

THE LOOK MAN REPORT

WEEK 18 WILD CARD: Don't Believe the Hype

"Sure, I'd love to have Reggie Bush. Then both of us can be unproductive thanks to our offensive line." – Houston QB David Carr

The 2005 football season is winding down and as is fitting, the best six teams from each conference get to go to the postseason tournament. Week 18 is known as Wild Card Weekend, when the bottom eight seeds get a chance to beat the odds and advance to the championship.

The hype for the week was over the top, and none of the games lived up to expectations. There was, however, some excellent defense played, leaving hair, teeth and eyeballs all over the NFL landscape. If you like defensive football and questionable Zebra calls, Week 18 was for you.

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

Genocide Victims at Tampa Bay:

The favored Corn Kings were looking to advance the theory of states rights against the Capitol City Genocide Victims. The game was held at the Big Sombrero in Tampa, but the only guys going to sleep were the unfortunate ball carriers getting zapped by hard hitting defenders.

While there weren't as many concussions as the Jyntz-Black Cats, there was plenty of hitting to go around. The result was a win for the GVs, who had the lowest offensive output in NFL playoff history for a winning team. Next week, they plan to win 0-0, then appeal the score with the Supreme Court nominee Samuel Alito, a noted Genocide Victims fan. Of course, Alito once rooted for the Pokes, but that was a long time ago.

The MVP for Washington was head zebra Mike Carey, who obviously has compromising photos floating around out there. Carey, who is usually a great ref, made five or six calls for DC, any one of which would have won the game for the Corn Kings.

Tampa QB Chris(sy) Simms actually did pretty well in his first postseason outing. He at least outplayed Mark Brunell, who looked as if he had never seen a football on one throw. Brunell pulled an Eli, throwing across his body to a wide open Tampa DB.

There were two big stories in this game. The first was a controversial TD catch/non-catch by Edell Shepard late in the fourth. Down 17-10, Chrissy threw a sweet TD pass to the young wideout, who tapped one foot, one knee, another knee and an elbow before regurgitating the rock. The back and side judges immediately called an incomplection, and after Jon (Chucky) Gruden challenged the call, Carey came back with a great explanation on why most of America has vision problems. That, my friends, was a touchdown.

The second story was the overtly bad coaching job by Chucky, who went for a fourth and six inches, only to call timeout when he didn't like the defensive alignment. In the Look Man's NFL, if you can't make six inches on fourth down, you *should* go home. You never, ever throw the football, unless it is into the endzone and for a win. There were six minutes left in the game and a field goal would have positioned the Corn Kings for a win,

especially the way their D was playing. Instead, Chucky lost the momentum, and the Kings never recovered.

The Genocide Victims now head to Coffeetown for a rematch with the rested SheHawks. Tampa Bay gets a version of the home game after blowing a great chance to get experience for a young offensive squad.

J-Squareds at Chowds:

You kinda knew when J-Ville started (Lord) Byron Leftwich that the J-Squareds were giving up. Lord Byron's lack of touch caused several dropped balls by receivers who were used to seeing softer passes from David (Samuel) Garrard. Usually sure-handed WR Jimmy Smith (Sifuentes) even missed a couple of balls.

This was far from the only coaching error by Jack (Vanessa) Del Rio. He leaned heavily on rookie RB Alvin Pearman, who was put to sleep by Asante Samuel of the Chowds. Vanessa should know by now that rookie players in playoff pressure cooker equals turnovers. It is a lesson taught by old schoolers like Gibbs, Parcels and others.

The Pearman fumble was only one of six fumbles in this slobberknocker, including four by New England. The Jags recovered zero, and got outthit, out hustled and outscored by the Chowds in a 28-3 blowout.

Black Cats at G-Men:

The Eli Manning Face is now part of the American lexicon, after he wasted an Herculean defensive effort by the Jynts defense. Not only did he throw a Bill Walton "Horrrrrriibbbbullllll" pick across his body and late to the middle, he let the Black Cats DBs and linemen eat him up like a fat kid eating cake.

