

you know herbert has to go out there he has to win a division or you know when a
playoff game right

well you know that that's that's what we are firmly he's the fourth year he needs
to go out there this team needs to win a playoff game this year they're certainly
capable of doing it

uh... but if he doesn't want to play a game this year it's it's a it's a it's
starting become a little bit of a disappointment

This is the Lawyers, Guns, and Money Podcast.

(upbeat music)

- Hello, and welcome to the Lawyers, Guns, and Money Podcast

and welcome to our annual NFL preview

with Scott Leung-yoo and Rob Farley.

Gentlemen, hello.

- Sir.

- It is finally time for the NFL to return

and thus the world is right again.

finally Sunday has a point. All right. God lives finally. About three days he's dead.

It's like seven months. So let's, we might as well just jump into this, you know, as

a pretty exciting season unfolds with what I believe is the vastly superior conference

this year, the AFC. And let me start with the AFC East, which is kind of a traditional

place to start where you've got a pretty interesting division with four teams that all have a few

question marks, but all could be 500 or higher.

Yeah, it's fun.

So I have the wind projections from Aaron Schatz's annual Almanac, which formerly under the auspices

of football outsiders, which was destroyed by some shady Canadian company.

So the projected wins for the division are bills 10.8, so basically 11, jets 9.8, so basically 10.

The dolphins 8.5, perhaps a little lower than some men have anticipated.

And the New England Patriots at 8.1 projected to be under 500 for another year.

So do we think that's-- and that's probably roughly how I see the division lining up, bills winning it, jets wildcard.

I mean, the Dolphins, so I guess take the, let's go one by one.

So the Bills are interesting in that they were probably the team most picked to win the Super Bowl last year.

And it was a weird year and yet, you know, they had a good record.

The underlying stats were fine, but something always seemed a little bit off about them.

And then they just got absolutely destroyed.

The score of that Bengals playoff game was not as close as the game and they struggled to be Skyler Thompson the previous week.

So I think the question is, do we just kind of write off last year, you know, Alan clearly was playing hard for a lot of the year, you know, Miller was injured, tons of injuries to the defense.

So we kind of write off last year's an aberration and basically say they should be top contenders again.

Or do we say, you know, McDonough is going to regret that 13 seconds or retorted against Mahomes and Tyree killed the rest of his career.

I have to say that instinctively, I'm kind of leaning towards the latter, that I think the Bills are still a good team, but I just I wonder if they kind of lost their moment and the rest of the conference, you know, several teams in the conference are kind of pulling ahead of them.

But, you know, they're still good.

I may be wrong about that.

But I just something, I don't know, there's something, there's something I don't like entirely like about the vibes around that team.

I'm not sure I can, you know, I don't know if it's my old Josh Allen skepticism or what, but I think they're like a good team.

I would rank them pretty far below the-- well, there's the injury measures of the chiefs, but if the chiefs and Bengals are healthy, I think I like them quite a bit more.

MIKE GREEN: I would say that part of a hallmark of your approach to the Bills and Josh Allen is consistency, Scott.

I mean, you've stayed-- SCOTT H

Yes. I have been on all along. I have always loved Josh Allen.

MIKE GREEN; As long as it will take you. Right. I don't know. I mean, this is an awfully good division. But I think every team in this division has serious questions that the big except for the Bills, right? You know, all of the other teams are they're solid, right?

But you would you really be surprised to see Aaron Rodgers completely fall apart, which

is be surprised to see to get hurt. You know, and who knows what's going on and going on in New England. But I mean, you know, the Bills, I have to agree with you, right, that they need to be the favorite in this division, then much depends on two things which are very hard to predict, which are Tua and Aaron Rodgers.

And I think we have to grapple with the fact that we can't-- I think we go into this Aaron Rodgers question with just sort of seeing Tom Brady ahead of him.

And that's probably wrong, right?

Because Brady is so sui generis that I don't think we can take that projection and then apply it to what we're going to see out of this Jets team.

So I don't know.

beyond the bills, I don't know what's going to happen in this division other than it's a pretty good division, there are going to be some pretty good games.

I think I do agree that the Patriots are probably going to come in last, but I would not be shocked if any of the teams other than the Bills came in last.

I would be shocked if the Bills even came in second.

Yeah, I tend to believe-- there's a lot of this negative vibe around Bills.

I mean, it's very clear that Brian De Abel leaving for the Giants did have a bit impact.

Ken Dorsey definitely did not have that magic at the Office of Coordinator.

Does that change in his second year?

That's tough to predict.

But I think it kind of goes a little bit too far.

