

STRAT-O-MATIC®

SUMMER NEWSLETTER

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SUMMER 2026

NEW PRE-ORDER DATES FOR FOOTBALL, HOCKEY, AND BASKETBALL

TRADITIONALLY, STRAT-O-MATIC'S SUMMER PRE-ORDER PERIOD HAS FEATURED FOOTBALL, HOCKEY AND BASKETBALL PRODUCTS LAUNCHING TOGETHER. THIS YEAR, FOR THE FIRST TIME, EACH SPORT WILL HAVE ITS OWN PRE-ORDER DATE.

THE NEW SCHEDULE WILL GIVE EACH RELEASE ITS OWN TIME IN THE SPOTLIGHT WHILE MAKING IT EASIER FOR GAMERS TO PLAN THEIR PURCHASES THROUGHOUT THE SUMMER AND FALL.

THE 2026 PRE-ORDER SCHEDULE IS:

- **FOOTBALL: AUGUST 5**
INCLUDES BOTH PRO AND COLLEGE FOOTBALL PRODUCTS
- **HOCKEY: SEPTEMBER 9**
- **BASKETBALL: OCTOBER 7**

RATHER THAN HAVING TO MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT ALL THREE SPORTS AT ONCE, GAMERS CAN NOW FOCUS ON ONE RELEASE AT A TIME.

BEGINNING AROUND 10AM ET ON THE ANNOUNCED DATE FOR EACH SPORT, CUSTOMERS WILL BE ABLE TO VISIT THE STRAT-O-MATIC WEBSITE, SELECT THEIR PRODUCTS AND COMPLETE THEIR ORDERS AS USUAL.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR AUGUST 5, SEPTEMBER 9 AND OCTOBER 7, AND READ ON FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS YEAR'S FOOTBALL, HOCKEY AND BASKETBALL RELEASES.

SEAHAWKS AVENGE SUPER BOWL LOSS IN SEASON FILLED WITH NEW STARS

Eleven years after Malcolm Butler's game-winning interception at the goal line in Super Bowl XLIX, the Seattle Seahawks avenged the loss that many fans believe they should have won with a rematch against the New England Patriots in Super Bowl LX.

Though today's Seahawks and Patriots teams share none of the same players as their 2014 counterparts, some lingering DNA is undeniably still there. The champion Seahawks made their way to the big game on the back of a hungry young defense and a quarterback who might not quite be a superstar, but made just enough game-winning plays all season to put his team in

a position to win. New England arrived on the scene with a quarterback who always managed to get the job done despite a relative deficiency in receiving talent.

While Super Bowl XLIX came down to the final play, Super Bowl LX was decided much sooner. The Seahawks' defense dominated the Patriots for a 29-13 victory. Quarterback Sam Darnold became the first quarterback from his illustrious draft class to win a championship, while running back Kenneth Walker earned Super Bowl MVP honors with 161 yards from scrimmage.

Though the Patriots ultimately lost, Strat fans should look forward to getting

their hands on Drake Maye's card. In his second season and his first full season as a starter, Maye lit up the NFL to the tune of 4,394 yards, 31 touchdowns and just eight interceptions. His 72% completion rate and 113.5 passer rating will make him an ultra-efficient and relatively mistake-free option.

The second-year phenom's great season was only topped by 37-year-old Matthew Stafford, who just edged by Maye in the MVP award voting. Stafford delivered a monstrous season with 4,707 passing yards and 46 touchdowns, both league highs, against only 8 interceptions.

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HURRICANES FINALLY BREAK THROUGH TO WIN THE STANLEY CUP

For seven straight years, the Carolina Hurricanes were good, but never quite good enough. They always made the playoffs and usually won a series, but could never get over the Conference Finals hump to reach the Stanley Cup Finals. This year, that changed. The 'Canes made it to the Stanley Cup Finals and defeated the Vegas Golden Knights, four games to two, to win their first championship since 2006. Center Jordan Staal took home the Conn Smythe Trophy, adding an important

honor to his résumé and making debates about his future Hall of Fame case a bit more interesting. He scored six goals in the series, with arguably his biggest performance coming in Game 4 as the Hurricanes evened the series at 2-2 before going on to win Games 5 and 6.

The Hart Memorial Trophy race did not include a player from either the Hurricanes or Golden Knights. Instead, the top two candidates were Tampa Bay's Nikita Kucherov and Edmonton's Connor McDavid. Kucherov ultimately won the second Hart Trophy of his career, but the results were remarkably close.

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**1981 PRO FOOTBALL: 49ERS BEGIN A DYNASTY
IN SEASON FILLED WITH CLASSIC MOMENTS**

The 1981 pro football season marked the beginning of a new era. After finishing just 6-10 one year earlier, the San Francisco 49ers surged to a 13-3 record and captured the first championship in franchise history. Their opponent in Super Bowl XVI, the Cincinnati Bengals, completed an equally impressive turnaround, improving from 6-10 to 12-4 and winning their first conference title.

San Francisco's rise was led by head coach Bill Walsh and quarterback Joe Montana. Walsh's precision passing offense began to change the way football was played, while Montana established himself as one of the game's best young quarterbacks. Dwight Clark caught 85 passes for 1,105 yards, Freddie Solomon added 969 receiving yards, and running back Ricky Patton led a balanced backfield.

The rebuilt defense was just as important. Rookie defensive backs Ronnie Lott, Eric Wright and Carlton Williamson joined third-year player Dwight Hicks to form a secondary that helped the 49ers allow the second-fewest points in the league.

