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Sunday Night Football Selections

NBC Sunday Night Football is a weekly television broadcast of Sunday evening National Football League games on NBC that began airing on Sunday, August 6, 2006. It features a matchup of two NFL teams, and it is normally expected to be the best matchup of the weekend. It is played at a time when no other games are happening. But how does the NFL (and maybe NBC) decide which teams should participate in that game?

I believe that these matchups are selected based on the previous interactions of the teams. If the teams previously met in the playoffs or if they are perennial playoff contenders, the chances of them seeing an SNF game are very high. Also teams, that consistently have higher win percentages are more likely to be selected for the evening matchup.

I think the SNF selection process can be understood using network metrics. If each playoff matchup is viewed as a link between teams, the teams with the higher degrees and centrality can be found on SNF. I plan to look at the last 6 years of SNF matchups to confirm or disprove my hypothesis.