

# Big Game

PREVIEW



# Inside the Big Game

## VIEWING OPTIONS

The Super Bowl will be broadcast in two formats for the first time in NFL history. CBS will carry a traditional broadcast, while Nickelodeon airs a telecast aimed at families and kids.

## PLANTING SEEDS

Baltimore failed to advance to the big game, losing to Kansas City despite being the No. 1 AFC seed. The top seeds haven't advanced to the big game in back-to-back years since 2015, when it happened for the third consecutive time dating back to the 2013 season.

## UNIFORM NOTES

Kansas City wore red helmets, white jerseys and red pants in the AFC title game. They'd come in at 5-1 with that combination, with the lone loss coming against the Denver Broncos. Meanwhile, San Francisco played the NFC championship game in gold helmets, red jerseys and gold pants. They were 7-3 in 2023 with that combination, losing to the Cleveland Browns, Cincinnati Bengals and Los Angeles Rams.

## SWIFTIE ALERT

Will Chiefs super-fan Taylor Swift

## LVIII Game Day Information

**Date:** 6:30 p.m. ET, Sunday, Feb. 11, 2024

**Location:** Allegiant Stadium, Las Vegas

**TV:** CBS, Nickelodeon

**Game Weather:** None (indoor)

**TV Announcers:** Jim Nantz, Tony Romo, Tracy Wolfson, Evan Washburn, and Jay Feely

**Streaming:** Paramount+, CBS Sports App

**Halftime Performer:** Usher

be there to support boyfriend Travis Kelce in the big game? Her concert schedule won't make it easy — but she could resume her position in the skybox in Las Vegas.

The LVIII matchup is set for 6:30

p.m. Eastern time on Sunday, Feb. 11, the day after Swift concludes a run of four shows on the Eras Tour in Tokyo, Japan. The time difference will work in her favor, since Japan is 17 hours ahead of Nevada.

Her concert would potentially end around midnight, which is 7 a.m. on Saturday in Vegas. She'd then need to immediately board a flight back to the States. Swift's tour then resumes on Friday, Feb. 16, in Melbourne, Australia.

## RUMOR MILL

Late in the conference championship week, a conspiracy theory took hold on social media: The NFL had predicted this year's matchup with an LVIII logo that featured San Francisco 49ers red and Baltimore Ravens purple. Of course, those teams won't meet in this year's Super Bowl — but there is a precedent for such things.

For instance, the LVI game logo was red, orange, and yellow, and featured the Cincinnati Bengals (orange) and the Los Angeles Rams (yellow). Then the subsequent logo for the LVII match was green, red and purple as the Philadelphia Eagles (green) faced off against the Kansas City Chiefs (red).





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# 49ers Try Again for Elusive Title

It took a big comeback, but No. 1 NFC seed San Francisco finally punched their ticket for a rematch of 2020's Super Bowl LIV, when the 49ers lost 31-20 to the Kansas City Chiefs.

They had to overcome an early NFC Championship Game deficit against the Detroit Lions to get there.

On the one hand, the 49ers have been the model of consistency, appear-

ing in four of the last five NFC Championship Games — and half of the last 12. But San Francisco hasn't won a Super Bowl in 30 seasons. The Lions appeared to be on the verge of their first-ever title game trip, but Detroit was outscored by 20 points in the second half of the NFC title game.

San Francisco had already shown they could take a punch. Their season turned on Week 10 in Jacksonville, after having slumped to three straight losses. The 49ers breezed past the Jaguars 34-3, notching their biggest road win in a decade. They then began the club's lengthiest win streak of the year, at six.

Meanwhile, the Detroit Lions ended

up as the No. 3 seed, significantly impacting their chances of advancing to the big game. No. 3 Kansas City advanced to the Super Bowl on the other side of the 2023 bracket, but before then, the most recent No. 3 seed to advance past the conference championships was the Indianapolis Colts, who beat the Chicago Bears following the 2006 season. Only three No. 3 seeded teams have ever made the final matchup of the season since the current wild-card playoff system was created in 1990.

But the Lions spent the year defying low expectations. Detroit won the first NFC North title in franchise history,

then beat the Los Angeles Rams in the wild-card game and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in the divisional round. Before this, Detroit hadn't won a playoff game on the road since way back in 1957. Ironically, that win came against the 49ers.

Meanwhile, San Francisco was trying to advance to the Super Bowl for the first time since 2019. They took advantage of key miscues against Detroit. Coach Dan Campbell chose to attempt a fourth-down conversion deep in San Francisco territory rather than tying the game with a field goal, and the 49ers added to their 27 unanswered second-half points.



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# Chiefs Are Back In the Big Game

**Kansas City has a chance to join an exclusive club with a win in the Super Bowl.**

A return appearance gives the Chiefs an opportunity to break the longest drought without back-to-back Super Bowl champions in league history. They defeated the Philadelphia Eagles last year. It's been almost two decades since the New England Patriots repeated.

