

CASE NFL

NFL WEEK 12

1. *Texans -6 at Jaguars (2 units)*

A great running attack and the league's No. 1 defense is more than enough for the Texans to cover this small number against a now dead Jaguars squad.

The Jaguars fell to 3-7 after failing to score from the one-yard line on the final play last Sunday against Cleveland. The Jaguars threw the ball instead of running Maurice Jones-Drew like they should have.

The Jaguars are down mentally and physically with numerous key defensive injuries, including injuries to their nose guard, linebacker and best cornerback. The Jaguars don't have nearly the talent or quarterbacking to overcome this.

Yes, Matt Leinart is Houston's new quarterback replacing injured Matt Schaub. But I would still take the veteran Leinart over rookie Blaine Gabbert, who is completing less than 49 percent of his passes and clearly has shown he's not close to being an NFL-caliber starting quarterback yet.

A big key for the Texans is getting premier wide receiver Andre Johnson back. He's missed the last six games with a hamstring injury. The rested Texans wanted to wait until after their bye, which was last week, to have Johnson back at full strength. Arian Foster and Ben Tate have combined to run for 520 yards and score five touchdowns in Houston's last three games. The Texans, ranked No. 2 in rushing, will be even stronger on the ground with defenses having to account for Johnson.

The Jaguars gave up 115 yards rushing to plodding third-stringer Chris Ogbonnaya last week. It's scary to think what Foster can do against the Jaguars, whose run defense is vulnerable following recent injuries.

The Texans held Jacksonville to just 160 yards of offense when they beat them 24-14 in Week 8. The Texans may have shut out the Jaguars in that game if not for two turnovers in their own territory. That shouldn't happen again and the score should be even more lopsided in Houston's favor this time around.

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2. Bears +4 at Raiders (2 units)

Jay Cutler may have been playing his finest ball when he suffered a thumb injury. Caleb Hanie, his replacement, lacks Cutler's big arm.

But the Bears will be fine in this matchup with Hanie behind center. Matt Forte is having a great season and Oakland still hasn't solved their perennial run defense woes. Hanie, if you may recall, nearly led the Bears to an upset victory over Green Bay in the NFC title game after he replaced an ineffective and injured Cutler.

The Raiders may yet to prove to be the class of the AFC West - but this remains a very weak division. The Raiders aren't as disciplined as the Bears and their veterans aren't as savvy as Chicago's key veterans such as Brian Urlacher and Lance Briggs.

Carson Palmer is still learning Oakland's offense. His wide receivers are banged-up. The Raiders still won't have their best running back either, Darren McFadden. The Bears are a very opportunistic defense. They've picked off 11 passes in their last four games. Charles Tillman is playing as well as any cornerback.

Chicago is in a nice groove. You would have to go back to Week 5 to find the last time the Bears lost. They have held six straight foes to 24 points or less. In their last five games, the Bears have scored 37, 30, 24, 39 and 31 points.

The Raiders have good special teams, but Devin Hester trumps them. Sebastian Janikowski also still isn't 100 percent so probably no long field goals for the Raiders.

The Raiders lack the pedigree in this role having failed to cover 14 of the last 17 times they've been home favorites. They are not a team that can be relied on.

3. Jets -9 1/2 hosting Bills (1 unit)

The line keeps climbing in this matchup, but it's totally justified. The Bills are playing terrible having dropped four of their last five while giving up an average of 35.3 points in their last three games.

Buffalo has marginal talent and limited depth. Now the Bills have been hit hard by injuries. In the last couple of weeks, they've lost their best offensive lineman (center Eric Wood), their best running back and most productive offensive player (Fred Jackson), wide receiver Donald Jones and cornerback Terrence McGee.

Ryan Fitzpatrick needs a strong supporting cast to cover up his weak arm and limited skills. The Bills don't have that and opposing defenses have figured out Buffalo's short passing game. Fitzpatrick is averaging two turnovers per game in his last six games. The

CASE NFL

Bills have scored the grand total of 26 points during their last three games - and that was with Jackson, who was their best running back by far.

