

## **The Look Man Report 2010** **Week Six: You Use Your Head, It's Ovah**

*"Quarterbacks get hit in this league. Tony Romo got hit a lot. There are some of those things, the continuation of plays, those guys are going to get hit. ... We're paying him enough every game. He's going to get hit." – Vikes coach Brad Childress when asked about the frequency of hits on Brett Favre*

Week Six featured some of the most brutal hits ever assembled during four hours of football. Between one and four PM, at least five guys got concussed on brutal hits. The Look Man will go into the NFL's response in detail in the Zebra of the Week feature, but suffice it to say that defenses are now catching up to offenses at this juncture of the season.

The Elimination Bowl in Minnesota last week turned out to be the highest rated regular season game in Fox Sports NFL history. Dallas finally succumbed to Minnesota in a flag-fest which included yet another celebration penalty for the Pokes. When the dust cleared, the Pants on the Ground revenge game ended up being a Lampshade on the Head crusher for Dallas.

The league is unsettled at best, as the red hot Falcons got blown out by the Iggles, New England knocked off Baltimore, and the Jets eked out a win at Investigation Field at Mile High. Even the Niners claimed their first win, and Big Ben returned to the gridiron with a 28-10 thrashing of the Browns. Hope sprang eternal for Houston and Cleveland, with a dramatic zebra aided win for the former, and an actual QB sighting for Cleveland.

The point is that no one knows who the best teams in the NFL are at this point in the season. The Atlanta bandwagon ground to a halt with a broken axle, and other hot teams cooled in Week Six. To quote Hollywood director Robert Evans, "We don't know nothing."

### **ZEBRA OF THE WEEK**

#### *Highlander IV: Unnecessary Roughness*

The Look Man is going to omit the Lagniappe feature this week to focus on a bigger issue: the Unnecessary Roughness penalties for helmet-to-helmet contact. The NFL announced fines of \$175K for last week's explosive hits, but in the Look Man's belief, only the Merriweather hit on Todd Heap even justified a flag. Perhaps the paralyzed Rutgers player on Saturday contributed to the panic, but this is an overreaction, plain and simple. The game has been played for a hundred years, and the league changes the rulebook for three hours of hits? Un-----believable.

The Look Man sought professional help on this topic from noted scientist and Long Suffering Bengals Fan Sundance. Dance is a CDC researcher with an encyclopedic knowledge of work health hazards. When asked about the topic, LSBF had this to say:

*"I don't have any particular genius to contribute the recent introspection by the league pooh-bahs over the proper enforcement of Rule 12, Section 2, Article 8 of the 2010 NFL rulebook. The fact that an inherently violent sport purports to outlaw certain kind of roughness it deems "unnecessary" is kind of comical to begin with.*

*Refs in many sports are given almost impossible jobs. The football rule on unnecessary roughness (UR), drafted as it is to enumerate several specific examples of UR, also strikes me as essentially silent on certain other kinds of UR that could also be defined as cheap shots, or dirty play, that are equally reprehensible.*

*Maybe there are other rules that cover such things, but I'm thinking of Kimo vonCrippler's roll-up on Carson's leg, and Hines Ward's blind-side jawbreaker on (LB Keith) Rivers. Both of those plays seemed obviously dirty, but I don't think either one drew a flag, let alone a fine or ejection (could be wrong – my memory sucks).*

*Point here is that the game is such that on almost every play, some cheap-shot artist can end the career of another player. The goon can be a virtual no-name thug, and the crippled victim could be a luminary that the fans would have been talking about years hence, but for the assassination.*

*The Romans didn't defang the lions, and NFL fans don't want to turn their circus into flag football, but seeing a speeding DB or LB spear a WR when he is defenseless isn't essential to my enjoyment of the game.*

*I guess the discussion is about ejections, fines and suspensions, since there are no new rules being proposed here. I haven't taken the time to explore how the league makes those decisions, but at least with respect to ejections, it is once again, the poor beleaguered zebras (much maligned by certain bloggers and weekly pundits, I know), that are put in the position of deciding how much roughness is too much roughness.*

*Why don't we just do what the Roman Emperors did, and have the fans vote with their thumbs on whether the human spear should take an early shower? “*

The Look Man has a slightly different take. The NFL is engaging in intellectual dishonesty. They claim to want to protect the health of the players, but simultaneously propose to increase the number of injuries in exchange for greater revenues from an expanded schedule. In addition, the NFL is fighting 175 claims from former players for worker related injuries.

