Week 6

When/Where: Sunday 4:05pm Oakland Coliseum Oakland, CA
Current Spread: Browns +7

The story line of the week 6 game for the Cleveland Browns against the Oakland Raiders will no doubt be the passing of the Raiders owner Al Davis. Davis passed away last Saturday, October 8th. The day after his passing the Raiders beat the favored Houston Texans in Texas and will look to keep the momentum going as they return home to play for the first time since their owner's death.

The Cleveland Browns are coming off of a bye week and should be well rested for the trip to the west coast. The Browns are coming into the game with a 2-2 record and the Raiders are currently 3-2.
The contest will be an emotional one for both teams as Oakland will try feeding off of that crowd which will be even louder than the usual frenzy created in the black hole as they pay respect to their beloved owner. The Browns will be busy trying to fight through that emotion and earn their second road victory in as many tries.

Let's take a closer look at the matchup:

Oakland Season Snaphshot

The Raiders have a first year head coach in Hue Jackson that has lead the team to a 3-2 early season record. The Raiders two losses were to the Bills and the Patriots. Both of those teams have only one loss on the season and are proving to be two of the better teams in the AFC, so far so the Raiders have nothing to hang their heads about.

Oakland could have an even better record on the year but they have shot themselves in the foot with untimely turnovers and mental mistakes. The silver and black lead the league in penalties, which is a category no coach wants to lead the league in, and those penalties have been a big factor in their losses.
When you look at their victories, Oakland has at least two quality wins on the year beating the Jets and the Texans, both of which are expected by many to make the playoffs. The Raiders

are playing good team football and look to continue this on Sunday against the Browns.

Expectations on Gameday

Offense- Jason Campell starts at QB for the Raiders and head coach Hue Jackson calls the plays. They have one of the best running backs in the NFL Darren McFadden and their receiving core, although young, is very fast and explosive. The Offensive line is a good group made up of veteran players on the right side and young players on the left.

In the Running game you can expect the Raiders to vary their approach. They use both man-on-man power blocking and some zone stretch looks as well. The Raiders use a good mix of outside and inside runs with starting back McFadden and they also use some duel halfback looks with backup RB Michael Bush playing tailback and McFadden split out as a WR.

The Raiders will run the ball as much as any team in the NFL and are effective when they do it which is evident by their lofty team rushing ranking. Oakland is second in the league when it comes to rushing yards and Darren McFadden is the reason why.

McFadden is leading the NFL in rushing yards and has transformed his game from the diva, outside runner he was coming out of college into a great all around RB. McFadden runs hard and physical to combine with his elite speed(4.3) and these attributes make him a special player at the position. He is the type of RB that can score on any play so he has to be your focal point as a defense no matter if he is lined up in the backfield or split out as a WR.

The Raiders use a combination of power plays with an occasional unbalanced line and sometimes they even bring in extra lineman for additional power. They also use counter and misdirection plays in order to keep overly aggressive defenses from over pursuing McFadden's initial movement. The overall goal of the running game is always to get McFadden on the edge so he can use his elite speed.

McFadden's backup, Michael Bush, is a good compliment to the starter's speed and agility because he is a big and powerful RB standing 6-1 and weighing a hefty 250lbs. Bush is big but he is still nimble enough to be a feature back and he will spell McFadden throughout the game, not just on the goal line. Both backs have 3 TDs on the year so coach Hue Jackson does a good job of mixing it up.

The Raiders passing game is set up by their superior running game so play action passes are a staple. QB Jason Campbell is a big, strong QB (6-5 230lbs) and he has a very strong arm. Historically the Raiders love the vertical passing game and the 2011 Raiders throw the deep ball all game long.

RB McFadden is the team's receptions leader but Darrius Heyward-Bey is leading in receiving yards, followed by rookie Denarius Moore. The Raiders entire WR core boasts top notch speed so you have to be conscious of the deep pass at all times.
This is the first year in his 7 year career that Campbell has had the same play caller two years in a row and he seems to be playing much better because of it. He is over 60% in completion

percentage and he is not getting sacked much either. He has only been sacked 5 times, which is second best in the NFL, and that is a credit to both him and the offensive line.

The biggest area of concern for Campbell is keeping the turnovers down, he has 4ints on the year which isn't an absurd amount, but the biggest problem for Campbell is the timing of the interceptions. He has been picked off too much in the redzone and those are the picks that keep you from scoring points and end up being momentum changers.

As a unit, look for Oakland to continue what has worked so far and that is pounding the run and using play action passes to takes shots down the field in an attempt to create big plays. The Raiders used two flea flickers last week against the Texans to go along with a fake punt, so expect a few trick plays to be in their arsenal.

