

Big Game PREVIEW



Inside the Big Game

A pair of high-powered offenses aren't the only storylines.

The Chiefs got their revenge on Cincinnati almost a year to the day after the Bengals sent Kansas City home at the AFC Championship Game. It didn't look good for Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes, however, who entered this very anticipated rematch with a high ankle sprain. The Bengals also owned a three-game winning streak over Kansas City.

Mahomes fought hard throughout the game and got the Chiefs close enough for Harrison Butker to kick a 45-yard field goal to beat Cincinnati 23-20. They'll now face Jalen Hurts and the Philadelphia Eagles in what will be Kansas City's third Super Bowl appearance in just four seasons.

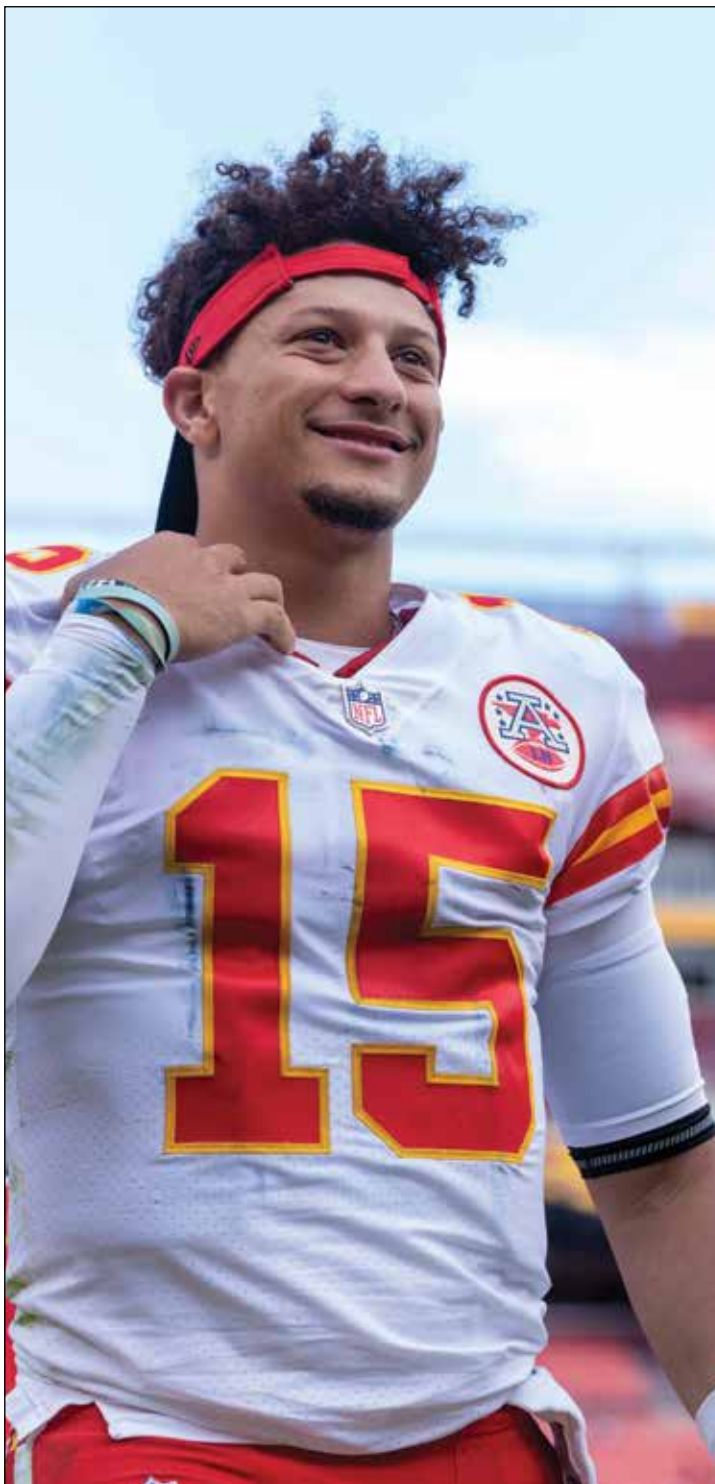
The Eagles arrive with their own impressive momentum, having trounced the San Francisco 49ers in the NFC Championship Game to make their fourth franchise trip to the Super Bowl. Philadelphia won it all in 2017, but that was with a different coach and quarterback.

