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ALWAYS UNPREDICTABLE NFL SAILS INTO SECOND QUARTER

As the NFL kicks off the second quarter of its season this week, only one thing is certain – uncertainty!

The unpredictable nature of the league has been evident through four weeks. And there's much more where that came from, beginning with one of Sunday's most anticipated matchups – the red-hot Philadelphia Eagles (3-1) facing their longtime rivals, the Dallas Cowboys (2-2) at Texas Stadium.

After dropping their opener in Atlanta on Kickoff Weekend, the Eagles have soared to three consecutive victories, punctuated with a stirring come-from-behind 37-31 win over Kansas City last Sunday highlighted by comebacks from 17-0 and 24-6 deficits.

"I thought the win last week was a great accomplishment by our football team against a good football team," says Eagles head coach **ANDY REID**. "To be able to come back against a club the caliber of the Chiefs was something special."

Ten of the NFC's 16 teams are 2-2 or better. And the six clubs who are sub-.500 find hope in the fact that since 1990, 11 teams have gone from three games below .500 to the postseason.

A look at some of the NFC's sizzling starts through the first quarter of the season:

ARIZONA: The Cardinals are developing one of the NFL's most dangerous duos at wide receiver in second-year pro **LARRY FITZGERALD** and third-year man **ANQUAN BOLDIN**. Fitzgerald (27 receptions, 368 yards) and Boldin (26 catches, 385 yards) are the only wide receiver tandem in the NFL with 25+ catches and 350+ yards.....Kicker **NEIL RACKERS** is a perfect 16 of 16 in field-goal attempts, leading the NFL in scoring with 50 points. His 16 field goals are the most through four games in NFL history.

ATLANTA: The Falcons' ground game has been a major reason for the club's 3-1 start. Atlanta leads the NFL with an average of 209.0 rushing yards per game and seeks to become the first team since the 1998-99 San Francisco 49ers to lead the league in rushing in consecutive seasons. No team has averaged 200.0 rushing yards per game for a season since the Chicago Bears accomplished the feat in 1977.....Defensive tackle **ROD COLEMAN** leads NFL defensive tackles with 5.0 sacks and the club tops the NFL with 17.0.

CAROLINA: It's been a successful return to the field for a pair of Panthers sidelined for much of 2004 due to injury. Running back **STEPHEN DAVIS** ties for second in the NFL and first in the NFC with six touchdowns. Wide receiver **STEVE SMITH** has also enjoyed a successful rebound, establishing himself as a game-breaking performer for Carolina. Smith has posted 25 receptions for 354 yards, averaging 14.2 yards per catch. His four touchdown receptions are tied for second most in the NFL.

CHICAGO: In his second year with the club, running back **THOMAS JONES** continues to be an impact player. After posting a career-best 948 rushing yards in 2004, Jones has rushed for 276 yards in three games, averaging 4.5 yards per carry with four touchdowns. Jones is on track for his first 1,000-yard season and aims to increase his rushing total from the previous year for his fifth consecutive NFL season.....Second-year cornerback **NATHAN VASHER** has had a nose for the ball in his brief NFL career, totaling eight interceptions in 19 games.

DALLAS: The Cowboys have specialized in close games this season, as each of their first four contests have been decided by six points or less for the first time since 1988.....Former New England teammates **DREW BLEDSOE** and **TERRY GLENN** have been reunited – for outstanding results. Bledsoe has posted a 96.2 passer rating, tossing seven touchdowns to three interceptions. Glenn meanwhile leads the NFL by averaging a whopping 25.0 yards per catch (minimum 15 catches), totaling 400 receiving yards – his most after four games since 1999.

DETROIT: The Lions have made life difficult for opposing passers through three games, allowing foes an average of 6.32 yards per attempt, sixth lowest in the league. The defense has posted five interceptions in 105 attempts and ranks fifth with a 4.8 interception percentage. Third-year safety **TERRENCE HOLT** leads the team with two interceptions.

