

Browns vs. Bills - Week 5

Written by {ga=tommoore}

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The Cleveland Browns make their annual primetime appearance tonight, taking on the Buffalo Bills in the NFL Network game of the week.

The Browns are looking for their third consecutive win, which would help maintain their grasp of the AFC North division lead.

One of these teams will walk off the field tonight at 3-2 and in the heart of the playoff race in the AFC.

Let's try to find out who that will be.

The Opposition

Buffalo's record: 2-2

Offensive rank: 16th overall/28th passing/2nd rushing

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Defensive rank: 27th overall/22nd passing/27th rushing

All-time record: Cleveland leads, 11-7

Last meeting: Buffalo won, 24-14, in Week 3 of last season

[Injury report](#)

The line: Browns -4

What to Watch For

Browns quarterback Brian Hoyer has been on quite a role since taking over the starter's job.

In his first game, he became just the second Cleveland quarterback since 1999 to win his first start with the Browns.

In his second game, he became the first Browns quarterback to win his first two starts since Mark Rypien in 1994.

Lead the Browns to a win tonight against Buffalo, and Hoyer becomes the first Cleveland quarterback to win his first three starts since Hall of Famer Otto Graham pulled off that trick in 1946.

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No pressure or anything, though.

“It’s a quick turnaround and (Buffalo’s) defense is not very simple,” [Hoyer told the team’s website](#). “They have some complications to them, so you have to figure it out quickly. Something is going to get thrown at you that you haven’t seen before; that’s just the way it is in this league. You try to prepare as much as you can, and the more prepared you are the more comfortable you are out there.”

The Bills are weak on defense, giving up 277 yards through the air and 122 yards on the ground, although they did intercept Baltimore’s Joe Flacco five times and held the Ravens to just 24 rushing yards in their win on Sunday.

But the Bills gave up an average of 155 rushing yards during their first three games, so if the Browns are ever going to show that they have a real running game, tonight would seem like a good opportunity for that.

On defense, the Bills may present another tough test for the Browns suddenly solid rush defense.

Buffalo is currently second in the NFL in rushing at 152 yards per game. C.J. Spiller has rushed for 230 yards (but his per carry average is just 3.5 yards so he must not be very good), while Fred Jackson has 256 yards and a more impressive 5.3 yards per carry average.

Both backs were injured on Sunday and while they are optimistic about playing against the Browns, the short turnaround time could prevent that, or at least limit their effectiveness, which would be a break for the Browns.

Cleveland is dealing with its own injury issues on defense, as Billy Winn is out, while Jabaal Sheard, John Hughes and Quentin Groves are both questionable.

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If the Browns can keep the Buffalo running game in check, it may be open season on Bills rookie quarterback E.J. Manuel.

“If you want to put a \$100 million Ferrari out there, it’s going to get hit,” [Browns defensive coordinator Ray Horton sai](#)

d. “Is that what you want to do? If you do, that’s okay. We’ll hit that Ferrari, try to dent it up and kick the tires a little bit. That’s been my mantra. If they’re going to put the quarterback out there to get hit, we’re going to hit him.”

Sounds like a solid plan to us.

The Prediction

For the Browns, a win tonight would put them over .500 for the first time since the third week of the 2011 season.

Buffalo seems like the perfect opponent tonight, as they are injured, are starting a rookie quarterback and are on the road in a short week – although the road team has won the Thursday night game the past two weeks.

And the Bills are coming off a week where they did something the Browns have never done – beat the Baltimore Ravens with Joe Flacco at quarterback.

But Cleveland fans need a pick-me-up after Wednesday night’s disappointing lose by the Indians in the Wild Card game.

Take the Browns to win and cover.

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And, with 10 days off until their next game, get ready for Hoyer Mania to take over the town.