

## **The Look Man Report 2007** **Week Fourteen: First & Fourteen**

*"That's never a good thing for an offense." – Fox Analyst Brian Baldinger: after a graphic showing Vikings 224 rushing yards, Lions 1*

### **PROLOGUE**

After fourteen weeks are in the books, the final few developments in the NFL season have yet to occur. It's like a detective novel, where all of the clues are out there, but you don't always know whodunit.

In the case of the NFL, we have four juggernauts, split evenly between the AFC and NFC. New England and Indy are balanced by Dallas and Green Bay, and for the first time in a long time, the NFC is actually holding its own against its AFC brethren. After years of AFC dominance, interleague play is now pretty even.

The stretch run is interesting, with only a few teams actually eliminated. The focus is now upon which teams will gain home field throughout the playoffs, and Dallas and New England are well positioned. However, the 14-2 Bolts lost in their first home game of the 2006 playoffs, and the same thing could happen to the eventual bye teams this year.

The 2007 season is intriguing, so the Look Man came up with fourteen thoughts on the current status of the NFL. Without further delay, First and Fourteen:

- 1) Officiating is at an all-time low. The Browns needed an illegal review to beat B-More, then got robbed against the Deadbirds. Baltimore's loss to the Chowds is being banned in China because it was straight robbery. The league is in turmoil, and they need to fix this before the playoffs.
- 2) It's nice to see some new teams in the playoff mix. While the final combination has yet to play out, seeing Cleveland, Buffalo and Minnesota playing meaningful games in December is fun.
- 3) The Stillers are quietly a team in trouble. They are nicked up with injuries, and they just lost DE Aaron Smith for the year. This team is awful on the road, but they may not need to worry about that. They will face a good wild card team as a three seed, and they could be knocked out before even getting to the next round.
- 4) Pickna and God's Team fell short of his 10 win prediction after a tough loss to Dallas in Week 14. Despite hanging tough for 59 minutes and 42 seconds, Detroit lost this game and their season. They need only look in the mirror to see why, as head coach Mike (Megalomaniac) Martz eschewed the run for far too long. Against the Pokes, he ran early and often, then fell back to the pass to give Dallas more time than they needed to win. About 18 seconds too much time.
- 5) While B-more was the victim of grand larceny against the Chowds, turnovers and coaching may have cost them the game. Boller threw away three points with his fourth quarter pick, and Billick's clock management was horrid. The Look Man was tempted to take the rest of the season off after that fiasco and the league owes Billick and the Dumpster Ducks an apology.
- 6) The sideline timeout issue must be resolved. We've had assistant coaches granted timeouts, consecutive timeouts granted despite the head linesman saying it was okay, and kicker icing timeouts too numerous to mention. It's time for the game to be decided between the white lines. The Competition Committee needs to step up and make the change for the good of the game. Give timeouts to the offensive and defensive captains only.

