

Defense Dooms Dolphins

Contributed by Rich Rodriguez
Monday, 24 November 2008

All year long, the special teams coverage units have been villified. We've been expecting that sooner or later, they would lose a game for us.

On Sunday against the Patriots, there were no coverage teams breakdowns. No huge returns.

The coverage breakdowns came from the Miami Dolphins secondary, who were unable to cover Randy Moss, Wes Welker and Jabbar Gaffney. The breakdowns were aided by a pass rush that could not get pressure with just 4 men.

This just goes to show just how far this team still is talent-wise. There is no bookend to Joey Porter. Porter alone has half the Dolphins sack this season. No one else has more than 4. The pass rush is still a huge need for this defense that has become stout against the run but still needs help against the pass.

On Sunday, the offense performed admirably, at least in keeping the Dolphins in it for most of the game. While the Wildcat did not yield any big plays and the Dolphins found it hard to run the ball, the passing game was clicking, with Greg Camarillo, Ted Ginn Jr., Devone Bess and David Martin all providing very productive games. Chad Pennington, aside from one bad interception, had his best statistical day as a Dolphins passer. He threw for 3 TDs and ran for one more.

Greg Camarillo showed that a new contract wasn't going to make him become complacent, although we're still waiting to hear about his knee injury.

Ted Ginn Jr. finally caught a ball deep down the field, but he did have a couple of troublesome drops as the Dolphins lost focus toward the end of the game.

Devone Bess, an undrafted rookie, is making himself a viable option not only on short quick routes, but on some intermediate routes as well.

And David Martin, who would have thought a year ago that he would be on the team, let alone playing as well as he is?

So it wasn't special teams or offense that doomed the Dolphins against the Patriots.

It was defense. The Patriots scored on 8 different drives and gained over 500 yards of offense. Matt Cassel, who has gone from inexperienced back up to valuable trade bait, torched the Dolphins all day long.

Next season, the Dolphins will still have Chad Pennington, the R&R Express, these emerging wide receivers and tight ends, along with a (hopefully) improving offensive line. They will have their QB of the future still learning and being groomed.

But this defense still needs help at linebacker, at corner, at safety and most of all, players who can pressure the quarterback. Look for a defense-heavy offseason for the Dolphins.

The defensive performance against the Patriots should make that all but certain.

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