

SEASON IN REVIEW TOP 10 STORIES ■ TEAM REPORTS ■ STATS

February 2012

Pro Football **WEEKLY**



ELITE

Two-time Super Bowl MVP
Eli Manning and the
Giants capture the
Lombardi Trophy for the
second time in five seasons

PLUS: SENIOR BOWL COVERAGE



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KRT/PHOTOS LIVE

Justin Tuck played a key role in the Giants' Super Bowl win.



The 10-year CBA extension was the top story of 2011.

FEATURES

SUPER BOWL XLVI **12**

The NFL's title game came down to a few crucial plays that went the Giants' way, with another clutch performance from MVP Eli Manning a deciding factor. Plus, we recap the week's top stories from Indy.

TOP 10 STORIES **18**

PFW looks back at the top 10 stories of the 2011 season, highlighted by the 10-year CBA agreement, the power of Tim Tebow and the magical run to a title by Eli Manning and the Giants.

SEASON IN REVIEW **20**

We offer an in-depth review of the 2011 season for all 32 teams and select an MVP, biggest surprise and biggest disappointment for each. Plus, we look forward and give you each team's offseason outlook.

FUTURE STARS **40**

Our coverage of the Senior Bowl lets you know how QB prospects Kirk Cousins and Russell Wilson and CB Janoris Jenkins fared, and we tell you who helped or hurt their draft stock during the week.

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DRAFT DATABASE Get up to speed on the 2012 NFL draft by exploring PFW's new draft database, which features scouting reports on the top prospects and Nolan Nawrocki's player rankings.

DAILY VIDEO The Pro Football Weekly Video Network brings you insightful and entertaining analysis of all things NFL. We offer our no-holds-barred opinions on the NFL's most overrated and underrated players, as well as previews of free agency and the April draft.

FANTASY QUESTIONS William Del Pilar explores the biggest fantasy football-related questions for each team heading into this offseason.



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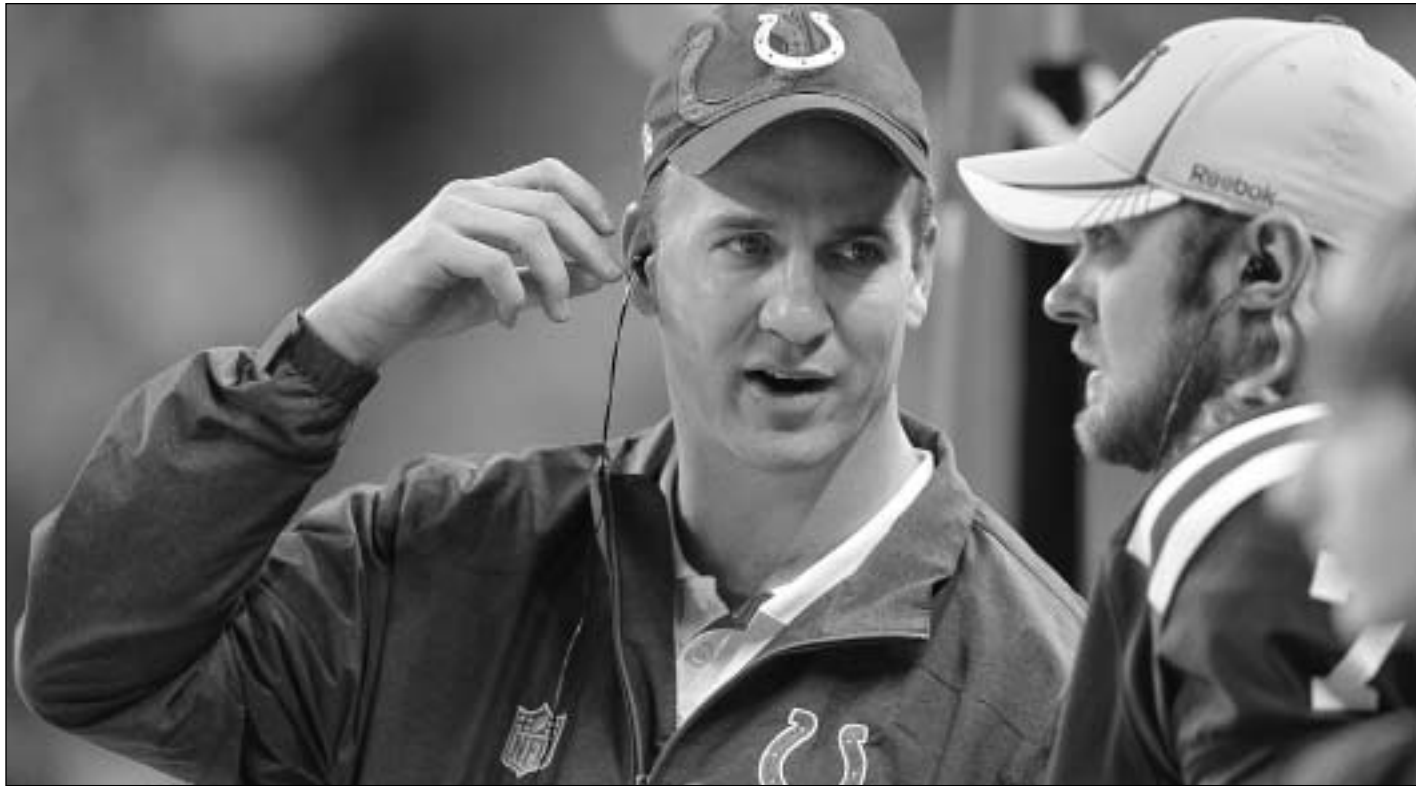
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THE WAY WE SEE IT

Our weekly take on the hottest topics from around the NFL.

MAN, OH, MANNINGS!



Just like they were in the week leading up to the Super Bowl, all eyes will be on Peyton Manning's future this February.

Exit Eli, enter Peyton as NFL's hottest story

Make way for more "Manning mania," with the NFL's undisputed "first family" continuing to hog center stage.

Hot on the heels of Giants QB Eli Manning's scintillating Super Bowl MVP performance, it's time for big brother Peyton to steal back the family thunder.

With the national media once again converging on Indianapolis the last week in February for the annual NFL Scouting Combine, the prospect of "Peyton Place II" — a continuation of the often-tacky soap opera featuring Peyton Manning and Colts owner Jim Irsay that dominated the week leading up to Super Bowl XLVI — looms large.

The smart money is on Irsay opting not to pay Manning the \$28 million option bonus that's due on March 8 to extend the four-time league MVP's contract for four more years, thus opening the door for Manning to likely become the most captivating free agent in league history.

Look for more suitors than just Dolphins owner Stephen Ross to be infatuated with the prospect of making Manning their big fish, especially in the wake of reports indicating that he'd be willing to sign a strictly performance-based contract with a new team. Sure beats the hell out of an impending lockout for "hot offseason story" honors, don't you think? — *Dan Arkush*

CAUTIONARY TALE

Coughlin has more work to do to get into Hall of Fame

In the span of about 36 hours in Indianapolis, we learned that Bill Parcells is not yet qualified to make the Hall of Fame — and that, transitively, neither is Tom Coughlin. In winning his second Super Bowl, Coughlin went a long way toward cementing his place in Canton, but he has more work to do to get there. Parcells, who famously rebuilt the Giants, Patriots, Jets and Cowboys and won two Super Bowls in the process, has more victories. Right now, Parcells (172-130-1 regular season, 11-8 postseason) has a better overall record than Coughlin (142-114, 12-7). The good news is that Coughlin plans to coach more, probably earning at least a three-year deal. The bad? He has no idea right now what it will take to earn the bronze bust. — *Eric Edholm*

MOVING FORWARD

Pats come away empty again; must look to 2012

A crushing loss in the Super Bowl has the Patriots looking forward at what needs to be improved, instead of celebrating the legacies of Tom Brady and Bill Belichick. It will be a busy offseason for Robert Kraft and company, with the contracts of several key contributors expiring, starting with WR Wes Welker. It's more a question of "How much will it cost?" as opposed to "Can he be re-signed?" Other key free agents include BenJarvus Green-Ellis, Dan Connolly and Andre Carter. The loss to the Giants showed needs in some of the same places as last offseason: pass rush, secondary and wide receiver. The Patriots should remain the team to beat in the AFC East in 2012, but personnel improvements are needed for the Pats to be considered a Super Bowl contender again. — *Kevin Fishbain*

BREES WAITING

Saints, QB are on the clock with free agency looming

Peyton Manning is not the only high-profile quarterback with a potentially intriguing contract situation this offseason. No one — including Drew Brees, whose contract is set to expire — seems to doubt that Brees will be playing for the Saints for many years to come. Yet, with about a month to go before the start of free agency, it doesn't appear that significant progress is being made in negotiations to sign the Super Bowl XLIV MVP to a long-term deal, and the franchise tag is an option. How strongly do the Saints feel about Brees, who led the franchise to its only title in 2008 and set the NFL record for passing yards in a season in '11? This is their chance to show it. The longer this drags on, the more Saints fans will be left to wonder. — *Dan Parr*

2012 DRAFT ORDER

** — Subject to coin flip at NFL Scouting Combine.

RANK THE SKINNY

- 1 Indianapolis Colts** The most talked-about bad team during Super Bowl week of all time.
- 2 St. Louis Rams** Fans, city not necessarily on board with three home games in London.
- 3 Minnesota Vikings** Knees of A.P., Gerhart could gear draft decisions toward a running back.
- 4 Cleveland Browns** Childress has work cut out for him, taking over 29th-ranked offense.
- 5 Tampa Bay Buccaneers** Year Four crucial for Freeman, who fell below expectations.
- 6 Washington Redskins** Got good look at QBs in Mobile, but likely not the one they covet.
- 7 Jacksonville Jaguars** Khan would have drafted Tebow; not what Gabbert wants to hear.
- 8 Carolina Panthers**** Healthy defense could have Panthers eyeing playoffs in 2012.
- 9 Miami Dolphins**** Philbin and Sherman look to make Dolphins "Green Bay Southeast."
- 10 Buffalo Bills** Re-signing Lindell and LS Sanborn likely not the news fans are waiting on.
- 11 Kansas City Chiefs**** The All-ACL team (Charles, Berry, Moeaki) looking forward to '12.
- 12 Seattle Seahawks**** A team that's potentially willing to trade up for a franchise QB.
- 13 Arizona Cardinals** Can Larry Fitzgerald convince Peyton to be his next Kurt Warner?
- 14 Dallas Cowboys** Since '07, Giants have two Super Bowls, Cowboys have one playoff win.
- 15 Philadelphia Eagles** G-Men are reigning champs, but Eagles not far off in the division.
- 16 New York Jets** Think Rex wants to edit out part of his book where he trashed the Giants?
- 17 Oakland Raiders** Dennis Allen could use a high compensatory pick for Asomugha.
- 18 San Diego Chargers** Vincent Jackson is their top offseason priority ... again.
- 19 Chicago Bears** Cutler must be pleased to go from Martz to reunion with Jeremy Bates.
- 20 Tennessee Titans** New GM tells season-ticket holders it's Hasselbeck/Locker for 2012.
- 21 Cincinnati Bengals** The biggest beneficiary of an "aging" Steelers defense.
- 22 Atlanta Falcons** Gonzalez said '12 season will be his last. Another TE might be on radar.
- 23 Detroit Lions** After 11 sacks, six forced fumbles in '11, Avril is top-priority to re-sign.
- 24 Pittsburgh Steelers** Haley and Roethlisberger should be an intriguing duo to watch.
- 25 Denver Broncos** Moreno's run-in with the law adds to disappointing career to date.
- 26 Houston Texans** OLB spot a potential priority if Mario Williams is not re-signed.
- 27 New Orleans Saints** The only question is how much Brees will get to stay in New Orleans.
- 28 Green Bay Packers** A forgotten team after an early exit, but still a 2012 favorite.
- 29 Baltimore Ravens** With Ricky Williams retiring, Ravens are in market for No. 2 back.
- 30 San Francisco 49ers** A clause Alex Smith would want in his contract: a new WR.
- 31 New England Patriots** It will be another typical draft for the Pats: four picks in first 63.
- 32 New York Giants** And to think the Giants lost to the Redskins twice in Super Bowl season.

GETTY IMAGES

WHISPERS

■ Dolphins rookie RB **Daniel Thomas** battled injuries and didn't show a whole lot in his first season, but the club is still behind the player it traded up to draft in 2011. "Daniel is going to be a fine player. I believe in him," GM **Jeff Ireland** said at the Senior Bowl. "He's tough, he's strong, he learned the pass protections really quick. He's got to keep his feet in the ground when he's making contact." The Dolphins were 11th in the league in rushing, thanks to a breakout campaign by **Reggie Bush**, but we hear they still might draft another back to add depth to the unit. Short-yardage back **Lex Hilliard** is a restricted free agent.

■ How much did **Kelvin Sheppard** impress the Bills' coaching staff during his rookie season? He already has a spot in the team's new 4-3 defense. "I know Shep's going to be in the middle, don't hold me to anything after that," head coach **Chan Gailey** told reporters last week. The Bills are shifting to a four-man front under **Dave Wannstedt**, and questions remain about personnel, mainly at one DE spot and in the LB corps. It's expected that **Nick Barnett**, who excelled in his first season in Buffalo as one of the inside linebackers, will move outside in 2012. It was Sheppard, though, whom Gailey showed confidence in by announcing that his position is set in stone. The rookie took over as a starter in Week Eight and was fourth on the team with 70 tackles.

THE WAY WE HEAR IT

AFC EAST

By Kevin Fishbain



The Bills have a sense of loyalty to RB Fred Jackson despite C.J. Spiller's emergence late last season.


**BUFFALO
BILLS**

C.J. Spiller's performance in replacing **Fred Jackson** was a very positive sign for the Bills from an organizational standpoint. Spiller's 561 rushing yards with a 5.2-yard rushing average means the first-rounder likely is not the bust many thought. It also takes some pressure off the team when it comes to an extension for Jackson, who was one of the better backs in the league before breaking his leg in Week 11. The way we hear it, the team still feels a loyalty to Jackson, and GM **Buddy Nix** was quick to remind reporters earlier this month that Jackson is under contract through the 2012 season. Nix added that he wants Jackson to finish his career as a Bill. The Bills likely won't break the bank to keep Jackson, who will be 31 in February, especially knowing what they have in Spiller. What we do know is that the team will have one of the league's top backfields next season, and the Bills would prefer to get an extension done with Jackson.


**NEW YORK
JETS**

Plaxico Burress made headlines without saying much at the Super Bowl. His comments to the *New York Post*, such as "**Mark Sanchez** is Mark Sanchez" and "the Jets locker room is the Jets locker room" seemed to confirm that his days as a Jet are done. In his first NFL season since 2008, Burress had 45 catches for 612 yards and eight touchdowns. With **Tony Sparano** taking over the offense, a wealth of receivers is not a high priority. Looking at the depth behind **Santonio Holmes**, the Jets' staff was impressed with WR **Patrick Turner**, who is similar in size to Burress at 6-5, 220 pounds, but he had only eight receptions all season. Rookie **Jeremy Kerley** played well out of the slot. Behind Kerley, though, there is not much depth. **Logan Payne** missed the 2011 season but is mainly a special-teams contributor. Assuming Burress is not re-signed, the Jets might need to draft another outside receiver.


**NEW ENGLAND
PATRIOTS**

His season might be remembered most for the catch he was unable to make in Super Bowl XLVI, but WR **Wes Welker** picked a good time to have his best campaign. In a contract year, Welker led the league with 122 catches and tallied 1,569 yards and nine TDs. He added 19 catches for 168 yards and a score in the playoffs. Heading into the offseason, Welker's contract is expected to be priority No. 1 in the front office. Welker became a star in his first season with the Pats in 2007 and it appears to be a mutual feeling to keep him in New England. "I think Wes wants to be here and we want him to be here," owner **Robert Kraft** said after the AFC title game. "Hopefully when the season ends, both sides will be wise enough to consummate something. He's pretty special." In recent years, the Patriots have successfully locked up **Vince Wilfork**, **Tom Brady** and **Logan Mankins**, and Welker is likely next.


**MIAMI
DOLPHINS**

The Dolphins have one glaring hole on offense — at quarterback — but the defense is a slightly easier unit to work with for **Joe Philbin's** new coaching staff. Miami finished 15th in the league in total defense and third against the run with talented players like **Karlos Dansby**, **Cameron Wake** and **Paul Soliai**.

Kevin Coyle, formerly the Bengals' secondary coach, will be the Dolphins' new defensive coordinator. Much of the talk has focused on the likelihood that the Dolphins will switch from a 3-4 to more of a 4-3. Although we hear the team is expected to continue to show multiple fronts, there will be some personnel changes in the new scheme.

GM **Jeff Ireland** seemed prepared for this possibility. "If we had to go 4-3, we certainly have personnel to make a pretty good transition," he said at the Senior Bowl. "I've prepared our scouts early on in the process, especially in December, we need to be looking at 4-3 personnel," he added.

One easy transition will be Wake, who was a star in the CFL as a defensive end. Arguably the Dolphins' biggest need on defense this offseason, though, is finding a pass rusher to complement Wake and replace the retired **Jason Taylor**.

Randy Starks will move inside, and he had a very productive season with 10 tackles for loss. **Jared Odrick** can play inside or out, and the team may use **Tony McDaniel** more on the inside.

A predominantly four-man front could spell the end of Soliai's time in Miami. The nose tackle got the franchise tag last season and was stout again in the middle, but he fits better as a 3-4 nose. If **Kendall Langford** isn't re-signed, that opens up another D-line spot to fill via free agency or the draft.

Dansby can play all three LB positions and began his career as a weak-side linebacker. **Kevin Burnett** improved as the season went along and also has some versatility, but the Dolphins could stand to add another member to the group.

One daily team observer pointed out how Coyle found success in Cincinnati with former Dolphins castoff **Chris Crocker**. The Dolphins could still use an upgrade at safety, especially in a division with the Patriots' attack and with an aging **Jeremiah Bell** at strong safety.

One thing that should stay the same with Coyle, we hear, is the aggressive style the Dolphins had on defense under **Mike Nolan**.

WHISPERS

■ Bengals RB coach **Jim Anderson** wants to see **Bernard Scott** become more of an all-around back. "He has that versatility, so we just expect for him to work on it," Anderson told PFW at the Senior Bowl. "We're going to work on it and everything so that he can be more of the total package." Scott carried 112 times for 380 yards and caught 13 passes for 38 yards in 2011, his third NFL season. Overall, Scott received nearly twice as many touches as he did the previous season. The potential for Scott to receive even more work in 2012 is very apparent with starter **Cedric Benson** slated to be an unrestricted free agent. Should Benson depart, Scott will be the top option at tailback, though Cincinnati would figure to add another veteran and/or a rookie via the draft to bolster the depth at the position. Anderson, who's beginning his 29th year coaching the Bengals' running backs, is confident Scott can become a more well-rounded player. "He's got that skill; we just need to refine it," Anderson said.

■ At the club's season-ending press conference, Ravens general manager **Ozzie Newsome** said the Ravens would consider signing CB **Lardarius Webb**, who's slated to be a restricted free agent, to a long-term deal. "(Is) that something that we would entertain? Yes. I think it would be best for this organization. The sooner you strike, the better deal you can get for yourself," Newsome said. The Ravens' GM cited the play of Webb, **Cary Williams** and **Jimmy Smith** as one of the season's positives.

THE WAY WE HEAR IT

AFC NORTH

By Mike Wilkening



Ravens owner Steve Bisciotti has a firm belief that QB Joe Flacco is the man to lead his team to a title.



PITTSBURGH STEELERS

The Steelers expected **Marcus Gilbert** to back up both tackle spots in his first NFL season, but when ORT **Willie Colon** suffered a season-ending triceps injury in Week One, the rookie took on significantly more responsibility. Gilbert started 14 of the next 16 games, including the playoff loss to Denver. "He's got a lot of room for improvement and growth, but he worked hard, and I was real pleased with his first year," Steelers OL coach **Sean Kugler** said at the Senior Bowl. Kugler told PFW that the experience can only help the Florida product. "He's ahead of schedule, just because he's got 15 games under his belt, which a lot of guys going into their second year don't have. He has that advantage, and hopefully he can take advantage of that and continue to progress," Kugler said. Colon is slated to return, but OLT **Max Starks**, who suffered an ACL injury in the wildcard loss, is a free agent.



CINCINNATI BENGALS

OLB **Thomas Howard** made a significant impact in his first season in Cincinnati, playing all 16 games (15 starts) and recording 99 tackles for the NFL's seventh-best defense from a yards-allowed perspective. In an interview with PFW at the Super Bowl, Howard praised the play of the defensive line in front of him ("so many great, young, talented guys") and the work of the Bengals' coaching staff. "They understand defense. I knew coming here I would become a better player," Howard said. Howard also said that he, like his team, is capable of bigger and better things in 2012. "I definitely want to improve and be better for my team next year, because we're just scratching the surface right now of our potential. We have young Pro Bowl talent on offense — (QB) **Andy Dalton**, (TE) **Jermaine Gresham**, (WR) **A.J. Green**. They're going to be good for a long time, and I'm excited (about) it."



CLEVELAND BROWNS

The addition of **Brad Childress** as offensive coordinator gives the Browns two former NFL head coaches as the top assistants to second-year head coach **Pat Shurmur**. If the Browns' offense responds to Childress like the team's defense took to **Dick Jauron**, the hire will be a success. Simply adding Childress won't cure all that ails the offense — a group that has scored fewer touchdowns in the past two seasons than five offenses scored in 2011 alone — but the presence of a coach with 13 years NFL experience can't hurt, the way we hear it. Childress is well-versed in the West Coast offense, an attack that takes multiple years for a club to master, some have suggested. It is unclear whether Childress will call plays or whether Shurmur will retain that role. Whoever calls the plays, the need for more skill-position talent in Cleveland is obvious — a key weakness that must be addressed this offseason.



BALTIMORE RAVENS

The Ravens believe they have a strong hand on offense with RB **Ray Rice** and QB **Joe Flacco**.

And at the team's season-ending press conference, owner **Steve Bisciotti** didn't hesitate to show his hand with regard to the futures of both players in Baltimore.

Bisciotti indicated that Rice, who's slated to be an unrestricted free agent, is a candidate to get the franchise tag should a contract extension not be reached. Rice had 2,068 combined yards in 2011.

Flacco, who has one year left on his contract, is in line to receive a new deal, Bisciotti said.

"We are just going to sit down and start grinding out a contract and terms, and that's something that I trust (GM **Ozzie Newsome**) and (VP of football administration **Pat Moriarty**) to do well," he said.

Bisciotti and Newsome presented a unified front on Flacco. "I think he's going to win Super Bowls — a lot of them," Newsome said. "And I hope to be a part of them. He has improved."

Bisciotti, meanwhile, said Flacco's presence makes any concerns about the Ravens' age — especially their age on defense — a moot point.

"I don't see age as being a window closing, not when you have a franchise quarterback coming up that's entering his fifth year," Bisciotti said.

While you can pencil Flacco and Rice into the lineup for 2012, the Ravens have plenty of other lineup questions to address. The offensive line is one position group that could undergo some changes, with Newsome naming it as an area that needs to be bolstered. C **Matt Birk**, who's slated to be an unrestricted free agent, is contemplating retirement. Backup C **Andre Gurode**'s contract is also up. Newsome said the club would be adding a center in the offseason.

The Ravens also could have a decision to make regarding Pro Bowl OLG **Ben Grubbs**, who could draw strong interest in free agency and will not be cheap to retain.

"Ben has two major factors that we like: He's a really good player and he's young," Newsome said of Grubbs, who turns 28 in March. However, any decision on whether to bring back Grubbs, Newsome said, would force the team to weigh "who will Ben keep us from getting and who will we have to let go in order to keep Ben? That's going to be the balance."

WHISPERS

■ Colts owner **Jim Irsay** said he was looking for a culture change — and early signs point to a dramatic shift. Former vice chairman **Bill Polian** and head coach **Jim Caldwell** were veiled in secrecy in their relationships with the media. Meanwhile, new GM **Ryan Grigson** and head coach **Chuck Pagano** have been very gracious with their time thus far. Irsay said at his press conference announcing the departure of the Polians that he wanted the relationship between the team and the media to improve, and it has been very positive early under the new regime.

■ The hiring of former Texans QB coach **Greg Knapp** as offensive coordinator by the Raiders is not surprising. By all accounts, Knapp was simply tremendous in getting QB **T.J. Yates** ready to play last season. The real surprise is that the Texans' coaching staff didn't receive more interest from around the league. Some league observers thought offensive coordinator **Rick Dennison** was a guy who could at least warrant a head-coaching interview. DBs coach **Vance Joseph** is another name who seemed to fly under the radar despite his great work with the secondary.

■ Titans head coach **Mike Munchak** might have begun to develop a bit of a slow trigger finger when it seemed to be time to make moves with personnel last season, but give him credit — he has swiftly identified changes that needed to be made on his staff in his first offseason. Munchak is definitely making sure his entire staff will do things his way; there is a lot of accountability involved.

THE WAY WE HEAR IT

AFC SOUTH

By Arthur Arkush



BRUCE L. SCHWARTZMAN

Maurice Jones-Drew is confident the Jaguars will add offensive weapons to help him and QB Blaine Gabbert.

HOUSTON
TEXANS

Now that the Texans' offensive line is beginning to receive the credit it's due, can the club keep it intact for next season? C **Chris Myers** and ORG **Mike Brisiel** are both unrestricted free agents whom Houston would like to resign, but neither is likely to receive a huge deal because the Texans' main focus is on locking up OLB **Mario Williams** and RB **Arian Foster** long term. Behind OLT **Duane Brown**, Myers was the best performer on the line last season. The Texans love Brisiel's toughness and mean streak; his quick recovery last season from a broken fibula is a testament to that. Perhaps working in the Texans' favor for bringing them back is the perception around the league that players can thrive in Houston's zone-blocking system. One of the keys to this unit's success is continuity, so the Texans' ability to re-sign the pair will be a situation to monitor once free agency begins.

TENNESSEE
TITANS

An Achilles' heel for the Titans in 2011 was the lack of a pass rush. Enter **Keith Millard**, hired recently as a defensive assistant/pass-rush specialist to address the issue. The three-time All-Pro defensive tackle and 1989 Defensive Player of the Year was the Buccaneers' DL coach last season, but he will help all defensive players to improve their pass-rush skills in Nashville. Adding Millard is a first for the Titans, who have never had someone in his position before. He will work closely with SLB **Akeem Ayers**, who was solid in starting all 16 games as a rookie but will be counted on to get after the QB more in '12. In his first season in Nashville, DL coach **Tracy Rucker** did a nice job working with rookie DTs **Karl Klug** and **Jurrell Casey**, but now he will have some help. With several of the team's defensive ends becoming free agents in March, the Titans view adding an edge rusher as a top priority.

INDIANAPOLIS
COLTS

New head coach **Chuck Pagano** raided the Ravens' coaching staff last week, hiring **Marwan Maalouf** as his special-teams coordinator, **Roy Anderson** as safeties coach and **Alfredo Roberts** to coach the tight ends. The way we hear it, don't be surprised when Pagano targets at least one Ravens free agent to bolster his "D." How the LB corps shapes up this season will be fascinating. Can **Robert Mathis**, an unrestricted free agent whom the Colts would like to re-sign, play OLB? What about **Dwight Freeney**? Where do **Pat Angerer** and **Kavell Conner** fit in? While it remains to be seen where all of these players fit in, one Ravens unrestricted free agent who certainly fit well in Pagano's "D" last season was OLB **Jarret Johnson**. A nine-year veteran, Johnson would be a nice addition to Pagano's unit, we hear. Ravens CB **Lardarius Webb**, a restricted free agent, could also receive interest from the Colts.

JACKSONVILLE
JAGUARS

RB **Maurice Jones-Drew** thinks QB **Blaine Gabbert** will be stronger as a result of the great adversity he and the team faced last season.

"All of these other QBs they try to compare him to, they had a guy that was there with them from Week One to Week 17," Jones-Drew told PFW last week on radio row in Indianapolis. "Blaine, he was dealing with different receivers ... bringing guys off the street, putting them in there to start.

"He fought through that — no complaining. We didn't protect him; we put him out there and let him learn on the fly. I think because of that, that adversity, he will be all right."

One of the few positives of Gabbert's rookie season was that he didn't lose confidence despite his significant challenges. Jones-Drew said having a full offseason to work with new head coach **Mike Mularkey** should allow Gabbert to make great strides in Year Two. Our sources on the scene have echoed those sentiments. Although there were few encouraging signs for Gabbert as a rookie, more continuity will be a plus.

GM **Gene Smith** will turn his attention this offseason to providing better offensive weapons for Gabbert.

MJD said new owner **Shahid Khan** is ready to make a splash, and although Jones-Drew didn't want to put his GM cap on, he said he is confident the Jaguars will target the top guys in free agency. According to Jones-Drew, Khan has told the players they will have all the resources they need to be successful, and in return, the players will be held to a high standard of winning.

Jones-Drew also expressed excitement over the energy and "breath of fresh air" that Khan will provide.

"His mustache is cool," Jones-Drew said jokingly. "The way he talks is cool. ... He is going to bring some style to the NFL. ... Mr. Khan is going to be one of those guys that people can relate to."

With Mularkey putting his staff together and Jones-Drew taking time out for the Pro Bowl and Super Bowl, the two have not yet had a chance to talk. MJD said as soon as he gets back to California, he and Mularkey will have a chance to connect over the phone and get the ball rolling.

WHISPERS

■ Many were shocked that the Chargers opted to keep head coach **Norv Turner** after their second consecutive season missing the playoffs. However, to those inside the locker room, the news that Turner would be around in 2012 was positive. "It was pretty unanimous in the locker room, guys were hoping he'd stay," QB **Philip Rivers** told PFW. "Fortunately, that was the case." Rivers acknowledged the team has been successful in the regular season with Turner at the helm (49 wins in five years), but not in the playoffs (three postseason wins in that span). That said, he still believes in the coach. "I think Norv and his staff, and the group of guys we have, give us the best chance to get (a Super Bowl) done."

■ New Raiders offensive coordinator **Greg Knapp** has a background working with signalcallers, most recently as the quarterbacks coach of the Texans. He has history working with QBs who can make plays out of the pocket — including **Jeff Garcia** while with the 49ers and **Michael Vick** with the Falcons. We hear that is a good sign for Oakland backup QB **Terrelle Pryor**, whose best attributes are his ability to run and make plays outside the hashmarks.

■ Chiefs head coach **Romeo Crennel** will continue to call the defense, just as he did when he was the team's defensive coordinator. That is good news for the team, as we hear that the players have a great respect for the coach and were skeptical of another coach running the unit instead of Crennel.

THE WAY WE HEAR IT

AFC WEST

By Eli Kaboron



QB Philip Rivers believes that a solidified offensive line will help the Chargers return to the playoffs.

DENVER BRONCOS

In a couple areas of special teams, the Broncos are all set. PK **Matt Prater** was solid in 2011, connecting on 76 percent of his field-goal attempts, including three from further than 50 yards. P **Britton Colquitt** had a strong 40.2 net average on 101 punts, and turned into a strong field-position weapon with 33 placed inside the 20. The coverage teams were pretty solid, allowing only one return touchdown all season. However, upgrades in both kickoff and punt returns will be a must this offseason. With **Eddie Royal** set to hit free agency, the team will need a primary punt returner. Kickoff returns also should be addressed, as the team's best returner on the current roster, **Eric Decker**, is expected to see a larger role as a wide receiver in 2012. With Denver needing running backs, receivers and cornerbacks in the draft, finding a player who also can be a return specialist would make sense for the organization.

OAKLAND RAIDERS

Many were surprised at the choice of **Dennis Allen** as head coach, as the former defensive coordinator bucked the trend of the past four decades within the organization of picking only offensive-minded head coaches. Before Allen, the last defensive coach to lead the franchise was **John Madden**, who retired in 1978. However, a team insider told PFW that the move had former owner **Al Davis'** handwriting all over it, mainly because Allen was such an under-the-radar pick and is very young (39), the youngest head coach in the NFL. The arrival of the new coach could mean changes to the Raiders, especially in the secondary. Allen's background is as a DB coach, and he will look to improve a unit that was 27th in the NFL in passing yards allowed per game in 2011. We hear one of the top priorities for the team, once it gets under the salary cap, is adding some veteran cornerbacks to the depth chart.

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS

There will be a QB competition this offseason for the Chiefs, according to GM **Scott Pioli**, but we hear based on recent moves by the team, one signalcaller is already in the lead. **Matt Cassel**, who started nine games before hurting his hand and being placed on I.R., is familiar with the offense of new coordinator **Brian Daboll**. Both were in New England — Cassel as **Tom Brady's** backup, Daboll as the wide receivers coach — in 2005 and '06, and their familiarity should give Cassel an edge over whoever is brought in to challenge him. That player possibly could be **Kyle Orton**, Kansas City's starter the final three weeks of the season. Orton, a free agent, would like to play for a team where he has a chance to start. That possibly could be the Chiefs, who have good talent at the other offensive skill positions when healthy. However, with Cassel returning to the top of the depth chart, Orton might opt to sign elsewhere.

SAN DIEGO CHARGERS

Prior to the season, numerous pundits predicted **Philip Rivers** would end his season in Indianapolis at Super Bowl XLVI. Technically they were right. Rivers was in the championship city, but not because he led the Chargers to the AFC title. Instead, it was because he was a finalist for the Walter Payton Man of the Year Award.

There were several reasons why Rivers didn't end up there with his Chargers teammates. Throughout the 2011 season, San Diego had lots of issues, specifically on offense. Problems in protection and turnovers both doomed the team, especially in a six-game losing streak during the middle of the campaign that dropped the team from first place to last in the AFC West. A late recovery had them back in the playoff hunt for a while, but it was not enough.

Speaking to PFW after the Payton Award press conference in Indianapolis, Rivers said he is eager to see what his team does on the offensive line. The Pro Bowl QB said he has had contact with OG **Kris Dielman**, who missed the final 10 games of the season after suffering a seizure following a concussion. Rivers has not, however, spoken to OT **Marcus McNeill**, who suffered a serious neck injury that cost him seven games.

"I think that remains to be seen, we'll see what happens the next few months or so. It will be good, whatever it is," Rivers said about the offensive line. "Obviously it would be great if we could get Kris (back). Marcus ... I know he seems upbeat about coming back."

"Fortunately, (OG) **Tyronne Green** played a bunch of ball last year, and played well. (OG **Louis Vasquez** probably played his best, had his best season had he not had some injuries. And the fact that we got (OT **Jared Gaither** at the end of the year, I think his contract's up, too. I think we'll see what happens the next few weeks."

Rivers was sacked 30 times during the season, but was taken down in only two of the team's final seven games. The QB is hopeful the momentum the team had at the end of the season — they won four of their last five games — will carry over to 2012, when the Chargers hope to return to the top of the division.

"It's wide open, every division is," Rivers said. "You got to find a way to get in. I think that's where it starts, is in the West."

WHISPERS

■ NFL sources tell PFW that the Eagles remain committed to trying to re-sign WR **DeSean Jackson** after it appeared maybe his ship had run its course in Philadelphia. That said, there already are some concerns from the team that Jackson's belief of his own value is higher, maybe a lot so, than what the team's perceived value of him is.

■ The Cowboys secretly have to be worried that free-agent OG **Carl Nicks**, one of their preferred targets in free agency, might be willing to return to the Saints for something of a hometown discount. Nicks reportedly is the top target of the Cowboys to fill one of their OG needs, but he also has let it be known his preference would be to return to New Orleans, despite the Saints' long list of important free agents to bring back.

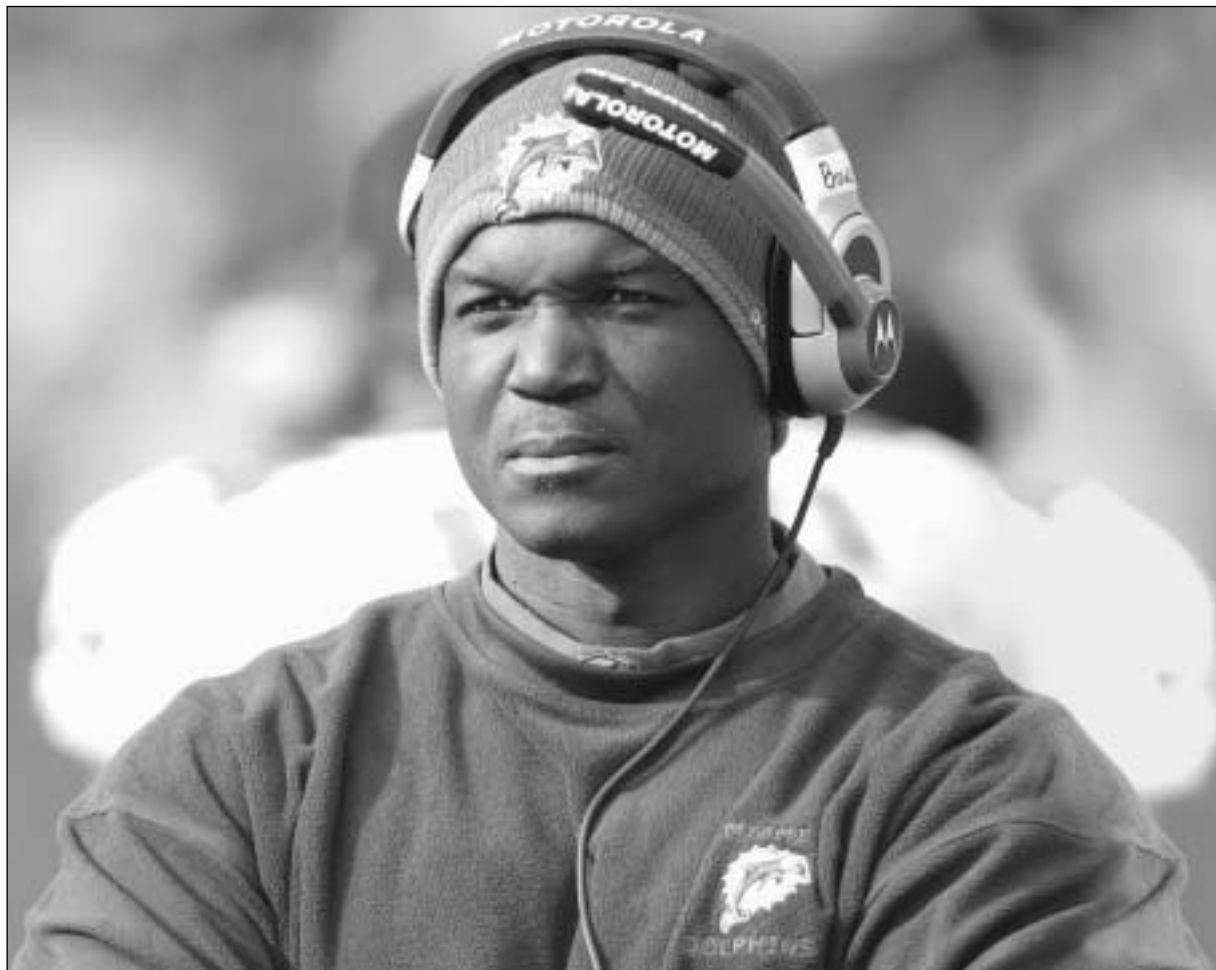
■ In addition to making a big play at quarterback, expect the Redskins to do the same at wide receiver. They like **Leonard Hankerson** and think **Santana Moss** can remain effective in the slot. But a speedy playmaker who can tilt defenses and change coverages will be on the menu as well, we hear.

