

NFL 2008 - Week 15

by Joe Mulder

Week 14: 9-7

Overall: 95-111-3

Look at that; two 9-7 weeks in a row. At this rate, we should be back at .500 by about St. Patrick's Day.

The Smartest Thing I Said Last Week:

DOLPHINS @ Bills -1

Let's check the weather forecast for Buffalo... what's that you say? This game is being played indoors, in Toronto? Hey, thanks NFL! Just when I needed an easy win to pad this week's record.

I don't actually bet on these games, as I've said (which, if you look at my overall record, is a very good thing). But even I knew that anyone who bet on the Dolphins last Sunday was basically just stealing money.

The Dumbest Thing I Said Last Week:

JETS @ 49ers +4

The Jets will bounce back in a big way, mark my words.

Not quite; they lost by ten to a 4-8 San Francisco team (now a 5-8 San Francisco team).

Saints @ BEARS -3

Check it out; I got a push on the Thursday night game (then again, so did everybody). Given that I usually lose the Thursday night game, a push is a nice change of pace.

And since this game was played in Illinois, this seems like as good a place as any to point out that Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich, arrested this week for essentially offering to "sell" Barack Obama's vacated U.S. Senate seat to the highest bidder, has ridiculously stupid hair.

Also, it's becoming more and more obvious that this is pretty much how politics is done in Illinois, isn't it? "The Daily Show" pointed out this week that, if Blagojevich goes to jail, four out of the last eight Illinois governors will have gone on to spend some time behind bars. I know some people are trying to tie Obama to this scandal but, although it may sound counter-intuitive, I think this only makes him look better. Given the rampant corruption endemic in Illinois politics, attending dinner parties with domestic terrorists and having mob guys get you a sweetheart deal on your mansion don't really seem all that bad. That's almost the least amount of scandal you can possibly hope for in an Illinois politician,

isn't it? Don't worry, Barack. You'll be fine. Just have a smoke, relax, and this'll all be over soon.

(by the way, I vote that we finally just go for it and refer to this Blagojevich thing as "Scandalgate." It's bound to happen at some point; let's make it happen now)

Buccaneers @ FALCONS -3

I say it every week, but, when the NFC South plays the NFC South, you just pick the home team. I think Vegas knows that too; that's why the line is so low when the Buccaneers are clearly better than the Falcons. Still, I'm sticking with the home teams until they give me a reason not to.

Redskins @ BENGALS +7

I think this one's just going to come down to who wants it less.

Titans @ TEXANS +3

Call me crazy; the Texans have only beaten one winning team all year, but they seem to be riding high after going into Lambeau Field last week and coming out a winner. The Titans aren't in much danger of losing the top seed in the AFC even if they lose to Houston; Tennessee hosts the only team that can catch them, Pittsburgh, next week. I think the Texans catch the Titans napping.

Lions @ COLTS -17

You might be tempted to pick the Lions here (I certainly was). They're running out of chances, and you know they've got to be desperate to get that first win of the season. But I really think the Colts have found the eye of the tiger, and are not going to give up their lead in the Wild Card race.

17 is awfully high; a garbage-time touchdown in a blowout can get the Lions within 17. Still, the Colts have won six in a row and beat a bad team by 32 last week; you have to go with them.

PACKERS @ Jaguars +1.5

The Packers can technically still make the playoffs, and they're really not as bad as their record would seem to indicate (although the argument could be made, I suppose, that a 5-8 team is – by virtue of the fact that it is a 5-8 team – precisely as bad as a 5-8 team).

The Jaguars, meanwhile, appear to have shut things down for the year. I suppose it's demoralizing when you start the season as a trendy Super Bowl pick and then lose six of seven once the leaves start to turn brown; never having personally started the season as a trendy Super Bowl pick, or lost six of seven NFL games, I wouldn't know.

POOP READING

CHARGERS @ Chiefs +5.5

If you lose this pick and you took the Chargers, you're going to sit there and think to yourself, "how in the world could I have picked the Chargers? What was I thinking?" If you lose this pick and you took the Chiefs, you're going to sit there and think to yourself, "how in the world could I have picked the Chiefs? What was I thinking?"

May as well go with the team that was at least *supposed* to be good, I guess.

49ers @ DOLPHINS -6.5

Before we get too excited about the 49ers beating the first place Jets last week, let's remember that those same Jets are 0-3 on the West Coast this season against three pretty bad teams.

The Dolphins, on the other hand, have completely rebounded from last year's 1-15 campaign and find themselves in the thick of the playoff hunt. I'd say that might be encouraging to this year's winless Lions if only they weren't, in fact, the Lions.

