

What Do I Know? 2019 NFL Season Projections, Futures and Storylines

Before the Storm: 2019 NFL Preview: Storylines and Projections

Laces of Spaces? 2019 NFL Season Projections

The long lull of Major League Baseball's summer slog. The click-bait drivel about helmet semantics, hold-outs and overweight OTAs. The strange excitement for third-string competitions narrated by that forever-classic, but [always-nameless narrator](#) on HBO's Hard Knocks.

This is the natural effect of no-NFL decay.

But in less than a week, football fans get a shot of life, just like A-Rod in Billy Corben's [Screwball](#), when the 2019 NFL season kicks off on September 5th with the Packers and Bears in Chicago.

With kickoff so close, Thursday mornings begin with those NFL Network horns stuck in your head. It's time for the American tradition of swearing by a few subjective predictions, to later be proven wrong and then hide behind circumstances that we claim are only possible by forces we've named "God".

But keep in mind the unpredictable force that always seems to strike every NFL season.

Ask a Patriot fan about Week 14 in Miami last year or fantasy owners who selected Le'veon Bell, not James Connor.

Or New Orleans residents, who watched the Rams lose in the Superbowl.

We're not even out of preseason and there's already been a slew of shock and awe from frostbitten toes to Indianapolis heartbreak.

I don't know if these events were due to an almighty power or happenstance but every year it proves to be true. With that in mind, peruse my division-by-division projections, money makers and Superbowl favorites.

NFC

Last year, aside from the East, each NFC division was top-heavy, with the divisional leaders winning a playoff berth by at least three games. This year, with conference additions like Bruce

Arians and fully-healed squads in Green Bay, Atlanta and San Francisco, the NFC will be a competition of attrition.

North

1. Green Bay – 10-6
2. Minnesota – 9-7
3. Chicago – 8-8
4. Detroit – 6-10

It seems like a no brainer to pick Green Bay this year. They lost two franchise guys in Clay Matthews and Randall Cobb, but spent big in free agency: OLBs Za'Darius Smith, OLB Preston Smith, SS Adrian Amos, OG Billy Turner. If Green Bay finally gives Aaron Rodgers a defense, the Packers have enough offense to not only win the division but the conference. The Vikings have potential, especially if Dalvin Cook finally lives up to the pre-ACL tear hype, and could give the Packers trouble. But ultimately Kirk Cousins is too average, and I think they'll end up missing out on the Wild Card. A lot of people like the Bears this year. I'm not and never have been high on Mitch Trubisky, but he'll certainly have the chance to make me look like a fool, especially the last four games, where I think they'll go 0-4: vs. Dallas, @Green Bay, vs. Kansas City, @Minnesota.

East

1. Philadelphia – 11-5
2. Dallas – 10-6
3. New York G – 5-11
4. Washington – 5-11

The Eagles have it all O-line, D-line, innovative coach and a fairly easy second place schedule. But they also have one big question: Carson Wentz's stability. The division rests on his health, because QB2 is swatting mosquitoes in Jacksonville. Zeke will sign before the opener and if he doesn't, I think Dallas can sustain wins until the Saints in Week 4. All in all, I expect the Cowboys to be solid this year, only losing close games and clinching a Wild Card spot. But this is still the NFC East with major upset potential in any of the in-division games, including opening weekend. And who knows, if Daniel Jones is as good against first team defenses, as he is against preseason hopefuls, and if Eli is Eli in November, maybe the Giants can make some noise. But aside from the ladder almost guaranteed, that's way too many ifs.

South

1. Saints – 10-6
2. Atlanta – 9-7
3. Tampa Bay – 8-8
4. Carolina – 7-9

Good luck in the NFC South. Drew Brees and a robbed-Saints team; Matt Ryan and newly healthy Julio Jones and Devonte Freeman; seemingly Jameis Winston's last shot at a starting gig;

and who's Cam Newton? All in all, the Saints have the better roster, better coach and I think that bitter taste in their mouth from last year is enough to win the division.

But don't sleep on Atlanta. They've upgraded their offensive line and they're healthy. Last year it seemed like every week they had a starter go down. The Bucs will be fun, but Bruce Arians needs a full year with Jameis, but expect that offense to put up ridiculous numbers.

The Panthers could pull off a few upsets, but this is the year Cam proves to be injury prone, solely affording the Panthers fantasy value.

West

1. Los Angeles R – 10-6
2. San Francisco – 9-7
3. Seattle – 8-8
4. Arizona – 4-12

The Rams should win this division easily, with Seattle and Arizona searching for new identities. Todd Gurley won't see the ball as much, so look for Jared Goff to take over this offense. There's a lot of anticipation for the return of Jimmy Garoppolo. With Kyle Shanahan finally confident in his starter and big-play potential in Dante Pettis and George Kittle, this offense could boom. But I still give the edge to the Rams. Seattle is interesting and Arizona will be fun to watch, but there's too much luck involved with finger-crossing and rookies.

NFC Playoff Seeding

- 1 – Philadelphia
- 2 – Los Angeles R
- 3 – Green Bay
- 4 – New Orleans
- WC1 – Dallas
- WC2 – Atlanta

AFC

North

1. Pittsburg – 11-5
2. Cleveland – 10-6
3. Baltimore – 8-8
4. Cincinnati – 5-11

Later in this article, it'll seem like I really trounce Cleveland, and that's only true for the beginning of their season. Once the Browns get a couple of wins under their belt, I think they'll roll and be the highest scoring offense in the league. As long as they can control their temperament they'll win double-digit games. But I like the Steelers to win the division.

