

THE UK'S PREMIUM WEEKLY AMERICAN FOOTBALL MAGAZINE

THE GRID

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REGULAR SEASON FINALE — WEEK 18

WEEK 18 RECAP & Wild Card Weekend Preview

2025 Regular Season — Games played Jan 3-4, 2026

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Every Week 18 game reviewed
- Final standings & playoff picture
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- Season awards: MVP tracker & more

The Grid Magazine is an independent publication and is not affiliated with, endorsed by, or in any way connected to the National Football League (NFL).

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A NOTE ON THIS ISSUE

This issue covers Week 18 of the 2025 NFL regular season — the final week, played January 3-4, 2026. Scores, stats, and standings are drawn from official league data. Match reports, team grades, player ratings, historical comparisons, and all predictions are original editorial content produced for this magazine and represent opinion, not official league analysis.

The Big Picture

Sixteen games, one true elimination weekend, and a regular season that ended with almost every big question answered. Seattle and Denver locked up the top seeds and first-round byes with defensive statement wins. Pittsburgh, Jacksonville, New England (by tiebreaker over Denver) and a three-way NFC South photo finish rounded out the eight division races. And in Cincinnati, Myles Garrett wrote himself into the record books with the 23rd sack of his season — breaking a mark that had stood, in some form, for nearly a quarter-century.

STORYLINES THAT MATTERED

Garrett's record. 23 sacks in a season breaks the mark shared by Michael Strahan (2001) and T.J. Watt (2021) at 22.5 — and Cleveland still had to win the game.

Two byes, two blowouts. Seattle (14-3) and Denver (14-3) clinched the NFC and AFC's No. 1 seeds with defensive shutdowns of division rivals, not shootouts.

The NFC South's wildest finish. Atlanta, Carolina and Tampa Bay all finished 8-9. Carolina takes the division on tiebreakers — full breakdown on page 7.

An emotional night in New York. Giants owner John Mara received a game ball amid his cancer treatment as the team blew out Dallas in the finale.

Final Standings — AFC

AFC EAST

TEAM	W	L	T	PCT	STRK/TAG
New England Patriots	14	3	0	.824	Division
Buffalo Bills	12	5	0	.706	Wild Card
Miami Dolphins	7	10	0	.412	
New York Jets	3	14	0	.176	

AFC NORTH

TEAM	W	L	T	PCT	STRK/TAG
Pittsburgh Steelers	10	7	0	.588	Division
Baltimore Ravens	8	9	0	.471	
Cincinnati Bengals	6	11	0	.353	
Cleveland Browns	5	12	0	.294	

AFC SOUTH

TEAM	W	L	T	PCT	STRK/TAG
Jacksonville Jaguars	13	4	0	.765	Division
Houston Texans	12	5	0	.706	Wild Card
Indianapolis Colts	8	9	0	.471	
Tennessee Titans	3	14	0	.176	

AFC WEST

TEAM	W	L	T	PCT	STRK/TAG
Denver Broncos	14	3	0	.824	Division + Bye
Los Angeles Chargers	11	6	0	.647	Wild Card
Kansas City Chiefs	6	11	0	.353	
Las Vegas Raiders	3	14	0	.176	

CLINCH KEY: Division + Bye = No. 1 seed and a first-round bye · Division = division champion · Wild Card = playoff berth

Final Standings — NFC

NFC EAST

TEAM	W	L	T	PCT	STRK/TAG
Philadelphia Eagles	11	6	0	.647	Division
Dallas Cowboys	7	9	1	.441	
Washington Commanders	5	12	0	.294	
New York Giants	4	13	0	.235	

NFC NORTH

TEAM	W	L	T	PCT	STRK/TAG
Chicago Bears	11	6	0	.647	Division
Green Bay Packers	9	7	1	.559	Wild Card
Detroit Lions	9	8	0	.529	
Minnesota Vikings	9	8	0	.529	

NFC SOUTH

TEAM	W	L	T	PCT	STRK/TAG
Carolina Panthers	8	9	0	.471	Division
Tampa Bay Buccaneers	8	9	0	.471	
Atlanta Falcons	8	9	0	.471	
New Orleans Saints	6	11	0	.353	

NFC WEST

TEAM	W	L	T	PCT	STRK/TAG
Seattle Seahawks	14	3	0	.824	Division + Bye
Los Angeles Rams	12	5	0	.706	Wild Card
San Francisco 49ers	12	5	0	.706	Wild Card
Arizona Cardinals	3	14	0	.176	

NFC South finished in a three-way 8-9 tie (ATL/CAR/TB) — Carolina wins the division on tiebreakers. Full breakdown on the [Playoff Picture](#) page.

Playoff Picture — AFC

1

Denver Broncos

14-3 · Division + bye

2

New England Patriots

14-3 · Division

3

Jacksonville Jaguars

13-4 · Division

4

Pittsburgh Steelers

10-7 · Division

5

Houston Texans

12-5 · Wild card

6

Buffalo Bills

12-5 · Wild card

7

Los Angeles Chargers

11-6 · Wild card

WILD CARD ROUND MATCHUPS (SEE PAGE 34 FOR PICKS)

(7) Los Angeles Chargers at (2) New England Patriots

(6) Buffalo Bills at (3) Jacksonville Jaguars

(5) Houston Texans at (4) Pittsburgh Steelers

Playoff Picture — NFC

- 1 Seattle Seahawks**
14-3 · Division + bye
- 2 Chicago Bears**
11-6 · Division
- 3 Philadelphia Eagles**
11-6 · Division
- 4 Carolina Panthers**
8-9 · Division
- 5 Los Angeles Rams**
12-5 · Wild card
- 6 San Francisco 49ers**
12-5 · Wild card
- 7 Green Bay Packers**
9-7-1 · Wild card

WILD CARD ROUND MATCHUPS (SEE PAGE 35 FOR PICKS)

- (7) Green Bay Packers at (2) Chicago Bears
(6) San Francisco 49ers at (3) Philadelphia Eagles
(5) Los Angeles Rams at (4) Carolina Panthers

HOW CAROLINA WON THE NFC SOUTH

Atlanta, Carolina and Tampa Bay all finished 8-9 with identical 3-3 division records, and Carolina actually posted the worst point differential of the three (-69, vs. Tampa Bay's -31 and Atlanta's -48). With division record and scoring margin both washing out, the tiebreaker came down to head-to-head results and record in common games — where Carolina came out on top. A reminder that the NFL's tiebreaker chain doesn't always reward the 'best' team by the eye test, just the one that won the games that counted.

Injury Report — AFC

Baltimore Ravens

PLAYER	INJ	ST
Rashod Bateman (WR)	Illness	Out
Taven Bryan (DT)	Knee	Out

Cleveland Browns

PLAYER	INJ	ST
David Njoku (TE)	Knee/Rest	Out
Winston Reid (OLB)	Back	Out
Carson Schweginger (LB)	Quad/Ankle	Out
Harold Fannin Jr. (TE)	Groin	Out

Denver Broncos

PLAYER	INJ	ST
Karene Reid (LB)	Hamstring	Out
Dre Greenlaw (LB)	Hamstring	Out

Houston Texans

PLAYER	INJ	ST
Kamari Lassiter (CB)	Ankle/Knee	Out
Nico Collins (WR)	Rest	Out
Ajani Carter (CB)	Hamstring	Out
Darrell Taylor (DE)	Ankle	Out
Jamal Hill (LB)	Calf	Out

Kansas City Chiefs

PLAYER	INJ	ST
Trey Smith (G)	Ankle	Out
Xavier Worthy (WR)	Illness	Doubtful
Jake Briningstool (TE)	Hamstring	Out

Los Angeles Chargers

PLAYER	INJ	ST
Elijah Molden (DB)	Hamstring	Out
Omarion Hampton (RB)	Ankle	Out
Nikko Reed (CB)	Hamstring	Out
Jamaree Salyer (OL)	Hamstring	Doubtful

New England Patriots

PLAYER	INJ	ST
Harold Landry III (OLB)	Knee	Out
Robert Spillane (LB)	Ankle	Out
Khyiris Tonga (DL)	Foot	Out
Jared Wilson (C)	Concussion	Out

