

NFL BROADCAST RESEARCH PACKET

SFO@RAM



San Francisco 49ers at Los Angeles Rams

Thursday, September 10, 2026 – Week 1

Starting QBs: Brock Purdy (SFO) vs Matthew Stafford (RAM)

Records: SFO 12-5 vs RAM 12-5

Season stats: 2025 regular season (17 G). Season profiles use 2025 (last completed season), through games completed before this 2026 slate.

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OPENING WATCH LIST – READ THIS FIRST

Game Thesis

The 2026 season opener features a clash of offensive philosophies between two 12-5 NFC West rivals. Matthew Stafford enters his 18th NFL season leading a Los Angeles attack that was the division’s most explosive last year, racking up 4,707 passing yards and 46 touchdowns. The Rams' identity is built on high-volume efficiency, leading the league in early-down success (47.9% on first down) while trusting Stafford to punish opponents who blitz, where he produced a +0.285 EPA per play last season.

San Francisco counters with the league’s most efficient situational engine, despite Brock Purdy being limited to nine games in 2025. The 49 ers finished last season with the NFL's #2-ranked third-down offense (+0.263 EPA) and the #1-ranked money-down passer in Purdy, who posted a +0.588 EPA on non-red-zone money downs. The central tension tonight is whether a 49 ers defense that ranked dead last in the NFL in sacks (20) and 30th in interceptions (6) last year can disrupt a Rams offense that added Davante Adams to a room already featuring Puka Nacua, the league’s highest-graded offensive player in 2025.

Core Broadcast Question

Can the 49 ers' pass rush, which recorded a league-low 20 sacks last season and currently lists Nick Bosa as Questionable, generate enough pressure to disrupt Matthew Stafford’s 46-touchdown rhythm?

All Things to Watch

- **Stafford’s Opening Script:** The Rams led the NFL in first-down success rate (47.9%) and second-down success rate (57.0%) last season;
- **The Money-Down Maestro:** Brock Purdy led all qualified QBs last season with a +0.588 EPA on non-red-zone money downs; the 49 ers' ability to stay on the field depends on his situational precision.
- **Bosa vs. Jackson Health:** San Francisco’s Nick Bosa (knee) and Rams left tackle Alaric Jackson (illness) are both Questionable; the winner of this game-time availability battle decides the blind-side pressure rate.
- **Nacua vs. Cover-3:** San Francisco’s most-used coverage shell last year (Cover-3, 26.8%) allowed a 74.7% completion rate, the exact seam Nacua attacked for 1,715 yards last season.
- **WR Room Attrition:** The 49 ers enter without Ricky Pearsall (IR), while Mike Evans, Christian Kirk, and De'Zhaun Stribling are all Questionable, potentially leaving George Kittle as the primary target.
- **Stafford’s Blitz Answer:** Stafford was more efficient against the blitz (+0.285 EPA) than standard looks (+0.225 EPA) last year; San Francisco only blitzed on 10.5% of plays in 2025.
- **The Red-Zone Squeeze:** Despite 46 touchdowns, Stafford struggled on money downs inside the 20 last year, posting a minus-1.095 EPA with one interception on nine attempts.
- **McCaffrey’s Interior Lane:** Christian McCaffrey (1,202 yards last season) found his best efficiency running middle-left (4.6 YPC), a direct collision with Rams run-stuffer Poona Ford (72.6 defensive grade).
- **Kicking Reliability:** San Francisco’s Eddy Pineiro was nearly perfect in 2025 (96.6% FG) compared to a Rams unit that saw Joshua Karty miss five field goals (66.7%).
- **Stafford's Yardage Milestone:** Entering his 18th season, Stafford sits at 59,871 career regular-season passing yards, just 129 yards shy of the 60,000 mark.

How Tonight Unfolds

- Matthew Stafford enters the game with 377 career touchdowns, looking to build on a 4,707-yard 2025 campaign.
- The Rams offense utilizes 11 personnel (46.2% of 2025 snaps) but transitions to 13 personnel for maximum efficiency (+0.238 EPA).
- Brock Purdy targets a 49 ers receiving corps that could be missing its three top outside threats due to game-time quad, calf, and hamstringing designations.
- Christian McCaffrey resumes his bell-cow role after logging 432 total touches and 10 rushing touchdowns last season.
- Fred Warner, the league's top-graded defender (83.8), anchors an SFO middle facing a Rams zone back end that gave up a 71.2% completion rate to Cover-2 last year.
- The Rams defensive front, led by Kobie Turner (70.8 pass-rush grade), tests an SFO offensive line that saw Trent Williams surrender 32 pressures in 2025.
- Kyren Williams (1,252 yards in 2025) and Blake Corum (746 yards) share the backfield workload against an SFO defense that allowed a +0.237 EPA against their base Cover-3 shell.

Game Keys

Key	Why It Matters
Purdy’s Blitz Timing	Purdy’s EPA cratered from +0.262 to +0.021 when blitzed last season; RAM recorded 47 sacks.
Stafford’s Blind Side	If RAM LT Alaric Jackson (Q) sits, Stafford faces pressure behind a unit that allowed 25 sacks in 2025.
Kittle in the Seam	With SFO wideouts flagged, Kittle faces a RAM zone that surrendered a 68.1% completion rate to Cover-3.
Red Zone Conversions	SFO was 7th in RZ success (46.3%); Stafford’s money-down RZ EPA was a matchup-low -1.095.
The Sack Gap	SFO's league-low 20 sacks in 2025 must improve to stop a passer who averaged 7.9 yards per attempt.
Pineiro’s Leg	SFO holds a major special teams edge; Pineiro (96.6%) vs. a RAM room that split kicks at 66.7% and 92.3%.

Broadcast line: The Rams bring the NFC West’s most explosive scoring machine (46 Stafford TDs) into the opener to test a 49 ers defense that ranked last in the league in sacks a year ago.

Deep-Dive Contents

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1. SFO Team Identity

Coaching Staff & Scheme

Name	Title
Kyle Shanahan	Head Coach
Klayton Adams	Offensive Coordinator
Robert Saleh	Defensive Coordinator
John Lynch	General Manager

Broadcast line: A 12-5 club that won with a top-six passing attack and elite money-down efficiency, but whose defensive sack and takeaway production ranks among the league's worst.

SFO Identity Tonight

San Francisco's identity is a passing operation with an elite situational engine. The 49 ers finished the 2025 season 12-5 and reached the wild-card round, winning on the strength of an offense that ranked 6th in the NFL in passing yards (4,318) and 5th in pass EPA (107.0). Brock Purdy, in his fifth NFL season (4 completed), was the NFL's best money-down passer a year ago – +0.588 EPA (#1 of 50 qualified QBs) on non-red-zone money downs, with 8 touchdowns to 2 interceptions on 79 attempts – and the 49 ers ran the league's best 3rd-down offense at +0.263 EPA (#2/32) with a 52.0% success rate (#2/32). The ground game supplemented rather than led: 1817 rushing yards ranked 24th, with Christian McCaffrey (311 carries, 1,202 yards, 10 touchdowns in 2025) the outright bell cow.

The counterweight is a defense that struggled to make splash plays. San Francisco recorded just 20 sacks in 2025 – the NFL's fewest, #32/32 – and only 6 defensive interceptions (#30/32). Linebacker Fred Warner (83.8 overall grade, #1 of 720 qualified defenders in 2025) was the league's top-graded defender and the club's run-stuff anchor, but the back-end takeaway production did not follow. This is the tension at the core of the 2026 opener: a precision, situationally elite offense paired with a front that ranked 32nd in sacks a year ago, and a defense now waiting on availability answers across the front seven (Nick Bosa and Osa Odighizuwa both Questionable).

Offense

The 49 ers' pass game is a short-to-intermediate rhythm attack built for conversion downs. Purdy's 2025 Next Gen profile – +5.1 CPOE, 7.8 intended air yards, 3.2-second time to throw – fit a quick-game scheme, and the unit's efficiency was concentrated on 3rd down rather than early downs (1st-down EPA -0.023, 2nd down +0.047). SFO lived in 11 personnel (1 RB, 1 TE, 3 WR) on 22.7% of 2025 snaps; its most efficient package was 21 personnel (1 RB, 1 FB, 1 TE, 2 WR) at +0.176 EPA/play. The unit's play-action rate (10.8%) and screen rate (2.9%) were both modest, and it faced the blitz on just 10.5% of snaps.

Why vs the Rams: George Kittle (PFF Off 78.0, 8th best, #8/686 in 2025) is the one fully healthy top-tier pass catcher, with 57 catches on 69 targets for 628 yards and 7 touchdowns; Mike Evans and Christian Kirk, the marquee outside additions, are both Questionable (quad, calf) and carry no 2025 49 ers line on the board. The offensive line is anchored by left tackle Trent Williams (73.8 pass-block grade, 2025) with Dominick Puni the iron-man at 1,119 snaps. Los Angeles' marquee edge, Myles Garrett, is Questionable (lower body), headlining an outside rush that turned in 47 sacks a year ago (#8/32).

Defense & Matchup

San Francisco played a zone-first shell in 2025 – 69.7% zone to 30.3% man – with COVER-3 their most-used look (26.8% of pass plays) and COVER-2 close behind (23.3%). The coverage anchor is Fred Warner (83.8 overall, #1 of 720 qualified defenders in 2025), with Deommodore Lenoir logging a team-high 1,066 defensive snaps and Dee Winters 993. The liability a year ago was the deep zone: opponents completed 74.7% against COVER-3 with +0.237 avg EPA, the sharpest mark SFO allowed on any shell. Safety Malik Mustapha is Questionable (hamstring) for the opener, so the back-end is not fully settled.

The pass rush is the pressing story. The 49 ers' 20 sacks ranked last in the NFL (#32/32) in 2025, and the front-seven rotation is thinned – Andrew Farmer II, Mikail Kamara, William Bradley-King, and Keion White (Questionable, groin) all carry availability flags, with Nick Bosa Questionable (knee – ACL surgery). Bryce Huff (65.9 pass-rush grade, 2025) is the available edge with a printed front grade. Fred Warner's 77.6 run-defense grade in 2025 is the verified run-stop backbone.

Special Teams

Kicker	FG M/A	FG%	XP M/A	XP%
Eddy Pineiro	28/29	96.6%	34/38	89.5%

The kicking battery is San Francisco's cleanest unit edge. Eddy Pineiro converted 28 of 29 field goals in 2025 (96.6%, 66.8 PFF) on the room's heaviest workload; Jake Moody went 1/3 (33.3%) and Matt Gay 4/4 (100.0%). Punting fell to Thomas Morstead, who averaged 36.1 net yards on 44 punts with 23 inside the 20 (52.3%) last season. The return game was active but scoreless – Skyy Moore averaged 11.5 punt-return yards on 59 returns, and the team posted 0 special-teams touchdowns in 2025.

Front Office

John Lynch, the general manager and president of football operations, runs the roster. The marquee offseason gambit was reloading the receiver room around Brock Purdy, adding Mike Evans (13th NFL season, 12 completed) and Christian Kirk (9th NFL season, 8 completed) as perimeter targets – both Questionable for tonight. The stakes are clear: a 12-5 wild-card team a year ago, with an elite situational offense and a 32nd-ranked sack total, betting that health and the new pass-catching group can close the gap with the division's two best rosters.

What's Working / What's Not

- Working – Money-Down Passing:** Brock Purdy was the NFL's top qualified money-down QB in 2025 at +0.588 EPA (#1 of 50) with 8 TDs and 2 INTs on 79 non-red-zone attempts.
- Working – Third-Down Engine:** The 49 ers ran the league's best 3rd-down offense at +0.263 EPA (#2/32) with a 52.0% success rate (#2/32) on 227 plays in 2025.
- Working – Coverage Anchor:** Fred Warner graded 83.8 overall – #1 of 720 qualified defenders – with a 74.3 coverage grade last season.
- Working – Kicking Reliability:** Eddy Pineiro converted 28 of 29 field goals (96.6%) on the highest workload of the room in 2025.
- Not Working – Sacks:** San Francisco recorded just 20 sacks in 2025, the NFL's fewest (#32/32).
- Not Working – Takeaways:** The defense produced only 6 interceptions in 2025 (#30/32), with no defensive score on the season board.
- Not Working – Goal-Line Finish:** 14 goal-to-go plays produced -0.189 EPA last season, softening the red-zone payoff.
- Not Working – Outside Questions:** Mike Evans and Christian Kirk, the marquee receiver additions, are both Questionable (quad, calf) for the opener.

Clubhouse & Stakes

- Rivalry opener:** SFO and RAM both finished 12-5 in 2025 and meet as NFC West rivals in Week 1 of the 2026 season.
- Wild-card reality:** The 49 ers enter off a 12-5 season and a wild-card run that ended with a 41-6 loss at Seattle on Jan 17, 2026.
- Health check:** Nick Bosa (knee – ACL surgery), Osa Odighizuwa (elbow), and Malik Mustapha (hamstring) are all Questionable; Ricky Pearsall (IR – knee PCL) is out for the year.
- Division stakes:** With Los Angeles posting the NFL's best early-down offense a year ago (47 sacks, #8/32; 16 Def INT, #7/32), the gap SFO must close is in the trenches and back-end.

