



NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE
280 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10017
(212) 450-2000 * FAX (212) 681-7573
WWW.NFLMedia.com

Joe Browne, Executive Vice President-Communications
Greg Aiello, Senior Vice President-Public Relations

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GIANTS & REDSKINS KICK OFF SEASON THURSDAY NIGHT ON NBC

The countdown starts!

America's favorite sport roars back into action this Thursday night in the first game of NFL Kickoff 2008 Weekend. In an NFC East Division battle of 2007 playoff teams, the Super Bowl XLII-champion **NEW YORK GIANTS** will host the **WASHINGTON REDSKINS** at Giants Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey at 7:00 PM ET on NBC.

The teams played two memorable games last year. In Week 3, the Giants began their NFL-record 10 road victories in a row (see below) with a goal-line stand in Washington. In Week 15, Redskins quarterback **TODD COLLINS**, in his first start in 10 years, produced five scoring drives for the win.

The Thursday night celebration will be highlighted by "**NFL OPENING KICKOFF 2008 PRESENTED BY EA SPORTS**," a free concert open to the public in New York's Columbus Circle that will feature Grammy Award-winning artists **KEITH URBAN, NATASHA BEDINGFIELD** and **USHER**. Portions of the event that will honor the Super Bowl Giants will air on NFL Network from 3:30 PM ET and will be streamed on NFL.com from 4:00-7:00 PM ET.

HERE COMES THE NFL!

Every last player...and fan...is ready!

The "It-Can't-Come-Soon-Enough" league returns this week. That means the next four months will be packed with the sizzle and suspense that comes only with the National Football League. And then come the playoffs!

"We feel ready. It's time to put what we've been practicing to work." – RB Willie Parker, Pittsburgh Steelers.

Everybody is ready for the unique unpredictability of the NFL.

Last year, almost half the games (47 percent) were decided by one score (eight points or less). Seventeen percent were decided by a scoring play in the final two minutes or overtime. And for the 12th consecutive year, at least five teams made the playoffs after missing out the year before.

"I'm prepared and ready to go." – QB Matt Ryan, Atlanta Falcons.

All the anticipation that started with the NFL Combine last February, heightened with the NFL Draft in April, and peaked with the opening of training camps in July comes to realization this weekend. The NFL – under the season theme of "Believe In Now" – is back, bigger and bolder than ever.

"We're definitely ready." – QB Aaron Rodgers, Green Bay Packers.

As the 2008 NFL season kicks off, it comes packed with changes, quests and questions:

- **CAN THE SUPER BOWL CHAMP GIANTS REPEAT?**: It's tough. It's happened only eight times since the first Super Bowl in 1967. But tough tasks don't seem to faze the Giants. Last year, they set an NFL season record by winning an improbable 10 consecutive road games (not counting the neutral-site Super Bowl). In three of their four playoff games, they defeated teams they had lost to during the season. "When the regular season starts, it goes to another level," says Giants **C SHAUN O'HARA**. "It's a new challenge, and we're looking forward to it."
- **LT GOES FOR THE RECORD**: You can't see his eyes behind that sunglass shield he wears, but you can't miss him with the ball in his hands. San Diego Chargers **RB LA DAINIAN TOMLINSON**, the NFL's leading rusher the past two years, can break his tie this season with Pro Football Hall of Famer **ERIC DICKERSON** for most 1,200-yard rushing seasons (7) to begin a career. "He is the most decisive runner I have ever seen," says Atlanta Falcons **RB MICHAEL TURNER**. Other records can be topped: Kansas City's **TONY GONZALEZ** can become the all-time leader in tight-end receiving yards with another 179.....Indianapolis **QB PEYTON MANNING** needs

32 completions to become the eighth player in history with 3,500 passes completed.....Chicago **KR-PR DEVIN HESTER** (with 11) needs three combined kick-return touchdowns for first place all-time in the category.....and the **CHICAGO BEARS**, with seven wins, can become the first team in history with 700 victories.

- **NEW COACHES/PLAYERS IN NEW PLACES:** There are four new head coaches in 2008 – all “rookies” in their first job as the head man – **JOHN HARBAUGH** in Baltimore, **MIKE SMITH** in Atlanta, **TONY SPARANO** in Miami and **JIM ZORN** in Washington. Harbaugh, Sparano and Zorn made the unusual jump from non-coordinator positions to the head role. “There really isn’t one formula to becoming a head coach,” says Zorn.

