

2016 NFL Picks - Week 4

by Joe Mulder

Last week: 5-9-1

Overall: 14-16-1

Yeesh. Well, I always say nobody knows anything at least until after Week 4, so my bad picks last week prove me right about that? Let's go with that?

Also I just straight-up forgot to include a game last week; that's why it adds up to 15 instead of 16.

Onward...

THURSDAY NIGHT:

DOLPHINS @ Bengals (-7.5)

My thinking: Thursday night games are generally sluggish, low-scoring duds so 7.5 is too many points almost no matter who's playing.

So much for that idea. Well, I was half right – the game was a low-scoring dud.

SUNDAY EARLY:

COLTS (-2.5) @ Jaguars [in London]

I was thinking recently about how, had they not lucked into drafting two spectacular quarterbacks in Peyton Manning and Andrew Luck, the Colts would be considered one of the garbage franchises in all of sports. The entire Irsay era (dad Bob, who bought the team in 1972, and son Jim, who runs things now) would likely have been a Clippers-or-Browns-esque nightmare for Indianapolis fans (and Baltimore fans before them). Bob Irsay takes over a recent Super Bowl champion, and then they don't win a playoff game for another 22 seasons. Then they get 20+ years of Hall of Fame quarterbacking and they're mistaken for the class of the NFL. I think they're settling back down to their appropriate Irsay level of competitiveness these days, even with Andrew Luck at the helm.

(I'm still not ready to pick the Jaguars over anybody on a neutral field)

SEAHAWKS (-2.5) @ Jets

There were some high hopes for the Jets this year, but I think we start to enter "lost season" territory if they fall to 1-3. And sometimes scheduling is everything – the Jets have got the Steelers and Cardinals up next, and could conceivably be in an un-crawl-outable 1-5 hole before they hit their Ravens/Browns/Dolphins/Rams/bye stretch. Anybody feel good about the Jets sweeping those four and clawing their

way back to .500 before resting up to play the Patriots? I'm not sure I do.

And as amusing as it would be to see the Seahawks be bad-to-mediocre again (they were fun for a while but now they're pretty annoying), it looks like they're still good. Sigh.

RAIDERS @ Ravens (-3.5)

A win's a win and you can only play the teams in front of you. And once a win is in the books nobody take it away, no matter how much the NCAA likes to pretend that you can.

All that is to say it's not the Ravens' fault that they're off to one of the least impressive 3-0 starts in recent memory, beating three teams – Bills, Browns, Jaguars – that are currently a combined 1-8. It's weird to think that the Raiders might have to be considered a "quality team," but let's see how the Ravens do once they play a quality team.

PANTHERS (-3) @ Falcons

The Falcons might be good. Still, I think the Panthers remain the team to beat in the NFC South, and every Falcons game so far has been a shootout. What I'd really love to do is bet the farm on the "over" in this game (sitting at 50 right now), but since that's not what we're here for I'll just take the Panthers.

Titans @ TEXANS (-4.5)

The Texans have lost J.J. Watt for the year. That's a pretty devastating blow – I had to check and make sure he wasn't on the cover of Madden 17. He wasn't, so the "Madden Curse" is nothing to worry about. This year's cover boy is Patriots tight end Rob Gronkowski, who – in what amounts to nothing more than a coincidence – missed the first two games of the season and has yet to catch a pass this year.

If the Titans feel like taking control of this division, this would be an excellent week to start. I think the Texans will be rested up and ready to fend them off.

Oh, and one more thing: on behalf of all fantasy football owners who were stuck with DeMarco Murray last season and had no choice but to keep playing him even as he delivered stink bomb after stink bomb, and then drafted Derrick Henry because he looked like an absolute beast but now Derrick Henry is kind of stuck behind DeMarco Murray in the Titans backfield because DeMarco Murray decided to start playing like the love child of Darren Sproles and Vanellope Von Schweetz – on behalf of all of us – come on, DeMarco Murray. Stink or don't stink. Make up your mind.

LIONS (-3) @ Bears

The Lions lost their great wide receiver, Calvin Johnson, to retirement in the offseason and their rather explosive offense

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has just kept right on humming.

The Bears lost their great running back, Matt Forte, to free agency in the offseason, and their offense – well, I'd call it "stagnant" but that would be an insult to puddles of fetid, filmy, standing water everywhere.

So far I'm picking almost all road teams but what can you do?

Bills @ PATRIOTS (-4.5)

I had another realization a while ago, much like my more recent Colts one – how much of the Patriots 21st century mystique derives from them being a great organization being run by innovative and clever people all the way through the ranks, and how much derives from them being in the AFC East with the Bills, Dolphins and Jets? The Patriots have won 13 of the last 15 division titles, and during that time only the Jets have suffered from the occasional flare-up of competitiveness. The Dolphins haven't won a playoff game since three weeks after the Supreme Court decided *Bush v. Gore*. The Bills haven't made the playoffs since the 1900s, which is damn near unfathomable. So, how much of the Patriots' greatness is the Patriots' own doing, and how much is due to the fact that they can pretty much count on going at least 3-1 in the division every single season? If the Patriots play .500 ball outside of the AFC East they go 11-5 at worst. And then it's not like they plow through the playoffs every year; in the Brady/Belichick era they've lost as many AFC title games as they've won Super Bowls.

Anyway – they're an all-time great team but they're aided by playing in what otherwise is a comically bad division, is what I'm saying.

Browns @ REDSKINS (-7.5)

I wouldn't bet on either of these teams with a ten foot pole (note: it's possible that I'm not entirely familiar with how betting works) but since I'm picking every game, I'll take the 'Skins.

SUNDAY LATE:

BRONCOS (-3) @ Buccaneers

Let's just ride the Broncos until they give us any indication that we shouldn't. Sound good?

Rams @ CARDINALS (-7.5)

I smell a "see, we're not that bad" game coming from the Cardinals, and a "see, we're not that good" game coming from the Rams. It's bananas that the terrible Rams are a game up on the pretty good Cardinals, and this week should take care of that.

SAINTS @ Chargers (-4)

For as long as I can remember, the Chargers always seem to lose the close ones. It's like Marty Schottenheimer left all his bad juju behind after he was done coaching them. Or possibly it's that Norv Turner and Mike McCoy have been the coaches since.

COWBOYS (-2) @ 49ers

I want to stop picking road teams and I'm looking at all the games and I just can't.

SUNDAY NIGHT:

Chiefs @ STEELERS (-4.5)

Do you think the Steelers are still an elite team, and simply had a game from hell against the upstart Eagles last week? I bet the Steelers do.

MONDAY NIGHT:

Giants @ VIKINGS (-5)

Last week I said that I'd keep picking against the Vikings if that meant they'd keep winning. I lied. As a lifelong Vikings fan I should know better than to be excited – but I'm excited. This defense is absolutely stifling. They've been down 10-0 twice and 7-0 once and, from that point on in each of their three games they have given up a grand total of seven combined points (I didn't look that up to make sure it was right but I feel like it is). Somehow it doesn't matter who goes down with an injury on the defensive line; whomever they suit up immediately becomes a QB-seeking missile. The Vikings could put me in a game I'd probably get at least a couple of quarterback hurries.

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 then 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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POOP READING

Four road teams. What could go wrong?

FISCAL FIVE LAST WEEK: 0-5 [yeesh]

FISCAL FIVE OVERALL: 3-7
