

NINERS' NUGGETS

Week of April 15, 2013

By Robert J. Nash

The NFL released their official schedule for all 32 teams on Thursday and while we've known the 2013 match-ups for some time, we now know when/what time the teams will meet, which games are nationally televised, and on what network they might appear. Below is the schedule. The 49ers will play 2 Sunday night games, 2 on Monday, and one Thursday game (before heading to London).

Personally, I am most excited about the week one game vs. Green Bay. This will be the second consecutive season the two power-houses have opened the season against one another and it is sure to be a battle. The Niners got the best of the Pack twice during the 2012 season; they won 30-22 in the



opener and the second victory came during the Divisional Round of the NFC playoffs when the Niners won 45-31. I imagine both games left a bad taste in Aaron Rodgers' mouth as well as the rest of the Packers and they will be out for blood. They won't be caught off guard by the arm and legs of Collin Kaepernick this

time around either. That being said, I still think the Niners walk away with the win on opening day. The game is at home and Kaepernick will have the entire off-season to practice and fine tune his already incredible skills. I don't see the Niners being "hung over" after their Super Bowl loss either, but resilient. Last year they proved that 2011 wasn't a fluke. This year there going to prove that they're not going anywhere for a while.

The Niners won't have it easy as they try to return to the Super Bowl this year though as they'll face off against the resurgent AFC South. They'll play Indianapolis, Houston, and Jacksonville at home....though to be fair, the "home game" against Jacksonville is in London, but they get to *play* as the home team....in another country. The match-up seems unfair really. A team on the east coast obviously has a much shorter flight and less of a time change than a team on the west. Why not have two east coast teams for the London game? Or even two west coast based teams? Yes, I know they receive a bye the following week, but that really means little in my opinion. Both the Indy and Houston games should be entertaining. The Texans are coming off another stellar season which saw them claim their first AFC South title as well as a playoff victory. Meanwhile, the Colts didn't miss a beat during their second season without Manning under center as Andrew Luck took a surprise trip to the playoffs as a wild-card. Look for the Colts to be an improved team this season. I think the Niners might split these two games – possibly a win against Houston and an upset loss to Indy. I think they can win at Tennessee and the Jacksonville game, well that's anyone's guess. I will be pessimistic and give the team a 2-2 record against the AFC South.

They'll also have their hands full with the rise of the NFC South. They'll host Carolina and Atlanta while visiting New Orleans and Tampa Bay. All of these teams can be nasty. Of course we played the Falcons in the NFC Championship and barely snuck by. New Orleans made a small comeback towards the end of the 2012 season. With the return of their coach I have the feeling they'll make a strong push for the playoffs, though probably not as powerful as their 2010-2011 squad. Both Tampa Bay and Carolina are

building towards a bright future; each has the components to win big games. I still believe the Niners will win both, but they'll be close. I think they will split the New Orleans and Atlanta games – let's say that Atlanta squeaks past us. That gives us a 3-1 record there.

We'll be treated to a showdown with RG3 and the Redskins *in* Washington on Monday Night Football. This should be a fun to watch. Two quick footed QBs who also have laser precision passing. I think the Niners have the advantage with defense, but it won't be an easy win by any means. Especially in front of that loud Washington crowd on National television. It will also follow a loud, tough game against the Saints. I'll give Washington the early nod.

Of course the rest of the season will feature the other members of the NFC West. I am anxious to see where Seattle is at this year. I do not believe they were a Cinderella team in 2012, but I wonder how they will respond this season. I will give them a home win against the Niners while praying we take one when they visit Candlestick for the final time. I will assume that we can beat the Cardinals both times. But what about those pesky Rams? We tied them in the first meeting last season and then lost in OT the second time. I believe any Jeff Fischer squad has the potential to win, but I just can't believe that Coach Harbaugh will allow two more similar performances like last season against the Rams. In fact, I bet he has them circled on his calendar. Look for the Niners to take both, putting them at 5-1 in their division.

So, for those keeping up, my insanely-early-but-still-awesome 2013 projection for San Francisco is 11-5 (though a +/- in either direction wouldn't shock me). Niners will take the division title, but not until the final weeks as the Seahawks stick close. I'll get really crazy and say that the 49ers take the top seed in the playoffs thanks to a much tougher NFC South. Niners will make it to their second consecutive Super Bowl to win that coveted 6th Lombardi Trophy! Though, to be fair, it is 3 a.m. and I am sleep deprived so I reserve the right to change my mind as soon as I read this post in the light of day.

Week 1: Sunday, Sept. 8, vs. Green Bay, 1:25 p.m. (FOX)

Week 2: Sunday, Sept. 15, at Seattle, 5:30 p.m. (NBC)

Week 3: Sunday, Sept. 22, vs. Indianapolis, 1:25 p.m. (CBS)

Week 4: Thursday, Sept. 26, at St. Louis, 5:25 p.m. (NFLN)

Week 5: Sunday, Oct. 6, vs. Houston, 5:30 p.m. (NBC)

Week 6: Sunday, Oct. 13, vs. Arizona, 1:25 p.m. (FOX)

Week 7: Sunday, Oct. 20, at Tennessee, 1:05 p.m. (FOX)

Week 8: Sunday, Oct. 27, vs. Jacksonville (London), 10 a.m. (FOX)

Week 9: BYE

Week 10: Sunday, Nov. 10, vs. Carolina, 1:05 p.m. (FOX)

Week 11: Sunday, Nov. 17, at New Orleans, 1:25 p.m. (FOX)

Week 12: Monday, Nov. 25, at Washington, 5:30 p.m. (ESPN)

Week 13: Sunday, Dec. 1, vs. St. Louis, 1:05 p.m. (FOX)

Week 14: Sunday, Dec. 8, vs. Seattle, 1:25 p.m. (FOX)

Week 15: Sunday, Dec. 15, at Tampa Bay, 10 a.m. (FOX)

Week 16: Monday, Dec. 23, Atlanta, 5:30 p.m. (ESPN)

Week 17: Sunday, Dec. 29, at Arizona, 1:25 p.m. (FOX)

Hope everyone has a great weekend – enjoy some great baseball matchups and the NBA playoffs!

Robert Nash is the owner of Rudder Writing Services and covers the Texas Rangers, San Francisco 49ers and San Antonio Spurs for kingsportsnews.com. Follow him on Twitter [@FreelancerNash](https://twitter.com/FreelancerNash), "Like" him on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/FreelancerNash) add him to your network on [Google](https://www.google.com/) or visit him at www.freelancernash.com