

## THE LOOK MAN REPORT 2008 Week Minus One - You've Been Favre'd

The last three NFL seasons have had storybook endings. The Stillers capped the 2005 season with a win in Detroit for hometown hero Jerome Bettis. The 2006 season saw the Colts and Peyton Manning get a ring over the Bears. February 2008 brought us the best Super Bowl ever, with the G-Men beating the undefeated Chowds with solid defense, physical running, and sparkling catches.

But you can't have sunshine without a little rain. The death of NFLPA President Gene Upshaw, the growing potential for labor strife in 2010, and Roger Goodell's failed personal conduct policy all cast a pall over the upcoming season. Tack on the never ending saga of Favre, and the offseason was a zoo. Of course, that last item did unearth the comical draft day footage of Commissioner Tagliabue calling him "Brett Favor."

The NFL is back and better than ever, ready to take its rightful place at the pinnacle of sports. So buckle your chinstraps, because 2008 is gonna be a bumpy ride.

Without further ado, the NFL 2008 Preview:

### Nomenis Favre?

The Brett Favre offseason saga was ridiculous, with Green Bay GM Ted Thompson playing the heavy. The truth is that the Pope has been playing with a fork protruding from his back in the last five seasons except 2007.

The Look Man believes Aaron Rodgers is the real deal. Brett needed to move to the bright lights of a city that doesn't bow to the Pope. Once he throws a few game losing picks at the Meadowlands, he'll wish he was back in the cushy bosom of Flambeau, wearing his Wrangler jeans while being felated by John Madden.

**Editors Note:** LMR Correspondent GB Shaw offers his annual Starhead Draft Analysis as follows:

### GB Shaw on NFL Draft 2008:

*The 2008 NFL Draft took a significant step forward in packaging for the TV audience. Yes, you had the traditional formulaic utterances: "With the nth pick of the X Round of the 2008 NFL Draft, the city, team selects player, from school." But you also had improved lighting and camera work, fewer players moping around awaiting their names nee Brady Quinn, and quicker analysis of the trades being proposed and accepted. Because of this improved format, the LMR's Cowboy Fan correspondent had fewer nits to pick -- but there were a few:*

*I guess somebody finally got to Kiper to let him know that, in previous years, all his hair needed was a yellow stripe and a single Steelers' decal, and he was ready for the practice field. His mane this go-round looked like it could be actual human hair.*

*The NFL Channel guys were laughing at their own jokes far too often, leading this observer to wonder if the NFL's substance abuse policy should be casting a bit of a wider net.*

*Apparently, nobody from NFL Channel or ESPN could utter the words "Philadelphia Eagles" without projecting great things for them predicated on McNabb staying healthy. This may have been their sole talking point on the Iggles. It got to the point that I started writing down tick*

*marks every time they trotted out this already-clichéd canard back onstage, and got to 5 (but then, I did start keeping track only after I had heard it a bunch of times).*

*Dallas picked up two corners, two running backs, and a TE of note. I was disappointed that they didn't get a wide receiver, but it turns out they picked up a Texas Tech WR in free agency, and he's already started to impress in the OTAs. I'll give the Starheads a solid B -- kind of like what the MCFW and ESPN gave them, as well.*

*And so, until the 2009 draft, this is G.B. Shaw, signing off. Later...*

**Editors Note:** *The aforementioned Texas Tech WR, Danny Amendola, made the Dallas practice squad after a significant role on HBO's Hard Knocks. The Look Man believes he may become the 2008 version of Richmond Flowers III, the singing sprinter who had a carnal relationship with QB Chad Hutchinson in Hard Knocks 2002. The Pokes finished 5-11 after HK02.*

### Stay Inside the Lines...

The NFL Rules Committee authorized several new rules for the 2008 season. The 'force-out' rule is now gone, missed field goals are now subject to replay, and the defensive captain has a helmet radio for sideline signals. This latter change was in direct response to Chowdergate, and wholly unnecessary to any old school fan.

What galls the Look Man was the failure to review the most egregious of rules in 2007: the last second timeout on field goals, aka the *Shanahan Shenanigan*. The SS violates the true spirit of sportsmanship, and has cost teams games. The Look Man predicts it will end up costing someone a playoff game and putting egg all over the faces of the NFL Rules Committee.

### A Stephen King Novel

Roger (Rabbit) Goodell re-instated Adam (the Langolier) Jones for the season, despite the fact that off-field incidents continue to mount just as before implementation of his personal conduct policy. The death of Denver's Darrent Williams and the recent shooting of a J-Ville OT are just two of these incidents involving gunplay.

