NFL · SEPTEMBER 9, 2026

2026 NFL Week 1 Game-by-Game Preview: All 16 Openers From Seattle to Kansas City

All 16 Week 1 games previewed across the four-day opener (Wed 9/9–Mon 9/14): a Super Bowl LX rematch in Seattle, the NFL's first regular-season game in Australia, 13 Sunday games and a Mahomes-comeback MNF, with odds, injuries, new head coaches and storylines for each matchup.

20 min read · 35 sources

2026 | 2026 season | game previews | injury report | odds and spreads | quarterback competition | schedule preview | week 1

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The 2026 NFL season opens with the most spread-out Week 1 in league history: **16 games across four days**, from a Wednesday-night Super Bowl rematch in Seattle to a Monday-night quarterback-return showcase in Kansas City, with the league's first-ever regular-season game in Australia wedged in between. Ten teams enter with new head coaches, the quarterback carousel touched more than a third of the league, and the market says most of the slate is a coin flip — 12 of 16 games opened within 3.5 points. Here is a game-by-game preview of the NFL's 107th season opener, with odds as of Tuesday, September 8.

16	10	12 of 16	Wed 9/9	50.5
Week 1 games	New head coaches	Spreads within 3.5 pts	Season opener	Highest total (TB-CIN)
across 4 days	record for a season	board is a coin flip	first Wed kickoff since 2012	lowest 39.5 (NYJ-TEN)

KEY FINDING

Only four of the sixteen games are priced wider than a field goal and a half — Chargers -10, Jaguars -7.5, Lions -7 and Eagles -4.5. Everything else is effectively a pick'em, which makes Week 1 the hardest slate of the season to call[1][4].

The Week 1 slate at a glance

Week 1 runs Wednesday, Sept. 9 through Monday, Sept. 14. The opener is the NFL's first Wednesday season kickoff since 2012, and Thursday marks the league's first regular-season game in Australia. All times Eastern[1][2][3].

▼ **Full Week 1 schedule — all 16 games**

DAY	GAME	VENUE	KICKOFF (ET)	TV / STREAMING
Wed 9/9	Patriots at Seahawks	Lumen Field, Seattle	8:20 p.m.	NBC, Peacock
Thu 9/10	49ers vs. Rams	MCG, Melbourne	8:35 p.m.	Netflix
Sun 9/13	Bears at Panthers	Bank of America Stadium	1:00 p.m.	FOX
Sun 9/13	Buccaneers at Bengals	Paycor Stadium	1:00 p.m.	FOX
Sun 9/13	Ravens at Colts	Lucas Oil Stadium	1:00 p.m.	CBS
Sun 9/13	Bills at Texans	NRG Stadium	1:00 p.m.	CBS
Sun 9/13	Saints at Lions	Ford Field	1:00 p.m.	FOX
Sun 9/13	Jets at Titans	Nissan Stadium	1:00 p.m.	CBS
Sun 9/13	Falcons at Steelers	Acrisure Stadium	1:00 p.m.	FOX

DAY	GAME	VENUE	KICKOFF (ET)	TV / STREAMING
Sun 9/13	Browns at Jaguars	EverBank Stadium	1:00 p.m.	CBS
Sun 9/13	Cardinals at Chargers	SoFi Stadium	4:25 p.m.	CBS
Sun 9/13	Packers at Vikings	U.S. Bank Stadium	4:25 p.m.	CBS
Sun 9/13	Dolphins at Raiders	Allegiant Stadium	4:25 p.m.	FOX
Sun 9/13	Commanders at Eagles	Lincoln Financial Field	4:25 p.m.	FOX
Sun 9/13	Cowboys at Giants	MetLife Stadium	8:20 p.m.	NBC, Peacock
Mon 9/14	Broncos at Chiefs	Arrowhead Stadium	8:15 p.m.	ESPN, ABC

The Melbourne game kicks off at 10:35 a.m. local time Friday, Sept. 11 AEST. Sunday's 4:25 p.m. slot carries the week's most consequential slate — three of the four late games involve a team many consider a Super Bowl contender[1][2][3].

How to read the betting board

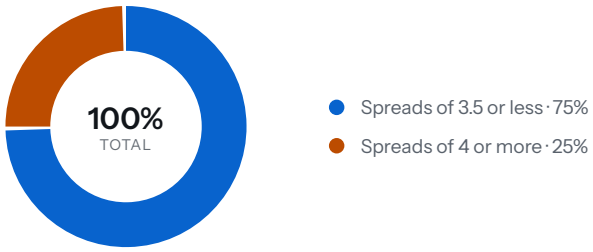
Spreads below are the ESPN/DraftKings consensus as of Sept. 7–8[1]; where the BetMGM board differed materially (as of Sept. 8, 10:45 a.m. ET), that number is noted[4]. **Twelve of the 16 games were within a field goal and a half**, and per ESPN nine of 13 Sunday games sat at 3.5 or fewer[1]. Week 1 is famously the hardest week of the season to handicap — no team has played a meaningful down together yet, and several key starters are injury questions.

