

Fox NFL Kickoff

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Tony Gonzalez

FOX NFL Kickoff



CHARISSA THOMPSON: Here we go. You're looking at Lambeau Field and Green Bay the legendary home of the Packers where Aaron Rodgers and company are 15-2 over the last two seasons. That will be put to test as Aaron Donald, a big boy, Jalen Ramsey bring the league's best defense to town with a trip to the NFC Championship on the line. Divisional Saturday starts right now.

>> Two towns couldn't be more different and one game forces them together -- kind of.

This is Los Angeles. Ever heard of it? Second largest city in the U.S. and the world's number one provider in both entertainment and often unbounded ego.

This is Green Bay. It's in Wisconsin. So humble. They let the fans on the team. And not so humble, they stop calling themselves Title Town U.S.A. Take a chill pill, GB.

Quite the contrast isn't it? Pristine solitude of the Midwest against the hustle and bustle of big city life. In deed, these two are the -- fancy word alert -- antithesis, did I say that right -- of each other.

It's not just offense versus defense, grit versus glitz, snow versus surf, cheese versus cheese -- had enough of the comparisons yet? But that's what makes the NFL great; one team starts out a G.O.A.T., and the other a terminator.

>> That defense is looking unstoppable.

>> Packers are the best offense in the NFL.

>> This is the NFC divisional round, Rams versus Packers, only on Fox.

>> Yes!

>> Welcome to Fox NFL kickoff presented by IBM.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: The road to Tampa in the NFC goes through Green Bay where the Rams and Packers meet today. They kick off an amazing weekend of football. We've got Ravens, Bills, Browns, Chiefs, Bucs and Saints all to come. We'll get into that this hour.

It's a battle of heavyweights, though. I don't know if you heard. Jalen Ramsey goes toe to toe with Davante Adams. And a duel between Tom Brady and Drew Brees is on the top of everyone's list. Plus, how this year's Chiefs compare to the team that won the Super Bowl.

Welcome everybody to "Fox NFL Kickoff". I'm Charissa Thompson here with Tony, Mike, Coach and Colin. Thanks to Eric Andre for getting us started today. His new film "Bad Trip", co-starting Little Ralph and Tiffany Haddish hits Netflix this March. Looking forward to that. Coach is a huge Little Ralph fan.

We're a huge fan of football. This is it, boys. I'm so excited. Get into all of this. It's the playoffs. We had to. We got it out of the way. As we saw a moment ago, there's a lot of contrast in this weekend's matchups. Not the least of which is the glaring difference between the starting quarterbacks in each conference. But is it that simple case of a young versus old, or is it more of a yin and yang thing?

>> If imitation is the sincere rest form of flattery, the hot young QBs in the AFC might want to start flattering their NFC counterparts. As the playoffs continue three of the four young bucks repping the AFC are fresh off their first playoff win. Meanwhile, the NFC's quarterbacks are synonymous with postseason success: 52 wins, 154 touchdown passes and eight Lombardis between them.

To be fair, those NFC starters are an average of 12 years older than the AFC. And it shows: Seven combined wins. 21 touchdown passes and a lone Super Bowl title.

Still, there's little doubt we're witnessing a foursome of superstars in the making. Two league MVPs and a pair who have led their franchises to their first playoff win in a quarter century. The youth movement is bright. But experience has its own beauty. This weekend should be



something to behold.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: So the average age of an NFC quarterback is 37 years old. The average age of an AFC quarterback is 24 years old. This AFC is in good hands.

COLIN COWHERD: I think a lot of people would suggest that Patrick Mahomes got to a Super Bowl, one, there's going to be a litany of them for the next 10 years but the easier the path, the more you get to. There's a reason Brady got to a lot of them. A lot of home playoff games. A lot of byes.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Activation.

COLIN COWHERD: Look at the AFC. Burrow is coming back, Baker Mayfield, Josh Allen, Lamar Jackson, Justin Herbert, Trevor Lawrence comes in, maybe Justin Fields. You're talking about seven, eight robust, dynamic players. We've got a lot of very good young coaches.

I think Mahomes is terrific. But he doesn't make much money now and he only makes about 20 million on the cap next year. After that, the Chiefs are going to have to make choices with what's around him because he's in the 30 and 40 million. I think they have to make hay.

Kansas City, it's not going to get easier going forward until you get Cleveland -- that historically is a break. I just think Mahomes has a bumpy path.

MICHAEL VICK: Speaking of age, that's what you talk about, I've got to endorse Tom Brady. 43 years old playing like he's 30. Whatever he's taking, TG, and I know you're a health connoisseur, whatever he's taking or whatever is in that TB12 diet I want it. I want it.

TONY GONZALEZ: Avocados and oil.

MICHAEL VICK: I know it's probably plant-based, but he's not the same quarterback that we've seen earlier in the season. Right now he's a guy that's confident, moving well, throwing the deep ball probably the best of any quarterback in the league and playing real confident football. This is not the guy we've seen early. It's going to be a great run for Tom Brady moving forward over the next couple of days.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Only one interception during this five-game win streak. Not turning the ball over.

TONY GONZALEZ: He's been on fire. But I think with all the teams that are left in the dance, in the tournament, there's a hard-core truth, a hard-core reality that's showing. I talked about it a couple weeks on the show. If you don't

have a Hall of Fame quarterback, this is kind of what you were talking about Colin, if you don't have a Hall of Fame quarterback or a quarterback who is on their first contract -- you don't have Brady, Brees, Rodgers or Mahomes, who was both last year on the first year contract, or Josh Allen or Lamar Jackson, Baker Mayfield -- they're on their first year, you can build around that guy.