San Francisco's defining moment came in the conference championship game against Dallas. Trailing 27-21 late in the fourth quarter, Montana directed an 89-yard drive and found Clark in the back of the end zone for the winning touchdown. The play became forever known simply as "The Catch."

Cincinnati was led by league MVP Ken Anderson, who completed 62.6 percent of his passes for 3,754 yards and 29 touchdowns. Rookie receiver Cris Collinsworth caught 67 passes for 1,009 yards, while tight end Dan Ross added 71 receptions. The Bengals reached the Super Bowl by defeating San Diego in the bitter cold of the AFC Championship Game, remembered as "The Freezer Bowl."

San Diego's "Air Coryell" system produced the league's most explosive offense, averaging nearly 30 points per game. Dan Fouts led the NFL with 4,802 passing yards, while Charlie Joyner and Kellen Winslow each surpassed 1,000 receiving yards. Before falling to Cincinnati, the Chargers defeated Miami, 41-38 in overtime, in one of the most exciting playoff games ever played.

The season also introduced one of football's greatest defensive stars. Rookie linebacker Lawrence Taylor helped lead the New York Giants to their first playoff appearance since 1963 and was named both Defensive Rookie of the Year and Defensive Player

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**1944-45 NHL: RICHARD MAKES HISTORY,
BUT TORONTO TAKES THE CUP**

The 1944-45 National Hockey League season produced one of the most celebrated individual accomplishments in hockey history. Maurice "Rocket" Richard became the first player to score 50 goals in a season, reaching the milestone in Montreal's 50th and final regular-season game.

Richard's historic performance highlighted a dominant season by Montreal. The Canadiens finished 38-8-4 with 80 points and featured the NHL's three leading scorers. Center Elmer Lach led the league with 80 points on 26 goals and 54 assists. Richard followed with 73 points, while Toe Blake added 29 goals and 67 points.

Together, Lach, Richard and Blake formed the famed Punch Line, one of the most productive combinations the game had ever seen. Lach was named the NHL's Most Valuable Player, while Montreal goaltender Bill Durnan won 38 games and captured the Vezina Trophy with a 2.42 goals-against average.

Despite Montreal's regular season dominance, the Stanley Cup belonged to the third-place Toronto Maple Leafs.

Toronto finished 24-22-4 behind teenage center Ted Kennedy, who led the team with 29 goals and 54 points. The Maple Leafs opened the playoffs by upsetting Montreal in six games, surviving a 10-3 loss in Game Five before eliminating the defending champions with a 3-2 victory in Toronto.

Rookie goaltender Frank McCool was the star of the postseason. McCool, who won the Calder Trophy during the regular season, opened the Stanley Cup Final against Detroit with three consecutive shutouts. He remains the only goaltender in NHL history to record three straight shutouts in the Final.

Toronto appeared ready to complete a sweep, but Detroit responded by winning three consecutive games. Red Wings goaltender Harry Lumley shut out the Maple Leafs in Games Five and Six, setting up a decisive seventh game in Detroit.

The Maple Leafs avoided completing the wrong side of a historic comeback when Babe Pratt scored the winning goal in a 2-1 Game Seven victory. Kennedy, still only 19 years old, led all players with seven playoff goals.

The six-team league was filled with stars. Boston's Bill Cowley recorded 65 points, Chicago's Bill Mosienko won the Lady Byng Trophy after finishing with 28 goals, 54 points and no penalty minutes, and Detroit finished second behind the goaltending of Lumley and a lineup that included Syd Howe, Flash Hollett and a young Ted Lindsay.

From Richard's 50 goals to McCool's postseason heroics, the 1944-45 season gives Strat-O-Matic coaches the opportunity to replay one of hockey's most memorable campaigns.

GRIDIRON GEMS BRINGS 16 GREAT TEAMS FROM THE 1960s BACK TO THE FIELD

Inspired by Strat-O-Matic's popular Diamond Gems baseball series, Gridiron Gems brings together 16 memorable football teams from the 1960s in two separate eight-team card sets. These collections are designed for cross-season matchups, tournaments and debates over which of the decade's greatest teams would come out on top.

The two sets feature champions from both the NFL and AFL, legendary players and several dominant teams that fell just short of a title. Coaches can match Vince Lombardi's Packers against the explosive offenses of the AFL, test Joe Namath's Jets against the Purple People Eaters, or give one of the decade's great runners-up another opportunity to win it all.

Gridiron Gems: 1960s A features the 1961 Houston Oilers, 1962 Green Bay Packers, 1963 New York Giants, 1964 Buffalo Bills, 1967 Los Angeles Rams, 1967 Oakland Raiders, 1968 New York Jets and 1969 Minnesota Vikings.

The 1961 Oilers scored 513 points behind George Blanda, Billy Cannon and Charley Hennigan before winning their second consecutive AFL championship. Green Bay's 1962 team finished 13-1, led the NFL in both scoring and fewest points allowed, and defeated New York for its second straight title.

The 1963 Giants counter with one of the decade's best passing attacks. Y.A. Tittle threw a then-record 36 touchdown passes, with Del Shofner and Frank Gifford among his leading receivers. Buffalo's balanced 1964 champions featured Jack Kemp, Cookie Gilchrist and a defense that allowed fewer than 1,000 rushing yards all season.

