

Key Releases

Date	Event	Play
01-14-23	Seattle @ San Francisco	San Francisco
01-15-23	NY Giants @ Minnesota	NY Giants

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January 14th, 2023

141/142	Score	Line	PR	GS Line	Avg. PR	Avg. OPR	SUR (H/A)	ATS (H/A)	O/U (H/A)	Pts. Diff. (H/A)	Avg. Ln. (H/A)
Seattle	10	43	9		10	9	5-4 / 4-4	4-5 / 3-5	4-5 / 5-3	+2.3 / -1.9	-0.5 / +4
San Francisco	28	-10	1(2)	-10	4	11	8-1 / 5-3	7-2 / 4-4	5-4 / 4-4	+13.2 / +6.8	-6 / -5

Whew! That must have been the Niners' reaction when Seattle beat the Rams in OT last Sunday, precluding the chance the hot Lions could qualify as the last NFC playoff seed and provide first-round opposition for SF at Santa Clara this weekend. Detroit then kept the Packers out of the postseason with a Sunday night win, but isn't here because it lost a wild 48-45 decision to the Seahawks back on October 2 and thus the tiebreaker vs. Pete Carroll's troops (those early-season results really do matter), thus allowing Seattle to slip in as the final NFC playoff seed. Recent history of the expanded playoff format, however, suggests the back of the field as represented by these seven-seeds like the Seahawks are likely to be out of their depth; that was certainly the case last year when both the Eagles and Steelers were outclassed, as were the Bears in 2020 (though Philip Rivers-led Indy did put up a pretty good fight at Buffalo two years ago in the AFC). And while this might be one of Carroll's best coaching jobs to steer a team most expected to be in rebuild mode after the Russell Wilson trade into the playoffs instead, the ride likely ends here. That's because the Niners are the hottest team in the NFL with ten wins on the spin, as the DeMeco Ryans defense has been arguably the best in the league, and the offense now has most of its weapons back in place with Deebo Samuel's return to active duty last week and Christian McCaffrey now completely versed in the Kyle Shanahan playbook. As, apparently, is Iowa State rookie QB Brock Purdy, whose story is well-known by now but whose poise and command of the offense continues to belie his first-year status, as no other rookie QB has won his first five NFL starts since Big Ben did so with Pittsburgh in 2004. If anything, Purdy has looked just as comfy at the controls, and less likely to make an error, than Jimmy G, who went out in the December 4 win vs. Miami but hasn't been missed as Purdy has passed for 13 TDs with just 3 picks since entering the lineup, and has developed a special rapport with big-play TE George Kittle, who has caught 7 TDP across the past four games. Meanwhile, the Nick Bosa-led stop unit throttled Seattle in both regular-season meetings, allowing just one TD (the Hawks notched their lone points in the 27-7 loss at Santa Clara on September 18 on a blocked-field goal return) and 106 YR across the pair of wins while also constantly in the face of Geno Smith, sacked five times across the two meetings and under constant duress. And while mentioning Bosa, must note his 18.5 sacks and 48 QB knockdowns, both NFL bests in 2022. In conclusion, though regular-season results don't always repeat in the playoffs, we're not sure how Carroll is going to flip the script with so many fundamental edges seemingly the other way, and Geno's Seahawks offense hardly flying high into the postseason, held to fewer than 20 points in four straight games. Not to mention the Levi's edge as SF has won 12 of its last 13 outright at home since midseason 2021 (only loss to the Chiefs) and has covered 11 of those well. More than a few Niners Faithful will also relish the chance for some playoff revenge against the Seattle from nine years ago, when the host Seahawks won a memorable NFC title game featuring big plays galore from Marshawn Lynch, Russell Wilson, Richard Sherman and Colin Kaepernick (remember him?).

Play San Francisco and the Under.

