

## RESPECT, find out what it means to me. Atlanta @ Miami

Contributed by Tony Simmons  
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That opening line in the title is from the Queen of Soul, Aretha Franklin, and Respect is what the Miami Dolphins will be looking to gain today as the 2-0 Dolphins host the 1-1 Atlanta Falcons in a 4:00 kickoff on Fox Sports. This will mark to home opener for Miami.

Miami is coming off a solid 24-20 win on the road at Indianapolis, their 2nd straight road win to open up the season, while the Falcons opened their home season with a 31-24 win over the St.Louis Rams.

Let's take a look at these 2 teams as we head into this matchup.

Offensively, the Dolphins come into the game ranking 21st in total offense, averaging 336 yards per game. Miami is 13th in pass offense at 276 yards per game, while coming in 28th in rush offense at 60.5 yards per game. The Dolphins are 15th in scoring at 23.5 points per game. They face a Falcon defense that ranks 27th in total defense giving up 420 yards per game. They rank 29th in pass defense giving up 347 yards per game, and rank 8th in rush defense at 73.5 yards per game. Atlanta ranks 17th in points allowed at 23.5 points per game.

Miami will be facing a Falcon defense that suffered major injuries in the game against the Rams last Sunday, as they lost OLB/DE Kroy Biermann for the season with a torn achilles. LB Sean Weatherspoon will miss 2 months with a foot injury and starting CB Asante Samuel is questionable with a thigh injury. Losing Biermann is particularly tough for a team that is not generating much pass rush to begin with, as the Falcons only have 2 sacks as a team. Miami got more production out of the the run game last week as the Dolphins had 101 yards against the Colts. The Dolphins will want to have a balanced attack against the Falcons, but I can see the Dolphins looking to attack what is a very suspect and vulnerable pass defense for the Falcons. While he is listed as questionable, I expect Mike Wallace to play and be part of the passing attack that has shown to be versatile in the weapons that they can bring to the show. WR Brian Hartline & Brandon Gibson have been factors for the Dolphins along with TE Charles Clay. The key for the Dolphins will be an offensive line that has given up 9 sacks. They are facing a defensive front that has struggled to generate pass rush, and if they can protect Ryan in this game, the Dolphins can have a very productive day.

Defensively, the Dolphins come into the game ranked 18th in total defense giving up 369 yards per game. Miami ranks 20th in pass defense, giving up 280 yards per game while ranking 12th in rush defense giving up 90.0 yards per game. Miami ranks 5th in points allowed, giving up 15.0 points per game. They face a Falcons offense that ranks 11th in total offense, generating 380 yards per game. Atlanta ranks 6th in pass offense generating 318 yards per game, while ranking 26th in rush offense with 62.0 yards per game. The Falcons rank 14th in points per game scoring 24.0.

The Dolphins will be facing a Falcon offense that features multiple playmakers. QB Matt Ryan is a top 10 quarterback in the NFL, and he has potent weapons to work with in WR Julio Jones, Roddy White and Harry Douglas along with TE Tony Gonzalez. Jones and White are big, fast wide receivers that have been difficult to contain and Jones is becoming one of the best deep threat receivers in the game. They can attack all parts of the field, and getting pressure on Ryan will be key, and he has been sacked 5 times and been pressured on many other occasion. The task of getting after Ryan has been made a little easier, as OLT Sam Baker will miss the game with a knee injury. Atlanta will also be missing RB Stephen Jackson with a thigh injury, which will keep him out for a few weeks. Atlanta will feature Jacquizz Rodgers and Jason Snelling in the run game, but the Dolphins have to and should be able to contain the run game. Miami comes into this game with 9 sacks, and will once again be key in this game. The pressure has to be constant and Matt Ryan will need to be hit a lot, even when he is not getting sacked. CB Brent Grimes and the secondary will have to play well in this game, as they face a potent passing attack. Look for the Dolphins to be very aggressive with LB Darnell Ellerbe and Phillip Wheeler blitzing and creating pressure. They also will have to be solid in pass coverage in dealing with Tony Gonzalez, as tight ends still are giving the Dolphins problems.

Miami faces a stiff test in Atlanta, and has been the case as the 1st 2 games, the Dolphins will be the underdog in the game. You want to get the respect you believe you deserve, beat the Falcons. I believe the Dolphins will be able to exploit a Falcons defense that was a little suspect to begin with and suffered major injuries that will make them more vulnerable. The defense will have their hands full, but the big plus for the defense is their strong, deep defensive line. This unit will be key, and I believe they will be able to make it a long, difficult day for QB Matt Ryan. The Falcons will make some plays, as they have to many weapons offensively, but the defense will be able to do enough to keep the damage to a minimum, as the Saints did when they defeated the Falcons 23-17 in the 1st game of the season in New Orleans.

In their 1st home game of 2013, I will take the Dolphins 28-21.

Go Dolphins.

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