■ The Giants' first order of business once the dust settles from their championship season will be to re-up with head coach **Tom Coughlin** and offensive coordinator **Kevin Gilbride**, both of whom have contracts that will run out soon. Coughlin's return was ensured with the return to the playoffs, but our sources say that taking care of Gilbride is very much a priority in the eyes of the front office and with ownership.

THE WAY WE HEAR IT

NFC EAST

By Eric Edholm



SPORTSPICS

Todd Bowles is well-respected as a defensive coach and should be a great asset to the Eagles' staff.

WASHINGTON
REDSKINS

The Redskins quietly are excited about the potential for internal improvement in the secondary with new DB coach **Raheem Morris**. Although Morris was a bust in his first head-coaching assignment in Tampa, he's highly regarded as a defensive coach, with a specialty in the secondary. That means that players such as CB **Josh Wilson**, who played well down the stretch, could be in line for an even better season in 2012. But that doesn't mean the team won't seek outside help; in fact, it is very likely to do so once more pressing offensive needs are addressed. But with a strong front seven that ranks among the league's better groups, it appears that a nickel corner and a safety are the two positions on defense that are most needful. FS **Oshiomogho Atogwe's** health is a concern, so he could be cut loose. Neither **Kevin Barnes** nor **Byron Westbrook** seized the opportunity playing the slot CB position.

DALLAS
COWBOYS

There is talk once more that NT **Jay Ratliff** could move off the nose. The Cowboys must reinforce their front, and asking Ratliff primarily to man the NT position for the bulk of his snaps could be too taxing for a player who has good penetration skills but also might be more effective maintaining his longevity by moving to end. Defensive coordinator **Rob Ryan** uses multiple fronts, and he will slide his players along the line in different techniques. But he must at least consider having Ratliff inhabit a position as an end most of the time, provided that Ryan can find a suitable replacement on the nose. **Josh Brent** is one possibility, but the team likely would want to add another body inside. Ratliff certainly is capable of kicking down inside when the team is rushing in obvious passing situations, but living full time over centers and guards could break him down over time.

PHILADELPHIA
EAGLES

As an experienced defensive coach and a potential future head coach, as many league observers believe, new secondary coach **Todd Bowles** might be the perfect foil for **Juan Castillo**, who will remain as the Eagles' defensive coordinator in 2012. The decision to retain Castillo was not handled well by head coach **Andy Reid** from a public-relations standpoint, but it could turn into a heady stroke if Bowles proves to be a steadying force, as expected, on the defensive staff. Bowles is respected around the league, especially in Dallas and Miami, where he helped guide some pretty good defenses. Some believe that Castillo was put in an unenviable position — having not coached defense in the NFL previously and having to run a defense without the benefit of an offseason. He now has that — along with a strong cohort in Bowles, who could end up being a trusted source for Castillo to bounce ideas off of.

NEW YORK
GIANTS

The afterglow of a Super Bowl championship only will last so long for the Giants, who must make several big personnel decisions in free agency as it relates to their own roster.

Champs often become targets for other teams, and the Giants will have to make key decisions on important players such as WR **Mario Manningham**, CBs **Aaron Ross** and **Terrell Thomas**, RT **Kareem McKenzie**, P **Steve Weatherford** and DT **Rocky Bernard**.

Manningham certainly has boosted his stock with a strong postseason. He scored touchdowns in each of the Giants' three games leading up to Super Bowl XLVI, and in that game, Manningham helped set up the game-winning score against the Patriots with a clutch, 38-yard catch along the sideline in the final minutes.

In order to keep him, the Giants likely would have to give Manningham starting-caliber money — and they still will want to work on an extension for **Victor Cruz** for down the road. It's possible that the team could allow Manningham to walk if the price gets too high and turn back to former Giants WR **Steve Smith**, who was a bust with the Eagles last season coming off injury but had his best production in New York.

Thomas could be back despite missing the season with a torn ACL, but Ross is a tougher call. Despite playing well this season with the team shorthanded at the position, Ross might be squeezed out in a numbers game with 2011 first-rounder **Prince Amukamara** likely pushing for increased playing time at some point.

McKenzie is on the back end of his career, and the Giants could opt to go younger up front. OLT **Will Beatty** was doing a nice job before suffering a season-ending injury, and his replacement (**David Diehl**) has played right tackle before. There appear to be better options at guard (**Kevin Boothe**, **Mitch Petrus**) than at tackle beyond that.

Weatherford was a quiet hero in Super Bowl XLVI, so he's very likely to receive another contract. Bernard was a solid rotational player, although the healthy return of 2011 second-round DT **Marvin Austin** might not guarantee that Bernard will be back.

Expect the Giants to be quiet signing outside free agents, but they'll be active with their in-house moves.

WHISPERS

■ At the Super Bowl, Lions head coach **Jim Schwartz** again expressed hope RB **Jahvid Best** (concussions) would be able to resume his playing career. "We're optimistic and we're encouraged, but concussions are different than ACLs, and they're different than hamstrings," Schwartz told PFW. "There's no time-tables for any of those things. It's just one of those situations. You have to be objective and you have to wait until the player's passed, but we feel very confident that he'll be back."

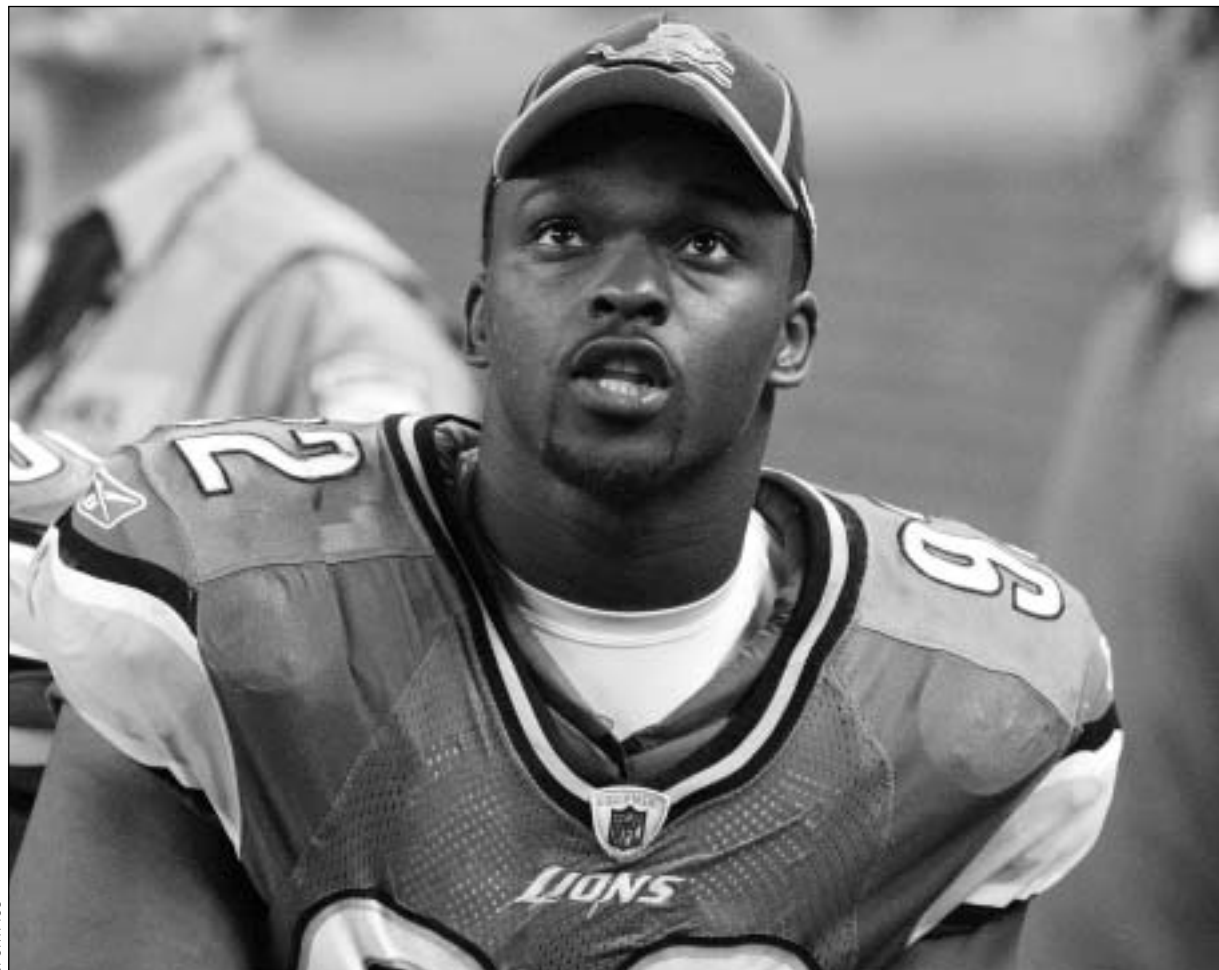
■ Vikings head coach **Leslie Frazier** told PFW why he thinks new defensive coordinator **Alan Williams** will work out in Minnesota: "I think the fact that he's such a great teacher," Frazier said. "That was one of the things I had a chance to observe when I was in Indianapolis working with him. ... When I think back to **Bob Sanders**, when he came to our team along with **Antoine Bethea** — two guys who were very young, very raw but tremendous (talents) — just to see how he worked with those guys and developed their talents by teaching them the basics of the position, and then eventually, both became Pro Bowlers, and in Bob's case, Defensive Player of the Year."

■ **Cliff Stein's** services will be as valuable as ever to the Bears as new GM **Phil Emery** prepares his plan for free agency. It wasn't exactly clear if Stein, the Bears' senior director of football administration and general counsel, would be retained at the outset of team president and CEO **Ted Phillips'** search for a new GM, but Stein received strong endorsements from Emery and Phillips upon the completion of the GM search.

THE WAY WE HEAR IT

NFC NORTH

By Dan Arkush, Eric Edholm, Dan Parr and Mike Wilkening



Signing DE Cliff Avril to a long-term deal is a priority for the Lions, though they know it won't be easy.


CHICAGO BEARS

Our sources say new GM **Phil Emery** has consistently demonstrated a commitment to making calculated, well-researched decisions during his 14 seasons in the league. A new challenge for him — managing an entire scouting department and a head coach — could be his toughest, though. Emery had to accept working with **Lovie Smith** in 2012 to get the job and was careful not to step on Smith's toes when pressed by reporters to reveal specifics about his level of authority on roster and coaching-staff decisions during his introductory press conference, but team president and CEO **Ted Phillips** insisted that Emery has the authority and the will to change the culture. "Someone asked about whether it's going to be status quo," Phillips said. "I would say to you absolutely not. (Emery is) going to set high standards, and he's going to be demanding and hold people accountable, and I like that."


GREEN BAY PACKERS

Even if **Nick Collins** gets the OK in March to resume his career after suffering a severe neck injury early this past season, we hear it's quite possible veteran CB **Charles Woodson** will switch to safety next season. Word is the team is unwilling to go through another year with **Morgan Burnett** and **Charlie Peprah**, who is considered a better fit in a reserve role, as the starting safeties, which could open the door at one safety spot for the 35-year-old Woodson. But even if that happens, team insiders tell us that it's important to note that Woodson will still continue playing 70 percent of the time in the slot, and that his overall role really would not change that much. In any event, it would be a big surprise if the Packers did not try to draft a long-term replacement for Collins, as well as at least a couple more cornerbacks to challenge **Tramon Williams** and **Sam Shields**, both of whom regressed significantly.


DETROIT LIONS

Head coach **Jim Schwartz** told PFW at the Super Bowl that he hoped the club would be able to resign DE **Cliff Avril**, who will be one of the top free-agent pass rushers available if he can test unrestricted free agency. However, Schwartz noted the challenges a team faces as it tries to keep as many talented core players as possible. "A couple years ago, we were trying to get rid of all of the bad players," Schwartz said. "Now, we're taking about how we're going to keep our good players. I think it's a sign of the way we've drafted. I think we've drafted well. We've also signed very well in free agency. And when that happens, you're going to have some difficult decisions to make, and it's going to be increasingly hard to hold a team together. But obviously, (Avril's) had great success in our system. He's young, he's developed with us and was (an) important part of our defense this year and hopefully in the future."


MINNESOTA VIKINGS

Head coach **Leslie Frazier** and his staff got a free scouting edge over the rest of the league with their experience coaching at the Senior Bowl.

They have positional needs all over the place, most notably on defense and along the offensive line. But they also could be in the market for a running back.

It's considered a position of strength, but the health of RBs **Adrian Peterson** and **Toby Gerhart** raises concerns over whether the team can afford not to bring in another body. Frazier said he believes the team will have enough information on Peterson's torn ACL and Gerhart's partially torn MCL to give it a good idea how pressing the RB need is.

"We will. We should know more about Toby in the weeks to come," Frazier said from Mobile, Ala. "Everything I am hearing, he is (headed) in the right direction without having surgery. It's a little bit longer time for Adrian, but we're optimistic. I am sure by Draft Day we'll have a better idea of where we are."

As for what type of back the Vikings might need, they'll start with the mold of the backs they have.

"You'd like to clone Adrian Peterson," Frazier said. "He's special; he's fun to watch. We've kind of gotten spoiled. We're looking forward to his return to be as explosive as he's been in the past. Toby came in and gave us a different dimension. He showed us that he could gain yards — it might not be as flashy, but you can still gain positive yards."

"You'd like to find a guy who is going to be durable but also be able to gain yards after contact, create his own holes at times and catch the ball. You also want someone who can (pass-) block on third down, as well. We have those things with Adrian and Toby, but we have to look out there and maybe see if there is another guy out there that we can maybe draft and develop."

Late in the season, the team brought in **Caleb King**, who went undrafted last year in the supplemental draft, and **Jordan Todman**, who spent most of last season on the Chargers' practice squad after being selected by the team in the sixth round in 2011. The Vikes also could bring back No. 3 RB **Lorenzo Booker** to help fill the void until either Gerhart or Peterson returns.

Peterson likely won't take the field until August at the earliest.

WHISPERS

■ Injury-plagued OLB **Thomas Davis** would like to stay with the Panthers and is willing to restructure his contract to facilitate his return. The Panthers would like to have him back, but the team is expected to release him before March 15, when he's due an \$8 million bonus, if the two sides can't work out a very modest short-term deal (which would include a massive pay cut) by that time. Releasing him, of course, would not preclude them from working out a deal later in the offseason. Davis tore his right ACL for the third time in 22 months in Week Two of the 2011 season, bringing his season to an end. We're told the team feels he still has a chance to be a big contributor and battle for a starting spot, but he's just not a player any team can count on to stay healthy at this point.

■ The Panthers are taking a hard look at the quarterbacks in this year's draft class and have interest in adding a signalcaller with a skill set that resembles **Cam Newton**'s. Ideally, the team would have a backup quarterback that could take over if Newton were to get hurt and not have to drastically change the offense. Carolina didn't have that last season, when **Derek Anderson**, who is due to become a free agent, backed up Newton, and third-stringer **Jimmy Clausen** also doesn't fit the mold.

■ Some team observers in Atlanta have suggested the Falcons should at least consider parting ways with RB **Michael Turner** this offseason, but we hear the team's commitment to him through at least 2012 — he's signed through 2013 — is solid.

THE WAY WE HEAR IT

NFC SOUTH

By Dan Parr



KRT PHOTOS

The Panthers are pleasantly surprised offensive coordinator Rob Chudzinski will stay with the club.



CAROLINA PANTHERS

The filling of the last remaining NFL head-coaching vacancy — the Buccaneers' hiring of **Greg Schiano** — was welcome news for the Panthers. They had been closely monitoring the Bucs' exhaustive search, which included an interview with Panthers offensive coordinator **Rob Chudzinski**. Head coach **Ron Rivera** told PFW last month that Carolina would "still have the same players and pretty much the same scheme" next season no matter what happened with Chudzinski, but Rivera admitted during his time in Mobile, Ala., for the Senior Bowl that the Panthers had been putting off some of their offseason work until they had clarity on Chudzinski's future. It appears he will be staying put after also interviewing for the Rams' and Jaguars' jobs, although there will be plenty of speculation about his future again next season if Newton and the Panthers' offense keeps moving in the right direction.



NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

A critical month lies ahead for GM **Mickey Loomis** as he works to get deals done with key Saints players ahead of free agency, which begins March 13. Contract talks already have picked up. The Saints' top priority is working out a deal with QB **Drew Brees**, the league's highest-profile impending free agent, but WR **Marques Colston** and OLG **Carl Nicks** are also due to hit the open market, and the team will push to re-sign both players. The expectation is the Saints and Brees will find common ground on a deal eventually — Brees has said he would be "beyond stunned" if he left New Orleans — and the preference for both sides is to finalize a long-term agreement sooner rather than later. The franchise tag deadline is March 5, though, and Loomis has not ruled out using it. The tag number for QBs is expected to be around \$14 million. It will be an estimated \$9.4 million for wide receivers and O-linemen.



TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS

After an injury-plagued first two seasons, DT **Gerald McCoy** is not allowing the setbacks to crush his spirit. "I'm ready for a breakout season," McCoy told PFW. McCoy suffered biceps tears in each of his first two seasons. Both injuries landed him on injured reserve, sidelining him for 10 games last season and the final three games of '10. "This season I started off fast," McCoy said. "It got cut short. It wasn't in God's plans for me to finish, but hopefully, I've been praying that next year it is." McCoy said he has been training and rehabbing in San Diego and had yet to speak with the Bucs' new head coach, **Greg Schiano**, when PFW caught up with him. He was encouraged by a conversation with Patriots head coach **Bill Belichick** at Super Bowl media day, though. "For arguably the best coach in the NFL, with his résumé to give my new coach the stamp of approval, I can't hope for anything better than that," he said.



ATLANTA FALCONS

The offensive line once again will command the attention of the Falcons' decision makers as they prepare for free agency and the draft. Changes up front appear likely for the second offseason in a row.

Atlanta had three of its five starters on the O-line headed for free agency last year, but a mass exodus was avoided. Gritty ORG **Harvey Dahl**, who had been a tone-setter for a front five that embraced his scrapper's mentality, moved on and signed with the Rams, but OLG **Justin Blalock** and ORT **Tyson Clabo** were re-signed to lucrative new deals. Keeping Blalock and Clabo in the fold didn't prevent some serious issues from befalling the unit, though.

Inconsistency in pass protection and struggles to get a push at the line of scrimmage in short-yardage situations were a couple of the team's more maddening problems. The lack of a push in 4th-and-short situations cost them dearly in their loss to the Giants in the wild-card round of the playoffs.

This year, the only starting O-lineman due to hit the open market is longtime C **Todd McClure**, who told PFW back in December that he wants to continue his career for two more seasons, but there are question marks at left tackle, and the ORG situation will be impacted by whatever happens with McClure, as **Joe Hawley** could slide from right guard to center if McClure does not return. It's also possible that McClure will have to compete against another player — potentially Hawley — to keep his starting job if he does return to Atlanta.

At left tackle, **Sam Baker** and **Will Svitek** are both signed through next season, but neither is viewed as a long-term solution at the position.

The class of O-linemen in this year's draft is very strong and the Falcons are expected to take a hard look at that area when they make their picks. Barring a trade up in the draft for the second year in a row, they won't be able to address the area of need until the second half of the second round, however.

There also will be a new assistant coach responsible for the O-line, as former Fresno State head coach **Pat Hill** was hired to replace **Paul Boudreau**, who was not retained following Atlanta's exit from the playoffs after spending four seasons with the team.

WHISPERS

■ Might the 49ers all of a sudden not be in such a big hurry to re-sign free-agent QB **Alex Smith** after his lackluster effort in the team's playoff loss to the Giants? "I think they still want to re-sign Alex Smith in a big way," said one inside source on the scene. "He'll be affordable, and he wants to come back. I would be shocked if they don't re-sign him."

■ In his first year with the Seahawks, free-agent addition **Robert Gallery** had a real roller-coaster season. But after struggling the first half of the season with a groin injury, we hear the team was quite pleased with the former Raider first-round draft pick's play at left guard down the stretch. "He was one of a lot of veteran guys who wasn't in the best of shape because of not having a full conditioning program. They're looking forward to him hopefully being a lot healthier next year."

■ The odds are looking pretty strong that **Kellen Clemens**, who played under new Rams offensive coordinator **Brian Schottenheimer** with the Jets, will return as **Sam Bradford**'s backup next season. "Obviously I'm a big fan of Kellen," Schottenheimer said. "... I think here's a guy that understands what it means to be a pro. He was unbelievable in meetings for us in New York. It does not surprise me that he came in here and played well because he takes his craft very, very seriously."

■ With the crowd at running back increasing with **Ryan Williams** returning to the mix after sitting out last season, our Cardinals sources would be very surprised if free agent **Chester Taylor** is brought back.

THE WAY WE HEAR IT

NFC WEST

By Dan Arkush



The Seahawks expect WR Sidney Rice to bounce back from his injuries and play a starring role in 2012.


**ST. LOUIS
RAMS**

The consensus among our sources in St. Louis is that new Rams offensive coordinator **Brian Schottenheimer** has something to prove after earning mixed reviews in the same capacity with the Jets. "He did not do the greatest job developing **Mark Sanchez**," one team insider said of Schottenheimer, who we hear beat out former Raiders head coach **Hue Jackson** in a "close call" for the offensive-coordinator job. "The real key will be whoever ends up as the QB coach." We hear it would be a mistake to automatically assume Schottenheimer will stress the same kind of run-heavy, "ground and pound" attack the Jets so effectively used in 2009-10. However, with Schottenheimer being a two-back proponent and free-agent RBs **Cadillac Williams** and **Jerious Norwood** considered long shots to re-sign, look for the Rams to perhaps seriously pursue backfield help via free agency and the draft.


**SAN FRANCISCO
49ERS**

If there was any doubt that the Niners' biggest need is for a big upgrade at receiver, it was eliminated after the vanishing act turned in by the team's wideouts in the divisional-playoff loss to the Giants (only one catch for three yards by **Michael Crabtree**). The only wide receivers under contract entering the offseason who finished the season on the roster are Crabtree, a major postseason disappointment who had problems holding on to the ball, and **Kyle Williams**, whose costly fumbles on a pair of punt returns shattered the Niners' Super Bowl hopes. Team insiders hardly would be surprised if the Niners made a major effort in the draft or free agency to land a No. 1 receiver and then dropped Crabtree into the No. 2 role. As for Williams, word is his playoff blunders have not sealed his fate in San Francisco, contrary to popular belief. "But he will be challenged to make the final roster," one team source said.


**SEATTLE
SEAHAWKS**

After spending a bundle on free-agent WR **Sidney Rice**, the Seahawks were banking on a potent 1-2 punch with Rice as the acrobatic, big-play flanker and **Mike Williams**, who had a breakthrough campaign the previous season, as a dangerous, TE-sized complement at split end. But after Rice and Williams missed a combined 11 games because of injuries in 2011, and Williams regressed significantly when he was healthy enough to play, we hear the vision of a consistently dynamic duo has been blurred somewhat. "They still have huge expectations for Rice, because he's so young (25), and they think they can make his frame a lot stronger and more durable with a full offseason to get into shape," one team source said. "As for Williams, he was just never the same guy (as in '10). He really appears dedicated to getting back on track, but it looks like he is going to have to prove himself all over again."


**ARIZONA
CARDINALS**

Is it really possible the Cardinals could have an interest in landing **Peyton Manning**, as has been rumored by both ESPN's **Adam Schefter** and CBS' **Charlie Caserly**?

Although a multitude of factors would have to fall into place, team insiders tell us stranger things have happened.

"It's not completely out there," one insider told PFW of the rumors suggesting that Manning could finish out his illustrious career in the desert. "It's not emanating the rolling eyeballs like the constant **Donovan McNabb**-to-Arizona rumors did for so long. That was never going to happen."

So, what would have to happen for Manning to actually be considered a possibility to be wearing a Cardinals uniform in 2012?

For starters, Manning, who turns 36 on March 24, must get a clean bill of health after undergoing three different surgical procedures on his neck, which is far from a given.

In addition, Colts owner **Jim Irsay** must decide to cut the cord with his longtime marquee attraction — a decision expected to be made before March 8, when Manning is due a whopping \$28 million roster bonus.

If Manning is then free to leave, the likely heavy competition for his services would present another huge hurdle for the Cardinals.

A less daunting hurdle, we hear, would be a decision by the Cardinals on what to do with **Kevin Kolb**, the current starting QB, should Manning become available.

"If a healthy Manning was in the picture, I think it would be hard to bring Kolb back," the insider said of the team's incumbent QB, who just happens to be due a \$7 million roster bonus on March 17.

"I don't think anybody would be heartbroken, since Kolb hasn't done much to win people over."

The consensus is that the Cardinals could present a scenario that just might win Manning over in a major way.

"For one thing, he'd be hooking up with one of the league's best receivers in **Larry Fitzgerald**," the insider said. "He'd also be playing for a head coach, in **Ken Whisenhunt**, who likes to throw the ball and has proven with **Kurt Warner** that he could mold an offense around a veteran quarterback."

"The offensive line is a question mark, but Manning could make an average tackle look good."

SUPER BOWL XLVI REVIEW

HAND IN HAND

Welker's non-catch, Manningham's catch the difference in Giants' victory

By Eric Edholm
Senior editor

When Wes Welker receives a new contract from the Patriots this coming offseason, it will be for multiple years and for millions of dollars. By most measures, he and his family will be set for life.

But Welker also will carry the anchor of burden that comes with dropping what might have been the pass — a back-shoulder (wrong shoulder?) throw — to sink the Giants and buoy the Patriots to their fourth Super Bowl title.

Instead, it was the Giants, nothing if not opportunistic this season in going from 7-7 entering Week 16 to ending up in the Super Bowl, who would be hoisting the Lombardi Trophy at night's end, on the right end of a 21-17 victory, their second title in five seasons.

Football's primary measurement is in yards, but a new metric — inches — was the difference between victory and defeat in XLVI in Indianapolis.

"It hit me right in the hands," said a distraught Welker, fighting back his emotions after the game. "I mean, it's a play I never drop, I always make. Most critical situation and I let the team down."

Tom Brady threw the pass but allowed the opportunity to pass without taking some of the blame for not making a more accurate throw to the 5-foot-9 Welker against a



(Left) Wes Welker was unable to make a catch that could've clinched the game for the Patriots while (above) Mario Manningham came down with a spectacular catch that propelled the Giants to victory.

in 2010 to perhaps the game's best finisher and, yes, the designation of "elite" in his field.

"Good thing I wear (size) 11s (shoes)," Manningham said of his toe-tapping grab before being pushed out of bounds, "because if I wore 11-and-a-

halves, I don't think I'd have been in."

Again, inches.

It was a strange game in which mistakes — those that hurt and those that did not — were as important as the successful plays.

The two media-star pass catchers in the week leading up to the game, and the leading receivers for the Giants and Patriots, respectively, Victor Cruz and Rob Gronkowski, were not close to being their respective teams' leading producers in the game. But Cruz had a touchdown and two key third-down conversions, and Gronkowski's lack of mobility with a high ankle sprain allowed the Giants to commit a linebacker in coverage on him, which normally is a mismatch.

The Patriots' first offensive series also opened in odd

fashion — after they were backed up by a great punt by the Giants' Steve Weatherford (one of three that he dropped inside the 10-yard line) — with a safety, the result of a Justin Tuck pressure on Brady, who threw the ball away to the middle of the field, where no Patriots receivers could be found. The officials conferred, and referee John Parry made the call, leading to the first Super Bowl two-pointer in more than 20 years.

"It is a referee's judgment call," Brady said. "I was looking down the middle of the field, and Tuck was looking to come get me, and I tried to get rid of it."

After the Patriots' free kick, questions about the New England defense, which had been part of its story all season despite a 13-3 regular-season record, came to light.

Manning started carving up the edges of the Patriots' "D" with a series of short passes that would presage what would become the Dink and Dunk Bowl, with runs mixed in because of the Patriots' cover-2-heavy defensive looks. Manning to FB Henry Hynoski for 13 yards. Manning to No. 3 RB D.J. Ware for eight more. An Ahmad Bradshaw run for 24 yards. Six more on the ground from Ware. Three more short gains and the Giants sat at the Patriots' 11-yard line, but they faced a crucial 3rd-and-3.

Then came the first of many momentum swings — and an uncharacteristic one for a Bill Belichick-coached team. Reserve CB Antwaun Molden ran on the field late as the Giants broke the huddle, and it turns out he shouldn't have. Cruz caught a quick slant and was

Giants secondary that was in a botched coverage.

"(Welker) went up to try and make it, as he always does, and we just couldn't connect," Brady said. "He's a hell of a player. I'll keep throwing the ball to him for as long as I possibly can."

Mario Manningham is a free-agent-in-waiting, too, and he added himself to the annals of Giants lore for producing his David Tyree-esque moment: a 38-yard catch of a gorgeous Eli Manning pass down the left sideline on the first play of the drive after the Welker drop and a Patriots punt, which would set up the game-winning score two minutes later.

The catch was exceptional; Manning's pass, though, was the type of throw that helped vault him from the second tier of NFL quarterbacks and a 27-turnover season



UNsung HERO Hub Arkush, Publisher

Tuck's hits were game-changers

There should be no doubt that the Giants were a better team and more deserving champion in Super Bowl XLVI than the Patriots. It was borne out on the playing field, the scoreboard and in the stats sheet. But grand proclamations being made that the game cemented the Hall of Fame credentials of Tom Coughlin and Eli Manning, and the awarding of the game's MVP to Manning do, in fact, deserve much closer scrutiny.

Justin Tuck was the most valuable player in Super Bowl XLVI. On the Pats' first offensive play, aided by great coverage, it was Tuck's pass rush that forced Tom Brady to throw wildly and take an intentional-grounding penalty. The result was a safety that dictated strategy throughout the game. Without those two points, the Pats would have needed only a field goal at the end to force overtime instead of a TD to win.

Tuck's second sack of the game, on 3rd-and-10 from the Patriots' 20-yard line, forced the Patriots to burn their final timeout with 36 seconds remaining. Even though Brady converted on fourth down, the loss of that timeout effectively ended any chance New England had of going the length of the field for a heart-stopping win.

But it was Tuck's first sack of Brady with 6:12 left in the third quarter that changed everything, limited the Patriot QB's ability to perform and most likely secured rings for Tuck and all his teammates. The play seemed benign enough at the time, again with coverage forcing Brady to leave the pocket and pretty much stumble into Tuck. Still, when Brady landed squarely on his tender left shoulder with the full weight of the 268-pound Tuck on top of him, the Patriots' hopes for a fourth Super Bowl title were gone.

Even though, after the game, he denied the shoulder had been a problem, you could see from Brady's body language that something was wrong immediately after the play happened. He was met by the team trainer and

a doctor as soon as he got to the sideline. They accompanied him to the bench in spite of his protests, and just a moment later, backup QB Brian Hoyer was up and throwing.

Brady didn't miss a snap and did his best to hide the damage, but here are the facts:

■ Prior to that play, the Pats held a 17-12 lead. Brady had just snapped a Super Bowl-record string of 16 consecutive completions on the play before. And he had completed 20-of-24 passes for 201 yards with two TDs and a passer rating of 141.9.

■ After the Tuck sack, Brady completed only 7-of-17 throws for 75 yards with one interception, for a passer rating of 32.0, and New England was kept off the scoreboard the rest of the way.

If you believe Brady didn't reinjure that shoulder, the Giants have a number of bridges around Manhattan they'd love to sell you.

Might New York have won the game even if Brady hadn't been hurt? Of course, they could have. Manning did play very well, and Coughlin had an excellent plan and a very well-coached team. But I don't believe they would have won the game without Tuck, who clearly emerged in the week leading up to the game as a humble, well-spoken deep thinker who is every bit the leader Manning is on that team.

Shed no tears for the Patriots. As heroic as the New England defense was most of the night, the Giants went through it like a hot knife through butter for the winning score after the incredible Manning-to-Manningham connection on first down from their own 12 with 3:46 to play. Plus, the Patriots' receivers had more than enough key drops to ensure they didn't deserve to win. But the Pats are still young enough and more than talented enough to assume they'll get another shot before long.

As for the legacies of Manning and Coughlin, folks need to take a pill. What if Brady didn't get hurt and



Justin Tuck was a thorn in Tom Brady's side and a big reason why the Giants won Super Bowl XLVI.

the Giants had lost a close one? Then, they wouldn't belong in Canton? Manning's career is only half over. Besides, where was the hue and cry for Ben Roethlisberger's induction into Canton after he won *his* second ring? Coughlin is even less of a sure thing. There's a guy named Bill Parcells, whom Giants fans know well, who is far more accomplished than Coughlin but is still stuck outside the door to the Hall. All we know for sure after this Super Bowl is that Coughlin is a very good coach, no one will ever try to spell "elite" without "E-L-I" again, and it just might be Tuck posing for a bronze bust of his own someday, after this game.

I thought Brady said it best when he told us, "I'd rather come to this game and lose than not get here at all. I'll keep coming to this game as often as I can. It always comes down to one play, and if you make it, you're celebrating, and if you don't, you don't sleep for a week."

The funny thing about this game is that play just isn't the one that anybody's focused on at all.

slammed by LB Brandon Spikes short of the first-down marker, causing a fumble. The Patriots recovered, but the ensuing 12-men-on-the-field penalty negated the play and kept the drive alive.

"That was definitely a mistake, no question," said Belichick, who was seen angrily talking to Patriots safeties coach Matt Patricia on the sideline shortly thereafter.

Two plays later, Manning fit a pass into a tight window between a turned-around Jerod Mayo and a step-late James Ihedigbo on a rare Patriots cover-zero blitz and into the hands of Cruz, who gave the Giants a 9-0 lead and the pro-New York crowd a hot dish of Super Bowl salsa.

"I had to bottle (the catch) a little bit, but once I got it, I snagged it, and then it was salsa time after that, baby," Cruz said of his all-the-range touchdown dance.

The Patriots moved the ball 60 yards on their ensuing drive, as Brady shook off the early mistake, but they settled for a 29-yard field goal, having possessed the ball for only 3:32 of the first quarter.

The Giants stayed patient on offense, hardly looking deep because the coverage dictated it.

"They had a sound approach: don't let us get one-on-one matchups to see if we could get the big play. See if we could prove that we could be disciplined enough to take these long, methodical drives. Sure enough, we kept shooting ourselves in the foot, so their strategy was working. I looked up — we had 20 minutes' time of possession, but we didn't have a lot of points," Giants offen-

sive coordinator Kevin Gilbride said.

The Giants ran the clock down until a little more than four minutes remained in the first half, with Weatherford pinning Brady and the Patriots even deeper this time at their own four. A false start left New England 98 yards away, but Brady went to work on what would be the start of his finest stretch of the game.

After getting some breathing room, he found TE Aaron Hernandez — overshadowed all week by Gronkmania — for four completions, of 10, eight, eight and 12 yards. Giants LB Michael Boley had few solutions in man coverage.

"We had to play tighter coverage. It was that simple," Boley said. "They were getting guys open on the low part of the field."

The drive, 96 yards from start to finish (tying a Super Bowl record for length), saw Brady complete 10 straight passes — almost all in the short-to-medium range, and every one on point. He later would run that consecutive-completions tally to 16, breaking the record of his boyhood idol, Joe Montana, and the man Brady was chasing for his fourth Super Bowl ring.

The Patriots capped off the scoring drive with a check-down TD to the third option on the play, RB Danny Woodhead, on a call that was supposed to go to Gronkowski running an out route on the far side of the field. Gronkowski, though, got caught up in traffic, and Brady masterfully slipped the pass in for the go-ahead score to make it 10-9. After a vicious hit on the ensuing kickoff by Patriots special-teamer Dane Fletcher, the mo-

mentum had shifted dramatically right before halftime.

For as much as the Giants controlled the action in the first half, they now found themselves going to the locker room trailing, with the Patriots getting the ball first to start the second half.

"You feel real good after two good drives in a row," Patriots OG Logan Mankins. "You think you've got stuff figured out."

The second half opened with more of the same. Brady hit Chad Ochocinco (his only catch) with what would be the Patriots' longest play from scrimmage, 21 yards, kicking off a surgical, no-huddle attack with a mix of runs and passes. Eight plays and 79 yards later, they took a 17-9 lead on a Brady-to-Hernandez TD pass.

It would be the final time all night the Patriots would score.

The Giants were hardly prolific in the third quarter but sandwiched two field-goal drives around a Patriots three-and-out, cutting the lead from eight points to two. Tuck had a big sack on third down to end that New England drive, first dropping into coverage on a three-man pressure but quickly circling back into the backfield on a green-dog blitz and driving Brady into the turf with what appeared to be a re-aggravation of a thorny left shoulder injury Brady had dealt with most of this season.

"I think our coverage made him hold the ball a little bit longer, and we feel very confident up front that if we get a little extra time, we are going to be able to get to any-

(Continued on Page 14)

SUPER BOWL XLVI REVIEW

RECORDS SET OR TIED (COMPILED BY ELIAS SPORTS BUREAU)

SUPER BOWL RECORD SET IN SUPER BOWL XLVI

Oldest Winning Head Coach – 65, Tom Coughlin
Most Consecutive Completions – 16, Tom Brady
Most Consecutive Completions To Start Game – 9, Eli Manning
Most Passing Yards, Career – 1,277, Tom Brady
Most Passes, Career – 197, Tom Brady
Most Completions, Career – 127, Tom Brady
Most Punts Inside 10, Game – 3, Steve Weatherford
Most First Downs Passing, Game, Both Teams – 33 (N.Y. Giants 18, New England 15)

SUPER BOWL RECORDS TIED IN SUPER BOWL XLVI

Most Games Started – 5, Tom Brady; Matt Light
Longest Touchdown Drive, Team – 96 yards, New England
Fewest Turnovers, Game, Team – 0, N.Y. Giants
Most Safeties, Game, Team – 1, N.Y. Giants
Fewest Touchdowns Rushing, Game, Team – 0, New England
Fewest Passes Had Intercepted, Game, Team – 0, N.Y. Giants
Fewest First Downs By Penalty, Game, Team – 0, New England
Fewest Punt Returns, Game, Team – 0, New England
Fewest Fumbles, Game, Team – 0, New England
Fewest Fumbles Lost, Game, Both Teams – 0 (N.Y. Giants 0, New England 0)

(Continued from Page 13)

body," Tuck said.

