

## **THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2015**

### **Week Five – Bubble, bubble, toil and trouble**

*"Did you catch it?" "Yeah—just not with my hands!" "Hey, put that on the stat sheet!" Exchange between Browns QB Josh McCown and TE Gary Barnidge after the catch of the year so far.*

#### **PROLOGUE**

The NFL season is nearly six weeks old, and this is the first Look Man Report of 2015. The Look Man has been slammed at work, but the larger reason for the delay has more to do with disgust with the NFL than the workload.

The 2015 season began with a continuation of the Deflategate saga, with Tom (Zoolander) Brady with the most recent legal win over the NFL.

The Look Man compares Goodell to Macbeth, the Scottish king, whose ambition led to a death spiral. When Macbeth visits three Scottish witches to serve as oracles, they murmur a demonic incantation, "Double, double toil and trouble." If you insert Goodell instead of Macbeth, you have an excellent parallel. We all know how the play ends, and this NFL commissioner gig may end badly for Roger.

Roger (Rabbit) Goodell's hubris knows no bounds, and as bad as Deflategate was (and is), the moving of the PAT is worse. This 30 yard PAT is a solution looking for a problem, screwing up point spreads and manufacturing drama out of the ether.

Rabbit is 1-5 in key legal battles: (1) the concussion settlement; (2) Bountygate, (3) the overturning of Greg Hardy's suspension, and (5) Deflategate. He and the NFL actually won Spygate, but only after destroying the evidence and ticking off the Chowds. How many more losses does Rabbit need to suffer before he ends up beheaded and jobless?

Week Five concluded with five unbeatens: the Chowds in the AFC Least, the Cheeseheads in the NFC Norse, Denver, Carolina, and the surprising Bengals in the AFC Asgard. Carolina is coming off a bye with a stiff test in Seattle, and the Bengals look forward to a bye week in Week Seven, with Blitzburgh on the back side.

What do all of these teams have in common? Good health, as many others have had injuries to key players. Seattle has not gotten contributions from Marshawn (Bell Cow) Lynch, the Stillers have lost Big Ben, and the Cowpokes saw Tony Romo (the Place for Ribs) go down with his annual broken clavicle of the year. Depth seems to be as big a key as luck, but both are in short supply in the National...Football...League.

Without further ado, the Week that Was...

#### **LAGNIAPPE**

*Johnny [Insert Nickname Here]*

Browns backup QB Johnny (Rehab) Manziel was detained this week for fighting with his GF in a Cleveland suburb. When the cops arrived, Rehab admitted to alcohol being a factor. The Po-Po were called when drivers on an interstate west of Cleveland were passed by Manziel going about 90 MPH on the shoulder. The Browns backup QB "cut over several lanes of (traffic) and begin to exit" the highway near Johnny's home.

The witness said the driver had his arm and elbow around the neck of his female passenger as she attempted to exit the moving vehicle. Manziel told the Politzei that he and lady friend Colleen Crowley were downtown having adult

beverages earlier in the day and planned to see a movie. Crowley then accused Manziel of "bad driving", a criticism shared by any Browns Fan who has seen him play. Crowley then grabbed his wallet and threw it out of the window, simulating his penchant for turnovers. When Manziel stopped to look back for his wallet, Crowley tried to get out of the car, and he restrained her by ramming her head into the car window. No word on whether the Browns are considering cutting Manzebow, but should. All Johnny Turnover has done in Cleveland is create hate and discontent, and of course, put the ball on the ground.



*Ms. Rehab in happier times*

The Look Man dislikes Johnny Clipboard, and he needs to be part of Cleveland's past.

### Play of the Week/Month/Year

Browns TE Gary (Big Play) Barnidge caught a key TD pass at B-more, using his feet as hands. If you haven't seen the catch, you may want to check YouTube. BPB snags the ball at the goal line against two Dumpster Duck defenders, the second of which was so angry that he tried the slap the ball away after the TD signal.

The play turned the game around for Cleveland, which is enjoying the renaissance of journeyman QB Josh (The Real) McCown. McCown was wonderful for six weeks with the Bears in 2013, and awful for sixteen with the Expensive Corn Kings last season. All he has done in Cleveland is shut the Johnny (Freakin') Football nuts up, which is no small task. The Look Man was reading the Plain Dealer following his scintillating OT win at B-more, the Browns first in the John Harbaugh era. Commenters were maintaining the JFF would have won by 30 instead of three.

The Look Man has nearly gotten into fights with Browns Fans everywhere, simply by pointing out the obvious - - - Johnny Rehab is another version of Tim Tebow; a great college QB with no chance in the NFL. After the last few weeks, the Look Man is simply walking around the sports bars yelling, "JOHNNY WHO????!!!"

## **ZEBRA OF THE WEEK**

### Time – by Hootie and the Side Judge

When the Bolts kicked off to the Stillers on Monday Night Football, the clock read 2:58. Somehow, eighteen valuable seconds ticked off the clock despite the fact that the kick was untouched by human hands. The Stillers ended up winning on the final play with no time remaining, and Side Judge Rob Vernatchi is getting a week off (with pay) to think it over.

