

Gridiron Gold Sheet Football Newsletter

Dennis Stagliano's Gridiron Gold Sheet
An Award Winning Football Newsletter Since 1981



For the first time ever a sports service went the entire season without a single losing week. Ron Sataloff, President Sports Features Syndicate

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ALABAMA TIDAL WAVE CRUSHES THE OREGON DUCKS BUCKEYES SLIP BY DA FIGHTING IRISH

College Football Top 25 Roundup

No. 2 Ohio State rallied from a three-point halftime deficit and defeated No. 5 Notre Dame 21-10 in Columbus, Ohio, on Saturday in the season opener for both teams.

C.J. Stroud gave the Buckeyes a 14-10 lead with 17 seconds left in the third quarter when he passed 24 yards to walk-on receiver Xavier Johnson.

Miyan Williams then capped a 95-yard, 14-play drive with a 2-yard run with 4:51 to play to make it 21-10.

Stroud, a Heisman Trophy hopeful, was 24 of 34 for 223 yards and two touchdowns. Williams rushed 14 times for 84 yards while Emeka Egbuka made nine catches for 90 yards and a score.

Notre Dame's Tyler Buchner, in his first college start, completed 10 of 18 passes for 177 yards.

No. 1 Alabama 55, Utah State 0

Reigning Heisman Trophy winner Bryce Young took over where he left off last season, throwing for five touchdowns and rushing for another to lead the Crimson Tide to a dismantling of the Aggies in Tuscaloosa, Ala.

Young, who went 18-for-28 passing for 195 yards, threw two touchdowns to Jermaine Burton, who finished with five receptions for 35 yards in his first game with the Crimson Tide (1-0). Burton transferred from Georgia, where he was a key receiver during the Bulldogs' run to the national title in January.

Young, who also rushed for a career- and team-high 100 yards and a touchdown on five carries, threw two touchdown passes to Traeshon Holden (five catches, team-high 70 yards) and another to Jase McClellan, who also caught a scoring pass from backup quarterback Jalen Milroe.

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No. 3 Georgia 49, No. 11 Oregon 3

Stetson Bennett passed for 368 yards and two touchdowns and also rushed for a score as the Bulldogs opened defense of its national championship by routing the Ducks in the Chick-fil-A Kickoff in Atlanta.

Oregon's Dan Lanning, making his head-coaching debut after serving as Georgia's co-defensive coordinator the past three seasons, had no answer for the Bulldogs' offense, which scored touchdowns on its first seven possessions and amassed 571 yards.

Bennett, the offensive MVP of Georgia's 33-18 victory against Alabama in last season's College Football Playoff title game, was 18 of 21 for 254 yards a touchdown in the first half as the Bulldogs built a 28-3 lead.

No. 6 Texas A&M 31, Sam Houston State 0

Haynes King threw for 364 yards and three touchdowns as the Aggies blanked FCS opponent Sam Houston State 31-0 in a weather-delayed season opener.

King completed 20 of 31 passes and tossed a pair of interceptions in his first game since the second contest of last year, when he suffered a season-ending leg injury in the first quarter at Colorado. He also added 35 yards on six rushes before taking a seat for good in the fourth quarter.

The Aggies were never really threatened but didn't put the Bearkats away until the second half, outlasting a lightning delay of more than two hours that lengthened intermission. But their defense wasn't affected a bit by the unusual circumstances, limiting Sam Houston State to 198 total yards.

Florida 29, No. 7 Utah 26

Anthony Richardson made a sensational season-opening statement, propelling the host Gators to an upset win over the Utes in Gainesville, Fla., and delivering Billy Napier a win in his debut as Florida coach.

In his second career start, Richardson showed his poise with a mistake-free performance. His game-winning 1-yard scoring carry with 1:25 left was his third touchdown run of the night. Richardson completed 17 of 24 passes for 168 yards and carried 11 times for 104 yards.

In the final minute, Cameron Rising had Utah on the verge of a win as he drove the Utes to the Gators 6. But Amari Burney made a diving interception in the end zone to seal the win.

No. 8 Michigan 51, Colorado State 7

Cade McNamara went 9-of-18 passing for 136 yards and a touchdown in roughly one half of work to help lead the Wolverines to a season-opening home win over the Rams.

Blake Corum rushed for 76 yards and a touchdown on 13 carries and Donovan Edwards ran for 64 yards and a touchdown on 12 carries for the Wolverines.

Clay Millen went 16-of-20 passing for 137 yards and a touchdown, and Tory Horton caught six passes for 69 yards and a touchdown in defeat for Colorado State.

No. 9 Oklahoma 45, UTEP 13

Dillon Gabriel threw for 233 yards and two touchdowns to help the Sooners notch a victory over the Miners.

Oklahoma, in Brent Venables' first game as a head coach, got off to a quick start, leading 21-0 in the first quarter. The Sooners overhauled things on both sides of the ball in the offseason after Venables was hired following the departure of Lincoln Riley to Southern California.

Venables brought aboard Jeff Lebby, known for fast-paced offenses at Central Florida and Ole Miss, to run the Sooners' offense. Oklahoma needed only 13 plays — taking just 3:35 — to rack up 223 yards and build the early lead.

No. 10 Baylor 69, Albany 10

Blake Shapen passed for two touchdowns and ran for a third score, and Gavin Holmes had a 72-yard punt return touchdown as the Bears rolled to a win over the Great Danes in Waco, Texas.

Baylor, the defending Big 12 Conference champions, had little problem with Albany, an FCS school that was picked to finish 12th in the 13-team Colonial Athletic Association after going 2-9 last year.

Shapen completed 17 of 20 passes for 214 yards as Baylor outgained the Great Danes 573-237. Reese Poffenbarger passed for 150 yards and a score and ran for a team-best 45 yards in three quarters of action for Albany.

No. 13 N.C. State 21, East Carolina 20

The Pirates' hopes of upsetting their local rivals were dashed when kicker Owen Daffer missed what would have been a game-winning field goal from 41 yards out with nine seconds to play in Greenville, N.C.

East Carolina seemed to have swung momentum when it picked off N.C. State quarterback Devin Leary late in the fourth quarter. Four plays later, ECU found the end zone on a 3-yard scamper by Rahjai Harris.

Leary was 17 of 33 through the air for 211 yards. The Wolfpack were marred in this game by an ineffectiveness on third downs — just 4 of 13 on conversions — and penalties, picking up eight flags for 73 yards.

No. 14 USC 66, Rice 14

Caleb Williams threw a pair of touchdown passes to Jordan Addison, Austin Jones rushed for a pair of scores and the Trojans rolled past the Owls in Los Angeles.

The highly anticipated debut of the transfer duo did not disappoint from the start. Williams — who followed Trojans coach Lincoln Riley, also making his debut, from Oklahoma — completed 19 of 22 pass attempts for 249 yards.

Addison, the 2021 Biletnikoff Award winner while at Pittsburgh, caught five passes for 54 yards. Ten Trojans in total caught passes, including Tahj Washington's four receptions for a game-high 65 yards, and Oklahoma transfer Mario Williams' two grabs for 43 yards.

No. 16 Miami 70, Bethune-Cookman 13

Henry Parrish Jr. scored three first-half touchdowns in his program debut as the Hurricanes defeated the visiting Wildcats.

Other than a fumbled snap and running out of time at the end of the game, Miami scored a touchdown on its other nine possessions, and that excluded a defensive score on Gilbert Frierson's 32-yard interception return. A deflection by Miami defensive lineman Akheem Mesidor set up that play.

Bethune-Cookman was led by quarterback Jalon Jones, who completed 11 of 20 passes for 243 yards, one touchdown and one interception. The Wildcats scored on the game's initial possession as Jones completed 4 of 5 passes for 72 yards, leading to Dylan Moghaddam's 29-yard field goal.

No. 18 Wisconsin 38, Illinois State 0

John Torchio scored on a 100-yard interception return and Braelon Allen on a 96-yard run as the Badgers rolled to a nonconference victory over the Redbirds in Madison, Wis.

Torchio turned the game in the first quarter with the longest interception return for a touchdown in Wisconsin history. Allen bounced right off a clogged middle and went 96 yards to put Wisconsin up 14-0. It was the Badgers' longest touchdown run in school history, breaking the mark of 93 yards by James White in 2013.

Illinois State quarterback Zack Annexstad, a transfer from Minnesota, completed 16 of 24 passes for 186 yards with two interceptions for the FCS Redbirds, who dropped to 1-9 versus Big Ten opponents.

No. 19 Arkansas 31, No. 23 Cincinnati 24

KJ Jefferson threw for 223 yards and was responsible for four total touchdowns as the Razorbacks outlasted the visiting Bearcats in Fayetteville, Ark.

