

Preview: Ravens @ Browns

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}

Saturday, December 25 2010 11:26 PM - Last Updated Sunday, December 26 2010 6:44 AM

Baltimore Ravens at Cleveland Browns



Time: 1:00 pm, Sunday, December 26, 2010

Location: Cleveland Browns Stadium

Network, Announcers- CBS: Ian Eagle, Dan Fouts

Line: Ravens by three-and-a-half

Team W/L Records: Cleveland is 5-9; Baltimore is 10-4.

Coaches: Eric Mangini is 33-45 overall, 10-20 in his second season with the Browns; John Harbaugh is 30-16 in his third season with the Ravens.

Last Week for the Browns: Were once again whipped at the line of scrimmage in a 19-17 loss at lowly Cincinnati. The Bengals rushed for a season-high 188 yards, punted only once and ran

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68 plays to Cleveland's 39. It was the second week in a row the Browns yielded a season best in rushing yards to an opponent.

Last Week for the Ravens: *Bested the Saints 30-24 behind Ray Rice's 237 total yards and two touchdowns. Baltimore outrushed New Orleans 207-24, a number that enabled them to win despite ten penalties and some wasted chances in the red zone.*

All-Time Series: Ravens lead, 16-7.

Last Meeting- [September 26](#) : Peyton Hillis had his first signature performance of the season but it wasn't enough as Baltimore came from behind to beat the Browns, 24-17. Hillis powered for 144 yards and a touchdown and made seven catches as Cleveland rallied from a 14-3 deficit to take the lead going into the fourth quarter. Just as this was Hillis's first big game, it was Eric Wright's first disaster. Wright, who wraps up his campaign of woe on IR, was toasted for three Anquan Boldin touchdowns, including the game-winner with 9:13 left.

Out, Doubtful or Questionable for Baltimore: *WR David Reed (head) and S Tom Zbikowski (back) are out; CB Chris Carr (illness) and TE Todd Heap (thigh) are questionable.*

Out, Doubtful or Questionable for Cleveland: *TE Robert Royal (shoulder) is doubtful; LB Eric Alexander (groin), DE Kenyon Coleman (knee) and DT Shaun Rogers (ankle) are questionable.*

What to watch for the Ravens: *After a somewhat sluggish start the Ravens are once again in the thick of the postseason chase, and a major reason is the play of quarterback Joe Flacco. Early on the third-year pro from Delaware was dismal. In the first two games against the Jets and Bengals, Flacco completed just 48 percent of his passes with one touchdown and five interceptions.*

But the first meeting with the Browns got Flacco off the skids, and he's been hot ever since. In his last twelve starts Flacco has completed 65 percent of his attempts and has thrown 22 touchdown passes to just three interceptions. With Baltimore's ground game running hot and cold- Ray Rice has only two hundred-yard games this season as opposed to four in 2009- the

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quarterback has had to carry the offense, and he's done just that.

What to watch for the Browns: *Cleveland's two biggest wins this season, over the Saints and Patriots, have one big commonality- a stout run defence. The Browns yielded a total of 126 yards on the ground in those two games and a paltry 3.3 yards per carry.*

The last six games have been a different story. Cleveland is 2-4 in those games and like the New Orleans and New England wins there is a common theme- a run defence that has been absolutely gashed. In the last six games the Browns have given up an average of 157 rushing yards on 4.3 yards per carry. There are other problems- an unbalanced, overly Hillis-centric rushing attack, a sputtering passing game, sporadic offensive line play- but the main thing that leaps out has been the total domination of Cleveland's run defence on the ground. The Cincinnati game in particular was ugly, as one of the league's weakest rushing offenses simply smashed the Browns up front.

Now here come the Ravens, who look as if they're hitting their stride in exactly the phase the Browns have had so much trouble handling. Baltimore has been inconsistent in the ground game all season but took off with 208 yards in last week's win over New Orleans, including a season-high 153 by Ray Rice. The Ravens killed Cleveland through the air in the first meeting, but with snow and sub-freezing temps on the docket for Sunday, they'll likely be looking to own the ball and time of possession by hammering away at the collapsing Browns run defence. If they succeed it's going to be a long day for the Browns and their embattled head coach.

Next Week for Both Teams: Cleveland hosts Pittsburgh; Baltimore hosts Cincinnati.

Trivia: Baltimore has won five straight from the Browns dating back to the infamous "Dawson Bar" game of 2007.