New York Jets

PLAYER	INJ	ST
Micheal Clemons (DL)	Ankle	Out
Isaiah Davis (RB)	Concussion	Out
Breece Hall (RB)	Knee	Out
Xavier Newman (OL)	Knee	Out
Qwan'tez Stiggers (CB)	Knee	Out
Mason Taylor (TE)	Neck	Out
Jelani Woods (TE)	Hamstring	Out
Brandon Stephens (CB)	Neck	Out

Tennessee Titans

PLAYER	INJ	ST
Jalyn Armour-Davis (CB)	Achilles	Out
Gunnar Helm (TE)	Toe	Out
Amani Hooker (S)	Ankle/Toe	Doubtful
Van Jefferson (WR)	Forearm	Out
Arden Key (OLB)	Hip	Out
Oluwafemi Oladejo (OLB)	Fibula	Out

Injury Report — NFC

Arizona Cardinals

PLAYER	INJ	ST
Evan Brown (OL)	Personal	Out

Atlanta Falcons

PLAYER	INJ	ST
DeMarcco Hellams (S)	Hamstring	Out
Sam Roberts (DT)	Knee/Ankle	Out
Clark Phillips III (CB)	Triceps/Illness	Out
Brandon Dorlus (DT)	Hamstring	Out

Chicago Bears

PLAYER	INJ	ST
Joe Tryon-Shoyinka (DL)	Concussion	Out

Dallas Cowboys

PLAYER	INJ	ST
T.J. Bass (G)	Knee	Out
Malik Davis (RB)	Calf/Eye	Out
Shavon Revel Jr. (CB)	Concussion/Neck	Out
Javonte Williams (RB)	Shoulder/Neck	Out
DeMarvion Overshown (LB)	Concussion	Out

Detroit Lions

PLAYER	INJ	ST
Alex Anzalone (LB)	Concussion	Out
Tristan Colon (C)	Wrist	Out
Alim McNeill (DL)	Abdomen	Out
Penei Sewell (T)	Ankle	Out

Green Bay Packers

PLAYER	INJ	ST
Nick Niemann (LB)	Pectoral	Out
Donovan Jennings (OL)	Throat	Out
Dontayvion Wicks (WR)	Concussion	Doubtful
John Williams (G)	Back	Out
Savion Williams (WR)	Foot/Illness	Out

Los Angeles Rams

PLAYER	INJ	ST
Kevin Dotson (OL)	Ankle	Out
Quentin Lake (S)	Elbow	Out
Josh Wallace (CB)	Ankle	Out
Terrance Ferguson (TE)	Hamstring	Doubtful

Minnesota Vikings

PLAYER	INJ	ST
Gavin Bartholomew (TE)	Back	Out
T.J. Hockenson (TE)	Shoulder	Out
Aaron Jones Sr. (RB)	Hip	Out
Myles Price (WR)	Ankle	Out

Seattle Seahawks

PLAYER	INJ	ST
Coby Bryant (FS)	Knee	Doubtful
Charles Cross (T)	Hamstring	Out

Tampa Bay Buccaneers

PLAYER	INJ	ST
Jamel Dean (CB)	Shoulder	Out
Anthony Nelson (OLB)	Knee	Out

Washington Commanders

PLAYER	INJ	ST
Marcus Mariota (QB)	Hand/Quad	Out
Laremy Tunsil (T)	Oblique	Out
Jayden Daniels (QB)	Elbow	Out

Weekly Highlights

1

Myles Garrett breaks the single-season sack record

23rd sack of the year in Cleveland's 20-18 win at Cincinnati, passing Michael Strahan (2001) and T.J. Watt (2021) at 22.5. Full recap on page 30.

2

Antonio Johnson's 58-yard pick-six

Jacksonville's safety turned a Tennessee mistake into six points, punctuating a 41-7 rout that closed out the Jaguars' AFC South title.

3

Ja'Quan McMillian's 45-yard pick-six

Denver's defensive score was the only touchdown scored through the air or on the ground by either team in a 19-3 win that clinched the AFC's No. 1 seed.

4

Daniel Carlson's 60-yard field goal

Las Vegas beat Kansas City 14-12 as time expired — the longest game-winner of the week, in a game that meant nothing for the standings but everything for pride.

5

Zay Flowers, 138 yards and 2 TDs on 4 catches

A near-heroic, high-efficiency effort in a losing cause as Baltimore fell 26-24 to Pittsburgh in the AFC North decider.

6

Matthew Stafford's four-touchdown, zero-turnover finale

Closed the regular season 25-of-40 for 259 yards and four scores in a 37-20 win over Arizona — his case for a first career MVP.

7

Alec Pierce, 132 yards and 2 TDs on 4 catches

The best per-target day of the week for any receiver, in a losing effort as Indianapolis fell 38-30 in a Houston shootout.

8

Rhamondre Stevenson's three total touchdowns

Two rushing, one receiving, in New England's 457-yard, 38-10 demolition of Miami to close the year on a heater.

BUCS OUTLAST CAROLINA IN A RAIN-SOAKED SURVIVAL ACT

BOX SCORE

TEAM	YDS	PASS	RUSH	TO	TOP
CAR	285	266	19	3	22:35
TB	338	198	140	1	37:25

QUARTERBACKS CAR: **Bryce Young** 24/35, 266 yds, 2 TD, 1 INT | TB: **Baker Mayfield** 16/22, 203 yds, 1 TD, 1 INT

ON THE GROUND CAR: **Chuba Hubbard** 5 car, 10 yds | **Rico Dowdle** 7 car, 10 yds | TB: **Bucky Irving** 26 car, 85 yds

THROUGH THE AIR CAR: **Tetairoa McMillan** 4 rec, 85 yds | **Jalen Coker** 6 rec, 47 yds, 1 TD | TB: **Cade Otton** 7 rec, 94 yds, 1 TD | **Mike Evans** 2 rec, 34 yds

TEAM STATS

STAT	TB	CAR
1st Downs	18	17
Pass 1st downs	11	12
Rush 1st downs	7	4
1st downs (pen)	0	1
3rd down eff.	5-13	2-12
4th down eff.	1-1	2-3
Total Plays	56	62
Total Yards	338	332
Total Drives	11	11
Yards / Play	6.0	5.4
Net Passing	188	245
Comp / Att	18/23	25/40
Yards / pass	7.5	5.8
INT thrown	0	1
Sacks-Yds Lost	2-16	2-16
Rushing	150	87
Rush Attempts	31	20
Yards / rush	4.8	4.4
Red Zone (M-A)	3-3	0-3
Penalties	5-56	5-45
Turnovers	0	3
Fumbles lost	0	2
Def/ST TDs	0	0
Possession	31:43	28:17

Baker Mayfield needed only one series to remind Raymond James Stadium why Tampa Bay had trusted him with a season on the brink, opening the rain-soaked game with an 18-yard touchdown to Cade Otton. Tampa Bay led 7-0, then 10-0, before the turnovers started: Christian Rozeboom picked off Mayfield, Young found Tommy Tremble to cut it to 10-7, then Jacob Parrish intercepted Young right back and McLaughlin's kicks made it 13-7, then 16-7.

Then came the sequence everyone will remember: Carolina's flea-flicker pitch never arrived cleanly, and Lavonte David — maybe in his final game — scooped up the loose ball. It should have iced it; instead a blocked field goal kept the door open, and Young found Jalen Coker for a score with 2:27 left, a two-point stop holding it at 16-14. Carolina's last play, desperate laterals, ended in a fumble as time expired — both finished 8-9, and the tiebreaker broke for Carolina anyway.

THE VERDICT

GRADES CAR: C- (266 air yards undone by three turnovers and no run game) | TB: B (Otton, Irving and a Lavonte David takeaway carried the day)

TOP RATINGS Cade Otton (TB) 8.0/10 — 7 catches, 94 yards and the opening score — the engine of the win | Lavonte David (TB) 7.5/10 — The flea-flicker fumble recovery that nearly sealed it, maybe for the last time

HISTORICAL ECHO Tampa Bay needed a Week 18 win to keep its NFC South hopes alive — it got the win and lost the tiebreaker anyway.