This game was the most hard hitting of the weekend, and the Look Man counted three concussions by halftime. The funniest was when Carolina RB Nick (Porn Star) Goings was put to sleep by DB Gibril Wilson. The resultant fumble put the G-Men in great position, but the Cheesecake Kid wasted the opportunity.

Meanwhile, Carolina's offensive coordinator called a masterful game by converting on 3rd and longs via the draw play each time the Jynts went to double WR Steve Smith. When they went man, he simply threw it over them for six. After the first offensive series, Jake (The Man) Delhomme went to the sidelines and told his team exactly how to read the NY coverage scheme. He rarely guessed wrong afterwards, and Tom (Choke) Coughlin failed to adjust at the half. Game over, man. Game over.

Stillers at Bengals:

The Bengals looked to prove they were worthy of a third seed no one wanted because it meant facing the resurgent Blitzburgh Stillers. They even looked good, throwing a 66-yarder on the second offensive snap. That resounding pop was the sound of (Johnny) Carson Palmer's knee as Kimo von Oehlfaffen hit him low on the play. The cheers of the locals turned to jeers for the Stillers courtesy of a little Kimo therapy.

There are those who say that the hit by Kimo was unintentional but the Look Man believes otherwise. A QB can escape a low hit if his foot can pop loose from the Astro turf. No way can that happen with a 300 pound lineman wrapping his arm around it.

After the King of Late Night was carted off, backup QB Jon Pickna decided to do his best Ed McMahon impression. He even went Carnac the Magnificent, asking the question, "Who threw two picks to safety Troy Polamalu?" When the crowd yelled his name, he answered, "YOU ARE CORRECT, SIR!"

The rest of the Mighty Carson Art Players could not carry the show, after Pickna opened up the bakery in the second half. The MCAPs failed to hold a ten point first half lead, allowing 17 unanswered by the tricky Stillers offense. The game was up for grabs after the Bengals returned to bungle a short FG early in the 3rd quarter. The Stillers didn't waste the opportunity, pulling out reverse double passes and halfback options.

On a third-and-3 at the Bengals 43, Stillers OC Ken Whisenhunt called a direct snap to WR Antwaan Randle El(-Sid). El Sid rolled right as if to run the reverse, only to lateral the ball back to (Big) Ben Roethlisberger. Big Ben then calmly hit a wide open Cedric (the Entertainer) Wilson in the endzone, breaking the backs of the Bengals as well as the hearts of their fans. Cedric the Entertainer passed up the chance to do the *Designated Driver End Zone Dance*, and with good reason. He was getting pelted with cat food from Nati Fan.

Even a failed halfback option by Jerome (the Bus) Bettis couldn't turn the tide. The Bus missed yet another wide open WR with a worm burner pass, but the Stillers didn't need it. They were too busy picking off Pickna, lateraling stupidly, and basically disrespecting the Ugly & Black.

The Stillers even went to so far as to turn the Bengals "Who Dey" chant into a locker room taunt. "We called it 'We Dey,'" said Hines (57) Ward. "We Dey put their ass out of the tournament. It was a great day today." LB Joey Porter (Paint) remembered Chad Johnson's disparaging comments following the Bengals win in Blitzburgh in early December. Johnson said the change in the division power structure was like going from black-and-white television to color TV. "I'm going to send him the new plasma black-and-white TV," Porter said. "Hopefully, he's going to get the chance to watch us in our playoff game in Indianapolis."

As it turned out, the third quarter collapse by the Nati was no fluke. WR Chad (The Dentist) Johnson startled his teammates near the end of halftime intermission by fighting with receivers coach Hue Jackson. At one point, The Dentist was seen holding Jackson in a headlock. Head Coach Marvin (Jerry) Lewis attempted to intervene, the Dentist took a poke at him as well. Luckily, WR T.J. (Ponytail) Houshmandzadeh donned a black and white ref jersey and broke up the skirmish just as the Bengals were leaving for the second half.

