

Fox Sports NFL

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Tony Gonzalez

Colin Cowherd

Michael Vick

Dave Wannstedt

Peter Schrager

Terry Bradshaw

Howie Long

Eli Manning

Cooper Manning

Erin Andrews

FOX NFL Kickoff Show



go out there and win, you shouldn't be here because this is a privilege. It's the greatest job in the world. You get to go out and play a game. Even in week 17, even when you're trashed, they care. And they still want to win and they still want you to be great.

>> This is football. Welcome to the big leagues.

>> Welcome to Fox "Fox NFL Kickoff" presented by IBM.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: I love it. J.J. Watt fired up after an at times tumultuous 16 weeks. We've so far completed 240 NFL games, featuring a record 11,854 points scored, including 1373 touchdowns and yet entering our final Sunday more than 160 possible outcomes, you guys, for the postseason remain. You've got to love this game.

And coming up sit down with two of Dallas's brightest stars as the Cowboys prepare for a final playoff push. And we sort out who will be the NFC's top seed. And the Manning Hour becomes a family affair when Cooper's baby bro joins the fun. That will be entertaining.

Welcome to "Fox NFL kickoff." I'm Charissa Thompson, and we have Tony Gonzalez, Michael Vick, Dave Wannstedt and Colin Cowherd. And I remember this summer thinking, I hope we were going to have a football season. And here we are making it to the final week of the regular season with so many different postseason playoff berths that we're going to go through the next hour. There were at times, you guys, we thought this might not ever happen but the 2020 regular season ends today and there are many questions unanswered.

>> In the AFC, the Chiefs are the 1 seed and the Bills and the Steelers will host a game next week. The rest is up for grabs. Will Tennessee secure the South? If not, can the Colts punch their ticket? And who among the Dolphins, Ravens and Browns might crumble under the pressure of win and you're in.

In the NFC the East champ gets the 4 seed. The Bucs are a wild card. But who will take the top seed? Plus as the Rams, Cardinals and Bears face a wild race for the two remaining slots, whose hurdles will prove too big to

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Tom Brady has led Tampa to their first berth since 2007. His Bucs can lock up the fifth seed with a win today over division rival Atlanta. Oh, aren't we happy we're inside. December football, January football right there in New York, and the Cowboys and Giants will battle for one last shot at the NFC East crown. The final week of the regular season is here. This is Fox "Fox NFL Kickoff".

>> I know you've been through your lot in your career, but is this the most difficult season you've been through as a football player?

>> Yes.

>> Will y'all be able to regroup and hope to finish the season on a positive note this week?

>> We're professional athletes getting paid a lot of money. If you can't come in and put work in in the building, go out to the practice field and work hard, do your lifts and do what you're supposed to do, you shouldn't be here.

[MUSIC]

There are a lot of people that watch us and invest their time and they care about it. They care every single week. So if you can't go out there and you can't work out, you can't show up on time, you can't practice, you can't want to

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

overcome? Will a tight end lead the league in receiving for the first time ever? Is Aaron Rodgers a lock for MVP? Is this Donald's last stand as a Jet? Stafford's as a Lion? Rivers in any uniform? Will Tony make a food reference? Who is going to win super 6? And is Colin even paying attention? We'll know by day's end. Week 17, 16 games, the answers are out there.

TONY GONZALEZ: Weren't you paying attention?

COLIN COWHERD: Sometimes I get distracted briefly. It happens.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: He's exhausted from the three hours you do during the week every single day. We can't wait to see how some of these stories will end.

Mike, we'll go around the horn with different topics. You'll start. Aaron Rodgers, MVP, is he still the right call?

MICHAEL VICK: I think it's the right call. 44 touchdowns, five interceptions. I think it goes without saying. And I think this entire season he's only had one bad game against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in a league where it's supposed to be a young man's game. Aaron Rodgers at 37 did a great job of keeping Josh Allen and Patrick Mahomes in the rear. They made late surge for the MVP.

And today he can lock up the No. 1 seed. I think they're in a great position right now to move forward. And I think they made the right call. He put himself in this position. And he fought hard all year.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Tony, your boy Travis Kelce, looks like he won't be playing so he won't have a chance to lead the league in the receiving yards. Is this the right move?

TONY GONZALEZ: I've got to say, yes, it's the right move. They've already locked up and punched their ticket to the playoffs with a bye. But I would love to have seen this. We're talking about history right now. The history of the NFL, no tight end has ever led the NFL in receiving and he came so close. It's kind of a shame that they actually won last week because this game doesn't mean anything because I would have loved to see him get out there and get a chance to lead the NFL. It would have been great. But maybe next year.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Maybe next year. All year long we went back and forth: Are the Chiefs the best team? You're actually saying Buffalo is the best team. You still agree with that?

COLIN COWHERD: Oh, yeah, I think they would beat

Kansas City, I don't think the Chiefs are playing well. And I hope Buffalo today plays their starters, doesn't give Miami a break. You don't help the Steelers if you're the Ravens. You don't help the Rams if you're the Seahawks. This is a division rival.

If I'm Buffalo and Tua comes up today in the snow he's never played in the snow, and struggles. And there's a free agent on the market in the offseason. Buffalo can say, did you see Tua. They don't know who their quarterback is. We have Josh Allen. We're a Super Bowl contender. They're not a playoff team.

