



NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE
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IT'S MANNING VS. MC ALLISTER IN MISSISSIPPI AS COLTS FACE SAINTS; FIRST ROSTER CUTOWN LOOMS AS FIVE NATIONAL TV GAMES HIGHLIGHT WEEK 3 ACTION

A lot is happening – as usual! – in the NFL this week.

It will be a “happening” in Mississippi as two players with deep ties to the region highlight the state’s first NFL preseason game in 10 years as the Indianapolis Colts meet the “hometown” New Orleans Saints in the city of Jackson.

That game and the other 15 played this week will play a big part in determining final NFL rosters. The first roster cutdown is imminent. Clubs must be down to 75 players by 4:00 PM ET next Tuesday, August 29. Now is the week for players on the fringe to show their mettle.

Meanwhile, fans can sit back and watch much of the week’s goings-on with five national TV games.

The Colts-Saints’ matchup on Saturday night comes with numerous storylines.

It will signify one more step in the Saints’ commitment to the Gulf Coast region that was devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Last Monday, the team played Dallas in Shreveport, Louisiana. This Saturday’s game will be exactly a year to the day that the Saints last played in their Louisiana Superdome home (last August 26 against Baltimore).

For Saints running back **DEUCE MC ALLISTER**, the game at Jackson’s Mississippi Veterans Memorial Stadium – the first NFL preseason game in the state since August 3, 1996 (Houston 31, NY Jets 13 in Jackson) -- will be a homecoming.

Born in Lena, Mississippi, the Saints’ first-round draft choice in 2001 holds all major Ole Miss rushing records, conducts a “Cuttin’ Loose With Deuce” fundraiser in Jackson for underprivileged youngsters, and owns a car dealership in the city.

On the other side of the field will be a man with strong Mississippi ties also. Colts quarterback **PEYTON MANNING**’s father **ARCHIE** (who grew up in Drew, Mississippi) preceded McAllister as one of the most acclaimed players in Rebels history. He went on to star for the Saints and be chosen this year as the quarterback of the club’s All-40th Anniversary Team. Of course, Archie’s other QB son, the New York Giants’ **ELI**, followed in his footsteps at Ole Miss.

“What I’m looking forward to finding out is which sideline Archie’s going to be on,” kids Saints head coach **SEAN PAYTON**.

The five national television games this week:

- **MIAMI at CAROLINA (Thursday, FOX, 8:00 PM ET):** Quarterback watch! One is rounding into shape. The other seems in midseason form.

This summer, all football eyes in South Florida have been planted on new Dolphins quarterback **DAUNTE CULPEPPER**. And they haven’t been disappointed. Recovering from knee ligament damage, the eight-year vet has not missed any training camp time, and last Saturday against Tampa Bay took his first real hits while completing seven of nine attempts for 86 yards while engineering a nine-minute TD drive in the second quarter. “I’m continuing to get stronger every day,” says Culpepper.

For the Panthers, the man who has quarterbacked them to the NFC Championship Game or better in two of

the past three seasons, **JAKE DELHOMME**, has been in solid form this preseason. He comes off a Saturday victory over Jacksonville in which he led Carolina to a score on the opening possession for the second week in a row (and went 10-for-18 for 129 yards).

- **PITTSBURGH at PHILADELPHIA (Friday, ESPN, 8:00 PM ET)**: Here, too, eyes will be on the QBs as these Keystone Staters meet.

The Steelers' Super Bowl XL-winning quarterback **BEN ROETHLISBERGER** will continue his quick recovery from his June motorcycle accident. In his second appearance of the preseason last Saturday, the sore-thumbed Roethlisberger ran a no-huddle offense while throwing for a touchdown on Pittsburgh's opening drive.

The Eagles' **DONOVAN MC NABB** also is coming back from injury (sports hernia), and also using the no-huddle, took the team to a 10-0 lead last Thursday against Baltimore.

- **TAMPA BAY at JACKSONVILLE (Saturday, CBS, 8:00 PM ET)**: Stop Gradkowski!

A perfect example of a young player trying to impress this week is Bucs rookie quarterback **BRUCE GRADKOWSKI**, the team's sixth-round (**TOM BRADY**'s round) selection from Toledo. Gradkowski – the first QB in Division I-A history to complete 70 percent of his passes in consecutive seasons – was 11-for-14 for 193 yards Saturday against Miami. He has thrown three TD passes in the team's two games.

"I'm not worried about the depth chart or anything," says Gradkowski. "There is some great veteran leadership here that I can learn from."

He'll have it tough if he faces the Jags' first-team defense. It surrendered only three points in four series against Carolina on Saturday, not allowing a first down in two of those series, and one in a third.

- **HOUSTON at DENVER (Sunday, NFL Network, 8:00 PM ET)**: Kubiak comes back!

New Texans head coach **GARY KUBIAK** returns to Denver to face the team he was offensive coordinator for from 1995-05 and helped to seven playoff berths and two Super Bowl titles.

"I'm sure there will be a lot of emotion," says Kubiak. "But this is a business trip. As a team, we have to find out in which direction we're headed. This will be a great test for us." The Texans are 2-0, their best start in preseason history.

