NFL WEEK 10 PICKS

Welcome to Caesar’ 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 (games to stay away from), to medium (games that are 50-50, bet with caution), to high confidence (Games to piu. These spreads and picks are made as of Thursday, November 14th, 2019.

Oh boy. I have struggled the last three weeks after starting my predictions on a high note. I went 4-9 last week, bringing my total to 64-66. I split the four high confidence picks with a 2-2 week which puts me at 24-15. A lot of upsets took place last week, and I’ve had to change my perspective on multiple teams to change my process for picking games. I hope this changes my fortunes as we get into this weeks set of games.

Steelers 5-4 vs Browns 3-6 (-3)

The Steelers are 5-1 in their last six games, and a big part of that is the emergence of Safety Minkah Fitzpatrick. Fitzpatrick already has five interceptions, a forced fumble, and two defensive touchdowns in seven games with the Steelers. He’s a big player in a Steelers defense that has been stout this stretch, allowing under 300 total yards in the last three games, and averages 4.3 sacks per game. The offense has been shaky, but will look to get some help as RB James Conner is expected to play after missing two games with a shoulder injury. The Browns are also coming off a victory like Pittsburgh, but they still have their problems. They had eight chances to score from the two-yard line in the first quarter and couldn’t convert on any of them. The defense was able to keep them in the game against a struggling bills offense, but they need to take the next step in utilizing their offensive talent. Baker Mayfield has been sacked 25 times which is 7th most in the NFL. With a shaky o-line and a dangerous Steelers pass rush, expect Nick Chubb, who has over 100 rushing yards in three of his last four games, to get a lot of the work early. RB Kareem Hunt is also expected to get involved more this game after debuting of Cleveland last week against the Bills. While Cleveland has more talent in skill positions, the Steelers are built well in the trenches, and they can do enough to control the football and push the urgency to the dysfunctional Freddie Kitchens. I will take the Steelers with the points and the win.

Steelers 21, Browns 17/ Medium Confidence

Falcons 2-7 vs Panthers 5-4 (-5.5)

In what was arguably the biggest upset so far in the NFL season, the Falcons defeated the then 7-1 Saints, and actually dominated them in the trenches on both sides. The Falcons had seven total sacks entering that game, and nearly matched that total with six on Drew Brees. While it was a feel good win for what has been a disastrous season, they had a few key injuries on offense. RB Devonta Freeman is out for a few weeks with and ankle injury, and breakout TE Austin Hooper is out for a month with an MCL Sprain. They will play the Carolina Panthers who got stood up at the 1-yard line in Snowy Lambeau Field. The Panthers have to sure up the run defense as we have seen the 49ers and Packers get big chunks of yardage up the middle. They will have a chance against the Falcons run game that’s near the bottom of the league and is on its third string running back Brian Hill. The secondary also had a tough time matching up with WR Devante Adams last week with the absence of CB James Bradbury, and now they have to contain Julio Jones this week in the passing game. If Bradbury is still out, expect Jones to have a field day. NFC South teams always play each other tough, and I expect nothing different here. I have the Falcons covering the spread, but Carolina will win a close one with the difference being Christian McCaffrey.

Panthers 28, Falcons 24/ Medium Confidence

Bills 6-3 vs Dolphins 2-7 (+6)

Fun Fact: The Dolphins have two wins in November. That’s more than the Pat, 49ers, and Saints combined. That means that the Dolphins are going 9-7 and making the playoffs! Well, it’s unlikely but not impossible. The tank for Tua has turned into a competitive 5 game stretch that has turned them from all-time bad team to just a bad team that can compete on occasion. The defense has allowed fewer then 20 points on three of their last five games, and Ryan Fitzpatrick has his magic back, making plays for the team. With a Buffalo team that’s 25th in scoring, this will be a competitive affair. The Bills 25th offense has been a mix of lack of skill position talent, and inconsistency of QB Josh Allen. RB Devin Singletary has averaged 6.4 yards per carry but is still limited in the offense for some reason as Veteran Frank Gore eats into his touches. The Bills defense has allowed 492 rushing yards in three games, meaning that if they can’t fix their holes, then it may hurt the long term projection of the season. The Dolphins are on a roll while the Bills are faltering, which gives me confidence to take Miami in the spread. In fact, I will go ahead and pick the Dolphins in an upset to win at home and get three in a row.

