NFL WEEK 15 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 pick). These spreads and picks are made as of Saturday, December 14th, 2019.

\*I unfortunately didn’t have enough time to get my write-up out on Thursday, thus the Jets-Ravens Thursday game will not count for this week.

Last week was yet again a subpar week as I was only one game over .500 with an 8-7 record. At 94-95, with a 31-22 record in high confidence picks, Time is running out for me to finish with a solid record. These next three weeks are pivotal not only for playoff positioning but for Head Coaches, as we will see bad teams evaluating their coaches performance before making a decision. We are getting closer to Christmas time and finals are completed for this semester (Thank the lord) so it’s time to R-E-L-A-X as Aaron Rodgers would say and enjoy the last three weeks of the NFL Season!

Bears 7-6 vs Packers 10-3 (-4.5)

The Bears have found their rhythm, winning four out of their last five games. I made an observation earlier this year about how the Bears didn’t use Trubisky’s athleticism to their advantage. Fast-Forward and it looks like the Bears went back to what help Mitch Trubisky in 2018. He posted 63 rushing yards with a rushing touchdown in their win over the Cowboys. On defense, they will lose linebacker Roquan Smith for the season, but will also get a major return in defensive lineman Akiem Hicks, who has been on the shelf since week 5. He adds a new layer to the defense and takes away the focus from Khalil Mack. That will. Be important against the Packers as Green Bay has played well after rough performances this season. Even in a win last week, they struggled to move the ball in the second half against Washington. Expect the Packers to rebound from that game as they are 7-0 against the spread after not covering the week prior. They will continue to use Aaron Jones to wear down the defense as he had 195 scrimmage yards last week along with a touchdown. Give me the Packers to win at home and cover.

Packers 23, Bears 17/ Low Confidence

Broncos 5-8 vs Chiefs 9-4 (-9.5)

The Broncos are coming off their best game of the season in a 38-24 win over the AFC South leading Texans. Drew Lock had three touchdowns and over 300 yards and looks to have ignited the Broncos offense that was stagnant for most of the year. The Broncos defense has also stepped up with 20 or less points in four of the last six games. This will be a different level however as a rookie quarterback will travel to a loud Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City. Patrick Mahomes will look to light up the scoreboard against the broncos since he injured his knee in their first matchup. Mahomes is still banged up however as he has a new injury to his hand in an awkward fall against the Patriots. The Chiefs defense may have to step up if the Chiefs keep Mahomes protected with more conservative playcalling. They have given up 23 points total over the last two games which shows the improvement from earlier in the season. Those games were against the struggling Raiders and Patriots offenses though, and Denver is coming in with much more “momentum” on offense (Even though I hate that word). Give me the Broncos to cover in a divisional game, with the Chiefs winning.

Chiefs 27, Broncos 20/ Medium Confidence

Texans 8-5 vs Titans 8-5 (-3)

This is arguably the most important game of week 15 as these two teams are fighting for first place in the AFC South. The Titans are the hottest team in football not named the Ravens, and are led by Qb Ryan Tannehill’s second wind and RB Derrick Henry elevating his game to an elite level. Henry already has over 1000 rushing yards for the first time in his career, and has gotten over 100 rushing yards in each of his last four games. If Henry continues posting up big numbers, it will be the Titans division to lose. The Texans are on the opposite spectrum as they got dominated by the Broncos a week ago. The defense has to step up after letting a rookie quarterback in Drew Lock feast. QB Deshaun Watson had a decent showing despite two interceptions, but the running game and offensive line have struggled all season, and that won’t change this game. Houston is 27th in pass defense, setting up a bad matchup. I got the Titans winning this game and controlling their destiny the rest of the way.

