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FIVE CLUBS SCRAMBLING FOR FINAL TWO PLAYOFF SPOTS;
PATRIOTS GO FOR UNDEFEATED SEASON SATURDAY NIGHT
VS. GIANTS ON NFL NETWORK, CBS & NBC

The spots and the streak.

These are the stories as the NFL concludes one wild season this week with five clubs aiming for playoff spots in the new year and another seeking to end the year undefeated.

Leave it to the NFL to add some extra holiday spice to a final-weekend scramble.

Week 17 starts early on Saturday night at 8:00 PM ET in an unprecedented three-way national TV simulcast on NFL Network, CBS and NBC as the 15-0 New England Patriots visit the New York Giants in search of history.

The Patriots can become the fourth team in history to go through the regular season undefeated and untied. They can match the 1934 Chicago Bears (13-0), 1942 Bears (11-0) and 1972 Miami Dolphins (14-0) in accomplishing the feat.

Of course, the Patriots would account for the most regular-season wins (16) in matching the rare mark. The 1934 and '42 Bears lost the NFL Championship game (the equivalent of the Super Bowl), while the Dolphins posted the NFL's only "perfect" season (17-0) when they won two playoff games before taking Super Bowl VII.

And in spite of New England's take-it-one-game-at-a-time philosophy, Patriots linebacker TEDY BRUSCHI actually admits that he and his teammates may be thinking about a spotless season as Saturday approaches. "Like I've said before," says Bruschi, "put me in, coach. I want to play. I want to win. And if that means this week being 16-0, yeah, I want it."

There will be a lot of "wanting it" going on in the NFL this week. Specifically, about playoff spots. Ten of the NFL's 12 postseason berths have been decided. And five teams are vying for those final two spots.

In the AFC, the Cleveland Browns and Tennessee Titans are going for last slot, the sixth seed. In the NFC, for the same seed, it's a three-way battle between the Minnesota Vikings, New Orleans Saints and Washington Redskins.

"The stage is set," says Redskins cornerback FRED SMOOT, speaking, really, for all five clubs.

The five games with playoff implications in the final week of the season:

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS (5-10) at CLEVELAND BROWNS (9-6)

STORYLINE: Browns are on the cusp, but Niners are tough at season's end.

Cleveland was set for a playoff berth last Sunday but was upended by Cincinnati. With a win or tie and a Tennessee tie, or a Tennessee loss, the Browns take their first playoff berth since 2002.

But they will be facing a team that has built a tough 6-2 record in the season's final three weeks of head coach MIKE NOLAN's three-year tenure. "We're getting it done," says 49ers RB FRANK GORE, with his second consecutive 1,000-yard season.

The game will pit two QBs who were backups at season's start but have posted successful campaigns - the Browns' DEREK ANDERSON (9-5 record) and 49ers' SHAUN HILL, with two wins in a row.

NFL FACTOID

PATS GO FOR SECOND MARK: In addition to possibly becoming only the fourth team in history to post an undefeated/untied regular season (see above), the Patriots this Saturday night can break their 2003-04 NFL record of most consecutive regular-season victories (18) when they visit the Giants. New England won its final three of 2006.

**DALLAS COWBOYS (13-2) at WASHINGTON REDSKINS (8-7)**

**STORYLINE: *Keep the streak going, and the Redskins are in the playoffs.***

Washington has won its last three, including last Sunday night when it limited Minnesota Pro Bowl rookie **RB ADRIAN PETERSON** to 27 yards and intercepted two passes that led to scores.

Beat the Cowboys and Washington earns its second playoff berth in three years. And the 'Skins are quite happy with their 13-year veteran **QB TODD COLLINS**, who has completed 60.8 percent of his passes with no interceptions for a 107.0 rating in his three games this year, the last two starting.

These two NFC East rivals always seem to play each other tightly. Five of the last seven games in the series have been decided by five-or-fewer points, including Dallas' 28-23 victory on November 18. Cowboys are 7-0 on the road this year.

**NEW ORLEANS SAINTS (7-8) at CHICAGO BEARS (6-9)**

**STORYLINE: *Saints want to reverse last season.***

They have to – plus get help – if they want to return to the playoffs for the second time in as many years.

Last January 20, the Bears topped the visiting Saints 39-14 in the NFC Championship Game with the aid of four takeaways.

Fast forward to this year and Chicago comes off a 35-7 limiting of **BRETT FAVRE** and the Packers in which it held the Pro Bowl QB to 153 passing yards. But Saints **QB DREW Brees** leads the league in completions (408) and can set the NFL season record with 11 Sunday (**RICH GANNON**, 418, 2002).

"We've got one more game to play, against Chicago," says Saints head coach **SEAN PAYTON**, who may get **RB REGGIE BUSH** and **WR MARQUES COLSTON** back. "We plan on finishing it the right way."