Week 1 odds, totals and favorites — all 16 games

GAME	SPREAD	TOTAL	MONEYLINE FAVORITE	FPI FAVORITE
Patriots at Seahawks	SEA -3.5	45.5	SEA -180	SEA by 3.4 (61.1%)
49ers vs. Rams	LAR -3.5	48.5	LAR -185	LAR by 2.9 (60.5%)
Bears at Panthers	CHI -3	46.5	CHI -148	CHI by 2.6 (59.6%)
Buccaneers at Bengals	CIN -3.5	50.5	CIN -198	CIN by 3.2 (61.6%)
Saints at Lions	DET -7	49.5	DET -290	DET by 6.8 (71.9%)
Jets at Titans	TEN -1.5	39.5	TEN -125	TEN by 2.1 (57.6%)
Ravens at Colts	BAL -3	47.5	BAL -162	BAL by 2.4 (59.0%)
Bills at Texans	HOU -1.5	44.5	BUF -118	BUF by 1.1 (53.5%)
Falcons at Steelers	PIT -3.5	42.5	PIT -185	PIT by 2.6 (58.9%)

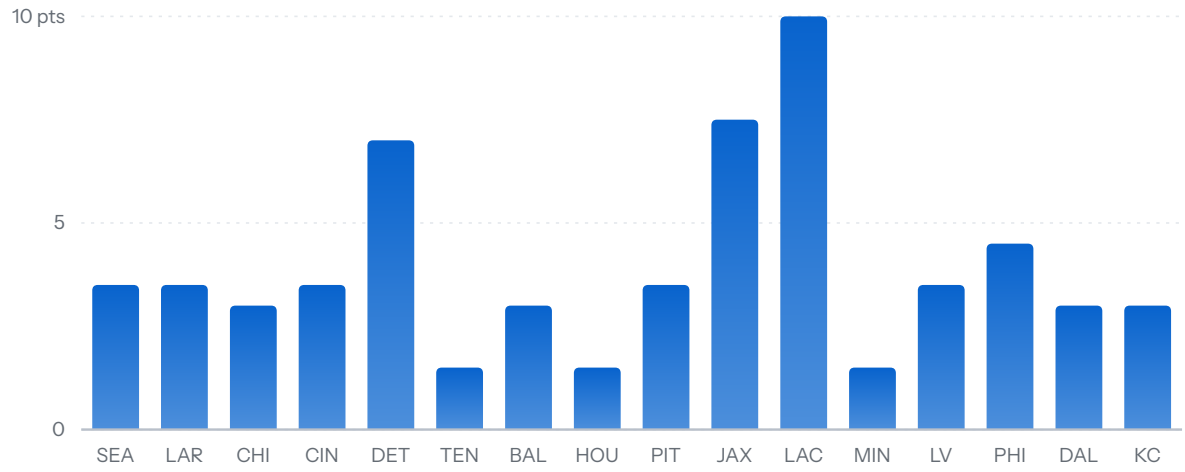
GAME	SPREAD	TOTAL	MONEYLINE FAVORITE	FPI FAVORITE
Browns at Jaguars	JAX -7.5	40.5	JAX -380	JAX by 7.8 (77.3%)
Cardinals at Chargers	LAC -10	47.5	LAC -625	LAC by 9.6 (80.8%)
Packers at Vikings	MIN -1.5	46.5	MIN -122	GB by 1.8 (56.6%)
Dolphins at Raiders	LV -3.5	40.5	LV -185	LV by 2.8 (59.8%)
Commanders at Eagles	PHI -4.5	44.5	PHI -205	PHI by 4.9 (66.5%)
Cowboys at Giants	DAL -3	48.5	DAL -155	DAL by 2.0 (57.2%)
Broncos at Chiefs	KC -3	43.5	KC -155	KC by 2.5 (58.5%)

How tight is the Week 1 board?

