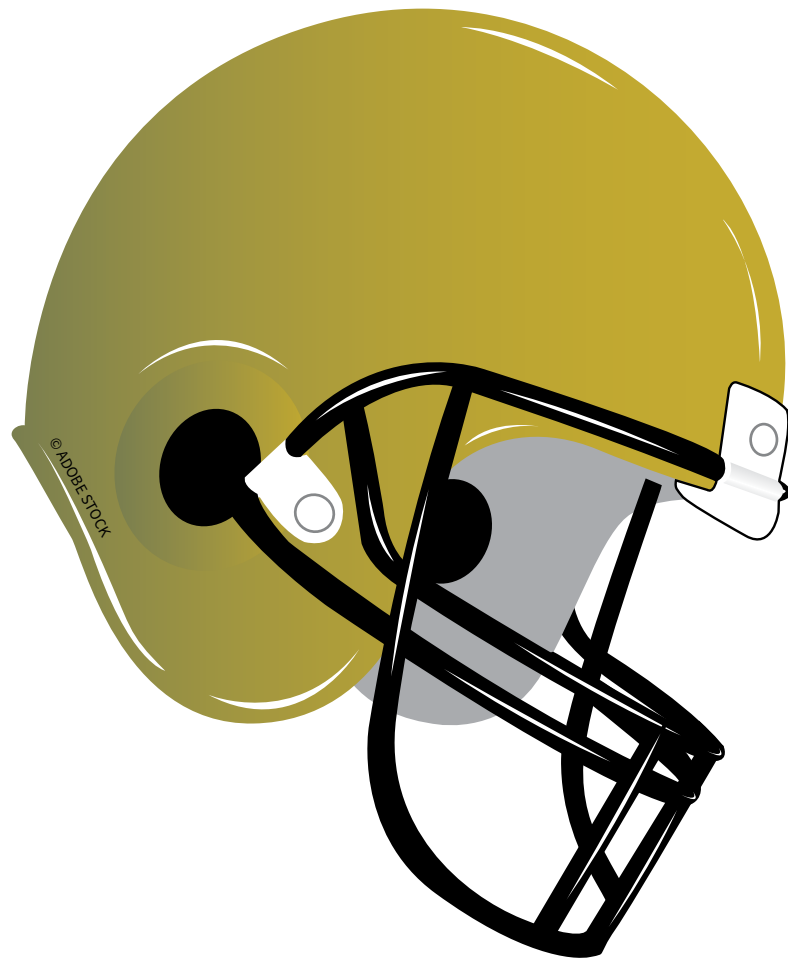




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# BIG GAME PREVIEW



# The Matchup

The stage is set for Feb. 2, 2020 — Super Bowl LIV. The Kansas City Chiefs will compete with the San Francisco 49ers for the Lombardi Trophy in Miami.

This game is a rematch from Sept. 23, 2018, when the Chiefs won at Arrowhead with a score of 38-27. The Niners lost their starting quarterback, Jimmy Garoppolo, prematurely due to an ACL injury during the matchup.

## **HOW THE NINERS CAN WIN**

The most significant challenge the Niners will face is how to contain the Chiefs' quarterback, Patrick Mahomes. The reigning NFL MVP is explosive, both through the air and on the ground. During the AFC Championship Game, he tip-toed

down the sideline for a 27-yard touchdown, after dodging numerous defensive players of the Tennessee Titans.

Fortunately for the 49ers, their stacked defense is on fire after shutting down the Green Bay Packers and Super Bowl champion Aaron Rodgers. The NFC Champions were relentless against the quarterback, causing two fumbles and an interception and holding the superstar to only 65 yards before halftime.

While the defense dominated their time with the ball, the offensive team took advantage of the opportunities

provided by their D. The Niners would go up 27-0 before finishing the game with a 37-20 lead.

A notable strategy was the decision to hammer the line of scrimmage with running plays and an unexpected urgency from the undrafted Raheem Mostert. He was cut by six teams before joining the San Francisco team and set a league record for most rushing yards (220) during this championship game.

## **HOW THE CHIEFS CAN WIN**

While the Chiefs weren't underdogs against the Tennessee Titans in the AFC Championship Game, they were tasked with managing the league's best rusher, Derrick Henry.

