

NOT HALF BAD

Losing at halftime? That’s okay. A great pep-talk, some secret plays, or a crafty game plan shift may spur a second-half comeback victory. Unless, of course, you’re facing the 2002 Indianapolis Colts, New England Patriots or Pittsburgh Steelers, who each posted undefeated records last year when leading at the half.

Clubs that posted the NFL’s best records when leading at halftime in 2002 (minimum two halftime leads):

TEAM	W	L	T	PCT.
Indianapolis Colts	6	0	0	1.000
New England Patriots	6	0	0	1.000
Pittsburgh Steelers	9	0	1	.950
Tampa Bay Buccaneers	8	1	0	.889

Pittsburgh Steelers head coach **BILL COWHER** explains how his team was so successful in transforming halftime leads into victories. “The most important thing we do is emphasize playing smart,” he says. “You cannot commit turnovers. You have to force the opponent to work for every score by not giving up the big play, and you have to use the clock as your ally.”

Whether it’s holding a lead or coming from behind, the coaches of these four teams find ways to win. New England’s **BILL BELICHICK**, Cowher, **TONY DUNGY** of Indianapolis and Tampa Bay’s **JON GRUDEN** own a combined career coaching record of 284-211-1 (.574) with two Super Bowl titles, three Super Bowl appearances, 12 division titles and 18 playoff berths to their credit.

TERRIFIC TWO POINTERS

With all due respect to the NFL’s kickers, when teams line up to attempt a two-point conversion, eschewing the traditional extra point, the excitement level in the stadium noticeably rises.

That enthusiasm was never more evident than last December 15, when the Minnesota Vikings faced the New Orleans Saints. Trailing 31-24 late in the fourth quarter, quarterback **DAUNTE CULPEPPER** connected with wide receiver **RANDY MOSS** on a 13-yard touchdown with five seconds remaining. Then things *really* got interesting.

Instead of going for the extra point to force overtime, Vikings head coach **MIKE TICE** had his offense remain on the field to attempt a make-or-break two-point conversion. And when Culpepper ran for the winning two-pointer, giving the Vikings a thrilling 32-31 triumph, they became the first team to successfully convert in the final two minutes of a game when trailing by one point since the two-point conversion was instituted in 1994.

“My philosophy on when to go for two is a combination between the two-point chart and a gut feeling,” says Tice. “I would go for two points to win a game again if I feel the situation warrants it.”

A close look at the two-point conversion:

<u>Most Two-Point Attempts (2002)</u>		<u>Most Two-Point Attempts (All-Time)</u>		<u>Best Conversion Rate All-time (Min. 10 att.)</u>	
New Orleans	11	New Orleans	51	Jacksonville	65.4 (17-26)
New England	7	Indianapolis	44	Minnesota	62.9 (22-35)
Indianapolis	6	Miami	36	San Francisco	57.6 (19-33)
Pittsburgh	6	Minnesota	35	Arizona	56.5 (13-23)
Tennessee	6	St. Louis	35	Philadelphia	56.3 (9-16)

BYE WHYS

If there’s one thing that will be absolutely predictable in the NFL this year, it is that every coach and most players of a team entering a bye week will say that it comes “at just the right time.”

No matter what the week, the NFL positive-thinkers always get quoted that their bye is coming “at just the right time.”

A sampling of those quotes from 2002, and the best after-bye-week clubs of the past five years:

Jets defensive end JOHN ABRAHAM	“This is the perfect time for a bye week. It will help us look at ourselves and work on getting our act together.”
Seahawks head coach MIKE HOLMGREN	“The bye is really going to help us.”
Rams head coach MIKE MARTZ	“The week off has given us a chance to regroup and get a good game plan up for next week.”
Patriots safety LAWYER MILLOY	“The bye week couldn’t come at a better week for us.”
Bills receiver JOSH REED	“The athletes compete at such a high level each game that we really need a week off sometimes. The bye week comes at the perfect time.”
Chiefs head coach DICK VERMEIL	“People that lose after being on a bye and playing pretty well have an excuse: ‘Well, the bye broke our momentum. The bye doesn’t line up and hit you in the mouth on Sunday. If you need an excuse to play poorly, I don’t think the bye is a good one.”

Teams (1998-2002)	Record After Bye Week
Oakland Raiders	5-0
St. Louis Rams	5-0
Washington Redskins	5-0
Minnesota Vikings	4-1
Philadelphia Eagles	4-1
Tennessee Titans	4-1



CHEMISTRY IS THE SOLUTION

“The chemistry thing is definitely not overrated,” says New York Jets center **KEVIN MAWAE**. “The more guys play together, the more comfortable you get with one another and the more you learn to respect one another.”

Clearly, group cohesion is important in the NFL, when competitive pressures can overwhelm even the most self-confident and capable athletes, it’s especially important to have your teammates behind you all the way.

As San Diego Chargers defensive end **MARCELLUS WILEY** puts it, “Chemistry is more important than physics in football. Who cares about speed and talent? I want a group that works in unison and realizes the worth and potential of each member.”

Mawae and Wiley aren’t alone in recognizing the critical role of cohesion and friendship on an NFL team. Just look at what some of the top players from around the league have to say on the subject:

Minnesota Vikings running back **MICHAEL BENNETT**: “It’s the most important thing. When you’re talking about 11 guys out there running plays, you’ve got to have team chemistry in order for everything to work. It brings us closer together.”

Green Bay Packers wide receiver **DONALD DRIVER**: “It’s not just the team chemistry between receivers and the quarterback, it’s the chemistry between everyone. Everyone has to come together.”

