

## NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

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## COMMUNICATIONS

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### **NFL TEAMS PREPARE FOR FINAL STRETCH**

***Week 16 also features doubleheaders (4:30 PM & 8:30 PM ET) on both Saturday & Christmas Day***

Time is running out. With two weeks to go in the NFL regular season, it's time for teams to make their final playoff push.

Through the first 15 weeks, five postseason berths have been clinched. Philadelphia (NFC East, first-round bye), Minnesota (NFC North), New England (AFC East) and Pittsburgh (AFC North) have each won its division. Jacksonville has secured a playoff berth. And with two weeks left in the regular season, there are still 19 teams in contention for a trip to Super Bowl LII.

There are seven playoff spots up for grabs, including four division titles.

In the AFC, New England (11-3, clinched AFC East) can secure a first-round bye and home-field advantage. Pittsburgh (11-3, clinched AFC North) can lock up a first-round bye. Jacksonville (10-4, clinched playoff berth) can win the AFC South. Kansas City (8-6) can clinch the AFC West. And Tennessee (8-6) can secure a playoff berth.

In the NFC, Philadelphia (12-2, clinched NFC East and first-round bye) can lock up home-field advantage. Minnesota (11-3, clinched NFC North) can secure a first-round bye. The Los Angeles Rams (10-4) can clinch the NFC West or a playoff berth. New Orleans (10-4) can lock up the NFC South or a playoff berth. And Carolina (10-4) and Atlanta (9-5) can each clinch a playoff berth.

By winning the NFC East, the Eagles have completed a "worst-to-first" turnaround and at least one team has won its division the season after finishing in or tied for last place in 14 of the past 15 seasons. Both the Jaguars (lead AFC South by two games) and Panthers (tied for NFC South lead) are either in or tied for first place entering Week 16 and can join the Eagles as teams making a "worst-to-first" turnaround. If both Jacksonville and Carolina match Philadelphia as teams accomplishing the feat, 2017 would tie the 2005 and 2006 seasons for the most such "worst-to-first" clubs in NFL history.

Week 16 kicks off on Saturday with a doubleheader starting at 4:30 PM ET on NFL Network as Baltimore hosts Indianapolis. The Ravens, who defeated Cleveland 27-10 last week, are 8-6 and in control for a playoff berth. Baltimore can lock up a spot in the postseason with wins in the team's final two games. That night in primetime (8:30 PM ET, NBC), *Sunday Night Football* moves to Saturday night and will feature NFC North rivals Green Bay and Minnesota at Lambeau Field. The Vikings have already locked up the division title and can secure a first-round bye this weekend with a win over the Packers combined with a Carolina loss.

The action continues on Sunday afternoon with 12 games. There will be nine contests played in the early afternoon window (1:00 PM ET) and three games in the late afternoon slot (4:05 and 4:25 PM ET).

The week concludes on Christmas Day with a doubleheader. In the first game, Pittsburgh will visit Houston (4:30 PM ET, NBC/NFLN/Amazon Prime). The Steelers have already won the AFC North and can clinch a first-round bye with a win combined with a Jacksonville loss on Sunday afternoon. The nightcap on Christmas night will showcase Oakland at Philadelphia (8:30 PM ET, ESPN). The Raiders enter Week 16 still alive in the playoff chase while the Eagles, who have already secured the NFC East division title and a first-round bye, can lock up home-field advantage throughout the NFC playoffs with a win or a Minnesota loss on Saturday. Some of the key games in Week 16 with potential playoff implications:

#### **MINNESOTA VIKINGS (11-3) at GREEN BAY PACKERS (7-7) (Saturday, NBC, 8:30 PM ET)**

- The Vikings clinched the NFC North with a 34-7 win over Cincinnati last week. Minnesota can secure a first-round bye with a win on Saturday night combined with a Carolina loss on Sunday afternoon. Quarterback **CASE KEENUM** had a 138.4 passer rating and completed 87 percent of his passes (20 of 23) in last week's win. Keenum has five games with a 115+ passer rating and 70+ completion percentage and tied Pro Football Hall of Famer **BRETT FAVRE** (2009) and **DAUNTE CULPEPPER** (2004) for the most such games in a season in franchise history.

**BUFFALO BILLS (8-6) at NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS (11-3) (Sunday, CBS, 1:00 PM ET)**

- Buffalo defeated Miami 24-16 last week to remain in the thick of the AFC playoff race. Running back **LE SEAN MC COY**, who rushed for 50 yards and scored two touchdowns, reached 10,000 career rushing yards. He achieved the milestone on his 2,145th career carry, becoming the fifth-fastest player in NFL history to reach 10,000 rushing yards.
- The Patriots defeated Pittsburgh 27-24 last week to clinch the AFC East for the ninth consecutive season, extending the longest streak in NFL history. New England, which has won the division title in 14 of the past 15 seasons, can lock up a first-round bye with a win combined with either a Pittsburgh or Jacksonville loss. If the Patriots win and both of those teams lose this week, New England will secure home-field advantage throughout the AFC playoffs.

