



### NFL Wild Card Weekend

#### Summary:

3 Stars SF -9.5	Winner = +3
3 Stars on Bengals in teasers	
1 star w/Bills -7	loser = -1.1
1 star w/ SF -3	winner = +1
1 Star w/ Jax +8.5)	winner = +1
2 Stars NYG/Min over 48	Winner = +2
1 Star Jags +2.5 (I split it with Jags \$line)	winner = +1.1 (up 7 units going to Monday)
1 Star TB/Dal UNDER 45.5	

Discussion of games is in order of kickoffs. Note that while I never place a bet based on history or trends, I do believe I should always KNOW it, and then decided what I feel is or is not as important!

#### **SATURDAY GAMES**

**Seahawks** (9-8 SU/7-10 ATS / 8-9 over) **+10 (42.5 total) at 49ers** (13-4, 11-6, 9-8), 430 pm

X Notes: Divisional matchup between 2 teams and coaches that know each other well. SF dominated game 1, back in week #2, in SF, 27-7. That was the game Lance went down and the bat signal went out for Jimmy G. While Geno had good numbers, it was the SF defense that dominated that day. But Sea RB Walker hadn't yet taken the job yet, and only had 4 carries. Seahawks only score came on a blocked kick return. In the rematch in Seattle, in game 14 again SF defense controlled the day. The 21-13 score was a bit misleading, as SF seemed to be in coast mode after going up 21-3 in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Q. It was QB Purdy's 2<sup>nd</sup> start and SF controlled the day until Sea finally found the EZ with 3 min to play.

SF is hot, or very good, or both as they've won 10 straight games and 7 of them by double digits+. All while moving from #2 to #3 QB. Everyone knows by now that rookie Purdy has not looked like a rookie,



from the start. They've covered in 8 of those 10, only failing by beating the Chargers by 6 (laying 8) and edging the Raiders by 3 in LV. The linesmakers have loved SF all year, and so did I early, but I backed off them a bit after their 3-4 ATS start. SF has been favored in all but TWO games this year (they were +1 vs KC and +1 at the Rams.) Meanwhile Seattle has only been favored in 5 games this year on their way to a 9-8 finish and shocking playoff slot. They won 2 of the 5 as favorites, but went 0-5 ATS in the fav role. Seems like they performed well when they weren't supposed to, but once finally in a favored role they struggled. Down the stretch they went 1-7 ATS in their final 8 games and only won 3 of their final 8 games SU. Not exactly peaking for playoffs. How does an expected bad team have the 6<sup>th</sup> worst record ATS and make playoffs? About the best thing I can say about Seahawks is that they really never were beat soundly (after that early loss in SF.) The "must win" last week, at HOME, vs a very beat up Rams team, in OT, was very unimpressive to say the least. Quietly, this was a phenomenal coaching year for Pete Carroll, taking a team expected to win about 5 games and being in playoffs. But Shanahan is my coach of the year, being the strongest team while on their 3<sup>rd</sup> QB! (How do Miami and Baltimore look on 3<sup>rd</sup> QB?)

Analysis: I don't see this as a competitive and it's my favorite game of the weekend, SF -9.5. Even though about 64% are betting SF, I don't consider that unexpected, given the normal "bet the better team laying points" that we see in playoffs. The defense will dominate the Seahawks here, they can stuff the Sea run game and then tee off on Geno. It may not be a factor, but light rain is expected and I just picture that helping their defense too while maybe helping the SF ground attack. SF has its weapons all back, including Deebo Samuel and the best thing that Purdy has done is understand the value of throwing to TE Kittle (4 TDs in last 7 games.) McCaffrey has the playbook down now and Mitchell is a great complement to spell CMC even though he's an every down back. I love Aiyuk as the #2 now that Deebo is back. Lots of weapons and a dominant defense, so I see this as a **SF win, 30-9**. Line has moved around -9.5/10 and if at -9.5 it's a rare **3 star play** for me. If you can play a 6.5 point teaser, SF to -3 is a good play also.

**Chargers** (10-7 / 11-5-1 / 7-9-1) **-2.5 at Jaguars** (9-8 / 8-9 / 8-9), total is 47.5, at 815 pm Saturday

X Notes: Jags won 38-10 AT Chargers back in week #3. It was a shocker as Chargers were popular pick in preseason and were coming off a tough 3 point loss at KC. They seem to be ready for Chiefs (well if a pair of 3 point losses means you have them). Clearly a top cover team at 11-5-1, and finished 4-0-1 ATS down the stretch. Jags were 4-8 this year before winning the final 5 (4 as an underdog) to get the division crown. You'd think that a 9-8 SU record for a team not expected to be near .500 this year means lots of covers, right? Nope, they somehow were 8-9 ATS. A bit chilly (42) for FLA, and a little windy (10mph).



