

NFL WEEK 9 PICKS

Welcome to Caesar's Picks Everyone! This will be a weekly project where I pick every game from the NFL Schedule. I'll offer my quick thoughts, some stats, and predictions for each game. I'll give a final score for each game as well as a confidence scale. My confidence scale is based not on the winner of the game, but the point spread of the game from the Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. The scale simply ranges from low, to medium, to high confidence.

I went 8-7 on my picks last week which keeps me at 6 games over .500 (55-49). My high confidence picks were near spot on last week as I went 5-1 (you had one job Colts) and now I have a strong 21-10 record on my strongest picks. With the conclusion of the World Series (Congratulations to the Nationals!), it's time to put the focus back to Football with a strong slate of games for the week.

49ers 7-0 vs Cardinals 3-4-1 (+10)

The 49ers are still undefeated and are making a stronger case each week as the best team in football. The pressure generated by their defensive front caused Panthers QB Kyle Allen to have his worst performance by far in his career with 3 interceptions. With names like Deforest Buckner, Dee Ford, Nick Bosa, Kwon Alexander, and Richard Sherman, the entire defense has a mix of youth and experience that balances out well. The offense is built on running the ball with Running backs Tevin Coleman, Matt Brieda, and Raheem Mostert. The Cardinals are 25th in run defense, so they will have trouble stopping the Niners. The Cardinals have some running backs of their own, but they're banged up and won't suit up for Thursday (David Johnson, Chase Edmonds). Arizona still has an option as they traded a 6th round pick at the trade deadline for former Dolphins RB Kenyan Drake. Drake showed flashes multiple times in Miami but never broke out to become the RB Miami wanted. Maybe a change of scenery will be the thing that helps Drake take the next step. While the Cardinals have shown that they are taking a step in the right direction, it's still not their time to win a game against a team of the Niners caliber. Give me San Francisco with the points.

49ers 30, Cardinals 16/ High Confidence

Texans 5-3 vs Jaguars 4-4 (+1.5)

This game is big in terms of the AFC South race, as all teams including the Colts and Titans are in the mix. The Texans suffered a huge blow last week as All-Pro DE JJ Watt is out for the rest of the season with a torn pectoral muscle. He was the one guy holding up a defense that has a below average secondary. The offense has a weak front, but they at least still have QB Deshaun Watson and WR Deandre Hopkins, as they hooked up for 11 completions and over 100 yards last week against the Raiders. They will need a similar performance to that against the Jags after Hopkins only found 40 receiving yards in the first matchup with Jacksonville. That game featured Jalen Ramsey on the opposite side however, so maybe this time Hopkins has a little more breathing room. The Jaguars have won their last two games by double digits as QB Gardner Minshew and RB Leonard Fournette have recovered from their mini-slump. This game will be played in London, and Jacksonville have travelled over there for nearly a decade, so they know what it's like to play, plus they have gained a following in London which will give them an advantage over their division rival. This will be close, but I will take the Jaguars to go over .500 and get a close win.

Jaguars 24, Texans 21/ Low Confidence

Bears 3-4 vs Eagles 4-4 (-5)

These two talented teams have been up and down halfway through the season, but now seem to be going in opposite directions. The Eagles got a big win on the road against the Bills, while the Bears lost on a last second missed field goal (again) and have now dropped three straights. QB Mitchell Trubisky is on the chopping block as he has shown little to no progression in his third season. He has a chance to get a few brownie points this week against a weak eagle secondary that I mention every week. This would usually be an easy task but with how Trubisky has been playing, I wouldn't bet on him in fantasy football this week. While the secondary is still a problem in Philly, the eagles run game has improved over the last three weeks as rookie RB Miles Sanders and veteran RB Jordan Howard have worked as a solid 1-2 punch. This game could go in many directions with how inconsistent these two teams are, but I will take the Eagles with the spread as they have some more momentum and are at home.