The Bills defense should be very good.

They still have a lot of quality players.

Josh Allen was not quite as good as he was two years ago.

But this feels like one of these narratives that happens quite a bit where some team kind of gets written off a bit as being maybe on the way down and then they're really not.

I tend to believe the Bills are actually going to win this relatively going away. I think they're still one of the best teams in the NFL. I don't see a lot of hard evidence why they shouldn't be.

Again, like most of the arguments are a little bit like when you're at Scott where you're like, not really feel that great about them, but it's hard to say why. I tend to, to out man,

I just don't know. The Jets offensive line is horrible. And Aaron Rodgers, he's one hit

away from being knocked out. Maybe Matt Jones, maybe now the Patriots actually have an offensive

maybe Matt Jones comes back and has a pretty fair year,

but boy, I'm not gonna bet on that one.

So I think I also within the world of vibes,

just think the Jets are gonna jet.

And that may be stupid,

but and I recognize that they do have,

a sauce gardener Garrett Wilson.

I mean, these are probably really good players,

but I do see quite a few weaknesses on the team,

particularly in the offensive line,
which is really not where you want to beat this
when you have a quarterback that you're all in on.
And it also has, you know, is also old.
It doesn't move all that great to begin with.
So I think it's gonna be,
the bill's pretty well going away in this division,
but I do recognize this is a,
one of the better divisions in the league
and any of these teams certainly could make playoffs.

- Yeah, I mean, the Jets are interesting.

You know, obviously the first thing that you think of
is the Brett Favre disaster.

Although, Rogers is a better player than Favre,
And he really is like, it's tricky because
he was mediocre last year, but is one year away
from being a legitimate MVP.

It's very hard to say.

Again, I do think with Rob that we do have to,
I think there's a tendency after Brady to just assume
that quarterbacks can just play forever.

But we've seen Matt Ryan basically faded away

in the normal career.

It certainly looks like that's happening to Russell Wilson.

You know, Phillip River, you know, like basically, you know, most quarterbacks

By their mid to late 30s or just breeze retired at exactly the right time, right or or one year late really

Arguably, right? Yeah, you wouldn't tell it, you know, give it one more try so that you a quarterback should play one season where they're while

They're bad, right? They should have a bad last season

So then you know, right?

Except for Brady Brady's good. Yeah, like that's smart get out

But, you know, I mean, yeah, and the thing is, yeah, I mean, and I think Eric has exactly right.

Like you like a lot of the skill talent. But not only is the bad offensive line of

problem in and of itself, it's like anything that gives Rogers somebody to blame for things

is really bad. You know, and he's also like, he's basically the Jets are for all defensive

purposes playing without an offensive coordinator. And not that I would want Nathaniel Hackett

necessarily giving a lot of input, but, you know, more or less, they're just letting Aaron Rogers

run the offense and I'm not sure that's a great idea. You know, I don't really think he's paid

manning. Like I think that Rogers kind of needs a coach to push back on him a little and he just

does not have that. You know, Soleil as a head coach is really very, still very up in the air.

So that'd be my biggest concerns, but you know, I understand the gamble from the Jets perspective.

And I guess the optimistic scenario is that they're nearly a playoff team with, you know,

horrendous quarterbacking. So it's not they don't even need Rodgers to play like an MVP.

They need him to be like competent, you know, to be a playoff team. And I certainly think that's

doable, you know, even with an offensive line, you know, and, you know, and, and I do like Garrett

Wilson in particular. So, you know, I think this is, you know, I think this is one of those things that it's most likely not to end up at a Super Bowl, but it's also likely not to completely jet out either. You know, sort of more like a, I see this more like a team loses in the first round, the classic Aaron Rodgers season, pretty good regular season, you know, terrible playoff loss kind of scenario. The dolphins is just about two of being healthy. And that's just not something I'm going to bet on. I believe is, is Mike white, I believe is the backup on the backup or so. You know, I mean, if he's hurt, they're screwed. But if two was healthy that is. I mean, they obviously like Waddle and Hill are phenomenal top two, you know, but that's just I just that two is too fragile.

Yeah, two is like every every season, both pro and college as far as I can recollect.

So yeah, yeah. And then the Patriots, you know, the the case of Patriots is, you know, the defense looks very good. You know, obviously, you know, Patricia's gone is, you know, it's hard to be excited about Bill O'Brien being your OC, except when he's replacing Matt Patricia and Joe Judge.

Competence is actually a major step up.

I do like their defense, and certainly you can see that team winning some close games.

