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NFL FEATURES RECORD NINE WEEK 12 GAMES INVOLVING TEAMS WITH .500-OR-BETTER RECORDS

The NFL is thankful for many things.

To name a few, the 22-year-old legs of the league's leading rusher, **JONATHAN TAYLOR**, and the living Fountain of Youth **TOM BRADY**, who leads the NFL in both career touchdown passes (610) and 2021 touchdown passes (29).

The NFC-leading **ARIZONA CARDINALS** (9-2), who have won two of their last three games without some of their key contributors. And the resurgent **NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS** (7-4), who own the NFL's longest winning streak, five. Along with the **DALLAS COWBOYS** (7-3), these three clubs lead their divisions after missing the 2020 playoffs. At least two teams have won their divisions the season after missing the playoffs in 17 of the past 18 years.

This season, the NFL is grateful for 23 games decided by a winning score on the final play, the most such games through Week 11 in league annals.

And in Week 12, the NFL is thankful for the number nine.

Nine games in Week 12 feature two teams with .500-or-better records, the most such games in Week 12 or later in NFL history. It's a recipe for something delicious.

For more information on the Thanksgiving triple-header, [click here](#).

MVP CANDIDATES FACE OFF: The **TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS** (7-3) and the **INDIANAPOLIS COLTS** (6-5), who meet Sunday at Lucas Oil Stadium (1:00 PM ET, FOX), share a lot of DNA. Pro Football Hall of Famer **TONY DUNGY** guided the franchises to a combined 11 playoff appearances -- each of his seven seasons at the reins in Indianapolis and four of his six seasons as head coach of the Buccaneers. Tampa Bay head coach **BRUCE ARIANS** earned Coach of the Year honors after leading the Colts to a remarkable turnaround and playoff berth in 2012 as Indianapolis' interim head coach.

And in 2021, the teams share something else in common: Each club boasts of a bona fide MVP candidate.

In last week's win, Colts running back **JONATHAN TAYLOR** became the first player to record at least 175 rushing yards, four rushing touchdowns and one touchdown reception in a game in NFL history. He finished with 204 scrimmage yards (185 rushing, 19 receiving) and five touchdowns (four rushing, one receiving). Also last week, Taylor:

- Became the third player under age 23 with at least five touchdowns in a game in NFL history, joining **CLINTON PORTIS** (five on Dec. 7, 2003, at 22 years and 97 days old) and Pro Football Hall of Famer **GALE SAYERS** (six on Dec. 12, 1965, at 22 years and 196 days old). Taylor was 22 years and 306 days old last Sunday.
- Became the fifth player all-time with four rushing touchdowns and one receiving touchdown in a game, joining **SHAUN ALEXANDER** (Sept. 29, 2002), **ABNER HAYNES** (Nov. 26, 1961), **DUB JONES** (Nov. 25, 1951) and Pro Football Hall of Famer **GALE SAYERS** (Dec. 12, 1965).
- Became the third player with at least 100 scrimmage yards and a rushing touchdown in eight consecutive games in NFL history, joining Pro Football Hall of Famer **LADAINIAN TOMLINSON** (2006) and **LYDELL MITCHELL** (1975-76).
- Became the fourth player since 2000 to record at least 1,000 rushing yards and 10 rushing touchdowns in each of his first two seasons, joining **ADRIAN PETERSON** (2007-08), **CLINTON PORTIS** (2002-03) and Pro Football Hall of Famer **LADAINIAN TOMLINSON** (2001-02). Taylor enters Week 12 with 1,122 rushing yards and 13 rushing touchdowns this season after recording 1,169 rushing yards and 11 rushing touchdowns as a rookie.

When Tampa Bay has the ball, perennial MVP candidate **TOM BRADY** presides over the NFL's top passing attack (314.8 yards per game).

