

# ShoresteinSays.com 2019 Colts Season Preview

The 2018 Colts were a pleasant surprise to Indianapolis. Andrew Luck rebounded from his perplexing shoulder injury that kept him out for all of 2017, and he led an efficient and high scoring offense for much of the season. Their offensive line play was stellar. Rookie guard Quenton Nelson was dominant throughout the season and showed the potential to be a perennial all-pro player and an anchor to the line. Even the largely unknown defense contributed a nice season by allowing a stout 21.20 points per game, which ranked 8<sup>th</sup> in the NFL for 2018.

With all that said, I'm selling on the Indianapolis Colts in 2019.

## **Don't Expect Andrew Luck to be elite in 2019.**

Luck has been a media darling ever since he came out as one of the highest graded college quarterbacks of all time. I see him as an overrated player. He's turnover happy, and he hasn't proven that he can be healthy on a consistent basis like the other high-end quarterbacks.

<i>Andrew Luck's Up and Downs</i>			
<u>Year</u>	<u>W/L Record</u>	<u>Games Missed</u>	<u>INT's / Game</u>
2015	2-5	9.00	1.71
2016	8-7	1.00	0.87
2017	Missed	16.00	N/A
2018	10-6	-	0.94

Since 2015, he's missed 26 games and he's thrown 30 interceptions in 38 games (about .79/Game). If you look at Cam Newton during his last 3 seasons, he's only missed 4 games and his interception ratio is only slightly higher (about .97/ game). Wouldn't you say that Cam Newton is perceived as an injury riddled quarterback who is prone to throwing bad interceptions? I think if you were consistent, you'd have to apply that same assertion to Luck.

In addition, Luck still doesn't have great skill players surrounding him. Aside from TY Hilton, there really isn't much that should scare defensive coordinators. Eric Ebron had a career year in 2018 at tight end, but he was close to dropping his way out of the league in the prior several seasons. He is by no means a sure fire second option, especially with increased focus in 2019. Devin Funchess and Chester Rogers are not anything special on the perimeter.

## **The offensive line could not possibly protect any better than it did in 2018.**

Andrew Luck was sacked on just 2.86% of passes last season, and yet he still managed to throw 15 interceptions. With a mediocre rushing attack (4.4 yards / carry ranked 17th) and a young defense, I don't think that should be acceptable from a supposedly elite QB.

The strange part about the Colts' league best pass protection statistic in 2018, is that Indy finished dead last at 10.31% in 2017. I understand that Nelson is an elite guard, but I have to assume the protection will land somewhere in the middle of those extremes in 2019. If that holds true, I don't think the Colts will be quite as explosive on offense, and I would not be surprised to see the 1.4 giveaways per game (22<sup>nd</sup> ranked in NFL) go even higher in 2019.

### **Who is on this Defense?**

Not a lot of names jump out at you on this defense aside from Darius Leonard, who was phenomenal at linebacker last year. They added an older Justin Houston to bolster the pass rush, but I'm not sure he's got much left in the tank. Malik Hooker can be an impact player at times, but he's not exactly leading the "Legion of Boom" in the secondary. I think you're largely looking at an average defense for 2019.

Here was how they performed in some of the most important defensive categories:

<b>2018 Colts Pass Defense</b>			
<b><u>Def. Passer Rating</u></b>	<b><u>Yards Allowed / Attempt</u></b>	<b><u>Sack %</u></b>	<b><u>Opponent Completion %</u></b>
91.10 (13th)	6.80 (12th)	6.65% (17th)	69.62% (31st)

I'd like to see a team that faced Blake Bortles, Cody Kessler, and Blaine Gabbert twice pad the numbers a little more.

### **AFC South should be one of the most competitive divisions in the NFL.**

I think this a very well-matched division overall. The Colts will go up against 3 very tough defenses in the Texans, Jaguars, and Titans in 6 divisional games. These three defenses ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> in points allowed in 2018, and all 3 of them kept their opponents under 20 points per game. The Colts went 4-2 against these teams last year, and I think that will be an unlikely feat to replicate. Watson should be sharper this season after being another year removed from his knee injury; Foles has shown what he can do at the highest stage when surrounded with talent; and I have really come around on Vrabel as an up-and-coming coach with a very talented defense. It would not shock me to see this division won at 9-7 with all 4 teams fighting in December.

### **Overall Strategy:**

As you can tell by my narrative, I am under on the 10 wins. However, in most spots, you will be laying significant juice (-150) at the moment. I would suggest waiting to get a more favorable number or waiting for a line move. I see them as a non-factor in the Super Bowl picture.

The Colts current win total is higher than Chicago, LA Chargers, Pittsburgh, Minnesota, Baltimore, Cleveland, and Dallas. I just don't see them as a top team at this "second level" of the NFL.

Look for me to fade them early in the season. I think you're looking at a classic "Sell High" type situation.

Thank you!



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