Conditions

- Road opener:** This is the Week 1 opener for both clubs at SoFi Stadium; no rest-edge or travel storyline is printed for the SFO defense.
- Surface caution:** Neither kickoff surface nor weather is available for SoFi Stadium in the packet, so no field-condition edge is confirmed.
- Divisional familiarity:** The 49 ers and Rams are NFC West rivals meeting in a division game to open the 2026 season.

Broadcast line: San Francisco is a 12-5 team built on Purdy's money-down magic and a top-six passing attack – but the opener hinges on whether a 32nd-ranked sack total and a thin, Questionable receiver room can hold up in the division spotlight.

2. RAM Team Identity

RAM Identity Tonight

Los Angeles arrives at the Week 1 opener as the NFC West's most explosive offense and most disruptive defense – a 12-5 club that led this division matchup in scoring (518 points) while allowing the fewest points of the two (346). The identity is simple and consistent: Stafford's arm feeds a top-two passing attack, the front hunts the quarterback, and the early-down efficiency turns possessions into points.

What defines this program under Sean McVay is a decade of sustained offensive sophistication – play-action, personnel variety, and a quarterback trusted to distribute to a deep weapon room. Last season the Rams graded the league's best early-down offense: a 47.9% success rate on 1st down (#1/32) and 57.0% on 2nd down (#1/32), with the NFL's second-ranked pass EPA (150.5, #2/32). The ground game complemented the pass at 2,152 yards (#7/32), and the defense paired 47 sacks (#8/32) with 16 interceptions (#7/32) for a plus-172 point differential – best of the two wild-card clubs on this board.

Offense

- The Rams are a pass-first operation that leans into 11 personnel (46.2% of snaps) but found its most efficient work in heavy sets – the 13-personnel package (1 RB, 3 TE, 1 WR) produced a +0.238 EPA/play, the top package rate on either side of this matchup. Play-action ran at 16.3% of 1,406 plays, and against the limited blitz they faced (13.7%), Stafford delivered a +0.285 EPA per play – the sharper answer of the two starters on this board.
- Explosive pass:** Matthew Stafford threw for 4,707 yards (#2/32) and 46 touchdowns against 8 interceptions in 2025, completing 65.0% on 597 attempts.
 - Red-zone squeeze:** Inside the 20, the Rams ran 101 plays at +0.003 EPA with a 40.6% success rate – the one soft spot in an otherwise top-two profile, with money-down red-zone plays at minus-1.095 EPA on 9 attempts.
 - Protection watch:** Left tackle Alaric Jackson is Questionable (illness) for tonight, a flag on the tag side of Stafford's pocket; the unit held up well enough a year ago that Stafford took 16 standard-dropback sacks all season.

Personnel	Plays	Share	EPA/Play
11 (1 RB, 1 TE, 3 WR)	650	46.2%	0.137
13 (1 RB, 3 TE, 1 WR)	346	24.6%	0.238
12 (1 RB, 2 TE, 2 WR)	80	5.7%	-0.025

Against a San Francisco front headlined by Nick Bosa – Questionable (knee) here – the Rams' answer a year ago was to handle standard pressure and punish blitzes; the printed blitz rate they faced was only 13.7%, the lowest figure on this matchup board.

Defense & Matchup

- Pass rush is the enterprise. The Rams recorded 47 sacks last season (#8/32) and took 16 interceptions (#7/32) with only 15 giveaways of their own – a turn over differential that fueled the division's best point differential.
- Front rotation:** Kobie Turner (Def 71.7, Pass Rush 70.8) and Byron Young (Def 71.7, Pass Rush 70.6) led a rotation where Jared Verse logged 856 snaps workhorse duty; Myles Garrett is Questionable (lower-body soreness) for the opener.
 - Run-stuff interior:** Poona Ford graded 72.6 Def with a 67.5 Run Def last season.
 - Zone-first back end:** 65.5% of charted snaps ran zone against 34.5% man, with COVER-3 (26.7% of looks, 68.1% opponent completion) as the base; the single-high COVER-1 man look held opponents to 60.8%. Kamren Curl played 1,112 defensive snaps (99.3%) as the iron-man anchor.
 - Middle softness:** The two-deep and three-deep shells surrendered the highest completion rates of the unit – 71.2% vs COVER-2 and 68.1% vs COVER-3 – the printed window George Kittle (PFF 78.0, #8/686) can attack.

- **Unavailable:** Linebacker Eddie Walls III is on injured reserve and not available tonight.

Special Teams

The Rams carry a two-kicker situation headlined by Harrison Mevis' reliability, with Joshua Karty as the alternate – and the 2025 numbers split cleanly in Mevis' direction.

- **Kicking:** Mevis converted 12 of 13 field goals (92.3%) and all 39 extra points (100.0%) last season; Karty's split was 10 of 15 field goals (66.7%) and 23 of 26 extra points (88.5%).
- **Punting:** Ethan Evans handled punting in 2025, grading 60.1 PFF across 50 punts with a 38.4 net average and 22 inside the 20.
- **Return threat:** Xavier Smith (63.8 PFF) returned 40 punts at 10.6 yards per return last season; the unit produced no special-teams touchdowns across 59 kick returns (1,479 yards) and 28 punt returns (259 yards).

Broadcast line: Mevis' perfect extra-point season and 92.3% field-goal clip give the Rams the cleaner kicking option heading into the opener.

Coaching Staff & Scheme

The staff table lists only those roles verified for tonight's roster sheet:

Name	Title
Sean McVay	Head Coach

- **Tenure:** McVay carries a 92-57 career regular-season record with one Super Bowl title, and his 9th season at the helm in Los Angeles – the identity of the franchise.
- **Personnel tell:** McVay's offense leaned on 11 personnel (46.2% of snaps) but found its best efficiency in 13 personnel at +0.238 EPA/play, and 16.3% of plays came off play-action last season.
- **Early-down machine:** The Rams graded the league's best early-down offense in 2025 with a top-ranked success rate on both 1st (47.9%) and 2nd down (57.0%).

Front Office

The general manager role is not verified on tonight's official roster sheet, so this section is omitted.

What's Working / What's Not

- **Working – Explosive Passing:** Stafford's 4,707 yards (#2/32) and 46 touchdowns against 8 interceptions, feeding Puka Nacua's league-best 86.1 PFF grade off a 129-catch season.
- **Working – Pass Rush:** 47 sacks (#8/32) from a rotation with multiple 70+ pass-rush grades, applying pressure that shortens throws over the deep zones.
- **Working – Protect the Football:** Just 15 giveaways in 2025, with a plus-172 point differential best on this NFC West board.
- **Not Working – Red-Zone Finish:** The Rams ran 101 red-zone plays at only +0.003 EPA with a 40.6% success rate – the efficiency dip that broke an otherwise top-two profile.
- **Not Working – Two-Deep Coverage Windows:** The zone base surrendered 71.2% completion vs COVER-2 and 68.1% vs COVER-3 last season, the printed soft spot over the middle.
- **Not Working – Kicking Uncertainty:** Joshua Karty's 66.7% field-goal season (10/15) keeps the kicking situation unsettled until Mevis's 92.3% clip is the confirmed starter.

Clubhouse & Stakes

The Rams enter the season as NFC West co-favorites on the board at 12-5, with a wild-card seed after last season's 12-5 mark and a run that ended in a 27-31 loss at Seattle in the NFC title game on January 25, 2026.

- **Divisional heat:** Tonight's opener pits the two 12-5 NFC West clubs against each other, with the Rams holding home field at SoFi Stadium.
- **Offseason continuity:** Both kickers return, and the roster sheet shows the same backfield tandem – Kyren Williams and Blake Corum – from last season's nearly 2000-yard ground game.
- **The stakes:** A Week 1 divisional swing in a two-team race sets the early positioning for a division that produced both wild-card clubs a year ago.

Conditions

- **Site:** Rams host the Thursday night opener at SoFi Stadium on September 10, 2026, with no printed weather or travel edge.
- **Divisional familiarity:** The NFC West paired these clubs at 12-5 each last season, adding a layer of scouting familiarity to the opener.
- **Rest:** Both clubs enter on even rest and a full offseason – no short-week disadvantage printed for either side.

Broadcast line: The Rams' Week 1 story is simple – the league's best early-down passing offense and a 47-sack front, hosting a division rival with its own elite money-down quarterback.

3. SFO Passing Attack

Brock Purdy – money-down maestro for the opener

The fifth-year starter authorizes an attack that leans on timing, spacing, and surgical third-down decisions over pure downfield aggression – and 2025's money-down numbers made him one of the league's most efficient situational passers.

CMP%	ATT	YDS	TD	INT	Y/A
69.4%	284	2,167	20	10	7.6

Purdy's 2025 season spanned 9 games (G=9) before injury, yet he still cleared 20 passing TDs on 284 attempts, plus 147 rushing yards and 3 scores on the ground. Next Gen Stats graded him well ahead of expectation on every throw – **+5.1 CPOE** – while his 3.2-second average time to throw and 7.8 intended air yards fit a quick-rhythm, short-intermediate scheme. His most memorable strike of the season was an improbable fourth-quarter touchdown to Jake Tonges vs SEA in Week 1 (Q4, 1:44) – a 10.7-air-yard throw against a 15% completion probability that ranked No. 1 nationally.

Efficiency & Money Downs

- **Third-down engine:** SFO ran the league's best 3rd-down offense in 2025 – **+0.263 EPA (#2/32)** with a **52.0% success rate (#2/32)** on 227 plays.

- **Money-down elite:** On non-red-zone money downs, Purdy posted **+0.588 EPA (#1/50)** with 8 TDs vs 2 INTs across 79 attempts – the single best efficiency mark in the qualified QB pool.
- **Early-down settling:** 1st-down EPA was a modest **-0.023** (44.6% success, #5/32) and 2nd down +0.047 (47.0% success, #7/32), meaning the passing game leans on the conversion downs to cash drives.
- **Red zone:** Inside the 20, the unit logged +0.030 RZ EPA with a 46.3% success rate (#7/32) on 82 plays – solid, though the 14 goal-to-go plays went negative at -0.189 EPA.

Under Pressure

- **Split personality:** Purdy was superb on standard looks – +0.262 EPA (#1/2) on 252 attempts at 69.1% – but the number cratered to +0.021 EPA vs the blitz (59 attempts, 69.8%), and he still gave up 4 sacks on those 59 pressured dropbacks.
- **Response to heat:** He absorbed 7 sacks against standard looks across 252 attempts but only 4 vs the blitz in a fraction of the attempts – the blitz both sped up his clock and cost him efficiency.
- **Protection context:** Trent Williams posted a 73.8 pass-block grade in 2025 with Colton McKivitz at 67.9; the Rams' marquee rusher Myles Garrett is listed **Questionable** (lower body soreness) for this one, with Jared Verse (69.5 overall defensive grade) headlining the outside rush.
- **Coverage tell:** Purdy's best 2025 EPA came against **COVER-4 (+0.427 on 24 attempts)** and COVER-2 (+0.187 on 64 attempts), both north of his COVER-1 mark (+0.142) – a beat worth naming when L.A. shows two-high shells.

Conditions

- **Road opener:** This is the Week 1 Thursday-night kickoff at SoFi Stadium – a fresh-season slate, so no short-rest hang over from a prior game, but a prime-time division opener against the Rams.
- **Receiving corps flags:** Wideout depth carries real injury questions entering the opener – Ricky Pearsall is on IR (knee-PCL), while Christian Kirk (calf), Mike Evans (quad), and **De'Zhaun Stribling (hamstring)** are each listed **Questionable**, leaving George Kittle (2025 Off grade 78.0, #8/686; route 77.4) as the one fully healthy, high-volume pass catcher.
- **Drive conversion:** SFO scored on **47.4% of drives (81/171)** in 2025, the best mark in this matchup pair – efficient, opportunistic offense built on finishing.

Broadcast line: Purdy's 2025 résumé says the 49 ers win the money downs – league-best +0.588 EPA on non-red-zone money downs and a #2-ranked third-down offense – but his efficiency evaporated when blitzed, and the Rams' pressure package is the lever to watch tonight.

4. SFO Rushing Attack

SFO Rushing Attack

San Francisco's ground game is a one-back show built around Christian McCaffrey, who carried 311 times a year ago while no other 49 er cracked 92.

Backfield Shares

McCaffrey is the outright bell cow – 432 total touches last season (311 carries, 121 receptions) at a 25.2% target share – with Brian Robinson the only other running back to see meaningful work.

Christian McCaffrey – 49 ers' bell-cow back

McCaffrey played a full 17-game season as the lead back and carried more than twice as often as the rest of the backfield combined.

CAR	YDS	YPC	TD	REC
311	1202	3.9	10	121

- **Committee:** Brian Robinson backed him with 92 carries, 400 yards and 2 touchdowns in 17 games – a change-of-pace option, not a true split.
- **No third wheel:** Isaac Guerendo played 7 games but took 0 carries last season; fullback Kyle Juszczyk's 2 carries (minus-3 yards) were the only other backfield touches on the board.
- **Depth flag:** rookie Kaelon Black is Questionable (thigh) for tonight, leaving the reserve picture thin behind the top two.

