

## **The Look Man Report 2010** **Week Minus One: The Golden Age?**

*"The Vikings need to go down there and hit that town like Katrina."- Former Bears DT Dan Hampton on the Week One matchup between Minnesota and New Orleans*

Despite the incredible inappropriateness of Danimal's statement, The Look Man would love to start the 2010 NFL season with positive feelings. After all, the New Orleans Religious Icons beat the Vegas odds and won the Lombardi, galvanizing a city while postponing Peyton Manning's pantheon crowning.

Not only did the underdog Icons come back from a deficit to win the championship, they successfully pulled the first opening half onside kick in history. Their gutsy, never-say-die attitude resulted in a successful come-from-behind win against one of the best big-game QBs in NFL history in Peyton (The Sheriff) Manning. When a guy throws for 49 TDs in a season and you beat him, you can put a notch on your bedpost for a conquest well done.

It was a fitting end to a 2009 season that saw record performances by QBs, a virtual return to the Golden Age on NFL QBs not seen since the Class of 1983, a year that yielded such stalwarts as Jim Kelly, Dan Marino, John Elway and Ken O'Brien.

What? You say Ken O'Brien doesn't belong on this list. Well, unless you saw O'Brien carve up the AFC and knock off Marino, Kelly and nearly Bernie Kosar, you have no idea how great this era was. Until he broke his thumb, ala Kurt Warner, O'Brien was a killer who racked up ridiculous offensive numbers and propelled the Jets to a prominence in the 80's. If not for an incredible Bernie Kosar comeback in 1985, we might be putting his name next to Joe Montana in the record books.

The great QBs of that era made it look easy while competing with the best of the best. The classes of 2004 (Big Ben, Phillip Rivers, Eli Manning) and 2008 (Matthew Stafford, Joe Flacco and Matt Ryan) could make us all forget the numbers that Aikman and Montana put up. We are living in the Golden Age of QBs, and we should never forget the Akili Smith, Tim Couch and David Carr eras. Those guys made us hate to watch the game as much as the current stars make us love it.

The NFL is a quarterback driven league, just as the NBA is a scorer-driven one. As much as we love to hate elite teams, we are drawn to offensive firepower, and this league has a bunch. Even if you eliminate Brett (The Pope) Favre, you have (HOU) Matt Schaub who put up nearly 5,000 yards without a playoff berth, Aaron Rodgers (GB) who threw for 4,000 yards despite being in the top five in sacks, and The Sheriff, who assembled an incredible season with nearly zero running game and two inexperienced wideouts.

The current era's QBs include Tom (Zoolander) Brady (three rings), Peyton (The Sheriff) Manning (1), Phillip Rivers (0), Matt Schaub (0), Aaron Rodgers (0), Eli Manning (1), Drew (Cool) Brees (1 ring with a win over Peyton), and many also rans.

It is reminiscent of the heavyweight era that featured Ali, Frazier, Foreman, and Norton.

Each was a champion in his own rite, but the sheer abundance of talent made each take a back seat. It was a joy to watch, a moment in time that sparkled with talent.

In point of fact, 2010 has more than one team looking for a narcissistic self-realization. The New York Aeronauticals proudly showcased their mediocrity on HBO's Hard Knocks. The Dallas Cowpokes announced that they would play the first home game in Super Bowl history in the Taj Mah-Jones. Neither will back up their boast in the greatest season in NFL history.

Why the greatest season? Several reasons:

- (1) NFL restricted free agents are looking for big pay-days, including Braylon Edwards, Bolts LT Marcus McNeil and WR Vincent Jackson, and others. Each would have been a free agent in 2010 if the league had not vacated the Collective Bargaining Agreement. The CBA guarantees that players become unrestricted free agents after four vested seasons, but none of these players realized the dream. Instead, they are forced to produce and they will turn the NFL upside down in an attempt to break the marginal bank that will be the post-2010 NFL.
- (2) The 2011 season is going to be a lockout. The owners are colluding by cutting down on free agent spending and contract extensions. They artificially drove down the market prices for players, and now are making noise about extending the season to eighteen games. Hell, the Colts and Saints took the last three weeks off in 2009 and still made it to the Bowl. The last thing we need is two extra games.
- (3) Teams like Baltimore, the Jets and Miami have added substantial free agents, and look to be stronger. More importantly, we are in a new age of QBs, featuring guys like Schaub, Peyton, Rodgers and Brees who are approaching seventy percent completion averages. Last year was a showcase, and if they can stay healthy, it should be a pinball machine of offense in 2010.

The only downside is the failure of the NFL to address the Shanahanigans Timeout Rule before game winning field goals. Instead of looking at that rule and the possession force out rule for receivers, they are tinkering with the umpire positioning, which stinks. The new umpire rule may preserve zebras, but it's open season on defensive holding.

