

THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2021

Week Sixteen – Boom!

“He was great to work with and just loved football, just loved football. I think he loved every aspect of it. Coaching it, announcing it, improving it, making it a better game, making it more exciting, making it better for the fans, making it safer, making it more entertaining, and the presentation of it in an entertaining way as well. Just a wonderful man with a really great perspective that did a lot for the game.” – Belichick on Madden

PROLOGUE

The death of John Madden was a lightning bolt in the midst of very entertaining 2021 NFL season. His passing comes at a time when COVID dominates the news, and at a time when hegemony has become the norm instead of an outlier.

Madden crisscrossed the country on his tour bus, stopping to meet the everyman. Despite his prodigious intellect, he believed that Americans are intrinsically good. There can be infighting and disagreement, but his basic premise was captured by his *Three Guys in a Bar* premise: if you ask three guys in a bar if it was a catch, the answer will be self-evident.

The game goes on, and the playoff march will overtake the news cycle, but his was a unique life. We are all better for having him in our world. And that is all you can ask of anyone.

Without further ado, the Look Man Report 2021 for Week Sixteen.

LAGNIAPPE

Celebrity Obit of the Week

The passing of John Madden followed a spectacular Christmas Day *All-Madden* documentary on Fox that featured players, coaches and commentators. If you missed it, you need to go immediately to pay-per-view and check it out.

Born John Earl Madden on April 10, 1936, in Austin, Minn., Madden was the son of an auto mechanic. He and his family moved to Northern California in 1942 in hopes of a better life. Madden worked as a teen caddie at San Francisco Golf Club, and quickly realized he would need a college education to succeed in life. He earned a football scholarship to the University of Oregon, and spent a year in pre-law in Eugene. But he didn't really enjoy the study of law, and he returned to Frisco following after a knee injury that cost him his scholarship.

Madden switched his major to education before enrolling at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, where he was a two-year starter on the O and D-lines, and played catcher on the baseball team. Madden was a talented athlete, once chasing down a player following a potential pick six. He was drafted by the Iggles in the 21st round of the 1958 NFL draft. Madden's pro career ended after another knee injury, so he returned to Cal Poly to earn his master's in education.

He turned to coaching and had success as San Diego State's HC before Al Davis, owner of the Oakland Raiders, hired him as assistant coach. Madden was hired as a 32-year old head coach following the resignation of John Mauch, who complained about Davis' constant meddling.

The Raiders made the playoffs eight times under Madden, who held a .759 regular-season winning percentage, still one of the best ever. Madden retired after the 1978 season due to a bleeding stomach

THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2021

Week Sixteen – Boom!

ulcer and fatigue, and many believe it was directly attributable to the injury of New England WR Darryl Stingley in an August 1978 preseason game.

Raiders FS Jack (the Assassin) Tatum, lined up Stingley, following an errant Steve Grogan pass. Grogan, the only NFL QB to wear a neck roll, was a running QB and passing was never his strong suit. His pass fluttered harmlessly past Stingley, but Tatum delivered what is now an illegal clothesline shot.

Darryl Stingley went down with a broken neck and never walked again. Ironically, this tragedy fostered a lifelong friendship with Madden, who took care of Stingley and his family for the rest of both of their lives.

Madden's generosity extended well beyond visits, starting the very night of the injury, When Madden discovered that Chowds HC Chuck Fairbanks was flying home with the team, he called the Oakland Airport, and demanded that Fairbanks be put on the line. "You get Chuck Fairbanks off that plane," Madden insisted.

When Stingley's ventilator quit working a few months later, Madden sounded the alarm credited with saving Stingley's life. He and his wife Virginia provided Stingley's girlfriend with housing and clothing when she arrived in Oakland with only the clothes on her back. Madden would leave Raiders practices to visit Stingley for several hours each day for the rest of the year.

John Madden retired from coaching immediately after the 1978 season, citing burnout, stomach ulcers and fatigue, two years removed from winning the Super Bowl. While he never declared publicly that the Stingley tragedy was the driver, Pat Toomay, a Raiders D-lineman, summed up his coach as follows:

"After an injury, they come back," Toomay wrote. "It might be months later, or even a year later. But they come back. When this fails to happen, as it did in the case of Darryl Stingley, our frailty shows through the masquerade of pads and numbers and facemasks and helmets, the fake armor of invincibility.

"In such a moment, we don't like what we see. An explanation outside the norms of the game is needed, and so scapegoats are sought. Disturbing feelings are pushed aside. Only the rarest among us grasp the depth of our frailty and still love the game. Is John Madden such a man? I think so."

