

THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2012

Week Three – The Power of Three

“Watching football is like watching pornography. There’s plenty of action, and I can’t take my eyes off it, but when it’s over, I wonder why the hell I spent an afternoon doing it.” - Author Luke Salisbury, seconded by the Look Man

PROLOGUE

Sunday was an excellent object lesson in the referenced quotation as the Bengals pulled out a wild one vs. the Pack (with a little help from their equine cousins). The game was wildly entertaining, the first time in NFL history that a team was down 14, and then up 16, only to lose the contest.

Both teams attempted to give the game away, and the Pack finally succeeded. Along the way, the Zebras butchered the rule book, and FS George Iloka received a letter from the league office for concussing folks with impunity.

But the biggest story of the week was the Colts win over the Niners. Luck and the Ponies gave Frisco a taste of its own medicine with a power running game and physical defense. Kaepernick looked pedestrian, and the Pistol looked waterlogged. The Look Man predicted the death of the spread in the NFL, and so far, Philly and SF are 1-2 using it.

Honorable mention goes to the Browns win over Minny. Journeyman QB Brian Hoyer threw for three bills and three picks in a weird trifecta. The Browns come up with a wild win after trading their best offensive player. Just to add some icing on the cake Browns punter Spencer (Manning) Lanning threw for a score on a fake, becoming the first man in NFL history to kick an extra point, throw a TD, and punt in a single contest. At halftime, Lanning went up into the stands and sold popcorn and made a TV commercial for “football on your phone.”

The return of WR Josh Gordon is bearing fruit already for Cleveland. All of you fantasy owners had better snatch this kid up if you can. He is special.

Without further ado, the Week that Was:

LAGNIAPPE

Youth Served Here – Part II

The Look Man discussed the impact of youth in the NFL coaching staffs last week. This week, it’s the players, with five teams averaging in the low twenties. It seems somewhat counter-intuitive, but three of the top five youngest teams made it to the postseason last year, and a number of these teams could repeat in 2013.

Here are the top 5 youngest teams in the NFL (Note: these numbers were based upon 2012 and prior to free agency and the trade of T-Rich):

5. The Cleveland Browns have missed the playoffs the last ten years, but the Browns and Cavs are both extremely young and on the come. RB Trent Richardson has been replaced by eleven year vet Willis McGahee, who has a special wheelchair exemption. The Barking Dawg D is top five versus the run, and these guys just might be for real - - - in 2013. Future stars: DE Paul Kruger, DT Desmond Bryant, WR Josh Gordon, and CB Joe Haden.

4. Minnesota Vikings made it to the playoffs in 2012 on the legs of Adrian Peterson, who nearly broke Eric Dickerson’s season rushing record. This season, they have struggled, largely due to QB (Sister) Christian Ponder, who couldn’t hit the ocean if he was in a boat.

The Hornheads were one of the biggest winners in the draft, picking up: DT Sharrif Floyd out of the University of Florida, a top ten pick who went at 23. NFLN's Mike Mayock called him the draft's "most explosive defensive tackle" and NFL Films guru Greg Cosell labeled Floyd "without question" the top college prospect in all the land. The Vikes also obtained CB (Dr. Charles) Xavier Rhodes from Free Shoes U, and WR Cordarrelle Patterson from the University of Tennessee.

3. Indianapolis went from 2-14 to the postseason in 2012, and QB Andrew Luck is the real deal, with 4,374 passing yards and 23 passing touchdowns. Luck has underrated athleticism, can move in the pocket, and generally owns the huddle. Coach Chuck Pagano has to prove he can meld his talent into a top team, but he is off to a great start. Future stars: WR T.Y. Hilton, RBs Trent Richardson, and Vick Ballard. On defense, Dwayne Allen and LaVon Brazil. All of these guys are 24 years old or younger.

2. Green Bay has a top GM in Ted Thompson, and perhaps the best organization in the NFL. They compete every season, and despite not overpaying players, they have the fourth youngest average age ranking for offensive starters in 2013. Thompson's squad is composed of 56 percent with two years of NFL experience or less, and 27 rookies.

Future stars: DE Datone Jones (UCLA), DT Josh Boyd (Mississippi State), both big and physical. Alabama RB Eddie Lacy and sleeper RB Jonathan Franklin, who cost them a game last week in Cincy. Big 10 DB of the Year, CB Micah Hyde rounds out the mix on defense.