Tennessee Titans running back **EDDIE GEORGE**: “It is everything for a team. Without team chemistry, you are talking about the difference between a playoff team and a non-contender. It is special and fragile. With free agency, it is important to try and find some chemistry early. To me, chemistry comes from knowing your teammates on and off the field and getting to a point where you can expect what they will do next.”

New York Giants defensive tackle **CORNELIUS GRIFFIN**: “It can make or break you. Everyone has to have the same heart beat.”

Atlanta Falcons defensive back **CORY HALL**: “With the camaraderie of the players and the coaches, the togetherness of the whole foundation—everybody from upstairs to downstairs—it’s just a healthy environment to work in and to play in. They’re putting you in the best possible position to win, to be champions, to go to the Super Bowl.”

Tampa Bay Buccaneers safety **JOHN LYNCH**: “Chemistry was one of the best assets of last year’s Super Bowl-winning team. It makes work very enjoyable to come to and it is about individuals coming together to share the same goal.”

Philadelphia Eagles quarterback **DONOVAN MCNABB**: “When I work out in the offsesason in Arizona, I encourage my teammates to come out there. We can work out in the morning and then hang around together in the evening; get to know each other better. I want them to bring the family, swim in the pool, get the grill going. I think that pays off down the road.”

Houston Texans linebacker **JAMIE SHARPER**: “Team chemistry keeps everyone on the team on the same page. If we don’t have team chemistry, we don’t have a shot at success.”

Denver Broncos assistant coach-cornerback **JIMMY SPENCER**: “Chemistry is what makes your team gel together. If you don’t have it, your team is lost. I look at it as being all about trust. As a corner, you have to be able to trust your safety to be in the right place, and he has to be able to trust you to be in your place. You’re like a family. With chemistry, you can be a great team.”

LET’S GO TO THE ECONOMIST & PHYSICIST

One man is a 6-0, 170-pound economist who never played football competitively. The other is a 6-4, 240-pound physicist who played offensive tackle in college. Neither has any affiliation to the NFL or any of its teams. Yet both believe that they have developed ways, through their trade, to help NFL teams find success.

DAVID ROMER, an economist at the University of California-Berkeley, is the author of the National Bureau of Economic Research paper entitled “It’s Fourth Down and What Does the Bellman Equation Say?” Romer and his assistants analyzed 20,000 NFL plays by using the Bellman theory, which simplifies a complex set of probabilities into an average set of likelihoods, to determine that NFL teams would be far better off by going for it on fourth down rather than punting.

DR. TIMOTHY GAY is a physics professor at the University of Nebraska who for three years has been teaching Cornhusker fans how physics relates to the game of football. Through his NFL Films telecast of “The Physics of Football,” which has been aired in 190 countries outside the U.S., Dr. Gay teaches lessons to fans and players alike to help them better understand the game they love to watch and play.

Following are several theories of both Mr. Romer and Dr. Gay:

DAVID ROMER ON GOING FOR FOURTH DOWN	TIMOTHY GAY ON THE PHYSICS OF FOOTBALL
Mr. Romer’s research determined that teams going for it on fourth-and-short situations near the goal line are successful 43 percent of the time. He argues that if a team has a three-in-seven chance of scoring a touchdown, and most likely adding the extra point, going for the touchdown has a higher expected value than kicking.	“Players of different sizes have been colliding since the NFL began,” says Dr. Gay. “It would seem that the larger and stronger of the two opponents would dish out more force than the smaller guy he hits. But according to Netwon’s Third Law, the force that the biggest player in the league exerts is exactly equal to the force exerted on him by his smaller target.”
“A team facing fourth-and-goal is better off on average trying for a touchdown as long as it is within five yards of the end zone,” says Romer. “At midfield, being within five yards of a first down makes going for it desirable. Even on its 10-yard line – 90 yards from a score – a team within three yards of a first down is better off on average going for it.”	As for why the smaller player winds up on the ground, Dr. Gay turns to Newton’s Second Law. The player with greater mass is more likely to run over his opponent.
Teams tend to overestimate the value of field position, compared with keeping the ball, on their end of the field and underestimate it, compared with the value of a field goal, on the other team’s end. When those estimates are corrected, the risks of going for it look a lot lower.	Dr. Gray’s explanation of why players run faster on turf than grass: “Grass is softer, so your feet sink, so it requires energy to put your foot down in the grass and lift it back up again. On artificial turf, more energy can be applied to lateral movement. It’s called the coefficient of restitution.”

SUPER BOWL TROPHY -- AND RING -- BY THE NUMBERS

All NFL players dream of gaining seven pounds in sterling silver weight . . . the Super Bowl trophy! The particulars of the Vince Lombardi Trophy:

Weight	7 pounds
Height	22 inches
Man-hours To Complete	72
Made of	Sterling silver *
Year Designed	1966
First Sketched On	A napkin
Sketched By	Oscar Riedener **
Crafted by	Hand
Made In	Parsippany, NJ
Made By	Tiffany
Sought Yearly By	1,600 players ***

*Including nuts and bolts. ** Former Tiffany VP of design. ***At least.

THE SUPER BOWL CHAMPIONSHIP RING

The **TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS** were only the second team in NFL history to use Tiffany & Co. -- manufacturers of the Super Bowl trophy -- to produce and design their rings.

"It was a great honor for Tiffany to join with the Buccaneers in designing a ring that would commemorate this dedicated team and their championship season," said **SCOTT SHIBLEY**, Tiffany vice president of business sales. "We especially enjoyed applying Tiffany's renowned quality standards to crafting the team's wonderful icons that give the ring great dimension and a unique personality."

