



2005 NFL Preview

Teams to Keep an Eye On

By Hansel Wei

If you're anything like me, you started getting excited about the upcoming NFL season on or about February 7, the day after New England won Super Bowl XXXIX. Exhibition season is right around the corner and (as if you need the extra encouragement) I've decided to take a look at which teams did the best job of improving their on-field product via the draft. While you can't actually bet on the games themselves yet, it's never too early to start thinking about props and futures, both of which are available now on GoSportsBet.com. If you think a team is a lock to win the division or even win the Super Bowl itself, why not put your money where your mouth is and take advantage of early future bets before everyone else figures out what you've already realized and the lines get worse.

I love what the **Arizona Cardinals** have done this off-season, not only via the draft, but also in particular the ballsy move they've made signing **Kurt Warner**. This is a guy who's got a major chip on his shoulder and who will look to come out guns blazing. In the draft, they resisted the urge to pick a high-profile offensive star and made a smart move getting lockdown corner **Antrel Rolle** in the first round. Look for Rolle to help stifle the high-octane passing offenses of division rivals Seattle and St. Louis. **J.J. Arrington** (2nd round) has what it takes to be a major contributor as a back. Coach Dennis Green likes what he's seen out of Arrington so far, so look for him to see some action.

Great to see signs of life from the **Detroit Lions** too. **Joey Harrington**'s breakout season was supposed to be last year, but pushing it back to the upcoming season isn't so bad either, with the addition of **Mike Williams** at wide receiver. The Lions already have **Roy Williams** and **Charles Rogers**, and by taking the best available talent at the number ten draft spot, they have no shortage of offensive potential. If Harrington steps up, there could be a reason to celebrate in Detroit *before* they host the Super Bowl!

It will be interesting to see how much **Cedric Benson** improves the **Chicago Bears**. Coming off a 5-11 season, hopes aren't exactly through the roof, but improvements are expected. Whether they can put together a winning season in a division with Detroit, Green Bay, and Minnesota is a tougher question. Look for "da Bears" to surprise some people, though.

Apparently the **Minnesota Vikings** are tired of getting scored on so much and wisely decided to do something about it, selecting DE **Erasmus James** with the eighteenth pick. Along with **Kenechi Udeze**, James will make life miserable for opposing QBs, while on the other side of the ball the speedy WR **Troy Williamson** will try to make Vikings fans get over their collective case of **Randy Moss** loss. As long as he doesn't pretend to moon the crowd, he's doing ok!

I've obviously left out the teams that will be contending for the Super Bowl and the Conference championships, because hey, guess what? They were good last year, and they're going to be good again this year. The draft choices made by the usual suspects—New England, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, Indianapolis, and Philadelphia, for instance—were going to be good regardless of who they picked (eliminate Philly from that category if T.O. and his agent keep acting like a couple of clowns and hold out over contract issues).

As far as the teams I've mentioned go, though, they've done great jobs using the draft to improve immediately and lay a foundation for future success. While some situations are contingent on quarterbacks performing (Detroit and Arizona), the groundwork is there for some very exciting seasons. If you're looking to start your 2005 football wagering season early, consider playing the props and futures on GoSportsBet.com. Because there has been minimal betting action so far, the lines haven't had a chance to adjust to betting patterns, and there is bound to be great value if you look hard enough.

Until next time, do yourself a favor...

Keep doing things Hansel's Wei.