Last 3 Games		PF/PA	Pts. Diff.	Avg. PR	Avg. OPR	Avg. Ln.	SUR (H/A)	ATS (H/A)	O/U (H/A)
Seattle		17.3 / 15.3	+2	9	7	+2	2-0 / 0-1	1-1 / 0-1	1-1 / 0-1
San Francisco		37.3 / 22.3	+15	1	9	-10	2-0 / 1-0	2-0 / 0-1	2-0 / 1-0

Results	Date	Opponent	Line	Total	Score	Results	Date	Opponent	Line	Total	Score
Seattle	01-08-23	LA Rams	-4.5	43	19-16	San Francisco	01-08-23	Arizona	-14.5	40	38-13
	01-01-23	NY Jets	PK	0	23-6		01-01-23	@ Las Vegas	-10	41	37-34
	12-24-22	@ Kansas Ci.	+10.5	50.5	10-24		12-24-22	Washington	-6	37	37-20

Recent meetings										
Date	Team	Score	Line	FD	RA/RV	PC/PA/I/PY	F/FL			
12-15-22	San Francisco	21	-3	15	34/170	17/26/0/211	0/0			
	Seattle	13	42.5	16	14/70	31/44/0/207	2/1			
09-18-22	Seattle	7	39.5	14	14/36	24/31/2/180	1/1			
	San Francisco	27	-8.5	25	45/189	15/24/0/184	1/0			
12-05-21	San Francisco	23	-2.5	17	25/71	20/30/2/294	1/1			
	Seattle	30	44.5	21	27/146	30/37/1/181	4/2			
10-03-21	Seattle	28	52	14	28/105	16/23/0/129	3/0			
	San Francisco	21	-2.5	23	29/143	23/41/1/314	1/1			

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143/144	Score	Line	PR	GS Line	Avg. PR	Avg. OPR	SUR (H/A)	ATS (H/A)	O/U (H/A)	Pts. Diff. (H/A)	Avg. Ln. (H/A)
LA Chargers	22	-1	4	-1	5	9	5-3 / 5-4	5-3 / 7-2	3-4 / 3-5	-0.9 / +1.6	-2.5 / +0.5
Jacksonville	27	47	7(2)		9	12	5-3 / 4-5	4-4 / 4-5	2-6 / 6-3	+3.1 / +3.2	-0.5 / +3.5

Regular-season results are no foolproof indicator of playoff rematches; for the Chargers' sake, they hope that's the case, because the less similarities to their 38-10 home loss to the Jags back on September 25, the better. J'ville entered Inglewood having lost 18 straight as a visitor (not counting a win in London last season against the Dolphins) but proceeded to score on seven of eleven possessions, with Trevor Lawrence (3 TDP) outplaying Justin Herbert and the Jags' defensive front crumpling the Chargers' forward wall, limiting the Bolts to just 26 YR while J'ville runners were churning for 151 yards of their own in a shock 28-point romp. True, the Jags didn't win again until November 6, but that subsequent W vs. the Raiders lit the fuse for a stretch drive in which Doug Pederson's bunch won seven of its last nine (and its last five in a row). Though the offense struggled in the AFC South-clinching win over the Titans on Saturday night, it had been a buzzsaw down the stretch prior, with the ground game flourishing behind Travis Etienne, Jr (five 100+ YR games since late October) and Lawrence playing like a top-five quarterback, ranking third in passer rating (104.6) since the start of November and spreading the ball effectively to preferred targets Christian Kirk, Zay Jones, and TE Evan Engram, who combined for a whopping 239 catches and 17 TDs this term. And while Lawrence will be making his first playoff appearance, he is no stranger to big-game pressure, having competed in a pair of FBS title games (winning once, convincingly, as an underdog vs. Bama) while at Clemson. The stop unit has also turned into a big-play machine, with 11 takeaways across the past five games and scoring TDs (either via pick-six or scoop-n-score) three times in the past four outings. Not to underestimate LA's Herbert, who is going to present a much greater challenge to the J'ville stop unit than the succession of QBs the Jags have seen the past month including Davis Mills, Zach Wilson, Chris Streveler, and Joshua Dobbs. But forgive us for wondering if LA's second-year HC Brandon Staley might actually be a hindrance, with a succession of baffling in-game decisions throughout the campaign including his decisions to play starters extended minutes last week in an otherwise meaningless regular-season finale at Denver, and potentially losing stalwarts like WR Mike Williams and DE Joey Bosa, both forced from the game. A chance both play this week, but it's those sorts of moves that have kept the rumor mill whirring in LA that a quick playoff exit puts Staley on the hot seat (Sean Payton, who has been living recently in So Cal, is known to covet the Bolts job and the chance to coach Herbert). So, if this game is to be decided by coaching, we'd rather go with the crafty Pederson, who has a memorable Super Bowl win under his belt and in short order has put a rudderless Jags ship back on course, and reminding more than a few of another perennial loser with a top choice QB in his second season that suddenly caught fire...last year's Bengals. Play Jacksonville.

