THE FANTASY FORECAST:
A Storm of Divisional Showdowns

by Chase Cassidy
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT
HE/HIM/HIS
chase.cassidy@uconn.edu



Joe Burrow, Cincinnati Bengals quarterback, seen with his team before a game. The Bengals are set to face the Baltimore Ravens on Oct. 25, 2026 at M&T Bank Stadium.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @BENGALS ON INSTAGRAM

We are just over a week away from Spirit Halloween's annual pièce de résistance. The festivities surrounding Oct. 31 bring much excitement and anxiety to Storrs. With all the planning and last-minute costume shopping, it can be difficult to effectively manage a fantasy football team.

Thankfully, that's where this week's Fantasy Forecast comes in.

As we barrel toward the fun-filled weekend, let's recognize that the halfway point of the NFL season is almost here. Like Krueger on Elm Street, the fantasy playoffs are lurking around the corner, making lineup preparation indispensable.

For costume advice, check out Party City's latest catalog. For NFL wisdom, read the Fantasy Forecast.

Matchup Spotlights:

Green Bay Packers vs. Detroit Lions

If there ever were a tale of two cities in the NFL, it would belong to the Detroit Lions. It has been the best of times for their defensive line and the worst of times for their secondary.

Leading the league with 20 sacks, defensive ends Aidan Hutchinson and D.J. Wonnum, alongside defensive tackles Alim McNeill and Levi Onwuzurike, have struck fear into the hearts of opposing quarterbacks.

On the other hand, Detroit's defense has struggled overall, ranking near the bottom of the league in yards allowed. The Lions have also surrendered nearly 30 points per game, again placing them among the NFL's worst.

As the Lions suit up this Sunday evening against the Green Bay Packers, fantasy managers should keep their cowardly secondary in mind. If Green Bay quarterback Jordan Love can avoid the ferocious pass rush, he should have opportunities to find wide receivers Christian Watson and Matthew Golden downfield.

Conversely, coming to a halt in Week 7 could be Detroit quarterback Jared Goff's steady yet phenomenal fantasy production. While Green Bay's rushing defense falls toward the middle of the pack, its pass defense ranks among the top 10. The Lions may find their footing quite comfortably on the ground in the division brawl as the aerial attacks could fall short.

The Cheeseheads are seeking a fourth straight victory as the 313 looks for a fresh start at home following its bye. Kickoff is slated for 4:25 p.m.

Tampa Bay Buccaneers vs. Carolina Panthers

A prime example of what a bad start can do to a team can be found in the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Four straight losses to start the season will force any team to doubt its chances in the postseason.

The 1-5 Bucs have found little success this season aside from running back Bucky Irving's career-best performance against the Dallas Cowboys, which subsequently resulted in Tampa Bay's only win.

With quarterback Baker Mayfield sidelined with a dislocated thumb, rookie Jalon Daniels has had to step into the role. Like Mayfield early in the season, Daniels has also struggled to light a spark for the Buccaneers.

Due in part to a lackluster receiving corps and an obvious reliance on the run, Tampa Bay's offense finds itself near the bottom of the league in passing yards and scoring.

The only good news is that their divisional opponent this Sunday is the Carolina Panthers, a team boasting one of the league's worst rushing defenses. Running back Bucky Irving has a solid chance of etching another career-best performance this season, but that might be the only positive for the Buccaneers' offense.

Fantasy managers with Carolina players must be encouraged by this dreary outlook. Quarterback Bryce Young should have plenty of opportunities to find wide receivers Tetairoa McMillan and Jalen Coker in the early stages of the game, whereas running back Chuba Hubbard could serve a more prominent role later on.

The only thing stopping the Panthers from securing their third straight victory is a desperate Tampa Bay Buccaneers team. In a divisional matchup, anything can happen, so fantasy managers should keep tabs on the 1 p.m. showdown.

Cincinnati Bengals vs. Baltimore Ravens

Perhaps the most anticipated game of Week 7 is the AFC North contest between the Cincinnati Bengals and Baltimore Ravens. Fresh off a bye, the Bengals will look to continue their recovery from two straight losses in Weeks 3 and 4, while the Ravens try to bounce back from a devastating loss to the division-rival Cleveland Browns.

While you may think this highly anticipated divisional matchup would be every fantasy manager's dream, there is one caveat.

Cincinnati's defense has undergone a complete transformation from last year. Yes, the Bengals still struggle to prevent the ground attack, allowing an average of five yards per carry. However, their secondary seems to put the clamps down when it matters most: in the red zone. Only five passing touchdowns have slipped past the Bengals this season.

So, what does that mean for fantasy managers?

