NFC NEWS 'N' NOTES

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PLAYOFF RACES IN FULL SWING AS NFC CLUBS VIE FOR POSITION

The Chicago Bears can clinch their division with a win but the rest is up for grabs.

That is the scenario in the NFC this week as the Bears can claim the NFC North championship with a victory over division rival Minnesota. Week 13 promises a host of intriguing matchups between teams with designs on the playoffs, including the NFC East showdown between Dallas and New York at Giants Stadium.

"At this point, all the games are important from here on out," says Cowboys head coach **BILL PARCELLS**, whose team has won three in a row to vault into first place in the NFC East. "We know where the competition is. I think we're going to be in this race for a while. But we've got a long ways to go. It's going to come down to who plays the best here at the end."

Eleven teams in the NFC are within one game of .500 or better entering the final five weeks of the season. The Giants have the toughest remaining schedule of the contenders, facing opponents with a combined 29-26 (.527) mark.

Following is the remaining strength of schedule for the 11 NFC teams within one game of .500 or better:

NFC EAST

TEAM	**DALLAS (7-4)**	**NY GIANTS (6-5)**	**PHILADELPHIA (5-6)**
OPP. RECORD	25-30 (.455)	29-26 (.527)	28-27 (.509)
WEEK 13	at NY Giants (6-5)	Dallas (7-4)	Carolina (6-5)
WEEK 14	New Orleans (7-4)	at Carolina (6-5)	at Washington (4-7)
WEEK 15	at Atlanta (5-6)	Philadelphia (5-6)	at NY Giants (6-5)
WEEK 16	Philadelphia (5-6)	New Orleans (7-4)	at Dallas (7-4)
WEEK 17	Detroit (2-9)	at Washington (4-7)	Atlanta (5-6)

NFC NORTH

TEAM	**CHICAGO (9-2)**	**MINNESOTA (5-6)**
OPP. RECORD	19-36 (.345)	26-29 (.473)
WEEK 13	Minnesota (5-6)	at Chicago (9-2)
WEEK 14	at St. Louis (5-6)	at Detroit (2-9)
WEEK 15	Tampa Bay (3-8)	NY Jets (6-5)
WEEK 16	at Detroit (2-9)	at Green Bay (4-7)
WEEK 17	Green Bay (4-7)	St. Louis (5-6)

NFC SOUTH

TEAM	**NEW ORLEANS (7-4)**	**CAROLINA (6-5)**	**ATLANTA (5-6)**
OPP. RECORD	28-27 (.509)	27-28 (.491)	25-30 (.455)
WEEK 13	San Francisco (5-6)	at Philadelphia (5-6)	at Washington (4-7)
WEEK 14	at Dallas (7-4)	NY Giants (6-5)	at Tampa Bay (3-8)
WEEK 15	Washington (4-7)	Pittsburgh (4-7)	Dallas (7-4)
WEEK 16	at NY Giants (6-5)	at Atlanta (5-6)	Carolina (6-5)
WEEK 17	Carolina (6-5)	at New Orleans (7-4)	at Philadelphia (5-6)

NFC WEST

TEAM	**SEATTLE (7-4)**	**ST. LOUIS (5-6)**	**SAN FRANCISCO (5-6)**
OPP. RECORD	26-29 (.473)	22-33 (.400)	27-28 (.491)
WEEK 13	at Denver (7-4)	Arizona (2-9)	at New Orleans (7-4)
WEEK 14	at Arizona (2-9)	Chicago (9-2)	Green Bay (4-7)
WEEK 15	San Francisco (5-6)	at Oakland (2-9)	at Seattle (7-4)
WEEK 16	San Diego (9-2)	Washington (4-7)	Arizona (2-9)
WEEK 17	at Tampa Bay (3-8)	at Minnesota (5-6)	at Denver (7-4)