NFL VP of Zebra-fication Dean Blandino has clearly put his staff on notice with this suspension, but the better question is why the league insists on changing/reinterpreting rules that work. The NFL has seen four or five instances of catches overturned, including the incredible Detroit-Dallas playoff non-catch by Dez Bryant. John Madden used to say that if three guys in a bar called it a catch, it was a catch. Those three guys would have to be sober as judges to rule on anything in 2015.

The NFL is in a mess right now, and zebra control of games is horrible. Penalties are being called at a rate not seen since the AFL-NFL merger nearly 40 years ago. The result is unwatchable games and too much face time for the Equines. The Look Man actually saw the Tuck Rule called for Andy Dalton and the Bengals in Week Three, and the same play called a fumble in Week Four with Matt Stafford and the Lions. The worse part: it was the same referee – Jeff (Beanbag) Triplette.

Regardless of league interpretation, the number and types of calls is unprecedented. Goodell and the Rules Committee need to take a chill pill, and let the players decide the games.



*"I missed the call by this much..."*

## **THE LOOK AHEAD**

### *Denver at Cleveland (+6.5)*

The 2015 Denver team is straight out of Bizarro World, coming in at thirtieth in total offense and first in total defense. Who would've believed a Peyton (The Sheriff) Manning team could be this bad and still undefeated. The answer comes in analyzing their defense, which is historically good. The Donkeys have are sacking QBs at an historical rate, and are good against the pass and run.

Enter the Browns, which are a surprising eighth in total offense, and thirtieth in total D. Josh (The Real) McCown has quieted the calls for Johnny Drug Test, even before the incident this week. The Look Man, a staunch McCown supporter since his acquisition, believes the Browns can make some noise in 2015. And, by making noise, we are talking about making the road to the playoffs contentious for other teams.

The Look Man likes the Browns chances, but the return of SS TJ Ward, a rolling ball of butcher knives on D, is a bad portent. Ward was ticked that the Browns didn't want to pay him, but they were wary of all the time he spent in the strip clubs. The parting of ways was solid for both teams, with the Browns finding FS Tashaun Gipson, who led the NFL in picks despite missing the last six weeks of the season. It also solidified CB Joe Haden's role as unofficial captain of the secondary.

You may know the Look Man's stance on returning players and coaches, and their impact on the game, but here it is again. When you play a good coach or player that you let go, watch your six, cuz these guys are trying to shoot it off.

Cases in point in 2015: (1) Kyle Shanahan, OC for the ATL, destroying the DC Genocide Vix in Week 5; (2) Cincy OC Hue Jackson's dismantling of the Raiders in Week One; former Stillers OC Bruce Arians and the Phoenix Deadbirds destroying the Stillers in Week Six. Well, that last one hasn't happened yet, but you get the Look Man's drift. It ain't good.

Folks are killing Peyton in Denver, saying he has deteriorating skills. Fact is, while The Sheriff can no longer throw outside the numbers, he is really missing Wes Welker. QBs love a security blanket, a guy who they can count on to be there in crunch time. Welker was Manning's and Brady's blanket. Brady developed a new blanket in Julian Edelman ('s Deli); Peyton? Not so much. Denver Fan is now chanting, "*We all know your arm's doo-doo*" to the Nationwide Insurance jingle.

Haden may not play today due to participation in the concussion protocol, two broken digits, and some sore ribs. Kid is a warrior, but you don't ask a guy to face Demaryius (means 'big, bad man' in Ebonics) Thomas without being healthy. The Look Man still has a feeling about this game that he cannot explain. Browns, baby, Browns.

### Cincinnati at Crapchester (+3.5)

The Bengals are feeling pretty good after a seminal comeback win over the Seahawks in Week Five. The national media has filled the locker room this week giving them head, and everyone is on board with their stultifying defense and the emergence of the Andy (the Red BB-Gun) Dalton. Dalton has become the best deep ball specialist in the league, and TE Tyler Eifert (Tower) is a fantasy favorite.

The Look Man sees the Bengals at Crapchester as a trap game. The Bisons are 'Taylor-made' to beat the Bengals: good TE (Charles Clay), strong D-line and great secondary. The issue is the loss of trigger man Tyrod (and Brakes) Taylor at QB. Backup EJ (Expected Jettison) Manuel will start, but the more important concerns are with Free Agent RB LeSean (Shady) McCoy and WR Sammy Watkins. Both guys will be needed to press the Cincinnati D.

There is one other factor in beating Cincy; you need to go no-huddle a fair amount in order to avoid their defensive line rotation. The Ugly and Black kept eleven D-linemen, and they use a rotation that keeps them all fresh, and the pass rush fast. Destroy that rhythm with the no-huddle, and you have a chance to hit the deep ball on this team.

The Look Man likes Buffalo to cover and win, beating the Bengals and the Zebras. Bison.

### Phoenix at Blitzburgh (+3.5)

The Look Man let the cat out of the bag early on this one, but when you ask your offensive coordinator to leave, and then tell the media that he retired, you had better watch out. The Stillers did that to Bruce (Kangol) Arians, and now he's coming back to Ketchup Field. The Stillers are riding high after a walk-off TD run last week at the Murph, but this one is for real.

