

THE LOOK MAN REPORT 2018

Week 20 – Groundhog Day

"You are the face of the league. And you have the responsibility to come out and address issues when they come about. So it's the commissioner's responsibility to do the same thing, and yet we don't hear a peep for 10 days. I don't think he really said much during most of that press conference." - Icons QB Drew (Cool) Brees regarding the gigantic no-call which cost New Orleans a Super Bowl appearance.

PROLOGUE

In the film Groundhog Day, Bill Murray keeps reliving the same day over and over, before finally understanding the meaning of life. The Look Man seems to be doing the same thing after watching the Conference Championship Playoffs decided by fourteen guys in black and white striped uniforms.

The Look Man began prognosticating this matchup way back in Week 12, when he said, "The NFL Zebras squeezed several AFC playoff teams in Week 11 to allow New England back into the home field advantage race. The Chowds have three losses already, but enter into the AFC Least portion of their remaining schedule, a series of ridiculously easy wins that should be illegal." KC, the Bolts and the Stillers all suffered awful calls down the stretch, which positioned New England for a first round bye.

Since the Chowds have never done a damn thing in the postseason without a bye week, that move was critical to their success. Not only did the old men get an extra week to rest and game plan, they tack an additional week on prior to the Lombardi round. Nothing like rest to repair a 41-year old throwing shoulder.

The NFL wanted the Rams and the Chowds and they have gotten exactly what they wanted. It's the second largest TV market in the US, and the first most loved/hated team in the league. Even if you hate the Chowds, you're watching to see them lose. And a legion of young Rams fans is going to remember this game for the rest of their lives.



"Are you sure you have Rams tickets?"

Without further meteorological metaphors, the Week that Was:

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LAGNIAPPE

The Water Boy

KY Senator Rand Paul suffered broken ribs following an attack over a property dispute. Rene Boucher, his attacker, has already served a 30-day prison sentence after pleading guilty to assaulting a member of Congress. He will now have to pay \$585K in damages to Paul.

Boucher, who is the brother of Bobby Boucher, testified that Paul routinely placed lawn debris on his property. Boucher was rebuffed by the senator when he attempted to discuss the issue. Boucher and Paul had wildly different accounts of the attack.

Paul testified that he was straightening up his yard when Boucher hit him from behind with such force that both flew through the air 5 or 10 feet. Paul said he was wearing noise-canceling headphones and didn't hear Boucher coming.

Boucher claims he had been physically burned on his face, neck and arms by a brush pile Paul created near the property boundary. He went into a rage after seeing the senator create yet another brush pile.

Either way, it's not okay to solve conflicts with physical force, but Boucher's hit on Rand will be included in this season's NFL Greatest Hits compilation. No word on whether fellow KY senator Mitch (Turtleneck) McConnell has ever been tackled, but several folks will be lining up if the Shutdown recurs in February.



Boucher: "That's some high quality H-2-O"

The Hype

The matchup has the pundits saying that the Chowds are the Greatest Team of All Time, but the Look Man disagrees. Here's a snapshot of the Chowds win-loss record in the Super Bowl:

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Super Bowl	NE Result	Date	Score	Recap
LII	L	Feb. 4, 2018	Philadelphia 41, New England 33	Nick Foles beats the Chowds with the Philly Special on 4th down, after a strip sack gets them the ball back.
LI	W	Feb. 5, 2017	New England 34, Atlanta 28 (OT)	Tom Brady leads a 25 point OT comeback, beating the all-time biggest SB comeback by 15 points. Numerous calls and bad clock stoppages were missed, forcing ATL to keep New England in the game by passing.
XLIX	W	Feb. 1, 2015	New England 28, Seattle 24	New England picks off the ball at their own 1-yard line despite a clear defensive PI in which the Chowds DB knocks the Seattle WR off his route.
XLVI	L	Feb. 5, 2012	NY Giants 21, New England 17	A smothering defense leads to a quality win for the Jynts.
XLII	L	Feb. 3, 2008	NY Giants 17, New England 14	Eli Manning engineers a win with the Helmet Catch, and some incredible defensive line play. <u>Chowds go 18-1, with the one loss to the New York Football Jynts, a 10-6 Wild Card team.</u>
XXXIX	W	Feb. 6, 2005	New England 24, Philadelphia 21	Andy Reid mismanages the clock, running out of time with the only Iggles team which provided McNabb with any decent receivers.
XXXVIII	W	Feb. 1, 2004	New England 32, Carolina 29	Adam Vinatieri kicks the game winner after rumors of signal stealing, beating Jake Delhomme and the Black Cats.
XXXVI	W	Feb. 3, 2002	New England 20, St. Louis 17	Adam Vinatieri kicks the game winner after rumors of signal stealing, beating the Greatest Show on Turf.

