

THE LOOKMAN REPORT 2024

Week Thirteen – Coaching Conundrums

"It's kind of our expectation now," – Bengals WR Ja'Marr Chase on the Bengals becoming the first NFL team to lose four games or more when scoring at least 33 points.

"I feel the pressure on me to be great. I just have to play to the absolute peak of my ability every week for us to go and win. I don't want to end up like Tony Romo, having to put up 51 to win because my defense can't stop a nosebleed." – QB Joe Burrow in response to Chase's comments.

PROLOGUE

The Talking Heads are at it again, becoming masters of the obvious. They are all-in on Detroit, and with good reason. This week, HC Dan (Ankle Biter) Campbell made a gutsy fourth down call to ice a key divisional game against Green Bay. If it works, you are an official genius; if it fails, like Matt (Flus) Eberflus mismanaging times out, you end up with Jon (Chucky) Gruden on the former NFL coaches bread line.

Eberflus is the third coach to obtain a version of the home game, following the Aeronauticals Robert Saleh and New Orleans Dennis Allen. Flus got his notice following his costly decision not to call a timeout in a 23-20 loss Turkey Day loss to Detroit. It was the third excruciating Bears' loss following a Week Eleven choke to the Pack, an OT loss to the Hornheads, and a last second Fail Mary at DC. It also unearthed memories of an unforgiveable choke job in 2023 to the Cadillacs in which Bears Fan had to replace their televisions.

NFL head coaches are good for one or two wins or losses per year and if you listen to the fans, you end up sitting next to them. Even good coaches can lose close games; the Cheeseheads Matt LaFleur, Dumpster Ducks Jim Harbaugh, and Stillers Mike Tomlin all come to mind. But bad head coaches pull defeat from the jaws of victory far too often.

The Hot Seat awaits even solid head coaches like two-time Coach of the Year Kevin Stefanski and Bengals HC Zac Taylor. In this league, you must follow your instincts and be true to who you are. Otherwise, you become the head coach of your own living room.

Without further ado, the Week that Was:

ZEBRA OF THE WEEK

KC BBQ Home Cooking?

The Look Man watched with astonishment the second annual Black Friday game ending between the Raiders and Baby Backs. The game ended on a controversial call in which KC recovered a fumbled snap to ice the game. The Zebras threw a flag for an offensive false start on the play, which typically stops the clock and nullifies the defensive recovery.

But not so fast, my friend. The NFL rulebook contains an odd provision that converts a false start to an illegal shift in the last two minutes. Since the clock was not running the illegal shift becomes a live ball foul, so the defense can decline the penalty, and recover the fumble.

The Look Man has heard grumbling about KC receiving preferential treatment from the Striped Wonders, but this ruling was factually legit. The obvious frustration on the Vegas sideline emanated primarily from the offensive center, who snapped the ball before the O-line and QB were set. After

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checking his wallet, the center, Jackson Powers-Johnson accepted responsibility for the loss while others Raiders players and assistants simply buttoned their pieholes.

The Look Man believes there are two issues: (1) the KC defense likely barked a signal (“HUT-HUT”) that confused Hyphen Name into snapping early, and (2) HC Antonio (Ambrose) Pierce deserves all of the blame here. The first is a penalty that the zebras likely missed; the second is just the truth.

Rather than kicking the game winning FG with Daniel Carlson, Pierce tried to run a play with zero timeouts and 0:12 remaining. This in the second loudest NFL stadium in Arrowhead, where a fake snap count by the defense was lost in the noise. Instead of taking the win, Pierce wanted to exhaust the clock and avoid giving Mahomes another Alcoa Fantastic Finish.

“I actually didn't watch,” said Pierce said of the fateful play. “That last play there was a lot going on, from the officiating to the flags to the ball being snapped. Plus, I was crapping my pants worrying about Mahomes getting me fired with a Hail Mary.”

Pierce is not a bad head coach, but he is being put in a bad spot. He is working with QBs (Chauncey) Gardner Minshew and Aidan (Stand by Me) O'Connell, neither of who can spell “elite.” They ejected WR Davante Adams and RB Josh Jacobs for no return. Pierce is being set up for termination by a bad organization.

Woman Gets Decapitated in NFL Game

Trevor (Vicki) Lawrence got knocked out for the season following a late slide at the sticks and a vicious tackle by Houston LB Azeez Al-Shaair. Her helmet bounced on the turf, and al Shaair received a three-game suspension for a blow to the head. The NFL contemplated a full season suspension before coming to their senses, but the language in their statement was appalling.

"Your lack of sportsmanship and respect for the game of football and all those who play, coach, and enjoy watching it, is troubling and does not reflect the core values of the NFL. Your continued disregard for NFL playing rules puts the health and safety of both you and your opponents in jeopardy and will not be tolerated," according to NFL Rules Meister Jon Runyan. “He could have received six games based upon hitting a woman, as it falls under the Domestic Violence guidelines.”

