

## THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2019

### Week Seven – Zebra Power

*"It needs to be said. People need to be held accountable for their job. When it affects my job, it sucks because it's not in my control." – Browns QB Baker Mayfield on the officiating in 2019.*

#### PROLOGUE

The Look Man got a chuckle out of (Cake) Baker Mayfield's comments on the officiating, especially in light of Cake throwing 25 picks in under two years, and that number ignores fumbles. For the record, you cannot cry about officiating when you don't value ball security. While the Browns have gotten jobbed by the zebras since Bottlegate, the right answer is to put your nose to the grindstone and clean up execution.

Irrespective of the Mayfield's ignorance, NFL100 is experiencing issues with officiating. Gambling will soon become legal in all 50 states, and the number and quality of missed or blown calls has been staggering. We have to flash back only as far as the NFC Championship Game to identify a blown defensive pass interference call that put the wrong team in the Super Bowl. And the new rule allowing the challenge of pass interference has actually backfired, with few overturns. Further, the zebras now use offensive holding to keep teams down and ruin offensive continuity, almost as if they were betting the under.

The league office prohibits criticism of officiating, stating *"...violations of these policies will result in prompt disciplinary action...which may include fines of the club and/or individual who make such public comments. Egregious and inflammatory public comments could result in the suspension of the individual(s) making the comment."* The Look Man doesn't know what 'egregious' means, but he's betting that many of these game-altering calls apply.

The Look Man has no desire to turn this entire column into a Zebra of the Week tome, but NFL100 needs to keep it on the 100 if they want to avoid a repeat of last year's officiating fiasco. Perhaps they don't care as long as they are making bank, but it needs to be resolved prior to the Raiders playing home games in Las Vegas in 2020. Otherwise, the Tailpipe Nation may have to take up tennis to occupy its Sundays.

Without further doomsaying, the Look Man engages in a truncated LMR for Week Seven.

#### ZEBRA OF THE WEEK

##### *GB Shaw Keeping the Faith*

Longtime Tailpipe Nation contributor GB Shaw shared a great email with the Look Man over the officiating. While the email contained large amounts of allegorical references between Star Trek TOS and NFL100, the Look Man presents some of its essence for entertainment purposes only:

*As Spock peers into the monitor, he sees Dak Prescott getting flattened over and over, but no calls made. He sees phantom holding calls against Starhead offensive linemen, killing drives.*

*Spock finds these obnoxious, but hardly insanity-inducing. But then Blake Cleteman appears, and ignores thirteen (!) Packers on the field. Spock finds this risible. Then a key Packer drive-extending penalty against Flowers for "hands to the face," which absolutely didn't happen.*

*Spock's superior intellect can still process this – "Well, that call won't happen again, and there will probably be an apology call coming soon" he reasons. Then the Pack's game-winning drive*

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*is again kept alive by a hands-to-the-face call, against the same lineman as before, while it still, manifestly, did not happen.*

*This is too much to process. That the zebras had decided the victor of the MNF contest before the coin toss is now inescapable. But, if that's the case, then not only is (human side) any emotional investment made in any NFL team rendered utterly futile, everybody's emotional investment is now shown to be a complete waste of time.*

GB Shaw's email aligned perfectly with the thoughts of the Look Man. The recent Green Bay-Detroit game devolved in the fourth quarter, with one missed defensive pass interference call, and two awful defensive hands to the face calls that swung the outcome.

The Look Man wanted three hours of his life back, and the game cast serious doubt about the veracity of the NFL officiating and the season in general. When taken in whole with the 2018 NFC Championship, it is nearly enough to make any emotional investment meaningless.



*"The needs of the Zebras outweigh the needs of the Few. Or the Many."*

### THE LOOKAHEAD

Week Eight features a handful of nice matchups. The Look Man is going out on a limb with at least one pick this week, but you knew that. The Week Ahead:

#### Cincinnati at LA Rams (-13) [in London]

Nati QB Andy (The Beige Water Pistol) Dalton was horrible in Week Eight, throwing three picks on consecutive fourth quarter series. The game against the J-Squareds went from close to a near blowout, setting the stage for the release of WR AJ Green. Rookie HC Zac Taylor knew there would be days like this, and he is ready for Tua in 2020.

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The Rams bounced back in Week Seven, but it was only Atlanta, which is attempting to get their head coach fired. They win this one easy, setting up a Bye Week for retooling their offense and defense. Rams.

#### Philadelphia at Buffalo (-1.5)

Buffalo is quietly become one of the best teams in the AFC, with a 4-1 conference record. The Look Man believes they can claim one of the two wild card positions right now, with a portable defense and running game. (Old Man) Frank Gore is running his way to the Hall of Fame, and this defense is nasty.

The Iggles, on the other hand, are a group of walking wounded, barely able to field a team. The secondary is limping badly, and the offense needs a vertical threat Deshaun Jackson back in the worst way. The Look Man really likes QB Carson Wentz, but he is taking a beating with a patchwork line and no deep threat.

This game is a must win for the Iggles, who have lost travel to the Big Windy to take on the Bears in Week Nine. So what, as the Iggles death spiral continues with a third straight loss. Bisons cover and win.

#### Arizona at New Orleans (-10.5)

Arizona has quietly become a force to be reckoned with in the NFC West, where every team is tough. Their QB Kyler Murray, the latest incarnation of America's Midget, is posting nearly three bills passing per game. The defense is passable, and the head coach is making headway against those who said he was simply a piker.