The Jets rank eight in total defense and fifth in pass defense thanks in large part to Darrelle Revis, who remains the premier cornerback. He'll take on Steve Johnson, who is playing hurt and Buffalo's only consistent wide receiving threat.

The Jets have had four extra days to stew about their loss to Denver and Tim Tebow. Mark Sanchez didn't play well in that game. He has a history, though, of following a bad performance with a good one.

The Bills don't put pressure on the quarterback ranking 29th in sacks. They rate 26th in total defense and have given up the third-most rushing touchdowns. Shonn Greene is back healthy and has averaged 4.8 yards per carry in his last three games against Buffalo. Sanchez, given good run support, should be able to put up good passing numbers against the Bills and their beat-up secondary.

New York defeated Buffalo, 27-11, just three weeks ago when the Bills still had their confidence and swagger. That's all gone now. The Jets were 16 points better than and now they're home and facing a far more banged-up Bills squad.

Look for the Jets to easily defeat the Bills for the seventh time in the last eight meetings.

4. Redskins +3 1/2 at Seahawks (1 unit)

Offensive left tackle Trent Williams, wide receiver Santana Moss and safety LaRon Landry are three of the best players on the Redskins.

They are all finally healthy and expected to play in this matchup. Washington is as healthy as it has been since early in the season. That makes the Redskins dangerous in this matchup.

Rex Grossman isn't going to make anyone forget Aaron Rodgers. But Grossman is a better quarterback than John Beck. The Redskins have the better defense, leading the NFL in sacks and giving up just 11 touchdown passes.

Tarvaris Jackson has thrown one touchdown pass and been picked off six times since returning from a strained right pectoral four games ago. His passing yards have dropped during each of the last four weeks.

The Seahawks have a makeshift offensive line having lost the right side of their line a couple of weeks ago and are without their two top cornerbacks.

Seattle is off a road victory against NFC West Division rival St. Louis, 24-7. The Seahawks, though, do not have a good history following a victory going 7-18-1 ATS. They are 3-23-2 ATS following a win of 14 points or more.

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5. Browns +7 1/2 at Bengals (1 unit)

The Bengals have produced two great efforts in a row in close losses to Pittsburgh and Baltimore the past two weeks. They are at Pittsburgh next week.

Even though this is a division game and in-state rivalry, it's going to prove too difficult for the young Bengals to give another great effort in this matchup. They are much better as underdogs than favorites having failed to cover 13 of the last 16 times they've been home chalk.

The Browns are limited offensively, but they do have several very good offensive linemen and are deep at tight end. Josh Cribbs remains a special teams weapon.

The Bengals are without their best cover cornerback, injured Leon Hall.

The Browns will play hard here. Their defense is respectable.

Cincinnati isn't a strong enough team to cover this kind of spread without playing its "A" or "B" game. The spot dictates that won't be the case.

The Bengals are going to struggle in a flat spot and with a huge look-ahead game. The Browns will take this one down to the wire. They are 7-2 ATS as a road 'dog of between 3 1/2 and 10 points.

6. Steelers -10 at Chiefs (1 unit)

There's a very good chance that Kyle Orton will be Kansas City's starting quarterback in Week 13. That means another opportunity to fade Tyler Palko and the Chiefs. Palko is one of the worst quarterbacks I've ever seen start in the NFL. He couldn't produce against New England's weak pass defense this past Monday and now on a short week he's going to be terrible again against a much stronger defense.

Making matters worse for Palko is the Chiefs are without their best pass blocker, left guard Ryan Lilja, who is out with a concussion. The Chiefs lack a ground game with Jamaal Charles out to take the pressure off Palko.

The Steelers are rested and ready having been idle last week. Ben Roethlisberger has a thumb injury, but he had a similar injury in 2005 when the Steelers won the Super Bowl. The Chiefs have allowed the fifth-most passing touchdowns and have the fewest sacks in the league. They are 5-11 ATS in their last 16 games versus AFC teams.

Pittsburgh has done the job as a favorite covering eight of the last 11 times in that role.

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