Eagles 20, Bears 13/ Medium Confidence

Colts 5-2 vs Steelers 3-4 (+1)

The Colts have easily been the most underrated football team in the league as they have a stout defense, a top tier offensive line, and a competitive quarterback in Jacoby Brissett. Their balanced offense combined with a bend but don't break defense allows them to play competitive with any NFL roster. This week they play a Steeler team that got a scare against the dolphins, trailing 14-0 before scoring 27 unanswered points. Their 28th ranked offense will need to play fast in order to put the pressure on the Colts to make an adjustment. The Steeler defense has forced 19 takeaways which is second in the NFL, so look for the turnover battle between a patient Colt offense and feisty Steeler defense to be crucial. The Colts will play close with Pittsburgh, but I like the Colts to come out of the close game with a win on the road.

Colts 23, Steelers 19/ Medium Confidence

Vikings 6-2 vs Chiefs 5-3 (+2)

What a difference one apology can make for an offense. Kirk Cousins went from a player on the chopping block to the league's best passer rating over the last four weeks (137.9). RB Dalvin Cook already has over 1,000 all-purpose yards in half of a season, and Stefon Diggs has 452 receiving yards in three games, which is team record. These stars lead the Vikings to the 3rd ranked offense in football, and now play a chief's team that could form a MASH unit. DT Chris Jones is deeply missed as the chiefs possess the 30th ranked run defense. The rushing offense in Kansas City isn't much better as they ranked 27th. Throw that with the likely start for QB Matt Moore, and I'll take the Vikings to win.

Vikings 28, Chiefs 21/ High Confidence

Jets 1-6 vs Dolphins (+3)

It's a major game for draft position this week as AFC East bottom feeders in the Jets and Dolphins meet. The Dolphins over their last 10 games have lost all 10 by an average of 22 points per game. They are also actively tanking by their play-calling. On a 3rd and 20 play last week late in the second quarter, while still

up 14-3, Miami called an all-out blitz which lead to a 45-yard touchdown for the Steelers. Maybe that all-out blitz will work against the worst (32nd) offense in football, the New York Jets. Adam Gase has already warmed up his seat in just his first season, but this week is an opportunity to take some of his burdens off of that situation and onto the Dolphins, as he was the previous Head Coach in South Beach for three seasons. He will need improvement from his QB Sam Darnold, who has thrown seven interceptions over the last two games (yikes). RB Le'Veon Bell has also struggled as he only ran for 23 yards last week and saw himself in trade rumors earlier this week before the Jets shut them down. Safety Jamal Adams was also in Trade talks as he's been disgruntled with his position on the Jets. With C.J. Mosley still out with a groin injury, and trading away run stuffer Leonard Williams to the Giants, Miami may be able to find success on a discouraged and depleted unit. That being said, I got the Jets in a dumpster fire of a game that you should avoid.

Jets 24, Dolphins 16/ Low Confidence

Titans 4-4 vs Panthers 4-3 (-3.5)

This game will get lost in the shuffle due to some more exciting contest, but it has a lot of importance on exposing if the Titans or Panthers are pretenders. The Panthers lost in tremendously bad fashion in a 51-13 rout, while the Titans have won two games in a row but are still being questioned on their long-term vision on offense. QB Ryan Tannehill's 115 passer rating provides some comfort for the Titans going into this week as well as the Titans defense limiting opposing teams to 16.9 points per game, fourth in the league. The Panthers defense are savants at creating pressure as they are 2nd in the NFL in sacks with 30. On offense QB Kyle Allen finally feels the pressure that comes with being an NFL Quarterback as Cam Newton may be returning soon. If Allen struggles again this week, don't be surprised if Superman Cam returns shortly after. All in all, it's a tough game to predict, but I'll give the advantage to an angry Panthers team, as the Titans haven't been able to pull together big win streaks over the last 5 seasons.

