



PLAYOFF RACES HEAT UP AS NFL SEASON ENTERS DECEMBER

As the calendar turns to December, the NFL playoff picture is starting to take shape. With five weeks remaining in the regular season, there are currently 24 teams either in or within two games of a playoff spot.

Over the past five seasons, the Carolina Panthers (19-5, .792) and Seattle Seahawks (19-5, .792) own the best record in the final month, which also includes regular-season games played in January. The New England Patriots (18-6, .750) lead the AFC.

TEAM	WINS	LOSSES	PCT.
Carolina Panthers	19	5	.792
Seattle Seahawks	19	5	.792
New England Patriots	18	6	.750
Green Bay Packers	17	6	.739
Pittsburgh Steelers	17	6	.739

“The games in December are the most important regular-season games by far,” says NFL Network analyst and former NFL head coach **STEVE MARIUCCI**. “It’s extremely important to win in December and to make a run at the playoffs.”

As the NFL season enters the final month, four teams are racing towards the finish line with winning streaks of at least five games – Dallas (10), Miami (six), the New York Giants (six) and Oakland (five).

“The momentum is real for us right now,” says Cowboys tight end **JASON WITTEN**. “Our football team is a lot of fun. It’s neat to be a part of this and lead a great group of guys. Ten wins is good but they don’t hang any banners after 11 games. We have to continue to build here going into a critical stretch.”

That critical stretch begins on Thursday night when Dallas visits Minnesota (8:25 PM ET, NBC/NFLN/Twitter). The Cowboys enter December with the league’s best record (10-1) and a two-game lead over the Giants in the NFC East. Minnesota (6-5) begins the final month of the regular season just one game behind Detroit (7-4) for first place in the NFC North.

The week concludes with a pair of primetime contests with playoff implications. On Sunday night (8:30 PM ET, NBC), the Seahawks will host the Panthers in a matchup between teams that represented the NFC in each of the past three Super Bowls. Seattle (7-3-1) enters the contest with a three-game lead in the NFC West while Carolina (4-7) looks to stay alive in the NFC playoff hunt. On Monday night (8:30 PM ET, ESPN), the Indianapolis Colts will visit the New York Jets. The Colts (5-6) sit just one game behind the AFC South leading Houston Texans (6-5) in the division race. Some of the key contests in Week 13:

DALLAS COWBOYS (10-1) at MINNESOTA VIKINGS (6-5) (Thursday, NBC/NFLN/Twitter, 8:25 PM ET)

- The Cowboys have won 10 games in a row, including a 31-26 win over Washington on Thanksgiving. Rookie quarterback **DAK PRESCOTT** has posted a 100+ passer rating in nine of the team’s 10 victories and rookie running back **EZEKIEL ELLIOTT** leads the NFL with 1,199 rushing yards.
- The Vikings rank second in the NFL – and lead the NFC – with a +12 turnover differential. Cornerback **XAVIER RHODES** has four interceptions, tied for the second-most in the conference. In Week 11 against Arizona, Rhodes had two interceptions, including a franchise-record 100-yard interception-return touchdown.

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS (8-3) at ATLANTA FALCONS (7-4) (Sunday, CBS, 1:00 PM ET)

- The Chiefs improved to 8-3 with a 30-27 overtime victory at Denver on Sunday night. Rookie wide receiver **TYREEK HILL** had a kickoff-return touchdown, a rushing touchdown and a receiving touchdown in the game, becoming the first player to accomplish the feat since Pro Football Hall of Famer **GALE SAYERS** in 1965.
- The Falcons maintained their lead in the NFC South with a 38-19 victory over Arizona. Quarterback **MATT RYAN** passed for 269 yards and two touchdowns – both to wide receiver **TAYLOR GABRIEL** – and became the first player in NFL history to pass for at least 200 yards in 50 consecutive games.

MIAMI DOLPHINS (7-4) at BALTIMORE RAVENS (6-5) (Sunday, CBS, 1:00 PM ET)

- The Dolphins, led by rookie head coach **ADAM GASE**, have won six consecutive games, the longest current streak in the AFC. Last week, quarterback **RYAN TANNEHILL** passed for 285 yards and three touchdowns in Miami's 31-24 victory over San Francisco.
- The Ravens enter December tied with Pittsburgh for the top spot in the AFC North. In Week 12, Baltimore defeated Cincinnati 19-14 behind **JUSTIN TUCKER**'s four field goals. Tucker made three field goals of at least 50 yards in the first half and is the only player in league history to accomplish the feat.