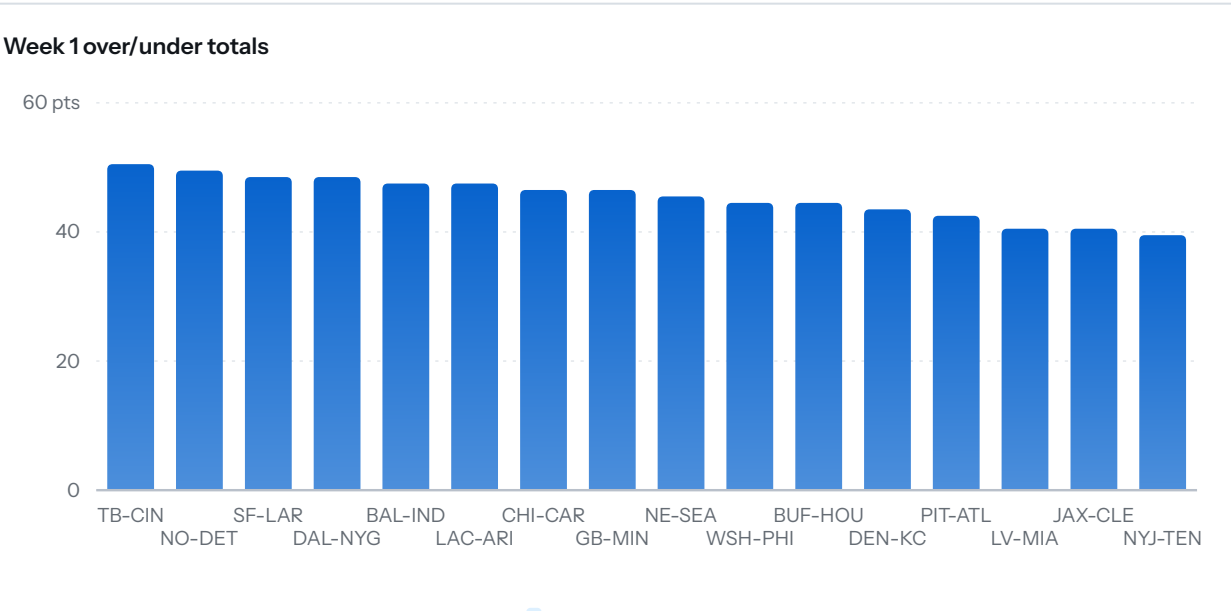


12 of 16 games sit within 3.5 points per ESPN [1]. Only LAC, JAX, DET and PHI lay more.

Week 1 favorite's point spread by game



ESPN/DraftKings consensus, Sept. 7–8. Values are the magnitude of the favorite's line.



Highest: Buccaneers-Bengals 50.5. Lowest: Jets-Titans 39.5[1].

Notable board facts: the Chargers are the week's biggest favorite at **-10** over Arizona (the only double-digit spread), Jacksonville is second at **-7.5**, Detroit third at **-7**, and Philadelphia is the only other team laying more than a field goal. The **Buccaneers-Bengals total of 50.5** is the week's highest; **Jets-Titans at 39.5** is the lowest. Two games where the books disagree with the model: Houston is favored over Buffalo while the moneyline prices the Bills (-118) — a sign of how tight that game is — and the FPI model prefers the Packers over the Vikings even though the market has Minnesota favored[1].

> **CAUTION**
>
> Odds quoted here are the ESPN/DraftKings board as of Sept. 7–8 and the BetMGM board of Sept. 8, 10:45 a.m. ET — they will move by kickoff, and several spreads (Josh Jacobs' status, Patrick Mahomes' mobility, Deshaun Watson's first start since 2024) hinge on news still breaking[1][4][5].

Wednesday Kickoff Game: Patriots at Seahawks

The defending Super Bowl LX champion Seahawks raise their banner against the team they beat **29–13** in February — the first season-opening Super Bowl rematch since 2016, when the Broncos repeated the feat over Carolina[3]. Sam Darnold, Jaxon Smith-Njigba and the core of a "Dark Side" defense that carried Seattle return, but the backfield has a Super Bowl MVP-sized hole: **Kenneth Walker III left in free agency for Kansas City**, and Zach Charbonnet is still recovering from knee surgery, leaving first-round pick Jadarian Price and newcomer Emanuel Wilson to lead the ground game[3][5].

New England remade its offense around Drake Maye. The biggest move came June 1, when the Eagles traded **A.J. Brown** to the Patriots for a 2028 first-round pick and a 2027 fifth-rounder, reuniting him with head coach Mike Vrabel from their Tennessee days[6]. Romeo Doubs was signed to a four-year deal opposite him, and the defense added a record-setting piece this week: **cornerback Christian Gonzalez signed a four-year, $135 million extension** — the richest cornerback deal in NFL history, per multiple reports[5][7]. One key absence: second-year running back **TreVeyon Henderson was ruled out** with an ankle injury after not practicing since Aug. 24, opening the door for Rhamondre Stevenson to lead the backfield[5][7].

