
A Passing Fantasy Issue 156

NFLBP Player Newsletter 2006 Preseason

ed Robert Crowther

Thanks to Darren and Martyn for their contributions this time, and congratulations to Dave for finally bagging the BP superbowl! The address for contributions is:

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

RAMBLINGS FROM ST LOUIS

Martyn Williams

Coach Williams was surprisingly upbeat when addressing the nations media the day after his team lost the Super Bowl to arch rival Dave Pinder's Patriots.

"First off I would like to say a big congratulations to Coach Pinder, who after many seasons in charge of the Patriots has finally led them to a NFLBP Championship in Super Bowl X. What better way to retire from the Pro game than at the top! I can have no arguments with the result, given that I've beaten Dave twice before in Super Bowls VII and VIII (remember those Dave?) ;o)

As is the norm in games between myself and Coach Pinder recently, this was a very closely fought contest that went right down to the wire, and guess what, Pinder nicks it right at the death! But he deserved to, throughout the game his O played better, his D played better, and it was only key turnovers and a great kick return that kept us in the game. And yet somehow at the two minute warning we still found ourselves clinging to a 1 point lead, and it was almost enough, but not quite. A 52 yard field goal with the last kick of the game gave the Patriots their first NFLBP Super Bowl victory. Surprisingly I wasn't as gutted as I'd have expected to be as the ball sailed through the uprights, it was almost a relief. No more

chasing further consecutive championships, almost a chance to start over again in St Louis and start building a new dynasty. And after flirting with the idea of retirement from NFLBP myself had I won a fourth straight title, now I'm revitalised and ready to come back stronger than ever to bring the Vince Lombardi trophy back where it belongs - to the home of the St Louis Rams! All you other coaches have been warned - I'm gonna kick serious butt in the 2006 season! All that's left to say is one final message for Coach Pinder. I'm sorry to see you leave BP but very happy you won the big one before leaving, even if it did have to be against me! Thanks for all the great games over the last few seasons and I'll look forward to continuing to lock horns with you in NCAA football. Cheers mate!"

DIVISIONAL BOWL REVIEW

Darren Birtchnell

Championship Bowl Review

The Chiefs staked their claim for 3rd best team in the league by beating the Buccs with a little room to spare. KC went up 21-0 in the 1st quarter, the first score coming after a good kick return and the third after a fumble. The Tampa offense just couldn't get going, although it might have been different if they had scored on a failed 4th down attempt late in the 3rd quarter. However, the co-coaches are now on their way out of BP, so I doubt they will be bothered by this result.

DIVISIONAL BOWL REVIEW

Darren Birtchnell

The Packers also got ahead early on the back of some big plays, but the Raiders gradually clawed their way back into the game and 15 second half points forced the extra period of play. Oakland then completed the comeback and I expect both teams to do very well in the coming season.

SILVER BOWL REVIEW

Darren Birtchnell

Cleveland caused a mild upset by beating the

Panthers. They also opened up a big half time lead and were able to ride it out, despite Carolina appearing to have much more possession during the game. The Browns will be hoping last season was the exception rather than the norm.

BRONZE BOWL REVIEW

Darren Birtchnell

Two power running games were on display here, although a combined total of 85 carries for 227 yds - an average of 2.7 yds per carry - shows that neither running game was particularly spectacular. The Lions fell behind early on but scored 10 points in the 4th quarter to force overtime, only for Buffalo to win out in the extra period. Detroit also missed two FG's, so they will be kicking themselves for losing.

OFF SEASON IN OAKLAND

The League Roundup last week confirmed what I'd been suspecting all offseason, the Raiders got pretty well hosed. We lost two offensive linemen and two defensive linemen to retirement, so far we have been unable to replace those on the offensive side as I decided that defensive personnel would be my priority (I'm assuming that I'll be more likely to be able to come up with a cunning offensive gameplan than a cunning defensive one). We will be releasing both kickers this week and I have high hopes of signing at least one of the veteran OL on the free agent list before the season kicks off. I think we'll struggle a bit early on with a weak OL, some teams are just going to overpower us, but we're not carrying many reduced players and have some solid veterans in key positions so I think as the season goes on, and we build up on the offensive line, we will get stronger. The trick is going to be not being too far behind KC when we're good enough to challenge, might be difficult one to pull off and I wouldn't be at all surprised to see us fail to win the AFC West for only the second time.