Dolphins 20, Bills 16/ High Confidence

Cowboys 5-4 vs Lions 3-5-1 (+3)

This spread may change depending on the status of QB Matthew Stafford, who has a back injury and sat out last week vs the Bears. If he can’t go, it will be QB Jeff Driskel’s second consecutive start. While he didn’t play terrible against a good Chicago Defense, he definitely didn’t have the same command of the offense that Stafford possessed. The Lions are hanging by a thread as their passing game is the only thing keeping them afloat as the defense struggle as mightily in the run and pass, while the run game has suffered since the Kerryon Johnson injury. The Lions will have to run the ball against Dallas who has given up over 100 yards rushing in six of its nine games this year. The Lions will also need to get off the field on defense as 45 percent of third down plays are converted by the opposing offense, but that will be more of a problem against a cowboys team that converts 51 percent of third downs on offense. If Stafford plays this week then the Lions have a shot, but with Driskel, their future looks bleak. I got the Cowboys bouncing back with a win

Cowboys 35, Lions 21/ High (with Driskel): Medium (with Stafford)

Broncos 3-6 vs Vikings 7-3 (-10.5)

The Broncos had their bye week and are now met with facing off against one of the top teams in the NFC. The Vikings have arguably the most efficient and balanced offense in football with RB Dalvin Cook overtaking Panthers RB Christian McCaffrey as the current league leader in scrimmage yards. The Vikings also get back home where they are 15-3 in the last 18 games. After two tough road games, this could be a trap game against a solid Broncos defense. The Broncos offense however may be in trouble as they are a run-first offense going against a 7th ranked Vikings Defense. It will take QB Brandon Allen, who had a decent debut against the Browns two weeks ago (192 yards, 2 tds, 0 ints) to step up and find his targets such as WR Courtland Sutton and TE Noah Fant. The Vikings are rolling and are great in the early game home slot. I’ll take Minnesota to cover the spread at 10.5.

Vikings 30, Broncos 14/ Medium Confidence

Texans 6-3 vs Ravens 7-2 (-4)

It’s a big showdown in Baltimore as two young emerging quarterbacks in the MVP conversation go at it as Deshaun Watson and the Texans face Lamar Jackson and the Ravens. Lamar had an easier week against Cincinnati compared to his two games previously against the Seahawks and Patriots respectively, but now faces another big test against the Texans who are looking to keep their lead in the AFC South. Lamar Jackson already has over 700 rushing yards in nine games, which means that barring injury, Jackson will most likely eclipse Michael Vick’s single season record for rushing yards by a QB. The legs and athleticism is Lamar’s calling card, but he can throw the ball efficiently as well, with a 101.7 passer rating. On the other side is Deshaun Watson who has led the Texans to the fourth ranked offense in the league. They have scored 23 or more points every game since week 5. It’s also expected that they will have Will Fuller back from injury, helping expand the field for Watson who has a 107.1 passer rating. This is a really tough game to call, but with the Texans coming off a bye, the extra preparation will certainly give them an advantage over the Ravens who play their third above .500 team in the last four games. Give me the Texans in a shootout.

Texans 31, Ravens 28/ Low Confidence

Jets 2-7 vs Redskins 1-8 (-1.5)

Ok, lets get this preview over with. These two teams are in a tank bowl for draft positioning. The Jets announced that Adam Gase won’t be fired after the season which, whether smart or not (or truthful), at least gives them some stability in the short term. Washington has a bye week to help Rookie QB Dwayne Haskins learn more of the playbook. They could try pounding the rock with RB Adrian Peterson, but the Jets defense has only given up 73 rushing yards over their last two games, including holding Saquon Barkley to a single yard. The Redskins at least have a chance for a spark at running with Darrius Guice returning from a knee injury he suffered in week 1. If Washington tries to throw the ball, it will be quick because the Jets are coming off a 6-sack performance against the Giants. The Jets aren’t good, but they have nearly all the advantages that it’s hard to not pick them even on the road. Give me the Jets in a snooze fest, and is anybody going to show up for that game?

