

## HOW WE SEE IT

Daily Journal staff members predict the outcome of this weekend's NFL wild-card playoff games:

**Rick Morwick**  
Sports editor

**Kansas City (9-7) at Indianapolis (12-4)**

The only advantage for the Colts is that they're at home. Apart from that, this is a toss-up. Kansas City excels at moving the ball on the ground but can do it in the air, too.



If the Colts' offense can't cover for their defense, which they haven't always done this season, this could be the latest in a series of embarrassing playoff losses for the horseshoes.

**Colts 28, Chiefs 24**
**Dallas (9-7) at Seattle (9-7)**

Who has momentum? How about neither team? Seattle, last year's NFC Super Bowl representative, brings a three-game skid. Dallas enters having lost two consecutive games for the first time all season.

But someone's going to halt a losing streak, and here's betting it's the Seahawks.

**Seahawks 21, Cowboys 17**

**N.Y. Jets (10-6) at New England (12-4)**  
The resurgence of quarterback Chad Pennington fueled an impressive stretch run by the Jets. They won five of their final six and bring a three-game winning streak to Foxborough, Mass., where they won 17-14 on Nov. 12. The Patriots are equally hot. They won six of their final seven regular-season games and also boast a three-game winning streak. They'll stay hot at home.

**Patriots 24, Jets 10**

**N.Y. Giants (8-8) at Philadelphia (10-6)**  
Somehow, some way, the Eagles stayed on playoff course without Donovan McNabb. Somehow, somehow, the Giants nearly played themselves off it with Eli Manning. Jeff Garcia not only kept the Philadelphia ship from sinking, he'll steer it to the divisional playoffs.

**Eagles 21, Giants 14**
**Jeff Decker**
**Assistant sports editor**
**Kansas City (9-7) at Indianapolis (12-4)**

As much as the Chiefs' Larry Johnson must be salivating at the thought of running through the Colts' matador defense, Kansas City won't be able to stay grounded unless its defense can stop the Colts. And that's just not going to happen.


**Colts 35, Chiefs 21**
**Dallas (9-7) at Seattle (9-7)**

Did these teams really make the playoffs? Is the NFC that bad? Yes, it is. Both of these teams underachieved, and neither displayed any kind of consistency throughout the season. Which makes this one difficult to call.

**Cowboys 27, Seahawks 19**
**N.Y. Jets (10-6) at New England (12-4)**

I always feel like the Patriots are overrated, that they're still living off of their three Super Bowl titles. Still, this game is in Foxborough. And though the Jets and coach Eric Mangini are a good story, they don't have enough to knock off New England.

**Patriots 21, Jets 13**
**N.Y. Giants (8-8) at Philadelphia (10-6)**

The second game of the NFC's JV tournament finds a team (the Giants) that qualified for the playoffs despite its worst efforts against a team (the Eagles) that looks good only because everyone else around them is so bad. Go with the better quarterback, veteran Jeff Garcia over still-learning Eli Manning.

**Eagles 24, Giants 10**
**Paul Hoffman**
**Special publications editor**
**Kansas City (9-7) at Indianapolis (12-4)**

The smell coming from the RCA Dome is the road kill that used to be the Colts' run defense. Indy was dead stinkin' last in rushing defense in the NFL (by far), allowing an odiferous 173 yards a game and 5.3 yards per carry. Getting Bob Sanders back will help a little. But if the Colts couldn't slow down the likes of Ronnie Brown, Ron Dayne, Maurice Jones-Drew and Travis Henry the second half of the season, how are they going to stop one of the NFL's best, Larry Johnson? You have to be able to



run and stop the run to win playoff games. Get me the tissues; I'm going to cry.

**Chiefs 37, Colts 31**
**Dallas (9-7) at Seattle (9-7)**

These teams both need crutches as they limped into the playoffs, losing three of their final four.

Actually, limping may not be the proper diagnosis. Perhaps broken and beaten would be better. Seattle lost to Arizona (a seriously maimed team if ever there was one) in its fade, and Dallas lost its regular-season finale to the crippled Detroit Lions. But somebody has to win ... NFL rules mandate it. Seattle's at home.

**Seahawks 23, Cowboys 20**
**N.Y. Jets (10-6) at New England (12-4)**

The Jets feasted on crummy teams this year, winning just once against a team with a winning record. That tasty victory happened to be a little morsel called the New England Patriots, in Massachusetts.

The Pats were off their game that day, starving for a third-down conversion. New England is still a pretty fat cat in the AFC, is playoff tested and should be able to run the ball on the Jets with Corey Dillon and Laurence Maroney. Oh yes, that Tom Brady feller is pretty good, too.

**Patriots 19, Jets 9**
**N.Y. Giants (8-8) at Philadelphia (10-6)**

Hey! An NFC team that played some pretty good ball at the end of the season. Crazy, baby!