QB (Johnny) Carson Palmer is playing with guts again; apparently, he is going all Dabo Sweeney, because he is playing 'BYOG' games every week. Throw in a solid running game, excellent receiving corps, and a solid defense and what do you have? A one-loss team in the NFC, even after Week Five.

The Look Man isn't crazy about this spread. He likes two and hates four, but take Phoenix and the points. Zona.



Hey Tomlin. I'm coming for you.

### New England at Indy (+9): Football Night in America

This Deflategate rematch has the media going wild, as Belicheat and the Chowds figure to dismantle the Colts like everyone else in 2015. Tom (Zoolander) Brady is responding in typical fashion, putting up crazy numbers to protect his legacy. The Chowds were primed for a lookahead loss last week, with Zoolander absorbing five brutal hits in the Dallas game before taking over the Jerry Dome. They were clearly looking ahead to this matchup.

Indy QB Andrew (Hide 'n Seek) Luck is trying to return after two weeks on the injury list. His backup, Matt (Hair Club for Men) Hasselback, won two games in Luck's absence, but no follicly-challenged corporate president figures to beat the Chowds, even if they are customers of their own company.

The real issue for the Ponies is the same as it has always been: they have no running game, and the O-line is on pace to allow franchise records for sacks incurred, and Luck has a bum shoulder to show for it. The Indy pass rush struggles with all of the offensive three and outs, and the result is an average team on the verge of firing its head coach.

This game looks like a doozy on paper, but don't bet on it. Without a solid running game, the Look Man believes the Ponies will look much like they did in the second half of the AFC Championship. Belicheat isn't one to suffer a snitch, and the Ponies ratted him and his deflated balls out to the Zebras. Chowds.



"I may not be the Mona Lisa Vito of football inflation, but snitches get stitches."

### Carolina at Seattle (-7):

The Look Man predicted the Seahawks would struggle in 2015. It's bad enough that head coach Pete Carroll called a pass on 2<sup>nd</sup> and one at the goal line simply to keep Skittles stock prices low, but the Blue Man Group lost key talent on the O-line and defensive backfield. (Dange-)Russ Wilson is on pace to eclipse the number of sacks suffered by David Klingler and newly acquired free agent TE Jimmy Graham (Cracker) is on the side of a milk carton.

Carolina is winning with defense and hard-nosed offense. Ironically, that defense has prospered despite the lack of their best player, LB Luke Kuechly, who suffered a concussion in Week Two and hasn't returned. Perennially underrated QB

Cam Newton is excelling with receivers who aren't even household names in their own households. Luckily, Cam has a not-so secret weapon in TE Greg Olsen, who is ripping it up in 2015.

The Look Man likes this game, largely in part to the fact that the Black Cats are coming off a bye week, and the Seahawks played five quarters against a physical Bengals team in Week Five. This battle for NFC supremacy has a history, with the Panthers beating Seattle on grass several times previously. Unfortunately, this one is not on grass, and the Twelfth Man is going to be a factor. Black Cats cover, Seattle wins.

*Philly at NY Jynts (-4.5): Monday Night Football:*

Everyone was killing Big Blue and (The Book of) Eli Manning, which lost two heartbreakers early. Eli has righted the ship with touch passing and leadership, and the NFC Least division is a mess. Still, Victor Cruz is still out, and uber wide receiver Odell Beckham Jr. (ODB) is nicked up.

Enter the Iggles, which wanted to prove that speed could defeat power in the NFL behind mastermind head coach Chip(munk) Kelly. Alvin tossed out talented players who didn't fit his system, and now the Iggles are struggling.

Look for more of the same as Manning and the Jynts put on a clinic at the Meadowlands. Jynts.

## **EPILOGUE**

Cool weather is coming and teams need to increase their dependence on the running game. Passing is great in September, when warm breezes make the ball nice and soft. In the fall and winter, you had better have a running game, or you are toast.

The increase in Alcoa Fantastic Finishes in Week Five also signals that offenses are finally clicking. Defenses are always ahead of offenses through the first few weeks of any season. By weeks four and five, the offense gets a rhythm, begins to know each other, and yards and points explode.

At this point, teams are in a do or die situation relative to QB selection, offensive personality and run game. As the weather cools, the running games will increase in importance. Similarly, offenses need to be able to run the no-huddle, two and four minute drills effectively.

One other item of note: while the zebras are calling defensive pass interference at alarming rates this season, the offensive inverse is not true. Teams are running 'the bubble screen' at will, and blocking while the ball is in the air is illegal last time the Look Man checked. The rule book states that an offensive player cannot block more than one yard downfield while the ball is en route.

This play is not only indefensible, it's chickenshit. These calls patently unfair to the defense, they are becoming a huge part of the offensive coordinator playbook. It's also why the Look Man butchered Bill Shakespeare's quote at the top, while using the four part meter ('tetrameter') instead of Bill's usual iambic pentameter.

The NFL wants offensive fireworks, even if they have to manufacture them. The result is high scoring games and nearly unwatchable football.

Peace,

The Look Man