



## BACK TO FOOTBALL

The NFL returns this week and it's time to get "Back to Football." That means the next five months will be packed with the sizzle and suspense that comes only with the National Football League and will culminate with Super Bowl LI, which will be played on Sunday, February 5, 2017 at NRG Stadium in Houston, Texas.

America's favorite sport roars back into action Thursday night (NBC, 8:30 PM ET) in the first game of NFL Kickoff 2016 Weekend. The opener features the Super Bowl champion **DENVER BRONCOS** hosting the **CAROLINA PANTHERS** in a rematch of Super Bowl 50. The game marks the first Super Bowl rematch played on Kickoff Weekend since 1970 (Kansas City vs. Minnesota).

Everybody is ready for the unique unpredictability of the NFL. And every team enters the new season with hope.

Last year, 131 games (51.2 percent) were decided by seven points or fewer, the most of any season in NFL history. And there were four new playoff teams in 2015: Houston, Kansas City, Minnesota and Washington. Since the 12-team playoff format was adopted in 1990, at least four teams have qualified for the playoffs in every season that were not in the postseason the year before.

The 2016 season promises more of the same.

As the season begins, it comes packed with changes, quests and questions:

- **CAN THE SUPER BOWL CHAMPION BRONCOS REPEAT?:** It's tough, having happened only eight times since the first Super Bowl in 1967. The last team to accomplish the feat was New England in 2004 (Super Bowls XXXVIII and XXXIX).
- **MILESTONES ON THE HORIZON:** Records are made to be broken...So what records will be set this year? Some milestones that can be reached this season: New Orleans **QB DREW BREES** (60,903) needs 459 passing yards to move into third place all-time...New England **QB TOM BRADY** (194) needs seven wins for the most overall victories (including postseason) by a QB...Minnesota **RB ADRIAN PETERSON** can become the second player to rush for 10+ TDs in nine different seasons...Dallas **TE JASON WITTEN** (1,020) and Arizona **WR LARRY FITZGERALD** (1,018) can move into the top five all-time in career receptions...and Houston DE **J.J. WATT** can record his NFL-record third 20-sack season.
- **NEW COACHES/PLAYERS IN NEW PLACES:** There are seven new head coaches hired to lead their teams in 2016 – **ADAM GASE** in Miami, **HUE JACKSON** in Cleveland, **CHIP KELLY** in San Francisco, **DIRK KOETTER** in Tampa Bay, **BEN MC ADOO** with the New York Giants, **MIKE MULARKEY** in Tennessee and **DOUG PEDERSON** in Philadelphia.

And there are a lot of well-known players with new teams, including quarterbacks **SAM BRADFORD** (Minnesota), **ROBERT GRIFFIN III** (Cleveland) and **BROCK OSWEILER** (Houston), running backs **MATT FORTÉ** (New York Jets), **ARIAN FOSTER** (Miami) and **DE MARCO MURRAY** (Tennessee), wide receivers **ANQUAN BOLDIN** (Detroit), **ANDRE JOHNSON** (Tennessee) and **MOHAMED SANU** (Atlanta), tight end **COBY FLEENER** (New Orleans), defensive backs **JOSH NORMAN** (Washington) and **ERIC WEDDLE** (Baltimore), pass rushers **DWIGHT FREENEY** (Atlanta), **CHANDLER JONES** (Arizona), **OLIVIER VERNON** (New York Giants) and **MARIO WILLIAMS** (Miami) and offensive linemen **ALEX BOONE** (Minnesota), **RYAN CLADY** (New York Jets), **ALEX MACK** (Atlanta) and **RUSSELL OKUNG** (Denver).

- **ON-THE-FIELD TRENDS IN 2015:** Close games and comeback victories...new teams making the playoffs...consistent teams excelling again...records falling...young players making their mark...and QBs performing at record levels.

In 2015, 131 games (51.2 percent) were decided by seven points or fewer, the most in NFL history...There were 174 games (68.0 percent) within one score in the fourth quarter...There were 67 comeback victories by a team trailing in the fourth quarter...A total of 11,680 points and 1,318 touchdowns were scored, both the second-most ever in a season...Games averaged 705.3 total net yards, the best in NFL history...League records were set for highest completion percentage (63.0), best passer rating (90.2), most touchdown passes (842) and lowest interception percentage (2.38)...An NFL-record 11 quarterbacks had 30+ touchdown passes...There were 59 individual performances with at least three touchdown passes without an interception, the most in any season...Four teams that missed the postseason in 2014 qualified for the playoffs, a feat which has happened in every season since the 12-team playoff format began in 1990.

