



2022 PRO FOOTBALL BETTING GUIDE

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LOCAL TEAMS:**

- JACKSONVILLE
- TAMPA BAY
- ATLANTA



The Year of the Moving Van Quarterback

By Brent Musburger



Welcome to the year of the Moving Van Quarterback. Eleven NFL teams – more than a third of the league – will open with a new signal-caller. Denver (Russell Wilson), Indianapolis (Matt Ryan), Washington (Carson Wentz) and Carolina (expecting Baker Mayfield to beat out Sam Darnold) will be starting quarterbacks who opened on other teams a year ago. And I expect Jimmy Garoppolo to be starting somewhere before the season hits Thanksgiving, if not sooner.

The AFC East is the only division without a new starting QB on one of its four teams.

The Moving Van Quarterback headlines handicapping 2022.

A year ago, I liked the Los Angeles Rams to contend in the NFC because of the addition of quarterback Matt Stafford, but in the AFC, I didn't give the Cincinnati Bengals a chance of making it to the Super Bowl. I underestimated Joe Burrow. My best bet of the year was nailing a Rams' December future wager to win the Super Bowl and then taking the Bengals and the points in the game itself. A rare middle which offset some of the losses during the season. Your friendly reminder: Don't just bet favorites.

The Detroit Lions finished 3-11-1 but against the spread they cashed 11 times against six losses. Only the Dallas Cowboys (13-4) and the Green Bay Packers (12-5) were better ATS, and both made the playoffs. As the season progresses, keep an eye on undervalued teams like the Lions, remembering that 90% of losing teams will have a better ATS record than won-loss record. Make jokes about bad franchises – like Jacksonville – but don't automatically bet against dogs, as several howl every week.

Speaking of Burrow, remember that only one Super Bowl loser (Dallas) ever made it back to the big game the following year. The hangover is real and, unfortunately, Burrow already underwent surgery to remove his appendix. Last year, the Kansas City Chiefs started 2-3 after their Super Bowl loss to Tampa Bay. I'm looking beyond Cincinnati this season.

The Los Angeles Chargers are my pick to make a serious run in the AFC. Quarterback Justin Herbert is one of the best young guns in the NFL. In the 35-32 overtime loss to the Las Vegas Raiders – which ended Los Angeles' playoff hopes, Herbert was unbelievable down the stretch. After a field goal put the Raiders ahead, 29-14, with 8:29 remaining, Herbert converted six fourth downs, including fourth-and-21 for a touchdown. For the season, he threw for 5,014 yards and 38 touchdowns. Add Khalil Mack and J.C. Jackson to the defense and the Chargers can upset the Chiefs in the brutal AFC West.

In the NFC, I'm backing the Dallas Cowboys as a serious contender. The media obsesses about the failures of head coach Mike McCarthy but his staff includes Dan Quinn (DC), Kellen Moore (OC), Jerry Philbin (O-line), John Fassel (special teams) and Doug Nussmeier (QBs). The staff is simply one of the best in the league.

A year ago, the Cowboys went 6-0 against NFC East rivals. They outscored Philadelphia, Washington and the Giants by a combined score of 240-to-107. That's domination and I don't see a serious challenger in the division.

Dak Prescott came back strong from a compound fracture of his right ankle, throwing for 4,449 yards and 37 touchdowns. The Cowboys traded Amari Cooper and his \$20 million dollar salary, but owner Jerry Jones watched the success of the Rams, acquiring Odell Beckham and Von Miller during the season. Look for Jones to open Dallas' hefty wallet before the trade deadline.

Like you, I can't wait for Thursday, Sept 8 and Week 1. Cash some tickets because that's what it's all about!

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VSIN Expert Predictions



	STEVE MAKINEN	MITCH MOSS	BRENT MUSBURGER	MIKE PRITCHARD	WES REYNOLDS	DAVE TULEY	JONATHAN VON TOBEL	MATT YOUMANS
AFC EAST	Bills	Bills	Bills	Bills	Bills	Bills	Bills	Bills
AFC NORTH	Ravens	Ravens	Browns	Bengals	Ravens	Ravens	Bengals	Ravens
AFC SOUTH	Colts	Colts	Colts	Colts	Colts	Titans	Colts	Colts
AFC WEST	Chargers	Chiefs	Chargers	Chargers	Chargers	Chiefs	Raiders	Chargers
AFC WILD CARD	Broncos	Bengals	Chiefs	Ravens	Bengals	Raiders	Chiefs	Bengals
AFC WILD CARD	Bengals	Broncos	Bengals	Chiefs	Chiefs	Chargers	Chargers	Chiefs
AFC WILD CARD	Chiefs	Chargers	Broncos	Raiders	Dolphins	Bengals	Ravens	Raiders
AFC CHAMPION								
NFC EAST	Cowboys	Eagles	Cowboys	Cowboys	Eagles	Cowboys	Eagles	Eagles
NFC NORTH	Packers	Packers	Packers	Packers	Vikings	Packers	Vikings	Packers
NFC SOUTH	Bucs	Saints	Bucs	Saints	Saints	Bucs	Saints	Saints
NFC WEST	49ers	49ers	Rams	49ers	49ers	Rams	Rams	49ers
NFC WILD CARD	Vikings	Vikings	49ers	Vikings	Packers	Vikings	Bucs	Bucs
NFC WILD CARD	Rams	Rams	Eagles	Eagles	Cowboys	Saints	Packers	Vikings
NFC WILD CARD	NY Giants	Panthers	Vikings	Rams	Rams	49ers	49ers	Rams
NFC CHAMPION								
AFC CHAMPION	Chargers	Bills	Bills	Bills	Chargers	Titans	Colts	Colts
NFC CHAMPION	Packers	Packers	Rams	49ers	49ers	Rams	Vikings	Packers
SUPER BOWL CHAMPION	Packers	Bills	Bills	Bills	Chargers	Titans	Colts	Colts

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BALTIMORE

OVER
10.5

Adam Burke:

The Over 9.5 at -160 is an option, but the Ravens are the best team in the AFC North. They ranked 32nd in Adjusted Games Lost per Football Outsiders with 191.2. That was 33 more than any other team in the NFL. They lost running backs and defensive backs early and then lost Lamar Jackson later in the season. While Baltimore went from 8-3 to 8-9, a severely banged-up roster with a backup quarterback lost those six games by 1, 2, 1, 20, 1 and 3 points, with four of those losses against playoff teams, including the two Super Bowl participants.

