

NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

345 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10154

p. (212) 450-2000
f. (212) 681-7573

NFLCommunications.com



Joe.Lockhart@nfl.com
Executive Vice President of Communications

Brian.McCarthy@nfl.com
Vice President of Communications

Michael.Signora@nfl.com
Vice President of Football Communications

COMMUNICATIONS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

9/5/17

<http://twitter.com/nfl345>

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 LII, which will be played on Sunday, February 4, 2018 at U.S. Bank Stadium in Minnesota.

America's favorite sport roars back into action Thursday night (NBC, 8:30 PM ET) in the first game of NFL Kickoff 2017 Weekend. The opener features the Super Bowl champion **NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS** hosting the **KANSAS CITY CHIEFS**.

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

Last year, 146 games (57.0 percent) were decided by one score (eight points or fewer), the most of any season in NFL history. And there were six new playoff teams in 2016: Atlanta, Dallas, Detroit, Miami, the New York Giants and Oakland. 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 2017 season promises more of the same. As the season begins, it comes packed with changes, quests and questions:

- **CAN THE SUPER BOWL CHAMPION PATRIOTS 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**: New Orleans QB **DREW BREES** (66,111) needs 3,889 passing yards to become the third QB in NFL history with 70,000. Brees (465) needs 35 touchdown passes to become the third player ever to reach 500...New England QB **TOM BRADY** (183) needs four wins for the most victories by a starting QB...New York Giants QB **ELI MANNING** (48,214), Pittsburgh QB **BEN ROETHLISBERGER** (46,814) and Los Angeles Chargers QB **PHILIP RIVERS** (45,833) can each reach 50,000 career passing yards...New Orleans RB **ADRIAN PETERSON** can become the second player in NFL history to rush for 10+ TDs in nine seasons...Indianapolis RB **FRANK GORE** can become the fifth player all-time to rush for 1,000+ yards in 10 seasons...Arizona WR **LARRY FITZGERALD** (1,125) can become the third player in NFL history to record 1,200 receptions...Carolina DE **JULIUS PEPPERS** (143.5) needs 6.5 sacks to become the fifth player with 150...and Indianapolis K **ADAM VINATIERI** (530) needs 36 field goals for the most in NFL history.
- **NEW COACHES/PLAYERS IN NEW PLACES**: There are six new head coaches hired to lead their teams in 2017 – **VANCE JOSEPH** in Denver, **ANTHONY LYNN** with the Los Angeles Chargers, **DOUG MARRONE** in Jacksonville, **SEAN MC DERMOTT** in Buffalo, **SEAN MC VAY** with the Los Angeles Rams and **KYLE SHANAHAN** in San Francisco.

And there are a lot of well-known players with new teams, including RBs **LE GARRETTE BLOUNT** (Philadelphia), **JAMAAL CHARLES** (Denver), **EDDIE LACY** (Seattle), **MARSHAWN LYNCH** (Oakland) and **ADRIAN PETERSON** (New Orleans); WRs **BRANDIN COOKS** (New England), **DE SEAN JACKSON** (Tampa Bay), **ALSHON JEFFERY** (Philadelphia), **BRANDON MARSHALL** (New York Giants) and **SAMMY WATKINS** (Los Angeles Rams); TE **MARTELLUS BENNETT** (Green Bay); and defenders CB **A.J. BOUYE** (Jacksonville), DE **CALAIS CAMPBELL** (Jacksonville), CB **STEPHON GILMORE** (New England), CB **JOE HADEN** (Pittsburgh), S **TONY JEFFERSON** (Baltimore), DE **JULIUS PEPPERS** (Carolina), DL **SHELDON RICHARDSON** (Seattle) and S **T.J. WARD** (Tampa Bay).

- **ON-THE-FIELD TRENDS IN 2016**: 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 2016, 135 games (52.7 percent) were decided by seven points or fewer, the most in NFL history...There were 184 games (71.9 percent) within one score in the fourth quarter, the most ever...There were 72 comeback victories by a team trailing in the fourth quarter, the most in NFL history...The margin of victory was 10.23 points per game, the lowest figure since 1935 (10.08)...A total of 11,661 points and 1,306 touchdowns were scored, both the third-most ever in a

season...Games averaged 700.8 total net yards, the second-best mark in NFL history...The league-wide completion percentage (63.0) tied the previous record (2015) and the league-wide passer rating (89.3) ranked second in league annals (90.2 in 2015). The league-wide interception percentage of 2.3 percent was the lowest in NFL history.

