

NFL PRESS BOX NOTES – WEEK 16

TOPS IN TOP 14: Week 15 was a successful one for the NFL on television.

NFL games were the top-rated program in the top 14 TV markets. In the top three markets, games at different times finished first -- Kansas City-New York Giants on Saturday in New York (No. 1), San Diego-Indianapolis on Sunday afternoon in Los Angeles (No. 2) and Atlanta-Chicago on Sunday night in Chicago (No. 3).

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INTEGRITY OF GAME INTACT: It is easy for fans to assume that clubs with losing records at this stage of the season are “just playing out the string” or satisfied with losing because it can mean a higher draft choice.

But statistics since 1970 prove that this is far from the case. As a matter of fact, losing teams have a better record over the final three games of the season than in all the games preceding them.

A perfect example of that is the Houston Texans' 30-19 win over Arizona last week. The Texans (2-12), after three tough losses in Weeks 12-14, came back last Sunday to register their largest point total of the season.

“This just shows there's no quit in us,” said Houston wide receiver **JABAR GAFFNEY**. “We came out and played it like we had a chance to go to the playoffs.”

Since 1970, teams with a share of last place have compiled a 42-109-1 (.280) record over the last three weeks of a season. This compares to the combined record of 257-1,780-2 (.127) of these teams in all the games preceding their final three. Over the past three seasons, the record of last-place teams during the final three weeks is 6-8.

The bottom line is that over the past 36 seasons, last-place teams have been more than twice as likely to win over the last three weeks of the season as they were leading up to those games. The integrity of the game is intact.

WINNING COMBINATION: When the Seattle Seahawks (12-2) host the Indianapolis Colts (13-1) on Saturday, it will mark the first regular-season game in history in which the teams playing each other combined for 25 wins.

Only six games have been played between teams with 24 combined wins:

TEAMS	DATE	COMBINED WINS
<i>Indianapolis (13-1) vs. Seattle (12-2)</i>	<i>12/24/05</i>	25
Frankford (14-2) vs. Pottsville (10-2-1)	12/18/26	24
Dallas (12-2) vs. Washington (12-2)	12/11/83	24
San Francisco (14-1) vs. LA Rams (10-5)	12/14/84	24
Seattle (12-3) vs. Denver (12-3)	12/15/84	24
Buffalo (13-2) vs. Detroit (11-4)	12/22/91	24
Tennessee (11-3) vs. Jacksonville (13-1)	12/26/99	24

The Colts-Seahawks' game also features two of the league's top running backs -- Indianapolis' **EDGERRIN JAMES** and Seattle's **SHAUN ALEXANDER** -- each of whom are on the verge of setting records.

James has 1,465 rushing yards and needs 35 more to become the fourth player in history with at least four 1,500-yard rushing seasons, joining Pro Football Hall of Famers **BARRY SANDERS** (5), **ERIC DICKERSON** (4) and **WALTER PAYTON** (4) as the only players to accomplish the feat.

Alexander, who last week became the fifth player in history with back-to-back 1,600-yard rushing seasons, has scored 24 touchdowns and needs four to pass **PRIEST HOLMES** (27 in 2003) for the NFL season record.

CAPITAL COMPANY: This Saturday, Washington running back **CLINTON PORTIS** can reach a rare mark when the Redskins host the New York Giants.

With 1,300 rushing yards in each of his first three seasons and 1,296 yards this year, Portis needs four yards to become the third player in history with 1,300 yards rushing in each of his first four seasons:

RUNNING BACKS	YEARS
Earl Campbell, Houston	1978-81
Barry Sanders, Detroit	1989-92
<i>*Clinton Portis, Den.- Wash.</i>	<i>2002-present</i>

*Through Week 15

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THE BARBER SHOP: Giants running back **TIKI BARBER** is having a stellar year. He leads NFL RBs in most runs of 20 yards (14) and 40 yards (6). Last week, Barber set four franchise rushing records -- yards in a game (220), yards in a season (1,577), most consecutive 100-yard games (5), and career attempts (1,846). He also tied **RODNEY HAMPTON** (49) for the most career rushing TDs.

One of the most impressive aspects of Barber's success is that it comes in the ninth year of his career at age 30. With 1,998 yards from scrimmage this year, Barber needs two yards to become the second oldest running back in history (**WALTER PAYTON**) to accumulate 2,000 such yards in a season. He also would join Payton (1984-85) as the oldest players to accomplish the feat in consecutive seasons.

The oldest players with 2,000 yards from scrimmage in a season:

PLAYER/TEAM	SCRIMMAGE YDS	AGE ON LAST DAY OF SEASON (12/31)
Walter Payton, Chi ('85)	2,034	31 years, 150 days
Walter Payton, Chi ('84)	2,052	30 years, 144 days
Priest Holmes, KC ('03)	2,110	30 years, 82 days
Tiki Barber, NYG ('04)	2,096	29 years, 270 days
Barry Sanders, Det ('97)	2,358	29 years, 158 days
<i>Tiki Barber, NYG ('05)</i>	<i>1,998 *</i>	<i>30 years, 268 days</i>

* Through 14 games

TIKI & CHOO CHOO: There were some ironies in **TIKI BARBER**'s breaking of the Giants' single-game rushing record. The player who held the record -- **GENE "CHOO CHOO" ROBERTS** -- ran for 218 yards against the Chicago Cardinals 55 years ago, on November 12, 1950. Roberts, who spent his entire career with the Giants (1947-50), hailed from Kansas City. Barber set his record against Kansas City.

Roberts was not even the Giants' leading rusher in 1950. It was **EDDIE PRICE**, who compiled 703 yards to Roberts' second-ranked 483 yards. Roberts is No. 2 all-time for the Giants in total touchdowns in a season (17 in 1949), behind **JOE MORRIS** (21 in 1985), and in front of Barber (15 in 2004) and Morris (15 in 1986) in third place.

Roberts, now 82, lives in Independence, Missouri.

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CARDINALS FLYING HIGH: Arizona Cardinals wide receivers **ANQUAN BOLDIN** and **LARRY FITZGERALD** are the only teammates this season to rank in the NFL's top five in both catches and receiving yards. Boldin is fourth with 85 receptions and ties for third with 1,240 yards, while Fitzgerald ranks second with 92 catches and fifth with 1,236 yards.

In addition, Boldin and Fitzgerald need 60 and 64 receiving yards, respectively, for their first career 1,300-yard seasons. If they both reach the milestone this week against Philadelphia, they will become only the sixth pair of teammates in history with 1,300 receiving yards in the same season.

The five pairs of teammates with 1,300 receiving yards in the same season:

TEAMMATES	TEAM	YEAR
Plaxico Burress (1,325), Hines Ward (1,329)	Pittsburgh	2002
Ed McCaffrey (1,317), Rod Smith (1,602)	Denver	2000
Isaac Bruce (1,471), Torry Holt (1,635)	St. Louis	2000
Herman Moore (1,686), Brett Perriman (1,488)	Detroit	1995
Mark Clayton (1,389), Mark Duper (1,306)	Miami	1984
<i>Anquan Boldin (1,240), Larry Fitzgerald (1,236)</i>	<i>Arizona</i>	<i>2005*</i>

*Through Week 15