

CASE NFL

NFL WEEK 9

1. Seahawks-Cowboys Over 43 1/2 (2 units)

The Seahawks, minus their two best cornerbacks, can't stop Tony Romo and Dallas' passing attack. Seattle is without cornerbacks Marcus Trufant and Walter Thurmond.

The Seahawks have surrendered an average of 27.3 points in road games against the Steelers, 49ers and Giants. The over has cashed in seven of Seattle's last nine road games. Dallas has gone over in 10 of its last 12 games, helped by a fast track at Cowboys Stadium.

The Cowboys' explosive offense is going to get their share of points. The key is how many points can the Seahawks muster?

I see the Seahawks scoring their share of points with Tarvaris Jackson back at quarterback. Jackson actually has produced good passing numbers in two of his last three games throwing for 319 yards versus the Falcons and for 323 yards against the Bengals. His average yards per pass was above eight against both of those teams.

The Cowboys are vulnerable in the secondary after losing cornerback Mike Jenkins to a hamstring injury. Linebacker Sean Lee, who had been playing extremely well, may not play either due to a wrist injury. There's a big drop-off for Dallas if Lee can't go.

2. Browns +11 at Texans (1 unit)

I'm not going to pretend the Browns are a decent team just because they own three victories, which is the same number as the Eagles and Cowboys.

Philadelphia and Dallas are clearly better. But the Browns have a respectable defense, good special teams and are catching an inflated number. Those are enough factors to put me on the Browns.

The Texans are improved defensively, too, but their offense is less explosive. Matt Schaub isn't having a good season by his standards. If Andre Johnson can't suit up again, the Texans' passing attack goes down 30 yards and loses their one playmaker on the flanks.

Johnson has missed the last four games with a hamstring injury. The Texans would be wise to hold him out this week and next, which would give Johnson three additional weeks to get fully healed since Houston has its bye in Week 11.

The Texans are playing for the ninth week in a row. So there could be a fatigue factor. They are far less dangerous minus Johnson. Veteran defensive coordinator and former head coach Dick Jauron has done a nice job improving Cleveland's defense. The Browns have held more than half of their opponents to 20 points or less.

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Last week, the Browns lost by 10 on the road to San Francisco. Now they are getting more points against a team that is arguably not as good as the 49ers, especially if Johnson doesn't go.

The Texans' one impressive home win was by seven points against Pittsburgh, which was at its most injured at the time. The Texans lost to the Raiders at home and defeated the winless Colts and two-win Jaguars by 10 points.

Besides possible fatigue this also is a letdown spot for the Texans having just won back-to-back AFC South Division games against Tennessee and Jacksonville. Now the Texans are laying their highest spread of the season. Only once this season have the Browns lost a game by more than 10 points.

3. Jets +2 at Bills (3 units)

The Bills have improved. No doubt about it. But they aren't in the Jets' class.

The Jets are getting their confidence and swagger back keyed by the return to health of Pro Bowl center Nick Mangold.

The Bills can take advantage of flawed defenses, but the Jets' defense is coming around and have the strong coverage skills to take away Ryan Fitzpatrick's favorite slant patterns. Rex Ryan is a defensive guru and has had two weeks to prepare and game-plan for this matchup.

The Jets have won and covered in the past three meetings sweeping last year's matchups, 38-14 on the road and 38-7 at home.

The Bills have been without Pro Bowl nose tackle Kyle Williams. The Jets have gotten their ground game back on track with Mangold healthy again. A respectable ground game sets up Mark Sanchez's play-action passes.

Before shutting out a Redskins team missing four key offensive starters last week, the Bills ranked 30th in run defense and 30th in pass defense. They entered that game with only four sacks.

The Jets remain the superior team and are back on track. They are 8-1 ATS the past nine times they've been a short road 'dog taking between one and three points.

4. Dolphins +4 at Chiefs (1 unit)

Indianapolis and Miami are the halfway leaders in the Andrew Luck sweepstakes.

There's a big difference, though, between the two winless teams.

The Colts are showing signs of quitting having been outscored, 116-34, in their last three games. The Dolphins, on the other hand, continue to play hard for embattled coach Tony Sparano.

Miami let a 15-point lead with three minutes remaining slip against Denver two weeks ago and blew a seven-point fourth-quarter lead to the Giants last week. The Dolphins have enough talent to win games. Their problem is closing teams out.

The Dolphins, however, don't need to close out Kansas City. They just need to hang close, which they should be able to do.

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Perhaps the Chiefs were written off too early after dropping their first two games to Buffalo and Detroit by a combined margin of 89-10. But their four-game win streak isn't as impressive as it may seem.

During this span, the Chiefs took advantage of a hapless Donovan McNabb Vikings team, beat the Curtis Painter-led Colts, shut out a punchless Oakland squad that started Kyle Boller and then put in a rusty and not-ready Carson Palmer and then were out-played and lucky to beat a bungling, penalty-screwed Chargers team this past Monday in overtime.

Defeating San Diego was huge for Kansas City. Now, though, the Chiefs have a short turnaround to get ready for this matchup. It's a letdown spot for the Chiefs, who aren't used to dramatic prime time victories. The Chiefs aren't nearly good enough to cover more than a field goal if they aren't playing well.

Let us not forget the Chiefs are without their best running back, Jamaal Charles, best defensive back, safety Eric Berry, and tight end Tony Moeaki. Matt Cassel isn't that much better than Matt Moore.

I don't like Moore. I'm not a fan of Reggie Bush either even though the cheating, NFL underachiever finally produced a 100-yard rushing game last week. The Dolphins have failed to score more than 17 points during their last six games. Their defense is respectable, though, when not matched against an elite offense.

Strangely, the Dolphins also play far better on the road than at home. Maybe they feel less pressure away from South Florida, but the Dolphins are 9-4-1 ATS during their past 14 road contests. The Dolphins very well could be 2-2 on the road this season having lost at the Giants and at Cleveland after leading the Browns by six with less than one minute left.

The Dolphins are close to that first victory. The Chiefs are due for a fall. This game figures to be very close. I'll take the points.

5. St. Louis +2 at Arizona 4:15PM (1 UNIT)

This is a pair of 1-6 SU teams. But the Rams got their first victory last week while the Cards have now lost 6 straight. Both come off a game in which they were +13 road dogs. It is a situation that has strongly favored the road dog in the following game. The Rams succeeded without QB Bradford following their 34-7 embarrassment in prime time TV. Though he may return this week, a more integral part of their attack is a healthy RB Jackson, and improved health of their WRs. In fact, St. Louis outrushed New Orleans 183-56 last week. Consider it a buy sign for the league's biggest underachiever. Arizona is reeling. They blew a 24-3 lead in an eventual 30-27 loss to Baltimore. They could gain just 207 yards and allowed 6 sacks. Now they must come home without starting QB Kolb to face a rejuvenated St. Louis team. The Cards are just 2-6 ATS home / loss.

6. Denver (+8) at OAKLAND (1 UNIT)

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My math model favors Oakland by just 5 points in this game and Denver's blowout loss to Detroit actually sets them up in a very good 78-18 ATS road underdog bounce-back situation. Also, teams that lost by more than 21 points and allow 42 points or more the previous week are a solid 92-61-7 ATS as underdogs the next week. Denver also applies to a 57-22-2 ATS road underdog revenge situation as they look to get even for their 3 point loss to the Raiders in Denver in week 1.

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