

Daily

# Sports

## NFL risers and fallers Week 2

by Jorge Eckardt  
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Week 2 of the NFL was horrible for one reason and one reason alone — everyone got hurt. The Colts lost Malik Hooker for the season. The Broncos lost Courtland Sutton for the season. The 49ers lost Nick Bosa for the season. The Giants lost Saquon Barkley for the season. And those are just some of the season-ending ones.

Christian McCaffery is going to miss an extended period of time with an ankle injury. Drew Lock is going to miss some time with a shoulder injury after already losing Sutton, his WR1.

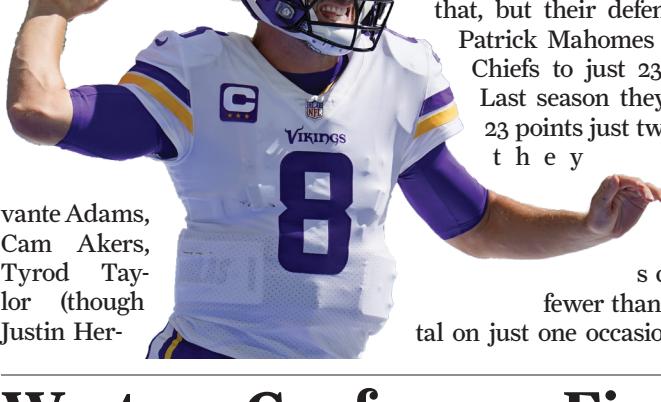
Barkley wasn't even the only piece the Giants lost, losing their WR1 in Sterling Shepard. Even with Shepard added into the mix, the Giants didn't even have the worst week for injuries; that goes to the 49ers. Not only did they lose Bosa, but they also suffered injuries with Jimmy Garoppolo, Raheem Mostert and Solomon Thomas.

There were many more players to hit the injury report, including

Byron

Jones,

Da-



vante Adams, Cam Akers, Tyrod Taylor (though Justin Her-

bert looked great), Anthony Barr and Connor McGovern. It was a bad week for most teams, and a disastrous one for a handful.

So for this week's edition of risers and fallers, we're going to base it solely on performance. Obviously the 49ers have a serious problem. Obviously the Giants have to remake their entire offense. Obviously the Panthers have to do the same. For these reasons, this ranking is going to be based on play alone.

### Riser: Los Angeles Chargers

Yes, the Chargers lost 23-20 to the Kansas City Chiefs on Sunday, but that's just it — they only lost 23-20. Not only that, but the Chiefs needed overtime to put them away. Even though they lost, this was still an overwhelmingly positive game for the Bolts. After starting QB Tyrod Taylor was scratched minutes before the game, rookie Herbert had to step in against the undisputed best team in football, and he killed it. I'd argue he looked better than Joe Burrow has in either of his first two starts. Herbert completed 22 of his 33 pass attempts for 311 yards while throwing one touchdown and one interception, and that was simply a result of an attempt to do too much, which overtime fixed on its own. It was simply a rookie mistake. The Chargers have found their guy. Not only that, but their defense held

Patrick Mahomes and the Chiefs to just 23 points. Last season they scored 23 points just twice, and they

scored fewer than that total on just one occasion. Who

knows, if they stick with Herbert, maybe they can make some noise.

### Faller: Atlanta Falcons

I think we all saw this

one coming.

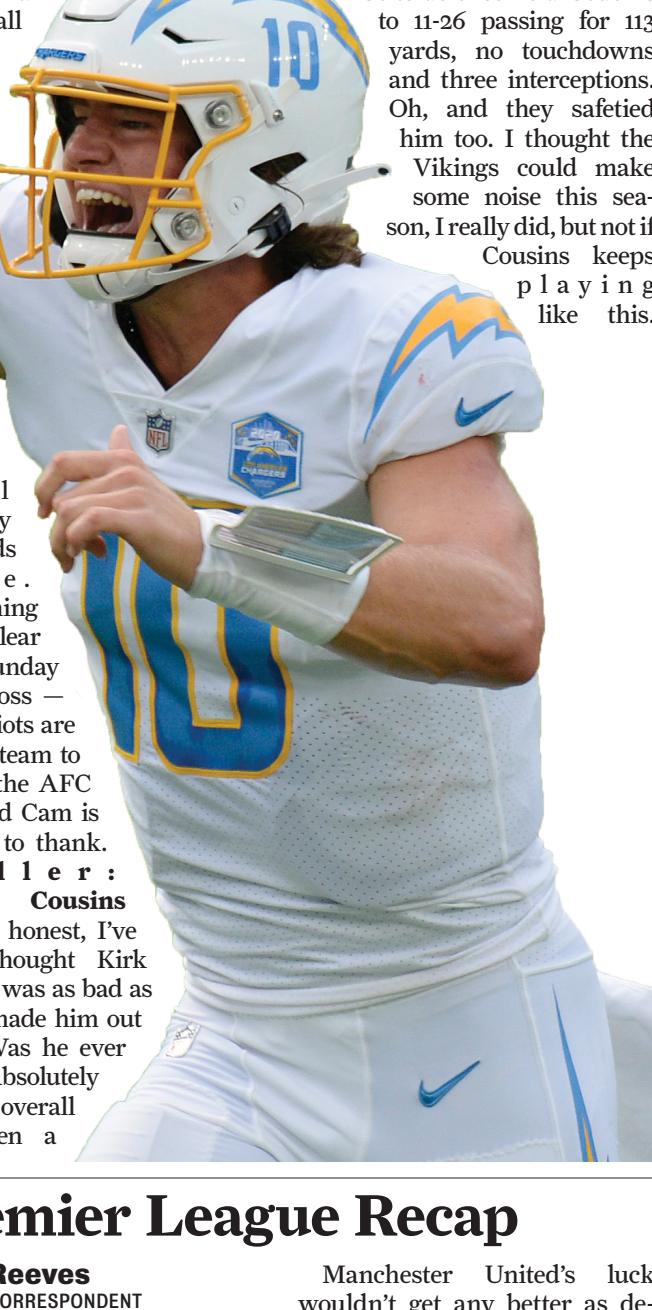
At one point in the game, the Falcons were leading the Cowboys 20-0. At the half, they were up 29-10. By the time the game ended, they put up 39 points. The only problem was the Cowboys put up 40. Matt Ryan threw for 273 yards and four touchdowns without turning the ball over once. In fact, no one on the Falcons turned the ball over and they forced three of their own. Per Elias Sports Bureau, the Falcons were the only team in NFL history to ever lose a game where they scored 39 or more points with no turnovers. Up until now, those teams were 440-0. For some reason, Dan Quinn and the Falcons just refuse to close out the game when they have big leads. If you're a Falcons fan, this one hurts. Probably not as much as another one that shall remain nameless, but it still hurts. Now, on that note, let's talk about the Patriots.

