

SPORTSMEMO

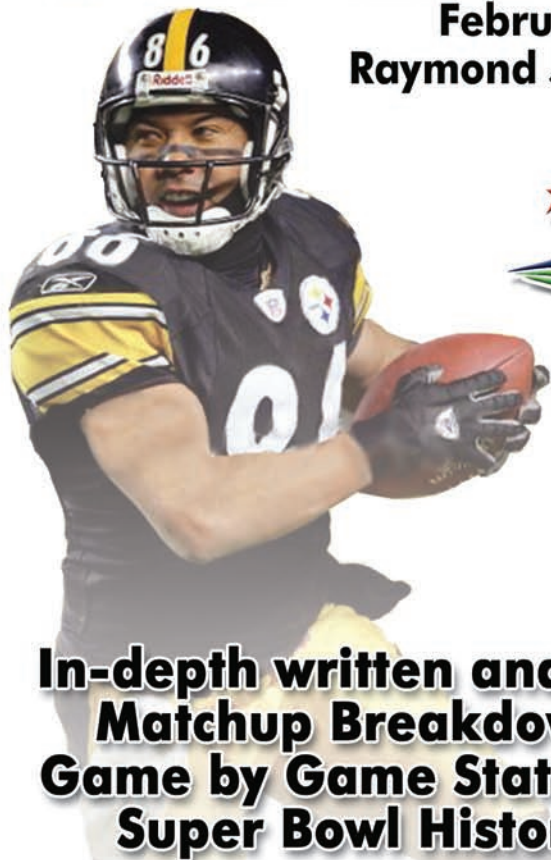
SPORTS FROM A **VEGAS** PERSPECTIVE

Volume 13, Issue 27 Super Bowl Edition

January 29, 2008

SUPER BOWL XLIII

February 1, 6:20 pm ET NBC
Raymond James Stadium Tampa, Fla.



In-depth written analysis
Matchup Breakdown
Game by Game Statistics
Super Bowl History

Consensus Report Side/Total
11 Prop Bet Recommendations
Weekly Best Bets
Service Play Offers

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Super Bowl XLIII



For much of the regular season and heading into the playoffs, the Arizona Cardinals were thought by many to be a gimmick – the Texas Tech of the NFL. The game plan was to outscore the opposition by way of the pass and for most of the season, they held true to form. However, en route to the Super Bowl we discovered that while not outstanding, the defense was capable of making plays. Additionally, the ground game proved to be creative enough to move the chains. Make no mistake; success throwing the football is the only way Arizona will emerge victorious but this is a different team than what we saw earlier this season.

In looking at Kurt Warner's numbers, with the exception of a meaningless late season game at New England, he fared well against some of the better pass defenses in the league. In eight games against teams that rank in the upper-half of the NFL in terms of passing yardage defense, Warner averaged 272 ypg with a strong 16-to-5 TD-to-INT ratio. The key for Warner has always been protection and Arizona did a solid job during the campaign allowing 26 sacks and just three in the playoffs. Over the last four years, when Warner was sacked four or more times in a game, his teams were 0-7. Four or more sacks may seem extreme, but the Steelers were No. 2 in the NFL with 51 during the regular season. They recorded four against San Diego and three versus the Ravens in the playoffs.

Despite the ruffling of feathers, the long-term result of keeping Edgerrin James on the sideline for a large portion of the regular season certainly paid dividends. When fresh, James' top four games in terms of carries resulted in Arizona going 4-0 SU and ATS. In three playoff games, he saw the ball no fewer than 16 times per game. This season, when James failed to get at least 10 carries, the Cardinals were 4-6 SU.

Defensively, Arizona didn't get much credit during the regular season and rightfully so as they were 28th in scoring defense. That included six games against San Francisco, Seattle and St. Louis, who ranked 25th, 31st and 22nd respectively in points scored. On the flip side you can make a small case that Arizona's lack of defensive success was a result of being in control of the NFC West for virtually the entire season. We've seen talent on the defensive side for Arizona when it matters with 77.3 ypg allowed on the ground and eight interceptions in three postseason games. In addition, you can rest assure that the Cardinals are aware that the Steelers' offensive line allowed 54 sacks this season.

Still, while Arizona's defense may be slightly underrated, the defensive gap between both teams is still massive. Pittsburgh played one of the toughest schedules in the league and had no trouble holding its opponents to crumbs. In looking at some of Pittsburgh's "worst" defensive outings, the stop unit had very little to do with the outcome. When they allowed 31 points at Tennessee, the Titans had an interception return for a touchdown and forced four turnovers. Against Indianapolis, Ben Roethlisberger threw three interceptions, two of which left the Colts with a short field on their way to touchdowns. In the Giants' 21-14 win, it wasn't until three minutes to go in the game that New York reached the end zone. Simply put, Pittsburgh's defense is as good as the Baltimore unit that won Super Bowl XXXV.

