

The Look Man Report 2006 **Week XIII: Don't Believe the Hype**

"The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, but that's the way to bet." - Damon Runyon

OPENING

The Look Man took a two week sabbatical to review the crazy 2006 season. Not only did his beloved Browns get whacked in consecutive weeks by archrivals Blitzburgh and Cincy, but there were several whacky comebacks and emotional wins. The 2006 NFL season has been nothing short of incredible. Not only have road teams dominated home teams, folks who are on the ropes have come back to win games that they have no business winning. Cases in point include:

- Vince Young with consecutive 14 point comebacks to defeat superior opponents;
- Indy losing winnable games to Dallas and Tennessee with turnovers;
- New England and Chicago winning games despite ridiculous turnovers and sloppy play;
- Dallas and Cincy peaking way too soon while front-running squads like KC, the Jynts, Indy, Carolina and J-Ville going into the tank just when they need to win.

The result is a total turnaround for Cincinnati and Dallas when it looked like they were on the ropes. Carolina and J-Ville have become their own worst enemies with inconsistent play against inferior competition.

The other interesting development has been the QB play. Dallas' post-Tony Romo (the Place for Ribs) success caused teams like Washington and Denver to emulate them by installing their own inexperienced signal callers. Chicago continues to win with a QB who has turned the ball over more often than Jon Pickna. (Johnny) Carson Palmer resurrected his season by forcing the ball to Chad (The Dentist) Johnson, who has had a career in the last four weeks.

It has been said that a QB gets too much credit when successful and too little in failure. (T-)Rex Grossman, Jake (the Fake) Plummer and Jake (Da Man) Delhomme have struggled, while Jeff (Jerry) Garcia threatens to carry the Iggles into the playoff mix despite the loss of a Pro Bowl caliber signal caller. What a long, strange road for Jerry, whose stints in Cleveland and Detroit ended badly.

All of this makes the Look Man wonder what is up with the incredible numbers being tallied by QBs? It used to be that a 300 yard passing day for a QB was an historic performance. In 2006, Drew Brees has exceeded 500 passing yards once, 400 passing yards once, and has 5 consecutive games over 3 bills. Cool Brees ain't alone, as passers routinely exceed the previously magical 300 yard passing mark in 2006.

Rookie QBs used to need three years of seasoning in order to become legitimate, but Vince Young is 4-5 as a starter with very little offensive talent surrounding him. While the media has complained about Mike Vick, he has quietly run for over 100 yards three or four times in 2006, and will surpass the magical 1000 yards rushing mark in Week 14.

Plays of 20 or more yards constitute big plays in the NFL, and the 2006 season has seen more of these big plays than any previous year. What in the wide world of sports is going on? Is the protection of the QB with roughing calls, the subjective pass interference rules, and spread offensive sets seem to be taking the league by storm, and defenses are giving up yardage in huge chunks. Even teams like Chicago and Denver, which started out stingily, are now allowing huge scoring and record comebacks in 4th quarter alone.

The Look Man has a few theories. One is that defensive players are attempting to appear on Jacked Up instead of simply making plays. As a result, missed tackles generate huge Yards After Catch totals. And as the Look Man says, "YAC-itty YAC, don't talk back!" Defenses in 2006 are in danger of being taken out with the papers and the trash.

Secondly, defenses live in fear of the dreaded Roughing the Passer call. QBs that would normally be on the ground now take off running, buy time and throw deep balls that result in YAC. The lack of defensive containment is also allowing QBs to get wide and complete big plays to wide open WRs. Some of these QBs, like Jake the Fake and Tony Romo are too short to see receivers while in the pocket, so failure to contain them can have negative results.

But what really bakes the Look Man's cookies is the number of games where QBs are passing for over 4 bills. Dan (The Man) Marino holds the NFL record with 13 such games, but at the current pace that record will fall in the next two years.