Last 3 Games			PF/PA	Pts. Diff.	Avg. PR	Avg. OPR	Avg. Ln.	SUR (H/A)	ATS (H/A)	O/U (H/A)	
LA Chargers			26.3 / 14.7	+11.7	5	9	-1	1-0 / 1-1	1-0 / 2-0	0-0 / 1-1	
Jacksonville			23.3 / 7.3	+16	8	9	-2.5	1-0 / 2-0	0-1 / 2-0	0-1 / 0-2	
Results	Date	Opponent	Line	Total	Score	Results	Date	Opponent	Line	Total	Score
LA Chargers	01-08-23	@ Denver	+6.5	39.5	28-31	Jacksonville	01-07-23	Tennessee	-6	39.5	20-16
	01-01-23	LA Rams	-6.5	41	31-10		01-01-23	@ Houston	-3.5	43.5	31-3
	12-26-22	@ Indianapo.	-3.5	44.5	20-3		12-22-22	@ NY Jets	+2.5	36.5	19-3

Recent meetings										
Date	Team	Score	Line	FD	RA/RV	PC/PA/I/PY	F/FL			
09-25-22	Jacksonville	38	45.5	25	36/151	28/39/0/262	0/0			
	LA Chargers	10	-6.5	16	12/26	25/45/1/286	1/1			

January 15th, 2023

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145/146	Score	Line	PR	GS Line	Avg. PR	Avg. OPR	SUR (H/A)	ATS (H/A)	O/U (H/A)	Pts. Diff. (H/A)	Avg. Ln. (H/A)
Miami	13	46	7		6	9	6-2 / 3-6	5-3 / 3-5	1-7 / 7-2	+6.1 / -5.7	-3.5 / +1
Buffalo	30	-9.5	0(3)	-10	-0	7	7-1 / 6-2	4-4 / 4-3	5-3 / 1-7	+13.4 / +7.8	-9 / -5.5

