

2016 NFL Picks, Week 3

by Joe Mulder

Last week: 9-7

I've said it before but I'll say it again: I love a full NFL week because there are 16 games, just like there are 16 games in every team's season, so your success in picking games that week translates perfectly. Every NFL fan knows what, say, an 11-5 season or a 6-10 season looks like, feels like, smells like (to a certain extent, that is – obviously Browns fans don't know what an 11-5 season feels like) – all sixteen possible records (forgetting for a moment about ties) have their own distinct "bouquet."

Overall: 9-7

My picks in all caps:

THURSDAY NIGHT

Texans @ PATRIOTS (pk)

I haven't missed a Thursday nighter all season. And I don't plan to!

Also – we may have to revisit Tom Brady after seeing what the Patriots did without him. The Patriots are now (feel free to look this up because I don't want to, but I'm pretty sure I'm right) 14-5 without Tom Brady since his illustrious career began, starting the likes of Matt Cassel, Jimmy Garoppolo and Jacoby Brissett in his stead. I remember about a decade ago when the Joe Montana comparisons began; I thought they were apt – Brady and Montana are both undeniably great, but I feel like they are also enormous beneficiaries of circumstances (that being the opposite of a victim of circumstance). There were probably a handful of quarterbacks in the league at any given time who'd have won four rings with the Bill Walsh 49ers or the Bill Belichick Patriots.

#HOTTAKE

SUNDAY EARLY

CARDINALS (-3.5) @ Bills

The poor Bills. The poor, poor Bills. I almost feel bad for Bills fans. And for a Vikings fan to say that, it would almost be like if – you know what? All the analogies running through my mind right now are deeply offensive and graphic so I'm going to pass.

I know there's a whole west-coast-team-going-east thing, but I don't suspect that'll kick in.

Browns @ DOLPHINS (-10)

Bills fans feel bad for Browns fans.

Vikings @ PANTHERS (-7)

If me picking against the Vikings makes the Vikings keep winning, I'll keep picking against the Vikings. By the by, I'm in the "they won't miss Adrian Peterson all that much" camp. The Vikings performance thus far has generated quite a bit of guarded optimism among the fanbase.

("Guarded optimism" is the highest possible setting for a Vikings fan. The Vikings could win the Super Bowl on the day that a given Vikings fan wins the lottery right before getting married to Brittney Alger while being irrevocably raptured into heaven for all eternity, and that Vikings fan would still describe his mood as "guarded optimism.")

Redskins @ GIANTS (-3.5)

Infighting, incompetence, and failing to deliver on expected results? In Washington, DC?? NOW I'VE SEEN EVERYTHING!

And this seems like the place to mention that I really enjoyed the premier of "Designated Survivor" as much as I knew I would, but – and maybe I'm wrong – it looks like Kiefer Sutherland has had a bit o' work done. The only other presidents who've had their faces carved up to that extent are Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Teddy Roosevelt.

Heyo! Mount Rushmore burn!

Lions @ PACKERS (-7)

This Vikings fan chose to ride or die with Aaron Rodgers and Jordy Nelson in his most expensive fantasy football league this season. So either they both stink, and the Packers along with them – or they both regain their mojo and steal the division title away from my Vikings. It would be easy to see this deal as lose/lose, but right about now I'm more inclined to see it as win/win.

HASHTAG GUARDED OPTIMISM

Ravens (-1) @ JAGUARS

For reasons that confound even me, I remain a Jaguars semi-believer and a Ravens non-believer. Both of those stances will be either confirmed or shattered on Sunday.

Raiders @ TITANS (-1)

Let's wait until the Raiders aren't the Raiders for at least a couple of weeks in a row before we pick them again. Deal?

SUNDAY LATE

49ERS @ Seahawks (-9.5)

POOP READING

This seems like it could be a major bounce-back game for the Seahawks, but based on what we've seen from them so far I'm not sure I want to give away more than nine points.

By the way, to every 8-to-13-year-old snot-nosed punk who has never been anywhere near the Pacific Northwest but has still spent the last two years traipsing around in Seahawks gear – I hope Santa brings you the Cam Newton jersey you ask for this Christmas, you frontrunning little wiener.

Rams @ BUCCANEERS (-5)

I've been amused – if not bemused – by all the reports about the hellish conditions at the L.A. Coliseum during the Rams home opener last week. "That facility is old and outdated and can't possibly accommodate 90,000 fans." As if that hasn't been happening several times every autumn for the last 100 years for USC games. As if 90,000 people showed up there out of nowhere and the Rams were caught off guard.

Granted the place is a dump – as a USC alum and former member of the Spirit of Troy marching band I've been to plenty of games there – but still.

CHARGERS @ Colts (-2.5)

I don't know what anybody has seen from the Colts that would make anybody think they should be favored over a half-decent team, and I don't know what anybody has seen from the Chargers that would make anybody think they weren't a half-decent team.

Jets @ CHIEFS (-3)

[sung to the tune of "I am evil Homer"]: Playoff im-pli-CA-tions! Playoff im-pli-CA-tions!

STEELERS (-3.5) @ Eagles

Someone should take the clip of "Hardcore" Holly genuinely beating the everloving crap out of a brash young contestant on MTV's "American Idol"-style pro wrestling show "Tough Enough" from like 10 or 12 years ago, and they should put Ben Roethlisberger's head onto "Hardcore" Holly's head and Carson Wentz's head onto the brash young contestant's head. That would succinctly sum up my feelings about how this game is going to go.

SUNDAY NIGHT

Bears @ COWBOYS (-7)

I do not feel good about this pick at all – spoiler alert: it will not be showing up in the Fiscal Five – but the Bears already have that "lost season" stink about them. I'd just as soon pick against them for now, no matter how big the number or how unconvinced I am of their opponent's prowess.

MONDAY NIGHT

FALCONS @ Saints (-3)

My best work friend's husband is a Falcons fan. That's about all I've got for this Monday night dud.

THE FISCAL FIVE

I call these games my "Fiscal Five" because they're the games I feel best about this week, and if you wager on these games and these games only, you are guaranteed to make tons of money.

[Guarantee not valid in AL, AK, AZ, AR, CA, CO, CT, DE, FL, GA, HI, ID, IL, IN, IA, KS, KY, LA, ME, MD, MA, MI, MN, MS, MO, MT, NE, NV, NH, NJ, NM, NY, NC, ND, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VT, VA, WA, WV, WI, WY, the US Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands, on foreign soil, or in international waters]

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Redskins @ GIANTS (-3.5)
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FISCAL FIVE LAST WEEK: 3-2

FISCAL FIVE OVERALL: 3-2

Did last week's Fiscal Five make you money? They did. 3-2 in a given week with your five favorite picks is nothing to write home about... but somebody who hits 60% of his or her picks every week could retire to a sprawling mansion by the sea and never have to work again. I'm not saying for certain that's what's going to happen to me – I'm just saying I got 60% of my best bets last week.

Anyway, enjoy the games! I'll try to get next week's picks column up early Friday instead of early Saturday, but that's also been my aim these last two weeks and it didn't happen so I wouldn't count on it!