Raheim Sanders racked up 117 rushing yards and tight end Trey Knox caught two touchdowns for the Razorbacks. Jefferson completed 18 of 26 passes and added 62 rushing yards on 18 carries, as Arkansas finished with 224 yards on the ground as a team.

Cincinnati quarterback Ben Bryant went 26-for-43 for 325 yards, two touchdowns and one pick. Corey Kiner ran for 59 yards and a touchdown for the Bearcats, who lost in the regular season for the first time since 2019.

No. 20 Kentucky 37, Miami (OH) 13

Will Levis threw for 303 yards and three touchdowns and Barion Brown added a 100-yard kickoff return for a score to lift the Wildcats to a victory over the visiting RedHawks in Lexington, Ky.

Levis, who was 21-for-32 passing, found Tayvion Robinson six times for 136 yards, while Dane Key added four receptions for 53 yards and a touchdown and Brown contributed three catches for 45 yards to complement his highlight on special teams.

After his team led 13-10 at the half, Brown caught the second-half kickoff on the goal line and ran up field before cutting to his left. He raced down the sideline untouched for a 20-10 lead just 13 seconds into the third quarter.

No. 21 Ole Miss 28, Troy 10

Three Ole Miss players rushed for touchdowns and Zach Evans had 130 yards on the ground as the Rebels defeated the Trojans at Oxford, Miss.

Evans, a transfer from TCU, didn't find the end zone on any of his 20 carries, but Ulysses Bentley IV, Jonathan Mingo and Quinshon Judkins each had a 2-yard touchdown run and the Rebels defense shut down the Trojans.

Redshirt junior Gunnar Watson, who was named the Trojans' starter by first-year coach Jon Sumrall earlier this week, completed 34 of 47 for 275 yards with one touchdown and one interception. Ole Miss out-rushed Troy 266-60, though the Trojans possessed the ball for nearly 37 minutes.

No. 24 Houston 37, Texas-San Antonio 35 (3OT)

Clayton Tune's two-point conversion was successful thanks to an 8-yard run in the third overtime as the visiting Cougars outlasted the Roadrunners in a wild season-opening game for both teams in San Antonio.

Both teams were forced to settle for field goals in the first overtime. The Cougars then scored on a 1-yard run by quarterback Tune and a pass to Nathan Dell on the mandatory two-point conversion. UTSA countered with 13-yard TD pass from Frank Harris to De'Corian Clark, and Harris rushed for the two-point conversion on its possession in the second OT.

Tune then scored the game-winner from added distance because of a false start, after which Harris' pass was incomplete on the Roadrunners' attempt in the third overtime.

No. 25 BYU 50, South Florida 21

Jaren Hall threw for 261 yards and two touchdowns to lead the Cougars to a victory over the Bulls in Tampa, Fla.

Christopher Brooks ran for 135 yards and a touchdown in his debut for BYU. Puka Nacua added 98 yards from scrimmage and two rushing touchdowns for the Cougars before leaving with a sprained ankle late in the first quarter.

BYU (1-0) notched its second-ever win in the state of Florida after totaling 575 yards and averaging 8.3 yards per play. The Cougars previously defeated UCF in the 2020 Boca Raton Bowl.

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TOP 10 COLLEGE FOOTBALL TEAM STATS

PASSING YARDS >

Through games September 3, 2022

RANK	NAME	TEAM	PASS YDS
1	Drake Maye	 North Carolina	646
2	N'Kosi Perry	 Fla. Atlantic	620
3	Casey Thompson	 Nebraska	548
4	Austin Reed	 Western Ky.	547
5	Gavin Hardison	 UTEP	537
6	Davis Brin	 Tulsa	460
7	Will Rogers	 Mississippi St.	450
8	Tanner Mordecai	 SMU	432
9	Tommy Devito	 Illinois	426
10	Daniel Richardson	 Central Mich.	424

RUSHING YARDS >

Through games September 3, 2022

RANK	NAME	TEAM	RUSH YDS
1	Chase Brown	 Illinois	350
2	Nate Carter	 UConn	313
3	Anthony Grant	 Nebraska	290
4	Mike Wright	 Vanderbilt	247
5	Ray Davis	 Vanderbilt	182
6	Frank Gore	 Southern Miss.	178
-	Larry McCammon	 Fla. Atlantic	178
8	Calvin Tyler Jr.	 Utah St.	174
9	Braelon Allen	 Wisconsin	148
10	Tank Bigsby	 Auburn	147

SCORING OFFENSE >

Through games September 3, 2022

RANK	TEAM	PPG
1	 Miami [FL]	70.0
2	 Baylor	69.0
3	 Southern California	66.0
4	 Texas Tech	63.0
5	 App State	61.0
6	 North Carolina	59.5
7	 Ga. Southern	59.0
-	 Tennessee	59.0
-	 UAB	59.0
10	 Arkansas St.	58.0

SCORING DEFENSE >

Through games September 3, 2022

RANK	TEAM	AVG
1	 Alabama	.00
-	 Duke	.00
-	 Kansas St.	.00
-	 Minnesota	.00
-	 New Mexico	.00
-	 Texas A&M	.00
-	 Toledo	.00
-	 UAB	.00
-	 Wisconsin	.00
10	 Arizona St.	3.00

[**Download College Football Line Sheet Schedule**](#)

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BETS

LIBERTY + 6½ Over UAB by 3

The UAB Blazers and Liberty Flames meet Saturday in week 2 college football action at Williams Stadium. The UAB Blazers look for another win after rocking Alabama A&M in their opener. The Liberty Flames look for another win after beating Southern Miss in 4 overtimes.

The UAB Blazers have won 4 of their last 5 road games. Dylan Hopkins is completing 72.2 percent of his passes for 191 yards, 1 touchdown and 0 interceptions. Tejhaun Palmer and TJ Jones have combined for 112 receiving yards on 8 catches, while Samario Rudolph has 2 receptions. The UAB Blazers ground game is averaging 240 yards per contest, and Jermaine Brown Jr. leads the way with 114 yards and 1 touchdown. Defensively, UAB is allowing 0 points and 240 yards per game. Noah Wilder leads the UAB Blazers with 9 tackles, Reise Collier has 1 sack and Mac McWilliams has 1 interception.

The Liberty Flames have won 4 of their last 6 home games. Kaidon Salter is completing 61.5 percent of his passes for 148 yards, 2 touchdowns and 1 interception. Demario Douglas and CJ Yarbrough have combined for 133 receiving yards and 2 touchdowns, while Caleb Snead has 3 receptions. The Liberty Flames ground game is averaging 244 yards per contest, and Salter leads the way with 65 yards on 9 carries. Defensively, Liberty is allowing 27 points and 391 yards per game. Ahmad Walker leads the Liberty Flames with 8 tackles, Stephen Sings V has 1 sack and Durrell Johnson has 1 interception.

The UAB Blazers are probably the more talented team, and they're well coached side that's proven over the years they can get the job done on the road. You can understand why they're favored here. However, the Liberty Flames still returned a respectable amount of players from last year's roster, and they still have a playmaker at quarterback. No, Salter isn't Malik Willis, but he can make plays both through the air and on the feet. I wouldn't sleep on Liberty in this game, even in an outright victory. I'll snag the free touchdown.

Projected Score: Liberty 30, UAB 27

Boston College + 3 Over VIRGINIA TECH by 10

The Boston College Eagles and the Virginia Tech Hokies meet Saturday in college football action from Lane Stadium. Boston College is fresh off an opener versus Rutgers. In that one the Eagles lost a tough one by a single point. As for Virginia Tech, they played Old Dominion in their first game. The Hokies ended up falling by three points there.

Boston College had a mediocre-to-bad campaign in 2021. The Eagles went 6-6 overall, but managed just a 2-6 record in the ACC matchups. That would leave Boston College in last place in the Atlantic Division. A Military Bowl matchup versus East Carolina was ultimately cancelled.

In their 2022 opener versus Rutgers, the Eagles had a 21-15 lead at halftime but couldn't hang on in a tough 22-21 loss. QB Phil Jurkovec managed 283 yards with three scores and two picks. Zay Flowers led the receivers with his 10 catches for 117 yards and two TDs.

Over on the Hokies' side, they managed to go 6-7 overall last year with a 4-4 run in the ACC games. Virginia Tech finished in third place in the Coastal Division and earned a trip to the Pinstripe Bowl. The Hokies were blown out by Maryland in that one, however.

