

NFL BETTING GUIDE

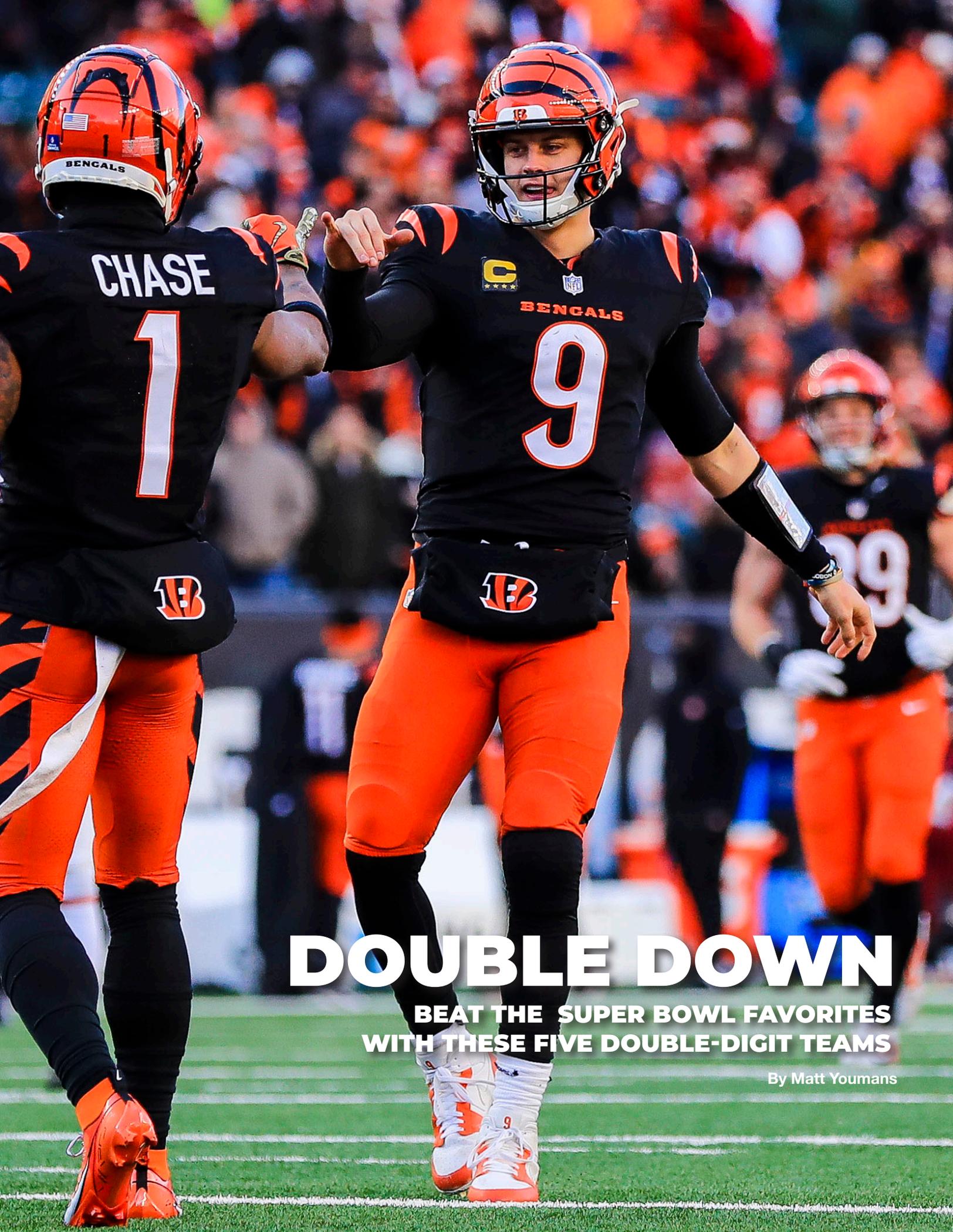
PRO EDITION



GUIDE INCLUDES

- REGIONAL TEAM COVERAGE
- TEAMS WITH SLEEPER APPEAL
- VSIN BETTING SPLITS & MORE!





DOUBLE DOWN

BEAT THE SUPER BOWL FAVORITES
WITH THESE FIVE DOUBLE-DIGIT TEAMS

By Matt Youmans

After reaching the playoffs six years in a row and coming up short of the Super Bowl six straight times, Josh Allen and the Bills have to hope seven is their lucky number. The betting public believes in Buffalo, for better or worse.

A behind-the-counter look into NFL futures wagering at Las Vegas books this summer reveals several trends have surfaced across the board. A handful of teams are hot, including a few longer shots, but the Bills are becoming the most popular play in the market.

At Circa Sports, Buffalo is the new Super Bowl favorite at 6-1 odds, leaping over reigning conference champions Philadelphia (+660) and Kansas City (+750). The Bills opened at +800 before attracting the most volume on the board, including a pair of \$25,000 wagers, according to Circa vice president of operations Mike Palm.

Allen was voted league MVP last season and led Buffalo to playoff victories over Denver and Baltimore before falling 32-29 in the AFC title game at Kansas City. In the aftermath of their embarrassing loss to the Eagles in the Super Bowl, the Chiefs have dropped from +535.