- Brady in leading teams through the stretch run, in Weeks 12-17 during his career, is a combined 88-24 (.786).
- Last week, Brady completed 30 of 46 attempts (65.2 percent) for 307 yards and two touchdowns with one interception for an 89.7 rating. In the process, he authored yet another record, surpassing 3,000 yards for the 19th season in his career, breaking a tie with Pro Football Hall of Famer **BRETT FAVRE** for most such seasons in NFL history. Brady ranks second in the league with 3,177 passing yards this season.
- Buccaneers wide receiver **MIKE EVANS** caught six passes for 73 yards and a touchdown in last week's win. His 10 receiving touchdowns this season are tied with the Rams' **COOPER KUPP** for most in the league. Evans' 71 career receiving touchdowns are the most in the NFL since Tampa Bay selected him in the first round (seventh overall) of the 2014 NFL Draft.
- And, Evans now has four seasons with at least 10 receiving touchdowns. Over the past 20 seasons (2002-21), only five players have reached 10 touchdown receptions more often: **LARRY FITZGERALD**, **ROB GRONKOWSKI** and Pro Football Hall of Famers **MARVIN HARRISON**, **RANDY MOSS** and **TERRELL OWENS** (each with five).

BELICHICK SEEKS FIRST WIN AGAINST FORMER PUPIL: The **TENNESSEE TITANS** (8-3) visit the **NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS** (7-4) in a battle of first-place teams on Sunday (1:00 PM ET, CBS).

- Tennessee's **MIKE VRABEL**, who signed as a free agent with the Patriots in 2001 and helped the team win three Super Bowls in his eight seasons as a New England player, is 2-0 as a head coach against **BILL BELICHICK**. Vrabel defeated his former head coach in his first season at the reins of the Titans, 2018, and again in the Wild Card round of the 2019 playoffs. Both wins were in New England.
- The Patriots, meanwhile, are the hottest team in the NFL, winners of five straight. They've built their winning streak largely on the strength of the league's stingiest defense (16.1 points allowed per game), which enters the game having allowed zero points over opponents' last 19 possessions.
- The last NFL team to hold an opponent scoreless over a stretch of at least 19 possessions was the Patriots (24 straight drives) in 2019. That season, San Francisco's defense also shut out opponents over a stretch of 19 consecutive possessions.
- The Patriots' **MAC JONES** is bidding to become the first rookie quarterback to lead his team to the playoffs since **DAK PRESCOTT** in 2016. Last week, Jones became the first rookie quarterback in NFL history to complete at least 80 percent of his passes in consecutive games (minimum 15 attempts).
- Jones leads all rookies in completions (245), completion percentage (70.2), passing yards (2,540), touchdown passes (14) and passer rating (94.7).

DON'T SLEEP ON ANYONE: So far this season, a game-winning score in the final two minutes of regulation or in overtime has decided 37 contests, the third-most such games through Week 11 all-time. Only 2015 (39) and 2003 (39) had more.

- Three teams – **HOUSTON**, **INDIANAPOLIS** and **MINNESOTA** – entered last week with a .500-or-below winning percentage and defeated a team that began the week in first place or tied for first place in its division. Since Week 9, there have been 11 wins by teams with a .500-or-below winning percentage against division leaders, the most such wins to occur during Weeks 9-11 of a single season since 1970.
- Houston and Minnesota each defeated teams that entered Week 11 with at least four more victories on the season. There have been eight such wins this season – by teams with at least four fewer wins than their opponents entering the game – tied with 1974 (eight) for the most such games through Week 11.

This week, the **MINNESOTA VIKINGS** (5-5) travel to face the **SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS** (5-5) on Sunday (4:25 PM ET, FOX) in a key intraconference game. Each team enters with a two-game winning streak.

- In last week's win, Minnesota quarterback **KIRK COUSINS** passed for 341 yards and three touchdowns with no interceptions for a 128.4 rating while wide receiver **JUSTIN JEFFERSON** had eight receptions for 169 yards and two touchdowns.
- Cousins has 21 touchdowns and only two interceptions this season, the fifth-best touchdown-to-interception ratio (10.5) through a player's first 10 games of a season (minimum 20 touchdown passes) in NFL history.