The Look Man is not looking for ultra-violence to enhance his enjoyment of NFL play, but even a maligning blogger can see the league is inviting even more subjectivity by zebras. The NFL Rule Book is an esoteric set of closely guarded rules that the average fan can neither see nor understand. If you doubt that, just take a look at what is happening regarding the rules for pass receptions.

Madden's 'three guys in a bar' rule no longer works on receptions, so what hope do we have for UR interpretation? The ZOTW feature could take up the entire LMR before the season is over based on this 'hooley' (sic, with thanks to Zimmer and the Cincinnati InkWire).

No-name thugs have been around forever, but the players tend to enforce their own form of discipline to weed out inappropriate play. In the case of the Browns-Stillers, not one O-lineman meted out anything remotely punitive following James Harrison's hits. In fact, Tony Pashos, the guy who failed to seal the backside on the Cribbs hit, was placed on IR, ostensibly as punishment for his negligence.

The players have an unwritten rule regarding tackling receivers, and it involves preserving the players' legs and career by going high. Failure to adhere results in punishment by enforcers on the field, not by the league. By intervening in this way, the NFL has actually jeopardized its CBA negotiations, and changed the symmetry of the game.

Further, the new edict on headhunting is a control mechanism by the NFL. The zebras can't control the outcome of a game in which a vicious tackle forces a turnover-induced score. The Look Man used to be naïve about the Vegas impact on calls, but it is now pretty blatant.

There is no freaking way you can avoid physical play via legislation. Based loosely upon the *Law of Unintended Consequences* popularized by Robert Merton, this new effort will lead to more, not less, injuries to the tacklers and/or the ball carriers.

The target zone from the rib cage to the sternum makes H2H contact unavoidable. If we lower the target zone, we increase damage, not decrease it.

The Look Man is reminded of Teddy Roosevelt, who saved the game of football after twelve deaths in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Big Stick mandated smart rule changes including the forward pass. These rules preserved and enhanced the game as surely as the NFL's new edict will hurt it.

This problem is not new. Carson Palmer, in a Sept 8, 2009 roundtable between Peter King and some NFL QBs said, *"The truth of the matter is . . . somebody is going to die here in the NFL. It's going to happen."*

*"Guys are getting so big, so fast, so explosive," Palmer said. "The game's so violent. Now that they're cutting out the wedge deal on kickoff returns, those guys [are] coming free, and at some point somebody is going to die in football. And I hope it's not anyone at this table, and I hope it doesn't happen, obviously."*

*Everyone talks about the good old days, when guys were tough and quarterbacks got crushed all the time, but back in the day, there weren't defensive ends that were Mario Williams -- 6-7, 300 pounds, 10 percent body fat, running a 4.7 40."*

The Look Man believes QBs are the least at risk because the hits they take entail less momentum. Unlike a receiver, they are not moving at full speed in the opposite direction when the impact occurs.

The problem is real, but the solution is knee jerk. The NFL needs to slow down and not play Chicken Little with a serious and real problem. By doing so, they again risk killing the Golden Goose.

## **THE LOOK AHEAD**

### *Blitzburgh at Miami (+3)*

Perhaps Bill Parcells knows something we don't. The Big Tuna vacated his Marine Mammals office this week, turning over operations to GM Jeff Ireland and coach Tony Sparano.

Maybe the Fish aren't headed in the direction the Tuna wants to go, or just maybe he's headed to KC to help son-in-law Scott Pioli turn the Baby Backs into the surprise team of 2010, just as he did with Miami a few years ago.

