	4	79	211	216	206	197	212	211	208	
Darius Slayton	NYG	14	WR	28	0	0	0	1	8	0	32	479	2	79	212	209	209	198	213	212	209	
Dyami Brown	JAX	8	WR	26	0	0	0	1	6	0	38	469	2	79	213	223	203	199	214	213	210	
Adonai Mitchell	IND	11	WR	23	0	0	0	5	27	0	30	431	3	77	214	211	214	203	215	217	213	
Andrei Iosivas	CIN	10	WR	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	389	4	77	215	218	213	204	216	218	215	
Foster Moreau	NO	11	TE	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	155	1	30	216	200	223	222	217	207	227	

Name	Tm	Bye	Pos	Age	PaYd	PaTD	INT	Ru	RuYd	RuTD	Rec	RcYd	RcTD	Fant	0.5 PPR Rk	No PPR Rk	PPR Rk	3WR Rk	2QB Rk	10 Tm Rk	14 Tm Rk
Jalen Royals	KC	10	WR	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	35	406	3	75	217	233	212	207	218	222	216
Elic Ayomanor	TEN	10	WR	22	0	0	0	3	17	0	33	410	3	74	218	232	217	212	219	223	220
Tutu Atwell	LAR	8	WR	26	0	0	0	2	12	0	35	434	2	74	219	238	215	213	220	224	221
DeMario Douglas	NE	14	WR	25	0	0	0	7	37	0	34	382	2	73	220	242	219	214	221	227	223
Luke Schoonmaker	DAL	10	TE	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	142	1	27	221	207	226	226	222	215	234
Tommy Tremble	CAR	14	TE	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	139	1	27	222	206	227	227	223	216	235
Mike Williams	LAC	12	WR	31	0	0	0	0	0	0	28	421	3	71	223	236	221	216	224	234	224
Brandin Cooks	NO	11	WR	32	0	0	0	1	6	0	34	403	2	71	224	246	220	217	225	235	225
Darnell Washington	PIT	5	TE	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	134	1	26	225	212	229	229	226	219	236
Josh Oliver	MIN	6	TE	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	128	1	26	226	208	232	230	227	220	237
AJ Barner	SEA	8	TE	23	0	0	0	0	1	0	13	136	1	26	227	213	231	231	229	221	238
Braelon Allen	NYJ	9	RB	21	0	0	0	81	325	2	15	110	1	69	228	228	235	250	230	243	217
Blake Corum	LAR	8	RB	25	0	0	0	100	403	3	8	58	1	69	229	214	251	251	231	244	218
DJ Giddens	IND	11	RB	22	0	0	0	84	340	3	14	111	0	69	230	229	237	252	232	245	219
Jerome Ford	CLE	9	RB	26	0	0	0	70	332	2	18	130	1	68	231	241	233	253	233	246	222
Jalen Tolbert	DAL	10	WR	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	27	353	3	69	232	243	224	220	234	240	231
Cade Stover	HOU	6	TE	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	123	1	24	233	219	236	233	235	225	241
Calvin Austin	PIT	5	WR	26	0	0	0	3	15	0	28	393	2	69	234	244	222	221	236	241	233
Elijah Higgins	ARI	8	TE	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	125	1	24	235	224	234	237	226	242	
Brevin Jordan	HOU	6	TE	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	112	1	22	236	227	239	235	238	228	244
Adam Trautman	DEN	12	TE	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	105	1	22	237	222	244	236	239	229	245
Stone Smartt	NYJ	9	TE	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	123	1	22	238	225	242	237	240	230	246
Jeremy Ruckert	NYJ	9	TE	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	116	1	22	239	231	238	238	241	231	247
Kylen Granson	PHI	9	TE	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	118	1	22	240	220	247	240	242	232	248
Jelani Woods	IND	11	TE	27	0	0	0	0	1	0	11	112	1	21	241	226	250	242	243	233	249
Dylan Sampson	CLE	9	RB	21	0	0	0	73	297	2	17	118	1	65	242	249	246	254	244	250	226
Mitchell Evans	CAR	14	TE	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	112	1	21	243	230	249	244	245	236	250
Will Shipley	PHI	9	RB	23	0	0	0	88	347	3	8	58	1	64	244	237	259	255	246	251	228
Daniel Bellinger	NYG	14	TE	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	112	1	21	245	234	253	245	247	237	251
Devaughn Vele	DEN	12	WR	28	0	0	0	1	4	0	31	336	3	65	246	252	225	224	248	247	239
Nick Westbrook-Ikhine	MIA	12	WR	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	26	376	3	65	247	250	230	225	249	248	240
Kareem Hunt	KC	10	RB	30	0	0	0	70	273	3	14	100	1	63	248	248	256	256	250	252	229
Luke Lachey	HOU	6	TE	24	0	0	0	0	1	0	10	104	1	20	249	235	255	247	251	238	253
Justice Hill	BAL	7	RB	28	0	0	0	41	197	1	23	177	1	63	250	253	241	257	252	253	230
Devin Neal	NO	11	RB	22	0	0	0	78	320	3	11	78	1	63	251	245	258	258	253	254	232
Drew Sample	CIN	10	TE	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	87	1	19	252	239	254	248	254	239	254
Tanner Hudson	CIN	10	TE	31	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	86	1	18	253	240	257	249	255	242	257
Elijah Moore	BUF	7	WR	25	0	0	0	2	9	0	33	353	2	62	254	255	228	232	256	249	243
Kayshon Boutte	NE	14	WR	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	26	331	2	60	255	254	248	239	257	255	252
Noah Brown	WAS	12	WR	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	28	357	2	59	256	245	241	258	256	255	
Roman Wilson	PIT	5	WR	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	31	348	2	59	257	258	240	243	259	257	256
Diontae Johnson	CLE	9	WR	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	28	325	2	58	258	257	252	246	260	258	258
Tyler Shough	NO	11	QB	26	2439	13	10	31	144	1	0	0	0	0	141	259	259	243	259	202	259
Jaxson Dart	NYG	14	QB	22	1946	11	7	40	185	2	0	0	0	0	126	260	260	260	228	260	260

# Statistical Appendix

## Broken Tackles by Team, Offense

## Broken Tackles by Team, Defense

Rk	Team	BTkl	Touch	BT/Touch	Rk	Team	BTkl	Touch	BT/Touch
1	GB	173	834	20.7%	1	KC	88	793	11.1%
2	DET	184	933	19.7%	2	MIN	92	807	11.4%
3	SEA	156	796	19.6%	3	BAL	93	779	11.9%
4	ARI	161	837	19.2%	4	PIT	101	794	12.7%
5	BAL	167	872	19.2%	5	LAR	109	831	13.1%
6	JAX	137	757	18.1%	6	TEN	110	817	13.5%
7	NE	140	788	17.8%	7	WAS	110	797	13.8%
8	ATL	148	859	17.2%	8	SEA	115	822	14.0%
9	SF	134	806	16.6%	9	DET	105	742	14.2%
10	NYJ	123	748	16.4%	10	NE	124	853	14.5%
11	LAC	129	799	16.1%	11	CIN	124	851	14.6%
12	DAL	133	827	16.1%	12	JAX	133	900	14.8%
13	PIT	137	854	16.0%	13	NYG	127	852	14.9%
14	TB	142	891	15.9%	14	TB	121	807	15.0%
15	PHI	145	924	15.7%	15	ATL	130	862	15.1%
16	NYG	123	790	15.6%	16	GB	122	807	15.1%
17	HOU	121	791	15.3%	17	BUF	126	831	15.2%
18	MIA	131	861	15.2%	18	PHI	118	753	15.7%
19	TEN	118	786	15.0%	19	CHI	127	810	15.7%
20	LAR	116	817	14.2%	20	CAR	151	952	15.9%
21	BUF	116	820	14.1%	21	DEN	134	817	16.4%
22	WAS	123	891	13.8%	22	DAL	137	831	16.5%
23	NO	107	784	13.6%	23	SF	136	814	16.7%
24	CAR	101	751	13.4%	24	NO	143	855	16.7%
25	CIN	112	840	13.3%	25	LV	138	824	16.7%
26	CLE	101	786	12.8%	26	HOU	133	773	17.2%
27	IND	100	785	12.7%	27	IND	158	909	17.4%
28	CHI	99	784	12.6%	28	NYJ	145	831	17.4%
29	DEN	101	840	12.0%	29	ARI	146	835	17.5%
30	LV	93	790	11.8%	30	LAC	141	793	17.8%
31	MIN	87	821	10.6%	31	CLE	146	804	18.2%
32	KC	89	854	10.4%	32	MIA	164	770	21.3%

Touches includes receptions and runs, not sacks.

Touches includes receptions and runs, not sacks.

## Most Broken Tackles, Defenders

Rk	Player	Pos	Team	BTkl	Rk	Player	Pos	Team	BTkl	Rk	Player	Pos	Team	BTkl
1	E.J.Speed	IND	LB	28	7	Q.Williams	NYJ	LB	19	12	J.Jones	LV	CB	16
2	B.Baker	ARI	S	24	8	J.Pitre	HOU	S	18	12	I.Pola-Mao	LV	S	16
2	J.Verse	LAR	ER	24	8	F.Warner	SF	LB	18	12	C.Rozeboom	LAR	LB	16
4	G.Pratt	CIN	LB	22	10	D.Overshown	DAL	LB	17	12	E.Wilson	GB	LB	16
5	J.Brooks	MIA	LB	21	10	H.To'oTo'o	HOU	LB	17	17	9 tied with			15
5	Z.Franklin	IND	LB	21	12	N.Bolton	KC	LB	16					

**Top 20 Defenders, Broken Tackle Rate**

Rk	Player	Team	Pos	BTkl	Tkl	Rate
1	H.Smith	MIN	S	2	56	3.4%
2	D.Elliott	PIT	S	3	72	4.0%
3	T.McDuffie	KC	CB	2	45	4.3%
4	R.Green	SF	CB	2	41	4.7%
5	T.Simpson	BAL	LB	2	40	4.8%
6	K.Joseph	DET	S	3	58	4.9%
7	C.Benford	BUF	CB	3	50	5.7%
8	M.Jones	NE	CB	3	48	5.9%
9	D.James	LAC	S	4	60	6.3%
9	B.Wagner	WAS	LB	5	75	6.3%
11	T.Johnson	BUF	CB	3	42	6.7%
12	B.Cook	KC	S	4	55	6.8%
13	S.Gilmore	MIN	CB	3	40	7.0%
14	M.Hilton	CIN	CB	4	50	7.4%
15	C.Bryant	SEA	S	4	48	7.7%
15	X.McKinney	GB	S	5	60	7.7%
15	T.Rapp	BUF	S	4	48	7.7%
18	D.Williams	BUF	LB	6	68	8.1%
19	A.Washington	BAL	S	4	45	8.2%
20	A.Johnson	JAX	S	5	55	8.3%

Broken Tackles divided by Broken Tackles + Solo Tackles.  
Special teams not included; min. 40 Solo Tackles

**Bottom 20 Defenders, Broken Tackle Rate**

Rk	Player	Team	Pos	BTkl	Tkl	Rate
1	J.Pitre	HOU	SAF	18	44	29.0%
2	A.Phillips	NYG	CB	15	46	24.6%
3	G.Stone	CIN	SAF	15	47	24.2%
4	A.Cisco	JAX	SAF	14	44	24.1%
5	J.Simmons	TEN	DL	13	41	24.1%
6	H.To'oTo'o	HOU	LB	17	54	23.9%
7	J.Jones	LV	CB	16	52	23.5%
8	D.Overshown	DAL	LB	17	56	23.3%
9	E.J.Speed	IND	LB	28	93	23.1%
10	J.Pinnock	NYG	SAF	15	50	23.1%
11	J.Jewell	CAR	LB	15	51	22.7%
12	D.Ward	CLE	CB	12	41	22.6%
13	I.Pola-Mao	LV	SAF	16	57	21.9%
14	A.Jennings	NE	ER	12	43	21.8%
14	R.McCreary	TEN	CB	12	43	21.8%
16	T.Mathieu	NO	SAF	13	47	21.7%
17	G.Pratt	CIN	LB	22	80	21.6%
17	D.Savage	JAX	SAF	11	40	21.6%
17	T.J.Watt	PIT	ER	11	40	21.6%
20	K.Moore	IND	CB	14	51	21.5%

Broken Tackles divided by Broken Tackles + Solo Tackles.  
Special teams not included; min. 40 Solo Tackles

**Most Broken Tackles, Running Backs**

Rk	Player	Team	Run	Rec	BTkl
1	J.Jacobs	GB	80	13	93
2	J.Conner	ARI	69	18	87
3	D.Henry	BAL	78	6	84
4	J.Gibbs	DET	70	12	82
5	B.Robinson	ATL	66	14	80
6	B.Irving	TB	60	19	79
7	K.Williams	LAR	70	5	75
8	S.Barkley	PHI	62	9	71
9	C.Brown	CIN	52	11	63
10	N.Harris	PIT	55	7	62
11	D.Montgomery	DET	46	15	61
12	J.Mixon	HOU	53	7	60
12	K.Walker	SEA	53	7	60
14	D.Achane	MIA	45	12	57
14	B.Hall	NYJ	42	15	57
14	C.Hubbard	CAR	50	7	57
17	J.Taylor	IND	52	4	56
18	R.Dowdle	DAL	47	7	54
19	A.Jones	MIN	46	6	52
20	T.Pollard	TEN	47	4	51