The particulars of the Super Bowl XXXVII Championship ring:

Made of	14-karat yellow gold and approximately 54 diamonds.
Bezel (top)	Features a depiction of the Vince Lombardi Trophy, the base of which is set with three rectangular modified brilliant diamonds. The trophy is surrounded by 50 sparkling round diamonds set in white gold. The face also bears a football, studded with a marquis diamond.
Team logo	Set on one side of the ring with the player's name engraved on a banner above and the Raymond James Stadium pirate ship below.
Sides	On one side, the cities of the contending teams (Tampa Bay and Oakland) appear, along with the game's score, date and location (48-21; January 26, 2003; San Diego, California), and the Super Bowl and NFL shield logos. The ring's other side displays the player's name engraved on a banner and captures the team's spirit with a Buccaneer flag, palm trees and a seagoing pirate ship reminiscent of the ship that stands in the north end zone of Raymond James Stadium.
Designed by	Team with the assistance of Tiffany & Co.
Manufactured by	Tiffany & Co.



THE PLAYERS

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN 2003

BRETT FAVRE, Green Bay, needs 756 passing yards to pass Dan Fouts (43,040) to move into fifth place all-time. In 12 seasons, Favre has passed for 42,285 yards.

Favre has passed for 3,000 yards in a season 11 times in his 12-year career and can tie John Elway (12) for second all-time with his next 3,000-yard passing season.

Favre has thrown 314 touchdown passes in 12 seasons and needs 29 to pass Fran Tarkenton (342) to move into second place all-time.

Favre has led the league in touchdown passes three times in his 12-year career and can tie Johnny Unitas, Len Dawson and Steve Young (4) for the most seasons leading the league in touchdown passes.

Favre needs 337 completions to pass Fran Tarkenton (3,686) and Warren Moon (3,988) to move into third place all-time. Favre has completed 3,652 passes in 12 seasons.

Favre needs 475 passing attempts to pass Fran Tarkenton (6,467) to move into fourth place all-time. In 12 seasons, Favre has 5,993 passing attempts.

Favre has 115 career victories in his 12-year career and needs 11 to pass Joe Montana (117) and Fran Tarkenton (125) to move into third-place all-time.

VINNY TESTAVERDE, New York Jets, needs 994 passing yards to pass Johnny Unitas (40,239) and Joe Montana (40,551) to move into seventh place all-time. In 16 seasons, Testaverde has passed for 39,558 yards and needs 442 yards to become the ninth player in NFL history to pass for 40,000 yards.

Testaverde has thrown 244 touchdown passes in 16 seasons and needs 30 to pass John Hadl (244), Boomer Esiason (247), Dan Fouts (254), Sonny Jurgensen (255), Dave Krieg (261) and Joe Montana (273) to move into seventh place all-time.

Testaverde needs 199 completions to pass Dan Fouts (3,297) and Joe Montana (3,409) to move into sixth place all-time (see Bledsoe note). In 16 seasons, Testaverde has completed 3,211 passes.

DREW BLEDSOE, Buffalo, needs 81 completions to become the 10th player in NFL history with 3,000 pass completions. In 10 seasons, Bledsoe has completed 2,919 passes and needs 379 completions to pass Boomer Esiason (2,969), Dave Krieg (3,105), Vinny Testaverde (3,211) and Dan Fouts (3,297) to move into seventh place all-time (see Testaverde note).

PEYTON MANNING, Indianapolis, has thrown 58 touchdown passes to wide receiver Marvin Harrison and the duo needs eight touchdowns to pass Johnny Unitas/Raymond Berry (63) and Jim Kelly/Andre Reed (65) for the third-most touchdowns by an NFL quarterback/receiver tandem.

STEVE MCNAIR, Tennessee, needs 578 passing yards to become the fifth quarterback in NFL history (Randall Cunningham, John Elway, Fran Tarkenton and Steve Young) to throw for 20,000 yards and rush for 3,000 yards. In eight seasons, McNair has passed for 19,422 yards and rushed for 3,034 yards.

EMMITT SMITH, Arizona, needs 838 rushing yards to become the first player in history to rush for 18,000 yards. In 13 seasons, Smith, the NFL's all-time leading rusher, has 17,162 yards.

Smith has 76 career 100-yard rushing games in 13 seasons and needs two to pass Walter Payton (77) for the most all-time.

Smith needs 826 combined yards to join Jerry Rice (22,248), Brian Mitchell (22,001) and Walter Payton (21,803) as the only players in NFL history with 21,000 combined yards. Smith has gained 20,174 combined yards in his 13-year career.

Smith has 20,174 scrimmage yards in 13 seasons and needs 1,090 yards from scrimmage to pass Walter Payton (21,264) to move into second place all-time. Smith needs 826 total yards from scrimmage to join Jerry Rice (22,242) and Payton as the only players in NFL history with 21,000 total scrimmage yards.

JEROME BETTIS, Pittsburgh, has rushed for 11,542 yards in 10 seasons. Bettis needs 1,198 rushing yards to pass Thurman Thomas (12,074), Franco Harris (12,120), Marcus Allen (12,243), Jim Brown (12,312) and Tony Dorsett (12,739) to move into fifth place all-time.

Bettis needs 1,000 rushing yards to move into sole possession of fourth place all-time in career 1,000-yard seasons. In 10 seasons, Bettis has rushed for 1,000 yards eight times, tied with Tony Dorsett, Franco Harris, Curtis Martin and Thurman Thomas (see Martin note).

What To Look For continued...

CURTIS MARTIN, New York Jets, needs 1,000 rushing yards to move into sole possession of fourth place all-time in career 1,000-yard seasons. In eight seasons, Martin has rushed for 1,000 yards eight times, tied with Jerome Bettis, Tony Dorsett, Franco Harris and Thurman Thomas (see Bettis note).

MARSHALL FAULK, St. Louis, needs 12 touchdowns to pass Walter Payton (125), Jim Brown (126) and Cris Carter (131) to move into fourth place all-time. In nine seasons, Faulk has scored 120 touchdowns.

