



Dear Sports Fans: I am coming to a revelation that maybe - just maybe - sporting contests have too many wildcard factors to be able to accurately predict with a scientific formula.

Yes, I know, the concept is groundbreaking and shocking, but there it is.

I mean, 9-6 against the spread is pretty decent, but the number of games that the HERO (Hutchison Erroneous Ranking Order) System saved me from picking wrong (Atlanta, Arizona) was offset by the games that it missed that I would have picked right given my own reign (Denver, Green Bay). So how is this infallible system just as fallible as human whim? I must not be using enough square roots.

BT also pulled a 9-6 and DJC rebounded from his December Doldrums with a 10-5, pulling the YTD standings to 109-107 for both BT and me and 107-109 for DJC.

I must admit that I'm very much looking forward to a number of these games this weekend, and the Browns game isn't one of them. I don't even plan on watching that. It doesn't sound like fun. Going back in time to the dorm party freshman year with that girl that insisted she could convince her roommate to form a threesome? Fun. Watching the Browns get the prison treatment from the Horsies? Not fun.

All odds are from VegasInsider.com :

CLE at DEN -13

Me - *My Line: DEN by 13*. One of those rare occurrences where HERO and Vegas are in complete harmony. This game would be SOOOOO much more interesting had the Browns won last week and still believably in the playoff picture, but they picked the most important game of the season to have their worst overall game of the year. The Defense couldn't stop a rookie 4th round QB in his first game, Brandon Weeden and Trent Richardson looked like crap, Pat Shurmur was massively exposed and outcoached (which actually was probably a good thing long-term, the Pro-Shurmur movement around town was disturbing)... all while Denver went into Baltimore and behaved just like a team that is focused and a real danger to win it All.

But 13 points? I know the whiny negative Cleveland fan in me wants to say something stupid like "*They'll probably lose by 40 points!*", but the Browns don't get blown out all that often, and the fact that they got blown out last week makes me think it won't happen again. Then again... with the offense sputtering down the stretch... *Pick:*

Broncos

DJC - *Pick: Browns*

BT - The Browns are getting 13? Still not enough. *Pick: Broncos*

ATL at DET +3.5

Me - *My Line: ATL by 6*. There seems to be this common concept out there that Detroit doesn't suck, that Matthew Stafford doesn't suck, and I just don't know where it comes from. I guess not a lot of people watch Lions games. Atlanta also has a public image, but theirs breeds skepticism, which is why this line is probably as pro-Detroit as a line could be between a 12-2 team ranked #4 and a 4-10 team ranked #26. *Pick: Falcons*

DJC - *Pick: Lions*

BT - Detroit sucks something awful. Executive Whiff of the week! *Pick: Lions*

TEN at GB -12.5

Me - *My Line: GB by 12.5.* OK, some weirdness going on here with a second exact line match. That means I'm free to use my human intellect (or lack thereof) on this one, and my intellect says that GB has a lot to play for and the Titans just suck. Sure, they beat the Jets last week, but who can't beat the Jets?
Pick: Packers

DJC - *Pick: Packers*

BT - Might be a snow out. Take Tennessee running to cover. *Pick: Titans*

OAK at CAR -8.5

Me - *My Line: CAR by 7.5.* Another fat line at home to cover, and HERO is telling me not to go with it this time. But Carolina is playing so well right now. Sure, their season ranking is #22, but I think they'd be dangerous to any team right now with the way they've played the last two weeks. And Oakland? They ain't got nuttin'. So I'm going to (probably foolishly) overrule the System here and take the Cams.
Pick: Panthers

DJC - *Pick: Panthers*

BT - *Pick: Panthers*

BUF at MIA -4.5

Me - *My Line: MIA by 6.* My Brother-In-Law is a Dolphins fan, to the point where he's texting me about their games as they happen as if I were watching, which is usually during the time when I'm either watching the Browns or trying to avoid watching crappy football, which by definition excludes Miami. Anyway, he spent this week speculating about the Fins' playoff chances much like many Cleveland fans did last week. Sadly (for him), this will end up much like the Browns playoff dreams did, since beating Buffalo this week should be no big whoop, but winning in New England next week? At least he won't have to worry about an offseason of new GM, new Head Coach, new Offensive System, new Defensive System, new QB = same shitty results.
Pick: Dolphins