Take away the robberies and they win a couple. Take away the Tuck Rule, and they never even get to this many. Belicheat is great, Brady is great, but their stats are inflated by a poor division and questionable officiating calls too numerous to mention. Deflategate, Videogate, and the Tuck Rule all tarnish the legacy of the Chowds. The Look Man respects them, but don't believe the hype.

ZEBRA OF THE WEEK

Vegas baby, Vegas?

You can say what you like about blown calls, the Look Man believes that gambling has already affected game outcomes. Goodell could have invoked Rule 17, which says the Commissioner has the authority to take corrective measures if any unfair actions take place in an NFL game. If he did so, the NFL would have to indemnify all sports betting outlets for any bets on the Rams-Icons game. Further, it would set a precedent for future gambling losses directly or indirectly attributable to officiating.

Here is Rule 17, Sections 1 and 2:

“The Commissioner has the sole authority to investigate and take appropriate disciplinary and/or corrective measures if any club action, non-participant interference, or calamity occurs in an NFL game which he deems so extraordinarily unfair or outside the accepted tactics encountered in professional football that such action has a major effect on the result of the game.”

Section 2, Article 3:

“The Commissioner’s powers under this Section 2 include the imposition of monetary fines and draft-choice forfeitures, suspension of persons involved in unfair acts, and, if appropriate, the reversal of a game’s result or the rescheduling of a game, either from the beginning or from the point at which the extraordinary act occurred.”

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Instant Replay Review Expansion?

While there was a massive (and legitimate) outcry over the blown DPI call in the NFC championship, there were some horrible calls in KC last week as well. The phantom roughing the passer preserved the game winning drive as did the offsides penalty.

What folks don't get is that the zebras will actually warn players about being offsides. If you've ever seen wideouts point to the sidelines while aligning, you're seeing the fluid process where the line and down judges will indicate compliance. The offsides call on KC LB Dee Ford negated an interception of a Tom Brady pass that would've put KC into Super Bowl LIII, the Big Lie. Instead, the Chowds go to their third world championship in a row.

The Look Man does not even believe that the call was blown. Back Judge Todd Prukop called the pass incomplete without a flag, then waved off Down Judge Patrick Turner, who was about to throw one. Referee Bill Vinovich claimed to have not seen the replay when asked after the game. This thing looked like *Operation No Collusion* on live TV.

The corroborating video, as well as any mention of the zebras' names, has been subsequently taken down from the Internet. A federal judge has also tossed a lawsuit by Saints season ticket holders to replay the game and Louisiana ophthalmologists are offering free eye exams for any NFL official.

Everyone is talking about the NFC championship call, but the AFC calls were just more nuanced. KC clearly didn't play well, but the Chowds received at least two favorable calls that affected the outcome. It seems that Edelman didn't touch that punt, but was there really irrefutable evidence? The phantom roughing call and offsides both turned the momentum to New England.

Confidence is such an important factor in sports. When you're getting calls, you know it, and playing with house money makes performance easier. The Chowds are the darlings of the NFL, and they get home cooking on the road, which is simply awful.



"Where's that confounded bridge???"

Home Cooking?

The Four-Letter Network posted an article questioning the origin of the officials. It turns out that Head Zebra Bill Vinovich, Side Judge Gary Cavaletto, and Back Judge Todd Prukop all live in Southern

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California. Down Judge Patrick Turner, who had primary responsibility on the play, also lives in Los Angeles County.