How They Run

The 49 ers run interior-first, and the payoff is concentrated on one side of center.

- **Primary lane:** most volume goes to Middle Left – 67 carries for 306 yards at 4.6 YPC, also the club's best rushing efficiency.
- **Run-side split:** the middle-right seam cratered to 2.8 YPC on 59 carries, a 1.8-yard drop from the left side of the same interior.
- **Modest edges:** outside runs were serviceable but not special – Right End 4.0 YPC (51 carries), Left End 3.3 YPC (54 carries).
- **Front to face:** the LAR line SFO runs into fronted with Poona Ford (67.5 run defense), Byron Young (66.9) and Kobie Turner (63.7) a year ago, and Ty Hamilton at 47.4 overall (9th worst, #712/720).

Short Yardage & Goal Line

- **Red zone:** SFO converted at a 46.3% red-zone success rate on 82 plays inside the 20 – 7th of 32 – at +0.030 EPA per play.
- **Goal line:** the output softened at the stripe, with 14 goal-line plays producing -0.189 EPA last season.
- **Finish rate:** McCaffrey scored all 10 rushing touchdowns on the 2025 board.

Broadcast line: Christian McCaffrey carried it 311 times for 1,202 yards and 10 touchdowns a year ago, and the 49 ers' ground game flows to a middle-left lane that produced 4.6 yards per carry on 67 attempts.

5. SFO Receiving Corps

SFO Receiving Corps

The 49 ers open 2026 with a rebuilt receiver room – the 2025 target leader at wideout is gone and both marquee outside additions are game-time questions – but the unit is anchored by a proven, elite pass-catching tight end.

Target Hierarchy

- **Anchor Target:** George Kittle drew a 13.8% target share on 292 routes in 2025 and graded as the 49 ers' top skill player – PFF Off 78.0 (8th best, #8/686) with a 77.4 route grade.
- **Marquee Additions:** Mike Evans (13th NFL season, 12 completed) and Christian Kirk (9th NFL season, 8 completed) headline the new outside group; both carry Questionable tags into the opener (quad, calf) and no 2025 49 ers line prints on the board.

- **Returning Veteran:** Demarcus Robinson (11th NFL season) is the familiar face of the rotation – 22 catches, 276 yards, 1 TD on 35 targets in 2025.

George Kittle – proven, elite catchpoint anchor

George Kittle, in his 10th NFL season (9 completed), is the one proven top-tier pass catcher the 49 ers can lock into the 2026 opener – the only healthy unit member with an elite printed grade.

TGT	REC	YDS	YPR	TD	Catch%
69	57	628	11.0	7	82.6%

Role & Shot

- **Share & Volume:** 66 targets at a 13.8% share with a 7.0 average depth of target – a true every-down receiving tight end who caught 57 of 69 targets (82.6%).
- **Elite Grade:** PFF Off 78.0 (8th best, #8/686) and a 77.4 route grade across 554 snaps – the healthiest and highest-graded pass-catch option in this room.

Route Diet & Depth

- **Two-Axis Tight End:** Kittle lives on Quick Out volume (17 targets, 76.5% catch, 2.8 average depth of target) but the chunk play is the Deep Out – 11 targets, 72.7% catch, 10.6 ADOT and the unit's best printed EPA at +1.259.
- **Quarterback Fit:** Brock Purdy's 2025 Next Gen profile – CPOE +5.1, avg intended air yards 7.8, 3.2 time to throw – fits a quick-game tight end who has to be accounted for underneath.
- **Depth Note:** Ricky Pearsall (IR – knee PCL) was the 2025 downfield answer on In/Dig (15 targets, 73.3% catch, EPA +0.892, 16.6 ADOT); he is not available to push the field in this one.

Broadcast line: George Kittle is the one proven elite catchpoint this rebuilt group can revolve around – the outside receiver answer is a game-time puzzle.

6. SFO Offensive Line & Defensive Front

Offensive Line

San Francisco's 2025 line graded as a mid-pack protection unit anchored by left tackle Trent Williams, with right guard Dominick Puni the iron-man – he took 99.7% of offensive snaps in 2025 (1,120). The starting five's 2025 pass-protection ledger:

Player	2025 Snaps	Pass Blk	Run Blk	Pressures	Sacks Allowed
Trent Williams	996	73.8	76.8	32	4
Colton McKivitz	1116	67.9	72.6	32	3
Dominick Puni	1119	63.6	64.6	30	1
Jake Brendel	950	60.3	65.7	23	0
Spencer Burford	458	51.7	59.6	21	2

- **Left-side anchor:** Trent Williams led the starting five in both pass-block (73.8) and run-block (76.8) grade in 2025 – the lone true edge of this group entering the opener.
- **Clean interior:** Dominick Puni allowed just 1 sack on 30 pressures across 1,119 snaps in 2025, with Jake Brendel at 0 sacks on 23 pressures; Spencer Burford, a swing-back with 458 snaps, gave up 2 sacks while grading 51.7 in pass protection.
- **Pressure exposure:** Williams and Colton McKivitz each surrendered 32 pressures and combined for 7 sacks over 2,112 combined snaps (2025); McKivitz graded 72.6 in run blocking, the strongest run-behind pairing with Puni.
- **Package lean:** SFO ran 11 personnel (1 RB, 1 TE, 3 WR) on 22.7% of 2025 snaps, with its best efficiency in 21 personnel (1 RB, 1 FB, 1 TE, 2 WR) at +0.176 EPA/play.

Defensive Front

San Francisco's 2025 pass rush was built around Nick Bosa, whose 80.0 defensive grade ranked 4th best of 720 qualified defenders with a 73.2 pass-rush grade – but Bosa is Questionable for the opener (knee – ACL surgery), so tonight's front identity is not locked in.

- **Run-stuff anchor:** Fred Warner, the 2025 league's top-graded defender (83.8, #1/720), led the front-seven unit with a 77.6 run-defense grade – the verified run-stop backbone behind the line.
- **Edge rotation thinned:** Keion White (Questionable, groin) graded 65.5 in pass rush on 318 snaps (2025); Bryce Huff (65.9 pass rush, 63.8 defense) is the available edge with a printed front grade. Andrew Farmer II, Mikail Kamara, and William Bradley-King are all on Injured Reserve.
- **Interior unsettled:** Osa Odighizuwa (DT, Questionable, elbow) and Romello Height (DE, Questionable, elbow) carry no confirmed availability, leaving the rotation unset around the game.

The Edge That Matters

The single line SFO must win tonight is its protection unit against the Rams' four-man pass rush – Jared Verse (68.5 pass-rush grade in 2025), Byron Young (70.6), and Kobie Turner (70.8). Brock Purdy posted +0.262 EPA/play on standard dropbacks (2025, #1/2) but only +0.021 vs the blitz (#2/2) on a 10.5% blitz-facing rate, so keeping him to clean pockets is the decisive battle. Trent Williams' 73.8 Pass Blk grade is the only outright edge the 49 ers bring into that fight.

Conditions

San Francisco opens the 2026 season on the road at the Los Angeles Rams on Thursday Night Football – no rest or weather edge printed for the opener.

Broadcast line: The 49 ers' opening-week story is protection – Trent Williams' left side vs the Rams' pass rush, with the pass-rush answer thinned by Nick Bosa's Questionable tag.

7. SFO Secondary & Linebackers

Coverage Identity

- **Zone-first shell:** San Francisco showed zone coverage on 69.7% of charted snaps last season, with man on 30.3% – the most common look was COVER-3 at 26.8% of pass plays (167 attempts), followed by COVER-2 at 23.3% (145 attempts).

- **COVER-1 checkdown:** The 49 ers' coverage held up best against COVER-1 at +0.079 avg EPA, but that shell drew the lowest completion rate against them, 60.3% – the tightest of any look they faced.
- **Deep-zone leak:** SFO gave up a 74.7% completion rate and +0.237 avg EPA when opponents attacked COVER-3, the sharpest EPA they allowed on any shell, plus +0.225 on COVER-4.

Who Covers Whom

- **Fred Warner – the anchor:** The All-Pro inside 'backer graded 83.8 overall (1st best, #1/720) with a 74.3 coverage grade on 330 snaps last season – the club's top defender on the board.
- **Iron-man corners:** Deommodore Lenoir logged 1,066 defensive snaps (98.5%), the heaviest workload among SFO defensive backs last year.
- **Linebacker alongside Warner:** Dee Winters was on the field for 993 defensive snaps (92.5%) – the No. 2 defensive snap total on this roster after Lenoir.
- **Rotation question at safety:** Malik Mustapha is listed Questionable (hamstring) for tonight, so the back-end rotation alongside Lenoir carries a game-time stamp; no clean bill of health is printed for that spot.

What They Allow

- **Slot and intermediate zone:** The 74.7% completion rate against their most-used COVER-3 shell points to a soft spot in the intermediate and slot windows – the same lanes that catch Puka Nacua, who graded 86.1 overall (1st best, #1/686) with an 84.8 route grade last season.
- **Rams' personnel context:** Los Angeles leaned on 11 personnel (1 RB, 1 TE, 3 WR) for 46.2% of plays last season and was most efficient out of 13 personnel (1 RB, 3 TE, 1 WR) at +0.238 EPA/play – the Rams' heavy play-action rate (16.3%) pushes coverage across the board.
- **Man coverage as a check:** Their COVER-1 look (21.7% share) kept completions down to 60.3% last season, the matchup answer to a Rams passing game that was still best vs COVER-3 (+0.299 EPA).

Conditions

- **Rest and repair:** This is the Week 1 opener for both clubs; no rest-edge or travel storyline is printed for the SFO defense tonight.
- **Surface caution:** Neither kickoff surface nor weather is available for SoFi Stadium in the packet, so no field-condition edge is confirmed.

Broadcast line: SFO's 49 ers' zone-dependent secondary – 69.7% zone, COVER-3 dominant at 26.8% – faces the league's top-graded receiver in Puka Nacua, with free safety Malik Mustapha (Questionable, hamstring) the one health watch in the back end.

8. SFO Special Teams

SFO Special Teams

San Francisco's special-teams unit was an efficiency story in the 2025 season more than a headline-maker – reliable placekicking, a steady veteran punter, and a return game that did not find the end zone (0 special-teams touchdowns, with 6 defensive interceptions for the defense as separate context).

Kicking

The 49 ers carried three kickers on last season's (2025) board, with Eddy Pineiro shouldering the bulk of the attempts.

Kicker	PFF (Season)	FG M/A	FG%	XP M/A	XP%
Eddy Pineiro	66.8	28/29	96.6%	34/38	89.5%
Matt Gay	65.4	4/4	100.0%	4/4	100.0%
Jake Moody	38.2	1/3	33.3%	2/2	100.0%

- **Volume edge (2025):** Pineiro's 29 field-goal attempts dwarfed the other two legs combined, and his 96.6% conversion rate on that workload was the top mark of the room.
- **Split-rate clarity:** Each FG percentage above is field goals made divided by field-goal attempts only; each XP percentage is extra points made divided by XP attempts only – never a blended FG+XP rate.
- No long-distance or range totals are available for the unit, so long-field-goal range is not stated here.

Punting & Coverage

Thomas Morstead handled the punting load and was the coverage unit's anchor in the 2025 season.

- **Thomas Morstead (59.5 PFF):** 44 punts, 36.1 net average, 23 inside the 20 last season.
- **Coverage context (2025):** Morstead's 23 punts inside the 20 on 44 boots (52.3%) kept a little more than half of his punts inside the opponent's 20-yard line.
- Opponent punt-return yards allowed are not present in the unit board, so that figure is omitted here.

Return Game

San Francisco's return unit was active but did not produce a score in the 2025 season.

- **Skyy Moore (62.8 PFF):** 59 returns, 11.5 punt-return yards per attempt last season.
- **Unit volume (2025):** 51 kickoff returns for 1,385 yards and 25 punt returns for 291 yards as a team.
- **No house calls (2025):** the club posted 0 special-teams touchdowns – no kick or punt return for a score last season.

Broadcast line: In the 2025 season, Eddy Pineiro converted 28 of 29 field goals (96.6%) and Thomas Morstead put 23 of his 44 punts inside the 20, while a 59-return unit led by Skyy Moore never reached the end zone.

9. RAM Passing Attack

Matthew Stafford – Heavy volume, elite touchdown rate

Matthew Stafford (18th NFL season, 17 completed) has been the focal point of the Rams' passing game, and last season he set the pace at the position.