**Most Broken Tackles, WR/TE**

Rk	Player	Team	Run	Rec	BTkl
1	D.Samuel	SF	11	14	25
2	C.Lamb	DAL	3	20	23
3	G.Wilson	NYJ	1	20	21
4	DJ Moore	CHI	1	17	18
5	J.Chase	CIN	0	17	17
5	Z.Flowers	BAL	2	15	17
5	P.Nacua	LAR	1	16	17
8	A.J.Brown	PHI	0	16	16
9	J.Smith-Njigba	SEA	1	14	15
10	L.McConkey	LAC	0	14	14
11	J.Ferguson	DAL	0	13	13
11	Q.Johnston	LAC	0	13	13
11	M.Nabers	NYG	1	12	13
11	W.Robinson	NYG	2	11	13
11	K.Shakir	BUF	0	13	13
16	D.London	ATL	0	12	12
17	D.Adams	LV	0	11	11
17	T.Kraft	GB	0	11	11
17	X.Worthy	KC	5	6	11
20	7 tied with				10

**Most Broken Tackles, Quarterbacks**

Rk	Player	Team	BTkl	Rk	Player	Team	BTkl
1	L.Jackson	BAL	21	7	C.Williams	CHI	10
2	A.Richardson	IND	15	8	D.Jones	NYG	10
3	J.Daniels	WAS	15	9	J.Fields	PIT	8
4	J.Hurts	PHI	12	10	J.Allen	BUF	7
5	D.Watson	CLE	11	11	J.Herbert	LAC	7
6	T.Hill	NO	11				

**Best Broken Tackle Rate, Offensive Players (min. 75 touches)**

Rk	Player	Team	BTkl	Touch	Rate
1	B.Irving	TB	79	254	31.1%
2	J.Conner	ARI	87	283	30.7%
3	K.Walker	SEA	60	199	30.2%
4	A.Gibson	NE	42	143	29.4%
5	T.Bigsby	JAX	50	175	28.6%
6	Z.Charbonnet	SEA	49	177	27.7%
7	D.Montgomery	DET	61	221	27.6%
8	J.Jacobs	GB	93	337	27.6%
9	J.Gibbs	DET	82	302	27.2%
10	D.Samuel	SF	25	93	26.9%
11	K.Gainwell	PHI	24	91	26.4%
12	J.Mason	SF	41	164	25.0%
13	D.Henry	BAL	84	344	24.4%
14	T.Spears	TEN	27	114	23.7%
15	R.Davis	BUF	30	130	23.1%
16	C.Akers	2TM	27	118	22.9%
17	E.Wilson	GB	26	114	22.8%
18	D.Singletary	NYG	30	134	22.4%
19	C.Brown	CIN	63	283	22.3%
20	B.Robinson	ATL	80	365	21.9%

**Best Yards After Contact (min. 100 carries)**

Rk	Player	Team	YafC
1	A.Gibson	NE	3.63
2	B.Irving	TB	3.51
3	D.Henry	BAL	3.45
4	T.Bigsby	JAX	3.36
5	J.Ford	CLE	3.33
6	J.Mason	SF	3.32
7	J.Conner	ARI	3.05
8	Z.Charbonnet	SEA	2.96
9	C.Hubbard	CAR	2.95
10	J.Jacobs	GB	2.94

**Worst Yards After Contact (min. 100 carries)**

Rk	Player	Team	YafC
1	A.Mattison	LV	1.92
2	N.Chubb	CLE	1.97
3	K.Hunt	KC	2.11
4	J.McLaughlin	DEN	2.20
5	D.Swift	CHI	2.28
6	A.Kamara	NO	2.35
7	J.Williams	DEN	2.40
8	J.Taylor	IND	2.41
9	K.Williams	LAR	2.46
10	C.Akers	2TM	2.51

**Worst Broken Tackle Rate, Offensive Players (min. 75 touches)**

Rk	Player	Team	BTkl	Touch	Rate
1	T.Kelce	KC	2	98	2.0%
2	C.Sutton	DEN	2	81	2.5%
3	T.McLaurin	WAS	4	84	4.8%
4	J.Jeudy	CLE	5	90	5.6%
5	J.Jefferson	MIN	6	104	5.8%
6	B.Bowers	LV	7	117	6.0%
7	I.Pacheco	KC	7	95	7.4%
8	A.St. Brown	DET	9	117	7.7%
9	D.Foreman	CLE	6	77	7.8%
10	J.Meyers	LV	7	89	7.9%

**Top 20 Defenders, Passes Defensed**

Rk	Player	Team	Hits
1	D.Ward	CLE	19
2	D.Stingley	HOU	18
3	Z.McCollum	TB	17
4	B.Branch	DET	16
4	M.Jackson	CAR	16
4	J.Jones	LV	16
4	A.Taylor	NO	16
4	C.Taylor-Britt	CIN	16
9	M.Humphrey	BAL	15
10	B.Murphy	MIN	14
10	M.Sainristil	WAS	14
10	T.Woolen	SEA	14
13	R.Green	SF	13
13	J.Horn	CAR	13
13	T.McDuffie	KC	13
13	D.Slay	PHI	13
13	N.Wiggins	BAL	13
18	D.Banks	NYG	12
18	C.J. Gardner-Johnson	PHI	12
18	J.Jones	IND	12
18	J.Love	SEA	12
18	Q.Mitchell	PHI	12
18	T.Stevenson	CHI	12

**Top 20 Defenders, Defeats**

Rk	Player	Team	Dfts
1	Z.Baun	PHI	34
2	B.Cashman	MIN	33
3	A.Van Ginkel	MIN	31
3	T.J.Watt	PIT	31
5	Z.Franklin	IND	30
6	L.David	TB	29
6	R.Spillane	LV	29
8	B.Baker	ARI	27
8	B.Branch	DET	27
10	N.Bolton	KC	26
10	B.Burns	NYG	26
10	N.Dean	PHI	26
10	T.J.Edwards	CHI	26
10	M.Garrett	CLE	26
10	J.Greenard	MIN	26
10	T.Hendrickson	CIN	26
10	F.Luvu	WAS	26
10	G.Rousseau	BUF	26
10	E.J.Speed	IND	26
10	L.Williams	SEA	26

**Top 20 Defenders, Quarterback Hits**

Rk	Player	Team	Hits
1	Z.Allen	DEN	33
2	G.Karlaftis	KC	22
3	G.Rousseau	BUF	20
4	O.Odighizuwa	DAL	19
5	Y.Diaby	TB	18
5	T.J.Watt	PIT	18
7	T.Hendrickson	CIN	17
8	N.Bosa	SF	16
8	C.Jones	KC	16
8	L.Williams	SEA	16
11	G.Dexter	CHI	15
11	M.Garrett	CLE	15
11	J.Verse	LAR	15
11	C.Young	NO	15
15	M.Crosby	LV	14
15	D.Hall	SEA	14
15	L.Onwuzurike	DET	14
15	D.Tomlinson	CLE	14
19	7 tied with		13

*Includes plays nullified by penalty.*

**Top 20 Defenders, QB Knockdowns (Sacks + Hits)**

Rk	Defender	Team	KD
1	Z.Allen	DEN	46
2	T.Hendrickson	CIN	36
3	G.Karlaftis	KC	31
3	T.J.Watt	PIT	31
5	M.Garrett	CLE	29
5	L.Williams	SEA	29
7	N.Bonitto	DEN	28
8	G.Rousseau	BUF	27
9	W.McDonald	NYJ	26
9	O.Oweh	BAL	26
11	N.Bosa	SF	25
11	O.Odighizuwa	DAL	25
11	M.Parsons	DAL	25
14	D.Hunter	HOU	24
15	J.Greenard	MIN	23
16	M.Crosby	LV	22
16	Y.Diaby	TB	22
16	D.Hall	SEA	22
16	C.Heyward	PIT	22
16	J.Hines-Allen	JAX	22
16	K.Van Noy	BAL	22
16	J.Verse	LAR	22
16	C.Young	NO	22

*Full credit for whole and half sacks; includes sacks cancelled by penalty.  
Does not include strip sacks.*

## Top 20 Defenders, Pressures (Sacks + Hits + Hurries)

Rk	Defender	Team	Press
1	T.Hendrickson	CIN	70
2	M.Parsons	DAL	69
3	G.Karlaftis	KC	67
4	D.Hunter	HOU	66
5	J.Verse	LAR	64
6	M.Garrett	CLE	63
7	G.Rousseau	BUF	61
8	Z.Allen	DEN	59
8	N.Bosa	SF	59
8	C.Jones	KC	59
8	W.McDonald	NYJ	59
12	B.Burns	NYG	57
13	J.Greenard	MIN	55
14	J.Cooper	DEN	54
15	M.Crosby	LV	52
15	Y.Diaby	TB	52
15	T.Walker	JAX	52
15	T.J.Watt	PIT	52
19	J.Hines-Allen	JAX	51
20	N.Bonitto	DEN	49

*Does not include plays nullified by penalty.*

## Top 10 Quarterbacks, QB Hits

Rk	Player	Team	Hits
1	P.Mahomes	KC	80
2	J.Burrow	CIN	78
3	J.Herbert	LAC	68
4	M.Stafford	LAR	65
5	G.Smith	SEA	62
6	C.J.Stroud	HOU	60
7	S.Darnold	MIN	59
8	J.Goff	DET	58
8	A.Rodgers	NYJ	58
10	K.Cousins	ATL	54

*Includes plays nullified by penalty.*

## Top 10 Quarterbacks, QB Knockdowns (Sacks + Hits)

Rk	Player	Team	KD
1	J.Burrow	CIN	129
2	P.Mahomes	KC	118
3	C.Williams	CHI	116
4	G.Smith	SEA	114
5	C.J.Stroud	HOU	112
6	S.Darnold	MIN	111
6	J.Herbert	LAC	111
8	A.Rodgers	NYJ	101
8	M.Stafford	LAR	93
10	J.Goff	DET	89

*Includes sacks cancelled by penalties*

*Does not include strip sacks or "self sacks" with no defender listed.*

## Top 10 Quarterbacks, Knockdowns per Pass

Rk	Player	Team	KD	Pct
1	D.Watson	CLE	77	29.2%
2	W.Levis	TEN	81	22.4%
3	R.Wilson	PIT	81	21.1%
4	J.Herbert	LAC	111	19.2%
5	D.Jones	NYG	75	19.2%
6	C.J.Stroud	HOU	112	18.2%
7	P.Mahomes	KC	118	18.2%
8	S.Darnold	MIN	111	17.4%
9	J.Burrow	CIN	129	17.4%
10	C.Williams	CHI	116	17.3%

*Min. 200 passes; includes passes cancelled by penalty*

## Bottom 10 Quarterbacks in Knockdowns per Pass

Rk	Player	Team	KD	Pct
1	T.Tagovaloa	MIA	32	7.3%
2	K.Murray	ARI	54	8.9%
3	B.Mayfield	TB	63	9.9%
4	B.Nix	DEN	62	10.0%
5	C.Rush	DAL	35	10.2%
6	D.Carr	NO	32	10.6%
7	J.Allen	BUF	58	10.8%
8	T.Lawrence	JAX	37	11.9%
9	L.Jackson	BAL	62	11.9%
10	A.O'Connell	LV	32	11.9%

*Min. 200 passes; includes passes cancelled by penalty*

## Top 10 Most Passes Tipped at Line, Quarterbacks

Rk	Player	Team	Total
1	B.Nix	DEN	16
2	K.Murray	ARI	13
2	G.Smith	SEA	13
4	K.Cousins	ATL	12
4	P.Mahomes	KC	12
4	B.Mayfield	TB	12
4	B.Purdy	SF	12
4	C.Rush	DAL	12
4	M.Stafford	LAR	12
10	L.Jackson	BAL	11

## Top 10 Tipped at the Line, Defenders

Rk	Player	Team	Total
1	C.Heyward	PIT	9
2	J.Carter	PHI	6
2	K.Mack	LAC	6
4	B.Burns	NYG	5
4	C.Campbell	MIA	5
4	M.Crosby	LV	5
4	F.Luvu	WAS	5
8	7 tied with		4