Virginia Tech's opener matchup versus Old Dominion was something of a disaster. The Hokies blew a 17-10 fourth-quarter lead and ultimately lost 20-17. QB Grant Wells threw for 193 yards, one TD and four picks. Keshawn King led the rush with 19 carries for 111 yards.

As for Virginia Tech, they did a pretty good job at keeping Old Dominion's offense at bay by allowing just 3.6 yards per play and 13 first downs. The Hokies' five turnovers, 14 penalties and 5-of-16 mark on third-down tries did the team in. Virginia Tech really needs to clean up their mistakes in this one.

The Eagles shot themselves in the proverbial foot several times in the Rutgers loss, posting just 29 rushing yards and coughing up three turnovers. There are some positives to build on however, and with a few tweaks I can see Boston College getting back to business here. Back the small road dog.
Projected Score: Boston College 27, Virginia Tech 17

IOWA - 3 Over Iowa St by 10

The Iowa State Cyclones and Iowa Hawkeyes meet Saturday in week 2 college football action at Kinnick Stadium. The Iowa State Cyclones look for another win after smoking Southeast Missouri State in their opener. The Iowa Hawkeyes look for a 2-0 start after escaping South Dakota State.

The Iowa State Cyclones have lost their last 3 road games. Hunter Dekkers is completing 80.6 percent of his passes for 293 yards, 4 touchdowns and 1 interception. Xavier Hutchinson and Darren Wilson Jr. have combined for 167 receiving yards and 3 touchdowns, while Jaylin Noel has 6 receptions. The Iowa State Cyclones ground game is averaging 176 yards per contest, and Jirehl Brock leads the way with 104 yards and 1 touchdown. Defensively, Iowa State is allowing 10 points and 320 yards per game. Colby Reeder leads the Iowa State Cyclones with 5 tackles, Jeremiah Cooper has 1 pass deflection and Anthony Johnson Jr. has 1 pass deflection.

The Iowa Hawkeyes have won 7 of their last 8 home games. Spencer Petras is completing 44 percent of his passes for 109 yards, 0 touchdowns and 1 interception. Arland Bruce IV and Leshon Williams have combined for 91 receiving yards on 7 catches, while Sam LaPorta has 2 receptions. The Iowa Hawkeyes ground game is averaging 61 yards per contest, and Williams leads the way with 72 yards on 24 carries. Defensively, Iowa is allowing 3 points and 120 yards per game. Jack Campbell leads the Iowa Hawkeyes with 11 tackles, Joe Evans has 2 sacks and Quinn Schulte has 4 pass deflections.

The Iowa State Cyclones are a live dog with how Iowa looked in its opener on the offensive side. Iowa better find some sort of offense if this game is going to be successful. The Iowa State Cyclones are not South Dakota State, respectfully, of course.

With that said, Iowa has won each of the last 6 meetings against the Cyclones and 7 of the last 8 meetings.

And while the Iowa offense has concerns, that Hawkeyes defense is elite and will keep them in games regardless. I would need at least a touchdown to consider backing the road team here. Kinnick Stadium is a tough place to win as a visitor. Take Iowa as a small favorite at home.
Projected Score: Iowa 26, Iowa St. 16

CALIFORNIA - 13 Over UNLV by 18

The UNLV Rebels and Cal Golden Bears meet Saturday in week 2 college football action at California Memorial Stadium. The UNLV Rebels look for another win after beating Idaho State in their opener. The Cal Golden Bears look for another win after beating UC Davis in their opener.

The UNLV Rebels have lost 5 of their last 6 road games. Doug Brumfield is completing 84 percent of his passes for 356 yards, 4 touchdowns and 0 interceptions. Ricky White and Jeff Weimer have combined for 253 receiving yards and 2 touchdowns, while Kyle Williams has 4 receptions. The UNLV Rebels ground game is averaging 149 yards per contest, and Courtney Reese leads the way with 73 yards on 7 carries. Defensively, UNLV is allowing 21 points and 241 yards per game. Fred Thompkins leads the UNLV Rebels with 10 tackles, Adam Plant Jr. has 1 sack and Austin Ajiake has 1 interception.

The Cal Golden Bears have won their last 4 home games. Jack Plummer is completing 65.7 percent of his passes for 268 yards, 3 touchdowns and 1 interception. Jeremiah Hunter and J. Michael Sturdivant have combined for 133 receiving yards and 1 touchdown, while Monroe Young has 2 receptions. The Cal Golden Bears ground game is averaging 148 yards per contest, and Jaydn Ott leads the way with 104 yards on 17 carries. Defensively, Cal is allowing 13 points and 387 yards per game. Jackson Sirmon leads the Cal Golden Bears with 8 tackles, Xavier Carlton has 1.5 sacks and Craig Woodson has 1 interception.

The UNLV Rebels did their thing in their season opener and even covered a big number, which is progress for a program where there's usually little expectations. Now we'll get a better feel for UNLV on the road against better competition. The Cal Golden Bears have questions that still need answers, especially defensively.

There's no doubt Cal is the more talented team here, and Plummer looked sharp in his first game at quarterback. While UNLV will have scoring chances, I'm not confident it has the horses to hang for 60 minutes. It may get hairy at times, but Cal does just enough to hang on and cover the two touchdowns.

Projected Score: California 35, UNLV 17

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1	10	5	5/5
	+6.5		+1
	-3.5		+1
	-3.5		

Alabama - 20 Over TEXAS by 30

Last week, the top-ranked Alabama Crimson Tide passed their opening test with flying colors in a 55-0 shutout over the Utah State Aggies in Tuscaloosa. Despite a 39-point betting line, I advised bettors that Alabama has an incredible track record, against the spread, in openers with Head Coach Nick Saban and Alabama was able to cover the large betting line with ease. This week the competition stiffens when the Crimson Tide travels to Austin, Texas, for a showdown with the Texas Longhorns.

The Longhorns also passed their opening test last week with a 52-10 victory over UL Monroe. The Longhorns covered the large 37.5-point betting line in a relatively unchallenged season opener.

By all accounts, the Longhorns have the talent to be really good this season, and many are expecting somewhat of a breakout season in Head Coach Steve Sarkisian's 2nd season. I believe a lot of those expectations and questions could be answered on Saturday by gauging how well this Texas football team can contend with a juggernaut like Alabama.

One of the biggest keys to this game and determining the side of this 20-point betting line revolves around the play of transfer quarterback Quinn Ewers. Alabama poses a monstrosity on both sides of the football, led by Heisman Trophy QB Bryce Young.

As bad as the Longhorns were defensively last year, I don't see many paths for this unit to shut down the high-profile attack of Alabama. Therefore, to keep this game competitive, the Longhorns will need a big-time performance from Ewers in his biggest challenge to date.

I know I said the key to the Longhorns' chances at covering will be dependent upon the arm of Quinn Ewers, and I'm sure the Texas faithful are screaming, "what about Bijan Robinson?"

Fair enough, I will give Longhorns fans credit that Robinson is among the best tailbacks in college football, and he should have an incredible year in the Texas backfield. That said, look at the track record of top-tier running backs against this Alabama defense. In a seemingly down year on the defensive side of the football in 2021, the Crimson Tide only relinquished 84 yards per game on the ground, and they are poised to be better this season.

Call it blasphemy or call it what you want; I think Alabama will take away the Longhorns' biggest threat on the ground. When that happens, it falls back on the success of the passing game with Ewers.

Now, if Ewers can make some big throws and the Longhorns can capitalize on plays down the field, that will open up more opportunities on the ground. I'm just not convinced that will happen enough to keep pace with the firepower from the Crimson Tide.

Alabama is 4-1 ATS in the last 5 non-conference games as 20 points favorites. Texas is 2-6 ATS in the last 8 games.

Make no mistakes about it, the Longhorns program is on the rise, and they could make some noise in the Big 12 this season. However, I don't think the program is quite ready to challenge such a dominant team like Alabama this early in the season. The Crimson Tide have far more paths to a victory and cover in this match-up. As a result, I'm backing Alabama for the 2nd straight week!

Projected Score: Alabama 44, Texas 14



FINALLY NFL KICKOFF ISSUE WOW! WEEK 1 MAJOR MATCHUPS BUFFALO @ LA RAMS + PITTSBURGH @ CINCINNATI + LAS VEGAS @ LA CHARGERS + TAMPA BAY @ DALLAS

Every NFL team's biggest strength & weakness heading into the 2022 season.

No NFL team is perfect. As we enter the 2022 season, we take a look at every team's biggest strength and weakness.

Arizona Cardinals Strength: Passing Game

Arizona is set to see changes in their offensive weapons this year, as Marquise Brown has arrived, replacing Christian Kirk. Still, the passing game should remain a strength with the accurate Kyler Murray finding outlets like Brown, DeAndre Hopkins, Rondale Moore, A.J. Green, and Zach Ertz.

