

Atlanta Falcons

Riding an all-time great offense and a stingy young defense, the Atlanta Falcons are one win away from their first Super Bowl championship in team history.

Quarterback Matt Ryan and wide receiver Julio Jones have mystified opposing defenses all season long, positioning the Falcons as among the 10 best all-time in the National Football League.

Atlanta soared to two home playoff victories — over the Seattle Seahawks and Green Bay Packers — to make it to the big game in Houston. For a team that not too many prognosticators tabbed as favorites to win their own division, the Falcons have given their fan base supreme confidence heading into their showdown with the New England Patriots.

INCREDIBLE OFFENSE

Yes, Ryan and Jones combined to form a fearsome duo all season long. Ryan, in fact, is favored to win the league's Most Valuable Player award. But the best-kept secret about the Falcons' offense may be their running game. Atlanta's Devonta Freeman and Tevin Coleman combined for 2,482 yards in the regular season with 24 touchdowns. This viable ground game kept defenses honest and opened up wide open passing lanes for Ryan.

Jones finished the regular season with six touchdowns and more than 1,400 yards receiving, many of which came during a 300-yard performance against the Carolina Panthers early in the season.



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Atlanta's defense hasn't demanded as many headlines as the offense throughout the season, but it has shaped into quite a challenge for opposing quarterbacks. Take the team's National Football Conference title win over the Green Bay Packers.

The Falcons cruised to a 44-21 victory thanks in large

part to the defense-shuddering quarterback Aaron Rodgers and his crew of wide receivers. Rodgers was sacked twice and threw an interception on a day where his receivers and running backs struggled to find any room to run. Second-year linebacker Vic Beasley and longtime veteran Dwight Freeney have helped turn the defense into a

strength this season in Atlanta.

CLOSING OUT THE GEORGIA DOME

The Falcons turned out some sold-out crowds during their postseason run as fans celebrated the history of the Georgia Dome. The longtime home of the Falcons will be replaced next year by

Mercedes-Benz Stadium.

The multi-purpose retractable roof stadium is currently under construction in Atlanta and will be ready for play ahead of the 2017 season. Estimated at \$1.5 billion, the stadium will host Super Bowl LIII in 2019 and will replace the famed Georgia Dome, which has hosted Falcons games since 1992.