

NFL Week 13 Thanksgiving Picks/ Late Season Awards

Hopefully everyone is out with family on this thanksgiving week and enjoying their time together. It's important to share our love for one another at this time and reflect on what you are all blessed with this holiday season!

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 (games to stay away from), to medium (games that are 50-50, bet with caution), to high confidence (Games to pick). These spreads and picks are made as of Thursday, November 28th, 2019.

This edition of Caesar's picks will highlight the three games on our screen this thanksgiving as well as the top players of the NFL season thus far with five weeks left of the regular season. I went even at 7-7 last week, finally not going under .500 for the first time in a month. At 77-81, I still have some catching up to do but a 2-2 high confidence record last week puts me at 28-19 in my locks. These three games could either really help or really hurt my chances for the rest of the week. Let's get into the games and the awards.

Bears 5-6 vs Lions 3-7-1 (+6)

Of course as part of Thanksgiving tradition, the struggling Lions will play an early home game, and for the second year in a row, it will be the Chicago Bears. The Bears haven't figured out an offense and at this point are just waiting for the season to end so they can retool said offense. They were 4-15 on third down to a porous Giants defense. They also only mustered up 67 rushing yards last week even though the Giants give up 117 rushing yards on average. Fortunately the defense is still good as they are 4th in fewest yards allowed per game. As for the Lions, Third-String Quarterback David Blough from Purdue will start because of Jeff Driskels struggles. Bloughs first career start is on national television which may be a blessing or a curse depending on the makeup of his character. Expect former Alabama RB Bo Scarbrough to get a lot of early carries in this game for Detroit. The Lion Defense is banged up however as Damon "snacks" Harrison is out Thursday, and interior linemen Trey Flowers and De'Shawn Hand are questionable. It's tough to pick either team as they are both inept offensively. The Bears have more talent, but six points never feels right for them. Give me the Lions to cover by just enough, but the Bears still get the win.

Bears 19, Lions 14/ Low Confidence

Bills 8-3 vs Cowboys 6-5 (-6.5)

The best game record wise out of the three sees the surprise Bills take on the Cowboys. The Boys were hanging tough with the Patriots four days ago, but the reason for that was poor

offensive performance as Dallas only converted two of the thirteen potential third down conversions. The staff costed Dallas another game, and now Jerry has given an ultimatum to Head Coach Jason Garrett. Win the Super Bowl or you're out! That means that this will usually be the time that Garrett get the Cowboys on a run and saves his job even without a super bowl. It also helps that he gets to go back home as Dallas has been plenty more efficient as they average 30 points per game at home. The Bills may be one of the few teams, similar to New England, to slow down the Dallas offense. They have allowed only 14 points per game over their last three, while holding teams to under 300 total offensive yards per game. I also mentioned earlier in the year that Bills QB Josh Allen has to find some consistency and stop turning the ball over. While I doubt he found this obscure sports blog by a 21-year-old, it seems that he and his coaching staff have worked on his efficiency as he only has one interception in his last six games. He also has five passing and three rushing touchdowns over the last three games. The Cowboys and Bills both have been put on blast by football fans for not winning tough games on their schedules, so this matchup will be interesting in determining were these teams stand. Six and a half points for the Cowboys feels extreme for a team that has been hot and cold this year. Give me the Bills with the points as I have the Cowboys squeezing out a game winner in a tough game.

Cowboys 24, Bills 23/ Medium Confidence

Saints 9-2 vs Falcons 3-8 (+7)

The Falcons pulled off the biggest upset of the season in the first matchup between these NFC South rivals. Fast-Forward to Thanksgiving and the status quo is still in tact. The Falcons are all but out of postseason contention, and the Saints are still a super bowl contender. The Falcons will be without TE Austin Hooper and RB Devonta Freeman for this matchup as they both played pivotal parts in the upset. The defense played well in New Orleans but not as a unit during the season as they are 26th in defensive yards allowed. The Saints played a close game against the rival Panthers in New Orleans as they lost another offensive lineman in Terron Armstead, who's out with a high ankle sprain. OL Andres Peat is also out with a broken arm. While the offense is banged up, the defense has CB Marshon Lattimore returning from a hamstring injury. Expect him to challenge WR Julio Jones on the other side. Speaking of receivers, the Saints have the top receiver this season in Michael Thomas who is at 104 catches and over 1,200 yards this season. Atlanta's weak secondary will feel the effects of Thomas this game. The first Atlanta win in New Orleans gives the Saints a reason to come out and beat the Falcons down this second meetup. The Falcons are however one of those unpredictable teams that you don't know what team shows up week to week. I got the Saints winning and covering, but this isn't a game I would bet on just because of the nature of the Falcons and this rivalry.

