Tough road to the playoffs? You betcha.

Contributed by Dave Blake
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It's December which means it is crunch time. Can the Dolphins use last week's win over a good Seattle Seahawks team as a springboard to a nice finish to the 2012 season? Let's hope so, but I would like to caution you that this is a young team led by a rookie quarterback. What that means is there will be good times and bad times ahead for us. Take each game and enjoy a look at the developing young talent.

The first obstacle for the Dolphins are the New England Patriots but what is in favor for us is that this game is in Miami ... you know, home field advantage and no wintery elements to deal with. All good teams plan to peak in December in order to get that playoff run. The Patriots are no exception, but for some strange reason the Dolphins have been a nemesis to them in December. In fact, in the last 10 years the Patriots are 35-3. Guess which team gave them those 3 losses? Yep, the Dolphins. Wait a minute, Dave. Were any of those losses at the end of the season and meaningless to the Patriots? If you believe that then you are saying that Belichick, the coach who runs the score up on teams and does not rest his starters, slacked up in December when it came to playing the Dolphins? Nice try;)

There's some really good news for Dolphins fans not in the Miami and Boston areas. This game is the CBS prime time game and most of America will finally get to see the Dolphins. I guess we can thank Tom Brady for this, and we can return the favor by beating them.

When you look at Miami's remaining 5 games, you see the Patriots twice and the 49ers in San Francisco. San Francisco will be a very tough game, and the Dolphins will have to fly across the country to play them.Let's remember the slow start that the Seahawks had against the Dolphins last week. It is a long flight across the country. There could be some jet lag issues. It could be a good close game or a total blow out.

Miami's remaining games:
* Week 13 New England Patriots
* Week 14 @ San Francisco 49ers
* Week 15 Jacksonville Jaguars
* Week 16 Buffalo Bills
* Week 17 @ New England Patriots

A LOOK AT THE WILD CARD PICTURE.

CHAD HENNE IS BACK.

Of the 5 remaining games I think you would initially breathe a sigh of relief to see Jacksonville in the list. You would think that the Jacksonville Jaguars game would be gimme for a team that started as well as we did this year, but that isn't the case as Jacksonville has sprung new life with the resurgence of Chad Henne. Chad Henne? Yep, he has thrown 6 touchdown passes and 1 interception over the past two games in relief of injured QB Brad Gabbart. Gabbart has been placed on IR, so, the Dolphins should face Henne in 3 weeks if he stays healthy.

I am happy for Henne. I thought Henne had a good start last year before his injury. I've always felt he had the tools to be a good quarterback in this league, but let's face it ... he has taken way too long to develop. When it comes down to it I put the failure on Henne. The Dolphins were patient with him and tried to surround him with an offensive line (a lot of first round picks here), a game breaking receiver (Brandon Marshall), and home run threat at running back (Bush). I think the injury took away a good season from him last year. The Dolphins had to go in a different direction this year, and I don't blame them at all.

As far as Jacksonville, I was shocked that he could not beat out Blaine Gabbart for the starting job, but maybe it took him time to learn the offense. Hopefully he can continue to improve. Will he? I'm not sure as he's always underachieved. I think he will always be a good #2 quarterback, but I hope for the best for him. He was a class act for us.

With that said, I expect it to be a tough game, but a win for the Dolphins.

CHARLES CLAY FINALLY PROVES THE HYPE

Last year, Charles Clay was the invisible weapon. Where was this preseason playmaker? Nowhere to be seen.

The first half of this seaason he was the one-play man. He could be counted on to show up for one play and then he'd disappear in overhype.

Last week he came out and caught 6 passes for 84 yards with a 29 yard touchdown. He would have had another catch but Tannehill misfired on the pass. He caught the ball well and seemed to have very good chemistry with Tannehill and he caught passes in stride finding the soft spots in a tough Seahawk defense. The Seahawks decided to follow the winning formula over the past week from Miami's opponents by stacking 8 in the box, so, the Dolphins finally had an answer for it.

So, now the question is ... is Clay a one-game wonder now, or will he continue to progess into a consistent playmaker? Chances are that we will be as Davone Bess and Brian Hartline ... make plays one game and disappear in the next.

IS TANNEHILL AHEAD OF THE ROOKIE CURVE?Everyone has an opinion on this. I mean, what does the rookie curve look like anyways? The traditional rookie curve for a quarterback is riding the bench watching a veteran. With defenses much more complex now than in the "old days", I am surprised that rookie quarterbacks are actually able to jump in on game 1 of their rookie year and bring order to their teams. Aaron Rogers, one of the best QB in the NFL, couldn't do that and took time to develop.

I took these stats from Pro Football Focus and had to use photoshop to put the information together, but Tannehill and the rookie starters from the past two years are doing well in the NFL. Is their QB ratings better than the official QB Efficiency Rating Sytem? Not so sure about that, but PFF definitely use more variables in their ratings ... they are insane.

So, I would give Tannehill a definite "yes" that he is far ahead of the rookie curve for quarterbacks.

GET READY FOR THE END OF REX RYAN

I have to admit that I am really enjoying Rex Ryan's Jets team implode. They seem to find new ways to lose each week. Check out the butt-fumble from Mark Sanchez. I've never seen such a thing. Why is he still the quarterback there?

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