You don't do Miami any favors today. You want to get them out of the playoffs and want to separate do you think New England did anybody any favors to anybody in that division for 20 years? I hope Buffalo plays all their starters. And I think they're not only the best team in the league. I think they match up with Kansas City very well.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: They have the best fans we did a poll at Fox Sports and they won that by a landslide. But not all the fans can be there. When we talk about home field advantage, Coach, will that actually even matter this year in a COVID year in the playoffs?

DAVE WANNSTEDT: I believe home field advantage will make a difference. Mike, you and Tony have been in the playoffs. When you get in the playoffs and now you're playing for one of these, you're at the dance, the intensity level and the stress for players, coaches, everything's another level.

And what calms down stress is confidence and comfort. And the home team they're staying at home. You know where you're going to eat. You know where you're going to have meetings the day of the game. You know where you're going to sit in your locker room.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Routine.

DAVE WANNSTEDT: It's the routine. When you travel you're dealing with airplanes, hotels, meals we've all been in some visiting team locker rooms, you don't know even where you're going to sit. I think playoffs and intensity, stress, definitely the home team

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Helps a lot?

TONY GONZALEZ: Didn't know you were wearing a Super Bowl ring. I thought it was something else.

DAVE WANNSTEDT: University of Pittsburgh or Miami, come on.



TONY GONZALEZ: Which one?

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Your high school ring?

DAVE WANNSTEDT: High school.

TONY GONZALEZ: A secret society ring or something.

DAVE WANNSTEDT: Sorry, Tony.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Time to get you in the know, delivered by Wendy's. This guy has been bringing us all the good stuff every single week. Peter Schrager a lot of breaking news on the COVID front. What's the latest today?

PETER SCHRAGER: Some good news, up to the minute here. Just got a text. The Browns Steelers game is on. The coaches have been told you can go bring the team to the building. No positive cases for Cleveland. They said that game is on. Cleveland in the clear. The Saints, you saw the news Jay Glazer reported yesterday. Alvin Kamara tested positive for COVID 19. Due to the contact tracing and close contacts, none of the running backs will be available. So expect Ty Montgomery to get some action from receiver to running back for those guys.

This all leads to a question of: What about next week? Because a lot of these teams are going to go to the playoffs. A lot of these teams have COVID 19 cases. My sources at the league are saying they will not schedule the playoff games on Saturday and Sunday based on who has COVID and who doesn't. What does that mean? Well, you think about Alvin Kamara, Cooper Kupp and Joe Haden, big names, Saturday and Sunday games, you'd think that the Sunday game benefits those two. The NFL says they won't be basing the games on COVID 19 situations. They're basing games on all factors. That is something to note when your team is getting their schedule tonight after the Sunday night game as to when they're playing next week.

Quickly, Packers and Bears, this might be the biggest game in the NFC today. You'll see it on Fox in the late window. Packers are without David Bakhtiari, left tackle. An absolute star. Freak injury in practice on a passing play. Planted wrong. Out for the rest of the playoffs. I'm told Billy Turner will turn to left tackle. The message is resiliency; we've got to get through this one. That was one crushing blow to end 2020.

As for the Bears, that man right there, Mitch Trubisky, I'm told both sides, players, his agent, team, front office, they decided not to discuss anything about Trubisky status next year until after the season. Mitch Trubisky has been

playing great of late. Let's see if he has one more great game in him.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Timing is everything. Thank you, Schrag's. This weather, this thing keeps up, that might be one of the best during the game. Here's a look at your Sunday coming up.

>> Los Angeles has been host to recast some A list players. Will they find a Hollywood ending or is this a project destined to flop. As the 2020 season draws to a close, you have to hear our take on the year that was. Plus, after Big Ben rose from the dead like the Undertaking, why we're wrestling with whether or not it's for real. And later, as Dallas visits New York, we visit two of the Cowboys biggest stars and get awkwardly familiar with a giant great.

>> Thank you for adding some credibility to our 17th show this year.

>> 17's too many.

>> All that and more ahead on Fox "Fox NFL Kickoff".

[COMMERCIAL].

>> IBM Fox NFL kickoff sponsored by IBM. The world is going hybrid with IBM.

>> This is it. The Bengals can't gain 12 yards. The Baltimore Ravens are headed to the postseason.

>> Tom catches the football. He's back to throw. Inches up in the pocket, throw. Touchdown.

>> The unthinkable happens on fourth down.

>> Disbelief has shrouded the stadium.

>> The Bengals have just handed Buffalo a belated Christmas gift.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: So, those Bengals could help play spoilers to the Ravens once again today. Though, the Bills won't need to follow so closely. They, like the Steelers and Chiefs, are good either way. Meanwhile, five teams are vying for four open spots at the bottom of the AFC Tennessee, Miami, Baltimore, Cleveland and Indy. So, Mike, despite recent struggles no Fitz magic, you think Tua can get the job done for them today.

MICHAEL VICK: I think he can. But it's a lot of pressure on Tua. And, Colin, you just said there's a lot of speculation on Tua's career and moving forward in Miami.



I think it's in his best interests to win this game.

The Buffalo Bills will have a lot of starters out. Guys might play first half, might not play the second half. I think this is in Tua's best interest to take advantage of that. This is his chance to right the ship and kill any speculations on his future at Miami. It has to happen today. And it's set up for him. He's one of the only rookie quarterbacks this year who can compete in the playoffs and have a chance to play in the playoffs this year.