- 7) The NFL rulebook that stipulates that A head coach cannot call two consecutive timeouts. Apparently, the rule book also says that the Zebras must notify the coach of the rule. Gibbs says he asked and the linesman told him it was joke. He calls the TO and gets humiliated. Go figure. Still, a HOF coach ought to know better.
- 8) As for Rex (the Movie Critic) Ryan, that 4<sup>th</sup> down timeout was ridiculous. In the big boy league the first guy to blink loses. And to think Papa Ryan was there to witness it in person. Buddy might put a bounty out on Rex for besmirching the family name.
- 9) The Pokes got away with a scare in Detroit last Sunday, but Doomsday Lite has been exposed. If the hapless Cadillacs can run wild on them, what could the Swedes do? The addition of WR Terry (She) Glenn will help them, but their real weakness is up the middle on defense. SS Roy (Rogers) Williams is taken out in the nickel, but a good no-huddle scheme could make mincemeat out of these mice. Romo and Witten can't save them if they don't have the rock, so a ball control offense is the nightmare keeping Capt Kangaroo awake at night.
- 10) Someone posited that when your team gets bad calls you tend to go ballistic, but when the opposite occurs, it's no big deal. The Look Man couldn't disagree more. Case in point is the Jets at Cleveland, circa 2006. The Jets TE catches a ball in the endzone, and gets forced out by SS Sean Jones. The call should've been forceout/TD, but it went against the Jets and the Browns won. The Look Man KNEW the call was bad, and it didn't feel like a win because it hadn't come honestly. The Jets went on to make the playoffs, but the emotional nature of a last second win can turn an entire season around. And the Zebras cheated the Jets of that sensation in 2006.
- 11) It has been said that if the Tuck Rule call went the other way, Oakland becomes a dynasty instead of the Chowds. If Oakland goes to that Bowl in 2001, it would have been true. Oaktown returned in 2003 following Callahan's first season, only to lose to the Corn Kings. If they beat the Chowds in Foxboro, Chucky stays, and they make 3 Bowls in 5 years instead of the Chowds. Dungy never goes to Indy, and the Colts loses for years to Oakland's dynasty due to a bad defense. Peyton becomes the Marino/Jim Kelly of the generation, and Zoolander doesn't get to date supermodels and appear on the cover of Esquire.
- 12) The Chowds' manufactured "quest for perfection" got a real shot in the arm by Blitzburgh. Even after tough games against the Iggles and Dumpster Ducks, the Chowds rebounded and punished the Stillers. Baltimore is the worst team in the AFC North, and the Iggles won't sniff the playoffs in the woeful NFC. Still, with the Jets, Marine Mammals and Jynts standing between Dr. Evil and immortality, it's unlikely that anyone will pose a threat in the regular season. Now, the postseason is a different matter, and the Look Man predicts an upset in Chowdertown.
- 13) Baltimore CB Samari (Esther) Rolle didn't have *Good Times* this season, and his contention that HL Phil McKinnely called him "boy" during their 27-24 loss to New England has gone unanswered. The league found now reason to fine McKinnely, saying that Rolle's allegations were questionable. LB Bart (Simpson) Scott and others heard McKinnely, but the league didn't find their statements to be more credible than McKinnely's testimony that he asked Rolle to "quit playing like a boy."
- 14) Tennessee QB Vince Young is the latest victim of the Madden Curse, having appeared on the cover of the 2007 version of the video game. He was forced out of the San Diego game, and is struggling to find his groove in his sophomore season. Coach Jeff Fisher is now forced to cancel Christmas as he starts former Carolina hurler Kerry (Tom) Collins during a pivotal

playoff push. Too bad, too, because the kids were so good this year.

## **ZEBRA OF THE WEEK**

The Look Man nearly had a conniption when he noticed that Walt Anderson and Crew were doing the Browns at Jets in Week 14. Anderson's crew was responsible for the worst officiating of the season in the Chowds-Ravens game on MNF. They even went so far as to verbally abuse Baltimore players simply for standing up for themselves.

Luckily, the crew did a decent job, and even allowed the Browns to get away with a few questionable calls. They withstood the challenge of three consecutive onside kicks by the Jets, and may have blown the call on one of the three onside kick attempts by calling Joe (Sid) Jurevicius for stepping out of bounds.

Honorable mention goes to Jerome Boger and crew, who did the Bolts-Thumbtacks. But for a controversial fourth down reception, the Bolts go on to lose that game. Instead, the 1<sup>st</sup> down conversion allowed the Bolts to make it to overtime and garner a win.

## **THE LOOK AHEAD:**

In December, we always here about teams that can run, and stop the run. We've been trained that this symmetry equals a championship level play. What we didn't know was that the Minnesota Swedes would be the team that everyone pointed to in 2007.

The Swedes have won seven in a row and are quietly turning their team around. Even without a name brand QB, they have parlayed a fantastic running game into a scoring offense. QB Tarvaris Jackson is economical in the passing game, throwing 12-20 times per game. TJ is a poor man's Ben Roethlisberger, and he can run the football to boot.

