

## NFL WEEK 6 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, to medium, to high confidence.

After the push on Thursday night football, I went 8-6 against the spread on Sunday and Monday, pushing my record to 34-27. Some of my upsets missed the mark (Bills-Titans, Bucs-Saints), while some of my safe picks got caught slipping on Sunday (Bears-Raiders, Broncos-Chargers, Colts-Chiefs). I went undefeated on my high Confidence picks last week at 3-0, bringing me to a strong 12-6 on high confidence. With the first 5 weeks of the season done, this is now the period where we are able to see the contenders and pretenders through these next three or so weeks. Let's see who breaks from the pack this week, as it's time to talk fall football!

Giants 2-3 vs Patriots 5-0 (-17)

The Giants are clear underdogs against the Patriots, but that hasn't stopped the G-Men from playing well against them before. Of course, this team is clearly different from the 2007 and 2011 Giants as they don't have an elite pass rush unit (or even a decent one at that) like those teams, and Eli Manning is no longer the starting quarterback. Daniel Jones has played below average football after his first career start, and now goes against the Patriots and Bill Belichick, who has won 14 of his last 15 matchups with rookie quarterbacks. Those quarterbacks combined completion percentage is 52, with a ratio of six touchdowns to 13 interceptions. The Patriots defense has been performing at an unbelievable, as opposing offenses have a 12.7 third down completion percentage. I got the Patriots covering the spread on a short week.

Patriots 31, Giants 10/ Medium Confidence

Panthers 3-2 vs Buccaneers 2-3 (+2.5)

It's time to wake up to football because this nfc south game will be played in the afternoon over in London, meaning a 9:30 am eastern time start here. The Bucs have two o-linemen injured in Alex Cappa and Demar Dotson, meaning an entirely new right side. That doesn't bode well for Jamies Winston, as Carolina is second in sacks with 20. For Carolina, their offense is Christian McCaffrey. He has 866 scrimmage yards through 5 games, which is second all time behind Jim Brown through the first five games of the season. QB Kyle Allen is the first player in NFL History to go 4-0 in his first four games as a starter with 0 interceptions. It will be up to him to make some plays in this game, as the Bucs are the 2<sup>nd</sup> ranked run defense, but the dead last in pass defense. Tampa held McCaffrey in check in week 2, but I expect McCaffrey to bounce back in a revenge game with a revitalized offense and give the Panthers the win.

Panthers 24, Buccaneers 21/ Low Confidence

### Bengals 0-5 vs Ravens 3-2 (-11)

After Lamar Jackson's fast start, the last three games have sent the former Heisman winner crashing back down to earth. He's thrown for only 4 touchdowns and has gotten sacked 12 times in the last three games. The advantage the Ravens possess is one the ground with the number one rushing offense going against a weak Bengals front four. The Bengals will look for a nice aerial showcase as the Ravens are 31<sup>st</sup> in Pass Defense and have lost Safety Tony Jefferson to an ACL injury. The Ravens are the better team on paper, and while I still have worries about how far they can go this season, this matchup suits them perfectly. I like the Ravens to cover the spread in this one.

Ravens 31, Bengals 17/ Low Confidence

### Texans 3-2 vs Chiefs 4-1 (-4.5)

The Chiefs were held to 13 points on Sunday Night Football after the Colts controlled the clock on offense and played great man Coverage on defense. The Lions and (last years) Patriots have also had success in man coverage against Patrick Mahomes, which means that there is a blueprint now on how to contain the reigning MVP. That means it's the perfect time for Tyreek Hill to return from injury against a depleted Texans secondary. The Texans also don't have the high caliber offensive line like the Colts to wear down the Chiefs for four quarters. Mahomes may be having an ankle issue after having it stepped on by a teammate last week, but he's a competitor, and I expect him to bounce back with a great game at home and win in a shootout with fellow 2017 draftee Deshaun Watson.

Chiefs 33, Texans 27/ Medium Confidence

### Seahawks 4-1 vs Browns 2-3 (+1.5)

The Browns went from offseason darlings to the annoying family member that you want to stop talking your head off. Granted, they brought it upon themselves, especially Quarterback Baker Mayfield with arrogant off-field comments. This hurt them last week as the 49ers shot out of a cannon against Baker, forcing him into his worst career start with only 8 completions, 100 yards, and two picks. Mayfield now has four touchdowns to eight interceptions on the season, and it doesn't get any easier against a lethal Seattle team coming off a big Thursday win against the rival Rams. For Seattle, Russell Wilson has played himself into becoming an early front-runner for league MVP. With 12 Touchdowns and zero picks with a 4-1 record, Wilson will have four extra days off to prepare for this Browns team that hasn't found its identity. Expect Wilson and RB Chris Carson to have success against a porous Browns run defense, and also expect Jadeveon Clowney and Quinton Jefferson to hit Baker often. Seattle will win, and I don't think it will be as close as some expect.