Experience, and minimal regression in production from James Washington and James Connor, who will fill the needs of WR2 and RB1. My favorite team in the division is Baltimore. I've read they're installing a Wishbone Offense for Lamar Jackson. The wishbone hasn't been seen in the NFL since WWII. Baltimore will be gritty, ugly to watch at times, but ultimately able to beat anyone on any Sunday. And finally expect nothing short of mediocre from the Bengals.

East

1. New England – 10-6
2. New York J – 8-8
3. Buffalo – 7-9
4. Miami – 2-14

Don't hate greatness. I despise the Patriots, but I absolutely love watching greatness. And the Patriot's greatness will look a little different this year, with a lot of youth and no Gronk. They did draft Damien Harris and return Sony Michel, James White and Rex Burkhead, so expect a lot of running and short-game passing. The Patriots have dominated this division since Sam Darnold, Josh Allen and Josh Rosen were in Kindergarten—for real, 16 for 18 in division titles since Brady's been the starter in 2001. It'll definitely be worth watching how these three young guns develop, especially with this division on the brink of a complete makeover after TB12 retires. But other than a potential upset in New York in October, this will be all Patriots.

South

1. Houston – 10-6
2. Indianapolis – 9-7
3. Tennessee – 8-8
4. Jacksonville – 7-9

Andrew Luck's retirement shook the Colts and set shockwaves through the league. Originally, I thought the Colts were a lock. Even with Luck gone, I think the Colts shock some teams and turn out to be a quality football team. In ten games started in 2018, Marlon Mack rushed for 908 yards on 4.7 yards per carry and added 10 total touchdowns. I think he follows that up with a top 10 season after the Colts drafted O-line in the first and second round and with Luck gone, I suspect a relentless running game and heavy reliance on D. They add Justin Houston to a defense that finished just out of the top 10 in total defense last year. I still like the Texans to win the division, but I'm not confident. In Houston's first eight games they're @Saints, @Chargers, vs. Falcons, @Chiefs, @Colts. And with Houston neglecting to really fix their offensive line needs, the stage is set for an underdog to come out of this division. The Colts could be a fairytale. Tennessee is a solid sleeper, going 9-7 each of the last three seasons and Jacksonville is interesting if Nick Foles plays even close to like he did when he was an Eagle.

West

1. Kansas City – 12-4
2. Los Angeles C – 10-6
3. Denver – 7-9

4. Oakland – 6-10

This will be the division to watch in years to come, with the Raiders rising, Denver's young playmakers settling in, the end of Phillip Rivers's Hall of Fame career, and the wunderkind, Patrick Mahomes. The Chiefs are going to be as good as advertised, and according to Travis Kelce, they're even faster than last year. With the Chiefs on the brink of a dynasty, the Chargers are the only team in this division that'll put up a fight. I don't think the Melvin Gordon holdout affects this team as much as anticipated. And if it does, the Chargers will fold, knowing where Phillip Rivers is on the back nine. Denver's always scary in September, then reveals themselves in November and December—match made with Joe Flacco. Oakland will be fun to watch, but hold off until Vegas for any realistic expectations.

AFC Playoff Seeding

- 1 – Kansas City
- 2 – Pittsburgh
- 3 – New England
- 4. – Houston
- WC1 – Cleveland
- WC2 – Los Angeles C

SuperBowl

Putting aside my biases, I think the Superbowl favorite comes out of the NFC. Like the Rams last year, whichever team has the firepower and stamina to survive that dogfight, will definitely earn the right. The AFC is pretty top-heavy and the only scenario I see, where the Chiefs aren't in the Superbowl, is if there's a repeat of last year's conference championship game. Andy Reid holds Bill Belichick's pocket when it comes to big games. And after 2017 I never bet against Tom Brady.

Top 2 Outcomes:

KC Chiefs 30 – Saints 32

NE Patriots 24 – Green Bay Packers 17

Money Makers

Don't bet your rent, but consider these tempting takes to start 2019 in the green.

Lines as of August 28th, 2019 on Betrivers.com

Tennessee Titans +185

Week 1 vs. Cleveland Browns

The Browns currently lead the league in two categories: most hype and youngest roster. Plus, this past offseason has been packed: they hired offensive coordinator Freddie Kitchens, traded for Odell Beckham Jr.; we've heard endless soundbites from Baker Mayfield, the no-huddle drive during the first preseason game. I like moxie and a team unashamed to show it, but this has all the making for an upset. The Titans can run the ball and are known to shock teams when they're the underdog e.g. 2018 vs. Dallas and New England.

Pitt. Steelers +110

More wins than the Cleveland Browns

The reasons I like the Titans to upset the Browns Week 1, are the same reasons I like the Steelers to win the division, and ultimately more games than the Browns. With the departure of Le'veon Bell and Antonio Brown, the Steelers camp has been the quietest its been in almost a decade. The Steelers also have the better coach, better quarterback and better running game, which is vital for the divisional games in the winter. Cleveland's going to be dangerous. Symbolizing the league's doormat for the better part of two decades will put a chip on your shoulder. But late in the season, when the field's frozen in Pittsburg, I'll take experience over moxie.

Parlay: Los Angeles Rams -3 and Kansas City Chiefs -4 -106, -110 = +272

Week 1: vs. @ Carolina Panthers and @ Jacksonville Jaguars

Both the Rams and the Chiefs are projected to be powerhouses and both have low odds to overcome opening day. The Panthers will start the season with new faces on offense and a less-than healthy Cam Newton. And although the Jags will probably have the same fiery defense from the past few years, I'm not a Nick Foles guy. Give me both the favorites in a parlay.