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2011 COLLEGE & PRO FOOTBALL NEWSLETTER

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Games of September 22 - 26, 2011

With two weeks in the books can see the NFL season unfolding with a number of surprise teams, both good and bad. 7 teams have started 2-0 and 7 have started 0-2. The rest of the league – 18 teams – are 1-1.

On the positive side the Detroit Lions are living up to the hype with a pair of solid wins to open the season. Washington's 2-0 start is also somewhat of a surprise and the Redskins sit atop the NFC East. Both teams have each won one game as a favorite and one as an underdog with both of Washington's wins coming at home. We'll get a better idea of Washington's improvement this season when they take to the road for the first time, playing in Dallas on Monday night.

Buffalo's 2-0 start is even more of a surprise but the Bills are not alone atop the AFC East as both New England and the New York Jets have also won their first two games. The Bills will be tested this week when they host the Patriots.

Houston's 2-0 start is surprising only to the extent that the Texans have yet to prove they can play to their talent level. Thus far they've performed as expected, winning a pair of games in which they were favored. This week they will be tested when they take on the underdog role at New Orleans.

The other 2-0 team comes as no surprise as the defending Super Bowl champion Green Bay Packers opened with an exciting home win over New Orleans, followed by a win at Carolina in which the Pack trailed early.

One 0-2 team that has to be considered as having a better than expected start is the aforementioned Carolina Panthers. Rookie QB Cam Newton has shown early leadership potential. Let's see if this continues as teams make adjustments in coming weeks to confuse him as they learn his tendencies.

On the very negative side is Kansas City. Expected to regress following last season's 10-6 record and AFC West Title, the Chiefs have been totally inept in dropping their first two games, being outscored 89-10 in the process. Injuries are part of the explanation, but only part.

The 0-2 start by the Indianapolis Colts is not surprising nor unexpected but the total ineptness of the offense without QB Peyton Manning is even greater than anticipated. Veteran Kerry Collins has not been sharp and this week things get no easier when the Colts host the Steelers and their stout defense.

Miami, Minnesota, St Louis and Seattle are also winless after two games. Of the combined 8 games played by this quartet only in one has any of the four been favored. Minnesota blew a 17-0 lead at home to Tampa Bay, losing in the final minute 24-20.

To argue that a team faces a "must win" game in week three is absurd and obviously premature. Yes, it is important for an 0-2 team to avoid an 0-3 start but it's too soon for any team to hit the panic button. Having cause for concern, however, is a different issue.

Of the 7 teams noted above that have started 0-2, nearly half of them – 3 to be precise – made the Playoffs in 2010. Seattle made last season's Playoffs but with a 7-9 record, winning the woeful NFC West, the Division with by far the worst record of any of the NFL's 8 Divisions since realignment in 2002 in non-Division games.

The Colts are an entirely difference team without Manning. Kansas City was expected to regress in 2011 and the early injuries have only heightened those expectations.

Through two weeks of the 2011 NFL season Home Underdogs were 6-4-1 Against the Spread (ATS) while Home Favorites stood at 10-10-1. OVERs hold a huge edge vs UNDERs with 22 games going OVER the Total and just 8 staying UNDER in a addition to a pair of PUSHes. Scoring in week 2 was almost identical to week 1 (750 total points vs 752) and the average combined points per game of 47.0 is near a FG per game higher than last season. Last season's average of 44.1 combined points per game was tied with 2008's average for the highest per game total in more than 30 seasons!

Last week we presented some data on 'key' margins of victory and how often games involving pointspreads around those key numbers actually fell on the key numbers. Those results can be used to determine whether it makes sense to 'buy' an extra half point on or off of those key numbers (i.e. laying 2 ½ instead of 3 or getting 3 ½ instead of 3). The answer can be found by looking at that data.

When you 'buy' that extra half point you must generally lay 6 to 5 (12-10) instead of the usual 11-10. At 11-10 you must hit 52.4% winners to break even. At 6-5 that rises to 54.6%. Recall that 29 seasons of history shows that about 9.05% of all games with pointspreads of 2 ½, 3 or 3 ½ end up with the favorite winning by exactly 3 points. Thus in just under 10 of 100 games there will be a benefit to buying the extra half point and turning a loss into a push or a push into a win. Let's examine what happens over those 100 bets.

90 of the bets remain unaffected. Thus laying 6-5 instead of 11-10 will cost you an extra \$900 in losses based on laying \$120 to win \$100 instead of laying \$110 to win \$100. **But that's only if you LOSE all of those 90 bets!** More likely you'll win close to, if not more than, half of those games so the added losses are closer to about \$450 in games that are unaffected by the buying of the extra half point.

