

### NFL 2008 - Week 7

by Joe Mulder

Week 6: 6-8

Overall: 43-43-2

The Smartest Thing I Said Last Week:

[T]his Vikings team has no business being favored by more than five or six points against anybody, ever, for any reason.

[The Vikings beat the winless Lions by two points on a last-minute field goal]

The Dumbest Thing I Said Last Week:

The Redskins, despite their charge to the top of the NFC pile, have won their games by five points, seven points, two points and six points, respectively. Some might take that as a sign that they're not the sort of team that will blow anybody out. This week, I'm going to choose to take it as a sign that they're just about due to – in the words of the great WWE announcer Jim Ross – stomp a mud hole in the Rams' ass and then walk it dry.

[The Redskins lost to the Rams by two. Why I would spend half a paragraph detailing the fact that they don't win games by very many points, and then pick them to cover a 13.5-point spread, is beyond me, but that's what I did]

I don't think it's fair to call Week 6 a disaster, but, neither was it my finest hour. Still, we're sitting right at .500 for the season; here's where we turn it around, my friends.

CHARGERS @ Bills -1

We have to figure that the Chargers are good, don't we? Their first two losses, to Carolina and Denver, were, respectively, very fluky and completely illegitimate. I know that LaDainian Tomlinson has a gimpy toe and Shawne Merriman is out, but overall they've been almost – not quite, but almost – the solid team we all thought they were going to be. What they did to the Patriots on Sunday was impressive. Sure, the Patriots are a weak 3-2 and could very well miss the playoffs... still. Blowing out the Patriots is blowing out the Patriots.

And I think we all got a bit too excited about Buffalo. When last we saw them, two weeks ago, they were getting blown out by the Cardinals. Sure, the Cardinals are 4-2 and a virtual lock to make the playoffs... still. Getting blown out by the Cardinals is getting blown out by the Cardinals. The only thing that gives me pause is that the Chargers are a west coast team playing an early game in the east, and the Bills are nice and rested up after their bye week. That's not quite

enough to talk me out of the Chargers, though.

Saints @ PANTHERS -3

The four NFC South teams are 4-0 against divisional opponents at home, and 0-4 against divisional opponents on the road. That might not have much to do with the Saints/Panthers game on Sunday, but it's not a trend I feel like bucking.

Vikings @ BEARS -3

The Vikings beat the winless, hapless, hopeless Lions, as I have noted, by two points, on a last-minute field goal. Here's the thing: they could beat the Bears by 24 points. They could lose to the Bears by 24 points. I can't rationally discuss the Vikings anymore, so I'm not going to pretend that I can. But, to repeat, they beat the Lions by two points, on a last-minute field goal. It's extremely easy to believe that they'll lose to be Bears by more than three.

Steelers @ BENGALS +9.5

This line's too high, and the Bengals are due. After all, the Bengals have been sort of almost competitive in most of their games. Under the "No One Goes 0-16" theory, I'll... pick... the... [sorry, I'm having a tough time actually typing the words]... Bengals.

TITANS @ Chiefs +8.5

You hate to give away 8-and-a-half points on the road, but, this boils down to one of the NFL's worst teams hosting one of the NFL's best. Arrowhead Stadium is supposed to be a really tough place to play, and it can be, but not when the upper sections are half-empty and the fans that do show up can hardly be bothered to care.

Ravens @ DOLPHINS -3

It might not have been the single dumbest thing I said last week (or, actually, it might have been), but picking the Ravens on the road against an always-dangerous Colts team wasn't the most spectacular bit of football prognostication the internet has ever seen. Probably not the best idea, as a rule, to back a rookie QB on the road against a team that won the Super Bowl two years ago and still has most of those players.

The Dolphins' Wildcat offense (so named because it was inspired by Sandra Bullock's character in *Speed*) (not really) is taking the league by storm, and even though they lost to the Texans last week I still think they're good now. The Wildcat offense – which, to this observer, consists mainly of having two tailbacks on the field, one of whom takes the snap – is sure to be imitated by other teams around the NFL if it keeps working as well as it has. For starters, maybe it can help the Dolphins rebound from that loss at Houston last

Sunday.

49ers @ GIANTS -10.5

We all might have gotten just an eensy bit carried away about the Giants prior to that 35-14 pasting they received at the hands of the Cleveland Browns on Monday night. But can you blame us? They were the undefeated Super Bowl champs; it seemed like they had a good thing going.

