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NFL'S TOP GROUND GAINERS RUSHING TO WIN

It's a football axiom that has never been truer than in 2005 – if you can run the ball, the wins will follow.

The NFL's top five rushing teams – Atlanta, Denver, Seattle, Indianapolis and Pittsburgh – have a combined record of 28-8 for a .778 winning percentage. And through eight weeks, no team has run the ball as successfully as the Falcons.

Coming off a bye in Week 8, the 5-2 Falcons, locked in a three-way tie atop the NFC South with Carolina and Tampa Bay, travel south this week for a matchup with the Miami Dolphins. The Falcons are averaging 188.1 rushing yards per game – tops in the NFL and on pace for the third most rushing yards in a single season (3,010) in history, trailing only the 1978 New England Patriots (3,165) and 1973 Buffalo Bills (3,088).

They will face a Miami defense that limited New Orleans to 90 yards rushing last week and has held five of its seven opponents under 100 yards rushing this season.

Leading the charge for the Falcons is nine-year veteran **WARRICK DUNN**, who is off to the best start of his career. The reigning Walter Payton/NFL Man of the Year has rushed for 732 yards, fourth in the NFL. His 5.4-yard average per carry is the best among the league's top 10 rushers. Running back **T.J. DUCKETT** also has been a productive option, gaining 183 yards on 45 carries and leading the team with four rushing touchdowns. And who can forget quarterback **MICHAEL VICK**, who leads all NFL QBs with 302 rushing yards on 49 attempts.

"Warrick finds the creases," says Atlanta head coach **JIM MORA**. "That's how he pops the long ones. What's interesting about T.J. and Warrick is they are both our running back. You've got two guys who would love to carry the ball every snap of the game and yet they know for us to be successful, they need to share the load."

A look at the NFL's top rushing teams in 2005:

Team	Avg. Rushing Yards Per Game	Rushing Yards	Record
Atlanta	188.1	1,317	5-2
Denver	170.8	1,366	6-2
Seattle	152.6	1,068	5-2
Indianapolis	134.9	944	7-0
Pittsburgh	131.3	919	5-2
			28-8 (.778)

Teams also have enjoyed big plays on the ground in 2005. Through eight weeks, there have been 147 runs of at least 20 yards, the most at this point in a season since 2002 (160).

In Seattle, **SHAUN ALEXANDER** has been a dominant big-play threat throughout the season. The NFL's third leading rusher with 776 yards, Alexander ties Dunn for the second most 20-yard runs in the league with six, trailing only Denver's **TATUM BELL** (eight).

"I am very proud of the job Shaun has done so far," says Seattle head coach **MIKE HOLMGREN**, whose team travels to Arizona this Sunday. "He seems like he's having fun and if he keeps it going, he could have his best year."

The success of Alexander has helped the Seahawks sustain long scoring drives. Seattle leads the NFL with 12 touchdown drives of at least 80 yards. A look at the teams with the most touchdown drives of 80-or-more yards:

Team	80-Yard TD Drives	Team	80-Yard TD Drives
Seattle	12	Dallas	7
Denver	8	Green Bay	7
St. Louis	8	Philadelphia	7
Carolina	7	San Diego	7

