

## **LMR 03 - Week 17**

### **To the Victor Go the Spoilers**

The end of a long regular season included some surprise endings for several clubs. Several non-playoff teams came back to bite the hands of playoff and potential playoff teams. The featured upsets were the Vikes-Cards, Browns-Bengals, Lions-Lambs, and Dallas-New Orleans matchups. Many of these teams were 4-11 or worse, and played the role of spoiler with gusto. In the case of the Browns-Bengals, it was merely the re-establishment of karma.

As a result, Seattle and the Packers back into the playoffs, while Dallas must now have Carolina on its mind. The Cheeseheads have established themselves as "the team no one wants to face" in the NFC, while Baltimore is their counterpart in the AFC. The front runners remain New England and Philly with the tragic loss by St. Louis to a Detroit team that had everyone chuckling most of the year.

At any rate, here's how the Look Man saw Week 17 of 2003 NFL season:

#### **Saturday Games:**

##### **Buffalo @ New England:**

The Bills wanted to dominate the AFC Least winning Chowds to prove the 31-0 thrashing in Game One was no fluke. The storyline was a reversal of fortunes that saw the Bills in the basement and the Chowds riding a double digit win streak. The result was a punishing 31-0 Chowds win featuring 4 TD passes by QB Tom Greg Brady. Greg needs to get his picture updated, as he looks like Alfalfa from the Little Rascals in the NFL league photo below:



##### **Seattle @ Frisco:**

The Niners looked sharp and the Shehawks hadn't won on the road since the Truman Administration, making this game look like a battle. Since the Niners were officially out of the playoffs, and Terrell (TO) Owens was out with a broken clavicle, no one expected too much. The game ended up being the best one of the day, featuring a sweet catch of the year entry by Niners WR Brandon Lloyd (Bridges) late in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. Lloyd went Sea Hunt, catching a ball that was headed for the Bay with one hand, then pulling it in with the toe tapper at the sticks. Review could not overturn this beauty, but Jeff (Jerry) Garcia had an acid flashback on the next play. With 4<sup>th</sup> down and inches, the O-Coordinator called a pass play, which Jerry promptly threw into the turf. Game over, Shehawks win and wait to see what Dallas and Minnesota had coming.

#### **Sunday games:**

##### **Browns @ Bungals:**

The 8-7 Bengals entered the game looking for their first winning season since 1990, while the Browns were looking to salvage respect in a season from Hell. Following the Week 16 losses by both teams, there was a lot of talk during the week regarding the playoff possibilities in the event of a Bengals win and a Baltimore loss. Cleveland DT Gerard (Big Money Wasted) Warren wasn't impressed with the notion of knocking the Bengals out of the playoffs. "We're not going down there to spoil their season," he said. "We're going down there to kick some behind. I will simply be trying to avoid getting killed by the cops. I heard the mayor down there says a 300 lb. black man is a lethal weapon. Especially if he has drugs in his system like I do."

Cleveland QB Tim (Sofa Boy) Couch expounded, "Cincinnati has a solid defense, but you can throw on them if you get time - that's the main thing," Couch said. "Their DBs are veterans.

Especially in a game of this magnitude, they're going to be ready to go. That is, go home and start getting ready for next season."

So the Bengals' 27<sup>th</sup> ranked defense was looking to make hay against a Browns offense that had failed to score a TD in 5 games in 2003. Unfortunately, the vaunted Beng Blitz had given up 362 points, 54 more than the Browns, and ranked 28<sup>th</sup> in scoring defense, ahead of only the Cards, Bolts and Dirty Birds. In other words, they had been stinking up the league while their offense set scoring records. If you tack on the fact that the Browns were coming off a 35-0 beating by the Flintstones, OT Barry (Carl B) Stokes reinjured his ankle sprain, and Paul Zukauskas was done for the year, it looked pretty bad for the North Coast.

Of course, that is why they play the games. In the first quarter the Bengals marched down the field in a no huddle offense, catching the Browns off guard and off tackle, too. QB Jon Pickna's incompletions were remedied by Browns-killer and noted ophthalmologist Jeff Tripplett and his band of Zebras. Tripplett called 4 penalties on the drive, resulting in the Nati's Rudi Johnson's endzone plunge. The most egregious call was a double penalty on S Earl Little, who missed a pick, but was flagged for pass interference and illegal batting on the same play.

