

### NFL 2008 - Week 17

by Joe Mulder

Week 16: 7-9

Overall: 107-128-6

There it is, folks; I could go 16-0 and I'd still have a losing season. Nothing to play for in Week 17; looks like I'll be resting my starters, evaluating some of the young guys and looking towards next year.

The Smartest Thing I Said Last Week:

The last time these two teams played, the Patriots handed the Cardinals a very dignified, respectable 23-12 defeat in a game during which the Cardinals honored the late Pat Tillman, a former teammate who had been killed in Afghanistan... I think the Patriots will show no such restraint when they host Arizona on Sunday.

[the Patriots beat the Cards by 40 points]

The Dumbest Thing I Said Last Week:

Much has been made over the years – mostly just by me, but still – about the Giants' Annual Late-Season Tom Coughlin Choke Job, which failed to materialize last year. Maybe 2007 was the exception, though, and not the rule.

[nope; turns out they're fine. The defending Super Bowl champs beat a really good Carolina team to secure home field advantage throughout the NFC playoffs]

Okay, folks; let's power through. It's Christmas and there's lasagna, beer and Pictionary waiting; we're going to do this as quickly as possible.

All games are on Sunday this week, it should be noted. Also: I won't be looking anything up as I go along, so take everything I say with a grain of salt. Usually, in this column, if I say that Team X or Player Y has a certain record on the road, or averages so many yards per carry, you can bet I've fact-checked it to the best of my ability. Not today.

Rams @ FALCONS -14.5

The Falcons are in the playoffs and, I've heard, have a chance to win the division – and get a first-round bye – with a victory over the Rams and a Carolina loss.

But 14 1/2 points? That's a little too high.

PATRIOTS @ Bills +6.5

6.5? Really? If I could, I'd bet on the Patriots covering this

spread in each individual quarter of play.

Chiefs @ BENGALS -3

I've picked the Bengals the last two weeks, and I've been right. Why stop now?

LIONS @ Packers -9.5

I'm so disgusted by the Packers, who could have – and should have – ended the Bears' season and secured the NFC North for the Vikings with a win at Soldier Field on Monday night. It's *awesome* being a Vikings fan, folks; even games in which the Vikings aren't playing have brutal, gut-wrenching finishes that are so bad they make you wish you had a dog, just so you could kick it.

BEARS @ Texans -2.5

Since we all know the Vikings' season will end in the most harmful way possible to the team's fans, it's a no-brainer that the Bears will beat Houston this weekend and take the Vikings' playoff spot.

Titans @ Colts +3

Neither team has anything to play for, but the Colts are dynamite this time of year (not particularly, they're not, but that sounded good). I predict that this will one day be known throughout the land as "The Jim Sorgi Game."

GIANTS @ Vikings -6.5

I don't want to talk about it.

Panthers @ SAINTS +3

Apparently Saints QB Drew Brees is alive to break the single-season passing yards mark. That, plus the fact that the home team always wins these NFC South matchups, is enough to get me to pick the Saints.

Browns @ STEELERS -10.5

The Steelers have nothing to play for. I still think they'll whup the Browns, though. The Bengals had nothing to play for last week, and they shut the Browns out.

Raiders @ BUCCANEERS -13

Not the fact that this is the once-every-four-years matchup between the NFL's two pirate franchises, nor the fact that it is a rematch of Super Bowl XXXVII, can make me interested in this game.

JAGUARS @ Ravens -12.5

At what point in the history of the Baltimore Ravens was

## POOP READING

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their offense good enough to be favored by 12.5 over anybody? Even the 2008 Jaguars?

Also, since this may well be my last chance to mention it given the team's subpar performance this season: Jacksonville head coach Jack Del Rio looks like a gigantic version of my cousin Phil.

DOLPHINS @ Jets -2.5

Home field advantage is generally considered to be worth three points, so this line suggests that Vegas thinks the Dolphins are better than the Jets. I do to.

COWBOYS @ Eagles -1.5

I think the Cowboys are going to make the playoffs somehow, just to bug us.

SEAHAWKS @ Cardinals -6

It's Mike Holmgren's last game at the helm for Seattle. They'll win one for him, just like they won his last home game on Sunday. Plus, it'll be easier to make fun of the Cardinals' crappy division title if they're 8-8 instead of 9-7.

Redskins @ 49ERS -3

Boy, the Redskins must really be bad.

BRONCOS @ Chargers -8

I certainly have no confidence that the Broncos will win this game; 8 points just seems high to me. In any case, I'd love to see two 8-8 teams in the playoffs while a bunch of 10-6 and maybe even 11-5 teams sit home. Knowing that other fans had it worse that I would almost salve the wounds of a season in which my Vikings, off to a 9-5 start, lost two in a row at home to miss the playoffs. Which – make no mistake about it – I'm pretty sure will happen.

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