

THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2023

Week Eighteen – Run the ball, Kevin

"We knew guys wasn't gonna play...we just gotta worry about getting the win, so this game right here, we knew that they was gonna rest some of the guys, but the main thing for us to do was get the win." – Stillers RB Najee Harris, who propelled the Stillers into the postseason with a Baltimore sweep, after QB Bitch Trubisky starred in "How to Blow the Wild Card in Five Days" with two midseason losses to eight loss teams.

PROLOGUE

The battle to the Tournament was crazy in Week Eighteen, with longshot Blitzburgh getting into the Wild Card and Indy, Nawlins, and J-Ville getting tossed in the trash. Perhaps even more wild was the Bisons and Pokes' ascension to the Two Seed in their respective conferences. The NFL schedule makers maintained the intrigue all the way to the finish line.

Black Monday claimed several head coaches, including Arthur Smith in the ATL, (Riverboat) Ron Rivera in DC, Pete Carroll in Seattle, and Mike Vrabel in Nashville. It took days for Belicheat to get a version of the home game in New England, signaling the end of an era.

The Look Man heard a kid on sports radio say the game had passed Belichick by, and he was "just okay." Dude has eight rings and coached Tom Brady and Lawrence Taylor, two of the greatest players in NFL history. That is not a coincidence; it is a fact. Recency bias is real, and it is frightening. We live in a fantasy football world with unreal expectations for immediate gratification.

That doesn't bode well for the future, but we have a spirited race for Coach of the Year and a lot of good young candidates. The state of the NFL union is strong, but they really need to fix a glaring weakness with the zebras.

Without further ado, the week that was...

LAGNIAPPE

Coach of the Year?

The COTY balloting is complete, and DeMeco Ryans, Mike Tomlin, and Kevin Stefanski all have strong claims. Each exceeded expectations, taking teams with serious flaws to the postseason. The Look Man has gone on record relative to Tomlin, who has never won the award, but the presumptive favorite is Stefanski. All he did was lose his starting QB and Pro Bowl RB before winning eleven games and claiming the five seed. His reward is to go on the road for the balance of the playoffs, starting with the upstart Slim Shadies this weekend.

Tomlin lost uber star TJ Watt and starter Kenny (East of LA) Pickett for large stretches, and still swept a One Seed for a trip to the postseason. He is definitely deserving, but won't win, perhaps because of his previous role on the House franchise. Tomlin had his team playing hard in 34F driving rain last week. If you've ever played outdoor sports in those conditions, you know he is a great coach.

Irrespective, the Slim Shadies are on the rise, and the Look Man believes they will be the cream of the AFC in two years. They can parlay the three ones received for Deshaun Watson into a chance to knock KC, Baltimore and Crapchester out of the dynasty conversation.

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Dr. Eric Foreman is a helluva Head Coach

ZEBRA OF THE WEEK

Zebra Assignments

Cover your eyes ugly officiating has dominated the headlines in 2023. The Wild Card Weekend assignments do little to provide confidence. They are as follow, courtesy of Twitter X:

 **Rick Gosselin**
@RickGosselin9 · Follow

The Alex Kemp officiating crew was toughest on road teams (119 penalties for 974 yards) this season. The Ron Torbert crew was toughest on home teams (107 for 858).

9:58 AM · Jan 8, 2024

2 ❤️ Reply Share

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 **Ari Meirov** · Jan 8, 2024
@MySportsUpdate · Follow

Just announced: Here are the referee assignments for Wild Card Weekend:



The graphic displays referee assignments for the Super Wild Card Weekend, sponsored by Verizon. It is organized into a grid of six boxes, each representing a game on a specific day and time. Each box includes the logos of the two teams and the name of the assigned referee.

Day & Time	Teams	Referee
Saturday 6:10 PM ET	Browns vs. Dolphins	Clay Martin
Sunday 1:00 PM ET	Patriots vs. Bills	Carl Cheffers
Sunday 8:15 PM ET	Raiders vs. Broncos	Craig Wrolstad
Saturday 8:15 PM ET	Dolphins vs. Redskins	Brad Rogers
Sunday 6:50 PM ET	Giants vs. Cowboys	Ron Torbert
Monday 8:15 PM ET	Eagles vs. Cardinals	Adrian Hill

Is the fix in? Ron Torbert (the Eighth Man) is doing Green Bay at Dallas

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The notables are Alex (Family Ties) Kemp and Ron Torbert (the Eighth Man), who lead the league in flag tossing for and against the home teams. The Look Man doesn't mind (Feet of) Clay Martin or Brad (Buck) Rogers, but the rest of these jabronis need to seek out their true life's work.

