**Tampa Bay Buccaneers**

The Bucs head into 2024 after a surprising 2023 season. Initially not seen as much of a contender, they defied expectations, finishing with a 9-8 record after winning five of their last six games. That record was enough to win the division and secure a wildcard game against the Eagles, which they won emphatically, 32-9. The divisional round proved tougher, as they faced the Lions, where the Bucs bowed out with a 31-23 loss.

In 2024, the Bucs enter the season with confidence, having found their quarterback following the Tom Brady era in Tampa. Baker Mayfield signed a new contract in the off-season after an impressive 2023 campaign, where he threw for 4,044 yards, marking his first season over 4,000 yards. He also recorded 28 passing touchdowns and one rushing touchdown. Kyle Trask will once again serve as Mayfield’s backup, continuing the role he played last season.

The running game will once again be led by Rachaad White, who had a breakout season in 2023. White finished with 990 rushing yards and six touchdowns, along with 549 receiving yards, which played a significant role in his success. He should have more support in 2024 with rookie Bucky Irving joining the team via the draft. The running back room also includes Sean Tucker and Chase Edmonds, providing solid depth.

The receiving corps will be led by Mike Evans, who aims to secure his 11th consecutive 1,000-yard season. Evans finished 2023 with 1,255 yards and 13 touchdowns. Chris Godwin, the wide receiver two, had his third 1,000-yard season, although he only managed two touchdowns. Rookie Jalen McMillan and Trey Palmer will compete for the third receiver spot, with Kameron Johnson and Rakim Jarrett providing additional depth.

Cade Otton returns as the starting tight end after posting 455 yards and four touchdowns in 2023. He will likely be a fourth target in the passing game, with McMillan and Palmer competing for the wide receiver three spot. The tight end group also includes Payne Durham, Ko Kieft, and rookie Devin Culp, who will compete for the backup roles.

On the offensive line, the Bucs strengthened their roster by drafting Graham Barton in the first round, who will start at centre. Cody Mauch and Ben Bredeson, a free agency acquisition, will start at right and left guard, respectively. Tristan Wirfs and Luke Goedeke will return as the starting tackles. Depth was bolstered with the free-agent signing of Sua Opeta as a backup guard, Robert Hainsey as the backup centre, and Justin Skule and Silas Dzansi as backup tackles. Ejiah Klein also makes the roster for a guard depth piece.

The defensive line will be anchored by Vita Vea, who recorded 5.5 sacks from the nose tackle position last season. Greg Gaines re-signed to provide backup. Calijah Kancey and Logan Hall will start alongside Vea in the 3-4 defensive scheme. William Golston, Ben Stille and Earnest Brown IV finish the group of tackles. Last season's sack leader, Yaya Diaby, who had an impressive rookie year, will play on the outside. Rookie Chris Braswell, Joe Tryon-Shoyinka, and Anthony Nelson will compete for the other outside linebacker spot, with solid depth at the position. Markees Watts and Jose Ramirez wrap up the outside linebacker group.

Lavonte David, who led the team with 134 tackles last season, will return but loses his starting partner with Devin White’s departure. K.J. Britt is expected to step into the starting role, with SirVocea Dennis and J.J. Russell rotating on the inside.

The secondary will once again feature standout safety Antoine Winfield Jr., who re-signed with the team. He will be partnered by Jordan Whitehead, who also re-signed. Tykee Smith, a draft addition, will provide depth alongside Kaevon Merryweather. Jamel Dean and Zyon McCollum will start at cornerback, with Bryce Hall adding valuable depth after signing in free agency. Graham Barton, Josh Hayes and Tyrek Funderburk also make the roster. Christian Izien and Tavierre Thomas will compete for the starting nickelback spot.

Chase McLaughlin will return as the spot kicker after a career-best season, where he posted a 93.5% success rate on field goals and converted all his extra-point attempts.

Heading into 2024, the Bucs are bolstered by the re-signing of key players from their successful 2023 season, including Mayfield, Evans, Winfield, and Davis. A few crucial draft selections could provide the extra boost they need. The Bucs are in a very winnable division, with the Falcons showing improvement and posing a significant challenge. This division could be a closely contested race, but don’t be surprised if the Bucs come out on top once again.

