



COMMUNICATIONS

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NFL REGULAR SEASON ENTERS FINAL QUARTER

There are only four weeks remaining in the regular season to decide who advances to the playoffs for a chance at a trip to Super Bowl LIII in Atlanta.

As the league enters the final quarter of the regular season, there are 19 teams either in or within one game of a playoff spot, including 10 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.

Entering Week 14, one team – the NFC West champion **LOS ANGELES RAMS** (11-1) – has clinched a playoff berth as the battle for the remaining spots forges ahead. Three additional teams – the **HOUSTON TEXANS** (9-3), **NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS** (9-3) and **NEW ORLEANS SAINTS** (10-2) – can clinch a division title this week.

Two teams that finished in or tied for last place in their division in 2017 – the **CHICAGO BEARS** (NFC North) and Houston Texans (AFC South) – are currently in first place in their respective divisions this season. In 14 of the past 15 seasons, at least one team finished in first place in its division the season after finishing in last or tied for last place. Of the 46 teams in league history to go from “worst-to-first,” 23 of them have done so in the past 15 years (2003-17), including an NFL-record three such teams in 2005 and 2006.

With four weeks remaining on the schedule, much is still to be decided. Thirty of the league’s 32 teams remain in contention as the NFL enters Week 14.

Seven divisional matchups highlight an exciting slate of games in Week 14:

On Sunday afternoon, the Houston Texans welcome the Indianapolis Colts to NRG Stadium (1:00 PM ET, CBS) in an AFC South battle. The Texans (9-3) lead the Colts (6-6) and the Titans (6-6) by three games in the division and look to extend their league-leading nine game winning streak. Since entering the league in 2017, Houston quarterback **DESHAUN WATSON** is one of two NFL quarterbacks (**RUSSELL WILSON**) with a 100+ passer rating (101.8) and at least 500 rushing yards (644). Colts quarterback **ANDREW LUCK** has thrown at least three touchdown passes in eight of his past nine games and ranks second in the league with 32 touchdown passes this season.

The New England Patriots and Miami Dolphins square off on Sunday afternoon (1:00 PM ET, CBS) at Hard Rock Stadium. The Patriots look to clinch their 10th consecutive AFC East title and extend the longest streak of consecutive division titles in NFL history. New England quarterback **TOM BRADY** (579 touchdown passes, including the postseason) needs one touchdown pass to surpass **PEYTON MANNING** for the most in NFL history. Dolphins cornerback **XAVIEN HOWARD** had two interceptions in Week 13 and has three games with multiple interceptions in 2018, the most in the NFL.

Baltimore rookie quarterback **LAMAR JACKSON** leads the Ravens into Arrowhead Stadium to take on **PATRICK MAHOMES** and the Kansas City Chiefs (1:00 PM ET, CBS). Winners of three consecutive games, the Ravens (7-5) look to maintain their place in the thick of the AFC postseason race, while the Chiefs (10-2) aim to stay atop the AFC West. Jackson, who has won each of his first three starts, is the first rookie quarterback in league history to rush for at least 70 yards in three consecutive games. Mahomes, who leads the NFL with 41 touchdown passes and ranks second with 3,923 passing yards, can become the third first-or-second year quarterback in league annals to throw for at least 4,000 yards and 40 touchdowns in a single season, joining Pro Football Hall of Famers **DAN MARINO** (1984) and **KURT WARNER** (1999). Both Marino and Warner were named Associated Press Most Valuable Player in those seasons.

A battle of first-place teams in the NFC takes center stage as the Los Angeles Rams and Chicago Bears square off at Soldier Field on NBC’s *Sunday Night Football* (8:20 PM ET). Rams defensive tackle **AARON DONALD** leads the NFL with 16.5 sacks this season and has recorded at least two sacks in each of his past three games. Rams running back **TODD GURLEY** leads the NFL with 19 touchdowns this season and quarterback **JARED GOFF** ranks second in the NFL with 3,754 passing yards. The duo can make the Rams just the sixth team in league history to have a quarterback with at least 4,000 passing yards and a player with 20+

scrimmage touchdowns in a single season. Bears safety **EDDIE JACKSON** has an interception-return touchdown in two of his past three games and leads the NFL with three defensive touchdowns this season.

Week 14 closes on Monday night as the Minnesota Vikings travel to Seattle to take on the Seahawks in a key NFC matchup (8:15 PM ET, ESPN). Minnesota quarterback **KIRK COUSINS** ranks second in the league with a 71.3 completion percentage (minimum 200 attempts) and is one of three quarterbacks (**DREW BREES** and **MATT RYAN**) with a 70+ completion percentage and at least 3,000 passing yards (3,490) this season. Seahawks quarterback **RUSSELL WILSON** ranks third in the league with a 5.8 touchdown-to-interception ratio (29 touchdowns and five interceptions) and is one of four NFL quarterbacks with a passer rating of at least 115 this season (115.5).

NFL WEEK 14 SCHEDULE **THURSDAY, SUNDAY & MONDAY, DECEMBER 6, DECEMBER 9-10**

(All times eastern)

Thursday, December 6

Jacksonville at Tennessee, 8:20 PM (FOX/NFLN/Amazon)

Sunday, December 9

New York Jets at Buffalo, 1:00 PM

Carolina at Cleveland, 1:00 PM

Atlanta at Green Bay, 1:00 PM

Indianapolis at Houston, 1:00 PM

Baltimore at Kansas City, 1:00 PM

New England at Miami, 1:00 PM

New Orleans at Tampa Bay, 1:00 PM

Sunday, December 9 (cont'd)

New York Giants at Washington, 1:00 PM

Cincinnati at Los Angeles Chargers, 4:05 PM

Denver at San Francisco, 4:05 PM

Detroit at Arizona, 4:25 PM

Philadelphia at Dallas, 4:25 PM

Pittsburgh at Oakland, 4:25 PM

Los Angeles Rams at Chicago, 8:20 PM (NBC)

Monday, December 10

Minnesota at Seattle, 8:15 PM (ESPN)