

NFL WILD CARD WEEKEND SELECTIONS 31-12 IN NFL PLAYOFF SIDES THE LAST FOUR SEASONS

NFL CLOSE CALLS – WEEK 17

Cincinnati (+8) 31, Baltimore Ravens 27 (40): The Bengals had a 24-10 edge halfway through the third quarter looking like a promising underdog aiming to spoil the playoff hopes for the Ravens. Baltimore changed the equation quickly scoring 17 points in about 13 minutes of game clock to lead by three. The Bengals went backwards and punted after three plays as the favorite cover was back in play for the Ravens. Baltimore reached midfield but failed on a key third down play and needed to punt. From its own 10-yard-line Cincinnati was able to move downfield getting two key penalties with a pass interference call for a first down and a defensive hold wiping out an interception. In the final minute the Bengals faced 4th-and-12 and connected for a 49-yard touchdown to score the outright upset. **Detroit Lions (-7) 35, Green Bay Packers 11 (44½):** This game was on pace to stay 'under' with a 20-3 score late in the third quarter but a 71-yard touchdown pass put the scoring at 30 heading into the final frame. Green Bay scored its first touchdown of the game and successfully went for two, a key play for those on the total with the scoring at 38 instead of 36. Four minutes later Detroit found the end zone again and up by 22 with the total at 44, opted to go for two as well as those on the total faced another decisive play with the Lions succeeding on a trick play pass back to Matthew Stafford to clear the 'over'. **Buffalo Bills (-2½) 22, Miami Dolphins (41½):** While playoff hopes were slim the Bills took charge in Miami with a 10-0 halftime lead and a 22-3 edge early in the fourth quarter to seemingly seal the game with the 'under' in a commanding position. Behind David Fales at quarterback the Dolphins made a late charge with back-to-back touchdown drives to trail by just six just after the two-minute-warning. Miami got the on-side kick to sit in position to flip the spread and total results with a touchdown but after crossing midfield Fales was intercepted in the final minute and then later in the afternoon the Bills got the help they needed to sneak into the playoffs. **Atlanta Falcons (-5) 22, Carolina Panthers 10 (44½):** The Falcons settled for three straight field goals in the second half to lead 16-7 but Carolina delivered a field goal to trim the margin to just six points in the fourth quarter on a spread that jumped from -3 to -5. The Falcons responded with another three points as Atlanta fans were looking good for securing a playoff spot up by nine but those laying points with the Falcons still had to sweat. Atlanta added another late field goal to lead by 12 after a Cam Newton interception but the Panthers did get inside the Atlanta 10-yard-line in the final minute to threaten to reach the closing spread before another turnover ended the game. **Tampa Bay Buccaneers (+6) 31, New Orleans Saints 24 (49):** The underdog Buccaneers made it clear they were not going to hand the Saints the division title with a competitive effort as New Orleans led 17-13 through three quarters, in range for the underdog to cover and on pace for the highest total of Week 17 to stay 'under'. The Buccaneers managed to score early in the fourth quarter on a big special teams play as a Ted Ginn fumble was scooped up for a touchdown. New Orleans delivered a 13-play, 92-yard touchdown drive later in the fourth quarter to go in front and looking to answer the Buccaneers settled for a field goal with 4:31 to go to cut the deficit to one, leaving the total scoring at 47. The Saints weren't able to add points and punted at the two-minute warning looking to hold a one-point edge. The Buccaneers converted a big fourth down and then with nine seconds remaining hit a 39-yard touchdown for the win while pushing the total 'over' as well. **Tennessee Titans (-2½) 15, Jacksonville Jaguars 10 (40½):** Despite being locked into the AFC's #3 seed the Jaguars said they would play to win in Week 17 against a Titans team trying to snag a wild card spot. That caused line movement from -5 to -6 down to -3 to just -1 by Sunday morning before closing at -2½. The price didn't appear to matter as the Titans led 15-3 through three quarters with Jacksonville's offense really struggling. The great Jaguars defense made a play to change the possible outcomes however with a 67-yard fumble return touchdown. The Jaguars had three more possessions but only one more first down as the Titans held on and will be playing next weekend. **Indianapolis Colts (-5½) 22, Houston Texans 13 (42):** Not many favorites that post 250 total yards wind up covering and the Colts certainly didn't appear on pace to do so trailing 13-7 at halftime hosting the Texans. Indianapolis was in front by one with a third quarter touchdown and a safety in the fourth quarter gave Indianapolis a three-point edge. A spread that reached -6 was matched after Adam Vinatieri added a 54-yard field goal and in the final minute the Colts added another three points for a nine-point final margin. **Dallas Cowboys (-4) 6, Philadelphia Eagles 0 (41):** Anyone on the 'under' deserved applause in this meaningless Week 17 NFC East battle. Both teams were coming off difficult emotional games from Week 16 with contrasting results and with the top NFC seed already locked up the Eagles allowed Nate Sudfeld to take significant action at quarterback. The Dallas starters played and were productive but points were elusive until Dallas completed a 12-play 99-yard touchdown drive early in the fourth quarter. Continue reaching at www.vegasinsider.com...

