

ULTIMATE STANDINGS

IN ITS
EIGHTH YEAR ...

... OUR SURVEY
CROWNS THE ...

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS BY
the **Warsaw Sports**
Marketing Center at the
University of Oregon
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FAN SURVEYS BY
Maddock Douglas and
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... SAINTS NO. 1
AT GIVING FANS ...

... EQUAL PARTS
MUSCLE AND
MERRIMENT.

BY PETER
KEATING

BEST | **FRANCHISEINSPORTS**

P 59

FIVE YEARS AGO, IN THE WAKE OF HURRICANE KATRINA, THE NEW ORLEANS SAINTS RANKED LAST IN OUR ULTIMATE STANDINGS. TODAY THEY'RE NO. 1. HOW'D THAT HAPPEN? COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY, CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY AND CHEAP PRICES. WE CHATTED WITH SAINTS NATION.

NOVEMBER 2005

What would you say to fans who think the Saints are leaving town for good?

Eighty percent of companies in New Orleans have not been able to reopen, but we are keeping this company in business. We relocated to San Antonio so we can stay afloat. We remain a Louisiana corporation, and we're paying \$25 million into the state income tax fund this year. All anybody wants to do is criticize [owner] Mr. [Tom] Benson, but they're barking up the wrong tree. **-Greg Bensel, team spokesman**

JUNE 2010

How close did the team come to moving?

The rest of the world thought we were down and weren't coming back. We had to relocate in '05. Our

practice facility was occupied by the military during that time. Publicly, everybody was talking about that. But we—ourselves and our staff—wanted to come back. We just had to find a way. And that's what we did. **-Tom Benson, owner**

Our standings rank all MLB, NBA, NFL and NHL teams by how they repay fans for the time, money and emotion they invest in them. (See our methodology on page 64.) The results show that fans feel a strong connection to the Saints. What accounts for that?

The bond we have with our fans, and the support we get from them, were created post-Katrina, with the struggles and hardships we all went through helping to rebuild this city. We really leaned on each other in that time, and I think it culminated in the reopening of the Superdome on Sept. 25, 2006. That symbolized the fact that New Orleans

was not only going to come back, but come back stronger than ever. When we thought about winning the Super Bowl, we wanted to win it for our fans. **-Drew Brees, quarterback**

You always see the players in our community, especially Drew Brees. You can drive by his house and honk, and if he's working on the yard or something, he'll wave back. **-Jeff Larsen, fan**

We have a good website, but not a big social media presence. When players leave practice or games, they're visible, and news spreads person to person and by word of mouth. The Saints are what people talk about with their neighbors. It's neat to see. **-Doug Miller, director of new media**

We explicitly look for people with a certain energy level. That's one reason we hired Sean Payton. We look for tough-mindedness and intelligence, and people who see a glass as half full. We have to have players and staff who do more than football, who relish the chance to make a difference in New Orleans. **-Mickey Loomis, GM**

Fans love Sean Payton. Does the Saints' aggressive play help keep the team close to fans?

I think so. On offense we attack, and on defense [defensive coordinator] Gregg Williams is blitzing every other down. I think it brings more excitement to the game. **-Pete Carmichael, offensive coordinator**

The Superdome has some wear and tear on it, but does it have a different vibe from other venues?

There's energy in the building; even when you come out for warmups in the early part of the day, you can feel the electricity. Then you come back out for the start of the game and you can really feel something in the air. **-Carmichael**

You go to some other stadiums and you hear fans kind of going up and down, but here it's loud the entire game. Maybe that has something to do with the hard alcohol they serve at the stadium. Or all the crazy costumes you see. Like Whistle Monster—he has a huge whistle on his head. **-Ryan Pace, director of pro scouting**

So coaches on the field, no matter what they say, notice what goes on in the stands.

There's a guy who dresses like a Saints robot, and he dances during timeouts. He's phenomenal. You can't help but notice. You're still taking care of



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1

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

Last Year's Rank	52
Title Track	3
Ownership	33
Coaching	2
Players	7
Fan Relations	5
Affordability	18
Stadium Experience	44
Bang for the Buck	4

business, but there are always those five or 10 seconds when there's a little lull, and you're like, "Wow, did you see that?" **-Scottie Patton, head athletic trainer**

How did the "Who Dat?" chant start?

