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280 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10017
(212) 450-2000 * FAX (212) 681-7573
WWW.NFLMedia.com

Joe Browne, Executive Vice President-Communications
Greg Aiello, Vice President-Public Relations

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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION,
CONTACT: STEVE ALIC (212/450-2066)

QUARTER-POINT BRINGS TOP PERFORMERS, MORE WORK TO BE DONE

A quarter of the season's action is in the books and the engine that is the NFL is hot to the touch, purring with surprises, new contenders and high performers.

The key to success over the course of a season, however, is consistency.

"Anybody in this league can go out and make a play or two plays," says New England Patriots head coach **BILL BELICHICK**, whose team leads the AFC East with a 3-1 mark. "There's plenty of talent on the field, but if you want to be a good team, you have to sustain it play-after-play, week-after-week. That's the big challenge.

"It's tough to win in this league."

Head coach **BRIAN BILLICK** of the Baltimore Ravens (4-0) knows there is more work to be done: "That's what life in the NFL is all about. 'What have you done for me lately?'"

A look at some of the fast starts in the AFC through the first quarter of the season:

BALTIMORE: Fifth-year linebacker **BART SCOTT**, who did not start a game for the Ravens until last season, is currently tied for the NFL lead in sacks with 5.0. Scott stands second on the team with 43 tackles to linebacker **RAY LEWIS'** club-best 53, helping the Ravens reach 4-0...Kicker **MATT STOVER** has made 29 field goals in a row dating back to last season – his career-longest streak and the longest active such streak in the league.

BUFFALO: The backfield tandem of **J.P. LOSMAN** and **WILLIS MC GAHEE** is clicking for the Bills. Already this season Losman has passed for his career game-high in yards (328) while McGahee has done the same in rushing yards (150). McGahee tops the NFL with 389 rushing yards and now has 13 career 100-yard games, tied with **JOE CRIBBS** for the third most in club history (**THURMAN THOMAS**, 46; **O.J. SIMPSON**, 41).

CINCINNATI: The Bengals (3-1) aim for consecutive division championships for the first time in club history... Quarterback **CARSON PALMER** has six TD passes thus far, three behind the league-leader (**DONOVAN MC NABB**, Phil.) in aiming to lead the NFL in that category for the second year in a row...Running back **RUDI JOHNSON** is tied for the league lead with four rushing touchdowns...Cincinnati's defense has allowed only three touchdown passes against seven interceptions, led by safety **MADIEU WILLIAMS** with two picks.

CLEVELAND: Young offensive skill position players are growing together along Lake Erie as quarterback **CHARLIE FRYE**, wide receiver **BRAYLON EDWARDS**, and tight end **KELLEN WINSLOW** compose a formidable threesome. Through four games, Frye has accounted for eight TDs (five passing) to tie for the most among AFC QBs; Edwards stands third in the NFL in average yards per catch (19.1) among players with more than 15 receptions; and Winslow leads NFL tight ends with 22 catches...Defensive end **KAMERION WIMBLEY** tops AFC rookies with 3.0 sacks.

DENVER: Proving he can continue the team's tradition of rushing excellence, **TATUM BELL** leads all NFL players with at least 50 carries with a 5.1-yard per-carry average...Wide receiver **JAVON WALKER** is proving to be every bit the standout performer he was in Green Bay. A tough matchup for nearly any defensive back, Walker has 250 receiving yards and a pair of touchdowns on 11 receptions in three games.

HOUSTON: Under the tutelage of head coach **GARY KUBIAK**, quarterback **DAVID CARR** owns the NFL's best passer rating of 108.9. Carr paces the AFC with seven touchdown passes and is completing a league-high 73.0 percent of his attempts...A significant pair of hands contributing to Carr's success is wide receiver **ANDRE JOHNSON**, whose 30 receptions tie for the most in the NFL. Johnson's 410 receiving yards trail league-leader **MARVIN HARRSION** (413) of Indianapolis by three.

INDIANAPOLIS: In addition to leading the AFC in passing yards (1,112) and tying for the second most TD passes in the conference with six, Colts quarterback **PEYTON MANNING** is running it across the goal line as well with two rushing TDs

on the year. Manning entered the season not having rushed for a score since 2002...In his first four NFL games – all victories for the Colts – rookie running back **JOSEPH ADDAI** is averaging 4.5 yards per carry, nearly a yard more than former Colts rusher **EDGERRIN JAMES** (3.7) posted in his first four rookie games in 1999.

