



FOR USE AS DESIRED
NFL-POST-1 1/3/06

HERE WE GO! WILD CARD WEEKEND ON TAP AS PLAYOFFS BEGIN

Seven new playoff teams. One that has won three of the past four Super Bowls. Four clubs that won 51 of their 64 games this year.

Who *knows* what histrionics these teams have in store!

The football universe starts to find out this Saturday and Sunday as Wild Card Weekend kicks off the 2005 NFL Playoffs, signaling the final turn on the "Road to Forty" expressway that leads to Super Bowl XL in Detroit on February 5. The Wild Card lineup:

NFL WILD CARD WEEKEND

Saturday, January 7

NFC: 4:30 PM ET Washington (10-6) at Tampa Bay (11-5) (ABC-TV)

AFC: 8:00 PM ET Jacksonville (12-4) at New England (10-6) (ABC-TV)

Sunday, January 8

NFC: 1:00 PM ET Carolina (11-5) at New York Giants (11-5) (FOX-TV)

AFC: 4:30 PM ET Pittsburgh (11-5) at Cincinnati (11-5) (CBS-TV)

"What the regular season does is get you to the playoffs," says the quarterback of one of those new playoff teams, **ELI MANNING** of the New York Giants. "Now you see what you've really got."

So far, the 12 2005 playoff teams have accomplished a great deal:

- Combined, they have the most victories of any playoff field ever – 138. And their combined winning percentage (.719, 138-54) is the highest in a playoff field in 28 years – since 1977 (.732, 82-30).
- Ten of the teams – Carolina, Chicago, Cincinnati, Denver, Indianapolis, Jacksonville, New York Giants, Pittsburgh, Seattle and Tampa Bay – have at least 11 wins, the most ever in one season.
- A strong field? One team – Wild Card Jacksonville – has more victories (12-4) than the division winner they will face this week (New England, 10-6).
- A hot field? Since Thanksgiving weekend – when the playoff race really starts to heat up – the playoff teams have combined for a .722 winning percentage (52-20).
- A distinctive field? All 12 teams rank in the top 10 in the league in either offense or defense.
- A consistent field? Most of this year's playoff field has been consistently strong over the past five years, headed by New England (.725 win pct.), Pittsburgh (.694), Indianapolis (.675), Denver (.625) and Seattle (.600). Four of those five clubs have averaged at least 10.0 wins per season over that time, with Seattle at 9.6.

The Wild Card storylines:

WASHINGTON REDSKINS (10-6) at TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS (11-5) (Saturday, 4:30 PM ET, ABC)

STORYLINE: *Rematch of the "Go-For-It" Game.*

On November 13 in Tampa, these two waged a 71-point, 729-yard slugfest that ended when the Bucs went for the win with

NFL PLAYOFF FACTOID

SUPER BOWL LINEAGE: At least one team from the past five Super Bowls is represented in the 2005 playoff field: Super Bowl XXXV (NY Giants), XXXVI (New England), XXXVII (Tampa Bay), XXXVIII (Carolina, New England) and XXXIX (New England).

:54 left rather than the tie in a 36-35 victory. **RB MIKE ALSTOTT** bulled it in after the Redskins had blocked an extra-point attempt but were called for offsides.

The Bucs won five of their next seven games, the Redskins lost two more, then finished the year with five victories in a row. Washington head coach **JOE GIBBS** has his team in the playoffs in only his second year back in the NFL (after it made them only once after he retired at the end of 1992).

“A lot of us coaches have stolen from Joe Gibbs,” says Tampa Bay head coach **JON GRUDEN**. “The way he presents his offense and runs his football team is quite impressive.”

Key matchup: Two 1,000-yard running backs – Washington’s **CLINTON PORTIS** (NFL No. 4; 1,516 yards) vs. Tampa Bay rookie **CADILLAC WILLIAMS** (No. 13; 1,178), behind only OL this season with the same five starters at each position.

JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS (12-4) at NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS (10-6) (Saturday, 8:00 PM ET, ABC)

STORYLINE: *Last team to beat the Patriots in the playoffs? The Jaguars!*

That was seven years ago, in a 1998 Wild Card game (25-10) in Jacksonville when the Jaguars were coached by **TOM COUGHLIN**, now leading the NFC East-champion Giants, and the Patriots by now-USC coach **PETE CARROLL**.

Since that meeting, the Patriots have won nine consecutive playoff games under head coach **BILL BELICHICK**, including, of course, three of the past four Super Bowls. They seek an NFL record 10th in a row Saturday (Green Bay, 1961-62, 1965-67).

The Jags – with more wins this year than the Pats -- are on their own hot streak, winning eight of their past nine. They expect starter **BYRON LEFTWICH** (ankle) to return at quarterback.

“We’re going against the defending champs,” says Jacksonville **S DEON GRANT**. “You can’t ask for anything more than that. If we go up there and stay focused and play our game, we’ll take care of them.”

The Patriots’ second-ranked NFL passing game – stoked by league passing-yardage leader **TOM BRADY** (4,110) goes against the Jaguars’ seventh-ranked pass defense.

Cold-weather tidbit: Jax is 2-0 in its past two cold-weather games (below 30 degrees) – last December 4 at Cleveland (28 degrees) and on December 19, 2004 at Green Bay (12 degrees). “We’re from *north* Florida,” kids **TE KYLE BRADY**.

