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## COMMUNICATIONS

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# **REMATCH OF NFC CHAMPIONSHIP HIGHLIGHTS WEEK 2 SLATE**

To help celebrate the NFL's 100th season, each week will feature an NFL100 Game of the Week. Each game will be a nod to a momentous game played, a fierce rivalry that spans decades, a matchup of original teams and/or a game in which history was made. The NFL has designated the Cleveland-New York Jets matchup as the Week 2 **NFL100 GAME OF THE WEEK** because *Monday Night Football*, now in its 50th season, began with a Browns-Jets contest – and an American cultural institution was born. With Keith Jackson, Howard Cosell and Don Meredith in the booth, on Sept. 21, 1970, Cleveland topped the Jets, 31-21, at Municipal Stadium in the season-opener. Cleveland's **HOMER JONES** scored to open the second half on a 94-yard kickoff return and the Browns' **BILLY ANDREWS** intercepted Pro Football Hall of Famer **JOE NAMATH** and scored on a 25-yard return to ice the game late in the fourth quarter. This week's game will be the 781st in *Monday Night Football* history.



Rookies exploding onto the scene, flawless passer ratings, long-distance strikes and white-knuckle comebacks highlighted maybe the most thrilling Kickoff Weekend ever. What will the NFL do for an encore?

This week's NFC Championship rematch could be a classic in the making. Fresh off a last-second victory to open 2019, **DREW BREES** and **NEW ORLEANS** travel to meet the **LOS ANGELES RAMS** (4:25 p.m. ET, FOX), who defeated **CAROLINA**. It's one of six rematches of last season's playoff games on the NFL schedule. Head coaches **SEAN PAYTON** and **SEAN McVAY**, two of the top offensive minds in the game, each saw their teams score 30 points in their victorious season openers. They weren't alone in putting points on the scoreboard.

On the heels of the most prolific offensive season in its history, the NFL picked up where it left off. The league combined for 90 touchdowns, most ever on Kickoff Weekend (89 in 2002 and 2011). Teams also combined for 776 points, the third-highest total in league history for an opening week. Only the 791 points in Week 1 of 2012 and the 788 in 2002, when the NFL expanded to 32 teams, were higher. BALTIMORE led the way, heading to the halftime locker room with 42 points, the most by any team ever in a season-opening half. KANSAS CITY and TENNESSEE also posted 40-plus points in their games, marking the first opening week ever in which three road teams scored 40-or-more points. And points most certainly weren't the only common thread.

To recap Week 1:

- **ROOKIE PASS-CATCHERS:** Four rookies – Tennessee's **A.J. BROWN** (100), Baltimore's **MARQUISE BROWN** (147), Detroit's **T.J. HOCKENSON** (131) and Washington's **TERRY McLaurin** (125) – posted 100-yard receiving games in their NFL debuts. It marked the first week ever in which more than two rookies recorded at least 100 receiving yards in their NFL debuts. Hockenson's total broke the 59-year-old NFL record held by **MONTY STICKLES** (123) for a tight end in his debut. Marquise Brown, meanwhile, became the first player in NFL history with two touchdown receptions of at least 40 yards in his NFL debut.
- **UNPRECEDENTED PASSER RATINGS:** Thirteen quarterbacks had a passer rating of 115 or higher (minimum 10 attempts). That's the most in any week in NFL history, breaking the record of 12 set in Week 3 of the 2017 season. Baltimore's **LAMAR JACKSON** and Dallas' **DAK PRESCOTT** became the first players to post the highest-attainable passer rating (158.3) in a season-opener (min. 20 attempts), with Jackson (22 years, 244 days) becoming the youngest player to finish any game with a 158.3 passer rating (min. 20 attempts).