Between the Lines...

The Big Ten nearly turned in a perfect bowl season starting 7-0 before Michigan's collapse against South Carolina. The results including three major bowl wins brings great fanfare for the conference that has certainly been the SEC's little brother the past decade but as is typically the case when the SEC trumpets a great bowl record, the Big Ten was favored in seven of those eight games and Purdue, the lone underdog was just a small underdog. Since no Big Ten teams made the playoff every team was slotted a spot lower than usual and there were more favorable matchups. Certainly the Big Ten has made some great strides in recent years with the revival of Michigan and Penn State but winning seven bowl games (while favored by at least 6 points in half the games) isn't an indicator of conference strength. Likewise the Pac-12 going 1-8 shouldn't be taken to mean it was a horrible conference this season as six of those nine teams were dogged by at least three points on the closing lines and only Oregon lost as a modest favorite.

The SEC getting two teams in the College Football playoff was realized this season and now the conference has a second championship in four years of the playoff wrapped up with two SEC foes meeting for the title. That was the case in the third to last season of the BCS as well as Alabama won 21-0 vs. LSU after the 2011 season. After amazing entertainment in the title game the past two seasons this year's game may be less compelling on a national level but the game being in Atlanta lines up incredibly for the SEC showcase with Athens about 70 miles from Atlanta and Tuscaloosa just 200 miles away. One thing is certain, tickets won't come cheap.

With the NFL playoff field set the New England Patriots are the clear favorite to repeat with just 2-1 odds to win the Super Bowl, still needing to win three games. The path has lined up incredibly for New England getting the top seed while seeing potentially fearsome wild cards in the Ravens and Chargers failing to make the field. The Patriots won't have to play Jacksonville in the divisional round no matter what happens this week and in a likely scenario will get to play the AFC Championship at home against the team that wins the Steelers/Jaguars matchup which could be a fierce physical battle between great defensive teams. Should the AFC favorites win this week the Chiefs and Jaguars will be underdogs in venues where they won by double-digits in the regular season for an unusual twist.

While the gap in the AFC odds goes from New England at 2-1 to Buffalo and Tennessee at 100-1 to win the Super Bowl the NFC spread is tight with Minnesota 4-1 to Carolina 30-1. The #6 seed Atlanta is at 20-1 due to a big advantage, as the #6 seed if they win they get to play the wounded Philadelphia team that looks quite vulnerable. Minnesota's odds are also a bit inflated as the Super Bowl is in Minneapolis, theoretically giving them a better shot to win should they win two playoff games to get there as Mike Zimmer looks to reverse a miserable postseason history for the franchise. The top seeded Eagles are listed at 15-1 despite looking like the NFL's best team most of the season as Philadelphia will be the rare top seed that could be an underdog in the divisional round. Best of Luck and on to this week's slate...

