NFL'S Crucial Catch Raises Awareness Of Getting Screened To Catch Cancer Early

'It Takes All of Us to Intercept Cancer': NFL and American Cancer Society (ACS) work together to encourage screenings during ongoing COVID-19 pandemic

For the 13th consecutive year, the National Football League (NFL) and the American Cancer Society (ACS) are working together to support the fight against cancer through *"Crucial Catch: Intercept Cancer."* The initiative, which kicks off in stadiums Sunday and continues to be highlighted through Week 6 games, addresses early detection and risk reduction efforts across multiple types of cancers. This year, Crucial Catch will again be part of the League's *It Takes All of Us* cause brand platform.

Crucial Catch encourages people to catch cancer early, when it may be easier to treat. This year, that is a greater challenge than ever. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on screening. At the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, some cancer screenings declined by 90%. Through *Crucial Catch*, the NFL and ACS are allocating resources dedicated to safely restarting cancer screenings in communities with the most need. For many forms of cancer (breast, cervical, colorectal and prostate), the five-year survival rate is above 90% when detected early before it has a chance to spread.

"The COVID -19 pandemic has had a dramatic impact on cancer screenings, with a screening decline that the American Cancer Society expects to lead to more late cancer diagnoses and increased cancer deaths in the future," said Dr. Karen Knudsen, MBA, PhD, chief executive officer of the American Cancer Society. "This year, it is critical to safely restart cancer screenings and to ensure that everyone has access to lifesaving screening. The strong, ongoing support of the NFL and Crucial Catch is invaluable to the American Cancer Society's work to increase cancer screenings, especially in under-served communities that need them most."

Since 2012, the NFL has funded ACS' Community Health Advocates Implementation Nationwide Grants for Empowerment and Equity (CHANGE) grants, which have contributed to over 600,000 screenings in underserved communities and reached more than 1,100,000 million individuals with education, screening reminders and patient navigation, bringing these life-saving messages and screening services to those who need them most.

All 32 NFL teams will have the option of supporting early detection and risk-reduction efforts for one or multiple cancers in-stadium and in their communities. In addition, players may wear cleats and shoelaces in any color representing the type of cancer awareness they support and/or have been impacted by during their team's *Crucial Catch* game.

NFL-issued *Crucial Catch* gameday apparel will feature a multi-colored logo representing all cancers. New this year, New Era and Nike have created newly designed *Crucial Catch* gear, highlighting the NFL's commitment to drawing awareness to and supporting multiple cancer prevention efforts. Fans can purchase NFL-licensed *Crucial Catch* apparel on NFLShop.com.

Beginning on Sunday, Oct.3, and continuing through Week 6, NFL *Crucial Catch* games will feature:

· Game balls with the *Crucial Catch* logo

· Multi-colored equipment for players, including helmet decals, captains' patches, sideline caps and quarterback towels.

· Multi-colored ribbon pins for coaches and teams

· Caps and pins for game officials

· On-field multi-colored *Crucial Catch* stencils

- Multi-colored goal post wraps in end zones; and
- Field-wall banners in the color(s) of the cancer awareness movement(s) that each club supports

Game-worn *Crucial Catch* merchandise will be auctioned on NFL Auction (nfl.com/auction). **The NFL does not profit from the sale of *Crucial Catch* merchandise.** Charitable contributions are donated to the American Cancer Society to support its CHANGE grant program.

It Takes All of Us to Intercept Cancer

This year's *Crucial Catch* marketing campaign focuses on why early detection through regular screenings saves lives – especially important this year since some cancer screenings declined by 90% at the height of the pandemic. The TV spot includes cancer survivors and advocates with NFL ties including: **COACH BRUCE ARIANS**, **COACH RON RIVERA**, **CALVIN JOHNSON**, and **LAURENT DUVERNAY-TARDIF**. Social and digital specific vignettes feature NFL ACS ambassadors **JAMES ROBINSON**, **QUINCY AND QUINNEN WILLIAMS** AND **NAJEE HARRIS**.

Each of the players and coaches involved in this year's *Crucial Catch* campaign have been personally impacted by cancer in some way. Coach Arians has been treated for cancer multiple times, the first in 2007 when he was diagnosed with prostate cancer. Right before the start of the 2020 NFL season, Coach Rivera was diagnosed with squamous cell carcinoma located in a lymph node. The cancer, which was in the early stage was "very treatable and curable," and he continued to coach his team throughout the season while receiving treatment. Calvin Johnson's mother was diagnosed with, and successfully battled, Pancreatic Cancer in 2013. Laurent Duvernay-Tardif witnessed firsthand the impact the Covid-19 pandemic had on regular cancer screenings, having opted out of the 2020 NFL season to work on the front lines of the pandemic at a long-term care facility in his hometown of Montreal. James Robinson's grandfather overcame kidney cancer. Quincy and Quinnen Williams are big advocates for breast cancer awareness. Their mother, Marquischa Henderson Williams, died of breast cancer in 2010. Najee Harris works closely with the ACS to advocate for more access for the homeless to get screened for cancer.

Additional Partnerships

During this year's *Crucial Catch* initiative, Skillz, the leading mobile games platform that connects players around the world in fair, fun, and meaningful competition, is launching a fundraising campaign in partnership with ACS and the NFL. For the full duration of *Crucial Catch* Month, three consecutive Sunday's, Oct. 3, 10, and 17 (10am-10pm PDT), Skillz-powered all-day tournaments will be hosted for players to compete in its most popular games and help raise funds to fight cancer. Donations will support cancer screenings in underserved communities. To play games and donate to help save lives, visit games.skillz.com/nfl-acs-crucial-catch.

New this year, Fan Creations has released *Crucial Catch* wooden signs to remind those that have been diagnosed with cancer that they are not alone in fighting this disease. These signs will be available for purchase on NFLShop.com and all proceeds will go to ACS.

Fathead is also partnering with the NFL and ACS to bring you removable wall decals that support the fight against cancer. Fathead Minis come with 5 removable decals in the following sizes: two 5"x7" stickers and three 2.5"x4" stickers and can be purchased on Fathead.com.

Youth Crucial Catch

Each season, youth football teams from across the country participate in *Youth Crucial Catch* to host their own *Crucial Catch* football games to raise awareness for multiple cancers and to raise money for ACS. At the end of the season, the youth team with most funds raised is named the youth team champion. This season, several NFL players including Pittsburgh Steelers rookie running back Najee Harris will conduct local and national meet and greets with the youth team winners.

For more information on *Crucial Catch* and resources for getting screened, visit www.NFL.com/CrucialCatch.

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