If Tua gets hurt and the Jets line is a gel, I do not like anything about the Patriots offense, even with the new coordinator.

I don't think Jones is-- I can see Mac Jones doing fine with the Niners.

him a coordinator who will get things open and speedy receivers. I think he can make

throw. He can be like 80% of Jared Goff or slightly worse Jimmy G. He does not have that.

The Patriots are horrendously slow. Belichick just seems to have no ability to drop the wide receiver. Have you seen the pictures of Ezekiel and Elliott at training camps?

So he's like, here's the Patriots new offensive lineman,
Zeke Elliott.

It's like, he's not, you know, so, yeah, but if they, you know,
so I do like their starting running back for what that's worth,
but that's my problem. The way is just that they're going to have to grind out a
lot of, you know, 14, 13, 17, 14 wins.

And that that's hard. You know, and I think in this, in this division,

I just, I, you know, I, I, I just don't like their offense. You know,
even getting rid of Patricia, I just, I don't believe in, you know,

Jones has a very, very, he's always had a very low ceiling and I just think he needs better skill
players to be effective. I just don't like it. Also, there's also a team that if Mac Jones does
go down, they made a big last second move for Mac Corral as back of quarterback, I mean,
God, that is rough.

Yeah, that's not so yeah, they've gotten,

it's like that's the dubious starting quarterback
with nothing behind,

basically I guess Belichick's basically burning the ships.

But again, I mean, that team will have a baseline
of confidence and the defense is legitimately very good

so that they could grind out some close wins.

But yeah, it's certainly it's at best a a a a team that gets annihilated in the wild card around like that. There's very the upside of this team is not very good.

Like they can, you know, and then I think there are a lot of divisions in which I think that have a reasonable chance of making the playoffs.

But if two is healthy, this is not one of them.

Like I think that the only way they don't finish last is is is a quarterback from another team getting hurt.

Rob, do you have any more thoughts on the--

No, no, I'm good.

All right.

Well, let's move on to another interesting division, the AFC North, which could really be a very strong division.

I mean, the Bengals, I think, will be strong.

The Ravens, again, you really rely on the marketing healthy, but you've got to like quite a bit of what you're seeing there.

You know, the Browns, I mean, the Browns have talent, right?

I mean, they're not--

they shouldn't be a terrible team,

although we'll see in the Steelers, I suppose, really depends on the development of Kenny Pickett.

Here's a question for you. Who do you think has the-- it's a narrow ban, but who do you think has

the highest projected DVR win total in this division? Do not tell me it's the Browns.

Cleveland Browns. Jekyll did 10.5 wins. Bengals 10.2. Ravens 9.7. Steelers 9.3.

So one thing that's telling you is that they seem to think this is probably the best division in football, which I think certainly if you're going to measure it by its worst team, it is.

It's like, I don't know, there's like the Bengals are the only team that I see as a top contender, but they're all pretty good. Now, I don't believe that projection. I would definitely pick the Bengals to win the division. My guess is the thinking is the Browns have an excellent defense, a lot of skilled position talent. And if you're just looking at it in terms of model, you would assume that Watson's performance last year is an aberration. And certainly, if Watson is even 85% of what he was in Houston, it's a really good tee. Now, I'm not so sure that it is. That's the thing. There's just not a lot of precedent for a quarterback missing that much time and then playing that badly when he comes back. And I'm certainly not going to be rooting for that. But it is, I think, really interesting in that you can kind of make a case for any of those teams. I like to bangle a lot. Obviously, Burrow with, you know, you know, is, you know, you know, an outstanding starting point.

You know, the defense is sort of not great in the regular season, but seems to improve in the playoffs. And obviously, again, really impressive skill position talent, especially wide out. And I actually kind of like, you know, the, the Ravens are kind of hard to know because like Lamar is so unpredictable, both in terms of performance and whether it'll stay healthy. But the Ravens and Steelers are interesting just because, especially the Steelers have the coaching that gives them a certain baseline, that they're always going to sort of play fundamentally sound. Steelers especially look like they have an excellent

defense. So it's all about picking. And I just don't-- it's hard to know. But really,

It's a very interesting division.

Unless Watson is just going to be what he was last year, it's really competitive.

That's probably going to be-- the toughest thing that the Bengals will have is that it's not going to be an easy division to win if they get any injuries.

I definitely don't see the number one seed in the conference coming out of this division.

That's going to be the toughest thing.

But it's--

You don't even think the Bengals could--

I mean, let me ask, because I don't want to interrupt.

Rob, is there a good case for the Bengals having slipped enough that you could legitimately argue that the Browns are a better team?

