

The banner features a dark background on the left with the title 'Gridiron Gold Sheet Football Newsletter' in yellow and white. A yellow oval with '\$15' is next to it. On the right, a hand holds a football. Below the title, it says '5 NCAA & 4 NFL BEST BETS + PICKS FOR ALL GAMES Award Winning Football Newsletter Since 1981'. At the bottom, it reads 'Dennis Stagliano's Best Bets Gridiron Gold Sheet Football Newsletter Volume 44 Issue 1 NFL Week 1, 2025'.

**Gridiron Gold Sheet
Football Newsletter**

\$15

**5 NCAA & 4 NFL BEST BETS + PICKS FOR ALL GAMES
Award Winning Football Newsletter Since 1981**

Dennis Stagliano's Best Bets Gridiron Gold Sheet Football Newsletter

Volume 44 Issue 1

NFL Week 1, 2025

Changing of the guard: Ranking 2025's NFL Week 1 QB changes

Who's better off, and who will regret making a switch? We rank the 12 quarterbacks from worst to best, plus reveal whether each team upgraded or downgraded this off-season.

12. New Orleans Saints quarterback Spencer Rattler or Tyler Shough

2024 Week 1 starter: Derek Carr

The Saints are the league's only team without a named Week 1 starter. Both candidates have experienced some highs and lows in August, with little separating the two before an informative preseason Week 3 game on Saturday against the Denver Broncos. Verdict: DOWNGRADE

11. Indianapolis Colts quarterback Daniel Jones

2024 Week 1 starter: Anthony Richardson Sr.

Richardson's benching signals a massive failure on the part of the Colts front office, led by general manager Chris Ballard, and head coach Shane Steichen, who was tasked with developing the raw prospect into an NFL starter.

Over Jones' last 16 starts with the New York Giants from 2023-24, he averaged 186.2 passing yards per game and threw 10 touchdowns with 13 interceptions. Verdict: DOWNGRADE

10. Cleveland Browns quarterback Joe Flacco

2024 Week 1 starter: Deshaun Watson

After a successful five-game stint with the Browns in 2023, Flacco, 40, is back for another run. While undoubtedly an improvement over Watson, the 18-year veteran has an alarming 15 interceptions in 13 games (11 starts) over the past two seasons. Verdict: UPGRADE

9. Tennessee Titans quarterback Cameron Ward

2024 Week 1 starter: Will Levis

The Titans should expect the natural rookie up-and-downs from Ward, 2025's No. 1 overall pick. Over his first two preseason starts, Ward is 7-of-15 for 109 yards. Still, he's a vast improvement over Levis, who provided more comedic gold than wins last season. Verdict: UPGRADE

8. New York Giants quarterback Russell Wilson

2024 Week 1 starter: Daniel Jones

Wilson is in the twilight of his career, but the 10-time Pro Bowler, who has 42 touchdowns and 13 interceptions since 2023, has a much higher floor than Jones. Verdict: UPGRADE

7. New York Jets quarterback Justin Fields

2024 Week 1 starter: Aaron Rodgers

Fields is a dynamic runner and showed improvement as a passer in six starts with the Pittsburgh Steelers last season. But after signing a short two-year deal in free agency, it's clear there remains doubt over whether he can be a long-term starter in the league. Verdict: DOWNGRADE

6. Minnesota Vikings quarterback J.J. McCarthy

2024 Week 1 starter: Sam Darnold

McCarthy could be better in the long run than Darnold, but we'd expect the 2024 first-rounder, who missed all of last season with a torn meniscus, to offer fewer rewards than his predecessor early in his career. Verdict: DOWNGRADE

5. Seattle Seahawks quarterback Sam Darnold

2024 Week 1 starter: Geno Smith

Darnold was one of the best stories in 2024, ending the year with 4,315 yards, 35 touchdowns and 12 interceptions while leading the Vikings to a 14-3 regular season. However, his disappointing end to the season and struggles against pressure make it harder to see him as any better than the quarterback he replaces. Verdict: DOWNGRADE

4. Atlanta Falcons quarterback Michael Penix Jr.

2024 Week 1 starter: Kirk Cousins

Penix was promising in a three-game sample size at the end of 2024, quickly forming a connection with wideout Drake London, who had 22 receptions on 39 targets, 352 yards and two touchdowns during the span. Verdict: UPGRADE

3. New England Patriots quarterback Drake Maye

2024 Week 1 starter: Jacoby Brissett

The plan was always for Brissett to keep the seat warm for Maye, who looked like a potential star in 12 starts last season, ending the year with 2,276 passing yards and 421 rushing yards. Verdict: UPGRADE

2. Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Aaron Rodgers

2024 Week 1 starter: Justin Fields

While far from his peak, Rodgers can still sling the football. Per NFL Pro data, he finished last season No. 5 in expected points added per dropback on deep pass attempts (balls that travel at least 20 air yards). Verdict: UPGRADE

1. Las Vegas Raiders quarterback Geno Smith

2024 Week 1 starter: Gardner Minshew

Smith completed 70.4 percent of his pass attempts in 2024, two seasons after leading the NFL in completion percentage (69.8 percent). He's proved himself time and time again over the past three seasons and will likely do it again in 2025. Verdict: UPGRADE

PRO FOOTBALL BEST BETS

Pittsburgh -2.5 at NY Jets

Pittsburgh brings Aaron Rodgers to MetLife in black and gold, and the matchup tilts toward structure and veteran quarterbacking over a Jets team resetting under new head coach Aaron Glenn with Justin Fields at QB. Rodgers inherits a cleaner operation and a defense that travels; that matters in a low-total opener where field position and red-zone execution swing the cover. The Jets' scheme change and new QB/OC pairing typically need live reps; Pittsburgh can squeeze explosives with a rush led by T.J. Watt and force Fields into late-down decisions. Offensively, the Steelers' plan is measured: lean on Jaylen Warren early, then let Rodgers work middle-of-the-field timing with Pat Freiermuth and isolate DK Metcalf when the Jets spin down to stop the run. Pittsburgh's upgraded WR room after the Pickens trade fits Rodgers' rhythm throws and back-shoulder game, and one chunk plus a turnover should be enough in this total range. In a grinder, the veteran QB and the steadier sideline have the cashable edge. **TAKE: Pittsburgh -2.5**

Miami -1.5 at Indianapolis

Miami's speed is the trump card: Tua Tagovailoa's quick release mitigates interior pressure and lets Tyreek Hill and Jaylen Waddle stretch the Colts' safeties horizontally and vertically. Indianapolis just named Daniel Jones the Week 1 starter, with Anthony Richardson backing up, which signals a ball-control passing script rather than a vertical track meet—bad news against a Dolphins front healthier with Bradley Chubb and Jaelan Phillips. Expect Mike McDaniel to script early pace, stress motion rules, and force Indy into single-high answers that open crossers and RPO slants. If the Colts lean on Jonathan Taylor, Miami's speed to the edge and alley fits have improved enough to keep the run game on schedule but explosive-free. Indoors, one Hill shot and two efficient drives put the Dolphins in command, and Jones isn't built to chase in a race against this WR room. Short number, better explosive profile—Miami gets separation late. **TAKE: Miami -1.5**

Cincinnati -5.5 at Cleveland

This handicap pivots on quarterback stability: Joe Burrow operates behind a steadier line, while Cleveland just named Joe Flacco the Week 1 starter with Deshaun Watson on reserve/PUP. That pushes the Browns toward a conservative, TE-centric plan with David Njoku and a ground game that still has to survive Cincinnati's early-down fits—putting Flacco in obvious passing downs against Lou Anarumo's disguise package is a tough way to live. Burrow's intermediate accuracy and timing with Ja'Marr Chase remain the matchup problem, and Tee Higgins punishes soft brackets when Cleveland leans resources to Chase. Expect Cincinnati to stay patient early, hammer choice routes on third-and-manageable, and wait for one Browns mistake to create daylight. In fourth-quarter scripts, the Bengals' two-minute offense and pass-rush games have closed better for two seasons; if Cleveland can't generate explosives, they'll be forced to string 10-play drives—low probability. Under a TD, we're backing the superior QB room and late-game machine. **TAKE: Cincinnati -5.5**

San Francisco -2.5 at Seattle

San Francisco's offense remains a nightmare to fit: Brock Purdy's rhythm with Kyle Shanahan's motion/play-action sequencing plus Christian McCaffrey's gravity forces defenses into bad math, and George Kittle punishes any leverage mistake. Seattle's quarterback room now centers on Sam Darnold after moving on from Geno Smith, and while Darnold can function in structure, this opener demands clean pockets against Nick Bosa and a deep 49ers rush that wins with four. If Kenneth Walker doesn't create efficient first downs, Seattle slides into long-yardage where San Francisco's rush/coverage marriage takes over. Expect the 49ers to widen seams with horizontal stretch, then hit glance/over routes once the Seahawks over-rotate to the run; one explosive plus a short-field score typically flips a game lined under a field goal. The trench edge and sideline edge both ride with San Francisco, and in this rivalry that's usually decisive. **TAKE: San Francisco -2.5**

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PRO FOOTBALL QUICK PICKS

Dallas +7.5 at Philadelphia (Thu 8:20 PM, Total 47.5)