Look for more controversy as Torbert punishes the Pokes with flags, and Cheffers to turn the Bisons game into a fiasco. The Look Man believes the Bake Show will self-immolate long before Adrian (Rocky) Hill can turn MNF into Flag Day 2024, but stranger things have happened. The Big Sombrero could go full Vecna and turn the contest into *the Upside Down* on Monday night.

THE LOOKAHEAD

Week Eighteen was pretty wild, but fortune favors the bold in the postseason. The Look Man still believes that defense wins championships, and there are some good ones remaining. Frisco, Cleveland, Blitzburgh, and Dallas qualify, and check the standings before you sleep on KC. These guys are top six and with LB Bolton back, they need only score enough to win.

Without further ado, the Lookahead to Super Wild Card Weekend.

Saturday

Cleveland Browns at Houston Slim Shadies (+2.5/44) 4:00pm

The Bengals destroyed Cleveland in Week Eighteen, beating the brakes off of second and third stringers. Joe (Richard Milhous) Mixon starred in what could be his last game in the Orange and Black. He will either be cut or take a pay cut in 2024, a year which could feature the losses of Tee Higgins, Tyler Boyd, and RT Jonah (Hill) Williams. The Bengals are gonna look very different next season.

Houston QB CJ Stroud was amazing in Week Eighteen, polishing off a road win with incredible passing. His third and forever pass to wideout Nico Collins was top ten for the year, and the Browns will struggle to repeat the Week Sixteen beatdown they issued in Cleveland.

(Cool) Joe Flacco returns after a week off, and the offense is relatively healthy. While Amari (Cooooop!) Cooper is unlikely to post another 265-yard receiving da265-yardowns have enough to cover and win. They won't need Pro Bowl K Dustin (Rain Man) Hopkins, but they will need someone to stop Collins and Singeltary.

The only issue Browns Fan has is that Kevin Stefanski has not run the football enough. There is a perpetual cry in Browns Land: "Run the damn ball, Kevin."

The Browns are the only team in the NFL which has beaten Frisco and Baltimore, so a win here should be expected. There is intrigue as Houston would love to prove they didn't need Watson to win. Browns, baby, Browns, as they advance to the Divisional Playoff.

Miami Marine Mammals at KC Baby Backs (-3.5/44) 8:00pm

Miami stunk on ice in Week Eighteen, losing a must win game to a Crapchester squad that turned the ball over three times in the first half. They also lost LB Andrew Van Ginkel and are now a walking M*A*S*H unit on defense. Mike (Eminem) McDaniel will have to scheme them up on offense if they are to prevail.

KC has been a mess most of the season, largely due to receivers that drop passes. Andy Reid will figure out how to neutralize the Kareem (the Cheetah) Hunt on his way to the Divisional Round.

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Not even defensive mastermind Vic Fangio can save them at KC in a freezer bowl game. Baby Backs win, putting Eminem on the hot seat in 2024.

Sunday

Blitzburgh Stillers at Crapchester Bisons (-10/35.5) 1:00pm

There's a winter storm warning in effect for Crapchester, threatening to create the need to move this game to Cleveland. On top of that drama comes the MCL injury to Stillers DE TJ Watt, who is unlikely to play on Sunday.

Believe it or not, the weather may actually have helped the Stillers, who unwrapped their running game in inclement weather last week at Baltimore. RB Najee Harris carried the load after backup Jaylen Warren was benched for coughing up the rock repeatedly, and Harris rushed for 112 yards and added 21 more in receptions.

It amazes the Look Man that HC Mike (Omar Epps) Tomlin keeps pulling rabbits out of hats, and the play of Mason Rudolph (the Red Necked QB) has been nothing short of amazing. Granted, Rudolph nearly canceled Christmas with a few late throws, but he protected the rock. He also rescued WR George Pickens from the side of a milk carton, as he caught, blocked, and generally balled out.

