

The Look Man Report 2006

Week X: Shootout at the Queen City Corral

"Being involved in that game, it was almost like a cartoon. Like it was animated. It was unbelievable." -- Bolts RB LaDainian Tomlinson, after a 49-41 comeback win at Cincinnati.

OPENING

Week 10 included several home favorites going down like free beer to the underdogs. The Browns knocked off Mike Vick and the Dirty Birds in the ATL, and were joined by five other upsets for .500 or better teams. If you tack on the tight wins by the Ponies and Denver, it was an NFL weekend for the ages.

Week 10 featured shootouts in the Religious Icons at Stillers, Baltimore at Tennessee, and the Game of the Week, San Iego (no D) at the Nati. The GOTW included one of the greatest comebacks of all time, as the Bolts came back from a zebra-assisted 21-0 deficit to win 49-41. The quality road win catapults the Bolts into the media stratosphere while increasing the volume on the Nati naysayers.

Marty's Boys sent Nati Fan home crying about a defense that surrendered 42 second half points and three TDs to LaDanian (LTD)Tomlinson. LTD ended the day with 104 rushing yards and four TDs in what has become just another day on the turnpike for him. He now has 15 TDs in a four game stretch, and he is on his way to obliterating the scoring record for a running back.

The Bears-Jynts matchup failed to live up to its earlier promise as the Monsters of the Furniture Mart blasted the G-Men. It was a tale of two halves, with the MOTFM losing the battle but winning the war. (T-)Rex Grossman combined a cover-your-eyes-ugly first half with rocket-laser armed passes in part 2. One almost expected him to be wearing his Peyton Manning *Falcon and the Snowman* mustache disguise on the sidelines. He ended up with 3 TD passes and 246 yards in a 38-20 win that was far worse than the score indicates.

The Ponies stayed perfect with a 17-16 win over the Bisons at Indy. The game came down to a 4th quarter FG miss by the Bisons, when K Rian Lindell went Scott Norwood. Lindell shanked a 41-yarder that would've given Crapchester the lead. The Ponies escape to take on Dallas next week in a game that could mar their quest for perfection.

Philip Rivers, Steve (Air) McNair, Brett (The Pope) Favre and Tony (The Place for Ribs) Romo each surpassed 3 bills passing, while (Johnny) Carson Palmer put up 440 yards and 3 TDs in a losing effort. (Big) Ben Roethlisberger and Air McNair have averaged nearly 300 passing yards the last few weeks. The question is, since when did NFL defensive backs become greeters at Wal-Mart?

WEEK IN REVIEW:

San Diego (-1.5) at Cincy:

The Look Man believes that at least once each year, the Bengals play in a transcendent game that boggles the imagination. Even when they were in the depths of their losing ways, Corey Dillon set the single game rushing record against Denver. Just a couple of years back, they beat Cleveland in a thriller that was the highest scoring game in NFL

history. They knocked off 9-0 Kansas City in a major upset at home. And no one can forget the Sam Wyche blast, "You don't live in Cleveland, you live in Cincinnati!"

As a football fan, one never knows when the Nati is going to put on a show, but this game had all the earmarks. The Ugly & Black had struggled over the last few weeks, losing three of four, and barely beating Carolina at home. The Bolts had road losses to inferior opponents in Baltimore and KC in addition to missing OLB Shawn Merroidman to suspension. Although it shaped up to be a game for the ages, Nati Fan was clearly concerned, and the stadium had an aura of anxious anticipation at game time.

The game did not disappoint, as the Vaunted Bengal Offense re-emerged with 21 first quarter points. The Bolts looked like they had been struck by black and white lightning, and their poor field position made them throw the Martyball gameplan out of the window.

Marty Schottenheimer turned the play-calling over to O-coordinator Cam Cameron, who wisely threw the rock early and often. The Bolts jumped back into the contest in the second half, attempting to overcome a seemingly insurmountable 28-7 deficit. QB Philip (Muddy) Rivers ignored wide open TE Antonio (Microsoft Hands) Gates, hitting 280 pound TE Brandon Manumaleuna for two TDs. After the first one, the Look Man was hoping for another just to force the Nati announcer to have to attempt to pronounce the name of the Catchin' Samoan.