## 2024 Quarterbacks with and without Pass Pressure

Rank	Player	Team	Plays	Pct Pressure	DVOA with Pressure	Yds with Pressure	DVOA w/o Pressure	Yds w/o Pressure	DVOA Dif	Rank
1	M.Jones	JAX	290	22.1%	-76.4%	1.9	31.0%	6.7	-107.4%	26
2	T.Tagovailoa	MIA	425	22.8%	-53.4%	3.3	46.0%	7.5	-99.4%	23
3	K.Murray	ARI	611	24.5%	-54.6%	3.0	46.7%	7.6	-101.3%	25
4	K.Cousins	MIN	480	25.0%	-90.2%	3.0	51.9%	8.2	-142.1%	36
5	C.Rush	DAL	324	26.2%	-51.3%	2.7	16.4%	6.4	-67.7%	5
6	B.Mayfield	TB	651	26.3%	-28.2%	4.4	52.7%	8.0	-80.9%	9
7	J.Goff	DET	581	26.3%	-77.3%	2.9	71.6%	9.4	-148.9%	38
8	T.Lawrence	JAX	314	27.4%	-54.6%	2.7	38.2%	7.8	-92.7%	18
9	J.Winston	CLE	327	27.5%	-61.8%	4.0	18.4%	7.0	-80.2%	8
10	J.Flacco	IND	269	27.9%	-118.6%	2.3	38.8%	7.7	-157.4%	39
11	J.Allen	BUF	539	28.0%	7.5%	5.9	62.1%	8.1	-54.6%	4
12	M.Rudolph	TEN	249	28.1%	-81.2%	3.0	10.7%	7.5	-91.9%	17
13	A.O'Connell	LV	255	28.2%	-36.5%	3.7	9.4%	7.0	-45.9%	1
14	A.Rodgers	NYJ	640	28.3%	-54.0%	3.2	25.8%	6.8	-79.8%	7
15	J.Love	GB	451	28.4%	-37.1%	4.8	59.4%	8.6	-96.6%	21
16	B.Nix	DEN	640	28.4%	-48.0%	4.0	38.5%	7.0	-86.5%	14
17	J.Hurts	PHI	437	29.1%	-79.0%	1.9	62.0%	8.8	-140.9%	35
18	G.Smith	SEA	650	29.2%	-87.1%	2.8	56.6%	8.0	-143.7%	37
19	J.Daniels	WAS	597	29.3%	-37.9%	4.5	53.8%	7.4	-91.6%	16
20	D.Carr	NO	295	30.2%	-19.2%	7.0	30.4%	7.4	-49.6%	3
21	J.Burrow	CIN	721	31.8%	-25.9%	4.7	57.5%	7.6	-83.4%	11
22	J.Herbert	LAC	572	31.8%	-61.9%	2.7	75.2%	8.9	-137.0%	33
23	M.Stafford	LAR	547	32.0%	-61.4%	2.8	62.2%	8.3	-123.5%	29
24	B.Purdy	SF	525	32.4%	-26.3%	4.3	70.2%	9.2	-96.4%	20
25	B.Young	CAR	450	32.4%	-37.1%	4.1	11.4%	6.2	-48.5%	2
26	S.Rattler	NO	263	33.5%	-92.0%	2.0	2.6%	6.4	-94.6%	19
27	G.Minshew	LV	343	33.5%	-99.8%	2.0	35.9%	7.4	-135.7%	32
28	C.Williams	CHI	676	33.6%	-88.6%	1.5	38.0%	6.9	-126.5%	30
29	D.Prescott	DAL	311	33.8%	-55.5%	3.7	26.8%	7.4	-82.4%	10
30	L.Jackson	BAL	538	33.8%	14.5%	5.9	99.0%	9.4	-84.5%	13
31	S.Darnold	MIN	620	34.0%	-59.1%	3.1	58.8%	8.6	-117.9%	28
32	D.Jones	NYG	381	34.1%	-86.4%	2.0	40.6%	6.9	-126.9%	31
33	D.Maye	NE	416	34.4%	-55.3%	3.5	28.2%	7.2	-83.5%	12
34	P.Mahomes	KC	652	34.5%	-24.3%	3.9	50.8%	7.4	-75.1%	6
35	A.Richardson	IND	297	34.7%	-64.6%	3.4	25.5%	7.9	-90.1%	15
36	W.Lewis	TEN	362	34.8%	-92.7%	2.3	17.0%	7.2	-109.7%	27
37	R.Wilson	PIT	387	35.9%	-78.0%	2.9	60.6%	8.1	-138.5%	34
38	C.J.Stroud	HOU	620	37.6%	-65.7%	3.2	31.9%	7.3	-97.6%	22
39	D.Watson	CLE	270	42.6%	-98.4%	1.8	2.8%	5.6	-101.2%	24

Includes scrambles, min. 200 passes.

**2024 Accuracy Rate**

Rank	Player	Team	Aimed Att	Acc%
1	T.Tagovailoa	MIA	382	94.5%
2	K.Cousins	ATL	416	94.0%
3	J.Burrow	CIN	613	93.5%
4	J.Hurts	PHI	321	93.1%
5	G.Smith	SEA	534	93.1%
6	B.Mayfield	TB	544	92.6%
7	K.Murray	ARI	503	92.6%
8	R.Wilson	PIT	292	92.5%
9	B.Purdy	SF	420	91.9%
10	D.Maye	NE	305	91.8%
11	P.Mahomes	KC	529	91.7%
12	M.Rudolph	TEN	198	91.4%
13	G.Minshew	LV	270	91.1%
14	A.O'Connell	LV	223	91.0%
15	D.Watson	CLE	200	91.0%
16	J.Herbert	LAC	473	90.9%
17	J.Love	GB	393	90.8%
18	D.Carr	NO	251	90.8%
19	D.Prescott	DAL	268	90.7%
20	D.Jones	NYG	310	90.6%
21	J.Goff	DET	499	90.6%
22	L.Jackson	BAL	431	90.5%
23	M.Jones	JAX	241	90.5%
24	B.Nix	DEN	526	90.1%
25	J.Winston	CLE	273	90.1%
26	J.Allen	BUF	444	90.1%
27	A.Rodgers	GB	551	90.0%
28	J.Flacco	IND	235	89.8%
29	M.Stafford	LAR	479	89.8%
30	C.Williams	CHI	507	89.5%
31	S.Darnold	MIN	491	89.0%
32	B.Young	CAR	348	88.8%
33	J.Daniels	WAS	450	88.7%
34	W.Lewis	TEN	280	88.6%
35	T.Lawrence	JAX	269	88.5%
36	C.J.Stroud	HOU	491	86.8%
37	C.Rush	DAL	287	86.4%
38	S.Rattler	NO	205	82.9%
39	A.Richardson	IND	236	82.2%

Min. 200 passes. Aimed attempts does not include passes batted down, thrown away, spiked, or with the QB hit in motion. Not adjusted for pass depth.

**WR: Highest Slot/Wide Ratio of Targets**

Rk	Player	Team	Slot	Wide	Slot%
1	J.Smith-Njigba	SEA	113	19	86%
2	A.Thielen	CAR	52	11	83%
3	J.Downs	IND	80	22	78%
4	J.Reed	GB	50	14	78%
5	D.Douglas	NE	68	20	77%
6	G.Dortch	ARI	36	11	77%
7	T.Boyd	TEN	44	15	75%
8	K.Turpin	DAL	37	13	74%
9	K.Shakir	BUF	69	28	71%
10	W.Robinson	NYG	93	40	70%
11	C.Kupp	LAR	70	32	69%
12	L.McConkey	LAC	76	39	66%
13	C.Godwin	TB	38	21	64%
14	E.Moore	CLE	65	36	64%
15	D.Vele	DEN	34	21	62%
16	C.Austin	PIT	37	23	62%
17	M.Mims	DEN	23	18	56%
18	D.Adams	2TM	71	73	49%
19	A.Lazard	NYJ	30	31	49%
20	S.Shepard	TB	24	26	48%

Min. 50 passes. Slot includes lined up tight.

**WR: Highest Wide/Slot Ratio of Targets**

Rk	Player	Team	Slot	Wide	Wide%
1	D.Slayton	NYG	5	69	93%
2	D.Metcalf	SEA	9	104	92%
3	A.Pierce	IND	6	67	92%
4	Q.Johnston	LAC	8	84	91%
5	A.Brown	PHI	9	91	91%
6	A.Cooper	2TM	8	80	91%
7	K.Boutte	NE	7	65	90%
8	K.Coleman	BUF	6	53	90%
9	R.Bateman	BAL	8	66	89%
10	C.Sutton	DEN	19	120	86%
11	R.Doubs	GB	12	63	84%
11	A.Mitchell	IND	9	47	84%
13	T.Higgins	CIN	20	95	83%
14	B.Cooks	DAL	10	44	81%
15	D.Hopkins	2TM	17	69	80%
16	N.Brown	WAS	13	49	79%
17	T.McLaurin	WAS	25	93	79%
17	C.Ridley	TEN	25	93	79%
19	D.J. Moore	CHI	29	103	78%
20	N.Westbrook-Ikhine	TEN	14	47	77%

Min. 50 passes. Slot includes lined up tight.

**Top 10 WR Better Lined Up Wide**

Rk	Player	Team	Slot	Wide	Slot	Wide	Dif
1	C.Samuel	BUF	23	20	-56.6%	7.7%	64.3%
2	M.Washington	MIA	18	16	-42.7%	10.5%	53.2%
3	T.McLaurin	WAS	25	93	-8.7%	33.8%	42.5%
4	P.Washington	JAX	19	33	-24.3%	16.4%	40.7%
5	C.Sutton	DEN	19	120	-29.2%	8.1%	37.2%
6	R.Shaheed	NO	16	25	-19.2%	17.6%	36.7%
7	N.Collins	HOU	23	75	-7.8%	22.5%	30.4%
8	D.Adams	2TM	71	73	-24.6%	5.7%	30.3%
9	R.McCloud	ATL	33	50	-27.6%	0.5%	28.0%
10	S.Shepard	TB	24	26	-33.0%	-9.4%	23.5%

Min. 15 targets from each position

**Top 10 WR Better Lined Up Slot/Tight**

Rk	Player	Team	Slot	Wide	Slot	Wide	Dif
1	M.Mims	DEN	23	18	20.1%	-52.5%	72.7%
2	T.Higgins	CIN	20	95	62.4%	5.8%	56.6%
3	D.Douglas	NE	68	20	5.3%	-42.1%	47.4%
4	C.Godwin	TB	38	21	44.7%	1.8%	42.9%
5	D.Hopkins	2TM	17	69	41.0%	-1.7%	42.8%
6	G.Wilson	NYJ	47	110	21.5%	-20.8%	42.3%
7	G.Pickens	PIT	29	76	21.8%	-17.0%	38.9%
8	T.Tucker	LV	19	61	8.0%	-27.4%	35.4%
9	J.Downs	IND	80	22	5.2%	-25.8%	31.0%
10	J.Tolbert	DAL	31	52	26.1%	-3.2%	29.3%

Min. 15 targets from each position

**Top 10 TE Highest Rate of Targets from WR Positions (Slot/Wide)**

Rk	Player	Team	Tight	Slot	Wide	Back	WR%
1	M.Gesicki	CIN	3	59	21	0	96%
2	M.Andrews	BAL	15	39	16	0	79%
3	P.Freiermuth	PIT	20	46	13	1	74%
4	B.Bowers	LV	41	79	30	6	70%
5	T.Kelce	KC	40	55	36	2	68%
6	D.Kincaid	BUF	24	42	9	1	67%
7	H.Henry	NE	33	62	1	1	65%
8	I.Likely	BAL	19	33	4	2	64%
9	B.Strange	JAX	20	28	7	0	64%
10	T.Hill	NO	9	12	8	3	63%

Min. 25 passes

**Top 10 TE Lowest Rate of Targets from WR Positions (Slot/Wide)**

Rk	Player	Team	Tight	Slot	Wide	Back	WR%
1	J.Oliver	MIN	24	2	2	0	14%
2	J.Mundt	MIN	20	4	2	2	21%
3	D.Washington	PIT	20	2	4	0	23%
4	A.Hooper	NE	43	13	3	0	27%
5	T.Kraft	GB	47	19	3	1	31%
6	J.Ruckert	NYJ	18	8	1	1	32%
7	F.Moreau	NO	29	12	2	0	33%
8	C.Otton	TB	55	24	6	3	34%
9	W.Dissly	LAC	39	17	6	2	36%
10	D.Schultz	HOU	48	22	9	6	36%

Min. 25 passes

**Top 10 RB Highest Rate of Targets from WR Positions (Slot/Wide)**

Rk	Player	Team	Back	Slot	Wide	Tight	WR%
1	D.Achane	MIA	52	24	11	0	40%
2	A.Ekeler	WAS	28	5	7	1	29%
3	A.Kamara	NO	63	18	8	0	29%
4	B.Robinson	WAS	18	7	0	0	28%
5	T.Johnson	BUF	19	5	1	0	24%
6	M.Sanders	CAR	23	1	6	0	23%
7	K.Juszczyk	SF	12	5	2	12	23%
8	C.Brown	CIN	51	8	6	1	21%
9	A.Jones	MIN	46	5	8	3	21%
10	Z.Charbonnet	SEA	42	5	6	1	20%