SEATTLE CLINCHES THE NFC'S NO. 1 SEED

BOX SCORE

TEAM	YDS	PASS	RUSH	TO	TOP
SEA	361	181	180	0	37:48
SF	173	120	53	1	22:12

QUARTERBACKS SEA: **Sam Darnold** 20/26, 198 yds, 0 TD | SF: **Brock Purdy** 19/27, 127 yds, 0 TD, 1 INT

ON THE GROUND SEA: **Kenneth Walker III** 16 car, 97 yds | **Zach Charbonnet** 17 car, 74 yds, 1 TD | SF: **Christian McCaffrey** 8 car, 23 yds

THROUGH THE AIR SEA: **Jaxon Smith-Njigba** 6 rec, 84 yds | SF: **Jauan Jennings** 4 rec, 35 yds | **George Kittle** 5 rec, 29 yds

Seattle's Drake Thomas intercepted Purdy; San Francisco's Tatum Bethune had the lone sack of the day.

TEAM STATS		
STAT	SF	SEA
1st Downs	9	23
Pass 1st downs	8	11
Rush 1st downs	1	10
1st downs (pen)	0	2
3rd down eff.	2-9	6-13
4th down eff.	0-2	0-1
Total Plays	42	67
Total Yards	173	361
Total Drives	8	9
Yards / Play	4.1	5.4
Net Passing	120	181
Comp / Att	19/27	20/26
Yards / pass	4.0	6.5
INT thrown	1	0
Sacks-Yds Lost	3-7	2-17
Rushing	53	180
Rush Attempts	12	39
Yards / rush	4.4	4.6
Red Zone (M-A)	0-1	0-3
Penalties	3-31	5-25
Turnovers	1	0
Fumbles lost	0	0
Def/ST TDs	0	0
Possession	22:12	37:48

Seattle's defense delivered the performance of the week, holding San Francisco to just 173 total yards and forcing a Brock Purdy interception — the Seahawks' Drake Thomas made the pick, and Tatum Bethune's lone sack of the day was the extent of San Francisco's answer up front. Sam Darnold didn't need to do much (198 yards, no turnovers) with Kenneth Walker III (97 yards) and Zach Charbonnet (74 yards, a touchdown) sharing a workhorse workload and Jaxon Smith-Njigba controlling the chains with 84 receiving yards. Seattle out-gained San Francisco 361 to 173 and held the ball for nearly 38 minutes; the win locks up the NFC's top seed and a first-round bye.

THE VERDICT

GRADES SEA: A (Dominant, clinched the No. 1 seed) | SF: D+ (Season-worst output, but the wild card is already banked)

TOP RATINGS Kenneth Walker III (SEA) 8.0/10 — Workhorse effort in a statement win | Sam Darnold (SEA) 7.0/10 — Clean, mistake-free, exactly what was needed

HISTORICAL ECHO A top-five defense carrying a team to the No. 1 seed is the most reliable formula in football.

FALCONS SURVIVE AS SAINTS' PASS RUSH COMES UP SHORT

BOX SCORE

TEAM	YDS	PASS	RUSH	TO	TOP
NO	340	232	108	2	31:19
ATL	208	159	49	1	28:41

QUARTERBACKS NO: **Tyler Shough** 23/35, 259 yds, 1 TD, 1 INT | ATL: **Kirk Cousins** 18/32, 180 yds, 1 TD, 1 INT

ON THE GROUND NO: **Audric Estime** 21 car, 63 yds | ATL: **Bijan Robinson** 15 car, 33 yds

THROUGH THE AIR NO: **Dante Pettis** 5 rec, 60 yds | **Juwan Johnson** 3 rec, 61 yds | ATL: **Drake London** 4 rec, 78 yds, 1 TD | **Kyle Pitts Sr.** 6 rec, 58 yds

Carl Granderson terrorized Atlanta's line with 3 sacks, but Dee Alford's 59-yard interception return flipped the game for the Falcons.

TEAM STATS		
STAT	ATL	NO
1st Downs	14	16
Pass 1st downs	11	10
Rush 1st downs	2	5
1st downs (pen)	1	1
3rd down eff.	4-14	5-16
4th down eff.	1-1	3-3
Total Plays	61	65
Total Yards	208	340
Total Drives	12	11
Yards / Play	3.4	5.2
Net Passing	159	232
Comp / Att	18/32	23/35
Yards / pass	4.4	5.9
INT thrown	1	1
Sacks-Yds Lost	4-21	4-27
Rushing	49	108
Rush Attempts	25	26
Yards / rush	2.0	4.2
Red Zone (M-A)	1-3	2-3
Penalties	5-42	6-40
Turnovers	1	2
Fumbles lost	0	1
Def/ST TDs	0	0
Possession	28:41	31:19

New Orleans out-gained Atlanta 340 to 208 and Carl Granderson had a monster day off the edge (3 sacks), but Dee Alford's 59-yard interception return turned a winnable road game into a costly finale loss, one of two Saints turnovers on the day against just one for the Falcons. Rookie Tyler Shough continued his encouraging first season, throwing for 259 yards and a touchdown, while Drake London (78 yards, a score) and four field goals from Zane Gonzalez steadied Atlanta's answer on the other side and were enough to hold on.

THE VERDICT

GRADES NO: C (Outgained the Falcons but gave the game away) | ATL: C+ (Survived on special teams and a takeaway)

TOP RATINGS Carl Granderson (NO) 7.5/10 — Three sacks in a losing effort | Drake London (ATL) 7.0/10 — Steadied Atlanta when it mattered

HISTORICAL ECHO *A fitting close to Atlanta's season — never dominant, always just enough.*

GARRETT REWRITES THE RECORD BOOK

BOX SCORE

TEAM	YDS	PASS	RUSH	TO	TOP
CLE	200	82	118	1	24:26
CIN	364	222	142	2	35:34

QUARTERBACKS CLE: **Shedeur Sanders** 11/22, 111 yds, 0 TD | CIN: **Joe Burrow** 29/39, 236 yds, 3 TD, 1 INT

ON THE GROUND CLE: **Dylan Sampson** 10 car, 32 yds | CIN: **Chase Brown** 13 car, 72 yds

THROUGH THE AIR CLE: **Raheim Sanders** 5 rec, 26 yds | CIN: **Ja'Marr Chase** 8 rec, 96 yds, 1 TD | **Tee Higgins** 6 rec, 67 yds, 1 TD

Myles Garrett's lone sack of the day was the one that mattered — his 23rd of the season.

TEAM STATS		
STAT	CIN	CLE
1st Downs	24	11
Pass 1st downs	16	4
Rush 1st downs	8	6
1st downs (pen)	0	1
3rd down eff.	5-11	5-14
4th down eff.	1-1	1-1
Total Plays	66	52
Total Yards	364	200
Total Drives	10	9
Yards / Play	5.5	3.8
Net Passing	222	82
Comp / Att	29/39	11/22
Yards / pass	5.4	2.9
INT thrown	1	0
Sacks-Yds Lost	2-14	6-29
Rushing	142	118
Rush Attempts	25	24
Yards / rush	5.7	4.9
Red Zone (M-A)	3-4	0-1
Penalties	6-40	4-40
Turnovers	2	1
Fumbles lost	1	1
Def/ST TDs	0	2
Possession	35:34	24:26

This one will be remembered for one man. Myles Garrett sacked Joe Burrow for the 23rd time this season, breaking the NFL's single-season sack record held jointly by Michael Strahan and T.J. Watt at 22.5 — in a game Cleveland still had to win outright, and did, despite being out-gained 364 to 200, behind a run-first approach (118 yards on the ground) and a modest 111-yard passing day from rookie Shedeur Sanders. Burrow was brilliant in defeat, throwing for 236 yards and three touchdowns with Ja'Marr Chase (96 yards) and Tee Higgins (67 yards) both finding the end zone, but Cleveland turned two defensive scores of its own, and Garrett's history-making night made it stand up.

THE VERDICT

GRADES CLE: A- (Garrett's record overshadows a scrappy team win) | CIN: C+ (Burrow's three TDs weren't enough)

TOP RATINGS Myles Garrett (CLE) 10.0/10 — A record that may stand for a generation | Joe Burrow (CIN) 8.0/10 — 236 yards, 3 TDs in a losing effort

HISTORICAL ECHO Strahan set the bar in 2001, Watt matched it in 2021 — Garrett now stands alone at 23.