**New Orleans Saints**

The Saints enter 2024 after a 9-8 season that saw them narrowly miss the playoffs due to their record against common opponents. Despite sharing the same overall and division record as the Buccaneers, the Saints fell short in the tiebreaker. The offseason has seen significant departures, but the core of the starting lineup remains intact. Although depth may be a concern, the Saints are optimistic about making a playoff push in a division that remains up for grabs.

Derek Carr returns as the starting quarterback, hoping for a healthier season after battling injuries in 2023. Despite playing all 17 games, Carr was often a game-time decision and finished just shy of 4,000 passing yards, posting his third-highest passer rating in his career. Backing him up is rookie Spencer Rattler, drafted 150th overall, who could see action if Carr’s health falters as well as Jake Haener who also made the roster. Taysom Hill will continue to contribute in various roles, maintaining his status as the team’s versatile playmaker.

The running back room is led once again by Alvin Kamara, who had a down year in 2023, rushing for just 694 yards—his lowest total since entering the NFL. His receiving yards also dipped to 466, the second-lowest of his career. However, Jamaal Williams and Kendre Miller provided valuable support, combining for over 500 rushing yards and 300 receiving yards, which helped lighten Kamara's load. It’s likely that head coach Dennis Allen will continue to spread the workload among the backs in 2024, especially given Kamara's reduced touches last season. Jordan Mims gets a roster spot and will be the backup whilst Keondre Miller is on IR.

Chris Olave remains Derek Carr’s primary target, having surpassed 1,000 receiving yards in each of his first two seasons. Rashid Shaheed will line up alongside him after a career-best 719-yard season in 2023, with hopes of further improvement. AT Perry is set to be the third receiver following a promising rookie year. Free-agent addition Cedric Wilson and along with rookie Bud Means, and Mason Tipton will provide depth, and Taysom Hill will also contribute as a receiver. Despite the departure of longtime starter Michael Thomas, the Saints' receiving corps still looks capable of strong production.

At tight end, the Saints will adjust to the loss of Jimmy Graham. Juwan Johnson remains the top option, with Taysom Hill and Foster Moreau offering different skill sets to complement the position. This trio could make for an intriguing group to watch as the season progresses, given their diverse abilities and potential for varied usage in the offence. Dallin Holker also makes the roster but starts on the PUP list.

The offensive line faces changes after losing Andrus Peat, Max Garcia, Colby Gossett, Trai Turner, and Cameron Irving to free agency. However, the addition of left tackle Tuliese Fuaga, drafted 14th overall, is a significant boost. He is expected to start immediately, and will be backed up by Landon Young and Justin Herron. Trevor Penning will be competing for the right tackle spot against free-agent signing Olisaemeka Udon as well as Ryan Ramczyk. Eric McCoy will anchor the line at centre, with Cesar Ruiz and Lucas Patrick likely starting at the guard positions. Nick Saldiveri will provide depth as backup guard.

The defence welcomes a major addition in Chase Young, who joins the Saints' defensive line looking to revitalise his career after some challenging seasons. He will team up with Carl Granderson, the team’s sack leader from last year, and veteran Cameron Jordan on the edges. Payton Turner, Isaiah Foskey and Tanoh Kpaasagnon all will be on the depth chart. The interior will be manned by Khalen Saunders and Nathan Shepard, with last year's standout rookie, Bryan Bresee, looking to build on his 4.5-sack season. Khristian Boyd, a rookie, adds depth to the defensive tackle rotation. Kendal Vickers, John Ridgeway III and Camron Peterson also add depth.

Linebacker DeMario Davis remains the leader of the unit, now joined by Willie Gay, a free-agent acquisition from the Chiefs. This duo has the potential to form a formidable partnership. Khaleke Hudson and Pete Werner will compete for the other starting linebacker spot, with Hudson recently signed in free agency. The Saints hope D’Marco Jackson makes a significant leap in his second year, especially with Ty Summers and Ryann Connelly departing in free agency. Anfrenee Orji, Jaylon Ford and Nephi Sewell also make the roster adding good depth to the linebacker group.