The Bengals refused to lay down, at least on offense. Just when the momentum seemed to swing in favor of San Diego, (Johnny) Carson Palmer hit Chad (Ocho Stinko) Johnson for a sweet 74-yard TD bomb. Ocho Stinko beat rookie CB Antonio Cromartie badly, turning him around before catching the pop fly bomb and taking it to the house. The Bolts quietly lead the league in Antonio's in the same way the Bengals have Johnsons.

But the game within the game was even more compelling. Marty Schottenheimer refused to go with his nickel and dime packages despite giving up huge chunks of yardage. His theory was that the Bengals would use Rudi (Ray Moore) Johnson in the no-huddle package, eating up clock that San Diego needed for its comeback. Instead, he stayed in the base 3-4 over 95% of the snaps, and the Bengals never adjusted. Their quick scores with the passing game actually played right into Marty's hands.

The Bolts also made one other key adjustment on offense. Using their patented zone blocking scheme to run the power play, they pulled backside guard Mike Goff to seal the inside LB. The result was four TDs for the New LT, and some crunching blocks that sent Bengals LBs to the locker room more than once.

Marty put on the headset only once or twice in the game. He chose instead to huddle with players, walk onto the field during TV timeouts, and generally exhort his troops. He pulled out the "one man, one play", "everybody grab an oar" and "feel the Gleam, men" speeches on nearly every possession. It was a Marty masterpiece.

Marvin Lewis, on the other hand, failed to make any adjustments. He was never seen talking to D-coordinator Chuck Bresnahan, and when the Bengals were faced with a mandatory TD and 2 point conversion situation at the end, he didn't put the ball into the hands of his best playmaker, Ocho Stinko.

Troubled WR Chris Henry dropped a ball that would have gone a long way to sending the game to overtime, largely due to seeing teammate TJ Houshmazooli get decapitated earlier. When the safety came over to help, Henry spent more time watching the defender than catching the rock, resulting in a drop on third down. The VBO eschewed the chance to go to The Dentist on fourth down despite the fact that he was matched up again with Cromartie in single coverage. They went instead to Henry, who was double covered with his head on a swivel. Game over man, game over.

This game had everything: Mr. Tonight Show threw for 440 and 3.5 TDs; The Dentist had 11 catches for 260 yards; Philip Rivers came of age with a comeback 300 yard passing day that included a nifty shovel pass to the Software Samoan; The New LT had four rushing TDs; and Marvin Lewis had the Bitter Beer Face afterwards.

Cincy now heads into the Big Easy at 4-5, while the Bolts go to Investigation Field to face archrival Denver. This game was one for the Pantheon, and it figures that it was a fork in the road for two teams going in opposite directions.

Bears at Jynts (-1.5):

The Jynts injury streak continued as RB Tiki (the) Barber (of the Ville) tweaked a thumb in the first half. He, CB Sam (Dolly) Madison, and OT Luke Pettigout joined Mike Strahan in the MASH unit known in the Meadowlands. It's a recap of last season, when the G-Men had to recruit players off of the street corners just to finish the season. Perhaps there is something amiss with head coach Tom Coughlin's approach to the game?

Both teams came out physical, but the Monsters exercised their will on the undermanned G-Men after the half. The Barber still got his yards, but most of them occurred on one play. Worse yet, the Jynts gave up the Bears annual 108-yard-TD-return-on-a-FG-try to Devin Hester. Hester noticed the Jynts players walking off the field, so he set up his blocks and took it to the hizzie.

The Jynts were clearly outplayed, and likely outcoached. More importantly, Eli Manning does not look right. If he wants to join Peyton on the endorsement bandwagon, he will have to do better than 14 of 32 for 121 yards, two picks and fumble. His worm burner passes were incredibly inaccurate, and with half of the squad in the hospital, playoff talk in the Big Apple is very premature.

As for the Bears, only Mrs. O'Leary's cow could keep them out of the playoffs. Where they go in the postseason is still a big question.

