

# WEEK 7



# EFL

# 2023

ELITE FOOTBALL LEAGUE

## We're Number 1!

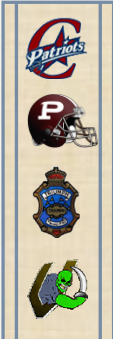
November 19, 2023

# TUA TUTORS!

EAST



CENTRAL



WEST



NORTH



COASTAL



SOUTH



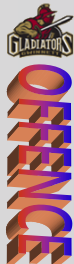
## Tua Georgia Gladiators

Gladiator quarterback *Tua Tagovailoa* gets the throw away as Wrecking Balls tackle *Andrew Billings* applies pressure in Week Seven action at Stone Pony Shore. Tua enjoyed a clean pocket for most of the day, as he threw 4 touchdown passes in a 31-28 road victory. The Glads enter next week facing a showdown for the division. (Story



Who was slick in Week Seven?

“Brylcreem” THE EFL’S FIRST SPONSOR



Tua Tagovailoa  
QB  
Georgia Gladiators

19 of 27, 348 yards, 4 TDs, 1 INT. Set fire to NJ secondary in explosive win.



Frankie Luvu  
OLB  
Budapest North Stars

4 Tk, 1 PD, 1 INT (79-yd TD), FR TD. Two TDs on 'D' sparked dynamic win.


**31**
**28**

**Tua Tagovailoa** threw 4 TD passes in 4 consecutive series spanning the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarters, including a 49-yard bomb to **Amari Cooper** and a 37-yard catch-and-run to rookie **Jason Smith-Njigba**, to propel the visiting Glads to a 31-6 lead. The Wrecking Balls pushed back with two **Daniel Jones** TD passes and a 79-yard fumble return for a TD by corner **Byron Murphy** to get within a field goal of even with 1:43 left. But NJ never got the ball back, as the Glads converted a 3<sup>rd</sup> & 19 on a 25-yard pass to **Diontae Johnson** at the 1:24 mark to maintain possession and hold on for the win.

11-19-2023 Stone Pony Shore Temp:74 Wind:5-15 None Line:GEO by 1 MVP:Tagovailoa HFA:

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2023 Georgia (4-3)	3	14	14	0	31
2023 New Jersey (4-3)	3	3	7	15	28

**Passing**

GEO: Tagovailoa 27/19 348 Yds 4 TDs Int

NJ: Jones 33/23 252 Yds 2 TDs

**Rushing**

GEO: Jacobs 20/40, Stevenson 7/24, Agnew 1/24

NJ: Jones 10/39, Montgomery 7/30, Robinson Jr. 5/21, McKinnon 1/8

**Receiving**

GEO: Stevenson 6/70 TD, Ertz 4/38, Johnson 3/69 TD, Cooper 3/112 TD, Smith-Njigba 2/50 TD

NJ: McKinnon 7/122, Samuel 5/34 TD, Allen 5/58 TD, McLaurin 3/23, Hooper 2/9

**Defense**

GEO: Nichols Sk 6-Tk, Jones Sk 4-Tk, Bell 8-Tk

NJ: Diggs Int 8-Tk, Hughes 9-Tk

**Injuries**

GEO:

NJ: Awuzie 8, Winfield Jr. 1

**Misc**

GEO: Pratt FR, Jacobs F-L, Bass 1/1 FG 47 Lg

NJ: Samuel F-L, Murphy FR-TD, Ryland 2/2 FG 55 Lg


**34**
**13**

**Teddy Bridgewater** threw back-to-back interceptions to reserve safeties **Kader Kohou** and **Ji' Ayir Brown**, setting up a 13-yard TD run by **James Cook** and a 16-yard TD pass to **Michael Pittman** to break up a tight early struggle and vault Cobb County into a 20-6 halftime lead. Bridgewater was picked off a third time, by **Jessie Bates**, on Erieau's first series of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, setting up the Coyotes at the Cadillac 9. **Bryce Young** hit **Luke Musgrave** two plays later for a 9-yard TD then **Travis Etienne** ripped off an 88-yard TD run to complete the scoring as the home team won easily.

11-19-2023 Kelly-Burke Field Temp:51 Wind:Calm None Line:CB by 1 MVP:Etienne HFA:

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2023 Cobb County (3-4)	3	17	14	0	34
2023 Erieau (2-5)	3	3	0	7	13

**Passing**

CB: Young 22/13 153 Yds 2 TDs

ERI: Bridgewater 15/7 96 Yds 3 Int, Peterman 13/7 89 Yds

**Rushing**

CB: Etienne 12/112 TD, Hill 15/35, Cook 2/13 TD, Parker 1/11, Strong Jr. 1/9

ERI: Harris 10/41, Pierce 7/25, Bolden 2/5, Hines 1/4

**Receiving**

CB: Musgrave 4/50 TD, Cooks 3/50, Pittman Jr. 3/35 TD, Etienne 1/12, Strong Jr. 1/-1

ERI: Waddle 4/78, Harris 3/27, Henry 2/60, Hines 2/0, Andrews 1/7, Higgins 1/10

**Defense**

CB: Payne 2-Sks 5-Tk, Omenihu Sk 7-Tk, Bates Int 6-Tk, Brown Int 4-Tk, Oluokun 9-Tk

ERI:

**Injuries**

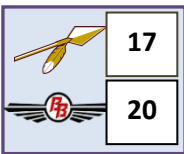
CB: Adams 7, Allen 6, White 2, Jones 1

ERI: Robinson 9, Bosa 5, Andrews 1

**Misc**

CB: Moody 2/2 FG 52 Lg

ERI: Myers 2/2 FG 41 Lg



17

20

**Brett Maher** nailed a dramatic 58-yard FG with 0:02 left to lift the Bombers to victory over the Braves. Two turnovers by LaPlata QB, **C.J. Stroud**, a lost fumble on a 1<sup>st</sup> quarter scramble and a pass picked by **Darius Slay** with less than 2 minutes left in the 1<sup>st</sup> half set up a pair of short drives for the home team, ending in TD runs by **Leonard Fournette** and **D'Onta Foreman**. Despite this, Stroud was able to tie the game at 17 with an 11-yard TD pass to **Adam Thielen** and put **Greg Joseph** in position to take the lead in the 4<sup>th</sup>. He missed the 53-yard attempt after penalties set them back.

11-19-2023 The Fortress Temp:77 Wind: Line:BRX by 14 MVP:Fields HFA:ON(

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2023 LaPlata (2-5)	0	10	0	7	17
2023 Bruxelles (6-1)	7	7	0	6	20

Passing

LPB: Stroud 18/15 176 Yds 2 TDs Int

BRX: Fields 18/12 100 Yds

Rushing

LPB: Mixon 13/75, Gibbs 13/41, Stroud 10/21

BRX: Fields 13/140, Foreman 16/57 TD, Herbert 2/16, Fournette 3/4 TD

Receiving

LPB: Thielen 7/102 2 TDs, Adams 4/55, Goedert 2/21, Mixon 2/-2

BRX: Wilson 5/29, Fournette 2/23, Godwin 2/25, Dulcich 2/11, Hopkins 1/12

Defense

LPB: Watt 2-Sks 8-Tk, Onyemata 2-Sks 3-Tk

BRX: Anzalone 15-Tk, Wilson FF 7-Tk, Slay Int 3-Tk

Injuries

LPB: Vera-Tucker 7, Stanley 3

BRX:

Misc

LPB: Stroud F-L, Phillips FR, Joseph 1/2 FG 33 Lg

BRX: Turner II FR, Dulcich F-L, Maher 2/2 FG 58 Lg



24

31

An interception by **Kwon Alexander** of **Lamar Jackson** at the Buffalo 10 set up a TD pass from **Jacoby Brissett** to **Rondale Moore** that broke a 17-17 tie in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter. **Micah Parsons** stripped HB **Tre McKitty** on the ensuing Buffalo drive and **Kerry Hyder** recovered, setting the stage for the eventual game-winning TD pass from Brissett to tight end **Luke Schoonmaker**. Jackson slung a 22-yard TD to **Josh Reynolds** with 2:52 left to give the Derailers a chance to tie, but the Irish were able to run out the clock to secure the win. Brissett won the QB battle, with 4 TDs to Lamar's 4 INTs.

11-19-2023 Mgr.McClancy Mem St Temp:66 Wind:5-15 None Line:EE by 8 MVP:Brissett HF

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2023 Buffalo (1-6)	0	10	7	7	24
2023 East Elmhurst (4-3)	7	7	10	7	31

Passing

BUF: Jackson 31/21 258 Yds 2 TDs 4 Int

EE: Brissett 41/25 252 Yds 4 TDs

Rushing

BUF: Dillon 13/92, Jackson 9/34 TD, Bigsby 2/9

EE: Brown 12/29, Williams 8/19, Brissett 1/3, Ingram 1/3

Receiving

BUF: Woods 9/116, Reynolds 5/69 TD, Dillon 3/32 TD, Fant 2/18, Bigsby 1/4, Rice 1/19

EE: Moore 6/85 2 TDs, Metcalf 5/66, Granson 5/38, Williams 3/16, Jones 2/22

Defense

BUF:

EE: Parsons 2-Sks FF 6-Tk, Bland Int 7-Tk, Epps Int 5-Tk, Hilton Int 3-Tk

Injuries

BUF: Robinson 5, Jackson 5, Donald 1

EE:

Misc

BUF: McKitty F-L, Elliott 1/1 FG 26 Lg

EE: Hyder Jr FR, Pineiro 1/1 FG 47 Lg



40



13

An opening series TD pass from **Joe Burrow** to **Jahan Dotson** and first series **Grant Delpit** interception of **Patrick Mahomes** augured well for Scarborough at home against one of the league's powerhouses. Unable to exploit the early turnover, the momentum turned against the Blue Eagles. The Violators went on to pile up 40 points on 5 TD passes from Mahomes to five different receivers, including a 19-yard TD pass to **Ja'Marr Chase** to open the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, while the Virden 'D' held the Blue Eagles to 252 total yards and forced 2 turnovers on downs to help preserve their perfect record.

11-19-2023 The Eagles Nest Temp:58 Wind:Calm Rain Line:W by 13 MVP:Mahomes HFA:0

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2023 Virden (7-0)	7	10	7	16	40
2023 Scarborough (1-6)	7	3	3	0	13

Passing

WV: Mahomes 34/22 267 Yds 5 TDs 2 Int  
 SBE: Burrow 30/18 149 Yds TD

Rushing

WV: Conner 10/47, Akers 8/38, Mitchell 1/8, Freeman 3/3, Mahomes 1/3  
 SBE: Cook 21/82, Zaccheaus 1/13, Edwards 2/7, Burrow 3/6, Perine 4/2

Receiving

WV: Hill 7/112 TD, Chase 6/80 TD, Olave 4/32 TD, Hockenson 2/36 TD, Akers 2/5 TD  
 SBE: Dotson 6/75 TD, Cobb 4/33, Perine 2/13, Reed 2/11, Uzomah 1/12, Mims Jr. 1/8

Defense

WV: Judon Sk FF 5-Tk, Peters 9-Tk  
 SBE: Hufanga 2-FF 5-Tk, Davis Int 4-Tk, Dallas FF 5-Tk

Injuries

WV: Humphries 6, Williams 2  
 SBE: Robinson 4, Smith-Williams 1

Misc

WV: Hargrave FR, Prater 2/2 FG 39 Lg  
 SBE: Cook F-L, Crosby 2/2 FG 44 Lg



0



19

**Ryan Tannehill's** first pass from scrimmage was intercepted by safety **Justin Simmons**, which set up the Thunder Lizards' first and only TD, a 6-yard pass to **Curtus Samuel**. This would turn out to be all Durham needed on a day when their defence completely shut down the Peg City attack, holding them to 183 net yards of offence, 9 first downs and no points. **Younghoe Koo** missed a 44-yard FG attempt and **Al-Quadin Muhammad** recovered a Tannehill fumble at the Durham 14 to preserve the Durham shutout. **Cairo Santos** was a perfect 4 of 4 kicking field goals to complete the scoring.

