

Pre-season NFL games

# Is anyone out there paying attention?

By John Grabowski

Unless your name happens to be George Steinbrenner, you probably don't assign much importance to the

## PeeWee/Bantam Soccer results

**Blue**  
Noteworthy players: The whole team.

**Green**  
Noteworthy players: Sarah Fenske, Michelle Boulanger, Tracy Metler.

**Orange**  
Goals: Melanie Booth 3, Sarah Williamson, Nicole Remedios, Yvonne Bergsma.  
Noteworthy players: Leslie Searth, Sarah Williamson, Cathy Pau.

**Purple**  
Goals: Alexis Kerr, Andrea McNeilly 2, Ithil Burrows.  
Noteworthy players: Alexis Kerr, Ann Bowman, Julie O'Neil.

**White**  
Goal: Wendy Padillo.  
Noteworthy players: Michelle Boulanger, Tracy Metler, Angela Fitzsimmons.

**White**  
Noteworthy players: Cindy Harnden, Leanne Inglis.

results of exhibition games. Pre-season competition in the National Football League is the time for experimentation. Rookies and marginal players try to make enough of an impression to be included on the opening day roster. For the most part, NFL veterans use pre-season games to fine-tune their skills, bringing their bodies to the point needed to face the long season. Head coach Wayne Fontes of the Detroit Lions, for instance, is undoubtedly more anxious for his players to learn the intricacies of the new "silver streak" offense than to roll over their exhibition opponents. On the other hand, is the Steinbrenner way completely wrong? Do the psychological benefits of a strong showing in pre-season "exhibition" games carry over into the regular NFL campaign? When push comes to shove, just how much do these games mean prior to opening day? Let's examine records for the NFL in the past six years. Although the results of individual years vary considerably, the overall figures seem to indicate there is a positive correlation in the NFL between success in the pre-season and regular season. Over the past six seasons, 15 NFL teams have cumulative records above the .500 mark in the regular season. Of those teams, 11 also have winning exhibition records over the same period of time. For 1983-88 combined, the only NFL teams with winning records in pre-season and losing marks in the regular season were the Kansas City

Chiefs in the AFC and Minnesota Vikings in the NFC. Interestingly, the teams that have had the best cumulative regular-season marks in each of the three AFC divisions also have had the best cumulative records in pre-season games. Despite their recent troubles, the Miami Dolphins hold the top spot, respectively, in both categories in the AFC East (.520 pre-season; .621 regular season). Likewise the Cleveland Browns are number one in the AFC Central (.667; and .568); and the Denver Broncos in the West (.640 and .658). During the regular season, three NFC clubs bettered Denver's AFC-leading winning percentage.

The NFC Central Chicago Bears have compiled the league's best record since 1983: 69 wins against only 26 losses, for a winning percentage of .726. The NFC West San Francisco 49ers, the defending Super Bowl champ, are next in line at .721 (68-26-1). But the club with the best overall mark in pre-season NFL games during the past six years is none other than the New York Giants.

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