

Welcome to the 178th issue of A Passing Fantasy. The existence of this issue is entirely due to Peter Kneil writing half of it for me!

Divisional Games Review

The Raiders got off to a fast start with a 93 yard touchdown pass on their opening possession. It was looking very good for Oakland on their following possession as they drove to the Cleveland 7 before a penalty put them in a passing situation and the Browns took advantage on the next play, picking off Hollas in the endzone and running it back 64 yards. Given a short field the Browns offense was able to drive into the endzone, converting a 4th and goal at the 2 to tie the game. In the second quarter defenses ruled, the key play a stuff by the Oakland defense at the Browns' 22 and forcing a fumble. Oakland got in the endzone in two plays for the only score of the quarter. The third quarter proved to be decisive, the Raiders took the opening kickoff and drove 38 yards in five plays before kicking a field goal.

A Passing Fantasy Issue 178

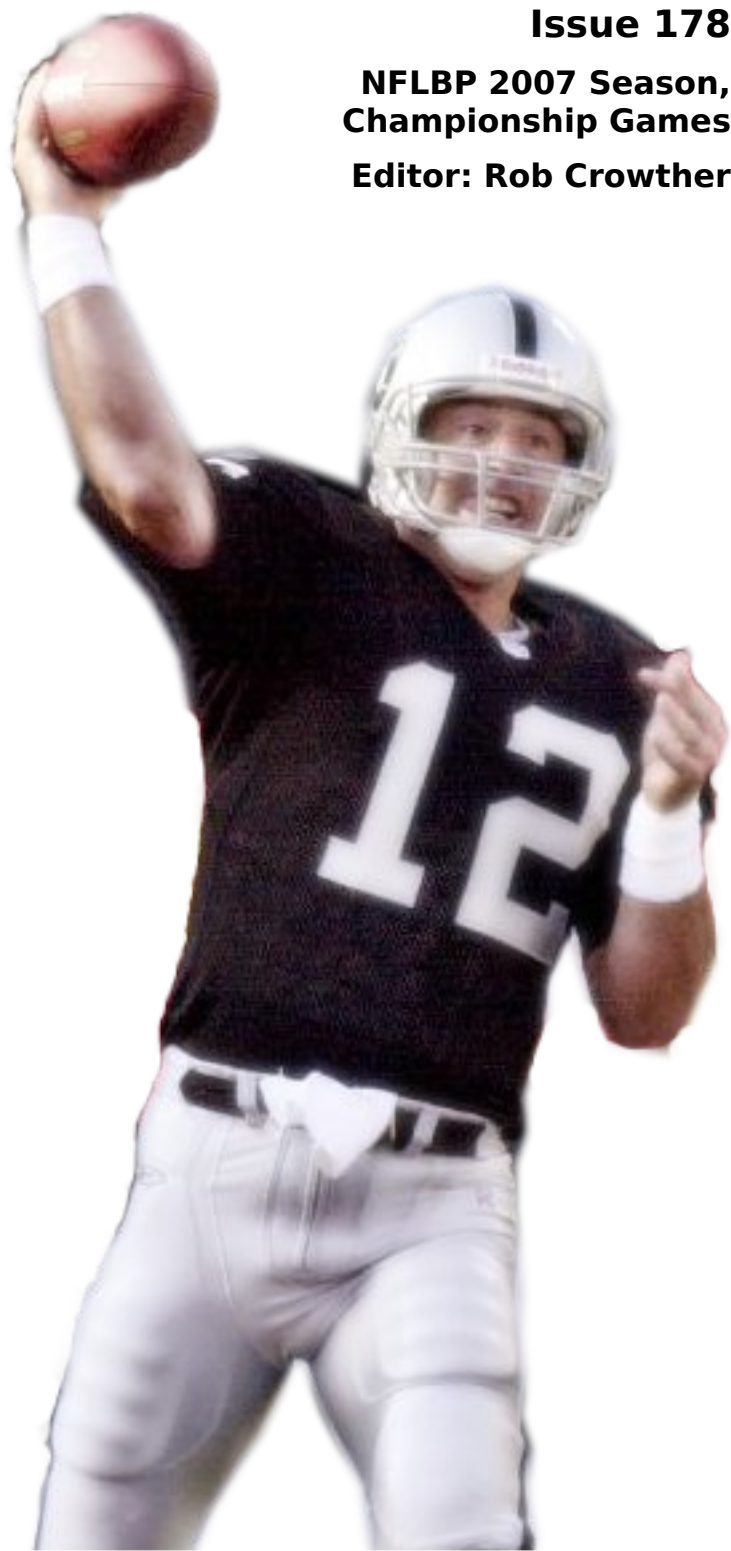
**NFLBP 2007 Season,
Championship Games**

