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**PLAYOFF RACES AROUND THE NFL ARE HEATING UP**

***NFL RETURNS TO MEXICO FOR 1ST EVER MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL GAME PLAYED OUTSIDE U.S.***

The NFL has entered the second half of the season and the excitement is building as playoff races tighten.

Nine teams have at least six wins, led by the 8-1 Dallas Cowboys – Dallas (8-1), Kansas City (7-2), New England (7-2), Oakland (7-2), Denver (7-3), Seattle (6-2-1), Houston (6-3), the New York Giants (6-3) and Atlanta (6-4). The AFC West has three teams with at least seven wins – Kansas City, Oakland and Denver – and the NFC East is the only division in which all four teams have a winning record – Dallas, the Giants, Washington (5-3-1) and Philadelphia (5-4).

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 1990, 25 teams have qualified for the playoffs with a losing record through nine games. Last year, four teams accomplished the feat and advanced to the postseason – Houston (4-5), Kansas City (4-5), Seattle (4-5) and Washington (4-5).

On the field, the games continue to be close. Through the first 10 weeks, 110 games have been within one score in the fourth quarter, the most such games in a season’s first 10 weeks in NFL history.

Last Sunday, there were two games which featured seven lead changes – Dallas at Pittsburgh and Seattle at New England – which marked the first day in NFL history with two games having at least seven lead changes. Additionally, the Kansas City Chiefs scored 20 unanswered points – including 17 in the fourth quarter – to overcome a 17-0 deficit and pull out a 20-17 victory at Carolina. The Chiefs have now rallied from a 14+ point deficit in the fourth quarter in two games this season (Week 1 vs. San Diego and Week 10 at Carolina) and are the first team to have two such victories in a season since the 2003 Indianapolis Colts.

Also in Week 11, the NFL returns to Mexico for the first time since October 2, 2005 when a crowd of 103,467 witnessed the league’s first international regular-season game as the Arizona Cardinals defeated the San Francisco 49ers 31-14 at Estadio Azteca in Mexico City. On Monday night (8:30 PM ET), two first-place teams – the Oakland Raiders (7-2) and Houston Texans (6-3) – will meet at Estadio Azteca in Mexico City in the first-ever *Monday Night Football* game to be played outside the United States. The game will be televised live on ESPN in the U.S. and on Televisa and ESPN in Mexico.

“Expanding our International Series of regular-season games to Mexico marks an important step in our continued international growth,” says NFL Commissioner **ROGER GOODELL**. “We have a tremendous, passionate fan base in Mexico and we know the atmosphere on game day will be outstanding.”

Four of the NFL’s 10 largest single-game attendance totals have come in Mexico, including the top two: 112,376 fans on August 15, 1994 (American Bowl preseason game between the Dallas Cowboys and Houston Oilers) and 106,424 on August 17, 1998 (American Bowl preseason game between the Cowboys and New England Patriots). Both of those contests were also played at Estadio Azteca in Mexico City.

Week 11 kicks off on Thursday night (8:25 PM ET, NBC/NFLN/Twitter) with a key NFC South matchup when the Carolina Panthers host the New Orleans Saints. The game will be broadcast on NBC, simulcast on NFL Network and streamed to a global audience across devices for free on Twitter as part of the league’s “Tri-Cast” distribution model.

The week concludes with a pair of primetime contests featuring four teams in the middle of the playoff race. On Sunday night, the Green Bay Packers visit the Washington Redskins (8:30 PM ET, NBC) in a rematch of last season’s Wild Card contest which the Packers won 35-18. The Texans and Raiders finish off the week in Mexico City on Monday night (8:30 PM ET, ESPN).

Some of the key games in Week 11:

**NEW ORLEANS SAINTS (4-5) at CAROLINA PANTHERS (3-6) (Thursday, NBC/NFLN/Twitter, 8:25 PM ET)**

* The Saints defeated the Panthers 41-38 earlier this season (Week 6). In that contest, New Orleans quarterback **DREW** **BREES** passed for 465 yards and four touchdowns and Saints kicker **WIL LUTZ** converted the game-winning 52-yard field goal with 11 seconds remaining in the fourth quarter.
* Brees (452) threw three touchdown passes last week and joined **PEYTON** **MANNING** (539) and Pro Football Hall of Famer **BRETT FAVRE** (508) as the only quarterbacks in NFL history with at least 450 touchdown passes.
* The Panthers have won six of the past nine meetings between the two teams, including three of the past four at home.
* Panthers quarterback **CAM NEWTON** threw a touchdown pass and rushed for a touchdown in last week’s game. He leads the Panthers in career TD passes (127) and TD runs (47) and is the only player to lead a current NFL franchise in both categories.

