

Philadelphia Eagles

In the ultra-competitive NFC East, there's not much distance between the playoffs and the cellar. The Eagles, for example, have ping-ponged between first and last the past four seasons. There's no 97-pound weakling to beat up on every season in this division.

The Eagles actually played pretty well last season. They went 8-8 (only two fewer wins than the previous year) despite playing the hardest schedule in the league. Their opponents combined to go 136-104 in games against other teams.

An easier schedule will help, but Philadelphia's offense at some point could run short of firepower. Both of this team's key offensive players, Brian Westbrook and Donovan McNabb, have had problems staying healthy, and the Eagles were unable to land an elite wide receiver – they tried for Randy Moss, Roy Williams and Anquan Boldin.

QUARTERBACK. Who would have thought, after the Eagles beat Atlanta in the 2004 NFC Championship to advance to their first Super Bowl in 24 years, that Donovan McNabb would go only 17-17 in his next 34 games? He needs to win more games if he wants to stay in the lineup.

His overall stats haven't been that bad. In typical fantasy scoring systems, he's been the No. 3 quarterback over the last three years when stats are adjusted to account for missed games, averaging 272 total yards, with 57 combined touchdowns in 33 games. Only three quarterbacks have done a better job avoiding interceptions.

But McNabb hasn't won consistently, and he hasn't stayed healthy. He's missed at least six games in two of his last three seasons. As his mobility declines, he becomes more likely to get hurt again. He was sacked, on average, once every 12 pass plays last year – almost double his rate from two years ago.

McNabb has never been a particularly accurate passer (he's completed a below-average 59.5 percent of his passes the last three years), and his overall production declined last season. He dropped 32 yards per game, and he finished with two fewer total touchdowns despite playing in four more games.

In crucial situations last year – like around the end zone – McNabb didn't get it done. Inside the 10, for example, he completed only 15 of 36 passes, with 9 TDs and an interception. Maybe getting tight end L.J. Smith back to full health will help. McNabb no longer has the wheels to be a big threat as a runner in that area.

Andy Reid's aggressive play-calling is a plus. Only Green Bay and Seattle called a higher percentage of pass plays in the red zone last season. But McNabb's critics will continue to howl unless he plays better and delivers more wins. In the rugged NFC East, that won't be easy.

Kevin Kolb has some value in larger leagues. After a year of seasoning, he should be ready to take over the No. 2 role, and he has a better chance than most backups of getting on the field. Kolb won't tear up the league as a passer, of course, but the Eagles tend to throw the ball in the red zone, and Kolb could be an extremely active runner – he ran for 21 TDs in college.

RUNNING BACK. An injury, it seems, is the only thing that potentially could stop Brian Westbrook from being a top-5 fantasy back. He's the Eagles' best runner, and he's also their best receiver. That's a tough combination to beat.

As a runner, Westbrook has been a force the last two years, averaging 88 yards per game. And he's averaged 4.9 yards per attempt in that time period, 5th-best among running backs with at least 300 carries.

But his pass-catching ability makes Westbrook a coveted fantasy commodity. He's caught 167 passes the last two seasons. He averages 51 receiving yards per game over the last four years, and he's caught at least 4 TD passes in each of the past five seasons.

Add the rushing and receiving together, and Westbrook piled up a league-high 2,104 yards from scrimmage last year – 155 more than any other player. He wasn't far off that pace the previous season, finishing at 1,916 yards in 14 games.



Donovan McNabb's effectiveness waned last season, and he's had a lot of problems with injuries.

Westbrook is an injury risk. He'll be 29 on opening day, and he's never played 16 games in a season. He doesn't take a lot of direct hits, but he weighs only 203 pounds. If the Eagles ask him to handle the ball 24-plus times per game again this season, there's a good chance he'll miss at least a month's worth of games. Still, it's difficult to allow that kind of talent to slip beyond the top 5 of a fantasy draft.

The Eagles hold the rights to three different tailbacks selected with third-round picks in the last three years, but another player – Correll Buckhalter – is the likely No. 2. None of those youngsters has done enough to even be guaranteed a roster spot, and Buckhalter (who'll be 30 in October) played well last year, carrying 17 times for 103 yards against the Giants in his lone start.

Buckhalter doesn't have special speed, power or talent, but his knowledge of the team's offense and its pass protection scheme is a huge advantage. He'll score 3-4 TDs on 1-yard runs, and if Westbrook gets hurt, Buckhalter should post decent overall numbers.

None of the team's three young backs look particularly promising. Ryan Moats and Tony Hunt haven't done anything. Lorenzo Booker, drafted by Miami last year, catches the ball well but weighs only 190 pounds – the Dolphins moved him briefly to wide receiver and were happy to unload him for a fourth-round pick. Booker might play on some third downs, but if Westbrook gets hurt, the Eagles could go to a committee approach at the position.