Faulk needs 1,812 total yards from scrimmage to pass Thurman Thomas (16,532), Marcus Allen (17,654) and Barry Sanders (18,190) to move into fourth place all-time. In nine seasons, Faulk has 16,379 total scrimmage yards.

Faulk needs 605 rushing yards and 16 receiving yards to become the first player in NFL history with 11,000 rushing yards and 6,000 receiving yards. In nine seasons, Faulk has 10,395 rushing yards and 5,984 receiving yards.

JERRY RICE, Oakland, needs eight receiving touchdowns to become the first player in NFL history with 200 career touchdown receptions. In 18 seasons, Rice has scored 192 touchdown receptions, the most in NFL history.

In 18 seasons, Rice has 1,456 receptions, the most in NFL history, and needs 44 to become the first player with 1,500 career receptions.

Rice needs 403 receiving yards to become the first player in NFL history with 22,000 receiving yards. Rice has gained an NFL-best 21,597 receiving yards in 18 seasons.

Rice has led the league in receiving yards six times in his 18-year career and can tie Don Hutson (7) for the most seasons leading the league in receiving yards.

Rice has gained 1,000 yards in a season 14 times in his 18-year career and needs one 1,000-yard season to become the first player in NFL history with 15 career 1,000-yard receiving seasons.

Rice has 73 100-yard receiving games in 18 seasons and needs two to become the first player in NFL history with 75 100-yard receiving games.

Rice needs one 200-yard receiving game to tie Lance Alworth (5) for most career 200-yard receiving games. In 18 seasons, Rice has four 200-yard receiving games.

Rice needs 752 combined yards to become the first player in NFL history to reach 23,000 combined yards (see Mitchell note). In 18 seasons, Rice has gained an NFL-record 22,248 combined yards.

Rice needs 758 total yards from scrimmage to become the first player in NFL history to reach 23,000 scrimmage yards. In 18 seasons, Rice has gained an NFL-record 22,242 total yards from scrimmage.

TIM BROWN, Oakland, needs 84 receptions to pass Cris Carter (1,101) to move into second place all-time. Brown has 1,018 receptions in 15 seasons.

Brown needs 1,000 receiving yards to become the second player in NFL history (Jerry Rice, 14) with double-digit 1,000-yard seasons. Brown has nine 1,000-yard receiving seasons in his 15-year career.

Brown needs 833 receiving yards to join Jerry Rice (21,597) as the only players with 15,000 career receiving yards. In 15 seasons, Brown has 14,167 receiving yards.

Brown has 97 touchdown receptions in 15 seasons and needs four to pass Steve Largent (100) to move into third place all-time. With three touchdown receptions, Brown would become the fourth player in NFL history (Jerry Rice, 192, Cris Carter, 130 and Steve Largent, 100) with 100 career touchdown receptions.

MARVIN HARRISON, Indianapolis, has 665 career receptions in his first seven seasons and already has more catches than any player in NFL history had in their first eight.

Harrison has three 1,500-receiving yard seasons in his seven-year career and needs 1,500 receiving yards to tie Jerry Rice (4) for the most 1,500-receiving yard seasons.

JIMMY SMITH, Jacksonville, needs 1,000 receiving yards to tie Lance Alworth (7) for fifth place all-time in 1,000-yard receiving seasons. In 10 seasons, Smith has six 1,000-yard seasons.

SHANNON SHARPE, Denver, needs 47 receptions to become the first tight end in NFL history with 800 receptions. In 13 seasons, Sharpe has 753 receptions, the most all-time by a tight end.

Sharpe has 9,290 receiving yards in his 13-year career, most-ever for a tight end in NFL history and needs 710 receiving yards to become the first tight end with 10,000 receiving yards.

Sharpe needs seven touchdown receptions to pass Jerry Smith (60) for the most career touchdowns by a tight end. In 13 seasons, Sharpe has 54 touchdown receptions.

FRANK WYCHECK, Tennessee, needs 12 receptions to become the fourth tight end in NFL history (Shannon Sharpe, 753, Ozzie Newsome, 662 and Kellen Winslow, 541) with 500 career receptions. In 10 seasons, Wycheck has 488 receptions.

BRIAN MITCHELL, New York Giants, has 22,001 combined yards in 13 seasons. Mitchell needs 999 yards to become the first player in NFL history to gain 23,000 combined yards. With 248 combined yards, Mitchell can become the all-time leader in the category (see Rice note).

Mitchell has gained 4,845 yards on punt returns, the most all-time, and needs 155 punt return yards to become the first player in NFL history with 5,000 punt return yards.

Mitchell needs two punt return touchdowns to pass Eric Metcalf (10) for the most punt return touchdowns in NFL history. In 13 seasons, Mitchell has returned nine punts for touchdowns.

What To Look For continued...

Mitchell has gained 12,897 yards on kickoff returns, the most all-time, and needs 103 kickoff return yards to become the first player in NFL history with 13,000 kickoff return yards.

Mitchell has gained 17,742 total yards on kick returns (kickoff and punt), the most all-time and needs 2,258 yards to become the first player in NFL history with 20,000 kick return yards.

MICHAEL BATES, Carolina, needs one kickoff return touchdown to tie Ollie Matson, Gale Sayers, Travis Williams and Mel Gray (6) for first place all-time. In 10 seasons, Bates has returned five kickoffs for touchdowns.

ROD WOODSON, Oakland, has led the league in interceptions two times in his 16-year career and can tie Everson Walls (3) for the most seasons leading the league in interceptions.

Woodson needs one interception to become the third person in NFL history (Paul Krause, 81 and Emlen Tunnell, 79) with 70 interceptions. In 16 seasons, Woodson has 69 interceptions.

