

LMR 03 - Week 9 **Half Empty**

As we head on to Week 10, we look back at the game AFTER the halfway mark. Most prognosticators are issuing their revised picks for the playoffs, but the Look Man will have none of that. Instead, he looks at tendencies for the first half of the season. To wit:

- 1) New Offensive Formula - - - teams running the "stretch play" followed by reverse and option passes off the same formations (see also Denver, KC, and GB)
- 2) highly ranked running teams are very successful in the first half, while lower ranked running teams are not (see KC, B-more, and Carolina vs. NYJ, Grayders, Browns, etc)
- 3) Non-playoff teams from 2002 making a big push this season, with the Chowds, Carolina, Vikes, KC and others taking spots formerly occupied by others
- 4) There is a Parity Push by the Zebras, as teams that looked to run and hide come back to the pack, largely due to a large volume of yellow laundry (see also Vikes, Pokes, Panthers, etc.)
- 5) Several Coach of the Year prospects in hot competition, including Parcells, Belichick, and Lewis.

At any rate, these are the things that the Look Man sees in the Year of Our Lord 2003. As far as Week 9, the annual Halloween week, most of the scariest stuff was in politics as opposed to on the football field. In every season, there is a point where fans see the glass as half full or half empty. Week 9 is that time for the Look Man. Without further doo-doo, the Week in Review.

Bungals @ Deadbirds:

Journeyman quarterback Jeff (Shake N) Blake, who always felt mistreated by the Bungals, is now 3-0 in starts against them. In those three games, Blake has five touchdown passes and no interceptions. Last week with the Arizona Deadbirds, he beat the Bakers with WRs who didn't even know their pass routes. Shake N's propensity for the great deep ball has been toned down due to this simple fact, but he still threw darts to the middle of the field against the Ugly & Black D. He has gone conservative not from lack of arm strength but from lack of supporting cast. Put Chad (The Dentist) Johnson and Peter (Wabbit) Warrick with Jeff Blake and you have an All Pro QB.

The Bungals request for a name change to the Cincinnati Bakers was rejected by the NFL League Office because of the paucity of Pickna turnovers in the last 3 games. The Nati will now request that they be renamed the Cincinnati Chicken Counters in light of counting their playoff chickens before they hatch.

Marvin (Jerry) Lewis and Company went Looney Tunes as the REAL Jon Pickna showed up last Sunday. Pickna went Easy Bake Oven and threw 2 picks as well as at least several other balls that had "INT" written all over them. After the game, Pickna said, "This was a big opportunity for us to be on a legitimate roll. Three (wins) in a row, the next two at home. Huge. We had it all right in front of us. Now we're in a cat fight." Actually, they are in a chicken fight, and Houston is positioning themselves for a drumstick.

Warner Brothers employee Foghorn Leghorn said, "Boy, ah say, boy thew more balls to them than his'n. Now that's what ah call a chickenhawk!" It wasn't quite hot enough to fry eggs in the Sonoran Desert, but the CCC's laid a big one nonetheless.

Said DT Oliver (Twist) Gibson, "He who runs the ball and doesn't turn it over wins the game." Of Arizona, Gibson added, "Oliver Stone made that movie, *Any Given Sunday*. He didn't title it that way just 'cause it sounded good. May I have some more porridge, please?" The game was more of a Dickensian nightmare than Oliver Stone oeuvre, as Twist and the Tri-C defense went Green Acres, making Olivers everywhere unhappy. Green Acres star Oliver Wendell Davis was on

hand as the Green Acres theme song replaced the Star Spangled Banner. "Duh duh duh duh duh. DUH DUH! The Stores! Duh duh duh duh duh. DUH DUH! The Scores! You are my wife. Goodbye, playoff life. Green Acres you are therrrrrrre! Duh duh duh duh duh. DUH DUH!"

When asked about the patriotism of eliminating the Star Spangled Banner, the Green Acres star deferred to Dolly Parton, the current Mayor of Hooterville. "Most folk here thought we were just having a Sunday picnic with fried chicken, Nati style. It's not fried, it's Shake N Blake, and ah hepped! ", said Parton. When Green Acres resident Pat Buttram goosed Parton after the comments, Davis yelled out, " MISTER HANEY!!!! Arnold Ziffel was seen at the game as well, with a sign that said, "Eat more ChickN."

All of which added up to bad news for the Chicken Counters. They started glancing around the stadium looking for Ashton Kutcher and the "Punk'd" cameras, or at a minimum to see if the game was sponsored by Buffalo Wild Wings.

The weekend not a total waste as Jerry Lewis and his Kids did get to see the Grand Canyon.