WILD CARD PLAYOFFS

SATURDAY, JANUARY 6, 2018

KANSAS CITY (-9) Tennessee (44½) 3:35 PM

The Chiefs have had an up-and-down season, looking like one of the league's top contenders with a 5-0 start before losing six of seven in the middle of the season. Kansas City still took the AFC West by winning the final four games of the season with a 4-0 ATS run into this game as well. The playoff track record for the Chiefs is miserable with one S/U or ATS win in the past 11 tries including losing four straight playoff home games, including falling last season hosting Pittsburgh as the AFC's #2 seed. Alex Smith finished as the league's top QB Rating quarterback while rookie Kareem Hunt was the league's leading rusher. The Chiefs have a highly vulnerable defense ranking 23rd in the NFL in yards per rush and yards per pass attempt. Tennessee led the AFC South much of the season with an 8-4 start and barely slipped into the playoffs. The Titans have a negative scoring differential and marginal statistics in most areas but run defense should be a significant advantage for Tennessee in this matchup. These teams played last season with the Titans winning 19-17 as a +6 road underdog as the line this week will be steeper. Expected to be a breakout team this year the Titans matched last season's record but are in the playoffs even with a very tough season for quarterback Marcus Mariota, who finished 27th in the league in QB Rating and has more interceptions than touchdown passes. The Titans have some quality wins however beating the Jaguars twice as well as the Seahawks and Ravens and a pair of blowout losses is skewing the statistics as four of the team's losses came by a single score. Kansas City went just 1-2 S/U at home vs. teams that made the playoffs but finishing +15 in turnover margin this season helped Kansas City tremendously. With past playoff demons lingering and the lesser defense in many areas in this matchup the Chiefs are worth fading laying this price. The Titans haven't been this big of an underdog since late in the 2015 season while the Chiefs are 2-9 ATS since the 2014 playoffs laying 7 or more points. The Titans have covered in five of the last six games and are a threat. **CHIEFS BY 3**

LA RAMS (-6½) Atlanta (48½) 7:15 PM

The Rams have been one of the great stories of the season as year two back in Los Angeles has been a huge success. First year head coach Sean McVay could win Coach of the Year while Jared Goff has played like a pro bowler after a shaky rookie season. Five of 11 losses came by 10 or fewer points and the defense had a few tough showings on the season. The Rams rested key players in Week 17 in anticipation of this game while Atlanta was in a win and get-in scenario last week at home, beating Carolina to earn the NFC's final wild card spot. For the defending NFC Champions it has felt like a difficult disappointing season but at 10-6 the Falcons are just a game off last season's record. The offensive numbers haven't come close to last season's results but the defense has quietly been quite respectable. The Falcons are the far superior run defense in this matchup while featuring a slightly stronger scoring defense. Despite the big games from Todd Gurley down the stretch the rushing numbers are close for these teams. Last December the Falcons humiliated the Rams in Los Angeles with a 42-14 result as it has been a decade since the Rams won in this series between teams that were division rivals for many years before realignment in 2001. The strength of schedule edge is dramatic for the Falcons who have seven wins vs. the top half of the league and only the Patriots beat Atlanta by more than 10 points this season. Atlanta surprisingly has more road wins than Los Angeles has home wins as the Rams struggled at home with a 26-20 win over the Saints the only quality home win of the season. The Rams saw diminished passing returns in the season's final month but remain one of the top rated special teams performers on the season. Ultimately this will be the first playoff game for much of the Los Angeles roster and coaching staff and a veteran Falcons team that has been here before might be worth a look as an inflated underdog against a popular team. Atlanta hasn't been this big of an underdog all season and has only been dogged by six or more points six times in the last four seasons, covering four times. These teams are also on opposing total streaks with five straight 'under' wins for the Falcons and five straight 'over' wins for the Rams. **RAMS BY 4**

HISTORICALLY SPEAKING

NFL TRENDS: *Trends are Against the Spread unless noted (S/U):*

DD=double-digit, R=road, H=home, F=favorite, D=dog, L=last, S/U=straight-up
Tennessee is 4-2 vs. Kansas City since '07 – Tennessee is 1-8 the last 9 as a 7+ underdog
Kansas City is 3-15 in the playoffs since '86 – KC is 20-34-1 as a home favorite since '07
Atlanta is 5-2 vs. Rams since '04 – Atlanta is 10-5 the last 15 as a road underdog
Rams are 18-28 as a home favorite since '04 – Rams are 7-13-1 in the playoffs since '80
Buffalo is 16-24-3 as a R/D since '11 – Buffalo is 9-6 vs. Jacksonville since '96
Jacksonville is 14-27-2 at home since '12 – Jacksonville is 11-19 as a H/F since '08
Carolina is 0-6 vs. New Orleans since '15 – Carolina is 12-5 at New Orleans since '01
'OVER' is 11-4 in Saints playoff games since '88 – New Orleans is 11-15-1 as a H/F since '14