DETROIT LIONS (7-4) at NEW ORLEANS SAINTS (5-6) (Sunday, FOX, 1:00 PM ET)

- The Lions have won three games in a row and took over sole possession of first place in the NFC North with a 16-13 win over Minnesota on Thanksgiving. Cornerback **DARIUS SLAY** had a key fourth-quarter interception with 38 seconds remaining to set up **MATT PRATER**'s game-winning field goal as time expired. Detroit is the first team in NFL history to have each of its first 11 games decided by seven points or fewer.
- The Saints defeated Los Angeles 49-21 last week as quarterback **DREW BREES** passed for 310 yards with four touchdowns and rushed for one touchdown. Brees has three career games with at least four touchdown passes and a rushing touchdown, the most in NFL history. This season, Brees has 30 touchdown passes and extended his NFL-record streak to nine consecutive seasons with at least 30 TD passes. He has nine career seasons with at least 30 touchdown passes, tied with Pro Football Hall of Famer **BRETT FAVRE** and **PEYTON MANNING** for the most in NFL history.

BUFFALO BILLS (6-5) at OAKLAND RAIDERS (9-2) (Sunday, CBS, 4:05 PM ET)

- The Bills aim for their third consecutive win after last week's 28-21 victory versus Jacksonville. Running back **LE SEAN MC COY** rushed for 103 yards and two touchdowns, including a 75-yard touchdown run on the first play from scrimmage in the second half. McCoy has nine rushing touchdowns this season, tied for the second-most in the AFC.
- The Raiders have won five games in a row, including last week's 35-32 win over Carolina. After the Panthers scored 25 unanswered points to take an eight-point lead in the fourth quarter, quarterback **DEREK CARR** guided the Raiders to the game's final 11 points. Defensive end **KHALIL MACK** returned an interception for a touchdown and had a sack, a forced fumble and a fumble recovery against the Panthers. He is the first player to have an interception-return touchdown, a sack, a forced fumble and a fumble recovery in the same game since **CHARLES WOODSON** in 2009.

NEW YORK GIANTS (8-3) at PITTSBURGH STEELERS (6-5) (Sunday, FOX, 4:25 PM ET)

- The Giants, led by rookie head coach **BEN MC ADOO**, have won six consecutive games and have the NFC's second-best record at 8-3. Last week, the Giants knocked off the Browns 27-13 at Cleveland. Defensive end **JASON PIERRE-PAUL** had a career-high three sacks, a forced fumble and a 43-yard fumble-return touchdown in the win. He is the first player with at least three sacks and a 40+ yard fumble-return touchdown in the same game since 1982, the first year individual sacks became an official statistic.
- The Steelers defeated Indianapolis 28-7 on Thanksgiving night as quarterback **BEN ROETHLISBERGER** threw three touchdown passes to wide receiver **ANTONIO BROWN**. Brown leads the NFL with 82 receptions this season and is tied for the league lead with 10 touchdown catches.

CAROLINA PANTHERS (4-7) at SEATTLE SEAHAWKS (7-3-1) (Sunday, NBC, 8:30 PM ET)

- Over the past five seasons, the Panthers and Seahawks are tied for the league's best record in December/January regular-season games (19-5, .792). The teams have combined to represent the NFC in each of the past three Super Bowls – Seattle (XLVIII and XLIX) and Carolina (50). The clubs have played in the Divisional Playoffs in each of the past two seasons with the teams splitting the two meetings.
- The Panthers have won 16 of their past 18 regular-season games played in December/January, outscoring opponents 509-307. Last season, quarterback **CAM NEWTON** had 15 touchdown passes with one interception for a 119.4 passer rating and rushed for three touchdowns in the final month (five games).
- The Seahawks hold a three-game lead in the NFC West and are seeking their fifth consecutive postseason appearance. Quarterback **RUSSELL WILSON** is 12-2 (.857) in his career at home (including the playoffs) in games played after December 1.