Expert consensus runs with the home team. CBS Sports: Seahawks 27, Patriots 17[4]. Sports Illustrated warns the Patriots' 2025 run relied on a historically easy schedule and a 7–3 record in one-score games that "will be hard… to replicate"[4]. Seattle is -3.5 with a 45.5 total; ESPN's FPI gives the Seahawks a 61.1% win probability[1].

> *"The Patriots' two biggest problems heading into Week 1 are both related to the pass rush: on defense, they have no proven pass rush, and on the other side of the ball, I don't think their offensive line can stop Seattle's pass rush." — CBS Sports*[4]

Thursday in Melbourne: 49ers vs. Rams

The NFL's first regular-season game in Australia pits NFC West rivals who both went **12–5** last season and both saw their seasons end against the Seahawks[1]. The Rams are the betting favorite to win Super Bowl LXI and enter as **-3.5** favorites with a 48.5 total[1][4].

The headline is the Rams' absurd defensive line, and its Week 1 reality check: **Aaron Donald, who unretired Aug. 30 to join forces with Myles Garrett, will not play and did not travel to Australia**, coach Sean McVay announced Tuesday. Donald, two years removed from retirement, is "doing a great job" but needs more time; McVay expects him "sooner rather than later"[8][9]. That leaves the reigning DPOY **Myles Garrett (knee) to make his Rams debut — McVay said he will be "ready to go"** — after the June blockbuster that sent him from Cleveland for Jared Verse, a 2027 first-rounder, a 2028 second and a 2029 third[9][10]. Cornerback **Trent McDuffie also debuts** after a draft-pick trade from Kansas City[3].

For San Francisco, the injury returns are the story: tight end **George Kittle (Achilles)** and edge rusher **Nick Bosa (ACL)** both traveled to Melbourne and are on track to play, with the 15-hour flight itself viewed as a hurdle for Kittle[11]. Linebacker Fred Warner, limited to six games last year by an ankle injury, says he is ready[12]. The 49ers' holdovers — Brock Purdy, Christian McCaffrey (not on the first injury report), Deebo Samuel — give them a puncher's chance, but the Rams have won four of the last five in the Sean McVay–Kyle Shanahan rivalry, and Matthew Stafford is the reigning MVP[1][3].

> *"I think he'll be ready to go sooner rather than later, but we're making a decision that we think is best for him and for our team… being two years off retirement, he's attacked this the right way, but it would have been a really quick turnaround." — Sean McVay on Aaron Donald's Week 1 absence* [9]

Sporting News picks the Rams 27–17, arguing San Francisco's line will struggle keeping Garrett "from putting pressure in Brock Purdy's face"; the Arizona Republic has it closer, Rams 27–23 [4]. Fox Sports notes the 49ers are hopeful on Kittle and Bosa though both remained questionable as of Tuesday [5].

Sunday early window, part one

Bears at Panthers (CHI -3, total 46.5)

Two quarterbacks forever linked by the 2023 trade of the No. 1 pick meet for the second time as starters — Caleb Williams beat Bryce Young's Panthers 36–10 in 2024 — and both arrive as reigning division champions: Carolina won the NFC South a year after benching Young; Chicago won the NFC North and then beat the Packers in the wild-card round [3]. The market likes Chicago on the road, but the sharpest argument against the Bears is regression: SI notes Chicago went **7–4 in one-score games**, led the NFL in turnover differential (+0.9/game) and won six games after trailing inside two minutes — "those two factors alone are going to be extremely difficult to replicate" [4]. Sporting News takes the Bears 33–20 on talent [4]. Carolina's marquee addition, top free-agent pass rusher Jaelan Phillips ($120M/4 yrs), makes his team debut [3]. Bears injuries to track: nickel corner Kyler Gordon is on IR with a calf injury and won't play, and receiver Rome Odunze is day-to-day with a non-foot issue but expected to go [5].

Buccaneers at Bengals (CIN -3.5, total 50.5 — week's highest)

The highest-scoring projection on the board features the league's premier receiver duo — **Ja'Marr Chase and Tee Higgins** — against Tampa's Emeka Egbuka and Chris Godwin. Joe Burrow and the Bengals are notoriously slow starters but snapped a three-year Week 1 losing streak last season before Burrow's turf-toe injury derailed the year [3]. The Bengals overhauled their defense: **Trey Hendrickson departed to Baltimore**, and they traded for Giants defensive tackle **Dexter Lawrence** [3]. Baker Mayfield plays without franchise legend Mike Evans for the first time but got a vote of confidence days before kickoff: a **three-year, $165 million extension** ($55M/year) [5] [7]. Expert leans split — the Arizona Republic calls the Bengals' hype premature ("we need to see it first") and takes the Bucs 24–23, while SI still sees value on Tampa covering [4]. Burrow is healthy after offseason toe surgery [3].

