

THE LOOK MAN REPORT 2008 **Week Seven – Are We There Yet?**

“When I die and go to Hell, that's what football will look like. With the Devil booking all bets.” – Paul (Dr. Z) Zimmerman, SI writer on dink and dunk football by Brett Favre

Dr. Z isn't the only one who hates to see the current version of what passes for NFL football. If you caught the Jets-Grayders or Cleveland-Washington games, you know how tedious a low scoring game full of penalties and miscues can be.

On the other hand, the shootout between the Vikes and the Bears was highly entertaining. There was little of what you might call defense, but the special teams play of the Hornheads was very amusing. Unless you are a Minnesota fan. Then it was like surgery without anesthesia.

But the Look Man digresses. The issue is that at the midpoint of the season, things are usually a little more settled. The absence of Tom Brady, the fall of the media darlings, and the failure of any team to really step up dominates the headlines. The exception is Tennessee, but they haven't really beaten anyone of consequence. The net result is coaches getting the boot before midseason, largely because teams believe they can climb back into the race.

The stage is set for Week Eight, and the three matchups of top flight teams. The Colts go to Tennessee in a must win. 4-2 Arizona returns to the East Coast to take on 5-2 Carolina. And the defending world champ Jynts match their 5-1 record with Blitzburgh's. All in all, it's a great time to be an NFL Fan.

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

Cleveland 11 at DC 14 (-8.5)

The Browns defense stiffened based upon the coaching of Romeo (Ralph Cramden) Crennel. Still, Derek (Neo) Anderson was as bad as it gets after lighting it up against the Jynts. The worst thing in the world is a QB who's hot one minute and ice cold the next.

QB Derek (Neo) Anderson struggled with wide open receivers for three quarters. In the fourth, Neo made some good reads and solid passes, but to no avail. Either Braylon Edwards ran the wrong route, or just dropped the ball at crunch time. Instead of a makeable FG, Edwards' last drop resulted in a 54 yard attempt. The Browns lost a game that should have been an easy win. Perhaps this will be the one they look back on when they miss the playoffs in a tiebreaker?

More importantly, FB Lawrence Vickers and DA got into it over a timeout call. "I kind of snapped because why would DA get mad because I was out of position?" asked Vickers. "When I jumped up, I noticed the clock near zero and called timeout with the ref. He was like, 'I'll do the thinking around here'. I guess I should quit drinking before kickoff."

Sadly, if Braylon doesn't drop passes and miss assignments, the Browns would've won this game. As it stands, it may come back to haunt them at playoff time. What Can Brown Do For You?



A conundrum wrapped in a riddle...

St Louise 38 at Dallas 13 (-7):

The Pokes lost for the second consecutive week, causing the sky to fall in the media outlets. The Look Man predicted the Pokes would struggle in Year Two of the Capt Kangaroo era. But the reasons may have more to do with O-Coordinator Jason Garrett.

Stephen Action Jackson rumbled all over Doomsday Lite, and the Lambs roared by sacking Brad Johnson three times last week. Despite all the rumblings about Dallas being finished, it only proves that the Pokes overlooked the Lambs, who were tailor made to beat them.

Garrett installed a game plan that wouldn't work for (Bad) Brad Johnson, whose strength is quick, early throws over the middle. With Jason Witten and Terrell Owens, you'd think that would be cake, but no. Instead, Garrett called deep outs and nine routes that nearly got Bad Brad killed. One has to wonder if Garrett is simply stubborn, or just crazy, because they almost had to bring the emergency QB into the game last week.

The game plan by Jason Garrett was awful, forcing an old and rusty Brad Johnson to hold the ball. Johnson paid homage to injured Tony Romo by missing a shotgun snap that was delivered early.

The weirdest thing was how the Pokes quit, losing by three TDs. Jerry Jones lit them up in the locker room. Ironically, Jones' meddling is the reason they are struggling.

Capt Kangaroo now says he will be more active in calling the defense. Right. Doomsday Lite is doing alright aside from stuffing the run. The truth is that they do a lot better when the offense is not engaging in a chorus line (One, two, three, punt!). Perhaps Jerry Jones should empower the good Captain to actually yell at the offense? Nah.