“The team with the most tickets on it is the Bills,” Red Rock sportsbook director Chuck Esposito said. “If you look at their division with the Jets, Dolphins and Patriots, you would think there’s a good chance Buffalo is going to be the No. 1 or No. 2 seed in the AFC. But I really like the Ravens more than the Bills.”

Bookmakers rarely fear the favorites because short odds don’t amount to dangerous liability. At Circa, Baltimore (+650) is the second choice on the board and one of four teams at single-digit odds. At the Westgate Superbook, the Eagles are the favorites at +600, followed by the Bills, Chiefs and Ravens each at +700, and the Lions recently moved to +800.

“The public likes the Bills, but 7-1 takes a while to add up,” Westgate oddsmaker Ed Salmons said.

The Westgate took a \$20,000 wager on the Lions at 10-1, Salmons said, and that was enough to significantly move the odds at this time of the year. At Circa, where Palm said there is “nothing really on the Lions,” the odds on Detroit are 14-1.

“Our largest liability is on the Lions at 10-1,” DraftKings oddsmaker Matt Grill said. “I’m surprised, but the bettors believe in them. Of the favorites, that’s our biggest loser by far.”

The Lions won 15 games to claim the top seed in the NFC last season. However, after Washington rookie quarterback Jayden Daniels outplayed Jared Goff and the Commanders manhandled the Lions in a 45-31 playoff win, the dominoes started falling in Detroit. Offensive coordinator Ben Johnson (Bears) and defensive coordinator Aaron Glenn (Jets) took head coaching jobs prior to the Lions losing two starters on their offensive line.

“You have to wonder if the Lions will take a little step back,” Esposito said. “Ben Johnson was good at getting the best out of Goff.” After the consensus top five teams on the Super Bowl futures board — Bills, Eagles, Ravens, Chiefs and Lions — the fun for bettors really begins in the hunt for longshots.

“People are looking for value instead of betting the low odds,” Esposito said.

A year ago, the Eagles were highlighted in this column at 14-1 odds. Sharp money showed over the summer on Philadelphia, which was my first futures bet last year and a team Salmons bet early at 22-1.

“The Eagles figure to be solid, but you never know with injuries and it’s a tougher schedule,” Salmons said. “But they still figure to be as good as anyone in the NFC.”

For bettors looking to beat the favorites with teams at double-digit odds, here are my five best bets:

BENGALS (20-1)

Cincinnati was upset in its first two home games — by the Patriots in Week 1 and by the Commanders in Week 3 — to wipe out about half of the Circa Survivor field. For those who were burned by the Bengals last season and feel hesitant to buy in this time, that’s understandable. Aside from Trey Hendrickson, who led the league with 17.5 sacks, the Bengals ranked either below average or bad in most major defensive categories.

The offense is a much different story. Joe Burrow led the NFL in passing yards (4,918) and touchdowns (43) and remains complemented by receiver Ja’Marr Chase and arguably the best set of playmakers in the league. I bet Burrow at +650 to win MVP and still will consider other futures plays on this team, but the defense raises doubts. Prior to the Chiefs’ three-year AFC reign, Cincinnati reached the Super Bowl in 2022, falling 23-20 to the Rams.

RAMS (22-1)

My first bet of this offseason was on the Rams at 30-1 in early March, around the same time VSin host Mitch Moss said he made the same play. We were not alone because there has been a major move in Los Angeles’ odds, which are now 16-1 at Circa. DraftKings offers the best current price at 22-1.

“The team we actually have the most liability on — and I agree with this — is the Rams,” Esposito said.

Veteran quarterback Matthew Stafford, 37, still has what it takes to win another Super Bowl and should be more productive this season with dynamic receivers Davante Adams and Puka Nacua. A defensive front seven led by Jared Verse is loaded with young talent. Last season, the Rams rallied from a 1-4 start to finish 10-7, making it four NFC West titles and six playoff appearances in coach Sean McVay’s eight years. Stafford had a shot to stop the Eagles’ run to the Super Bowl, but his late drive died deep in Philadelphia territory in a 28-22 loss.

“If you look back, the Rams gave the Eagles their best game,” Salmons said. “The Rams are so much more of a complete team than the 49ers, but the only issue is the schedule. If the 49ers don’t win 10 games, they should fire everyone because their schedule is so easy. I don’t like the 49ers’ team at all.”

VIKINGS (30-1)

The most noticeable change in Minnesota will be the quarterback. Sam Darnold, who passed for 35 touchdowns in a breakout year, is out

and replaced by J.J. McCarthy, who missed his rookie season with a knee injury. Darnold benefited by learning under coach Kevin O’Connell, but Darnold was a disaster in the Vikings’ final two games — blowout losses to the Lions and Rams — and McCarthy should be a capable young starter. After finishing 14-3, the Vikings’ expectations have surprisingly plummeted in the betting market.

“They can’t stop betting the Vikings,” Salmons said. “I’m not a Darnold guy, but there’s no way McCarthy can be that good in his first year.”

The NFC North was the strongest division in the NFL last season, at least until all three playoff teams busted out without a win. Green Bay might be the team about to break through, but the division appears up for grabs among the Lions, Packers and Vikings.