After the game, Brady denied the hit affected his play, but trainers huddled around him on the sideline, and backup QB Brian Hoyer briefly warmed up. Brady stayed in but was far less effective after that point (7-of-17 passing, 75 yards, one interception) than he had been prior to Tuck's sack (20-of-24 passing, 201 yards, two TDs).

Shaky pass protection and dropped passes also hurt the Patriots. C Dan Connolly, ORT Sebastian Vollmer (making his first start since Nov. 27) and Mankins all played incomplete games, allowing the Giants' fearsome front to populate the Patriots' backfield too often – a reprise of the plots from the Patriots' shocking Super Bowl XLII loss and their Week Nine defeat in Foxborough earlier this season.

"I think everybody realizes we were a better football team than what we saw out there," Patriots OG Brian Waters said.

The Patriots approached midfield as the final period began and went back to their bread and butter with a no-huddle, shotgun attack. On first down, they sent out five receivers and kept five home to block, unable to corral DTs Linval Joseph, who beat Mankins inside, and Rocky Bernard.

Brady barely escaped the pressure and fired deep to Gronkowski on the broken play, but he was boxed out by folk-hero LB Chase Blackburn, who two months earlier was set to take a substitute-teaching job before the Giants signed him and inserted him into their starting lineup. Blackburn came up with the drive-killing interception as the hindered Gronkowski's ankle buckled on the breakup attempt.

"It was just a good play by him," said Gronkowski, who was held to two catches and 26 yards on three targets.

The Giants milked nearly five minutes off the clock but were forced to punt, and Brady moved the Patriots from their own eight to the Giants' 44-yard line with just over four minutes left. It set up one of the defining moments of the game.

The Patriots had the perfect setup, with



Giants defenders prevented Aaron Hernandez from tipping Tom Brady's Hail Mary heave to a Patriots teammate.

Welker running up the inside edge of the numbers against the Giants, who were supposed to rotate from a two-deep to a single-high safety coverage. The problem was that S Kenny Phillips didn't get the message, and Welker ran freely. Brady's lob pass had the right touch but was a little high, and a sprawling Welker twisted around, unable to make a catch he said he has made "a thousand times" before.

Instead of running down the clock – the Giants had only one timeout remaining – and potentially adding to their lead, the Patriots surrendered the ball. Eventual game MVP Manning struck right away on his first throw, rainbowing it to Manningham, who had failed to get both feet inbounds on a deep catch the series before, and away from the coverage that was aimed to stop the dangerous Cruz and Hakeem Nicks (10-108-0 receiving).

Eight plays later, the Patriots allowed Bradshaw to score (a Giants mistake; Manning yelled at him to go down inside the one-yard line, but Bradshaw's momentum carried him into the endzone), to give Brady one more chance with 57 seconds remaining.

Although the Patriots moved to midfield for a final Hail Mary attempt, it fell to the ground, and the Giants ran wildly

GAME STATISTICS

Indianapolis, Indiana, Feb. 5, 2012
 N.Y. Giants 9 0 6 6 – 21
 New England 0 10 7 0 – 17
 Paid Attendance: 68,658.

SCORING

FIRST QUARTER
 N.Y. Giants: Brady pass incomplete, intentional grounding enforced in endzone, safety, 8:52. **N.Y. Giants 2, New England 0.**
 N.Y. Giants: Cruz 2 pass from Manning (Tynes kick), 3:24. Drive: 78 yards in nine plays, 5:28. Key plays: Bradshaw 24 run on 2nd-and-2 from New York 43; Penalty on New England for 12 men on field on 3rd-and-3 from New England 11. **N.Y. Giants 9, New England 0.**

SECOND QUARTER
 New England: Gostkowski 29 FG, 13:48. Drive: 60 yards in 10 plays, 4:36. Key plays: Branch 15 pass from Brady on 3rd-and-4 from New England 35; Welker 19 pass from Brady on 1st-and-10 from 50. **N.Y. Giants 9, New England 3.**
 New England: Woodhead 4 pass from Brady (Gostkowski kick), 0:08. Drive: 96 yards in 14 plays, 3:55. Key plays: Gronkowski 20 pass from Brady on 1st-and-10 from New England 15; Hernandez 12 pass from Brady on 3rd-and-4 from New York 45. **New England 10, N.Y. Giants 9.**

THIRD QUARTER
 New England: Hernandez 12 pass from Brady (Gostkowski kick), 11:20. Drive: 79 yards in eight plays, 3:40. Key plays: Ochocinco 21 pass from Brady on 1st-and-10 from New England 21; Green-Ellis 17 run on 2nd-and-2 from 50; Green-Ellis 4 run on 3rd-and-1 from New York 24. **New England 17, N.Y. Giants 9.**
 N.Y. Giants: Tynes 38 FG, 6:43. Drive: 45 yards in 10 plays, 4:37. Key plays: Nicks 11 pass from Manning on 1st-and-10 from New England 36; Manningham 5 pass from Manning on 3rd-and-10 from New England 25. **New England 17, N.Y. Giants 12.**
 N.Y. Giants: Tynes 33 FG, 0:35. Drive: 33 yards in nine plays, 5:01. Key plays: Nicks 17 pass from Manning on 2nd-and-9 from New England 47, fumbles,

recovered by Hynoski; Pascoe 12 pass from Manning on 1st-and-10 from New England 33. **New England 17, N.Y. Giants 15.**

FOURTH QUARTER
 N.Y. Giants: Bradshaw 6 run (Ware run on two-point conversion attempt fails), 0:57. Drive: 88 yards on nine plays, 2:49. Key plays: Manningham 38 pass from Manning on 1st-and-10 from New York 12; Manningham 16 pass from Manning on 1st-and-10 from 50; Nicks 14 pass from Manning on 2nd-and-8 from New England 32. **N.Y. Giants 21, New England 17.**

TEAM STATISTICS

	N.Y.G.	N.E.
First downs.....	26	21
Rushing	7	6
Passing	18	15
Penalty	1	0
Total yards	396	349
Rushing	114	83
Passing	282	266
Total plays	71	62
Average gain	5.6	5.6
Rushing plays	28	19
Average gain	4.1	4.4
Passes completed	30	27
Passes attempted	40	41
Passes had intercepted	0	1
Sacks allowed	3	2
Sacks yards lost	14	10
Punts.....	4	3
Average.....	40.8	41.0
Kickoffs	5	5
Endzone	5	1
Touchbacks	2	1
Punt returns	1	0
Yards returned	10	0
Kickoff returns	4	3
Yards returned	75	73
Penalties	4	5
Yards penalized	24	28
Fumbles.....	2	0
Lost.....	0	0
Field goals attempted.....	2	1
Made.....	2	1
Third-down plays.....	11	12
Converted to 1st down.....	5	6
Fourth-down plays.....	0	1
Converted to 1st down.....	0	1
Time of possession.....	37:05	22:55
Avg. yard line start.....	NYG 25	NE 16
Possessions inside 20.....	3	3
Touchdowns	2	2
Field goals	1	1

GIANTS STARTERS

WR 80 Victor Cruz	LE 91 Justin Tuck
OLT 66 David Diehl	LDT 97 Linval Joseph
OLG 77 Kevin Boothe	RDT 99 Chris Canty
C 64 David Baas	RE 90 Jason Pierre-Paul
ORG 76 Chris Snee	MLB 93 Chase Blackburn
ORT 67 Kareem McKenzie	WLB 59 Michael Boley
TE 85 Jake Ballard	LCB 23 Corey Webster
WR 88 Hakeem Nicks	FS 26 Antrel Rolle
FB 45 Henry Hynoski	SS 21 Kenny Phillips
QB 10 Eli Manning	RCB 31 Aaron Ross
RB 44 Ahmad Bradshaw	S 34 Deon Grant
PK 9 Lawrence Tynes	P 5 Steve Weatherford

GIANTS SUBSTITUTIONS
 WR 12 J. Jernigan, WR 15 D. Thomas, CB 20 P. Amukamara, DB 22 D. Martin, RB 27 B. Jacobs, RB 28 D. Ware, CB 36 W. Blackmon, S 39 T. Sash, TE 47 T. Beckum, LS 51 Z. DeOssie, LB 53 G. Jones, LB 55 S. Paysinger, LB 57 J. Williams, OG 62 M. Petrus, OT 70 T. Ugoh, DE 71 D. Tollefson, DE 72 O. Umenyiora, WR 82 M. Manningham, TE 86 B. Pascoe, LB 94 M. Kiwanuka, DT 95 R. Bernard.

DID NOT PLAY
 QB 8 D. Carr.

GIANTS INACTIVES
 WR 13 R. Barden, RB 33 D. Scott, LB 58 M. Herzlich, C 63 J. Cordle, DE 69 J. Trattout, DT 73 J. Kennedy, T 79 J. Brewer.

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING
 GIANTS — Bradshaw 17-72, 24L, 1td; Jacobs 9-37, 11L; Ware 1-6; Manning 1(-1).
 PATRIOTS — Green-Ellis 10-44, 17L; Welker 2-21, 11L; Woodhead 7-18, 6L.

PASSING
 GIANTS — Manning 30-40-296, 38L, 0i, 1td.
 PATRIOTS — Brady 27-41-276, 21L, 1i, 2td.

RECEIVING
 GIANTS — Nicks 10-109, 19L; Manningham 5-73, 38L; Pascoe 4-33, 12L; Cruz 4-25, 8L, 1td; Bradshaw 2-19, 11L; Hynoski 2-19, 13L; Ballard 2-10, 9L; Ware 1-8.
 PATRIOTS — Hernandez 8-67, 12L, 1td; Welker 7-60, 19L; Woodhead 4-42, 19L, 1td; Branch 3-45, 19L; Gronkowski 2-26, 20L; Green-Ellis 2-15, 8L; Ochocinco 1-21.

PUNTING
 GIANTS — Weatherford 4 for 40.8 avg, 51L, 3 ins 20.
 PATRIOTS — Mesko 3 for 41.0 avg, 48L, 1 ins 20.

PUNT RETURNS
 GIANTS — Blackburn 1-10, 2fc.
 PATRIOTS — Welker 0-0, 1fc.

KICKOFF RETURNS
 GIANTS — Jernigan 3-71, 34L; Blackmon 1-4.
 PATRIOTS — Edelman 3-73, 31L.

INTERCEPTIONS
 GIANTS — Blackburn 1-0.
 PATRIOTS — None.

TACKLES-ASSISTS-SACKS
 GIANTS — Boley 9-1-0; Phillips 5-1-0; Blackburn 4-2-0; Grant 4-1-0; Tuck 3-0-2; Rolle 3-0-0; Ross 2-1-0; Pierre-Paul 2-0-0; Williams 2-0-0; Bernard 2-0-0; Joseph 1-0-0; Webster 1-0-0; Amukamara 1-0-0; Canty 1-0-0; Umenyiora 0-1-0.
 PATRIOTS — Spikes 8-3-0; Mayo 8-3-0; McCourty 6-1-0; Chung 2-4-0; Anderson 3-2-1-5; Ihedigbo 2-3-0; Arrington 4-0-0; Molden 4-0-0; Ninkovich 3-1-0-5; Moore 3-0-0; Wilfork 3-0-0; Warren 1-1-0; White 0-2-0; Ellis 0-2-0; Deaderick 1-0-1; Love 1-0-0.

FUMBLES-RECOVERED-FORCED
 GIANTS — Bradshaw 1-0-0, Nicks 1-0-0, Hynoski 0-1-0, Snee 0-1-0.
 PATRIOTS — Mayo 0-0-1, Spikes 0-0-1.

FIELD GOALS
 GIANTS — Tynes 38g, 33g.
 PATRIOTS — Gostkowski 29g.

PATRIOTS STARTERS

WR 83 Wes Welker	LB 58 Tracy White
OLT 72 Matt Light	DT 75 Vince Wilfork
OLG 70 Logan Mankins	DT 74 Kyle Love
C 63 Dan Connolly	DL 71 Brandon Deaderick
ORG 54 Brian Waters	LB 50 Rob Ninkovich
ORT 76 Sebastian Vollmer	LB 51 Jerod Mayo
TE 87 Rob Gronkowski	LB 55 Brandon Spikes
WR 84 Deion Branch	LCB 32 Devin McCourty
RB 42 BenJarvus Green-Ellis	RCB 24 Kyle Arrington
QB 12 Tom Brady	S 44 James Ihedigbo
RB 39 Danny Woodhead	S 25 Patrick Chung
PK 3 Stephen Gostkowski	P 14 Zoltan Mesko

PATRIOTS SUBSTITUTIONS
 WR 11 J. Edelman, WR 18 M. Slater, CB 27 A. Molden, DB 29 S. Moore, S 31 S. Brown, FB 36 L. Polite, DB 41 M. Williams, LS 48 D. Aiken, LB 52 D. Fletcher, OL 61 M. Cannon, C 62 R. Wendell, OT 77 N. Solder, TE 81 A. Hernandez, WR 85 C. Ochocinco, LB 90 N. Koutouvides, DE 94 S. Ellis, DE 95 M. Anderson, DL 98 G. Warren.

DID NOT PLAY
 QB 8 B. Hoyer, RB 22 S. Ridley, DB 23 N. Jones, DE 69 A. Silvestro.

PATRIOTS INACTIVES
 QB 15 R. Mallett, RB 33 K. Faulk, RB 34 S. Vereen, LB 59 G. Guyton, OL 64 D. Thomas, OL 65 N. McDonald, DL 97 R. Brace.

onto the field, champions once more.

Brady's accuracy waned and the Patriots dropped several passes in the fourth quarter, but it's the Welker pass that proved most haunting.

"It comes to the biggest moment of my life and I don't come up with it," Welker said, fighting back tears. "It's discouraging."

Some 30 feet away, and mere mo-

ments later, Manningham, Phillips and other Giants teammates embraced as friends and family members looked on and celebrated.

"We knew that one of us was going to have to make a big play," Manningham said. "We didn't know when though. Just bite your tongue, be patient and the ball is going to come to you."

SUPER BOWL XLVI MVP

A GIANT SEQUEL

Once again, Eli Manning's legacy grew on a pass that set up a game-winning score

By Eli Kaboron
Associate Editor

INDIANAPOLIS — For the second time in his career, Eli Manning was named Super Bowl MVP for his performance on football's greatest stage. Because of his excellence in Super Bowl XLVI against the Patriots — where he completed 30-of-40 passes for 296 yards, with one touchdown and no interceptions — Manning joined an elite group of two-time winners of the award. Before him, only Bart Starr, Terry Bradshaw, Joe Montana and Tom Brady had won multiple Super Bowl MVPs; all four are either in the Pro Football Hall of Fame or Canton-bound five years after they retire.

Also for the second time in his career, Manning was crowned MVP despite his most important — and most memorable — throw not resulting in a touchdown. Four years after his 32-yard pass in Super Bowl XLII to WR David Tyree, when he evaded a heavy New England pass rush to throw to his receiver, who pinned the ball against his helmet to complete the reception on the go-ahead touchdown drive, Manning again showed a flair for the dramatic. With a beautiful 38-yard strike to WR Mario Manningham down the left sideline, helping set up RB Ahmad Bradshaw's game-winning score eight plays later, Manning cemented his place in Super Bowl lore as not only an elite player, but maybe one of the top big-game signal-callers the game has ever seen.

"His performance, coming down the stretch, was outstanding," Giants head coach Tom Coughlin said of Manning. "He is the guy who has done it for us all year."

The throw from Manning to Manningham, which came on the first play of the Giants' final offensive drive, was really the first big play New York had made in the passing game all day long. The Patriots' strategy had been to play two deep safeties, forcing Manning to go underneath with his passes instead of finding his receivers deep. The game plan worked, as the Giants hadn't completed a pass for 20-plus yards prior to the throw. During the regular season, Manning had averaged 4.2 completions of 20-plus yards per game. Following the Super Bowl, several Giants players said they were prepared for that type of defensive strategy from the Patriots, as New England had done similar things in Week Nine when the teams played.

Taking the snap from his own 12-yard line with his team down 17-15 and 3:46 showing on the clock, Manning recognized



Just as he did in the game-winning drive in Super Bowl XLII four years earlier, Giants QB Eli Manning completed the throws he needed to make in crunch time.

the Patriots were again in their two-deep look. The Giants' top two wide receivers — Hakeem Nicks and Victor Cruz — were split to the right side of the shotgun formation, with Manningham off to the left. Manning dropped back to the five and checked his targets on the right, but with neither of them gaining much separation from the defense, the quarterback lofted a throw down the left sideline, where a streaking Manningham had gotten a step behind Patriots CB Sterling Moore, about a yard from the sideline. The ball landed 42 yards later in the receiver's hands, just as S Patrick Chung and Manningham collided. Somehow, Manningham held on to the ball and tapped both feet inbounds before being shoved out of bounds.

"I looked to the right pretty long, didn't like what I was seeing, so I slid over in the pocket to see where that safety was," Manning said, recalling the play. "I saw a little window for Mario and put it out there where he would catch it or nobody (would). And he made a great catch, good job staying inbounds, keeping his two feet inbounds, knowing he was going to get hit."

Manningham gave credit to the quar-

terback, saying, "It was a perfect throw. They rolled into cover-2 at the last minute, and I saw the corner was acting like he was going to backpedal, but he came up to play cover-2 and I extended to the side a little bit and worked him outside. Eli just put the ball on the money. Great pass protection, great ball. I knew where I was on the sideline. I knew I didn't have that much room. Good thing I wear (size) 11s, because if I wore 11-and-a-halves, I don't think I'd have been in."

What Manningham ran was essentially a "go route" down the sideline, designed to distract the safety from protecting the middle of the field against Nicks and Cruz. It worked, but in an opposite fashion. Chung opted to stay at his position to contain the Giants' top receivers. That left the sideline open when Manningham broke past Moore, with no safety help over the top.

"They had us covered pretty well to the right," Manning said. "I looked that way. I saw I had the safety cheated in a little bit and threw it down the sideline."

All week in practice leading up to the Super Bowl, Manning told Manningham

ALL-TIME SUPER BOWL MVPs

SB game	MVP / Team
XLVI	QB Eli Manning / N.Y. Giants
XLV	QB Aaron Rodgers / Green Bay
XLIV	QB Drew Brees / New Orleans
XLIII	WR Antonio Holmes / Pittsburgh
XLII	QB Eli Manning / N.Y. Giants
XLI	QB Peyton Manning / Indianapolis
XL	WR Hines Ward / Pittsburgh
XXXIX	WR Deion Branch / New England
XXXVIII	QB Tom Brady / New England
XXXVII	FS Dexter Jackson / Tampa Bay
XXXVI	QB Tom Brady / New England
XXXV	LB Ray Lewis / Baltimore
XXXIV	QB Kurt Warner / St. Louis
XXXIII	QB John Elway / Denver
XXXII	RB Terrell Davis / Denver
XXXI	WR-RS Desmond Howard / Green Bay
XXX	CB Larry Brown / Dallas
XXIX	QB Steve Young / San Francisco
XXVIII	RB Emmitt Smith / Dallas
XXVII	QB Troy Aikman / Dallas
XXVI	QB Mark Rypien / Washington
XXV	RB Ottis Anderson / N.Y. Giants
XXIV	QB Joe Montana / San Francisco
XXIII	WR Jerry Rice / San Francisco
XXII	QB Doug Williams / Washington
XXI	QB Phil Simms / N.Y. Giants
XX	DE Richard Dent / Chicago
XIX	QB Joe Montana / San Francisco
XVIII	RB Marcus Allen / L.A. Raiders
XVII	RB John Riggins / Washington
XVI	QB Joe Montana / San Francisco
XV	QB Jim Plunkett / Oakland
XIV	QB Terry Bradshaw / Pittsburgh
XIII	QB Terry Bradshaw / Pittsburgh
XII	DT Randy White, DE Harvey Martin / Dallas
XI	WR Fred Biletnikoff / Oakland
X	WR Lynn Swann / Pittsburgh
IX	RB Franco Harris / Pittsburgh
VIII	RB Larry Csonka / Miami
VII	S Jake Scott / Miami
VI	QB Roger Staubach / Dallas
V	LB Chuck Howley / Dallas
IV	QB Len Dawson / Kansas City
III	QB Joe Namath / N.Y. Jets
II	QB Bart Starr / Green Bay
I	QB Bart Starr / Green Bay

that he'd be seeing one-on-one coverage, and that he'd have to come through with a big game for the Giants. The receiver obliged, hauling in five receptions for 73 yards.

However, nobody had a bigger game than Manning himself. For the second time in four years, he completed the throws he needed to make when the game was on the line. His most important pass didn't result in six points, but in winning the Super Bowl MVP, Manning showed he belongs in the elite group of two-time recipients of the honor, even if he didn't want to acknowledge it.

"This is about a team, an organization being named world champions, and that was the ultimate goal," Manning said. "That's the only thing that's important — is the team finding a way to get a victory.

"It's not about anything else."

NOTEBOOK

THE NEXT STEPS

Expansion and relocation major topics for Goodell; Smith discusses player health

By Eli Kaberon and Eric Edholm

INDIANAPOLIS — NFL commissioner Roger Goodell spoke for nearly 50 minutes during his annual State of the League address and touched on a variety of topics, headlined by the fact that all 32 teams will have at least one prime-time game starting next season.

The commissioner announced the expansion of “Thursday Night Football” on NFL Network from an eight-game package to 13 games. Thursday-night games will begin in Week Two and go through Week 15 starting in 2012. Every NFL team will appear at least once on either “Sunday Night Football,” “Monday Night Football” or the expanded Thursday-night schedule.

“We think that’s great for the fans, it’s great for the teams, because every one will get that prime-time exposure,” Goodell said. “And we think it’s great for the (NFL) Network. The Network continues to do an incredible job of promoting our sport, our game.”

The potential of NFL expansion and the possible relocation of existing teams dominated much of the conversation. Goodell told NBC’s Bob Costas earlier in the week that if the league were to expand, it would be to 34 teams, not adding only one to have an odd number. During his address, he clarified that statement, saying the league has no plans to add any franchises to its current collection of 32 clubs.

“We have not talked about expansion in the league, at all,” said Goodell when asked about the Costas interview. “It has not been on our agenda, it has not been something we’ve focused on with our membership. I don’t see that in the foreseeable future.”

Goodell added to that answer by saying, “We want to keep our teams where they are,” which led to many questions focused on the Los Angeles situation. Media members wanted to know about the L.A. stadium issue, the future of the Jaguars under their new ownership and the chance the Rams might move because of the uncertainty over their stadium in St. Louis.

Regarding Los Angeles, the commissioner said the league would like to work out a stadium deal with one of the two potential ownership groups.

“I look at this as a partnership,” he said about a possible deal between the league and one of the L.A. groups. “I believe that there is a way to make the partnership work. We’ve proven throughout the country where we can get stadiums built, they are great for the communities, they’re great for the team and they’re great for the league overall. You’re seeing



A major topic during Roger Goodell’s State of the League address was the chance that one or more teams would move to L.A.

it right here in Indianapolis.

“I think it’s important for us to make smart decisions. We would like to be back in Los Angeles if we can do it correctly, but there are a lot of issues that have to be met.”

On new Jaguars owner Shahid Khan, Goodell said that he believes Khan will help the franchise grow while keeping it in North Florida. “I know Shahid Khan is very interested in our international growth. He believes it’s good for Jacksonville as a community to get more global exposure. He’s taken interest in playing international games, including in London, and we’re going to take advantage of that.”

The Jaguars have been discussed as a potential candidate to move to L.A., as have been the Rams. Owner Stan Kroenke has been noncommittal about his team’s future in St. Louis, and the team recently announced plans to relinquish one home game in each of the next three seasons to play in London. Those plans hit a snag when the stadium authority claimed the Rams have a deal to play all their home games in the Edward Jones Dome. However, as of this writing, the Rams and the Convention and Visitors Commission were in the process of finalizing an agreement to the lease that would allow the team to play home games in London from 2012-14.

“I think it is great for the community of St. Louis to get that global exposure,” Goodell said. “But there are issues that obviously are going to have to get re-

solved. ... We hope that will get resolved shortly. And once that’s resolved, we’ll make a decision from there. But we will be playing in London next year.”

Goodell repeated that the NFL would like to keep all its teams in their current cities. However, with the Rams’ lease expiring in 2014, there are doubts about the team’s future.

“We’d love to have the St. Louis Rams stay in St. Louis,” Goodell said. “There are lease issues. They are going through the process ... both parties are engaging in that. ... We’ll allow the process to play out.”

The commissioner answered questions on several other topics, as well.

■ HGH testing has been a controversial subject between the league and the players, but Goodell said he “certainly hopes” the two sides reach a deal on testing this offseason. “We’d love to implement it, we’re prepared to do it, we agreed to do it last August. We have been working to try to address the issues the union has raised. We believe the science is clear. I do not hear any dispute from scientists around the world on the fact that this test is valid, and that we have the basis to put in and implement an HGH test that is fair to the players. We expect to be able to do that. We had discussions as recently as two weeks ago that we made some progress on, and I’m hopeful that we’ll be able to get that implemented immediately.”

■ On helping former players deal with football-related injuries, Goodell said that

“former players deserve the respect for helping us build this game.” He added that in the CBA agreed to last August, the league pledged more than \$1 billion in helping retired players and that the league is always looking for ways to make the game safer.

■ Along those lines, the commissioner explained the league’s studies into concussions and the ways it is trying to prevent them. All of the information the league has researched on the topic is public, according to Goodell, and since recent safety rules have been implemented, the average time a player with a concussion has sat out has risen from half a day to six days.

■ Goodell said he would encourage the NFL’s Competition Committee to research pushing back the trade deadline. “In anything that we do from a competitive standpoint, there are unintended consequences. The committee has looked at the trading deadline repeatedly. We will look at it again when we meet back here in a few weeks, and when they go down to Florida to meet for their session. But I do not recommend that they make any change. I recommend they study it. We’ll discuss it after they’ve studied it. Once I understand all the consequences, we’ll present it to the membership, and we’ll make a decision from there.”

■ With news that the 49ers have secured a \$200 million loan for a new stadium, Goodell said “he’s excited about a new stadium being built in California, and I certainly hope it leads to more new sta-

diums in California.”

■ The commissioner said the number of television blackouts dropped in 2011, but that he is concerned with the lack of sell-outs in Tampa Bay and Cincinnati. “I’m always concerned about making sure our stadiums are full.”

■ Goodell said there is definitely a possibility a future Super Bowl could return to Indianapolis. He also added that cold-weather cities, specifically Chicago and Philadelphia, could be considered to host Super Bowls if the ownership groups in those cities are interested. The league will be hosting its first-ever cold-weather, outdoor Super Bowl in 2014 in New York/New Jersey, which the commissioner believes will be a great success.

■ Another potential Super Bowl host city, Miami, must make improvements to its stadium in order to compete with the modern facilities around the country. However, Goodell said, “I do believe Miami will host another Super Bowl.”

SMITH: NFLPA WON'T BE 'BULLIED' INTO HGH TESTING

One year ago, NFLPA executive director DeMaurice Smith stood before a packed, hot room in Dallas and spoke with an obvious edge to his voice about the then-impending labor crisis.

In 2012, the mood was considerably more toned down.

Smith stood alongside the NFLPA's eight-player leadership panel — including several outgoing members such as Sean Morey, Tony Richardson and Kevin Mawae, whom Smith emotionally praised for their service — and spoke of labor harmony and the union's future goals for its membership.

There was business to attend to, though, and it was not all bouquet tossing in the 45-minute press conference. Regarding HGH testing for players, which has yet to be sorted out, Smith said the NFLPA and the league continue to collectively bargain the process for implementing the plan. Both sides agreed to testing for performance-enhancing drugs in the new labor agreement last year, but the details have yet to be settled.

Smith also said the union would not be “bullied” into accepting a bad plan for its players. Players roundly object to blood tests, which right now are said to be the only reliable test available. In addition, it's an extremely expensive test, costing up to \$2,500 for administering. But the union's biggest objection is over the test population — the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), Smith said, has not given enough information about what test levels are acceptable for positive and negative tests.

“With all due respect to the folks at WADA, who have told us that the standard against which our players will be measured is really none of our business and shouldn't concern us, how can it not



NFLPA executive director DeMaurice Smith discussed the players' reluctance to agree to HGH testing.

be our business?” Smith asked rhetorically. “It seems to me and the players that if we are able to get to a system that is truly transparent, that is the best answer to the solution.

“But no one will bully us into a test. No one will force the players to accept something that's unfair. How could we?”

WADA officials previously have said the NFLPA must live up to its agreement to proper testing. NFLPA officials privately are concerned that football players' HGH levels — which occur naturally in the body — could exceed non-players' levels, which might skew the WADA test results to the players' disadvantage.

In other union business, Smith said:

■ Health and safety concerns would be the main barometer for the union to consider regarding expanding the regular season beyond 16 games, which was a major negotiating point in the early labor talks last year. The league wants to expand to 18 games or more, and the NFLPA steadfastly has railed against the idea. Said Smith, “The health and safety of our players is something we said early on was a non-negotiable issue, and that will remain so.”

■ The union had not been consulted by the NFL about the report that the Rams will play London games in each of the next three seasons. “Obviously, it raises some significant concerns about the health and safety of the players given the transportation, given the jet lag,” Smith said.

■ The concerns raised by agent David Cornwell in a letter to fellow agents were replete with falsehoods. Cornwell, who threw his hat into the ring to vie for Smith's executive director job previously, criticized Smith's performance in an 11-page confidential memo. Smith dismissed the report summarily. “The truth is that everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but no one is entitled to their own facts,” he said. After Smith spoke, Mawae — the NFLPA president, whose contract is up in March, as is Smith's — passionately trashed the Cornwell report, saying he felt “highly disrespected” and that Cornwell was playing “Monday-morning quarterback” by criticizing a deal long after it had been bargained. The players will vote on

Smith's re-election in March, and Mawae told PFW after the press conference that Smith has included players in the labor process more than predecessor Gene Upshaw did and that Smith has “done everything he outlined when he ran for the position four years ago. He has met his goals, including a fair CBA for the players, and he should be re-elected.”

MARTIN, KENNEDY HIGHLIGHT 2012 HALL OF FAME CLASS

The Pro Football Hall of Fame announced its Class of 2012 — CB Jack Butler, C Dermontti Dawson, DE-OLB Chris Doleman, DT Cortez Kennedy, RB Curtis Martin and OT Willie Roaf.

Two first-year-eligible nominees, head coach Bill Parcells and OG Will Shields, were among the finalists who will have to wait at least another year for induction.

The other finalists who did not make it this year were RB Jerome Bettis, WR Tim Brown, WR Cris Carter, owner Eddie DeBartolo Jr., OLB-DE Kevin Greene, DE-OLB Charles Haley, WR Andre Reed, OG Dick Stanfel and CB-S Aeneas Williams.

Butler was nominated by the seniors committee. Upon his retirement after nine seasons with the Steelers from 1951-59, Butler ranked second all-time in interceptions with 52 (in only 103 games). He made the Pro Bowl four times and was named to the NFL's All-Decade team of the 1950s.

Dawson manned the center position for the Steelers from 1988-2000, playing in 184 games. He played in 170 consecutive games and played in seven consecutive Pro Bowls. He was named first-team All-Pro in six consecutive years.

Doleman's career spanned from 1985-99, mostly playing for the Vikings. He also played for the Falcons and 49ers. Doleman finished with 150½ sacks, which ranked fourth all-time at the time of his retirement. He had eight seasons with 10-plus sacks and was named to eight Pro Bowls.

Kennedy played all 11 of his NFL seasons with the Seahawks from 1990-2000. He recorded 58 sacks and three intercep-

tions in his career and twice led the Seahawks in sacks. He was the NFL's Defensive Player of the Year in 1992.

Martin spent his 11 NFL seasons with the Patriots and Jets and retired as the league's fourth all-time leading rusher with 14,101 yards. He had 90 rushing touchdowns and 10 receiving touchdowns in his career. Martin was named Rookie of the Year and made the Pro Bowl five times. He began his career with 10 consecutive 1,000-yard seasons and won the rushing title in 2004.

Roaf played in 189 games over 13 seasons for the Saints and Chiefs. A first-round pick in 1993, Roaf was voted to 11 Pro Bowls and was named first-team All-Pro seven times in his career.

INDIANAPOLIS MAKES A STRONG FIRST IMPRESSION

Helped by some unseasonably warm weather for early February, the city of Indianapolis turned out to be a fantastic host for Super Bowl XLVI, leading many to believe that the location could see a return appearance of the game in the future.

The city set attendance records for the NFL Experience fan event and every day the streets were packed with visitors — 1.1 million fans visited Super Bowl Village in downtown Indianapolis. Both teams spoke about how welcome they felt in Indy, especially the Giants, who practiced in the University of Indianapolis' new indoor facility.

“The facility there for us to practice at is outstanding,” Coughlin said of the school's field. “The people there have been outstanding. The hospitality has been great.”

Commissioner Roger Goodell echoed those statements, saying, “We can't say enough about the tremendous work everybody did. It was just an extraordinary effort and a great event.”

The next three Super Bowls are booked for New Orleans, New York/New Jersey and Arizona, but there is a strong belief that Indianapolis will enter bids to host Super Bowls after that. Based on its performance in 2012, it would be a surprise if Indy didn't get to host another big game.



To the surprise of many, Indianapolis was a terrific host for Super Bowl XLVI.

2011 SEASON IN REVIEW

THE TOP TEN IN '11

Pro Football Weekly takes a look back at the 10 stories that stood out the most in an action-packed 2011 campaign that took off like a rocket after a lengthy offseason shutdown

BY DAN ARKUSH

Could there be any doubt about the most significant story line of the 2011 NFL season?

That there actually was an unimpeded season following the longest labor stoppage in league history (136 agonizing days to be exact) has to take top honors on this year's top-10 list.

For more than four months, with the sport's normal offseason routine all but obliterated, the prospect of a possibly dramatic alteration of the regular season certainly seemed real enough.

But once a new Collective Bargaining Agreement was reached at the end of July, it didn't take long for the action on the pro football front to heat up big-time, beginning with a frenzied free-agent period that quickly moved the sport back to the forefront.

As it turned out, the product on the field showed no signs of being adversely affected by the lockout-induced shutdown.

Starting off with a scintillating Saints-Packers shootout on a national stage

— with Green Bay trigger man Aaron Rodgers just barely outdueling Saints gunslinger Drew Brees — the action was fast and furious on a weekly basis, with the usual array of eye-popping surprises and eye-dropping disappointments that have become par for the NFL course.

Based on votes from the PFW editorial staff, here are the 10 most important stories from the 2011 campaign:

1 NEW CBA GUARANTEES LABOR PEACE FOR NEXT DECADE

Did the league owners benefit from the new CBA more than the players? Probably. Among other things, they got about a 4 percent increase in their share of all revenues the game will produce over the next 10 years, retained the ability to restrict the movement of the game's top free agents for up to three years with franchise tags and received a new rookie salary cap, creating a savings that will go to fund improved benefits for retired players that otherwise would have come out of their own pockets. But the players were able



to ward off a move to an 18-game regular season — at least for now — and got the floor raised on the salary cap, as well as achieving significant reductions in offseason activities and training-camp practices and dramatically enhanced health benefits. With monstrous TV contracts fueling what is projected to be a steadily growing revenue stream of major proportions, both sides figure to make out like bandits in a sport likely facing 10 years of unprecedented prosperity.

2 TEBOW LEADS BRONCOS TO POSTSEASON PROMISED LAND

Despite a style that couldn't be more unorthodox and a ghastly 46.5 percent

completion rate, Tim Tebow somehow managed to spearhead a miraculous revival in Denver after replacing Kyle Orton as the starting QB at halftime in Week Five with the 1-4 Broncos struggling mightily to make ends meet. He registered six come-from-behind victories in the fourth quarter or overtime in 11 regular-season starts. Plus, he stunned the Steelers in a wild-card victory by tossing an 80-yard TD pass to WR Demaryius Thomas on the first play of overtime that triggered an unprecedented Twitter firestorm. As a result, the devoutly religious Tebow did indeed come off like God's gift. But it remains to be seen whether Broncos executive V.P. of football operations and former star QB John Elway can

2011 SEASON IN REVIEW

turn Tebow into an honest-to-God NFL signalcaller. That will be a process guaranteed to continue captivating even the most casual pro football fans in 2012 because of the undeniably magnetic aura that Tebow projects — both on and off the field.

3 ELI LOOKS ELITE IN TRIGGERING GIANTS' SUPER BOWL RUN

Following in the lofty footsteps of the 2010 Packers, the 2011 Giants got red-hot at just the right time, storming into the playoffs in great part due to the mastery under center of Super Bowl MVP Eli Manning, who managed to maneuver his way to the top rung of the NFL QB ladder with the likes of Aaron Rodgers, Tom Brady and Drew Brees. Manning was far from being a one-man band, though, as a vastly improved defense late in the season, led by DEs Jason Pierre-Paul, Justin Tuck and Osi Umenyiora, and a deep WR corps, featuring Hakeem Nicks and super sophomore Victor Cruz, also made giant contributions.

4 PASSERS KEEP SETTING RECORDS AS OFFENSE RULES

No better proof was provided that the NFL has become a QB-driven league than the numerous noteworthy league passing records that were broken in 2011. Start with league MVP Aaron Rodgers, who upended Peyton Manning's passer-rating record set in 2004 (121.1) with a 122.5 rating (45-6 TD-interception ratio). Continue with Drew Brees and Tom Brady, who both surpassed Dan Marino's single-season passing yardage mark (5,084) with totals of 5,476 and 5,235, respectively. For good measure, add Panthers rookie phenom Cam Newton to the mix for setting records for most passing yards by a rookie (4,051) and most rushing TDs by a QB (14) and becoming the first player in league history with 4,000 or more passing yards and 500 or more rushing yards in the same season. Ten QBs threw for more than 4,000 yards in 2011 (including seasons of 5,000-plus yards from Brees, Brady and Detroit's Matthew Stafford). Five QBs hit the 4,000-yard mark the previous season.

5 PATRIOTS OVERCOME SHAKY 'D' TO REACH THE SUPER BOWL

The cream rose to the top of the AFC courtesy of Tom Brady, who relentlessly attacked the middle of the field with precise darts to prolific WR Wes Welker and the dynamic TE duo of Rob Gronkowski and Aaron Hernandez, and head coach Bill Belichick, who true to form frequently devised resourceful wrinkles when the need developed. PFW's preseason favorites to win the Super Bowl left a lot to be desired on the defensive side of the ball, although they did register an AFC-leading

23 interceptions and plus-17 turnover differential and were consistently stingy in defending in the red zone.

