

NFL Gameday

Compiled by Desmond Bieler, Matt Bonesteel and David Larimer

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Oakland at New Orleans
1 p.m.

St. Louis at Washington
1 p.m.

Two New Faces On an Interim Basis

Today, the Raiders' Tom Cable and Rams' Jim Haslett will add their names to a select yet mostly undistinguished list: NFL interim head coaches. Over the years, interim coaches have been mostly placeholders who know the playbook and the players well enough to finish out a lost season. Then, they're usually kicked to the curb. In honor of such an unhistoric day in NFL history, a look at a select few interim coaches, the good, the bad and the ugly.



Tom Cable



Jim Haslett

REPLACED ...	TEAM RECORD WHEN HE TOOK OVER	TEAM RECORD AFTER HE TOOK OVER
Jeff Fisher Oilers, 1994	Jack Pardee	1-9

Fisher set the gold standard for recent interim coaches, as he took over the Oilers after Week 11 of the 1994 season and still is at the helm. Houston showed immediate improvement in 1995 and 1996, going 7-9 and 8-8, and in 1999 Fisher led the relocated Titans to the Super Bowl. He has a 120-99 record as an NFL head coach, all with that franchise.

REPLACED ...	TEAM RECORD WHEN HE TOOK OVER	TEAM RECORD AFTER HE TOOK OVER
Terry Robiskie Redskins, 2000 Browns, 2004	Norv Turner, Redskins	7-6

Robiskie gets a special achievement award for being named an interim coach twice. He failed to land the permanent job with either team, and even though the Browns didn't keep him as their head coach after the 2004 season, Robiskie stayed with the team as its wide receivers coach the next two seasons. He currently is the wide receivers coach for the Falcons.

REPLACED ...	TEAM RECORD WHEN HE TOOK OVER	TEAM RECORD AFTER HE TOOK OVER
Bruce Coslet Bengals, 1996	David Shula	1-6

Coslet's interim stint with the Bengals was pretty much the high-water mark of his coaching career. He led the team into playoff contention and an 8-8 finish in 1996, earning a four-year contract. But he followed with seasons of 7-9, 3-13 and 4-12. After starting 0-3 and getting outscored 74-7 over the first three games of the 2000 season, he resigned. In his nine-year head coaching career, Coslet finished above .500 only once: as interim coach in 1996.

REPLACED ...	TEAM RECORD WHEN HE TOOK OVER	TEAM RECORD AFTER HE TOOK OVER
Rick Venturi Colts, 1991 Saints, 1996	Ron Meyer, Colts	0-5

Venturi also was named interim coach twice, and historians still are trying to figure out how that happened. When he replaced Mora, the New Orleans Times-Picayune described him as a "freewheeling motorcycle enthusiast" before listing his coaching credentials. Perhaps that's because his head coaching credentials included a 1-31-1 record at Northwestern, 1978-80.

REPLACED ...	TEAM RECORD WHEN HE TOOK OVER	TEAM RECORD AFTER HE TOOK OVER
Marv Levy Bills, 1986	Hank Bullough	2-7

At the start of the 1986 season, Levy was the director of football operations for the CFL's Montreal Alouettes. But he kept the Bills afloat in 1986 and was named the team's permanent head coach. Four seasons later, he would begin a run of four straight Super Bowl appearances at the helm of the Bills, the team he would coach until 1997.

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Jacksonville at Denver
4:05 p.m.

Jacksonville used to be all about running the ball well and stopping the run. This year, however, it ranks a pedestrian 15th against the run, but more important, where has its ground attack gone? Last year, the Jaguars were second in the NFL in rushing; in 2006, they were third; in 2005, 10th. This year, they are 19th, as their vaunted tandem of Fred Taylor and Maurice Jones-Drew has combined for 408 yards. Jacksonville also has to be concerned about what its defense can do to blunt the Broncos' high-powered attack. The Jaguars are worst in the league at stopping foes on third down (49 percent).

Dallas at Arizona
4:15 p.m., Fox

The Cowboys (4-1) travel west to visit a former NFC East rival, and the team is likely happy to take a break from the rigors of that tough division. But the Cardinals, having built a new stadium a couple of years ago, are now building a little home-field advantage. Last week, the Cardinals (3-2) flexed their newfound muscle at gleaming University of Phoenix Stadium by spanking the previously undefeated Bills, 41-17. Their only other home game so far this year resulted in a 31-10 thrashing of the Dolphins, who haven't lost since. In fact, Arizona is 8-2 at home dating from last season.