Saints at Lions (DET -7, total 49.5)

Detroit is the week's third-biggest favorite after a 2025 playoff miss that cost offensive coordinator John Morton his job; new OC Drew Petzing inherits a backfield now led outright by **Jahmyr Gibbs** after **David Montgomery was traded to Houston**, with Sam LaPorta back from injury and Isiah Pacheco added [3]. The Saints counter with second-year QB **Tyler Shough**, who threw for 1,172 yards

in his final four games, plus Alvin Kamara and new signing Travis Etienne[3][4]. Two injury caveats: rookie first-round receiver **Jordyn Tyson is out roughly two months** with a hamstring injury[13], and Detroit's secondary is banged up[3]. ESPN's betting panel likes the Saints to cover on the road, citing Shough's fit in Kellen Moore's offense; Sporting News takes Detroit 24–20[4].

Sunday early window, part two

Bills at Texans (HOU -1.5, total 44.5)

The week's most fascinating AFC heavyweight fight and effectively a pick'em — and the one game where the market and the experts most openly disagree.

	Bills	vs	Texans
2025 playoff streak	6 straight Divisional+	·	3 straight Divisional+
2025 defense rank	—	·	No. 1 overall
New HC	Joe Brady (debut)	·	DeMeco Ryans (Yr 4)
Key debuts	WR DJ Moore, EDGE Bradley Chubb	·	RB David Montgomery (vs. old team)
Spread / total	HOU -1.5	·	44.5
FPI win prob.	53.5% (BUF)	·	46.5% (HOU)
Houston home favorite on the board; FPI and several experts take Buffalo.[1][3][4]			

Houston is the home favorite on the strength of last year's **top-ranked defense** with Will Anderson Jr. and Danielle Hunter off the edge — the exact unit that smothered Josh Allen in a Week 12 meeting (Buffalo's line allowed eight sacks)[4]. Bleacher Report is blunt: "The Houston Texans have no business being home underdogs against Buffalo in Week 1… a little smart game management should be enough to get the win"[4]. The Bills counter with QB Josh Allen, new head coach **Joe Brady** (his first game as a head coach after Sean McDermott's dismissal), new receiver **DJ Moore** and edge **Bradley Chubb**[3]. Houston also sees C.J. Stroud trying to silence playoff doubters[3].

Ravens at Colts (BAL -3, total 47.5)

A pair of 2025 what-ifs. Baltimore missed the playoffs for just the second time in Lamar Jackson's career, costing John Harbaugh his job after 18 seasons; new coach **Jesse Minter** inherits a defense that finished 18th in points allowed and now adds ex-Bengal **Trey Hendrickson** and a returning Calais Campbell[3]. Indianapolis started 7–1 before **Daniel Jones tore his Achilles** in Week 14; Jones signed a two-year, $88 million extension, says he is "100 percent," took nearly every first-team rep through camp, and is expected to start[3][14][15]. The Colts were the better 2025 offense by points (27.4

to 24.9) and best in the red zone (65.2%), which is why Sports Betting Dime likes the home dog [4]. ESPN's FPI, though, prefers the Ravens, and the Arizona Republic picks Colts 27–24 in an upset [1] [4]. Note: the BetMGM board had Baltimore at -3.5 [4].

Jets at Titans (TEN -1.5, total 39.5 — week's lowest)

Two teams that combined for six wins in 2025, and a revenge-game special: Titans coach **Robert Saleh** opens against the franchise that fired him, having brought ex-Jets Jermaine Johnson II and John Franklin-Myers with him [3]. The Jets counter with **Geno Smith** — New York's 2013 second-rounder, now the starter under new coach Aaron Glenn, chasing a second Comeback Player of the Year award [3]. Tennessee starts 2025's No. 1 overall pick **Cam Ward** in Year 2, and the game features **five 2026 first-rounders** — 15% of the class, including Titans wideout Carnell Tate and Jets edge David Bailey [3]. The total of 39.5 says both offenses are expected to sputter. The New York Post's breakdown says the Jets are better at quarterback, running back, offensive line, receiver and secondary, and likes the Jets outright plus the under; the Arizona Republic calls it "first one to 20 wins" and takes the Titans 20–17 [4]. The Jets carry a five-game losing streak into the season; Tennessee hasn't won a Week 1 game since 2020 [3].

