

# WILDCARD WEEKEND

## 2017

The regular season is finally over, and after a horrible schedule of boring games to close it out last weekend, we are on to the playoffs. Playoffs?!?! Yeah, here we are for Wildcard Weekend 2017, and it is on to the games:

First up is Tennessee at the KC Chiefs. The knee jerk is to say the Titans don't have enough scoring potential to keep cooking with the Chiefs. But KC has lost every home playoff game in the supposed ultimate home advantage of Arrowhead Stadium in the last 24 years (seriously, the last win there, the Chiefs had a QB by the name of Joe Montana). That is not good. KC also has some injury issues, especially as to returners, and will likely have to use star receiver Tyreek Hill in the fraught return game. Titans have their own injury problems with starting RB DeMarco Murray out with an MCL sprain. But they still have Derrick Henry, who is very good, but may be overworked. Injury problems at CB too for the Titans. You will be shocked to hear that the game will come down to which QB protects the ball better and gets yardage downfield, but Smith has Tyreek Hill and Travis Kelce for that. Hey, Aaron Rodgers he is not, but I will take the experience and calm of KC's Alex Smith over young and talented, but sometimes erratic, Marcus Mariota.

Late game for Saturday is Falcons at Rams. There are a lot of smart people, for one Mike Wilbon, thinking the edge here goes to the Dirty Birds because of their, and their quarterback's, superior experience in the playoffs. I don't know that that is wrong. By the same token, nothing seems false about the Rams. They already had a great defense, with true studs like Aaron Donald etc. The turnaround this year was the offense, and if Jared Goff gets past the original early game jitters, they are really solid on that side of the ball too. Todd Gurley is the serious beast we all thought he would be

coming out of Georgia. Goff has been steady, and at times spectacular. And, while there is no Julio Jones on their roster, the trio of Robert Woods, Sammy Watkins and Cooper Kupp gives Goff solid targets across his read. I have no real reason why, but will go out on a limb and take the Rams, even if I do not feel good about it.

Early game Sunday is Buffalo at Jacksonville. The Marrone Bowl, because Jax coach Doug Marrone walked out on the Bills and landed as the current coach of the Jaguars after a stint as OC. The Jags also have Tom Coughlin in the front office, but he seems to be quite involved in the field work too. The combo has worked for the Jags. Blake Bortles has even looked like an upper half NFL QB lately. The Bills are a great story getting back into the playoffs (not since 1999) – finally – after a long drought. But they did it by the thinnest of reeds in tie breakers. Frankly, I think the Chargers would have been a harder out at this point. But here the Bills are. Shady McCoy looks like he will play for the Bills, but his ankle clearly is not in optimum condition. And the Jacksonville defense, led by the awesome Calais Campbell, is quite stout. I'll take the Jags, Bortles and Leonard Fournette here, plus, of course, they are at home.

Last game is the Sunday late game of Carolina at Saints. Fittingly, it is last in the Saturday queue, because it is probably the best and most intriguing game. Both teams have experience in the playoffs. Cam Newton versus Drew Brees, two vastly different, but awesome QB's. New Orleans won both head to head matchups this year in the NFC South. And, no, I do not buy that "you can't win three games in a season against the same team" baloney. It may or may not be true, but it is a trope that came out of ACC basketball, not the NFL. The Saints defense is MUCH improved. Drew Brees is still Drew Breeees. And he has a young and ridiculously dynamic running back in Alvin Kamara. Kamara may well be on the field in kick return situations too. I think this is too much for the Panthers, especially in the Superdome.

Great game though.

Okay, there you have it. You all have good stuff to say, let it rip in comments. Music this weekend is by Willie Nelson. Willie is fucking great, and I went to see him again last Wednesday night. My wife had never seen him before, and her eyes were opened. Yes, it is not just his voice, but his guitar playing too. Really great. Have a great weekend folks.