

THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2021

Week Twenty-One – One in a Million, Doc

“We have higher aspirations than beating the Steelers right now.” — Bengals QB Joe Burrow, after a 41-10 beat down and season sweep of the Stillers.

PROLOGUE

The Bengals making the Super Bowl may be a sign of the End Times. They are at least one year ahead of schedule, and owe their appearance to (Jackpot) Joe Burrow. He has parlayed his moxie into an amazing run for a ring. It’s like the Seinfeld episode where the guy sits on a Fusilli pasta statue, telling his proctologist, “It was one in a million, Doc.”

Apparently, Mike McCarthy does not have the market cornered on stupid coaching decisions, as Andy (Big Kool Aid) Reid failed to kick a FG with five seconds remaining to go up 24-3 at the half. The football gods were ticked, and the punishment was getting beat by the AFC four seed.

After the half, instead of running the football to salt way the clock, Mahomes threw a pick to D lineman BJ Hill. The Look Man reviewed the tape, and Mahomes clearly concussed himself making the tackle on that big bodied dude. Reid took responsibility, and he should have. You must protect your QB from unnecessary risks for his own good. Right, Mike McCarthy?

Mahomes took the high road afterwards: “When you’re up 21-3 in a game, you can’t lose it, and I put that on myself.” Still, he went from a passer rating of 130 in the first half to 1.4 in the second. He couldn’t hit the broad side of a barn, nearly three picks in the second half, and the fumble late in regulation looked like a dance recital.

Meanwhile, the Rams attempted to give it away in Tampa, with four turnovers to convert a laughter into a nail biter. Stafford pulled it out late, but it should never have come to that. Cam Akers put the ball on the ground and even sure handed Cooper Kupp was bobbling it. The Rams nearly choked away a chance to go to the Super Bowl after going all in with free agency. They don’t have a first-round draft pick until 2024, so if they didn’t go now, their window may be closed.

Without further ado, the Look Man Report 2021 for Week Twenty-One.

LAGNIAPPE

Two in a Million, Doc

The NFL killed two birds with one stone. They provided much needed leverage in the Bengals stadium negotiations while simultaneously generating revenue to pay off the City of St. Louis relocation lawsuit.

The Rams value goes north of \$5 billion if they get a ring, and Cincinnati will never be able to negotiate a favorable stadium lease if the Bengals win it all. Who cares if viewership is the lowest of all time if they increase franchise values/revenue for both teams?

At a minimum, the Cincinnati county commissioner’s contention that owners Mike and Katie Brown-Blackburn are not making a good faith effort to field a competitive team just went out the window. Meanwhile, Mike and Katie are pocketing millions of salary cap dollars while engaging in nepotism and employing Katie’s husband, Mike’s sons and his niece. The Bengals stadium deal is the best in all of sports, amounting to \$1 per year for venue rental plus a substantial cut of parking and concession revenue PLUS right of first refusal for all events at Paul Brown Stadium.

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Stan Kroenke, owner of the Rams, quadrupled his team value by moving to LA, and he offered \$790 million to settle a lawsuit by the City of St. Louis for unlawful relocation. He then refused to indemnify the NFL for the balance of the liability, which could amount to \$3 billion or more.

This game kills two avian species with a single projectile; it sets up the Brown family for life, while generating revenue to offset the St. Louis city lawsuit. With the imminent sale of the Denver franchise, and possible future sales of Miami and Washington, the NFL is well positioned.

Coaching Adjustments

The Bengals needed to try something new at the half, looking up 21-3 at KC. They installed a three man pass rush, with eight in coverage, and Mahomes struggled to adjust. The Baby Backs scored only three in the second half, and the Bengals advance to the Super Bowl.

“We just had to change our looks, change our disguises,” said safety Vonn Bell. “Go out there and think, ‘When the ball is in the air, it’s our ball.’ With our backs against the wall, that’s when we fight the best. Guys bowed up, made big-time plays, big time stops. We never batted an eye, we believed in it for sure.”

This team has more belief in itself than the Look Man has seen since the Jyntz team that beat the Chowds in Super Bowl XLIV.

Whit and Joe

There are way too many coincidences in the Super Bowl LVI matchup, and the craziest may be that both former Bengals LT Andrew Whitworth and current Bengals QB Joe Burrow both got ACL repairs in LA. The two became while rehabbing knee injuries under the direction of Dr. Neal ElAttrache in Los Angeles. Whit had surgery in November 2020; Burrow in December 2020.

Jackpot Joe Burrow was in the area for a follow up in April 2021, so he called Whitworth to check in. Whitworth asked Burrow to come over to watch the 2021 NFL Draft, where the Bengals selected WR Ja’Marr Chase in the first round.

“He was pumped, really pumped,” Whitworth said. “He knew him so well, and he knew what it was going to mean for their offense.”

And now, so do we all. Wild stuff.

OBJ the Second?

Odell Beckham Junior (OBJ) was released by Cleveland, and showed up just prior to the season ending injury to superstar Robert Woods. OBJ has seamlessly become the number two, and part of it is due to a genius contract negotiation by the Rams. All of Beckham’s incentives are team-based, not individual achievements. OBJ got \$500K each for winning division and conference championships, and stands to double that with a Super Bowl win.

That’s a cool \$2 million for half a season’s work. Not bad for a guy who Browns Fan said they didn’t need and the front office couldn’t get to stay after his dad threw Cake Baker under the bus. The Browns clearly released the wrong player.

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There is one string: OBJ's girlfriend is expecting his first child on Saturday or Sunday. He must be on the active roster to get paid, so she is taking it easy this weekend.