TONY GONZALEZ: Look at the Cleveland Browns, I think looking at them, they're going to win today. They play the Pittsburgh Steelers. Mason Rudolph is starting at quarterback for them. I think they're going to win the game and get in.

Will they have success when they get to the playoffs? I look at the Browns and I look at the roster, they're just a good team to me. They have a good quarterback. He's not elite. They've got a good receiving corps, not elite. They have a pretty good running game. I'll give them that.

But can they make a serious run in the playoffs? I'm going to say no. I think you have to have elite play. You've got to have elite play at key positions. And the quarterback there's no doubt, just look at the history, to make a deep run you better have a better quarterback than what Baker is as far as I'm concerned. And we'll see. Maybe he can prove me wrong.

COLIN COWHERD: And that's why I love Baltimore. Lamar Jackson's improved. If I have to hear that he can't throw, his career pass rating is over 100. He doesn't throw the ball maybe as effortlessly as a Russell Wilson or Aaron Rodgers, but he gets better. Also last year there was so much pressure on him. MVP.

This year there's no pressure on him. The expectations in his own division are incredibly low. Last year there was a point in the season that, you know, Baltimore was dropping 40 points on people and it was, like, wow. So they lose close in the playoffs and we all bail on them. I think they're actually today better than they were a year ago today.

MICHAEL VICK: I agree.

COLIN COWHERD: I think they're playing great offensive football.

MICHAEL VICK: Playing under the radar.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: When we sat down for that interview last week, he said he loved that they don't have the pressure on them, that it was too much last year. And

as far as being the prototypical quarterback, I don't want to be that. That's not who I am.

COLIN COWHERD: Last two years, red zone, Lamar has 44 touchdowns, no picks.

DAVE WANNSTEDT: The key is how many times does he throw in the game. If you keep it manageable he's okay.

I'm looking at Tennessee. I expect Tennessee to get back to their winning ways. We sit here every week and say what's the identity of this team or this offense. Well, there's no secret. Everyone knows Tennessee, what they did to get to this point, what they're going to do today to lock up the division, in my point, and what they're going to do next week in the playoffs probably be playing Baltimore, Colin, your team.

They'll pound the football with Derrick Henry and Ryan Tannehill will come over the top with play action. I really like Tennessee. I think they make some noise in the playoffs.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: All right. We're going to take a quick break here. But coming up, we move to the NFC. Packers Bears is more than just bragging rights today. And will Kyler Murray make a stand against the Rams? Plus, what's to come with some big names in 2021.

[COMMERCIAL].

>> For the NFC North division championship and it all culminates in this, with a game hanging on it, on fourth and 8.

>> Playoff bid on the line for either the Bears or Packers.

>> Blitz. Rodgers gets out. Floats it. Cobb. Touchdown, Randall Cobb. The Green Bay Packers are playoff bound.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: The Packers hope it won't take until the final minute to beat Chicago this time around, especially with both New Orleans and Seattle still reaching for the crown. It will all play out 4:00 p.m. Eastern, only on Fox.

A record setting 200th meeting between these two teams, incredible rivalry. You think that the Bears can pull this off, or you like the Packers in this one, Tony?

TONY GONZALEZ: I like the Packers. I think the way the Packers are playing right now, with Mr. A ARon, Mr. R E L A X, MVP. You talked about, the way that he's the connection between with him and Davante Adams is unstoppable. And the reason they're having so much

success is because of Aaron Jones in the backfield. Aaron Jones averaging almost six yards per carry. And you give any quarterback a good running game, especially a guy like Aaron Rodgers, it's unstoppable.

And now you added A.J. Dillon, what I saw last week, their first round pick out of Boston College, 250 pounds, it's going to be a surf and turf back field now to go with Aaron Rodgers. I like them to make a serious run. The Packers are one of the two top teams in the NFL right now.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Thank you, Tony.

TONY GONZALEZ: Got that? Surf and turf is good.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Rich people can buy surf and turf. Not everyone can afford that on the menu.

MICHAEL VICK: You know they got deep pockets.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Chicago's playoff hopes still exist, thanks to Mitch Trubisky's recent play. This is Insights Built by IBM Watson. According to Watson, Trubisky's output and efficiency over the last month are night and day compared to the early weeks of the season. We all know he was benched at one point this season. Coach, what's the game plan for the Bears if they want to make the playoffs?

DAVE WANNSTEDT: To me it's simple. Most important, Matt Nagy, the head coach, he needs to stay true to Mitch Trubisky and this offense. By that I mean, don't get bored, Matt, with running the ball and throwing play action passes. Right now watching Mitch in the offense but your whole football team is very confident going into this game.

And another interesting storyline, we talk about stress, I mean it's there. I mean the future of Mitch, we talk about Matt Nagy, the general manager Ryan Pace, everybody's future is up in the air right now, a win today would be huge all cases.

COLIN COWHERD: By the way, Carolina, watch out today beating the Saints.

DAVE WANNSTEDT: You know where I'm going with this? You know who I like today? Bears. Bears to win. Bears to win tonight.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Wait. So you like Carolina today against the Saints, because no Alvin Kamara.

