



## COMMUNICATIONS

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# THE RACE TO THE PLAYOFFS ENTERS WEEK 16

*-- 14 of the 16 games in Week 16 feature at least one team in contention for a trip to Super Bowl LIII --*

As the NFL enters Week 16, five postseason berths have been clinched and seven remain up for grabs. Nineteen of the league's 32 teams remain in contention for a trip to Super Bowl LIII and 14 of the 16 games on this week's schedule feature at least one team still alive in the race to Atlanta.

Two teams – the Chicago Bears (NFC North) and Los Angeles Chargers (playoff berth) – clinched a berth in the 2018 NFL postseason last week. The Bears, who finished in fourth place in the NFC North last season, completed a “worst-to-first” turnaround in 2018. In 15 of the past 16 seasons, at least one team has finished in first place in its division the season after finishing in last or tied for last place. 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.

In the AFC, the Houston Texans (10-4) can clinch the AFC South division title with a victory, while the New England Patriots (9-5) can secure their 10th consecutive AFC East division title with a win. The Patriots have advanced to the postseason in nine consecutive seasons (2009-2017), tied with Dallas (nine from 1975-1983) and Indianapolis (nine from 2002-2010) for the most consecutive seasons in NFL history with a playoff berth.

The Kansas City Chiefs (11-3) and Los Angeles Chargers (11-3) are tied atop with the AFC West and continue to battle for position in the AFC playoff picture. The Pittsburgh Steelers (8-5-1) can secure the AFC North title with a victory coupled with a Baltimore loss. Additionally, the Baltimore Ravens (8-6), Cleveland Browns (6-7-1), Indianapolis Colts (8-6), Miami Dolphins (7-7) and Tennessee Titans (8-6) all look to remain in the hunt.

In the NFC, three divisions have been clinched – the NFC North (Chicago), NFC South (New Orleans) and NFC West (Los Angeles Rams). The battle for the NFC East continues, as the Dallas Cowboys (8-6) can secure the division title with a victory this week, but the Philadelphia Eagles (7-7) and Washington Redskins (7-7) remain in the thick of the race.

With a win in Week 16, the New Orleans Saints (12-2) would clinch home-field advantage throughout the NFC playoffs. The race for the two Wild Card positions in the NFC remains competitive, with the Carolina Panthers (6-8), Minnesota Vikings (7-6-1) and Seattle Seahawks (8-6) fighting for a position in the playoff picture.

Below are highlights of the Week 16 schedule:

Week 16 kicks off with a Saturday doubleheader on NFL Network, as the Tennessee Titans host the Washington Redskins (4:30 PM ET) and the Baltimore Ravens travel to the StubHub Center to take on the Los Angeles Chargers (8:20 PM ET). Titans running back **DERRICK HENRY**, who rushed for 170 yards and two touchdowns last week and 238 yards with four touchdowns in Week 14, is the fifth player since 2002 to record at least 170 rushing yards and two touchdown runs in consecutive games, joining Pro Football Hall of Famer **LA DAINIAN TOMLINSON** (2006), **DEUCE MC ALLISTER** (2003), **CLINTON PORTIS** (2003) and **RICKY WILLIAMS** (2002). Chargers quarterback **PHILIP RIVERS** ranks third in the NFL with a 112.4 passer rating and is one of four quarterbacks this season to throw at least 30 touchdown passes (31) and fewer than 10 interceptions (eight).

On Sunday, the Houston Texans and Philadelphia Eagles square off in a battle of playoff hopefuls at Lincoln Financial Field (1:00 PM ET, CBS). The Texans sit atop the AFC South and currently hold the No. 2 position in the AFC. Houston defensive end **J.J. WATT** had two sacks in the team's Week 15 victory and is the only player in the NFL with at least 14 sacks (14.5) and five forced fumbles (six) this season. Texans wide receiver **DE ANDRE HOPKINS** recorded 10 catches for 170 yards and two touchdowns in Week 15 and has three games with at least 10 catches, 100 receiving yards and a touchdown catch this season, the most in the NFL. Philadelphia tight end **ZACH ERTZ** leads all NFL tight ends with 101 catches this season and is the first player in franchise history to record at least 100 catches in a single season.

The NFC South champion New Orleans Saints welcome the Pittsburgh Steelers to the Mercedes-Benz Superdome on Sunday afternoon (4:25 PM ET, CBS). Saints quarterback **DREW BREES** leads the NFL with a 116.8 passer rating and a 74.9 completion percentage, while wide receiver **MICHAEL THOMAS** leads the league with 109 catches this season. Pittsburgh wide receiver **ANTONIO BROWN** has 672 receptions since 2013, tied with **WES WELKER** (672 from 2007-12) for the most by a player over any six-year span in NFL history.

Sunday's nightcap features the Kansas City Chiefs and Seattle Seahawks at CenturyLink Field (8:20 PM ET, NBC). Chiefs quarterback **PATRICK MAHOMES** leads the NFL with 45 touchdown passes this season, tied for third-most in league annals through the first 15 weeks of a season and tied for the sixth-most over the course of a single season in NFL history. Seattle is averaging 154.9 rushing yards per game, the highest mark in the league, and features the only trio of running back teammates – **CHRIS CARSON** (913 rushing yards), **MIKE DAVIS** (439) and rookie **RASHAAD PENNY** (413) – with 400 rushing yards each in 2018.

**NFL WEEK 16 SCHEDULE**  
**SATURDAY, SUNDAY & MONDAY, DECEMBER 22-24**  
(All times eastern)

**Saturday, December 22**

Washington at Tennessee, 4:30 PM (NFLN)  
Baltimore at Los Angeles Chargers, 8:20 PM (NFLN)

**Sunday, December 23**

Atlanta at Carolina, 1:00 PM  
Cincinnati at Cleveland, 1:00 PM  
Tampa Bay at Dallas, 1:00 PM  
Minnesota at Detroit, 1:00 PM  
New York Giants at Indianapolis, 1:00 PM  
Jacksonville at Miami, 1:00 PM

**Sunday, December 23 (cont'd)**

Buffalo at New England, 1:00 PM  
Green Bay at New York Jets, 1:00 PM  
Houston at Philadelphia, 1:00 PM  
Los Angeles Rams at Arizona, 4:05 PM  
Chicago at San Francisco, 4:05 PM  
Pittsburgh at New Orleans, 4:25 PM  
Kansas City at Seattle, 8:20 PM (NBC)

**Monday, December 24**

Denver at Oakland, 8:15 PM (ESPN)