Both leagues produced outstanding teams in 1967. The Los Angeles Rams finished 11-1-2 behind Roman Gabriel and the Fearsome Foursome, while Daryle Lamonica threw 30 touchdown passes for a 13-1 Oakland team that scored 468 points and won the AFL championship.

The set concludes with two of the decade's most famous teams. Namath's 1968 Jets defeated Baltimore in one of football's greatest upsets, while the 1969 Vikings finished 12-2 and allowed only 133 points behind their celebrated Purple People Eaters defense.

Gridiron Gems: 1960s B includes the 1962 Dallas Texans, 1963 Chicago Bears, 1963 San Diego Chargers, 1964 Cleveland Browns, 1966 Green Bay Packers, 1968 Baltimore Colts, 1968 Dallas Cowboys and 1969 Kansas City Chiefs.

The 1962 Texans won the AFL championship by defeating Houston, 20-17, in double overtime. Chicago's powerful defense held opponents to only 144 points and intercepted Tittle five times in a 14-10 NFL Championship Game victory over the Giants.

San Diego's 1963 championship team presents a much different challenge. Lance Alworth, Paul Lowe and Keith Lincoln powered an offense that scored 399 points before overwhelming Boston, 51-10, in the AFL title game. Cleveland's

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1973-74 WHA: HOWE FAMILY LEADS HOUSTON TO FIRST CHAMPIONSHIP

The World Hockey Association made one of its biggest statements during its second season by bringing Gordie Howe out of retirement to play alongside his sons, Mark and Marty, with the Houston Aeros.

At age 45, "Mr. Hockey" proved he was far more than a promotional attraction. Howe scored 31 goals, recorded 69 assists and reached 100 points for the second time in his professional career. He was named the WHA's Most Valuable Player while leading Houston to a 48-25-5 record and a league-best 101 points.

Mark Howe immediately became a star in his own right. The 18-year-old scored 38 goals and 79 points and was named the WHA's Rookie of the Year. Marty Howe joined his father and brother on a deep Houston roster that also featured Frank Hughes, who scored 42 goals, and Larry Lund, who recorded 86 points.

The Aeros combined that firepower with the league's best defense. Goaltender Don McLeod won 33 games, posted a 2.56 goals-against average and received the Ben Hatskin Trophy as the WHA's top goaltender. Houston scored 318 goals while allowing only 219.

The Aeros swept Winnipeg in the opening round of the playoffs and defeated the Minnesota Fighting Saints in six games to reach the Avco World Trophy Final. Their opponent was the Chicago Cougars, who had finished fourth in the East Division before upsetting first-place New England and second-place Toronto in consecutive seven-game series.

Chicago's surprising run ended against Houston. The Aeros swept the Cougars in four games, outscoring them 22-9 to win the first of two consecutive WHA championships.

Minnesota's Mike Walton led the WHA with 57 goals and 117 points. André Lacroix recorded a league-best 80 assists and 111 points for New York/New Jersey. Winnipeg's Bobby Hull scored 53 goals, while Vancouver's Danny Lawson reached 50.

The season also featured plenty of the unpredictability that made the WHA so memorable. The Philadelphia Blazers relocated to Vancouver before the season, while the New York Golden Blades moved to New Jersey after twenty games. On the ice, New England won the East Division, Toronto scored 304 goals, Minnesota produced a league-high 332, and Chicago emerged from fourth place to reach the championship round.

Pat Stapleton of Chicago was named the league's top defenseman, while former NHL stars such as Gerry Cheevers, J.C. Tremblay, Ralph Backstrom and Frank Mahovlich joined Howe and Hull in giving the young league instant credibility.

The six carded teams Chicago, Cleveland, Houston, Minnesota, New England, and Toronto. As always, the remaining teams will be available for customers to print on their own as a downloadable file.

With 12 colorful teams, wide-open offenses and one of the greatest players in hockey history returning to play with his sons, the 1973-74 WHA season offers a unique experience for any Strat-O-Matic coach.

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His season included an eight-game stretch during which he remarkably threw 25 touchdown passes without an interception. He carried the momentum from this incredible season into the NFC Championship game, where his Rams fell to the eventual champion Seahawks in a 31-27 thriller.

Though the seasoned veteran beat out the young upstart for MVP, young quarterback talent took the league by storm this year. Trevor Lawrence led the Jaguars to the AFC South title. Bryce Young's Panthers capitalized on a weak NFC South and won the division with an 8-9 record, aided by Offensive Rookie of the Year Tetairoa McMillan. Bo Nix made his second playoff appearance in two years by leading the Broncos to the AFC West title, while the Chicago Bears shocked the league by finishing first in the NFC North under Caleb Williams.

Williams truly emerged as a superstar in the making. His 3,942 passing yards and 27 passing touchdowns are impressive enough, but the stats only tell part of the story. To understand the emergence of the former first overall pick, one must look to the 46-yard game-winner he tossed to DJ Moore to beat the Packers in Week 16 and effectively wrap up the division. There was the second-half comeback he led against the same Packers team in the playoffs and the mind melting fourth-down heave to Cole Kmet that Williams made running backwards and throwing off his back foot to force overtime against the Rams in the divisional round. Williams' card might not be the most consistent one available, but fans can try to replicate the big plays when they matter most.