### Riser: Cam Newton

Cam is back. Yes, the Patriots lost, but Cam Newton looked about as good as ever. He finished the game just three yards shy of a 400-yard passing game, threw one touchdown and one admit-

tedly bad pick. He was also effective on the ground, rushing for 47 yards on 11 attempts and reaching the endzone twice. He battled against a should-be-strong defense in the Seahawks all game long when it was evident they were rarely going to run the ball unless Cam took it himself. He and Julian Edelman picked apart Jamal Adams all game.

He got Dam-



Byrd and N'Keal Harry 72 yards a piece. One thing was clear from Sunday night's loss — the Patriots are still the team to beat in the AFC East, and Cam is the one to thank.

### Faller: Kirk Cousins

I'll be honest, I've never thought Kirk Cousins was as bad as people made him out to be. Was he ever elite? Absolutely not, but overall he's been a

## Western Conference Finals Recap: Game 2

by Karthik Iyer  
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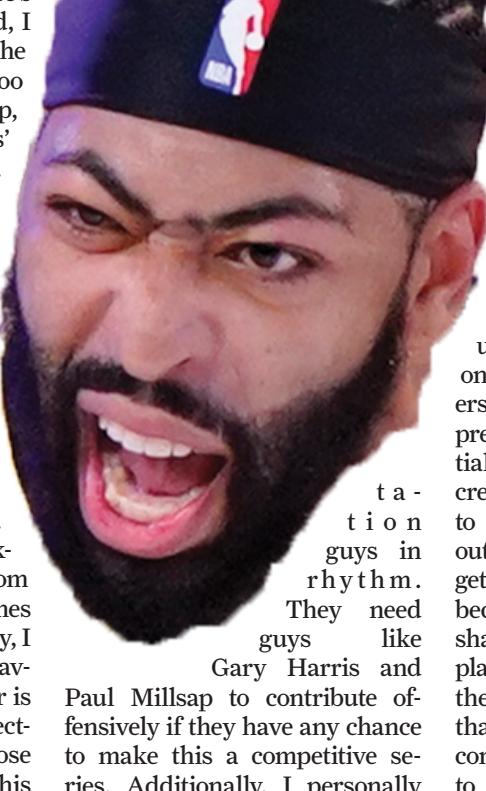
First things first, Anthony Davis shouting "Kobe" as the ball swished for a game winner was poetry in motion. I could not think of a better way to pay respect to the late, great Kobe Bryant, whom the 2020 season has been dedicated to. The purple and gold seem to be on a mission this year and are now six wins away from capturing the franchise's 17th title. With that being said, I have three takeaways from the game, as I believe it is a little too early to call the series a sweep, especially given the Nuggets' history in this year's playoffs.

First, the Nuggets have to turn up the ball pressure on the Lakers on the perimeter. While this is much easier said than done, it is the only chance they have of limiting Davis. Nobody truly matches up with Davis on the Nuggets. The best way the Nuggets can check him is to make him work for his touches and not let him get deep in the post. They have to force the Lakers to settle for jump shots from guys not named LeBron James and Anthony Davis. Personally, I think the defensive switch of having Miles Plumlee on the floor is working as well as can be expected, but someone needs to close out on Davis' jump shots. This will allow Nikola Jokic to secure more rebounds in the paint and limit the Lakers' second-chance

points and easy tip-in attempts.

Next, the Nuggets need to get back to being the balanced team they have been all year. The Lakers are keying in heavily on Jamal Murry and Jokic. This means they need to distribute the ball early and

late.



at

guys in

rhythm.

