

Preview: Browns at Ravens

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}
Saturday, September 20 2008 7:00 PM -

It's going to be hard to top last year's Browns/Ravens game out in Baltimore. The Browns blew a 13 point fourth quarter lead and thought they had lost before the officials overruled their original "no good" call and ruled Dawson's last-second, off-the-support-bar field-goal good, sending the game into OT, where the Browns won on the opening drive. We need this one today Browns fans. And Jesse previews the game for us.



Time: Sunday, September 21, 4:15 PM

Location: M&T Bank Stadium, Baltimore

Network, Announcers: CBS- Bill Macatee and Steve Beuerlein

Line: Ravens by two-and-a-half

Team W/L Records: Baltimore is 1-0; Cleveland is 0-2

Coaches: Romeo Crennel is 20-30 in his fourth season with the Browns; John Harbaugh is 1-0 in his first season with the Ravens

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Last Week for the Browns: Suffered their tenth consecutive loss to the Steelers, 10-6, in monsoon-like conditions at Cleveland Browns Stadium.

Last Week for the Ravens: Had their game at Houston postponed until November 10 due to the ravages of Hurricane Ike.

All-Time Series: Baltimore leads 11-7, although the Browns swept the series last season.

Last Meeting: November 18, 2007- The Dawson Bar game. The Browns blew a 13-point fourth-quarter lead, trailed 30-27, and thought they had lost before the officials overruled their original "no good" call and ruled Dawson's last-second, off-the-support-bar field-goal attempt good, tying the game and sending it into overtime. Cleveland took the opening kickoff in OT and promptly drove to the winning score, a 33-yard field goal that didn't bounce off anything but the net behind the goalposts.

Out or Questionable for Baltimore: quarterback Troy Smith (illness) and defensive tackle Kelly Gregg (neck) are out; cornerback Fabian Washington (neck) is doubtful; linebacker Nick Greisen (thigh) is questionable.

Out or Questionable for Cleveland: Safety Sean Jones (knee), tight end Martin Rucker (knee), and guard Eric Steinbach (shoulder) are out; linebacker Kris Griffin (calf) is doubtful; linebacker Willie McGinest (hamstring), wide receiver Donte Stallworth (quadriceps), and wide receiver Braylon Edwards (shoulder) are questionable.

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What to watch for the Ravens: How they run the football- Baltimore probably wants to lighten the burden on rookie quarterback Joe Flacco as much as humanly possible, and that means using Willis McGahee and Ray Rice to control the football by running it against a Browns rush defense that has been inconsistent so far this year. Cleveland was gashed on the ground to the tune of 167 yards at 5.4 per carry, but was considerably stouter in giving up just 93 rushing yards to the ground-happy Steelers last week. Baltimore's defense will likely hold down Cleveland's offense, which means the Ravens offense will need to control the clock and avoid turnovers in order to win. The way to do that is to run the ball successfully and keep young Flacco out of disadvantageous down-and-distance situations which could lead to rookie mistakes.

What to watch for the Browns: How they contain Baltimore's ground game- That's the flip-side to Baltimore's likely strategy. The Browns did a nice job against Pittsburgh's run game last week, and will have to repeat that success and put Joe Flacco in a position to screw things up. Basically that's been the strategy against Baltimore's offense for the last decade, regardless of the quarterback. The book calls for blitzing Flacco early and often; I'd like to see the Browns play zone, flood the passing lanes, and induce the rookie to throw into coverage. I'm not a big proponent of the blitz in most situations as it is, and it seems wise to minimize the number of one-on-one situations Baltimore has against Cleveland's young and beat-up secondary. Keep Flacco in the pocket, put seven and eight men in coverage, and go from there.

Good Past Win over the Ravens: I kind of dug the [Dawson Bar game](#) , how about you?

Bad Past Loss to the Ravens: [November 26, 2000](#) - Cleveland jumped out to a 7-0 lead on a four-yard touchdown run by Travis Prentice... and that was all she wrote for the Browns on this afternoon. Baltimore ripped off 44 unanswered points, out-gained the Browns 461-112, got 170 rushing yards from Jamal Lewis, 64 from Priest Holmes, and steamrolled to a 44-7 win. The Ravens were merciless in victory. When Chris Palmer complained about Baltimore pinning back

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its ears and going after rookie quarterback Spurgeon Wynn with the game long decided, Shannon Sharpe's response was succinct and cutting: "We do (the Browns) a favor. When we beat you bad, we let you know you need to go get some new players or a new coaching staff." Ouch.

Next Week for Both Teams: The Browns go to Cincinnati; Baltimore visits Pittsburgh on Monday Night.

Trivia: The Browns have never beaten the Ravens three straight times. Their longest winning streak against the illegitimate bastard franchise by the Chesapeake is two, accomplished twice (in 2001 and last season).