Don't Rollup on Me?

Marvin Harrison was injured last year on a screen pass where someone rolled him up as he was blocking. Harrison missed most of the season as a result, and he struggled in the first few weeks of 2008, before exploding a couple of weeks back.

Last week in Green Bay, Harrison ran out of bounds instead of issuing a block on a called screen play. Unfortunately, the back was covered, so Peyton had to throw it away. The look he gave Marvin afterwards was priceless. And you won't see that look in any commercial.

Second City Comedy Troupe?

The Swedes gave up 14 points in the punting game, and none were due to Chicago's Devin Hester breaking one all the way. In fact, punter Chris Kluwe's miss, kick and re-kick before the special teams TD was NFL Films football folly material. Take away that play and Minnesota's muff, and the Swedes likely win that game by 14 instead of losing 48-41.

One has to wonder if Kluwe was getting revenge for being thrown under the bus by head coach Brad (Mr. Potato Head) Childress after two Reggie Bush punt return TDs. MPH castigated Kluwe for kicking to Bush, but refused to blame him for dropping a snap in the Chicago game. Either way, the Swedes have given up 5 special teams TDs in 2008, which must be some kind of record.

New England or Denver Omelet?

The Chowds busted the Donkeys up 41-7 last Monday night, continuing Belichick's dominance over Mike (The Rat) Shanahan. Sometimes, a DB just owns a QB, picking him off an inordinate number of times based upon total interceptions. In the case of the Rat, Dr. Evil has owned him since a Monday Night Football game where the Chowds took a safety in order to eliminate their poor field position.

The safety put them down less than a TD with little time left, but it allowed them to get the ball closer to the fifty yard line. Brady and the Chowds calmly assembled a game winning TD drive, and Belichick laughed all the way to the airport.

Shanahan has never been a solid coach, and he's never won a ring without Elway. Perhaps Belichick doesn't like anybody smarmier than he is?

THE LOOK AHEAD

Cincy at Houston (-10):

The Nati is still awaiting a formal decision on (Johnny) Carson Palmer's elbow, so Ryan (Veritas) Fitzpatrick remains the starter. Cedric (The Butler) Benson seems to have solidified his hold on the starting RB job after nearly decapitating the Stillers Troy Polamalu last week. If you didn't see that hit or the jawbreaker that Hines (57) Ward laid on LB Keith Rivers, you missed two of 2008's best hits.

Houston is rounding into form, with Matt Schoub reclaiming his starting spot and WR Andre (the Giant) Johnson is terrorizing the league. Andre the Giant is averaging ten grabs a week for a buck twenty in yardage.

The Bengals held a blood drive at Pall Bearer Stadium this week, but fans didn't have to donate. The blood bank merely vacuumed up all the Bengals' blood that had soaked into the turf.

"It's an honor to help take part in this drive," said Bengals head coach Marvin Lewis. "We congratulate everyone who participated. There is no substitute for this vital resource, and no other way to obtain it. Lord knows we lack the heart to even pump our own blood."

The biggest thrill of this game might be that Gus Johnson is doing the call. Gus could make a paint drying contest sound fantastic. Slim Shadies cover and win.

Kansas City at Jets (-13.5):

When the Look Man saw this line, he had a double take. The Baby Backs have gotten smacked down by nearly every team they've played, but if you saw the pathetic Jets lose at Oaktown, you have to wonder. QBs Damon Huard and Brodie Croyle were both lost for the season last week.

RB Larry (Grandmama) Johnson will sit for at least a week after spitting a drink into a woman's face last week in KC. Grandmama claims the drink had simply gone sour, and her face just happened to be in his way. Commissioner Roger (Rabbit) Goodell isn't buying that take, so look for him to give Grandmama a few weeks off to figure out how to keep his bodily fluids off the faces of women.

Herm Edwards returns to the scene of the crime, the place that he escaped via KC. Look for him to get some revenge against a Jets organization he feels threw him under the bus. More importantly, with Lavaerneus Coles possibly out with post concussion syndrome and Jericho Cotchery having a bum shoulder, Favre may have to throw to himself.

