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Sunday: 12 to 4pm.

Rams will bear down in Chicago

(AP)—Though it may be a case of whistling past the graveyard, David Hill says the Los Angeles Rams are delighted they'll be in Chicago when the National Football League playoffs resume next Sunday.

They would have been the host of the NFC Championship game if the New York Giants had upset the Bears instead of getting shut out 21-0. Instead, the Rams are headed for Soldier Field.

"In a way, I'm glad its the Bears," Hill, an LA tight end, said. "It's always put forth that they are the team to beat. Maybe we can get a little recognition by the simple fact that we're there, playing in the championship game."

"The Rams will have a psychological advantage because they beat us the last two times we played them," Mike Singletary, the Bears' middle linebacker, said.

But the victories, 21-14 in 1983 and 29-13 in 1984, came in Los Angeles. The Rams haven't had too much success in Chicago — at least not this late in the season.

Since 1946, when the franchise was moved from Cleveland to sunny southern

California, the Rams have played 28 games in Chicago. They've won nine of them. And only three of those victories came as late as the first week in December, when things begin getting a bit brisk off the Lake Michigan shoreline.

The problems the Rams have encountered in Chicago pale compared to what the New England Patriots have experienced in Miami's Orange Bowl, the scene of Sunday's AFC Championship. They've lost 18 in a row in the Dolphins' home.

"We've won in the toughest places," New England guard Ron Wooten said. "Miami is the last castle we have to storm." Like the Bears, the Dolphins were unbeaten at home during the season.

And the Dolphins are unbeaten in five AFC championship games, tying Dallas for the most trips to the Super Bowl. Like the Cowboys, Miami is 2-3 in the NFL Championship game.

It's the Pats' first shot at a title since the American Football Conference was the American Football League and the New

England Patriots were the Boston Patriots. In 1963 they played San Diego for the AFL title and were blown out 51-10.

They also are this year's sole surviving wild-card team. "It's amazing what we've done," Patriots' running back Craig James said. "We've gone on the road and won some of the biggest ballgames you can imagine," most recently their 27-20 victory over the Raiders in Los Angeles.

They came close to beating the Dolphins on the road on Dec. 16. They were at the Miami 34-yard line — a 51-yard Tony Franklin field goal away from a tie — with 66 seconds to play when Glenn Blackwood intercepted an overthrown Tony Eason pass at the 11.

"That game was really detrimental to our mental attitude," wide receiver Cedric Jones said. "We were really down after that."

Since then they have beaten the Buffalo Bills, the New York Jets and the Raiders to get within one victory of their first Super Bowl game. "They're on a roll," Dolphins Coach Don Shula said.

Obscure Nathan leads Dolphins

MIAMI (AP) — A week ago, there were eight teams alive in the National Football League playoffs with a total of eight 1,000-yard runners.

Cleveland had two bruising backs in that category and everybody else had one — except Miami.

When the weekend's games were over, five of those 1,000-yarders were gone and Miami's Tony Nathan, not even close to 1,000 yards during the season, was looking forward to his 11th playoff game, Sunday against the New England

Patriots at the Orange Bowl.

While Walter Payton, Tony Dorsett, Eric Dickerson, Marcus Allen, Joe Morris, Craig James, Earnest Byner and Kevin Mack have reached the 1,000-yard plateau, Nathan has been winning games. The seventh-year pro from Alabama gained only 667 yards rushing during the regular season, but he was the star last Saturday when the Dolphins really needed him.

With the Cleveland defense set to shut down speedy Miami wide receivers Mark Duper and Mark Clayton, Nathan sneaked out of the backfield to grab 10 passes for 101 yards. The biggest catch was a 39-yarder that proved to be the catalyst for Miami's second of three second-half touchdowns.

"Tony Nathan is a money player," Dolphins Coach Don Shula said. "He has been making big plays for us all his career. I can't say enough about

Tony."

Nathan never has had a 1,000-yard rushing season and he's never had a 100-yard rushing game in the playoffs. That can be partially attributed to the Dolphins' pass-oriented attack. He led the team in receptions this season with 72 for 651 yards, giving him his best rushing and receiving total of 1,338 yards.

Nathan had registered totals of 1,137, 1,146 and 1,234 yards in the previous three full seasons.

But Nathan really seems to blossom in the playoffs. He has rolled up more than 100 total yards — rushing and receiving — in six of Miami last 10 playoff games. In last year's American Conference championship game, against Pittsburgh, he accounted for 178 yards, 64 on 19 rushes and 114 on eight receptions.

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