

NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

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COMMUNICATIONS

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PLAYOFF RACES AROUND THE NFL ARE HEATING UP

NFL RETURNS TO MEXICO AS RAIDERS HOST PATRIOTS

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

Eleven teams have at least six wins, led by the 8-1 Philadelphia Eagles – Philadelphia (8-1), Los Angeles Rams (7-2), Minnesota (7-2), New England (7-2), New Orleans (7-2), Pittsburgh (7-2), Carolina (7-3), Jacksonville (6-3), Kansas City (6-3), Seattle (6-3) and Tennessee (6-3). Seven of those 11 teams – Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Minnesota, New Orleans, Carolina, Jacksonville and Tennessee – did not make the playoffs last season. Since the 12-team playoff format began in 1990, at least four teams have qualified for the playoffs in every season that were not in the postseason the year before.

Seven teams currently have an active winning streak of at least four games, led by the Eagles and Saints who have each won seven in a row. The Patriots and Vikings are both riding five-game winning streaks while the Rams, Steelers and Titans have each won four consecutive contests.

New Orleans, which started the season 0-2, is the second team in the Super Bowl era to win its next seven games immediately following an 0-2 start. The other team to accomplish the feat – 1993 Dallas Cowboys – won the Super Bowl in that season. Last week, the Saints rushed for 298 yards and a franchise-record six touchdowns in the team's 47-10 win at Buffalo. New Orleans became the fifth team – and first since 1957 (Cleveland Browns, November 24, 1957) – in NFL history (including the postseason) to rush for at least 295 yards and six touchdowns in a single game.

As the season's second half continues, there's a lot to be decided, with plenty of football left to play. So don't count anyone out. Since 1990, 27 teams have qualified for the playoffs with a losing record through nine games. Last year, two teams – Green Bay (4-5) and Pittsburgh (4-5) – accomplished the feat and both clubs advanced to the Conference Championship Game.

Also in Week 11, the NFL returns to Mexico for the second consecutive year as the Oakland Raiders host the Patriots (4:25 PM ET, CBS). Last year, the Raiders defeated the Houston Texans 27-20 in front of 76,473 fans at Estadio Azteca in Mexico City in the first-ever *Monday Night Football* game to be played outside the United States.

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 Patriots). Both of those contests were also played at Estadio Azteca in Mexico City. Estadio Azteca underwent vast renovations in advance of the NFL's game in 2016 which reduced stadium capacity to approximately 77,000.

Week 11 kicks off on Thursday night (8:25 PM ET, NBC/NFLN/Amazon) when the Steelers host the Titans. Both teams enter the contest on four-game winning streaks. The week concludes with a pair of primetime games as the Dallas Cowboys host the Eagles on Sunday night (8:30 PM ET, NBC) in a key NFC East showdown and the Atlanta Falcons visit the Seahawks on Monday night (8:30 PM ET, ESPN) in a rematch of last season's NFC Divisional Playoff. Some of the other notable games in Week 11:

TENNESSEE TITANS (6-3) at PITTSBURGH STEELERS (7-2) (Thursday, NBC/NFLN/Amazon Prime, 8:25 PM ET)
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- The Titans are tied for first in the AFC South with a 6-3 record and have won four consecutive games, including last week's 24-20 win over Cincinnati.
- Tennessee running back **DE MARCO MURRAY** scored three touchdowns (two rushing, one receiving) against the Bengals, including the game-winning seven-yard TD reception from quarterback **MARCUS MARIOTA** with 36 seconds remaining. Since entering the NFL in 2015, Mariota has 36 touchdown passes and no interceptions in the red zone, the best TD/INT ratio in the league.

- The Steelers lead the AFC North and are tied for the best record in the AFC (7-2). Pittsburgh has won four consecutive games, including last week's 20-17 victory at Indianapolis.
- Pittsburgh running back **LE'VEON BELL** leads the NFL with 840 rushing yards and wide receiver **ANTONIO BROWN** has a league-best 882 receiving yards along with 60 receptions, tied for the second-most in the NFL. Wide receiver **JU JU SMITH-SCHUSTER** leads all rookies with 521 receiving yards and has recorded a touchdown reception in three consecutive games.

LOS ANGELES RAMS (7-2) at MINNESOTA VIKINGS (7-2) (Sunday, FOX, 1:00 PM ET)

- The Rams, who lead the NFC West with a 7-2 record, have won four games in a row, including last week's 33-7 victory over Houston. Los Angeles leads the NFL averaging 32.9 points per game.
- Rams quarterback **JARED GOFF** passed for 355 yards with three touchdowns and no interceptions last week and is the first player in team history to pass for at least 300 yards and three touchdowns with no interceptions in consecutive games. Running back **TODD GURLEY** leads the NFL with 1,160 scrimmage yards (754 rushing, 406 receiving) and 10 touchdowns (seven rushing, three receiving).
- The Vikings lead the NFC North with a 7-2 record and have won five consecutive games, including last week's 38-30 win at Washington as quarterback **CASE KEENUM** threw four touchdown passes.
- Minnesota wide receiver **ADAM THIELEN** had eight catches for 166 yards and a touchdown in the victory against the Redskins. Thielen, who went undrafted out of Minnesota State in 2013, has three career games (two in 2017) with at least 150 receiving yards, the most among active players who were not drafted. Thielen ranks third in the NFL with 793 receiving yards.