“I keep thinking the Packers will take a step forward and they kind of run in place,” Palm said. “We’re seeing Vikings’ money coming in.”

Instead of a Super Bowl play on Minnesota, the better bet is probably the win total. Palm and Moss have bet the Vikings Over 8.5 wins.

BRONCOS (40-1)

It’s a lot to ask of second-year quarterback Bo Nix to win an AFC headlined by Mahomes, Allen, Burrow and Lamar Jackson. But I did make two other plays on the Broncos — Over 9.5 wins (+110) and to win the AFC West (+350) — so I’m a believer in this team.

“It wouldn’t be a stunner to me if the Chiefs don’t win their division,” Esposito said. “The Super Bowl blowout was a reality check for them.”

Denver returns 20 starters and made key additions to a roster that suddenly ranks among the strongest in the NFL on both sides of the ball. A sophomore slump for Nix is a possibility, but Payton’s offense should improve after ranking 10th in scoring at 25 PPG. The defense led the league in sacks (63), ranked third in scoring (18.3 PPG) and looks even better. The Broncos, who were a blocked field goal away from sweeping the Chiefs last year, have what I grade as the best defense and deepest roster in the NFL’s toughest division.

STEELERS (67-1)

This is a contrarian opinion, and while I do like this Pittsburgh team more than most, it’s a play on the number as much as anything. Circa is dealing almost double the 35-1 price offered at DraftKings. The Steelers ranked eighth in scoring defense (20.4 PPG) and made some shrewd moves in free agency and the draft. Almost no one believes 41-year-old quarterback Aaron Rodgers has much left, which could be a reason to think he’s got a surprise season left in him.

“To me, Rodgers doesn’t really move the needle at all,” Esposito said.

Circa, DraftKings, Red Rock and Westgate bookmakers are reporting action on some other intriguing teams — including the Commanders (18-1), Chargers (28-1), Texans (35-1), Cowboys (60-1) and Cardinals (80-1) — and there’s plenty of time this summer to shop around for the best prices.

FIELD POSITION IN REVIEW

BY ADAM BURKE

One of the major questions going into the 2024 NFL season surrounded field position. In hopes of reducing injury and creating more returns, the league adopted new kickoff rules prior to the season. As a cliff notes version of what changed, here are the most noteworthy adjustments:

- No one except the kicker and returner can move until the ball is fielded
- The kicking team lined up on the receiving team's 40-yard line, while the kicker still boots it from his own 35-yard-line
- The receiving team lined up between their own 30 and 35-yard line
- Any kick that landed in front of the 20-yard-line is considered "out of bounds" (ball placed at the 40)
- Touchbacks were placed at the 30-yard-line, a five-yard difference from a 2016 rule change

The rule changes largely worked. Concussions were down significantly and the touchback percentage (TB%) went from 73% to 64.3%. The extra five yards mattered a lot to special teams coaches and the closer proximity of the players on the kicking team meant that placekickers found the risk of a return more palatable, especially relative to the "penalty" for a touchback.

Yards per return went up from 23.0 to 27.6. Average starting field position went from the 28.8-yard-line to the 30.1-yard-line. Given that the league-wide TO% dropped from 11.6% to 10.7%, kickoffs had a lot to do with the change.

Teams scored on 38% of their possessions compared to 35.5% in 2023 and 36.4% in 2022. Points per drive went from 1.88 to 2.07. There were 85 more touchdowns scored in 2024 compared to 2023 and 26 more made field goals on 55 more field goal attempts.

For the 2025 season, the "punishment" for a touchback will be placement of the ball at the 35-yard-line, so we could see even better field position numbers this year.

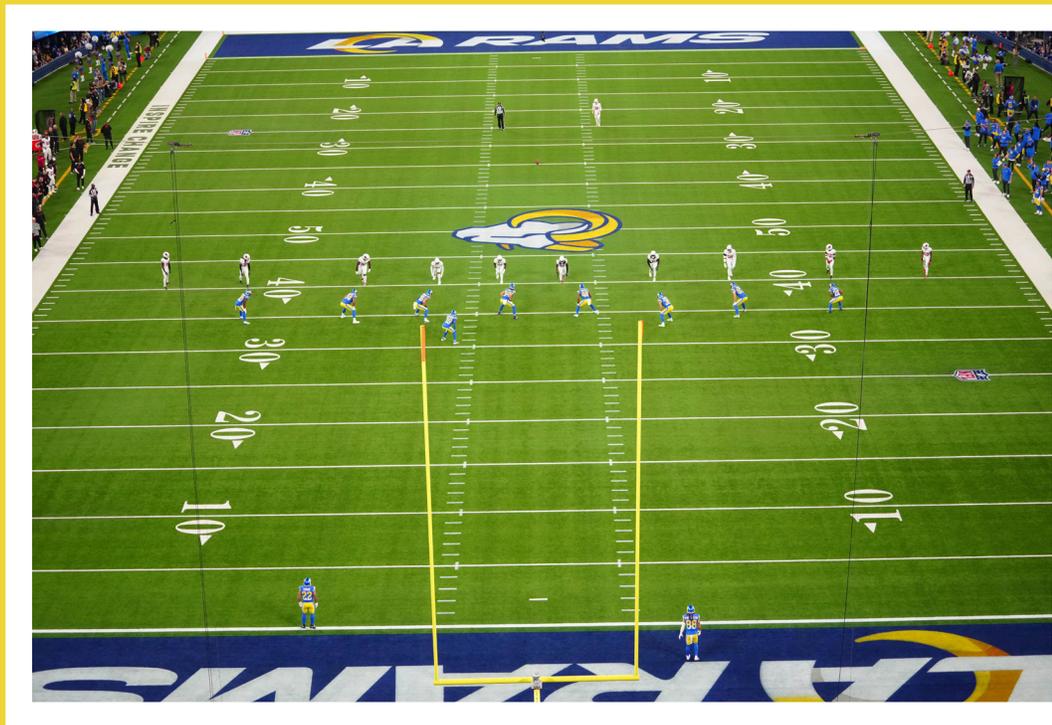
While the kickoff rules absolutely played a part in the increased scoring, those were not the sole reasons why. The league-wide third-down conversion rate went from 38.9% to 39.8%. More importantly, teams went from 7,194 third-down attempts in 2023 to 6,874 third-down attempts in 2024. That right there is a sign of how much more effective teams were on first and second down and the priority placed on success rate to stay ahead of the chains.