I think it was something that came out of the court system in the 1800s. I'm not exactly sure. But we didn't steal it from Cincinnati, that's for sure. They're "Who Dey?" We're "Who Dat?" **-Michael Prestenback, fan**

[Ed.'s note to Mr. Prestenback: "Who Dat?" originated in a song written by poet Paul Laurence Dunbar in 1898 that was part of a minstrel show.]

And we're allowed to drink walking down the street. They can't tailgate like we can down here. **-Scott VanderMeer, fan**

Following all those years of the Aints, of Black Mondays nearly every week, what was it like when the Saints won the Super Bowl?

It was families, friends, the older generation who had been waiting their whole lives for this, and it was nuts. We hit the [French] Quarter, Bourbon Street, and tore it up. It was Mardi Gras times 1,000. It was just love, everybody embracing each other. I think it might have stopped. I'm not really sure. **-Larsen**

After the Super Bowl I had so much stuff left in front of my house: wine bottles, beer, signs, cards, flowers, you name it. Just people showing their appreciation. You could tell how much it meant to them. **-Brees**

We estimate it costs fans an average of \$90.55 to go to a Saints game, the eighth-cheapest game day

in the NFL. Is that by design?

We understand our market and what makes our market work. If you invest in fans, the proof is in the pudding. Our prices are affordable, and we have sellouts. Mr. Benson gets that. **-Bensel**

Everyone has a story about how close this team is to its fans. What's yours?

They had a TV commercial for a furniture store that said, "You have to see the Special Man!" I played a lot of special teams. There's one guy named Shaq who would say things to me like, "Special Man! Special Man! I see you let him have it that time!" There aren't but two Fred McAfee jerseys on the planet, and he has one of them. He made me a plaque. To this day, he'll sit in the stands and call me the Special Man. **-Fred McAfee, director of player development and former player**

In this city, playing for this team, it's an experience week in and week out. I've had some pretty good conversations going through the grocery store. **-Marques Colston, wide receiver**

Coach Payton took the team on a two-hour trip to Plaquemines Parish on the coast, just to have a team rally, to let the shrimpers know we support them. And it can get to 110°, so the buses have to have tinted windows to keep the heat out and the air conditioning in. You can't see through the bus windows from the outside, but fans lined up anyway, at every traffic stop along the way. **-Miller**

122

LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS

Last Year's Rank	122
Title Track	119
Ownership	122
Coaching	121
Players	122
Fan Relations	121
Affordability	91
Stadium Experience	99
Bang for the Buck	112



Hollywood's B-team won 10 games more this season than the disaster flick that was 2008-09, but fans and our statistical analysis didn't care: The Clippers bottomed out for a second straight year. Fans rated owner Donald Sterling and his woebegone Players the worst in sports, and ranked the Clips' Stadium Experience 60 spots lower than that of the Lakers, though they share an arena. Rookie Blake Griffin's missed season didn't help, nor did the \$2.725 million payment Sterling made to settle charges that he refused to rent apartments to blacks, Hispanics and families with children. Sadly, the NBA had no comment.