Saints 30, Falcons 20/ Low Confidence

Late Season Awards

MVP: Ravens QB Lamar Jackson

Runner-ups: Seahawks QB Russell Wilson, Texans QB Deshaun Watson, Panthers RB Christian McCaffery, Vikings RB Dalvin Cook

Lamar Jackson has transformed the Ravens Organization with his tremendous play and great energy. He's on pace to beat Mike Vick's single season rushing record for quarterbacks by a country mile. Jackson will be a force in this league for a long time as long as the Ravens keep investing their resources in him. There is still time in the season for QB's Russell Wilson and Deshaun Watson to step up and surpass Jackson, but at the rate Jackson is going, that will be unlikely.

Offensive Player of the Year: Saints WR Michael Thomas

Runner-ups: Ravens QB Lamar Jackson, Panthers RB Christian McCaffery, Vikings RB Dalvin Cook

This award could easily go to Jackson again but for the sake of parody I decided to go with a wild-card. Thomas is a phenomenal talent who has broken out from just a Drew Brees product in some eyes to a true elite receiver. He was big in helping Teddy Bridgewater during his spell of games, and is a matchup nightmare for opposing teams every week. Dalvin Cook and Christian McCaffery have been the most consistent running backs in football this season and are in the mix for the award themselves, but with McCaffery on a struggling team and Cook's buzz fizzling out, Thomas looks like he's with Jackson as the front runners for this award.

Defensive Player of the Year: Patriots CB Stephon Gilmore

Runner-ups: 49ers DE Nick Bosa, Chargers DE Joey Bosa, Rams IL Aaron Donald, Steelers EDGE TJ Watt, Steelers S Minkah Fitzpatrick, Cardinals EDGE Chandler Jones

There are a lot of contenders for DPOY, and nothing is locked in yet, but as of now I'm giving it to the best Cornerback in football, Stephon Gilmore. QB's have a 39.5 passer rating throwing towards him, he has allowed zero touchdowns his way, and has four interceptions on the season. He along with players like Jamie Collins and Kyle Van Noy are a big part in shaping the number 1 ranked Pats Defense.

Offensive Rookie of the Year: Cardinals QB Kyler Murray

Runner-ups: Raiders RB Josh Jacobs, Ravens WR Marquise "Hollywood" Brown, Seahawks WR DK Metcalf, Redskins WR Terry McLaurin

This award is a two-man race at this point between QB Kyler Murray and RB Josh Jacobs. Jacobs has been one of the biggest reasons for the Raiders surprise season and has a running style that punishes defenses. I will give the edge to Kyler Murray for now however because of how drastic of a change he has made to the Cardinals offense and future prospects. He has the mobility for the modern game but also has shown his ability to make throws in tight windows with both touch and velocity. For that I will give it to Murray, but Jacobs is right there with him. Shout-out to the receivers of the rookie class as well as Brown, Metcalf, and McLaurin have stepped up for their teams this season.

Defensive Rookie of the Year: 49ers DE Nick Bosa

Runner-ups: Steelers LB Devin Bush, Jaguars DE Josh Allen, Panthers EDGE Brian Burns

If Nick Bosa is in consideration for the Defensive Player of the Year outright, then it's not a question that he at the very least will win the rookie title. He is in the forefront of the Niners pass rush that has put fear into opposing quarterbacks. Bosa will continue terrorizing Quarterbacks with a 10-1 record and a chance at a Lombardi Trophy in February.

Coach of the Year: Ravens HC John Harbaugh

Runner-ups: 49ers HC Kyle Shanahan, Colts HC Frank Reich, Saints HC Sean Payton, Bills HC Sean McDermott, Raiders HC John Gruden

John Harbaugh has always been a fine coach, but was questioned if his time was winding down in Baltimore as Joe Flacco was way beyond the years of Super Bowl Glory. When drafting Lamar Jackson late in the first round, Harbaugh made a conscious effort to play to Jackson's strengths rather than molding him to something that he's not. The result is a 9-2 record and a cheat code as the quarterback. Harbaugh has shown his ability to adapt and deserves a Coach of the Year award for that. Kyle Shanahan has been great for the Niners as well as he has built a Championship contender as well, but Harbaugh has led the most dominant team in Football.