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# A Passing Fantasy Issue 152

## NFLBP Player Newsletter 2005 Wildcard Week

ed Robert Crowther

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Thanks to Darren for writing most of the newsletter once again, no other contributions this time. Surely some people have things to say about their playoff chances? Or at least how unkind the off-season squad adjustments have been? The address for contributions is:

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Or email at '[gameplan@crowther.info](mailto: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 SIXTEEN REVIEW**

**Darren Birtchnell**

The Patriots rolled to another win against divisional opponents, seeing off the Jets 31-6. The Pats only gained 184 yds but they had some excellent punt returns and also returned a pick for a score, and once they had built a 21 point 1st quarter lead the result was never in doubt. Buffalo put up more of a fight in Miami than people expected them to, but once again they slipped to defeat. Neither offense really got going as the teams combined for 7 turnovers and the defeat, coupled with the Cowboys win against the Giants, condemned the Bills to second pick in the draft. Baltimore finished their regular season campaign with a win in Cleveland and, thanks to Oakland's win over the Chiefs, the Ravens will now host KC in the wildcard round. The highlight of the game was Baltimore's kick return TD in the 1st quarter. Cincinnati had no problems with Tennessee, scoring at will for most of the game. Thanks to the win, the Bengals have scored the most points and conceded the fewest in BP this season. The surging Broncos eked out a one-point win over Seattle to even their record at 8-8. Defenses look to have been on top and Denver forced the game's lone turnover while also holding the Seahawks below 50% completions. Oakland confirmed yet another division title by beating the Chiefs. The Raiders pass

rush and secondary were in good form but it took 10 points in the 4th quarter to win the game.

The Redskins showed what might have been as they continued their good recent form by beating the Eagles. Philly seem to have had the better of the game but, once again, turnovers proved crucial. Safeties proved crucial in the Cowboys - Giants game, as 2 safeties for Dallas effectively won the game for them. However, the Cowboys running game was in fine form too and they look to be good value for the win. An interesting note is that the Giants went 1-5 against divisional opponents but 4-4 against the rest of the conference, so a couple more wins in the division could have seen them in the postseason. It was a tale of 2 running games as Chicago visited Detroit. The Bears mainly went backwards, finishing with minus 6 yds on 12 carries, while Detroit pounded for 147 yds on 47 carries. Both teams will hope for better things next season. The Buccs and Packers produced the best game of the week as Tampa built a 31-11 lead only for Green Bay to score 20 unanswered points, including 17 in the 4th quarter, to force overtime. However, Tampa re-discovered their composure and scored the winning TD in the extra period. Green Bay have looked good recently though and could cause a surprise or two in the playoffs. The week's biggest surprise came in Carolina, where the Saints shocked the stuttering Panthers. New Orleans led 24-3 at the half and were just able to hold off a Carolina comeback. The Panthers have lost 3 in a row now, not ideal preparation for the playoffs. St Louis won an entertaining game versus the Niners as they pulled away in the second half. The Rams didn't do well on 3rd down and were also outgained, but they forced 4 turnovers and the win sealed the league's best regular season record.

### **PERFORMANCES OF THE WEEK**

Offensive performance of the week goes to the Green Bay Packers for their great comeback in a big game, even if they eventually came up

short. Defensive performance of the week goes to the Washington Redskins, for winning without scoring a touchdown. Special teams performance of the week goes to the Baltimore Ravens for their kick return touchdown and perfect place kicking.

### PREDICTIONS COMPETITION

#### Darren Birtchnell

Some good scores to end the season, well for most of us, and so very little change on the leaderboard. Apple didn't make any predictions and so missed out on the chance to win some credits, but seeing as the Buccs coaching staff are rumoured to be leaving at the end of the season, maybe he decided he didn't want any extra credits?!

So congratulations go to Chris for winning the top prize of six credits and also to Martyn for coming second and claiming three credits. Maybe those credits will make Chris feel a bit better after the Rams beat his Panthers to the NFC West crown?! And congratulations to me for finishing third and winning one credit, although seeing as I was keeping hold of them anyway it feels as though I've lost nine rather than won one!

Right, enough waffle, here are last week's scores:

Martyn Williams	45
Darren Birtchnell	42
Peter Kneil	39
Rob Crowther	20

And so the final standings are as follows:

Chris Stones	33.5 ave	(8 wks)
Martyn Williams	31.5	(11)
Darren Birtchnell	30.6	(16)
Peter Kneil	30	(16)
Rob Crowther	25.5	(14)

Dave Pinder	33.3	(6)
Apple	29.6	(7)

Interesting that the highest score of the season was in week 1, when Chris scored 57 which effectively won him the competition. Thanks to everyone who contributed credits, hopefully we can do something similar next season.

### WILDCARD PREVIEW

Chiefs at Ravens – On paper KC have the better offense while Baltimore have the better defense. However I expect this game to be dominated by defense as both teams are fairly conservative with the ball. RAVENS BY 7

Packers at Panthers – Carolina were the big story in NFLBP for most of the season, but collapsed dramatically in the last few weeks. Meanwhile Green Bay have been steadily improving throughout the season. Right now I think the Packers are the better team, but they will still find the going tough in Charlotte. PANTHERS BY 1

### PREDICTIONS

Darren Birtchnell: Ravens by 6, Packers by 3, Dolphins by 4, Redskins by 3, Browns by 10, Jets by 3, 49ers by 6, Bears by 7