They need

guys like

Gary Harris and

Paul Millsap to contribute offensively if they have any chance to make this a competitive series.

Additionally, I personally believe Michael Porter Jr. is being underutilized in the offense.

He has the skillset to draw de-

fenders toward him, providing more space for Murry and Jokic.

I know that sounds picky, but the Nuggets were one defensive stop or a few cheap points here and there from stealing a win in Game 2. Every mistake hurts against a team with two of the league's top-five players.

My last takeaway is that pace might be the most important factor in this series, and that game tempo is dictated by two players: Jokic and LeBron. Jokic and the Nuggets are always looking to throw fast outlet passes after securing rebounds and pushing the pace. They excel in the open floor with space to shoot. While the Lakers are also formidable on the fast break, they prefer a more methodical approach to their offense, which better utilizes their size advantage on the interior. Ideally, the Lakers want to have enough of a post presence to tire out Jokic, potentially get him in foul trouble and create easier shot opportunities to make up for their not-great outside shooting. The Lakers can get away with playing this way because LeBron, now without a shadow of a doubt, is still the best player in the league. He initiates the offense and has such gravity that he forces the Nuggets, who constantly switch on defense, to eventually make mistakes.

Don't let a 2-0 series lead fool you, this series is far from over. The Nuggets have earned that respect.

## Premier League Recap

by Ty Reeves

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The Premier League offered fans around the world exciting football this past weekend.

Tottenham Hotspur thrashed Southampton away from home while Arsenal stood strong against West Ham at the Emirates. Liverpool managed to beat a crippled Chelsea and Wilfred Zaha and Crystal Palace shocked Manchester United at Old Trafford.

### Crystal Palace: 3 Manchester United: 1

On the back of

Wilfred Zaha,

Crystal Palace

put three goals

in the back of

the net against

Manchester

United. The

Red Devils

controlled the game

having 76% of the

possession during

the match. However, it

was Palace who made

the most of their opportuni-

ties during the game. Palace got

off to a quick start, scoring in

the first 10 minutes to take a 1-0

lead against United. The move

started when midfielder Jeffrey Schlupp beat the United de-

fender and played a ball across

the face of the goal. The cross

was met by midfielder Andros

Townsend as he slotted the ball

into the bottom corner of the net.

Manchester United's luck

wouldn't get any better as de-

fender Victor Lindelof was

called for a handball in his pen-

alty box, resulting in a penalty

kick for Palace. Striker Jordan

Ayew stepped up to take the

penalty for Palace. His shot was

then saved by United keeper Da-

vid De Gea. However, after being

checked by the video assistant

referee (VAR), De Gea was called

for leaving his line before the

shot was kicked, meaning

Palace would be awarded

another penalty kick. Zaha then stepped

up and slotted the ball away to give

Palace a 2-0 lead.

Manchester United had a glimmer of hope in the

80th minute when substi-

tute Donny Van De Beek

brought the score to 2-1. Mo-

ments later, in the

84th minute, Zaha put the game

out of reach for Manchester

United when he blasted the ball

into the bottom left corner to give

Palace a 3-1 lead. That's

how the game would end as

Zaha, the former Manchester

United player, proved to be the Red Devils' kryptonite.

See SPURS, p. 11

### WHAT TO KEEP AN EYE ON THIS WEEK

**Games we're watching this week**



Lakers



Nuggets

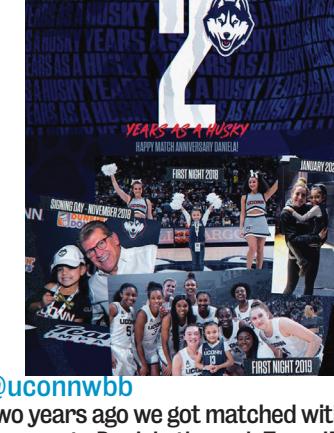
**Teams we're paying attention to**



Nikola Jokic

**Athletes we're paying attention to**

### INSTAGRAM OF THE DAY



@uconnwbb  
Two years ago we got matched with our best teammate Daniela through Team IMPACT! We love having you as a Husky, Daniela!

### TWEETS OF THE DAY

nicole esther

@njrealtonic

The disservice the Jets have done to Sam Darnold cannot be overstated.

ryan cordell stan squad

@whutyearisit

genuinely distressed jake won't be three-peating. no one hmu

Frankie Muniz

@frankiemuniz

Pain.

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# Gilson's Sports Guide: The return of Aaron Rodgers

by Conner Gilson

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On April 23, 2020, the Green Bay Packers moved up four spots to select QB Jordan Love with the 26th overall pick in the draft. And while that move was hated by fans at the time, now almost five months later it doesn't look so bad. This is by no means because of Jordan Love — who didn't do anything to prove his worth as a first rounder in training camp — but because the pick has given Aaron Rodgers something to prove. And when people begin to question Rodgers, you do not want to be on the other side of the ball. Let's look at a little history.

In 2013, Rodgers fractured his collarbone in Green Bay's Week 9 matchup against the Chicago Bears. The team was 6-3 at the time, and Rodgers had thrown for 2500 yards, but just 17 touchdowns with six INTs, both respectively worse than his season averages from years prior. Critics began to question whether he could lead the team with an aging receiving core and lack of running game on a lingering injury, so let's review what happened next season.