11-19-2023 Jurassic Park Temp:84 Wind:Calm None Line:PCC by 14 MVP:Simmons HFA:ON

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2023 Peg City (5-2)	0	0	0	0	0
2023 Durham (5-2)	7	6	3	3	19

Passing

PCC: Tannehill 20/10 112 Yds 2 Int, Jones 8/2 12 Yds  
 DTL: Allen 24/13 155 Yds TD Int, Mayfield 2/1 10 Yds

Rushing

PCC: Barkley 10/35, Hubbard 6/22, Kamara 4/9, Tannehill 3/5  
 DTL: Allen 8/56, Allgeier 12/36, Mattison 5/12, Penny 4/7, Tucker 2/2

Receiving

PCC: Barkley 3/23, Meyers 3/32, Aiyuk 3/32, Pitts 1/13, Kamara 1/10, Sutton 1/14  
 DTL: Samuel 4/37 TD, Valdes-Scantling 3/43, Knox 2/15, Palmer 2/21, Waller 2/42

Defense

PCC: Jones 2-Sks 5-Tk, Okereke 12-Tk, Jones Sk 4-Tk, Lawrence Sk 3-Tk  
 DTL: Simmons 2-Int FF 5-Tk, Allen 2-Sks 6-Tk, Barton 8-Tk

Injuries

PCC: Whitehair 1  
 DTL: Kupp 2, Ruckert 1

Misc

PCC: Kamara F-L, Tannehill F-L, Powell 3/86 KR 31 Lg, Koo 0/1 FG  
 DTL: Gonzalez FR, Muhammad FR, Santos 4/4 FG 44 Lg



23

Trevor Lawrence connected on a 25-yard TD pass to D.J. Moore to put the Triumph in front 14-10 lead in the 2nd quarter, a lead they would not relinquish. A battle for field position followed in the 2nd half, with the Triumph gaining the edge and extending their lead with Dustin Hopkins FGs of 34 and 25 yards. Jimmy Garoppolo connected with Isaiah McKenzie for an 11-yard TD pass to start the 4th quarter, narrowing the Triumph lead to 20-17. The two teams exchanged FGs before a Lawrence fumble set up a last-ditch Cowtown drive that ran out of time at the Triumph 39.



20

11-18-2023 Tillman Field Temp:60 Wind:15-25 \*Internet\* No Line MVP:Wilson HFA:ON(4)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2023 Twin Cities (5-2)	7	10	3	3	23
2023 Cowtown (4-3)	10	0	0	10	20

Passing

TCT: Lawrence 30/17 213 Yds TD Int  
COW: Garoppolo 39/29 321 Yds 2 TDs Int

Rushing

TCT: Wilson 21/145 TD, Lawrence 7/37, Henderson Jr. 4/14, Duvernay 1/1  
COW: Benjamin 5/19, Williams 11/17

Receiving

TCT: Moore 6/91 TD, Lockett 3/38, Wilson 2/7, Bryant 2/12, Duvernay 1/37, Pierce 1/4  
COW: Lazard 8/70, Bourne 6/55, Benjamin 5/53, McKenzie 3/33 TD, Evans 3/69 TD

Defense

TCT: McNeill Sk 6-Tk, Hunter Sk 4-Tk, Love 8-Tk, Alexander Int 3-Tk  
COW: Chinn 12-Tk, Banks Int 4-Tk, Smith 9-Tk

Injuries

TCT:  
COW: Woods 2

Misc

TCT: Lawrence F-L, Hopkins 3/3 FG, 34 Lg  
COW: Hamilton FR, Slye 2/2 FG 40 Lg



23

Sebastian charged out of the gate with two long TD drives, ending in a 1-yard TD run by Jonathan Taylor and a 18-yard TD pass to Michael Gallup for a 14-0 lead. But the Pats pushed back. Isaiah Pacheco dove in on 4th & inches for the go-ahead TD on the first drive of the 2nd half to give the Patriots their first lead, 17-14. The Charleswood defence went on to shutdown the Sebastian offence for the remainder of the game, holding on 4th & 1 at their own 34, 4th & 2 at their own 42 and sacking Kirk Cousins on 4th & 4 at the Swordfish 37 to ensure that no comeback could be mounted.



14

11-19-2023 The Fish Tank Temp:76 Wind:Calm Line:CHP by 2 MVP:Chark HFA:ON(

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2023 Charleswood (2-5)	0	10	10	3	23
2023 Sebastian (1-6)	7	7	0	0	14

Passing

CHP: Pickett 22/15 188 Yds TD  
SS: Cousins 34/26 179 Yds TD

Rushing

CHP: Dobbins 12/48, Pacheco 10/47 TD, Pickett 2/13, Singletary 1/7, Gibson 4/7  
SS: Chubb 24/87, Taylor 4/11 TD

Receiving

CHP: Chark 4/97 TD, Singletary 3/11, Agholor 3/47, Kelce 2/18, Smith-Schuster 2/12  
SS: Jones 9/72, Johnson 5/31, Gallup 4/41 TD, Schultz 2/18, Taylor 2/-2, Horvath 2/1

Defense

CHP: Queen FF 11-Tk, Samuel Jr. 10-Tk, Sweat Sk 4-Tk, Carter 9-Tk, Davis Sk 3-Tk  
SS: Jenkins 10-Tk, Singleton 10-Tk, Wilkins Sk 4-Tk

Injuries

CHP: Ojabo 9, Cushenberry 5, Darby 5, Campbell 2  
SS: Deablo 6, Tuipulotu 2, Johnson 2

Misc

CHP: Lutz 3/3 FG 39 Lg  
SS:



31
0



**Jalen Hurts** threw 3 TD passes and rushed for a TD in the 1<sup>st</sup> half to put the Spartans firmly in the driver's seat and in position to walk away with their 7<sup>th</sup> win. Hurts did it all on the opening drive and never looked back, rushing for 34 yards and completing 3 of 3 pass attempts, the last a 10-yard strike to **Pat Freiermuth** for the TD. **Trey Lance** made his first start for Seattle. He rushed for 116 yards but threw 2 picks, turned the ball over on downs 5 times, and failed to generate a score. Seattle's best chance at points came early, but a turnover on downs at the Spartans' 5 snuffed it out.

11-19-2023 Kingdome Temp:70 Wind:Calm Line:PIC by 14 MVP:Hurts HFA:ON(3)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2023 Pickering (7-0)	14	14	3	0	31
2023 Seattle (1-6)	0	0	0	0	0

Passing

PIC: Hurts 14/11 141 Yds 3 TDs, Wilson 4/1 16 Yds  
SEA: Lance 26/10 119 Yds 2 Int

Rushing

PIC: Hurts 6/90 TD, Sanders 15/57, White 7/21, Wilson 7/13, Swift 1/2  
SEA: Lance 24/116, Walker III 4/17, Hunt 1/1

Receiving

PIC: Pickens 4/58 TD, Smith 3/46 TD, Sanders 1/16, Ricard 1/5, Freiermuth 1/10 TD  
SEA: Lamb 6/80, Mingo 2/21, Moreau 1/6, Renfrow 1/12

Defense


PIC: McCourty Int 10-Tk, Lawrence Sk 7-Tk, Sieler Sk 4-Tk  
SEA: Elliott Sk 5-Tk, White 9-Tk

Injuries


PIC: Clowney 2, Kearse 1  
SEA: Washington 9, Sermon 7, Lattimore 5

Misc

PIC: Zuerlein 1/1 FG 44 Lg  
SEA:



46
27



**Frankie Luvu** intercepted **Derek Carr** and returned it 79 yards for a TD in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter then scooped and scored from 39 yards out on a **Roschon Johnson** fumble late in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter to punctuate a 30-point 1<sup>st</sup> half for Budapest. Meanwhile, **Aaron Rodgers** and the North Star offence also poured in on, with a 61-yard TD pass to **George Kittle** and 29-yard TD pass to **Justin Jefferson** heading the highlight reel. Carr got the start for the Cubs and was ineffective from the outset, completing just 5 passes in 17 attempts. **Russell Wilson** relieved him and threw 3 TD passes with 1 pick.

11-19-2023 Iowa City Superplex Temp:74 Wind: Line:ICC by 4 MVP:Luvu H

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2023 Budapest (5-2)	14	16	13	3	46
2023 Iowa City (3-4)	0	7	13	7	27

Passing

BUD: Rodgers 29/22 265 Yds 3 TDs Int  
ICC: Wilson 26/18 190 Yds 3 TDs Int, Carr 17/5 27 Yds Int

Rushing

BUD: Patterson 17/83 TD, Rodgers 2/18, Perkins 2/4, Ford 2/1  
ICC: Johnson 18/67 TD, Wilson 7/29, Carr 4/17, Miller 4/14, Carter 4/10

Receiving

BUD: Kittle 8/125 2 TDs, Jefferson 4/60 TD, Achane 4/21, Diggs 3/31, Raymond 2/23  
ICC: Brown 8/87 2 TDs, Njoku 5/31 TD, Kirk 4/34, Johnson 3/35, Carter 1/17

Defense

BUD: Phillips Sk 7-Tk, Luvu Int(TD) 4-Tk, David FF 8-Tk  
ICC: Brents Int 5-Tk, Johnson FF 5-Tk, Andersen 8-Tk

Injuries

BUD: Barno 3  
ICC: Hooker 6, Noteboom 4, Smith 2

Misc

BUD: Diggs F-L, Luvu FR-TD, Folk 2/2 FG 48 Lg  
ICC: Van Ness FR, Johnson F-L



23



17

A tight game through 3 quarters seemed to break York's way when **Tom Brady** hit **Amon-Ra St. Brown** over the middle for a 56-yard TD pass play and a 17-13 Excalibur lead with 9:11 left in the 4<sup>th</sup>. But **Jared Goff** completed a 14-yard pass to **Tyler Boyd** on 4<sup>th</sup> & 5 to keep the ensuing Chino drive alive at the York 42 and six plays later **Christian McCaffrey** broke the plane of the goal from half a yard out for the go-ahead TD with 4:16 left. **Tremon Smith** picked off Brady on the next series, setting up **Harrison Butker**'s 3<sup>rd</sup> FG of the game and the Convicts held on over the final minute for the win.