"I can't believe they let Pickna be Ed McMahon after Johnny got hurt. I kept telling them I can be Doc Severinsen, but they wouldn't listen," said Chad. "After only getting three passes, I felt more like Paul Schaffer. After all, I am a licensed DDS. So I drilled Marvin. That man is a raving anti-Dentite."

The Stillers' win was the first ever road playoff win for Bill (Iron Chin) Cowher, who is now 9-9 in the postseason. That record includes a home wild card win over Cleveland after being down 17 to Kelly (Tires) Holcomb. Cowher hasn't exactly torn it up in the playoffs, and now faces Indy, which is giving 9.5.

LAGNIAPPE

Now, Opie...

Washington DB Sean (Opie) Taylor did more than blow up Tampa Bay ball carriers on Sunday. Opie spit in the face of Corn Kings RB Michael Pittman after one play had ended. Despite Pittman's retaliation punch in the head gear, Opie was assessed a personal foul, an ejection and a trip to Mayberry by Zebra Mike Carey.

"I dint do nothing," said Opie. "The league is fining me seventeen large even though the tape was inconclusive. I don't even know what 'inconclusive' means, but I'm asking Aint Bee."

Taylor will not face a suspension this week at Seattle, but he will be forced to wear a full face shield on his helmet as a protective measure. Joe Horn asked whether the same would be enforced on Bill Cowher.

JoePa Says, "If Rape is Inevitable..."

Joe Paterno can add the National Organization for Women to the list of folks he has offended. NOW was "appalled" by Paterno's insensitive comments this week, which came when a reporter asked about Free Shoes U LB A.J. (Jack) Nicholson, who missed the Orange Bowl following sexual assault allegations.

Paterno replied, "There's some tough - there's so many people gravitating to these kids. He may not have even known what he was getting into, Nicholson. They knock on the door; somebody may knock on the door; a cute girl knocks on the door. What do you do?"

"Geez. I hope - thank God they don't knock on my door because I'd refer them to a couple of other rooms, unless I had those blue pills around," Paterno continued. "But that's too bad. You hate to see that. I really do. You like to see a kid end up his football career. He's a heck of a football player, by the way; he's a really good football player. And it's just too bad."

NOW is calling for Paterno to resign. "Allegations of sexual assault should never be taken lightly," the statement reads. "Making light of sexual assault sends the message that rape is something to be expected and accepted." Texas Tech basketball coach Bobby Knight had no comment on the story.

Bogomil to Coach Pokes in '06?

LMR reader Mike (Top) Hatfield is one of many folks perplexed by the Week 19 matchups. "I'm thinking Seahawks/Panthers in the NFC, but flat-out don't know about the AFC," said Hat. "The Colts aren't going to fall for the banana in the tail pipe, whereas the Patriots might be the ones who wreck the buffet table at the Harrow Club this morning.

Well, Michael, the Look Man advises you not to use *Beverly Hills Cop* metaphors when referring to the NFL. It can be confusing and sexually suggestive. Next time, pick FedEx Ground to ship your metaphors to the source safe, fast, and effectively.

ZEBRA OF THE WEEK

There was no shortage of contestants for the Zebra of the Week award. Like the players, the Zebras are in fine postseason form. The Wild Card Weekend had it all: down by contact calls on fumbles, one knee not equaling two feet, and another postseason QB donating his knee to science with nary a hanky in sight.

Now entering the studio:

Mike (Mariah) Carey - Genocide Vix at Corn Kings

Mariah went nuts, with a Mike Renfro non-TD, missed a fumble by Lavar Arrington following a pick, and generally gift wrapping the game for the Genocide Victims. Any one of these calls would have won it for the Chucky and the Corn Kings. Hell, they would have won anyway if Simms connects on the flag pattern to a wide open Edell Shepard AFTER the drop. Also, Mariah needs to quit going multi-octave riffs during the explanations. It takes our eyes away from her other assets. Like those tight uniform pants. No wonder this guy leads the league in player ejections!

