

2022

NFL SEASON PREVIEW

GEORGE'S PREDICTIONS

CNHI Sports Indiana's George Bremer predicts the major award winners for the 2022 NFL season:

MVP

Joe Burrow, Cincinnati Bengals: The third-year star will lead the Bengals to an AFC North title and the best regular-season record in the conference. That coupled with prodigious passing numbers will be enough to give him the league's top individual award for the first time.

OFFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Jonathan Taylor, Indianapolis Colts: Projections of a 2,000-yard season are likely too optimistic. But Taylor will again lead the NFL in rushing for a Colts team that wins the AFC South for the first time since 2014. He'll also be recognized as the indispensable offensive weapon he's become.

DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Aaron Donald, Los Angeles Rams: It's folly to choose anybody else for this award at this point. Need a refresher on the dominance Donald creates from his defensive tackle position? Just watch the final drive of the Super Bowl again.

OFFENSIVE ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

Chris Olave, New Orleans Saints: It's another stacked roster in the Big Easy with a playoff-ready defense that just needs the offense to keep up its end of the bargain. The sure-handed Olave will quickly become a security blanket for quarterback Jameis Winston.

DEFENSIVE ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

Derek Stingley Jr., Houston Texans: The former LSU cornerback was perhaps the best player at his position as a college freshman, and he'll prove to be a similarly quick study at the pro level. Stingley has the ball skills and athleticism for instant stardom on a team in need of a boost.

NFL SEASON PICKS

CNHI Sports Indiana's George Bremer makes his picks for the 2022 season:

DIVISION WINNERS

AFC East: Buffalo Bills
AFC North: Cincinnati Bengals
AFC South: Indianapolis Colts
AFC West: Kansas City Chiefs
NFC East: Philadelphia Eagles
NFC North: Green Bay Packers
NFC South: Tampa Bay Buccaneers
NFC West: Los Angeles Rams

WILD CARD TEAMS

AFC: Baltimore Ravens, Los Angeles Chargers, Las Vegas Raiders
NFC: Minnesota Vikings, Arizona Cardinals, Dallas Cowboys

CONFERENCE CHAMPIONS

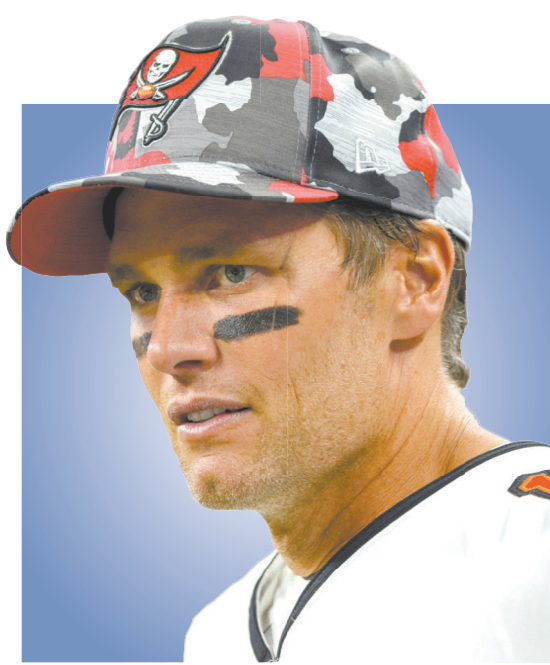
AFC: Buffalo Bills
NFC: Tampa Bay Buccaneers

