

## THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2019

### Week Twenty-Two – The Champ is Here

*“I’m here to represent the Kansas City Chiefs. I think my teammates feel the same way. Any time we get the opportunity to represent Kansas City the right way, represent our teammates the right way, I don’t see any wrong in that.” - Safety and team leader Tyrann Mathieu on visiting the White House to commemorate a Super Bowl LIV win.*

#### PROLOGUE

The Kansas City Chiefs are world champions for the second time and Head Coach Andy Reid has a monkey off his back. Reid’s locker room speech started, “That which was ours is ours again. E-ed plebnista...Home of the CHEEEEEFFFFSSS.” That’s all the Look Man was able to record before his speech was made unintelligible by eating what sounds like multiple cheeseburgers.

KC not only beat the superior Niners, but did it in historic fashion, erasing a ten or more-point deficit for the third time in this postseason. The game was no KC Masterpiece, but the defense shut down Shanahan’s offense while the offense scored on consecutive possessions to nearly turn the game into a laugher.

As a result, the Chiefs received a tweet from the Commander in Chief, congratulating the Chiefs and the people of the Great State of Kansas. Unfortunately, the Chiefs are from Missouri, but hey, nobody’s perfect. Reid did ask whether Trump “could do us a favor” and fix the tweet, which he did later.

Shanahan Jr. is getting killed by the media, which thought his play calling lacked discipline. The Look Man had no problem with the play calls, but the execution was horrible. Shanny’s first half clock management was awful. Everyone knows that you have to exceed 30 points to beat KC, and perhaps even 40. Taking locker rooms into the halftime with a 10-10 tie is not winning football.

Super Bowl LIV goes down in history as an epic comeback, and perhaps a coronation of the next dynasty. The Look Man just sees it as validation of his pick, based upon gut instinct and the Eye Test. Like Niners WR Emmanuel Sanders, he can’t wait to watch it again.

#### LAGNIAPPE

##### Horseshoes and Hand Grenades?

Jimmy G overthrew a wide open WR Emmanuel Sanders, for a game-winning TD pass. The Niners were trailing 24-20 with 1:40 remaining at the time.

Sanders exploded after a postgame question on the play. “What do you think it was? What route do you think it was? What did it look like? What did it look like? What route do you think it looked like?”

Sanders asked. When the reporter asked if it was a post route, Sanders answered, “Yeah, it was a post route.”

Sanders got more irritated when asked how close the ball was, saying, “How close do you think I was? That’s a dumb question. I was close enough to have a shot at the MVP if I caught it. Now, I need to call my agent to determine where I will play in 2020. I damn sho’ ain’t gonna be putting my faith in Jimmy G next season.” The question is whether the Niners feel the same way.

##### Andy and the Pips

The Chiefs broke out a first quarter synchronized pre-snap backfield spin move with a wildcat direct snap to RB Damien Williams. Williams gained converted on 4th-and-1 from the Niners five-yard lien,

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virtually guaranteeing the first KC TD. Reid eschewed a FG and the gamble paid off. Mahomes ran it in two plays later.

Boy Bands everywhere would be proud of that dance move. The only thing that would have made it better would have been if Andy (Big Red) Reid had been on the field also. He moves well for a big man, and even better when he has a double cheeseburger in hand.

The Chiefs' comeback win was dominant late, but these early calls set up the win. Offensive Coordinator Eric (Sleeping with) Bienemy dusted off the trick play from the 1948 Rose Bowl.

Reid went again on the Chiefs next possession, again converting on fourth and short, but had to settle for three. Analytics have been huge in recent years, but these felt like gut calls from Reid. They provided the margin of victory and tired out the defense with first half ball control. The Niners were clearly gassed in the second half, and the Chiefs went through them like a hot knife through butter.

One last thing: the pregame was fantastic, especially the NFL100 commercial with the all-star cast. Unfortunately, both teams were on the sidelines for way too long. Accordingly, the first few possessions felt shaky, as if the delay affected the players. The Look Man would like to see less fanfare, more balls in the air in Super Bowl LV in 2021.