Otherwise you're not going to get a chance to go to the Super Bowl. There's one outlier, and it's Jared Goff and the Los Angeles Rams will they make the Super Bowl. I'm not picking them today, I don't think they get past today's round. So I think that has to put an alert out there for the rest of the NFL; you cannot have a good quarterback. Good is not going to get you into the Super Bowl game.

DAVE WANNSTEDT: You've got to be careful about the money, too. Carson Wentz, Jared Goff, you mentioned. You jump out there too soon with those guys, it's a fine line.

TONY GONZALEZ: Also, too, I think the quarterback should know that. And, hey, maybe I should take maybe a little less money like Tom Brady did.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Exactly.

MICHAEL VICK: The Chiefs, the Chiefs entire team taking less money.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Urban Meyer might be getting a great quarterback, right, our former colleague's headed to Jacksonville. I would be remiss if we didn't say we didn't miss you already. But good luck in your future endeavors. What do you think of that move?

DAVE WANNSTEDT: I believe it's going to work for two big reasons. Number one, the Urban tyle of coaching is the CEO type. He's not going to get in there. We've seen college coaches go to the pros, they try to micromanage every player, every coach on the field.

He's big picture. He's going to set, with the foundation, his offense, defense. And he's going to let his coaches spend time with them. He's going to cultivate that culture I believe.

And the second thing is talent. How are you going to get players? Guess what, when we all went to Dallas with Jimmy. We knew the players that we were going to be drafting, some of whom we competed against. Some of whom we knew them from their high school days when we were trying to recruit them. And, yeah.

COLIN COWHERD: Pete Carroll did that in Seattle.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

DAVE WANNSTEDT: That's a big advantage for Urban. He'll take advantage of it.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Colin took a huge pay cut to be on this show to ensure that we have Peter Schragger. It's In the Know delivered by Burger King. Schragger is with us now. Jared Goff gets the start for the Rams despite the injured thumb. What's the latest on his situation?

PETER SCHRAGER: Jared Goff is going to be the starter. The injured thumb. And of course John Wolford is not even available. So Blake Bortles will be number two.

But I can tell you the Rams are not going to put it all on Jared Goff's shoulder or thumb today. They're going to empty the bag on offense. One name to watch is Cam Akers. You know he's a starting running back, You know he's wonderful out of the backfield, can catch the ball.

Cam Akers threw for 3100 yards as a senior in high school out of Clinton, Mississippi. There's a chance that you see Cam Akers in all sorts of ways today. Sean McVay knows that Jared Goff has the thumb and you're not going to outscore a duel with Aaron Rodgers. They're going to empty the bag. Expect a lot of creativity things on offense.

Injury update for the Rams. Cooper Kupp likely, I'm going to say it's unlikely he goes. Two hours until game time. He's going to try to work out and try to make it go. Jay Glazer will have it for sure next hour. Everything I'm hearing it's very unlikely. If he does play he will not be 100%.

And lastly, the defensive coordinator of the Rams has interviews this week. Likely going to be next couple of days with both the Texans and the Eagles. If they lose, this might be the last time you see Brandon Staley as the defensive coordinator of the Rams. He's that hot a prospect for both franchises.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Huge loss for Cooper Kupp, if he's not in that game, especially for Jared Goff. That's a security blanket for him. His completion percentage goes way down without him in the game.

As the players get warmed up in Lambeau, we've got plenty to come on this huge Rams-Packers matchup. Plus more, stay with us. Here's what's ahead.

>> Coming up, it's a colorful look at the big weekend ahead. Mike throws out a winning plan for Jackson, snow or no snow. Tony on why the Chiefs are even more dangerous than last season. CT catches up with Cole Beasley to find out what has Josh Allen, Stefon Diggs and

the Bills offense so animated. Plus, Colin on what makes Aaron Rodgers and Davante Adams so cartoonishly good. And Coach draws up what it will take for Michael Thomas and New Orleans to sweep Tom Brady's Bucs. All that and more. It's a work of art on "Fox NFL Kickoff".

HOWIE LONG: It's the divisional playoffs and the Super-6 game is giving away half million dollars.

TERRY BRADSHAW: Just pick-6 outcomes and you win. So whose money is it this time, big guy, yours?

HOWIE LONG: Nope, yours.

TERRY BRADSHAW: Mine? I did the regular season. What are you talking about?

HOWIE LONG: Win Terry's money is for the playoffs, too. Download the Fox Super 6 app for your chance to win \$500,000 and Terry's all new Ford F-150. Enter both divisional contests. It's free to play.

[COMMERCIAL].

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Three years later these three are setting the league on fire. But compared to Lamar and Baker, Josh Allen has remained mostly in the shadows. I sat down with one of his favorite targets, Cole Beasley, this week, who thinks Allen and this offense are ready for their day in the sun.

>> Knocked down incomplete. In the last seconds the Bills win it, Bills advance.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: First playoff win for you guys for this city of Buffalo in 25 years.

COLE BEASLEY: Yeah, I know it's crazy. Even before we got to the playoffs, just winning the division, you should have seen how many fans are there waiting for us.

>> There's Stefon Diggs, unbelievable.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Stefon Diggs, this guy is a beast. What is it like having a front row seat to the show that is Stefon Diggs?

