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COMMUNICATIONS

AFC NEWS 'N' NOTES

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PATRIOTS TIE FOR NFL BEST WITH EIGHT ALL-STAR SELECTIONS

PRO BOWL KICKS OFF SUPER BOWL WEEK IN PRIMETIME ON NBC ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 29

The AFC East champion New England Patriots will lead the American Football Conference All-Star squad with a conference-best eight All-Stars at the 2012 Pro Bowl, the NFL announced today. Trailing the Patriots with the most conference All-Stars are the Baltimore Ravens with seven and the Pittsburgh Steelers with five.

The 2012 Pro Bowl will be played on Sunday, January 29, 2012 at Aloha Stadium in Honolulu, Hawaii one week before Super Bowl XLVI in Indianapolis. Broadcast live on NBC at 7:00 PM ET, the Pro Bowl will be held prior to the Super Bowl for the third consecutive year and serve as the signature kickoff event of Super Bowl week.

The Patriots' eight All-Star selections – **TOM BRADY, ANDRE CARTER, ROB GRONKOWSKI, LOGAN MANKINS, MATTHEW SLATER, BRIAN WATERS, WES WELKER** and **VINCE WILFORK** – are tied for the most in team history and tied for the most in the NFL this season with the 49ers. The AFC roster has 13 first-time All-Stars, including Cincinnati Bengals rookie wide receiver **A.J. GREEN**, who is the first rookie wide receiver to be selected to the Pro Bowl since **ANQUAN BOLDIN** (2003 season).

Leading an elite trio of AFC passers is seven-time All-Star Tom Brady, who has been named the starter for the second consecutive season. Brady has guided the Patriots to an AFC-best 12-3 record and leads the conference with 4,897 passing yards, already the fourth-most in a season in NFL history, trailing only **DREW BREES** (5,087 in 2011; 5,069 in 2008) and Pro Football Hall of Famer **DAN MARINO** (5,084 in 1984). San Diego quarterback **PHILIP RIVERS**, who is second in the AFC behind Brady with 4,314 passing yards, was selected to his fourth Pro Bowl. Pittsburgh quarterback **BEN ROETHLISBERGER**, who has led the Steelers to the postseason for the sixth time since he entered the league in 2004, earns his second Pro Bowl appearance (2007 season).

The AFC backfield will be highlighted by first-time starter **RAY RICE** of the Baltimore Ravens. The two-time All-Star leads the NFL with 1,869 scrimmage yards (1,173 rushing yards, 696 receiving yards) and is tied for an AFC-high with 10 rushing touchdowns.

ARIAN FOSTER of Houston and **MAURICE JONES-DREW** of Jacksonville round out the running back position. Foster, who has played a pivotal role in the Texans reaching the postseason for the first time, earns a trip to Hawaii for the second straight season. Jones-Drew leads the NFL with 1,437 rushing yards and was named an All-Star for the third time. **VONTA LEACH** will be the AFC fullback for the second consecutive season and first as a Raven.

New England's Wes Welker has been chosen as one of four receivers on the AFC team. The four-time All-Star leads the NFL in receptions (116) and receiving yards (1,518) in 2011. Lined up opposite Welker and also named a starter will be first-time All-Star **MIKE WALLACE** of Pittsburgh. Miami's **BRANDON MARSHALL** will make his third Pro Bowl squad and first as a Dolphin. In his rookie season from Georgia, Cincinnati's A.J. Green rounds out the wide receiver group. Green is the first Bengals rookie to be selected to the Pro Bowl since **CRIS COLLINSWORTH** (1981 season).

Representing the AFC as a starter at tight end will be first-time All-Star Rob Gronkowski of the Patriots. In his second NFL season, Gronkowski is tied for an NFL-best with 15 touchdown receptions (**CALVIN JOHNSON**) in 2011, the most ever by a tight end in a season in NFL history. San Diego's **ANTONIO GATES** has been selected to his eighth consecutive Pro Bowl. Gates, who has 588 career receptions, surpassed Pro Football Hall of Famer **CHARLIE JOINER** (586) in Week 16 for the most receptions in franchise history.