Woodson has 1,465 interception return yards, the most all-time, and needs 35 interception return yards to become the first player in NFL history with 1,500 interception return yards.

AENEAS WILLIAMS, St. Louis, needs two interception returns for a touchdown to pass Ken Houston (9) to move into second place all-time. In 12 seasons, Williams has eight interception returns for touchdowns.

BRUCE SMITH, Washington, needs 3.5 sacks to pass Reggie White (198.0) to become the NFL’s all-time leader in sacks. In 18 seasons, Smith has 195.0 sacks.

JOHN RANDLE, Seattle, needs 6.0 sacks to pass Lawrence Taylor (132.5), Leslie O’Neal (132.5) and Richard Dent (137.5) to move into fifth place all-time in sacks. In 13 seasons, Randle has 132.0 sacks.

MORTEN ANDERSEN, Kansas City, has scored 2,153 points in his 21-year career and needs 71 points to pass Gary Anderson (2,223) for the most in NFL history.

Andersen has scored 100 points in a season 13 times in his 21-year NFL career, tied for the most all-time (Gary Anderson). With another 100-point season, Andersen will take over sole possession of first place in NFL history.

Andersen has successfully kicked 486 field goals and needs nine to pass Gary Anderson (494) to move into first place all-time. Andersen needs 14 field goals to become the first player in NFL history with 500 field goals.

SMITH: SACK RECORD?

Who knows? Maybe he does it in the second week of the season against a fellow Virginia Tech alum, **MICHAEL VICK** of the Atlanta Falcons. Whenever, and against whomever, the NFL should have a new sack king this year in the personage of Washington Redskins defensive end **BRUCE SMITH**.

Smith’s 195.0 sacks rank only 3.0 behind career-leader **REGGIE WHITE**, who retired from the NFL in 2000 after 15 seasons with Philadelphia, Green Bay and Carolina.

“Reggie White and I have totally different styles,” says Smith, who played his first 15 seasons with the Buffalo Bills before joining the Redskins in 2000. “He was more of a power rusher and I was more of a speed rusher with some power.”

As Smith enters his 19th season in the NFL, he admits that the road to where he is now has been long and hard, but he has had plenty of fun along the way.

“Anything worth achieving should be difficult,” says Smith. “When you go through adverse situations and come out on top you are able to build character, and it gave me a great sense of dignity and accomplishment. I can say I have enjoyed every minute of it.”

The all-time sack leaders in NFL history:

PLAYER	SACKS
Reggie White	198.0
Bruce Smith	195.0
Kevin Greene	160.0
Chris Doleman	150.5
Richard Dent	137.5

STREAKING INTO 2003

BRETT FAVRE, Green Bay, needs 20 touchdown passes to tie Dan Marino (10) for the most consecutive seasons with 20 touchdown passes. Favre has thrown for 20 touchdowns in nine consecutive seasons.

Favre needs to pass for 3,000 yards to become the first player in NFL history with 12 consecutive 3,000-yard seasons. Favre currently holds the league mark of 11 seasons in a row.

PEYTON MANNING, Indianapolis, needs 4,000 passing yards to become the first player in NFL history with five consecutive 4,000-yard passing seasons. Manning is the only player to pass for 4,000 yards in four consecutive seasons.

Manning needs 25 touchdown passes to become the first player in NFL history with six consecutive seasons having 25 touchdown passes. Manning is tied with Brett Favre and Dan Marino (5) for the longest streak all-time.

CURTIS MARTIN, New York Jets, needs 1,000 rushing yards to become the second player in NFL history (Barry Sanders, 10) to rush for 1,000 yards in each of his first nine seasons.

Martin needs 1,000 rushing yards to become the third player in NFL history (Emmitt Smith, 11 and Barry Sanders, 10) to rush for 1,000 yards in nine consecutive seasons.

Martin needs 250 carries to become the second player in NFL history (Emmitt Smith, 12) to record nine consecutive seasons with 250 rushing attempts. Martin needs 250 carries to become the first player in NFL history to begin his career with nine consecutive seasons with 250 rushing attempts.

COREY DILLON, Cincinnati, needs 1,000 rushing yards to become the fourth player in NFL history (Barry Sanders, 10, Curtis Martin, 8 and Eric Dickerson, 7) to rush for 1,000 yards in each of his first seven seasons.

EDDIE GEORGE, Tennessee, needs 300 carries to extend his streak of consecutive seasons with 300 carries to eight, the most in NFL history.

JERRY RICE, Oakland, looks to extend his streak of consecutive games with at least one reception. Rice has a reception in 257 consecutive games, the longest streak in NFL history.

RANDY MOSS, Minnesota, needs 1,000 receiving yards to become the first player in NFL history with 1,000 receiving yards in each of his first six seasons. Moss is the only player in NFL history with 1,000 receiving yards in each of his first five seasons.

MARVIN HARRISON, Indianapolis, needs 100 receptions to become the first player in NFL history with five consecutive 100-catch seasons.

Harrison needs 1,500 receiving yards to become the first player in NFL history with 1,500 receiving yards in three consecutive seasons.

MORTEN ANDERSEN, Kansas City, has played for 21 seasons and can move into second place all-time this year, breaking a tie with Gary Anderson and Earl Morrall.

Andersen has played in 322 games in his 21-year career and needs two games to pass Gary Anderson (323) for second all-time.

JASON ELAM, Denver, has scored 100 points in each of his first 10 seasons, the longest streak all-time. Elam needs 100 points to become the first player in NFL history with 100 points in each of his first 11 seasons.

ADAM VINATIERI, New England, has scored 100 points in each of his first seven seasons and needs 100 points to become the second player (Jason Elam, 10) in NFL history with 100 points in each of his first eight seasons.