Meanwhile, another issue for Arizona is Pittsburgh's balanced

Sportsmemo's Super Bowl Picks

Handicapper	Side	Total
Tim Trushel	Pittsburgh -6.5	Under 46.5
Teddy Covers	Arizona +7	Over 46.5
Fairway Jay	Pittsburgh -6.5	Over 46.5
Erin Rynning	Pittsburgh -6.5	Over 46.5
Brent Crow	Arizona +7	Over 46.5
Rob Veno	Pittsburgh -6.5	Over 46.5
Ed Cash	Arizona +7	Under 46.5
Marty Otto	Arizona +7	Under 46.5
Jared Klein	Arizona +7	Over 46.5
Donnie Black	Pittsburgh -6.5	Under 46.5
Helmut Sports	Pittsburgh -6.5	Under 46.5

NOTE - Both -6.5 and +7 are currently widely available at multiple locations as we strongly urge those playing the game to shop around for the best available number.

offense. With a healthy offensive line down the stretch, we saw quarterback Ben Roethlisberger perform at a higher level. When protected, he has weapons at his disposal with five players recording 40 or more catches. The running game has never been much in the way of explosive, but remains strong and physical enough to move the chains. The season long numbers show the Steelers averaged the fewest amount of offensive yards (311.9) out of this year's playoff field. They were also just as weak as Arizona in terms of running the ball (3.7 ypc). However, what Pittsburgh lacks in offensive stats, it makes up for in field position and special teams play. The gap in special teams play is especially worthy of note as Pittsburgh ranks No. 1 in kickoff defense (19.1) and fourth in punt defense (6.2). Arizona was one of the league's worst at 29th and 31st, respectively. Meanwhile, our feeling is that Pittsburgh will have the type of offensive output we saw throughout the season. They'll move the ball and try to wear down Arizona with long sustained drives. They'll also be on the lookout for situations in which to utilize their famed down field passing game with Antonio Holmes and Nate Washington.

From a coaching perspective, there is plenty of familiarity for Arizona after head coach Ken Whisenhunt served as the Steelers' offensive coordinator during their Super Bowl run. He and his staff's knowledge of Pittsburgh's personnel shouldn't go unnoticed. In the 2007 matchup between these two teams, Whisenhunt's Cardinals pressured Roethlisberger into throwing two interceptions while sacking him four times en route to a 21-14 victory.

It's easy to go back and say last's year 12-point spread was over-inflated but even had the Patriots gone on to win, a majority of betting community would have told you it was too much. This year, the consensus at Sportsmemo is that the line is fair. Pittsburgh may be a "public team" but unlike Arizona, there aren't many flaws with this team, especially on the defensive side. Is Arizona capable of pulling the upset? Absolutely. Again, turn back the clock to last year if you want a team that endured difficulties, found its groove, was undervalued and came up big. In the upper right-hand corner are recommendations on the side and total from all of the Sportsmemo Handicappers. Good luck and enjoy the game!

Super Bowl Breakdown



Pittsburgh Regular Season Statistics

2008-09 Record	12-4 SU, 9-7 ATS, 8-8 O/U	
Leading Passer	B. Roethlisberger 281-469 3,301, 17 TD 14 INT	
Leading Rusher	W. Parker 210-791, 5 TD	
Leading Receiver	H. Ward 81-1,043, 7 TD	
Leading Tackler	J. Farris 133 TKL, 4 SACKS	
Super Bowl History	Five SB titles, last in 2005	
Team Stats - Regular Season	Steelers	Opponents
Total First Downs	290	240
1st downs (Rush-pass-penalty)	93 - 179 - 18	73 - 149 - 18
3rd down conversions	92/224	71/226
4th down conversions	3/12	10/21
Total offensive yards	4,991	3,795
Offense (Plays-Average Yards)	1015 - 4.9	974 - 3.9
Total Rushing Yards	1,690	1,284
Rushing (Plays-Average Yards)	460 - 3.7	390 - 3.3
Total Passing Yards	3,604	2,511
Passing (Comp-Att-Int-Avg)	303 - 506 - 15 - 7.1	301 - 533 - 20 - 5.4
Sacks	51	49
Field Goals	27/31	24/27
Touchdowns	38	21
TDs (Rush-Pass>Returns-Defense)	16 - 19 - 0 - 3	7 - 12 - 0 - 2
Time of Possession	31:41	28:41
Turnover Ratio	+4	

Arizona Regular Season Statistics

2008-09 Record	9-7 SU, 9-7 ATS, 11-5 O/U	
Leading Passer	K. Warner 401-598 4,583, 30 TD 14 INT	
Leading Rusher	E. James 133-514, 3 TD	
Leading Receiver	L. Fitzgerald 96-1,431, 12 TD	
Leading Tackler	K. Dansby 119 TKL, 4 SACKS	
Super Bowl History	First appearance	
Team Stats - Regular Season	Cardinals	Opponents
Total First Downs	328	312
1st downs (Rush-pass-penalty)	72 - 231 - 25	117 - 172 - 23
3rd down conversions	83/198	92/207
4th down conversions	8/16	13/17
Total offensive yards	5,852	5,304
Offense (Plays-Average Yards)	998 - 5.9	993 - 5.3
Total Rushing Yards	1,178	1,764
Rushing (Plays-Average Yards)	340 - 3.5	445 - 4.0
Total Passing Yards	4,674	3,540
Passing (Comp-Att-Int-Avg)	418 - 630 - 15 - 7.7	323 - 517 - 13 - 7.2
Sacks	31	28
Field Goals	25/28	21/27
Touchdowns	51	52
TDs (Rush-Pass>Returns-Defense)	14 - 31 - 1 - 5	13 - 36 - 2 - 1
Time of Possession	30:10	29:53
Turnover Ratio	0	