The Browns clearly have their issues with Deshaun Watson's suspension. Many project the Bengals to fall back a bit. The Steelers may be in line for their first losing season under Mike Tomlin. It isn't out of the realm of possibility that Baltimore goes 5-1 or 4-2 in the division. The AFC East and NFC South are the divisions the Ravens drew on the schedule, but they also added Jacksonville and the Giants on the road along with Denver at home with their last-place schedule. While all three are improved, so, too, are the Ravens.

This team should be the AFC North champion and 11 or 12 wins should accomplish that feat, along with going Over this alternate win total.



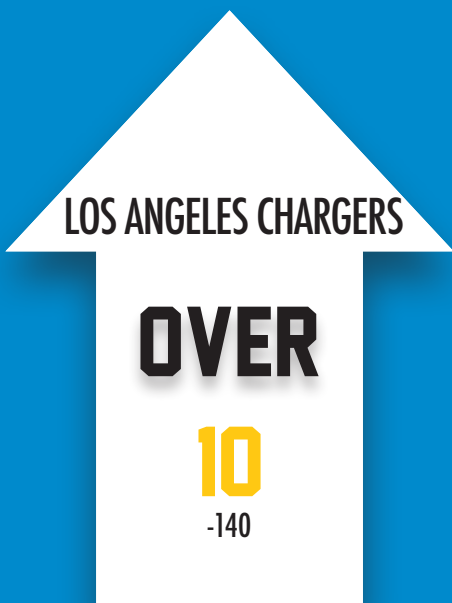
Paul Howard:

The Colts should have made the playoffs last year and many think they upgraded big time with Matt Ryan replacing Carson Wentz. A great running game and offensive line will help Ryan, along with an underrated defense. It feels like 4-0 or 3-1 against Jacksonville and Houston, but the big move that will also help is Tennessee taking a huge step back. Ryan Tannehill was so bad in the playoff loss last year that he sought out therapy. A.J. Brown and Julio Jones are gone at wideout and their replacements are Robert Woods (coming off an injury) and Treyton Burks (rookie). If this team gets off to a slow start, Malik Willis could also take over at QB.



Steve Makinen:

I have to admit, I was stunned watching Kansas City's second-half implosion in the AFC title game, and to this day, I don't feel QB Patrick Mahomes is taking enough criticism for the role he played in it. Toward the end of the game, he looked legitimately shook. Now, heading into the 2022 season, he has been stripped of perhaps the team's biggest difference-maker over the last six years in WR Tyreek Hill. He was the kind of player opposing defensive coordinators had to scheme for every play of the game. His loss, and it's importance on what this offense has been able to do, is being undersold if you ask me. He made Mahomes look better by opening the field. I think every other K.C. offensive option is going to suffer somewhat in his absence. Let's not forget the Chiefs also lost defensive playmaker Tyrann Mathieu. Andy Reid's team will face a major challenge from a division that is arguably the best in football. The Chargers' and Broncos' gains will be the Chiefs' loss in my opinion. Plus, the schedule to open the season is one of the most difficult eight-game starts I have ever seen, at least on paper.



Steve Makinen:

I have come to rely on one of my transitional systems more than others, and it revolves around prolific offensive teams not making the playoffs. There have been 12 teams that have scored 27+ PPG in the last 21 seasons and did not make the playoffs. The combined record of those teams in the follow-up season was 119-74, good for 61.7% and an average of 9.9 wins per season. Only three of those teams did not make the playoffs, and two others, the 2009 Saints and 2020 Buccaneers, went on to win the Super Bowl. The Chargers qualify for this system as well as another one that involves outscoring opponents while having a negative turnover differential. In 2021, the Chargers suffered from bad luck, rookie coaching decisions and injury woes. In my estimation, all three of those factors have a chance of completely turning around this season. Justin Herbert has developed into one of the NFL's top quarterbacks, a dynamic playmaker who led the Chargers on a six-game run at the end of the season in which they topped the 28-point mark in every game, averaging 33.5 PPG! This team also boasts a nice defensive front and some playmakers on the back end. In my opinion, the Chargers and Broncos take over the tough AFC West this season.

What Quality of Wins/Losses in 2021 May Mean in '22

By Steve Makinen

Changeover Systems, which are the previous season's records and/or statistics that provide insight into the upcoming season, are often extremely predictive. Two years ago, many of the most optimistic systems pointed to the Buccaneers enjoying a breakout season in 2020. All the Bucs did was go on to win their first Super Bowl title. Last year, the systems weren't quite as definitive, but several angles signaled declines for teams such as the Seahawks and Ravens and improvements for the Raiders and 49ers. The Seahawks and Ravens dropped by five and three wins. The Raiders, despite an in-season coaching change, jumped by two wins and reached the postseason for the first time in five years, while the 49ers improved by four wins and reached the NFC title game.

This exercise is a rite of spring for me. Each year, I go through the list of won-lost records and statistical traits I feel are most important for projecting the next season. In Part 1, I'll analyze the quality and quantity of each team's won-lost records. Next week, in Part 2, I'll dig into a number of key statistical angles that typically lead to significant improvement or decline.