Titans 31, Texans 23/Medium Confidence

Dolphins 3-10 vs Giants 2-11 (-3)

Tank Bowl in the Meadowlands! The Giants will look to get Eli Manning’s winning percentage back to .500 in what is most likely his last home game as a giant. He lost his even record in an overtime loss to the Eagles. Manning was only 15 for 30, but had two touchdowns in the first half that gave the Giants a 17-3 lead. The Giants defense will have to get pressure on QB Ryan Fitzpatrick as they only have 26 sacks on the season. The Dolphins are worse in the pass rush department as they only have 16 sacks on the season. Miami has also lost 12 of their last 13 road games, but are 4-1 on the road in the last five games against the spread. I like the Giants to play hard and get a win in their final home game of the year.

Giants 26, Dolphins 21/ Medium Confidence

Patriots 10-3 vs Bengals 1-12 (+10.5)

The Patriots had a rough week on and off the field, but they’re now on to Cincinnati to try and shake off their two game losing streak. Post-Thanksgiving is usually the time when the patriots go into another gear, but this year has only seen them go 1-2 in that stretch as Tom Brady is coming off a 53 percent completion percentage game against the Chiefs. He’s a part of the offense struggling mightily this year. Expect the Pats to try something different as they will look to go run-heavy against the dead last Bengals run defense. The Bengals will go with the same game plan as Joe Mixon has had his best stretch of football this season. He had 186 scrimmage yards last week and had 29 combined touches. He will need a similar workload to neutralize the top notch Patriots pass defense. While the Pats aren’t the most dominant team in the league, they are still led by Bill Belichick, and I don’t believe for a second that the 1-win Bengals can hang with them. Give me the Pats to win and cover easily.

Patriots 27, Bengals 10/ High Confidence

Eagles 6-7 vs Redskins 3-10 (+6)

The Eagles are banged up more than any other roster in the league and it shows every week. They needed overtime to knock off a two-win Giants team, and will face another divisional foe this week in the Redskins. Dwayne Haskins has struggled at quarterback, as he owns a 3 to 7 touchdown to interception ratio. The offense is purely run first, but RB Darrius Guice suffered another injury . An MCL Sprain will end his season as Adrian Peterson is again the lead back. Even with the injury, I like the Redskins to cover. I see them controlling the ball to keep it close, and the Eagles are too thin at Wide Reciever on offense to exploit the weak Redskins Secondary. I still like the Eagles to win but in a competitive game.

Eagles 21, Redskins 17/Medium Confidence

Seahawks 10-3 vs Panthers 5-8 (+6)

The Panthers have fallen off completely from the 4-2 version of the team earlier in the season. In their first game without Head Coach Ron Rivera in nearly a decade, the Panthers looked lethargic against the Falcons. There is obviously a big hole in the locker room with Rivera gone, and now the Panthers have to fight that feeling and play hard against a Seahawks team coming off a loss in Primetime against the Rams. RB Rashaad Penny tore his ACL on the first play of the game, and it looked like the Seahawks game plan was more sporadic because of it. That was also their first road loss of the season, so expect Seahawks to bounce back against the Panthers this week thanks to the run game as RB Chris Carson is set for a big day against a 29th ranked run defense. Give me the Seahawks to cover.

Seahawks 34, Panthers 24/ High Confidence

Buccaneers 6-7 vs Lions 3-9-1 (+5.5)

The Buccaneers have a two-game winning streak and will look to continue against a bottom five defense in the Lions. The Bucs have a few key injuries on offense however. One of them is WR Mike Evans who will miss this game with a hamstring injury. Another injury is to QB Jameis Winston’s thumb on his throwing hand. Winston already has a league-leading 23 interceptions on the season , so this is an injury that could affect the gun-slinger significantly. The Problem however is that the Lions are not a ball-hunting type defense. Five total interceptions on the season means that if Jameis’ thumb isn’t hurting significantly, then he should still be able to sling the ball around. The Lions offense is depleted as they have averaged less than 18 points per game since Matthew Stafford has been out. QB David Blough has played better than fellow backup Jeff Driskel, but not by much with an even 3 to 3 touchdown to interception ratio. Despite all of that pointing towards the Bucs, I still think the Lions will cover as they tend to start the game with a fast lead before faltering. Detroit is also a pass-heavy offense which means that won’t play into the Bucs hand with their top tier run defense . Give me the Lions cover with a close Tampa Bay win.

