Atlanta Falcons @ Cleveland Browns

Time: 1:00 pm, Sunday, October 10, 2010

Location: Cleveland Browns Stadium

Network, Announcers- FOX: Chris Myers and Charles Davis

Line: Falcons by three

Team W/L Records: Cleveland is 1-3; Atlanta is 3-1

Coaches: Eric Mangini is 29-39 overall, 6-14 in his second season with the Browns; Mike Smith is 23-13 in his third season with the Falcons.

Last Week for the Browns: Took a lead into the fourth quarter for the fourth consecutive week

and finally held onto it, beating the Bengals for their first win of the season, 23-20. Peyton Hillis rocked and socked for 102 yards on 27 carries- his second straight game of over a hundred- while the Cleveland defence survived 371 passing yards from Carson Palmer and 222 receiving yards from Terrell Owens.

Last Week for the Falcons: Spotted visiting San Francisco a 14-0 lead before coming back to beat the 49ers, 16-14, on Matt Bryant's 43-yard field goal with two seconds left. Atlanta's game-winning drive was interrupted by a Nate Clements interception with a minute-and-a-half left but instead of simply going down, which would have clinched the victory for the 49ers, Clements attempted to return the pick and was stripped of the football.

All-Time Series: Browns lead, 10-2

Last Meeting- November 12, 2006 : Charlie Frye threw for 165 yards and a touchdown without an interception as the Browns surprised the Falcons in the Georgia Dome, 17-13. Atlanta outgained Cleveland 343-236 but was impaired by three turnovers, seven penalties, and a 16-of-40 performance by the erratic Michael Vick.

Out, Doubtful or Questionable for Atlanta: LB Curtis Lofton (knee), LB Sean Weatherspoon (ankle) and WR Michael Jenkins (shoulder) are questionable.

Out, Doubtful or Questionable for Cleveland: T John St. Clair (ankle) is out; RB Peyton Hillis (ankle), DE Kenyon Coleman (knee), QB Jake Delhomme (ankle), C Alex Mack (shoulder), DT Shaun Rogers (ankle), DE Robaire Smith (back) and CB Nick Sorenson (calf) are questionable.

What to watch for the Browns: Atlanta comes into Sunday's game with one of the most potent attacks in football. The Falcons are sixth in the NFL in total offense, have picked up more first downs than any other team and rank in the top ten in both rushing and passing. Matt Ryan is off to an excellent start, completing 62.4 percent of his pass attempts and throwing six touchdown passes to only three interceptions. His favourite target, Roddy White, is second in the NFL in receptions with 32. With Matty Ice, Rowdy Roddy, ageless Tony Gonzalez and the two-head backfield monster of Michael Turner and Jason Snelling, Atlanta is balanced and dangerous on the offensive side. That isn't good news for a Cleveland defence that is statistically

unimpressive and has its entire starting defensive line on the injury list.

The good news is that Atlanta's defence isn't as imposing as its offence- particularly against the run. The Falcons are a respectable eleventh in the NFL in total yards allowed on the ground. But they're getting gashed to the tune of 4.6 yards per carry. Teams just haven't run the ball much against them- only 83 attempts, second fewest in the league- and are instead opting to throw into the teeth of a pass defence that has nabbed a league-high eight interceptions.

Well, you know the Browns aren't going to follow that strategy if they can help it. Cleveland has re-discovered its potent ground game in the last two weeks, averaging 145 yards against Baltimore and Cincinnati. And although it looks as if Jake Delhomme will be back for Sunday's game, the formula for victory remains the same: control the ball, the clock and Atlanta's explosive offence by running the football. There's a reasonably good chance the Browns will be able to do so successfully.

What to watch for the Falcons: 2009 saw the end of one of sport's most ignominious streaks. For the first time since entering the NFL as an expansion team in 1966 the Falcons put together back-to-back winning seasons, finishing 9-7 after their 11-5 division-championship campaign of 2008. Atlanta didn't make the playoffs in 2009 but just finishing over .500- again- was an important milestone in the history of the franchise.

But Atlanta couldn't carry its newfound success outside the climate-controlled confines of the Georgia Dome- or any other indoor stadium. The Falcons are just 6-8 in outdoor stadiums since Mike Smith took the head-coaching job in 2008, as opposed to 17-5 in indoor stadiums. Part of that is the natural home-road success disparity; then again, the Falcons are an even 2-2 since 2008 in road games played under a roof.

Atlanta has played only one outdoor game so far this season, the opener at Pittsburgh. The Falcons lost that game in overtime, 15-9, failing to reach the end zone. Of course, that was against the Steelers defence. The Browns don't quite present that kind of obstacle, regardless of the venue. Still, Atlanta will be out of its comfort zone this Sunday- and hopefully that will provide Cleveland with some sort of advantage, however miniscule.

Next Week for Both Teams: Cleveland visits Pittsburgh; Atlanta goes to Philadelphia.

Trivia: Peyton Hillis is on pace to run for 1,288 yards this season which would make him the first white 1,000-yard rusher in the NFL since 1985, when New England's Craig James ran for 1,227. No word on whether or not the Browns are the first NFL team with a white tailback and a black punter.