Falcons at Steelers (PIT -3.5, total 42.5)

Old faces in new places on both sides. **Mike McCarthy** makes his Steelers head-coaching debut — the first time since 2006 that Mike Tomlin hasn't led Pittsburgh into a season — and he is reunited with **Aaron Rodgers**, who signed a one-year deal worth up to $25 million in May and has said with "zero debate" that 2026 will be his final NFL season [3] [16] [17]. Rodgers' targets **DK Metcalf and Michael Pittman are expected to be available** [18]. Atlanta counters with **Tua Tagovailoa**, named the starter over Michael Penix Jr. (still recovering from a torn ACL) — a one-year, minimum-salary signing after Miami released him carrying a record **$99 million dead-cap charge** [19] [20] [21]. Tua has Drake London, Kyle Pitts and Bijan Robinson around him, but the consensus doubts the Falcons can pressure Rodgers — Sportsnaut notes Atlanta "doesn't have anything resembling a competent pass-rushing unit," predicting Steelers 27–17 [21] [22]. Sporting News likes the Steelers 24–14 in a defensive slog [4].

Browns at Jaguars (JAX -7.5, total 40.5)

Jacksonville is the AFC South favorite and the market's clear Week 1 pick — **-7.5 (the week's second-biggest line) with an 80.8% FPI win probability** [1]. Trevor Lawrence is coming off a career-best 38 total touchdowns and a fifth-place MVP finish [3]. Cleveland begins the Todd Monken era having named **Deshaun Watson** the Week 1 starter over Shedeur Sanders — Watson's first regular-season start since 2024 [23] [24]. The Browns no longer have **Myles Garrett** (traded to the Rams; Jared Verse arrives in return) but still boast Denzel Ward, Carson Schwesinger and Mason Graham; two first-round rookies (Spencer Fano, KC Concepcion) debut [3] [10]. The Jaguars list two-way star **Travis Hunter as a starting cornerback** on the Week 1 depth chart after his rookie season ended with LCL surgery [25]. ESPN's betting panel rides the Jaguars, citing their 12–5 ATS season and Cleveland's 2–6 road ATS mark, while the New York Post says the Browns cover [4]. One trend for Jacksonville to break: the Jags have lost three straight to Cleveland, last beating them in 2017 [3].

Sunday late window

Cardinals at Chargers (LAC -10, total 47.5)

The week's only double-digit spread, and the game the board is built around [1] [4]. The Chargers return mostly healthy — linemen **Joe Alt and Rashawn Slater** are back — and debut **Mike McDaniel as offensive coordinator**, pairing the run-game guru with Justin Herbert [3]. Arizona arrives on a nine-game losing streak with new coach Mike LaFleur and **Jacoby Brissett** at quarterback (one of five team captains), plus No. 3 overall pick running back **Jeremiyah Love**, who signed a rookie deal with a record $53 million guaranteed [3] [26]. ESPN FPI gives the Chargers an 80.8% win probability, and the Arizona Republic's own preview concedes "Can the Cardinals just keep it close?" [1] [4]. Arizona's defense ranked 27th overall last year, and Bleacher Report expects McDaniel's Herbert to "put on a show" [4]. The BetMGM number was -9 [4].

Packers at Vikings (MIN -1.5, total 46.5)

The market has this near-even, but FPI actually likes the Packers by 1.8 — a rare disagreement between the board and the model [1]. Both teams come in with massive questions. Green Bay lost five straight to end 2025 (blowing an 18-point halftime lead to the Bears in the wild-card round), is **without edge rusher Micah Parsons (ACL, on PUP)** and faces the real possibility of playing without **Josh Jacobs**: the running back was placed on the **Commissioner's Exempt List** Aug. 30 after misdemeanor battery and criminal-damage charges, with his court appearance moved up to Sept. 10 — three days before this game — but the NFL had not decided on reinstatement as of kickoff week [27] [28] [29]. The Packers are preparing for a running-back-by-committee approach [30]. Jordan Love's receiving corps is thinner after Romeo Doubs (New England) and Dontayvion Wicks (Philadelphia) departed, though Christian Watson, Jayden Reed and rookie Matthew Golden remain [3]. Minnesota ended 2025 with a five-game winning streak but missed the playoffs, and coach Kevin O'Connell **named Kyler Murray the starter** over J.J. McCarthy in August after signing Murray to a one-year deal in March [31].

> *"From the outset of the offseason… we've been really intentional and open about the goal of creating just a competitive environment filled with wildly capable players… We've got four guys in four different places in time in their journeys." — Kevin O'Connell on naming Kyler Murray the Vikings' starter* [31]

Covers.com notes Green Bay's line has injuries at both guard spots, that Love's numbers collapsed under pressure last year (41.6% completion), and that Parsons' and Jacobs' absences are "a huge hit" [4]. Murray finally has "a top-tier receiver corps… for the first time of his career" with Justin Jefferson and Jordan Addison [4]. The NFC North is stacked; whoever wins gets the early leg up.

