

NFL 2009, Week 14

by Joe Mulder

Last Week: 6-10

Overall: 93-97-2

Last week was brutal for everybody, from what I hear, so 6-10 might have been as good as could be expected. But that doesn't change the fact that, after a good start, I've dipped back below .500 for the first time all season.

The Smartest Thing I Said Last Week:

EAGLES @ Falcons +5.5

The Eagles are the Jets of the NFC; they always suck their fans in *just* enough to think they might do something, which of course they won't.

Except that unlike the Jets, the Eagles actually go as far as making the playoffs.

The Eagles kept up their end of the bargain; they beat the Falcons in Atlanta by 27.

The Dumbest Thing I Said Last Week:

SAINTS @ Redskins +9.5

I was tempted to make this my fourth or fifth "this is the week the Saints finally falter" pick, but I decided against it.

On the road, against an opponent it would be easy to take lightly, just six days after a big, big Monday Night Football game... of *course* this was the week the Saints were going to falter. Sure, they won the game in overtime (due to the incompetent boobery of the Redskins and some NBA-level shady officiating), but practically from the opening kickoff there was almost no chance that they'd cover the spread.

And I knew it too; I just didn't pick it. Stupid. Stupid!

Anyway. Onward.

STEELERS @ Browns +9.5

Once again I Tweeted my incorrect Thursday night pick, to have it time stamped so you don't think that I'm cheating and trying to anti-pad my stats. Why I'd do that I have no idea, but, there you have it.

SAINTS @ Falcons +10.5

This is the Saints' "bounce back" game. Must be nice to be so good that you "bounce back" from a game that you actually *won*.

Doesn't matter; I still think the Vikings can beat the Saints in the playoffs. I'm not saying that I necessarily think they *will*, mind you... I'm just saying that I think they *can*.

Meanwhile, the Falcons look like they might not get those first-ever back-to-back winning seasons in franchise history. They're 6-6, and rather unlikely to win this week. Too bad.

PANTHERS @ Patriots -13.5

What are the Patriots doing being two-touchdown favorites over anybody anymore? Tom Brady is banged up, Randy Moss has stopped caring, Bill Belichick seems to have been possessed by the ghost of Joe Gibbs (from when he came back to coach the Redskins a couple of years ago and was bad; not from when he coached them like 25 years ago and won a bunch of Super Bowls), they can't run the ball, and their defense can't stop anybody. Why should they be such huge favorites over a half-decent team like Carolina?

Well, because they're the Patriots. The uniform itself is enough to get people to bet on them, at least for another year or two, no matter what happens. And it's easy to forget sometimes that the purpose of a point spread isn't to predict what the final margin of victory will be, but rather to generate an equal amount of betting on both sides of the line. I suspect this spread will do that, even if I think it's way too high. Just pretend that the Patriots were a team that doesn't exist – the Los Angeles Knights, say – and that their season had played out exactly as it has so far, and that they were hosting the Panthers on Sunday. Would the hypothetical Knights be two-touchdown favorites?

I sincerely doubt it.

(now that I said all that, watch them deliver one of those old-school Patriot ass whuppings like the 59-0 one that they handed the Titans earlier this season)

PACKERS @ Bears +3

The whole "Vikings haven't beaten anybody good" narrative certainly gained steam after Minnesota laid a major egg in Arizona last Sunday night, but I'd like to point out that the Vikings beat the 8-4 Packers twice. And I'd also like to point out that if the Packers had split the two games with the Vikings like they almost always do, the Packers would be 9-3 right now and so would the Vikings.

My point? The Packers are a pretty darn good team this year, so those two Vikings wins over them were quality victories by any measure.

Also, if Green Bay is in fact good, they should have no trouble whatsoever with the Bears this week.

LIONS @ Ravens -13.5

POOP READING

The Ravens have lost six games, to the Patriots, Bengals, Vikings, Bengals again, Colts and Packers. Only one of those teams, the Packers, are currently not in first place all by themselves, and we just got done discussing how good the Packers are. So, the Ravens might actually be good, even if their quarterback Joe Flacco is redefining the term "sophomore slump" and their defense is aging faster than... I don't know... something that is known for aging particularly rapidly (leave me alone; I'm tired).

And if the Ravens are good, they should absolutely beat the Lions by at least two touchdowns.

Dolphins @ JAGUARS -3

The Jaguars are 3-1 in their last four games, but even that stat is – like everything to do with the 2009 Jaguars – maddeningly and misleadingly confusing. They beat the Chiefs, Jets, Bills and Texans, all of whom are pretty bad (you'd have to say the Texans are the best of the bunch, I imagine), all in very close games, then lost to the so-so 49ers somewhere in there by the embarrassing score of 20-3.

And yet, if the season ended today they'd make the playoffs.

There's an old Nostradamus quatrain that was recently uncovered, in which the medieval mystic attempts to predict the result of just one 2009 Jaguars game. Eventually he just writes, in Latin, "You know what? Screw it."

Jets @ BUCCANEERS +3

As long as Bucs QB Josh Freeman can manage not to throw five interceptions with no touchdowns like he did last week, the Buccaneers have a chance.

I say this is the one Jets fans have been waiting for (and not in a good way); the one where, after they win just enough to start thinking "playoffs," they come crashing down against a terrible team to which they have no business losing.

Bengals @ VIKINGS -6.5

Last week, watching the Vikings against the Cardinals, I sort of felt like somebody who'd found a genie in a lamp and made a wish that during the game we'd see "vintage Brett Favre;" only it was one of those mischievous genies who technically grants your wish, only in such a way that you end up wanting to take it back entirely. Because in a sense, what we got last week certainly was "vintage Brett Favre."

I say – or rather, I desperately hope – that Sunday's abomination against the Cardinals was just one of those bizarre hiccups I talk about occasionally, and not a sign of things to come.

BILLS @ Chiefs pk

The Bills might actually not be terrible. We'll see this week, I guess.

Seahawks @ TEXANS -6.5

At 5-7 the Texans have virtually no chance to make the playoffs and almost nothing left to play for; and now that that's the case, they'll probably feel free to start winning again. They're like the A-Rod of NFL teams. Or were, until A-Rod actually started coming through in big games.

Broncos @ COLTS -7

If I wasn't a Vikings fan I'd be really, really rooting for a Colts-Saints all-undefeated Super Bowl. I mean, can you imagine?

Redskins @ RAIDERS +1

I smell a big letdown coming for the Redskins after their almost-win against the Saints last week. Plus, the Raiders – as crazy as this sounds – have won two of three, and three of six. And those three wins came against a team tied for first place, a team all alone in first place, and the defending Super Bowl champs. I'm just sayin'.

Rams @ TITANS -13

Still not technically out of it, the Titans.

And by the way, the Titans have the same record as the Texans and still generally are considered a playoff longshot but a playoff possibility, while everyone pretty much agrees that the Texans are done. And everyone is pretty much right; can you imagine having to be a Texans fan, is my question?

Chargers @ COWBOYS -3

Maybe I'm crazy. We all know the Chargers don't lose in December, and the Cowboys don't win.

But still.

Eagles @ GIANTS -1

These last two picks are heavily influenced by the fact that my fantasy football playoffs started this week. I have Tony Romo of the Cowboys and Brandon Jacobs of the Giants on my team, I need them both to come up huge, and I'm worried that since they both came up huge last week they'll stink this week.

Why am I dragging you into this, though?

My apologies.

CARDINALS @ 49ers +3.5

POOP READING

Stupid Cardinals.