JACKSONVILLE: Cornerback **RASHEAN MATHIS** leads the NFL with four interceptions and with his most recent pick Sunday at Washington, now owns the franchise record with 16 just four games into his fourth season...Quarterback **BYRON LEFTWICH** is finding third-year vet **REGGIE WILLIAMS** open often as Williams is fourth among AFC WRs with 21 catches. His three TD receptions tie for the league high...No AFC rookie running back has as many third-down receptions as **MAURICE JONES-DREW**, who has six for 83 yards (13.8 average) with two going for touchdowns.

KANSAS CITY: Continuing to churn out stellar performances, running back **LARRY JOHNSON** leads the AFC in scrimmage yards with 457. Johnson has 11 100-yard rushing games in his past 12 dating back to 2005...The Chiefs' defense has not allowed a touchdown pass in its first three games of the season, marking the first time in franchise history that the club has accomplished that feat.

MIAMI: Defensive end **JASON TAYLOR**, with 3.0 sacks on the season, now has 95.5 in his career and is 4.5 sacks shy of becoming the 23rd player in history with 100...**RONNIE BROWN** is one of four NFL running backs with at least 200 rushing yards (239) and 150 receiving yards (156)...The Dolphins aim to become the 19th team since 1990 to begin a season 1-3 and advance to the playoffs. The 2001 New England Patriots, who began 1-3, won Super Bowl XXXVI.

NEW ENGLAND: Running back **LAURENCE MARONEY** leads the Patriots and all NFL rookies with 294 rushing yards. His two TDs in a 38-13 win at Cincinnati Sunday marked the first time a New England rookie registered multiple rushing touchdowns in a game since **CURTIS MARTIN** (five) did it in 1995...The Patriots are one of two AFC clubs (Jacksonville) to have six players with at least eight receptions, led by tight end **BEN WATSON** with 12. Last season, Watson recorded his 12th reception on Nov. 13 in the ninth game of the year.

NEW YORK: Wide receiver **LAVERANUES COLES** is tied for the NFL lead in receptions with 30. **AL TOON** was the most recent Jets player to lead the league for a season with 93 catches in 1988...**KEVAN BARLOW** is tied for the league lead with four rushing TDs, tying for the second-most TDs overall. The last Jets player to lead the league in that category for a season was **EMERSON BOOZER**, whose 14 TDs in 1972 tied the Giants' **RON JOHNSON**.

OAKLAND: The Raiders' defense stands ninth in the NFL in total yards allowed per game (283.0) – a 19-slot improvement from their 28th ranking (371.0) in the category through four weeks in 2005...Kick returner **CHRIS CARR** stands fifth in the AFC with a 27.1-yard average. If he maintains that figure, he would become the first Raider since **GREG PRUITT** (28.4) in 1982 to average more than 27.0 yards per return.

PITTSBURGH: Black helmets and gold pants continue to spell doom for opposing rushers. The Steelers own the fourth-best mark in the league in rushing yards allowed per game (78.3) and have posted a top-five league ranking in this area for four of the past five seasons...Despite an early season bye, **HEATH MILLER** (146) has the sixth-most receiving yards among AFC tight ends. His 87-yard touchdown reception on the season's opening night remains the longest in the league through four weeks of play.

SAN DIEGO: In his first season as the team's starting quarterback, **PHILIP RIVERS** has proven worthy of the task. His passer rating (96.7) is the seventh-best in the league while his shiny 67.6 completion percentage is the NFL's third-most accurate mark...Led by 4.0 sacks from defensive end **SHAWNE MERRIMAN** and two **QUENTIN JAMMER** interceptions, the Chargers have yet to allow a rushing touchdown and lead the league in fewest yards allowed per game (184.3).

TENNESSEE: Rookie quarterback **VINCE YOUNG** started his first NFL game last Sunday and has thrown a touchdown pass in consecutive weeks...As its quarterbacks have dropped back to pass 143 times, the Titans' offensive line has only allowed six sacks. In fact, Tennessee – behind the pass-rushing exploits of defensive end **KYLE VANDEN BOSCH** (2.0 sacks) and rookie defensive back **CORTLAND FINNEGAN** (2.0) – owns a plus-two mark in sack differential (eight to six).

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