Dolphins at Raiders (LV -3.5, total 40.5)

The most aggressively rebuilt rosters in football meet in Las Vegas. The Dolphins are paying for the Tua release with **$181.6 million in dead cap** — CBS notes that left "only $120 million to spend on the rest of their team, which is how you end up with a roster that has 12 rookies" — and first-year coach Jeff Hafley has "already admitted that success in 2026 won't be defined by wins"[4]. Their QB1 is **Malik Willis**, signed in March after a brilliant spot-start run in Green Bay (86% completion, six TDs, zero INTs in limited work)[32]. The Raiders, two years into their rebuild under rookie coach **Klint Kubiak** (a Super Bowl winner with Seattle last season), start **Kirk Cousins** over No. 1 overall pick Fernando Mendoza — making Mendoza the first top pick not to start Week 1 since Baker Mayfield in 2018[33]. **Maxx Crosby returns from knee surgery** after a trade to Baltimore fell through; newcomers Tyler Linderbaum, Nakobe Dean and Quay Walker debut[3]. CBS takes the Raiders 20–13, saying this "might be the Dolphins' best chance at a win all season, but they're still going to lose by at least a touchdown"[4]. SI agrees the Raiders cover, citing Brock Bowers and Ashton Jeanty[4].

Commanders at Eagles (PHI -4.5, total 44.5)

The two-time reigning NFC East champion Eagles host the team that has split the season series with them in each of the last two years. Washington gets **Jayden Daniels back** from the elbow injury that cut his 2025 short (a 5–12 year); he missed both 2025 meetings with Philly[3]. The Eagles, meanwhile, traded **A.J. Brown to New England** and will debut first-round receiver **Makai Lemon** (the No. 20 pick acquired from Dallas in a trade-up) opposite DeVonta Smith[6]. Washington added **Stefon Diggs on a one-year, up-to-$12 million deal** in August, giving Daniels a veteran target alongside Terry McLaurin, and will debut No. 7 overall pick **Sonny Styles** on defense[3][34]. Philadelphia's Sean Mannion takes over at offensive coordinator; the Commanders' new OC is David Blough[4]. The market likes the Eagles (-4.5, FPI 66.5%); Sporting News and the Arizona Republic both pick Philadelphia by about a touchdown[1][4]. Daniels' mobility against Vic Fangio's defense is the swing factor.

Sunday night: Cowboys at Giants (DAL -3, total 48.5)

Sunday Night Football opens with a rivalry the league keeps going back to — this is the **eighth time in 15 seasons** the Cowboys and Giants have opened against each other[3].

	Cowboys	VS	Giants
2025 scoring offense	27.7 ppg	·	Dart enters Year 2
2025 points allowed	most in NFL	·	struggled (missed playoffs)
QB	Dak Prescott	·	Jaxson Dart
Head coach	(no change)	·	John Harbaugh — home debut
Spread / total	DAL -3	·	48.5
Cowboys led the league in points allowed per Covers/USA Today; both clubs missed the 2025 playoffs. [3] [4]			

The Giants are beginning the **John Harbaugh era** with **Jaxson Dart** in Year 2 at quarterback, working in a new offense under Matt Nagy, with Malik Nabers healthy and Isiah Likely at tight end [3] [4]. Dallas counters with Dak Prescott, **CeeDee Lamb** and **George Pickens**, who signed the franchise tag for $27.3 million rather than a long-term deal [35] [36]. The Cowboys' offense returns with continuity after averaging 27.7 points per game; their defense, which allowed the most points in the league in 2025, is overhauled under new coordinator Christian Parker [3] [4]. Sporting News' pick (Giants 27–24) leans on the Harbaugh bounce and New York's weapons, while Covers.com takes Dallas on offensive continuity and the defensive investment [4]. Watch Jerry Jones' hint that the team is "in play, defensively" for a trade — though nothing would affect this game [5].

Monday night: Broncos at Chiefs (KC -3, total 43.5)

Monday Night Football closes Week 1 with the AFC West's new balance of power.

	Broncos	VS	Chiefs
2025 record	14–3 (AFC No. 1 seed)	·	6–11 (missed playoffs)
QB status	Bo Nix back from ankle surgery	·	Patrick Mahomes back from ACL/LCL tear
Key debut	WR Jaylen Waddle (from Miami)	·	RB Kenneth Walker III (SB LX MVP)
New OC	Davis Webb (promoted)	·	—
Spread / total	KC -3	·	43.5
Chiefs' nine-year AFC West reign was snapped by Denver in 2025. [1] [3]			

The Chiefs had their nine-season run as AFC West champions snapped last year by Denver — Kansas City finished **6–11**, missed the playoffs for the first time since 2014, and saw Patrick Mahomes tear his **ACL and LCL in Week 15**. Andy Reid said Tuesday there's a "good chance" and "most likely"

