

Preview: Cowboys at Browns

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}
Friday, September 05 2008 7:00 PM -

It's finally here Browns fans. Tomorrow, at 4:15 PM, the Dallas Cowboys and Cleveland Browns kick off their 2008 campaigns with a nationally televised affair at Cleveland Browns Stadium. There's a chill in the air. The Muni Lot will be rockin' at 7 AM. The Brownies are back. And life is good. Jesse's back to do another season of weekly Browns game previews for us. And in his first one for 2008, looks ahead to tomorrow's mega-showdown between the Browns and the 'Boys.



Time: Sunday, September 7, 4:15 PM

Location: Cleveland Browns Stadium

Network, Announcers: Fox- Joe Buck and Troy "Kermit the Frog" Aikman

Line: Cowboys by six

Team W/L Records: Both teams are zero and zero. Dallas went 13-3 in 2007; Cleveland went 10-6.

Coaches: Romeo Crennel is 20-28 in his third season with the Browns; Wade Phillips is 13-3 in one season with the Cowboys, 61-42 overall.

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Last Week for the Browns: Finished up their first winless preseason since 1972 with a 16-10 loss to the Bears at Cleveland Browns Stadium.

Last Week for the Cowboys: Finished up a 2-2 preseason with a 16-10 victory over Minnesota at Texas Stadium.

All-Time Series: Browns lead 15-10

Last Meeting: Week Two, 2004- The Browns have lost a lot of games since 1999, but this one pegged the meter on the ugly scale, as Jeff Garcia produced a 0.0 quarterback rating, Kellen Winslow snapped his leg on an on-side kick, and the Cowboys, despite four turnovers and eleven penalties, prevailed 19-12, in what can only be described as a hideous display of football, on both sides.

Out or Questionable for Dallas: Wide receivers Miles Austin (knee), and WR Sam Hurd (ankle), guard Kyle Kosier (foot) and linebacker Anthony Spencer (knee) are out; Wide receiver Isaiah Stanback (shoulder) and cornerback Terence Newman (groin) are questionable.

Out or Questionable for Cleveland: Linebacker Kris Griffin (elbow) and tight end Martin Rucker (knee) are out; guard Rex Hadnot (knee), safety Brodney Pool (concussion), guard Ryan Tucker (hip), linebacker Beau Bell (knee), wide receiver Joshua Cribbs (ankle), and running back Jamal Lewis (hamstring) are questionable.

What to watch for the Cowboys: Dallas's pass offense vs. Cleveland's pass defense- It's quite simple: the Cowboys, who finished fourth in the NFL in passing yards and second in passing touchdowns in 2007, will be more than eager to take advantage of Cleveland's shallow, callow secondary. The Browns were 24

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in the league against the pass in 2007, and with Daven Holly injured and Leigh

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Bodden in Detroit, they figure to be highly vulnerable in that area again in 2008. The Cowboys are a little beat up in the bottom area of their receiving depth chart, but the main components- Tony Romo, Terrell Owens, Patrick Crayton, and Jason Witten- are healthy and ready to go, and that spells trouble for the kiddie corps on the back line of Cleveland's defense. Look for Romo's ever-present smirk to widen after the first couple of times he scans what should be some wide-open passing lanes.

What to watch for the Browns: Cleveland's offense vs. Dallas's defense- the biggest problem for the Browns this training camp and preseason was getting their playmakers on the field. Both Derek Anderson and Braylon Edwards missed the bulk of the preseason with injuries, setting back progress and chemistry between quarterback and receiver. Without much time together as a unit, Cleveland's offense will be called upon to keep pace with Dallas's powerful attack, against a Cowboys defensive unit that finished a respectable ninth in the NFL in yards allowed in 2007 and racked up 46 sacks. The key battle: Joe Thomas and DeMarcus Ware. If JT keeps DA upright, there will be an opportunity to exploit an overrated Cowboys secondary that will be a little thin without Terence Newman.

Good Past Win over the Cowboys: September 24, 1979: Playing in front of 80,123 fans at the Stadium and a Monday Night television audience, the Browns exploded for three touchdowns in the first seven minutes, including a Brian Sipe-to-Ozzie Newsome bomb and a Thom Darden pick-six off the arm of Roger Staubach, and moved to 4-0 with a 26-7 rout of the Cowboys, the two-time defending NFC Champions.

Bad Past Loss to the Cowboys: December 12, 1970: the Browns dropped to 6-7 and were all but eliminated from the AFC playoff chase

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in an ugly, mud-splattered, 6-2 loss to the Cowboys at the Stadium. Cleveland's only score came in the first quarter when Bob Hayes was trapped in the end zone for a safety. Dallas's points came off two second-half field goals by Mike Clark. Cleveland out-gained the Cowboys 299-174 but was undone by four turnovers and 64 yards in penalties. The loss not only killed Cleveland's playoff chances, but also clinched the franchise's first non-winning season since 1956.

Next Week for Both Teams: Dallas hosts Philadelphia on Monday Night; the Browns host Pittsburgh on Sunday Night.

Trivia: For three straight seasons from 1967-69, the Browns and Cowboys met in the championship game of the NFL's old Eastern Conference. Dallas won the first meeting 52-14 at the Cotton Bowl; the Browns defeated the Cowboys the next two years, 31-20 at Cleveland in 1968, and 38-14 at Dallas in '69.