Fourth-down attempts were actually down last season, but the success rate was up dramatically. Teams converted at 51.8% in 2023 and 56.6% in 2024.

Red zone success also took a leap, going from 54.3% to 56.9%. With the likelihood of more trips inside the opponents' 20-yard-line now with field position probably improving across the board again this season, the fact that teams are having more success on third down, fourth down, and in the red zone should increase scoring yet again.

There were 622 more points scored during the 2024 season than the 2023 season. It will be interesting to see how much of a leap we'll see this season and if some of those conversion percentages keep trending up, especially because red zone efficiency started very slowly in 2024, as teams were below 47% through the first two weeks.

The average Over/Under was 43.1 in 2023 and 44.6 in 2024, so an adjustment was made over the course of the season to put totals on par with what we saw back in 2022. So, you could argue that 2023 was the outlier and the changes simply brought us closer to what should be the baseline. So, we'll see what the 2025 season holds and how sportsbooks and bettors adjust to the changes.





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TEAMS WITH SLEEPER APPEAL

BY ZACH COHEN

The 2024 Commanders flipped the script in the NFC East, going from basement-dwellers to division champs. The leap was powered by a coaching overhaul, the electric debut of rookie Jayden Daniels and a few strategic offseason upgrades. The Broncos also made a sizable jump, going 10-7 with Sean Payton finding his quarterback in rookie Bo Nix, along with the front office providing the legendary head coach with some real talent on both sides of the ball.

I'm not sure the same exact formula is out there this year. There won't be many rookies starting games, and the ones that will be in bad situations. However, I do see some teams that will make similarly massive turnaround from 2024 to 2025. And if you're looking to bet futures this summer, identifying which teams can do so should be a profitable exercise — whether that's for win totals, alternate win totals or bolder futures with bigger payouts.

Here are some candidates for teams with sleeper appeal, excluding teams like the 49ers who were ravaged by injuries last season.

CHICAGO BEARS

The Bears were pegged for a breakout year in 2024, but they stumbled out the gates and finished 5-12. Caleb Williams played like a rookie and head coach Matt Eberflus, along with other key members of his staff, was dismissed midseason. Overall, it was a disappointing year for a team that had high hopes for the No. 1 pick, especially considering the type of talent he was surrounded by.

The good news for Chicago is that the team's struggles allowed the franchise to grab one of the hottest available coaches in years: Ben Johnson, the offensive coordinator of the Lions. From 2022 to 2024, Johnson oversaw some of the best offenses in football. In fact, over that three-year stretch, the Lions had an EPA per play of 0.095, which was the third-highest mark in the NFL. Last year, nobody in the league averaged more points per game than the 33.2 that Detroit put up.

Johnson's obsession with detail, in addition to his creativity as a play caller, should unlock Williams, and that's especially true with the Bears having made some improvements along the offensive line. The arrival of All-Pro guard Joe Thuney should stabilize a group that is talented up front — and healthier than it has been in years.

If Johnson can get Chicago to another level offensively, the sky's the limit in the Windy City. The Bears were 13th in the NFL in EPA per play allowed (0.002) last year, so they don't have to get too much better on that side of the ball. Plus, they brought in some big bodies to address their porous run defense. That said, they should be ready to rock on defense.

Of course, the NFC North is loaded. Detroit will be good again, Minnesota has been consistently excellent under Kevin O'Connell and Green Bay is always a threat to make the playoffs. So, going from worst to first will be a challenge for Chicago. But the Bears have a win total of 8.5 this year, and you can get plus-money odds to take the Over. If things break right, Chicago could go Over that mark — and a spot in the postseason isn't out of the question.

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

The Patriots should be able to get right rather quickly. Going from Jerod Mayo to Mike Vrabel is a huge upgrade on the sidelines, and Josh McDaniels is a good offensive coordinator for Drake Maye, who should be awesome in Year 2 under center.

