

CASE NFL

NFL WEEK 8: OCTOBER 30 & 31

1. Jacksonville at Houston (-9 1/2) 1:00PM:

HOUSTON -9.5 1 UNIT

Never easy to back an NFL team in this price range who must surely be a bit complacent following that 41-7 victory at Tennessee. But the difference between this season's high scoring Houston team and that of recent years is a DC Phillips defense. This unit is allowing less than 100 yards overland, only 53% completions, and only 303 yards. With the expected return of WR Johnson it gives extra impetus to this 400 yard offense. The Jags saved their coach's season with an emotional 12-7 MNF victory vs Baltimore. It's unlikely, however, that they carry that emotion over to today's game. The only thing they do remotely well will be shutdown by that Houston defensive front. Remember, this is a team that averages on y 12 pts and 252 yards per game on a league low 4.3 yards/OFF YPPL. The Houston defense which has recorded 19 sacks will pressure rookie QB Gabbert all day as he operates behind an OL that has allowed 21 sacks.

2. Arizona at Baltimore (-12) 1:00PM:

BALTIMORE -12 1 UNIT

Arizona obeyed my command last week when they fell 32-20 to our top play Pittsburgh Steelers. In a game that could have been far worse than the final score, the Steelers out rushed and out passed the Cards and controlled the clock 36-24. Now this Arizona team, that is on a 2-11 ATS road run, must travel west to east for the dreaded early start. The Steelers were in QB Kolb's face the entire game. It will be worse this week with a Baltimore defensive front that has recorded 19 sacks vs an Arizona OL that has allowed 18 sacks. Without RB Wells (out) and TE Heap (hamstring, questionable) it allows the Ravens blitz tactics to be even more successful. The Ravens have been a peripatetic team in 2011. They have thrown in major clunkers at home vs Tennessee and at Jacksonville Monday night when they were out rushed 132-34 in a head scratching 12-7 loss. But in their 4 victories, they have covered by 26, 26, 14 and 8 points. That includes 3 games on this field against Pittsburgh, the Jets and Houston, all teams clearly superior to Arizona. Baltimore is on a 21-6 ATS HF run vs non-division foes and current HC Harbaugh is 7-3 (-10+) HF. Look for a high scoring Baltimore victory.

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3. Washington +6 vs Buffalo 4:05PM (Toronto, Canada):

WASHINGTON +6 1 UNIT

Each of these teams is suffering with multiple injuries. It may not be until Sunday that a definitive injury list evolves. Nonetheless, at this price point I favor the value with a Washington Redskin team who would have been the favorite in week #1. Yet they have done little wrong in going 3-3 SU with two of those losses coming to high powered Philadelphia and Dallas. Credit an improved defense and a commitment to the running game along with a more conservative offensive game plan. The Bills, conversely, have made their mark this season with an offense averaging 31 PPG. But the DL is still a problem. They have recorded just 5 sacks and are allowing 136/5.2 overland. In this game, we favor the under dog Redskins with the better defense. Hidden stat: much of these teams fortunes have been decided by TOs this season. Washington enters with a -6 net TO margin while Buffalo has a +9 net TO margin. NO surprise to this bureau if that begins to even out today.

4. Detroit Lions (-3) at Denver:

DENVER +3 1 UNIT

The Tim Tebow era has arrived. Trailing 15-0 with 5 minutes remaining, he rallied the Broncos to an 18-15 win. There is plenty of value in this line based on Detroit's hot start. Despite losing their last 2, they have still covered the line by a net 32 points this season. At this Thursday writing, Detroit QB Stafford (leg) is expected to start. But their most explosive runner, Best, is doubtful to make post. Favor the clear momentum of the Broncos at what remains a value price.

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5. Cleveland at San Francisco (-9) 4:15PM

SAN FRANCISCO -9 1 UNIT

In this game, we pay the price to back the Niners momentum. They stand 5-0-1 ATS for the season covering by 79 points. Cleveland, conversely, is on a 2-11 ATS slide failing by a net of 28 points this season. The 6-3 home victory last week was a microcosm of their offensive season. They now average just 4.4 YPPL, near the bottom of the league and well below the league average of 5.7 YPPL. San Francisco HC Harbaugh has miraculously transformed this team. At 11.0, they have the best offensive YPPT in the league indicating amazing efficiency. They are outrushing their foes 132/4.5 to 75/3.6. The plus 8 net turnover margin is among the best in the league. Whatever Harbaugh is doing has brought a whole new attitude of success to this team. QB Smith is 10-1-1 ATS on this field in his starts.

6. Chargers -3 1/2 at Chiefs (2 units) MONDAY NIGHT

CHARGERS -3 1/2 2 UNITS

The San Diego Chargers aren't an elite team - yet. But they are getting there. They have far more talent on both sides of the ball than Kansas City.

This line is short because Kansas City is 3-3 and playing at home. The Chargers won the first meeting by just three points, 20-17, in Week 3. Still, it was the sixth time in the last seven meetings that the Chargers have won. The one game they lost to the Chiefs during this span was last year's opener when they dominated the statistics.

The Chargers are coming on. The Chiefs have won three in a row. They are due for a fall. Kansas City's victories have been against the Vikings with Donovan McNabb, the Colts with Curtis Painter and the Raiders with the disastrous duo of Kyle Boller and rusty Carson Palmer. The Raiders also lost star running back Darren McFadden early in that game.

Because they've played such bad quarterbacks the past three games, the Chiefs' defensive statistics look respectable on paper. Truth be told, the Chiefs can't match up against explosive offenses.

Philip Rivers is due for a big game, especially now that he has a healthy Antonio Gates and Vincent Jackson. Rivers' slow start has helped Ryan Mathews become a force after a disappointing rookie season.

Rivers traditionally plays well at Arrowhead Stadium where he's completed 63.2 percent of his throws in three games for 912 yards with a 7-to-1 touchdown-to-interception ratio.

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Gates has scored three touchdowns while averaging six catches and nearly 100 yards receiving during his last two games against the Chiefs, who are missing their top defensive player, safety Eric Berry.

Jackson is due for a big performance, too. He's not being covered by Darrelle Revis like he was last week.

San Diego entered this week ranked No. 3 in pass defense and fifth in total defense giving up less than 300 yards per game. The Chiefs are without their best running back, injured Jamaal Charles.

If you discount their performance against the Colts' last-ranked defense, the Chiefs have scored only six touchdowns offensively in five games.

Don't make the mistake of getting caught up in any Kansas City hype and home-field talk. The Chargers are the better team and win this matchup going away.

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