And there are a lot of well-known players with new teams. **BRETT FAVRE** is with the Jets, **CHAD PENNINGTON** with the Dolphins, **JEREMY SHOCKEY** with the Saints, **JASON TAYLOR** with the Redskins, **ISAAC BRUCE** with the 49ers, **ALGE CRUMPLER** with the Titans, **DE ANGELO HALL** with the Raiders, **JULIUS JONES** with the Seahawks, **ASANTE SAMUEL** with the Eagles and **ZACH THOMAS** with the Cowboys.

- **ON-THE-FIELD TRENDS:** The passing game ratcheted up even more...spread offenses...hybrid defenses. Those are only some of the on-the-field trends that may be even more noticeable in 2008.

In the air: Last year, seven quarterbacks threw for 4,000 yards, the most such QBs in a season. That quick-strike trend should continue in '08. Even such historically rush-first teams as the Pittsburgh Steelers are getting into the air act, with **QB BEN ROETHLISBERGER** throwing for 32 TDs last year, the most ever for a Steelers quarterback. “We’re kind of keeping up with the league,” says Roethlisberger. “The NFL is always evolving and offenses are always changing. Right now, the offenses around the league – in terms of who wins – are pass-dominant.”**Spread it out:** More and more teams, it seems, are using versions of the college “spread offense” that creates points. In the spread, the offense lines up almost exclusively in the shotgun with either one or no running backs and four or five receivers. Players shift and go in motion prior to the snap on almost every play. It can create havoc with the defense. The New England Patriots used portions of the spread last year in averaging a league-leading 411.3 yards per game.....**The hybrid:** Meanwhile, the defense is scheming too. A bunch of teams are using the “hybrid defense” to confuse the offense. In the hybrid, a defense mixes a 4-3 and 3-4 defensive alignment on any down and in any game. Defensive coaches feel they make an opponent prepare for every possible look and then dictate what works best for them. But “pulling it off isn’t easy,” says NFL.com senior analyst **PAT KIRWAN**. “If it were, everyone would be doing it.”

- **NEW RULES:** There are three main ones -- Teams will now be permitted to have one defensive player on the field with a radio in his helmet to receive signals, as has the offense since 1994. “It’s an effective tool, having the ability to get the call in in real time,” says Indianapolis Colts **LB GARY BRACKETT**.....There will be no more forceout rule. Now, a player must have both feet inbounds for a completed catch.....And clubs now will have the option to defer the opportunity to kick or receive the kickoff to the second half.
- **THE INTERNATIONAL NFL:** Last year was such a success, the NFL is doing it again! The league again will play a regular-season overseas game in the United Kingdom (the first in a three-year program in the U.K.) when the New Orleans Saints meet the San Diego Chargers at London’s Wembley Stadium on October 26. Last year’s game (Dolphins-Giants) was a sellout, as this year is expected to be.

Closer to home, the Buffalo Bills will host the Miami Dolphins on December 7 in Toronto – the first of five annual regular-season games the Bills will play in Canada’s largest city.

- **THE '58 CHAMPIONSHIP:** The NFL will be saluting this year the 50th anniversary of one of the most memorable games in its history – the 1958 championship game between the Baltimore Colts and New York Giants that has been termed the “Greatest Game Ever Played.” The game on December 28, 1958 (50 years to the day the NFL will conclude its 2008 regular season) is acknowledged as having a pivotal impact on the still-growing NFL of the '50s becoming America’s favorite sport of today.
- **COMMEMORATIONS:** The NFL will honor the late **GENE UPSHAW**, Pro Football Hall of Famer and executive director of the NFL Players Association, with all players wearing a special patch the entire season.....the Detroit Lions will celebrate their 75th season...the New York Jets the 40th anniversary of their Super Bowl III triumph... Tennessee its 10th season as the Titans...the Kansas City Chiefs have made permanent their memorial patch for their late owner **LAMAR HUNT**...the St. Louis Rams will wear a memorial patch for **GEORGIA FRONTIERE**, their late owner.....and the Indianapolis Colts and Dallas Cowboys will wear patches commemorating the first and last years of their stadiums.
- **SUNDAY NIGHT STREAMING:** It’s *extra* football! This season, the 17-game NBC *Sunday Night Football* schedule will be available to fans on NFL.com and NBCSports.com. The new live coverage will come from NBC’s telecast of the *Sunday Night Football* game. It marks the first time complete NFL games will be widely available in the U.S. via live online streaming.

So the drama of the NFL is back, and everybody – *everybody!* – is ready.

