

ONE HOUSE. ONE DREAM

FEBRUARY 3





ATLANTA, GA



Patriots vs. Rams: Historical Head-to-Head Record and Super Bowl 53 Pick

Super Bowl LIII is as close as February 3. The New England Patriots and Los Angeles Rams are already a week into their game preparations, but things are going to ramp up in the coming days. It's shaping up to be a tremendous matchup between two of the most balanced teams in the NFL.

This is far from the first time the Patriots and Rams have faced off. Notably, the Bill Belichick and Tom Brady dynasty in New England kicked off with an upset win over the Rams back in Super Bowl XXXVI.

Here we're going to take both a look ahead at the matchup and a look back at those in the past. We'll examine the

history of the Rams and Patriots and make our pick for

Super Bowl LIII.

Rams-Patriots Head-to-Head Total Games Played: 13

Series Record: New England leads 8-5

Series Home Split: 6-6-1 Patriots Home Record: 3-3 Rams Home Record: 2-4

Neutral Site Record (Super Bowl XXXVI): Patriots 1-o

Super Bowl LIII

Who: New England Patriots vs. Los Angeles Rams Where: Mercedes-Benz Stadium, Atlanta, Georgia

When: Sunday, February 3 at 6:30 p.m. ET TV and Live Stream: CBS and CBS All Access

Line and Over/Under (from OddsShark): NE -2.5, 56.5



Prediction

There are a lot of individual matchups to digest in the game, and that's why this one could go either way. The Patriots are favored, but the Rams have both the talent and the coaching know-how to get the job done.

L.A. head coach Sean McVay is an offensive innovator. He knows how to get his players open in the passing game and how to create room in the running game. When it comes to weapons, he has plenty to work with. Losing Cooper Kupp for the season hurt, but he still has players like Brandin Cooks, Robert Woods, Todd Gurley and C.J. Anderson to lean

Defensively, Los Angeles has a seasoned play-caller in Wade Phillips. While his defense had its issues in the regular season—it ranked 19th with an average of 358.6 yards per game allowed—it has been better in the postseason. In two playoff games, L.A. has allowed 299 yards and 22.5 points per contest.

There are two big reasons, however, that we are leaning toward the Patriots in this one.

The first is New England's rushing attack. The Patriots have leaned heavily on the ground game, especially in the playoffs. New England has amassed 331 yards on the ground in its two postseason contests.

With Sony Michel, Rex Burkhead and James White in the backfield, the Pats have plenty of weapons with which to attack the Rams up front. This is important because while the Rams defense has been better in the playoffs, it's susceptible to the run.

Los Angeles allowed an average of 122.3 yards per game on the ground in the regular season. As Doug Farrar of USA Today recently pointed out, Phillips has improved the run defense largely by stacking the box.

Rams are an interesting case study right now. Run defense was a major problem in the regular season. Big uptick in the playoffs, but they're getting that through heavily stacked boxes. When they go light, they're still vulnerable.

Here comes Brady.

This could create a problem for the Rams defense because Tom Brady knows exactly how to make a defense pay for

selling out against the run. It will also be harder for guys like Aaron Donald and Dante Fowler Jr. to get to Brady if they are concentrating on containing Michel and Co.

If Los Angeles doesn't focus on stopping the run, though, New England will have a chance to grind out the game and to keep L.A.'s potent offense off the field. This creates a catch-22 for the Rams defense that could have it off balance all game long.

The other reason why we're giving New England an edge here is its ability to play man coverage on defense. While a lot of teams rely heavily on the zone, the Patriots do not.



"I know for us, we watch the quarterbacks," safety Devin McCourty said, per Doug Kyed of NESN.com. "The quarterbacks are too good. They read the zone. Guys know how to get open in zone and do different things."

Playing zone is going to put a lot of pressure on the front seven to slow Gurley and Anderson in the running game. However, it's also going to put a lot of pressure on Rams quarterback Jared Goff. He will have to process the field and determine where the open receiver is on the fly. New England simply won't let him predetermine open spots in the zone.

Both the Philadelphia Eagles and the Chicago Bears flustered Goff with man defense late in the season. This could give New England's pass rush the split second it needs to hit home.

