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NFL ANNOUNCES NATIONALLY TELEVISED KICKOFF WEEKEND & THANKSGIVING GAMES

The NFL announced on Monday its 2006 Kickoff Weekend nationally televised schedule – including a Monday night doubleheader -- and its Thanksgiving Day national TV tripleheader.

In a tradition instituted in 2004, the Super Bowl champion annually hosts the NFL Thursday night season kickoff the following year. This September 7 at 8:30 PM ET, the Super Bowl XL champion Pittsburgh Steelers will oppose the Miami Dolphins as NBC rejoins the NFL's TV Family for the first time since 1997. The game will feature a quarterback matchup of Pittsburgh's **BEN ROETHLISBERGER** and the Dolphins' **DAUNTE CULPEPPER**, acquired recently from Minnesota in a trade.

On Sunday, September 10, the FOX national doubleheader game at 4:15 PM ET will feature the Dallas Cowboys at the Jacksonville Jaguars, who finished 12-4 and earned a playoff spot last season

The Sunday night primetime game (8:15 PM ET) on NBC can be called the "Manning Bowl" and it will be a history-maker. The AFC South champion Indianapolis Colts will visit the NFC East titlist New York Giants. It will be a matchup of quarterback brothers – the Colts' 30-year-old **PEYTON MANNING** against his sibling, 25-year-old **ELI** of the Giants. It will be the first time in NFL history that brothers will start at quarterback against each other.

Monday night, September 11, will feature the first regularly scheduled *Monday Night Football* game on ESPN, and the first regularly scheduled *Monday Night Football* doubleheader. The first game (7:00 PM ET) will pit the Minnesota Vikings, under new head coach **BRAD CHILDRESS**, at the Washington Redskins, an '05 Divisional Playoff team. The Monday night "nightcap" (10:15 PM ET) will be an AFC West meeting of the San Diego Chargers, directed by new starting quarterback **PHILIP RIVERS**, at the Oakland Raiders, also led by a new coach, Pro Football Hall of Famer **ART SHELL**.

On Sunday, September 10, CBS, which has U.S. Open tennis in the late afternoon slot, will carry a lineup of early regional NFL games. CBS will televise the NFL national doubleheader late game in Week 2.

The NFL will kick off its new late-season primetime television package on NFL Network on Thanksgiving night, giving NFL fans three games on Thanksgiving Day for the first time.

The early game that day (CBS, 12:30 PM ET) will feature the Dolphins at the Detroit Lions, under new head coach **ROD MARINELLI**. The second game (FOX, 4:15 PM ET) will send the NFC South champion Tampa Bay Buccaneers to Dallas to face the Cowboys.

The Thanksgiving package concludes at 8:00 PM ET on NFL Network when the top two teams in the AFC West last year meet. The Denver Broncos (13-3) will visit the Kansas City Chiefs (10-6).

The announcement of these national TV games was made Monday afternoon by NFL Commissioner **PAUL TAGLIABUE** at the NFL Annual Meeting in Orlando, Florida.

The rest of the 2006 regular-season schedule will be finalized and announced in April.

The review of the Kickoff Weekend and Thanksgiving national television games:

KICKOFF WEEKEND				
DATE	DAY	OPPONENTS	NETWORK	TIME (ET)
September 7	Thursday	Miami at Pittsburgh	NBC	8:30 PM
September 10	Sunday	Dallas at Jacksonville	FOX	4:15 PM
		Indianapolis at NY Giants	NBC	8:15 PM
September 11	Monday	Minnesota at Washington	ESPN	7:00 PM
		San Diego at Oakland	ESPN	10:15 PM
THANKSGIVING				
DATE	DAY	OPPONENTS	NETWORK	TIME (ET)
November 23	Thursday	Miami at Detroit	CBS	12:30 PM
		Tampa Bay at Dallas	FOX	4:15 PM
		Denver at Kansas City	NFL Network	8:00 PM

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