**MINNESOTA VIKINGS (8-7) at DENVER BRONCOS (6-9)**

**STORYLINE: *Vikes go for Wild Card – maybe through Peterson going for rushing title.***

Minnesota has to win or tie with other scenarios to earn its first playoff berth since 2004. The Vikings would love to do it on the production of **RB ADRIAN PETERSON** (1,305 rush yards), who will be extra pumped on Sunday because he will vie with San Diego's **LA DAINIAN TOMLINSON** (1,418) and Philadelphia's **BRIAN WESTBROOK** (1,291) for the NFL rushing title.

Denver is aware of Washington's Week 16 plan that packed eight and nine men up front to basically shut down Peterson and the Vikings' No. 1 NFL rush game (87 yards) to help hand Minnesota its first loss after five wins in a row.

The Vikings know Denver wants to end its season on a positive with a win while slowing down Peterson. "Those guys get paid, too," says Vikings **C MATT BIRK**. "You always tip your hat to your opponent when they stop you, when they beat you."

**TENNESSEE TITANS (9-6) at INDIANAPOLIS COLTS (13-2) (Sunday night, NBC, 8:15 PM ET)**

**STORYLINE: *Terrific way to end the season!***

A playoff berth can be clinched...it's a division rivalry...Colts are 13-2, Titans have won three of their last four...and the last three games between the two have been decided by a total of six points.

With a win, the Titans are in the postseason. They seem to be getting hot at just the right time. Their right-side Pro Bowl DLmen, **DE KYLE VANDEN BOSCH** and **DT ALBERT HAYNESWORTH**, will give Indy all it can handle. The dominating Haynesworth has returned as a starter from injury and Vanden Bosch comes off his second three-sack game of the year.

But the Colts – who have won 10 consecutive home games against division foes – have won the division, have a first-round bye and come off a season-high 458-yard game while tying a team record with 33 first downs.

"This is a playoff game for us and that's how we have to play," says Titans **RB LEN DALE WHITE**, fresh off the first 1,000-yard season of his two-year career. "Every yard we are going to have to fight for. We've got to score early and often."

## 2007 NFL STANDINGS

### AFC - 2007 Regular Season

#### AFC East

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Net	Pts	TD	Home	Road	Div	Pct	Conf	Pct	Non-Conf	Streak	Last 5
*- New England Patriots	15	0	0	1.000	551	239	312	71	8-0	7-0	6-0	1.000	12-0	1.000	3-0	15W	5-0	
Buffalo Bills	7	8	0	.467	243	337	-94	25	4-4	3-4	4-2	.667	6-6	.500	1-2	2L	2-3	
New York Jets	3	12	0	.200	255	345	-90	25	2-5	1-7	2-4	.333	3-8	.273	0-4	3L	1-4	
Miami Dolphins	1	14	0	.067	242	399	-157	26	1-6	0-8	0-6	.000	1-10	.091	0-4	1L	1-4	

#### AFC North

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Net	Pts	TD	Home	Road	Div	Pct	Conf	Pct	Non-Conf	Streak	Last 5
z- Pittsburgh Steelers	10	5	0	.667	372	242	130	43	7-1	3-4	5-0	1.000	7-4	.636	3-1	1W	3-2	
Cleveland Browns	9	6	0	.600	382	375	7	44	6-1	3-5	3-3	.500	7-5	.583	2-1	1L	3-2	
Cincinnati Bengals	6	9	0	.400	342	360	-18	36	5-3	1-6	3-3	.500	5-6	.455	1-3	1W	3-2	
Baltimore Ravens	4	11	0	.267	248	363	-115	25	3-4	1-7	0-5	.000	1-10	.091	3-1	9L	0-5	

#### AFC South

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Net	Pts	TD	Home	Road	Div	Pct	Conf	Pct	Non-Conf	Streak	Last 5
z- Indianapolis Colts	13	2	0	.867	440	246	194	53	6-1	7-1	5-0	1.000	9-2	.818	4-0	6W	5-0	
y- Jacksonville Jaguars	11	4	0	.733	383	262	121	46	6-2	5-2	2-3	.400	8-3	.727	3-1	3W	4-1	
Tennessee Titans	9	6	0	.600	285	287	-2	27	5-3	4-3	3-2	.600	6-5	.545	3-1	2W	3-2	
Houston Texans	7	8	0	.467	337	356	-19	37	5-2	2-6	0-5	.000	4-7	.364	3-1	1L	2-3	

#### AFC West

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Net	Pts	TD	Home	Road	Div	Pct	Conf	Pct	Non-Conf	Streak	Last 5
z- San Diego Chargers	10	5	0	.667	382	267	115	46	7-1	3-4	4-1	.800	8-3	.727	2-2	5W	5-0	
Denver Broncos	6	9	0	.400	298	390	-92	32	4-3	2-6	3-3	.500	6-6	.500	0-3	2L	1-4	
Oakland Raiders	4	11	0	.267	266	368	-102	28	2-5	2-6	2-3	.400	4-7	.364	0-4	3L	2-3	
Kansas City Chiefs	4	11	0	.267	216	322	-106	23	2-6	2-5	2-4	.333	3-8	.273	1-3	8L	0-5	

