

## Risky Business Week 5

### Bringing them to their Knees

With only 1:47 remaining in the game, the Chargers found themselves trailing the Browns by one point with a third-and-2 at the 11 yard line. Just when Austin Ekeler appeared to have a clear path to the endzone, he slid to his knees three yards short of the goal line. It is not easy to coach an NFL running back to show such restraint when they have been programmed to reach the endzone for their entire careers. However, Ekeler did the prudent thing. The Browns had just burned their final timeout prior to the snap and the Chargers could now ensure themselves of kicking a game winning field goal with no time remaining on the clock. Now all the Chargers needed to do was safely take a couple of knees and run down the clock while the Browns defense watched helplessly. Surprisingly, Ekeler ran into the center of the Browns' defensive line on the subsequent play with apparently no intent on crossing the goal line. The Browns defenders would have no part of this clever strategy as they provided a personal concierge service for Ekeler by literally carrying him forward for a touchdown. This was a brilliant maneuver by the Browns that could have snatched an almost certain victory from the Chargers.

Why the Chargers didn't simply take a knee behind the line of scrimmage is inexplicable. They were assured of kicking the equivalent of an extra-point for the win with very little risk. Their pre-snap GWC was 97.5% with this conservative approach. After Ekeler was forced into the end zone and prior to the two-point conversion attempt, the Chargers managed to drop their GWC by a whopping 13% all the way down to 84.5%. To complicate matters, the two-point attempt failed and now a custom simulation showed the Chargers' GWC to slip even further to 79.2% GWC. Independent betting market data showed even greater confidence in a Baker Mayfield game-winning-drive with an implied GWC for the Chargers as low as 73% after the kickoff.

Although it surely was not the intent of Austin Ekeler to score a touchdown, this was a completely avoidable blunder. In fact, it was one of the most egregious and costly errors of the 2021 NFL season to date. Unfortunately for the Browns, they were unable to capitalize on this very poor decision.