In 2014, Rodgers tossed for 4400 yards, 38 TDs and ranked second in the league with a 112.2 passer rating, all while only throwing five picks, his lowest since becoming a starter in 2008. The Packers finished the season 12-4 with Rodgers winning the MVP and made it to the NFC Championship before falling to the one-seeded Seahawks in OT. Fast forward to the past couple of years and we find ourselves in an eerily similar situation.

Since the 2018 season, it's been clear that Green Bay is transitioning to a run-first offense, utilizing their thunder and lightning duo of Aaron Jones and Jamaal Williams. Accordingly, Rodgers' numbers have taken a hit, and the once top-2 QB has fallen down the ranks in fans' eyes to that of a much more



Green Bay Packers' Aaron Rodgers scrambles during the first half of an NFL football game against the Detroit Lions Sunday, Sept. 20, 2020, in Green Bay, Wis. PHOTO BY MORRY GASH/AP

average one, with nothing flashy about him. But if we take a look at the numbers, he has been the same elite QB he was for the past ten years, he just doesn't have the personnel to match.

In 2019 Rodgers put up 4000 yards, 26 TDs and four interceptions. These are very respectable for most QBs, but for one who was just two seasons removed from compiling 4400 yards and a career-best 40 TDs, this was considered subpar. But if we take into account his cast of pass-catchers, keeping in mind Davante missed four games due to injury, those

numbers look a lot better. The reality of the situation is that if Rodgers had even a slightly better supporting cast out wide, his numbers would have been as impressive as ever in 2019.

Tapes from last season show that Rodgers' WR group left almost 1300 yards and 15 touchdowns on the field off of catchable passes. And while we should obviously assume some of these will be dropped, there were too many occasions where a big gain or TD would end in a dropped pass, hurting not only the team but also Rodgers and his numbers. This, compared to

the 750 yards and eight TDs players failed to convert on catchable passes in his 2014 MVP season show how significant his lack of help has been on his numbers. So, let's do some quick math.

If we take half of those dropped passes and pretend they were caught like they often should have been, that puts Rodgers' 2019 numbers at 4642 passing yards and 34 TDs, good enough for third and second respectively in those categories. While I understand this is speculation and we can apply the same to other QBs, the sheer number of passes that

should have been completed make the case that Rodgers still has the stuff. Still, a 13-3 record and a trip to the NFC Championship wasn't enough for fans who now believe him to be well past his prime, so let's check out Rodgers' 2020 early on.

Week 1 brought a matchup against what everyone is calling one of the best defenses in the league in the Minnesota Vikings. Sure, they have a couple of injuries and Yannick Ngakoue still had some things to learn, but overall this defense was still considered among the best. With no fans, Rodgers didn't even bat an eye, completing 32/44 passes for 364 yards and four TDs. He looked pretty quick and about as accurate as we've seen, pinpointing exactly where the ball needed to go and finding his receiver on multiple occasions. And while Week 2 was a little bit more run heavy, we still got a glimpse of what an angry Rodgers can do.

Against the Lions, Green Bay went down 14-3 after the first. Rodgers kept his composure and took over in the second, leading the Packers down the field and finding Jones and Robert Tonyan on consecutive drives to take the lead for the first time in the game, the only time they would have to. The rest of the game was controlled by the run game as Jones finished with 168 rushing yards, but it was clear that when the Pack were down, Rodgers had no trouble stepping up. He'd finish the game with 240 yards and 2 TDs on 30 pass attempts.

So while Rodgers may not have quite the bounce back compared to his jump from 2013 to 2014 and he probably won't walk away with his third MVP, he remains an elite quarterback in the league who can turn it on when needed, even with a depleted supporting cast. He always has and always will be one of the best; fans have just awoken the beast to give him that extra motivation.

# Tottenham, Arsenal and Liverpool all win

SPURS, cont. from p. 12

Tottenham: 5  
Southampton: 2

Tottenham bounced back to their winning ways by defeating Southampton, and it was the Son Heung-min and Harry Kane show. Southampton controlled the match in the first half, but Son and Kane proved to be too much for the squad in the second half.

Southampton started the scoring in the 32nd minute when striker Danny Ings made a beautiful run between the two Spurs defenders. The Englishmen then took a touch and placed the ball past Tottenham keeper Hugo Lloris to give the Saints a 1-0 lead. The Spurs were able to get level in stoppage time for the first half when Kane played a ball to a scampering Son where he finished to level the game at 1-1.

In the second half, the combination of Son and Kane proved to be too much for the Saints in the long run. In the 47th minute, Kane once again threaded the ball through the Southampton defense to the South Korean international as Son slotted the ball into the bottom left corner to give Tottenham a 2-1 lead. The scoring would continue in the 64th minute as Kane yet again found Son running through the defense, passing the ball by the Southampton keeper to extend the lead to 3-1 and completing the hat-trick. Son would again score in the 73rd minute to bring his goal tally to four and put Tottenham in the lead 4-1.