*He Hate Me – Redux: the Rebirth of the XFL*

Super Bowl LIV brought a close to NFL100, but the XFL is back Saturday with Commissioner Vince McMahon taking another run at forcing a merger and being bought out by the NFL. The league starts its season on Saturday, and despite some odd rules changes and spotty television coverage, it boasts a few B-listers from the NFL:

Position	Name	Notes
DE	Kony Ealy	Serious DT/DE from Carolina
K	Nick Novak	accurate K with several teams
LB	Scooby Wright	Browns and Cards
OT	Cyrus Kouandijo	OT from Bama; never panned out
QB	Cardale (Shotgun) Jones	OSU Bolts and Bills
QB	Landry Jones	former Stilller and Bama
QB	Matt McGloin	Raiders
QB	Vinny Testaverde Jr.	Dad was a baller at the U
RB	Cameron Artis-Payne	Carolina
RB	Christine Michael	Seattle
S	Matt Elam	former first rounder from B-More
TE	Jace Amaro	former 'Tacks TE
WR	Tommy Lee Lewis	former Saints WR

McMahon rose from humble origins in rural North Carolina to national fame as a promoter, announcer and wrestler in the World Wrestling Federation (WWF). His original attempt with the XFL began and ended in 2001, when the nascent league folded due to poor television ratings. McMahon, at \$3.2 billion net worth (\$2.5 billion richer than the President), is taking another shot in 2020.

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The XFL did manage to add some flair to the pro game, including RB Rod Smart, who placed the name “He Hate Me” on his Las Vegas Outlaws jersey. Smart spent time with the Iggles and Panthers, but his real contribution might have been the idea behind Chad “Ochocinco” Johnson. The brash style and fun atmosphere took a while to permeate the stodgy NFL, but the current end zone celebrations are an homage to the XFL.

The Look Man will take in a game or two in the interest of scouting. Or maybe just to fill the Dead Zone between the Super Bowl and March Madness...



*Mister McMahon...Stand Back!*

*Correction from GB Shaw*

Longtime Tailpipe GB Shaw caught the Look Man error in Week Twenty: the Viking QB in SB IV was (Jumping) Joe Kapp, not Francis Tarkenton. Shaw went on to question the Look Man’s identity, owing to the presence of a factual error in the LMR.

The Look Man admits the mistake, and credits it to the lack of an editor. The LMR takes a fair amount of effort, and editing often takes a back seat.

So, thanks GB, for the correction. And for the references to Star Trek TOS episode, *Whom Gods Destroy*. The Look Man also failed to mention the passing of the comely Yvonne (Batgirl) Craig, and this was a nice opportunity.



*“Queen to Kings level 3.”*

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Cleveland Staff for NFL101

The Browns just hired the youngest GM in the league, Andrew Berry. Berry was with Cleveland as Sashi Brown's lieutenant, before departing to work with Howie Roseman in Philly. For the uninitiated, Sashi Brown was the real architect behind Cleveland's resurgence, providing the draft capital required to obtain the current talent. Berry will now focus on scouting and player acquisition, attempting to turn former GM John (Buddy Boy) Dorsey's mess into a competitive squad.

Berry has worked under Bill Polian and Ryan Grigson (Colts), Howie Roseman (Iggles) and Dorsey (Cleveland). He believes strongly in analytics and was also a three-year starter at cornerback at Harvard. He, HC Kevin Stefanski and Sr. Executive Paul DePodesta all played ball and boast Ivy League degrees.

There was a little conflict this week in the press conference when Stefanski said he would have "a say in player acquisition." One of the problems historically has been the absence of clear lines of authority between the HC and GM. Under previous regimes, both reported directly to the owner and that is a recipe for disaster.

Stefanski was a run-first guy at Minnesota, but the parallels in arm strength between Kirk Cousins and (Cake) Baker Mayfield are concerning. Still, WRs Adam Thielen and Stefon Diggs put up big numbers in Minnesota, and TE Kyle Rudolph was prolific.