Buccaneers 31, Lions 28/ Medium Confidence

Browns 6-7 vs Cardinals 3-9-1 (+2.5)

Reports are that HC Freddie Kitchens will be safe as Head Coach for the Browns as long as they don’t collapse in these last three games. While it’s no guarantee that will happen, anyone paying attention to the Browns this year (or this decade, or last decade too) knows that anything can happen with the Browns. They still have a slim chance of reaching the postseason, and will need to start by defeating the Cardinals who have lost six games in a row. QB Kyler Murray threw three interceptions for the Cards last week in a loss to the Steelers, but the Browns don’t have the same level of pressure that Pittsburgh has, with Myles Garrett out due to suspension. Expect HC Kliff Kingsbury to get Murray to throw the ball quickly against this Browns defense. While the Cardinals look to throw the ball and make it a shootout, the Browns will try and pound the rock with their backfield of Nick Chubb and Kareem Hunt. Chubb has over 1200 rushing yards as he lead the league in that category, making him a sure-fire bet for the Pro-Bowl. The same can’t be said for WR Odell Beckham Jr, who is seemingly one foot out the door in Cleveland as his targets have dropped significantly this season. With CB Patrick Peterson most likely sticking Beckham, expect another underwhelming performance. I like the Cardinals to cover and outright win this game in an upset, as I believe they will make this game a shootout, leaving it up to coaching adjustments in a close game. I will take Kingsbury over Kitchens, and Murray over Mayfield any time in that matchup.

Cardinals 33, Browns 30/ Medium Confidence

Jaguars 4-9 vs Raiders 6-7 (-6.5)

If the season was from only November to December, the 2019 Jaguars would be one of the worst teams in NFL History. This is now the fifth straight blowout loss this season after the Chargers, who are as intertwined with close games as Peanut Butter is to Jelly, won 45-10. This week doesn’t look like the week that fixes those problems either, as the Raiders will play their final home game at the Coliseum before moving to Las Vegas next season. Raiders HC Jon Gruden is a great motivator who understands these moments, and with the Raiders struggling themselves recently, they want to turn it around quickly for their fans. The Jags have no such motivation as they look done with HC Doug Marrone and are ready to get the season done with. No chance am I picking the Jaguars again this season (Which means they will finally win).

Raiders 30, Jaguars 10/High Confidence

Vikings 9-4 vs Chargers 5-8 (+1)

At this point at Chargers game is 50-50 odds. No stats or matchups dictate how the Chargers perform so a write-up for them is kind of pointless, but I’m not going to that stop me. That also won’t stop QB Philip Rivers from slinging the ball, as he ahead his first game without a pick in over a month as the Chargers blowout the Jags. That performance by Rivers will be tougher as the Vikings are trying, and the Vikings also have a defensive mastermind in Mike Zimmer as Head Coach. He will find ways to get his key Pass-Rusher Danielle Hunter in the backfield, as he is coming off a monster three sack performance in the first half alone. The defense is also 11th in rushing yards per game, so it should be an interesting matchup in the trenches to see if RB’s Melvin Gordon and Austin Ekeler can find some lanes this game. The Vikings will continue to run the ball like they have done all season with Dalvin Cook, as the Chargers have a middle of the road run defense (17th). The Chargers do however possess the 4th ranked pass defense, which will be big as the Vikings will see the return of WR Adam Thielen to the lineup. Thielen had a solid season before his hamstring injury, and will help tremendously on third downs. In fact, I see his return being the difference as the Vikings win a close one on the “road” against the Chargers. Of course this will be a Low confidence pick though, because you can’t be confident with the Chargers involved.