Min. 25 passes

**Top 20 Players, Passes Dropped**

Rk	Player	Team	Total
1	M.Nabers	NYG	10
2	J.Chase	CIN	8
2	J.Jeudy	CLE	8
4	C.Lamb	DAL	7
4	A.Lazard	NYJ	7
4	D.Njoku	CLE	7
4	C.Otton	TB	7
4	G.Pickens	PIT	7
4	T.Pollard	TEN	7
4	J.Reed	GB	7
11	B.Bowers	LV	6
11	J.Jefferson	MIN	6
11	A.Kamara	NO	6
11	T.Kelce	KC	6
15	15 tied with		5

**Top 20 Players, Pct. Passes Dropped**

Rk	Player	Team	Drops	Passes	Pct
1	B.Allen	NYJ	5	27	15.6%
2	J.Taylor	IND	5	31	13.9%
3	T.Pollard	TEN	8	57	12.3%
4	A.Lazard	NYJ	7	61	10.3%
5	B.Aiyuk	SF	5	47	9.6%
6	J.Nailor	MIN	4	41	8.9%
7	J.Reed	GB	6	67	8.2%
8	K.Coleman	BUF	5	57	8.1%
9	N.Harris	PIT	4	48	7.7%
10	C.Otton	TB	7	87	7.4%
11	D.Wicks	GB	5	63	7.4%
12	T.Tracy	NYG	4	53	7.0%
13	D.Njoku	CLE	7	97	6.7%
14	C.Austin	PIT	4	58	6.5%
15	A.Kamara	NO	6	89	6.3%
16	A.Iosivas	CIN	4	61	6.2%
16	T.Kraft	GB	4	61	6.2%
18	T.Atwell	LA	4	62	6.1%
19	O.Zaccheaus	WAS	4	64	5.9%
19	R.Doubs	GB	4	64	5.9%

*Min. four drops***Top 10 Teams, Pct Passes Dropped**

Rk	Team	Passes	Drops	Pct
1	DET	510	7	1.4%
2	BUF	478	11	2.3%
3	PHI	402	10	2.5%
4	BAL	434	11	2.5%
5	ARI	505	13	2.6%
6	LV	569	15	2.6%
7	LAR	521	14	2.7%
8	DAL	593	17	2.9%
9	NE	475	14	2.9%
10	ATL	515	16	3.1%

*Adjusted for passes tipped/thrown away.***Bottom 10 Teams, Pct Passes Dropped**

Rk	Team	Passes	Drops	Pct
23	TEN	479	19	4.0%
24	HOU	527	21	4.0%
25	SF	490	21	4.3%
26	CLE	604	26	4.3%
27	PIT	441	19	4.3%
28	GB	446	21	4.7%
29	IND	472	23	4.9%
30	NYG	529	27	5.1%
31	CIN	613	32	5.2%
32	NYJ	572	30	5.2%

*Adjusted for passes tipped/thrown away.***Top 20 Yards Lost to  
Drops by Quarterbacks**

Rk	Player	Team	Drops	Yds
1	J.Burrow	CIN	32	180
2	S.Darnold	MIN	17	174
3	C.J.Stroud	HOU	20	166
4	J.Allen	BUF	10	159
5	A.Richardson	IND	14	158
6	J.Love	GB	18	157
7	P.Mahomes	KC	19	153
8	B.Nix	DEN	18	149
8	B.Young	CAR	11	149
10	B.Mayfield	TB	21	142
11	L.Jackson	BAL	11	127
12	A.Rodgers	NYJ	30	124
13	B.Purdy	SF	18	120
14	G.Smith	SEA	16	117
15	C.Williams	CHI	17	113
16	J.Daniels	WAS	16	105
16	J.Herbert	LAC	18	105
18	J.Goff	DET	7	82
19	D.Jones	NYG	16	80
19	D.Lock	NYG	9	80

*Based on yardage in the air, no possible YAC included.***Top 10 Intended Receivers  
on Interceptions**

Rk	Player	Team	Total
1	E.Moore	CLE	8
1	D.London	ATL	8
3	J.Chase	CIN	7
4	C.Lamb	DAL	6
4	J.McMillan	TB	6
4	C.Sutton	DEN	6
7	B.Bowers	LV	5
7	N.Collins	HOU	5
7	M.Evans	TB	5
7	J.Jefferson	MIN	5
7	D.Johnson	CAR	5
7	B.Thomas	JAX	5
7	G.Wilson	NYJ	5

## Top 10 Completion Percentage Over Expected

Rk	Player	Team	CPOE
1	J.Hurts	PHI	+6.7%
2	J.Goff	DET	+5.4%
3	L.Jackson	BAL	+4.5%
4	S.Darnold	MIN	+4.4%
5	G.Smith	SEA	+4.4%
6	D.Carr	NO	+3.8%
7	J.Burrow	CIN	+3.4%
8	K.Murray	ARI	+2.7%
9	T.Tagovailoa	MIA	+2.7%
10	R.Wilson	PIT	+2.4%

Min. 200 passes; CPOE adjusted for passes tipped/thrown away.

## Bottom 10 Completion Percentage Over Expected

Rk	Player	Team	CPOE
1	A.Richardson	IND	-10.4%
2	S.Rattler	NO	-7.7%
3	C.Rush	DAL	-7.0%
4	A.Rodgers	NYJ	-5.6%
5	D.Watson	CLE	-5.4%
6	T.Lawrence	JAX	-4.4%
7	W.Levis	TEN	-2.5%
8	A.O'Connell	LV	-2.3%
9	D.Prescott	DAL	-2.3%
10	D.Jones	NYG	-1.8%

Min. 200 passes; CPOE adjusted for passes tipped/thrown away.

## Top 10 Plus/Minus for Wide Receivers

Rk	Player	Team	Pass	+/-
1	A.St.Brown	DET	141	+15.3
2	D.Smith	PHI	89	+10.7
3	T.McLaurin	WAS	117	+10.4
4	A.Thielen	CAR	62	+9.0
5	J.Smith-Njigba	SEA	137	+8.3
6	L.McConkey	LAC	113	+7.6
7	M.Evans	TB	110	+7.3
8	P.Nacua	LAR	106	+6.9
9	J.Chase	CIN	175	+6.8
10	A.J.Brown	PHI	97	+6.4

Min. 50 passes; plus/minus adjusted for passes tipped/thrown away.

## Bottom 10 Plus/Minus for Wide Receivers

Rk	Player	Team	Pass	+/-
1	A.Cooper	2TM	85	-8.5
2	D.Samuel	SF	81	-8.4
3	D.Johnson	3TM	67	-8.2
4	A.Mitchell	IND	55	-7.4
5	D.Wicks	GB	76	-7.3
6	X.Worthy	KC	98	-7.2
7	W.Robinson	NYG	140	-7.2
8	D.Adams	2TM	141	-5.9
9	B.Cooks	DAL	54	-5.8
10	R.Odunze	CHI	101	-5.4

Min. 50 passes; plus/minus adjusted for passes tipped/thrown away.

## Top 10 Plus/Minus for Tight Ends

Rk	Player	Team	Pass	+/-
1	G.Kittle	SF	94	+14.7
2	M.Andrews	BAL	69	+10.5
3	T.McBride	ARI	147	+10.1
4	P.Freiermuth	PIT	78	+9.8
5	C.Kmet	CHI	55	+7.0
6	S.LaPorta	DET	83	+6.8
7	M.Gesicki	CIN	83	+6.1
8	Z.Ertz	WAS	91	+6.0
9	N.Gray	KC	49	+6.0
10	J.Smith	MIA	111	+5.9

Min. 25 passes; plus/minus adjusted for passes tipped/thrown away.

## Bottom 10 Plus/Minus for Tight Ends

Rk	Player	Team	Pass	+/-
1	D.Kincaid	BUF	75	-7.0
2	C.Parkinson	LAR	49	-5.9
3	K.Granson	IND	31	-5.2
4	D.Schultz	HOU	85	-4.7
5	J.Ferguson	DAL	86	-4.3
6	D.Njoku	CLE	97	-4.1
7	J.Ruckert	NYJ	28	-3.6
8	M.Mayer	LV	32	-3.0
9	K.Pitts	ATL	74	-2.6
10	C.Otton	TB	87	-2.5

Min. 25 passes; plus/minus adjusted for passes tipped/thrown away.

**Top 10 Plus/Minus for Running Backs**

Rk	Player	Team	Pass	+/-
1	D.Achane	MIA	87	+6.2
2	A.Jones	MIN	62	+5.3
3	R.White	TB	57	+3.6
4	D.Montgomery	DET	38	+3.2
5	Z.Charbonnet	SEA	54	+3.1
6	J.Hill	BAL	51	+2.7
7	J.Warren	PIT	47	+2.3
8	A.Abdullah	LV	47	+2.2
9	A.Gibson	NE	30	+2.1
10	S.Barkley	PHI	43	+2.1

Min. 25 passes; plus/minus adjusted for passes tipped/thrown away.

**Bottom 10 Plus/Minus for Running Backs**

Rk	Player	Team	Pass	+/-
1	J.Taylor	IND	31	-8.7
2	A.Kamara	NO	89	-6.2
3	T.Pollard	TEN	57	-5.5
4	B.Hall	NYJ	76	-5.2
5	T.Etienne	JAX	52	-4.7
6	J.Mixon	HOU	52	-4.5
7	N.Harris	PIT	48	-4.1
8	J.Williams	DEN	70	-4.1
9	T.Tracy	NYG	53	-3.8
10	B.Allen	NYJ	27	-3.4

Min. 25 passes; plus/minus adjusted for passes tipped/thrown away.

**Top 10 Quarterbacks,  
Yards Gained on Defensive  
Pass Interference**

Rk	Player	Team	Pen	Yds
1	S.Darnold	MIN	15	328
2	M.Stafford	LAR	16	240
3	J.Burrow	CIN	15	225
4	J.Love	GB	10	202
5	G.Smith	SEA	14	200
6	J.Flacco	IND	8	189
7	A.Rodgers	NYJ	13	185
8	J.Herbert	LAC	11	158
9	B.Mayfield	TB	9	155
9	K.Murray	ARI	9	155

**Top 10 Receivers, Yards  
Gained on Defensive  
Pass Interference**

Rk	Player	Team	Pen	Yds
1	J.Jefferson	MIN	9	171
2	N.Brown	WAS	6	158
3	A.Pierce	IND	4	140
4	D.Mooney	ATL	7	123
5	J.Addison	MIN	3	113
6	D.Adams	2TM	5	84
7	T.Higgins	CIN	6	77
8	J.Reed	GB	4	76
9	T.Lockett	SEA	5	74
10	R.Doubs	GB	3	72
10	A.Iosivas	CIN	4	72

**Top 10 Defenders, Yards  
Allowed on Defensive  
Pass Interference**

Rk	Player	Team	Pen	Yds
1	T.Arnold	DET	7	137
1	D.J.Reed	NYJ	8	137
3	D.Banks	NYG	4	106
4	M.Jackson	CAR	4	94
5	S.Murphy-Bunting	ARI	4	93
6	P.Adebo	NO	6	91
7	J.Porter	PIT	6	87
8	M.Lattimore	2TM	4	85
9	R.Moss	DEN	4	83
10	M.Brown	JAX	4	77
10	B.Stephens	BAL	5	77

**Top 20 First Downs/Touchdowns  
Allowed, Coverage**

Rk	Player	Team	FD/TD	Rk	Player	Team	FD/TD
1	B.Stephens	BAL	54	11	D.Alford	ATL	37
2	M.Jackson	CAR	46	11	M.Brown	JAX	37
3	B.Murphy	MIN	45	11	J.Jones	IND	37
4	R.Moss	DEN	42	14	D.Banks	NYG	36
5	M.Emerson	CLE	40	14	B.St-Juste	WAS	36
5	C.Taylor-Britt	CIN	40	16	T.McDuffie	KC	35
7	J.Jones	LV	39	16	A.Taylor	NO	35
7	Z.McCollum	TB	39	18	B.Branch	DET	34
7	M.Sainristil	WAS	39	18	J.McMillian	DEN	34
10	T.Arnold	DET	38	18	J.Porter	PIT	34

Includes Defensive Pass Interference.

**Top 20 Passing Yards Allowed, Coverage**

Rk	Player	Team	Yards	Rk	Player	Team	Yards
1	B.Stephens	BAL	1005	11	M.Emerson	CLE	747
2	M.Jackson	CAR	969	12	M.Sainristil	WAS	738
3	Z.McCollum	TB	873	13	J.Jones	LV	727
4	C.Taylor-Britt	CIN	868	14	R.Moss	DEN	721
5	B.Murphy	MIN	864	15	J.Porter	PIT	713
6	A.Taylor	NO	856	16	B.St-Juste	WAS	703
7	D.Banks	NYG	812	17	D.Ward	CLE	693
8	T.Arnold	DET	802	18	D.Witherspoon	SEA	669
9	J.Jones	IND	770	19	J.McMillian	DEN	662
10	M.Brown	JAX	755	20	D.Alford	ATL	650

Includes Defensive Pass Interference.

### Fewest Yards After Catch Allowed, Coverage by Cornerbacks

Rk	Player	Team	YAC
1	Q.Mitchell	PHI	1.4
2	P.Surtain	DEN	2.0
3	R.Moss	DEN	2.1
4	J.Horn	CAR	2.3
5	K.Fulton	LAC	2.6
6	T.McDuffie	KC	2.6
7	A.Terrell	ATL	2.7
8	C.Benford	BUF	2.7
9	K.Nixon	GB	2.7
10	D.Bland	DAL	2.7

Min. 45 passes or 8 games started.

