

The Look Man Report 2005 Week Sixteen: ...And (Still) Never Been Kissed!

Why shouldn't I tell the truth? I ain't trying to get no Pepsi commercial." - Yankees OF Gary Sheffield regarding problems in the Yankees' clubhouse

Week 16 featured a full slate of NFL games on Christmas Eve for the first time in 17 years. Since many playoff spots remained unclaimed, the question was whether Week 16 would be a merry Christmas or a good old Hooville special.

Seattle, Indy, and the Nati had all clinched division crowns going into the week, while Chicago, the Jyntz and Denver all waited to claim the royal birthrights. Carolina, Tampa Bay, the ATL, Pittsburgh and J-Ville were looking to put Wild Card berths under their trees. Washington, Dallas, Minnesota, KC and the Lightning Bolts still held outside shots at getting something other than lumps of coal in their stockings at the outset of the week.

The week was complicated by the apparent suicide of James Dungy, son of Colts HC Tony. Coach Dungy and the team had just suffered the first loss of a perfect season, and their marquee matchup with the SheHawks lost its luster as he attended to funeral arrangements. Instead of the Super Bowl preview everyone anticipated, this game had the feel of a funeral march.

With the Look Man in his kerchief and Ma Look Man in her cap, there would be quite awhile before settling down for a long winter nap in 2005. Saturday and Sunday football has always been a bonus feature in December, and the hot playoff races made this one quite spayshul.

Without further trademark infringements, the Week in Review:

WEEK IN REVIEW:

Stillers at Browns:

The Look Man wrote the following in the Week 15 report:

Look for the Browns to run early and often in order to keep Charlie Frye out of the hospital. The Stillers need to win out, but faced a tough, physical defense last week in Minnesota. The Look Man thinks back to back road wins is too much to ask of this Stillers squad. Browns baby, Browns.

Suffice it to say the Stillers showed up, bitch-slapped Cleveland 41-0 and left town. The only item of note was that Gregory Gall, who is banned from Bengals games after running onto the field in the Green Bay game, has apparently switched teams. Gall ran onto the field in the 4th quarter wearing Browns gear, only to be body slammed by Stillers LB James (William Henry) Harrison.

The 23rd President of the US was attempting to reenact the Joe Turkey Jones/Terry Bradshaw face plant move on the play. Gall is expected to return to the Nati for neck surgery.

Bisons at Bengals:

The Look Man called for the Bisons to "shock the Bengals," and they did just that. QB Kelly (Tires) Holcomb showed he has a little tread left, as he torched the Bengals

secondary beginning with the first series. Kelly Tires could not however, block the middle of the Bengals D-line, which assembled several great goal line stands. Fortunately, Kelly Tires found the endzone in other ways, as did Bisons CB Terry McGee. McGee set a modern day record with a kick return and INT return for touchdowns in the same game.

(Johnny) Carson Palmer threw the game-losing pick after coming up with a pulled groin on the previous play. Mr. Tonight Show was attempting to get out of bounds ahead of pursuing LB London (Bridge) Fletcher. Instead, he triggered Carnac the Magnificent in the form of the Look Man, who predicted the pick.

The Bengals have now lost 2 of their last four, and MTS is beginning to show chinks in his Late Night armor. He has thrown a boatload of picks on his way to the playoffs. The Bengals rewarded him with a contract extension through 2014. Nice.

Dallas at Carolina:

As usual Carolina was inconsistent, and lost a very winnable game at home to the Pokes. The biggest play of the game was probably the ejection of Carolina WR Steve Smith for touching a zebra. Even when Smith was in, Jake (The Man) Delhomme used him largely as a decoy, instead throwing the ball to phenom WR Drew (Nell) Carter.

The Man hit Nell for a sweet TD over the free safety challenged Pokes. Their best play of the day was a play action, pump fake post to Carter which froze lead footed SS Roy (Rogers) Williams. "I was looking for the flag route on that one", said Rogers. "Once I realized it was the skinny post, I mounted Trigger, but it was too late."

