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HEADLINE: BENGALS SEASON PREVIEW

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Cincinnati is a city that has very little to celebrate in its history in the NFL. With three trips to the Super Bowl and winning zero of the biggest game of the year, fans hope for a turnaround sooner rather than later.

Recently their biggest aspect to celebrate is the drafting of young star quarterback Joe Burrow in the 2020 NFL Draft. After his season was cut short due to injury, he quickly rebounded in his sophomore season in 2021 bringing the Bengals to the Super Bowl for the first time since 1989. Although they ultimately lost to the Los Angeles Rams, this brought great life to Cincinnati as they finally had something to root for again.

In 2024, the Bengals and the fans are in a very similar situation to the 2021 season. They still have star-studded talent that makes the team a heavy contender to perform very well in an already extremely competitive AFC; not to mention that the AFC North is arguably the best division in football currently. Their star quarterback is once again coming off an injury but is currently healthy and confirmed to be playing week 1 against the New England Patriots. Reports say that Burrow is back and better than ever.

Not all is perfect in Cincinnati though. Their star receiver Ja'Marr Chase who was drafted a year later than Joe Burrow in 2021, both out of LSU, is currently making general manager Duke Tobin's life a living hell by not practicing and not attending team meetings in hopes that the Bengals will restructure his contract for more money. With two more years on his rookie contract, it seems

like a selfish thing to do when all the pieces are once again falling into place for the Bengals with Joe Burrow's triumphant return.

Although this seems like trouble, Bengals fans should have nothing to worry about as this behavior is very common among young star receivers. Chase should be ready to play by week 1 with Coach Zac Taylor saying this is the case.

Another thing to look forward to is their opponent in week 1 the New England Patriots who are currently regarded as one of the weaker teams in the league.

Looking towards the future of the 2024 season for the Bengals, as mentioned above, the AFC North is an extremely competitive division with any team having a chance at winning it. The Ravens, Steelers, and Browns all have very strong defenses that could give Joe Burrow and the Bengals problems down the line.

In the offseason, the Bengals' offensive line also has not been showing that they are capable of protecting Burrow and running back Zach Moss from these tough defenses ranking 21st in the league.

The Cincinnati Bengals defense is again looking good to start the 2024 season after helping their team finish (9-8) in 2023 with a broken offense playing a rookie backup quarterback after Burrow's unfortunate wrist injury in week 11. With players like defensive end Trey Hendrickson and Mike Hilton, who is considered to be one of the best slot cornerbacks in the entire league. The Bengals are looking strong offensively and defensively heading into the 2024 season.