SUNDAY, JANUARY 7, 2018

JACKSONVILLE (-9) Buffalo (39½) 12:05 PM

The Bills breaking the longest playoff drought in the league overshadows a historic return to the playoffs for Jacksonville, the AFC South Champions for the first time since 1999 despite winning no more than five games in any of the previous six seasons. The Jaguars played what rates as one of the league's weakest schedules but Jacksonville excelled in several areas with the top pass defense numbers in the NFL while also providing the league's most productive rushing attack on offense. Despite the Jaguars only being one game stronger in record they are 206 points superior to Buffalo in net scoring differential. Buffalo has two road wins vs. playoff teams this season but they didn't top 300 yards in either of those games while being +4 in turnovers. Turnovers could be the key in this game with quarterbacks that have had uneven results and both teams finishing strongly plus in turnover margin on the season. Blake Bortles threw for nearly 1,000 more yards than Tyrod Taylor but also had nine more interceptions. Both finished in the league's top 14 in Total QBR and had some strong results in several games down the stretch. Despite the weak schedule the Jaguars did beat four winning teams this season and the only home losses came in the first half of the season. Jacksonville enters this game coming off back-to-back losses however though both games came away from home and playoff teams off consecutive losses have fared well historically, especially at home. The schedule lines up a bit challenging for the Bills with road games in Week 16 and Week 17 as Buffalo will be in Florida for a second straight week after holding on in Miami last week and then having the Bengals stun the Ravens to get the Bills into the field as the emotional toll could be higher for Buffalo. Adding intrigue to this matchup is that Jacksonville head coach Doug Marrone was Buffalo's head coach in 2013 and 2014. After a 9-7 season in 2014 Marrone opted out of his contract in a surprise move that came due to the Buffalo's ownership change. Several players were not happy with how Marrone handled that departure though the roster has turned over significantly in the three years since with this season the first for Sean McDermott. A big question mark is running back LeSean McCoy who hurt his ankle last week and figures to provide Buffalo's best opportunity against Jacksonville with the run defense for the Jaguars a weak spot. **JAGS BY 14**

NEW ORLEANS (-6½) Carolina (48½) 3:40 PM

The final wild card matchup figures to be the most interesting with a battle of division foes that had matching 11-5 records. With some doubts for the top NFC seeds the victor of this game will lurk as a serious threat for a deep playoff run. The Saints went 7-1 at home and had a +122 scoring differential compared to only +36 for the Panthers despite the matching records. New Orleans won both regular season meetings with a 34-13 Week 3 win in Charlotte and a 31-21 home win in Week 13. The win at Carolina was fueled by turnovers as the Saints had a modest production edge but came up with big plays in a desperate spot after starting the season 0-2. New Orleans was more impressive statistically in the more recent home meeting despite the tighter final score. New Orleans has covered in all six meetings between these teams the past three years but also hasn't been this big of a favorite in that time with this spread a tick higher than the -6 spread in the early December meeting in New Orleans. The Saints rushed for nearly 300 combined yards in the two meetings despite a strong Carolina run defense on the season. The emergence of the ground game was the critical component for the rise for the Saints this season as the Saints gained 4.7 yards per carry this season and were less reliant on huge passing games from Drew Brees. Turnovers could play a big role as the Panthers were a negative turnover margin team despite the 11-5 record. History favors the victor when a squad faces a team a third time after two regular season wins with those teams winning 13 of 20 meetings since 1970 but winning and covering aren't the same thing. Only one of the 11 wins for the Saints came by fewer than eight points however while four of five Carolina losses came by double-digits. With wins over the Patriots and Vikings the Panthers have a high ceiling that hinges on the erratic Cam Newton. The former MVP had marginal numbers in the passing game this season but had his best rushing season gaining 754 net yards on 5.4 yards per carry. As a result the Panthers are a great 3rd down conversion team and a great time of possession team. The Panthers also were a great red zone defense and this is a Saints team that suffered some injuries on defense and slipped to just 3-3 over the final six games. After the great midseason run all three wins down the stretch came in competitive games and a few midseason blowouts inflate the statistics for New Orleans. Brees has won a Super Bowl but the Panthers have more recent playoff experience and are an attractive underdog in a matchup where both teams know each other well with an outright upset possible. **PANTHERS BY 3**