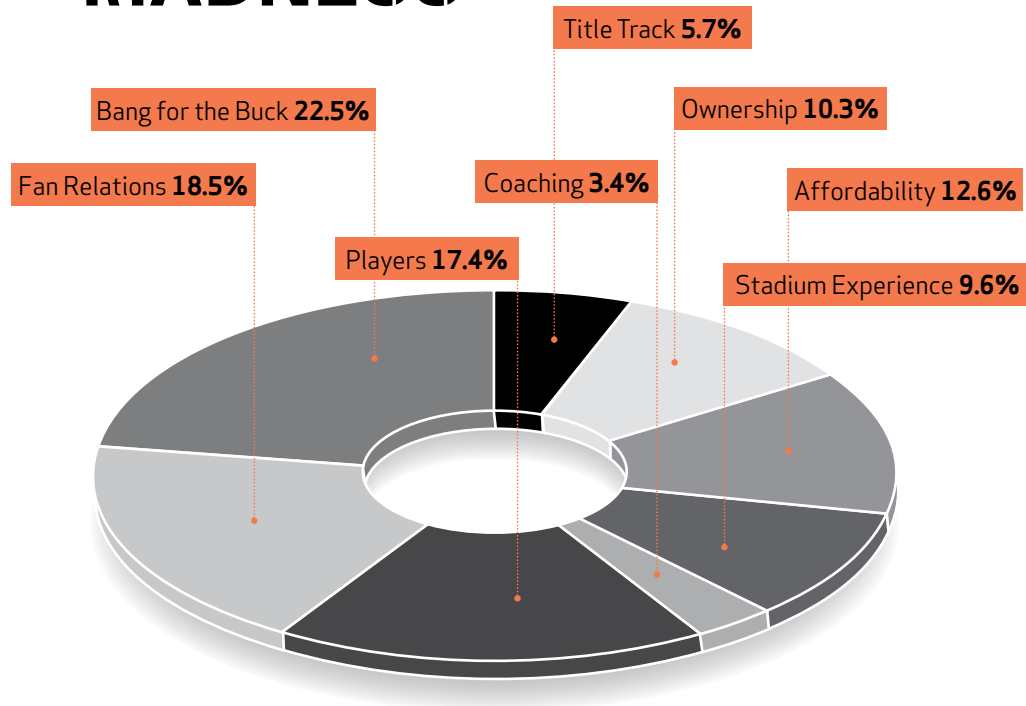
THE RANKING LIST

1-25

26-50

- | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 New Orleans Saints | 6 Tampa Bay Rays | 11 Washington Capitals | 16 Chicago Blackhawks | 21 Carolina Hurricanes |
| 2 Orlando Magic | 7 San Antonio Spurs | 12 San Jose Sharks | 17 Philadelphia Phillies | 22 St. Louis Cardinals |
| 3 Los Angeles Angels | 8 Detroit Red Wings | 13 Colorado Rockies | 18 Phoenix Coyotes | 23 Anaheim Ducks |
| 4 Indianapolis Colts | 9 Green Bay Packers | 14 Minnesota Twins | 19 Arizona Cardinals | 24 Dallas Mavericks |
| 5 Pittsburgh Penguins | 10 Cleveland Cavaliers | 15 Atlanta Braves | 20 Baltimore Ravens | 25 Oklahoma City Thunder |

THE METHOD TO OUR MADNESS



The Ultimate Standings rank MLB, NBA, NFL and NHL franchises according to how much they give back to fans for all of the time, money and emotion they invest in them. Here's how: Working with Maddock Douglas, an Elmhurst, Ill., consulting firm, we surveyed 1,000 fans across North America to find out what they want most from their favorite teams. Our poll covered 21 separate topics, from "has won or will win a championship while I'm a fan" to "has likable players" to "provides avenue for fan feedback." ESPN.com then asked fans to rate their favorite clubs in each of these categories. We received more than 56,000 completed responses—thanks to all of you who voted!—and grouped answers into seven of the eight broad categories listed

above. For the eighth category, Bang for the Buck, we analyzed how efficiently teams convert dollars spent by fans into wins on the field (regular and postseason). Researchers at the Warsaw Sports Marketing Center at the University of Oregon assisted us with these calculations. Finally, we combined each team's scores across all eight categories into one final, weighted score, taking each category's importance from our national survey. (For example, fans rated Stadium Experience nearly three times higher than Coaching, so that's how much more it counts in our formula.) Result: the only list of rankings that combines fan perspective with an objective measure of how well teams turn fan dollars into wins.

ULTIMATE CATEGORY WINNERS AND LOSERS

- AFFORDABILITY**
Price of tickets, parking and concessions
1 Los Angeles Angels
122 Toronto Maple Leafs
- BANG FOR THE BUCK**
Wins over the past two seasons per dollar contributed directly by fans (adjusted for league schedules)
1 Orlando Magic
122 Toronto Maple Leafs
- COACHING**
Strength of on-field leadership
1 Los Angeles Angels
122 Philadelphia 76ers
- FAN RELATIONS**
Openness and consideration toward fans on the part of players, coaches and management
1 Pittsburgh Penguins
122 Washington Wizards
- OWNERSHIP**
Honesty; loyalty to core players and local community
1 Detroit Red Wings
122 Los Angeles Clippers
- PLAYERS**
Effort on the field; likability off it
1 Philadelphia Phillies
122 Los Angeles Clippers
- STADIUM EXPERIENCE**
Quality of arena and game-day promotions; fan-friendliness of environment
1 Minnesota Twins
122 New York Islanders
- TITLE TRACK**
Championships already won or expected within lifetime of current fans
1 Philadelphia Phillies
122 Minnesota Timberwolves

HUNGER PAINS

The leagues' lowest, and highest, prices for a hot dog and soda:

\$2.00 **\$11.25**

1 Cincinnati Reds

Don't want a dog and a pop? The Reds also offer peanuts, popcorn and ice cream cups for a buck apiece at their value-menu concession stands.