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS (7-2) at OAKLAND RAIDERS (4-5) in Mexico City (Sunday, CBS, 4:25 PM ET)

- The Patriots lead the AFC East and are tied for the best record in the AFC (7-2). New England has won five consecutive games, including last week's 41-16 victory at Denver. The Patriots lead the NFL in total offense (409.4 yards per game) and passing offense (301.6).
- New England quarterback **TOM BRADY** leads the NFL in completions (231), attempts (343) and passing yards (2,807), ranks second in passer rating (108.3) and ties for second in touchdown passes (19). Brady threw three touchdown passes at Denver and recorded his 86th regular-season road win, passing **PEYTON MANNING** (85) for the most in NFL history.
- The Raiders, who had a bye last week, defeated Miami 27-24 in Week 9 as quarterback **DEREK CARR** threw for 300 yards with a touchdown and running back **MARSHAWN LYNCH** rushed for two scores.
- Oakland defeated Houston 27-20 last year at Estadio Azteca in Mexico City (November 21, 2016). In that contest, Carr threw three touchdown passes, including the game-winning 35-yard score to wide receiver **AMARI COOPER** with 4:43 remaining.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES (8-1) at DALLAS COWBOYS (5-4) (Sunday, NBC, 8:30 PM ET)

- The Eagles, who had a bye last week, have the NFL's best record (8-1) and have won seven consecutive games. This is the fifth time in franchise history the Eagles have started a season 8-1 or better (1949, 1960, 1980 and 2004) and the team advanced to the NFL Championship/Super Bowl in each of the previous four instances.
- Philadelphia quarterback **CARSON WENTZ** leads the NFL with 23 touchdown passes and his 104.1 passer rating tops the NFC. Wentz's 23 touchdown passes are the most by an Eagle in the team's first nine games to start a season in franchise history. In Week 9, Wentz threw four touchdown passes in the Eagles' 51-23 victory over Denver.
- The Cowboys have won three of their past four games and are in the thick of the NFC playoff race with a 5-4 record.
- Dallas quarterback **DAK PRESCOTT** is one of only four players since the 1970 merger to account for at least 50 touchdowns in his first 25 career NFL games. Prescott has passed for 39 touchdowns and rushed for 11 TDs in his first 25 career games and has led the Cowboys to an 18-7 record during that span. Prescott's 11 rushing touchdowns are the most by a quarterback since the start of the 2016 season.

ATLANTA FALCONS (5-4) at SEATTLE SEAHAWKS (6-3) (Monday, ESPN, 8:30 PM ET)

- Atlanta defensive end **ADRIAN CLAYBORN** recorded a franchise-record six sacks in the Falcons' 27-7 win over Dallas last week. Clayborn's six sacks are tied for the second-most in a single game since the individual sack became an official statistic in 1982 (Pro Football Hall of Famer **DERRICK THOMAS**, seven sacks on November 11, 1990).
- Falcons quarterback **MATT RYAN** (40,073) reached 40,000 career passing yards in his 151st game and became the fastest player in NFL history to attain the milestone.
- The Seahawks have won five of their past six games, including a 22-16 win at Arizona on Thursday night in Week 10. Seattle leads the NFC in passing offense (267.8 yards per game).
- Seahawks quarterback **RUSSELL WILSON** threw two touchdown passes to tight end **JIMMY GRAHAM** in the win over the Cardinals, including a two-yard TD in the fourth quarter to extend Seattle's lead. Wilson is the NFL's top-ranked passer in the fourth quarter with a 135.2 passer rating with 12 touchdowns and one interception.

NFL WEEK 11 SCHEDULE
THURSDAY, SUNDAY & MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 19-20

(All times local)

Byes: Carolina, Indianapolis, New York Jets, San Francisco

Thursday, November 16

Tennessee at Pittsburgh, 8:25 PM (NBC/NFLN/Amazon)

Sunday, November 19

Detroit at Chicago, 12:00 PM

Jacksonville at Cleveland, 1:00 PM

Baltimore at Green Bay, 12:00 PM

Arizona at Houston, 12:00 PM

Tampa Bay at Miami, 1:00 PM

Los Angeles Rams at Minnesota, 12:00 PM

Sunday, November 19 (cont'd)

Washington at New Orleans, 12:00 PM

Kansas City at New York Giants, 1:00 PM

Buffalo at Los Angeles Chargers, 1:05 PM

Cincinnati at Denver, 2:25 PM

New England at Oakland (Mexico City), 3:25 PM

Philadelphia at Dallas, 7:30 PM (NBC)

Monday, November 20

Atlanta at Seattle, 5:30 PM (ESPN)