New Orleans at Blitzburgh (-4):

There was indeed trouble at the confluence of the Still city, but Bill (Iron Chin) Cowher rallied his squad in an unlikely shootout with Drew (Cool) Brees and the Religious Icons. The Stillers outlasted an injury-depleted New Orleans team that didn't lose as much as run out of time on the clock. The 38-31 final score was hardly indicative of the closeness of this game. If WR Terrance Copper doesn't cough up the rock in the red zone, the Stillers would be looking up at Cleveland from the basement of the AFC Asgard Division.

The Boy Scouts used all of their weapons against the Stillers after S Troy Polamalu left with his sixth concussion of his career. Troy was attempting to tackle rookie sensation

Reggie Bush when someone turned the lights out. Polamalu left the game, and Bush went on to a second term in office that included a sweet reverse pitch TD with a somersault flourish.

Benched starting CB Ike (and Tina) Taylor had to return due to the Polamalu injury and resultant backfield shuffle. Luckily for the Stillers, WR Joe Horn was on the sidelines, or we would have seen him singing Proud Mary on his cell phone following TDs.

Big Ben seemed to rebound from his previous struggles, but the key to this one was the long TD by Fast Willie Parker. The Stillers escaped to play another day, but the Icons exposed more flaws in the World Champs' armor.

LAGNIAPPE

A whole can of shhhh!!

Dr. Evil's plan to throw 50 times at Minnesota came back to haunt as Tom (Zoolander) Brady's arm is now toast. Zoolander has looked like crap the last two weeks in a row, and we could be seeing the beginning of the Matt Kassell Era. Or a comical Vinny-Testaverde-in-a-Wheelchair on the field scenario after the Chowds signed the 43 year old right-hander.

Of course, based upon the swamp-like conditions at the Blade, that wheelchair might need to be a fan boat. The Chowds have decided to install yet another new surface at the Blade after playing for months on painted dirt. They will first conduct an environmental impact study since parts of Zoolander's body are lodged in the turf after last week's loss to the Jets, where he was drilled repeatedly.

There are those who believe that Dr. Evil purposely allowed the field conditions to suffer in order to gain a home-field advantage. Irrespective of the reason, the NFL was going to step in if the Chowds didn't get that field up to safety standards. When Brady was asked whether he preferred grass or field turf he replied, "I don't know, I never smoked Field Turf. Maybe you should ask Belichick's son Stephen."

More Bling for Pokes?

Emmitt (Catch 22) Smith won the Dancin' with the Stars contest with his partner Cheryl Burke. The ex-Poke beat out *Saved by the Bell* star Mario Lopez home the bling. When asked about the win Smith said, "It is awesome! It is awesome!", after hugging his professional dance partner. "We came a long way, we really have," he added. "Things started off a little dicey when I tried to tap that aice right off the bat."

Smith was confused by chants for competitor Jerry Springer on the top rated reality show. "I thought The King of Pop was in the house, and Jerry Jones still owes me some money," said Catch 22. The cheers of "Jerry, Jerry" may actually have been for last season's contestant Jerry Rice, who chimed in, "Tell Emmitt I can kick his butt on the dance floor anytime. He don't want none of this San Francisco Treat."

ABC is already planning for the 2007 season featuring NFL Zebra Mike Carey. Carey will do his patented first down/official timeout dance as a line dance with all of the other contestants and audience. He may be joined by Hulk Hochuli, who is the only other zebra who can compete with Carey for convoluted replay speeches. Hochuli has already asked to borrow Emmitt's sleeveless silk shirt with arm bands ensemble.

Muck Fichigan! Ann Arbor is a Whore

Michigan Hedgehogs at Ohio State Luckeyes matches BCS Numbers 1 and 2 in the Game of the Century. This blood feud goes way back to Woody Hayes-Bo Schembechler matchups where Woody would only refer to Michigan as “that team up North.” If the measure of greatness is determined by the quality of your opposition, this game is in the dictionary as the definition.

Tailpipe Bobby Simminger is calling for Bengals, OSU, and UC Bearcats wins in a most unusual Ohio football trifecta. He adds, “If [the Luckeyes] win or lose close isn't there a chance for them still be 1 & 2 and have a repeat for the BCS title? And if the Browns beat the Stillers I guess that would be the very elusive fofecta for Ohio??? It's a weekend made just for football fanatics.”