RYAN LONGWELL, Green Bay, has scored 100 points in each of his first six seasons and needs 100 points to become the third player (Jason Elam, 10 and Adam Vinatieri, 7) in NFL history with 100 points in each of his first seven seasons.

THE QBs: A WHOLE RANGE OF ‘EM, ALL GOOD

As always, all eyes will be on the quarterback position as the NFL kicks off its 84th season. And what a position it is, filled with established superstars, steady performers and exciting, thrill-a-minute youngsters who are highlights waiting to happen.

The contingent of veteran quarterbacks is led by none other than Green Bay’s No. 4, **BRETT FAVRE**. Favre is on the cusp of a bevy of milestones in 2003 (see page 49) and seeks to continue his amazing durability, one that has set him apart. Favre has started 173 consecutive games, the most in NFL history for a quarterback and the longest current streak in the league.

“Brett Favre is one of the most intimidating quarterbacks in the NFL,” says four-time All-Star quarterback **BOOMER ESIASON**, an analyst for CBS Radio. “He makes throws that others cannot make. Brett is the same guy doing the same things with the same flair and enthusiasm that he had 10 years ago. In my mind, that is the mark of a champion.”

Oakland Raiders quarterback **RICH GANNON** finished 2002 with a 97.3 passer rating, second-best in the NFL. Gannon, who enters his 16th season from Delaware, aims to lead the Raiders to a second consecutive Super Bowl appearance and fourth consecutive AFC West championship. Tampa Bay’s Super Bowl-winning quarterback, **BRAD JOHNSON**, another veteran standout in his 12th season, led the NFL with a 1.3 interception percentage in 2002 (six INTs, 451 attempts), and looks to continue his mistake-free play.

Buffalo Bills quarterback **DREW BLEDSOE** enters his 11th season on the heels of a strong 2002 campaign and with a significant milestone in site. Bledsoe needs 81 completions to become only the 10th player in league history with 3,000.

“When you play in this league, you’re on trial every week for your job,” says Bledsoe. “You always have to perform.”

There is another group of quarterbacks excelling as well. Though not as veteran as the aforementioned standouts, they are still fully established as excellent performers. One of the leaders of this contingent is Indianapolis Colts passer **PEYTON MANNING**, who enters the season on the brink of many noteworthy accomplishments. One is possibly extending his NFL record to five consecutive seasons with 4,000 yards passing. With 25 touchdown passes, he will bypass some impressive company, eclipsing Favre and **DAN MARINO** with his sixth consecutive 25-touchdown season.

Philadelphia Eagles quarterback **DONOVAN MC NABB** enters his fourth year as the club’s full-time starter, and the Syracuse alum has established himself as a proven winner. McNabb has taken his team to three consecutive playoff appearances, including two conference championship games in a row.

Tennessee Titans signal-caller **STEVE MC NAIR** needs 578 yards passing to become only the fifth quarterback in NFL history to throw for 20,000 yards and also rush for 3,000. McNair is coming off perhaps his best season in 2002, passing for career highs with 3,387 yards and 22 touchdowns. In New England, **TOM BRADY** boasts an impressive resume, including a Super Bowl triumph and Super Bowl MVP Award, while San Francisco’s **JEFF GARCIA** seeks a fourth consecutive All-Star appearance.

Then comes the NFL’s youngest passers, players who have already shown flashes of brilliance but promise years of thrilling moments ahead. Perhaps foremost among them is Atlanta Falcons phenom **MICHAEL VICK**. Vick excelled in his first year as the club’s full-time starter in 2002, finishing with 16 touchdown passes and just eight interceptions, while also rushing for 777 yards – third-most in NFL history among quarterbacks.

“Michael Vick is the best athlete at the quarterback position in the history of the game,” says Esiason. “His spontaneous movements make him the single most difficult player in the league to defend. Michael can create a play with his movement, which is similar to what **JOHN ELWAY** and **STEVE YOUNG** were able to accomplish.”

New York Jets quarterback **CHAD PENNINGTON** generated major excitement in New York after taking over as the starter last season, leading the NFL with a 104.2 passer rating and helping the Jets to the AFC East championship. The sky is the limit for talented passers such as Detroit’s **JOEY HARRINGTON**, Houston’s **DAVID CARR** and 2003’s top draft pick, Cincinnati’s **CARSON PALMER**. Players such as these all help to ensure that the quarterback position is in good hands for years to come.

AND IN THE FUTURE?

With more boys playing high school football than ever, nearly doubling the next-most-played sport, coupled with the ever-increasing number of passes thrown in college football, the future of the quarterback position in the NFL never looked brighter.

“There are more good college quarterbacks with NFL potential than ever before,” says **GIL BRANDT**, who served the Dallas Cowboys personnel department for 29 years and shares his gridiron knowledge on NFL.com. “Teams are relying on the passing game more. Traditional running schools are throwing the ball 25 times per game. College quarterbacks threw for 400 yards or more 54 times in 2002. Michigan threw the ball over 450 times last season. The game continues to open up.”

“Michigan has always been a program built around a running game,” Brandt continues. “The Big Ten conference in the past was known as a blue-collar conference. But with schools like Michigan and Ohio State going to the air more often than not, the entire conference is changing its perception.”

Brandt thinks that the increase in passing camps for aspiring young quarterbacks, along with 7-on-7 high school summer league football in some states, which emphasizes passing, are key reasons why youngsters are becoming better quarterbacks.

