

### NFL 2008 - Week 9

by Joe Mulder

Week 8: 3-10-1

Overall: 53-61-3

The Smartest Thing I Said Last Week:

Sooner or later I might have no choice to admit that these Bills are for real; first let's see how they handle an AFC East foe on the road (lest we forget, they haven't had to do that yet).

[I picked against the Bills, and they lost. Not a stunningly brave or insightful move by me, but beggars can't be choosers]

The Dumbest Thing I Said Last Week (and so many to choose from...):

Browns @ JAGUARS -7

I don't get this line at all. I don't know who in the world would take Cleveland here.

[the Browns won the game, so obviously plenty of people knew something I didn't]

A less-than-stellar week, I'm not going to lie. I lost like three or four games by 1/2 a point, but even if I'd gotten all of those I wouldn't have been in great shape.

Onward...

Jets @ BILLS -5.5

I've played a decent amount of blackjack in my day. I like to think I know what I'm doing at a blackjack table, more or less. I also like to think I know when somebody else doesn't know what he's doing. Why do I bring all of this up? Here's what Jets quarterback Brett Favre said about blackjack this week, according to Yahoo!:

I used to always take hits on 16. Does it depend on what the guy next to you has?... I would sit at the table and [have] everyone get up because [they'd say], "that guy takes hits on everything." When you're betting 10 dollars, who cares?

Could Favre have said anything – anything at all – that better explained the last ten years of his career? Hitting on 16 is just like forcing a throw into double-or-triple coverage; it might work a small percentage of the time, and when it does it makes you look brilliant and ballsy. The vast majority of the time, though, it not only ends up screwing you, it screws everybody else who's playing right along with you.

But, as Favre says, "who cares?" He's a multi-millionaire, so ten bucks means nothing to him, so screw everybody else at the table. He's an all-time great who has already won a Super Bowl (would a more discerning Brett Favre have won at least three?), so screw everybody else on the field.

I remain not sold on the Bills, especially given their loss at Miami last week, but this Jets team isn't that great either. They've built a 4-3 record on some pretty iffy wins, they're only 1-2 on the road, and I don't think they're ready to wear the big-boy pants quite yet.

JAGUARS @ Bengals +7.5

The Bengals have to win sometime, one would think. But I've picked them two weeks in a row, and they've been pathetic. In fact, in last week's column, I named picking the Bengals two weeks ago The Dumbest Thing I Said [That] Week, and then proceeded to pick the Bengals again.

No more. The Jaguars are gasping for air and they badly need a win. Watch; this will be the week the Bengals finally do it. I don't care. I can't pick them anymore.

RAVENS @ Browns -1.5

The Ravens are good. I'm going to go ahead and say it. And I understand that the Browns have sort of come on strong of late. Still, as my great-grandpappy used to say, "son, any time you've got a team with the NFL's 30th-ranked offense going against a team with the league's 2nd-ranked defense, put your money on the latter." Keep in mind that there were *only 28 teams in the NFL when he passed away*, and you'll realize just how much he knew about the game.

TEXANS @ Vikings -4.5

Ladies and gentlemen, the end zone celebration bar has been raised considerably. Though touchdown dances have been around for quite a while, the mid-'90s saw the emergence end zone celebration luminaries such as Carolina's Wesley Walls, who would spike the ball and then "shoot" it out of the air with a pretend shotgun, and San Diego's Alfred Pupunu, who, in a nod to his Tongan heritage, would act like the football was a coconut, twist the top off and "drink" of the milk within.

It was the early years of the 21st century, however, during which the likes of Steve Smith, Joe Horn, Chad Johnson and the Mozart of end zone celebrations, Terrell Owens, brought the genre to previously undreamed of heights. One still weeps when one contemplated the beauty of Owens pulling a Sharpie marker out of his sock and autographing the ball immediately following a score.

All of those acts were mere prelude, however, to what we saw last Sunday, when wide receiver David Anderson of the Houston Texans caught a pass from quarterback Matt

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Schaub, scampered into the end zone, and unleashed upon the world...

The Conan O'Brien string dance.

Video of the incident is readily available to anyone who wishes to Google "David Anderson" and "string dance," and doing so is highly recommended.

It's not as if any team needs help beating the spread against the Vikings, but the good karma that is sure to follow the Texans after David Anderson's revolutionization of the very concept of the end zone celebration makes this game the safest bet of the week.

Lions @ BEARS -13

Ah, hell. You hate to give away 13 points. But it's the 0-7 Lions, on the road. So even though this line of thinking has burned me before, I'll go with the premise that you really just have no choice but to take the Bears.