The players with the best touchdown-to-interception ratio through their first 10 games of a season in NFL history (minimum 20 touchdown passes):

PLAYER	TEAM	SEASON	TDs	INTs	RATIO
Drew Brees	New Orleans	2018	25	1	25.0
Patrick Mahomes	Kansas City	2020	27	2	13.5
Russell Wilson	Seattle	2019	23	2	11.5

Tom Brady	New England	2017	22	2	11.0
Kirk Cousins	Minnesota	2021	21	2	10.5

- Cousins now has 25 career games with at least 300 passing yards and three touchdown passes, surpassing **AARON RODGERS** (24) for the second-most such games by a quarterback in his first 10 seasons in NFL history. Only Pro Football Hall of Famer **DAN MARINO** (26) has more.
- Jefferson recorded his 11th career game with at least 100 receiving yards, tied with Pro Football Hall of Famer **RANDY MOSS** (11) and **JUJU SMITH-SCHUSTER** (11) for the second-most such games by a player in his first two seasons in the Super Bowl era. Only **ODELL BECKHAM JR.** (15) has more.
- Also, Jefferson joined **EARNEST GRAY** (1989-90) and **LOUIS LIPPS** (1984-85) as the only players in the Super Bowl era with at least 150 receiving yards and two receiving touchdowns in a game in each of their first two seasons. He also accomplished the feat as a rookie in Week 6 last season (166 receiving yards, two touchdown receptions).
- In the 49ers' win last week, wide receiver **DEEBO SAMUEL** registered 94 scrimmage yards (career-high 79 rushing, 15 receiving) and his third rushing touchdown of the season. Samuel, who has three rushing touchdowns this season and registered three rushing touchdowns as a rookie in 2019, became the first wide receiver in the Super Bowl era with at least three rushing touchdowns in two of his first three seasons. Samuel also ranks second in the NFL with 994 receiving yards, only 6 shy of his first career 1,000-yard season.
- San Francisco tight end **GEORGE KITTLE** has a receiving touchdown in three consecutive games, the longest streak of his career.
- San Francisco opened last week's game with a drive that lasted 13 minutes and five seconds, the longest NFL drive since Tennessee held the ball for 13 minutes and 27 seconds on Nov. 27, 1997.

AFC WEST, AFC NORTH ARE ANYONE'S DIVISIONS: Every team in both the AFC West and AFC North is .500 or better.

It's the first time in five years that any NFL division – not to mention two this season – has entered Week 12 without a team below .500. In 2016, all four NFC East teams – Dallas (9-1), the New York Giants (7-3), Washington (6-3-1) and Philadelphia (5-5) reached that threshold after 11 weeks.

This week, the **LOS ANGELES CHARGERS** (6-4) make their annual trip to face the **DENVER BRONCOS** (5-5) on Sunday (4:05 PM ET, CBS). Each of the last two games in Denver between the teams has been decided by a field goal or less. Last season, Denver won, 31-30, on a 1-yard touchdown reception by **KJ HAMLER** with no time remaining. The year before, Denver captured a 23-20 victory on a 53-yard field goal by **BRANDON MCMANUS** with no time remaining.

- In Week 11, quarterback **JUSTIN HERBERT** threw for 382 yards and ran for 90, becoming the first player with at least 375 passing yards and 90 rushing yards in a game in NFL history. He also has 53 career touchdown passes, tied with **DEREK CARR** (53) for the second-most by a quarterback in his first two seasons in league annals.
- In last week's win, Chargers running back **AUSTIN EKELER** had 115 scrimmage yards (65 receiving, 50 rushing) and four touchdowns (two receiving, two rushing). Ekeler, who has seven rushing touchdowns and six receiving touchdowns this season, became just the second player since the merger in 1970 with at least six in each category through his team's first 10 games, joining **KAREEM HUNT** (2018).
- Also last week, Ekeler became the first player in a decade to rush for multiple touchdowns and catch multiple touchdowns in a game, since **MAURICE JONES-DREW** in 2011 (Week 14).

Meanwhile, all four AFC North clubs face a divisional opponent, with **PITTSBURGH** (5-4-1) at **CINCINNATI** (6-4) on Sunday (1:00 PM ET, CBS) and **CLEVELAND** (6-5) at **BALTIMORE** (7-3) on *Sunday Night Football* (8:20 PM ET, NBC).

