

THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2021

Week Twenty-Two – Once I Dreamed a Dream...

"When you're GOOD at something, you'll tell everyone. When you're GREAT at something, they'll tell you." – the late, great Walter Payton, Chicago Bears

PROLOGUE

The Week Twenty-Two title comes from the Matrix trilogy in which Morpheus sees his battle cruiser blown to bits. The Bengals had to feel the same way after making it all the way to Super Bowl LVI before being undone by an offensive line that couldn't stop a nosebleed.

The Nati looked good for about two quarters, before the Rams installed a line stunt that got Jackpot Joe Burrow sacked seven times. The stunt was not really that creative, a simple T-E twist which freed up Aaron Donald to wreak havoc. Of course, some of that havoc may have been unleashed by center Trey Hopkins, who shoved Donald after a questionable Burrow hit on the sidelines. Hopkins took umbrage and woke the sleeping giant that is Donald.

It is worth noting that OG Hakeem Adeniji played an incredibly poor game, even by his standards. The Look Man believes the next guy he blocks will be the first. Adeniji must collect his paycheck with a gun and a mask. The Look Man believes we should invent a new invective. Instead of saying, "dammit", we should simply yell "ADENIJI!!!"

Irrespective, the {insert City Name Here} Rams won the game despite a pedestrian effort by QB Matt Stafford, and a herculean effort by WR Cooper Kupp. Former Browns WR Odell Beckham Junior nearly broke the game wide open before reinjuring his ACL on a poorly throw Stafford pass. Afterwards, the game devolved into a defensive battle, and the Rams proved superior. Of course, it wouldn't have been WWF enough absent some bad calls by Zebra of the Year Ron Torbert (The Eighth Man). Torbert's contributions late put the Bengals in a tough spot and Aaron Donald finished it with a sack on 4th and 1. Replay indicated that WR Ja'Marr Chase was two steps clear of CB Jalen Ramsey, and even another second could have resulted in the greatest Super Bowl finish in history. Unfortunately, Adeniji missed a block and the rest is history.

Without further ado, the Look Man Report 2021 for Super Bowl LVI.

LAGNIAPPE

The Football Gods

The Football Gods often frown on teams which attempt to purchase a ring, preferring instead teams which build from the ground up. This Rams team doesn't have a first-round pick for two more years, and was assembled with free agents like Andrew Whitworth, Matt Stafford, and Von Miller. In their stretch run, they added OBJ from Cleveland, and SS Eric Weddle from his sofa.

The Look Man is also a fan of building a team in the draft, and hopes that high and middle round picks in Cleveland can make a difference. He would like to add Matty (Ice) Ryan from the ATL, draft a stud LB and WR, and laugh all the way to Super Bowl LVII. Of course, that plan would also include jettisoning one Cake Baker Mayfield in the process.

All told, this Rams team should not have a ring. But they do, and no one can take that away from them. Perhaps lightning can strike two seasons in a row, and the Browns can get there and win it?

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Porky's – the Revenge

The Look Man was so distraught with the outcome and the Browns' failure to appear that he took a vacation in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico.

Cabo is the kind of venue that can erase any pain. The hotels are spectacular, and the influx of wealthy Americans makes it into the World's Greatest Day Party. All-inclusive eats and drinks don't hurt, and the warm winter weather is epic. If you live anywhere north of the Mason Dixon Line, a week here will make the last dregs of winter bearable. And a full moon doesn't hurt at all.

The Look Man told you that story to tell you this one: one afternoon, while peering off his balcony at the assembled revelers, he noted two particularly comely young women in thong bikinis. He might not even have noticed if the Official Wife of the Look Man hadn't uttered the phrase, "Those women might as well be naked!"

That really got the Look Man's attention, and he looked up to find two particularly well-endowed posteriors. A moment later, some large, corn-fed Midwestern woman in a modest one piece blocked his view and most of the pool bar. It was reminiscent of the scene in *Porky's* where the kid yells, "Move it, Lard Ass!" It might not have been so bad if the woman hadn't had harpoon marks on her back, and a tattoo that read simply: "Ahab Lied".

