The first public week of picking via the new ranking system went sufficiently, giving birth to an 8.5-4.5 record (the Atlanta-Tampa game was halved). But, like John Henry, my machine was outdone by a human, in this case BT, who managed his best week of the year at 9.5-3.5. DJC, after taking a convincing lead, sputtered a bit at 6.5-6.5.

For the year: DJC - 87.5-83.5, Chris - 86.5-84.5, BT - 85.5-85.5.

Yes, now everyone is .500 or better against the spread.

BT pointed out to me how sad it was that we are only a collective 6 games over .500 at this point in the season, and how we would be living off of rat parts and public fountain water if we were counting on our choices to find us a fortune in Vegas. I countered with the fact that we are a collective 35 over .500 in the last 5 weeks.

So perhaps it just takes half a season to get a decent bead on the NFL. Or perhaps that's just a pipe dream too, which is why the sidewalks of southern Nevada are paved with gold (and shattered knee caps).

And for those of you who don't know, according to American folklore John Henry was a doctor that boasted his manual colonoscopies were superior to a scope, and that he could complete more with his hand in a day than the machine. Anyway, he did persist and defeated the scope, only to die of toxic shock immediately afterwards. But he won, God bless his grimy fist.

Or something similar to that.

All odds are from VegasInsider.com :

CLE at OAK -1.5

Me - My Line: CLE by 1.5. The Browns play tough and don't get blown out by anybody. But they also manage to play down to their competition and never ever ever blow anybody out. So every game has to be close, and most encouraging wins are followed by heart-wrenching losses. It is the nature of the team and the Coach; they are incapable of going on a winning streak. Which is why the Coach will be looking for a job in about a month. But Oakland's just too bad for me to overrule The System. *Pick: Browns*

DJC - *Pick: Raiders*

BT - *Pick: Raiders*

SEA at CHI -3.5

Me - My Line: CHI by 7.5. I don't know what it is about Jay Cutler. He doesn't seem like much. He throws picks like they'll get him laid. He pouts like his diaper is leaking (new baby spawns many diaper references). But he just wins, baby. Seattle is battling for its playoff life, but like a lot of the other rookie QB's around the league, Russell Wilson seems to be hitting the rookie

wall. Should be low scoring and not particularly interesting. *Pick: Bears*

DJC - *Pick: Bears*

BT - *Pick: Bears*

MIN at GB -9

Me - My Line: GB by 5. I'm not overly fond of The System's pick on this, since Green Bay usually finds a way to bounce back with Author-eye-tay after embarrassing losses. And make no mistake, Sunday night's loss was embarrassing. They clearly just gave up. They realized they weren't going to win and just mailed it in. Aaron Rodgers was probably the key figure in the surrender. Some say "Who can blame him? He was getting pounded all night." I can. I can blame him. This ain't the NBA. You don't mail in games unless you've already clinched. Or you're trying to lose for draft position (which I guess does make it like the NBA).

Anyway, I guess the line is too large for me to be comfortable with picking the Pack to cover here anyway. *Pick: Vikings*

DJC - *Pick: Packers*

BT - Please give it to AP 40 times. *Pick: Vikings*

SF at STL +7

Me - My Line: SF by 11. These two teams tied just a few weeks ago, and the Rams looked really solid dismantling Arizona last week. But they also got stomped by the Jets at home 2 weeks ago, so this young team is more than capable of throwing a clunker into the mix. With

San Fran on a temporary high with their shiny new QB, I think this will be the case. Which it better be, since The System is making me take SF anyway. *Pick: 49ers*

DJC - *Pick: 49ers*

BT - *Pick: 49ers*

ARI at NYJ -4.5

Me - My Line: NYJ by 4. Despite the free fall, Arizona is actually ranked 3 spots ahead of New York. But after watching some of that rookie Lindley guy last week, I'm definitely giving them the 3 point injured QB deduction. The Cards are just no capable of scoring a ton of points. And I think there's a good chance for a Defensive score by New York in this one too. My line and the Vegas line are only a half point apart on this one... I think I be goin' against The System on this one. *Pick: Jets*

DJC - Would love to pick ARI, but there QB situation is a mess. *Pick: Jets*

BT - *Pick: Jets*

CAR at KC +3

Me - My Line: CAR by 3.5. Going strictly by ranking (27 versus 32), Carolina would only be favored by a half point. But I'm giving KC the QB deduction since Brady Quinn has to play, and if he's playing, all the competent QB's are hurt (or non-existent). *Pick: Panthers*