The Browns are actually playing consecutive games against the Ravens – Weeks 12 and 14 – sandwiched around their Week 13 bye. It's the first time in an NFL regular season a team will play consecutive games against the same opponent in 30 years, since Seattle (then a member of the AFC West) met the San Diego Chargers in Weeks 9 and 11 of the 1991 season. Each team had a Week 10 bye that season.

VENERABLE FOES RETURN TO LAMBEAU: Fresh off their bye week, the **LOS ANGELES RAMS** (7-3) return to Lambeau Field to face the **GREEN BAY PACKERS** (8-3) on Sunday (4:25 PM ET, FOX), looking to avenge their 2020 Divisional playoff loss. It's the eighth rematch this season of 2020 playoff teams. So far, the team that lost the playoff game is 5-2 this year, including wins in four straight rematches.

- Rams wide receiver **COOPER KUPP** leads the NFL in both receptions (85) and receiving yards (1,141) and is tied for the league lead in touchdown catches (10). He is the first player with at least 80 receptions, 1,100 receiving yards and 10 touchdown receptions in his team's first 10 games of a season all-time.

- Since taking the reins of the Rams in 2017, head coach **SEAN MCVAY** is 3-1 after bye weeks.
- Last week, Green Bay quarterback **AARON RODGERS** passed for 385 yards and four touchdowns with no interceptions for a 148.4 rating. Rodgers has 13 career games with at least four touchdown passes and a passer rating of 140-or-higher, tied with Pro Football Hall of Famer **PEYTON MANNING** (13) for the third-most such games all-time. Only **DREW BREES** (15) and **TOM BRADY** (14) have more.
- Rodgers also has 112 career games with a passer rating of 100-or-higher, tied with Pro Football Hall of Famer **PEYTON MANNING** (112) for the third-most such games all time. Only **TOM BRADY** (148) and **DREW BREES** (141) have more.

NO HURTS, NO GAIN: Quarterback **JALEN HURTS** leads the **PHILADELPHIA EAGLES** (5-6) up Interstate 95 to MetLife Stadium for a divisional clash with the **NEW YORK GIANTS** (3-7) on Sunday (1:00 PM ET, FOX).

- In last week's win, making his 15th career start, Hurts rushed for three touchdowns. Hurts, who was 23 years and 106 days old, became the second-youngest quarterback in league annals to register three rushing touchdowns in a single game, trailing only **CAM NEWTON** (three rushing touchdowns on Dec. 4, 2011, at 22 years, 207 days old). Hurts had 11 rushing touchdowns in his first 15 career starts, tied with **JOSH ALLEN** (11) and **KORDELL STEWART** (11) for the second-most by a quarterback in his first 15 career starts in the Super Bowl era. Only Newton (14) had more.
- Hurts also has four career games with at least two rushing touchdowns, tied with **CAM NEWTON** (four) for the most such games by a quarterback in his first two seasons in the Super Bowl era.
- Teammate **DARIUS SLAY** recorded a 51-yard interception return for a touchdown in the Eagles' win last week. The cornerback, who had an 83-yard fumble return for a touchdown in Week 10, is the third player since 2000 with a defensive touchdown of at least 50 yards in consecutive games, joining **SHELDON BROWN** (Weeks 13-14, 2009) and **VINCENT FULLER** (Week 3 and Week 5, 2007).

WEEK 12 NFL SCHEDULE

(All times Eastern)

Thursday, November 25 (Thanksgiving)	Chicago at Detroit Las Vegas at Dallas Buffalo at New Orleans	FOX CBS NBC	12:30 4:30 8:20
Sunday, November 28	Pittsburgh at Cincinnati New York Jets at Houston Tampa Bay at Indianapolis Atlanta at Jacksonville Carolina at Miami Tennessee at New England Philadelphia at New York Giants Los Angeles Chargers at Denver Los Angeles Rams at Green Bay Minnesota at San Francisco Cleveland at Baltimore	CBS CBS FOX FOX FOX CBS FOX CBS FOX FOX NBC	1:00 1:00 1:00 1:00 1:00 1:00 1:00 4:05 4:25 4:25 8:20
Monday, November 29	Seattle at Washington	ESPN	8:15
			Byes: Arizona, Kansas City