Though it will be wall-to-wall football in Ohio, the Look Man ain't counting his chickens just yet. His conspiracy theory of the week has OSU beating the Hedgehogs, followed by a Notre Dame win over one-loss USC that catapults the Fighting Celts into the BCS Championship. It would certainly be like a license to print money for the avaricious BCS, which has one letter too many for the Look Man.

The NCAA Ohio under card features the Nati Bearcats against the undefeated Rutgers Scarlet Knights. After all of the hoopla surrounding the Big East Conference, the Nati could put itself on the NCAA map with a win. If nothing else, a noted ESPN analyst has now quit calling them “Rut-jers.”

ZEBRA OF THE WEEK

Bears at Jynts – Zebra Hulk Hochuli:

According to Tailpipe GB Shaw, “the Hulk was blind (with rage?) in the Meadowlands. On Plaxico's fumble, the one Bear was clearly down by contact prior to the stripping of the ball, and the camera had a great angle on it. How Hoculi could maintain that that was a fumble is beyond me.”

The Look Man's take is that the NFL clearly wanted the Jynts to do well in 2006. Commissioner Roger (Rabbit) Goodell even renamed the new football for deceased owner Wellington (The Duke) Mara. Unfortunately, the football gods look unkindly on these acts of hubris by installing body builders with zebra suits for key games.

San Diego at Bengals – Zebra Scott Green:

Green called several first half calls including an early and capricious personal foul to keep the Bolts deep into their own territory. The Martyball principle says don't throw if you're deep in your own end, and this nearly caused the Bolts to go in the tank.

Later in the first half, a similar scuffle on a punt return didn't yield a personal foul even though several Bengals were pushing, shoving and generally begging for someone to call the 381-JERK line normally reserved for unruly fans.

Long Suffering Bengals Fan Dave (Sundance) Sundin noted guys leaving early for the Bengals without a call, and several D-holding calls that gave the Bengals much needed first downs. Many of the calls were declined after the Bengals chewed up yardage, but they inspired an undeserved confidence that allowed them to build a 21-0 lead. Later, the Zebras tried to even things up by swallowing whistles in the second half.

Jets at Chowds – Zebra Peter Morelli (Mushroom):

The second quarter Vic Hobson sack on Zoolander was a clean hit, while Brady was in the act of throwing, but the Mushroom called it roughing the passer. How come the Chowds continue to suit up players wearing black and white uniforms?

Baltimore at Tennessee – Zebra Jeff Triplette:

Beanbag Triplette ruled a 2nd quarter Mike Anderson fumble was, in fact, not a fumble since Anderson was “down by contact.” Beanbag then upheld the call after Thumbtacks’ coach Jeff Fisher challenged the call. The replay clearly showed Tennessee DT Robaire Smith

"We all saw it," Fisher said. "Everybody saw it. I hope they hear me [at the NFL offices] in New York, because that was field position, and we lost by a point." Apparently league officials did hear Fisher, because they levied a \$12,500 fine for criticizing zebras following the 27-26 loss. Ironically, Fisher is the co-chairman of the NFL's competition committee and has often defended the zebras. The fine follows a similar \$25K fine for Blitzburgh's Dan Rooney, who called out the zebras in their ATL loss.

The NFL is attempting to discourage its members from openly calling out the equine strippers, but the officiating this season has been horrid. Not only are there 2-3 rookie zebras, the new rule regarding the overturn of ‘down by contact’ fumbles has been completely ineffective. Further, it seems that even obviously poor calls are not changed, making replay a complete joke.

Beanbag Triplette wins his first **Zebra of the Week** award in 2006, but it will likely be the first of many more.

THE LOOK AHEAD:

Bengals at Religious Icons (-3.5):

Tory James, Chris Henry, and Andrew Whitworth attend a Big Easy homecoming of sorts as the Bengals travel to New Orleans. Will the VBO show up two weeks in a row, or more importantly, will Marvin even bother to allow his defensive players onto the plane?

The Bengals face an uphill battle versus the Icons after losing yet another offensive lineman this week. The reshuffled line makes it too hard to beat the wild card bound Icons this week, who cover and win easily. New Orleans.