11-19-2023 Camelot Temp:57 Wind:0-5 None Line:YOR by 8 MVP:Jones HFA:ON(3)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2023 Chino (5-2)	0	10	0	13	23
2023 York (4-3)	3	7	0	7	17

Passing

CHI: Goff 31/21 189 Yds Int  
YOR: Brady 35/24 243 Yds TD Int

Rushing

CHI: Jones 16/107 TD, Ahmed 3/26, McCaffrey 12/26 TD, Campbell 2/16, Goff 2/11  
YOR: Henry 15/39, Scott 7/34 TD, Brady 5/3

Receiving

CHI: McCaffrey 11/103, Boyd 6/59, Jones 3/21, Campbell 1/6  
YOR: St. Brown 14/170 TD, Williams 4/36, Kmet 2/20, Gesicki 2/12, Scott 1/3

Defense

CHI: Whitehead 13-Tk, Franklin 10-Tk  
YOR: Poyer Int FF 9-Tk

Injuries

CHI:  
YOR: Mathis 9, Zuniga 8, Williams 8, Holcomb 5, Gary 5, Burks 3

Misc

CHI: Stewart FR, Butker 3/3 FG 35 Lg  
YOR: Kmet F-L, Gould 1/1 FG 25 Lg



13



28

Defensive tackle **Raekwon Davis** corralled a pass tipped by **Isaiah Simmons** to set up the game's first TD, a 9-yard pass from **Geno Smith** to **Evan Engram**. That set off a 21-point 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter which saw the Hawks capitalize on **Justin Herbert**'s second pick and a Billtown turnover on downs at the Brooklin 45 to add two more TD for a 21-3 lead at the half. Billtown could not improve their position in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, despite moving the ball well and picking off Smith, as they turned the ball over on downs twice in Brooklin territory. **Bijan Robinson** secured the Brooklin win with a 58-yard TD run in the 4<sup>th</sup>.

11-19-2023 Hawkeye Park Temp:59 Wind:Calm None Line:BRH by 6 MVP:Robinson HFA:ON(2)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2023 Billtown (1-6)	0	3	0	10	13
2023 Brooklin (2-5)	0	21	0	7	28

Passing

BB: Herbert 48/34 240 Yds TD 2 Int  
BRH: Smith 28/22 174 Yds 2 TDs Int

Rushing

BB: Harris 11/77, Herbert 4/24, Spears 5/15, Breida 4/13  
BRH: Robinson 11/100 TD, Ekeler 8/37 TD

Receiving

BB: Kincaid 8/61, Jeudy 6/52, Thomas 5/45 TD, Watkins 4/23, Hodgins 4/39, Breida 3/10  
BRH: Ekeler 9/55, Engram 3/28 TD, Hollins 3/20, Robinson 3/17, Conklin 2/19

Defense

BB: Davis Int FF 9-Tk, Wise Jr. Sk 3-Tk  
BRH: Tranquill 15-Tk, Hubbard 2-Sks 3-Tk, Curl 11-Tk, Campbell Int 5-Tk, Davis Int

Injuries

BB: Leonard 6, Fuller 6, Hardman 6, Williams 1  
BRH: Bolles 9

Misc

BB: Fairbairn 2/2 FG 60 Lg  
BRH:



WEEK SEVEN

STANDINGS & STATS

2023 EFL - Week 7 Standings

East	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Bruxelles	6	1	0	.857	W1	219	31.3	139	19.9	11.4	3 0 0	2 1 0	4 1 0
New Jersey	4	3	0	.571	L1	140	20.0	108	15.4	4.6	1 3 0	1 2 0	3 2 0
Cobb County	3	4	0	.429	W2	164	23.4	179	25.6	-2.1	1 2 0	2 1 0	2 3 0
Buffalo	1	6	0	.143	L6	96	13.7	189	27.0	-13.3	1 3 0	1 2 0	1 4 0
Central	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Virden	7	0	0	1.000	W7	272	38.9	90	12.9	26.0	3 0 0	2 0 0	5 0 0
Peg City	5	2	0	.714	L1	148	21.1	142	20.3	0.9	2 1 0	1 1 0	4 1 0
Twin Cities	5	2	0	.714	W5	193	27.6	125	17.9	9.7	3 1 0	1 1 0	3 2 0
Charleswood	2	5	0	.286	W1	136	19.4	180	25.7	-6.3	1 3 0	0 2 0	0 5 0
West	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Chino	5	2	0	.714	W1	162	23.1	133	19.0	4.1	3 1 0	1 1 0	3 2 0
Iowa City	3	4	0	.429	L1	196	28.0	226	32.3	-4.3	1 2 0	2 0 0	3 2 0
Seattle	1	6	0	.143	L5	45	6.4	189	27.0	-20.6	1 2 0	1 1 0	1 4 0
Billtown	1	6	0	.143	L2	97	13.9	203	29.0	-15.1	0 4 0	0 2 0	1 4 0
North	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Durham	5	2	0	.714	W3	186	26.6	160	22.9	3.7	3 1 0	2 1 0	4 1 0
Cowtown	4	3	0	.571	L2	159	22.7	149	21.3	1.4	1 2 0	2 1 0	4 1 0
Sebastian	1	6	0	.143	L1	125	17.9	207	29.6	-11.7	0 3 0	1 2 0	1 4 0
Scarborough	1	6	0	.143	L4	155	22.1	205	29.3	-7.1	0 4 0	1 2 0	1 4 0
Coastal	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Pickering	7	0	0	1.000	W7	243	34.7	98	14.0	20.7	4 0 0	2 0 0	5 0 0
Budapest	5	2	0	.714	W2	164	23.4	125	17.9	5.6	3 0 0	0 2 0	3 2 0
York	4	3	0	.571	L2	190	27.1	141	20.1	7.0	1 2 0	2 0 0	3 2 0
Brooklin	2	5	0	.286	W1	130	18.6	160	22.9	-4.3	2 2 0	0 2 0	1 4 0
South	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Georgia	4	3	0	.571	W2	187	26.7	174	24.9	1.9	2 2 0	2 0 0	3 2 0
East Elmhurst	4	3	0	.571	W1	149	21.3	187	26.7	-5.4	3 0 0	1 1 0	2 3 0
LaPlata	2	5	0	.286	L1	118	16.9	144	20.6	-3.7	2 2 0	1 1 0	2 3 0
Erieau	2	5	0	.286	L2	146	20.9	167	23.9	-3.0	0 3 0	0 2 0	1 4 0

Passing		G	Att	Cmp	C%	Yds	Y/C	Lg	25	50	In	I%	Td	Td%	Sk	Rate
1 Hurts	PIC	7	137	95	69.3	1302	13.7	32	9	0	1	0.7	13	9.5	3	128.1
2 Mahomes	VV	7	239	159	66.5	2258	14.2	75	19	0	5	2.1	26	10.9	4	124.4
3 Wilson	ICC	7	115	78	67.8	1026	13.2	47	11	0	3	2.6	9	7.8	9	111.0
4 Garoppolo	COW	7	214	145	67.8	1689	11.6	57	9	1	5	2.3	13	6.1	12	101.9
5 Tannehill	PCC	5	128	82	64.1	1028	12.5	57	6	0	3	2.3	7	5.5	9	97.4
6 Fields	BRX	7	150	100	66.7	1217	12.2	52	11	0	4	2.7	7	4.7	11	95.9
7 Brissett	EE	6	176	112	63.6	1139	10.2	44	8	0	3	1.7	11	6.3	9	95.8
8 Tagovailoa	GEO	6	206	122	59.2	1742	14.3	49	19	0	11	5.3	19	9.2	4	95.2
9 Jones	NJ	7	203	140	69.0	1225	8.8	54	6	0	2	1.0	8	3.9	18	93.7
10 Goff	CHI	7	259	176	68.0	1602	9.1	30	5	0	3	1.2	8	3.1	5	90.0
11 Burrow	SBE	7	217	136	62.7	1372	10.1	65	10	0	6	2.8	13	6.0	8	89.1
12 Young	CB	7	225	139	61.8	1774	12.8	52	10	0	8	3.6	11	4.9	18	87.9
13 Lawrence	TCT	7	225	142	63.1	1474	10.4	37	12	0	4	1.8	9	4.0	8	87.9
14 Brady	YOR	7	252	160	63.5	1759	11.0	66	8	0	8	3.2	10	4.0	8	84.1
15 Rodgers	BUD	7	232	143	61.6	1576	11.0	74	11	0	8	3.4	11	4.7	10	83.2
16 Allen	DTL	7	230	133	57.8	1686	12.7	54	13	0	10	4.3	14	6.1	12	83.0
17 Smith	BRH	7	267	173	64.8	1524	8.8	47	7	0	5	1.9	8	3.0	11	82.0
18 Murray	ERI	4	148	100	67.6	884	8.8	28	4	0	3	2.0	3	2.0	9	81.6
19 Ryan	LPB	5	118	73	61.9	915	12.5	62	8	0	4	3.4	3	2.5	4	80.3
20 Carr	ICC	6	110	57	51.8	822	14.4	66	10	0	5	4.5	6	5.5	1	75.6
21 Herbert	BB	7	259	168	64.9	1389	8.3	72	6	0	7	2.7	6	2.3	13	74.9
22 Cousins	SS	7	272	175	64.3	1576	9.0	34	8	0	10	3.7	7	2.6	16	73.1
23 Pickett	CHP	7	213	129	60.6	1318	10.2	45	9	0	8	3.8	6	2.8	17	72.1
24 Jackson	BUF	7	223	131	58.7	1235	9.4	73	5	0	7	3.1	6	2.7	22	70.0
25 Wentz	SEA	6	155	93	60.0	815	8.8	46	4	0	8	5.2	1	0.6	13	54.6

Kick Returns		G	No	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td	Punt Returns		G	No	FC	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td
1 Williams	BUF	7	17	400	23.5	36	0	1 Covey	YOR	7	27	5	378	14.0	86	1
2 Jackson	CHI	7	12	360	30.0	50	0	2 Turpin	BRX	7	14	8	290	20.7	52	0
3 Powell	PCC	7	13	304	23.4	38	0	3 Duvernay	TCT	7	16	5	207	12.9	19	0
4 Rodgers	CHP	7	9	276	30.7	51	0	4 Hines	ERI	7	18	6	185	10.3	30	0
5 Haskins	SBE	7	11	255	23.2	32	0	5 Carter	COW	7	16	5	182	11.4	18	0
6 Berrios	LPB	7	9	251	27.9	47	0	6 McCloud	PCC	7	15	6	155	10.3	23	0
7 Agnew	GEO	7	11	251	22.8	45	0	7 Washington	CB	7	18	3	134	7.4	16	0
8 Carter	COW	7	11	239	21.7	35	0	8 Woods	BUF	7	18	3	133	7.4	28	0
9 Hines	ERI	7	8	226	28.3	34	0	9 Taylor	NJ	7	15	6	130	8.7	17	0
10 Scott	DTL	7	7	173	24.7	37	0	10 Agnew	GEO	7	14	6	123	8.8	16	0
11 Jones	ICC	7	5	152	0.0	35	0	11 Reed	SBE	7	12	4	120	10.0	35	0
12 Nixon	BRX	7	5	147	0.0	38	0	12 Williams	SS	7	12	4	119	9.9	19	0
13 Brightwell	NJ	7	6	130	0.0	29	0	13 Raymond	BUD	7	9	12	119	13.2	63	0
14 Williams	SS	7	6	127	0.0	27	0	14 Dell	SEA	7	16	3	118	7.4	29	0
15 Patterson	BUD	5	5	116	0.0	34	0	15 Jones	ICC	7	8	2	73	9.1	12	0
16 Scott	YOR	7	3	104	0.0	32	0	16 Smith	CHI	7	8	4	73	9.1	21	0
17 Sims	VV	7	5	103	0.0	28	0	17 Rodgers	EE	7	7	4	73	10.4	16	0
18 Spears	BB	7	7	102	14.6	25	0	18 Holland	CHP	7	10	3	61	6.1	16	0
19 Covey	YOR	7	5	94	0.0	24	0	19 Berrios	LPB	7	7	6	61	8.7	16	0
20 Abanikanda	TCT	7	4	94	0.0	34	0	20 Milne	BUD	5	6	0	53	0.0	15	0
21 Duvernay	TCT	7	5	92	0.0	26	0	21 Palmer	DTL	7	4	18	46	0.0	22	0
22 Johnston	EE	7	6	90	0.0	22	0	22 Sims	VV	7	8	14	43	5.4	12	0
23 Mingo	SEA	7	6	85	0.0	27	0	23 King II	NJ	7	3	0	41	0.0	17	0
24 Washington	BRH	7	3	81	0.0	41	0	24 Washington	BRH	7	9	2	34	3.8	14	0
25 Washington	CB	7	5	76	0.0	19	0	25 Gray	PIC	7	5	8	33	0.0	12	0