The NFL is unlike any other league in how quickly teams can rise and fall from year to year. First-to-worst and worst-to-first moves are not unusual, so it benefits bettors to know the traits that lead to teams improving or declining so quickly. What is the typical resume of a team that improves greatly from one season to the next? Those who can find the answer can take advantage of not only futures wagers and season win totals but also point spreads in the early weeks of the season.

Read through my findings over the next couple of weeks and make your own assessments. Then factor in free-agent moves and other personnel changes and head to the betting window. I will share my own conclusions, along with my updated 2022 NFL Power Ratings, sometime in the next few weeks.

Systems for teams that had an unusually high or low total of close wins the prior season:

In 2019, the Seahawks' 10 "close wins" (eight points or less) were the most by any team over the last 30 seasons. In that span, the 33 teams that managed 8+ close wins had an average decline of 3.0 wins the following season.

Team affected in 2022: Pittsburgh.

From 2017-20, 41 teams won 6+ games by eight points or less. Only six improved the next season, with an average decline of 2.3 wins.

Teams affected in 2022: Atlanta, Baltimore, Green Bay, Las Vegas, Minnesota, Pittsburgh, Tampa Bay, Tennessee.

Systems for teams that had an unusually high or low total of close losses:

From 1997-2020, 33 teams lost 8+ games by eight points or less. This group's average improvement the next season was 3.52 wins, with 29 of those teams improving.

Team affected in 2022: Minnesota.

From 2007-20, 67 teams lost 6+ games by eight points or less. Of those 67 teams, 53 of them improved their won-lost record the next season, including 27 by 4+ wins. The average improvement of the 67 teams was 2.81 wins. Of the six teams that qualified in 2021, four improved while the other two equaled their 2020 win total.

Teams affected in 2022: Baltimore, Carolina, Cleveland, Detroit, Minnesota.

Systems for teams that had an unusually high or low total of blowout wins:

The last team to record at least nine double-digit wins and improve its won-lost record the next season was the Broncos in 1997-98. Since then, the average decline of the 30 teams that did it was 3.97 wins.

Team affected in 2022: Buffalo.

(continued on next page)

None of the last 15 teams that recorded at least six “blowout wins” (20+ points) improved its record the next year. The average decline of those 15 teams was 3.3 wins.

Team affected in 2022: Tampa Bay.

From 1994-2020, eight teams won 6+ games without winning a single game by double digits. Although the 2020 Raiders became the first of that group to improve the next year, those eight teams had an average decline of 2.25 wins.

Teams affected in 2022: Atlanta.

Interestingly, teams that won five games or less but none by double-digit margins have shown significant improvement the following year. In fact, since 2006, 24 of the 26 teams in this group improved the next season, with an average improvement of 3.81 wins. All three teams from this group in 2020 improved by two wins in 2021.

Teams affected in 2022: NY Jets.

Systems for teams that had an unusually high or low total of blowout losses:

From 2000-20, 21 teams went 7-9 or worse and had zero “blowout losses” (20 points or more). These teams are natural candidates for improvement, and 19 of the 21 teams did just that, with an average jump of 3.05 wins.

Teams affected in 2022: Seattle.

Another sign of how quickly fortunes can change in the NFL: From 1999-2020, 35 teams lost at least nine games by double-digit margins. Of those, 30 improved the next season — by an average of 3.93 wins — including the Jaguars and Jets last year.

Teams affected in 2022: Houston, Jacksonville, N.Y. Giants.

From 1999-2020, 20 teams won at least 10 games and had 4+ losses by double-digit margins. Half of those teams declined by at least three wins (with an average decline of 4.9 wins).

Teams affected in 2022: Las Vegas.

Systems based on playoff results:

Only two of the last 28 teams to lose in the Super Bowl improved their won-lost record the following season, with an average decline of 3.36 wins.

Team affected in 2022: Cincinnati.

Alternatively, the last 29 Super Bowl winners have an average decline of only 1.1 wins, boasting an average won-lost record of about 11-5. Only two of those 29 teams finished below .500 the following season.

Team affected in 2022: LA Rams.

From 1991-2020, 34 teams won 13+ games and didn’t make the Super Bowl. None of those 34 improved their won-lost record the following season and only four equaled their previous win total. The average decline among this group was 3.71 wins.

Teams affected in 2021: Green Bay, Tampa Bay.

Systems for teams whose won-lost records are trending:

From 2001-20, 14 teams improved their record for a third consecutive season (or more). Of those 14, only one team improved the following season. The average decline for this group was 4.3 wins, with an average win total of 6.5.

Team affected in 2022: Arizona, Las Vegas, Tampa Bay.

From 2005-20, 30 teams won at least six more games than the previous season. Of those 30, only one improved in the following season, with an average decline of 3.37 wins.

Teams affected in 2022: Cincinnati, Dallas.

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JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS

HEAD COACH: DOUG PEDERSON (1ST)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: PRESS TAYLOR

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: MIKE CALDWELL

18.5 STEVE MAKINEN'S POWER RATING
(#27 OF 32)

The Urban Meyer experiment was a disaster both on and off the field. Enter Doug Pederson, a Super Bowl-winning coach who brings an experienced NFL staff. Trevor Lawrence, the 2021 No. 1 overall pick, led the NFL with 17 interceptions last season but never really had a chance under Meyer. This year, he has a coach who's at least smart enough not to bench the team's best running back (James Robinson). Jacksonville also spent, and overpaid, in free agency to land wide receiver Christian Kirk, guard Brandon Scherff and linebacker Foyesade Oluokun. The Jaguars also focused on building the defense through the draft. There is nowhere to go but up for a team that has won four combined games over the last two seasons.

