2022 PRO FOOTBALL
BETTING GUIDE

VSIN

VSIN EXPERTS PREVIEW YOUR LOCAL TEAM:

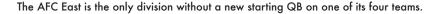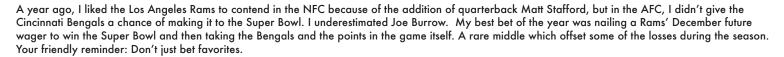- DENVER

950 AM

Altitude

SPORTS RADIO

The Year of the Moving Van Quarterback

By Brent Musburger

Welcome to the year of the Moving Van Quarterback. Eleven NFL teams – more than a third of the league – will open with a new signal-caller. Denver (Russell Wilson), Indianapolis (Matt Ryan), Washington (Carson Wentz) and Carolina (expecting Baker Mayfield to beat out Sam Darnold) will be starting quarterbacks who opened on other teams a year ago. And I expect Jimmy Garoppolo to be starting somewhere before the season hits Thanksgiving, if not sooner.

The AFC East is the only division without a new starting QB on one of its four teams.

The Moving Van Quarterback headlines handicapping 2022.

A year ago, I liked the Los Angeles Rams to contend in the NFC because of the addition of quarterback Matt Stafford, but in the AFC, I didn't give the Cincinnati Bengals a chance of making it to the Super Bowl. I underestimated Joe Burrow. My best bet of the year was nailing a Rams' December future wager to win the Super Bowl and then taking the Bengals and the points in the game itself. A rare middle which offset some of the losses during the season. Your friendly reminder: Don't just bet favorites.

The Detroit Lions finished 3-11-1 but against the spread they cashed 11 times against six losses. Only the Dallas Cowboys (13-4) and the Green Bay Packers (12-5) were better ATS, and both made the playoffs. As the season progresses, keep an eye on undervalued teams like the Lions, remembering that 90% of losing teams will have a better ATS record than won-loss record. Make jokes about bad franchises – like Jacksonville – but don't automatically bet against dogs, as several howl every week.

Speaking of Burrow, remember that only one Super Bowl loser (Dallas) ever made it back to the big game the following year. The hangover is real and, unfortunately, Burrow already underwent surgery to remove his appendix. Last year, the Kansas City Chiefs started 2-3 after their Super Bowl loss to Tampa Bay. I'm looking beyond Cincinnati this season.

The Los Angeles Chargers are my pick to make a serious run in the AFC. Quarterback Justin Herbert is one of the best young guns in the NFL. In the 35-32 overtime loss to the Las Vegas Raiders – which ended Los Angeles' playoff hopes, Herbert was unbelievable down the stretch. After a field goal put the Raiders ahead, 29-14, with 8:29 remaining, Herbert converted six fourth downs, including fourth-and-21 for a touchdown. For the season, he threw for 5,014 yards and 38 touchdowns. Add Khalil Mack and J.C. Jackson to the defense and the Chargers can upset the Chiefs in the brutal AFC West.

In the NFC, I'm backing the Dallas Cowboys as a serious contender. The media obsesses about the failures of head coach Mike McCarthy but his staff includes Dan Quinn (DC), Kellen Moore (OC), Jerry Philbin (O-line), John Fassel (special teams) and Doug Nussmeier (QBs). The staff is simply one of the best in the league.

A year ago, the Cowboys went 6-0 against NFC East rivals. They outscored Philadelphia, Washington and the Giants by a combined score of 240-to-107. That's domination and I don't see a serious challenger in the division.

Dak Prescott came back strong from a compound fracture of his right ankle, throwing for 4,449 yards and 37 touchdowns. The Cowboys traded Amari Cooper and his $20 million dollar salary, but owner Jerry Jones watched the success of the Rams, acquiring Odell Beckham and Von Miller during the season. Look for Jones to open Dallas' hefty wallet before the trade deadline.

Like you, I can't wait for Thursday, Sept 8 and Week 1. Cash some tickets because that's what it's all about!

