



IT'S THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR: NFL ON SATURDAY!

If the NFL is playing on Saturday – which it will be for the next *three* Saturdays – it means that the annual December playoff scramble is in full tilt.

Saturday's nationally televised tripleheader offers the following:

- **1:30 PM ET (FOX): TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS (9-4) at NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS (8-5)** – The sunbelt travels to the snowbelt.

The last time Tampa Bay head coach **JON GRUDEN** led a warm-weather team into Foxboro, his Oakland Raiders lost to New England in overtime 16-13 on January 19, 2002 in that memorable “tuck/blizzard” Divisional Playoff game.

The Bucs face a quarterback, **TOM BRADY**, who is 14-0 in games played in 35 degrees or below. And since 1971, the Pats are 9-0 in games in snowstorms. That all said, the Bucs are 5-2 on the road this year and feature the NFL's leading rookie rusher, **CADILLAC WILLIAMS** (924 yards) -- the third Tampa Bay rookie to run for at least 900 yards (**ERRICT RHETT**, 1994; and **WARRICK DUNN**, 1997). Shaking off early-season injuries, Williams has averaged 102 yards in his last four games.

Playoff implications: The Patriots can capture the AFC East Division with a win or other scenarios.

- **5:00 PM ET (CBS): KANSAS CITY CHIEFS (8-5) at NEW YORK GIANTS (9-4)** – Tiki vs. Larry – two of the top five.

That's what it could come down to as night falls on Giants Stadium. “You have to run the ball in December, no matter what,” says Chiefs head coach **DICK VERMEIL**. And the game's two main backs definitely can.

The Giants' **TIKI BARBER** ranks third in the NFL in rushing (1,357 yards) and has pounded out four 100-yard games in a row. The Chiefs' **LARRY JOHNSON**, No. 4 in the league (1,251), is the hottest RB in 100-yard games, producing six in a row. But...they go against top-10 rush defenses – the Chiefs' No. 6 and the Giants' No. 8.

If it all comes down to the fourth quarter, you've got two top-10 quarterbacks leading things – KC's **TRENT GREEN** (No. 3 in fourth quarter, 103.9) and NY's **ELI MANNING** (No. 10, 85.9).

Playoff implications: The Giants can qualify for the playoffs with a win and other scenarios.

- **8:30 PM ET (ESPN): DENVER BRONCOS (10-3) at BUFFALO BILLS (4-9)** – Buffalo in December shouldn't bother the Rockies-hardened Broncos.

The only thing that could make Denver sweat is not winning. With a victory, they earn a playoff berth. With a win or tie and other scenarios, they can clinch the AFC West. And although the Bills are out of the playoffs, the Broncos and **QB JAKE PLUMMER** will not have an easy time of it. Buffalo ties Chicago for the sixth most takeaways in the league (27).

“Buffalo is a tough place to play,” says Plummer. “We know it's going to be as hard of a win as we've had all year, but we have to keep stacking them up.”