
A Passing Fantasy Issue 140

NFLBP Player Newsletter 2005 Week Five

ed Robert Crowther

Thanks to Darren for his contribution this time, and for all the predictions. The address for contributions is:

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

WEEK FOUR REVIEW

Darren Birtchnell

Most of the results went as expected last week, although 1 or 2 performances stood out in particular. It's the NFC's turn to go first this week.

Carolina were far too strong for Washington, denting the 'Skins confidence after last week's win. The Panthers were comfortably on top on offense and defense, if not for a kick return TD by Washington it would've been a thrashing. Everyone predicted the Saints to lose, so to get a tie in Philly has to be considered a good result for Briggsy first up. Should be an interesting game in New Orleans this week. Tampa held off the Giants with a solid looking display. New York can take heart from their performances so far, if they keep it up they're certain to be in contention come week 16. Green Bay made surprisingly hard work of Dallas, turnovers look to have been the reason. You have to wonder where the Cowboys next win will come from. The Rams won again, easily seeing off a team who occasionally cause them some problems. Detroit are really struggling to find their form of last season. I expect Coach Eden wants to shoot his kicker after 3 missed FG's led to a 3 point loss in Chicago. The Niners dominated statistically and really should have won, they'll need to win the close games if they're to stay in touch in a suddenly very tough division.

New England finally got the big win they've been waiting for, the Seahawks passing game couldn't find any space in the Pats pass coverage. The other New York team have also made a good start and continued it by beating the Broncos. They have a big game this week though and will probably need a better performance to beat New England. The Bengals stayed unbeaten and looked comfortable until Miami's passing game came alive late in the game. The Dolphins have been my bogey team over the years so I'm happy with the win. Buffalo won their second straight, but it was only against the Titans. Unfortunately I don't expect them to pick up many more victories before the season's out. Oakland kicked ass again, Cleveland the unlucky recipients this time. Cleveland have had an unbelievably tough schedule to start the season, but to be the best you've got to beat the best and they've struggled to do that so far this year. KC continue to impress me, cruising to victory in Baltimore. The Ravens aren't out of it by any means, but the loser of their game with Cleveland this week will have a massive mountain to climb.

PERFORMANCES OF THE WEEK

Offensive performance of the week goes to Carolina, who ran riot against a previously solid looking defense in Washington. Defensive performance of the week goes to New England for completely shutting down the Seahawks. Special teams performance of the week goes to Green Bay for a kick return touchdown that turned out to be the difference between winning and losing.

ORATION FROM OAKLAND

I'm obviously very happy with how everything has gone so far in Oakland, our defense has been playing great, second in the league on yardage, in stark contrast to last season. The offense hasn't been racking up the yards but has been very efficient – good yards per play and relatively few turnovers, and with the defense doing so much better it's not been so important to pile up the yardage all the way

through the game. I expect our form to dip somewhat as the season goes on because we carried a lot of injuries into the start of the season and we'll be experiencing diminishing returns on our form gains, but I hope to have made a significant step towards retaining the AFC West title before that becomes a factor. A significant step in that direction can be made this week if we manage to see off the Chiefs, that is easier said than done, however. I think we can make yardage on the Kansas secondary and I'll be looking for our D-line to dominate a slightly under strength O-line, but the Chiefs have experienced players at key positions and will be no pushover.

PREDICTIONS COMPETITION

Darren Birtchnell

We've still got 10 turn credits in the pot, if anyone else is feeling generous enough to donate a couple just let Rob or myself know.

I'm sure we're all aware of the scoring system by now, so I'll go straight into last week's results and the standings:

Peter Kneil 42
Darren Birtchnell 35
Martyn Williams 34
Rob Crowther 27
Chris Stones 17

STANDINGS

- 1) Chris Stones 37.3 avg (3 wks)
- 2) Darren Birtchnell 33.8 (4)
- 3) Dave Pinder 33 (2)
- 4) Martyn Williams 32 (2)
- 5) Rob Crowther 27.7 (3)
- 6) Peter Kneil 25.3 (4)

There's still time for some new predictors to enter the fray, as long as you predict 8 week's worth of games you could win a prize....

WEEK FIVE PREVIEW

Patriots at Jets – A key matchup in determining the destination of the AFC East title this year. New England start as favourites because of their track record but I think New York could be ready to spring an upset. The Pats' passing game has been dire so far but they won't want to be running the ball into a very strong

looking New York defense. The Jets meanwhile will get to get to run against the defense giving up the highest yardage per carry in the AFC.

Dolphins at Bills – Miami have been somewhat unlucky so far, they have produced some big comebacks against quality teams and come up short several times – maybe they should look to start their comebacks a little earlier? Buffalo looked good last week, but so have everyone else when playing the Titans.

Browns at Ravens – With Cincy rapidly disappearing over the horizon these teams need to get their act together quickly if they're going to stay in the playoff hunt. Cleveland are good on offense, Baltimore are better on defense, but I think the Ravens will be the better all round team at home.

Bengals at Titans – This one won't even be close, Cincinnati are too far too good for Tennessee.

Raiders at Chiefs – A crucial matchup in the AFC West. I'm hoping Oakland maintain their current form but will be taking nothing for granted.

Seahawks at Broncos – The battle of the also-rans. I suspect Seattle are the better team even though they haven't really demonstrated that on the field yet this season.

Redskins at Eagles – Philly are no longer an automatic choice for the NFC East crown but Washington are ranked dead last in the league in both offense and defense. Expect the Eagles to soar.

Giants at Cowboys – New York to continue the Dallas losing streak and keep pace with the Eagles. Dallas may be better than their record indicates but they'll struggle to put points on the board.

Lions at Bears – Detroit haven't looked their usual selves this year, the defense has been leaking points and the offense can't seem to get it together. Chicago haven't played great defense but have a solid of-

fense and should be able to outscore the Lions.

Bucs at Packers – A big showdown in the NFC, these coaches know each other well. Tampa look the better team on paper, and have had much longer to get the team sorted out than the new coach in Green Bay which I think will give them a crucial advantage.

Rams at 49ers – With all the new coaches arriving in the NFC East the 49ers need to get started quickly if they want to be in the playoff race later in the year. Unfortunately St Louis is not a good team to be playing when you're looking to bounce back from a loss.

Panthers at Saints – The NFC East new boys face off. New Orleans looked good last week but Carolina have looked good all season, I think they'll be too well prepared for the Saints in only their second game under their new coach.

PREDICTIONS

Peter Kneil: Jets by 3, Bills by 3, Ravens by 3 (who says I'm stubborn?), Bengals by 28, Raiders by 14, Broncos by 7, Eagles by 14, Giants by 14, Bears by 17, Bucs by 10, Rams by 21, Panthers by 14

Darren Birtchnell: Patriots by 8, Dolphins by 12, Ravens by 3, Bengals by 24, Raiders by 7, Broncos by 4, Eagles by 6, Giants by 14, Bears by 13, Packers by 2, Rams by 21, Panthers by 7

Rob Crowther: Patriots by 7, Dolphins by 10, Ravens by 3, Bengals by 28, Seahawks by 3, Eagles by 7, Giants by 10, Bears by 7, Bucs by 3, Rams by 7, Panthers by 7

Martyn Williams: Patriots by 8, Dolphins by 6, Browns by 7, Bengals by 27, Raiders by 14, Broncos by 5, Eagles by 10, Giants by 9, Bears by 10, Bucs by 7, Rams by 17, Panthers by 10