Arizona Cardinals Weakness: Pass Defense

The team was in the middle of the pack stopping the pass last season, but the problems will likely worsen with the loss of Chandler Jones and significant questions at cornerback. The team continues to rely on J.J. Watt to generate a pass rush, but his inability to stay healthy makes that a risk.

Atlanta Falcons Strength: Tight End

Kyle Pitts is coming off a historic rookie season, finishing with 68 catches for 1,026 yards. He heads into 2022 as the clear top receiving offense in the Falcons offense.

Atlanta Falcons Weakness: Quarterback

Matt Ryan had his issues in recent seasons, but Falcons fans would likely prefer him over this year's options. Atlanta added former Titans starter Marcus Mariota, with third-round pick Desmond Ridder as a backup plan. Neither quarterback is likely to be the future at the position.

Baltimore Ravens Strength: Running Game

Coordinator Greg Roman's offense is built around a run-heavy scheme, which perfectly complements Lamar Jackson's mobility. The team averaged an impressive 4.8 yards per carry last season while using past-their-prime veterans, and they are set to get J.K. Dobbins and Gus Edwards back from injury early this season.

Baltimore Ravens Defense: Wide Receivers

The Ravens have needed wide receiver help for several years, and that continues after trading Marquise Brown. Second-year wideout Rashod Bateman is probably miscast as the No. 1. Baltimore

hopes to offset the wideout issues with star tight end Mark Andrews, as well as emerging rookie tight end Isaiah Likely.

Buffalo Bills Strength: Quarterback

Josh Allen is in the conversation as the best quarterback in the NFL after his performance over the last two seasons. He's thrown for over 4,400 yards in consecutive years, and also offers mobility for the Bills' dynamic offense.

Buffalo Bills Weakness: Game Management

It's still a sore spot for Bills fans, but Sean McDermott's game management was called into question on several occasions last year. It was never a more blatant issue than the end of regulation against the Chiefs in the Divisional Round when the defense allowed Patrick Mahomes and company to march down the field for a game-tying field goal.

Carolina Panthers Strength: Secondary

The Panthers have done well to build a strong, young secondary headlined by Donte Jackson and recent draft picks Jaycee Horn and Jeremy Chinn. The team allowed only 6.3 yards per reception last year, and is hopeful the addition of veteran Xavier Woods at safety can help even more.

Carolina Panthers Weakness: Quarterback

Quarterback has been an ongoing saga in Carolina since Matt Rhule was hired. Teddy Bridgewater wasn't good enough in his first year, while Sam Darnold was a disaster last season and now he's on IR. Adding former No. 1 overall draft pick Baker Mayfield offers some potential, but he's been inconsistent and banged up for most of his NFL career.

Chicago Bears Strength: Linebackers

The linebacker position is synonymous with the Bears' history, and they have an excellent set currently headlined by stars Roquan Smith and Robert Quinn. The loss of Khalil Mack this offseason certainly hurts, however.

Chicago Bears Weakness: Passing Game

Justin Fields deserves a mulligan after struggling in his rookie season, but the optimism hasn't increased much after the Bears lost Allen Robinson and failed to adequately address their offensive line. The struggles in the passing game are likely to continue in 2022.

Cincinnati Bengals Strength: Passing Game

With a healthy Joe Burrow and the addition of Ja'Marr Chase, the Bengals' passing game was better than fans could have imagined last season. The team was top 10 in passing yards, yards per pass, and completion rate while operating as a fine-tuned machine, also with the help of Tee Higgins, Tyler Boyd, and Joe Mixon.

Cincinnati Bengals Weakness: Pass Defense

The secondary issues for the Bengals were glaring at times last year, as Eli Apple and the safeties were exposed. The team allowed nearly 250 passing yards per game, but have attempted to address their weakness with draft picks Dax Hill and Cam Taylor-Britt.

Cleveland Browns Strength: Running Game

The Browns averaged 5.1 yards per rush attempt last season, with a terrific running back trio of Nick Chubb, Kareem Hunt, and D'Ernest Johnson, along with a powerful offensive line. The addition of Deshaun Watson late this season could make the running game even more dynamic.

Cleveland Browns Weakness: Passing Game

Jacoby Brissett is set to start the first 11 games of the season until Deshaun Watson returns from suspension. While the Browns added Amari Cooper and rookie David Bell to their wideout corps, finding consistency could be difficult with the new quarterback situation.

Dallas Cowboys Strength: Offense

Some of the weapons are different, but the Cowboys' offense is expected to remain a strength this season with elite players like Dak Prescott, Ezekiel Elliott, Tony Pollard, and CeeDee Lamb. Still, the losses of Amari Cooper and Tyron Smith remain a concern that could cause some regression for what was the highest-scoring team in the league last year.

Dallas Cowboys Weakness: Depth

The Cowboys had more personnel losses than gains in the offseason, and now have serious depth issues on the offensive line, wide receiver, and the secondary. The team has already had bad luck in training camp with left tackle Tyron Smith and wideout James Washington, and can't afford many more injuries.

Denver Broncos Strength: Quarterback

Not since Peyton Manning have the Broncos been able to claim quarterback as a strength, but they can now say that again with Russell Wilson. The former Seahawks quarterback guided Seattle to nine consecutive winning seasons before suffering a finger injury last season and still throws the prettiest deep ball in the game.

Denver Broncos Weakness: Pass Rush

Denver's front seven looks very different after trading Von Miller last season, and the team also moved Shelby Harris in the offseason. Incumbent Bradley Chubb and the addition of Randy Gregory should help, but the Broncos' pass rush remains a concern after ranking 17th in sack rate last season.

Detroit Lions Strength: Offensive Line

Detroit has heavily invested in their offensive line, with three former first-round picks, and it shows. 2021 first-rounder Penei Sewell is the more recent addition to the strong unit.

Detroit Lions Weakness: Defense

Detroit's defense has been a mess recently, allowing the second most points per game last season after faring even worse in 2020. The team is hopeful youth will help, led by first-round pick Aidan Hutchinson.

Green Bay Packers Strength: Quarterback

Aaron Rodgers is still the field general in Green Bay, just off back-to-back NFL MVP Awards. Of course, he could find winning the award more difficult this season after losing significant talent at wideout.

Green Bay Packers Weakness: Receivers

The Packers lost their top two wideouts in the offseason, as Davante Adams and Marquez Valdes-Scantling went elsewhere. The organization likes the potential of rookies Christian Watson and Romeo Doubs, but it will likely take time for them to get comfortable. For now, veterans Allen Lazard, Randall Cobb, and Sammy Watkins, along with tight end Robert Tonyan, will be Aaron Rodgers' best options.

Houston Texans Strength: Offensive Weapons

There are certainly teams with better weapons, but the Texans look like they have a capable offensive cast with Brandin Cooks, Nico Collins, Marlon Mack, and rookie Dameon Pierce.

Houston Texans Weakness: Offensive Line

Laremy Tunsil is solid at left tackle, and the Texans like the potential of first-round pick Kenyon Green. Elsewhere, their offensive line is a problem, after the team rushed for only 3.4 yards per carry and failed to protect their quarterback last season.

Indianapolis Colts Strength: Running Game

Jonathan Taylor easily led the NFL in rushing last season. It's not only his tremendous ability that makes this area a strength, but also an elite offensive line interior led by Quenton Nelson.

Indianapolis Colts Weakness: Passing Game

The Colts continue to play musical chairs at quarterback, with their fourth regular starter in four years. Matt Ryan has an MVP Award in his trophy case, but he's clearly not the same quarterback that he was earlier in his career with Atlanta. Indy is just hoping for more stability than what they had last season with Carson Wentz.

Jacksonville Jaguars Strength: Coaching

Coaching was arguably Jacksonville's most significant weakness last year during the Urban Meyer debacle, but it immediately became a strength when they hired Doug Pederson. The former Eagles head coach led his former team to a Super Bowl, and brings consistency and know-how from the Andy Reid coaching tree.

Jacksonville Jaguars Weakness: Defense

The turnover on defense for the Jags over the last five seasons has been alarming, partly explaining their downfall. The team failed to stop teams in any facet last year, though they do have potential with stars like Josh Allen and first-round picks Travon Walker and Devin Lloyd.

Kansas City Chiefs Strength: Offense

The Chiefs have finished in the top 10 in points scored in seven of nine seasons since Andy Reid was hired, and they have been among the elite in all four of Patrick Mahomes' seasons. There is some concern of regression following the loss of Tyreek Hill, but the Chiefs now have a deeper crop of wideouts, along with future Hall of Fame tight end Travis Kelce leading the way.