OFFENSE

The Jaguars invested in free agency to help further develop Lawrence, who showed brief flashes but ended up throwing just 12 touchdowns versus 17 picks. Pederson, who will call the plays, and new offensive coordinator Press Taylor will be challenged with creating a more explosive group that ranked last in the NFL in scoring (14.9 ppg).

Kirk gets an opportunity that never came in Arizona to be the No. 1 receiver. Zay Jones and tight end Evan Engram come in via free agency to join a group that includes Marvin Jones Jr., Laviska Shenault Jr., Jamal Agnew and Laquon Treadwell.

Owner Shad Khan and GM Trent Baalke also invested heavily in the offensive line, signing left tackle Cam Robinson to a three-year extension, adding five-time Pro Bowl right guard Scherff and drafting center Luke Fortner. This group must improve as they allowed their franchise player to be sacked 32 times.

James Robinson had 1,414 total yards and 10 touchdowns as a rookie in 2020 but fell out of favor with Meyer and tore his Achilles late last season. He just returned to begin 7-on-7 drills. Travis Etienne, a first-round pick in 2021, missed last season with a foot injury but participated in the team's offseason program and looks to recreate the magic he had with Lawrence at Clemson.

DEFENSE

This group was near the bottom of the league with only 32 sacks. Jacksonville elected to go with potential by drafting Travon Walker (Georgia) with the No. 1 overall pick instead of selecting proven production with Aidan Hutchinson (Michigan). The Jaguars used most of their draft selections on the defensive side (five of seven overall), including Utah's Devin Lloyd (No. 27 overall) and Wyoming's Chad Muma (Round 3).

The front seven should at least be better at stopping the run with the additions of Walker and Lloyd, who will play alongside Josh Allen (needs to find the form of his 2019 rookie season when he posted 10.5 sacks), Oluokun (led the league last year with 192 tackles), Malcom Brown, Roy Robertson-Harris and Foley Fatukasi (signed in free agency after playing his first four seasons with the Jets).

The biggest offseason deal in the secondary was signing former Rams cornerback Darious Williams. Williams will start opposite Shaq Griffin, with 2021 second-round pick Tyson Campbell playing the nickel. Free safety Rayshawn Jenkins must make a more significant impact after not having an interception in 14 games. Second-year strong safety Andre Cisco must meet expectations after failing to beat out Andrew Wingard for the starting job last season. This group only had seven interceptions (tied for 30th) last season.

OUTLOOK

There are reasons for some optimism in Jacksonville as this roster has more talent than last year and has a significant upgrade in coaching. However, the organization has had 10 double-digit losing seasons in the last 11 years. If Lawrence can play like he did in the season finale, when he helped knock the Colts out of the playoffs, then Jacksonville could eclipse their win total. Nevertheless, they still look to be a year early. — Wes Reynolds

SEASON WIN
TOTAL PLAY

**UNDER
6.5**

AFC SOUTH
ODDS TO WIN

+750

AFC CONFERENCE
ODDS TO WIN

65-1

SUPER BOWL
ODDS TO WIN

130-1

STEVE MAKINEN'S EFFECTIVE STATISTICS

SEASON	NEW HC?	SM PR	EFF STRG	EYPP+/-	SM BR	OFFRS-NEW	EOPPG	EOYPP	EOYPPT	DEFRS-NEW	EDPPG	EDFYPP	EDYPTT
2021	Yes	13.5	-11.3	-0.48	9.2	Yes	15.6	5.26	19.81	Yes	26.8	5.74	13.04
2020		13	-11.5	-0.85	11.5	Yes	18.1	5.49	18.04		29.9	6.35	13.96
2019		18.5	-5.4	-0.65	5.8	Yes	18.4	5.62	18.65		24.2	6.27	15.45
2018		20	-3.1	-0.11	3.2		16.4	5.15	18.72		19.5	5.26	15.77

SCHEDULE STRENGTH

23.79
(#12 of 32)

FIELD RATINGS

1 / -0.5
(HOME/ROAD)

2022 SCHEDULE

DATE	OPPONENT	Est. Line	SERIES TRENDS
9/11	at Washington	+4.9	WASHINGTON is 6-1 ATS all-time vs. Jacksonville
9/18	INDIANAPOLIS	+6	JACKSONVILLE has won L6 ATS hosting Indianapolis
9/25	at LA Chargers	+11.5	CHARGERS have won L9 ATS vs. Jacksonville
10/2	at Philadelphia	+7.5	PHILADELPHIA is on 3-0 SU & ATS streak vs. Jacksonville
10/9	HOUSTON	-3.5	UNDERDOGS are 14-5 ATS In HOU-JAC series since '12
10/16	at Indianapolis	+8.8	JACKSONVILLE is on 5-1-1 ATS run at Indianapolis
10/23	NY GIANTS	+0.8	JACKSONVILLE is 6-1 ATS all-time vs. Giants
10/30	vs. Denver	+7.5	UNDER the total is 6-3 in L9 of DEN-JAC h2h series
11/6	LAS VEGAS	+4.7	JACKSONVILLE is on 6-2 ATS run vs. Raiders
11/13	at Kansas City	+14	KANSAS CITY is 5-1 ATS in L6 vs. Jacksonville
11/27	BALTIMORE	+4.9	HOME TEAMS are 7-2-1 ATS in L10 of BAL-JAC h2h series
12/4	at Detroit	+1.7	FAVORITES have won L7 ATS in JAC-DET h2h series
12/11	at Tennessee	+8.1	TENNESSEE is on 10-3 ATS surge vs. Jacksonville
12/18	DALLAS	+6.8	The L5 games of DAL-JAC h2h series went OVER the total
12/22	at NY Jets	+1.7	The L5 games of JAC-NYJ h2h series went OVER the total
1/1	at Houston	-0.8	UNDERDOGS are 7-3 ATS in L10 of JAC-HOU series in Houston
1/8	TENNESSEE	+5.6	TENNESSEE is 4-1 ATS in L5 at Jacksonville

