

THE LOOK MAN REPORT 2018

Week 8 – Two for the Money

"You either have the charisma, the knowledge, the passion, the intelligence - or you don't," – Raiders HC Jon Gruden on being a head coach in the NFL

PROLOGUE

The Look Man received a text midweek from devoted Tailpipe Brain indicating that Cleveland Browns Head Coach Hue Jackson had been sacked. A few minutes later, Brain confirmed that OC Todd Haley was also given a version of the home game.

The rest of the NFL kept turning, with the Iggles righting their ship in London, the Seahawks getting on a roll following the death of owner Paul Allen, New Orleans getting jiggy, and the surprising Bolts stringing together some wins. The 2018 season is going swimmingly, especially if you're not the Cleveland Browns.

The Look Man likes the numerous NFL story lines. Just in the last week, the Look Man has heard that Nashville is the best team in the AFC South, the Bears will win the NFC North, and nobody can derail the freight train that is the LA Rams. The Look Man isn't buying any of these stories, but they make for good water cooler talk. And the NFL wins when the water cooler heats up.

Without further moaning about ex-porn star head coaches, the Week that Was.

LAGNIAPPE

Back Together Again for the First Time

KC QB Patrick Mahomes and Baker Mayfield face off Sunday in Cleveland. But the big story angle is a game from 2016 in which these two young gunslingers made history in a college football tilt between Chokelahoma and Texas Tech. The teams combined for an FBS-record 1,708 yards of offense, in which each team posted the exact same yardage numbers - - - 854.

FBS records fell like dominoes, with Mayfield throwing for an OU record seven TDs, and Mahomes throwing 88 times for 734 passing yards. Defense has always been a rumor in the Big 12 conference, but this one was ridiculous.

Cake had just left Texas Tech to walk on at Chokelahoma, and former Red Raider teammate Mahomes seized the job in his absence. It was Cake's first return to Lubbock since his unceremonious departure, and the fans were in rare form, booing him mercilessly. The game featured some big-time collegians who now play on Sunday, including RB Joe Mixon (Mixoff) - Bengals, WRs Keke Coutee (Houston) and Dede Westbrook (Jags), plus OT Orlando (Zeus) Brown Jr. (Ducks) and DL "Obo" Okoronkwo (Rams).

Mahomes entered the game with a severely separated left (non-throwing) shoulder from a game two weeks prior. Cake had an all-world offense, a beefy O-line, and a solid defense. The game became an instant classic similar to the old Holiday Bowl games on ESPN.

The 66-59 final score was crazy by any standard, but even the winners felt like losers. "It felt like we lost. Yeah, we won the game, but we gave up [854] yards. It was quiet, we didn't say nothing on the bus ride home. We were ashamed. Everybody was laughing at us. I looked at my Twitter, and I just deleted the app off there because all our fans were disgusted with us," said Obo.

Bob Stoops, the Chokelahoma HC, finally gave up on defense, choosing instead to keep scoring. The game ended in a kneel down, the Look Man's favorite offensive play.

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Week 8 – Two for the Money

Two For the Money...

The Browns probably did Huger a favor by releasing him, but the timing makes no sense. Jackson becomes the sixth straight Cleveland coach to be fired following the team's second game against the Steelers. Romeo (the Bus Driver) Crennel, Eric Mangina, Pat Shurmur, Rob Chudzinski and Mike (Stone Cold) Pettine all met their demise following game two against the Steelers. Browns owner Jimmy Haslam was a Steelers minority owner before he purchased the Browns.

While it is not unusual for a coach with a losing record to be shown the door, this one is a head scratcher. The Look Man predicted that Huger was being set up from jump street, with the Browns hiring not one, but three former head coaches on his staff. The interaction was clear on HBO's *Hard Knocks*; both Haley and DC Gregg (Double G) Williams went rogue, clearly out to take Huger's job.

Cleveland has a very unusual management structure in which the coaches report directly to the owner instead of GM John Dorsey. This unwieldy organizational structure already resulted in Jackson getting former GM Sashi Brown fired, and it was now his turn.

Owner Jimmy Haslam cited discord on the coaching staff as the primary driver, but it was he himself who created the problem. It is problematic anytime you take play-calling duties away from a head coach, especially one who is 3-36-1. Why not simply fire Jackson before the season and call it macaroni? Dorsey could then have hired his guy to mentor the number one overall pick, probably a former Cheesehead like Mike McCarthy. Or wait until the bye week, allowing the Browns to get healthy for a stretch run in December.