Jets 17, Redskins 10/ High Confidence

Jaguars 4-5 vs Colts 5-4 (-3)

After a 26-3 thrashing in London, Minshew Mania was placed on hold for the time being. QB Nick Foles returns from the collarbone injury he suffered during week 1. The Colts also expect a QB to return in this game as Jacoby Brissett is expected to return after QB Brian Hoyer threw 3 interceptions in a loss to the Dolphins. For Jacksonville, they have been a run-first team this season(averaging 4.8 yards per carry), so expect Leonard Fournette to take pressure off of Foles in his first game back. The same sentiment can be expressed with the Colts as they average 127.4 yards per game rushing, which is 10th in the league. Both teams are also below average in run defense (Jags are 29th in Yards Per Carry, Colts are 19th), so we should see a fast clock in this game. With the Colts, if Jacoby Brissett and star WR TY Hilton return, they will still be met with a fierce Jacksonville pass defense that’s 4th in sacks with 30, and holds Quarterbacks to an 88.9 passer rating. The Colts are reeling, and even when they play well they keep it too close. Nick Foles should help expand the Jags offense vertically, and I expect them to win and reach .500 in a competitive AFC South.

Jaguars 23, Colts 20/ Medium Confidence

Saints 7-2 vs Buccaneers 3-6 (+5.5)

The Saints had a bizarre loss to the Falcons where it seem all of the Saints powers were zapped and were put into the Falcons players. They gave up six sacks against an abysmal Falcons pass rush, even though the Saints have a top tier offensive line. If this isn’t a weird game and this just becomes a new trend for the o-line, then they may be in trouble as Shaquil Barrett has 11.5 sacks on the season (tied for 1st). Atlanta also stopped the Saints on the ground, and Tampa Bay is 1st in rushing yards allowed. Take that with a grain of salt however because Tampa Bay allows a 100.3 passer rating to opposing quarterbacks, and gives up the most passing yards in the league. Expect WR Michael Thomas to continue his dominant run as he already has over 1,000 receiving yards this season. I still think that the Saints are super bowl contenders, but they have had hiccups in the NFC South games before (which I should’ve accounted for last week). The Bucs always put up points, so I got Tampa Bay covering, with the Saints icing the game late.

Saints 30, Buccaneers 27/ Low Confidence

Cardinals 3-6-1 vs 49ers 8-1 (-10)

The 49ers suffered their first loss on Monday Night Football, and now have to bounce back against the Cardinals. These two teams played recently, so expect a lot of adjustments from the first encounter. The 49ers suffered tremendously with the absence of Star TE George Kittle as they struggled with drops over the middle of the field. QB Jimmy Garappolo looked out of synch with many of his receivers on the day and didn’t have the run game to lean on. WR Emmanuel Sanders was also out as he suffered a rib injury early, and will be a game-time decision. The Cardinals have an advantage in that their QB Kyle Murray has a similar play style as Russell Wilson, who gave the niners problems last week. If running backs Kenyan Drake and David Johnson find holes on the ground, expect Murray to have some opportunities to torch the 49er secondary. I didn’t give enough credit to the Cardinals in predicting the first matchup between these teams, but I will this time as I’ll take them in the spread this week. 49ers still get the job done however and win.

