NFL 2025-26 Season

Top Teams Analytical Report

Defense • O-Line • Special Teams • Coaching • Depth • Consistency

Now includes: Defensive Formation Diagrams + Chiefs 2025 Collapse Deep Dive

Teams: Denver Broncos | Seattle Seahawks | New England Patriots | Chicago Bears | LA Chargers | Buffalo Bills | Kansas City Chiefs*

* Chiefs included despite missing playoffs (first time since 2015)

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Executive Summary

The 2025-26 NFL season produced a pair of 14-3 powerhouses — the Denver Broncos (AFC) and Seattle Seahawks (NFC) — as the undisputed class of their conferences. The Kansas City Chiefs' stunning descent to 6-11, and a first playoff miss since 2015, reshaped the AFC landscape and opened the door for fresh contenders in New England, Los Angeles, and Buffalo.

This report evaluates all seven teams across six dimensions: Defensive Scheme, Offensive Line Strength, Special Teams, Coaching Staff Quality, Roster Depth, and Season Consistency. It also includes defensive formation diagrams and a dedicated Chiefs collapse post-mortem.

Summary Scorecard

Team	Defense	O-Line	Sp. Teams	Coaching	Depth	Consistency
Denver Broncos 14-3, AFC #1 Seed	Elite	Elite	Average	Elite	Strong	Elite
Seattle Seahawks 14-3, NFC #1 Seed	Strong	Above Avg	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong
New England Patriots AFC #2 Seed	Strong	Above Avg	Average	Above Avg	Average	Above Avg
Chicago Bears NFC #2 Seed	Above Avg	Above Avg	Average	Above Avg	Average	Average
Los Angeles Chargers AFC #5 Seed	Above Avg	Strong	Average	Above Avg	Strong	Above Avg
Buffalo Bills AFC Wild Card	Average	Strong	Average	Strong	Average	Average
Kansas City Chiefs 6-11, Missed Playoffs	Above Avg	Below Avg	Average	Elite	Below Avg	Below Avg

Key Findings

Denver Broncos: The most complete team in football. The NFL's #1 offensive line (league-low 6 sacks) combined with a top-3 defense and Sean Payton's elite coaching makes them the Super Bowl favorite.

Seattle Seahawks: The NFC's best team. Mike Macdonald's pressure-without-blitzing defense and a top-3 special teams unit make Seattle a true threat. The question mark is whether Sam Darnold can perform at this level in the Super Bowl.

Kansas City Chiefs: A cautionary tale. Despite Andy Reid and Steve Spagnuolo remaining elite, a depleted receiver corps, unstable O-line, and broken run game doomed Mahomes. The dynasty is paused, not ended. (See full Chiefs deep-dive section.)

Denver Broncos

AFC #1 Seed | 14-3 | HC: Sean Payton | DC: Vance Joseph

Defensive Scheme	Multiple 3-4 base. Features elite press-man and zone coverage anchored by CB Pat Surtain II and S Talanoa Hufanga. Finished 2nd in yards allowed, 3rd in points. Championship-caliber pass rush without excessive blitzing.
O-Line Strength	#1 in the NFL by PFF — league-low 6 sacks allowed (89.5 PFF pass-blocking efficiency). LT Garett Bolles 90.8 PFF grade, highest among all tackles. Same starting five returned for continuity.
Special Teams	Middle of the pack (~12th). Reliable but not a weapon. No significant standout units.
Coaching Staff	Sean Payton brings championship pedigree and elite game-planning. Vance Joseph's defense statistically among the NFL's best. Strong coordinated staff with clear identity.
Depth & Roster	Deep defensive front with quality rotation. Adequate but not flashy offensive weapons. Depth behind QB Bo Nix a mild concern. Overall Strong rating — few drop-offs at key positions.
Consistency	Most consistent team in the AFC — wire-to-wire top seed. Won 14 games including tough divisional matchups. No significant mid-season slumps. True elite-tier consistency.