The Eagles, winners of five straight after a midseason swoon, have done it with Jeff Garcia taking over for the injured Donovan McNabb at QB. Now how nutty is that? And how about that Eli Manning guy? The Giants' late-season problems coincided with his drop in production. Wild, huh? Well, you can blame some of it on that internal strife thing, too: coach and players not seeing eye to eye and not afraid to talk about it. That's so whack.

**Eagles 27, Giants 3**
**Matthew Glensk**
**Sports writer**
**Kansas City (9-7) at Indianapolis (12-4)**

Someone get Larry Johnson a towel. The league's second-leading rusher is salivating at the chance to run on the Colts' 32nd-ranked defense.



LJ will get his, but in the end, the Chiefs won't be able to keep up with Peyton Manning because the Chiefs don't possess the type of defense that gives Manning fits. This one should be a shootout.

**Colts 38, Chiefs 28**
**Dallas (9-7) at Seattle (9-7)**

Losing three of your past four games is not how you want to enter the post-season, but that's the position both Dallas and Seattle are in.

A month ago, the Cowboys were the toast of a weak NFC. Now, Tony Romo is providing Bill Parcells with more ulcers than points.

The Seahawks haven't been much better, losing to San Francisco and Arizona in recent weeks. Yeesh!

Someone tell me what happens; I'm going to a movie.

**Cowboys 24, Seahawks 21**
**N.Y. Jets (10-6) at New England (12-4)**

The Jets have defeated only one team with a winning record this season. Coincidentally, that team was New England.

Eric Mangini has done a fantastic job getting his team into the postseason, but the protégé will soon get a lesson from the master, as Bill Belichick's Patriots will show their class in a close, physical game. This should be the most competitive game of the first round.

**Patriots 20, Jets 13**
**N.Y. Giants (8-8) at Philadelphia (10-6)**

At the beginning of the year, if I told you Jeff Garcia would lead the Eagles to the NFC East Division crown, you would've directed me to the nearest mental health facility.

But not even I was crazy enough to envision that. Philadelphia is peaking right now, and the Giants are a mess. Tom Coughlin will not only lose the game on Sunday, he'll lose his job.

**Eagles 28, Giants 10**


AP PHOTO

Pittsburgh Steelers coach Bill Cowher places a miniature Super Bowl trophy on the podium that was presented to him by Steelers chairman Dan Rooney before Cowher announced his resignation Friday in Pittsburgh.

# Cowher taking some time off

## Longtime Steelers coach resigns but doesn't rule out return to sideline

By ALAN ROBINSON

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**PITTSBURGH**

He has the best-known jaw in the NFL, a jutting block of granite that perfectly reflects his toughness and passion for winning.

What no one seemed to know about Bill Cowher was that finally winning the Super Bowl with the Pittsburgh Steelers not only calmed his competitiveness but sent him off on a football sabbatical with a look he rarely flashed before: a smile of satisfaction.

Cowher resigned Friday after 15 seasons as the Steelers' coach, a job he probably could have held for life, or at least for as long as the 23 years predecessor Chuck Noll had it.

The Steelers immediately began searching for a new coach for only the second time since 1969, a span when other NFL teams have had as many as 15 coaches.

Team president Art Rooney II said Steelers assistants Ken Whisenhunt and Russ Grimm are among the candidates. Both are interviewing for some of the other four current NFL job openings, with Whisenhunt already talking to the Falcons and Cardinals.

One word noticeably absent during Cowher's farewell to the Steelers was retirement; he said it

makes him sound old. He is only 49, an age when some head coaches are only being hired, and he didn't deny he might want to coach again, maybe soon.

For now, the man Steelers chairman Dan Rooney calls one of the great head coaches plans to spend time with his family at their new home in Raleigh, N.C., where his wife, Kaye, and youngest daughter, Lindsay, relocated in the summer.

"I'm not burned out," Cowher said. "There comes a time in your life — I'm healthy and happy, and I've been fortunate — you've got to prioritize things."

"My family has made a lot of sacrifices for me, and I'm looking forward to being there for them. It's the right time."

That means Cowher and his wife will attend a lot of basketball games in the next few months since daughters Meagan and Lauren play at Princeton. Cowher's 161-99-1 record ranks him fourth among current-era coaches in career wins.

He won a Super Bowl last season after six trips to the AFC Championship Game and took the Steelers to the playoffs 10 times, with star players including Rod Woodson, Jerome Bettis, Hines Ward, Dermontti Dawson and LeVon Kirkland.

# • Punters

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

Chiefs quarterback Trent Green said.

"We were hoping that getting a dome team coming to Kansas City in January that it would be snowing and everything else. And all of a sudden we show up and it's 60 degrees and sunny. That didn't work into our favor; and then the game was just a shootout."

