

LMR 03 - Week 19 **Destiny's Nephew**

If you didn't enjoy last week's Division Playoffs, you don't have a pulse. The action was so intense that it reminded the Look Man of, well, it was like no other week in NFL Playoff history. Sure there have been some great single games in the playoffs. Games like The Drive, The Fumble, The Catch, The Tuck, The Sea of Hands, the Immaculate Reception, Air Coryell vs. the Killer Bees, and The Freezer Bowl have captured our imagination. But never in the Look Man's memory, has every single Divisional Playoff game come down to a single possession to determine the outcome. Here are but a few of the Greatest Games in NFL playoff history:

- 1972 NFC semis: Cowboys 30, 49ers 28 ... Staubach led 17-point 4th quarter at Candlestick vs. John (Jaws) Brodie
- 1975 NFC semis: Cowboys 17, Vikings 14 ... the first "Hail Mary" - Staubach to Drew Pearson
- 1977 AFC semis: Raiders 37, Colts 31 (2 OT) .. The "Ghost to the Post," Stabler to Casper
- 1986 AFC semis: Browns 23, Jets 20 (2 OT) ... "The Bernie, Bernay Game", Kosar and the Browns score 10 points in the final 4 minutes, and win in OT. Kosar throws 64 times for 489 yards on the day.
- 1989 AFC semis: Browns 34, Bills 30 ... "Clay Day/Clay Day!" - LB Clay Matthews INT at 1-yard line with 3 seconds left seals it (included a pick by Felix Wright on Don Beebe that was miscalled)
- 1998 NFL wild card: 49ers 30, Packers 27 ... Young to Owens with 3 seconds left
- 1998 NFC championship: Falcons 30, Vikings 27 (OT) ... Gary Anderson misses first FG of season with 2:10 left, Falcons then tie it and win in OT
- 1999 AFC wild card: Titans 22, Bills 16 ... The Music City Miracle
- 2001 AFC semis: Patriots 16, Raiders 13 (OT) ... The Tuck

But never before on a single weekend have we had 2 out of 4 games go to OT, including a double OT thriller, PLUS the other 2 games coming down to the final possession. If this keeps up, the 2003-04 NFL Playoffs will make watching the 2003 major league baseball playoffs seem like watching folks play checkers by comparison.

TN Flaming Thumbtacks at New England Clam Chowders:

Co-MVP Steve (Air) McNair and the TN Flaming Thumbtacks rolled into the cold, crisp night air of Gillette Stadium to play the Beantown Clam Chowders last week. The Chowds had a perfect record at the Blade, including some comeback wins. This game figured to be a low scoring defensive battle and it didn't disappoint.

Chowds' QB Tom Greg Brady showed no evidence of a bad wheel, and threw a nice first quarter bomb to WR David Givens to open up the scoring. The Thumbtacks defense stiffened after a first quarter injury forced Chowds center Damien Woody to the bench. Afterwards, RB Antwoine Smith found few holes to run in, and Air McNair and Co. came roaring back in the 4th quarter.

WR Drew (Harve) Bennett made some scintillating catches but couldn't convert on a very makeable 4th down. The catch would have put the Tacks in FG range with a chance to tie the

score at 17. Instead, as the Look Man predicted, the Zebras called everything but chicken claws on the Tacks, giving the win to the Chowds.

The game was unusual in that the 2 teams combined for 76 attempted passes despite the subzero wind chill. It was so cold that Tacks O-lineman Zach (Cat-a)Piller said, "Man, I can't feel my hands or my feet. I'm starting to freak out." Nonetheless, both the Chowds and Tacks continued to throw the football, and except for Bennett's drop in crunch time, did very well.

Game of the Week:

Carolina Confederate Black Cats @ St. Louis Mouflons:

The Confederacy charged into St. Lew looking for no Compromise in Missouri. After calling a great game last week, Carolina Offensive Coordinator Dan Henning called another gem, this time against the Greatest Show on Turf. Mike (Megalomaniac) Martz decided to go pass-happy with one of the greatest running backs in history. As a result, he and the Lambs are staying home for MLK Day, while the Black Cats move on to Philly for the NFC Championship game.