Madden's career blossomed after coaching, when his animated delivery and teaching of Xs and Os was a departure from the old school color commentary. He invented the telestrator, which revolutionized football broadcasting, and later created Madden football video game as a coach's tool. EA Sports, which owns the rights, has generated over \$4 billion in revenue to date.

Madden was known for his fear of flying, which created the Madden Cruiser, a bus to transport him from game to game. He never flew after a claustrophobia attack in Tampa, and discredits the theory involving the 1960 Cal-Poly plane crash where 22 people died, including 16 Cal Poly football players.

Over time, stories spread that he was on the plane, and that the crash caused his fear of flying. "Neither one is true," Madden told the AP. "I didn't like getting on planes before that. I got claustrophobic, and it got worse over the years."

THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2021

Week Sixteen – Boom!

Madden's Hall of Fame career was punctuated by his 1976 Super Bowl XI win over the Hornheads. He was carried off the field by his players afterwards, a moment he recalled in his incredible Hall of Fame speech.

"I was told it took like five or six guys to lift me up, then they dropped me," he said. "But that's OK, because that was me and that was them. They aren't going to carry me off. You carry him off for a while, boom, you dump him on the ground. But it was the happiest moment of my life."

The late Raiders QB Ken Stabler once told the San Francisco Chronicle, "John's strong suit as a coach was how he handled players. He knew football, of course, but we had such a group of free spirits, with different egos and different lifestyles. He acknowledged the fact it was a diverse group.

I always remember John's two rules: Be on time and play hard. There were no dress codes, no haircut rules. Because he treated us that way, nobody abused it."

There have been many giants in the NFL; George Halas is credited as being the Father of Professional Football, but the Look Man believes it was Paul Brown, who invented the face mask, calling the game from the sidelines and professional practice habits. John Facenda voiced NFL Films in the 60s, often credited as being the "voice of God" to Steve Sabols balletic video. But there has never been a personality the size of Madden, and there never will be.

"I'm the luckiest guy in the world," Madden said. "I look at it and I have to pinch myself sometimes, because I've never had to work. I went from a player to a coach to a broadcaster. I've been in the NFL forever. That's my life. That's what I do. I'm just lucky."

Boom.



Fortune Favors the Brave...

Despite being one game below .500 at 7-8, the Browns could win the AFC North and claim their first division title since 1989. Two things must happen on Sunday:

1. KC beats the Bengals at Pall Bearer Stadium, and,
2. The Rams beat Baltimore in the Charm City.

A Browns win over the Stillers on MNF would then create a de facto on January 9th division championship game at Cleveland between the Browns and Bengals. The Week Eighteen Baltimore-Blitzburgh matchup would then have no bearing on the division champ.

THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2021

Week Sixteen – Boom!

In this scenario, a Browns win over the Bengals would result in both teams finishing 9-8, but the Browns would win the head-to-head division first tiebreaker. Even if the Dumpster Ducks beat the Stillers, their 9-8 finish would knock them out via head-to-head tiebreaker with the Bengals (0-2) and best division record tiebreaker with Cleveland.

At Home With Baker Mayfield

Emily Mayfield, the Official Wife of the Progressive Pitchman, complained this week about mistreatment by Browns Fan. The death threats, lies being told about my husband, and blatant DISRESPECT never ceases to amaze me. For the record – I pray those of you who even think those thoughts, let alone type them out. I hope you can find some happiness so you stop trying to steal it from others,” said Emily. Baker attempted to throw in his two cents, but it was picked.

The Look Man doesn't support death threats or chatty sports spouses, but this is over the top. (Cake) Baker is stinking up the joint, but there is no reason for death threats. Just get off the babysitter, Joel, and everything will be alright. In this case, the babysitter is the starting rotation. Case Keenum can take this team as far as it needs to go, and with a top five defense and top five O-line.

As for Emily Mayfield, she needs to shut up and take her medicine. Her husband cost this team an AFC Asgard Division in a down year, and perhaps a deep playoff run.



Horse hospitals

Emily Mayfield had a narrow escape at Urgent Care

THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2021

Week Sixteen – Boom!

THE LOOKAHEAD

Kansas City Baby Backs at Cincinnati Bengals (+5.5)

Joe (Goat Boy) Burrow just destroyed the Bengals record books last week with 525 passing yards against the Dumpster Ducks, and he gets another chance this week in the biggest AFC game of the week. Both the Bengals and Baby Backs can clinch with a win, so the playoffs start right now at Pall Bearer Stadium.