Rushing		G	Att	Yds	Avg	Gain	10	25	50	FD	Lg	Td	Att/G	Yds/G	
1	Henry	YOR	7	180	739	4.1	80.6	14	0	0	35	79	7	25.7	105.6
2	Fields	BRX	7	87	658	7.6	81.6	31	0	0	46	56	9	12.4	94.0
3	Chubb	SS	7	134	641	4.8	82.8	22	0	0	37	36	5	19.1	91.6
4	Wilson	TCT	7	91	641	7.0	82.4	18	1	0	27	52	6	13.0	91.6
5	Cook	SBE	7	132	623	4.7	78.8	13	0	0	28	64	4	18.9	89.0
6	Jacobs	GEO	7	134	607	4.5	80.6	14	0	0	25	68	1	19.1	86.7
7	Sanders	PIC	7	127	569	4.5	81.9	15	0	0	31	21	6	18.1	81.3
8	Foreman	BRX	7	104	486	4.7	76.0	11	0	0	19	58	3	14.9	69.4
9	Johnson	ICC	7	79	473	6.0	86.1	14	0	0	22	53	4	11.3	67.6
10	Walker III	SEA	7	98	413	4.2	77.6	14	0	0	18	40	1	14.0	59.0
11	McCaffrey	CHI	7	101	413	4.1	75.2	9	0	0	28	46	8	14.4	59.0
12	Jones	NJ	7	80	413	5.2	80.0	16	0	0	37	24	2	11.4	59.0
13	Etienne	CB	7	83	405	4.9	69.9	12	0	0	18	88	1	11.9	57.9
14	Robinson	BRH	7	69	400	5.8	87.0	9	0	0	23	58	3	9.9	57.1
15	Jackson	BUF	7	71	383	5.4	78.9	13	0	0	23	28	4	10.1	54.7
16	Conner	VV	7	92	373	4.1	81.5	7	0	0	24	23	4	13.1	53.3
17	Dillon	BUF	7	98	367	3.7	78.6	11	0	0	20	26	1	14.0	52.4
18	Williams	COW	7	107	341	3.2	73.8	7	0	0	18	38	3	15.3	48.7
19	Barkley	PCC	7	99	339	3.4	84.8	6	1	0	15	35	4	14.1	48.4
20	Allen	DTL	7	53	334	6.3	75.5	16	1	0	19	28	1	7.6	47.7
21	Jones	CHI	7	68	333	4.9	66.2	13	0	0	20	27	2	9.7	47.6
22	Gibbs	LPB	7	64	329	5.1	78.1	10	0	0	14	49	2	9.1	47.0
23	Mixon	LPB	7	88	312	3.5	81.8	5	0	0	20	19	3	12.6	44.6
24	Harris	BB	7	50	306	6.1	90.0	10	0	0	18	15	0	7.1	43.7
25	Hurts	PIC	7	47	298	6.3	83.0	14	0	0	25	32	5	6.7	42.6
26	Allgeier	DTL	6	73	290	4.0	78.1	4	0	0	9	16	2	12.2	48.3
27	Kamara	PCC	6	54	290	5.4	85.2	9	0	0	12	27	1	9.0	48.3
28	Pacheco	CHP	7	72	289	4.0	76.4	4	0	0	11	36	2	10.3	41.3
29	Montgomery	NJ	7	80	288	3.6	81.3	5	0	0	12	29	1	11.4	41.1
30	Mostert	BUD	7	53	280	5.3	84.9	7	0	0	14	46	2	7.6	40.0
31	Murray	COW	5	49	279	5.7	85.7	8	0	0	10	61	1	9.8	55.8
32	Patterson	BUD	5	52	261	5.0	78.8	5	0	0	14	39	3	10.4	52.2
33	Pierce	ERI	7	61	260	4.3	78.7	5	0	0	10	78	1	8.7	37.1
34	Dobbins	CHP	7	54	259	4.8	74.1	8	0	0	11	44	2	7.7	37.0
35	Pickett	CHP	7	33	259	7.8	93.9	9	0	0	16	24	2	4.7	37.0
36	Fournette	BRX	6	53	257	4.8	88.7	6	0	0	13	22	3	8.8	42.8
37	White	PIC	7	56	244	4.4	71.4	7	0	0	10	29	1	8.0	34.9
38	Harris	ERI	7	69	242	3.5	81.2	5	0	0	15	16	3	9.9	34.6
39	Ekeler	BRH	7	57	241	4.2	84.2	6	0	0	15	16	4	8.1	34.4
40	Spears	BB	7	41	214	5.2	82.9	7	0	0	15	30	1	5.9	30.6
41	Mahomes	VV	7	29	203	7.0	89.7	9	0	0	9	20	0	4.1	29.0
42	Akers	VV	7	47	199	4.2	85.1	5	0	0	16	22	1	6.7	28.4
43	Brissett	EE	6	26	194	7.5	88.5	7	0	0	11	41	2	4.3	32.3
44	Young	CB	7	27	178	6.6	77.8	7	0	0	13	25	4	3.9	25.4
45	Huntley	EE	3	37	174	4.7	89.2	5	0	0	13	17	2	12.3	58.0

Receiving		G	No	Dp	Att	Rac	Yds	Avg	25	50	FD	Lg	Td	Rec/G	Yds/G
1 Hill	WV	7	48	3	77	213	937	19.5	10	0	35	75	10	6.9	133.9
2 Adams	LPB	7	47	0	70	121	736	15.7	6	0	30	62	1	6.7	105.1
3 Jones	SS	7	45	1	68	97	420	9.3	2	0	18	34	2	6.4	60.0
4 Jefferson	BUD	7	45	3	77	78	562	12.5	5	0	28	38	3	6.4	80.3
5 Ekeler	BRH	7	42	0	59	312	235	5.6	0	0	10	20	2	6.0	33.6
6 Metcalf	EE	7	42	3	64	71	529	12.6	3	0	30	30	2	6.0	75.6
7 McCaffrey	CHI	7	42	2	59	402	303	7.2	2	0	19	30	3	6.0	43.3
8 Allen	NJ	7	38	0	51	121	377	9.9	2	0	20	54	4	5.4	53.9
9 Jeudy	BB	7	38	5	57	111	415	10.9	1	0	21	72	0	5.4	59.3
10 Godwin	BRX	7	38	2	49	156	526	13.8	6	0	25	52	4	5.4	75.1
11 Moore	TCT	7	38	3	59	90	503	13.2	6	0	29	34	4	5.4	71.9
12 Chase	VV	7	37	6	59	74	487	13.2	2	0	31	28	4	5.3	69.6
13 Andrews	ERI	7	36	3	48	115	395	11.0	2	0	18	43	2	5.1	56.4
14 Cooks	CB	7	36	5	61	123	526	14.6	5	0	27	48	2	5.1	75.1
15 Waddle	ERI	7	35	3	60	68	556	15.9	6	0	24	29	2	5.0	79.4
16 Gage	BUF	7	35	1	57	50	285	8.1	0	0	20	19	2	5.0	40.7
17 Lamb	SEA	7	35	1	61	80	455	13.0	2	0	24	46	0	5.0	65.0
18 Brown	ICC	7	34	4	67	196	769	22.6	12	0	30	66	8	4.9	109.9
19 Lazard	COW	7	34	3	47	184	483	14.2	4	0	21	57	2	4.9	69.0
20 Woods	BUF	7	34	5	55	103	387	11.4	3	0	20	49	1	4.9	55.3
21 Hodgins	BB	7	34	2	51	51	317	9.3	2	0	12	29	0	4.9	45.3
22 Williams	YOR	7	34	1	57	102	429	12.6	2	0	26	39	2	4.9	61.3
23 St. Brown	YOR	7	34	0	55	105	371	10.9	1	0	18	56	2	4.9	53.0
24 Pittman Jr.	CB	7	33	0	48	52	434	13.2	1	0	24	28	1	4.7	62.0
25 Flowers	CHI	7	33	1	49	49	351	10.6	0	0	24	21	2	4.7	50.1
26 Peoples-Jones	SS	7	32	0	51	47	441	13.8	4	0	21	32	1	4.6	63.0
27 London	BRH	7	32	5	57	94	450	14.1	4	0	26	47	2	4.6	64.3
28 Evans	COW	7	32	6	53	131	452	14.1	4	1	18	51	4	4.6	64.6
29 Thielen	LPB	7	32	0	46	73	329	10.3	1	0	19	33	5	4.6	47.0
30 Kelce	CHP	7	31	3	55	66	318	10.3	0	0	22	18	1	4.4	45.4
31 Johnson	GEO	7	31	3	58	100	457	14.7	4	0	27	33	5	4.4	65.3
32 Stevenson	GEO	7	31	3	46	368	333	10.7	4	0	13	43	1	4.4	47.6
33 Kmet	YOR	7	31	0	48	98	339	10.9	2	0	20	39	3	4.4	48.4
34 Dotson	SBE	7	31	1	46	200	471	15.2	4	0	22	65	7	4.4	67.3
35 Diggs	BUD	7	30	2	63	67	297	9.9	1	0	17	46	2	4.3	42.4
36 Boyd	CHI	7	30	1	43	31	362	12.1	1	0	20	25	1	4.3	51.7
37 Higbee	TCT	7	30	5	50	53	287	9.6	1	0	20	26	2	4.3	41.0
38 Smith	PIC	7	29	5	43	71	477	16.4	4	0	25	30	4	4.1	68.1
39 Chark	CHP	7	28	1	45	121	456	16.3	5	0	23	45	4	4.0	65.1
40 Kirk	ICC	7	28	2	43	65	370	13.2	3	0	18	31	2	4.0	52.9
41 Samuel	DTL	7	28	2	42	58	315	11.3	1	0	23	25	4	4.0	45.0
42 Cobb	SBE	7	27	0	33	24	256	9.5	1	0	15	36	2	3.9	36.6
43 McKinnon	NJ	7	26	0	33	278	230	8.8	2	0	9	38	2	3.7	32.9
44 Burks	YOR	6	26	1	37	202	382	14.7	3	0	14	66	2	4.3	63.7
45 Smith-Schuster	CHP	7	26	2	40	59	254	9.8	1	0	13	34	1	3.7	36.3



# AROUND THE



## With Spats McChad

NEW YORK – I can see where this season is going. If I had any doubts before, they are pretty much all gone now:

Virden and Pickering will meet in the Gale Sayers Game and Virden will win. This hit me like a ton of bricks while preparing my all-important mid-term report card on all the teams, which is due for release next week.