COLIN COWHERD: And that changes the offense. Carolina, Coach, you coached college and pro. You win that bowl game for a young team that's not great yet. The

offseason training is better. They beat Washington last week. If they beat the Saints today, Matt Rhule is a terrific coach, they're in a total rebuild. Great offseason, optimism, get some free agents.

And Teddy Bridgewater knows that Saints defense. Practice against it every day. He lit them up in week seven. I think Carolina, this is the upset of the day. Keep your eye on the Panthers today.

MICHAEL VICK: It's very possible that Carolina can beat New Orleans today. But the Saints, they have to get Alvin Kamara back. And they have to get him back healthy. He's the staple for their offense. He's 50 percent of their offense. Things they can do with him with his presence in the backfield out of the backfield is invaluable. They've got to get that guy back.

DAVE WANNSTEDT: I'd be curious to see how much Taysom Hill plays. Drew Brees it was Michael Thomas for years, right, security blanket. Then it was Alvin Kamara. They're both out. So, Mike, I don't know, who is his target today?

TONY GONZALEZ: Don't forget Ty Montgomery. Ty Montgomery, a receiver, played running back before. As long as he can pick up a blitz, that's the thing, can he pick up a blitz.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: What's interesting is what Schrage talked about, that scheduling, that on board scheduling will come out after today. If Alvin Kamara, if they end up scheduling this wild card game, he won't be able to play next Saturday, but could play Sunday if he passes the COVID protocol. But that scheduling becomes very important for them as well.

COLIN COWHERD: Seattle could be the No. 1 seed. How?

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Exactly. We're going to talk more about this and we're also going to talk about how the Rams' LA story facing a win in their in scenario without their starting quarterback. A mysterious hero emerges. His name John Wolford, a former Arizona hotshot looking to take down the hotshot from Arizona, we know as Kyler.

For more on John Wolford Tony is yelling, who let's bring in a guy we know who has got all that information. Schrage, what's the latest here?

PETER SCHRAGER: John Wolford, quarterback out of Wake Forest, played for AAF Arizona Hotshots last year. He's going to start for the Rams. I tell you, they're not doom and gloom over this. If anything they're excited.

Wolford brings an entirely different skill set than Jared Goff. Not as tall as Goff, but he is more mobile.

I'll expect some things that the Arizona Cardinals didn't see from the Rams offense the first time around, and hasn't seen in all the other times they played the Rams with Jared Goff at the quarterback. One thing to note, no Cooper Kupp, and that also affects the playoff scheduling you just mentioned, when it refers to the Saturday or Sunday game due to COVID 19 protocols.

As for the Arizona Cardinals, really interesting here, Kyler was banged up last week. He's going to go. Budda Baker showed up on the injury report with a neck injury this week. He might be their best defensive player. He's going to go. But Larry Fitzgerald their star wide receiver who of course every week, is it his last game as a Cardinal is not going to dress, not going to play for the Arizona Cardinals in what might be his last game as a Cardinal in that uniform.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: What a career he's had. Thank you, how does this thing play out for the Rams?

COLIN COWHERD: Initially I wanted to bail on the Rams but huge defensive edge for the Rams. Huge coaching edge the Rams. And I watched Jared Goff the last couple of weeks with Sean McVay, and you can see the body language. They have they hit a ceiling with Goff.

The way McVay rolls the pocket, I'm not sure John Wolford, who is more athletic, for a game, doesn't have a Jalen Hurts feel in Philadelphia, where they can just open some playbook up, move the pocket more, roll him out. I think he's going to be better for a week than we think. I like the Rams today.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: He's never taken an NFL snap.

COLIN COWHERD: You're guessing. That's what the Saints were doing against Jalen Hurts; you're guessing.

MICHAEL VICK: And the Cardinals haven't beat Sean McVay. Kyler Murray doesn't play well against the Rams defense. It's proven. Turned the ball over a lot and really hasn't protected the football. I see the Cardinals winning, but this is a must win game for Kyler Murray if you ask me. He'll get a lot of opportunities with the Rams not having a for sure quarterback on the field.

So another game that Kyler Murray has to win. They win, they get in. This is an excellent position for him to be in.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: They're also without Christian Kirk due to COVID.

MICHAEL VICK: Gotta find a way.

TONY GONZALEZ: Look at Wolford. The only thing he has going for him is he doesn't know how big this is. When you play in these type of games he's never been in this situation, so maybe he has that going for him.

But real quick about the Cardinals. If Larry Fitzgerald, if they end up losing that game and he doesn't play, I have to pay homage to this guy. One of the greatest receivers. I don't think he'll be coming back. I hope really for his worth he gets a chance that they do win and they can play again next week I'd hate for him to miss the last game of his year.

MICHAEL VICK: Shout out to Larry.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Brady is not missing anything. He's got his Bucs off and running, coming off a season high scoring performance and having won three straight as they take on Atlanta. We'll take a look at that game and what else the future may bring when "Kickoff" returns.

[COMMERCIAL]

TERRY BRADSHAW: Howie Long here to tell you about the Fox Super 6 App. All you have to do is pick the outcome of six football games, and you could win \$100,000 of the big guy's money. Last year Fox gave away Terry Bradshaw's money. But I think he's too handsome to go broke. So play this week to win up to \$100,000 of my money.

HOWIE LONG: This is low even for you. Are you serious. Pick the outcomes of six games this Sunday to win \$100,000 of Terry's money.

TERRY BRADSHAW: I have a twin.

[COMMERCIAL].

