

Sporting News' NFL Top 100: Colts QB Peyton Manning voted No. 1 by our panel of experts

Patriots quarterback [Tom Brady](#) second; 12 passers, including Michael Vick, make list
Jeff D'Alessio, Sporting News

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Tom Brady has more rings, Drew Brees threw for more yards last season and his own kid brother makes more money. But ask [NFL](#) experts who they'd want under center on their team, and the choice is clear: Peyton Manning.

The Colts quarterback came out No. 1 in *Sporting News'* annual ranking of the NFL's top 100 players. Don't take it from us; take it from the blue-ribbon voting panel of 106 experts we assembled. It included 27 Hall of Famers and past and present Pro Bowlers, executives and coaches.

Manning "really carries that team on his shoulders," said Pro Bowl safety [Troy Polamalu](#), the highest-ranked Steeler at No. 9. "Guys like him and Tom Brady, the total success of the team relies totally on their performance, not necessarily a running game or a defense, for that matter. To have that pressure is one thing. To have that pressure and be successful is what makes him a great player."

Brady lets his teammates know what he expects from them.

Brady finished second despite piling up the most first-place votes — 50 to Manning's 35.

"Mostly, it's the attitude he takes," Patriots wide receiver Wes Welker said. "He has that look in his eye — 'We're ready to score, and we're going to execute the offense.' Sometimes you get a look from guys, where it's like, 'I hope.' Whereas with Tom, it's like, 'Hey, we're doing it.' It helps you focus and get your mind right. And it's like that all the

time. All the time. He brings it every day and makes sure that everyone is accountable for what they're doing, too."

Other big winners in SN's list:

Quarterbacks. Twelve made the top 100, most of any position—by one, over defensive/nose tackles. Ten wide receivers and 10 defensive ends made the cut, followed by outside linebackers (9), running backs and cornerbacks (8 of each), offensive tackles (7), guards (6), safeties (5), tight ends and middle linebackers (4) and centers and inside linebackers (3).

The Steelers and Vikings. Seven of each made SN's list, including Brett Favre (No. 51). There were six Chargers and Colts; five Cardinals, Eagles, Falcons, Cowboys, Patriots and Ravens; four Bears, Broncos, Giants, Panthers and Titans; three Jets and Texans; two Browns, Lions, Packers, Raiders, Redskins, Saints and Seahawks; and one Bill, Dolphin, 49er and Ram. Four teams were shut out: the Bengals, Bucs, Chiefs and Jaguars.

Offensive players. They hogged all top five spots, with Vikings running back Adrian Peterson checking in at No. 3, Cardinals wide receiver Larry Fitzgerald at No. 4 and Chargers running back LaDainian Tomlinson at No. 5.



"All Day" leads the way among Vikings.

Michael Vick. Despite not having played in an NFL game in two-plus years, the Eagles quarterback still wound up No. 88. No other backup at any position made SN's top 100. Nor did several accomplished starting QBs — Cincinnati's Carson Palmer, Dallas' Tony Romo, Green Bay's Aaron Rodgers, Jacksonville's David Garrard and Carolina's Jake Delhomme among them. Said Saints safety Darren Sharper of Vick: "Everybody's curious to see what kind of guy he is after being out of the league. He was a guy that just had the ability to break you down and beat you in so many different ways. He made plays last a little bit longer because he was so elusive and he could scramble and he could make throws on the run."

Among the NFL legends who filled out ballots for SN were Hall of Famers Dan Dierdorf, Mike Ditka, Art Donovan, Bob Griese, Dan Hampton, Ted Hendricks, Paul Horning,

Sam Huff, Stan Jones, Leroy Kelly, Paul Krause, Jim Langer, [Steve Largent](#), Larry Little, Mike McCormack, Randall McDaniel, Hugh McElhenny, Lenny Moore, Anthony Munoz, Alan Page, Mel Renfro, Gale Sayers, Lee Roy Selmon, Jackie Slater, Lynn Swann, Fran Tarkenton and Jack Youngblood.