CMP%	ATT	YDS	TD	INT	Y/A
65.0%	597	4,707	46	8	7.9

Efficiency & Money Downs

- **Early-down machine:** Los Angeles graded the best early-down offense last season, with a 1st-down EPA of +0.118 (#2/32) on a 47.9% success rate (#1/32) and a 2nd-down EPA of +0.162 (#2/32) on a 57.0% success rate (#1/32).
- **Money down (non-RZ):** Stafford posted a +0.271 EPA (5th of 50 qualified QBs) on 155 attempts, throwing 10 touchdown passes against just 2 interceptions in those high-leverage spots.
- **The squeeze point:** Inside the 20, the Rams ran 101 red-zone plays at a +0.003 EPA with a 40.6% success rate; on money downs inside the red zone, Stafford was minus-1.095 EPA with one interception on 9 attempts – the spot that broke the profile.
- **Drive health:** 85 of 181 drives ended in scores (47.0%), with a max scoring streak of 2.

Under Pressure

- **Blitz answer:** Against the blitz last season, Stafford delivered a +0.285 EPA per play (#1 of 2 in this matchup) on a 62.4% completion rate across 159 attempts – his sharper answer of the two looks.
- **Standard sets:** In non-blitzed looks (497 attempts), he completed 64.6% at +0.225 EPA per play (#2 of 2). He took 16 sacks in standard sets and 9 against the blitz.
- **Protection watch:** Left tackle **Alaric Jackson** is listed Questionable (illness) for tonight, a spot to monitor for the tag side of the pocket.
- **Coverage lean:** Stafford was most productive against COVER-3, going 68.1% on 174 attempts with a +0.299 EPA – his best rate against any shell (COVER-1 +0.119 on 158, COVER-2 +0.255 on 115, COVER-4 +0.295 on 67).

Conditions

- **Site:** Rams host this Week 1 NFC West opener at SoFi Stadium on Thursday, September 10, 2026 – a short-week, prime time setting off last season's 12-5 opener.
- **Availability:** Left tackle Alaric Jackson (illness) is Questionable; that trim of the protection unit is the health story to watch on the tag side.
- **Opposing charge:** The Rams' passing unit faces a San Francisco front headlined by Nick Bosa (80.0 PFF defense, #4/720) – though Bosa is Questionable (knee) – behind linebacker Fred Warner (Def 83.8, #1/720).

Broadcast line: Last season's passer rating leader is an efficiency spike against the blitz, but the red-zone money down was the one place the machine went quiet.

10. RAM Rushing Attack

Backfield Shares

Kyren Williams is the hammer and Blake Corum the clear No. 2; the pair carried the load across all 17 games last season.

CAR	YDS	YPC	TD
259	1252	4.8	10

- **Lead back:** Williams took 259 of the backfield's 413 carries – a 62.7% share – with 44 targets on 316 routes for 303 total touches.
- **Committee No. 2:** Corum ran 145 times for 746 yards and 6 touchdowns in every game (35.1% of carries), a change-of-pace role with no targets printed.
- **Spot duty:** Ronnie Rivers chipped in 9 carries for 46 yards across 6 games.

How They Run

The ground game found its most efficient work up the middle while leaning on the right edge for volume.

- **Volume edge:** Most carries went to Right End – 74 attempts for 348 yards (4.7 YPC).
- **Best efficiency inside:** Both Middle Left (62 att, 299 yds) and Right Guard (54 att, 260 yds) averaged **4.8 YPC**, the top per-carry rates on the board.
- **Corum's pop:** The No. 2 averaged 5.1 yards a carry last season (746 yards on 145 attempts), a full step ahead of the lead-back rate.

Short Yardage & Goal Line

- **Red-zone profile:** 101 red-zone plays at +0.003 EPA with a 40.6% success rate and only 3 goal-line plays at -0.107 EPA – the RZ EPA and success rank columns show no top-10 edge printed for this club.

Broadcast line: Kyren Williams and Blake Corum combined for 1998 rushing yards on a 60/40 carry split, with the Rams' most efficient ground work coming up the middle at 4.8 yards a carry.

11. RAM Receiving Corps

Target Hierarchy

Puka Nacua sat atop the Rams' 2025 pass-game pecking order at a 29.3% target share (160 targets), with Davante Adams second at 20.3% (111 targets) and tight end Colby Parkinson third at 10.4% (57 targets) among the catch group.

Puka Nacua – the target-share king

Puka Nacua anchored the Rams' 2025 passing attack, carrying a 29.3% target share while posting the league's top offensive grade.

TGT	REC	YDS	YPR	TD	Catch%
166	129	1715	13.3	10	77.7

Role & Shot

- Nacua ran a team-high 462 routes and drew 160 targets in 2025, and his 3.79 yards per route run ranked 4th best among 280 qualified receivers.
- His 86.1 PFF offensive grade was No. 1 among 686 qualified players, backed by an 84.8 route grade – the top receiving-efficiency markers on the board.

Route Diet & Depth

- **Nacua works two levels:** he drew 25 Go-route targets at a 25.0 average depth (52.0% catch, 0.729 EPA) and 24 Hitch/Curl targets at 6.1 average depth (83.3% catch, 0.579 EPA), pairing the explosive with the easy completion.

- Adams is the perimeter specialist – a 13.5 average depth of target and a 14.3% slot rate mark the lowest slot usage of the group; his 23 Go targets (20.7 ADOT, 0.505 EPA on a 30.4% catch rate) and 16 Deep Outs (13.4 ADOT) keep him out wide. Parkinson is the underneath tight end at a 4.7 average depth: 13 Hitch/Curl targets at a 92.3% catch rate and 12 Quick Outs at 91.7%, with a 10.7% slot rate.
- Xavier Smith is the slot-efficiency outlier – a 76.6% slot rate on a 14.3 average depth, and his 5.38 yards per route run ranked No. 1 among 280 qualified receivers despite just 22 targets.

Against Tonight's Coverage

- Smith's 5.38 yards per route run (No. 1 among 280 qualified receivers) is the cleanest slot-efficiency marker on the board; Nacua's 3.79 (4th best) blends that efficiency with far heavier volume.
- Stafford attacked downfield in 2025 with a 9.1 average intended air yard and an 18.6% aggressiveness rate, and the deep Go routes that fed both Nacua (0.729 EPA) and Adams (0.505 EPA) are the printed coverage pressure points.

Conditions

- The Rams host at SoFi Stadium for the Week 1 opener against SFO on even rest – no travel or short-week edge printed for either side.

Broadcast line: Puka Nacua enters Week 1 as the NFL's top-graded offensive player (86.1, No. 1 of 686) off a 129-catch, 1,715-yard 2025, carrying a 29.3% target share.

12. RAM Offensive Line & Defensive Front

Offensive Line

Protection anchored the offense last season – Stafford was sacked 16 times on standard dropbacks and 9 vs blitz – but the opener carries a left-tackle availability question and a proven weak link on the depth chart.

- Left-tackle question mark:** Alaric Jackson graded 70.3 Pass Blk with 38 pressures and 4 sacks allowed in 2025, but is **Questionable (illness)** tonight – a game-time flag on the gate-protector.
- Weak-link swing:** DJ Humphries posted a 30.0 Pass Blk grade (3rd worst, #465/467) over 84 snaps with 5 pressures and 1 sack allowed last season – the clear soft spot if he sees the field.
- Run-block anchors:** Kevin Dotson (Run Blk 73.4) and Warren McClendon (Run Blk 74.3) were the unit's best run blockers a year ago.

Player	Pass Blk	Run Blk	Pressures	Sacks
Coleman Shelton	54.0	67.0	20	2
Alaric Jackson (Q)	70.3	70.6	38	4
Kevin Dotson	65.5	73.4	20	3
Steve Avila	67.2	67.1	14	1
Warren McClendon	70.2	74.3	12	1

Defensive Front

Pass rush was the identity in 2025, with two 70+ Pass Rush grades and a heavy-snap edge carrying the rotation.

- Best pass-rushers:** Kobie Turner (Def 71.7, Pass Rush 70.8) and Byron Young (Def 71.7, Pass Rush 70.6) led the front last season.
- Heavy-snap edge:** Jared Verse logged 856 snaps (Def 69.5, Pass Rush 68.5) as the rotation's workhorse.
- Run-stuff interior:** Poona Ford graded 72.6 Def with a 67.5 Run Def.
- Availability flags:** Myles Garrett is **Questionable (lower-body soreness)**; depth interior man Ty Hamilton graded 47.4 (9th worst, #712/720) in limited 2025 action.

The Edge That Matters

The swing is RAM's offensive line against SFO's front – and both sides arrive with their marquee names flagged.

- Stafford was elite against heat in 2025, posting a +0.285 EPA/play vs blitz (1st of the two QBs) with 9 sacks on 159 blitz-faced attempts, so keeping the pocket clean carries the load.
- Rams faced a 13.7% blitz rate but threw play-action at a 16.3% clip last season – the early-down protection tell.
- SFO's counter is Nick Bosa (Def 80.0, 4th best #4/720, Pass Rush 73.2) – **Questionable (ACL knee surgery)** – with Keion White (Q, groin) on the same board.

Conditions

Home opener Thursday night at SoFi Stadium – the Rams carry the home side of the matchup.

Broadcast line: A Questionable-listed left tackle protecting Stafford against a Questionable-listed Bosa is the front-line question; the Rams answered blitzes at +0.285 EPA/play last season.

13. RAM Secondary & Linebackers

Coverage Identity

The Rams are a zone-first back end: 65.5% of their charted snaps ran zone coverage against 34.5% man last season (2025), with a three-deep shell as the base look.

Shell	Share of looks	Opp. Cmp %
COVER-3	26.7%	68.1%
COVER-1	24.2%	60.8%
COVER-2	17.6%	71.2%
COVER-4	10.3%	64.1%

- Man mix:** the 24.2% COVER-1 rate gives the unit a single-high press-man changeup behind its zone anchors.

Who Covers Whom

- Iron-man safety:** Kamren Curl played 1,112 defensive snaps (99.3%) last season, the anchor of the back end.
- Ballhawk:** Kamren Kinchens ranks 2nd among active NFL defenders in games with 2+ interceptions over the last 3 seasons (2 such games).

- **Every-down backer:** Nate Landman logged 1,017 defensive snaps (90.5%) in 2025, the on-field coverage 'backer in the middle.
- **Front-seven help:** Byron Young graded 71.7 overall on defense with a 70.6 pass-rush last season, pressure that shortens windows over the deep zones.
- **Unavailable:** linebacker Eddie Walls III is on injured reserve and is not available tonight.

What They Allow

The soft spot runs over the middle in zone. Last season the Rams' two-deep and three-deep shells surrendered the highest completion rates: 71.2% vs COVER-2 and 68.1% vs COVER-3, while the COVER-1 man look held opposing QBs to 60.8%.

- **Catcher to attack it:** George Kittle is the 49 ers' matchup problem for that zone middle. He graded 78.0 overall (8th best of 686 graded offensive players) with a 77.4 route grade last season.

Conditions

- **Home opener:** the Rams open Thursday night at SoFi Stadium. No weather or rest edge is printed for this unit.

Broadcast line: RAM is a zone-first, man-mixing back end anchored by iron-man safety Kamren Curl, with George Kittle working the middle of the field as the night's clear one-on-one backdrop.

14. RAM Special Teams

Kicking

The Rams open the season with a two-kicker competition on the roster sheet – both returners from last season – and the 2025 numbers split cleanly in one direction.

Kicker	FG M/A	FG %	XP M/A	XP %
Harrison Mevis	12/13	92.3%	39/39	100.0%
Joshua Karty	10/15	66.7%	23/26	88.5%

- **Edge in the competition:** Mevis graded higher a year ago at 65.4 PFF, versus Karty at 57.7 – and the gap mirrors the made kicks, with Mevis at 92.3% on field goals (12/13) against Karty's 66.7% (10/15) in 2025. Long and range are not printed in the packet; the deciding factor is volume of extra points, where Mevis went a perfect 39-for-39.

Punting & Coverage

- **Anchor leg:** Ethan Evans handled the punting duty last season, grading 60.1 PFF across 50 punts with a 38.4 net average and 22 inside the 20 in 2025. Return yards allowed off his boots is not printed.

Return Game

- **Punt return:** Xavier Smith (63.8 PFF) logged 40 returns at 10.6 PR YPA in 2025 – the referenced punt-return option for this unit.
- **Coverage profile:** The Rams finished last season with 1,479 kick-return yards (on 59 kick returns) and 259 punt-return yards (on 28 punt returns), with zero special-teams touchdowns.

Broadcast line: Mevis' perfect extra-point season and 92.3% field-goal clip put him ahead of Karty heading into the opener.

15. Unit-by-Unit Comparison & Takeaways

Unit Edges At A Glance

The collision is cleaner than the rivalry suggests: Los Angeles holds the edge in every on-field unit except the kicking battery, where San Francisco's reliability flips the one table cell. The night's drama is whether the 49 ers' elite situational offense and special teams offset the Rams' production and takeaway machine.

