

NFL Picks: Carolina Panthers vs San Diego Chargers

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The San Diego Chargers begin their march toward a second consecutive AFC Championship game appearance this Sunday at Qualcomm Stadium in San Diego, CA. Last year's AFC West winner will be facing the Carolina Panthers at 4:15pm ET in a Fox televised contest. NFL Picks for on Week 1 Odds at Sportsbook.com are favoring the home team Chargers -9 to take out the Panthers.

San Diego was a huge favorite to reach the Super Bowl entering the 2007 season. The Chargers, however, stumbled out of the gate losing three of their first four games before rebounding to finish at 11-5. San Diego returns 19 starters from last season, and they again are expected to be an elite team in the AFC.

Quarterback Philip Rivers evolved into a team leader of the course of last season under the guidance of Head Coach Norv Turner. This year Rivers should have his best season yet as he commands an offense that posted 25.8 points per game in 2007.

The Carolina Panthers would like to forget everything about last season, and at this point, they probably have. Their 7-9 finish was a result of injuries, poor quarterback play, and a huge drop off in the production of their defensive line. Thankfully for Panther fans, quarterback Jake Delhomme has returned healthy from elbow surgery to take over his role as team leader.

Carolina experienced a great deal of roster turnover in the off-season as six starters from 2007 are no longer with the team. However, they had nine picks in this year's draft and also signed 11 players in free agency. Head Coach John Fox will get the opportunity to see if his message sinks in with a lot of fresh faces.

Key Matchup: The Panthers offensive line will likely be a work in progress in the early portion of the season but they will need to find a way to hold up against the Chargers defensive front. San Diego produced 42 sacks last year and they will be itching to get after Delhomme.

NFL Week 1 Trend: The Under is 7-3 in Carolina's last 10 games as a road underdog.

Sportsbook.com' NFL Week 1 Odds for the Panthers vs Chargers:

Panthers +9 (-105), Over 41.5, +350 (Money line)

Chargers -9 (-105), Under 41.5, -450 (Money line)

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