In the opening minutes of the match, West Ham got their first shot on goal as defender Angelo Ogbonna had a wide-open header. Unfortunately for the Hammers, the ball was headed directly at Arsenal keeper Bernd Leno. Arsenal opened up the scoring in the 25th minute as striker Alexandre Lacazette headed the ball into the top of the net to give Arsenal a 1-0 lead. The move started when winger Bukayo Saka threaded the ball through the West Ham defense to captain Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang.

Aubameyang, on his weaker left foot, chipped the ball near the penalty spot, and Lacazette finished the play with a goal. Arsenal: 2 West Ham: 1

Arsenal continued their run of good form, edging West Ham United in the London Derby 2-1. It wasn't a typi-



Liverpool's Sadio Mane scores during the English Premier League soccer match between Chelsea and Liverpool at Stamford Bridge Stadium, Sunday, Sept. 20, 2020. PHOTO BY MICHAEL REGAN, POOL VIA AP

cal Arsenal performance that fans have come accustomed to, but it was enough to get the job done. Even though the Gunners walked away with the win, for a majority of the match, the Hammers were the more threatening side.

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Aubameyang, on his weaker left foot, chipped the ball near the penalty spot, and Lacazette finished the play with a goal.

West Ham leveled the score 1-1 right before half time as the Hammers quickly counter-attacked, leading to a Michail Antonio goal in the 45th minute.

The second half was more of a deadlock as neither team was able to capitalize on any opportunities. In the 66th minute, Antonio had the Hammers' best opportunity to equalize as he headed the ball on goal and struck the post. Arsenal got the go-ahead goal in the 85th minute when Saka found midfielder Danny Ceballos, who slipped between the West Ham defense. Ceballos then played the ball across the box to striker Eddie Nketiah, who tapped the ball into the open net to give the Gunners the lead 2-1. Arsenal would then hold on to win the game 2-1.

Liverpool: 2 Chelsea: 0

Liverpool faced off against Chelsea in what could've been one of the best games of the season. The game didn't live up to

the expectations, as Liverpool won easily and Chelsea's mistakes cost them the game. Both Liverpool and Chelsea came out with similar squads from their previous matches, so on paper it looked to be a very entertaining game.

Chelsea was still missing new signings Thiago Silva and Ben Chilwell, as both players

were left out of the squad.

The first half was very much a back-and-forth contest as neither team was able to get a leg up on the other. Liverpool's first opportunity came in the 19th minute when Roberto Firmino played the ball out wide to Mohammad Salah. The pass drew out Chelsea keeper Kepa Arrizabalaga from the net, exposing the Chelsea goal. Salah then played a ball across the goal and was cleared by defender Andreas Christensen.

Right before half-time, Sadio Mane made a run through the middle of the Chelsea defense. The winger was then tackled

by Christensen, and the defender was given a red card.

Liverpool, up a man, came out and dominated in the second half of play. The scoring started in the 50th minute when Salah and Firmino played a quick one-two and Firmino crossed the ball into the box. The ball was met by Mane as he headed the ball into the back of the net to give the Reds a 1-0 lead. Minutes later, Kepa had the ball at his feet looking for a passing option. The Spaniard then passed the ball right to Mane, and the Senegal International passed the ball into the open goal, giving Liverpool a 2-0 lead. Chelsea then had a chance to get a goal back when striker Timo Werner drew a penalty kick. Chelsea captain Jorginho stepped up to take the penalty. His shot was then saved by Liverpool keeper Allison Becker to keep the Liverpool lead at two. The game ended 2-0 with Liverpool picking up the win.

# Sports

## Photo of the Day | Thread the needle



In this file photo, UConn defeats Iona 80-62 in Gampel Pavilion. The Huskies held the lead for 94% of the contest; their greatest lead was 22 points. Overall, UConn's Josh Carlton scored the most points. PHOTO BY KEVIN LINDSTROM, PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

## DB's Weekly Take: The NFL refused to delay its season. Now the players are paying the price

by Danny Barletta

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Let me begin this piece by saying how happy I am that football is back. Few things give me more enjoyment than a Sunday full of watching the NFL, so for selfish reasons, I'm glad the season started on time. But after witnessing the barrage of injuries that took place during Week 2, I'm starting to think the NFL could have made some different decisions to keep its players safer.

On Sunday, the NFL lost two of its most exciting running backs when Saquon Barkley of the New York Giants went down with a torn ACL and Christian McCaffrey of the Carolina Panthers left his game with an ankle injury. Barkley will be out for the rest of the season, while McCaffrey is expected to miss multiple weeks.

In addition to these two young superstars, other players to go down with injuries on Sunday included Jimmy Garoppolo, Nick Bosa, Solomon Thomas, Raheem Mostert (49ers), Tyrod Taylor (Chargers), Parris Campbell, Malik Hooker (Colts), Davante Adams, Corey Linsley (Packers), Cam Akers, Joe Noteboom (Rams), Drew Lock, Courtland Sutton (Broncos), Byron Jones (Dolphins), Anthony Barr, Mike Boone (Vikings), Tavon Young (Ravens), Breshad Perriman, Chris Hogan, Connor McGovern (Jets), Brandon Scherff (Washington), Brandon Linder (Jaguars), Issac Seumalo (Eagles), Kaleb McGary (Falcons), Chidobe Awuzie (Cowboys), Bruce Irvin (Seahawks), Will Fuller (Texans) and Jonathan Joseph (Titans).