COLE BEASLEY: It's awesome. Everything he does he does for the guys next to him. He's my favorite number one receiver I've ever played with.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: You can hear it in your voice, how genuine you are. I don't think it's any coincidence you guys continue to have success, collectively.



COLE BEASLEY: He makes it way easier to line up there. The way he pushes his body through things, he makes you want to do the same things and not let him down.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: You have my dream life. You play in the NFL. You've got incredible hair and you're a rapper. You've got to use single app, it's called sometimes what's the meaning behind it, "Sometimes"?

COLE BEASLEY: [Singing] Sometimes I'm in my feelings --

The time I made this song I was definitely feeling kind of how I was expressing the song. That's what music is for me. It's an outlet.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Are we listening to it in the locker room? Do the guys put it on, support you?

COLE BEASLEY: They listen to everything I make. I probably have about 30 songs I haven't released.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: It's fair they get a first look. Gotta give America a hint of what's to come.

COLE BEASLEY: I'll save that after the season. I've got football to focus on right now.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: More of the interview next hour. He was great. And he loves Buffalo. He even made a comment that my son said, dad, do we ever have to leave here, cuz I don't want to leave. They've really embraced.

COLIN COWHERD: Players love Buffalo. You ask guys, coaches that played there, they love Buffalo.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: This Ravens defense isn't going to love this offense. If you're the defensive coordinator how do you stop the squad?

DAVE WANNSTEDT: Give the Ravens credit. They're the number two scoring defense, they're a great defense, been that way all year. The problem is, if you're the defensive coordinator what do we have to stop? Right? To beat the Bills, what do I have to take away?

They're as balanced as anybody in the NFL and not just balanced. Everybody says they're balanced. These guys are efficient in balance. Number two scoring, 31 points a game, Buffalo is scoring on offense. And they'll beat you with running the ball. The quarterback run. Last week Josh Allen was the leading rusher. He had 19 carries versus the Colts in the playoffs. And now you throw in Diggs and Beasley and the passing game. The weather is not going to bother him. Nice, big, strong. I like Buffalo in

this game just because of their efficientness on offense.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: They're efficient, best on third down, but Baltimore's defense is the best defense on third down. Could be a stalemate there. Meanwhile, Baltimore's ground attack is doing things we've never seen before. Insights built by IBM Watson tells us that according to Watson, Lamar and the Ravens are on arguably the greatest six-game stretch, you guys, in NFL history. Why? Cuz they're averaging an insane 262 rush yards a game. Mike, in terms of a game plan today, if it ain't broke, what?

MICHAEL VICK: Don't fix it. And that's what the Ravens have been doing. They haven't been touching anything to do with the run game, let Lamar be Lamar. Enough about him; he's doing what he needs to do.

I've got to give credit to Greg Roman for getting Hollywood Bryant involved in the offense heavily. Last week, seven catches, 109 yards. They put him in space, lined him up in the back field, moved him around. He was a big reason they were able to outduel Tennessee and a big reason they can beat Buffalo today.

DAVE WANNSTEDT: Do you think he puts his guard down since they got the playoff win off his back?

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Hope not.

MICHAEL VICK: No, it's a bigger picture for Lamar. It's about Super Bowl. It's not about winning playoff games. This is the easy part.

TONY GONZALEZ: Just keep running the ball, Lamar.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Exactly.

Schrager, you've got more on the Ravens as they head into Buffalo. What's the latest there?

PETER SCHRAGER: Josh Allen is a 6'5" mountain of a man, but they had Derrick Henry last week and held him to just 40 yards rushing. Coach, you mentioned 19 carries for Allen. The message all week in Baltimore on the defensive side of the ball was we need to treat him as if he was Derrick Henry. Tackle him the same way and look at him in the same manner.

And one note, their defensive coordinator, Wink Martindale, 57 years old, defense is number two in the league; they've been number one the last three years. Zero interviews throughout this head-coaching process. The team is rallying around it. The defense thinks they can stop the Buffalo offense.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Thanks, Schrages.

The other AFC divisional game features Cleveland visiting the reigning champs in Kansas City tomorrow. And on paper it doesn't look like much of a contest. Where have we heard that before?

>> The Browns are back in the playoffs. First time in 18 years.

>> Four decades of futility. Pittsburgh's on the opposite end of the spectrum.

>> High over the head of Big Ben. The Browns have it in the end zone. Runs in for a touchdown! Kansas City, here we come.

>> Cleveland getting no respect. Don't hitch your wagon to them going to Arrowhead. They're going to get annihilated.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: The Steelers got annihilated by the Cleveland Browns. Wasn't even a contest. Colin, you and Baker have a colorful history going back and forth right there. How much of a chance do you give them to win at KC this weekend?

COLIN COWHERD: The line is 10. I don't understand it. Football in the playoffs is situational. It's about matchups. And nine times Patrick Mahomes has lost with the Chiefs. On average, the teams that beat him run for 166 yards and have 35 minutes of time to possession. That's the Browns. That's exactly what the Browns do. Also, Cleveland's a fast-starting team: Ten times at half this year, 10-0 in those games. Talk about Mahomes hasn't played in three weeks. It's reasonable to assume Cleveland takes a lead. Runs the ball. Eats the clock. I'm not saying they're going to win. But on paper this is the team that can beat them. Remember, Cleveland's offensive line, number -- highest graded O line in the sport. I'm telling you guys, the matchup is not -- it's scary if you're a --

CHARISSA THOMPSON: I can't believe Tony has been quiet this long.

