

THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2014

Week Ten – Point of Emphasis

"It was definitely not a push-off. I'm running down the field telling myself, 'Whatever you do, don't push off.' It's interesting how guys grab me everywhere on the field and I put literally two fingers on somebody, and they make that kind of call." - Saints TE Jimmy Graham, on the offensive pass interference call that negated the winning touchdown against division rival Frisco.

PROLOGUE

The NFL has established offensive and defensive holding as a point of emphasis in 2014, and it is screwing up the game. Saints TE Jimmy Graham had a game winning TD overturned last week as regulation expired. Steve (Jacob Jingleheimer) Smith had a GW TD overturned in a division game at Cincy two weeks ago. In a game where every defensive foul except encroachment results in a first down, teams are converting on third and forever courtesy of defensive PI calls.

The net effect of the calls is increasing scoring in 2014. The game has become a haven for fantasy owners, but the product is unwatchable. The fans and players are looking around after every incomplete pass to see whether a flag was thrown. Zebras are on TV more often than Leave it to Beaver reruns, and the product suffers. The Look Man would like less zebra and more defense. Or simply, just to have the games decided on the field and not by the folks of the equine persuasion.

Without further ado, the Week that Was...

LAGNIAPPE

Does CBS stand for "Colossal Blowout Show??"

The Browns dismantled the Bengals on Thursday Night Football on NFL Network last week 24-3. The game was played in nasty cold and windy venue, and Bengals QB Andy (The Red BB Gun) Dalton ended up with a QB rating of 2, creating the following internet meme:

- *Did you hear about the latest overpriced software? That's right! Andy Dalton 2.0!*

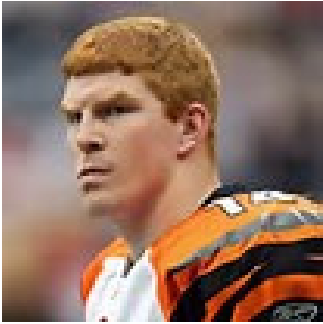
There have been nine Thursday night prime-time games thus far in 2014, and only three of them have been watchable. In addition to the latest blowout, we had Atlanta 56-14 over Tampa Bay, Green Bay 42-10 over the Vikes, and Jynts 45-14 over Washington. Ten games have been decided by over 200 points, and now that the games are on NFLN, no one is watching.

Further, it's clear that the NFL cares more about money than player safety. Bengals DT Geo Atkins got his knee rearranged last season, and asking teams to play two games in five days defines 'cruel and unusual punishment.' Perhaps this is why the TNF games have stunk, but something must be done.

Prime Time?

After the Battle of Ohio Part One, Browns QB Brian Hoyer was interviewed by NFLNs Deion Sanders. "There was a \$100 million quarterback on the field tonight (Dalton), and I didn't know which one it was," said Prime. "But the one that's sitting right here. ...And I don't talk a man's money unless his game is funny. That's my rule. Tonight, that game was funny. If that kid can make a hundred, this kid can make a hundred. Pay this man."

Dalton just received a generous contract, and continues to stink it up during prime time games. The Look Man has called Dalton the Red BB Gun as an homage to The Christmas Story movie featuring Ralphie and Darren McGavin. While TRBBG is awful, his contract bodes well for Hoyer, a free agent. Hoyer could be in line for an incentive laden deal at season's end, putting him in the same pay league as Cutler and Dalton. Hopefully, he won't play like either in 2015.



"You'll shoot yer eye out, Kid"

The Good Hands Team

The 2014 draft may go down in history with the '83 QB draft as one of the best for wideouts. The list of outstanding rookies includes:

- John Brown (Arizona)
- Odell Beckham (Jynts)
- Mike Evans (Tampa Bay)
- Sammy Watkins (Buffalo)
- Martavis Bryant (Stillers)
- Brandin Cooks (Saints)
- Jordan Matthews (Iggles)
- Kelvin Benjamin (Carolina)

These guys are lighting it up in 2014, largely courtesy of the point of emphasis rules. John Elway, Jim Kelly, and Dan Marino have nothing on these young stars, many of whom are headed for big paydays.

It used to be that the complexity of the NFL passing game meant that it took two years to see talent at receiver. Other than Randy Moss, no rookies really tore up the league. Now, you have more than a half a dozen guys wearing out defenses. Hmmm....