Who are among the best of some of those young quarterbacks? Following are Brandt’s five choices (alphabetically):

PLAYER	YEAR	HT., WT.	BRANDT’S ANALYSIS
Casey Clausen, Tennessee	Senior	6-3, 215	“Pure pocket passer. Has shown ability to overcome adversity.”
Eli Manning, Ole Miss	Senior	6-4, 216	“Leader. Strong arm and quick release. Student of the game.”
John Navarre, Michigan	Senior	6-6, 235	“Has shown steady improvement. Gunslinger. Stands tough in the pocket.”
Cody Pickett, Washington	Senior	6-4, 220	“Puts zip on the ball. Can make every throw on the field.”
Matt Schaub, Virginia	Senior	6-5, 244	“Throws a pretty ball. Accurate passer. Good intangibles.”

Brandt’s Honorable Mentions: **ROBERT KENT**, Jackson State; **JARED LORENZEN**, Kentucky; **JONATHAN LOSMAN**, Tulane; **LUKE MC KOWN**, Louisiana Tech; **PHILLIP RIVERS**, North Carolina State.

The pool will only deepen with these five high school seniors, rated in order of talent by high school guru **TOM LEMMING**:

PLAYER	HT., WT	HIGH SCHOOL	CITY, STATE	LEMMING’S ANALYSIS:
Brian Brohm	6-4, 200	Trinity	Louisville, KY	“Most ready of all the big-time QBs this year.”
Rhett Bomar	6-4, 205	Grand Prairie	Grand Prairie, TX	“Tremendous arm strength and great release.”
Anthony Morelli	6-4, 208	Penn Hills	Pittsburgh, PA	“Good feel for the game. Solid passing tools”
Chad Henne	6-3, 210	Wilson	West Lawn, PA	“Tough kid with a winning disposition.”
Xavier Lee	6-4, 200	Seabreeze	Daytona Beach, FL	“Mobile. Dangerous when throwing on the run.”

Lemming’s Honorable Mentions: **ROCKY HINDS**, (Playa Del Ray, CA), Saint Bernard HS; **CORNELIUS INGRAM**, (Hawthorne, FL), Hawthorne HS; **STEPHEN MC GEE**, (Burnette, TX), Burnette HS; **CHASE PATTON**, (Columbia, MO), Rock Bridge HS; **DREW WEATHERFORD**, (Land O’ Lakes, FL), Land O’ Lakes HS.

BRETT-TAKING

When football fans discuss quarterbacks and what it means to play perhaps the most glamorous position in all of sports, “**BRETT FAVRE**” is a name that quickly comes to mind. To many, Favre is the epitome of a quarterback in the National Football League.

Maybe it is because of his success – Favre has led the Packers to eight playoff appearances, four division titles, two NFC Championships and one Super Bowl victory. He has captured the Associated Press NFL Most Valuable Player award an unprecedented three times and been named to seven Pro Bowls.

Or maybe it is his attitude, as the Kiln, Mississippi native’s obvious love of football and competition, and the exuberance with which he approaches each game, has translated to fans worldwide. Favre’s No. 4 jersey can be seen on the streets from Tokyo to Toronto, Sydney to Sicily.

Or maybe it’s how Favre has the ability to relate to working people everywhere, as he shows up for work each and every day, Sunday after Sunday, never missing a beat and never giving anything less than maximum effort. Favre has started 173 consecutive games, the most ever by a quarterback and the longest current streak for any player.

Combine these attributes and it’s easy to see why for many, Favre is the ultimate symbol of an NFL quarterback.

“I’ve been lucky and very determined,” says Favre of his longevity. “There have been times when injuries could have kept me out and maybe should have kept me out, but my mom always said I was hard-headed. I’ve just wanted to play and you can always will yourself to do things.”

Favre began his journey as a starting quarterback – one that will almost certainly conclude with his enshrinement in the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio – in Week 4 of the 1992 season. On that day, Favre helped the Packers to a 17-3 win over the visiting Pittsburgh Steelers, completing 14 of 19 attempts for 210 yards, two touchdowns and no interceptions. The young quarterback who had come on in relief of an injured **DON MAJKOWSKI** the week before, was now on his way to stardom.

Favre’s ascension and unyielding grip on the quarterback position has forced several former Packers passers to look elsewhere for an opportunity to take the field. Included in this impressive group are New Orleans’ **AARON BROOKS**, Jacksonville’s **MARK BRUNELL**, Seattle’s **MATT HASSELBECK** and St. Louis’ **KURT WARNER**.

Brooks spent the 1999 season as Green Bay’s third quarterback before eventually emerging as a standout performer with the New Orleans Saints, passing for a career-high 27 touchdowns in 2002.

“I learned from Brett that this game can humble you in so many ways and no one is going to give you anything,” Brooks says. “We won three of our first four games in 1999 in the last minute, and Brett put the team on his back. He drove down the field and made all the right throws. It was magnificent. It really opened my eyes to the NFL and showed me what it takes to be a winner.”

Brunell spent the 1993-94 seasons in Green Bay prior to becoming the cornerstone of the expansion Jacksonville Jaguars franchise. Since joining the club in 1995, the three-time All-Star has led the team to four postseason appearances.

“I learned a lot from Brett,” says Brunell. “Watching his strong arm, the way he competed every game and always giving everything he had, helped me realize what it takes to be successful.”

Warner’s exposure to Favre was brief, but still made a lasting impression. The former NFL Europe League star with the Amsterdam Admirals spent the summer of 1994 in training camp with the Packers, his first exposure to the NFL.

“I remember Brett being a down-home, fun-loving guy,” Warner recalls. “He enjoyed what he was doing and made it fun for everyone around him. He was on the upswing of his career and you could tell he would be one of the best QBs in the league. He had all the talent, but he also had all the intangibles, which of course everyone knows now.”

Especially his opponents.