Game-by-Game Statistics

ARIZONA		Line	OU	Score	SU	ATS	OU	RY	YPR	PY	YPPC	RYA	YPRA	PYA	YPPA
01/18	vs PHILADELPHIA	+3	47	32-25	W	W	Ov	102	3.5	267	12.7	97	5.4	357	12.8
01/10	at CAROLINA	+10	50	33-13	W	W	Un	145	3.4	215	10.2	75	5.0	194	11.4
01/03	vs ATLANTA	-2	51.5	30-24	W	W	Ov	86	3.1	271	14.3	60	2.5	190	7.3
12/28	vs SEATTLE	-7	47	34-21	W	W	Ov	111	5.8	346	14.4	87	3.1	243	10.1
12/21	at NEW ENGLAND	+8	41	7-47	L	L	Ov	44	2.9	142	11.8	183	4.4	331	15.8
12/14	vs MINNESOTA	-4.5	46.5	14-35	L	L	Ov	43	6.1	261	8.4	239	5.4	157	14.3
12/07	vs ST LOUIS	-14.5	48	34-10	W	W	Un	63	2.9	272	11.3	85	3.4	223	10.1
11/27	at PHILADELPHIA	+3	49	20-48	L	L	Ov	25	2.5	235	11.2	185	4.6	252	9.3
11/23	vs NY GIANTS	+3	48	29-37	L	L	Ov	23	1.5	348	10.9	87	3.2	234	9.0
11/16	at SEATTLE	-3	47.5	26-20	W	W	Un	76	3.2	382	11.9	43	2.0	153	9.0
11/10	vs SAN FRANCISCO	-9.5	47.5	29-24	W	L	Ov	46	2.4	328	10.3	118	4.2	217	11.4
11/02	at ST LOUIS	-3	49	34-13	W	W	Un	177	5.4	333	14.5	61	3.0	170	10.6
10/26	at CAROLINA	+5	43.5	23-27	L	W	Ov	50	3.6	375	10.4	113	3.9	238	11.9
10/12	vs DALLAS	+4.5	53.5	30-24	W	W	Ov	50	2.6	226	10.3	73	3.3	301	12.5
10/05	vs BUFFALO	-2	44.5	41-17	W	W	Ov	123	3.6	250	7.6	84	4.9	203	11.3
09/28	at NY JETS	+1.5	43.5	35-56	L	L	Ov	42	2.8	426	10.7	89	3.4	284	11.8
09/21	at WASHINGTON	+3	43.5	17-24	L	L	Un	116	5.0	197	11.6	136	4.4	187	8.1
09/14	vs MIAMI	-6	40.5	31-10	W	W	Ov	81	2.6	364	18.2	72	3.0	164	9.6
09/07	at SAN FRANCISCO	-2.5	42.5	23-13	W	W	Un	109	2.8	176	9.3	108	5.4	183	13.1
PITTSBURGH		Line	OU	Score	SU	ATS	OU	RY	YPR	PY	YPPC	RYA	YPRA	PYA	YPPA
01/18	vs BALTIMORE	-6	35.5	23-14	W	W	Ov	52	1.9	223	13.9	73	2.9	125	9.6
01/11	vs SAN DIEGO	-6.5	38	35-24	W	W	Ov	165	3.9	177	10.4	15	1.3	275	13.1
12/28	vs CLEVELAND	-11.5	33.5	31-0	W	W	Un	176	5.0	193	11.4	106	3.7	20	3.3
12/21	at TENNESSEE	-3	34	14-31	L	L	Ov	71	3.0	303	11.7	117	3.8	206	10.3
12/14	at BALTIMORE	+3	34	13-9	W	W	Un	91	3.4	220	10.0	112	3.6	90	8.2
12/07	vs DALLAS	-4	38	20-13	W	W	Un	70	2.7	168	9.9	95	3.7	194	10.2
11/30	at NEW ENGLAND	+2.5	40	33-10	W	W	Ov	161	4.7	172	10.1	122	6.1	145	7.6
11/20	vs CINCINNATI	-12	34.5	27-10	W	W	Ov	121	3.3	243	14.3	43	2.1	165	8.3
11/16	vs SAN DIEGO	-4	40	11-10	W	L	Un	124	4.4	286	9.2	66	3.0	147	9.8
11/09	vs INDIANAPOLIS	-3	39	20-24	L	L	Ov	55	2.1	271	9.0	62	3.3	228	10.9
11/03	at WASHINGTON	+3	37.5	23-6	W	W	Un	65	2.2	165	13.8	60	4.0	161	6.7
10/26	vs NY GIANTS	-3	41	14-21	L	L	Un	78	3.5	154	11.8	83	2.4	199	10.5
10/19	at CINCINNATI	-7.5	36.5	38-10	W	W	Ov	125	4.6	250	12.5	84	3.8	128	5.3
10/05	at JACKSONVILLE	+5.5	38	26-21	W	W	Ov	129	5.0	286	11.0	38	2.0	175	9.7
09/29	vs BALTIMORE	-6	34.5	23-20	W	L	Ov	69	2.5	168	12.0	103	3.1	140	8.8
09/21	at PHILADELPHIA	+3.5	44.5	6-15	L	L	Un	33	1.7	147	8.6	65	2.8	195	7.5
09/14	at CLEVELAND	-6	43	10-6	W	L	Un	117	3.8	164	13.7	53	2.1	155	8.6
09/07	vs HOUSTON	-6	44	38-17	W	W	Ov	183	4.7	122	9.4	75	3.8	159	6.4

