
A Passing Fantasy Issue 149

NFLBP Player Newsletter 2005 Week Fourteen

ed Robert Crowther

Thanks to Darren for writing most of the newsletter once again, and for all the folk who sent predictions – just about made it onto four pages this time! The address for contributions is:

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

WEEK THIRTEEN REVIEW

Darren Birtchnell

New England lost in KC in one of three shocks in the AFC last week. The Chiefs got 324 passing yds on only 15 completions, one of which was a 98yd TD. The Pats only gained 158 yds on their 15 completions, so it seems the win was deserved. Oakland dominated the Jets and all but ended New York's playoff ambitions in the process. The Jets only gained 197 yds and 9 first downs while turning it over 4 times, and if you do that against Oakland you aren't going to win. Shock number two came in Baltimore, as the Ravens lost out to the Dolphins. A very even game hinged on two key plays which both went against the Ravens - they fumbled at the Miami 1yd line and also missed a short field goal. The win keeps the Dolphins alive in the playoff race and they have a massive game vs New England this week. Cleveland extended the Bills losing streak to 9 games with an easy win at home. Buffalo were still in the game at half time, but the Browns class came through and they ended up running away with it. I think I've finally run out of ways to describe Tennessee's continued losing. Seattle did what everyone else has done for the last 31 games and took the opportunity to improve their points difference. The only question is when will the Titans losing streak come to an end? The third and biggest shock came when the Bengals run of

good performances came to an abrupt halt in Denver. The Broncos could have won by more, as they missed a PAT and a very makeable FG, but it was more a case of Cincinnati beating themselves as they threw 3 picks, one on the Denver 1yd line, and committed a season-high 11 penalties for 82 yds.

San Francisco had a surprisingly big win over the Redskins, which has damaged Washington's playoff hopes. But luckily for them, they play in the weak NFC East and at 6-7 still have a chance of winning the division - if they were in any other division they wouldn't be higher than 3rd. St Louis had no problems in beating the Eagles, their offense wasn't as spectacular as normal but they got a good performance from their defense, holding Philly scoreless and also running an interception back for a TD. When Chicago started the season 3-1 it looked as though they might mount a challenge. Unfortunately for them, those aspirations went by the wayside long ago and this week they dropped their 9th straight game. The win gives the Giants a flicker of hope in the NFC East, but it's only a flicker and they need other results to go their way big time if they're going to fulfill my pre-season prediction. Detroit gained 350 yds against Dallas, with 318 of those coming on the ground as they rolled to an easy win. The Cowboys two most-used defensive plays were zone defences, no wonder the Lions ran all over them. Carolina edged another step closer to winning the NFC West by beating the Packers in overtime. They seem to have had a slight edge statistically, but if they didn't make the two-point conversion in the 4th quarter it would have been the Packers who emerged victorious. Tampa had no problems on the road in New Orleans. Their offense put up some good numbers and their defense didn't give much away. They also returned a fumble for a TD and one more win will seal the division title.

PERFORMANCES OF THE WEEK

Offensive performance of the week goes to Kansas City for a stunning display against the Patriots, with an honourable mention for the

Bucs. Defensive performance of the week goes to the other big upset team, Denver, who's defense made the plays that turned the game. Special teams performance of the week goes to Cincinnati again, good kick returning and three of three on field goals.

PREDICTIONS COMPETITION

Darren Birtchnell

Some good scores last week, despite the 3 upsets in the AFC, as everyone bar Rob got at least one prediction spot on. However, Apple and Dave need to send predictions for the last 3 weeks otherwise they will lose out on those turn credits. This is your last reminder guys, you should know the rules by now! :o)

Here are last week's scores then:

Martyn Williams 42
Darren Birtchnell 39
Peter Kneil 37
Rob Crowther 21

Which means the standings look like this:

Chris Stones	34.6 ave	(7 wks)
Dave Pinder	32.6	(5)
Apple	32.4	(5)
Martyn Williams	31.3	(9)
Darren Birtchnell	30.6	(13)
Peter Kneil	29	(13)
Rob Crowther	26	(11)

PLAYOFF PICTURE

Darren Birtchnell

With just 3 weeks to go until the end of the regular season, the playoff race is hotting up nicely in both conferences. Here's a run-down of the current situation.

AFC

Cincinnati 10-3
New England 10-3
Oakland 10-3
Kansas City 9-4
Baltimore 8-5

Miami 7-6
Cleveland 6-7
New York 6-7

No surprises here, as the 'Big 3' are out in front. Homefield advantage could well come down to points difference, in which Cincinnati currently have a slim advantage. Oakland play at New England in week 15, so the loser of that game is pretty likely to be on the road in the divisional round.

Looking at the remaining fixtures, you would think the Bengals would hang on for HFA, but as last week's game showed you can't take anything for granted, and should they slip up then the winner of the Raiders-Pats game is likely to snatch HFA from them.

