

The Look Man Report 2009

Week Fifteen: Don't Gimme No Backtalk!

"I've been in this league 12 years, man, and I've been through a lot and these shoulders that I have on my body, you can put the earth on it. ... I bounce back." - Randy (the Chronic) Moss with his mountain man beard following the win over Crapchester

Moss caught seven balls, including a sweet toe-tap TD and contributed mightily to the win in Week 15. But his performance paled in comparison to others of note in Week Fifteen. To wit:

The Pokes knocked New Orleans from the ranks of the unbeaten, salvaging their playoff hopes in the process. The Pokes have been a wholly-owned subsidiary of Sean (Secret Squirrel) Payton and the Icons in recent memory, with Secret going 5-0 since taking over the Icons. DeMarcus (Farber) Ware played despite having a broken neck, and single-handedly protected the Pokes' secondary from the deep ball.

The Stillers won a 37-36 war with the Cheeseheads as time expired. Big Ben dropped half a thousand passing yards on the Pack, sending them back to the drawing board. In 2009, the Pack have played valiantly against the Vikes and Bears, but lost close ones to the Bengals and Stillers. Mayhap the AFC is tougher this year?

The Browns hired Mike (The Walrus) Holmgren as President of Football Operations. That title means it will up to the Walrus to give Eric Mangina and Brady Quinn their walking papers at season's end, so the Browns tried to keep Mangina from losing his job. Cleveland posted not one, but two Hall-worthy performances.

KR Josh Cribbs put up 300 kick return yards with two TDs to set a new KR record. RB Jerome Harrison broke Jim Brown's single game rushing record with 286 yards. It's amazing to see one HOF performance in a season, let alone two in one game.

LAGNIAPPE

Laissez les bon temps terminer?

Two of the best games were on NFL Network, where few could see them. The Pokes dominated New Orleans for three of the four quarters, followed by Drew (Cool) Brees nearly pulling out a win courtesy of a missed chip shot by Dallas K Nick Folk. Folk received a version of the home game this week, as the Pokes welcomed Shaun Suisham back to Valley Ranch.

TE Jeremy Shockey's game time scratch made the Icons change their game plan. Much of the Icons' offense flows through the TE, and the backup, Dave Thomas, hamburgered his way to a great day. Mr. Wendy's did have trouble with the speed seam route on LB Rob (Barbie) Carpenter, which allowed Doomsday Lite to double Colston and Meacham. Devery(man) Henderson couldn't handle the physical play of D-Lite, dropping a key TD late. And this after the Look Man gave him some serious love in Week 14!

When it was all over, the Pokes pulled off a major upset, and the Icons got a much needed loss. New Orleans can now focus on securing the one seed in the weak NFC, setting up a sprint to the Lombardi.

The Andy Reid Syndrome

The Game of the Week was Cheeseheads at Stillers. The Stillers led until Mike (Omar Epps) Tomlin's went Andy Reid with a 4th quarter onside kick while up 30-28. The Cheeseheads scored a go-ahead TD, and it took a miraculous last play TD pass from Big Ben to Mike (60 Minutes) Wallace to preserve the win.

It turns out that Wallace ain't Morley Safer. The Kid can play. As for Omar Epps, he's getting treated like his doctor character on *House* after that brain cramp. If the Stillers lost that game, they're out of the playoff picture and Tomlin is on the hot seat. Now, they simply need to win out and hope that the tiebreakers work in their favor.

The Stillers are 4-6 in AFC Conference games, ahead of only Tennessee. Jacksonville and B-More are 6-4 in the AFC and Denver is 6-5 with only one AFC contest remaining. Even the Jets are 5-5, with two AFC games remaining. The J-E-T-S could win at Indy and at home against Cincy in Week 17, getting the sixth Wild Card.

The NFL tiebreaker formula is like Chinese calculus, but the Look Man posts it here for your consideration.

Two Clubs

1. Head-to-head (best won-lost-tied percentage in games between the clubs).
2. Best won-lost-tied percentage in games played within the division.
3. Best won-lost-tied percentage in common games.
4. Best won-lost-tied percentage in games played within the conference.
5. Strength of victory.

Three or More Clubs

(Note: If two clubs remain tied after third or other clubs are eliminated during any step, tie breaker reverts to step 1 of the two-club format).

