



NFC NEWS 'N' NOTES

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INTERCONFERENCE SHOWDOWNS ON TAP!

When it comes to AFC versus NFC, is this the year things are about to change?

The 16 NFC teams certainly hope so.

American Football Conference clubs have captured seven of the past nine Super Bowls, including the last three in a row. The AFC posted a 306-248-2 (.554) record entering 2006 since the conference's run of Super Bowl success started in 1997. That turned around an NFC tide that lasted more than a decade, when the conference won 13 consecutive Super Bowls and posted a 351-334-1 (.513) mark in interconference play from 1984-96.

"Conference superiority runs in cycles," says NFL.com national editor **VIC CARUCCI**, "especially in an era when the forces of the salary cap and free agency promote competitive balance throughout the league. All teams work from the same talent pool. The balance of football brain power, whether it's coaching or evaluating players, will always shift back and forth for no real concrete reason."

Through the first five weeks of 2006, the NFC has posted a 9-6 (.600) record against the AFC and aims to take the series outright for the first time since 1995 (the AFC has won eight of the past 10 seasons with two years ending in a tie).

This weekend, six games featuring an AFC-NFC contest appear on the schedule:

NFC TEAM	AFC TEAM
Carolina Panthers	BALTIMORE RAVENS
DALLAS COWBOYS	Houston Texans
DETROIT LIONS	Buffalo Bills
TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS	Cincinnati Bengals
WASHINGTON REDSKINS	Tennessee Titans
SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS	San Diego Chargers

Home team in CAPS

NFL.com senior analyst **GIL BRANDT** believes that the emergence of quality quarterbacks is one of the keys to the NFC's rise.

"The dominance by one conference over the other is a cyclical thing, but one thing I look at is the quarterback," says Brandt, the former vice president of player personnel for the Dallas Cowboys from 1960-89. "There are some good quarterbacks emerging in the NFC. For example, we've seen **DONOVAN MC NABB** come into his own in Philadelphia. Recently, there's been **MATT HASSELBECK** in Seattle and this year there is Chicago's **REX GROSSMAN**. NFC quarterbacks are on the way up."

And it's not just the quarterbacks. Five of the top six rushers in the NFL this season are NFC running backs, including league co-leaders **STEVEN JACKSON** of St. Louis and **FRANK GORE** of San Francisco (465 yards).

With strong play out of those skill positions, it's no surprise that the NFC has put up some impressive offensive numbers. This season, eight of the top 10 teams in total yards reside in the NFC.

TEAM	YARDS	TEAM	YARDS
Philadelphia	417.8	San Diego	350.8
New York Giants	396.3	New Orleans	350.6
Indianapolis	357.2	Atlanta	350.3
Chicago	356.4	Green Bay	341.2
Dallas	351.5	St. Louis	340.6