(note: speaking of Moss, if you get a chance to watch ESPN's 30 for 30 called "Rand University," do it. It was outstanding effort produced by Bomani Jones of Around the Horn and Highly Questionable.)

ZEBRA OF THE WEEK

Cleveland at Cincy: Jeff (Beanbag) Triplette

A punt return fumble and bad defensive PI call was the only reason this game wasn't a 24-0 shutout. Beanbag threw so many flags that despite the 52 running plays by the Browns, the game went nearly to midnight. Triplette has had it in for Cleveland since Orlando Zeus Brown shoved him down after beanbag put his eye out. In back to back weeks, the Browns have faced Terry (Bottlegate) McAulay and Beanbag. Who's next, Walt (Tuck Rule) Coleman?

Alabama at LSU: Tom Ritter

The Look Man is not a huge college football fan, but last Saturday's lineup was epic. The Look Man watched the Ohio State Buckeyes destroy the Spartans, but the Bama-LSU game caught his attention.

A loss by Bama would upset the cabal that is the NCAA playoff system. Instead, a personal foul call after a key late fumble pushed LSU out of FG range and decided the game. Never mind that the game went to OT; the call should've been offsetting, as the Bama team was pushing and shoving every single LSU player.

When the game went to OT, it was over: Les Miles never saw a winnable game he couldn't lose.

Tom Ritter is the Look Man's **Zebra of the Week**.

THE LOOK AHEAD

Week Eleven features some fantastic games between competitive teams. Philly at Green Bay, Detroit at Zona, New England at Indy are all must see TV. Tack on Cincy at New Orleans and Houston at Cleveland, and you have a great slate. The Look Man sees the wheat being separated from the chaff this week, and casual fans will have a better sense of contenders and pretenders by Week Twelve.

Houston at Cleveland (-3):

The Houston Slim Shades have looked stout defensively and challenged offensively, largely on the basis of QB Ryan (The Great Kazoo) Fitzpatrick. The Great Kazoo was replaced during the bye week, creating a Brady Backup bowl featuring former Chowds Ryan Mallett and Brian Hoyer.

The Look Man knows little about Mallett with the exception of the fact that he can throw a football nearly 90 yards in the air. Hoyer is having a great season based upon his talent, but this game is going to be tough.

Houston is getting folks healthy at the right time with ILB Brian Cushing, CB Jonathan Joseph and DE Jadaveon Clowney all expected to play. Tack on MVP candidate JJ Watt and the possible return of RB Arian Foster, and you have a perfect trap game for C-Town.

Here's the deal: someone asked the Look Man if the Browns were for real following their blowout of the Bengals last week. The answer is no, they are simply learning to win. The Browns have a week schedule against the AFC and NFC Souse teams and they are feasting. This team was expected to win six games in 2014, and they may regress to the norm. They learned something with two solid division wins against the Stillers and Bengals, but they have room to grow.

Houston is a bad matchup for the Browns. They run the same offense, so the Houston D sees what Hoyer wants to do every day in practice. Houston is coming off a bye. Foster is a better running back than all three of the Browns Three Headed Monster. And Watt will bat at least two Hoyer passes, one of which will result in a pick.

But there is one factor that the Look Man has seized upon: former Houston RB Ben Tate would like to prove he should still be playing there. Look for Tate, West, and underrated Crowell to pound the rock in a frigid turf, wearing down Houston and sealing the win. Browns, baby Browns.

Cincy at New Orleans (-6):

The Religious Icons lost a winnable game in OT last week, but they are still in first place in the NFC Souse at 4-5. Brees and Jimmy Graham will go off on a feisty Bengals team missing two LBs in Burfict and Mauluga. The Bengals try to make

it a track meet, but go down. As always, any team with a good TE beats the Ugly and Black, and Graham is superior. New Orleans.

Philly at Green Bay (-6):

When is the last time a 7-2 team was a six point dog in the NFL. The issue here is QB play. Aaron Rodgers is The Truth, while Mark Sanchez is a pretender. Sanchez is far and away the most turnover prone QB this side of Jay Cutler, and he will give it up like a cheerleader on barbiturates in Green Bay.

