

NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

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COMMUNICATIONS

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EIGHT DIVISIONAL MATCHUPS HEADLINE WEEK 2

Close games, record-setting performances and memorable moments from stars both established and new highlighted an exciting Kickoff Weekend. With eight divisional matchups and a rematch of the 2017 AFC Championship Game on the schedule, Week 2 promises more of the same.

Every team wants to get off to a fast start as history has shown that teams that are victorious in their season openers are more than twice as likely to advance to the playoffs as teams that lose their opener. But an 0-1 start is not impossible to overcome as nearly 25 percent of teams that lose a season opener advance to the playoffs, including three teams in 2017 – the **NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS**, **NEW ORLEANS SAINTS** and **TENNESSEE TITANS**.

Since 1978 when the NFL went to the 16-game schedule, and excluding the abbreviated season of 1982, 52.1 percent (306 of 587) of teams that won their season opener advanced to the postseason:

Of the 587 teams which won openers...306 went to the playoffs (185 won division titles)

Of the 586 teams which lost openers...140 went to the playoffs (81 won division titles)

(Note: There are a different number of winning and losing teams in season opening games due to the fact that the NFL had 31 teams in each season from 1999 to 2001, which creates an odd number for the total number of results.)

Ten games in Week 1 were decided by eight points or fewer and eight games were won by teams that did not advance to the 2017 postseason. Twelve of 16 games were within one score in the fourth quarter and five teams – **CINCINNATI**, **CLEVELAND**, **DENVER**, **GREEN BAY** and **PHILADELPHIA** – won or tied a game after trailing in the fourth quarter. The Packers, who defeated Chicago 24-23 in Week 1 after trailing 20-0 in the third quarter, became the eighth team in league history to win a season-opening game after trailing by at least 20 points.

Led by the **NEW YORK JETS** (48 points), **TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS** (48) and **BALTIMORE RAVENS** (47), there were 765 total points scored across the league on Kickoff Weekend, the third-most in NFL history in Week 1. There were 12 return touchdowns on Kickoff Weekend, the second-most in Week 1 since the 1970 merger (13 in 2011). The Jets, who scored two return touchdowns in their win at Detroit in Week 1, became the third team in NFL history to score a touchdown via pass, rush, interception and punt return in a season-opening game.

Last week saw incredible performances from rookies and veterans alike. New England quarterback **TOM BRADY** became the third player in NFL history to throw a touchdown pass in a season-opening game at the age of 41 or older, joining Pro Football Hall of Famers **GEORGE BLANDA** and **WARREN MOON**, in the Patriots' 27-20 win over Houston. New York Jets rookie quarterback **SAM DARNOLD**, who became the youngest quarterback (21 years, 97 days old), to start a season-opening game in the Super Bowl era, threw two touchdown passes in the Jets' Week 1 win over Detroit. With two interceptions against Pittsburgh in his NFL debut, Cleveland cornerback **DENZEL WARD** became the first rookie to record multiple interceptions in a season-opening game since Indianapolis' EUGENE DANIEL on September 2, 1984 against the New York Jets.

Week 2 kicks off with an AFC North showdown on *Thursday Night Football* as the Baltimore Ravens travel to Cincinnati to take on the Bengals (8:20 PM, NFL Network). Baltimore saw six different offensive players score touchdowns – including newcomers **JOHN BROWN**, **MICHAEL CRABTREE** and **WILLIE SNEAD IV** – in a 47-3 victory over the Bills last week. The Bengals were led offensively by wide receiver **A.J. GREEN** (six catches for 92 yards and one touchdown) and running back **JOE MIXON** (149 scrimmage yards and one rushing touchdown) and safety **CLAYTON FEJEDELEM** forced and returned a fumble 83 yards for a touchdown in the closing minutes of Cincinnati's 34-23 victory at Indianapolis last week.

On Sunday afternoon, the Jacksonville Jaguars host the New England Patriots (CBS, 4:25 PM ET) in a rematch of the 2017 AFC Championship Game. In the contest, Brady threw two touchdown passes with under ten minutes remaining to overcome a ten-point fourth-quarter deficit as New England advanced to Super Bowl LII with a 24-20 win over Jacksonville at Gillette Stadium.

A full slate of action on Sunday closes at AT&T Stadium with the 112th regular-season meeting between the New York Giants and Dallas Cowboys on *Sunday Night Football* (NBC, 8:20 PM ET). Last week, running back **SAQUON BARKLEY** scored his first-career touchdown on a 68-yard run in the fourth quarter and became the first Giants rookie to rush for a touchdown of at least 60 yards on Kickoff Weekend.

NFL WEEK 2 SCHEDULE **THURSDAY, SUNDAY & MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 16-17**

(All times eastern)

Thursday, September 13

Baltimore at Cincinnati, 8:20 PM (NFLN)

Sunday, September 16

Carolina at Atlanta, 1:00 PM

Los Angeles Chargers at Buffalo, 1:00 PM

Minnesota at Green Bay, 1:00 PM

Cleveland at New Orleans, 1:00 PM

Miami at New York Jets, 1:00 PM

Kansas City at Pittsburgh, 1:00 PM

Philadelphia at Tampa Bay, 1:00 PM

Sunday, September 16 (cont'd)

Houston at Tennessee, 1:00 PM

Indianapolis at Washington, 1:00 PM

Arizona at Los Angeles Rams, 4:05 PM

Detroit at San Francisco, 4:05 PM

Oakland at Denver, 4:25 PM

New England at Jacksonville, 4:25 PM

New York Giants at Dallas, 8:20 PM (NBC)

Monday, September 17

Seattle at Chicago, 8:15 PM (ESPN)