CAROLINA PANTHERS (11-5) at NEW YORK GIANTS (11-5) (Sunday, 1:00 PM ET, FOX)

STORYLINE: *Matchup of two explosive offensive forces, but defense could tell the tale.*

Two of the most exciting offensive performers in the NFL this year – both Pro Bowl selections -- will be on the field. Giants **RB TIKI BARBER** – with three of the NFL’s five 200-yard rushing games this season – led the league in scrimmage yards (2,390). Panthers **WR STEVE SMITH** tied Arizona’s **LARRY FITZGERALD** for the NFL lead in receptions (103), topped the league in receiving yards (1,563), and tied Indianapolis’ **MARVIN HARRISON** for the most TD catches (12).

But...both teams have solid defenses, particularly on the line. The Giants – led by ends **MICHAEL STRAHAN** and **OSI UMENYIORA** – rank third in the NFL in sacks by the DL (34.5), followed by Carolina (33.0), bulwarked by ends **JULIUS PEPPERS** and **MIKE RUCKER**. (Indianapolis’ DL tops the NFL with 41.5 sacks, followed by Miami with 35.0.)

Like old times: the Panthers’ **JOHN FOX** is one of five former Giants defensive coordinators who are now NFL head coaches, along with **BILL BELICHICK**, **MIKE NOLAN**, **BILL PARCELLS** and **MARTY SCHOTTENHEIMER**.

PITTSBURGH STEELERS (11-5) at CINCINNATI BENGALS (11-5) (Sunday, 4:30 PM ET, CBS)

STORYLINE: *The lone divisional matchup of the weekend, and are these “neighbors” ever ready!*

About 300 miles separate these two Ohio River cities and their teams like the other’s place – at least this year. The Steelers won (27-13) in Cincinnati on October 23, and the Bengals won (38-31) in Pittsburgh on December 4.

“We love this matchup with Pittsburgh,” says Cincy **QB CARSON PALMER**. “They love playing us. It’s always a great, competitive game. It gets your mind ready. When you’ve got Pittsburgh coming in, you’ve got to get focused.”

If it’s cold or rainy or snowy, that focus may well stay primarily on the ground, and the teams are fine on that front. Cincinnati’s **RUDI JOHNSON** finished No. 7 in NFL rushing (1,458) and Pittsburgh’s **WILLIE PARKER** No. 12 (1,202).

In the air, you’ve got the top QBs in the league in TD percentage – Palmer and the Steelers’ **BEN ROETHLISBERGER**, both with a 6.3 mark. Their main receivers have scored 17 (Pitt’s **HINES WARD**, 11 and rookie **HEATH MILLER**, 6) and 16 touchdowns (Cincy’s **CHAD JOHNSON**, 9 and **T.J. HOUSHMANDZADEH**, 7).

NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE 2005 PLAYOFF SCHEDULE

(All times Eastern)

NFC: Washington Redskins (10-6) at Tampa Bay Buccaneers (11-5), 4:30 PM, Saturday, January 7 (ABC)

AFC: Jacksonville Jaguars (12-4) at New England Patriots (10-6), 8:00 PM, Saturday, January 7 (ABC)

NFC: Carolina Panthers (11-5) at New York Giants (11-5), 1:00 PM, Sunday, January 8 (FOX)

AFC: Pittsburgh Steelers (11-5) at Cincinnati Bengals (11-5), 4:30 PM, Sunday, January 8 (CBS)

2005 FINAL NFL STANDINGS

AFC East												
Team	Overall Record	Head to Head	Division Record	Common Games Record	Conf Record	Strength of Victory	Strength of Schedule	Conf PF + PA Rank	Overall PF + PA Rank	Common Game Net Pts	Overall Net Pts	TD
y-New England	10-6-0		5-1-0	0-0-0	7-5-0	.400	.508	17	27	0	41	46
Miami	9-7-0		3-3-0	0-0-0	7-5-0	.438	.457	17	31	0	1	34
Buffalo	5-11-0		2-4-0	0-0-0	5-7-0	.450	.500	25	48	0	-96	26
New York Jets	4-12-0		2-4-0	0-0-0	3-9-0	.453	.527	27	52	0	-115	25
AFC North												
Team	Overall Record	Head to Head	Division Record	Common Games Record	Conf Record	Strength of Victory	Strength of Schedule	Conf PF + PA Rank	Overall PF + PA Rank	Common Game Net Pts	Overall Net Pts	TD
y-Cincinnati	11-5-0	1	5-1-0	0-0-0	7-5-0	.398	.477	13	26	0	71	48
x-Pittsburgh	11-5-0	1	4-2-0	0-0-0	7-5-0	.415	.492	8	12	0	131	45
Baltimore	6-10-0	1	2-4-0	0-0-0	4-8-0	.375	.523	18	35	0	-34	25
Cleveland	6-10-0	1	1-5-0	0-0-0	4-8-0	.396	.508	22	43	0	-69	22
AFC South												
Team	Overall Record	Head to Head	Division Record	Common Games Record	Conf Record	Strength of Victory	Strength of Schedule	Conf PF + PA Rank	Overall PF + PA Rank	Common Game Net Pts	Overall Net Pts	TD
*-Indianapolis	14-2-0		6-0-0	0-0-0	11-1-0	.424	.457	2	4	0	192	53
x-Jacksonville	12-4-0		4-2-0	0-0-0	9-3-0	.375	.465	12	18	0	92	42
Tennessee	4-12-0		2-4-0	0-0-0	3-9-0	.219	.512	25	50	0	-122	33
Houston	2-14-0		0-6-0	0-0-0	1-11-0	.344	.535	30	58	0	-171	26
AFC West												
Team	Overall Record	Head to Head	Division Record	Common Games Record	Conf Record	Strength of Victory	Strength of Schedule	Conf PF + PA Rank	Overall PF + PA Rank	Common Game Net Pts	Overall Net Pts	TD
z-Denver	13-3-0		5-1-0	0-0-0	10-2-0	.471	.500	7	10	0	137	46
Kansas City	10-6-0		4-2-0	0-0-0	9-3-0	.475	.504	13	22	0	78	46
San Diego	9-7-0		3-3-0	0-0-0	7-5-0	.500	.559	10	18	0	106	51
Oakland	4-12-0		0-6-0	0-0-0	2-10-0	.438	.539	25	48	0	-93	33
NFC East												
Team	Overall Record	Head to Head	Division Record	Common Games Record	Conf Record	Strength of Victory	Strength of Schedule	Conf PF + PA Rank	Overall PF + PA Rank	Common Game Net Pts	Overall Net Pts	TD
y-New York Giants	11-5-0		4-2-0	0-0-0	8-4-0	.432	.492	9	17	0	108	45
x-Washington	10-6-0		5-1-0	0-0-0	10-2-0	.500	.539	10	22	0	66	44
Dallas	9-7-0		3-3-0	0-0-0	7-5-0	.465	.523	13	27	0	17	38
Philadelphia	6-10-0		0-6-0	0-0-0	3-9-0	.385	.531	22	45	0	-78	35