Walt (Disney) Anderson – J-Squareds at Chowds

One has to wonder if Walt Disney is the Chowds personal zebra. Every time they have a big game, he goes Fantasia on their opponents. Despite a seeming blowout, Anderson called illegal procedure on a J-Ville lineman induced by the Chowds lineman into jumping. The Look Man guesses that little rule doesn't apply to America's Team.

Larry Nemers(kull) – Stillers at Bengals

Nemmerskull let this one get out of hand in the warm-ups. He failed to call Kimo for going Dirt Winston and crushing Palmer, then had several on field skirmishes. The culmination was the unsportsmanlike after Polamalu tried to see if Bengals C Rich Braham could swallow a football whole.

The Look Man was at the game and believes the outcome was dramatically altered by the absence of Mr. Tonight Show. His injury allowed the Stillers to:

- 1) put safeties in the box to stuff the run game,
- 2) play a man-over, zone under scheme that set up the picks,
- 3) eliminate the deep ball from the Bengals' arsenal.

Pickna's lack of arm strength allowed da Burgh to gamble underneath after releasing receivers to deep routes. On one play, they employed a two-man rush, dropped nine, and still sacked Pickna. Of course, he did give some nice brownies to Nemmerskull later that same day.

Bill Leavy – Black Cats at Jynts

There were two fumbles in the first five minutes of the second half that were overturned by down by contact calls in this one. The DBC rule meant that possession could not be ascertained by review challenge. The league really needs to review the DBC and pass reception rules in the off-season, or the NFL will become the WWF.

The Look Man doesn't know the winner of the ZOTW award, but he does know the loser - - - it's the fans.

CELEBRITY OBIT OF THE WEEK

Lou Rawls, the silky voiced singer, actor and longtime community activist has died at the age of 72. Rawls had been hospitalized in Los Angeles and succumbed to a two year battle with lung and brain cancer.

Louis Allen Rawls was born on 1st December 1, 1933 in Chicago, Illinois. Rawls was raised by his grandmother after his father abandoned the family. Mr. Rawls discovered music as a seven year old in church choir. He and classmate Sam Cooke would sing do-wop harmonies in the Dunbar Tech school lavatory.

After a brief stint with a touring gospel singing group called the Pilgrim Travelers, Rawls joined the US Army 82nd Airborne Division, where he attained the rank of Sergeant with the Screaming Eagle Paratroopers. Shortly after his tour, Rawls and Cooke were involved in a serious auto accident in 1958, and Rawls was actually declared dead en route to the hospital. Rawls suffered a five day coma and debilitating symptoms for a year thereafter.

Capitol Records producer Nick Benet discovered Rawls' four active range at a Los Angeles coffee shop and signed him to a record deal. Rawls recorded "Stormy Monday," with the Les McCann Trio in 1962 and he began delivering hip monologues during songs like "World of Trouble" and "Tobacco Road." The genre was recently called "pre-rap" but Rawls explained that it evolved from his work in noisy bars and clubs. "You'd be swinging and the waitress would yell, 'I want 12 beers and four martinis!' and dude would put the ice in the crusher," Rawls recalled. "There had to be a way to get the attention of the people. So instead of just starting in singing, I would just start in talking the song. I actually wrote the 'This Bud's For You' slogan one night at the Mound." His "raps" were so popular that "Dead End Street" won him his first Grammy for best R&B vocal performance.

Rawls' 1966 "Love Is a Hurtin' Thing" topped the charts and earned Rawls a gig opening for The Beatles in Cincinnati. Rawls parlayed his fame into a major role with the United Negro College Fund. His telethons raised more than \$200 million for the organization, and he used the platform to support education in schools, playgrounds and community centers.

Rawls' trademark was his smooth, four-octave voice — the "silkiest chops in the singing game," Frank Sinatra once said. Rawls' familiar voice earned him a job as Anheuser-Busch spokesman where he made the slogan, "When you've said Budweiser, you've said it all." "He was one of the few singers that you knew without hearing more than a few notes, that it was him," Burt Bacharach told The Associated Press.

Rawls won four Grammys, and recorded 52 albums including his biggest hit, "You'll Never Find," in 1976. The song was co-written by famed Sound of Philadelphia producers Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff, and it catapulted Rawls to superstardom.

