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# A Passing Fantasy Issue 131

## NFLBP Player Newsletter 2003 Week Seven

### ed Robert Crowther

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### WEEK SIX REVIEW

Defenses were in charge in the Florida derby, hometown Tampa held the visiting Dolphins to just two field goals, a good day were it not for the fact that the Bucs were held to just one. New England were more than ready for the visit of Detroit, two touchdowns up at the end of the first quarter the Patriots were never troubled. Green Bay went after the normally formidable Buffalo defense on the ground and the Bills were unable to stop them, the Packers never pulled into a big lead but were in control of the game all the way. The Jets were rampant once again, establishing their credentials as the main challenger to New England in the AFC East with an impressive mauling of the Bears. In the big game of the week Cincinnati got most of the yards but St Louis got most of the points, the Rams were well ahead by halftime which allowed them to sit back and soak up the pressure in the second half. The 49ers offense was once again slightly anaemic but they were good enough to take advantage of some solid field position provided by their defense and special teams in Tennessee. The Cleveland offense was once again on good form, showing more stamina than New Orleans as they turned a one point half time lead into a rather comfortable victory. The Baltimore offense sprang to life to grab three second quarter touchdowns and a ten point halftime lead, the exertion seemed to tire them unduly, however, as they didn't manage another point through the following three quarters of play. Carolina managed to claw back the deficit in

the fourth quarter but neither team was able to break the deadlock in overtime, missing three field goals didn't help the Panthers. The shootout of the week occurred in, of all places, Philadelphia. Neither defense was much cop, though the Oakland D was slightly more competent for most of the game before nearly blowing what looked like a very comfortable fourth quarter lead. Dallas took the opportunity to move ahead of the Eagles with a tense win over the struggling Chiefs. Washington looked a very competent outfit in disposing of the Seahawks at home, and could yet figure in the playoffs if they continue to show improvement like this. Denver produced the upset of the week, finding, from nowhere, 37 points to put them well clear of the previously high flying Giants.

Offensive performance of the week goes to Cleveland for an all round very solid display. Defensive performance of the week goes to New England for the only shutout. Special teams performance of the week goes to St Louis, a kick return TD certainly helped the cause.

### ST LOUIS POST-DESPATCH EARLY SEASON INTERVIEW WITH COACH WILLIAMS Martyn Williams

Coach Williams couldn't stop smiling when he sat down with the Post-Despatch staff earlier this week. And it doesn't take a genius to work out why – being head coach of the Super Bowl Champions, who have looked unbeatable so far this season, must be a great place to be – especially when you have finally put one over on Bengals coach Birtchnell! We asked Coach Williams his thoughts on the NFLBP season so far. "Fun, fun, fun! I couldn't be happier. New starting QB Bulger looks like he has been playing the position for years, our offensive production has gone above even last seasons – just look at what we have done to the 49ers and Bengals in recent weeks! Our offence and special teams are based around speed and so far we haven't met a team able to even keep close to us. We have four