While nobody is predicting a similar 69-point explosion today, there are many enticing similarities.

The Chiefs that year were characterized by a nearly unstoppable offense and a pitiable defense that could hardly put a

stop on anybody. Yet the Chiefs were unbeaten at home.

This year, the Colts have the league's No. 2 passing offense. However, their run defense that'll be tasked with slowing down Larry Johnson, the NFL's No. 2 rusher, is ranked dead last. And the Colts are unbeaten at home.

Colts coach Tony Dungy remembers the game as one of the best offensive performances he's ever seen.

"So much ebb-and-flow," he said. "We were able to get the lead with a couple of big plays. Dante Hall got a kick return to get them back in it. You just remember the energy and the noise in the stadium, and then the last drive that we had to really edge the game, and Edgerrin and Dominic (Rhodes) really doing a good job of running the ball and

# • Run

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

Bowl safety Bob Sanders, one of Indy's best tacklers and most energizing defenders, back on the field.

Sanders has played in only two games since having arthroscopic surgery on his right knee in mid-September and practiced Tuesday and Wednesday this week, the first time he's worked on consecutive days since surgery.

Having Sanders could make a big difference.

"It's not optimal since he's not played for so long, but I think he'll play well," Dungy said. "He'll play with a lot of energy, but I don't know how many plays that's going to be."

Sanders was held out of practice Thursday for precautionary reasons, although he acknowledged the knee felt better than it has in nearly four months.

With Sanders, the Colts are usually more aggressive, something that could cut either way when trying to tackle Johnson.

"Hopefully, I'm not overanxious and try and stay calm," Sanders said. "Playing a Johnson-type runner, if you come too fast, he can sidestep you."

Johnson may get more carries than usual today for another reason: the Chiefs' developing quarterback controversy.

Coach Herm Edwards plans to start veteran Trent Green, a two-time Pro Bowl quarterback who missed much of the season with a concussion before hurting his ankle while sliding in last week's season-finale against Jacksonville.

If Green falters, Edwards has already said he would pull Green in favor of Damon Huard, who went 5-3 as a starter this season. Green's not worried.

"You know it doesn't matter whether we're playing Baltimore, San Diego, the Raiders, Denver or whoever it may be," Green said. "I'm just going to prepare the best I can, play as best I can. Everything else is out of my hands."

Given the history between the teams, though, it may not be entirely out of Green's hands, either.

Green and two-time MVP Peyton Manning found themselves involved in one of the NFL's greatest playoff shootouts three years ago, a game in which neither team punted and that the Colts finally won 38-31.

If today's game becomes a carbon-copy, or if the Chiefs fall behind early, they may resort to throwing the ball more often.

It's a script that has worked well for Indianapolis in the past.

"Anytime you play, you want to get off to a good start," said Manning, who is 3-6 in playoff

# SUNDAY'S GAME AT A GLANCE

**Kansas City Chiefs (9-7) at Indianapolis Colts (12-4)**  
4:30 p.m., WTHR-Channel 13

**Opening line:** Colts by 6½  
**Record vs. spread:** Chiefs 8-8; Colts 8-8

**Series record:** Colts lead 10-7  
**Playoff records:** Chiefs 8-12; Colts 13-16

**Most recent meeting:** Chiefs 45, Colts 35, Oct. 31, 2004, at Kansas City  
**Last week:** Chiefs beat Jaguars 35-30; Colts beat Dolphins 17-22

**Chiefs' offense:** Overall (16), rush (9), pass (22)

**Chiefs' defense:** Overall (16), rush (18), pass (18)

**Colts' offense:** Overall (3), rush (18), pass (2)

**Colts' defense:** Overall (21), rush (32), pass (2)

**Streaks, stats and notes:** Kansas City is making its first postseason appearance since 2003. ... Coach Herman Edwards led the Chiefs to the playoffs in his first year. He's the fifth coach in NFL history to lead two teams to the playoffs in the first season with those clubs.

Edwards took the Jets to the playoffs three times in five seasons. ... The Chiefs have the No. 3 red-zone offense (60.4) in the league. ... QB Trent Green has seven TDs and three INTs in three starts against the Colts. Green (21,459 yards) is the franchise's second-leading all-time passer, trailing only Len Dawson (28,507). ... Rookie DE Tamba Hali led the club with eight sacks. ... WR Eddie Kennison (53 catches, 860 yards) and TE Tony Gonzalez (73 catches, 900 yards) each had five TD catches. ... Including the playoffs, CB Ty Law has seven INTs in his past 11 games vs. Colts. ... P Dustin Colquitt led the league with 39.3 net punting average. ... RB Larry Johnson, with an NFL record 416 carries, rushed for 1,789 yards, breaking the Chiefs' single-season record of 1,750 he set last year. Johnson finished third among AFC RBs with 410 yards receiving. ... Indianapolis was the only team in the NFL to allow all 16 opponents to rush for at least 100 yards and gave up a league-high 173 yards per game. ... The Colts went 3-4 after 9-0 start. ... Coach Tony Dungy is making his eighth consecutive playoff appearance, including the past five with Indianapolis. ... The Colts led the AFC in total offense (379.4 yards) and led the NFL in third-down conversion (56.1 percent, 105 of 187). ... QB Peyton Manning led the NFL in passing (101.0) and TD passes (31). Manning, the AFC leader with 4,397 yards passing, has 15 TDs and eight INTs in nine career playoff games. ... WRs Marvin Harrison (95 catches, 1,366 yards, 12 TDs) and Reggie Wayne (86 catches, 1,130, 9 TDs) were the NFL's top receiving duo for receptions, yards and TDs (21).