Unit	SFO	RAM	Edge
Passing	4,318 yds, #6/32; Purdy 3rd-down +0.263 EPA (#2/32)	4,707 yds, #2/32; Stafford 46 TD, 8 INT	RAM
Rushing	1817 yds (#24/32); McCaffrey 1,202 yds, 10 TD	2,152 yds, #7/32; Williams 1,252 + Corum 746	RAM
Receiving	Kittle 628 yds, 7 TD, PFF 78.0 (#8/686)	Nacua 1,715 yds, 10 TD, PFF 86.1 (#1/686)	RAM
Trenches	20 sacks (#32/32) – Bosa Q (knee)	47 sacks, #8/32; Garrett Q (lower body)	RAM
Secondary	6 Def INT (#30/32); Warner 83.8 (#1/720)	16 Def INT, #7/32; Curl 1,112 snaps	RAM
Special Teams	Pineiro FG 28/29 (96.6%), 66.8 PFF	Mevis FG 12/13 (92.3%); Karty FG 10/15 (66.7%)	SFO

Where SFO Wins

- **Kicking reliability:** Eddy Pineiro converted 28 of 29 field goals last season (96.6%, 66.8 PFF) on the highest workload of the room – against a Rams two-kicker split where Joshua Karty sat at 66.7% (10/15) and Harrison Mevis at 92.3% (12/13). That is the cleanest field-goal edge on the board.
- **Money-down passing:** San Francisco ran the league's best 3rd-down offense in 2025 at +0.263 EPA (#2/32) on 227 plays with a 52.0% success rate (#2/32), and Brock Purdy's non-red-zone money-down mark of +0.588 EPA ranked #1 of 50 qualified QBs (8 TD, 2 INT on 79 attempts).
- **Coverage anchor:** Fred Warner graded 83.8 overall – #1 of 720 qualified defenders – with a 74.3 coverage grade last season, the top defensive number on either side.

Where RAM Wins

- **Passing volume and efficiency:** Matthew Stafford threw for 4,707 yards (2nd, #2/32) and 46 touchdowns against 8 interceptions, leading the best early-down offense in the league – #1 success rate on both 1st (47.9%) and 2nd down (57.0%).
- **Receiving firepower:** Puka Nacua enters as the NFL's top-graded offensive player (86.1, #1/686) off a 129-catch, 1,715-yard, 10-TD season at a 29.3% target share, with Davante Adams pairing on the perimeter and Xavier Smith's 5.38 yards per route run (No. 1 among 280 qualified receivers) as the slot answer.
- **Front-seven pressure feeding takeaways:** The Rams' 47 sacks ranked #8/32 – 27 more than San Francisco's 20 (#32/32) – and their 16 interceptions were #7/32 against the 49 ers' 6 (#30/32).
- **Ground game depth:** Los Angeles ran for 2,152 yards (#7/32) behind a 60/40 carry split – Kyren Williams (259 carries, 1,252 yards, 4.8 YPC) and Blake Corum (145 carries, 746 yards, 5.1 YPC) – versus a 49 ers ground game at 1817 yards (#24/32).

Swing Units

- **Trenches after the Questionables:** Myles Garrett (lower body) and Nick Bosa (knee – ACL surgery) are both Questionable, and San Francisco's edge rotation is thinned with three defensive ends on injured reserve. If the 49 ers' front can't pressure Stafford, a 47-sack defense facing a zone-leaning secondary is the whole story; if Bosa plays, the 20-vs-47 sack gap narrows into a genuine push.
- **The COVER-3 collision:** San Francisco showed zone on 69.7% of charted snaps and surrendered a 74.7% completion rate at +0.237 EPA when attacked in its most-used COVER-3 shell – the exact look Stafford punished hardest last season (+0.299 EPA, 68.1% on 174 attempts). When Los Angeles flips to COVER-1 man (24.2% share, holding QBs to 60.8%), it faces a 49 ers offense whose own weakest printed number came against COVER-1 (+0.079 EPA).

Takeaways

- **Pressure feeding coverage:** Los Angeles' 47-sack front (#8/32) shortens windows over a zone-heavy back end, and if Bosa's front cannot touch Stafford, San Francisco's COVER-3 leak (74.7% opponent completion) becomes the night's open lane.
- **Takeaway disparity:** The Rams' 16 interceptions (#7/32) against the 49 ers' 6 (#30/32) is the largest single-game swing a neutral analyst can hang a verdict on – a ballhawk back end anchored by Kamren Curl's 1,112 snaps.
- **Situational offense vs scheme:** San Francisco's #2 3rd-down EPA meets a Rams 3rd-down profile that slipped to +0.003 red-zone EPA and -1.095 on money downs inside the 20 – separate spots Purdy can attack underneath.
- **Tight end versus the zone middle:** George Kittle (PFF 78.0, #8/686) is the clean mismatch against Rams shells that surrendered 71.2% completion in COVER-2 and 68.1% in COVER-3.
- **The kicking differential:** With both offenses capable of trading drives, Pineiro's 96.6% field-goal clip is the lone categorical edge the 49 ers own – and it is decisive against a Rams room where one leg (Karty) converted just 10 of 15.
- **Health reshapes the trenches:** Bosa, Garrett, and Rams left tackle Alaric Jackson (illness, Questionable) are each game-time decisions – Jackson's tag side is the pass-protection spot to track opposite the rush.

Broadcast line: Los Angeles wins every unit on the field except the kicking battery – the real game is whether San Francisco's elite 3rd-down offense and reliable leg can outlast the Rams' pressure-and-takeaway machine.

QB Matchup – Season Lines

QB	Team	Cmp-Att	Cmp%	Pass Yds	Pass TD	INT	EPA/Pass	Rush Yds	Rush TD	G
Matthew Stafford	RAM	388-597	65.0%	4707	46	8	150.45	1	0	17
Brock Purdy	SFO	197-284	69.4%	2167	20	10	63.13	147	3	9

Rushing Core – Season Lines

Team	Player	Pos	G	Car	Yds	TD
RAM	Kyren Williams	RB	17	259.0	1252	10.0
RAM	Blake Corum	RB	17	145.0	746.0	6.0
RAM	Ronnie Rivers	RB	6	9.0	46.0	0.0
SFO	Christian McCaffrey	RB	17	311.0	1202	10.0
SFO	Kyle Juszczyk	FB	16	2.0	-3.0	0.0
SFO	Brian Robinson	RB	17	92.0	400.0	2.0
SFO	Isaac Guerendo	RB	7	0.0	0.0	0.0

Red Zone & Goal-Line Efficiency

Inside the 20

Team	RZ Plays	RZ EPA	RZ Success %	GL Plays	GL EPA
San Francisco 49 ers (SFO)	82	0.030	46.3	14	-0.189
Los Angeles Rams (RAM)	101	0.003	40.6	3	-0.107

Special Teams Unit Profile

Team Special Teams Production

Team	KR Yds	PR Yds	KR	PR	ST TD	Def INT
San Francisco 49 ers (SFO)	1385	291	51	25	0	6
Los Angeles Rams (RAM)	1479	259	59	28	0	16

PFF Specialists (Season Avg)

Team	Role	Player	PFF Grade	Production
RAM	Kicker	Joshua Karty	57.7	FG 10/15 (66.7%), XP 23/26 (88.5%)
RAM	Kicker	Harrison Mevis	65.4	FG 12/13 (92.3%), XP 39/39 (100.0%)
RAM	Punter	Ethan Evans	60.1	50 punts, 38.4 net avg, 22 inside-20
RAM	Returner	Xavier Smith	63.8	40 returns, 10.6 PR YPA
SFO	Kicker	Eddy Pineiro	66.8	FG 28/29 (96.6%), XP 34/38 (89.5%)
SFO	Kicker	Matt Gay	65.4	FG 4/4 (100.0%), XP 4/4 (100.0%)
SFO	Kicker	Jake Moody	38.2	FG 1/3 (33.3%), XP 2/2 (100.0%)
SFO	Punter	Thomas Morstead	59.5	44 punts, 36.1 net avg, 23 inside-20
SFO	Returner	Skyy Moore	62.8	59 returns, 11.5 PR YPA

16. WR / CB Coverage Matchups

Career / Season Coverage History

The printed boards here are coverage shells, not explicit WR-CB on-ball assignments, so the history reads as how each back end lines up against the other's top catchers.

- **The bolding edges:** San Francisco's most-used three-deep leaked EPA last season, and the Rams' two-deep and three-deep shells surrendered the two highest completion rates over the middle.

Back End	Shell	Share	Opp. Cmp %	Avg EPA
SFO pass def	COVER-3	26.8%	74.7%	+0.237
SFO pass def	COVER-1	21.7%	60.3%	+0.079
RAM pass def	COVER-3	26.7%	68.1%	+0.299
RAM pass def	COVER-2	17.6%	71.2%	+0.255
RAM pass def	COVER-1	24.2%	60.8%	+0.119

- **SFO zone leak vs Nacua:** the 49 ers' most-used shell last season, COVER-3 (26.8% of pass plays, 167 attempts), allowed a 74.7% completion rate at +0.237 avg EPA – the sharpest EPA the secondary gave up on any look – the backdrop Puka Nacua plays against after a 2025 that printed 129 catches, 1,715 yards and a league-best 86.1 offensive grade (1st of 686) with an 84.8 route grade.
- **Rams zone middle vs Kittle:** Los Angeles gave up 71.2% to COVER-2 and 68.1% to COVER-3, the two highest completion rates it allowed, in the same middle seams George Kittle owns after a 2025 at 57 catches, 628 yards, 7 touchdowns and an 78.0 PFF grade (8th best of 686) with a 77.4 route grade.
- **Man-shell changeups:** each secondary's press-man look held opposing QBs to its lowest completion rate of the season – 60.3% for SFO (21.7% share), 60.8% for RAM (24.2% share).

Route Tree Collisions

- **Nacua runs two levels:** 25 Go-route targets at a 25.0 average depth (52.0% catch, +0.729 EPA) plus 24 Hitch/Curl targets at 6.1 average depth (83.3% catch, +0.579 EPA) – the deep shot into SFO's three-deep and four-deep (SFO allowed +0.225 avg EPA on COVER-4) paired with an easy zone completion.
- **Adams lives on the perimeter:** 23 Go targets at 20.7 average depth (+0.505 EPA on a 30.4% catch rate) and 16 Deep Out targets at 13.4 average depth, off a 14.3% slot rate – the boundary answer against SFO's outside corners.
- **Parkinson underneath:** the Rams' tight end worked 13 Hitch/Curl targets at a 92.3% catch rate and 12 Quick Outs at 91.7%, all at a 4.7 average depth – the short-to-intermediate option into SFO's zone.
- **Kittle's chunk call:** his Deep Out printed the cleanest EPA on the board – 11 targets, 72.7% catch, 10.6 average depth, +1.259 EPA – aimed at the Rams' soft zone middle, while 17 Quick Out targets at 76.5% (2.8 ADOT) carry the underneath volume.
- **Outside answers are game-time:** Mike Evans (Questionable – quad), Christian Kirk (Questionable – calf) and De'Zhaun Stribling (Questionable – hamstring) all carry tags into the opener, and downfield threat Ricky Pearsall (IR – knee PCL) is out.

Slot & Seam

- **Xavier Smith is the slot outlier:** the Rams' 22-target receiver ran a 76.6% slot rate on a 14.3 average depth and posted 5.38 yards per route run – No. 1 among 280 qualified receivers last season.
- **Kittle's slot share:** Kittle ran 292 routes at a 27.8% slot rate (66 targets, 7.0 ADOT) – the seam target against a Rams nickel anchored by iron-man safety Kamren Curl (1,112 defensive snaps, 99.3% last season) and ballhawk Kamren Kinchens (2nd among active NFL defenders in games with 2+ interceptions over the last 3 seasons).
- **Rams' seam pairing:** Colby Parkinson (10.7% slot rate, 4.7 ADOT, 92.3% catch on Hitch/Curls) and Tyler Higbee (25 catches, 281 yards, 3 touchdowns in 2025) give Stafford underneath answers against SFO's zone.
- **Safety availability:** SFO safety Malik Mustapha is Questionable (hamstring) – a game-time stamp on the deep-middle backend behind the seam routes.

What Matters Tonight

- **Availability stamps both WR rooms:** Puka Nacua and Davante Adams are healthy for the Rams; San Francisco fields Kittle plus a game-time outside group – Mike Evans (Questionable – quad), Christian Kirk (Questionable – calf), De'Zhaun Stribling (Questionable – hamstring) – with Pearsall (IR) out.
- **Nacua vs the leak:** the 49 ers allowed 74.7% completion at +0.237 avg EPA against their most-used COVER-3 shell last season, the look Nacua's Go and Hitch/Curl board attacks.
- **Kittle vs the soft zone:** the Rams gave up 71.2% to COVER-2 and 68.1% to COVER-3, and Kittle's Deep Out printed +1.259 EPA off 11 targets.
- **Man-shell checks:** SFO's COVER-1 held QBs to 60.3% and RAM's to 60.8% last season – the press changeups on both sides of the ball.
- **Broadcast line:** The night's cleanest coverage collision pairs Puka Nacua's two-level route board against a 49 ers three-deep that leaked +0.237 EPA with George Kittle working the Rams zone middle that gave up its two highest completion rates.