Goodell figures to shore up the discrepancy with his new fan code of conduct policy. From now on, fans who show up drunk at games will forfeit their right to carry guns into the stadium. While this rule has always been in effect at the Black Hole, it is new in cities like Chicago and Cleveland.

### A Brown Study

The Look Man is still attempting to understand the Browns' thought process in trading a bona fide CB (Leigh Bodden) for a bona fide run-stuffer (Shaun Rogers), but he is thrilled at the prospect of having twin terrors in the run D. Former Cheesehead DE Corey Williams and Rogers could be just what Cleveland needs in a division of running teams.

The basketball-dunking Rogers is a massive man who is best known for his 66-yard interception return for a TD in 2007. The 6-4 nose tackle is conservatively listed at 345 pounds, but he makes a 6-4", 335-pound DE Corey Williams look thin by comparison. Rogers also wowed Browns Backers by picking off a practice pass by Brady Quinn. Tack on DE Shaun Smith and DE Robaire Smith and Cleveland features a D-line average 320+. C-town could easily go from 27<sup>th</sup> to a top ten run defense.

The addition of WR Donte(s Inferno) Stallworth provides yet another long ball target for Derek (Neo) Anderson, and should quiet TE Kellen Winslow's cries for a giant payday. The Browns slightly overpaid for Stallworth, but they needed a veteran to teach Braylon Edwards the ropes. The Browns can now pound the ball with Jamal (Bam Bam) Lewis, go deep with Edwards OR Stallworth, and run the seam route with KW2. If they get up early, the defensive additions can rush the passer.

One problem with the Bodden trade: this guy shut down Chad Johnson over the last three seasons. Chad is going to be a Bengal, and shutdown CBs don't grow on trees. Bodden may not have gotten the press, but he did have 6 picks in '07, plus he held Ocho Cinco to 2 TDs in 2 games.

### Home Chowder?

New England gets another cake schedule in 2008, prompting an outcry from every team in the AFC Asgard and Souse Divisions. The 2007 campaign saw the Chowds play only one regular season game outside the Eastern Time Zone, they never played west of Dallas until the Super Bowl in 2008.

The Chowds '08 schedule features a September bye, then three trips to Cali, a trip to Coffeetown to face the Shehawks, and a game at Lucas Field in Indy. Their four night games reflect how well they draw on a national level, and they may get one more based upon flex scheduling.

Still, the schedule is tougher than last season, especially with the addition of the Pope in their division as well as the Parcels-led Marine Mammals, and a physical Buffalo squad. They might even lose two games this year.

By contrast, the Pokes will play 12 games this season against teams with .500 or better records in 2007. Big D will play eight 2007 playoff teams, plus 10-6 Cleveland.

Speaking of the Browns, they will travel the fewest miles of any NFL team this year, at 6,416 miles. The longest C-Town roadie is October 26 to Jacksonville, at just over 1,000 miles.

### Rock a Bye Baby

The Look Man loves sleepers – teams that get no love from the media, but will shock the world. Oakland and St. Louis come to mind in 2008. Oaktown has some fantastic RBs with hands, including future superstar Darren McFadden, Justin Vargas and Michael Bush, returning from a broken leg. The Silver and Black also added WR Drew Carter from Carolina, to go with Javon Walker. They should stretch the field vertically, and then run underneath.

St. Louise was devastated by OL injuries in 2007, causing QB Marc (the Scarecrow) Bulger to get dinged up. The O-line is now healthy, and despite feature-back Steven Jackson's lengthy holdout, they should be improved. Toss in the paucity of talent in the NFC West, and you have a legit contender.

### Mister Tonight Show

Several days after bashing Ohio State fans on a Los Angeles radio station, Cincinnati Bengals quarterback (Johnny) Carson Palmer had a statement to make. He's sorry. On

Tuesday Palmer apologized for his remarks when he said he "cannot stand the Buckeyes" and that their fans drive him "absolutely nuts." THE Ohio State University will play Palmer's alma mater, USC, in a big game on Sept. 13.

Ironically, many of Palmer's loyal supporters in Cincinnati also are hard-core Ohio State fans, and when word began to spread of the interview, locals became angry. So Palmer released this public statement, courtesy of the Bengals' public relations department:

"I'm a Trojan all the way, and I was talking to a Trojan audience in California. I guess I got a little fired up, as all good fans will do. But I really do respect the Buckeyes, and I know their fans are passionate, too. I hope they all understand our new ad campaign: Evolve. Don't be a pig. Use a Trojan every time."