>> T.J. Watt will lead this team to a championship.

>> We always remember dadadada go, Pack, go.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Currently sitting at number five on this season's receiving yards list, Calvin Ridley has something to play for today. After all, he did drop 163 yards on the Bucs just two weeks ago. And while he and Matt Ryan have put up great numbers, the wins for Atlanta haven't followed. So, like many teams, now that 2020 is hindsight we'll play a little "what's to come in 2021." When you look at your former squad, the Falcons, what do you want to see from them in 2021?

TONY GONZALEZ: They need to solidify the head coaching position, and Raheem Morris is the guy, as far as I can tell. He's gone 4 6 since he's taken over as the interim head coach. But they've played some really close games. They've had some catastrophic meltdowns at the beginning of the season, three games where they lost double digit leads.

But they still have a core group of players. They still have Julio and Calvin Ridley and Gage. Matt Ryan, say whatever you want about him, he's still playing at a high level. The window is still open is what I'm saying.

Keep Raheem there. He's been there since 2015. He knows both sides.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: The players love him.

TONY GONZALEZ: Yeah, the players love him. He's honest to the players, can call them out. I think if they get a running back they can go out there and fill in that defensive side of the ball, they can make a serious run.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: When you look at the New England team, Coach, missing the playoffs for the first time since 2008, where do you go with this team?

DAVE WANNSTEDT: Bill Belichick I would find a way to make a trade for Matthew Stafford of Detroit. I think he's a veteran quarterback that still can play for a couple of years at a high level.

And then to help that, you've got to go out and either trade or draft a couple big time playmakers to help him on offense. And keep in mind, New England had eight players opt out this season. So get those guys back. And you'll be in the playoff hunt next year.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: But the Cam experiment is over?

DAVE WANNSTEDT: Yes, unfortunately, yes.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Colin, when you look at the Jets, they won late. They lost Trevor Lawrence. What are you doing with Sam Darnold and what's the future in New York?

COLIN COWHERD: I think he's never been given a fair shake. His offensive line has been bottom five since he entered the league. He's never had a running game. They can't keep wide receivers healthy. Adam Gase hasn't worked as a head coach in the NFL.

I'd like to see him go to the Colts. Garoppolo wins games.

But he can't stay healthy. Kyle Shanahan long term, is Garoppolo the answer? I know John Lynch played in the Pac 12. Sam Darnold, did he like him coming out of the draft? Sam Darnold, San Francisco, Colts, maybe Pittsburgh makes sense to me.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Mike, Houston, they fired Bill O'Brien. Deshaun Watson has played at a high level despite not having the weapons. What do you do with the team next year?

MICHAEL VICK: Two things you've got to start by getting a head coach. Got to find the right guy. I think Eric Bienemy can be the guy that can be paired with Deshaun Watson to make him a better quarterback.

And find a receiver. Find someone to replace DeAndre Hopkins, maybe a Kenny (indiscernible) or a Chris Godwin, serviceable receiver, somebody that's serviceable. But I don't want to see Deshaun Watson go the next couple of years without the right talent around him. And it's going to be a complete waste of talent. So I think it's right there for them. They've just got to make the right decision.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Love it. That's what we hope will happen down the road. Let's find out what is happening right now. Peter Schrage, give us the scoop on some potential offseason moves.

PETER SCHRAGER: It's going to be a loud few weeks, Charissa. Let's start out with Detroit where I think it's really interesting because they have to hire a general manager and head coach. My sources said they've interviewed Marvin Lewis as a head coaching candidate. And this week interim head coach Darrell Bevell and Eric Bienemy, who is the offensive coordinator of the Chiefs and will not have a game next week, and Robert Saleh, who is a Detroit native and will not be going to the playoffs with the 49ers. The Lions, all eyes on the GM and head coach. They're interviewing simultaneously both positions, and it could be a new era in Detroit.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Thanks, Schrages. Don't forget, Ford "Fox NFL Sunday" is less than 30 minutes away. The gang over there is getting ready to bring you everything you need to know for week 17. And Ndamukong Suh hopes to make Matt Ryan's final regular season a rough one today. Greg Jennings joins us to talk about that when "Kickoff" continues.

[COMMERCIAL].

>> We dominate all night long. We start fast and furious. I see a number of dogs in this fight. Let's go!

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Making the most of the situation is kind of the theme of this year.

- >> From the beginning.
- >> Here's Murray, sacked.
- >> Be ready to work.
- >> Great stiff arm. We'll have some of that.
- >> Picked off by Baker. The chase is on!
- >> Aaron Rodgers, his 400th touchdown pass.
- >> That's 400.
- >> Diggs catches the touchdown.
- >> Visit the desert sky.
- >> Hopkins, do you believe that?
- >> Yea baby.
- >> Smile check. Smile check.
- >> That's what this is for.
- >> Don't dance with him. Run him over.
- >> Caught, Jefferson, touchdown!
- >> He's so good.
- >> And the Chiefs, the No. 1 seed.
- >> Hollywood Bowl.
- >> Touchdown, Kareem Hunt.
- >> He scored!
- >> Greatest games in history right there.
- >> Crowd him. Hey Alexa.
- >> We want to keep our team alive, we've got to win today!

CHARISSA THOMPSON: 2020 sounded so sweet. Speaking of, many are getting sweeter on the Bucs' prospects by the day as they're locked into either that fifth or sixth seed as they close the season out today against Atlanta.

