

The Look Man Report 2004

Week 17: The Afterlife

The 2004 NFL season has begun its inexorable push to completion. In true Highlander fashion, the cries of "There can be only One!" will soon ring out on Super Sunday. Until then large, cat quick men will be matched against each other in a Machiavellian dance of the depraved that we call 'football.' If you saw Denver safety John Lynch (Mob) decapitate Indy TE Dallas Clark, you know the dance of which the Look Man speaks.

Lynch is now 75 grrrr lighter in the wallet, thanks to the league office, and some believe that this man's game can be played without violence. No less than Dan Dierdorf exclaimed after defensive backs drilled receivers attempting to catch deep outs in the Jets-Lambs matchup. The Look Man believes that if a receiver has the audacity to run in the zone and catch deep-ins and deep-outs, he had better be ready to pay the price.

But, the Look Man digresses. Week 17 was one of the weirdest in memory, with all 32 teams playing ON THE SAME DAY. Because of the holidays, there were no Sunday or Monday Night games, and since 7 out of 12 playoff spots were irrevocably locked up, most teams could not even change their seeds in the final week of the 2004 season.

The Look Man took umbrage with the League for allowing teams to sit players in the last few weeks of the season. It impacts the balance of the league in a way that is unseemly. But this final week featured something even more demonic. Indy was actually able to determine not only its future opponent, it was also able to avoid a bad matchup with a possible alternate opponent. Here 's how:

At any rate, we are plunged headlong into a cacophony of hard hits; of things and of ideas that exist in a dimension somewhere between the pit of Man's fears, and the summit of his gambling money. Thirty-two teams began a bizarre, barbaric, pain-filled tournament of elimination. There's a signpost up ahead. Next stop: The Playoff Zone.

Stillers @ Bisons:

Bill (Iron Chin) Cowher wisely sat (Big) Ben Roethlisberger and Jerome the Bus Bettis in a meaningless finale. He instead started Tommy (That Deaf Dumb and Blind Kid) Maddox, who looked adequate in beating the playoff minded Bisons. Of course, the win had more to do with a staunch Stillers D than the right arm of TDDABK.

Stillers D-Coordinator Dick LeBeau(nhead) fixed his sack problem with a CB blitz by Ricardo Colclough (Hammer), who nailed Bisons QB Drew (The Statue) Bledsoe, causing a fumble that LB James (Henry) Harrison turned into six. Harrison is looking so good that Clark (Kent) Haggans may be out of a job when

healthy. It still raises the question of how many presidents of the USA are playing in the NFL anyway?

The Bisons home loss knocked them out of the playoffs, but they had a lot of help from the Zebras, who didn't want to see them in the postseason. The primary reasons were the way Buffalo's D can turn any game ugly, as well as the problem of keeping pigeon poop off of Bledsoe during the game.

Swedes @ GVs:

Vikes quarterback Daunte Culpepper looked to end the streak of outdoor losses at FedEx Field against a depleted Genocide Victims team that had little reason to play. The Swedes needed this win after losing a must win to Green Bay. Instead, they were victimized by a hard-hitting GV squad that got a lot of help from the Zebras.

The Vikes battled back valiantly, and with 2 seconds remaining, and the Vikes down 21-18, WR Randy (Mouth) Moss strolled off FedX Field before the inevitable onside kick. Mouth was essentially saying the game was over, and left his teammates in the lurch in a situation that might have called for a Hail Mary to their best wideout. The Look Man sees this move as the equivalent of Bungals RB Corey Dillon throwing his pads into the stands after the finale last season. Moss will not appear in Vikes gear for much longer after this fiasco.

Head Coach Mike (Fried) Tice was able to kao pung his way backwards into the playoffs. Fried might still face the wrath of the Evil Emperor Red McCombs with a first round loss at Lambeau next Sunday.

Jets @ Lambs:

The Jets-Lambs matchup at the Edward Jones Dome was epic because both teams went into the game knowing they needed a win and/or some help to get into the playoffs. As a result, we saw some of the hardest hitting of the year.

The Lambs were the hottest NFC team going in, and both teams have struggled due to the bad AC joints of QBs Marc (The Scarecrow) Bulger and Chad Pennington and Pound Foolish. Still, the game featured hard running and deep passing in a back and forth affair, largely due to the relative health of the Scarecrow's shoulder. He painted his own yellow brick road with sweet passes to Torry Holt and Isaac Bruce.