Super Bowl Prop Bets



Tim Trushel		Will T. Hightower score a touchdown? (CRIS)	
No ✓			-180
Yes			
<p>In his last eight games, Hightower has two TDs. He did not have a receiving TD during the entire season and had only one play of more than 30. Simply put, he is not a huge part of the offense. The only projection for a TD here would be on a short yardage situation but Arizona likes to pass in goal-to-go spots (Pittsburgh's defense allowed seven rushing TDs during the regular season). Grab the no now.</p>			
Fairway Jay		B. Roethlisberger completions (Greek)	
Over 17.5 ✓			-115
Under 17.5			
<p>Ben Roethlisberger posted 17.5 completions per game despite the fact that the Steelers faced a far superior schedule that included many defenses superior to Arizona. The Cardinals' pass defense allowed over 62% completions this season. Each of the three opposing playoff QBs completed at least 17 passes including Carolina's Jake Delhomme, who had a miserable day. Play this one over.</p>			
Erin Rynning		E. James total rushing yards (Hilton)	
Over			
Under 42.5 ✓			-110
<p>While James had games of 73, 57 and 73 rushing yards in the playoffs, keep in mind the Cardinals played with a lead for the majority of the time. More importantly, none of those foes were as stout as the Steelers' in terms of stopping the run. In the Cardinals' game against the Eagles, James was able to break a few mid-yardage runs because of simple missed tackles. I don't expect that type of success in this game.</p>			
Ed Cash		Total fumbles lost by both teams (CRIS)	
Over 1.5 ✓			+115
Under 1.5			
<p>I think there is good value with the over in this prop. Both quarterbacks have had a propensity to fumble during their careers when sacked (14 lost fumbles combined this season). Arizona ranked fourth in the league with 20 forced fumbles during the regular season. With the blitz expected to be called with regularity, we'll take the plus-price with the over.</p>			
Marty Otto		C. Davis rush+receiving yards (Greek)	
Over 2.5 ✓			+120
Under			
<p>Davis was an afterthought in the offensive scheme this season as the Steelers went to more one back sets and spread formations. But he has proven to be a nice piece of the puzzle over the past three games. With five catches and one carry for 52 total yards in his last three games, eclipsing this mark looks doable. We just need one touch in 60 minutes and with a nice plus price we'll take that chance.</p>			
Helmut Sports		Will Kurt Warner throw at least one INT (Greek)	
No			
Yes ✓			-230
<p>With Pittsburgh very good at stopping the run, Arizona could potentially have even more pass attempts than normal. Quarterback Kurt Warner has thrown at least one interception in six of seven games that Cardinals have lost. Since I think it's likely they will lose and Pittsburgh ranked second in the AFC in interceptions, the likelihood of this occurring outweighs the moderate sized price.</p>			

Rob Veno		A. Boldin total receiving yards (CRIS)	
Over 64.5 ✓			-115
Under 64.5			
<p>Boldin compiled 62+ yards in 11 of his 14 games played this season. You have to believe the highly publicized sideline argument between Boldin and OC Todd Haley has the receiver extremely determined to produce and Haley looking to get him the ball. With Pittsburgh's best and most physical cover man Ike Taylor assigned to Larry Fitzgerald, look for Boldin to take advantage of CB Bryant McFadden.</p>			
Donnie Black		E. James rushing attempts (Greek)	
Over 13.5			
Under 13.5 ✓			-130
<p>In the last week of the season against Seattle, James got back into action and ran 14 times for 100 yards. In three playoff games he carried the ball 52 times. Yet we think the amount of carries had much more to do with the situation of Arizona holding big leads, and we don't expect that to happen here. Additionally, while Baltimore showed a willingness to run the ball, Arizona will eschew the run if it does not produce dividends.</p>			
Brent Crow		E. James' first rush yardage (CRIS)	
Over 3			
Under 3 ✓			-145
<p>The main reason I bet this under is that I think the majority of James' rushing attempts will be for 3 yards or less. Pittsburgh allowed just 3.2 yards per rush on the year while James averaged 3.9 ypc. His first attempt could very well be on the first play of the game for Arizona, and I expect Pittsburgh to be ready for it. Minimal gains expect to be a common theme for James.</p>			
Teddy Covers		Total Interceptions (Greek)	
Over 2.5 ✓			+150
Under 2.5			
<p>Research has proven that fumbles are largely random, but interceptions are quite predictable. Both Arizona and Pittsburgh are strong at pressuring the QB and forcing turnovers. In two postseason games, the Steelers have seven sacks while forcing four INTs. In three postseason games, the Cardinals have forced eight INTs and notched seven sacks. We'll take the plus-price and play this one over.</p>			
Jared Klein		Who will have more receptions? (BoDog)	
L. Sweed (PIT)			
J. Urban (ARI) ✓			-135
<p>Sweed had only two catches for 20 yards against Baltimore even though Heinz Ward left the game with an injury. Urban should benefit from the hot routes that Arizona will have to run in order to avoid the Steelers' blitz. Urban had 34 catches on the season compared to six for Sweed and I think this prop has solid value. Take Urban over Sweed this weekend.</p>			