We're joined by Greg Jennings from Tampa. Hello, Greg. It's been an up and down year for this Tampa Bay team. Of course they crushed a depleted Lions team last week. Should Tampa Bay fans be excited or is this a little bit of fool's gold.

GREG JENNINGS: Tampa Bay fans should be excited. This team is finding their stride. They're taking on what I believe is the identity of Tom Brady, a guy who comes with extreme experience and obviously playoff experience, and understanding what it takes at this moment in the season to get it done. This team is a scary team entering into the playoffs.

TONY GONZALEZ: What's up, Greg? It's Tony. We've talked about this team having so many mouths to feed on that offensive side of the ball. But lately it seems like Antonio Brown has been able to get involved in this offense. How have you seen his involvement? What are they doing to get him the ball now?

GREG JENNINGS: Well, he's their No. 3 guy, but as we all know, he can easily be a No. 1 threat, because of what he's always brought to this game. But when you talk to Tom Brady and you talk to Antonio Brown, they're starting to develop that chemistry that they started in New England, but then it was gone.

So he's been here for just two months. He's finding his football legs. And this, again, is a guy who, if he continues to play at the level that we've seen the last few weeks, look out in the playoffs.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Appreciate the time, as always, Greg, have a great call. We'll talk to you later.

Colin, when you look at this game, so if the Bucs win, they'll face whoever wins the NFC East, who should they be rooting for?

COLIN COWHERD: Anybody but Washington. Ron Rivera is a really smart defensive coordinator. Alex Smith, Alex Smith has been in these games before. I think they match up really well, Tampa does, with Dallas' defense and lack of pass rush. I don't think the Giants have the offensive firepower or experience at quarterback.

But you give me Alex Smith and Ron Rivera, and Tom would be uncomfortable with that pass rush that Washington generates. You could see an ugly game, Tom's uncomfortable, and then losing.

TONY GONZALEZ: But looking at the Bucs, what they did against the Detroit lines last week, to me, you called it



fool's gold. That was fool's gold. They're not on that level yet. Remember the Lions had five coaches out, had a couple players out, with Stafford going down.

But looking at what this offense has done, how they've matured, especially since the bye week, weeks eight through 12 for the deep ball for Tom Brady, he was 5 for 27, one touchdown, four picks. Since that bye week, 10 for 17, four touchdowns and zero picks.

They're adding that deep ball now. Leave it up to Tom to do his visionary and his avocado shakes and all that good stuff to get his mind right to make this playoff run because that roster, we've talked about it all year. If they can come together, wow. This could be something really special. And it looks like they're starting to hit that stride right in time for the playoffs.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: It's all about the timing of everything. The Steelers were dominant all year long then fell apart. After what you saw last week, do you think they're playoff ready, Coach?

DAVE WANNSTEDT: I know the defense is. In fact the defense has been playoff ready all year. We know that. The thing that has to happen here is that offense, Big Ben, primarily, has to pick off where he left off the second half of that Indy game. And the obvious was scoring points.

But you can feel it. In watching that game, the defense got reenergized, Mike, when the offense was putting the ball in the end zone that's what happens for them to advance.

MICHAEL VICK: There was a lot of talk about Ben calling his own plays last week. I've been around Ben long enough in that one year span to know when he's calling his own plays and what it looks like. And when that vertical passing game came alive, and then the run, I knew it was all him. He's more than capable of doing that.

They have to take that same energy into the playoffs. And it's going to start with Big Ben. He's at his best when he's scoring his own plays.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Why is he not doing that?

MICHAEL VICK: Rock out.

DAVE WANNSTEDT: Why do you need a coach?

CHARISSA THOMPSON: We've been saying it all year, every year. (Laughter).

MICHAEL VICK: Strong statement coming from you.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: As the rest of us wrap up the holiday season, Cooper and the Manning clan have one more big day marked on the calendar. And what better way for Eli to spend his fortieth birthday today than humoring his older brother.

COOPER MANNING: Well, 2020 is finally over. Sure. A lot of it sucked. Not what I meant. But we did make it all the way through the NFL regular season. Sure, there were some hiccups. Not what I meant. But all things considered it was a pretty good NFL season. So I thought I'd share my top 10 moments. Unfortunately, whenever a Manning says the number 10, this guy is contractually obligated to show up.

ELI MANNING: Coop, you were begging me to come on the show.

COOPER MANNING: To each their own, Eli. Were you surprised to see the NFL even go on without a Manning this year?

ELI MANNING: I'm surprised this show is going on without a Manning in the NFL. (Laughter).

COOPER MANNING: How did your first season away from the Giants go?

ELI MANNING: I've been really, really busy. I've done, accomplished a lot of things. For example, I watched "Mighty Ducks 3" today, which has always been on my bucket list.

COOPER MANNING: Speaking of the Mighty Ducks, I mean the Giants, they could still get in the playoffs somehow. And they need Washington to lose. But Washington has already lost their mascot, their quarterback. This shouldn't be a big deal.

ELI MANNING: Exactly.

COOPER MANNING: You may have retired from football, but you finished your rookie year of being on Twitter. You've only tweeted about me once.

ELI MANNING: Once too many.

COOPER MANNING: It was read to me that you tweet a lot about New Jersey style sloppy joes.