Six defending champs have lost the following year. The Pittsburgh Steelers are the only NFL franchise to win back-

to-back titles on two occasions, with a '70s-era squad that produced an incredible 11 Pro Football Hall of Famers. No team has ever won three Super Bowls in a row. The Packers won a trio of consecutive titles, but only the second and third were in the Super Bowl.

Kansas City has been a regular AFC championship contender of late, playing in their sixth consecutive title game. This year marked the 12th consecutive AFC championship match featuring either the Chiefs and/or the New England Patriots, dating back to a 2011 contest between the Pittsburgh Steelers and New York Jets.

Kansas City entered the AFC title game with issues on the offensive line, as the Chiefs dealt with an injury to left guard Joe Thuney. He strained a pectoral against the Buffalo Bills in the divisional round. But key mistakes by the Baltimore Ravens sent Kansas City back to the Super Bowl after a 17-10 victory.

Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes claimed his 13th postseason win to reach the big game, tying Terry Bradshaw, John Elway, Peyton Manning and Steve Young for third all-time behind Tom Brady and Joe Montana. Kansas City's Andy Reid is the only coach to appear in four conference title

matches with different NFL clubs. He led the Philadelphia Eagles to five before taking the Chiefs to their sixth in 2024.

Kansas City tight end Travis Kelce set a new record for career NFL postseason catches with an 8-yarder from quarterback Patrick Mahomes in the first half of the AFC title match. (Kelce moved past wide receiver Jerry Rice, who used to play for the Chiefs' LVIII opponents in San Francisco.) Kelce started the scoring against the Baltimore Ravens, hauling in a 19-yard TD pass from Mahomes on the first drive of the conference championship.



# Purdy vs. Mahomes

For all of his recent dominance, Patrick Mahomes actually finished with his worst-ever regular season numbers. Despite that, he's returning to the big game for a second straight year.

Among his career-low marks: average yards per pass (7.0), average passing yards per game (261.4), passer rating (92.6) and sacks (4.33% of his dropbacks). Blame a supporting cast who's struggled, including a receiving corps that dropped a worst in the NFL 40 passes.

The Chiefs lost six games in 2023, including five over a miserable eight-week stretch in the middle of the season that left Kansas City as the No. 3 seed on the AFC side of the bracket. But then Mahomes and tight end Travis Kelce caught fire, eventually snapping the record for most post-season scoring passes between a receiver and quarterback previously held by Tom Brady and Rob Gronkowski.

Meanwhile, Brock Purdy had to quickly put 2022 behind him, after the 49ers lost last year's NFC Championship Game when he went down in the first quarter against



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Philadelphia. It was a disappointing end to a campaign that saw him quickly move up from No. 3 quarterback behind Jimmy Garoppolo and Trey Lance before injuries knocked them out.

San Francisco won every game that Purdy started and finished before the injury. Fast forward to this year, and he

exited the 2023 regular season as the first San Francisco quarterback to throw at least 30 TDs and more than 4,000 yards in more than two decades. Purdy led the league with a passer rating of 113, while his 9.6 yards per attempt were the most since 2000 when Kurt Warner had 9.9.

He then helped the 49ers to



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the LVIII title match after leading an incredible comeback despite trailing 17-3 at the beginning of the third quarter in the NFC Championship Game. Lions quarterback Jared Goff arrived having recorded consecutive 100-plus postseason passer ratings, yet it was Purdy and the 49ers who stormed to a

34-31 comeback victory.

Even so, Purdy is making just \$870,000 in base salary as part of a four-year contract worth \$3.7 million as the final pick in the 2022 NFL Draft. Cincinnati quarterback Joe Burrow is the highest-paid quarterback in the league with an average annual salary of \$55 million.





# The Winding Road to the Title Match

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The road to the big game this year saw the 49ers rack up momentum and the Chiefs return to the spotlight.

San Francisco got off to an incredibly hot start, going 5-0 to join the Eagles as the last undefeated NFL teams in 2023. The 49ers then lost to Cleveland, skidding into a total of three consecutive losses going into the bye. Returning rested and ready, San Francisco then proceeded to reel off another six straight victories.

They'd become the first NFL team to clinch a playoff berth, then claimed the NFC West title in consecutive years for the first time since 2011-12 with a 45-29 victory over Arizona. The 49ers entered the playoffs as the No. 1 seed, a first for San Francisco since 2019.

They managed only a close 24-21 win over Green Bay in the divisional round before slipping past Detroit in the NFC Championship in their fourth appearance in five years. The Lions' Cinderella season had included their first home playoff game since 1993, and just their third since earning a pre-Super Bowl NFL championship in 1957.

Still, San Francisco was appearing in the conference title match for the third consecutive time, following similar runs in 1988-90, 1992-94 and 2011-13. That experience came in handy when a comeback was needed to advance to the NFL's biggest game.

On the other side of the NFL bracket, Kansas City didn't improve upon their 2022 season numbers, when the Chiefs went 14-3. They nevertheless became division champs for an eighth straight time while notching their 11th straight winning campaign. The Chiefs beat Baltimore in their sixth consecutive AFC title match 17-10, earning their fourth

Super Bowl berth in five years.