Seattle Seahawks

NFC #1 Seed | 14-3 | HC: Mike Macdonald | DC: Mike Macdonald (dual role)

Defensive Scheme	Pressure-heavy 4-2-5. Posted 26.2% pressure rate with blitz rate under 20% — one of only two top-10 pressure teams to do so. DL pass-rush win rate 7th in NFL (41%). Strong secondary limits elite WRs.
O-Line Strength	Improved significantly under new OL coach John Benton. Ranked approximately 10th-14th. QB Sam Darnold got cleaner pockets; run blocking solid for Kenneth Walker III.
Special Teams	Ranked 3rd in the NFL. Top-3 in field position after kickoffs and opponent net-punt average. Rashid Shaheed (trade deadline) was a key returner after Tory Horton's injury.
Coaching Staff	Mike Macdonald among the fastest-rising coaches in the NFL. Defensive acumen widely praised. Offensive staff pivoted well around Darnold. Excellent in-game adjustments.
Depth & Roster	Strong defensive depth. Offensive skill positions solid (Walker III, Smith-Njigba, Shaheed). QB depth behind Darnold a relative concern.
Consistency	Dominant throughout — locked up NFC #1 seed with a late-season win over the 49ers. Very few bad performances. Consistent execution on both sides.

New England Patriots

AFC #2 Seed | HC: Mike Vrabel | OC: Josh McDaniels

Defensive Scheme	Multiple base scheme. Outstanding in playoffs — disciplined gap control, strong linebacker play, good secondary disguise. Physical, assignment-sound football. Not exotic, but highly effective.
O-Line Strength	~12th — improving. Morgan Moses (RT), Garrett Bradbury (C), and Will Campbell (top draft pick) boosted the unit. Mike Onwenu moved inside. 6th-longest time to pressure (2.55 sec). Cole Strange remains a weak link.
Special Teams	16th overall. Marcus Jones bright spot: 17.3 yds/punt return, 2 TDs. Opponent net punt #1 in NFL. Otherwise average to below average.
Coaching Staff	Mike Vrabel's debut: 14 wins — remarkable. McDaniels' downhill gap-heavy run game complements Maye. Championship-experienced staff calibrated around developing a franchise QB.
Depth & Roster	Average depth — Drake Maye's health is everything. Receiver corps lacks a true #1. Defensive depth serviceable. A roster still building.
Consistency	Above average — won the division, held the Chargers to 3 points in playoffs. Some inconsistent regular-season offensive outings.

Chicago Bears

NFC #2 Seed | HC: Ben Johnson | 14-win debut season

Defensive Scheme	4-3 base with zone-heavy coverage. Competent unit — held up well enough to win the NFC North. Not elite but disciplined. Defensive coordinator piece still proving itself.
O-Line Strength	Significantly upgraded: Joe Thuney (LG), Drew Dalman (C), Jonah Jackson acquisitions. Interior rebuild was the right priority. ~11th-15th. Enabled the offense to function and the QB to operate comfortably.
Special Teams	Around 18th-22nd. Nothing notable positive or negative. Inconsistent return game.
Coaching Staff	Ben Johnson's arrival from Detroit was the offseason's biggest splash. Innovative, QB-friendly offensive system. 14-win debut validated the hire. DC staff less proven.
Depth & Roster	Average depth — coaching and offense carried this team. Defensive depth middling. Receiver weapons limited. A maturing roster.
Consistency	Some inconsistency — late regular-season loss to Lions (19-16) complicated seeding. Wild Card: erased 18-point deficit to beat the Packers. Exciting but not always reliable.

