
A Passing Fantasy Issue 144

NFLBP Player Newsletter 2005 Week Nine

ed Robert Crowther

Thanks to Darren and Martyn for their contributions this time. The address for contributions is:

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

WEEK EIGHT REVIEW

Darren Birtchnell

Quite a few surprise results last week, including the Rams winning streak coming to an end. I haven't started with the NFC for a while, so I will this time.

Dallas racked up nearly 400 yds, 31 first downs and only turned it over once, so they won, right? Wrong. Washington got ahead early on the back of some big passing plays and were comfortable winners. The Giants and Eagles played out a hard-fought game in which neither offense really caught the eye. Philly were outgained, but their defense easily contained the Giants passing attack. Neither passing game was close to what you could call effective in the Packers-Lions game either, but Detroit brought their running game with them, which was just enough for the win. The Buccs continued to stretch their lead at the top of the NFC Central, they were way too good for Chicago and will take some stopping. Carolina were also far too good for the 49ers and had the game won by halftime, a late TD spoiling a potential shutout. New Orleans beat the Rams. As a Saints fan in real life, that has a nice ring to it! St Louis got a couple of big plays but not a lot else, while New Orleans ground out the yards on the ground and through the air. The post-season might be a step too far for the Saints, but their opponents will have to take them seriously now.

The Patriots had very little trouble with Buffalo, their defense was outstanding once again. They're the AFC's form team and they get another easy game this week as Tennessee come to town. Miami winning in New York was a surprise, but it goes to show the Dolphins are still dangerous when they put their mind to it. Two 4th quarter TD's gave them the edge. Cleveland became the latest team to beat up on the Titans and they took all their frustrations out on them. The Browns were another team who put in a very good defensive performance. Cincinnati and Baltimore fought a battle of field position, in which the Ravens came out on top. Neither passing game did too much, but the Ravens running game gained some decent yardage and ended up being the difference. Maybe Seattle didn't peak too soon after all, as they won on the road in Kansas City in overtime. The Chiefs needed 10 points in the 4th quarter to force the extra period, so you have to say the win was deserved. Oakland were another team with a good defensive performance and were 1 of 7 teams to hold their opponents below 50% pass completions. The Raiders offense wasn't particularly outstanding, but with their defense playing so well it didn't matter.

PERFORMANCES OF THE WEEK

Offensive performance of the week goes to Tampa Bay for an excellent all round showing, despite a couple of turnovers and a missed field goal keeping their overall score down. Defensive performance of the week goes to New Orleans, they didn't have a great day compared to the several defenses that got shutouts, but they kept the potent St Louis offense from scoring in the second half which was a key part of the upset victory. Special teams performance of the week goes to Philadelphia for their big yardage on kick returns.

MESSAGES

Martyn Williams to all – See, I told you all that Briggsey would beat me at least once! I just couldn't stop his running backs and our two turnovers resulted in 10 Saints

points. That's the game right there. Really not looking forward to the re-match in week 10!

PREDICTIONS COMPETITION

Darren Birtchnell

We're now halfway through the competition and the leaderboard seems to be settling down a bit. However, some of the predictors need to get involved a bit more often over the second half of the season, otherwise they won't have predicted enough weeks to qualify for the prizes. Come on, you know who you are...!

Here are last week's scores, not that impressive overall, although 'Psychic Stones' was at it again!

Chris Stones 38
Peter Kneil 31
Apple 28
Darren Birtchnell 26
Rob Crowther 24

And so the standings now look like this:

Chris Stones 38.4 ave (5 wks)
Apple 35.5 (2)
Darren Birtchnell 32 (8)
Dave Pinder 31.7 (3)
Martyn Williams 31.4 (5)
Peter Kneil 28.6 (8)
Rob Crowther 26.2 (6)

WEEK NINE PREVIEW

Titans at Patriots – One team vying to be the worst in the league, another vying to be the best. Shouldn't even be close. PATRIOTS BY 28

Bengals at Jets – New York have come a long way this season but their loss last week to Miami indicates they're not yet ready to be counted among the elite. Cincy start as favourites but New York may have something to prove at home. BENGALS BY 7

Chiefs at Dolphins – Kansas City were the victims of an upset last week, while Miami finally had a fourth quarter comeback that paid off. A win for the Dolphins puts them right back in playoff conten-

tion and I think they can catch the Chiefs out with another comeback. DOLPHINS BY 7

Raiders at Bills – Really there should be no way Oakland lose this one, but on the road against a strong defensive team is always a risky proposition.

Broncos at Browns – It's quite surprising, going on last season's form, that Denver have amassed a better record than Cleveland so far. I suspect that has as much to do with the relative strength of schedules as the relative strength of the two teams, providing the Browns' offense doesn't make too many mistakes and put pressure on their defense they should win. BROWNS BY 10

Seahawks at Ravens – Seattle are capable of an upset, as they proved last week, but Baltimore are comfortably the better all round team. RAVENS BY 10

Packers at Redskins – Green Bay struggled a bit last week, but I think this is an aberration on the gradual improvement. PACKERS BY 14

Bucs at Eagles – Tampa Bay appear to be firing on all cylinders now, they'll be too good for inconsistent Philly. BUCS BY 10

49ers at Giants – New York's losing streak to continue as San Francisco demonstrate how tough the NFC East is. 49ERS BY 10

Rams at Cowboys – Hmm, St Louis bouncing back from their first defeat of the season, could get nasty. RAMS BY 21

Saints at Lions – New Orleans officially moved up to the 'contender' category with last week's win, Detroit might have a good defense statistically but I don't think it'll measure up to the Saints in action. SAINTS BY 10

Panthers at Bears – Nasty four game losing streak for Chicago, I can only see it getting longer here, Carolina to complete a clean sweep for the NFC East. PANTHERS BY 20

PREDICTIONS

Peter Kneil: Patriots by 28, Bengals by 10, Chiefs by 14, Raiders by 21, Browns by 10, Ravens by 14, Packers by 10, Buccs by 21, Giants by 13, Rams by 24, Saints by 17, Panthers by 24

Darren Birtchnell: Patriots by 27, Bengals by 8, Chiefs by 6, Raiders by 24, Browns by 10, Ravens by 17, Packers by 7, Buccs by 10, Giants by 8, Rams by 28, Lions by 3, Panthers by 16

Martyn Williams: Patriots by 35, Bengals by 10, Chiefs by 6, Raiders by 21, Browns by 10, Ravens by 13, Packers by 9, Buccs by 20, Giants by 6, Rams by 17, Saints by 10, Panthers by 23