

THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2021

Week Eighteen – Finally

“We’re probably 20-point underdogs and we’re going to the No. 1 team, I know they’re not the No. 1 seed but they’ve won the AFC the last two years, arguably the best team in football. We don’t have a chance. So, let’s just go in and have fun.” — Big Ben Roethlisberger when asked about his mindset for Wild Card Weekend at Kansas City

PROLOGUE

Big Ben sneaked into the playoffs by the hair of Mike (Omar Epps) Tomlin’s chinny-chin chin. His reward is a trip to beautiful Kansas City, to face the AFC One Seed. Not exactly a walk in the park for the worst QB remaining in the Tournament. An upset over the Baby Backs would be an incredible stroke of luck, or just the Zebras inserting themselves for the sake of Vegas and the NFL.

Big Ben is sanguine about the game, but more likely putting the onus on himself. The Stillers beat Baltimore in spite of Ben, not because of him. The Stillers need that win PLUS some WWE magic in a Football Night in America OT between the Bolts and Raiders to get into the postseason.

Or maybe just horrible coaching by Bolts HC Brandon (BS) Staley. Staley called a timeout with under a minute remaining in a tie game. If the OT ends in a tie, both the Bolts and Raiders are in the postseason and Blitzburgh is out. Instead, BS blinked, the Raiders got a first down, and doinked in the game-winning FG with triple zeroes on the clock. This ending, like so many of the Bolts’, reflects a talented team with horrible coaching that loses close games. Just why did the Bolts fire Anthony Lynn? Oh yeah, underachieving with too much talent.

The loss sent the Bolts fishing at Coronado Island, and the storybook ending of a Raiders championship as an homage to the late John Madden survived. How wild would it be if the Raiders and Stillers ended up in the AFC Championship and a deflected ball ended up in the hands of Najee Harris for the improbable comeback win? Don’t worry; that only happens in the movies, right?

In other news, the One Seeds prevailed in Week Eighteen, but the Look Man’s *Pepto Bismol of the Year Superfecta* nearly prevailed. Detroit beat Green Bay, the J-Squareds eliminated Indy, and Miami bested the Chowds. The Aeronauticals failure to cover at Crapchester blew up a perfectly good parlay, and that was only by half a point.

The rest of the week featured a number of firings on Black Monday (and Tuesday and Wednesday). Interestingly, two of the seven terminations were African American; three if you count Anthony Lynn’s firing as OC for Detroit. Lynn is probably lucky to get away from a team which is supposedly on the rise, but more likely setting its fan base up for more misery. Jared (Subway) Goff cannot compete in a division with good and great QBs in Justin Fields, Kirk (Curt) Cousins and Aaron Rodgers.

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

THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2021
Week Eighteen – Finally



*"It was working...and the Jets f*cked up a perfectly good parlay."*

LAGNIAPPE

Black Monday, Again

Marine Mammals owner Stephen Ross highlighted Black Monday by firing HC Brian Flores in a move that can only be considered bizarre. "I have no coach in mind at this point. We're going to do a thorough review and interview process," Ross said with a slight laugh. "And Jim Harbaugh, I love Jim Harbaugh. He had the opportunity once before to come to the Miami Dolphins. But he's at the University of Michigan. ... That is my school I graduated from, and I'm very involved in it. In fact, I co-own a Dockers franchise with Jim, and we are doing very well in the 40-56 age group."

Harbaugh may be a decent coach, but all fired HC Brian Flores did was finish one game out of the playoff hunt in two consecutive seasons, going 4-2 against Belicheat in the process. If the Marine Mammals believe guys like Flores grow on trees, they have another think coming.

The central issue seems to be friction with incumbent QB Tua Tagovailoa and GM Chris Grier. Flores wanted a real QB, not a diminutive lefty with bad decision making. His attempts to trade for DeShaun Watson fell flat, but his defense has been top five in turnovers and scoring the last two years. And that ain't bad.

Flores didn't deserve the hatchet, and ownership will again pay the price for blowing up the franchise. Ross has had four coaches and five QBs since purchasing the team, and chose poorly when selecting Tua over Justin Herbert in the draft.

THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2021

Week Eighteen – Finally

The Fish have become the new Cleveland Browns, with a revolving door at QB, including Ryan Tannehill, Jay Cutler, Matt Moore, Ryan FitzMagic, Brock Osweiler, Jacoby Brissett and Tua since 2016. Maybe they would like a brash, inaccurate QB who is also a Progressive commercial pitchman? They won't win that way, but apparently, they only care about feelings in South Beach, not rings.

The Look Man is hot about this termination, and it speaks to a mentality that head coaches not only have to win, they have to kowtow [see also Raheem Morris, Lovie Smith and Tony (Skeletor) Dungy in Tampa Bay]. The last time the Look Man checked, that approach only gets you fired. The last time something like this happened was 2019, when Marvin Lewis, Todd Bowles, Steve Wilks and Vance Joseph got canned. Lewis went to the postseason in five consecutive seasons, and got canned anyway. It stinks.

Black Monday, Again – Part 2

Mike Zimmer, David Culley, Matt Nagy and Vic Fangio also got a version of the home game, and at least Nagy deserved it. The others were part of a rebuilding franchise that had unreasonable expectations. In Minny, Zim got the hook because his lame duck QB refused to be vaccinated. In the most important game of the season, Cousins went down with COVID, and it cost Zim his job.

The NFL needs to get out of this win-now mentality, but the owners are captive to fans. Fans get coaches fired, but the good franchises (Stillers, Packers, Seahawks) develop players, keep coaches and win consistently.



Why did you DO that??!!

America's Game – For Sale

The Frisco Niners have a fan base that travels well, a term for fans who support their team at road venues. Last week, Niners Fan turned Sofi into Levi South, making so much noise that Rams QB Matt Stafford had to use a silent snap count AT HOME.

The Niners take on the Pokes at the Jones Mahal in Dallas this week, and the Sports Business Journal crafted a story on Niners Fan got tickets to the first playoff game between the two since the 1994 NFC Championship. That game, and the series which preceded it, featured furious competition, usually with the winner taking home the Lombardi.

Pokes Owner Jerry (the King of Pop) Jones, downplayed the possibility of a Niners takeover of the Jerry Dome, but the Dallas Morning News referenced the 2014 regular-season opener, in which Frisco destroyed the Pokes at AT&T Stadium with a crowd that “looked almost as red as it did blue and white, and at certain points sounded so.”

THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2021

Week Eighteen – Finally

Pokes season ticket holders probably cannot afford NOT to flip the seats for a profit, and, frankly, these transactions go right into Jerrah's pocket. Now that the NFL is in league with Stubhub, Ticketmaster and other online scalping operations via a league-controlled blockchain apparatus, the NFL gets paid irrespective of the fans team colors.

And when the NFL gets paid, you know Jerrah has his hand out, too.



"...as long as I get to wet my beak..."

At Home with Baker Mayfield...

The Browns were eliminated in Week Seventeen Bengals win (courtesy of Zebra Ron Torbert), and faced scrutiny over who will be their QB in 2022. Despite rampant speculation about dumping (Cake) Baker Mayfield, Cleveland GM Andrew Berry told reporters that the Browns have no qualm about proceeding with him next season.

"We have a lot of guys who will have gone into their final [contract] year or something along those lines. That is not something that really goes into the calculus for us. Every year, you will have guys on expiring deals," said Berry, who also refused to call Mayfield a "lame duck" in 2022.

"I do not know that I would categorize it that way. Again, you have a number of players across positions that are entering the final years of their deals. That is not something that is really top of mind for me."

Berry can say whatever he wants, but Cake is a bum, and his presence is divisive. Mayfield will impede the Browns ability to acquire free agents, and the Barking Dawg D already hates his guts. Cleveland wasted OBJ, Nick Chubb, Kareem Hunt and Jarvis (Iron Man) Landry in 2021.

Even if Mayfield bounces back in 2022, he will still lead the league in picks thrown with 56 since 2016. And that is not a stat that you want associated with your name. Unless you are making more money selling insurance than winning football games.

Even if he does play well in 2022, the Browns will be on the hook for a long-term deal at \$40 million annually. Anyone who watched Goff, Cousins or Wentz knows the danger of signing a QB to a deal too soon.

For now, the Browns front office is just playing coy. It needs to acquire a free agent like Matty Ice if it wants to complete in 2022. Because the reality is, the Cleveland Browns are... *At Home With Baker Mayfield...* for the playoffs in 2021.

THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2021

Week Eighteen – Finally

ZEBRA OF THE WEEK

The Week Seventeen candidates are:

Clete Blakeman (Bolts at Raiders) - just before halftime, a late DPI call on Bolts CB Chris Harris on Zay Jones was called for a ball that landed 20 yards away in the end zone. The ball was clearly uncatchable, and called nearly five seconds after the ball hit the ground. This laughable call allowed the Raiders to score before the half of a game that was getting away from them. Even Derek (Elvis) Carr was laughing; he just wanted to avoid a sack before the half.

Ron Torbert (the Eighth Man) - Dallas at Philly – this game was meaningless for both teams, but there were enough bad calls to make the Look Man turn it off. The final score was indicative of nothing, but Torbert stinks.

The honor goes to Blakeman, whose call ended up turning the game into a 32-32 tie in regulation. The overtime went down to the wire in a game that decided the fate of these AFC teams, and Blitzburgh backed into the postseason. It's ironic the game was contested in Vegas. Clete Blakeman, you are the **Look Man's Zebra of the Week!**



"I just made a nice little sum on that turd call..."

THE LOOKAHEAD – SUPER WILD CARD WEEKEND

Saturday Games

[Insert City Here] Raiders at Cincinnati Bengals (-5.5)

The Bengals are rested after losing a Week Seventeen battle of the backups in Cleveland. Enter Derek (Elvis) Carr, and the Raiders, coming in high on the heels of a grueling OT win over the Bolts. The weather will be a factor, with 20F wind chill on a Saturday night game. Granted, that is not the -10F wind chill they expect in Crapchester for Chowds at Bisons, but it is cold enough for a dome team.

The Bengals have nearly zero playoff experience, and cold weather affects key components of passing and the special teams. Joe (Goat Boy) Burrow has been doing it in the air of late. Can RB Joe (Richard Milhouse) Mixon run the ball consistently on the Raiders with an unproven O-line?

THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2021

Week Eighteen – Finally

The Bengals haven't won a playoff game since 1990, when they beat the Houston Oilers 41-14, before bowing out to the Raiders in the Divisional Playoff. That loss started a fourteen-year playoff drought that ended with Marvin (Jerry) Lewis in 2005. The Bengals made the playoffs six times in seven years under Lewis, but failed to post a win.

The 2015 playoff game against the Steelers had the Bengals winning with 90 ticks remaining, before LB Vontaze Burfict delected WR Antonio Brown. The fifteen-yard personal foul put the Steelers into FG range, and the Bengals pulled defeat from the jaws of victory on a cold, rainy winters night at Pall Bearer.

Lewis was back in the spotlight this week: "Any time I see Mike (Brown) have success, it makes me smile. I've spoken to him two or three times, and I'm really happy for the success they've had this season. So that would be great to see them win in the playoffs."

"The goal was always to win the Super Bowl, and the only way to win the Super Bowl is you've got to get through the playoffs. It's something I failed to do. You do the job for one reason, and that's to win the Super Bowl. And I wasn't able to get that done," Lewis said.

One theory on the losing streak is the Cincinnati fight song, featuring tubas and glockenspiels. Here are the lyrics:

*Hear that Bengal bawling, mean and angry,
Watching Marvin scowling, we got no sympathy,
No Gresham or Green,
Red Rifle ain't keen,
And the offense really sucks, f*ck.
Cincinnati Bengals,
That's the team we're going to see in misery,
Playoff Bengals suckin' just as usual,
And lose a game for Cincinnati.*

Well, those are not the exact lyrics, but you get the drift. The Look Man believes it has more to do with good TE play by the opposition, and Raiders TE Darren Waller is a rare combination of speed and power. Still, the Bengals overcome history, bad coaching by Zac Taylor, and an awful fight song this week in the Super Wild Card. The InkWire headlines read *One Point As Good As One Thousand* as Raiders cover, Bengals win a close one.

New England Chowds at Buffalo Bisons (-4)

The weather forecast for Crapchester is "f-ing cold" and the Bills Mafia will be inebriated beyond belief. No folding table will be safe in the parking lot, nor will the outcome. The Zebras are going to get involved early and often here, attempting to ensure the NFL dream matchup.

The Look Man is picking the upset here. Chowds cheat their way to a "W", running all over the Bisons. QB Josh (Irwin) Allen goes sci-fi with an untimely turnover created by innumerable offensive holding calls, and Belicheat advances. Chowds.

THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2021

Week Eighteen – Finally

Sunday Games

Philadelphia Iggles at Tampa Bay Expensive Corn Kings (-8.5)

The Iggles look better, but it is difficult to tell because of the offensive structure. They are running on everyone, but much of the load is carried by QB Jalen Hurts. The defense is stout, stuffing the run and playing a Cover Two Zone that forces teams into slow, double-digit drives. Philly is not so much winning, as wearing down its opponents.

Tampa is doing it with smoke and mirrors, after losing Chris Goodwin and Antonio Brown to injuries. AB's brain injury goes back to the 2016 playoff game in Cincy, but he is gone anyway.

Tom Brady and the Corn Kings need this win, and the NFL needs to print its own money. Kings in a walkover, just to ensure Philly doesn't appear on our TV screens again this postseason. Corn Kings.

San Francisco Niners at Dallas Pokes (-3) [Pepto Bismol Upset of the Week]

There will be a lot of Niners Fan at AT&T Stadium; after all, it is officially located in Frisco, Texas. The real drama will be on the sidelines, where Pokes HC Mike McCarthy will be in a battle of wits with Niners HC Kyle Shanahan. McCarthy will be at a distinct disadvantage in that particular battle; he hasn't been able to coach his way out of a wet paper bag in years.

The Look Man may not be the most superstitious man in the world, but he is in the competition. While the Look Man is not fond of Niners QB Jimmy (G) Garoppolo, he did see a guy wearing a SF Giants hat at the quicky lube this morning. And he loves WR Deebo Samuel, a weapon for whom the Pokes have no answer. Niners upset.

Blitzburgh Stillers at Kansas City Baby Backs (-12.5) WWE Night in America

Kansas City is banged up after a win last week over a feisty Denver squad. WR Tyreek (the Cheetah) Hill, TE Travis Kelce were both injured in that game, and RBs Clyde Edwards-Helaire (shoulder) and Darrel Williams (toe) have been hurt for a while.

The Stillers counter with a bad elbow injury for RB Najee Harris. Harris somehow finished that war with Baltimore last week, but he was running with one arm most of the day. The Stillers front seven played with abandon and Baltimore has no deep passing game.

Q: When was the last time Football Night in America game was a laughter?

A: 2020. Nearly every game this season has ended with an Alcoa Fantastic Finish, courtesy of the zebras.

Watch for the Baby Backs to try to turn it on for the postseason, getting the offense revved up for battles in the coming weeks. No deal, as Blitzburgh uglies it up and the zebras help. KC wins, zebras cover the spread, and Big Ben limps off into the NFL sunset.

Monday Game

Arizona Birdhead Heads at [Insert City Here] Rams (-2.5) Monday Night Football WC Special

The NFL MNF WC game on ESPN is a bonus. Arizona has a losing record at home, but is deadly on the road in 2021. The Rams have no home field advantage, as Sofi is overrun with opposing fans.

The real referendum might be Kyler Murray vs. Matt Stafford. Both started out red hot and have cooled since. It is clear that Murray misses WR Deondre Hopkins, and the offense has also struggled absent the

THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2021

Week Eighteen – Finally

power running of RB James (Sarah) Conner. Conner suffered his annual debilitating injury of the year a few weeks ago, and can no longer carry the load. Meanwhile, Stafford has been lighting it up offensively with OBJ and Cooper Kupp. Untimely turnovers that cost him wins over Tennessee, Green Bay and the Niners (twice). The Fearsome Foursome has not been very good since losing DE Leonard Floyd, but the real problem is a suspect linebacking corps.

Tough pick here, but the Look Man is going to go chalk. Hard for the NFL to ignore the number two R+TV market, so the Rams get a win. Rams.

EPILOGUE

The Look Man is going to the Raiders-Bengals and rushing to get out the door. His extreme cold weather gear has been in storage for a couple of years, owing to minimal postseason games for the Browns and Bengals. Plus, like Danny Glover in the *Lethal Weapon* franchise, “he’s getting too old for this sh!t.”

Still, there is nothing like the feel of postseason football. The food tastes better, the alcohol is colder, and the general sense of heart thumping expectation mounts. It makes one feel alive in a way that nothing else does.

Here is to a Super Wild Card Weekend devoid of bad officiating, and filled with wonderful, clean football games. Cheers!

Peace,

The Look Man