PACKERS OFFENSE GOES SILENT IN MINNEAPOLIS

BOX SCORE

TEAM	YDS	PASS	RUSH	TO	TOP
GB	121	-7	128	0	26:30
MIN	363	226	137	1	33:30

QUARTERBACKS GB: Clayton Tune 6/11, 34 yds, 0 TD | MIN: J.J. McCarthy 14/23, 182 yds, 0 TD

ON THE GROUND GB: Chris Brooks 13 car, 61 yds | Emanuel Wilson 18 car, 44 yds | MIN: Jordan Mason 14 car, 94 yds

THROUGH THE AIR GB: Jakobie Keeney-James 2 rec, 15 yds | MIN: Justin Jefferson 8 rec, 101 yds

Minnesota's Dallas Turner had 2 sacks as Green Bay's line collapsed all night.

TEAM STATS		
STAT	MIN	GB
1st Downs	23	12
Pass 1st downs	14	1
Rush 1st downs	8	10
1st downs (pen)	1	1
3rd down eff.	2-10	3-12
4th down eff.	1-1	0-0
Total Plays	64	50
Total Yards	363	121
Total Drives	9	10
Yards / Play	5.7	2.4
Net Passing	226	-7
Comp / Att	21/31	6/11
Yards / pass	6.8	-0.5
INT thrown	0	0
Sacks-Yds Lost	2-13	4-41
Rushing	137	128
Rush Attempts	31	35
Yards / rush	4.4	3.7
Red Zone (M-A)	1-4	0-1
Penalties	2-20	4-47
Turnovers	1	0
Fumbles lost	1	0
Def/ST TDs	0	0
Possession	33:30	26:30

Green Bay's finale was forgettable — negative net passing yardage, with backup Clayton Tune under center instead of Jordan Love, summed up an offense that never found rhythm despite 128 rushing yards and never got out of its own way, taking four sacks for 41 yards. Minnesota leaned on Jordan Mason's 94-yard day and a typically productive 101-yard showing from Justin Jefferson to cruise home, out-gaining the Packers 363 to 121, with Dallas Turner's two sacks capping a miserable night for the Packers' front. Green Bay still finishes above .500, but this was as flat as it gets for a team with playoff aspirations.

THE VERDICT

GRADES GB: D (Negative net passing yardage says it all) | MIN: B+ (Controlled the ground game start to finish)

TOP RATINGS Jordan Mason (MIN) 7.5/10 — 94 yards on a day the passing game rested | Justin Jefferson (MIN) 7.0/10 — Steady as ever

HISTORICAL ECHO Green Bay's negative net passing day is the stat line you circle and hope never happens again.

AN EMOTIONAL NIGHT IN EAST RUTHERFORD

BOX SCORE

TEAM	YDS	PASS	RUSH	TO	TOP
DAL	286	143	143	2	26:53
NYG	380	219	161	1	33:07

QUARTERBACKS DAL: **Joe Milton III** 7/13, 73 yds, 1 INT | **Dak Prescott** 7/11, 70 yds | NYG: **Jaxson Dart** 22/32, 230 yds, 2 TD

ON THE GROUND DAL: **Jaydon Blue** 16 car, 64 yds, 1 TD | NYG: **Tyrone Tracy Jr.** 18 car, 103 yds | **Devin Singletary** 9 car, 26 yds, 1 TD

THROUGH THE AIR DAL: **Ryan Flourney** 5 rec, 68 yds | NYG: **Gunner Olszewski** 8 rec, 102 yds | **Tyrone Tracy Jr.** 8 rec, 56 yds, 1 TD

Jadeveon Clowney had 3 sacks for Dallas; Bobby Okereke's interception helped seal it for New York.

TEAM STATS		
STAT	NYG	DAL
1st Downs	25	18
Pass 1st downs	14	8
Rush 1st downs	8	9
1st downs (pen)	3	1
3rd down eff.	8-14	2-8
4th down eff.	0-0	1-2
Total Plays	69	54
Total Yards	380	286
Total Drives	10	11
Yards / Play	5.5	5.3
Net Passing	219	143
Comp / Att	22/33	14/24
Yards / pass	5.9	6.0
INT thrown	0	1
Sacks-Yds Lost	4-11	0-0
Rushing	161	143
Rush Attempts	32	30
Yards / rush	5.0	4.8
Red Zone (M-A)	2-5	2-4
Penalties	7-63	9-94
Turnovers	1	2
Fumbles lost	1	1
Def/ST TDs	0	0
Possession	33:07	26:53

The football took a back seat when Giants owner John Mara was presented with a game ball amid his cancer treatment, and his team responded with its most complete performance of the season, out-gaining Dallas 380 to 286 and controlling the ball for over 33 minutes. Rookie Jaxson Dart threw for 230 yards and two touchdowns, Tyrone Tracy Jr. piled up 103 rushing yards on top of 56 more through the air, and Gunner Olszewski added 102 receiving yards as New York routed a Dallas team that split reps between Joe Milton III and Dak Prescott, got three sacks from Jadeveon Clowney, and still turned the ball over twice.

THE VERDICT

GRADES DAL: D+ (Outclassed on a night that meant more than the score) | NYG: A- (Complete team performance)

TOP RATINGS Jaxson Dart (NYG) 8.0/10 — Two TD passes on a night bigger than football | Tyrone Tracy Jr. (NYG) 8.0/10 — 159 yards from scrimmage, controlled the game

HISTORICAL ECHO *A reminder that this league is, first and always, about the people in the building.*

JAGUARS CLOSE OUT THE AFC SOUTH IN STYLE

BOX SCORE

TEAM	YDS	PASS	RUSH	TO	TOP
TEN	194	117	77	1	26:57
JAX	319	255	64	0	33:03

QUARTERBACKS TEN: **Brandon Allen** 17/30, 72 yds, 1 INT | **Cam Ward** 3/3, 52 yds + rush TD | JAX: **Trevor Lawrence** 22/30, 255 yds, 3 TD

ON THE GROUND TEN: **Tony Pollard** 14 car, 48 yds | JAX: **Travis Etienne Jr.** 14 car, 32 yds | **Bhayshul Tuten** 5 car, 23 yds, 1 TD

THROUGH THE AIR TEN: — | JAX: **Parker Washington** 5 rec, 87 yds, 1 TD | **Brenton Strange** 6 rec, 52 yds, 1 TD

Jaguars safety Antonio Johnson turned a Tennessee turnover into a 58-yard pick-six.

TEAM STATS

STAT	JAX	TEN
1st Downs	24	10
Pass 1st downs	17	5
Rush 1st downs	4	5
1st downs (pen)	3	0
3rd down eff.	4-9	4-14
4th down eff.	0-0	1-3
Total Plays	58	53
Total Yards	319	194
Total Drives	10	10
Yards / Play	5.5	3.7
Net Passing	255	117
Comp / Att	24/32	20/33
Yards / pass	7.5	3.4
INT thrown	0	1
Sacks-Yds Lost	2-16	1-7
Rushing	64	77
Rush Attempts	24	19
Yards / rush	2.7	4.1
Red Zone (M-A)	3-3	1-1
Penalties	3-20	6-67
Turnovers	0	1
Fumbles lost	0	0
Def/ST TDs	1	0
Possession	33:03	26:57

Trevor Lawrence set a career high for touchdowns in a season while putting a bow on Jacksonville's AFC South title, throwing for 255 yards and three scores in a rout of a Tennessee team that started veteran Brandon Allen over rookie Cam Ward, who only entered in relief and scored on an 11-yard scramble. The Jaguars out-gained the Titans 319 to 194 and controlled the clock for 33 of 60 minutes. Parker Washington (87 yards, a touchdown) and Brenton Strange (52 yards, a touchdown) both found the end zone, and safety Antonio Johnson's 58-yard interception return for a score put an exclamation point on a Jaguars offense that clicked from the opening drive.

THE VERDICT

GRADES TEN: D- (Blown out to close a lost season) | JAX: A (Division title, franchise-record QB season)

TOP RATINGS Trevor Lawrence (JAX) 9.0/10 — Franchise-record TD season, capped in style | Antonio Johnson (JAX) 8.0/10 — 58-yard pick-six sealed the rout

HISTORICAL ECHO *Jacksonville's first division title in years arrives with its quarterback playing the best football of his career.*

SHOOTOUT IN HOUSTON

BOX SCORE

TEAM	YDS	PASS	RUSH	TO	TOP
IND	354	278	76	3	31:45
HOU	339	205	134	0	28:15

QUARTERBACKS IND: **Riley Leonard** 21/34, 270 yds, 2 TD, 1 INT + rush TD | HOU: **C.J. Stroud** 14/23, 169 yds, 1 TD + rush TD

ON THE GROUND IND: **DJ Giddens** 8 car, 30 yds | HOU: **British Brooks** 13 car, 63 yds

THROUGH THE AIR IND: **Alec Pierce** 4 rec, 132 yds, 2 TD | HOU: **Xavier Hutchinson** 5 rec, 84 yds | **Dalton Schultz** 4 rec, 73 yds

Colts linebacker Zaire Franklin led all players with 12 tackles in a game that was more track meet than defensive struggle.