Kansas City Chiefs Weakness: Pass Rush

The Chiefs struggled to generate pressure last season, with little push on the defensive line beyond Chris Jones. The weakness has been addressed with the additions of Carlos Dunlap and rookie George Karlaftis, but it remains to be seen if that will be enough.

Las Vegas Raiders Strength: Passing Game

A strong passing game that averaged nearly 270 yards per game last year is set to get even better this year after hiring Josh McDaniels and signing Davante Adams. Derek Carr still has former top options Darren Waller and Hunter Renfrow at his disposal, as well.

Las Vegas Raiders Weakness: Offensive Line

The glaring issues the former Raiders regime had drafting and developing talent show on the offensive line. Left tackle Kolton Miller could be the only above-average starter, while 2021 first-round pick Alex Leatherwood is already looking like a bust.

Los Angeles Chargers Strength: Passing Game

The Chargers' passing game is already beginning to compete with the rival Chiefs in the AFC West. Justin Herbert looks elite through two NFL seasons, while wideouts Keenan Allen and Mike Williams are a terrific tandem. LA averaged over 280 passing yards per game in 2021.

Los Angeles Chargers Weakness: Run Defense

Run defense isn't the highest priority on a team that stresses analytics, but the Chargers still need improvement in that area. They allowed the third most rush yards in the league last year, and former first-round pick Kenneth Murray has regressed.

Los Angeles Rams Strength: Passing Game

Head coach Sean McVay finally got his elite quarterback last year in Matthew Stafford, and the result was quite evident in the team's excellent offense and eventual championship. The Stafford to Cooper Kupp connection was almost impossible to stop last year, and the Rams have added Allen Robinson this season.

Los Angeles Rams Weakness: Depth

The Rams continue to trade draft picks for players who can help them win now. That's a good strategy for winning now until injuries strike. The team is already worried about Matthew Stafford's barking elbow, and also has some depth issues on the offensive line and defense.

Miami Dolphins Strength: Offensive Weapons

Miami's offense was vanilla last year, but that's set to change significantly. New head coach Mike McDaniel could present an exciting offense after the additions of Chase Edmonds, Tyreek Hill, and Cedrick Wilson joining Jaylen Waddle.

Miami Dolphins Weakness: Quarterback

For all of Miami's offensive additions, it's still unclear if Tua Tagovailoa is the answer at quarterback. He's continued to have injury issues, as he did in college at Alabama, and averaged only 6.8 yards per pass attempt last season.

Minnesota Vikings Strength: Offensive Weapons

Few teams can claim better offensive weapons than the Vikings. Justin Jefferson has had a historic first two seasons with over 3,000 yards receiving, Dalvin Cook remains an elite running back, and Adam Thielen is a tremendous Red Zone target. Minnesota is also excited about the return of tight end Irv Smith Jr. from injury.

Minnesota Vikings Weakness: Defense

Minnesota's defense got old fast and is now facing the consequences. The team still has stars like Danielle Hunter, Eric Kendricks, and Harrison Smith, along with the addition of Za'Darius Smith, but the unit was bottom 10 in points and yards allowed last season.

New England Patriots Strength: Quarterback

It didn't take long for the Patriots to find a long-term replacement for Tom Brady, as Mac Jones had a terrific rookie season in 2021. The team has higher hopes as he enters his second year.

New England Patriots Weakness: Wide Receivers

To help Mac Jones reach his potential, the Pats need to do more at wide receiver. The only notable addition in the offseason was DeVante Parker, and the team lacks a high-upside target after striking out on N'Keal Harry and Nelson Agholor.

New Orleans Saints Strength: Defense

The Saints have developed an elite defense over the last two seasons. Most recently, they ranked fourth in points allowed last year, and promoted coordinator Dennis Allen to head coach during the offseason. While there have been changes at safety, the core of the strong unit remains intact.

New Orleans Saints Weakness: Quarterback

Quarterback was a huge issue last season following the retirement of Drew Brees. New Orleans is giving Jameis Winston another chance following knee surgery, but his history of turnovers and mediocre performance last season is concerning.

New York Giants Strength: Offensive Weapons

The Giants might have made a serious blunder by giving Kenny Golladay big money last offseason, but they still have great alternative weapons. Saquon Barkley remains a dynamic running back when healthy, while young wideouts Kadarius Toney and Wan'Dale Robinson show exciting potential.

New York Giants Weakness: Quarterback

Simply put, the Giants can't win if Daniel Jones continues to play as poorly as he has in his first three seasons. He's shown flashes of ability, but the turnovers have killed the team with 29 picks and 36 fumbles in only 38 career games.

New York Jets Strength: Defensive Line

Quinnen Williams remains one of the most talented interior defensive linemen in the league, and he's set to get help this year. Carl Lawson is returning from injury, and first-round pick Jermaine Johnson should also provide immediate help.

New York Jets Weakness: Quarterback

Zach Wilson looked lost in his rookie season, and a knee injury is likely to sideline him for the start of 2022. He must make enormous strides for the Jets to have any chance of competing this year.

Philadelphia Eagles Strength: Running Game

Philadelphia was the most run-heavy offense in the league last season and for good reason. The team averaged 5.0 yards per carry with a solid running back committee led by Miles Sanders, and quarterback Jalen Hurts also offers good running ability.

Philadelphia Eagles Weakness: Passing Game

Hurts' strength isn't throwing the ball down the field, as the Eagles completed just over 61% of their passes last season and had less than seven yards per pass attempt. However, DeVonta Smith was excellent in his rookie season, and former Titans star A.J. Brown should have a significant impact.

Pittsburgh Steelers Strength: Receivers

The Steelers have been a wideout factor over the last two decades with stars like Hines Ward, Plaxico Burress, Santonio Holmes, Mike Wallace, and Antonio Brown. Their reputation for developing wideouts continues with a potentially elite trio of Diontae Johnson, Chase Claypool, and rookie George Pickens. Tight end Pat Freiermuth is also coming off an excellent rookie season.

Pittsburgh Steelers Weakness: Quarterback

The play at quarterback was waning with the final days of Ben Roethlisberger, and the position remains a concern with Mitchell Trubisky and rookie Kenny Pickett. With a solid supporting cast, the Steelers don't need much at quarterback to remain competitive, fortunately.

San Francisco 49ers Strength: Pass Rush

Quarterbacks were in constant pressure against the 49ers last season, with a terrific defensive line led by Nick Bosa leading the charge. San Francisco ranked third in sack rate, and hopes to get even better this season after drafting Drake Jackson in the second round.

San Francisco 49ers Weakness: Quarterback

No one really knows what the 49ers have in Trey Lance. The second-year quarterback struggled when he got an opportunity last season, but the team seems all in on him this year. His ability to pass the ball down the field should determine the team's ceiling.

Seattle Seahawks Strength: Running Game

Seattle's running game really came on late last season when Rashaad Penny got an opportunity. The former first-round pick led the league with 6.3 yards per carry, and Seattle has added further help with second-round rookie Kenneth Walker.

Seattle Seahawks Weakness: Quarterback

Seattle traded Russell Wilson in the offseason, but inexplicably failed to add a viable replacement. They head into Week 1 with Geno Smith as the starter, who went 1-2 as the starter last season and has never shown much upside in his nine NFL seasons.

Tampa Bay Buccaneers Strength: Offensive Weapons

While Tom Brady lost Rob Gronkowski in the offseason, the Bucs still have an embarrassment of riches to help him. Stars Mike Evans, Chris Godwin, and Leonard Fournette remain, but the team added Russell Gage, Julio Jones, Kyle Rudolph, and rookie running back Rachad White.

Tampa Bay Buccaneers Weakness: Offensive Line

The Bucs remain solid on the edges of the offensive line with Donovan Smith and Tristan Wirfs, but the interior is a huge concern. The team lost center Ryan Jensen to injury, with guards Ali Marpet and Alex Cappa are also gone.

Tennessee Titans Strength: Running Game

Derrick Henry joined the 2,000-yard club two years ago, but the Titans proved they could run the ball without him when he fractured his foot last season. They now have a healthy Henry again, and will lean on him after significant losses at wideout.

Tennessee Titans Weakness: Passing Game

The passing game was a weakness for Tennessee before losing A.J. Brown and Julio Jones in the offseason. Tennessee is hopeful that Robert Woods and rookie Treyton Burks can fill the void for Ryan Tannehill this season, but the passing game will take a hit.

