**San Francisco 49ers**

Heartbreak once again for the 49ers in the 2023 season. They made it all the way to the playoffs and into the Super Bowl, staying in the game until the very final whistle, where they narrowly lost in overtime to the Chiefs. The 49ers were impressive all season long, finishing with a 12-5 record and being the number one seed in the NFC, but they will be bitterly disappointed not to have taken the title home. They will be hoping that in 2024 they have enough to make another run at the Super Bowl.

Brock Purdy is the starting quarterback. He finished last season with 4,280 passing yards and an impressive 31 passing touchdowns, placing him fifth in passing yards and third in passing touchdowns, which is incredible for someone playing in just their first full season as a starter. Brandon Allen and Josh Dobbs will be backing up Purdy heading into the new season.

The most impressive player in football leads the running backroom. Offensive Player of the Year Christian McCaffrey will once again be a vital piece of the 49ers' offence. In 2023, he finished first in rushing yards with 1,459 and added 14 rushing touchdowns. He also contributed 564 receiving yards and a further seven receiving touchdowns, confirming once again that he is one of the best Swiss Army knives in football. McCaffrey will hope to reclaim the Offensive Player of the Year title. Elijah Mitchell will be ready to step in again when required in the backup role, and rookie Isaac Guerendo will also be used as a change-of-pace back. Jordan Mason iis likely to be the backup to start the season however due to Mitchell being placed on IR and likely to miss the season. Patrick Taylor makes the roster in Mitchell’s absence. Kyle Juszczyk once again makes the roster and is a contributor from full back in both blocking and passing.

Brandon Aiyuk’s contract situation is the talk of the off-season. The 49ers will be hoping that the return to the team will be easy, as he led them in receiving yards last time out with an impressive 1,342. Deebo Samuel had 892 receiving yards and 225 rushing yards with 12 touchdowns combined, making the 49ers' receivers one of the best duos in the league. Juan Jennings re-signs with the team, adding some good depth after making significant contributions in 2023. Further depth was added via the draft, with Ricky Pearsall and Jacob Cowing joining the side. Chris Conley and Ronnie Bell also make the roster. If Aiyuk can get back up to speed quickly this group could be a scary thought for most oppositions.

Aiyuk wasn't the only 1,000-yard receiver for the 49ers. George Kittle had another hugely impressive season and looked every bit one of the very best in the league. Kittle not only leads this room in receptions but also plays a significant role in the run game with some crucial blocks. He is one of the few tight ends able to do everything, making him one of the very best. Eric Saubert and Eric Tonges will be the backups for the 49ers and will battle it out for the rotation spot.

The offensive line for the 49ers is normally impressive and is led by first-team All-Pro Trent Williams at left tackle. Jaylon Moore will be the backup to start the season. Aaron Banks is likely to start at left guard once fully healthy, Spencer Burford and Nick Zakelj will battle it for the rotation spot. Jake Brendel will start at centre, with Ben Bartch and Jon Feliciano joining as his backup when required. Hugely impressive rookie Dominick Puni will be right guard after winning the role in the off-season, with Burford also backing him up. Colton McKivitz will start at right tackle. The emergence of Puni and the contract resolution with Williams makes this group once again a very good unit.

The defensive line is also hugely impressive. The former Defensive Player of the Year Nick Bosa, who led the team in sacks last season, will once again lead the line. However, there is a change on the other side, as Randy Gregory and Chase Young left in free agency. Leonard Floyd joins after a season with the Buffalo Bills. Yetur Gross-Matos and Robert Beale Jr. will be in the rotation. With Drake Jackson and Sam Okuayinonu being the depth pieces. There are changes on the inside as well, with Arik Armstead leaving for Jacksonville in free agency. Javon Hargrave will be the starter once again but will have Maliek Collins alongside him after an impressive season in 2023 with the Texans. Jordan Elliott joins in free agency as well and will be the backup alongside Kevin Givens and Kalia Davis.

The linebackers will once again be led by the hugely impressive duo of Fred Warner and Dre Greenlaw. Greenlaw finished 2023 with a terrible injury in the Super Bowl, and it is unclear if he will be fit to take the field this season. Demetrius Flannigan-Fowles will also be a starter in the three-linebacker sets. De’Vondre Campbell will back them up but will likely start due to Greenlaw’s injury. Curtis Robinson, Dee Winters and Rookie Tatum Bethune will also be looking to help out when required.