Philadelphia at San Francisco
4:15 p.m., Fox

Andy Reid and Donovan McNabb are one of only two combinations of first-time head coach and rookie quarterback to join a team at the same time and last as long as 10 years together. The other duo? Couple of fellows named Bill Walsh and Joe Montana. With a win today against the 49ers, Reid and McNabb can top Walsh and Montana's 10-year win total of 75. Individually, Walsh disciple Reid is going for his 99th career victory, and McNabb has a pretty good shot at passing Ron Jaworski for all-time franchise marks in passing attempts (3,918) and yards (26,963).

N.Y. Giants at Cleveland
Tomorrow, 8:30 p.m., ESPN

The first time the Browns played the Giants this year, it was during the preseason and, for Cleveland, it was a complete debacle. The Browns lost, 37-34, a score that doesn't begin to reflect the pounding Cleveland took in the first half, when both teams had its starters in the game. Since then, the Giants have somehow managed to look even better than during their epic playoff run last season, culminating a 4-0 start with a 44-6 rout of Seattle last week. By contrast, Cleveland barely avoided an 0-4 start with a close win over the winless Bengals before heading into its bye week.

4

Detroit at Minnesota (1 p.m.): After last Monday's close win at New Orleans, the Vikings (2-3) breathed a sigh of relief. They may have breathed an even bigger one when they saw what was up next — a home game

against the hapless Lions. Minnesota survived a game in which star RB Adrian Peterson could barely dent the Saints' less-than-vaunted run defense, amassing 32 yards on 21 carries. It just so happens Detroit has been everyone's springboard this season, having lost all four of its games by a combined 147-66. Former GM Matt Millen has already been fired, and Coach Rod Marinelli may be next, especially if his team plays like it did last week, when it came out of a bye only to get pummeled by the Bears, 34-7, at home.

Cincinnati at N.Y. Jets (1 p.m.): The Jets may not have wanted to have last week off on a bye, because their quarterback had just gotten red hot. Brett Favre tossed a team record-tying six touchdowns against the Cardinals and looked every bit like the Hall of Famer that Gang Green hoped it had acquired in the offseason. So the task for the Jets is to pick up exactly where they left off. The Bengals have quite the opposite task. Almost nothing has gone right for them in an 0-5 start except for showing some fight in road games against the Giants and Cowboys. In theory, they have the firepower to match the Jets through the air, throwing to a group of wide receivers that includes T.J. Houshmandzadeh, Chad Ocho Cinco and Chris Henry.

Miami at Houston (1 p.m.): All hail the Dolfuns (so dubbed by the Palm Beach Post's Greg Stoda), who have defeated last year's AFC finalists in consecutive games. All pity the Texans, who aren't having any fun at all. Before Sunday's win over the Chargers, Miami (2-2) hadn't been at .500 since 2005. Now they're winnin' games and runnin' the Wildcat and causin' opposing teams' personnel to mutter profanities under their breath. Their unexpected success has led Coach Tony Sparano to warn his team against overconfidence. The winless Texans have lost their past two games by a combined seven points.

Green Bay at Seattle (4:15 p.m.): Starting QB Matt Hasselbeck hyperextended his right knee in the first quarter of Seattle's 44-6 debacle at the Meadowlands last Sunday. He didn't practice on Wednesday, and neither did backup Seneca Wallace, who aggravated a calf injury he suffered earlier in the season. That means former Cleveland Brown Charlie Frye probably will start this weekend. Packers QB Aaron Rodgers is still dealing with a sprained throwing shoulder. Green Bay's more pressing concern is its injuries on defense. DE Cullen Jenkins is out for the season with a torn pectoral muscle, LB A.J. Hawk is battling a groin injury, and S Atari Bigby has missed three straight games with a hamstring injury.

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The Sunday Line

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Chicago at Atlanta
1 p.m.

Now that the Cubs and White Sox are finished letting down the city of Chicago again, perhaps the Bears finally can start getting some attention in the Windy City. They are in first place, after all.