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Super Bowl History



SB	Year	Winner	Loser	Total	Location
XLII	2008	New York Giants (+12.5) 17	New England Patriots 14	54.5, UNDER	Glendale, AZ
XLI	2007	Indianapolis Colts (-7) 29	Chicago Bears 17	48, UNDER	Miami, FL
XL	2006	Pittsburgh Steelers (-4) 21	Seattle Seahawks 10	47, UNDER	Detroit, MI
XXXIX	2005	New England Patriots 24	Philadelphia Eagles (+7) 21	46.5, UNDER	Jacksonville, FL
XXXVIII	2004	New England Patriots 32	Carolina Panthers (+7) 29	37.5, OVER	Houston, TX
XXXVII	2003	Tampa Bay Buccaneers (+4) 48	Oakland Raiders 21	44, OVER	San Diego, CA
XXXVI	2002	New England Patriots (+14) 20	St. Louis Rams 17	53, UNDER	New Orleans, LA
XXXV	2001	Baltimore Ravens (-3) 34	New York Giants 7	33, OVER	Tampa, FL
XXXIV	2000	St. Louis Rams (-7) 23	Tennessee Titans 16	47.5, UNDER	Atlanta, GA
XXXIII	1999	Denver Broncos (-7.5) 34	Atlanta Falcons 19	52.5, OVER	Miami, FL
XXXII	1998	Denver Broncos (+11) 31	Green Bay Packers 24	49, OVER	San Diego, CA
XXXI	1997	Green Bay Packers (-14) 35	New England Patriots 21	49, OVER	New Orleans, LA
XXX	1996	Dallas Cowboys 27	Pittsburgh Steelers (+13.5) 17	51, UNDER	Tempe, AZ
XXIX	1995	San Francisco 49ers (-18) 49	San Diego Chargers 26	53.5, OVER	Miami, FL
XXVIII	1994	Dallas Cowboys (-10.5) 30	Buffalo Bills 13	50.5, UNDER	Atlanta, GA
XXVII	1993	Dallas Cowboys (-6.5) 52	Buffalo Bills 17	44.5, OVER	Pasadena, CA
XXVI	1992	Washington Redskins (-7) 37	Buffalo Bills 24	49, OVER	Minneapolis, MN
XXV	1991	New York Giants (+7) 20	Buffalo Bills 19	40.5, UNDER	Tampa, FL
XXIV	1990	San Francisco 49ers (-12) 55	Denver Broncos 10	48, OVER	New Orleans, LA
XXIII	1989	San Francisco 49ers 20	Cincinnati Bengals (+7) 16	48, UNDER	Miami, FL
XXII	1988	Washington Redskins (+3) 42	Denver Broncos 10	47, OVER	San Diego, CA
XXI	1987	New York Giants (-9.5) 39	Denver Broncos 20	40, OVER	Pasadena, CA
XX	1986	Chicago Bears (-10) 46	New England Patriots 10	37.5, OVER	New Orleans, LA
XIX	1985	San Francisco 49ers (-3.5) 38	Miami Dolphins 16	53.5, OVER	Stanford, CA
XVIII	1984	LA Raiders (+3) 38	Washington Redskins 9	48, UNDER	Tampa, FL
XVII	1983	Washington Redskins (+3) 27	Miami Dolphins 17	36.5, OVER	Pasadena, CA
XVI	1982	San Francisco 49ers (PK) 26	Cincinnati Bengals 21	48, UNDER	Pontiac, MI
XV	1981	Oakland Raiders (+3) 27	Philadelphia Eagles 10	37.5, UNDER	New Orleans, LA
XIV	1980	Pittsburgh Steelers (-10.5) 31	Los Angeles Rams 19	36, OVER	Pasadena, CA
XIII	1979	Pittsburgh Steelers (-3.5) 35	Dallas Cowboys 31	37, OVER	Miami, FL
XII	1978	Dallas Cowboys (-6) 27	Denver Broncos 10	39, UNDER	New Orleans, LA
XI	1977	Oakland Raiders (-4) 32	Minnesota Vikings 14	38, OVER	Pasadena, CA
X	1976	Pittsburgh Steelers 21	Dallas Cowboys (+7) 17	36, OVER	Miami, FL
IX	1975	Pittsburgh Steelers (-3) 16	Minnesota Vikings 6	33, UNDER	New Orleans, LA
VIII	1974	Miami Dolphins (-6.5) 24	Minnesota Vikings 7	33, UNDER	Houston, TX
VII	1973	Miami Dolphins (+1.5) 14	Washington Redskins 7	33, UNDER	Los Angeles, CA
VI	1972	Dallas Cowboys (-6) 24	Miami Dolphins 3	34, UNDER	New Orleans, LA
V	1971	Baltimore Colts (+2.5) 16	Dallas Cowboys 13	36, UNDER	Miami, FL
IV	1970	Kansas City Chiefs (+12) 23	Minnesota Vikings 7	39, UNDER	New Orleans, LA
III	1969	New York Jets (+18) 16	Baltimore Colts 7	40, UNDER	Miami, FL
II	1968	Green Bay Packers (-13.5) 33	Oakland Raiders 14	43, OVER	Miami, FL
I	1967	Green Bay Packers (-14) 35	Kansas City Chiefs 10	NL	Los Angeles, CA

THE CLOCK IS TICKING...