Los Angeles Chargers

AFC #5 Seed | HC: Jim Harbaugh | DC: Jesse Minter

Defensive Scheme	Multiple scheme under Jesse Minter — aggressive with man coverage tendencies. 9th in points allowed. Capable of disrupting offenses with a strong front seven. Above average overall.
O-Line Strength	Ranked #5-7 in the NFL — a genuine strength. Strong balance of pass protection and run blocking. Justin Herbert has benefited from improved pocket time in the Harbaugh era.
Special Teams	~15th-19th. Cameron Dicker (K) reliable. Return game adequate. Not a factor in wins or losses.
Coaching Staff	Jim Harbaugh transformed the culture immediately. Jesse Minter's scheme solid. Strong offensive structure around Herbert. Second-year continuity could make this staff even more dangerous.
Depth & Roster	Strong depth, especially on offense. Herbert provides an automatic floor. Younger receiver weapons developing. Defensive depth adequate.
Consistency	Above average. Strategically rested starters in Week 18 — organizational discipline. Won the game that eliminated the Chiefs from playoff contention.

Buffalo Bills

AFC Wild Card | HC: Sean McDermott | DC: Bobby Babich

Defensive Scheme	3-4 base under Bobby Babich. Finished 12th in scoring defense. Lacks elite pass rushers. Relies on secondary and scheme to compensate. Teams have had success running and throwing vs. Buffalo's front.
O-Line Strength	Ranked #5 in the NFL — a significant strength. Dion Dawkins at LT anchors an above-average unit. Gave Josh Allen time and opened running lanes for James Cook (NFL rushing champion).
Special Teams	~15th-20th. Tyler Bass reliable inside 50 yds. Return coverage adequate. Not a differentiating unit.
Coaching Staff	Sean McDermott is an experienced playoff coach. Josh Allen elevates any coaching staff. OC must maximize a receiving corps without a true #1 WR.
Depth & Roster	Average overall depth. No true #1 WR to complement Allen. James Cook strong on the ground. Defensive depth falls off quickly after starters.
Consistency	Mixed — dangerous in any game with Allen but has had stalled offensive performances. A team capable of beating anyone, but not reliably dominant.

Defensive Scheme Diagrams

The following diagrams illustrate the base defensive formations used by four of the seven teams analyzed. Each shows alignment relative to a generic offensive pro set (line of scrimmage at center). These are base packages — all teams employ multiple sub-packages and personnel groupings.
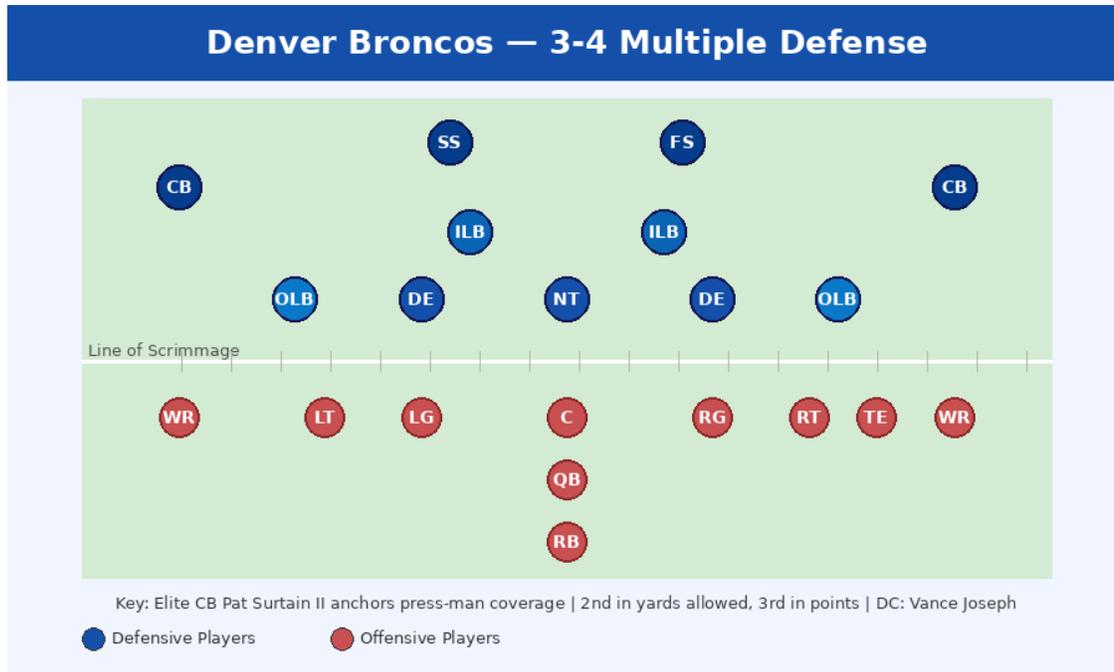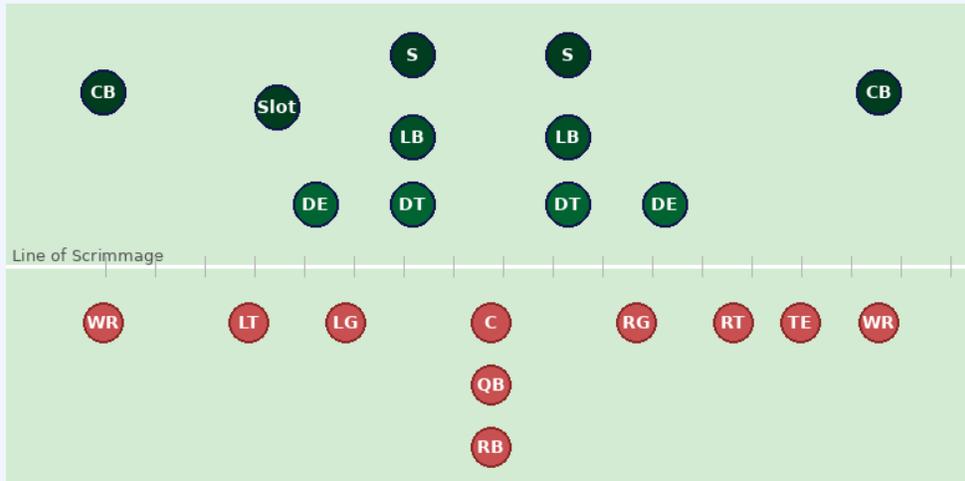
Denver Broncos — 3-4 Multiple Defense