The tradeoff for all this emerging young talent was that many of the league's recent powers endured down seasons. The Kansas City Chiefs stumbled to 6-11 after their humiliating Super Bowl LIX loss to the Philadelphia Eagles, with Patrick Mahomes tearing his ACL late in the season. The Ravens dealt with injuries all year and still nearly made the playoffs, but fell to the Pittsburgh Steelers in an unforgettable, win-or-go-home week 18 classic.

The Buffalo Bills made the playoffs with a 12-5 record but were outshone by the division-winning Patriots. We are used to seeing eye popping-numbers from former MVP Josh Allen, but he produced a far more pedestrian line in 2025 with 3,668 yards, 25 TDs and 10 INTs. Is a changing of the guard already underway in the NFL, or will these teams return to prominence next season?

Across the league, skill-position players delivered remarkable individual performances while making their cases for Offensive Player of the Year. Jonathan Taylor rushed for 1,585 yards and led the league with 18 rushing touchdowns, accounting for three total scores four times during the season. Like many of Stafford's top targets throughout his career, Puka Nacua delivered an exceptionally high-volume season with a league leading 129 receptions and 1,715 yards. Comeback Player of the Year Christian McCaffrey also made his case for the award, touch the ball 413 times for the 49ers. While it was not his most efficient campaign, CMC eclipsed 2,100 yards with ease and nearly produced a 1,000-yard rushing and 1,000-yard receiving season, finishing with 1,202 and 924.

Ultimately, the honor went to third-year Seahawks receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba. JSN was consistently one of the NFL's top threats throughout the season. At times, it seemed as though Seattle's entire passing offense ran through him alone. He caught 119 passes for a league leading 1,793 yards, scored 10 touchdowns and averaged an impressive 15.1 yards per reception.

That's enough talk of offense though. Strat players know the defensive side is just as important. This season featured some of the strongest full-season defense performances in years.

Perhaps the most dominant and well-rounded defense belonged to the Houston Texans, led by defensive end Will Anderson Jr.'s 12 sacks and three forced fumbles. The Denver Broncos rode their incredible defensive unit to the #1 seed and held the Patriots to 10 points in their AFC Championship battle.

The story of the season is not complete without discussing Defensive Player of the Year Myles Garrett's historic campaign with the Cleveland Browns. Garrett set an NFL record with 23 sacks, including an incredible four-game stretch in which he recorded 13. Rookie linebacker Carson Schwesinger also took home Defensive Rookie of the Year honors for Cleveland. The Browns may have had an overall season to forget, but fans can expect their defense to wreak havoc on opposing offenses.

There are still so many storylines that we have not covered, including Aaron Rodgers' arrival in Pittsburgh, Jaxon Dart's exciting campaign in New York, and the Jets becoming the first team to record zero interceptions in a season.

Now it's up to you to relive those moments through the cards!

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of the Year. The New York Jets also returned to the postseason for the first time since 1969.

New Orleans rookie George Rogers led the league with 1,674 rushing yards, Atlanta's Alfred Jenkins topped all receivers with 1,358 yards and 13 touchdowns, and Dallas won 12 games to win the NFC East then walloped Tampa Bay 38-0 in the Divisional Round before its dramatic loss in San Francisco.

In a first for Strat-O-Matic old-timer football seasons, six teams will be physically carded but

customers will also receive a PDF file to download the remaining 22 teams. Gamers can print off the other teams as needed from the file which can be found in the "Downloads" section of their account on the Strat-O-Matic website. The six carded teams that will ship in mid-August are Cincinnati, Dallas, Miami, Philadelphia, San Diego, and San Francisco.

Replay a season that featured remarkable turnarounds, unforgettable playoff games and the beginning of one of football's greatest dynasties.

NEW FEATURES ADD MORE REALISM AND CONTROL TO THE FOOTBALL WINDOWS GAME

The newest Strat-O-Matic Football Windows game introduces updated professional football rules, expanded customization and several improvements designed to make leagues easier to manage.

UPDATED OVERTIME AND KICKOFF RULES

The Pro Game now supports the regular-season overtime rule introduced in 2025. Both teams will receive an opportunity to possess the ball, even if the team receiving the opening kickoff scores a touchdown. If the game remains tied after both possessions, it becomes sudden death. Regular season overtime will still last only 10 minutes before the game is declared a tie.

The Custom Rules dialog has been reorganized with separate settings for overtime length, postseason rules and regular-season rules. Gamers can choose among First Score, FG Doesn't Win It and Both Teams Get Ball formats. Certain combinations of Custom Rules may be incompatible.

The updated Dynamic Kickoff Rule is also supported. Touchbacks will now place the ball at the 35-yard line instead of the 30. Trailing teams may also attempt an onside kick at any point in the game rather than only during the fourth quarter.

CONTROL COLLEGE FOOTBALL BLOWOUTS

Strat-O-Matic College Football 2026 gamers can control the frequency and size of lopsided games with the new Blowout Throttle slider.

Once a stronger team builds a lead of at least four touchdowns, the feature can begin reducing the effects of the College Football Mismatch system. As the lead grows, the mismatch effects are reduced further, reflecting how teams sometimes become less aggressive after building a commanding advantage.

Gamers can allow throttling to begin in the second, third or fourth quarter, keep it active throughout the game or select Never to retain the original system. Never remains the default setting.

IMPROVED LEAGUE MANAGEMENT

League reports will now include the current week number in their file names. A standings report generated after Week 1, for example, will be saved separately from the report created after Week 2. Commissioners who generate reports regularly can maintain snapshots showing how their leagues developed throughout the season.