RECEIVER. The Eagles failed in their attempts to land Randy Moss, Anquan Boldin and Roy Williams, but their receiving corps should be slightly better anyway. Incumbent starters Kevin Curtis and Reggie Brown will have more help. L.J. Smith is healthy, and second-rounder DeSean Jackson could contribute some big plays.

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2007 INDIVIDUAL PLAYER STATS

| PASSING | Att | Comp | Pct | Yards | TD | Int | Sack | Rating |
|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|---------|---------|---------|
| Donovan McNabb | 473 | 291 | 61.5 | 3324 | 19 | 7 | 44 | 89.9 |
| A.J. Feeley | 103 | 59 | 57.3 | 681 | 5 | 8 | 3 | 61.2 |
| Eagles | 577 | 350 | 60.7 | 4005 | 24 | 15 | 49 | 84.6 |
| Opponents | 539 | 312 | 57.9 | 3693 | 16 | 11 | 37 | 80.3 |
| RUSHING | Att | Yards | Avg | Long | TD | '06 Yd | '06 TD | '05 TD |
| Brian Westbrook | 278 | 1333 | 4.8 | 36 | 7 | 1217 | 7 | 3 |
| Correll Buckhalter | 62 | 313 | 5.0 | 30t | 4 | 345 | 2 | -- |
| Donovan McNabb | 50 | 236 | 4.7 | 40 | 0 | 212 | 3 | 1 |
| Eagles | 421 | 1974 | 4.7 | 40 | 12 | 1984 | 13 | 11 |
| Opponents | 403 | 1533 | 3.8 | 56 | 10 | 2182 | 12 | 15 |
| RECEIVING | No | Yards | Avg | Long | TD | '06 Yd | '06 TD | '05 TD |
| Brian Westbrook | 90 | 771 | 8.6 | 57t | 5 | 699 | 4 | 4 |
| Kevin Curtis | 77 | 1110 | 14.4 | 75t | 6 | 479 | 4 | 6 |
| Reggie Brown | 61 | 780 | 12.8 | 45t | 4 | 816 | 8 | 4 |
| Jason Avant | 23 | 267 | 11.6 | 31 | 2 | 68 | 1 | -- |
| L.J. Smith | 22 | 236 | 10.7 | 26 | 1 | 611 | 5 | 3 |
| Eagles | 350 | 4005 | 11.4 | 75t | 24 | 4309 | 31 | 21 |
| Opponents | 312 | 3693 | 11.8 | 91t | 16 | 3067 | 17 | 24 |
| KICKING | XP-A | FG-A | 40-49 | 50+ | Pts | '06 Pts | '05 Pts | '04 Pts |
| David Akers | 36-36 | 24-32 | 1-6 | 1-4 | 108 | 102 | 71 | 122 |
| Opponents | 27-29 | 31-38 | 5-9 | 2-2 | 120 | 112 | 112 | 78 |

Curtis should be the leading receiver. He's much faster than Brown, and he appears to have a better rapport with Donovan McNabb. In his first year with the team, Curtis caught 16 more passes than Brown and scored 4 more TDs. The Eagles are using the deep pass more often than they did in the past, and that fits with Curtis' skill set; twice in the last three years, he's scored 3 TDs from 40-plus yards.

Curtis, however, is really more of a No. 2. He's not very big (6-0, 186), so he won't be a major factor in the red zone. Inside the 10 last year, only 6 passes were thrown his way, and he caught only 1 of them. We're penciling him in for about 1,000 yards and 6 TDs.

Brown doesn't have the physical tools to be more than an average No. 2 receiver. He's only slightly bigger than Curtis, yet he's slower, and not nearly as good on deep routes. As a 16-game starter last season, he finished with a modest 61 catches and 780 yards, with 4 TDs. Hard to believe he managed to catch 9 TDs two years ago.

Smith sputtered through an injury-marred season last year, missing seven starts, but he has the potential to re-emerge as a significant factor – particularly because neither Curtis nor Brown is a good target around the goal line. Two years ago, Smith accounted for almost half of the team's receiving production inside the 10, catching 13 passes, 5 TDs and a 2-point conversion in that area.

Even if Smith stays healthy, however, he's not sure to match his numbers from 2006, when he finished with 50 catches and 611 yards. He's only an above-average pass catcher, and the Eagles are looking to make their other tight end, Brent Celek, a bigger part of the offense. Celek doesn't run as fast as Smith, but he might have slightly better hands.

Jackson looks like another Ted Ginn or Roscoe Parrish – a tiny receiver (5-9, 170) with elite speed and quickness. He'll play part-time, running a few fly patterns per game, and they'll see what he can do after short passes and on end-arounds. He'll also probably score on a kick return at some point. The Eagles haven't scored a return TD since 2003.

