

NFL DIVISIONAL PLAYOFFS IN PANDEMIC TRASH TALK

Greetings to all fans, whether you are scoring at home, or alone in isolation. It is pretty remarkable that the NFL has made it this far without blowing up from Covid. Yet here they are down to four games this weekend, and most of the teams are pretty healthy and ready to go. So, let's get to it.

First up is the Rams at Packers. The Rams allowed the fewest points in the league this year. The Packers scored the most. No signs of snow by reports, but it will be around 32° with light to moderate wind. The Packers know how to play on the famously frozen tundra, but their record of never, or at least rarely, losing at Lambeau in the playoffs does not have the lock it once had. They can be had at home. The Rams were pretty high on young John Wolford at QB, but he is out for today and Jarred Goff is back in the saddle, bum thumb and all, and Blake Bortles will back him up. The Pack defense is certainly not on the level of the Rams, but they are solid. If Rodgers is Rodgers, the Pack should win, but this is probably a lot closer than folks would expect.

Second game up for Saturday is Ravens at Bills. This may well turn out to be the best game of the weekend. Both teams have young QB's that can run in addition to throwing, and given the weather in Buffalo, that will likely be necessary. When it comes to passing though, the edge would seem to go to Buffalo with Josh Allen and Stephon Diggs, the best receiver in the NFL this year. Curiously, Baltimore has made running back Marlon Ingram a healthy scratch. That is weird as this is exactly the kind of game Ingram is made for. It is close, but a majority of the experts, both on local sports talk radio, and on TV, seem to favor the Ravens to win this. So do the odds makers. I'm not so

sure, and will very tentatively take the Bills in a close game.

Early game Sunday is Browns at Chiefs. The Brownies are a great story this year and are playing with some swagger. They are not the Browns of the last 25 years. The Chef's defense is not nearly as good as Cleveland's. On the other hand, KC has the once in a generation wizardry of Patrick Mahomes, a dual headed monster at RB with Nick Chubb and Kareem Hunt. And, of course huge weapons in Tyreek Hill and Travis Kelce. They will, however, be without Sammy Watkins to take attention away from Hill. This could go any number of ways, but I am not going to bet against Mahomes and Andy Reid. Nope, no can do.

The coda on the weekend's games is the battle of the Geezer QBs. The B boys, Brady and Brees. You know who they are by now. They have never met in the playoffs. During the regular season, the Saints owned the Bucs. In fairness, Tampa Bay finally gelled down the end stretch of the regular season and is playing much better now, and has also integrated Antonio Brown into their gam much better. With Chris Godwin and Mike Evans (both a tad nicked up, but ready to play), that is one hell of a set of receivers. Oh, and there is that Gronk guy healthy and ready to rumble at TE. Saints have the outstanding Alvin Kamara at RB, and Bucs have Fournette and Ronald Jones. By a slim margin, most of the experts, including Vegas, favor the Saints. They are at home, but without the usual crowd advantage that would portend. I have no idea how it will go, so will simply call it a tossup.

Music today by the incomparable Thin Lizzy. Man, I miss those boys. But rock and roll and tilt a cold one.