Let's now look at the other 10 bets – the ones that are affected. If those 10 bets would have been losses but are now pushes, you will have prevented \$1100 in losses by laying the extra juice. (At 11-10 you would have laid \$1100 to win \$1000 but would have lost whereas at 6-5 you would have laid \$1,200 and pushed). If those 10 bets would have pushed at 11-10 they would win by laying 6-5. Thus you would gain an extra \$1000 in winnings by laying the 6-5. More likely, the 10 bets would have involved changing some losses to pushes and some pushes to wins. The net impact of the 10 transformed wagers would range between \$1000 and \$1100.

Thus in analyzing the impact of buying on or off of '3' out of 100 wagers we would have sacrificed the added 'vig' on 90 of the wagers. Assuming we'd go 45-45 on those plays our added cost of buying the extra half point would be \$450. On the 10 wagers that are impacted the assumption is that without the extra half point we'd have 5 pushes and 5 losses (a net loss of \$550) that would be converted into 5 pushes and 5 winners with the extra half point (a net win of \$500), for a net gain of \$1050. Taken together the gain of \$1050 on the 10 affected wagers is offset by the \$450 additional losses on the 90 unaffected wagers for a net benefit of \$600 gained by buying onto or off of the number '3' in the NFL.

We can therefore conclude that buying the extra half point onto or off of 3 gives you a noticeable edge over not buying the half point and laying the standard 11 to 10. Of the other 9 'key' numbers presented in our study (1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 10, 13, 14 and 17) the percentage of favorites winning by exactly that margin when the line was within a half point of that number ranged from 1.12% to 5.63% (with the exception of the small sample at 17).

In next week's issue we shall debut our weekly Spreadsheet that provides unique statistical information that will enhance the analyses presented in the Newsletter. Sometimes numbers can give a much clearer indication of strengths and weakness and how teams match up than can commentary. We know you will find the data to be very useful in doing your own evaluation of the games.

COLLEGE SELECTION OF THE WEEK: BAYLOR - 20 over Rice – During a rain delay during the first half of last week's game vs Stephen F Austin, both coaches agreed to a shortened game without a halftime break due to expected severe lightning heading towards Waco. No problem as in just 39:02 of playing time Baylor won 48-0, winning the yards battle 545-207 with an almost perfectly run/pass offense directed by their fine QB Griffin III. That win followed their wild opening win two weeks earlier over TCU, 50-48. Rice split their first

two games, losing at Texas and edging Purdue. The Owls were outgained in both games including 506-224 in their 25 point loss to the Longhorns. There is a talent and class difference between these programs that is widening as the Baylor program has been upgrade in coach Briles' 3+ seasons. The Bears made it to their first Bowl game since 1994. Their prospects are great for further improvement this season. Baylor has won both meetings vs Rice in the past decade, winning and covering as 8.5 point favorites last season on the road 30-13. And they defeated the Owls at home in 2007 42-17, easily covering as 7.5 point faves. The line is much greater this week but the result should be just as one sided. Baylor wins 47-17.

Other Featured College Selections

Tulane + 10 over DUKE – Teams known more for academics than their football prowess meet after each had upset wins last week on the conference road. Duke held on for a 20-19 win at Boston College, winning as 7 point underdogs. Tulane was even more impressive in winning 49-10 as 12 point dogs at UAB. Including a win over FCS SE Louisiana, Tulane is 2-1, losing only at home to conference foe Tulsa 31-3 in a game not all that statistically one sided as the score might suggest. Prior to the win at BC Duke was routed at home by powerful Stanford, a loss that followed a home loss a week earlier to Richmond, a middle of the pack FCS foe – the third such home loss to Richmond in 3 meetings since 2006! Tulane has increased its win totals from 2 to 3 to 4 since 2008 as ex-UCLA coach Toledo's been able to recruit his type of player to the program. As is often the case with these types of programs, the defense of both teams leaves much to be desired. But Tulane has developed a reasonably effective offense and that should be enough to suggest Tulane is competitive in this spot. While an upset would not be a shock, the call is for Duke to win but by just 24-20.