ELI MANNING: Yes, I never knew there was a New Jersey style sloppy joes. So I thought about the rest of the world must not know this exist or even New Jerseyans.

COOPER MANNING: Around the rest of the country when

people hear of New Jersey style sloppy joes they may think of this.

ELI MANNING: Can we please just get to the top 10?

COOPER MANNING: What's the rush? It's called "The Manning Hour."

ELI MANNING: There's a reason they only gave you two and a half minutes.

COOPER MANNING: Fine, No. 10.

ELI MANNING: Your producer says you're out of time.

COOPER MANNING: There's a producer?

ELI MANNING: Pick a few you feel most attached to, and they'll scroll through the rest, Coop.

COOPER MANNING: Let's go with No. 6, my best friend.

ELI MANNING: Mom?

COOPER MANNING: No, Alvin Kamara, for his six touchdowns.

ELI MANNING: Drew, told me not to trust you. I think that was the wrong clip.

COOPER MANNING: No, it wasn't. And No. 4.

ELI MANNING: Nice. So what's No. 2?

COOPER MANNING: I found that script it has the No. 1 moment of the entire season.

ELI MANNING: What does it say?

COOPER MANNING: And the best moment is finally having my favorite brother join the show.

ELI MANNING: Amazing. Your top play is my low light of my year.

COOPER MANNING: Thanks.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: That family. Not boring. And victory over Dallas would be a nice birthday gift for Eli, who here's a tweet not sure what to wear for the Giants game today, my jersey or birthday suit. Eli crushing it on Twitter. Gotta step up your game. Who knew?

Meanwhile, Andy Dalton literally has one million reasons to help his Cowboys make the playoffs. It's a contract thing.

We break down the NFC East next.

TONY GONZALEZ: A million dollars.

[COMMERCIAL]

>> The race to win the NFC East has been neck and neck. Washington jumped out to a fast start. Eagles put the pedal to the metal in week four, only to be immediately passed by the Cowboys. Dallas kept up the pace for a couple of laps. Took their foot off the gas and Philly reclaimed the pole position, holding that lead for five weeks straight. But when Carson Wentz stalled, so did they.

The Giants took command for laps 12 and 13. But Washington got a boost from some unexpected pit stops by division foes. If they can make it through this final turn, they'll celebrate in victory lane as NFC East champs for the first time since 2015.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: So it will take a full 17 weeks to decide the NFC East champs. We'll get you up to speed brought to you by State Farm. And it took us 17 weeks for them to get us talk together, because normally this would get both of us fired. So we're going to be on our best behavior. I just said to Karen, our stage manager, it's freezing in here. Then you came up and I said, oh, I should be quiet real quick. You have quite the collection of jackets.

ERIN ANDREWS: We'll get into that later. You mentioned the 17 weeks and the NFC East, which great graphic situation right there, guys. Let's do our favorite thing. Movie lines ready, this one: So you're saying there's a chance. Yeah! No. That's "Dumb and Dumber" not "Steel Magnolias." Work with me.

Of course, the winner of this game today, they need some help from the Philadelphia Eagles. You guys have been talking about it all game. The Eagles need to beat WFT, the Washington Football Team, obviously for them to take the division and stay alive and play into the playoffs.

I saw you guys had a great shot of the weather. Nice wintery mix. Looks like the weather won't be a factor. Looks like the rain is supposed to get going around 4:00. You know what that means? We need to play quick. I'm just kidding. These teams won't have to deal with the weather. Let's start with the New York Giants. Joe Judge telling us today that they have to run the ball. If they don't, they're going to struggle. They have struggled doing that the last three weeks.

Another thing they're going to have to do is stop the Dallas Cowboys from running the ball. Ezekiel Elliott doing a

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

great job doing that. And Cowboys saying we're playing our best football right now. Why? The offense is clicking and the offensive line is meshing. And like we said, Ezekiel Elliott, he is healthy and cured of that fumbleitis. Easier for me to say. Did I also say wintry mix? I love that.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: I hope so. We're in Dallas, rains, with the weather report.

ERIN ANDREWS: I'm not as tan as him.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: I know. Who is? I need a self tanner. Anyways, we're out of time. Have a great call. We love you. We'll talk to you later.

Turning our attention to Dak Prescott. When he went down, many were quick to bury Dallas. But there's a reason why "how about them Cowboys" is part of the lexicon as they make a last divisional kind of run here. Michael Gallup and CeeDee Lamb make it clear they're not living in a Lone Star state.

>> Time running out, as they now go 3 and 9 on the season.

>> I wouldn't say it's necessarily over. But it's hard to keep saying that when you're not winning football games.

>> Sitting there in the locker room, 3 0, we all felt a little bit of embarrassment just because, like, we all had high hopes this season.

>> Everybody was really just mad about that. Frustrated. Knowing that we could have played a little bit better. Had to get that connection, that communication, that meshing well.

>> And I think we found a little groove right here at the last stretch.

>> Fade left side, end zone, Gallup he's got it. Touchdown, Gallup. Over the top for Lamb to the 30, to the 20, on the run to the end zone.

>> This is a completely different team than three weeks ago.

>> Turning point: After that Ravens game, I just feel like we moved into the final home stretch. And everybody needed to just find that extra boost of energy. And we definitely found it and got our groove back.