Today, it's coach Nick Sirianni and quarterback Jalen Hurts. Once considered just a promising prospect, Hurts has become the face of the Philadelphia franchise. That led to a career year for A.J. Brown, whose friendship with Hurts goes back to before Eagles vice president Howie Roseman made a draft-day trade for the former Tennessee wide receiver. Brown's been living up to his personal motto: "Always Open."

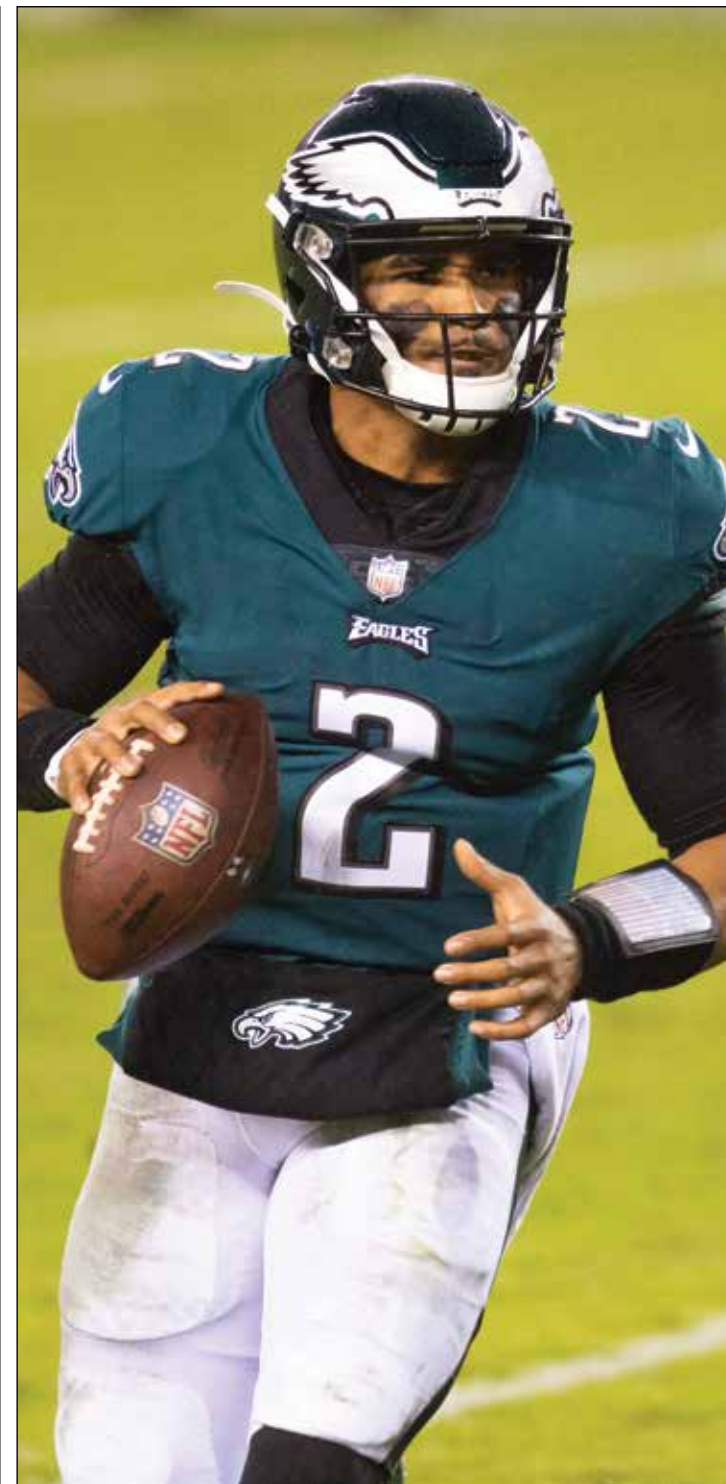
Hurts had other help in the San Francisco game. The Eagles came in with 32 regular-season rushing touchdowns, ranking in the Top 5 in league history, and ended up scoring four times on the ground to punch Philadelphia's ticket to the big game.