The game started slowly, with RB Stephen (Jefferson) Davis missing some gigantic holes created by his mammoth offensive line. After several opportunities created by Marc (the Scarecrow) Bulger's picks, Davis rumbled for 60 plus yards on a single play. Not since the Last Charge at Appomattox had the Confederacy shown this much heart. Unfortunately, like the War of Northern Aggression, the President of the Confederacy got injured on the play, and had to stay out of the fighting for the rest of the war.

His replacement was a Look Man favorite, RB DeShaun (Bananas) Foster, who promptly hit the holes that Jeff Davis had largely missed. Bananas lived up to his name and set up a nice scoring opportunity for QB Jake (the Man) Delhomme. The Man tried to lateral to Bananas for the score on 3rd and goal, but his arm was tipped. The resultant fumble was batted by Bananas, muffed by the Lambs DE Grant Wistrom, and ended up in the hands of Carolina WR (Bullwinkle) Muhsin Muhammad. Bullwinkle yelled from the pileup, "Hey, Rocky. Want to see me pull a rabbit out of a hat. Oops. Wrong hat."

The hat was all right with the Black Cats, who went up 7-6 and never looked back. K John Kasay (Kasem) kept his kicks reaching for the stars and knocked down 3 to put the Panthers up 11. Unfortunately, Referee Mike (Jim) Carey and his company of Zebras called 13 penalties for 92 yards a week after Carolina got zero in a 29-10 victory over Dallas. Carey wasn't smokin', but regained his status as the best in the business by overturning some heinous holding calls and upholding some difficult replays. Still, there could be no question that the refs kept the GSOT in the game.

After scoring a referee-aided TD and a 2-point conversion, the Mouflons were 3 points from overtime, perched to score a TD for a regulation win. Fresh off of a bye, they wore down the Black Cats defense and could have iced it with a TD. Instead Megalo Martz went conservative and kicked the FG to tie and go to overtime.

In OT, The Scarecrow threw a pass that CB (The Tribe's) Rick Manning picked off in front of Torry (The Wood Nymph) Holt. Delhomme quickly parlayed that into a missed FG attempt. After the GSOT returned the favor on an incredible succession of missed tries by 2 great kickers, the Cats broke it wide open with a skinny post to WR and NBA guard Steven Smith. Smith decided not to dribble but instead took the orange to the rack for a game winning TD. Smith, known for his infamous punching out of a rookie WR last season, yelled something to would-be tackler Jason Sehorn like, "Take this @sskicking whitcha!" He also questioned Angie Harmon's taste in husbands.

So as predicted, the GSOT goes down like free beer in the Edward (Joe Turkey) Jones Dome. Carolina is the real deal, with the ability to run AND stop the run. The Iggles had better watch their collective sixes on Sunday; this team can shoot it off.

Indy Horsies @ KC Baby Backs:

Over in the Junior Circuit, the KC Baby Backs were coming off a bye week to play the Indianapolis Horsies at "the toughest stadium for a road team in the NFL". Granted Agarn Stadium is loud, and its denizens bleed yellow and red, but that moniker is tough to defend. CBS TV installed noise meters at Agarn. When the locals got wind of the news, they accommodated by rivaling jet engine noise levels whenever the Horsies possessed the rock. The Look Man wonders: if a stadium had a game and there were no TV cameras, would anyone even know about it? It didn't matter much; Manning is so used to his football-challenged Hoosiers cheering loudly when he has the ball anyway.

So the ExtraTerrestrial Peyton Manning paid a collect call home on Sunday as and the Horsies invaded the Show Me State. ET was nothing short of spectacular, with a 138 QB rating and a masterful game. The Horsies trampled all over the Baby Backs defense, scoring every time they had the ball. Manning spread the ball around like an intergalactic hockey puck, hitting WRs (Starvin) Marvin Harrison, Reggie (Millionaire Playboy Bruce) Wayne and Brandon Stokely (Carmichael) as well as Edge from the U, and TE Marcus Pollard. ET went as far as to get a TD pass to seldom-used FB Jim Lopienski from the TV series *Taxi*. Apparently, Judd Hirsh couldn't suit up for the game.