The secondary looks set, with starting corners Charvarius Ward and Deommodore Lenoir having developed a great partnership. Isaac Yiadom is likely to join the starters meaning Lenoir can start in the nickel. Renardo Green will start at the backup nickel spot after being picked in the draft, whilst Rock Ya-Sin and Darrell Luther will be in the outside rotation until Ambry Thomas is fit to play. The safety starters are also a hugely impressive duo, with Talanoa Hufanga and Ji’Ayir Brown looking to continue where they left off in 2023. The safety depth will include George Odum, Tracy Walker III and Malik Mustapha, who also joined in the draft.

Jake Moody will be the place kicker. He had an up-and-down rookie season with some big misses, but he showed good potential with an 84% success rate on field goals and only one mistake on extra points.

The 49ers head into 2024 as one of the favourites once again. After narrowly missing out last season, the team still looks strong and could take the NFC crown once again. They will face challenges along the way, but with Offensive Player of the Year Christian McCaffrey, they know they can turn a game in their favour. The contract situations of Williams and Aiyuk are a concern heading into the new season, but even if they do not step on the field, the team looks good enough to make another challenge.

**Los Angeles Rams**

The Rams' 2023 season concluded with a playoff exit in the wildcard round, falling to the Lions. Despite a sluggish start that saw them enter their Week 10 bye with a 3-6 record, the Rams rallied to finish the season strong, going 7-1 after the break to end with a 10-7 record, securing the runner-up spot in the NFC West. The season was a success for several reasons, notably their draft hits with Puka Nacua, Steve Avila, Bryon Murphy, and Kobie Turner, all of whom were considered for Rookie of the Year honours and made the All-Rookie Team. The Rams aim to build on this momentum in 2024.

The team will once again be led by franchise quarterback Matthew Stafford. While last season was only the second time in his career where he didn’t surpass 4,000 passing yards despite playing over 14 games, this can be attributed to the Rams' strong running game (which will be discussed shortly). Stafford will be joined by Jimmy Garoppolo, who is set to compete with Stetson Bennett for the backup quarterback role once back from suspension.

Kyren Williams had a breakout year in 2023, dramatically improving from his 139 rushing yards in 2022 to becoming one of the NFL's top running backs with the third-highest rushing yards (1144) and 12 touchdowns. He is expected to be a key player again in 2024, now supported by Blake Corum, whom the Rams drafted following his success at Michigan, where he helped secure a national championship. The combination of Williams and Corum could form a formidable duo in the Rams' backfield. Ronnie Rivers also adds some depth giving the Rams a nice looking backfield.

At wide receiver, the Rams discovered a star in Puka Nacua, who, along with the ever-reliable Cooper Kupp, is considered among the best in the NFL. Nacua finished the season with the fourth highest receptions and the most by a rookie in a single season. Kupp in his 12 games racked up 737 yards. They are bolstered by the addition of Jordan Whittington through the draft. DeMarcus Robinson has re-signed with the team and will compete with Tutu Atwell for the third wide receiver spot, adding depth and competition to the receiving corps. Jordan Whittington and Tyler Johnson also make the roster.

A late-season injury to tight end Tyler Higbee could have been a significant setback for the Rams, but they mitigate this risk by signing Colby Parkinson in free agency. This acquisition allows Higbee to recover fully without rushing back, with Davis Allen expected to back up Parkinson after his strong finish to the previous season. Hunter Long is also kept but it remains to be seen once Tyler Higbee is fit if he keeps his spot.

On the offensive line, Kevin Dotson re-signed and will continue at right guard, while the Rams added Johan Jackson in free agency, who is likely to start at left guard or centre. Steve Avila is set to anchor the line at centre or left guard, with Alaric Jackson (once back from suspension) and Rob Havenstein positioned at left and right tackle, respectively. The starting line appears solid, and the Rams added KT Leveston for depth in the seventh round of the draft. The depth chart looks robust, with Joe Noteboom, Logan Bruss, AJ Arcuri, Warren McClendon and Beaux Limmer providing reliable backup options. Conor McDermott is also there once he returns from IR.