TWO PACKAGES, TREMENDOUS SAVINGS - RE-UP YOUR NEWSLETTER ON PG. 8



Handicapper Best Bets



TIM TRUSHEL
OKLAHOMA STATE AT TEXAS A&M (1/31)



Recommendation: Texas A&M

It could be argued that the Aggies have faced the most difficult conference schedule of any Big XII team. At 1-4 the results have been disappointing but perhaps not unexpected. They have played two home games, splitting with a win over Baylor and a hard fought six-point loss to Oklahoma. One the road they are 0-3 with losses at Texas, Kansas and Oklahoma State. In essence their conference schedule has featured five of the six top teams in the conference. This week, with some home cooking, they should get a chance to post a couple of wins. Mid-week they host Texas Tech and with a projected win they should come in confident. As an added bonus, based on the numbers, we expect A&M to be installed as a slight home underdog. Oklahoma State will enter this game off a contest against their rival Oklahoma. Off either a win or a loss, we would expect the focus to be less than 100% on the road against an opponent they have already beaten. On the other side of the equation, there will be plenty of motivation as Josh Carter, the Aggies' leading scorer, was held scoreless in the first meeting. The Aggies will improve upon the 4-of-17 from three point range and with all else being equal, they should have more than enough to earn the win.



BRENT CROW
GEORGETOWN AT MARQUETTE (1/31)



Recommendation: Marquette

The Hoyas have dropped three in a row entering this week's games at Cincinnati and Marquette. They are just 2-5 SU since beating UConn to open Big East play and the general feeling is that this is who the Hoyas are rather than a team going through a mid-season funk. Georgetown struggles from the outside and has not executed the Princeton offense as well as years past. The Hoyas also lack depth, with center Greg Monroe receiving little help from a bench that has just one player averaging more than 5 ppg. Teams seem to be figuring out how to defend the Hoyas as well, with minimal efforts of 58 against West Virginia and 60 at Seton Hall in their last two losses. They will definitely have to score plenty to keep pace with Marquette and its outstanding three-guard attack. The Eagles average 81.5 ppg and are unbeaten on their home court this season. Guards Wesley Matthews and Jerel McNeal are both having tremendous seasons, averaging 19.2 and 18.9 ppg, respectively. Lazar Hayward has also emerged this season, notching 16.5 ppg and 8.8 rpg to give Marquette another solid weapon. Look for them to hand the Hoyas another loss on Saturday.



ED CASH
WASHINGTON AT ARIZONA STATE (1/31)



Recommendation: Arizona State

Lorenzo Romar's Washington Huskies begin the week atop the league standings at 6-1; one game up on Arizona State, Cal and UCLA. But while the Huskies currently serve as the team to beat in the PAC-10 after sweeping both LA schools, a win against Arizona on Thursday will provide us with a tremendous play on the home team, Arizona State. Washington has done most of its damage at home this season, with road wins coming against Oregon, Oregon State and Washington State -- all of which have losing league records. Arizona State has achieved its 5-2 conference mark largely on the road. They have played just two home games against the Oregon schools, both easy wins, while going 3-2 on the road against Cal, Stanford, Arizona, USC and UCLA. I expect the Sun Devils to be able to handle Washington with ease, especially if the Huskies beat a slumping Arizona team on Thursday. Even with a loss, Arizona State should be a solid play as they are the better team and have a tremendous home court edge.



DONNIE BLACK
UAB AT MARSHALL (1/31)



Recommendation: Marshall

Despite a slew of suspensions, ineligible players and a depleted bench, UAB has managed to persevere while currently residing in the upper-half of the C-USA standings at 3-2. But while the remaining roster has been able to keep the ship afloat, the Blazers could be in for a wake-up call starting Wednesday. After playing three straight at home, UAB travels to a tough Tulsa venue before making the trek to Huntington on Saturday to face Marshall. The Thundering Herd are your typical mediocre C-USA unit who struggle on the road but hold enough of a home court advantage to be considered playable. On the season, Marshall is 8-1 at home with a lone loss to 14-5 East Tennessee State. A concern with Marshall is lack of size with its tallest contributing player checking in at 6-8. However, UAB isn't overwhelming in the front court and has actually been outbounded on the season which should help our cause. In looking at the last two years of the series, Marshall lost at UAB by 13 and 19 but emerged victorious at home -- both times as a small underdog. We expect the Herd to be catching points once again this weekend as UAB and its thin roster play the second of back-to-back road games.



MARTY OTTO
NEW MEXICO AT UTAH (1/31)



Recommendation: Utah

Home teams have ruled the roost in the Mountain West Conference, routinely winning SU and covering spreads. The Utah Utes have been doing it in impressive fashion at home going 6-1 SU thus far while winning by an average margin of 16 ppg. They beat a very good Gonzaga club as an underdog and blew out LSU by 30. The Utes will be in a position to potentially sit atop the conference standings if they knock off both BYU and New Mexico this week. The fundamental edges start on the front line where New Mexico simply doesn't have an answer for 7-2 center Luke Nevill. Nevill is second in scoring and first in rebounding in the MWC. He provides the Utes with a player teams like New Mexico just can't match up against. He is aided on the glass by Shaun Green and Carlon Brown who both rank in the top 10 in the MWC in rebounding. Look for Utah to control the glass (+9.5 rebound margin, 1st MWC), a real key in what figures to be an intense defensive contest. With the lead we can then watch Utah salt away the victory with the league's top free throw percentage, helping secure what should be a nice win and cover.