Genocide Victims at Lonesome Dove:

Steve (I've got spurs that jingle, jangle, jingle) Spurrier and the Capitol City Genocide Victims had 2 weeks to prepare for an NFC Least matchup with the hated Cowpokes. That meant 2 weeks to repair their pass protection, 2 weeks to shore up the defense, and 2 weeks to heal QB Patrick (Warburton) Ramsey, who had been bashed around like a piñata on Cinco de Mayo. Instead Jingle Jangle and his crew must have spent the time drinking firewater. The Pokes blitzed from the moment Puddy got off the bus, fracturing both his finger and his confidence in the process.

Jingle Jangle and the GVs allowed Puddy to absorb as bad a beating as the Look Man has seen since QB Rob Johnson was in Buffalo, and still had an opportunity to win this one. With a 15 point lead, the Pokes allowed Puddy to throw a TD and 2-point conversion to trail by only 7. The Tuna and Company then put them out of their misery with a nifty reverse call to Terry (The Senator) Glenn. Quincy (Klugman) Carter laid down a nice block on the play, which allowed the Senator to get a key first down and exhaust the clock. Klugman's autopsy of the defender after the block revealed that he had a subdural hematoma, most likely caused by his cranium impacted the Irvin Texas AstroTurf at God's House.

The Big D offense reciprocated by looking like 30 miles of bad road. If the Starhead offense was a little sister it would have to have a pork chop tied around it's neck to get the dog to play with her. (Dr. Christian) Troy Hambrick looked more like *Sister Christian*, as he put the rock on the carpet twice. Turnovers were distributed like Halloween candy, but Parcels could not remove the offenders from the game due to the lack of ready replacements. "It's like when you're Rowdy Yates and you go on a cattle drive and Mr. Favor asks you to pick up the strays with a few hungover cowpokes. You do the best you can. After all, you are what you are," said the Tuna.

In addition to allowing Ramsey to take vicious shots while in "max protection", Jingle also went for a 4th and 12 with a lot of time left in the fourth quarter, and then berated Puddy for the incomplection. The young QB obviously threw the wrong route, but it was a low percentage call. Jingle Jangle is now surreptitiously looking for work at UNC and University of Tennessee, because, like Dubya, he won't be back in DC in '04.

Cheeseheads @ Purple People Bleeders:

Broken thumb, no problem as Brett Favre (Bean) threw like the guy in the Levitra commercial. CheeseHead D-Coordinator Ed Donatell and the Pack D confused QB Daunte (Stuffed) Culpepper, frustrating Randy (Mouth) Moss in the process. Mouth was ticked, but not as ticked as Red (neck) McCombs, who was so angry that he quit drinking - for 5 minutes!

Despite the return of speedster RB Michael Bennett, the Vikes struggled on O, due to Stuffed Culpepper's late reads. Usually, Stuffed can buy time with his mammoth O-line, then hit someone deep. The Pack forced him to throw early and on time, and he suffered.

Meanwhile, Vikes TE Jimmy (Spike) Kleinsasser went straight *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, biting defensive backs at will and forcing Pack Coach Mike (Xander) Sherman to bust him up with a wooden stake. Spike went without a catch late in the game, and the Pack got a must win on Sunday Night ESPN.

The Jynts exposed the Vikes' defensive lack of speed, now everyone is taking advantage of the V-Men. The safeties are slow and the LBs slower. Granted, the safeties are ballhawks, but they have been getting taken advantage of against the run, when they overreact to the stretch play. Further, the Vikes do not tackle well, and unless the Purple People Bleeders get up early on offense, they face "a tough roll to hold", as Bearcats Football Coach Rick Minter would say.

Chowds @ Broncos:

Bill (Dr. Evil) Belichick solidified his bid for Coach of the Year and demonstrated his Awesome Powers of Defense on Monday Night Football against the Denver Donkeys. Dr. Evil called for a safety by snapping the ball over the punter's head with a 1-point deficit. The safety put the Chowds down 3 with 3 minutes to play, but allowed them to keep all of their timeouts intact.

The call was a stroke of evil genius and the resultant 3rd down pass call by Donkeys Head Coach Mike (The Rat) Shanahan set up the Chowds for the game winning TD pass from Tom (Greg) Brady. After the win, Greg Brady said, "Marcia, Marcia, Marcia. That's what I kept telling the troops. They could have a date with my sister Marcia if we won." Apparently, that was enough as the Donkeys went Ann B. Davis and cooked up a loss along with a side of pork chops and apple sauce.

Dr. Evil and the Chowds have started 40 different players this season while clamming to a 7-2 Record. They have healthy bodies a-coming after the bye on Sunday. Dr. Evil wisely chose to allow DT Richard (Jane) Seymour to stay at home and heal up for the long second half of the season. The second half includes a favorable schedule and the Brady Bunches AFC record is outstanding. If you add the Super Bowl win vs. the Lambs a few years back, Dr. Evil just plays to win, Babay! They may be the class of the AFC in a few weeks.

