

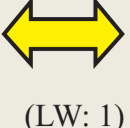


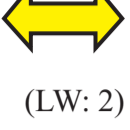


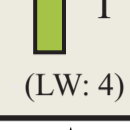
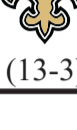


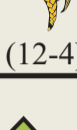


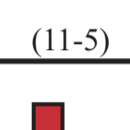


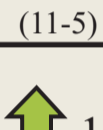


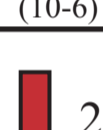

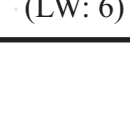



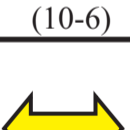


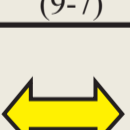



















In the Red Zone

Slot	Team	Three easy steps/slides to get there
1	 (13-3)	1) They'll begin post-season play riding a winning streak (11 games). Under the current format, no No. 1 seed that entered the playoffs with a losing streak (that range includes this year's Colts and Saints) won it all. Their championship hopes just got better. 2) That was mathematical evidence...do you want factual one? 3) PRAISING ZONE. When Billy Volek finished leading the Bolts over the Redskins during last weekend's action, the Chargers became the only team among the contenders for which their backups came through. Personnel-wise --and in general--, they're more than ready.
  (LW: 1)		BEHIND: REDSKINS (23-20, W) AHEAD: BYE - PLAYOFFS
2	 (14-2)	1) I didn't like it either, but I understood the decision of resting their starters. That was until... 2) Reggie Wayne and Dallas Clark played long enough to register their respective 100th grabs of the season. I don't know about you, but to me, it sure smells like a double-standard was cooked around Indy. 3) PRAISING ZONE. Then again, what can I say? They earned the right to pick their poison, and they're the ones that are going to have to live with the results. More than ever, the ball's in their court...er, side of the field.
  (LW: 2)		BEHIND: @BILLS (30-7, L) AHEAD: BYE - PLAYOFFS
3	 (11-5)	1) Against the Eagles --and with a division title on the line--, they pitched their 2nd shutout in a row for the first time in team history. That's not all... 2) Tony Romo averaged a 104.1 QB rating in 5 December/January contests; the Cowboys finished with a winning record after Dec. 1 for the first time since 1996; and they snapped a nine-game losing streak in season finales. I told you. 3) PRAISING ZONE. This is a team that has been pushed to the brink (more than once), and somehow, has lived to tell about it. It wouldn't surprise me if they go on to win it all. No, really.
  (LW: 4)		BEHIND: EAGLES (24-0, W) AHEAD: EAGLES - PLAYOFFS
4	 (13-3)	1) Without playing, Drew Brees broke the NFL record for completion percentage in a season (70.60 % efficiency). Even when he isn't on the field, he remains relevant. Then again... 2) Led by his backup, Mark Brunell , the Saints became the first No. 1 seed to enter the playoffs on a three-game skid. On second thoughts, this was probably the mark Brees should've been interested in breaking. 3) PRAISING ZONE. "Would I have loved it if we came out here and scored 41 today? I mean, yeah," Saints' QB Drew Brees said. That's just Brees being...cool.
  (LW: 5)		BEHIND: @PANTHERS (23-10, L) AHEAD: BYE - PLAYOFFS
5	 (12-4)	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Scary thoughts:</u></p> 1) As a tune-up for the playoffs, the Vikings decided to play <i>with</i> (and not against) the Giants in order to make a statement. They succeeded. 2) Percy Harvin totaled 2,081 all-purpose yards; but the thing that clinched him the <i>Offensive Rookie of the Year</i> award was the element of fear. No other rookie attracted the kind of attention that Harvin did. 3) Brett Favre tossed only seven INT's in the calendar, and nobody expected to see that few. If he sustains that momentum 1 more month, the rest of the field is in danger: An efficient Favre is the most dangerous one.
  (LW: 7)		BEHIND: GIANTS (44-7, W) AHEAD: BYE - PLAYOFFS
6	 (11-5)	1) They travelled to Dallas as the 3rd-highest scoring offense in the League (28.6 points-per-game average). With no points put on the scoreboard, they left as the 5th. 2) Eagles' LB Will Witherspoon became the 5th player to play 17 regular-season games (because of a trade). I wouldn't worry about resting him, though. Given that the Dallas offense achieved 474 yards, it's safe to say that just like the rest of his defensive mates, he took the week off. 3) "We're going to go back to the drawing board," Eagles' head coach Andy Reid . And for their sake, I hope their homework is done by now.
  (LW: 3)		BEHIND: @COWBOYS (24-0, L) AHEAD: @COWBOYS - PLAYOFFS
7	 (11-5)	1) With Aaron Kampman and Al Harris , the Packers gave up 20.3 points per game through 10 outings. After they went down, Green Bay surrendered 15.67 units in their last 6. Charles Woodson (career-best 9 INT's, franchise-record 3 INT-returns for TD's) was the main responsible in holding down the fort, and yes, he's your <i>Defensive Player of the Year</i> . 2) Aaron Rodgers was sacked 41 times in his first 9 games. He was sacked 9 times in the last 7 contests. In the end, he survived; and for that alone, the Packers have a really, really good chance to go deep. 3) MAGIC NUMBER UPDATE. 3-0.
  (LW: 8)		BEHIND: @CARDS (33-7, W) AHEAD: @CARDS - PLAYOFFS
8	 (10-6)	1) Carson Palmer completed 1 of 11 passes for zero yards and an interception. His brother Jordan had a better game just by avoiding being sent to the field. 2) "It was not the outcome we wanted," Bengals coach Marvin Lewis said. I believe him. Let's call it...a hunch. 3) Say, Chad...will you be game for the rematch in the playoffs? "We'll be fine," Bengals' WR Chad Ochocinco . And I also believe him. Again, let's call it...another hunch.
  (LW: 6)		BEHIND: @JETS (37-0, L) AHEAD: JETS - PLAYOFFS