49ers 26, Cardinals 21/ Medium Confidence

Bengals 0-9 vs Raiders 5-4 (-10.5)

The Bengals are the leading the great tank race being the only team to have yet to grab a W this season. The biggest reason for that is the abysmal offensive and defensive lines. They are last in run defense, 29th in pass defense, and the offense has 7 of their 9 games end with the Bengals scoring less than 20 points. QB Ryan Finley had a rough first start, albeit a good Ravens defense , but he is definitely not a guy who’s going to get into a shootout with any team. The Raiders have been playing great food on offense over the last few weeks and a big part of that is Josh Jacobs who has seven touchdowns and over 800 yards rushing this season. Expect him to get another 150 and a pair of touchdowns against the Bengals run defense. If this was just a pick em show then I wouldn’t think twice about taking the Raiders. The problem is however that the slow paced offense may keep the game closer than some expect. They also only have one win over double digits since Jon Gruden returned as Head Coach. Oakland’s secondary is also a big weakness, so Ryan Finley should feel a little more comfortable this game. I will take the Bengals in the spread just barely, but I wouldn’t be surprised to see Oakland run away with it as their fan base cheers on in the last season at Oakland.

Raiders 30, Bengals 20/Low Confidence

Patriots 8-1 vs Eagles 5-4 (+3)

The Super bowl 52 rematch takes place in Philadelphia as both the Pats and Eagles have two weeks of preparation for this game, so expect a good one. The Eagles have found a running game as they ranked 11th in the league in rushing with Jordan Howard and Miles Sanders sharing the majority of touches. They look to put up similar rushing numbers as the Ravens did to the Patriots two weeks ago, rushing for 210 yards on New England. We’ll see if that’s an outlier, but what isn’t an outlier is New England’s aggressiveness in going after the ball as a defense. They lead the league in takeaways with 27. An interesting matchup will be Eagles tight end Zach Ertz vs the Patriots linebackers and/or defensive backs, as New England has allowed the third fewest catches and yards to tight ends. Ertz is coming off an 11 catch performance, so we will see which side gives in. The Eagles have played up to Bill Belichick and Tom Brady the few times they meet, but the Patriots are coming off a loss and a bye week. You don’t bet against the best when they have something to prove. Give me the Patriots in this one.

Patriots 27, Eagles 20/ Medium Confidence

Bears 4-5 vs Rams 5-4 (-6.5)

This spread is surprising to me. The Rams haven’t been able to run the ball effectively all season and defenses have figured out Sean McVay’s play action. The result has been a struggling Jared Goff who has 11 touchdowns to 9 interceptions. They now play a good Bears defense who will feast on the shaky Rams o-line. There are still concerns at Quarterback for Chicago (as if I haven’t heard about it for the last month), but RB David Montgomery has provided some balance to the original pass heavy offense. Trubisky had three touchdowns last week as a result. We will see if Chicago allows Trubisky to utilize his athleticism more, as he only has 54 rushing yards all season. Limiting him to being just a pocket passer has lessened his value as a quarterback for the team. The Rams are not the same team from a year ago, and it will show in this game. I got the Bears not only covering, but winning this game and going to .500 on the season.

Bears 20, Rams 17/ High Confidence

Chiefs 6-4 vs Chargers 4-6 (-3.5)

It’s impossible to pick a Chargers game correctly. They are easily the most inconsistent team in football as Philip Rivers threw three picks against a weak Raiders secondary. They have 11 days to travel to Mexico City as they play a Chiefs team fresh of a loss to the Titans. While the Chargers are a mixed bag they are good at running the football, as running back Melvin Gordon had over 100 rushing yards last week, and the team as a whole has had over 145 rushing yards in each of their last two games. The Chiefs are 30th in yards per carry on defense, and we have seen the Colts, Texans, and Titans win by running ball well (how about the AFC South!). Even with those problems, the Chiefs will never be out of a game as long as Patrick Mahomes is the Chiefs Quarterback. He returned from a knee and ankle injury with three touchdowns, 446 passing yards, and a 119.3 passer rating in a losing effort. The Chargers are 31st in completion percentage allowed on defense with a 25th ranking on opposing QB passer rating. The Chargers do however ranked 9th in pressures with 24.9 percent per passing play. I don’t feel good about this, but I have the Chargers winning. I see Melvin Gordon and Austin Ekeler have success running on the porous Chiefs defense, opening up the field for Rivers who needs a bounce back game. I could be totally wrong about this game, but the matchup favors the Chargers so I will give them the win.

Chargers 33, Chiefs 31/ Low Confidence