



# COLTS INSIDER 2024

WEEK 18



Jacksonville Jaguars at Indianapolis Colts  
Sunday, 1 p.m., FOX

## SCHEDULE

- L Week 1, vs. Houston Texans 29, Colts 27
- L Week 2, at Green Bay Packers 16, Colts 10
- W Week 3, vs. Chicago Colts 21, Bears 16
- W Week 4, vs. Pittsburgh Colts 27, Steelers 24
- L Week 5, at Jacksonville Jaguars 37, Colts 34
- W Week 6, at Tennessee Colts 20, Titans 17
- W Week 7, vs. Miami Colts 16, Dolphins 10
- L Week 8, at Houston Texans 23, Colts 20
- L Week 9, at Minnesota Vikings 21, Colts 13
- L Week 10, vs. Buffalo Bills 30, Colts 20
- W Week 11, at New York Jets Colts 28, Jets 27
- L Week 12, vs. Detroit Lions 24, Colts 6
- W Week 13, at New England Colts 25, Patriots 24
- X Week 14, Bye Dec. 8
- L Week 15, at Denver Broncos 31, Colts 13
- W Week 16, vs. Tennessee Colts 38, Titans 30
- L Week 17, at New York Giants Giants 45, Colts 33
- U Week 18, vs. Jacksonville Jan. 5, 1 p.m., Fox

## STANDINGS

AFC SOUTH				
	W	L	T	PCT.
Houston	9	7	0	.563
Indianapolis	7	9	0	.438
Jacksonville	4	12	0	.250
Tennessee	3	13	0	.188

## BIG NUMBER

3

Consecutive wins in the annual series for Jacksonville. The Jaguars won 37-34 on Oct. 6 in Jacksonville and swept last year's series with a 37-20 victory at home and a 31-21 win in Indianapolis. The Colts' last victory was a 34-27 decision at home on Oct. 16, 2022, with Matt Ryan starting at quarterback. The Jaguars have won five of the last six meetings overall.



David Zalubowski | Associated Press

Indianapolis Colts defensive tackle DeForest Buckner heads off the field after a loss against the Denver Broncos on Dec. 15 in Denver.

# WHAT'S NEXT?

## Off-field questions loom as Colts prepare for season finale

GEORGE BREMER  
CNHI SPORTS INDIANA

INDIANAPOLIS — There weren't many questions asked this week at the Indiana Farm Bureau Football Center about Sunday's game.

The result of the Indianapolis Colts' season finale against the Jacksonville Jaguars at Lucas Oil Stadium holds far less intrigue than what comes next.

General manager Chris Ballard is on the hot seat as a fourth straight season without a playoff appearance comes to an end under his watch.

His fate — as well as head coach Shane Steichen's and perhaps even quarterback Anthony Richardson's — largely remains a mystery with Colts owner Jim Irsay refraining from public comment.

A decision on Ballard's future will set the course for an offseason sure to be filled with change of some sort. Defensive coordinator Gus Bradley is among the figures most under fire with his unit ranked 27th in scoring (25.3 points allowed per game) and 29th in yards (363.8 per game).

But the offense has had its share of troubles as well, ranking in the middle of the NFL in both scoring (21.9 points per game, 16th) and yards (328.9 per game, 15th).

The latter total is heavily supported by the league's eighth-best rushing attack, with running back Jonathan Taylor (1,254 rushing yards, 10 rushing touchdowns in 13 games) and left guard Quenton Nelson among Indianapolis' three Pro Bowl representatives.

Linebacker Zaire Franklin, who has a league-leading 165 tackles, is the third member of that party.

Defensive tackle DeForest Buckner, among the NFL's most consistently underrated players, did not make the all-star cut. He missed five

games with an early season ankle injury but still ranks second on the team with 6.5 sacks and 13 quarterback hits and is third with eight tackles for loss.

The 30-year-old has reached the stage in his career, however, where winning is by far the most important stat.

He lost the Super Bowl in his final game with the San Francisco 49ers before being traded to Indianapolis before the start of the 2020 season, and he's enjoyed just one playoff appearance with the Colts.

Buckner signed a contract extension to remain with the franchise through the 2026 season — with a pair of void years tacked onto the end of the deal — in large part because he believes Richardson has the potential to be a real difference maker.