Defense- The Raiders defense is one of the more aggressive 4-3 systems in the league. They are 6th in the NFL with 14 sacks through 5 games. They rely on their front 7 to get penetration and disrupt plays in the backfield which leaves their secondary in quite a bit of man coverage. They have paid for all the blitzes and man coverage by giving up the 3rd most receiving TDs in the league (10).

In the first 3 games the Raiders were getting gashed in the running game but they did a great job against Arian Foster and the Houston Texans last week, giving Foster only 68 yards in 22 carries and Houston as a team only had 70 rushing yards. This was a drastic change from the 183 yards they gave up to the Patriots in week 4.

Against the pass, expect the Raiders to pressure Colt McCoy with their front seven. The Raiders will more than likely press the Browns WRs and force them to beat man coverage which is something the Browns have struggled with up to this point in the season.

You can also anticipate the Raiders to show a 6 man front using both outside LBs up on the line of scrimmage. They used this front a lot against the Texans and I think it was a factor in controlling Houston's running game.

Pressure up front attempting to force Colt McCoy into some bad throws will be the strategy in the Raiders pass defense and bringing the SS in the box will more than likely be the plan to control Peyton Hillis.

Browns Season Snapshot

The Cleveland Browns are coming off of a bye week and are 2-2 for the season. The Browns have played above expectations on defense and below expectations on offense. The Browns and first year head coach Pat Shurmur have been bitten by the big play on defense and have failed to create their own big plays on offense during the early games in the 2011 season.

The Browns have struggled to score points early in games and have played from behind because of it. The defense is coming off of a game in which they held the opposing QB to 10

completions but gave up an 80 yard TD pass and another 57 yard passing play that led to points just before the half and changed the flow of the game.

The Browns have yet to put forth a solid game on both sides of the ball so they will look to do so and gain some momentum after correcting some mistakes during their bye week.

Here are some things you may see on game day:

Expectations on Gameday

Defense- The Browns will continue to deploy their base 4-3 defense in week 6 but they may throw in some wrinkles after having the bye week to inject some additional packages and bring some newly acquired players up to speed.

The Browns typically rely on their front 4 to get pressure on the QB but in week 3 they showed that they are capable of using some zone pressure and DB pressure schemes. Jason Campbell has a reputation of getting “happy feet” after he gets hit a few times so I look for the Browns to add some pressure when defending the pass.

The key to getting pressure will be containing the run and making the Raiders one dimensional. If they allow the Raiders to have success in the running game it will allow the them to use play action in the passing game which will make it much more difficult to get pressure.

Stopping Darren McFadden will no doubt be the Cleveland Browns number one priority. McFadden is a game changing back and his success in the running game allows the Raiders to stretch the field getting behind nosey DBs.

I expect the Browns to use some run stunts with the defensive line designed to disrupt the running game of the Raiders but other than some DT and DE inside/outside stunts don’t expect them to get too cute. The focus will be Darren McFadden not Jason Campbell.

The overall strategy of the Browns should be one that invites Campbell and the young Raider WRs to beat them. As long as the Browns keep the WRs in front of them this should be the most effective approach.

Offense- The Browns will try and exploit the aggression of Oakland’s defense. In the running game I expect the Browns to use quick traps and counters plays in order to force the Raiders to stay at home. The Texans struggled to keep the Raiders blocked while using their zone stretch plays in week 5, but other teams have had success using quicker hitting running plays and I expect the Browns to use those types of plays. The key to the Browns success in the running game will be the ability to block the second level defenders (LBs) and the ability of the WRs and TEs to engage SS Tyvon Branch.

If the Raiders are having success stopping the run using the safety in the box, look for the Browns attempt some running plays while lining up in some spread formations. Multiple WR formations will also put Peyton Hillis in one-on-one coverage and if so Hillis should have similar

success gaining big yards like RB Arian Foster did last week for the Texans. Foster had 5 receptions for 116 yards out of the backfield so Hillis could be a big factor in the passing game as well as the running game.

Other than Hillis, look for the Browns passing game to have success from the players who can beat man coverage. Match up wise the best match ups for the Browns will be Evan Moore and Greg Little. I look for these two players to have the potential for big days.

The Raiders will be starting the fast but small rookie CB De Marcus Van Dyke. Although Van Dyke was the fastest player at this year's scouting combine clocking a ridiculous 4.28, he is only 176lbs at almost 6-1 so his thin build is a factor in him getting out muscled while in coverage. He had 2 pass interference penalties last week and he struggled against the 6-3 Kevin Walter. I expect the Browns to test the rookie all day long.
The Raiders have given up big yards to teams that run multiple TE sets. The second TEs have been able to make big plays so as I mentioned above, look for Moore to have an impact on Sunday.

