

SPORTS

Defying Expectations

BILLS, BROWNS BOTH OFF TO SURPRISING STARTS

Nick Blake
assistant sports editor
nrc5069@psu.edu

If you stand outside Gillette Stadium in Foxboro, MA and listen carefully, you may hear something. The sound on your ear is probably the faint chant of, "Let's go Buffalo," riding the northeasterly winds.

In week one of the NFL season, the New England Patriots lost Pro Bowl quarterback Tom Brady. Brady went down with a knee injury that is going to keep him sidelined for the rest of the season.

When this happened, the thought of another team winning the AFC East, started to look like a reality.

The Patriots have sat atop the AFC East since 2003, and it seemed as if they were going to be there for even longer. However, Brady was such a key ingredient to their success that when he went down it changed the team. Ok, so if the Patriots aren't going to be division champions, who is? Well, the New York Jets acquired Green Bay Packer legend Brett Favre in the preseason, so the Jets are looking pretty good to win it. However, Brett Favre is struggling to learn the offense and the Jets aren't doing so hot. The Miami Dolphins are coming off of a 1-15 season, so chances are they won't be able to make such a dramatic turn-around so soon. That leaves the Buffalo Bills, with young quarterback Trent Edwards at the helm. Surprisingly enough, the Bills are 3-0 and are currently in first place in the AFC East.

The Buffalo Bills are 3-0 for the first time since 1992, and they are really looking like a strong football team. Veteran kicker Rian Lindell hit a 38-yard field goal as the clock ran out to finish off a comeback win in overtime against the Oakland Raiders in week three.

"I just jogged out and trusted what I had done and the week I put in and good snap Ryan Neill, good hold Brian Moorman and it went through," said Lindell after the game.

Even though it was close, a win is a win and head coach Dick Jauron was very pleased. "It was definitely a sweet win for us and it was a team (win) offense, defense and special teams," said Jauron.

The Buffalo Bills are ranked fifth in the NFL for Total Defense. They are also ranked in the top ten for points and passing yards allowed per game. They have eight sacks and two interceptions in three games.

For the time being, the Bills defense is definitely their strong point. Their offense is decent, averaging 26 points per game, and averaging 333.7 yards per game. However, the running game is having trouble getting moving. The Bills rushing attack is ranked 23rd in the NFL, averaging only 99 yards per game. Second year quarterback Trent Edwards is doing a pretty good job leading his offense. He has completed 67% of his passes, thrown three touchdowns and one interception in three games.

With Brett Favre and the Jets struggling, and the Patriots "Brady-less," don't count out the Bills. If their defense keeps up the work, and the offense can get the wheels turning, they could be a scary team. There is no better time than now for the Bills to make a run at winning the division.

Nathan Carter
staff writer
nph5041@psu.edu

This week, the Cleveland Browns took a devastating loss to the Baltimore Ravens, beginning their season 0-3. Regardless, I think this is the start to a moderate Cleveland comeback because there are some very good things developing for them. Amidst these losses, their defense still remains a moderate force to be reckoned with. However, with an amateur offense, a good defense can only do so much.

Following the Browns (0, 4) preseason, I originally thought they were going to do great this year. They finished within five points of the Jets - who were playing Brett Favre that game - and within three points of the Giants - who were playing their regular season defensive team. And, after a devastating preseason, I still had hopes for the Cleveland Browns for three reasons: 1) their offense was stressing the passing aspect, when they've unsuccessfully finished the past couple seasons in near complete rushing mode; 2) their defense was early considered a reckoning force having placed two sacks on Romo, and 3) their special teams was 100% accurate.

Then the longest rivalry in football history reared its head when the Steelers came to Cleveland. The game was left to the defensive teams as the offensive side of things was horrible. The Browns only scored two field goals, taking an early lead, but their defense couldn't hold Giants running back Derrick Ward from scoring a TD late in the second quarter. That was the tragic end to what looked like an

early win for Cleveland. Their offense was no match for Pittsburgh's defense, headed by Bryant McFadden and Aaron Smith - who made two sacks on the Browns in the third quarter.

The third week against the Ravens, yet again, looked like a win for Cleveland early on with an interception by D'Qwell Jackson and a TD by Jerome Harrison. This left the Ravens defense in amazement, but their offense wasn't going to take it. In the second half, Ed Reed returned a Browns punt for a TD and was quickly followed by Le'Ron McClain and Willis McGahee making three touchdowns of their own.



"Yes, I think the players are trying." Head Coach Romeo Crennel stated, after the loss in Baltimore.

"But they're not making the best decisions on the field... when you're playing good teams, like we have been in the past few weeks, we need to make better decisions. I think this team shows potential, and if we can get one win under our belts, the rest of the season will be better off."

Lastly, Browns fans, I remember a little old team who went 0-3 last year and later went on to win the Super Bowl. So, when the Browns play the Cincinnati Bengals next week, cheer your hardest because anything's possible in a little thing we call football!

The Browns need to get their offense going and make better decisions. With that said, they may be able to turn their season around and make it successful

"Off the Wall"

Each week, sports editor Connor Sattely picks a widely accepted NFL view and disputes it in his editorial column, "Off the Wall." Think he's wrong? Let him know and your rebuttal might make next week's edition.



Arizona Cardinal quarterbacks Matt Leinart (left) and Kurt Warner.

The rise of the two-QB system: Part II

By Connor Sattely
sports editor
cis5060@psu.edu

I really thought that my articles about Barack Obama, Jim Gaffigan, or the housing situation at Behrend would give me some great reader feedback.