Receiving Core – Season Lines

Team	Player	Pos	G	Rec	Tgt	Yds	TD
RAM	Puka Nacua	WR	16	129.0	166.0	1715	10.0
RAM	Davante Adams	WR	14	60.0	114.0	789.0	14.0
RAM	Colby Parkinson	TE	14	43.0	56.0	408.0	8.0
RAM	Xavier Smith	WR	16	18.0	24.0	303.0	0.0
RAM	Tyler Higbee	TE	10	25.0	36.0	281.0	3.0
RAM	Terrance Ferguson	TE	11	11.0	25.0	231.0	3.0
RAM	Davis Allen	TE	15	24.0	33.0	208.0	3.0
RAM	Tutu Atwell	WR	8	6.0	15.0	192.0	1.0
RAM	Jordan Whittington	WR	15	18.0	25.0	171.0	0.0
RAM	Konata Mumpfield	WR	10	10.0	23.0	92.0	1.0
SFO	Jauan Jennings	WR	15	55.0	90.0	643.0	9.0
SFO	George Kittle	TE	11	57.0	69.0	628.0	7.0
SFO	Kendrick Bourne	WR	14	37.0	53.0	551.0	0.0
SFO	Ricky Pearsall	WR	9	36.0	53.0	528.0	0.0
SFO	Jake Tonges	TE	10	34.0	46.0	293.0	5.0
SFO	Demarcus Robinson	WR	14	22.0	35.0	276.0	1.0
SFO	Skyy Moore	WR	17	5.0	7.0	87.0	0.0
SFO	Luke Farrell	TE	13	11.0	14.0	85.0	2.0
SFO	Marquez Valdes Scantling	WR	4	4.0	8.0	40.0	0.0
SFO	Jordan Watkins	WR	2	2.0	3.0	26.0	0.0
SFO	Malik Turner	WR	2	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0
SFO	Brayden Willis	TE	6	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0

Coverage Shells Faced

Top Coverages Seen

Team	Coverage	Pass Att	Share %	Cmp %	Avg EPA
San Francisco 49 ers (SFO)	COVER-3	167	26.8	74.7	0.237
San Francisco 49 ers (SFO)	COVER-2	145	23.3	71.2	0.170
San Francisco 49 ers (SFO)	COVER-1	135	21.7	60.3	0.079
San Francisco 49 ers (SFO)	COVER-4	65	10.5	65.1	0.225
Los Angeles Rams (RAM)	COVER-3	174	26.7	68.1	0.299
Los Angeles Rams (RAM)	COVER-1	158	24.2	60.8	0.119
Los Angeles Rams (RAM)	COVER-2	115	17.6	71.2	0.255
Los Angeles Rams (RAM)	COVER-4	67	10.3	64.1	0.295

17. Opening Week History & Franchise Cool Facts

SFO Opener Lore

- **Openers under the lights:** San Francisco enters tonight 3-1 all-time in Week 1 regular-season games, riding a **3-game Week 1 winning streak** – capped by a 17-13 win @ SEA in 2025, a 19-32 win vs NYJ in 2024, and a 30-7 win @ PIT in 2023. The lone opener blemish came in 2022, a 10-19 loss @ CHI.
- **Signal-caller stability:** Brock Purdy, in his 5th NFL season (4 completed), starts the opener.
- **Career regular-season totals:** 9,518 passing yards, 64 passing TDs.
- **Familiar pieces flanking him:** Christian McCaffrey (10th NFL season, 9 completed) and George Kittle (10th NFL season, 9 completed) headline a returning core that carried the club to a 12-5 mark last season under Kyle Shanahan (82-67 career).

RAM Opener Lore

- **A short, clean slate:** Los Angeles is 1-1 all-time in Week 1 regular-season games, splitting two openers – a 9-14 win vs Houston in 2025 and a 20-26 loss @ Detroit in 2024.
- **The veteran at the controls:** Matthew Stafford, in his **18th NFL season** (17 completed), starts under Sean McVay (92-57 career). His career regular-season numbers are staggering: 59,871 passing yards and 377 passing TDs.
- **Rushing depth behind him:** Kyren Williams (5th NFL season, 4 completed) carries **2,582 career regular-season rushing yards** into his opener duties.

Historical Rarities

- **A Week 1 rivalry with history:** These two clubs have opened a season against each other three times before – and both prior meetings at San Francisco were 49 ers wins by the same score line. In **2016**, SFO shut out the Rams **28-0**; in **2005**, SFO edged them **28-25**. The only L.A. Week 1 win in the series came in **1955**, a 23-14 Rams victory.
- **Defensive ballhawk pedigree:** Xavien Howard ranks 1st among active defenders with 5 career games of 2+ interceptions – a spotlight-ready credential for a prime time opener.
- **Opposite poles of the experience scale:** Tonight pairs the NFL's elder statesman under center (Stafford, 17 completed seasons) against a young core on both sidelines – the Rams' own board features two second-year defenders (Shaun Dolac, Josaiah Stewart) still in the sophomore stage.

Broadcast line: Two exacting veterans – McVay's Rams riding a 9-14 Week 1 win, Shanahan's 49 ers on a 3-game opener streak – collide in a Thursday night historically tilted toward San Francisco.

18. Player Spotlights & Notes

Matthew Stafford – the 46-touchdown gunslinger

A 18th-year quarterback who still put up the single most productive passing season of any QB on this roster, then added a proven perimeter weapon for the encore.

CMP%	ATT	YDS	TD	INT	Y/A
65.0%	597	4,707	46	8	7.9

- **Volume and efficiency co-existed:** Stafford aired it out 597 times a year ago and still held a 65.0% completion rate with a 7.9 yards-per-attempt – the league's best early-down unit (1st-down EPA +0.118, 2nd-down +0.162) ran through his right arm.
- **Career ledger:** the 18th-year signal-caller (17 completed seasons) enters the opener with 59,871 career REG passing yards and 377 career REG touchdown passes – the counting marks that pace the NFC West QB room.
- **Money-down poise:** on non-red-zone money downs he posted +0.271 EPA (5th of 50 qualified QBs) with 10 TDs vs 2 INTs on 155 attempts.

Role & Shot

- **The whole engine:** Stafford took 1,117 offensive snaps – 98.5% of the Rams' offense – and the receiving tree is built around him: Puka Nacua at a 29.3% target share and Davante Adams at 20.3%.
- **Blitz answer:** against the blitz he delivered +0.285 EPA per play (62.4% completion on 159 attempts), the sharper of his two looks a season ago.

Matchup

- **Front to face:** San Francisco's pass rush is headlined by Nick Bosa, but Bosa is Questionable (knee – ACL surgery) for the opener, so the clean-pocket point of attack is unsettled.
- **Protection flag:** left tackle Alaric Jackson is Questionable (illness) tonight, putting a game-time stamp on the blind side Stafford leans on.

Storylines

- **New toy out wide:** Adams (13th NFL season, 12 completed) joins a room where Nacua already commanded a 29.3% share – the Rams' two wideouts combined for 271 targets a year ago.
- **Red-zone blemish:** the one crack in the profile – inside the 20, Stafford's money-down EPA dropped to minus-1.095 with an interception on 9 attempts in 2025.

What Matters Tonight

Guards the highest-volume, highest-TD-rate passing attack on this field (4,707 yards, 46 TDs in 2025).

- His best-efficiency shelf was against COVER-3 (68.1% on 174 attempts, +0.299 EPA) – the same shell SFO showed most often (26.8% of pass plays).
- Jackson's Questionable tag (illness) is the gate-protector story to monitor.

Broadcast line: Stafford tossed 46 touchdowns last season and added Davante Adams – the ceiling just got higher.

Brock Purdy – efficiency over volume

A fifth-year starter whose 2025 was cut to 9 games by injury, yet he still produced the best third-down efficiency in the qualified QB pool.

CMP%	ATT	YDS	TD	INT	Y/A
69.4%	284	2,167	20	10	7.6

- **Elite CPOE:** Purdy graded +5.1 CPOE last season on his 3.2-second average time to throw – the 49 ers' quick-rhythm brand beating expectation on every throw.
- **Career REG ledger:** he carries 9,518 career REG passing yards and 64 career REG touchdown passes into the opener, plus 480 career REG rushing yards.
- **Nine-game efficiency:** in 2025's 9 starts (G=9) he cleared 20 TDs on 284 attempts while adding 147 rushing yards and 3 scores on the ground.

Form & Streaks

- **Money-down elite:** on non-red-zone money downs, Purdy posted +0.588 EPA (#1/50) with 8 TDs vs 2 INTs across 79 attempts – the best single efficiency mark in the qualified pool.
- **Third-down engine:** SFO ran the league's best 3rd-down offense in 2025 – +0.263 EPA (#2/32) with a 52.0% success rate (#2/32) on 227 plays.

Role & Shot

- **The man under center:** head coach Kyle Shanahan's scheme leans on timing and spacing over downfield aggression – 7.8 intended air yards on the season.
- **Bell-cow support:** Christian McCaffrey's 25.2% target share gives Purdy a release valve that few quarterbacks can match.

Matchup

- **Secondary to test:** the Rams' zone-heavy back end (Kamren Curl, 99.3% defensive snaps) held opponents to a 74.7% completion rate against COVER-3 last year – the seam Purdy's attack works.

- **Blitz framing:** SFO's offense was most efficient on money downs, where the Rams' pass rush – Kobie Turner at 70.8 Pass Rush grade – tries to force pressure.

Storylines

- **Health story:** 2025 ended early with injury; the 5th-year QB (4 completed seasons) opens 2026 with MacJones and Kurtis Rourke behind him on the depth chart.
- **The magical moment:** his 2025 signature was an improbable fourth-quarter touchdown to Jake Tonges vs SEA in Week 1 – a 10.7-air-yard throw against a 15% completion probability that ranked No. 1 nationally.

What Matters Tonight

Opens against the Rams, a division rival that finished 12-5 in 2025 – the first divisional test of the new season.

- He's the higher-efficiency QB in this matchup but the lower-volume one (284 vs 597 attempts in 2025).

Broadcast line: Purdy's numbers say efficiency-first – and his money-down numbers say elite.

Christian McCaffrey – volume king

The 10th-year back touched the ball 432 times last season – a 25.2% target share – and carried more than twice as often as every other 49 er combined.

CAR	YDS	YPC	TD	REC
311	1,202	3.9	10	121

- **Iron-man workload:** McCaffrey played all 17 games a year ago with 311 carries and 121 receptions – 432 total touches, far and away the team's usage anchor.
- **Dual-threat volume:** his 121 receptions nearly doubled the next-closest receiver's catch total on the 2025 49 ers' board.

Role & Shot

- **Target-share anchor:** at a 25.2% target share (432 touches), every drive script starts with McCaffrey – the broadcast angle of this entire offense.
- **No true split:** Brian Robinson backed him with 92 carries for 400 yards in 2025, but the bell-cow share never wavered.
- **Depth flag:** rookie Kaelon Black is Questionable (thigh) tonight, leaving the reserve picture thin behind the top two.

Matchup

- **Front to face:** the Rams' interior run defense graded as the soft spot – Poona Ford (67.5 Run Def), Byron Young (66.9), Kobie Turner (63.7) – with depth man Ty Hamilton at 47.4 overall (9th worst, #712/720) in 2025.
- **Efficiency lanes:** McCaffrey's best ground efficiency came up the middle-left (67 carries, 306 yards, 4.6 YPC), the seam the Rams' front is weakest in.

Storylines

- **Career Arc:** the 10th-year veteran (9 completed seasons), a former Offensive Player of the Year, remains the most-used back on this roster after a full 17-game season.
- **Kyle Shanahan pairing:** this is the same bell-cow role that produced his 2023 triple-threat peak under this coach.

What Matters Tonight

He's the unquestioned offensive centerpiece – 25.2% of targets and the heaviest carry share on the field.

- Interior-first running (Middle Left at 4.6 YPC) vs a Rams front with a crater in run-defense depth.

Broadcast line: McCaffrey's 432 touches last year tell you everything – this offense runs through No. 23.

Puka Nacua – the league's top-graded receiver

The 4th-year wideout carried a 29.3% target share while posting the No. 1 offensive grade among all qualified players in 2025.

TGT	REC	YDS	YPR	TD	Catch%
166	129	1,715	13.3	10	77.7%

- **Efficiency at high volume:** Nacua's 3.79 yards per route run ranked 4th best among 280 qualified receivers on a team-high 462 routes in 2025.
- **The grade to match:** his 86.1 PFF offensive grade was No. 1 of 686 qualified players, backed by an 84.8 route grade – the top receiving-efficiency markers on the board.

Role & Shot

- **Two-level threat:** he drew 25 Go-route targets at a 25.0 average depth (52.0% catch) and 24 Hitch/Curl targets at 6.1 average depth (83.3% catch) – pairing the explosive with the easy completion.
- **Share king:** added Davante Adams and still commanded a 29.3% target share a year ago – the No. 1 target in this offense by a wide margin.

Matchup

- **Coverage to face:** SFO's most-used COVER-3 shell (26.8% of pass plays) allowed a 74.7% completion rate and +0.237 avg EPA last season – the lanes Nacua's route tree attacks.
- **COVER-3 lean:** Stafford's best-efficiency shell was COVER-3 (68.1% on 174 attempts, +0.299 EPA), and Nacua is the top target in that concept.