### Most Yards After Catch Allowed, Coverage by Cornerbacks

Rk	Player	Team	YAC
1	G.Newsome	CLE	7.3
2	T.Johnson	BUF	7.2
3	D.Jackson	PIT	6.6
4	K.Gordon	CHI	6.2
5	D.Stingley	HOU	6.2
6	R.McCreary	TEN	6.1
7	J.Johnson	CHI	6.1
8	J.Jones	JAX	6.0
9	D.Witherspoon	SEA	5.8
10	J.Lewis	DAL	5.8

Min. 45 passes or 8 games started.

### Best Coverage DVOA, Cornerbacks

Rk	Player	Team	Tgts	DVOA
1	D.Baker	TEN	40	-44.6%
2	P.Surtain	DEN	64	-42.6%
3	M.Lattimore	2TM	37	-40.9%
4	C.Benford	BUF	55	-40.5%
5	J.Johnson	CHI	53	-36.0%
6	B.Murphy	MIN	109	-32.7%
7	T.Still	LAC	72	-29.8%
8	D.Stingley	HOU	95	-28.3%
9	T.Smith	TB	73	-27.8%
10	G.Williams	ARI	58	-27.0%
11	C.DeJean	PHI	56	-25.8%
12	T.Diggs	DAL	53	-24.7%
13	D.Jackson	PIT	73	-24.6%
14	J.Bennett	LV	46	-24.4%
15	N.Wiggins	BAL	76	-24.3%
16	K.Moore	IND	70	-24.2%
17	B.Bishop	PIT	66	-24.2%
18	M.Humphrey	BAL	86	-23.6%
19	D.Lenoir	SF	88	-21.8%
20	Q.Mitchell	PHI	76	-19.2%

Min. 45 targets or 8 games started.

### Worst Coverage DVOA, Cornerbacks

Rk	Player	Team	Tgts	DVOA
1	R.Moss	DEN	96	41.0%
2	G.Newsome	CLE	51	38.5%
3	B.St-Juste	WAS	93	37.9%
4	D.Banks	NYG	81	36.6%
5	M.Emerson	CLE	95	29.9%
6	R.Darby	JAX	59	28.0%
7	M.Brown	JAX	87	27.1%
8	A.Witherspoon	LAR	47	24.7%
9	D.Richardson	LV	47	21.0%
10	A.Taylor	NO	97	20.7%
11	P.Adebo	NO	60	18.2%
12	J.Jobe	SEA	55	15.2%
13	B.Stephens	BAL	109	15.2%
14	J.Jones	NE	52	15.1%
15	M.Jackson	CAR	102	14.6%
16	M.Sainristil	WAS	97	13.7%
17	K.Fulton	LAC	69	13.6%
18	D.Alford	ATL	85	13.5%
19	R.McCreary	TEN	58	12.1%
20	C.Hart	LAC	57	11.5%

Min. 45 targets or 8 games started.

**Best Coverage DVOA, Safeties**

Rk	Player	Team	Tgts	DVOA
1	J.Ward	HOU	28	-86.7%
2	X.Woods	CAR	23	-52.8%
3	K.Curl	LAR	19	-36.7%
4	D.Belton	NYG	21	-35.9%
5	J.Brown	SF	18	-34.0%
6	M.Hooker	DAL	12	-28.2%
7	R.McLeod	CLE	18	-19.7%
8	J.Love	SEA	29	-18.1%
9	Q.Lake	LAR	49	-16.9%
10	J.Metellus	MIN	52	-16.4%
11	D.James	LAC	42	-14.1%
12	J.McCollough	LAR	18	-13.6%
13	C.Izien	TB	34	-13.5%
14	H.Smith	MIN	26	-13.5%
15	J.Bates	ATL	25	-12.0%
16	D.Savage	JAX	20	-9.4%
17	B.Cook	KC	15	-8.6%
18	J.Simmons	ATL	16	-5.0%
19	D.Hamlin	BUF	14	-2.0%
20	J.Pitre	HOU	50	-1.7%

Min. 16 targets or 8 games started.

**Worst Coverage DVOA, Safeties**

Rk	Player	Team	Tgts	DVOA
1	R.Blankenship	PHI	16	97.6%
2	J.Pinnock	NYG	16	79.3%
3	A.Hooker	TEN	18	66.5%
4	A.Johnson	JAX	29	58.8%
5	J.Blackmon	IND	12	51.4%
6	P.J.Locke	DEN	20	42.1%
7	C.Bryant	SEA	15	38.8%
8	B.Branch	DET	59	37.4%
9	A.Cisco	JAX	12	36.4%
10	J.Reid	KC	35	34.2%
11	J.Chinn	WAS	31	34.2%
12	C.J.Gardner-Johnson	PHI	25	33.3%
13	N.Cross	IND	36	31.3%
14	T.Adams	NYJ	27	28.1%
15	K.Dugger	NE	30	27.8%
16	D.Wilson	DAL	14	26.8%
17	U.Amadi	NO	66	26.5%
18	T.Nubin	NYG	21	24.9%
19	I.Pola-Mao	LV	18	24.1%
20	E.Molden	LAC	15	22.8%

Min. 16 targets or 8 games started.

**Best Coverage DVOA, Linebackers**

Rk	Player	Team	Tgts	DVOA
1	W.Gay	NO	13	-76.6%
2	E.Wilson	GB	24	-28.9%
3	T.Edmunds	CHI	50	-24.3%
4	J.Jewell	CAR	33	-23.7%
5	J.Owusu-Koramoah	CLE	15	-22.8%
6	B.Spector	BUF	20	-22.8%
7	T.Dodson	2TM	32	-21.8%
8	E.Cooper	GB	31	-21.3%
9	F.Warner	SF	48	-21.2%
10	D.Davis	NO	43	-17.3%
11	R.Spillane	LV	51	-16.0%
12	Z.Franklin	IND	58	-15.2%
13	Q.Walker	GB	29	-15.0%
14	J.Hicks	CLE	20	-14.8%
15	C.Barton	DEN	38	-14.7%
16	J.Campbell	DET	36	-14.1%
17	M.Diabate	CLE	14	-13.6%
18	M.Wilson	ARI	25	-10.6%
19	D.Lloyd	JAX	45	-9.8%
20	T.Simpson	BAL	23	-9.6%

Min. 16 targets or 8 games started.

**Worst Coverage DVOA, Linebackers**

Rk	Player	Team	Tgts	DVOA
1	D.Williams	BUF	49	60.7%
2	D.Overshown	DAL	34	55.7%
3	E.Kendricks	DAL	23	40.6%
4	D.Long	2TM	18	39.3%
5	T.Andersen	ATL	20	33.4%
6	O.Pappoe	ARI	16	30.6%
7	C.Elliss	NE	21	30.6%
8	J.Tavai	NE	45	29.0%
9	E.Roberts	PIT	17	26.2%
10	T.Edwards	CHI	61	23.8%
11	D.Winters	SF	23	22.6%
12	J.Brooks	MIA	65	20.9%
13	F.Oluokun	JAX	54	20.3%
14	I.McDuffie	GB	44	18.1%
15	C.Rozeboom	LAR	39	17.6%
16	E.J.Speed	IND	58	17.5%
17	A.Walker	MIA	26	16.3%
18	K.Elliss	ATL	39	15.2%
19	A.Anzalone	DET	49	14.8%
20	P.Werner	NO	39	12.8%

Min. 16 targets or 8 games started.

**Top 20 Defenders, Run Tackles for Loss**

Rk	Player	Team	TFL
1	E.Cooper	GB	12
1	G.Stewart	IND	12
3	N.Bolton	KC	11
3	B.Wagner	WAS	11
5	Z.Baun	PHI	10
5	B.Burns	NYG	10
5	D.Bush	CLE	10
5	M.Crosby	LV	10
5	M.Hilton	CIN	10
5	M.McFadden	NYG	10
5	I.McGuire	CLE	10
5	T.J.Watt	PIT	10
5	Q.Williams (LB)	NYJ	10
14	G.Rousseau	BUF	9
14	M.Garrett	CLE	9
14	J.Sherwood	NYJ	9
17	12 tied with		8

*Includes both tackles and assists.***Fewest Avg Yards on Run Tackle,  
Defensive Line or Edge Rusher**

Rk	Player	Team	Tkl	Avg
1	M.Crosby	LV	33	0.6
2	Y.Diaby	TB	43	0.9
3	I.McGuire	CLE	30	1.0
4	J.Franklin-Myers	DEN	29	1.2
5	Z.Allen	DEN	45	1.2
6	G.Stewart	IND	66	1.3
7	E.Ogbah	MIA	36	1.3
8	G.Rousseau	BUF	36	1.5
9	G.Jarrett	ATL	44	1.5
10	S.Harris	CLE	31	1.5
11	M.Garrett	CLE	30	1.5
12	J.Greenard	MIN	36	1.6
13	D.Hunter	HOU	31	1.6
14	A.J.Epenesa	BUF	27	1.7
15	J.Simmons	TEN	63	1.7
16	A.Key	TEN	31	1.8
17	J.Bullard	MIN	40	1.8
18	T.Jones	BAL	39	1.9
19	D.Jones	DEN	40	1.9
20	S.Joseph-Day	TEN	41	1.9

*Min. 25 run tackles***Fewest Avg Yards on Run Tackle, LB**

Rk	Player	Team	Tkl	Avg
1	Q.Williams	NYJ	75	2.4
2	T.Dodson	2TM	53	2.7
3	M.Diabate	CLE	45	2.7
4	E.Cooper	GB	43	2.7
5	L.David	TB	57	2.7
6	M.Harrison	BAL	36	2.9
7	A.Al-Shaair	HOU	49	2.9
8	D.Tranquill	KC	58	2.9
9	J.Owusu-Koramoah	CLE	41	3.0
10	L.Chenal	KC	41	3.0
11	T.Bernard	BUF	60	3.1
12	I.Pace	MIN	47	3.1
13	S.Thompson	CAR	27	3.1
14	B.Cashman	MIN	55	3.1
15	D.Muasau	NYG	38	3.1
16	E.Roberts	PIT	36	3.1
17	R.Smith	BAL	90	3.1
18	T.Dye	LAC	35	3.2
19	J.Strnad	DEN	41	3.2
20	J.Baker	2TM	36	3.3

*Min. 25 run tackles***Fewest Avg Yards on Run Tackle, DB**

Rk	Player	Team	Tkl	Avg
1	M.Hilton	CIN	38	2.6
2	J.Pitre	HOU	30	2.9
3	A.Phillips	NYG	26	3.0
4	K.Gordon	CHI	31	3.1
5	N.Johnson	KC	23	3.8
6	J.Ward	HOU	20	3.8
7	K.Lassiter	HOU	26	3.8
8	J.Brisker	CHI	21	4.0
9	K.Moore	IND	36	4.0
10	J.Ramsey	MIA	21	4.0
11	G.Delpit	CLE	63	4.3
12	J.Brownlee	TEN	40	4.4
13	D.Lenoir	SF	38	4.4
14	C.Davis	DET	22	4.4
14	R.Douglas	BUF	22	4.4
16	K.Hamilton	BAL	51	4.5
17	J.McMillian	DEN	23	4.5
18	C.Conner	KC	26	4.5
19	C.Ward	SF	24	4.7
20	J.Jones	IND	38	4.7

*Min. 20 run tackles*

## Top 20 Offensive Tackles, Pressures Allowed

Rk	Player	Pos	Team	Est Pass Snaps	Press	Rate
1	D.Jacobs	RT	NE	545	50	9.2%
2	K.Miller	LT	LV	721	47	6.5%
2	C.Robinson	LT	2TM	614	47	7.7%
4	T.Steele	RT	DAL	738	46	6.2%
4	J.Taylor	RT	KC	698	46	6.6%
6	D.Glaze	RT	LV	669	43	6.4%
6	B.Jones	RT	PIT	593	43	7.3%
8	C.McKivitz	RT	SF	643	42	6.5%
9	R.Rosengarten	RT	BAL	491	40	8.1%
10	D.Moore	LT	PIT	615	39	6.3%
10	W.Morris	LT	KC	468	39	8.3%
12	JC Latham	LT	TEN	657	36	5.5%
12	R.Walker	LT	GB	556	36	6.5%
14	I.Ekwonu	LT	CAR	582	35	6.0%
15	C.Ford	LT/LG	CIN	470	34	7.2%
15	T.Howard	RT	HOU	648	34	5.2%
15	D.Wright	RT	CHI	666	34	5.1%
18	B.Coleman	LT	WAS	474	32	6.8%
18	L.Goedeke	RT	TB	550	32	5.8%
18	T.Guyton	LT	DAL	422	32	7.6%
18	R.Stanley	LT	BAL	573	32	5.6%

