

NFL 2009, Week 2

by Joe Mulder

Week 1: 8-8

Overall: 8-8

Well... there you go. The sad thing is that if I keep up this pace, it will represent a marked improvement over last year.

The Smartest Things I Said Last Week:

I can't imagine how it's going to be for the Panthers, going forward with Jake Delhomme at quarterback after his performance in the playoffs against Arizona last season... when Jake Delhomme drops back to pass all Carolina fans will be able to see are the five Delhomme interceptions that killed their season in that game against the Cardinals a year ago.

Delhomme threw four more interceptions – that's nine in his two most recent games – and lost a fumble as the Panthers, undefeated in the regular season at home last year, fell to the visiting Eagles 38-10.

I don't think [the Cardinals] can overcome both the Madden cover jinx... and the curse of the Super Bowl loser... I like the 49ers +6.

Not only did the 49ers cover that six point spread, they beat the Cardinals outright.

The Dumbest Things I Said Last Week:

[E]verybody else thinks the Broncos are going to be *this* bad, huh? "Underdogs to the Bengals by four" bad? Maybe they will. I'll pick against them this week, because who am I to argue with everybody else?

Even before Brandon Stokley's insane last-second touchdown to defeat the Bengals in Cincinnati, the Broncos were going to beat this spread (they were down by one before the Stokley play). Why did I listen to everyone else instead of myself? Everyone else is so dumb!

I'm basically picking new Bears quarterback Jay Cutler with this pick...

Cutler, of course, put up positively Jake Delhomme-esque numbers in Green Bay, completely submarining the Bears' chances against the Packers in a game that Chicago might well have won easily with a conservative, game-manager type of quarterback (say a Kyle Orton, just to pick someone completely at random) at the helm.

Onward. Bear in mind, please, that it's only Week 2, so nobody really knows anything yet. Least of all me.

Panthers @ FALCONS -6

Last season, the 12 games in which NFL South teams played each other resulted in 11 wins for the home team (Carolina at New Orleans in Week 17 being the only road victory).

Expect that trend to continue next week; not because last season has anything at all to do with this season, but because the Panthers have said that they're sticking with starting quarterback Jake Delhomme, who's been playing as though he's singlehandedly attempting to "Major League" the Panthers franchise right the hell out of Charlotte.

As for the Falcons, they sure seemed to look like the real thing last week against Miami, which may or may not turn out to mean much if the Dolphins end up being bad many suspect they might be.

Despite the win, Atlanta running back Michael Turner didn't have a particularly outstanding game (65 yards, 0 TDs)... but I'm sure the guy in my fantasy football league who drafted Turner over Adrian Peterson with the first overall pick must know something the rest of us don't.

Vikings @ LIONS +9.5

Yes, I know. I'm nuts. We should have learned by now that I can't – I'd even go so far as to say *won't* – pick Vikings games rationally. That said, this is the sort of game in which the Vikings, coming off a dominating Week 1 road victory, would typically struggle even if they managed to avoid losing outright. Those are the Vikings I grew to know and love.

Is that still who the Vikings are? We'll see. Even as they went 10-6 last season and Detroit famously went winless, Minnesota only beat the hapless Lions by a combined six points in those games, and could well have lost either. Or both.

Can a Vikings team quarterbacked by a newly and uncharacteristically cautious Brett Favre (right, Brett? Please?) and led by All-Universe running back Adrian Peterson overcome the team's historical tendency toward mediocrity? Here's hoping.

But just to be safe, I'm not going to pick them to beat the Lions by ten.

Bengals @ PACKERS -9

As an interested observer, I was hoping to gain some insight on the NFC North from the Bears/Packers matchup last Sunday. I don't feel like I did.

How good is the Packers defense? Do we know? Is there a football team on earth, up to and including the Pop Warner level of competition, that couldn't have picked Jay Cutler off four times lastweek? During one series the Packers dropped

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two straight interception chances before finally holding onto a third.

But the Bengals are terrible, right? I don't know. I don't know anything anymore, except that it's hard to give away nine points this early in the season. But I guess I have no choice.