New England's Logan Mankins and Brian Waters will help pave the way up front as the starters at guard for the AFC. Mankins will make his fourth All-Star appearance and 12-year veteran Waters, in his first season as a Patriot, has been

selected to his sixth Pro Bowl. Budding talent **MARSHAL YANDA** of Baltimore will play in his first Pro Bowl.

MAURKICE POUNCEY of the Steelers will be the starting center and has been selected to the All-Star squad for the second straight season. **NICK MANGOLD**, a mainstay along the Jets offensive line, earns his fourth Pro Bowl nod.

Assigned to keep the pocket clean against the talented NFC edge rushers are a trio of standout tackles. Former No. 1 overall pick (2008) **JAKE LONG** of Miami has been selected to his fourth consecutive All-Star game. Cleveland tackle **JOE THOMAS** has earned his fifth consecutive Pro Bowl nod since entering the league in 2007. New York Jets tackle **D'BRICKASHAW FERGUSON** will round out the group with his third straight trip to the Pro Bowl.

The key cogs along the AFC defensive front are starting interior linemen **HALOTI NGATA** of Baltimore and Vince Wilfork of New England for the third consecutive season. Ngata has earned his third straight All-Star trip, while Wilfork reaches his fourth Pro Bowl. Joining Ngata and Wilfork is seven-time All-Star **RICHARD SEYMOUR** of Oakland.

In his 11th season, New England's Andre Carter, who registered 10 sacks this season, was selected to his first Pro Bowl. Indianapolis' **DWIGHT FREENEY** has been chosen as a starter at defensive end for the fourth consecutive season and reaches his seventh Pro Bowl in 10 seasons. **ELVIS DUMERVIL** of Denver will make his second All-Star appearance.

TERRELL SUGGS of Baltimore, who leads the AFC with 13 sacks, has been named a starter at outside linebacker and earns his fifth Pro Bowl selection. Joining Suggs as a starter at outside linebacker is first-time All-Star **TAMBA HALI** of Kansas City, who trails Suggs in the AFC with 12 sacks. Denver's **VON MILLER** earns a trip to Hawaii and will be the AFC's lone rookie on defense.

The AFC middle linebackers are **RAY LEWIS** of Baltimore and **DERRICK JOHNSON** of Kansas City. In his 16th NFL season, Lewis joins **JUNIOR SEAU** as the only linebackers to be selected to 12 Pro Bowls. Johnson, who leads the Chiefs defense with 126 tackles, has earned his first Pro Bowl berth.

At cornerback, **CHAMP BAILEY** of Denver and **DARRELLE REVIS** of the New York Jets are the starters. An 11-time All-Star, Bailey is tied with Pro Football Hall of Famer **ROD WOODSON** (11) for the most Pro Bowl selections by a defensive back. Revis has been named a starter for the third straight year. Texans' offseason acquisition **JOHNATHAN JOSEPH** is the second cornerback selected to the Pro Bowl in franchise history (**AARON GLENN**, 2003).

Two of the NFL's most accomplished defensive players will start at safety for the AFC. Baltimore's ball-hawking free safety **ED REED** earns his eighth Pro Bowl nod in 10 NFL seasons. Pittsburgh's strong safety **TROY POLAMALU**, who is a major contributor to the Steelers' defense that is allowing an NFL-low 273.9 yards per game this season, earns his seventh AFC All-Star berth. San Diego safety **ERIC WEDDLE** joins starting safeties Reed and Polamalu in his first Pro Bowl.

The AFC special teams unit is comprised of four players. First-time All-star **ANTONIO BROWN** of Pittsburgh will serve as the AFC's kick returner. Oakland's **SEBASTIAN JANIKOWSKI** and **SHANE LECHLER** have been chosen for the AFC's kicking duties. Janikowski, who has made 27 of 31 field goals (87.1 percent) this season, will make his All-Star debut as the AFC's kicker. A seven-time All-Star, Lechler leads the NFL with a 50.7 average in 2011 and has placed 27 punts inside the opponents' 20-yard line. Completing the special teams group will be New England's wide receiver Matthew Slater, who will serve as the AFC's special teamer. Slater is the son of Pro Football Hall of Famer and seven-time All-Star **JACKIE SLATER**. They are one of six active father-son duos selected to at least one Pro Bowl apiece (**GILL & JAIRUS BYRD**, **ARCHIE & ELI MANNING**, **ARCHIE & PEYTON MANNING**, **CLAY & CLAY MATTHEWS**, **KELLEN & KELLEN WINSLOW**).