Al-Shaair will now miss games against the Marine Mammals, Baby Backs and Dumpster Ducks, effectively ending Houston’s playoff chances. He is eligible to return against the Flaming Thumbtacks, but he is the heart of the Slim Shadies D.

The Look Man has trouble with both the tenor and the administration of the penalty. While he disagrees the slide was late as stated by Houston management, it did occur right at the first down marker. The NFL should modify the rule to protect QBs and the defense by creating a Zone of Zero Funkativity at the sticks. Any slide within one yard of the line to gain would waive the protection, forcing QBs to either go for the marker or face the music.

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Looks like Vicki knew the Boom was coming...

LAGNIAPPE

The MVP?

Bengals QB Joe Burrow is putting up MVP numbers in 2024, but he can't buy a win. The recent Stillers game was no exception, as he put up yet another three bills, three TD stat, only to lose due to Cam Heyward's pivotal 3rd quarter sack, an eight-yard loss that effectively ended the contest.

"Cam Heyward made a great play," Burrow said of the takedown. "I just wish we had someone who could make plays like that on defense." Instead, the Bengals DC Lou Anarumo dialed up a zero blitz twenty seconds before a key fourth quarter snap. Stillers QB (Dange)Russ Wilson sniffed it out and easily changed the play, throwing a TD pass to nearly ice the game.

Sweet Lou rarely blitzes, but he has only DE Trey Hendrickson to apply pressure. Irrespective, you cannot go zero that early. It leaves too much clock for the QB to audible. Especially when that QB is a HOFer like Russ. Wilson put up four bills passing with three TDs to mash the Bengals, receiving the FedEx Ground and Pound for the week. So much for Sean (Secret Squirrel) Payton's prediction that Russ is washed up...



"Let's ride!"

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Najee injury:

Najee Harris had to leave the game against the Bengals with an unspecified malady last week. He returned after a brief exist, pointing to his Thanksgiving dinner as the cause.

"Thanksgiving, (TE Pat Freiermuth's) girlfriend Jill, she made this fire-ass banana thing. And I had too much. I didn't know it affected me until that first drive. I got some oranges and I was good," said Harris.

Harris rushed for 75 yards on 16 totes with one TD, adding six catches for 54 yards. It was his best game since posting three consecutive 100-yard rushing games in Weeks Six through Eight. He now needs to average 75.2 rushing yards per game to reach his career-high 1,200 rookie rushing yards, which would surpass his totals from the past two seasons. Can you say "contract year?"



"Orange you glad I didn't say 'banana?'"

THE LOOKAHEAD

Week Fourteen has some outstanding division matchups and playoff previews. The Look Man picked a lot of games this week, perhaps because of the week off. Still, it is getting interesting down the stretch, and it won't be long before Saturday NFL is a reality. Here's the Lookahead to Week Fourteen:

Cleveland Browns at Blitzburgh Stillers (-6.5/44)

Stillers HC Mike (Epps) Tomlin is on pace for his first Coach of the Year award after rejuvenating the career of (Dange)Russ Wilson. This defense has some juice despite the loss of DE Alex Highsmith to an ankle he suffered against DC, but backup Nick Herbig(ore) is eating up left tackles.

Tomlin is salivating over Browns QB (Famous) Jameis Winston, who scores points for both teams via his propensity for throwing pick sixes. Winston asked for divine intervention after the Enver game in which he posted nearly five bills passing but provided fourteen points to the opposition.

The 2024 season has seen two AFC QBs put up big numbers and still lose games in historical fashion. Both Winston and Burrow have punished defenses with passing, but failed to eat Ws. The good news in Cleveland is that it has a defense, and that side of the ball is still ticked off by bulletin board material courtesy of Stillers WR George (Slim) Pickens.

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Pickens claims the Stillers' Snow Globe loss a few weeks ago was weather related, and that the Browns are not a good team. He also went straight Michigan Wolverines after the game, fighting in the end zone with Browns CB and bandleader Greg (Tommy) Newsome after the loss. Pickens is out of control and should have been tossed or suspended multiple times in 2024.

The other side of the rivalry is a beef between Browns DE Myles Garrett and Stillers DE TJ Watt. Watt believes he should've been named DPOY in 2023, and Garrett has rabbit ears. Both QBs better have eyes in the back of their heads, because both defenders can take over a game.

The smart money is on the Stillers to avenge their recent loss at Cleveland, but this rivalry is getting juicy again. Watch for recently acquired Jets WR Mike Williams to take the heat off of Dr. Strangelove, but the Look Man likes the Browns in a close game. Browns, baby, Browns.