TONY GONZALEZ: Yes, you're right. There's a formula of success to beat any team out there. But ifs and buts were coconuts, we'd have a Merry Christmas. It's tough to go out accomplish that. I think Andy Reid -- they were almost like bored seems like. You're right, they were playing down to the level of their competition, but it worked for them last year all the way to a Super Bowl. I think they're a better offense than they were last year. The points are up. Their efficiency is up. They have a running game with Clyde Edwards-Helaire, who is going to be healthy. And he's

going to be able to have that ground attack. I just --

MICHAEL VICK: And they've got 15 at quarterback.

TONY GONZALEZ: 15 at quarterback. And with Andy Reid, he's Willy Wonka. It's pure imagination with the calls he has on that side of the line ball. I don't think it's going to be that close for them. I think the Chiefs will go eye to eye and strike first and strike hard.

COLIN COWHERD: AFC is better, Lamar is better. Josh Allen is better. Baker is better. AFC is tougher this year.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: All right, Johnnie, break a leg.

Pair of former Cal Berkeley quarterbacks, and a look at why you can't throw out the record books when it's Brady versus Brady, "Kickoff" continues after this. What was that coconut thing?

TONY GONZALEZ: Something my coach used to say.

[COMMERCIAL].

>> The Packers look as good as anybody.

>> Aaron Rodgers is playing like an MVP.

>> Even though Aaron Donald makes a lot of money.

>> Who in the NFC is trying to go to Lambeau to take this thing.

>> An exclamation point by the Rams' top-rated defense. What a battle we have for you in the NFC.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Jared Goff will be the face of the Rams' offense today. He'll need to improve on the numbers he put up last week if he hopes to keep pace with Aaron Rodgers.

In that Rams' win at Seattle last week, Cam Akers was the wild card, racking up a touchdown and 176 scrimmage yards, second most ever for a rookie in his NFL postseason debut. Kristina Pink sat down with Akers to find out what's in store for act two.

>> Akers, a one-man game for the touchdown.

>> The rookie with a finger roll over the goal post.

KRISTINA PINK: Sean McVay told us before that game in Seattle that you don't have to get ready if you stay ready. You stay ready at all times.

CAM AKERS: Always, always.

KRISTINA PINK: You seem like a pretty quiet guy, very humble. Then I saw you're mic'ed up in Seattle.

CAM AKERS: Talking one-on-one all day.

KRISTINA PINK: You know what I'm talking about. You're trash talking, saying this is easy.

CAM AKERS: My offensive line made it easy. It was a breeze.

KRISTINA PINK: What's the difference in the Cam we're seeing here and the Cam that takes over on game day?

CAM AKERS: This is the in-front-of-the-camera Cam. I'm on the field, I get to be myself all the time, every play, you see me let loose, have fun, play football and enjoy the game.

>> Cam Akers, the rookie broke it loose.

KRISTINA PINK: You go into a place like Lambeau, it's historic, great atmosphere. What are your thoughts stepping inside of that building?

CAM AKERS: (Indiscernible) legends and people that played in the building, just to be able to be a kid, dream about that. And now actually to be here is a blessing. We'll go out and try to make the most of it, take advantage of it.

KRISTINA PINK: We're ready to see you shine in Green Bay.

CAM AKERS: I got you.

DAVE WANNSTEDT: He's going to be the star again. If I'm Sean McVay, I'm taking that game plan from last week against Seattle, going to the copy machine and just saying ditto, ditto, ditto, because you're going to the frozen tundra, and you're facing Aaron Rodgers. You cannot get into a shootout. That game plan is perfect.

They ran the ball 60% of the time. The most they ran it all year, the Rams. And you've got to take the air out of the football, as we said, which means shorten the game and give Aaron Rodgers less possessions.

COLIN COWHERD: I think Green Bay has better players, seven Pro Bowlers to two. The tight end for the Packer should have been a Pro Bowler, so should Kenny Clark.

I think a lot of people look at the Rams and think a couple

of stars. I think the stars are overwhelmingly on the Packers. I think they have the most underrated roster in the league. And they had three or four players that didn't make the Pro Bowl that should have.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Talking about good running backs, Aaron Jones, he put up 30 touchdowns over the last two seasons. He's an incredible weapon for Aaron Rodgers.

TONY GONZALEZ: Averaging 5.5 yards a carry, which is great. But to me he's the second-most important player on that team, over Davante Adams because of this. Because of this right here. When you can do this, and that defense has to step up --

CHARISSA THOMPSON: How much do you love that, Mike?

TONY GONZALEZ: What does that do for you as a defense?

MICHAEL VICK: Makes the game easier.

TONY GONZALEZ: Makes the game easier. So that is why Aaron Rodgers is playing at the MVP level. I do believe that this backfield that they have with Aaron Jones and Williams and even A.J. Dillon, who doesn't get that much time, it's the best backfield that Aaron Rodgers, I've seen him have, in a long time. And it's the reason why they're the number one team in the NFC.

MICHAEL VICK: When he touched the ball, it's like he's going to take it to the yard every time. It's like the new modern day Marshall Faulk. Just a good football player overall, in the backfield, out of the backfield. It's the player you want to be able to hand the ball off to to take it the distance.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: He's also the player you want in the locker room -- he's fun, light, yeah, good energy.

