

Week 3 NFL 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 spread of the game from the Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. The scale simply ranges from low, to medium, to High confidence.

Last week saw me go 8-8 on the spread, and 11-5 on the winners. I only finished 3-3 on High Confidence Picks, so this week the goal is to get past that .500 mark, because I don't like average. A lot has happened over the past week in the National Football League, and I'm here to discuss the major storylines and key matchups going into each game. Now, it's time to dive into this week's slate of games.

Titans 1-1 vs Jaguars 0-2 (+2)

The yearly tradition of Titans vs Jags Thursday Night Football continues in 2019. Both of these teams are coming off of losses to division rivals (Colts, Texans) and are looking to bounce back. Jaguars cornerback Jalen Ramsey requested a trade on Monday after a dispute with Head Coach Doug Marrone. Dealing with this situation on a short week could hurt them, but I think that Quarterback Gardner Minshew is finding a rhythm with the offense, plus the homefield advantage will help as the Jags win a close one.

Jaguars 20, Titans 16/ Low Confidence

Bengals 0-2 vs Bills 2-0 (-6)

I'll admit that I jumped the gun on the Bengals. After a decent showing at Seattle, they returned home completely outmatched by the 49ers, giving up 41 points and over 500 yards of offense. The potential momentum for Cincinnati has been halted, and now they play a Bills team starting at 2-0. Buffalo has yet to play against elite competition, but the defense is taking advantage of their competition, allowing less than 18 points per game through the first two games. While I wouldn't feel comfortable about this game if I were a better, I think the Bills can keep it at a touchdown distance game, and another win.

Bills 21, Bengals 14/ Low Confidence

Falcons 1-1 vs Colts 1-1 (-1.5)

The Colts have found a new identity for their offense, ground and pound offense. The new style has allowed the Colts to stay close with a talented Chargers team and wear down and defeat their division rival Tennessee Titans. Now they go against a Falcons team coming off a key win against the eagles at home. Atlanta has struggled against AFC teams heavily in recent years, going for an abysmal 3-9 record over the last 3 years. The defensive line showed improvement at home, but now they go back to the road against a physical Colts o-line and running back Marlon Mack who's been running free in the early season. Until Atlanta proves that they can play the physical football we saw against Philadelphia on a consistent basis, I'll take the Colts at home.

Colts 28, Falcons 23/ Medium Confidence

Ravens 2-0 vs Chiefs 2-0 (-6.5)

One of the biggest games of the week sees two electrifying Quarterbacks take the field in Lamar Jackson and Patrick Mahomes. Mahomes is coming off one of the best 15-minute stretches in NFL History, going for 278 yards and 4 touchdowns in the second quarter (yes, one quarter!), while Lamar Jackson run for over 100 yards and threw for over 270. The chiefs already have injury problem (Tyreek Hill, Damien Williams, and Lesean McCoy are all hurt), and their defense has looked vulnerable in spurts. The Chiefs give up an average of 6.6 yards per carry, giving Lamar Jackson, Mark Ingram, and the Ravens o-line a chance to win the trenches early. This game will be back and forth for 4 quarters, which makes me like the 6.5 point spread for Baltimore, however I think Mahomes will lead an impressive drive late in the game to set up a game winning field goal or touchdown.

Chiefs 30, Ravens 29/ Low confidence

Broncos 0-2 vs Packers 2-0 (-7.5)

The Packers have found a goldmine in their defensive game plan, surrendering 19 points combined through two games. The offense hasn't found its consistency, but they showed their potential in a 21-point first quarter against a solid Vikings defense. Aaron Rodgers and Head Coach Matt Lefleur will have to find consistency against a Broncos defense that played well a week ago but are now on the road. The Broncos as far as offense goes are miserable, having yet to reach the 17-point mark through their first two games. Going against a newly revamped Packer Defense, I feel confident that more offensive woes will come the Broncos way. I like the Pack to win big at Lambeau.