## **THE LOOK AHEAD**

### *Minnesota at New Orleans (-5.5 ) 2010 Kickoff Classic*

The annual Favre watch is over and folks expect that the Pope will pick up where he left off in 2009. The only problem is that he started off with tomato cans last season, handing off the rock to Adrian Peterson and getting out of the way. It wasn't until he knocked out the Niners with a last second TD pass that Favre started getting his schwerk on. His improbable 33/7 TD to INT ratio was incredible for anyone, let alone a 40-year old non-virgin.

This season, the Pope returns to the parish with a thud as New Orleans is one of the two best offensive teams in the league. The Religious Icons pounded their preseason opponents with points, and the loss of key defensive weapons won't hurt them too much early. Safety extraordinaire Darren Sharper won't play, but he won't need to as the Icons put Favre's pants on the ground again in Week One. Saints, baby, Saints.

Atlanta at Pittsburgh (+2.5)

Mike Tomlin decided to go with QB Dennis Dixon during Big Ben's suspension and the Look Man thinks it's the right move. Ben gives up a lot of sacks by holding the ball too long, but Dixon has escapability.

The Dirty Birds are not in offensive synch, but the defense can pressure the passer. They have a DE named Kroy Bierman who is dating one of the Real Housewives of Atlanta. He may be facing former Pokes LT Flozell (Geico) Adams, who is now playing RT. The rest of the defense is decent, including Look Man favorite FS Thomas DeCoud.

Look for the Stillers to show some defensive wizardry against Matty (Ice) Ryan and knock Atlanta for a loop in this week one thrilla. Dixon and RB Rashad Mendenhall take care of bi'nness in the Still City. Stillers.



*Kroy, you sack that Stillers QB, you heah?*

Detroit at Chicago (-6.5)

Da Bears added O-Coordinator and noted coach killer Mike Martz in the offseason. The hope is that Martz can reach QB and head case Jay (The Knife) Cutler(y). Martz has a system that requires the QB to be disciplined, throwing on time and at the top of his drop.

Cutlery likes to free lance, throw off the wrong foot and then act nonchalantly when a pick ensues. He led the league with picks in 2009, and that's even with Delhomme going color blind in Carolina.

The Monsters of the Furniture Mart are on pace to end up on the outside looking in, with head coach Lovie (Howell III) Smith fired. It starts with a loss to the Lions, who have improved their D-line with Ndamakong Suh and Kyle VanDenBosh. Lions cover the spread and perhaps win outright at Spaceship Field in Week One. Lions.

Cincinnati at New England (-4.5)

The Nati made big headlines by snagging one free agent wideout and cutting another. The Look Man thinks the real issue was that Antonio Bryant was making \$7 million while Terrell (TO) Owens only \$2 mill. Someone had to go and it wasn't going to be the new reincarnation of Batman.

The bigger issue might be whether (Johnny) Carson Palmer is really healthy. Mr. Tonight Show faded down the stretch in 2009, and the Bengos hopes faded with him.

Now, they have added receivers, but have no effective backup. Baltimore felt that they had a legitimate shot at the Lombardi, so they acquired Marc (The Scarecrow) Bulger for \$2.5 million. The Bengos, in the same position, release JT O'Sullivan. Now, if Mr. Tonight Show gets injured, it's another season on the Island of Misfit Teams for the Nati.

New England is clicking on offense, but their secondary is cradle young. Fred Taylor still has some tread on the tires, so look for the Chowds to run early and often to shorten the game against a Bengals D that was rated fourth in the NFL in 2009.

The Look Man sees the Chowds winning, as the Bengals look ahead to Week Two and Baltimore. Chowds.

Cleveland at Tampa Bay (+3)

Jake (the Man) Delhomme still has some gas left in the tank. He tried to do too much in Carolina, but now he can hand the ball off to Hillis and Harrison. H-squared takes care of business and Jake throws just enough to keep the D off balance.

The bad news in Cleveland is still the same; head coach Eric Mangina is an idiot who kept twelve linebackers at cutdown. They finally cut 2<sup>nd</sup> rounder project pick David Veikune, picking up a crappy CB. At least now they have four corners and eleven linebackers.

Still, the acquisition of Saints LB and Look Man favorite Scott (Kodachrome) Fujita as well as Philly defenders Chris Gocong and Sheldon Brown is positive. Look for the Barking Dawg D to stop the run and mix up the pass rush. Browns, baby, Browns.



*The Penguin and the Walrus wonder, "Where's Batman?"*

### Green Bay at Philadelphia (+3)

The Football Gods frown when you trade a top five QB (McNabb) for a guy who may never become a top ten (Kevin Kolb). When you do it in the same division, you really tick Them off.

