

## **The Look Man Report 2006** **Week Minus 1: The Cincinnati Jail Blazers??**

*"Before he cleans out his office, have Paul Tagliabue show you where he keeps Gene Upshaw's leash." – NFL Network Commentator Bryant Gumbel to new Commish Goodell*

The 2005 NFL season ended in dramatic fashion when one of its star players was able to pull a Jimmy Connors and retire with a flourish. Jerome (The Bust) Bettis solidified his Hall of Fame credentials by winning a championship ring in his home town of Detroit. Bill (Iron Chin) Cowher rendered the Cowher Spit Shields unnecessary by out coaching one of the remaining Mikes in defeating Mike (The Walrus) Holmgren. The Stillers finally got "One for the Thumb" with the aid of a slash-style WR Antoine Randle-El (Sid) and a down to earth MVP in Hines (57) Ward. The storyline was as epic as any Hollywood movie. If that movie was *Waterworld*.

The off-season led to some turmoil in the selection of a replacement for longtime NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue. Tags reigned over one of the greatest periods of prosperity in the history of the league, and narrowly avoided a work stoppage in 2007 with a new Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) that gave the players unparalleled benefits. The owners escaped defeat by their own worse enemies by avoiding mirrors during the negotiations. They followed that feat by selecting a home grown successor to Tags in the person of front-runner Roger (Rabbit) Goodell.

Rabbit began his career as an NFL gopher and is now one of the most powerful men in sports and business history. Whether he can continue the legacy of the league is in question, especially with the owners looking to terminate the current CBA after two years in order to regain their losses. Goodell's and the league's fortunes will hang in the balance.

But the 2006 season opens with much promise. Both Super Bowl combatants have a legitimate chance to repeat. The Black Cats and Bears should easily defend their division titles and both have a solid chance to vie for the Conference crown. The NFC East looks strong from top to bottom with the Pokes' addition of Terrell Owens, the Jynts adding Lavar (Roots) Arrington and the Iggles pickup of bona fide WR Donte (Don't Call Me John) Stallworth.

Without further ado, the NFL 2006 preview:

### **The Nati is the New Northwest:**

On the flip side, the Bengals decided to go Portland Jail Blazers during the off-season. WR Chris Henry was arrested once a quarter, LB Odell Thurman violated the league drug policy, LB AJ (Jack) Nicholson was indicted for burglary, and rookie DT Frostee Rucker was housed for spousal battery. In addition, DT Mathias Askew was tased for parking illegally. In the Nati, a brother parking his Escalade illegally is reason for deadly force.

For good measure, head coach Marvin Lewis drafted LB Ahmad Brooks in the supplemental draft. Brooks was kicked off the UVA squad by former NFL head coach Al Groh for conduct detrimental. Apparently, Coach Lewis figures conduct detrimental is just good business when you play in a division with Kimo von Wilkes Boothe and Ray (Ray) Lewis. Lewis's request to go with horizontal versus vertical stripes was rejected

by the league. They also didn't like the front and profile head shots for Monday Night Football.

But the real story in the Queen City is the return of (Johnny) Carson Palmer. Mr. Tonight Show was last seen writhing on the ground after being assassinated by a disgruntled civil servant, er, DT. The King of Late Night returned for the Cheesehead preseason game and looked as if he hadn't missed a beat. The Look Man still predicts he will not play sixteen in '06, and the Ugly & Black will take a big step backwards with Anthony (If lovin' U is wrong) Wright.

### **TO be, or Not to Be**

Jerry Jones decided to take a flyer and sign troubled WR Terrell Owens in the off-season. Bill (The Tuna) Parcells seemed less than pleased with this development, and he was forced to cut his possession WR, Keyshawn Johnson.