Dallas now features George Pickens as a true WR1 after the offseason trade, giving Dak Prescott a vertical threat. Philadelphia still boasts Jalen Hurts and a dominant offensive line, but their defense regressed last year in pass coverage. With Parsons gone to Green Bay, Dallas leans offense, that's why our play is on the over in this rivalry game. **TAKE: Over 47.5**

Kansas City -3 at LA Chargers (Fri 8:00 PM, Total 47.5)

Patrick Mahomes remains the best big-game QB, and Andy Reid thrives with time to prepare. The Chargers, with Justin Herbert and Jim Harbaugh in his debut season, are still meshing a new system. Kansas City's defensive front should disrupt enough drives to tilt the field. **TAKE: Under 47.5**

Carolina +3 at Jacksonville (Sun 1:00 PM, Total 46.5)

New coach Liam Coen's Jaguars are built around Trevor Lawrence, but Carolina's defense is underrated against the pass. Rookie QB Drake Maye starts for the Panthers and can extend plays, which matters in an early-season dogfight. The number is tight, and Carolina's front can keep it close. **TAKE: Carolina +3**

NY Giants +6 at Washington (Sun 1:00 PM, Total 45.5)

Daniel Jones is now in Indianapolis, leaving rookie Malik Nabers to headline the Giants' rebuild with Tyrod Taylor at QB. Washington counters with Jayden Daniels, who gives them an edge in playmaking but also rookie variance. Six points is hefty for an unproven Commanders group. **TAKE: NY Giants +6**

Las Vegas +2.5 at New England (Sun 1:00 PM, Total 42.5)

Antonio Pierce's Raiders ride Zamir White and a defensive front that battles in the trenches. New England rolls with Drake Maye, but rookie mistakes are common in early starts. A physical Raiders defense can tilt the game script. **TAKE: Las Vegas +2.5**

Arizona -6.5 at New Orleans (Sun 1:00 PM, Total 42.5)

Arizona's tempo and spread looks stress New Orleans' second level, and the Cardinals' front can squeeze the Saints' early-down run game to force long yardage. If Arizona gets the first score, the Saints' offense is pushed into a pass-heavier script where protection has been shaky. With the number under 7, Arizona's balance and red-zone edge carry the cover. **TAKE: Arizona - 6.5**

Tampa Bay -2.5 at Atlanta (Sun 1:00 PM, Total 46.5)

Baker Mayfield comes off his best pro season, and Tampa Bay's defensive front remains a top-tier unit against the run. Atlanta turns to rookie QB Michael Penix Jr., who has arm talent but faces an aggressive Todd Bowles scheme in his debut. The Buccaneers' experience and pressure defense tilt the matchup. **TAKE: Tampa Bay -2.5**

Tennessee +7.5 at Denver (Sun 4:05 PM, Total 41.5)

Will Levis opens his second season with confidence, and the Titans' defense can still stop the run and make games ugly. Denver counters with Bo Nix making his first career start, and rookie quarterbacks against disguised pressures often stumble. The points grab has value in what profiles as a grinder. **TAKE: Tennessee +7.5**

Detroit +2.5 at Green Bay (Sun 4:25 PM, Total 47.5)

Detroit brings continuity with Jared Goff and a strong offensive line, plus Amon-Ra St. Brown working the middle. Green Bay debuts Micah Parsons alongside Rashan Gary, giving their defense bite, but Jordan Love still faces a Lions team that has handled him before. Detroit's balance and toughness travel well. **TAKE: Detroit +2.5**

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Houston +2.5 at LA Rams (Sun 4:25 PM, Total 43.5)

C.J. Stroud looks to build off a strong rookie season with a deeper receiver room and a more aggressive scheme. The Rams rely on Matthew Stafford, but Houston's pass rush can disrupt behind Will Anderson Jr. Stroud's poise and mobility give the Texans the edge as a short dog.

TAKE: Houston +2.5

Baltimore pick'em at Buffalo (Sun 8:20 PM, Total 51.5)

Sunday night marquee game with Josh Allen vs Lamar Jackson. Still a sharp matchup. Lamar Jackson leads an offense built on balance, while Josh Allen remains Buffalo's centerpiece. In a coin-flip line, the Ravens' run game and the Bills running can score often with tempo. **TAKE: Over 51.5**

Minnesota -1.5 at Chicago (Mon 8:15 PM, Total 43.5)

J.J. McCarthy takes over at quarterback for Minnesota, and his supporting cast with Justin Jefferson helps ease the transition. Chicago leans on Caleb Williams, but rookie QBs often face rough patches in divisional openers. Minnesota & Chicago in a defensive struggle. **TAKE: Under 43.5**



THIS WEEKS GRIDIRON GOLD SHEET BEST BETS

	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet
NFL	Steelers – 2.5	Dolphins – 1.5	Bengals – 5.5	Niners – 2.5

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