DJC - *Pick: Panthers*

BT - *Pick: Panthers*

IND at DET -4.5

Me - My Line: DET by 1.5. Indy's not nearly as good as their record. But the Lions are as bad as theirs. I don't know what kind of hallucinogen Matt Stafford has been taking this year, but that guy is schizo. And the Defense... ugh. Guess last year was a mirage and they're the NFC's Paper Kitties (the Bengals are the AFC's). I can certainly see Detroit winning a close game, but by a FG, not 4.5. *Pick: Colts*

DJC - *Pick: Lions*

BT - *Pick: Colts*

JAX at BUF -6

Me - My Line: BUF by 7. Aaaaannnnd, the career of Blaine Gabbert is already over. Well, that might not be fair. His career as a Starter is over. But I guess that's what we said about Chad Henne at the end of last season too. OK, fine. The career of Blaine Gabbert as a *starter* in *Jac ksonville*
is over. There. That's almost 100% accurate.
Pick: Bills

DJC- *Pick: Bills*

BT- *Pick: Bills*

NE at MIA +7.5

Me - My Line: NE by 7. It IS hard for me to take the Fins here. Ryan Tannehill has been mostly blech the last 3 or 4 weeks. The Pats are on a roll, and their D is rounding into shape. But 7.5 on the road is a big line, and that half point makes a big damn difference. *Pick: Dolphins*

DJC - *Pick: Patriots*

BT - *Pick: Patriots*

HOU at TEN +6

Me - My Line: HOU by 15. Houston has been underwhelming in lackluster victories over bad teams the last 2 weeks, and I can see it happening again in Nashville. I'm not sure if they're so far ahead in the standings that they're just losing interest or if teams have figured out their Pass D or what. So my System's line of 15... I don't see them covering that. But 6 points? Yeah, I think they'll get that done. *Pick: Texans*

DJC - *Pick: Texans*

BT - *Pick: Titans*

TB at DEN -7

Me - My Line: DEN by 6.5. Tampa's got the offense to hang with Denver, and for some reason I'm still not completely sold on the Broncos. Doug Martin's production has gone down as of late, but Denver's going to be going to war with Knowshon Moreno at RB for the next several weeks, and, well, he ain't no good. Peyton & Co. will probably still win, but it'll be a struggle. *Pick:*

Buccaneers

DJC - *Pick: Buccaneers*

BT - *Pick: Broncos*

PIT at BAL -3 (is now -8 since POS-Burger has been declared out)

Me - My Line: BAL by 9.5. The Steelers definitely get the 3 point QB discount after watching Charlie Batch flail about last week. With mediocre RB's and mediocre OL, this team is NOTHING without their fat possible-rapist QB. About to lose 3 in a row is what they are. It feels strange to root for Baltimore as much as I do in these games, but there it is. My hatred of Pittsburgh and my love for whomever is causing them pain overrides all logic. *Pick: Ravens*

DJC - *Pick: Ravens*

BT - Baltimore by 50 (I hope) *Pick: Ravens*

CIN at SD +1.5

Me - My Line: CIN by 1. The System says Bungles by 1, but can they cover an extra half point. Hell no. That's damn crazy talk. The Chargers are Chokemasters under Norv Turner (always have been, always will be), but they showed they can play with almost any team at home. They SHOULD have beaten Baltimore last week, and the Ravens are better than the AFC Paper Kitties. *Pick: Chargers*

DJC - *Pick: Chargers*

BT - *Pick: Bungholes*

PHI at DAL -10

Me - My Line: DAL by 12. My initial thought is the same as DJC's, too many points. And the straight line is only DAL by 9. But Nick Foles against the 8th ranked D on the road? Yeah, I guess I can buy a Dallas blowout. Philly looks like they've thrown in the collective towel anyway. *Pick: Cowboys*

DJC - Too many points. *Pick: Eagles*

BT - *Pick: Cowboys*

NYG at WAS +2.5

Me - My Line: NYG by 1.5. The far superior NFC East game is on Monday Night this week (wonder how NBC got stuck with that PHI/DAL clunker, didn't the flex schedule kick in yet?). The Giants are a mystery to me. They look great one week, like a dirty yellow smells-like-rotten-otter-milk diaper the next. Washington at least is consistently ah-ight. I would never bet this game in real life, and as it scares the carbuncle out of me, I'll just let The System take it from here. *Pick: Redskins*

DJC - *Pick: Redskins*

BT - *Pick: Redskins*