But are we going to count on their defense and their quarterback having another off day against another lousy team, this time at home? I sure wish the line was a little lower, because the 49ers seem like they could put up a little bit of a fight, but, let's just assume that the Giants right the ship this week.

COWBOYS @ Rams +7

Speaking of getting an eensy bit carried away, I think we may have gotten an eensy bit carried away about the entire NFC East, what with the Cowboys, Redskins and Giants falling to the Cardinals (4-2, but still), Rams and Browns in Week 6. Maybe it was just a down week for those teams, but maybe the NFC East isn't quite the collection of badasses we assumed it to be.

On to the game at hand; are the Cowboys ready to fall apart? Are things finally coming together for the Rams? I say not quite yet, and no way.

Lions @ TEXANS -9.5

They really, really want people to take the Lions this week, don't they? Well, I, for one, took them last week, and they beat the spread for me, this in a game in which their quarterback basically sprinted out of the back of his own end zone and didn't realize it for at least a solid five-count. This week, I'm not going to press my luck.

COLTS @ Packers +1.5

The Packers are banged up at cornerback, which might not be the best recipe for trying to stop a Colts team that has rediscovered its dominant passing game to the tune of 271 yards and three touchdowns last week Sunday against the #1-ranked Baltimore defense.

I don't have much more to add about the game itself, but when I was checking out the Packers' injury report for the week I noticed that "A. Hawk" was listed as "probable," with a groin injury. This referred, of course, to Packers linebacker A.J. Hawk, and I knew that, but it still looked really weird. Can we all just agree that guys who go by initials get their entire initials listed in such a situation, rather than just the first one? Even the millisecond that it takes the brain to assess the situation and recalibrate ("wait; who's 'A. Hawk'? Oh, right; A.J. Hawk") is one millisecond too many; we've all got

enough to worry about these days without adding that to the pile. And if you say, "that's not fair; why should A.J. Hawk get to have what amounts to his entire name listed, while other guys only get their first initial?," I'd respond by pointing out that when months are abbreviated to three letters "May" always just gets to be written out in full, and you don't hear the other months bitching about it.

(in completely unrelated news, I'm sort of running out of stuff to say about the NFL)

JETS @ Raiders +3

The last time Brett Favre visited Oakland (to play NFL football, at least; I'm not as up on the travel habits of Brett Favre as I used to be, so he could have visited Oakland for pleasure since then, although people who can help it have generally been known not to), he torched the Raiders for 399 yards and four touchdowns, leading the Packers to a 41-7 victory on "Monday Night Football" just one day after his father died of a heart attack. It was one of the performances that will forever define his career.

I like to make a lot of jokes in this column, but I won't joke about somebody's dad dying of a heart attack. If I did indirectly joke about the situation by saying that I wouldn't put it past Jets fans to try and take out Favre's mom on the eve of Sunday's game just to see if Favre could replicate his performance from five years ago, that would be a joke (barely) about Jets fans, not about Favre or his dad.

Besides, all kidding aside, I don't think that even a Jets fan would stoop that low. Not in October, when they're only playing the Raiders. They'd save something like that for the playoffs.

Browns @ REDSKINS -7

What to do, what to do... tell you what: go up and look at The Dumbest Thing I Said Last Week. Let's just pretend that I was talking about this week's Redskins game against the Browns, and not last week's Redskins game against the Rams, okay? Deal? Deal. It has to apply at some point, right?

Seahawks @ BUCCANEERS -10.5

I can only throw raw data at you, at this point. Tampa Bay's record at home this season: 3-0. Tampa Bay's average margin of victory in those games: 16 points. Overall record of the three teams Tampa Bay played in those games: 11-7. Seahawks' record: 1-4.

The numbers speak for themselves, people.

Broncos @ PATRIOTS -3

You might not know it from watching them the last few

## POOP READING

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weeks, but both of these teams have winning records and, if the season ended today, would make the playoffs. After the relatively unimpressive performances both teams delivered last week you don't really want to pick either one, but I'll take the Patriots, even with their old, slow linebackers and seemingly hopeless quarterback. Why?

Well, you can say what you want about Pats coach Bill Belichick – for instance, I want to say that he's a philandering sourpuss who sullied his and his team's legacy by blatantly cheating and then clearly lying about it – but the last time his Patriots lost back-to-back games was almost two years ago, and the last time they lost back-to-back games prior to that was in December of 2002. The point being that if something is wrong, Bill Belichick usually fixes it but quick. These Patriots might prove to be beyond fixing, but for this week at least, Belichick has earned the benefit of the doubt. In that respect if in no other.

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