The Browns O-line featured future Hall of Famers Enoch (Already) Demar and Joaquin (Phoenix) Gonzalez. This juggernaut of a line provided the bounce with a couple of field goals, along with a few nice reverses by seldom-used WR Dennis Northcutt. Butch (Hurricane Boy) Davis crossed up the Nati by running the football. Sofa Boy's declaration about being able to pass proved to be part of a clever ruse perpetrated against the Ugly & Black.

The capper was a 78-yard scamper by rookie 4<sup>th</sup> round RB Lee (Majors) Suggs. Suggs treated the Nati like the Big Valley by setting up a nice stretch play with an outside bounce move, then toasting Rogers (Dr. Sam) Beckett in a footrace. Dr. Beckett was hampered by some kind of time-space warp that made it appear that he was running in quicksand on the play. The Look Man has questioned the speed of the good doctor all season, and never was its lack more apparent than on this play.

Once back on defense, and for once having a chance to regroup courtesy of sustained drives, the Browns threw more breaking balls as CB Daylon McCutcheon covered Peter (P-Dub) Warrick in the slot instead of his usual starting LCB spot. Not only did he shut down P-Dub, but the bracket coverage on Chad (The Dentist) Johnson resulted in some more questionable zebra pass interference calls by Tripplett and Co. Jeff proved an equal opportunity zebra, as on the second offensive PI call, Herbie the Dentist was injured and since it was inside 2 minutes, the Bungals were forced to use their last timeout. The calls were more than questionable; they were downright ridiculous. The Look Man had been getting a lot of grief from the locals for protesting too much. After the 2 PI calls on Herbie, the unsophisticated locals began to see it his way, and asked to have the bananas summarily removed from their tail pipes.

Too late, as Pickna got sacked for bad clock management and the half ended 13-7 CLE with the Nati eschewing a FG with 10 seconds left. The coaching cognoscenti will tell you that the best bet is to go for the sure FG early, and gamble for the TD to ice the game late. Marvin (Jerry) Lewis went decidedly Nutty Professor on this one, and it cost the Bengals the momentum.

Da Beng bounced back with a solid drive in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, capped by a Rudi Who Dey TD run. Sofa Boy returned to form in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter with several 3 and outs. The 4<sup>th</sup> quarter was a different story altogether as the Browns dominated with long clock eating drives. The monochromed Ugly & Black D lived up to its name, and got worn down by several clock eating Sofa Boy drives. While the Browns didn't score on the 3 shots from the 1-yard line with less than 2 minutes remaining, they did manage a FG to go up 8 points with 1:17 to play. The Look Man was thinking overtime as Pickna had not looked like his usual Easy Bake Oven thru the first 3.8 quarters.

Alas, Pickna baked up a nice turnover for Robert Griffith by forcing one in to TE Aaron Schoebel (Bread). The ball sailed high, Cleveland picked it, and karma was restored, if only for one week of a dismal season.

When asked about the PI calls, Chad would say only, "Why am I such a misfit? I just don't fit in." He also tempted Fate by questioning the calls. Apparently Herbie has an unlimited pocketbook for fines. Since his outrageous sign-fine episode, he hasn't been in the endzone or contributed to NFL Charities. That should change after Sunday's outburst.

Afterwards, RB Corey (Marshall) Dillon went straight Festus, tossing his cleats, helmet and shoulder pads into the south endzone, nearly causing a riot. Fortunately, none of the fans were 300 lb. black men or the police might have had to kill somebody right at the stadium. They don't call it Pall Bearer Stadium for nothing.

### **Dallas @ New Orleans:**

The Big D was in the Big Easy for what should have been a Fat Sunday, but Aaron Brooks (Brothers) and the Religious Icons defense had other plans. Brooks Bros. carved the Doomsday Lite D with a sweet pass to WR Donte Stallworth, who had a C-note receiving on the day. S Darren Woodson is still chasing Stallworth as of the time of this report.

The loss allowed the Shehawks into the playoffs if the Vikes also lost in the Sonoran Desert.