Bills @ JETS -7.5

Having just spoken ill of the Jets, they're due. And Buffalo stinks. The Bills beat four horrible teams (Seahawks, Jaguars, Raiders, Rams) to start the season, and I think we all got suckered in. Now we know better.

I have nothing against the Jets, really, but I'm sort of hoping they miss the playoffs after starting 8-3 just because I'd love to see exactly how that collapse would be spun to make us believe that Brett Favre still did a fantastic job all season long. They'd really have their work cut out for them, in that case.

Although they'll never top what happened back in Week 7, when the announcers kept heaping praise of Favre and saying how great he was in the clutch... during a game he was losing... *to the Raiders*.

SEAHAWKS @ Rams +3

As the Seahawks showed against the Patriots last week, they've got just a little bit more fight left in 'em.

Vikings @ CARDINALS -3

This game could well end up determining who gets the #3 seed in the NFC, believe it or not (especially if the Vikings win).

I'm doing my standard "misery insurance" pick, and the Vikings are generally a safe bet to lose outdoors on grass. But enough about the game; let's talk about Visanthe

Shiancoe's penis!

In case you missed it, FOX cameras captured Vikings owner Zygi Wilf in the locker room after the team's win in Detroit, awarding Sunday's game ball to head coach Brad Childress. In the background, it appeared as though Vikings tight end Visanthe Shiancoe may have been shown naked for a brief moment as he was adjusting his towel. Apparently, DVR owners were able to back up the footage isolate a frame or two wherein Shiancoe's penis was plainly visible. Word spread quickly, what with the internet and all, and within hours this was quite the story. What stands out to this observer, however, is the fantastic way in which this was handled by absolutely everybody involved. Nobody flipped about it, nobody (of note) wrote any angry letters, nobody's getting fined, and everybody just had a nice laugh.

See, this wasn't Janet Jackson's boob at halftime of the Super Bowl. That was a pre-planned incident involving a man rather aggressively ripping off a piece of a woman's clothing, leaving her semi-nude; I understood the argument that such a thing might not be appropriate given the setting.

The Shiancoe-flashing was different; some dude's garbage got caught on camera, inadvertently, for a third of a second, it was kind of funny, and that was pretty much that. Even FOX, which broadcast said phallus, offered only the most perfunctory of apologies, with FOX Sports VP of communications Dan Bell saying, "Obviously it was an oversight on our part and we apologize."

Shiancoe ("SHANK-oh") himself even called into the Dan Patrick radio show on Tuesday, telling Patrick that his nickname, with the Vikings and the Giants before that, has always been "Shank," and essentially agreeing that such a nickname was more appropriate now than ever. He even signed off on Patrick using the relatively uninspired moniker "The Junk Man" in future highlights, should the occasion arise (luckily, after Shiancoe was off the phone, the folks at the Dan Patrick Show came up with "The Equipment Manager").

And, when approached Sunday evening by a female columnist for the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* who clearly found the incident amusing, Shiancoe asked, "How'd it look?" He said that while it was certainly unusual to have such a thing happen, "it's not too bad. I didn't just get out of the pool."

In a related story, my new favorite football player is Vikings tight end Visanthe Shiancoe.

STEELERS @ Ravens -2

I predict that the Steelers, much like Vikings tight end Visanthe Shiancoe, will display impressive talent on the road. They clinch the division and a first-round bye with a win in Baltimore.

POOP READING

Broncos @ PANTHERS -7.5

Remember earlier in the season, when we all kind of thought that the Panthers looked like they could be right up there with the class of the NFC? And then we all just kind of forgot about them? Well, they're 10-3, and they're looking like they're right up there with the class of the NFC. Watch out for them.

Besides, they're 7-0 at home this season; feel good about taking them this week.

PATRIOTS @ Raiders +7

Pats QB Matt Cassel's dad passed away this week, and it's unclear whether he'll start this weekend. Since the Patriots are playing the Raiders, they should be fine with or without him. Although they have been going win, lose, win, lose, win, every other week, since the end of October, and they won last Sunday. So be warned.

GIANTS @ Cowboys -3

Man, the Cowboys are a mess. I mean, plenty of teams would like to be such a mess as to be 8-5 and alive for a playoff berth, but, really. They're a mess.

BROWNS @ Eagles -14

I already took the Colts by 17; I didn't want to give away 14 points in this one, too. Even though the Eagles have looked pretty darn good lately.

And there you have it. Will my trend of (just barely) winning weeks continue? I feel good about things. I say it will.
