

NFL 2011 - Week 11

by Joe Mulder

Last week: 11-5

Overall: 57-70-4

Has the blind squirrel finally found the nut? Or have I finally figured out the NFL after 10 weeks? Only time will tell. Also, I will tell, right now: I just got lucky and it probably won't happen again.

The Smartest Thing I Said Last Week:

I keep waiting for the Texans to fall apart like they always do, but this might finally be the year that they don't.

This was really smart *at the time*, because at the time the Texans hadn't yet lost quarterback Matt Schaub for the season. It's no longer applies, but seeing as how they went to Florida and beat the Buccaneers by 28 points it certainly applied on Sunday.

The Dumbest Thing I Said Last Week:

...

You know what? I'm giving myself a pass on this one. I went 11-5, and even the ones I missed weren't that bad. The Falcons took the Saints to overtime and if they hadn't gone for it on fourth down in their own territory I might be 12-4. But don't worry; I'm sure I'll say plenty of dumb stuff this week.

Onward...

Jets @ BRONCOS +6 (Thursday)

If I forget to come back and edit this section after the game is over, rest assured I probably got it wrong. I almost always get the Thursday games wrong. I went 11-5 last week (have I mentioned that yet?) and even last week I got the Thursday game wrong.

[Friday morning note: I got this one right. In Tebow we trust...]

Panthers @ LIONS -7

It would be easy to say that the Lions have lost whatever mojo led them to that impressive 5-0 start (and it would be delightful if that were true), but they never should have been 5-0 in the first place. So, they were never all that good. And though they've lost three of their last four, they're not that bad either. Those three losses came at the hands of three good teams. The Lions haven't lost to a lousy team all season, and I don't think they'll start with the Panthers.

Buccaneers @ PACKERS -14

I hate so much that the Packers are on top again. I can't even tell you. And what's worse is that they're one of the only pro sports teams that there's no possible reason to hate, so if you *do* hate them it's probably because you're a jealous, bitter Vikings fan. Which I *totally* am.

COWBOYS @ Redskins +7.5

If you're willing to forget about that bizarre thrashing they took at the hands of the schizophrenic Eagles a few weeks ago, the 5-4 Cowboys' season, on the whole, actually looks pretty darned impressive. Dallas also has two games left against the division-leading Giants, whom they only trail by a game in the standings. Their destiny is most certainly in their hands, and they've really looked good lately. They Cowboys have an excellent chance to be "the team that nobody wants to play" headed into the playoffs this season.

[For the uninitiated, "the team that nobody wants to play" isn't the same as "the team that everyone thinks is going to win the title." In fact, "the team that nobody wants to play" almost never ends up winning the title. Except for last year, when the Packers somehow managed to be both "the team that nobody wants to play" *and* "the team that everyone thinks is going to win the title," and then went and won the title. Damn Packers.]

Bills @ DOLPHINS -1

Oh, how the mighty Buffalo has fallen. If you'd have told a Bills fan two months ago, right after his team got done knocking off the Patriots to cap a thrilling 3-0 start, that before Thanksgiving came they'd be 5-4 and underdogs to the lowly Dolphins, do you think he'd have believed you?

Actually, if he was a lifelong Bills fan I'm sure he would have. I think Vikings fans look at Bills fans the way people in crutches look at people in wheelchairs. The poor bastards.

Raiders @ VIKINGS +1

Hey, speaking of poor bastards...

But, hey, the Vikings still have quite a few talented players, they can still stop the run (sixth best in the NFL in that department, and that's even considering they've been blown out a few times, thus spending big chunks of the second half going against teams that did little *but* run the ball), and Oakland's quarterback is still the desiccated husk that used to contain Carson Palmer. You'd be a fool to say you "feel good" about the 2011 Minnesota Vikings going into any given game, so let's just say that I feel less bad about this game than I've felt about quite a few others this season.

Really, though, no matter what the year, all Vikings fans are essentially this Vikings fan. The hairstyles and wardrobe

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might be different, but the feelings the same.

BENGALS @ Ravens -7

What to make of the Ravens? Their last four games have featured two inexplicable losses to crappy teams, one embarrassingly close win over a crappy team, and a thrilling 23-20 win in Pittsburgh over the hated Steelers. So who knows?

As far as the Bengals go, their surprising 6-2 start was always spoken of with a Barry Bonds-sized asterisk as nobody ever let them forget that they still had to play the Ravens and Steelers twice each. Cincinnati lost to the Steelers last week and if they lose to the Ravens on Sunday their path to the playoffs becomes much, much more rocky. And while you and I are pretty sure the Bengals don't really have a chance to make the playoffs, I'm sure the Bengals have convinced themselves that they do. So even at 6-3, this game is do-or-die for them. If the "lose to crappy teams" version of the Ravens so much as pokes its head out of the ground, even for a few plays, the Bengals should be able to hang around and maybe even win this thing.

Seahawks @ Rams -1

We just can't trust either of these teams to really stink up the joint anymore. I don't think the Seahawks are quite so tough without their massive home field advantage, so I'll take the Rams. For the second week in a row. Crazy.

Cardinals @ 49ERS -9.5

The 49ers might as well make their travel arrangements right now to fly into Green Bay the weekend of January 22nd for the NFC Championship Game. And then they could make plans to fly to Maui or Barbados or wherever to start their vacation on January 23rd because there's no way they're beating the Packers, but, still. Number 2 seed and a title game appearance ain't too bad for a team that hasn't made the playoffs since 2002.

TITANS @ Falcons -6

I can't figure either of these teams out, but I don't think the Titans should be six point underdogs too often. Certainly not to a team that isn't one of the elite teams in the league, which the Falcons don't appear to be.

Chargers @ BEARS -3.5

I keep waiting for the Bears to start looking as bad as I think they should. I've been waiting for about fourteen months now.

Eagles @ GIANTS -4

Well, this is pretty much it, isn't it? If the Eagles lose this

one, they're done. And we've been saying that for about a month now, but this time it's really true. And we've been saying *that* for like two weeks, but this time it's *extra* true!

Chiefs @ PATRIOTS -14.5

Remember when the Chiefs got blown out in their first two games, and we all said, "Oh, wow, the Chiefs are really bad"? When you're picking Chiefs games from now on you can probably just pretend that the season stopped there and then picked up where we are now, and ignore that four-game winning streak they had. You'll probably be better off that way.