I don't really see it myself.

I mean, I guess the argument is, I guess, if Watson is fully back to what he wanted--

I mean, Watson, then at his best, was about as good as Burrow was.

So I guess that would be the case.

Watson is close to as good as Burrow.

I think that their offenses are comparable. I would agree that the Browns definitely have a better defense. I think that's true. Better, really good secondary and an excellent pass

rush as well. I guess that would be the case. Personally, I am taking the Bengals, personally.

I do think the Browns are likely to be better. MIKE NOVOTNY

That's interesting. First, I did not realize that there were such a thing as DeShawn Watson's stands, but we had one in the comment thread for last week's podcast, right? A fellow who not only was sort of aggressively pro Deshaun Watson, but had a very long and elaborate theory

of how Deshaun Watson was effectively framed by the entire world.

Like 45 women all telling the same story.

Yes, no, a carefully organized, I believe it was something along a carefully organized campaign of

disinformation and character assassination by the Houston Texans. I didn't really go into it, right?

because like, I don't know, it seems more plausible that there are aliens. But anyway, that we didn't find a guy there who was sort of very aggressively enthusiastic.

You know, I mean, you know, a thing with the Bengals, right? I mean, this is a franchise that, that, you know, when they are good, they don't stay good for very long, right? And I think that that's sort of lurking in the back of everybody's head. But, you know, this team is a lot younger, and it's a lot better than some of the teams you might you might compare within the past, some of the Bengals teams you might compare with in the past. And it's not obvious to me that the

parts are really are falling asunder yet, right? They still have sort of the core offensive parts, you know, I mean, much, much, much weighs upon, you know, they're probably one of the best, they're probably one of the good teams that would suffer most dramatically from a quarterback injury, right? And so, you know, how good is this team without Joe Burrow? Right.

But Rob is there a belief out there? Is this just part of being, you know, the fans of a team that is terrible for so long that they just can't be good for very long.

The disaster is about to strike. This is certainly better than the 80.

So yeah, no, and I think that's a lot of what's going on here, right? That you do have this concern, right? But the Bengals now, they feel like they're a known quantity, right?

They're an excellent team. This is a tough division to compete in. But I don't really see any of these other teams ending up ahead of the Bengals. And they would still be my pick to take

this division with respect to the rest of them. I guess I would be sort of mildly optimistic about Deshaun Watson. And so maybe put the Browns second. I don't know if I can be optimistic about

Lamar. It's a very interesting division. I would go with the Bengals and then probably the Browns,

number two. One thing I do like about the Ravens here, and these things can be overrated and people

do all the time, but they did hire Greg Roman to be the new offensive coordinator. Supposedly, he's putting in an offense that actually really uses Jackson's skill sets. You hear this all the

the time in the NFL, you know, we'll see. But, you know, just looking at a pro football

focus thing here, it said that Baltimore used three receivers 12% of the time last year,

which is not good. And I really need to move on from Roman. Like that was getting really

stale. Yeah. So, uh, or yeah, it's much, sorry, Todd Monckons, the Todd, Todd, right. And

That's pretty, that's really undermining, not pointing to the strength of your quarterback,

but it's hurt a lot too.

The Ravens to me are a team that could really be anything from Super Bowl contender to disaster,

really, depending on almost entirely on Lamar's health.

Yeah.

That's it.

There was a case to be made for the-- I think you can also make a case for the Steelers second, just because again, they're, you know, they like, Tom, basically is just, you start off with such a good infrastructure that you get like no quarterback play at all. And you're still going to win like seven or eight games. So it's another situation where like picket doesn't have to be great. You know, he has to be like fine. You know, so I think that, you know, they, they have less, I think, potential to do damage in the postseason than any of the other, like the other three teams division, all I think have more upside, like at their best, if they're starting quarterback is healthy and playing well, I would take any of those teams, but there's a lot of, you know, outside of Cincinnati, there's a lot of questions, you know, the, the question marks, you know, so I would almost being client, you know, if I, if I had to sort of bet on one of those three over unders, I think I'd bet on Pittsburgh just because, you know, that they're, they're, they're, they're, they're the least likely to collapse. You know, I think there's, you know, and, and again, I think like Tom is, I think, you know, one of the three best coaches in the league.

Oh, oh, Julio Rodriguez, three run homer.

But so, you know, but I think it's actually a fascinating division.

And I will be interested to see what Lamar can do with the new scheme.

You know, and the Ravens are actually another team, too.

I mean, Harbaugh, if not quite Tom, it is also really good.

They're always going to have good special teams.

You know, the defense is probably going to be solid.