MICHAEL VICK: Great personality.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Coming up, our official weigh-in on today's heavyweight fight between Jalen Ramsey and Davante Adams. Plus, Tony gets defensive apparently with a pair of Smiths from Green Bay. Plenty more "Fox NFL Kickoff" after the break.

[COMMERCIAL].

[MUSIC]

CHARISSA THOMPSON: How lucky are we? Brees,

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

Brady, and Tom Brady should get another ring for his meme making. Faces the fact that he and Brees have 85 years between them. History channel might cover this game, I love it. I don't know who handles the social media, but it's great.

>> Old guys rule.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Tomorrow's contest is important to Brady for a number of reasons. Peter Schrage joins us with the details. Schrage?

PETER SCHRAGER: Yeah, look when the Buccaneers put together these contracts of this all-star team of sorts, a lot of it was incentive laden. We know about Antonio Brown being tied to a Super Bowl championship. Tom Brady gets \$500,000, a cool half million dollars, if he gets to the NFC Championship game. There's a lot at stake, some other carrots. I think that one helps. I don't know, does Tom Brady really need it? We'll see.

TONY GONZALEZ: Yeah.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: What's \$500,000 to Brady.

DAVE WANNSTEDT: What's another speed boat.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: What's another speed boat. This is the first playoff game with opposing quarterbacks over 40, but these two have already faced off twice this year. The Saints winning both. Colin, do they get a third?

COLIN COWHERD: I think the Saints win. The kryptonite for Brady and most great quarterbacks who are not real mobile has always been can you get a pass rush with rushing four. And the Saints have.

So in two games, the Saints have hit him 15 times and sacked him six. Now, remember Brady's also one of the best pre-snap quarterbacks of all time. And he gets rid of it quickly. What does that tell you? That offensive line for Tampa has struggled locking the Saints front.

He got hit nine times last game. That's the most he's been hit all year. And they don't bring a lot of pressure outside of those four. So it tells me there's a matchup issue. It tells me it's not going to be solved regardless of how many times they play.

DAVE WANNSTEDT: I'm going to tell you how it's going to get solved. I'll tell you. I like Tampa Bay. A lot has changed since the two teams played last time; we all agree on that. The biggest change is -- and the defense has been consistent all year; they'll be fine. But the biggest change is Bruce Arians and Tom Brady, in my opinion,

came together give and take.

What was the issue? You said Tom is getting hit. He was getting hit. Bruce was mad because he couldn't throw the ball down the field. What's happened since the last Saints game, all of a sudden they're running it more, they're throwing more play-action passes. They're keeping Gronk in as a blocker when they have to. And Tom is not getting hit, so he's throwing the ball down the field. I think their offense is hitting stride, Mike.

MICHAEL VICK: I just don't think it can happen three times in a row, and the Saints are going to have to make me a believer. I think the biggest caveat, the X factor is Antonio Brown. Who is going to guard -- is it going to be Lattimore on Brown? Is it going to be Janoris Jenkins on Brown?

Interesting matchups. We know Mike Evans and Lattimore has a nice thing going on there. They'll battle it out. But who is going to guard AB? He's the X factor. He's the guy that can catapult this team. He's the one that they need.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Still have to account for him on the field. And they're finding their rhythm in these last few weeks.

TONY GONZALEZ: They're starting to hit that rhythm. But you guys are hitting the Xs and Os here, but I've got to admit this is a little bittersweet for me to watch this game. I think this should be if you're just a sports fan in general, this is a game you want to watch.

These guys that have been going at it, two of the best quarterbacks to ever play -- top five in my opinion ever -- to put on a pair of pads. So I just want to be a fan this weekend. I don't want to overanalyze it. I just want to sit there enjoy the movie. Enjoy what we have. Because this is like Boyz II Men. It's so hard to say goodbye yesterday, because these guys have had a huge impact on what has been the product of the NFL over the past 20 years.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Tony has come to the end of his road here on "Fox NFL Kickoff" with all his analogies today. Kidding, you can stay as long as you want. More on the teams about Brady and Brees. Get you up to speed brought to you by State Farm.

We begin with Pam Oliver covering the Packers.

PAM OLIVER: Good morning. We caught a break as far as the weather is concerned. It was supposed to be in the 20s. The temperatures hover in the mid-30s today. Winds at about 10 to 15 miles an hour. Packers coming off that break. They're rested. They feel they're in good shape.



Head coach Matt LaFleur telling us, though, that he feels good about one thing: He likes how the team has come out. They've dug in and they are loose. One thing he doesn't like as much is that Aaron Donald guy. He's a pain, he said. He watched a lot of cut-ups of Donald. He said this is a guy that can wreak a lot of carnage, completely blow up a game; we have got to block him. Focus is what Davante Adams told us about. He said this Packers group is more focused than any group he's ever seen. He says it's all right there in front of us; we've got to take advantage. Now for what's happening with the Rams, here's Christina Pink.

KRISTINA PINK: Hello, Pam. The Packers might be rested but the Rams are a little banged up. No mystery around starting quarterback this week. Jared Goff will get the start although not 100 percent. Three weeks removed from surgery on his right thumb. You see him wearing some protective gloves on that thumb in the pregame warmups. Who is he going to be throwing the ball to? He'll not have his favorite target today. Cooper Kupp is out. He's dealing with bursitis in right knee. He didn't even practice at all this week. He'll be without left guard David Edwards. He's out with an ankle injury. Bobby Evans will get the start. But let's talk about the defense. We just saw Pam talking about Aaron Donald. Donald is good to go. Although he's dealing with a rib injury. He told me, ah, it's not that big a deal. At practice I felt fine. He worked out with it during the week. This is the guy also that Sean McVay refers to as The Terminator. And he will be wearing a protective flap on those ribs today. Charissa.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Thank you, Kristina. We appreciate it.

