

NFL: MORE EXCITING THAN EVER!

The players and their performances in the NFL seem to keep getting better, whether they come from veterans like **LA DAINIAN TOMLINSON** or rookies like **DEVIN HESTER**. The excitement quotient seems always ready to explode.

“You see the scores on Sunday and nothing should surprise anyone anymore,” says Seattle Seahawks head coach **MIKE HOLMGREN**. “Anybody is capable of beating anyone else. It’s great for the fans.

“You only play 16 games. Going into the last couple weeks of the season and having so many teams still in contention is great for fan interest. I think that is why the NFL is at the height of its popularity now.”

A look at some happenings in 2006 that exhibit the excitement of the NFL game:

In 2006...

- For the first time in history, three teams in a season – Baltimore, New Orleans and Philadelphia – went from “worst to first” in their divisions, winning their divisions after finishing last in 2005. It was the fifth time since 2000 that two teams performed such a turnaround.
- The cumulative winning percentage for all 12 playoff clubs was .672 (129-63). Eight of the 12 teams won at least 10 games.
- Seven clubs – Baltimore, Dallas, Kansas City, New Orleans, New York Jets, Philadelphia and San Diego – made the final 12 after missing out in 2005. It marked the 10th consecutive year that at least five clubs accomplished the feat.
- The postseason also showcased teams that have been consistently good over the years, with winning percentages of .600 or more over the past five seasons – Indianapolis (.750), New England (.738), Philadelphia (.663) and Seattle (.600).
- Scoring averaged more than 40.0 points per game (41.3) for the 13th consecutive season.
- **LA DAINIAN TOMLINSON** (most rush TDs ever, 28) and **LARRY JOHNSON** (most carries ever, 416) glamorized the rushing game. Twenty-three players rushed for 1,000 yards, tying 2000 for the most ever in a season.
- Offense exploded across the field. For the first time in history, there were 400-yard passers (**CARSON PALMER** and **DREW BREES**), 200-yard rushers (**WILLIE PARKER** and **FRANK GORE**) and 250-yard receivers (**CHAD JOHNSON** and **LEE EVANS**) in consecutive weeks in a season (Weeks 10-11). There was a 400-yard passer in each of Weeks 9-12, one behind the record five such weeks of 1986.
- Games were “***thisclose.***” Nearly half of NFL games were decided by one score:

POINTS	GAMES	PCT.
8 or Less	126 of 256	49%
7 or Less	117 of 256	46%
3 or Less	61 of 256	24%

To show the quality of today’s play, at the end of the 2006 season, eight of the 10 highest-rated passers of all-time with at least 1,500 attempts were active players. The other two are enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame. The list:

TOP-RATED PASSERS WITH AT LEAST 1,500 CAREER ATTEMPTS

QUARTERBACK	YEARS	ATT.	COMP.	YARDS	TD	INT	RATING
Steve Young**	15	4,149	2,667	33,124	232	107	96.8
Peyton Manning*	9	4,890	3,131	37,586	275	139	94.4
Kurt Warner*	9	2,508	1,645	20,591	125	83	93.8
Joe Montana**	15	5,391	3,409	40,551	273	139	92.3
Marc Bulger*	5	2,106	1,357	16,233	95	59	91.3
Daunte Culpepper*	8	2,741	1,759	21,091	137	89	90.8
Chad Pennington*	7	1,659	1,080	11,973	72	46	89.3
Tom Brady*	7	3,064	1,896	21,564	147	78	88.4
Drew Brees*	6	2,363	1,481	16,766	106	64	87.5
Trent Green*	9	3,527	2,143	26,963	157	101	87.5

*Active; **In Pro Football Hall of Fame