The Rams received a major blow this offseason with the retirement of Aaron Donald, the three-time Defensive Player of the Year and eight-time first-team All-Pro. His departure leaves a significant void, but the Rams sought to address it through the draft, selecting Jared Verse and Braden Fiske. Verse is expected to start on the edge in the Rams' 3-4 defence alongside Byron Young, who had an impressive rookie season finishing with 8 sacks. Brennan Jackson, another draft pick, will likely serve as a backup alongside Nick Hampton and Michael Hoecht. Fiske is set to start alongside Bobby Brown and Kobie Turner. Kobie Turner finished the season leading the Rams in sacks with 9. on the defensive line, with Tyler Davis joining as a rotational piece. Neville Gallimore, Desjuan Johnson and Larrell Murchison are also kept for depth in the line. Despite Donald's absence, this defensive line still looks formidable.

At linebacker, Christian Rozeboom and Omar Speigths, the rookie out of LSU are expected to lead the group, with Jacob Hummel and Michael Hoecht providing additional support. Jacob Hummel was kept for depth. Ernest Jones led the team in tackles last season, with a significant margin over the next best, highlighting his importance to the defence, leaving the team via a trade. The Rams will need these linebackers to continue their strong play to relieve pressure on the interior.

In the secondary, the Rams made a notable addition by signing Tre'Davious White, who became a cap casualty for the Bills. He will start at cornerback alongside the re-signed Darius Williams once back from IR. Cobie Durant is likely to start in his absence, along with either Josh Wallace, Derion Kendrick, Tre Tomlinson or Jerry Jacobs, will provide additional support, with Quentin Lake in the nickel role. Russ Yeast and Charles Woods are there for backup. The safety positions will be manned by Kamren Curl and John Johnson III, with rookie Kamren Kinchens serving as a backup alongside Jaylen McCollough.

The Rams addressed their kicking needs by drafting Joshua Karty, hoping he can bring consistency and reliability in clutch situations throughout the season.

Overall, the Rams had an impressive offseason, addressing key areas of need and potentially filling the massive gap left by Aaron Donald's retirement. They are poised to be strong contenders in the NFC West, likely posing the biggest challenge to the 49ers for the division title. With stars spread across the roster and one of the league's best offensive minds in Sean McVay, the Rams are set for another playoff run. Chris Shula steps into the role of defensive coordinator for the first time, following Raheem Morris' departure to become a head coach. Shula, who has been with the Rams since 2017, brings a wealth of knowledge, and the Rams are hopeful for a strong year under his leadership. If the Rams can start the season strong, they could very well claim the division title, though it will be a challenging task.

**Seattle Seahawks**

The Seahawks had a disappointing 2023 season after missing out on the playoffs. They finished with a 9-8 record, but considering they were 6-3 at one point, the ending was a crushing blow as they failed to secure a postseason berth. There have been a lot of changes in the off-season, with some big names leaving the team. Additionally, head coach Pete Carroll will not lead the side for the first time since 2010. Mike Macdonald takes over the head coaching role, joining the Seahawks after impressing as the defensive coordinator for the Ravens.

Geno Smith will once again lead the team at quarterback. He finished last season with 3,624 passing yards, which was over 600 yards fewer than the year before, though Smith did miss two games. His backup from last year, Drew Lock, moved on in free agency. A trade for Sam Howell in the off-season could potentially give the Seahawks their quarterback of the future. If Geno struggles this season, Howell could step into the starting spot.

Kenneth Walker III will once again be the lead running back. He finished 2023 with 905 rushing yards and an additional 295 receiving yards. Walker will be aiming to get back into the 1,000-yard bracket this coming season. He had a valuable backup in Zach Charbonnet, who finished with 462 rushing yards and 209 receiving yards, allowing Walker to take breaks when required. Kenny McIntosh also makes the roster to add depth to the group.

The receiver room is one of the very best in football. DK Metcalf led the team in receiving yards with 1,114. Tyler Lockett added 894 yards, and the other starter, Jaxon Smith-Njigba, contributed 628 in his rookie season. Jake Bobo, a solid depth piece, had a handful of important catches last season. The Seahawks added a new weapon in Laviska Shenault, whose career hasn't really taken off yet, but he could become a valuable part of the group due to his versatility. Dareke Young and Marcus Simms also make the roster.