The Jets offense struggled after being hit with a strange green laser beam in the Edward Jones Dome on Sunday. The Jets made the playoffs anyway, but lost 32-29 in OT to the Lambs. Of particular note was the pick that Pennington threw to Adam (Ant) Archuleta late in the game. The pass hit Adam Ant in the mandibles, and fell harmlessly to the turf. A pick in that situation would have sealed the win for the Lambs.

Pennington was unable to manufacture a TD on 3 trips into the St. Louise red zone. The Jets do not use play action despite having Curtis Martin, the 2004 NFL rushing leader.

The Look Man believes that Chad is one of the poorest play action fakers in the league, and since he does it so poorly, the Jets have eliminated the play fake and the motion offense. The net result is a failure to score in the red zone, where freezing the LBs and DBs for one step can be the difference between 6 and 3.

The Look Man also questioned the sanity of the 2 head coaches. Mike (The Cockatoo) Martz finally decided to run the football, albeit with rookie RB Steven Jackson. Meanwhile, Gang Green head coach Herm Edwards may have been on drugs. His midweek "...we're on the bus..." comments were high comedy, but when the scoreboard in St. Louis flashed the final score of the Bills loss, it assured the Jets of a fifth playoff seed irrespective of the outcome of their game with the Lambs.

Still, when the Jets, down by 3, reached the 9-yard line with six seconds remaining in regulation Edwards ordered the game tying field goal, cinching overtime. The Look Man wondered why the noted filmmaker and part time football coach didn't simply go for the winning TD on fourth down. It was obvious that his troops would be worn out from extended play, and it could hurt them in their next game at San Diego.

Horsies @ Donkeys:

The thoroughbred Colts traveled to Denver to face the Donkeys on Sunday, with the latter needing a win. Indy simply needed to stay healthy and get on a roll for the postseason. It seemed a good idea for Colts trainer Tony (Hume Cronyn) Dungy to allow QB Peyton Manning to reach a nice round number of TD passes in his record-breaking year. Instead, Peyton played only one series, handing the reins over to backup Jim Sorgi. Denver dominated the game, creating a déjà vu all over again. These 2 teams will face each other again next Sunday in Indy.

The game did feature a notable hit by Denver's John Lynch (Mob) on Colts TE Dallas Clark. Lynch Mob drilled Clark in the facemask on a seam route, an action that is sure to get him a note from the principal's office. Either that, or a fine for animal cruelty. The play was like a bizarre recap of the Miami-Cleveland Sunday Nighter, when Reggie Bruce picked up the fumble, fumbled himself, and allowed the Donkeys to score an apparent TD. Instead, the Zebras sided with the Horsies, calling an incomplete pass. The Denver crowd notably did not shout, "IN-COM-LETE" on the play.

Indy played Denver in a late kickoff, knowing that a Denver win would insure a rematch in the playoffs. The Colts knew they would play the 6th seeded team and by sitting its starters, the Colts actually bumped Jacksonville and Buffalo out of the picture. Since either team matches up with the Lucky Charms better than the Donkeys, Indy was able to affect its own playoff future. The Horsies now hope next week will be a redux of their 41-10 castration of the Donkeys in the 2003 playoffs.

Many argue that sitting players avoids injuries to key players, but that is not supported by the facts. In truth, the impact of going into the postseason on a losing streak affects an offense much more. Case in point: since 1999 playoff teams seeded 1 through 4 which won in the final week were 25-5 in their first postseason game. Those same seeds were 6-4 in their first playoff game if they lost in Week 17. The simple morale of the story: Just win, baby!

New Orleans @ Carolina

Jake (The Man) Delhomme faced the Religious Icons' ferocious pass rush after falling behind early. As a result, Jake's hand must have been re-injured, because he couldn't hit the broad side of a barn. He would have overthrown Kareem Abdul Jabbar out there on Sunday. The Man was sacked 6 times and it is hard to complete passes when you are wearing defensive linemen as clothing.

Still, the Black Cats nearly went to OT but for a blocked FG by New Orleans. As a result, the Saints looked like they might take Carolina's spot in the playoffs pending the Lambs-Jets finale.

