

THE LOOK MAN REPORT 2008

Week Six – Xanadu!

"I wouldn't have minded a flag on the call, but we didn't get it. So you go on. It feels like 400 pounds falling on you. It's not something you would want to happen often." – Eli Manning describing the hit he took from Browns NT Shaun Rogers

PROLOGUE

Five games were won in the last ten seconds for the first time in NFL history. Of course, the hidden stat is that the Zebras forced the issue with horrific calls in several games. Those games would've been won handily if not for Zebra interdiction.

Still, the NFL has one week in which underdogs rise up and slap down the favorites. The Look Man calls this Xanadu Week, and Week Six definitely qualifies. It's a fantastic gambling opportunity if you can predict it. On the other hand, it can be a week from Hades if you go in believing the hype machine. One week never makes a season, but it can separate a team from its playoff hopes based upon the intricate tiebreaking system.

After six full weeks, the NFC is beginning to resemble the haves and the have-nots. While the NFC Norse has no teams with a winning record, the NFC Souse has no teams with a losing record. The NFC Beast has turned into a dogfight after three of the four denizens lost in Week Six.

Over in the AFC, Tennessee stands alone and undefeated. The Colts, Bolts and J-Squareds are looking at a little bit of a roll, while the Bisons are hovering in uncharted territory at the top of the AFC East. Week Seven promises to cause Archie Bell and the Drells to break out their horns and perform *Tighten Up*.

Like the 2008 presidential election, the NFL is getting down to crunch time. Let's hope Joe the Plumber doesn't rear his bald head in Week Seven.

Without further exposures of butt crack, the Week that was:

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

Instead of a tedious blow-by-blow about how the Look Man nailed the upset picks of St. Louise, Arizona and Cleveland last week, suffice it to say that it was glorious. It wasn't just that underdogs got their day, or the cliché, Any Given Sunday. It was just nice to see the big boys get taken down a peg.

The net result was the sense that anyone can win it in 2008. Perhaps the Tom Brady hit has made more of an impact than anyone realized. Without an 800-pound gorilla in the League, anyone can and will win the Big One. Last week just reinforced the fact that the difference between the bottom of the League and the top is not too great. Unless you're Cincinnati. Then, it's a full time job just keeping a gun out of your pie-hole.

On the other side of the coin, the Look Man was pretty pleased with the Browns win over the Jynts on Monday Night Football. It was a must win for C-Town, and they executed it pretty well. While the three TD margin of victory was not indicative of how close that game really was for four quarters, it was a good start for the Brownies. Now, let's hope

that they can build on that confidence. After all, they will be on the national stage three more times, and no one wants to see bad football.



Slaughter the white rabbit Neo...

LAGNIAPPE

All Hat and No Cattle

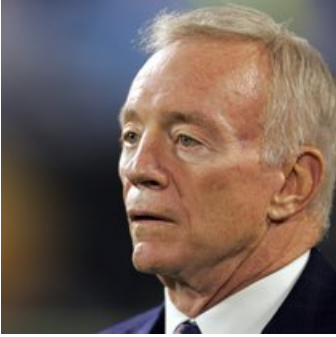
The Look Man is not surprised that the Pokes have hit a rough patch. It was inevitable from the moment Jerry (The King of Pop) Jones hired Jason Garrett and paid him \$3M to call plays. Now lame duck head coach Wade (Capt Kangaroo) Phillips just stands around looking forlorn. Every so often Capt Kangaroo exhibits an emotional response, but the guy doesn't even get a headset half the time. It's awful to watch.

When Parcels and his dictatorial style left Valley Ranch, you just knew the Pokes were in trouble. Replacing him with a players' coach like Phillips works in Year One, when you get the bounce from happy players proving they are man enough to produce without the threat of the whip. In Year Two, you get this weird entropy where the nuts are running the asylum. Tack on a meddling owner like Jones and a Hard Knocks series, and you have a recipe for disaster.

The Look Man ain't saying the Pokes won't contend. But they haven't won a playoff game in a decade. You don't need a laissez-faire head coach at the helm, you need a task master.

As former Pokes All-Pro Nate Newton said after the Deadbirds loss: "If that was Jimmy Johnson somebody would've been cut today. Somebody would've been released. And they tell me, 'Oh, it's gonna be OK.' We've lost one of the best punters in the game and it's OK? And nobody's cut, nobody's released. I don't understand it."

Nuff said.



"Tito - - - help me!"

The Yellow Rose?

The media has had a feeding frenzy over the Pacman Jones incident, the injuries and the ignominious loss to Arizona. The Look Man still likes the Pokes, but things are coming to a boil. What was most interesting was the mini-battle between Commissioner Roger (Rabbit) Goodell and Pokes owner Jerry Jones.

Jones refused to suspend the Langolier after thoroughly investigating the incident. Dallas security obtained every detail on the case, and money may have even changed hands. Two Dallas area police officers are in hot water for failing to detain Pacman, who was obviously intoxicated. Since Pacman is on probation following his various plea bargains, any arrest could have sent him to prison.

