

NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

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COMMUNICATIONS

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NFL HEADS TOWARDS HALFWAY POINT AS WEEK 8 APPROACHES

The NFL season is nearing the halfway point and the standings remain close. Through the first seven weeks, 26 teams have at least three wins. Leading the way are six clubs with at least five victories: Philadelphia (6-1), Kansas City (5-2), the Los Angeles Rams (5-2), Minnesota (5-2), New England (5-2) and Pittsburgh (5-2). Since 1990, when the current 12-team playoff format was adopted, nearly 80 percent (197 of 247) of the previous teams to start 5-2 or better advanced to the postseason.

Entering Week 8, there are 20 teams with a .500 or better winning percentage and 14 clubs with a winning record. Since 1990, 285 of the league's 324 playoff teams (88 percent) had a winning record through seven games.

But nothing is a given in the NFL. There have been 39 teams since 1990 which had a .500 or lower record after seven games to advance to the postseason. That includes five teams over the past two seasons: Houston (2-5), Kansas City (2-5), Seattle (3-4) and Washington (3-4) in 2015 and Miami (3-4) last year.

Week 8 begins on Thursday night with the Baltimore Ravens hosting the Miami Dolphins (8:25 PM ET, CBS/NFL Network/Amazon Prime). The action continues "across the pond" on Sunday morning (9:30 AM ET, NFL Network) when the Minnesota Vikings face the Cleveland Browns in London. The game marks the fourth and final 2017 London Series game and the second consecutive week Twickenham Stadium – the home of England Rugby – will host an NFL contest.

The week concludes with a pair of primetime contests as the Detroit Lions host the Pittsburgh Steelers on Sunday night (8:30 PM ET, NBC) and the Denver Broncos visit the Kansas City Chiefs on Monday night (8:30 PM ET, ESPN) in a showdown between AFC West rivals. Some of the other key games in Week 8:

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS (3-4) at NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS (5-2) (Sunday, CBS, 1:00 PM ET)

- The Chargers have won three consecutive games, including last week's 21-0 victory over Denver. Los Angeles limited the Broncos to 251 total net yards and became the first team to shutout Denver since November 22, 1992.
- Wide receiver **TRAVIS BENJAMIN** returned a punt 65 yards for a touchdown and added a 42-yard touchdown reception from quarterback **PHILIP RIVERS** in the Chargers' victory over Denver. Benjamin is the first Charger to have a punt-return touchdown and a TD reception in the same game since **ERIC METCALF** on November 30, 1997.
- The Patriots have won three games in a row, including a 23-7 win over Atlanta on Sunday night in a rematch of Super Bowl LI. Quarterback **TOM BRADY** threw two touchdown passes – one each to wide receiver **BRANDIN COOKS** and running back **JAMES WHITE** – to lead the Patriots past the Falcons for the second time in eight months.
- Brady leads the NFL with 2,208 passing yards and is tied for the AFC lead with 15 touchdown passes. He is the first player to pass for at least 2,000 yards and 10 touchdowns in his team's first seven games at the age of 40 or older.

CHICAGO BEARS (3-4) at NEW ORLEANS SAINTS (4-2) (Sunday, FOX, 1:00 PM ET)

- Bears rookie safety **EDDIE JACKSON** had a 76-yard interception-return touchdown and a 75-yard fumble-return touchdown in last week's 17-3 win against Carolina. Jackson is the first player in NFL history to score multiple 75+ yard defensive touchdowns in a single game. He is also the only rookie in league annals to score multiple 75+ yard defensive touchdowns in an entire season.
- Chicago has scored three defensive touchdowns of at least 75 yards in the past two games. In addition to Jackson's two scores, safety **ADRIAN AMOS** had a 90-yard interception-return touchdown in Week 6 at Baltimore.
- The Saints have won four consecutive games and sit atop the NFC South with a 4-2 record. Last week, New Orleans knocked off Green Bay 26-17 at Lambeau Field.

- In the win against the Packers, quarterback **DREW BREES** threw the 500th touchdown pass of his career (including the postseason). Brees, who has 476 touchdown passes in the regular season and 24 in the postseason, became the fourth player in NFL history to throw 500 career touchdown passes, joining **PEYTON MANNING** (579), Pro Football Hall of Famer **BRETT FAVRE** (552) and **TOM BRADY** (534).

HOUSTON TEXANS (3-3) at SEATTLE SEAHAWKS (4-2) (Sunday, CBS, 4:05 PM ET)

- The Texans had a bye last week following a 33-17 win over Cleveland in Week 6. Houston has scored at least 30 points in four consecutive games and since Week 3, the Texans are averaging an NFL-best 39.3 points per game.
- Quarterback **DESHAUN WATSON** ties for the AFC lead with 15 touchdown passes, the most ever by a rookie in his team's first six games of a season. Watson has thrown at least three touchdown passes in three consecutive games and is the first rookie in NFL history to accomplish the feat. Watson has 12 passing touchdowns in the past three games, the most ever by a rookie in any three-game span.
- Seattle has won three consecutive games, including last week's 24-7 win at the New York Giants. Quarterback **RUSSELL WILSON** passed for 334 yards and three touchdowns in the victory as he completed a pass to 11 different receivers. Wide receiver **DOUG BALDWIN** led the way with nine catches for 92 yards and a touchdown.
- Wilson has 30 career games with multiple touchdown passes and no interceptions, the most such performances by a quarterback in his first six seasons.

