

The Look Man Report 2009

Week Twenty-One: Miami Nice

"I'd like to thank everybody here in Miami. I know they love me. I want to just tell everybody in Miami, hey, we're coming to beat you twice next year." – Jets head coach Rex Ryan before flipping Miami MMA Fans the bird.

The Look Man waited until this week to provide Super Bowl picks in the unlikely event that something would change his call. Well, something did happen, and that something was the revelation that Pro Bowl DE Dwight Freeney has a torn ankle ligament and might miss the game.

Well, if you believe that, the Look Man has some oceanside property in Kansas for sale. Freeney will play, but he might be limited. Still, if you're looking for something to hang your Mardi Gras beads on, this would qualify.

The media has drawn up its storyline regarding an underdog that was devastated by Hurricane Katrina and needs this game to complete a miracle comeback. On the other side, you have poster boy Peyton Manning and a Colts team that won more games in the decade than any other team ever. It's a storybook setup for the biggest game of the year, right before an uncapped 2010 season that could spell the beginning of the end of the NFL.

Miami is a perfect setting for all of this drama. The NBC Miami Vice franchise saved the city in the Eighties, resurrecting art deco in the process. Director Michael Mann inserted Crockett and Tubbs into the blighted South Beach area while refusing to use any earth tones on camera. The fluorescent colors popped on camera, and the eye candy in the background didn't hurt. It was the MTV generation, and the soundtrack and visual pageantry changed filmmaking forever.

Peyton and Brees provide the protagonist and antagonist on Sunday. Which guy is which depends upon your rooting interest, but the real winner is the fan.



"Drop the shotgun, Peyton! Cuff him Switek."

LAGNIAPPE

Greatest Super Bowl Plays of All Time

The Look Man thought long and hard to come up with the greatest SB plays of all time. The following list is comprised of the best plays, good and bad in the last 43 years:

- 1) Harrison's 100 yard INT pick six in SB XLIII (Stillers-Deadbirds). OLB James (Henry) Harrison read the play, left his coverage responsibility to fool QB Kurt Warner. After the pick, Harrison perfectly read his blocks, and had the stamina to go 100 yards late in the half.

If he had been stopped, the clock would've run out with no score. Credit Deadbirds WR Larry Fitzgerald (Kennedy), who nearly made a game saving tackle, only to have Harrison land on his legs. If Harrison doesn't land on JFK's legs, his knee is down and time expires with no score. Stillers CB DeShea Townsend accurately stated, "What I like the most about that play is, it's not just one of the greatest plays in Super Bowl history. It's also a pure example of Steelers football."

- 2) Big Ben's game winning TD throw to WR Santonio Holmes in SB XLIII (Stillers-Deadbirds). Perfect throw, great catch after Holmes dropped the same pass on the other side previously. The TD wiped out a valiant comeback by Kurt Warner and the Deadbirds, making Mike Tomlin the second brotha to win a Lombardi.
- 3) Tyree's helmet grab in SB XLII (Jynts-Chowds). The Jynts were able to contain the most prolific offense of all time long enough to force this completion. The real credit goes to Eli Manning, who escaped a sack with a Houdini move, and put the throw the only place it could go. Kudos to S Rodney Harrison, who did everything but stick a knife into Tyree, to no avail.

This might be the greatest play evah because of the fact that it took three guys to make it happen. It was later revealed that Tyree's real name is Peter Parker, a freelance photog for the Daily Bugle.

- 4) St. Louise LB Mike Jones stopping Tennessee WR Kevin Dyson one yard short of the end zone on the last play of Super Bowl XXXIV (Thumbtacks-Lambs). With six seconds remaining, Dyson took the slant and tried to extend his right arm to the goal line but was just short. The Lambs won 23-16, but the real story was the pounding that Kurt Warner took that day. It was similar to the poundings he and Favre took against the Icons, but Warner was much younger then.

NFL Films recaps head coach Dick Vermeil asking the team doctors if Warner could even continue based upon the first half pounding. Vermeil was getting backup ready just in case, but Warner refused to leave, forcing McNair to take over in regulation. McNair's near miss would've sealed a Hall of Fame bid because he pulled an Eli, escaping certain sacks, running, throwing and nearly willing his team to victory. It was the greatest SB of all time to that point in time.