Obviously, football is a contact sport that is full of injuries, but if this seems like an absurdly high number to you for one day, you're not



New York Giants running back Saquon Barkley is helped off the field after being injured against the Chicago Bears during the first half of an NFL football game in Chicago, Sunday, Sept. 20, 2020. PHOTO BY CHARLES REX ARBOGAST/AP

wrong. Watching NFL Red-Zone yesterday, it seemed like Scott Hanson was giving a new injury report every five minutes. This list doesn't even include players like Michael Thomas of the New Orleans Saints or Sterling Shepard of the Giants, who didn't play this week due to previous injuries.

I don't think it's a coincidence that the most injury-plagued week of NFL football I have ever witnessed comes two weeks into a season following a weird offseason schedule due to the coronavirus. There were no offseason team training programs. Players didn't even begin to work out as a team until the beginning of August, and weren't full-on practicing until Aug.

17. In addition, there were no preseason games or joint practices, which I understand are a risk of injury themselves, but still help work the players up to game speed without having to go 150% like they do in games that count.

Do I think a couple of pre-season games and a longer training camp would have prevented all these injuries from happening? Of course not. There are injuries every year. But do I think delaying the season and giving players a little more time to train and prepare would have helped cut down on the sheer volume of injuries we've seen so far? Absolutely.

See NFL, p. 9

## Column: Tottenham, Wales, Golf, Madrid – in that order

by David Sandoval

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It's a great time to be a Spurs fan. On Saturday, Tottenham Hotspur unveiled on social media not one, but two signings: left-back Sergio Reguilón on a five-year deal and the long-awaited return of Gareth Bale on a one-year loan (both from Real Madrid).

Now I must say, as a Spurs fan, it's quite surprising to see chairman Daniel Levy actually open up his checkbook for players of fairly big status like Reguilón and Bale. All jokes aside, these two are exactly who Jose Mourinho needs for his project at Tottenham. Reguilón, to begin with, spent last season on loan at Sevilla, where he won

the Europa League trophy and was named La Liga's left-back of the year. Only costing the Spurs over \$35 million with a buyback clause established by Madrid, the Spaniard will add much-needed depth to Tottenham's defense.

But the main player that everyone was talking about over the weekend was of course Bale. Arriving at White Hart Lane back in the summer of 2007, Gareth Bale made a name for himself and became one of the most prolific players of the Premier League at the time, with 203 appearances, 56 goals and 58 assists; including a remarkable hat-trick against then-champions Inter Milan in 2010 and two PFA Player of the Year awards. In Sept. 2013, the Lilywhites sent

him off for \$110 million to the Spanish capitol, where he would secure multiple trophies. Now, seven years later, he has come full circle back to a different era in the North London club's history.

As I said already, Bale joined the squad but on a season-long loan. However, that loan could be extended an additional year, should all parties agree to the extension and Bale is content with his time at Tottenham. The question is: Will Bale give it his all to seek a second season at Spurs and run out the remainder of his Madrid contract which, funny enough, ends in two years? I say yes, easily.

See MADRID, p. 9

## League of Legends: Worlds is coming!

by Ashton Stansel

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Worlds is coming! On Friday, Sept. 25th, MAD Lions will play INTZ in the opening match of the 2020 League of Legends World Championship.

The first stage of the play-ins, where both groups play a round robin with the rest of the teams in their group, will last from Friday to Monday. The third and fourth place team games are on Tuesday, and the winners of those games will play the second seed of the other group on Wednesday. It's an intense schedule, which could be difficult, especially for less experienced teams.

Saturday will be the most intensive day with seven games scheduled. This is presumably so Sunday and Monday can have just four games and allow for potential tiebreakers. With a broadcast taking place in three different countries, according to Riot, there is some concern about technology issues.

Many fans were upset at the announcement last week that the LPL's English casters will not be participating in Worlds. Since Worlds is in China this year, and the LPL teams have won two World Championships in a row, it seems odd that Riot has made this decision and hasn't provided a reason why.

Travel woes have also plagued teams. PSG Talon will be playing with three substitutes in the play-ins, and LCL's Unicorns of Love were barely able to attend, according to a tweet on Sept. 12.

Since they need to quarantine for two weeks, the team seemingly must've made it into quarantine on or around the 11th or 12th. They do not play day one, which means they really made it at the last possible moment.