Fig 1: Denver's 3-4 base. OLBs serve as edge rushers; CBs play press-man (Surtain II on left). ILBs provide second-level run fit.

Seattle Seahawks — 4-2-5 Pressure Scheme

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26.2% pressure rate with <20% blitz — one of only 2 such teams in NFL | 7th DL pass-rush win rate (41%) | HC Macdonald

● Defensive Players ● Offensive Players

Fig 2: Seattle's 4-2-5 nickel base. Five defensive backs on the field by default. DL generates 26.2% pressure rate without blitzing — among the NFL's most innovative fronts.

Kansas City Chiefs — 4-3 Multiple (Spagnuolo)

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Highest Cover-0 rate in NFL (11%) | Zone-leaning: Cover 2 (22%), Cover 3 (23%) | Ranked 6th in points allowed despite 6-11 record

● Defensive Players ● Offensive Players

Fig 3: Chiefs' 4-3 Multiple. Known for Cover-0 aggression (highest rate in NFL at 11%), exotic corner blitzes, and zone-leaning coverage. Chris Jones as interior DT is the anchor.

Buffalo Bills — 3-4 Base Defense

Buffalo Bills — 3-4 Base Defense

SS   FS

CB   CB

ILB   ILB

OLB   DE   NT   DE   OLB

Line of Scrimmage

WR   LT   LG   C   RG   RT   TE   WR

QB

RB

12th in scoring defense | Lacks elite pass rush | Secondary must compensate | DC: Bobby Babich

