



NFC NEWS 'N' NOTES

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MARQUEE QBs TAKE CENTER STAGE AS NFL SEASON KICKS OFF

Two of the NFL's premier quarterbacks – **DREW BRESS** and **PEYTON MANNING** – will be in the spotlight this Thursday night when the 2007 NFL season kicks off as Brees and the New Orleans Saints visit Manning and the Super Bowl XLI champion Indianapolis Colts in primetime (NBC, 8:30 PM ET).

In his first season with the Saints last year, Brees revitalized New Orleans by passing for an NFL-best 4,418 yards and leading the team to its first NFC Championship Game. Manning, who led the league with a 101.0 passer rating and 31 touchdown passes, guided the Colts to victory in Super Bowl XLI and earned Super Bowl MVP honors.

Quarterbacks around the league find themselves in the spotlight as the NFL begins the new season, all hoping to lead their teams to a berth in Super Bowl XLII on February 3 at University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale, Arizona.

Following is a team-by-team look at the quarterback position in the NFC in 2007:

ARIZONA: Entering his second NFL season, **MATT LEINART** brings excitement to the desert after an impressive rookie campaign. The 2004 Heisman Trophy winner started 11 games last year and set a franchise rookie record by throwing for 2,547 yards, including an NFL single-game rookie record 405 yards (11/26/06). Leinart, the Cardinals' first-round pick in the 2006 NFL Draft (No. 10), will rely on two wide receivers with Pro Bowl experience in **ANQUAN BOLDIN** and **LARRY FITZGERALD** and hand the ball off to four-time All-Star running back **EDGERRIN JAMES**.

ATLANTA: The Falcons and rookie head coach **BOBBY PETRINO** will look to **JOEY HARRINGTON** to guide them in 2007. Signed in the offseason as a free agent, Harrington has started 66 games in his five-year career after being selected in the first round (No. 3) of the 2002 draft by Detroit. The former Oregon star has 12,478 yards and 72 touchdowns in his career and owns a 3-0 record as a starter on Kickoff Weekend.

CAROLINA: A familiar face will be at quarterback for the Panthers as **JAKE DELHOMME** starts on Kickoff Weekend for a franchise-record fourth consecutive season. Delhomme has passed for 13,331 yards and 89 touchdowns in 61 games with the Panthers, including 60 starts. The nine-year veteran will again look to hook up often with Pro Bowl wide receiver **STEVE SMITH**, who has recorded back-to-back 1,000-yard seasons.

CHICAGO: The 2006 NFC champions hope for a return trip to the Super Bowl behind quarterback **REX GROSSMAN**. The five-year veteran from Florida has a 17-6 (.739) record as the team's starting quarterback, the third-best mark among active quarterbacks. Last season, Grossman threw for 3,193 yards, the second highest season total in team history and had a 100.0 passer rating in seven starts, the second most such ratings in the NFL.

DALLAS: Five-year veteran **TONY ROMO** made his first career start last season and finished the year as an All-Star, becoming the first Cowboys quarterback selected for the Pro Bowl since Pro Football Hall of Famer **TROY AIKMAN** in 1997. The former Eastern Illinois star passed for 2,903 yards with 19 touchdowns and posted a 95.1 passer rating, the third highest single-season mark in team history behind Hall of Fame quarterbacks **ROGER STAUBACH** (104.8 in 1971) and Aikman (99.0 in 1993).

DETROIT: With the addition of first-round draft pick **CALVIN JOHNSON** (No. 2), the Lions' offense and quarterback **JON KITNA** look to be even more dangerous in 2007. Last year, Kitna became only the second quarterback in team history to pass for 4,000 yards as the 11-year veteran threw for a career-high 4,208 yards. Kitna finished the season ranked first in the NFL in completions (372), second in attempts (596), fourth in yards (4,208) and ninth in TD passes (21).

