

## Strange Territory

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The win over the San Fransisco 49ers on Sunday marked a territorial boundary of sorts, a border between the lands of the usual and mundane, and those lands that are unusual and historic. That border is always delineated by wins: it plays no favorites and spans every generation. It has a merciless, objective eye, and cares naught for the circumstances that create the event that reaches it's notice. It is a measure in terms of one thing:

victory.

The 9 wins by the Miami Dolphins tied the two teams since the '70 merger to go from 1 win to 9 in a single year. Those two are the '97 Parcells-led Jets and the '92 Marchibroda-led Colts. Both got to 9-7.

With two to go, we are already there.

A win THIS Sunday elevates us to a stunning plateau: there are four teams in the long history of the NFL to make single-season turnarounds of 9 games: the '29 NY Giants, the '63 Raiders, the '99 Rams and the '04 Steelers. Of those, only Oakland was climbing up from a 1-win effort: they went 10-4.

The best of all, the '99 Colts (who went 3-13 to 13-3 in one year, a 10 game improvement) are within reach.

This is outrageously good, and has the potential to be epic. It already can be nothing less than excellent. The records of the teams that have beaten us are 9-5, 9-5, 9-5, 8-6 and 7-7. There's no shame in those, especially since we were in all of them but one.

We have beaten two Division-leaders. We went 3-1 versus the NFCW which a good team would be. We can sweep the AFCW which a good team would do. We can go to 4-2 in our Division which is right now pretty darn tough overall.

Despite not having top-half talent (and no, we are not in the top 16 teams in overall talent), we are hobnobbing with those teams. We have some really good players (Penny, Porter, Ronnie and Ricky, to name a few) and some decent prospects, but our wins are more a reflection of continuity, good practice habits and excellent leadership than a talent-laden roster. We are playing smart, we are playing as a unit; we are playing way over our heads talent-wise and doing it through execution.

A momentary digression:

You've all probably seen a diagram of a byte somewhere. Bytes are the digital collections of bits (binary digits) that reflect either 'on' or 'off' and are expressed in terms of 1 or 0. A typical byte is 8 bits, or something like this: 10011010. A group of bytes strung together (and each having varying 1 and 0 sequences) record digital data so that a computer 'remembers' stuff we put into it.

Miami's 'data' for the Dolphins v2k8 goes something like this: 11001111101110. It is probably not in the correct sequence, but regardless it reads and means the same. That is how many turnovers Miami has committed on a game-by-game basis. We have not given the ball up more than once in any game.

Another little interesting 'bit': 0 0 0. That is a sequence of how many TDs we have surrendered the last three games.

Miami at 9-5 is in rarified air after the stench of 1-15's pollution. We got here by playing smart, being well-led, and by giving maximum effort. It has been enough to overcome our defficiencies. It has been enough to give us a competetive edge. It has given us a chance to be right in the thick of this thing.

Rarified air. Take a deep breath, and be sure you inhale.

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