You should see plenty of screen passes against the aggressive Raiders defense as well. Screens and hitches to the WRs should have success against man coverage which means, Josh Cribbs and Greg Little could have big run after catch days and Hillis should be able to gain some additional yards this week as well.

Key Match-ups

WRs Greg Little/Mohamed Massaquoi vs CB DeMarcus Van Dyke- Whoever gets to go against the rookie CB should be key to gaining consistent yards in the passing game. Van Dyke is incredibly fast but he can be muscled and isn't the best tackler. If the Browns flourish in the passing game it will more than likely be because they exploited this matchup.

Little is starting for the first time this week, and after being named the official starter on the depth chart, he should begin to show why he was drafted in the second round after missing the entire 2010 season and only playing WR for one year in college.

The Brown's Guards vs DT Richard Seymour- Seymour has wreaked havoc on every team the Raiders have faced so far this year. He already has 5 sacks this year and 15 of his 18 tackles are solo tackles. Getting Seymour blocked could be the key to having success in the running or passing game on Sunday.
He plays mostly on the left side of the defense so Shawn Lauvao will probably get the lion's share of the job, but rookie Jason Pinkston won't get the day off because DT Tommy Kelly has 2.5 sacks and 16 tackles playing on the other side.

CB Sheldon Brown vs. Oakland Raiders WRs- Sheldon Brown is aging right before our eyes. He is not done playing or a bad CB yet but he has just lost a few steps. The WRs of the Raiders are big plays waiting to happen so Brown will need his entire bag of veteran tricks to ensure the speedsters don't get behind him. Brown is still very effective against the big and physical WRs but he doesn't have the wheels he used to have.

If Joe Haden who is questionable for the game with a knee sprain doesn't play it will be an even bigger task to keep Oakland from big plays, the veteran Brown will have to pick up the slack.

DT Phil Taylor vs RG Cooper Carlisle- Phil Taylor having a good game will go a long way in slowing down Darren McFadden. If the Browns are going to win this game they will need to contain McFadden, and Phil Taylor could be a huge factor in that. Taylor has gotten off to a good start with 20 tackles in 4 games… he will need to add to that total on Sunday in order to contain the Raiders running game.

RB Peyton Hillis vs MLB Rolando McClain/SSTyvon Branch- McClain and Branch will be two of the biggest factors in the Brown's success running the ball. McClain has a sprained ankle and is questionable for the game but most expect him to play. He is a huge MLB who can control a game but with a bum wheel Hillis should have the advantage, especially if the big MLB will have to cover Hillis in the passing game.
Tyvon Branch is a big and fast strong safety. His speed and size make him extremely effective filling lanes in run support. Hillis will have to be conscience of Branch and hold onto the ball because his forceful hits could lead the giving Hillis turning the ball over and that could be game changing.

Prediction

This game is hard to predict because on one hand as a fan you want to think the bye week was productive and allowed the Browns to improve and on the other hand you understand the type of atmosphere the Browns will be fighting on Sunday.

The energy in the stadium as Raider Nation pays homage to their owner Al Davis will be way more than most owners receive. Al Davis was not just an owner of a football team, he has been the face of an organization for decades. He also had intimate relationships with all of his players because he is the person who brought them to the organization while serving as GM and most every other title associated with making personnel decisions.

Al Davis loved the fans and treated them with the respect they deserve and I think they will do the same for him.

If you add the atmosphere with the fact that this Raiders team has good talent on both sides of the ball and are explosive both offensively and defensively it makes the decision even harder. The Raiders are a good football team that has been plagued by mistakes and foolish penalties or they may very well be undefeated right now.

In week 2 I picked against the Browns thinking they would not be able to overcome the energy of the fans in Indy fighting for a victory without Peyton Manning, but the Brown's defense stepped up early in the contest forcing the Colts into FGs which kept them in the game until the offense showed up and ultimately they won the game.

This week, I am picking the Browns to go into Oakland and win that football game. I respect the

Raiders and their explosive offense scares me to no end, but when it is all said and done I think Colt McCoy is a better QB than Jason Campbell and I am picking the Browns because of it.

I picked the Browns in week one for the same reason and the defense gave up a big play, then McCoy failed to bring the Browns back when he had his shot.

I have seen the growth in the young QB and that leads me to believe if he gets another shot at taking the team down for a winning score he will produce like he did against the Dolphins and end up winning the game.

In closing I want to get a bit serious and extend my sympathy and condolences to Raider Nation and say, “R.I.P Al Davis and thank you for all that you have contributed to the NFL.”

Browns fans….. enjoy the game and….. Go Browns!

Browns 24 Raiders 20

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