Washington Commanders Strength: Offensive Weapons

The strength of the offense remains to be seen with Carson Wentz at quarterback, but it won't be for lack of offensive weapons. Terry McLaurin has been a highly productive wideout since he was drafted in 2019, and he's joined by first-round pick Jahan Dotson and a healthy Curtis Samuel. Tight end Logan Thomas has developed nicely at the position, and the running back room looks terrific with rookie Brian Robinson joining Antonio Gibson and J.D. McKissic.

Washington Commanders Weakness: Secondary

Washington failed to stop the pass last season, and has done very little to address the defensive back issues. William Jackson struggled in his first year with the team, while the organization is still trying to recover at safety from free agent bust Landon Collins. The team needs more from safeties Bobby McCain and Kamren Curl this season to stop the bleeding.

AFC South

Colts

Major losses: Carson Wentz, Zach Pascal, Mark Glowinski, Al-Quadin Muhammad, Rock Ya-Sin, Chris Reed, George Odum, Marlon Mack

Major additions: Matt Ryan, Yannick Ngakoue, Stephon Gilmore, Rodney McLeod, Dennis Kelly, Ifeadi Odenigbo, Phillip Lindsay, Nick Foles

Top draft pick: Alec Pierce (WR, Cincinnati) (Rd. 2, Pick 53)

Titans

Major losses: David Quessenberry, Rodger Saffold, A.J. Brown, Rashaan Evans, Dane Cruikshank, Julio Jones, Anthony Firkser, D'Onta Foreman

Major additions: Robert Woods, Austin Hooper, Lonnie Johnson Jr., DeMarcus Walker

Top draft pick: Treyton Burks (WR, Arkansas) (Rd. 1, Pick 18)

Texans

Major losses: Terrance Mitchell, Justin Reid, Jacob Martin, Geron Christian, Lonnie Johnson Jr., DeMarcus Walker, Tyrod Taylor, Jordan Akins

Major additions: Steven Nelson, Rasheem Green, Jalen Reeves-Maybin, Chester Rogers, M.J. Stewart

Top draft pick: Derek Stingley Jr. (CB, LSU) (Rd. 1, Pick 3)

Jaguars

Major losses: Andrew Norwell, Myles Jack, Damien Wilson, Jihad Ward, D.J. Chark

Major additions: Foyesade Oluokun, Darius Williams, Christian Kirk, Evan Engram, Brandon Scherff, Zay Jones, Arden Key

Top draft pick: Travon Walker (DE, Georgia) (Rd. 1, Pick 1)

NFC South

Buccaneers

Major losses: Alex Cappa, Jordan Whitehead, Bradley Pinion, O.J. Howard, Ronald Jones II

Major additions: Shaquille Mason, Logan Ryan, Julio Jones, Russell Gage, Keanu Neal, Kyle Rudolph, Akiem Hicks, Carl Nassib

Top draft pick: Logan Hall (DE, Houston) (Rd. 2, Pick 33)

Saints

Major losses: Marcus Williams, Kwon Alexander, Terron Armstead, Trevor Siemian, Christian Ringo, Ty Montgomery

Major additions: Tyrann Mathieu, Daniel Sorenson, Jarvis Landry, Andy Dalton, Kentavious Street, Marcus Maye

Top draft pick: Chris Olave (WR, Ohio State) (Rd. 1, Pick 11)

Falcons

Major losses: Foyesade Oluokun, Matt Ryan, Duron Harmon, Fabian Moreau, Steven Means, Russell Gage, Mike Davis, Tajae Sharpe, Dante Fowler Jr., Hayden Hurst

Major additions: Casey Hayward, Bryan Edwards, Dean Marlowe, Damiere Byrd, Lorenzo Carter, Bradley Pinion, Rashaan Evans, MyCole Pruitt, Anthony Firkser

Top draft pick: Drake London (WR, USC) (Rd. 1, Pick 8)

Panthers

Major losses: Haason Reddick, Jermaine Carter Jr., DaQuan Jones, Morgan Fox, Stephon Gilmore

Major additions: Xavier Woods, Austin Corbett, Baker Mayfield, Bradley Bozeman, Damien Wilson, Cory Littleton, Matt Ioannidis, Rashard Higgins, Johnny Hekker, D'Onta Foreman

Top draft pick: Ikem Ekwonu (OT, NC State) (Rd. 1, Pick 6)

AFC North

Bengals

Major losses: C.J. Uzomah, Riley Reiff, Larry Ogunjo

Major additions: Alex Cappa, Ted Karras, La'el Collins, Hayden Hurst

Top draft pick: Daxton Hill (S, Michigan) (Rd.1, Pick 31)

Steelers

Major losses: Trai Turner, Joe Schobert, Ray-Ray McCloud, James Washington, JuJu Smith-Schuster, Taco Charlton

Major additions: James Daniels, Levi Wallace, Myles Jack, Mason Cole, Mitchell Trubisky, Myles Boykin, Gunner Olszewski

Top draft pick: Kenny Pickett (QB, Pittsburgh) (Rd. 1, Pick 20)

Browns

Major losses: Baker Mayfield, Austin Hooper, Jarvis Landry, Troy Hill, Rashard Higgins, Mack Wilson, Ifeadi Odenigbo, Case Keenum

Major additions: Deshaun Watson, Amari Cooper, Ethan Pocic, Taven Bryan, Jacoby Brissett, Jakeem Grant

Top draft pick: Martin Emerson (CB, Mississippi State) (Rd. 3, Pick 68)

Ravens

Major losses: Marquise Brown, Bradley Bozeman, Anthony Averett, Tavon Young, Sammy Watkins, Justin Ellis, Chris Board, DeShon Elliot

Major additions: Morgan Moses, Marcus Williams, Kyle Fuller, Steven Means, Mike Davis

Top draft pick: Kyle Hamilton (S, Notre Dame) (Rd. 1, Pick 14)

NFC North

Bears

Major losses: James Daniels, Khalil Mack, Bilal Nichols, Akiem Hicks, Allen Robinson, Andy Dalton, Deon Bush, Marquise Goodwin, Pat O'Donnell, Jakeem Grant, Nick Foles

Major additions: Lucas Patrick, Michael Schofield, Al-Quadin Muhammad, Riley Reiff, Ryan Griffin, Tavon Young, Byron Pringle, N'Keal Harry, Equanimeous St. Brown

Top draft pick: Kyler Gordon (CB, Washington) (Rd. 2, Pick 39)

Packers

Major losses: Davante Adams, Lucas Patrick, Chandon Sullivan, Billy Turner, Marquez Valdes-Scantling, Equanimeous St. Brown, Za'Darius Smith

Major additions: Sammy Watkins, Jarran Reed, Pat O'Donnell

Top draft pick: Quay Walker (LB, Georgia) (Rd. 1, Pick 22)

Lions

Major losses: Dean Marlowe, Jalen Reeves-Maybin, Jessie Lemonier

Major additions: Mike Hughes, D.J. Chark, Justin Jackson, DeShon Elliot

Top draft pick: Aidan Hutchinson (DE, Michigan) (Rd. 1, Pick 2)

Vikings

Major losses: Xavier Woods, Tyler Conklin, Anthony Barr, Mackenzie Alexander, Nick Vigil, Mason Cole, Rashod Hill

Major additions: Jordan Hicks, Jesse Davis, Chandon Sullivan, Chris Reed, Albert Wilson, Jonathan Bullard, Za'Darius Smith

Top draft pick: Lewis Cine (S, Georgia) (Rd. 1, Pick 32)

AFC East

Patriots

Major losses: J.C. Jackson, Brandon Bolden, Chase Winovich, Shaq Mason, Kyle Van Noy, Ted Karras, N'Keal Harry

Major additions: Malcolm Butler, DeVante Parker, Jabrill Peppers, Mack Wilson, Terrance Mitchell, Ty Montgomery

Top draft pick: Cole Strange (OG, Chattanooga) (Rd. 1, Pick 29)

Bills

Major losses: Jerry Hughes, Mitchell Trubisky, Matt Breida, Mario Addison

Major additions: Von Miller, Rodger Saffold, Duke Johnson, O.J. Howard, Tavon Austin, Greg Van Roten, Jamison Crowder

Top draft pick: Kaiir Elam (CB, Florida) (Rd. 1, Pick 23)

Dolphins

Major losses: DeVante Parker, Jesse Davis, Phillip Lindsay, Albert Wilson, Justin Coleman, Duke Johnson

Major additions: Tyreek Hill, Terron Armstead, Teddy Bridgewater, Melvin Ingram, Raheem Mostert, Mackensie Alexander, Chase Edmonds, Sony Michel

Top draft pick: Channing Tindall (LB, Georgia) (Rd. 3, Pick 102)