SN's TOP 100

1. Peyton Manning, QB, Colts
2. Tom Brady, QB, Patriots
3. Adrian Peterson, RB, Vikings
4. Larry Fitzgerald, WR, Cardinals
5. LaDainian Tomlinson, RB, Chargers
6. Albert Haynesworth, DT, Redskins
7. Ed Reed, S, Ravens
8. Randy Moss, WR, Patriots
9. Troy Polamalu, S, Steelers
10. Tony Gonzalez, TE, Falcons
11. Ray Lewis, ILB, Ravens
12. Ben Roethlisberger, QB, Steelers
13. Dwight Freeney, DE, Colts
14. Steve Hutchinson, G, Vikings
15. DeMarcus Ware, OLB, Cowboys
16. Julius Peppers, DE, Panthers
17. Brian Westbrook, RB, Eagles
18. Drew Brees, QB, Saints
19. James Harrison, OLB, Steelers
20. Nnamdi Asomugha, CB, Raiders
21. Jared Allen, DE, Vikings
22. Donovan McNabb, QB, Eagles
23. Andre Johnson, WR, Texans
24. Steve Smith, WR, Panthers
25. Kurt Warner, QB, Cardinals
26. Champ Bailey, CB, Broncos
27. Shawne Merriman, OLB, Chargers
28. Osi Umenyiora, DE, Giants
29. Walter Jones, OT, Seahawks
30. Kevin Williams, DT, Vikings
31. Anquan Boldin, WR, Cardinals
32. Antonio Gates, TE, Chargers
33. Terrell Owens, WR, Bills
34. Alan Faneca, G, Jets
35. Patrick Willis, ILB, 49ers
36. Mario Williams, DE, Texans
37. Jeff Saturday, C, Colts
38. Jason Witten, TE, Cowboys
39. Brian Dawkins, S, Broncos

40. Matt Birk, C, Ravens
41. Joe Thomas, OT, Browns
42. Michael Turner, RB, Falcons
43. Clinton Portis, RB, Redskins
44. Bob Sanders, S, Colts
45. Terrell Suggs, OLB, Ravens
46. Justin Tuck, DE, Giants
47. Pat Williams, DT, Vikings
48. Joey Porter, OLB, Dolphins
49. Reggie Wayne, WR, Colts
50. Eli Manning, QB, Giants

51. Brett Favre, QB, Vikings
52. Asante Samuel, CB, Eagles
53. Chris Snee, G, Giants
54. Philip Rivers, QB, Chargers
55. Jordan Gross, OT, Panthers
56. Charles Woodson, CB, Packers
57. Lance Briggs, OLB, Bears
58. Tommie Harris, DT, Bears
59. Antonio Cromartie, CB, Chargers
60. Jammal Brown, OT, Saints
61. Brian Urlacher, MLB, Bears
62. Matt Light, OT, Patriots
63. Matt Ryan, QB, Falcons
64. James Farrior, ILB, Steelers
65. Vince Wilfork, NT, Patriots
66. Adrian Wilson, S, Cardinals
67. Lofa Tatupu, MLB, Seahawks
68. Jay Cutler, QB, Bears
69. Kris Jenkins, NT, Jets
70. Chris Johnson, RB, Titans
71. Shaun Rogers, NT, Browns
72. Julian Peterson, OLB, Lions
73. Kyle Vanden Bosch, DE, Titans
74. Trent Cole, DE, Eagles
75. Darnell Dockett, DT, Cardinals
76. Antoine Winfield, CB, Vikings
77. Willie Parker, RB, Steelers
78. Brandon Marshall, WR, Broncos
79. Leonard Davis, G, Cowboys
80. Aaron Kampman, OLB, Packers
81. Jon Beason, MLB, Panthers
82. Calvin Johnson, WR, Lions
83. Kris Dielman, G, Chargers
84. Andre Gurode, C, Cowboys

85. Jay Ratliff, NT, Cowboys
86. DeMeco Ryans, MLB, Texans
87. Roddy White, WR, Falcons
88. Michael Vick, QB, Eagles
89. Michael Roos, OT, Titans
90. Cortland Finnegan, CB, Titans
91. Ryan Clady, OT, Broncos
92. Haloti Ngata, NT, Ravens
93. John Abraham, DE, Falcons
94. Casey Hampton, NT, Steelers
95. Logan Mankins, G, Patriots
96. Steven Jackson, RB, Rams
97. Richard Seymour, DE, Raiders
98. Darrelle Revis, CB, Jets
99. LaMarr Woodley, OLB, Steelers
100. Dallas Clark, TE, Colts

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