1. Head-to-head (best won-lost-tied percentage in games among the clubs).
2. Best won-lost-tied percentage in games played within the division.

With seven teams in the AFC getting to a possible 9-7 records, and the logjam in the NFC East, the fourth or fifth tiebreaker could come into play for the first time since 2007.

Here are the remaining schedules in the AFC and some scenarios:

BAL:

At 9-7 (with loss to Steelers and win over Raiders), Baltimore would win tiebreaker with Steelers (division record), Broncos (head-to-head), Titans (conference record) and Texans (conference record); Baltimore would lose tiebreaker to Jags (conference record), Dolphins (common games), Jets (common games).

At 9-7 (with win over Steelers and loss to Raiders), Baltimore would win tiebreaker with Steelers (h2h), Broncos (h2h), Dolphins (common games), Titans (conference record) and Texans (conference record); Baltimore would lose tiebreaker to Jags (conference record) and Jets (common games).

DEN:

At 9-7 (with loss to Eagles and win over Chiefs), Denver would win tiebreaker with Dolphins (common games), Titans (conference record) and Texans (conference record); Denver would lose tiebreaker with Ravens (h2h), Jaguars (conference record), Jets (common games) and Steelers (h2h)

At 9-7 (with win over Eagles and loss to Chiefs), Denver would win tiebreaker with Titans (conference record); Denver would lose tiebreaker with Ravens (h2h), Jaguars (conference record), Dolphins (conference record), Jets (conference record) and Steelers (h2h). The Broncos tiebreaker with the Texans would be strength of victory (can't project right now).

The Look Man believes Baltimore and Denver ultimately get in, but not before the Jets make it close. More importantly, if the lightning-hot Chargers stumble in their last two and the Patriots win out, San Diego would fall to the No. 3 seed because of the common games tiebreaker with New England.

Any way you slice it, the AFC playoff picture is going to be dramatic until the end. A great ending to a great season, with fewer meaningless games in Week 17.

ZEBRA OF THE WEEK

Terry (Bottlegate) McAulay - Pokes at Religious Icons:

Terry and the Zebras allowed them to play, but Bottlegate gave the Pokes much more latitude than the Icons. There was a critical illegal contact by CB Mike (Spuds) McKenzie on Roy Williams should've been a no call. Williams turned away from the ball, and ran into Spuds, nearly knocking him down.

There were at least two pass interference penalties against the Pokes that went uncalled, especially one against Colston that could've made it a ball game in the first half. All in all, Secret Squirrel was boiling mad, and he had a right to be.

Terry McAulay, you are the Look Man's **Zebra of the Week** and the first consecutive week winner since the late fifties.

THE LOOK AHEAD

Bolts at Flaming Thumbtacks (+3) [Festivus Night Football Special on NFLN]

The Bolts travel to Nashvegas on Christmas to take on the second hottest team in the AFC. Again, this one has been co-opted by the NFL Network, but it could be a great game.

The bad news for the Flaming Thumbtacks is the loss of two starting LBs. Team captain and field general Keith Bullock and David Thornton both went on IR last week and the defense will suffer. Look for the Bolts to put up more points than the Tacks can match, covering the three, and propelling them to the 2nd seed in the playoffs. Bolts.

Carolina at Jynts (-7)

The Jynts need wins at Carolina and at Minnesota, plus a loss by the Pokes to gain the tiebreaker advantage to make the playoffs. Despite having swept the Pokes in 2009, they could be on the outside looking in.

The Black Cats looked solid in destroying the Hornheads last week, setting up the inevitable sideline battle between Brett (The Pope) Favre and Brad (Mr. Potato Head) Childress when MPH attempted to pull the Pope in a 7-6 game. The tiff was reminiscent of the tire commercial featuring Mr. and Mrs. Childress where her mouth pops out and rolls down the hill.



"Does this headset make me look bald?"

The Black Cats' Julius Peppers earned some of his \$17 million salary, sacking the Pope at will and getting LT Bryant McKinney benched in the process. Peppers hasn't shown that he can put together consecutive games, and the Jynts will double team him to make sure.

