

The Look Man Report 2007

Week Fifteen: The Pursuit of Imperfection

"They scored 45 on us the last time. I told my guys that they better expect that this time." – Browns head coach Romeo Crennel on the Battle of Ohio Part II

PROLOGUE

Week Fifteen in the NFL was a dream come true. After a season of awful officiating, QB carousels, and little drama, the league exploded with snow games, upsets and the end of a streak of futility in Miami. In short, Week Fifteen is the reason fans of the NFL watch the games.

The losses by Dallas, the Jynts and the Stillers have shaken up the league. Now instead of resting players, each team will likely have to play hard to guarantee its seed in the postseason. It's always nice to see teams not lay down, and in light of the *Pursuit of Pomposity* in New England, even better. After all, the Chowds do lead the league in payroll as well as ink.

As predicted, Doomsday Lite was exposed in the win over Detroit, and the Iggles tore into them in a defensive gem. Philly's running game was highlighted by the incredible Play of the Year by Westbrook, who took a knee instead of scoring a TD. The knee ensured the win for Philly, and even the Iggles brain trust looked surprised.

But the Bisons-Browns snow bowl game in C-Town may have topped everyone for pure entertainment value. There is nothing quite like a football game where the lines are obliterated, and the Browns added a shutout on top. Buffalo nearly scored a TD late, but the defense rose up to snuff the score and the Bisons' playoff dreams. Epic.

Week 15 ended with Chicago at Minnesota in an NFC playoff battle. The Bears had slim playoff hopes dashed when they started Dave Grohl from the Foo Fighters at QB. But seriously, folks, will someone tell "Kal Ohton" not to comb his bangs down before putting on his helmet? It makes him look like a Pee Wee Leaguer. Orton topped that off with a pick under 2:00 in the 4th quarter, leading to the Kornholio blast, "It had a hang time of 11 seconds.

So basically, Week 15 set up a great push for the playoffs for several teams. The Hornheads and Browns are peaking at the right time, while the Jynts, Tennessee and Washington remain mathematically alive. It's a perfect NFL storm as we head down the stretch.

LAGNIAPPE

The Worst Teams Ever – Look Man Edition

The OT win by the Marine Mammals reminded the Look Man of other wins by the worst teams ever. Here's the short list of bad NFL teams that actually won a game:

The 1989 Dallas Cowboys went 1-15 with a rookie QB named Troy Aikman. The one win was a Week Nine victory over the archrival Genocide Victims, who were en route to a ring. The Pokes were 2-26 during a two year stretch, with both wins over Washington. Genocide Vix Fan booed lustily following the loss, prompting QB Doug Williams' infamous blast, "They pay their money. It's not right for us to go into the stands and choke them if they boo."

Rookie head coach Jimmah Johnson and the Starheads went on to select Emmitt Smith and a host of PTPers to dominate the Nineties.

The 1993 Cincinnati Bengals began the season 0-10 under boy genius Dave Shula. Their fortunes turned in a home win over Art Shell's Grayders in Week 11. The Bungals 'rushing attack' featured Eric Ball, Derrick Fenner and Harold Green, who combined for three TDs for the

year. So when the 6-4 Grayders came to town in a November snow game, no one expected Hall of Famer Art Shell to lose to Dave Shula.

Grayders QB Jeff Hostetler connected on just two passes in the first half, largely due to the fork sticking out of his back. Bengals kicker Doug Pelfrey hit three field goals, while punter Lee Johnson drilled a 56-yard punt to pin the Grayders' desultory offense.

The game turned when Nati QB Jay Schroeder was able to put up points just days after his infant son's brain tumor surgery. Schroeder got a game ball, and Shula hugged his assistants following the win. It was one of the few happy moments for Dave, who would later suffer the ignominy of having LB Gary Reasons pull his cap over his eyes. Shula finished with a 19-52 record, christening 14 years of losing seasons in the Nati.

The closest parallel to this year's Miami win was a 1990 New England team that ended the year 1-15. Chowds coach Rod Rust (never sleeps) got blasted nearly every week, losing by an average of 15 points a game. Rust got his only win of the year against a pathetic Indy team coached by former New England coach Ron Meyer.

New England's defense rose up to force four picks by Ponies' QB Jeff George to eke out a 16-14 win. QB Steve Grogan retired shortly thereafter, having already lost to the '85 Bears in the Super Bowl. New England fans still wonder why a safety was playing QB.