So it's it's it's actually a fascinating division.

And that's the one thing that Bengals have is just very little margin for error.

There are divisions where, you know, Burrow could miss four games.

They'd be fine. This is not one of them, you know, that they need.

They or if, you know, even if if, you know, receiver gets hurt,

that's the one thing it's a low margin for error division.

That's that's you know, that's that's where I think they are to disadvantage
against your Jacksonvilles and Kansas cities.

You know, that it's there's not a really weak team in the division unless

unless Watson is clocked. I would like to see that, but probably not. I think he's definitely
going to have at least-- he'll get at least halfway back, I think, from where he was last year.

MIKE POMPEO Other thoughts here on the North?

OK, well, let's go to a far less interesting division, the AFC South,

which Texans and Colts are both complete disasters. I don't see that changing anytime soon.
The Titans

and Jags are probably relatively mediocre. I tend to think that the Jags are probably the best
team,

but when you're saying that Jacksonville is the best team, you are really not feeling too good
about it. I think there's reasons to believe that, but no one from this team is going too far in the
playoffs in my view. projections are, and this is so the Jacksonville 9.6, so that would basically
be

Roughly tied with Pittsburgh is easily the best projection in this division because from there,

you go to-- let's keep scrolling down here. Tennessee, 7.4, keep scrolling. Indy, 5.9, Houston, 5.6. This is seen by the models as pretty decisively the worst division in football, including the NFC South, which is not exactly any hot shit either. That is good news for the Jaguars in that they finally have a competent coach. They have far and away the best quarterback in the division. I don't think that the Jaguars are as good as the Bills or the Bengals or the Chiefs, but this is one thing they have is that they have a real shot at being the number one seed, I think, just because that division is horrible.

I think that the more--

Nobody likes playing a road game in Jacksonville, right?

It's known as a--

For many reasons, yeah.

Can we stay in Tuscaloosa?

But I think three of these teams are relatively non-controversial.

I think we'd see the Jaguars as flawed, but clearly the best team in the division.

I think nobody thinks the Colts and Texans are going to be good.

I think the interesting question is Tennessee. I mean, I think that that number I think is under the Vegas over under and I would be pretty disappointed. That's one that I buy. I do not like the Titans at all. And with the caveat that I don't like betting against a good coach, I do think Vable's a good coach, but the defense is like, okay, but not great. I don't know what what Tannehill has left and beyond him, they're fucked.

Like, um, absolutely.

He was, he was really bad.

I mean, you know, Rob, you could talk about, uh, will
levis as, as, you know, future savior of Tennessee Titans.

They have a type.

It's amazing to have Wilson that doubled out on levels.

Like, yeah, it's like our last raw tools prospect was a bust.

Let's try it.

Even less talented one.

Yeah.

Yeah.

I mean, so I don't know. So I was like, yeah, that's rough. Yeah. I mean, I'll mostly echo
Scott here only more. So, I mean, it feels to me like the Titans had their shot. Right.

Um, and really, I mean, they sort of, they had like a four or five, even sort of stretching
back into the Marietta years, like they were like, you know, maybe, maybe you can kind
of see it. And then the Tannehill, and now I think that's done. Right. And you know,

the whole levels, that means seriously, he wasn't even that great here. Right. And it's

just, you know, at least Josh Allen played well for Wyoming. Right. And you know, and

so I mean, it's very, it's very hard to see. I mean, what I will say is that I like where

the Titans got him in the draft, right, that didn't draw pretty far. And so it's not like

they, you know, it's not like they sold out the farm for him, right? I mean, they were,

it was a measured situation and he was going to go very soon after that if he didn't go

Yeah, I mean, I don't I think Tennessee's moment has passed, you know, unless Derek

Henry has some kind of, you know, career progression that is completely different than every other

player of his physical type.

You know, which if that happens, well, then great, it happened.

But also, you know, their office a lot was horrible last year.

Right.

And I know there's a new guys, but it was, you know, from the Bengals from last year,

you could bring in a bunch of you guys, but it doesn't mean it's gonna gel.

I mean, maybe they're a little better off the line,

but that just makes it even harder for Derek Henry.

So I'm really skeptical about it.

- Here's now, we're all, I think,

pretty knowledgeable football fans.

We all had to recently prepare for a fantasy football draft.

I will be shocked if either of you can name

the top three Titans wideouts.

And I had even forgotten about the number one guy briefly.

- Well, I know you have DeAndre Hopkins now.

- Right.

So a somewhere between past his prime and washed up new,

'cause they're number one, but the two and three guys,

This is a, and it's kind of your home team Farley.