A look at some of the major milestones Favre is approaching in 2003:

- Has 42,285 passing yards and needs 756 to pass **DAN FOUTS** (43,040) for fifth place all-time. **DAN MARINO** is the all-time leader with 61,361 yards.
- Has passed for 3,000 yards in a season 11 times. He needs 3,000 yards in 2003 to tie **JOHN ELWAY** (12) for second-most all-time. Marino is the all-time leader with 13 3,000-yard passing seasons.
- Has thrown 314 touchdown passes and needs 29 to pass **FRAN TARKENTON** for second all-time. Marino is the leader with 420.
- Has led the NFL in touchdown passes three times and can tie **JOHNNY UNITAS**, **LEN DAWSON** and **STEVE YOUNG** (4) for most seasons leading the league in touchdown passes.
- Has thrown for 20 touchdowns in nine consecutive seasons and can tie Marino (10) for the most all-time.
- Has 115 career victories and needs 11 to pass **JOE MONTANA** (117) and Tarkenton (125) for third place all-time. The leader is Elway with 148.
- Has completed 3,652 passes and needs 337 completions to pass Tarkenton (3,686) and **WARREN MOON** (3,988) for third-place all-time. The all-time leader is Marino with 4,967.
- Has 5,993 pass attempts and needs 475 to pass Tarkenton (6,467) in fourth-place all-time. Marino is the leader with 8,358.

FAVRE’S STREAK GETS TESTED BY NEW SOLDIER FIELD

The Chicago Bears and Green Bay Packers will renew one of the greatest rivalries in professional sports on Monday, September 29, as the Bears open a newly renovated Soldier Field before a raucous, sellout crowd.

And though several storylines are sure to accompany the attention of fans and pundits alike, including the home debut of new Bears quarterback **KORDELL STEWART**, the return of *ABC’s NFL Monday Night Football* to the windy city, and the always intense rivalry between the venerable franchises, there will also be a significant milestone on the line.

Packers quarterback **BRETT FAVRE** has a touchdown pass in 22 consecutive games against the Bears – including five in two games last season – the longest active streak in the NFL. When the teams meet on December 7, Green Bay’s No. 4 might be in

position to tie the all-time record, held by legendary Miami Dolphins passer **DAN MARINO**. Marino had a touchdown pass against the New York Jets in 24 consecutive games from 1985-98.

“Brett Favre is the chairman of the board, the best of the best,” says Chicago defensive coordinator **GREG BLACHE**. “If you are going to start a franchise, that is the guy I would start with. He is worth eight or nine wins by himself.”

In 22 career games against Chicago, Favre has completed 445 of 707 attempts (62.9) for 5,299 yards, 44 touchdowns and 21 interceptions for a 94.1 passer rating. The Packers have won 18 of those 22 games.

A look at the active streaks and records since 1970 for consecutive games with a touchdown pass against one opponent:

ACTIVE				SINCE 1970			
Name	Opponent	Streak	Start	Name	Opponent	Streak	Years
Brett Favre	Chicago	22	1992	Dan Marino	NY Jets	24	1985-98
Mark Brunell	Cincinnati	12	1996	Brett Favre	Chicago	22	1992-present
Vinny Testaverde	Indianapolis	12	1988	Dan Fouts	Oakland	17	1978-87
Rich Gannon	Denver	11	1997	Joe Montana	Atlanta	15	1980-89
Drew Bledsoe	Indianapolis	11	1995	Steve Grogan	Indianapolis	14	1976-90

MANNING THE RECORD BOOKS

Indianapolis Colts quarterback **PEYTON MANNING** has thrown for 138 touchdowns in his five-year career. In each of his first five seasons, Manning has passed for 25 or more touchdowns, tying Green Bay Packers quarterback **BRETT FAVRE** and former Miami Dolphins QB **DAN MARINO** for the most consecutive seasons with 25 or more TD passes.

“I’ve seen a lot of Peyton, and he’s a great player,” says Marino. “He’s made great strides at this level and he seemingly always makes good decisions. He’s going to be a big-time quarterback for a long time.”

With 25 passing touchdowns this year, Manning can become the first player in NFL history to reach that mark six seasons in a row. Despite all of his success, Manning gives a lot of the credit to his coaches and teammates.

“I’m lucky because I’ve had the same coordinator (**TOM MOORE**) all five years, so I’ve become more comfortable and confident as time goes on. And I’ve been blessed with great teammates. I try to spread the ball around to different receivers and let them make plays. A lot of credit goes to the receivers.”

Following are the longest streaks of consecutive seasons with 25 or more passing touchdowns:

QUARTERBACK	TEAM	YEARS	STREAK
Brett Favre	Green Bay	1994-98	5
Peyton Manning	Indianapolis	1998-02	5*
Dan Marino	Miami	1984-88	5
Six tied	--	--	3

*Active streak

WHAT A COMBO!

Like bacon and eggs, or Burns and Allen, Indianapolis Colts quarterback **PEYTON MANNING** and wide receiver **MARVIN HARRISON** seem made for each other. The duo can this year conceivably move into third place all-time in QB-WR touchdown combinations – they’re already the most prolific pair of active players.

“What they have as a tandem has evolved over five years together in the offense,” says Colts offensive coordinator **TOM MOORE**. “It has come through hard work, practice and repetition.”

On top of that, it seems like Manning and Harrison are on the same level. “There is a degree of unspoken communication between Marvin and Peyton,” Moore says. “What makes them special, other than their obvious talent, is their drive to work and refine their abilities. They thrive on competition, and each has an outstanding desire to win.”

The top five QB-WR connections of all time:

PLAYERS	TEAM	TD's
Steve Young to Jerry Rice	San Francisco	85
Dan Marino to Mark Clayton	Miami	79
Jim Kelly to Andre Reed	Buffalo	65
Johnny Unitas to Raymond Berry	Baltimore Colts	63
Peyton Manning to Marvin Harrison	Indianapolis	58