The new naming system applies to League Standings, Record Book, Injury Report, League Leaders, Situational Yardage, League Grand Totals, Takeaway/Giveaway, First Down Percentage and Team-by-Team Scoring reports.

A new Copy Rules option has also been added to League Manager. Commissioners can copy all Game Rules settings from one league to another and then review or adjust them in the League Rules dialog.

The Schedule/Restart Season function will now clear old play-by-play text files from the league's logs folder, allowing a restarted league to begin with a clean set of files.

OPTIONAL LB BLITZ COMPUTER MANAGERS

The new version includes two optional defensive computer managers, one for 4-3 defenses and another for 3-4 defenses. Designed for stock or draft teams from 1994 through the present, these managers use more linebacker blitzes and fewer free-safety blitzes than the default defensive managers.

The alternate managers provide a different and potentially more competitive opponent. They can also help gamers practice against increased linebacker pressure before playing online against live opponents. Both can be imported manually through the Defensive Plays tab on a team's depth chart.

With updated rules, greater customization and improved league tools, the newest Football Windows game gives Strat-O-Matic coaches more control over how they create, manage and enjoy their seasons.

NEW FEATURES PLANNED FOR HOCKEY AND BASKETBALL 2026

The 2026 editions of the Strat-O-Matic Hockey and Basketball Windows games are expected to introduce new customization options, league-management tools and gameplay improvements.

Please note that these features are still planned and are not guaranteed for the final releases. Testing has not yet begun, and there have been occasions when a feature had to be removed because it did not perform as expected and could not be corrected before launch.

STRAT-O-MATIC HOCKEY 2026

One of the most visible additions planned for Hockey 2026 is support for custom backdrop images on the Improved Game Screen. Gamers will be able to create an 1800-by-1200 JPG image for a team and assign it through the Team Information tab. That backdrop will then appear during the team's home games, allowing users to feature an arena interior or another team-related design. As with customized rinks, Strat-

O-Matic cannot supply backdrop images because of licensing restrictions.

New Save Game Screen Layout and Restore Game Screen Layout options will allow users to save different arrangements of the game-screen elements. Gamers can reposition and resize the rosters, player picture, play-by-play area and other elements, then save and restore as many layouts as they wish.

This will be especially helpful for those who switch between the Original and Improved Game Screens. Separate layouts can be saved for each interface, although switching between the two screens will still require exiting the game and changing the "Use Improved Interface" setting.

Several gameplay improvements are also planned. On offensive-zone power-play faceoffs won to "Any Player," the computer manager will use the team's Shot Order to determine which player takes the shot. Previous versions used the team's Any Player Possession Order.

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KNICKS END 53-YEAR TITLE DROUGHT IN UNFORGETTABLE SEASON

After 53 long years, the New York Knicks became NBA champions once again with a 4-1 series victory over the San Antonio Spurs. Though the outcome on paper would suggest that the Knicks cruised to their trophy, this couldn't be farther from the truth.

New York trailed during the fourth quarter of every game, often by double digits. That included game 4, when the Spurs led by a whopping 29 points in the third quarter. The Knicks stormed back, with OG Anunoby tipping in Jalen Brunson's missed three-point attempt to give New York a 107-106 lead with 1.2 seconds remaining. The score held, completing the largest comeback in NBA Finals history.

The following game, Jalen Brunson would deliver a 45-point masterclass to erase yet another fourth quarter deficit and clinch the championship. "Captain Clutch" averaged 10.3 points per game in fourth quarters of the Finals, making one game-saving shot after another. His unforgettable performance earned him series MVP honors and completed one of the greatest seasons in Knicks history.

San Antonio's season was nothing

to scoff at either. In fact, many media outlets considered the Spurs the favorite entering the Finals. Led by third-year phenom and Defensive Player of the Year Victor Wembanyama, San Antonio's young core fully emerged as a contender and won 62 games, good for second place in the West.

Standing in the Spurs' way throughout the season were the defending champion Oklahoma City Thunder, who secured the top seed with 64 wins. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander averaged 31/4/7 while winning the NBA's Most Valuable Player Award for the second consecutive season.

The Spurs and Thunder appeared destined to meet in the Western Conference Finals. When they did, the series went the full seven games, with Oklahoma City falling just short of being the first defending champion since the 2018-19 Golden State Warriors to return to the Finals.

The Eastern Conference featured another young team taking a major step forward. The Detroit Pistons earned the #1 seed by winning 60 regular season games for the first time in 20 years. Detroit had returned to the playoffs as the sixth seed one year earlier before falling to the Knicks in the opening round, but this season established the

Pistons as legitimate championship contenders.

Cade Cunningham continued his development into a superstar, averaging nearly a double-double (23.9 points per game and 9.9 assists per game), en route to an All-NBA First Team selection. Combine that with fourth year center Jalen Duren breaking out into an All Star and third year forward Ausar Thompson earning a First Team All-Defense selection and you have a recipe for success. Despite that talented young core, Detroit fell behind the eight-seeded Orlando Magic, three games to one, in the first round. The Pistons responded by reeling off three straight wins to take the series and advance to the second round.