Huger's termination comes 24 hours after the release of Cavs coach Tyronn Lue, who led the team to an NBA title in 2016. Apparently, the Cavs don't have a savior like Cake Baker. The Look Man predicts the Browns run the table with zero wins for the rest of the season, going 2-13-1. Nice.



Beef Cake?

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Week 8 – Two for the Money

ZEBRA OF THE WEEK

There's no Zebra of the Week award this week, but it is notable that equine conferences have gotten longer since the firing of Hugo Cruz for the no call in Bolts-Browns a few weeks back. The zebras discuss every call ad nauseum, and the result is longer games and fan irritation. Just this week, Gronk stepped out of bounds on a first down, a conference ensued, followed by a challenge and a bad review.

Cruz's replacement stunk up the joint last week, but the whole thing feels off. The 2018 season will go down as the worst in officiating history, and the Look Man predicts a game-altering goof in the postseason.

Ineligible Downfield?

"What's that cutoff point for an offensive lineman to be legally down the field in pass pro? When is a guy offsides and when is he not? Is it 12 yards now? Because they're 10 yards down the field on pass plays sometimes," - Denver defensive end Derek Wolfe.

The primary offenders of this rule are KC and New England. Perhaps it's no surprise both teams are leading the AFC on a collision course for the postseason. In point of fact, most of their biggest pass plays came on RPOs and screens.

The Look Man saw the same thing in the New Orleans-Minny game. Linemen are five to seven yards downfield when the receiver catches the ball, and many are engaging defenders before the ball is even caught. It's horrible.

THE LOOKAHEAD

Week 9 features marquee games across the board, so the Look Man won't waste time on the riff raff.

Baby Backs at Browns (+8.5)

The Browns front office decided that the week before KC was the opportune time to fire two coaches. Andy Reid has owned the Browns, and is frankly one of the top two coaches in the NFL today.

Enter interim HC Gregg Williams and the struggling Browns. KC's speed demon offense features former Clevelander RB Kareem (Lamar Jr.) Hunt, former Browns DE Nate Orchard in addition to a host of speedy receivers like Sammy Watkins and Tyreek Hill.

Meanwhile, (Cake) Baker Mayfield has returned to earth, and his pedestrian QBR and turnovers are indicative of who he really is - - - a mediocre rookie QB with bad feet and a rubber band arm. He's holding the ball way too long, picking up sacks in bunches, costing Cleveland wins and Huge Action a job.

Tyrod Taylor could've posted more than the Browns two-win total, but he has been relegated to the bench after suffering numerous hard sacks. Cake is now in the same boat, but most of his sacks are the result of inaction and bad reads. He did have one nice double pirouette in the Stillers game, but he's gonna get hurt if he doesn't get better pass pro.

KC boat races the Browns, setting up a stretch run for the AFC home field advantage. Baby Backs.

THE LOOK MAN REPORT 2018

Week 8 – Two for the Money

Stillers at Dumpster Ducks (-2)

Stillers RB James Conner is having a career year, making everyone ask “Le’Veon who?” B-More quietly has the number one defense in the NFL, so this matchup could be the best of the week.

B-More QB Joe Flacco is putting up typical contract year numbers in an attempt to get another mega deal before he devolves into mediocrity. The Ducks acquired former Pack factor back Ty Montgomery this week for a seventh-round pick and a bag of donuts, and their running game needs help. The Look Man’s questions whether they have the receiving talent to compete.

Big Ben missed a couple of practices this week, but he will be ready on game day. HC Mike Tomlin got his guys ready after a mass murder occurred at a synagogue in his Blitzburgh neighborhood. Tomlin is a doing a solid job in a difficult year.

Look for the Stillers to run, pass and defend big time. Big Ben has the second-best record as a road underdog behind Tom Terrific in New England. Stillers.



Tomlin lives in his hopes, not his fears

Rams at Religious Icons New Orleans (-1)

The Religious Icons took down the Hornheads last week, and under the heading “no good deed goes unpunished, they now face the cream of the NFC in LA. Drew Brees is having a special year, and with Mark Ingram teaming with Alvin (and the Chipmunks) Kamara, New Orleans has the balance to beat LA.