BUCCANEERS @ Chiefs +8.5

Can the Buccaneers score enough to justify taking them on the road with this big of a spread? Maybe; they're averaging over 21 points a game. And this is a semi-must-win game for them, heading into their bye week. They need to beat the Chiefs if they want to stay near the top of the NFC playoff hopefuls.

CARDINALS @ Rams +3

You know, you get to the middle few weeks of the season, when the thrill of having the NFL back in your life has worn off a bit and the playoff scenarios haven't really quite started to take shape yet, and there are going to be certain games that you just don't really care that much about. Cardinals @ Rams is one of those games.

Packers @ TITANS -5.5

When did we decide that the Packers could hang with what we have no choice to refer to as the best team in the league in Tennessee? Was it those consecutive wins over the lousy Seahawks and the shaky Colts (who should probably just be known officially as the Shaky Colts, like how Anaheim used to be the Mighty Ducks)? I wasn't consulted about that (hard to believe, isn't it, given my record of picking games this season?).

Dolphins @ BRONCOS -3

Are these teams evenly matched? For some reason, and this is going to sound ridiculous, I think the Dolphins are better, but I feel relatively good about taking Denver this week. The Broncos are coming off a bye week and they've beaten some decent teams at home this year. With such a volatile team, I'd

rather just assume they'll take care of things at home.

And while we're here, talking about the Broncos, now seems as good a time as any to mention that the end of an era will take place, a torch will be passed, and a new dawn will come to the National Football League. Yes, we've been hearing a lot about change in the last few months, and on Tuesday we will head to the polls and decide who will replace Mike Shanahan of the Broncos as the NFL Head Coach Who Looks Most Like the President. Will we need to hold a runoff between Herm Edwards of the Chiefs and Tony Dungy of the Colts, or will the underdog, Giants coach Tom Coughlin, defy the odds and the pollsters and pull it out in the end?

Either way, it's an exciting time to be an American.

COWBOYS @ Giants -9

This line is too high for an NFC East battle the Cowboys really need to win, so even though the Giants defense should beat up Brad Johnson and whoever replaces him midway through the second quarter when he inevitably gets hurt or yanked from the game, I'm still taking Dallas.

EAGLES @ Seahawks +6.5

If this game were being played during the Taft administration, then Andy Reid and Mike Holmgren would be engaged in an all-time classic Texas death match for the undisputed NFL Head Coach Who Looks Most Like the President title.

But it isn't.

The Eagles are up and down, but so far this year they've handled all of the bad teams they've had to play, well, handily. That should continue.

FALCONS @ Raiders +3

The Falcons might make the playoffs. You heard it here first.

PATRIOTS @ Colts -5.5

It seems like the Colts and Patriots play like eight times a year, doesn't it? Of course, sophisticated football fans know that the real number is much closer to five or six.

Last season's November matchup between these two teams, into which they both entered undefeated, was commonly referred to as "Super Bowl 41 1/2." This year's meeting, however has been unofficially dubbed the "Meineke Car Care Bowl 6 1/2," after the caliber of players we're likely to see taking the field for the two injury plagued clubs.

I'll go with the Patriots, because until they lose a couple of

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games in a row, I'm going to go on assuming that they're kind of still The Patriots.

Steelers @ REDSKINS -1.5

It used to be if the Redskins won their last home game before a presidential election that meant the incumbent president's party would keep the White House, and if the Redskins lost their last home game before a presidential election then the incumbent party would lose. Believe it or not, this held true for 17 consecutive presidential elections, dating all the way back to 1936.

In fact, in 2000 the Redskins lost by one point in double overtime on a controversial call, and then George W. Bush went on to defeat the incumbent party on his way to a controversial electoral college win. Spooky, huh?

[note: I made almost all of that last paragraph up. First of all, you can't win by one point in overtime. Nor is there such a thing as double overtime in the NFL's regular season. What's wrong with you?]

In 2004 the streak came to an end, with the Redskins losing their last home game before the election and Bush retaining the presidency, breaking a 68-year-old pattern in the process (really, is there anything that man can't accomplish? I mean, other than things he claims via banner to have already done?).

Lucky for me, that frees me up to pick the 'Skins to beat Pittsburgh. If the Redskins' uncanny predictive powers were still in play, we'd all be forced to go with the Steelers on Sunday, since Obama's going to win.

And, in that spirit, let's "hope" that this is the week my luck in picking games will finally "change." Am I right, America?

Choose or Die! (or whatever it is Puffy says)

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