Maye was actually 12th amongst starting quarterbacks in Completion Percentage Over Expected (2.8%) as a rookie, and he already looks like a dangerous runner — he averaged 8.8 yards per carry last season. With New England having signed Morgan Moses and Garrett Bradbury, Maye has a better group blocking for him. The team also used the fourth overall pick on LSU lineman Will Campbell, who notably said he's going to "fight and die" trying to protect Maye after being selected. All of that, combined with some small improvements at the skill positions, should mean a much better Patriots offense.

New England also loaded up quite a bit defensively, signing Milton Williams, Carlton Davis, Harold Landry III and Robert Spillane to add to a group that should already be better with Vrabel just being around.

This is just a more talented team and a better coached team than it was last season, and it's checking a lot of boxes when looking for Over plays on regular season win totals. But I wouldn't stop there with the Pats. This is a team in which you'll want to consider some alt Overs at great prices, and an easy schedule is a big part of that.

New England has home games against seven opponents that had losing records last year. Tack on another four road games against opponents that were below .500 and this could be a team that hits double-digit wins. Honestly, the Patriots have a better shot than the Dolphins of giving the Bills a run for their money atop the AFC East.

CAROLINA PANTHERS

The Panthers will play 11 games against opponents with losing records from 2024. That alone means we should see a better season for a Carolina team that was very competitive to end the 2024 season. It also doesn't hurt that the Panthers open the season with seven winnable games. Starting the season on the right note is a good way for a team to build confidence and shake off a bad year.

Carolina also added some talent on defense, including Tershawn Wharton, Bobby Brown III and Tre'veon Moehrig. And getting Derrick Brown back should mean the Panthers will immediately be tougher to run against than they were last year. Also, rookies Nic Scourton and Princely Umanmielen could make some noise as edge rushers.

Defensive coordinator Ejiro Evero is also highly-regarded around the league. He did good work as the coordinator for Denver in 2022, and he should be able to patch things up now that Carolina gave him some actual talent to work with.

As far as the offense goes, we could see an entirely different Panthers team. Bryce Young is going to be extremely comfortable in his second year in Dave Canales' offense, and we saw the third-year signal-caller do some great things towards the end of last year. Young finished the season throwing for seven touchdowns and no picks in his final three games. And over the second half of 2024, Carolina performed like a top-

15 offense in EPA per play. With improved offensive line play, we could see the Panthers flirt with top-10 offensive production — especially if rookie wideout Tetairoa McMillan is ready to make use of that 6-foot-5 body of his. Carolina didn't have a true No. 1 receiver in Young's first two years in the league.

Realistically, heading into last season, Carolina was pegged as a sleeper team after beefing up the offensive line and making some big short-term investments. Sure, the Panthers ended up disappointing a bit, but sometimes we're a year early in predicting the success of young teams. Carolina looks like a great bet to go Over its win total, and I wouldn't rule out the Panthers winning the NFC South. Of all of the teams looking to go from worst to first, Carolina has the best shot.

JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS

Liam Coen, the new head coach of the Jaguars, didn't receive as much hype as Ben Johnson did, but he did a similarly spectacular job last season. Coen was the offensive coordinator for the Buccaneers, who finished the season fifth in the NFL in EPA per play (0.133). Coen did tremendous work with Baker Mayfield and an explosive Tampa Bay passing game, but he also got the ground game going. The Bucs were sixth in the league in Rush EPA per play (0.012) in 2024. They were 27th in Rush EPA per play (-0.166) in 2023.



