



COMMUNICATIONS

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PLAYOFF RACES HEAT UP AS NFL ENTERS FINAL MONTH OF REGULAR SEASON

As the calendar turns to December, the NFL enters the final month of the regular season. With 11 games down, only five remain for teams to make their playoff push.

"Everyone understands that there is a lot of football left," says New Orleans head coach **SEAN PAYTON**. "There are a lot of teams competing for similar goals, whether it's winning the division or trying to put yourself in the best position for a postseason berth. Our team understands the importance of playing well in the month of December."

As the league enters Week 13, there are 17 teams either in or within one game of a playoff spot.

"We're entering December with 11 wins and we're right where we want to be," says Green Bay quarterback **AARON RODGERS**.

The Packers (11-0) and San Francisco 49ers (9-2) can clinch their divisions this weekend. But there is still plenty of football left to be played.

Since 2004, a team with a losing record through the first 11 games has qualified for the postseason in every season. And, in six of those seven years, that team has won at least one playoff game.

"Things can happen," says Philadelphia running back **LE SEAN MC COY**, who leads the NFL in rushing with 1,050 yards. "We just have to stay positive and hope for the best. All we can do is win next week. We know we need to win all of our games just to have a chance for the playoffs."

McCoy and the Eagles kick off Week 13 on Thursday night (8:00 PM ET, NFL Network) when they travel to Seattle to face the Seahawks and running back **MARSHAWN LYNCH**, who is the first Seahawk to score a touchdown in seven consecutive games since **SHAUN ALEXANDER** (2005). Some of the key games in Week 13:

ATLANTA FALCONS (7-4) at HOUSTON TEXANS (8-3) (Sunday, FOX, 1:00 PM ET)
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Two teams in the playoff hunt will meet at Houston's Reliant Stadium.

The Falcons are coming off a 24-14 home win over Minnesota. Quarterback **MATT RYAN** completed 79.4 percent of his passes (27 of 34) for 262 yards with three touchdowns and no interceptions for a 128.2 passer rating. In his career, the Falcons are 20-0 when Ryan posts a passer rating of at least 100.

"It was a good win for our team," says Ryan. "We've got a tough opponent coming up in Houston, so we've got to get back to work and get ready for the Texans."

NFL FACTOID

Arizona rookie **PATRICK PETERSON** is the first player in NFL history with four punt-return touchdowns of at least 80 yards in a single season. In fact, only five other players have four 80+ yard PR-TDs in their entire NFL career: **DEVIN HESTER & ERIC METCALF** (5); **DANTE HALL, DARRIEN GORDON & TAMARICK VANOVER** (4).

Prior to this season, the Cardinals had not scored on a punt-return of at least 80 yards since **CHUCK LATOURETTE** had an 86-yard PR-TD for the St. Louis Cardinals in 1968 (9/29/68 vs. New Orleans). Latourette was also the team's punter.

Houston notched a 20-13 win at Jacksonville in Week 12 and leads the AFC South by two games. Texans running back **ARIAN FOSTER** is averaging 141.6 scrimmage yards per game (1,274 yards, nine games), the best mark in the NFL.

"I'm very proud of this team," says Houston head coach **GARY KUBIAK**, whose team has won five games in a row. "When you face some of the adversity we've face and continue to find a way to win, that's a sign of a very solid football team. We have to continue to put ourselves in a position to be successful."

CINCINNATI BENGALS (7-4) at PITTSBURGH STEELERS (8-3) (Sunday, CBS, 1:00 PM ET)

One game separates the top three teams in the AFC North as Baltimore (8-3), Pittsburgh (8-3) and Cincinnati (7-4) are gearing up for the stretch run.

These two teams met in Week 10, with Pittsburgh defeating Cincinnati 24-17 at Paul Brown Stadium. Steelers quarterback **BEN ROETHLISBERGER** is 11-4 in his career against the Bengals, including wins in eight of his past 10 starts in the series. Last week, the Pittsburgh defense forced four turnovers and limited Kansas City to 252 total yards.

"That's what 'team' is all about," says Roethlisberger. "The defense stepped up huge for us."

Cincinnati erased a 17-7 halftime deficit to beat Cleveland 23-20 in Week 12. It marked the Bengals' third win this season in which they trailed by at least 10 points at halftime, tied for the most in a season in NFL history.

"We're where we want to be," says Cincinnati safety **CHRIS CROCKER** about the team's position in the playoff chase. "We just saw the Steelers a few weeks ago. We know what they want to do and they know what we want to do. It's going to be a good game. We just have to lay it all out on the line."