Blitzburgh has a murderer's row schedule with New England, New Orleans and Cincinnati upcoming. Two of those three are primetime night games, so look for the Stillers to have a letdown in South Beach. Also, the women of South Florida are angling to get Ben Rapelessberger in trouble again.

Miami pulled off an inspired win in Titledown last week, courtesy of hard hitting defense and good special teams. Marine Mammals cover.

#### Washington at Chicago (-3)

This might be the Look Man's Game of the Week if not for the Favre Bowl in Green Bay. McNabb returns to his point of origin for a big NFC tilt between two potential playoff teams. The Genocide Victims are winning or losing close, and this one figures to be no different.

Mike and Mike (Mike Martz and Mike Tice) have had time to get their radio show fixed during the bye week. The line protections are just one part of the sad sack issues for the Bears. Jay (the Knife) Cutler must release the ball quicker, and adjust to blind side blitzers. These guys are coming untouched and knocking the edge off of the Knife.

Martz had better get the ambulance ready because it's going to be Caleb Haney if da Bears don't go max protect. Cutler has been sacked fifteen times in six games, a pace that would yield 40 sacks in a season. While those numbers are only half what David Klinger and Tim Couch routinely took, most of Jay's are the decleating variety.

The Look Man has a theory about QBs who return home with limited success. Jim Kelly, Dan Marino and Joe Montana rarely won in their native Pittsburgh. It must be something about losing one's edge, but it's a factor.

Still, the Look Man can't see Washington losing this pivotal NFC battle. DC wins, Mike Martz claims another head coach kill, and Lovie Smith breaks down sobbing while muttering, "Jay...is our quarterback." Smith will be joining Captain Kangaroo and Marvin Lewis on the bread line in January. Washington covers.

#### Philadelphia at Tennessee (-3)

Another GOTW candidate, as Kevin (Korn) Kolb faces off with Kerry (Tom) Collins??? Well, it's tough to know who will start for the Flaming Thumbtacks after Vince Young stupidly hurt his leg going after a lose ball last week. Collins poured up a nice win for Tennessee, but it was only J-Ville.

The Iggles are on a little roll, with one little hiccup: the lost WR DeSean Jackson to a concussion, and he might be done for the season. This is DJ's second major concussion since 2009, and rushing him back would be a replay of the Brian Westbrook saga.

Without DJ to stretch the field, look for Kolb to go all Tom Brady, dinking and dunking for the yardage. The Look Man doesn't like a one dimensional, lazy offense, and Tennessee should prevail. Their front seven is very solid, and deep.

They will put the pressure on Kolb and make the running attack non-existent. Flaming Thumbtacks cover and win, sending the Iggles into the bye week with a QB controversy and a headache. Tacks.

### Cleveland at New Orleans (-13)

New Orleans safety Darren Sharper could return this week, just in time to face the Browns 2.0. The Browns 2.0 partied like it was 1999 in New Orleans on a last second 56-yard TD pass from Tim (Sofa Boy) Couch to Kevin (KJ) Johnson for their first win.

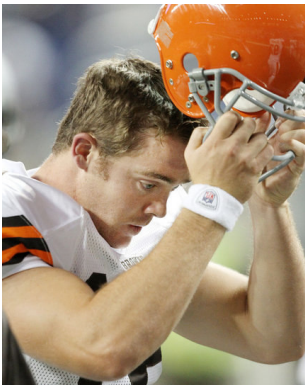
The Look Man was supposed to attend that game, but couldn't get a wing man for what he knew would be an epic performance. Believe it or not, RB Ricky Williams toted the rock 40 times in that 1999 battle. He's still playing a position where the average life expectancy is three years.

Now, a new wunderkind, Cleveland rookie QB Colt (My Little Pony) McCoy could pull a similar upset. The New Orleans secondary has been disrupted by injuries, including Sharper, CB Tracy Porter and CB Jabari Greer. My Little Pony should light up this defense, even with WR Mohamed Massaquoi out with a concussion.

Former New Orleans Saints linebacker Scott (Kodachrome) Fujita, now with the Browns, returns to the city where he won a Super Bowl. Kodachrome has had a solid season, helping the Browns defensive intensity and run stuffing capability. Fujita will help game planning against the Religious Icons, which could keep the Browns in the game.