Don't forget, Terry, Howie and boys are less than 30 minutes away. They'll be here today and tomorrow with you. Get you ready for all the games. Speaking of full coverage, Aaron Donald hopes to be draped all over Aaron Rodgers today, Kristina said he's good to go. We'll take a look at this game head-to-head battle next.

[COMMERCIAL]

>> One playoff game from Green Bay is underway. In the end zone touchdown.

>> Michael Vick is up. Runs faster than anyone else on the field.

>> That pass is picked off.

>> This is pretty stunning.

>> They have just been beaten every way you can get

beaten and dominated every way you can get dominated.

[MUSIC]

CHARISSA THOMPSON: That fires me up. It's not the same frozen tundra Mike faced 18 years ago, but today's forecast 30s, possible snow, 6,000 fans in attendance should feel right at home. Mike, I can't believe that was 18 years ago.

MICHAEL VICK: You know --

CHARISSA THOMPSON: 27-7 you went in, you did the dang thing.

DAVE WANNSTEDT: Got the win.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: What do you remember about that?

MICHAEL VICK: Biggest memory is just looking across the field and just watching Brent Favre warm up. That was legendary. I think more than anything, I'll be honest with you guys, I was star struck.

TONY GONZALEZ: Why wouldn't you be?

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Love it. Like Jared Goff, you came in that game with a thumb injury, very similar to what Jared Goff has today. You clearly had success with it. He's hoping to do the same. How do you adjust for that?

MICHAEL VICK: I had success with it but I struggled. What Goff is going to have to go through is having to grip the football. And the most important finger on the football is the thumb. You've got to widen this thumb out and you've got to have the distance between the pointer finger and the thumb. If you can't get that, if you've got to bring this thumb in here because it's so swollen and it's hard to maneuver it down on the football, then he's going to have to cup it and just push it. And that's the most difficult thing I had to cup and push it. It was evident last week, against the Seattle Seahawks, he was pushing the ball down the field instead of throwing it because he couldn't grip it.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: That's why he's wearing those gloves. Now all of a sudden you're trying to do, that's a whole different thing, right?

MICHAEL VICK: It could help potentially with the grip, but good luck in the cold weather.

TONY GONZALEZ: I think he's going to struggle out there with the cold weather and everything else. Anyways, even before he had the injury, they were a little down on Jared

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

Goff anyway. And then last week they ran the ball 60% of the time. You brought it up earlier, Coach. I think that's going to be their recipe for success today. If they can't run the ball, then Jared Goff is going to have to throw the ball. And in that weather, with the thumb, I just don't see him having that much success.

COLIN COWHERD: Not only Goff has lost confidence but the coaching staff has lost confidence in him. Listening to Schrager's earlier report, I think you'll see a lot of what they call "exotics", a lot of movement, different sets, some trick plays. From the coaching staff, you saw this with Mike Zimmer and Kirk Cousins a few times this year, with the staff out on taking risks, I don't think you can beat Aaron Rodgers at Lambeau.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: If he was healthy he would be in there. So today it's going to be a total chess match between Jalen Ramsey and Davante Adams. The two are basically opposite sides of the same coin. As to who will win today, it's a toss-up.

[MUSIC]

>> I always feel like I'm the best defensive back that any receiver plays. I don't want just to say that; I want them to feel that.

I feel like nobody can even come close to guarding me when I get on the field man-to-man. There's certain things that the brain can't process. So my mind is one of my most powerful tools.

[MUSIC]

>> Against whoever, whoever is going to come, type of -- football is a physical game, it's furious game. I want to keep it that way.

>> I like to call it lunch meat. Just easy and everybody is edible out there.

TONY GONZALEZ: I like that: Lunchmeat.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Be humble. Who wins this one?

TONY GONZALEZ: Obviously it's going to be a great matchup. This is something that everybody wants to see. But I remember when I went against Kam Chancellor from the Seattle Seahawks, and one of the best All-Pro safeties, and I said to myself, What's really going to make me be successful? What's the numbers? I said 50 yards and a touchdown. That would mean that I won that matchup. And I think right now, looking at this matchup, can Jalen

Ramsey hold him under 60 yards? 60, 70 yards and a touchdown?

DAVE WANNSTEDT: I think so.

TONY GONZALEZ: I'll go with Ramsey on this one just because what he's done throughout the season. You've seen what he has done against the best receivers DeAndre Hopkins, what he's done against D.K. Metcalf. No receiver has had more than 50 yards against him since the first game of the season. That was Amari Cooper. Since then he's been the All-Pro, best defensive back in the NFL, best defensive back I've seen in a long time. I give the advantage to Ramsey.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Shut down corner for no reason. If you're the defensive coordinator for the Rams, how are you planning to scheme against Adams, Coach?

DAVE WANNSTEDT: I agree with Tony. I give Jalen the edge on this because Aaron's not going to wait very long for Davante Adams to get open, first thing he has to do is find him. I tell you they do a great job in Green Bay moving Davante Adams around. Look at this. This is really great game planning. They've got to move outside. They've got him in the slot. They've got him in the backfield.

TONY GONZALEZ: All over the place.