Rams QB Jared (Subway) Goff got a little exposed last week: he really hates the contact, and he will fold if he gets hit. Let’s face it: no one likes to get hit, but some guys dislike it more than others. (Johnny) Carson Palmer comes immediately to mind. Goff is in the same camp, and if you can put pressure on him, he will put it up for grabs. And McVay has a little too much Andy Reid in him, which means he will always chose the pass over the run, even in late game situations that could cost you the game.

The bigger tell in this game is that the Rams secondary is just average without Aqib Talib. Brees will turn this thing into a track meet. Perhaps more important, New Orleans has the secondary to put a safety on

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Week 8 – Two for the Money

Todd Gurley, which should help stop the potential league MVP. Saints cover and win this NFC playoff preview. Icons.

Bolts at Seahawks (-1.5)

This battle between two of the best teams you have not seen is going to be outstanding. Bolts QB Philip Rivers is putting up career numbers and (Dange)Russ Wilson has an actual RB in Chris Carson. This game could be the best of the week, and the over is only 48 points.

The Look Man really likes the return of Seattle LB KJ Wright, who is the glue for that defense. While everyone is discussing the dissolution of the Legion of Boom, Wright is a true Tampa Two LB who makes the pass rush and deep secondary work.

RB Melvin Gordon was limited in practice, and DE Joey Bosa could return for the Bolts. Either way, look for Seattle to cover and win this matchup, setting up another close game against the Rams for the NFC West title. Hawks.

Cheeseheads at Chowds (-5.5): Football Night in America

Aaron (Discount Double Check) Rodgers was hot last week after KR Ty Montgomery coughed up the rock and a chance for a win against the Rams. He now faces Tom (Zoolander) Brady and the Chowds in Fakesboro on Football Night in America.

The Cheesehead D looked solid coming off a bye week and keeping the Rams bottled up for a good portion of the game. Rams HC Sean McVay had to go deep into his bag of tricks to win that game, and even then, it came down to Montgomery's fumble. DDC was waiting in the wings for his 999th come-from-behind win. Well, that would be a record, but this guy is special with the game on the line.

The Cheeseheads are quietly getting healthy on both sides of the ball, and this game could be a Super Bowl preview. If nothing else, it pits two of the best QBs of our era against each other. While nearly everyone believes Brady is the GOAT, the Look Man's money will always be on Rodgers. He's more athletic, has a bigger arm and is much more likeable.

Look for DDC to overcome the Chowds and the zebras for a rare road team win at the Blade. Cheeseheads.



GOAT roping?

THE LOOK MAN REPORT 2018

Week 8 – Two for the Money

Flaming Thumbtacks at Pokes (-6) Monday Night Football

The big Oakland WR Amari Cooper to the Pokes for a number one pick created some heat last week, largely because it signaled the dismantling of the Raiders. The Look Man isn't sure this trade will wake up the Pokes, but it should allow Dak Prescott to throw RB Zeke Elliott open.

Most pundits believe the run sets up the pass, but you can stop the eight-man fronts with a few early deep passes. If you can get the linebackers to step backwards instead of forwards, the running game will find room.

Thumbtacks QB Marcus Mariota is a bit of an enigma. The Look Man doesn't believe Mariota is the real deal, but his numbers say otherwise. His ranking is right there with Steve Young's first few years in yardage, TD passes and QB rating. What makes the Thumbtacks good is the coaching of head coach Mike Vrabel. Vrabel has been half-man/half riverboat gambler and the team is responding.

The Pokes are coming off a bye week, but get caught looking ahead to division rival Philly in Week 10. Thumbtacks in a minor upset.

EPILOGUE

Week 9 is going to be epic, as the postseason picture should come into focus. Arizona, Cincinnati, Indy, J-Ville, the Jynts and Philly all have bye weeks, but the games we do have are solid. Which raises a significant question: why would the NFL allow an 0-16 team to wait until Week 11 for a bye week?

Bad teams clearly need an earlier bye week, if only to allow them to fire their head coaches. Instead, the tough schedules and late bye weeks encourage teams to stink longer than they should.

We will know more by Week 10, and the NFL slate is combined with an excellent college appetizer. Georgia-Kentucky, Bama-LSU and Michigan-Penn State make for a two-day football fest. Mrs. Look Man is sure to be grumpy after this weekend.

Peace,

The Look Man