Ironically, the Bengals didn't even try to run last week against a top rushing defense, and RB Joe (Richard Millhouse) Mixon will need to earn his money this week. The key to beating KC is to run the football, and mix in some opportune passing. The Bengals receiving corps is outstanding, with Tee Higgins, Tyler Boyd and rookie Ja'Marr Chase. Tack on utility infielder TE CJ Uzomah, and Mixon, and you have an offense worthy of tournament contention.

The O-line has not looked good despite Goat Boy's performance. He escaped a sack on the first play from scrimmage with a Houdini move, one of about three on the day. Long Suffering Bengals Fan Sundance was heard to exclaim, "How did he do that?!" multiple times on the day. Clearly, Goat Boy has been spending time in the weight room, as he wore no brace on his repaired ACL and demonstrated incredible core strength.

Meanwhile, in BBQ Land, Patrick (Sneakerhead) Mahomes gets his number one weapon back in the form of TE Travis Kelce (Grammer). Kelce was out last week courtesy of the Rona, and returns in time to feast on the Ugly and Black. As one Bengals Fan uttered last week, "Any team with a good TE destroys our defense." True, and it has been for the last forty years.

Perhaps more important, Nati HC Zac (Andy's Boy) Taylor has made some questionable red zone play calling. Taylor went straight Mayberry in the blowout, but was bailed out by Zebra Clete (Otis) Blakeman, who called multiple DPI/holding calls while still in the Drunk Tank.

Baltimore fourth string RB Josh Johnson up three bills passing against the Bengals in a 41-21 blowout. Imagine what Mahomes and the KC D will do in this matchup to clinch, setting up an Alcoa Fantastic Finish in the AFC Asgard Division. KC.



Kelce: Tossed salad and scrambled eggs...

THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2021

Week Sixteen – Boom!

Miami Marine Mammals at Tennessee Flaming Thumbtacks (-3)

Miami is knocking on the Wild Card door with a dominant win on Monday Night Football over the Religious Icons. The win, Miami's seventh in a row, featured a record tying eight sacks on NOLA rookie QB Ian Book (of Bond). The game was nearly unwatchable, but underscored the dominance of the Dolphins D and opportunistic offense. That, and the fact that Notre Dame QBs stink in the National...Football...League.

HC Brian Flores has turned a rag-tag team of misfits into winners, and could throw a monkey wrench into the AFC Least. Their last two regular season games are at the Flaming Thumbtacks, and finishing with the Chowds at home. If they win out, they are likely in the Tournament.

They are the first team in NFL history with a seven game losing and winning streak in the same season. QB Tua Togavaiola is completing passes at a 70% clip, and Miami's red zone efficiency is uncanny. This is a team no one wants to see in the postseason. Well, except for Fergie and a bunch of South Beach models.

The Flaming Thumbtacks and may be the weirdest team evah. They have wins over KC, Tampa and Buffalo, but have lost to the Jets, Houston, and Chicago. The dominant run game went south the moment Derrick (King) Henry went down with a foot, and QB Ryan Tannehill has become a turnover machine. The Tacks are 10-5, and need this win to keep pace with Indy. The Ponies are suddenly resurgent, and at 9-6, have only the Raiders between them and the postseason.

The Look Man is leaning toward a Miami win, but the Tacks have compromising photos of Goodell on file. Tacks get help from the Zebras in a backdoor cover (or push).

Las Vegas Raiders at Indianapolis Ponies (-7.5)

If you haven't seen HBO's *Hard Knocks in Season*, featuring Indy, you are missing a great show. The Ponies are playing championship caliber ball after underachieving early. QB Carson Wentz is on a reclamation project, and HC Frank (the Fourth) Reich should be considered for Coach of the Year.

Vegas, on the other hand, is a dumpster fire. They go down like free beer in Indy. Ponies win and hold their breath for a playoff spot.

LA Rams at Baltimore Dumpster Ducks (+3.5)

QB Lamar (Action) Jackson may be healthy for the first time since Browns LB Jeremiah Owusu-Koramoah (JOK) tore his ankle off. The Dumpster Ducks have been up and down in his absence, and the wins have hurt his chances for a big payday. Backup QB Tyler Huntley looked nearly as good as Action, and this team plays hard no matter whom is at the helm.

The Rams can clinch the NFC West with a win and some help by the Pokes, and this defensive backfield lost CB Anthony Averett in the Bengals game. Imagine what WRs Cooper Kupp and Odell Beckham Jr. can do against this depleted secondary. Rams cover and win.