Stillers (-3.5) at Browns:

You know it's Blitzburgh Week as Braylon Edwards began talking smack the moment after beating the ATL. Edwards didn't even play in the Christmas Eve Massacre in 2005, so he should just shut up. That game also featured Stillers LB James (Henry) Harrison body-slaming a Gregory Gall wannabe who ran onto the field. The team and the fan received roughly the same humiliation. The Stillers and Browns are both 3-6, so this one is a real battle for supremacy.

Troy Polamalu was concussed for the 6th time but may play in Cleveland on Sunday. The Browns Reuben Droughns is a game time decision with a sprained foot. Irrespective, the Browns cover and win on Sunday in a rare showing of pride.

Indianapolis -1.5 At Dallas

It's a well-documented fact that Dallas always loses before their annual Turkey Bowl game and the Ponies are not exactly pushovers. More importantly the loss of DE Greg Ellis to an Achilles doesn't bode well for the Poke Nation. According to noted Poke Fan GB Shaw, Bobby Carpenter is lighter and slower than Ellis and the only other option is some guy named Junior Glymph (means "swollen, puss-filled baller" in Texia). His brother, Senior Glymph, is currently playing Gonorrhoea in a medical thriller at SUNY.

Despite the fact that Romo has looked good early, his 102.1 QB rating is deceiving. Look for mastermind Tony Dungy to work up some magic on defense, while Tom (Roger) Moore's offense carves Doomsday Lite up. Dungy should confuse Romo with unique defensive looks, especially if the D-line can put some heat on his grill. As everyone knows, putting sauce on the ribs too early can ruin them. Contrary to the Look Man's previous thoughts, Indy covers and wins at Big D.

Atlanta at Baltimore -4.5

Vick has struggled of late, but this game pits him against a big physical defense. Dumpster Ducks struggled to an emotional win at Tennessee, and that game may have taken the wind out of their sails.

On the flip side DE Patrick Kearney is out for the year, and LB Ed Hartwell returns to the scene of previous glory in B-More. John Abraham is still nursing a groin, and the defensive backfield in Atlanta is pretty thin.

Even with MLB Ray (Ray) Lewis likely out, the Ducks build an insurmountable division lead over the Bungals by beating Ron Mexico and the Dirty Birds at M&T Bank.

St. Louise at Carolina -7

Scott Linnehan should have been fired for his bad coaching in the Seattle game. Faced with a 4th and 1 in the red zone, he threw to a rookie TE. The lack of a FG forced the Mouflons to go for a TD in the waning moments, instead of a GW FG.

Carolina didn't play well after the bye, but sensational DE Julius (Cayenne) Peppers should tear the stuffing out of the Scarecrow. Black Cats.

Chicago -7 at NY Jets

MOTFM should have stayed in the Big Apple after beating the Jynts. They now go back to the scene of Hulk Hochuli's crime in the Meadowlands, and this time they face a scrappy Aeronauticals team looking to sneak into the playoff picture.

Unfortunately, both teams had big games last week, so the home team is favored here. Look for Mangina to *tuck it and pluck it* versus the hot and cold Grossman. J-E-T-S cover, baby.

San Diego at Denver -2.5

Marty has never had much success in Denver irrespective of his team. This year, he has a championship caliber squad, and nothing less will be tolerated. If the Bolts are going deep into the playoffs, they need to assemble back-to-back wins against solid teams. They lost at Bal'mer, and at KC earlier this year, and they need a win at Investigation Field.

San Diego is also coming off an emotional but physical win in Cincy. Guys were getting carried off the field left and right in that one, as the hits just kept on coming. DE/OLB Shaun Phillips didn't look healthy, but his containment of Jake the Fake makes the difference here.

Denver's RBs are dinged up, and their defense is overrated. They have a trap game since they play at KC on Turkey Day. The Look Man Rule: Never go against the New LT. Bolts defense rebounds and wins at Investigation Field.

At Jacksonville -3.5 NY Giants MNF

The Jynnts folded under the duress of a physical D, and J-Ville is ticked after being swept by the Slim Shadies. Carolina and J-Ville are two of the most inconsistent good teams out there, but the Look Man likes the Sports Cars in their annual "look good in big game" outing. Last season it was the Stillers, and this year they will shock the G-Men, who have injury issues aplenty. Jags, baby, Jags.

Peace,

The Look Man