The Look Man had drinks with a Philly Phan who felt that Kevin (Korn) Kolb will be successful in the City of Brotherly Haters. The Look Man rattled off a list of McNabb's accomplishments longer than a gorilla's arm, but this Jackwagon was nonplussed, saying that Number Five just couldn't get them over the hump.

Philly Phan finally agreed that Andy Reid was as complicit as McNabb, and that everyone assumed the Walrus II would ultimately leave town on the same bus. We left it at agreeing to disagree, while hoping to compare notes after the season. The Look Man has the Genocide Vix finishing ahead of the Iggles when the smoke clears.

So, we have Aaron (Staff of Moses) Rodgers versus the laziest offense in the NFL, 32<sup>nd</sup> in short yardage. The Cheeseheads dropped 59 on the Colts in the preseason, and they will dispatch the Iggles on Sunday. Go Pack, go!

### San Francisco at Seattle (+3)

Pete Carroll discarded the USC Trojans like a discarded condom, en route to his third head coaching job in the Big Boys League. For those who don't remember, Carroll was laughed out of both the Jets and Chowds jobs after desultory performances. His rah-rah attitude brought snickers from the pros, and his lack of real time decision making was comical.

Carroll now faces Mike Singletary and a solid defense in the weak NFC West. The talent level in Coffeetown is bad, and Carroll released TJ Houshmandzadeh despite having no replacement. QB Matt (Hair Club for Men) Hasselbeck's bad back won't get healthier as rookie LT Russell Okung is out.

Add it all up, and you have a Niners win and a long season for HCFM. Niners.

### Dallas at Washington (+3.5) Football Nite in America

The Pokes have gone on record as saying they will be playing a home game in February, but the Look Man begs to differ. Despite all of the sturm und drang in DC, the Genocide Victims will surprise the Pokes and the rest of the NFC Beast.

It starts with this one, as the Pokes offense has been stagnant in the preseason. Romo struggled in Minny in the NFC Divisional Playoffs and those struggles continue as he gets used to his new weapons.

The Pokes O-line resembles a M\*A\*S\*H unit in Week One. While the injuries look to address themselves prior to the meat of the schedule, the biggest impact is the potential delay in the O-line gelling. New LT Doug (World B) Free has Romo's blind side, after Flozell Adams was destroyed by the Vikings in the Divisional Playoff.

At this point, LT, guard and RT all seem in flux and Romo's body is taking a pounding. Romo hasn't been hit this hard since Jessica Simpson jumped on top of him in bed last season. Ba-dum-tum!

Look for McNabb, the Genocide Vix new Cowpoke Killa QB, to dominate in Week One. Hail to the GVs to cover and win.

*Baltimore at NY Jets (-2) Monday Night Football I*

HBO's Hard Knocks series has featured the bombastic Rex Ryan spouting some pretty good invectives to get his young squad motivated. Now that Sexy Rexy has crowned the Jets as future champs, they need to back it up on the field. Unfortunately the offense has sputtered and QB Mark Sanchez has the deer in the headlights look of a second year player.

B-More has issues in the secondary, but the linebacking corps is solid. Tack on a receiving corps that added Anquan Boldin and TJ Houshmandzadeh, and you have a formidable team. If they needed additional incentive, Sexy Rexy and the J-E-T-S have provided it in spades via trash talking and bravado.

The Look Man is picking the Dumpster Ducks to go all the way to February. It starts here as QB Joe Flacco wins and writes "first win in the new stadium" in the visiting locker room. Bal'mer.

*San Diego -4.5 at Kansas City (+4.5) - Monday Night Football II*

Everyone assumes the Bolts will take up where they left off and perhaps they will. The absence of LT Marcus McNeill and WR Vincent (Price) Jackson says otherwise. In fact, when we last saw the Bolts, they were getting pounded by the Jets physical running game in the AFC Divisional Playoff.

They now face a great running team in the KC Chiefs. The Baby Backs stable includes young Turk Jamal Charles and Thomas Jones of the Jets. If they can run the football effectively, they will give the Bolts fits, allowing QB Matt Cassel to throw to... Never mind, Bolts cover and win at KC. Bolts.

**EPILOGUE**

The Look Man would like for each of you to send your NFL 2010 picks for the regular and post season, including playoffs and Super Bowl. We took a year off last season, but after the incredible success of Da Gorilla in picking the NY Giants to beat the 18-0 Chowds, it's time to get back in the saddle.

Send your picks, including wild cards, using the Super Bowl total score as a tiebreaker in care of the Look Man at this email address, and as always, the grand prize is in the hands of Johnny Most. Tell 'em what they'll win John...

Good luck to you and your team in the final season before the NFL goes to a lockout.

To paraphrase the old TV series, there are nine million stories in the 2010 season; the Look Man would just like to tell one of them well.

Peace,

The Look Man