ShoresteinSays.com 2020 - NFL Week 7

"The Money Zone": Games that have a "Calculated vs. Actual" difference of between 2 and 6 points are considered The Money Zone. Since 2015, games that fall within this tier have hit ~55% on a sample of over 600 games. I consider games in this tier to have a statistical advantage in the long run. This is a completely objective calculation that does not account for injuries, roster changes, weather etc. However, I believe the smartest investment is to make small bets on each one of these games and slowly increase them over time if you are successful.

2020 Week 7					
Away	Home	Calculated Spread	Actual Spread	Calculated vs Actual	Projected Winner ATS
Cleveland	Cincinnati	(5.40)	3.50	8.90	Cincinnati
Carolina	New Orleans	0.93	(7.50)	8.43	Carolina
Tampa Bay	Las Vegas	(4.75)	3.00	7.75	Las Vegas
Buffalo	NY Jets	5.87	13.00	7.13	NY Jets
San Francisco	New England	3.25	(2.00)	5.25	San Francisco
Detroit	Atlanta	2.60	(2.00)	4.60	Detroit
Seattle	Arizona	7.67	3.50	4.17	Seattle
Dallas	Washington	(3.93)	-	3.93	Washington
Green Bay	Houston	(0.37)	3.50	3.87	Houston
Kansas City	Denver	13.03	9.50	3.53	Kansas City
Pittsburgh	Tennessee	1.77	(1.00)	2.77	Pittsburgh
NY Giants	Philadelphia	(2.33)	(4.00)	1.67	NY Giants
Jacksonville	LA Chargers	(9.63)	(8.00)	1.63	LA Chargers
Chicago	LA Rams	(4.37)	(5.50)	1.13	Chicago

The Week 7 Money Zone picks are San Francisco, Detroit, Seattle, Washington, Houston, Kansas City, & Pittsburgh.

2020 Money Zone Record is 20-19 ATS (51.28%)

"Shorestein Says" Picks of the Week: Each week I select between 3-5 of my favorite games and do additional analysis on them. I've highlighted the "Shorestein Says" picks of the week in yellow. Read below for my in-depth analysis.

"Shorestein Says" Picks of the Week are 12-11 ATS in 2020 (52.17%)

Seattle -3.5 *@ Arizona:* I like the Seahawks in this important NFC West contest. Seattle continues to be a perennial power house in terms of passer rating differential as they are now ranked league best at over 40! I like them this week particularly, as they have a significant rest advantage against the Cardinals who played the late Monday night game, while Seattle was resting during its bye week. This is great for their workhorse running back Chris Carson who has recently battled knee injuries. The cherry on top here is that Seattle has performed exceptionally well when they have a rest advantage over their opponent. Since 2017, Seattle is 5-1 ATS when they have a rest advantage.

I'm looking for the Cardinals to have a setback after their blowout win against an inferior, heartless Cowboys team. Although the Cardinals capitalized on the poor play of Dallas, I'm not overly impressed with their offensive efficiency. I see Kyler Murray missing too many down field low percentage throws, and I'm not convinced that they can run between the tackles. Murray is certainly dangerous on the perimeter, but I think Seattle has decent second level speed that can keep him relatively contained.

People want to put him in the same class as Wilson, but I still think he has a long way to go. Seattle has flaws on defense, but they remain opportunistic with turnovers. For the second straight year, they remain effective at taking the ball away as they are averaging 2 per game in 2020 (tied for 1st) and forced 1.8 in 2019 (4th). Murray has shown that he can be mistake prone, and Wilson has always been excellent with turnover management.

I'm far more impressed by Russell Wilson's play and game management. No one has a higher QB rating the last two years, and Seattle continues to get better in the red zone. They are a deadly 88.89% in the red zone which ranks them 1st by a long shot. They've gotten a lot more versatile with DK Metcalf's size and their ability to pound it in with Chris Carson and the running game. This is in addition to Tyler Lockett's elite quickness to get open in small spaces. At 33.8 points/ game this is the highest scoring offense in football and their days of running a conservative game appear to be behind them.

I often like to sell high on a team when they are coming off of a blowout win, and I think Arizona fits that scenario this week.

Kansas City -9.5 @ Denver: Kansas City still looks like the team to beat in the NFL. I was really impressed with their running game against an outmatched Bills team. They showed how versatile they can be as they relied on Clyde Edwards Helaire to carry the load in a bad weather game in Buffalo. Mahomes has also showed this year that he can be a patient, short yardage thrower when the big plays aren't available, or the weather calls for it. The KC offense looks as good as ever in my opinion. Hopefully, the addition of Le'veon Bell doesn't get in the way of what they have going for them now.

I think the Chiefs are also in a favorable position this week as Denver is riding high over a win that they never thought they'd get it New England. I think they wore down an unprepared Patriots team that was clearly impacted by the Covid outbreak that occurred in their locker room. The weapons on the Kansas City side are so much more explosive than what New England has to work with that I think Denver will have trouble adjusting.