First and foremost, it's amazing to witness prayers being answered in this world of arguments, hyperbole and strife, and it appeared to this reporter as nothing less than a miracle that Damar Hamlin survived a suffering cardiac arrest in the Monday Night Football game and then woke up around 72 hours later asking "Did we win?" His plight and fight have awakened the nation, and he certainly inspired his teammates to a dramatic effort and important victory. Frankly, expect the "Did we win?" aspect of this game can't be underestimated as Hamlin's being essentially brought back to life by on-field team and emergency medical staff is a nearly unprecedented event in pro football, all stemming from provisions made after the tragic demise of Detroit's Chuck Hughes in 1971. Perhaps taking a page from Denmark at the last Euros, which briefly emerged as "Danish Dynamite" after a similar situation with Christian Eriksen and his uplifting recovery, this game will likely be emotionally charged as was the New England victory, even as we have to acknowledge that Miami has been a sometimes-sticky adversary for the Bills, sporting a 5-4-1 spread mark in the 10 meetings since Buffalo drafted QB Josh Allen. However, it is important to note that the Bills are 8-2 SU overall and have 5-0 straight-up at home against the Dolphins on Allen's watch, with one defeat coming in his rookie season, and that Miami could again be minus QB Tua Tagovailoa. Dolphin HC Mike McDaniel made it plain he's not counting on Tua (slow to clear concussion protocols, and yet to be cleared even for practice purposes as of early in the week) for anything right now, the upside of forcing him back even a minute early isn't worth the downside, especially after the clearly questionable medical advice Tagovailoa has received this season. Therefore, it is likely to be either Skylar Thompson or vet journeyman Teddy Bridgewater at the controls in the cold of Buffalo. Neither is an optimal choice, as Bridgewater is fresh off an injury and completing just 47.9% of his passes over the last five games with a 4-4 TD-interception ratio. Thompson is a rookie picked in the seventh round out of Kansas State who is 40 of 74 passing (54%) for 382 yds. with a 1-3 TD-int. ratio, and had a 14.8 QBR in the crucial win over the Jets, throwing for just 152 yards and rushing for three yards. Scaling down the offense and leaning on a rushing game spearheaded by Purdue product and eight-year NFL vet Raheem Mostert (now dealing with a thumb injury) is a dicey proposition considering Buffalo ranks fourth in the NFL against the run. Meanwhile, the Bills have Allen (4283 YP, 35 TDP, 761 YR, 7 TDR), RB Devin Singletary (790 YR) and an assortment of receivers headlined by WRs Stefon Diggs (108 catches, 1429 yds., 11 TDs) & Gabe Davis (48 recs., 836 yds., seven TDs) as well as TE Dawson Knox (also 48 catches with eight scores). The talent is evident, after all, so it's no surprise the Bills won the AFC East, as this is their third straight year at the top of the division since wresting ownership of the East from Tom Brady, Bill Belichick and the Patriots.

Play Buffalo.

Last 3 Games			PF/PA		Pts. Diff.	Avg. PR	Avg. OPR	Avg. Ln.	SUR (H/A)	ATS (H/A)	O/U (H/A)
Miami			17.3 / 18.3		-1	6	8	-1.5	1-1 / 0-1	1-1 / 1-0	0-2 / 1-0
Buffalo			34 / 21.7		+12.3	0	8	-7.5	2-0 / 1-0	1-1 / 1-0	2-0 / 1-0
Results	Date	Opponent	Line	Total	Score	Results	Date	Opponent	Line	Total	Score
Miami	01-08-23	NY Jets	-4	37	11-6	Buffalo	01-08-23	New Engla.	-8	44.5	35-23
	01-01-23	@ New Engla.	+3	42	21-23		12-24-22	@ Chicago	-8	40.5	35-13
	12-25-22	Green Bay	-4	49.5	20-26		12-17-22	Miami	-7	45	32-29

Recent meetings											
Date	Team	Score	Line	FD	RA/RV	PC/PA/I/PY	F/FL				
12-17-22	Miami	29	45	20	25/188	17/30/0/217	1/0				
	Buffalo	32	-7	29	29/150	25/40/0/296	2/1				
09-25-22	Buffalo	19	-4	31	23/115	42/63/0/382	4/1				
	Miami	21	54.5	15	17/41	13/20/0/171	0/0				
10-31-21	Miami	11	48.5	16	23/68	21/39/1/194	2/1				
	Buffalo	26	-14.5	24	23/102	29/43/0/249	1/0				
09-19-21	Buffalo	35	-3.5	21	30/143	17/33/1/171	2/1				
	Miami	0	48	13	20/71	25/44/1/145	3/2				