SUPER BOWL CHAMPIONS

Tampa Bay Buccaneers



PATRICK MAHOMES



TOM BRADY

BEST OF THE BEST

CNHI Sports' George Bremer and Bill Burt rank all 2022 starting QBs

AFC QUARTERBACKS

- 1. Patrick Mahomes, Kansas City Chiefs:** The 26-year-old is still the class of the conference, but he's being chased by a host of fellow young guns. He will have a big test this year without top wideout Tyreek Hill.
- 2. Josh Allen, Buffalo Bills:** The 26-year-old has developed into one of the league's elite dual-threat quarterbacks. To get over the final hump, he must prove he can take Buffalo to a championship level.
- 3. Joe Burrow, Cincinnati Bengals:** The 25-year-old's cool demeanor and winning pedigree call to mind a young Tom Brady. It feels like only a matter of time until the third-year star takes the top spot.
- 4. Justin Herbert, Los Angeles Chargers:** The 24-year-old has thrown for 9,350 yards and 69 touchdowns combined in his first two NFL seasons. Now it's time for him to prove he can take the Chargers to the playoffs and win.
- 5. Lamar Jackson, Baltimore Ravens:** The 25-year-old's resume already includes an MVP award, and he has a pair of 1,000-yard rushing seasons. He remains the most unique QB weapon in the NFL.
- 6. Russell Wilson, Denver Broncos:** After suffering the first losing season of his career, the 33-year-old comes to Denver looking to replicate Peyton Manning's second act and add a second Super Bowl title.
- 7. Matt Ryan, Indianapolis Colts:** The 37-year-old's timing and accuracy feel like a perfect fit in head coach Frank Reich's offense, but the former MVP did see some slippage in his passing numbers in 2021.
- 8. Derek Carr, Las Vegas Raiders:** Already highly productive with four straight 4,000-yard seasons, the 31-year-old will look to taste postseason success for the first time under new head coach Josh McDaniels.
- 9. Ryan Tannehill, Tennessee Titans:** The 34-year-old turned his career around in 2019 with the trade to Tennessee. But his three-interception game in last year's playoff loss lingers, and rookie backup Malik Willis provides pressure.
- 10. Mac Jones, New England Patriots:** The 23-year-old had the best season of last year's rookie passers, but now he must provide an encore without offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels drawing up the plays.
- 11. Trevor Lawrence, Jacksonville Jaguars:** The No. 1 overall pick led the league with 17 interceptions under the disastrous reign of Urban Meyer. The 22-year-old could jump several places on this list next season after a year with Doug Pederson.
- 12. Tua Tagovailoa, Miami Dolphins:** Another potential riser, the 24-year-old has made just 21 starts over this first two seasons. But he has an improved offense around him under new head coach Mike McDaniel.
- 13. Zach Wilson, New York Jets:** The No. 2 overall pick had a mostly regrettable rookie campaign and could miss the start of the regular season with a knee injury. There's plenty of raw talent here, but the results so far don't match.
- 14. Jacoby Brissett, Cleveland Browns:** A placeholder for the first 11 games (assuming Cleveland doesn't acquire Jimmy Garoppolo, who would rank ninth on this list), the 29-year-old must keep the ship upright for DeShaun Watson's return.
- 15. Davis Mills, Houston Texans:** The 23-year-old showed some promise in 11 starts as a rookie, but Houston remains in rebuilding mode and there's little talent on offense to support him.
- 16. Mitch Trubisky, Pittsburgh Steelers:** The No. 2 overall pick in 2017 by the Chicago Bears has never lived up to expectations. It will be difficult for the 28-year-old to hold off rookie Kenny Pickett for long.

— George Bremer

NFC QUARTERBACKS

- 1. Tom Brady, Tampa Bay Buccaneers:** The 2022 season is probably it for Brady. Expect his best and a probable Super Bowl run in a weak NFC, despite issues on the offensive line.
- 2. Aaron Rodgers, Green Bay Packers:** The Packers and Rodgers have blown some key conference title opportunities despite the MVP runs, and it will be tougher to do it with some big losses.
- 3. Matthew Stafford, Los Angeles Rams:** Stafford proved his mettle, making big plays in big moments. He's not in the Brady-Rodgers-Mahomes tier, but another ring and it would be a consideration.
- 4. Dak Prescott, Dallas Cowboys:** No. 4 is generous for a QB that hasn't done much in January (1-3). But Prescott is the leader, and it's about time he earn this ranking among NFC QBs.
- 5. Kyler Murray, Arizona Cardinals:** In the AFC, he'd barely crack the top 10. He has an elite arm and feet, but the diminutive passer has crumbled in December.
- 6. Kirk Cousins, Minnesota Vikings:** Cousins cracked the NFL Top 100, a classic system QB who can run an offense. But he's had talent around him and needs to win above and beyond the .500 mark.
- 7. Jalen Hurts, Philadelphia Eagles:** Hurts shows signs of goodness. The Eagles are on the cusp of being pretty good, but it starts at this position. Hurts needs to win games. A 10-7 record in this weak NFC and playoff experience will help a lot.
- 8. Jameis Winston, New Orleans Saints:** Winston looked as good as he's ever looked before his injury, but that's not great. But he has a chance to improve his lot with some talent around him, including a top-10 running back in Alvin Kamara and potential top-three receiver in Michael Thomas.
- 9. Carson Wentz, Washington Commanders:** This has to be Wentz's last shot at being the No. 1 dude on any NFL team if he doesn't get back to his MVP-type season in 2017. A very good athlete, but decision-making and bad throws have killed him.
- 10. Baker Mayfield, Carolina Panthers:** Mayfield has his chance. But, honestly, he already had his chance with a pretty good team the last two years with not much to show for it other than a playoff win over a hurting Steelers team 17 months ago.
- 11. Trey Lance, San Francisco 49ers:** This is a guess. He's better than five other QBs in the NFC. He could be top six, ahead of Cousins, if he ascends to where the 49ers expect. Lance has raw talent.
- 12. Jared Goff, Detroit Lions:** This is it for Goff. The Lions appear to be trending in the right direction. Most NFL fans seem to be in love with the head coach's passion. But, in the end, Goff is the most important person in that franchise.
- 13. Justin Fields, Chicago Bears:** This might be a little low, but we need to see more of Fields. One issue he has is inferior talent at skill positions. Fields is a very good athlete with a strong arm, but the Bears need leadership out of him.
- 14. Daniel Jones, New York Giants:** Was he overrated as the sixth overall pick in 2019? Yup. He was ready to be a franchise-QB-in-waiting, and his development was probably slowed.
- 15. Marcus Mariota, Atlanta Falcons:** Mariota seemed like a prime target the last two years, but nobody bit — earning only a backup spot with the Raiders. He is an elite athlete but not an elite passer.
- 16. Geno Smith, Seattle Seahawks:** Honestly, Smith is starting for the Seahawks because they don't really have a potential dependable winner at QB. But he has shown flashes of goodness.