games. "We're trying to be sharper in practice, and the main thing is to protect the ball when you have chances to score."

Most teams have limited Manning's chances by running the ball effectively, and the Chiefs are expected to try that tactic.

day with now-retired left tackle Willie Roaf.

"I definitely remember Willie Roaf," he said. "It was an offensive game, like the defenses were almost nonexistent. We definitely don't want that to happen again."

Center Jeff Saturday is one of the Colts who started that game and will start against Kansas City this second time around.

"It was one of those days where both offenses were humming, and it made for a great game," he said. "Whoever got the ball last was going to win, and that happened to be us."

By the end of the exhausting afternoon, both defenses seemed ready to just roll over and play dead like, well, like a possum.

*Doug Tucker writes for The Associated Press. Send comments to dtucker@ap.org.*

# • Numbers

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

The Colts are giving up only 159.2 passing yards per game. They have faced 415 attempts (25.9 per game) and made 25 sacks.

Pass attempts against the Colts are down from the past two years, but their sack success rate still has fallen. Despite facing only a handful or fewer passes per game, sacks have been cut basically in half.

In 2005, teams passed 509 times against the Colts (31.8 per game), and they registered 46 sacks.

In 2004, the opposition threw 557 times (34.8 per game), and the Colts made 45 sacks.

"If you look at the statistics, it's all about pass attempts and the percentage of sacks per pass attempt and how many times you hit the quarterback per pass attempt," Freney said. "It's not about the end number."

"(Now) we are in the playoffs, and hopefully they will start throwing the ball a little bit more, and we will get some turnovers and we can make some big plays."

Freney, however, has no delusions that Kansas City will come out firing when it has running back Larry Johnson, who set an NFL single-season record this year with 416 carries. Johnson amassed 1,789 yards

## THE FREENEY FILE

**Name:** Dwight Freney  
**Team:** Indianapolis Colts  
**Position:** Defensive end  
**Number:** 93  
**Height:** 6-foot-1  
**Weight:** 268 pounds  
**Born:** Feb. 19, 1980, in Hartford, Conn.  
**Resides:** Bloomfield, Conn.  
**College:** Syracuse  
**NFL experience:** Five seasons  
**Statistics:** Had a career-low 5.5 quarterback sacks this season. For his career, Freney has 219 tackles, 56.5 sacks and 27 forced fumbles.  
**Family:** Single

and 17 touchdowns, both figures second in the NFL behind San Diego's LaDainian Tomlinson.

"They are going to ride the horse that got them there, so we have to step up and make some plays," Freney said. "I think we are doing a lot better this week in preparing for that, if they decide to go with that game plan."

"(Safety) Bob (Sanders) is back, and some guys are getting more familiar with the positions that they are playing. I think we should be good."

The consensus among Colts defenders heading into this game is that they still can try to make big plays even if the Chiefs are devoted to the run.

"Really, what it comes down to is swarming the ball carrier,"

linebacker Rob Morris said. "We are built to swarm; we are built to have three or four guys around the tackle."

"That's the concept of the defense, and we did that against Cincinnati (a 34-16 victory on Dec. 18)," Morris continued. "We watched the Cincinnati tape, and there were blue jerseys everywhere around the ball carrier."

"You can see when we've struggled there hasn't been."

The more players corraling the ball carrier, the more chances for one of the late arrivers to try to strip the ball, Freney said.

"A lot of guys have to be able to hit the running back at different angles," he said. "It's definitely hard to get turnovers when you are playing some good backs and they are holding onto the ball."

"It may have to be a little bit of a slip on their end, or they may have the ball exposed and hopefully we can jar the ball loose."

Freney also remains confident that he can impact the game even if the Chiefs only pass 20 times or so. He had three sacks against the Bengals and forced fumbles on all of those plays, leading to one fumble recovery.

"It's not something where we have to come up with some new, elaborate game plan," Freney said. "I think for the most part, if we just do what we do and have guys in position to make plays, we'll be fine."

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