6 HARBAUGH MOLDS 49ERS INTO INSTANT CONTENDERS

Under the direction of runaway PFW/PFWA Coach of the Year selection Jim Harbaugh, the Niners made a quantum leap. Thriving behind an exceptional defense that led the league in rushing yards allowed and turnover differential, an offense that kept mistakes to a minimum and did just enough to win and the best special teams in the league, San Francisco took charge early in the NFC West and finished 13-3, its best record since 1997. In addition, the Niners' divisional-playoff victory over the high-powered Saints was deemed an instant classic, with TE Vernon Davis's 14-yard TD catch with nine seconds remaining capping a back-and-forth masterpiece that featured four lead changes in the final 4:02. Harbaugh made extra headlines in Week 12 on Thanksgiving night, when he and Ravens head coach John Harbaugh became the first brothers to face off on opposite sidelines as head coaches in a pro game, and Week Six, when he mixed it up in a very animated fashion with Lions head coach Jim Schwartz while walking off Ford Field following a tense, come-from-behind 25-19 victory.

7 TIGHT ENDS MAKE PRESENCE FELT IN MAJOR FASHION

Vernon Davis, who set a postseason record for a tight end with 180 receiving yards and scored the first and last TDs in the playoff victory over New Orleans, was not the only player to excel at his position in 2011. Patriots TE Rob Gronkowski and Saints TE Jimmy Graham were high-octane weapons of the highest order, finishing second in catches in the AFC and NFC, respectively, while combining for 28 receiving TDs and breaking Kellen Winslow Sr.'s record for most single-season receiving yards by a tight end (1,290) on the same day. Gronkowski had a league-high 17 receiving TDs, which set a record for most TD receptions in a season by a tight end. Teammate Aaron Hernandez finished fifth in the AFC with 79 catches and had seven TDs. In the NFC, five of the top 14 pass catchers were tight ends (Graham, Detroit's Brandon Pettigrew, Atlanta's Tony Gonzalez, Dallas' Jason Witten and Tampa Bay's Kellen Winslow Jr.). In total, 17 tight ends caught more than 50 passes.

8 LIFE WITHOUT PEYTON PROVES DEADLY FOR COLTS

It was widely expected that things would change dramatically for the Colts in 2011 with future Hall of Fame QB Peyton Manning forced to the sideline after undergoing three surgical procedures

on his neck in a 19-month span. But few league observers expected a team coming off nine consecutive postseason appearances to finish 2-14, its worst record in two decades. Team owner Jim Irsay didn't take long to clean house, raising eyebrows with the firing of vice chairman Bill Polian, the team's longtime top front-office exec, and his son, Chris, the team's GM. In short order, Irsay hired former Eagles director of player personnel Ryan Grigson as the new GM, replaced head coach Jim Caldwell with former Ravens defensive coordinator Chuck Pagano and began sending strong signals that the Colts' historic connection with Manning, who is due a \$28 million bonus on March 8, could end in the not-too-distant future.

9 LEAGUE LOSES UNIQUE PIONEER IN RAIDERS BOSS DAVIS

Like him or not, Al Davis, the rebellious Raiders owner who was a central figure in the merger with the upstart AFL, was one of the game's true giants. One day after his death on Oct. 8 at the age of 82, Davis' team paid him a tribute that he most definitely would have considered the best of the many deserved accolades issued after his passing — a highly emotional 25-20 road victory over the Texans. Thriving as a coach, GM and owner in a career with the Raiders that spanned nearly 50 years, Davis' Raiders teams made it to five Super Bowls, winning three of them (SB XI in 1977, SB XV in '81 and SB XVIII in '84). He also feuded for decades with former NFL commissioner Pete Rozelle and sued the league in the early '80s, but was at the same time a major force responsible for eventually making pro football the country's preeminent sport. A staunch supporter and treasured friend of *Pro Football Weekly*, with whom he had a business relationship for a spell in the late-1970s and early-1980s, Davis' impact on the game was truly monumental.

10 PACKERS' NEAR-PERFECT SEASON ENDS ON SOUR NOTE

With a record-setting offense directed by Aaron Rodgers leading the way, the Packers' 15-1 season was impressive enough to probably make them the preseason favorite to win SB XLVII in the eyes of many observers. But a subpar effort on both sides of the ball in a divisional-playoff loss to the Giants was a giant disappointment that made the team's serious flirtation with perfection much of the season seem like a distant memory. However, three of Green Bay's victories — Week One over New Orleans (42-34), Week 13 over the Giants (38-35) and a 45-41 win over the Lions in the regular-season finale featuring a sensational performance under center by Matt Flynn in place of Rodgers — were among the most entertaining games the league had to offer in 2011.

FINAL 2011 NFL STANDINGS

AFC EAST	W	L	T	PF	PA
New England	13	3	0	513	342
New York Jets	8	8	0	377	363
Miami	6	10	0	329	313
Buffalo	6	10	0	372	434
AFC NORTH	W	L	T	PF	PA
Baltimore	12	4	0	378	266
Pittsburgh	12	4	0	325	227
Cincinnati	9	7	0	344	323
Cleveland	4	12	0	218	307
AFC SOUTH	W	L	T	PF	PA
Houston	10	6	0	381	278
Tennessee	9	7	0	325	317
Jacksonville	5	11	0	243	329
Indianapolis	2	14	0	243	430
AFC WEST	W	L	T	PF	PA
Denver	8	8	0	309	390
San Diego	8	8	0	406	377
Oakland	8	8	0	359	433
Kansas City	7	9	0	212	338
NFC EAST	W	L	T	PF	PA
New York Giants	9	7	0	394	400
Philadelphia	8	8	0	396	328
Dallas	8	8	0	369	347
Washington	5	11	0	288	367
NFC NORTH	W	L	T	PF	PA
Green Bay	15	1	0	560	359
Detroit	10	6	0	474	387
Chicago	8	8	0	353	341
Minnesota	3	13	0	340	449
NFC SOUTH	W	L	T	PF	PA
New Orleans	13	3	0	547	339
Atlanta	10	6	0	402	350
Carolina	6	10	0	406	429
Tampa Bay	4	12	0	287	494
NFC WEST	W	L	T	PF	PA
San Francisco	13	3	0	380	229
Arizona	8	8	0	312	348
Seattle	7	9	0	321	315
St. Louis	2	14	0	193	407

WILD-CARD PLAYOFFS

Houston 31, Cincinnati 10
 New Orleans 45, Detroit 28
 New York Giants 24, Atlanta 2
 Denver 29, Pittsburgh 23

DIVISIONAL PLAYOFFS

San Francisco 36, New Orleans 32
 New England 45, Denver 10
 Baltimore 20, Houston 13
 New York Giants 37, Green Bay 20

CONFERENCE CHAMPIONSHIPS

New England 23, Baltimore 20
 New York Giants 20, San Francisco 17

SUPER BOWL XLVI

New York Giants 21, New England 17

2011 SEASON IN REVIEW

TURNING THE PAGE

In addition to recapping a 2011 campaign that managed to survive a prolonged lockout, PFW looks ahead to a return to normalcy for all 32 teams in 2012

A familiar refrain echoed across the NFL landscape after a 2011 season in which every team felt decidedly off-kilter, following an offseason cut dramatically short by a lockout that lasted more than four months.

Whether their teams enjoyed surprising success or struggled mightily to make ends meet, players everywhere couldn't help wondering aloud just how different things might have been with the benefit of a full offseason to prepare.

A lack of normalcy certainly didn't hinder the Niners, one of six new playoff teams in 2011. Coming off a very disappointing 6-10 season, San Francisco cranked out eight straight wins after a Week Two loss to the Cowboys and never looked back. Under the direction of new head coach Jim Harbaugh, the 49ers fell just short of a Super Bowl trip, losing the NFC title game to the Giants.

Two other 6-10 squads, the Lions in the NFC and the Texans in the AFC, enjoyed major turnarounds.

Detroit made a big leap in the NFC North, finishing 10-6 and earning a wild-card berth with a high-powered offense featuring QB Matthew Stafford, who finally managed to stay healthy, and superstar WR Calvin Johnson.

Houston looks like it could become a perennial postseason participant after making the playoffs for the first time ever, with new defensive coordinator Wade Phillips assembling a greatly improved unit, despite the season-ending loss of star OLB Mario Williams.

The Bengals, who bungled their way to only four victories in 2010, also made significant strides, improving to 9-7 and earning a wild-card berth, thanks mostly to the young blood provided by two 2011 draft picks: second-round QB Andy Dalton and first-round WR A.J. Green.

Just as many teams, though, ended up falling way short of expectations, with the Eagles, Rams and Buccaneers at the top of the list.

Dubbed the "Dream Team" by Vince Young, one of a host of high-profile newcomers to come to Philadelphia via free agency and the trade front, the Eagles needed to go undefeated over the final four weeks just to finish .500.

Predicted by most experts to win the NFC West after showing major improvement in 2010 with first-round draft pick Sam Bradford under center, the Rams caved in under the weight of an injury epidemic to finish a ghastly 2-14, costing head coach Steve Spagnuolo his job.

Raheem Morris suffered a similar fate in Tampa, as the Bucs dropped out of sight after having finished 10-6 the previous season, losing their final 10 games in what turned out to be a very forgettable 4-12 campaign.

Joining Spagnuolo and Morris on the unemployment line were Jack Del Rio (Jaguars), Todd Haley (Chiefs) and Tony Sparano (Dolphins), each of whom received pink slips before the regular season ended, and Jim Caldwell (Colts) and Hue Jackson (Raiders).

Read on for an in-depth look back at how each team fared in 2011.

AFC EAST

BUFFALO BILLS

Overview: The Bills got off to a fast start, winning five of their first seven games. Buffalo was in first place in the AFC East before the wheels fell off. Injuries to NT Kyle Williams, C Eric Wood and RB Fred Jackson didn't help the cause as the Bills lost seven in a row before beating the Broncos in Week 16. The high-powered offense engineered by Ryan Fitzpatrick struggled after October, and the defense remained one of the league's worst units.

Team MVP: He only played in 10 games, but Jackson was clearly the team's most valuable player, evidenced further by how lost the offense seemed without him. He averaged 137.6 yards of offense per game and was one of the league's better backs as both a runner and receiver. Jackson was also a very underrated pass protector. He did it all for Buffalo, and his injury helped fuel the team's downfall.

Biggest surprise: Outside of the run defense, the Bills' offensive line was considered their biggest weakness heading into the season. Instead, it was one of the league's top units. Buffalo allowed the fewest sacks in the NFL (23) and paved the way for the league's 13th-ranked rushing offense. Even with injuries to Wood and OLT Demetrius Bell, the O-line kept Fitzpatrick protected.

Biggest disappointment: League observers might not have been surprised, but OLB Shawne Merriman proved to be a disappointment in Buffalo after a promising preseason. He had only one sack and nine tackles in five games before landing on injured reserve, again. The Bills pinned their pass-rush hopes on Merriman, and that area of the defense remains a weakness.

Offseason outlook: The Bills need to make a decision this offseason on WR Stevie Johnson, who recorded another 1,000-yard receiving season, but he is a free agent, and his endzone antics haven't changed. The focus this offseason,

though, needs to be on improving the defense, starting with finding a pass rusher in the draft. Last year's rookie class, led by DL Marcell Dareus, played well, but the group still needs plenty of upgrades in personnel. Dave Wannstedt will be the new coordinator in 2012. The tools on offense are there, and the Bills had a taste of success. But they are still far from getting over the hump in the AFC East.

MIAMI DOLPHINS

Overview: In a must-win season for Tony Sparano, the Dolphins got off to a nightmarish start, losing their first seven games. Sparano held on to his job for a little while, as the team rallied to win four of its next five games. A 26-10 loss to the Eagles in Week 14, though, did Sparano in, and Todd Bowles led the team to a 2-1 finish with the interim title. The offense improved, but not enough, and the defense remained stout, especially against the run. On Jan. 20, after a failed attempt to land Jeff Fisher, the Dolphins hired Joe Philbin as the team's next head coach.

Team MVP: Reggie Bush finally got the chance to be a featured back, and he made the most of it, proving many doubters wrong. Bush hit career highs in carries (216) and yards (1,086). His previous career high in rushing yards was 581 during the 2007 season. Bush had six rushing scores and helped Miami finish with the league's 11th-best rushing attack.

Biggest surprise: Matt Moore surprised a lot of people with his performance replacing the injured Chad Henne. He threw 16 touchdowns and nine interceptions in 12 starts and received a lot of respect from the team as a leader. Moore, who also had two rushing scores, had three games with a passer rating of greater than 122.

Biggest disappointment: The defense improved as the season went along, but the Dolphins were very susceptible against the pass, finishing 25th in the league in that category. Miami allowed more than 40

2011 SEASON IN REVIEW

extra passing yards per game in 2011 than it did in 2010. CB Sean Smith did not have the breakout season some expected, and CB Vontae Davis had to fight through injuries early on. The team also failed to have consistent play from the FS spot.

Offseason outlook: The offseason will be focused on a clean slate for the Dolphins, still looking to return the franchise to the glory it had under Don Shula. Finding a franchise quarterback is priority No. 1 this offseason for Philbin, GM Jeff Ireland and owner Stephen Ross, who is committed to winning but has made some questionable decisions along the way. The team is expected to switch to a 4-3 defense, making it an important offseason from a personnel standpoint. Decisions on re-signing DE Kendall Langford and especially NT Paul Soliai loom large.

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

Overview: In an emotional season that saw the Patriots rally around honoring owner Robert Kraft's late wife, Myra, New England posted the AFC's best record for the second year in a row. The offense steamrolled opponents most of the season, lighting up the scoreboard to make up for the league's 31st-ranked defense. But in the end, it wasn't enough, as the Patriots fell to the Giants in Super Bowl XLVI.

Team MVP: Tom Brady had to deal with a defense that gave up the second-most yards in the league, an inconsistent run game and four different starting centers. All he did was throw for 5,235 yards and 39 touchdowns. In the team's eight-game win streak to end the regular season, Brady threw 19 touchdowns and two interceptions. The league MVP in 2010, Brady was the biggest reason for the Patriots finishing with the AFC's best record.

Biggest surprise: DE Andre Carter, a free-agent acquisition in the offseason, brought a huge spark to the Patriots' pass rush. The 11-year vet had 10 sacks before suffering a season-ending injury in Week 15. Carter was also very stout against the run, helping set the edge.

Biggest disappointment: Few expected Chad Ochocinco to have 1,000 yards receiving. With the lockout, he had to speed up his learning curve in a complex offense. But it's likely no one predicted he would be as ineffective as he was. Ochocinco had 15 catches for 276 yards — both career lows — and tied a career low with one touchdown. He was inactive in the AFC championship game and played just one snap in the divisional-round win. Ochocinco wasn't a distraction, but he also wasn't productive on the field. He did have a 21-yard catch in the Super Bowl, the Patriots' longest play of the game.

Offseason outlook: It will be a long offseason for the Patriots after another crushing Super Bowl loss to the Giants, a game that New England arguably should have won. Priority No. 1 in the offseason will be re-signing WR Wes Welker, and the team will have plenty of decisions to make about



RB Reggie Bush made the most of his opportunity to be Miami's featured back, hitting career highs in carries and yards.

veteran free agents. The focus, again, will have to be on improving the personnel on defense, mainly in the secondary and in the form of pass rushers.

NEW YORK JETS

Overview: It was a disappointing roller coaster of a season for the Jets, which ended on a low note. The Jets were in the driver's seat for a wild-card spot after a 37-10 win in Week 14, but they lost three games in a row to end the season, thus missing out on the playoffs. Stories leaked about the lack of chemistry in the locker room, and players complained about WR Antonio Holmes and QB Mark Sanchez. Sanchez's struggles led to the team parting ways with offensive coordinator Brian Schottenheimer and hiring Tony Sparano.

Team MVP: CB Darrelle Revis remains the league's best cover corner, and he had another stellar season shutting down one half of the field every Sunday. Statistically,

Revis finished with 52 tackles, 21 passes defended, four interceptions and a 100-yard interception return for a touchdown. His physical play and speed on the outside frustrated elite receivers and forced quarterbacks to look to their second options.

Biggest surprise: Rookie Muhammad Wilkerson had a tough task — replacing veteran Shaun Ellis on the defensive line without a normal offseason. Because he came from a small school (Temple), there were doubts about him, but Wilkerson was one of the Jets' more consistent defensive players. He led the team with 13 tackles for loss and added three sacks, two passes defended and a forced fumble.

Biggest disappointments: The run game and run defense, two Rex Ryan staples, fell short of expectations. Despite a strong second half by Shonn Greene, who rushed for 1,054 yards, the team finished 22nd in the league in rushing, which put Sanchez in many 3rd-and-long situations. Without Ellis and injured OLB Bryan

Thomas, the run defense faltered, mainly on the edges. The Jets allowed more than 20 additional rushing yards a game in 2011 than they did in 2010.

Offseason outlook: This is a crucial offseason for Ryan and GM Mike Tannenbaum, as they need to right the ship and start fresh in 2012. The Jets have some pieces to add on defense and may look to get a quarterback to challenge Sanchez, who needs to have a productive offseason and show progress in 2012. Ryan is far from the hot seat, but another poor campaign in the New York spotlight won't be good for him. Fixing the locker-room problems and getting the offense back on track will be top priorities for the Jets.

AFC NORTH BALTIMORE RAVENS

Overview: The Ravens were on the doorstep of their first Super Bowl trip
(Continued on Page 22)

2011 SEASON IN REVIEW

(Continued from Page 21)

since 2000, but they simply could not close the deal in a draining AFC title game loss at New England. The good news is that Baltimore probably has the pieces to make another run next season. A perennially strong defense again impressed, and the offense, led by RB Ray Rice, had standout moments. Now the focus turns to how the Ravens can finally break through in the AFC.

Team MVP: The nod goes to Rice, who racked up 2,068 rushing-receiving yards. His 191 yards rushing in the season finale at Cincinnati helped Baltimore clinch the AFC North. Rice is slated to be an unrestricted free agent, but it's unlikely the Ravens will allow him to reach the open market. His versatility is one of the keys to the offense, as his playmaking ability can sometimes bail out an occasionally stagnant Ravens attack.

Biggest surprise: The Ravens acquired WR Lee Evans from Buffalo in August to bolster their downfield passing game, but Evans suffered an ankle injury shortly after joining Baltimore and contributed little. With Evans hampered by injury, rookie WR Torrey Smith stepped up, catching 50 passes for 841 yards and seven TDs. The second-round pick from Maryland has rare speed and looks to have a bright future.

Biggest disappointment: It's a tie. Evans had a season to forget. The injury rendered him a nonfactor, as he caught only 4-of-26 passes thrown his way in the regular season and then couldn't hold on to a potential go-ahead TD in the playoff loss at New England. PK Billy Cundiff also had a disappointing season, capped by a 32-yard miss in the final moments of the AFC championship game. Cundiff also battled an injury and struggled late in the regular season.

Offseason outlook: The Ravens must work to find a way to keep Rice in the fold, with a contract extension the best outcome considering his value and the salary-cap savings usually associated with a long-term deal. The club also has to work out a contract extension with QB Joe Flacco, who's entering the final year of his deal. Flacco didn't hurt his value with a fine AFC title game performance. Some personnel changes are also likely. One change that would be helpful is acquiring more playmaking ability at wideout.

CINCINNATI BENGALS

Overview: Widely written off entering 2011, the Bengals started fast, winning six of their first eight games, and then held on late for a wild-card berth. Though Cincinnati fell in the first round at Houston, it's hard to consider the Bengals' season anything but a major success. A pair of their rookies, QB Andy Dalton and WR A.J. Green, made the Pro Bowl, as did second-year pros TE Jermaine Gresham and DT Geno Atkins. Cincinnati has built an envi-



RB Ray Rice's versatility and playmaking ability are keys in the Ravens' offense.

able core of young talent.

Team MVP: Green played like a No. 1 receiver as a rookie, racking up 65 catches for 1,057 yards and seven TD receptions. Green's rare combination of size and athletic ability makes him particularly dangerous on vertical routes and in the red zone. He already ranks among the league's best in those areas.

Biggest surprise: The surprise isn't that Dalton started — that was the plan all along. The surprise was that he played well enough to lead the Bengals to the postseason and garner widespread respect around the league, as reflected by the Pro Bowl voting. Dalton was shaky early in the pre-season, but then he got his bearings. When the regular season began, he proved ready to play, throwing for 3,398 yards and 20 TDs with only 13 picks in 516 attempts.

Biggest disappointment: DE Carlos Dunlap missed four games with a hamstring injury, and his sack total decreased from 9½ in 2010 to 4½ in his second NFL

season. Dunlap, who doesn't turn 23 until the end of February, has a world of potential. But he has yet to earn a starting job, and he has battled some lingering injuries in his two NFL seasons.

Offseason outlook: The Bengals are positioned to build off their surprising 2011 success. They will have two first-round picks, and a majority of their core players are under contract. They have some decisions to make at running back, as Cedric Benson is an unrestricted free agent, as well as at wideout, where they lack a consistent complementary target opposite Green.

CLEVELAND BROWNS

Overview: The Browns started 2-1 and then did a steady fade to the back of the AFC North pack, losing 11 of their final 13 games. Cleveland again struggled vs. division competition, losing all six of its games against North foes. Its offense sputtered, too. QB Colt McCoy was inconsistent in

his first full season as a starter and will have competition for the No. 1 job. One positive: The defense was far better than expected.

Team MVP: MLB D'Qwell Jackson missed most of the 2009 and '10 seasons with triceps injuries, but he stayed healthy in 2011 and had a Comeback Player of the Year-caliber campaign, notching 158 tackles and 3½ sacks. His return was one of the major positives in another lost season for Cleveland. Jackson was one of several standouts on an above-average defense, with DT Ahtyba Rubin and CB Joe Haden among the other Browns meriting mention.

Biggest surprise: Rookie DE Jabaal Sheard emerged as the club's top pass rusher, notching 8½ sacks. The second-round pick from Pitt had just 2½ sacks in his first nine games but finished strongly, recording a half-dozen in Cleveland's final seven contests. Sheard's exceptional productivity was a very nice surprise.

Biggest disappointment: RB Peyton Hillis was perhaps the club's MVP in 2010, but he didn't come close to playing at that level in 2011. His troubles began in Week Three, when he missed the win vs. Miami because of illness on the advice of his agent, who had been trying to negotiate a new contract with Cleveland. The situation was an unneeded distraction. Later in the season, Hillis would miss five games because of a hamstring injury. Only at season's end did Hillis round back into his best form — a classic case of too little, too late.

Offseason outlook: The Browns need more offensive punch in the worst way. It can be argued that they have glaring needs at quarterback, wide receiver and running back. With two first-round picks, the Browns can continue to add to their young, talented core. But it will be interesting to see if they make any splashes in free agency or via trade as they try to fix the offense.

PITTSBURGH STEELERS

Overview: The Steelers' season started with a thud, when the Ravens routed them in Baltimore. Were the Steelers simply too old to keep competing at the highest level? The answer was no, as Pittsburgh captured 12-of-15 thereafter. However, the Steelers endured a wave of late-season injuries, and their defense, which allowed the NFL's fewest yards in the regular season, faltered in Pittsburgh's wild-card loss at Denver.

Team MVP: Of all of the injuries the Steelers suffered down the stretch, the high ankle sprain suffered by QB Ben Roethlisberger in Week 14 loomed largest. He tried to play 11 days later in a pivotal game at San Francisco, but he struggled, and the Steelers fell 20-3. Roethlisberger returned in Week 17 and played in the wild-card game at Denver, but he was never quite the same. At his best, Roethlisberger, who threw for 4,077 yards and 21 TDs in the

2011 SEASON IN REVIEW

regular season, is one of the NFL's premier playmakers. He was not at his best down the stretch.

Biggest surprise: WR Antonio Brown replaced Hines Ward as a starter and emerged as one of the AFC's more dynamic all-around threats. Brown hauled in 69 passes for 1,108 yards, averaged 27.3 yards on kickoff returns and 10.8 yards on punt returns and earned Pro Bowl honors as a returner. A sixth-round pick in the 2010 draft, Brown's rapid development bolstered an already formidable passing attack.

Biggest disappointment: ILB Lawrence Timmons started all 16 games and notched 93 tackles, but he wasn't the playmaker he had been in 2010, when he recorded 135 tackles and was one of the NFL's top players at his position. The athletic Timmons has a bright future and could easily take his game back to another level next season, but his impact was somewhat muted in 2011.

Offseason outlook: The Steelers have a host of salary-cap-related decisions to make. If Ward comes back, it will be at a reduced cap number. CB Bryant McFadden and OLB Chris Kemoeatu are among the players who could be released, and NT Casey Hampton's cap number may need to be reduced. Adding more youth to a sage,

physical but aging defense is a must.

AFC SOUTH HOUSTON TEXANS

Overview: The AFC South champion Texans conquered great adversity — the loss of their top two quarterbacks, best defensive player and No. 1 wide receiver to injuries for a large portion of the season — en route to their best season in franchise history. After a 10-6 regular season, in which Houston finished in the top five in both rushing offense and total defense, it thrashed the Bengals 31-10 in its first-ever playoff appearance before coming up just short against the Ravens in the divisional round.

Team MVP: There were a number of key contributors in Houston's stunning defensive turnaround, perhaps none greater than coordinator Wade Phillips, but ILB Brian Cushing stood out. Cushing was the centerpiece of Phillips' "D," leading the team in tackles (114) and helping form the identity of the unit with his toughness and physicality.

Biggest surprise: When QB Matt Schaub suffered a season-ending foot injury in Week 10 and backup Matt Leinart made it through less than one half before breaking his collarbone, many thought

it was curtains for the Texans. Instead, it was rookie fifth-rounder T.J. Yates to the rescue, earning Houston victories in his first three appearances and leading the Texans to their first-ever postseason. Yates' numbers don't tell the whole story; he was remarkably poised and prepared out of the gate.

Biggest disappointment: The Texans traveled to Baltimore in the divisional round and played a more physical brand of football than the Ravens. Houston outgained Baltimore 315-227, owning the line of scrimmage and consistently harassing QB Joe Flacco. But the Texans turned the ball over four times, including a pair of fourth-quarter interceptions thrown by Yates, essentially gift-wrapping a trip to the AFC championship game for the Ravens.

Offseason outlook: Houston will be a heavy favorite to repeat as division champs in 2012 and likely be a sexy Super Bowl pick without making any moves. The No. 1 priority for the Texans will be re-signing OLB Mario Williams, although the defense was quite formidable without him for most of the season. The Texans are deep and talented, but upgrading the No. 2 WR spot and getting Schaub back could make the offense elite. Phillips' unit should only improve with the benefit of a full offseason.

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS

Overview: The Colts went from perennial powerhouse to the worst team in football seemingly in the blink of an eye without QB Peyton Manning, who missed the entire season while recovering from his third neck surgery in 19 months. Indianapolis' 2-14 campaign led to the firings of vice chairman Bill Polian, GM Chris Polian, head coach Jim Caldwell and most of his staff shortly after the season ended.

Team MVP: There were few bright spots for the Colts, but MLB Pat Angerer was exceptional, starting 16 games and finishing fourth in the league with 148 tackles. Angerer still has work to do dropping back in coverage, but he improved as the season progressed and was a menacing run defender. He slid inside to replace captain Gary Brackett, who tore his rotator cuff in Week One.

Biggest surprise: That the Colts struggled without their triggerman, Manning, was a surprise to no one. But the way Indianapolis fell so far, so fast qualified as a stunner. For perspective on just how bad the Colts were this season, consider this: They went more than two months without holding a lead! Bill Polian, who will one day be enshrined in Canton, badly mis-evaluated the backup QB position and the

(Continued on Page 24)

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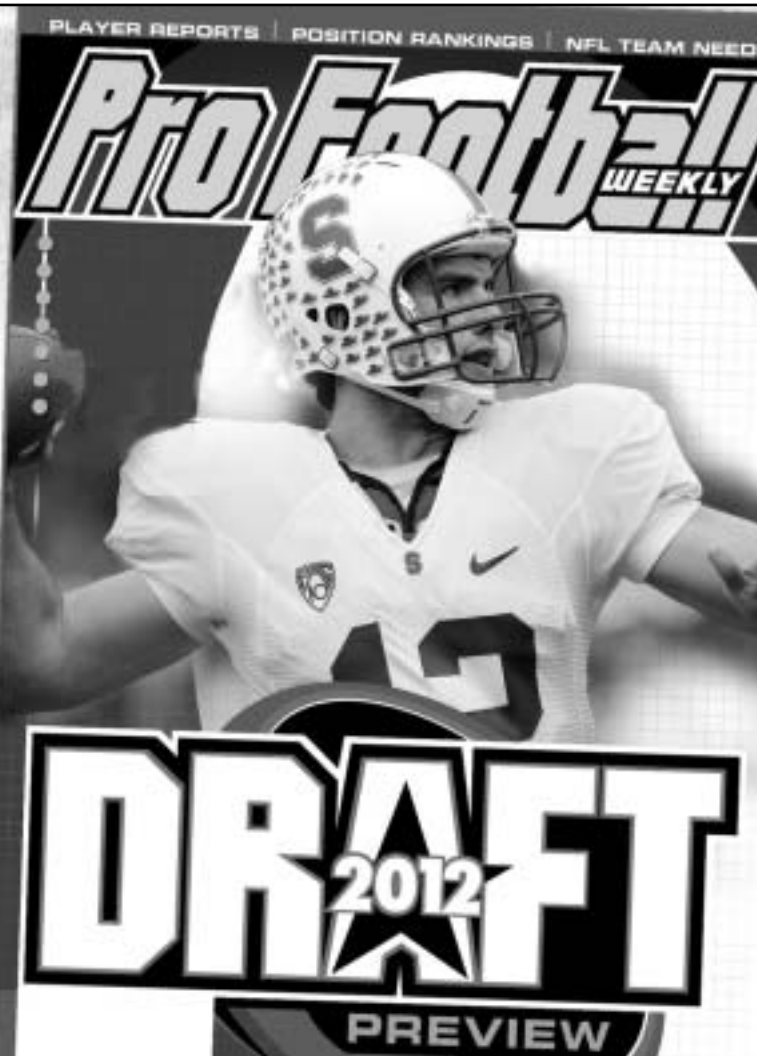
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A12DP



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(Continued from Page 23)

talent in the secondary.

Biggest disappointment: In what essentially turned out to be a lost season, it sure would have been nice to get more experience for the rookie class, which showed real promise but was besieged by injuries. Second-round OT Ben Ijalana suffered a season-ending knee injury in his first game, and third-round DT Drake Nevis sustained a season-ending back injury just as he was really starting to flash potential. Fourth-round RB Delone Carter's strong start was somewhat stymied by a fumbling problem.

Offseason outlook: Following the shake-up at the top by owner Jim Irsay, the Colts are starting anew. Manning's health concerns and \$28 million option bonus due March 8 likely will lead to his release, making way for the likely soon-to-be No. 1 pick, Stanford QB Andrew Luck, to shift into the driver's seat. Under new GM Ryan Grigson and head coach Chuck Pagano, expect the housecleaning to continue, with an emphasis on getting bigger, stronger players who better fit the Colts' new direction.

JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS

Overview: It was one step forward, two steps back for the 5-11 Jaguars, whose tremendous defensive improvement from 2010 was overshadowed by the alarming ineptitude of rookie QB Blaine Gabbert and the Jaguars' passing offense. Head coach Jack Del Rio, dismissed after Week 12, made the move to Gabbert after a horrible performance in Week Two by Luke McCown. With no help from his offensive line or receivers, Gabbert clearly wasn't ready to be on the field.

Team MVP: A no-brainer, if there ever was one. NFL rushing champ Maurice Jones-Drew set career highs in rushing yards (1,606) and attempts (343), despite Jacksonville having the league's worst passing offense. Defenses stacked the box to stop M.J.D., but it didn't matter; he displayed vintage mojo, running over and around would-be tacklers while putting the kibosh on any lingering concerns about offseason knee surgery.

Biggest surprise: After surrendering the most points in franchise history in 2010, the Jaguars' defense was a top-10 stop unit. GM Gene Smith swung for the fences in free agency, adding multiple new starters on defense, and the newcomers jelled instantly. MLB Paul Posluszny, in particular, was everything the Jaguars hoped for and more. Coordinator Mel Tucker, the interim head coach following Del Rio's ouster, was tremendous in his first season calling plays.

Biggest disappointment: There is no question the lack of progress from Gabbert was concerning, but TE Mercedes Lewis' disappearing act after he received a lucrative contract extension in the offseason was even more disturbing. After catching a

career-high 10 TDs a season earlier, Lewis didn't find paydirt once. Compounding matters was the fact that Lewis dropped several would-be TDs.

Offseason outlook: New owner Shahid Khan and Smith tabbed Mike Mularkey as Del Rio's successor. Following his four-year stint overseeing Falcons QB Matt Ryan's growth in Atlanta, Mularkey is being counted on to help Gabbert make significant strides this offseason. Jacksonville desperately needs a No. 1 WR, and Smith is expected to again go all out, in both free agency and the draft, to give Gabbert the necessary weapons to succeed. Entering his fourth year as the general manager, Smith needs better results quickly, as Khan won't be overly patient.

TENNESSEE TITANS

Overview: With a rookie head coach in Mike Munchak, two new coordinators implementing their systems and a new starting QB in Matt Hasselbeck, the Titans were thought to be one of the teams most impacted by the lockout-shortened offseason. Instead, Tennessee was one of the league's bigger surprises, adding three wins to its 2010 total and narrowly missing out on a wild-card berth by virtue of

losing a tiebreaker to the Bengals.

Team MVP: Hasselbeck had one of his finer seasons, starting all 16 games for the first time since 2007 and providing a much-needed veteran leadership presence in the locker room. Although his performance leveled off late, he carried the team for the better part of the season with the league's worst running game and without his No. 1 wideout, Kenny Britt.

Biggest surprise: Tennessee received terrific defensive contributions from its rookie class. DT Karl Klug led the club with eight sacks and provided the club's only consistent pass rush. MLB Colin McCarthy came on like gangbusters after replacing veteran Barrett Ruud in Week 10. DT Jurrell Casey was the team's best run staffer. SLB Akeem Ayers started all 16 games.

Biggest disappointment: RB Chris Johnson held out of training camp, demanding a contract that would pay him like one of the league's top playmakers. The Titans held up their end of the bargain, rewarding C.J. with a deal that included \$30 million guaranteed. Johnson, however, spent more than half of the season working his way into shape and never resembled the dynamic back he was prior to the deal. Al-

though run blocking was an issue, Johnson struggled to make defenders miss and did not hit holes with the same burst.

Offseason outlook: The Titans made great strides rebuilding their front seven last offseason. Still, a dynamic edge rusher is sorely needed. Tennessee will also have to rebuild its secondary, as CB Cortland Finnegan and safeties Michael Griffin and Chris Hope are unrestricted free agents who could move on. On offense, all eyes will be on the QB position, where Hasselbeck and Jake Locker, fresh off a tantalizing rookie season, will compete for the starting job. Johnson should benefit from a full offseason and an expected upgrade on the interior of the offensive line.

AFC WEST DENVER BRONCOS

Overview: Year One of the John Fox era went better than anybody could have expected. A season after going 4-12, and despite trading WR Brandon Lloyd and releasing QB Kyle Orton during the season, the Broncos won the AFC West and reached the divisional round of the playoffs. A fast defense and the late-game heroics of QB Tim Tebow were the primary



Jaguars RB Maurice Jones-Drew led the league in rushing despite Jacksonville having the league's worst passing offense.

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reasons for the dramatic improvement.

Team MVP: The Broncos had the league's No. 1 rushing attack, and that was primarily because of RB Willis McGahee and Tebow. McGahee — a featured back again after having spent three seasons as a Raven splitting carries with Ray Rice — was strong and explosive, rushing for 4.8 yards per carry. Tebow also proved to be tough to bring down, averaging 5.4 yards per rush and rushing for six touchdowns.

Biggest surprise: After winning the AFC West with an 8-8 record, most thought the Broncos would be road kill for the reigning conference champion Steelers. Instead, Denver pulled off a shocking upset, winning 29-23 in overtime. The game's final play was as surprising as the win itself, as Tebow actually threw for the winning score — an 80-yard bomb to WR Demaryius Thomas on the first snap of overtime.

Biggest disappointment: Though the Broncos' defense was strong at times, there were serious lulls when it appeared the unit couldn't stop a pee-wee team. Denver allowed 40 or more points four times in the regular season, then a fifth time in the playoff loss to the Patriots in the AFC divisional round. Issues in the secondary, especially at both safety spots, resulted in Denver finishing 24th in the league in points allowed.

Offseason outlook: Everything with the Broncos starts with Tebow, who executive VP of football operations John Elway says will be the starting QB at the beginning of training camp. If he improves as a passer entering his third season in the league — he completed just 46.5 percent of his passes in 2011 — the Broncos have a chance to be an annual playoff contender. More reinforcements on a young defense must be acquired, as well.

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS

Overview: Injuries played a huge factor in the Chiefs' failure to repeat as AFC West champions. The team was without RB Jamaal Charles, SS Eric Berry and TE Tony Moeaki for all or most of the season, and a lack of depth behind those star players proved to be too much to overcome. Todd Haley was fired as head coach in mid-December for a variety of reasons, the five losses by 27 points or more being among them.

Team MVP: A year after he led the AFC in sacks with 14½, OLB Tamba Hali had another outstanding season leading the Kansas City defense. Hali registered 12 sacks and forced four fumbles, despite being the team's only established pass rusher for opponents to key on. He also signed a five-year, \$60 million extension with the team, keeping the feared defender in K.C. for the long term.

Biggest surprise: Just days after Haley was fired and Romeo Crennel was promoted from defensive coordinator to interim head coach, the Chiefs pulled off



Chiefs OLB Tamba Hali registered 12 sacks and four forced fumbles despite being K.C.'s only established pass rusher.

the upset of the year, knocking off the 13-0 Packers in Week 15 at Arrowhead Stadium. Kansas City held the vaunted Packers offense to 16 first downs, and new starting QB Kyle Orton threw for 299 yards in the shocking victory.

Biggest disappointment: Although losing Charles, Moeaki and QB Matt Cassel for extended periods of time was a reason, the lack of offensive explosion was a serious disappointment for the Chiefs. The team scored just 212 points — second-fewest in the NFL, topping only the lowly Rams — and Kansas City scored 10 points or fewer in nine games. It's not what the team expected after adding free-agent WR Steve Breaston and first-round WR Jonathan Baldwin in the offseason.