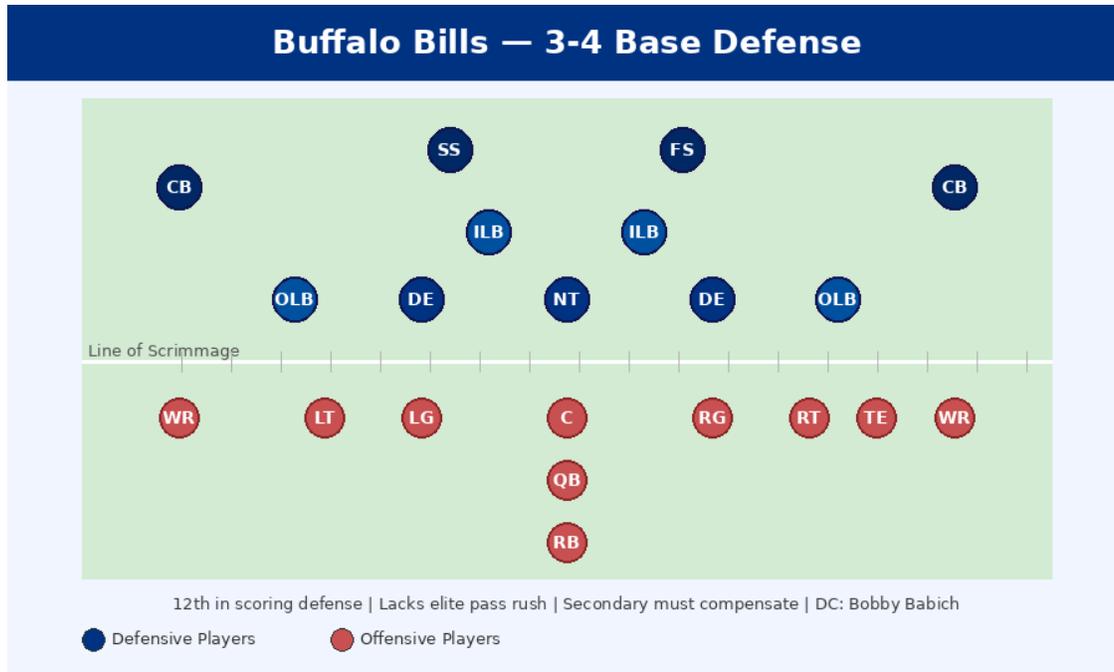● Defensive Players   ● Offensive Players

Fig 4: Bills' 3-4 base. Finished 12th in scoring defense — adequate but lacking elite pass rush. Secondary coverage must compensate for front-seven limitations.

Note on Chicago Bears and New England Patriots: Both run multiple base sets with significant sub-package usage. The Bears run a 4-3 zone-leaning scheme under Ben Johnson's defensive staff; the Patriots employ a disguise-heavy multiple scheme under Vrabel that prioritizes gap assignments and coverage flexibility.

Deep Dive: What Went Wrong with the Kansas City Chiefs in 2025?

The Kansas City Chiefs' collapse from back-to-back Super Bowl champions to a 6-11 also-ran is one of the most jarring single-season falls in recent NFL history. Their SRS of 1.92 (12th in the league) and expected W-L of 9.5-7.5 reveals the painful truth: this was not a bad team. It was a talented team destroyed by a cascade of interconnected failures. Below is a systematic breakdown of every major factor.

