

# ***CASE NFL***

## **NFL WEEK 16**

### ***1. Cardinals-Bengals Under 41 (1 unit)***

We know the Bengals have a good defense. The numbers back that up. Cincinnati ranks in the top 10 in fewest points allowed, total defense and rushing defense.

But what about Arizona? The Cardinals surrendered an average of 26.1 points and 390.7 yards per game during their first seven games. In their last seven games, though, the Cardinals are giving up an average of 17.4 points and 325 yards.

There are several reasons for this among them being the Cardinals are more in sync with defensive coordinator Ray Horton's system and top rookie cornerback Patrick Peterson is improving his coverage as he gains more experience.

During this seven-game span no opponent has scored more than 23 points on the Cardinals despite two of the games going into overtime. Consequently, Cincinnati has hit a roadblock on offense. The Bengals haven't broken the 24-point barrier during any of their past seven games.

Cincinnati is averaging 15.3 points in its last three games. Rookie quarterback Andy Dalton has tailed off. It's been five games since he's had multiple touchdown throws in a game. A.J. Green, the Bengals' lone playmaker, has a shoulder injury and will be far less than 100 percent if he plays. The Bengals' passing attack suffers greatly if Green can't play, or is severely restricted.

The Cardinals aren't going to put up many points either with inaccurate John Skelton as their quarterback. Skelton is kind of a poor man's Tim Tebow in that he's not pretty with a quarterback rating of under 70 and a six-to-eight touchdown-to-interception ratio, but he does the job as Arizona is 5-1 when he's played.

### ***2. Chargers-Lions Over 52 (2 units)***

A fast track, two elite quarterbacks at the top of their games and a depleted Lions secondary will spell over the total.

Helped by finally having healthy receivers, Philip Rivers has thrown eight touchdown passes in the last four games with no interceptions. He'll be operating against a Detroit secondary missing key personnel. Ryan Mathews has stepped up to post his best four-game rushing total averaging 113.2 yards during the past four weeks.

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The Lions are giving up 30.8 points during their last six games. Detroit, though, is more than capable of scoring against a mediocre Chargers defense that gives up more than 22 points per game despite playing six weak offenses in the last eight weeks, including Kansas City, Jacksonville and Buffalo.

Matthew Stafford has thrown for 1,135 yards and 13 touchdowns in the last five games.

Both offenses will be aided playing in a dome stadium.

### ***3. Dolphins plus 10 at Patriots (1 unit)***

The Dolphins have become a very tough out covering seven of their last eight games.

Miami historically is outstanding on the road, too, going 21-8-1 ATS. This includes a 3-1 ATS mark in its last four visits to Foxboro.

The Patriots don't have a strong enough defense to lay this many points against a decent team. The Patriots have allowed the most first downs and rank last in total defense and pass defense.

The Patriots have compiled these horrible defensive statistics despite playing inaccurate quarterbacks. The last five quarterbacks the Patriots have faced are Tyler Palko, Vince Young, Dan Orlovsky, Rex Grossman and Tim Tebow.

The Dolphins aren't fancy, but Matt Moore and Reggie Bush are having career years. Bush has rushed for 406 yards in his last three games. Brandon Marshall is a big-time talent who can take advantage of a vulnerable Patriots secondary that has been reduced to using wide receivers.

The Patriots suffered a key defensive injury last week when Andre Carter suffered a season-ending quad injury. He was the Patriots' only big-time pass rusher.

Miami showed it could play in cold weather beating Buffalo on the road last week. That game followed the Dolphins' worst performance in their last eight games, a loss to the Eagles.

The Dolphins proved against the Bills that they will continue to play hard even under interim coach Todd Bowles.

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## **4. Ravens -12 hosting Browns (1 unit)**

Kill spot for Baltimore off an embarrassing loss to San Diego and with designs of not only winning the AFC North, but earning home-field advantage in the playoffs.

The Ravens have never lost in seven meetings against the Browns under John Harbaugh, covering six of the seven. Baltimore is 7-0 at home this season. The Ravens are 4-2-1 ATS at home with victories and covers against the Steelers, Jets, Texans and 49ers - all teams far superior to Cleveland.

The Browns have failed to cover seven of the past nine times they've gone against foes with a winning mark. They are 2-6 ATS in their last eight AFC North games and 3-8 ATS as an underdog.

Baltimore is at its best when it runs Ray Rice a lot. That's what the Ravens did when the teams met in Week 13. Baltimore ran for 290 yards with Rice picking up 204 yards on the ground in a methodical 24-10 victory. The Ravens held the Browns to 59 yards rushing on 17 carries.

The Ravens are much more intimidating at home, especially with Ray Lewis back in the lineup. They should steamroll the Browns again. The Browns' run defense is worn down. In their last eight games, the Browns are giving up an average of five yards per carry.

Cleveland has little offense ranking 29th in total yards at 294.8 and 30th in scoring at 13.9 points per game. Career backup Seneca Wallace figures to start at quarterback for Cleveland. I'm not a Colt McCoy fan, but Wallace isn't any better.

## **5. Bears-Packers Under 44 (3 units, play now as the total is going down)**

Minus Jay Cutler, Matt Forte and now Johnny Knox, the Bears' offense is down and out. Chicago has managed just 27 points during the last three games.

Caleb Hanie is out as the starter, but there's not much - if any - improvement with the switch to 32-year-old journeyman Josh McCown. McCown needs weapons around him to move the ball. He doesn't have that.

The Packers may have home-field clinched before this game begins if San Francisco were to lose to Seattle. That could mean a limited role for Aaron Rodgers.

The Packers shouldn't need Rodgers to play the entire game to beat the Bears. They will be extra careful down several offensive lineman, including starting right tackle Bryan Bulaga.

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The Bears have the defensive front seven to pressure Rodgers, especially with a still highly-effective Julius Peppers.

Snow isn't expected, but temperatures are expected to be in the 20s with a seven mph crosswind.

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