DJC - *Pick: Dolphins*

BT - *Pick: Dolphins*

CIN at PIT -3.5

Me - *My Line: PIT by 2.* Let's be clear - Cincy is the better team. This isn't so much a compliment to the Bengals as it is a shot at the Steelers, who are getting old and rickety and have no running game and get by a lot on reputation. But that's the problem - that reputation is earned. The Steelers are the Steelers, and the Bengals are the Bungles are the Paper Kitties. At least until they win a game like this. And then actually do something in the playoffs. I have my doubts, but I know I'll be rooting hard for them to knock the Toothless Retards out of the playoff race, so Go Cincy!
Pick: Bengals

DJC - *Pick: Bengals*

BT - I hate Shitsburgh. *Pick: Bengals*

NE at JAX +14.5

Me - *My Line: NE by 15.5.* With their loss last week, the poor Patriots got knocked all the way down to #5 in the rankings. Which is still a few spots higher than the #32 Jaguars. I really hate taking all these double-digit favorites, picking against big points like that is an easy way to lose money. But the Jags... sigh... just give those poor fans their wish and send them the player equivalent of a nuclear bomb (Tim Tebow) and put them out of their misery.

Pick: Patriots

DJC - *Pick: Patriots*

BT - NE will score 45. *Pick: Patriots*

SD at NYJ -2.5

Me - *My Line: Pick 'Em.* NBC wisely used their flex powers to avoid this awful matchup, tossing it in the dumpster in favor of SF-SEA. I don't know how this Jets implosion is a surprise to anyone. You take a fragile-minded QB that isn't all that good and you bring in a backup QB that comes with huge fan and media speculation and you're asking for disaster. Combine that with a Coach that doesn't want said backup (Timmy Tebow) there, a poor O Line, and WR's so bad that they actually had to sign Braylon Edwards... there was no way this train wasn't going to wreck. It all starts when you clearly have an Owner/GM/Coach who were not only on different pages but different libraries. You got that goin' on, you ain't got a chance.

Pick: Chargers

DJC - *Pick: Chargers*

BT - Really? Do they have to play this game? Gimme the Jets and McElroy. *Pick: Jets*

IND at KC +7

Me - *My Line: IND by 6.5.* I gave the Chiefs the QB deduction because, well, they're still starting Brady Quinn. And with it clear that Pioli and Crennel are both Dead Men Walking (which was easier to figure out than whether or not it will be darker at midnight than noon), this team is ready to pack it in. Still, the Colts aren't nearly as good as their record, and the Chiefs might be able to keep this close. The System says go with KC, and I don't feel strongly enough to counter it.
Pick: Chiefs

DJC - *Pick: Colts*

BT - *Pick: Colts*

NO at DAL -3

Me - *My Line: DAL by 3.5.* This has a chance to be a very entertaining affair, what with Dallas in the midst of a playoff run and New Orleans starting to look like a team that could've been dangerous had they gotten in (this week, at least). I guess this one comes down to the fact the Mr. Brees can struggle if you put pressure on him, and Dallas can do that OK.
Pick: Cowboys

DJC - *Pick: Saints*

BT - *Pick: Cowboys*

WAS at PHI +6.5

Me - *My Line: WAS by 7.5.* HERO's line would've been on the other side of 6.5 had I not

applied the QB deduction to Philly, which I am fine with doing after watching Nick Foles against the Bengals last week. I guess he's not HORRIBLE, but he's just another one of those meh guys that needs players around him to be successful and he doesn't have many right now. The return of Shady McCoy might help, but Washington's on a real roll right now, and this is a game they have to have. And RG3's back. *Pick: Redskins*