One test for Houston will be the Broncos' running game. Denver's unheralded rookie free-agent running back **MIKE BELL** (Arizona) comes off a 73-yard, two-TD performance Saturday against Tennessee.

- **GREEN BAY at CINCINNATI (Monday, ESPN, 8:00 PM ET)**: One definitely looks like he's back, the other may be.

Packers quarterback **BRETT FAVRE**, who wrestled with retirement this offseason, acted like that was the furthest thing from his mind last Saturday against Atlanta as he completed 16-of-22 passes for 134 yards with two TDs coming after long drives. The Pack won 38-10.

"Sharp," said **RAY FARMER**, the Kansas City Chiefs' director of pro personnel who was scouting the game. "But that's no surprise. He's Brett Favre."

For Cincinnati, their main man may return. Quarterback **CARSON PALMER**, who last year led the Bengals to their first division championship since 1990, may see his first action after postseason knee surgery.

Cincy head coach **MARVIN LEWIS** wants Palmer to be able to play in the last two preseason games in order to start the season opener on September 10.

NFL cutdown dates for 2006:

DATE	ROSTER MAXIMUM
August 29	75
September 2	53

LAST WEEK'S NFL RESULTS

(Home team in CAPS)

Thursday, August 17

N.Y. GIANTS 17, Kansas City 0
BALTIMORE 20, Philadelphia 10

Friday, August 18

CHICAGO 24, San Diego 3
Cincinnati 44, BUFFALO 31
CLEVELAND 20, Detroit 16

Saturday, August 19

NEW ENGLAND 30, Arizona 3
Carolina 17, JACKSONVILLE 10

Saturday, August 19, cont'd.

Miami 13, TAMPA BAY 10
GREEN BAY 38, Atlanta 10
Houston 27, ST. LOUIS 20
Minnesota 17, PITTSBURGH 10
N.Y. Jets 27, WASHINGTON 14
DENVER 35, Tennessee 10

Sunday, August 20

Seattle 30, INDIANAPOLIS 17
OAKLAND 23, San Francisco 7

Monday, August 21

Dallas 30, NEW ORLEANS 7 (at Shreveport)

AMERICAN FOOTBALL CONFERENCE							NATIONAL FOOTBALL CONFERENCE						
East Division							East Division						
	W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP		W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP
Miami	1	1	0	.500	39	41	Dallas	2	0	0	1.000	43	10
New England	1	1	0	.500	53	29	N.Y. Giants	2	0	0	1.000	34	16
N.Y. Jets	1	1	0	.500	30	30	Philadelphia	1	2	0	.333	40	43
Buffalo	0	2	0	.000	44	58	Washington	0	2	0	.000	17	46
North Division							North Division						
	W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP		W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP
Cincinnati	2	0	0	1.000	63	34	Chicago	1	1	0	.500	38	31
Baltimore	1	1	0	.500	36	27	Detroit	1	1	0	.500	36	33
Cleveland	1	1	0	.500	27	36	Green Bay	1	1	0	.500	41	27
Pittsburgh	0	2	0	.000	23	38	Minnesota	1	1	0	.500	30	26
South Division							South Division						
	W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP		W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP
Houston	2	0	0	1.000	51	34	Carolina	2	0	0	1.000	31	23
Jacksonville	1	1	0	.500	41	43	Atlanta	1	1	0	.500	36	61
Indianapolis	0	2	0	.000	34	49	New Orleans	1	1	0	.500	26	46
Tennessee	0	2	0	.000	26	54	Tampa Bay	1	1	0	.500	26	16
West Division							West Division						
	W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP		W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP
Oakland	3	0	0	1.000	55	30	Arizona	1	1	0	.500	24	43
Denver	1	1	0	.500	48	30	St. Louis	1	1	0	.500	39	44
San Diego	1	1	0	.500	20	27	San Francisco	1	1	0	.500	35	37
Kansas City	0	2	0	.000	14	41	Seattle	1	1	0	.500	33	30

THIS WEEK'S NFL SCHEDULE (AUGUST 24-28)

(All times local)

Thursday, August 24

Miami at Carolina, 8:00 (FOX)

Friday, August 25

Pittsburgh at Philadelphia, 8:00 (ESPN)
Arizona at Chicago, 7:00
Baltimore at Minnesota, 7:00
N.Y. Giants at N.Y. Jets, 8:00
Detroit at Oakland, 7:00

Saturday, August 26

Tampa Bay at Jacksonville, 8:00 (CBS)
Cleveland at Buffalo, 6:00
Indianapolis at New Orleans (at Jackson, MS), 6:00

Saturday, August 26, cont'd.

Atlanta at Tennessee, 7:00
San Francisco at Dallas, 7:00
Washington at New England, 8:00
St. Louis at Kansas City, 7:30
Seattle at San Diego, 8:00

Sunday, August 27

Houston at Denver, 6:00 (NFLN)

Monday, August 28

Green Bay at Cincinnati, 8:00 (ESPN)

