

### NFL 2009, Week 10

by Joe Mulder

Last Week: 7-6

Overall: 67-61-1

The Smartest Thing I Said Last Week:

CARDINALS @ Bears -3

Were I in Las Vegas this weekend, I would bet some money on the Cardinals to win this game straight up.

The Cardinals beat the Bears soundly, 41-21, inspiring Yahoo! Sports to run one of the best headlines I've seen in ages ("Scenes From a Maul").

The Dumbest Thing I Said Last Week:

Were I in Las Vegas this weekend, I would bet some money on the Cardinals to win this game straight up.

Here's the thing: my wife *was* in Las Vegas this weekend, and I could *easily* have had her bet some money on the Cardinals to win this game straight up... but I didn't. I even told her as we were driving to the airport on Friday that I may decide to text her with an NFL bet or two (the second one would have been Houston to beat the spread against Indy, which would have come through as well). So, even though I didn't really even open my wallet at all last weekend, I somehow feel as though I lost a significant amount of money.

Oh, well. Onto this week's picks...

Bears @ 49ERS -3

As in years past, since this column goes up on a Friday you'll just have to trust me with me on the Thursday pick. Don't worry, if I were cheating on the Thursday games I wouldn't miss like 70% of them.

I can tell you that I started Cutler over Romo on my fantasy team this week, not that you care.

Falcons @ PANTHERS +2

The Falcons haven't actually beaten anybody with a winning record. Then again, Carolina doesn't have a winning record. But still.

Last year, the rule in NFC South games was "take the home team." That worked pretty much every time. This year the Saints are great and the Buccaneers stink (those two teams were 8-8 and 9-7 last year, respectively), so that philosophy doesn't work quite as well. I'm going with it this week, though; as much as Carolina has struggled, they've still got to

be thinking that they playoffs aren't completely out of the question.

Buccaneers @ DOLPHINS -10

The Buccaneers orange throwback uniforms looked just gorgeous last week, did they not? My main complaint about every new NFL uniform design that's debuted since, say, 1997 is that they all appear to have been designed by the same guy. In the same week.

Not those orange pieces of work, though; those look like they were conceived by some community college kid in Tampa in 1973 who sent in his design as part of a contest run by a local newspaper, and were chosen late one night as the winning look by like three slightly drunk guys high up in the Bucs organization who said, "hey, those look cool." And I mean that not only in a good way, but in the best way possible. That's how uniforms *should* be designed and chosen. All new uniforms that the league has come up with in the last decade-and-a-half look as though they've been product-tested and focus-grouped to within an inch of their life; not those babies.

And what good does it do? I mean, would any reasonable person in his right mind prefer the bland, lifeless duds that the Buccaneers wear now to those orange beauties?

Anyway; Dolphins to cover the spread this week. The Bucs had their big win against the Packers last Sunday; I don't expect them to repeat that performance.

LIONS @ Vikings -16.5

Remember earlier, when I pointed out that the Falcons had yet to beat a team with a winning record? Well, I hate to say it, but neither have the Vikings. Of course, they have only *played* one team that currently has a winning record (Pittsburgh), and that was a weird, fluky loss that I'm not really worried about. Also, a few teams that the Vikings have played don't have a winning record simply because the Vikings beat them.

Still, 7-1 and three games clear of anybody else in the NFC North, there is absolutely no excuse whatsoever for the Vikings not to destroy the Lions. I have to believe that these are not the 21st century Vikings we all grew to know and love, the Vikings who were always a threat to win – or lose – any game they played, no matter whom the opponent or where the game was taking place.

So why am I picking the Lions to beat this spread (although I don't think – I can't let myself think – that the Lions have any chance whatsoever to win the game)? Well, because the sad fact is that anybody can move the ball at least a little bit on these Vikings. The Vikes have the horses to outscore just about anybody, but they're not going to win many 35-3 games. The Rams moved the ball at will against them, for

## POOP READING

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heaven's sake.

So that, plus the fact that the Vikings could be up by three touchdowns and garbage-time score could still mean Detroit beating the spread, is why I'm picking the Lions. Not to win the game, though. Perish the thought.

Jaguars @ JETS -7

Jets aren't that great, but they're at home and coming off a bye. I really, really don't like to give away seven points to a team with Maurice Jones-Drew on it, even if that team is the 2009 Jaguars (which, given Jones-Drew's current employment status, it would pretty much have to be).

But Jets, at home, after a bye... I don't feel like I have any choice. Please, please don't put your money on this one on my account, though.

Bengals @ STEELERS -7

This line shows that the oddsmakers reeeeeeally don't think that *we* think that the Bengals are quite ready to wear big boy pants just yet. I'm inclined to agree until I see them beat a team like the Steelers. I mean, they beat the Steelers earlier this year... but still.

SAINTS @ Rams +13.5

You can't make a Rams line high enough. Certainly not against what many consider to be the best team in the league.

(Can you imagine being a lifelong Saints fan, by the way? For the first time in franchise history your team is being mentioned regularly along with the phrase "best team in the league," and not only that, but they just defied the *Sports Illustrated* cover jinx, which in only the past few weeks has taken down Iowa and Oklahoma State and taken them down hard. Heady times in New Orleans, I'd say)

Bills @ TITANS -6.5

Are the Titans back? They might be back. They'd probably have to win out to have a shot at the playoffs, and that seems incredibly, incredibly unlikely, but even so, they might be back.

Broncos @ REDSKINS +3.5

I don't really think the Broncos are good anymore. They always collapse in the second half of the year, anyway. You can change the coach and you can change the quarterback, but can you change that?

The Redskins really stink, but I almost feel like I have no choice but to take them (hey, somebody go cue up the "Dumbest Thing I Said Last Week" music...)

CHIEFS @ Raiders -2

I can't imagine having to watch this game. Yikes.

SEAHAWKS @ Cardinals -9

The Cardinals are 1-3 at home; how can you trust them with nine points? Especially against a Seahawks team that probably thinks it still has a shot at the playoffs if it wins this game?

COWBOYS @ Packers +3

Cowboys are good, Packers are bad. Cowboys get after the QB okay, and Aaron Rodgers has taken by far the most sacks of anybody this year.

Tony Romo hopefully will have a bad game, though, since I chose not to start him on my fantasy team (not that you care about that).

Eagles @ CHARGERS -2

This season might be just like last season as far as the Chargers and Broncos are concerned, with the Broncos looking early on like they're going to cruise to an easy division title, only to blow it as the Chargers make a late-season run.

As far as the Eagles go, who the heck knows? I mean, I think being a Vikings fan is frustrating...

PATRIOTS @ Colts -3

The annual Game of the Year between these two. I think it's the Patriots' turn.

RAVENS @ Browns +10.5

The Ravens have lost three of four, all to good teams, and badly need a win to stay in the playoff chase. Luckily, they play the Browns.

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