OFF SEASON REVIEW

Darren Birtchnell

With most of the off-season roster moves now complete, it seems like a good time to have a look at how everyone has fared with the new rules regarding Conditional Free Agents.

The first thing I noticed when looking at the rosters compared to at this time last year, is that only 6 teams have smaller rosters than at the same stage a year ago - Oakland, Kansas City, NY Giants, Dallas, Tampa Bay & Chicago. This makes you wonder if the new rules have had much effect, as we were told the changes would make rosters smaller. But when comparing the league summary from this time last season, the number of total squad strengths is almost exactly the same, whereas the number of form strengths, or in other words reduced effectiveness players, is up by 61 points, or over 2.5 points per team. I think the rules will have more of an effect next season, as more players retire.

Now for a brief review of each division.

AFC East

The SB champions roster looks almost identical to last season, save for the addition of a backup QB. The Pats would surely secure another division title and playoff berth if Coach Pinder stayed on, but they may even manage it without him. The unpredictable Dolphins continue to have the division's weakest roster, but they weren't far off making the post-season last time around and you can never discount them. The Jets have lost a good WR and 2 good RB's. They drafted the 4* RB, but no replacement has been found for the receiver yet, which could cause problems given their veteran WR's inexperience. Buffalo's strength remains their D-line, but I still think they need more help in the secondary in case the pass rush doesn't get there.

AFC Central

The Bengals got pretty much what they wanted this off-season, but kicking and punting could potentially cause a problem as Cincy preferred to have the strengths elsewhere on the roster. Baltimore lost 2 DB's and managed to replace both, but the receiving corps looks a little light to me, particularly given the deep passing game they have used from time to time. The Browns roster is much bigger than last season, although having a 4* backup QB can sometimes be a luxury. Coach Hilliar is known for his constant roster moves so I wouldn't expect the team to remain the same for long. Tennessee have a much bigger roster too but, despite having top pick, they have somehow ended up with 2 gaps on the O-line. Look for teams to go after QB Steve McNair.

AFC West

The Raiders roster is dramatically smaller than last year and they also have 2 holes on the O-line. However, Coach Crowther knows his stuff and I fully expect this to be addressed before long. Kansas City's roster is slightly smaller than last season, although there are still only 3 spaces on the roster. But they made the AFC championship game, so Coach Cox obviously knows what he's doing. After criticising Seattle for picking a 3* TE in the draft, it's hard to see where else they could have used the pick as they have a pretty full roster. However, I still don't think they'll challenge much. Denver have the league's biggest roster and sprung a few surprises last season, so they could be another banana skin for teams who take their eye off the ball.

NFC East

Washington have pretty much maintained their roster and will be looking to build on their performances from the end of last season, but the D-line looks a bit light to me. The Eagles roster also has a similar look, in fact it's pretty hard to see what's changed from last year. It should be another close battle for the division. New York have lost their starting QB and 2 most experienced RB's, so given their offensive struggles last season it's difficult to see how they will improve with a rookie QB and sophomore RB. The Cowboys have the equal-weakest roster in the league, along with Miami. Considering last year's poor performance it's hard to see any light at the end of the tunnel.

NFC Central

Tampa had their best ever season in BP last time out, but with the co-coaches leaving it's hard to see them repeating the feat. They have, however, left the roster in good shape as you would expect. I also criticised the Lions for taking a 3* TE, but again having seen the roster it looks like a decent pick. The secondary might not be up to the task though, but they do have a strong front 7 if opponents try to run it too often. The Packers roster has a good solid look to it and I expect them to provide serious competition to St Louis this season. However, they might need to bolster their receiving corps if they're to get over the hump. Chicago have a smaller squad than last season, which doesn't bode well after their poor showing last time. The D-line looks weak

too, so I'm not hopeful for the Bears chances.

NFC West

The Rams have one of the league's smallest rosters, not that it matters given their record over the last few seasons. The O-line looks very strong, so we could see St Louis continuing their recent tactics of running the ball more. The Panthers have made a big improvement in roster size, but I would expect their rookie QB to be on his way shortly and I also expect them to challenge the Rams strongly again. San Francisco have made the biggest improvement in their roster and will be hoping to improve on last year's poor showing. The secondary looks a bit weak to me, but other than that the roster appears solid. New Orleans benefitted from Coach Briggs brief stint in charge and the roster is in fairly good nick as a result. However, I can't see them doing as well as last season given the Niners potential for improvement.