

Preview: Patriots @ Browns

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}

Saturday, November 06 2010 1:00 PM - Last Updated Saturday, November 06 2010 9:36 AM



New England Patriots @ Cleveland Browns

Time: 1:00 pm, Sunday, November 7, 2010

Location: Cleveland Browns Stadium

Network, Announcers- CBS: Bill Macatee and Rich Gannon

Line: Patriots by four-and-a-half.

Team W/L Records: Cleveland is 2-5; New England is 6-1.

Coaches: Eric Mangini is 30-41 overall, 7-16 in his second season with the Browns; Bill Belichick is 154-93 overall, 118-49 in his eleventh season with the Patriots.

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Last Week for the Browns: On the bye. Two weeks ago Cleveland went down to the Superdome and stunned the defending World Champion Saints with an amorphous defence and a bevy of gadget plays, flattening New Orleans, 30-17. It was the most lopsided home loss for the Saints since [the second-to-last week of the 2007 season](#) .

Last Week for the Patriots: Knocked Brett Favre out of the game and the Vikings almost out of serious contention in a 28-18 victory. BenJarvus Green-Ellis enjoyed his best day as a pro against Minnesota, running for career highs in yardage (112) and touchdowns (two.) New England won going away despite giving up over 400 total yards for only the second time this season.

All-Time Series: Cleveland leads, 11-9.

Last Meeting- [October 7, 2007](#) : The surprising Browns put up a game fight but became just another speed-bump for the undefeated Patriots as Cleveland fell in Foxboro, 34-17. Tom Brady riddled the Browns for 265 yards and three touchdowns while future Cleveland tight end Ben Watson enjoyed a big day with six catches for 107 yards and a pair of touchdowns. The Browns moved the ball well with 353 total yards but were hurt by four turnovers, including three interceptions thrown by Derek Anderson.

Out, Doubtful or Questionable for New England: S Jarrad Page (calf) and RB Fred Taylor (toe) are out; WR Deion Branch (hamstring), S Patrick Chung (knee) and WR Matt Slater (ankle) are questionable .

Out, Doubtful or Questionable for Cleveland: QB Jake Delhomme (ankle), and T John St. Clair (ankle) are doubtful; DE Kenyon Coleman (knee), QB Seneca Wallace (ankle), DT Shaun Rogers (ankle) and LB Matt Roth (hamstring) are questionable.

What to watch for the Browns: I haven't checked the NFL's strength-of-schedule rankings, but sight unseen I'd be surprised if many other teams have faced a tougher first half than the Browns. Taking away the common results, Cleveland's first nine opponents have a combined 38-20 record. Six of the nine either hold the outright lead or are tied for first in their division.

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Sunday's opponent, New England, has the NFL's best record.

Not all of these teams are created equal. Tampa Bay has a whiff of fraud about them, with the Bucs' negative point differential and one-sided home losses to the Steelers and Saints. Kansas City should be in it all season, but the Chiefs, coming off a 10-38 stretch from 2007-09, are still an unproven commodity. But the Pats, Jets, Ravens, Steelers, Falcons and Saints are almost certainly for real, and it would be a little bit surprising to see any of them miss the postseason.

Given the nature of the competition the Browns haven't fared too badly. Other than the loss in Pittsburgh three weeks ago they've had a chance to win in the fourth quarter week in and week out. The only loss that really sticks in this crew is the opener at Tampa Bay, when the Browns dominated the first 29 minutes and then self-destructed. People would feel a lot better about this team at 3-4 instead of 2-5, especially considering the gauntlet the Browns have run all season.

What to watch for the Patriots: The Patriots a bit of a statistical oddity. Their young defence is ranked 28th in the league in yards allowed and their offense, despite the presence of Tom Brady, is ranked 19th. Those figures aren't that much better than those of the Browns, who are 28th in offense and 22nd in defence. Yet New England has scored the most points in the league and owns the best record in football as we approach the midway point of the season.

They also lead the NFL in resourcefulness. New England has scored five touchdowns with its defence and special teams, including three in a 41-14 Monday Night thrashing of Miami on October 4th. The Patriots rank second-to-least in pass defence but have intercepted nine passes and, combined with an offense that has turned the ball over just six times, own one of the best turnover margins in the league at +7. They've also won the close games. Three weeks ago the Patriots overcame a ten-point fourth-quarter deficit to beat Baltimore in overtime, 23-20. Two weeks ago against San Diego they nearly blew a 17-point fourth-quarter lead but hung on to beat the Chargers by the same score.

The Pats are, to say the least, not a dominant football team. They've been out-gained in all but two games this season. But they're opportunistic, they don't make mistakes, they have a great coach and quarterback and they just know how to win. They've been doing it for years. New

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England can be beaten this Sunday. But they aren't going to beat themselves. Cleveland will have to do it for them.

Next Week for Both Teams: Cleveland hosts the New York Jets; New England is at Pittsburgh.

Trivia: □ 23 games into his second tour of duty as a head coach, Eric Mangini is 7-16. 23 games into his second tour of duty as a head coach, seven games into the 2001 season, Bill Belichick was 8-15.