

Preview: Texans at Browns

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}

Saturday, November 24 2007 7:00 PM -

Texans at Browns, week 12, Cleveland Browns Stadium. A game expected to be a high scoring shootout, and dripping with playoff implications. Didn't think I'd be typing that the Sunday after Thanksgiving. I can't wait for this one tomorrow, and Browns Stadium should be absolutely rocking tomorrow. If you're coming down for the game, stop by our tailgate in the Muni Lot ... details are in our Browns forum. Jesse previews the big game for us.



Time: Sunday, November 25, 1:00 PM

Location: Cleveland Browns Stadium

Network, Announcers: CBS- Gus Johnson and Steve Tasker. If Sunday goes the way most Browns games have gone in '07, Gus will drop a load in his pants and have seizures like a kid watching a Japanese cartoon just from sheer excitement.

Line: Browns by three

Team W/L Records: Cleveland is 6-4; Houston is 5-5

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Coaches: Romeo Crennel is 16-26 in his third season with the Browns. Gary Kubiak is 11-15 in his second season with the Texans

Last Week for the Browns: Completed a season sweep of the Ravens with a harrowing, exhilarating, Billick-punking 33-30 overtime victory.

Last Week for the Texans: Moved to 5-5, their best-ever record at the ten-game mark, with a convincing 23-10 victory over the Saints.

All-Time Series: Tied 2-2

Last Meeting: The final game of the 2006 season: the Texans locked down the second-best record (6-10) in their franchise's short history with a 14-6 triumph over Charlie Frye and the Browns. Now if you'll excuse me, I'm going to go ahead and forget this game ever took place. Who's Charlie Frye again?

Out or Questionable for Houston: RB Ahman Green (knee) is out

Out or Questionable for Cleveland: CB Eric Wright (knee) is out; DT Ethan Kelly (knee) is doubtful; WR Tim Carter (finger), T Kevin Shaffer (knee), and DE Shaun Smith (knee) are questionable

What to watch for the Texans: Andre Johnson has only played three games due to a sprained knee, but in those games he's been his usual elite-unit self, with twenty catches for 382 yards- a robust 127 yards-per-game average- and four touchdowns. Houston is 3-0 with the ex-Miami Hurricane in the lineup and 2-5 without him. That may not be entirely a coincidence.

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Despite Johnson's maladies as well as those of the banged-up and inconsistent Matt Shaub (as many touchdown passes as backup Sage Rosenfels in 155 more attempts), Houston's passing game as a whole ranks seventh in total yardage and fourth in yards-per-attempt, and the main components are getting healthy. With an ineffectual running attack and a match-up with a pass defense that made Devard Darling look like Jerry Rice last week, look for Houston to go to the air with an eagerness reminiscent of the Run 'n Shoot [Gamblers](#) of the USFL.

What to watch for the Browns: Playing on the road last week against one of the league's stoutest rush defenses, the Browns still ran for 117 yards, the most given up by Baltimore this season. This week Cleveland is at home and faces off with a Houston rush defense that ranks twenty-second in the league in yards allowed and is giving up a generous 4.4 yards per carry. The opportunity could be there for a big game on the ground, and possibly, a chance to see one of this team's more intriguing young players.

Cleveland's last three opponents- the Seahawks, Steelers, and Ravens- were thirteenth, third, and second in the league against the run, respectively, and Seattle as well as Pittsburgh are both outstanding pass-rushing teams. Prior to that stretch were the pair of victories over the Dolphins and Rams, who rank thirty-second and nineteenth against the run and are both near the bottom in sacks. Jerome Harrison was impressive in those games, running for 89 yards on thirteen carries- 6.8 yards per-carry- but he hasn't had an attempt since, because he apparently picks up blitzes about as well as Estelle Getty.

We could get a good look at the diminutive ex-Washington State Cougar against the Texans, a team that, like the Dolphins and Rams, is soft against the run and has a substandard pass rush. Or maybe it's just wishful thinking to speculate that Coach Crennel might actually find utility in a guy who rips off seven yards a pop. Can we get us some Ghost, please?

Good Past Win over the Texans: Week Seven, 2002- Cleveland 34, Houston 17: Cleveland's normally unobtrusive pass rush got to David Carr nine times,

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Quincy Morgan had 81 receiving yards along with a touchdown, and Andre Davis returned a kickoff for a score as the Browns topped the expansion Texans at CBS and moved to 3-4 on the season. Notable (or not): the Browns wore their alternate orange jerseys for the very first time in this game.

Bad Past Loss to the Texans: Week Eight, 2005- Houston 19, Cleveland 16: Houston limped into this one winless and losers of six straight games by an average score of 30-12. But although out-gained 325-237 by the Browns, the Texans turned a pair of Cleveland fumbles into points and got a great game by Jerome Mathis, who opened the scoring with a 34-yard touchdown reception and set up the game-winning field goal with a 63-yard kickoff return after Phil Dawson's field goal tied the game with 4:29 left. The humbling loss dropped the Browns to 2-5 on the season.

Next Week for Both Teams: Cleveland goes to Arizona; Houston goes to Tennessee

Trivia: The present-day Texans are not the first Houston-based professional football team by that name. The World Football League briefly had an Astrodome-based franchise known as the [Houston Texans](#) ; midway through the WFL's inaugural season of 1974, the green-and-gold clad Texans picked up stakes, moved to Shreveport, and re-named themselves the Steamer, a name that in those days was supposed to evoke the boats that once plied the Red River, not an unspeakable act of debauchery. Go Browns!