Delhomme has been predictable of late, and Smith has been Carolina's only weapon. Once he was gone, the defense wore down, and Drew (Big Boi) Bledsoe threw a sweet fade route to Terry (She) Glenn for six. The win postponed any celebration in Carolina, which could have wrapped up a nice NFC Souse title. Naughty Cowpokes! Naughty!

The Pokes preserved their slim playoff hopes, but need help to get into the postseason thanks to several ignominious losses. They now need a win plus an Atlanta win over Carolina to get in. There are some other ways for the Starheads to make it, but you have to be Norman Einstein to figure those out.

Atlanta at Tampa Bay:

Not only was Tampa Bay ticked after the blowout loss to the Chowds, they took it out on Ron Mexico and the Dirty Birds. They have now positioned themselves for an opportunity to win the NFC Souse.

The Dirty Bird D was pushed around and run over in this one as Cadillac gave them the gas. On offense, Vick was pounded and failed once again to prove he can be a pocket passer. Not sure whether this loss is the result of bad coaching, bad play or both, but Arthur Blank's Boys need to retool for 2006 after being eliminated from the playoff hunt. Pretty ugly indeed for a team that routed the Pack and stood one game away from the Super Bowl two seasons ago.

So, will it be Wild Card or Souse Champs for the Buccaneers? They can go as far as the Cadillac can drive them. As the Look Man says, "Balanced offense = a good passing game for a young QB." See also "Big Ben Roethlisberger."

Jynts at Washington:

The Jynts headed into the capitol city hoping to parlay their big week 15 win into an NFC East title on Sunday. They faced a Genocide Victims squad that was sky high after blowout win over Dallas the week prior. Unfortunately, the Jynts played without some key offensive linemen, so Tiki Barber and Company struggled. After knocking out GV QB Mark Brunell, it looked like they would squeak by with a win.

Enter backup QB Patrick (Stewart) Ramsey, who promptly got the entire offense discombobulated. Patrick has trouble with the Picard role, and called two time-outs while trying to get command of the bridge. Just when it looked hopeless, he threw a bullet to WR (Carlos) Santana Moss, who made a circus catch look routine. Devadip followed the catch with a nice guitar riff that left CB Will Allen doing a tricky dance step. Allen tripped and Santana zipped to the end zone. "I call that my Black Magic Woman move", said Moss. "I warned him not to turn his back on me baybay, but he didn't listen."

The improbable GVs are now in position to garner a playoff berth if they can beat the Iggles next week. Despite internal turmoil between coach Joe Gibbs and LB Lavar (Roots) Arrington, they seem to be getting hot at the right time. They have an embarrassing wealth of pass catchers, including Chris Cooley (High), Mike (Wine) Sellers and Ladell (All) Betts (Are Off). Their backfield includes Rock (The Last) Cartwright and (Bill) Clinton Portis, who do the Running Back by Committee pretty well.

On the other side of the rock, the GVs feature DT's Joe Salave'a and Cornelius Griffin, as well as LB Marcus (George) Washington. These guys are very underrated, and if they get into the postseason tournament, they are capable of beating anyone. They remind the Look Man of the Patriots of the NFC; no one wants to face them.

San Diego at Kansas City:

Dick (the Crying Man) Vermeil and his Baby Backs are getting hot down the stretch. Their back-to-back losses to the Pokes and Jynts probably doomed their season, but the discovery of Larry (Grandmama) Johnson bodes well for the new year. It was Crying Man One versus Crying Man Too as Vermeil's Vixens faced Marty's Mashers.

The Mashers were in a bad spot after an emotional win over the Colts in Week 15. Further, nobody beats the Baby Backs at Agarn in December. KC beat the snot out of the Bolts with ultra-physical play, hard running and solid defense. It turns out that the injury to LaDanian Tomlinson was much worse than thought, and he was punished all day.