The Look Man wanted a defensive head coach like Robert Saleh from the Niners. Saleh was able to stuff Mahomes for three and a half quarters in Super Bowl LIV, and that's better than most. The Browns should reflect the character of the city; hard-nosed and blue collar.

Stefanski did acquire Niners DB coach Joe Woods as his D-Coordinator. Woods comes from the Mike Tomlin/Tony Dungy coaching tree and has worked with Wade Phillips. He has coached Charles Woodson, Richard Sherman, Xavier Rhodes, Ronde Barber, Antoine Winfield, Darren Sharper and Aqib Talib, and they all sing his praises.

So, the Look Man remains cautiously optimistic about the future. Cleveland now has the brightest brain trust in professional sports. They simply need to get owner Jimmy Haslam out of their way.

**ZEBRA OF THE WEEK**

Close Calls?

Bill Vinovich and crew called a fine game in Super Bowl LIV. That didn't stop Niners Fan from complaining about the officiating. Three calls stand out for them: (1) TE George Kittle's OPI at the end of the first half; (2) a 4<sup>th</sup> quarter roughing the passer that went uncalled, and (3) RB Damien Williams pylon-scaping TD late in the game.

The bar for call number 1 is simple: if the receiver locks his elbow to push the defender and create room for the catch, it's offensive pass interference. Kittle pushed Sorensen and then locked him out with a straight arm.

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Call number 3 is also open and shut: the ball must touch the front pane of the end zone, not break it. Williams touched the plane of the end zone well prior to his toe landing on the out of bounds. Even if he didn't, Andy Reid was going for it on fourth and millimeters. Reid uncharacteristically went for two previous fourth downs, and was three of four on the game. KC's only fourth down failure was the final kneel down.

Call number 2 is nuanced. Both Jimmy G and the Ketchup Kid took some shots, and none were called. In addition to the non-call on chin music, Jimmy G was banged out of bounds on a shove. Mahomes was hit in the face on a pass late. The Zebras simply let 'em play, and for the Look Man, consistency is not the hobgoblin of small minds, it is the bread and butter of good officiating.

Let's face it: the Niners had every chance to win this game, and blew them. Not one of these calls was even close to the missed DPI call at the end of the Rams-Saints NFC Championship in 2018. By comparison, it was a well-officiated game which featured the players, not the zebras.

### **EPILOGUE**

There is no Lookahead this week, as the season is over, but Look Man would be remiss if he failed to address a few key issues for NFL101, culminating in Super Bowl LV.

There are an unprecedented number of free agent QBs available. Ryan Tannehill, Philip Rivers, Drew (Cool) Brees, Cam Newton, Tom Brady, Dak Prescott and Marcus Mariota are all out there for the taking. And that makes a lot of incumbents nervous. Raiders QB Derek Carr needs to put purchase a house soon, and he doesn't know if it will be Vegas or Nashville. It will be interesting to see the musical chairs, and the Look Man can only hope one of these vets lands in Cleveland. Cake Baker Mayfield needs a mentor. Or a replacement.

Lost amid all the hoopla and parades in KC is the simple fact that a new labor deal between the NFL and the NFLPA is in limbo. Roger Goodell extended a proposal to up the league year to seventeen games, but NFLPA leadership received unexpected resistance to that proposal from the Executive Committee and board of player representatives.

The Look Man wonders what happens if the membership decides seventeen games is too much, and wants to recoup lost dollars from the previous CBA? The NFLPA could vote "thanks, but no thanks," ushering in the specter of a work stoppage in 2020.

Everyone is talking free agents, the NFL Draft in Vegas in April, and a new dynasty in the AFC, but no one is talking about this. And this, in the Look Man's humble opinion, is very likely.

The Look Man wishes you a happy offseason. And remember, the NFL Draft means only six months until the kickoff of the regular season.

Peace,

The Look Man