

Preview: Browns at Steelers

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}
Saturday, September 08 2007 7:00 PM -

Jesse Lamovsky does all kinds of things for us here at TCF. He helps with the brackets. He's our resident historian, who has penned several great columns about the history of Cleveland sports. He's "HermFontenot" in our message forums. And he's agreed to do previews for all the Browns games for us this season, great news for all TCF loyalists. The opener is just hours away, and Jesse breaks it down for us today. HERE WE GO BROWNIES, HERE WE GO!



Time: Sunday, September 9, 1:00 PM

Location: Cleveland Browns Stadium, Cleveland, Ohio

Network, Announcers: CBS- Kevin Harlan, who will be strident, and Rich "Cannon", who will flog Charlie Frye for staring down his receivers.

Line: Steelers by 5

Team W/L Records: It's Opening Sunday, and everyone is zero and zero.

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Coaches: 35-year old Mike Tomlin is coaching his first game with the Steelers; 61-year old Romeo Crennel enters his third year in Cleveland with a 10-22 record, including a 1-11 mark within the AFC North.

Last Week for the Browns: Defeated Chicago 19-9 at Soldier Field to finish the preseason 3-1.

Last Week for the Steelers: Won 19-3 at Carolina to finish the preseason with a 4-1 record.

All-Time Series: Tied, 55-55 (a double-double-nickel). It's the first time the series has been deadlocked since it was 0-0 going into the first-ever meeting between the two, in Week Four of the 1950 season. Pittsburgh has won seven in a row over the Browns dating back to 2003 and will attempt to take the lead in the series for the first time.

Last Meeting: December 7, 2006- Pittsburgh ruined Derek Anderson's first start as Browns quarterback with a 27-7 thrashing at Heinz Field, a beat-down "highlighted" by Willie Parker's team-record 223 rushing yards. Following the game, D'Qwell Jackson was scraped off the front of Alan Faneca's uniform with a spatula.

Out or Questionable for Pittsburgh: LB Marquis Cooper is out (hamstring)

Out or Questionable for Cleveland: LB Willie McGinest is out (age); CB Gary

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Baxter (knees) and P Dave Zastudil (back) are questionable

What to watch for the Steelers: the Pittsburgh offense- Ben Roethlisberger is fully healthy for the first time since 2005. Santonio Holmes averaged 16.8 yards per catch as a rookie, tenth-highest in the league in '06, scored only twice, but made maybe Pittsburgh's top play of the season- the 67-yard bomb from Big Ben in overtime to beat Cincinnati on the road and send the Steelers into the off-season at even .500. Willie Parker (1,494 rushing yards, sixteen total touchdowns) is a proven every-down back, Heath Miller is the best yinzer tight end since Eric Green, and Hines Ward is, well, Hines Ward. Pittsburgh was fifth in the NFL in total offense last season with turnovers being the bugaboo. If offensive coordinator Bruce Arians is smarter than his tenure in Cleveland made him look (and he most likely is), this group will carry the Steelers, who look a little thin at linebacker and were lousy against the pass in 2006 (as usual).

What to watch for the Browns: Charlie Frye- Unlike last year, Ben Roethlisberger won't do Frye the favor of matching him mistake-for-mistake. A festival of fumbles, wobbly, errant throws, and backward scrambles will spell disaster for the Browns. Not much more to say here. I lack confidence in Charlie Frye. That is all.

Good Past Win over the Steelers: Week One, 1989- Cleveland forced eight Steelers turnovers, scored three defensive touchdowns, and routed Pittsburgh 51-0, in Bud Carson's first game as head coach.

Bad Past Loss to the Steelers: Week Four, 1954- after losing the first eight games of the series, Pittsburgh broke out in a huge way, scoring 27 second-quarter points and burying the championship-bound Browns 55-27. Steelers quarterback and future star GM Jim Finks fired four touchdown passes,

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three to Ray Matthews, who also ran for a score.

(There are almost certainly more catastrophic losses to be found in the series, like 43-0 in 1999 or 41-0 in 2005, but I like the old stuff, and besides, there's another game left between these two teams anyway.)

Next Week for Both Teams: Pittsburgh hosts Buffalo; Cleveland hosts Cincinnati

Trivia: Mike Tomlin is the first Steelers coach to begin his career against the Browns. The only Cleveland coach to begin his career against the Steelers is Bud Carson in 1989. Tomlin is also the first Steelers coach who is *not* a former Browns linebacker since Bill Austin, who piloted the yinzers to an 11-28-3 record from 1966 through '68.