Dick (The Crying Man) Vermeil knew it would be a long day if he couldn't go hoof to hoof with them, so he opened up his offense and gambled on 4th down. The result was that the punters for both teams got the day off, and decided to go to the local rib shack.

Indy's guy, Hunter (the Punter) Smith did have a FANTASTIC hold on a late FG to Mike (Yacht Boy) Vanderjagt. The FG was critical and put the onus on KC to come roaring back and score a TD in that situation. The snap landed flat but HTP snatched it up and kept Yacht Boy perfect on the year.

There was one uncomfortable moment when Tom (The OC) Moore was caught on camera biting ET's head off for the third down hand-off to Edgerrin James. It turns out that Manning failed to recognize the uncovered DE on the edge, who snuffed James for no gain. The OC was more worried about the Zebras calling holding on WR Brandon Stokely (Carmichael), thus moving the Horsies out of FG range. The Zebras swallowed the whistle, Yacht Boy hit the FG, and the Colts cruised for a showdown in Foxboro with the Chowds.

GB Cheeseheads @ Philly Cheesesteaks:

The question in Week 19 was whether the Green Bay Cheeseheads were the Team of Destiny in 2003. The answer came back as a resounding, "HELL NO!" as the Iggles slammed Destiny's door in their faces at Lincoln Log Field.

The Pack, playing away from the frozen tundra of Lambeau Field, looked to establish a running game with RB Ahman (Corner) Green and then bust the Iggles with the deep ball when they least expected it. The gameplan was classic Pack, harkening back to the days of Bart (Ringo) Starr and Vince (The Night Stalker) Lombardi. The great thing was, it worked.

The Cheeseheads busted out to a 14-point lead on the strength of the Ahman Corner and some great throws by Brett (Favre) Bean despite the frigid conditions in Philly. Favre Bean didn't need any Chianti to go along with the liver of Iggles DB Sheldon Brown, who he carved up like the prison guard from *Silence of the Lambs*. By the time the paramedics arrived, Brown was nothing but a faceless pile of protoplasm, and Favre Bean was headed toward the exits and a berth in the NFC Championship game.

But suddenly, the Gang Green defense reappeared, forcing a 4th and 1 in Green Bay territory late

in the game. Pack Coach Mike Sherman (Tank) decided not to risk his Calvary, and instead punted after a half-hearted attempt to get the Birds to encroach. The resultant punt went into the endzone, and the Birds were in business.

Iggles QB Donovan (Filthy) McNabb(sty) took over at his own 20 with the Cheeseheads up 17-14 and just over 2 minutes separating him from vacation. Filthy handed off to RB Duce McAllister, who ripped off a nice 22 yarder to put the Birds near FG range. On first down, Filthy ended up getting a grounding penalty, followed by a questionable in the grasp sack call on 2nd down. On 3rd and 26, Filthy nearly completed a 22 yarder to TE Chad (Shari) Lewis, but Muttonchop quit running at the last minute. The incompletion set up a desperation 4th and 26 which Filthy calmly converted with the help of (Fast) Freddie Mitchell. Fast Freddie ran the exact same route that Terrell (TO) Owens executed against the exact same zone defense in the 1998 NFL wild card. The Pack fit the definition of insanity by calling the same defense in the same situation, except this time it would only take a FG to tie the game. D-Coordinator Ed Donatell(o's Pizza) delivered again in the crunch, this time giving Filthy and the Birds the deluxe OT special with extra cheese.

