



NFL PRESEASON WEEK 2

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NFL FOOTBALL LANDSCAPE

WHAT BETTORS NEED TO KNOW THIS WEEK

Quarterback rotations are driving this week's betting value. Cleveland will start Shedeur Sanders against Buffalo, while Indianapolis flips its rotation to Riley Leonard first and Anthony Richardson second. Atlanta is resting its starters, making backup-QB depth unusually important.

The Raiders-Texans matchup has one of the clearest depth-chart contrasts on the card. Las Vegas can evaluate Fernando Mendoza and Aidan O'Connell behind a stable plan, while Houston lost Graham Mertz for the season and added Brett Rypien after a rough passing performance in the opener.

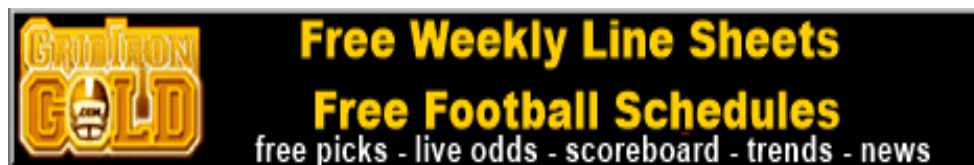
Several teams are giving starters a controlled tune-up. Bo Nix is expected to get roughly 10–15 snaps for Denver, Jordan Love will play a bit for Green Bay, Trevor Lawrence could get a couple of drives for Jacksonville, and Baker Mayfield is expected to start for Tampa Bay.

Late-week availability still matters. The Jets are monitoring Geno Smith's ankle, Chicago backup Tyson Bagent has missed practice time with a hamstring issue, and the Giants are dealing with offensive-line concerns that could influence how much Jaxson Dart plays.

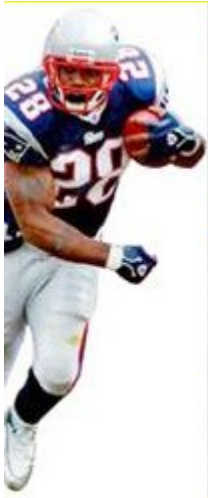
Rookie and young quarterbacks remain the preseason's biggest market movers. Mendoza, Drew Allar, Sanders, Ty Simpson and Cam Ward all have meaningful evaluation reps ahead, and their playing time can matter more to an August point spread than a team's regular-season power rating.

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BEST BET

Las Vegas over HOUSTON by 11 points

Line Las Vegas -1.5 O/U 37.5

Las Vegas has the cleaner quarterback plan for a preseason game in which depth should decide the final two quarters. Fernando Mendoza showed poise in his debut and is expected to get another meaningful look, while Aidan O'Connell gives the Raiders experienced reserve play behind him. Houston's passing game produced very little after its opening drive last week, and the Texans now have to reshape the rotation after Graham Mertz was lost for the season. Brett Rypien was added this week and may be asked to handle snaps with limited preparation time. Even if C.J. Stroud sees a short early appearance, the bulk of this game should favor Las Vegas at quarterback. With the Raiders laying only a point and a half, we project their reserve offense to create separation after halftime.

PROJECTED SCORE: Las Vegas 24, Houston 13

TAKE: Las Vegas -1.5

BEST BET

PITTSBURGH over New York Jets by 7 points

Line New York Jets -1.5 O/U 36.5

The Steelers have an attractive preseason quarterback setup at home. Will Howard has been named the starter, and Mike McCarthy has made it clear that he wants to maximize the opportunities for both Howard and rookie Drew Allar. Allar looked comfortable in his first preseason action, and Pittsburgh can devote the game to two young quarterbacks who need meaningful reps. The Jets have more uncertainty. Geno Smith has been dealing with an ankle issue, and even with Aaron Glenn wanting to play starters, Smith may not be one of them. That leaves Cade Klubnik, Brady Cook and Bailey Zappe competing for backup work. Pittsburgh's focused two-quarterback plan gives us more confidence than New York's wider rotation, and getting points with the home team creates additional value.

PROJECTED SCORE: Pittsburgh 20, New York Jets 13

TAKE: Pittsburgh +1.5

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BEST BET

CLEVELAND over Buffalo by 11 points

Line Cleveland -2.5 O/U 36.5

Cleveland has more to accomplish at quarterback than Buffalo, and that matters in August. Shedeur Sanders is scheduled to start and play the first half, with Deshaun Watson expected to work behind him. Todd Monken has also indicated that most of Cleveland's starters could see action, depending on how the joint-practice work is handled. Buffalo has much less incentive to expose Josh Allen, leaving Kyle Allen and Shane Buechele to handle most or all of the quarterback work. The Bills showed explosive production with Josh Allen in the opener, but that is not the offense we expect to see for four quarters here. Cleveland's quarterback competition should keep the offense aggressive deeper into the game, and the Browns also have young skill talent that needs evaluation snaps.