Game Analysis: But there's just something about this Chargers team that is unimpressive to me. They only won by a TD 3 times this year, the Texans by 10 and their last 2 wins of year. I would have said that's starting to improve at right time – but the debacle last week in Denver is mind boggling. They played starters in a meaningless game, (lost M. Williams to injury!), and then with game on the line went to the bench in 4<sup>th</sup> Q. WTF? The Jags defense is very overrated, IMO, especially the pass defense. They gave up 4 TD passes to Carson Wentz – I should stop there. But, heck their division gave them 6 games to face top QBs Mills (2), Ryan (2), Tannehill and Dobbs! You ought to have some good stats against the pass. I won't even mention the end of Z.Wilson or R. Wilson to round out half their games. Heck they "held" J.Hurts to "only" 204 yards in the air –because they ran all over them. I was tempted to go Chargers here, solely for the reason of Herbert vs a very overrated pass defense, but I'm not because I'm just a little tired of the Chargers being overrated and stupid coaching decisions by Staley. He will probably go on 4<sup>th</sup> and one early and turn it over deep in their own territory, and we'll talk about "the analytics chart" in correctly, again. The emergence of Etienne as an run/pass threat and Lawrence has a lot of places to throw the ball, mostly an underrated C.Kirk who's a big time threat. TE Engram may be a bit overrated simply because they call him a TE, which makes you think he's very good, but in reality he plays WR. Early in the week, I loved the Jags, but the more I watched some game films, there more I became concerned about their pass defense and Herbert could have a big day if not too windy. Regardless, I'm taking the Jags in a tight one, Jax 24-23, just a 1 Star play. Jax up to +8.5 , at home, is a good system "teaser play".

## SUNDAY GAMES

**Dolphins (9-8 / 9-8 / 8-9) +13.5 (total 43.5) at Bills (13-3 / 7-8-1 / 6-10), 1pm**

X Notes: Miami quite streaky again this year - Win 3/Lose 3/Win 5/Lose 5 before the final W vs hapless Jets to get in. Lots of tight games this year including 11 that were 1 score. (Yeah, on the pod I said 11-1 by mistake!) They did win a big game 221-19 vs Buf in week 3 and lost a tight one late in year AT Buff 32-29. Dolphins likely glad that it's supposed to be 25 and no wind or snow, which is about all they could hope for. Bills have not been a good cover team all year, covering the last 2 just to get to 7-8-1. They had dropped 4 of last 5 before those 2 final Ws.

Game Analysis: on one hand, I think trying to figure out what to expect from Miami, with both Tua and Bridgewater out, is just a pure guess. On the other however, I've seen all I need to see of Sklyer Thompson at QB. Bills may still be the top all around team, but they've not lived up to it after the KC win early in the year. Allen has been sloppy, with way too many red zone turnovers. But I see no reason to not expect the Bills defense to dominate the Fins just like the Jets did last week. It's a division game, or I'd fear the Bills are looking ahead, plus the recent tragedy has them likely focused on this game. But



they still know they are facing Skylar T! I am NOT betting this game as I think Buffalo routs and I don't think this Fins team w/3<sup>rd</sup> QB is in position to cover late. But it's rare for me to put actual dollars on an NFL team to win by over 2 TDs, and this won't be one of them. The total is not playable either, because I feel it's an UNDER bet, but if the Bills get early lead – I actually worry about the Fins offense playing from behind and giving up too many scoring opportunities to move it from under to over! The best play (and only one I would make) is teasing the Bills IF you can get them to -7, either by the line at -13 or if you can do the -6.5 point teaser. See summary at end for that, but I won't play this game or total straight.

**Giants (9-7-1, 13-4, 7-10) +3 (48) at Vikings (13-4 / 7-9-1 / 11-6), 430 pm**

X Notes: NYG are the best team ATS this year at 13-4. They started hot, 6-1 ATS and finished hot, 6-1 ATS. While they were 8-4-1 SU in 1 score games, those went 12-1 ATS. Everyone knows the Vikes set records for all kinds of bad "net points" for a team that won so much including most wins ever for a team with a minus net points! Prior to "the Peterman game" last week, the Vikes had dropped 4 straight ATS and had gone OVER last 6. (I got to throw out that Bears game vs Peterman!) The Vikes were 11-0 in 1 score games, basically finding a way to win every close game, but also that means when they got beat –they got beat badly! I mention the one score games because both teams seem to be in so many, why not expect it here too? Vikes won (but didn't cover) vs NYG, 27-24 in Xmas eve game. Vikes took big lead early, gave it back (as always) and a back n forth 4<sup>th</sup> qtr ended with a game winning 61 yard FG.