Both Hurts and Mahomes are MVP candidates, and they'll square off while leading two of the NFL's most prolific offenses. But the quarterback are not the only highly intriguing matchup in a contest that pits Chiefs coach Andy Reid against his former team in Philadelphia. There are also a pair of brothers – Travis and Jason Kielce – on opposite sides of the field.

Reid's current club is more experienced, having also advanced to the AFC Championship Game for an incredible five straight years. A win over Philadelphia would already give Mahomes two Super Bowl titles in his young career. But the Eagles may have the momentum, having more easily dispatched two opponents on the way to Glendale.



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About the Game

TEAMS: Kansas City Chiefs vs. Philadelphia Eagles

DATE: Sunday, Feb. 12

TIME: 6:30 p.m. ET

LOCATION: State Farm Stadium, Glendale, Ariz.

WATCH: FOX, or stream via fuboTV

HALF-TIME PERFORMERS: Rihanna headlines, while Chris Stapleton sings the National Anthem. Babyface will perform "America the Beautiful."

How They Got Here

The road to the big game wasn't easy for either team.

Philadelphia is five years removed from its first-ever Super Bowl title, and they got to this game in a surprisingly similar manner. In both cases, they were a well-regarded pre-season team that endured injury at quarterback and upfront.

Jalen Hurts injured his shoulder against the Chicago Bears, just after an easy rout over the New York Giants. Eagles coach Nick Sirianni turned to backup Gardner

Minschew, then took a vanilla offensive approach – but Philadelphia kept winning until Hurts was eased back into the regular lineup. Meanwhile, the Giants upset Minnesota in the opening round of the playoffs, while Eagles fans hoped the extra week off worked in Hurts' favor.

It did. Hurts confirmed his transformation into a true triple threat, helping Philadelphia challenge decades-old rushing touchdown records. The Eagles were facing a San Francisco team in the NFL

Championship Game that hadn't dropped a game since mid-October – and they easily won 31-7. Hurts' numbers weren't eye popping, going just 15-for-25 for 121 yards and no touchdowns. But he also had zero turnovers. Meanwhile, that long Niners touchdown was just the second Philadelphia's defense allowed in this postseason.

Chiefs fans spent the week monitoring Patrick Mahomes' balky ankle, worried that a sprain he suffered during a divisional round victory over Jacksonville would lead to a second straight AFC

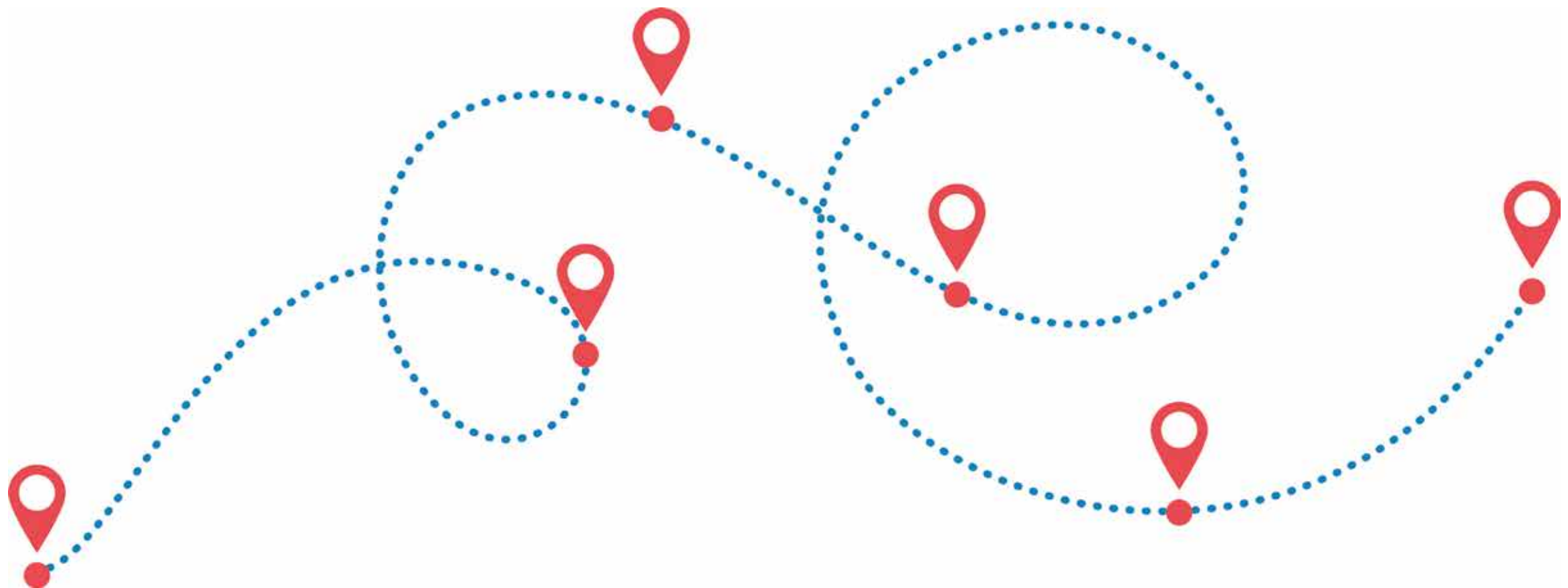
Championship Game loss. Instead, Mahomes was brilliant. He went 29-of-43 for two touchdowns in defeating Cincinnati. He even toughed out a late shove in the Chiefs' final drive, drawing a penalty for unnecessary roughness that set up the winning field goal. In the end, Mahomes directly involved in all but 34 of Kansas City's offensive production.

