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## COMMUNICATIONS

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### **RACE TO PLAYOFFS INTENSIFIES IN NFL'S SECOND HALF**

The second half of the NFL season is here and the race to the playoffs is in full swing.

Thirteen teams have won at least five games, led by the 8-1 Philadelphia Eagles. This is the fifth time in franchise history the Eagles have started a season 8-1 or better (1949, 1960, 1980 and 2004) and the team advanced to the NFL Championship/Super Bowl in each of the previous four instances. In the Super Bowl era, 91 teams have previously started 8-1 or better through the first nine games and 88 advanced to the playoffs (96.7 percent). Of those 91 teams, 40 reached the Super Bowl (44 percent) and 22 won the Super Bowl (24.2 percent).

The Eagles (seven) and New Orleans Saints (six) currently have the longest active winning streaks in the league. New Orleans, which started the season 0-2, is the third team in the Super Bowl era to win its next six games immediately following an 0-2 start. The other two teams to accomplish the feat – 1993 Dallas Cowboys and 2007 New York Giants – both won the Super Bowl in that season.

As the season moves into the second half, it's all still to be decided, with plenty of football left to play. So don't count anyone out. Since 2000, 44 teams have reached the halfway point of their season with a .500 or below winning percentage and advanced to the playoffs, including at least one in each season. Last year, there were four such teams: Detroit (4-4), Green Bay (4-4), Miami (4-4) and Pittsburgh (4-4).

Of those 44 clubs, seven have advanced to the Conference Championship Game, including both the Packers and Steelers last season. The 2001 New England Patriots reached the midway point with a 4-4 record and went on to win Super Bowl XXXVI.

Week 10 begins on Thursday night with an NFC West matchup as the Arizona Cardinals host the Seattle Seahawks (8:25 PM ET, NBC/NFLN/Amazon Prime). The game marks the first of NBC's Tri-Cast package this season which will feature five *Thursday Night Football* contests and a Christmas Day game. The week concludes with a pair of primetime contests as the Denver Broncos host the New England Patriots on Sunday night (8:30 PM ET, NBC) and the Miami Dolphins visit the Carolina Panthers on Monday night (8:30 PM ET, ESPN). Some of the other notable games in Week 10:

#### **SEATTLE SEAHAWKS (5-3) at ARIZONA CARDINALS (4-4) (Thursday, NBC/NFLN/Amazon Prime, 8:25 PM ET)**

- The Seahawks have won four of their past five games and finished the first half of their season with a 5-3 record. Seattle is on pace for its sixth consecutive season with at least 10 wins and the Seahawks have made the playoffs in each of the previous five seasons.
- Seattle leads the NFC in passing offense (274.8 yards per game) and ranks third in the conference in total offense (378.6). Quarterback **RUSSELL WILSON** leads the NFC with 2,305 passing yards and is the NFL's top-ranked passer in the fourth quarter with a 132.9 passer rating.
- The Cardinals defeated San Francisco 20-10 last week. Quarterback **DREW STANTON**, making his first start in 2017, threw two touchdown passes against the 49ers and has now won his past four starts.
- Arizona running back **ADRIAN PETERSON** rushed for 159 yards last week and has surpassed the 100-yard mark in two of his three games with the Cardinals. Peterson, who turned 32 in March, is the third-oldest player in NFL history to rush for at least 150 yards in a game.

#### **NEW ORLEANS SAINTS (6-2) at BUFFALO BILLS (5-3) (Sunday, FOX, 1:00 PM ET)**

- The Saints, who defeated Tampa Bay 30-10 last week, have won six consecutive games and are the third team in the Super Bowl era to win its next six games immediately following an 0-2 start.
- Rookie running back **ALVIN KAMARA** had a career-high 152 scrimmage yards (84 receiving, 68 rushing) and scored two touchdowns against the Buccaneers. Kamara is one of only three players (**KAREEM HUNT** and **TODD GURLEY**) in the NFL this season with at least 300 rushing yards (311), 300 receiving yards (341) and five touchdowns (five).

- The Bills are 5-3 at the halfway point and are aiming for their first 10-win season since 1999. Buffalo leads the NFL with a +11 turnover differential (17 takeaways, 6 giveaways) and safety **MICAH HYDE** ranks second in the league with five interceptions.
- Buffalo is 4-0 at home this season and has outscored opponents 111-69 at New Era Field. The Bills have scored at least 20 points in a franchise-record 13 consecutive home games.

#### PITTSBURGH STEELERS (6-2) at INDIANAPOLIS COLTS (3-6) (Sunday, CBS, 1:00 PM ET)

- The Steelers have won three consecutive games and are tied with New England for the best record in the AFC (6-2). Pittsburgh had a bye last week and defeated Detroit 20-15 in Week 8.
- Wide receiver **ANTONIO BROWN** leads the NFL with 57 catches and 835 receiving yards and is on pace to record his fifth consecutive season with at least 100 catches and 1,000 receiving yards. Rookie wide receiver **JU JU SMITH-SCHUSTER** had seven catches for 193 yards and a touchdown (97 yards) in Week 8 and was named the AFC Offensive Player of the Week. Smith-Schuster leads all NFL rookies with 424 receiving yards.
- The Colts recorded a 20-14 win at Houston last week. On the final play of the game, which started at the Indianapolis seven-yard line, Colts linebacker **JABAAL SHEARD** recorded a sack and forced a fumble – which was recovered by linebacker **BARKEVIOUS MINGO** – to seal the victory.
- Wide receiver **T.Y. HILTON** had five catches for 175 yards and two touchdowns in the win at Houston. Hilton has 10 career games with at least 150 receiving yards, tied with **JULIO JONES** for the fourth-most 150-yard receiving games in a player's first six seasons. The only players with more such games in their first six seasons are Pro Football Hall of Famers **LANCE ALWORTH** (13) and **JERRY RICE** (13) and **RANDY MOSS** (12).