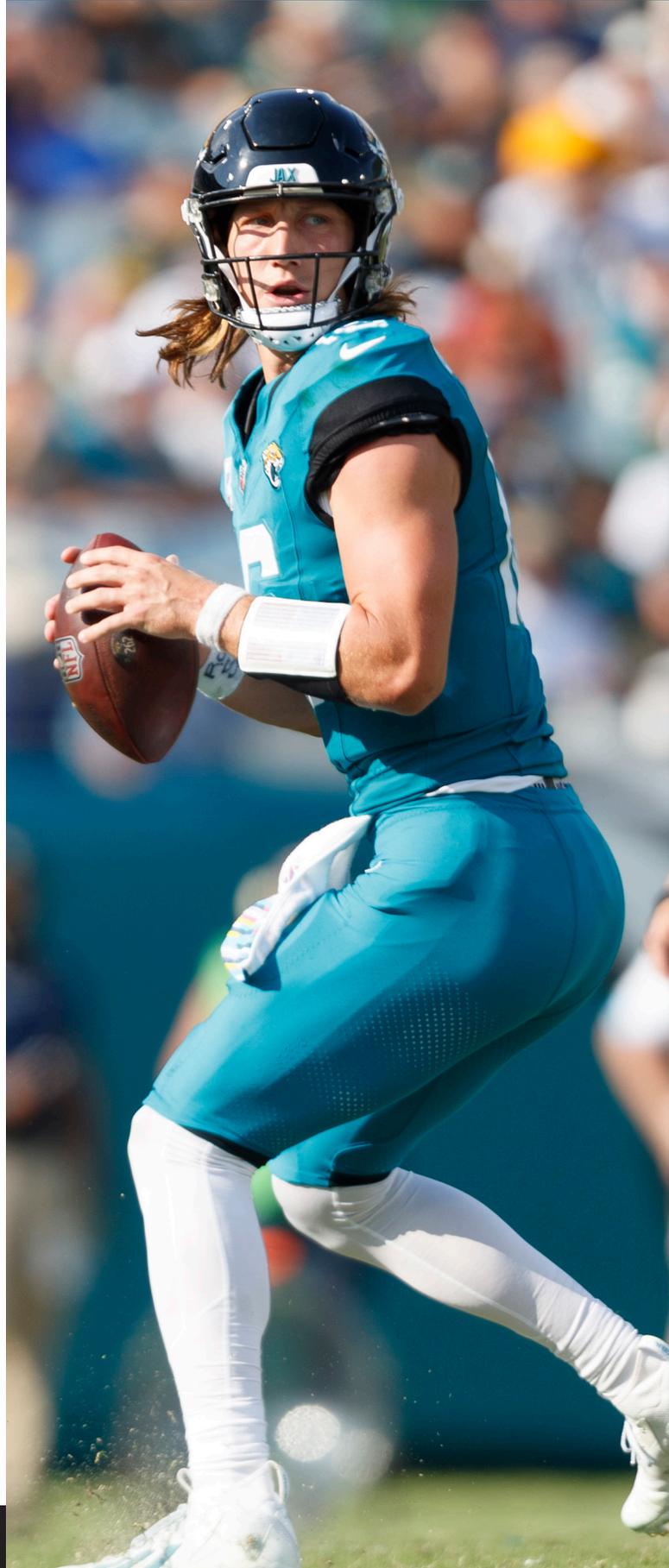
Coen will now look to make some things happen with a Jacksonville offense that was 19th in EPA per play (-0.023) last year. And there's really no reason to think he can't. Trevor Lawrence hasn't lived up to his pre-draft hype, but we know he has a big arm, great size and the ability to make plays with his legs. He's also not too far removed from a 2022 season in which he completed 66.3% of his passes and threw for 4,113 yards with 25 touchdowns and only eight interceptions. Well, Coen's offense should be able to bring that version of Lawrence out again. The Jaguars are going to do a lot of things pre-snap, and receivers should be schemed open more often than they were under Doug Pederson. Also, Grant Udinski should be able to add a lot to the offense. The new Jacksonville offensive coordinator has been with Minnesota since 2022, so he should be able to help Coen install some of Kevin O'Connell's playbook.

As long as the Jaguars offensive line isn't a nightmare, we could be looking at a sleeping giant when talking about the Jacksonville offense — especially with Brian Thomas Jr. in Year 2, looking poised to take advantage of being in this new system.

If the offense lives up to the hype, it isn't crazy to think the Jags can contend in the AFC South. Of course, Jacksonville can't be the worst team in the league when it comes to Dropback EPA per play allowed (0.241) again. But it's hard to expect that given some of the team's offseason moves. The Jaguars used the second overall pick on two-way superstar Travis Hunter, who should add a lot to the secondary. It's not yet clear how many snaps he'll play on defense, but he's an electric, ball-hawking playmaker that will contribute when he's out there. Jacksonville also added Jourdan Lewis, who should be productive while some of the team's younger corners look to crack the depth chart. The Jags will also be hoping for a bounceback year from Tyson Campbell, who played great ball in 2022. And some continued growth from Montaric Brown could help the defense a lot.

It's just hard not to like the group of pass rushers Jacksonville has, and the linebacking corps is solid as well. So, it isn't crazy to expect new defensive coordinator Anthony Campanile to fix this defense up. He's viewed as an outside-the-box thinker — much like the new Jags head coach and front office members — and he'll be aggressive with the tools he has at his disposal.

Overall, this is just a talented team that can make some real strides with a new set of voices on the coaching staff. People liked this team to contend in the AFC a year ago, and that didn't work out for a number of different reasons. But there's no reason that leap can't come a year later, and it doesn't hurt that Jacksonville plays in one of the weakest divisions in the league.



WIN WITH VSIN BETTING SPLITS

BY JOSH APPELBAUM

The NFL is the most heavily bet sport by far, dwarfing all other professional and college leagues in terms of public interest, ticket counts and overall money wagered. With 39 states (and counting) having legalized sports betting across America, millions of bettors are set to participate in NFL betting this season, many for the very first time.

The vast majority of bettors wagering on the NFL are considered “public” bettors. This means they are mostly betting for fun and making their weekly selections based upon gut instinct, bias and favoritism. Most public bettors lean toward favorites (take the better team!) and Overs (it’s more fun rooting for points!), while also leaning toward home teams, whoever has the better won-loss record and whoever played better the previous week.

Unfortunately for the public, betting based on bias and emotion is a recipe for disaster and plays right into the sportsbooks’ hands. Instead, bettors should focus on cold, hard sports betting data to help them decide who and what to bet on.

Luckily for bettors, VSIN provides [NFL Betting Splits](#) for Pro members. Bet Splits cut through the noise and media narrative by reporting the real and accurate percentage of bets and dollars made across the marketplace for all bet types. By learning how to analyze and interpret the bet splits, bettors can be confident in placing data-driven wagers with their head and not their heart.

Bet Splits can be confusing, so let’s provide an actionable blueprint on how to use them to your advantage.