TOTAL OF THE WEEK

'UNDER' Tennessee Titans at Kansas City Chiefs

After a high scoring start to the season the 'under' is 6-2 in the last eight games for Kansas City. The Chiefs closed the season allowing just over 16 points per game in the final four weeks despite allowing nearly 28 points per game in the first 12 games. The Titans lost three of the final four games of the season despite making the playoffs but the defense did its part allowing just 18.5 points per game including facing hot offensive teams in the season's final three games facing the 49ers, Rams, and Jaguars. Over the final 10 games the Titans have averaged only 18.8 points per game on offense and with Marcus Mariota rating as one of the worst passers in the league a conservative approach to limit turnovers looks likely for the Titans against a Chiefs defense that had 26 takeaways. The December 2016 meeting featured just 36 points with Tennessee delivering 12 in the fourth quarter in a comeback win.

NFL WEEK 16	Line	Final	FD	Rushing	Passing	TO	NFL WEEK 17	Line	Final	FD	Rushing	Passing	TO							
COLTS	41	16	17	24	93	16	33	203	0	0	BENGALS	40	31	22	30	146	23	44	213	1
RAVENS	-13.5	23	23	32	103	29	38	220	0	1	RAVENS	-8	27	19	26	118	25	57	194	1
VIKINGS	-9	16	15	33	112	14	25	124	0	4	PACKERS	44.4	11	17	27	103	20	32	153	4
PACKERS	41	0	12	24	113	17	40	126	2	0	LIONS	-7	35	18	23	51	20	29	305	0
LIONS	-3	17	15	22	87	19	35	189	1	1	BILLS	-2.5	22	23	32	126	19	27	186	0
BENGALS	43.4	26	28	34	142	27	41	222	1	1	DOLPHINS	41.5	16	21	22	93	30	44	263	1
CHARGERS	-7	14	21	30	89	22	40	290	0	3	PANTHERS	44.5	10	15	24	87	14	34	161	3
JETS	42.5	7	13	30	197	15	28	98	3	0	FALCONS	-5	22	20	26	60	28	45	311	0
RAMS	-5.5	27	20	26	116	22	39	286	1	1	SAINTS	-6	24	18	26	92	22	30	231	1
TITANS	46.5	23	19	26	97	22	39	269	1	1	BUCCANEERS	49	31	28	28	110	28	51	345	3
BROWNS	37	3	12	20	76	18	36	178	3	4	JAGUARS	40.5	10	13	24	83	15	34	146	4
BEARS	-6	20	16	31	97	14	23	161	0	0	TITANS	-2.5	15	11	39	116	12	21	116	1
BUCCANEERS	47	19	20	24	66	21	27	326	3	3	JETS	43.5	6	14	19	40	19	36	207	0
PANTHERS	-10	22	20	31	115	16	26	140	1	1	PATRIOTS	-16	26	28	38	147	19	40	183	0
FALCONS	52	13	15	20	67	22	36	264	2	1	TEXANS	42	13	15	27	85	14	24	124	1
SAINTS	-5.5	23	15	31	86	21	28	229	1	1	COLTS	-5.5	22	20	36	146	15	25	104	0
BRONCOS	39.5	11	18	29	159	22	38	171	3	3	BROWNS	38	24	17	27	102	16	30	272	2
REDSKINS	-3	27	19	29	87	19	37	299	2	2	STEELERS	-5	28	20	28	124	23	27	224	2
DOLPHINS	44	13	15	16	59	19	38	286	2	2	REDSKINS	-5	10	10	16	61	20	37	136	3
CHIEFS	-11	29	23	34	103	25	39	301	0	0	GIANTS	41	18	17	44	260	10	28	121	1
BILLS	47	16	17	24	84	21	38	242	0	0	BEARS	38	10	12	15	30	20	37	171	0
PATRIOTS	-11	37	28	38	193	21	28	218	1	1	VIKINGS	-13	23	21	36	147	21	29	180	0
JAGUARS	-3.5	33	32	28	92	32	50	380	3	3	COWBOYS	-4	6	16	32	129	17	30	172	1
49ERS	43.5	44	26	35	131	21	30	238	1	1	EAGLES	41	0	12	18	70	23	34	149	2
GIANTS	40	0	12	20	43	27	45	250	3	3	RAIDERS	43	10	14	23	105	19	28	231	2
CARDINALS	-3	23	19	27	74	21	35	215	2	2	CHARGERS	-7	30	26	30	115	28	37	380	0
SEAHAWKS	47.5	21	15	30	76	14	21	60	0	0	CARDINALS	38	26	19	33	116	15	34	143	1
COWBOYS	-4.5	12	21	30	128	21	34	154	3	3	SEAHAWKS	-8	24	13	22	101	18	29	195	0
STEELERS	-9	34	20	28	104	20	30	226	0	0	CHIEFS	37.5	27	22	27	110	22	36	269	2
TEXANS	45	6	13	28	176	8	17	51	2	2	BRONCOS	-3	24	22	29	110	21	31	226	3
RAIDERS	45.5	10	13	33	137	15	29	137	5	5	49ERS	-6.5	34	25	30	171	20	33	292	3
EAGLES	-10	19	12	21	78	19	38	138	2	2	RAMS	44	13	15	26	102	20	34	149	2