122 Detroit Lions

The Lions may have cut ticket prices, but they're charging fans a whopping 34 cents for every ounce of soda. With two wins in two seasons, the team must figure fans will get thirsty waiting for a victory.



BANG FOR THE YUK

Question: Which of the following are bad jokes?

- A man says to his wife, "Where would you like to go for our anniversary?" She replies dreamily, "Oh, just take me someplace expensive." So he drops her off at the new **Cowboys Stadium**.
- If you wrangle your way into a luxury suite at the new Cowboys Stadium, a **cheese pizza and a six-pack** of beer will cost you **\$90**.
- Two Cowboys fans go to a game. They buy tickets and pay for parking, eat green chile kobe burgers and drink soda, enjoy nachos and ice cream, purchase caps and score-cards—and top it off by catching a ball that Miles Austin tosses into the stands. On the way home, the first fan says to the second, "Do you realize that this **one lousy ball** cost us **\$1,000?**" The second fan replies, "Wow! Good thing we didn't catch more!"
- It cost Cowboys fans an average of **\$1,966.83** to attend a **full season of home games** last year, 22% more than for any other team in the NFL.

Answer: Sadly, they're all true, which makes them all bad jokes.

THE RANKING LIST

26-50

51-75

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 26 Arizona Diamondbacks | 31 Milwaukee Brewers | 36 Atlanta Falcons | 41 St. Louis Blues | 46 New England Patriots |
| 27 Utah Jazz | 32 Houston Texans | 37 Tennessee Titans | 42 Buffalo Sabres | 47 Phoenix Suns |
| 28 Pittsburgh Steelers | 33 Detroit Tigers | 38 Portland Trail Blazers | 43 Cincinnati Reds | 48 Texas Rangers |
| 29 Nashville Predators | 34 New Jersey Devils | 39 Carolina Panthers | 44 Atlanta Hawks | 49 Ottawa Senators |
| 30 Houston Rockets | 35 Colorado Avalanche | 40 Charlotte Bobcats | 45 Los Angeles Kings | 50 New York Jets |

51-75

76-100

- | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 51 Los Angeles Lakers | 56 San Diego Padres | 61 San Francisco Giants | 66 New York Giants | 71 Jacksonville Jaguars |
| 52 Philadelphia Eagles | 57 Dallas Stars | 62 New York Yankees | 67 Dallas Cowboys | 72 Los Angeles Dodgers |
| 53 Denver Nuggets | 58 Miami Dolphins | 63 Miami Heat | 68 Boston Celtics | 73 Chicago White Sox |
| 54 New Orleans Hornets | 59 Minnesota Vikings | 64 Vancouver Canucks | 69 Milwaukee Bucks | 74 Boston Red Sox |
| 55 Seattle Mariners | 60 Philadelphia Flyers | 65 Florida Marlins | 70 Tampa Bay Lightning | 75 Memphis Grizzlies |

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: JAMES D. SMITH/AP IMAGES; MARK J. REBILAS/US PRESSWIRE; HENRY RAY ABRAMS/AP IMAGES; GLENN JAMES/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

ULTIMATE CRUSHES

Fans rated their recent change in commitment to their teams on a scale of 1 to 5. Higher scores? Growing intensity. Lower scores? Growing colder.