TEAM STATS

STAT	HOU	IND
1st Downs	22	19
Pass 1st downs	9	11
Rush 1st downs	10	7
1st downs (pen)	3	1
3rd down eff.	4-13	8-15
4th down eff.	0-0	1-1
Total Plays	64	64
Total Yards	339	354
Total Drives	11	11
Yards / Play	5.3	5.5
Net Passing	205	278
Comp / Att	17/32	22/35
Yards / pass	6.4	7.7
INT thrown	0	1
Sacks-Yds Lost	0-0	1-8
Rushing	134	76
Rush Attempts	32	28
Yards / rush	4.2	2.7
Red Zone (M-A)	2-3	2-4
Penalties	7-77	7-81
Turnovers	0	3
Fumbles lost	0	2
Def/ST TDs	1	0
Possession	28:15	31:45

Indianapolis actually out-gained Houston 354 to 339, and Alec Pierce's 132-yard, two-touchdown day was the best individual performance of the week outside of Cincinnati, but three turnovers from rookie starter Riley Leonard proved fatal in a track meet that saw both offenses move the ball at will and combine for 68 points. C.J. Stroud was efficient (169 yards, a passing score and a rushing score) and Houston's discipline with the football — zero turnovers to Indy's three, one of them returned for a defensive score — closed out a 12-5 campaign that will make the Texans dangerous in the wild card round.

THE VERDICT

GRADES IND: C (More yards, more mistakes) | HOU: B+ (Discipline with the football made the difference)

TOP RATINGS Alec Pierce (IND) 8.0/10 — 132 yards, two touchdowns in a losing effort | C.J. Stroud (HOU) 7.5/10 — A passing score and a rushing score, zero mistakes

HISTORICAL ECHO *Neither defense showed up, but Houston's discipline with the football made the difference.*

BILLS STAY RED-HOT INTO THE POSTSEASON

BOX SCORE

TEAM	YDS	PASS	RUSH	TO	TOP
NYJ	122	53	69	0	21:40
BUF	470	259	211	0	38:20

QUARTERBACKS NYJ: **Brady Cook** 11/22, 60 yds, 1 TD | BUF: **Mitchell Trubisky** 22/29, 259 yds, 4 TD

ON THE GROUND NYJ: **Khalil Herbert** 12 car, 42 yds | BUF: **Ray Davis** 21 car, 151 yds

THROUGH THE AIR NYJ: — | BUF: **Gabe Davis** 5 rec, 41 yds, 1 TD | **Dalton Kincaid** 3 rec, 48 yds

Buffalo rested Josh Allen with playoff seeding locked; Mitchell Trubisky made the most of the spot start.

TEAM STATS		
STAT	BUF	NYJ
1st Downs	30	9
Pass 1st downs	16	5
Rush 1st downs	13	3
1st downs (pen)	1	1
3rd down eff.	6-13	5-13
4th down eff.	3-5	1-3
Total Plays	72	46
Total Yards	470	122
Total Drives	9	8
Yards / Play	6.5	2.7
Net Passing	259	53
Comp / Att	22/29	11/22
Yards / pass	8.9	2.3
INT thrown	0	0
Sacks-Yds Lost	0-0	1-7
Rushing	211	69
Rush Attempts	43	23
Yards / rush	4.9	3.0
Red Zone (M-A)	5-6	1-1
Penalties	3-28	4-27
Turnovers	0	0
Fumbles lost	0	0
Def/ST TDs	0	0
Possession	38:20	21:40

Buffalo's 470-122 yardage advantage tells the story of a Jets team with nothing left to play for and a Bills team peaking at exactly the right time, even with Josh Allen resting for the postseason. Mitchell Trubisky threw four touchdowns in relief, Ray Davis bulldozed his way to 151 yards on the ground as Buffalo ran for 211 as a team, and the defense barely broke a sweat against a New York offense led by Brady Cook that managed just nine first downs and held the ball for barely 21 minutes heading into January.

THE VERDICT

GRADES NYJ: F (Overmatched from the opening whistle) | BUF: A (Complete domination, peaking at the right time)

TOP RATINGS Ray Davis (BUF) 8.5/10 — 151 yards, downhill all day | Mitchell Trubisky (BUF) 8.0/10 — Four touchdowns, zero drama in relief

HISTORICAL ECHO *A statement blowout heading into January — exactly the tape you want on file before the postseason.*

BEARS HOLD ON FOR THE DIVISION

BOX SCORE

TEAM	YDS	PASS	RUSH	TO	TOP
DET	433	311	122	1	35:45
CHI	270	205	65	1	24:15

QUARTERBACKS DET: **Jared Goff** 27/42, 331 yds, 1 TD, 1 INT | CHI: **Caleb Williams** 20/33, 212 yds, 2 TD, 1 INT

ON THE GROUND DET: **Jahmyr Gibbs** 19 car, 80 yds | CHI: **D'Andre Swift** 10 car, 40 yds

THROUGH THE AIR DET: **Amon-Ra St. Brown** 11 rec, 139 yds | CHI: **Colston Loveland** 10 rec, 91 yds, 1 TD

Bears safety Kevin Byard's interception was the defensive stop that closed out the division.

TEAM STATS		
STAT	CHI	DET
1st Downs	16	26
Pass 1st downs	10	17
Rush 1st downs	4	7
1st downs (pen)	2	2
3rd down eff.	4-11	6-13
4th down eff.	1-2	0-0
Total Plays	52	72
Total Yards	270	433
Total Drives	8	9
Yards / Play	5.2	6.0
Net Passing	205	311
Comp / Att	20/33	27/42
Yards / pass	6.0	6.9
INT thrown	1	1
Sacks-Yds Lost	1-7	3-20
Rushing	65	122
Rush Attempts	18	27
Yards / rush	3.6	4.5
Red Zone (M-A)	1-1	1-4
Penalties	4-25	6-35
Turnovers	1	1
Fumbles lost	0	0
Def/ST TDs	0	0
Possession	24:15	35:45

Detroit dominated the yardage battle, 433 to 270, with Jared Goff (331 yards) finding Amon-Ra St. Brown 11 times for 139 yards, but a red zone that stalled at 1-for-4 left points on the field, and Chicago's defense bent without breaking — Kevin Byard's interception was the game's decisive stop — in a game that closed out the Bears' surprise run to an NFC North title and the conference's No. 2 seed. Caleb Williams and rookie tight end Colston Loveland (91 yards, a touchdown) kept it competitive to the final whistle, but it wasn't enough to change the standings math.

THE VERDICT

GRADES DET: B- (Dominated yardage, lost the scoreboard) | CHI: B (Bent but never broke, division sealed)

TOP RATINGS Amon-Ra St. Brown (DET) 8.0/10 — 139 yards on 11 catches, no finishing touch | Colston Loveland (CHI) 7.0/10 — 91 yards and a score for the rookie tight end

HISTORICAL ECHO *Chicago's rise from also-ran to the NFC's No. 2 seed is this season's quieter storyline.*

BRONCOS LOCK UP THE AFC'S TOP SEED

BOX SCORE

TEAM	YDS	PASS	RUSH	TO	TOP
LAC	217	104	113	2	25:59
DEN	240	124	116	0	34:01

QUARTERBACKS LAC: **Trey Lance** 20/44, 136 yds, 1 INT | DEN: **Bo Nix** 14/23, 141 yds + 8 car, 49 yds

ON THE GROUND LAC: **Trey Lance** 9 car, 69 yds | DEN: **RJ Harvey** 15 car, 28 yds

THROUGH THE AIR LAC: **Keenan Allen** 7 rec, 36 yds | DEN: **Evan Engram** 3 rec, 45 yds

Denver corner Ja'Quan McMillian's 45-yard pick-six was the game's only touchdown by either offense's arm — a defensive score decided it.