**ATLANTA FALCONS (9-5) at NEW ORLEANS SAINTS (10-4) (Sunday, FOX, 1:00 PM ET)**

- The Falcons, who finish the season with games against New Orleans and Carolina, are in control for the NFC South and will claim the division title by winning their final two games. Atlanta, which knocked off Tampa Bay last week 24-21, can clinch a playoff berth with a win over the Saints. Running back **DEVONTA FREEMAN** had 194 scrimmage yards and a touchdown in the victory at Tampa Bay. In Week 14, linebacker **DEION JONES** had a key fourth-quarter interception in the end zone to help preserve Atlanta's 20-17 victory over New Orleans.
- The Saints improved to 10-4 with a 31-19 win over the New York Jets last week. New Orleans can clinch the NFC South division title with a win over Atlanta combined with a Carolina loss. The Saints can also secure a playoff berth with a win. In last week's victory over the Jets, running back **MARK INGRAM** had 151 scrimmage yards and two rushing touchdowns. Ingram (1,420), rookie running back **ALVIN KAMARA** (1,336) and wide receiver **MICHAEL THOMAS** (1,085) are the only trio of teammates in the NFL this season to each have at least 1,000 scrimmage yards.

**LOS ANGELES RAMS (10-4) at TENNESSEE TITANS (8-6) (Sunday, FOX, 1:00 PM ET)**

- The Rams, who defeated Seattle 42-7 last week, can clinch the NFC West this week with a win or a Seahawks loss. The Rams can also lock up a playoff berth without a win if Atlanta, Carolina and Detroit all lose. In last week's win at Seattle, running back **TODD GURLEY** became the second player in franchise history – joining Pro Football Hall of Famer **MARSHALL FAULK** (October 20, 2002) – to have at least 150 rushing yards (152), three rushing touchdowns (three) and a receiving touchdown (one) in a single game.
- The Titans, who lost 25-23 at San Francisco last week, are still in the mix for both a postseason berth and the AFC South title. Tennessee can clinch a playoff berth this week with a win combined with losses by both Baltimore and Buffalo. The Titans, who play Jacksonville in Week 17, can force a winner-take-all showdown for the AFC South division title if they win this weekend and the Jaguars lose.

**JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS (10-4) at SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS (4-10) (Sunday, CBS, 4:05 PM ET)**

- The Jaguars clinched the team's first playoff berth since 2007 with a 45-7 victory over Houston last week. Jacksonville can secure the AFC South division this weekend with a win or a Tennessee loss. Quarterback **BLAKE BORTLES** passed for 326 yards, three touchdowns and no interceptions for a 143.8 passer rating last week and is the first player in franchise history to have three consecutive games with a 100+ passer rating, multiple touchdown passes and no interceptions.

**SEATTLE SEAHAWKS (8-6) at DALLAS COWBOYS (8-6) (Sunday, FOX, 4:25 PM ET)**

- The Cowboys and Seahawks are both still in the mix for a postseason berth. The winner of this game will remain alive for another week while the loser will be eliminated from playoff contention. Dallas has won three consecutive games while the Seahawks, who have won seven of their past 11, are looking to end a two-game losing streak.

**OAKLAND RAIDERS (6-8) at PHILADELPHIA EAGLES (12-2) (Monday, ESPN, 8:30 PM ET)**

- The Raiders enter Week 16 still in the mix for a playoff berth. Defensive end **KHALIL MACK** aims for his sixth consecutive game with a sack and has reached 10+ sacks (10.5) for the third season in a row. Mack's 36.5 sacks since the start of the 2015 season are the second-most in the NFL (**CHANDLER JONES**, 38.5).
- The Eagles have an NFL-best 12-2 record and have already clinched the NFC East and a first-round bye. With a win over the Raiders or a Minnesota loss on Saturday night, Philadelphia will secure home-field advantage throughout the NFC playoffs for the first time since 2004. Quarterback **NICK FOLE**, making his first start of the season, threw four touchdown passes in last week's 34-29 victory at the New York Giants. The Eagles (**CARSON WENTZ** and Foles, Weeks 14 and 15) are the first team since the 2011 Green Bay Packers (**AARON RODGERS** and **MATT FLYNN**, Weeks 16 and 17) to have different starting quarterbacks throw at least four touchdown passes in back-to-back weeks.

**NFL WEEK 16 SCHEDULE**  
**SATURDAY, SUNDAY & MONDAY, DECEMBER 23-25**

(All times local)

**Saturday, December 23**

Indianapolis at Baltimore, 4:30 PM (NFLN)  
Minnesota at Green Bay, 7:30 PM (NBC)

**Sunday, December 24**

Tampa Bay at Carolina, 1:00 PM  
Cleveland at Chicago, 12:00 PM  
Detroit at Cincinnati, 1:00 PM  
Miami at Kansas City, 12:00 PM  
Buffalo at New England, 1:00 PM  
Atlanta at New Orleans, 12:00 PM

**Sunday, December 24 (cont'd)**

Los Angeles Chargers at New York Jets, 1:00 PM  
Los Angeles Rams at Tennessee, 12:00 PM  
Denver at Washington, 1:00 PM  
Jacksonville at San Francisco, 1:05 PM  
New York Giants at Arizona, 2:25 PM  
Seattle at Dallas, 3:25 PM

**Monday, December 25**

Pittsburgh at Houston, 3:30 PM (NBC/NFLN/Amazon)  
Oakland at Philadelphia, 8:30 PM (ESPN)