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147/148	Score	Line	PR	GS Line	Avg. PR	Avg. OPR	SUR (H/A)	ATS (H/A)	O/U (H/A)	Pts. Diff. (H/A)	Avg. Ln. (H/A)
NY Giants	29	48	7		8	2	5-3 / 4-4	6-3 / 7-1	4-4 / 3-5	+0.6 / -1.4	+0.5 / +7
Minnesota	24	-3	8(2)	-1	7	12	8-1 / 5-3	4-5 / 3-4	7-2 / 4-4	+1.8 / -2.4	-3 / -0

Minnesota has more lives than Keifer Sutherland's character Jack Bauer in "24" or John Krasinki's title role in "Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan"...how many times can you be in a rough spot against terrorist thugs and snatch victory from the jaws of death? That scenario has been Minnesota's modus operandi for much of this season, with the vast majority of the Viking games going down to the wire, often with Minny behind late requiring a miracle rescue from QB Kirk Cousins (66%, 4547 YP, 29 TDs), WRs Justin Jefferson (128 catches, 1809 yds., eight TDs) or Adam Thielen (107 catches, 716 yds.), RB Dalvin Cook (1173 YR, eight TDs) or PK Greg Joseph. The November acquisition of TE TJ Hockenson was a superb move, as he had 60 catches in his 10 games for the Vikes. That's all great, makes for exciting finishes... but why did the obviously talented offense have to come to the rescue so often? It could have something to do with a defense that ranked 31st in the NFL, allowing 389 ypg and tied for 30th in points allowed at 25.1, all part of a puzzling narrative in which Minnesota somehow ended up -3 in scoring differential (really!) despite its 13-4 SU mark. A good example of how things went for the Vikes this year was the Christmas Eve meeting between these two teams. In that game Minnesota built a double-digit lead in the first half and blew it by the five-minute mark in the third quarter, then retaking the lead early in the fourth quarter before New York came back within a point. The Vikes scored and pushed the advantage to eight points with 3:00 minutes left and the defense then allowed the Giants to drive 75 yards in under a minute to tie the game with two minutes left on a long 4th-down run by Saquon Barkley. Fortunately or Minny, the G-Men scored a bit too soon, leaving Cousins just enough time to engineer a short drive to facilitate a personal-best 61-yard field goal by Joseph and, abra cadabra, another escape worthy of Penn and Teller or Houdini (you pick). The Giants had 445 total yards, Minnesota 353. New York QB Daniel Jones completed 30 of 42 for 334 yards with one score and one interception and ran for 8.5 ypc on his four runs, while Cousins was at 34 of 48 for 299 yards with three TDs. Barkley ran for 84 YR, 6.0 ypc and a TD with eight catches (Cook was at 4.6 ypc, 64 YR and no TDs and three catches). The Giants certainly don't have the receiving corps that the Vikings do, but WRs Richie James and Isaiah Hodgins each caught eight passes, and wideout Darius Slayden averaged 19.8 ypc on his four snags against a Viking secondary that gave up chunk yardage all season long. Not to mention the previous week spotting the Colts a 33-0 halftime edge before rallying for the biggest-ever NFL comeback win, and flying dangerously close to the flame yet again. This is the Giants' second playoff game in ten years, and the Vikings are 2-2 straight-up in four playoff games since New York's 2017 postseason appearance. But the defensive difference and the fact the Giants got to this level fighting through the toughest division in the NFL this season, with the NFC East filling an NFL best three playoff spots, while the Vikes are the only representative from a pliable NFC North, where the Bears, Lions and Vikes were three of the bottom five in the NFL in scoring defense. And by the end of the season, was Minnesota really better than the third-best team in its own division, with decisive losses to the Pack and Lions down the stretch?

Play NY Giants and the Over.