TEAM STATS

STAT	DEN	LAC
1st Downs	13	13
Pass 1st downs	6	7
Rush 1st downs	7	6
1st downs (pen)	0	0
3rd down eff.	5-15	7-20
4th down eff.	0-0	3-5
Total Plays	58	69
Total Yards	240	217
Total Drives	12	12
Yards / Play	4.1	3.1
Net Passing	124	104
Comp / Att	14/23	20/44
Yards / pass	4.6	2.2
INT thrown	0	1
Sacks-Yds Lost	4-17	4-32
Rushing	116	113
Rush Attempts	31	21
Yards / rush	3.7	5.4
Red Zone (M-A)	0-3	0-2
Penalties	1-5	5-25
Turnovers	0	2
Fumbles lost	0	1
Def/ST TDs	1	0
Possession	34:01	25:59

Denver didn't need fireworks — just a suffocating defensive performance capped by Ja'Quan McMillian's 45-yard interception return for a touchdown, and enough from Bo Nix, who contributed with his legs (49 rushing yards) as much as his arm, to put away a Chargers team that turned it over twice behind a scrambling Trey Lance. Neither offense topped 250 total yards, but Denver held the ball for 34 minutes and made its one big defensive play count. The win secures the AFC's No. 1 overall seed and a bye, capping a 14-3 season that has this defense trending toward the postseason as the league's most dangerous unit.

THE VERDICT

GRADES LAC: C- (Two turnovers in a game that mattered) | DEN: A (Defense-first title run, clinched the bye)

TOP RATINGS Ja'Quan McMillian (DEN) 8.5/10 — 45-yard pick-six was the play of the game | Bo Nix (DEN) 7.5/10 — Efficient through the air, dangerous on the ground

HISTORICAL ECHO *A defense-first title run — Denver's formula has been simple and brutally effective all season.*

CARLSON'S 60-YARDER ENDS IT IN VEGAS

BOX SCORE

TEAM	YDS	PASS	RUSH	TO	TOP
KC	168	84	84	2	29:16
LV	204	86	118	2	30:44

QUARTERBACKS KC: **Shane Buechele** 7/14, 88 yds | **Chris Oladokun** 11/17, 58 yds | LV: **Aidan O'Connell** 10/22, 102 yds

ON THE GROUND KC: **Brashard Smith** 12 car, 56 yds | LV: **Ashton Jeanty** 26 car, 87 yds

THROUGH THE AIR KC: **Hollywood Brown** 3 rec, 64 yds | LV: **Michael Mayer** 3 rec, 47 yds

Chris Jones had 2 sacks and a Chamarri Conner interception for Kansas City, who rested Patrick Mahomes with nothing left to play for.

TEAM STATS		
STAT	LV	KC
1st Downs	12	10
Pass 1st downs	5	6
Rush 1st downs	5	4
1st downs (pen)	2	0
3rd down eff.	4-16	3-17
4th down eff.	0-2	1-1
Total Plays	61	62
Total Yards	204	168
Total Drives	14	15
Yards / Play	3.3	2.7
Net Passing	86	84
Comp / Att	11/26	18/31
Yards / pass	3.0	2.2
INT thrown	1	0
Sacks-Yds Lost	3-19	8-62
Rushing	118	84
Rush Attempts	32	23
Yards / rush	3.7	3.7
Red Zone (M-A)	0-2	0-2
Penalties	2-10	7-45
Turnovers	2	2
Fumbles lost	1	2
Def/ST TDs	0	0
Possession	30:44	29:16

Neither offense did much of anything — Kansas City rested Patrick Mahomes and rotated Shane Buechele and Chris Oladokun behind center — but Daniel Carlson didn't need much, his 60-yard field goal winning it for Las Vegas in a game that meant nothing for the standings but everything for pride. Both teams turned it over twice and neither offense cracked 220 total yards; Kansas City's reserve pass rush harassed Aidan O'Connell all day, piling up eight sacks. Rookie Ashton Jeanty continued his strong debut season with 87 yards on 26 carries, a nice parting note for a Raiders team already looking to 2026, while Chris Jones's two sacks led the Chiefs' effort up front.

THE VERDICT

GRADES KC: D+ (Backups in, offense never showed up) | LV: B (Found a way to win an ugly one)

TOP RATINGS Daniel Carlson (LV) 9.0/10 — 60 yards, game over | Ashton Jeanty (LV) 7.5/10 — Another workhorse day for the rookie

HISTORICAL ECHO A 60-yard game-winner is the kind of moment that outlives a meaningless final score.

EAGLES REST UP, COMMANDERS SPOIL THE PARTY

BOX SCORE

TEAM	YDS	PASS	RUSH	TO	TOP
WSH	274	131	143	2	34:09
PHI	307	227	80	1	25:51

QUARTERBACKS WSH: **Josh Johnson** 14/22, 131 yds, 1 TD, 1 INT | PHI: **Tanner McKee** 21/40, 241 yds, 1 TD, 1 INT

ON THE GROUND WSH: **Chris Rodriguez Jr.** 16 car, 65 yds, 1 TD | PHI: **Tank Bigsby** 16 car, 75 yds, 1 TD

THROUGH THE AIR WSH: **Terry McLaurin** 4 rec, 57 yds | PHI: **DeVonta Smith** 3 rec, 52 yds | **Jahan Dotson** 3 rec, 40 yds

Washington's Jeremy Reaves and Philadelphia's Jalyx Hunt each intercepted a pass in a backups-heavy finale.

TEAM STATS

STAT	PHI	WSH
1st Downs	18	25
Pass 1st downs	13	9
Rush 1st downs	5	10
1st downs (pen)	0	6
3rd down eff.	6-14	6-11
4th down eff.	0-3	1-1
Total Plays	62	63
Total Yards	307	274
Total Drives	10	11
Yards / Play	5.0	4.3
Net Passing	227	131
Comp / Att	21/40	14/22
Yards / pass	5.3	6.0
INT thrown	1	1
Sacks-Yds Lost	3-14	0-0
Rushing	80	143
Rush Attempts	19	41
Yards / rush	4.2	3.5
Red Zone (M-A)	2-3	3-4
Penalties	9-123	4-19
Turnovers	1	2
Fumbles lost	0	1
Def/ST TDs	0	0
Possession	25:51	34:09

With the NFC East long since wrapped up, Philadelphia sat Jalen Hurts, Saquon Barkley and other key starters, and Washington made them pay behind Josh Johnson's efficient 131-yard, one-score day and a 65-yard rushing touchdown from Chris Rodriguez Jr., controlling the ball for over 34 minutes despite Philadelphia piling up 307 total yards and getting flagged nine times for 123 yards. Terry McLaurin did his usual quiet damage, Tank Bigsby (75 yards, a score) gave Philadelphia's reserves a bright spot, and the Commanders' backups-vs-backups win means little in the standings but plenty for a young roster building confidence into the offseason.

THE VERDICT

GRADES WSH: B+ (Took care of business against the reserves) | PHI: C (Reserves-only, evaluate with caution)

TOP RATINGS Terry McLaurin (WSH) 7.0/10 — Professional as always | Tank Bigsby (PHI) 6.5/10 — Made the most of extended reps

HISTORICAL ECHO *The classic nothing-at-stake finale — evaluate carefully before reading too much into it.*

RODGERS AND THE STEELERS CLAIM THE NORTH

BOX SCORE

TEAM	YDS	PASS	RUSH	TO	TOP
BAL	359	222	137	1	25:49
PIT	390	290	100	0	34:11

QUARTERBACKS BAL: **Lamar Jackson** 11/18, 238 yds, 3 TD, 1 INT | PIT: **Aaron Rodgers** 31/47, 294 yds, 1 TD

ON THE GROUND BAL: **Derrick Henry** 20 car, 126 yds | PIT: **Jaylen Warren** 14 car, 66 yds

THROUGH THE AIR BAL: **Zay Flowers** 4 rec, 138 yds, 2 TD | PIT: **Kenny Gainwell** 8 rec, 64 yds | **Calvin Austin III** 3 rec, 55 yds, 1 TD

T.J. Watt's interception, plus sacks from Alex Highsmith, Derrick Harmon and Nick Herbig, powered a Pittsburgh pass rush that never let up.

