

### NFL 2009, Week 11

by Joe Mulder

Last Week: 8-7

Overall: 75-68-1

I keep hovering around .500, waiting for that breakout week. You know what? I think this will be it.

The Smartest Thing I Said Last Week:

Broncos @ REDSKINS +3.5

I don't really think the Broncos are good anymore. They always collapse in the second half of the year, anyway. You can change the coach and you can change the quarterback, but can you change that?

The Redskins really stink, but I almost feel like I have no choice but to take them[.]

The Broncos lost by ten to a Redskins team that's almost universally regarded as being in total disarray. Broncos quarterback Kyle Orton missed the second half with an injury, but still. I was right.

The Dumbest Thing I Said Last Week:

Jaguars @ JETS -7

[The] Jets aren't that great, but they're at home and coming off a bye... I don't feel like I have any choice.

The Jaguars seem like they might be sort of good now, and the Jets are just lousy. I mean, they're the Jets. What was I thinking?

Onward. No teams have byes this week (or for the rest of the season), which means that once again there are 16 games every week, which is fun because then one's record picking games each week is the same as a team's record over the course of a season (be it 10-6, 5-11, etc.).

We're going "no huddle" this week; let's burn through these...

Dolphins @ PANTHERS -3

So that's a wrong pick on the Thursday game to start us off.

COLTS @ Ravens +1

I picked against the Colts last week, and although they won the game (you may have heard about it), they didn't cover the spread.

I do not anticipate picking against them very much anymore.

Redskins @ COWBOYS -11

Who saw last week's Cowboys stink bomb in Green Bay coming? Anyone?

Most decent teams have a hiccup or two like that over the course of a season (although the *best* teams don't tend to), so I think the Cowboys should be all right against the Redskins.

And don't be fooled by the Redskins' decisive win over the Broncos last week; they're still pretty bad.

Browns @ LIONS -3.5

Only because it's mathematically inadvisable to predict "scoreless tie."

49ERS @ Packers -6.5

Just as decent teams can have a hiccup here or there (see above, re: Cowboys), lousy ones can too. The Packers' domination of the Cowboys last week was, I suspect, just that.

And while I'm still not totally sure the 49ers are for real, 6.5 points is a lot for this Packers team.

Bills @ JAGUARS -8.5

Oh, Jaguars. Just either be good or be bad, will you? You're giving me a headache.

STEELERS @ Chiefs +10

The Steelers, fresh off of being swept by the Bengals, probably feel like they're better than their 6-3 record, and will probably play this weekend in Kansas City like they're trying to prove it.

SEAHAWKS @ Vikings -10.5

I don't feel like going back to check, but I'm pretty sure that last week was the first time all year that I picked a Vikings game incorrectly. They were 16.5-point favorites, I said they wouldn't cover that spread, but they won by 17 (thus covering by a half a point, in a game in which the Lions, I'd point out, missed a field goal). So even though I missed last week by the slimmest of possible margins, I've been pretty right on as far as the Vikings have been concerned. So listen to me when I tell you that Sunday's game against the Seahawks will be close. I say the Vikings win, but it's close.

Falcons @ GIANTS -6.5

The Falcons have famously never had back-to-back winning seasons in franchise history, and are in danger of keeping that streak alive if they don't get going.

The Giants, meanwhile, look to get off the proverbial schvide (a four game losing streak knocked them out of first place, and out of the discussion of the best teams in the NFC) following their bye week. I hope that running back Brandon Jacobs gets off his own schvide in particular; otherwise I feel like I could join up with all the rest of his fantasy football owners and organize some sort of class action lawsuit against him.

Saints @ BUCCANEERS +11

I suggest that we refer to Tampa Bay as the "Pluckaneers," as their plucky style of play under new starting quarterback Josh Freeman has breathed new life into the franchise of late (note: I don't actually suggest that; that's lame).

I know it sounds crazy to back a one-win team over one of the two remaining undefeateds, but the Bucs *have* looked like a different team the last couple of weeks. Not a team that's going to beat the Saints, necessarily, but a team that could at least keep it close.

(plus, this pick fits the standard NFC South "always take the home team" trend that has served us all very well since the start of last season)

CARDINALS @ Rams +9

Since their bye week the Cardinals are a pretty impressive 5-1, their only loss being one of those aforementioned hiccups against Carolina.

And the Rams played the Saints really tough at home last week; as condescending as it sounds to say, that was probably "their Super Bowl." I don't look for a repeat performance.

CHARGERS @ Broncos [no odds]

As I write this the Broncos quarterback situation is up in the air, so nobody's posting odds for this game (which, in the policy of this particular column, makes this game a pick-'em). I'd probably take the Chargers if they were favored by anything less than a touchdown, for the record. San Diego is on the rise, while Denver is on the fall (I realize that "on the fall" isn't necessarily an expression, but why shouldn't it be? "On the rise" is; what's the difference? Huh? Tough guy?).

Jets @ PATRIOTS -10.5

I loved the call last week.

If you missed it, Patriots coach Bill Belichick had his team go for it on 4th-and-2 from their own 28 yard line, leading by six with just over two minutes left to play against the Colts in Indianapolis last week. The try failed, and the Colts took the ball 28 yards for the winning touchdown with just seconds

left on the clock.

Belichick was predictably excoriated by the majority of people who make it their business to weigh in on such things, as his choice was one that almost no coach would ever make. Then the stat nerds chimed in, though, and it turns out that any way you slice it, going for it on fourth down actually gave the Patriots a greater chance to win – in terms of probability and percentages – than punting did. Any other coach, presented with the same math, would still probably punt, just to avoid the sort of hassle involved if he went for it and failed. This is where Bill Belichick's egoism and sourness pays off, however; if you've got a coach who doesn't give a shit what anybody else thinks, why then he'll be willing to make an unconventional, even unheard of move if it gives his team the best chance to win, knowing full well that his own fans will turn on him if he comes up short (and doing it anyway, because he doesn't give a shit about that).

Yes, the tactic backfired, as it will a small percentage of the time. But, if it were me, I'd still rather have the coach who astutely plays the percentages (crazy though such plays will occasionally seem) over a coach who plays it safe to avoid blame and second-guessing.

(Of course, if it were me, I'd also rather have a coach who wasn't an absolute black hole of joy, but, there you go)

BENGALS @ Raiders +9.5

I think we can all finally agree that the Bengals are for real, right? They're one freaky Week 1 play away from being 8-1 right now.

EAGLES @ Bears +3

Ha! Enjoy Jay Cutler for the next few years, Bears fans! I mean, what with Brett Favre and all, my team is staring into the gaping maw of complete uncertainty as far as the future of its quarterback position goes, and I *still* wouldn't trade our quarterback situation for yours in a billion years!

Hee hee!

TITANS @ Texans -4.5

If you'd have told me right after the 2006 Rose Bowl, after Vince Young just got done almost single-handedly winning the national championship for Texas, that a little less than four years later he'd be playing excellent football in the NFL for a team that also featured a running back who essentially looked like a video game version of Barry Sanders... I would not assume that said NFL team would be 3-6. Such are the 2009 Titans, though.

Those three wins came in their last three games, however, and I don't think that the Titans think they're out of it just yet. As such, this is a huge Monday night game for them, and I

# POOP READING

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say they win.

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