VSIN Expert Predictions

	STEVE MAKINEN	MITCH MOSS	BRENT MUSBURGER	MIKE PRITCHARD	WES REYNOLDS	DAVE TULEY	JONATHAN VON TOBEL	MATT YOUMANS
AFC EAST	Bills	Bills	Bills	Bills	Bills	Bills	Bills	Bills
AFC NORTH	Ravens	Ravens	Browns	Bengals	Ravens	Ravens	Bengals	Ravens
AFC SOUTH	Colts	Colts	Colts	Colts	Colts	Titans	Colts	Colts
AFC WEST	Chargers	Chiefs	Chargers	Chargers	Chargers	Chiefs	Raiders	Chargers
AFC WILD CARD	Broncos	Bengals	Chiefs	Ravens	Bengals	Raiders	Chiefs	Bengals
AFC WILD CARD	Bengals	Broncos	Bengals	Chiefs	Chiefs	Chargers	Chargers	Chiefs
AFC WILD CARD	Chiefs	Chargers	Broncos	Raiders	Dolphins	Bengals	Ravens	Raiders
NFC EAST	Cowboys	Eagles	Cowboys	Cowboys	Eagles	Cowboys	Eagles	Eagles
NFC NORTH	Packers	Packers	Packers	Packers	Vikings	Packers	Vikings	Packers
NFC SOUTH	Bucs	Saints	Bucs	Saints	Saints	Bucs	Saints	Saints
NFC WEST	49ers	49ers	Rams	49ers	49ers	Rams	Rams	49ers
NFC WILD CARD	Vikings	Vikings	49ers	Vikings	Packers	Vikings	Bucs	Bucs
NFC WILD CARD	Rams	Rams	Eagles	Eagles	Cowboys	Saints	Packers	Vikings
NFC WILD CARD	NY Giants	Panthers	Vikings	Rams	Rams	49ers	49ers	Rams
AFC CHAMPION	Chargers	Bills	Bills	Bills	Chargers	Titans	Colts	Colts
NFC CHAMPION	Packers	Packers	Rams	49ers	49ers	Rams	Vikings	Packers
SUPER BOWL CHAMPION	Packers	Bills	Bills	Bills	Chargers	Titans	Colts	Colts

VSIN SEASON WIN TOTAL BEST BETS

BALTIMORE

OVER

10.5

Adam Burke:

The Over 9.5 at -160 is an option, but the Ravens are the best team in the AFC North. They ranked 32nd in Adjusted Games Lost per Football Outsiders with 191.2. That was 33 more than any other team in the NFL. They lost running backs and defensive backs early and then lost Lamar Jackson later in the season. While Baltimore went from 8-3 to 8-9, a severely banged-up roster with a backup quarterback lost those six games by 1, 2, 1, 20, 1 and 3 points, with four of those losses against playoff teams, including the two Super Bowl participants.

The Browns clearly have their issues with Deshaun Watson's suspension. Many project the Bengals to fall back a bit. The Steelers may be in line for their first losing season under Mike Tomlin. It isn't out of the realm of possibility that Baltimore goes 5-1 or 4-2 in the division. The AFC East and NFC South are the divisions the Ravens drew on the schedule, but they also added Jacksonville and the Giants on the road along with Denver at home with their last-place schedule. While all three are improved, so, too, are the Ravens.

This team should be the AFC North champion and 11 or 12 wins should accomplish that feat, along with going Over this alternate win total.

INDIANAPOLIS

OVER

10
-105

Paul Howard:

The Colts should have made the playoffs last year and many think they upgraded big time with Matt Ryan replacing Carson Wentz. A great running game and offensive line will help Ryan, along with an underrated defense. It feels like 4-0 or 3-1 against Jacksonville and Houston, but the big move that will also help is Tennessee taking a huge step back. Ryan Tannehill was so bad in the playoff loss last year that he sought out therapy. A.J. Brown and Julio Jones are gone at wideout and their replacements are Robert Woods (coming off an injury) and Treylon Burks (rookie). If this team gets off to a slow start, Malik Willis could also take over at QB.