While the Rams are also capable of playing man defense in the secondary, they aren't quite as effective at it. Marcus Peters, in particular, has struggled in man quite a bit this season. The Patriots are better equipped to win the mandefense matchup, and they will be able to throw looks at Goff that the young quarterback has likely never seen before.

It would be a shock for Los Angeles to show Brady something he's never before seen.

This should lead to New England winning the turnover battle—the Patriots defense had 14 forced fumbles and 18 interceptions in the regular season—and that is going to make all the difference in a close contest.

Prediction: Patriots 33, Rams 27

CREDIT: KRISTOPHER KNOX

https://bleacherreport.com/articles/2817847-patriots-vs-rams-historic-head-to-head-record-and-super-bowl-53-pick



Djordje Mihailović scores in dream debut for U.S. Men's National Team

As Gregg Berhalter's first camp as U.S. Men's National Team manager shifted from Chula Visa to Glendale this week, rumblings began to emerge in the media that 20-year-old Fire Homegrown midfielder Djordje Mihailović had been one of the top performers in camp to date, not only among the youngsters but of all players in the squad.

On Sunday, Mihailović put on display the skillset that likely sparked that chatter, confidently taking the field for his first senior U.S. cap and start and delivering a 40th-minute goal in the USMNT's 3-0 international friendly win over Concacaf foe Panama. In addition to becoming the 52nd player in U.S. Men's National Team history to score on his debut -- and doing so exactly two years to the day that he signed his Homegrown contract with the Fire on Jan. 27, 2017 -- Mihailović was active on and off the ball in his 62-minute shift, facilitating the U.S. attack from his spot on the left wing.

"When we talked in San Diego, I was telling you all how impressed I was with Djordje all camp," Berhalter told media after the match in Glendale. "He's a smart soccer player. If you slow it down and look at some of the small things he does, you can understand how intelligent of a soccer player he is."

The Chicago Fire Academy product found himself with space in dangerous areas on multiple occasions on the night, but never more so than late in the first half following a Panama turnover near midfield. With Gyasi Zardes and Corey Baird leading the U.S. line, Mihailović perfectly timed his delayed run through the defense and was an unmarked target for Baird's simple service across the box. A low, one-timed shot by Mihailović took a slight deflection and caromed past Panama GK Eddie Roberts for the game's first goal.

"It's definitely a dream," Mihailović said. "I owe a lot to my team for getting me involved in that goal, Corey Baird played me a great ball. I think I'm just more excited about the first win of 2019 and getting things going."





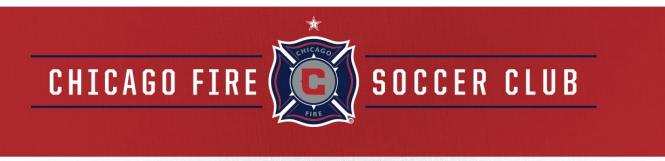
The moment was surely a sweet one for Mihailović, who still is just 15 months removed from an ACL tear that brought an otherwise promising rookie season in MLS to a devastating end. After an arduous rehab period that sidelined him for most of the 2018 MLS regular season, Mihailović returned to match action last August, and by mid-September had begun to again show the attacking flair and confidence that had long made him a regular in U.S. youth national team camps.

Still, there was no guarantee that his late-season efforts would be enough to warrant a place in Berhalter's inaugural January camp. But when that call came in December, Mihailović made clear his intention to make it just the first of many senior team call-ups.

Now, with the possibility of regular international duty being added to the high expectations held for Mihailović at the club level with the Fire, expect the Lemont native to work doubly hard in proving that Sunday's goal in Glendale was only the beginning for his USMNT career.

"It's a great time for me, working very hard the past 12 to 14 months from my injury," he said. "I think this is the end product but there's much more to be coming."

CREDIT: Scott Hammer Chicago-Fire.com



CLUB NEWS



Sam Kerr becomes W-League's all-time top scorer

Sam Kerr has made a habit of making history.

Against the Western Sydney Wanderers on Thursday, Kerr's goal in the 70th minute ascended her name to

the top of the all-time scoring list in the Westfield W-League. The league's first-ever marquee signing added a brilliant header goal to add two to her name on the night to reach 65 career goals in Australia's premier competition.

"Any time you break a record it's a huge achievement and it's something I'm proud of," Kerr told the W-League in the postgame interview. "I didn't know that coming into the game. It's obviously a proud moment and something I'll look back on for the rest of my career."