TEAM TRENDS

• JACKSONVILLE IS 12-2-1 ATS (L15G) VS INDIANAPOLIS

• JACKSONVILLE IS 10-39-1 ATS (L50G) NON-CONFERENCE GAMES

• JACKSONVILLE IS 12-2-1 UNDER (L15G) NON-CONFERENCE GAMES

2021 RESULTS

3-14 SU & 5-12 ATS

DATE	OPPONENT	SCORE	SU	FL	ATS	TOTAL
9/12	at Houston	21-37	L	-3	L	45.5 O
9/19	DENVER	13-23	L	6	L	44.5 U
9/26	ARIZONA	19-31	L	8	L	51.5 U
9/30	at Cincinnati	21-24	L	7.5	W	46 U
10/10	TENNESSEE	19-37	L	4.5	L	48.5 O
10/17	vs. Miami	23-20	W	1.5	W	47 U
10/31	at Seattle	7-31	L	4	L	44 U
11/7	BUFFALO	9-6	W	16	W	48.5 U
11/14	at Indianapolis	17-23	L	10.5	W	48 U
11/21	SAN FRANCISCO	10-30	L	6.5	L	45.5 U
11/28	ATLANTA	14-21	L	1	L	46 U
12/5	at LA Rams	7-37	L	14	L	47.5 U
12/12	at Tennessee	0-20	L	8.5	L	44.5 U
12/19	HOUSTON	16-30	L	-6	L	40.5 O
12/26	at NY Jets	21-26	L	2	L	43 O
1/2	at New England	10-50	L	17	L	41.5 O
1/9	INDIANAPOLIS	26-11	W	14	W	43 U

2021 STATS & RANKS

	OFFENSE STAT	OFFENSE RANK	DEFENSE STAT	DEFENSE RANK
Points Per Game	14.9	32	26.9	28
Yards Per Point	20.5	32	13.1	30
Plays Per Game	60.5	29		
Time of Possession	27:21	31		
3rd Down Conv. %	35.9%	28	43.0%	25
Total Yards Per Game	305.4	27	353.1	20
Yards Per Play	5	24	5.6	25
Rush Attempts Per Game	23.1	30		
Rush Yards Per Game	103.2	22	125.1	23
Yards Per Rush Attempt	4.5	9	4.3	16
Pass Attempts Per Game	35.5	11		
Completion %	59.8%	28	69.4%	31
Passing Yards Per Game	202.1	22	227.9	17
Yards Per Pass Attempt	6.1	29	7.1	27
Turnovers	1.7	29	0.5	32



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TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS

HEAD COACH: TODD BOWLES (1ST)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: BYRON LEFTWICH

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: KACY RODGERS/LARRY FOOTE

30

STEVE MAKINEN'S POWER RATING
(#2 OF 32)

Tampa Bay had the most volatile offseason of any team in the NFL. Tom Brady retired on Feb. 1 and then unretired on the eve of free agency. Not all of Brady's mates elected to run it back as Rob Gronkowski and Ali Marpet retired. Bruce Arians moves upstairs, and defensive coordinator Todd Bowles gets another shot as a head coach. The Bucs tied with Green Bay for the best record in the NFL last season at 13-4. Tampa Bay outscored opponents by 158 points and were ranked favorably by Pro Football Focus and Football Outsiders, earning the fourth overall team grade at PFF and ranking third in Total Defense-Adjusted Value Over Average (DVOA) and fourth in Weighted DVOA at FO. Brady and offensive coordinator Byron Leftwich are loaded with weapons on offense. At 45, can Brady do it one more time?

OFFENSE

In his 22nd season, Brady led the NFL in passing yards (5,316) and touchdown passes (43). However, he also led the league in passing attempts (719) and has made it clear he'd like a better balance. The Bucs re-signed workhorse Leonard Fournette and veteran Giovani Bernard to go with Ke'Shawn Vaughn. Arizona State rookie Rachaad White may be the receiving back Brady has needed since he left the Patriots. Nevertheless, Brady did take a leave of absence from the team on Aug. 11 to attend to "personal things."

Chris Godwin tore his ACL in Week 15 and is likely to miss the early portion of the season. Mike Evans has been battling hamstring issues but has eight straight 1,000-yard receiving seasons and can carry a heavier load until Godwin's return. Julio Jones and Russell Gage spent several years together in Atlanta and now return to the NFC South.

The tight end group is nearly brand new with the departure of Gronk and O.J. Howard. Cameron Brate regains his starting job but will be challenged by fourth-rounder Cade Otton (Washington) and Kyle Rudolph.

Questions remain on the offensive line with Marpet's retirement, Alex Cappa leaving for Cincinnati and center Ryan Jensen going down in training camp with a potentially season-ending knee injury. The Bucs traded for Shaq Mason and drafted tackle/guard Luke Goedeke (Central Michigan) in the second round.

DEFENSE

Last season, the Bucs allowed the most completions (445) but also had the most passing attempts against (680) as teams largely abandoned the run against the league's best rush defense over the past three seasons. Still, the Bucs needed to get younger and more athletic on the defensive front, so they said goodbye to edge rusher Jason Pierre-Paul and defensive tackle Ndamukong Suh. Joe Tryon-Shoyinka, the team's first-round pick in 2021, takes Paul's place. The Bucs traded out of the first round to select Houston defensive end Logan Hall at No. 33 overall. Hall is a good pass rush who can complement Pro Bowl nose tackle Vita Vea. Akiem Hicks also comes in from Chicago via free agency.