UNDER

10.5
+100

KANSAS CITY

Steve Makinen:

I have to admit, I was stunned watching Kansas City's second-half implosion in the AFC title game, and to this day, I don't feel QB Patrick Mahomes is taking enough criticism for the role he played in it. Toward the end of the game, he looked legitimately shook. Now, heading into the 2022 season, he has been stripped of perhaps the team's biggest difference-maker over the last six years in WR Tyreek Hill. He was the kind of player opposing defensive coordinators had to scheme for every play of the game. His loss, and it's importance on what this offense has been able to do, is being undersold if you ask me. He made Mahomes look better by opening the field. I think every other K.C. offensive option is going to suffer somewhat in his absence. Let's not forget the Chiefs also lost defensive playmaker Tyrann Mathieu. Andy Reid's team will face a major challenge from a division that is arguably the best in football. The Chargers' and Broncos' gains will be the Chiefs' loss in my opinion. Plus, the schedule to open the season is one of the most difficult eight-game starts I have ever seen, at least on paper.

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS

OVER

10
-140

Steve Makinen:

I have come to rely on one of my transitional systems more than others, and it revolves around prolific offensive teams not making the playoffs. There have been 12 teams that have scored 27+ PPG in the last 21 seasons and did not make the playoffs. The combined record of those teams in the follow-up season was 119-74, good for 61.7% and an average of 9.9 wins per season. Only three of those teams did not make the playoffs, and two others, the 2009 Saints and 2020 Buccaneers, went on to win the Super Bowl. The Chargers qualify for this system as well as another one that involves outscoring opponents while having a negative turnover differential. In 2021, the Chargers suffered from bad luck, rookie coaching decisions and injury woes. In my estimation, all three of those factors have a chance of completely turning around this season. Justin Herbert has developed into one of the NFL's top quarterbacks, a dynamic playmaker who led the Chargers on a six-game run at the end of the season in which they topped the 28-point mark in every game, averaging 33.5 PPG! This team also boasts a nice defensive front and some playmakers on the back end. In my opinion, the Chargers and Broncos take over the tough AFC West this season.

What Quality of Wins/Losses in 2021 May Mean in '22

By Steve Makinen

Changeover Systems, which are the previous season's records and/or statistics that provide insight into the upcoming season, are often extremely predictive. Two years ago, many of the most optimistic systems pointed to the Buccaneers enjoying a breakout season in 2020. All the Bucs did was go on to win their first Super Bowl title. Last year, the systems weren't quite as definitive, but several angles signaled declines for teams such as the Seahawks and Ravens and improvements for the Raiders and 49ers. The Seahawks and Ravens dropped by five and three wins. The Raiders, despite an in-season coaching change, jumped by two wins and reached the postseason for the first time in five years, while the 49ers improved by four wins and reached the NFC title game.

This exercise is a rite of spring for me. Each year, I go through the list of won-lost records and statistical traits I feel are most important for projecting the next season. In Part 1, I'll analyze the quality and quantity of each team's won-lost records. Next week, in Part 2, I'll dig into a number of key statistical angles that typically lead to significant improvement or decline.

The NFL is unlike any other league in how quickly teams can rise and fall from year to year. First-to-worst and worst-to-first moves are not unusual, so it benefits bettors to know the traits that lead to teams improving or declining so quickly. What is the typical resume of a team that improves greatly from one season to the next? Those who can find the answer can take advantage of not only futures wagers and season win totals but also point spreads in the early weeks of the season.

Read through my findings over the next couple of weeks and make your own assessments. Then factor in free-agent moves and other personnel changes and head to the betting window. I will share my own conclusions, along with my updated 2022 NFL Power Ratings, sometime in the next few weeks.

Systems for teams that had an unusually high or low total of close wins the prior season:

In 2019, the Seahawks' 10 "close wins" (eight points or less) were the most by any team over the last 30 seasons. In that span, the 33 teams that managed 8+ close wins had an average decline of 3.0 wins the following season.

Team affected in 2022: Pittsburgh.

From 2017-20, 41 teams won 6+ games by eight points or less. Only six improved the next season, with an average decline of 2.3 wins.

Teams affected in 2022: Atlanta, Baltimore, Green Bay, Las Vegas, Minnesota, Pittsburgh, Tampa Bay, Tennessee.

Systems for teams that had an unusually high or low total of close losses:

From 1997-2020, 33 teams lost 8+ games by eight points or less. This group's average improvement the next season was 3.52 wins, with 29 of those teams improving.

Team affected in 2022: Minnesota.