Offseason outlook: Crennel was promoted from interim coach to full-time head coach after the season, and he will hope to continue the improvement the team showed at the end of the season, when it won two of the final three games. GM Scott Pioli will search for more impact players on both sides of the ball, although

the return of the injured troops may be the most important arrivals.

OAKLAND RAIDERS

Overview: The Raiders ended the season with a very different team than the one they started it with. Injuries to key players such as QB Jason Campbell and RB Darren McFadden shook up the lineup a great deal, as did the shocking October trade for QB Carson Palmer. There was also the death of team owner and general manager Al Davis in early October, which affected everyone in the organization. In the end, however, it was still the same old Raiders, as the team lost four of its last five games to miss the playoffs for a ninth straight season.

Team MVP: PK Sebastian Janikowski was Oakland's only consistent offensive weapon. The lefty drilled 31 field goals, including seven of 50 yards or longer, despite missing a game with a hamstring injury. He also tied an NFL record with a 63-yard field goal at the end of the first half in the team's Week One win over the Broncos.

Biggest surprise: Fifth-round draft

choice Denarius Moore, the 18th wide receiver selected last April, made a huge impact for the Raiders. Moore finished with 33 receptions for 618 yards (seventh- and sixth-best, respectively, among rookie wide receivers) and led the team with five TD receptions. In an offense based on deep throws, Moore quickly became the team's best downfield receiver.

Biggest disappointment: The Raiders dealt two high draft picks for Palmer in the belief he could lead the team to the playoffs. While there is clearly disappointment in the revamped front office over that decision, much of the blame goes to Palmer himself, who was subpar in his 10 games with the team. He threw an interception on nearly five percent of his throws (the median for qualifying QBs was 2.7 percent in 2011), and the team won just four games with him under center.

Offseason outlook: Major changes have already taken place for the Raiders since the season finale, and more are in store. Reggie McKenzie was hired as the

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team's general manager, and his first order of business was to fire head coach Hue Jackson. Dennis Allen, the former Broncos defensive coordinator, becomes the third Raiders head coach in three years, as he and McKenzie will try to lead Oakland back to the playoffs.

SAN DIEGO CHARGERS

Overview: Considered a Super Bowl contender early in the season after starting off 4-1, the Chargers went into a tailspin, losing six consecutive games before forging a too-little, too-late rally. Injuries on both sides of the ball were one reason for the struggles, but more important was the fact that several star players didn't play up to their expected levels.

Team MVP: After signing a \$40 million contract in the offseason, FS Eric Weddle played like a big-money player in 2011. With seven interceptions, Weddle tied for the league lead while also adding 88 tackles and 12 passes defended. On a Chargers defense that struggled to prevent big plays, Weddle's presence in the secondary was one of the unit's few bright spots.

Biggest surprise: A pair of second-year players stepped up big-time for the Chargers. On offense, RB Ryan Mathews had a breakout season, rushing for 1,091 yards and six TDs while also hauling in 50 receptions for 455 yards. Defensively, ILB Donald Butler — who missed all of the 2010 season rehabbing from a torn Achilles — came on strong. He finished second on the team with 96 tackles, including a team-high 10 tackles for loss.

Biggest disappointment: The Chargers had plenty of chances to win the AFC West, but time and time again, late-game collapses did them in. No player was as responsible as QB Philip Rivers, who chucked eight fourth-quarter interceptions and also lost a fumble down the stretch in a Week Eight loss to the Chiefs. In the end, San Diego lost five games by seven points or fewer, and Rivers had a fourth-quarter turnover in four of them. Rivers was the symbol of a disappointing season.

Offseason outlook: Despite a second consecutive season missing the playoffs, the organization opted to keep GM A.J. Smith and head coach Norv Turner. It will be up to them, plus the group of core players already on the roster, to return to the top of the division in 2012. A major piece who may not be back is WR Vincent Jackson, one of Rivers' top targets, who is set to hit the free-agent market.

NFC EAST

DALLAS COWBOYS

Overview: The Cowboys went into the final week of the season with a chance to claim the NFC East crown and host a playoff game, but they lost to the Giants, who went on to win the Super Bowl. It was a frustrating campaign in Dallas, fraught

with unmet expectations, injuries and defensive breakdowns. Tony Romo and the passing game thrived, and rookie DeMarco Murray titillated with his potential (a club-record 253 rushing yards against the Rams) before getting hurt. But Rob Ryan's defense had too many missing parts and communication breakdowns to take the division.

Team MVP: QB Tony Romo has his detractors, but he had a fine overall season. Romo gets guff for his penchant for late-game mistakes, but he was brilliant down the stretch with a 20-3 TD-interception ratio in the Cowboys' final nine games and rallied the team from a 21-0 deficit against the Giants in the Week 17 elimination game. Romo gets the vote over DeMarcus Ware and his 19½ sacks, as sacrilegious as that sounds. Ware had a good, but not a great, season; his overall pressures were down, and observers point out he didn't play at the same overall level he did a year earlier.

Biggest surprise: The emergence of WR Laurent Robinson was a gift from above. He was claimed, released and then re-signed in Week Two and thrust himself into the picture as a weapon on par — statistically, anyway — with WRs Dez Bryant and Miles Austin and TE Jason Witten. When Austin went down, the Cowboys' passing game easily could have gone in the tank, but Robinson was quite the buoy. And now he has made himself some money, with free agency impending.

Biggest disappointment: Ryan was brought in as a defensive savior whose schemes would mask whatever deficiencies the team had in terms of personnel. Wrong. It certainly wasn't all Ryan's fault, as the defensive line was mediocre, Ware was the only pass rusher and the secondary was a stinking mess. But Ryan's complex schemes and fancy fronts often led to communication issues on defense and caused the team to be out of alignment several times in key situations. The unit also was flagged for having 12 men on the field and had a few plays where only 10 men were out there. The lockout and Jason Garrett's game management certainly didn't help, either.

Offseason outlook: As usual, the Cowboys will be players — either in the draft, free agency or both. They could use interior OL help, a pass rusher (if Anthony Spencer is not re-signed), a developmental QB (ideally Romo's heir), some special-teams help and almost a whole new secondary. That last part likely will be the focus of free agency — finding starters at cornerback, with Terence Newman expected to be cut, and at safety — as well as an area that gets help from the draft.

NEW YORK GIANTS

Overview: The Giants turned "all in" from poker lingo to a New York football staple. As the Giants faced a string of elimination games, starting with a 7-7 record heading into the Week 16 crosstown battle with the Jets, they got better with each

successive game, all the way through the Super Bowl XLVI victory over the Patriots. Eli Manning came back from a career high in turnovers a year ago to post career-best numbers, and the defense rallied down the stretch after a poor statistical season.

Team MVP: With apologies to DE Jason Pierre-Paul, who had a masterful second season, it has to be Manning. Mr. Fourth Quarter performed his best in the biggest games, authoring five regular-season and two postseason comebacks in the final quarter, leading the Giants to his second championship title. Manning said in the preseason he felt he was in the elite group of quarterbacks that included the Patriots' Tom Brady. By the end of the season, Manning — not Brady — was hoisting the Lombardi Trophy.

Biggest surprise: WR Victor Cruz put some spice in the Giants' offense — after nearly being cut. Cruz broke out with a franchise-best 1,536 receiving yards after catching nary a pass in three games as a rookie. And his salsa dance, the punctuation mark after every TD he scored this season, became something of a national phenomenon. Few thought Cruz would match Steve Smith's production in the slot, and they were right: Cruz exceeded it.

Biggest disappointment: The run game, once the Giants' bread and butter, was absent much of the season. It was revived in the playoffs and helped spur the Super Bowl run. But it took more than 15 weeks to figure out what was not working. Ahmad Bradshaw was hurt through the middle portion of the season, and Brandon Jacobs was spotty with his effort and execution. Also, the offensive line didn't always play with great power. Even with the improved execution at times, you still can't say this was a team strength.

Offseason outlook: The Giants are in strong shape to make another run next season. They have a solid nucleus on defense, with potential to get better from within. Manning is in his prime, and Pierre-Paul is just scratching the surface of his massive potential. The Giants will be very measured in free agency, perhaps only tweaking certain positions, and they haven't tended to be flashy in the draft with bold trades. Tight end suddenly has become a bigger need after the Super Bowl injuries to Travis Beckum (ACL) and Jake Ballard (PCL), which could cut into their offseasons.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES

Overview: Nothing really went as planned the first chunk of the season. Expectations ran out of control when the Eagles, coming off a 10-6 season, went on a spending spree following the lockout and appeared to add top-tier talent to what was already a pretty good club. But things unraveled quickly and spiraled out of control during a 4-8 start that had Andy Reid and defensive coordinator Juan Castillo running for cover from the media and fans. The four-game win streak to end the

season might have saved Reid's job, but it added to the frustration of the awful start.

Team MVP: LeSean McCoy was simply terrific in his third season, becoming a complete player and one of the more dangerous weapons in the NFL. He scored 20 touchdowns in all and found the endzone on the ground in an amazing 13 of his 15 contests. The Eagles' offense changed because of McCoy, becoming more ground-based than it ever had been under Reid, who always has preferred the pass. A great runner-up would be OLT Jason Peters, who was downright dominant by season's end.

Biggest surprise: Some league observers felt that the Eagles overpaid for DE Jason Babin, but his guaranteed money was paltry for the production he put up in his first season back in Philly. Babin had 18 sacks, three forced fumbles and was a constant force and disruption off the left edge. That was money well spent. Another pleasant surprise was the kicking of rookie Alex Henery. The fourth-rounder was a bit of a surprise choice. His arrival led to the ouster of David Akers, the franchise's all-time leading scorer, but all Henery did was put up the best field-goal percentage (88.9) for a rookie ever.

Biggest disappointment: It has to be the play of CB Nnamdi Asomugha, although there were plenty of other defensive problems. Still, Asomugha had carved out a brilliant start to his career as a shutdown press corner in Oakland and earned a monster contract from the Eagles, even though they already had Asante Samuel well-paid at the position and Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie arriving via trade. But with the Eagles forced to play a lot of zone coverage following the lockout and Castillo's brief introduction to the defensive side of the ball, many of Asomugha's greatest strengths were muted. The pressure is on him to improve markedly in Year Two with the team.

Offseason outlook: The Eagles don't have a ton of glaring needs, but linebacker is one, and safety might be another. The Eagles also always seem to covet offensive and defensive linemen, so it should be no surprise if they draft one of those high. But expecting a first-round linebacker? Well, don't hold your breath. Reid never has taken one higher than Round Two and would be more likely to seek help at that position through free agency.

WASHINGTON REDSKINS

Overview: It was a strange season in which the Redskins swept the Giants — beating them in Week One and again in Week 15 — and battled the Patriots and 49ers down to the wire. But the team's 3-1 start was followed by eight losses in nine games and another last-place finish in the NFC East. Much of the team's problems can be laid on the QB play, which was again subpar. The team bypassed options in the draft and failed to acquire anyone in free agency, and the temperature now has been raised a bit on Mike Shanahan

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and his staff.

Team MVP: Has London Fletcher found the Fountain of Youth? He continued to amaze at age 36, leading the team in tackles (by a mile), and also contributed three forced fumbles and 1½ sacks. The team will have to find his replacement at some point, but he's a free agent the team would love to have back to anchor its young, talented LB corps. Other Redskins who had strong seasons include P Sav Rocca and OLB Ryan Kerrigan.

Biggest surprise: The potential of the rookie class appears strong. Kerrigan stood out as a 3-4 outside linebacker, having played as a college rush end and making the transition very well. RBs Roy Helu and Evan Royster eventually showed what they could do and might make up two-thirds of the RB platoon next season with Tim Hightower. WR Leonard Hankerson could start next season, S DeJon Gomes and OG Maurice Hurt have malleable talent, and DE Jarvis Jenkins looked like the team's best defensive lineman in the pre-season before suffering a torn ACL.

Biggest disappointment: The QB play. It's a tough call — was it that big a disappointment that Rex Grossman and John Beck had more interceptions (24 combined) than touchdown passes (18), considering what each had accomplished prior to this season? Grossman took the job after it was Beck's to be had, but Grossman wasn't much different than he had been in the past — a risk taker who can have big games but always will be prone to turnovers.

Offseason outlook: Finding a quarterback is mission No. 1. Through the draft, free agency or trade — all avenues will be explored. Trading up to select Andrew Luck or Robert Griffin III could prove to be too costly, considering that the team needs draft picks to address other needs. Matt Flynn is a possibility in free agency, but he might be destined to land elsewhere. Peyton Manning? Don't rule it out. The Redskins know they need to go big here this offseason.

NFC NORTH CHICAGO BEARS

Overview: The defending NFC North champions came up empty in their bid for a second straight playoff appearance. They were heating up as they approached the beginning of December, but QB Jay Cutler broke his thumb in Week 11. Chicago lost five of its final six games with Cutler sidelined, winning only a meaningless Week 17 game over the Vikings. The collapse cost GM Jerry Angelo his job, and offensive coordinator Mike Martz, who has since retired from coaching, was also dismissed.

Team MVP: The void left by Cutler's injury proved to be far more catastrophic to the Bears than the one created by Pro Bowl RB Matt Forté after he tore his MCL in Week 13 and didn't play again. Cutler



Bears QB Jay Cutler was playing some of the best football of his career when he suffered a season-ending thumb injury.

was playing some of the best football of his career when he broke his thumb. Forté put the offense on his back at times, but no one on the roster is more indispensable than Cutler, although DE Julius Peppers and MLB Brian Urlacher come very close to matching Cutler in that category.

Biggest surprise: It's hard to believe that, after three seasons, the Bears didn't have a better idea of what QB Caleb Hanie could offer. He went 0-4 as the starter, throwing three touchdowns and nine interceptions, and head coach Lovie Smith, who eventually turned to Josh McCown, stuck with Hanie under center until it was too late.

Biggest disappointment: Cutler's injury and backup Hanie's horrendous performance led to the Bears' collapse down the stretch. They should have at least beaten the Broncos in Week 14 — the Bears led 10-0 with a little more than two minutes remaining in the fourth quarter — but they blew that game, losing in overtime, and were blown out by the Seahawks at home one week later.

Offseason outlook: No full-blown culture change is anticipated at Halas Hall, but there will be a fresh set of eyes in the front office with former Chiefs college

scouting director Phil Emery, a 14-year veteran of NFL scouting departments, in place as the new general manager. Jeremy Bates, who worked with Cutler during his three years in Denver, has been hired as QB coach under new offensive coordinator Mike Tice. Meanwhile, Emery faces a decision on Forté, who could receive the franchise tag before the start of free agency.

DETROIT LIONS

Overview: A 5-0 start gave the Lions the cushion necessary to withstand a midseason lull, and they were able to earn their first playoff berth since 1999. However, the Lions were one-and-done in the post-season, falling at New Orleans. A high-powered passing game led by QB Matthew Stafford and WR Calvin Johnson made the Lions one of the NFL's more entertaining teams to watch, but a leaky defense fell apart at season's end. Nevertheless, the Lions have come a long way since going 0-16 in 2008.

Team MVP: Johnson simply took over the game in multiple instances, most notably in comeback wins at Dallas and Oakland. From the red zone to vertical routes, he was exceptional in every facet. When Johnson wasn't getting the ball, the atten-

tion he drew from the opposition helped pave the way for the Lions' other pass catchers. Johnson, who caught 96 passes for 1,681 yards and 16 TDs, had a truly special season.

Biggest surprise: Stafford's first uninterrupted season as a starter was something else. Stafford, who missed 19 games in his first two years in the league, threw for 5,038 yards and 41 TDs in 2011 and played very well in comeback situations. Stafford has never lacked for talent, but that he took his game to such a high level in 2011 was a pleasant development for Detroit.

Biggest disappointment: DT Ndamukong Suh's second season fell short of expectations on numerous levels, to say the least. He recorded 30 fewer tackles and six fewer sacks than he did as a rookie. Moreover, he was suspended for a pair of games after stomping on Packers OG Evan Dietrich-Smith on Thanksgiving Day. Overall, Suh just wasn't the dynamic player he had been in his first NFL season, when he looked like he would be a perennial Pro Bowler.

Offseason outlook: The Lions need to bolster their defense, with their second-

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ary particularly needing more playmaking ability. That side of the ball figures to be addressed in the offseason. The Lions might also consider adding to their RB depth with Jahvid Best (concussion) and Mikel Leshoure (Achilles) on the mend. The Lions' top free agent is DE Cliff Avril, who notched 11 sacks in 2011. Signing Johnson to a contract extension could also be on the agenda.

GREEN BAY PACKERS

Overview: Spearheaded by a high-powered offense that scored a league-high 35 points per game, the Packers registered a franchise-record 15 victories in the regular season and won their first 13 games, the best start and longest single-season win streak in franchise history. But they saved by far their worst effort of the season for last — a disappointing 37-20 divisional playoff loss to the Giants, ugly enough to trigger an improbable mass exodus from Lambeau Field midway through the fourth quarter.

Team MVP: League MVP Aaron Rodgers quite simply had one of the best seasons ever by a pro quarterback, as evidenced by his league-record 122.5 passer rating and off-the-charts 45-6 TD-interception ratio. An incredibly hardworking perfectionist who can make every throw in the book, Rodgers did a masterful job distributing the ball to a host of talented weapons. He also consistently made big plays with his feet, finishing fourth among QBs with 257 rushing yards, and didn't lose a single fumble in a near-perfect regular season.

Biggest surprise: Even though Jordy Nelson finished off the 2010 season with a flourish, catching nine passes for 140 yards and a touchdown in the Packers' Super Bowl victory over the Steelers, nobody expected him to become one of the league's more dangerous big-play weapons. Averaging an impressive 18.6 yards on a team-high 68 catches and scoring a team-high 15 TDs (scores in 10 different games; five TDs in the last two regular-season games), Nelson made the three-year, \$13.35 million contract extension he signed early in the 2011 season look like a major steal for the Packers.

Biggest disappointment: It has to be a defense that finished last in yards allowed (after ranking fifth in that category the previous season) and surrendered more passing yards than any team in league history (299.8 per game). A secondary that looked as solid as any in the league entering the 2011 season was dealt a huge blow when three-time Pro Bowl FS Nick Collins suffered a season-ending, career-threatening neck injury in Week Two. Without Collins, and with no help whatsoever from a paltry pass rush, the Packers' defensive backs lost a lot more coverage battles than they won, despite a league-leading 31 interceptions.

Offseason outlook: GM Ted Thompson's first order of business figures to be

decisions on the futures of TE Jermichael Finley and C Scott Wells, among other Packers free agents. Beyond that, reinforcements for the right side of the defensive front seven and the secondary should be top priorities in the draft and free agency. Thompson normally steers clear of the free-agent market. But with a need for possibly as many as four new defensive starters and no draft picks until late in the first round (28th, barring a trade), he might not have a choice.

MINNESOTA VIKINGS

Overview: The Vikings were caught in between rebuilding and staying competitive when they acquired Donovan McNabb in a preseason trade with the Redskins. The move flopped, as McNabb was benched after six starts, and the Vikings ended up playing three quarterbacks. Christian Ponder and Joe Webb had their moments, but neither was able to help the team avoid a last-place finish and the third-worst record in the NFL. Even stars such as Adrian Peterson and Percy Harvin suffered through injuries, with Peterson ending the season on injured reserve with a torn ACL. The last remnants of a great defense struggled to regain their glory, although DE Jared Allen had one of his finest seasons.

Team MVP: Allen was outstanding, collecting 22 sacks and finishing half a sack

shy of Michael Strahan's 2001 league record. While much of the defense collapsed around him, Allen's motor ran hot, and he often saved blown coverages with the constant pressure he provided. Even during the team's long losing streak, Allen never stopped giving his maximum effort. It was a great example for the team's young defenders to follow.

Biggest surprise: C John Sullivan quietly turned in a strong season, handling the revolving-door QB position and backing up his five-year, \$25 million contract extension with a commensurate level of play. The guard play on either side of him was less than ideal, with an injured Anthony Herrera and a declining Steve Hutchinson, but Sullivan stayed strong. He should be a smart anchor for the line for years to come.

Biggest disappointment: The quarterbacks failed to win games for the Vikings. McNabb looked older and slower, and he routinely bounced passes, even short ones. He was supposed to be the bridge to Ponder, but the Vikings were forced to go to the rookie earlier than they had hoped. Ponder started well but faded, appearing to regress. He also suffered a concussion and generally took a beating, raising more questions about his ability to stay in the lineup. Webb provided a shot in the arm after residing

on the bench, but there are questions as to whether he is a legitimate starting QB candidate.

Offseason outlook: If the Vikings believe in Ponder, they must protect him better. A left tackle would be a good place to start. A guard couldn't hurt, either. They also could use a receiver next to Harvin and TE Kyle Rudolph to give Ponder more open targets. Defensively, the team badly needs help in the secondary but also would like to upgrade on the defensive line (specifically nose tackle) and at middle linebacker. E.J. Henderson very likely won't be back.

NFC SOUTH ATLANTA FALCONS

Overview: Despite being plagued by inconsistency for much of the regular season, the Falcons battled their way into the playoffs as a wild card. Their run ended with a thud, however, as the Giants blew them out 24-2 at the Meadowlands in the first round. The loss was followed by the first major coaching staff changes since Mike Smith was hired in 2008.

Team MVP: QB Matt Ryan had his bad moments, particularly early in the season, but he was outstanding once he settled in. He turned the ball over only twice in the final seven games of the regular season. Ryan actually had, statistically, the best



Vikings DE Jared Allen posted a league-high 22 sacks, falling only half a sack shy of Michael Strahan's league record.

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season of his career and showed maturity and leadership guiding a no-huddle offense that became a very successful part of the team's attack.

Biggest surprise: This team didn't look much like the Falcons of the past three seasons. The solid fundamentals, focus and discipline that had led to a division title and the No. 1 seed in the NFC playoffs one season ago appeared to be trademarks of a Smith-coached team, but those principles seemed to be neglected during the 2011 season.

Biggest disappointment: The individual performances of free-agent addition DE Ray Edwards and 2010 first-round pick Peria Jerry were major letdowns, but they don't compare to the collective frustration felt by this franchise after once again exiting the playoffs without a win. This team felt it had legitimate Super Bowl aspirations after signing Edwards and drafting WR Julio Jones in the offseason, but it was blown out in the postseason for a second straight season.

Offseason outlook: GM Thomas Dimitroff has vowed that there will be no sacred cows when it comes to evaluating personnel, so major changes are expected. The team will have some very tough decisions to make ahead of free agency with players like DE John Abraham, C Todd McClure, MLB Curtis Lofton, CB Brent Grimes and FS Thomas DeCoud due to become unrestricted free agents. The Falcons do not have a first-round draft pick — that was sent to the Browns in the trade to move up and select Jones last year.

CAROLINA PANTHERS

Overview: After a rough 2-8 start that included three losses by five points or fewer, the Panthers had a respectable finish, winning four of their final six games. Ron Rivera, a longtime NFL assistant but first-time head coach, saw the team through an injury-plagued but ultimately very promising year in his first season at the helm, and rookie QB Cam Newton's sensational debut energized a franchise that needed just that.

Team MVP: Their offense went from the league's worst to one of its most explosive, and Newton's arrival changed everything for the club. He had his share of rough patches, including three games with three interceptions or more (all Carolina losses), but he also became the first player in league history to throw for more than 4,000 yards and rush for more than 500 yards in a season. Newton also set the record for rushing touchdowns in a season by a quarterback with 14.

Biggest surprise: Newton's performance, given that he was making the adjustment from college to the pros and had such little time to prepare with the coaching staff because of the lockout, shattered expectations. With a big assist from shrewd offensive coordinator Rob Chudzinski, who proved to be an astute manager



QB Cam Newton turned Carolina's offense into one of the more potent in the league.

of a rare talent, the rookie quarterback sent shockwaves through the league.

Biggest disappointment: The Panthers have to wonder what might have been had injuries not put a stake in the heart of their defense. Three-time Pro Bowl MLB Jon Beason was lost for the season in Week One, and OLB Thomas Davis joined him on injured reserve one week later. Free-agent addition DT Ron Edwards was placed on I.R. after getting hurt in training camp, and second-year WR David Gettis also missed the entire season.

Offseason outlook: The core of the team won't be in peril when free agency begins, as GM Marty Hurney has the vast majority of those players signed through at least the 2012 season. The biggest name on the team's list of potential free agents this offseason is veteran TE Jeremy Shockey, and he's not indispensable. The plan will focus on using the draft to tighten up the defense and strengthen Newton's supporting cast.

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

Overview: After suffering surprising road losses to the Buccaneers and Rams in the first half of the season, the Saints flipped a switch and didn't look back, winning eight in a row to close out the regular season. Their high-powered offense set a new league record for yards gained in one season, and the Saints looked like the league's most dominant team heading into the playoffs. They knocked off the Lions in the wild-card round but came up short vs. the 49ers the next week.

Team MVP: Drew Brees had one of the best seasons by any quarterback ever. He set a new league record, throwing for 5,476 yards, and also threw a career-high 46 touchdown passes. He bested his own league record for completion percentage,

connecting on 71.2 percent on his throws. Although he didn't win it, Brees made a strong case for the league's MVP award. He's the heart and soul of the Saints.

Biggest surprise: No one anticipated the kind of performances TE Jimmy Graham, a third-round pick in 2010, and RB Darren Sproles, who signed a relatively modest contract with the Saints as a free agent last offseason, put forth. Sproles played the Reggie Bush role better than Bush ever did, setting a new league record for all-purpose yards (2,694), and Graham became Brees' go-to guy in his first year as a full-time starter.

Biggest disappointment: The defense, which ranked 24th in the league (30th vs. the pass), didn't consistently practice what defensive coordinator Gregg Williams preached. This is a unit that prides itself on hitting the quarterback and forcing turnovers, but it had the second-fewest takeaways in the league (16) and ranked 28th in QB sack percentage.

Offseason outlook: GM Mickey Loomis is staring down some major decisions on potential free agents. Brees, who is due to become a free agent, has said he would be "beyond stunned" if he doesn't get a deal done with the Saints, but the franchise tag is expected to be placed on him if the two sides can't compromise before the start of free agency. OLG Carl Nicks, WR Marques Colston and CB Tracy Porter are among the other top players due to hit the open market.

TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS

Overview: It looked like the Buccaneers were set to compete for a playoff spot when they started the season 4-2, but disaster struck after the first six games. The Bucs lost to the Bears in London in Week Seven and didn't win again all season, dropping

their final 10 games. QB Josh Freeman regressed, and the defense set a franchise record for most points allowed. That resulted in the firing of head coach Raheem Morris and his staff. After an exhaustive search, the Bucs hired Rutgers head coach Greg Schiano to replace Morris.

Team MVP: Some of his teammates had far better individual performances in 2011, including the Bucs' lone Pro Bowler, ORG Davin Joseph, but a guard, even one of the league's best, is more replaceable than a franchise quarterback. Freeman is still the player Tampa Bay can least afford to lose.

Biggest surprise: After winning 10 games in 2010 and four of its first six contests in '11, this still looked like a young team on the rise. No one saw a complete collapse coming. The Bucs lost by at least 16 points in each of their final five games. The team quit on Morris, who was considered a Coach of the Year candidate just a season earlier.

Biggest disappointment: Where to start? Freeman's performance was as troubling as anything, since expectations for him were so high after a brilliant sophomore season, but at least he was on the field. The Bucs lost DT Gerald McCoy, the third overall pick in the 2010 draft, to a season-ending biceps tear for a second straight year, and the defense was not the same without him.

Offseason outlook: Schiano and GM Mark Dominik are working together to put together a coaching staff that will be able to get a young team that went off the rails back on track. One of his top tasks is to bring discipline and structure to a club that has to have more of those qualities to get out of the cellar in a highly competitive division. There are pressing needs on both sides of the ball, and the team could be more active in free agency than it had been in recent years. Developing Freeman and surrounding him with better, more mature talent will be key.

NFC WEST

ARIZONA CARDINALS

Overview: Losing six straight after winning their opener vs. the Panthers, the Cardinals seemed to be going nowhere fast. But a resurgent defense and a resilient offense with a flair for coming on strong late in games keyed a 7-2 record over the final nine games that enabled Arizona to finish .500. The team set an NFL single-season record by winning four overtime contests (all at home) and also had six fourth-quarter comebacks. Under the direction of first-year coordinator Ray Horton, the defense allowed only 12 touchdowns over the final nine games.

Team MVP: Averaging a career-best 17.6 yards per catch, WR Larry Fitzgerald became the franchise leader in four new categories (career receiving yards, receiving TDs, 100-yard games and career

(Continued on Page 30)

2011 SEASON IN REVIEW

(Continued from Page 29)

TDs). Earning his fifth straight Pro Bowl selection, Fitzgerald saved his best performance of the year for the regular-season finale, when he dominated the division-rival Seahawks' excellent young secondary with nine catches — including a couple of brilliant highlight-reel grabs — for 149 yards in a 23-20 overtime victory.

Biggest surprise: Posting a 5-2 record as a starter (6-2 in games in which he appeared), strong-armed sophomore QB John Skelton earned himself a shot at competing for the starting job under center next season with high-priced trade acquisition Kevin Kolb. Skelton looked awful at times, mostly early in games, but he showed tremendous poise while leading four fourth-quarter comeback victories.

Biggest disappointment: Armed with a five-year, \$63 million contract after being obtained in a trade with the Eagles in exchange for CB Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie and a second-round draft pick, Kolb registered a 2-6 record in his eight full games as a starter. Kolb missed four games with a foot/toe injury and three games with a concussion. When he was healthy enough to get on the field, he frequently threw errant passes and never looked totally comfortable.

Offseason outlook: The Cardinals' strong finish would appear to bode well for the future, but an unstable QB situation must be rectified. The offense also needs an upgrade at tackle and could really use a big-play, deep-threat complement to Fitzgerald. The defense's top priority is to re-sign free-agent DE Calais Campbell, the team's leading sacker (eight), who provides a valuable extra dimension with his kick-blocking ability.

ST. LOUIS RAMS

Overview: Plagued by injuries the entire season, the Rams failed miserably in their third year under head coach Steve Spagnuolo, who was fired along with GM Billy Devaney the day after the completion of a 2-14 campaign that couldn't end soon enough. The Rams struggled mightily on both sides of the ball, scoring a league-low 193 points while allowing 407. The defense yielded 2,433 rushing yards, the third-worst total in franchise history.

Team MVP: DE Chris Long had a Pro Bowl-caliber season, playing through nagging injuries to post 13 sacks, which ranked seventh in the league. Three of his sacks came in the team's Week Eight upset of the Saints, a season high point. Following in the lofty footsteps of his father, Hall of Famer Howie Long, Chris Long also led the defense in QB pressures (15) and QB hits (16).

Biggest surprise: In a season extremely short on positives, the nod probably has to go to former Packers CB Josh Gordy, who was promoted off the practice squad in Week Three and went on to lead the team with three interceptions, including one in two of the final three games. Gordy held

his own in nine starts, but the consensus among daily team observers is that he's a reliable third corner at best.

Biggest disappointment: The expectations were high following the hiring of Josh McDaniels as the new offensive coordinator. He replaced Pat Shurmur, who left to become the new head coach in Cleveland, but McDaniels, who earned strong reviews as the Patriots' offensive coordinator from 2006-08, never was able to get the offense on track. McDaniels' decision not to hire a QB coach to further Sam Bradford's development in a new system was widely viewed as a major mistake. Making matters worse was the team's dreadful play-calling on a fairly regular basis.

Offseason outlook: Hope springs eternal following the hiring of former Titans head coach Jeff Fisher to replace Spagnuolo. Widely considered the most solid candidate available, Fisher quickly began assembling a big-name coaching staff, choosing Brian Schottenheimer as his offensive coordinator, best buddy Gregg Williams as his defensive coordinator and another old crony, former NFL head coach Dave McGinnis, as his assistant head coach. But an air of uncertainty hangs over Rams Nation, with team owner Stan Kroenke considered far from a lock to stay put in St. Louis for the long term.

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

Overview: The hiring of Jim Harbaugh away from nearby Stanford University five days after the end of a disappointing 2010 campaign turned out to be a terrific move, as the Niners quickly became heavyweight contenders under Harbaugh's direction. After easily winning the NFC West with a 13-3 record (6-2 on the road, including four wins in the Eastern time zone), the Niners staged a classic comeback divisional playoff victory over the Saints before succumbing to the Giants in overtime in the NFC title game.

Team MVP: Nobody personified the gritty, blue-collar mindset that Harbaugh worked so hard to instill better than 11-year veteran DT Justin Smith. Off the field, Smith set the tone, outworking everybody on the team and providing invaluable guidance for younger defenders like first-round draft pick Aldon Smith. On the field, Smith displayed amazing stamina, which enabled him to consistently come up with tide-turning plays in crunch time.

Biggest surprise: Rewarding Harbaugh for the confidence the new head coach showed in him after struggling more often than not in the previous six seasons, QB Alex Smith proved mostly worthy of his former first-round billing. Seldom making mistakes (league-low five interceptions), Smith registered an impressive 90.7 passer rating and looked like Joe Montana directing TD drives of 80 and 85 yards in the final 4:02 of the Niners' stirring playoff victory over New Orleans.

Biggest disappointment: The team



Relentless DT Justin Smith was the Niners' MVP — both on and off the field.

had high hopes that former Pro Bowl WR Braylon Edwards would provide a consistent big-play counterpunch to No. 1 WR Michael Crabtree. But with knee and shoulder injuries making him a relative nonfactor, Edwards was abruptly released in late December.

Offseason outlook: Overall, the Niners appear to be in good shape with 16 starters under contract for next season, including eight from one of the league's more punishing defenses. But they have key free-agent decisions to make on Alex Smith, who did not have a particularly good ending to his season in the NFC title game loss, and Pro Bowl DBs Carlos Rogers and Dashon Goldson (12 interceptions combined).

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS

Overview: For the second year in a row, the Seahawks finished 7-9 under the direction of head coach Pete Carroll and GM John Schneider. But there is legitimate reason for optimism after the team came back from a shaky 2-6 start to win five of its last eight games. While questions remain at quarterback, a steadily improving ground game featuring Marshawn Lynch bodes well for the future. A talented young secondary featuring one Pro Bowl starter (FS Earl Thomas) and two other Pro Bowlers (SS Kam Chancellor and CB Brandon Browner) headlines a solid defense.

Team MVP: Lynch, a colorful character with a bruising "Beast Mode" style fueled by an addiction to Skittles, provided eye-popping eye candy with a career-high 1,204 yards rushing (six 100-yard games over the final nine games) and 12 TDs. An unrestricted free agent who is being

counted on as the team's undisputed offensive centerpiece for the long term (he's only 25), Lynch is considered a top priority to be re-signed.

Biggest surprise: There are many players to choose from, but the most unexpected boost was provided by undrafted rookie free-agent WR Doug Baldwin, who led the Seahawks in receiving with 51 catches for 788 yards and four TDs. Displaying an uncanny knack for finding openings in the seams, Baldwin came out of nowhere to likely become the long-term solution at slot receiver.

Biggest disappointment: Other than Baldwin, the Seahawks did not get much bang for the buck from their receivers. That was especially the case with WR Sidney Rice, who missed seven games due to injuries after signing a five-year, \$41 million deal. Rice was placed on injured reserve Nov. 30 after suffering two concussions in a three-game stretch. TE Zach Miller, another high-priced free-agent addition, who had caught at least 60 passes in each of his previous two seasons with the Raiders, had only 25 catches for 233 yards and zero scores. WR Mike Williams, who had a breakout season in 2010, broke down with only 18 catches for 236 yards and one score.

Offseason outlook: After a 2011 draft that netted four instant starters with great upside, along with Baldwin, the arrow appears to be pointing up for the Seahawks. But a long-term starting quarterback remains a key to the future, as do decisions on 18 unrestricted free agents, led by Lynch, top defenders Red Bryant, David Hawthorne and Leroy Hill and Pro Bowl FB Michael Robinson.