After holding him to only 69 yards, the defense is now up against the

Niners' stable, who rushed for a total of 287 yards in their championship matchup. The same defense must pursue the run and consider the risks of play-action calls.

If the Niners fail to put pressure on Mahomes, we can expect a massive passing game. The quarterback is coming off two victories after coming back from being down in points.

During the Divisional Round against the Houston Texans, the Chiefs overcame a 24-0 deficit before taking a four-point lead in a single quarter. The offense is incredibly quick to expose defenses and make big plays.

Another area that everyone will be watching is the coaching strategy from Andy Reid. He was criticized for poor clock management during his Super Bowl game coaching the Eagles.

# Spotlight on the Chiefs

Fortunately for Kansas City, Patrick Mahomes works best under pressure.

When the team was down 10-0 to the Tennessee Titans in the AFC Championship game, Mahomes wound up passing for 172 yards, two passing TDs and an impressive rushing touchdown to bring the score to 21-17 before halftime.

The steam provided by Kansas City proved to be too much for the Titans to overcome. The Chiefs took the game with a score of 35-24 to punch their ticket to Super Bowl LIV. This will be the team's first appearance in the big game in 50 years.

## OVERCOMING INJURY

Patrick Mahomes suffered a frightening knee injury during Week Seven in a matchup against the Denver Broncos. Early reports stated the dislocated kneecap would keep the quarterback off the field for three to five games. The QB only missed two competitions, however, during which the team went 1-1 without their starter steering the ship.

Mahomes made his way back onto the field in Week 10, where he threw for 446 yards and three touchdowns against his AFC Championship opponents, the Tennessee Titans.

Tyreek Hill is another significant injury that the Chiefs had to overcome early in the season. After a Week

One collarbone injury, the star receiver was forced to sit on the bench until Week Six. Hill proved to be an asset after scoring two touchdowns for the Chiefs in the Divisional Championship game.

## PASS-HEAVY OFFENSE

The Kansas City Chiefs are entering Super Bowl LIV primarily because of Patrick Mahome's throwing arm. The quarterback threw for 4,031 yards and 26 touchdowns in the regular season. It will be interesting to see how the offensive game plan aims to overcome San Francisco's pocket-collapsing defense.

The Chiefs ranked 23rd in the league for rushing during the regular season. Their 1,569 yards were gained by position players who experienced numerous injuries throughout the year. Stars on their offensive line and rushing stable missed extended time this season.

An interesting statistic from ESPN shows that Mahomes led his team in postseason rushing yards with 106, while his lead back, Damien Williams, obtained 92. Twenty-seven of the quarterback's rushing yards came in the AFC Championship, where he tight-roped the sideline for a pace-changing touchdown.



# Spotlight on the 49ers

The San Francisco 49ers dominated Aaron Rodgers and the Green Bay Packers with a score of 37–20 during the NFC Championship game.

This is the first time the team has made it to the Super Bowl since 2013, when they suffered a close loss at the hands of the Baltimore Ravens.

After struggling through injuries and a losing record last season, the team is prepared for battle under the guidance of their head coach, Kyle Shanahan. It took the coach only three years to make the big game after taking the job in 2017.

## REBOUND SEASON

The San Francisco 49ers joined the history books after their victory over the Green Bay Packers in the NFC Championship game. Only in one other instance has a team made the Super Bowl after losing at least 12 games in their previous season. This is a feat accomplished previously by the St. Louis Rams, who went on to win the big game in 2000.

A season-ending knee injury to quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo can partly be blamed for last year's losing season. The lackluster performance from the 49ers did, however, earn them the number two pick in this year's



CASEY MCNEIL/CREATIVE COMMONS

draft. Enter Nick Bosa.

## OUTSTANDING DEFENSE

The Niners' defense has been impressive throughout the season. They started the year with 10 interceptions through only seven games. The addition of defensive end Nick Bosa is credited as a significant factor in the turn-

around season. The NFC Defensive Player of October finished the year with 47 tackles and nine sacks.

As a unit, the defense racked up 12 interceptions, a substantial 1,000 tackles, and caused 23 fumbles.

## RUNNING GAME

49ers quarterback Jimmy

Garoppolo only threw six completions out of eight attempts during the NFC Championship game. The game plan was built surrounding their standup running stable. Back Raheem Mostert set a conference championship record with an unprecedented 220 yards and four rushing scores. Per the

NFL's Next Gen Stats technology, it was revealed that nine of his 24 carries broke 15-plus mph.

