

## Miami travels to San Francisco to take on the 49ers

Contributed by Tony Simmons  
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The 5-7 Miami Dolphins travel to San Francisco to take on the 8-3-1 49ers in a 4:00 kickoff. Both teams are coming off of losses, Miami to New England in Miami 23-16, the 49ers in overtime in St. Louis to the Rams 16-13.

While the Dolphins try to keep their faint playoff hopes alive, the 49ers are battling to hold of the Seattle Seahawks in the NFC West.

Let's take a look at how the teams matchup.

Miami comes into the game ranked 28th in total offense generating 317.6 yards per game. They rank 17th in rush offense coming in at 108.2 yards per game while ranking 23rd in passing offense at 209.3 yards per game. The Dolphins are scoring 18.9 points per game, which ranks 27th in the league. Miami will be facing one of the premier defensive teams in the NFL, as the 49ers rank 2nd in total defense giving up 279.6 yards per game. They rank 3rd in run defense giving up 90.6 yards per game while ranking 2nd in pass defense giving up 189.0 yards per game. The 49ers are giving up 14.2 yards per game, which ranks 1st in the NFL.

To say the Dolphins face a tough challenge today against this 49ers defense is an understatement. The Dolphins have had to reshuffle their offensive line with OLT Jake Long gone for the season with a biceps tear, and ORT Jonathan Martin now has moved to his natural position of OLT. He faces the top sack guy in the NFL in Aldon Smith, who has 17.5 of the 30 sacks the 49ers have generated. I know I sound like a broken record, and it will be a tough task, but the Dolphins will need to force the run game against a very good run defense to keep the 49ers defense honest. Miami also needs to use RB Reggie Bush more in the passing game to loosen up a very good group of 49er linebackers, led by Patrick Willis and Navarro Bowman. QB Ryan Tannehill has started to use his mobility more and will need to use that mobility in this game today along with being more accurate in the pass game than he was last week against New England. This is going to be a physical game in the trenches, and the Miami OL will have to hold their own today to have a chance. Might be wise to try to use one Charles Clay a little more as well.

Defensively, the Dolphins come into the game ranked 20th in total defense giving up 355.3 yards per game. They rank 26th in pass defense, giving up 257.7 yards per game and rank 8th in rushing defense giving up 97.7 yards per game. Miami is giving up 20.8 points per game, which ranks 11th in the NFL. They face a 49ers offense that relies heavily on the run game and a big, strong offensive line and a unit that just recently made a change at QB to the very mobile and athletic Colin Kaepernick. The 49ers rank 11th in total offense generating 363.3 yards per game. They rank 25th in passing offense at 201.2 yards per game while ranking 2nd in rush offense generating 162.1 yards per game.

There is no secret in what the Dolphins will need to do defensively today. The front seven will be tested today by a 49ers offense that will want to play power football. They feature a big, physical offensive line and a solid group of running backs led by RB Frank Gore. QB Colin Kaepernick has great mobility and has been used in Wildcat formation and the Dolphins will need to be very concerned about his ability to create outside the pocket. That being said, this is the phone booth type of physical battle that the Dolphin defense should be up for. Stop the run game and make a very inconsistent passer in Kaepernick beat you with the passing game. DC Kevin Coyle will need to be aggressive and get after Kaepernick in the passing game.

I have not discussed special teams in a while, as they have been solid for most of the year. But the last few weeks, this unit has had some major mishaps, and their mistakes last week cost the Dolphins dearly, as it led to 14 New England points. They will have to play like the did earlier in the year and they will have to contain one Ted Ginn in the return game.

Miami has a tall task in front of them today as they face a very good 49ers team on the road. We found out that Miami can battle a top flight team at home in the game against New England last week, although they lost that game. Can Miami go on the road and give themselves a chance to win against another elite team in the 49ers. We will find out.

Go Dolphins.....