- **NEW RULES:** With player health and safety remaining a priority, here are some of the key rules changes and points of emphasis for 2016:

**Chop block:** All chop blocks are now illegal. A chop block is a two-man high-low block in which a defensive player is engaged above the waist by one offensive player and blocked at the thigh or below by a second offensive player. A chop block is a foul whether it occurs on a running play, a pass play or a kicking play. If it is clear that the defensive player is initiating the contact above the waist, or that the offensive player is trying to slip or escape, then the block is legal.

**Unsportsmanlike conduct:** A player that is penalized twice in the same game for certain types of unsportsmanlike conduct fouls will be automatically disqualified. These types of fouls include:

- Throwing a punch or kick without making contact
- Use of abusive or threatening language toward an opponent, teammate, official or league representative
- Any act that constitutes taunting

**Horse collar:** The horse collar rule has been expanded for this season. Prior to this change, it was illegal to grab the inside collar of the back or the side of the shoulder pad or jersey and pull the runner toward the ground. Now it will also be illegal to grab the back or side of the jersey at the name plate or above and pull the runner toward the ground. The runner does not have to be pulled all the way to the ground. If his knees are buckled by the action, it is a foul. This rule does not apply to the quarterback in the pocket or a runner in the tackle box, but once the runner leaves the tackle box or the quarterback leaves the pocket the rule is back in effect.

**Touchbacks:** For the 2016 season, after a touchback resulting from a kickoff or safety kick, the ball will be placed at the receiving team's 25-yard line.

- **INTERNATIONAL NFL:** In response to outstanding and growing fan support of football internationally, the NFL will once again play three regular-season games in the United Kingdom – including one game at a new venue, Twickenham Stadium – and also host a regular-season game in Mexico City for the first time since 2005.

The Jacksonville Jaguars will face the Indianapolis Colts on October 2 in an AFC South division contest at London's Wembley Stadium. In the second 2016 UK game, the Los Angeles Rams will host the New York Giants on October 23 in the first-ever NFL game at Twickenham Stadium. The final 2016 International Series game in London will take place on October 30 at Wembley when the Cincinnati Bengals meet the Washington Redskins. All three London contests will kick off at 9:30 AM ET.

The NFL will return to Mexico City on November 21 when the Oakland Raiders will host the Houston Texans at Estadio Azteca in the first-ever *Monday Night Football* game played outside the United States.

- **TRI-CAST:** This season, the NFL will use a "Tri-Cast" distribution model of broadcast (CBS/NBC), cable (NFL Network) and digital (Twitter) for 10 Thursday Night Football games. CBS and NBC will each broadcast five Thursday Night Football games which will be simulcast on NFL Network and streamed to a global audience across devices for free on Twitter. CBS will start in Week 2 (Thursday, September 15) with the Buffalo Bills hosting the New York Jets and NBC's package begins in Week 11 (Thursday, November 17) with the New Orleans Saints visiting the Carolina Panthers.
- **NFL ON TV:** Among the television highlights in 2016 include the continuation of expanded flexible scheduling and "cross-flexing."

**Flexible scheduling:** "Flexible scheduling" will be used in Weeks 10-15 and 17. Additionally, in Weeks 5-9, flexible scheduling may be used in no more than two weeks. In Weeks 5-15, the schedule lists the games tentatively set for *Sunday Night Football* on NBC. Only Sunday afternoon games are eligible to be moved to Sunday night, in which case the tentatively scheduled Sunday night game would be moved to an afternoon start time. Flexible scheduling will not be applied to games airing on Thursday, Saturday or Monday nights. A flexible scheduling move would be announced at least 12 days before the game. For Week 17, the Sunday night game will be announced no later than six days prior to January 1. The schedule does not list a Sunday night game in Week 17, but an afternoon game with playoff implications will be moved to that time slot. Flexible scheduling ensures quality matchups in all Sunday time slots in those weeks and gives "surprise" teams a chance to play their way into prime time.

**Cross-flexing:** For the third consecutive season, a select number of games are being "cross-flexed," moving between CBS and FOX to bring potentially under-distributed games to wider audiences. Some of those contests have already been announced while others will be decided during the season.