The Look Man likes the upset here, or at least KC to cover the double digit spread. It's just karma taking over after Favre's revelation that he gave Breen Gay trade secrets to Detroit in Week One. Chiefs cover.

Expensive Corn Kings at Pokes (-2.5):

Bad Brad returns to face one of his former teams as Tampa comes to Big D. The other featured matchup is QB Jeff (Jerry) Garcia against his old nemesis Terrell Owens. This game has plenty of jazz, and should be one of the week's best.

O-Coordinator Jason Garrett had better go to the middle to take advantage of Bad Brad's strengths. Unfortunately, the Tampa Two is really underrated LBs Barrett Ruud and Derrick Brooks. The rest of the defense is no-name, and can be beaten, especially in the middle.

Doomsday Lite needs to pick a pass off from Jerry Garcia, but he has been phenomenal of late. He has a QB rating exceeding 100 and zero picks in the last two weeks. Dallas defensive coaches Todd Grantham and Dave (Papa Smurf) Campo now have Capt Kangaroo calling plays with the hope that this will jump start Doomsday Lite. It may be as simple as adding Mr. Green Jeans at safety now that Roy (Rogers) Williams is on the IR.

The Pokes will cover and win this game, but the Look Man doesn't know how. Perhaps the zebras help out, but it just feels like Big D gets a W before facing the Jyntz next week in Jersey.

Arizona at Carolina (-4):

Arizona has a chance to take a nice lead in the NFC West, but Carolina is tough at home. After firing Mike Nolan, Mike Singeltary is in his first head coaching stint, and he's yelling, "I like this kinda pahty!"

Look for the Deadbirds D to go after Delhomme, but there is too much balance in Carolina. Black Cats win, extending Arizona's record of failure on the Left Coast.

San Diego at New Orleans (in London):

With Dubya out for at least a month, the Icons now face a tough test against a Bolts team that badly needs a win. This is the 2nd game in a long string of extended road games for the Bolts. They will be the most traveled team in the league this season, and Norv Turner needs to get them ready.

The Look Man likes the matchup of TE Antonio (Bill) Gates vs. S Kevin Special K Kaesvihearn. Icons QB Drew (Cool) Brees missed the 300 yard mark for the first time last week against a physical Carolina team. He should be fine against a finesse defense in San Diego.

Unfortunately, the Icons' D gave up a lot of running yards to a Carolina offense that didn't have the LaDanian Tomlinson or backup Darren Sproles. Actually, Sproles is playing better than the New LT right now, and if he gets ten touches, the Bolts roll at Wembley Stadium. Bolts, baby, Bolts.

Cleveland at Jacksonville (-7):

The J-Squareds are coming off a bye while the Browns face a must win following the KWII controversy. It will be interesting to see how the Browns respond after all the media hoopla.

Maurice (Mo-Jo) Jones-Drew is a bowling ball runner who could eat the Barking Dawg D alive. The J-Squareds bring in Greg Jones on 3rd downs, and WR Dennis Northcutt would like to prove himself against his former team. WR Matt Jones is facing a suspension for snorting the white lines on the field, but will play on Sunday.

The Browns are a bizarre team. They will cover against the Jags, but they badly need a win. The J-Squared secondary can be had, as proven by Denver two weeks ago. The Look Man is calling for a breakout game by the Cleveland offense, setting up a nice run. Browns, baby, Browns.

Atlanta at Philly (-9):

The Eagles have had a bye week to study Dirty Birds QB Matt Ryan('s Hope), who has put up great numbers in the Georgia Dome, but struggled on the road. He takes his 2-1 team to face Donovan McNabb and the Iggles blitzing D.

The Dirty Birds are easier to beat on the road than at home, so look for the Iggles to fly again. The Iggles welcome the return of Kevin (The White Shadow) Curtis at WR, as well as uber-back Brian Westbrook. Look for the City of Brotherly Love to extend Andy (The Walrus II) Reid's 9-0 winning streak following a bye week. Iggles.