While Detroit overcame a 3-1 deficit, the Boston Celtics surrendered the same series advantage in a first-round loss to the Philadelphia 76ers. Despite the disappointing ending, no one expected Boston to get this far in the first place when Jayson Tatum tore his Achilles during the 2025 playoffs. It took a Herculean season from Jaylen Brown, who set career highs in points (28.7), field goals made (10.4) and assists (5.1), to keep Boston thriving despite missing their best player. He earned MVP votes

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Kucherov received 72.53 percent of the overall vote share, while McDavid received 72.02 percent. They earned 72 and 68 first-place votes, respectively.

Statistically, the stars had similar seasons. Kucherov recorded 130 points with 44 goals and 86 assists, while McDavid finished with 138 points on 48 goals and 90 assists. The vote likely came down to team performance, as Kucherov's Lightning earned 106 points while McDavid's Oilers finished with 93.

It was a decorated season all around for the Lightning, as Andrei Vasilevskiy secured his second Vezina Trophy one year after finishing second for the award. He was once again nearly impossible to score against, posting a .911 save percentage and a 2.31 goals-against average.

Ilya Sorokin of the New York Islanders finished second in the voting. Although he produced an excellent .906 save percentage and 2.68 goals-against average, the vote was decisively in favor of Vasilevskiy. Still, the Islanders saw plenty of promise from rookie defenseman Matthew Schaefer, who impressed throughout the season on his way to winning the Calder Memorial Trophy.

The Colorado Avalanche had a very strong season all

around, leading the NHL in both goals scored per game at 3.63 and goals allowed per game at 2.40. Their 121 points were far and away the best total in the league, as was their plus-99 goal differential.

Nathan MacKinnon's 53 goals led the NHL, as he was one of only two players to eclipse the 50-goal mark this season. Montreal's Cole Caufield scored 51. Colorado goaltender Scott Wedgewood also led all qualifying goalies with a 2.02 goals-against average and .921 save percentage, although he appeared in only 45 games.

Despite that regular-season dominance, the Avalanche were ultimately swept in the Western Conference Final by a Golden Knights team that had been the least successful of the division winners. Vegas entered the playoffs with only 95 points and a plus-15 goal differential, but got hot at the right time before eventually falling to Carolina.

In addition to Kucherov and McDavid, six other players reached the 100-point threshold this season: MacKinnon with 127, San Jose's Macklin Celebrini with 115, Winnipeg's Mark Scheifele with 103, Montreal's Nick Suzuki with 101, Boston's David Pastrnak with 100 and Colorado's Martin Nečas with 100.

Will these stars reach the same heights when you play out the season?

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1964 champions were led by Jim Brown, Frank Ryan and rookie Paul Warfield, then stunned heavily favored Baltimore, 27-0, for the NFL title.

The 1966 Packers won the first Super Bowl behind league MVP Bart Starr and another outstanding Lombardi defense. Baltimore's 1968 team finished 13-1, scored 402 points and allowed only 144, but its dominant season ended with the famous loss to the Jets in Super Bowl III.

Dallas also finished near the top of the NFL in 1968, scoring a league-high 431 points behind Don Meredith, Bob Hayes and Lance Rentzel. The collection finishes with the 1969 Kansas City Chiefs, who allowed only 20 points in three postseason games and defeated Minnesota, 23-7, in Super Bowl IV.

With 16 teams spanning the decade, Gridiron Gems gives Strat-O-Matic coaches the opportunity to replay historic championship games and create matchups football fans never had the chance to see.

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for the first time in his career and made an All-NBA Team for the second time in his career (22-23) to lead the Celtics to 56 wins under the guidance of Coach of the Year winner Joe Mazulla.

Though the pain of losing scoring champion Luka Dončić (33.5 ppg) may never wear off for the fans, Cooper Flagg lived up to all the hype and won Rookie of the Year for the Dallas Mavericks, averaging 21/7/5 in 70 games. Flagg's former Duke teammate Kon Knueppel made his own run for the award as he averaged 18.5 points while shooting a blistering 42.5% from three on 7.9 attempts per game. His 273 made threes set a new rookie record and helped Charlotte finish 18-9 after the All-Star break.

Rookies making big contributions to

winning teams was a theme this year. Second overall pick Dylan Harper was a consistently effective spark plug off the bench throughout San Antonio's run to the Finals. VJ Edgecombe - the third overall pick - made the most of his starting opportunity for the 76ers, averaging 16/6/4. He delivered one of his biggest performances in Game 7 against Boston, scoring 23 points with five 3-pointers to help Philadelphia complete the upset.

Other storylines around the league this season include Nickeil Alexander-Walker's Most Improved Player campaign with Atlanta, as he averaged 20.8 points per game while shooting 39.9% from three, dwarfing his previous career high in points of 11.0. Miami's Bam Adebayo scored 83 points in a single game, surpassing Kobe Bryant's

81 for the second-highest total in NBA history behind only Wilt Chamberlain's legendary 100-point feat. Nikola Jokić averaged a triple double for the second consecutive season (28/13/11) but once again finished behind SGA in the MVP race. The Cavaliers advanced to the conference finals for the first time since 2018, while LeBron James continued to defy logic with a 21 ppg campaign at age 41.

From the Knicks's historical championship to the emergence of a new generation of stars, this was a season filled with unforgettable performances and dramatic finishes. Now it's your turn to explore every team, create new matchups, and play out the possibilities for yourself.

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In-game roster reports will also be easier to access. Gamers will be able to double-click the area near the goalie that displays the team's offensive and defensive settings and Win Probability to open that team's roster report.