Last 3 Games			PF/PA	Pts. Diff.	Avg. PR	Avg. OPR	Avg. Ln.	SUR (H/A)	ATS (H/A)	O/U (H/A)	
NY Giants			26 / 19.7	+6.3	8	6	+7	1-0 / 0-2	1-0 / 2-0	1-0 / 1-1	
Minnesota			24.3 / 26	-1.7	7	9	-2.5	1-0 / 1-1	0-1 / 1-1	1-0 / 1-1	
Results	Date	Opponent	Line	Total	Score	Results	Date	Opponent	Line	Total	Score
NY Giants	01-08-23	@ Philadelp.	+17	43	16-22	Minnesota	01-08-23	@ Chicago	-6.5	42.5	29-13
	01-01-23	Indianapo.	PK	0	38-10		01-01-23	@ Green Bay	+3.5	47.5	17-41
	12-24-22	@ Minnesota	+4.5	48	24-27		12-24-22	NY Giants	-4.5	48	27-24

Recent meetings										
Date	Team	Score	Line	FD	RA/RV	PC/PA/I/PY	F/FL			
12-24-22	NY Giants	24	48	23	21/126	30/42/1/319	2/1			
	Minnesota	27	-4.5	23	19/83	34/48/0/270	0/0			

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149/150	Score	Line	PR	GS Line	Avg. PR	Avg. OPR	SUR (H/A)	ATS (H/A)	O/U (H/A)	Pts. Diff. (H/A)	Avg. Ln. (H/A)
Baltimore	14	42	7		5	3	5-3 / 5-4	1-6 / 6-3	2-6 / 4-5	+1.8 / +2.3	-4.5 / -0.5
Cincinnati	26	-7	3(2)	-6	6	7	6-1 / 6-3	5-2 / 7-2	3-4 / 3-5	+10.7 / +2.3	-5.5 / -3

The Ravens could have just stuck around town, had a couple of Skyline Chili lunches, and maybe watched the Creighton-Xavier game on Wednesday night, instead of another back-and-forth from BWI this week. That because they're right back at Cincy for the wild card round as they were last Sunday in a 27-16 loss that sewed up home edge this weekend for the Bengals, who were a bit chagrined (rightfully so) that they were the side shortchanged in the scenarios arrived at by the league in the wake of developments from the Bills game the preceding Monday. Baltimore was also down to rookie FA Anthony Brown at QB last Sunday (Brown actually looked no worse than normal backup Tyler Huntley, who was sidelined with shoulder problems), with the hope this week that Lamar Jackson will finally be beyond the knee injury that has kept him out the past five Sundays while the offense has cratered in his absence, recording the second lowest point total in the league across the past five games. With Jackson in the lineup, the Ravens did win the first matchup 19-17 back on October 9 when Mr. Reliable, PK Justin Tucker, hit a 43-yard field goal on the final play. But even if Jackson, who has become something of an NFL version of Zion Williamson with his recurring injuries, is activated, he'll have to shake off some rust, and as mobility is his game; how much has his knee actually recovered? Moreover, Jackson's three previous playoff exits have all been pulled from a similar script, with shortcomings in the passing game exploited on each occasion. Besides, we're not anxious at the moment to recommend against the Bengals, who have won eight straight as they hit the postseason hot for the second straight year. In fact, this stretch of excellence includes a stunning 20-3 spread mark across a 23-game span into last Sunday, when many Cincy bettors cashed tickets again before the spread began gyrating wildly before kickoff on Baltimore QB news. True, Cincy has some issues on its OL with key RT La'El Collins sidelined, but Joe Burrow has a better command of the offense than he did at the same time a year ago, and was minus key WR Tee Higgins for the October matchup; he's back, and so is the devastating 1-2 punch with wideout mate Ja'Marr Chase (combined 161 catches and 16 TDs). The Ravens, especially since the trade deadline add of LB Roquan Smith, have enough defense to not get overrun, but there are too many questions about the Baltimore offense, with or especially without Jackson, to expect a deep playoff run for the John Harbaughs. And doubtful it starts here vs. a Cincy team that has outscored Baltimore 109-54 across its three series wins since last season.

Play Cincinnati.