The Swedes are starting to make the Look Man's prediction of an NFC Norris Division title look less idiotic. They can not only stop the run, their defense has turned offensive, scoring one or two times weekly. Last week, both of their DTs garnered a pick, and you know how the Look Man loves to see fat men run. In short, the Vikes are looking good for the postseason. They're the NFC team that no one wants to see in January.

The AFC equivalent is probably Jacksonville. The J-Squareds have been on the cusp for a while, but coaching has held them back. Their defense has always been punishing, but the two headed run game of Jones-Drew and Taylor is running up scads of yardage. J-Ville's receiver play is mediocre, but David (The Fugitive) Garrard has the fewest picks in the NFL for a starter.

This week's game at Blitzburgh is a good test. If J-Ville wins that one, they will lock up a wild card berth. They'll also be the Swedes' equivalent in the AFC; no one will want to see them in the postseason, and that includes the Chowds.

### *Cincinnati at San Francisco (+8.5) Saturday Night Special:*

The Bungals have been a wholly owned subsidiary of the Niners for years now, and the only reason they're getting 8.5 is because Frisco has no QB. The imaginary resurgence of the Cincy defense is a joke, and the Niners prove it on Saturday. Frank (An Inconvenient Truth) Gore decides to run after all, punishing the Bungals D, and eating clock. The Niners defense is led by rookie LB Patrick Willis, who again proves that the Bungals cannot beat the Niners. If you haven't seen this kid play, make sure you catch this NFLN Saturday Night Special.

### *Iggles at Dallas (-10.5):*

Dallas' epic 28-27 win over Detroit was a thing of beauty, at least offensively. Romo has matured into something special, and Jason Witten showed the Look Man that he may be the best TE ever. Witten's 15 catches took over the contest, and his 'fumble' at the goal line was questionable. At

crunch time, he caught the game winner with 18 seconds remaining, forcing Detroit QB Jon Pickna to eat his 10 win prediction.

Detroit ran over, around and through the Pokes, and would've won this game if they had even a little defense. Philly has a much better running game as well as a better TE in LJ Smith. If some guy named McHugh carves up Dallas, what will LJ do to them?

Terry Glenn returned to practice this week, but not in time to help the Pokes. WRs Terrell (TO) Owens, Patrick (Crayola) Crayton, and Sam (Horton) Hurd (a Hoo) have played great as a unit. Glenn could return just in time to give the Pokes an elite receiving crew in the postseason, but the Iggles cover the 10.5 this week.

### Buffalo at Cleveland (-5.5)

The Browns defense is making a comeback, and Buffalo looked great in dismantling the Marine Mammals last week. This game may decide the AFC wild card as the sixth seeded Browns take on the contending Bisons. It's the Battle of Lake Erie, in a rematch of an epic 1989 wild card playoff game.

The weather may become a factor as snow is expected in C-Town. The Bisons looked great in the snow at Ralph Wilson, and the Browns haven't played in bad weather yet this season. The rain last week at the Meadowlands was bad, and this could be a repeat. If the Browns are smart, they use Jamal (Bam Bam) Lewis to pound the run, with ample doses of their other two RBs to keep him from coughing up the rock.

While the Look Man expects the Browns to win this one, a few things are troubling:

- 1) Bisons have a better D than advertised, and they can shut down a good run game;
- 2) Buffalo's deep passing game and TEs are pretty good, and this could give Cleveland fits;
- 3) Derek (Neo) Anderson is kicking it with Trinity off the field, and his game is showing it.

Neo has not looked good in the short game of late. His footwork is awful, and he is missing the slant and hook patterns that could blow the games wide open. Teams have reviewed film, and they are shutting off the deep ball and seam routes. As a result, Neo must complete the underneath stuff in order to finish games. Cleveland needs to hire Rocky Balboa's trainer to get Anderson to chase some chickens in the offseason.

Browns win to set up a possible Wild Card clinch in the Battle of Ohio Part II in Week 16.

