

THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2019

Week Twenty – Three Meatballs

“They weren’t huge meatballs. So, like one time, John Wayne, he wanted a couple more meatballs. If I knew he played football I would’ve given him as many as he wanted. But I was told, I was instructed, to give three meatballs or we were gonna run out. You’re getting three meatballs. I always looked down when I did it. I never made eye contact—just, ‘Three meatballs.’” – KC Honcho Andy Reid

PROLOGUE

Peter King wrote a fantastic Football Morning in America piece on Andy (Big Red) Reid this week. The story chronicles Reid’s upbringing in Los Angeles, where he worked for a caterer at the Merv Griffin Show. When the Duke asked for an extra helping, Reid followed orders and issued the standard three meatballs. Interesting metaphor for Reid and for the Chiefs, who are on the verge of another Lombardi Trophy for the first time in fifty years.

Many Tailpipers will remember a twelve-year-old Andy Reid in the Punt, Pass and Kick competition. Reid wore a Rams uniform that was big enough for Merlin Olsen, and he threw the ball about sixty yards. That image is inked indelibly in the mind of the Look Man, and Big Red still evokes that memory.

The other side of the ledger features the first NFL father-son combination to compete for Super Bowl wins. Dad Mike (The Rat) Shanahan did it back-to-back with John Elway back in Bowls XXXII and XXXIII. Kyle (The Kid) Shanahan is attempting to make history with Jimmy G and the Niners. Like the Rat, the Kid is parlaying a zone running scheme, West Coast Offense principles and a zone defense with a staunch pass rush into a championship.

Reid is trying to shake off numerous big game losses, including the Super Bowl XXXIX loss to the Chowds. Terrell Owens played that game on a broken ankle, Donovan McNabb played concussed, and Reid mismanaged the clock down the stretch, costing the Iggles a win. Reid has now lost conference championships, Super Bowls and playoff games where he had a lead or the superior squad.

Shanahan Jr. is trying to live down a Super Bowl loss LI loss after leading by 25 points as the OC of Atlanta. The loss was aided by awful officiating, but the stigma follows the Kid like a bad odor. He would love to turn the tide with a team of his own on Sunday, perhaps starting his own dynasty in the NFC West.

Either way, this battle is going to be an epic contrast in styles, and maybe, just maybe, the greatest Super Bowl in history. Tack on the Miami venue, and Super Bowl LIV is the place to be this weekend.

LAGNIAPPE

Kobe Call?

The NFL will likely reference the loss of Kobe Bryant, who lost his life last week in a chopper crash. Bryant was a transcendent champion whose life was a testament to his character. He was no saint, but his preparation and instincts were nearly always spot on. He was a global icon who inspired others to greatness, both on the field and off. He spoke five languages, and won sports championships and Oscars with the same grace and panache.

Kobe’s death also sends us a lesson; life is short, and you have to live with gusto. No man knoweth the hour, so while you live a principled life, you cannot be afraid to stop and smell the roses. We all work hard, but sometimes it is nice to take a detour and enjoy the journey. RIP, Kobe.

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Maqic Mahomes

Patrick Mahomes II could win an MVP and a championship in his first two years as a starter, joining only the great Jim Brown and Kareem Abdul Jabbar. Often compared to Brett Favre, he is really a better version of Aaron (Discount Double Check) Rodgers; an athletic QB who protects the football, but can run, pass and score in bunches. Favre was careless with the football by contrast.

Check these career numbers after two years of starting:

	P. Manning	D. Marino	P. Mahomes
Games	32	27	31
Passing Yards	7,874	7,294	9,128
Touchdowns	52	68	76
INTs	43	23	18

Mahomes exceeds both Peyton and Marino in passing yards and touchdowns. But look at the interception values; not even close.

Mahomes can throw it 70 yards, perform no-look/sidearm passes, and protects the football. Nothing is more important to the Look Man. A quarterback has to value the rock as much as he values his next breath of air.

If Mahomes continues the way he has started, he will be joining those guys in Canton OH. Numerically, he is nothing short of amazing. On the field, he is magical.



The Ketchup Kid will win the Lombardi and the MVP on Sunday

ZEBRA OF THE WEEK

Virtual Vinovich?

Social media is going crazy over the selection of 15-year-veteran Bill Vinovich as referee of his second Super Bowl. The officiating in NFL100 has been butt-ugly, and Vinovich was at the scene of the crime in the 2019 NFC Championship, where he and his crew conspired to put the wrong team in the Super Bowl.

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The missed DPI call at the end of the Rams-Saints was so historic that the NFL changed the rules. At least, on paper.

Vinovich began his career in the NFL as a side judge for Dick Hantak and Ed (the Hulk) Hochuli before being promoted in the 2004 NFL season. He officiated Super Bowl XLIX between the Chowds and Seahawks, and the resultant 28-24 Chowds win was tainted by what the Look Man saw as DPI at the 1-yard line.

Granted, Pete Carroll should never have thrown the ball at the one with Beast Mode in the backfield, but New England CB Malcolm (X) Butler knocked the Seattle receiver off his route for the pick. If not for that blown call, Seattle wins back-to-back Lombardi's and replaces New England as *America's Dynasty*.

Vinovich shared a love of a college basketball official with Gene Steratore, and both officiated March Madness and Super Bowls. Vinovich retired prior to the 2007 season due to a heart condition, but returned in 2012. He has done three conference championships, four divisional playoffs, two wild cards and a Super Bowl previously.