In fact, Drew (Cool) Brees joined the hallowed 500 yards passing club this season versus the Bengals. Brees is on his way to joining Dan the Man as the only two passers to throw for 5,000 yards in a season. And that is not just whistlin' Dixie in the Look Man's book. Here are some numbers for comparison:

NFL'S 500-YARD PASSING CLUB

<u>Yards</u>	<u>Quarterback</u>	<u>Team</u>	<u>Year</u>
504	Elvis Grbac	K.C. Chiefs	2000
505	Y.A. Tittle	N.Y. Giants	1962
509	Vince Ferragamo	L.A. Rams	1982
510	Drew Brees	N.O. Saints	2006
513	Phil Simms	N.Y. Giants	1985
521	Dan Marino	Miami	1988
522	Boomer Esiason	Arizona	1996
527	Warren Moon	Houston	1990
554	Norm Van Brocklin	L.A. Rams	1951

Note: Simms and Brees did the nasty against the Bengals, just two decades apart.

But it isn't just QBs who are feasting in 2006. Frank (An Inconvenient Truth) Gore, Larry (Grandmama) Johnson and Tiki Barber all have over 30 carries that resulted in 10 or more rushing yards. LaDanian Tomlinson is on pace to demolish the 28 TD mark set by Shaun Alexander in 2005. The New LT has 24 already in addition to two passing TDs through Week 13. Barring injury, he could be looking at Dan Marino numbers - - - as a Running Back!!!

Marion Barber of the Pokes is a young back on the come, and he has nearly 20 such big plays. His backfield mate Julius (Dr. J) Jones also has some burst, but his lack of blocking skills makes him expendable.

In addition to passing, this phenomenon is quietly helping ATL QB Mike Vick amass 40 runs of 10 or more yards in 2006. Since Ron Mexico has only run the ball 105 times, this amounts to an incredible percentage. Vick is getting no love from the media because he is not a classic pocket QB, but he will surpass 1,000 rushing yards on Sunday, something no NFL signal caller has ever done.

WEEK IN REVIEW:

Baltimore at Cincy:

The Dumpster Ducks rolled into the Nati for an NFL Network Thursday Night Special. Many folks don't even know about these games because only DirecTV subscribers and a few cable networks carry the channel. At any rate, NFLN commentators Steve (Mooch) Mariucci, Rich Eisen (Heaven), Deion (Prime Time) Sanders, Marshall Faulk were set up in the South End Zone at Pall Bearer Stadium. Due to the rain, they had a giant plastic bubble around them, as well as makeup artists fawning all over them. Prime Time was getting serious love to ensure that his dome didn't inadvertently blind the viewers.

The crowd anticipated a good game and they weren't disappointed. What did surprise the Look Man were the chants of "Dee-Feense!" from the crowd. Nati Fan is not known for making things happen at ball games. Perhaps it was the weather, perhaps it was the desperation of the Bengals, but this slightly disorganized chant was music to the ears of the team. They responded by nearly duplicating their shutout of Cleveland against a legitimate playoff contender.

When the Ducks got the ball down only 13-0 with about a minute to go, Nati Fan headed for the exits, but the Look Man knew it wasn't over. Air McNair manufactured a 36-yard TD strike, and Baltimore was within a TD of winning with 43 seconds left.

Bengals special teams sealed the deal, but only after some trickeration by Marvin Lewis. Lewis called timeouts on both the missed FG and onside kick tries, resulting in a surprisingly easy win. Bad sportsmanship maybe, but the W still counts.

Mr. Tonight Show has taken the pounding and returned to his scrambling ways, buying time and putting up freakish numbers. He has forced the ball to Chad (Ocho Cinco) Johnson, who reciprocated with YAC. All in all, the Bengals offense is clicking, but the absence of a solid running game should worry legitimate fans.

LAGNIAPPE

Cats on a Hot Tentative Roof

The inconsistency of J-Ville and Carolina can be traced to injuries. J-Ville has lost three key defensive stars in S Donovan Darius, DE Reggie Hayward, and MLB Mike Peterson. These players help the defense avoid big plays like the two 83 yard bombs caught in the same game by Buffalo WR Lee (Bob) Evans.

The NFC equivalent of J-Ville is the Look Man's other Super Bowl pick, Carolina. The Black Cats have lost both RBs, two offensive linemen, and MLB Dan Morgan this year. As a result, their defense cannot hold a 4th quarter leads like the one they had at Philly. The pressure to win typically forces Jake Delhomme into a late game pick in the red zone, just like in Cincy and Philly.

Neither team is likely to make the playoffs because of inconsistency. The AFC is much more competitive, and the J-Squares have a long row to hoe to make the postseason.

A Passing Fancy?