The above scenario of course was and is at the forefront of many cogent analyses. I expect some may mock me for stating “the obvious.” But it is one thing to project it as a favoured possibility among many reasonably probable outcomes, and another thing *to know* that it will transpire that way, fifteen weeks from now, for a virtual certainty. The only factor that could alter the current trajectory would be a catastrophic injury to a key player or group of players on one or both teams. I don’t think that is going to happen – the *Football Gods* (yes, they exist!) will not allow these two titans of the 2023 season to *not* face each other in the ultimate showdown for this year’s football crown. Both are too dominant within their respective conferences to permit such a travesty. The *Football Gods* like watching the game too, and they will want to see this battle as much as any of you.

At the start of the season – and up until now – I could visualize Durham or Budapest reasserting their hegemony in the Atlantic, the experience of their rosters and caginess of their coaches combining to out-manuever and psyche-out the relatively younger Spartans team. I no longer see that as a possibility. The North Stars appear to be burning out and the Thunder Lizards are not quite as strong as last year and have a turnover problem that does not seem to be going away. The Spartans, on the other hand, have the confidence of a young roster blossoming into its prime – if not this very moment, certainly by the end of the season. **Gus Konstantakos** knows exactly how to use his roster and knows both his main opponents inside out.

In the Pacific, it was always going to be Virden emerging in my view. However, I could once imagine the remote possibility of a playoff upset coming from some dark corner of the conference, directed by a cunning coach with a shrewd game plan bolstered by a touch of “any-given-Sunday” good fortune. Who it would be was less clear in my mind. Possibly some voodoo from **Kenny Main**? A Peg City defence that had had enough of **Patrick Mahomes** and waited for the playoffs to have the game of their lives against him, winning on pick-sixes and forced fumbles? A one-of-a-kind game plan from **Guy Williams** against a familiar foe, with the guts to carry it through? I even considered the possibility that **Daniel Jones** would prove to be a find and get enough done to support the excellent Wrecking Balls defence – although that seemed much less likely, even before I became aware of his inability to throw a ball accurately more than 15 yards downfield. No upset will happen. The Virden roster is too strong, and **Lance Barrate** is good enough of a coach not to mess it up with some stupid high-risk, low-reward fourth down gamble in the middle of a close game.

I am now at a place in Week Seven where I am questioning all that I do from week-to-week. What is the point? This report card I am preparing seems trivial suddenly. In the past it was intended to help correct and inspire my football students – get them back on the right path if they were struggling and encourage them to continue their path if they were excelling. Now, it is all moot. Virden and Pickering will get their A+s and everybody else will get at best a B and a reminder that they have no hope in hell.

Is there value now in analyzing and reflecting on the trials and tribulations of the soon-to-be also rans? Only if you are considering a wager on whether one or both of Virden and Pickering will go undefeated this year. In such a case, knowing who can cause a “1” to appear in the “L” column of the standings under either team is important. There is a good chance both could finish undefeated, of course, which would be a first in league history. I doubt that, much as I am impressed by both squads. But if some team does manage to tarnish one or both of their perfect seasons, it will be but a small speed bump on the road to their pre-destined immortal clash in the Championship.

Oh well...the season is all but over, but old habits die hard. I can’t help but continue to gaze on at the progress of the 2023 EFL season, hoping to catch sight of next year’s Virden or Pickering in a pre-hegemonic development phase. I think I may have found one – they visited my neck of the woods this week – and I am impressed for the future. Read on....

### **TUA MUCH!**

The Stone Pony Autumn Stage held its final pre-game concert of the EFL season. Yellowcard played a five-song set, opening with *Ocean Avenue* to get the New Jersey shore crowd in the mood. A new band from Utah, The Backseat Lovers, followed, playing songs that sounded like they could have originated from anywhere in the United States but for some reason their Utah origin was considered important. Dogs in a Pile was next, featuring their popular hit, *The ‘G’ Song* and a set of Grateful Dead covers. Finally, the show ended with Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes rounding out a six-song set with *I Don’t Want to Go Home*.

I know these details because I was there, and I am sharing them with you to prove it. You will have difficulty finding the set

list anywhere on the internet. The Wrecking Balls subsidize these concerts for fans with tickets to the game and set aside a thousand seats for regular concertgoers, who have more interest in the music, to ensure there is a proper concert “vibe.” To avoid as much as possible after-market ticket action that might tempt football fans to sell their game tickets to music fans looking to follow their favourite bands on the off-season Autumn Stage, the featured bands are announced at the last minute, as a surprise.

The list of artists didn’t matter to me. I hadn’t heard of any of them. To be honest, the Jersey Shore music scene and vibe isn’t my thing. I prefer Metallica and big concert halls. But I did want to see what the *total* Wrecking Balls home game “experience” was like. The COVID-19 scamdemic cut out the free concerts and six-hour tailgate for two years and my last game-day experience, on opening day of 2021, was subject to the most draconian and frankly lunatic COVID restrictions in place in any EFL venue at the time. I felt that I may have missed something important about the traditional Wrecking Balls home game experience that might explain why they suck so badly at home. So, I decided to attend a game, starting with the “free” concert.

Technically, it’s a free concert for football ticket holders, but only for the “premium” upgrade, which is an additional \$25, so it isn’t free. It just feels free because one is choosing the “premium” ticket over the “regular” ticket and premium also includes some cheap Wrecking Balls paraphernalia – plastic footballs and such – to obfuscate the issue. Still, it’s a pretty good deal if you also like the venue’s laid-back, coastal, retro post-60s vibe blended with post-2000s corporatism. The Stone Pony is conscious of what it is, and where it stands in music iconography, depriving it now of the spontaneity and organic grassroots impulses that formed its genesis. Today it is a largely soulless, money-making machine.

The association between music and football is a precarious one, especially when the music isn’t *Crazy Train* or *We Will Rock You*. It became obvious once I was inside the semi-enclosed Autumn Stage (a Summer Stage with heaters inside an open-air tent) that most of the football fans were elsewhere, most likely setting up their BBQs and coolers in the stadium parking lot. Few Wrecking Balls jerseys could be seen in the crowd. Security was letting people in without “premium” game tickets. The atmosphere was laid back, casual, the crowd a broad mix of young and old. A clutch of Deadheads stood and sat in the middle of the audience area eating brownies, drinking from flasks. Many had coolers and large thermal bags, presumably full of food, drink and who knows what else Deadheads consume. Some were already dancing even though no band was playing. A few looked old enough to have followed the original band around the country in the 60s. There were some young kids wearing ball caps backwards – by kids I mean in their early 20s. There were older women, middle-aged men and, standing out like a hippopotamus at a tea party, the Wrecking Balls’ Muppet-style mascot, Bally, who was bouncing around exhorting the disinterested audience to join in the team chant, “*Wrecking! Wrecking! Wrecking BALLLL!*” There were probably more mask-wearers here than I guess would be normal almost two years after COVID. I looked around for concessions. It was only 10:00 am, 30 minutes from show time, and I knew I needed a beer – or ten – to get through this. I had to exit the tent to find the beer garden. A tall beer was \$15 – it was going to be an expensive day.

I won’t bore you with many more details – this is not a concert review. The bands were pretty good – not my style, but very capable of holding the attention of the mostly non-football audience. The chords of the final song struck at 12:23 pm, giving the crowd enough time to make it to the stadium. I did not stay for the encore. I left with about three dozen other apparent football fans. A couple of thousand music fans stayed to hear Southside Johnny and the Jukes bang out the **Bruce Springsteen** cover, *Talk to Me*.

As I navigated through the parking lot full of pick-ups, RVs, makeshift BBQs and lawn chairs – you know, *normal* tailgating – I reflected on how I had just wasted my time listening to bands I didn’t particularly care for playing to an audience mostly comprised of people I had nothing in common with. The connection between the free pre-game concerts and the game was a promotional, administrative one, unnatural and in a sense awkward. They were separate events, connected through timing, proximity and the Muppet-costumed, Bally. If you are a football tourist planning to attend a Wrecking Balls game in the future, I would not recommend the pre-game concert, unless of course you like to combine your concert-going experience with your football one.

Inside the stadium, the vibe was a familiar sporty one, save for the incessant Springsteen music playing in the background over the stadium PA as the players warmed up. I took it all in. Milano and Samuel jerseys predominated in the growing crowd. Stafford had taken a bit of a hit in the wake of his three-interception performance in the playoffs. A few young fans were confident and brave enough to sport Jones jerseys. Lots of beer-guzzler blue hard hats, festooned with the Wrecking Ball logo, perched on the fat heads of beer-bellied *Nathan*’s hot dog-eating season-ticket holders and NY Giants jackets were visible. These were my people!

Turning to football (finally) the Wrecking Balls were hosting the Gladiators in the second weekly slate of inter-conference games. Both squads urgently needed a win to keep pace with their respective division rivals. Bruxelles was proving to be more than a thorn in the side for New Jersey in the East Division – they had been nearly perfect. Through six weeks, East Elmhurst had played feisty football and stood even with a Georgia team that had been inconsistent.

The Glads had been pegged in the pre-season as a team to watch. They were the accepted favourite to win the South Division due to a prospective high-powered offence. Many analysts felt they would be able to survive the first round of playoffs if the defence played respectably well. Georgia opened the season with two divisional wins. Then they had run into a buzzsaw, losing three-in-a-row to Pickering, Bruxelles and Durham – the kind of teams they would have to beat if they hoped to make a deep playoff run. They had rebounded last week with a solid win over Brooklin. **Marcus Mariota** had started that game at quarterback after **Tua Tagovailoa** had unexpectedly entered concussion protocol during the week.

Tua was back for this game, but there was concern in the Georgia media about his readiness to play a reputedly elite Wrecking Balls defence. Coach **Dave Birdsall** seemed unconcerned, however; “Tua will be 100% ready to play,” he stated flatly when delivering his team’s injury report. If he wasn’t, Mariota had shown that he still had something left from his glory days with the



Spartans coach **Gus Konstantakos** sits back and enjoys a beer as a shaven and modernized defensive coordinator **General Pausanias** bellows heatedly at the ref, held back from by offensive coordinator, **Commander Dercylidas**. Assured that his roster is nearly perfect, the Spartans coach is letting his assistants call the plays while he enjoys the show. This week he watched his coaches preside over a 30-0 shutout of the woeful Pilots.

Cannibals/Bombers. He still had that twitch in his legs that allowed him to escape and make plays off script. His arm will still a question mark, as it had not been tested much against the Hawks, but if Tus were to go down in this game, all would not be lost for Georgia.

On the New Jersey side, the sight of **Matt Stafford** on the sideline, reportedly “injured” yet available as a back-up, was very odd. It was as if he was being publicly shamed for throwing away New Jersey’s season – forced to watch a young up-and-comer get every chance to take his job away for good. The nature of Stafford’s injury was ambiguous at best. At points throughout the pre-season and into the regular season it was variously described as a shoulder, or an elbow, or a chest, or a wrist injury of undisclosed character. Yet, he was always dressed on game day. Stafford played along, describing himself as “about 75%” and “good to go if I am called on” whenever asked about his status. He had not formally lost his job, according to coach **Sean McDermott**. “Matt is still our number one,” he would

say when the subject was raised, which was often. Even **Daniel Jones** seemed to be in on the apparent conspiracy: “I am ready to go as long as Matt needs to get to 100%,” Jones would say. “I will give it everything I have to keep us winning until that time.”