I remain impressed by how the Chiefs have turned everything around defensively since the 2nd half of last year. It really looks like night and day. I think it took some time for the players to really understand Steve Spagnolo's defensive concepts and get used to implementing them on a weekly basis. But I think they've shown that they have largely corrected their deficiencies in the run game, and are clearly playing with more confidence in the secondary. Up front, they've always had the pass rushing talent with Chris Jones and Frank Clark. I have highlighted some of their improvements in key areas this season:

Kansas City Defensive Improvements				
Year	Turnovers Forced	Passer Rating Def	Yards Allowed / Carry	Yards / Play
2020	1.5 (11th)	81.90 (4th)	4.8 (25th)	5.6 (16th)
2019	1.3 (14th)	82.8 (5th)	4.9 (29th)	5.4 (14th)

When you have an offense that is good as KC's, I think the role of the defense is to create turnovers and eliminate the huge plays. I think they have still done their job in that regard, and Denver has certainly shown that they are more than willing to give the ball away as they average 2.0 per game.

Dallas @ Washington (Pick 'em): You all must think I am crazy for the amount of times that I've already picked Washington this year…. But it worked last week!

I'm hoping to capitalize again as they go up against one of the most hopeless looking teams in the NFL. I think everything fell apart for the Cowboys all at once this year. They will likely be going into Sunday's game with backups at every offensive line position and at quarterback. All of those positions were clearly the strength of this Dallas team and what they were built around. With all of them collapsing so early in the season, it's hard not to notice that it has completely deflated the entire team. Because Andy Dalton has next to zero time to throw the ball, the amount of weapons that they have at receiver are essentially irrelevant. In Dalton's game on Monday night, his average air yards / attempt was under 4 yards, and this was on 54 attempts! To give that number some perspective, the Jets average the league lowest at 4.8 air yards / attempt. It's clear that he has almost no time to pass, and Washington has shown that maybe the only thing they do well is rush the passer.

Dallas has shown no ability to stop anyone. They are giving up over 5 yards per rush which ranks them 31st in the league, and quarterbacks have lit them up in the passing game as they rank 25th in the NFL at 106.1 in def. rating. In a normal season, that would typically be last in the NFL, but there has been bad defense all across the league. At 36.3 points allowed per game, they are last by a wide margin.

Kyle Allen played relatively well last week, but he was just plagued by his two turnovers. He threw an interception and gave up a fumble for a TD. If he could avoid disaster plays, I think he has more than enough talent around him to beat this bad team. Offensively, they should lean on the run game and wear down this leaky defense. Terry McLaurin has also really emerged as a receiving threat, and Dallas clearly has no one to match up with him.

Pittsburgh +1 *@ Tennessee:* I like the Steelers as slight underdogs in this matchup between two of the hottest teams in the league. As I said last week, I think Pittsburgh is a top 3 team in the NFL, and I think they look like the most balanced team right now. The Titans have really impressed me with their offense, but I am actually a little disappointed with how the defense has played. I think they are the weakest unit in this contest, and I'd expect the Steelers to exploit that. While I was very high on the Titans defense coming into the season, I don't think they have delivered so far:

Titans Not Living up to Expectations on Defense			
Team	**Points allowed**	**Passing Yards / Attempt**	**Yards Allowed / Play**	**Sack %**
Tennessee	25.20 (15th)	7.20 (22nd)	6.20 (28th)	3.57% (28th)
Pittsburgh	18.80 (3rd)	6.40 (9th)	4.90 (3rd)	12.31% (1st)

While Tannehill continues to light the league on fire, the Titans appear to be missing something on defense. Clowney hasn't been the answer so far as the pass rush continues to struggle. On the other side, Pittsburgh has continued its dominance that it established on defense last year. I think if they take Henry away, Tennessee could be vulnerable to the Steelers pass rush. The Titans best lineman Taylor Lewan was just lost for the season, and Bud Dupree and TJ Watt have been an unstoppable duo on the edge this season. I look for this to be a major factor in the game.

Pittsburgh continues to show improvement in the run game as they are now up to 4.3 yards per carry. This was a major area that they struggled in last year (just 3.7 which was 30th). I think the mix of the improved running game and the addition of a game breaking wide receiver in Chase Claypool has made the Steelers a very legitimate force in the AFC. I think this weekend they show it.

Random Thoughts:

- The Money Zone has really cooled of these past few weeks, but I'm feeling ready for a turn around with 7 opportunities this week!

- I was very close to making San Francisco a pick of the week, but I just couldn't pull the trigger. I think Belichick is way too dangerous coming off a loss, and I think he must have some insight on how to defend Garoppolo.

- Thursday Night Football is back this week….. but it's another disgraceful NFC East matchup. I reminisce to the days back when those teams were good….

- Lions feel like an intriguing play, but I just couldn't bring myself to do another write up on how the Falcons suck. Especially, after they lit up my Vikings pick last week.

- The Jets are starting to look like one of the worst teams of all time.

- I think Chicago is an interesting play. I've seen that defense destroy Jared Goff, and it looks like they have some swagger back.

- Shame on me for falling for the Packers trap last week. Whenever I think they've turned he corner, they prove me wrong and show that they remain one of the softest teams in the upper tier of the league.

- Tampa is starting to look like a threat in the NFC. The defense has come so far in such little time.

Good Luck Everyone!