Jerry Jones had to know the terms of the agreement with the NFL regarding Pacman's participation. Therefore, Jerry knew that Pacman should've been suspended for multiple games. Jerry's failure to act no doubt infuriated Rabbit Goodell, and the resultant four game suspension said more about their relationship than Pacman's behavior.

Jerry has become one of the most influential owners in the NFL based upon his Taj Mahal stadium gamble, soft drink deals, and personal seat license fees likely exceeding \$100 million. Goodell knows that The King of Pop will be a key opponent of a new CBA negotiation. This recent move by Goodell signals a power play, and Jerry lost big on this gamble.

The Look Man has been very disappointed in the Commish, whose focus has been on bogus player safety, gang signs, and other fluff. This move signals he may be getting tougher.

ZEBRA OF THE WEEK

The close games this week were exciting, but the Look Man attributes several of them to bad officiating. Controversial calls occurred in the Vikes over Detroit, Cards over Dallas, St. Louise over DC, and J-Ville at Denver contests. Here's the rundown:

Peter Morelli (Mushroom) - Pokes at Deadbirds:

After refusing to call holding on Dallas offensive linemen who tackled defenders on nearly every late possession, Mushroom actually called a defensive player offsides for being injured and unable to walk off the field. The FG kick to send the game into OT should never have happened.

Bill (Toyota) Carollo – J-Squareds at Donkeys:

After allowing Denver defenders to do-se-do receivers and call penalties in the first half, Toyota called a makeup pass interference call down the stretch. Denver was ticked, and J-Ville scooped up the rare road win at Investigation Field. Look for fines to be issued against several Denver coaches and players this week.

Walt Coleman (Lantern) St. Louise at DC:

Coleman lantern called a horrific illegal alignment to force the Lambs into a 3rd and long despite the fact that the Genocide Victims late hit Bulger on a scramble. A woozy Bulger still threw a perfect pass to Steven Jackson, but the defender had Jackson so wrapped up, he couldn't get his hands to the ball. Only a fantastic defensive stand saved the day for St. Louise.

Tony Corrente – Minnesota at Detroit:

The late PI call against Detroit set up the game winning FG by Minnesota. Of course, Corrente did call the safety when QB Dan Orlovsky ran out of the back of the end zone while attempting to pass.

Each of these guys was horrible, but Mushroom Morelli gets extra credit for the call on DE Travis LaBoy. NFL players need to learn to fall down when injured, but there was no excuse for this travesty. Morelli Mushroom, you are the Look Man's Zebra of the Week!

ZOTW – Part Deux

Troy Polamalu came out this week with regard to the NFL policy on player safety. It seems that several safeties have been fined for hits that never even received flags during the game.

In addition to the Anquan Boldin decelerator by Jet Eric Smith, Deadbirds S Adrian Wilson was fined 25 large for a clean hit on Buffalo QB Trent Edwards. Just last week, Blitzburgh WR Heinz (57) Ward was fined \$7500 for a clean block after he stepped over the fallen player.

The NFL claims these fines are for player safety, but the truth is that high impact collisions are part of the game. Any attempt to think or modify the hit mid-stream would simply result in more injuries to players. Worse yet, the NFL continues to feature exploding helmet collisions and market big hit videos. It is the ultimate hypocrisy and it needs to stop yesterday. Big hits are the reason why we watch.

THE LOOK AHEAD

Minnesota at Chicago (-3) [1PM]

Both teams looked ahead last week, and the Hornheads narrowly escaped on the strength of a very questionable PI call. The Bears lost in ignominious fashion to the ATL, suffering key injuries to their secondary in the process.

The Look Man likes the Swedes to cover and win on Sunday in the Big Windy. Not only can they run the ball more effectively, Gus Frerotte can throw to Bears castoff WR Bernard Berrian (Swallow). Look for the Swedes to play well on the road, where Brad (Mr. Potato Head) Childress won't get booed by his home fans. Swedes.

San Diego at Buffalo (even) [1PM]

The Look Man did a double take when he saw the spread on this one. Although Buffalo has been very tough on defense through their bye last week, the Bolts have something to prove here. The odds makers must believe that San Diego was too high in the saddle for the New England game last week, and they predict a letdown.

The Bisons haven't looked nearly as good since they lost special teamer Roscoe Parrish. Parrish is a difference maker on offense and special teams. More importantly, QB Trent (NPR) Edwards is coming off a bad concussion, and the Bolts can rush the passer and cover the receivers.

Look for the Bolts to use alternating current to get a win in Crapchester, bringing the Bisons back to the pack in the AFC Least. Bolts.

Dallas at St. Louise (+7) [1PM]:

Rumors about Romo starting with a broken pinkie are ridiculous. Romo is pursuing Dave Krieg's QB fumble record with a vengeance, even with ten good digits. Putting him in harm's way against any defense would be an epic error in judgment. Unfortunately, that decision will not be Capt. Kangaroo's to make. We all know who'll make that call, and he's had a lot of plastic surgery.

The Lambs aren't pretty, but that was an emotional win last week in DC. They can and will run the football with Action Jackson, but Marc (The Scarecrow) Bulger can throw it a little bit also. Lambs cover.