### J-Ville at Blitzburgh (-3.5):

The Look Man has been waiting for the J-Squareds to step up and claim their rightful spot in the postseason. J-Ville blew it big time in their bid to unseat Indy as the AFC Souse leader. Now they head to Ketchup Field, where the Stillers are nearly unbeatable.

The reason the J-Squareds haven't succeeded has more to do with the team than its coach. Jack Del Rio made a gutsy move in keeping David (the Fugitive) Garrard over Byron Leftwich. Unfortunately, he cannot take his talented defense to the next level, and they give up way too many points. His in-game coaching is awful, and his gripping has affected his team.

Having said all that, the Look Man likes the J-Squareds to finally man up. They have played the Stillers very tough in the last few years, and defensive injuries to SS Troy Polamolu and DE Aaron Smith make Blitzburgh vulnerable. Smith is out for the year after tearing a bicep, and the Stillers are vulnerable to the off-tackle run as well as play action passing.

The Stillers suffer a hangover after the New England loss, allowing J-Ville to beat them at their own physical game. This loss helps Blitzburgh right their ship just in time for the postseason. Of course, it helps when you play two bums in weeks 16 and 17. Jags, baby, Jags.

Jets at New England (-24):

The Chowds match their highest point spread in NFL history against their arch nemesis. The Jets started the SpyGate debacle, and Dr. Evil plans to make them pay. Mangina hopes to keep it close despite allegations that the Jets illegally filmed the Chowds in 2005.

The problem is that the Jets are not very good. Head Coach Eric Mangina is not very good at in-game strategy, and the key to beating the Chowds is to play Mexican stare down. The first coach who blinks at a critical moment loses. Chowds win handily, setting up Chowds-Phish in Week 16.

Cadillacs at Bolts (-10):

God's Team continues to struggle in Week 15. Pseudo Head Coach Mike (Megalomaniac) Martz cannot run against the Bolts defense like he did against Doomsday Lite, forcing QB Jon Pickna back to baking school. The result is ugly, as Cromartie and Company eat up Pickna's turnovers and leave him the crumbs. Bolts cover and win. Pickna then predicts the Caddies will go undefeated in 2008.

Minnesota at Chicago (+10):

The Monsters of the Furniture Mart have returned to Kyle Orton at QB based upon Rex Grossman's annual season-ending leg injury. Meanwhile, the Hornheads have turned into the NFC version of the team that no one wants to play. Minnesota has won seven consecutive, and they can now run and stop the run. You know what that means: championship.

Adrian Peterson, meet Adrian Peterson. Chester Taylor, meet Garrett Wolfe. Bears, meet the future champs of the NFC Norris for the next five years.

## **EPILOGUE**

The media is a again whipping fans into a frenzy, but the Look Man ain't buying it this time. In the words of Lt. Commander Montgomery Scott, "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me." In other words, the league and, by extension, the zebras have attempted to turn several matchups into instant classics. The NFL has succeeded only in marring their reputation due to their own greed.

The pilfering of key late season games in an effort to milk the cable industry for more profit is diabolical. Further, the zebras are trying to manipulate point spreads, usually with ugly results. Any time you see a defensive holding call inside the ten yard line, you've gotta know the zebras are trying to steal one by giving a team four shots to run the football. The same thing is true for an underdog who gets an offensive holding call while in FG range. Both calls stink, and in the Look Man's view, no replay equals bad call.

The Chowds' loss of LB Roosevelt Colvin for the year is a big blow. Ro Colvin is the only pure LB in a group that is overrated and over aged. In addition to weakness in the middle, the Chowds will now be forced to use safety help in the flats.

The large number of middling teams in the AFC virtually guarantees that a team with 11 or more wins will end up getting knocked out in the first or second round of the playoffs. It happened to San Diego in 2006, and they just might be in position to return the favor this season. Irrespective of whether it's the Bolts or someone else, somebody gonna have a problem after getting knocked out of the postseason.

Just as the Look Man doubts the Chowds will go undefeated, he sees the Marine Mammals winning at least one this season. And that one might be on December 31 against the Nati.

Peace,

The Look Man