NFC North												
Team	Overall Record	Head to Head	Division Record	Common Games Record	Conf Record	Strength of Victory	Strength of Schedule	Conf PF + PA Rank	Overall PF + PA Rank	Common Game Net Pts	Overall Net Pts	TD
z-Chicago	11-5-0		5-1-0	0-0-0	10-2-0	.398	.457	14	27	0	58	28
Minnesota	9-7-0		5-1-0	0-0-0	8-4-0	.382	.484	19	38	0	-38	33
Detroit	5-11-0		1-5-0	0-0-0	3-9-0	.300	.504	25	49	0	-91	28
Green Bay	4-12-0		1-5-0	0-0-0	4-8-0	.453	.531	21	41	0	-46	34

NFC South												
Team	Overall Record	Head to Head	Division Record	Common Games Record	Conf Record	Strength of Victory	Strength of Schedule	Conf PF + PA Rank	Overall PF + PA Rank	Common Game Net Pts	Overall Net Pts	TD
y-Tampa Bay	11-5-0	1	5-1-0	0-0-0	9-3-0	.426	.449	15	28	0	26	33
x-Carolina	11-5-0	1	4-2-0	0-0-0	8-4-0	.409	.449	5	13	0	132	45
Atlanta	8-8-0		2-4-0	0-0-0	5-7-0	.344	.492	14	32	0	10	39
New Orleans	3-13-0		1-5-0	0-0-0	1-11-0	.417	.523	30	59	0	-163	23

NFC West												
Team	Overall Record	Head to Head	Division Record	Common Games Record	Conf Record	Strength of Victory	Strength of Schedule	Conf PF + PA Rank	Overall PF + PA Rank	Common Game Net Pts	Overall Net Pts	TD
*-Seattle	13-3-0		6-0-0	0-0-0	10-2-0	.404	.430	4	8	0	181	57
St. Louis	6-10-0		1-5-0	0-0-0	3-9-0	.365	.484	20	42	0	-66	40
Arizona	5-11-0		3-3-0	0-0-0	4-8-0	.300	.508	20	43	0	-76	26
San Francisco	4-12-0		2-4-0	0-0-0	3-9-0	.391	.539	30	60	0	-189	23

x-clinched playoff berth
y-clinched division title
z-clinched first-round bye
*-clinched home-field advantage

LAST WEEK'S NFL RESULTS (DEC. 31- JAN. 1)

(Home team in CAPS)

Saturday, December 31

Denver 23, SAN DIEGO 7
N.Y. Giants 30, OAKLAND 21

Sunday, January 1

Carolina 41, Atlanta 11
CLEVELAND 20, Baltimore 16
INDIANAPOLIS 17, Arizona 13
Miami 28, NEW ENGLAND 26
N.Y. Jets 30, Buffalo 26

Sunday, January 1, cont.'d

PITTSBURGH 35, Detroit 21
TAMPA BAY 27, New Orleans 13
KANSAS CITY 37, Cincinnati 3
GREEN BAY 23, Seattle 17
SAN FRANCISCO 20, Houston 17 (OT)
JACKSONVILLE 40, Tennessee 13
Washington 31, PHILADELPHIA 20
MINNESOTA 34, Chicago 10
St. Louis 20, DALLAS 10

2005 PLAYOFF DATES

Saturday, January 7, 2006
Sunday, January 8, 2006
Saturday, January 14, 2006
Saturday, January 15, 2006
Sunday, January 22, 2006
Sunday, February 5, 2006
Sunday, February 12, 2006

AFC and NFC Wild Card Playoffs
AFC and NFC Wild Card Playoffs
AFC and NFC Divisional Playoffs
AFC and NFC Divisional Playoffs
AFC and NFC Championship Games
Super Bowl XL at Ford Field in Detroit, Michigan
AFC-NFC Pro Bowl at Aloha Stadium in Honolulu, Hawaii



★ WILD CARD ★
WEEKEND

AFC NEWS 'N' NOTES

FOR USE AS DESIRED
AFC-N-20 1/3/06

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
CONTACT: STEVE ALIC (212/450-2066)

JACKSONVILLE AT NEW ENGLAND SATURDAY,
PITTSBURGH AT CINCINNATI SUNDAY
IN AFC WILD CARD PLAYOFFS

SATURDAY, JANUARY 7

JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS–AFC SOUTH (12-4) AT NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS–AFC EAST (10-6)