It will be interesting to see if the strategy during the Super Bowl matchup will be much of the same, or if Garoppolo will be tasked with a more significant role to compete with Patrick Mahomes' air attack.

# Coach Comparison

A unique storyline to follow in anticipation of Super Bowl LIV is the coaching matchup.

Both Andy Reid and Kyle Shanahan have experienced historical heartbreak in previous events but look to lead their teams to victory and obtain their first ring as head coach. Time will tell if the experience of Reid will outshine the relatively new leader in San Francisco.

## ANDY REID

The leader of the Kansas City Chiefs began his coaching career as an offensive line coach for four different colleges. Reid obtained his first job in the National Football League as an offensive assistant for the Green Bay Packers in 1992.

During his time with the Packers, he helped lead the team to a Super Bowl XXXI victory in a matchup against the New England Patriots in 1996. He took over the role of quarterback coach the following year.

In 1999, the Philadelphia Eagles hired Andy Reid as their head coach, making him the second-youngest manager at the time and the first to land this position without prior coordinator experience. It was 2001 when the team began its four consecutive seasons of winning the NFL's Eastern Division titles. Reid competed in his first and only Super Bowl appearance in 2004, where the



Andy Reid, coach of the Kansas City Chiefs in a 2017 photo.

JEFFREY BEALL/CREATIVE COMMONS

team suffered a loss to the New England Patriots.

The Eagles and Reid parted ways in 2013, when the coach signed a five-year contract to become the new head coach of the Kansas City Chiefs. Since he has held the position, the team has only missed the playoffs once, in 2014. Last year, the Chiefs made it to the AFC

Championship but fell short of advancing after losing to Tom Brady and his New England Patriots.

## KYLE SHANAHAN

Kyle is the son of the illustrious head coach Mike Shanahan, who holds three Super Bowl championships. The younger Shanahan



Kyle Shanahan, coach of the San Francisco 49ers, pictured in 2016.

THOMSON200/CREATIVE COMMONS

became the coach of the San Francisco 49ers in 2017, after two years as the offensive coordinator for the Atlanta Falcons.

The play calling by Mike Shanahan led to an impressive 28-3 lead over the Patriots during Super Bowl LI. In a stunning turn of events, the Pats overcame the deficit and shocked the world by beating

the Falcons in overtime with a score of 34-28.

After facing much criticism for his play-calling during the Falcons' loss, Shanahan's strategy will be an exciting storyline. Kyle and his father have made history by becoming the first father-son duo to lead their teams to the Super Bowl game.

# Quarterbacks: Setting the Pace

With a victory, the San Francisco 49ers would become tied with the Steelers and Patriots for the most Super Bowl championships within a franchise, with six.