### **Vikes @ Cards:**

To wit, the Vikes turned a tight game into a laughter with several quick strikes to go up 17-6 late in the game. Unfortunately, the secondary got no help from the pass rush, and gave up a quick strike from Hall of Fame QB Josh McC(l)own to make it 17-12. The onside kick was bobbled and recovered by the Redbirds, who went to WR Nathan('s Hot Dogs) Poole on a back breaking, toe-tapping TD. The V-Men pulled defeat from the jaws of victory with a defense that knocked them out of the playoffs after starting 6-0.

The largest Deadbirds crowd of the year was comprised largely of purple clad Minnesotans. The game winner silenced the crowd, and sent them home to dream about next year. The victory cost Arizona the No. 1 pick in next season's draft, dropping them to 3<sup>rd</sup>. Vikes WR Randy (Mouth)

Moss had three catches on the opening drive, then entered the Witness Protection Program for the rest of the game. DBs Brian Russell and Denard Walker would love to enter the real WPP after their performance, but the real villain is head coach Mike (Fried) Tice, who couldn't eke out a playoff berth. Owner Red (Neck) McCombs was interviewed after the game, and could say only, "Bluhhwhwhhwhw?"

The win propelled the Cheeseheads into the playoffs courtesy of their 31-3 thrashing of the Donkeys' B-team. The Shehawks also back in with an incredible permutation of tiebreakers. Afterwards, Nathan's Hot Dogs was given the key to the City of Green Bay for his efforts. "I didn't even think they liked hot dogs up there. Every time you look, it's 'brats and metts'. I guess that's what you call market penetration", said the wideout. No matter how you slice it, the Cards win was far from kosher, and left the Swedes with a sauerkraut taste in their mouths.

### **Stillers @ Flintstones:**

The second part of the Bengals playoff hope was rendered moot following the loss to Cleveland. While the Flintstones entered the playoffs courtesy of the Bengals heartbreaker, RB Jamal (Bam Bam) Lewis was looking to join the exclusive 2,000-yard club. The president of the club is Eric (Dick Dog) Dickerson with 2,105, along with other members Barry Sanders (2,053); Terrell Davis (2,008); and O.J. Simpson (2,003). Bam Bam needed 148 yards to depose Dick Dog and rewrite the history text. Against a porous Blitzburg D in Bedrock, he was even money to do it.

In a bizarre subplot, Blitzburgh stormed into Bal'mer with an attitude following Ray (Ray) Lewis gestures toward LB Joey Porter (Paints) in their earlier matchup. Ray Ray used his fingers like a gun and pointed to his own posterior while Porter Paints looked on. The Stillers were not amused and promised revenge after that stunt.

The game ended up being a defensive battle, punctuated with several nice runs by Bam Bam. Bill (Iron Chin) Cowher pulled a page out of Dr. Evil's playbook on fake punt that went for 78 yards and a TD to tie it at 7. Iron Chin had noticed that the miked-up Flintstones S Ed (Can't) Reed was crashing inside on his punt rush, and pimped Billick's Boys from Bedrock. Ironically, Can't Reed can run, and he nearly caught the receiver twice en route to the House.

The halftime featured a tribute to Flintstones owner Art Modell, who was unable to make it due to the flu, and some Browns operatives who have put out a hit on him. Art is losing the team in 2004 due to his managing malfeasance, but the tribute by ESPN did summarize his contributions to the league including Monday Night Football, profit sharing, and purple uniforms that look like San Francisco style pajamas.

The game ended up in OT, as Tommy (That Deaf Dumb and Blind Kid) Maddox couldn't put anything together and Flintstones K Matt Stover missed a couple of long FGs. Stover is long in the tooth and his leg doesn't have the spring it once did. Of course, he did get the game winner at 13-10, as the Stillers covered the spread.

#### **Miscellaneous:**

In a bizarre ritual, Union College in Schenectady, NY requires students are to do three things before graduation. One of them is to have sex on the 50-yard line of the football field, according to a Playboy report. "We see them out there going at it every day," says one alum. "At the end of the year, there is literally a line waiting to get on the 50-yard line so everyone can accomplish the task before graduation."

Since Union College has only 2,000 students, including 500 or so seniors, why are they lining up at the end of the year if they're out there every day? The Look Man is guessing that some players are going Bill Belichick, while using the old line, "Honey, if we don't do this, I don't graduate." Needless to say, scoring is at an all-time high, and the state of the Union is still strong.