In the secondary, the Saints face changes with the departures of safeties Marcus Maye and Lonnie Johnson. Tyrann Mathieu and Jordan Howden will start at safety, with Will Harris and J.T Gray providing some much needed depth. Marshon Lattimore remains the top cornerback, now paired with second-round draft pick Kool-Aid McKinstry. Paulson Adebo will also contribute as a starting cornerback if McKinstry isn't ready straight away. Rico Payton and Rejzhon Wright make the roster as well, while Alontae Taylor takes over as the starting nickelback.

Special teams see some competition at kicker in the offseason with Blake Grupe facing a challenge from Irish kicker Charlie Smyth after Grupe missed seven field goals in 2023. The battle for the starting job pushed both kickers to perform at their best as the season approached. Grupe won the battle and will look to start the season.

Overall, the Saints have assembled a competitive roster for 2024, poised to contend in a division that has been up for grabs in recent seasons. While depth in some areas may be a concern, the starting lineup is strong enough to secure wins. The Saints will likely face stiff competition for the division title from the Buccaneers and Falcons, both of whom have also improved, but they are well-positioned to make a playoff push.

**Atlanta Falcons**

The season outlook for the Falcons should be a positive one. The Falcons are in a winnable division, one that is definitely there for the taking again this year. Last season, the Falcons finished with a record of 7-10, just two wins short of the playoffs. They managed this despite poor quarterback play from Desmond Ridder and Taylor Heinicke. This led to head coach Arthur Smith being replaced by Raheem Morris, who was the defensive coordinator for the LA Rams last season. Morris' appointment may be the most underrated of the eight head coaching changes made this offseason. Additionally, the Falcons hire new offensive coordinator Zac Robinson, previously the Rams' quarterback coach who learned from one of the best, Sean McVay.

Nearly everything is set up at this point. The biggest need for the Falcons was to get a quarterback to maximise the potential of their offensive weapons. They addressed this by signing the best available free agent, Kirk Cousins, from the Vikings. Cousins signed a four-year deal with the Falcons, although he is coming off a season-ending Achilles injury. They also addressed their quarterback of the future with a controversial first draft pick, Michael Penix, at 8th overall. This pick is smart in the long term, although it raises questions about giving Cousins a four-year deal. With Cousins at quarterback, the Falcons should not be in the top 10 of the draft again, so taking their future quarterback now is prudent. Penix can learn and grow behind Cousins, one of the best professionals in the NFL.

One of the most exciting players to watch in the NFL, second-year running back Bijan Robinson, will benefit greatly from the Falcons' offseason moves. In his rookie year, Bijan was impressive, nearing 1,000 yards rushing and adding nearly 500 yards receiving. Last season, he shared the backfield with Tyler Allgeier, but this year, Bijan is expected to take on a workhorse role. This might be harsh on Allgeier, who has been solid, but Bijan's talent warrants maximising his use. The Falcons also drafted Jase McClellan from Alabama, which could prove to be a smart move for the future. They also have Avery Williams to add some more depth.

Another need for the Falcons was adding depth to the wide receiver room after losing Van Jefferson and Mack Hollins to free agency. Depth was needed to relieve some pressure from Drake London. They added valuable weapons in Darnell Mooney and Rondale Moore, who showed promise with the Bears and Cardinals, respectively. They also brought in Ray-Ray McCloud from the 49ers, who can contribute as a receiver and in punt and kickoff returns, potentially replacing Cordarrelle Patterson. This bolsters the Falcons' receiver depth and should divert attention from London. They also have Casey Washington and KhaDarel Hodge to add depth to the position.

Tight end Kyle Pitts, who showed great promise in his rookie year, has been hindered by poor quarterback play but could have a breakout year, cementing himself as one of the best young tight ends in the game. He will have Charlie Woerner and Ross Dwelley ready to step in when required.

The Falcons' offensive line has always been talented, and this trend continues in 2024 with the five starters from last season still on the roster. Jake Matthews, a proven left tackle, will be Cousins' main protector alongside Matthew Bergeron left guard, Drew Dalman centre, and Kaleb McGary right tackle, with second-team All-Pro Chris Lindstrom at right guard completing the lineup. They added depth with Storm Norton and re-signed backup centre Ryan Neuzil. They also add Kyle Hinton, Tyler Vrabel and Javaughn Gwyn. This unit should remain strong and benefit from a good quarterback who can get the ball out quickly.