Eli has looked doggone good the last few weeks. In fact, it's almost like his Citizen Watch commercial: *Eli Manning is Unstoppable!* Jynts cover, setting up a war at the Mall of America next week.

Houston at Miami (-3)

As usual, now that the season is over for them, the Slim Shadies are stringing together wins. The enigmatic Slim Shadies have done just enough to get coach Gary Kubiak fired.

QB (The Other) Chad Henne has 10 TDs against 12 picks, and has turned it over a lot of late. Turnovers kill teams, but the Marine Mammals have stepped up the defense. Ricky Williams leads a solid running attack that doesn't feature the Wildcat anymore.

Unfortunately, QBs make teams, and the Look Man likes Matt Schaub over the Other Chad. Look for the Slim Shadies to knock off the Phish, jeopardizing their playoff hopes in a little display of Schadenfreud. Houston in an upset, as Miami looks ahead to Blitzburgh in Week 17.

Baltimore at Blitzburgh (-2.5)

Baltimore seems to have righted its ship, dropping a forty-burger in Week Fourteen. Big Ben and the Stillers put on an offensive display against the Cheeseheads last week. The number of guys who've thrown for five bills in a non-overtime game is pretty short, and Ben was as sharp as a piece of 20 year-old Limburger. This game is going to be a war.

Wide receiver Joey Galloway has been added to the Pittsburgh Steelers' roster as the replacement for Limas Sweed. Sweed was placed on injured reserve Monday with a non-football-related illness.

Coach Mike Tomlin would not reveal any details of Sweed's condition Tuesday. "I think it's appropriate right now that we say very little in regard to his personal issues," said Omar Epps. "Suffice it to say that part of it has to do with the fact that Limas can't catch a cold naked in Alaska right now. And that's where he'll be playing next season as far as I'm concerned."

Galloway joins the Stillers after being released by the Chowds earlier this season. No word on whether he'll require a league exemption for a special jersey with a hole for a fork sticking out of the back.

Meanwhile, B-More gets WR Mark Clayton and uber-safety Ed Reed back this week from injury stints. Flacco seems to have re-acquainted himself with TE Todd (Uriah) Heap, but the real straw that stirs the Dumpster Duck offense is RB Ray Rice. If the Stillers can't stop the run, they'll miss the playoffs.

The Look Man likes the Still Curtain in this one. Both teams have lost way too many close games, but the Stillers seem to be putting it together when it counts. Plus, in this battle of porous secondaries, the Stillers should be able to hurt the injury-depleted backfield of the Ducks. Stillers cover and win a battle. Stillers.

Jacksonville at New England (-7.5)

The J-Squareds gallantly pushed the Colts to the brink last week before losing 35-31. Their reward is to travel to a cold and snowy Blade, with a suddenly resurgent Chowds offense. Nice.

No one is really talking about New England in the postseason, but this should be an easy win for the Chowds. J-Ville has too little offense, and it must get the run going behind Maurice (Mo-Jo) Jones-Drew. The Chowds have been vulnerable to the run, but they are ranked tenth overall in total defense.

Look for the J-Squareds to bow to the Chowds, effectively knocking them from the playoff hunt. Ironically, the J-Squareds own the Stillers, but can't beat the Chowds. Sometimes, matchups are everything. Chowds cover and win.

KC Baby Backs at Cincy (-13.5)

The Bengals lost a heartbreaker last week to the Bolts, setting up another late season slide that could get them pimped at playoff time. The Nati offense reappeared as (Johnny) Carson Palmer had his first 300 yard passing day in two years last week.

The Bengals attended their second team funeral of the 2009 season as they laid Chris (Slim) Henry to rest on Tuesday. Roger (Rabbit) Goodell even attended the ceremony, and included an obituary to the Bengals offense, which has been lying in state since the week Slim broke his wrist.

Now the Bengals have a short week in order to prepare for the Baby Backs on Sunday. The game hasn't yet sold out, so Goodell may have to grant his fourth extension to avoid

a blackout in the Nati. The Bengals clinch a playoff spot and the AFC Asgard crown with a win, and they can't even sell out the game.

Baby Backs cover this spread, but can't beat both the Beng and the Zebras.