DJC - *Pick: Redskins*

BT - Washington by 10. *Pick: Redskins*

STL at TB -3

Me - *My Line: TB by 4.5.* Neither of these teams is "bad", per se, but neither is "good" either. Tampa looked shiny and pretty in the playoff picture a couple weeks ago, but then they lost at home to an ass-pimple Eagles team and got blown the F out by the Saints. The Rams beat the Niners in quadruple OT only to get trashed at home by the Vikes. The NFL teams with these middle-feeders, teams like these two (and the Browns and the Dolphins) that are ah-ight most of the time but just don't know how to make that step into true playoff contender. This one's really a coin toss. *Pick: Buccaneers*

DJC - *Pick: Buccaneers*

BT - *Pick: Buccaneers*

NYG at BAL +2.5

Me - *My Line: NYG by 0.5.* This is really a pick 'em game. The Giants are the better team. On any given night, there's not a team in the NFL they can't pound into the turf. Unfortunately, they are also schizo. They lose a lot of games they have no business losing, at least during the regular season. Baltimore, on the other hand, you know what you're going to get from them at

this point of the year, and that's a pretty mediocre team that has no business winning a Division. So either the Giants will blow the Ravens clean into the Chesapeake Bay or the Ravens will squeak out a close one. Both teams need it bad... *Pick: Ravens*

DJC - *Pick: Giants*

BT - Two Dr. Hekyll and Mr. Hyde teams. And the coin flip goes to NYG. *Pick: Giants*

MIN at HOU -7.5

Me - *My Line: HOU by 8.* Houston can be scored on, but sadly for Minny, the Texans' kryptonite is their Pass D, not the Run D. Minnesota can only run the ball. Christian Ponder only throws about 6 passes a game. So it's not a good matchup for the Petersons, and not a good result for their playoff aspirations. *Pick: Texans*

DJC - *Pick: Texans*

BT - Minnesota and the newly wed Christian Ponder. Super hot wife. Better than Erin Andrews I think. *Pick: Vikings*

CHI at ARI +5.5

Me - *My Line: CHI by 7.* The Bears have this bad habit of late season death spirals, but they got the perfect tonic this week in a team they can beat without having to score an Offensive TD. Yes, the Cards pulled their heads out of their asses last week to beat the Lions, but that was Matthew Stafford who makes a ton of bad throws while Chicago has Jay Cutler, who... uh... well, at least they can run the ball some if Jane is having a bad day. *Pick: Bears*

DJC - *Pick: Bears*

BT - *Pick: Bears*

SF at SEA +1

Me - *My Line: Pick 'Em.* Really looking forward to this game, which means it will probably be a blowout. Not really sure how the 9-5 Seahawks that have that D and just laid down back-to-back 50 point explosions are dogs at a place they haven't lost all year (Home), but there it is. Not only do we have 2 of the best D's in the NFL in this game, but 2 of the best RB's and 2 of the most dynamic young QB's.

These teams represent how GM's will build long-term winning franchises in the future (short of getting the #1 overall pick or lucking into a Tom Brady in the 6th round). In the past, coaches would have stuck with the veteran "decent passer" QB's Matt Flynn or Alex Smith and tried to "old-fashion" their way to a Lombardi - the way Houston and Atlanta and Baltimore will attempt to do - but these college coaches thought outside the NFL box and realized that if you don't have a Brady or a Manning or a Brees then you better have a QB who is not only a "decent passer" but multi-dimensional. He better be able to be a real threat in the running game. He better be able to "create" when the play breaks down.

Personally, I don't think the Houstons or the Atlantas or the Baltimores of the world have a rat's chance in space of winning a Super Bowl. But the Newtons and the Kaepernick's and the Wilsons and the RG3's? With enough support around them, yes.

Get used to this trend, kids. *Pick: Seahawks*

DJC - *Pick: 49ers*

BT - Game of the week. Gimme the home dog errr Hawk. *Pick: Seahawks*