Cincinnati was no pushover. The defending AFC champs won 10 straight to end the year, riding an explosive offense and solid defense into their rematch with Kansas City.

They'd even tied the game at 20 early in the fourth quarter, erasing a 13-3 deficit. But Mahomes would not be denied.

He found a willing partner in Travis Kelce, who finished the Bengals game with seven catches for 78 yards and a touchdown. The Chiefs star passed Julian Edelman for second-most postseason receiving yards, and he now trails only Pro Football Hall of Fame Jerry Rice.

On defense, Chris Jones had two sacks and six pressures, in a career-best playoff performance for Kansas City.



Comparing the Quarterbacks



History will be made before the kickoff even happens.

The big game will feature two starting Black quarterbacks for the first time ever. That's not all Patrick Mahomes and Jalen Hurts have in common. They're both from Texas, with Hurts playing at Channelview High near Houston and Mahomes at Whitehouse High outside of Tyler.

Mahomes stayed home for college, signing with Texas Tech, while Hurts went to Alabama. But both have shared heartbreak in big games: Hurts was benched in the second half of a college national championship which Alabama won, and played well in another that they lost. Mahomes beat San Francisco in his first Super Bowl, but lost to Tampa Bay in his second.

Both are mobile, but their approaches are actually far different. Mahomes is an improviser, perhaps the most dangerous sideways scrambler ever. He's able to create plays outside of the pocket that are so unconventional because of past experience as a shortstop in baseball, where throws are often unbalanced. Once again, Mahomes will have to be creative when he scrambles, in order to protect

himself from further injury with a high ankle sprain. The issue also puts additional pressure on his offensive line, who must protect him.

Hurts, on the other hand, operates the offense through designed runs and pushes forward in straighter, more efficient lines when he scrambles. He's had great success: The physical, elusive Hurts just passed Cam Newton for the most quarterback rushing touchdowns in a season.

Yet both can still throw – early and often. Mahomes lost his best deep threat when Tyreek Hill was traded, but still sprinkled the ball around enough to lead the NFL in passing for the second time in just five seasons. He's got history's best quarterback rating through 13 playoff games, with the lowest interception percentage ever. Hurts has also emerged as an accurate and decisive passer, despite a shoulder injury that threatened to derail his MVP candidacy. When healthy, he can be Mahomes' match as a do-anything playmaker.

Mahomes can become the first Black quarterback to win the big game twice, while Hurts could emerge as the fourth to win a Super Bowl – joining Doug Williams, Russell Wilson and Mahomes. Those who have started but lost include Wilson, Steve McNair, Colin Kaepernick and Newton.



Breaking Down the Defenses

There's more to the big game than who's under center.