Vikings 27, Chargers 23/Low Confidence

Falcons 4-9 vs 49ers 11-2 (+10)

The Falcons see Kyle Shanahan for the first time since “28-3” but as an opponent this time around. The 49ers look a lot similar offensively to that Falcons team four seasons ago, with a multitude of backs (Coleman,Mostert,Brieda,Wilson Jr.), reliable targets (Sanders, Samuel, Bourne), an elite target that draws the defenses attention (Kittle), and a smart pocket passer (Garoppolo). They showed up in a big way, putting up 48 points on a good Saints defense in arguably the game of the season so far. The problem from that game however was the injuries as Center Weston Richburg, Corner back Richard Sherman, and pass rusher Dee Ford all got banged up. That’s what happens when you play back-to-back Super Bowl contenders on the road in the Ravens and Saints, and now they travel back home to take on the Falcons who have been competitive of the last month. They did however lose WR Calvin Ridley who was emerging late in the season, which will hurt their intermediate passing game. Despite that, Julio Jones and Austin Hooper should still cause enough problem for the Niners defense that they make it closer than some think. The Niners pass rush will eat up the Falcons offensive line late, but I think Atlanta can hang in there and cover against their old offensive coordinator.

49ers 28, Falcons 21/ Medium Confidence

Rams 8-5 vs Cowboys 6-7 (Pick Em)

At this point I think the city of Dallas would rather have the Joker roam around their streets causing chaos then Jason Garrett as the Cowboys Head Coach. The Cowboys have still yet to defeat a winning team this season , and have averaged only 16 points per game against the top defenses of the Patriots, Bills, and Bears respectively. Recently it’s been the top defenses that take a step back when matched against a top offense, but the Cowboys don’t want to follow that trend. The Cowboys also cut Kicker Brett Maher on Monday after a slew of misses inside of 50 yards. These Cowboys trends don’t bode well for a surging Rams team that has the 2nd ranked defense in fewest yards per game since week 10. CB Jalen Ramsey started slow in his arrival to LA but has since returned to his elite level of performance that we know him for, and Aaron Donald has quietly put together another monster year with 28 hurries and 11 sacks. RB Todd Gurley has gotten more touches for the Rams on offense as he had 27 against the Seahawks in a win. His late re-emergence as the bell cow for the Rams as their patented play-action offense working again and making it easier for QB Jared Goff. That gives me confidence that they will continue the winning streak and beat the Cowboys in Jerry-World.

Rams 30, Cowboys 26/ High Confidence

Bills 9-4 vs Steelers 8-5 (+1)

This is a real football game in Pittsburgh, in the night time under the bright lights as two defensive heavyweights face off. The Bills lost by seven to the Ravens in a game that showed how stout the Bills are defensively,holding the Ravens to 24 points. The Steelers showed how opportunistic they are on defense with three interceptions on Kyler Murray. That means it will be the classic matchup of who can control the football. The Steelers have the Duck on their side, as Duck Hodges went 16 for 19 in pass attempts against Arizona. He has shown that he can be smart enough with the football to not hurt the Steelers sin any significant way. Bills QB Josh Allen has more big play ability, but has periods of really cold play, as shown last week with only 105 passing yards. Allen will be more prone to try and make something happen, but this will not be a good week to try that with the Steelers having 15 interceptions on the season. I expect Allen to throw two more Pittsburghs way, and the Steelers will control the ball and get it done at home.

Steelers 19, Bills 14/ Medium Confidence

Colts 6-7 vs Saints 10-3 (-9)

The Colts team from earlier is not the same team now, and I haven’t accounted for it in my picks. They have no receiving threat with T.Y Hilton out, and their running game has stalled out big time. Now they play the Saints who are looking to get a win to stay in the race for a first-round bye. WR Michael Thomas has 121 catches, and needs 23 more over the next three games to break Marvin Harrison’s single season record. This week should help as the Colts are 22nd in pass defense and don’t have a cornerback that can matchup well with Thomas. A double team will just leave Brees with open targets in the middle, so it’s truly pick your poison. The Saints have always played well on Monday Night at home, and the close loss to the Niners will get the defense to step it up after a rough week. I’ll take the Saints to win and cover.

Saints 27, Colts 17/ High Confidence