DALLAS COWBOYS (3-3) at WASHINGTON REDSKINS (3-3) (Sunday, FOX, 4:25 PM ET)

- The Cowboys defeated the 49ers 40-10 last week in San Francisco to even the team's record at 3-3. Quarterback **DAK PRESCOTT** threw three touchdown passes and rushed for one score while running back **EZEKIEL ELLIOTT** racked up 219 scrimmage yards (147 rushing, 72 receiving) and three touchdowns (two rushing, one receiving).
- Prescott, who is currently in his second season, has seven career games with at least three touchdown passes with one or zero interceptions. Only Pro Football Hall of Famer **DAN MARINO** (nine) had more such games in a player's first two seasons.
- Washington quarterback **KIRK COUSINS** leads the NFC with a 107.2 passer rating and 8.27 yards-per-pass average. He has passed for at least 300 yards in three of his past four games and has thrown multiple touchdown passes in each of his past four games.
- Running back **CHRIS THOMPSON** leads the Redskins in both receiving yards (366) and rushing yards (213). He is the only player in the NFL this season to lead his club in both categories.

PITTSBURGH STEELERS (5-2) at DETROIT LIONS (3-3) (Sunday, NBC, 8:30 PM ET)

- The Steelers lead the AFC North and aim for their third win in a row. Last week, Pittsburgh defeated Cincinnati 29-14 as quarterback **BEN ROETHLISBERGER** threw two touchdown passes and running back **LE'VEON BELL** racked up 192 scrimmage yards (134 rushing, 58 receiving).
- Bell has amassed at least 190 scrimmage yards in each of the past two weeks and leads the NFL with three games with at least 185 scrimmage yards this season. No other player in the league has two such games.
- The Lions had a bye in Week 7 and look to bounce back from their Week 6 loss in New Orleans. Detroit trailed by as many as 35 points in that contest but rallied to close within seven points in the fourth quarter.
- Quarterback **MATTHEW STAFFORD** passed for 312 yards and three touchdowns against the Saints. Second-year defensive tackle **A'SHAWN ROBINSON** recorded his first career interception and returned it for a touchdown.

DENVER BRONCOS (3-3) at KANSAS CITY CHIEFS (5-2) (Monday, ESPN, 8:30 PM ET)

- Denver running back **JAMAAL CHARLES** will face his former team for the first time. Charles played his first nine seasons (2008-16) with the Chiefs and is the franchise's all-time leading rusher (7,260 yards).
- Broncos linebacker **VON MILLER** has eight sacks in his past six meetings against Kansas City. Since entering the league in 2011, Miller has 80.5 sacks, the most in the NFL during that span.
- Kansas City rookie running back **KAREEM HUNT** leads the NFL in rushing yards (717) and scrimmage yards (1,002). Hunt is the first rookie in NFL history to gain at least 100 scrimmage yards in each of his team's first seven games and he joined Pro Football Hall of Famer **ERIC DICKERSON** (1,045 yards in 1983) as the only rookies to gain at least 1,000 scrimmage yards in his team's first seven games.
- Chiefs quarterback **ALEX SMITH** leads the NFL with a 120.5 passer rating and 72.4 completion percentage. Smith is tied for the AFC lead with 15 touchdown passes and has not thrown an interception this season. He and **MILT PLUM** (1960 Cleveland) are the only players in NFL history to throw at least one touchdown pass without an interception in each of his team's first seven games of a season.

NFL WEEK 8 SCHEDULE
THURSDAY, SUNDAY & MONDAY, OCTOBER 26, OCTOBER 29-30

(All times local)

Byes: Arizona, Green Bay, Jacksonville, Los Angeles Rams, New York Giants, Tennessee

Thursday, October 26

Miami at Baltimore, 8:25 PM (CBS/NFLN/Amazon)

Sunday, October 29

Minnesota at Cleveland (London), 1:30 PM

Oakland at Buffalo, 1:00 PM

Indianapolis at Cincinnati, 1:00 PM

Los Angeles Chargers at New England, 1:00 PM

Chicago at New Orleans, 12:00 PM

Atlanta at New York Jets, 1:00 PM

Sunday, October 29 (cont'd)

San Francisco at Philadelphia, 1:00 PM

Carolina at Tampa Bay, 1:00 PM

Houston at Seattle, 1:05 PM

Dallas at Washington, 4:25 PM

Pittsburgh at Detroit, 8:30 PM (NBC)

Monday, October 30

Denver at Kansas City, 8:30 PM (ESPN)