Bowles will still be the play caller on defense and the keys to his operation are linebackers Devin White and Lavonte David, who is recovering from a Lisfranc injury. David has been playing at an elite level for almost a decade, but White declined from nine sacks in 2020 to 3.5 last season. Shaq Barrett had 10 sacks last season and leads the NFL in quarterback pressures (232) since joining the Bucs in 2019.

Strong safety Jordan Whitehead left for the Jets, but the Bucs have continuity in the secondary, led by cornerback Carlton Davis III, who re-signed a three-year deal. Davis missed seven games due to injury but still had 11 passes defended and one INT while drawing the best opposing receiver each week.

Corner Sean Murphy-Bunting also battled injuries and returns with Jamel Dean and safety Antoine Winfield Jr. In all, the Bucs have four starters still on their rookie deals. The secondary is one of the better groups in the league and gets even better with the addition of two veteran safeties in free agency: the Falcons' Keanu Neal and the Giants' Logan Ryan.

OUTLOOK

The Bucs remain a strong favorite in the AFC South, but the longer Brady has an indefinite timetable for return (some are starting to take the win total off the board), the more worrisome it becomes. Injuries have mounted during training camp, especially on the offensive line and in the receiving corps. The schedule is tough to start the season with road games at Dallas and New Orleans, which has defeated the Bucs in seven straight regular-season games. Then Green Bay and Kansas City come to town. The Ravens and the Rams, who defeated Tampa in the final seconds of the divisional round after the Bucs came back from a 27-3 deficit, also visit Raymond James Stadium. The Bucs are on a mission team after ending the season in gut-wrenching fashion. However, there is still a lot of change in just one year and there could be more on the horizon. — Wes Reynolds

SEASON WIN
TOTAL PLAY

UNDER
11.5

NFC SOUTH
ODDS TO WIN

-250

NFC CONFERENCE
ODDS TO WIN

+330

SUPER BOWL
ODDS TO WIN

+750

STEVE MAKINEN'S EFFECTIVE STATISTICS

SEASON	NEW HC?	SM PR	EFF STRG	EYPP+/-	SM BR	OFFRS-NEW	EOPPG	EOYPP	EOYPPT	DEFRS-NEW	EDPPG	EDFYPP	EDYPPT
2021		30	8.2	0.66	-5.8		30.3	6.11	13.25		22	5.45	15.21
2020		31.5	9.1	0.83	-5.6		30.9	6.17	12.55		22.2	5.34	14.76
2019	Yes	24	1.1	0.78	0.5	Yes	27.1	6.14	14.72	Yes	26.4	5.35	13
2018		20.5	-2.7	0.39	3.9		25	6.67	16.89		27.8	6.28	13.58

SCHEDULE STRENGTH

23.02
(#22 of 32)

FIELD RATINGS

1.9 / 0.1
(HOME/ROAD)

2022 SCHEDULE

DATE	OPPONENT	Est. Line	SERIES TRENDS
9/11	at Dallas	-0.8	UNDERDOGS are on 4-0-1 ATS run in TB-DAL h2h series
9/18	at New Orleans	-6.6	NEW ORLEANS is 7-1 ATS in L8 vs. Tampa Bay
9/25	GREEN BAY	-2.9	TAMPA BAY is 7-3 ATS in L10 hosting Green Bay
10/2	KANSAS CITY	-2.6	TAMPA BAY is 4-0-1 ATS in L5 at home vs. Kansas City
10/9	ATLANTA	-14	OVER the total is 10-2 in L12 of ATL-TB h2h series
10/16	at Pittsburgh	-7.5	ROAD TEAMS are on 5-1 ATS run in L6 of TB-PIT series
10/23	at Carolina	-10.1	TAMPA BAY has won L4 SU & ATS vs. Carolina by 21.8 PPG
10/27	BALTIMORE	-7.5	ROAD TEAMS have won L5 ATS in BAL-TB h2h series
11/6	LA RAMS	-2.1	RAMS are 9-1 ATS in L10 vs. Tampa Bay
11/13	vs. Seattle	-11.4	TAMPA BAY is 4-1 in L5 vs. Seattle but lost LT
11/27	at Cleveland	-5.7	The L6 games of TB-CLE series went UNDER the total
12/5	NEW ORLEANS	-9.2	NEW ORLEANS has won L4 SU & ATS at Tampa Bay
12/11	at San Francisco	-3.9	ROAD TEAMS are on 3-1 ATS run in L4 of TB-SF series
12/18	CINCINNATI	-7	TAMPA BAY has won L5 ATS vs. Cincinnati
12/25	at Arizona	-3.1	ARIZONA has won L4 ATS vs. Tampa Bay
1/1	CAROLINA	-12.8	TAMPA BAY has won L3 SU & ATS hosting Carolina
1/8	at Atlanta	-11.6	OVER the total is 5-1 in L6 of TB-ATL series at Atlanta

TEAM TRENDS

• TAMPA BAY IS 9-1 ATS (L10G) ON ROAD VS AFC NORTH

• TAMPA BAY IS 1-9 ATS (L10G) VS LA RAMS

• TAMPA BAY IS 25-11 OVER (L10Y) IN OCTOBER

2021 RESULTS

14-5 SU & 10-9 ATS

DATE	OPPONENT	SCORE	SU	FL	ATS	TOTAL
9/9	DALLAS	31-29	W	-9	L	52.5 O
9/19	ATLANTA	48-25	W	-13	W	52 O
9/26	at LA Rams	24-34	L	0	L	55 O
10/3	at New England	19-17	W	-6.5	L	49.5 U
10/10	MIAMI	45-17	W	-11	W	48 O
10/14	at Philadelphia	28-22	W	-7	L	52 U
10/24	CHICAGO	38-3	W	-12	W	47 U
10/31	at New Orleans	27-36	L	-4	L	48.5 O
11/14	at Washington	19-29	L	-9	L	50.5 U
11/22	NY GIANTS	30-10	W	-10.5	W	50 U
11/28	at Indianapolis	38-31	W	-3	W	53 O
12/5	at Atlanta	30-17	W	-10.5	W	51 U
12/12	BUFFALO	33-27	W	-3	W	53.5 O
12/19	NEW ORLEANS	0-9	L	-12	L	46 U
12/26	at Carolina	32-6	W	-11.5	W	44 U
1/2	at NY Jets	28-24	W	-14.5	L	47 O
1/9	CAROLINA	41-17	W	-11	W	43 O
1/16	PHILADELPHIA	31-15	W	-7.5	W	46.5 U
1/23	LA RAMS	27-30	L	-2.5	L	48 O