SERIES

	JAGUARS	PATRIOTS
LEADER		4-1
STREAKS		Past 3 at home
COACHES VS. OPP.	Del Rio: 0-1	Belichick: 1-3
VS. COMMON OPP.	JAX: 2-3 (Den 0-1, Ind 0-2, NYJ 1-0, Pit 1-0) NE: 3-2 (Den 0-1, Ind 0-1, NYJ 2-0, Pit 1-0)	
PLAYOFF RECORD	4-4	16-10
LAST WEEK	W 40-13 vs. Titans	L 28-26 vs. Dolphins
LAST GAME	12/14/03: Jaguars 13 at Patriots 27. New England QB Tom Brady passes for 228 yards & 2 TDs as Patriots win 10th game in row.	
LAST GAME AT SITE	12/14/03	
LAST PLAYOFF	1/3/99: Patriots 10 at Jaguars 25. Jacksonville rookie RB Fred Taylor rushes for 162 yards, including 13-yard TD.	
BROADCAST	ABC (8:00 PM ET): Al Michaels, John Madden, Michelle Tafoya (Field reporter). CBS Radio: Dave Sims, Boomer Esiason, Kevin Kiley (Field reporter).	

STAT LEADERS

PASSING	Leftwich: 175-302-2,123-15-5-89.3	Brady: 334-530-4,110 (1L)-26 (3L)-14-92.3
RUSHING	Taylor: 194-787-4.1-3	Dillon: 209-733-3.5-12
RECEIVING	J. Smith: 70-1,023-14.6-6	Branch: 78-998-12.8-5
OFFENSE	321.8	352.0
TAKE/GIVE	+11	-6
DEFENSE	290.9 (3C)	330.2
SACKS	Hayward: 8.5	Colvin: 7.0
INTs	Mathis: 5	Hobbs (R), Samuel: 3
PR	Pearman (R): 8.4	Dwight: 8.5
KOR	Wimbush: 24.5	Johnson: 22.4
PUNTING	Hanson: 42.9	Miller: 45.1 (3C)
KICKING	Scobee: 107 (38/39 PAT; 23/30 FG)	Vinatieri: 100 (40/41 PAT; 20/25 FG)

NOTES

LAST MEETING in playoffs between these teams (AFC Divisional, Jan. 3, 1999) was last time New England lost playoff game, as Jaguars won 25-10.

JAGUARS: Team has trailed in 9 of 12 wins, showing ability to rally. Is 1 of 4 teams w/ 12+ wins & has won 8 of past 10 on road.....Under 3rd-year coach **JACK DEL RIO**, club has improved win total each season.....**QB BYRON LEFTWICH** makes 1st playoff start. Team has won 8 of Leftwich's past 11 starts, including 4 in row. Has TD pass in 32 of 40 career games. Club is 10-1 (.909) when Leftwich throws 2+ TDs. **QB DAVID GARRARD** has not thrown INT in past 133 pass attempts. Jaguar QBs have thrown fewest INTs (6) in NFL.....**RB FRED TAYLOR** has 4 of 5 top rushing days of season on road & has 100+ rush yds in 3 of 4 career playoffs. **RB GREG JONES** has 12+ carries in 6 of past 9 games played

.....**WR JIMMY SMITH** (1,023) posted 1,000 rec. yds in 9 of past 10 seasons. Smith has at least 5 catches in 5 consecutive playoffs & has 5 TD catches in past 4 postseason games. **WR ERNEST WILFORD** has scored TD in 7 of past 14 games & 35 of his 41 catches have gone for 1st downs (85.4 pct.). Rookie **WR MATT JONES** posted rush attempt in 9 games & has 5 TD catches. Offense has scored 30+ points in 4 of final 8 games.....Team is +11 in turnover differential, 4th-best in AFC.....Defense ranks 3rd in AFC (290.9 yds). **LB MIKE PETERSON** has sack in 6 of past 10 games & has led team in tackles in 13 of 16 games. Defense notched 47 sacks, tied for 3rd in NFL. Club has 4 players with 3+ INTs for 1st time in history: **CB RASHEAN MATHIS** (5), **CB TERRY COUSIN** (4), **S DEON GRANT** (3), & **LB Peterson** (3). **DE PAUL SPICER** has 7.5 sacks; career-best before '05 was 4.0 (2002). All-Star **DT MARCUS STROUD** started in all 16 games.....Rookie **KR-RB DERRICK WIMBUSH** posted club-record 955 KR yds on 39 KR (24.5 avg.).