NFL TURNOVER MARGIN:

RAVENS	+17
CHIEFS	+15
CHARGERS	+12
EAGLES	+11
LIONS	+10
JAGUARS	+10
BILLS	+9
SEAHAWKS	+8
RAMS	+7
SAINTS	+7
PATRIOTS	+6
COLTS	+5
VIKINGS	+5
STEELERS	+2
BEARS	0
COWBOYS	-1
BUCCANEERS	-1
PANTHERS	-1
FALCONS	-2
PACKERS	-3
GIANTS	-3
49ERS	-3
TITANS	-4
JETS	-4
CARDINALS	-4
REDSKINS	-4
BENGALS	-9
TEXANS	-12
RAIDERS	-14
DOLPHINS	-14
BRONCOS	-17
BROWNS	-28

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP GAME - MONDAY, JANUARY 8, 2017

At Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia

Alabama (-4½) Georgia (45)

7:45 PM

The SEC championship matchup most expected to see most of the season is now the national championship after Georgia won in double-overtime against Oklahoma while Alabama scored revenge on Clemson in the semifinals Monday. These teams haven't met since 2015 and have only played four times since Nick Saban took over in Tuscaloosa in 2007 with Alabama losing the first meeting but winning the past three (2-2 ATS). The most memorable meeting was the 2012 SEC Championship with Alabama winning 32-28 en route to winning the BCS Championship that season. Current Georgia head coach Kirby Smart led the Alabama defense at that time and was the defensive coordinator under Saban from 2008 to 2015. Smart is now in position to win a national title at Georgia in just his second season as a head coach. The Bulldogs survived a wild Rose Bowl with alarming numbers from what had been considered one of the nation's top defensive teams. Oklahoma wound up posting 531 yards including 8.0 yards per pass attempt with Baker Mayfield looking every bit the Heisman Trophy winner. In the first half Oklahoma converted 6 of 8 3rd downs to produce 31-17 halftime lead but Georgia rallied to take the lead before allowing a defensive touchdown but then forcing overtime, and getting a blocked field goal in the 2nd overtime session. Georgia posted 317 rushing yards on 9.3 yards per carry living up to its billing as one of the nation's top rushing teams and freshman quarterback Jake Fromm was impressive with 20/29 passing and no turnovers while leading several big scoring drives. Wins over Notre Dame and Auburn have lost a bit of luster as Georgia's run through the SEC deserved some scrutiny. Alabama's schedule was also much lighter than usual however but the victory over Clemson was a dominant defensive performance. Alabama held the playoff's top seed to just 188 total yards while creating several big plays. The Tide held Clemson to 1.9 yards per rush and overwhelmed quarterback Kelly Bryant. The Alabama offense was underwhelming with only 17 points plus a defensive touchdown and no scoring drives longer than 47 yards. Alabama was able to play with a lead most of the way but wound up with just 261 total yards and Jalen Hurts wasn't forced to throw downfield with mostly short yardage downs and distances and the Tide passing for just 5.0 yards per attempt and rushing for 3.4 yards per rush. That was certainly a game Alabama had plenty of motivation for as a revenge game from the previous national championship game plus the controversy surrounding the Tide even making the playoff. With much less time to prepare there could be challenges on both sides of the ball though both squads certainly had done some advance prep work as these teams were slated to play in December until Auburn upset Alabama. There is far more potential for the Georgia offense compared with Clemson with the injuries on the Alabama defense not showing up last week vs. a limited Tigers offense that fell behind early. Alabama didn't dominate as much as the score suggested as it was a 10-6 game in the second half before turnovers led to two touchdowns in 13 seconds of game clock. Alabama has allowed just 2.8 yards per rush on the season but LSU, Mississippi State, and Auburn all had productive rushing games against Alabama with at least 151 yards on the ground. Last week Georgia had 229 rushing yards before contact last week as the blocking and schematic potential for the Bulldogs will certainly be the best that Alabama has faced this season. This game is also in Atlanta for a rare near home field edge in a championship matchup. Tuscaloosa is only some 200 miles away from Atlanta as well but the Tide has routinely played for championships while this is the first title shot for Georgia since winning the 1980 title. Alabama's offense doesn't have close to the potential that Oklahoma has in the passing game and red zone efficiency and special teams are overlooked areas where Georgia has a clear edge. The win over Clemson was the first for Alabama over a top 10 team in the Sagarin ratings while Georgia has three as the schedule contrast is dramatic and the minor statistical edges for Alabama could be overblown especially with the overreaction to the semifinal results that appeared to be drastically contrasting with Georgia getting a fortunate shootout escape while Alabama won handily, even with little production and two major turnover breaks. Despite being a popular team that reached #1 in the polls early in the season Georgia is 10-4 ATS and could cover again at this price. **ALABAMA BY 3**