HOTTEST

- Oklahoma City Thunder **4.50**
- Charlotte Bobcats **4.40**
- New York Jets **4.38**
- Phoenix Coyotes **4.37**
- Chicago Blackhawks **4.32**
- Hottest MLB team**
Tampa Bay Rays (4.29)



- Los Angeles Clippers **2.55**
- Minnesota Timberwolves **2.48**
- Detroit Pistons **2.48**
- Washington Wizards **2.38**
- Philadelphia 76ers **2.17**

- Coldest NHL team**
Florida Panthers (2.60)
- Coldest MLB team**
Baltimore Orioles (2.78)
- Coldest NFL team**
Buffalo Bills (2.99)

COLDEST



ULTIMATE SKIPPERS

1. **MIKE SCIOSCIA**
Los Angeles Angels
2. **SEAN PAYTON**
New Orleans Saints
3. **GREGG POPOVICH**
San Antonio Spurs
4. **(TIE) REX RYAN**
New York Jets
- MIKE BABCOCK**
Detroit Red Wings

Of the bottom six coaches in this category, all had been fired by the time our fan voting concluded. The lowest-ranking survivor: **Jim O'Brien** of the Indiana Pacers, at 117.



ULTIMATE DUMP

For the second year in a row, fans have ranked **Nassau Coliseum** the worst venue in sports. We'll stipulate that "The Mausoleum" has its charms: contact highs, "Rangers suck" chants and some of the best sight lines in any NHL arena (really). But at its core the Coliseum is a mess.

When the Islanders started winning in the late '70s, they eliminated walkways in order to add premium seats. The result is a congested arena that's still the league's smallest. Plus, the roof leaks, and pieces of the facade blew off before a March game.

Neither owner Nassau County nor manager Spectacor Management Group wants to pay for repairs, and team owner Charles Wang will renovate only if he can develop a \$3.7 billion project nearby—a plan local pols have stalled. Wang has threatened to move the Isles to Kansas City or relocate to Willets Point, a hood near the Mets' Citi Field. Either way, the ending for the barn will be ugly. And, frankly, a sad finale for a place that was home to four straight Stanley Cup winners. —P.K. and DOUG MITTLER

ULTIMATE SWAG

When fans want goodies, they head to the Big Show, because MLB boasts the coolest (Brockabrellas) and strangest (soap dispensers) promo giveaways in pro sports. Here's a list of where and when to snag swag this summer.

Los Angeles Angels
(their **garden gnome** giveaway was sweet)
JULY 31 Rally Monkey soap dispenser
AUG. 28 Angels candy jar

Milwaukee Brewers
JULY 24 Grill Master apron
AUG. 8 Italian Racing Sausage bobblehead
AUG. 29 CC Sabathia bobblehead (cooler than most)

Tampa Bay Rays
AUG. 1 Jeff Niemann growth chart (cool 'cause he's 6'9")
AUG. 29 Raymond the Ray pool tube
SEPT. 19 Rays superhero cape

St. Louis Cardinals
JULY 2 Brockabrella (a hat that's also an umbrella—hands-free!)
AUG. 1 1985 Ozzie Smith teddy bear

Arizona Diamondbacks
JULY 10 Greg Schulte (announcer) 2,000th-game bobblehead
AUG. 22 D-backs back-to-school backpack

