



## NFC NEWS 'N' NOTES

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CONTACT: MICHAEL SIGNORA (212/450-2076)

## UNCERTAINTY & EXCITEMENT ABOUND AS NFL KICKS OFF SECOND QUARTER

Fans saw dominant performances, comebacks and surprises galore...and that was just the first quarter!

There's more excitement in store this week as the NFL kicks off the second quarter of its season with a bunch of intriguing games including a pair of always interesting NFC East matchups as the Washington Redskins visit the New York Giants and the Dallas Cowboys are hosted by the Philadelphia Eagles.

Dallas, Philadelphia and Washington all earned impressive victories in Week 4 – while the New York Giants had a bye – including the Eagles' 31-9 win over Green Bay on Monday night, highlighted by a four-touchdown performance from quarterback **DONOVAN MC NABB**.

After missing significant playing time due to injury a year ago, McNabb leads the NFL with nine touchdown passes, including his 45-and 30-yard touchdown strikes on Monday, and is on pace for a career-best 36.

"I looked up on some of the highlights and I saw Peyton Manning score, so I had to outdo him," says McNabb of his career-best two rushing touchdowns against the Packers. "We have to focus on the mistakes we made in this game and try to eliminate them. Next week is a division game against Dallas and we need it. We look forward to the challenge."

### A look at some of the NFC's sizzling starts through the first quarter of the season:

**ARIZONA:** The Cardinals receiving duo of third-year pro **LARRY FITZGERALD** and fourth-year man **ANQUAN BOLDIN** continues to impress. Fitzgerald and Boldin are on pace to each post 1,000 yards receiving for the second consecutive season...On the defensive side of the ball, safety **ADRIAN WILSON** set the NFL single-season record for sacks by a defensive back with eight in 2005 and is on pace to equal that number with two sacks through four weeks.

**ATLANTA:** The Falcons' ground game has been a major reason for the club's 3-1 start. Atlanta leads the NFL with an average of 234.3 rushing yards per game and seeks to become the first team since the 1983-86 Chicago Bears to lead the league in rushing in three consecutive seasons. No team has averaged 200 rushing yards per game for a season since the Bears accomplished the feat in 1977. The Falcons are the only team in the NFL with three players to have rushed for at least 200 yards: **WARRICK DUNN** (365), **MICHAEL VICK** (333) and rookie **JERIOUS NORWOOD** (217).

**CAROLINA:** After an 0-2 start, the Panthers have evened their record at 2-2, winning consecutive games decided by three points or less, and that might be a positive sign. In two playoff seasons under head coach **JOHN FOX** (2003, 2005), Carolina has posted a 13-6 (.684) record in games decided by seven points or less...Defensive end **JULIUS PEPPERS** has been a dominant presence, posting five sacks in the season's first four games, the best start of his six-year career.

**CHICAGO:** The Bears completed a perfect 4-0 first quarter of the season for the sixth time in the Super Bowl era, joining the 1985-87, 1989 and 1991 teams to accomplish the feat. Four of those five fast starters reached the playoffs (not in 1989)...With eight touchdown passes, tied for second most in the NFL, and 1,061 passing yards, fifth-best in the league, quarterback **REX GROSSMAN** is on track to set franchise single-season records in both categories.

**DALLAS:** Third-year running back **JULIUS JONES** has rushed for 288 yards in three games, the best start of his career. Jones has now rushed for at least 70 yards in 18 of 22 career starts, including each of the first three weeks...Wide receiver **TERRY GLENN** has three touchdown receptions in three games and may challenge **FRANK CLARKE**'s franchise record of 14 established in 1962.

**DETROIT:** Three of the Lions four losses have been by seven points or less...Wide receiver **ROY WILLIAMS** ranks fourth in the NFL with 384 receiving yards, 29 behind the leader, **MARVIN HARRISON**. If Williams can lead the league, he would be the first Lion to accomplish the feat since **PAT STUDSTILL** in 1966 with 1,266 yards...The club's defense has limited opposing rushers to 3.0 yards per carry, fourth best in the NFL.

**GREEN BAY:** Quarterback **BRETT FAVRE**'s six touchdown passes tie him for fifth-best in the NFL. The 16-year veteran needs 19 TD passes to eclipse Pro Football Hall of Famer **DAN MARINO** (420) for the most in NFL history... Rookie wide receiver **GREG JENNINGS** is quickly proving to be an impact player. The second-round pick from Western Michigan ranks second among rookies with 259 receiving yards and third with 15 receptions. The club's all-time rookie receiving leader is **STERLING SHARPE**, who had 55 catches in 1988, while **BILLY HOWTON** holds the rookie receiving yards mark with 1,231 in 1952.

