

NFL 2009, Week 6

by Joe Mulder

Last Week: 8-6

Overall: 41-35

Back to my winning ways, though not overwhelmingly so. What say we put some daylight between me and .500 this week, eh boys?

Rams @ JAGUARS -9.5

That pretty much sums it up for the Rams, doesn't it? Nine-and-a-half point underdogs to a team that just lost 41-0 last week. Also, the biggest story of the year involving the team involved a radio host being blacklisted from attempting to purchase a share of the team because some inflammatory racial statements that someone made up and then pretended that he said.

I imagine that the 2009 Rams season highlights DVD will just be a continuous, fixed shot of a guy sitting in front of a TV set that's playing a copy of the 1999 Rams season highlights DVD.

As far as the Jaguars go, my policy for the rest of the year was going to be to pick against Jacksonville at home no matter what, but then two things happened. One, they beat the Titans (the now 0-5 Titans, but still) at home by twenty points, and two, they have the Rams on the schedule this week.

The Jaguars seem like they could lose by thirty or win by thirty any Sunday, so you really can't pick them to win a game by ten.

But you *extra* can't pick the Rams, at all, no matter what the point spread. Not this year. Not until they at least put up a fight against somebody who isn't the Redskins.

PANTHERS @ Buccaneers +3

[First of all, an editorial note: our loyal reader(s?) may have noticed that last week I capitalized the word "Eagles" in my Buccaneers @ Eagles pick, whereas if one read the accompanying statement it was clear that I had intended to pick the Buccaneers. I regret the error, and you can rest assured that my incorrect Buccaneers pick is the one that's reflected in my weekly record at the top of this column]

The "take the home team in all NFC South matchups" rule is out the window this year, I'm afraid. At least when the game is in Tampa. The Buccaneers are another team that hasn't been close against anyone other than the Redskins, while Carolina finally got off the proverbial schvide last week, managing their first win of the season against – you guessed it – the Redskins.

[I saw Proverbial Schnide live at Troubadour last weekend, by the way; those boys put on a hell of a show]

Giants @ SAINTS -3

The game of the week, no question about it. The two NFC favorites (the Vikings tend to be unfairly overlooked a bit because of how tired everyone is of Brett Favre) go head-to-head in what will almost certainly prove to be 2009's final battle of unbeaten teams.

I want to pick the Giants. I think the Giants are better. I think the Giants would win most of the time if these two teams played a number of hypothetical games in a row.

However, I don't feel like going against the high-powered New Orleans offense at home, after a bye week, in what must be one of the biggest regular season games in Saints history.

So I won't.

CHIEFS @ Redskins -6.5

If you've been reading this column carefully up to this point, you will notice a few clues as to the fact that I don't think the Redskins are any good.

The 0-5 Chiefs are no picnic either, of course, but I think they've been close more often than they haven't. Everybody keeps it close against the Redskins.

RAVENS @ Vikings -3

The Vikings are 5-0. That's good. In the past fifteen years or so, the Vikings have enjoyed, in various years, starts of 4-0, 7-0, 7-0, 6-0 and 5-1. Those five particular seasons resulted in, respectively, records of 9-7, 15-1, 11-5, 9-7 and 8-8, four playoff appearances, three playoff wins and no trips to the Super Bowl.

Now, the Vikings will probably make the playoffs even if they lose to the Ravens on Sunday. Heck, they could lose to the Ravens and then go on to win the Super Bowl. I just can't shake the feeling, though, that this has the potential to be one of those "screeching halt" games that grinds the entire season's momentum to a halt and leads to a brutal stretch of 1-6 or 1-7, something like that. Take a look at the schedule: ten of the Vikings' final eleven opponents have to be considered potentially troubling, and even the Lions aren't complete pushovers this year.

I'm saying enjoy it now, Viking fans, because it might not be like this for much longer.

I mean, it might; but, it might not.

LIONS @ Packers -13.5

What evidence do we have that the Packers are any good?

The fact that they played the undefeated Vikings tough on the road? Kind of; a couple of late Packers scores made things look a lot closer than they were.