Goalie management is also being improved. If a team pulls its goalie and then allows an empty-net goal, the game will check whether the new score remains within the selected goalie-pull range. If it does not, the goalie will return to the game, preventing teams from allowing an unlimited number of empty-net goals after falling further behind.

STRAT-O-MATIC BASKETBALL 2026

Basketball 2026 is expected to address a font-rendering problem caused by Microsoft's Windows Version 24H2 update. The operating-system change made player names difficult to read on several screens. After introducing a temporary workaround last year, the affected code has now been rewritten to display player names directly through Windows GDI.

The fix has been applied to the Team Defensive Profile dialog, Create Manual Game File dialog and the Player Profile and Eligible Player tabs within the Computer Manager dialog. While future Windows changes remain outside Strat-O-Matic's control, the new approach should provide a more dependable solution.

Commissioners will also have a faster way to create draft

leagues. The Create Team function will allow users to select one team as a model and add multiple copies to a league at once. After entering the desired number of teams, the game will automatically create them with standardized names and distribute them evenly among the league's divisions. Commissioners can then update team cities, nicknames and abbreviations before conducting their draft.

Several in-game improvements are also planned. Coaches will be able to make substitutions after the final free throw is made without using a timeout. This will be especially useful when replacing the free-throw shooter late in a game after all timeouts have been used.

Each team's total points, rebounds, assists and fouls will appear directly on the game screen beneath the individual player totals. For league games, each team's updated won-loss record will also appear in the box-score header.

Finally, several play-by-play descriptions that sounded outdated when applied to modern players have been refreshed. Players will now "move" up the court rather than "lumber" up the court, for example. Gamers who notice other dated descriptions are encouraged to report them to technical support for consideration in future updates.

Together, these planned Hockey and Basketball improvements will provide greater customization, faster league setup and a smoother game experience.



STRAT-O-MATIC BASEBALL NOW AVAILABLE AT BARNES & NOBLE STORES NATIONWIDE

For 65 years, Strat-O-Matic has brought generations of sports fans together around the tabletop. Now, a new national retail partnership with Barnes & Noble makes it easier for longtime gamers, families and a new generation of fans to discover Strat-O-Matic Baseball.

Two Strat-O-Matic products are now available at Barnes & Noble stores nationwide, each offering a different way to experience the strategy and excitement of baseball.

The Strat-O-Matic Baseball B&N Exclusive Edition features all 30 teams from the 2025 season. The game

has been repackaged in a new 12-by-12-inch square box designed specifically for retail shelves. Several charts have also been redesigned to fit the new format while preserving the statistical accuracy, realism and strategic decision-making that have defined Strat-O-Matic for decades. The game also includes a coupon for 75% off additional players plus free shipping, while supplies last.

The Strat-O-Matic Baseball B&N Exclusive Edition is available only inside Barnes & Noble stores and cannot be purchased through the Barnes & Noble website.

Also available is the fifth edition of Strat-O-Matic Baseball Express, a faster-playing version that provides an accessible introduction to the Strat-O-Matic experience while offering veteran gamers another exciting way to play. Baseball Express is an ideal starting point for friends and family members who are new to the game and is perfect for travel.

Together, the two products give Barnes & Noble customers the opportunity to choose between the complete Strat-O-Matic Baseball experience and a quicker introduction to the game. Both were designed to help more baseball fans discover why Strat-O-Matic has remained a favorite for generations.

Barnes & Noble has long been a destination for books, games, gifts and shared experiences. This partnership places Strat-O-Matic in front of millions of customers while giving current gamers an easy way to introduce the game to friends, children and grandchildren.

Visit a Barnes & Noble store near you and look for Strat-O-Matic Baseball!

NEW BASEBALL MAX FEATURES ARE HERE; NEW USERS SAVE 50% THROUGH AUGUST 31

Baseball MAX continues to grow, with new features that make it easier than ever to play with friends, review your games and enjoy the action from any device.

Multiplayer games are now available across every Baseball MAX experience, including Historical Leagues and Game of the Day. During any game, you can invite a friend to play against you by entering an email address or request to join a game already in progress.

Best of all, invited guests do not need a Baseball MAX subscription. Any baseball fan can accept an invitation and play for free, making it easy to introduce friends and family to Strat-O-Matic or challenge a longtime rival.

BASEBALL MAX BY STRAT-O-MATIC®

Play-by-play is also now available after every game. Managers can revisit each at-bat, review the key decisions and relive the moments that determined the final score.

Additional updates include improved reliability, better mobile and box score displays, more dependable league processing and overall performance improvements. Together, these enhancements provide a faster, smoother Baseball MAX experience.

New users can subscribe for a full year for only \$99 through August 31, a 50% savings off the regular \$199 annual subscription price. Visit Baseball MAX today to subscribe, invite your friends and start playing!

275 NEW PLAYER CARDS, 1968 SEASON, AND MORE ADDED TO BASEBALL 365



Baseball 365's All-Time Greats player set is bigger this summer, with 275 new player cards now available. The additions span more than a century of baseball history, giving managers even more legendary seasons and strategic possibilities to explore.

The top offensive additions include several of the greatest individual seasons ever produced. The new cards are headlined by Aaron Judge and Bobby Witt Jr. from 2024, Lou Gehrig and Babe Ruth from 1930, Joe Jackson from 1912 and Ted Williams from 1942.

Ed Walsh's legendary 1908 season leads the pitching additions, joined by Tom Hughes from 1915 and Paul Skenes from his outstanding 2024 rookie campaign. New 19th-century cards for Tony Mullane and Clark Griffith add even more variety to the growing All-Time Greats player pool.