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Lions owner William Clay Ford retained GM Matt (F-Bomb) Millen, despite a 10-38 record during his tenure. "I want him," Ford said before the game. "I don't need any more reason than that. Plus, he buys a lot of Ford Explorers, and we need sales as badly as any of the Big 3."

F-bomb has 2 years and over \$6M left on his contract, but staff changes are expected. For one thing, Millen is expected to hire lion-tamer Roy Horn following his recovery from a mauling. "If he can tame those lions, he can sure tame ours", said Millen. "It's part of my cultural sensitivity for what I said to Chiefs WR Johnnie Morton. Not that there's anything wrong with that."

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Flintstones RB Bam Bam Lewis narrowly missed Eric Dickerson's single season rushing record in a close game on Sunday night. The scary part is that OJ Simpson broke the 2000 yard plateau in 14 games, while all of the other alumni had 16 games to do so. The Look Man believes that the new barometer for runners should be 1500 yards after a 2003 season that saw over 10 backs eclipse 150 yards in a single game. As for Bam Bam, he Betty and Barney will be resting in the offseason following a first round loss to the Flaming Thumbtacks on Saturday.

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Cheesehead and future HOF QB Brett Favre (Bean) has been going off after his father's stroke death last week. The performance also corresponds with his new MasterCard priceless ad, in which he and his wife Deanna appear. The Look Man thought Mr. Bean was married to Carmen Diaz all this time. Although, *There's Something About Deanna*.

A number of NFL head coaches were given a version of the home game this season, opening up several new jobs. Since only 12 teams make the playoffs, it is only natural that many will have losing seasons. At least 6 playoff teams from last season are at home, so why the big changes at the top? The answer: marketing.

Here are the top candidates for getting fired in 2005:

The Lambs D-Coordinator Lovie Smith interviews with the Falcons and G-Men, but may not be good enough for the top job. The Look Man believes they will find Thurston Howell III on Gilligan's Island before this guy wins a playoff game. He is a hot prospect who has proven he can take mediocre players and make a mediocre D with a strong O. Can you say Hurricane Boy?

The Chowds coordinators Romeo (Must Diet) Crennel and Charlie Weis (Guy) are looking for a city with great food, or at least massive quantities of it. The real genius is in Belichick, and even a stomach staple won't get these jamokes hired. Even if it works, look for both to end up like Jimmy Johnson's underlings, who never succeeded after working for the Brillcreamed One.

Among the fires:

ATL: Dan (Zocor) Reeves - because he wanted out and Arthur Blank is the ultimate in marketing.

BUF: Gregg Williams - with Kevin Gilbride, AKA The Worst O-Coordinator in the world, he deserved to be fired. His defenses were good, but his offense turned the ball over in a pass wacky offense. Williams' accomplishments in the finale show that he lost the team by:

- Benching Pro Bowl OG Reuben Brown and nearly getting Bledsoe killed
- took the most talent on D in the league and squandered it with an O that couldn't convert on third down

Look for Buffalo to hire the oldest coach available with a PhD and prostate trouble.

NYG: Jim (Old) Fassel - was too smart for his own good. He is a good guy and classy, but he needed a sure handed RB and QB, along with a TE who can just shut the hell up. In 2003, he beat an undefeated Minnesota squad in Week 7, but failed to provide the spark each week thereafter.

PHX: Dave McGinness - ditto; too bad but he would be a great coordinator with the right team. Dave's accomplishments in 03:

- only won at home; the dreaded Jeff (Shake n) Blake blues
- needed healthy RB, O-line, D-line, and way too many players

A new stadium in 2 years could make this a nice job for someone new, as long as they aren't worried about airplanes crashing into the ballpark.

OAK: Bill (Dirty Harry) Callahan - is still waiting for the ax to fall. Dirty Harry followed a disgusting SB XXXVII coaching performance with a season of ineptitude. He couldn't coach his way out of a wet paper bag. Most recently Dirty Harry benched the 2 Chucks (Woodson and Garner) when they failed to make bed check or a Sunday AM meeting. Even WR Tim Brown, the picture of class, thinks he should be gone. And still, the Zodiac Killer remains loose in Oaktown.

