

NFL 2009, Week 5

by Joe Mulder

Last Week: 6-8

Overall: 33-29

That's okay. We can stumble. This week we bounce back.

The Smartest Thing I Said Last Week:

This is madness. There's no way that the Cowboys should be favored over an undefeated team on the road. Absolute madness.

The Cowboys lost to the Broncos by a touchdown.

The Dumbest Thing I Said Last Week:

RAIDERS @ Texans -9

Come on, Joe. The Raiders? Seriously?

On to this week's action. Let's just power through; I'm in no mood...

BENGALS @ Ravens -8.5

Here's how you get in trouble a quarter of the way through the season: you start to think you know something based on what's happened so far – something like "the Bengals are good now" – and you forget that the Ravens now have one of the top offenses in the league.

And I know that's how you get in trouble, yet I still do it.

BROWNS @ Bills -6

I just can't pick the Bills. They're so, so bad. I mean, the Browns are too. But you've got to pick one of these terrible teams this week, and I'm going with the one that's not giving away six points.

Redskins @ PANTHERS -4

These Redskins lost to the Lions, remember. Also, the Panthers are coming off of a bye. Even though Carolina is 0-3, this is an easy one.

STEELERS @ Lions +10.5

And so we have the first-ever meeting between the defending Super Bowl champions and a team that lost 16 games the previous season. I'll take the defending Super Bowl champs, even if their season so far has not indicated that they are likely to defend said title.

Cowboys @ CHIEFS +8

Please refer back to The Smartest Thing I Said Last Week, only replace the word "undefeated" with the word "winless." It's still true (also, replace the word "an" with the word "a," I suppose. For sticklers). The Cowboys aren't good, people. Take it from somebody who's been following them because he made the mistake of picking Tony Romo for his fantasy football quarterback: *the Cowboys aren't good.*

I know the Chiefs are bad. Still.

(You know your prospects for a good week of picks might not be the best, by the way, if you're forced to defend multiple picks with the phrase "I know Team X is bad, but...")

Raiders @ GIANTS -14.5

I feel like I learned my lesson as far as the Raiders are concerned.

Buccaneers @ EAGLES -15.5

I think it's still early enough to take a "wait and see" approach with this year's Eagles, and a "wait and see" approach most certainly does not mean picking them to beat anybody by 16 in Donovan McNabb's first game back at QB.

VIKINGS @ Rams +10

There's no excuse for the Vikings not to win this game decisively. If they have Super Bowl aspirations, then they can't even allow games like this one to be competitive. Do you want to know how long it's been since an eventual Super Bowl champion lost to a team outside its division that finished with a losing record? Six years (5-11 Redskins over Super Bowl champ Patriots, 2003).

The great teams just can't – and just don't – lose games like this. A win this week won't prove that the Vikings are a great team, but a loss – and perhaps even a close game – would probably prove that they are not.

Falcons @ 49ERS -2.5

This line seems to suggest that the Falcons are better than the 49ers. I'd like to suggest that you take San Francisco, and feel good about it. There's one "bad for the previous few years, then somehow easily makes the playoffs" team every season, and this year it really looks like the 49ers are it.

Texans @ CARDINALS -5.5 I don't think the Cardinals are particularly good, and I still think Houston might be. Still, "never trust the Texans" is pretty sound advice, and the Cardinals are at home after a bye facing an early must-win game. Consider my pick of them to be "begrudging."

Patriots @ BRONCOS +3.5

POOP READING

Look, if somebody dove at my knee, caved it in, and messed it up for an entire year, I'd be nervous the next time somebody dove at my knees, too. So I don't blame Tom Brady for overreacting and gesturing for patently ridiculous roughing the passer penalties. The blame rests with the officials for indulging him.

Although who could say "no" to those eyes, and those cheekbones...

Sorry, where was I?

Anyway, I don't think we'll see any of that nonsense from the officials this week in Denver, and I don't think the Patriots are really quite the Patriots this year, and Denver might be as good as their 4-0 record would suggest, so I'll take the Broncos.

JAGUARS @ Seahawks

No line for this game, from what I saw, probably because of uncertainty over whether Matt Hasselbeck or Seneca Wallace will play quarterback for Seattle. I have no idea what to make of the Seahawks either way; they've beaten one dreadful team (St. Louis) and lost to three potentially pretty good ones (San Francisco, Chicago, Indianapolis).

I have even less of an idea what to make of the Jaguars; didn't we all agree that after failing miserably to live up to expectations last season they had given up on their coach and were going to be phoning it in? They certainly didn't do that last week, when they thrashed the Titans by 20 points. They've only played one bad game, in fact, but it *was* a pretty bad one, getting badly beaten at home by a "meh" Cardinals team.

The only read I have on either of these two teams is that the Jaguars might turn out to be kind of good, so I'll go with them this week.

COLTS @ Titans +3.5

To paraphrase Stewie's dance instructor from that one episode of "Family Guy," the Titans season is like Fire Island after Labor Day: *over!*

JETS @ Dolphins +2

If we can somehow avoid a *Back to the Future*-style rupture in the space-time continuum resulting from Jets rookie quarterback Mark Sanchez's boyish, ethnic hunkiness coming within even a few miles of the South Beach party scene, I think we'll all live to see a New York win on Monday night.

(What is it with me and quarterbacks this week, by the way? I need a drink...)