>> A lot of it has to do with, you know, pride, and a lot of people have a lot of love for the game. And I feel like that plays a huge part in our success these past couple of

weeks.

>> Everybody believed that we'll still be able to make a run have a chance to go to the playoffs. So everybody's just meshing really well right now.

>> We've been able to overcome just as far as injuries. It's been phenomenal in my opinion. And just the confidence that Andy's been going out leading us to the victory, we feel like a lot of people are already counting us out. All we have is each other. And we kind of use that bond to go out there and fight for each other.

[MUSIC]

>> Gotta keep it going, play one more and hope that these Eagles now need them to beat Washington.

>> Rooting for the Eagles, it's going to be different, it's going to be weird.

>> You don't really want to cheer for another team, but obviously in this situation we definitely have to cheer for them. Hopefully they come out on top for us. But we've still got to get this last game.

TONY GONZALEZ: You know what? It's good to see them get going and start clicking. Obviously when Dak went down, remember, before Dak went down, he was on his way, with that receiving corps to breaking the all time NFL, for most yards in one season. That's how dangerous that receiving corps is, and Andy Dalton has tapped into it. And they're looking great on that side of the ball.

COLIN COWHERD: Listen, Andy Dalton, last three games, 117 passer rating. If he wins today he goes 5 2 down the stretch off the bye. I don't think it was fair to judge Andy or the entire team pre bye, pandemic, no preseason, new staff. Since the bye it's a real team. And Dalton, we thought, nice backup, went to TCU. His numbers and Dak, the last six starts, are identical. He can still play. Wouldn't be shocked if somebody makes an offer to him that needs a quarterback for two or three years for money.

DAVE WANNSTEDT: Yeah, I think they win today and finish on a four game winning streak. But the winner of the division I believe I think we all agree is going to be the Redskins.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: The Washington Football Team.

DAVE WANNSTEDT: I'm sorry Washington Football Team, Scott Turner, the offensive coordinator, he's going to have good, balanced game plan. It's going to be heavy

run, high percentage throws for Alex Smith.

And then on the other side, keep in mind, Jalen Hurts, the quarterback for the Eagles, he struggled last week against the Dallas defense. Accuracy and turnovers. Well, now you're facing Washington's defense, who is one of the best in the NFL. There's no comparison. Washington, Dallas defense, this defense is going to get after them and make it very difficult.

MICHAEL VICK: Alex Smith and Ron Rivera, they beat the odds in 2020, and today they'll probably beat the odds and beat up on my Philadelphia Eagles, minus Fletcher Cox. So on behalf of the "Kickoff" crew, we're sending love back East to the bros. Congratulations to the Washington Football Team. I think they get in the postseason.

TONY GONZALEZ: I think you said it right there. To me, it's already been a hell of a story. If they go out there, win this game today, it's going to be it's probably the best sports story in history to me because of what Ron Rivera has been through and what Alex Smith has been through. It's been like a Disney movie. I'm seeing right now Alex Smith played by Chris Pratt; Ron Rivera played by George Lopez. Comedy to drama. Maybe making a run at the Oscars or something. But this is that big of a story to me. I'm rooting for Washington, no doubt about it, just because of the story from that standpoint.

COLIN COWHERD: By the way, even if they don't get in, Rivera was the right choice. Clearly the locker room has bought into Ron. Like Matt Rhule/Carolina, they're not winning games, you can tell the team's buying in. That's great for the offseason.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: All right. What looked like the worst division in football has ended up being the most intriguing. Injuries. Fighting COVID. Quarterback carousels and a whole bunch of stuff. We will talk about that all of that, the guys will, next hour on Ford "Fox NFL Sunday". We'll be back with more after this.

[COMMERCIAL]

TERRY BRADSHAW: Howie Long here to tell you about the Fox Super 6 App. All you have to do is pick the outcome of six football games, and you could win \$100,000 of the big guy's money. Last year Fox gave away Terry Bradshaw's money. But I think he's too handsome to go broke. So play this week to win up to \$100,000 of my money.

HOWIE LONG: This is low even for you. Are you serious. Pick the outcomes of six games this Sunday to win \$100,000 of Terry's money.

TERRY BRADSHAW: I have a twin.

[COMMERCIAL]

CHARISSA THOMPSON: It's officially down to Coach and Schragger. Man, this hurts. I hate losing. Mike, maybe next year. You know what? This is Super 6. We've got another \$100,000 of Terry's money on the line today. Download the app. Play it for free. Choose the winners of six games, the margin of victory. I'm going to take the Packers over the Bears by 7. Schrags, who you got?

PETER SCHRAGER: I don't think I've ever won anything in my life. So for all the marbles, I'm going with rookie quarterback who was benched last week. Give me Tua and Dolphins by 4. I think we see a lot more of Matt Barkley than Josh Allen this afternoon.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Love it. Coach?

DAVE WANNSTEDT: I have one, Schrags, and I feel very good about my picks. Someone said it earlier. About how them Cowboys? Cowboys by three over the Giants.

TONY GONZALEZ: Oh, boy. I'm going to take the Bucs over the Falcons to motivate the Falcons by 7.

MICHAEL VICK: Lions over Vikings by 10.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Colin, just for fun.

COLIN COWHERD: Browns by 8 over the Steelers.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: "Fox NFL Sunday" starts right now.

TONY GONZALEZ: Yes. Happy new year.

[COMMERCIAL]