GREEN BAY PACKERS (11-0) at NEW YORK GIANTS (6-5) (Sunday, FOX, 4:15 PM ET)

The Packers have won 17 consecutive games (including the playoffs), the longest streak in team history. Green Bay is the second defending Super Bowl champion (1998 Denver) to start the following season 11-0 and the Packers are 11-0 for the first time.

On Thanksgiving, Green Bay defeated Detroit 27-15 at Ford Field. Quarterback **AARON RODGERS** completed 22 of 33 passes (66.7 percent) for 307 yards with two touchdowns and no interceptions for a 116.6 passer rating. Rodgers has posted a passer rating of at least 100 in every game this season, surpassing the previous record of 10 consecutive games, shared by Pro Football Hall of Famer STEVE YOUNG (1994-95) and TOM BRADY (2010-11).

"We're 11-0," says Green Bay head coach **MIKE MC CARTHY**. "Once you get to 11 or 12 wins, you can see that division championship in sight and that's our focus."

The last time the Giants faced an undefeated team this late into a season was Super Bowl XLII against the 18-0 New England Patriots. New York knocked off the Patriots 17-14 and quarterback **ELI MANNING** claimed Super Bowl MVP honors. Now, at 6-5 and one game behind Dallas for first place in the NFC East, the Giants know what's at stake.

"We have a big game coming up," says Manning, who became the fifth player in NFL history to pass for at least 3,000 yards and 20 touchdowns in seven consecutive seasons. "These last five games are big and will determine our season."

DETROIT LIONS (7-4) at NEW ORLEANS SAINTS (8-3) (Sunday, NBC, 8:20 PM ET)

The Lions and Saints enter Week 13 in the middle of the NFC playoff race and will face one another on Sunday night.

Detroit wide receiver **CALVIN JOHNSON** leads the NFL with 12 receiving touchdowns. He joins Pro Football Hall of Famers LANCE ALWORTH and JERRY RICE as the only players in NFL history to record at least 12 receiving touchdowns three times in their first five seasons.

"We've got to try and get to 8-4," says Lions quarterback **MATTHEW STAFFORD**. "We've got to go down to New Orleans and play a really good Saints team in a tough place on Sunday Night Football. We've got to show up and play well. It's a very good football team and it'll be a challenge for us."

New Orleans is coming off a 49-24 victory over the New York Giants and the Saints have won three in a row. Against the Giants, quarterback **DREW BREES** passed for 363 yards and four touchdowns – and rushed for another score – and tied Pro Football Hall of Famer DAN MARINO for the most career 350-yard passing games (27).

"It's time to get ready for Detroit," says Brees, who has passed for 3,689 yards, the most ever by a player through the first 11 games of a season. "There's never a time to rest and never a dull moment."

2011 NFL STANDINGS

American Football Conference**East Division**

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	Conf	Div	Streak
New England Patriots	8	3	0	.727	331	223	4-1-0	4-2-0	6-2-0	3-1-0	Won 3
New York Jets	6	5	0	.545	256	241	5-1-0	1-4-0	5-5-0	3-2-0	Won 1
Buffalo Bills	5	6	0	.455	261	281	4-1-0	1-5-0	3-4-0	1-3-0	Lost 4
Miami Dolphins	3	8	0	.273	212	206	2-3-0	1-5-0	2-6-0	1-2-0	Lost 1

North Division

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	Conf	Div	Streak
Baltimore Ravens	8	3	0	.727	272	182	6-0-0	2-3-0	5-2-0	3-0-0	Won 2
Pittsburgh Steelers	8	3	0	.727	233	188	4-1-0	4-2-0	6-3-0	1-2-0	Won 2
Cincinnati Bengals	7	4	0	.636	259	215	3-2-0	4-2-0	6-3-0	2-2-0	Won 1
Cleveland Browns	4	7	0	.364	165	216	3-3-0	1-4-0	3-5-0	0-2-0	Lost 1

South Division

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	Conf	Div	Streak
Houston Texans	8	3	0	.727	293	179	4-1-0	4-2-0	7-2-0	4-0-0	Won 5
Tennessee Titans	6	5	0	.545	226	212	4-2-0	2-3-0	4-4-0	1-2-0	Won 1
Jacksonville Jaguars	3	8	0	.273	138	200	2-3-0	1-5-0	3-6-0	2-2-0	Lost 2
Indianapolis Colts	0	11	0	.000	150	327	0-6-0	0-5-0	0-7-0	0-3-0	Lost 11