- 5) RB Marcus Allen's reverse 74-yard TD Run in SB XVIII (Grayders-Genocide Vix) resulting in a 38-9 dismantling. Allen reversed field, then beat half the DC defense to the middle. Once there, he turned on the afterburners, leaving the surprised, old and slow GV defenders in his wake. No one ever smelled pay dirt like Marcus Allen.

- 6) TE Jackie Harris' TD drop in SB XIII (Stillers-Pokes). Harris dropped a wide open fourth quarter TD pass from Roger Staubach in a 35-31 loss to the Still Curtain. Staubach and the Pokes deserved to win that game, and it changed the destiny of the Pokes and Stillers, who have the most combined meetings of any Super Bowl rivals.
- 7) Scott Norwood – wide right FG miss in Super Bowl XXV (Bisons-Jynts). Norwood's miss was attributable to the first of four SB losses by the Bills, based largely upon Parcels pounding the rock with the run. The Tuna kept the Bills' potent, high speed offense off the field, and the last drive was decided by his defense keeping the Bills just out of FG range. D-Coordinator Bill (Dr. Evil) Belichick went on to become a pretty good head coach.
- 8) William (The Refrigerator) Perry's TD run in SB XX (Bears-Chowds). This play is on the list because Walter Payton never scored a TD in the Big Game. Instead of giving Sweetness his due, Iron Mike Ditka called this gimmick play to seal the deal. In those days, the Bears offense was about 60% Sweetness, and Ditka regrets the decision to this day. The Fridge was an iconic force of nature, but this still galls the Look Man. One would think that the Bears could've done more to honor Sweetness in a 46-10 thrashing.
- 9) Neil O'Donnell's two picks in SB XXX (Dallas-Blitzburgh). The Pokes scored on its first three possessions before the Stillers climbed within six points. O'Donnell then threw two picks to CB Larry Brown, setting up TDs for Dallas. The worst one was with about 4 minutes remaining, when O'Donnell hit Brown right between the numbers.

O'Donnell actually led the league that season with the fewest picks per pass attempt. The real reason for the loss was head coach Bill (The Chin) Cowher, who eschewed the Slash offense that got the Stillers to the Bowl. By putting the onus on O'Donnell, Cowher obviated the massive second half offensive dominance by the Stillers, blowing his chance for multiple rings in the process. O'Donnell should've been the Dallas MVP instead of Larry Brown.



"1st MVP from Long Guyland..."

Amazingly, most of these plays come from the last two decades. That's not to say there weren't great games early, but the athleticism in recent years has been epic. Let's hope we get more of that on Sunday.

Shock the World?

Two years ago, da Gorilla shocked the world with a preseason pick of the Jynts winning the Lombardi. Though not quite as incredible, Tailpipe J-Jack from the Chi nearly equaled that feat in 2009 by predicting that the Denver Broncos would miss the playoffs despite a 6-0 start. Only six teams have ever accomplished that, but the Donkeys certainly looked legitimate at the time.

J-Jack dropped a prescient voice mail on the Look Man in Week 7, saying: "Though the Chargers are doing well, the Broncos will not be making the playoffs. The Chargers will walk away with the AFC West division..." In the interest of full disclosure, J-Jack was on Cloud Nine in the preseason, describing the impact that Jay Cutler would have with the Monsters of the Furniture Mart.

J-Jack wasn't drinking the Cutler Kool-Aid like the rest of Bears Fans, who had to change their pants after premature e-playoffication. Any way you slice it, J-Jack has shown some serious football analytical skill. He definitely ain't goin' for no banana in the tailpipe.

Who Dat Think Dey Gon' Make Some Caish?

The NFL issued cease and desist orders to a number of New Orleans merchants marketing gear bearing the Who Dat slogan. Locals have been snatching up the gear in record numbers for the Religious Icons' first trip to the Super Bowl. The NFL just wanted to get their piece of the pie, which for them means ALL of it.

The "Who Dat" chant has some pretty murky origins, dating back to minstrel shows featuring the Marx Brothers. A racially offensive MGM cartoon with caricatures of black entertainers such as Ethel Waters, the Mills Brothers, Louis Armstrong, and Cab Calloway followed in 1938.

The slogan may have reached its zenith during a high school chant for future Saint RB Dalton Hilliard. Hilliard took the chant with him to LSU, and when he was selected by the Saints in 1983, the stadium rocked the slogan big time.