TOTAL PREDICTION: Both teams leaned to the 'under' on the season and featured elite per play numbers on defense with Alabama allowing only 3.9 yards per play and Georgia surrendering 4.6. Both teams have strong run defenses and Alabama in particular has some of the nation's best numbers against the pass, albeit through a far weaker schedule. Against common foes Alabama was a bit more dominant in blowout wins vs. Tennessee and Vanderbilt while the Auburn comparison is a challenge as Georgia lost badly in one meeting and one convincingly in the other. The 'under' has hit in six of the last eight Alabama games though every total in that run was 45 or higher. The 'over' has hit in six of the last nine Georgia games but despite allowing 48 points last week the Bulldogs held 10 foes to 14 or fewer points. Championship games are not expected to be high scoring but in the playoff format they all have been with 62, 85, and 66 points the past three years and Alabama has been involved in the past two of those games. The month-long layoff ahead of the semifinals provides ample time to prepare for the opposition and half of the now eight semifinals have been lower scoring games with 38 or fewer points including three of the four games Alabama has been involved in. Having just a week and this season less time than usual going Monday to Monday should favor the offensive personnel and 'over' may have some promise in Monday's finale. **OVER 45**

Non-Offensive TD Margin:
This includes scores on interceptions, fumbles, kick return, and punt block & return touchdowns.

JAGUARS	+5
RAVENS	+5
RAMS	+4
SEAHAWKS	+4
CHARGERS	+3
CHIEFS	+3
LIONS	+2
SAINTS	+2
EAGLES	+2
BEARS	+1
BENGALS	+1
BILLS	+1
PANTHERS	+1
COWBOYS	-1
DOLPHINS	-1
49ERS	-1
BRONCOS	-2
PATRIOTS	-2
CARDINALS	-3
JETS	-3
RAIDERS	-3
REDSKINS	-3
TITANS	-3
BROWNS	-5
COLTS	-5

NFL ATS Leaders

SIDES	
VIKINGS	11-4-1
PATRIOTS	11-5
CHIEFS	10-6
EAGLES	10-6
BILLS	9-6-1
BUCCANEERS	6-9-1
CARDINALS	6-9-1
SEAHAWKS	6-9-1
DOLPHINS	5-9-2
RAIDERS	5-9-2
BRONCOS	4-11-1
BROWNS	4-12
OVERS	
PACKERS	11/5
RAMS	11/5
UNDERS	
CHARGERS	4/12
BEARS	4/11/1
FALCONS	5/11
RAIDERS	5/11
STEELERS	5/10/1
CARDINALS	6/10
COLTS	6/10
COWBOYS	6/10
GIANTS	6/10
BENGALS	6/8/2