## **THE LOOK AHEAD**

### Jets at Marine Mammals (+3):

The Cheeseheads misread the smoke plume, allowing Brett (the Pope) Favre to head to Broadway. Unfortunately, Miami may have gotten the better end of the deal, signing Chad Pennington as their starter. Pennington is a career 70% passer, and all he does is win. He knows the Jets offense better than the Pope, and his physical Phish surprise the Jets on Sunday.

### Chicago at Indy (-9.5)

The Monsters of the Furniture Mart look pretty pathetic this season. They finally settled on Kyle Orton as their QB, but they have no number one WR, and Foo Fighters wants their lead singer back. The running game looks improved with rookie RB Matt Forte, but the defense looks lackadaisical.

On the other side of the ball, Indy has a brand spanking new facility called Lucas Oil Stadium. Both Marvin Harrison and Peyton Manning are coming off of serious knee ailments. The Ponies have added Michigan RB Mike Hart, and 2<sup>nd</sup> year slot receiver Anthony Gonzalez should have a breakout season.

Look for the Ponies to cruise by the Bears in this Super Bowl XLI rematch. The Look Man likes Chicago to cover the 9.5, but bear-ly.



*Orton celebrates TD pass*

Bungals at Baltimore (+3):

The Dumpster Ducks have trouble at QB after 2<sup>nd</sup> year man Troy Smith developed viral tonsillitis. Kyle Boller is on IR, and has played his last game for the Flintstones. Enter rookie Joe Flacco, with his first career start against the Ugly & Black.

Marvin Lewis and former Starhead D-Coordinator Mike Zimmer will throw the kitchen sink of blitzes at Flacco, but this game comes down to ball control. Zimmer has crafted top ten defenses in Dallas for years, but the challenge is to do it in the Nati with paltry talent.

Flacco has not mastered the deep throw, and with RB Willis McGahee coming off a knee, it could get ugly. Rookie RB Ray Rice is nice, but the Flintstones O-line and secondary are both injured as well. Bungals celebrate Paul Brown's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a road W, swelling their heads before a week two loss to the Flaming Thumbtacks.

Hornheads at Cheeseheads (-2):

Aaron (Mister) Rodgers will be fine as the new head cook and bottle washer. Mr. Rodgers might struggle early, but between the zebras and the talent, Green Bay will be a wild card team.

Minnesota has gotten some preseason love, but everyone keeps downing their QB Tarvaris Jackson. The Look Man sees the best defense in the NFC, as well as the best running back. Only the loss of LT Bryant McKinnie is even an issue, and against a Packers team without a new identity, look for them to roll. Hornheads, baby, Hornheads.

Pokes at Browns (+6):

Both teams have gotten ridiculous pre-season hype. The Pokes were featured on the almost unwatchable HBO *Hard Knocks* series. The cinematography and lack of candid moments turned this reality series into an infomercial.

Still, the Pokes have serious weapons, despite their relative lack of depth. The linebacking corps is weakened, and the receiving corps is paper thin. An injury to CB Terence (Hello) Newman means a start for PacMan, who starts across from ex-Brown Anthony Henry. SS Roy Williams is playing 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> down only in a revamped Poke defense.

The Browns enter the game after a woeful preseason that saw QB Derek (Neo) Anderson concussed by Jynts DE Osi Humanurine. Karma was served as Humanurine will miss the season with a knee.

But there is reason for optimism, as Braylon Edwards set a single-season Browns' records in both receiving yards (1,289) and touchdown receptions (16). Neo threw for nearly 3,800 yards and 29 TDs in 2007, so look for this tandem to hook up early and often against a depleted Dallas secondary.

A couple of interesting factoids for the possible Game of the Week:

- Dallas is 32-15-1 in season-openers games — best in the NFC;
- The Browns have dropped the last three season openers and stand at 27-28 (.491) all-time;

- Since dropping its first home game in 2007, Cleveland has won seven-straight at home.
- These two teams last faced off in 2004 (a 19-12 Dallas victory), but Cleveland is one of only five teams with a career winning percentage over Dallas.

The Browns have four starters who will likely miss the game, including bruising RB Jamal (Bam Bam) Lewis and special teams maven Josh Cribbs. The Look Man says fine, especially in light of the week two clash with the Stillers. Pokes win a shootout, as the Browns look ahead to the Still Curtain.



*"See you in C-Town, Tony!"*

## **EPILOGUE**

The beginning of the NFL season is one of the best sports times of the year. Pennant races are in full swing, college football is beginning to have some decent non-conference matchups, and the cool fall air is not far off.

Get out and celebrate your NFL team at a stadium near you. But please, celebrate responsibly or the NFL Tailgate Nazis could seize your ticket.

Peace,

The Look Man