K David (Green) Akers calmly converted the 37 yarder to send it to overtime. What happened next was curious. Favre Bean looked to end the game early with a bomb against the safety blitz. Unfortunately, Brett failed to read the deep safety, and Brian (Ball-Hawk) Dawkins ate the pass up and returned it deep into Cheesehead territory. The remainder of the game was still tense, as Filthy nearly returned the favor by throwing 2 near picks in the endzone. Fortunately, Green Akers brought joy to Hooterville by kicking the game winning FG of 31 yards in a tricky wind.

Pundits berated Mike Sherman for not going for it on 4th and 1 late, but his early failure in a similar situation on the goal line made him tentative. The Look Man believes he did the right thing, and no team in the world gives up a 4th and 26. Except maybe Cleveland, and they are already on the beach catching some rays.

At any rate, McNabb stole the game with a record 107 rushing yards, a 4th and 26 conversion, and several Houdini impressions. MC Filthy provided 65 Minutes of Funk, and did so despite being sacked 8 times. On the 4th quarter TD pass to WR Todd Pinkston, McNabb avoided DE KGB, and DT Grady Jackson en route to a throwing a sweet toe tapper on the run. While he denies that the Rush Limburger comments have had an impact on his season, it is clear that the media is *very desirous* of a QB who can convert a 4th and 26 in crunch time. Of course, they were more desirous of a QB whose father had passed away late in the season. But, as Rush would say, "he isn't *that good*."



Mike Sherman after the game.

Miscellaneous:

Dateline: San Jose, CA

Niners QB Jeff (jerry) Garcia was arrested for suspicion of DUI at his alma mater on Tuesday night. Garcia had attended the San Jose Sharks' hockey game before being pulled over for "erratic operation." Apparently Garcia, another adult male, and two adult females passengers were shouting, "I CAN'T TASTE MY BEER!!!!" The blood alcohol content report showed that Jerry was above the legal limit, and that he had recently taken large quantities of LSD.

Garcia has been the 49ers' starting quarterback since Steve Young retired after the 1999 season. When pulled over, he asked the cops, "Do you know who I am? I am Glen Campbell, the Rhinestone QB." No comment from Glenn Campbell on the story.

Coaching Note 1:

Coaching news was rampant this week. Enny (No D) Green wound up in Phoenix, Jim (Playoffs?!) Mora Jr. was selected in the ATL, and Mike (Fulla) Mularkey was hired as coach of the Buffalo. Natalie Schaefer in Chicago and Tom Coughlin and the Jyntys also reached accords in a wild week for coaches.

Vegas odds are now being issued to see whether Strahan and Shockey will be the first to punch out Coughlin and yell, "Hey, you forgot your hat!" as Tommy Boy runs for his life. Coughlin is best known for his Draconian training camps in which he would not allow his assistants wear sunglasses despite being in sunny F-Hell-A.

Lovie Smith promised that the Bears would be competitive in '04, with 11 tough guys on defense and 11 tough guys on offense. Apparently, Lovie is planning to get rid of Kordell Stewart at QB. Kordell countered with, "And just how did he get off Gilligan's Island while the others are still stranded? I think we need to hear from the Professor and Mary Ann on this topic."

Natalie Schaefer becomes the fourth desert island survivor to serve as head coach of an NFL team, joining Denny (the Skipper) Green, Tony (Thurston Cronyn III) Dungy, and Marvin (Gilligan) Lewis. The Look Man thinks the league should incentivize African American head coach selection process with draft picks. Instead of penalizing teams that select established coaches, provide extra draft picks for teams that have the guts to provide opportunities to unproven quantities. It is good for public relations, and it supports the parity initiative in the NFL.

Coaching Note 2:

In other coaching news, former Bungals D-Backs Coach Ron Meeks is the D-Coordinator for the Colts and is doing a fine job. Meeks was deemed as replaceable when the imminent Mark Duffner was viewed as the next coach of the Ugly & Black. Duffner and the Pack are out of the playoffs while Meeks looks forward to the AFC Championship and potential the Super Bowl XXXVIII in Houston.

Speaking of Super Bowls, the Big Four-Oh will be "Super Bowl XL" in Roman Numerals. The game will be held in Detroit, which is known for its extra-large citizens. Look for a wacky and substandard time in a cold weather town.