It is possible that the Wrecking Balls are just confused and desperate and don’t know what to do. A lack of bravado from GM and minority owner, **Jeff Cohen** in the pre-season suggests that he is conscious of how his hyping the team every year has backfired. He confidently predicted a trip to the Gale Sayers Game in the lead-up to last season and his team could not get past the first round. Last year’s squad was more powerful than this year’s edition, so keeping expectations modest this year seems deliberate. Throwing the dice with Jones while keeping an “injured” Stafford around could be just another way to hedge his bet. It would pay off if Jones proved capable of moving the offence while maintaining better ball security than Stafford has. If not, the “injury” distances Cohen from the failure of having made the wrong choice at starting quarterback.

One must wonder how this arrangement has affected Jones’ confidence and play so far. At times he has looked like a quarterback a playoff contending roster could win with. Other times, he has looked lost. Strangely, when he has looked most lost has been at home in front of the caustic New Jersey fans. With Philadelphia long out of the pro football picture, Wrecking Balls fans have earned a reputation as the most obnoxious fans in the EFL, passing Convicts fans in the annual AP Worst Fans poll. From what I have witnessed, I still think the Convicts fans are not only more obnoxious, but certainly more dangerous than Wrecking Balls fans. But in the end, the deciding factor seems to be that Wrecking Balls fans are never happy. Even when they are winning, they are looking over their proverbial shoulders wondering when disaster will strike and take it all away. I don’t really blame them for that – given the on-field bloopers that have beset this team since their inception. But if great play by the players isn’t rewarded by full-throated delirium by the fans in the stands (as it is in Chino), the fans have not held up their end of the bargain and, therefore, could be considered the worst fans.

I was sitting in the middle of these worst fans. Some were already grumbling loudly about Jones’ play before the game had even started. “*Jones is a dink!*” barked one of a group sitting two rows behind me. “*You forgot the dunk!*” quipped another. “*He’s a dink and a dunk them,*” laughed the first. “*McLaurin’s begging for Stafford to get back in there!*” another snapped. And so, the banter carried on in that vein, critical of just about everybody and everything but sparing **Matt Milano**, the one Wrecking Ball who could run for mayor of New York and win.

I had no great premonition about this game, thinking it could go either way. I did not think it a given that Jones would play poorly again just because he was at home. For me, it came down to how Tua played. The Wrecking Balls could live with Jones dinking and dunking if he didn’t throw the ball to the other team. Tua, on the other hand, had thrown an interception in every game he had played so far, and 8 in this last three games before going into “concussion protocol.” Tua was the key to unlocking the Glads’ vast offensive potential, but the big plays would be hard to come by against this Wrecking Balls defence and would be undone anyway if he continued to throw the ball to the other team.

When **Tyler Bass** finally kicked off at exactly 1:06 pm ET, it felt like it had been a long day already. The buzz I had built up at the Stone Pony Autumn Stage was harder to sustain in the stadium, where the price of beer was \$18 for a small and \$22 for a large and it took at least 15 minutes to get one. (I really need to reconsider applying for a Wrecking Balls media pass, but the red tape required to get one doesn't seem worth it for the one game I attend per year, except in those moments when I am at that one game, standing in line with everyone else waiting to buy a beer).

**Desmond King II** gave the crowd an early thrill by nearly breaking the opening kickoff return all the way. Bass, the last man between King and goal line forced him out of bounds with a desperate lunge at the 42-yard line for a 41-yard return. I immediately scanned the field for yellow flags. Surprisingly, there were none. It was rare these days that the referees let good kick returns go unpunished with an illegal block or a hold.

The brief high from the kick return wore off quickly, as the Wrecking Balls' offence fell into a familiar pattern when playing at home this year. They led with a turnover on downs at the Gladiator 49 after moving the ball 9 yards. Jones took it himself on 4<sup>th</sup> & 1 and the Glads were waiting for him, holding him to no gain.

Georgia turned the short field into a field goal after catching a huge break when an interception by rookie defensive back **Tyrique Stevenson** was called back by a roughing the passer penalty on **Jerry Hughes**. On replay the hit could be interpreted as "late," but in real time it just looked like the demonic Hughes going full steam at the quarterback and unable to hold up, as he had been doing for his entire 14-year career. It was a borderline call and having taken away an interception it felt close to egregious. But the league is worried about its quarterbacks, especially the ones just coming off concussion protocol. This was a message: *Do not kill the quarterback.*

The fans in the stands had a message to deliver to referee **Scott Novak** as well, but it is unfit for print. I looked around for little children in the stands who might be asking their parents what a certain set of unprintable words meant and could see none. In fact, it hit me in that moment that the crowd demographic looked older than average for a pro football game. I admit, this was an entirely unscientific and subjective observation, based on a sample size limited by my range and accuracy of vision and my location in premium seats near the fifty-yard line. All the same, I made a mental note to check the data – if it is available – to see whether the age group attracted to the Wrecking Balls is, on average, older than other fan bases.

Back to the game: The remainder of the first quarter and early second quarter slipped into a sort of "feeling out" process between two teams unfamiliar with each other. Mistakes and bad judgement on both sides characterized a forgettable opening period. **Deebo Samuel** lost a fumble at the Georgia 41 that squashed a promising drive. The Glads responded with a turnover on downs, Tua sailing a throw on 4<sup>th</sup> & 3 at the New Jersey 39-yard line. The Balls took over and drove to the Georgia 32, where coach McDermott seemed to contemplate going for it on 4<sup>th</sup> & 4 but apparently could not decide on a play, causing a delay of game penalty that nearly pushed them out of field goal range. The torrent of boos from the crowd in that moment was horrifying, but rookie **Chad Ryland** quelled the fury by making a 55-yard field goal to even the score.

Tua's response as the quarter turned was to force a throw to a double-covered **Diontae Johnson** on third down and watch dumbly as King tipped the pass into the arms of **Quandre Diggs** for the interception. This time the turnover stood, and the Wrecking Balls took over at the Georgia 29-yard line, already in field goal range. This was the moment in the entire afternoon when the mood at Stone Pony Shore felt the most upbeat and optimistic. As Jones led the Wrecking Balls offence onto the field, many of the fans stood – a rarity for this crowd – and bellowed words that, in their own way, were encouraging:

*"Alright, don't f\*\*@k this up Daniel!" "We gotta put 'em away here, boys!" "In for the kill, guys! In for the kill!" "Alright, no mercy here! No f\*\*@kin' mercy!" "Make 'em pay, boys!"*

What followed was a major turning point, but not in the expected direction.

On the first play of the sequence, Jones ran into the line for no gain. A false start by **Terry McLaurin** on 2<sup>nd</sup> down pushed the ball back five yards, but **Jerick McKinnon** made up all but one of the 15 yards needed for a first on a neatly executed screen that beat the blitz. On 3<sup>rd</sup> & 1, the Wrecking Balls brought in their heavy package, setting both sides with tight ends and plopping both **Brian Robinson** and **David Montgomery** in the backfield. The Glads brought safety, **John Johnson III** into the box as the interior linemen hunkered down tightly together in the middle. It was a perfect time for play action, but the Glads did not second guess themselves – they sold out to stop the run, with the safety Johnson charging straight at Robinson on the snap. The handoff went to Montgomery instead, negating the safety, but the double push by **Bilal Nichols** and **Poona Ford** up the middle knocked center **Tyler Biadasz** backwards into the running back. Before Montgomery could switch direction, **Dalvin Tomlinson** swooped in with remarkable swiftness for such a big man and gobbled him up behind the line for a one-yard loss. This big defensive play brought up 4<sup>th</sup> & 2 at the Georgia 21.

*Interlude:* I know "the chart" says to go for it here. I don't know who made "the chart" but it is based on "data" going back at least 10 years and guides the user using such factors as "expected points" and success probabilities, painting a rosy picture for situations such as the one the Wrecking Balls faced at that fateful moment. The chart is an alluring siren, depriving a coach of his brain at the very moment when it is needed most. *Trust in me*, it says. *Go for it, you know you want to*, it whispers beguilingly. Of course, when a gamble fails, the chart shrugs its non-existent shoulders and says, *don't blame me, I don't make the decisions!*

Coach McDermott, with GM **Jeff Cohen** standing next to him joined at the hip, kept his offence on the field. This caused a wave of excitement in the crowd while it made me slightly nauseous. *This is not going to end well*, I thought. And it didn't.

Not fooling anybody, least of all the Gladiators, the play call sent Jones on a sweep to the right behind the tight end and right tackle. The Georgia defence was ready, all eleven of them focused on the New Jersey quarterback. As the line strung out and Jones ran out of room to the outside, he stopped and cut back, only to be swallowed at the line of scrimmage by the defensive tackle, Nichols. For

the second time in the game already, the Balls had turned the ball over on downs. In both scenarios they had turned to Jones' legs, rather than his arm and the Glads saw it coming both times. This is what happens when defences know the coach has no confidence in his quarterback's arm, and far too much confidence in his offensive line and "the chart."

The crowd at Stone Pony turned ugly in an instant. They could see well that the Glads had not dodged the proverbial bullet; rather they had knocked the gun down at the last second and watched the Wrecking Balls shoot themselves in the foot. The Wrecking Balls had come away with nothing to show for their interception. Georgia had survived Tua's turnover and Tua himself looked like a condemned man given a reprieve.

The adrenaline from the fourth down stop transferred to Tua and the offence. They played small ball, chipping away with short passes and runs until they reached mid-field, where at the perfect moment, with the New Jersey defence braced for the run, Tua dropped a bomb behind the secondary to **Amari Cooper** for a 49-yard touchdown. This play set off a string of four consecutive Gladiator possessions ending in touchdown passes – *big* touchdown passes. These were all solid, highlight-reel scores; a 37-yard catch-and-run to **Jaxon Smith-Njigba** on a short slant; the identical play to Johnson for a 20-yard touchdown to open the second half; and a brilliantly timed and executed screen to **Rhamondre Stevenson** for a 25-yard score to make it 31-6 for Georgia with 6:08 left in the third quarter.

While Tua was making the so-called elite New Jersey defence look like the Cubs, the New Jersey offence was stuck in neutral, save for a rather flukey check down to McKinnon for 38 yards that set up another Ryland field goal. It was only after this last Tua TD (his fourth of the game) that the Wrecking Balls offence started to move in its dinky way – with Jones seeming to run as often as he passed. A pair of touchdown passes – one to **Keenan Allen** and the other to **Deebo Samuel** – and a **Byron Murphy** scoop-and-score made the score close and provided a glimmer of bitterly false hope for the Wrecking Ball faithful, that was cruelly crushed when Tua converted a 3<sup>rd</sup> & 19 with a 25-yard pass to Johnson to put the Georgia in a position to run out the clock.

Wrecking Balls fans are getting used to this. As inflamed as the crowd gets in the moment, when it is all over and done they absorb a game like this as just another lamentable loss and move on, complaining incessantly as they do, but finding a strange comfort in the predictability of it all. As I pushed my way out of the stadium and to a waiting cab, I took in post-game commentary:

*"I knew it, I knew they'd fall short!" "They've gotta fire McDermott." "Jones sucks – they all suck!" "Blow it up! They got to blow the whole thing up. Keep Milano and get rid of everybody else!" "F\*@k! Where's Stafford for f\*@k's sake!" "Tua was too much for us. Too much for our defence!"*

That was exactly it! Once he woke up and shook the cobwebs from his concussion-addled brain, **Tua Tagovailoa** looked not unlike **Dan Marino** with his precision and effortless accuracy. What scouts and analysts saw when he was at Alabama is finally coming to the fore, four years into his career. If he keeps it up, he will be "Tua much" for more than just the Wrecking Balls.