To my surprise, the article which has given me the most feedback was my "Off the Wall" column last week, where I explained why I think that the two-QB system will be the next revolution in the world of professional football.

What's a shame is that nobody had the guts to e-mail a response. Behrend's sports fans, while particularly articulate in a behind-closed-doors argument, apparently aren't willing to put it on the line.

This isn't a lapse in creativity. I feel that my column last week didn't particularly clarify why I think that the 2-QB system will make its way to the NFL. In addition, there are several key factors that must occur before the system can find success.

The first is the requirements for both quarterbacks must be pretty high. Both must be expected to be able to make plays with their legs as well as with their arms.

For some quarterbacks, their mobility is near zero; even when they find themselves flushed out of the pocket, they have trouble eluding blitzers. For others, they have high mobility but can't support a team on his arm when his running is stopped (See Tennessee, Vince Young and Co.).

It's asking a lot; don't get me wrong. The system would only be available with two quarterbacks that can do both the ground and air components of the perfect playcaller. I like to look at Dennis Dixon or last week's example, Tim Tebow. Partnered with another quarterback of equal or greater skill, those two could easily excel in a two-QB system.

The second requirement for success is the preparedness of the team. For most situations where two quarterbacks are used in the NFL, it's simply out of necessity. Don't know which quarterback is best? Hell, use them both until one gets hurt or gets better.

If a team spent six days preparing for a specific defense with the game plan of having two quarterbacks, they could come up with a respectable amount of plays where they could exploit the weakness of the defense in front

of them. Weak corners could be a catalyst of a pass-happy day until the star receiver is double-teamed, then quarterbacks can hit the ground running.

The third requirement is a good running game and backfield. I don't really see the benefit of two QB and two RB situations, but having a threat with a running-back would be especially helpful in presenting an additional threat (or, at least, an extra option to flex out an opposing defense).

There are two problems which my readers (in private, of course) let me know about.

One is the cost. With the average cost of an NFL quarterback skyrocketing (See Matt Ryan), teams wouldn't be able to afford two stars.

I disagree. Quarterbacks like Tebow or Dixon will not go first round because they are not able to carry a team on their backs. Players like Ryan will grab huge contracts in the first round because they can succeed in the NFL alone. I don't think that Tebow will do as good as, say, Georgia's Matt Stafford in the draft or as a leader in the league alone. Quarterbacks who present an option as a part of an offense rather than its workhorse will expect less pay.

The other problem people let me know about is the fragility of the players. Quarterbacks get hurt. Putting them in as a faux-runningback would present them to too much of a chance for injury.

If you run the system right, the whole point of having two quarterbacks is to confuse the defense. At the point where they've realized the quarterback is running, or rather doing something they are not expecting, it should already be too late. I'm not opposed to quarterbacks sliding down to avoid bone-crushing hits. Get that first down and hit the ground.

The system requires quality players, a quality program, and the right approach. Will it happen? I think so. Don't you? Let me know.

In writing,
Submissions should be mailed to cis5060@psu.edu and should contain no less than 250 words. All submissions will be considered for publication.

Beat The Experts

NFL

	Connor	Matt	Rachel	Ryan	Chris
Atlanta @ Carolina	Atlanta	Atlanta	Carolina	Carolina	Atlanta
Cleveland @ Cinci.	Cleveland	Cinci.	Cleveland	Cinci.	Cleve.
Houston @ Jacksonville	Jacksonville	Jacksonville	Jacksonville	Houston	Houston
Philly @ Chicago	Philly	Philly	Philly	Philly	Philly
S.F. @ New Orleans	New Orleans	New Orleans	New Orleans	S.F.	N.O.
Arizona @ N.Y. Jets	N.Y.J.	Arizona	N.Y.J.	N.Y.J.	N.Y.J.
G.B. @ Tampa Bay	G.B.	G.B.	G.B.	T.B.	G.B.
Min @ Tennessee	Minn.	Minn.	Minn.	Minn.	Minn.
San Diego @ Oakland	S.D.	S.D.	S.D.	Oakland	S.D.
Buffalo @ St. Louis	Buffalo	Buffalo	Buffalo	Buffalo	Buffalo
Washington @ Dallas	Dallas	Dallas	Dallas	Dallas	Dallas
Tie-Breaker Baltimore @ Pittsburgh	+3 Pitt.	+2 Pitt.	+3 Balt.	+4 Pitt.	+6 Balt.
Last week: * denotes winner	*9-3	6-6	8-4	5-7	5-7

NCAA

Illinois @ PSU	PSU	PSU	PSU	PSU	PSU
Alabama @ Georgia	*Bama	Georgia	Georgia	Georgia	*Bama
Stanford @ Washington	Wash.	Wash.	Wash.	Wash.	Stanford
S. Florida @ N.C. State	S. Florida	S. Florida	S. Florida	S. Florida	N.C. St.
T.C.U. @ Oklahoma	Oklahoma	Oklahoma	Oklahoma	Oklahoma	O.K.
Last week: * denotes winner	*5-0	2-3	3-2	3-2	3-2

Season Totals: Connor 39-12, Matt 28-23, Rachel 35-16, Ryan 29-21, Chris 27-24

Following an abysmal Week III of the NFL picks, Connor and Rachel rebound with respectable scores.

Currently, the only score that matters is:

Beacon - 4
Behrend - 0

Can you out-pick our sports fans?

Try to out-pick us; send a list of your weekend picks to cis5060@psu.edu.