Do you have any idea?

- No, no.

People here don't root you for the Titans.

People here cheer for the Band of the

- Oh, okay.

Okay. Yeah.

That's true.

So anyway, second,

WR number two, Trilon Burks.

Wide receiver number three, Nick Westbrook-Ekemiye.

Yeah.

And Tannehill's another guy who he needs, you know,

He's not a bad quarterback, but he needs help.

And Hopkins is not necessarily getting a lot of separation
at this point in his career.

And he's going to draw the other team's top corner.

And there is not much.

I don't like this team at all.

Yeah, no.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

And he's a worse, right?

But Houston and India are worse, right?

And that's the thing, right?

So it's a terrible division.

And that's why I think the Jags are going to win it going away.

And, you know, I mean, like none of the projections I see, like have them anywhere near the number

one slot, but it's not implausible, right?

Maybe, especially if Lawrence continues to develop and, you know, given how tough the

Bengals and the Bills are, the schedules they're looking at, you know, just to where the indivision

opponents, right?

You could definitely see, you could see the Jags running through this division, like just cutting through it like...

I mean, the Titans have been the number one seed, right?

The number one seed isn't the best team in the conference.

It's even the best, right?

It's not the same thing.

Yeah, that's 'cause I'm definitely going to be betting

the Jags over the Titans under and Jags to win the division.

I should look into, you could probably get

a pretty juicy number on the Jags being the number one seed.

That's probably a good bet.

Not again, because I don't think they're as good

as the other top teams, but those other teams

have way tougher schedules.

Like this is just, you know, I think like the Texans
at least look a little like they're at least trying
do something like Ryan's probably a good head coach like they've added some talent. Decolts,
oh, God, that is a rough. It's just not a-- Until ownership changes, they're really hard
to see to them. They're doing much. Yeah, no, I got to say that's-- I mean,
by the way, is a proud Anthony Richardson fantasy owner.

It'll be interesting to see him, but yeah, that's a bleak division. That's the good news for the
Jaguars is that being competent with a good quarterback in this division is a huge step up.
the Jags could definitely get some home games in the playoffs. Even if another team is better,
that's not necessarily going to be easy either. It's still like their defense to be better,
but I like the Jags a lot in this context.

All right. I think it's time perhaps to move on to a more interesting division, the AFC West.
And it's funny because I think last year we were talking about this being this amazing division,
And it didn't quite turn out that way, did it?

I mean, I think, you know, just as a quick intro,
I mean, the Chiefs, the Chiefs,
you know, it's hard to me to see really
not feeling pretty good about them going back yet again,
especially since they did that
after losing Tyreek Hill.

The Chargers should be good,
but they never actually seem to win when it counts.

I think there's some ways we can explain that away for now,
it is becoming an issue. The Broncos, I mean, Jesus, that went south fast. And the Raiders
are, of course, a clown show, which is when you hired Josh McDaniels. So I think we have a little
bit more to chew on on this division. MIKE GREEN: Yeah. So projections, Chiefs,
essentially 11 wins, 10.9. Chargers, 9.5. So with Jacksonville, the Steelers.

Denver 7.4 model not really expecting much of a comeback and

The Raiders keep scrolling down you guys keep going down

You might find the Crimson Tide there first right so just roll past

Duke

Rutgers oh yes the laws

Yes, so the the model is also not bullish on on Josh McDaniels

Who like he basically what he started like seven and one in Denver and after that is like like
three and fifty fives ahead coaches

Not not good

Yeah, so I think this is so actually that isn't you know for what we said about the Jaguars

You know the the Chiefs also have a pretty easy path here. There is at least one other good
team the division

Now I assume both of you gentlemen heard that that and hell see it looks like Kelsey's not
playing week one

Yeah, good to be playing a Patrick Mahomes owner and fast

Yes, so and and and this is actually important to me is also a Jared Goff owner

Do I have a good quarterback room? Absolutely not

But Chris Jones is not gonna be playing week one, right? Is that there? I guess it's not a
hundred percent sure

But he's not signed a contract as it is. I'm so some likely at this point

Yeah, we'll get to this, we talk about the Lions, but that should swing the line at about

five given the quarterback.

But that's really the only thing that could hurt the Chiefs.

But the thing about the Chiefs, again, is that with Mahomes and Reed, they can survive

an injury to a top skill player.

Now, if we're talking about championship game, no.

the regular season, I think, even if Kelsey has to miss two or three weeks, they'll get by with that.