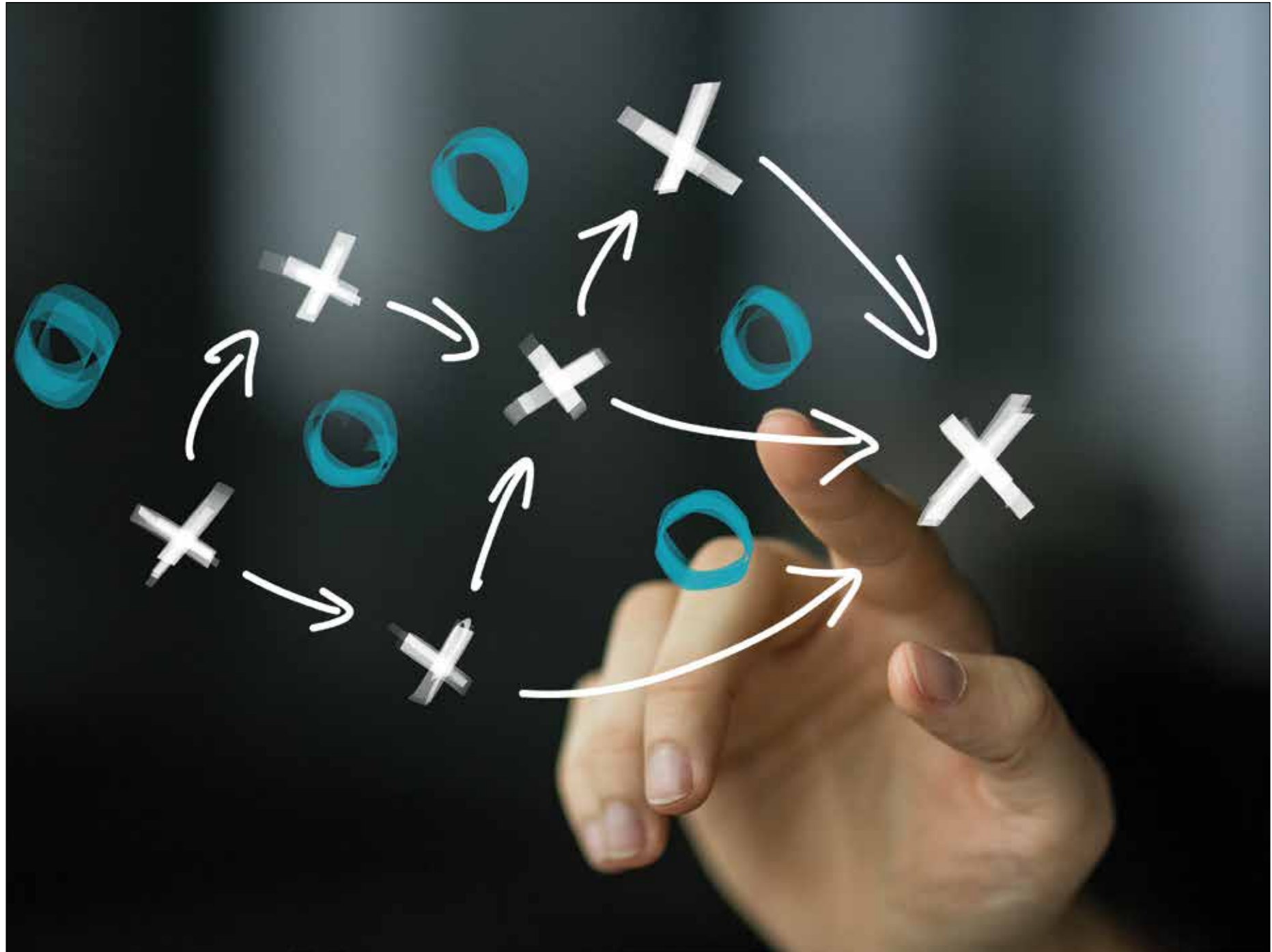
Super Bowl storylines will inevitably revolve around Jalen Hurts and Patrick Mahomes, since the two quarterbacks lead two of the most exciting and reliable offenses in the NFL. Both are dealing with injuries too, and that adds another dimension.

