

NFL 2008 - Week 14

by Joe Mulder

Week 13: 9-7

Overall: 86-104-3

The Smartest Thing I Said Last Week:

BRONCOS @ Jets -7.5

Let down? Let down, anyone? Do I hear let down?

[sure enough, one week after beating the undefeated Titans handily on the road, the Jets lost at home, by 17, to an up and down Broncos team that nobody likes. Did I call that one or did I call that one?]

The Dumbest Thing I Said Last Week:

The Colts have won their last four games, but by an average of four points. Still, I'm okay with giving away five, because the Browns are kind of a mess.

[Dude; what did you *just* get done saying? The Colts have won their last four by an average of four, and you pick them to cover a five point spread on the road? And then the Colts go out and win by – let's see here – four! My goodness, the Colts winning by four? Who could have *possibly* seen that coming? Well, you did! Listen to yourself, why don't you? No wonder you're 20 games under .500]

So, at 9-7, at least I had a winning week. For the first time since Week 5. That's the first weekend in October we're talking about, people. Listen: you can't go from Columbus Day to Thanksgiving without winning a single week of football picks. You just can't. And yet, I did.

Something special is going on this season, folks. Come along for the ride.

RAIDERS @ Chargers -9

The Chargers won this one handily; nice to see I'm back to messing up the Thursday game.

Jaguars @ BEARS -6.5

A graphical representation of the fortunes of the 2008 Jacksonville Jaguars could pretty much be superimposed right over a graph of the fortunes of Sarah Palin; both started out as trendy, sexy picks around Labor Day, both stumbled out of the gates and didn't look so great around mid-September, both appeared as though they might have a chance to right the ship, and then both just fell apart and really couldn't have looked any worse by the beginning of November (although the Jaguars lost consecutive games to the Browns and the Bengals right about then, so I'd say Palin

wins that head-to-head. Not having heard of the Bush Doctrine can't compete with losing to the Browns and the Bengals in the space of eight days).

And, to finish off the comparison, nobody right now could possibly have any idea how either Palin or the Jaguars will do in 2012.

The Bears, by contrast, are still in the playoff hunt (they're a game behind the first place Vikings, but their remaining schedule looks a heck of a lot easier), and they really need this one.

Vikings @ LIONS +9

I've pointed it out before, but now that the scenario is upon us it certainly bears repeating: in 2001, the Lions were 0-12 when they hosted the Vikings in Week 14. Now, the Lions are 0-12 and hosting the Vikings in Week 14. In 2001, I seem to remember that everyone was pretty sure the Lions would beat the Vikings. Now, everyone seems to think that the Vikings game is the Lions' last best hope to get a win this season. In 2001, the Lions did in fact beat the Vikings to improve to 1-12. Now, the Lions are probably going to do it again, just when we Vikings fans are all excited about being in first place with Gus Frerotte at quarterback and Brad Childress as head coach. Making the playoffs despite those two gentlemen occupying those two positions would be a bit like winning a competitive eating contest despite a having a stomach flu and a very strong gag reflex.

(actually, I don't mind either Childress or Frerotte terribly, but I fell in love with that analogy. Was it worth it, for a cheap joke at the expense of two guys who never did anything to me? Probably, especially since neither they nor anyone they know is ever likely to see this)

(although former Broncos GM Ted Sundquist did e-mail me once to complain about something I wrote about him on my old website. But he turned out to be a really good guy, so everything's cool)

And I realize that what happened in 2001 has no bearing on what's going to happen this season; what may well have a bearing on this Sunday's matchup is the fact that the Lions almost beat the Vikings already this year, in a game in which Detroit's quarterback memorably stepped out of the back of his own end zone for a safety and continued to scramble around out of bounds for a good five count before he realized what he was doing. That game, the Lions almost won.

Also, it should be noted that by the time you read this we'll likely know whether Minnesota's two star defensive linemen, Kevin Williams and Pat Williams, will be serving four-game suspensions during this game. I say the Vikings blow it with or without them.

Texans @ PACKERS -5.5

POOP READING

The Packers aren't as bad as 5-7. It's not even out of the question that they could run the table and win the NFC North at 9-7. If I know that, and you know that, we can be pretty sure that the Packers know it too, and will play accordingly.

Bengals @ COLTS -13.5

Wow, NFL. You really present me with a quandary. Do I take the Colts, who have now won their last *five* games by an average of four points, to win by two touchdowns? Or do I take the Bengals, who are just awful?

You know what? Even though it means repeating last week's Dumbest Thing I Said, I can't take the Bengals. Not when I've already picked the Lions.

Falcons @ SAINTS -3

NFC South vs. NFC South, you take the home team (even if the Saints burned me in that very same scenario last week, losing by three at Tampa Bay when they were three-and-a-half point underdogs).