The moral of these teams' stories is that it's harder to go winless than it is to go undefeated.

Play of the Year - Part Infinity

There were a few more entries for Play of the Year in Week Fifteen. Of note:

- Busted play for six by Adrian (All Day) Peterson in Bears vs. Swedes
- Westbrook taking a knee instead of scoring six in Iggles at Pokes
- Phil Dawson's 35 and 49 yard kicks in the blizzard in Buffalo at Cleveland.

This last kick was the Look Man's favorite of the year. Dawson's boot never went higher than 12 feet above the ground, and curved from outside the post. It was like a golf shot in high wind, and at 49 yards in a 40 MPH wind, you'll not see a better one.

Brian Westbrook's hook slide at the one is a play you'll see again. Westbrook went down around the two minute mark to ensure that the Pokes had zero chance to get the rock back. Although a score would've made it tough, the slide meant that the Pokes didn't even see the rock again. The best win is the shortest win, and this one set up the Look Man's favorite play: the kneel down.

Trigger Goes to Far Side Horse Hospital

Ironically, the loss of Roy (Rogers) Williams comes at a bad time. It would be fine if the Cats were a passing team, but the Pokes need to jam the run this week. Roy Rogers is really a glorified LB in safety's clothing, as proven by him being the number 2 tackler on Doomsday Lite.

The Look Man doesn't like the horse collar rule, but Roy takes it to extremes. It's fine when it's the only way to get a guy, but Rogers employs it on nearly every tackle. Rogers has already been fined for using it three times previously in 2007, and the rule was actually created because of him. The NFL upheld its Week 16 suspension after Williams' appeal, so he will not play at Carolina.

Teammates TO and Patrick (Crayola) Crayton blasted him for using it, and Williams is now putting his team in a hole with the suspension. It doesn't help that nickel back Pat Watkins has an ankle. Looks like safety Keith (CSI) Davis will have to play a lot of downs. Hopefully, there

won't be a metal detector at the airport, or he may not make the flight due to the amount of lead in his body.

Signal Caller Carousel

Shaun Hill marshaled the Niners to a win over the Bungals in Week 15, and he became the 60th QB to start a game in 2007. Since there are only 32 teams, that's quite a feat. B-More's Troy Smith will become number 61 on Sunday, and we need look only to last week's Kyle Orton-Tarvaris Jackson matchup to see the folly of that stat. The Look Man hasn't seen that many bad passes since his boy Granch tried to shoot his regular at a lesbian bar.

Baltimore and Carolina lead the league in the number of QB starters. Brian Billick may yet lose his job after sending twelve QBs to the scrap heap ahead of him. Billick never met a QB he couldn't destroy, so the Look Man hopes for the best out of Troy Smith.

The league needs to fix this mess and soon. Instead of the collegiate growth of pro style offenses helping the NFL, it seems that the coaching carousel is contributing to the demise of the signal caller. Coaches rush QBs to the helm, only to see them flounder under the speed of the pro game.

THE LOOK AHEAD:

The next two weeks will be action packed, and as usual the NFL is saturation bombing us with games that matter on Saturday and Sunday. The plan is to get folks ready for the Wild Card playoff rounds, so get your work done early and get your popcorn ready, cuz it's gonna be a show.

Dallas at Carolina (+10.5) [Saturday Night Special on NFLN]:

The next two games are the real test of Capt Kangaroo's leadership. The Pokes got a big bounce from a laissez-faire coach after Parcels, but if they can't buckle the chinstraps for the last two weeks, the road to the Lombardi goes thru Lambeau. And that way lies madness, according to Jerry Jones.

The Pokes are gripping after Romo's bad thumb, which could jeopardize his career. Kurt Warner went from MVP to the outhouse after a similar injury, so Jessica Simpson may be hooking up with a new man in the near term.

The Look Man would play it smart and get backup QB Brad Johnson ready for this game. Effectively, the Pokes need to run to win, and use touch passes underneath instead of deep balls. Defenses in the NFL have figured out the secret to the Pokes deep passing game, and until Terry Glenn comes back, it will be a timing pattern/seam route affair. Bench Romo to get that hand healthy; don't expose him to a solid pass rush with OG Andre Gurode injured. After all, a man without hand is not really a man.

With two road games on the slate, discretion is the better part of valor. The Pokes need to get their run game ready for the postseason, and 16 runs just won't cut it. Jason (Voorheis) Garrett needs to quit going Mike Martz, and pound the rock. All that passing just keeps Doomsday Lite on the field, and Carolina RB DeAngelo Williams could make them pay.