- **EXPLOSIVE PLAYS:** Overall, 15 offensive touchdowns covered at least 40 yards, an NFL record for Kickoff Weekend. The prior record was 14 in 1991. With two more Sunday, Philadelphia wide receiver **DeSEAN JACKSON** (31) joined Pro Football Hall of Famer **JERRY RICE** (36) as the only players to record more than 30 touchdowns of 50-plus yards in NFL history.
- **CONTAGIOUS COMEBACKS: NEW ORLEANS** scored twice in the final minute to deny **HOUSTON**, 30-28, in a Monday night opener for the ages. In NFL history among season-opening games, Saints kicker **WIL LUTZ** (58 yards) recorded the longest game-winning field goal with no time remaining. Five triumphant clubs erased second-half deficits. **BUFFALO** trailed 16-0 and won, and **PHILADELPHIA** trailed 17-0 before winning. The only other year in which multiple teams overcame deficits of at least 16 points to win their Week 1 games was 1999, when both Arizona and Dallas closed 21-point gaps to win on Kickoff Weekend. Also this past weekend, both **INDIANAPOLIS** and **ARIZONA** trailed 24-9 in the second half and sent their games to overtime.

**HOPE REMAINS IN ABUNDANCE:** In 2018, seven teams opened 2-0. Only two – **KANSAS CITY** and the **LOS ANGELES RAMS** – made the postseason.

- Since 1990, when the NFL adopted the 12-team playoff format, 144 of the 235 teams (61.3 percent) to start 2-0 have qualified for the postseason.
- Since 1978, when NFL teams began playing 16-game schedules, and excluding the abbreviated season of 1982, 195 of the 313 teams (62.3 percent) to start 2-0 advanced to the postseason.
- Of those 313 teams, only 128 (40.9 percent) won their division titles.

**INTRACONFERENCE CLASHES:** In addition to the Saints and Rams, two other Week 2 games feature matchups of 1-0 teams. Earlier, at Lambeau Field, **GREEN BAY** with a win over **MINNESOTA** (1 p.m. ET, FOX) can start the year with a 2-0 record in the NFC North, and start 2-0 overall for the first time since 2015. In **OAKLAND**, the Raiders can also jump to 2-0 in their division with a win over **KANSAS CITY** (4:05 p.m. ET, CBS). Raiders running back **JOSH JACOBS** became the first player since Pro Football Hall of Famer **LaDAINIAN TOMLINSON** in 2001 with at least 100 scrimmage yards and two rushing touchdowns in his NFL debut. Meanwhile, Chiefs quarterback **PATRICK MAHOMES** has more passing yards (5,759) and passing touchdowns (53) than any player ever over his first 20 games. The Kansas City-Oakland game is one of seven division contests to dot the schedule, including **TAMPA BAY** at **CAROLINA**, who kick off Week 2 on Thursday night (8:20 p.m. ET, NFLN).

**FAMILIAR TERRITORY:** After authoring an incredible comeback to defeat the **NEW YORK JETS** last week, **BUFFALO** returns to MetLife Stadium to meet the **NEW YORK GIANTS**. It's the first time a road team has played at the same stadium in consecutive weeks since **BALTIMORE** did it Oct. 16-23, 2016, also at MetLife Stadium. **MIAMI** later this season will also travel to New York in consecutive weeks, Dec. 8-15.

## NFL SCHEDULE, SEPT. 12, 15-16

(All times Eastern)

Thursday			Sunday (cont.)		
Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Carolina Panthers	8:20 p.m.	NFLN	Seattle Seahawks at Pittsburgh Steelers	1 p.m.	FOX
<b>Sunday</b>			Indianapolis Colts at Tennessee Titans	1 p.m.	CBS
Arizona Cardinals at Baltimore Ravens	1 p.m.	FOX	Dallas Cowboys at Washington Redskins	1 p.m.	FOX
San Francisco 49ers at Cincinnati Bengals	1 p.m.	FOX	Kansas City Chiefs at Oakland Raiders	4:05 p.m.	CBS
Los Angeles Chargers at Detroit Lions	1 p.m.	CBS	Chicago Bears at Denver Broncos	4:25 p.m.	FOX
Minnesota Vikings at Green Bay Packers	1 p.m.	FOX	New Orleans Saints at Los Angeles Rams	4:25 p.m.	FOX
Jacksonville Jaguars at Houston Texans	1 p.m.	CBS	Philadelphia Eagles at Atlanta Falcons	8:20 p.m.	NBC
New England Patriots at Miami Dolphins	1 p.m.	CBS	<b>Monday</b>		
Buffalo Bills at New York Giants	1 p.m.	CBS	Cleveland Browns at New York Jets	8:15 p.m.	ESPN