

Browns vs. Steelers - Week 17

Written by {ga=tommoore}

Wednesday, December 25 2013 12:00 AM - Last Updated Sunday, December 29 2013 10:38 AM



The Cleveland Browns take their Pro Bowl-laden roster to Pittsburgh today to close out the 2013 NFL season against the Steelers.

Pittsburgh is holding out slim hopes of making the playoffs after an 0-4 start to the season, while the Browns are battling for yet another high draft pick after starting out the year at 3-2.

Today could be the final game in a Browns uniform for several players, most notably Alex Mack, T.J. Ward, D'Qwell Jackson, Greg Little and Brandon Weeden.

With any luck, the game will also mark the final starting appearance by quarterback Jason Campbell, who will be looking to join the [elite group of Cleveland quarterbacks who faced the Steelers in their final game as Browns quarterback](#).

The Opposition

Pittsburgh's record: 7-8

Offensive rank: 16th overall/11th passing/29th rushing

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Defensive rank: 14th overall/8th passing/22nd rushing

All-time record: Pittsburgh leads, 66-57

Last meeting: Pittsburgh won, 27-11, in Week 12

[Injury report](#)

The line: Browns +7

What to Watch For

The numbers are staggeringly depressing when you look at what the Browns have done against the Steelers since 1999:

- ·The Browns have not won in Pittsburgh since 2003
- ·The Browns have lost 24 of the past 28 games against Pittsburgh
- ·The Browns are 1-16 against Pittsburgh quarterback Ben Roethlisberger

The Browns also enter this game having lost nine of their last 10 games as the offense has failed to do anything under Campbell and the defense has been in a slow dive over the second half of the season.

While Cleveland's rush defense is still tied for third in the league in giving up just 3.8 yards per carry, they have fallen to 16th in yards per game, giving up an average of 110. That has been worse during the current six -game losing streak, as the Browns are giving up 129.5 yards per game, highlighted by giving up 179 yards to Chicago and 208 yards to the Jets.

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It would seem as if the Browns are catching a break this week as the Steelers are averaging just 3.5 yards per carry and 84.2 rushing yards per game, both 29th in the league. But Pittsburgh running back Le'Veon Bell has averaged more than four yards per carry in three of his past four games, to go along with three rushing touchdowns, so there things may be tougher than they first appear.

Even if the Browns can keep the Steeler running game in check they will have to contend with Roethlisberger, who has thrown 14 touchdowns against just two interceptions in his past six games.

Stopping Roethlisberger also means stopping Antonio Brown, who enters the game with 101 receptions, 1,412 yards and eight touchdowns. That task gets considerably more difficult if Haden, who is questionable with a hip pointer, misses the game.

On offense, it's the same game plan as always: throw the ball to Gordon and hope for the best.

The Browns may – emphasis on may – be able to get something going on the ground against a Steeler defense that is below-average against the run. Edwin Baker has scored a rushing touchdown in consecutive games for the Browns and surpassed the 100-yard mark (although it took him two games to do it), which for this current Browns team is worthy of praise.

“He’s given us a lift in the run game. He runs hard, he’s decisive. He’s been able to make some tough yards and run through some contact,” [Browns coach Rob Chudzinski said](#) . “So, he has been productive for us. I think it’s shown that our running game has improved
.”

The Prediction

It’s been a long year for the Browns and their fans. And while this is the last Sunday that we will see the guys in the Orange helmets until next fall, it will probably be a good thing when 4 o’clock

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rolls around this afternoon.

This team still has a lot of work to do and the sooner they get started on next season the better. It's depressing to think about, but it's true.

"We still have one more game, and I don't want to end my season like this," [Haden said](#) . "I don't think anybody in this locker room would. The team that we have and the players that we have, I would never have expected it to be like this."
"

Haden's been around Cleveland long enough to know better.

Take the Steelers, lay the points and let's get ready for 2014.

(Photo courtesy of PittsburghSteelers.com)