# FINAL 2016 NFL PRESEASON STANDINGS

## American Football Conference

### East Division

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	Conf	Div	Streak
New England Patriots	3	1	0	.750	85	78	2-0	1-1	0-0	0-0	1L
Miami Dolphins	2	2	0	.500	68	78	1-1	1-1	0-1	0-0	1L
Buffalo Bills	1	3	0	.250	55	71	1-1	0-2	0-1	0-0	2L
New York Jets	1	3	0	.250	61	70	1-1	0-2	1-0	0-0	3L

### North Division

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	Conf	Div	Streak
Baltimore Ravens	4	0	0	1.000	94	60	2-0	2-0	1-0	0-0	4W
Cincinnati Bengals	1	3	0	.250	77	70	0-2	1-1	0-2	0-0	2L
Pittsburgh Steelers	1	3	0	.250	50	79	0-2	1-1	0-0	0-0	1L
Cleveland Browns	0	4	0	.000	44	92	0-2	0-2	0-0	0-0	4L

### South Division

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	Conf	Div	Streak
Houston Texans	4	0	0	1.000	102	63	2-0	2-0	0-0	0-0	4W
Tennessee Titans	3	1	0	.750	91	60	1-1	2-0	3-0	0-0	2W
Indianapolis Colts	2	2	0	.500	73	80	0-2	2-0	2-1	0-0	1W
Jacksonville Jaguars	1	3	0	.250	75	82	1-1	0-2	1-1	0-0	1L

### West Division

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	Conf	Div	Streak
Denver Broncos	2	2	0	.500	80	78	1-1	1-1	0-0	0-0	1L
Kansas City Chiefs	2	2	0	.500	76	52	1-1	1-1	0-0	0-0	2W
Oakland Raiders	1	3	0	.250	78	80	0-2	1-1	0-1	0-0	3L
San Diego Chargers	1	3	0	.250	60	84	1-1	0-2	0-1	0-0	2L

## National Football Conference

### East Division

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	Conf	Div	Streak
Philadelphia Eagles	4	0	0	1.000	81	38	2-0	2-0	1-0	0-0	4W
Washington Redskins	3	1	0	.750	80	70	2-0	1-1	1-1	0-0	3W
New York Giants	2	2	0	.500	48	77	1-1	1-1	0-0	0-0	2W
Dallas Cowboys	1	3	0	.250	99	97	1-1	0-2	0-2	0-0	2L

### North Division

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	Conf	Div	Streak
Minnesota Vikings	4	0	0	1.000	85	62	2-0	1-1	2-0	0-0	4W
Green Bay Packers	3	1	0	.750	65	50	2-0	1-1	1-0	0-0	1L
Detroit Lions	2	2	0	.500	84	77	1-1	1-1	0-0	0-0	1W
Chicago Bears	1	3	0	.250	50	75	1-1	0-2	0-0	0-0	1W

### South Division

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	Conf	Div	Streak
Atlanta Falcons	3	1	0	.750	70	62	2-0	1-1	1-0	0-0	1W
Carolina Panthers	2	2	0	.500	80	63	1-1	1-1	0-0	0-0	1W
Tampa Bay Buccaneers	2	2	0	.500	79	71	1-1	1-1	0-2	0-0	1L
New Orleans Saints	0	4	0	.000	59	100	0-2	0-2	0-0	0-0	4L

### West Division

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	Conf	Div	Streak
Seattle Seahawks	3	1	0	.750	78	72	1-1	2-0	1-1	0-0	2W
San Francisco 49ers	2	2	0	.500	85	90	0-2	2-0	0-1	0-0	1W
Los Angeles Rams	2	2	0	.500	83	88	2-0	0-2	1-1	0-0	2L
Arizona Cardinals	1	3	0	.250	75	101	1-1	0-2	0-0	0-0	1W

**NFL KICKOFF 2016 SCHEDULE**  
**THURSDAY, SUNDAY & MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 11-12**

(All times local)

**Thursday, September 8**

Carolina at Denver, 6:30 PM (NBC)

**Sunday, September 11**

Tampa Bay at Atlanta, 1:00 PM

Buffalo at Baltimore, 1:00 PM

Chicago at Houston, 12:00 PM

Green Bay at Jacksonville, 1:00 PM

San Diego at Kansas City, 12:00 PM

Oakland at New Orleans, 12:00 PM

Cincinnati at New York Jets, 1:00 PM

**Sunday, September 11 (cont'd)**

Cleveland at Philadelphia, 1:00 PM

Minnesota at Tennessee, 12:00 PM

Miami at Seattle, 1:05 PM

New York Giants at Dallas, 3:25 PM

Detroit at Indianapolis, 4:25 PM

New England at Arizona, 5:30 PM (NBC)

**Monday, September 12**

Pittsburgh at Washington, 7:10 PM (ESPN)

Los Angeles at San Francisco, 7:20 PM (ESPN)