

Written by Patrick Mayo

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Below, we explore what should happen in this week's NFL games. Of course, in the NFL, only half of what should happen actually does happen, but playing the percentages gives you the best chance of winning. Remember, think twice before benching a stud based on match-ups! We list the Vegas odds spread in parentheses and the Over/Under number in brackets.

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### **SATURDAY NIGHT (8:00pm ET)**

#### **Philadelphia @ Dallas (-4) [45]**

Dallas is now 2-0 against the Eagles this year, after the 24-0 shamming they put on them last week. But that won't phase me. I truly believe that Philly is the better team, and they'll prove it this week. No one has really been talking about the return of Brian Westbrook, but he will be the key to an extended Eagles' playoff run. LeSean McCoy and Leonard Weaver tried their best to replicate his production, but the Eagles superb screen game basically disappeared in Westbrook's absence. If Westbrook is truly back to full health, he can cause major problems for a Dallas defense that isn't afraid to give up big plays. McNabb won't have to force the ball into tight spaces with Westbrook lingering around the line of scrimmage, just waiting for an opportunity to break a long one. He's the ultimate safety valve.

Let's forget Dallas' decade of blowing it for a minute and come up with reasons why they'll win this game. The Cowboys possess the second best offense in the league. Their early season struggles running the ball have dissipated, and everything seems to be coming up Dallas lately. They're the hottest team in the NFC heading into the playoffs, with wins over the previously undefeated Saints, the Redskins and the Eagles. Their offense has been unstoppable, and Tony Romo finally looks like he's taken the next step and is finally ready to lead his team back to the promised land. Sound familiar? It should. Ever since Romo first took over the controls in Dallas in 2006, any time he has achieved the most minimal of accomplishments, he's been dubbed the next coming of Christ. And every time Romo looks like he's finally exorcised his demons, he's served a hefty helping of humble pie.

## NFL - 2009 Fantasy Football Wild Card Playoffs Week 18 Spread Pick'em Preview (PHI @ DAL)

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Since the merger, teams going for a three game season sweep are 11-8. Dallas has had this opportunity twice -- 1998 against the Cardinals and 2007 against the Giants. Both were losses. I like to use history as a guide in picking these games. Taking a larger sample size tends to be more effective. Dallas hasn't won a playoff game since Super Bowl XXX, and they have an amusing way tanking games. Philadelphia, on the other hand, has been to five NFC championships over the last ten years, and they're unlikely to lay an egg two weeks in a row -- they're just too good. I'll take experience and antiquity. Go Eagles!

**PHI 33, DAL 30 (Pick: Philadelphia +4, over 45)**

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