West Division

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	Conf	Div	Streak
Oakland Raiders	7	4	0	.636	260	274	3-3-0	4-1-0	5-4-0	2-2-0	Won 3
Denver Broncos	6	5	0	.545	221	260	2-3-0	4-2-0	6-3-0	3-2-0	Won 4
Kansas City Chiefs	4	7	0	.364	153	265	2-4-0	2-3-0	3-6-0	2-2-0	Lost 4
San Diego Chargers	4	7	0	.364	249	275	3-3-0	1-4-0	3-5-0	2-3-0	Lost 6

National Football Conference**East Division**

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	Conf	Div	Streak
Dallas Cowboys	7	4	0	.636	270	225	5-1-0	2-3-0	5-2-0	2-1-0	Won 4
New York Giants	6	5	0	.545	252	277	3-2-0	3-3-0	3-5-0	1-2-0	Lost 3
Philadelphia Eagles	4	7	0	.364	257	251	1-5-0	3-2-0	4-5-0	3-1-0	Lost 1
Washington Redskins	4	7	0	.364	183	222	2-3-0	2-4-0	4-5-0	1-3-0	Won 1

North Division

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	Conf	Div	Streak
Green Bay Packers	11	0	0	1.000	382	227	5-0-0	6-0-0	9-0-0	4-0-0	Won 11
Chicago Bears	7	4	0	.636	288	232	5-1-0	2-3-0	6-3-0	2-2-0	Lost 1
Detroit Lions	7	4	0	.636	316	246	3-3-0	4-1-0	5-4-0	2-2-0	Lost 1
Minnesota Vikings	2	9	0	.182	214	295	1-4-0	1-5-0	2-6-0	0-4-0	Lost 3

South Division

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	Conf	Div	Streak
New Orleans Saints	8	3	0	.727	362	252	5-0-0	3-3-0	5-3-0	3-1-0	Won 3
Atlanta Falcons	7	4	0	.636	259	227	4-2-0	3-2-0	5-4-0	1-2-0	Won 2
Tampa Bay Buccaneers	4	7	0	.364	199	291	3-3-0	1-4-0	3-5-0	2-1-0	Lost 5
Carolina Panthers	3	8	0	.273	252	305	2-4-0	1-4-0	1-7-0	0-2-0	Won 1

West Division

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	Conf	Div	Streak
San Francisco 49ers	9	2	0	.818	262	161	5-1-0	4-1-0	7-1-0	2-0-0	Lost 1
Seattle Seahawks	4	7	0	.364	185	232	2-3-0	2-4-0	3-4-0	2-1-0	Lost 1
Arizona Cardinals	4	7	0	.364	213	256	2-2-0	2-5-0	4-5-0	2-2-0	Won 1
St. Louis Rams	2	9	0	.182	140	270	1-5-0	1-4-0	1-8-0	0-3-0	Lost 2

LAST WEEK'S RESULTS (NOVEMBER 24, 27-28)

Thursday, November 24

Green Bay 27, DETROIT 15
DALLAS 20, Miami 19
BALTIMORE 16, San Francisco 6

Sunday, November 27

ATLANTA 24, Minnesota 14
CINCINNATI 23, Cleveland 20
Carolina 27, INDIANAPOLIS 19
Houston 20, JACKSONVILLE 13
NY JETS 28, Buffalo 24

Sunday, November 27, cont'd

Arizona 23, ST. LOUIS 20
TENNESSEE 23, Tampa Bay 17
OAKLAND 25, Chicago 20
Washington 23, SEATTLE 17
New England 38, PHILADELPHIA 20
Denver 16, SAN DIEGO 13 (OT)
Pittsburgh 13, KANSAS CITY 9

Monday, November 28

NEW ORLEANS 49, NY Giants 24

2011 WEEK 13 SCHEDULE (DECEMBER 1, 4-5)

(All times local)

Thursday, December 1

Philadelphia at Seattle, 5:00 PM (NFLN)

Sunday, December 4

Tennessee at Buffalo, 1:00 PM
Kansas City at Chicago, 12:00 PM
Atlanta at Houston, 12:00 PM
Oakland at Miami, 1:00 PM
Cincinnati at Pittsburgh, 1:00 PM
Carolina at Tampa Bay, 1:00 PM
NY Jets at Washington, 1:00 PM

Sunday, December 4, cont'd

Denver at Minnesota, 12:00 PM
Indianapolis at New England, 1:00 PM
Baltimore at Cleveland, 4:05 PM
Dallas at Arizona, 2:15 PM
Green Bay at NY Giants, 4:15 PM
St. Louis at San Francisco, 1:15 PM
Detroit at New Orleans, 7:20 PM (NBC)

Monday, December 5

San Diego at Jacksonville, 8:30 PM (ESPN)