2021 STATS & RANKS

	OFFENSE STAT	OFFENSE RANK	DEFENSE STAT	DEFENSE RANK
Points Per Game	30.1	2	20.8	5
Yards Per Point	13.5	6	16	9
Plays Per Game	67	4		
Time of Possession	30:17	19		
3rd Down Conv. %	47.1%	2	38.5%	12
Total Yards Per Game	405.9	2	331.5	13
Yards Per Play	6.1	2	5.2	7
Rush Attempts Per Game	22.6	31		
Rush Yards Per Game	98.4	26	92.5	3
Yards Per Rush Attempt	4.3	15	4.3	15
Pass Attempts Per Game	43	1		
Completion %	67.3%	7	65.4%	17
Passing Yards Per Game	307.6	1	238.9	21
Yards Per Pass Attempt	7.4	12	6	4
Turnovers	1.1	8	1.7	5



ATLANTA FALCONS

HEAD COACH: ARTHUR SMITH (2ND)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: DAVE RAGONE

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: DEAN PEES

17.5 STEVE MAKINEN'S POWER RATING
(#30 OF 32)

Even though the Falcons insisted they were not in a rebuild, they're in the middle of one this year – and should've started one year ago. The roster lacks talent at several positions, and they pursued a trade for Deshaun Watson, which was the cue for Matt Ryan to seek an exit from Atlanta after 14 seasons. Atlanta has one year to find out if its long-term replacement for Ryan is on the roster with free agent Marcus Mariota and third-round pick Desmond Ridder (Cincinnati) competing for the starting job. Second-year head coach Arthur Smith had a great deal of success in Tennessee as its offensive coordinator, but he is going to need both time and patience from Falcons owner Arthur Blank.

OFFENSE

Mariota didn't play much last season and was used only sparingly by the Raiders in 2020, but he is still a small favorite to hang on to the starting quarterback job over Ridder. On the surface, both QBs look like stopgaps until Atlanta perhaps has a crack at either Bryce Young or C.J. Stroud in the 2023 NFL draft.

Atlanta ranked 31st out of 32 teams in rushing offense last season, which should not come as a surprise considering wide receiver Cordarrelle Patterson was the leading rusher at 618 yards (1,166 yards of total offense). Damien Williams comes in from Kansas City while fifth-round pick Tyler Allgeier (BYU) could be an immediate factor, as his physical running style is a fit for Smith's scheme.

Tight end Kyle Pitts lived up to being the No. 4 overall pick in 2021 with 68 catches for 1,026 yards and made the Pro Bowl as a rookie. However, he only had one touchdown, so the Falcons must improve dramatically in the red zone. Fellow tight end Anthony Firkser played under Smith at Tennessee and could help free up Pitts for more red-zone opportunities. With Calvin Ridley out for the season due to a gambling suspension, No. 8 overall pick Drake London (USC) will be the primary target at receiver. Bryan Edwards also comes in via free agency from the Raiders, but there isn't much proven production elsewhere at wideout.

Longtime left tackle Jake Matthews signed an extension in the offseason, and right guard Chris Lindstrom is in line for a new deal. After these two, there are a lot of holes still up front.

DEFENSE

Atlanta is coming off a season when it was 26th in the NFL in total defense and 30th in scoring defense. However, Foye Oluokun is now in Jacksonville after leading the NFL with 192 tackles. Safety and fourth-leading tackler Duron Harmon left for the Raiders.

Grady Jarrett has been a mainstay up front in Atlanta for his entire seven-year career. He has had to carry this group and may have to do so again, which is not a good thing considering the Falcons were the only defensive line last season that had a PFF grade below 50. Atlanta took some steps to make things better this offseason by bringing in Lorenzo Carter (career-high five sacks in 2021) and Arnold Ebiketie (Penn State) on the edge.

They also added third-rounder DeAngelo Malone (Western Kentucky), and Adetokunbo Ogundeji was a pleasant surprise in his rookie season. The inside linebacker group loses Oluokun but gains former first-round pick Rashaan Evans, who was with Falcons defensive coordinator Dean Pees in Tennessee. Evans hasn't quite lived up to his draft status, but he should slot in decently as Oluokun's replacement with 2020 draft pick Mykal Walker. Will linebacker Deion Jones has been inconsistent the last couple seasons. Second-rounder Troy Andersen (Montana State) should push for time in the middle.

No cornerback duo heading into 2022 gave up fewer yards last season than Casey Hayward and A.J. Terrell, who combined to allow only 588 yards. Granted, Hayward was playing with the Raiders, but corner is the Falcons' strength on defense. Safeties Richie Grant and Jaylinn Hawkins must get better if the pass rush does not improve.