The Lambs game winning kick came after former Saints kicker Doug Brien missed a 53-yarder for the Jets that would have put the Saints in the postseason. One New Orleans official openly cursed Brien, who was released in a 2001 salary purge. Icons' owner Tom Benson watched the GW kick and said quietly, "Oh, well. Looks like another Christmas of the Island of Misfit Teams."

Baby Backs @ Bolts:

Marty went the way of the Genius head coaches and benched Drew (Cool) Brees for America's Midget Doug Flutie. Flutie Flakes came to play and carved up the KC D. Flutie looked rejuvenated at 42, and he and Vinny Testaverde are planning to star in the Broadway version of *The Producers*, replete with Vinny's musical version of "Death of a Salesman - On Ice." Vinny may be forced to turn down the role of Max Bialystock for a chance to star as Wilford Brimley in *Cocoon III: The Pick*.

At any rate, the Bolts blasted KC, and they are charging into the playoffs with some good energy.

Weird, Wild Stuff:

(Johnny) Carson Palmer called the Look Man last night to point out some, "Weird, wild stuff" in 2004. The following stats made the Look Man yell out, "Yesss! You are correct, Sir!" Either that, or, "I did not know that. Did you know that, Ed?"

- There were an incredible number of 400 yard passing performances in 2004; McNabb and Marc (The Scarecrow) Bulger had at least 2 each, plus Cleveland's Kelly (Tires) Holcomb and Mr. Tonight Show went over 4 bills in the highest scoring game in NFL history.

- There were numerous 100 yard rushing games in 2004, with Miami being the only team with none all season. Never before have so many rushers busted the century and a half mark, with many of those games resulting in single digit spreads. The bottom line: the tendency to throw late caused a lot of Alcoa fantastic finishes when the run would have put the game away.
- KC TE (Big T) Tony Gonzalez had a record number of catches for a TE, while Bolts' TE Antonio (Bill) Gates became the richest receiver in TDs ever.
- Jets TB Curtis (My Favorite) Martin won the league rushing title by one yard over Shaun Alexander (The Great), but failed to have a single run of more than 25 yards, a first in league history. Uncle Martin claims his O-line stabbed him in the back, forcing him to carry more times for the same yards as other league RBs.

Leslie Frazier (Crane), Down the Drain:

Head coach Marvin Jerry Lewis unceremoniously dumped Bungals D-Coordinator Leslie Frazier (Carne). The move comes after the hiring of former Grayders' D-Co Chuck Bresnahan(ski). Chucky worked for the Grayders 2002 AFC championship team that lost to Tampa Bay in the Super Bowl. Oaktown ranked second in the AFC in points allowed and third in the NFL rush defense that season. Both were a major problem area for the Bungals in 2004.

Frazier Crane was not Lewis' first choice as coordinator, who wanted Niles Crane instead. Lewis was denied permission to interview Niles by NBC in 2003. Lewis then hired Bresnahan as senior defensive assistant/defensive backs, pending Frazier's last season. Since Friends has also been canceled by NBC, look for Jennifer Anniston to be hired as Director of Scouting.

Celebrity Obituary of the Week:

Shirley Chisholm was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1969. The African American woman represented the state of New York, a rarity for both her race and gender in American politics.

Chisholm inspired a generation of minorities to become public servants. Her legacy included her unsuccessful run for the Democratic Party presidential nomination in 1972. Chisholm lost to eventual nominee George McGovern, who was never the same after battling with Shirley. McGovern lost in a landslide to Richard Milhaus Nixon.

Chisholm represented the infamous Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn during the Nixon administration, retiring in 1983 during the Reagan years. She broke precedent by lobbying to be removed from the House Agriculture Committee, an appointment which failed to reflect the interests of her urban constituents. She later garnered a seat on the influential Veterans Affairs Committee, where she opposed the Vietnam War. It was there that she helped found the Congressional Black Caucus, which included Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., and Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich, and Louis Stokes D-Ohio.

Chisholm was renowned for basing her decisions on her strong and controversial beliefs instead of political expedience. Her war opposition and her visit to hospitalized segregationist George Wallace were just two examples. Chisholm's boldness embodied a spirit absent in many of today's politicians.

Ohio representative Stephanie Tubbs-Jones said it best: "Shirley Chisholm was truly extraordinary. As the first black woman elected to Congress and first black to launch a full-fledged campaign for the presidency, she was a trailblazer for many, including myself. If there had been no Shirley Chisholm, there would be no Stephanie Tubbs-Jones."