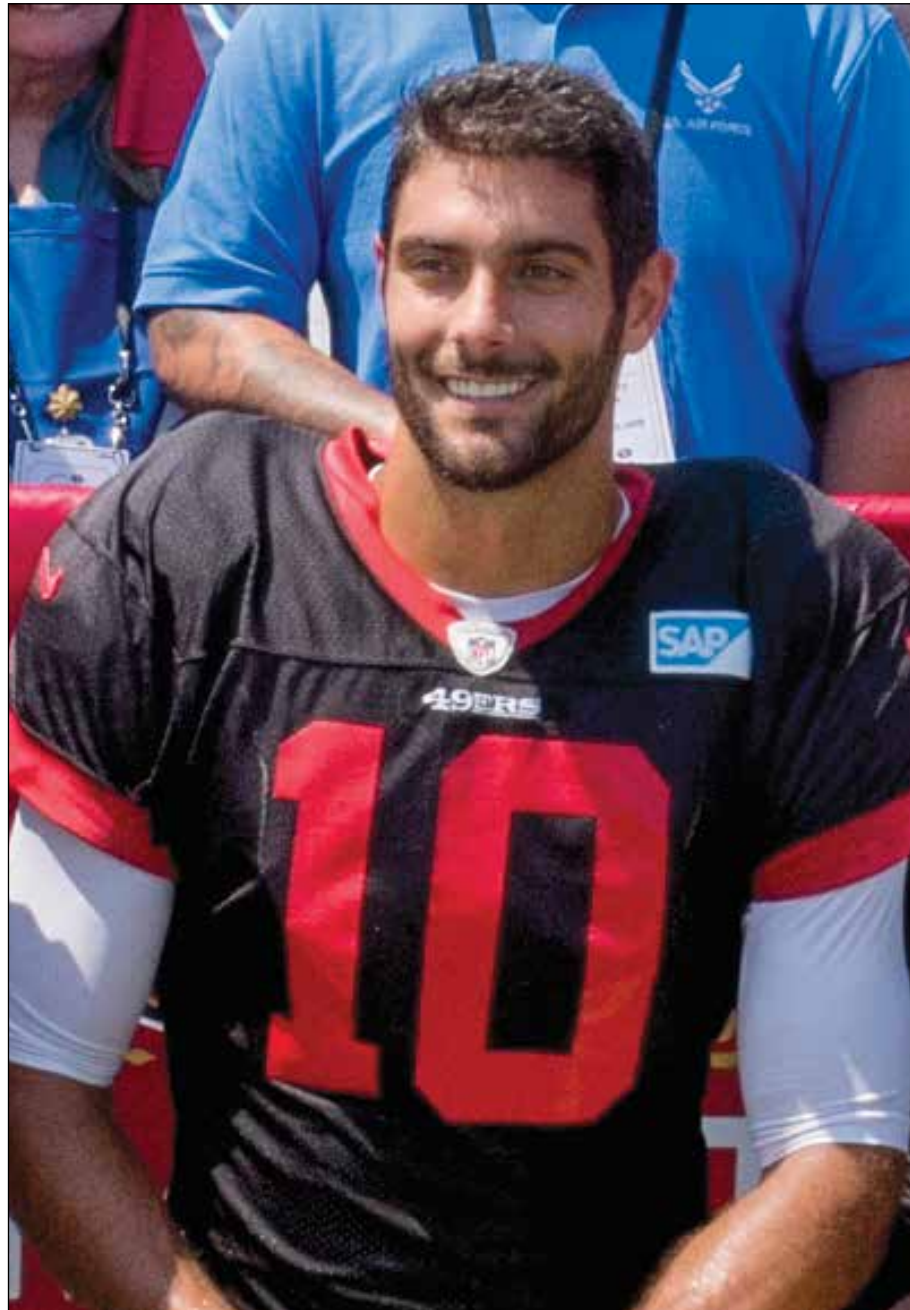
After a heartbreaking season of losses and injuries last year, the turnaround made by the team is nothing short of amazing. Led by Kyle Shanahan on the sidelines and Jimmy Garoppolo under center, the 49ers look to hoist the Lombardi Trophy when the scoreboard reads double zeros.

On the other side of the competition, the Kansas City Chiefs are entering their first Super Bowl in 50 years. During their first and only appearance in the big game, the Chiefs lost to the Packers in the first AFL-NFL Championship Game. This year, head coach Andy Reid will enter his second Super Bowl game with the reigning MVP, Patrick Mahomes, at the helm.

While the quarterbacks play with totally different styles, the pace of the matchup will be set by these two impressive players.

## JIMMY GAROPPOLO

Before leading the 49ers to their first Super Bowl since 2013, Jimmy Garoppolo was drafted in the second round by the New England Patriots in 2014. He would continue to



LAN KIM/U.S. AIR FORCE

play backup to Tom Brady until 2017 when he was traded to San Francisco for a second-round pick in the 2018 NFL Draft.

The quarterback suffered a season-ending injury last year during Week Three against his upcoming opponents. Since returning to continue his tenure as the starting quarterback, Garoppolo put up 3,978

yards and 27 touchdowns in the regular season. During the postseason, he threw for 131 yards against the Vikings. During the NFC Championships, he only completed six of eight attempts for 77 yards.

## PATRICK MAHOMES

After suffering a shocking, overtime loss in the AFC



JEFFREY BEALL/CREATIVE COMMONS

Championship last season, Mahomes and the Chiefs achieved the goal of punching a ticket to Super Bowl LIV. While they dominated their postseason opponents this year, the defense of the 49ers may be a difficult task to overcome.

