

TRASH TALK - GETAWAY WEEK

The Phoenix Suns once, thrice actually, had a coach named Cotton Fitzsimmons. A wonderful man, and a great coach (10th winningest coach in NBA history actually). Cotton was a diminutive man with outsized character; he may be one of the only men in history that could consistently put Charles Barkley in his place, and it was with such charm that Chuck loved him like a father. Anyway, Cotton had this theory that it was always important to win "getaway games". And Cotton defined getaway games as the last home game before a big road trip or the last game before the playoffs. He always wanted to roll into tough situations on a positive note. Smart man.

Well, this is the last week of the regular season in the National Favre League, and for those teams headed to the playoffs, or trying desperately to get into the playoffs, we got some getaway games. Eli, Coughlin and the Giants showed what it meant last year to play hard on a getaway game in the last week, even when you are already in the playoffs and it won't affect your seeding. Even though they lost to the Patriots, they played their hearts out and left every ounce on the field. What they gained from that effort propelled them all the way to the Lombardi Trophy. Oh, and don't miss today's video, it is some excellent getaway music.

Fish at Jets and Pats at Bison: Let's be honest, this is all one big game, and it is going to be for all the marbles. If the Dolphins win, they win the East and they are in the playoffs; if they lose and the Bills beat the Pats, the Jets are in. If the Jets win and the Pats win, the Pats are the East champs. Even if the Dolphins win, the Pats can get in as a wildcard if the Ravens lose to Jacksonville. The Jets get in as a wildcard if they win and the Pats beat Buffalo, so long as the Ravens lose. I really, and I mean really, hate to say this, but I think

the Dolphins will beat the Jets, the Pats will beat the Bills, and the Ravens, being the home team, will beat the Jags. This, sadly, means that Brett, the Jets and the Pats all go home. Totally sucks, but that is how I see it; the Fish and Ravens win getaway games.

Donkos at Bolts: The other bare knuckle brawl for all the marbles is the Denver boys going to the beach to visit Randiego. Having spent some time in graduate school at Boulder, I am a bit of a Broncos fan, and I have always admired Mike Shanahan. I am again really sad to report that I think the Bolts will win this getaway game and head into the playoffs with as much steam as a weak kneed 8-8 team can muster. Then Norval Turner will show just what kind of coach he is and promptly lose to a wild card challenger.

In the rest of the games, Giants win a close one over the Vikings in Minnesota; Panthers beat the Saints in N'awlins; Lions end their season of historic incompetence in the home of the Green Bay Packers; Rams lose in HotLanta to the Falcons; Bears succumb to the Texans in Houston; Titans make it close, but get kicked by the Colts in Indy; Browns get rolled by Big Ben and the Steelers; Raiders get walked off the plank by the Buccos in Tampa Bay; Chiefs beat the hapless Bengals in Cincy; Cowboys scalp the Eagles in Philly (and that could be an ugly scene); Redskins lose in a close game to the up and coming 49ers in Frisco; Seahawks go back to their losing ways and give the Cardinals a getaway victory at home, and with it, only the second winning season in the more than twenty years the bumbling birds have been in Phoenix. Then, like Randiego's Bolts, they show their true nature and become fodder for a wildcard challenger

Here is the complete playoff picture and calculations from Fox Sports, because this is really what is important at this point:

NFC EAST

New York Giants

Giants have clinched NFC East division title, first-round bye and homefield advantage throughout NFC playoffs.

Dallas Cowboys

Cowboys can clinch playoff spot with:

1. Cowboys win.

Philadelphia Eagles

Eagles can clinch playoff spot with:

1. Eagles win AND Bucs loss AND Bears OR Vikings loss.

NFC NORTH

Minnesota Vikings

Vikings can clinch NFC North title with:

1. Vikings win, OR ...
2. Bears loss.

Chicago Bears

Bears can clinch NFC North title with:

1. Bears win AND Vikings loss.

Bears can clinch playoff spot with:

1. Bears win AND Cowboys loss AND Bucs loss.

NFC SOUTH

Carolina Panthers

Panthers have clinched playoff spot.

Panthers can clinch division title and first-round bye with:

1. Panthers win/tie, OR ...
2. Falcons loss.

Atlanta Falcons

Falcons have clinched playoff spot.

Falcons can clinch division title and first-round bye with:

1. Falcons win AND Panthers loss.

Tampa Bay Buccaneers

Buccaneers can clinch playoff spot with:

1. Buccaneers win AND Cowboys loss.

NFC WEST

Arizona Cardinals

Cardinals have clinched NFC West title.

NFC eliminated teams: 49ers, Lions,
Packers, Rams, Redskins, Saints,
Seahawks

AFC East

Miami Dolphins

Dolphins can clinch AFC East title with:

1. Dolphins win.

New England Patriots

Patriots can clinch AFC East title with:

1. Patriots win AND Dolphins loss.

Patriots can clinch playoff spot with:

1. Patriots win AND Ravens loss.

New York Jets

Jets can clinch AFC East title with:

1. Jets win AND Patriots loss.

Jets can clinch playoff spot with:

1. Jets win AND Ravens loss.

AFC NORTH

Pittsburgh Steelers

Steelers have clinched AFC North title
and first-round bye.

Baltimore Ravens

Ravens can clinch playoff spot with:

1. Ravens win.

AFC SOUTH

Tennessee Titans

Titans have clinched AFC South division
title, first-round bye and homefield
advantage throughout AFC playoffs.

Indianapolis Colts

Colts have clinched playoff spot.

AFC WEST

Denver Broncos

Broncos can clinch AFC West division title with:

1. Broncos win/tie, OR ...
2. Chargers loss/tie.

AFC eliminated teams: Bengals, Bills, Browns, Chiefs, Jaguars, Raiders, Texans

That's all folks. Please litter and trash appropriately!