Panthers 27, Titans 21/ Low confidence

Redskins 1-7 vs Bills 5-2 (-9.5)

I just heard about the story of Trent Williams cancer that was diagnosed 6 years ago. I pray for Trent and hope that everything is ok with him and his Family. I won't rant on the Washington organization because I don't know all of the details, but all I know is right now this can't be good for the teams Public Relations.

The Bills got exposed last week as the Eagles won in comfortable fashion. The offense is still limited with Sophomore QB Josh Allen still showing inconsistencies in the passing game. The defense has also allowed more rushing yards in the last three weeks (429) than in the first four (338). That being said, the Bills still have the 3rd ranked pass defense and are a viable wild-card team at the mid-season mark. The Redskins have a similar make-up to the eagles but are worst in nearly every position talent-wise. The Redskins are 28th in rush defense and have a weak secondary. They will most likely play Dwayne Haskins at QB on offense but has struggled to adapt to the NFL level. Expect the Bills defense to feast on the rookie form The Ohio State if Case Keenum is unavailable. If Case does play, then I may give the Redskins enough to cover, but if Haskins plays, then I see an easy Bills win and a cover and seeing how that is more likely as of the time I'm writing this, that's what I'll go with.

Bills 21, Redskins 7/ Medium Confidence

Lions 3-3-1 vs Raiders 3-4 (-2)

The Raiders have been a competitive team this season, and the same goes for the Lions. Many thought that these could have been two teams tanking for a draft pick but in week 9, these two teams are viable threats to compete in a lot of their games. The Lions have done this through big play offense as they have 33 passing plays of over 20 yards, which is tied for fifth in the league. Expect them to get more as the Raiders have allowed 35 20-plus yard passes. The Raiders have stayed in game through efficiency, as QB Derek Carr has a 110-passer rating over the last six weeks, second to Kirk Cousins in Minnesota. RB Josh Jacobs has also made a smooth transition to the NFL game as he's running hard. This is the Tortoise (Raiders) vs the Hare (Lions), and we know that slow and steady wins this race. I'll take the Raiders to move to .500.

Raiders 24, Lions 20/ Medium Confidence

Buccaneers 2-5 vs Seahawks 6-2 (-5.5)

I'm having a tough time picking the Buccaneers. I like the coaching staff, they have a lot of weapons on offense, and they have enough playmakers on defense to get a few stops. The one thing I keep underestimating is how often Jameis Winston turns the ball over. He has 10 turnovers in two games, and I don't want to predict the one game where he plays well anymore, so I assume that more will be on the way at Seattle in that ruckus crowd. The Seahawks have a big injury that may affect the entire team however, as Center Justin Britt is out for the season. Losing the Center is one of the tougher adjustments to make in the league as he has to communicate with his fellow linemen and be in synch with his quarterback. The Bucs also have Shaquill Barrett and Jason-Pierre Paul on the defensive line who can cause chaos for opposing teams. This may be a reason to pick the Bucs, but I'm not trusting Winston to make the right plays for all four quarters. Give me Seattle this week.

Seahawks 34, Buccaneers 27/ Medium Confidence

Packers 7-1 vs Chargers 3-5 (+3.5)

The Packers are up there with the Saints and 49ers for the best candidate to play the Patriots in the Super bowl this year. After starting the year as a running offense and top defense, the Packers have shifted to the traditional Aaron Rodgers hero ball for wins. It's good that Green Bay has shown that they can win with multiple styles of play in order to match up with the opposing team. Luckily for the Chargers, they rank 6th in pass defense, and DE Joey Bosa has four sacks over the last two games. The offense will see small changes as offensive coordinator Ken Whisenhunt was fired Monday. We could possibly see a more concentrated effort on the ground game as the Chargers have rushed for under 40 yards in four consecutive games. I get that the Chargers may be better than their record suggests, but the Packers are a super bowl contender, and a 3.5-point spread doesn't do them justice. I'm glad to pick the Packers to win this glorified home game in fair-weather Los Angeles.