Analysis: I don't see any reason to expect much different here, as both teams can't pull away. In the last matchup a couple weeks ago, both moved the ball easily, when it mattered. Sure they will try to run Barkely and Cook early, but when we get into the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of a close game, they will air it out. Cousins is playing well, but the real reason they win so many 1 tight games this year is the defense can't stop anyone. Giants outgained them 445 to 353 in that loss. The obvious conclusion is another Vikes win but not cover, and another NYG cover. But no, I'm not expecting it to fall in a tight window like that! I think the best play in this game is the OVER 48 and I expect it to inch higher as the weekend unfolds. Somebody wins a tight game, and I won't care, nor try to guess who, but I'll say Vikes survive 30-28, so I'm a solid 2 stars on OVER 48.

**Ravens (10-7 / 8-9 / 5-12) +8.5 (40.5) at Bengals (12-4 / 10-7 / 6-9-1)**

X Notes: Analyzing the Ravens without Lamar is almost pointless. Last year they were 8-1 with him and this year 6-3. They don't have weapons on offense (besides K Tucker) and depend on Lamar running the ball and creating plays. Without him is different game. I always say, "it's not who's out, it's who's



playing". While I'd not be excited for A.Brown to start at QB, I'm not sure he's any worse than Huntley. Ravens did win 19-17 vs Cincy in game 5 but weren't competitive in the finale last week in Cincy. Cincy has won 8 straight but are only 4-4 ATS. Even though they have top weapon J.Chase back, they've gone UNDER in 4 of last 6.

Analysis: Disappointing, not just for Ravens fans, because this COULD have been a great matchup if Lamar was healthy. (Doesn't look good for X2s preseason pick of Ravens to win SB is not looking good.) Bengals busy playing the "other teams all screwed us" card, by voting for the silly coin flip rule, and those things always seem to work. Unless they don't. ☺ I don't bet on 3<sup>rd</sup> string QBs, so would lean to Cincy here as they could win easily, but I'm not betting them laying that number as Harbaugh should be able to at least slow the Bengals attack some and maybe pressure Burrow enough to keep in check. My best pick of the week (given to VIPs on Wed afternoon as soon as Lamar OUT), was to TEASE Cincy from -8.5 to -2.5 with tbd team! That's the perfect teaser number, as Cincy should win this game and crossing over both the 3 and the 7 is big. (See below for teaser summary.) I will play the UNDER 40.5 for 1 unit here and expect Cincy to win this 23-11.

### Monday Game

**Cowboys (12-5 / 10-7 / 9-8) -2.5 (45.5) at Tampa Bay (8-9 / 4-12-1 / 6-11), 815pm**

X Notes: Dallas is 6-2 ATS in last 8. They started year being an UNDER, staying under the number in 5 of 7, but then kicked into gear and went OVER in 7 of 8, before UNDER final 2. Bucs were just not good, all year and are quite fortunate to be in postseason. NFL worst ATS at 4-12-1 and never really played well after they beat Dallas easily in opener, 19-3. After that, they couldn't cover and couldn't get "OVER" either. Bucs went UNDER on 10 out of first 12 games before finally getting some points late and going over in 4 of last 5., but still just 6-11 went OVER on the year.

Analysis: TB was my Achilles heal this year in many ways. A few times I went WITH them as I expected a typical trend reversal, but they kept losing ATS and kept going under. Then I swore them off. Twice. Brady and the offense are not playing well, although Mike Evans did re-introduce himself in game 16. I said I wouldn't bet Tampa again this year. But what do you do when an 8-9 team, that can't cover (4-12-1) plays a 12-5 team? Yeah, I can't even say it. Making it even harder is the fact that despite the best about even (53%) TB, the line moved from Dallas -3 down to just -2.5 most places. Really? Don't do this to me. I'm tempted to say my vow was to not bet them "this year" and after all it is 2023, right? But I'm feeling like this is a low scoring game, where Dak continues as the league leader in INT's and TB doesn't hit many big plays. With a 21-20 score seeming like about as high as it can get, I'm playing the UNDER on Monday night. I know, I know, nobody likes the UNDER on MNF, but it is what it is and TB hasn't scored all year, only getting over 23 TWICE. They can't score many points, but maybe TB can score one



more than Dallas. That's why I'm skipping the side and just playing UNDER, although a clear case can be made to tease the home team out to +8.5 here. May update this one on Monday afternoon.