Jets

Major losses: Keelan Cole, Jamison Crowder, Morgan Moses, Greg Van Roten, Folorunso Fatukasi, Marcus Maye

Major additions: Duane Brown, C.J. Uzomah, Laken Tomlinson, Kwon Alexander, Jordan Whitehead, D.J. Reed, Tyler Conklin

Top draft pick: Sauce Gardner (CB, Cincinnati) (Rd. 1, Pick 4)

NFC East

Cowboys

Major losses: Amari Cooper, La'el Collins, Keanu Neal, Connor Williams, Greg Zuerlein, Randy Gregory

Major additions: Anthony Barr, Dante Fowler Jr., James Washington

Top draft pick: Tyler Smith (OT, Tulsa) (Rd. 1, Pick 24)

Eagles

Major losses: Steven Nelson, Rodney McLeod, Alex Singleton, Hassan Ridgeway

Major additions: James Bradberry, Haason Reddick, Zach Pascal, A.J. Brown, Jaquiski Tarrt, Kyzir White

Top draft pick: Jordan Davis (DT, Georgia) (Rd. 1, Pick 13)

Giants

Major losses: James Bradberry, Logan Ryan, Kyle Rudolph, Austin Johnson, Evan Engram, Jabrill Peppers, Will Hernandez

Major additions: Tyrod Taylor, Mark Glowinski, Jihad Ward, Ricky Seals-Jones, Matt Breida, Jordan Akins

Top draft pick: Kayvon Thibodeaux (DE, Oregon) (Rd. 1, Pick 5)

Commanders

Major losses: Brandon Scherff, Matt Ioannidis, Ricky Seals-Jones, DeAndre Carter

Major additions: Carson Wentz, Andrew Norwell, Trai Turner, Justin Hamilton

Top draft pick: Jahan Dotson (WR, Penn State) (Rd. 1, Pick 16)

AFC West

Chiefs

Major losses: Tyreek Hill, Tyrann Mathieu, Charvarius Ward, Jarran Reed, Daniel Sorenson, Melvin Ingram, Ben Niemann, Byron Pringle, Darrel Williams, Mike Hughes

Major additions: Jermaine Carter Jr., JuJu Smith-Schuster, Justin Reid, Geron Christian, Marquez Valdes-Scantling, Carlos Dunlap, Deon Bush, Ronald Jones II

Top draft pick: Trent McDuffie (CB, Washington) (Rd. 1, Pick 21)

Chargers

Major losses: Kyzir White, Michael Schofield, Uchenna Nwosu, Justin Jones, Kyler Fackrell, Justin Jackson

Major additions: J.C. Jackson, Kyle Van Noy, Gerald Everett, Troy Reeder, Austin Johnson, Morgan Fox, Bryce Callahan, DeAndre Carter, Khalil Mack

Top draft pick: Zion Johnson (OG, Boston College) (Rd. 1, Pick 17)

Raiders

Major losses: Casey Hayward, Yannick Ngakoue, Bryan Edwards, Cory Littleton, Quinton Jefferson, Zay Jones, Brandon Facyson, Solomon Thomas

Major additions: Davante Adams, Duron Harmon, Chandler Jones, Anthony Averett, Bilal Nichols, Kenny Young, Rock Ya-Sin, Keelan Cole, Brandon Bolden, Tyler Lancaster

Top draft pick: Dylan Parham (OG, Memphis) (Rd. 3, Pick 90))

Broncos

Major losses: Teddy Bridgewater, Noah Fant, Kyle Fuller, Kenny Young, Shelby Harris, Bryce Callahan, Drew Lock

Major additions: Russell Wilson, Joe Schobert, Billy Turner, Alex Singleton, K'Waun Williams, Tom Compton, D.J. Jones, Randy Gregory

Top draft pick: Nik Bonitto (LB, Oklahoma) (Rd. 2, Pick 64)

NFC West

Rams

Major losses: Austin Corbett, Darious Williams, Von Miller, Troy Reeder, Robert Woods, Sony Michel, Johnny Hekker

Major additions: Bobby Wagner, Allen Robinson, Troy Hill

Top draft pick: Logan Bruss (OG, Wisconsin) (Rd. 3, Pick 104)

Cardinals

Major losses: Jordan Hicks, Christian Kirk, Chandler Jones, Max Garcia, Chase Edmonds

Major additions: Will Hernandez, Marquise Brown, Nick Vigil, Ben Niemann, Darrel Williams

Top draft pick: Trey McBride (TE, Colorado State) (Rd. 2, Pick 55)

Seahawks

Major losses: Duane Brown, Bobby Wagner, Russell Wilson, D.J. Reed, Rasheem Green, Gerald Everett, Ethan Pocic, Ugochukwu Amadi, Kerry Hyder, Carlos Dunlap

Major additions: Noah Fant, Drew Lock, Uchenna Nwosu, Quinton Jefferson, Shelby Harris, Marquise Goodwin, Justin Coleman

Top draft pick: Charles Cross (OT, Mississippi State) (Rd. 1, Pick 9)

49ers

Major losses: Laken Tomlinson, Jaquiski Tartt, K'Waun Williams, Tom Compton, D.J. Jones, Arden Key, Kentavious Street, Mohamed Sanu

Major additions: Charvarius Ward, Ray-Ray McCloud, George Odum, Kerry Hyder, Tyler Kroft, Hassan Ridgeway

Top draft pick: Drake Jackson (DE, USC) (Rd. 2, Pick 61)

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PRO FOOTBALL BEST BETS

Cleveland + 2½ Over CAROLINA by 5

Could the Cleveland Browns have screwed up any more over the offseason? If you have been living under a rock, the Browns signed QB Deshaun Watson amidst a plethora of off-the-field issues. The Browns also let former QB Baker Mayfield walk, which ended in Mayfield signing with the Carolina Panthers. Now, Watson is suspended for 11 games, and the Browns have all but forfeited the 2022 campaign unless QB Jacoby Brissett and the running attack can salvage the majority of the season. Either way, the drama that is Cleveland Browns football will reach a fever pitch in the season opener when they travel to Charlotte to meet the Carolina Panthers and former quarterback Baker Mayfield.

While I understand the Browns' offseason moves were focused on the long-term future, they could have still handled things much better to protect the imminent future. Regardless, former QB Baker Mayfield will get his shot at revenge after a bitter departure when he leads the Panthers in week 1. For Carolina, things worked out well. After making a move for QB Sam Darnold prior to 2021, which was a failed experiment, the Panthers get an immediate upgrade at the quarterback position to complement RB Christian McCaffrey and WR DJ Moore, which provides the offense with some balanced firepower for the first time in years.

While it would appear that the storyline favors the Panthers for this Week 1 showdown, I don't think that assumption is as reliable as many may believe. The betting public has hammered the Panthers since opening as 4 point underdogs, and the line has consistently shifted in Carolina's favor to its current position as two point favorites. However, the Browns still have one of the best rushing attacks in the NFL, and they will surely ride the ground game even more with Brissett behind center. So the question quickly becomes, do we really trust the Panthers defense that ranked in the bottom half of the league against the run in 2021 and gave up 24 points per game?

The Panthers went 0-7 ATS in the final seven games of 2021 but to be fair, RB Christian McCaffrey was hurt, and the quarterback play from Sam Darnold was pathetic. The Panthers' offense is built around McCaffrey, and keeping him healthy is critical to their success this season. Defensively, Cleveland struggled to get pressure on opposing quarterbacks last year, even with DE Myles Garrett. Without any indications of improvement over the offseason, Mayfield will have opportunities to make plays down the field, and if he plays well, I believe the world will see just how good WR DJ Moore truly is.

The problem with that thought process is I don't know why anyone would have high confidence in Mayfield. Mayfield had one of the best rushing attacks in the NFL and still consistently made mistakes when the offense needed him. So how much will this Panthers offense improve remains to be determined. For Cleveland's offense, one of the few things they did correctly over the offseason was bring in WR Amari Cooper, and they did not allow backup RB Kareem Hunt to leave despite a trade request. As a result, the Browns have a lot of playmakers at the skill positions to help manage the storm until Watson returns. The question for this match-up with Carolina is will they find enough big plays to pull out the victory?

It seems like the entire world is backing the Mayfield revenge narrative. However, Cleveland is the better football team, even with Brissett behind center. In fact, Brissett is not a bad backup option and is more than capable of putting together quality performances. I think the Browns have more paths to victory, so I am fading the public here. Take Cleveland and the points.