PROJECTED SCORE: Cleveland 24, Buffalo 13

TAKE: Cleveland -2.5

BEST BET

INDIANAPOLIS over Atlanta by 11 points

Line Indianapolis -3 O/U 36.5

The quarterback and playing-time plans point strongly toward Indianapolis. Atlanta has announced that its starters will not play, which sidelines Tua Tagovailoa, while Michael Penix Jr. continues working back from injury and is not expected to play. That leaves Jack Strand and Cooper Rush to carry the Falcons' offense, with Strand taking first-team practice reps this week. Indianapolis has a much clearer evaluation plan: Riley Leonard starts, and Anthony Richardson follows him in the second half. Both quarterbacks have a reason to attack the opportunity rather than simply manage the game. The Colts are also at home and should have the more stable offensive structure across all four quarters. Laying more than a field goal in preseason always demands caution, but our projected margin still creates enough room.

PROJECTED SCORE: Indianapolis 24, Atlanta 13

TAKE: Indianapolis -3

NFL QUICK PICKS

San Francisco -1.5 vs LOS ANGELES CHARGERS

San Francisco may again lean heavily on Adrian Martinez if Kurtis Rourke remains limited, while the Chargers can divide the game between Trey Lance and DJ Uiagalelei. Los Angeles also comes off a strong reserve-level performance against Houston. The points are useful in what should be a backup-quarterback game.

TAKE: Los Angeles Chargers +1.5

Carolina -1.5 vs JACKSONVILLE

Jacksonville plans to give Trevor Lawrence and the starters a couple of drives, while Carolina will divide work among Bryce Young, Kenny Pickett and Kyle Trask with Haynes King unavailable. The Jaguars' early-game advantage plus home field is enough for us to take the short number with the underdog.

TAKE: Jacksonville +1.5

Green Bay +6 vs DENVER

Both teams intend to give their starters some work, but the six-point spread is substantial for a preseason game. Jordan Love is expected to play a bit, and Green Bay still has experienced quarterback depth behind him. Denver deserves to be favored, but the line gives the Packers too much protection to ignore.

TAKE: Green Bay +6

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Washington +4.5 vs DETROIT

Detroit is expected to lean heavily on Joshua Dobbs and Luke Altmyer rather than Jared Goff, while Washington can get productive evaluation snaps from Sam Hartman and Athan Kaliakmanis after Marcus Mariota's injury. The Commanders showed they can move the ball with Hartman last week, so the points are attractive.

TAKE: Washington +4.5

Baltimore +3.5 vs MINNESOTA

Minnesota has a deeper quarterback room for this setting, with J.J. McCarthy expected to see more work and Carson Wentz available behind him. Baltimore used Joe Fagnano for most of its passing volume last week. The Vikings should have the steadier offense across four quarters.

TAKE: Minnesota -3.5

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New Orleans -3 vs LOS ANGELES RAMS

Sean McVay is again expected to protect most players of consequence, and the Rams should split the quarterback work more evenly between Ty Simpson and Stetson Bennett. New Orleans is still sorting out its reserve quarterback order behind Tyler Shough. With both sides likely to stay conservative, the total has more appeal than the side.

TAKE: UNDER 37.5

New York Giants -2.5 vs MIAMI

The Giants have offensive-line concerns and may limit Jaxson Dart, while newly signed Jake Haener is still learning the system. Miami also has quarterback uncertainty with Quinn Ewers missing practice time. Both offenses have reasons to simplify the plan, making sustained scoring difficult.

TAKE: UNDER 37.5

Philadelphia -2.5 vs NEW ENGLAND

Neither Jalen Hurts nor Drake Maye is expected to carry much of the game, which puts the focus on reserve depth. Philadelphia can turn to Tanner McKee and Andy Dalton, a more experienced combination than New England's Tommy DeVito and Behren Morton. That gives the Eagles the edge in the second half.

TAKE: Philadelphia -2.5

Chicago -1.5 vs CINCINNATI

Joe Burrow may get another short tune-up, but Cincinnati should again spend most of the night evaluating Josh Johnson and Sean Clifford. Chicago's reserve offense was productive in the opener, and Case Keenum provides a steady option if Tyson Bagent's hamstring keeps him limited.

TAKE: Chicago -1.5

Kansas City +5.5 vs TAMPA BAY

Tampa Bay plans to play its starters, including Baker Mayfield, while Kansas City should devote most quarterback snaps to Justin Fields and Garrett Nussmeier as Patrick Mahomes continues his controlled return. The Buccaneers also got an impressive debut from Jalon Daniels. The starter-and-depth combination supports the favorite.

TAKE: Tampa Bay -5.5

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Dallas +1.5 vs ARIZONA

Dallas has a clean backup battle between Joe Milton and Sam Howell, with each capable of handling extended work. Arizona is already playing its third preseason game and remains less certain about how much veteran quarterback work it wants. The Cowboys' two-quarterback setup is enough to take the small number.

TAKE: Dallas +1.5

Seattle +4.5 vs TENNESSEE

Tennessee should give Cam Ward another opportunity after an uneven opener and can follow with plenty of Will Levis. Seattle counters with Drew Lock and Jalen Milroe, whose mobility can be particularly useful against preseason defenses late in games. Four and a half points is a generous cushion for Seattle's reserve quarterback pairing.

TAKE: Seattle +4.5

NFL BEST BETS

Las Vegas -1.5 • Pittsburgh +1.5 • Cleveland -2.5 • Indianapolis -3.

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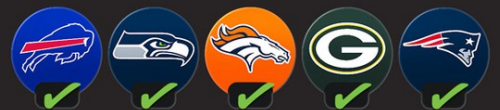
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