

NFL 2011 - Week 3

by Joe Mulder

Last week: 7-7-2

Overall: 12-17-2

Hey, look at that... I broke even last week. I mean, *you* wouldn't have, if you'd used my picks to bet on the games, because the house always takes a piece of the action. Although if you're using my picks to bet on games, then you may as well just drop the money you're sure to lose over the course of the season directly off at my house.

The Smartest Thing I Said Last Week:

I should probably just pick against my Vikings every week, since all they are is a source of endless frustration for me.

The Vikings blew a 17-0 halftime lead at home and lost to the Buccaneers, 24-20. This during a season in which a few wins would probably really help out as far as getting a stadium built that has any chance of keeping them in Minnesota.

The Dumbest Thing I Said Last Week:

The Rams are supposed to make the playoffs (and, granted, that team is a walking MAS*H unit right now. But still). The Giants might be the worst team in the NFC East.

And yet the Giants are favored by six.

Sometimes it's like Vegas *wants* to give away free money!

You can never get that confident. Well, *I* should certainly never get that confident. The Rams lost by 12 points and quite literally gave up trying late in the fourth quarter (more on that later).

Onto this week's games. Let's whip through them, because I'm tired...

Jaguars @ PANTHERS -3.5

I don't feel like looking this up to prove that it's true, but this game is going to be the best game in history in which two rookie quarterbacks started against each other.

Cam Newton, as everyone who follows football knows quite well by now, has thrown for more yards in his first two games than anybody, ever. Even so, it does appear that there's a learning curve at the quarterback position in the NFL; Newton threw three interceptions last week against the defending champion Packers in a game his team only lost by

seven points.

Will the Jaguars be good enough to exploit the rookie quarterback's weaknesses? Perhaps not, seeing as how they're starting their own rookie quarterback in Blaine Gabbert. This point spread might be a bit too high for a Carolina team that was 2-14 last season and has yet to win a game this year, but the Jaguars looked like a mess last week. Better safe than sorry.

LIONS @ Vikings +3.5

I don't want to talk about my Vikings. It's too frustrating. Let's all just agree that I'll pick against them every week until they show me a reason to do otherwise, and then let's all move on. Thanks.

49ers @ BENGALS -3

I'm still not sure what happened to the Bengals last week. They lost in Denver (which plenty of teams have done over the years, to be sure), but to a Broncos team that wasn't really any good. In Week 1 they beat a Browns team that was supposed to be good, but might not be. Although the only reason we think the Browns might not be good is because they lost to those selfsame Bengals.

One thing is for sure: the 49ers are in the NFC West, the NFC West stinks to high heaven (it's obviously very early in the season, but NFC West teams are already 2-6, and one of those wins only happened because NFC West mates San Francisco and Seattle played each other, so somebody had to win). It would take extreme circumstances for anybody to back an NFC West team on the road in an intra-divisional game this year.

DOLPHINS @ Browns -1.5

The Dolphins were 1-7 at home last year and 6-2 on the road. They're 0-2 this year, both losses coming at home. So that means they're definitely going to win in Cleveland, right?

Patriots @ BILLS +9

The Bills have lost something like 13 straight games against the Patriots. On the other hand, the Bills have looked relatively unstoppable on offense so far this young season, putting 41 and 38 points on the board in their first two games.

You'd have to be crazy to think that the Bills are actually going to *beat* the Patriots on Sunday... but you'd have to be only slightly less crazy to think that there's no chance the game could be close. Nine points is an awful lot of points to be giving away for a team that can score as much, and as quickly, as the Bills.

GIANTS @ Eagles -9

Any time I have to go back and double check the odds because at first glance it seems like I must have gotten it wrong, that's a pretty big indicator that I feel strongly about a game. And even though these Eagles are supposed to be some sort of super team, and even though they're playing at home and sure to be amped up against the rival Giants, and even though it looks as of this writing that quarterback Michael Vick will play for Philadelphia, it's hard for somebody who watched their first two games to imagine them being favored by this much.

Broncos @ TITANS -6.5

I told you the Titans were good! Why didn't you listen?