The wildcard race is interesting too. Baltimore have two easy games before finishing the season at Cleveland, while KC play the Broncos, Jets and Raiders. Miami have a massive game this week vs New England, if they lose I think the wildcards will stay as they are. Cleveland and New York need to win out just to have a chance, but looking at their opponents that's unlikely.

NFC

Carolina	12-1
Tampa	9-3-1
Philadelphia	6-6-1
St Louis	10-2-1
Green Bay	7-6

New Orleans	6-6-1
Detroit	6-7
Washington	6-7
New York	5-8

If things stay as they are, the Rams will feel hard done by, as they have the second best record in the conference, indeed the whole league, yet currently find themselves in a wildcard spot. This week's game between the Rams and Panthers will go a long way to deciding HFA. The Panthers also have to play the Buccs, so they could even end up a wildcard themselves. Either way, the Panthers, Rams and Buccs have been the best 3 teams in the NFC this year.

Tampa have all but won their division, but they still have two testing games against the Panthers and Packers. If they should end up playing St Louis in the divisional round that would be very interesting! The Rams, other

than this weeks game with the Panthers, have an easy run-in so if they can beat Carolina they could yet snatch HFA.

The Eagles are currently top of the NFC (L)East and if they stay there they'll have a playoff game. Just the one though, as they aren't good enough to mount a challenge this year and I'll be amazed if they beat any of the Panthers, Buccs, Rams or Packers should they play them. Washington could nick the division title as the two play each other in week 16, but if they do get to the post-season they would fare even worse than the Eagles.

Green Bay ought to sew up the last wildcard, particularly now that Coach Briggs stint in New Orleans has come to an unfortunate end. Detroit still have slim hopes, but they would probably need other results to go their way and New York could sneak into the playoffs, but as I mentioned earlier, they need to win their remaining games and even then they would still need an awful lot of help.

WEEK FOURTEEN PREVIEW

Patriots at Dolphins – New England coming off a shock loss and Miami coming off a shock win, are more upsets in store? I don't think so. PATRIOTS BY 14

Jets at Bills – Both teams got completely shut down offensively last week, but New York have been more consistent over the course of the season and should be able to pick themselves up for this one. JETS BY 10

Browns at Bengals – Cleveland are making a late run at respectability, but it's too little too late as far as the playoffs are concerned. Don't expect Cincy to repeat last week's mistakes. BENGALS BY 14

Ravens at Titans – No reason to see the Tennessee losing streak ending any time soon. RAVENS BY 24

Raiders at Seahawks – Oakland have traditionally had trouble dealing with Seattle, but need to keep ahead of KC in the division.

Chiefs at Broncos - Denver with a big upset

last week, can they repeat the trick? I really hope so, but I don't think it's likely. CHIEFS BY 10

Redskins at Giants – Washington are apparently slumping, but it might just be they've been playing better quality opponents recently. A loss to New York basically hands the division to Philly. GIANTS BY 7

Eagles at Cowboys – Philly should have no trouble dealing with Dallas. EAGLES BY 14

Lions at Bucs – Detroit have kept up with the new coaches in the mainly thanks to an excellent record against division opponents. However, Tampa look to be set up to their coaches' satisfaction and are now a dangerous opponent for anyone. BUCS BY 14

Bears at Packers – Chicago are behind only Tennessee in longest losing streak now, expect it to get longer here as Green Bay solidify their playoff position. PACKERS BY 21

Rams at Panthers – St Louis' last chance to hold on to their NFC West crown, Carolina is not a top tourist destination in the NFLBP these days. PANTHERS BY 7

49ers at Saints – New Orleans are going to miss out on the playoffs but are much improved since the start of the season, they should have enough to see off surging San Francisco. SAINTS BY 10

PREDICTIONS

Peter Kneil: Patriots by 10, Jets by 10, Bengals by 21, Ravens by 28, Raiders by 7, Chiefs by 7, Giants by 7, Eagles by 10, Buccs by 24, Packers by 14, Panthers by 7, Saints by 10

Darren Birtchnell: Dolphins by 3, Jets by 10, Bengals by 7, Ravens by 34, Raiders by 12, Chiefs by 9, Giants by 4, Eagles by 13, Buccs by 21, Packers by 20, Panthers by 3, Saints by 6

Martyn Williams: Patriots by 17, Jets by 8,

Bengals by 20, Ravens by 17, Raiders by 19, Chiefs by 10, Redskins by 6, Eagles by 12, Buccs by 21, Packers by 20, Panthers by 6, Saints by 7

Apple: Pats by 10, Jets by 17, Bengals by 17, Ravens by 23, Raiders by 14, Chiefs by 10, Redskins by 7, Eagles by 14, Buccs by 14, Packers by 14, Rams by 3, SF by 7