The meta at Worlds will also be interesting to see. Since

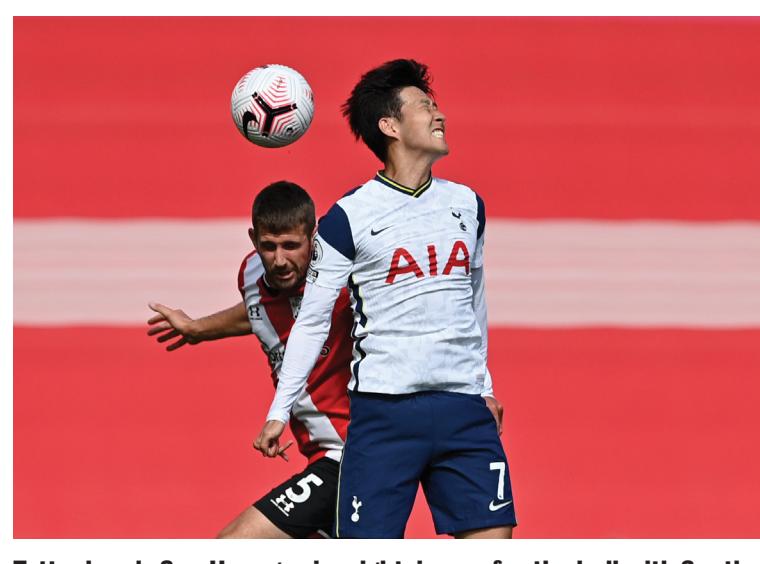
teams have had limited time to play before play-ins, it's very possible the meta might still be extremely fluid. One of the more interesting parts of Worlds is that every year it tends to form its own meta in a combination of each region's contributions.

The Group Stage will begin on Oct. 3, including the 12 teams who qualified directly to the event and the four who qualify from the play-ins stage. This means that the teams who qualify from the Tuesday matches will have only about three days off before they're playing more best-of-ones.

While the play-ins can be good experience for less-experienced teams, they force teams to play a lot of games in a short length of time. Especially with the stress of this year, with the COVID-19 pandemic and Worlds being in a bubble, it wouldn't be surprising to see good teams crash and burn.

On the other hand, it could also provide a chance for lesser-known teams to show their resilience. They have less pressure on them; if Team Liquid or MAD struggles day one, it could damage their mental game. A team like PSG Talon can't really do worse than expected because they have three substitutes. A team like Rainbow7, who aren't supposed to do anything, can't do worse than that. That can be liberating for major region teams because it alleviates the pressure to win.

For a long time in 2020, it didn't seem like this week would ever come. The idea of Worlds seemed impossible. And yet, so far, Riot Games seems to be managing and in four days, we'll see the results of work done by so many people behind the scenes that found a way to make this event happen. Now, the teams just have to make this as memorable as the situation that brought us to this point.



Tottenham's Son Heung-min, right, jumps for the ball with Southampton's Jack Stephens during the English Premier League soccer match between Southampton and Tottenham Hotspur. PHOTO BY JUSTIN TALLIS, THE POOL VIA AP

## Barkley, Bosa and a plethora of others all done for the season

NFL, cont. from p. 10

As with most things in life, money matters, and the NFL knew how much money they would lose by moving the season back even just one week, so that Sept. 10 start date wasn't moving for anyone. But I think it was irresponsible to rush the players, who had only been practicing for three weeks at the maximum, into full-speed regular season games where most of them are playing north of 50 snaps. That's just asking for injuries.

The best method in my opinion would have been to start the training camp at the same time they did, with all the COVID-19 precautions taking up the majority of the first week. Then, have the ramp-up period and start full practices in the middle of August like they did. But instead of going right from that into the season, starting the week of Sept. 10, each team could have been paired with another team, and they could scrimmage against each other for a week or so. Then, the next week, the teams could play a full-on preseason game to get the players reacclimated to game-speed situations that many hadn't played in for over eight months.

Then, if everything still

looked good from a health standpoint, the season could start on Sept. 24, just two weeks later, and play a 14-game regular season instead. That would have required some serious revisions in the schedule, but every other league has made shortened seasons work. I believe those two weeks of more demanding activity would have greatly benefited the players, and it's unfortunate the league valued money over player safety. Although I can't say I'm the least bit surprised.

The NFL wanted the season to start on time, and I'm sure most of the players did too. But giving the players a couple more weeks of training camp to make up for the strange offseason definitely wouldn't have hurt. Even one preseason game could have made the transition to the regular season a little less strenuous on these players' bodies.

But here we are, with key players on more than half the teams in the league missing at least some time with injuries, if not the whole season. Now, some of the league's brightest stars aren't playing. Fans' favorite players aren't playing, and that's not good for the sport.

So the NFL is getting its precious 16-game season in (barring any COVID-19 issues). But at what cost?



San Francisco 49ers defensive end Nick Bosa (97) is carted off the field after being injured during the first half of an NFL football game against the New York Jets, Sunday, Sept. 20, 2020, in East Rutherford, N.J. PHOTO BY BILL KOSTROUN/AP

## Bale back at Tottenham on loan from Real Madrid



Soccer player Gareth Bale looks at fans as he arrives at the training ground of Tottenham Hotspur in London, Friday Sept. 18, 2020. Real Madrid winger Gareth Bale is in London to complete his return to Tottenham. Bale left Tottenham for Madrid in 2013 for 100 million euros. PHOTO BY FRANK AUGSTEIN/AP

MADRID, cont. from p. 10

To begin with, most soccer fans are aware of his rather toxic relationship with the Madrid giants; which, I'll admit, he deserves some of the blame for after not learning Spanish and basically trolling the Spanish side with the "Wales, Golf, Madrid, in that order" flag last year after qualifying for the Euros. But some of the elites at the Spanish club along with many fans have treated the Welshman very poorly, in my opinion, during his time there. For instance, he stated in an interview early in the summer that he's tried to leave to other clubs, but Madrid always ended up blocking the transfers from happening. You might ask yourself, "Well if they blocked the transfers from happening, then Zinedine Zidane surely thought he had some purpose to the squad?" To that, I say not at all; Madrid chairman Florentino Pérez was reportedly very unhappy with the way Zidane took care of the Bale (and Reguilón) transfer, as he believed Bale could still be of

good use. All in all, he probably enjoyed the money he racked up while at Madrid without playing a whole lot, but now he will likely try to fully burn the bridge with the club after all these years.

