Cleveland Browns @ New Orleans Saints

Time: 1:00 pm, Sunday, October 24, 2010

Location: Louisiana Superdome, New Orleans, Louisiana

Network, Announcers- CBS: Kevin Harlan and Solomon Wilcots

Line: Saints by thirteen

Team W/L Records: Cleveland is 1-5; New Orleans is 4-2.

Coaches: Eric Mangini is 29-41 overall, 6-16 in his second season with the Browns; Sean Payton is 70-42 in his fifth season with the Saints.

Last Week for the Browns: Colt McCoy performed admirably in his debut, throwing for 281 yards and a touchdown, but the return of Pittsburgh's pass offense and a couple of James Harrison cheap shots was too much for the Browns to handle in a 28-10 defeat.

Last Week for the Saints: Played their best game of a heretofore up-and-down season, running up a season-high 475 total yards in a 31-6 road rout of the Buccaneers.

All-Time Series: Browns lead, 13-4.

Last Meeting- September 10, 2006 : The Saints set the tone for their renaissance on a sunny day in Cleveland, as Drew Brees crisply managed the offense while first-round Reggie Bush gained 141 combined yards and seventh-round rookie Marques Colston caught his first touchdown pass. Cleveland's offense, meanwhile, bumbled and stumbled to 186 yards to go with three turnovers and a batch of dropped passes by Braylon Edwards. The result was a 19-14 Saints victory and the first for yet another New Orleans rookie, head coach Sean Payton.

Out, Doubtful or Questionable for New Orleans: RB Reggie Bush (fibula), CB Tracy Porter (knee) and RB Pierre Thomas (ankle) are out; CB Jabari Greer (shoulder) and LB Scott Shanle (hamstring) are questionable. The Saints are a little thin at secondary right now, although there's a chance
Darren Sharper, who was playing for the Super Bowl Packers when Colt McCoy was eleven, will make his return this Sunday.

Out, Doubtful or Questionable for Cleveland: QB Jake Delhomme (ankle), WR Mohammed Massaquoi (head), T John St. Clair (ankle) and QB Seneca Wallace (ankle) are doubtful; DE Kenyon Coleman (knee), DT Shaun Rogers (ankle) and TE Robert Royal (elbow) are questionable. Right tackle Tony Pashos and defensive end Robaire Smith went on season-ending injured reserve
this week as well. With Pashos hors de combat and John St. Clair doubtful (on the other hand, when is John St. Clair not "doubtful?") the state of Cleveland's right side is a little bit murky in this day and age.

What to watch for the Browns: For the second consecutive week Colt McCoy will start a football game on the road against an elite team with a veteran defensive mind at coordinator. Last week it was Pittsburgh and Dick LeBeau; this week it's New Orleans and Gregg Williams, whose defence snagged twenty-six interceptions last season, third-most in the NFL.

Obviously the Saints don't have the personnel of the Steelers on defence. And they're a little thin in the secondary- although Darren Sharper's imminent return gives them a boost in that area. Still, the Saints are a respectable seventh in the NFL against the pass so far. They've faced two rookie quarterbacks already in Carolina's Jimmy Clausen and Arizona's Max Hall and have held them to just 6.5 yards per attempt.

Aside from a solid defence led by a capable mind, McCoy will have to deal with the crowd noise in the Superdome as well as an offensive line that has been re-shuffled by injuries. And unlike the Steelers, the Saints have film on McCoy. Add it all up and this is going to be an even tougher test for the rookie than Pittsburgh. How he performs will go a long way toward deciding if he continues to start after the bye or whether he takes a seat on the bench and watches Delhomme or Wallace resume the starter's role when either is healthy.

What to watch for the Saints: From Cleveland's standpoint the Saints picked a bad time to get healthy in the passing game. Drew Brees surgically dissected the Buccaneers last week, throwing long touchdown passes to Lance Moore and Robert Meacham and collecting 263 yards with three scores in the rout of Tampa. The Saints also rushed for 212 yards but it was the passing attack that set the tone early, as Brees hit on 8-of-9 attempts for 141 yards and two touchdowns on the first two New Orleans drives.

It's not a good match-up for a Cleveland defence that has struggled mightily against the pass, particularly in the last four weeks. Since Week Three in Baltimore the Browns have given up an average of 258 yards per game through the air along with nine touchdown passes to just one interception. They've been susceptible to the big play all season, surrendering five touchdown passes of twenty-five yards or longer. Cleveland is thirtieth in the league in opposing yards per attempt (8.0) and twenty-ninth in opposing quarterback rating (99.1).

The prospect of this secondary facing the Saints is an ugly one. Add the energy of New Orleans playing in its Dome for the first time in three weeks and we might just see the Browns get truly blown out for the first time this season. The only question is fantasy-related: who of Meacham, Moore or Devery Henderson will have a big game? I guess it depends on which one is being

covered by Eric Wright, the new-school Antonio Langham.

Next Week for Both Teams: Cleveland is on the bye (thankfully); New Orleans hosts Pittsburgh

Trivia: Since returning to the NFL in 1999 the Browns have played eight games against defending Super Bowl Champions. They're 4-4 in those games, defeating the Ravens twice in 2001, the Giants in 2008 and the Steelers last season.