The Perfect Storm: Root Causes

1. Receiver Suspension + Injuries (Games 1-6)	WR1 Rashee Rice served a 6-game suspension to start the season. WR Xavier Worthy dislocated his shoulder on the opening drive of Week 1. Mahomes was essentially without his top two pass-catchers for the first quarter of the season — the team went under .500 in those weeks and never fully recovered.
2. No True X Receiver	The Chiefs built their receiving corps around speed (Hollywood Brown, Tyquan Thornton, Xavier Worthy) but lacked a physical X receiver who could win contested catches or beat man coverage consistently. Deep passes outside the numbers: 12 of 40 completions, 0 touchdowns, 3 INTs. No receiver cracked 600 yards — Travis Kelce (851 yds) was the only skill player near 600.
3. Running Back Decline	Isiah Pacheco, still recovering from a 2024 fractured fibula, averaged just 3.9 ypc on 118 carries. Kareem Hunt (3.8 ypc) was admirable but capped at 7-8 yards per carry; no explosive runs. Patrick Mahomes ranked 2nd on the team in rushing yards with 407. The run game was so ineffective that defenses had no reason to stack the box, compounding the passing issues.
4. O-Line Injuries & Instability	LT Josh Simmons missed significant time with wrist issues; when healthy, he flashed top-5 potential. LG Kingsley Suamataia had growing pains in his interior role. The revolving door at right tackle was never resolved. Despite having elite interior linemen (Creed Humphrey — 1st-team All-Pro; Trey Smith), the bookend tackles caused Mahomes to face more pressure than in any prior year.
5. Offensive Scheme Problems (OC Matt Nagy)	For the third consecutive season, the Chiefs' offense ranked 20th in points per game and 17th in yards per game. Critics pointed to: puzzling personnel choices (Smith-Schuster over Thornton), predictable run-pass options, inability to scheme receivers open, and poor situational playcalling (running out of shotgun on 2nd-and-long). The offense had no identity.
6. Mahomes Execution Errors	Mahomes — as acknowledged — made pivotal mistakes in close losses. Week 11 vs. Denver: missed Worthy, Gray, and Thornton all open on consecutive plays en route to a 3-point loss. Week 14 vs. Houston: missed windows that could have changed the game. Without his superhuman scrambling (407 rushing yards), the offense would have been historically poor.
7. Defensive Pass Rush Collapse	Despite Spagnuolo's elite scheme, the Chiefs went 11 consecutive quarters without a sack at one point mid-season. Chris Jones was the only consistent threat; the surrounding cast couldn't generate pressure. This collapsed the entire defensive structure — corners and safeties were perpetually in "cover forever" situations.
8. Special Teams Regression	Harrison Butker uncharacteristically missed several kicks in September and October — the Chiefs lost two early games by a combined 9 points. Return teams never scored a single touchdown. Kicker misses + no return game explosiveness cost them 2+ wins early when the season's trajectory was still salvageable.

| 9. The Talent-Result Gap | SRS of 1.92 (12th in NFL) with an expected W-L of 9.5-7.5 vs. actual 6-11 shows the Chiefs significantly underperformed their talent. Their point differential was not as catastrophic as their record. This underperformance reflects the compounding effect of bad luck, injuries, and execution errors — all occurring simultaneously. |

Season Timeline: How the Dynasty Derailed

- **Weeks 1-4:** Worthy injured Wk1, Rice suspended. Chiefs go 1-3 with makeshift passing game.
- **Weeks 5-10:** Rice returns; team claws back to respectability. Still inconsistent OL play.
- **Week 11:** Loss to Denver (22-19): Mahomes misses open receivers on opening drive; Chiefs now 4-7.
- **Week 12:** Thanksgiving loss to Dallas (31-28): dropped passes, O-line injuries, 11-game sack drought exposed.
- **Week 14:** Loss to Houston (20-10): playoff hopes effectively over. Chris Jones was outstanding; everyone else failed.
- **Week 15:** Eliminated from playoff contention by Chargers — first time since 2015.
- **Wks 16-17:** Final games played without Mahomes (injury). Team fails to reach 200 yards of offense in either game. 1 offensive TD total.

The Defense That Deserved Better

While the offense cratered, Steve Spagnuolo's defense was genuinely good — 6th in points allowed, with Nick Bolton recording 154 tackles and Chris Jones remaining an elite disruptor. The defense was fundamentally let down by an offense that consistently gave opponents short fields and kept the defense on the field too long.

Key Stats That Tell the Story

Metric	Chiefs 2025	Context
Actual Record	6-11 (3rd, AFC West)	First non-playoff season since 2014
Expected W-L (SRS)	9.5-7.5	Underperformed by ~3.5 wins
Points Per Game (Off)	21.3 (21st)	3rd straight yr ranked 20th+ on offense
No. of WRs with 600+ yds	0 (Travis Kelce: 851 yds)	Kelce was the lone productive skill player
Deep Pass Outside Numbers	12/40, 0 TD, 3 INT	Fatal flaw: no physical X receiver
Consecutive Scoreless Sack Qtrs	11 quarters	Defensive line fully exposed without help
Mahomes Rushing Yds	407 (2nd on team)	Entire team needed him to create with legs
Harrison Butker Missed FGs	Multiple (early season)	Cost Chiefs ~2 wins in first month