Carolina covers, but the Pokes win and Capt Kangaroo laughs all the way home from Bank of America Stadium.



Jessica with new man Santa

Cleveland at Cincy – The Battle of Ohio Part II (-3)

The Look Man is worried about the Battle of Ohio on Sunday. The Bengals would love to play spoiler, and the Browns simply don't match up well against their offense. Though the Barking Dawg D has played better on 3rd and 4th down of late, it will be most important to shut down the Nati on 1st and 2nd down. Further, the Nati rarely wins in games in which they start poorly on offense. If the Bungals score ten or less in the first half, this one will be over.

The tiebreaker scenario is horrible for Cleveland. Win and their in the postseason. Lose, and Cleveland is the best team to not make the playoffs in 2007. The Bungals would love to repay the Browns for bursting their 2004 playoff bubble with a late season shellacking.

Look for TE Kellen Winslow Jr. to make the Bungals pay for his Pro Bowl snub. KWII has struggled lately, likely because of his separated shoulder and chronic knee injury. The Soldier reloads for this big game, which would clinch a playoff berth for the Brownies.

The Look Man is from *Believeland*, and the Cinderella season continues as the Browns clown the Bungals in Week 16. Browns, baby, Browns as Dawson bangs a 64-yard game winner off both uprights and the stanchion.

Houston at Indy (-6.5):

The Ponies have little to play for, having locked up a second seed in the AFC. Tony (Hume Cronyn) Dungy will rest his nicked up starters in preparation for a rematch with New England. Houston has been eliminated from the postseason, but covers in this AFC Souse battle.

Marine Mammals at New England (-22):

The point spread mysteriously dropped from 27 to 22 after the Miami win over Baltimore. The Mammals get a nice bounce from the emotion of the reunion of the undefeated '72 team. It's a little known fact that the Phish get blown out once each year by the Chowds, then play them tough in the second meeting.

The Chowds have mounted a fantastic air attack, but in inclement weather, they beat the Jets by only 10. Worse yet, 2/3 of their points came from defense and special teams. Take away a dumbass pass by Clemens and a blocked punt for six, and the '72 Marine Mammals are clinking glasses instead of worrying about a massacre on Sunday.

Miami covers by stuffing the New England running game, setting up an interesting game against the Jyntz at the Blade in Week 17.

Washington at Minnesota (-6.5):

The Hornheads struggled in the national spotlight against a proud Chicago team, and now face the motivated Genocide Vix. DC has slim playoff hopes, and have played well under new QB Todd Collins. Collins is a 13 year veteran who is quietly parlaying his reading skills into a Comeback Player of the Year story.

Unfortunately, Collins' success is built on a strong running game, and nobody runs on the Vikes. Minnesota has a lot of practice playing without injured CB Antoine Winfield, so their secondary can stand up to a perennial backup.

Tarvaris Jackson is nothing special, and his bad footwork is beginning to result in Jon Pickna Disease. Jackson struggles, but Adrian (All Day) Peterson doesn't as the Genocide Vix tribute to Sean Taylor ends in the Land of 10,000 Blondes.

EPILOGUE

The Ponies may hold the key to the AFC playoffs, since they play the Thumbtacks in Week 17. They cannot improve their seeding, and they are going to rest their guys. This development would be a disaster if Cleveland loses to the Nati on Sunday (a greater possibility than the Look Man would like to admit).

The AFC North does not include a team that plays well on the road, and this issue will likely mean the eventual Super Bowl rep will not come from the North. In point of fact, Indy is the only team in the AFC that has really proven its road worthiness. The Ponies are like the Verizon commercial, out eating doghouse roofs in preparation for a postseason battle with New England. And yes, they do bite.

Keep an eye on Tom (Zoolander) Brady's right arm. The Chowds struggled in 2006 after Blue Steel threw 50 times at Minnesota. The cortisone shots take their toll and he could be in deep trouble in the playoffs if he faces the J-Squareds at the Blade.

New England's pass-early, pass-often, pass-always offense will sputter in the postseason elements. The Ponies are playing a much more playoff oriented style, and they can win with roof, without roof, or chewed up roof.

San Diego has reestablished its running game and they would love nothing more than to repay the Chowds for last season's upset. Any way you slice it, the AFC race to the postseason is going to be spayshul.

The Look Man wishes each of you a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

Peace,

The Look Man