The Bisons will depend on the legs of Josh (Irwin) Allen, much like they did last week. WR Gabe (Welcome Back Kotter) Davis is out with a knee, meaning a double team on Stefon Diggs. TE Dalton Kincaid will have to be a game wrecker, and that is unlikely.

Look for the Stillers to go Big Nickel and pick Allen repeatedly with the absence of Watt. No matter what, the under is a good bet. Stillers get an unlikely win to move on.

Green Bay Cheeseheads at Dallas Cowpokes (-7.5/50.5) 4:00pm

The Look Man loves this matchup between solid NFC QBs. Jordan (the) Love (Broker) has figured it out and Dak (Here we go) Prescott needs a spectacular game to cover and win. The presence of Zebra Ron Torbert (the Eighth Man) makes that less likely, and HC Mike McCarthy may be facing dismissal absent a deep playoff run. Can you imagine Belicheat in Big D in 2024? Jerrah can.

Doomsday Lite is vulnerable to the run, so their best game plan is to get up early and milk the clock. Unfortunately, their running game is not that good, and Love Broker can score from anywhere on the field.

The Look Man's conspiracy theory on getting Jerrah Jones a ring before he dies is still in play, but it would be beyond high comedy if the Cheeseheads beat Mike Mc. Just for the sake of comedy, the Cheeseheads bring back echoes of Favre and Hulk Hochuli in a nail biter. Green Bay covers.

LA Rams at Detroit Cadillacs (-3.5/51.5) [Football Night in America] 8:00pm

QB Matt Stafford returns to the scene of the crime in one of the biggest heists in NFL history. His opposite number is Jared (Subway) Goff, who has turned his career around in Detroit. If you think this is just another game, you would be wrong.

Rookie sensation TE Matt LaPorta (means "door" in Italian) is out with a knee, after playing in a meaningless game in Week Eighteen. No one ever accused HC Dan Campbell of lacking toughness, but he is no genius either.

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Stafford is going to be emotional in his return to Detroit, but he has the weapons. Puka Nacua, Tutu Atwell, and Cooper Kupp are going to have Detroit's secondary spinning. The only way for the Cadillacs to win this one is ground and pound with RBs Gibbs and Montgomery.

The Look Man loves a good upset, and he is calling for one here. Cadillacs advance if only to get another shot at Dallas, which stole one in Week Seventeen. Detroit covers and wins on a late FG, and McCarthy gets canned on his way to the locker room.

Philly Iggles at Tampa Bay Expensive Corn Kings (+2.5/44) Monday Night Football

Submitted for your approval; two teams going in opposite directions. The Iggles have lost five of six and the Corn Kings have parlayed (Cake) Baker Mayfield into five wins in six games. The Bake Show is having a career year but enters with a significant rib injury. QB Jalen (Hulu has live sports) Hurts has a finger pointing the wrong direction on his throwing hand and WR AJ Brown has a knee.

Everyone is blaming the Philly offense, but the Look Man believes the defense quit right around the time Matt (Peppermint Patty) Patricia took over for DC Sean Desai. Their lack of depth in the secondary has killed them, but they simply don't believe in Peppermint Patty. HC Tony Sirianni is now on the hot seat.

Look for the reemergence of the Baker Cycle on Sunday as the Iggles rise up one last time. Bake throws two picks and a TD, his usual turnover recipe. Hurts is going to run, pass and watch live sports as the Iggles beat the Corn Kings. Iggles.

EPILOGUE

There is nothing better than Saturday football, and the Super Wild Card Weekend is second only to March Madness for the Look Man. The win or go home aspect is tailor-made for drama, and regular season rematches make for excellent drama.

The Look Man still doesn't care for the single bye for One Seeds, but the numbers don't work without them. That is why the NFL wants to go to an eighteen-game season. Oh, and the money doesn't hurt either.

If you've never been to a playoff game, you should do yourselves a favor and attend one. The hitting is fiercer, the drama is next level, and the coaching moves are pressure packed. Folks talk about watching the games at home, but the Look Man will have none of that. Get off the couch and go.

Peace,

The Look Man