The attached 2006 passer ratings are very intriguing. Tony Romo is one top, with an amazing 102.4 after six starts. Most of the other guys in the top 7 are also surprising, if only because of injury or non-starting status in 2005. Of course, only one of these guys has played 'hide the sausage' with Jessica Simpson.

2006 NFL Passing Statistics												
	<u>Att</u>	<u>Cmp</u>	<u>Pct</u>	<u>Yds</u>	<u>Avg</u>	<u>TD</u>	<u>TD%</u>	<u>Int</u>	<u>Int%</u>	<u>Sack</u>	<u>Loss</u>	<u>Rating</u>
<u>Player</u>												
<u>Tony Romo, Dal</u>	214	145	67.8	1913	8.94	13	6.1	7	3.3	9	48	102.4
<u>Carson Palmer, Cin</u>	386	249	64.5	3103	8.04	23	6.0	8	2.1	30	185	100.6
<u>Peyton Manning, Ind</u>	407	265	65.1	3315	8.14	22	5.4	8	2.0	12	81	100.1
<u>Drew Brees, NO</u>	441	292	66.2	3649	8.27	21	4.8	10	2.3	14	81	98.2
<u>Damon Huard, KC</u>	241	146	60.6	1824	7.57	11	4.6	1	0.4	16	106	97.6
<u>Donovan McNabb, Phi</u>	316	180	57.0	2612	8.27	17	5.4	6	1.9	21	140	94.0
<u>Philip Rivers, SD</u>	360	232	64.4	2599	7.22	16	4.4	6	1.7	21	112	93.7

ZEBRA OF THE WEEK

KC at Cleveland Zebra Bill (Toyota) Carollo

There are some guys who call games tight, some guys who call it loose, and then there's Bill (Toyota) Carollo. Toyota calls a decent enough game, but he hasn't overturned any of his team's calls in nearly two years. The odds against this feat are incredible, and last week's sudden death game with the Baby Backs and Browns put it to the test.

All Pro TE Tony (Speedy) Gonzalez got the rock to the sideline with one second remaining in regulation. Speedy Gonzalez had been carving the Browns all day, and this looked to be another bizarre late FG win for KC. Browns Fan is familiar with the routine after losing to them 9-6 in the Dwayne Rudd Helmet Toss game. Sure enough, Toyota called "game over" and despite the clear replay, the call stood as the Browns won on a FG in OT.

Baltimore at Cincy – Zebra Peter Morelli (Mushroom):

Morelli Mushroom didn't really make any egregious calls, but the league needs to look at timeouts called by coaches on the sideline just before kicks. These calls violate the spirit of the rule, and last week, they allowed the Bengals to undermine the kicker with

the highest FG accuracy in NFL history. Matt Stover made a chip shot 26 yarder, then missed after the timeout call by Lewis. Later, the onside kick try had to be redone, and the Bengals got the second one.

These timeouts don't always work either. There are other examples where the kicks were missed, and the timeout allowed the kicker to make the try. Bottom line: It's bad sportsmanship and likely reason for homicide by some gambling nuts.

Carollo gets the **Zebra of the Week**, but the Competition Committee needs to look at 2006 and make much needed adjustments.

THE LOOK AHEAD:

The NFL post season rounds into shape with the following matchups. Don't be surprised if a favorite suddenly falls out of the mix in Week 14.

New Orleans at Dallas:

This is the LMR Pepto Bismol Pick of the Week. New Orleans is tailor made to beat Dallas, and head coach Sean Payton and a boatload of ex-Pokes on the roster. More importantly, the Boy Scouts can keep Tony Romo in the pocket, forcing him to throw erratically. Romo is closer to 5'11" than 6'2", so he needs to get outside in order to see downfield.

On offense, Brees gets back WR Marques (Watergate) Colston just in time. The Boy Scouts need this game, and the Pokes are beginning to read too many of their own press clippings. Boy Scouts help an Old Tuna across the street, cover and win this one.

Grayders at Cincy:

At the risk of going crazy with upsets, the Look Man likes the Grayders to cover. They quietly have one of the better defenses in the AFC, and the Bengals are looking ahead to Indy on national TV. Grayders cover, with a great chance to win this one.

Jynts at Carolina:

The winner goes to the playoffs (maybe) but the loser is likely out. Look Man takes Carolina, but only because he picked them to win it all. Black Cats over the team that put the 'fun' in 'dysfunctional.'