Noah Fant re-signed with the team and will start at tight end. Fant played all 16 games last season, finishing with 414 receiving yards. Given the strength of the Seahawks' receivers, it’s unlikely he will see much more than that. Free agent signing Pharaoh Brown will be the backup should Fant not be able to go, and AJ Barners was added in the draft to provide depth when required as well as Brady Russell.

The offensive line has seen significant changes with Evan Brown and Damien Lewis leaving in free agency. Charles Cross will start at left tackle, Laken Tomlinson at left guard, Connor Williams at centre, Anthony Bradford at right guard, and George Fant likely to start at right tackle. If not, Abraham Lucas will step in when fit to play. Sataoa Laumea joined via the draft and could play at both guard or tackle. Olu Oluwatimi can also play as a guard or centre and will be a valuable depth piece alongside Jalen Sundell and Christian Haynes, with Michael Jerrett and Stone Forsythe serving as the backup tackles.

Byron Murphy comes into the defensive line after joining in the first round of the draft. He joins Leonard Williams, Johnathan Hawkins, and Jarran Reed as potential starters at defensive tackle. Mike Morris, Myles Adams and Cameron Young will also provide rotation and depth. Boye Mafe, who led the team in sacks in 2023, will take one of the starting outside linebacker spots. Dre’Mont Jones and Uchenna Nwosu will vie for the other edge spots. Derick Hall heads into year two hoping to make a significant leap to add greater depth on the edge. Treviso Gibson and Joshua Onujiogualso make the roster adding needed depth.

The linebackers will look entirely different this season, with the Seahawks losing Bobby Wagner, Devin Bush, Nick Bellore, and Jordyn Brooks. The Seahawks will hope free-agent signings Tyrel Dodson and Jerome Baker can fill the gaps. Tyrice Knight, added through the draft, will provide depth alongside Drake Thomas.

The secondary looks like an impressive young unit. Corners Riq Woolen and Tre Brown will once again lead the outside, while Dee Williams and Nehemiah Pritchett will be the backups. The hugely impressive Devon Witherspoon heads into year two after finishing on the All-Rookie team at nickel. The Seahawks allowed Jamal Adams and Quandre Diggs to leave in free agency, leaving Julian Love needing a new partner. Rayshawn Jenkins joins through free agency and will take the starting spot, with Coby Bryant backing up alongside K’Von Wallace and Jerrick Reed II.

Jason Myers will once again be the place kicker. He finished with an 83.3% success rate on field goals, which was down from 91.1% the year before. However, he made all of his extra points and will want to continue that form in the new year.

The Seahawks head into the 2024 season hoping to get back into the playoffs after narrowly missing out last season. Although there have been some significant losses in the side, the depth remains impressive. The continuity on offence should be beneficial under the guidance of new offensive coordinator Ryan Grubb. Mike Macdonald, coming in with a huge reputation, will look to maximise the potential of the defence. With strong leadership on both sides of the ball and talented rookies looking to make an impact, the Seahawks aim to return to their winning ways and could be poised for a resurgence this season.

**Arizona Cardinals**

The 2023/24 season was a tough one for the Cardinals, starting the season without Kyler Murray until the 9th game of the season. The Cardinals only managed to get one win during this period in what was seen as a shock result against the Cowboys. Once Murray returned, the offence picked up, and so did the results with a win against the Falcons, and finished with other wins against the Steelers and Eagles. Still, the Cardinals only managed to finish with a record of 4-13.

The Cardinals needed to make moves in the off-season and they have done this. They had a few tough losses with in free agency which could hurt them.

With all the losses one thing remains the same, franchise quarterback Kyler Murray will lead the team, the Cardinals will be hoping for a fully fit Murray this year. When he is fit Kyler is one of the most entertaining quarterbacks in the league. Last season in his 8 games he passed for 1,799 yards with 10 touchdowns, as well as rushing for 244 yards and three touchdowns. He has back-up this year from Clayton Tune who heads into year 2 with the side.

The running back room adds depth to help starting running back James Conner who is coming off his first 1000 rushing season for the Cardinals. Trey Benson joins via the draft, he was looked at alongside Brooks as the number one running back in this class and could be a hugely important piece for the Cardinals and James Conner moving forward. Emari Demercado and DeeJat Dallas add some depth to the room.