Blitzburgh at Cincy (+9) [1PM]:

Knock, knock. Who's there? Stillers. BOOM. Outta here.

Miami at Baltimore (+3) [1PM]:

B-More head coach John Harbaugh opened up a flat of worms when he criticized Miami players with a backhanded compliment to O-Coordinator Candid Cameron. Harbaugh thought Candid did as well as he could given the talent he had. Marine Mammals players are winning this season with only the addition of QB Chad Pennington, and didn't appreciate the slight.

Many pundits feel the Wildcat formation won't work against the tough Baltimore defense, but the Look Man feels just the opposite. The Wildcat takes advantage of over aggressive play using cutback lanes and misdirection.

Look for Sparano and the Mammals to use it often. Of course, B-More could kill Pennington if he plays wideout, so he better keep his head on a swivel. These guys can knock it clean off. Mammals cover.

New Orleans at Carolina (-3):

This looks like the Game of the Week to the Look Man. Drew (Cool) Brees is on pace to destroy the record books for passing yardage. He gets WR Marques (Watergate) Colston and TE Jeremy Shockey back this week, so look for fireworks to ensue. One thing about Brees: he hits the open man, whether that guy is getting paid or just another guy.

Jake Delhomme has looked great following offseason Tommy John surgery. The Black Cats can really run the football, and that translates into fewer touches for New Orleans. More importantly, Reggie (Dubya) Bush doesn't respond well to physical D. And the Cats play as hard-hitting a defense as anyone except Tennessee.

The Look Man likes the Black Cats to get a win on the strength of their defense. He likes them to cover the spread, opening up some room in the tough NFC South division. Black Cats.

Browns at Genocide Victims (4:15) (-7)

The Browns head to DC this weekend, and the Browns struggle against downhill runners and good TEs. Clinton Portis and Chris Cooley could make the Browns' miserable with ball control drives. QB Jason Campbell (Soup) is the only QB in the league who has not yet thrown a pick, making the Genocide Vix offense even more effective.

Derek (Neo) Anderson and Braylon Edwards rediscovered some 2007 magic on Monday night, but the big story was ball distribution. Steve Heiden emerged from the side of the milk carton to catch five key balls, and Josh Cribbs showed off the Cleveland version of the Wildcat, aka the Junkyard Dawg formation. RB Jerome Harrison complimented the power running of Jamal (Bam Bam) Lewis with speed around the corners. It was a real renaissance for the Cleveland O, which posted 28 points despite ten penalties.

The Barking Dawg D is hamstrung by the absence of DE Shaun Smith, who received a metal plate and screws in his broken hand just before the Jyntz game. DE Louis Leonard takes his place, but the absence of depth is a worry. NT Shaun Rogers was a beast on Monday night, busting up Eli (Cheesecake) Manning with a pancake tackle. Still, Ralph Cramden will need to rotate the D-line in order to keep them fresh.

The Look Man doesn't believe Soup can run the no-huddle, so that ought to be enough for the Browns to cover in a shootout. Browns, baby, Browns as Cleveland strings together a three game winning streak before the J-Ville game in Week 8.

Denver at New England (-3) MNF

These two coaches don't like each other and there isn't much love lost between the players. Bill (Dr. Evil) Belichick made a fool of Mike (the Rat) Shanahan a few years back on MNF, and might do it again this week.

Look for Matt (Sand) Cassell to rebound from a tough outing with a solid day against the Onkeys (no D). The Chowds are always tough at home, and Enver may be without possession receiver Brandon Stokely due to a concussion. Stokely has suffered 8 or 10 in his career, and could become a canned vegetable if this keeps up.

The Chowds may need to go with Sammy Morris after a mysterious illness to RB Laurence (Bony) Maroney. The Chowds offense is largely predicated on the short passing game anyway, but the issue has been the deep ball. Randy (Chronic) Moss may turn out the team after the poorly balls he received from Matty Sand last week.

Chowds cover and win at the Blade, giving Chowds Fan solace after the Sawks bow out in the ALCS to Tampa.



A superhero can dream, can't he? Go Chowds!

EPILOGUE

Atlanta, Arizona, Philly and J-Ville get byes this week, and they couldn't come at a better team. Each of these teams had emotional wins in Week 7, and this rest will allow them to rebound in the second half.

These teams also share one other trait – solid QBs. Despite the turnovers by Kurt Warner, all of these signal callers showed outstanding leadership in 2008. These guys will be heard from for the rest of the year, beginning fresh in Week 9.

The media hasn't yet caught on to this fact, preferring to spend time on the front runners. The Look Man is tired of hearing the 'story of the week,' whether it be the unstoppable NFC East, or genuflecting to Brett (The Pope) Favre. The most interesting aspect of Week Six was the startling lack of support for the underdogs. While the Look Man was able to accurately predict these upsets, the media merely parrots the thoughts of the man on the street. And that man has very little football acumen.

So before you begin believing the NFC South is the best division in the NFL, before you stick a fork in the Pokes, before you bury the hapless Cleveland Browns and St. Louis Rams, look at the details. The dough you save may be your own.

Peace,

The Look Man