

Division 2 Prologue:

Shockingly enough, 3 teams made the playoffs from this Division last season, meaning that if I may be permitted a cliché, “Something will have to give.” Brett had a tough year off a championship run and will be looking to rebound. Tom F. had another solid year making the playoffs and completing a run of 3 consecutive seasons without a losing record. James followed up a monster showing 2023 with a playoff run that could have went longer had he not run into some bad luck. As for myself, more of the same. I lost in the finals for the second straight year, making it 6 losses in in my last 6 finals appearances dating back to 2010.

Team James:

2024 Record: 8-6

Last 3 years: 24-18

Where we last left off: After bottoming out in 2022, James has recovered nicely the last two seasons making the playoffs both times. A proponent (and an effective one at that) of the punt QB strategy. James traditionally drafts an all around roster that’s as good as anyone in the league. After years of getting clipped with good teams, James went on an absolute tear winning 3 championships in the mid to late 2010s, but he hasn’t been back in quite some time. The question is, will this be the year.

QB: L. Jackson, B. Young, M. Penix Jr.

I mentioned James’ predilection for value QBs, earlier because I am shocked to see the selection of Lamar Jackson as I am fairly certain it’s the first time he’s ever taken a QB in Round 1. From the guy who takes Josh Allen every year, you’re not gonna get any arguments here as to whether or not this was the right move. It’s true Jackson’s efficiency was unsustainable based on how many times he threw an ran the ball, but I couldn’t care less. Even if he took a 20% drop across the board, he’s still in play for QB #1, overall. I am not a huge fan of Bryce Young, but I can see the appeal based on the way he finished the season and with the addition of Tate McMillian. Still, I can’t help but feel that the team

could move on next season and should that be a potential outcome as they see it, will they commit to Young for a full season if he and the team struggle? This could be my bias, but I am completely out on Michael Penix. He's a terrible fit in an offense that requires precision from its QB, the team lost 2/5 of its offensive line and he's a zero in the run game with his Samuel L. Jackson in Unbreakable pension for lower body injuries. Still, Jackson alone makes almost any QB/Superflex combination an above average play, and James has two viable QBS penciled in behind him.

Overall Grade: A-

RB: Achane, Conner, A. Jones, Ollie Gordon

I absolutely love the Top end of this group and they upside they provide in the aggregate. My fear for Achane a season ago is that he would underwhelm with a looming drop in efficiency coupled with an overall lack of touches. Both came to fruition, however, I did not account for how he would be used as a receiver. Achane has RB #1 upside with his playmaking ability and as long as Tua wants to stay out of intensive care, he'll likely catch plenty of dump offs. James Conner is and has been the most underrated RB in football for the last couple of seasons. He's habitually a Top 15 finisher with the perennial critique being that he's old and he's "injury prone". He debunked the latter of those concerns last season as did Aaron Jones who makes one of the better RB3s in our league. I like Ollie Gordon, but I'm not sure why he's rostered over Jaylen Wright who's the handcuff to Achane. I also would have liked to see James secure Conner by getting Trey Benson, but he should be fine.

Overall Grade: B+

WR: Collins, Jamo Williams, Matt Golden, Shaheed, Chism III

I was pretty bummed when James took Collins over Nabers as I also had him valued high. The soft tissue injuries in back to back years are concerning, but when the guy is on the field he's as good as any one in the league. A little birdie also told me that new coordinator Nick Caley is giving CJ Stroud full autonomy to change plays at the huddle, which is something he couldn't do in previous years. It's no secret that stroud loves to go deep and there are few that do it better than Nico Collins. I like Jameson Williams, but think he's a little miscast as a WR2. He has nuclear upside as he's one of the best yards per catch guys in the league, but he also disappears certain weeks which is not something you want out of your second wideout. Golden slides in as a fine WR3, although my concern is that like

Jamo, he will be boom or bust in a given week. Ditto for Shaheed who is a better player than people realize, but he's stuck with Spencer Rattler at QB and coming off a major leg injury. I can see a scenario where he struggles out of the gate, but gets stronger as he gets further away from surgery and eventually syncs up with mayor of YOLOville, Tyler Schuck, who will take plenty of shots downfield to him when the time comes. I'm not 100% sure why Efton Chism III is owned, unless James just thinks it's fun to say his name. And while I'm only kidding about that, if it were to be the case, it's a lot more fun to say Kenyon Boute, who also has the inside track to busting out if you're choosing between New England receivers. I'm lukewarm at best with his group, and don't like the boom and bust construction of it.

Overall Grade: B-

TE: Mark Andrews

I find it odd that so many people hate Mark Andrews, when the guy is a TD machine who once caught 100 passes in a season. He's only 30-years old and should perform well in a contract year.

Overall Grade: B

Kicker/Defense: B-

How he'll fare: I like what I see with this team and see no reason why James won't have another winning season. I'm intrigued by his decision to invest highly in QB as it's out of character. I also think that even though he did so, he didn't sacrifice too much at the other positions as he's pretty well balanced. As I stated earlier, the all-or-nothing receiver profile is concerning and could lead to a scenario where James could wind up with a bad record with a lot of overall points scored. The RB depth is a bit of a concern based on age, but I think he'll be fine as every guy he owns would be productive in even a timeshare. It's not the best team I've seen him draft, but it is definitely better than most.

Overall Grade: B+