DC: Steve (I've Got ) Spurrier (That Jingle Jangle Jingle) ended his reign of error in DC with a self-inflicted resignation. Jingle Jangle's wife hated DC with a passion, and he just didn't like the golf courses as much as Florida's. His resignation was more of a Frankie Five Angels affair, and hinged on the inability to re-sign Lavar (Roots) Arrington unless he was gone. On the bright side, there's always the Nebraska job.

CLE: O-Coordinator Bruce (Foghorn Leghorn) Arians was terminated immediately after the Nati win. RBs coach Todd (No Air) McNair and QB Coach Carl (Weathers) Smith were also sent

packing after a season on the brink. Weathers left after one of the players, Bill Duke, threatened to gut him, real quiet like, if he gave away the Browns position again. So now, 3 scapegoats have been sacrificed so that Hurricane Boy can live. The next scapegoat will be Hurricane Boy himself.

When asked why he fired The Chicken Hawk, Hurricane Boy said, "I've got some reasons, I say reasons. I think you don't make any of these kind of decisions haphazardly. It's not a knee-jerk reaction to this season or any set of games. It's a byproduct of three seasons. Taking a look at areas and just feeling that we needed to go in a different direction. Like actually scoring touchdowns for a change! "

Davis said it wasn't just the injuries and the suspension of William (Red) Green that led to the cancellation of the Warner Bros. Offense. The offense finished 31st in 2001, 23rd in 2002 and 26th this season. In five games this season, it failed to score a touchdown.

The Look Man wonders, why is de facto GM Pete Garcia not even mentioned in the Browns' media guide? Could it be his Miami mob ties? At any rate 2004 looks like a serious rebuilding year in which the Browns must re-sign or cut Dennis Northcutt, Tim Couch, Courtney Brown and Gerard Warren. RB Jamel White is already packing his bags while the Browns look to re-sign Hall of Fame LB Brant (He's Just a) Boyer (Jihm).

NOLA: Jim Haslett should be gone, but he has compromising photos of owner Tom Benson practicing autoeroticism, which, by the way, is not loving your car dealership. Nuff said.

MIN: Mike (Fried) Tice was done after they hid his pencil in Week 7. Red McCombs decided to retain the Chinese restaurant staple and purchase a real defense in 04 with all of their cap room. Either that, or put out a hit on Brett Favre's dad.

NYJ: D-Coordinator Ted Cottrell went from head coaching candidate to the unemployment line in 1 season as the scapegoat of the year club. Cottrell should not be gone based on the injuries suffered by the Aeronauticals and the fact that half of their team is in Washington DC now.

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Marvin (Jerry) Lewis should be the Coach of the Year without a doubt after taking a 2-14 team to the brink of the playoffs. If last season is any indicator, New England's Dr. Evil will get it AND another ring, perhaps with the AFC home field advantage. Jerry is looking at a tough act to follow in 04, with former #1 pick (Johnny) Carson Palmer waiting in the wings. Johnny Carson spent 2003 watching Kitna excel while learning the intricacies of the Bengals offense. In doing so, Palmer was the first Bengals No. 1 pick not to play a snap in his rookie season since Ki-Jana (means "punk" in Swahili) Carter in 1995.

QB Jon Pickna counts as \$4.4 million against the cap next year, while Johnny Carson's contract will count \$2.8 million in 2004. The Bengals are hoping to re-do Easy Bake Oven's contract, release him with a \$1 million salary-cap hit or trade him. In his Monday news conference, Jerry Lewis was non-committal about the quarterback situation. "We're not going to make a decision on that today. I told Jon that," he said. "We're going to wait and see what's best." When pressed on the topic, Jerry did his best Ed McMahon impression, saying, "Heeeeeeeeere's Johnny!"

The real issue in 2004 for the Beng is defense. Despite his reputation as a mastermind, Lewis' defense was ranked 28th in total defense, 28th in points allowed, 25th in rushing defense and 24th in passing yards allowed. Can you say "free agents?"

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Corey (Marshall) Dillon's postgame riot causing blast and interview mean that he is long gone in 04. The Marshall's base salary is \$3.3 million in 2004 and \$3.85 million in 2005. His \$10.5 million signing bonus in 2001 will count against the Bengals cap number for the next 2 years if he

is not released, but Jerry Lewis can't take anymore of these tantrums. Look for the Ugly & Black to release Dillon and eat the remaining \$4.2 million of signing bonus on the cap.

