



**Sunday, February 11, 2024**

## **KANSAS CITY CHIEFS VS. SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS**

**Game Time: 6:30pm ET**

**Location: Allegiant Stadium (Las Vegas)**

**Watch: CBS**

**Selection: KC Chiefs on the spread and money line.**

Super Bowl LVIII is upon us as the AFC #3 Seed Kansas City Chiefs are set to square off against the NFC #1 Seed San Francisco 49ers. Heading into this matchup, both teams have been trending in opposite directions. The Chiefs have notched 3 impressive wins, first at home vs Miami, and then on the road in hostile environments at both Buffalo and Baltimore, and the Chiefs were rare underdogs in both of those games. They are surging and playing their best football of the season at the perfect time, as championship caliber teams do. The Chiefs are the 9th team in the past 20 seasons to pull off upsets in both the Divisional round and Conference Championship, and 6 of the previous 8 teams to do this have won the Super Bowl. The 49ers, meanwhile, barely squeaked by in back-to-back weeks at home, failing to cover the point spread each time, and quite honestly, they caught some serious breaks to be able to do so.

On the surface, the simple reason to like the Chiefs is Patrick Mahomes. He's far and away the best quarterback in the game right now, especially in a big game setting, particularly in a one game, winner-take-all scenario. From a betting perspective, he has been unbelievably profitable in the playoffs. In his career he is 12-5 against the spread (ATS) and 14-3 straight up (SU). That's the best cover rate of any QB in the Super Bowl era (minimum 15 starts) and the best win percentage of any QB in the Super Bowl era (minimum 10 starts). As an underdog, which the Chiefs are in this game, he has been even better, going 10-1-1 ATS and 9-3 SU as an underdog for his career, and 3-0 ATS and 3-0 SU for his career in the playoffs. In his last 6 playoff games he has completed 70% of his passes, with 11 touchdown passes and 0 interceptions. It just does not get any better than that, but as we delve further into the analysis for this game there are a plethora of reasons to back the Chiefs in this game.

Let's start with the coaching matchup. Andy Reid in his career has been lethal with extra time to prepare, to the tune of 31-7 SU off the bye. He has a tremendous amount of Super Bowl experience, as this is now his fifth appearance in the big game as a head coach (4th appearance as Chiefs HC in 5 years) and sixth overall if you count his appearance as an offensive assistant for the Packers. We can trust that he will have his team well prepared and will make sound decisions throughout the game. Kyle Shanahan, although a great coach in his own right, has some demons in the Super Bowl. He was the Offensive Coordinator for the Falcons when they famously blew a 28-3 lead to the New England Patriots in Super Bowl LI, and the head coach of the 49ers when they blew a 10-point 4th quarter lead in Super Bowl LIV, which they ultimately lost to the Chiefs, 31-20. I think it is safe to say that with that kind of history there is far more pressure on Shanahan than Reid. This is the fourth Super Bowl rematch between head coaches. The coach who won the first matchup won the second matchup in all three previous rematches (Chuck Noll vs Tom Landry,

Jimmy Johnson vs Marv Levy, Tom Coughlin vs Bill Belichick.) On the defensive side of the ball there is no one better right now than Chief's Defensive Coordinator Steve Spagnuolo. Last week his defensive game planning broke the Ravens as they threw the ball 37 times (their 2nd highest total of the season) and only ran the ball 16 times. Spagnola's defense forced 3 turnovers with 4 sacks en route to holding an offensive led by the probable league MVP Lamar Jackson to 10 points.

This is the first time in Patrick Mahomes' career that we can say his team has an elite defense. In fact, one could argue it is the strength of this team, and this unit has been stellar in the playoffs, only allowing 13.7 points per game. This season the Chiefs defense has allowed more than 24 points just once. The Niners defense has struggled this postseason, giving up an average of 386 yards per game, 770 yards total in just two games. This ranks 6th among 8 teams that have played two playoff games this year. This defense continues to be susceptible to the run as they gave up 108 yards on 18 carries to Aaron Jones of the Packers, and then 182 yards rushing to the Lions. Teams have a 79% conversion rate on short yardage runs on 3rd, 4th, or goal line situations of 1-2 yards. The Chiefs will look to continue to exploit this matchup, as they have found something with their promising young running back Isiah Pacheco. In 6 career postseason games he has averaged 18.7 touches for 90.5 total yards and is the second Chiefs player ever to have a rushing TD in 4 consecutive games. The Chiefs have leaned on him this postseason and he has not disappointed.

The 49ers certainly have an edge with regards to their skill positions, but they do not have a duo anywhere near as successful as Patrick Mahomes and Travis Kelce, who now have the record for most touchdown passes between QB and receiver in the postseason ever. Kelce has really come on in the playoffs this year, already amassing 23 catches for 262 yards (second most this postseason), and 3 touchdown catches (tied for 1st this postseason). He is now 2nd all time in playoff receiving yards at 1,810 yards, 1st in playoff receptions 156, and 2nd in playoff receiving touchdowns with 19.

The kicking game is an area where there is probably the biggest discrepancy between these two teams. The Chiefs have Harrison Butker, who is one of the best kickers in the game. He was 33-35 on field goals during the regular season (94.3%), and 38-38 on PATS. In the postseason he has been 6-6 on FG and 5-5 in PATS. The 49ers have 3rd round rookie Jake Moody who has had an up and down year. 21-25 on FG, 60-61 in PATS in the regular season. In the postseason he has struggled, going 3-5 FG, 7-7 in PATS, and has missed a field goal in each of the 49ers 2 playoff games so far. This is a huge area of concern for a game of this magnitude.

An interesting stat of note is the Chiefs have led for 2:05:36 this postseason, which is the 4th most by any team entering the Super Bowl since 2000. The Niners have only led for 27:30, which is the least amount of time for any team entering the Super Bowl since 2000. The Chiefs are 1 of 3 NFL franchises to make 4 Super Bowls in 5 years and are looking to become the first team since the 2003-04 Patriots to win back-to-back titles. The two-time Super Bowl MVP Patrick Mahomes is the first QB ever to start in 4 Super Bowls before turning 30.

Since 2001, underdogs are 15-7 ATS in the Super Bowl. We expect the Kansas City Chiefs to make it 16. Back the Chiefs in Super Bowl LVIII.

**I suggest splitting up your bet. Wager half on the MONEY LINE to win the game outright, and the other half getting 2 or 2.5 points, depending on where you wager.**

