

The Look Man Report 2007 **Week Twenty: Batmanning & Robin**

"There are 10 [expletive] good players on that team, but Richard Seymour is a dirty, cheap, little pompous [expletive]. ... Richard Seymour is the biggest [expletive] I've ever played." – Bolts center Nick Hardwick after the AFC Championship

PROLOGUE

The NFC and AFC championship games were played in brutal conditions with sub-zero wind chills in both sites. While CBS went with their standard studio crew from New York, Fox decided to flip the script with their pre-game crowd live from Flambeau.

Curt Menefee, Terry Bradshaw, Howie Long and Jimmah Johnson looked like popsicles, freezing their lips off during the pregame. Howie broke with the Randy Parker hat from *A Christmas Story*, causing all the dogs in Green Bay to start looking for turkeys to pilfer. Sideline reporters also donned headgear to fight the Hawk. Thank goodness we didn't have to witness Pam Oliver's 'fivehead' taking up the whole screen while she talked about how her teeth hurt from the cold.

But the real stories were the games themselves. Eli turned into Batmanning, calmly defeating the Cheeseheads with crisp throws. Bolts QB Philip Rivers trotted out his surgically repaired knee at the Blade and proceeded to make third down throws that nearly pulled it out. And the defenses for the Jynts and the Chowds stiffened like a pervert at a porn movie, shutting down the opposition at crunch time.

In short, Championship Week lived up to the hype, giving us one expected Super Bowl combatant and one surprise. The only thing that could've kept the Chowds out of Phoenix on February 3rd was if their plane went down over Nantucket. The Jynts bring the second largest TV market in the nation to the party, as well as ten road wins in the brutal NFC East.

The Jynts' win over the Cheeseheads was certainly surprising, but not as surprising as Norv Turner's decision to go with an injured Philip Rivers over healthy backup Billy Volek. The result was predictable, as Rivers' inability to produce in the redzone wasted an outstanding defensive effort by the Bolts. Folks will say the game was close, but the Look Man believes San Diego could and should have won the game. An injured LaDainian Tomlinson was man enough to admit that his backups provided the best opportunity for success. Why Norvell didn't figure out the same thing at QB is a mystery.

So the matchups for Super Bowl XLII are set, and the hype machine has already been started. Either the Perfect Pats or the Big Blue Man Group II will experience the Quickening, donning World Champ brims and ostentatious diamond rings to match.

WEEK IN REVIEW

Jynts at Cheeseheads (-7):

When most of the players from both teams emerged without sleeves, you knew this was going to be a man's game. The performances lived up to the hype, with slobberknocking hits on both sides of the ball. The game went nearly four hours and an extra quarter courtesy of the defenses, and with a little help from the Zebras.

Eli Manning has been outstanding the last five games of the 2007 season, and Sunday was no different. Eli put the ball on the money, and if not for several key drops by Amani Toomer and Plexiglass Burrell, this one would have ended in regulation.

Eli employed his special Bat-Gloves on the sideline, keeping his throwing hand warm. On the opposite side, Brett Favre looked old and cold, throwing bad picks and generally stinking. The Baby Faced Gunslinger actually outplayed The Original Gunslinger on his own turf, and he looked as if he may be ready to become a real NFL pitcher. Like his Citizen Eco-Drive ads, he actually has been 'unstoppable.'

How cold was it? Well, Coughlin's face matched the Jynt's red after the first quarter. He looked like Rudolph the Red Faced Head Coach. In the second half, he went with the après ski Vaseline look, saving layers of his own grill as well as avoiding embarrassment. The odd thing was that Coughlin actually did an excellent job preparing his squad.

Coughlin, a former Jynt's assistant, is a damn good coach. A flashback to Nov. 20, 1993 gives some insight. It was Boston College vs. Notre Dame, with Notre Dame No. 1 and 10-0, coming off a win over top-ranked Florida State the week prior. BC was ranked 17 but had lost at Notre Dame 54-7 the season before. That game featured Lou Holtz and the Fighting Celts going Bill Belichick by faking a punt from with the score 37-0.

Coughlin's BC Eagles trailed after allowing Our Lady to storm back from a 38-17 deficit. Coughlin calmly allowed a walk on kicker to attempt a 41-yard game winning FG right into the face of Touchdown Jesus. He'd never said anything on a previous kick, but told his kicker during an icing timeout, "I just want you to make good contact on the ball." The kicker drilled it, giving Coughlin and the Eagles a 42-29 W. Afterwards, Coughlin went Dana Jacobsen, uttering, "F---- Notre Dame. F--- Touchdown Jesus."

That game may have been in the minor leagues, but it says a lot about the man and his team. The G-Men have not allowed a hundred yard rusher down the stretch run. Breen Gay's Ryan (Cary) Grant put up 201 against the Shehawks. Against Big Blue, he went for 29 and 2.2 per carry. These guys can run, and stop the run. That, my friends, is an old school recipe for success in the...National...Football...League.

When asked about holding Grant under 100, Brandon Jacobs said, "He wasn't going to do to us what he did to Seattle. This is the NFC East, man." Nuff said.

Bolts at Chowds (-14)

The Bolts went into the Blade very beat up after one of the most physical divisional playoff games in history. San Diego won the battle, but the war was yet to be fought as they played in one of the toughest venues in the NFL. The outcome rode on the knees of LaDainian Tomlinson and Philip Rivers.