GO CONTRARIAN

Because the NFL is the most popular public sport, data-driven bettors look to bet against the masses. Why? Because more often than not, Average Joes come out on the losing end. After all, when the public loses, the house cleans up. And year after year, the sportsbooks make a killing. With this in mind, data-driven bettors look to bet against the public and place themselves on the side of the house.

In order to go contrarian, bettors should focus on the “bets” column located next to the “spread” tab. The goal is to look for games displaying the most lopsided ticket counts and then take the opposite side.

For example, if the Chargers (-3) are receiving 80% of spread bets against the Raiders, that

means the public loves Los Angeles and is betting heavily in their favor. For contrarian bettors, this lopsided bet split would lead them to go the other way and take Raiders +3, who are unpopular, undervalued and receiving only 20% of spread bets.

A line of demarcation for contrarian bettors is 65/35. This means betting against teams receiving 65% of spread bets or more and betting in favor of teams receiving 35% of spread bets or less.

Keep in mind, contrarian value is heightened in primetime games due to the increased public participation in Sunday Night Football, Thursday Night Football and Monday Night Football. So, if you see a team getting 35% of spread bets or less in primetime, that is a situation contrarians love to play.

FOLLOW SHARP ACTION

Going contrarian is one piece of the data-driven puzzle. It’s a good starting point and foundational pillar. However, the ultimate goal is to not only bet against the public but also place yourself on the side of the sharps who win at a high rate and have the respect of the sportsbooks.

In order to identify sharp action, bettors must compare and contrast the “bets” column with the “handle” column. While the “bets” column shows you the percentage of overall, raw tickets each side is receiving, the “handle” column shows the percentage of overall money each side is receiving. The goal is to look for teams receiving a higher percentage of handle than bets, which means they are receiving a larger share of respected wagers.

For example, if a team is only receiving 40% of spread bets but 65% of spread dollars, that would qualify as a sharp bet split. However, if a team is receiving 65% of spread bets but only 40% of spread dollars, that would qualify as a public bet split worth fading because the team is popular with the masses but receiving far less cold, hard cash.

A good line of demarcation is 10%. This means searching for teams getting at least 10% more money than bets. Keep it simple and remember this phrase: “low bets, higher dollars.”

DRAFTKINGS VS CIRCA

One of the best features of the VSIN Bet Splits is the fact that they come from two different sportsbooks, DraftKings and Circa Sports. As data-driven bettors, it’s our job to analyze both sets of splits to get the clearest picture of where the public is and where the sharps are.

To figure out where the public is (and go contrarian), bettors should focus on the DraftKings splits. After all, DraftKings is one of the most popular sportsbooks in America. As a result, they take heavy action from Average Joe bettors across the country. So, if a team is getting 65% or spread bets or more at DraftKings, that symbolizes a popular public play worth fading.

On the other hand, Circa Sports is based out of Vegas and considered one of the sharpest, market setting books that cater to sharp bettors and take in (and don’t refuse or limit) smart money from pro bettors. With this in mind, if you see a team getting 45% of spread bets but 75% of spread dollars at Circa, that is further evidence of the desert wiseguys taking a position.

WORD OF CAUTION

Bet Splits are critically important to figuring out who the public likes and what teams sharp bettors are backing. Will every contrarian play or “low bets, higher dollars” sharp split win? Of course not. The key is to use bet splits as a piece of your handicapping puzzle but not the “end all, be all.” With this in mind, bettors should also consult the [VSIN NFL Odds](#) page

and compare the bet splits to the line movement, ensuring that the splits and movement are on the same page and not contradicting themselves.

For example, if the Bengals are taking in 40% of spread

bets and 60% of spread dollars and have also moved from +3.5 to +3, that would be a data-driven play that “checks off all the boxes.”

Lastly, keep in mind that the bet splits are constantly updating every five minutes based on new action coming in. As a result, they can fluctuate throughout the day and week leading to Sunday.

Bet Splits are always the strongest later in the week, especially in the final 24-48 hours leading up to kickoff because that’s when the largest share of action is placed.

“ A line of demarcation for contrarian bettors is 65/35. This means betting against teams receiving 65% of spread bets or more and betting in favor of teams receiving 35% of spread bets or less. ”



