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PLAYOFF PICTURE HEATS UP AS NFL ENTERS WEEK 11

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

Seventeen teams are currently in or within one game of playoff position, including nine teams that did not advance to the postseason in 2017. 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. But a slow start does not mean a team can be counted out. Since 1990, 27 teams have qualified for the playoffs with a losing record through nine games.

Five teams are currently riding win streaks of at least four games, led by the New Orleans Saints, which have won eight consecutive games. The Houston Texans and Los Angeles Chargers have both won six straight games, while Pittsburgh and Kansas City have won five and four consecutive games, respectively. The Texans, which began the season 0-3, are the second team since 1970 to win six consecutive games immediately following an 0-3 start, joining the 1970 New York Giants.

Last week, 19 of the league's 28 starting quarterbacks (67.9 percent) recorded a passer rating of 100 or higher (minimum 15 attempts), the most in a single week in NFL history, surpassing the previous high of 17 set in Week 2 of the 2018 season. Four quarterbacks - Pittsburgh's **BEN ROETHLISBERGER** (158.3), Cleveland's **BAKER MAYFIELD** (151.2), New Orleans' **DREW BREES** (150.4) and Chicago's **MITCHELL TRUBISKY** (148.6) - recorded a passer rating of at least 145 (minimum 20 attempts) in Week 10. The four quarterbacks with a 145+ passer rating (minimum 20 attempts) last week were the most in a single week in NFL history, surpassing the previous high of three which occurred four different times, most recently in Week 3 of the 2017 season.

One of the season's most anticipated matchups takes place on ESPN's *Monday Night Football* (8:15 PM ET), as the Kansas City Chiefs (9-1) take on the Los Angeles Rams (9-1) at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum in a battle of two of the league's top contenders. This is the fifth meeting between teams with one or fewer losses in Week 11 or later since 1970 and the first since November 17, 2013 (Denver (8-1) vs. Kansas City (9-0)).

Chiefs quarterback **PATRICK MAHOMES** (3,150 passing yards, 117.4 passer rating) and Rams quarterback **JARED GOFF** (3,134 passing yards, 113.0 passer rating) rank first and second, respectively, in the NFL in passing yards and are two of only eight quarterbacks in league history with at least 3,000 passing yards and a 110+ passer rating in their team's first 10 games of a season. Each of the previous six quarterbacks to accomplish the feat captured Associated Press Most Valuable Player honors in their respective seasons.

Below are highlights of the Week 11 schedule:

Week 11 kicks off on Thursday night as the Green Bay Packers travel to Seattle to battle the Seahawks at CenturyLink Field (8:20 PM ET, FOX/NFL Network/Amazon Prime). Packers running back **AARON JONES** rushed for 145 yards on 15 carries (9.7 average), including two rushing touchdowns, in Green Bay's 31-12 victory over Miami in Week 10. Jones is the second running back in franchise history to rush for at least 140 yards and two touchdowns on 15 or fewer carries, joining **AHMAN GREEN** (October 24, 2004 vs. Dallas). Seahawks quarterback **RUSSELL WILSON** has thrown at least three touchdown passes and recorded a passer rating of 120 or higher in four of his past five games.

The Houston Texans and Washington Redskins square off in a battle of first-place teams at FedExField (1:00 PM ET, CBS). Texans wide receiver **DE ANDRE HOPKINS** had 10 catches for 105 yards and a touchdown in Houston's Week 9 win at Denver. Since 2017, Hopkins has four games with at least 10 catches, 100 receiving yards and a touchdown reception, the most in the NFL over the span. Houston defensive end **J.J. WATT** ties for third in the league with nine sacks this season and is one of three players with at least eight sacks and 10 tackles for loss (11), joining the Rams' **AARON DONALD** (12.5 sacks, 16 tackles for loss) and the Vikings' **DANIELLE HUNTER** (11.5 sacks, 13 tackles for loss). Washington, led by defensive end **MATT IOANNIDIS** (7.5 sacks) and safety **D.J. SWEARINGER** (four interceptions), is tied for second in the NFC allowing 19.4 points per game.

The Indianapolis Colts welcome the Tennessee Titans to Lucas Oil Stadium in a key AFC South contest (1:00 PM ET, CBS). Titans quarterback **MARCUS MARIOTA** passed for 228 yards with two touchdowns, rushed for 21 yards and had a 21-yard reception in Tennessee's Week 10 win over New England. Mariota became the third quarterback in league history with at least 200 passing yards, 20 rushing yards and 20 receiving yards in a single game, joining Carolina's **CAM NEWTON** (December 4, 2011) and Chicago's **JIM MC MAHON** (October 21, 1984). Indianapolis quarterback **ANDREW LUCK** threw three touchdown passes in the Colts' 29-26 victory against Jacksonville last week and is one of three quarterbacks in NFL history to record at least six consecutive games with three or more touchdown passes in a single season, joining **TOM BRADY** (10 consecutive games in 2007) and **PEYTON MANNING** (eight in 2004). Brady and Manning were each named Associated Press Most Valuable Player in those respective seasons.

On Sunday afternoon, the Philadelphia Eagles travel to the Mercedes-Benz Superdome to take on the New Orleans Saints (4:25 PM ET, FOX) in a showdown of 2017 NFC playoff teams. Philadelphia quarterback **CARSON WENTZ** is one of two players in the NFL (Atlanta's **MATT RYAN**) to average at least 300 passing yards per game (306.9) while completing at least 70 percent of his passes (71.0) this season. Saints quarterback **DREW BREES** leads the league with a 77.3 completion percentage which is on pace to surpass the NFL record of 72.0 percent, which was set by Brees last season, by 5.3 percentage points.

Sunday's nightcap is a battle for first place in the NFC North between the Minnesota Vikings and Chicago Bears at Soldier Field (8:20 PM ET, NBC). Minnesota wide receiver **ADAM THIELEN** has 78 catches this season, tied with New Orleans' **MICHAEL THOMAS** (78) for the most in the NFL. Thielen and Thomas, along with Philadelphia's **ZACH ERTZ** (75), join **JULIO JONES** (80 catches in 2015), and Pro Football Hall of Famer **MARVIN HARRISON** (75 in 2002) as the only players in NFL history with at least 75 catches in their team's first nine games of a season. Chicago quarterback **MITCHELL TRUBISKY** recorded a 148.6 passer rating in the Bears' Week 10 win over Detroit and is one of two NFL quarterbacks (**CAM NEWTON**) this season with a 100+ passer rating (101.6), at least 300 rushing yards (320) and three rushing touchdowns (three).

NFL WEEK 11 SCHEDULE **THURSDAY, SUNDAY & MONDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 18-19**

(All times eastern)

Bye: Buffalo, Cleveland, Miami, New England, New York Jets, San Francisco

Thursday, November 15

Green Bay at Seattle, 8:20 PM (FOX/NFLN/Amazon)

Sunday, November 18

Dallas at Atlanta, 1:00 PM

Cincinnati at Baltimore, 1:00 PM

Carolina at Detroit, 1:00 PM

Tennessee at Indianapolis, 1:00 PM

Pittsburgh at Jacksonville, 1:00 PM

Tampa Bay at New York Giants, 1:00 PM

Sunday, November 18 (cont'd)

Houston at Washington, 1:00 PM

Oakland at Arizona, 4:05 PM

Denver at Los Angeles Chargers, 4:05 PM

Philadelphia at New Orleans, 4:25 PM

Minnesota at Chicago, 8:20 PM (NBC)

Monday, November 19

Kansas City at Los Angeles Rams, 8:15 PM (ESPN)