Arizona Deadbirds at Dallas Cowpokes (-5.5)

The Deadbirds have fallen back to Earth following the loss of WR Deondre (D-Hop) Hopkins to injury. Detroit, the Rams and Indy have all beaten them of late, and they haven't looked nearly as dominant after a huge NFC lead in the seeding. Most of the blame lies with the play of Tyler Murray, who has

THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2021

Week Sixteen – Boom!

been figured out since returning from a high ankle sprain. Teams are now using a mush-rush to collapse the pocket and minimize his scrambling.

Enter Doomsday Lite, which has over performed courtesy of new D-Coordinator Dan (the Mighty) Quinn. Quinn has leveraged rookie Micah Parsons (Brown) and various edge rushers to elevate a largely pedestrian secondary. CB Trayvon Diggs has a league leading eleven picks in 2021, and Parsons is marrying QBs at a Defensive Rookie of the Year rate. There has even been MVP talk for the rookie LB/DE, but that is simply crazy talk.

The Pokes are getting healthy at the right time, and the 56-14 destruction of the Washington last week had more to do with the emotional state of DC than the Pokes. A deadly car crash by a defensive back killed his then girlfriend, and HC Ron Rivera referred to it as “real life shit.” This week, DE Montez Sweat’s brother was killed in a shooting, and the team is devastated. Granted, Dak Prescott put up impressive numbers, but the defense is the story in Big D.

The Look Man was dead wrong in picking the WFT to cover last week, but he has a sneaking suspicion that Zona will rise up here, stuffing the run and forcing Dak to throw. SS Budd(h)a (“the enlightened one”) Baker will be lurking and gets two picks in this one, setting up a cover. Zona.



Buddha has lost a few pounds since he was run down by DK Metcalf

Cleveland Browns at Blitzburgh Stillers (+3.5) Monday Night Football

The Browns come off a devastating Christmas Day loss to the Cheeseheads, and many believe a missed DPI was to blame. The Look Man knows better, and if you throw three picks, you’re gonna be on the bench, even if your name is Manning. Cake Baker has never mastered the Two Minute Offense, and his bad decisions in crunch time started with a Week One loss at KC.

THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2021

Week Sixteen – Boom!

Cake's three first half turnovers resulted in 21 Green Bay points, and the Barking Dawg D played well enough to win. RB Nick Chubb touched the rock only five times in the first half, and that is not nearly enough. This team flows through Chubb and the run game, not some idiotic Progressive pitchman.

The Stillers got destroyed 36-10 last week at Arrowhead, and the game wasn't even close. The Baby Backs did it with a number of COVID related starters out, including TE Travis Kelce. Big Ben looked old and worn out, as the speed and physicality of the KC D was obvious.

All of this sets up an epic MNF game between two longtime AFC rivals. But when was the last time Blitzburgh failed to show up following a bad loss? Dating back to 1992, the Blitzburgh has won twenty consecutive home games on MNF. In fact, and according to the Pro Football Reference, the Stillers own the overall NFL record for Monday wins with 50, not including one prior to MNF or a Monday doubleheader on Christmas Day 2017.

Tomlin will have his boys primed and ready, and he knows that the tie to hapless Detroit actually helps him in the playoff race. At 7-7-1, they don't control their own destiny, but could ace out AFC contenders with a better winning percentage. They also have a slim shot to the win the division if they win out.

Look for (Cake) Baker Mayfield to turn the ball over at least twice more in this game, sealing his fate in Cleveland. That WC playoff win in 2020 seems like millennia ago, and Browns chances for back-to-back playoffs since 1989 gets squandered by Number 6. Stillers.

EPILOGUE

The NFL lost a giant, both literally and figuratively, in John Madden. He would love the playoff chase in 2021, with all of its drama.

The Look Man recently watched some NFL Films featuring the Raiders and Madden doing Super Bowl XLIII between the Stillers and Deadbirds. The former featured *A Sea of Hands* and *Ghost to the Post* playoff games between Oakland and Miami, respectively.

The games featured Madden as well as the colorful Raiders greats Kenny (the Snake) Stabler, Ted (the Stork) Hendricks, Art Shell and Gene Upshaw. Madden himself never got over *The Immaculate Reception*, citing poor officiating resultant from the fear of Stillers Fan, who was typically overserved. It was the 70s equivalent of *The Tuck Rule Game*. The Stillers went on to multiple rings, just as the Chowds, but either game could easily have gone the other way, changing destiny forever.

Madden had great quotes, documenting the fact that despite being a football coach, he was at his essence, a teacher who was dissertation shy of a PhD in Education. He will be sorely missed.

Happy New Year to you and your families. The Rona is through in '22!

Peace,

The Look Man