BALL STATE + 4 ½ over Army – Army is off of an upset win over Northwestern last week in which they ran for 381 yards while gaining just 6 through the air on 1 for 7 passing. The win followed a pair of losses to San Diego State and at Northern Illinois. Ball State also has a win over a Big 10 teams, opening the season with a neutral site 27-20 win over Indiana. After losing badly at South Florida, Ball State rebounded with a 28-25 win last week over Buffalo in the MAC opener. Ball State has a much more balanced offense than Army. IN their only prior recent meeting, in 2009, Ball State covered as 8.5 point dogs in a 24-17 road loss. It's tough to lay points on the road with Army as the Cadets have lost ATS in their last 6 such attempts laying a FG or more, including 5 outright losses. Last season they were favored by 9.5 at Eastern Michigan but could manage to win by just 31-27. It's rare for Army to be favored on the road as those 6 road favorite roles stretch back to 1997! Ball State has had moderate success over the past several seasons, posting a 12-2 mark in 2008 before declining to 2 and 4 win seasons. In a good spot for an upset, Ball State wins 23-20.

Oklahoma State +4 over TEXAS A&M – Both teams are unbeaten as each has sights set on major Bowls at the end of the season as both are legitimate contenders in the Big 12. Only one their combined 5 wins has come on the road – Oklahoma's State 59-33 win last week at Tulsa (in a game that started after midnight local time due to a lengthy weather delay). OSU also has impressive wins over Arizona and UL Lafayette while the Aggies have comfortable wins over SMU and Idaho. Both teams have outstanding offenses with potent passing attacks and above average running games. A&M is arguably the better defensive team, especially against the run, but that may be partially due to OSU's offense favoring a more uptempo pace. This has been a competitive series in recent seasons with OSU winning the last 3 after a string of 4 straight A&M wins. 4 of the last 5 games have been decided by 5 points or less with the only blowout a 56-28 home win by OSU in 2008 (favored by 24.5). Both teams should be focused and prepared for their Big 12 opener although OSU has a Bye next week while A&M has a double revenge game against Arkansas next week. In an evenly matched game that can go either way, taking more than a FG is an attractive option. Both teams return much experience but OSU has been the better program over the last several seasons. Oklahoma State wins 31-27.

Best of the Rest (Recommendations)

CINCINNATI - 7 ½ over North Carolina St [Thur]	BYU - 2 ½ over Central Florida [Fri]
SYRACUSE - 2 ½ over Toledo	Ohio U + 4 ½ over RUTGERS
Kansas State + 13 over MIAMI FLA	Temple + 9 ½ over MARYLAND
WEST VIRGINIA + 6 over Lsu	San Diego State + 10 over MICHIGAN
GEORGIA TECH - 6 ½ over North Carolina	CLEMSON + 1 over Florida State

Fresno State - 4 over IDAHO	SOUTH CAROLINA - 16 over Vanderbilt
MISSISSIPPI STATE - 20 over Louisiana Tech	VIRGINIA - 3 over Southern Miss
Missouri + 22 over OKLAHOMA	Oregon - 15 ½ over ARIZONA
ARIZONA STATE - 2 ½ over Usc	TROY - 12 ½ over Middle Tennessee
UL Lafayette + 17 over FLORIDA INT'L	

The Rest (Leans)

OHIO STATE - 15 over Colorado	EAST CAROLINA - 13 over Alabama-Birmingham
Utep + 29 over SOUTH FLORIDA	Western Michigan + 13 ½ over ILLINOIS
Eastern Michigan + 29 over PENN STATE	Smu - 22 over MEMPHIS
Central Michigan + 24 over MICHIGAN STATE	MISSISSIPPI + 9 ½ over Georgia
Bowling Green + 4 ½ over MIAMI OHIO	Virginia Tech - 20 over MARSHALL
ALABAMA - 11 ½ over Arkansas	WASHINGTON - 1 ½ over California
Florida - 19 over KENTUCKY	Notre Dame - 6 ½ over PITTSBURGH
SAN JOSE STATE - 9 ½ over New Mexico State	BUFFALO + 9 over Connecticut
OREGON STATE - 4 over Ucla	TEXAS TECH - 20 over Nevada
Nebraska - 23 over WYOMING	UTAH STATE - 9 over Colorado State
Tulsa + 32 ½ over BOISE STATE	AUBURN - 33 over Florida Atlantic
IOWA - 17 over Louisiana Monroe	NORTH TEXAS + 7 over Indiana

NFL SELECTION OF THE WEEK: SEATTLE + 3 ½ over Arizona – Seattle's loss in Pittsburgh last week was expected and now they open their home season after a pair of road losses that have them 0-2. Arizona was unable to hold a late lead in Washington to fall to 1-1. In winning the NFC West last season Seattle defeated Arizona twice, both by double digits. Both teams have new QBs this season with Arizona's Kolb considered to have much more upside potential than the Seahawks' Jackson. Both offenses should show improvement as the season progresses. Seattle does have the better defense, especially against the pass. They catch Arizona in a second straight road game. Arizona is favored on the road largely due to perception but the reality is that at this stage of the season neither team has much in the way of edges and appear talent wise to be fairly evenly matched. In facing San Francisco and Pittsburgh on the road Seattle has played a tougher early schedule than Arizona who've hosted Carolina and played at Washington. Seattle wins 24-20.