**BALTIMORE RAVENS (5-4) at DALLAS COWBOYS (8-1) (Sunday, CBS, 1:00 PM ET)**

* The Ravens defeated Cleveland last Thursday night 28-7 and sit atop the AFC North with a 5-4 record.
* Baltimore wide receiver **STEVE SMITH, SR.** has 997 career receptions and can become the 14th player in NFL history to reach 1,000 catches.
* The Cowboys have won eight consecutive games, including last week’s 35-30 win at Pittsburgh.
* Dallas rookie quarterback **DAK PRESCOTT** (2,339 passing yards) and **EZEKIEL ELLIOTT** (1,005 rushing yards) are the first rookie teammates in NFL history to have at least 2,000 passing yards and 1,000 rushing yards in their team’s first nine games of a season. Last week at Pittsburgh, Prescott threw two touchdown passes and Elliott scored three touchdowns (two rushing, one receiving).

**PHILADELPHIA EAGLES (5-4) at SEATTLE SEAHAWKS (6-2-1) (Sunday, CBS, 4:25 PM ET)**

* The Eagles rushed for 208 yards and limited the Falcons to 48 rushing yards in last week’s 24-15 win over Atlanta. It marked the first time since 1997 (October 5, 1997 against Washington) that the Eagles rushed for more than 200 yards while giving up fewer than 50 rushing yards in the same game.
* Philadelphia running back **RYAN MATHEWS** rushed for 109 yards and two touchdowns, his second career game with at least 100 rushing yards and multiple touchdown runs (January 2, 2011 with San Diego against Denver).
* The Seahawks defeated the Patriots 31-24 in New England last week on Sunday night. Seattle quarterback **RUSSELL** **WILSON** threw three touchdown passes to wide receiver **DOUG BALDWIN** in the victory.
* Wilson has 12 career games with at least three touchdown passes and no interceptions, the second-most in a player’s first five seasons in NFL history (Pro Football Hall of Famer **DAN MARINO**, 13).

**GREEN BAY PACKERS (4-5) at WASHINGTON REDSKINS (5-3-1) (Sunday, NBC, 8:30 PM ET)**

* Green Bay quarterback **AARON RODGERS** has won his past two starts against Washington, including last season’s Wild Card playoff (January 10, 2016). In his past two against the Redskins, Rodgers has completed 55 of 78 passes (70.5 percent) for 690 yards with six touchdowns and no interceptions for a 123.3 passer rating.
* Last week, Packers wide receivers **DAVANTE ADAMS** (six catches for 156 yards) and **JORDY NELSON** (12 catches for 126 yards and a touchdown) each had 100+ receiving yards.
* The Redskins are unbeaten in six of their past seven games (5-1-1), including last week’s 26-20 win over Minnesota.
* Washington linebacker **PRESTON SMITH** had two sacks and an interception in the victory against the Vikings. Smith, who had an interception to set up a field goal in the fourth quarter and recorded a sack on Minnesota’s final play to seal the win, is the first Redskins player to record both an interception and a sack in the fourth quarter of a victory.

**HOUSTON TEXANS (6-3) at OAKLAND RAIDERS (7-2) in Mexico City (Monday, ESPN, 8:30 PM ET)**

* Two first-place teams – Oakland (7-2) and Houston (6-3) – will meet at Estadio Azteca in Mexico City in the first-ever *Monday Night Football* game to be played outside the United States. It marks the first NFL game in Mexico since 2005 (Arizona 31, San Francisco 14 on October 2, 2005).
* The Texans have won two in a row, including last week’s 24-21 win at Jacksonville. Houston cornerback **KAREEM** **JACKSON** had a 42-yard interception-return touchdown and quarterback **BROCK OSWEILER** threw two touchdown passes in the victory over the Jaguars.
* The Raiders have won three consecutive games and six of their past seven. Oakland had a bye in Week 10 and defeated Denver 30-20 in Week 9. In that contest, Raiders running back **LATAVIUS MURRAY** rushed for 114 yards and three touchdowns, only the third time a player has rushed for at least 100 yards and three touchdowns against the defending Super Bowl champions. Oakland quarterback **DEREK CARR** has 17 touchdowns and three interceptions this season and his 5.67 TD/INT ratio is the best mark in the league among players with at least 15 touchdown passes.