The 24-year old quarterback was drafted 10th overall in the 2017 NFL draft after the Chiefs

gave up their third-round pick and 2018 first-rounder to the Buffalo Bills.

Coach Andy Reid saw the potential in the Texas Tech superstar and made the moves to acquire him. The strategy worked in the Chiefs' favor as the quarterback threw for over 5,000 yards and 50 touchdowns when he became the starter in 2018.

# Defense Wins Championships

Both the Kansas City Chiefs and the San Francisco 49ers are known for their fast-paced, high-scoring offenses. Names like Kelce, Kittle, Mahomes, Hill and Garoppolo frequent the highlight reels. Stills, their stars on the other side of the ball are just as crucial to punching their ticket to the Super Bowl.

Check out these statistics from the National Football League to understand the importance of a well-stacked defense in the big game.

- The average NFL defensive rank for a potential Super Bowl champion is seventh.
- Forty-five of 47 Super Bowl champions have totaled at least 30 sacks in a season.
- The top-ranked defense reached the big game a total of 11 times, and have a record of 8-3 in the Super Bowl.
- The team who allowed the fewest points in a season reached the Super Bowl 18 times and won the game 13 times.

This year, both defenses will have their hands full when managing two of

the hottest offenses in the game.

## KANSAS CITY CHIEFS

The Chiefs defensive coordinator, Bob Sutton, was released only days after the team lost in overtime to the New England Patriots during the AFC Championship. Steve Spagnuolo stepped into the role, revamped his coaching staff and ignited the Chiefs' impact on the defensive side of the ball.

The Honey Badger, Tyrann Mathieu, was named the AFC Defensive Player of the Month during the Chiefs' playoff push in December. The safety racked up 25 tackles, six pass defenses, two interceptions and forced a fumble during the final month of the year.

The Chiefs also acquired the veteran

experience of Terrell Suggs, picking him up off waivers after the Arizona Cardinals released him. His impact is yet to be seen, but he already has one Super Bowl win over the San Francisco 49ers. He was a member of the Baltimore Ravens, who won the big game in 2013.

## SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

The Niners have been fighting for an epic defense for the last several seasons. The team used their first-round pick to pick up a defensive lineman consecutively in four of the previous five NFL Drafts. The talent upfront is in sync and dominating the league with big sacks and offense-crippling play calling.