Other Featured NFL Selections:

MINNESOTA + 3 ½ over Detroit – Thus far Detroit has lived up to, if not exceeded, expectations. Including the end of last season and this season's pre season the Lions have won 10 straight games. They have been strong on both sides of the football and appear to be capable of challenging both Chicago and Green Bay for the Playoffs if not the NFC North title. Minnesota was in position to win their opener at San Diego and led most of the way last week, losing in the final minute to Tampa Bay after squandering a 17-0 lead. Still, the Vikes have an above average defense and an offense that should improve over the next few weeks as QB McNabb gets comfortable with his new offense and teammates. And the Vikes have RB Peterson to provide the balance Detroit's offense lacks with a rather pedestrian running game. Minnesota is seeking to avoid an 0-3 start while Detroit is in position to regress a bit. Both teams have faced Tampa Bay and although the Lions had the better stats (and won) the edges were not huge. Clearly the fortunes of these teams are

changing with Detroit on the upswing and the Vikes possibly in decline and certainly in transition. But the Vikes have won 13 straight home games against Detroit. In an ideal spot for an upset. Minnesota wins 23-21.

Baltimore - 4 ½ over ST LOUIS – As impressive as the Ravens were in their opening week rout of Pittsburgh, that's how dull they were in last week's loss at Tennessee. Clearly they were flat following a game they'd prepared for all off season and it showed with 3 turnovers and a ground game held to just 45 yards. St Louis is off Monday night's loss at the Giants in which their multiple miscues played a huge role. While improved, the Rams must show they can defeat an upper echelon team. Now they catch such a team off of a poor performance. Played later in the season the Rams might be able to pull off the upset. But this game could resemble their season opener in which they were outplayed by veteran Philadelphia followed by their failure against the Giants, both of which were 10-6 last season and on a par with the Ravens (12-4 in 2010). The Ravens have followed their last 9 regular season losses with a win in their next game, with 7 of the 9 by at least 6 points including all 4 such games on the road. Baltimore gets the win, 27-14.

CHICAGO + 3 ½ over Green Bay – Notwithstanding their loss at New Orleans last week the Bears showed they are still a force with which to be reckoned in the NFC. They face their long time foe, seeking to avenge their loss to the Packers in last season's NFC Title game. Green Bay fell behind early but their superior talent enabled them to overcome Carolina last week in a non-covering road win. But their pass defense has been vulnerable, allowing 396 and 404 yards to the Saints and Panthers. The Bears should be able to exploit some of those weaknesses as offensive coordinator Martz' passing offense is functioning better than last season. The Chicago defense is solid and plays well at home. This should be a typically physical Bears/Packers game. Getting at least a FG is attractive in a game the Bears are certainly capable of winning straight up as they've done on this field against Green Bay in 3 of their last 4 regular season meetings. Chicago wins 19-17.

Best of the Rest (Recommendations)

CINCINNATI - 2 ½ over San Francisco	NEW ORLEANS - 4 over Houston
Jacksonville + 3 ½ over CAROLINA	N Y Jets - 3 ½ over OAKLAND
TAMPA BAY - 1 over Atlanta	Washington + 5 over DALLAS (Monday)

The Rest (Leans)

New England - 9 over BUFFALO	N Y Giants + 4 over PHILADELPHIA
Miami + 3 over CLEVELAND	Denver + 7 over TENNESSEE
SAN DIEGO - 14 ½ over Kansas City	INDIANAPOLIS + 10 ½ over Pittsburgh

Best of the NFL Totals

San Francisco/Cincinnati UNDER 41	New England/Buffalo OVER 53
Houston/New Orleans OVER 53	Miami/Cleveland UNDER 41
N Y Jets/Oakland OVER 41	Atlanta/Tampa Bay UNDER 45 ½
Green Bay/Chicago UNDER 46	Pittsburgh/Indianapolis UNDER 39 ½

Money Line Recommendations

College:	Ohio U	BALL STATE	Oklahoma State	ARIZONA STATE
Pro:	MINNESOTA	Jacksonville	SEATTLE	CHICAGO

NOTE: All Selections are picked to win Against the Spread (ATS). Unless otherwise indicated, HOME TEAMS are in CAPS. All material is provided as news matter only and is not to be used in violation of any Federal, State or Local law(s).