### NFC - 2007 Regular Season

#### NFC East

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Net	Pts	TD	Home	Road	Div	Pct	Conf	Pct	Non-Conf	Streak	Last 5
*- Dallas Cowboys	13	2	0	.867	449	298	151	54	6-2	7-0	4-1	.800	10-1	.909	3-1	1W	4-1	
y- New York Giants	10	5	0	.667	338	313	25	39	3-4	7-1	3-3	.500	7-5	.583	3-0	1W	3-2	
Washington Redskins	8	7	0	.533	307	304	3	32	4-3	4-4	2-3	.400	6-5	.545	2-2	3W	3-2	
Philadelphia Eagles	7	8	0	.467	319	291	28	36	2-5	5-3	2-4	.333	5-7	.417	2-1	2W	2-3	

#### NFC North

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Net	Pts	TD	Home	Road	Div	Pct	Conf	Pct	Non-Conf	Streak	Last 5
z- Green Bay Packers	12	3	0	.800	401	278	123	45	6-1	6-2	3-2	.600	8-3	.727	4-0	1L	3-2	
Minnesota Vikings	8	7	0	.533	346	289	57	41	5-3	3-4	3-3	.500	6-6	.500	2-1	1L	4-1	
Detroit Lions	7	8	0	.467	333	410	-77	36	5-3	2-5	3-2	.600	4-7	.364	3-1	1W	1-4	
Chicago Bears	6	9	0	.400	301	323	-22	30	3-4	3-5	2-4	.333	3-8	.273	3-1	1W	2-3	

#### NFC South

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Net	Pts	TD	Home	Road	Div	Pct	Conf	Pct	Non-Conf	Streak	Last 5
z- Tampa Bay Buccaneers	9	6	0	.600	311	239	72	34	6-1	3-5	5-0	1.000	8-3	.727	1-3	1L	3-2	
New Orleans Saints	7	8	0	.467	354	355	-1	44	3-5	4-3	3-3	.500	6-5	.545	1-3	1L	3-2	
Carolina Panthers	6	9	0	.400	236	324	-88	24	2-6	4-3	2-3	.400	6-5	.545	0-4	1L	2-3	
Atlanta Falcons	3	12	0	.200	215	373	-158	21	2-5	1-7	1-5	.167	2-9	.182	1-3	6L	0-5	

#### NFC West

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Net	Pts	TD	Home	Road	Div	Pct	Conf	Pct	Non-Conf	Streak	Last 5
z- Seattle Seahawks	10	5	0	.667	352	247	105	39	7-1	3-4	5-1	.833	8-3	.727	2-2	1W	4-1	
Arizona Cardinals	7	8	0	.467	356	380	-24	43	5-2	2-6	2-3	.400	4-7	.364	3-1	1W	2-3	
San Francisco 49ers	5	10	0	.333	212	344	-132	23	3-5	2-5	3-3	.500	4-8	.333	1-2	2W	3-2	
St. Louis Rams	3	12	0	.200	244	390	-146	25	1-7	2-5	1-4	.200	3-8	.273	0-4	3L	1-4	

x - Clinched playoff, y - Clinched Wild Card, z - Clinched Division

\* - Clinched Division and Homefield Advantage

## LAST WEEK'S NFL RESULTS (DECEMBER 20, 22-24)

(Home team in CAPS)

### Thursday, December 20

Pittsburgh 41, ST. LOUIS 24

### Saturday, December 22

Dallas 20, CAROLINA 13

### Sunday, December 23

N.Y. Giants 38, BUFFALO 21  
CHICAGO 35, Green Bay 7  
CINCINNATI 19, Cleveland 14  
DETROIT 25, Kansas City 20  
INDIANAPOLIS 38, Houston 15

### Sunday, December 23, Cont.'d.

JACKSONVILLE 49, Oakland 11  
Philadelphia 38, NEW ORLEANS 23  
ARIZONA 30, Atlanta 27 (OT)  
SAN FRANCISCO 21, Tampa Bay 19  
NEW ENGLAND 28, Miami 7  
SEATTLE 27, Baltimore 6  
TENNESSEE 10, N.Y. Jets 6  
Washington 32, MINNESOTA 21

### Monday, December 24

SAN DIEGO 23, Denver 3

## WEEK 17 SCHEDULE – DECEMBER 29-30

(All times local)

### Saturday, December 29

New England at N.Y. Giants, 8:00 PM (NFL Network)

### Sunday, December 30

Seattle at Atlanta, 1:00 PM  
New Orleans at Chicago, 12:00 PM  
San Francisco at Cleveland, 1:00 PM  
Detroit at Green Bay, 12:00 PM  
Jacksonville at Houston, 12:00 PM  
Cincinnati at Miami, 1:00 PM

### Sunday, December 30, Cont.'d.

Buffalo at Philadelphia, 1:00 PM  
Carolina at Tampa Bay, 1:00 PM  
St. Louis at Arizona, 2:15 PM  
Pittsburgh at Baltimore, 4:15 PM  
Minnesota at Denver, 2:15 PM  
Kansas City at N.Y. Jets, 4:15 PM  
San Diego at Oakland, 1:15 PM  
Dallas at Washington, 4:15 PM  
Tennessee at Indianapolis, 7:15 PM (NBC)