Projected Score: Cleveland 26, Carolina 21

CINCINNATI - 6½ Over Pittsburgh by 14

For the first time since 2003, the Pittsburgh Steelers will open their football season without former quarterback Ben Roethlisberger. The quarterback spot is the most prized position in football, and Steelers fans had the luxury of having that position solidified for nearly 20 years. However, the 2022 campaign will bring some changes with journeyman QB Mitch Trubisky getting another crack at the starting role, and that has Steelers fans pondering both the short and long-term future at the once concrete position.

In many ways, some of those questions could be answered right out of the gates when Pittsburgh travels to face the Cincinnati Bengals in the season opener at Paycor Stadium. The Bengals are on the heels of a Cinderella type of story, which captured an AFC Championship and Super Bowl appearance in quarterback Joe Burrow's 2nd season. By nearly all accounts, the Bengals have found their franchise quarterback for the future, and Burrow should only get better as he continues to mature.

Surprisingly, the Bengals 2021 run has been somewhat underscored as just getting hot at the right time. In reality, the Bengals are stacked with talent on the offensive side of the football, and they spent the offseason upgrading the offensive line with the addition of OT La'el Collins. By all stretches of the imagination, when you add the offseason support with the maturing mega talents of Burrow and WR Ja'Marr Chase; this offense has the potential to be even better this season which is scary for opponents, especially those like Pittsburgh that are trying to find their identity on offense.

One of the reasons I find the Steelers' offense intriguing is because they are really not as bad as people might expect. The offensive line was terrible last year, and we witnessed the aging Roethlisberger struggle with arm strength. As a result, defenses basically pinned their ears back and did not have any respect for the vertical parts of the field. While I'm not exactly ready to label Trubisky an upgrade, he definitely has the arm strength to bring back the vertical threats. Receivers Diontae Johnson, Chase Claypool, and rookie George Pickens are a talented group of young receivers. Not to mention, RB Najee Harris is a really good threat out of the backfield despite the offensive line concerns. Needless to say, the Steelers have guys that can make plays, but the question remains will we see consistency from Trubisky and the offensive line?

Despite the offensive prowess, the Bengals still have question marks on defense, especially in the secondary, which could open the door for opportunities for this Steelers offense. However, I believe it will be the play of the Steelers' defense that likely determines how this game unfolds from a betting standpoint. The Steelers' pass defense should be solid for the 2nd year in a row after allowing just 215 yards per game through the air in 2021. Furthermore, T.J Watt is making a case for the best defensive player in football after logging 22.5 sacks last season. Therefore, if the Steelers can get some help with the pass-rush and pass defense to avoid a high-scoring affair, there is an opportunity to keep this game close.

Joe Burrow is 3-1 SU against the Steelers during his career, with three consecutive wins all coming by double-digit points. Granted, the Steelers present some challenges defensively, but if the Bengals offense has a relatively solid performance, things will be difficult for this Pittsburgh offense to keep this game within reach. I don't have much confidence in QB Mitch Trubisky, as he has been really bad throughout his career. If Trubisky is shaky in this match-up, the Bengals will win going away, and that is what I believe happens here. Lay the 6½ points in the jungle.

Projected Score: Cincinnati 27, Pittsburgh 13

New Orleans - 5½ Over ATLANTA by 15

The opening weekend in the NFL will feature a number of high-profile meetings that will surely set the tone for the 2022 season, but perhaps one of the games being overlooked on the Week 1 slate includes an NFC South showdown between the New Orleans Saints and Atlanta Falcons inside Mercedes-Benz Stadium. I say this game is intriguing because some team in the NFC South is going to emerge as a contender to Tampa Bay this season based simply on a numbers game. Could the Saints be the team that takes a step forward with new Head Coach Dennis Allen? Only time will tell.

In the wake of Sean Payton's retirement, Dennis Allen will be the guy that Saints fans hope can lead the team back to the playoffs following a 9-8 SU campaign in 2021 that snapped a 4-year postseason streak. My biggest concern for the Saints going into 2022 ironically pertains to the offensive side of the football. The offense has rarely been a weakness in New Orleans, but this is a very different team than we have seen in previous years. Volatile QB Jameis Winston returns behind center after a season-ending ACL injury in 2021, RB Alvin Kamara is coming off his worst season as a pro, and former star WR Michael Thomas appears to be an injury-riddled shadow on his former self.

The Saints did get some additions over the offseason, but most of the quality additions occurred on the defensive side of the football with Taco Charlton, Marcus Maye, and Tyrann Mathieu. Veteran WR Jarvis Landry was added on the offensive side of the football, which should help, but this is a Saints' offense that will need to establish an identity. If I had to guess, I would imagine the defense of New Orleans will be the group that keeps the team competitive this season, especially in division play against some mediocre offenses in Atlanta and Carolina. The Saints' defense will open the season with perhaps one of their most favorable match-ups of the season against Atlanta.

In some ways, Atlanta exceeded expectations in 2021 with a 7-10 SU record following a 4-win season in 2020. However, for the 2nd straight year, the Falcons have suffered substantial losses on the offensive side of the football with the losses of QB Matt Ryan, RB Mike Davis, and WR Russell Gage, among others. This Atlanta offense was among the bottom five teams in the league in both yardage and scoring in 2021. Needless to say, there are some major concerns for the immediate future, especially with QB Marcus Mariota who will get an opportunity to revive his career.

For the record, I do believe Atlanta has some raw talents on the offensive side of the football. Rookie WR Drake London looks promising, and 2nd year TE Kyle Pitts remains an athletic freak of nature. However, Atlanta still has nothing to offer in the run game, and that is not an ideal scenario for Mariota as he will likely be put in more pure passing situations. Personally, I just see too many question marks and inexperience on the offensive side of the football. In an ideal situation, this team will grow throughout the season, but I'm not sure the Falcons will do that. This is a worse team than we saw a year ago, and Atlanta was just 2-6-1 ATS in their final nine games last season. Not to mention, Atlanta was also 0-7 ATS in their last seven home games in 2021 as well.

New Orleans has many paths to victory and a cover. QB Jameis Winston is still a solid passer despite his turnover concerns. With Alvin Kamara healthy, this offense will have plenty of options in the run game and the short-intermediate passing game to keep the ball moving. With that being said even if New Orleans' offense does not fire on all cylinders, I love the Saints' match-up on the defensive side of the football. The Saints pass-rush should feast on a bad Atlanta front, and they have added veterans in the secondary that will match up against a lot of inexperienced targets in the passing game. Don't be surprised if the Saints shut down the Falcons offense completely and make this an easy win and cover!

Projected Score: New Orleans 28, Atlanta 13

Kansas City at ARIZONA Over 53 by 13

Kansas City was comfortably a top-5 passing and scoring offense last season, but they lost a big part of that identity with Tyreek Hill leaving town. The Chiefs need to replace 111 receptions and 1,239 yards, and a trio of new faces will be responsible for producing on the outside. JuJu Smith-Schuster is the proven addition and deep threat Marquez Valdes-Scantling comes over from the Packers. KC invested a 2nd round draft pick in Skyy Moore, with incumbent Mecole Hardman rounding out the WR room. That group stands a good chance to match Hill's total production, but it is still likely that KC's homerun ability is diminished. Travis Kelce is a good bet to lead the team in receptions this year.

Patrick Mahomes is poised for another fantastic season behind a solid O-line. KC had the second-most passing attempts in 2021 but gave up the third-fewest sacks. It won't take long for this offense to get in a high gear, Mahomes will find his weapons with the OL giving him time. Clyde Edwards-Helaire returns after averaging 4.3 yards per carry and rushing for four scores in 2021. Chris Jones recorded nine sacks and got a Pro Bowl nod last year, his next sack will be the 50th of his career.

There are always questions to answer in the opening weeks, and early season betting takes a lot of trust. Patrick Mahomes should have no problems putting points on the board, even with an updated stable of receivers.

Both defenses will struggle, which is the easiest advocacy for betting the over, and while these defensive units were statistically similar last season, it is Arizona that returns fewer starters, to borrow a college football phrase. Kansas City also addressed its defensive needs a lot more obviously in the offseason, but they'll be against the Cards explosive offense.

This could be one of the more fun games to watch during Week 1, and we have seen Kansas City in many back-and-forth contests. Mahomes is a State Farm guy, and this game is at State Farm Stadium; look for the "Patrick Price" to be a 35-31 win for Kansas City. Footballs will be flying aplenty, so play the over 53 points.

Projected Score: Kansas City 35, Arizona 31



THIS WEEKS GRIDIRON GOLD SHEET BEST BETS

	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet
CFB	B College + 3	Liberty + 6½	Iowa-3	California -13	Alabama -20
NFL	Browns + 2½	Bengals - 6½	Saints - 5½	Chiefs Over 53	