Rawls also appeared in 18 movies, including "Leaving Las Vegas" and "Blues Brothers 2000," and 16 television series, including "Fantasy Island", "Bonanza" and "The Fall Guy." Rawls' road manager John Molinare said the singer was never too busy to stop and sign autographs. Rawls and Molinare would often have fun at those fans' expense.

"As a joke, when they were walking away, I'd say, 'See, Henry, you do look like Lou Rawls,'" said Molinare. "Sound just like him, too. He had a good sense of humor."



You'll Never Find, Another Voice Like Mine...

Black Cats at Bears:

The league QB play has been diluted to the point that folks may one day say, "Remember back in 2006, when T-Rex and Delhomme went head to head in that epic battle in the postseason?" Despite a well called offensive game last week in NYC, you can rest assured that S Mike Brown and the Bears won't allow this kind of crap. Delhomme had better have a chat with TE John Mangum (Force) and get him to catch the rock. With the Bears doubling Steve Smith, the lack of TE seam routes could doom the Black Cats to a loss at Soldier Field.

Smith quietly became the first NFL player to win the wide receiver "triple crown" since Sterling Sharpe in 1992. While everyone talks about Chad Johnson and the Riverdance, Smith has dominated. He opens up the rest of the offense, creating scoring opportunities for others.

Chicago's defense has worn down in the stretch run, and their secret is forcing teams into third and longs. Their undersized DE's will not stop the Carolina running game, which will run right at them. When Chicago brings safety Mike Brown up, Delhomme goes vertical.

The Look Man likes the Black Cats in this one. If Wild Card Week taught us anything, it taught us that young QBs in the playoff pressure cooker tend to wilt. Delhomme and the Black Cats are only two years removed from the biggest stage of all. Black Cats.

Genocide Victims at SheHawks:

As much as the Look Man doubts the SheHawks, the GV offense could only muster one TD in the Tampa game. That won't be enough to stop Seattle, even if Mike (The Walrus) Holmgren is the coach.

On the other hand Washington is tough versus the run, and Matt (Hair Club for Men) Hasselback may have to resort to wearing Snickers on his dome in this one. Still, a rested SheHawks squad proves too much for the GVs.

Chowds at Donkeys:

Looks like seafood stew versus *Equus asinus* at Investigation Field. The Look Man may have to take this game off, because he will be forced into the Sisyphussian dilemma of rooting for either New England or Denver next weekend. He just hopes for a double OT crucible that forces the winner to lose the following week.

Still, in the playoffs always go with the best QB, which in this case is clearly Tom (Zoolander) Brady over Jake (the Fake) Plummer. Either that, or the coaching mismatch between Bill (Dr. Evil) Belichick vs. Mike (The Rat) Shanahan. New England sets up a rematch with the Colts in Indy.

Stillers at Ponies:

No six seed has ever gone on to win the Super Bowl, but Blitzburgh would like to change that. A win in Indy would go a long way in their pursuit of *One for the Thumb*, as well as knocking out the odds-on favorite Colts.

The Stillers match up well with the Colts, and could win the game with a ball control running attack and some well-timed trickeration. Conventional wisdom says the key to beating the Colts is to keep Peyton on the sidelines, but the real MVP for the Ponies is Edgerrin James. If the Colts run the ball effectively, they can use their other weapons and win easily.

The Colts have been through the blender of late, but they will emerge rested and ready. The Look Man likes them this week at least, and likely for the trip to Detroit for XL.

EPILOGUE

Whether the Kimo Siragusa hit was intentional or not the league needs to police late low hits. The same kind of hit effectively torched the Browns' season after the Colts matchup where Dilfer tore up a knee.

Now that Carson Palmer has had a career-threatening injury, the NFL has to look no further than the matchup between Trent Dilfer and Kerry Collins in Super Bowl XXXV to know how important it is to protect the passers. You will remember that is the year that Baltimore knocked McNair and Gannon out on their way to the Big Dance.