Inside Enemy Territory

Slot	Team	Three easy steps/slides to get there
9	 (10-6)	1) "When we come to play and are playing on all cylinders, we can play with anybody." Cards' WR Larry Fitzgerald said. I know that... 2) "We know we have some work to do and our main focus is [wild-card] weekend." Cards' DT Darnell Dockett said. I like the fact that they're aware of that... 3) "I think our team is ready to play in the playoffs," Cards' head coach Ken Whisenhunt . And after being beaten by Green Bay in both the third pre-season game and the regular season...They better show up this time and do exactly that.
  (LW: 9)		BEHIND: PACKERS (33-7, L) AHEAD: PACKERS - PLAYOFFS
10	 (10-6)	1) When Drew Bledsoe went down, Tom Brady emerged; when Brady was lost, Matt Cassell answered the call. Now that Wes Welker is out for the year, folks are already assuming that Julian Edelman will pick up the slack smoothly. And you know what? I won't bet against him. 2) Ronnie Brown on Offense; Bernard Pollard on Defense. That's how you start an Anti-Patriots team. 3) Whether to defend Randy Moss ; or to blast Houston's turf; or to refute Charley Casserly's reports, in less than a month, Bill Belichick gave more material to the media than in several years combined. Seize this.
  (LW: 10)		BEHIND: @TEXANS (34-27, L) AHEAD: RAVENS - PLAYOFFS
11	 (9-7)	1) With 89 total yards, Ray Rice became the 2nd player in team history (Jamal Lewis) to have more than 2,000 yards from scrimmage. And yes, without a doubt, he is the team MVP. 2) But on the most important day of their season, Willis McGahee put the Ravens on his back, and with a career-high 167 rushing yards and 3 TD's, singlehandedly carried them to the playoffs. 3) Back in '03, Jack del Rio placed an ax in the Jags' locker room and his punter got injured. This week, I saw that John Harbaugh keeps a sword in the Ravens' locker room. Do we need a tragedy for these things to stop?
  (LW: 11)		BEHIND: @RAIDERS (21-13, W) AHEAD: @PATRIOTS - PLAYOFFS
12	 (9-7)	1) <u>The good:</u> Kudos to Deshae Townsend . His 2nd quarter INT on Sunday was the first by a Steelers' CB all year. 2) <u>The bad:</u> Amazingly, Ben Roethlisberger ended the year tied with Aaron Rodgers for the League lead in sacks endured (50). He now has been taken down 143 times in the last 3 years. What's Pittsburgh's off-season priority? O-Linemen, of course. 3) <u>The irrelevant:</u> They defeated 2 playoff teams (Green Bay, Baltimore) and 1 contender (Miami) in the last 3 weeks. But unfortunately for them, it was too little, too late.
  (LW: 12)		BEHIND: @DOLPHINS (30-24, W) AHEAD: OFF-SEASON
13	 (8-8)	1) 11 straight 100-yard games on the ground; 6th player with 2,000 rushing yards in season (2,006); NFL-record 2,509 yards from scrimmage in a single campaign. That's the résumé of your <i>Offensive Player of The Year</i> , Chris Johnson . 2) In the last 10 weeks of the season, they only lost to the Colts and the Chargers. They can't be ranked lower than No. 13 - at least on this chart. 3) Back in '06, the Titans started 0-5 and Vince Young rallied them to finish 8-8. This year, he brought them back from 0-6 to achieve another 8-8 mark. Out of curiosity, let's give him one more try from Opening Day.
  (LW: 13)		BEHIND: @SEAHAWKS (17-13, W) AHEAD: OFF-SEASON
14	 (9-7)	1) The Falcons did it. They posted back-to-back winning campaigns for the first time in franchise history... 2) And a lot of the credit for that feat goes to --the last man standing in their backfield-- Jason Snelling (25 carries for 147 yards last Sunday). Who, after being assigned the starting spot at RB, got 274 of his 613 units during Atlanta's season-saving three-game winning streak. 3) Joe Flacco's Ravens ended 9-7. Matt Ryan's Falcons finished 9-7 as well. Were you really expecting anything other than that?
  (LW: 15)		BEHIND: @BUCS (20-10, W) AHEAD: OFF-SEASON
15	 (9-7)	1) They have both the NFL's No. 1 ranked rushing attack, and the League's top ranked D--The ideal pair to create havoc in the post-season. 2) So, why aren't they ranked in the top 12 on this chart given that they made the playoffs? Because if I let myself be driven just by the raw numbers, I would eliminate all the fun. 3) "All that matters is that we are in the postseason,"... "You earn everything you get in this league. Nothing is given to you." Jets' RT Damien Woody said. All right Damien, I'll give you that...See? I just trounced his argument.
  (LW: 18)		BEHIND: BENGALS (37-0, W) AHEAD: PLAYOFFS - BYE
16	 (9-7)	1) Here are RB Arian Foster's totals for the season: 6 games, 54 carries, 257 yards, 3 TD's. And he was the Texans' "best" runner. Reason enough for his team to be kept out of the playoffs. 2) Here are some of LB Brian Cushing's totals for the season: 134 tackles (87 solo), 5 sacks, 4 INT's. Those made him a very deserving recipient of <i>Defensive Rookie of the Year</i> honors. Reason enough for his team to finish above .500 for the first time in franchise history. 3) "I'm disappointed with the way Cincinnati played," Texans' owner Bob McNair said. Sir, please...let's not start with THE disappointments.
  (LW: 19)		BEHIND: PATRIOTS (34-27, W) AHEAD: OFF-SEASON