At just 25 years old, Kerr already has an impressive list of accolades. Playing for the Chicago Red Stars in the 2018 National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) season, the Aussie became the first player to score 50 career goals en route to her second-consecutive golden boot. She's also the all-time leading scorer in the NWSL, meaning she holds that honor in

two different leagues.

More importantly for Kerr, however, was the result. A definitive 5-1 win that allows Perth Glory to control their own postseason destiny with a game to go. Kerr wasn't the first Red Star player to score for Perth that night. Katie Naughton capitalized off a rebounded shot to regain the lead for her team heading into halftime. Alyssa Mautz would also assist Kerr's second goal. With the victory, Perth sits in second place in the W-League ladder.

The team ahead of Perth? Yuki Nagasato's Brisbane Roar, who took on Canberra United in their Round 13 fixture. The former Japanese international would be the third Red Star player to score a goal in Round 13. Nagasato placed a strike from outside the 18-yard box perfectly past the goalkeeper to give her team a 3-1 lead. Brisbane would go on to win 4-1, ascending them to the top of the league ladder.

The final Red Star player in Round 13 action would be Arin Wright, who's Newcastle Jets took on against Adelaide United. It was Wright who opened the scoring for her team, tucking away a penalty in the 22nd minute in a 2-1 victory.

With a game left before the playoffs, three teams featuring Chicago Red Stars are in contention for the postseason. As previously mentioned, Brisbane Roar and Perth Glory sit 1st and 2nd respectively in the league table. Danielle Colaprico's Sydney FC sit 4th with two regular season games left against Melbourne Victory and Melbourne City.

CREDIT: RED STARS SOCCER CLUB









Cavaliers rally past Bulls 104-101, snap 6-game skid

Jordan Clarkson and Alec Burks each scored 18 points, Cedi Osman added 17 and the Cleveland Cavaliers ended a sixgame losing streak, rallying to beat the Chicago Bulls 104-101 on Sunday.

NBA-worst Cleveland improved to 10-41 after dropping 18 of 19. Matthew Dellavedova had 16 points, and Rodney Hood added 14.

Lauri Markkanen led Chicago with 21 points and 15 rebounds, and Zach LaVine had 17 points and 12 rebounds. The Bulls have lost three straight and 13 of 14.

Hood had a follow basket with 17 seconds left to put Cleveland up 102-101. After a Chicago miss, Dellavedova hit a pair of free throws to close out the scoring. LaVine missed a 3-point attempt at the buzzer.

Chicago had just one field goal in the final 3:50.



Cleveland had a 12-2 run early in the fourth quarter to take a 91-83 lead. Clarkson had seven points during the run.

The Bulls answered with a run of their own, with Markkanen tying it at 94 with a three-point play with 5 1/2 minutes to go. Robin Lopez put Chicago back on top at 98-96 with 3:50 remaining. After the Cavaliers took a 100-98 lead, Wayne Selden Jr. hit a 3-pointer to give the Bulls a 101-100 edge with 1:07 left, setting up the finish.

TIP-INS

Cavaliers: F Larry Nance Jr. was scoreless in 17 minutes off the bench in his second game back from a sprained right knee. ... Cleveland let go G Cameron Payne after declining to sign him for the remainder of the season. Payne's second 10-day contract expired Saturday. He averaged 8.2 points and 2.6 assists in nine games with Cleveland.

Bulls: Rookie F Chandler Hutchinson will be sidelined for at least a month with a fractured bone in his right foot. Hutchinson will be in a walking boot for two to four weeks and will be reevaluated following next month's all-star break. The 22nd pick of the 2018 draft has played in 44 games (14 starts), averaging 5.2 points and 4.2 rebounds in 20.3 minutes.

PLAYING HURT

Hutchinson was injured late against the Atlanta Hawks on Wednesday night, but thought it was just minor soreness. He practiced the following day and had a career-high-tying 12 points and a career-high 12 rebounds in 41 minutes two nights later against the Los Angeles Clippers before the injury was discovered.

"You play a whole game, you think just some ice, some stim and treatment and you'll be good," Hutchinson said. "To have to be out for multiple weeks is kind of a bummer."

CREDIT: AP FOX Sports Ohio



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