TEAM STATS		
STAT	PIT	BAL
1st Downs	24	12
Pass 1st downs	14	5
Rush 1st downs	8	6
1st downs (pen)	2	1
3rd down eff.	9-16	4-12
4th down eff.	1-2	2-2
Total Plays	73	48
Total Yards	390	359
Total Drives	10	10
Yards / Play	5.3	7.5
Net Passing	290	222
Comp / Att	31/47	11/18
Yards / pass	5.9	10.6
INT thrown	0	1
Sacks-Yds Lost	2-4	3-16
Rushing	100	137
Rush Attempts	24	27
Yards / rush	4.2	5.1
Red Zone (M-A)	2-4	0-0
Penalties	5-45	9-78
Turnovers	0	1
Fumbles lost	0	0
Def/ST TDs	0	0
Possession	34:11	25:49

Aaron Rodgers threw for 294 yards and outlasted a Derrick Henry (126 yards) and Zay Flowers (138 yards on just 4 catches, 2 TDs) shootout attempt from Baltimore in a game that went down to the wire despite Pittsburgh needing 25 more plays to match Baltimore's yardage. Lamar Jackson was electric in defeat (238 yards, 3 touchdowns) but a T.J. Watt interception and pressure from Alex Highsmith, Derrick Harmon and Nick Herbig tilted the game just enough, and Pittsburgh held the ball for over 34 minutes to keep the Ravens' explosive attack off the field. Pittsburgh closes out the AFC North title in a season that has re-energized the franchise around its 42-year-old quarterback.

THE VERDICT

GRADES BAL: C+ (Flowers was brilliant, not enough support) | PIT: A- (Delivered a division title down the stretch)

TOP RATINGS Aaron Rodgers (PIT) 8.0/10 — 294 yards, delivered when it counted | Zay Flowers (BAL) 8.5/10 — 138 yards and 2 TDs on just 4 catches, in a losing cause

HISTORICAL ECHO *Rodgers' first division title outside Green Bay closes one of the sport's more improbable late-career chapters.*

STAFFORD CLOSES THE BOOK ON AN MVP-CALIBER YEAR

BOX SCORE

TEAM	YDS	PASS	RUSH	TO	TOP
ARI	317	238	79	2	27:49
LAR	395	252	143	0	32:11

QUARTERBACKS ARI: **Jacoby Brissett** 22/31, 243 yds, 2 TD, 1 INT | LAR: **Matthew Stafford** 25/40, 259 yds, 4 TD

ON THE GROUND ARI: **Emari Demercado** 2 car, 29 yds | LAR: **Kyren Williams** 12 car, 60 yds

THROUGH THE AIR ARI: **Michael Wilson** 5 rec, 99 yds, 1 TD | LAR: **Puka Nacua** 10 rec, 76 yds, 1 TD | **Tyler Higbee** 5 rec, 91 yds, 1 TD

Desjuan Johnson had 2 sacks and Ahkello Witherspoon picked off Brissett as the Rams' defense closed the door.

TEAM STATS

STAT	LAR	ARI
1st Downs	25	17
Pass 1st downs	16	13
Rush 1st downs	9	4
1st downs (pen)	0	0
3rd down eff.	9-16	4-11
4th down eff.	1-1	1-2
Total Plays	72	53
Total Yards	395	317
Total Drives	10	9
Yards / Play	5.5	6.0
Net Passing	252	238
Comp / Att	25/40	23/32
Yards / pass	6.1	6.3
INT thrown	0	1
Sacks-Yds Lost	1-7	6-33
Rushing	143	79
Rush Attempts	31	15
Yards / rush	4.6	5.3
Red Zone (M-A)	2-4	1-3
Penalties	4-20	6-45
Turnovers	0	2
Fumbles lost	0	1
Def/ST TDs	0	0
Possession	32:11	27:49

Matthew Stafford threw four touchdowns without a turnover as the Rams cruised into the postseason as one of the NFC's hottest teams, out-gaining Arizona 395 to 317 while spreading the ball to Puka Nacua (10 catches, 76 yards) and Tyler Higbee (91 yards) as Kyren Williams and the ground game piled up 143 yards on the way to a 9-of-16 day on third down. Arizona — eliminated weeks ago — offered token resistance behind Michael Wilson's 99-yard day, but Desjuan Johnson's two sacks (part of six on the day) and an Ahkello Witherspoon interception shut the door. Another data point in Stafford's case for a first career MVP.

THE VERDICT

GRADES ARI: D (Eliminated, playing out the string) | LAR: A- (Four TDs, zero mistakes, MVP-caliber)

TOP RATINGS Matthew Stafford (LAR) 9.0/10 — Four scores, zero mistakes, MVP-caliber | Puka Nacua (LAR) 7.5/10 — 76 yards and a score on 10 catches

HISTORICAL ECHO *At 37, Stafford is playing the best stretch of football of a Hall of Fame-caliber career.*

Patriots Close the Year on a Heater

BOX SCORE

TEAM	YDS	PASS	RUSH	TO	TOP
MIA	180	117	63	2	29:11
NE	457	214	243	0	30:49

QUARTERBACKS MIA: **Quinn Ewers** 16/23, 137 yds, 1 TD, 1 INT | NE: **Drake Maye** 14/18, 191 yds, 1 TD

ON THE GROUND MIA: **Jaylen Wright** 13 car, 23 yds | NE: **Rhamondre Stevenson** 7 car, 131 yds, 2 TD | **TreVeyon Henderson** 13 car, 53 yds, 2 TD

THROUGH THE AIR MIA: **Theo Wease Jr.** 3 rec, 44 yds | NE: **Hunter Henry** 5 rec, 56 yds | **Rhamondre Stevenson** 2 rec, 22 yds, 1 TD

Four different Patriots defenders recorded a sack, and Jaylinn Hawkins added an interception, in a complete team performance.

TEAM STATS		
STAT	NE	MIA
1st Downs	22	13
Pass 1st downs	8	7
Rush 1st downs	12	5
1st downs (pen)	2	1
3rd down eff.	5-10	5-13
4th down eff.	0-1	0-1
Total Plays	56	54
Total Yards	457	180
Total Drives	12	11
Yards / Play	8.2	3.3
Net Passing	214	117
Comp / Att	17/22	16/25
Yards / pass	9.7	4.0
INT thrown	0	1
Sacks-Yds Lost	0-0	4-20
Rushing	243	63
Rush Attempts	34	25
Yards / rush	7.1	2.5
Red Zone (M-A)	4-5	1-3
Penalties	4-52	7-52
Turnovers	0	2
Fumbles lost	0	1
Def/ST TDs	0	0
Possession	30:49	29:11

Rhamondre Stevenson scored three total touchdowns — two rushing (131 yards on just 7 carries) and one receiving — as New England racked up 457 total yards at 8.2 yards a play in a lopsided finale that has the Patriots looking every bit like a genuine AFC contender. TreVeyon Henderson chipped in two more rushing scores as the Patriots ran for 243 yards as a team, Drake Maye was efficient again (191 yards, a touchdown, no sacks allowed), and a defense that got sacks from four different players and forced two turnovers sent Miami's season out with a ninth loss in its last twelve games.

THE VERDICT

GRADES MIA: D- (A long, rough season ends the same way it went) | NE: A (Peaking at the perfect time)

TOP RATINGS Rhamondre Stevenson (NE) 9.0/10 — Three total touchdowns, downhill all day | Drake Maye (NE) 7.5/10 — Efficient game manager in a laughter

HISTORICAL ECHO *New England enters January as the team nobody in the AFC wants to see across the bracket.*

Top 10 Stat Leaders

PASSING YARDS

RK	PLAYER	TEAM	TOTAL
1	Matthew Stafford	LAR	4,707
2	Jared Goff	DET	4,564
3	Dak Prescott	DAL	4,552
4	Drake Maye	NE	4,394
5	Sam Darnold	SEA	4,048
6	Trevor Lawrence	JAX	4,007
7	Caleb Williams	CHI	3,942
8	Bo Nix	DEN	3,931
9	Justin Herbert	LAC	3,727
10	Baker Mayfield	TB	—

PASSING TOUCHDOWNS

RK	PLAYER	TEAM	TOTAL
1	Matthew Stafford	LAR	46
2	Jared Goff	DET	34
3	Drake Maye	NE	31
4	Dak Prescott	DAL	30
5	Trevor Lawrence	JAX	29
6	Caleb Williams	CHI	27
7	Baker Mayfield	TB	26
8	Justin Herbert	LAC	26
9	Sam Darnold	SEA	25
10	Josh Allen	BUF	—