## Top 20 Offensive Tackles in Pressure Rate Allowed

Rk	Player	Pos	Team	Est Pass Snaps	Press	Rate
1	K.Lamm	RT	MIA	314	5	1.6%
2	T.Wirfs	LT	TB	616	11	1.8%
3	C.Lucas	LT	WAS	280	6	2.1%
4	T.Armstead	LT	MIA	504	14	2.8%
5	J.Matthews	LT	ATL	626	18	2.9%
6	B.O'Neill	RT	MIN	676	20	3.0%
7	P.Sewell	RT	DET	623	19	3.0%
8	A.Jackson	LT	LAR	524	17	3.2%
9	K.Beachum	RT	ARI	446	15	3.4%
10	O.Brown	LT	CIN	434	15	3.5%
11	R.Havenstein	RT	LAR	401	14	3.5%
12	G.Bolles	LT	DEN	666	25	3.8%
13	C.Cross	LT	SEA	729	28	3.8%
14	L.Johnson	RT	PHI	462	18	3.9%
15	T.Williams	LT	SF	393	16	4.1%
16	R.Slater	LT	LAC	536	22	4.1%
17	A.Thomas	LT	NYG	268	11	4.1%
18	L.Tunsil	LT	HOU	654	27	4.1%
19	D.Dawkins	LT	BUF	556	23	4.1%
20	A.Jackson	RT	MIA	332	14	4.2%

Minimum: 400 offensive snaps

## Top 20 Interior Linemen, Pressures Allowed

Rk	Player	Pos	Team	Est Pass Snaps	Press	Rate
1	A.Cappa	RG	CIN	772	42	5.4%
2	T.Smith	RG	KC	713	34	4.8%
3	B.Brandel	LG	MIN	686	32	4.7%
4	C.Volson	LG	CIN	671	30	4.5%
5	J.Bitonio	LG	CLE	808	29	3.6%
5	B.Bredeson	LG	TB	684	29	4.2%
7	T.Pipkins	RG	LAC	497	28	5.6%
8	Z.Johnson	LG	LAC	621	27	4.3%
9	L.Eichenberg	RG	MIA	637	26	4.1%
10	R.Jones	LG	MIA	663	25	3.8%
11	N.Allegretti	LG	WAS	691	24	3.5%
11	D.Faalele	RG	BAL	583	24	4.1%
11	P.Mekari	LG	BAL	525	24	4.6%
14	M.Onwenu	RG/RT	NE	642	23	3.6%
14	B.Powers	LG	DEN	678	23	3.4%
14	J.Runyan	LG	NYG	541	23	4.3%
14	C.Shelton	C	CHI	731	23	3.1%
14	L.Tomlinson	LG	SEA	729	23	3.2%
19	G.Bradbury	C	MIN	686	22	3.2%
19	T.Karras	C	CIN	775	22	2.8%

## Top 20 Interior Linemen in Pressure Rate Allowed

Rk	Player	Pos	Team	Est Pass Snaps	Press	Rate
1	Z.Frazier	C	PIT	539	7	1.3%
2	F.Ragnow	C	DET	577	8	1.4%
3	S.Cosmi	RG	WAS	698	10	1.4%
4	R.Kelly	C	IND	334	5	1.5%
5	C.Humphrey	C	KC	713	11	1.5%
6	D.Dalman	C	ATL	310	5	1.6%
7	Q.Meinerz	RG	DEN	678	11	1.6%
8	A.James	C	LV	471	8	1.7%
9	C.Jurgens	C	PHI	527	9	1.7%
10	J.Patterson	C	HOU	349	6	1.7%
11	M.Morse	C	JAX	629	11	1.7%
12	L.Wattenberg	C	DEN	514	9	1.8%
13	B.Scherff	RG	JAX	625	11	1.8%
14	E.Jenkins	LG	GB	554	10	1.8%
15	D.Risner	RG	MIN	330	6	1.8%
16	C.Ruiz	RG	NO	491	9	1.8%
17	K.Dotson	RG	LAR	600	11	1.8%
18	B.Hoffman	C	DAL	326	6	1.8%
19	E.Pocic	C	CLE	736	14	1.9%
20	B.Brown	C	NE	420	8	1.9%

Minimum: 400 offensive snaps

## Top 20 Skill Players, Pressures Allowed

Rk	Player	Team	Pos	Press	Rk	Player	Team	Pos	Press
1	D.Washington	PIT	TE	13	10	S.Barkley	PHI	RB	7
2	A.Trautman	DEN	TE	12	10	G.Calcaterra	PHI	TE	7
3	D.Schultz	HOU	TE	11	10	J.K.Dobbins	LAC	RB	7
4	J.Ferguson	DAL	TE	10	10	T.Johnson	NYG	TE	7
4	C.Kmet	CHI	TE	10	10	B.Robinson	ATL	RB	7
6	A.Hooper	NE	TE	8	10	D.Sample	CIN	TE	7
6	D.Ogunbowale	HOU	RB	8	10	D.Smythe	MIA	TE	7
6	C.Parkinson	SEA	TE	8	10	C.Stover	HOU	TE	7
6	R.White	TB	RB	8	18	13 tied with			6

## Most Penalties, Offense

Rk	Player	Team	Pen	Yds
1	L.Tunsil	HOU	19	95
2	T.Guyton	DAL	18	100
3	J.Taylor	KC	17	100
4	S.Brown	BUF	16	105
5	G.Bolles	DEN	15	95
6	D.Dawkins	BUF	14	96
7	V.Lowe	NE	13	76
8	M.Bergeron	ATL	12	66
8	I.Ekwonu	CAR	12	95
8	P.Mekari	BAL	12	90
8	T.Penning	NO	12	97
8	C.Robinson	2TM	12	65
8	B.Smith	IND	12	45
8	R.Stanley	BAL	12	75
15	B.Brandel	MIN	11	66
15	S.Cosmi	WAS	11	69
15	D.Jacobs	NE	11	75
15	Q.Nelson	IND	11	63
15	J.Powers-Johnson	LV	11	77
20	7 tied with		10	

Includes declined and offsetting, but not penalties on special teams, turnover returns, or kneeldowns.

## Most Penalties, Defense

Rk	Player	Team	Pen	Yds
1	J.Porter	PIT	15	126
2	J.Horn	CAR	11	65
2	D.J.Reed	NYJ	11	147
2	P.Surtain	DEN	11	115
2	C.Taylor-Britt	CIN	11	86
6	T.Arnold	DET	10	161
6	A.Gardner	NYJ	10	83
6	M.Humphrey	BAL	10	99
9	P.Adebo	NO	9	106
9	B.Branch	DET	9	115
9	J.Brownlee	TEN	9	57
9	R.Douglas	BUF	9	37
9	K.Fulton	LAC	9	47
9	J.Jones	IND	9	53
9	S.Murphy-Bunting	ARI	9	108
9	B.St-Juste	WAS	9	84
17	M.Emerson	CLE	8	53
17	J.Kinlaw	NYJ	8	45
17	T.McDuffie	KC	8	40
17	M.Parsons	DAL	8	35
17	N.Wiggins	BAL	8	75

Includes declined and offsetting, but not penalties on special teams, turnover returns, or kneeldowns.

## Top 10 Kickers, Gross Kickoff Value over Average

Rk	Player	Team	Kick Pts+	Net Pts+	Kicks
1	B.Grupe	NO	+3.5	+5.6	78
2	B.McManus	GB	+2.8	+2.0	60
3	J.Myers	SEA	+2.1	-3.6	86
4	C.Santos	CHI	+2.0	+3.3	69
5	A.Seibert	WAS	+2.0	+2.2	58
6	J.Bates	DET	+1.3	+0.6	108
7	C.Boswell	PIT	+1.3	-5.5	90
8	B.Narveson	2TM	+1.2	+2.0	38
9	E.Pineiro	CAR	+0.9	+4.1	72
10	N.Folk	TEN	+0.8	-7.4	57

Min. 20 kickoffs; squibs and onside not included

## Bottom 10 Kickers, Gross Kickoff Value over Average

Rk	Player	Team	Kick Pts+	Net Pts+	Kicks
1	W.Reichard	MIN	-2.7	0.0	74
2	T.Bass	BUF	-2.1	-5.9	102
3	J.Sanders	MIA	-2.0	+3.4	84
4	J.Moody	SF	-1.9	-1.2	67
5	C.York	2TM	-1.4	+0.7	31
6	T.Gill	TB	-1.2	-2.3	46
7	M.Prater	ARI	-1.1	-3.7	20
8	H.Butker	KC	-0.9	-0.4	62
9	J.Slye	NE	-0.9	+5.1	68
10	C.Dicker	LAC	-0.8	-2.9	93

Min. 20 kickoffs; squibs and onside not included

**Top 10 Punters, Gross****Punt Value over Average**

Rk	Player	Team	Punt Pts+	Net Pts+	Punts
1	C.Bojorquez	CLE	+11.9	-2.9	89
2	M.Dickson	SEA	+8.8	+8.7	76
3	L.Cooke	JAX	+7.8	+10.1	68
4	R.Sanchez	IND	+7.6	-0.8	68
5	T.Taylor	CHI	+6.2	+5.3	82
6	J.Fox	DET	+5.6	+9.4	45
7	B.Baringer	NE	+5.3	-2.0	70
8	B.Gillikin	ARI	+5.0	+0.1	38
9	E.Evans	LAR	+4.3	+5.8	55
10	T.Way	WAS	+3.0	+6.5	50

Min. 20 punts

**Bottom 10 Punters, Gross****Punt Value over Average**

Rk	Player	Team	Punt Pts+	Net Pts+	Punts
1	R.Wright	MIN	-8.7	-1.5	57
2	R.Stonehouse	TEN	-7.9	-31.4	75
3	J.Hekker	CAR	-5.4	-3.2	74
4	J.Bailey	MIA	-5.1	-4.5	57
5	T.Morstead	NYJ	-5.0	-0.5	63
6	M.Hayball	NO	-4.0	+1.3	75
7	T.Gill	TB	-3.7	-0.9	27
8	M.Wishnowsky	SF	-3.7	-8.0	23
9	S.Martin	BUF	-3.5	-6.3	55
10	J.Gillan	NYG	-2.8	+2.9	56

Min. 20 punts

**Top 10 Kick Returners,  
Value over Average**

Rk	Player	Team	Pts+	Returns
1	K.Turpin	DAL	+11.0	27
2	I.Smith-Marsette	NYG	+7.0	11
3	D.Pierce	HOU	+5.7	9
4	D.Carter	CHI	+3.9	15
5	L.McCaffrey	WAS	+3.7	10
6	A.Abdullah	LV	+3.6	9
7	M.Washington	MIA	+3.4	14
8	A.Ekeler	WAS	+3.2	19
9	J.Hill	BAL	+2.7	5
10	C.Jones	CIN	+2.7	5

Min. five returns

**Bottom 10 Kick Returners,  
Value over Average**

Rk	Player	Team	Pts+	Returns
1	J.Jackson	TEN	-5.3	16
2	E.Gray	NYG	-4.3	21
3	I.Guerendo	SF	-4.2	6
4	R.Blackshear	CAR	-4.2	31
5	R.McCloud	ATL	-3.4	14
6	P.Washington	JAX	-3.2	5
7	D.Davis	LAC	-3.1	19
8	D.Williams	2TM	-2.5	10
9	R.Davis	BUF	-2.1	7
10	J.Hasty	NE	-2.0	10

Min. five returns

**Top 10 Punt Returners,  
Value over Average**

Rk	Player	Team	Pts+	Returns
1	K.Raymond	DET	+10.9	30
2	M.Mims	DEN	+9.3	26
3	J.Blackwell	CHI	+7.8	7
4	P.Washington	JAX	+7.6	6
5	R.Shaheed	NO	+6.6	9
6	M.Jones	NE	+6.2	26
7	K.Turpin	DAL	+2.8	18
8	B.Codrington	BUF	+2.7	27
9	B.Berrios	MIA	+2.5	7
10	C.Austin	PIT	+2.5	28

Min. five returns

**Bottom 10 Punt Returners,  
Value over Average**

Rk	Player	Team	Pts+	Returns
1	S.Sims	2TM	-7.0	21
2	J.Jackson	TEN	-6.0	28
3	X.Gipson	NYJ	-5.2	33
4	D.Williams	SEA	-3.6	15
5	J.Cowing	SF	-3.5	28
6	C.Jones	CIN	-3.3	14
7	J.Reed	GB	-3.1	14
8	B.Powell	MIN	-2.9	23
9	T.Palmer	TB	-2.2	17
10	M.Washington	MIA	-2.2	18

Min. five returns

## Top 20 Special Teams Plays

Rk	Player	Team	Plays	Rk	Player	Team	Plays
1	J.T.Gray	NO	22	9	D.Hardy	CHI	11
2	N.Bellore	WAS	20	9	H.Luepke	DAL	11
2	J.Reaves	WAS	20	9	N.Niemann	LAC	11
4	D.Bell	CLE	15	9	A.Ogbongbemiga	CHI	11
5	L.Gifford	TEN	14	9	T.Owens	WAS	11
6	M.Killebrew	PIT	13	9	R.Payton	NO	11
7	A.Orji	NO	12	9	J.Pierre	PIT	11
7	J.Rhattigan	CAR	12	9	M.Walker	WAS	11
9	T.Anderson	CIN	11	19	13 tied with		10
9	M.Brown	TEN	11				

Plays = tackles + assists; does not include onside or end-half squib kicks.

