

Preview: Steelers at Browns

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}
Friday, September 12 2008 7:00 PM -

The all-time series of professional football's greatest rivalry is tied at 55 wins apiece, but the Appalachian's have utterly and thoroughly dominated this series as of late, winning five straight and fifteen of the last sixteen. Downtown Cleveland will be buzzing tomorrow night, with a 8:15 start and a nationally televised game. And the Browns need this one. Jesse previews tomorrow nights Browns/Steelers game.



Time: Sunday, September 14, 8:15 PM

Location: Cleveland Browns Stadium

Network, Announcers: NBC- Al Michaels and John Madden

Line: Steelers by six-and-a-half

Team W/L Records: Pittsburgh is 1-0; Cleveland is 0-1

Coaches: Romeo Crennel is 20-29 in his fourth season with the Browns; Mike Tomlin is 11-6 in his second season with the Steelers

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Last Week for the Browns: Gave up nearly 500 yards of offense in a 28-10 loss to the Cowboys that was much more lopsided than the score would indicate.

Last Week for the Steelers: Ran over the Texans with 183 rushing yards in a 38-17 victory that was much more lopsided than the score would indicate.

All-Time Series: Regular-season series is tied 55-55

Last Meeting: November 11, 2007- Shrugging off the memory of the 34-7 Week One wipeout in Cleveland, the Browns, behind a spectacular performance by Joshua Cribbs (204 kick return yards, including a 100-yard return for a touchdown) jumped out to a 21-6 first-half lead. In the second half, the Steelers, as they always do against the Browns, came back. With Ben Roethlisberger throwing for 278 yards and two touchdowns and running thirty yards for another score, Pittsburgh hung on to win, 31-28- their ninth consecutive victory over the Browns.

Out or Questionable for Pittsburgh: Cornerback Deshea Townsend (foot) is out.

Out or Questionable for Cleveland: Safety Sean Jones (knee) and tight end Martin Rucker (knee) are out; wide receiver Donte Stallworth (quadriceps) and tackle Ryan Tucker (hip) are doubtful; wide receiver Joshua Cribbs (ankle), guard Rex Hadnot (knee), and safety Brodney Pool (concussion) are questionable.

What to watch for the Steelers: Ben Roethlisberger against the Cleveland secondary: You think Big Ben- who has never lost a game to the Browns- is a little excited about the prospect of going up against the rag-tag group manning the back line of Cleveland's defense? The Browns barely got a hand on Tony Romo last week, and while it might be safe to suppose they'll get more pressure on Roethlisberger because of Pittsburgh's iffy offensive line, it probably won't matter. Big Ben throws better on the move than any quarterback since John Elway, and he'll be throwing against a secondary without its best player, Sean Jones. And Cleveland has no pass-rusher the equivalent of Houston's Mario Williams. Even with a banged-up shoulder, expect Big Ben to test the throwing lanes with aplomb and relative impunity on Sunday night.

What to watch for the Browns: A sharper Cleveland offense against Pittsburgh's defense: Cleveland's defense wasn't expected to perform well against the prolific Cowboys attack, and sure enough, it didn't. But the real disappointment was the Browns offense, which could generate only 205 yards, more because of its own ineptitude than what Dallas's defense was doing. With a week of practice time under their belts and Josh Cribbs hopefully back to tip the scales of field position, expect Cleveland's offense to be a bit more prolific than it was last week, even with the receiver depth chart in tatters. Look at it this way- Braylon Edwards can't possibly play worse than he did against the Cowboys, and that alone should guarantee a better output out of the offense in general, even against Pittsburgh's formidable defense.

Here's another factor: the home crowd. With an 8:15 start, CBS will be buzzing at kickoff, literally and figuratively, but how long and how friendly that buzz remains depends on the kind of start the Browns get off to. No fan-base in the NFL is quicker to turn on its team than Browns fans, and if the Steelers jump out to an early lead, things could get ugly in a hurry. Undermanned and under the gun, the Browns will need the help of the home crowd to finally get over the hump against their nemesis from Western Pee-Ay. The team will need to do its part to make that happen, but so will the fans. Just speaking for myself- not as a directive, as I'm in no position to toss out orders, but as a bit off wishful thinking- I'd like to see the crowd stay positive, keep the Terrible Towel-wavers at bay, and not throw

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their team under the bus at the first opportunity, as they did last week, when they were booing the Browns off the field in the second quarter of a 14-7 game.

A lot of people spent a lot of time this past week worrying about LeBron James's rooting preferences, when we need to get our own house in order when it comes to getting behind the home team. Just saying...

Good Past Win over the Cowboys: [September 20, 1987](#) - Another Week Two meeting in Cleveland between the two rivals, and this one went decisively to the Browns. Cleveland out-gained Pittsburgh 304-185, forced six Steelers turnovers- including a 26-yard pick-six by Clay Matthews- and rolled to a 34-10 win, the third in what eventually became a seven-game winning streak by the Browns over their dentally-challenged rivals to the east.

Bad Past Loss to the Steelers: Gee, I don't know- how about any one of the nine freaking games in a row the Browns have lost to these inbred bastards?

Next Week for Both Teams: Pittsburgh goes to Philadelphia; Cleveland goes to Baltimore.

Trivia: The last time the Browns defeated the Steelers in Cleveland

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was way back on September 17, 2000, when Chris Palmer's team came from behind on two fourth-quarter field goals by Phil Dawson to edge the Steelers, 23-20. Since that game, the Browns have lost seven straight to Pittsburgh in the not-so-friendly confines of CBS.