
A Passing Fantasy Issue 139

NFLBP Player Newsletter 2005 Week Four
ed Robert Crowther

Thanks to Darren, Martyn, Chris and Andrew for their contributions this time, and for all the predictions. Last week's issue didn't get completed in time for posting to Danny, if you want a copy of it then email me to be added to the mailing list or get in touch at the following address:

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Or email at 'gameplan@crowther.info'. If you want to discuss Gameplan with other coaches have a look at the Yahoo! Group:

<http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/gameplan>

WEEK ONE REVIEW **Darren Birtchnell**

Week three saw four teams register their first win of the season and a new coach in New Orleans. It's the AFC's turn to go first this week.

New England had a comfortable win over the Ravens, although statistically there wasn't that much between them. Apart from the turnovers that is. Another tough looking game for Baltimore this week, they need to get some wins under their belt otherwise they might need another late-season surge just to be in contention. Cleveland broke their duck in a hard-fought game in New York, scoring a TD in overtime. The Jets missed a FG which cost them the win, special teams should never be undervalued. Miami dropped 14-0 behind to Denver, but then scored 33 straight points to ease home and also get off the mark for the season. It's unlikely they'll score 33 straight points this week though. Buffalo were another team to win their first game of the season, much against the odds. Seattle must be wondering what's happened after their opening day win over Cleveland, have they peaked too early? KC at Cincinnati was a real battle, the Chiefs had more of the ball but couldn't quite make it count. However, the signs are promising for them to push on from last year's

showing. Oakland kept the scoreboard rolling again, although it was only against the hapless Titans. But you can only beat what's in front of you and Oakland have made a very good job of that so far.

Washington surprised the pundits by beating the Bears at home, courtesy of 4 FG's and a +4 turnover margin. A timely reminder that they were a playoff team last year. The Eagles were comfortably outgained by the Lions and only completed 41% of their passes, yet still won. Field position looks to have been the key thanks to some excellent returns. The Giants put up the sort of score they should have done last week, as New Orleans were put to the sword. New Saints coach Andrew Briggs was in the stands and already has big plans for the team. Will he be the man to finally turn them around? Carolina dealt with Dallas easily enough, although I'm sure they would have preferred a bigger winning margin, as points difference could well come into play later in the season. The Buccs got back to winning ways but had to hold on after a 4th quarter comeback from the Niners. Their game vs the Giants this week will be very interesting. And St Louis keep on rolling, despite Martyn's fears the Rams were far too good for the Packers. The result will be a lot closer next time I'm sure.

PERFORMANCES OF THE WEEK

Offensive performance of the week goes to the Rams, who had a day where everything seemed to go right for them. Defensive performance of the week goes to Washington, handing the Bears their first loss despite not being able to score a TD. Special teams performance of the week goes to the Giants for the single most impressive return of the day, an 80 yard kickoff return for a TD.

MESSAGE SECTION

Andrew Briggs to Everyone - Thanks for the welcome I've been given since taking over at helm of the Saints last week. This is obviously a tough league

throughout and I haven't exactly helped myself by landing in the nasty NFC West, but hey, someone's gotta do something about those pesky Rams... The Saint roster, as expected, has some gaping holes and the playcalling/training require some overhauling but with some sensible spending and able gameplanning this ship should be turned around and headed for playoff island in time for tea. Looking forward to the challenge. All the best.

Chris Stones to Andrew Briggs – From one recent newcomer to another - Welcome to the Saints Andrew, now don't think about turning them around too quickly will you??

BLEATINGS FROM ST LOUIS

Martyn Williams

Now that is more like it! For the first time this season we've actually looked like a team that has contested the last four Super Bowls. The D was awesome, running game strong and the passing game made the plays when they really mattered. Good to see that when required, this team can put together long drives that eat the clock, and that we don't rely entirely on the big play offence. Also very happy to beat The Goz for the first time, albeit in a game where I had a huge advantage in the amount of time I've had to build the squad and training. But no matter, that's revenge for a beating he gave me in similar circumstances, very early in my NFLBS career!

EARLY THOUGHTS FROM CAROLINA

Chris Stones

It's been an entertaining start to the season for me at the Panthers. Must comment on the game with Martyn's Rams in week 2, what an unbelievable display from both offences. The proverbial knife through butter from both teams - well over 900 yards total offence, over 50 first downs, 70 points, 8 touchdowns... The opening score safety I gave up in the first quarter ultimately proved the difference, and by the end of the game it came down to who had the ball last, and that turned out to be the Rams. A couple of long completions in the final minute enabled them to seal it with a last play field goal, and I would put

this down to a Rams squad which I imagine has its strengths set up extremely well to engineer those sort of plays. Great game Martyn and well played.

