

# ShoresteinSays.com 2019 Bears Season Preview

## **Expect the Bears to maintain their dominance on defense:**

The Chicago Bears may very well have the most talented roster in the NFL. Starting with their world class defense, I don't believe there are any visible holes as they have elite individual players at every level of the unit. Aside from Aaron Donald, there isn't a more impactful pass rusher than Khalil Mack. When paired with Akiem Hicks, they are likely the most difficult front to stop in the NFL. The linebacking core has speed and all the tools required to stifle opposing passing offenses, yet maintain efficiency in the run game. The only major change in the secondary is that they have replaced Adrian Amos with Ha Ha Clinton-Dix. Clinton-Dix has had an up and down career, but he has never been surrounded with the caliber of players that play on the Bears defense. I expect him to be an opportunistic ball hawk playing opposite of Eddie Jackson, and he should fill Amos' role nicely.

I'd be shocked if the Bears finished outside the top 3 in defensive passer rating. I have laid out how they matched up with two of the best defenses I have studied in my history of doing this:

<b>Dominant Defenses In Recent History</b>				
<b>Team</b>	<b>Points Allowed</b>	<b>Sack %</b>	<b>Defensive PR</b>	<b>Takeaways Per Game</b>
2013 Seahawks	14.6 (1st)	7.51% (5th)	64.7 (1st)	2.4 (1st)
2017 Jaguars	17.7 (3rd)	8.76% (2nd)	72.7 (1st)	2.0 (2nd)
2018 Bears	17.6 (1st)	7.22% (8th)	73.2 (1st)	2.2 (1st)

The departure of defensive coordinator Vic Fangio is the only major hurdle that they will have to overcome to return to their 2018 form. His replacement, Chuck Pagano, had an unimpressive run as head coach in Indianapolis, but he has shown what he can do with high end performing defenses in Baltimore.

<b>Chuck Pagano 2011 Ravens Defensive Coordinator</b>			
<b>Points Allowed</b>	<b>Passer Rating Defense</b>	<b>Yards / Rush</b>	<b>Sack %</b>
16.80 (3rd)	65.80 (1st)	3.6 (2nd)	7.48% (6th)

After the stellar 2011 season with the Ravens defense, you can see why he was given a head coaching opportunity in Indy. I think he's a great fit for this position, even though I think he is a horrible head coach. I've said it a million times, once it gets into cold, windy December, it's a borderline miracle every time an opposing offense scores a TD at Soldier Field.

**The biggest question by far is the development of Mitchell Trubisky.** While I have major questions about his accuracy and decision making, I have a ton of confidence in Matt Nagy's play calling and the skill position players that surround him. I view his situation as very similar to Jared Goff's with Sean McVay. I think you have two quarterbacks who can look horrible at times, but they are talented enough to capitalize with their creative coaches. I don't think you can underestimate how much impact a coach can have on a quarterback.

Look at how their careers started under Jeff Fisher and John Fox and how much they improved once they were given a real chance with an offensive minded coach:

<i>Jared Goff vs Mitchell Trubisky</i>				
<u>Season</u>	<u>Team Points / Game</u>	<u>Comp %</u>	<u>QB Rating</u>	<u>Yards / Attempt</u>
Goff Rookie Year	14.0 (32nd)	54.60%	63.60	5.30
Goff Year 2	28.90 (3rd)	62.10%	100.50	8.00
Goff Year 3	30.80 (1st)	64.90%	101.10	8.40
Trubisky Rookie Year	16.50 (29th)	59.40%	77.50	6.10
Trubisky Year 2	25.60 (10th)	66.60%	95.40	7.30

Bottomline here is that Nagy's offensive coaching philosophy can keep defenses on their heels so that they don't have the opportunity to put Trubisky in a position where he is required to read and react. (Void this comment, should he face the Great Bill Belichick again this year.)

Look for the Bears offense to lean on the running game and high % swing passes to the dynamic Tarik Cohen. Their outside receivers in Allen Robinson and Taylor Gabriel are under rated, and I think Cordarrelle Patterson is a nice addition as a gadget player to Nagy's offense.

**Can they find a Kicker that isn't grossly inept?**

Last year was a devastating season for the Bears kicking game as they ended 27<sup>th</sup> in FG %. So bad, that I'm not sure it could possibly be any worse? Close game kicking will be a concern for regular season win totals, but I think they are talented enough to overcome it.

**Over 9-9.5 Wins:** As a team that ranked in the top 3 in passer rating differential for virtually all of 2018, I really like the over. (Passer Rating Differential is my #1 key in analyzing football and the statistical driver of the Money Zone!) If Trubisky is put in favorable spots, I think they can use their running game and opportunistic passing game to win the NFC North and host a divisional round playoff game again. 10 wins should be very realistic for this team.

**Superbowl!** I think they've got great value at anything outside of 12-1. I'd say only the Rams, Chiefs, Saints and Patriots deserve to have better Super Bowl odds. I put Chicago ahead of teams like Indy, Baltimore, LA Chargers, Philadelphia, Dallas, and Pittsburgh who have pretty similar odds. In my mind, they are the top 2<sup>nd</sup> tier team from last year, that should have a great chance to move into elite status in 2019.



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