

COUNTDOWN TO KICKOFF (8 DAYS)



FROM WORST TO FIRST

Competitive balance, one of the hallmarks of the NFL, gives fans hope entering each season. Four 2013 playoff teams – the Carolina Panthers (12-4 in 2013, 7-9 in 2012), Kansas City Chiefs (11-5 in 2013, 2-14 in 2012), New Orleans Saints (11-5 in 2013, 7-9 in 2012) and Philadelphia Eagles (10-6 in 2013, 4-12 in 2012) – finished in last place or tied for last place in 2012 and combined for a 24-win improvement last year. Two of those clubs – Carolina (NFC South) and Philadelphia (NFC East) – won their division.



For an NFL-record 11th consecutive season, at least one team finished in first place in its division the season after finishing in last or tied for last place. In fact, of the 42 teams in league history to go from “worst-to-first,” 19 of them have done so in the past 11 years (2003-13), including an NFL-record three such teams in 2005 and 2006.

After finishing tied for last in the division the prior year, the Panthers won 11 of their last 12 games to close the 2013 campaign and claim the NFC South crown. After starting the season 1-3, the Panthers and Eagles both qualified for postseason play, becoming only the sixth and seventh teams since 2004 to make the playoffs after opening the season 1-3 or worse.

“There is something about big games that brings out the best in our team,” says Panthers head coach **RON RIVERA** (left). “Our team is just that in big games – a team. Even after starting 1-3, we didn’t panic.”

The teams to go from “worst-to-first” in their division since 2003:

SEASON	TEAM	RECORD	PRIOR SEASON RECORD
2003	Carolina	11-5	7-9
2003	Kansas City	13-3	8-8*
2004	Atlanta	11-5	5-11
2004	San Diego	12-4	4-12*
2005	Chicago	11-5	5-11
2005	New York Giants	11-5	6-10*
2005	Tampa Bay	11-5	5-11
2006	Baltimore	13-3	6-10*
2006	New Orleans	10-6	3-13
2006	Philadelphia	10-6	6-10
2007	Tampa Bay	9-7	4-12
2008	Miami	11-5	1-15
2009	New Orleans**	13-3	8-8
2010	Kansas City	10-6	4-12
2011	Denver	8-8	4-12
2011	Houston	10-6	6-10*
2012	Washington	10-6	5-11
2013	Carolina	12-4	7-9*
2013	Philadelphia	10-6	4-12

* Tied for last place

** Won Super Bowl



KICKOFF WEEKEND RECORDS OF NFL HEAD COACHES

<u>COACH</u>	<u>TEAM</u>	<u>W-L</u>	<u>PCT</u>	<u>COACH</u>	<u>TEAM</u>	<u>W-L</u>	<u>PCT</u>
Jim Harbaugh	San Francisco	3-0	1.000	John Fox	Denver	6-6	.500
Chip Kelly	Philadelphia	1-0	1.000	Chuck Pagano	Indianapolis	1-1	.500
Marc Trestman	Chicago	1-0	1.000	Joe Philbin	Miami	1-1	.500
John Harbaugh	Baltimore	5-1	.833	Mike Smith	Atlanta	3-3	.500
Rex Ryan	N.Y. Jets	4-1	.800	Marvin Lewis	Cincinnati	4-7	.364
Sean Payton	New Orleans	5-2	.714	Jim Caldwell	Detroit	1-2	.333
Bill Belichick	New England	13-6	.684	Bruce Arians	Arizona	0-1	.000
Jason Garrett	Dallas	2-1	.667	Gus Bradley	Jacksonville	0-1	.000
Ken Whisenhunt	Tennessee	4-2	.667	Doug Marrone	Buffalo	0-1	.000
Pete Carroll	Seattle	5-3	.625	Mike McCoy	San Diego	0-1	.000
Mike McCarthy	Green Bay	5-3	.625	Dennis Allen	Oakland	0-2	.000
Jeff Fisher	St. Louis	11-7	.611	Ron Rivera	Carolina	0-3	.000
Mike Tomlin	Pittsburgh	4-3	.571	Jay Gruden	Washington	0-0	--
Tom Coughlin	N.Y. Giants	10-8	.556	Bill O'Brien	Houston	0-0	--
Lovie Smith	Tampa Bay	5-4	.556	Mike Pettine	Cleveland	0-0	--
Andy Reid	Kansas City	8-7	.533	Mike Zimmer	Minnesota	0-0	--