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The Look Man believes Marvin will be gone in 2 years when he asks for more caish. The Flintstones are the youngest team in the NFL and have restructured for another SB run. Once they get a QB, they will make life miserable for the rest of the AFC North, most of whom also don't have one. There is no way the Bengals repeat 2003, a year in which they had few injuries and the luxury of no QB controversy, and low fan expectations.

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The Look Man is very fond of budding star and all around hottie Jessica Alba from the hit show *Dark Angel*. She is indeed all of that AND a bag of chips, and currently starring in a *Flashdance* homage called fittingly, *Honey*. The Look Man attaches exclusive photos of Ms. Alba for your very own car dealership, below:



Now that's what I call a "Honey!"

Double your pleasure with this Napeleonic beauty.

### **Zebra Of The Week:**

The nominees are: Walt (Richard) Anderson for Burgh at B-More and Jeff (Eyepatch)Tripplett for Browns @ Bungals. While Oscar Goldman completely lost control of a physical ballgame, Tripplett wins easily for the 2 invisible offensive pass interference calls plus numerous defensive penalties against the Browns that kept the Bungals in the game. Tripplett is a ZOTW emeritus for nearly putting out OT Orlando (Zeus) Brown's eye out when Zeus played for C-town.

In other ZOTW news, don't expect to see Tom (Snow) White in the NFL postseason, which is based on merit. Snow White will likely not be around in 2004, going the way of Phil Lockett with a version of the home game.





### **Looking Ahead:**

#### **Dallas @ Carolina:**

Due to their ignominious loss to the Religious Icons, the Pokes face a tougher row to hoe in the Black Cats. It now appears that even if they win, they will be so beat up that the next round won't matter. The first game was so hard hitting that it surprised 1<sup>st</sup> year starter Jake Delhomme of the Confederates.

I like the Pokes to win this one on the road, if only because Stephen (Jefferson) Davis is beat up. Like the Confederacy, one can't win a war without a good railroad.

In other Gaucho news, it appears that Parcels was looking at Rudi Johnson and Kevan Barlow before the trade deadline. Both the Niners and Bungals said no way, Jose, but the Tuna is still a shrewd evaluator of talent and he knows his RB is a punk. (Dr. Christian) Troy Hambrick went out of bounds in the Philly game proving he is not a RB, he simply plays one on TV.

#### **Tacks at B-More:**

The big question here is who will QB the Flaming Thumbtacks? Will it be Neil (Old) O'Donnell (Had an Arm) or Steve (Air) McNair? The Stillers provided the formula to beat the Flintstones, and now Tennessee will have to execute the same game plan. Unfortunately, Tacks RB (Formerly Fast) Eddie George is a punk who looks to fall down whenever Ray Ray is in the same zip code. Like the previous game, the Look Man still likes the Tacks, based on their run defense, and superior coaching.



"E-I-E-I-O!"

#### **Denver @ Indy:**

A good rematch of speed vs. spunk. Will Mike (the Rat) Shanahan be able to go Mr. Miyagi on RB Clinton Portis' bad knee? Will MVP candidate Peyton Manning rise to the occasion and win his first playoff game? Good solid D will find a way vs. the Rat and Co., but lack of team speed was exposed in the first game; look for Horsies coach Hume Cronyn to fix that in the offseason. Peyton will win his first playoff game in IND, knocking the Donkeys into submission.

#### **Seattle @ GB:**

The Shehawks can't win on the road and Holmgren could be out if they don't. Favre Bean is on a mission since his dad pulled a Herb Brooks. The Pack has looked very solid and they are the new team that no one wants to play in the playoffs. Take the Pack and the points in this one.

#### **Round Two:**

Round two will feature some good matchups, including a well-rested Chowds team. Like Deion Sanders, the Look Man believes that Greg Brady's knee did get hurt last week, despite what he told Bonnie Bernstein. Nobody gets hit like that without some impact on the patella. Don't forget that he failed to score a TD in 2 home games; look for a potential repeat if they face a tough defensive juggernaut like B-More or TN at home.

Happy New Year in 2004 to all the LMR readers!

Out.

The Look Man