And there's a pretty good chance they would have been 5-0, if not for a few dropped passes against the Panthers in Week 2 and an ill-timed unsportsmanlike conduct penalty against the Buccaneers in Week 3.

Bears QB Kyle Orton has carried the offense with his surprisingly heady play, but Chicago faces a rejuvenated Falcons team that has its fans believing: The game was announced as a sellout on Tuesday afternoon, thus avoiding a local-TV blackout. The main reasons for such excitement are RB Michael Turner, who leads the league in rushing at 108.6 yards per game; rookie QB Matt Ryan, who has as many wins (three) as Peyton Manning did as a rookie in 1998; and DE John Abraham, who is tops in the NFL with seven sacks.

Baltimore at Indianapolis

1 p.m., CBS

It's always a guessing game as to which Colts team is going to show up. Is it the one that scored three times in 2 minutes 10 seconds last Sunday to earn an improbable comeback win over the Texans? Or the one that couldn't score against Houston's middling defense for pretty much the previous three quarters?

Will their defense force key turnovers, as it did twice late in the fourth quarter against the Texans, or will it give up 156 rushing yards, as it also did against Houston?

The Colts' opponent, the Ravens, seems to have its game plan down: run the ball, and blitz on defense, two facets of the game with which Indianapolis has had a hard time. The Colts have the league's worst rush defense at 188.5 yards per game, and QB Peyton Manning still seems rattled when faced with a heavy pass rush. Now, the Colts face a team that has run the ball 56 more times than it has thrown it, and is averaging more than two sacks per game.



Running back Michael Turner is leading the NFL in rushing with 543 yards for the Falcons (3-2).



Colts QB Peyton Manning will face a Ravens defense that is averaging more than two sacks per game.

Carolina at Tampa Bay

1 p.m.

Something about playing the Buccaneers brings out the best in Panthers QB Jake Delhomme. He's 7-1 against Tampa Bay, with the last loss coming in 2005. He has completed 138 of 221 passes for 1,748 yards and 13 touchdowns, with a 93.5 passer rating. In his past four games in Tampa Bay, he's 4-0 with a 96.9 passer rating.

This season, Delhomme has done just about everything possible to make people forget he missed most of last season after elbow ligament replacement surgery. He has five touchdown passes and only two interceptions. His passer rating has been at least 111.2 the past two games. Part of his success is because of the offensive line, as Delhomme hasn't been sacked the past two games.

On the other side, it looks as if Jeff Garcia will replace Brian Griese as Tampa Bay's quarterback. Griese has been dealing with a sore right elbow and shoulder. Garcia came in on Sunday after Griese got hurt and completed 13 of 17 passes for 93 yards and the Buccaneers' only touchdown of the day.

New England at San Diego

8:15 p.m., NBC

Yankees-Red Sox. Redskins-Cowboys. Oklahoma-Texas. Canadiens-Bruins. Republicans-Democrats. Patriots-Chargers.

Wait, Patriots-Chargers? Yes, this bicoastal rivalry has become heated, with New England winning its past three games against San Diego and knocking the Chargers out of the playoffs the past two seasons.

The biggest volleys in this war of words have come from the Chargers. After the Patriots knocked San Diego out of the playoffs in January 2007, usually soft-spoken RB LaDainian Tomlinson took issue with the way New England's players celebrated on San Diego's home turf, and LB Shaun Phillips called the Patriots "classless."

The Patriots, meanwhile, still are trying to figure out what they can do with Matt Cassel instead of Tom Brady at quarterback. Keeping Cassel on his feet could be the key: New England's opponents have 16 sacks this season; they had 21 all of last season.

Bragging Rights The NFL Gameday crew picks their locks of the week, listed with this year's record:

Chicago (-2½) over ATLANTA

Still honeymooning in Argentina, Larimer is awed by toilets that flush backward and the Bears' 3-1-1 record against the number this season.

— David Larimer (5-0)

NEW YORK JETS (-9½) over Cincinnati

Just to clarify, at the time I made this lock, the line was still -6. It would be nice if the Jets settled any brewing Bragging Rights controversy and won by 10, though.

— Desmond Bieler (4-1)

Carolina (+1½) over TAMPA BAY

Panthers QB Jake Delhomme is 4-0 lifetime in Tampa, and I'm somehow above .500 five weeks into the season. Seems like a harmonious convergence to me.

— Matt Bonesteel (3-2)