Baltimore at KC:

The Baby Backs have one of the best home field advantages of any squad, and the Ducks have been on the road two weeks in a row. Look for the Ducks to prolong the celebration of winning the AFC Asgard crown for another week, as KC rolls them.

Denver at San Diego:

Marty always struggles against the Donkeys, but not this time. Shanahan has gone meshugina replacing Jake the Fake with Jay (The Knife) Cutler. Marty's Boys bust him and the bad running Donkeys up en route to the AFC West title.

Chicago at St. Louise:

The reverse is true in the Second City, where Lovie (Thurston Howell III) Smith refuses to bench QB (T-) Rex Grossman. The Monsters of the Furniture Mart have a solid, ball-hawking D, but Jurassic QB keeps threatening playoff extinction. Lovie had better get

the rust off of Griese soon, or he will be permanently shipped to Gilligan's Island of Misfit Teams.

Indy at J-Ville:

Always a tough battle for the Ponies in J-Ville, and this week is no exception. The Ponies were looking ahead when they lost to Vince Young and the Flaming Thumbtacks in Week 13. Now they are in a dogfight with San Diego for AFC home field advantage.

The Look Man believes the loss of TE Dallas Clark really hurts Indy, especially without WR Brandon Stokely (Carmichael). Everyone talks about how bad the Indy defense is, but the truth is that with the Ponies' offense, these guys get a lot of rest. Still, the Look Man picked the J-Squareds early, and he sticks by them. J-ville wins at home, forcing the Ponies to man up down the stretch run.

Chicago at St. Louise (MNF):

Thurston Howell's wife has given Griese extra snaps this week, despite professing his love for Jurassic QB. Too little, too late, as the Lambs run and throw all over the MOTFM on Monday Night. The Bears just won the NFC Black & Blue title, but they will stumble down the stretch with the home field advantage hanging in the balance. Lambs.

EPILOGUE

Dallas has regained ownership of its America's Team label, largely due to the play of Tony Romo (the Place for Ribs). Ribs King has surpassed Peyton Manning in the QB ratings battle, and actually owns the Wall Street Journal title for Yards Per Attempt, an interesting metric for QB success. The YPA metric has Ribs King, McNabbsty, Mr. Tonight Show, and Cool Brees. Each of those teams is at least playing .500 ball, and look to make a playoff challenge in 2006.

But the Look Man believes Dallas has peaked too soon, and this week's loss to the Boy Scouts will expose Romo's shortcomings. The Kid is good, but no one takes over Archie's Boy in one season. Unless he is a 6'5" laser rocket armed QB, which Romo is decidedly not.

By any measure, 2006 has become the Year of the QB. We may not have seen a draft year like 1983, but the current crop of hurlers is either the best we've seen since then, or the NFL Rules Committee has really done a number on the defensive side of the rock.

Peace,

The Look Man

**NFL Point Spreads For Week 14 - Week Fourteen NFL
Football Spread - NFL Game Dates 12/7 - 12/11, 2006**

Date & Time	Favorite	Spread	Underdog
12/7 8:00 ET	At Pittsburgh	-7.5	Cleveland
12/10 1:00 ET	At Kansas City	-2.5	Baltimore
12/10 1:00 ET	Atlanta	-3	At Tampa Bay
12/10 1:00 ET	At Detroit	-2.5	Minnesota
12/10 1:00 ET	At Houston	-1.5	Tennessee
12/10 1:00 ET	At Carolina	-2.5	NY Giants
12/10 8:15 ET	At Dallas	-7	New Orleans
12/10 4:15 ET	At NY Jets	-4	Buffalo
12/10 1:00 ET	Indianapolis	-1.5	At Jacksonville
12/10 1:00 ET	Philadelphia	-1	At Washington
12/10 1:00 ET	At Cincinnati	-11	Oakland
12/10 1:00 ET	New England	-3.5	At Miami
12/10 4:05 ET	At San Francisco	-5	Green Bay
12/10 4:05 ET	Seattle	-3.5	At Arizona
12/10 4:15 ET	At San Diego	-7.5	Denver

Monday Night Football Point Spread

12/11 8:30 ET	Chicago	-6.5	At St. Louis
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