Top 10 Stat Leaders

RUSHING YARDS

RK	PLAYER	TEAM	TOTAL
1	James Cook III	BUF	1,621
2	Derrick Henry	BAL	1,595
3	Jonathan Taylor	IND	1,585
4	Bijan Robinson	ATL	1,478
5	De'Von Achane	MIA	1,350
6	Kyren Williams	LAR	1,252
7	Jahmyr Gibbs	DET	1,223
8	Christian McCaffrey	SF	1,202
9	Javonte Williams	DAL	1,201
10	Saquon Barkley	PHI	—

RECEIVING YARDS

RK	PLAYER	TEAM	TOTAL
1	Jaxon Smith-Njigba	SEA	1,793
2	Puka Nacua	LAR	1,715
3	George Pickens	DAL	1,429
4	Ja'Marr Chase	CIN	1,412
5	Amon-Ra St. Brown	DET	1,401
6	Trey McBride	ARI	1,239
7	Zay Flowers	BAL	1,211
8	Chris Olave	NO	1,163
9	Nico Collins	HOU	1,117
10	Jameson Williams	DET	—

Top 10 Stat Leaders

SACKS

RK	PLAYER	TEAM	TOTAL
1	Myles Garrett	CLE	23.0
2	Brian Burns	CIN	16.5
3	Danielle Hunter	HOU	15.0
4	Aidan Hutchinson	DET	14.5
5	Nik Bonitto	DEN	14.0
6	Tuli Tuipulotu	LAC	13.0
7	Micah Parsons	GB	12.5
8	Josh Sweat	ARI	12.0
9	Will Anderson Jr.	HOU	12.0
10	Byron Young	LAR	—

INTERCEPTIONS

RK	PLAYER	TEAM	TOTAL
1	Kevin Byard	CHI	7
2	Devin Lloyd	JAX	5
3	Jaycee Horn	CAR	5
4	Ernest Jones IV	SEA	5
5	Antonio Johnson	JAX	5
6	Xavier Watts	ATL	5
7	Nahshon Wright	DAL	5
8	Tony Jefferson	ATL	4
9	Marlon Humphrey	BAL	4
10	Jaylinn Hawkins	NE	4

Play of the Week

MYLES GARRETT'S 23RD SACK

Cleveland Browns at Cincinnati Bengals — 4th quarter

With the single-season sack record on the line, Garrett beat Bengals right tackle Amarius Mims off the edge and dropped Joe Burrow for the 23rd time this season — breaking the mark of 22.5 shared by Michael Strahan (2001) and T.J. Watt (2021). It wasn't garbage time, either: Cleveland still needed the sack, and the win, to close out the season on a high note. Garrett finished the year leading the NFL in tackles for loss and was subsequently named AP Defensive Player of the Year — his second such honor.

RUNNERS-UP

Daniel Carlson's 60-yard field goal — Las Vegas beats Kansas City as time expires — the longest game-winner of the week.

Rhamondre Stevenson's 3rd rushing TD — Sealed New England's 38-10 rout of Miami and a statement finish to the year.

Zay Flowers, 138 yards & 2 TDs — A near-heroic effort in a losing cause as Baltimore fell to Pittsburgh in the AFC North decider.

Rookie Watch

Cam Ward QB · Tennessee Titans

The No. 1 overall pick's rookie year was a rough one on a 3-14 team, but the flashes of arm talent were real even in Week 18's blowout loss to Jacksonville. A full offseason and (hopefully) a better supporting cast await.

Travis Hunter WR/CB · Jacksonville Jaguars

The Heisman winner played both ways for a division champion in his first season — a genuinely unusual feat in the modern NFL. Jacksonville's AFC South title has his fingerprints on both sides of the ball.

Ashton Jeanty RB · Las Vegas Raiders

26 carries for 87 yards in the Week 18 win over Kansas City was a fitting close to a rookie season that saw him become the focal point of Las Vegas's offense from day one.

Tyler Shough QB · New Orleans Saints

Started the finale for New Orleans and moved the offense well in defeat, throwing into red zone after red zone. A rookie season with real positives for a rebuilding franchise.

Jaxson Dart QB · New York Giants

Threw two touchdowns in an emotional Week 18 win, on the night the Giants honored owner John Mara with a game ball. A promising final month to build on into 2026.

MVP Race Tracker

1. **Matthew Stafford** Los Angeles Rams

Four touchdowns and no turnovers to close the year, capping a season that has him as the clear front-runner. At 37, arguably the best football of his career.

2. **Trevor Lawrence** Jacksonville Jaguars

A career-high touchdown season and an AFC South title. The counter-argument for MVP has always been team success, and Lawrence delivered both.

3. **Bo Nix** Denver Broncos

Quietly efficient all year behind the league's best defense, and the engine behind the AFC's No. 1 seed. Doesn't put up gaudy numbers, but Denver doesn't win without him.

4. **Myles Garrett** Cleveland Browns

The single-season sack record (23) makes him this magazine's top defensive vote, and a real word-of-mouth MVP case on a non-playoff team — historically a tough sell with voters.

5. **Drake Maye** New England Patriots

Efficient, mistake-free, and finishing the year on a heater with a 457-yard team performance in the finale. The Patriots' best quarterback play in years.

Opinion ballot — not an official award. Winners announced at NFL Honors.

Fantasy Corner

Week 18 falls after the fantasy playoffs in most standard leagues, so instead of start/sit advice, here's the closing debrief: the players who won titles, the ones who cost you, and early names to know before your 2026 draft.

WEEK 18 FANTASY STUDS

Rhamondre Stevenson (NE) — 3 rushing TDs — a league-winning line if you had him in a championship.

Mitchell Trubisky (BUF) — 4 passing TDs in relief-turned-signature performance.

Zay Flowers (BAL) — 138 yards, 2 TDs — meaningless for the standings, huge for fantasy finals.

Ray Davis (BUF) — 151 rushing yards on a workhorse workload.

BUY-LOW NAMES FOR 2026 DRAFTS

Ashton Jeanty (LV) — Workhorse volume as a rookie on a bad team — situation can only improve.

Jaxson Dart (NYG) — Flashed real arm talent late; a full offseason as the guy changes his outlook.

Tyler Shough (NO) — Rookie QB with starting reps in a rebuild — worth a late-round dynasty stash.

Wild Card Predictions — AFC

(7) LAC at (2) NE

Los Angeles Chargers vs New England Patriots

PICK: New England Patriots

New England is red-hot off a 457-yard demolition of Miami and gets the Chargers, who managed just 217 total yards and two turnovers in a lifeless finale loss to Denver. Home field and Stevenson's legs make the Patriots the pick.

(6) BUF at (3) JAX

Buffalo Bills vs Jacksonville Jaguars

PICK: Buffalo Bills

Trevor Lawrence is playing the best football of his career, but Buffalo enters January as the more battle-tested team after a 470-yard statement win over the Jets. A pick'em on paper — we lean Bills on playoff pedigree.

(5) HOU at (4) PIT

Houston Texans vs Pittsburgh Steelers

PICK: Pittsburgh Steelers

Aaron Rodgers just delivered a division title in his first year in Pittsburgh, and the Steelers get to open the postseason at Acrisure Stadium. Houston is dangerous, but this is Pittsburgh's moment.

Wild Card Predictions — NFC

(7) GB at (2) CHI

Green Bay Packers vs Chicago Bears

PICK: Chicago Bears

Green Bay's offense produced negative net passing yards in Week 18 — an alarming sign heading into a road game at a Bears team that just claimed its first NFC North title in years. Chicago at home is the play.

(6) SF at (3) PHI

San Francisco 49ers vs Philadelphia Eagles

PICK: Philadelphia Eagles

Philadelphia rested Jalen Hurts and Saquon Barkley in Week 18 and will get both back at full speed. San Francisco was outgained 361-173 in its finale and has to find offense fast. Slight edge to the healthier, deeper roster.

(5) LAR at (4) CAR

Los Angeles Rams vs Carolina Panthers

PICK: Los Angeles Rams

Carolina backed into the NFC South on tiebreakers with the worst point differential (-69) of any 2025 playoff team. Matthew Stafford's Rams, fresh off a four-touchdown, zero-turnover finale, are the road favorite here.

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