This is a tough game to predict; the Browns are facing a weakened New Orleans team that must get healthy to face the Stillers in Week Eight. New Orleans has shown offensive balance with RB Corey Ivory. Don't be surprised if MLP throws a pick six in this one, just to mitigate the early positive returns putting him into the Hall of Fame for an adequate start at Blitzburgh.

The Look Man sees the Browns covering the two TD spread, but not winning this game. Too much home field, too much Brees. Browns cover, Saints win.



*Obi Wan, why didn't you tell me?*

### Cincinnati at Atlanta (-3.5)

The Bengos head to the ATL this weekend to attempt to right their ship. They are struggling as usual in the early season, and they need this win before a pivotal AFC matchup with the Marine Mammals next week in the Jungle.

The Dirty Birds broke a wing and nearly DeSean Jackson's neck last week in Philly, but they got buckshot in the process. Korn Kolb lit them up with unusual number of deep balls, and their secondary is reeling with the loss of Dunta Robinson to a concussion.

Robinson is also 50 large lighter in the wallet for his H2H hit on DJ, but the Look Man thought it was clean. Look for the Dirty Bird D to light up some Bengos this week to test the NFL officiating waters.

The Bengos are coming off a bye week, so (Johnny) Carson Palmer's arm should be rested. IF he can keep Atlanta out of his face with a balanced attack, the Bengos actually have a chance in this one.

Mike Zimmer made some comments about his stint in the ATL this week, roasting former Atlanta head coach Bobby Petrino. The newspaper sanitized the comments, but they really weren't billboard material.

What was billboard material were the letters that Ochocinco sent to the Dirty Birds secondary. These letters were then countered by inflammatory comments by Atlanta WR Roddy (McDowell) White. White made the following comments regarding the Bengals:

- "They do a lot of talking before the season started and now we're gonna shatter their dreams, hearts and desires on Sunday."
- "This is not really a big game for us. It's just the next game on the schedule. Unfortunately it's against the Bengals and they think they're good. I don't even know their record – I think they're like 2-4."
- "I'm gonna get working on the DBs that they have. I don't even know these guys' names. But hey, I'm gonna go at them."

Cincinnati CBs Johnathan Joseph and Leon Hall are among the NFL's best. Roddy could end up in a bad *Planet of the Apes* sequel if he isn't careful.

- The Bengals are struggling because Cedric (the Butler) Benson can't catch the rock and he's not a good pass protector. These two factors hurt when the Bengals need to audible out of a bad offensive call. You cannot allow the defense to guess your play calls based upon personnel, but with Benson in, you know what they *can't* run.
- TE Gresham still running short routes. The guy has 4.4 speed and never leaves the line of scrimmage. It makes the offense one dimensional and way too predictable.
- O-line issues. Palmer doesn't trust the right tackle so he gets rid of the ball early. He has been getting tagged so it's hard to blame him. Andre Smith has played more, but again, there's a trust factor.
- Playcalling. Bob (DUI) Bratkowski gets a buck forty four out of The Butler, then goes pass happy down the stretch. The result: fourteen unanswered, two picks and a loss on a last second field goal to Tampa.

Add it all up and you have a bad season for the Bengos. Or maybe just a head coach in the final year of his contract that won't be renewed.

Despite all of this, the Look Man believes in the superiority of the AFC, so he's taking the Nati to cover. Bengos.

### *New England at San Diego (-3)*

Speaking of tough schedules, the Chowds come off a big win over B-More with a game against the hated Bolts. Phillip Rivers will have to face the Chowds without TE Antonio Gates and WR Malcolm (in the Middle) Floyd, who are injured. That means the Men of Thor must use the run instead, and that plays into the hands of the Chowds.