Storylines

- **The breakout is real:** from undrafted buzz to a No. 1-grade season – Nacua is the Rams' most reliably productive pass catcher on the board.

What Matters Tonight

Highest-graded player on either roster (86.1, #1/686) – the clear focal point of the Rams' 29.3%-share attack.

- Faces a zone-first 49 er back end that gave up its sharpest EPA against the deep-zone shells Nacua eats on.

Broadcast line: Nacua graded No. 1 in the league last year – he's the engine of this passing game.

Davante Adams – the new perimeter weapon

The 13th-year wideout arrives as the Rams' second target at a 20.3% share, and his 14 touchdown catches in 2025 led the receiving room.

TGT	REC	YDS	YPR	TD	Catch%
114	60	789	13.2	14	52.6%

- **Touchdown specialist:** Adams caught 14 TD passes in 2025 – the most on this roster's receiving board – despite a 52.6% catch rate on 114 targets.
- **Perimeter specialist:** a 13.5 average depth of target and a 14.3% slot rate mark the lowest slot usage of the Rams' catch group – he lives out wide.

Role & Shot

- **High-leverage deep options:** his 23 Go targets (20.7 ADOT, 0.505 EPA on a 30.4% catch rate) and 16 Deep Outs (13.4 ADOT) keep him as the downfield complement to Nacua.
- **Second banana:** at a 20.3% target share (111 targets), Adams pairs with Nacua's 29.3% to form a 271-target-wideout tandem.

Matchup

- **Zone pressure:** the 49 ers' COVER-3 shell (most-used at 26.8%) gave up a 74.7% completion rate last season – a favorable attacking lane for a deep-out route runner.
- **Red-zone target:** his 14 TDs on 60 catches show the trust Stafford has in him near the goal line.

Storylines

- **Career REG ledger:** the 13th-year vet (12 completed seasons) is a proven star whose prime production translates to a new NFC West home – he's now Stafford's deep target.

What Matters Tonight

Provides the Rams' best deep-ball threat alongside Nacua's intermediate volume.

- His 14 TD catches in 2025 were the most on either roster's receiving board.

Broadcast line: Adams brings 14 touchdown catches and a 20.3% target share to a Rams air attack that already led the division.

Fred Warner – the No. 1 graded defender

The All-Pro inside 'backer graded 83.8 overall – the best mark of 720 qualified defenders – in 2025, anchoring SFO's run defense and coverage.

TKL	SACK	INT	PD	FF
28	0.0	0	3	2

- Warner's counting line is a partial 2025 sample (6 games on the board for this season window); his season-long grade of 83.8 (1st best, #1/720) is the headline marker.*
- **The anchor:** Warner graded 83.8 overall (1st best, #1/720) with a 74.3 coverage grade across 330 coverage snaps last season – the top defender on either roster.
- **Run-stop backbone:** his 77.6 run-defense grade led the 49 er front seven, the verified stop unit behind the defensive line.

Role & Shot

- **Every-down engine:** Warner is the middle of SFO's zone-first shell (69.7% zone coverage last season) and the primary check on the Rams' intermediate passing game.
- **Traffic cop vs the run:** against McCaffrey and Kyren Williams – two backs who combined for 2,454 rushing yards in 2025 – Warner is the first-line run fit.

Storylines

- **All-Pro lineage:** the 9th-year veteran (8 completed seasons) is the most decorated defender on this field, and his 2025 grade (#1/720) was the best of his career by the board's standard.

What Matters Tonight

Matches up against the Rams' two-headed backfield – Williams (1,252 rush yards) and Corum (746) – the league's highest-rush-volume duo SFO faces.

- His coverage of the intermediate zone (74.3 coverage grade) is the key to containing Nacua's 6.1-ADOT Hitch/Curl catches.

Broadcast line: Warner was the league's best-graded defender last year – and the Rams' run game is his first mission.

Kobie Turner – the 70-pass-rush interior

The 3rd-year defensive tackle pairs a 71.7 overall grade with a 70.8 pass-rush grade, the top pressure producer on a Rams front built around pass rush.

TKL	SACK	INT	PD	FF
24	7.0	1	3	0

- **Pass-rush identity:** Turner's 70.8 Pass Rush grade led the Rams' front in 2025, with 7.0 sacks and an interception on 17 games.
- **Run-stuff partner:** alongside Byron Young (71.7 Def, 70.6 Pass Rush) and the 17-game edge Jared Verse (7.5 sacks), Turner anchors a front that pressured SFO's line all season.

Role & Shot

- **Heavy-snap interior:** Turner graded 71.7 overall (17 games) as the most reliable presence in the Rams' defensive rotation.
- **The unit's identity:** Los Angeles' pass rush graded top-tier – two 70+ Pass Rush grades and Verse's 856-snap workload – making Turner the gatekeeper against Purdy's short-intermediate timing.

Storylines

- **From later-round pick to anchor:** Turner has blossomed into the Rams' most consistent interior rusher, and his 2025 season (7 sacks, 70.8 pass-rush grade) cements that role.

What Matters Tonight

Faces a Purdy attack designed to get the ball out in 3.2 seconds – Turner's interior push is the counter to that quick-rhythm plan.

- His run-defense grade (63.7) is the soft spot against McCaffrey's middle-left efficiency (4.6 YPC) – the one hole in an otherwise elite front.

Broadcast line: Turner's 70.8 pass-rush grade powered the Rams' pressure identity a year ago – and tonight he attacks a quick-passing offense.

19. Roster Career Arc – Youth, Veterans & Breakouts

Youth vs Experience

Both NFC West clubs arrive with strikingly different roster compositions entering the Week 1 opener. San Francisco fields more established depth, while Los Angeles carries a younger core and more first-year names.

Team	Rookies	Core (1-7 yrs)	Veterans (8+ yrs)
San Francisco 49 ers	5	17	7
Los Angeles Rams	6	18	3

- Veteran weight:** The 49 ers carry 7 players with 8+ NFL seasons on the active skill/defense board, more than double the Rams' 3.
- First-year depth:** The Rams bring 6 rookies vs the 49 ers' 5 – both clubs rely on first-year names for depth, but Los Angeles leans on more of them.
- QB tenure contrast:** Brock Purdy enters his 5th NFL season (4 completed) opposite Matthew Stafford in his 18th (17 completed) – a 13-season experience gap under center.

Broadcast line: The 49 ers are the older, more seasoned roster; the Rams bring more first-year depth into the opener.

Rookies & First-Timers

Eleven rookies sit on these two active boards – 6 for the Rams, 5 for the 49 ers – and all are undrafted additions working into depth roles.

- Rams rookies:** QB Matthew Caldwell sits behind Matthew Stafford; RB Dean Connors is in the touches battle behind Kyren Williams; WR C.J. Daniels works into the rotation behind Puka Nacua; TEs Dan Villari, Max Klare, and Rohan Jones provide situational tight-end depth.
- 49 ers rookies:** RB Kaelon Black is in the touches battle behind Christian McCaffrey; WRs De'Zhaun Stribling, Wesley Grimes, and Will Pauling rotate behind the established starters; TE Khalil Dinkins adds situational depth.
- Watch on special teams:** With so many undrafted first-year players, rookie contributions are most likely to show up on coverage and return units.

Broadcast line: Every rookie on both rosters is an undrafted addition – expect their first impact on special teams and backup snaps rather than the headline roles.

Veteran Anchors

Both starting quarterbacks headline veteran groups: Purdy on the 49 ers, Stafford anchoring the Rams.

- Matthew Stafford (RAM, QB):** In his 18th NFL season (17 completed), he owns 59,871 career regular-season passing yards and 377 career regular-season passing TDs, plus 1,356 career rushing yards.
- Brock Purdy (SFO, QB):** In his 5th season (4 completed), he carries 9,518 career regular-season passing yards, 64 career regular-season passing TDs, and 480 career rushing yards.
- Rams veteran core:** WR Davante Adams (13th season, 12 completed) and TE Tyler Higbee (11th, 10 completed) join Stafford as the active 8+ anchors – Higbee with 3,668 career regular-season receiving yards.
- 49 ers veteran core:** TE George Kittle (10th, 9 completed), RB Christian McCaffrey (10th, 9 completed), WR Mike Evans (13th, 12 completed), RB Kyle Juszczyk (14th, 13 completed), and WRs Demarcus Robinson (11th, 10 completed), Christian Kirk (9th, 8 completed), and Malik Turner (9th, 8 completed) anchor the older side of this roster.

Broadcast line: Stafford's 13-season head start over Purdy is the clearest marker of a veteran-fronted Rams offense facing the 49 ers' deeper veteran ledger.

Breakout Watch

One second-year name comes with printed 2025 production worth tracking.

- Terrance Ferguson (RAM, TE):** The Oregon product enters year two after averaging 21 scrimmage yards per game and 0.3 TDs per game in 2025.
- Second-year wave without printed numbers:** Both clubs carry several sophomores – the Rams with Shaun Dolac, Josaiah Stewart, Jarquez Hunter, Jordan Waters, Mark Redman, Brennan Presley, Mario Williams, Tru Edwards, and Konata Mumpfield; the 49 ers with Nick Martin, Kurtis Rourke, Jordan James, Junior Bergen, and Jordan Watkins – but Ferguson is the only one with a printed 2025 rate to build a story on.

Broadcast line: Terrance Ferguson is the one second-year Ram with a 2025 stat line on file – a low-volume target who produced at close to a third of a touchdown per game a year ago.

20. Storylines, Milestones & Division Race

Milestones & Streaks

- Stafford's march:** Matthew Stafford enters at 59,871 career REG passing yards and 377 career REG touchdown passes; he will be 18th-season veteran (17 completed) in his 11th kickoff with the Rams.
- Purdy's bank balance:** Brock Purdy (5th NFL season, 4 completed) carries 9,518 career REG passing yards and 64 career REG TDs into his opener – each of his first four seasons ended with more touchdown passes than interceptions.
- Higbee heating up:** Tyler Higbee (11th NFL season, 10 completed) sits at 3,668 career REG receiving yards; his last-3-games 16.7 yards-per-game rate was the only hot skill trend printed for either club entering the opener.

Historical Rarities

- Last season's split:** The 2025 season series went SFO 26-23 at RAM on October 2, 2025, then RAM 42-26 at SFO on November 9, 2025 – the Rams' 42 points were the most SFO allowed all season, and one of SFO's 437 points allowed ultimately landed the 49 ers the wild-card seed.

- **A 154-meeting rivalry:** SFO holds a 79-72-3 all-time edge across 154 meetings before tonight.
- **Week 1 openers:** SFO is 3-1 in its last four REG openers and on a 3-game Week 1 winning streak, most recently 17-13 at SEA in 2025 (only 2022 @ CHI, 10-19, was a loss); RAM is 1-1 in Week 1 openers, winning 14-9 vs HTX in 2025. These rivals have met on Week 1 three times – most recently RAM 0 @ SFO 28 in 2016 – and SFO has won all three (28-0 in 2016, 28-25 in 2005, 14-23 the reverse in 1955).
- **Season peaks:** Stafford's 457 passing yards came at SEA on December 18, 2025; SFO's most points (48) and largest win (48-27, 21 points) both came at CLT on December 22, 2025, while RAM's high-water mark was a 45-17 win (28-point margin) at CRD on December 7, 2025.

Player Impact Storylines

- **George Kittle – elite catchpoint anchor:** In his 10th NFL season (9 completed), Kittle is the one proven top-tier target in a rebuilt SFO receiver room – 57 catches, 628 yards, 7 TDs on 69 targets (82.6% catch) with an 86.1 offensive grade (8th best, #8/686) in 2025. With outside additions Mike Evans (quad) and Christian Kirk (calf) both Questionable and Ricky Pearsall on IR (knee PCL), the middle of the field against RAM's zone-first back end is Kittle's stage.
- **Christian McCaffrey – bell-cow back:** McCaffrey, in his 10th NFL season, played all 17 games in 2025 as the outright lead – 311 carries, 1,202 yards, 10 rushing TDs, plus 121 catches on 432 touches. His season high on the ground was 140 yards/1 TD vs CHI on December 28, 2025; the 49 ers' ground game flows to a middle-left lane that averaged 4.6 yards a carry on 67 attempts.
- **Matthew Stafford – heavy volume, elite TD rate:** The 18-year veteran threw for 4,707 yards and a career-rhythm 46 TDs against 8 INTs in 2025 (597 attempts), the highest TD total and passing volume on the board. His best single game came late – 457 yards/3 TD at SEA on December 18, 2025 – and his +0.285 EPA/play vs the blitz was the sharper QB answer in this matchup (159 blitzed attempts). Puka Nacua – the NFL's top-graded offensive player: Nacua (4th NFL season) enters as the league's highest-graded offensive player (86.1 overall, No. 1 of 686) off 129 catches, 1,715 yards and 10 TDs on a 29.3% target share – including a 12-225-2 receiving line at SEA on December 18, 2025. His 3.79 yards per route run ranked 4th best among 280 qualified receivers, against a SFO COVER-3 shell that allowed a 74.7% completion rate in 2025.
- **Christian McCaffrey vs the Byron Young-Kobie Turner front:** the same interior lanes (Middle Left, 4.6 YPC) run head-on into a RAM front graded by Byron Young (71.7 overall, 70.6 pass rush) and Kobie Turner (63.7) – with edge star Myles Garrett questionable (lower body soreness).