Seahawks 28, Browns 17/ High Confidence

### Saints 4-1 vs Jaguars 2-3 (-1)

Interesting to see that the under .500 Jaguars are Vegas favorites against the Saints who are on a 3-game win streak. While the Saints are known to have a home-field advantage, they are also 8-2 in their last 10 road games. While the Jags and Gardner Minshew have played solid football, the Saints still have more depth from top to bottom with an elite Offensive Line, star skill players (Kamara, Mike Thomas), a consistent pass rusher (Cam Jordan) and a backup QB who is playing well in Bridgewater. Expect the Jaguars to counter that with Leonard Fournette, who has run the ball well in his last two games. If he can keep Jacksonville on the field and avoid Minshew becoming liable to getting stripped (3 fumbles last week) then Jacksonville can win. I still however see the Saints as heavyweight contenders in the NFC, and they will show that on the road in a victory.

Saints 27, Jaguars 22/ Medium Confidence

### Eagles 3-2 vs Vikings 3-2 (-3)

Another game that surprises me in the spread, sees Kirk Cousins favored against a big opponent in the Eagles. The Philadelphia secondary has struggled, so Stefon Diggs and Adam Thielen should have success in getting targets like last week against the Giants. On the other side of the coin is that the Eagles may have found their pass rush back with 10 sacks against the Jets. The Vikings defense has also been strong, allowing only 20 or more points just once this season (only 21 to the Packers). Minnesota found a balance against the Giants last week, but can they replicate it against a stiffer front 4 in the Eagles? My answer is no. One week doesn't give me enough confidence that Cousins is a new quarterback that's willing to throw intermediate passes consistently against defenses. Expect Fletcher Cox to have a big day on that d-line for Philly, resulting in a victory.

Eagles 26, Vikings 21/ Medium Confidence

### Redskins 0-5 vs Dolphins 0-4 (+3.5)

It's the biggest game of the year so far as the Redskins without recently fired head coach Jay Gruden take on a Dolphins team whose front office couldn't care less about winning this season. QB controversy still arises for Washington, as well as front office issues that plague the team. Bill Callahan is the Interim head coach, who once lead the Raiders to a super bowl appearance back in 2002, so that could lead to a spark. They'll need it as they average the fifth-fewest yards per game and lead the league in giveaways. For Miami, they had their best week of the season against the bye, but now have to play a team again. Their -137-point differential is the NFL's largest four game point differential since 1940. Josh Rosen has actually played decently in his two starts for the Dolphins but hasn't been good enough to help an abysmal roster put up points. If Rosen plays well here against a bad Washington team here, they could get there first win of the season. I however am sticking to the promise I made that I can't pick Miami to win until I see it. We have seen teams play well after a firing, as it gives players a fresh start, and I think we will see something similar this week for the Redskins.

Redskins 20, Dolphins 14/ Low Confidence

Falcons 1-4 vs Cardinals 1-3-1 (+2.5)

This is now the third spread this week that I don't agree with. Dan Quinn is currently number 1 on the Hot seat after the Jay Gruden firing, as the Falcons have looked completely out of it. Last week saw them give up 53 points to the Texans, not get to Deshaun Watson one time, give up 10 20-yard plus plays, and lost safety Demontae Kazee to a concussion. Now they face a young Kyler Murray who has been successful throwing inside the pocket this season. Murray's legs will hurt the Falcons this week, as he and the rest of the Cardinal offense are coming off a 514-yard performance against the Bengals. One key issue for the Cardinals is Red Zone offense, as seen last week with six red-zone trips, and only one touchdown. David Johnson may also miss the game with a back injury, meaning Chase Edmunds could see some more run in this game. The Cardinals still have some kinks to work out, but they are by far a more attentive football team than the Falcons are right now, and I like them to win comfortably at home.