Coaching Note 3:

KC Baby Backs D-Coordinator Greg (Will) Robinson resigned after being unable to coach his way out of a wet paper bag in the Horsies-Baby Backs Divisional Playoff. Will Robinson wanted out of the Jupiter II, citing friction with the Robot and Dr. Smith. "They just keep hogging all the story lines, and I can't get any justice. It's not like on the Twilight Zone, where I could make anything happen that I wanted. I simply can't get these guys to play", said Robinson.

Head Coach Dick (The Crying Man) Vermeil spoke after Robinson, and seemed to take a shot at those who have been critical of Robinson and his defensive scheme. "You saw what a real man's made of," Vermeil said. "There might be a number of you who don't come close to understanding what a real man's all about because you're not forced into the environment like people in our responsible positions are. But I think he told you the truth as well as he could tell you. Now excuse me while I go have a nice cry."

Robinson has been shown the door before after defensive disasters in Denver. With the Nebraska job taken, he may be relegated to keeping movie goers from going under the velvet ropes and seeing several movies for the price of one.

Jacksonville Jags punter Chris (Charlie) Hanson is confident he will return for the 2004 season after injuring his leg in the now infamous ax-swinging incident in the locker room. Hanson wrote

the words 'Helter Skelter' in his own blood following the ordeal, and anticipates some nervousness next time he punts.

"There will be some anxiety," Hanson said. "My right leg feels as stable as it did before the accident. I just hope it's going to be like swinging a golf club again." Hanson suggested that the ax damaged some bone and muscle, resulting in four hours of surgery. "I was like, Why?' and 'What if?' after it happened," Hanson said. "It wasn't horseplay. It was something I had been doing for several weeks. You don't plan for it. You don't plan to make mistakes (like that). It just happened. You know, just like when we did Sharon Tate and her old man."



PK Hanson keeps choppin' wood!

Celebrity Obit of the Week:

Yinka Dare, the New Jersey Nets' first-round draft pick in 1994, died at the age of 32 in his home in Englewood, NJ. Quincy (Klugman) Carter pronounced him dead Friday at the hospital. Dare had been rushed there following a massive coronary. Klugman speculated that the heart attack was due to an arrhythmia condition discovered while Dare was still in college.

The 7-foot-0, 265-pound Nigerian center collapsed while preparing breakfast following a routine morning workout. Despite an outstanding collegiate career at George Washington University, Dare averaged only 2.1 points and 2.6 rebounds with the Nets. His four career assists are a record for a player with 4 years experience. Dare is survived by his parents, Gabriel and Joan, and two sisters and a brother.

Celebrity Bit of the Week:

Mission Viejo, CA

A 30-year-old Orange County woman was attacked by a mountain lion while cycling in a wilderness area last week. Anne Hjelle, a former Marine who works as a fitness instructor, was rescued from the mountain lion's jaws by her cycling companion, Debbie Nicholls. Authorities believe the lion was the same animal that killed Mark Reynolds earlier.

Ms Hjelle was riding her bicycle when a 110-pound mountain lion clamped its jaws around her head and dragged her into the brush. Her companion, Debbie Nicholls threw her bike at the animal and grabbed onto her friend's leg until the big cat released its grip. "If anybody is going to eat Anne, it's going to be me, not a mountain lion", said Nicholls. When asked to comment on the attack, Siegfried, of Siegfried and Roy, disagreed. "I don't believe the mountain lion was actually trying to eat the woman. The animal was probably simply trying to protect the woman from her bicycle, which the lion believed to be dangerous. She was wearing a helmet, you know."

Ms. Hjelle has been upgraded to fair condition and continues to recover. A 2-year-old male mountain lion later was shot and killed by Orange County sheriff's deputies at the site where Reynolds' body was found. Footprints taken in Whiting Ranch Wilderness Park have led authorities to believe the cougar was responsible for both attacks. There was also parts of what seemed to be a human lung and liver found in the mountain lion's stomach.