In any case, this could be the week where we start to find out if the Falcons are actually good, or just "16 games is a short enough schedule that a mediocre team like the 2007 Browns can get some bounces, make a play here and there, finish 10-6 and almost make the playoffs" good.

(really, when you think about it, almost anything can happen over the course of 16 games. I mean, a horrible team isn't going to go undefeated and a great team isn't going to go 4-12, but an average team could conceivably go 11-5 or so. 16 games isn't a lot. I know it's a different sport, but, by way of comparison, the losingest baseball team in modern history, the 1962 Mets, had a 16-game stretch where they went 9-7. Not that that has anything at all to do with the Falcons and Saints, but, still. I was interested. Hey; let's look up the best 16-game stretch for the 2003 Tigers, who lost one game fewer than the '62 Mets. Hold on; give me a second... 8-8. This is fun. Wait; one more... the 1988 Baltimore Orioles, who opened the season with 21 straight losses: 9-7. Okay, I promised we were done, but... the worst 16-game stretch for the 2001 Seattle Mariners, who won 116 games? 8-8. What does all this prove? Nothing really, but at least it wasted a bunch of everyone's time)

Eagles @ GIANTS -7

Not sure the Eagles are going to blow out the defending champs by 28, like they did to the Cardinals on Thanksgiving.

Also, Giants wide receiver Plaxico Burress shot himself in the leg with his own gun at a Manhattan club last weekend. I will not be making any jokes about that here today. Not because of the seriousness of the situation or anything, but because I'm pretty sure that any joke worth telling has been

told by now.

BROWNS @ Titans -14

I had the Titans, then I switched it because the Browns haven't lost by such a large margin since Week 3. They're competitive. They lose, but not by this much (now watch them go lose by at least this much).

DOLPHINS @ Bills -1

Let's check the weather forecast for Buffalo... what's that you say? This game is being played indoors, in Toronto? Hey, thanks NFL! Just when I needed an easy win to pad this week's record.

Chiefs @ BRONCOS -9

I picked the Broncos to beat the spread against the Jets last week (and would have picked them to win the game outright, if that's what we did here), then I saw that the weather in New Jersey was crappy. I had a brief "uh-oh" moment, but Broncos QB threw for 357 yards in the wind and the rain to prove my hunch right. And because the Broncos have a quarterback who's apparently weatherproof, I can pick them to cover a 9-point spread in Denver in December.

JETS @ 49ers +4

The Jets will bounce back in a big way, mark my words.

Well, what are you waiting for? *Mark them!*

PATRIOTS @ Seahawks +4.5

A game against the Seahawks is probably just what the doctor ordered for the 7-5 Pats, who could conceivably need to win out to make the playoffs.

(by the way, if you'd have told this Vikings fan that his team would have the same record as the New England Patriots heading into Week 14, I would have enthusiastically said, "I'll take it!")

Rams @ CARDINALS -14

The Cardinals feast on bad teams.

And they've got to win another game eventually, because – actually, you know what? I was going to finish that sentence with "because the NFC West isn't going to clinch itself," but with the second-place 49ers sitting at 4-8 and facing three more opponents with winning records, it actually just might. The NFC West might end up clinching itself. I'm not sure what that would mean for the "thing X is not going to Y itself" rhetorical device, which is one of my favorites, and one I've used to good effect in years past if I may be so bold as to say so.

POOP READING

Cowboys @ STEELERS -3

All anyone wants to talk about these days is the shoddy playing surface at Pittsburgh's Heinz Field; turn on any TV channel, and I bet you 50 bucks that's what they're talking about right this second.* The talk is that the field may, in general, act as a bit of a disadvantage to the Steelers, slowing down their speedy defense. I'd imagine that high-flying Cowboys offense would be just as slowed down, since they're playing on the very same field. I hate to pick against the Cowboys when they're on a roll like they have been, but, I feel I must.

*This bet will under no circumstances be honored.

Redskins @ RAVENS -5

NBC is trying to hype this matchup as some sort of geographical rivalry; I'm not quite sure I buy it. Really, do you think half of the players on either team even realize that Baltimore and DC are within 45 miles of each other?

And before you get outraged that I would ask such a thing, remember that we're talking about a league in which an appreciable percentage of the players apparently did not know until a few weeks ago that it was possible for a regular season game to end in a tie. A league that employs Dolphins linebacker Channing Crowder, who, it was reported, did not know until five days before his team's game in London last season that in London, they speak English. A league where players bring guns to nightclubs, and then when they're fiddling with those guns they accidentally shoot themselves in the leg.

I'm not looking for Sunday night's Redskins-Ravens game to be a knock-down, drag-out grudge match between bitter rivals, is what I'm telling you.

Buccaneers @ PANTHERS -3

What have we learned about NFC South divisional games, kids? That's right: take the home team!

Very good. Now go outside and play.