“We’re ready to roll,” says Jacksonville Jaguars **QB DAVID GARRARD**. “Everybody is excited. It’s time to stop just practicing and playing for fun and start playing for real.”

FINAL 2008 PRESEASON RECORDS

<u>AMERICAN FOOTBALL CONFERENCE</u>							<u>NATIONAL FOOTBALL CONFERENCE</u>						
<u>East Division</u>							<u>East Division</u>						
	<u>W</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>T</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>Pts.</u>	<u>OP</u>		<u>W</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>T</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>Pts.</u>	<u>OP</u>
Miami	3	1	0	.750	63	41	Washington	3	2	0	.600	66	111
N.Y. Jets	3	1	0	.750	71	60	Dallas	2	2	0	.500	69	86
Buffalo	2	2	0	.500	64	59	N.Y. Giants	2	2	0	.500	73	71
New England	0	4	0	.000	56	86	Philadelphia	2	2	0	.500	81	73
<u>North Division</u>							<u>North Division</u>						
	<u>W</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>T</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>Pts.</u>	<u>OP</u>		<u>W</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>T</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>Pts.</u>	<u>OP</u>
Pittsburgh	3	1	0	.750	68	60	Detroit	4	0	0	1.000	80	32
Cincinnati	2	2	0	.500	57	64	Chicago	1	3	0	.250	92	100
Baltimore	1	3	0	.250	50	72	Green Bay	1	3	0	.250	71	101
Cleveland	0	4	0	.000	70	103	Minnesota	1	3	0	.250	60	77
<u>South Division</u>							<u>South Division</u>						
	<u>W</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>T</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>Pts.</u>	<u>OP</u>		<u>W</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>T</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>Pts.</u>	<u>OP</u>
Jacksonville	3	1	0	.750	81	56	Tampa Bay	3	1	0	.750	77	45
Tennessee	3	1	0	.750	77	67	Atlanta	2	2	0	.500	53	48
Houston	2	2	0	.500	78	82	Carolina	2	2	0	.500	99	66
Indianapolis	1	4	0	.200	66	109	New Orleans	2	2	0	.500	74	55
<u>West Division</u>							<u>West Division</u>						
	<u>W</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>T</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>Pts.</u>	<u>OP</u>		<u>W</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>T</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>Pts.</u>	<u>OP</u>
San Diego	3	1	0	.750	75	58	Seattle	3	1	0	.750	103	77
Denver	2	2	0	.500	91	73	Arizona	2	2	0	.500	75	69
Kansas City	2	2	0	.500	62	88	St. Louis	2	2	0	.500	61	71
Oakland	1	3	0	.250	50	70	San Francisco	2	2	0	.500	94	74

LAST WEEK'S NFL RESULTS (AUGUST 28-29)

(All times local)

Thursday, August 28

Detroit 14, BUFFALO 6
 N.Y. Jets 27, PHILADELPHIA 20
 Atlanta 10, BALTIMORE 9
 Cincinnati 27, INDIANAPOLIS 7
 Jacksonville 24, WASHINGTON 3
 N.Y. GIANTS 19, New England 14
 PITTSBURGH 19, Carolina 16
 Chicago 16, CLEVELAND 10
 Miami 14, NEW ORLEANS 10

DALLAS 16, Minnesota 10
 KANSAS CITY 21, St. Louis 17
 Tampa Bay 16, HOUSTON 6
 Tennessee 23, GREEN BAY 21

Friday, August 29

Denver 28, ARIZONA 14
 SEATTLE 23, Oakland 16
 San Diego 20, SAN FRANCISCO 17

KICKOFF WEEKEND 2008 SCHEDULE – SEPTEMBER 4, 7-8

(All times local)

Thursday, September 4

Washington at N.Y. Giants, 7:00 (NBC)

Sunday, September 7

Detroit at Atlanta, 1:00
 Cincinnati at Baltimore, 1:00
 Seattle at Buffalo, 1:00
 N.Y. Jets at Miami, 1:00
 Kansas City at New England, 1:00
 Tampa Bay at New Orleans, 12:00
 St. Louis at Philadelphia, 1:00

Sunday, September 7, Cont.'d.

Houston at Pittsburgh, 1:00
 Jacksonville at Tennessee, 12:00
 Dallas at Cleveland, 4:15
 Carolina at San Diego, 1:15
 Arizona at San Francisco, 1:15
 Chicago at Indianapolis, 8:15 (NBC)

Monday, September 8

Minnesota at Green Bay, 6:00 (ESPN)
 Denver at Oakland, 7:15 (ESPN)