### Top 10 Offenses, 3-and-out per drive

Rk	Team	Pct
1	ATL	10.4%
2	DET	14.0%
3	MIA	14.7%
4	SF	15.3%
5	TB	15.4%
6	ARI	16.5%
7	BAL	16.5%
8	BUF	17.4%
9	MIN	18.0%
10	CIN	18.1%

### Top 10 Defenses, 3-and-out per drive

Rk	Team	Pct
1	SEA	27.6%
2	CLE	27.4%
3	MIA	26.7%
4	PIT	26.0%
5	LAC	24.6%
6	WAS	23.4%
7	PHI	23.3%
8	TEN	23.2%
9	DEN	23.2%
10	HOU	22.8%

### Top 10 Offenses, Yards per drive

Rk	Team	Yds/Dr
1	BAL	39.76
2	DET	38.66
3	TB	38.46
4	ATL	37.32
5	WAS	37.20
6	SF	36.94
7	ARI	36.90
8	CIN	36.85
9	PHI	36.62
10	BUF	36.37

### Top 10 Defenses, Yards per drive

Rk	Team	Yds/Dr
1	PHI	27.19
2	HOU	28.49
3	DEN	28.84
4	CLE	28.96
5	MIA	29.14
6	GB	29.93
7	MIN	29.94
8	TEN	30.11
9	SEA	30.30
10	LAC	30.46

### Bottom 10 Offenses, 3-and-out per drive

Rk	Team	Pct
23	PIT	23.4%
24	KC	23.9%
25	JAX	25.4%
26	NE	25.7%
27	LAC	26.0%
28	CHI	26.9%
29	CLE	27.0%
30	CAR	27.4%
31	DEN	28.0%
32	NYG	28.2%

### Bottom 10 Defenses, 3-and-out per drive

Rk	Team	Pct
23	KC	19.6%
24	ATL	19.5%
25	IND	19.3%
26	BUF	18.6%
26	DET	18.3%
28	ARI	17.9%
29	CAR	17.4%
30	LAR	16.9%
31	JAX	16.3%
32	NE	14.9%

### Bottom 10 Offenses, Yards per drive

Rk	Team	Yds/Dr
23	DAL	29.46
24	PIT	28.90
25	HOU	28.29
26	CAR	28.21
27	NYG	28.14
28	LV	27.67
29	NE	27.45
30	CHI	26.79
31	TEN	26.70
32	CLE	25.13

### Bottom 10 Defenses, Yards per drive

Rk	Team	Yds/Dr
23	CIN	33.61
24	ATL	33.86
25	WAS	34.16
26	NYG	34.66
27	NE	34.74
28	LAR	35.19
29	ARI	35.43
30	NO	35.74
31	JAX	38.05
32	CAR	38.39

**Top 10 Offenses, avg LOS to start drive**

Rk	Team	LOS
1	BUF	33.5
2	GB	32.0
3	WAS	31.9
4	PIT	31.9
5	DEN	31.8
6	HOU	31.7
7	PHI	31.4
8	NO	31.3
9	CIN	31.2
10	MIN	31.1

**Top 10 Defenses, avg LOS to start drive**

Rk	Team	LOS
1	NO	26.2
2	HOU	27.2
3	DEN	27.8
4	LAR	28.0
5	BUF	28.6
6	JAX	28.8
7	CIN	28.8
8	LAC	28.8
9	NYG	28.9
10	DET	29.0

**Top 10 Offenses, Points per Drive**

Rk	Team	Pts/Dr
1	DET	3.09
2	BUF	3.01
3	BAL	2.86
4	WAS	2.81
5	TB	2.78
6	PHI	2.70
7	CIN	2.63
8	GB	2.57
9	ARI	2.37
10	KC	2.33

**Top 10 Defenses, Points per Drive**

Rk	Team	Pts/Dr
1	DEN	1.64
2	LAC	1.67
3	PHI	1.67
4	MIN	1.77
5	GB	1.82
6	SEA	1.86
7	PIT	1.88
8	DET	1.91
9	HOU	1.96
10	MIA	1.96

**Bottom 10 Offenses, avg LOS to start drive**

Rk	Team	LOS
23	CLE	29.2
24	LAC	29.1
25	NYJ	28.8
26	IND	28.8
27	LAR	28.6
28	ATL	28.3
29	SEA	28.2
30	ARI	28.2
31	BAL	28.2
32	JAX	27.4

**Bottom 10 Defenses, avg LOS to start drive**

Rk	Team	LOS
23	NYJ	31.3
24	ATL	31.4
25	NE	31.4
26	MIA	31.7
27	DAL	31.8
28	IND	31.9
29	TEN	32.1
30	TB	32.2
31	LV	32.4
32	SF	32.7

**Bottom 10 Offenses, Points per Drive**

Rk	Team	Pts/Dr
23	HOU	1.87
24	NO	1.85
25	JAX	1.80
26	DAL	1.74
27	LV	1.65
28	CHI	1.65
29	TEN	1.62
30	NE	1.61
31	NYG	1.49
32	CLE	1.24

**Bottom 10 Defenses, Points per Drive**

Rk	Team	Pts/Dr
23	LAR	2.31
24	LV	2.31
25	TEN	2.32
26	NE	2.35
27	CIN	2.35
28	DAL	2.45
29	ATL	2.48
30	JAX	2.52
31	SF	2.54
32	CAR	2.92

**Top 10 Offenses, Better DVOA with Shotgun/Pistol**

Rk	Team	% Plays Shotgun	DVOA Shot	DVOA Not	Yd/Play Shot	Yd/Play Not	DVOA Dif
1	CIN	86%	19.0%	-18.1%	6.0	3.7	37.1%
2	ARI	78%	14.0%	-6.8%	6.1	5.5	20.8%
3	IND	90%	-1.1%	-21.1%	5.7	4.0	20.0%
4	WAS	92%	16.9%	0.5%	5.9	4.7	16.4%
5	ATL	85%	9.4%	-6.2%	6.0	4.5	15.5%
6	BUF	74%	27.7%	13.5%	6.3	5.3	14.2%
7	BAL	77%	42.2%	28.8%	7.0	6.1	13.4%
8	SEA	82%	3.1%	-10.0%	5.6	4.2	13.1%
9	TB	73%	18.6%	6.5%	6.4	5.6	12.1%
10	MIA	82%	-4.7%	-14.9%	5.2	4.4	10.2%

**Bottom 10 Offenses, Worse DVOA with Shotgun/Pistol**

Rk	Team	% Plays Shotgun	DVOA Shot	DVOA Not	Yd/Play Shot	Yd/Play Not	DVOA Dif
23	CAR	76%	-4.8%	-4.8%	5.3	4.9	0.0%
24	MIN	66%	8.0%	9.2%	5.8	5.9	-1.2%
25	NO	69%	-6.8%	-4.0%	5.4	5.3	-2.8%
26	DAL	78%	-7.5%	-4.1%	5.2	4.8	-3.4%
27	DET	64%	23.3%	26.8%	6.4	6.7	-3.5%
28	HOU	71%	-6.8%	-2.3%	5.3	5.5	-4.6%
29	LV	79%	-15.4%	-10.7%	4.9	5.0	-4.7%
30	CLE	82%	-26.1%	-18.7%	4.6	4.7	-7.4%
31	LAR	69%	14.8%	22.5%	5.7	5.8	-7.7%
32	TEN	79%	-17.7%	-7.2%	5.1	4.7	-10.5%

## Top 10 Offenses, Better DVOA with Play-Action

Rk	Team	% Plays Shotgun	DVOA Shot	DVOA Not	Yd/Play Shot	Yd/Play Not	DVOA Dif
23	CAR	76%	-4.8%	-4.8%	5.3	4.9	0.0%
24	MIN	66%	8.0%	9.2%	5.8	5.9	-1.2%
25	NO	69%	-6.8%	-4.0%	5.4	5.3	-2.8%
26	DAL	78%	-7.5%	-4.1%	5.2	4.8	-3.4%
27	DET	64%	23.3%	26.8%	6.4	6.7	-3.5%
28	HOU	71%	-6.8%	-2.3%	5.3	5.5	-4.6%
29	LV	79%	-15.4%	-10.7%	4.9	5.0	-4.7%
30	CLE	82%	-26.1%	-18.7%	4.6	4.7	-7.4%
31	LAR	69%	14.8%	22.5%	5.7	5.8	-7.7%
32	TEN	79%	-17.7%	-7.2%	5.1	4.7	-10.5%

## Bottom 10 Offenses, Worse DVOA with Play-Action

Rk	Team	% PA	DVOA PA	DVOA No PA	Yd/Play PA	Yd/Play No PA	DVOA Dif
23	NYJ	24%	9.0%	7.0%	5.8	6.0	2.0%
24	WAS	25%	32.5%	31.4%	7.2	6.6	1.1%
25	BUF	18%	46.6%	46.7%	8.6	7.2	0.0%
26	ATL	14%	11.9%	16.1%	7.5	7.0	-4.2%
27	CLE	22%	-38.3%	-27.3%	5.4	4.7	-11.0%
28	CAR	22%	-13.1%	-1.7%	5.5	5.8	-11.3%
29	CIN	18%	25.3%	36.8%	7.4	6.7	-11.5%
30	PIT	27%	2.1%	17.0%	6.3	6.2	-14.8%
31	IND	29%	-12.8%	10.2%	7.4	6.3	-23.0%
32	SEA	18%	-11.6%	21.4%	5.6	6.7	-33.0%

## Top 10 Defenses, Better DVOA vs. Shotgun/Pistol

Rk	Team	% Plays Shotgun	DVOA Shot	DVOA Not	Yd/Play Shot	Yd/Play Not	DVOA Dif
1	SEA	74%	-4.7%	6.7%	5.5	5.9	-11.4%
2	LAR	75%	4.1%	13.5%	5.8	5.5	-9.4%
3	NO	76%	3.6%	10.3%	6.1	5.6	-6.7%
4	DAL	75%	4.3%	9.5%	6.0	5.9	-5.2%
5	CHI	72%	2.8%	7.7%	6.0	6.0	-4.9%
6	MIA	76%	1.7%	6.3%	5.4	5.5	-4.6%
7	CIN	78%	6.4%	10.9%	5.7	5.1	-4.5%
8	ARI	76%	-1.2%	2.8%	5.7	5.6	-4.0%
9	GB	75%	-7.1%	-4.4%	5.3	5.0	-2.7%
10	NYJ	73%	3.0%	4.5%	5.3	5.1	-1.5%

## Bottom 10 Defenses, Worse DVOA vs. Shotgun/Pistol

Rk	Team	% Plays Shotgun	DVOA Shot	DVOA Not	Yd/Play Shot	Yd/Play Not	DVOA Dif
23	MIN	77%	-15.8%	-22.1%	5.5	4.8	6.3%
24	NE	78%	13.2%	6.7%	5.6	4.9	6.5%
25	CAR	73%	19.1%	11.2%	6.3	5.4	7.9%
26	IND	74%	1.8%	-6.4%	5.7	5.2	8.3%
27	BAL	80%	-7.2%	-15.6%	5.4	4.5	8.4%
28	TB	80%	1.7%	-7.5%	5.5	4.9	9.2%
29	DET	80%	-9.9%	-20.0%	5.9	4.7	10.1%
30	LV	80%	2.0%	-11.5%	5.6	4.6	13.5%
31	NYG	78%	6.4%	-9.0%	5.8	4.7	15.4%
32	CLE	77%	3.7%	-11.9%	5.8	4.5	15.6%

## Top 10 Defenses, Better DVOA vs. Play-Action

Rk	Team	% PA	DVOA PA	DVOA No PA	Yd/Play PA	Yd/Play No PA	DVOA Dif
1	WAS	21%	-2.0%	13.0%	7.2	6.0	-15.0%
2	NYG	25%	14.0%	27.9%	7.0	7.0	-13.9%
3	CAR	25%	15.8%	27.5%	7.4	7.0	-11.7%
4	CLE	26%	9.4%	19.7%	6.4	7.0	-10.3%
5	NYJ	24%	11.9%	11.5%	7.3	5.9	0.3%
6	IND	26%	14.4%	10.8%	7.8	6.5	3.7%
7	SF	23%	3.9%	-0.2%	6.5	6.2	4.1%
8	MIN	17%	-8.8%	-13.6%	7.4	5.8	4.9%
9	TB	18%	20.1%	10.3%	7.3	6.0	9.8%
10	CIN	24%	21.1%	10.9%	7.3	6.3	10.2%