2011 SEASON IN REVIEW

ARIZONA CARDINALS

Date	Opponent	Spread	Score
Sept. 11	Carolina	(-7)	28-21
Sept. 18	At Washington	(+4.5)	21-22
Sept. 25	At Seattle	(-3)	10-13
Oct. 2	New York Giants	(+1)	27-31
Oct. 9	At Minnesota	(+3.5)	10-34
Oct. 16	BYE		
Oct. 23	Pittsburgh	(+4)	20-32
Oct. 30	At Baltimore	(+11.5)	27-30
Nov. 6	St. Louis	(-1)	19-13*
Nov. 13	At Philadelphia	(+13)	21-17
Nov. 20	At San Francisco	(+10)	7-23
Nov. 27	At St. Louis	(+2.5)	23-20
Dec. 4	Dallas	(+4.5)	19-13*
Dec. 11	San Francisco	(+3.5)	21-19
Dec. 18	Cleveland	(-6)	20-17*
Dec. 24	At Cincinnati	(+4)	16-23
Jan. 1	Seattle	(-2.5)	23-20*

* Overtime

ATLANTA FALCONS

Date	Opponent	Spread	Score
Sept. 11	At Chicago	(-2)	12-30
Sept. 18	Philadelphia	(+2.5)	35-31
Sept. 25	At Tampa Bay	(+1)	13-16
Oct. 2	At Seattle	(-6)	30-28
Oct. 9	Green Bay	(+6)	14-25
Oct. 16	Carolina	(-3.5)	31-17
Oct. 23	At Detroit	(+4.5)	23-16
Oct. 30	BYE		
Nov. 6	At Indianapolis	(-7)	31-7
Nov. 13	New Orleans	(-1)	23-26*
Nov. 20	Tennessee	(-6)	23-17
Nov. 27	Minnesota	(-10)	24-14
Dec. 4	At Houston	(-2)	10-17
Dec. 11	At Carolina	(-3)	31-23
Dec. 15	Jacksonville	(-13.5)	41-14
Dec. 26	At New Orleans	(+7)	16-45
Jan. 1	Tampa Bay	(-10)	45-24

* Overtime

POSTSEASON

Jan. 8	At New York Giants	(+3)	2-24
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BALTIMORE RAVENS

Date	Opponent	Spread	Score
Sept. 11	Pittsburgh	(-1.5)	35-7
Sept. 18	At Tennessee	(-6)	13-26
Sept. 25	At St. Louis	(-5.5)	37-7
Oct. 2	New York Jets	(-5)	34-17
Oct. 9	BYE		
Oct. 16	Houston	(-7)	29-14
Oct. 24	At Jacksonville	(-10)	7-12
Oct. 30	Arizona	(-11.5)	30-27
Nov. 6	At Pittsburgh	(+3.5)	23-20
Nov. 13	At Seattle	(-7)	17-22
Nov. 20	Cincinnati	(-7)	31-24
Nov. 24	San Francisco	(-3.5)	16-6
Dec. 4	At Cleveland	(-7)	24-10
Dec. 11	Indianapolis	(-16)	24-10
Dec. 18	At San Diego	(-2)	14-34
Dec. 24	Cleveland	(-11)	20-14
Jan. 1	At Cincinnati	(-3)	24-16

* Overtime

POSTSEASON

Jan. 15	Houston	(-7.5)	20-13
Jan. 22	At New England	(+7)	20-23

BUFFALO BILLS

Date	Opponent	Spread	Score
Sept. 11	At Kansas City	(+4)	41-7
Sept. 18	Oakland	(-3.5)	38-35
Sept. 25	New England	(+7)	34-31
Oct. 2	At Cincinnati	(-3)	20-23
Oct. 9	Philadelphia	(+3)	31-24
Oct. 16	At New York Giants	(+3.5)	24-27
Oct. 23	BYE		
Oct. 30	Washington	(-4)	23-0
Nov. 6	New York Jets	(-2.5)	11-27
Nov. 13	At Dallas	(+4.5)	7-44
Nov. 20	At Miami	(+3)	8-35
Nov. 27	At New York Jets	(+9.5)	24-28
Dec. 4	Tennessee	(-1)	17-23
Dec. 11	At San Diego	(+7)	10-37
Dec. 18	Miami	(0)	23-30
Dec. 24	Denver	(+3)	40-14
Jan. 1	At New England	(+10.5)	21-49

CAROLINA PANTHERS

Date	Opponent	Spread	Score
Sept. 11	At Arizona	(+7)	21-28
Sept. 18	Green Bay	(+10.5)	23-30
Sept. 25	Jacksonville	(-3.5)	16-10
Oct. 2	At Chicago	(+7)	29-34
Oct. 9	New Orleans	(+6.5)	27-30
Oct. 16	At Atlanta	(+3.5)	17-31
Oct. 23	Washington	(-2.5)	33-20
Oct. 30	Minnesota	(-3)	21-24
Nov. 6	BYE		
Nov. 13	Tennessee	(-3.5)	3-30
Nov. 20	At Detroit	(+7)	35-49
Nov. 27	At Indianapolis	(-3.5)	27-19
Dec. 4	At Tampa Bay	(-1)	38-19
Dec. 11	Atlanta	(+3)	23-31
Dec. 18	At Houston	(+5)	28-13
Dec. 24	Tampa Bay	(-7.5)	48-16
Jan. 1	At New Orleans	(+7)	17-45

CHICAGO BEARS

Date	Opponent	Spread	Score
Sept. 11	Atlanta	(+2)	30-12
Sept. 18	At New Orleans	(+5.5)	13-30
Sept. 25	Green Bay	(+4.5)	17-27
Oct. 2	Carolina	(-7)	34-29
Oct. 10	At Detroit	(+6.5)	13-24
Oct. 16	Minnesota	(-2.5)	39-10
Oct. 23	At Tampa Bay	(-1.5)	24-18

Oct. 30	BYE		
Nov. 7	At Philadelphia	(+8)	30-24
Nov. 13	Detroit	(-2.5)	37-13
Nov. 20	San Diego	(-4.5)	31-20
Nov. 27	At Oakland	(+3)	20-25
Dec. 4	Kansas City	(-8.5)	3-10
Dec. 11	At Denver	(+3)	10-13*
Dec. 18	Seattle	(-3.5)	14-38
Dec. 25	At Green Bay	(+13.5)	21-35
Jan. 1	At Minnesota	(+2.5)	17-13

* Overtime

CINCINNATI BENGALS

Date	Opponent	Spread	Score
Sept. 11	At Cleveland	(+7)	27-17
Sept. 18	At Denver	(+3)	22-24
Sept. 25	San Francisco	(-1.5)	8-13
Oct. 2	Buffalo	(+3)	23-20
Oct. 9	At Jacksonville	(-2.5)	30-20
Oct. 16	Indianapolis	(-4.5)	27-17
Oct. 23	BYE		
Oct. 30	At Seattle	(-1.5)	34-12
Nov. 6	At Tennessee	(+2.5)	24-17
Nov. 13	Pittsburgh	(+4)	17-24
Nov. 20	At Baltimore	(+7)	24-31
Nov. 27	Cleveland	(-6.5)	23-20
Dec. 4	At Pittsburgh	(+7)	7-35
Dec. 11	Houston	(-2.5)	19-20
Dec. 18	At St. Louis	(-7)	20-13
Dec. 24	Arizona	(-4)	23-16
Jan. 1	Baltimore	(+3)	16-24

* Overtime

POSTSEASON

Jan. 7	At Houston	(+4)	10-31
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CLEVELAND BROWNS

Date	Opponent	Spread	Score
Sept. 11	Cincinnati	(-7)	17-27
Sept. 18	At Indianapolis	(-2)	27-19
Sept. 25	Miami	(+2)	17-16
Oct. 2	Tennessee	(-1.5)	13-31
Oct. 9	BYE		
Oct. 16	At Oakland	(+7)	17-24
Oct. 23	Seattle	(-3)	6-3
Oct. 30	At San Francisco	(+9)	10-20
Nov. 6	At Houston	(+10.5)	12-30
Nov. 13	St. Louis	(-3)	12-13
Nov. 20	Jacksonville	(-1.5)	14-10
Nov. 27	At Cincinnati	(+6.5)	20-23
Dec. 4	Baltimore	(+7)	10-24
Dec. 8	At Pittsburgh	(+14)	3-14
Dec. 18	At Arizona	(+6)	17-20*
Dec. 24	At Baltimore	(+11)	14-20
Jan. 1	Pittsburgh	(+7)	9-13

* Overtime

DALLAS COWBOYS

Date	Opponent	Spread	Score
Sept. 11	At New York Jets	(+6.5)	24-27
Sept. 18	At San Francisco	(-3)	27-24*
Sept. 26	Washington	(-3.5)	18-16
Oct. 2	Detroit	(-2.5)	30-34
Oct. 9	BYE		
Oct. 16	At New England	(+6.5)	16-20
Oct. 23	St. Louis	(-14)	34-7
Oct. 30	At Philadelphia	(+3)	7-34
Nov. 6	Seattle	(-10.5)	23-13
Nov. 13	Buffalo	(-4.5)	44-7
Nov. 20	At Washington	(-7)	27-24*
Nov. 24	Miami	(-7)	20-19
Dec. 4	At Arizona	(-4.5)	13-19*
Dec. 11	At New York Giants	(-4.5)	34-37
Dec. 17	At Tampa Bay	(-7.5)	31-15
Dec. 24	Philadelphia	(+2.5)	7-20
Jan. 1	At New York Giants	(+3)	14-31

* Overtime

DENVER BRONCOS

Date	Opponent	Spread	Score
Sept. 12	Oakland	(-3)	20-23
Sept. 18	Cincinnati	(-3)	24-22
Sept. 25	At Tennessee	(+7)	14-17
Oct. 2	At Green Bay	(+12)	23-49
Oct. 9	San Diego	(+3.5)	24-29
Oct. 16	BYE		
Oct. 23	At Miami	(-1)	18-15*
Oct. 30	Detroit	(+3)	10-45
Nov. 6	At Oakland	(+7)	38-24
Nov. 13	At Kansas City	(+3)	17-10
Nov. 17	New York Jets	(+6.5)	17-13
Nov. 27	At San Diego	(+4.5)	16-13*
Dec. 4	At Minnesota	(+1)	35-32
Dec. 11	Chicago	(-3)	13-10*
Dec. 18	New England	(+7)	23-41
Dec. 24	At Buffalo	(-3)	14-40
Jan. 1	Kansas City	(-2)	3-7

* Overtime

POSTSEASON

Jan. 8	Pittsburgh	(+7.5)	29-23*
Jan. 14	At New England	(+14)	10-45

DETROIT LIONS

Date	Opponent	Spread	Score
Sept. 11	At Tampa Bay	(+1.5)	27-20
Sept. 18	Kansas City	(-8)	48-3
Sept. 25	At Minnesota	(-3)	26-23*
Oct. 2	At Dallas	(+2.5)	34-30
Oct. 10	Chicago	(-6.5)	24-13
Oct. 16	San Francisco	(-5)	19-25
Oct. 23	Atlanta	(-4.5)	16-23
Oct. 30	At Denver	(-3)	45-10
Nov. 6	BYE		
Nov. 13	At Chicago	(+2.5)	13-37
Nov. 20	Carolina	(-7)	49-35
Nov. 24	Green Bay	(+4)	15-27
Dec. 4	At New Orleans	(+9)	17-31

Dec. 11	Minnesota	(-10)	34-28
Dec. 18	At Oakland	(-3)	28-27
Dec. 24	San Diego	(0)	38-10
Jan. 1	At Green Bay	(-6.5)	41-45

* Overtime

POSTSEASON

Jan. 7	At New Orleans	(+10.5)	28-45
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GREEN BAY PACKERS

Date	Opponent	Spread	Score
Sept. 8	New Orleans	(-4.5)	42-34
Sept. 18	At Carolina	(-10.5)	30-23
Sept. 25	At Chicago	(-4.5)	27-17
Oct. 2	Denver	(-12)	49-23
Oct. 9	At Atlanta	(-6)	25-14
Oct. 16	St. Louis	(-14)	24-3
Oct. 23	At Minnesota	(-10)	33-27
Oct. 30	BYE		
Nov. 6	At San Diego	(-6)	45-38
Nov. 14	Minnesota	(-13)	45-7
Nov. 20	Tampa Bay	(-14)	35-26
Nov. 24	At Detroit	(-4)	27-15
Dec. 4	At New York Giants	(-7)	38-35
Dec. 11	Oakland	(-12)	46-16
Dec. 18	At Kansas City	(-11)	14-19
Dec. 25	Chicago	(-13.5)	35-21
Jan. 1	Detroit	(+6.5)	45-41

* Overtime

POSTSEASON

Jan. 15	New York Giants	(-8.5)	20-37
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HOUSTON TEXANS

Date	Opponent	Spread	Score
Sept. 11	Indianapolis	(-8.5)	34-7
Sept. 18	At Miami	(-3)	23-13
Sept. 25	At New Orleans	(+3.5)	33-40
Oct. 2	Pittsburgh	(-4)	17-10
Oct. 9	Oakland	(-5)	20-25
Oct. 16	At Baltimore	(+7)	14-29
Oct. 23	At Tennessee	(+2.5)	41-7
Oct. 30	Jacksonville	(-10)	24-14
Nov. 6	Cleveland	(-10.5)	30-12
Nov. 13	At Tampa Bay	(-3.5)	37-9
Nov. 20	BYE		
Nov. 27	At Jacksonville	(-6.5)	20-13
Dec. 4	Atlanta	(+2)	17-10
Dec. 11	At Cincinnati	(+2.5)	20-19
Dec. 18	Carolina	(-5)	13-28
Dec. 22	At Indianapolis	(-7)	16-19
Jan. 1	Tennessee	(+2.5)	22-23

* Overtime

POSTSEASON

Jan. 7	Cincinnati	(-4)	31-10
Jan. 15	At Baltimore	(+7.5)	13-20

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS

Date	Opponent	Spread	Score
Sept. 11	At Houston	(+8.5)	7-34
Sept. 18	Cleveland	(+2)	19-27
Sept. 25	Pittsburgh	(+11)	20-23
Oct. 3	At Tampa Bay	(+10)	17-24
Oct. 9	Kansas City	(-1.5)	24-28
Oct. 16	At Cincinnati	(+4.5)	17-27
Oct. 23	At New Orleans		

AFC INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS 2011 FINAL



PASSING

Player	Team	Att	Comp	Pct	Yds	TD	Int	Lg	Rating
Brady	N.E.	611	401	65.6	5,235	39	6.4	99	105.6
Schaub	Hou.	292	178	61.0	2,479	15	5.1	80	96.8
Roethlisberger	Pitt.	513	324	63.2	4,077	21	4.1	95	14.7
Rivers	S.D.	582	366	62.9	4,624	27	4.6	58	20.3
Mat. Moore	Mia.	347	210	60.5	2,497	16	4.6	65	9.2
Hasselbeck	Ten.	518	319	61.6	3,571	18	3.5	80	14.2
Flacco	Balt.	542	312	57.6	3,610	20	3.7	74	12.2
Palmer	Oak.	328	199	60.7	2,753	13	4.0	78	16.4
Dalton	Cin.	516	300	58.1	3,398	20	3.9	84	13.2
Fitzpatrick	Buff.	569	353	62.0	3,832	24	4.2	60	23.4
Sanchez	N.Y.J.	543	308	56.7	3,474	26	4.8	74	18.3
Orton	K.C.	252	150	59.5	1,758	9	3.6	52	9.3
Cassel	K.C.	269	160	59.5	1,713	10	3.7	52	9.3
McCoy	Clev.	463	265	57.2	2,733	14	3.0	56	11.2
Tebow	Den.	271	126	46.5	1,729	12	4.4	56	6.2
Painter	Ind.	243	132	54.3	1,541	6	2.5	87	9.7
Gabbert	Jax.	413	210	50.8	2,214	12	2.9	74	11.2

NON-QUALIFIERS

Sepulveda	Pitt.	1	1	100.0	33	0	0.0	33	0	0.0	33.00	118.8
Rice	Balt.	1	1	100.0	1	1	100.0	0	0	0.0	1.00	118.8
Hoyer	N.E.	1	1	100.0	22	0	0.0	22	0	0.0	22.00	118.8
Sanders	Pitt.	1	1	100.0	15	0	0.0	15	0	0.0	15.00	118.8
Kerley	N.Y.J.	1	1	100.0	41	0	0.0	41	0	0.0	41.00	118.8
T. Taylor	Balt.	1	1	100.0	18	0	0.0	18	0	0.0	18.00	118.8
Lechler	Oak.	3	1	33.3	35	1	33.3	35	0	0.0	11.67	118.1
Leinart	Hou.	13	10	76.9	57	1	7.7	20	0	0.0	4.38	110.1
Locker	Ten.	66	34	51.5	542	4	6.1	54	0	0.0	8.21	99.4
Delhomme	Hou.	28	18	64.3	211	1	3.6	40	0	0.0	7.54	99.0
J. Campbell	Oak.	165	100	60.6	1,170	6	3.6	58	4	2.4	7.09	84.2
Orlovsky	Ind.	193	122	63.2	1,201	6	3.1	40	4	2.1	6.22	82.4
Yates	Hou.	134	82	61.2	949	3	2.2	50	3	2.2	7.08	80.7
Henne	Mia.	112	64	57.1	868	4	3.6	41	4	3.6	7.75	79.0
Losman	Mia.	10	6	60.0	60	0	0.0	25	0	0.0	6.00	77.1
Batch	Pitt.	24	15	62.5	208	0	0.0	46	1	4.2	8.67	72.9
Brunell	N.Y.J.	3	1	33.3	27	0	0.0	27	0	0.0	9.00	67.4
Collins	Ind.	98	48	49.0	481	2	2.0	36	1	1.0	4.91	65.9
S. Wallace	Clev.	107	55	51.4	567	2	1.9	76	2	1.9	5.30	65.4
Palko	K.C.	134	80	59.7	796	2	1.5	38	7	5.2	5.94	59.8
Gradkowski	Cin.	18	8	44.4	109	1	5.6	41	1	5.6	6.06	59.7
Colquitt	Den.	1	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0.00	39.6
Scott	Cin.	1	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0.00	39.6
D. Thomas	Den.	1	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0.00	39.6
Decker	Den.	1	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0.00	39.6
McCown	Jax.	56	30	53.6	296	0	0.0	25	4	7.1	5.29	39.0
Boller	Oak.	28	15	53.6	161	0	0.0	27	3	10.7	5.75	31.1
Thigpen	Buff.	8	3	37.5	25	0	0.0	13	1	12.5	3.13	6.8
B. Smith	Buff.	1	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	1	100.0	0.00	0.0

RUSHING

Jones-Drew	Jax.	343	1,606	4.7	56	8
Rice	Balt.	291	1,364	4.7	70	12
Foster	Hou.	278	1,224	4.4	43	10
McGahee	Den.	249	1,199	4.8	60	4
Mathews	S.D.	222	1,091	4.9	39	6
Bush	Mia.	216	1,086	5.0	76	6
Benson	Cin.	273	1,067	3.9	42	6
Greene	N.Y.J.	253	1,054	4.2	31	6
C. Johnson	Ten.	262	1,047	4.0	48	4
Bush	Oak.	256	977	3.8	44	7
Tate	Hou.	175	942	5.4	56	4
F. Jackson	Buff.	170	934	5.5	80	6
Mendenhall	Pitt.	228	928	4.1	68	9
Green-Ellis	N.E.	181	667	3.7	18	11
Tebow	Den.	122	660	5.4	32	6
D. Brown	Ind.	134	645	4.8	80	5
McFadden	Oak.	113	614	5.4	70	4
Battle	K.C.	149	597	4.0	34	2
Hillis	Clev.	161	587	3.6	24	3
Thomas	Mia.	165	581	3.5	28	0
Spiller	Buff.	107	516	5.2	38	4
McCluster	K.C.	114	561	4.5	32	1
Tolbert	S.D.	121	490	4.0	40	8
Redman	Pitt.	110	479	4.4	27	3
Jones	K.C.	153	478	3.1	26	0
R. Williams	Balt.	108	444	4.1	28	2
Ridley	N.E.	87	441	5.1	33	1
Addai	Ind.	118	433	3.7	16	1
Ball	Den.	96	402	4.2	34	1
Scott	Cin.	112	380	3.4	25	3
Carter	Ind.	101	377	3.7	42	2
Woodhead	N.E.	77	351	4.6	12	1
Ogbonnaya	Clev.	76	340	4.5	40	1
Tomlinson	N.Y.J.	75	280	3.7	20	1
Hardesty	Clev.	88	266	3.0	19	0
Fitzpatrick	Buff.	56	215	3.8	18	0
McCoy	Clev.	61	212	3.5	20	0
Ringer	Ten.	59	185	3.1	25	1
Moreno	Den.	37	179	4.8	24	0
Moore	Pitt.	22	157	7.1	21	0
Ward	Hou.	45	154	3.4	15	2
Choice	Buff.	57	152	2.7	14	1
Dalton	Cin.	37	152	4.1	17	1
McKnight	N.Y.J.	43	134	3.1	11	0
Karim	Jax.	63	130	2.1	14	0
Dwyer	Pitt.	16	123	7.7	76	0
Reece	Oak.	17	112	6.6	26	0
Henne	Mia.	14	112	8.0	20	1
Brady	N.E.	43	109	2.5	13	3
Painter	Ind.	17	107	6.3	24	0
Sanchez	N.Y.J.	37	103	2.8	25	6
Brinkley	S.D.	30	101	3.4	12	1
Cassel	K.C.	25	99	4.0	24	0
Gabbert	Jax.	48	98	2.0	12	0
Hester	S.D.	28	90	3.2	16	0
Flacco	Balt.	40	88	2.2	33	1
B. Smith	Buff.	20	87	4.4	18	1
Leonard	Cin.	17	85	5.0	14	0
Charles	K.C.	12	83	6.9	24	0
J. Johnson	Den.	14	77	5.5	25	0
T. Jones	Oak.	16	73	4.6	14	0
Roethlisberger	Pitt.	31	70	2.3	11	0

Excludes players with fewer than 10 yards, no TDs.

RECEIVING

Player	Team	No	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
Welker	N.E.	122	1,569	12.9	99	9
R. Gronkowski	N.E.	90	1,327	14.7	52	17
Marshall	Mia.	81	1,214	15.0	65	6
Bowe	K.C.	81	1,159	14.3	52	5
Hernandez	N.E.	79	910	11.5	46	7
St. Johnson	Buff.	76	1,004	13.2	55	7
Rice	Balt.	76	704	9.3	52	3
Wayne	Ind.	75	960	12.8	56	4
Washington	Ten.	74	1,023	13.8	57	7
Wallace	Pitt.	72	1,193	16.6	95	8
Garcon	Ind.	70	947	13.5	87	6
A. Brown	Pitt.	69	1,108	16.1	79	2
Green	Cin.	65	1,057	16.3	58	7
Keller	N.Y.J.	65	815	12.5	41	5
Heyward-Bey	Oak.	64	975	15.2	58	4
Gates	S.D.	64	778	12.2	38	7
Breaston	K.C.	61	785	12.9	43	2
Little	Clev.	61	709	11.6	76	2
D. Nelson	Buff.	61	658	10.8	35	5
V. Jackson	S.D.	60	1,106	18.4	58	9
Boldin	Balt.	57	887	15.6	56	3
C. Johnson	Ten.	57	418	7.3	34	0
Gresham	Cin.	56	596	10.6	31	6
Daniels	Hou.	54	677	12.5	34	3
Dickson	Balt.	54	528	9.8	25	5
Collie	Ind.	54	514	9.5	27	1
Tolbert	S.D.	54	433	8.0	27	2
Foster	Hou.	53	617	11.6	78	2
Branch	N.E.	51	702	13.8	63	5
Holmes	N.Y.J.	51	654	12.8	38	8
Miller	Pitt.	51	631	12.4	39	2
Bess	Mia.	51	537	10.5	41	3
T. Smith	Balt.	50	841	16.8	74	7
Simpson	Cin.	50	725	14.5	84	4
Mathews	S.D.	50	455	9.1	42	0
Cook	Ten.	49	759	15.5	80	3
L. Hawkins	Ind.	47	470	10.0	32	1
Ward	Pitt.	46	381	8.3	31	2
McCluster	K.C.	46	328	7.1	49	1
Burruss	N.Y.J.	45	612	13.6	30	8
D. Williams	Ten.	45	592	13.2	54	5
Decker	Den.	44	612	13.9	56	8
M. Thomas	Jax.	44	415	9.4	47	1
Floyd	S.D.	43	856	19.9	52	5
Jones-Drew	Jax.	43	374	8.7	48	3
Bush	Mia.	43	296	6.9	34	1
Tomlinson	N.Y.J.	42	449	10.7	74	2
Cribbs	Clev.	41	518	12.6	45	4
Pitta	Balt.	40	405	10.1	39	3
Walter	Hou.	39	474	12.2	41	3
Lewis	Jax.	39	460	11.8	62	0
F. Jackson	Buff.	39	442	11.3	49	0
Spiller	Buff.	39	269	6.9	19	2
Chandler	Buff.	38	389	10.2	31	6
Bush	Oak.	37	418	11.3	55	1
Watson	Clev.	37	410	11.1	34	2
Caldwell	Cin.	37	317	8.6	49	3
B. Hartline	Mia.	35	549	15.7	41	1
Clark	Ind.	34	352	10.4	21	2
Moore	Clev.	34	324	9.5	33	4
Moore	Oak.	33	618	18.7	78	5
A. Johnson	Hou.	33	492	14.9	50	2
D. Thomas	Den.	32	551	17.2	47	4
Fasano	Mia.	32	451	14.1	35	5
Jones	Hou.	31	512	16.5	80	2
Massaquoi	Clev.	31	384	12.4	56	2
McMichael	S.D.	30	271	9.0	30	0
Greene	N.Y.J.	30	211	7.0	36	0
Kerley	N.Y.J.	29	314	10.8	38	1
Dillard	Jax.	29	292	10.1	25	1
Boss	Oak.	28	368	13.1	35	3
Dreessen						

Choice	Buff.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Clay	Pitt.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Cloherly	Jax.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Cochart	Cin.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Collie	Ind.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Collins	Jax.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Conner	N.Y.J.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Crayton	S.D.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Curry	Oak.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Dalton	Cin.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Dillard	Jax.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Edelman	N.E.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Flacco	Balt.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Florence	Buff.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Flowers	K.C.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Goodman	Den.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Goodman	S.D.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Graham	Ten.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Gregory	S.D.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Hagan	Buff.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Harper	Ten.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Harris	N.Y.J.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
B. Hartline	Mia.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
L. Hawkins	Ten.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Henne	Mia.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Hester	S.D.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Houshmandzadeh	Oak.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Sp. Johnson	Buff.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Johnson	Pitt.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
B. Johnson	Hou.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
J. Johnson	Balt.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
G. Jones	Jax.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Jones	Buff.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Kerley	N.Y.J.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Lacey	Ind.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Lewis	K.C.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Locker	Ten.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Mariani	Ten.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
McCain	Hou.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
J. McClain	Balt.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
McCorty	Ten.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
McKelvin	Buff.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
McKnight	N.Y.J.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Miller	Jax.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Moore	Pitt.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
S. Moore	N.E.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Moreno	Den.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Murphy	Oak.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Nelson	Cin.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Ngata	Balt.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Ninkovich	N.E.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Norwood	Clev.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Ochocinco	N.E.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Ogbonnaya	Clev.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Palmer	Oak.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Polamalu	Pitt.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Pope	K.C.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Potter	Jax.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Powers	Ind.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Reece	Oak.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Revis	N.Y.J.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Ridley	N.E.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Ringer	Ten.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Rivers	S.D.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Roosevelt	Buff.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Saunders	Pitt.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Scifres	S.D.	0	3/3	1/1	0	6
Shorts	Jax.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Slaton	Mia.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Slauson	N.Y.J.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
W. Smith	Hou.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Stevens	Ten.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Tammie	Ind.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Tate	Cin.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
M. Thomas	Jax.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Thomas	Mia.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
P. Turner	N.Y.J.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Urban	K.C.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Vareen	N.E.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Vaughn	Den.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Wilfork	N.E.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Willis	Den.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Youboty	Jax.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Team	Pitt.	0	0/0	0/0	0	4
Coutu	Buff.	0	3/3	0/1	0	3
Fitzpatrick	Buff.	0	0/0	0/0	1	2
Koch	Balt.	0	0/0	0/0	1	2
McClain	Oak.	0	0/0	0/0	0	2
Pouha	N.Y.J.	0	0/0	0/0	0	2
Sheppard	Buff.	0	0/0	0/0	0	2
Team	N.Y.J.	0	0/0	0/0	0	2
Team	Cin.	0	0/0	0/0	0	2
Wilkinson	N.Y.J.	0	0/0	0/0	0	2

KICKOFF RETURNS						
Player	Team	No	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
McKnight	N.Y.J.	34	1,073	31.6	107	1
Goodman	S.D.	34	936	27.5	105	1
A. Brown	Pitt.	27	737	27.3	52	0
Cribbs	Clev.	39	974	25.0	63	0
C. Gates	Mia.	34	843	24.8	77	0
Karim	Jax.	27	652	24.1	37	0
Tate	Cin.	42	998	23.8	45	0
Mariani	Ten.	32	748	23.4	49	0
McCluster	K.C.	25	557	22.3	35	0
Woodhead	N.E.	20	437	21.9	37	0
Lefeged	Ind.	31	578	18.6	51	0
NON-QUALIFIERS						
Demps	Hou.	5	169	33.8	50	0
Ford	Oak.	11	341	31.0	101	1
Vaughn	Den.	7	210	30.0	67	0
E. Reed	Balt.	1	30	30.0	30	0
D. Reed	Balt.	17	504	29.6	77	0
Webb	Balt.	2	59	29.5	37	0
J. Baker	N.Y.J.	1	29	29.0	29	0
Rogers	Buff.	13	373	28.7	54	0
Slaton	Mia.	3	85	28.3	42	0
McCann	Oak.	16	440	27.5	91	0

PUNTING												
Player	Team	No	Yds	Lg	Gross			Blk	Ret	Ret	Yds	Avg
					Avg	TB	20					
Mesko	N.E.	57	2,648	65	46.5	3	24	0	26	220	41.5	
Fields	Mia.	78	3,810	70	48.8	7	32	0	47	463	41.1	
Lechler	Oak.	78	3,960	80	50.8	9	27	0	44	593	40.9	
Colquitt	Den.	101	4,783	66	47.4	7	33	0	51	585	40.2	
Colquitt	K.C.	89	4,084	68	45.9	5	27	0	36	411	40.1	
Scifres	S.D.	47	2,234	71	47.5	2	17	0	25	329	39.7	
McAfee	Ind.	88	4,102	64	46.6	3	21	1	48	550	39.2	
Huber	Cin.	91	4,023	71	44.2	9	23	0	38	273	39.2	
Kern	Ten.	86	3,747	64	43.6	7	31	0	35	245	39.1	
Conley	N.Y.J.	92	3,926	63	42.7	6	32	0	32	241	38.8	
Koch	Balt.	73	3,393	63	46.5	9	21	0	33	392	38.6	
Moorman	Buff.	72	3,472	66	48.2	10	20	1	43	494	38.1	
Hartmann	Hou.	58	2,573	69	44.4	7	15	0	26	243	37.8	
N. Harris	Jax.	72	3,075	78	42.7	5	13	0	39	271	37.6	
Maynard	Clev.	81	3,282	63	40.5	1	32	0	25	288	36.7	
Turk	Hou.	43	1,755	65	40.8	6	11	0	15	151	34.5	
NON-QUALIFIER												
Kapinos	Pitt.	34	1,530	59	45.0	1	10	0	21	203	38.4	
Sepulveda	Pitt.	26	1,153	66	44.3	5	8	1	8	37	37.6	
R. McGee	Clev.	8	288	48	36.0	1	0	0	1	15	31.6	

FIELD-GOAL ACCURACY												
Player	Team	1-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50 or Longer	Total	Avg			Lg	
								Yds	Yds	Yds		Att
Scobee	Jax.	1-1	5-5	5-5	7-8	5-6	23-25	39.5	38.6	50.0	55	
		1,000	1,000	1,000	.875	.833	.920					
Bironas	Ten.	0-0	5-5	9-10	9-10	6-7	29-32	40.7	39.9	47.7	53	
		.000	1,000	.900	.900	.857	.906					
Janikowski	Oak.	1-1	8-8	5-5	10-11	7-10	31-35	41.6	39.6	57.3	63	
		1,000	1,000	1,000	.909	.700	.886					
Nugent	Cin.	0-0	15-15	5-8	13-15	0-0	33-38	34.2	33.5	39.0	49	
		.000	1,000	.625	.867	.000	.868					
D. Carpenter	Mia.	0-0	10-11	6-7	11-12	2-4	29-34	36.4	35.4	42.2	58	
		.000	.909	.857	.917	.500	.853					
Vinatieri	Ind.	0-0	7-7	6-7	8-10	2-3	23-27	36.9	35.8	43.5	53	
		.000	1,000	.857	.800	.667	.852					
Gostkowski	N.E.	1-1	12-13	5-6	9-11	1-2	28-33	34.3	33.0	41.4	50	
		1,000	.923	.833	.818	.500	.849					
Rackers	Hou.	0-0	14-14	10-11	4-8	4-5	32-38	35.5	33.6	45.7	54	
		.000	1,000	.909	.500	.800	.842					
Dawson	Clev.	0-0	7-9	3-4	7-8	7-8	24-29	38.7	38.9	37.4	54	
		.000	.778	.750	.875	.875	.828					
Succop	K.C.	1-1	7-7	6-7	7-12	3-3	24-30	36.9	34.8	45.5	54	
		1,000	1,000	.857	.583	1,000	.800					
Novak	S.D.	0-0	11-11	4-5	8-11	4-7	27-34	38.9	36.5	47.9	53	
		.000	1,000	.800	.727	.571	.794					
Folk	N.Y.J.	0-0	5-6	6-6	5-7	3-6	19-25	39.0	37.0	45.2	51	
		.000	.833	1,000	.714	.500	.760					
Prater	Den.	0-0	5-6	8-8	3-7	3-4	19-25	38.7	37.3	43.3	59	
		.000	.833	1,000	.429	.750	.760					
Cundiff	Balt.	1-1	9-9	10-12	7-9	1-6	28-37	36.7	34.0	45.2	51	
		1,000	1,000	.833	.778	.167	.757					
Suisham	Pitt.	2-2	8-8	6-8	6-11	1-2	23-31	35.4	33.0	42.4	51	
		1,000	1,000	.750	.545	.500	.742					
NON-QUALIFIERS												
Scifres	S.D.	0-0	0-0	0-0	1-1	0-0	1-1	40.0	40.0	0.0	40	
		.000	.000	.000	1,000	.000	1,000					
Lindell	Buff.	0-0	6-6	2-3	5-6	0-0	13-15	35.4	34.5	41.5	49	
		.000	1,000	.667	.833	.000	.867					
Graham	Balt.	0-0	4-4	0-0	2-3	0-0	6-7	34.6	32.5	47.0	48	
		.000	1,000	.000	.667	.000	.857					
Rayner	Buff.	0-0	5-6	3-4	0-1	2-4	10-15	36.7	34.4	41.4	56	
		.000	.833	.750	.000	.500	.667					
Coutu	Buff.	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-1	0-0	0-1	45.0	0.0	45.0	0	
		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000					

PUNT RETURNS												
Player	Team	No	FC	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	NON-QUALIFIERS				
								A. Jones	Cin.	2	0	67

NFC INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS 2011 FINAL

PASSING

Player	Team	Att	Comp	Pct	Yds	TD	Lg	Int	Avg	Rating
Rodgers	G.B.	502	343	68.3	4,643	45	93	6	9.25	122.5
Brees	N.O.	657	468	71.2	5,476	46	79	14	8.33	110.6
Romo	Dall.	522	346	66.3	4,184	31	59	10	8.02	102.5
Stafford	Det.	663	421	63.5	5,038	41	62	73	7.60	97.2
Manning	N.Y.G.	589	359	61.0	4,933	29	49	16	8.38	92.9
Ryan	Atl.	566	347	61.3	4,177	29	51	80	7.38	92.2
Ale. Smith	S.F.	445	273	61.3	3,144	17	38	56	7.07	90.7
Cutler	Chi.	314	182	58.0	2,319	13	41	56	7.39	85.7
Vick	Phil.	423	253	59.8	3,303	18	43	73	7.81	84.9
Newton	Car.	517	310	60.0	4,051	21	41	91	7.77	84.5
Kolb	Ariz.	253	146	57.7	1,955	9	36	73	7.73	81.1
T. Jackson	Sea.	450	271	60.2	3,091	14	31	61	7.39	79.2
Freeman	T.B.	551	346	62.8	3,592	16	29	65	6.52	74.6
Grossman	Wash.	458	265	57.9	3,151	16	35	51	6.88	72.4
Bradford	St.L.	357	191	53.5	2,164	6	17	68	6.06	70.5
Ponder	Minn.	291	158	54.3	1,853	13	45	72	6.37	70.1
Skelton	Ariz.	275	151	54.9	1,913	11	40	60	6.96	68.9

NON-QUALIFIERS

Akers	S.F.	1	1	100.0	14	1	100.0	14	0	0.0	14.00	158.3
Banks	Wash.	1	1	100.0	49	1	100.0	49	0	0.0	49.00	158.3
Flynn	G.B.	49	33	67.3	518	6	12.2	80	2	4.1	10.57	124.8
Rice	Sea.	1	1	100.0	55	0	0.0	55	0	0.0	55.00	118.8
Naanee	Car.	1	1	100.0	27	0	0.0	27	0	0.0	27.00	118.8
Edwards	Car.	1	1	100.0	11	0	0.0	11	0	0.0	11.00	112.5
Sh. Hill	Det.	3	2	66.7	33	0	0.0	28	0	0.0	11.00	103.5
Daniel	N.O.	5	4	80.0	29	0	0.0	14	0	0.0	5.80	90.8
McGee	Dall.	38	24	63.2	182	1	2.6	19	0	0.0	4.79	83.4
McNabb	Minn.	156	94	60.3	1,026	4	2.6	60	2	1.3	6.58	82.9
Kitna	Dall.	10	6	60.0	87	1	10.0	33	2	20.0	8.70	82.1
Kaepernick	S.F.	5	3	60.0	35	0	0.0	19	0	0.0	7.00	81.3
Webb	Minn.	63	34	54.0	376	3	4.8	36	2	3.2	5.97	74.6
Clemens	St.L.	91	48	52.7	546	2	2.2	36	1	1.1	6.00	73.8
Beck	Wash.	132	80	60.6	858	2	1.5	32	4	3.0	6.50	72.1
Redman	Atl.	28	18	64.3	188	0	0.0	22	1	3.6	6.71	68.8
McCown	Chi.	55	35	63.6	414	2	3.6	49	4	7.3	7.53	68.3
Feeley	St.L.	97	53	54.6	548	1	1.0	34	2	2.1	5.65	66.0
Whitehurst	Sea.	56	27	48.2	298	1	1.8	38	1	1.8	5.32	62.9
Young	Phil.	114	66	57.9	866	4	3.5	58	9	7.9	7.60	60.8
J. Johnson	T.B.	36	19	52.8	246	1	2.8	42	2	5.6	6.83	60.6
Bartel	Ariz.	22	10	45.5	86	1	4.5	23	1	4.5	3.91	52.5
Kafka	Phil.	16	11	68.8	107	0	0.0	43	2	12.5	6.69	47.7
Hanie	Chi.	102	51	50.0	613	3	2.9	81	9	8.8	6.01	41.8
Brandstater	St.L.	2	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0.00	39.6
Lynch	Sea.	2	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0.00	39.6
Forté	Chi.	1	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0.00	39.6
Podlesh	Chi.	1	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0.00	39.6
Spurlough	T.B.	1	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0.00	39.6
Lloyd	St.L.	1	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0.00	39.6
Cobb	G.B.	1	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0.00	39.6
Henry	Phil.	1	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0.00	39.6
Norwood	St.L.	1	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	1	100.0	0.00	0.0

RUSHING

Turner	Atl.	301	1,340	4.5	81	11
McCoy	Phil.	273	1,309	4.8	60	17
Gore	S.F.	282	1,211	4.3	55	8
Lynch	Sea.	285	1,204	4.2	47	12
S. Jackson	St.L.	260	1,145	4.4	47	5
B. Wells	Ariz.	245	1,047	4.3	71	10
Forté	Chi.	203	997	4.9	46	3
Peterson	Minn.	208	970	4.7	54	12
Murray	Dall.	164	897	5.5	91	2
D. Williams	Car.	155	836	5.4	74	7
Blount	T.B.	184	781	4.2	54	5
Stewart	Car.	142	761	5.4	32	4
Newton	Car.	126	706	5.6	49	14
Bradshaw	N.Y.G.	171	659	3.9	37	9
Helu	Wash.	151	640	4.2	28	2
Sproles	N.O.	87	603	6.9	36	2
Vick	Phil.	76	589	7.8	53	1
Starks	G.B.	133	578	4.3	40	1
F. Jones	Dall.	127	575	4.5	40	1
Jacobs	N.Y.G.	152	571	3.8	28	7
P. Thomas	N.O.	110	562	5.1	33	5
Grant	G.B.	134	559	4.2	47	2
Gerhart	Minn.	109	531	4.9	67	1
Ingram	N.O.	122	474	3.9	35	5
Hunter	S.F.	112	473	4.2	44	2
Barber	Chi.	114	422	3.7	29	6
Best	Det.	84	390	4.6	88	2
Ivory	N.O.	79	374	4.7	35	1
C. Williams	St.L.	87	361	4.1	23	1
K. Smith	Det.	72	356	4.9	43	4
Harvin	Minn.	52	345	6.6	39	2
Bell	Chi.	79	337	4.3	26	0
Royster	Wash.	56	328	5.9	28	0
Hightower	Wash.	84	321	3.8	22	1
Morris	Det.	80	316	4.0	31	1
Rodgers	G.B.	60	257	4.3	25	3
L. Washington	Sea.	53	248	4.7	48	1
Freeman	T.B.	55	238	4.3	25	4
Ponder	Minn.	28	219	7.8	28	0
Graham	T.B.	37	206	5.6	34	0
Rodgers	Atl.	57	205	3.6	13	1
Torain	Wash.	59	200	3.4	39	1
K. Williams	Det.	58	195	3.4	18	2
Ale. Smith	S.F.	52	179	3.4	14	2
Stephens-Howling	Ariz.	43	167	3.9	39	0
Ware	N.Y.G.	46	163	3.5	17	0
Webb	Minn.	22	154	7.0	65	2
Snelling	Atl.	44	151	3.4	18	0
Forsett	Sea.	46	145	3.2	22	1
R. Brown	Phil.	42	136	3.2	15	1
Skelton	Ariz.	28	128	4.6	14	0
T. Jackson	Sea.	40	108	2.7	13	1
Lumpkin	T.B.	31	105	3.4	19	0
Smith	Ariz.	30	102	3.4	12	1
Lewis	Phil.	23	102	4.4	20	1

Excludes players with fewer than 10 yards and no touchdowns.