So I like them a lot. But I think we all know about that. The Chargers are the really interesting team

in that there's obviously talent there. The head coaching is extremely questionable and was

just epicly bad in the playoffs last year. Now, as two Oregon stands here, what is the feeling

about Justin Herbert? Are you liking the trajectory? Or is it kind of like not quite fulfilling the

promise? Where do you, how do you, how do you about it? You know, he's, he's, this is, you know,

much like Joe Burrow, this is his third year, right? And I don't, you know, I don't think,

yeah, you know, from where you drafted him, you can't complain about what you've gotten

from Justin Herbert so far, right? Except that like, it felt like maybe you could have gotten more,

right? You know, but, but, you know, he's not, he, well, obviously he's not a bust. He's an

exceptionally talented quarterback. He has adapted to the professional game very well.

He just doesn't want, right? And I think we'll come back to this because I have some comments

about the Netflix series and some factors that actually seem fairly consistent to Oregon

quarterbacks very weirdly. And I'm curious about Eric's thoughts on this when we get to it. But Herbert has to go out there and he has to win a division or win a playoff game, right? we are firmly he's the fourth year he needs to go out there this team needs to win a playoff game this year they're certainly capable of doing it but if he doesn't want to play off game this year it's it's a it's a it's starting to become a little bit of a disappointment well I I think that I mean yes I it's difficult when you have a defense that bad it's difficult when your head coaches is quite questionable and it's also worth noting last year that very early in the season and as watched in this game, you know, Herbert's ribs were basically destroyed and he played through that. I mean, I think, you know, Rashawn Slater got hurt at the beginning of the year. That really undermined the offensive line. He should be back. And you know, and so, you know, I think that, you know, that, that, that the injuries last year were so brutal to that team.

Um, that I, I, I,
of COVID, right?

I mean, they lost a game because of COVID basically.

Right.

So I don't remember that, but

I can't remember, but it was,

okay.

But I, you know, and so I don't feel too bad about it at this point,

but the point is he doesn't need to win and, and you know,

bring telling more into the audience, the coordinator, I don't know.

I mean, you know, but maybe, um, we'll see about that.

But, um, you know, but there is one more step to take, right?

Um, and you know, to a certain extent, part of what it means to be in a league quarterback in the NFL is to will your team to win.

Even if the rest of the team is a little sucky, um, to make that key throw at the end, he hadn't quite done that yet.

So I'm not worried about it.

Um, and I think he deserves the contract he's gotten and the chargers have no choices about it anyway.

Right.

But I don't think they were even, you know, hesitating for a second.

He's the best quarterback they've had.

I would say rivers personally.

Rivers obviously has a longer period of time, but the upside is higher than rivers I think ever was.

It's a choice you have to make.

The problems of this team are not really about Justin Herbert.

We'll see going forward.

Yes, the narrative could be out there and at some point, it becomes a deserved narrative.

And then, you know, I kind of bet against the Chiefs last year, but I'm not going to do that again.

You know, I will say that this is, I mean, this is, you know, the sort of three top teams in the AFC.

I mean, this is a pretty classic three-way matchup, right?

With three sort of really great teams, the Bengals, the Bills, and the Chiefs.

I mean, this is a pretty great moment.

And it'll be interesting, right?

Sort of part of the question here is, right, can the Bills go to the Super Bowl like the Chiefs and the Bengals have?

Right, because in some way, I mean, the bills are extremely impressive team, but they haven't won those games in the playoffs at the very end.

Right.

And, and last year, certainly, I mean, the Bengals just, you know, but yeah, no, it's still, it's a great like three way sort of top of this league.

And we've seen things like that before.

But it's a, it's a really fun moment for these three teams.

I mean, I, I agree.

And I think it's a fun league as well, because you know, it's also a situation where you You could see the Ravens or you could see the Chargers coming out of the AFC to the Super Bowl.

There's a path forward.

I'm not going to say anything about Jacksonville yet.

I'm certainly not going to say anything about Cleveland, but there's a lot of good teams

in this conference.

When we get to the NFC, it's not the Ganks.

Yeah, we've got, I think, a clear top tier with Buffalo and Kansas City and Cincinnati.

Then Jacksonville and the Chargers, one tier below that.

you have, for example, you know, I mean, the Jets, if Rodgers plays well in any individual playoff game, certainly, you know, that they have a defense, they have skilled players. I think any of the Northern teams that get into the playoffs, you know, I don't know about a Super Bowl run, but I, you know, the Steelers, the Ravens, you know, if Watson's good, like those can all win a playoff game, and those are not going to be easy outs, but they could definitely upset somebody.

