

Preview: Browns at Eagles

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}

Saturday, December 13 2008 7:00 PM -

At the outset of the season, tonight's Monday night game in Philly was one that I and many other Browns fans looked to as being a potentially huge late season game for the orange and brown. Things haven't quite played out that way. That said, the game is still crucial for Philly. Not all drama is lost for Browns fans though. This year's team improbably has a chance to be the first Browns team to ever win three Monday night games in one season. And there's always the no touchdowns in 14 quarters streak to keep an eye on.



Time: 8:30 pm, Sunday, December 15, 2008

Location: Lincoln Financial Field, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Network, Announcers: ESPN- Mike Tirico, Ron Jaworski, and Tony Kornheiser, as Dennis Miller.

Line: Philadelphia by, um, "phifteen."

Team W/L Records: Cleveland is 4-9; the Eagles are 7-5-1.

Coaches: Romeo Crennel and his sweet cop-stache are 24-37 in their fourth seasons with the Browns; Andy Reid and his sweet cop-stache are 93-61-1 in their tenth seasons in Philadelphia. Neither of these roly-poly men is singing songs of love, and neither has heard them from his team's fans for long stretches during this season.

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Last Week for the Browns: Gave up 235 rushing yards and extended their string of touchdown-free quarters to twelve in a 28-9 loss at Tennessee.

Last Week for the Eagles: Stunned the Giants 20-14 at the Meadowlands to breathe life into their flagging playoff hopes.

All-Time Series: Browns lead 31-14-1.

Last Meeting: [October 24, 2004](#) - The Super Bowl-bound Eagles needed an extra session to squeeze by the Browns 34-31 at CBS. Donovan McNabb threw for 376 yards and four touchdowns, 109 of the yards and two of the scores to T.O. (who probably did have BO after working over the Cleveland secondary for three-plus hours) and ripped off a critical long scramble in overtime to set up David Akers for the 51-yarder that won the game. Lee Suggs and William Green combined for 142 yards and two scores in defeat. The heartbreaker touched off a nine-game losing streak that sent Butch Davis out of town and the Browns to a 4-12 finish that may yet be duplicated here in '08. Progress!

Out or Questionable for Philadelphia: Guard Shawn Andrews (back) is out; tackle Jon Runyan (knee) is questionable.

Out or Questionable for Cleveland: Tight end Kellen Winslow (ankle) is out; guard Rex Hadnot (knee), running back Jerome Harrison (ribs), defensive end Corey Williams (shoulder), special teams bad-ass Josh Cribbs (back), fullback Charles Ali (ribs), linebacker Beau Bell (knee), defensive end Louis Leonard (toe), linebacker Shantee Orr (knee), defensive tackle Shaun Rogers (shoulder), and defensive tackle Shaun Smith (calf) are questionable.

What to watch for Philadelphia: The Eagles have one of the league's most dynamic backs in Brian Westbrook, but they aren't a running team by nature. As a matter of fact, they've been made to look foolish a number of times this season in

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critical short-yardage running situations, with Westbrook and sidekick Corral Buckhalter stood up in the hole while Andy Reid stares blankly over his play-sheet. Philadelphia is 22nd in the NFL in rushing yards, 24th

in rushing attempts and generally runs the ball with the enthusiasm of a trophy wife doing her duty in the marital bed.

Part of the problem has been that Andy Reid is by nature reluctant to run when he can throw, which for him is on pretty much every down. Part has been the troubled season of road-grading Shawn Andrews. Maybe the biggest part is that Westbrook has been, as always, banged-up, missing two games with ankle ailments and spending much of the rest of the season cloistered in his semi-permanent anchorage on the "Questionable" portion of the injured list. Thanks in large part to their problems in the running game, the Eagles never really "took wing" in 2008, lurching unsteadily through an inconsistent season.

Philadelphia's mercurial disposition has been on display throughout its journey through the AFC North part of the schedule. The Eagles throttled Pittsburgh despite losing Westbrook early, dominating the Steelers physically and putting a merciless beating on Ben Roethlisberger. But they were routed in Baltimore and suffered that appalling tie in Cincinnati, a pair of setbacks that put their playoff hopes on November life support.

Now, however, Westbrook is healthy- or at least, healthy by his standards. He isn't even his usual "Questionable" this week on the injured report, and hasn't looked questionable at all on the field

in the last two weeks. Westbrook tormented the Cardinals and Giants with a combined 333 yards from scrimmage and six touchdowns and made the road takedown in New York a one-man show: 131 rushing yards, 72 receiving yards, and both of Philadelphia's touchdowns on long plays in the 20-14 decision. His team looks healthier too, not coincidentally. After back-to-back wins over division frontrunners, the Eagles are 7-5-1, and while they're still behind eight teams in the NFC playoff pecking order, and that tie will remain a potentially fatal open sore on their schedule... there is still meaningful football to be played in the Illadelph.

I had Brian Westbrook on my fantasy team, which got knocked out in the first round of the playoffs last week. I'm not going to lie- I liked this match-up down the road.

What to watch for Cleveland: I'm not sure offhand if it's the franchise record, but the 2000 Browns, that fearsome band, once went fourteen consecutive quarters without scoring a touchdown, a streak that started in a loss at Denver and continued for three more losses after Tim Couch was knocked out for the season by one of his own teammates in practice. The present team, which has its own problems at quarterback, sits at twelve. Three more dry quarters- not exactly a long shot at this point- and our 2008 Cleveland Browns will have achieved a level of impotence not even matched by 2000 Browns, the second-most impotent team I've ever seen in the NFL (the first being the 1999 Browns.) Progress!

Good Past Win over the Eagles: [November 4, 1979](#) - The Kardiak Kids survived a 197-yard performance by Wilbert Montgomery and overcame a 19-10 fourth-quarter deficit to upset Dick Vermeil's team at

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the Vet, 24-19. Mike Pruitt scored the game-winning touchdown on a 24-yard burst. The victory came with a cost. Jerry Sherk suffered a knee abrasion on the Veterans Stadium turf, and contracted a staph infection that threatened his life and short-circuited his career.

Bad Past Loss to the Eagles: [December 13, 1953](#) - The 11-0 Browns needed a win in Philadelphia to finish a perfect regular season, and they got off to a good start, leading 10-0 in the first quarter. But the Eagles roared back behind quarterback Bobby Thomason, who riddled Cleveland's defense for 335 passing yards and three touchdowns in a 42-27 Philadelphia win. The Browns went on to lose the NFL title game in a thriller to the Lions, which would have ruined their perfect season anyhow.

Next Week for Both Teams: The Eagles go to Washington; the Browns host the Bengals.

Trivia: A win over the Eagles would make this the first Browns team to win three times on Monday Night Football in the same year.