Shirley Chisholm died this week in Florida at the age of 80.

The Look Ahead:

Denver @ Indy:

Jake (the Fake) Plummer will try to avenge the 41-10 beating the Donkeys took at the hands of the Colts in the 2003 playoffs. Unfortunately, what he'll win is a chance to face da Burgh, and get his pipes mangled.

Manning and the Colts should have little trouble with the Donkeys, whose smack talk may just tick off Indy. The Donkey DBs intimated that the Colts WRs are soft, and Manning won't take that lightly. Not to mention that Edgerrin James is likely to run all over Denver instead.

Minnesota @ Gouda Group:

The Vikes haven't won outdoors since the Eisenhower Administration, making the Look Man wonder how they can possibly win at historic Lambeau. Still, the Pack won the first 2 games on the humble, and the trifecta is pretty difficult. The Pack D has given up 31 points to the Vikes, including one game without Mouth Moss. For some reason, the Look Man likes the Vikes in this one, even though most of the Gouda Group wears black and white unis.

After seeing the Vikes fail to beat the Zebras at Philly, DC, Green Bay and Indy, the Look Man thinks the looser officiating of the playoffs could help. Bet the Vikes and the spread at the Cheddar Cheese Chalet on Sunday.

Jets @ Bolts :

The Jets take Chad's bad AC joint to Jack Murphy for a Bolts battle. The Jets always struggle on the Left Coast, including their most recent loss to the Grayders a few years back. For some reason, they play badly out there.

Still, young Bolts have no playoff experience and are bound to be tight. Of course between Marty Schottenheimer(dinger) and Herm (Blake) Edwards the winner could be a wet paper bag.

Lambs @ Seattle:

Mike (The Walrus) Holmgren meets the unbeatable foe in St. Louise. Last week, the Seahags faced a controversy when The Walrus failed to give Alexander the Great the rock at the one-foot line. Alex lost the rushing title to My Favorite Martin, and complained to the press. Given his penchant for fumbling inside the five, who can blame the Walrus?

The Seahags' Matt (Hair Club for Men) Hasselback hasn't been the same since his overtime coin toss at Lambeau in 2003. "We'll take the ball and we're gonna score!" has become the rallying cry for prematurely balding men everywhere. The Lambs are the hottest team in the NFC, having won two in a row vs. some tough competition, albeit

bizarre. Neither of the teams they faced needed a win to get to the playoffs, but the Lambs own the Hags.

Epilogue:

New Trends Department:

The last couple of seasons, the question has been whether the old adage "Defense Wins Super Bowls" still rings true. Tampa seemed to prove the point, but the Chowds won it after giving up huge chunks of yardage to both St. Louise and the Black Cats. This season may well test the theory.

Prior to 2004, no team ranked offensively in the bottom 10 has ever made the playoffs. This year 4 such teams have qualified for the playoffs: Gouda Group, Horsies, Swedes and Hags. The league would like to eliminate the Hags and Vikes in order to allow its premier QBs to make the Show. The Gouda Group and Colts feature Favre and Manning, but don't discount the MVP runner up in Minnesota. Culpepper would run away with the award if it weren't for Manning, and the Look Man likes the Vikes in the postseason. They were, after all, his Super Bowl pick at the beginning of the year.

The Colts hardly qualify as a Dark Horse, but against the always tough Chowds and upstart Stillers, it will be a battle royale. Everyone is jumping on the Chowds bandwagon, but they are overlooking one thing: the knee injury suffered by DE Richard (Pryor) Seymour could be the straw. While Bill (Dr. Evil) Belichick guards his injury lists closer than the Grinch guards Who-ville, the Chowds Nation is built on stuffing the run. If Richard Pryor can't go *Live on the Sunset Strip*, the Chowds could go down like Scott Peterson with an all-female jury.

Seymour is unquestionably the Chowds best defensive player. They may have converted LBs and DBs, defenders who play offense in their spare time and vice versa, but if they can't stuff the run, they will not get another trophy. Plus, Ty Law may not return, and it is a matter of time before someone game plans that patchwork secondary. Mark my words.

The Look Man still thinks there are upsets in the making in the 2004 postseason, including the Stillers and/or Chowds.

Out.

The Look Man