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Football Newsletter

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Dennis Stagliano's Best Bets Gridiron Gold Sheet Football Newsletter
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NFL LANDSCAPE:

McCaffrey carries 49ers over Panthers 20-9

McCaffrey totaled 142 scrimmage yards (89 rushing, 53 receiving) and a touchdown on 31 touches (4.6 ypt). He leads the NFL in scrimmage yards with 1,581, 116 more than the next closest player, Jonathan Taylor.

Brock Purdy had a rough night, completing 23 of 32 (72%) for 193 yards, one touchdown, and three interceptions. George Kittle caught six of ten targets for 78 yards.

Bryce Young struggled, completing 18 of 29 passes (62%) for 169 yards, one touchdown, and two interceptions. Jaycee Horn, Carolina's best player, had two interceptions before leaving with a concussion.

Joe Burrow will play on Thanksgiving

Burrow will make his long-awaited return on Thanksgiving against the Ravens. He has not played since suffering a toe injury (that required surgery) in Week 2. Burrow led the NFL in passing yards (4,918) and passing touchdowns (43) last season. Cincinnati managed to win just one of the nine games Burrow missed. They will likely need to win each of their remaining six to make the playoffs. Tee Higgins will miss Thursday's game with a concussion. Records going into this week are: AFC North: Ravens (6-5), Steelers (6-5), Bengals (3-8), and Browns (3-8).

McCarthy in concussion protocol; Brosmer in line to start

McCarthy, who finished Sunday's game, reported concussion symptoms on the flight home. The team has not identified the hit that caused the apparent concussion. In six games (2-4 record) this season, McCarthy has completed just 54.1% of his passes for 929 yards (155 per game), six touchdowns, and ten interceptions. Max Brosmer, an undrafted rookie out of Minnesota, is in line to start against the Seahawks this week. Dane Brugler (The Athletic) referred to Brosmer as a "highly efficient intermediate level passer" with "a high football IQ"

Baker Mayfield not dealing with structural damage to shoulder

An MRI revealed no fractures and no structural damage to Mayfield's injured left shoulder. He did suffer a low-grade AC joint sprain. The Buccaneers are not ruling Mayfield out for Week 13 against the Cardinals. Teddy Bridgewater will start if Mayfield misses any time. The 33-year-old did not play particularly well in the second half of Sunday's loss to the Rams, completing eight of 15 passes (53%) for 62 yards, no touchdowns, and no interceptions. Bucky Irving (shoulder) is expected to practice fully this week, and is on track to play against Arizona.

Browns name Shedeur Sanders starter

Kevin Stefanski announced that Sanders will start against the 49ers in Week 13. Dillon Gabriel has cleared the concussion protocol and will serve as the backup. 1-0: Sanders won his first career start on Sunday, completing 11 of 20 passes (55%) for 209 yards, one touchdown, and one interception against the Raiders. His average of 10.4 yards per attempt is far superior to Gabriel's average of 5.1 yards. If Sanders closes the season strongly, it could convince the Browns that he is franchise quarterback material, while also knocking the team out of a top five draft pick.

What's wrong with Lamar Jackson?

The Baltimore Ravens got off to a very slow start in their game against the New York Jets last Sunday, and questions were raised about whether Lamar Jackson is fully healthy. The star quarterback addressed some of that speculation after Baltimore's win.

Jackson completed just 13-of-23 passes for 153 yards, no touchdowns and no interceptions in the Ravens' 23-10 win over the Jets. Baltimore's offense was practically non-existent in the first half, and the Jets led 7-3 going into the break. The Ravens scored touchdowns on their first two drives of the second half and then got Derrick Henry going to slowly pull away.

Jackson was not effective running the ball, either. The two-time NFL MVP finished with just 11 rushing yards on seven attempts. Lamar Jackson says injuries were not a factor

Jackson sat out for a month with a hamstring injury before returning in Week 9 against the Miami Dolphins. He has now led the Ravens to four consecutive wins since he came back, which has placed the team in a tie for first place in the AFC North. Jackson has not played up to his usual standards during that stretch, however.

Jackson threw four touchdown passes in Baltimore's 28-6 win over the Dolphins, but he has just one in the three games since. He was also held to 14 or fewer rushing yards in three of the four games since he returned from his hamstring injury. Jackson has missed some practice time with various ailments over the past few weeks, but he insisted on Sunday that the documented knee and ankle issues are not holding him back.