1. The St. Louis Rams play in a division with the Niners and Seahawks, but they are rising. Former Thumbtacks CB Cortland Finnegan is teaching the young'uns, and head coach Jeff Fisher is solid in a tough NFC. On offense, the Rams boast QB Sam Bradford, at 25 years old, speed burning rookie WR Tavon Austin and TE Jared Cook. All of these future stars are 26 years old or younger.

If you add Detroit and Oakland to this mix, it's obvious that youth will be served in the NFL in 2013. The question is whether teams can coach up this talent, or get canned before realizing their dream. Bradford is a prime example of a kid who has had four different offensive coordinators in his limited time. Like Brandon Weeden, this approach is antithetical to long term success.

ZEBRA OF THE WEEK

St. Louis at Dallas: Carl Cheffers failed to see Pokes WR Dez Bryant push CB Cortland Finnegan to the ground in the end zone, on an early TD pass. Even former Pokes WR Michael Irvin believes this was a bad call, and he nearly perfected offensive PI.

Cleveland at Minnesota: Bill (Done) Leavy torched his chances at a Super Bowl gig by calling a foul on Hornheads Coach Leslie Frazier on a replay. Instead of costing the Hornheads a timeout, a 15-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty ensued, ala Jim Schwartz in Detroit. The NFL changed this rule before the season, but apparently no one told Leavy.

The revised rule states that if a coach challenges a play that is subject to a booth review only, his team would be charged with a team timeout and no yardage would be assessed. If the team is out of time outs, a 15-yarder is assessed. Last week vs. Cleveland, Frazier had three timeouts remaining and it may have changed the balance of a four point loss.

Done Leavy's crew also blew one in the Green Bay-San Francisco Week 1 game, giving the 49ers an extra down on a dead ball foul that led to a game winning score.

Green Bay at Cincy - Clete Blakeman: Cletus went all Fantasia in this game, calling fouls at will and setting the Bengals up for an American Idol finish. It culminated in a 4th down fumble return that never should have counted.

If there is a fumble on fourth down, only the fumbling player may recover and advance the ball. If a teammate recovers the fumble, the ball is dead and the ball is returned to the spot of the fumble. Most folks remember the Dave Casper "Holy Roller" play, but this obscure rule applies even before the last two minutes. When S Reggie Nelson fumbled the game winning TD return, this play should've been blown dead, not returned by Terence (Toast) Newman for six.

In addition, the personal foul/roughness call on Trammond Williams set up a key Bengals score, and the QB roughing call against the Bengals added to the folly. The Zebras took a very entertaining contest and cheapened it with ridiculous calls.

Clete Blakeman, you are the Look Man's ***Zebra of the Week!***

THE LOOK AHEAD

The Look Man has struggled in 2013, as teams figure themselves out. Week Four is no different, as upset picks abound.

Cincinnati at Cleveland (+4): The Browns pulled off a minor upset last week in the Twin Cities, but this week is a real test. QB Brian Hoyer gets another start at QB, and if he does well, Weeden better practice holding a clipboard, because that's all he'll be doing for the balance of 2013.

On the opposite side, Coach Marvin Lewis is making all the right noises. The Bengals are 6-2 in Cleveland over the last eight. Oddly, AJ Green plays better on the road than at Pall Bearer, and Andy (The Red BB Gun) Dalton averages three bills and three TDs against the Browns.

There are two keys to beating the Nati: (1) stop the run and force them to throw, making the offense unbalanced between run and pass, and (2) go no huddle, in order to tire out the defensive line rotation. The Bengals are hurting in the secondary, and they added SS Chris (Betty) Crocker this week. The former Browns' safety has played well against Cleveland the last two years, returning from the scrap heap and baking up turnovers seemingly at will.

As predicted last week in Green Bay-Cincinnati, "...the Bengals struggle against any team with a solid TE...", and Cleveland has an excellent one in Jordan Cameron. Let's hope SS George Iloka doesn't take his head off the way he did Jermichael Finley last week. Iloka received an invitation to the NFL Ball in the amount of fifteen large for that hit. Since he only makes \$48K per game, that was fairly significant, especially since Finley was a featured player in the GB game plan.

The Browns have yet to see rookie sensation Gio Bernard at RB, but they have a stiff run defense. The Look Man believes this factor will create turnovers. And turnovers create wins.

Cleveland rocks and the Browns roll, as the Bengals get caught looking ahead to the Chowds in Week Five at Pall Bearer Stadium. Browns.



Hoyer: One more start or full time QB?