PATRIOTS: Victory would give club NFL-record 10th consecutive playoff win, surpassing Green Bay (1961-62; 1965-67). Club has won 25 of past 28 games at Gillette Stadium.....Head coach **BILL BELICHICK** (10-1, .909) owns NFL's highest playoff win pct. in history; 2nd on list is HOFer **VINCE LOMBARDI** (9-1, .900).....All-Star **QB TOM BRADY** (4,110) is 1st Patriot QB to lead league in pass yards. Brady has won NFL-record 9 playoff games to begin career & is 20-1 (.952) as starter when kickoff temperature is 40°F or colder.....**RB COREY DILLON** tied career-high w/ 13 TDs, also reached in '04 & '01. Dillon has scored 26 TDs in 27 games played as Patriot & is 1 of 18 players in NFL history to rush for 10,000+ yds (10,429).....**WR DEION BRANCH** has at least 116 rec. yds in each of past 2 playoffs. Branch earned Super Bowl XXXIX MVP honors, tying SB record w/ 11 catches for 133 yds & 1 TD. Set career-highs in '05 w/ 78 catches for 998 rec. yds & 5 TDs. **WR DAVID GIVENS** has TD catch in 5 consecutive playoffs, tied for 2nd-longest postseason streak in NFL history (HOFer **JOHN STALLWORTH**, 8). **TEs BEN WATSON** (4) & **DANIEL GRAHAM** (3) combine for 7 TDs. Total of 12 Pats have TD catch, including **LB MIKE VRABEL** (3) & **T TOM ASHWORTH**. Offense ranks No. 3 in NFL redzone TD efficiency (63.8 pct.), scoring 37 TDs in 58 trips.....**LB WILLIE MC GINEST** has 11.5 playoff sacks for 3rd-most all-time (**BRUCE SMITH**, 14.5). **LB TEDY BRUSCHI** has started in club's past 10 playoff games & has 3 defensive FRs, tied for 2nd-most in NFL postseason history. **LB ROSELVELT COLVIN** had 4.5 sacks in final 6 games of '05. All-Star **DL RICHARD SEYMOUR** has pass defended in 5 of 7 career playoff games – all victories. Seymour attended Georgia w/ JAX DT Stroud. Rookie **CB ELLIS HOBBS** made 9 starts in 2005 & tied for club-best 3 INTs.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 8

PITTSBURGH STEELERS–AFC NORTH (11-5) AT CINCINNATI BENGALS–AFC NORTH (11-5)

SERIES

	<u>STEELERS</u>	<u>BENGALS</u>
LEADER	42-29	
STREAKS	6 of past 8	
COACHES VS. OPP.	Cowher: 20-8	Lewis: 2-4
VS. COMMON OPP.	PIT: 9-3 (Bal 1-1, Cle 2-0, Chi 1-0, Det 1-0, GB 1-0, Hou 1-0, Ind 0-1, Jax 0-1, Min 1-0, Ten 1-0) CIN: 10-2 (Bal 2-0, Cle 2-0, Chi 1-0, Det 1-0, GB 1-0, Hou 1-0, Ind 0-1, Jax 0-1, Min 1-0, Ten 1-0)	
PLAYOFF RECORD	24-18	5-7
LAST WEEK	W 35-21 vs. Lions	L 37-3 at Chiefs
LAST GAME	12/4/05: Bengals 38 at Steelers 31. Cincinnati QB Carson Palmer passes for 3 TDs & Bengals' defense forces 4 turnovers.	
LAST GAME AT SITE	10/23/05: Steelers 27, Bengals 13. Pittsburgh RB Willie Parker rushes for 131 yards, including 37-yard TD. Steelers QB Ben Roethlisberger throws 2 TDs.	
LAST PLAYOFF	--	
BROADCAST	CBS (4:30 PM ET): Jim Nantz, Phil Simms, Bonnie Bernstein (Field reporter). CBS Radio: Joel Meyers, Bob Trumpy, Rick Walker (Field reporter).	

STAT LEADERS

PASSING	Roethlisberger: 168-268-2,385-17-9-98.6 (3L)	Palmer: 345-509-3,836 (3C)-32 (1L)-12-101.1 (2L)
RUSHING	Parker: 255-1,202-4.7-4	R. Johnson: 337-1,458-4.3-12
RECEIVING	Ward: 69-975-14.1-11 (T2C)	C. Johnson: 97 (1C)-1,432 (1C)-14.8-9
OFFENSE	321.8	358.1
TAKE/GIVE	+7	+24 (1L)
DEFENSE	284.0 (1C)	338.7
SACKS	Porter: 10.5	J. Smith: 6.0
INTs	Hope: 3	O'Neal: 10 (T1L)
PR	Randle El: 10.2 (3C)	Ratliff: 5.6
KOR	Morgan: 25.3	T. Perry (R): 24.4
PUNTING	Gardocki: 41.8	Larson: 43.2
KICKING	Reed: 117 (45/45 PAT; 24/29 FG)	Graham: 131 (1C) (47/47 PAT; 28/32 FG)

NOTES

CLUBS MEET in playoffs for 1st time in series of 71 meetings.

STEELERS: Team is 6-0 all-time in playoffs vs. division foes.....Head coach **BILL COWHER** is 20-8 (.714) vs. CIN – his most wins vs. any team. Under Cowher, club is 127-28 (.819) when out-rushing opponent. Team is 8-1 (.889) on season when scoring 1st.....In 4 career starts vs. CIN, **QB BEN ROETHLISBERGER** owns 99.1 passer rating, completing 70 of 101 (69.3 pct.) with 7 TDs vs. 4 INTs. Roethlisberger (98.6) stands 3rd in NFL passer rating & posted career-high 386 passing yds w/ 3 TDs vs. CIN in Wk. 13.....**RB WILLIE PARKER** has at least 130 rush yds in consecutive weeks. Parker rushed for 131 yds on 18 carries at CIN in Wk. 7, including 37-yd TD run. **RB JEROME BETTIS** has 7 rush TDs in past 5 games. Equaled career-high 3 rush TDs last Sunday vs. DET.....**WR HINES WARD** caught season-high 9 passes for 135 yds & 2 TDs vs. CIN in Wk. 13 & has TD catch in 4 consecutive playoff games. Among players with 26+ catches, **WR CEDRIC WILSON** (17.3) owns NFL's 5th-best per-catch avg. Rookie **TE HEATH MILLER** (6) notched more TD catches than any AFC TE in playoffs.....Defense tied for 3rd-fewest points allowed in league (16.1). Team's DBs account for 11 of its 15 INTs, led by **S CHRIS HOPE** (3). All-Star **LB JOEY PORTER** (10.5) & **LB CLARK HAGGANS** (9.0) combine for NFL's top sack total by LB tandem. **LB LARRY FOOTE** leads club with 123 tackles. **DT KIMO VON OELHOFFEN** has sack in 2 of past 3 vs. CIN & was Bengal from 1994-99. **DE AARON SMITH** posted 1st-career INT in Wk. 7 mtg.....**WR-PR ANTWAAN RANDLE EL** has PR of 35+ yds in 3 games in row. Randle El is NFL's only player w/ 2 PR-TDs in 2005. **WR-KR QUINCY MORGAN** stands 5th in AFC with 25.3 KR avg. Morgan's past 2 catches vs. CIN have been for TDs.

