

## 2007 NFL Preview: San Francisco 49ers

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The 2006 San Francisco 49ers showed major improvements on both sides of the football, but there is still no doubt that more improvement must be made before they can challenge in the NFC West. Find out if Jeff Alexander has San Francisco building on its seven-win season in his 2007 NFL Preview for Point-Spreads.com.

Sportsbook.com have made the San Francisco 49ers 20 to 1 odds to win Super Bowl XLII. With more money under the salary cap than any other team, the Niners wasted little time building on to a franchise that exceeded expectations with seven victories in 2006.

At the top of the list of noteworthy free-agent newcomers is cornerback Nate Clements, who signed what is believed to be the richest contract for a free-agent defensive player in league history. Although Clements is without a doubt a defensive star, I'm not sure if this big paycheck will be money well spent as we could see him get fat and happy on a team with still a ways to go.

The team hopes to overcome the departure of offensive coordinator Norv Turner, who left to coach the Chargers, and continue the considerable progress it made offensively last season by keeping Turner's successful run-first system intact, but also adding some new wrinkles into the scheme. As long as Frank Gore continues to see plenty of the football, the offense should be alright no matter who is calling the shots.

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On defense, the Niners have struggled to install a consistent 3-4 scheme the last four years and hope new defensive coordinator Greg Manusky, formerly the Chargers linebacker coach, can make a difference with improved talent. Hopefully Munusky can bring the same high caliber play to the Niners defense that we saw last season in San Diego.

The key to the offense's improvement was a breakout season by running back Frank Gore, who set franchise records in rushing yards and total yards from scrimmage. With all the great 49ers players, this is quite the feat. In addition, quarterback Alex Smith made huge strides in his second season after a very rough rookie campaign, nearly doubling his passer rating.

But there's still major room for improvement in a passing game that netted only two 100-yard performances the entire season from the team's receivers. It's becoming clear that Alex Smith is a guy who can deliver the football, the Niners just need some talent to catch it. 49ers fans will forever miss the Jerry Rice and John Taylor receiving duo.

The Niners were on pace to give up the most points in league history through the first seven games last season before shaking things up in the next three games. A major turning point was the insertion of linebacker Brandon Moore, safety Keith Lewis, and defensive tackle Ronald Fields into the starting lineup at the season's halfway mark. That move has us believing that these boys won't be so bad in 2007.

With another year of maturity under this young team's belts and some nice additions in the offseason, the 49ers are destined for improvement, but not the variety that gets you to the playoffs just yet. They'll likely be good enough for second place out West, but eight wins probably doesn't have them in the playoffs.

Point-Spreads.com contributing sports expert Jeff Alexander started handicapping to ensure that the average sports bettor has the best chance at making a profit. Nobody outworks Jeff and the result is winning season after winning season. 2006 showed unmatched success by hitting 65% in the NFL and nearly every big game he put out. Sportsbook.com has posted the NFL odds to win Super Bowl XLII:

New England Patriots 2-1

San Diego Chargers 5-1

Indianapolis Colts 7-1

Chicago Bears 16-1

Baltimore Ravens 25-1

Pittsburgh Steelers 30-1

Cincinnati Bengals 25-1

Denver Broncos 25-1  
Philadelphia Eagles 18-1  
Dallas Cowboys 25-1  
Carolina Panthers 25-1  
Seattle Seahawks 18-1  
New Orleans Saints 18-1  
New York Giants 35-1  
Jacksonville Jaguars 30-1  
Kansas City Chiefs 60-1  
New York Jets 40-1  
Miami Dolphins 55-1  
Tennessee Titans 60-1  
Atlanta Falcons 60-1  
Buffalo Bills 100-1  
Washington Redskins 40-1  
Arizona Cardinals 40-1  
Saint Louis Rams 50-1  
Tampa Bay Buccaneers 45-1  
San Francisco 49ers 20-1  
Minnesota Vikings 50-1  
Green Bay Packers 40-1  
Houston Texans 100-1  
Oakland Raiders 75-1  
Cleveland Browns 100-1  
Detroit Lions 100-1