CARDINALS @ Jaguars -3

The good news about living in Jacksonville is that you know it must be an incredibly happenin' town with plenty of great entertainment options, given that the Jaguars have trouble scaring up 65,000 people to watch a home game there. Not that I blame the good people of Jacksonville – and certainly not the good people of nearby Ponte Vedra Beach – for not wanting to go and watch this blah team, especially with their ugly new uniforms with those goofy stripes on them. I mean, I know for a fact that the Jacksonville area is home to men of a keen design aesthetic, and yet the Jaguars refuse to make use of them.

Anyway. Enough of that silliness. The Jags do have a legitimate offensive weapon in Maurice Jones-Drew, but not much else to go with him. Their home field in Jacksonville, where the atmosphere on game day manages to be even less exciting than the name of the place ("Jacksonville Municipal Stadium"), may have a bit to do with the fact that the highly-touted Jaguars were 2-6 at home last season.

As for the Cardinals, they got off to a rough start in defense of their surprise NFC championship, but maybe a trip to Jacksonville is just what they need. If last week's game in Indianapolis is any indication of what's to come then we can guess that the Jaguars don't are so well when facing an elite quarterback throwing to an elite receiver, as Peyton Manning and Reggie Wayne connected for 162 yards and a touchdown. And, since the dual curses of being 84 years old and being on the cover of the Madden video game have yet to strike Arizona's Kurt Warner and Larry Fitzgerald, respectively, Jacksonville could be in for a long day.

Luckily, due to the NFL's TV blackout policy and the countless other fun local things for Jacksonians to see and do, hardly any Jaguar fans will actually see it.

Raiders @ CHIEFS -3

Yikes.

PATRIOTS @ Jets +3

I don't think anyone really has to worry about the Dolphins or the Bills, so this right here is pretty much your AFC East race. Can the Patriots' close win and first half ineffectiveness against Buffalo be explained by the idea that Tom Brady may well have had some "the last time I did this a guy dove at my knees and my legs almost came off" jitters? Maybe. Is their defensive unit even an above-average one

anymore? Who knows.

And what to make of the Jets? They and their rookie QB creamed the Houston Texans, who were supposed to be contenders this year, down in Houston last week. Are they for real? Rookie quarterbacks with rookie head coaches are allowed to make the playoffs now, you know.

I say take the safe, easy pick since it's early. And if the year in which you're picking football games happens to start with a "2", that means the safe, easy pick is the Patriots.

SAINTS @ Eagles pk

Let's just let the winner of this game play the Vikings in the NFC title game, okay? I know I'd sign off on that. Everybody else cool with that?

Also, I'd just like to point out that I joined two fantasy football leagues this season after going a couple of years without playing. One was free, and one cost me a not completely insignificant amount of money. Now, I'm not going to talk too much about it because I know nobody cares, but just this once I thought I'd mention that last week, when Saints quarterback Drew Brees 358 yards and six touchdowns, I naturally had him on my team in the free league and was going up against him in the pay one. So it looks like that's how that's going to go.

TEXANS @ Titans -6.5

I'm giving the Texans a mulligan. Just one. They're still supposed to have this high-powered offense and this crushing defense, so we'll see.

And after going against my instincts a bit last week, and losing the pick because of it, I think I'm going to wait a while before I once again pick the Titans either to beat anyone or lost to anyone by more than three. They're going to play a lot of 13-10 games.

Rams @ REDSKINS -9.5

Look at this line; they're just beeeeeegging us to take Washington. Okay; I'll bite.

I do think the Rams have a good chance of actually scoring this week, though.

Seahawks @ 49ERS -1.5

Even if it didn't involve a lame gold mining pun, I would still have said that the 49ers staked their claim on the NFC West title last week in upsetting the Cardinals. Now the team that stands in their way of a division championship comes to town, fresh off a shutout of the hapless Rams. A Week 2 game with playoff implications? In the NFC West, where it's hard to imagine anyone contending for a Wild Card berth,

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you *bet* that can happen.

And, since I had two sick kids just wake up in the middle of the night and I'm tired and this is long enough already, here are my pics for the final six games:

Buccaneers @ BILLS -5.5
STEELERS @ Bears +3
Browns @ BRONCOS -3
RAVENS @ Chargers -3
GIANTS @ Cowboys -3
COLTS @ Dolphins +3