"No. No, I don't think that at all. I feel like we just need to execute a lot better," Jackson told reporters on Sunday, via ESPN's Jamison Hensley. "We get in great field position, but we're not putting points on the board. That has nothing to do with an injury. I'm out there, so I feel like I should still be able to do what I do."

The quarterback added that he feels like he **"should still be able to do what I do" as long as he suits up and plays.**

The Ravens are back in the playoff hunt

Jackson has likely missed time in practice because the Ravens want to limit his reps. Following a 1-5 start to the season, Baltimore is 6-5 and back on top in the AFC North. The team struggled without Jackson and are trying to keep him healthy.

That may also have something to do with why Jackson has had less designed run plays. Even if he is not actively nursing an injury, that does not mean the Ravens want to risk him suffering a new one. It would not be a surprise if we see running from Jackson on Thanksgiving night. He's not the same, but he can be the same once the stakes get higher. Intriguing matchup vs Joe Burrow Thursday night.

Jacksonville Jaguars at Tennessee Titans

Line: Jaguars -6.5, Total 42.5

BEST BET: TITANS +6.5

Sometimes the market gets intoxicated by ceiling and forgets about floor. Jacksonville has the profile of a team the public loves: offensive talent, a reputation for explosiveness, and a recent highlight reel comeback. But when you peel back the box scores, you see a team that's been living dangerously for weeks and just got another reminder against Arizona. They flirted with disaster, again, thanks to turnovers, red-zone waste, and pass-protection lapses that keep underdogs hanging around.

Tennessee is never going to win a beauty contest, but from a numbers standpoint, this is a team that plays a style perfectly suited to catching more than a field goal at home. Their offense is conservative by design, but that can work in a game where Jacksonville's defense has shown a steady pattern of allowing sustained drives late. The Titans have been stuck in ugly, low-possession scripts most of the year, and while that limits their blowout upside, it's exactly what you want grabbing nearly a touchdown. Fewer drives, more clock bleed, more chances for one key turnover or special-teams swing to flip the margin.

Defensively, Tennessee's front is still good enough to bother Jacksonville's passing game. We've seen this offense get loose with the ball when forced off script and into long-yardage spots. Tennessee has been quietly decent at generating negative plays on early downs, particularly at home. When they get you behind the chains, they're happy to bring pressure and dare you to string together three precise plays in a row. That's where Jacksonville's inconsistency shows up: sacks, forced throws, and drive-killing mistakes.

Jacksonville is coming off a high-variance game where they had to bail themselves out late — exactly the kind of emotional roller coaster that can lead to a flatter start the following week, especially in a division road spot. The Titans, on the other hand, just played Houston tight, had a late-game shot, and come home with a defense that has plenty of film of Jacksonville misfiring in the red zone and giving up cheap field position.

This line is still being hung like Jacksonville is a polished contender who steps on throats. They're not. They're a fun, volatile group that leaves the back door open and can absolutely turn the ball over in a hostile environment. In a lower-total game where every possession matters, the dog getting almost a full touchdown at home is the side the sharp money tends to gravitate toward.

TAKE: TITANS +6.5

San Francisco 49ers at Cleveland Browns

Line: 49ers -6, Total 40

BEST BET: 49ERS/BROWNS UNDER 40

If you're looking for fireworks, this isn't the game. What we have here is a classic grinder: one offense trying to protect its quarterback after a multi-turnover outing, and another that's leaning heavily on its defense and still figuring out what it can trust in the passing game. The scoreboard expectations are inflated more by brand names than by how these two actually want to play right now.

Start with Cleveland. Their defense has been consistently disruptive up front, and that was on full display against Las Vegas. They lived in the backfield, piled up double-digit sacks, and never allowed the Raiders' passing game to get comfortable. That's not a one-week fluke; this is a front that wins with both power and quickness, and it forces opposing offenses into shorter concepts and quicker reads. When that happens, you tend to see fewer explosive plays and more "bend, don't break"

sequences that end in field goals instead of touchdowns.

San Francisco's offense, meanwhile, is coming off a game that looks fine in the win column but showed real sloppiness. Multiple first-half interceptions, poor decisions in scoring range, and missed opportunities against a shorthanded defense are not the signs of an attack that's firing on all cylinders. The second half featured more checkdowns and safer calls, and that's the version we're likely to see here: plenty of run game, controlled passing, and a strong emphasis on avoiding the big mistake.