So going forward I know what I need to aim for, it will obviously take time to bring the squad and training to a position where we can fully complete with them, but at least it shows there's a chance.

Then a nice win in week 3 against the Cowboys, where the team performed well on both sides of the ball, but it took us a while to convert this into points. Good to come through in the end though and very pleased to be sitting at 2-1.

A new coach this week in the NFC West and I've heard that Briggsy comes in with a strong gameplan pedigree, so it should make life in the division even more entertaining.

PREDICTIONS COMPETITION

Darren Birtchnell

We now have a total of 10 turn credits up for grabs, courtesy of donations by Peter Kneil, Martyn Williams, Chris Stones, Dave Pinder and myself. If anyone else is feeling generous & would like to donate a couple of credits, please contact either Rob or myself (birtchnelljdjv@willis.com).

And for those that haven't been paying attention (Peter?), the scoring system is as follows:

- Predict the winning team - 2 points
- Predict the correct winning margin - 10 bonus points
- Within 1 point of the winning margin - 5 bonus points
- Within 2 points - 4 bonus points
- Within 3 points - 3 bonus points
- Within 4 points - 2 bonus points
- Within 5 points - 1 bonus point

Last week's scores were:

Darren Birtchnell 33
 Martyn Williams 30
 Rob Crowther 29
 Peter Kneil 20

Which leaves the standings as follows:

- 1) Chris Stones 47.5 avg (2 wks)
- 2) Darren Birtchnell 33.3 (3)
- 3) Dave Pinder 33 (2)
- 4) Martyn Williams 30 (1)
- 5) Rob Crowther 28 (2)
- 6) Peter Kneil 19.7 (3)

And remember, you need to predict at least 8 week's worth of games to qualify for the prizes...

WEEK FOUR PREVIEW

Seahawks at Patriots – Seattle handed Buffalo their first win last week, they are unlikely to trouble New England.

Broncos at Jets – New York's first defeat last week came in overtime, they are too good an all round team to lose out to the inconsistent Broncos.

Bengals at Dolphins – Miami have had a difficult start to the season, and it's not getting any easier. After this game they will be the best 1-3 team in the league.

Titans at Bills – Buffalo surprised me by winning a game last week, I expect them to cement Tennessee's first draft pick position here.

Raiders at Browns – Cleveland were one of the few teams to beat Oakland last season. They have had a tough start and are probably better than their record suggests, presenting the Raiders' toughest challenge so far.

Chiefs at Ravens – Two teams who should be vying for playoff positions come the end of the season. Kansas City rely on their defense to win games and I expect them to be too good for the Baltimore offense.

Panthers at Redskins – Washington surprised the Bears last week, but they'll need to get more than field goals to see off Carolina.

Saints at Eagles – Will the new coach in New Orleans have had enough time to make any telling changes? I don't think so this time, Philadelphia at home should

be too good.

Bucs at Giants – Tampa are looking better every week, New York have relying on their special teams and defense to score them points. If the game plays 'straight' then the Bucs will edge it, if the Giants get some scoring help from defense or special teams then it could tip the balance.

Packers at Cowboys – Dallas have had a sorry start to the season, things won't improve here as Green Bay get back to winning ways.

Rams at Lions – Detroit have been something of a bogey team for the Rams in the past, it would be a major shock if that continued here. St Louis to roll on.

49ers at Bears – Both teams suffered tough losses last week. Chicago look to have the better defense and will be too good for San Francisco at home.

PREDICTIONS

Peter Kneil: Patriots by 13, Jets by 12, Bengals by 9, Bills by 15, Raiders by 17, Ravens by 3, Panthers by 10, Eagles by 9, Giants by 7, Packers by 7, Rams by 20, Bears by 6

Darren Birtchnell: Patriots by 13, Jets by 17, Bengals by 11, Bills by 5, Raiders by 8, Chiefs by 3, Panthers by 9, Eagles by 3, Bucs by 6, Packers by 15, Rams by 21, Bears by 6

Rob Crowther: Patriots by 14, Jets by 10, Bengals by 7, Bills by 7, Chiefs by 3, Panthers by 17, Eagles by 7, Bucs by 1, Packers by 14, Rams by 14, Bears by 7

Martyn Williams: Patriots by 17, Jets by 7, Bengals by 21, Bills by 3, Raiders by 10, Chiefs by 3, Panthers by 13, Eagles by 7, Bucs by 6, Packers by 8, Rams by 17, Bears by 7

Chris Stones: Patriots by 13, Jets by 7, Bengals by 10, Bills by 6, Raiders by 14, Ravens by 4, Panthers by 3, Eagles by 6, Giants by 4, Packers by 13, Rams by 20,

49ers by 6