Philadelphia's other receivers probably won't play much. Hank Baskett is the team's only big receiver, so he may see a few throws in the red zone. Jason Avant should share the No. 3 role with Jackson, and if either of the starting receivers gets hurt, Avant probably will

step into the lineup – but he's not going to put up significant numbers. **KICKER.** David Akers is a three-time Pro Bowler, but the Eagles will have to consider dumping him unless he solves his accuracy problems. He's made only 75 percent of his field goals over the last three years, 4th-worst among kickers with at least 50 attempts. He was one of the best the previous five years, converting almost 86 percent.

Akers is only 33, but he appears to have lost some power. He ranked near the bottom in touchback percentage last year, and he was only 2 of 10 on field goal attempts from 40-plus yards. Philadelphia's supporting cast is so strong that he might rank among the league's top 10 in scoring, but he's probably worth a gamble only if he performs well in training camp.

| | at G.B. 13-16 | Wash. 12-20 | Det. 56-21 | at NYG 3-16 | at NYJ 16-9 | Chi. 16-19 | at Minn. 23-16 | Dall. 17-38 | at Wash. 33-25 | Mia. 17-7 | at N.E. 28-31 | Sea. 24-28 | NYG 13-16 | at Dall. 10-6 | at N.O. 38-23 | Buff. 17-9 |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| QB McNabb (run stats) | 15-33-1-184 4-9 9 | 28-46-0-240 2-15 | 21-26-0-381 3-7 43,68,12,43 | 15-31-0-138 4-4 | 22-35-1-278 2-3 75 | 21-34-0-226 2-18 13 | 23-36-0-333 3-13 6 | 27-46-2-264 1-1 10 | 20-28-0-251 7-37 4,8,45,57 | 3-11-2-34 2-28 | DNP ankle | DNP ankle | 20-30-0-179 4-11 18 | 23-41-0-208 9-53 1 | 24-35-0-263 6-37 31,9,7 | 29-41-1-345 1-0 2 |
| QB Feeley (run stats) | DNP | DNP | DNP | DNP | DNP | DNP | DNP | DNP | DNP | 13-19-1-116 2-7 4 | 27-42-3-345 1-2 28,18,8 | 19-42-4-220 4-14 24 | DNP | DNP | DNP | DNP |
| RB Westbrook (rec stats) | 20-85 6-46 | 17-96 8-66 | 14-110 5-111 43 rec,25,5 | DNP abdomen | 20-120 6-36 | 18-79 6-40 | 21-46 4-46 6 rec,1 | 16-65 14-90 3 | 20-110 5-83 57,4 recs,10 | 32-148 1-0 | 17-52 7-40 1 | 21-93 7-46 29 | 20-116 5-38 18 rec | 18-81 9-63 | 17-100 3-9 | 7-42 4-57 |
| RB Buckhalter (rec stats) | 4-5 1-3 | 1-3 0-0 | 7-43 0-0 1 | 17-103 4-35 | 4-23 0-0 | 3-13 1-11 | 2-3 4-28 | 2-0 0-0 | DNP | 3-19 0-0 8 | 0-0 0-0 | 4-37 0-0 30 | 2-9 0-0 | DNP concussion | 4-37 0-0 20 | 9-18 2-10 |
| WR Curtis | 2-53 | 4-28 | 11-221 68,12,43 | 2-21 | 5-121 75 | 5-62 | 3-76 | 5-51 | 3-20 | 5-69 | 5-71 | 6-111 24 | 3-26 | 5-40 | 6-78 0 fumble rec,7 | 7-62 0 fumble rec |
| WR Brown | 1-14 | 2-27 | 2-23 | 3-17 | 6-89 | 3-44 | 8-105 | 2-55 | 3-55 45 | 2-18 | 5-45 8 | 2-26 | 7-71 | 4-35 1 | 6-73 31 | 5-83 |
| WR Avant | 3-54 9 | 5-55 | 1-9 | 1-12 | 0-0 | 2-15 | 0-0 | DNP groin | 2-27 | 1-4 4 | 1-21 | 0-0 | 1-5 | 0-0 | 4-35 | 2-30 |
| TE Smith | 2-14 | 2-12 | DNP groin | DNP groin | 1-8 | DNP hernia | 0-0 | 2-34 | 4-49 8 | 4-44 | 3-46 | 3-21 | 1-8 | DNP knee | DNP knee | DNP knee |
| PK Akers | 33,47 - | 24,39,26,22 - | - - | 53 miss: 42 | 22,31,25 miss: 41,41 | 24,33,37 - | 20,27,25 miss: 59 | 36 - | - miss: 53 | 34 - | - - | 31 miss: 48 | 29,39 miss: 57 | 21 miss: 47 | 24 - | 38 - |
| Others | | | Hunt 1 run | | | Schobel 13 rec | | Baskett 10 rec | | | G.Lewis 28 rec G.Lewis 18 rec | | | G.Lewis 9 rec | Celek 2 rec | |