Cardinals 31, Falcons 20/ High Confidence

49ers 4-0 vs Rams 3-2 (-3)

It's one of the biggest games of the year so far (not saying it sarcastically this time) as the Niners and Rams jock for position in a tight three team race in the NFC west. The 49ers showed their stuff on Monday Night in a dominant win against the Browns, and now work on a slightly short week against a Rams team that was a few inches from a 4-1 start. The Rams on the flip side have 10 days to rest up and figure things out on defense, as they have given up 55 and 30 in the last two games respectively. Todd Gurley's injury has also limited the offense tremendously as they have only gained 55 yards per game those last two weeks. The Niners have ran the ball exceptionally well this season with 200 rushing yards per game. Jimmy Garoppolo however has still yet to get into a rhythm with the offense ever since the ACL injury last season. The defensive line has been stellar as Nick Bosa, DeForest Buckner, and Dee Ford have made impact plays on the line. This is a tough one to pick, but I like the Niners on the road. It will be between Garoppolo and Jared Goff to see who makes more plays and causes less turnovers, and with the Niners run game, I believe it will be easier for Garoppolo to have solid game this week. I'll take the Niners in this one.

49ers 30, Rams 27/ Low Confidence

Cowboys 3-2 vs Jets 0-4 (+7)

Sam Darnold returns this week to try to salvage the Jets season as the Jets offense has only scored one offensive touchdown through four games. Those numbers could get Adam Gase fired at the end of the season if they don't trend upward. They will play a talented Cowboys defense that's angry from the poor performance against the Packers (mostly Aaron Jones) a week ago. Dak Prescott has had a rough two games but seemed to get his rhythm back late in the second half against the Packers, albeit playing from behind. The Jets secondary is bottom tier in terms of talent, so expect Amari Cooper and Michael Gallup to get open often for Prescott. I expect a big bounce back effort for the Cowboys as Sam Darnold will still have to adjust to the broken offense of Adam Gase.

Cowboys 30, Jets 13/ High Confidence

### **Titans 2-3 vs Broncos 1-4 (-2.5)**

Every time the Titans look like they're back in the mix, they lay an egg. It seems to happen every year for 10 straight years, and this year is no different as they only scored 7 points against the Bills (No thanks to their kicker). The other side sees the Broncos handily defeat a talented Chargers team and finally got a victory after two close home losses earlier in the year. The defense finally had the game that we would expect from them, shutting down Phillip Rivers. It should be even easier this week with Marcus Mariota at the helm for the Titans. The Tennessee defense hasn't allowed 20 or more points yet this season, so expect another grind it out affair in this one. I trust Flacco over Mariota in this one, as Flacco has had a couple of big potential game winning drives at home this year (one against the Bears defense). Give me the Broncos and the points.

Broncos 17, Titans 10/ Low Confidence

### **Steelers 1-4 vs Chargers 2-3 (-6.5)**

The over-achieving Steelers meet the under-achieving Chargers on Sunday Night Football. The injuries have piled up for both teams as the Steelers dealt with the scary concussion injury of Mason Rudolph last week and are now starting Devlin Hodges, undrafted Rookie out of Samford. RB Jaylen Samuels is also expected to miss significant time, depleting the offense. The Chargers injuries have piled up now for quite some time, and last week's gave against Denver showed that it may have finally caught up to them. Melvin Gordon looked out of his element in his return game, potentially opening the Austin Ekeler door again until Gordon shakes off the rust. The offense as a whole was held without a touchdown for the first time in 56 games. It's tough to read this Chargers team as one week they look sharp, then falter the next. As much as I want to take the Steelers with the points, there's too much of a difference between Philip rivers and Devlin Hodges to ignore. I'll take the Chargers in a bounce back performance.

Chargers 28, Steelers 21/ Low Confidence

### **Lions 2-1-1 vs Packers 4-1 (-4)**

Both of these teams look really good through five weeks. They will need this win to keep pace in the staked NFC North. Aaron Jones has been amazing for the Packers this season, showing Le'Veon Bell-esque patience while running the football, making him a touchdown machine. He will go against an average run defense in the Lions, so expect another good game out of him. In fact, the Lions have won four in a row against Green Bay and have the confidence of holding Mahomes to zero touchdowns passing. The o-line has only given up seven sacks through four games, however the Packers have 15 sacks through five games, after three sacks and eight qb hits onto Dak Prescott. A big match-up will be the Packers 3<sup>rd</sup>-down offense vs the Lions 3<sup>rd</sup>-down Defense, as both are in the bottom 3<sup>rd</sup> of the league in 3rd down conversion rate (Packers 28<sup>th</sup> in conversion, Lions 27<sup>th</sup> in allowed conversions). This game will be interesting to follow on Monday, however I trust Aaron Rodgers in primetime over Matt Stafford, so I will take Green Bay in a fun game.

Packers 30, Lions 24/ Medium Confidence