Packers 34, Broncos 14/ High Confidence

Lions 1-0-1 vs Eagles 1-1 (-6.5)

The Eagles took a beating on Sunday night Football, losing Desean Jackson, Alshon Jeffery, Dallas Goedert, and Timmy Jernigan during the game. Carson Wentz also went to concussion protocol before returning to the game. With all of these injuries, this opens the door for the Lions who came off an upset win over the Chargers (which I called). The Lions have a big defense in the front seven with guys like Damon Harrison, Mike Daniels, and Trey Flowers, and can match the physical blockers on the eagles o-line. The Lions offense has Matt Stafford, a big arm Quarterback who can take advantage of the aggressive play calling of former Lions Head Coach and current Eagles defensive coordinator Jim Schwartz. These things will help Detroit play close, and I believe they will cover the 6.5-point spread. I will still take the Eagles to win however as they have the homefield advantage and the better Quarterback in Wentz.

Eagles 26, Lions 23/ medium Confidence

Dolphins 0-2 vs Cowboys 2-0 (-21.5)

I gave the Dolphins way way way way way too much credit then they deserved last week. It seems apparent that a good chunk of these players are already looking to move on to greener pastures and aren't interested in tanking. Minkah Fitzpatrick already got his wish as he's now in Pittsburgh, and I expect to see more dolphins traded soon. They play the Cowboys who are rolling this season. It's tough to go 0-16 in the NFL, and I do think the Dolphins will find at least one game they can win, but I'm going to pick their games assuming they will go 0-16 until they show up.

Cowboys 40, Dolphins 7/ High Confidence

Jets 0-2 vs Patriots 2-0 (-23)

As bad as the dolphins look, they aren't the biggest underdog of the week, as that belongs to the New York Jets. Darnold is still out with mono, first round pick Quinnen Williams is ruled out, CJ Mosley is out, and Darnold's backup Trevor Siemien is out with a leg injury thanks to Myles Garrett. Safety Jamal Adams has unfollowed the Jets on Twitter, and avoided questions involving the situation, leading to trade rumors. Now second year man Luke Falk out of Washington State is under center at Quarterback, and this is not the ideal first career start. The Pats have given up 3 points in two games, and I don't see a lot more points being put up on that stout defense that's still rolling from the super bowl win in February. I'm also taking this spread, as this has more to do with Jets injuries and the Pats being dominant then the Jets as a team.

Patriots 30, Jets 3/ medium Confidence

Raiders 1-1 vs Vikings 1-1 (-8.5)

This game favors the Vikings, as they thrive in early home games. The Vikings are 5-1 against the spread in early home games under Kirk Cousins, and the raiders are still searching for answers on defense. Dalvin Cook has had a great start to the season for Minnesota and should continue his success. Mix that with a long flight for the raiders to go to Minnesota, and I see a Vikings bounce back win.

Vikings 31, Raiders 21/ High Confidence

Panthers 0-2 vs Cardinals 0-1-1 (-2.5)

There is a 2.5 point spread currently on the books as Cam Newton's status for Sunday is up in the air. This makes sense as Cam Newton has dealt with a plethora of injuries for years now. Newton is also on an eight-game losing streak, so a new quarterback may not be the worst situation, as Newton could get some rest. The Cardinals have something in Kyler Murray, as he has had flashes of excellence through his first two games in the league. I like the Cardinals to get their first win of the year and continue the momentum they have on the offense.

Cardinals 24, Panthers 17/ Medium Confidence

Giants 0-2 vs Buccaneers 1-1 (-6.5)

The Daniel Jones Era has begun in New York. After seasons of struggling, 2-time super bowl champion Eli Manning has been benched for the 6th overall pick in the 2019 draft. Jones first game is on the road against an improved Bucs defense under Defensive Coordinator Todd Bowles. Jamies Winston is still a mixed bag, but Bruce Arians figured out how to minimize Winston's potential turnovers last week. I think he will have a similar game against a putrid Giants defense, and help the Bucs cover the spread.

