NFL Predictions: Kansas City Chiefs AFC West Preview

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Tuesday, 22 July 2008
Last Updated Thursday, 18 September 2008

Last season the Kansas City Chiefs were forced to do what they had been putting off for a couple of years -- rebuild. The final eight games of the 2007 season were the start of a youth movement that gathered even more steam in the off season. And, while the team was dreadful in closing out the year on a nine game losing streak, they will be better for it in the next few seasons. NFL Betting odds at BodogLife.com clearly reflect the Chiefs new direction as they are listed at 12/1 odds to win the AFC West.

The once high flying Chiefs offense came crashing to earth last year in rather precipitous fashion. Among the myriad of problems for the unit was a steady course of quarterback juggling, a season ending foot injury to star running back Larry Johnson in week eight, and an offensive line that often resembled a parted Red Sea (55 sacks allowed). The result of all these issues was a 14.1 point per game average and a 32nd ranked rushing attack (78 yards rushing per game). In fact, aside from All-Pro tight end Tony Gonzalez (99 receptions, 5 TD's) and rookie wide-out Dwayne Bowe (70 receptions, 5 TD's), there were few bright spots.

Despite last season's troubles, the offense should be better in 2008. The Chiefs let offensive line coach turned coordinator Mike Solari go and replaced him with a more experienced play caller in Chan Gailey. The drafting of Virginia standout Branden Albert should help bolster the offensive line too. Albert will likely be inserted at left tackle and Damion McIntosh will move to the right side of the line which he is more suited to play. Chiefs coaches are hopeful that a revamped line will give them a chance to truly evaluate what kind of quarterback they have in third year player Brodie Croyle.

Larry Johnson will also make a return to the lineup after having half the 2007 season and the entire off season to allow his broken foot to heal. While Johnson's numbers were not outstanding prior to the injury, the Chiefs record reflected his absence. When the former Penn State star was in the lineup the Chiefs were 4-4, without him they were 0-8.

The Chiefs defense made some big improvements last season in spite of spending an inordinate amount of time on the field. The Chiefs continual 'three and out' offense took its toll primarily on the team's rush defense (they allowed 130.6 yards rushing per game), but the unit still held opponents to 20.9 points per game (14th in the league). The pass defense, thanks in part to a pass rush that produced 37 sacks on the season, gave up just 188.5 yards per game through the air.

The team did trade sack artist Jared Allen to the Vikings in the off season and his loss will certainly be felt. However, they were able to pick up LSU's Glenn Dorsey with one of their two first round selections. Dorsey, second round pick Brandon Flowers (cornerback), and former Falcon linebacker Demarrio Williams will make good additions to a unit that already features Derrick Johnson, Donnie Edwards, and Tamba Hali.

NFL Betting odds at BodogLife.com list the Chiefs at 100/1 odds to win the Super Bowl, and 50/1 odds to win the AFC Championship trophy which bears their founder's name (Lamar Hunt).

Prediction: 3rd Place AFC West.