The loss knocks one of the best teams in the NFL out of the playoff mix. Not only is San Diego better than some division winners, they could beat every team in the NFC tournament. Too bad we won't get to see them in the playoffs.

The win sets up a Bengals at Baby Backs season finale. The Baby Backs will know by game time whether they have a chance at the playoffs, and the Bengals will likely look to rest their nicked up starters. It could turn out to be a great game. If nothing else, we will get to see Jon Pikna's new baking franchise. His turnovers will be famous throughout the midwest after Sunday.

Da Bears at Flambeau:

Da Bears 20th anniversary Super Bowl celebration continued at the not yet frozen tundra of Flambeau Field. Brett (The Pope) Favre and the Cheeseheads played host to their physical defense, hoping to add legitimacy to a season of futility. Pack RB Samkon Gado was on the shelf with a bad patella, so it was up to the Pope to lead them to glory. Too bad, because Cheesehead Fan has been so good this year, too.

Anyway, the Bears Triplets decided to have a cheese course before their big pre-hibernation meal in the playoffs. (T-)Rex Grossman went early and often to WR Mushin (Bullwinkle) Muhammad, who held on to one TD while dropping another. It seems Bullwinkle is having trouble holding on to the rock this season, having dropped a number of catchable balls. It is hard to blame him though; he has one hand on the signing bonus he received this season as a free agent pickup.

Thomas (It's Not Unusual) Jones had another productive day, with a buck oh-five rushing on 20 plus carries. If the Bears are to do well in the post season, it will be on the legs of Jones, who does some singing when he is not running the football. The other key guy for the Bears is safety Mike Brown, who along with LB Lance Briggs form the backbone of a defense that rivals the '85 Super Bowl team for toughness. While Urlacher receives the credit, all these two do is make plays.

The Pope ended up with 3 bills passing on 51 attempts. The 24-17 final was not indicative of the beating Green Bay took. However you slice the cheese, the Pack stinks like limburger this season and the Bears' every move comes up smelling like roses. The insertion of T-Rex at QB has paid off, and luckily his receivers' arms are longer than his own.

LAGNIAPPE

Here's Johnny!

Mr. Tonight Show became the highest paid player in the NFL this week after signing an through 2014. Palmer is already being suited up for Brett Favre Limited Edition Fork Jersey, which he will likely wear before the end of his agreement.

The move allows the Nati to use 2005 cap money to complete deals for their offensive linemen. OG Eric (John) Steinbach, and OT's Levi (Jeans) Jones and Willie (Louie) Anderson are in the final years of their deals and would like extensions as well. The Bengals need to do these deals before 2008, when Chad (The Dentist) Johnson and agent Drew Rosenhaus arrive in their Brinks truck.

Meadowlands Mercy Hospital

The Jynts LB corps is more banged up after losing another backer last week. The Jynts signed former Houston LB Jamie Sharper and a guy who spent the 2005 season on his couch. The G-Men have gone from a top five run stuffing D to the middle of the pack in a few short weeks. Lucky that they have Tiki, or the story would be far worse.

As former Bearcats football coach Rick Minter would say, The Jynts now face a tough "roll to hold" in the playoffs. Irrespective of opponents, they will face a tough running team. They are better configured against passing teams than rushing teams with DE's Osi Umenyiora and Mike Strahan. The Jynts will make an early exit from the postseason.

Playoffs?! Playoffs?!

Baby Backs exec Carl Peterson wants to expand the playoffs to include at least one coach who cries every week. Either that or two additional wild card entrants. The addition would mean that 14 of 32 teams would make the tournament, effectively turning the NFL into the NBA.

The Look Man recognizes that the Bolts and Baby Backs are better than most NFC teams, but there simply is no room for more Wild Cards. The current configuration makes the regular season mean something. Instead of crying about a 10-6 finish with no playoffs, try beating Denver and Dallas when it counts.

