
A Passing Fantasy Issue 154

NFLBP Player Newsletter 2005 Championship Week

ed Robert Crowther

Thanks to Darren for writing most of the newsletter once again, no other contributions this time. The address for contributions is:

35a Dukes Avenue
Finchley
London
N3 2DE

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>

DIVISIONAL ROUND REVIEW

Darren Birtchnell

The Chiefs won on the road again to advance to the AFC Championship for the first time in BP's history. It was a tight game throughout with both offenses moving the ball fairly well, although the Bengals struggled on third down. Cincinnati held an eight point edge going into the final quarter, but their offense began to splutter and their defense, normally the strength of the team, couldn't stop the Chiefs offense when it mattered most. Overall KC played well and deserve their first shot at making the SB. Oakland and New England also played out a tight game, with the Patriots eventually prevailing in overtime. Like the Bengals, Oakland also held an eight point lead after three quarters, but New England returned an interception for a TD and tacked on the two-point conversion to tie the game. The Pats got another big play to start overtime, as they returned the opening kickoff 55 yds to put them in field goal range and their kicker did the rest.

The Rams overcame a potentially tricky tie to advance to yet another NFC Championship game. They broke the game wide open with 23 second-quarter points and Green Bay just couldn't recover. As well as getting some big plays on offense, the Rams won the turnover battle 4-0, one of which was returned for a score. The future looks bright for the Packers though and next season they will be among

the favourites. Tampa Bay completed the line-up by easily seeing off the Eagles at home. The Bucs defense continued it's excellent recent form and didn't allow the Eagles any room to breathe at all, holding them to 40% completions, grabbing 3 picks and only allowing Philly to go 1/17 on third down. This week's NFC Championship game should be a classic.

SILVER BOWL REVIEW

Darren Birtchnell

It was home wins all round in the Silver Bowl. Carolina got the better of Baltimore, despite the Panthers QB being harrassed all day. Carolina did pretty well on defense themselves and are now favourites to win the Silver Bowl. The Saints won the battle of two in-form teams by easing to victory over Washington, the New Orleans offense was the difference here. Cleveland had a comfortable win over the Jets, holding New York scoreless until the 4th quarter while racking up the points themselves. San Fran had a good win over Chicago behind a persistent rushing attack, the Bears offense wasn't on the field long enough to do any real damage. Maybe the Silver Bowl should be re-named the 'NFC West Bowl', as 3 of the remaining 4 teams are from that division.

BRONZE BOWL REVIEW

Darren Birtchnell

Buffalo won the battle of the league's two worst teams, just holding off the Titans. In fact, if not for an interception return TD, Tennessee might have just nicked it. Seattle ground out a win over Dallas, although they took their foot off the pedal in the second half and almost paid the price. The Cowboys were another team with an interception return for a TD. Detroit came from behind with nine points in the 4th quarter to beat the Giants. Just looking at the stats it seems as though New York had the better of the game, so maybe they didn't make the most of their opportunities. Miami completed another clean sweep for the home teams by beating Denver. Despite

comfortably outgaining the Broncos, the Dolphins needed two field goals in the 4th to edge home.

PERFORMANCES OF THE WEEK

Offensive performance of the week goes to the Rams for a big performance in their biggest game of the year so far. Similarly, defensive performance of the week goes to Tampa Bay for shutting down an opponent when it mattered. Special teams performance of the week goes to the New England Patriots, for big plays at big moments.

DRAFT REVIEW

Darren Birtchnell

Some more interesting picks in round two, here's my take on some of them.

Tennessee and Buffalo snapped up the two remaining top quality DB's with the first two picks, maybe the Titans defense won't be quite so bad next season? The Cowboys got good value, taking a good RB with the 27th overall pick. The Niners and Lions added WR's to the TE's they drafted in the first round, will Detroit look to pass the ball more next season? The Bears, Seahawks, Giants and Jets all took linemen before Cleveland drafted the first 2* RB. However, they didn't go for the 2* guy with a return strength, who must surely get snapped up early in round 3. The Broncos also took a D-lineman before the Redskins took a QB, the only one to be drafted in the second round. The Saints and Eagles both took DB's before 3 O-linemen were taken in the next 4 picks. The Ravens took the only LB to be drafted in round 2, which is a little surprising. The Raiders, Bucs, Patriots and Rams all traded down, St Louis perhaps needlessly given the 2* RB with a return strength was still available. The Bengals again got what they wanted by drafting a DB.

There are still plenty of good players available, especially at RB, LB and DB, so I can't see too many teams having to take 1* players in the final round.

CHAMPIONSHIP GAME PREVIEW

Chiefs at Patriots – KC are this year's surprise package. They could become only the fourth AFC team to make a superbowl

after Oakland, Cincy and New England. That extra game in the wildcard round is going to hurt them eventually, though and the Patriots have a solid defense which won't let the game get out of hand and an offense which can make plays when it matters. PATRIOTS BY 7

Bucs at Rams – St Louis have been NFC champion for as long as most people can remember. This season has presented them with their toughest challenge in a long while, but like all true champions they have risen to that challenge. Tampa could present their biggest challenge yet, if you had to pick a coach to write a one off gameplan then two at the top of the list would certainly be Apple and Troy, they could well have been saving up something special for Martyn in this one. RAMS BY 3

PREDICTIONS

Darren Birtchnell: Patriots by 3, Bucs by 1, Raiders by 6, Packers by 13, Panthers by 6, Browns by 7, Seahawks by 6, Dolphins by 7