Metric	Chiefs 2025	Context
Defense Points Allowed Rank	6th in NFL	Defense was blameless — offense was the issue

The Road Back: 2026 Offseason Priorities

The Chiefs are NOT a dynasty in collapse — they are a dynasty on pause. The core infrastructure (Mahomes, Reid, Spagnuolo, Humphrey, Jones, Bolton, Surtain-adjacent secondary) remains elite. The 2026 offseason has one mandate:

- Sign a physical X receiver who can win in man coverage and finish contested catches — the #1 priority.
- Resolve the right tackle position with a reliable starter (not a rotation).
- Address the running back room — add an explosive every-down back (Breece Hall type).
- Keep Josh Simmons healthy — when he played, he was a top-5 LT.
- Revisit offensive scheme identity under Matt Nagy or consider a coordinator change.
- Rebuild pass rush depth around Chris Jones — the edge rusher market must be addressed.

Bottom Line: The Chiefs' 2025 collapse was the product of a perfect storm — suspension + injuries at receiver, an unstable offensive line, a broken run game, and an offensive scheme without identity. The defense held its own all year. With Andy Reid, Patrick Mahomes, and Spagnuolo intact, Kansas City is one productive offseason away from being a legitimate contender in 2026.

Comparative Analysis & Outlook

Offensive Line Rankings

Rank	Team	PFF Grade	Highlight
1	Denver Broncos	89.5 (Pass Block)	League-low 6 sacks; Bolles 90.8 grade (best tackle)
2-3	Los Angeles Chargers	Strong	Balanced pass/run; key to Herbert's success
4-5	Buffalo Bills	Strong	Dion Dawkins anchors; gave James Cook running room
6-7	Chicago Bears	Above Avg	Interior rebuilt with Thuney, Dalman, Jackson
10-14	Seattle Seahawks	Above Avg	Significant improvement; Benton's first year effective
12-15	New England Patriots	Above Avg	Campbell (69.1 PFF) strong as rookie; Moses solid
22-26	Kansas City Chiefs	Below Avg	Injuries decimated the unit; Mahomes under pressure all year

Coaching Staff Power Rankings

1. Andy Reid (KC Chiefs) — The GOAT coach. 5 Super Bowl appearances, 3 championships. 2025 was roster failure, not coaching failure.

2. Sean Payton (Denver Broncos) — Championship pedigree transforming Denver into an AFC powerhouse.

3. Mike Macdonald (Seattle Seahawks) — Best young head coach in the NFL. Defensive innovations put Seattle at NFC #1.

4. Jim Harbaugh (LA Chargers) — Immediate culture shift. Turned Herbert's talent into a playoff team with identity.

5. Mike Vrabel (New England Patriots) — 14 wins in year 1 — among the best coaching debuts in recent memory.

6. Ben Johnson (Chicago Bears) — Most hyped HC hire delivered — 14 wins in debut. DC piece still developing.

7. Sean McDermott (Buffalo Bills) — Experienced coach who hasn't broken through to a Super Bowl with Allen. Defense underperformed.

Super Bowl LX Outlook

Denver Broncos enter the postseason as the most complete team in football — elite on both sides of the ball, with the NFL's best O-line and a defense that held opponents to the 3rd-fewest points in the league.

Seattle Seahawks are the NFC's most dangerous team. Mike Macdonald's defense is genuinely innovative, and special teams provide real field-position advantages. Sam Darnold is the only meaningful question mark.

The Kansas City Chiefs story is the most instructive of the season: even the greatest coaches and quarterbacks cannot overcome a collapsed offensive line, a receiver corps with no physical X-receiver, and a broken run game. The dynasty is not over — it is interrupted.

Super Bowl LX Prediction: Denver Broncos vs. Seattle Seahawks. Denver's superior O-line and pass defense provides a slight edge, but Mike Macdonald's Seahawks are the most capable of an upset. Expect a low-scoring, defensively driven game.