2016 NFL STANDINGS

American Football Conference

East Division

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	Conf	Div	Streak
New England Patriots	9	2	0	.818	293	197	3-2	6-0	7-1	3-1	2W
Miami Dolphins	7	4	0	.636	249	240	5-1	2-3	5-3	2-1	6W
Buffalo Bills	6	5	0	.545	281	236	3-2	3-3	3-4	1-3	2W
New York Jets	3	8	0	.273	196	266	1-4	2-4	3-5	1-2	3L

North Division

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	Conf	Div	Streak
Baltimore Ravens	6	5	0	.545	218	201	4-2	2-3	6-2	4-0	1W
Pittsburgh Steelers	6	5	0	.545	266	222	3-2	3-3	5-3	2-1	2W
Cincinnati Bengals	3	7	1	.318	213	245	2-2-1	1-5	3-5	1-2	3L
Cleveland Browns	0	12	0	.000	197	352	0-6	0-6	0-8	0-4	12L

South Division

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	Conf	Div	Streak
Houston Texans	6	5	0	.545	194	236	5-1	1-4	4-4	3-0	2L
Tennessee Titans	6	6	0	.500	308	296	3-3	3-3	3-5	1-3	1W
Indianapolis Colts	5	6	0	.455	270	301	3-3	2-3	3-5-0	2-2	1L
Jacksonville Jaguars	2	9	0	.182	214	293	1-4	1-5	1-7	1-2	6L

West Division

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	Conf	Div	Streak
Oakland Raiders	9	2	0	.818	307	275	4-2	5-0	6-1	2-1	5W
Kansas City Chiefs	8	3	0	.727	252	214	4-1	4-2	6-2	3-0	1W
Denver Broncos	7	4	0	.636	266	219	4-2	3-2	4-3	1-3	1L
San Diego Chargers	5	6	0	.455	313	291	3-2	2-4	4-5	1-3	1W

National Football Conference

East Division

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	Conf	Div	Streak
Dallas Cowboys	10	1	0	.909	316	213	5-1	5-0	6-1	3-1	10W
New York Giants	8	3	0	.727	231	213	5-1	3-2	5-3	2-1	6W
Washington Redskins	6	4	1	.591	280	264	4-2	2-2-1	4-3	2-2	1L
Philadelphia Eagles	5	6	0	.455	254	213	4-1	1-5	3-6	0-3	2L

North Division

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	Conf	Div	Streak
Detroit Lions	7	4	0	.636	247	238	5-1	2-3	5-2	2-2	3W
Minnesota Vikings	6	5	0	.545	218	192	4-1	2-4	4-5	1-3	1L
Green Bay Packers	5	6	0	.455	274	289	3-2	2-4	4-4	2-1	1W
Chicago Bears	2	9	0	.182	178	264	2-3	0-6	2-5	2-1	3L

South Division

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	Conf	Div	Streak
Atlanta Falcons	7	4	0	.636	358	302	3-2	4-2	5-3	3-1	1W
Tampa Bay Buccaneers	6	5	0	.545	249	264	2-4	4-1	5-3	2-1	3W
New Orleans Saints	5	6	0	.455	334	307	3-3	2-3	4-3	1-2	1W
Carolina Panthers	4	7	0	.364	276	281	3-3	1-4	4-4	1-3	1L

West Division

Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	Conf	Div	Streak
Seattle Seahawks	7	3	1	.682	224	187	5-0	2-3-1	3-3-1	1-1-1	1L
Arizona Cardinals	4	6	1	.409	245	228	3-2-1	1-4	3-4-1	2-1-1	2L
Los Angeles Rams	4	7	0	.364	170	236	1-4	3-3	3-5	2-1	2L
San Francisco 49ers	1	10	0	.091	228	344	1-5	0-5	1-7	1-3	10L

NFL WEEK 13 SCHEDULE
THURSDAY, SUNDAY & MONDAY, DECEMBER 1, 4-5

(All times local)

Byes: Cleveland, Tennessee

Thursday, December 1

Dallas at Minnesota, 7:25 PM (NBC/NFLN/Twitter)

Sunday, December 4

Kansas City at Atlanta, 1:00 PM

Miami at Baltimore, 1:00 PM

San Francisco at Chicago, 12:00 PM

Philadelphia at Cincinnati, 1:00 PM

Houston at Green Bay, 12:00 PM

Denver at Jacksonville, 1:00 PM

Sunday, December 4 (cont'd)

Los Angeles at New England, 1:00 PM

Detroit at New Orleans, 12:00 PM

Buffalo at Oakland, 1:05 PM

Washington at Arizona, 2:25 PM

New York Giants at Pittsburgh, 4:25 PM

Tampa Bay at San Diego, 1:25 PM

Carolina at Seattle, 5:30 PM (NBC)

Monday, December 5

Indianapolis at New York Jets, 8:30 PM (ESPN)