The game was very physical, with the Chowds knocking out Donkeys WR (Steel) Rod Smith, with a big shot by DB Assante (Assassin) Samuel. Not to be outdone, SS Rodney (King) Harrison blasted anyone with the ball and used his helmet crown to do so. OG Tom Ashworth returned home to Colorado and had a great game in the win.

Zebra of the Week:

Referee (and Look Man favorite) Mike Carey put in his bid for the Zebra of the Week award with several questionable calls in the Bungals-Deadbirds game. Carey went Jim Carrey, calling:

- 1) Chad Johnson in bounds on a first half toe-tapper catch,
- 2) A bad Roughing the Passer call following a Pickna pick in Marlboro Country,
- 3) A no-catch by Peter Wabbit down the stretch in crunch time.

Carey is the best in the business, but had a bad day at the office on Sunday. He was not only edged out, but totally blown away on the ZOTW voting Monday Night as rookie Referee Peter Morelli issued a last call at the last mall for penalties against the Chowds. At one point the calls were 14-1 against the Chowds, including a defensive neutral zone infraction on the Donkeys, called Illegal procedure, a Brady fumble recovery given to the Donkeys, and several horrible O-holding calls on Chowds while Donkeys O-linemen tackled folks. Morelli and Crew evened up the calls to a 14-4 final when it didn't matter. Welcome to the NFL Morelli. You have just won the **Zebra of the Week** award.

Misc:

Klugman was just one of several QB's throwing meaningful blocks on the newly energized reverse play. Brett Favre (Bean) cannibalized the Vikes D with a nice cut block and a glass of Chianti, and Trent (Long)Green has been throwing this block all year. The reverse is the flavor of the month, and most teams are starting to use it after the Browns' success in 2002.

Remember the days when someone said the NEW post-Ravens Browns had a series of 1st round picks, and the Look Man and his homies were sitting around salivating at the thought? With 3 years of first rounders, and a possible additional pick if they didn't make the playoffs, the Browns version 2.1 were set. Who could miss with Akili Smith, Tim Couch, AND Cade McNown all available??? Plus there's these other defensive studs named Courtney Brown and Gerard Warren out there who will come into the league better than Warren Sapp ever dreamed of begin. Playoffs? Playoffs? They could win the Super Bowl with these guys!

And then we woke up, and Carmen Policy was still our President and Butch (Hurricane Boy) Davis the coach. The prescience of these guys reminds of the early 20th century decision by the City of Cincinnati when asked if they would like to be a main hub for the new railroad. The Nati politely declined, stating that THE CANAL was the wave of the future. Chicago got the railroad hub, and the rest is history.

Brian Billick(goat) got fined \$15,000 for complaining about the officiating in his replay tirade. Billickgoat is a smug son of a sea cook, and he was wrong on both of his challenges, but he does have a point. Instant Replay has an inferior design, and is set up to fail. The reviews should occur during the entire game, not just until the last 2 minutes of each half, and they should include pass interference, and that pesky defensive holding inside the opponents 10 yard line.

Bungals CB and Free Agent pickup Jeff Burris suffered his 4th concussion in 2 years, and was replaced by Hall of Fame CB Artrell(is) Hawkins, who did his best rose hanging impression. Burris meanwhile, is headed for Romo-Land. Meanwhile, rookie CB Dennis (Principal) Weathersby is still sitting with Archie and Veronica on the inactive list.

Looking Ahead:

Slim Shadies @ Tri-C: Jerry Lewis challenged Nati "Fans" to sell out PBS for Sunday's Slim Shady game, and chided them for not having "...anything invested in the team..." if they couldn't sell out their own crib. The resultant furor by the fans caused Jerry to recant and apologize for his comments. Said Lewis, "I'm sahwy. I'm sahwy. I'M NOT SAAAAWWWYYYYY! HEY LAAAADDDDDDDYYYYYY!"

Browns @ Baby Backs: It could have been an upset of incredible magnitude, but the Multi-Colored Fish Wrap broke the story on Thursday. Now the Baby Backs will likely parboil the Brownies at Agarn Stadium. It won't help that Butch (Hurricane Boy) Davis suspended William (Red) Green for Chronic inhalation, and benched WR Kevin (KJ) Johnson for criticizing HB policies. If the Browns lose this one, their thin playoff goose is cooked.

Confederate Cats @ Expensive Corn Kings: IF the Corn Kings hold true to form, they will win every other week, with this week being "other." If the Confederate Cats win this one, they will have swept the Kings, and get a major leg up on the NFC Souse Division. As anyone who has every eaten souse meat knows, it's "SPICAAAAAYYYYYY!" The Look Man looks for the Cats to take this game, thereby relegating the undisciplined Kings to be home for Christmas.

Buffalo @ Pokes: The Tuna goes up against yet another pupil when Bills QB Drew Bledsoe comes South to Big D. Look for the Bills to get rolled just as the Jets and Chowds did previously. Klugman has come back to Earth in QB rating, but the matchup favors the Boys blitzing style.

Out. - LM