The 42-man AFC squad is comprised of 21 offensive and 17 defensive players plus four specialists. A 43rd "need" player will be chosen by the AFC head coach and must be a long snapper. The 2012 AFC coaching staff will be from the team with the best regular-season record that is eliminated in the AFC Divisional playoffs.

The NFL is the only professional sports league that combines voting by fans, coaches and players in determining its All-Star teams. The consensus vote of each group counts one-third towards the total. Each team submits two ballots – those of the coach and the players with no one permitted to vote for a player on his own team. This year, a record 100.64 million votes were cast by fans this year online and on web-enhanced mobile phones at NFL.com.

The National Conference defeated the American Conference 55-41 last season in the Pro Bowl. The 2012 game is the 42nd between the AFC and NFC All-Stars. The NFC leads the all-time series 21-20. Fans can purchase tickets to the 2012 Pro Bowl at www.NFL.com/probowl.

Under terms of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, each player on the winning Pro Bowl team receives \$50,000, while each player on the losing squad earns \$25,000.

2012 AMERICAN FOOTBALL CONFERENCE ALL-STARS

AFC-NFC PRO BOWL, SUNDAY, JANUARY 29, 2012, ALOHA STADIUM, HONOLULU, HAWAII

(Starters listed in ***Bold/Italics***)
 (* First-time Pro Bowl selection)

OFFENSE

	WIDE RECEIVERS			TIGHT ENDS
*	A.J. Green, Cincinnati			Antonio Gates, San Diego
	Brandon Marshall, Miami		*	<i>Rob Gronkowski, New England</i>
*	<i>Mike Wallace, Pittsburgh</i>			
	<i>Wes Welker, New England</i>			QUARTERBACKS
				<i>Tom Brady, New England</i>
	TACKLES			Philip Rivers, San Diego
	D'Brickashaw Ferguson, New York Jets			Ben Roethlisberger, Pittsburgh
	<i>Jake Long, Miami</i>			
	<i>Joe Thomas, Cleveland</i>			RUNNING BACKS
				Arian Foster, Houston
	GUARDS			Maurice Jones-Drew, Jacksonville
	<i>Logan Mankins, New England</i>			<i>Ray Rice, Baltimore</i>
	<i>Brian Waters, New England</i>			
*	Marshal Yanda, Baltimore			FULLBACK
				<i>Vonta Leach, Baltimore</i>
	CENTERS			
	Nick Mangold, New York Jets			
	<i>Maurkice Pouncey, Pittsburgh</i>			

DEFENSE

	ENDS			INSIDE/MIDDLE LINEBACKERS
*	<i>Andre Carter, New England</i>			<i>Ray Lewis, Baltimore</i>
	Elvis Dumervil, Denver		*	Derrick Johnson, Kansas City
	<i>Dwight Freeney, Indianapolis</i>			
				CORNERBACKS
	INTERIOR LINEMAN			<i>Champ Bailey, Denver</i>
	<i>Haloti Ngata, Baltimore</i>		*	Johnathan Joseph, Houston
	Richard Seymour, Oakland			<i>Darrelle Revis, New York Jets</i>
	<i>Vince Wilfork, New England</i>			
				STRONG SAFETY
	OUTSIDE LINEBACKERS			<i>Troy Polamalu, Pittsburgh</i>
*	Tamba Hali, Kansas City			
*	<i>Von Miller, Denver</i>			FREE SAFETIES
	<i>Terrell Suggs, Baltimore</i>			<i>Ed Reed, Baltimore</i>
			*	Eric Weddle, San Diego

SPECIALISTS

	PUNTER			KICK RETURN SPECIALIST
	Shane Lechler, Oakland		*	Antonio Brown, Pittsburgh
	PLACEKICKER			SPECIAL TEAMER
*	Sebastian Janikowski, Oakland		*	Matthew Slater, New England

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