

# NFL looks into more foreign affairs

## League seeks regular basis for games abroad

By **DARREN URBAN**  
TRIBUNE

**MEXICO CITY** • The goal for the NFL is for Sunday night's Cardinals-49ers game to not only be the first regular season matchup outside the United States, but the first of many — no matter what the individual teams might think.

The Cardinals were willing to give up a home game for the trip, something most teams do not want to do. Commissioner Paul Tagliabue said in a pregame press conference that can't be an issue.

"We have to make it a universal obligation," Tagliabue said, noting it would only affect teams once every 16 years (it would actually be once every 32 years, since the visiting teams don't lose a home game).

"It has to be institutionalized," Tagliabue said. "Then this can begin to gain momentum."

Tagliabue also said the league has thought about expansion into both Mexico and Canada, which gave him an opportunity to needle Cards coach Dennis Green. On Saturday, Green said he wanted expansion to 40 teams — mistakenly saying that the NFL already had 36. There are 32 teams.

"I have thought about teams everywhere, but I think Coach Green already thinks we expanded," Tagliabue quipped. "He

doesn't know we have 32 teams. Maybe he thinks he was beaten by 36 teams."

### KING RACKERS

Kicker Neil Rackers could have tied an NFL record for field goals in a game Sunday, had Green chosen to attempt a final field goal. Green even said he was tempted as the game came to an end, since the 49ers kept calling timeouts with the game clearly over.

But Rackers didn't mind — "That's not the kind of man he is," Rackers said of his coach — and was happy enough with his 6-for-6 performance.

"I'd be lying if I said I wouldn't be satisfied at this point," said Rackers, who is now 16-for-16 on field goals this season.

### STELLAR LINE

The night started ugly for the offensive line, when rookie guard Elton Brown got beat by the 49ers' Bryant Young, leading to a sack, fumble and San Francisco touchdown.

But overall, the line was excellent, even with right tackle Fred Wakefield playing his first NFL game on offense.

"The first series, I was a little jittery, but as we got rolling I got comfortable," Wakefield said. "We did better tonight. We need to get back to the run. Once we get that, we'll have the whole package."

### BIG CROWD

The crowd of 103,467 was the



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**OLÉ!** Fans cheer Sunday at Estadio Azteca in Mexico City during the first NFL game to be held outside the United States.

largest in NFL regular season history, topping the 102,368 that saw the 49ers play the Los Angeles Rams Nov. 10, 1957.

"When this many people show up to watch you do your job," Cardinals quarterback Josh McCown said, "it's something special."

Originally, the NFL told the media the capacity was 85,000, but it turned out the stadium manifest did not include their version of suites, which brought the capacity well over 100,000.

### EXTRA POINTS

With cornerback Antrel Rolle out and fellow starter David Macklin having to leave early Sunday night with his

problem hamstring, the Cards turned to their depth, including veteran Robert Tate — cut before the season and just re-signed this week. Tate responded, coming up with an interception and a forced fumble as the defense dominated the 49ers.

"Coach Green gave me a chance and I understand my role," Tate said. "A couple guys went down and I wanted to pick up the slack."

Rookie cornerback Eric Green missed the birth of his first child over the weekend, after the baby was born a week early. He celebrated by stripping 49ers receiver Brandon Lloyd in the first half and recovering the fumble.

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