Oaktown at Cleveland (-3.5)

Brady Quinn (Medicine Woman) broke his foot on his only contribution to the KC win, a 24-yard run-for-your-life scramble. He's done for the year (again), so Derek (Neo) Anderson returns to face the suddenly dangerous Oaktown Grayders, potentially facing one of two ex-Browns, Charlie (Biggie) Frye or Bruce (The New Polish Rifle) Gradkowski.

Both teams are playing to impress their next coach, so the game should be interesting. Neo will provide the passing that Quinn couldn't, complimenting the suddenly potent running attack. Frye would love to gain revenge against the team that sent him packing, but he could turn into Bubby Brister with another shot to the dome. Browns cover and post the second win in the Walrus Era.



"Koo-koo, ka-choo, and fifty million, too!"

Denver at Philly (-7)

The Donkeys are coming off a stunning loss to the Grayders, led by QB JaMarcus Russell. JaMarcus got hit with a Mr. T grenade from *the World of War Craft*, after starter Charlie (Biggie) Frye got knocked into next week. Russell carved the Donkeys for a game winning TD drive, one of the few times the zebras didn't get involved at Investigation Field.

"I didn't even know a lineman could throw a pass legally," said Donkeys safety Brian Dawkins. "He was down to his last Fro-Hawk grenade, but instead he used the resurrection module to turn himself into a real live QB. He kept yelling on that last drive, 'Don't gimme no backtalk!'"

Mickey D wasn't the only guy upset as the Donkeys continue their annual December swoon. These guys are the AFC version of Dallas, unable to win when it counts most. They needed only one win in their last four games of 2008, and allowed the Bolts to knock them out of the postseason. It cost Shanahan his job, and Cutler his team.

Look for Philly to take advantage of the Donkey secondary, which has looked awful of late. Brian (Hawk) Dawkins can't cover the seam route, so TE Brent Celek should have a field day. Brian Westbrook returns from Concussionville, but will see only limited action.

The Iggles need this win to keep pace in the NFC East, where Dallas and the Jynnts are breathing down their necks. Let's hope Andy (The Walrus II) Reid doesn't lose his mind again while looking ahead to the Week Seventeen tilt with the Pokes.

Iggles blitz, forcing Kyle Orton to throw early. Since Orton can't throw deep, he'll get the worst case of red zone pickamonus since Jay Cutler. Iggles.

Pokes at DC (+7)

This one looks like a walkover, but the Jynnts 45-12 pasting of the Genocide Victims was classic look-ahead. The GVs have given the Pokes trouble, and after the breakout win over the undefeated Icons, the Pokes are poised for the playoffs.

Romo has been outstanding of late, and the GVs secondary is laughable. Safety LaRon Landry goes for the double move like it's something good to eat. He'll face Miles (Steve) Austin this week, plus he'll have to contend with TE Jason Witten. The DC defense is good against the run, and balance has been the key to the Pokes recent emergence.

Despite the fact that they have the tiebreaker advantage, the Pokes need this one to get to the doorstep of the playoffs. Still, this division game will be closer than the seven. Either way, the Dallas-Philly game next week shapes up as one of the season's best. DC covers.

Jets at Indy (-5.5)

Jets QB Mark Sanchez is back eating hot dogs for New York, but he can't get any mustard on his passes. The Colts will likely rest starters, so they need to get out early and salt this one away in order to get win number 14.

Put it all together and you have a conundrum. The Look Man likes the Colts to play hard and take away the slim playoff hopes of the Aeronauticals. Jets cover.

EPILOGUE

The AFC playoff picture is a mess. There's no other way to put it. Seven teams are at 7-7, and it all comes down to tiebreakers. As indicated, the 2009 season could come down to the fourth or fifth tiebreaker in the AFC, and it's crazy. Never before have so many given so much to so few.

The good news is the relevance of the NFL in the affected cities. The Look Man's Browns have been out of the race since Week Four. We watch football because we love it, but the love becomes Sam Kinnison love when your team has a shot at the season-ending trip to Miami.

Whether the Colts finish the season undefeated is irrelevant. The Tournament could feature the Bolts, Colts, Broncos, Bengals, Chowds, and/or Stillers and Flaming Thumbtacks. Each of these teams has exciting offense, so in the parlance of Terrell Owens, "get yo popcorn ready, cuz it's go'n be a show."

Peace on Earth,

The Look Man