Lord Byron:

J² QB (Lord) Byron Leftwich is back practicing, setting up a potential QB controversy in J-Ville. The Jags will likely play the Chowds or Bengals in sub-freezing temps, and would do well to install a QB who can run. Backup QB David (Samuel) Garrard has lost 20 pounds since taking over the starting role. He forces the defense to account for him, and RB Fred (Sheriff) Taylor has returned from Mayberry in fine form. The Look Man would counsel Jack (Vanessa) Del Rio to dance with the girl that he brung.

Ahi Nigiri:

Dallas now has rumors about the Tuna retiring at the end of 2005. Jerry Jones is set to announce their new head coach, Yakamoto Nigiri from Japan. No disrespect to the Orientals of course, but the Big Ahi wasn't getting it done. Expect a number of surprise plays from the Pokes in 2006.

Mora Minutes:

Dirty Bird HC Jim Mora will be fined for chatting on his cell phone during the Corn Kings game last week. Mora was trying to figure out if a tie was better than a loss when the overtime was winding down. While few games have ended in ties since the sudden death format was introduced in the regular season, Mora was hoping to kick Dallas and Washington to the curb with a tie.

The move ticked off Religious Icons WR Joe Horn, who claims he didn't get his rollover minutes counted toward his \$30K fine for cell phone celebration last season. Mora also made his bid for the NFL All Angry team by cussing out a reporter and throwing items in the media room. Apparently his aim is no better than QB Mike Vick's, as he missed the reporter, the wall and the chairs.

ZEBRA OF THE WEEK

Only two contestants this week. First off, we have Terry (Bottlegate) McAulay for Dallas at Carolina. All Bottlegate and crew did was toss the best Carolina player - - - WR Steve Smith - - - out of the game. Actually the move was warranted, but it single-handedly won the game for the Pokes, who are stilling searching for the D in Dallas.

What wasn't warranted was a roughing the kicker call against DE Julius Peppers. Pokes PK Billy Cundiff was allegedly roughed while missing a game tying FG. The ball seemed to have been partially blocked, which would have made the contact legal. Bottlegate was unable to overturn the call that set up the GW TD pass for the Pokes. The Tuna then cut Cundiff, who has been spotty, as he re-signed kicker Shaun Suisham.

Pete Morelli (Mushroom) – Bisons at Cincy:

Morelli attempted to overturn a legitimate onside kick with an illegal blocking call. The Bisons were leading 6-0 at the time, and the unexpected first quarter onside kick caught the Bengals napping.

The ball went 14 yards and was recovered following a heads up play in which the Bisons blasted the ball loose from a prospective Bengal. Mushroom ruled that the hit unfairly interfered with the Bengals opportunity to field the kickoff as it did not go 10 yards. The ruling was subsequently reviewed by Mike (Fulla) Mularkey and special teams coach extraordinaire Bobby April (in Paris). The Bisons scored on the drive en route to punking the Bengals at PBS 27-17.

And the winner is --- the NCAA crew that did the Michigan-Nebraska bowl game. Not only did these zebras rob the Wolverines several times during the contest, they failed to give Michigan a final play when half the players and fans stormed onto the field. The Michigan play included 8 laterals, and made the Cal-Stanford Band game finish look orderly.

The ball was finally advanced to the Nebraska 15 and there was even a question whether the tackler was in the game at the start of the play. All in all, these guys win the Zebra of the Week for this lunacy.

THE LOOK AHEAD

Week 17 promises to be special. The two Saturday games may clarify the playoff picture as Pittsburgh can get into the playoffs with a San Diego win over the Donkeys, who will resting starters. That would effectively eliminate the Baby Backs, who play the Bengals on Sunday.