But they're not playing against each other. Instead, they'll have to face the opposing team's defense – and there are intriguing matchups on the other side of the ball, too.

Hurts will be facing a far more vulnerable pass defense than he did against San Francisco, principally because they came into the season relying on so many rookies. Many of them have come up big, including first-year cornerbacks Jaylen Watson and Joshua Williams – both of whom snagged huge interceptions against Joe Burrow in the AFC title match.

Rookie safety Bryan Cook tipped the ball that ended up in Williams' hands, and rookie defensive end George Karlaftis produced a sack. They'll be tested by Kansas City's stout rushing game, too. The Chiefs haven't faced a team that can run like this one. Everyone will have to grow up in a hurry.

Meanwhile, Philadelphia is coming off a game where they knocked both Niners' quarterbacks out of the game. Rookie



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Brock Purdy was hurt in a big Haason Reddick hit that produced a fumble. Replacement Josh Johnson then suffered a concussion on a sack, forcing Purdy back into the game. Underrated for most of the season, the Eagles defense quietly led the NFL in quarterback takedowns – and Reddick

started to look like the second coming of Reggie White.

He had a dominating performance against the New York Giants in the postseason, racking up 1 and 1/2 sacks. Reddick was even better against San Francisco, setting a new postseason franchise record with two more sacks. His first take-

down of the game also forced a fumble, something Reddick prioritizes. He also produced a turnover by jumping on a loose ball before halftime, setting up a Philadelphia touchdown.

San Francisco's Nick Bosa was the acknowledged favorite to become the NFL's Defensive

Player of the Year, but he didn't look like the game's best edge rusher in the NFC Championship Game. Instead, the nod goes to Reddick. He now has 19 and 1/2 sacks on the season, the most since White set a still-standing franchise record with 21 back in 1987.

Big Game Fun Facts

These matchups always provide cool trivia, stats and memories

Every year brings its own intrigue, and this one is no different. But the Super Bowl is a treasure trove of fun facts. We've collected a few:

HIRING MAGIC

The last two head coaches hired by Philadelphia owner Jeffrey Lurie guided the Eagles to the Super Bowl in their second season.

NEVER PLAYED

Four teams have never advanced to the big game. They are: the Cleveland Browns, Detroit Lions, Houston Texans and Jacksonville Jaguars.

MOST LOSSES

Multi-trophy winners like the New England Patriots, Pittsburgh Steelers and San Francisco 49ers are often heralded. But who's lost the most? Ironically, the Patriots are tied with the Denver Broncos with the most losses, at five each. Minnesota and Buffalo are both 0-4 in the big game.

BACK TO ARIZONA

This year's Super Bowl will be the fourth in Arizona, and the third (after 2008 and 2015) to be played in Glendale. The first one in the Grand Canyon State was in 1996, at Sun Devil Stadium.

WHO PAYS?

Each franchise is allowed 150

Super Bowl championship rings, which the teams pay for with help from the National Football League

KANSAS CITY CONNECTIONS

Kansas City played in the very first Super Bowl, losing to Green Bay in 1967. Late Chiefs founder Lamar Hunt also came up with the games unique numbering system, after officials became worried that there would be confusion since the actual game is played at the beginning of the next year.

POPULAR CITIES

Which city is the most popular for Super Bowls? Miami has played host to 11, while New Orleans has been home to 10.

ABOUT THAT TROPHY

The Lombardi Trophy costs \$50,000, and weighs seven pounds. It was named after the late Green Bay coach Vince Lombardi, who led the Packers to victory in the first two Super Bowls before his 1970 death.

TELEVISION AUDIENCES

This game is regularly one of the most-watched TV moments.

In fact, the list of highest-rated programs only includes one non-Super Bowl entry – the 1983 finale of M*A*S*H, at No. 9. Every other slot is filled with the big game, and all of them have played since 2010. A whopping 114 million people watched the Patriots beat the Seahawks in 2015.



Digging Deeper



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Here's a look at some of this year's secondary storylines.

A game pitting Patrick Mahomes against Jalen Hurts would be exciting enough.

Then there's the fact that these two starting quarterbacks will combine for the youngest combined after in the history of the Super Bowl. They're also dealing with injuries, after Mahomes suffered a high ankle sprain in the divisional playoff round. Hurts is still recovering from a late season shoulder injury.