BENGALS: Team returns to playoffs for 1st time since 1990 & has 10+ victories for 1st time since 1988 when club was 12-4 & advanced to Super Bowl XXIII.....In 1st 3 seasons as head coach, **MARVIN LEWIS** is 27-21 (.563); in 3 seasons prior to Lewis, club was 12-36 (.250). Pittsburgh native Lewis was Steelers assistant from 1992-95.....All-Star **QB CARSON PALMER** set club record in '05 with NFL-leading 32 TD passes (**KEN ANDERSON**, 29, 1981). Finished season w/ 2nd-highest passer rating (101.1) in NFL.....**RB RUDI JOHNSON** (1,458) set club record for rush yards in consecutive seasons & ranks 7th in NFL rushing. Johnson rushed for 70+ yds in 14 of 16 games. **RB CHRIS PERRY** (51) posted more catches than any AFC RB in playoffs.....Pro Bowl **WR CHAD JOHNSON** is 1st player to lead conference in rec. yds 3 consecutive yrs since **TIM BROWN** (AFC, 1993-95) & **JERRY RICE** (NFC, 1993-95). Johnson is 1st player in club history to lead AFC in both receptions (97) & rec. yds (1,432) in same season. **WR T.J. HOUSHMANDZADEH** had career-best 78 receptions in '05 for 956 yds, posting 950+ rec. yds for 2nd consecutive season.....Anchored by AFC All-Star **T WILLIE ANDERSON**, offensive line allowed club's all-time low 21 sacks in '05.....Team finished 2005 with NFL-best +24 turnover differential & surrendered fewest lost fumbles in league (6). Defense seized NFL-best 31 INTs.....Rookie **LB ODELL THURMAN** posted 5 INTs to lead all rookies & tie for most in NFL by LB (**CATO JUNE**, IND). Thurman leads club with 148 tackles. LB Thurman & **LB BRIAN SIMMONS** lead team w/ 4 FFs apiece. All-Star **CB DELTA O'NEAL** (10) set club record in INTs & became 1st Bengal to share league lead in category for season. **CB TORY JAMES** (98) posted 3rd-highest single-game playoff INT-return yd total in 2000 AFC Divisional (w/OAK).....Pro Bowl **K SHAYNE GRAHAM** led AFC with 131 points.



★ WILD CARD ★
WEEKEND

NFC NEWS 'N' NOTES

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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
CONTACT: MICHAEL SIGNORA (212/450-2076)

WASHINGTON AT TAMPA BAY SATURDAY,
CAROLINA AT NY GIANTS SUNDAY
IN NFC WILD CARD PLAYOFFS

SATURDAY, JANUARY 7

WASHINGTON REDSKINS–NFC EAST (10-6) AT TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS–NFC SOUTH (11-5)

SERIES

	REDSKINS	BUCCANEERS
LEADER	7-6	
STREAKS		Past 5 at home (including playoffs)
COACHES VS. OPP.	Gibbs: 3-1	Gruden: 1-2
VS. COMMON OPP.	Was: 2-0 (Chi 1-0, SF 1-0) TB: 0-2 (Chi 0-1, SF 0-1)	
PLAYOFF RECORD	22-15	6-7
LAST WEEK	W 31-20 at Eagles	W 27-13 vs. Saints
LAST GAME	11/13/05: Redskins 35 at Buccaneers 36. Tampa Bay QB Chris Simms passes for 3 TDs & RB Mike Alstott rushes for 2 & adds game-winning 2-point conversion with 58 seconds remaining.	
LAST GAME AT SITE	11/13/05	
LAST PLAYOFF	1/15/99: Redskins 13 at Buccaneers 14. Tampa Bay converts 2 2nd-half turnovers into TDs as Buccaneers earn 1st trip to NFC Championship game since '79.	
BROADCAST	ABC (4:30 PM ET): Mike Patrick, Paul Maguire, Joe Theismann, Suzy Kolber (Field reporter) CBS Radio: Brad Sham, Jack Ham, Jeff Bostic (Field reporter).	

STAT LEADERS

QBs	Brunell: 262-454-3,050-23-10-85.9	Simms: 191-313-2,035-10-7-81.4
RBs	Portis: 352-1,516 (3C)-4.3-11 (3C)	Williams (R): 290-1,178-4.1-6
WRs	Moss: 84-1,483 (2L)-17.7-9	Galloway: 83-1,287-15.5-10 (T2C)
OFFENSE	330.6	294.8
TAKE/GIVE	+1	+7
DEFENSE	297.9	277.8 (1L)
SACKS	Daniels: 8.0	Rice: 14.0 (3L)
INTs	Marshall: 4	Barber: 5
PR	Thrash: 7.7	Jones: 9.6
KOR	Betts: 25.9 (2C)	Shepherd: 20.7
PUNTING	Frost: 40.4	Bidwell: 45.6 (3L)
KICKING	Hall: 63 (27/27 PAT; 12/14 FG)	M. Bryant: 94 (31/31 PAT; 21/25 FG)

NOTES

INCLUDING PLAYOFFS, 11 OF 14 GAMES BETWEEN CLUBS DECIDED BY 8 POINTS OR LESS, including 6 of 8 at Tampa Bay.