"Dilation at less than 1 mm"

The (Mickey) Rooney Rule

The Look Man has been railing against the lack of diversity in coaching hires for several weeks, and Houston did hire former Bears HC Lovie Smith. Still, the Rooney Rule is not working, and Eric (Sleeping with) Bieniemy is still jobless.

It is a bad look for a league that is 70% African-American, and we are approaching a situation in which we have more black representation in the Supreme Court than in head coaches in the NFL. Goodell needs to take the lead, and the most likely path to correction could be black ownership.

The Washington Football Team is in deep trouble due to recent allegations about sexual misconduct, and that franchise would be a prime candidate for minority ownership. Only then would we likely see the next Mike Tomlin rise to prominence.

THE LOOKAHEAD

This game is way too close to call. Granted, LA has the bigger names on defense, but Cincinnati is the new No Name Defense. These guys have shut down KC, Tennessee and Vegas en route to the Big Game. Plus, (Jackpot) Joe Burrow vs. Matt Stafford should be epic. The game could go many ways, but the Look Man is counting on a fantastic outing by both clubs.



SoFi, aka Earth Final Conflict Stadium

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Super Bowl LVI at SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles

[Insert City Name Here] Rams vs. Cincinnati Bengals (+4.5)/ Total Points: 48.5

The Bengals have been installed as the road team, and kick the Rams out of their own home locker room. Since 2017, the home team alternates between AFC and NFC. Of course, no team had ever played at home before Tampa Bay in Super Bowl LV. And that only happened because of construction delays at SoFi. Since the LA venue wasn't ready, Tampa Bay moved up in the rotation from 2022 to 2021. This marks the second consecutive time it has happened in the 56-year history of the game.

It will be interesting to see if the home team has any significance in Los Angeles, where there is a lot to do other than watch football. Los Angelinos tend to be bandwagon fans who are often drowned out by visiting fans. We do know that the Rams will get to call the opening coin toss as the road team.

Stafford would like to come out hot, and go up big early on the Nati. That would allow them to pound the Bengals with the run game and salt it away in the second half. Ironically, the Bengals are a second half ballclub, and they have made halftime adjustments in both the divisional and conference championship rounds.

But the Look Man sees another factor at play: Sean McVay wants to be seen as an innovative genius, and eh cannot do that by running the football. The Browns swept the Bengals by running the ball, but McVay will choke on that approach. And if he does, he is playing right into Cincinnati's hands.

The Look Man sees the Bengals running the football early and often. Joe (Richard Milhouse) Mixon is more than capable, and he has excellent ball security. Cam Akers, on the other hand, is opening up a string of West Coast bakeries that only sell turnovers. He cannot be trusted, and if he turns it over, the Bengals will capitalize.

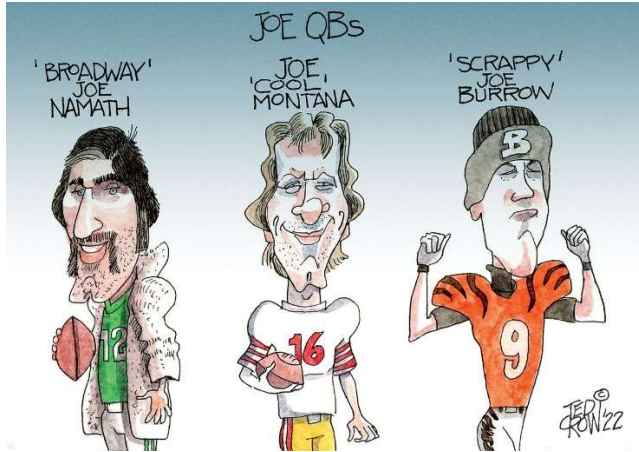
The Look Man expects Cooper Kupp to get doubled, opening it up for OBJ to get double digit catches. Cincinnati's other weakness is the TE position, but Tyler Higbee is officially out. The backup, Kendall Blanton, is decent, but he is no Max McGee. And CB Mike Hilton is balling out for Cincinnati, which makes it easier for Awuzie and the safeties to play on-ball defense.

The Cincinnati O-line is the biggest mismatch, because the Rams front seven is outstanding. Unfortunately, the zebras do not call holding in the Super Bowl, which could negate some of the advantage. The balance will be overcome by Burrow's quick passing game, including screens to President Mixon and TE CJ Uzomah, who will play and be productive.

Zebra of the Year Ron Torbert is officiating the game, so look for hijinks to ensue. Torbert is the worst of the worst, and with Tony (Hip Check) Corrente and seven other senior zebras retiring, it could get a lot worse. The zebra pipeline draws from the NCAA, where replay allows them to toss a player for targeting even if they didn't see the foul. God help us all in 2022.

The Look Man has played this game in his head over and over, and the Rams are the clearly superior team. That's why he is going with the Bengals to cover and win. Who Dey? It. Is. Us.

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Not just average Joe's...

EPILOGUE

The 2021 season has been incredible. Granted, some of the games were over-officiated, creating close games out of blowouts, and Vegas had way too much influence on outcomes, but on balance it was exciting.

The Look Man always gets weird at the end of the NFL season. On one hand, he is throw-up-in-his-mouth excited about the Big Game, but it represents the end of a journey. The NFL Draft timing is pure genius, as it occurs at the NFL calendar midpoint before the next season.

Irrespective, one team will be crowned as world champs, and the other 31 are also rans. But that doesn't mean that the season was a failure, unless you took a championship caliber team and allowed your QB to hold it hostage in contract negotiations like Cake Baker. The Look Man would be busting his buttons proud if he were a Bengals Fan.

The Look Man would love to see a few more coaches of color installed, and the retirement of Brady in Tampa is heartening. But the owner issues in Washington, Miami, and the LA Rams are upsetting. Congress is getting involved, and no one expects that to end well.

Peace,

The Look Man