Now the follow-up question Spurs fans have been asking: What will be the effect of Bale joining Mourinho's Spurs? The answer: the possible departure of Dele Alli and less playing time for Lucas Moura. It's still fairly early to say if Alli will leave Tottenham in the future for sure, but there have been reports in the past week that many European clubs, including PSG, are interested in signing the midfielder after Spurs signed Bale. As for Moura, having Bale replace him on the right-wing is a change I'm all for. Ever since his electric night in Amsterdam last year, I haven't been too impressed with his performance when he's in the starting 11; and I think Mourinho is starting to feel the same way. This change likely won't happen until mid-October, as Bale picked up an injury while on international duty with Wales, so at least in the meantime Moura will get his regular playing time.

## Gase: Struggling Jets need to go on 'hyperdrive' to improve

NEW YORK (AP) — Adam Gase knows exactly where it all went wrong for the New York Jets. Offense. Defense. And special teams.

"Overall, we've got to put everything in hyperdrive," the coach said Monday, "and do a better job this week and improve quickly and get ourselves ready for Indianapolis."

Gase's squad is 0-2 following a 31-13 defeat Sunday to a San Francisco team that lost its quarterback, two running backs and two top defensive linemen during the game. Still, the Jets struggled to do much of anything against the 49ers.

They've been lousy through two games and have frustrated fans already giving up on the season. Some want the coach fired and/or the owners to sell and are worried they still might not have a franchise quarterback.

While they're all reasonable concerns from outside the building, those within the facility insist it's too early to start looking to 2021.

"I don't think anybody's panicking," said right tackle George Fant, a team captain. "Everybody just wants to get better."

... I'm a big, firm believer in just kind of putting your head down and just working, and great things will come from it."

That sounds good, sure. But no one has hinted at there being a lack of effort through two games. The coaching, however, has left lots to be desired.



New York Jets head coach Adam Gase yells instructions during the second half of an NFL football game against the Buffalo Bills in Orchard Park, N.Y., Sunday, Sept. 13, 2020. PHOTO BY JEFFREY T. BARNES/AP

That starts with Gase, who oversees the offense — a unit that ranks among the league's bottom dwellers in several categories. That was on full display against San Francisco, when New York routinely had possessions fizzle with nothing to show.

"We left too many yards out there on offense," Gase said. "We didn't finish drives the way we needed to."

Defensive coordinator Gregg Williams has a lot of work to do, too. Even with safety Jamal Adams traded to Seattle and linebacker C.J. Mosley opting out because of family health concerns amid the coronavirus pandemic, the defense was expected to be solid.

But New York was in a hole from the start when Raheem Mostert ripped off an 80-yard touchdown run on the 49ers' first play from scrimmage.

Even worse was when San Francisco had a third-and-31 deep in its own territory early in the third quarter and Jerick McKinnon somehow got loose for a 55-yard gain.

"Defensively, the one thing we talked about was making sure we didn't give up explosive plays in the run game," Gase lamented. "We didn't do that."

He said the special teams unit has "some things to clean up," but at least Sam Ficken is 3 for 3 on his field goal attempts.

Rookie punter Braden Mann has been solid, too, but

he has already punted 11 times — second most in the league behind Washington's Tress Way.

And that goes right back to the ineptitude of the offense.

"We know what guys we have in the locker room and no one's going to back down from a challenge," quarterback Sam Darnold said.

WHAT'S WORKING

Other than frantic Jets fans venting on social media and calling into sports radio shows?

Well, the list is short. But rookie left tackle Mekhi Becton has so far lived up to his lofty draft status at No. 11 overall by handling himself mostly well in his first two NFL games and throwing plenty of pancake blocks.

Becton's been awesome,"

Darnold said. "I think he would say there's a couple of things (to improve), but other than that, he's going to continue to grow and help this team win games."

WHAT NEEDS HELP

The Jets need to be more effective when they get into the red zone, and that means scoring touchdowns and not field goals. They're 1 for 4 in those situations, with their 25% conversion rate ranking last in the NFL.

"We've just got to find a way to get the ball in the end zone when we're in the red zone," Gase said.

STOCK UP

DT Quinnen Williams. The 2019 first-round pick had his best game as a pro, getting two sacks, seven tackles (four solo), two tackles for losses, a quarterback hit and a forced fumble.

He was the No. 3 overall pick last year and came in with high expectations but had a nondescript rookie season. Williams flashed his overall talent against the 49ers and was one of the few bright spots for New York.

STOCK DOWN

TE Chris Herndon. He built a nice chemistry with Darnold when the two were rookies in 2018, but Herndon missed all but one game last year because of a suspension and injuries.

Expected to be a primary outlet for Darnold this season, Herndon has just seven catches for 42 yards. Against San Francisco, he had one catch for 5 yards — and a drop in the end zone — despite the Jets being short on receivers.