Zebra Of The Week:

The nominees are: Bill (Toyota) Carollo for Tacks @ Chowds, Mike (Jim) Carey for Black Cats @ GSOT, Gerry Austin for Horsies @ Baby Backs, and Ed (Hulk) Hochuli for Pack @ Iggles. While the Look Man could build a solid case for each of these striped gentlemen, Toyota Carollo wins hands down.

Toyota called several holding penalties on Tacks OG Benji Olson at critical junctures in the 4th quarter. He also called McNair for grounding, which includes a loss of down penalty, despite the presence of Titans in the area. In addition to personally moving the Tacks out of FG range which would have tied the game, he also allowed a non-K ball to be used on Adam The Winemaker Vinatieri's FG.

A Tennessee TV station has footage of Chowds punter and holder Ken Walters warming a football in front of one of the gas heaters just before the Winemaker's kick. The place-kicker is supposed to use a special K-Ball held by special officials on the sideline. The Winemaker drilled a 46-yarder by inches on a day when the temperature routinely takes 5-7 yards of distance off of the kick. You tell me. Was that ball illegally warmed or did the Winemaker have some special Chianti?

New England has some history in this area. Many will remember the ex-con that cleaned snow off of the field prior to a FG kick in the Miami-Boston game years ago. The Tuck Rule gaffe was pretty blatant in the Super Bowl year, and now this. The Look Man is starting to see Orange Bowl proportions to the level of favoritism shown the Chowds and it stinks. At any rate, Bill Carollo is the **Zebra of the Week**.

Looking Ahead to the AFC/NFC Championships :

Horsies @ Chowds:

Most folks are concerned that the cold will affect the Colts pass offense and force them to run the football. The Look Man says that Manning is so hot that the field temperature will rise by several degrees when he shows up. Never in the history of the playoffs has one guy been so hot. Watch for ET to turn the Blade into Area 51 on Sunday.

When these 2 teams played last time, WR and X-Factor Stokely Carmichael did not play. Although his son developed encephalitis this week, Stokely will play and he will carve the D. Many believe Chowds' WR Bethel Johnson's speed will be a factor, but Hume Cronyn will not kick to Bethel again after the disastrous kickoff coverage last time. Number 81 will not be a factor.

One interesting deal is that the Chowds defense has had problems with fatigue. They had to fake injury to beat the Colts earlier, and the no-huddle will tear their hearts out. Of course the no-huddle can backfire if Manning and the Offense go three and out, so it is a double-edged horseshoe.

The main factor is the loss of All Pro Woody Damien at center. The Colts D-line will push up the middle and pressure the Brady Bunch into some picks. Look for Coach of the Year Bill (Dr. Evil) Belichick to throw Peyton some curves, but they won't matter as the Horsies stampede into Houston on February 8, 2003.



Belichick is scheming

Black Cats @ Lincoln Financial:

Philly was ordained Destiny's Nephew last week after knocking off the Cheeseheads. Nobody warned them that next week's Team of Destiny could be Carolina. This Iggles defense gave up 210 rushing yards to the Pack, and the Black Cats may have a better O-line.

QB Jake (The Man) Delhomme has never been under the pressure of NFC Title game, and the Iggles have been to the last 3 in a row. Still, there are 5 key guys in Carolina who have been to games of this magnitude. DT Brenston Buckner (PGH), WR Ricky Proehl (STL), K John Kasay (CAR), and OT Todd Steussie (MN) have all played in Conference Championships, Super Bowls, or both.

The Look Man sees it coming down to the kicking game and kickers John (Ben) Kasay vs. David (Green) Akers. Will it be, "Man. Woman. Birth. Death. Infinity" or "Duh duh duh duh duh, Dunt Dunt!" The swirling winds of Lincoln Financial are just like the US Economy; they blow ill winds to all but the wealthiest. In this case, the Look Man likes the Iggles to move on as a slight favorite, based on their "find a way to win mentality." However, if they stumble, Carolina could represent the NFC in Houston.

Peace.

The Look Man