REDSKINS: Finished reg-season with 5 consecutive wins, earning 1st playoff berth since '99.....Head coach **JOE GIBBS** has 16 career playoff wins & needs 1 win to pass **CHUCK NOLL** for 3rd-most all time, trailing **TOM LANDRY** (20) & **DON SHULA** (19).....**QB MARK BRUNELL** had career-high 23 TD passes & has TD pass in 4 consecutive playoff games. Ranked 7th in NFL with 2.2 INT pct. (10 INT in 454 att.).....**RB CLINTON PORTIS** rushed for franchise single-season record 1,516 yards. Joined **EARL CAMPBELL** ('78-'81) & **BARRY SANDERS** ('89-'92) as only players in NFL

history with 1,300 yards rushing in each of 1st 4 seasons. Finished with 5 consecutive 100-yard rushing games & his 9 in '05 was club single-season best. Has rushed for 148 & 144 yards in 2 career games vs. Bucs.....**WR SANTANA MOSS** earned 1st trip to Pro Bowl. With 83 receiving yards last week (4 catches), passed Pro Football HOFer **BOBBY MITCHELL** (1,436, '63) for club single-season record. Led NFL with 10 catches of 40+ yards. Among players with 40+ catches, ranked 3rd with 17.7-yard per catch avg.....**CHRIS COOLEY** tied for 2nd among NFL TEs with 7 TD catches. Finished 4th among TEs with 71 receptions (774 yards). **MIKE SELLERS** has 12 receptions in '05, 7 for TDs.....Defense finished 3rd in league allowing 16.1 1st downs per game.....**DE PHILLIP DANIELS** led club with 8 sacks, including 6 in past 3 games. Seeks 1st career playoff sack.....**MARCUS WASHINGTON** tied for 6th among NFL LBs with 7.5 sacks. **LEMAR MARSHALL** led club with 4 INTs, most by Redskins LB since **ANDRE COLLINS'** 4 in '94.....**KR LADELL BETTS** ranked 6th in NFL & 2nd in NFC with 25.9-yard KR avg.

BUCCANEERS: **JON GRUDEN** has led his teams to division championship in 4 of past 6 seasons as head coach (Oak, '00-'01; TB, '02, '05).....**QB CHRIS SIMMS** makes 1st playoff start after winning 6 of past 8 starts. Has 2 INT in past 184 attempts (1.1 INT pct.).....**RB CARNELL "CADILLAC" WILLIAMS** set franchise rookie record with 1,178 rushing yards. Established franchise single season mark with 6 100-yard rushing games, helping club to 6-0 record in those games. **RB MICHAEL PITTMAN** rushed for 124 yards in his last playoff game (SB XXXVII).....With 2 TD catches last week, **WR JOEY GALLOWAY** set club single season record with 10. Had career highs with 83 catches & 1,287 yards, 2nd-highest receiving yardage total in team annals. Had 7 catches for 131 yards (1 TD) in last meeting vs. Wash. **WR IKE HILLIARD** had career highs with 10 catches, 155 yards & 2 TDs in '00 NFC Champ Game (with NYG vs. Min).....**TE ALEX SMITH** led rookie TEs & ranks 3rd among all rookies with 41 receptions (367 yards).....Defense ranked 1st in NFL overall (277.8) & club is 1 of 3 NFL defenses in top 10 overall, vs. run (6, 94.7) & vs. pass (6, 183.1), joining Bal & Car.....**DE SIMEON RICE** has 5 sacks in past 3 games, including 2 in each of past 2. Has sack in 4 consecutive playoff games. Has 14 sacks in 13 career games vs. Redskins. **DE DEWAYNE WHITE** tied for 3rd in NFL with 3 defensive fumble recoveries. Had 34-yard FR TD last week.....**LBs DERRICK BROOKS & SHELTON QUARLES** play in 10th playoff game with Bucs, most among defensive players in franchise history.....**CB RONDE BARBER** led club with 5 INTs & is 1st CB in NFL history with 20 INT (28) & 20 career sacks (20). Has INT in 2 of past 3 playoff games.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 8

CAROLINA PANTHERS–NFC SOUTH (11-5) AT NEW YORK GIANTS–NFC EAST (11-5)

SERIES

	PANTHERS	GIANTS
LEADER	2-0	
STREAKS	Past 2	
COACHES VS. OPP.	Fox: 1-0	Coughlin: 2-0
VS. COMMON OPP.	Car: 3-2 (Arz 1-0, Dal 0-1, Min 1-0, NO 1-1) NYG: 3-2 (Arz 1-0, Dal 1-1, Min 0-1, NO 1-0)	
PLAYOFF RECORD	4-2	16-21
LAST WEEK	W 44-11 at Falcons	W 30-21 at Raiders
LAST GAME	12/28/03: Panthers 37 at Giants 24. Carolina QB Jake Delhomme passes for 2 TDs & Panthers' defense forces 5 turnovers in Jim Fassel's last game as Giants' head coach.	
LAST GAME AT SITE	12/28/03	
LAST PLAYOFF	--	
BROADCAST	FOX (1:00 PM CT): Joe Buck, Troy Aikman, Pam Oliver (Field reporter) CBS Radio: Marv Albert, John Riggins, John Dockery (Field reporter).	