Packers 27, Chargers 20/ High Confidence

Browns 2-5 vs Broncos 2-6 (+4)

Both of these teams had bad weeks in the media. The Broncos dealt with QB Joe Flacco being openly critical about the conservative play-calling late in games that has cost Denver three potential victories. Meanwhile in Cleveland, Baker Mayfield continues to slam reporters, Odell Beckham has started calling out teammates, and Head Coach Freddie Kitchens has been overwhelmed by his tasks. The Broncos will start Brandon Allen at quarterback after Joe Flacco suffered a bulging disc in his neck. It may not make much of a difference as the Broncos were already 26th in total offense while averaging just over 15 points per game. They still have Running Backs Phillip Lindsay and Royce Freeman who can make a difference, however. Speaking of Running Backs, the Browns have Nick Chubb who had an impressive 131 rushing yards despite the 2 fumbles to start. He has shown to be the most consistent player on offense for them, and if he gets going, then the Browns will have success. I will trust Freddie Kitchens this week to game plan around Chubb and pound the rock down the Broncos, leading to a win (Can't wait for this to backfire on me).

Browns 27, Broncos 17/ Medium Confidence

Patriots 8-0 vs Ravens 5-2 (+3)

This is a potential AFC Championship preview as the undefeated Patriots play their toughest opponent on the season in the Baltimore Ravens. While the Patriots have looked like the overwhelming favorite like most years, the Ravens have put together the 2nd ranked offense in football. The Patriots have the 2nd ranked defense in terms of yards given up per game, so the unstoppable force led by Lamar Jackson will meet the Immovable object that owns a plus 189-point differential. The Pats advantage on young quarterbacks is a real thing however (Ask Sam Darnold), as they have won 21 consecutive games against first- or second-year quarterbacks. In the five games this year against said opponents, it was a touchdown to interception ratio of 1 to 10. New England has forced 27 takeaways in total as well, and has shut opponents down on third down, with only 15.6 percent of third down being completed. For the Ravens, they are 9-2 following a bye in the John Harbaugh era. Lamar Jackson averages 6.94 yards per carry which is most among qualified rushers. Mark Ingram has seven rushing touchdowns on the season as him and Jackson will be tough to contain for the Patriots. On Defense, Baltimore has the third ranked run defense. DE Matthew Judon has been getting after the QB with 12 sacks on the season. If the Interior rush can force Tom Brady to back pedal into Judon, then this game will stay interesting for four quarters. I am looking forward to this contest more than any other this week. I will go with the Patriots in a safe bet to win (booooo!). This will be a good game in the Pats-Ravens rivalry, but I trust the experience of Belichick and Brady to pull through.

Patriots 26, Ravens 19/ Low Confidence

Cowboys 4-3 vs Giants 2-6 (+7.5)

The Cowboys return to Monday Night Football after their bye week to take on the Giants who have come back down to earth after an interesting start to the season. Dallas possesses the Numero Uno total offensive yardage in the league against a Giants team ranked 28th overall in defense. The Giants traded for Leonard Williams from the Jets for a 3rd and 5th round pick, but the Giants may have needed more of a pass rusher to help rather than a run stuffer. At least the Giants offense has looked better as Rookie WR Darius Slayton has been an unsung hero, Golden Tate has played well in his first games back from suspension, and Saquon Barkley is still Saquon Barkley. QB Daniel Jones improved last week, but he still has a turnover problem as a crucial fumble six for the Lions was the swing play that changed the momentum of the game. He also had turnover problem in his games against the Redskins, Patriots, and

Cardinals. The Cowboys on defense have playmakers in DE Demarcus Lawrence, CB Byron Jones, and LB's Jaylon Smith and Leighton Vander Esch. I like the Cowboys to cover this game and keep first place in the NFC East... I mean East.

Cowboys 35, Giants 24/ High Confidence