Cleveland's offense doesn't exactly scream "shootout" either. Even in a comfortable win last week, a huge chunk of their success came from short fields created by the defense. When they're forced to drive the field, protection issues and inexperience at quarterback show up. Against a San Francisco defense that still tackles well and rallies to the ball, it's hard to see them stacking up explosive scores. They'll likely lean on the run, accept punts, and trust their defense to keep them in range.

Weather and environment also point to a tighter, lower-scoring game. Cleveland late in the year tends to produce slower tracks and more conservative playcalling, especially for a West Coast team that just watched its quarterback gift-wrap interceptions. Both staffs know the path to victory is protecting the ball, winning field position, and leaning on their pass rush — not turning this into a track meet.

With two high-end fronts, shaky quarterback situations in terms of recent form, and coaching tendencies that lean conservative when games get tight, this total is simply a bit too high. Long fields, stalled red-zone trips, and a steady diet of punts are all your friends here.

TAKE: 49ERS/BROWNS UNDER 40

Los Angeles Rams at Carolina Panthers

Line: Rams -11, Total 45.5

BEST BET: PANTHERS +11

This number is all about perception. The Rams just flattened a playoff-caliber opponent, and that type of scoreboard tends to echo in the betting market. Blowout wins on national radars stick in people's minds. But wise guys care more about where a team is headed than what the last box score says, and this sets up as a classic sell-high on the road favorite and buy-low on the ugly home dog.

Carolina looked dead early against Atlanta, then completely flipped the script in the second half. The most important takeaway wasn't just the comeback; it was the quarterback settling in, attacking downfield, and showing he can push the ball against a solid secondary when protected reasonably well. That's big for a team that had been stuck in the mud offensively. It means they're not as one-dimensional as the market power-rated them a few weeks ago, and it gives them the ability to punch back if they fall behind.

From a matchup standpoint, the Panthers' offense has a path to competence here. The Rams' defense is playing well, but this is still a team that's shown vulnerability to extended drives and underneath throws when they're on the field too long. Carolina's staff did a better job last week of mixing tempo, using quick-game concepts early, then taking shots once the defense started to lean forward. At home, with crowd noise behind their defense and no travel fatigue, they're far more likely to replicate that second-half identity than the early-season slog.

The situational spot is where this really gets interesting. The Rams are coming off a dominant performance and have multiple emotionally-charged games around this one. This is a classic sandwich: a non-conference road trip, early kick, against a team with an ugly record and a rookie quarterback. Those are the weeks where sharp bettors expect a little less focus from the favorite — slower starts, more conservative calls once ahead, and an emphasis on getting out healthy rather

than running up the score.

Carolina, on the other hand, views this as a chance to show they're not a doormat. They just pulled off a big rally win and head back home with belief and tape that proves they can move the ball when they're aggressive. Defensively, they're still feisty enough up front to force the Rams into some third-and-longs, especially if the visitors come out a bit flat after last week's peak effort.

Winning outright is a separate conversation, but we don't need that. In a game where the motivational and situational arrows both tilt toward the dog, and where the backdoor is very much open if the Rams shift into clock mode in the fourth quarter, this double-digit spread is rich. Professional money tends to grab these big home numbers when the market is chasing a favorite's last blowout.

TAKE: PANTHERS +11

Las Vegas Raiders at Los Angeles Chargers

Line: Chargers -9.5, Total 41.5

BEST BET: CHARGERS -9.5

On paper, laying double digits in a division game looks square. But sometimes the mismatch in the trenches is so extreme that the number still doesn't fully reflect how fragile the dog is. That's the case here. The Raiders' offense just put on a clinic in how not to protect your quarterback: double-digit sacks allowed, constant pressure, and a passing game that never had rhythm. That wasn't an outlier; protection has been a recurring problem, and now they walk into a matchup against a defense that's far more capable of turning that weakness into points.

The Chargers' defense has been one of the league's quieter success stories. Metrics-wise, they're playing like a top unit, particularly in passing situations. They rush in waves, win one-on-one, and force quarterbacks to speed up their clock. When you combine that with a Raiders offensive line that's getting bullied, you get the kind of script where stalled drives, strip-sacks, and short fields pile up quickly. In a game lined near 41, a couple of those can completely break the dog.