— Bill Burt

BILL'S PREDICTIONS

CNHI North of Boston's Bill Burt makes a series of predictions for the 2022 NFL season:

- 1. Cincinnati won't make playoffs:** The Bengals are trending near the top echelon of the NFL, and it's deserved. But they have a self-importance they haven't really earned. If they make the playoffs, it will be squeaking in. (In Year 2, Tom Brady didn't make the playoffs, either.)
- 2. Mahomes' year:** Patrick Mahomes appeared unbeatable. Then he started losing. In big games. Now he's lost his Hall of Fame-talent at wide receiver in Tyreek Hill. He has commented about the lack of respect he seems to be receiving. In my opinion, Mahomes is the best. And he will prove it in 2022.
- 3. Carroll first coach fired:** By sending Russell Wilson away, the Seahawks don't have a disgruntled franchise quarterback. Worse, though, they don't have a real quarterback. Since not handing off to Marshawn Lynch in the Super Bowl, Pete Carroll's teams have won two division titles and coming off a last-place, 7-10 season. The Seahawks will be lucky to win four games. This is it for Coach Carroll, possibly before December.
- 4. Ravens implode:** Baltimore went all-in on Lamar Jackson a few years ago. That is not the case today as his contract situation after this season is still up in the air. The Ravens' division will hurt in 2022 as much as any year, with four pretty good teams. They will win and lose and win and lose. They are 9-8 and will not be in position to replace Jackson.
- 5. Bills' year is 2022:** There are two things standing in the way of Buffalo winning its first Super Bowl ... Patrick Mahomes and itself. Everything is in place to win the big prize. They have built this over the long haul, with a culture other franchises should emulate. But the window isn't big. It's now. If they don't win this year, in a tough, tough AFC, self-doubt will creep back in.

PROP BETS WORTH CONSIDERING

TEAM WIN TOTALS

- Chiefs OVER 10.5
- Colts OVER 9.5
- Seahawks UNDER 6
- Packers OVER 11

PLAYER PROP BETS

- Nick Chubb (CLE) leads NFL in rushing yards: Bet \$100, win \$1,100
- Frank Reich (IND) Coach of the Year: Bet \$100, win \$2,100
- Derrick Henry (TEN) Comeback Player of Year: Bet \$100, win \$550
- T.J. Watt (PIT) Defensive Player of Year: Bet \$100, win \$1,000

TEAMS TO MAKE PLAYOFFS

Patriots: Bet \$100, win \$260
Colts: Bet \$165, win \$265

TEAMS TO MISS PLAYOFFS

Bengals: Bet \$123, win \$223
Ravens: Bet \$100, win \$244

— Oddschecker.com

Photos: Associated Press • Content: George Bremer and Bill Burt, CNHI Sports • Graphic: Patrick Caldwell, CNHI

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