The 22-year-old Richardson has missed 16 games due to injury, however, in his first two NFL seasons. And he's likely to add a 17th Sunday while continuing to heal from a back injury that left him unable to move for a time last week.

But Buckner claims he has no regrets about committing to the Colts (7-9).

That doesn't mean he has no regrets about another fruitless season.

"I've been to the big dance before, fell short of it, but my goal — I know this team's goal every year is to make the playoffs," Buckner said. "Just the past couple of years we fell short. Some key plays, moments through-

out each and every season that we wish we had back, and those key moments and plays, we win the ball game and we're in the playoffs. So that feeling of being so close but so far — it's frustrating."

The primary questions this week have centered around each player's motivation for a game against the 4-12 Jaguars that will have no effect on the playoff race.

Most answers focused on predictable themes. There's a professional obligation to see the season through no matter the stakes. Camaraderie and the likelihood of a pending roster shakeup add urgency to win in what could be the final game with Indianapolis for several players. And a victory could provide at least a sliver of light heading into the 2025 season.

Some motivation comes from a basic competitive desire.

The Jaguars swept the Colts a year ago and won 37-34 earlier this season in one of several games that helped bring an early end to Indianapolis' campaign.

For some players, even a small measure of payback is motive enough.

"We've got one more opportunity," Franklin said. "Obviously, (the) season didn't go the way we want to, didn't play the way we wanted to in games that mattered the most."

"But the reality of the situation is, we've got one more opportunity against a division opponent in front of our home fans, and not only do we have a job to do, but the fans deserve for us to leave with a home win."

## STATISTICS

THROUGH 16 GAMES

PASSING						
	ATT	COM	PCT	YDS	TD	INT
Flacco	208	139	66.8	1,497	11	7
TEAM	473	266	56.2	3,335	19	19
OPP.	513	358	69.8	3,917	26	15

RUSHING						
	NO.	YDS	AVG	LONG	TD	
Taylor	269	1,254	4.7	70	10	
Richardson	86	499	5.8	29	6	
Sermon	56	159	2.8	17	2	
TEAM	462	2,154	4.7	70	19	
OPP.	497	2,128	4.3	65	17	

RECEIVING						
	NO.	YDS	AVG	LONG	TD	
Pierce	35	767	21.9	65	6	
Pittman	63	736	11.7	33	3	
Downs	62	709	11.4	69	5	
Mitchell	23	312	13.6	36	0	
TEAM	266	3,335	12.5	69	19	
OPP.	358	3,917	10.9	85	26	

INTERCEPTIONS						
	NO.	YDS	AVG	LONG	TD	
Moore	3	28	9.3	12	0	
Cross	3	25	8.3	20	0	
Blackmon	2	17	8.5	17	0	
TEAM	15	95	6.3	20	0	
OPP.	19	142	7.5	30	1	

SACKS						
Paye	.....	7				
Buckner	.....	6.5				
Latu	.....	4				
TEAM	.....	34				
OPP.	.....	29				

TACKLES						
	SOLO	ASST	COMB			
Franklin	90	75	165			
Cross	84	54	138			
Speed	87	47	134			
Jones	61	30	91			

PUNT RETURNS						
	RET	YDS	AVG	TD		
Gould	7	83	11.9	0		
TEAM	23	244	10.6	0		
OPP.	30	390	13	0		

SCORING							
	RUSH	REC	RET	TD	FG	PAT	PTS
Gay	0	0	0	0	27	31	112
Taylor	10	1	0	11	0	0	66
Richardson	6	0	0	6	0	1	38
Pierce	0	6	0	6	0	0	36
TEAM	19	19	1	39	27	35	351
OPP.	17	26	3	46	27	44	404

## WHO'S HOT



**RB Jonathan Taylor:** A Pro Bowler for the second time, Taylor has at least 100 rushing yards in three straight games and has rushed for 546 yards over the past four games overall.

## WHO'S NOT



**Pass defense:** The Giants' season-high 45 points last week came with 309 passing yards, the most allowed by the Colts since the Jaguars threw for 371 yards in the teams' first meeting on Oct. 6.