The Look Man is not fond of Vinovich, who often disappears at key moments, but he certainly isn't the worst, either. As long as Tom Brady and Robert Kraft are not involved, Vinovich is a decent choice. Or at least, better than Jerome Boger.



"Glad you told that LB to stay away from Tom...how's the family doing?"

THE LOOKAHEAD – SUPER BOWL LIV

The Look Man is stoked about the game on Super Sunday. He loves both teams; the Niners 1982 win over the Bengals was an historic Look Man Pepto Bismol Upset of the Week prediction. The Chiefs 1970 win over Fran Tarkenton and the Vikes was his first Super Bowl memory. If you've never seen the NFL Films rendition of Hank Stram yelling about "...keep matriculating the ball down the field boys..." you need to find it on YouTube immediamento.

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This one is going to be special, and Miami is the perfect venue. It's Jimmy G vs. the Ketchup Kid, for all the marbles. Or, put another way, the NFC's best defense against the AFC's best scoring machine. The classic meeting of the immovable object and the irresistible force comes right into your living room on Sunday night.

Frisco at Kansas City (-1)

Kyle the Kid has turned Jimmy (G) Garoppolo into the ultimate game manager since throwing a pick in the Minnesota playoff game. Jimmy G almost threw three in that contest, but the stone hands of the Vikes let him off the hook.

Shanahan didn't. He called only seven passes in the NFC championship, grinding out nearly 300 rushing. Kyle the Kid saw what the Look Man saw: the Vikings had solid film on Garoppolo, and inside linebacker Eric Kendricks knew the play before the snap. Jimmy G has a penchant for throwing picks in bunches, and Kyle is not about to lose a chance at a Lombardi because his passer is careless.

There is another issue: Shanahan knows the name of the game in Frisco is defense. His front four of Dee Ford, Nick Bosa, Arik Armstead and DeForest Buckner are reminiscent of the Jynts wrecking crew that dethroned the undefeated Patriots. These guys rush the passer like a mad dog in a meat market, and Richard Sherman and Jaquiski Tartt play zone coverage behind it. This Niners defense is very effective, and extremely deadly if you take seven step drops and hold the rock.

Enter Patrick Mahomes, the King of the Seven Step Drop and passer extraordinaire. Mahomes is a zone killer, posting a 90+ passer rating versus the zone, tacking on ten of his twenty-eight TD passes against the coverage. He killed the Colts and Bears in zone, going nine for nine against the former. When Tennessee attempted to compensate by going into man coverage late in the second quarter, Mahomes scampered 27 yards for a magnificent touchdown run that all but sealed the outcome.

Both teams have incredible speed. The Niners' three running backs, Raheem Mostert, Matt Breida and Tevin Coleman, all exceeded 21 MPH on runs in 2019. Mecole Hardman, Tyreek Hill and Sammy Watkins accomplished the same feat on pass receptions. It is speed versus speed, and the Chiefs have the advantage on defense with Tyrann (Honey Badger) Mathieu. Richard Sherman doesn't run as well as he used to, and Tartt is just average.

This is just one area of similarity; another is on defense. The Look Man is torn between Niners D-Co Robert Saleh and the Chiefs Steve Spagnuolo. Both guys get the most out of their players, and both are in the Top Ten in defense. Saleh was the Look Man's favorite for the Cleveland head coaching job, and his fifth ranked defense is ferocious. Spags is no slouch at number seven, and he, too, could be moving on to a head job in 2021.

The Niners will attempt to run the ball down the Chiefs' throats. It is not going to work against a defense that shut down Derrick (King) Henry. Shanny will then turn to Jimmy G to save the day, but it will be too late; Jimmy G will be careless with the football, and KC will turn those turnovers into points.

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This game will either be a close win by KC or a blowout, depending on how many turnovers Frisco makes.

For the Look Man, this game comes down to feel, and that feeling is that Mahomes is other-worldly. His comebacks against the Flaming Thumbtacks and Texans were incredible. Mahomes is simply never out of a game. After seeing the Saints and Ravens put up 30+ points on the Niners, the Look Man doesn't see them stopping the Ketchup Kid. Chiefs win by a field goal to give Reid his first Lombardi as a head coach. KC.

EPILOGUE

The Look Man is ambivalent about the game on Super Sunday. NFL100 has been both a rousing success and an abysmal officiating failure. The end of the season is like the loss of a friend, and Game 257 on Sunday is no different. The NFL Draft, preseason, regular season and playoffs all culminate in one secular holiday at 6:30PM.

The Look Man loves an underdog story, and the Chiefs have a great one. Not only did they lose their first Super Bowl in crushing fashion, they haven't been back in fifty years. In the intervening years, the Chiefs played *Marty Ball*, a staunch, physical defensive unit which could never get over the offensive hump. They followed that period with years of futility and multiple years of double digit wins only to lose soul-crushingly in the postseason.

The last two of those losses happened in the AFC Championship just last year. Former Chief and current Niners DE Dee Ford lined up offsides on what would have been the game winning pick. The do-over allowed New England to convert three third-and-tens and win on the first possession of OT.

The storyline of redemption would be sweeter than a honey-based BBQ sauce for KC. It would also validate a kid who refused to break the rules for meatballs.

Peace,

The Look Man