

Games that matter



New England Patriots at Houston Texans

Line: Texans by 8,

Time/TV: 1 p.m., none.

The skinny: To get in the playoffs, Houston needs to win and have two of the following teams lose: the Broncos, Jets and Ravens. They face a team that has locked up a playoff spot and seems destined for the No. 3 AFC seed and might use many of its regulars sparingly although word is that Tom Brady expects to start.

Steelers want: Texans to lose.



Baltimore Ravens at Oakland Raiders

Line: Ravens by 10½.

Time/TV: 4:15 p.m., KDKA.

The skinny: A win sends Baltimore to the playoffs, but that's not a gimme. Oakland has beaten division leaders Cincinnati and Philadelphia, plus contenders Denver and the Steelers. Of course, current Raiders QB Charlie Frye engineered none of those upsets. On the bright side, Ravens secondary is still beat up.

Steelers want: Ravens to lose.



Kansas City Chiefs at Denver Broncos

Line: Broncos by 12.

Time/TV: 4:05 p.m., none.

The skinny: Denver can lose and get in the playoffs, but a win enhances its chances and it gets the lowly Chiefs here. Denver has lost 7 of 9 and key WR Brandon Marshall is being benched so the Broncos should take to the ground because Kansas City is 31st vs. the run.

Steelers want: Broncos to lose.



Cincinnati Bengals at New York Jets

Line: Jets by 10.

Time/TV: 8:20 p.m., WPXI.

The skinny: New York makes the playoffs if it wins; lose and it's done. The Bengals have little to gain here and may open the playoffs against these same Jets so don't expect a full night for the regulars. It will be interesting to see the TV rating for this one in the Pittsburgh market if the playoffs come down to this game.

Steelers want: Jets to lose.