The update is not limited to players. Every ballpark from the 1968, 1980 and 2024 seasons has also been added to All-Time Greats. These additions give managers more opportunities to build their teams around ballpark effects and select a home field that complements their roster and strategy.

For gamers interested in managing a complete historical season, 1968 is also now available as a separate, standalone Baseball 365 set. Draft from one of baseball's most memorable seasons and write your own history.

With 275 new player cards, three seasons of ballparks and the complete 1968 season now available, there are more ways than ever to build, manage and compete. Visit 365.strat-o-matic.com and start playing today!

THE RHETT RED TEE IS BACK IN STOCK!



The Rhett Red Tee is back by popular demand!

Featuring Strat-O-Matic's iconic red box logo, this stylish red ringer T-shirt sold out within weeks of its original release. Demand was so strong that some sizes were gone before the pre-order period even ended.

If you missed it the first time, now is your chance to add the Rhett Red Tee to your Strat-O-Matic collection. Get yours while supplies last!

NEW STRAT-O-MATIC MERCHANDISE NOW AVAILABLE



Looking for more ways to show your Strat-O-Matic pride? New Strat-O-Matic merchandise is now available on Printify!

The collection includes hats, T-shirts, hoodies and more, with a variety of designs, colors and styles to choose from. Whether you are looking for something to wear on game day, use in your Strat cave, or a gift for another Strat fan, there are plenty of new options available.

Check out the collection and get your new Strat-O-Matic merch today!

SIGN UP NOW FOR THE WSBG STRAT-O-MATIC BASEBALL CARDS & DICE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

Last call to prove you're the best Strat player there is! In just a few short weeks, Strat-O-Matic players will be competing for the crown of "World's Greatest Strat-O-Matic Player".

Hosted by the World Series of Board Gaming, the cards and dice Strat-O-Matic tournament will take place at the Horseshoe Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas from September 5 through September 9.

With the event getting closer, we encourage you to throw your hat into the ring and give yourself the chance to claim crown. Purchase your tournament entry through the official World Series of Board Gaming website: <https://wsbgvegas.com/stratomatic-2026/>. Tournament registration will remain open through August 15th, while discounted hotel rates at the Horseshoe are available only through August 1st. Act now so you don't miss out!

The tournament structure is simple. Players will compete head-to-head over the course of multiple days, beginning with divisional play. The players with the best records in their divisions will advance to the playoff rounds, where they will compete in elimination play. The field will continue to narrow until only two players remain. Those finalists will face off in a best-of-seven championship series to determine the winner.

For detailed information on the tournament format and rules, review the official tournament page here: <https://wsbgvegas.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/2026-WSBG->

[Stratomatic-Championship-Rules-Overview v2 5.pdf](#)

The tournament will feature the 32 teams from the following Diamond Gems card sets:

- 1920s
- 1950s
- 1970s Series B
- 2000s Series B

All cards needed for tournament play will be provided when you arrive.

It would not be Vegas without a chance to win something. The WSBG will award the following guaranteed cash prizes:

- **First place: \$5,000**
- **Second place: \$2,500**
- **Third place: \$750**
- **Fourth place: \$320**

Not only will you have the opportunity to prove that you are the best Strat-O-Matic player in the world, but you could also bring home some serious winnings.

Representatives from Strat-O-Matic will be in attendance throughout the tournament to answer any questions about the cards, rules, and gameplay. If you have questions before the event, contact us at support@strat-o-matic.com, or watch the official WSBG AMA from July: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntryQNHIZOW>

Do not miss your chance to compete for a world championship in Las Vegas. Register by August 15th, and reserve your discounted hotel room by August 1st.

Hope to see you there. Strat On!

INDIVIDUAL DEFENSIVE MARKERS COMING TO ALL NEW FOOTBALL SETS

While current season Football releases have included individual defensive markers for some time, all new Football card sets will receive a digital version this year.

Customers who order the 2025 season, 1981 season or Gridiron Gems card sets will receive a downloadable file containing individual defensive squares. The file will be available through the customer's Strat-O-Matic account and can be printed for use during gameplay.

The defensive squares also feature a slightly updated layout. Pass-rush ratings will now appear directly on the markers, making that information easier to reference throughout the game. Each team's colors will also be represented, helping coaches quickly identify players and creating a more visually appealing setup on the tabletop.

These new markers will give every newly released Football card set the same convenient defensive setup while placing more of the information coaches need directly in front of them.

2025 FOOTBALL RATINGS GUIDE NOW AVAILABLE

Good coaches are well-prepared coaches, and the new 2025 Football Ratings Guide gives you the information you need to prepare for your next draft, trade, or matchup.

Now available as a computer download, the guide provides detailed analysis for every player, team defense, and special teams card from the 2025 season. Separate spreadsheets cover quarterbacks, running backs, receivers, offensive and defensive linemen, kickers, and return specialists.

The team defense spreadsheet offers an extensive

breakdown of each club's performance against different types of runs and passes, helping you identify favorable matchups and potential weaknesses. Player results are color-coded so you can quickly see who rates as great, good, average, below average, or poor in each area.

Because the guide is provided in spreadsheet form, you can sort and compare players and teams based on the categories that matter most to you. Whether you are building a draft-league roster or managing a stock team, the 2025 Football Ratings Guide can help you make better-informed decisions throughout the season.