

ARMCHAIR QUARTER BACK

THE

Arggh! What a week! My first losing record in 6 weeks. Worse than that, though, was the fact that I was 6-7 going into Monday night's game, and I still had a chance to salvage a .500 week. But I picked the Saints, which meant I was in the unenviable position of having to cheer AGAINST my favourite team for me to have a semi-respectable showing. Well the Jets won (yay!), but that meant I slipped below .500 (boo!) Maybe if I pick them to lose from now on (Monday was the first time I'd picked against them all year), they might win a few games...

With four weeks to go in the season, some of the play-off confusion has been sorted out, but there are still a number of unknowns and, to quote our good friend (?) Howard C., a "veritable plethora" of play-off possibilities. Here's my breakdown of the league after three-quarters of the schedule (team record in brackets):

SHOO-INS: These are the teams that are guaranteed to be in post-season action, unless their team plane is hijacked to Cuba (or some other non-football playing nation). Washington Redskins (10-2) Dallas Cowboys (10-2)

Los Angeles Raiders (9-3) Pittsburgh Steelers (9-3) STRONG CONTENDERS: These are teams that have a good shot at winning their division, or, failing there, could squeeze in as wild cards. (Current records and difficulty of remaining schedule are key factors considered here):

Miami Dolphins (8-4) San Francisco (7-5) Los Angeles Rams (7-5)

Minnesota (7-5) ALMOST THERE: These squads will have a tough time, but with some big performances, they could sneak into the

play-off scene.

Buffalo Bills (7-5) Cleveland (7-5) Denver (7-5) Seattle (6-6) New England (6-6) Baltimore (6-6) Green Bay (6-6) Detroit (6-6) New Orleans (6-6)

DOWN, BUT NOT QUITE OUT: The teams listed here still have mathematical shots at wild card spots, but they'll need a lot of luck to even have a realistic chance. They all have the talent, BUT... New York Jets (5-7) Kansas City (5-7)

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St. Louis (5-6-1) Atlanta (5-7) ALSO-RANS: These are the write-offs - totally out of it. Cincinati Bengals (5-7) Houston (1-11) San Diego (4-8) New York Giants (3-8-1) Philadelphia (4-8) Chicago Bears (5-7) Tampa Bay (1-11) Now, here are this week's selections (Home team in CAPS): **Baltimore over CLEVELAND by 2** L.A. RAMS over Buffalo by 6 Denver over SAN DIEGO by 3 **ATLANTA over Green Bay by 4** Pittsburgh over DETROIT by 5 **DALLAS over St. Louis 8** TAMPA BAY over Houston by 1 (the one we've been waiting for!) Kansas City over SEATTLE by 2 **NEW ORLEANS over Minnesota by 3** New England over N.Y. JETS by 5 L.A. RAIDERS over N.Y. Giants by 10 WASHINGTON over Philadelphia by 7 San Francisco over CHICAGO by 6 **MIAMI** over Cincinnati by 7 **RECORD:** This week: 6-8 (.429); vs. the spread: 5-1 (.833) Overall: 88-79-1 (.527); vs. the spread: 49-17 (.742)