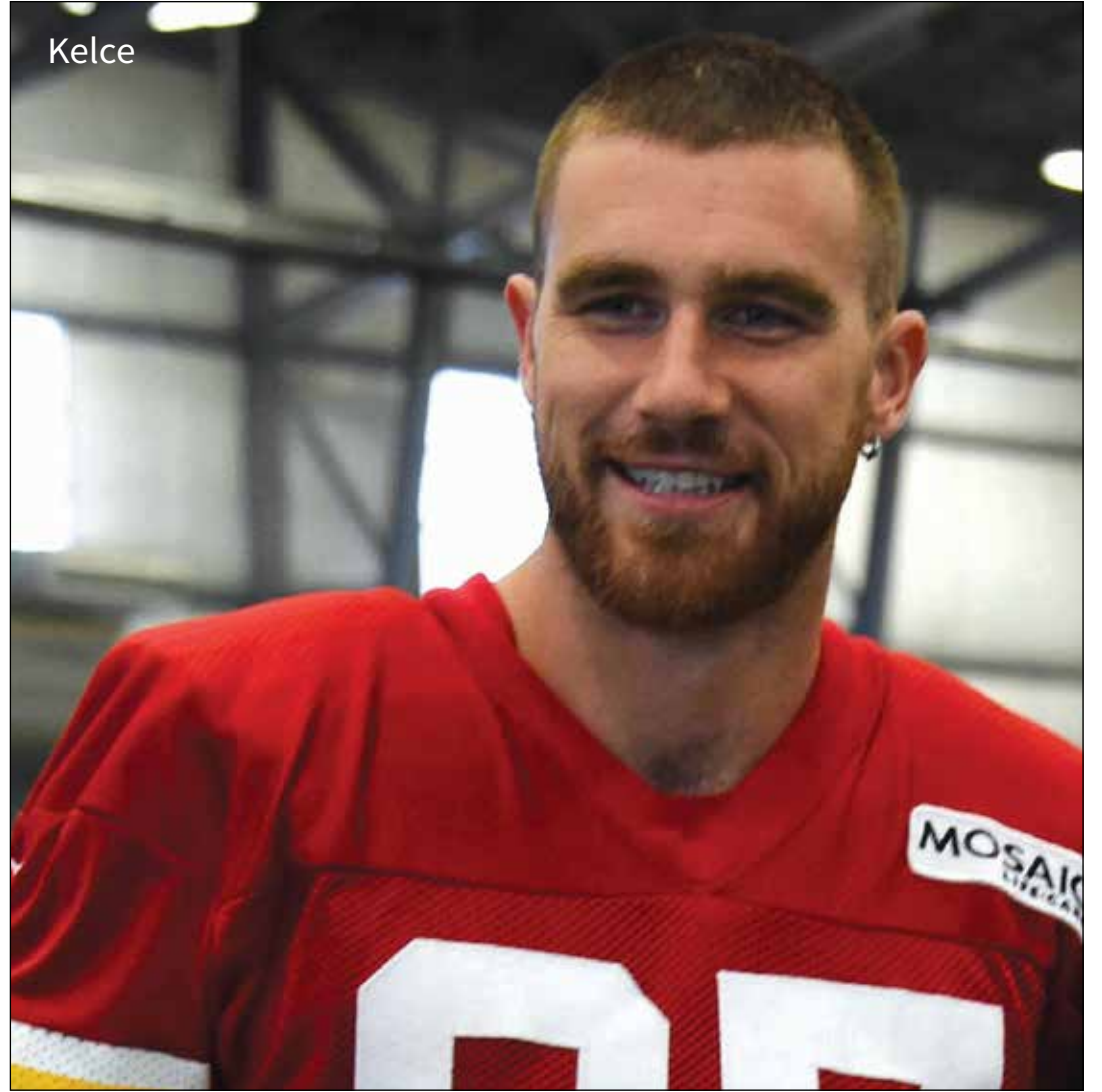
In the NFC Divisional Round, all four of the first-round picks sacked quarterback Kirk Cousins for a sack. Their ability to collapse the pocket will be an intriguing part of Sunday's game, as Patrick Mahomes is no stranger to scrambling before making big plays. However, speed from the rookie Nick Bosa may be what the team needs to limit the time for the QB must find an open receiver.

Mahomes



THOMSON/CREATIVE COMMONS

Kelce



U.S. AIR FORCE MASTER SGT. APRIL WICKES

# The Players to Watch

The Kansas City Chiefs and the San Francisco 49ers each have stars on both sides of the ball. The matchup that takes place on Feb. 2 is expected to be packed with high-flying offense and explosive defensive efforts.

Keep an eye on these dynamic players as their potential for big plays will make for an exciting game.

## **PATRICK MAHOMES**

Expect the Niners to have their hands full when facing quarterback Patrick Mahomes. In both playoff games this season, the Chiefs came back from deficits — 24-0 against Houston and 10-0 when playing Tennessee — before kicking it into high gear and dominating their opponents.

The Chiefs, under the guidance of Mahomes, put up a staggering 51 points against the Texans and beat the Titans with an impressive score of 31. Watch for the quarterback to continue his dominance through the air and by making spectacular rushing gains.

## **TRAVIS KELCE**

The 6-foot-5 tight end has the potential of being a gamechanger during the Super Bowl. After syncing with Mahomes for 134 yards and three touchdowns against the Texans, he was held to only 30 yards during the AFC Championship. Kelce will be under the microscope when going against San Francisco's elite tight end, George Kittle.

## **JIMMY GAROPPOLO**

While the Niners quarterback only attempted eight passes during the NFC Championship Game, he may be forced to throw more when keeping up with the Chiefs' high-scoring offense.

Look for Garoppolo to take this game personally, as the last time these two teams met, he suffered a season-ending ACL injury. During the previous matchup, the quarterback threw for 251 yards after 31 attempts. The Chiefs would ultimately win with a score of 38-27.

## **RAHEEM MOSTERT**

The 49ers running back Tevin Coleman left the NFC Championship game with a shoulder injury. This led to an incredible performance from Raheem Mostert during the run-heavy victory. The undrafted talent is still awaiting his first NFL start. Will the Super Bowl be his time to shine?