**MINNESOTA:** The trend in Minnesota this season has been to play close, exciting games. Each of the club's first four contests has been decided by five points or less, the first time that has happened in franchise history...**KEVIN WILLIAMS** ties for fourth among NFL defensive tackles with two sacks. Pressuring the passer is nothing new for the fourth-year pro. Since Williams' 2003 rookie year, he ranks second in the NFL among defensive tackles with 28 sacks.

**NEW ORLEANS:** It's been quite a first quarter for the Saints, as the club has raced to a 3-1 start. Not only did they reopen the Louisiana Superdome in grand fashion on September 25 with a win over Atlanta, they also have successfully integrated a pair of rookies into the offensive attack. The NFL's No. 2 overall pick **REGGIE BUSH** has rushed for 147 yards and leads all running backs with 23 receptions. New Orleans plucked **MARQUES COLSTON** at the other end of the draft, as the seventh-rounder from Hofstra was the 252nd player selected. Colston leads all rookies and ranks sixth in the league with 336 receiving yards (20 catches) and ties for the NFL lead with three touchdown receptions.

**NEW YORK:** Running back **TIKI BARBER** continues to be a key player for the Giants, both rushing and receiving. Now he's on the verge of a significant milestone. His 225 rushing yards bring his career total to 9,012, the most in club history. With 132 receiving yards, he now stands at 4,850. With 150 receiving yards, he will join NFL greats **MARCUS ALLEN** (12,243 & 5,411) and **MARSHALL FAULK** (12,279 & 6,875) as the only players in NFL history with 9,000 rushing and 5,000 receiving yards.

**PHILADELPHIA:** Fourth-year tight end **L.J. SMITH** continues to be a potent offensive option for the Eagles. His 18 receptions and 224 receiving yards each rank third in the NFL among tight ends. At this pace, Smith will surpass the single-season club record for receiving yards by an Eagles tight end, set in 1988 when **KEITH JACKSON** finished with 869... Second-year defensive end **TRENT COLE** ties for the NFL lead with 5.0 sacks. In 19 career games, the 2005 fifth-round pick has 10 sacks.

**ST. LOUIS:** **TORRY HOLT** continues to cement his position as one of the NFL's premier wide receivers. Holt ties for the NFL lead with three touchdown catches, and ranks fourth with 26 receptions while his 332 yards receiving are seventh most in the league. The former North Carolina State star is on track for his seventh consecutive 1,300-yard receiving season... Running back **STEVEN JACKSON** ranks second in the NFL with 367 rushing yards and bids to become the first Rams player to lead the league since **CHARLES WHITE** (1,374) in 1987.

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Second-year running back **FRANK GORE** has been effective both rushing and receiving, totaling 460 yards from scrimmage, the second-best total in the NFL... The 49ers' defense has kept the pressure on opposing quarterbacks through four weeks as the club's 12 sacks tie for the fifth-best total in the league. Linebacker **MANNY LAWSON**, a first-round pick from North Carolina State, ties for third among rookies with two sacks.

**SEATTLE:** The Seahawks are off to a 3-1 start in their quest to become the first Super Bowl loser to return to the game the following season since the 1992 Buffalo Bills... Safety **KEN HAMLIN** has played a major role on defense for Seattle, returning from his injuries in 2005 to earn NFC Defensive Player of the Month honors in September, helping the club to a perfect 3-0 month. With two interceptions through four games, he is on pace for eight, which would be the most by a Seahawk since **DARRYL WILLIAMS**' eight in 1997.

**TAMPA BAY:** The Buccaneers look to turn things around this week when they travel to New Orleans to face the Saints. Rookie quarterback **BRUCE GRADKOWSKI** makes his first NFL start after being selected by the club in the sixth-round from Toledo, where in 2003-04 he became the first quarterback in NCAA history to complete more than 70 percent of his pass attempts in consecutive seasons.

**WASHINGTON:** The Redskins closed the first quarter of the season with consecutive wins as the club has now posted 30+ points in five of its last seven regular-season games. Quarterback **MARK BRUNELL** guides an offense that ranks third in the NFL, averaging 371.8 yards per game and 5.9 yards per play... Wide receiver **SANTANA MOSS** is averaging a stellar 19.2 yards per catch, eighth in the NFL among players with at least 10 receptions.

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