

THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2019

Week Seventeen – Test of Mettle

“I know I’m a baller. I know I’m going to fix my mistakes. If I eliminate those, I’m going to be the best. That’s bar none. You better check your sheet. I eliminate those, I’m going to be the best.” – Tampa Bay QB Jameis (Winchester) Winston after becoming the sole member of the 30 picks, 30 TD passes club.

PROLOGUE

Winchester threw a pick six to end his season in an OT loss to the ATL, reinforcing just how good and bad he really is. He combined 5,100 passing yards and 33 TD passes with 30 picks, including seven returned for touchdowns by the wrong colored jersey. Perhaps he is just color-blind?

He and Marcus Bustiota headlined the QB Class of 2013, and both are looking for a new job in 2020. HC Bruce (BA) Arians narrowly avoided health issues courtesy of Winston, and could parlay the Tampa talent into a winner simply by replacing him. A guy like, say Andy (The Beige Water Pistol) Dalton could become the next Ryan Tannehill there. Or any QB who didn’t throw 30 picks...

The NFL season ground to a close with intrigue only about seeding. This happens every few years, and fans and media scream about a re-seeding being the only fix. Unfortunately, you cannot have everything, and shaking up the seeding flies in the face of playoff tiebreakers and resting players in Weeks Sixteen and Seventeen.

The Browns, Rams and Pokes led the parade of underperforming teams in NFL100, each due to a fatal flaw. And that flaw was coaching. As a result, two of those three are looking for new coaches, and the Rams, who were the NFL Flavor of the Year in 2018, go back to the drawing board.

Arizona, Cincinnati and Green Bay gobbled up Sean McVay disciples to change their fortunes with mixed reviews. As a result, the Walsh Coaching Tree continues to flourish with Andy (Kool Aid) Reid outpacing Parcells’ disciples. While folks talk about the Belichick Tree, most of his assistants continue to struggle, with only Mike Vrabel and Bill O’Brien in the postseason.

The postseason is here, and unlike the NCAA, the NFL should post a real champion in a few weeks. Wild Card Weekend is a test of mettle, a cauldron in which teams are tempered. Philly, Seattle and New Orleans have been in the playoff mode for weeks. Now it is time for others to join the fray.

Without further mixed metaphors, the Week that Was...



“Let’s eat some INTs...”

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LAGNIAPPE

The Mythical National Championship

THE Ohio State University got jobbed by the SEC officiating crew in the Clemson-OSU playoff semifinal. That scoop six was legit and the targeting was the dumbest call evah. Having said that, Ryan Day didn't cover himself in glory. Instead of milking the clock after going up 16-0, he went all Freddie Kitchens, throwing the rock and going up tempo. Clemson's two quick scores before the half were eerily reminiscent of the Ravens-Browns two weeks ago.

Day did a fine job in 2019, but he has to learn to coach. The tempo game is not a panacea, and time of possession is a defensive best friend. If he limits offensive possessions, there is no team that can beat him. And that includes LSU, the presumptive champion.

The Battle of Ohio – Part II, aka Get Freddie Fired

The Look Man went to the Battle of Ohio II last week along with ten thousand other Browns Fans, ten thousand Bengals Fans and thirty thousand fans dressed as empty seats. It was hard to blame anyone for not coming; it was 65F and raining, plus the game had little or no intrigue.

Calling it the Battle of Ohio is a misnomer. The game can now officially be called "The Get Freddie Fired Game." Browns came out with two solid runs and a 46-yard pass to Damien Ratley for six. Chubb barely saw the rock for the rest of the game, and when he did, the Bengals were keying on him. Still, the Look Man would rather give him the ball sixty times than see the three picks by Bake. What a maroon.

Bengals RB Joe Mixon rushed for a buck sixty on our defense, which tackled as if they had never seen a ball carrier. It was an odd game which featured a seven-minute TD drive for Cleveland after they were down two touchdowns. If you extrapolate that efficiency the game would have needed to go another quarter in order for the Browns to win. It was almost as if they were playing for the tie.

Sundance, a long time Tailpipe and Long-Suffering Bengals Fan asked the Look Man to point out Freddie on the field, and there he was in bright orange. No other player or coach was within 20 feet of him. He was clearly a dead man walking.

Bake threw his typical three picks, and the Browns finished at 6-10 in a season that had promise. The Bengals likely bid goodbye to Andy (The Beige Water Pistol) Dalton, who had a solid game. The AFC Asgard is likely to change dramatically in 2020, with the Bengals moving up with LSU QB Joe Burrow, and the Browns keeping Cake. Looks like another season on the Island of Misfit Teams.

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He gone...

Paulie D!

The Browns are entertaining several coaching candidates, including Urban Meyer, Mike McCarthy and Josh McDaniels. The Look Man hates all of those choices, but likes Robert Saleh, the current D-Coordinator for Frisco. Dude is brash and smart, and could turn the Browns Barking Dawg defense into a Top Five in no time flat.

Cleveland needs a solid defensive team and an offense which scores just enough to win. Dump Cake for Garrett Gilbert, rebuild the O-line and draft a stud linebacker. Saleh has spent time with the Jags, Texans and Seahawks, the latter including their 2013 championship season. He is a co-architect of the Legion of Boom and stopped the Seahawks on the one-inch line in Week Seventeen.

The Browns are expected to hire a head coach and then a GM, with senior consultant Paul (Paulie D) DePodesta leading the search. Paulie D still has no home in CLE, instead teleworking from LaJolla and cashing paychecks from owner Jimmy Haslam.

Paulie D is best known for his baseball expertise, refining the Moneyball concept following a stint as a wideout at Harvard. He led the Dodgers to their first playoff win in 16 years before being fired and moving on to the NFL. Sports columnists T.J. Simers and Bill Plaschke referred to DePodesta pejoratively as "Google Boy" during his time in LA.