#### MINNESOTA VIKINGS (6-2) at WASHINGTON REDSKINS (4-4) (Sunday, FOX, 1:00 PM ET)

- The Vikings, who had a bye last week, defeated Cleveland 33-16 at London's Twickenham Stadium in Week 8. Running back **JERICK MC KINNON** had 122 scrimmage yards (72 receiving, 50 rushing) and a touchdown against the Browns.
- Wide receiver **ADAM THIELEN**, who had five catches for 98 yards and a touchdown versus Cleveland, ranks second in the NFC with 627 receiving yards. Defensive end **EVERSON GRIFFEN** ranks third in the NFL with 10 sacks and is one of only three players (**DWIGHT FREENEY** and **ROBERT MATHIS**) to record a sack in each of his team's first eight games of a season since the individual sack became an official statistic in 1982.
- Washington running back **ROB KELLEY** rushed for two touchdowns – including the game-winning score with 59 seconds remaining in the fourth quarter – in the Redskins' 17-14 come-from-behind victory at Seattle.
- Quarterback **KIRK COUSINS** led the game-winning drive, completing a 31-yard pass to wide receiver **BRIAN QUICK** and connecting with wide receiver **JOSH DOCTSON** on a 38-yard completion to set the Redskins up at the Seattle one-yard line.

#### DALLAS COWBOYS (5-3) at ATLANTA FALCONS (4-4) (Sunday, FOX, 4:25 PM ET)

- The Cowboys have won three consecutive games, including last week's 28-17 victory over Kansas City. Quarterback **DAK PRESCOTT** threw two touchdown passes – both to wide receiver **COLE BEASLEY** – and added a rushing TD. Prescott joined **CAM NEWTON** as the only players in NFL history to have at least 35 touchdown passes (39) and 10 rushing touchdowns (10) in their first two seasons.
- Defensive end **DEMARCUS LAWRENCE** ranks second in the NFL – and leads the NFC – with a career-high 10.5 sacks. Lawrence has recorded at least one sack in seven of the Cowboys' eight games this season.
- Atlanta quarterback **MATT RYAN** passed for 313 yards and two touchdowns in last week's 20-17 loss at Carolina. Ryan, who played in his 150th game, has 39,858 career passing yards, the most in NFL history by a player in his first 150 games.
- Falcons wide receiver **JULIO JONES** leads the NFC with 658 receiving yards. In his career, Jones is averaging 95 receiving yards per game (8,268 yards in 87 games), the highest mark in NFL history (minimum 50 games).

#### MIAMI DOLPHINS (4-4) at CAROLINA PANTHERS (6-3) (Monday, ESPN, 8:30 PM ET)

- Miami quarterback **JAY CUTLER** passed for 311 yards and three touchdowns in last week's 27-24 loss against Oakland.
- Wide receiver **JARVIS LANDRY** ranks second in the league with 56 catches and has 344 career receptions, the most by a player in his first four seasons in NFL history.
- The Panthers improved to 6-3 with a key 20-17 divisional victory over Atlanta last week. Carolina rushed for 201 yards and two touchdowns against the Falcons, led by quarterback **CAM NEWTON** (86 yards, one touchdown) and rookie running back **CHRISTIAN MC CAFFREY** (66 yards, one touchdown).
- McCaffrey, who leads the NFC with 54 receptions, is the only player in the NFL this season with at least 150 rushing yards (183) and 50 catches (54).

**NFL WEEK 10 SCHEDULE**  
**THURSDAY, SUNDAY & MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 12-13**

(All times local)

*Byes: Baltimore, Kansas City, Oakland, Philadelphia*

**Thursday, November 9**

Seattle at Arizona, 6:25 PM (NBC/NFLN/Amazon)

**Sunday, November 12**

New Orleans at Buffalo, 1:00 PM

Green Bay at Chicago, 12:00 PM

Cleveland at Detroit, 1:00 PM

Pittsburgh at Indianapolis, 1:00 PM

Los Angeles Chargers at Jacksonville, 1:00 PM

New York Jets at Tampa Bay, 1:00 PM

**Sunday, November 12 (cont'd)**

Cincinnati at Tennessee, 12:00 PM

Minnesota at Washington, 1:00 PM

Houston at Los Angeles Rams, 1:05 PM

Dallas at Atlanta, 4:25 PM

New York Giants at San Francisco, 1:25 PM

New England at Denver, 6:30 PM (NBC)

**Monday, November 13**

Miami at Carolina, 8:30 PM (ESPN)