preview

CAROLINA PANTHERS

2024 Record (incl playoffs): 5-12 SU & 8-9 ATS / 13-4-0 O-U-T
Head Coach: Dave Canales (2nd)

2025 schedule

DATE	OPPONENT	LINE*	SERIES TREND
9/7	at Jacksonville	+3.6	FAVORITES have won L5 ATS in CAR-JAC h2h series
9/14	at Arizona	+5.7	UNDERDOGS have won L5 ATS in ARI-CAR h2h series
9/21	ATLANTA	+0.3	UNDERDOGS are on 8-2 ATS run in ATL-CAR series
9/28	at New England	+3.9	CAROLINA is 5-1 ATS in L6 vs. New England
10/5	MIAMI	+1	MIAMI is 6-1-1 ATS in L8 vs. Carolina
10/12	DALLAS	+1	FAVORITES are on 6-1 SU & ATS streak in DAL-CAR h2h series
10/19	at NY Jets	+1.9	FAVORITES are 4-0-1 ATS in L5 of CAR-NYJ h2h series
10/26	BUFFALO	+7	BUFFALO is on 3-0-1 ATS run vs. Carolina
11/2	at Green Bay	+9.8	HOME TEAMS are 6-1 ATS in L7 of CAR-GB h2h series
11/9	NEW ORLEANS	-3	HOME TEAMS are on 6-1-1 ATS run in NO-CAR rivalry
11/16	at Atlanta	+3.5	CAROLINA is 4-1 ATS in L5 at Atlanta
11/24	at San Francisco	+8.1	FAVORITES are on 5-0 ATS streak in CAR-SF h2h series
11/30	LA RAMS	+3.8	FAVORITES are 6-1-1 ATS in L7 of LAR-CAR series
- BYE WEEK -			
12/14	at New Orleans	-0.4	OVER the total is 11-4 in CAR-NO series at New Orleans since '12
12/21	TAMPA BAY	+4.3	UNDER the total is 8-4 in L12 of TB-CAR rivalry in Carolina
12/28	SEATTLE	+0.4	The L8 games of SEA-CAR h2h series went OVER the total
1/4	at Tampa Bay	+7.6	TAMPA BAY is on 6-0 SU & 5-1 ATS surge hosting Carolina

STEVE MAKINEN 21.0 (#27 of 32) POWER RATINGS

Dating back to the 2002 division realignment, the only years in which a team hasn't gone worst to first have been 2014, 2019, and 2024. Semantics might come into play with the Panthers, who you could argue tied for last place and technically finished in third because of tiebreakers. Nevertheless, the overarching point here is that teams can and often do turn it around from one year to the next.

In a division that does feel ripe for the taking, the question is whether or not Bryce Young can be consistently good and if the league's worst scoring defense can improve enough for the team to be in contention. After the bye week, the signs were there, as the Panthers nearly beat the Chiefs and probably should have beaten the Buccaneers and Eagles. But "should" and "did" are two very different things in the NFL.

OFFENSE

There were three stages of offense for the Panthers last season. There was the Bryce Young era, the Andy Dalton era, and then Bryce Young Part Deux. Because I'm such a naturally optimistic guy, I'll look at the A.D. weeks (After Dalton). Young took back over as the starter in Week 8. In those 10 games, the Panthers were 4-6 and Young had a 15/6 TD/INT ratio with a 61.8% completion rate and 223 rushing yards on 37 carries. He only had 6.69 adjusted net yards per attempt, but looked to have a better grasp of the Dave Canales offense.

For 3WR sets now, Young has 2024 first-round pick Xavier Legette, productive vet Adam Thielen, and 2025 first-round pick Tetairoa McMillan. So his primary targets are 6'3", 6'2", and 6'5". Catch radius should matter a lot with a somewhat inaccurate, short-statured QB. The backfield is also bolstered with Chuba Hubbard and a homecoming of sorts for South Carolina product Rico Dowdle, who ran for over 1,000 yards and still was content to sign into a timeshare at best. With an OL that was top-10 in yards per carry and 12th in Sack%, you can see why this offense is highly-regarded in the minds of some.

DEFENSE

The focus will always be on a QB taken No. 1 overall, but this defense was extremely poor last season. Opponents converted over 50% of their third-down attempts and this was a bottom-five red zone unit. Carolina's 64 QB hits were the lowest in the league and they were last in Pressure%. They got gashed to the tune of 5.2 yards per carry. It's a make-or-break year for third-year DC Ejiro Evero in all likelihood.

Carolina added 13 sacks in free agency from Patrick Jones II and Tereshawn Wharton, plus a huge-bodied run-stopper in Bobby Brown III. Tre'von Moehring had 97 tackles and 10 pass breakups. This unit needs more than a few free agents, but there really is nowhere to go but up.

OUTLOOK

The season hinges on Young being better than he was and significantly, if the Panthers want to contend for a playoff spot. The schedule isn't too bad, though a Week 14 bye is concerning if Young gets off to a slow start. I think this team will look better on the stat sheet, but not necessarily in the standings. Both sides of the ball have a long way to go.

prediction

UNDER 6.5 WINS

odds

SUPER BOWL 120-1

NFC 50-1

NFC SOUTH +400

2024 stats

	OFFENSE		DEFENSE	
	STAT	RANK	STAT	RANK
POINTS PER GAME	20.1	23	31.4	32
YARDS PER POINT	14.9	15	12.9	30
PLAYS PER GAME	58.4	31		
TIME OF POSSESSION	27:13	31		
3RD DOWN CONV. %	36.0%	26	50.2%	32
TOTAL YARDS PER GAME	298	29	404.5	32
YARDS PER PLAY	5.1	24	6	32
RUSH ATTEMPTS PER GAME	24.1	27		
RUSH YARDS PER GAME	110.5	18	179.8	32
YARDS PER RUSH ATTEMPT	4.6	10	5.2	32
PASS ATTEMPTS PER GAME	32.2	19		
COMPLETION %	62.3%	28	67.9%	26
PASSING YARDS PER GAME	187.5	30	224.7	23
YARDS PER PASS ATTEMPT	6.2	30	7.2	29
TURNOVERS	1.3	19	1	20

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