Next up is a look at the defensive line, another significant need for the Falcons. Although they were favourites to draft a defensive player first, they opted for Penix. However, they addressed the defensive line with their next three picks: Ruke Orhorhoro, a defensive tackle with a big reputation from Clemson, Washington's Bralen Trice on the edge, and versatile defensive lineman Brandon Dorlus from Oregon. The defensive line will likely be Grady Jarrett, David Onyemata and Zach Harrison. This leaves Orhorhoro and Dorlus joining Eddie Goldman, James Smith-Williams, Kentavius Street and Ta’Quon Graham in rotation. The recent addition of the pass rusher Matt Judon is likely to help get pressure of the quarterback and get the sacks required, he will be partnered by Arnold Ebiketie whilst Trice starts on IR. Lorenzo Carter and DeAngelo Malone will look to get on the field from the depth spots.

The linebacker room will be led by Kaden Ellis. JD Bertrand, drafted this year, could also be a valuable contributor from the start. Troy Anderson, Nate Landman and Milo Eifler will also be a use for the Falcons. While some argue the Falcons could have made better selections in the draft, they have undoubtedly made significant upgrades across their defensive needs.

The Falcons' outstanding secondary, led by second-team All-Pro Jessie Bates, is another strong point. They added Antonio Hamilton from the Cardinals to a cornerback room featuring star AJ Terrell, Mike Hughes, Harrison Hand and Clark Phillips, as well as excellent nickel corner Dee Alford. The safety room needed more depth, with Bates, the Falcons add second team all pro Justin Simmons to partner Jessie Bates leaving the Falcons looking really strong for 2024. Second-year player Demarco Hellams, Micah Abernathy and Richie Grant comprising the group.

Additionally, the Falcons have one of the most reliable kickers in the game, Younghoe Koo, who has consistently delivered when needed.

This Falcons squad is strong. They should be serious contenders this year and are poised for their best season in a long time. With improved quarterback play, the offensive weapons can truly shine, and the defence, bolstered by draft additions and late veteran pick ups, could also see improvement. Matt Judon’s presence on defence might help develop the younger players in the defensive line, but with Raheem Morris' expertise in defence, the Falcons are well-positioned to succeed.

**Carolina Panthers**

The Panthers' 2023 season was a really rough one. They ended up with just two wins, but they had already traded away their first-round pick to select Bryce Young the year before. This led to Frank Reich being sacked 12 games into the season. The Panthers selected Tampa Bay offensive coordinator Dave Canales to lead the team next year. In recent seasons, Canales helped Geno Smith in Seattle play some of his best football before helping Baker Mayfield have a career year in Tampa Bay. All of this leads to the question: How good can he make Bryce Young? There is no better coach to do it, as he is proven, comes with a huge reputation, and was one of the most sought-after coaches this off-season. They also managed to retain one of the best defensive-minded coaches in Ejiro Evero, who took several head coaching interviews.

Bryce Young will be looking to grow from a poor first season. Young endured a tough 2023 finishing with 2877 passing yards, 11 touchdowns and 10 interceptions. Young wasn’t helped much by the offensive line who gave up 65 sacks last season. The number one draft pick in 2023 is once again backed up by veteran Andy Dalton, and Bryce will look to lean on him to help get up to speed with the new Canales playbook. Young should be more confident heading into next season with the change in head coach and seeing what Canales has done previously.

The running back room got an upgrade via the draft with Texas running back Jonathan Brooks coming in. He looked really good in his first year as a starter in college before an ACL tear cost him the end of the season. He will be looking to come into the Panthers lineup and take over as the running back one but faces competition from Miles Sanders and Chuba Hubbard, who are both coming off poor seasons and will be looking to bounce back and impress the new head coach. If Brooks is not fit to start expect Hubbard to take the lead role. Raheem Blackshear also get a roster spot but he is more likely used in kick offs and punt returns.

The wide receiver room also needed an upgrade, as Bryce Young didn't have many options last season. Adam Thielen led the team in yards with 1,014, and the next best was 525 yards from DJ Chark. This changes with a huge upgrade via free agency with Diontae Johnson arriving, who could easily step into the wide receiver one role. Another player who stands a chance of becoming the wide receiver one is Xavier Legette, whom the Panthers traded up into the first round to take. The receiver room looks a lot stronger, and the Panthers will be hoping that Jonathan Mingo makes a jump heading into year two. If he does, this group could put up far better numbers than last year. David Moore and Devin Carter also make the roster and will be looking to help Young out where they can.