HELMUT SPORTS
NEBRASKA AT TEXAS TECH (1/31)



Recommendation: Under

The Red Raiders are still playing very up-tempo this season ranking No. 13 in the nation in pace/tempo. The Huskers are the slowest paced team in the Big XII and have a knack for slowing down these fast paced teams, as games against up-tempo conference opponents, Oklahoma State, Kansas State, Oklahoma and Missouri, all played under 135 total possessions. The Huskers have been very good on defense this season holding opponents to 41.5% from the field and an average of 57.8 ppg. They have an excellent defensive efficiency (90.0, 19th in nation) not only due to the FG% defense but because they are quite good at causing turnovers nearly 18 per game. The Red Raiders have been playing poorly on offense. In their last eight games they have shot 42.3% from the field, averaged 67.6 ppg and turned it over nearly 18 times per game. The Huskers' offense has taken a dip since the beginning of conference play as they have only shot 40.4% from the field and have also played poorly on the road, shooting just 37.8% in five games. Although the Red Raiders' defense is not great the Huskers have shown no ability to score on the road and have not done well on offense since the end of the non-conference schedule.

Handicapper Best Bets



ERIN RYNNING BOSTON AT DETROIT (1/30)



Recommendation: Under

Rivals collide on Friday night with the Celtics paying a visit to the Motor City for a game against the Pistons. No question, the Celtics are still the superior team in this match-up, while the Pistons are a far cry from their past championship level. Front and center for the Celtics is their superior defense, which has recently returned to last season's form. In fact, the Celtics have flexed their defensive muscle in this match-up twice this season, holding the Pistons to lows of 80 and 76 points this year. Both games to no surprise went under the total with 178- and 164-point totals. Meanwhile, the Pistons are simply an inefficient bunch on the offensive end. Allen Iverson was never a real efficient offensive player to begin with and his skills are in sharp decline. Rasheed Wallace continues to play soft and hide behind the three-point line. In addition, with Rodney Stuckey at the point guard position, there has been a noticeable decline in team play after Chauncey Billups left for Denver. Defense figures to rule the day once again when these two meet Friday night and we'll side with the Under.



FAIRWAY JAY CLEVELAND AT DETROIT (2/1)



Recommendation: Cleveland

This is a Super Bowl Sunday NBA feature on ABC as the Cleveland Cavaliers travel to Detroit to take on the Pistons. A changing of the guard this season has Cleveland with a commanding 10-game lead over their division rival whereas the slumping Pistons have lost four of their last five home games. Detroit will have battled Boston's No. 1 defense Friday night at home, and then must take on Cleveland's No. 2-ranked stop unit. The Cavs are also one of the NBA's top offenses in terms of efficiency, led by LeBron James' 28 ppg and excellent shooters throughout the starting lineup. Mo Williams continues his excellent play at the point, and Cleveland enters the week with three straight road wins including victories at Portland and Utah. The Cavs should be primed and determined for this rematch after Detroit won the only meeting this season back in November. Cleveland is clearly playing some of the best basketball in the NBA with solid contributions and team chemistry throughout the lineup even with center Zydrunas Ilgasuskas on the shelf (ankle). Cleveland will likely be a small road favorite, and I look for them to prove they are the better team and payback the Pistons.



ROB VENO NEW ORLEANS AT SAN ANTONIO (1/31)



Recommendation: Under

Head coach Gregg Popovich's recent outburst on the lack of defense being played by his Spurs is becoming a sentiment echoed by his players. Sixth-man Manu Ginobili expressed similar concerns after a 14-point loss to the Lakers. With the entire Spurs team expected to be on the same page and determined to improve their defense, the erratic offense of New Orleans will likely have trouble posting a substantial point total. The Hornets' 96.3 ppg ranks 24th in the league and they'll be challenged by the focused Spurs' defense for the full 48 minutes. However, the New Orleans defense has been a constant all season long as they've thoroughly committed themselves on that end of the floor, ranking third in the league while allowing just 93.1 ppg. The defensive intensity and methodical offensive possessions figure to be at a playoff-type peak here between these divisional rivals who sit first and second in the Southwest, separated by just 1.5 games. The last meeting back on December 17 saw just 173 points scored and I look for more of the same here in the rematch where the total should open in the 188-189 range.



TEDDY COVERS MIAMI AT INDIANA (1/30)



Recommendation: Indiana

Indiana is finally healthy, and finally developing a healthy sense of confidence that eluded them earlier this season. They've won three out of five and covered the spread in seven of their last nine. The Pacers are an extremely difficult team to defend since Mike Dunleavy returned from injury. Starting forward Troy Murphy was quoted as saying, "I feel we are... about to really get ourselves going. I feel more comfortable about myself and the team every game we play." With six players averaging in double figures, and first-time all-star Danny Granger becoming a true crunch time force, Indiana is very much a bet-on team right now, particularly at home. Miami doesn't have the same level of balance or depth, more of a one-trick pony-type of team. Dwayne Wade may be capable of carrying this team to the playoffs, but he has not been capable of getting the Heat into the win column in these one game road trip situations. The results don't lie as Miami is just 1-5 SU on single game trips like this one, including SU and ATS losses at the Knicks, Bobcats and Grizzlies. With trade rumors swirling around the Heat right now and a very winnable game at home against the Wizards on Saturday, look for this Friday Night affair to be a real flat spot for the road team.