Enter the Religious Icons, who have gone 5-0 since losing Drew (Cool) Brees to injury. Teddy (Two Gloves) Bridgewater is hitting the deep ball, and WR (Can't Guard) Mike Thomas is posting another Prop Bowl season after signing a big money contract. NOLA misses RB extraordinaire Alvin (and the Chipmunks) Kamara, but the offense is clicking and the defense is mean.

The spread is more crooked than a Ninth Ward fishmonger, but the Saints prevail en route to a Bye Week. More importantly, they can sit Brees for two more weeks before a late season push to the postseason. Icons win, Deadbirds cover.

#### Niners at Carolina (+5.5)

This spread looks as fishy as a cheap sandwich at Fisherman's Wharf. Black Cats backup QB Kyle Allen has looked spectacular and RB (Sister) Christian McCaffrey is a legitimate MVP candidate.

Meanwhile, the Niners are smelling themselves and reading their own press after big wins in consecutive weeks. Their string of east coast wins grinds to a halt. Black Cats cover and win.

#### Cleveland at New England (-13.5) – Pepto Bismol Upset of the Year

The Browns return from the Bye Week, rested and ready to face the buzz saw that is New England. While the Chowds have always boasted freakish offensive continuity, the defense is the real story in 2019. New England is clamming its way to a top five finish and a shot at another piece of February hardware.

A win on Sunday afternoon would be Belichick's 300<sup>th</sup> regular and postseason win. He has owned the Browns since his unceremonious departure following the 1995 season. Folks forget that Belichick was

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11-5 the year before the announcement that Cleveland was to become the Baltimore Ravens. He was well on his way to his first ring as a head coach when the wheels fell off.

Browns HC Freddie Kitchens forced (Cake) Baker Mayfield under center and emphasized the run in Week 4. He then followed by spraying the ball all over Levi Stadium in an eventual loss to the Niners, who tormented Mayfield. Mayfield was non-plussed, largely because he is opening a series of Midwest bakeries in the offseason. Of course, they only sell turnovers.

The Browns defense sprung a leak in Frisco, largely because of Cake's miscues. DE Myles (Hawaii 5-0) Garrett got nicked in practice this week, but the real key is to establish a D-line rotation with DTs Devaroe Lawrence and Larry Ogunjobi. The run defenses will be tested in what should become a referendum on the back former Georgia running back in the NFL: Nick Chubb or Sony (Panasonic) Michel.

The Look Man expects a cat-and-mouse contest, move and countermove between Kitchens and Belicheat. The no-huddle defeats the D-line rotation, blitzing defeats play-action, and so on. Belicheat has a penchant for beating first and second year QBs, and Cake stinks on ice. Kitchens coaches like he eats, fast and without regard to long term consequence.

Still, look for Freddie Kitchens to put the ball into the hands of Nick Chubb for a change. The Zebras will attempt to force the issue with spurious (read "horse-bleep") holding calls to force Cleveland behind the sticks, but if Cleveland sticks to the run, this game is winnable. Of course, the opposite is also true: if Cake throws the ball 30 times, New England will cover the double digit spread. Kitchens has to protect Mayfield from himself by not throwing deep in his own territory, staying ahead of the sticks, and using misdirection to take advantage of the Chowds defensive aggression.

The Chowds look past Cleveland to a Week Nine tilt with the Ravens. Cleveland stuns the world, knocking the Chowds from the ranks of the undefeated. Browns, baby, Browns.

#### Green Bay at KC (+3.5) – Football Night in America

This interconference tilt would be the Game of the Week if not for the injury of Patrick Mahomes. Backup Matt Moore is cover-your-eyes awful, and even Andy (Kool-Aid) Reid will have trouble manufacturing enough offense to stay in the game.

The game follows a perfect outing by Aaron (Discount Double Check) Rodgers, who performed this prodigious task without WR Davante Adams. DDC was responsible for six scores, as well as a bar argument in which the Look Man opined that he is the best QB in the NFL. Patrons countered with the usual suspects, including Tom (Terrific) Brady, Mahomes and...Peyton Manning??? After the Look Man reminded them that Manning was not even in the NFL, they were forced to back down. But who throws five TDs to guys who aren't even household names in their own homes?

The Cheeseheads roll here, reinforcing their elite status in the NFC. Now that the Pack has a legitimate D and the Zebras in their corner, the sky is the limit. Go, Pack, go.

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#### South Beach at Blitzburgh (-14): Monday Night Football

The Stillers get Mason Rudolph back from Queer Street just in time to stop the new-look Marine Mammals. Miami has installed Ryan Fitzmagic as their signal caller, meaning that they are still “Tanking for Tua,” but will be entertaining while doing so.

The Stillers maintain their MNF dominance, winning the game, but not covering the spread. Stillers win, Miami covers.

#### **EPILOGUE**

NFL100 enters the halfway point after this week, and the results have not been stellar. The main storylines surround injured quarterbacks and bad officiating, with a few lines about a possible perfect season for Belichick and the Chowds. The Niners and Chowds could enter the midway point undefeated, meaning the 1972 Marine Mammals are just starting to chill their champagne.

Any way you slice it, the Zebras must improve. Last night’s Thursday Night Football game between the Genocide Victims and Hornheads featured offensive holding calls too numerous to mention. The game was nearly unwatchable, and not because it featured “Kurt” Cousins and (Soft) Case Keenum at QB. That game was field goal heaven, effectively burying the lead: a revenge game between two discarded QBs on opposite teams.



*“Clete, Tony! How are those kids doing?? Helluva job, Brownie. Helluva job!”*

The weather in the Southeast has just begun to moderate, and the Look Man turned his furnace on the for the first-time last week. Something about cooler weather triggers a yen for good football, both college and professional. Let’s just hope that the zebras don’t ruin the season for everyone.

Peace,

The Look Man