



ONE ON ONE

Garret Mann and David Batchelder
Sports Commentators

NFL surprise teams: who will continue to impress fans?

With four weeks completed in the 2010 NFL season, there have been a number of surprises. As we sit now, there are a number of surprise teams in the league. So which team will be the 2008 Bills (started 4-0, finished 7-9), and which team will be the 2007 Patriots (16-0 regular season, lost in the Super Bowl)?

GARRET MANN

To me, both the Bears and Steelers have the opportunity to maintain their high levels of play, while the Chiefs desperately tread water until they sink down to a loss. Kansas City held the 49ers offense to 251 total yards and inched past the Browns, who were starting the backup to Jake Delhomme, but they are simply too young of a team. I honor them for their recent success, but I do predict that after their bye, they will crack under the great sky of Texas in Dallas and Houston.

Both the Bears with their Tampa 2 defense, and the Roethlisberger-less Steelers, have shown they can hold their own on the road. But I just can't see the Steelers remaining undefeated with a current three-way QB battle. The Bears have won on the road, they have a solid twelfth man at home, and they have beyond solid leaders. The Chicago Bears will stay on top of the NFC North this season.

DAVID BATCHELDER

Although I agree the Kansas City Chiefs will lose within in the next few weeks, I disagree with your evaluation of the Chicago Bears. The Bears have narrowly escaped defeat in each of their three wins; for instance against the Green Bay Packers in week three they did not beat the Packers, the Packers beat themselves with 18 penalties equivalent to 152 yards lost. Also against the Detroit Lions in Week One, Calvin Johnson was absolutely robbed of a game winning touchdown. Although the Bears have an easier schedule, quarterback Jay Cutler is prone to interceptions, pouting, and a lack of focus all while running back Matt Forte has just 134 rushing yards in four games combined.

Charlie Batch showed proficiency at managing games at quarterback, but now two time Super Bowl champion Ben Roethlisberger returns to reclaim his identity as one of the league's top-5 quarterbacks, with regards to passer ratings.

GARRET

The Bears have forced 11 turnovers this season so far, before Sunday night's loss Jay Cutler had a quarterback rating of 109.7, and Devin Hester had shown glimpses of his former self. While the Packers had many penalties, they also missed two red zone opportunities. The Bears won and the Packers lost in Week Three. Also while you say Calvin Johnson was robbed of a touchdown, I say that was excellent officiating by Gene Steratore. Jay Cutler has six touchdowns with three interceptions, while the combination of Dennis Dixon and Charlie Batch had three touchdowns and four interceptions. And what the Bears lack in the running department, they make up for with three receivers totaling double digits in receptions. Until Roethlisberger returns to form, the Steelers will ultimately be doubted by me.

DAVID

Although Chicago may be throwing the ball all over the field, leaving the ball in Jay Cutler's hands puts the game in jeopardy. One positive about the Bears is that tight end Greg Olson has been added to the play book after years of hibernation. Even with the reliable Olson, the Bears lack the fundamentals necessary to continue their hot streak.

On the other hand, the Pittsburgh Steelers have supplemented the suspension of Roethlisberger with a seasoned veteran. While not the elusive gun-slinger that Big Ben is, Charlie Batch has the football knowledge and patience to let a play develop and only pass to the best available receiver. Look for wide receiver Mike Wallace to make big gains this year, while reliability is put on display by running back Rashard Mendenhall. The Steelers are back to their historical style of offense. In regards to the defense, Dick LeBeau and his cast of hard hitting defenders will surely rank among the league's best.

ATHLETIC RESULTS

SEPT. 29 - OCT. 3

Football

Oct. 2
Samford 19
Elon 24

Men's Soccer

Oct. 2
Elon 1
UNCG 0

Women's Soccer

Oct. 1
Davidson 0
Elon 1

Oct. 3
Georgia Southern 2
Elon 1

Volleyball

Sept. 29
North Carolina A&T 0
Elon 3

Oct. 2
Elon 1
Appalachian State 3

Oct. 3
Elon 3
Western Carolina 1

ELON ATHLETICS THIS WEEK

OCT. 6 - 12

Wednesday 10/6

Men's soccer vs. West Virginia — 7 p.m.