Mahomes will start Monday night — a remarkable recovery timeline — but he may be without left tackle Josh Simmons (back), with undrafted rookie Kahlil Benson the fallback[1][5][7]. CBS Sports picks the Broncos 23–21, arguing that even a playing Mahomes "isn't quite going to be 100% yet and Denver's defense is the last one you want to be facing if you're not 100%"[4]. Denver was **14–3** last season, returns Bo Nix (expected back from ankle surgery) and debuts **Jaylen Waddle** (acquired from Miami for a 2026 first-rounder) plus new offensive coordinator Davis Webb[3]. Travis Kelce returns for what could be a farewell tour — his first game as a married man after his summer wedding to Taylor Swift, per NFL.com[3]. Covers.com flags the Chiefs' "A LOT" of off-field distraction as a risk and takes Denver against the number, noting Denver went 5–1 ATS as an underdog last season[4].

9 Sep 2026 — **Kickoff Game**
Patriots at Seahawks, Super Bowl LX rematch, 8:20 p.m. NBC

10 Sep 2026 — **NFL in Australia**
49ers vs Rams at the MCG, 8:35 p.m. ET on Netflix — first regular-season game Down Under

13 Sep 2026 — **13-game Sunday**
Early window 1 p.m. ET, late window 4:25 p.m. ET, Cowboys-Giants on SNF

14 Sep 2026 — **MNF premiere**
Broncos at Chiefs; Mahomes expected to start after ACL/LCL tear

The Week 1 storyline scorecard

New head coaches debuting this week

TEAM	COACH	NOTABLE CONTEXT
Bills	Joe Brady	Promoted after Sean McDermott's dismissal; 36 years old
Ravens	Jesse Minter	Defensive coordinator to head coach; first game at Indy
Browns	Todd Monken	Replaces Kevin Stefanski; opens vs. Jaguars
Falcons	Kevin Stefanski	Ex-Browns HC; hired in Atlanta
Steelers	Mike McCarthy	First Steelers HC since 2006 not named Tomlin
Cardinals	Mike LaFleur	Takes over 9-game-losing-streak team
Titans	Robert Saleh	Revenge game vs. former Jets team
Dolphins	Jeff Hafley	First HC job; stripped-down roster
Raiders	Klint Kubiak	Rookie HC; ex-Seahawks OC
Giants	John Harbaugh	18-year Ravens HC to New York

Sources: NFL.com Week 1 previews and team announcements[3][6][33].

Marquee injury and availability storylines

PLAYER	SITUATION	WEEK 1 OUTLOOK
Patrick Mahomes (KC)	ACL/LCL tear, Week 15 2025	"Most likely" starts vs. Denver[7]
Aaron Donald (LAR)	Unretired Aug. 30	Inactive, did not travel to Australia[9]
Myles Garrett (LAR)	Knee swelling in camp	"Ready to go" for Rams debut[9]
Micah Parsons (GB)	ACL, on PUP	Out vs. Vikings[27][29]
Josh Jacobs (GB)	Commissioner's Exempt List	Status unresolved; court 9/10[27][28]
George Kittle / Nick Bosa (SF)	Achilles / ACL	Traveled to Australia; on track to play[11]
Daniel Jones (IND)	Torn Achilles (2025)	Expected to start[14][15]
Travis Hunter (JAX)	LCL surgery (2025)	Listed starting CB[25]
TreVeyon Henderson (NE)	Ankle	Ruled out vs. Seahawks[7]
Fred Warner (SF)	Ankle (6 games in 2025)	Says he's ready for Melbourne[12]

Bottom line

If you only watch three things: the **Wednesday night Super Bowl rematch** (banner night, and the truest test of whether New England closed the gap), **49ers-Rams from Melbourne on Thursday** (the season's most star-loaded matchup, even without Donald), and **Broncos-Chiefs on Monday** (Mahomes' comeback against the team that ended Kansas City's division reign). For depth, the **Bills-Texans and Ravens-Colts** early games are the sharpest matchups the market can't separate. The betting board says most of Week 1 is a coin flip — trust the double-digit number (Chargers) or near-touchdown favorites (Lions, Jaguars) more than the field-goal games, and remember that several storylines (Jacobs, Mahomes' mobility, Watson's first start since 2024, which Tua shows up) are still moving as of kickoff week. Odds quoted here are as of Sept. 7–8 and will shift; the single biggest swing factor on the entire slate is Patrick Mahomes' health on Monday night[1][4][5].

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Researched and written with deepseek/deepseek-v4-flash-0731, from the sources listed above. Figures are as reported by those sources. Exported November 29, 2026 from https://intel.innerpulse.net/doc/2026-nfl-week-1-game-by-game-preview-all-16-openers-from-seattle-to-kansas-city, where the current version lives.