The tight end room also added a huge weapon in the catching game with draft pick Ja’Tavion Sanders, who did not drop a pass for Texas in 2023. He is another weapon for Bryce Young to learn and grow with. They lost veterans Hayden Hurst and Giovanni Ricci in free agency but kept Tommy Tremble to mentor Sanders and is likely to start as tight end one if Sanders has any rookie struggles. Ian Thomas and Jordan Matthew fill the tight end room.

The Panthers needed a squad overhaul, starting with protecting Bryce Young, as the team gave up 65 sacks last season. They added guards Robert Hunt and Damien Lewis, who will be first-string on the depth chart at right and left guard, respectively. They will partner alongside left tackle Ikem Ekwonu, centre Austin Corbett, and right tackle Taylor Moton. They added depth at tackle with the versatile Yosh Nijman. Chandler Zavala will be the backup guard as he heads into year 2. Although they lost Bradley Bozeman in free agency, this group looks like a better unit. Andrew Raym, Badara Traore (IR), Brady Christian, Jarrett Smith (IR) and Jarrett Kingston also make the roster.

The defence loses two huge players from last season. Brian Burns was traded to the Giants, and Frankie Luvu left via free agency. Safety Vonn Bell also left via free agency, which could be a significant loss. However, on the defensive line, the Panthers managed to keep Derrick Brown despite trade rumours. A’Shawn Robinson will also help lead the line with Shy Tuttle in the middle. They will be backed up by draft pick Jaden Crumedy, as well as LaBryan Ray, Nick Thurman, Popo Aumavae and Raequan Willaims. They should be supported well with the free agency signing of edge rusher Jadeveon Clowney, who had 9.5 sacks last season with the Ravens. He is likely to lead the rush alongside D.J. Wonnum, who joins after recording eight sacks with the Vikings last season. These two will be looking to get pressure on the quarterback and will be backed up by DJ Johnson, K’Lavon Chaisson, Cam Gill, Jamie Smith and Eku Leota.

The linebacker room did lose the impressive Luvu, which is a huge loss for the team. However, they brought in Josey Jewell to join Shaq Thompson. Trevin Wallace, and Claudine Cherelus will also be there in rotation when required. As well as having Tae Davis and Jon Rhattigan in depth spots.

The secondary gets big upgrades, with Jordan Fuller and Nick Scott joining in free agency from the Rams and Bengals, respectively. They will be in a safety group with Xavier Woods and Sam Franklin Jr. The corners will likely be led by Dane Jackson, who joins from the Bills once off IR. Jaycee Horn, heading into year four, will also likely be a starter with Michael Jackson starting in Jackson’s place. They should be backed up by Tariq Castro-Fields, Keenan Isaac and Shemar Bartholomew. Troy Hill is expected to start at nickelback, with Chau Smith-Wade joining through the draft to back him up, Jammie Robinson also gets a a roster spot.

Eddie Pineiro will be the starting place kicker heading into the new season. He will want to improve on his 86% success rate on field goals and 17 out of 20 extra points in the new season.

Overall, the Panthers on paper have made some great moves. They added support for Bryce Young in all aspects of the offence, and the new head coach should improve Young. The offensive line got the upgrades required to keep Bryce upright longer. Better receivers should help Young and get open for more yards than last year. The running back room looks stronger, which could be vital in improving last season's poor record. Things should be far better for the Panthers. The expectation should be a handful more wins and better showings on offence. The defence should remain strong even with the valuable Burns and Luvu not being on the roster.

**Outlook and Predictions**

The Bucs head into 2024/25 season knowing that the they will have to play well to reclaim the title. There are big improvements to all the other sides. The Saints will hope to get the best out of Derek Carr to mount a challenge. The biggest off-season move of Kirk Cousins makes the Falcons instantly a contender for the crown. The Panthers will be hoping the change in head coach will get the best out of Bryce Young.

**Prediction:**

1. Falcons
2. Buccaneers
3. Saints
4. Panthers