Well, there may not be many scoring opportunities for wide receivers Zay Flowers and Rashod Bateman. With quarterback Lamar Jackson operating on a day-to-day basis following an ankle injury last Sunday, it's very likely that running back Derrick Henry will have a field day. The 11th-season veteran has consistently posed a threat to Cincinnati and shouldn't have a hard time doing so again.

The Bengals are well-rested and itching to climb to the top of their division. A healthy receiving corps and a locked-in Joe Burrow at quarterback should send shivers down the spines of Baltimore fans. Meanwhile, the Ravens are trying to avoid back-to-back losses to division rivals.

With so much at stake and even more fantasy point potential, every fantasy manager will want to tune in. The stage is set for Sunday's 1 p.m. kickoff in Baltimore.

Best of luck, Huskies.

NFL Through Six Weeks:
Who is exceeding or not meeting expectations?

by Mitchell Lookner
CONTRIBUTOR
HE/HIM/HIS
mitchell.lookner@uconn.edu



Matthew Stafford of the Los Angeles Rams during a game against the Arizona Cardinals. The Rams lost against the Cardinals 16-18 on Oct. 18, 2026.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @RAMS ON INSTAGRAM

After the first six weeks of the National Football League season, the standings are not what fans expected them to look like. Some of the so-called "best teams" are last in their division, while some teams who fans counted out are sitting atop their division. Additionally, while some quarterbacks are playing like prime Tom Brady, some are putting on some less-than-stellar performances.

ESPN had the Los Angeles Rams at No.1 in their preseason power rankings. Not only are the Rams not even close to being the best team in the league, but they are last in their division with two wins and four losses.

Just this past week, the Rams lost on a last-second field goal against the Arizona Cardinals, a team who ESPN ranked third-to-last in their preseason power rankings. In their loss to the Denver Broncos, the Rams led 16-0 going into halftime; however, LA would give up 30 points to Denver in the second half and lose by a score of 30-26.

Ironically enough, the Rams aren't the only team in LA underperforming this season.

The Los Angeles Chargers sat at No. 14 in ESPN's preseason power rankings. In those rankings, ESPN predicted that Chargers quarterback Justin Herbert would have one of the most productive seasons of his career. Unfortunately, based on the first six weeks of this season, ESPN could not have been more wrong.

The Chargers are currently 0-6 and Herbert has played terribly. He is currently leading the league in interceptions with 8, ranks last among quarterbacks in adjusted quarterback rating (QBR) with a 29.9 rating and ranks last among qualified quarterbacks this season in touchdowns with only five.

Another quarterback in the American Football Conference (AFC) who had high expectations going into the season is vastly underperforming.

Denver Broncos quarterback Bo Nix has looked like a shell of the 2025 Bo Nix who took his team to the AFC Championship. Nix ranks third-to-last in the league in QBR with a rating of 38.2 and third-to-last in touchdowns with just six. However, unlike Herbert's team, the Broncos have still found ways to win this season, as they currently sit at a 4-2 record.

Enough about the teams and players who are underachieving this season. Let's get into some of the teams and players who are overachieving this season.

The Cleveland Browns, the team ranked second-to-last in ESPN's preseason power rankings, are currently winning their division with a record of 4-2. After finishing with a record of 5-12 last year, the Browns were given little to no thought going into this season.

People had no expectations for Browns quarterback Deshaun Watson this year, as Watson had not had a dominant season since 2020. Also, going into this season people did not have much faith in Cleveland's young receiving core either.

While Watson hasn't particularly stood out this season, he has performed when it matters, as he has four game-winning drives for Cleveland which is the reason why they currently sit atop the AFC North division. As far as the receiving core goes, rookie wideouts Denzel Boston and KC Concepcion have been producing for the Browns offense so far this season.

There is another team that people counted out going into this season that is currently steamrolling through the league.

The Minnesota Vikings were ranked No. 22 by ESPN in their preseason power rankings. Minnesota is a clean 5-0 right now, thanks in part to their stellar defense that has allowed the least number of points per game of any team in the NFL this season (12.8) and touchdowns of any team in the NFL this season (six).

If you told ESPN before the season started that after the first six weeks, the Vikings would be 5-0 and the Rams would be 2-4, they would likely ask you if you even watch football.

The Vikings, however, are not alone in the undefeated club because the San Francisco 49ers are 6-0.

San Francisco's undefeated start is courtesy of their elite offense that ranks third in the NFL in points per game this season and is led by star quarterback Brock Purdy. He is having an MVP caliber season so far this year, as he has the highest QBR of any quarterback in the league (83.0) and is tied for the most touchdowns of any quarterback in the league with 14.