- **NEW RULES:** With player health and safety remaining a priority, here are some of the key rules changes for 2017:

Unsportsmanlike Conduct: Makes permanent the rule that automatically disqualifies a player that is penalized twice in the same game for certain types of unsportsmanlike conduct fouls. These types of fouls include:

- Throwing a punch or kick without making contact
- Use of abusive or threatening language
- Any act that constitutes taunting

Also, it is now an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty to commit multiple fouls during the same down designed to manipulate the game clock.

Replay Reviews: All sideline replay monitors will be replaced with a hand-held device and designated members of the NFL Officiating department will be authorized to make the final decision on replay reviews from the NFL league office.

Leaping: Prohibits a player who is off the line of scrimmage from running and jumping over offensive lineman on the line of scrimmage in an attempt to block a FG or PAT attempt.

Touchbacks: For the 2017 season, after a touchback resulting from a kickoff or safety kick, the ball will be placed at the receiving team's 25-yard line. The rule, which was also used in 2016, was approved on a one-year basis for 2017.

Crackback Blocks: Prohibits crackback blocks by a backfield player in motion, even if he is not more than two yards outside the tackle when the ball is snapped.

Defenseless Receiver Protection: Gives a receiver running a pass route defenseless player protection when the defender approaches him from behind or the side.

Overtime: The length of preseason and regular season overtime periods is reduced from 15 minutes to 10 minutes.

Clock Stoppages: All illegal acts to conserve time are not permitted after the two-minute warning of either half. The previous rule applied inside of one minute of either half.

Additionally, after conversations with more than 80 current and former players, Commissioner Goodell announced in May that the league will relax its rules on touchdown celebrations to allow players more room to express themselves.

- **INTERNATIONAL NFL:** The NFL will play four regular-season games in the United Kingdom for the first time and also host a regular-season game in Mexico City for the second consecutive season.

In the first of four 2017 London games, the Jacksonville Jaguars will face the Baltimore Ravens on September 24 at Wembley Stadium. The next week, on October 1, the Miami Dolphins will host the New Orleans Saints at Wembley. The action will move to Twickenham Stadium for the final two 2017 London games. On October 22, the Arizona Cardinals will face the Los Angeles Rams and the following week, on October 29, the Cleveland Browns will host the Minnesota Vikings.

The NFL will return to Mexico City when the Oakland Raiders host the New England Patriots at Estadio Azteca on November 19.

- **NFL ON TV:** Among the television highlights in 2017 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 December 31. 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: A select number of games will be "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.

- **TRI-CAST**: The NFL will once again use a “Tri-Cast” distribution model of broadcast (CBS/NBC), cable (NFL Network) and digital (Amazon Prime) for 10 *Thursday Night Football* games and a Christmas Day contest. CBS and NBC will each broadcast five *Thursday Night Football* games which will be simulcast on NFL Network and streamed to Amazon Prime members worldwide. NBC will also broadcast the Christmas Day game. CBS will start in Week 4 (Thursday, September 28) with the Green Bay Packers hosting the Chicago Bears and NBC’s package begins in Week 10 (Thursday, November 9) with the Seattle Seahawks visiting the Arizona Cardinals.

NFL KICKOFF 2017 SCHEDULE
THURSDAY, SUNDAY & MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 10-11

(All times local)

Thursday, September 7

Kansas City at New England, 8:30 PM (NBC)

Sunday, September 10

New York Jets at Buffalo, 1:00 PM
Atlanta at Chicago, 12:00 PM
Baltimore at Cincinnati, 1:00 PM
Pittsburgh at Cleveland, 1:00 PM
Arizona at Detroit, 1:00 PM
Jacksonville at Houston, 12:00 PM
Tampa Bay at Miami, 1:00 PM

Sunday, September 10 (cont'd)

Oakland at Tennessee, 12:00 PM
Philadelphia at Washington, 1:00 PM
Indianapolis at Los Angeles Rams, 1:05 PM
Seattle at Green Bay, 3:25 PM
Carolina at San Francisco, 1:25 PM
New York Giants at Dallas, 7:30 PM (NBC)

Monday, September 11

New Orleans at Minnesota, 6:10 PM (ESPN)
Los Angeles Chargers at Denver, 8:20 PM (ESPN)