The Look Man thought that Coach Norv Turner should've pulled the plug on Rivers, who gutted out the game despite not one but two bad patella. The Chowds have been taken to the brink by two backup QBs in 2007. Kyle Boller (Hat) with Baltimore and AJ (Touchy) Feely with the Iggles carved up the Chowds D like a soft-shelled crab. Why did Norv figure that backup Billy Volek could do any worse than a QB with no wheels?

Worse yet, Norv decided to build the game plan around NLT. When NLT went out early in the first quarter, he forced Rivers to provide one of the gutsiest performances in NFL history.

Unfortunately, it wasn't enough as the Zebras allowed OLB Mike Vrabel to leg whip Rivers in the pocket, forcing an ill-timed pick that sealed the win in the first half.

Up 14-6, the Chowds coasted to the win on the strength of a strong running game. When a team can pass, run, and have their way with your defense, you simply cannot allow three redzone trips to result in three FGs. Norv deserved to lose, and the Bolts had nothing coming after a tough week at Indy.

LANGIAPPE

Level the Field

Week 19 proved that 13-3 teams need to refuse assistant coach interviews during the bye week. Both Indy and Dallas went down in the first round of the playoffs, largely due to the fact that their assistants were out job hunting. The Competition Committee needs to look at this during the off-season. It's true that coordinators deserve the opportunity for advancement, but the NFL should level the playing field by putting all interviews off until after the Bowl. Why penalize successful teams at a crucial time while allowing also-rans to take the primo jobs? Make all of the teams wait, and don't steal the postseason thunder of the top teams.

Here Comes the (Gil)bride

The Look Man has crucified Jynt's OC Kevin Gilbride for his past idiocy. Gilbride is best remembered for being punched out by Buddy Ryan in Houston for throwing the ball immediately after a decisive defensive INT.

But KG actually has earned his way back into the Look Man's good graces. He has parlayed a ball control ball style and a conservative game plan into a championship run. Further, he has turned Eli Manning into a real live QB. And that ain't easy in the Big Apple, where the spotlight is bright and the scrutiny can turn anyone into a choke artist. Instead of giving Batmanning all of the credit, the Look Man is sharing some love with Gilbride. After leading an offense to 380 offensive yards in a -24F wind-chill, he may be the assistant Coach of the Year.

Hello, neighbor

The Etroit Lions have decided to trade or waive DT Shaun (Mister) Rogers, according to reports in the Freep. Rogers served one four-game suspension for taking a banned substance and could face an eight-game suspension in 2008. The Motor City Caddies are risk averse, and looking to get out with three years remaining on his contract. If anyone out there needs a 380 pound, Pro Bowl DT, Rogers is available. You listening Browns?

Darth Vader

LaDainian Tomlinson got blasted for sitting while Rivers played through two bad knees in the AFC Championship, but the Look Man disagrees. They're called "running" backs for a reason, and if you have a bad wheel, you're looking to get killed out there. Why take that chance when you have two excellent backups in Michael Turner and Darren Sproles at RB?

Hall of Fame quality RB Terrell Davis agrees. "I always felt like this," Davis said. "You can question my playing ability. You can kill me in the media for how I'm playing. But never question my integrity or my heart. And when they started taking shots at my character, that I wasn't tough enough when I was trying to come back from knee problems, it was like, 'Hold up, man. You have no clue what I'm going through. Nobody wants to play more than me.'"

Bottom line: NLT made the right choice, and anyone who thinks he was dogging it is either

hatin' or stupid. He's waited seven years to prove himself, not to go out and risk his career on a game where his coach played the wrong QB.

ZEBRA OF THE WEEK

The Zebra of the Week award came down to Terry (Bottlegate) McAulay and Jeff (Beanbag) Triplette. In a week where only two games were contested, each did his part to bring the league to its knees.

Bottlegate gave that game to the Jynts courtesy of some questionable calls on close man-to-man coverage. The game conditions were inhuman, and Bottlegate made the game into a 4 hour OT marathon with his incessant calls. Pack Fan would've rioted, but he couldn't feel his feet, and his beer intake was limited by the fact that the beer solidified in its container before he could drink it.

But Beanbag likely changed the outcome by not calling the blatant personal foul on LB Mike (Cheap Shot) Vrabel. Cheap Shot clearly leg whipped Rivers on a play that resulted in a pick, and exacerbated an already bad ACL. If someone did that to Brady, they would be serving time in the local penitentiary. Rivers threw the pick to Asante Samuel, and Brady turned the INT into a 14-6 halftime lead that the Chowds never relinquished.

Tack on the additional Rivers takedown by Richard (Dick) Seymour, holding by Welker, and a cheap shot by Moss on DT Luis Castillo (Rum), and SD Center Nick Hardwick's comments on Dick Seymour seemed pretty accurate. The Seymour-Rivers takedown was right in front of Beanbag as well as the leg-whip by Vrabel.

Beanbag gets the Booby Prize, along with a monogrammed hanky. Triplette, you are the Look Man's **Zebra of the Week**.

EPILOGUE

The Jynts have made mincemeat out of the NFL's second and third ranked offenses in the postseason. They knock out the 2nd ranked Cheeseheads at Flambeau only a week after knocking off the 3rd rated Pokes in Big D.

Perhaps more impressively, they held three Pro Bowl QBs to a paltry 65 QB rating while allowing only 3.5 yards per carry to some top RBs. Their reward was to be installed as a 14-point underdog on Super Sunday against the Chowds.

Heavy betting dropped the spread to a mere 12 points, but the Look Man is not sure that this game will be a blowout. More on that in the LMR Week 21 Super Bowl Preview.

Peace,

The Look Man