At any rate, if you haven't made the trip to the Baja Peninsula, the Look Man strongly endorses it.

Coaching Adjustments II

The Bengals held their own for a good portion of this game, owing to solid defense and the OBJ injury. They shut down Kupp and the Rams, and nearly killed backup WR Van Jefferson, who was decleated numerous times.

The turning point came when the Rams incorporated the T-E twist, and Bengals HC Zac Taylor did nothing to respond. Stafford, with nothing to lose, starting focusing all of the Rams' offense on Kupp, who single-handedly won the game and the MVP.

Taylor's lack of response allowed Sean McVay to outcoach him and obtain a Lombardi. His reward: a contract extension through 2026.

The Look Man remembers the Bengals under Sam Wyche (RIP), and was always happy to see his contract extended. Wyche had the biggest and best O-line in the AFC, but insisted on passing the football when he could run roughshod over the conference. The result was 12-4 seasons followed by 4-12 seasons. Wyche was the best thing that ever happened to the Cleveland Browns and Taylor could be the same. The Browns swept the Bengals in 2021, and absent real improvement in the O-line, could do so again.

Whit and Joe II

former Bengals LT Andrew Whitworth is well deserving of a ring after years of futility in Orange and Black. On the other hand, Bengals QB Joe Burrow nearly injured his healthy ACL late in the game. He will not need surgery, but did sprain his MCL.

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Jackpot Joe needs a line in the worst way after suffering a league leading 71 sacks in 2021. If he doesn't get help, he could end up like Dan Marino. Marino played in a Bowl in Year One of his career and never returned.

OBJ in 2022?

Odell Beckham Junior (OBJ) may have a tough time re-signing after tearing his left ACL for the second time. He clearly won't get as much money as he deserves, and likely will miss a year of his career. Cleveland Fan is engaging in Schadenfreude, glad that he was injured, but no one can take his ring.

The Look Man actually heard an audible pop in real time, and having suffered a torn ACL, he was heartbroken. In point of fact, any time anyone suffers a knee injury on live TV, the Look Man has to look away to avoid puking.

Beckham also received a check for one million, courtesy of his contributions. Not too bad for a WR released by Cleveland as washed up. His teammate, Jarvis Landry, is just what the Rams need to repeat, and is deserving. Especially if the Browns trot Number Six out there in 2022. Ugh.



Jubilation and triumph, and a legacy Browns Fan cannot touch

Autopsy

The game, as predicted, ended up being "...way too close to call." Still, LA won fair and square, especially after a very questionable facemask call was missed at the beginning of the third stanza. WR Tee Higgins pulled a very veteran move on Ramsey, but that call was horrible. The Zebras allowed them to play - - - right up until the end. That's when Torbert took over.

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Ironically, the way the Rams won was eerily similar to the way the Bengals beat KC. Multiple red zone calls set LA up for success, and the Bengals ran out of time due to awful play selection. Burrow narrowly missed out on becoming the Third Joe to win championships in college and the NFL, and bore the ignominy of having to wear his Bengals suit home after a bad loss. He could be back, but not with this offensive line.



Burrow, rocking a Cam Newton original

EPILOGUE

The 2021 season ended predictably, with a close game that was over officiated. In some ways it was a fitting end to a season in which Vegas has been over represented. The NFL is still the Big Dog on the Block, but one has to wonder for how long given the current product. Still, it was nothing if not exciting, and the seventeen-game slate, while arduous, was not without entertainment value.

The Look Man is in Day Two of the Cabo vacation, and had an incredible mango margarita that nearly knocked his socks off. He has a saying, “The party don’t stop between Thanksgiving and the Super Bowl.,” but he may have to revisit that. At least until a formal contract award plunges him into sixty-hour work weeks. Still, the NFL is a fabulous distraction and the Browns’ battle call remains: “Wait until next year!”

Peace,

The Look Man