GREEN BAY: The Packers last three losses have been by a total of six points.....Quarterback **BRETT FAVRE** ties for second in the NFL with nine touchdown passes. If he can lead the league for the fifth time in his career, Favre will surpass **JOHNNY UNITAS**, **LEN DAWSON** and **STEVE YOUNG** for the most seasons as the NFL leader in touchdown passes.

MINNESOTA: Second-year running back **MEWELDE MOORE** leads the team in rushing with 187 yards. Moore has had multiple rushing attempts in six games, posting 526 yards and three 100-yard rushing games in those contests.....Rookie punter **CHRIS KLUWE** leads the NFL with a 48.8-yard average and a 42.6-yard net punting average. Kluwe earned NFC Special Teams Player of the Month honors for September. The last player to post a higher punting average after his first four games was **STEVE O'NEAL** of the 1969 New York Jets (50.1).

NEW ORLEANS: Quarterback **AARON BROOKS** and wide receiver **JOE HORN** are both approaching significant franchise milestones. Brooks has thrown 109 career touchdown passes and needs seven to surpass **ARCHIE MANNING** for most in franchise history. Horn has 46 TD receptions with New Orleans and needs three to pass **ERIC MARTIN** (48) for most in club annals.

NEW YORK: The Giants lead the NFL with 136 points scored, an average of 34.0 points per game. If the club continues at this pace, it will shatter the franchise record of 488 points, set in 1963, and challenge the 1998 Minnesota Vikings' NFL record of 556.....Quarterback **ELI MANNING** has not thrown an interception in 110 attempts and ties for second in the NFL with nine touchdown passes.

PHILADELPHIA: An edge in time of possession has been a great omen for the Eagles under head coach **ANDY REID**, as the club has compiled a 37-3 (.925) mark when earning the time-of-possession advantage.....Quarterback **DONOVAN MC NABB** has passed for 1,333 yards in four games, becoming the first player in team history with three consecutive 300-yard passing games. The Eagles have the NFL leader in receptions by a wide receiver (**TERRELL OWENS**, 32) running back (**BRIAN WESTRBOOK**, 22) and tight end (**L.J. SMITH**, 26).

ST. LOUIS: **TORRY HOLT** continues to cement his position as one of the NFL's premier wide receivers. Holt ranks second in the league with 30 receptions while his 442 yards receiving are third most in the NFL. The former North Carolina State star is on track for his sixth consecutive 1,300-yard receiving season.....The Rams' defense has done a good job on third downs in 2005, limiting opponents to a 29.5 percent conversion rate, tied for third in the NFL.

SAN FRANCISCO: With 17 receptions for 326 yards and three touchdowns, third-year wide receiver **BRANDON LLOYD** is off to the best start of his career.....Defensive end **BRYANT YOUNG** leads the NFL with 6.0 sacks, his highest total after four games, and is on track to eclipse his career best of 11.5 in 1996.....The club's special teams hold opponents to an average of 17.5 yards per kickoff return, tops in the NFL.

SEATTLE: Running back **SHAUN ALEXANDER** has proved extremely proficient at finding the end zone. Alexander ties for second in the NFL with six touchdowns and is on pace to extend his NFL record streak of four consecutive seasons with at least 15 touchdowns. He has 6,392 rushing yards since being drafted by the club in 2000 and is nearing the franchise record of 6,706 set by **CHRIS WARREN** from 1990-97.

TAMPA BAY: The 4-0 Buccaneers seek to equal the best start in franchise history (1979, 1997) and have risen to first place in the NFC South behind rookie running back **CARNELL "CADILLAC" WILLIAMS**. Williams has rushed for 447 yards, third most in the NFL.....The Bucs have the NFL's top-ranked defense, allowing 220.3 yards per game. The defense has not allowed a fourth-quarter touchdown in five consecutive games, the second-longest active streak (Houston, 7).

WASHINGTON: The club is off to a 3-0 start, its best since beginning 11-0 in 1991 en route to a win in Super Bowl XXVI.....Quarterback **MARK BRUNELL** has enjoyed success on third downs and is one of five passers with a 100.0 third-down passer rating (102.4).....The Redskins have allowed 18 points or less in nine consecutive games and have not allowed a 100-yard rusher in eight in a row, both the longest active streaks in the NFL.

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