Chicago at Detroit (-3): Odd spread here. The Bears have a dinged up secondary, and Detroit has been rolling offensively, even without RB Reggie Bush (41). Again, the presence of a three-headed monster in Calvin (Megatron) Johnson, and twin TEs Joseph Fauria / Tony Sheffler.

WR Nate Burleson allegedly broke his wing when a pizza slid off of his car seat, and his attempt to catch it caused a one car collision. Someone may need to drug test Nate. Just sayin'.

Cutler and the Bears have been living on borrowed time, largely due to a defense which scores. Every season the Monsters of the Furniture Mart defense is fantastic until Week Six. At that point, there is enough film to figure them out, and dominate.

A win would put the Bears up two in the division, and three over Green Bay. The Bears have owned the Lions lately, but the Look Man predicts it comes to an end in Week Four. Lions.



"Pass the jizzo please."

Jynts at KC (-4): The Jynts are turning the ball over left and right, with Eli Manning leading all QBs. The Chiefs are taking the ball away with amazing skill, flipping the script from 2012, when they were -24 on turnovers. Why, then is the spread only four? Vegas, baby Vegas.

The Look Man really likes Eli, but his O-line is awful. The Jynts need this game to keep parity in the NFC Least, where the Pokes are threatening to run away and hide. The Baby Backs won a very emotional game at Philly last week, and Andy (The Walrus) Reid could always return to form with a greedy pass attack and not enough pounding the rock.

The Look Man would love to take the G-Men, but their offense is pathetic. KC.

Indy at J-Ville (+8): The Ponies crushed the Niners last week, and Coach Chuck Pagano is attempting to rein them in by placing mousetraps around the locker room. The metaphor is meant to indicate that the Jags are a trap game, but J-Ville always plays tough against Indy.

RB Ahmad Bradshaw is a scratch, so Trent (T-Rich) Richardson will have to create issues for J-Ville. The Look Man is taking the points as one of the 0-3 teams has to win at some point. Jags to cover in a division matchup.

Dallas at San Diego (+2): The converse of the equation in the NFC Least. The Pokes are not as good as their record, and they are banged up on the D-line after losing DE Anthony Spencer for the year. DeMarcus Ware is having a fantastic year, and the Bolts O-line is smarting from injuries. Romo is lighting it up, with a QB rating above 90, and few turnovers.

On the other hand, Rivers is nearly leading the league in fewest sacks, and his 3rd down conversion percentage is solid. Denver castoff WR Daryl Royal is a fantasy dream, scoring TDs in bunches.

Dallas is looking ahead to a Week Five game against the Broncos. Look for the Bolts (who should be 3-0) to rebound and get a W here (they ought to be 3-0, anyway). Rivers and Company light up the Pokes as home dogs. Bolts.

New England at Atlanta (-2): The Chowds are in for a rare battle as they had to the ATL for a possible Super Bowl preview. The Falcons are banged up in the secondary, but TE Rob Gronkowski is a game time decision, and Danny Amendola is iffy.

The Dirty Bird defense is giving up rushing yards in bunches. This game is a desperation game for the ATL, where New Orleans is threatening to run away with the NFC Souse. Atlanta plays tough at home, 23-2 under Matty (Ice) Ryan, but RB Steven Jackson is out, and WRs Julio Jones and Roddy White are nicked up. Look for TE Tony (T-Gone) Gonzales to have a big game.

You ever noticed what happens when Brady goes up against a heralded QB? He lights them the F up. Chowds win outright, putting a burden on the Falcons. Chowds.

EPILOGUE

Things may get interesting as we approach the end of the first quarter of the season. So far, a lot of teams are either undefeated or winless, so something has to give. Washington, Pittsburgh, the Jynts, Tampa Bay, Minnesota and J-Ville are all winless, while the number of 3-0 teams is long. The Bears, Chiefs, Chowds, Religious Icons, Seahawks, Donkeys, and Marine Mammals all boast a spotless record in Week Four.

Parity will win out, and several of these undefeated teams will stumble in Week Four. In addition, the Stillers and Hornheads play in London, and one of these teams will remain 'defeated' at 0-4. Any way you slice it, this season has been hilarious, and the difference between winning and losing comes down to key officiating calls.

The Look Man delights in saying it takes three to four weeks for an offense to jell. Well, it's Week Four boys; start jellin' like a felon, or it's over.

As for Cleveland, a win over the Bengals puts them at 2-2 after four weeks. Not bad for a team that faced three 2012 playoff participants, plus the Marine Mammals, who spent \$150 million on free agents in the offseason.

Peace,

The Look Man