#### **AROUND THE EFL**

The only drawback for me professionally when I attend Wrecking Balls games is that I have less time to digest the rest of the week's action. Except for highlights streaming to my phone when I care to look at it during the game, it's all catch-up at my control center after Wrecking Ball Game Day. Watching a game when you know the outcome is not the same and makes for a more clinical analysis.

This week's big upset in terms of the Vegas spread occurred in Camelot, where the 8-point underdog Convicts were able to steal a 23-17 victory over the suddenly listless and mistake-prone Excaliburs. I never bought into this line as being perfectly reflective of the fundamental talent differences between these teams and assume that the Brady Dominance myth, the homefield advantage, and the Convicts' untrustworthiness combined to inflate it to an octopian size. This was not a very convincing win for Chino, nor was it a shameful loss for York, but it goes into the books as the second straight loss for the home team and puts the Convicts more securely in the driver's seat in the West Division. Evenly played through the first half and most of the third quarter, the contest broke a hair in the visitor's direction when York's **Cole Kmet** nabbed a pass from **Tom Brady** and appeared on his way to a first down in Chino territory, when safety **Eddie Jackson** punched the ball loose and utility DB, **M.J. Stewart** jumped on it to give the Convicts possession. They moved methodically up the field all the way to the York 4-yard line, where coach **Rob Nazar**, unlike most of his colleagues in the coaching fraternity, resisted the lurid temptations of "the chart" and opted to grab the lead, 13-10, on a **Harrison Butker** field goal. This and the Chino stop of York that followed was too much success for **Jared Goff** to bear, and on his next series he threw a pass into the teeth of excellent coverage to see it picked off on the rebound by **Jordan Poyer**. The Excaliburs took full advantage, with Brady hooking up with **Amon-Ra St. Brown** for a 56-yard touchdown pass to give the home team a 17-13 lead. Goff then made up partially for his miscue, completing a 14-yard pass on a do-or-die 4<sup>th</sup> & 5 at his team's own 44 to keep the eventual game-winning touchdown drive alive. **Christian McCaffrey** banged it in on his second try from half a yard away to give Chino a 20-17 lead with 4:16 left and corner **Tremon Smith** all but sealed the deal with a pick of Brady on York's ensuing drive. Brady was visibly livid with **Corey Davis**, the intended receiver on the play. One thing that stood out in this game was the absence of **Treyton Burks**, whose importance to making the York passing game work has never been so clear.

At Tillman Field in Cowntown, the Triumph ploughed past the Corn Kings, 23-20 in a closely contested game that seemed like it should have gone the other way, but for a clutch of unsung heroes on the visitors' side. *ESPN* will tell you it was **Jeff Wilson's** 46-yard touchdown run and threatening presence in the backfield that made the difference for Twin Cities. *BoobTube* content creators will break down film claiming to show **Trevor Lawrence** making a subtle but vital difference with his scrambles for first downs and perfectly placed slant to **DJ Moore** for a touchdown. Spats, on the other hand, will tell you here in this column that the Triumph front seven made all the difference in this contest. They controlled the line of scrimmage, putting pressure on **Jimmy Garoppolo** and limiting the Cowntown run game to a paltry 27 yards on 19 carries. Jimmy G performed well under the circumstances, but without **Jamaal Williams** paving the way

at least a little bit, play-action loses all credibility and without that, the Cowtown passing attack looks at best like it did in this game: *Not good enough*. Defensive tackle, **Alim McNeill** was a silent game-wrecker up the middle, making five tackles, including one sack and three stuffs. **Danielle Hunter** had the Triumph's other sack, but his hidden value was the pressure he put on Garoppolo on third down, as he danced around the awkward and off-balance **Evan Neal** and whoever was there to help him. The Triumph are unlikely to win their division, but this win allows them to keep pace with Peg City in the wildcard race.

At The Fortress in Bruxelles, the Bombers dropped a 58-yard **Brett Maher** bomb on **C.J. Stroud** and the Braves with 0:02 remaining to survive LaPlata 20-17 and stay two games in front of New Jersey in the East Division. Always one to second guess coaching decisions of all kinds, I must wonder if this game might have ended differently with **Matt Ryan** calling signals for the visitors, rather than Stroud. The rookie managed the game and emerged with good numbers – a 121.3 quarterback rating – but only attempted 18 passes, demonstrating that the full LaPlata playbook is not available when he plays. He also turned the ball over twice, both times leading to Bomber touchdowns. This was unfortunate for the Braves' defence, which became only the second squad this year to put **Justin Fields** in his place, at least as it concerns the passing game. This game had all the makings of an outright upset, not just one against the absurdly wide 14-point spread in favour of Bruxelles. But LaPlata let the home team off the hook by playing the rook. Oh well!

Moving on to games that were not as close as they appear, but at least looked close, the Irish rode a 17-point streak in the second half at Monsignor McClancy Memorial Stadium in Queens to overcome the Derailers, 31-24 to rise to 4-3. **Jacoby Brissett** earned the game ball with 252 yards passing and 4 TD passes. Some crazy people are talking about Brissett seriously as an MVP candidate, as he leads this ramshackle Irish team to a share of first place seven weeks into the season. It's funny to me how the Irish were severely downgraded by analysts in the pre-season and the Derailers were thought to be a dark horse challenger for the East Division, yet so many commentators and fans were absolutely horrified when Buffalo took the opening drive of the second half the full 75 yards for a **Lamar Jackson** touchdown pass to **A.J. Dillon** to take a 17-14 lead. This is a sign of how remedial the football program in Buffalo has become that a lead late in the game against a team originally projected to be in the running for the first overall pick is considered a notable achievement. Once again, as I do every week now, I look back at the opening day Derailers' win as a singularity of heroic proportions.

At the Iowa City Superplex in (you guessed it!) Iowa City, the labouring Budapest offence broke out against the stillborn Cubs' defence to spark the North Stars to a 46-27 win. Now, the score is a touch deceptive as it corresponds to the efficacy of the Budapest attack, as two of the team's six touchdowns came from linebacker **Frankie Luvu**, who returned an interception 79 yards for a score and a fumble 39 yards for another. Nevertheless, 32 points is a decent haul for an offence that hadn't cracked the 30-point barrier until now. The Cubs held Budapest to under 400 yards, which is a moral victory for this dilapidated Cubs' defence, which had averaged 445 yards surrendered per game coming into this week. Carefully discerning fans and analysts are not willing to declare that Aaron Rodgers and his All-World wide-receiver pairing are "back" yet. I agree.

At Hawkeye Park in Brooklin, the Hawks exploited their opponent's errors to fly higher than the Bats, 28-13. Brooklin coach **Tom Jones** got a huge assist from **Justin Herbert** and his coach in a 21-point second quarter explosion that would lay the foundation for his team's eventual victory. Two Herbert interceptions led to two Brooklin touchdowns and the coach's decision to go for it on 4<sup>th</sup> & 5 at the Brooklin 43, resulted in a turnover on downs, setting up the third major. From there it was mostly a matter of hanging on against an incensed Bats' offence that kept banging its head against the 4<sup>th</sup> down wall and turning the ball over on downs. The 'Lemmon School' has another acolyte in **Stephen Michael** apparently. *Highlight Alert: Bijan Robinson* dodged two tackles and shook off another enroute to a 58-yard TD run to seal the game for Brooklin late in the 4<sup>th</sup>.

At Jurassic Park in Durham, the Thunder Lizards' defence put on a virtuoso performance, shutting out the Crusaders, 19-0. The game's only touchdown came after **Justin Simmons** intercepted **Ryan Tannehill** on the game's second play from scrimmage. **Josh Allen** connected over the middle to **Curtis Samuel** for a 6-yard TD pass. **Cairo Santos** made up the rest of the scoring, with four straight field goals. So, what happened to the Crusaders' attack? The Lizards happened. This game was a throwback to last season, when a ball-hawking secondary and relentless pass rush set the table for Durham victory after Durham victory. Simmons finished with two picks and **Zach Allen** finished with two sacks to go along with 7 QB hits by the rest of the defence. Despite the dominance, the shutout was a bit lucky, as a missed field goal, a lost fumble at the Durham 27, and a turnover on downs inside the 20 killed good scoring opportunities.

At The Fish Tank in Sebastian, the Patriots stemmed an early Swordfish push and shut them out in the second half to prevail 23-14 in an early season battle for fourth-from-last place. The Fish jumped out to a 14-0 lead on a **Kirk Cousins** TD pass and **Jonathan Taylor** TD run but succumbed to the big play and their own fourth down fetish in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half to let the Pats back in the game. **D.J. Chark** caught four passes for 97 yards, three of them for more than 25 yards, including a 29-yard catch-and-run touchdown, to earn the game ball. **Kenny Pickett** was good, in an unspectacular way, throwing for 188 yards and not turning the ball over. The Pats have two wins, more than I thought they would have seven weeks into the season.

Three more games occurred this week and I'm glad I missed them. At Kelly-Burke Field in Erieau, the Cadillac were towed away by the Coyotes, 34-13. **Bryce Young** threw 2 TD passes and threw no picks for the second week in a row, and **Travis Etienne** busted an 88-yard TD run to lead the charge. **Teddy Bridgewater** threw 3 interceptions for Erieau and was replaced by **Nathan Peterman**, one of the worst things that can ever happen to an uninjured starting quarterback. At the Eagle's Nest in Toronto, the Violators indecently assaulted the Blue Eagles 40-13 after the latter had the temerity to score on the game's opening possession. If Scarborough didn't know its place before, it knows it now. And finally, my big chuckle of the week came at the sight of Spartans coach **Gus Konstantakos** sipping back a beer on the sideline at the Kingdome as Pickering rubbed out the Pilots 31-0. Even in his team's championship year he was never this confident or relaxed. He could afford to take it easy. Seattle has not scored in 10 straight quarters.

# BUG THE BOOKIE!

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## *Jimmy's WEEK EIGHT PICKS*

### **NEW JERSEY @ VIRDEN (line – VIOLATORS by 12)**

**INJURIES:** New Jersey – Chidobe Awuzie (OUT), David Bakhtiari (OUT), Antoine Winfield Jr., (OUT); **Virden** – D.J. Humphries (OUT), Leonard Williams (OUT).

This line started at a whopping 15 points but decreased over the week as action moved toward the visitors. It appears people think Daniel Jones is a different quarterback on the road and that has been the case so far, as the Wrecking Balls are perfect away from Stone Pony Shore. Expect that perfection to end this week, as there is no sign whatsoever that powerhouse Virden is slowing down. Patrick Mahomes was a bit sloppy last week, throwing two picks, but still demolished the ragtag Blue Eagles on the road. Leonard Williams, last year's team defensive MVP, is out, but the defence overall is healthier than it has been in years. This has made a big difference in the mood of the offence, which no longer needs to press the attack to keep pace. The New Jersey defence is missing two starters in the secondary and has performed below expectations so far this year. Expect more violence here. **PICK: VIRDEN**

### **BUFFALO @ CHARLESWOOD (line – PATRIOTS by 7)**

**INJURIES:** Buffalo – Aaron Donald (OUT), Donte Jackson (OUT), Wan'Dale Robinson (OUT); **Charleswood** – De'Vondre Campbell (OUT), Lloyd Cushenberry (OUT), Ronald Darby (OUT), David Ojabo (OUT).