DePodesta has been named him one of the Top 10 innovators under the age of 40 by Baseball Prospectus and Fortune Magazine, and has several uncredited appearances on the NBC drama *Homicide: Life on the Street*. If he cannot turn around the Browns fortunes in 2020, he may make a credited performance in the real thing.

Without further moaning, the Lookahead

THE LOOKAHEAD

Week Eighteen features some physical offenses in Buffalo and Tennessee, who also boast portable, run stuffing defense. Houston, New England and New Orleans defenses are not exactly chopped liver either. Nothing says excitement like Wild Card Weekend. It's win or go home in a single game elimination tourney. Get yer popcorn ready.

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Saturday – AFC:

Buffalo at Houston (-2.5)

Romeo (The Bus Driver) Crennel and the defense have been the real story in Houston, and the offense is struggling without WR Will Fuller (Brush Man). Deshaun Watson now faces a physical Crapchester team which is hungry and talented.

Buffalo is coming off a zebra aided loss to the Chowds, but this team is for real. QB Josh (Irwin) Allen is tough and feisty, and the defense is multiple.

Look for a minor upset as the Bills beat the Texans, possibly sparking a rebuild and the loss of consortium for head coach Bill O’Brien. Bisons.

Tennessee at New England (-5)

The Chowds blew an opportunity for a bye week by losing to the Marine Mammals in Week Seventeen. Ryan FitzMagic and the Fish hit a late FG to knock the champs of their perch, setting up an enticing WCW battle with The Team No One Wants to Play in the Flaming Thumbtacks.

QB Ryan Tannehill has surprised in 2019, and Derrick (John) Henry won the rushing title thanks to former Browns HC Freddie Kitchens. Kitchens refused to give the rock to Nick Chubb in the finale, and Henry trucked for 211 rushing yards to take the crown.

Kitchens wins the Dean Smith Award for 2019 hands down, and that’s why he’s gone. Dean Smith was the only coach who could keep Michael Jordan from averaging 20 points a game. Kitchens the only coach who could keep Chubb from winning the rushing title by not handing him the ball. Chubb is the real superstar in Cleveland irrespective of the number of Progressive TV commercials inflicted by Baker Mayfield.

The Chowds struggle bus is predicated on an injured Edelman, and can win this game only by having RB James White get double digit grabs. The Flaming Thumbtacks defense is stout versus the run, and can run effectively against any defense. The difference is clearly playoff experience, which New England has in spades and the Tacks very little.

Look for Tennessee to get a number of bad holding calls, forcing Tannehill to throw to a fast and underrated receiving corps (see also AJ Brown, a legit 4.3 guy, and TE Jonnu Smith). Tanney is accurate and tough; he will take a hit to fit a ball into a window and score.

The Chowds would like to get up early and use the inclement weather to leverage a win. Not gonna happen, and Mike Vrabel joins an elite group of students to defeat the Master (Belichick) courtesy of a pedestrian Tom Brady performance. Tacks cover and win.

Sunday – NFC:

Minnesota at New Orleans (-7.5)

The Saints narrowly missed a bye week courtesy of a missed DPI call in Niners-Hawks. Instead, they have to wage war with RB Dalvin Cook and QB Kirk (Curt) Cousins in Wild Card Weekend. It just seems wrong that a 13-3 squad is playing in WCW.

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Cousins has a bad track record in big games, and they don't get bigger than this. The Hornheads beat New Orleans in the Miracle at Minneapolis two seasons back, so the Saints owe them one.

Perhaps more importantly, the Saints were snakebit again in 2018 in the NFC Championship DPI no-call. By all rights, they should've been in Super Bowl LIII, where they definitely put up more than the three puny points against the Chowds. Hell, fourteen points wins that game, and Payton and Brees lock in a reservation for Canton.

The Look Man likes the Icons in this one. While the Vikings defense is the real story in Princeville, New Orleans has weapons all over the field. Mike Zimmer is not going to outcoach Sean Payton. Saints cover and win.

Seattle at Philly (+1.5)

The Iggles have perfectly parlayed backups to go on a run to the postseason that is nearly unprecedented. Their wins over the Pokes, Genocide Vix and Jynts paved the way and they did it with guys who weren't even on the roster a month ago. Carson Wentz has been nothing short of incredible, posting 4,000 yards passing with no single receiver having more than 500 yards. Think about that stat for a minute.

On the other side of the ledger is a badly injured Seattle squad who had to replace its entire running back corps. Seattle is 7-1 on the road this season, and the Look Man is putting all of that on QB Russell Wilson. DangeRuss would have been the MVP in other year.

The Iggles have a Top Five run D, but cannot win without TE Zach Ertz, who suffered a lacerated kidney two weeks ago. Seattle covers and wins to send the Iggles on a fishing charter after a heroic year. Hawks.

EPILOGUE

It is odd that the NFL went to all AFC and NFC days instead of the usual mixed bag. It is likely that the networks played a part, because no one wanted Seattle-Philly. Hard to figure, especially since Fox decided that Washington-Dallas was a better game than Iggles-Jynts in Week Seventeen. The latter was a thriller, and the former was nearly unwatchable since Dallas could not control its destiny.

NFL100 was a mixed bag, with awful officiating and several teams with double digit wins. The Tournament features a changing of the guard with Tennessee, Houston and KC waiting in the wings to take the mantle from Blitzburgh, the Rams and New England.

The Look Man likes the new wave of NFL signal callers, and Wild Card Weekend will be the first glimpse for many of these quarterbacks in the postseason. The Tom Brady-Big Ben era comes quietly to a close, and for The Look Man, it's not a moment to soon.

Happy 2020,

The Look Man