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CHEMISTRY IS KING BETWEEN QUARTERBACKS & CENTERS

We know of the coach-to-quarterback helmet communication system and much has been said about "sight adjustments" made by a quarterback and his receivers. But what about the man whose hands grasp the ball before every NFL snap?

What about center-quarterback chemistry?

"It's very important," says six-time Pro Bowl center **KEVIN MAWAE** of the Tennessee Titans. "The quarterback needs to feel comfortable with what is happening in front of him with protection. When a center and quarterback have chemistry, the quarterback will understand what protection calls are going to come and why that call was made."

"I have watched film with quarterbacks," continues Mawae. "We go through different scenarios and situations and work through what calls will work best for both the line and the quarterback. It helps eliminate the discrepancies that may occur during a game."

Here is a look at the quarterback-center tandems who have started the most games together since 1970 as well as those among active teammates:

QB-C TANDEM SINCE 1970	GAMES	CURRENT QB-C TANDEM	GAMES
Jim Kelly-Kent Hull, Buffalo	157	Peyton Manning-Jeff Saturday, Indianapolis	101
Brett Favre-Frank Winters, Green Bay	123	Trent Green-Casey Wiegmann, Kansas City	80
Steve Bartkowski-Jeff Van Note, Atlanta	120	Matt Hasselbeck-Robbie Tobeck, Seattle	74
Phil Simms-Bart Oates, N.Y. Giants	106	Michael Vick-Todd McClure, Atlanta	57
Dan Fouts-Don Macek, San Diego	105	David Carr-Steve McKinney, Houston	56

Indianapolis' **PEYTON MANNING** and **JEFF SATURDAY** have started 101 games together – the most by an active quarterback-center duo. "The chemistry is important in that you are both trying to communicate in the same way so that all five linemen, tight ends and running backs are on the same page, and that usually starts from the center's call," says Saturday, a 2005 AFC All-Star who entered the league as an undrafted free agent in 1998.

"There are many advantages that you have by playing together for a long time," says Saturday. "You kind of add on to what you have seen in past years as you watch tape, and you grow exponentially in what you do. It's a great honor to have played as long as I have with Peyton Manning."

A veteran of 10 NFL seasons, Denver's **JAKE PLUMMER** agrees with Mawae and Saturday from a quarterback's perspective. "It's very important for a quarterback to be comfortable working with his center, from a timing standpoint and the way he delivers the ball," says Plummer. "It's also important that we're on the same page with our silent counts."

New England quarterback **TOM BRADY** explains how he and center **DAN KOPPEN** work together to keep the Patriots' offense humming. "I control the communication to pretty much all the skill positions," says Brady. "The center controls the communication to the offensive line and the tight ends on how we are blocking on every play, run or pass."

Brady adds what he and Koppen work at together that few fans may know about. "Besides the physical stuff – like actually getting the ball on every snap, which we practice every day, both in the shotgun and from under center – it is just the way that we are always communicating," he says. "For example, on the road, when it is loud, we have to find ways that we can effectively make adjustments out on the field, so we will be talking throughout the game on the sidelines as to how we want to call the blocks."

In addition to ensuring clarity on protection calls, Mawae explains how his experience can help Titans rookie quarterback **VINCE YOUNG**. "I feel like I can take some pressure off of him by taking control of the line calls and making sure the whole line is on the same page," he says. "That will allow him to do his job and feel confident that we will protect him."