The fact that they opened up the season with a quality win over a good Bears team? Maybe; Chicago quarterback Jay Cutler probably did more to defeat the Bears that day than any Packer can claim credit for.

I'm not sure that Sunday's eight-point loss to the defending champs is going to be the last time the Lions play a good team close, is what I'm saying. And that's if the Packers even qualify as a good team.

They certainly aren't the best team Brett Favre has ever been on. Not like the 2009 Vikings are, according to Brett Favre this week.

(So much fun for this Viking fan to just keep twisting that knife. So much fun. And, for reasons made clear in my comments about the Vikings-Ravens game, I figure I'd better twist while the twisting is good)

Texans @ BENGALS -5

"Gee, I don't know, can we really make the Bengals a touchdown favorite over a team that people thought was going to be good this year?"

Yes! Yes you can! The Bengals are good! They just beat the Ravens last week! They have a great quarterback, which may have slipped some people's minds because in 2005 he essentially had his leg torn off at the knee, and only now is he finally healthy again. The Bengals are good, people! It *has* happened before, you know. Okay, only once in the past 20 years has it happened prior to this season, but it *has* happened.

And who are the Texans, to be only five point dogs to a clearly superior team? Houston has lost to the Jets, Jaguars and Cardinals so far this year; I know that the Jets started off strong, but that's not exactly a murderer's row.

I'm almost worried how much I like the Bengals in this game. Like, it can't be this easy, can it?

Browns @ STEELERS -14

The Steelers haven't beaten a team by more than ten all season, but I imagine that comes to an end this Sunday. Even if Browns quarterback Derek Anderson is considerably better than the 2-17 and the 23 yards passing he managed in "leading" the Browns to a 6-3 "win" over Buffalo last week, I still say the Steelers take care of business.

Cardinals @ SEAHAWKS -3

Is it possible that we – and by "we," I mean "I" – moved a bit too quickly in bestowing the presumed 2009 NFC West crown in the 49ers as early as we (I) did?

Perhaps. The Seahawks have been devastated by injuries but are still 2-3, just one game behind San Francisco and coming off a 41-0 pasting of Jacksonville. The Cardinals won the division last year, but weren't any good even then (and I know that they almost won the Super Bowl; that was a fluke). If you're a Seattle fan right now, maybe you aren't thinking "Playoffs!," but you're probably at least thinking, "Playoffs?"

EAGLES @ Raiders +14

I can't imagine how high they'd have to make this line to get anyone to bet on the Raiders. Also, you know it's gotten particularly bad when an opposing coach can look over to the Eagles sideline and honestly say to himself, "Boy, if someone offered me the chance, I'd sure trade personal lives with Andy Reid right about now."

Bills @ JETS -9.5

I've become less enamored of the Jets and their new quarterback, who is dangerously close to being downgraded from "rookie phenom Mark Sanchez" to "promising rookie Mark Sanchez."

The Bills, on the other hand, are embarrassingly hopeless, and there's just no excuse to pick them this week (or, perhaps, any other week, for the rest of the season).

Titans @ PATRIOTS -9

We all know by now that Bill Belichick's Patriots, even in years when they don't win the Super Bowl (like, for example, probably this one), don't lose two games in a row. That's just about a given. So do they beat the Titans by more than nine?

I can't imagine not. I can't imagine what the Titans have left to play for, other than pride. And there's only so much pride you can have when you're forced to play football looking like [this](#).

Bears @ FALCONS -3

It looks like we may be able to pencil the Falcons in for a Wild Card playoff spot. Meanwhile, what to make of the Bears? This week might help us figure that out.

Broncos @ CHARGERS -3.5

I'm not sure that the Chargers, who were supposed to take the AFC West virtually uncontested, are all that great. I am sure, however, that after their bye week, and at the risk of falling three games behind the Broncos with a loss on Monday night, the Chargers will be both desperate *and* well-rested.

POOP READING

And I'm pretty sure I don't want to take three-and-a-half points against a good team with a solid quarterback playing a must-win division game at home after a bye.