Friday 10/8

Women's tennis (Elon Fall Invitational) — All Day
Men's tennis (Elon Fall Invitational) — All Day
Volleyball vs. UNCG — 6 p.m.
Women's soccer vs. Charleston — 7 p.m.

Saturday 10/9

Women's tennis (Elon Fall Invitational) — All Day
Men's tennis (Elon Fall Invitational) — All Day
Football @ Appalachian State — 3 p.m.
Volleyball vs. Furman — 6 p.m.
Men's soccer vs. Charleston — 7 p.m.

Sunday 10/10

Women's tennis (Elon Fall Invitational) — All Day
Men's tennis (Elon Fall Invitational) — All Day
Women's soccer vs. The Citadel — 2 p.m.

Monday 10/11

Men's golf (Mizuno Savannah Intercollegiate) — All Day
Women's golf (Lady Pirate Intercollegiate) — All Day

Tuesday 10/12

Men's golf (Mizuno Savannah Intercollegiate) — All Day
Women's golf (Lady Pirate Intercollegiate) — All Day
Men's soccer @ Clemson — 7 p.m.



FILE PHOTO
Junior forward Denzel Ogunyase looks to past defenders in a game on Sept. 19. The Phoenix will take on West Virginia University 7 p.m. Wednesday.

Phoenix to host nationally- ranked opponent Wednesday

Jack Rodenfels
Senior Reporter

A game-winning goal in double overtime to erase a two-goal deficit to force a tie. A four-goal offensive outburst.

For the Elon men's soccer team, there has been a little bit of everything during the team's current seven-game unbeaten streak. Elon looks to carry that momentum to Rudd Field as the Phoenix host the nationally-ranked West Virginia University at 7 p.m. Wednesday.

"When we get the chance to play these big soccer programs such as a nationally-ranked West Virginia team, it's exciting for the players," said head coach Darren Powell. "Our ambition is to be up there with those top teams. In order to do so we have to compete with them on a daily basis."

After starting the season with two difficult 1-0 defeats at the hands of the High Point Panthers and Charlotte 49ers, the Phoenix has rallied to win four of its last seven games, while drawing ties in the other three matches. During the hot streak, the Phoenix has outscored its opponents 14-5.

Coach Powell is encouraged by his team's offensive prowess, but still sees areas to improve that will help the young Phoenix squad develop throughout the season.

"We need to work on the precision of our passes and our team movement," Powell said. "If we can continue to improve our team passing we can create even more opportunities to score goals."

Last Saturday's game was a prime example of the Phoenix capitalizing on opportunities against UNC Greensboro. During regulation, the Phoenix had multiple chances to put the ball on net, but was unsuccessful. In the first half, freshman midfielder Daniel Lovitz and redshirt freshman Nick Butterly both had chances, with Lovitz's shot blocked by the Spartans goalie, and Butterly's header ricocheting off of the crossbar.

In the second half, the Phoenix had ample opportunity to pull ahead, but was unsuccessful. The golden goal came in the second overtime, as senior midfielder Brad Franks crossed the ball to sophomore midfielder Gabe Latigue, who crossed the ball to the left post from 25 yards out, giving the Phoenix the decisive 1-0 victory.

The Phoenix has been involved in four overtime matches this season, and Saturday's overtime victory was Elon's first of the season in extra time.

"Going into overtime, it definitely wasn't the first time we had been in that position," Latigue said. "We had a few open chances in the beginning. It was important for us to stay confident and keep working hard."

With the win, senior goalkeeper Clint Irwin recorded his 22nd career shutout, and Elon improved its record to 4-2-3 overall, and 2-0-0 in SoCon play.

The Mountaineers come to Rudd Field Wednesday with a 5-3-1 record, and the No. 21 spot in the country. The Phoenix will try to improve its unbeaten 1-0-3 home ledger.

"When we play teams out of conference like West Virginia, it helps us prepare for our conference matches," Powell said. "It makes us a better team and helps us become more fundamentally sound."

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