Coaching Chess

- **Small-ball contrast:** RAM ran 11 personnel (1 RB, 1 TE, 3 WR) on 46.2% of 2025 plays but was most efficient out of 13 personnel (1 RB, 3 TE, 1 WR) at +0.238 EPA/play; SFO leaned 11 (22.7%) and found its best efficiency in 21 personnel (1 RB, 1 FB, 1 TE, 2 WR) at +0.176 EPA/play.
- **Play-action tell:** RAM's 16.3% play-action rate last season was the clearest scheme marker on the board – nearly double SFO's 10.8% – a tell to track on early downs.
- **Coverage counter:** SFO's best passing answer was COVER-1 (+0.079 EPA allowed), the one shell that held RAM's best weapons; RAM, in turn, was most productive attacking COVER-3 (+0.299 EPA, 68.1% completion on 174 attempts) – the shell SFO showed most often (26.8%).

Standings / Race

Both clubs open 2026 as 12-5 NFC West co-leaders from a 2025 tie that turned on point differential – RAM at 518-346 (+172), SFO at 437-371 (+66) – with SRS rating RAM 12.5 to SFO's 6.0. Last season ended on a bitter note for both: SFO was bounced 6-41 at SEA in the NFC Divisional on January 17, 2026, and RAM fell 27-31 at SEA in the NFC Championship on January 25, 2026 – the Rams one game short of the Super Bowl.

- **SFO route:** a wild-card seed a year ago with the NFC West's 2nd-best point differential; a division title is the clean step up from a 12-5 wild card.
- **RAM route:** the higher-SRS (12.5) club of the two and NFC runner-up, carrying a chip into a Thursday-night division opener at home.

Broadcast line: Two 12-5 division rivals open the 2026 season at SoFi Stadium – Stafford and the league's top-graded receiver against Purdy, McCaffrey and a 49 ers defense that held its own in a coin-flip 2025 split.

Season Extremes & Rare Facts (Candidates)

- **Matthew Stafford season high pass game:** 457 yds / 3 TD at SEA on December 18, 2025.
- **MacJones season high pass game:** 347 yds / 0 TD at TAM on October 12, 2025.
- **SFO season high points:** 48 at CLT on December 22, 2025.
- **RAM season high points:** 45 at CRD on December 7, 2025.
- **SFO largest win margin:** 21 (48-27) at CLT on December 22, 2025.
- **RAM largest win margin:** 28 (45-17) at CRD on December 7, 2025.
- **Christian McCaffrey season high rush game:** 140 yds / 1 TD vs CHI on December 28, 2025.
- **Puka Nacua season high receiving game:** 12 rec / 225 yds / 2 TD at SEA on December 18, 2025.
- **Blake Corum season high rush game:** 128 yds / 2 TD at CRD on December 7, 2025.
- **Kendrick Bourne season high receiving game:** 5 rec / 142 yds / 0 TD at TAM on October 12, 2025.
- **SFO season high points allowed:** 42 vs RAM on November 9, 2025.
- **RAM season high points allowed:** 38 at SEA on December 18, 2025.
- **SFO season low points:** 3 vs SEA on January 3, 2026.

21. Betting Lines & Market Storylines

Game Market Read

The Rams sit as home favorites by a field goal in the NFC West opener, with a healthy 48.5 total and a pronounced moneyline lean into the home side.

- **Broadcast line:** Rams -3.5, 49 ers +3.5 (both -110); total 48.5 (over/under -110); moneyline Rams -190, 49 ers +150.
- **Rams home edge:** Los Angeles posted a 7-1 home record in 2025 (88%) versus 5-4 on the road, anchoring the -3.5 number.
- **49 ers road form:** San Francisco actually traveled better a year ago, going 7-2 away (78%) against 5-3 at home, which supports the +150 road dog price.
- **Total context:** Both clubs scored 25-plus at a high clip in 2025, the Rams 9-3 in those 12 games and the 49 ers 8-1 in nine, backing the 48.5 line.

Prop Angles

The market's strongest lean sits on Stafford's touchdown line, and the receivers' boards are clustered around a mid-50s yardage mark with Nacua headlining the board.

- **Stafford Pass TD:** 1.5 is juiced to -170, the heaviest lean on the board; his Pass Yds line is 261.5. Stafford enters 2026 with 59,871 career regular-season passing yards and 377 career TD.

- **Purdy Pass Yds:** 239.5 with Pass TD at 1.5 (his Rush Yds line is 14.5). Purdy carries 9,518 career regular-season passing yards and 64 career TD.
- **Nacua Rec Yds:** 91.5 is the highest receiver prop offered, well above the field of pass-catchers tonight.
- **Adams Rec Yds:** 52.5 and **Evans Rec Yds:** 53.5 sit side by side; Evans is listed Questionable with a quadriceps strain, so that number carries an availability flag.
- **McCaffrey dual board:** Rush Yds 62 and Rec Yds 40.5 both posted, reflecting his receiving out of the backfield.
- **Williams Rush Yds:** 59.5; Kyren Williams brings 2,582 career regular-season rushing yards into the opener.

Situational Hooks

The defensive ends of both tables are eye-catching, with each club nearly automatic when it wins the turn over battle or keeps the opponent off the board.

- **Rams defense clamp:** When Los Angeles held an opponent to 20 or fewer points in 2025, it went 10-0.
- **Turnover margin:** The Rams were 10-1 when winning the turn over battle (11 games) and the 49 ers 5-0 (5 games), so giveaways loom large with both squads undefeated on that side a year ago.
- **One-score games:** The Rams went 4-5 in one-score contests in 2025 while the 49 ers went 5-1, a contrast that matters with the spread sitting at a field goal.
- **49 ers availability stack:** San Francisco carries a long Questionable board, including Nick Bosa (knee ACL), Mike Evans (quadriceps) and Christian Kirk (calf), plus the knee-PCL IR designation on Ricky Pearsall, so the road side's health is a live variable.

Broadcast line: The Rams are the home favorite behind a 7-1 home mark and a 10-0 defensive clamp rate, but the 49 ers arrive with the better 2025 one-score record and a 7-2 road profile backing the 3.5 catch.

22. Fantasy Football Storylines

Must-Start Tier

- **Christian McCaffrey (SFO RB):** the volume anchor of this matchup. He averaged **24.5 PPR points per game** in the 2025 season across 17 games, with 12 games of 20+ PPR points – a high-floor, high-ceiling combination for a Week 1 opener.
- **Puka Nacua (RAM WR):** finished the 2025 season at **23.4 PPR/g** across 16 games, with a 29.4 average over his last three games (+6.0 vs. season) and 10 games of 20+ PPR points.
- **Matthew Stafford (RAM QB):** **20.6 PPR/g** in 2025 over 17 games, 23.4 in his last three (+2.8), with 10 games of 20+ PPR points – the top-tier quarterback option on the board.
- **Brock Purdy (SFO QB):** **19.7 PPR/g** across just 9 games in 2025, but a 24.3 clip in his last three (+4.6 vs. season) – trending sharply into the opener.
- **George Kittle (SFO TE):** **14.7 PPR/g** over 11 games in 2025, with a 18.4 last-three average (+3.7) and 4 games of 20+ PPR points – elite at the tight-end spot when he is on the field.

Trending Up / Down

- **Up – Brock Purdy:** his 24.3 PPR/g over his last three 2025 games sits +4.6 above his 19.7 season clip, the largest positive delta among the starters in this game.
- **Up – Puka Nacua:** the 29.4 last-three average is +6.0 above his 23.4 season mark, the biggest gain on either roster.
- **Up – George Kittle:** 18.4 last-three (+3.7 vs. 14.7 season) and a run of 20+ PPR games late in 2025.
- **Up – Rams tight ends: Colby Parkinson** (9.3 PPR/g, **11.7 last three, +2.4**) and **Tyler Higbee** (7.1 PPR/g, **9.9 last three, +2.8**) both closed 2025 hot.
- **Down – Kyren Williams (RAM RB):** **15.5 PPR/g** in 2025 but just 12.9 in his last three (-2.6), with only 3 games of 20+ PPR points on 17 games.
- **Down – Davante Adams (RAM WR):** **15.9 PPR/g** over 14 games but 13.3 in his last three (-2.7).
- **Down – Jake Tonges (SFO TE):** 9.3 PPR/g but 6.9 in his last three (-2.4).

DFS & Ceiling Plays

- **Christian McCaffrey – the ceiling anchor:** 12 games of 20+ PPR points in 17 appearances during 2025 makes him the safest stacking hero on the slate, with no injury flag on tonight's board.
- **Puka Nacua – the spike candidate:** 10 games of 20+ PPR points and a 29.4 last-three average give the Rams' top receiver the highest single-game ceiling of any non-RB in this game.
- **Matthew Stafford – stacking partner:** his 10 games of 20+ PPR points and 23.4 last-three clip (17 games, 20.6 PPR/g) pair naturally with Nacua.
- **Brock Purdy – value angle:** coming off a **24.3 last-three 2025 stretch**, he carries a high-upside floor in a game that projects to be pass-heavy for both sides.
- **Availability flags for lineup builders:** Mike Evans (SFO) and Christian Kirk (SFO) are both Questionable (quad / calf);Ricky Pearsall (SFO) is on **IR (knee)** and not available – so San Francisco's receiver corps behind Kittle carries real uncertainty into kickoff.

Broadcast line: San Francisco leans on McCaffrey's **24.5 PPR/g** and a healthy Kittle, while the Rams' path runs through Nacua's **29.4 last-three spike** and Stafford's late-2025 form – with the 49 ers' pass-catchers needing a final health check at game time.

23. Injuries & Availability

Out / Doubtful

- Ricky Pearsall (WR, SFO) – Injured Reserve (knee – PCL, right). Placed on IR; not available for the opener. Listed return 2027-02-15 (season-ending designation). The receiver room's 2026 outlook hinges on a healthy group, and Pearsall is out of the mix for Week 1.
- Andrew Farmer II (DE, SFO) – Injured Reserve (back). Not available; listed return 2027-02-15.
- Mikail Kamara (DE, SFO) – Injured Reserve (knee). Not available; listed return 2027-02-15.
- Tanner McLachlan (TE, SFO) – Injured Reserve (undisclosed). Not available; listed return 2027-02-15.
- William Bradley-King (DE, SFO) – Injured Reserve (undisclosed). Not available; listed return 2027-02-15.
- Eddie Walls III (LB, LAR) – Injured Reserve (undisclosed). Not available; listed return 2027-02-15.
- Justin Dedich (G, LAR) – Out (hand). Not available tonight; listed return 2026-08-15.

Questionable / Game-Time Decisions

- Nick Bosa (DE, SFO) – Questionable (knee – ACL, surgery, right). A game-time flag; 2025 form only counts as context, and tonight's availability is not locked in.

- Mike Evans (WR, SFO) – Questionable (quadriceps strain). Game-time flag; every tonight claim must carry the question mark.
- Christian Kirk (WR, SFO) – Questionable (calf). Game-time flag.
- Malik Mustapha (S, SFO) – Questionable (hamstring strain). Game-time flag.
- Keion White (DE, SFO) – Questionable (groin, surgery). Game-time flag.
- Osa Odighizuwa (DT, SFO) – Questionable (elbow, surgery). Game-time flag.
- De'Zhaun Stribling (WR, SFO) – Questionable (hamstring soreness). Game-time flag.
- Kaelon Black (RB, SFO) – Questionable (thigh). Game-time flag.
- Romello Height (DE, SFO) – Questionable (elbow). Game-time flag.
- Alaric Jackson (OT, LAR) – Questionable (illness). Game-time flag on the Rams' starting left tackle.
- Myles Garrett (DE, LAR) – Questionable (lower-body soreness). Game-time flag on the Rams' marquee edge defender.

Impact Assessment

- The 49 ers' defensive front is the story. Nick Bosa (ACL surgery), Keion White (groin surgery), Osa Odighizuwa (elbow surgery) and Romello Height are all Questionable, while Andrew Farmer II, Mikail Kamara and William Bradley-King are on IR. That is a heavily flagged pass-rush rotation entering the opener.
- San Francisco's receiver and backfield depth is also in flux. Ricky Pearsall is on IR (PCL), while Mike Evans, Christian Kirk and De'Zhaun Stribling are all Questionable; Kaelon Black is Questionable at running back.
- The Rams build around Questionable headliners. Myles Garrett (lower-body soreness) and left tackle Alaric Jackson (illness) are both game-time decisions, with Eddie Walls III on IR and Justin Dedich ruled out. The starting QB stays per the depth chart: Brock Purdy (SFO) vs Matthew Stafford (RAM).
- **Broadcast line:** Two NFC West contenders open with a long Questionable list – the 49 ers' entire pass-rush unit and the Rams' new edge anchor – making pregame activation calls the dominant availability storyline for the Sept 10 opener.