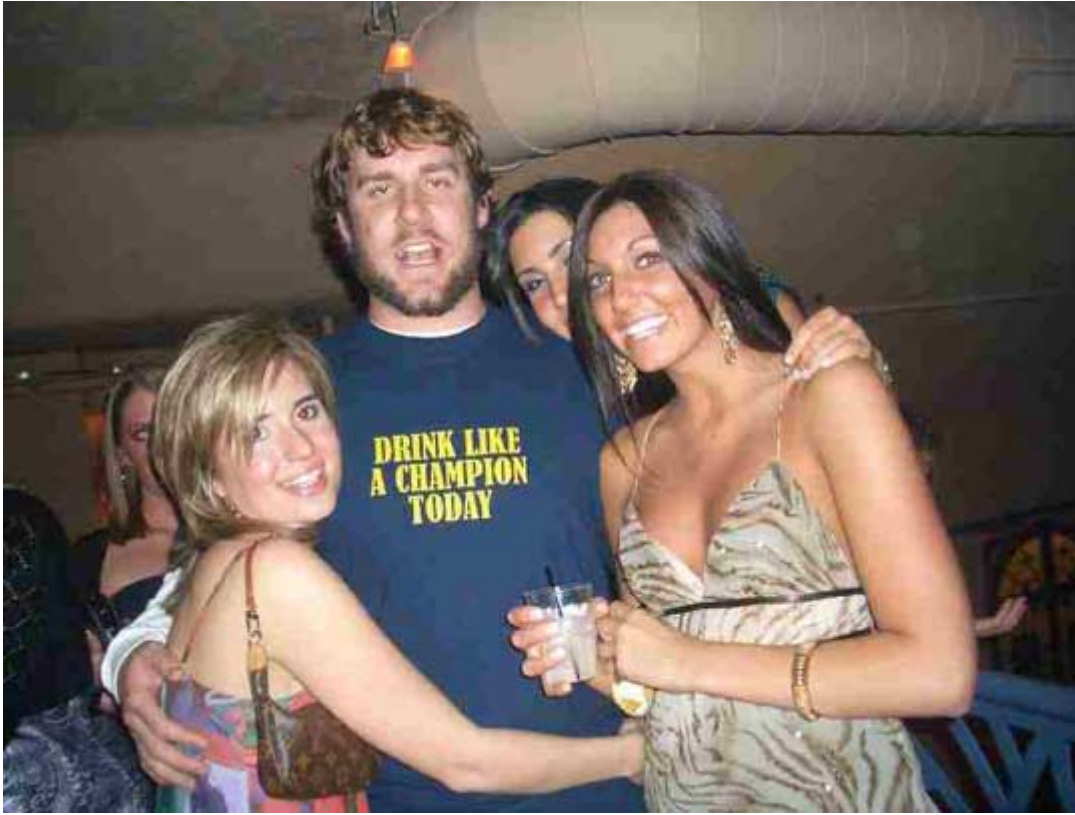
Predictably, the Pokes preseason in Oxnard, CA turned into a sideshow. Owens appeared in bicycle gear after tearing a hammy. Even though WRs Hines (57) Ward and Steve Smith (and Jones) also missed time, the media tore TO a larger orifice than his own mouth. What is lost in the circus atmosphere is the incredible preseason performances of Drew (Big Boi) Bledsoe, Terry (She) Glenn, and a host of others.

Safety Keith Davis also got shot for the second time in three seasons, but this bit of levity was lost in the TO brouhaha. Davis claimed he was "just driving along at 2 AM, minding his own business when a bullet came through his window striking him in the head. How 'bout dem Cowpokes!?"

### **QB Musical Chairs:**

QB injuries were the event of the season. After (Big) Ben Roethlisberger crashed his two-wheeled rig, nearly killing himself. Mr. Tonight Show joined Daunte (Pep) Culpepper, (Hanging) Chad Pennington and Drew (Cool) Brees with career threatening injuries. In a bizarre twist, all of these guys look healthy as 2006 begins. Unfortunately, Pep and Cool are with new teams after signing hefty contracts.

In both cases, these guys were run off by teams that didn't respect productivity. Pep threw 40 TDs, narrowly missing out on the MVP to Peyton Manning, who had fitty. Brees nearly led the Bolts to within one game the playoffs after they foolishly benched All World TE Antonio (Microsoft Hands) Gates for one game. The Look Man likes both of these guys, but Pep will better his circumstance while Cool waits for next year. Hanging Chad has a Brett Favre sized fork emanating from his back, so the Aeronauticals are toast.



*Who needs a helmet? Unless it's purple!*

**Ready to Wear Zebras of the Week:**

The Look Man hasn't watched much preseason ball, but he has noticed the ugly new unis worn by the zebras. These guys have more than enough face time already, and these new unis are hideous. Rumor has it that they didn't want to be confused with Denver Broncos, who have several guys wearing black and white every home game.

There are also several new Zebras in 2006. The Look Man isn't sure whether this means HOF Zebra Johnny (Big Bootay) Grier is retired, but one can always hope.

**Duh, duh, duh duhhhhh:**

The NFL awarded NBC with a long term deal to televise the league, including the Sunday Night Football package. The Peacock Network immediately procured Al (Wham!) Michaels and John (Boom!) Madden to staff the show. They also picked up Greg Gumbel, Chris Collinsworth, Jerome Bettis and Bob Costas for the studio.

NBC now looks to take over the cache of Monday Night on broadcast TV. Joe Theesman ruins the booth over at ESPN, and MNF is history. Worse yet, ESPN's PrimeTime goes by the boards. While the Total Disney pregame show has gone south with the addition of screamer Mike Irvin, PrimeTime never lost its luster. That pearl now goes to Costas and NBC, who may raise the bar.