From 2007-20, 67 teams lost 6+ games by eight points or less. Of those 67 teams, 53 of them improved their won-lost record the next season, including 27 by 4+ wins. The average improvement of the 67 teams was 2.81 wins. Of the six teams that qualified in 2021, four improved while the other two equaled their 2020 win total.

Teams affected in 2022: Baltimore, Carolina, Cleveland, Detroit, Minnesota.

Systems for teams that had an unusually high or low total of blowout wins:

The last team to record at least nine double-digit wins and improve its won-lost record the next season was the Broncos in 1997-98. Since then, the average decline of the 30 teams that did it was 3.97 wins.

Team affected in 2022: Buffalo.

None of the last 15 teams that recorded at least six "blowout wins" (20+ points) improved its record the next year. The average decline of those 15 teams was 3.3 wins.

Team affected in 2022: Tampa Bay.

From 1994-2020, eight teams won 6+ games without winning a single game by double digits. Although the 2020 Raiders became the first of that group to improve the next year, those eight teams had an average decline of 2.25 wins.

Teams affected in 2022: Atlanta.

Interestingly, teams that won five games or less but none by double-digit margins have shown significant improvement the following year. In fact, since 2006, 24 of the 26 teams in this group improved the next season, with an average improvement of 3.81 wins. All three teams from this group in 2020 improved by two wins in 2021.

Teams affected in 2022: NY Jets.

Systems for teams that had an unusually high or low total of blowout losses:

From 2000-20, 21 teams went 7-9 or worse and had zero "blowout losses" (20 points or more). These teams are natural candidates for improvement, and 19 of the 21 teams did just that, with an average jump of 3.05 wins.

Teams affected in 2022: Seattle.

Another sign of how quickly fortunes can change in the NFL: From 1999-2020, 35 teams lost at least nine games by double-digit margins. Of those, 30 improved the next season — by an average of 3.93 wins — including the Jaguars and Jets last year.

Teams affected in 2022: Houston, Jacksonville, N.Y. Giants.

From 1999-2020, 20 teams won at least 10 games and had 4+ losses by double-digit margins. Half of those teams declined by at least three wins (with an average decline of 4.9 wins).

Teams affected in 2022: Las Vegas.

Systems based on playoff results:

Only two of the last 28 teams to lose in the Super Bowl improved their won-lost record the following season, with an average decline of 3.36 wins.

Team affected in 2022: Cincinnati.

Alternatively, the last 29 Super Bowl winners have an average decline of only 1.1 wins, boasting an average won-lost record of about 11-5. Only two of those 29 teams finished below .500 the following season.

Team affected in 2022: LA Rams.

From 1991-2020, 34 teams won 13+ games and didn't make the Super Bowl. None of those 34 improved their won-lost record the following season and only four equaled their previous win total. The average decline among this group was 3.71 wins.

Teams affected in 2021: Green Bay, Tampa Bay.

Systems for teams whose won-lost records are trending:

From 2001-20, 14 teams improved their record for a third consecutive season (or more). Of those 14, only one team improved the following season. The average decline for this group was 4.3 wins, with an average win total of 6.5.

Team affected in 2022: Arizona, Las Vegas, Tampa Bay.

From 2005-20, 30 teams won at least six more games than the previous season. Of those 30, only one improved in the following season, with an average decline of 3.37 wins.

Teams affected in 2022: Cincinnati, Dallas.

DENVER
BRONCOS

HEAD COACH: NATHANIEL HACKETT (1ST)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: JUSTIN OUTTEN
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: EJIRO EVERO

26
STEVE MAKINEN'S POWER RATING
(#8 OF 32)

After stumbling through five straight losing seasons and a couple of bad head-coaching hires — Vance Joseph (2017-18) and Vic Fangio (2019-21) — the Broncos are turning to Nathaniel Hackett to restore order on the sideline. Hackett, former offensive coordinator for the Packers, is not bringing Aaron Rodgers with him, but he is starting a new era with a Super Bowl-winning quarterback who plans to replicate what Peyton Manning did for his final act in Denver.