Detroit Tigers
AUG. 6 Island-theme Tigers bucket hat
AUG. 8 Inside-out rally cap



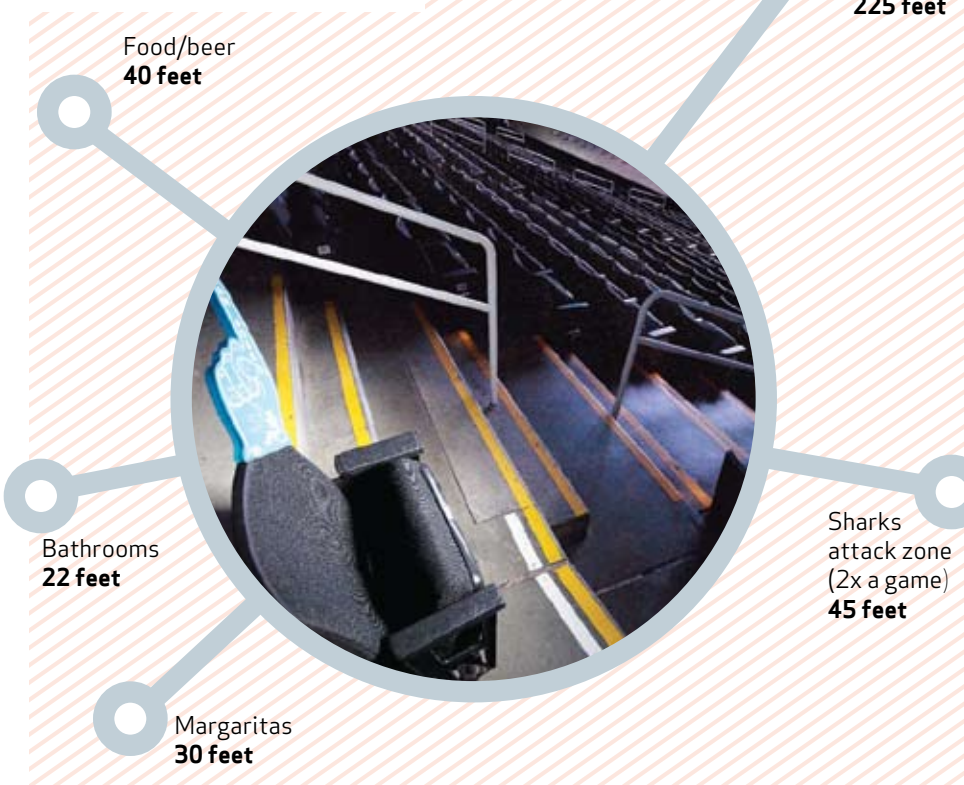
ULTIMATE SEAT

Finding a partisan's paradise was no easy task. We looked at teams with winning records, playoff appearances in their last full season, below-average ticket prices and Stadium Experience scores above 90. The hard work paid off. The best seat in sports has endless leg and elbow room (it's the only seat in Row 17) and, within 40 feet, concessions selling grub 'n libations from burritos to fine wines. Add to that the cross-ice sight of arguably the best entrance in sports—out of a smoking, glowing shark's head—not to mention a bird's-eye view of Joe Thornton & Co. on offense twice a game. Sure, the seat costs \$83, but if the Sharks continue their ascension and win a Stanley Cup it will be priceless.

—CHARLES CURTIS

HP Pavilion at San Jose

Section 113 | Row 17 | Seat 16



RUNNER-UP Angel Stadium Terrace Level | Section 223 | Row B | Seat 25

For \$65 on a nonpremium day (or \$48 per game as a season ticket), this bucket, halfway down the first baseline, includes views of two scoreboards and a peek into the Angels' dugout. New flat-screens attached to the overhang might keep Halo fans from wanting to leave their seats at all.

THE RANKING LIST

76-100

101-122

- | | | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 76 Boston Bruins | 81 San Diego Chargers | 86 Chicago Bears | 91 Cleveland Indians | 96 Columbus Blue Jackets |
| 77 San Francisco 49ers | 82 Pittsburgh Pirates | 87 Calgary Flames | 92 Toronto Blue Jays | 97 Sacramento Kings |
| 78 Minnesota Wild | 83 Seattle Seahawks | 88 Houston Astros | 93 Detroit Pistons | 98 Indiana Pacers |
| 79 Oakland Athletics | 84 Montreal Canadiens | 89 Kansas City Royals | 94 Washington Nationals | 99 Tampa Bay Buccaneers |
| 80 Denver Broncos | 85 Chicago Bulls | 90 Cincinnati Bengals | 95 Kansas City Chiefs | 100 Chicago Cubs |

101-122

- | | | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 101 Buffalo Bills | 106 Florida Panthers | 111 Edmonton Oilers | 116 Minnesota Timberwolves | 121 Toronto Maple Leafs |
| 102 Baltimore Orioles | 107 New York Mets | 112 Detroit Lions | 117 Philadelphia 76ers | 122 Los Angeles Clippers |
| 103 New York Islanders | 108 Cleveland Browns | 113 Toronto Raptors | 118 New Jersey Nets | |
| 104 New York Rangers | 109 Atlanta Thrashers | 114 St. Louis Rams | 119 New York Knicks | |
| 105 Washington Redskins | 110 Golden State Warriors | 115 Oakland Raiders | 120 Washington Wizards | |

FOR IN-DEPTH REPORTING ON ALL 122 TEAMS IN OUR STANDINGS—WITH COMPLETE CATEGORY RANKINGS—GO TO ESPN.COM/INSIDER