

## Division 1 Prologue:

Two-year outlook: It's been a strong last two seasons for 3 out of 4 teams in this division. While Nick has had a rough go of it, Brett, Manzo and myself have 3 of the best 4 records in the league during that stretch. We'll start with Brett who's had a hell of a run. He went wire to wire as the league's best team and was rewarded with his first ever league championship. Manzo overperformed last season finishing with the second-best record and I do that little thing I do which is win a bunch of games and then lose to in the playoffs not because I am unlucky, but because I simply just never have the better team come that time, ever. It makes me wonder why so many guys from my team always land at the top of the following year's draft. Without looking at any team as of this moment other than my own, I feel like the theme for this Division will be Something's Gotta Give. I think it's time for Nick to climb back to the pack and one of us three to fall from Grace: The question is, "When and where will those dominos fall?"

## Team Brett Ivarone

**Where we last left off:** Brett is coming off a sick 2-year run which culminated with his first league championship in 2022. Unlike the louder people in the league (like yours truly), Brett quietly goes about his business and does nothing else but win consistently. When you factor in the role guys like Geno Smith, Josh Jacobs, and a healthy Christian McCaffery played, it's fair to say that everything that could go right for Brett, did go right: The question is, "Will the momentum train continue, or is time for some negative regression?"

**QB: Aaron Rodgers, Geno Smith, Bryce Young:** Let's just nickname this group of QBs "Thunderbolts and lightning" because it is very, very frightening. I guess we'll call Geno QB1 over Rodgers, which very well may be the most hilarious thing I've written this year. Last year was a dream season, and his roster has improved. With that being said, there is now a year's worth of tape on him, and his production dipped hard at the end of last year and that was against some pretty mediocre defenses. I like Geno, but with tempered enthusiasm. I am and will remain an Aaron Rodgers mark, but at this point his career, it's hard to see him as anything other than mid-range QB2 in fantasy. With all his audibles, he typically runs the fewest offensive plays, and I wonder if he's going to throw on the goal line the same way he did in Green Bay with the firepower he now possess at RB. I like Bryce Young as a QB3, and by the time Brett has to use him, he should have shaken off most of the rookie rust. With limited upside, I think this group comes up short this season

Overall Grade: B-

**RB: Saquon Barkley, Alexander Mattison, Jonathan Taylor, Ezekiel Elliott, D'Onta Foreman:** Saquon represents a solid RB1 and although Mattison's RB peripherals have dipped in recent seasons, he'll see more volume than Patrick Swayze's hair in Road House. Obviously, this group would be much stronger with a healthy Jonathan Taylor and if he doesn't get traded, I'm skeptical that he'll play anything other than the half the season required of him to move his service time by another year. Zeke and Foreman provide so so depth as RB4 and 5, but one or both may be needed if I am right about Taylor. Tough break on Taylor who may be the driving force behind some of that negative regression I mentioned. His absence turns a team strength into something average at best

Overall Grade: B

**WR: AJ Brown, Amari Cooper, Christian Kirk, Michael Pittman, Gabe Davis, Adam Thielen:** AJ Brown is a fine WR1, but there is a reason why he's only drafted at the back half of that class. While injuries didn't bite him a season ago, he has chronic knee issues, and it wouldn't shock anyone if he's running around the field in mid-November like Jack Nicholson during the last half hour of The Shining. Amari Cooper is a solid WR2 with a reasonably high floor, but low ceiling. Ditto for Christian Kirk as WR3 who did a fine job last year, but now has to share his piece of what figures to be 100 plus targets that will go to Calvin Ridley. Michael Pittman on paper seems to be a steal at WR4, but I have serious doubts that his quarterback could win him a stuffed elephant by throwing a football through a truck tire on the jersey shore. Gabe Davis may be the steal of the draft at WR5. His high ankle sprain limited him last year and he figures to be the number 2 target for arguably the best quarterback in the NFL. Davis represents some much-needed upside on a team, severely lacking it.

Overall Grade: B+

**TE: Austin Hooper:** I thought when I read the team sheets that Brett's only TE was Austin Hooper, but that can't be right

Overall Grade: D+

**What the Magic 8-Ball Tells Me:** I can't remember the last time I disliked one of Brett's teams this much, but I am sorry to say that in the league's best division, he's in a lot of trouble. To be fair, Taylor would cover some of the warts, but he's already gone for 4 games, and it can be much more if things don't change quickly. The WRs are the only thing that line the clouds of what looks to be a rough season: This makes me even angrier for that he didn't get his choice of chair at this year's draft: Magic 8-ball will Brett make the playoffs: "My sources say no"

Overall Grade: B-