

A

Detroit has a stable, talented roster of proven pros making it a strong candidate for a deep playoff. QB Chris Anzalone, RB Artayvious Taylor, WR Jonjon Sheets and G Aric Faoro are the lynchpins of a lethal offense that should be able to weather the free-agent loss of star OT Kyle England, while CB Jonathan Mouton, LB Ke'von Jarrad and DE Daniel Cyphers anchor one of the league's best defenses. Free agent and draft signings were made with depth in mind--back-up TE Tyler Toohey (from OKC) and top pick WR Aquarius Dabo being most notable, rookie kicker Payton Fordham will be under the microscope in close games.

A

Memphis is expected to keep right on winning with a strong roster bolstered by key newcomers. One of 2023's free-agent prizes, Detroit OT Kyle England joins the Memphis O-line, and top draft choice Jayden Nicolas-Paul is an instant starter at FS. ex-New England QB Kel Juenemann was signed as insurance in case Joe Mattox gets hurt. Mattox will lead a balanced, productive offense which features battering-ram RB Keon Portress and game-breaking WR Keivarae Langhorne. The defense is a bit less settled, especially in the secondary.

A-

Oklahoma City continues its ascent into the league's top tier, benefiting from a settled QB situation: Dallas Hedrick is the surprise starter, beating out former free-agent acquisition Korey Bondarenko. Bondarenko's future with OKC is cloudy after collecting a big pay day and then delivering mediocre (at best) play. Not to be deterred, OKC cooked up another huge contract and presented it to former New England G Omi Kelaho, who sat out 2022 in a contract dispute. OKC has league's best WR in JuJu Golden, capable players elsewhere, and solid special teams.

B

Chicago is hoping for a bounce-back season, and it could be in the cards with new-found stability in the offensive backfield and a net-plus in free-agency. QB Bo Stoever has established himself as the club leader, with his unorthodox approach (a power-running quarterback?) and RB Khalil Aldredge was signed away from Portland. The draft provided glue-fingered TE Slade Katsigiannis, a perfect target for Stoever's sometime-wayward throws. The defense, always a Chicago strength, gets even stronger with the signing of free agent LB Von Ivory, a perennial all-pro, and rookie MLB Makai Winston, Jr. Add can't-miss kicker Bobby Nimmo to the mix, and the playoffs are certainly within reach.

B

Portland QB Bryce Bollinger is back under center after missing all of 2022 with a shoulder injury, which is the top story in Portland. TE Paul Habermehl and WR Trumane Clarke will benefit from Bollinger's return. While Bollinger was away, T Brock Rausch blossomed into one of the league's best. The club lost RB Khalil Aldredge to free-agency (CHI), but grabbed productive RB Boston Dunston in the college draft to take his place. Another highly-regarded rookie, DE KeeKee Ngaluafe, is a day-one starter on defense, where LB Cam Little and CB Pharoah Favreau provide veteran leadership.

C

St. Louis football fans point to the biggest play-maker on the team, WR-KR Tobi Upchurch, whose explosiveness will be much-needed if this club is to make a post-season run. RB Bentavious Ealy, Jr. provides the ground yardage, QB Connor Hoxie is very solid, if unspectacular. On defense, CB Rhakim Williams was signed (from MPH) to shore up a secondary depleted by the loss of veteran FS Maurice Lewis. Veteran DL Vance Pearl was picked up to bolster the defensive line. Kicking could be suspect, with re-tread Tay Bontrager taking over as PK and LB Klyde Absher once again handling the punting duties.

C

Golden Bay finds itself beset by multiple injuries in the offensive line and backfield, threatening to undo what could have been a very productive season. OT Zach Lomonaco and G Keike Aheae are expected to play hurt, but G E. J. Van Duyne is lost for the year. QB C. J. Marrazzo is also hampered by an ankle injury. The club does get RB Deuce Caudill back, out for all of 2022 with a knee injury. The defense will have to step up--it's got a couple of the league's brightest stars in CB Nickendre Lott and LB Truth Jones III. Rookie help arrives in LB DJ Wilson and speedy WR-KR Lucky Montesi.

C

San Diego is slowly recovering from last year's championship (2021) hangover, this club could make a playoff return in '23. QB Geoff Russell is now 34 years old and not the mobile passing threat of past years but is still among the league's best. It's a contract year for star RB Detrel Sealey, which could be a plus--or a distraction. In either case, there will be more emphasis on ground attack this year, as evidenced by the signing of massive TE O'Shaan Tresser from Memphis whose known more for his crushing blocks than his pass-catching ability. Defensively, the club made hulking DT Vatulele Murghara its top draft pick, he's expected to be the heart of the San Diego defense from day one.

C-

Orlando must address question marks on defense, a problem that's seemingly been the hallmark of a QB Matt Harrell-led club. Star DE Von Ivory gets a big free-agent money deal from Chicago and exits. CB Shaheer Allison is left un-paid, a veteran whose best days are probably behind him: he signs with Portland (but for less money than he wanted). WR Billy Howey and TE Rosse Pogge have retired and RB LeShaun Boomer is injured, again. Orlando is suddenly (and perhaps surprisingly to some) an aging club struggling to hold onto post-season hopes. Harrell will be 40 next year, so this is (probably) his last chance at championship glory.

D+

New York shows incremental improvement for 2022's worst club, starting with top draft pick RB Desmeal Harper from Old Michigan University. Harper is a true dual-threat player, excelling as both a runner and pass-catcher. QB Mason Quibodeaux showed signs of growth in a rough '22 season, he'll be the unchallenged NY starter in '23. WR E. J. Collett remains one of the league's elite, and LB's Jacquae Farris and Tupac Rachman are bona-fide play-makers on defense. This Gotham squad probably won't make the playoffs, but they'll be a lot more respectable this year.

D

New England has an unsettled vibe which could be traced back to last year's acrimonious hold out from G Omi Kelaho, handled badly by front office and coaching staff. Kelaho found money in Oklahoma City and now others want out. The QB situation was also problematic, the front office solved (mishandled?) that by shipping Kel Juenemann off to Memphis, leaving QB Brellynd Pawlawski as the starter. RB Hassan Driggs is back from an injury-filled 2022, which seems to have had a lingering effect. All-pro LB Markevion Coye is a terror on defense, but he's entering his contract option year. Yikes.

F

San Antonio suffered a blue streak of injuries that appears to have knocked its 2023 season off the rails. The injury bug hit especially hard on offense, where CE Lee Ursich, OT Tyler Hinojosa, RB Tanner Matsos and QB Billy Whittle are all out of action for the season. Things look a little better on defense, where a unit led by DT Julien Wallace, LB Cardale Copes and CB Shaquan McCormick will now be counted on to keep enemy scoring to a minimum in hopes that the make-shift offense, led by unproven QB Garrett Woodall, can scratch out a few points.