Editor: Rob Crowther

Cleveland tried to reply immediately, though a poor return meant they had to start from their own ten. However, they soon got out of their own half and eight plays later they had first and ten at the Oakland 18. Unfortunately that's where it all started to fall apart – a fifteen yard penalty followed by an incomplection and a short dumpoff left them at third and 23 and then the Raiders picked off the deep pass. Oakland immediately took advantage, a 12 play 80 yard drive for a touchdown on a short pass put them 17 points up and effectively ended the game as both defenses took control in the fourth quarter.

The Ravens also got off to a fast start, but turnovers were almost their undoing. Every drive in the first half where they didn't turn the ball over they scored, apart from the last one where they failed on 4th down with time running out. Fortunately the Baltimore defense was also coming up with the turnovers as the two teams combined for four in the first half. The second half produced three more turnovers, but not much offense and little in the way of scoring as the Ravens cruised to victory.

The Eagles once again exploited the Tampa pass defense, but once again it wasn't enough. Philly were on for the big upset, going in at halftime with a 10-3 lead, but the Bucs came out in the third quarter and scored two touchdowns to put them back in control then iced the game in the fourth quarter with a third touchdown.



In the other NFC game, Carolina will be ruing the turnovers, they let the Giants get ahead of them in the first half and then couldn't come back in the face of the New York ball control offense. Four turnovers for the Panthers against only one for the Giants was the key statistic in the game.

Ravens/Patriots review

Peter Kneil

Although the final score of 27-14 in our favour suggests a fairly close game, the stats suggest otherwise. We had the ball for 40 minutes to their 20; 26 first downs to their 6 and 500 yards to their 190.

We started well with a FG on our first drive and went 80 yards for a TD in just four plays to go up 10-0. New England came out passing and caused us some early trouble and quickly responded with a 16 yard TD pass. Their next drive was four plays, all passes, and resulted in a 33 yard TD pass for a 14-10 lead. We started to take control now though and went 80 yards in 3 minutes to regain the lead. A Pats fumble gave us the ball at their 35 and shortly afterwards we had made it 24-14 with a 1 yard run.

Defenses were well on top in the second half, as our Change Down offense kicked in, with just a further FG for us to make the final score 27-14 Ravens.

AFC Championship Preview

Peter Kneil

After trying for a few seasons, I've finally won my first AFC Central title and now another first as I get to my first AFC Championship game. I couldn't have wished for a tougher game though, as we travel to Pre-season favourites Oakland. They've swept all before them this season, finishing with a very impressive 14-2 record. Despite Tampa's better record, Oakland are clearly the best team in the league.

So can we win? Judging by the 41-7 hammering they gave us in week 7, the answer would have to be 'No'! However, there are grounds for optimism: The HC for Baltimore (ie me!) called a terrible game that day and can only do better this time; we are certainly one of the form teams at the moment and the defense has really stepped up lately, conceding just 34 points in our last six games. Whether this is due to a weak schedule, better play calling or a combination of both, we'll find out shortly.

I think this game will be won or lost in the air as we are one and two in rush defense. Oakland have the number one pass attack but the number 20 pass defense.

On a line through Cleveland and New England, we have a chance, but overall Oakland's record is much better and with HFA they have to be favourites for this game. I'll be very disappointed if it turns out to be anything like 41-7 again though!

NFC Championship Preview

The Giants are somewhat lucky to be in the Championship Game, but their recipe of power running and aggressive defense is a good combination in playoff football. Tampa Bay have been clearly the best team in the NFC this season and should win this game comfortably providing they don't give up too many turnovers.