## Bottom 10 Defenses, Worse DVOA vs. Play-Action

Rk	Team	% PA	DVOA PA	DVOA No PA	Yd/Play PA	Yd/Play No PA	DVOA Dif
23	KC	22%	20.5%	1.6%	7.8	6.0	19.0%
24	CHI	27%	17.8%	-2.0%	9.4	6.1	19.9%
25	NE	22%	39.2%	19.1%	7.4	6.3	20.1%
26	GB	26%	15.6%	-6.0%	7.3	5.7	21.6%
27	PIT	18%	18.7%	-6.1%	7.6	6.0	24.8%
28	LAC	16%	18.6%	-6.9%	7.8	5.6	25.5%
29	LAR	23%	34.3%	4.9%	7.7	6.5	29.4%
30	BAL	23%	23.8%	-8.8%	7.3	6.0	32.6%
31	JAX	27%	66.4%	21.6%	10.2	6.3	44.8%
32	SEA	28%	47.4%	-19.9%	8.5	5.1	67.3%

## 2024 Defenses with and without Pass Pressure

Rank	Team	Plays	Pct Pressure	DVOA with Pressure	Yds with Pressure	DVOA w/o Pressure	Yds w/o Pressure	DVOA Dif	Rank
1	CLE	614	41.3%	-31.9%	4.8	47.5%	8.1	-79.4%	8
2	DEN	639	38.8%	-66.4%	3.1	25.4%	7.4	-91.8%	20
3	DAL	585	37.6%	-61.6%	3.9	45.1%	8.5	-106.7%	29
4	KC	645	35.0%	-39.6%	4.7	26.5%	7.1	-66.1%	1
5	TB	680	34.5%	-46.0%	3.5	41.1%	7.7	-87.1%	15
6	NYJ	600	34.5%	-68.5%	3.0	44.8%	7.6	-113.3%	30
7	MIA	652	34.1%	-41.3%	3.2	28.8%	7.3	-70.0%	3
8	CHI	676	34.1%	-50.6%	5.0	30.1%	7.8	-80.8%	11
9	BUF	645	33.3%	-52.5%	3.4	28.2%	7.7	-80.6%	10
10	GB	611	33.1%	-71.7%	2.3	33.3%	7.9	-105.0%	27
11	HOU	647	32.6%	-71.5%	3.4	15.5%	7.0	-87.0%	14
12	SEA	659	31.9%	-72.1%	2.5	33.1%	7.5	-105.3%	28
13	PIT	648	31.7%	-73.4%	3.2	30.4%	7.6	-103.8%	26
14	NYG	633	31.1%	-71.2%	2.4	60.8%	8.7	-132.0%	32
15	LAR	675	30.8%	-50.7%	3.9	37.2%	7.9	-87.9%	17
16	MIN	673	30.7%	-85.1%	2.2	15.4%	7.7	-100.6%	25
17	PHI	730	30.6%	-64.4%	3.3	9.2%	6.1	-73.6%	5
18	LAC	669	30.3%	-58.9%	3.2	19.8%	7.1	-78.7%	7
19	CIN	645	30.1%	-44.4%	3.3	32.9%	7.6	-77.3%	6
20	WAS	660	29.9%	-44.0%	3.8	23.7%	6.9	-67.6%	2
21	BAL	731	29.8%	-71.6%	3.2	26.7%	7.4	-98.3%	24
22	TEN	646	29.8%	-60.0%	3.3	35.9%	7.2	-95.9%	23
23	SF	703	29.6%	-92.7%	2.0	35.3%	7.8	-128.0%	31
24	DET	659	29.2%	-74.0%	3.1	12.4%	7.9	-86.5%	13
25	LV	649	29.1%	-56.7%	2.5	33.1%	7.8	-89.8%	18
26	NO	631	28.1%	-55.9%	3.5	23.9%	7.8	-79.8%	9
27	IND	643	25.5%	-53.8%	3.5	33.7%	7.9	-87.5%	16
28	NE	636	25.3%	-33.0%	3.4	38.4%	7.4	-71.4%	4
29	ARI	569	25.0%	-66.2%	3.3	25.0%	7.4	-91.2%	19
30	JAX	691	24.9%	-39.5%	3.4	53.9%	8.4	-93.4%	21
31	ATL	621	23.4%	-51.4%	4.2	34.6%	7.1	-85.9%	12
32	CAR	519	22.7%	-52.2%	3.7	42.2%	7.9	-94.4%	22
<b>NFL AVERAGE</b>		<b>646</b>	<b>30.9%</b>	<b>-58.8%</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>31.6%</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>-90.5%</b>	

Includes scrambles

## 2024 Record in One-Score Games

Rank	Team	W-L	Pct	Other W-L	Rank	Team	W-L	Pct	Other W-L	Rank	Team	W-L	Pct	Other W-L	Rank	Team	W-L	Pct	Other W-L
1	KC	11-0	1.000	4-2	8	LAR	8-5	0.615	2-2	13	LAC	4-4	0.500	7-2	25	CHI	3-7	0.300	2-5
2	MIN	9-1	0.900	5-2	10	PIT	6-4	0.600	4-3	13	MIA	4-4	0.500	4-5	25	NYJ	3-7	0.300	2-5
3	PHI	8-2	0.800	6-1	11	HOU	7-5	0.583	3-2	19	CLE	3-4	0.429	0-10	27	NO	2-6	0.250	3-6
4	DET	7-2	0.778	8-0	12	CAR	4-3	0.571	1-9	19	LV	3-4	0.429	1-9	27	SF	2-6	0.250	4-5
5	SEA	6-2	0.750	4-5	13	ATL	6-6	0.500	2-3	21	ARI	3-5	0.375	5-4	27	TEN	2-6	0.250	1-8
6	WAS	8-4	0.667	4-1	13	BAL	5-5	0.500	7-0	21	TB	3-5	0.375	7-2	30	JAX	3-10	0.231	1-3
7	BUF	5-3	0.625	8-1	13	DAL	5-5	0.500	2-5	23	CIN	4-7	0.364	5-1	31	DEN	1-6	0.143	9-1
8	IND	8-5	0.615	0-4	13	GB	5-5	0.500	6-1	24	NE	3-6	0.333	1-7	32	NYG	1-8	0.111	2-6

# Author Bios

## Editor-in-Chief and Lead Statistician

**Aaron Schatz** is the creator of the proprietary statistics within *FTN Football Almanac*, including DVOA, DYAR, and adjusted line yards, as well as the 2025 NFL team projections. He founded the website Football Outsiders in July 2003 and has been doing NFL analytics for over 20 years. Schatz writes regularly for both FTN Fantasy and ESPN and is one of 50 members of the Associated Press NFL voting panel for regular-season awards and the All-Pro team. He has also done custom research for several NFL teams. *The New York Times Magazine* referred to him as “the Bill James of football.” Readers should feel free to blame everything in this book on the fact that he went to high school six miles from Gillette Stadium before detouring through Brown University and eventually landing in Auburn, Massachusetts.

## Layout and Design

**Vincent Verhei** started covering the NFL for Football Outsiders in 2007. His writings have also appeared in *ESPN The Magazine* and in Maple Street Press publications, and he has done layout on several other books for Football Outsiders and Prospectus Entertainment Ventures. Vince can also be heard on the *Bryan & Vinny Show* and the *Big Vinny V Show* podcasts at pro wrestling/MMA website F4WOnline.com. He is a graduate of Western Washington University.

## Fantasy Football Projections

**Jeff Ratcliffe** is president of the FTN Network Group, as well as a host on Sirius XM fantasy radio and a TV analyst for the CBS Sports Network. He previously spent more than nine years as Director of Fantasy for Pro Football Focus. He was ranked the most accurate fantasy expert of 2021 by FantasyPros.com. He lives in Philadelphia.

## Contributors

As FTN Fantasy’s Director of Analytics, **Alex Bickle** uses a mix of strong mathematical fundamentals and creative problem solving in his data analysis. He combines degrees in economics and statistics with a love and deep knowledge of football, basketball, baseball, and golf. He’s also a professional golfer, giving him unique insight into the psychology and preparation of professional athletes and what it takes to perform under pressure.

**Cale Clinton** wrote for Football Outsiders from 2017 through 2023, with additional work for The Athletic, USA Today Sports, Deadspin, and Underdog Fantasy. He tries his best to turn nuggets of data into a fully fleshed-out narrative. He aspires to one day be the first NFL writer to have his work described as “Lynchian.”

**Bryan Knowles** has been covering the NFL since 2010, with his work appearing on Football Outsiders, ESPN, Bleacher Report, Underdog and Fansided. He can currently be found on FTN Fantasy’s DVOA page. You can also find him wherever people are discussing either confusing playoff scenarios or defunct 1920s football teams, skill sets which ensure he would not survive in the wild.

**Tyler Loechner** is a fantasy analyst at FTN Fantasy. Prior to FTN, Tyler honed his sports data analysis chops for 9 seasons at PFF Fantasy and also contributed to RotoViz and Bleacher Report. He has received multiple FSWA nominations and won Best Football Series in 2017.

**Rivers McCown** writes and edits for NBC Sports EDGE and has appeared in all but one *Football Outsiders/FTN Almanac* since 2011. He’s probably cleaning up after a toddler as you read this, so perhaps your life is more glamorous than you think.

**Dan Pizzuta** has written for The 33rd Team, Sharp Football Analysis, Bleacher Report, numberFire, and Big Blue View. He got into football analytics after hearing Aaron Schatz on a podcast once and now he’s here. This is his sixth *Almanac*.

Having covered the NFL for Football Outsiders, the New York Times, Bleacher Report and other outlets over the past 20 years, **Mike Tanier** recently transcended the traditional sports Internet and can now be found at the Too Deep Zone Substack ([miketanier.substack.com](https://miketanier.substack.com)). Tanier has also shed his corporeal body and flits about the cosmos as a photon of dazzling luminescence.

**Robert Weintraub** is the author of several books including *The Divine Miss Marble*, *The Victory Season*, *The House That Ruth Built*, and the *New York Times* bestseller *No Better Friend: One Man, One Dog, and their Extraordinary Story of Courage and Survival in WWII*. He has also been a regular contributor to *Sports on Earth*, *Slate*, *Grantland*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, and *The New York Times*. You can read as he counts down the top 1000 sporting events in New York City history at his Substack, the NYC1000 ([weintraubr.substack.com](https://weintraubr.substack.com)).

## Acknowledgements

We want to thank all our readers, all the people in the media who have helped to spread the word about our website and books, and all the people in the NFL who have shown interest in our work. This is our 21st annual book as part of the series previously known as *Pro Football Prospectus* or *Football Outsiders Almanac*. We couldn't do this if we were just one guy, or without the help and/or support from all these people:

- Everyone at FTN Fantasy.
- All our contacts in the NFL and with the Associated Press.
- ESPN's NFL department, in particular editors Erika Leflouria and Dane Beavers.
- Mike Harris for help with the season simulation.
- Excel macro masters John Argentiero and Logan Rigby.
- Jim Armstrong, who compiles our drive and pace stats.
- Abe vander Bent, who handles our data parser.
- Jason McKinley, creator of Offensive Line Continuity Score.
- Jeremy Snyder, our incredibly prolific transcriber of old play-by-play gamebooks.
- Roland Beech, formerly of TwoMinuteWarning.com, who came up with the original ideas behind our individual defensive stats.
- Our editors at ESPN.com.
- Our comrades in the revolution: Bill Barnwell (our long-lost brother), Brian Burke and the guys from ESPN Stats & Information, Kevin Cole, Mina Kimes, Seth Walder, Ben Baldwin, Neil Paine, Robert Mays, Danny Kelly, Kevin Clark, and K.C. Joyner, plus everyone at Pro Football Reference, the football guys from footballguys.com, and all of the young analysts doing awesome work with NFLfastR all over Twitter.
- Also, our scouting buddies, including Chris Brown, Greg Cosell, Doug Farrar, Russ Lande, Brandon Thorn, and Matt Waldman.
- Special thanks to intern Diego Loveshe, who helped put together many of this year's book tables.

As always, thanks to our family and friends for putting up with this nonsense.

Aaron Schatz

## Podcast

You can subscribe to FTN Fantasy's *Schatz and Tanier NFL Podcast* on all your favorite podcast apps, or search for it on YouTube. We broadcast a livestream on YouTube Mondays and Thursdays at 11am Eastern during the season as well as Thursdays at 11am Eastern during the preseason.

## Follow Us on Social Media

You can follow the *FTN Football Almanac 2025* writers on social media. We're now on Bluesky and we're also still on Twitter, or "X" if you feel like calling it that.

Bluesky handles are the same as Twitter handles with "bsky. social" added, except for Aaron Schatz whose Bluesky handle is **AaronSchatz.com**.

Alex Bickle: **@AlexBickle1**

Cale Clinton: **@CaleClinton**

Bryan Knowles: **@BryKno**

Tyler Loechner: **@LoechnerNFL**

Rivers McCown: **@RiversMcCown**

Dan Pizzuta: **@DanPizzuta**

Jeff Ratcliffe: **@JeffRatcliffe**

Aaron Schatz: **@ASchatzNFL** on Twitter or **@AaronSchatz.com** on Bluesky.

Mike Tanier: **@MikeTanier**

Vince Verhei: **@VincentVerhei**

Robert Weintraub: **@RobWein**