wideouts and a HB capable of taking the ball to the endzone from anywhere on the field, and with veteran TE Conwell and FB Faulk giving us the ability to ram the ball down peoples throats as well, well let's just say I'm glad I don't have to think up a D gameplan to stop those guys! Okay, I admit there is a small concern over our porous run defence, but then it is easy to gain yards on the ground when you are 3 or 4 scores behind and running into pass defences." OK coach, obviously this St Louis team is running exactly how you want it to at present, but even with the obvious ability of your squad, there must be some teams in the league that scare you? "Scare? Not a chance! But I do have respect for all teams, some more than others of course, but no matter who the opponents are I prepare the players fully for the game. Other than the Saints there isn't a team in the NFC that isn't in a position to challenge us for the NFC title over the next ten weeks." So what are your thoughts on the whole league at this point in the season? "It promises to be one of the most interesting seasons in BP for many years, with teams like the Jets, Browns and Giants returning to prominence. In the AFC the Raiders are once again practically assured the Western division, but it looks as though the Bengals have a real fight on their hands in the Central now, being two games behind the Browns, and the Patriots have the Jets and Dolphins hot on their tails. At this point I really couldn't say which team of the Browns, Bengals, Patriots, Jets and Dolphins will miss out on the post season, it's just a shame that one of them will. In the NFC the Cowboys are surprising everyone atop the East, but I don't think they'll be in that position for much longer – that division is all about the Eagles and Giants. Look for the Eagles to return to the aggressive defending of recent seasons if they don't pick up a few more wins soon. And the Redskins could really be a surprise package, Coach Bulbrook already having brought them a rare victory. In the Central the Buccaneers seem to be struggling a little, and the Packers haven't started as well as I expected, allowing the Lions to take the lead. My money is still on the Packers for the division though. And in the West, well, in all honesty I can't see this Rams outfit letting me down this season – another sweep of the NFC may be too much to ask, but after 15-1 last year, I've challenged them to go unbeaten

this season. With the Bengals despatched, let's just say that looks more possible now. Of course, having said that, the Lions will probably beat us this week – they have been my bogey team since I took over in St Louis after all, with Coach Torpey having a winning record against me. But I'm hoping to even that up this week at the Edward Jones Dome..."

### WEEK SEVEN PREVIEW

Predictions and commentary from myself, other predictions from Darren Birtchnell.

Dolphins at Broncos – Miami have stuttered at the start of the season, but I doubt Denver have the tools to do them any harm. MIAMI BY 10

Patriots at Seahawks – New England are on a massive roll, Seattle have been their usual first half of the season selves. Seahawks will be unable to stem the flow of points from the New England offense. PATRIOTS BY 14

Bills at Ravens – Two teams with similar records, but Buffalo have been something of a disappointment while Baltimore, if anything, have already exceeded expectations. As long as they don't give up any cheap touchdowns the Bills' defense will give Buffalo the edge. Bills by 3

Jets at Browns – Two teams that have improved massively over last season. New York have looked the better all round team but Cleveland definitely have the edge on offense. Homefield, or whoever gets the ball last. BROWNS BY 3

Bengals at Chiefs – Cincinnati will be smarting after recent performances and will be looking to take out their frustrations on KC. The Chiefs have yet to find a successful offensive formula and, unless they pull one out of the bag, don't stand a chance. BENGALS BY 14

Titans at Raiders – The Oakland defense took a day off last week, the Titans will need the same again as they have one of the

poorer offenses in the league.

Eagles at Panthers – Philly are an unfamiliar third place in their division, Carolina have made one of their best starts to the season since they last won the superbowl. I expect a reversal of fortunes here though, Panthers to go down. EAGLES BY 7

Cowboys at Saints – Dallas are once again vying for a playoff spot and will do their chances no harm in winless New Orleans. COWBOYS BY 7

Redskins at Bears – Washington are starting to look like a half decent football team, somewhat unusual for them in this league, but if their current form continues they will have no problems with disappointing Chicago. REDSKINS BY 7

Giants at Packers – Green Bay are showing signs of getting their act together, New York were the victims of an upset last week but it was their own mistakes that killed them. If they manage a mistake free performance then they should manage a road win, but the Pack are good enough to take advantage of any mistakes. GIANTS BY 3

Bucs at 49ers – Tampa's playoff hopes are already starting fade, but they have a good record against San Francisco in recent years and will be hoping to turn things around. The 49ers have been inconsistent so far but will have the edge in a low scoring game. 49ERS BY 3

Lions at Rams – Is anyone able to stop St Louis? Detroit have done it before, and have started the season well, but it's hard to see them keeping the game close enough to have a chance in the fourth quarter. RAMS BY 14

DB – Dolphins by 8, Patriots by 21, Ravens by 3, Jets by 1, Raiders by 10, Eagles by 6, Cowboys by 10, Redskins by 7, Packers by 1, 49ers by 10, Rams by 17