JARED KLEIN NASHVILLE AT EDMONTON (2/1)



Recommendation: Edmonton

Two teams heading in the opposite directions take to the ice this weekend when the Oilers face the Predators at Rexall Place. Heading into the All-Star Break, Edmonton was on a huge roll winning seven out of its last nine at home to jump into second place in the Northwest Division. "Guys are playing better, individuals are playing better right now," head coach Craig MacTavish was quoted as saying. "Guys like Sam Gagner and Erik Cole have chemistry. Robert Nilsson was playing well. Ethan Moreau is playing well. Andrew Cogliano is playing the best he's played. Marc Pouliot's developed and G Dwayne Roloson is playing well. The defense is moving the puck pretty decently. And confidence is a large player in all of this." The bottom line is this team is finally coming together. The same cannot be said for the Predators who have a road record of just 8-16 and are just 3-7 in their last 10 games. Nashville has been beaten by a combined score of 10-3 over its last two games and was booed off their home ice after a 7-2 loss to the Atlanta Thrashers. The road hasn't been kind to the Predators this season and I look for that trend to continue this weekend in Edmonton.

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College Basketball Power Ratings

by: Rob Veno

VCU	-6	Oklahoma State		Georgia State		Brown		San Diego State	-6	Jacksonville State	
Hofstra		Texas A&M	-4.5	William & Mary	-6	Columbia	-3.5	Colorado State		Eastern Illinois	-3.5
Wake Forest	-9	SMU		Washington		Oregon		St. Mary's (CA)	-8	Tennessee State	
Georgia Tech		Tulsa	-14.5	Arizona State	-8	Oregon State	-3.5	Portland		Eastern Kentucky	-8
Notre Dame		Central Florida	-4.5	Wyoming		Ark-Little Rock	-2.5	Florida		UT Martin	
Pittsburgh	-11	Tulane		BYU	-14.5	Florida Intl'		Tennessee	-5	Murray State	-4
West Virginia		South Carolina		San Diego		Wright State		Nevada		Northern Colorado	
Louisville	-9.5	Kentucky	-10.5	Gonzaga	-17.5	Cleveland State	-8.5	Idaho	-0.5	Northern Arizona	-6.5
Umass		New Orleans		Baylor		Virginia Tech		Utah State	-6	Tennessee Tech	-8
Xavier	-14.5	South Alabama	-12	Missouri	-3.5	Boston College	-3.5	Fresno Sate		SE Missouri	
Washington State		San Jose State		Richmond		Miami (FL)		Pepperdine		Idaho State	
Arizona	-5.5	Louisiana Tech	-1	Temple	-12.5	Maryland	-1	Santa Clara	-17	Weber State	-8
Houston		North Carolina	-14.5	Toledo		Nebraska	-0.5	Loyola Marymount		Eastern Washington	
Memphis	-13.5	NC Sate		Buffalo	-15	Texas Tech		San Francisco	-13.5	Montana	-9
Ole Miss		New Mexico		UAB	-3	Southern Illinois		Pacific		Sunday 2/1	
Mississippi State	-11	Utah	-5	Marhall		Evansville	PK	UC Davis	PK		
Delaware		Stanford		Princeton		Wisconsin		Long Beach State	-1.5	Penn State	
Northeastern	-12	UCLA	-9	Harvard	-5	Northwestern	-1	Cal Irvine		Michigan State	-13.5
Michigan		Bradley		UL-Lafayette		Loyola-Chicago		California		St. Joe's	
Purdue	-10.5	Illinois State	-7.5	Florida Atlantic	-1.5	Wisc-Green Bay	-11.5	USC	-5.5	Dayton	-4
Northern Iowa		Ohio State	-8.5	Yale		Southern Miss		Davidson	-14	Cincinnati	
Indiana State	-7.5	Indiana		Cornell	-11.5	UTEP	-6	Samford		Villanova	-12
Oklahoma	-12	Providence		Saint Louis	-7	UL-Monroe		Furman		South Florida	
Iowa State		UConn	-14	Fordham		Middle Tennessee	-15	Appalachian State	-13.5	St. John's	-1.5
Vanderbilt		Kansas State		James Madison	-9	DePaul		Elon		Virginia	
Auburn	-5	Texas A&M	-7.5	UNC Wilmington		Rutgers	-3.5	Charleston	-13.5	Duke	-22
East Carolina		Colorado		St. Bonaventure		Illinois-Chicago		Georgia Southern		Iowa	
Rice	-2	Kansas	-22.5	Duquesne	-9.5	Wisc-Milwaukee	-3	UT Chattanooga	-8	Illinois	-11
Miami (OH)	-10	UNLV	-10	Penn	-0.5	North Texas		St. Peter's		Missouri State	
Eastern Michigan		Air Force		Dartmouth		Western Kentucky	-6.5	Iona	-10.5	Creighton	-12
Kent State		Drexel	-2.5	George Mason		Denver		Austin Peay		Canisius	
Western Michigan	-4	Towson		Old Dominion	-0.5	Troy	-6	Morhead State	-0.5	Rider	-8.5
La Salle		Arkansas		Central Michigan		Hawaii		UNC Greensboro		Loyola (MD)	
Rhode Island	-10.5	LSU	-7	Akron	-13.5	New Mexico State	-11.5	The Citadel	-9	Fairfield	-5.5
Ohio	-2.5	Drake		Georgia		Cal Northridge	-3	Wofford		Portland State	-3
Ball State		Wichita State	-0.5	Alabama	-7	Cal Poly		Western Carolina	-6.5	Montana State	
Georgetown		Bowling Green	-3	Detroit		Cal Riverside		Niagara	-2	For Rob Veno's daily NBA and CBB Powr Ratings, be sure to visit sportsmemo.com	
Marquette	-4	Northern Illinois		Youngstown State	-3.5	Cal Fullerton	-6.5	Manhattan			

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