OFFENSE
It's an understatement to say there are high hopes for Russell Wilson, who led the Seahawks to a Super Bowl blowout of the Broncos in 2014. Wilson sulked his way out of Seattle, a year after Rodgers tried unsuccessfully to force his way out of Green Bay with his sights set on Denver. Wilson is a good bet to be the answer, yet at 33 years old, is he still the dynamic playmaker he was for 10 years with the Seahawks? He missed three games with a finger injury on his throwing hand last season, when the Seahawks went 6-8 in his starts. Wilson passed for 25 touchdowns with six interceptions, but he appeared overweight and slower while totaling a career-low 183 rushing yards.

Now he steps in behind a stronger Denver offensive line with two quality tight ends, three wide receivers (Courtland Sutton, Jerry Jeudy and KJ Hamler) and two running backs (Javonte Williams and Melvin Gordon III) with big-play ability. Gordon and Williams each rushed for more than 900 yards last season. Hackett will call plays for the Broncos, something he did not do for the Packers when coach Matt LaFleur handled those duties and Rodgers won two MVP awards. Hackett will give Wilson a lot of freedom to run the offense, and the Broncos should significantly improve last year's scoring average (19.7 PPG). For those who enjoy dramatic storylines, Wilson will make his Denver debut on Monday, Sept. 12 at Seattle.

DEFENSE
Fangio had an impressive track record as a defensive coordinator, and Denver ranked third in scoring defense (18.9 PPG) last year, but he could not solve game-management questions as a head coach. While the Broncos have had a playoff-quality defense, it was the offense that handcuffed the team. With outside linebackers Bradley Chubb and Randy Gregory, Denver should pack some punch with its pass rush. The run defense is solid up the middle with Dre'Mont Jones and D.J. Jones on the line in front of inside linebacker Josey Jewell, who is the definition of a blue-collar tough guy. The secondary has depth and talent – led by cornerback Patrick Surtain II and safeties Justin Simmons and Kareem Jackson – and that will be imperative in a division that features high-powered passing attacks.

OUTLOOK
Denver has been plagued by clumsy coaching and a broken quarterback carousel for the past five years. Wilson is the long-awaited sequel to Manning, who retired following a Super Bowl win in 2016. The post-Manning era has produced 11 different starting quarterbacks and zero playoff appearances. Manning compiled a 45-12 regular-season record as a four-year starter for the Broncos, who are 39-58 in the subsequent six years while finishing either third or last in the division five times. Denver made a bold but necessary move in March by trading five draft picks (two first-rounders) and three players to the Seahawks for Wilson. The schedule includes a few soft spots (Texans, Jets, Jaguars), yet there are no gimme putts inside the division, where it's going to be extremely challenging for any team to attain 11 wins. For the Broncos to top their win total, Wilson would need to have an MVP-type year. — *Matt Youmans*

SEASON WIN TOTAL PLAY

UNDER 10

AFC WEST ODDS TO WIN

+260

AFC CONFERENCE ODDS TO WIN

+850

SUPER BOWL ODDS TO WIN

17-1

STEVE MAKINEN'S EFFECTIVE STATISTICS

SEASON	NEW HC?	SM PR	EFF STRG	EYPP+/-	SM BR	OFFRS-NEW	EOPPG	EOYPP	EOYPPT	DEFRS-NEW	EDPPG	EDFYPP	EDYPPT
2021		22	0.3	0.07	-0.1		18.9	5.61	17.45		18.5	5.55	17.69
2020		18.5	-5.7	-0.37	4.4	Yes	20.1	5.44	16.91		26.8	5.81	13.59
2019	Yes	24.5	0.8	-0.23	-2.6	Yes	18.6	5.3	16.23	Yes	19.6	5.53	16.95
2018		20.5	-0.6	-0.16	2.3		19.8	5.76	17.86		20.3	5.92	17.79

SCHEDULE STRENGTH

24.29
(#6 of 32)

FIELD RATINGS

1.3 / -0.1
(HOME/ROAD)

