

Miami Dolphins vs Dallas Cowboys Game Preview

Contributed by Dave Blake
Friday, 08 August 2008

Day: Sunday
Date: Sept. 16th, 2007
Location: Dolphin Stadium
Time: 4:05 p.m. ET

Weather Forecast: 89°F Possible Storms in the Afternoon
Series leader: Dolphins, 7-3
Streaks: The Dolphins have won five of the last seven.

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Miami Dolphins
Head Coach: Cam Cameron
Record: 0-1 (0-0)
Division: AFC East
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Game Analysis by Rich Rodriguez

Key Matchups

- Dolphins Offensive Line versus Cowboys Front Seven** - The performance of the Dolphins offensive line will continue to be a key until they begin to consistently demonstrate that they can hold their own versus opposing front sevens. The good news for the Dolphins offensive line this week is that Dallas might be missing two of its key pieces in nose tackle Jason Ferguson and linebacker Greg Ellis. However, Dallas will still have the presence of DeMarcus Ware. The Dolphins offensive line held their own in pass protection last week, allowing 2 sacks and generally giving Trent Green good enough protection to allow him to get rid of the ball. However, they opened up very little in the way of running lanes for the Dolphins running backs. They also showed little sign that they were adjusting. It is critical that the offensive line open holes against Dallas. It is worth noting that the New York Giants ran for 124 yards. **Advantage: Dallas** - While the front seven for Dallas is injured and they were unable to shut down the Giants running game, they still have the experience edge over the Dolphins, particularly center Samson Satele. Satele needs to learn quickly as a runblocker if the Dolphins are going to have any success running the ball in this game. They might do better than they did against the Redskins, but it will still not be good enough. Also, Dallas will bring a better pass rush than Washington.
- Trent Green and the Receivers Versus the Cowboys Pass Defense** - Terrence Newman is out. This means the Dolphins will probably attack his replacement early and often. Cam Cameron showed that he is dedicated to trying to get Chris Chambers the ball around 10-15 times a game. No reason to believe this won't be the case again. If the offensive line can provide Trent Green with adequate protection again, expect another effective day from the Green/Chambers connection. Now the other receivers on the team, particularly David Martin, need to hold their weight. **Advantage: Green** - He still has the ability to read defenses and throw quick, accurate passes. This neutralizes the other team's pass rush. If the Dolphins could find some success running the ball, it would really open up the passing game, particularly play action, which is Green's specialty.
- Miami's Front Seven versus Dallas Offensive Line** - This will be the most intriguing matchup of the game. Miami's front seven were ineffective in stopping Washington's running game in the second half. The pass rush was also nowhere to be seen in those key second half situations. How much did the "easy" camp hurt the veterans on this front seven? Were they not used to the contact? As good as Dallas's offense may be, I still think the superior talent lies on the side of the Dolphins front seven. The question is whether Joey Porter will be allowed to be on the field in key situations this time around. Hopefully he learned those nickel packages over the past week. How will Taylor fair against former Pro-Bowl left tackle Flozell Adams? **Advantage: Miami** - Again this will be the most intriguing match up and I believe the home field advantage and the play of Jason Taylor and Zach Thomas will make the difference here.
- Miami's Pass Defense versus Cowboys Receivers** - If the Dolphins can't stop the run and can't get to Tony Romo, Terrell Owens will have a field day. There is not a member of the Dolphins secondary that can keep up with Owens. Even though Terry Glenn is out, Owens is elite and having a very good tight end like Jason Witten catching passes underneath will help him. **Advantage: Dallas** - Even with Jeremiah Bell, stop Owens would have been a

tall order. He is simply too good. Analysis: The Dolphins defense we saw last week is not one we are used to seeing. I believe things will be different this week. The Dolphins will be able to contain the Cowboys running game, but the Cowboys will still be able to pass. The secondary is beat up and wasn't that good to begin with. Owens and Witten will hurt the Miami secondary, especially in big situations. The only guy that can get any pressure right now is Jason Taylor, so unless Joey Porter can have a coming out party, I believe the Cowboys will have success making plays downfield. I also feel we will see improved play out of the offense, but inconsistency will still lead to killing drives again. Green gives this team a chance with his heady play, but he simply doesn't have enough guys around him who are reliable targets. Unless Ted Ginn Jr has a coming out party this week, it will be more short passes and an improved, but inconsistent running game.

Final Score: Cowboys 23, Dolphins 20. T-Rock's Keys to winning the game by Tom Eddie

While fans are still reeling and upset over the loss to the Redskins in a game we clearly had a chance to win, time is over for players and coaches to think about it. The Cowboys are coming off a 45-35 win over the New York Giants. While the Cowboys did win big, it's important to look at what the Giants were able to accomplish, even though they lost. The Giants were able to plug in a player at Running Back who had little prior NFL experience after spending 5 seasons in New York backing up the back-up to Tiki Barber. In addition, Quarterback Eli Manning had the 2nd best game of his career, connecting with WR Plaxico Burress 8 times, 3 for TDs. The Cowboys run Defense was suspect, as well. So if we're going to have a chance to win, these are my 5 keys to the game:

1. Establish a running game. Unless the game situation dictates otherwise, you have to have a successful running game in order to have opportunities to win on a consistent basis. Running the ball also sets up the passing game. Ronnie Brown is most effective when he has 20 or more carries.
2. Stop the run on Defense. Last week we faced a 2 headed monster in Clinton Portis and Ladell Betts. This week, Julius Jones and Marion Barber aren't quite the same caliber but they can be effective.
3. Throw downfield to keep the Defense honest. We have Ginn and Chambers who can both fly downfield. We need to go deep to keep the defense on its toes. Even with Ginn and Booker going deep it allows Chambers to find soft spots underneath when used in the slot.
4. Don't lose sight of Jason Witten. He's one of the top TEs in the league and can wreak havoc on a Defense. 116 yards on 6 receptions last week, and one touchdown, proves it.
5. Establish a pass rush to neutralize Terrell Owens. If Tony Romo has time to wait for Owens downfield he's got plenty of arm to get the ball to him. We need constant pressure from the front 7 on defense to keep Romo from being too comfortable.

Well, those are my 5 keys. Perhaps you have more? Talk about it on the forums!