With the losses in free agency, the biggest area of need was at wide receiver and they didn’t overthink their draft pick by selecting Ohio State receiver Marvin Harrison Jr, considered the best non-QB offensive player available. They then made a smart move by picking up veteran receiver Zay Jones. This makes the wide receiver room a fairly strong one if Michael Wilson makes a jump going into year 2. The Cardinals also have valuable depth pieces with Greg Dortch and Zach Pascal making the Cardinals receiver room a better group. Marvin Harrison Jr comes with a huge reputation and could be the big move the Cardinals needed and the big target Kyler Murray needed. Chris Moore and Xavier Weaver also make the side, adding further depth.

Kyler also has a stud tight end Trey McBride. McBride finished with 825 yards on the season and was hugely influential and lead the team in receiving yards, with the additions in the receiver room there maybe good opportunity for McBride to reach these figures again due to the attention being elsewhere. Tip Reiman joins via the draft to give good depth and rotation when required. The Cardinals also keep Elijah Higgins and Travis Vokolek in the squad.

The offensive line gets a few upgrades with right tackle Jonah Williams and left guard Evan Brown joining in free agency from the Bengals and Seahawks respectively, as well as guard Isaiah Adams and tackle Christian Jones via the draft who will provide great back-ups for this line. It's likely Williams will take over as starting right tackle to play the other side to Paris Johnson the starting left tackle, and Brown will likely start at left guard. Hjalte Froholdt will start at centre and Will Henandez will be starting right guard. Kelvin Beachum will be at rotation at tackle. With Jon Gaines backing up at centre. Tristan Colon and CarterO’Donnell are also in the squad to add depth at guard.

On the defensive side of the ball, Jonathan Gannon addressed needs on the defensive line by adding several bodies. Via free agency, the Cardinals added Bilal Nichols (Bears), Justin Jones (Chargers), and Khyris Tonga (Vikings). They then further strengthened the line in the draft by selecting Darius Robinson with their second first-round pick through the trade from Houston, aiming to improve their pass rush. Robinson's versatility to play inside and outside could be key for the Gannon defence. Nichols and Jones are likely to start alongside Zaven Collins at the defensive tackles in a 3-4 defence. Roy Lopez and L.J. Collier add some more depth on the inside. Dante Stills and Dennis Gardeck will be on the outside to start with BJ Ojulari coming into the fold when returning from IR. Robinson will also start on IR leaving Xavier Thomas and Jesse Luketa with the rotation spots.

They made a great addition to their linebacker room in Mack Wilson, who is likely to start alongside Kyzir White, the leading tackler during the 2023 season. This addition complements a linebacker room that includes Owen Pappoe who heads into year two and Krys Barners.

Additions in the secondary also help with potential starter Sean Murphy-Bunting joining via free agency, heading into year 6 after impressing in Tennessee last season, as well as Max Melton via the draft. Elijah Jones, Starling Thomas V, and Kei’Trel Clark will add valuable depth here. Additional depth at safety comes via the draft with Dadrion Taylor-Demerson to go alongside Budda Baker and Jalen Thompson. Joey Blount and Darren Hall are also kept to some good depth here. Garrett Wilson will be the starting nickelback. As a starting group the Cardinals look stronger with the additions that were added into the squad.

Matt Prater will once again be the Cardinals kicker, Prater finished with 28-33 on field goals last year and will hope for slightly better numbers, but the 62 yard field goal from last year proved he still has a long boot and this maybe crucial in 2024.

The additions that the Cardinals made on paper are solid, bringing in a lot of potential starters and depth. They addressed clear areas of need in the off-season. A strong draft, with eight selections in the top one hundred and four picks and seven in the first three rounds, provided a solid foundation. With a fit Kyler Murray all year next year, potentially better protection, and improved weapons, the Cardinals' offence may be one to watch this year as the surprise package. If they have hit on their draft selections, this could massively improve their defence, as the three defensive players selected in the draft are likely starters this could make the Cardinals on for a much better season than last time out.

**Outlook and Predictions**

The 49ers look to be the strongest side once again with Aiyuk signing the new contract that also helps make them look like a real contender for the superbowl once again. The Rams may miss Aaron Donald but have been calculated in adding his replacement. The Seahawks also look to have a strong side, the quarterback situation does raise concerns as to how far they can go this year, the Cardinals look a better side than last season however the side doesn't look quite as strong as the rest.

**Prediction:**

1. 49ers
2. Rams
3. Seahawks
4. Cardinals