RECEIVING

Player	Team	No	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
White	Atl.	100	1,296	13.0	43	8
Graham	N.O.	99	1,310	13.2	59	11
C. Johnson	Det.	96	1,681	17.5	73	16
Harvin	Minn.	87	967	11.1	52	6
Sproles	N.O.	86	710	8.3	39	7
Pettigrew	Det.	83	777	9.4	27	5
Crux	N.Y.G.	82	1,536	18.7	99	9
Fitzgerald	Ariz.	80	1,411	17.6	73	8
Colston	N.O.	80	1,143	14.3	50	8
Gonzalez	Atl.	80	875	10.9	30	7
S. Smith	Car.	79	1,394	17.6	77	7
Witten	Dall.	79	942	11.9	64	5
Nicks	N.Y.G.	76	1,192	15.7	68	7
Winslow	T.B.	75	763	10.2	37	2
Burleson	Det.	73	757	10.4	47	3
Crabtree	S.F.	72	874	12.1	52	4
Lloyd	St.L.	70	966	13.8	44	5
Nelson	G.B.	68	1,263	18.6	93	15
Gaffney	Wash.	68	947	13.9	45	5
G. Jennings	G.B.	67	949	14.2	79	9
V. Davis	S.F.	67	792	11.8	44	6
M. Williams	T.B.	65	771	11.9	42	3
Bryant	Dall.	63	928	14.7	50	9
Maclin	Phil.	63	859	13.6	59	5
Celek	Phil.	62	811	13.1	73	5
F. Davis	Wash.	59	796	13.5	42	3
D. Jackson	Phil.	58	961	16.6	62	4
Finley	G.B.	55	767	13.9	41	8
Jones	Atl.	54	959	17.8	80	8
Robinson	Dall.	54	858	15.9	74	11
Doucet	Ariz.	54	689	12.8	70	5
Avant	Phil.	52	679	13.1	35	1
L. Moore	N.O.	52	627	12.1	47	8
Forté	Chi.	52	490	9.4	56	1
Baldwin	Sea.	51	788	15.5	55	4
Roberts	Ariz.	51	586	11.5	45	2
P. Thomas	N.O.	50	425	8.5	57	1
Helu	Wash.	49	379	7.7	47	1
T. Young	Det.	48	607	12.6	57	6
McCoy	Phil.	48	315	6.6	26	3
Stewart	Car.	47	413	8.8	26	1
Moss	Wash.	46	584	12.7	49	4
Olsen	Car.	45	540	12.0	44	5
Naanee	Car.	44	467	10.6	28	1
Austin	Dall.	43	579	13.5	53	7
S. Jackson	St.L.	42	333	7.9	50	1
Lumpkin	T.B.	41	291	7.1	16	0
Meachem	N.O.	40	620	15.5	67	6
Parker	T.B.	40	554	13.9	51	3
Manningham	N.Y.G.	39	523	13.4	47	4
Douglas	Atl.	39	498	12.8	49	1
J. Jones	G.B.	38	635	16.7	70	7
Ballard	N.Y.G.	38	604	15.9	41	4
Jenkins	Minn.	38	466	12.3	72	3
Knox	Chi.	37	727	19.6	81	2
R. Williams	Chi.	37	507	13.7	25	2
Shockey	Car.	37	455	12.3	29	4
Driver	G.B.	37	445	12.0	35	6
Obomanu	Sea.	37	436	11.8	55	2
LaFell	Car.	36	613	17.0	91	3
B. Gibson	St.L.	36	431	12.0	34	1
Shiancoe	Minn.	36	409	11.4	37	3
Briscoe	T.B.	35	387	11.1	46	6
Tate	Sea.	35	382	10.9	33	3
Bradshaw	N.Y.G.	34	267	7.9	26	2
F. Jones	Dall.	33	221	6.7	27	0
Henderson	N.O.	32	503	15.7	79	2
Rice	Sea.	32	484	15.1	52	2

Player	Team	No	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
Stallworth	Wash.	2	0/0	0/0	0	12
Stevens-Howling	Ariz.	2	0/0	0/0	0	12
Talib	T.B.	2	0/0	0/0	0	12
Tillman	Chi.	2	0/0	0/0	0	12
Urchler	Chi.	2	0/0	0/0	0	12
Webb	Minn.	2	0/0	0/0	0	12
K. Williams	Det.	2	0/0	0/0	0	12
R. Williams	Chi.	2	0/0	0/0	0	12
D. Anderson	Wash.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Aromashodu	Minn.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Avant	Phil.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Beckum	N.Y.G.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Bell	Chi.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Bennett	Chi.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Biermann	Atl.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Boley	N.Y.G.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Brees	N.O.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Brockel	Car.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
R. Brown	Phil.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Bryant	Sea.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
B. Carpenter	Det.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Clemens	St.L.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Cooper	Phil.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Crabtree	G.B.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Cutler	Chi.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Douglas	Atl.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Flynn	G.B.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Forset	Sea.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
B. Gibson	St.L.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Gilmore	N.O.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Grossman	Wash.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Hall	Phil.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Harbor	Phil.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Hawthorne	Sea.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Heap	Ariz.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Hixon	N.Y.G.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Idonije	Chi.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Ivory	N.O.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
T. Jackson	Sea.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Jenkins	N.O.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
F. Jones	Dall.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Kerrigan	Wash.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Lewis	Phil.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Lockette	Sea.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Lofton	Atl.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Mack	T.B.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Manning	N.Y.G.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Matthews	G.B.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
McNabb	Minn.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
N. Miller	St.L.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Miller	S.F.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
D.J. Moore	Chi.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Morgan	S.F.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Nanane	Car.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Newman	Dall.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Palmer	Atl.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Peprah	G.B.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Peters	Atl.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Philips	Dall.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Pilares	Car.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Raji	G.B.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Rogers	S.F.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Rolle	Phil.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Romo	Dall.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Samuel	Phil.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Smith	Phil.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
A. Smith	Det.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Smith	Ariz.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Snelling	Atl.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Starks	G.B.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Stewart	St.L.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Tanner	Dall.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Taylor	Ariz.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Taylor	G.B.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Torain	Wash.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Torrence	N.O.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Tulloch	Det.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Vick	Phil.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Vilma	N.O.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Walden	G.B.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
L. Washington	Sea.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Watson	T.B.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
T. Williams	G.B.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Edw. Williams	Chi.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
M. Williams	Sea.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
C. Williams	St.L.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Woodson	G.B.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Wright	Chi.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Young	Wash.	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Ware	N.Y.G.	0	0/0	0/0	0	2
J. Allen	Minn.	0	0/0	0/0	0	2
Barber	T.B.	0	0/0	0/0	0	2
Canty	N.Y.G.	0	0/0	0/0	0	2
J. Hall	St.L.	0	0/0	0/0	0	2
Hankerson	Wash.	0	0/0	0/0	0	2
Hardy	Car.	0	0/0	0/0	0	2
Hargrove	Sea.	0	0/0	0/0	0	2
Hunt	Phil.	0	0/0	0/0	0	2
McCown	Chi.	0	0/0	0/0	0	2
Paea	Chi.	0	0/0	0/0	0	2
Pierre-Paul	N.Y.G.	0	0/0	0/0	0	2
Ald. Smith	S.F.	0	0/0	0/0	0	2
Team	Det.	0	0/0	0/0	0	2
Team	St.L.	0	0/0	0/0	0	2

Player	Team	No	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
Cobb	G.B.	34	941	27.7	108	1
Ginn	S.F.	29	800	27.6	102	1
Sproles	N.O.	40	1,089	27.2	92	0
Stroughter	T.B.	20	540	27.0	78	0
Pilares	Car.	23	590	25.7	101	1
Norwood	St.L.	24	611	25.5	47	0
Logan	Det.	33	832	25.2	42	0
L. Washington	Sea.	43	1,084	25.2	54	0
D. Thomas	N.Y.G.	25	607	24.3	40	0

PUNTING												
Player	Team	No	Yds	Lg	Gross					Ret	Yds	Avg
					Avg	TB	20	Blk	Ret			
Lee	S.F.	78	3,970	68	50.9	9	28	1	39	315	44.0	
Morstead	N.O.	46	2,224	64	48.3	4	13	1	19	118	43.1	
Podlesh	Chi.	89	3,903	70	43.9	4	21	0	40	223	40.4	
Koenen	T.B.	67	3,023	65	45.1	3	24	0	36	266	40.3	
Ryan	Sea.	95	4,431	77	46.6	8	34	0	47	541	39.3	
Weatherford	N.Y.G.	82	3,745	62	45.7	6	25	0	41	407	39.2	
Rocca	Wash.	66	2,842	63	43.1	1	27	0	32	250	39.0	
Bosher	Atl.	70	2,990	59	42.7	4	27	1	31	150	38.9	
Masthay	G.B.	55	2,506	71	45.6	4	23	0	24	305	38.6	
Kluwe	Minn.	77	3,517	60	45.7	3	22	0	43	532	38.0	
Zastudil	Ariz.	87	3,929	66	45.2	5	24	0	48	563	37.5	
D. Jones	St.L.	105	4,652	65	44.3	9	29	1	45	552	37.0	
Henry	Phil.	66	2,830	60	42.9	9	19	1	31	176	36.9	
Donahue	Det.	49	2,093	60	42.7	4	13	0	22	270	35.6	
McBriar	Dall.	59	2,542	68	43.1	7	21	1	24	268	35.6	
Baker	Car.	66	2,819	56	42.7	5	19	0	35	469	34.1	
NON-QUALIFIER												
C. Jones	Dall.	10	426	54	42.6	1	4	0	3	1	40.5	
Graham	Det.	33	1,447	58	43.8	3	12	0	13	137	37.9	
Bailey	Dall.	2	79	41	39.5	0	0	0	3	9	35.0	
Malone	Det.	5	245	62	49.0	0	0	0	3	122	24.6	

FIELD-GOAL ACCURACY												
Player	Team	1-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50 or Longer	Total	Avg			Lg	
								Yds	Att	Yds		Yds
Bryant	Atl.	2-2	9-9	9-9	5-7	2-2	27-29	33.3	32.5	43.5	51	
Barth	T.B.	0-0	5-5	6-6	13-14	2-3	26-28	39.9	39.1	50.5	55	
Henery	Phil.	0-0	10-10	9-11	4-4	1-2	24-27	33.4	32.0	45.0	51	
Gould	Chi.	0-0	10-10	6-6	6-10	6-6	28-32	37.3	36.5	43.5	57	
Bailey	Dall.	1-1	8-9	11-11	10-12	2-4	32-37	36.4	35.2	44.4	51	
Crosby	G.B.	1-1	4-5	14-14	3-5	2-3	24-28	36.6	35.5	43.3	58	
Akers	S.F.	2-2	16-16	13-14	6-11	7-9	44-52	36.7	35.1	45.5	55	
Hauschka	Sea.	2-2	5-6	9-10	7-8	2-4	25-30	36.7	35.4	43.0	52	
Hanson	Det.	0-0	9-9	8-9	2-4	5-7	24-29	36.9	34.8	47.0	51	
Kasay	N.O.	0-0	11-11	10-10	5-8	2-5	28-34	36.6	34.3	47.3	53	
Feely	Ariz.	0-0	9-9	4-6	5-7	1-2	19-24	35.8	34.0	42.8	51	
Tynes	N.Y.G.	0-0	12-12	3-4	3-5	1-3	19-24	33.9	30.6	46.6	50	
Longwell	Minn.	0-0	7-7	7-8	6-10	2-3	22-28	38.1	36.0	45.8	53	
Mare	Car.	1-1	7-7	6-9	8-9	0-2	22-28	35.0	33.2	41.3	45	
Gano	Wash.	0-0	14-15	5-9	8-11	4-6	31-41	36.8	35.4	41.3	59	
Jo. Brown	St.L.	0-0	7-7	6-7	8-12	0-2	21-28	38.6	36.4	45.1	49	
Crabtree	G.B.	1	11	11.0	11	0						
Byrd	Wash.	1	10	10.0	10	0						
Sims	St.L.	1	10	10.0	10	0						
Woodson	G.B.	1	9	9.0	9	0						
Bennett	Chi.	1	9	9.0	9	0						
Clutts	Chi.	1	9	9.0	9	0						
Ware	N.Y.G.	2	17	8.5	17	0						
Spaeth	Chi.	2	14	7.0	7	0						

Player	Team	No	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
Stephens-Howling	Ariz.	36	857	23.8	37	0
Weems	Atl.	24	563	23.5	37	0
Banks	Wash.	51	1,174	23.0	47	0
Porter	St.L.	25	554	22.2	32	0
Parker	T.B.	20	439	22.0	45	0
Hester	Chi.	33	723	21.9	98	1
Lewis	Phil.	31	669	21.6	33	0

NON-QUALIFIERS						
Player	Team	No	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
Lissemore	Dall.	1	38	38.0	38	0
Baldwin	Sea.	1	37	37.0	37	0
Harvin	Minn.	16	520	32.5	104	1
Harris	Dall.	8	231	28.9	51	0
Armstrong	Wash.	1	28	28.0	28	0
Sherels	Minn.	16	445	27.8	78	0
F. Jones	Dall.	7	186	26.6	69	0
Knox	Chi.	15	397	26.5	56	0
Hunter	S.F.	6	156	26.0	43	0
K. Williams	S.F.	4	104	26.0	33	0
Rodgers-Cromartie	Phil.	2	52	26.0	29	0
Pugh	Car.	2	51	25.5	28	0
Jefferson	Ariz.	14	356	25.4	51	0
Scott	N.Y.G.	14	341	24.4	38	0
Hurd	Chi.	1	24	24.0	24	0
L. Booker	Minn.	19	450	23.7	68	0
Jernigan	N.Y.G.	8				

NFL TEAM STATISTICS 2011 FINAL

BAL	BUF	CIN	CLE	DEN	HOU	IND	JAX	KC	MIA	NE	NYJ	OAK	PIT	SD	TEN	OFFENSE	AZ	ATL	CAR	CHI	DAL	DET	GB	MIN	NO	NYG	PHI	SF	SEA	STL	TB	WAS	NFL AVG	
12-4-0	6-10-0	9-7-0	4-12-0	8-8-0	10-6-0	2-14-0	5-11-0	7-9-0	6-10-0	13-3-0	8-8-0	8-8-0	12-4-0	8-8-0	9-7-0	GAMES (W-L-T)	8-8-0	10-6-0	6-10-0	8-8-0	8-8-0	10-6-0	15-1-0	3-13-0	13-3-0	9-7-0	8-8-0	13-3-0	7-9-0	2-14-0	4-12-0	5-11-0		
312	313	285	278	286	321	258	251	277	287	399	301	328	341	359	281	FIRST DOWNS	286	349	345	271	327	349	353	297	416	331	356	282	265	267	276	312	311.2	
98	100	93	77	129	131	69	103	89	89	107	92	110	96	97	71	Rushing	83	100	139	97	91	71	89	118	116	84	134	101	89	79	74	79	96.7	
181	180	160	173	130	176	170	122	163	166	262	173	186	221	234	185	Passing	175	215	175	153	219	244	230	159	280	216	197	150	153	159	180	204	187.2	
33	33	32	28	27	14	19	26	25	32	30	36	32	24	28	25	Penalty	28	34	31	21	17	34	34	20	20	31	25	31	23	29	22	29	27.3	
5419	5624	5118	4621	5066	5954	4589	4149	4973	5078	6848	4989	6070	5957	6290	5361	TOTAL YARDS GAINED	5192	6026	6237	5026	6008	6337	6482	5275	7474	6161	6386	4974	4861	4537	5110	5387	5549.3	
338.7	351.5	319.9	288.8	316.6	372.1	286.8	259.3	310.8	317.4	428.0	311.8	379.4	372.3	393.1	335.1	Average Per Game	324.5	376.6	389.8	314.1	375.5	396.1	405.1	329.7	467.1	385.1	399.1	310.9	303.8	283.6	319.4	336.7	346.8	
1996	1921	1778	1531	2632	2448	1594	1970	1893	1987	1764	1692	2110	1903	1864	1438	RUSHING (NET)	1625	1834	2408	2015	1807	1523	1558	2318	2127	1427	2276	2044	1756	1667	1458	1614	1874.3	
124.8	120.1	111.1	95.7	164.5	153.0	99.6	123.1	118.3	124.2	110.3	105.8	131.9	118.9	116.5	89.9	Average Per Game	101.6	114.6	150.5	125.9	112.9	95.2	97.4	144.9	132.9	89.2	142.3	1278	109.8	104.2	91.1	100.9	117.1	
3423	3703	3340	3090	2434	3506	2995	2179	3080	3091	5084	3297	3960	4054	4426	3923	PASSING (NET)	3567	4192	3829	3011	4201	4814	4924	2957	5347	4734	4110	2936	3105	2870	3652	3773	3675.2	
213.9	231.4	208.8	193.1	152.1	219.1	187.2	136.2	192.5	193.2	317.8	206.1	247.5	253.4	276.6	245.2	Average Per Game	222.9	262.0	239.3	188.2	262.6	300.9	307.8	184.8	334.2	295.9	256.9	183.5	194.1	179.4	228.3	235.8	229.7	
460	391	455	415	546	546	382	489	487	468	438	443	466	434	436	378	RUSHES	389	453	445	456	408	356	395	448	431	411	450	498	444	409	346	401	436.6	
4.3	4.9	3.9	3.7	4.8	4.5	4.2	4.0	3.9	4.2	4.0	3.8	4.5	4.4	4.3	3.6	Average Yards	4.2	4.0	5.4	4.4	4.4	4.3	3.9	5.2	4.9	3.5	5.1	4.1	4.0	4.1	4.2	4.0	4.3	
544	578	535	570	429	467	534	469	500	469	612	547	524	539	582	584	PASSES ATTEMPTED	550	594	519	473	570	666	552	510	662	589	554	451	509	549	588	591	544.1	
314	356	308	320	217	288	302	240	300	280	402	310	315	341	366	353	Completed	307	365	312	268	376	423	376	286	472	359	330	277	299	292	365	346	327.0	
57.7	61.6	57.6	56.1	50.6	61.7	56.6	51.2	60.0	59.7	60.1	63.3	62.9	60.4	60.1	63.3	Percent Completed	55.8	61.4	60.1	56.7	66.0	63.5	68.1	56.1	71.3	61.0	59.6	61.4	58.7	53.2	62.1	58.5	60.1	
33	23	25	39	42	33	35	44	34	52	32	40	25	42	30	24	Sacked	54	26	35	49	39	36	41	49	24	28	32	44	50	55	32	40	37.1	
206	154	167	210	274	190	228	331	208	334	173	245	157	279	198	190	Yards Lost	387	173	260	335	252	257	237	298	158	199	166	263	339	388	188	285	241.5	
12	25	14	13	13	9	14	15	18	13	12	18	23	15	20	14	Had Intercepted	23	13	17	20	12	16	8	17	14	16	25	5	14	10	24	24	15.8	
159	327	159	241	276	132	119	177	247	224	186	382	234	201	522	167	Yards Opp. Ret.	267	178	229	380	158	140	63	213	162	291	368	51	187	40	265	353	221.8	
1	3	1	1	3	0	1	0	1	1	3	3	3	0	4	3	Opp. TDs On Int.	1	2	1	3	2	3	0	2	1	3	2	0	1	0	2	0	1.5	
73	72	91	89	101	74	88	99	89	78	57	92	78	60	47	86	PUNTS	92	70	66	89	71	82	55	77	46	82	66	78	95	106	67	66	77.6	
46.5	48.2	44.2	40.1	47.4	44.0	46.6	41.9	45.9	48.8	46.5	42.7	50.8	44.7	47.5	43.6	Gross Average	45.0	42.7	42.7	43.9	42.9	43.6	45.6	45.7	48.3	45.7	42.9	50.9	46.6	43.9	45.1	43.1	45.1	
9	10	9	2	7	8	3	10	5	7	3	6	9	6	2	7	Touchbacks	5	4	5	4	8	7	4	3	4	6	9	9	8	9	3	1	6.0	
38.6	38.6	39.2	36.3	40.2	37.7	39.6	36.5	40.1	41.1	41.5	38.8	40.9	38.6	39.7	39.4	Net Average	37.3	39.4	34.1	40.4	36.7	36.0	38.6	38.0	44.0	39.2	37.5	44.6	39.3	37.0	40.3	39.0	38.9	
0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	Blocked	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0.3	
36	26	53	38	47	51	32	34	40	46	38	44	32	33	31	47	PUNT RETURNS	46	33	32	30	41	38	27	33	29	28	30	44	42	27	29	37	36.7	
9.6	12.7	11.5	11.1	12.7	10.4	3.4	4.4	11.9	11.4	10.3	9.7	8.3	10.5	8.5	10.4	Average Return	15.1	9.5	5.5	15.7	7.1	7.9	10.9	8.4	10.1	6.1	7.1	12.4	11.0	11.0	8.0	8.9	9.9	
1	1	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	Return For TD	4	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0.6
42	37	45	48	39	29	31	47	46	39	46	62	43	35	43	32	KICKOFF RETURNS	52	24	39	57	33	37	41	53	42	52	39	39	46	55	46	56	43.2	
24.9	23.1	22.8	23.6	23.9	25.2	18.6	22.4	21.3	24.2	21.4	26.3	23.5	25.1	25.6	26.0	Average Return	24.0	23.5	23.7	21.7	23.3	24.0	24.5	26.9	26.5	23.3	20.9	27.2	24.8	23.3	22.3	22.1	23.7	
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	Returns For TD	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.3	
92	86	99	95	101	99	76	77	110	85	87	102	163	101	91	104	PENALTIES	106	93	113	104	114	128	76	109	99	94	107	113	138	112	123	90	102.7	
742	743	874	847	842	852	549	680	916	779	815	849	1358	854	753	960	Yards	1004	769	1013	800	816	1075	589	908	851	795	853	1014	1047	899	1007	892	867.0	
24	16	17	22	30	20	24	27	17	28	13	25	16	16	20	17	FUMBLES	24	12	13	26	24	20	15	20	6	18	23	14	22	27	30	25	20.3	
12	5	8	6	17	11	15	8	10	12	5	16	7	13	8	8	Fumbles Lost	9	8	6	9	9	7	6	9	5	8	13	5	9	13	16	11	9.5	
27	21	26	20	19	18	15	21	18	17	21	25	13	13	11	20	Opponent Fumbles	15	19	20	23	20	25	19	26	20	21	18	31	18	24	21	26	20.3	
11	11	12	11	9	10	9	11	6	3	11	12	8	4	4	12	Opponent Fumbles Rec.	9	10	10	11	10	13	7	15	7	11	9	15	9	6	10	8	9.5	
229	191	219	238	214	224	214	241	225	207	194	213	199	196	211	218	3RD-DOWN ATTEMPTS	205	224	185	202	198	212	189	216	208	206	204	221	228	228	206	218	212.0	
1/1	1/2	0/1	0/1	3/6	0/1	0/1	0/1	0/0	0/1	2/2	0/1	0/2	0/0	1/1	0/0	Conv. to 1st Down	66	99	75	66	78	76	91	83	118	77	85	65	77	64	76	81	80.4	
42.4	32.5	36.5	38.7	30.8	41.5	34.6	33.6	36.0	33.3	45.9	34.7	35.7	45.9	48.8	33.9	3rd Down Efficiency	32.2	44.2	40.5	32.7	39.4	35.8	48.1	38.4	56.7	37.4	41.7	29.4	33.8	28.1	36.9	37.2	37.9	
7	22	10	18	13	11	12	17	17	16	11	11	13	8	11	14	4TH-DOWN ATTEMPTS	15	13	10	8	10	14	8	18	10	13	15	14	15	23	21	13	13.5	
4	9	4	10	3	3	4	6	7	6	7	4	7	3	4	10	Conv. to 1st Down	9	4	6	2	5	8	4	7	3	4	7	9	7	8	8	4	5.8	
57.1	40.9	40.0	55.6	23.1	27.3	33.3	35.3	41.2	37.5	63.6	36.4	53.8	37.5	36.4	71.4	4th-Down Efficiency	60.0	30.8	60.0	25.0	50.0	57.1												

NFL TEAM RANKINGS 2011 FINAL

AFC

AFC																OFFENSE																
BAL	BUF	CIN	CLE	DEN	HOU	IND	JAX	KC	MIA	NE	NYJ	OAK	PIT	SD	TEN	AZ	ATL	CAR	CHI	DAL	DET	GB	MIN	NO	NYG	PHI	SF	SEA	STL	TB	WAS	
15	14	20	29	23	13	30	32	27	22	2	25	9	12	6	17	Total Yards/Game	19	10	7	24	11	5	3	18	1	8	4	26	28	31	21	16
10	13	19	28	1	2	26	12	15	11	20	22	7	14	16	31	Rushing Yards/Game	24	17	3	9	18	29	27	4	6	32	5	8	21	23	30	25
12	5	27	31	6	8	18	22	28	15	23	30	7	11	14	29	Avg. Gain/Rush	17	21	1	10	9	13	26	2	4	32	3	19	25	20	16	24
19	15	20	24	31	18	27	32	25	23	2	21	11	10	6	12	Passing Yards/Game	17	8	13	26	7	4	3	28	1	5	9	29	22	30	16	14
19	15	17	30	29	8	28	32	24	18	2	25	6	9	5	14	Avg. Gain/Pass Play	21	13	10	23	11	12	1	27	3	4	7	20	26	31	22	16
9	30	13	10	19	4	14	20	25	17	5	22	31	18	24	11	Pct. Had Intercepted	28	8	21	29	6	12	2	23	7	15	32	1	16	3	27	26
13	2	5	18t	27	20	14	24	17	32	9	21	7	23	8	3	Pct. QB Sacks Allowed	28	4	15	31	18t	10	22	25	1	6	12	26	29	30	11	16
15t	14	22	25	20t	13	31	32	26	19	2	17	11	9	3	24	First Downs/Game	20t	6t	8	28	12	6t	5	18	1	10	4	23	30	29	27	15t
19	13	23	30	25	12	29	32	26	22	3	28	9	11	6	15	Avg. Gain/Off. Play	18	14	4	21	10	8	2	17	1	7	5	24	27	31	16	20
7	28	17	12	30	9	22	25	18	26	5	21	20	4	2	23	3rd Down Efficiency	29	6	10	27	11	19	3	13	1	14	8	31	24	32	16	15
6t	15	16	8	32	30	25	23	14	19t	3	21t	9	19t	21t	1	4th Down Efficiency	4t	26t	4t	31	10t	6t	10t	17	29	26t	12t	2	12t	24	18	26t
19	4	7	9	3	15	32	31	6	8	16	18	24	13	22	14	Punt Return Avg.	2	20	30	1	27	26	12	23	17	29	28	5	10	11	25	21
9	23	24	17	11	7	32	25	30	13	29	4	18	8	6	5	Kickoff Return Avg.	15	19	16	28	20t	14	12	2	3	22	31	1	10	20t	26	27
10	5	19	32	7	20	9	31	12	3	11	30	2	18	6	24	Gross Punting Avg.	17	28	29	22	26	23	15	13	4	14	27	1	8	21	16	25
19	21	14	29	8	24	15	28	9	4	3	18	5	22	10	11	Net Punting Avg.	25	17	32	6	30	31	20	23	2	13	26	1	12	27	7	16
12	14	18	30	25	10	28t	28t	31	20	3	13	16	21t	5t	21t	Points/Game	24	7	5t	17	15	4	1	19	2	9	8	11	23	32	27	26
2t	2t	28t	2t	2t	26	2t	2t	2t	30	2t	2t	2t	1	24t	2t	Extra Point Pct.	28t	2t	24t	2t	2t	2t	23	27	2t	2t	2t	2t	2t	32	2t	31
27	31	12	18t	28	16	10t	3	20t	14t	13	24t	7	32	20t	4	Field Goal Pct.	22t	2	24t	8	9	18t	10t	24t	5	22t	6	14t	17	30	1	29

NFC

AFC																DEFENSE																
BAL	BUF	CIN	CLE	DEN	HOU	IND	JAX	KC	MIA	NE	NYJ	OAK	PIT	SD	TEN	AZ	ATL	CAR	CHI	DAL	DET	GB	MIN	NO	NYG	PHI	SF	SEA	STL	TB	WAS	
3	26	7	10	20	2	25	6	11	15	31	5	29	1	16	18t	Opp. Yards/Game	18t	12	28	17	14	23	32	21	24	27	8	4	9	22	30	13
2	28	10	30	22	4	29	9	26	3	17	13	27	8	20	24	Opp. Rush Yds./Game	21	6	25	5	7	23	14	11	12	19	16	1	15	31	32	18
2	28	8	21	13	11	17	5	14	3	24	7	32	9	20	22	Avg. Gain/Rush	16	15	25	10	12	30	26	6	29	23	19	1	4	27	31	18
4	19	9	2	18	3	15	8	6	25	31	5	27	1	13	14	Opp. Pass Yds./Game	17	20	24	28	23	22	32	26	30	29	10	16	11	7	21	12
3	26	4	6	21	2	27	14	24	18	29	7	15	1	28	5	Avg. Gain/Pass Play	10	19	32	13	23	8	30	25	16	20	11	9	12	17	31	22
19	5	27	25	29	14	30	12	2	21	7	6	15	24	8	26	Pct. Intercepted By	28	11	18	13	20	9	1	31	32	10	17	4	3	23	16	22
3	27	4	15	10	5	26	24	21	13	20	14	19	18	17	31	QB Sack Pct.	11	25	22	29	9	16	32	2	28	6	1	12	23	7	30	8
4	27	7	13	19	5	28	3	9t	15t	32	6	31	1	17	20	Opp. 1st Downs/Game	25	11	23	9t	14	21	30	24	22	26	8	2	15t	18	29	12
2	28	4	9	16	3	22	8	15	13	29	5	26	1	25	11	Avg. Gain/Def. Play	10	18	30	14	24	20	31	21	27	23	12	6	7	19	32	17
2	21	12	24	6	14	27	15	8	7	29	3	25	19	32	23	3rd Down Efficiency	1	30	28	10	22	4	26	31	5	17	13	11	9	18	20	16
21	31t	8t	17	6t	20	22t	19	18	22t	15t	1	5	28	2	10	4th Down Efficiency	22t	25	6t	12t	8t	15t	3	26t	4	26t	12t	12t	30	29	31t	11
24	20	7	23	19	15	22	6	18	16	13	9	32	12	29	4	Opp. Punt Return Avg.	25	1	30	2	14	31	28	27	5	17	3	11	21	26	8	10
31	1	3	12	20	7	32	18	17	10	6	4	27	16	25	8	Opp. Kickoff Ret. Avg.	23	22	30	19	5	26	15	21	28	11	14	13	29	24	9	2
7	14	26	22	30	27	8	9	32	24	21	16	25	6	28	10	Opp. Gross Punt Avg.	13	23	4	1	31	18	2	29	12	11	3	15	17	20	5	19
13	16	18	10	12	23	26	22	24	15	19	9	29	17	30	1	Opp. Net Punt Avg.	2	27	11	3	32	25	5	31	14	28	21	4	6	20	7	8
3	30	9	5	24	4	28	11	12	6	15	20	29	1	22	8	Opp. Points/Game	17	18	27	14	16	23	19	31	13	25	10	2	7	26	32	21
29	21	9t	25t	14	18t	23	5	15t	6t	27	31	2	11t	28	32	Opp. Field Goal Pct.	3	15t	24	18t	6t	25t	11t	30	22	9t	1	11t	4	20	8	17

AFC																MISCELLANEOUS																
BAL	BUF	CIN	CLE	DEN	HOU	IND	JAX	KC	MIA	NE	NYJ	OAK	PIT	SD	TEN	AZ	ATL	CAR	CHI	DAL	DET	GB	MIN	NO	NYG	PHI	SF	SEA	STL	TB	WAS	
5	22	13	27	25	6	30	26	29	14	3	15	23	7	11	17	Point Differential	21	10	20	16	12	8	2	28	1	19	9	4	18	32	31	24
11t	13t	17	13t	26t	7t	26t	9	18	24	3	19t	22	28t	25	13t	Turnover Edge	28t	5t	13t	11t	10	4	2	19t	19t	7t	30t	1	5t	23	32	30t
2	7	15	25	16	29t	3	4	22	5	10	8	32	20	14	28	Penalty Yards Edge	18	11	24	21	29t	23	1	19	12	6	17	27	26	13	31	9
24	14	3	20	13	16	32	25	18	11	10	8	29	9	28	5	Punt Ret. Differential	7	2	31	1	23	30	22	27	6	26	12	4	19	21	17	15
31	4	6	10	19	7	32	26	27	9	18	1	28	15	16	3	KO Return Differential	20	22	29	30	8	23	11	5	14	13	24	2	21	25	17	12
10	16	13	23	25	1	32	19	22	12	26	9	20	2	6	31	Time of Possession	28	3	14	15	8	18	11	27	5	21	7	4	29t	29t	24	17

TURNOVERS

TEAM	GAME			SEASON			DIF
	Fum	Int	Tot	Fum	Int	Tot	
S.F.	0	0	0	5	5	10	+28
G.B.	1	1	2	6	8	14	+24
N.E.	0	1	1	5	12	17	+17
Det.	2	2	4	7	16	23	+11
Atl.	1	1	2	8	13	21	+8
Sea.	0	1	1	9	14	23	+8
Hou.	1	0	1	11	9	20	+7
N.Y.G.	0	0	0	8	16	24	+7
Jax.	1	0	1	8	15	23	+5
Dall.	1	1	2	9	12	21	+4
Balt.	0	0	0	12	12	24	+2
Chi.	2	1	3	9	20	29	+2
Buff.	0	4	4	5	25	30	+1
Car.	1	1	2	6	17	23	+1
Clev.	0	1	1	6	13	19	+1
Ten.	1	0	1	8	14	22	+1
Cin.	1	0	1	8	14	22	+0
K.C.	1	0	1	10	18	28	-2
Minn.	0	3	3	9	17	26	-3
N.O.	0	1	1	5	14	19	-3
N.Y.J.	0	3	3	16	18	34	-3
Oak.	0	1	1	7	23	30	-4
St.L.	0	2	2	13	10	23	-5
Mia.	0	2	2	12	13	25	-6
S.D.	0	1	1	8	20	28	-7
Den.							

OPINION

WHAT YOU THINK

Questioning praise for Sparano as O-line coach

I wish the scouts, coaches and front-office personnel in the "Audibles" column would put their names or organizations to their comments.

The Jets "made a great hire and Bill Callahan doesn't know personnel" according to an unnamed person. Furthermore, (Tony) Sparano, in his estimation, "is one of the best offensive line coaches in football."

Did this person bother to watch the AFC East the last few years?

Sparano had multiple high draft picks and free agents to craft a good offensive line in Miami. He wasn't able to field a consistently good line with the Dolphins despite having three first-round picks and some high-priced free agents. Whose fault was that?

Two years ago in the draft, Miami passed on Jimmy Graham for a right guard who has made only 13 starts — three in 2011 — in two seasons. The guard was a player that Sparano coached in the Senior Bowl who he had to have.

Sparano did his best in Miami, but to call him one of the best O-line coaches in the NFL doesn't hold up as anything close to objective or truthful.

— A.J. Murphy, Mendham, N.J.

'Defenseless' player rules need to be revised

Sure hope the NFL Competition Committee revisits the safety rules in the offseason.

I think they're overreacting to every possible hit to a "defenseless" offensive player. I'd be the first to agree that something needed to be done in recent years with the purposeful hits to the head, but they've taken it too far in protecting the offensive players.

There are just too many times where a defensive player cannot control the outcome of his hit due to the speed of the game and the moves/actions of the offensive player.

They should let the players play the game. It is a violent game and I doubt anyone disagrees with that.

However, there are a lot of hard but unintentional hits that take place that just happen. Penalize the offending team for unsportsmanlike conduct, fine the responsible (irresponsible?) defensive player who purposefully leads with his head, aiming at the offensive player's head.

But they still need to let the players play the game.

— Gordon Craig, Crown Point, Ind.

LETTERS POLICY

Send letters to letters@pfwmedia.com, by fax to (847) 940-1108 or by U.S. mail to Letters to the Editor, Pro Football Weekly, 302 Saunders Road, Suite 100, Riverwoods, IL 60015. Limit of 250 words. Include name, hometown and daytime phone number (phone for verification purposes only). We reserve the right to edit letters for content and brevity.

WHAT WE THINK

Time has come to spike Pro Bowl

The NFL is finally admitting what its fans have known for years: The Pro Bowl is a joke.

In a radio interview on Super Bowl Sunday, commissioner Roger Goodell conceded that the previous week's Pro Bowl was a farce and that something had to change.

"I really didn't think that was the kind of football that we want to be demonstrating for our fans," Goodell said. "And you heard it from the fans. The fans were actively booing in the stands. They didn't like what they were seeing."

It was so bad that Packers QB Aaron Rodgers called out his NFC teammates, saying some of them "embarrassed themselves."

