



Does spate of big-name injuries threaten 18-game NFL season?

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By Howard Smith, US Presswire

Packers RB Ryan Grant suffered an ankle injury in Week 1 that will keep him out for the rest of the season.



The painful trend from the NFL's opening week? A rash of devastating, season-ending injury hits impacting legitimate [Super Bowl](#) contenders.

Consider:

- [Green Bay Packers](#) running back [Ryan Grant](#) is finished for the season after tearing a right ankle ligament early in Green Bay's victory against the [Philadelphia Eagles](#).
- [New York Jets](#) nose tackle [Kris Jenkins](#), 31, is done as well after shredding the anterior cruciate ligament in his surgically repaired left knee in Monday night's loss against the [Baltimore Ravens](#)— 11 months after suffering the same fate.

- The [Houston Texans](#) lost up-and-coming, pass-rushing defensive end Connor Barwin to a dislocated right ankle in their win against Indianapolis.
- Off-injured Colts safety [Bob Sanders](#) underwent surgery on his torn biceps tendon performed by [Dr. James Andrews](#) Wednesday. The Colts kept Sanders on the rosters, keeping alive the chance that the 2007 Defensive Player of the Year might return this season.

Kickoff week's injury toll was so dispiriting that Texans right tackle [Eric Winston](#) suggested commissioner [Roger Goodell](#) and league owners re-think their push to play 18 regular-season games come the 2012 season.

POWER RANKINGS: [Texans rising as Saints, Packers top heap](#)

"It makes you take a step back and say, 'Whoa, is this what we really want?,' " Winston said. "If this doesn't do it, I don't know what will ... And that's not even the guys who suffered concussions like (Eagles quarterback) [Kevin Kolb](#) and even ([Detroit Lions](#) quarterback) [Matthew Stafford](#) out a few weeks with a shoulder injury.

"If you think we had some meaningless games last year in Week 16 and 17, what's going to happen in Week 17 and 18? That's a thing people need to take a harder look at."

Was the attrition rate in Week 1 out of the norm?

"Whenever you have a collision sport like football,

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it's inevitable something's going to happen because you are contacting other athletes at high impact," said Dr. Alexis Chiang Colvin, an orthopedic surgeon specializing in sports medicine at New York's Mount Sinai School of Medicine. "I don't think it's unusual that any of those injuries happened. But because they all clustered together in the same week, it did seem a little bit unusual.

"You have to look at the whole season at the end to see if it was a trend or an outlier. It's hard to say so early.

"Who knows for the next couple of months, if there will be very few (injuries)?"

New Orleans Saints player representative Drew Brees raised questions about the long-term effect on already fatigued bodies if two more regular-season games are added.

"That's definitely a concern, anytime you increase the number of competitive games, you're certainly at risk for more injuries," Dr. Colvin says. "Especially with the concern now and all this awareness about concussions. I'm sure that's going to come into play when they talk about extending the season."

Texans general manager Rick Smith was en route to visiting Barwin at the hospital Tuesday when he reflected on losing the second-year player.

"That was a tough loss because he worked really, really hard and had done some things that made us say, 'Wow, he has a chance to really impact the pass-rush situation,' " Smith said

"But these things have a way of leveling out. I don't anticipate there's going to be an injury increase. Sometimes they come in bunches.

"You know, more often than not you're going to lose guys. The healthy teams tend to be the ones that last through the playoffs and into the Super Bowl. So you're just hoping for good luck as you're trying to make a run."

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