This one is tough however, if only because every team that has blown up the week prior has struggled. Discount Double Check put up six TDs IN THE FIRST HALF last week. The problem: a poor running game that forces DDC to throw the ball 40 times a game, which is antithetical to winning against a team that runs a play every 17 seconds. Pack wins with defensive scores in a high scoring affair. Take the over.

Seattle at KC (-2):

KC won at tough road game last week at Buffalo, and their reward is to play the defending world champs. Seattle looked like world beaters against the Jyntz, making a close game into a blowout with a physical run game spearheaded by Marshawn (Beast Mode) Lynch.

KC has a stout defense featuring LB Justin Houston and a solid but underrated defensive backfield. Their front seven is as good as anyone in the league, and they win with adequate offense. QB Alex Smith has zero TDs to a wide receiver, but Seattle's defense shuts down receivers anyway.

Seattle is not a good grass team, and will struggle in the noise of Arrowhead. Jamal Charles and Knile Davis give Seattle a taste of its own medicine, pounding the rock against a front four that lost DT Brandon Mebane. Mebane is the glue of the Hawks D-line, and they will miss him more than you think. Baby backs.

Detroit at Arizona (-1.5):

The Lions are the best team no one is talking about, but Phoenix is where good teams go to die. Backup Drew Stanton is good enough to win, and the Zona defensive backfield can shut down the agile Detroit receivers. Matt Stafford got tenderized in the win last week vs. the Marine Mammals and this defense is better. Megatron gets his, but Golden Tate and the rest of the Lions do not. Cardinals.

New England at Indy (-3):

Indy is quietly one of the best teams in the NFL, and the Chowds have been on fiyah since getting their nationally televised tails kicked at KC. Since that blowout loss, the Chowds have lit up the Bears, Bengals, and Broncos. So why are the Colts going to win this week? Because their name has no "B" in it.

The real reason: the Ponies match up well with the Chowds, who cannot run the football and depend on Gronkowski to make their offense go. Andrew Luck needs to win this one to get folks not to focus on the bad neck beard, and provide legitimacy. Luck is currently on pace to exceed Peyton (The Sheriff) Manning's single season passing record of 5477 yards. Perhaps more importantly, the road to the championship begins with not having to face NE at Foxboro, where the rules of football don't even apply, especially in the postseason.

Colts reverse the tide and get the Chowds this week, setting up an interesting stretch run. Colts.

Minnesota at Chicago (-3):

Chicago is the most talented team ever to stink up the league, and the Look Man believes they are attempting to get their coach fired. When this situation happens, stay away from the game. With offensive talent like Cutler, Forte,

Jeffery, and Brandon Marshall, how do you get blown out three times in one season? Marc (The Man With No Eyebrows) Trestman is in trouble, and D-Coordinator Mel Tucker is in line for a version of the home game as well.

The Look Man likes Minnesota's QB, rookie Teddy (Garfunkel) Bridgewater. Look for the Hornheads to light up the Monsters of the Furniture Mart, who have lost three straight at home. Hornheads.

EPILOGUE

Through ten weeks, the NFL has called 338 defensive pass interference calls. In all of 2013 season, the NFL called 410 such penalties. If you extrapolate, that represents a 32% increase in flags for defensive PI only. If you add the offensive PI calls that decided the Ravens-Bengals and Niners-Saints games, you would see a dramatic increase across the board.

The result is the Year of the Blowout. Teams get up double digits, and the opponent has no choice but to throw early and often to catch up. Defensive scoring is up, and blowouts are becoming the norm, especially in prime time games. The very nature of the NFL is changing right before our eyes, and the advent of the 17-13 slobberknocker has been replaced by blowouts.

Folks are talking a lot about playoffs in Week Eleven. The scenarios if the season ended today have proliferated, but don't be fooled. After seeing wild card teams like the Jynts, Stillers and Baltimore win the championship, it's clear that the team that gets hot late can win it all. So let's hold our water before we start using the "P" word before Week Eleven.

It's so bad that Deadbirds coach Bruce Arians is already making comments about backup QB Drew Stanton being capable of taking Arizona to the Promised Land despite the season ending injury to (Johnny) Carson Palmer. The Super Bowl will be played in AZ this February, and Arians is telling his team "...not to let anyone dress in their locker room." No team has ever played a Super Bowl in its own stadium and the Look Man doesn't expect this year to be any different.

Peace,

The Look Man