Offensively, Los Angeles is coming off a dud, but context matters. Last week was about surviving a brutal protection situation of their own against a front that pinned its ears back. This matchup is the opposite. The Raiders don't bring the same heat or discipline, and we've already seen what happens when this Chargers offense gets a clean pocket and a manageable down-and-distance rhythm: they move the ball methodically and cash in. Against Pittsburgh earlier, they showed they can play a patient game and still separate on the scoreboard when the defense is doing its job.

This is also a very forgiving opponent for a bounce-back spot. The Raiders just got suffocated by a physical Cleveland front, and that kind of beating tends to linger. Offensive linemen are banged up, the quarterback's internal clock is sped up, and the play-caller becomes more conservative to protect everyone. That's not the recipe you want as a big road dog. If they try to shorten the game, they're banking on red-zone perfection and turnover luck. If they open it up, they're exposing a protection unit that just proved it can't hold up.

Division familiarity usually favors the dog, but here it simply means the Chargers know exactly how to attack. They've seen this personnel, they understand where the protection rules are soft, and they understand that once they get a two-score lead, the Raiders' structure forces them into must-pass situations behind a leaky front.

With a dominant defensive edge, a favorable offensive rebound spot, and a total low enough that each Chargers touchdown moves the cover probability significantly, laying the 9.5 is justified. This profiles as the kind of game where the favorite can win comfortably without playing perfect football.

TAKE: CHARGERS -9.5

PRO FOOTBALL QUICK PICKS

TURKEY DAY GAMES

Green Bay Packers at Detroit Lions

Line: Lions -2.5, Total 48.5

Detroit's defense has been leaking explosive plays, and Green Bay has shown they can still stretch the field when they're not shooting themselves in the foot with drops and miscues. On the other side, the Lions' offensive profile at home is still that of a unit capable of stacking chunk gains and multiple scoring drives, especially indoors on a fast track. Both offenses have special-teams support and short-field upside based on recent turnover trends. Even if one side sputters early, the other has enough firepower to force the pace.

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TAKE: PACKERS/LIONS OVER 48.5

Kansas City Chiefs at Dallas Cowboys

Line: Chiefs -3.5, Total 53

The market hung a big number here on brand equity, but both offenses have been more volatile than the logo suggests, and both defenses are capable of generating timely pressure. Kansas City has seen a pile of drive-killing penalties and red-zone stalls, while Dallas has been more reliant on explosive plays than down-to-down efficiency. In a game with two pass rushes that can win and two coaching staffs comfortable taking three when drives bog down, this total is inflated. A tighter, field-position driven script is more likely than a full track meet.

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TAKE: CHIEFS/COWBOYS UNDER 53

Cincinnati Bengals at Baltimore Ravens

Line: Ravens -7, Total 53

Cincinnati just got dragged into another lower-output type of game where their offense sputtered for long stretches and needed breaks to get on the board. Baltimore's defense has been good at forcing opponents into long fields and third-and-long situations, and they're facing a Bengals team that hasn't consistently protected the quarterback. On the other side, Baltimore's own offensive rhythm has been uneven, especially when they can't lean on quarterback mobility to bail out stalled drives. With both sides familiar and willing to punt rather than force mistakes, this number sits a touch high.

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TAKE: BENGALS/RAVENS UNDER 53

FRIDAY GAME:

Chicago Bears at Philadelphia Eagles

Line: Eagles -7, Total 45

Philadelphia's identity right now leans defense and game control more than fireworks. They were in total command against Detroit but still couldn't turn that into a blowout on the scoreboard because the

offense is more grind-it-out than explosive. Chicago, meanwhile, has flashed stretches of competence but also long dry spells when their quarterback play dips and protection breaks down. This sets up as a methodical game where the Eagles shorten it with the run game and situational football, forcing the Bears to drive the length of the field repeatedly.

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TAKE: BEARS/EAGLES UNDER 45

SUNDAY GAMES:

Houston Texans at Indianapolis Colts

Line: Colts -4.5, Total 45

Houston's defense just stifled Buffalo's explosive attack, and they did it by winning up front and forcing long-yardage third downs all afternoon. Indianapolis has moved the ball in spurts, but protection has not been clean, and they've shown real vulnerability when asked to throw in obvious passing situations. On the flip side, the Colts' front is disruptive enough to keep Houston from turning this into a track meet, especially with a backup quarterback in the mix recently. Both teams have shown red-zone inconsistency, which supports a lower-scoring result than this number implies.