Carolina Black Cats at Philadelphia Eagles (-13.5/46)

This point spread is ridiculous. Carolina is the most improved team in the NFC, and they narrowly lost to KC and Tampa in the last two weeks. QB Bryce Young (Man) has shown improvement, and was one Chuba Hubbard fumble away from beating Tampa. Black Cats cover as Eagles look ahead to a possible Super Bowl matchup with the Still Curtain in Week Fifteen.

Seattle Seahawks at Arizona Cardinals (-2.5/44.5)

Arizona and Seattle fight for NFC West supremacy, and the loser is in some trubba. The Look Man is no fan of QB Kyler Murray but WR Marvin Harrison Jr. can catch an arrow in a hurricane. Seahawks.

Chicago Bears of Time Management at San Francisco Niners (-3.5/44)

The Niners lost Christian (CMC) McCaffrey to a knee after his return from Achilles hell. Run CMC slipped on a snowy field at Crapchester, tearing his PCL and effectively ending any hopes for a Niners return trip to the Lombardi Tournament.

San Francisco does get QB Brock Purdy back, just in time to face the team with the worst clock management in recent NFL history, and the Niners secondary may get back Deommodore (Decker) Lenoir. "We're stronger with him than without him", said HC Kyle Shanahan. "We don't want him taking a shuttlecraft into the Planet Killer this week, but we would like some help on Keenan Allen."

The Niners may also get back LB (Dr.) Dre Greenlaw, who is recovering from an ACL suffered in last year's Super Bowl, but the Look Man isn't counting on it. Dr. Dre is the guy who makes this defense go, not Joey Bosa, as is commonly thought. When Greenlaw and Fred Warner team up in the middle, bad things happen to offenses.

Of course, bad things always happen to Chicago's offense, largely because the O-line stinks on ice. Niners.

Crapchester Bisons at LA Rams (+3.5/49.5)

Everyone has their eyes on this game, largely due to the fact the Bisons are chasing the Baby Backs for the AFC One Seed. Josh (Irwin) Allen is locked into the MVP race, and looked great in a dominant win over the Niners in the snow last week.

But the Rams are fighting for their playoff lives in the NFC, one game back of the Seahawks, and with an opportunity to get in only by winning the NFC West. Matt Stafford is the best QB in the conference not

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named Jared (Subway) Goff, and he is playing lights out with teammate Puka Nacua (means “bad man” in Polynesian).

The spread is ridiculous but the hidden factor is the Bisons-Cadillacs matchup in Week Fifteen. Buffalo gets caught looking ahead and the Rams steal one at Sofi. Rams cover.

LA Lightning Bolts at KC Baby Backs (-4.5/43) Football Night in America

Patrick Mahomes balky ankle is a little worrisome, but he is 8-1 against rookie QBs in his career. Denver QB Bo Nix is a rookie. See how this works?

The Bolts key weapon Ladd McConkey (son of Phil) is banged up with a shoulder and a knee. Jim (the Milk Man) Harbaugh has been doing it with smoke and mirrors, plus a healthy helping of solid defense. QB Justin Herbert is solid, but unspectacular and the run game is key.

The Baby Backs own the West, and get a win in a big showcase. Did the Look Man mention that factor back RB Isiah (Ferdie) Pacheco is back in Reid’s corner? Baby Backs, baby, in the Chili’s Bowl.



Ferdie is back for the knockout

Cincinnati Bengals at Dallas Pokes (+5.5/49.5) – Monday Night Football

is led by backup QB Cooper Rush (to Judgement), who is relying on WR CeeDee (F-G) Lamb and RB Rico Dowdell to do his bidding. TE Jake (Black Eyed Pea) Ferguson returns from injury in Week Fourteen, kicking productive backup Luke (The Force) Schoonmaker to the pine. The Force was productive in Fergie's absence, posting 14 catches, 144 yards and a TD in three games.

The Bengals are scoring at a prodigious rate without much to show for it. Ja’Marr Chase is killing it, and future Cleveland Browns WR Tee (Magnum) Higgins is mostly up in a contract year. RB Chase Brown is a Pacheco wanna be who is putting up solid numbers.

The problem is that any team with a good TE and reasonable defense can beat Cincy. HC Zac (Opie) Taylor is on the hot seat because the GM Katie Brown won’t provide Burrow with adequate protection or competent defense. The Look Man likes the Bengals to win this game, but forget the spread and take the over.

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Mike McCarthy cools down the hot seat for Zac

EPILOGUE

The weather has turned cold, meaning that running the football is an imperative. Teams that can run and stop the run are legitimate contenders. Those that do only one are not.

The real story behind the Browns and Bengals losses is the lack of a running game. The same can be said of Baltimore, which either posts two hundred plus rushing yards or in the mid-sixties.

In the NFL you pass for points and run for wins. No matter how far up you are in points, teams can get back into the game if you cannot run the clock. The result is getting nipped at the buzzer like the Raiders in Week Thirteen. One bad snap can turn the tide if the game is close.

Peace,

The Look Man