But this year's Super Bowl has several other interesting things going for it:

TALE OF TWO BROTHERS

Travis Kelce is the record-smashing Kansas City tight end, while Jason Kelce is a fan-favorite Philadelphia center. They were born less than two years apart, and the Pro Bowlers root for one another when they're not facing off on the field. It's more complicated for their parents. Donna Kelce traveled some 1,300 miles in one day to see her sons in separate wild-card playoff games. She watched the Eagles at Tampa Bay, then flew to surprise Travis after his game in Kansas City.

IN A RUSH

Eagles linebacker Hanson Reddick is becoming a one-man wrecking ball, knocking two San Francisco quarterbacks out of the NFC

Championship Game. Meanwhile, Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes is nursing a tender ankle. So Chiefs offensive tackle Orlando Brown Jr. will have to be especially successful at guarding the blind side.

ANDY REID'S PHILLY REUNION

Kansas City coach Andy Reid was with Philadelphia for 14 years before leading the Chiefs. He was very competitive over that long stretch, earning six division titles – including four straight. The Eagles advanced to the NFC Championship Game a remarkable five times, but only appeared in one Super Bowl and lost to New England. He was let go in 2012 after going 4-12 in Philadelphia.

WHEN THEY'RE PASSING

Eagles wide receiver DeVonta Smith has become one of the NFL's most reliable figures, and he'll be facing off against a Chiefs cornerback in Jaylen Watson who picked off both Jacksonville's Trevor Lawrence and Cincinnati's Joe Burrow in earlier playoff games. Philadelphia will have to spread the ball around to A.J. Brown, while Chiefs secondary star Trent McDuffie stays on his toes.

Travis Kelce remains Patrick Mahomes' top target, so it will likely be up to Eagles ace C.J. Gardner-Johnson – who's played nickel corner and safety – to make sure he can't get open.

Game's Biggest Underdogs

They were never supposed to win – until they did.

Kansas City coach Andy Reid will join Jon Gruden, Pete Carroll and Dan Reeves in facing a team he once coached in the Super Bowl. But unlike his former championship team at Philadelphia, the Chiefs won't come into the game as huge underdogs.

In fact, Reid's 2017 Eagles team went unfavored so many times that they took to wearing dog masks after each win. The story of their unexpected run to Super Bowl glory joined a few others that are still as surprising and they are memorable:

1969: JETS DEFEAT THE COLTS

The NFL had been dominant through the first two shared championship games – but Super Bowl III changed all of that. Jets quarterback Joe Namath seemed to sense it, boldly predicting victory days before the game – even though the Baltimore Colts entered with just one loss. New York made good, 16-7.

1970: CHIEFS DEFEAT THE VIKINGS

A year after the Jets' big upset, the legacy AFL Chiefs were once again completely overlooked. They'd finished second in their division, and Minnesota boasted an NFL-best record of 12-2. Idiosyncratic Kansas Chiefs coach Hank



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Stram called a great game, and the defense did the rest as the Chiefs won 23-7.

1998: BRONCOS DEFEAT THE PACKERS

Green Bay was coming off a return-to-glory championship with quarterback Brett Favre, while John Elway had a long history of Super Bowl failure with Denver. Elway ended up leading the Broncos to the first

of two straight career-ending big game victories.

2002: PATRIOTS DEFEAT THE RAMS

They later became the game's most decorated team, but the New England Patriots were huge underdogs when coach Bill Belichick and young quarterback Tom Brady entered Super Bowl XXXVI. The explosive Rams, then

based in St. Louis, were known as the "Greatest Show on Turf" – and they'd just won it all a couple of years before. Then Brady led an incredible fourth-quarter drive, and the Patriots secured their 20-17 win with a huge kick by Adam Vinatieri.

2008: GIANTS DEFEAT THE PATRIOTS

Six short years later, the

Patriots were juggernauts, looking to complete the first undefeated NFL championship season since the early 1970s against Eli Manning and frequently overlooked New York Giants.

Though only a wild-card team, the Giants made huge plays when they needed to and ultimately ended New England's streak by a score of 17-14.