DAVE WANNSTEDT: You've got to find him first and now, okay, now if I'm Jalen Ramsey, now, okay, I know where he's at. If I'm in man coverage, or cat coverage, I've got this cat, you got that cat, it's easy. Everybody's just running with everybody.

But the majority of the defense that the Rams play is zone. So when you're in zone, and we saw where Davante is going to line up, and he motions, their coverage can change. So it's not just about the football; it's about the football intellect. And that's what makes Jalen Ramsey; he can get lined up. He can execute physically and mentally. This guy is a rare, rare player. Boy, outstanding.

MICHAEL VICK: It's really important motion. You've got to motion Davante Adams and keep him away from Jalen Ramsey. Don't line him up stationary so he can bump him. But what I would do if I'm Aaron Rodgers, I'm going down the yard. I'm telling Davante early, go deep. We're going to play a mind game with Jalen Ramsey and then we're going to come back, we're going to reboot start moving them around, like Coach said, get them in space and out breaking routes and play that mind game. Force him to cover.

COLIN COWHERD: Rams have the third highest graded



offensive line. Their hope is Cam Akers. That's the only avenue to a win I can see. Cam's big. They run the ball. Colts did a little bit of that with Philip Rivers to beat Green Bay earlier. That's the recipe. But that game was not at Lambeau.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: I'm excited to see Cam Akers throw the football, too. I can't wait. Today is the first time all season that fans have been in attendance at Lambeau. You'll bet they'll get their money's worth. Tony sits down with a pair of Packers defenders is next, when "Kickoff" returns. I'm excited.

TONY GONZALEZ: Excited.

[COMMERCIAL]

COOPER MANNING: Cooper Manning here. I know you may be asking yourself why moi. This is New Orleans and I'm wearing a Los Angeles Rams jersey. It's because I've become friends with all these huge LA stars. Now I know you my brothers. Did you know I have another brother who lives in Green Bay? We have a huge sibling rivalry.

>> You betcha, Coop.

COOPER MANNING: And if anybody knows anything about sibling rivalries, it's these guys.

>> Wait. That's not what I meant.

COOPER MANNING: Sure it's not. Speaking of old No. 12 there, he'll be the second best Aaron on the field this week.

>> You want to talk about second best? That quarterback of yours is the second best thing that come out of Cal on TV today.

COOPER MANNING: Who is the first? Tony Gonzales?

>> No. Serious.

COOPER MANNING: We're talking about A Rod, right?

>> Yeah. Dude.

COOPER MANNING: But old Sean McVay is going to expose more holes in your defense --

>> Oh, jeez. What do you know about cheese?

COOPER MANNING: Have you seen these segments?

>> No.

COOPER MANNING: You have 99 problems, dude, and all of them are that mustache. Ooha.

>> Dave Wannstedt would kill to have this mustache.

TONY GONZALEZ: That was good.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Funny. I was going to say my favorite Cal bear was Marshawn Lynch. But we won't get into that now. Thankfully not everyone with the same last name works together so poorly. Tony, Preston and Za'Darius Smith seem to be getting along just fine in Green Bay.

TONY GONZALEZ: That's putting it mildly. They are in sync. They might as well be brothers. Although they're not. From knocking down passes or quarterbacks, they can make any offense miserable. But talking to them, what stands out to me is just how much fun they're having and how they treat this game like a gift.

ZA'DARIUS SMITH: What I got a gift. Merry Christmas.

TONY GONZALEZ: I saw the Christmas gift you gave Preston. What was that about? What prompted you to give him a car?

ZA'DARIUS SMITH: To tell you the truth, man, I didn't really get it for him. It was all a joke.

TONY GONZALEZ: It was a joke?

ZA'DARIUS SMITH: But it was a good one. Preston was just talking about this car. I told him, we got to the car, I just recorded it like I bought it for him. I know the world been thinking I really got it for him, but I didn't.

PRESTON SMITH: We love each other. Not that much to give each other a car. We give each other a lot of good gifts, but I just like the family feel we have around here.

TONY GONZALEZ: I was going to say in my 17 years I've seen good gifts, but I've never seen another player give another player a car.

ZA'DARIUS SMITH: What was it, \$80,000 car? No way. No way.

>> Having lots of fun.

TONY GONZALEZ: You guys have the second-most sacks over the last two years for a duo.

>> Za'Darius Smith and Preston Smith sandwich the



quarterback.

TONY GONZALEZ: Do you guys feel you run under the radar a little bit?

ZA'DARIUS SMITH: A little bit. But that adds fuel to the fire, just keep us going. We really don't want to be considered as one of the best. We want to be the best.

PRESTON SMITH: Great answer, Z.

TONY GONZALEZ: You've got Aaron Donald and Ramsey on the other side. I remember when I used to go against someone like Shannon Sharpe or Antonio Gates, for me in my mind I was like, okay, it's time, I'm going to show -- you guys think they're good; I'm going to show you how good I am. Do you feel that coming into this game?

PRESTON SMITH: It's definitely something you think about, but it's all or nothing right now. It's win or go home. We know they've got some great players on their team do a lot of great things to help them out, but we've got to do a lot of great things to help our team at.

ZA'DARIUS SMITH: Great answer, P.

>> Za'Darius Smith with the sack and strip. Preston Smith with the scoop and score.

TONY GONZALEZ: Not only are you guys good with the sack dances but you had a hell of a touchdown dance against the Bears. You guys rehearse this stuff? Where does that come from?

