

NEW YORK JETS QUARTERBACK AARON RODGERS WARMS UP BEFORE A GAME AGAINST THE BUFFALO BILLS ON SEPT. 11, 2023. ADAM HUNGER / ASSOCIATED PRESS BY APHOTO

Rodgers' Jets return to come at 49ers in Week 1 'MNF' tilt

THE ATHLETIC

Aaron Rodgers' much-anticipated return from a torn Achilles tendon will come in a familiar place and a familiar prime-time window.

The New York Jets will travel to the San Francisco 49ers on Sept. 9 to play on "Monday Night Football" in Week 1, the teams announced Tuesday. Rodgers, the Jets quarterback, suffered the season-ending Achilles injury just four offensive snaps into his New York debut on MNF against the Buffalo Bills last year.

The Jets — and the NFL — are hoping Rodgers lasts longer this time. Perhaps playing away from MetLife Stadium and in Northern California, where Rodgers grew up, will be a less disastrous formula.

Right out of the gate, Rodgers and the Jets will find out how they stack up against one of the NFL's best teams. Their new-look offensive line — led by future Hall of Famer Tyron Smith at left tackle — will have to

keep him upright against one of the best defensive lines in football.

Both teams will enter the matchup with plenty of familiarity. There are many on the Jets staff and roster with the 49ers in their back ground, including coach Robert Saleh, their former defensive coordinator. The fact Saleh spent four seasons as San Francisco's defensive coordinator means there is overlap in the teams' philosophies and plenty of ex-49ers in New York. The Jets coaching staff has two former 49ers assistants — cornerbacks coach Tony Oden and defensive line coach Aaron Whitecotton.

Meanwhile, the 49ers were interested in hiring Jets defensive coordinator Jeff Ulbrich, a San Jose native who spent 10 seasons playing linebacker for the 49ers, as their own coordinator in the offseason. The Jets made it clear that Ulbrich was unavailable and San Francisco did not make a formal request to interview Ulbrich.

There are also several former 49ers on the Jets roster, including a pair of former first-round picks along the defensive line, Javon Kinlaw and Solomon Thomas. Other former 49ers include cornerback D.J. Reed, the only fifth-round selection by Kyle Shanahan and general manager John Lynch not currently on San Francisco's roster, linebacker Marcelino McCrary-Ball and Isaiah Oliver, who was a cornerback with the 49ers who may be switching to safety with the Jets.

The Jets and 49ers last played each other on Sept. 20, 2020, with San Francisco winning 31-13.

The 49ers made it to Super Bowl LVIII last season, before losing to the Kansas City Chiefs in overtime. The Jets entered last season with Super Bowl hopes, but they were quickly derailed by a sack on Rodgers by Bills defensive end Leonard Floyd on the team's opening drive. The Jets finished 7-10 in 2023 and missed the playoffs.

BRIDGE

Phillip Alder



The certainty or the guess?

Rudyard Kipling claimed that "a woman's guess is much more accurate than a man's certainty."

At the bridge table, though, a certainty — a guaranteed line of play or defense — is much better than a guess, regardless of the gender of the guesser.

In this deal, South is in four hearts. West leads the spade queen. When East encourages with his eight, West continues the suit, and South trumps the third round. How would a guesser play from there? What would someone preferring a certainty do?

With a balanced hand, South is only just worth his jump to game. But if he prefers a game-try, what try does he make? Nothing really fits the bill. And then North would be in a

		North 05-10-24	
		♠ 4 3 2	
		♥ K J 7 4	
		♦ 8 4 3	
		♣ K J 9	
West		♠ Q J 10 9	East ♠ A K 8 4
		♥ 6 3	♥ 9 5 1
		♦ Q 7 2	♦ 10 9 8 5
		♣ 6 5 3	♣ 7 4 2
		South	
		♠ 7 2	
		♥ A Q 10 8 5	
		♦ A K J	
		♣ A 10 9	
Dealer: South		Vulnerable: Both	
South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	2♥	Pass
3♥	Pass	Pass	Pass
Opening lead: ♠ Q			

quandary. Eight points is a maximum, but 4-3-3-3 is a big minus. Note that three no-trump makes easily here, but next time the spades will be 5-3.

The guesser cashes the heart ace and diamond ace, crosses to dummy with a trump, and plays a diamond to the jack. Here, West wins with the queen and exits carefully with a diamond. Now South must guess which opponent holds the club queen. Maybe (she will get it right; maybe (she won't).

The declarer who prefers not to guess sees that this is a sure-trick deal. After drawing trumps, (she plays three rounds of diamonds. What does West do when in with his queen?

Returning a spade concedes a ruff-and-sluff. South ruffs in one hand and shuffles a club from the other. And West's shift to a club finds the queen for declarer. It is a perfect elimination and endplay.

LOOKING FOR THE PUZZLES? » B9

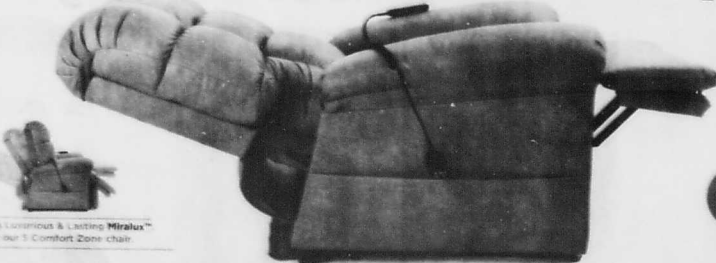
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