But it wasn't easy. Kansas City opened the season with a loss, falling to the Detroit Lions. The Chiefs then reeled off six straight wins before suffering a midseason swoon. They lost five of eight, including a divisional stumble against Denver. Kansas City recovered with two wins to end the season at 11-6 overall and 9-3 in the AFC West.

The Chiefs beat the No. 6 seed Miami 26-7 in Kansas City in the wild-card round to open the postseason, then gutted out a 27-24 win over the Bills in Buffalo to get past the division round. A win over the Ravens sent Kansas City to the NFL's LVII title match.



# Redemption for Andy Reid

Kansas City has won two of the last four Super Bowls, confirming Andy Reid's place among the NFL's greatest coaches. Ironically, just a few years ago, the Chiefs were dead last in the AFC West for total division titles.

Denver tied for first all-time in 2015 with the Chargers and Raiders, each of whom had 15 championships. Kansas City only had eight total at that point. What a difference Reid, quarterback phenom Patrick Mahomes and others have made for the Chiefs. They've reeled off another eight straight AFC West titles to take the all-time lead.

The just-concluded season certainly wasn't the Chiefs' most dominant. But they battled through the year, claimed another divisional title and then bested Miami, Buffalo and the Ravens to get back to the Super Bowl.

Ironically, Reid was also once known for struggling on the biggest NFL stages. Hired by the Philadelphia Eagles in 1999, he went on to reach three consecutive NFC championship games between 2001-03 — but lost them all, to the Rams, Buccaneers and Panthers, respectively.



SPC. ALVIN CONLEY/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Even when the Eagles finally broke through, beating the Atlanta Falcons in the conference title match to advance to the Super Bowl, Philadelphia lost 24-21 to the New England Patriots. The Eagles reached one more AFC championship game but fell again 32-25 to the Arizona Cardinals.

Philadelphia parted ways

with Reid, opening the door for his current tenure in Kansas City beginning with the 2013 season. The Chiefs lost their first conference championship game too, before Kansas City defeated the 49ers, 31-20, in 2020's Super Bowl LIV.

The Chiefs stayed in the mix, but fell to Tampa Bay in the

following year's Super Bowl and then to Cincinnati in the 2022 AFC title game. Kansas City advanced to Super Bowl LVII in 2023 and defeated Reid's former Eagles team, 38-35.

In all, Reid has made 11 trips to NFL conference championship games, and has won two of his four Super Bowl games.

His current team's division-title streak is second in NFL history only to the New England Patriots, who once claimed a record 11 straight AFC East titles.

Entering this postseason, Kansas City already had more playoff wins in the last five years than they'd had in previous history (11 vs. 9).



# The Big Game Still Amazes

The Super Bowl grew out of the 1966 merger of the NFL with their rival American Football League. Both sides agreed to an end-of-the-season title match, which began in January 1967 as the AFL-NFL World Championship Game. Tickets were \$12.

The big game is a big boon for grocers, takeout places and beer distributors. Experts say Super Bowl Sunday is the second biggest day for food consumption, trailing only Thanksgiving. The National Chicken Council reports that Americans eat almost 1.5 billion chicken wings over the weekend. Americans are also projected to spend more than \$1 billion on beer alone.

The Pittsburgh Steelers and New England Patriots are tied for the most Super Bowl victories, with six each. The Vikings are the only franchise to appear in four Super Bowls while never holding a lead on the scoreboard.

Usher is scheduled to star in the LVIII halftime show, but the game didn't always feature singers. In fact, the first didn't perform until 1970 when Carol Channing took the stage. These acts aren't paid an appearance fee. Instead, the NFL simply



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covers expenses associated with their performance, including stagehands, lighting and security.

Just three university programs have traditionally produced the most Super Bowl quarterbacks: Notre Dame, Michigan and Stanford. Purdue was next on the list.

Last year's big game featured two starting Black quarter-

backs for the first time in league history, as the Chiefs' Patrick Mahomes faced off against the Eagles' Jalen Hurts. Mahomes' teammate Travis Kelce returns to the NFL title match a year after participating in the first Super Bowl ever to feature two brothers. His Chiefs bested the Eagles and Jason Kelce.

After their 2024 NFC title

game loss, the Detroit Lions remain one of four teams that have never advanced to the big game — along with the Cleveland Browns, Jacksonville Jaguars and Houston Texas. There are still 12 NFL clubs without Super Bowl titles, including the Lions, Browns, Jaguars, Texans, Cincinnati Bengals, Buffalo Bills, San Diego Chargers, Arizona

Cardinals, Atlanta Falcons, Carolina Panthers, Tennessee Titans and Minnesota Vikings.

For years, the series finale for M\*A\*S\*H was the most-watched TV show in history — until the XLIV title match finally bested it. The underdog New Orleans Saints beat the Indianapolis Colts 31-17, earning their first-ever NFL championship.