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**Brand Keys 2015 Sports Fan Loyalty Index Names
Patriots, Packers & Seahawks Fan Favorites,
Buccaneers, Redskins & Browns Trail**

NEW YORK, NY September 8, 2015 – The 2015 National Football League season kicks off this Thursday with every team’s ideal season ending up on the road to Super Bowl 50. This year the annual kickoff game will feature the defending Super Bowl XLIX champions, the New England Patriots, hosting the Pittsburgh Steelers at Gillette Stadium in Foxborough, MA.

Before the first kickoff, Brand Keys, Inc. (www.brandkeys.com), the New York-based brand engagement and customer loyalty research consultancy, announces the results of the 23rd annual Brand Keys 2015 *Sports Fan Loyalty Index*. “Consumers also have an ‘ideal,’ said Robert Passikoff, Brand Keys’ founder and president. “An ideal team. Teams that are able to better meet fans expectations for that Ideal, *always* end up winning in the Loyalty Bowl. There’s no trophy, but it comes with something more important – emotionally engaged fans, increased game viewership, and increase purchases of licensed merchandise.”

Here are this year’s NFL teams that scored well when it comes to fan loyalty, and those that didn’t. For comparative purposes, #'s in parentheses give the team’s rankings for last season:

Top-5

1. New England Patriots (#1)
2. Green Bay Packers (#3)
3. Seattle Seahawks (#6)
4. Denver Broncos (#4)
5. Indianapolis Colts (#5)

Bottom-5

32. Oakland Raiders (#32)
31. Jacksonville Jaguars (#31)
30. Tampa Bay Buccaneers (#29)
29. Washington Redskins (#23)
30. Cleveland Browns (#30)

The *Sports Fan Loyalty Index* was designed to help professional sports team management identify precise fan loyalty rankings in their home and national markets “with insights that enable the league and team to identify areas – particularly emotional ones – that can use some strategic brand reinforcement,” said Passikoff. “Those insights are always based upon the fans’ ‘ideal team,’ and that means values more than just a win-loss ratio.” *The Sports Fan Loyalty Index* provides an apples-to-apples comparison of the intensity with which fans within the team’s home market catchment area support the home team versus corresponding values for the fans of the other teams or leagues in the same market.

“It’s true. Everybody loves a winner, but it’s important to note that win-loss ratios do not entirely govern fan loyalty. Neither does counting game attendance. When it comes to emotions, and particularly emotional games like the Super Bowl, you could fill that venue fifty times over.” observed Passikoff. “That said, there are other powerful and emotionally-based factors that have to be taken into account.” The percentages next to each indicate the contribution they currently make to fan loyalty and engagement:

History and Tradition (30%): Is the game and the team part of fans’ and community rituals, institutions and beliefs?

Fan Bonding (29%): Are players particularly respected and admired?

Pure Entertainment (21%): How well a team does, wins, losses sure. But even more importantly than a win-loss ratio, how or entertaining is their play? On-the-field aggressive play *is* an acceptable component of this loyalty driver.

Authenticity (20%): How well they play as a team. What’s the offense and defense like? New managers, as they’re seen to be responsible for the genuineness and credibility of the team, can also help lift this driver.

“All teams show up intending to win. That’s the reason they’re there. But the nature of sports fan loyalty is that overall league and team rankings correlate very highly with game viewership and purchase of licensed merchandise by fans. And since rankings can be influenced depending upon how loyalty drivers are managed, it’s critical that team marketers manage them strategically. In particular to better meet fan expectations,” said Passikoff. “But you have to know what the fans really expect to do that – beyond a winning season.”

The Brand Keys *Sports Fan Loyalty Index* measures all the teams in the four Major Leagues. The National Football League is currently rated 1st followed by Major League Baseball. The NBA currently ranks 3rd with the National Hockey League 4th. “Loyalty is a leading-indicator of behavior and profitability, and should be a key statistic professional sports teams should track” said Passikoff, “It tells us what fans are going to do.

The full slate of games for other NFL teams returns on Sunday, September 13th and Monday, September 14th. “It’s been said that some people think football is a matter of life and death. Depending on your level of fan loyalty, sometimes it can get much more serious than that,” noted Passikoff.

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