

The AFC will come down to the wire with the Dolphins leading the way

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Bills will make the playoffs again, but they will have a tougher time getting through because the competition in the AFC will not let them win it again.

The New England Patriots are the surprise team of the NFL this year. When Drew Bledsoe came out with five games with 300-plus yards, the Patriots were over .500 % for the first time in five years. Teams caught on quickly and Bledsoe has been intercepted seven times in four games. They need to improve their running game. They have the worst rushing offense with a total of 592 yards. Marion Butts was picked up in the off-season and was expected to fill that hole, but has choked so far getting the ball 108 times for 309 yards, an average of 2.9 yards a carry. If Butts decides to step up and run then look for the Patriots to cause a threat for a wild card.

The Indianapolis Colts have been unlucky this year. They have the third-best rushing attack with Marshall Faulk, but haven't been able to stop their opponents from getting in the end zone. Jim Harbaugh is getting a second chance in Indiana and is taking advantage of the 'Faulk Threat' by leading the AFC in passing. The Colts could find themselves in the thick of things if they can juice up the defense.

The New York Jets have been impressive with some big wins over the Bills and the Patriots but have been getting beaten up recently. Johnny Johnson is out with a pulled hamstring, and linebacker Marvin Jones is out with a sprained ankle. The list goes on. Their only realistic chance of making the playoffs is if they do something they haven't done since 1982 - sweep the Bills.

In the AFC Central, the 6-2 Browns have been on a tear with their only competitor being the 5-3 Steelers. The 1-7 Oilers and the 0-8 Bengals are only playing for pride out their now because they aren't going anywhere this season.

The Cleveland Browns are one of the surprise teams of the NFL this year by starting off 6-2. They started off 4-0 last year, but then didn't even make the playoffs. This has been Vinnie Testaverde's first time behind a

good offensive line and he is showing them what he can do with a little time. Testaverde has been knocked out of the last two games with concussions and is getting worried about it. On the ground, Leroy Hoard and Eric Metcalf have combined for 507 yards on 121 carries. Metcalf has returned a league leading two punts for touchdowns. If Testaverde is injured, ex-Redskin quarterback Mark Rypien is there to take charge. The Browns will win the division, but on the way they might hear some buzzing from the Steelers.

The Pittsburgh Steelers are sporting the best defense in the AFC, but they need to improve their passing game if they want to contend for the division. They have the second-best rushing attack in the AFC with Barry Foster and Bam Morris, but are ranked 11th in passing. The Steelers will find themselves in the hunt if they can work out their passing problems.

The Cincinnati Bengals are starting to get things in order as they gave the defending Super Bowl champs a scare. It's too bad it took them so long, as they have wasted half a season. If they decide to stay with Jeff Blake as quarterback, look for them to win four or five games before the season is over. If they keep Klingler in, they can kiss their pride goodbye.

The Houston Oilers have been the biggest upset in the NFL this year. After last season's 12 wins in a row and getting so close to the AFC championship, they were expected to do some big things this season. The inaccuracy of Cody Carlson has been a key to the downfall of the Oilers. Don't expect any noise from them this year, but they will probably pick up something good in the draft.

The AFC West should be a tight one between the 7-1 Chargers, the 5-3 Chiefs and the 4-4 Raiders, but don't count out the 3-5 Broncos and the 3-5 Seahawks. The Chargers have shocked a lot of people with their performance so far this year, but with Stan Humphries out, it will make things interesting. Joe Montana and Derek Thomas have put together a great 1-2 combo in Kansas City. Thomas'

defense has not let down too often, and Montana's offense has been pretty consistent. If the Hos can stay cool, we might see some action from the Raiders. If he loses his team things aren't going to go as planned.

The San Diego Chargers have the best rushing offense and rushing defense. They are seventh in offensive passing and are in fourth for defensive passing. They have been a great all-around team so far, but can they keep it up without Humphries? Natrone Means has led the rushing attack with 790 yards on 178 carries and set a team record with four consecutive 100 yard rushing games. San Diego should win the division, but not if Kansas City can do anything about it. The two teams meet up on Nov. 13, and it should be a hot one.

The Kansas City Chiefs need to protect Montana. When they keep him on his feet, they win. When he gets knocked around they lose. Montana has thrown for the second most yards with 2,151 yards on 301 passes.

Marcus Allen has rushed for 405 yards on 108 carries and has rushed for five touchdowns. Look for the experienced Chiefs to give San Diego a run for their money.

The Los Angeles Raiders started off on the wrong foot but have regained balance at .500%. Jeff Hostetler's little team-bashing incident doesn't make anything better for the Raiders, but maybe he sparked something in his team to get them going. The Raiders are the fastest team in the NFL, but they need to use their speed more effectively. Ex-Chief Harvey Williams is leading the ground attack for the Raiders with 462 yards on 122 carries. The Hos has thrown for 1,619 yards and 11 touchdown passes so far and has been looking better as the season has progressed. They need to keep their momentum going if they want to see the playoffs this season.

The Denver Broncos didn't get the start they wanted, but have started to turn things around here at the half way mark. John Elway is looking at a very challenging

role as he attempts to bring his team into the playoffs. He has thrown for 2,120 yards and 10 touchdowns. Leonard Russell has rushed for 364 yards and has met the end zone eight times. In order for the Broncos to make the playoffs, their defense will have to dig their way out of the cellar as they have given up 2,934 yards.

The Seattle Seahawks started out pretty strong and got a lot of people's hopes up, but have lost five consecutive games. They are ranked 12th on offense and are tied for 11th on defense. Chris Warren has done his job, as he has rushed for 713 yards and scored six times, but Rick Mirer is having his sophomore jinx. He just can't seem to come up with the big plays at the right time. The Seahawks need to build up their young players more for them to be a threat in the AFC East.

In the playoffs, look for the Dolphins or Chargers to dominate, also look for threats from the defense strong Steelers and there are still threats alive in the hearts of th Bill's and Chiefs.

Easter 1987, Age 5



Easter 1988, Age 6



Easter 1989, Age 7



Lorien Lea Denham.

Killed by a drunk driver on Good Friday, March 29, 1991, at College Park Drive and Hwy. 19 North in Meridian, Miss.

If you don't stop your friend from driving drunk, who will? Do whatever it takes.

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U.S. Department of Transportation

**DRUNK DRIVING DOESN'T JUST KILL DRUNK DRIVERS.**

Age 7, 1982



Age 15, 1990



Age 18, 1993



Elizabeth Suto.

Killed by a drunk driver on February 27, 1994, on Bell Blvd. in Cedar Park, Texas.

If you don't stop your friend from driving drunk, who will? Do whatever it takes.

**FRIENDS DON'T LET FRIENDS DRIVE DRUNK.**



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