PRESTON SMITH: A lot of times we choreograph, sometimes we might be on the fly, or we just might be doing some stuff throughout the week. We might be, we like that. Let's do that. Guys come together and we come up with a celebration and we do something fun.

TONY GONZALEZ: You got something special this weekend, Za'Darius? Anything on your shirt? Anything good for us?

ZA'DARIUS SMITH: Yes, sir. We've got something very special for you all, and that's the defense, too, for turnovers. We've got something very special as a group, yes. It's going to be real nice and fun. We know the world is watching, man, so we can't wait.

DAVE WANNSTEDT: Fun guy. Tony, great job. I'll tell you what, Mike Pettine, their defensive coordinator, these guys must be fun to coach, and they're responding. Look how they've improved throughout the year. And really the measuring stick for me was we all talked here all year,

particularly Colin, the perception, Green Bay is not tough enough.

COLIN COWHERD: I know tough.

DAVE WANNSTEDT: Tough. They're not tough enough. They can't stop the run. Well, week 16, when they played the Titans, Derrick Henry and that Titans' offensive line, one of the best in the league, Derrick Henry's longest run was 10 yards. And I think you could almost read that the mentality was from a defensive standpoint, and I could hear Mike Pettine saying it: Guys, if we think we'll go to the Super Bowl, we have to hold up our end of the bargain. And they are.

MICHAEL VICK: They have to defend Robert Woods. I think he's a bright spot on the offense. I like the way Sean McVay uses him, a hybrid type of player. He's going to have to be heavily involved in the offense. I like what he do, the way they use them, in the backfield, out the backfield, a hybrid kind of player, can catch it, good with the football in his hand, he can run it. He'll have to generate some offense today.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: He's going to have to without Cooper Kupp being out. That's Robert Woods all day. One story lost in all this is the close relationship that these two head coaches have -- Sean McVay and Matt LaFleur. Schrages, I know you know them very well. What do you have on them?

PETER SCHRAGER: I spoke with Sean McVay, and he said in 2010 when he and Matt LaFleur were assistant coaches for Washington Redskins, he lived across the street from Matt and his wife, and he was the third wheel. They would go out to local restaurants. He was the third guy in. And he said he felt like he was the extra guy, but they always took him in.

But I'll tell you this, Kyle Shanahan knows them very well. I spoke to Kyle this morning. He says these guys were so competitive when they were all together in Washington that he would have to tell them to chill. One time they were doing drills and McVay would not want to lose to LaFleur. Said he was so nervous that McVay ended up throwing up because he was trying too hard. He said, just chill out, Sean. Kyle Shanahan will be watching today. A lot of people are saying, just chill out, Sean. He's not chilling out; he wants to beat LaFleur.

TONY GONZALEZ: There's another matchup that I think people are overlooking. They're talking about Davante Adams and Jalen Ramsey. What about Corey Linsley, First-Team All-Pro, going against Aaron Donald. Normally I would say that's Aaron Donald. He's one in a billion. And

he's going to manhandle him. But with those ribs, I question his effectiveness -- 80% going against that First-Team All-Pro. That's a matchup you guys will want to watch because that could determine the outcome of the game.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Colin had rib injuries. Never been the same since.

COLIN COWHERD: We look at the Packers, they were overwhelmed by the Niners at the end of the year. We think, they have a long way to go. They had seven players either Pro Bowl or All-Pro on offense or should have been. That's just on offense. Robert Tonyan, their tight end, didn't make the Pro Bowl. Should have. He had 11 TDs. Stacked.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Coming up, Jay Glazer sits down with Sean McVay and Matt LaFleur for more. And I talked to Cole Beasley a bit longer. His big matchup with the Ravens coming up. We've got more Super Six coming up after the break.

>> Divisional playoffs and the Fox Super-6 game is giving away a half million dollars. Just pick six outcomes and you win. Ha! So whose money is it this time big guy, yours?

>> Nope, yours.

>> Mine, I did the regular season. What are you talking about.

>> Win Terry's money is for the playoffs, too. Download the Fox Super-6 app for your chance to win \$500,000 and Terry's all new 2021 Ford F-150. Enter both divisional contests now play now. It's free to play.

[COMMERCIAL]

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Best in the biz, Schragger.

No matter how you say his name, he's a winner. He's won America's heart and our Super-6 contest. Congrats. Well deserved. Well deserved.

TONY GONZALEZ: Speech.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: He's speechless.

PETER SCHRAGER: I want to thank my four-year-old son. He made all the picks.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: I need to have children, one reason only. This is Super-6. Two great contests for you this weekend today. There's a quarter of million dollars of

Terry's money on the line. Download the app to play free. Then just answer six simple questions about today's Rams-Packers game. And tune in tomorrow for your chance to win another \$250,000. And one random entrant will also win Terry's truck. Giving away trucks now. We are going to each pick a winner of today's game and by how much. I'm taking the Packers by 10.

PETER SCHRAGER: I'm going Rams by 3. Rams by 3. Upset special, Cam Akers.

TONY GONZALEZ: All right. I'm going to take the Packers by 6.

MICHAEL VICK: Packers by 10 by Rams.

DAVE WANNSTEDT: I'm a company man, Packers by 10.

COLIN COWHERD: Packers by 7.

CHARISSA THOMPSON: Ford "Fox NFL Special" starts right now.

TONY GONZALEZ: Enjoy.

[COMMERCIAL]

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