Oh, yeah; maybe because they lost to the lousy Jaguars in Week 1.

Still, listen: the Titans are good.

Texans @ SAINTS -4

This is the Texans' chance to finally prove that they deserve to be considered an elite team in the NFL. As with all other such chances the Texans have had in their decade-long history, I suspect they'll fall short.

JETS @ Raiders +3.5

I keep watching the Jets and thinking to myself, "How are they doing this? They're not that good!"

It's been that way for about two years. I give up. The Jets are good.

RAVENS @ Rams +4

It's almost impossible to imagine an NFL team showing as little sack as the Rams showed last week against the Giants. As I touched on before, by the end of the 4th quarter St. Louis had quite literally given up any semblance of even making it *appear* as though they were trying to win the game. I don't know how a team comes out after something so pathetic and possibly expects to play a good game.

Here's what happened: the Rams were down 28-16 to the Giants in the fourth quarter. First they punted from their own 24 on 4th and 6 – sure you're unlikely to get a first down if you go for it there, but how likely are you to win if you punt the ball away?

The Rams punted, and the Giants almost four-and-a-half minutes off of the clock before turning it over on downs. At this point the damage was effectively done; the Giants were up 12 with two minutes left. Still, at that point it's at least technically, theoretically possible for the Rams to come back and win, right? Not likely, certainly; not something you'd expect them to do if they had 50 chances to do it, but still.

Possible.

So what did the Rams do? After a sack, a penalty, and two incomplete passes, the Rams *punted with a minute-and-a-half left!* Sure it was 4th and 28. Sure the ball was on their own 15-yard line. The chances of converting that fourth down, let alone getting two touchdowns to win the game, were minuscule at that point, but they went from minuscule to non-existent the second the Rams decided to kick the ball away and concede the game.

Basically it went like this:

"Hey, Rams... you're probably going to lose since you're down by 12 and there's only a minute-and-a-half left, and it's fourth down. That said, you *do* have one more shot at a first down and 90 more seconds to try to win this game. Would you like to attempt to do that?"

"Nah... we're good." [Punt!]

I've never seen anything quite like it in all my years of watching football. The Rams literally and unambiguously gave up before the game was over, so, I have no problem giving up on them.

Chiefs @ CHARGERS -14.5

The Chiefs have surrendered 41 and 48 points in their first two games. They've lost by a combined score of 89-10, and last week they lost their best (maybe even their only decent) offensive player to a season-ending injury.

The worst defeat in NFL history was 73-0; I'm not saying it's possible that the Chiefs will lose to the Chargers that badly on Sunday, I'm just saying that the worst defeat in NFL history was 73-0.

FALCONS @ Buccaneers -1.5

The Falcons looked like the contenders they were supposed to be last week in beating the banged-up and Vick-less Eagles. The jury's still out on the Buccoes, who were down 17-0 at halftime last week and staring 0-2 right in the face. They're lucky they were playing the Vikings and thus had no trouble coming back to win in the second half, or else their season would really be in trouble right now.

Cardinals @ SEAHAWKS +3

Every instinct in me says to go with the Cardinals, even though the Seahawks have one of the best home field advantages in the NFL and this is their home opener.

But then, most of my football-picking instincts stink. So, Seahawks it is. Although if they crap the bed in this game, we can pretty much write them off for the year.

POOP READING

PACKERS @ Bears +3.5

I think we all feel good about declaring that the Packers are for real; this game will help us decide whether or not the Bears are.

STEELERS @ Colts +10.5

Pretty much all that needs to be said about the 2011 Colts season is that it's starting to seem pretty funny that a quarterback named "Luck" might end up wearing a horseshoe on his helmet during his NFL career.

Redskins @ Cowboys [off the board]

I don't think anybody's sure how badly Cowboys quarterback Tony Romo is hurt. Whether he plays or not would significantly affect the odds for this game, so I couldn't find a line anywhere. If I find one before Monday night I'll Tweet a pick (@RealJoeMulder); if not, I won't.

[note: I found a line that said Cowboys by four. So...

Redskins @ COWBOYS -4]