Had the zebras made the call correctly, New Orleans could have run out most of the clock and kicked a game winning FG. Instead, the clock stopped on the bad call, and the Rams eventually prevailed 26-23 in overtime to steal a trip to the Super Bowl.

The Zebras were forced to leave their hotel in downtown New Orleans due to harassment. They moved to a suburban hotel and some members of the crew watched part of the AFC championship game in the bar without incident.

THE LOOKAHEAD

The Game That the NFL Wanted is on Sunday at 6:30PM. The NFL got the Rams and an entrée into a huge TV market in the US, which solves its Los Angeles problem. After years of musical chairs, the second largest television market is now filled, thanks to Stan Kroenke and his five million dollar privately funded stadium.

Kroenke, a Missouri native, doubled the value of his franchise to \$4 billion simply by moving his team. He can surely afford this stadium, especially when part of the cost is defrayed by rent to the Chargers. Kroenke purchased the Rams in 2010 for the discount price of \$750 million. He just quintupled his money in nine years and a 500% profit is nothing to sneeze at.

In exchange for his 'sacrifice' Kroenke gets into the Hall of Fame, and his team gets into the Super Bowl. In point of fact, he is also guaranteed a Super Bowl in his new facility with a good chance that his team will be the first NFL team to appear at home in a championship.

The league provided preferential treatment to the Rams, sharing San Diego owner Dean Spanos' plan with Rams owner Stan Kroenke. Spanos had a plan to accelerate permit approvals in order to facilitate early opening of a new stadium in Los Angeles. The NFL gave that plan to Kroenke, who promptly doubled the value of the Rams franchise to \$4 billion. The league then told Spanos to share the stadium with the Rams, which has worked out so well in New Jersey.

Here's the Lookahead for Super Bowl LIII, if you need it.

Super Bowl LIII – the Big Lie

Chowds at Rams (+2.5/56.5)

A win by New England would tie them with the Stillers for six Super Bowl victories. A win by the Rams would be their second ring, the first since the Greatest Show on Turf era. Given the history and setup, neither of these teams should even be appearing in the game.

Indicators:

- The only way to beat New England is the way the Jynts and Iggles did: rush Brady up the middle, and knock him off his spot. The edge rush does not affect him, only a rush that threatens his knees, owing to the ACL from years ago.
- LA has Ndamakong Suh, Aaron Donald and Michael Brockers, a solid D-line. You all saw what they did to Dallas' rushing game and make no mistake: the Chowds offense is predicated on a good running game.

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- The Rams must rush the football in order to win. They failed to rush for 100 yards or better in a handful of games this season, winning only one of those contests. The one win: NFC Conference championship.
- Rams QB Jared Goff needs to play great. He pulled a rabbit out of a hat in the NFC Conference Championship with that dime to Brandin Cooks. He will need two or three of those throws on Sunday to give them a chance.

The Pick:

Who can pick against the Chowds? They have appeared in three straight years, and most of the team knows what to expect. This game is won or lost in the two intervening weeks between the conference championships and the actual game. The Rams have their heads in the clouds while the Chowds are on a business trip. Chowds, and it won't be close.

EPILOGUE

The 99th season of the NFL has been an abject failure. Not only is the sanctity of the game at issue, replay and Rooney Rule diversity have now reared their heads. The National Anthem and concussions have taken a back seat in 2018, or have they?

Kaepernick's collusion lawsuit looks like it has real teeth after seeing Mark Sanchez, Josh Jackson and Jeff Driskel start games in 2018. No reasonable person believes that any of these jokers could hold Kap's jock strap.

As regards concussions, the league announced a 30% drop in 2018. The Look Man saw at least three NFL contests in which a clearly concussed player returned to play in an important game. Dak Prescott was a prime example, returning to a game after being so blown up that Tony Romo mourned the fact that he wouldn't be able to return. Three plays later, here comes Dak, emerging from the Blue Tent as fresh as a daisy.

The Look Man cannot cite one reason to support the NFL in its current configuration. Last week's awful officiating was just the capping blow. The NFL has finally and inexorably jumped the proverbial shark, and has become the new WWE.

Enjoy the Super Bowl, but the Look Man will take a pass. After all, it is Groundhog Day.

Peace,

The Look Man