Over in the NFC, the Jynts can lock up the NFC East with a win, and effectively bounce some hangers on. Since the G-Men have already locked up a playoff berth, they effectively control the destiny of Carolina, Tampa Bay, Dallas and Washington. The situation is so crazy that the 5th tiebreaker, strength of victory, could come into play.

Here is the two team tiebreaking formula:

1. Head-to-head (best won-lost-tied percentage in games between the clubs).
2. Best won-lost-tied percentage in games played within the division.
3. Best won-lost-tied percentage in common games.
4. Best won-lost-tied percentage in games played within the conference.
5. Strength of victory.
6. Strength of schedule.

It gets even more crazy for Big D, as follows:

Dallas can clinch playoff berth with:

- 1) DAL win + WAS loss or tie OR
- 2) DAL win + CAR loss OR
- 3) DAL win + TB loss + NYG loss + NYG and DAL clinch strength of victory tiebreaker over TB OR
- 4) DAL tie + WAS loss

The Pokes will be rooting for New Orleans, Atlanta, and the Iggles this weekend.

Jynts at Raiders:

Kerry (Tom) Collins faces the team that sent him packing in a vendetta game. The Jynts running defense is in turmoil, just as the Raiders' Lamont Jordan throws a rod. Look for Collins to go deep early and often to open up the running game. The Look Man likes the Raiders in an upset, but they will need to beat the Zebras AND the G-Men to do so.

Washington at Philly:

The Iggles looked flat last week in Arizona, likely due to a look ahead here. A win over DC would make their season complete. QB issues are abundant as Brunell and McMahon are injured, but could play. Looks like a good old slobberknocker on paper, and it should be fun.

Bengals at Baby Backs:

Bengals look to lose on purpose in order to avoid playing the Stillers three times in 2005. Further, this could be Vermeil's swan song in KC, so the Baby Backs will play with fire irrespective of their playoff chances. Backs beat the Bungals, who are limping their way into the playoffs.

Chicago at Minnesota:

The Bears have too much for the Vikes, but cannot really improve their seeding. Look for Coach of the Year Lovie Smith to rest his boys in preparation for the playoffs. The Vikes could be playing for Mike (Fried) Tice's future. Tice recently proclaimed himself the biggest lame duck around. Make that crispy duck as owner Zygi Wilf cans him next week.

St. Louise at Dallas:

Dallas is the big conundrum. They beat a tough Bolts team on the road in Week One, and beat a tough Carolina team in Week 16. In between, they lost winnable games at Seattle and Washington. Go figure as the Pokes try to save Parcels for a run in 2006.

Miami at New England:

New England is on a roll, and so is Miami. This game could be entitled Revenge of the Sith, as Bill (Dr. Evil) Belichick faces Jedi pupil Nick (Light) Saban. The Chowds have been incredibly effective against the run, and their patchwork secondary is beginning to get healthy.

On the other hand, Miami WR Chris Chambers (of Horror) and RB Ricky (Marley) Williams have been hotter than a crack pipe. The Look Man likes the Marine Mammals to surprise the Chowds. Tom (Zoolander) Brady gets a special award as his Visa protection breaks down while on a date with his girlfriend Corey Dillon.

The ultimate irony would be if both the Bengals and Chowds look to lose on purpose in order to position themselves for J-Ville. The Chowds could easily set up a rematch with the Colts, who are quaking in their hooves.

Houston at Frisco:

This game is the Reggie Bush Bowl. If Houston loses, they get the first pick in the draft. If the Niners lose, it could come down to a complex tiebreaking format between multiple 3 win teams. Reggie may care who wins this one, but most of us expect a punt fest.

EPILOGUE:

The 2005 season bleeds into 2006 under the new February Super Bowl format. The fact that the last playoff spots in both conferences are still up for grabs is a testament to parity. Or maybe simply a testament to bad officiating. Nonetheless, many starters will be playing on Sunday, and we have the opportunity at least for some interesting games in the Week 17 finale.

Happy New Year in 2006!

The Look Man