2022 SCHEDULE

DATE	OPPONENT	Est. Line	SERIES TRENDS
9/12	at Seattle	-4.8	OVER the total is 13-6 in DEN-SEA series since '95
9/18	HOUSTON	-12.1	UNDER the total is 5-2 in L7 of HOU-DEN h2h series
9/25	SAN FRANCISCO	-3.5	HOME TEAMS are on 5-2 ATS run in SF-DEN h2h series
10/2	at Las Vegas	+0.2	RAIDERS are on 8-1 ATS run vs. Denver
10/6	INDIANAPOLIS	-2.6	DENVER is on 3-0 ATS streak vs. Colts after 0-9 ATS skid
10/17	at LA Chargers	+2.8	HOME TEAMS have won L5 ATS in DEN-LAC h2h series
10/23	NY JETS	-10.3	DENVER is on 12-4-1 ATS surge vs. NY Jets
10/30	vs. Jacksonville	-7.5	UNDER the total is 6-3 in L9 of DEN-JAC h2h series
11/13	at Tennessee	+1	DENVER is on a 7-1 ATS run vs. Tennessee
11/20	LAS VEGAS	-2.3	UNDERDOGS have won L4 ATS of LV-DEN series in Denver
11/27	at Carolina	-5.1	DENVER has won L4 SU & ATS vs. Carolina
12/4	at Baltimore	+1.4	FAVORITES are 7-2 ATS in L9 of DEN-BAL h2h series
12/11	KANSAS CITY	+2.8	KANSAS CITY is 7-1 ATS in L8 trips to Denver but lost LY
12/18	ARIZONA	-1.8	The L7 games of ARI-DEN h2h series went OVER the total
12/25	at LA Rams	+6.3	UNDERDOGS have won L6 ATS in DEN-LAR h2h series
1/1	at Kansas City	+5.3	L4 games of DEN-KC rivalry in Kansas City went UNDER the total
1/8	LA CHARGERS	+1.3	DENVER is 5-2-2 ATS in L9 hosting Chargers

TEAM TRENDS

• DENVER IS 7-1 ATS (L8G) VS TENNESSEE

• DENVER IS 2-8 ATS (L10G) ON ROAD 2ND GAME OF THE SEASON VS OPPONENT

• DENVER IS 13-2 UNDER (L15G) ON ROAD VS AFC WEST

2021 RESULTS
7-10 SU & 8-8 ATS

DATE	OPPONENT	SCORE	SU	FL	ATS	TOTAL
9/12	at NY Giants	27-13	W	-3	W	41.5 U
9/19	at Jacksonville	23-13	W	-6	W	44.5 U
9/26	NY JETS	26-0	W	-10	W	42 U
10/3	BALTIMORE	7-23	L	-1	L	44 U
10/10	at Pittsburgh	19-27	L	-1	L	39.5 O
10/17	LAS VEGAS	24-34	L	-5	L	45 O
10/21	at Cleveland	14-17	L	3	T	42 U
10/31	WASHINGTON	17-10	W	-4	W	45 U
11/7	at Dallas	30-16	W	10	W	50 U
11/14	PHILADELPHIA	13-30	L	1	L	44.5 U
11/28	LA CHARGERS	28-13	W	2.5	W	47 U
12/5	at Kansas City	9-22	L	8.5	L	46.5 U
12/12	DETROIT	38-10	W	-12.5	W	42 O
12/19	CINCINNATI	10-15	L	-2.5	L	44 U
12/26	at Las Vegas	13-17	L	-1	L	41.5 U
1/2	at LA Chargers	13-34	L	7.5	L	45 O
1/8	KANSAS CITY	24-28	L	11.5	W	44.5 O

2021 STATS & RANKS

	OFFENSE STAT	RANK	DEFENSE STAT	RANK
Points Per Game	19.7	23	18.9	3
Yards Per Point	16.8	26	17.2	4
Plays Per Game	60.9	27		
Time of Possession	30:48	8		
3rd Down Conv. %	38.5%	21	44.9%	28
Total Yards Per Game	330.5	19	326.1	8
Yards Per Play	5.4	19	5.3	13
Rush Attempts Per Game	26.8	14		
Rush Yards Per Game	119.1	13	111.3	15
Yards Per Rush Attempt	4.5	10	4.3	14
Pass Attempts Per Game	31.8	24		
Completion %	65.4%	18	60.7%	4
Passing Yards Per Game	211.4	19	214.8	8
Yards Per Pass Attempt	7.1	15	6.5	15
Turnovers	1.1	6	1.1	21

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