"I was just surprised that some of the guys either didn't want to play or, when they were in there, didn't put any effort into it," Rodgers said.

With even its well-respected MVP dismissing the game, the league can no longer deny the obvious.

"We're either going to have to improve the quality of what we're doing in the Pro Bowl or consider other changes or even (consider) eliminating the game," Goodell said.

NFL Players Association spokesman George Atallah said players want to keep the Pro Bowl, which he called "an important tradition." Fortunately he tweeted that comment, so he didn't have to worry about suppressing a smirk. Of course, players want to keep the game: Who wouldn't want a free trip to Hawaii to play some flag football?

The fact of the matter is that there's nothing the NFL can do to make players take the game more seriously. Football is a violent sport, with its players at risk of a career-threatening injury every time they step on the field. Throw in the fact that NFL players generally don't have the kinds of contract guarantees seen in other sports, and there is no way a player is going to risk his livelihood for an exhibition game.

Eliminating the game is the only option. The question: What does the NFL do to fill the programming void in the off week before the Super Bowl and to continue to support its fans and the economy in Hawaii?

We still like the idea put forward by PFW publisher/editor Hub Arkush to have the losers of the two conference championship games play a consolation game that week. Real teams, real football. Granted, motivation could be a problem for teams that just got knocked out of the playoffs. But the league could find a way to provide incentive — maybe extra draft picks for the winner, or financial rewards for the winner.

If that idea doesn't fly, then maybe a made-for-TV skills competition featuring NFL stars. That would be an exhibition, too, but at least nobody would be trying to pass it off as real football.

Either way, it's time for the NFL to pull the plug on the Pro Bowl.



PUBLISHER'S PEN Hub Arkush, publisher/editor

Indy impressive as Super Bowl host

In the weeks and months leading up to this moment as I contemplated how I might end up feeling about, and how I would review, the NFL's 46th world championship game between the AFC and NFC in Indianapolis, one word I really never envisioned myself using was "super." But "super," in fact, is the best way to describe Indianapolis' effort in putting on its first Super Bowl. If you'd like a grade, let's give it an A-minus. There is very little I can imagine that could have been done better.

As bad as Dallas was last year, and it was awful, that's how good Indianapolis was this year, and I'm not accounting for weather in either of those reviews. But how ironic is it that we arrived in Indianapolis the Monday before the game to discover the temperature was about 35 degrees warmer than it had been in Dallas a year earlier? And for the most part, it stayed that way all week long. That was the only great thing about Indy that appeared to have anything to do with luck.

The facilities in Indianapolis are tailor-made for Super Bowl week. Normally a great deal of Super Bowl week is spent listening to a majority of the media bitching about one thing or another, but this year I didn't hear a single complaint. The four hotels that housed the media were all relatively new, right next to each other, and connected to each other and the media center, so you never had to go outside

unless you wanted to. Of course, thanks to the weather surprise, I, for one, chose to go outside whenever possible. Yet, it was exceptionally convenient, and that was just the beginning.

The media complex was a five-minute walk from the Giants' hotel, 15-20 minutes from the Pats' and no more than a 10-minute hike to Lucas Oil Stadium. It was also a five-minute walk to the heart of downtown Indianapolis, which the city transformed for the week into a Super Bowl Village patterned after a typical Olympic Village. There was music, food, shopping, activities and events all week long right outside our doors, but far enough away so that sleep and rest were achievable when desired.

OK, I know most of you are saying, "Who cares about the media?" I get it, I even agree. But for the uninitiated, as the fans roll into town during Super Bowl week, everybody gravitates toward and tends to gather around the media center or complex, on the assumption that's where the action is, which usually isn't true. But in Indianapolis it was, and all that worked for the media was equally convenient and entertaining for the fans, and that is what really matters.

Lucas Oil Stadium is fine, nothing special, but more than comfortable. The amenities include everything you need, and the access was 1,000 percent better than

the fiasco in Texas a year ago.

I'm sure the NFL is less than thrilled it had 30,000-or-so fewer seats than it had in Dallas to sell at an average of about \$900 a pop, leaving \$27 million on the table. But there was an intimacy that is sometimes missing from the Super Bowl, which made this game much more exciting than last year's.

Most importantly, the people of Indianapolis were spectacular. This was the 33rd consecutive Super Bowl I've covered, and never have I felt more welcomed or met more pleasant folks, including just about every person I came across, both the volunteers and the natives on the streets and in the shops.

So, why is there a minus behind the "A" grade? The one negative all week was reports of serious price gouging on hotel rooms, with any rooms that weren't blocked by the NFL being sold at 10-20 times their normal rates and more. It did leave a very bad taste for folks who struggled to find rooms at all and then finally came across rooms normally sold at \$50-\$80 a night that were going for \$1,000 a night and more.

We should all hope that one serious bit of greed and breach of trust doesn't cause the league to balk at coming back to Indianapolis for the big game again, because it was a Super week, and Indianapolis really did put on a great Super Bowl.

OPINION



PLENTY TO PROVE Arthur Arkush

Can Schaub be super for Texans?

Within hours of the Giants being crowned Super Bowl champions, the wheels of 31 NFL teams began turning. The Giants became the measuring stick with which every other team will now compare itself and strive to replicate.

One team that stacks up well against the Giants is the Texans, whose 12-1 Super Bowl odds for 2012 are bested by only three teams: Green Bay (6-1), New England (7-1) and New Orleans (17-2). There is no question that the arrow is pointing up for Houston.

GM Rick Smith and head coach Gary Kubiak find themselves in an enviable position: Their team should be back in the thick of the Super Bowl hunt without making any major changes. Of course, with the benefit of the draft and free agency, the Texans will try to bolster the club, namely at wide receiver, where a better complement to Andre Johnson could put the Texans in the driver's seat in the AFC.

But what about the driver?

Although the Texans compare favorably to the Giants in a lot of areas, there is a considerable gap at the most important position on the field. Is Matt Schaub ready

to make an Eli-sized leap?

Schaub is in unfamiliar territory this offseason. He is trying to come back from a serious season-ending Lisfranc injury. For the first time during his five years in Houston, he has a team that is built to win now on both sides of the ball. Also for the first time as a member of the Texans, Schaub will be entering a contract year. The Texans don't yet know what they will do at QB beyond this season. It is up to Schaub to make his case, and it is pretty obvious what the ultimate selling point would be.

Unlike Eli Manning and his Giants, Schaub won't be asked to consistently put his team on his back. Houston has one of the better offensive lines in football, creating cutback lanes for two supremely talented backs, Arian Foster and Ben Tate. The running game is undoubtedly the lifeline of the Texans. Still, there will be times when Schaub will be counted on to win games for his team in the fourth quarter. Manning went from upper echelon to elite this season, in large part because of his fourth-quarter heroics. In Schaub's case, his inability to win games

in crunch time is arguably the greatest knock against him. In close games (within seven points) in the fourth quarter, Schaub's completion percentage with the Texans is 63.4, and his TD-interception ratio is 12-12.

Thus, I expect the Texans to at least kick the tires on Peyton Manning once he becomes a free agent. He is a once-in-a-generation talent who, if healthy, is light-years ahead of Schaub. But I suspect that teams like the Dolphins and Redskins have more to offer financially, and thus it will be Schaub's team next season.

Schaub could be on a short leash, though; the Texans were able to win a playoff game with T.J. Yates, a third-stringer drafted in the fifth round. It is widely believed that if Schaub, not Yates, had been on the field in Baltimore, the Texans would have been one game away from reaching the Super Bowl.

Needless to say, expectations will be higher in 2012. How Schaub handles the pressure will go a long way toward determining the Texans' chances of contending for a Super Bowl and Schaub's long-term outlook in Houston.



SUPER COVERAGE Barry Jackson

Praise abounds for NBC's broadcast

This, quite simply, was a blueprint for how a Super Bowl broadcast should be done. With exceptional announcing, timely but restrained use of graphics, and nifty angles on replays, NBC delivered exemplary coverage of Super Bowl XLVI on Sunday.

As usual, analyst Cris Collinsworth wasted few words and offered analysis rich in insight and details.

He made a reasonable argument in suggesting the Giants not score a late touchdown, if it meant leaving too much time on the clock for the Patriots. (Collinsworth preferred the Giants to kick a short field goal after using up more of the game clock.) The Giants appeared to consider that, with Ahmad Bradshaw hesitating at the one-yard line before scoring. And Collinsworth's point proved justified, considering Tom Brady's desperation pass to end the game wasn't that far off from being caught for a winning touchdown.

Collinsworth spotted that the Patriots' defense had 12 men on the field on a key early play, thus negating a Giants fumble.

He paid close attention to line play, noting who made key blocks or who was vic-

timized on sacks.

Al Michaels was typically diligent about disseminating pertinent details quickly after plays, and added flavor to the broadcast with anecdotes and tidbits, such as noting Bill Belichick took his team off the field for 30 minutes during Wednesday's practice to replicate a Super Bowl halftime.

NBC limited graphics largely to meaningful numbers and records, including Eli Manning becoming the first Super Bowl quarterback to complete his first nine passes, and Brady setting a Super Bowl record with 14 consecutive completions (he eventually had 16). The network made prudent use of isolations on replays, one of which showed how Patriots TE Rob Gronkowski was slowed early by an ankle injury.

Nitpicks? Very, very few. Collinsworth said he had never seen the Patriots "quite so unsettled to start a game," when they were trailing 9-0. Collinsworth or Michaels should have noted that New England trailed in its final two regular-season games 17-0 (to Miami) and 21-0 (to Buffalo) before winning both. And when Wes Welker couldn't make a catch, Collinsworth said he makes the play "100 out of 100 times." He

presumably meant 99 out of 100.

NBC's only real embarrassing moment was singer M.I.A. raising her middle finger during Madonna's halftime performance. NBC apologized.

All networks use their Super Bowl pregame platforms as promotional vehicles for their prime-time lineups, but NBC took that to particularly blatant extremes, to the point of absurdity at times.

NBC aired highlights of a Boston-Washington NHL game — but didn't mention the Boston-Memphis NBA game earlier in the day — simply because the network owns NHL rights but not NBA rights.

We also were "treated" to a London Olympics preview, because, well, the Games are on NBC. No matter that they're still six months away.

But the five-hour pregame marathon, deftly anchored by Bob Costas, had some highlights, most notably Peter King's poignant piece on former Saints player Steve Gleason's battle with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).

Barry Jackson covers sports media for the Miami Herald.

A-BOMBS

Dan Arkush unleashes his early February reflections.



Star power breakdown

If you are interested in identifying the NFL's most talented teams with the offseason now officially under way, you might want to check out the following team-by-team breakdown of the "Super 50" NFL players, which was featured in the previous issue of *Pro Football Weekly*. Players are listed by team, with their rankings in parentheses:

49ERS (5): DE **Justin Smith** (21), ILB **NaVorro Bowman** (24), ILB **Patrick Willis** (28), OLB **Aldon Smith** (41), FS **Dashon Goldson** (49).

SAINTS (4): QB **Drew Brees** (2), TE **Jimmy Graham** (14), RB **Darren Sproles** (25), OG **Carl Nicks** (30).

GIANTS (4): QB **Eli Manning** (4), DE **Jason Pierre-Paul** (19), WR **Victor Cruz** (29), WR **Hakeem Nicks** (34).

PACKERS (4): QB **Aaron Rodgers** (1), WR **Jordy Nelson** (32), WR **Greg Jennings** (39), CB **Charles Woodson** (50).

PATRIOTS (3): QB **Tom Brady** (3), TE **Rob Gronkowski** (10), WR **Wes Welker** (23).

RAVENS (3): OLB **Terrell Suggs** (6), RB **Ray Rice** (11), DT **Haloti Ngata** (27).

EAGLES (3): OT **Jason Peters** (18), RB **LeSean McCoy** (20), DE **Jason Babin** (26).

TEXANS (3): RB **Arian Foster** (13), CB **Johnathan Joseph** (36), ILB **Brian Cushing** (37).

STEELERS (3): QB **Ben Roethlisberger** (22), WR **Mike Wallace** (35), S **Troy Polamalu** (43).

LIONS (2): WR **Calvin Johnson** (5), QB **Matthew Stafford** (8).

PANTHERS (2): QB **Cam Newton** (9), WR **Steve Smith** (31).

COWBOYS (2): OLB **DeMarcus Ware** (16), QB **Tony Romo** (33).

JETS (1): CB **Darrelle Revis** (7).

VIKINGS (1): DE **Jared Allen** (12).

CARDINALS (1): WR **Larry Fitzgerald** (15).

JAGUARS (1): RB **Maurice Jones-Drew** (17).

CHARGERS (1): QB **Philip Rivers** (38).

SEAHAWKS (1): RB **Marshawn Lynch** (40).

FALCONS (1): QB **Matt Ryan** (42).

BILLS (1): RB **Fred Jackson** (44).

BENGALS (1): WR **A.J. Green** (45).

BRONCOS (1): OLB **Von Miller** (46).

BEARS (1): RB **Matt Forté** (47).

CHIEFS (1) OLB **Tamba Hali** (48).

■ ■ ■

Eight teams failed to land at least one player in the PFW Super 50: Dolphins, Browns, Colts, Titans, Raiders, Redskins, Buccaneers and Rams.

By position, the Super 50 broke down as follows: quarterbacks (10), wide receivers (10), running backs (8), outside linebackers (5), defensive ends (4), inside linebackers (3), cornerbacks (3), tight ends (2), safeties (2), offensive tackles (1), guards (1), defensive tackles (1).

SENIOR BOWL

THE NEXT BATCH

Kirk Cousins and Russell Wilson look to replicate the success of the '11 rookie QBs

By Kevin Fishbain
Associate editor

MOBILE, Ala. — For some of the quarterbacks at this year's Senior Bowl, you heard the words "intangibles" and "character" from observers before "arm strength" or "mobility." Luckily for them, they play the one position where showing the tools to lead can greatly boost a player's draft stock.

Last season's rookie class of quarterbacks combined to make 61 starts. Two of those quarterbacks, Christian Ponder and Andy Dalton, didn't have the off-the-chart athleticism and arm strength like Rookie of the Year winner Cam Newton, yet both players had productive rookie seasons, especially Dalton, who led the Bengals to the playoffs.

Ponder and Dalton were at last year's Senior Bowl, and neither necessarily "wowed" observers with a rocket arm, but they were accurate and showed the leadership necessary to play the position.

Like last year, this year's Senior Bowl featured six QBs that all knew the first two signalcallers that will be off the board in April — Andrew Luck and Robert Griffin III — weren't with them in Mobile. But Ponder and Dalton, who were drafted after Newton and Blaine Gabbert in 2011, are only the most recent examples that you don't need to be the first quarterback out of the green room to succeed.

"As you look at the history of the draft, many times, players that were later-round picks, especially at the quarterback position, have had great careers," Michigan State QB Kirk Cousins said. "You don't have to look too much further than Drew Brees, Tom Brady and Aaron Rodgers. They would all tell you they didn't get drafted where they thought or where they hoped to get drafted. They were also told things they couldn't do."

For Cousins, his off-the-chart intangibles



Kirk Cousins and Russell Wilson impressed with their arms and intangibles in Mobile.

will be a big reason why a team drafts him. He said it's not a slight that scouting reports might mention his leadership before his accuracy or arm strength.

"It is what it is," Cousins said. "It's an honor to be identified as a leader. At the same time, there are plenty of football abilities that have gotten me to this point and there are a lot of great leaders out there who are not on the verge of becoming an NFL quarterback."

Cousins was on the North team at the Senior Bowl, and it might have been considered the "all-intangibles-quarterback"

team. Cousins' teammates at the position were Boise State's Kellen Moore and Wisconsin's Russell Wilson, two players who were proven winners in college, but lack the ideal size to play the position in the NFL.

"Size is not a factor," said Wilson, who stands 5-10⁵/₈ tall but was very impressive during the week nonetheless. "I don't get many balls batted down. It's just one thing that people try to knock on me."

A player's character is something every team scrutinizes during the draft process, regardless of position. But at quarterback, it's different. It's weighed more.



North Alabama's Janoris Jenkins faced questions about his past in Mobile.

NOTHING TO HIDE

Ex-Gator Jenkins, one of top CBs in the 2012 draft, had plenty to prove in Mobile

By Mike Wilkening
Senior editor

MOBILE, Ala. — The purple helmet and the "North" in front of the "Alabama" in his school's name didn't fool anyone. This is SEC country, and once an SEC star, always an SEC star.

When the Senior Bowl was over, scores of fans flooded out of the Ladd-Peebles Stadium bleachers, and one of the bigger groups descended upon Janoris Jenkins, the former Florida Gators star. Every time he tried to inch toward the locker room, his progress was stopped. There is press coverage, and then there is the pressure applied by kids who want you to sign just one more autograph.

Finally, he excused himself for a moment. Senior Bowl week was over. The practices and game were on video, his answers to eve-

ry question asked by every inquiring team on the record.

Perhaps no prospect here had more queries to answer than Jenkins, who was kicked off the Gators' squad in 2011 after two marijuana-related arrests early in the year. (In both cases, he reportedly paid fines of several hundred dollars, and the cases were resolved.) Overall, he was arrested three times during his time at Florida. He played his final collegiate season at Division II North Alabama, earning All-America honors from several media outlets.

Teams knew of Jenkins — you're going to draw attention covering the best receivers in the best conference in the country like he did — but they had to get to know him. They had to ask him questions about his past, and they had to see how he held up against the best senior receivers.

On the field, the 5-9³/₄, 191-pound Jenkins wanted to show he could play press-man coverage. Off the field, he wanted to dispel any notion that he was a "bad kid," as he put it.

"Everything that happened to me was a mistake, and I learned from it, and I'm ready to move forward," said Jenkins, a starter for the South team.

Come late April, Jenkins, the most highly regarded cornerback at the Senior Bowl, could be hearing his name called in Round One. The top cornerback in the 2012 draft is expected to be Morris Claiborne, the exceptionally athletic and productive LSU junior. Claiborne looks to be a top-10 pick.

The quick and instinctive Jenkins could be the next to come off the board. In PFW personnel analyst Nolan Nawrocki's first mock draft, Jenkins was the No. 17 overall pick to Cincinnati, one of numerous clubs with a need at cornerback.

Redskins head coach Mike Shanahan, who coached the South squad, was impressed by Jenkins' skill set.

"I think everybody can see he can bump, he can play off, he's very talented," Shanahan said. "He can run. So he'll be a top guy."

Wherever Jenkins lands, he will be expected to contribute immediately. With passing on the rise in recent years, the value of cornerbacks also has increased. In addition to Jenkins, several other cornerbacks who played in Mobile could be selected in

“Sometimes, people look at a guy’s arm strength and how far he can throw the football and think, ‘OK, that makes a great quarterback,’ but the leadership is necessary at the position,” said Vikings head coach Leslie Frazier, who coached the North team in Mobile. “You have to be a guy that can galvanize everyone in the locker room that they want your support. Those are the intangibles that you sometimes can’t measure.”

Cousins knows that he won’t score off the charts at the Scouting Combine in February, where measurables will be the focus.

“My greatest strengths aren’t going to be displayed in a 40-yard dash or be displayed in a number,” he said. “My greatest strengths are some of the intangibles. But, at the same time, when I line up and throw, I feel very confident about what I’m going to be able to do throwing the football.

“My arm strength and my accuracy are underrated right now. I’m excited to show exactly what I do have in my ability to throw.”

Heading into the week, Oklahoma State’s Brandon Weeden was considered the best quarterback of the group, and he did not disappoint. But with Texas A&M’s Ryan Tannehill, who is likely to be the third passer taken in April’s draft, unable to participate because of an injury, Cousins, Wilson, Moore, Arizona’s Nick Foles and San Diego State’s Ryan Lindley got the chance to impress and jockey for draft position.

the first two rounds, including Georgia’s Brandon Boykin, Nebraska’s Alfonzo Dennard, Iowa State’s Leonard Johnson, Coastal Carolina’s Josh Norman and Furman’s Ryan Steed.

As the value of cornerbacks has increased, so has the difficulty of playing the position, as Vikings head coach Leslie Frazier noted. Frazier, a cornerback for the Chicago Bears from 1981-85, said all of the NFL’s skilled quarterbacks and wide receivers are among the factors that have made life difficult on cornerbacks.

“Three-hundred-yard passing games are nothing now, and that used to be a big deal 10 years ago,” said Frazier, who coached the North squad. “Even 400-yard passing games are becoming almost the norm now. So it’s a different league, and much tougher for corners to make it than when I was playing.”

For young cornerbacks, being oblivious to the pain of making errors while learning from them is necessary, Frazier said.

“You really have to be fearless,” he said. “You can’t be one of those guys who, when a mistake is made, you’re beating yourself up over it. You have to be such a confident player that, when something bad happens, it really goes in one side of the ear and out the other.”

The NFL, Frazier said, is not an easy place to develop self-confidence — it needs to be there when a rookie signs on.

What was most important for Cousins and Wilson was to show off their throwing against the nation’s best senior defenders. Both players wanted reporters — and teams — to know what they can do on the field.

“I wouldn’t be here if I couldn’t throw the football extremely well and if I couldn’t run it,” Wilson said. “People talk about my leadership and intangibles, and I think that’s very important. (To be) a great quarterback, you want to be a great leader, competitor — a guy that always has attention to detail, and I believe I have that.”

Said Cousins, “There’s no doubt that I do have some football abilities that have helped me get here. The intangibles have also helped. You’re trying to develop both those things. Certainly you have the accuracy, the mobility and the arm strength, but you also have to have the leadership and character as well.”

Frazier pointed out one more character quality these quarterbacks possess that will help them at the next level and cannot be measured in a 40-yard dash.

“All three guys we have beat the odds throughout their careers,” Frazier said about Wilson, Cousins and Moore. “Those are good signs when you’re talking about a guy who has to play at our level because you’re going to face so much adversity, especially early in your career and you have to be able to overcome, and each one of them has had to overcome some kind of adversity along the way and still excelled.”

“Once you get to the league, man, you don’t have a lot of chances for error,” he said. “You’ll be out of the league if too many balls go over your head.

“So that mental toughness needs to be there.”

The good news for Jenkins is that his confidence looks to be one of his strengths.

Early in Senior Bowl week, as he recounted his story, he was asked if he ever doubted he had blown his opportunity to redeem himself after being dismissed from Florida.

“I didn’t wonder, because I feel like I have great talent,” he explained. “Like I said, I made some mistakes as a kid off the field that teams don’t like, people don’t like, but it’s just something that happened.”

Jenkins faced questions like this and didn’t flinch. Nor did he deny that the off-field incidents could affect his draft stock.

Jenkins didn’t have a flawless week in Mobile. His former Gator teammate, Chris Rainey, sprinted away from Jenkins for a long reception in a one-on-one drill. One evaluator, speaking on condition of anonymity, told PFW that Jenkins needs to be a more willing tackler on the next level.

Overall, though, the feeling was Jenkins didn’t hurt himself by being here. If nothing else, he got the chance to look teams in the eye and tell his story.

“I did what I had to do,” Jenkins said, the game in the books and only the autograph-seekers left to answer to for now.

SENIOR BOWL NOTEBOOK Kevin Fishbain and Mike Wilkening

Buckeye blockers’ stock moves in opposite directions

MOBILE, Ala. — The Senior Bowl is only one part of the evaluation process for NFL clubs, but it can be a very important one. Prospects’ fortunes can rise and fall during the practices and the game itself.

What follows is our assessment of the prospects who helped themselves most at the Senior Bowl, as well as our thoughts on the players who didn’t fare as well as expected. We polled evaluators and coaches for their take on the players who had the best and worst weeks, with all respondents participating on condition of anonymity.

Finally, we also look at a handful of players who caught our attention.

STOCK UP

Ohio State OT Mike Adams — The 6-7, 323-pound Adams has an intriguing combination of size and athleticism. He needs some technique work, but the feeling was he was better in Mobile than he was in a suspension-shortened senior season. He has first-round physical ability and plays a very valuable position. Moreover, he has been open about the off-field issues that hampered him at Ohio State. He’s a player to watch in the weeks ahead.

Marshall DE Vinny Curry — Earned mention from multiple evaluators for his play during Senior Bowl week, which was capped with two sacks in the North’s win. Could get looks as a 3-4 outside linebacker (specifically in schemes that want a bigger player outside, a la Baltimore’s Jarret Johnson) as well as a 4-3 defensive end.

Boise State RB Doug Martin — From Day One, Martin was the best back at the Senior Bowl. He showed a tremendous burst and hit the holes hard in practice, and he also showed a couple moves on kickoff returns. It can be hard during practice to get noticed as a running back, but Martin got the job done, and it should help his stock in a RB class that’s thin on depth after the top two.

Connecticut DT Kendall Reyes — Reyes turned heads with a nice inside move in practice that blew up a run play. In the game, Reyes got the start and had three tackles and one sack. He showed good strength and athleticism as one of the top tackles in Mobile.

STOCK DOWN

Ohio State C Mike Brewster — Definitely plays with the aggressive streak that can be a major asset in the trenches, but he struggled against Michigan DT Mike Martin, and the general sense is he didn’t help himself in Mobile. Didn’t show the power, explosiveness or athleticism he was expected to, according to one

person who knows OL play well.

Nebraska CB Alfonzo Dennard — Had a disappointing performance, failing to impress evaluators before leaving with a hip flexor injury mid-week. Could fit best in a cover-2 scheme. His physicality is a strength, but there was some sentiment that he didn’t show enough explosiveness.

Texas A&M WR Jeff Fuller — Very few receivers impressed during the week, and Fuller appeared to continue a bit of a regression that began after his junior season, when he had 1,066 receiving yards and 12 touchdowns (he had 828 and six TDs as a senior). Fuller looks the part but continued to have a case of the drops.

Washington RB Chris Polk — Many were excited to see Polk, who could be the third back off the board in April. He showed his explosiveness in college, but he did not “wow” many observers during the practices. He had some time as a featured back in the game and didn’t do a whole lot, finishing with 15 yards on six carries (2.5 avg.). The Combine and his pro day will be key for Polk’s draft status.

INTRIGUING PLAYERS

Cincinnati RB Isaiah Pead — Helped himself with a strong showing as a returner in the Senior Bowl, returning punts for 60 and 38 yards and rushing for 31 yards on eight carries as he earned game MVP honors. His playmaking ability and versatility boosts his stock.

North Carolina DE Quinton Coples — Coples was arguably the best player in Mobile, which is important for his draft stock considering there were some doubters after a somewhat average senior season. Coples has the size, strength and speed necessary to play anywhere on the line. He moved O-linemen with ease and seemed to quiet any doubters he might have had.

Arkansas WR Joe Adams — Had a strong game (save for a first-quarter fumble), catching a game-high eight passes for 133 yards. His speed is his calling card, and he likely helped his standing with some teams with his play in Mobile. A slight build — he measured in at 5-10½ and 174 pounds — is somewhat concerning.

Wisconsin QB Russell Wilson — For the next few months, you will continue to hear about Wilson’s size, meaning lack thereof. He does not look like an NFL quarterback standing less than 5-foot-11, but he was accurate and made all the throws during the week. His mobility is worth noting for teams that want to use him in certain packages. Wilson also showed plenty of confidence throwing and talking to the media.



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NFL TRANSACTIONS

(As reported, Jan. 22-Feb. 7)

AMERICAN FOOTBALL CONFERENCE

BALTIMORE — **Jan. 23:** Roster additions for 2012: RB Damien Berry; WR Rodney Bradley; TE Davon Drew; DT Bryan Hall; WR Phillip Livas; C Cecil Newton; WR Patrick Williams. **Jan. 26:** Roster additions for 2012: OG Howard Barbieri; LB Cody Glenn. **Jan. 30:** Practice-squad contracts expired: OG Garrett Chisolm; OT Kenny Wiggins.

HOUSTON — **Jan. 23:** Practice-squad contract expired: OG Howard Barbieri. **INDIANAPOLIS** — **Jan. 28:** Roster addition for 2012: C A.Q. Shipley. **Feb. 7:** Contract terminated: LB Zach Diles. Placed on waivers: OG Jaimie Thomas; OT James Williams (both failed physical).

NEW ENGLAND — **Jan. 25:** Practice squad; injured: WR Dorin Dickerson. **Jan. 26:** Practice-squad addition: TE Carson Butler. **Feb. 4:** Roster addition: DE Alex Silvestro (from Patriots practice squad). Placed on waivers: WR Tiquan Underwood. **Feb. 7:** Roster additions for 2012: LB Markell Carter; WR Britt Davis; OT Matt Kopa; DE Aaron Lavarias; LB Mike Rivera; WR Tiquan Underwood; S Ross Ventrone.

N.Y. JETS — **Jan. 24:** Visit: OG Jovan Olafioye. **Jan. 31:** Tryout: WR Tyler Beiler.

PITTSBURGH — **Feb. 6:** Roster addition for 2012: WR Tyler Beiler. Placed on waivers: DE Miguel Chavis; LB Erik Clanton.

SAN DIEGO — **Jan. 31:** Roster addition for 2012: LB Ricky Elmore.

NATIONAL FOOTBALL CONFERENCE

DETROIT — **Feb. 6:** Placed on waivers: LB Cody Brown (from reserve/did not report).

GREEN BAY — **Feb. 1:** Tryouts: DT Lamar Divens; DT Anthony Gray; DE Mau-

rice Evans; DE Jarrett Crittendon.

MINNESOTA — **Jan. 31:** Roster addition for 2012: LB Solomon Elimimian. **NEW ORLEANS** — **Jan. 23:** Practice-squad contracts expired: LB Darry Beckwith; QB Sean Canfield. **Jan. 24:** Roster additions for 2012: DT Swanson Miller; CB Josh Victorian. **Jan. 26:** Roster addition for 2012: QB Sean Canfield. **Feb. 3:** Tryout: TE Hayden Smith.

N.Y. GIANTS — **Jan. 25:** Practice-squad addition: OT Selvish Capers. Practice-squad deletion: QB Ryan Perrilloux. **Jan. 31:** Practice-squad addition: QB Ryan Perrilloux. Practice-squad deletion: OT Selvish Capers. **Feb. 1:** Practice-squad addition: OT Selvish Capers. Practice-squad deletion: QB Ryan Perrilloux.

PHILADELPHIA — **Jan. 23:** Claimed on waivers: OT D.J. Jones from Ravens. **Jan. 31:** Visit: QB Trent Edwards. **Feb. 6:** Assigned on waivers: OT D.J. Jones from Ravens.

SAN FRANCISCO — **Jan. 24:** Roster additions for 2012: C Chase Beeler; OT Derek Hall; S Mark LeGree; CB Cory Nelms; TE Konrad Reuland; LB Michael Wilhoite. **Jan. 26:** Roster addition for 2012: WR John Matthews. **Jan. 30:** Practice-squad contracts expired: LB Ricky Elmore; LB Monte Simmons; LB Michael Wilhoite. **Feb. 1:** Roster additions for 2012: OG Garrett Chisolm; OT Kenny Wiggins.

SEATTLE — **Feb. 6:** Activated: OG John Moffitt (from reserve/suspended by commissioner).

ST. LOUIS — **Feb. 6:** Roster addition for 2012: OG Jovan Olafioye (B.C. Lions, Canadian Football League). Placed on waivers: WR John Chiles. **Feb. 7:** Contract disapproved: OG Jovan Olafioye.

WASHINGTON — **Feb. 6:** Activated: TE Fred Davis; OT Trent Williams (from reserve/suspended by commissioner).

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AUDIBLES

The following quotes are from NFL scouts, coaches and front-office personnel, speaking on the condition of anonymity.



ICON PHOTOS THREE

“(Giants QB) **Eli Manning** can zap the energy out of opponents. That is what he does best. He had not thrown a wrong pass all day (in Super Bowl XLVI). After he laid that one in there to (**Mario**) **Manningham** — you’ve got to be kidding me. The problem with any quarterback rating or measurement of quarterbacks — you could look at **Alex Smith**’s passer rating in the NFC championship game; it was a little better than Manning’s (in the same game). What a computer cannot do is measure the effect certain plays have on a team emotionally — jacking one up or jacking one down.”

■ “The sleeper for the Giants, besides their four-man, interchangeable rush, was S **Kenny Phillips**. He altered two passes in that game — and you can’t really see it unless you have the 22-man tape, but (**Tom**) **Brady** could not throw down the middle. He fit one in to (**Rob**) **Gronkowski**, but Phillips hit the (expletive) out of him.”

■ “One thing that was really interesting to me was the (Giants’) 12-men-on-the-field call at the end of the game. If **Tom Coughlin** intentionally put them out there, it was a helluva call. The competition committee is going to have to review that. I’ll put 15 men on the field late in the game if it’s going to run 15 seconds off the clock and only cost me five yards. They are going to need some type of equalizing rule where, if a defense is called for it in the final two minutes, they get the time back on the clock and X amount of yards. I’m not sure the Giants did it on purpose, but it sure worked in their favor. The (eight) seconds on the clock were much more valuable than five yards at that point.”

■ “The Patriots got snookered on **Chad Ochocinco**. It’s imperative for receivers to run precise routes in their offense. If someone thought Chad could do that, they were wrong. I don’t think the experiment will last much longer. It’s not part of his makeup.”

■ “For as meticulous and detailed as **Bill Belichick** is, to give up nine points because they had 12 men on the field and gave up a safety has to be killing him. Bill would rather lose by 50 than to lose a game that way. It’s going to eat him up and drive him for a long time.”

■ “Some people are going to question the sideline call when (**Mario**) **Manningham** brought it in. **Bill (Belichick)** was standing right there. But you’ve got to challenge that call. It is the home run. There were a couple singles and doubles given up in the game at that point, but that was the first home run. If you get that call, it changes the whole complexion of the game. It was a momentum-changer. (Belichick) made the right call.”

■ “Come the beginning of April, every wart on every draft prospect is going to get bigger and bigger. There will be a group of guys that find flaws on every player and will focus on them and concentrate on them instead of the positive traits. They will be talking about how **Andrew Luck** does not have **John Elway**’s arm. It was like **Cam Newton** last year. Everyone was ripping the kid until the final three days before the draft, when it became clear that (Panthers GM) **Marty (Hurney)** really was going to take him.”

■ “There are a lot of bad guys playing in the NFL. You can’t have 53 choirboys on your roster. It has never been that way. Can you imagine if the media back then was the way it is now, with **Jim Brown**? Back in the 1960s and ’70s, writers were buddies with a lot of the players. They would cover their (butts). Now, there are just so many (media people), and they need the negative scoop — it’s a different world we live in.”

■ “I think Philly has to think hard about their quarterback situation. Same with Dallas, Denver, Miami and Kansas City. There’s no question Washington, Seattle and Cleveland need new quarterbacks.”

NFList

Star linemen among those up for Hall of Fame Class of 2013

By Kevin Fishbain and Eli Kaberon
Associate editors

The Hall of Fame Class of 2012 was the first one since 1996 not to include any first-year-eligible candidates. Bill Parcells and Will Shields were the two modern-era finalists who were on the ballot for the first time, but they will have to wait another year.

Unlike the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame, first-timers on the NFL’s ballot have had success. The most recent first-time-eligible players to get inducted were Deion Sanders and Marshall Faulk in 2011.

On the heels of the announcement of the Class of 2012, we want to look ahead to the first-year-eligible players who will be crashing next year’s ballot. To be eligible for the Pro Football Hall of Fame, a player must have been retired at least five years, so the next class will include players who called it quits following the 2007 season.

If the 2012 class is any indication, the offensive linemen are getting plenty of love from the voters, and that should bode well for a couple of players who become eligible next year — Larry Allen and Jonathan Ogden. Both C Dermontti Dawson and OT Willie Roaf were elected in the Class of 2012.

The *Pro Football Weekly* staff voted solely on players who will be eligible for the Pro Football Hall of Fame for the first time next year, and ranked the players we believe are most deserving.

1. OG Larry Allen / Cowboys 1994-2005, 49ers 2006-07 — Allen was a huge part, literally and figuratively, of the Cowboys’ dynasty in the mid-1990s. Beginning his career in 1994, Allen played a total of 203 games, starting 197 of them, before retiring after the 2007 season. Allen was a member of the NFL’s All-Decade team for both the 1990s and 2000s. For nine seasons, Allen paved the way for Hall of Fame RB Emmitt Smith, including the 1995 campaign when Smith ran for a league-high 1,773 yards. That year marked the first of Allen’s 11 Pro Bowl selections.

2. OT Jonathan Ogden / Ravens 1996-2007 — While Ray Lewis and the Baltimore defense received much of the glory, Ogden was one of the key reasons why the Ravens were so successful during his 12-year career. The mammoth, 6-9, 340-pound tackle had incredible mobility for someone his size and could be counted on as an elite run blocker and pass protector. Ogden was a Pro Bowler in each of his NFL seasons except his rookie campaign and was a key contributor to Baltimore’s Super Bowl title in 2000.

3. DE Michael Strahan / Giants 1993-2007 — The league’s single-season sack champion, Strahan retired in 2007 with 141½ career sacks, which ranks fifth all-time. His mark of 22½ sacks in 2001 remains an NFL record. Strahan spent his entire 15-year career with the Giants, which



SPORTSPICS

Former Cowboys OG **Larry Allen** appears to be the lead blocker on the road to Canton’s Class of 2013.

included a Super Bowl title in his final season, when he recorded nine sacks. Strahan was a seven-time Pro Bowler and also was the AP Defensive Player of the Year in ’01.

4. DT Warren Sapp / Buccaneers 1995-2003, Raiders 2004-07 — The anchor of the famed Tampa-2 defense, Sapp, a seven-time Pro Bowler, was a constant nightmare for opposing offenses. He recorded 96½ career sacks and was named the AP Defensive Player of the Year in 1999 after notching 12½ sacks and four forced fumbles. The next season, he had a career-high 16½ sacks. Known for his nonstop trash talking on the field, Sapp usually backed up his chatter with exceptional play during his 198 career games.

5. DT Bryant Young / 49ers 1994-2007 — Young was a standout on the 49ers’ defense for 14 seasons, finishing his career with 89½ sacks, 12 forced fumbles and three safeties. Young started all 208 games in which he played. His best season came in ’96 when he had a career-high 11½ sacks and two safeties. It was the only year he was honored as a first-team All-Pro. Young made it to four Pro Bowls in his career.

6. RB Priest Holmes / Ravens 1997-2000, Chiefs 2001-07 — Though he lacked the longevity of some other Hall of Fame backs, Holmes posted some of the best individual seasons of anybody in NFL history. During his first three seasons in Kansas City, Holmes had more than 2,100 yards from scrimmage and was named a first-team All-Pro in each campaign. He also led the league in touchdowns twice (’02 and ’03), and his 86 rushing TDs rank 14th all-time.

Other first-ballot candidates — PK Morten Andersen, RB Mike Alstott, QB Steve McNair.

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