So that's going to be a-- that should be a great playoff. If several teams enter relatively healthy, that's really fascinating. There's not going to be a lot of super lopsided odds despite the fact that I do think there's a tier of teams. Again, are you going to be shocked if Jacksonville is in the Super Bowl? No. And I think that's where this will be an interesting year for the Chargers.

You have to think that Herbert would love to be in the other conference.

- Right, yes, that's right.

- Yeah, that's right.

- I think these guys probably wear it.

- You know, like that's the thing.

This is a tough, it's a tough road to go through.

- You know, there's a lot I should say here.

There's a lot of great quarterbacks in the AFC at this point and Russell Wilson is not one of them.

- Right, yeah.

So, I mean, this is obviously the, you know,

I mean, I think that there's not much to say

about the Raiders, they're awful.

But, you know, and I don't see Jimmy G.

Where, you know, that's another situation.

Like as with Mack Jones, you know,

He could be a competent quarterback in the right circumstances, and these are not.

They do have Devontae Adams, so I can't compare them to the Patriots.

Still, it's a team with not much upside and a lot of downside.

The Broncos, you can see it two ways.

The optimistic take is Nathaniel Hackett is one of the worst NFL coaching hires in contemporary history.

Sean Payton has an outstanding track record.

He's won with the smoldering embers of Drew Brees.

He got a pretty good record out of even James Winston.

We also look notably better after Hackett was fired in the last couple of weeks last year.

He seems to be in better shape.

Training for coaches actually is something I went through the ball.

actually has an extremely good track record, although people make fun of it. It actually

does work out very well. And the Broncos were excellent defensively last year, so they're

none of the world's teams. Again, they don't need Russ to be like Russell five years ago.

They need Russ to be an above replacement level quarterback. So that's the optimistic

scenario. I'm not sure that I buy it. And I say this as, I like Russell Wilson. I like

the-- I think we all three of us like the trade at the time. It's not like any of us

predicted that this was going to come out.

But you just didn't like a lot of what you're seeing.

Judy's already hurt.

And again, I think that I could see an optimistic scenario

if Wilson had all of his weapons at a good offensive line.

He does not have that.

So I think one thing we could definitely

say is that Wilson is not at the stage of his career

where he's going to win games by--

he's still probably good enough to win

with a lot of surrounding talent.

I'm not sure that he has that, unless Judy comes back

really quickly. You can't like the fact that already the skill talent's getting hurt. And

it's going to be really quick before, you know, pain may just decide it's over. And

you can see him pulling the plug. And I'll tell you, if Stidham comes in, this team could

finish below the Raiders. I mean, he is awful. So, you know, it's yeah, so it's, it's, you

know, I think that this team has more upside than some of the dregs teams in this conference,

because, again, Wilson was a pretty good quarterback just one season ago. Payton is a legitimately

elite coach, and it's a good defense. I, myself, I tend to take them more so-- I think they'll be above the very bottom tier, but I see this as like a six or seven win team with some-- and again, if they just give up on Wilson, he gets hurt, it's going to be just dreadful.

- Right, yeah, I don't have anything to disagree with about that.

- Yeah, no, I think Wilson's finished and I think it's kind of amazing how quickly he declined.

You don't see that much in quarterbacks really.

- Especially a mobile, I think it's pretty obvious that Matt Ryan was not gonna age well.

I would have thought that, and I'm not, again, nobody should answer it, but I would be surprised, I would surprisingly want that quickly.

I would have expected Ross to be pretty good was like 30s. I mean, the mobility slip, right? He's just not as fast. He used to be in, it really made a huge difference. Yeah. You know, cause I also, also the ego, like, I mean, that was a huge part of the Broncos last year is Russell Wilson's ego was like a 54th player on the team. And you know, I know Peyton's not going to put up with that crap and, and then that may help, but, but I don't know. He's likely to be more, not only will he have a better coach, he's likely to be more coachable. That's one thing. I do think that that's, you know, either he will be a better teammate or like pain won't play him. So, so I do think that will help. So I think, I think you're

going to see, I don't think he'll be as bad as he was last year if he was healthy, but you know,

I just don't, I don't see him being good enough to, for that team to be competitive in this conference.

This has been the first half of the Lawyers, Guns and Money,

2023 NFL preview. Come back on Sunday for the next edition where we talk about the

National Football Conference.

Thank you again for listening to the Lawyers, Guns, and Money podcast.

We would like to thank Elizabeth Nelson of the Paranoid Style for supplying, as our intro and outro music, I'd Bet My Lands and Titles, a track on the album for executive meeting.

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