The NFL finally came to its senses, largely due to the help of a Louisiana judge. It came down to the ownership of intellectual property, and it was impossible to prove that the league owned the slogan. The league will allow the Who Dat shirts as long as they make no reference to the NFL or the Saints logo.

The NFL will continue its claim against any using the phrase, "It is what it is." They claim that the phrase is wholly owned by the NFL based upon its creation by Miami GM Bill Parcells.

THE LOOK AHEAD

Since 1990, only one team has made it the Bowl without vanquishing at least one team that has ten or more wins and/or a won its division. The Colts path to the Bowl has been relatively easy, beating two 9-7 wild cards handily. Not since the 2005 Shehawks has any team had this much of a cakewalk to the championship game.

New Orleans had to beat the fourth seeded Arizona and second seeded Minnesota. More importantly, they played a tough Dallas team, demolished the Chowds in a Monday

Night, and posted an incredible comeback win over DC and Minnesota. It would appear that the Colts are a team of Destiny.

What most folks don't understand is the depth of the Colts defense. These guys were able to withstand the loss of safety Bob Sanders, and backup DE Raheem Brock is a more than adequate sub. Chances are the Colts can switch the underrated Robert (Johnny) Mathis to the right side without missing much of a beat.

New Orleans played Dallas in December following the neck injury to DE DeMarcus Ware. Based upon the horrific nature of the injury, they foolishly believed Ware wouldn't play. Ware ended up harassing Drew Brees and disrupting the Colts' potent offense. If the Colts overlook Freeney and the rest of the Colts D, they risk the same ending this week.

The Look Man was searching for something to prove that the Colts could actually compete in this game, but couldn't. Then J-Jack sent him an email that turned the tide. "I heard Bobby 'Cajun Cannon' Hebert calling the Saints Defense 'The Strip Club' this week. Maybe the most appropriate nickname I have ever heard." New Orleans may have the largest number of quality strip clubs per capita of any city in the US, and the defense epitomizes the city.

You can say what you want about the turnovers caused by New Orleans, but the Colts are a ball-hawking defense. Despite a defensive ranking in the bottom third overall, the Colts practice strip moves every day, and they're as good at it as any team since the Steelers invented it in the 70's.

The problem is that Indy doesn't fumble. They don't turn the ball over with picks. Unlike the Vikings, they're simply too damned smart to give a game away. Their team includes the second highest number of college grads in the NFL, behind only New England.

The Colts' play action really works despite their paltry 80 yard per game rushing average. You would think that teams would simply laugh at the play action and keep pursuing Peyton, but unlike Favre, Peyton actually audibles to the run, not just the pass.

Playoff football is different than the regular season. You can't really fool playoff defenses as much as overpower them. You find one or two plays that work, and you use your best players to either make plays or as decoys to find soft spots. Either way, finesse doesn't work.

No matter how often the Look Man sees Peyton, he's thunderstruck at Manning's pre-snap reads, and perfect delivery to the open man. Peyton destroys the blitz, delivering the ball right to the area from which pressure emanates. It defies logic, which may be the reason the Look Man has lost so much cash betting against Peyton.

This game will come down to the team best able to handle the pressure. In the Super Bowl, the excitement can make a team hyperventilate and lose focus. If a team can survive the early jitters, it can win the game with execution.

The Saints arrived on the scene 44 years ago. Barack Obama is the 44th President of the US and he picked New Orleans to win. And this is Super Bowl XLIV. Hmmm....

So the Look Man is going once more into the breach, picking the Icons to cover the six, and perhaps even win narrowly. Sean (Secret Squirrel) Payton will come up with one of his patented pre-game motivational ploys, and the Icons will ride the run to an historic Hollywood ending. By eating clock and keeping Peyton on the sidelines, the Icons can actually win this game and proclaim "Who Dat" to a nation of disenfranchised underdogs. Icons, baby, Icons.

EPILOGUE

This game may represent the last great Super Bowl in a long while. Labor unrest, brain injuries, and micromanagement threaten to kill the Golden Goose. Owners want a return on investment that is inconsistent with risk. Instead of taking stadium money and double digit growth, they want to break the NFLPA with an eighteen percent salary rescission.

Revenue sharing counts only against the billion dollar TV money plus gate revenues, not individual team deals, concessions and luxury seats.

Perhaps the 50th anniversary of the AFL is fitting, since greedy ownership actually created a market for a new league with a different kind of football. One can only hope the NFL comes to its senses in time to avoid disaster.

Peace,

The Look Man