St. Louise at New England (-7.5):

OJ Atogwe may be one of the most underrated DBs in the NFL. He picks off Matt (Sand) Cassell, notching another win for the upstart Lambs. Don't count them out of this thing yet, as Jim (Lemon Top) Haslett has them playing inspired ball. Lambs.

Buffalo at Miami (+1):

Buffalo is the only team that hasn't faced a division opponent. Their stretch run begins in Week Eight, with a test at South Beach. Marine Mammals QB has faced the Bisons many times before, but DE Marcus Stroud is having a dramatic impact upon the D-line and the run defense.

The heat takes its toll on the Bisons, as they fall victim to the new-look Wildcat formation in Miami. The Bisons struggled in the heat of Phoenix, and this is their Achilles heel (Actually, the Look Man simply needs someone to slow down the runaway train that is the Buffalo offense, and Miami just happens to be there). That and the fact that Mammals LB Joey Porter has 8.5 sacks, an actual sign of the Apocalypse. Marine Mammals cover and win by a FG.

Jynts at Stillers (-3):

This is the week Big Ben goes down, leaving a shaky Byron Leftwich to run the show. The Big Blue D is tailor made for the Stillers offense, with stout run-stuffers, good corners and a lethal pass rush. (Fast) Willie Parker is supposed to return, but his knee is shaky, and the Stillers will be forced to throw the ball against a ball-hawking defense.

The Stillers were flat against the Bungals in Cincy, but this week they get flattened by a Jynts team that is as physical as they are. Plus, the Stillers have a Monday Night date at DC next week, so the look ahead factor is in full effect.

The only thing that gets in the way of a lead pipe lock is that the G-Men may also be looking ahead to the Dallas game in Week Nine. Based upon the return of Plexiglass to the Still City, the Look Man sees trouble at the confluence of the Monongahela and Ohio rivers. Jynts cover and win, sending the Stillers into the beginning of a tailspin due to a tough schedule.

Indianapolis at Tennessee (-3.5) Monday Night Football:

This game has the talking heads all atwitter. The media wants to know if Tennessee is for real, or if they just faced weak competition. Indy was looking ahead last week in Green Bay, because they really need this one.

This game will pit the strong Tennessee front seven vs. an inexperienced O-line for the Ponies. Peyton is at his best in prime time, and the Colts have won 8 of the last 10 against the Flaming Thumbtacks.

The Look Man likes to pick the best QB in a close matchup of division rivals. Peyton is miles ahead of the economical Kerry (Tom) Collins. Collins can be effective as long as the run game hides his deficiencies. After seeing the Tacks roll up nearly 400 rushing yards in Week Seven, look for the Colts to shut that down. Peyton and the offense will attempt to use the same script they had against Baltimore; get up early, and take away the run, forcing the QB to beat you. It worked in Week Six, and it'll knock Tennessee from the ranks of the undefeated. Ponies cover.

EPILOGUE

Week Eight features several showdowns with playoff potential. The Flaming Thumbtacks have a three game over Indy and Jacksonville, and their remaining schedule is just beginning to heat up. They have games at JAX, at home against the Jynts, and finish the year with games against Blitzburgh and at Indy. Their home game against Indy this week is huge.

The AFC race is very tight, with four teams one game behind their division leaders, and two more teams two back. Teams like Houston, Cleveland and Miami are on the bubble at three games back, and need to get on a hot streak. For them, momentum is key while conference losses are the kiss of death.

Over in the NFC, all of the division races are tight. Even the NFC West race could heat up with a win by suddenly resurgent St. Louise over New England. While many pundits argue that the Cowboys are in trouble, the Look Man believes 10-6 will secure a playoff spot in the NFC.

The only team in the NFC catbird seat is Washington, and they look unsteady. Granted, the Genocide Vix have a solid running game, but they have not yet proven the ability to shut down the run, a precursor to a championship run.

Week Eight is always a line of demarcation in the NFL. If the first quarter of the season is a search for identity, the halfway mark signals the search for consistency. Teams that can't step up and win the games that they are supposed to win will face playoff tiebreakers. There's always one key game that comes back to burst the bubble for those teams. You simply hope that one game hasn't already happened, right Cleveland?

Peace,

The Look Man