GREEN BAY: As he enters his 17th season, **BRETT FAVRE** is within reach of a number of significant NFL milestones. Favre has 414 career touchdown passes and needs seven to pass Pro Football Hall of Famer **DAN MARINO** (420) for the most in league history. The eight-time All-Star has won 147 games and trails Hall of Famer **JOHN ELWAY** (148) by just one for the most wins by a quarterback. And the NFL's only three-time Associated Press MVP ranks second with 57,500 passing yards and needs 3,862 yards to pass Marino (61,361) for the NFL record.

MINNESOTA: **TARVARIS JACKSON** became the third quarterback in team history to start a game as a rookie last year,

joining Pro Football Hall of Famer **FRAN TARKENTON** (1961) and **TOMMY KRAMER** (1977). A second-round pick by the Vikings in the 2006 draft, Jackson started the team's final two games and was one of only three rookies to pass and rush for a touchdown last year (Arizona's **MATT LEINART** and Tennessee's **VINCE YOUNG**).

NEW ORLEANS: All-Star **DREW BREES** made an immediate impact in his first season with the Saints, leading the club to the NFC Championship Game and setting numerous Saints records. The co-winner of the Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year Award with San Diego's **LA DAINIAN TOMLINSON** became the first quarterback in team history to pass for 4,000 yards (4,418) and set season franchise marks in passer rating (96.2), 300-yard games (eight) and completions (356) as the Saints posted a 10-6 record to win the NFC South.

NEW YORK: The Giants hope to advance to the postseason for the third consecutive year behind quarterback **ELI MANNING**. The No. 1 overall pick in the 2004 draft has passed for 3,000 yards in each of the past two seasons and started 39 consecutive games. Last year, Manning threw for 3,244 yards and tied his career-high with 24 touchdown passes.

PHILADELPHIA: **DONOVAN MC NABB** missed the final six games due to injury last year and is looking for a bounce-back season in 2007. The nine-year veteran has posted a 65-33 (.663) career record and has led the Eagles to a Super Bowl and four NFC Championship Games. McNabb's seven postseason wins are the most by a quarterback in Eagles history. The five-time All-Star has 152 touchdowns versus 72 interceptions in his career for a 2.11 ratio, the second best mark all-time behind Pro Football Hall of Famer **STEVE YOUNG** (2.17).

ST. LOUIS: The Rams have high hopes for 2007 and will once again turn to All-Star **MARC BULGER** to lead the charge. Bulger, who has a career 36-24 mark (.600) as a starter, is coming off a season in which he passed for a career-high 4,301 yards and posted a 92.9 passer rating, including an NFL-best eight games with a rating of at least 100.0.

SAN FRANCISCO: In his first full year as the team's starter, **ALEX SMITH** became the first quarterback in franchise history to take every snap in a season. The No. 1 overall selection in the 2005 draft passed for a career-high 2,890 yards and 16 touchdowns. The former Utah star enters his third NFL season with 23 starts under his belt.

SEATTLE: Aiming to help win the NFC West for the fourth consecutive year and reach the playoffs for the fifth season in a row, quarterback **MATT HASSELBECK** enters his seventh year with the Seahawks. The two-time All-Star is the highest rated passer in team history with an 85.1 rating and his 12 career 300-yard games are the most in Seahawks annals. In his six seasons in Seattle, Hasselbeck has averaged more than 3,000 passing yards per year.

TAMPA BAY: The Buccaneers added three-time All-Star **JEFF GARCIA** during the offseason to upgrade the quarterback position. The nine-year veteran started the final six games of the regular season for the Philadelphia Eagles last year and helped guide the team to the playoffs. Garcia saw action in eight games and passed for 1,309 yards with 10 touchdowns and two interceptions for a 95.8 passer rating.

WASHINGTON: **JASON CAMPBELL** enters his third NFL season and is the team's starter on Kickoff Weekend for the first time in his career. The club's first-round selection in the 2005 draft (No. 25) started the final seven games of the 2006 season and threw at least one touchdown pass in every start. Campbell led Auburn to an undefeated season in 2004 and was named the SEC Offensive Player of the Year.

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