Bucs 23, Giants 10/ High Confidence

Texans 1-1 vs Chargers 1-1 (-3.5)

The Chargers may be having another snake bitten season as Hunter Henry is now out, alongside Darwin James from earlier in the season, and of course running back Melvin Gordon is still holding out. The Chargers also lost to the Lions last week, and now play a solid Texans team. Houston survived a close one against the division rival Jaguars, but still have issues protecting Deshaun Watson. Newly acquired tackle Leremy Tunsil has had a rough couple of games, and the offensive line will deal with Joey Bosa and Melvin Ingram, two elite pass rushers for the Chargers. I think that will be the key difference in this matchup, as I'll take the Chargers in a close game.

Chargers 24, Texans 20/ Low Confidence

Saints 1-1 vs Seahawks 2-0 (-4)

The Seahawks have an unprecedented 15 game win streak in September home games and will look to continue that streak against a Saints team that's lost their franchise quarterback and future hall of famer Drew Brees for 6 weeks with a thumb injury. Head Coach Sean Payton plans to use both Teddy Bridgewater and Taysom Hill as the Quarterbacks, as both are high quality backups with different skill sets, with Bridgewater's accuracy and pocket presence, and Taysom Hill's athleticism. Still, there's no guarantee that they move the football efficiently at the home of the 12th Man at Seattle. Quarterback Russell Wilson also looks to be in top form already for Seattle in a 300-yard, 3 touchdown performance a week ago. I have the Seahawks covering the spread and continuing their early season home winning streak.

Seahawks 28, Saints 21/ Medium Confidence

Steelers 0-2 vs 49ers 2-0 (-6.5)

So much for the 49ers not having an identity. The brand of west coast football is alive and well for Kyle Shanahan and his guys as they put a 40 burger on the Bengals last week. This team had multiple players getting involved in the offense, creating that diversity in play calling that Shanahan loves. The defense has also stepped up, getting 5 takeaways through just two games. As for the Steelers, it's a complete 180 from what the niners are feeling. Ben Roethlisburger suffered a season ending elbow injury and have yet to grab a win. Mason Rudolph will start at quarterback for Pittsburgh and had a decent performance against the Seahawks defense. They also acquired Minkah Fitzpatrick from the Dolphins in exchange for a first-round pick, in a move to address the problems in the secondary. The Steelers are in a better position than some people believe, but they have a tough matchup this week in the Niners. Mike Tomlin also has a 1-5 record in west coast games for the Steelers, and they like to say history repeats itself.

49ers 34, Steelers 26/ Medium Confidence

Rams 2-0 vs Browns 1-1 (+3)

The Browns proved very little despite a blowout win against a depleted Jets roster. The offense still looked inconsistent for much of the first half , and their offensive line is still an issue. Say hello to Aaron Donald, the reigning defensive player of the year, causing havoc up the middle and making Baker Mayfield uncomfortable. On the flip side, Cleveland's pass rush is just as formidable, as Myles Garrett is coming off a game where he made Trevor Siemien's night a living hell, and then sent him to the hospital with a leg injury. The Rams also struggle with protecting Quarterback Jared Goff, so the team that wins the battle of the most pressure forced on the quarterback will be in the driver's seat. I like the Rams in a close one, as they have more experience with playing in the prime-time slot and will stay levelheaded throughout the course of the game.

Rams 27, Browns 23/ Low Confidence

Bears 1-1 vs Redskins 0-2 (+4)

I'm concerned about the Bears offense right now. Quarterback Mitch Trubisky has showed the same problems from a year ago without much improvement. It's a long season so there's no need to hit a panic button but it's something the bears need to figure out. What they already have figured out is of course their defense, giving up 17 or fewer points in their past 7 games going back to last year. They go against a Washington team looking for their first win. Defensive end Johnathon Allen is out, which will certainly help the Bears run game, as rookie David Montgomery got his first career touchdown last week. I like the Bears on the road to get a win, shutting down the Washington offense in the process.

Bears 21, Redskins 13/ Medium Confidence