OUTLOOK

The Falcons were outscored by 146 points last year, the fifth-worst scoring differential in the NFL. Atlanta was also 30th in Total DVOA and had the third-best injury luck metric per Football Outsiders. This was a bad team that somehow won seven games because it went 7-2 in one-score games. That is bound to regress dramatically this season. – Wes Reynolds

SEASON WIN
TOTAL PLAY

**UNDER
5**

NFC SOUTH
ODDS TO WIN

35-1

NFC CONFERENCE
ODDS TO WIN

100-1

SUPER BOWL
ODDS TO WIN

200-1

STEVE MAKINEN'S EFFECTIVE STATISTICS

SEASON	NEW HC?	SM PR	EFF STRG	EYPP+/-	SM BR	OFFRS-NEW	EOPPG	EOYPP	EOYPPT	DEFRS-NEW	EDPPG	EDFYPP	EDYPTT
2021	Yes	18	-8.7	-0.33	3.5	Yes	18.8	5.33	16.13	Yes	27.5	5.67	13.29
2020		23	-0.3	-0.55	0.0		24.2	5.73	15.36	Yes	24.3	6.28	16.23
2019		24	0	-0.02	1.9	Yes	22.6	5.87	16.96	Yes	22.9	5.89	15.4
2018		24	-1	0.18	-0.6		25.1	6.4	15.44		26.1	6.22	14.82

SCHEDULE STRENGTH

23.54
(#16 of 32)

FIELD RATINGS

1.4 / 0
(HOME/ROAD)

2022 SCHEDULE

DATE	OPPONENT	Est. Line	SERIES TRENDS
9/11	NEW ORLEANS	+3.8	NEW ORLEANS is on 4-0 SU & ATS run at New Orleans
9/18	at LA Rams	+14.7	FAVORITES are on 10-2 ATS surge in ATL-LAR series
9/25	at Seattle	+3.6	OVER the total is 10-3 in L13 of ATL-SEA h2h series
10/2	CLEVELAND	+2.9	CLEVELAND is on 5-1 ATS run vs. Atlanta
10/9	at Tampa Bay	+14	OVER the total is 10-2 in L12 of ATL-TB h2h series
10/16	SAN FRANCISCO	+4.9	OVER the total is 5-2 in L7 of SF-ATL series in Atlanta
10/23	at Cincinnati	+9.7	OVER the total is 5-2 in L7 of ATL-CIN h2h series
10/30	CAROLINA	+0.2	ROAD TEAMS/DOG are on 4-0 ATS streak in CAR-ATL rivalry
11/6	LA CHARGERS	+8.9	UNDER the total is 6-1 in L7 of LAC-ATL h2h series
11/10	at Carolina	+2.5	ATLANTA has won L4 ATS at Carolina
11/20	CHICAGO	-2.8	CHICAGO is 9-2-1 ATS in L12 vs. Atlanta
11/27	at Washington	+5.4	ROAD TEAMS are on 8-1 ATS surge in ATL-WAS h2h series
12/4	PITTSBURGH	+0.5	PITTSBURGH has won L3 SU & ATS vs. Atlanta
12/18	at New Orleans	+6	UNDER the total is 7-2 in L9 of ATL-NO series at New Orleans
12/24	at Baltimore	+9.8	BALTIMORE is on 5-1 ATS run vs. Atlanta
1/1	ARIZONA	+6.6	ATLANTA is on 7-2 ATS run hosting Arizona
1/8	TAMPA BAY	+11.6	OVER the total is 5-1 in L6 of TB-ATL series at Atlanta

TEAM TRENDS

- ATLANTA IS 8-2 ATS (L10G) IN NON-CONFERENCE GAMES

- ATLANTA IS 2-13 ATS (L15G) AT HOME IN CONFERENCE GAMES

- ATLANTA IS 10-1-1 OVER (L12G) AT HOME IN JANUARY

2021 RESULTS

7-10 SU & ATS

DATE	OPPONENT	SCORE	SU	FL	ATS	TOTAL
9/12	PHILADELPHIA	6-32	L	-3.5	L	48.5 U
9/19	at Tampa Bay	25-48	L	13	L	52 O
9/26	at NY Giants	17-14	W	2.5	W	47.5 U
10/3	WASHINGTON	30-34	L	2	L	46.5 O
10/10	vs. NY Jets	27-20	W	-3.5	W	46 O
10/24	at Miami	30-28	W	-1.5	W	48 O
10/31	CAROLINA	13-19	L	-1.5	L	47 U
11/7	at New Orleans	27-25	W	6.5	W	43 O
11/14	at Dallas	3-43	L	7.5	L	55 U
11/18	NEW ENGLAND	0-25	L	7	L	47.5 U
11/28	at Jacksonville	21-14	W	-1	W	46 U
12/5	TAMPA BAY	17-30	L	10.5	L	51 U
12/12	at Carolina	29-21	W	2.5	W	42 O
12/19	at San Francisco	13-31	L	9	L	47.5 U
12/26	DETROIT	20-16	W	-7.5	L	43 U
1/2	at Buffalo	15-29	L	14.5	W	46 U

2021 STATS & RANKS

	OFFENSE STAT	OFFENSE RANK	DEFENSE STAT	DEFENSE RANK
Points Per Game	18.4	26	27	29
Yards Per Point	16.5	21	13.5	26
Plays Per Game	59.2	31		
Time of Possession	28:09	29		
3rd Down Conv. %	38.9%	19	48.4%	30
Total Yards Per Game	303.8	29	364.4	26
Yards Per Play	5.1	23	5.6	24
Rush Attempts Per Game	23.1	29		
Rush Yards Per Game	85.4	31	131.9	27
Yards Per Rush Attempt	3.7	30	4.3	17
Pass Attempts Per Game	33.7	19		
Completion %	65.8%	14	67.8%	28
Passing Yards Per Game	218.4	16	232.5	18
Yards Per Pass Attempt	7	19	6.8	23
Turnovers	1.5	25	1.2	19



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