Last 3 Games			PF/PA		Pts. Diff.	Avg. PR	Avg. OPR	Avg. Ln.	SUR (H/A)	ATS (H/A)	O/U (H/A)
Baltimore			15.3 / 17.3		-2	6	7	+1.5	1-1 / 0-1	1-1 / 1-0	1-1 / 1-0
Cincinnati			27.7 / 19		+8.7	3	8	-6	1-0 / 2-0	0-1 / 2-0	1-0 / 1-1
Results	Date	Opponent	Line	Total	Score	Results	Date	Opponent	Line	Total	Score
Baltimore	01-08-23	@ Cincinnati	+11.5	39.5	16-27	Cincinnati	01-08-23	Baltimore	-11.5	39.5	27-16
	01-01-23	Pittsburgh	PK	0	13-16		12-24-22	@ New Engla.	-3	41.5	22-18
	12-24-22	Atlanta	-6.5	35.5	17-9		12-18-22	@ Tampa Bay	-3	47.5	34-23

Recent meetings											
Date	Team	Score	Line	FD	RA/RV	PC/PA/I/PY	F/FL				
01-08-23	Baltimore	16	39.5	20	27/110	19/44/2/276	2/2				
	Cincinnati	27	-11.5	15	20/55	25/42/0/202	1/1				
10-09-22	Cincinnati	17	48	20	21/101	24/35/1/190	0/0				
	Baltimore	19	-3	22	28/155	19/32/1/170	1/0				
12-26-21	Baltimore	21	43.5	21	16/39	28/40/1/295	2/0				
	Cincinnati	41	-7.5	33	21/77	37/46/0/498	0/0				
10-24-21	Cincinnati	41	46	19	24/111	23/38/1/409	1/0				
	Baltimore	17	-6.5	20	24/115	20/42/0/278	1/0				

January 16th, 2023

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151/152	Score	Line	PR	GS Line	Avg. PR	Avg. OPR	SUR (H/A)	ATS (H/A)	O/U (H/A)	Pts. Diff. (H/A)	Avg. Ln. (H/A)
Dallas	19	-2.5	3	-2	6	11	8-1 / 4-4	6-3 / 4-4	5-4 / 4-4	+10.3 / +4	-6 / -2.5
Tampa Bay	21	45	8(3)		5	11	5-4 / 3-5	2-6 / 2-6	4-5 / 2-6	-0.8 / -4.8	-2.5 / -3.5

In the glass-is-half-full department, maybe one could suggest that the Cowboys got their bad game out of their system in the regular-season finale at Washington, or that Dallas at least escaped with no major injuries. Beyond that, however, we wonder if Jerry Jones is thinking that he should have asked Mike McCarthy to give the starters (especially on offense) the afternoon off, as it was a longshot that the scaled-back Giants would beat the Eagles to open a path to the NFC East title, and there was nothing about the humbling 26-6 loss at FedEx Field that suggests the Cowboys are ready for the playoffs. Specifically, Dak Prescott continues his late-season case of the yips, tossing an interception for the seventh straight game, including his third pick-six in the last four games, the worst such stretch for a Dallas QB since Vinny Testaverde was intercepted nine straight games in 2004 (wow, we had almost forgotten that Testaverde played for the Cowboys!). That also ignominiously tied Prescott with Houston's Davis Mills for the NFL interception lead with 15 despite the fact Dak missed five games this season. But it wasn't just Prescott (also a career-low 38% completions on 14 for 37 passing) spitting the bit last week; special teams contributed a pair of turnovers in the 1st Q, then later missing a PAT, and the defense made it easy on rookie QB Sam Howell, making his first NFL start. Now, another loss in a playoff opener, and we'd say Jones also has his case to jettison McCarthy...stay tuned. If there's a blessing, it's that Dallas now gets the rare sub-.500 division winner (the Bucs) in the wild card round, though the Cowboys have never beaten Tom Brady in seven tries, including opening night back in September when it was more a case of the Tampa Bay defense throwing the blanket over the Dallas offense much the way Washington did last week in a 19-3 win at Arlington, with injury added to insult for the Pokes when Dak suffered a broken thumb late in what had already been a very difficult night for him (just 14 for 29 with no TDP and a pick). But these also weren't the same Bucs as the past two years, winning the NFC South only because the Panthers, Saints, and Falcons were worse, while missing the creative energy of Bruce Arians along the sideline and the red-zone threat that Gronk had provided Brady the past several years. Moreover, Todd Bowles' bunch has only covered two pointspreads since the Week 2 win over the Saints, though most of those failures vs. the number came as chalk. Indeed, Tampa Bay's offensive struggles were in plain view all season, needing some late-game Brady magic to improbably pull games out of the fire past midseason against the Rams, Saints, and Cards, and was having trouble breaking the 17-point threshold until posting 30 on the Panthers in the penultimate week, when Mike Evans hooked up with Brady on three long TD passes. Offensive issues thus solved? Maybe not, as issues along the OL (including health) have been an ongoing concern, and on the other end, the secondary enters the postseason banged up. But it's the playoffs, where the Cowboys haven't won on the road since the Barry Switzer era in the mid 90s, and where Dak has rarely been able to up his game in the past, and doesn't appear ready to change that dynamic right now, either. And while we don't want to reduce this to simply a Prescott vs. Brady question, especially with most indicators (starting with that 8-9 SU mark) suggesting this Tampa Bay edition is in fact quite ordinary, we've been down this road too many times with the actors involved to expect a different outcome.