STAT LEADERS

QBs	Delhomme: 262-435-3,421-24(T1C)-16-88.1	Manning: 294-557-3,762(2C)-24(T1C)-17-75.9
RBs	Foster: 205-879-4.3-2	Barber: 357-1,860(2L)-5.2-9
WRs	S. Smith: 103(T1L)-1,563(1L)-15.2-12 (T1L)	Burrese: 76-1,214-16.0-7
OFFENSE	309.4	361.7 (2C)
TAKE/GIVE	+16 (3L)	+12 (2C)
DEFENSE	282.6 (3L)	327.5
SACKS	Peppers: 10.5	Umenyiora: 14.5 (2L)
INTs	Gamble: 7 (3C)	Alexander: 4
PR	Gamble: 11.3	Morton: 9.6
KOR	Robertson: 21.4	Ponder: 25.9 (3C)
PUNTING	Baker: 43.3	Feagles: 42.1
KICKING	Kasay: 121 (43/44 PAT; 26/34 FG)	Feely: 148 (43/43 PAT; 35/42 FG)

NOTES

TEAMS MEET FOR 1ST TIME IN PLAYOFFS.....Panthers have scored 27-or-more points in each of 2 games between clubs.

PANTHERS: Prior to becoming club's head coach, **JOHN FOX** spent '97-'01 as d-coordinator for Giants, helping NYG to berth in Super Bowl XXXV. Has led Car to 11-win season in 2 of 4 years as head coach.....In 4 career playoff games, **QB JAKE DELHOMME** has 106.1 passer rating, 6 TDs vs. 1 INT & 987 passing yards, winning 3 of 4 starts. Had career highs with 60.2 comp. pct. (262 of 435) & 88.1 passer rating in '05. Ranks 6th in NFL with 90.2 4th-quarter passer rating.....**RB DE SHAUN FOSTER** had career high 1,251 yards from scrimmage (879 rushing, 372 receiving). Avgs. 4.7 yards per carry in 4 career playoff games (42-196). Leads NFL RBs with 30+ catches, avging. 10.9 yards per catch.....**WR STEVE SMITH** set franchise records with '05 NFL-best 1,563 receiving yards & 103 receptions, tied for most in league. Tied for NFL-best with 12 TD receptions. With 9 100-yard receiving games, tied for 6th-best single-season total all-time. In 4 career playoff games, has 2 100-yard efforts & 3 TD catches, avging 22.4 yards per catch on 18 catches for 404 yards. **WR RICKY PROEHL** avgd. career-best 17.6 yards per catch (25-441). Has TD reception in all 4 postseasons he has participated in ('99-'01, StL; '03 Car).....Defense 1 of 3 in NFL to rank in top 10 overall (3, 282.6), vs. run (4, 91.6) & vs. pass (9, 191.1), joining Bal & TB.....Club's +16 takeaway/giveaway ratio ranks 3rd in NFL.....**DE JULIUS PEPPERS** posted 3rd 10-sack (10.5) season of 4-year career, joining **MIKE RUCKER** (47.5) & **KEVIN GREENE** (41.5) as only Panthers with 40.....**LB BRANDON SHORT** spent 1st 4 NFL seasons with NYG, starting 44 games for club from '00-'03.....Among players who entered NFL in '04, **CB CHRIS GAMBLE** ties for lead with 13 INTs (Nathan Vasher). **CB RICKY MANNING, JR** ties for lead among players in postseason with 4 playoff INTs (Terrell Buckley). Is 1 of 8 players all-time with 3-or-more INTs in playoff game ('03 NFC Champ).

GIANTS: Finished with NFL's No. 4 offense (361.7), club's best offensive ranking since No. 4 in '72, earning 1st NFC East title since '00.....Club's 422 points rank 2nd in franchise history (448, '63).....**TOM COUGHLIN** has led his team to playoffs in 5 of 10 seasons as head coach.....**QB ELI MANNING** makes 1st playoff start. His 24 TD passes are most by club QB since **FRAN TARKENTON** tossed 29 in '67. Tied for 3rd in NFL with 7 4th-quarter TD passes & club ranks 4th in league with 115 4th-quarter points.....**RB TIKI BARBER** set franchise record with 1,860 rushing yards, 11th-best single-season total in NFL history. Scored on 95-yard run last week vs. Raiders, 9th-longest run all time. Had 3 200-yard rushing games in '05, joining **EARL CAMPBELL** (4, '80) & **O.J. SIMPSON** (3, '73) as only players ever to post 3 in single season. Totaled 2,390 yards from scrimmage (530 receiving), 2nd-best in single season all time (Marshall Faulk, 2,429, '99). **RB BRANDON JACOBS** led NFL rookies with 7 rushing TDs.....**WR PLAXICO BURRESS** led club with 1,214 receiving yards, joining **AMANI TOOMER** ('02) & **HOMER JONES** ('67) as only Giants ever with 1,200-yard season. Has TD reception in all 3 postseasons he has participated in ('01-'02, '04). Toomer had 3 TD catches in last playoff game ('02 WC vs. SF) & is 1 of 11 players to accomplish feat.....**JEREMY SHOCKEY** is only Giants TE with 3 career 60-catch seasons. Ranks 3rd among TEs with 891 receiving yards & ties for 3rd with 12 catches of 20+ yards.....Defense ranked 3rd in NFL with 37 takeaways.....**DE MICHAEL STRAHAN** has sack in 4 of 5 career playoff games. Ranks 9th all time with 129.5 career sacks. **DE OSI UMENYIORA** finished 2nd in NFL with career-best 14.5 sacks.....**CB TERRELL BUCKLEY** ties for lead among players in postseason with 4 playoff INT.