TAKE: TEXANS/COLTS UNDER 45

Arizona Cardinals at Tampa Bay Buccaneers

Line: Buccaneers -3, Total 45

Arizona's offense has been extremely matchup-dependent, and when they've stepped up in class against disciplined fronts, their scoring has dried up outside of broken plays and late-game volume. Tampa Bay's defense has its flaws, but it still limits explosive runs and forces opponents to string together long drives. On the other side, the Buccaneers' own attack just got completely suffocated by the Rams, and this staff will skew conservative early to avoid a repeat turnover fest. That combination of cautious game plans and limited run efficiency from both sides makes points more expensive than the total suggests.

TAKE: CARDINALS/BUCCANEERS UNDER 45

Atlanta Falcons at New York Jets

Line: Falcons -2.5, Total 39.5

Atlanta is working with a backup quarterback and just got lit up by a Panthers team that found a rhythm after halftime. Their pass protection has been shaky, and asking them to lay points on the road against a Jets defense that still plays with pride is aggressive. New York's offense isn't pretty, but they've repeatedly manufactured short-field points via returns and defensive plays, and that's exactly how you stay inside a small spread in a low-total environment. In what projects as a choppy, possession-limited grind, the value lies with the home dog plus the number.

TAKE: JETS +2.5

New Orleans Saints at Miami Dolphins

Line: Dolphins -6.5, Total 41.5

Miami eked out an ugly win in Spain that featured goal-line failures and questionable decision-making, not the clean efficiency their reputation suggests. New Orleans' record is ugly, but this is still a defense that can win on early downs and put an offense behind schedule. The Saints' offense has enough pulse to trade a few scores if they're not playing from a constant two-score deficit, and Miami's tendency to stall in the red zone keeps that door open. Catching a full six with the more physical defense is attractive in a game where the favorite's margin has been thinner than the market implies.

TAKE: SAINTS +6.5

Minnesota Vikings at Seattle Seahawks

Line: Seahawks -10.5, Total 41.5

Seattle's passing game absolutely torched Tennessee, and that was with several potential big plays left on the field. They now face a Vikings team whose quarterback has been completely overwhelmed by pressure in recent weeks, leading to ugly stat lines and stalled drives. Seattle's defense doesn't need to be elite to exploit that; they just need to be competent, and they've shown more than that at home. With the Seahawks capable of hitting explosive scores and Minnesota prone to three-and-outs and turnovers when forced to throw, the favorite has a clear path to winning this one by margin.

TAKE: SEAHAWKS -10.5

Buffalo Bills at Pittsburgh Steelers

Line: Bills -3.5, Total 47.5

Buffalo just lost as a solid favorite on the road, but the deeper read shows that most of the damage came from protection breakdowns and a handful of critical mistakes, not systemic collapse. They've historically responded well off losses, and this is a defense that can make life tough on an offense like Pittsburgh's that just got exposed again as limited when it can't lean on short fields. The Steelers' recent win profile is heavy on turnover luck and defensive scores, exactly the kind of thing that regresses against a focused opponent. Laying a short number with the more complete roster is the professional side here.

TAKE: BILLS -3.5

Denver Broncos at Washington Commanders

Line: Broncos -6.5, Total 44

Denver continues to stack wins, but the offense has been stuck in the mud far more often than the record suggests, and they just played another rock fight against a bad Raiders team. Washington, meanwhile, has been wildly inconsistent, but their defense is still capable of forcing long drives and making opponents settle for three. Both staffs are comfortable leaning on the run and field position rather than pushing tempo. With Denver's passing game not built to separate and Washington's offense unreliable, this shapes up as another grinder where each touchdown feels expensive.

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TAKE: BRONCOS/COMMANDERS UNDER 44

MNF GAME:

New York Giants at New England Patriots

Line: Patriots -7.5, Total 47

New England's offense has been winning games lately, but a lot of that has come from explosive plays and defensive help rather than sustained, high-volume scoring. The Giants, for all their issues, have managed to muddy up games with a mix of pressure and bend-but-don't-break defense, and they just pushed Detroit to overtime behind that profile. Both quarterbacks here are prone to sacks and negative plays, which chews clock and kills drives. With New England more interested in controlling the game than pushing pace as a big home favorite, this total sits a few points high.

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TAKE: GIANTS/PATRIOTS UNDER 47



THIS WEEKS GRIDIRON GOLD SHEET BEST BETS

	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet
NFL	Titans + 6.5	49ers Under 40	Panthers + 11	Chargers - 9.5

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