Play Tampa Bay and the Under.

Last 3 Games			PF/PA	Pts. Diff.	Avg. PR	Avg. OPR	Avg. Ln.	SUR (H/A)	ATS (H/A)	O/U (H/A)	
Dallas			24.3 / 24.3	0	3	7	-8.5	1-0 / 1-1	1-0 / 1-1	1-0 / 0-2	
Tampa Bay			22 / 23.3	-1.3	9	9	-1.5	1-0 / 1-1	1-0 / 0-2	1-0 / 1-1	
Results	Date	Opponent	Line	Total	Score	Results	Date	Opponent	Line	Total	Score
Dallas	01-08-23	@ Washington	-8.5	41	6-26	Tampa Bay	01-08-23	@ Atlanta	+6	40.5	17-30
	12-29-22	@ Tennessee	-13.5	41	27-13		01-01-23	Carolina	-3.5	40.5	30-24
	12-24-22	Philadelp.	-4	48	40-34		12-25-22	@ Arizona	-7.5	41.5	19-16

Recent meetings									
Date	Team	Score	Line	FD	RA/RV	PC/PA/I/PY	F/FL		
09-11-22	Tampa Bay	19	-2.5	18	33/152	18/27/1/195	0/0		
	Dallas	3	49.5	12	18/71	21/42/1/173	0/0		
09-09-21	Dallas	29	52.5	30	18/60	42/58/1/391	1/0		
	Tampa Bay	31	-9	24	14/52	32/50/2/379	2/2		

KEY	
Score	The predicted score for an event
PR	The team's Power Rating
GS Line	The GoldSheet line, calculated using each team's Power Rating.
Avg. PR	The average Power Rating of a team over the course of the season.
Avg. OPR	The average of a team's opponent Power Rating on the day that they played.
SUR (H/A)	The team's straight-up-record, both at home and on the road.
ATS (H/A)	The team's record against-the-spread.
O/U (H/A)	The team's over-under record.
Pts. Diff. (H/A)	The team's +/- point differential.
Avg. Ln. (H/A)	The average line the team has had over the course of the season.
PF/PA	The average points a team has scored and allowed.
FD	The total number of first downs.
RA/RV	The number of rushing attempts and yards.
PC/PA/I/PY	The number of passing completions, attempts, interceptions and yards.
RA/RV	The number of fumbles and fumbles lost.

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