New England seems to have acquitted itself regarding the loss of Moss. Their short passing game was aided by the addition of WR Deon Branch, who lit up Baltimore. Branch might be getting fitted for a Hall of Fame jacket had he stayed in Beantown. Instead, he did a long running stint on the CBS series *Without a Trace* while he was in Seattle. He has plenty of Joe Montegna autographs to prove it. More importantly, they had a balanced attack with Ben-Jarvis-Green Ellis (the Law Firm) and Danny Woodhead.

The Bolts don't match up well against a balanced attack as indicated in losses to Oakland and KC. The Chowds may get caught up in the Look Ahead factor with Randy Moss returning to town in Week Eight. **Push.**



*"I heard you found Branch doing porn in Bellingham."*

### *Minnesota at Green Bay (+2.5) Game of the Week [Football Nite in America]*

Charlie Sheen stars as Brett Favre in *Crotch Shots! Part Deux*, while the Cheeseheads attempt to stop the streak at Favre 2, Pack 0. The Look Man learned that the Pack has sold 30,000 of a special edition Favre T-shirt for the affair. No word on whether Jenn Sterger is going to sing the National Anthem.

As usual, the Pack is so banged up that it can't withstand the onslaught. They are down to two healthy D-linemen, Jermichael Finley is out for the year, and there's a panic in Cheesehead Park. The Look Man is not sure what Football God QB Aaron Rodgers ticked off, but he can't buy a thrill against the Hornheads.

The only chance the Cheeseheads have is the Lookahead Factor, with the Vikes going into Beantown to face the Chowds in Week Eight. The Look Man doesn't think that'll be enough to stop Adrian Peterson from running all over the decimated defense. Plus, Percy (Percy, Me) Harvin is a matchup nightmare for a defense missing linebackers. Even Poppinga got nicked up last week, joining Clay Matthews on the M\*A\*S\*H\* chopper.

Brett's a Wranglers man, always was, always will be, but he only threw nineteen times in the win over Dallas. He'll throw about the same this week in a Vikes win. Vikes, baby, Vikes.



*Limited edition sold with audio CD...*

### *Giants at Dallas (-3) [Monday Night Football]*

The G-Men swept the Pokes in 2009, including the inaugural game at the Jones Dome in Big D. Despite their anger at Eli Manning for desecrating the walls of the new stadium, the Pokes were unable to avenge the loss later in the Meadowlands.

The Jynts are quietly assembling the same kind of season that they had during their Super Bowl championship year. They started off slowly, found their offensive personality, and got on a late roll.

These guys have knocked off Houston and Chicago (when they were considered good), and played tough against a scrappy Detroit team. Their losses were courtesy of an eleven penalty game against the Flaming Thumbtacks, and an Indy team where Eli's big brother plays.

The Pokes are racking up the yardage, but can't get out of their own way with mistakes. The celebration penalty and late Romo pick were only the latest problems for a team averaging 400 yards of offense. Based upon their numbers on both sides of the ball, you'd think they were 4-1, not 1-4.

The Look Man believes the G-Men own Dallas, much like Philly did during the McNabb era. The zebras get involved, pushing for America's Team to right the ship. Too bad, because it would be worth another loss just to see the "Wade Phillips Face" on Captain Kangaroo and Jerry Jones. Pokes.





*The aforementioned WPF...*

## **EPILOGUE**

The big games this week are largely interconference affairs. The Bengals, Browns and Flaming Thumbtacks face Atlanta, New Orleans and Philly respectively. If the AFC wins two out of these three, the NFC will stand for No F-ing Chance in the Super Bowl.

The season is nearly at the halfway point and we still don't have clear-cut favorites. Indy, San Diego and Green Bay are in trouble with injuries to key personnel. Joseph Addai and Dallas Clark are out indefinitely, Antonio Gates had a knee scope and will miss several weeks, and the Pack is a hot mess.

It looks as if a surprise team or two is in the cards this season. The Niners still have a remote chance to climb back in the race, the Pokes are a few key NFC East competitors' injuries away from contending, and the Vikes have a tough road ahead with New Orleans and New England upcoming.

It's flip a coin time in the NFL, and the last thing we need is some Bud Selig-esque monkeying around with the rule book. Be careful what you wish for NFL, you may just get it.

Peace,

The Look Man