This is not a line I would have believed possible at the start of the season, but the Derailers have been so dreadful and the Pats so less dreadful, that a converted touchdown line makes sense. The one positive that Buffalo can take from their sixth straight loss last week is that they were in the game entering the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter until Tre' McKitty's fumble turned the momentum against them for good. That is something to build on as they visit a more patient if somewhat less talented Charleswood team. The Pats let the Swordfish hook themselves last week and came away with the win. Kenny Pickett is no budding star but has proven capable of playing well against the dregs of the league, which is a start, of sorts. I see the Pats gutting it out against another dreg, but in a closer game. **PICK: BUFFALO**

### **COBB COUNTY @ TWIN CITIES (line – TRIUMPH by 6)**

**INJURIES:** Cobb County – Jamal Adams (IR), Brian Allen (OUT), Brandon Jones (OUT), Tre'Davious White (OUT); **Twin Cities** – Avonte Maddox (OUT), Emmanuel Moseley (OUT).

The Coyotes are on a bit of a roll, having won two in a row after wrecking the Cadillac last week. Their fate really turns on rookie Bryce Young and his ability to avoid turning over the ball. He has not thrown an interception in those two wins, while throwing 3 touchdowns and putting the solid Cobb County defence in a position to compete. This week they have their paws full against the hot Triumph, winners of five straight after battling for a win in the wind in Cowtown. Apart from the Seattle game, the Triumph are not blowing away opponents and have relied more on their defence to keep games in range. Still, Trevor Lawrence is proving deceptively capable in clutch situations with both his arm and his legs. I can envision an upset scenario where Young maintains ball security and the Coyote defence howls, but my vision of the Triumph putting the rookie back in his place is stronger. **PICK: TWIN CITIES**

### **BRUXELLES @ PEG CITY (line – BOMBERS by 1)**

**INJURIES:** Bruxelles – Harrison Smith (PROBABLE); **Peg City** – Gerlad Everett (QUESTIONABLE), Cody Whitehair (OUT).

Bruxelles rebounded somewhat unconvincingly against LaPlata last week after taking their first loss two weeks earlier. Justin Fields is gradually being pushed back into his one-dimensional box, where his legs are more threatening than his arm. This is a concern against a fully functional Crusader defence that, if they choose to play everybody, should be able to put the Bruxelles punting unit on the field regularly. As long as they can limit the big plays, expect Peg City to give the Bruxelles offence all it can handle, while the Crusader

offence works to find a way forward after being shut out last week. Despite upgrades over last year, the Peg City attack remains the least inspiring of all the serious playoff contenders. All this means a tough defensive slog and the narrowest of home wins. **PICK: PEG CITY**

### **IOWA CITY @ SEATTLE (line – CUBS by 4)**

**INJURIES:** Iowa City – Josey Jewell (DOUBTFUL), Zach Tom (DOUBTFUL), Amani Hooker (OUT), Joe Noteboom (OUT), Tyron Smith (OUT), Benjamin St-Juste (OUT). Seattle – Marshon Lattimore (OUT), Trey Sermon (OUT), Ar'Darius Washington (IR).

With it being 10 quarters since the Pilots last scored any points the real test of how bad this offence is, is coming this week against the league's worst defence for points allowed. In this battle of weakness versus weakness, the difference could come down to whether the Cubs' offence can manhandle the Pilots' defence the way it has so many others. Fourth in the league in points scored and second in yards-per-play, it is scary to think how far ahead in the West the Cubs would be if they had more than an ounce of stoutness on the back end. That one ounce they have, the dependable Josey Jewell, is listed as 'doubtful' for this game. Not to worry, Cubs fans; Seattle's offence is in such disarray that first rounder Trey Lance couldn't get it going last week. Having said that, the Pilots have historically played Iowa City tough, and they are at home. This game could get bitter if Seattle hangs around long enough. **PICK: SEATTLE**

### **CHINO @ BILLTOWN (line – CONVICTS by 6)**

**INJURIES:** Chino – Chauncey Gardner-Johnson (DOUBTFUL), A.J. Terrell (OUT); Billtown – Jordan Fuller (OUT), Mecole Hardman (OUT), Shaquille Leonard (OUT), Marcus Williams (OUT).

The Convicts may have surprised themselves by going into York and handing Tom Brady an "L" last week. The road upset removes some of the bad taste from their Week Six debacle against the Crusaders and extends their lead in the West to two games. Far from being Chino's main competition for the division, Billtown is now simply looking to win a game at home to give their new fans something to cheer about. The Bats' so far sad season took another gut punch last week in a 15-point loss to Brooklin that was not as close as the score suggests. Not just bad execution, but questionable decision-making is playing a role in their faltering fortunes. It is fair to say that they are in the running for league's worst team at their current output. All this makes the Convicts look like a lock. **PICK: CHINO**

### **BUDAPEST @ DURHAM (line – THUNDER LIZARDS by 5)**

**INJURIES:** Budapest – Amare Barno (OUT); Durham – Cooper Kupp (OUT), Jeremy Ruckert (OUT).

The Thunder Lizards' defence roared last week against Peg City, completely shutting down their offence. Durham has won three straight and is in sole possession of the North Division. Although Budapest fell 4 points short of putting a fifty-spot against the Cubs last week, it must be noted that two of their touchdowns were scored on defence and they were up against the worst defence in football. The general state of the Budapest offence has been sluggish, failing to reach the 20-point plateau in four of seven games. If the Durham defence is in the process of returning to 2022 form, this could be a long day for Aaron Rodgers. On the other side, Josh Allen is pressing by his standards and has been more careless with the ball than Rodgers. Budapest needs this one more than Durham does. **PICK: BUDAPEST**

### **PICKERING @ COWTOWN (line – SPARTANS by 8)**

**INJURIES:** Pickering – Jadeveon Clowney (OUT), Jayron Kearsse (OUT), Trent Williams (OUT); Cowtown – Michael Pierce (OUT), TJ Watt (OUT), Xavier Woods (OUT).

Some analysts are seriously suggesting the Spartans could fall this week on the road against a team that has upset them more than once in recent history. If that's all they are basing their claims on, I say cow patties. These teams did not face each other last year and are in clear-cut different classes this year. Not that Cowtown is incapable, but with T.J. Watt out their defence is unlikely to find a way to contain Jalen Hurts, whether he is passing, escaping the pocket, or executing a designed run. That means that Jimmy Garoppolo will need to be in top form to avoid turning it over to the ball-hawking Spartans' secondary, led by Tariq Woolen, and the run game needs to produce more than the 27 yards it did last week against the Triumph. Trent Williams is out for Pickering, a significant loss that might slow down the offence and offer Cowtown a shot at Hurts' blindside. Upset unlikely but this could be very close. **PICK: COWTOWN**

### **SEBASTIAN @ BROOKLIN (line – HAWKS by 6)**

**INJURIES:** Sebastian – Divine Deablo (OUT), Austin Johnson (OUT), Marlon Tuipulotu (OUT); Brooklin – Garrett Boles (IR).

Neither of these teams have lived up to modest expectations this year, but if one of them is salvageable it would have to be Brooklin, coming off a wobbly win over Billtown. The Hawks took what the Bats gave them last week, which is all that can be asked of a team that has struggled to take anything away from a determined opponent. The Swordfish regressed in a loss to Charleswood last week after appearing to turn a corner the week before in Scarborough. It is not like they are overly injured or incredibly unlucky, they are just a mediocre team playing a style beyond their means. The Hawks have similarly overplayed their hand, not seeing that Geno Smith is not Dan Fouts and that the offence would be better served by tapping more into that rookie running back who pulled off that game-clinching

58-yard touchdown run last week. Neither team can be trusted – I'll go with the more off-the-wall one this time. **PICK: SEBASTIAN**

### **SCARBOROUGH @ YORK (line – EXCALIBURS by 11)**

**INJURIES:** Scarborough – Allen Robinson (OUT), James Smith-Williams (OUT); York – Treyton Burks (OUT), Rashan Gary (OUT), Cole Holcomb (OUT), Aziz Ojulari (OUT), Javonte Williams (OUT), Jabari Zuniga (OUT), Phidarian Mathis (IR).

The Blue Eagles have lost four in a row after their now seemingly miraculous Week 3 win over Durham. Some of these losses have been tight, but there was no doubt about the shellacking they received from Virden last week, a team out of their league. The Excaliburs are scratching their heads after dropping one to Chino at home, making it two straight losses after upsetting Budapest. York now finds itself one game behind the North Stars and clumped with three others at the back of the wild card race. This is a game they absolutely need to win and should win in a normal universe. Critical errors have cost them lately and the offence has become predictable, with Tom Brady relying on Derrick Henry and Amon-Ra St. Brown exclusively. Expect a York win, but no breakaway. **PICK: SCARBOROUGH**

### **LAPLATA @ ERIEAU (line – BRAVES by 1)**

**INJURIES:** LaPlata – J.J. Watt (PROBABLE), Ronnie Stanley (OUT), Alijah Vera-Tucker (OUT); Erieau – Mark Andrews (OUT), Joey Bosa (OUT), Bernhard Raimann (OUT), Aaron Robinson (IR).

I'm not convinced that C.J. Stroud should be starting just yet for a Braves team not yet out of the playoff picture in a shaky South Division. The rookie posted respectable numbers last week but is responsible for two turnovers that would up costing them a close game against Bruxelles. They must start stringing wins together this week to recover from a weak start. They have the calibre of defence to survive post-season play if they can just punch their ticket to get there. The Cadillac look very vulnerable after the no.1 pick in the draft handed them their lunch last week. On their end, Teddy Bridgewater and Nathan Peterman combined for three interceptions and no touchdowns. I don't know why Kyler Murray isn't in there, but there is clearly something wrong in Erieau. **PICK: LAPLATA**

### **GEORGIA @ EAST ELMHURST (line – GLADIATORS by 5)**

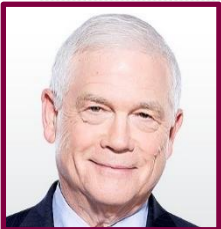
**INJURIES:** Georgia – Nate Davis (DOUBTFUL), Will Harris (OUT); East Elmhurst – None.

Jacoby Brissett looked very impressive last week against Buffalo, which should tell you how much trouble the Derailers are in this year. In fairness, this year's stop-gap Irish quarterback has flashed splendidly at times, which is one reason why East Elmhurst is in the hunt for the South Division against all prognostications. The other reason is linebacker Micah Parsons, who has been a rock of stability against the run and a proven game-wrecker in the same mold as Aaron Donald. The Gladiators hope to resolve this unexpected challenge from the Irish this week with a fired up Tua Tagovailoa at the controls coming off a four-touchdown performance against New Jersey. The Glads prevailed in a nail-biter and are riding a mini two-game wave heading into Queens. Everyone who matters most is healthy. Barring a surprise benching of Tua for imaginary preventative injury reasons, the Glads should prevail take hold of the South. **PICK: GEORGIA**

## **EFL FOCUS**

A weekly tour of Media from around the EFL. This week we focus on.....

### **NEW JERSEY**



## **THE BALLS ARE GOOD, NO LONGER GREAT, BUT WILL BE GREAT AGAIN!**

By Dave Hodge

*Legendary Sportscaster, former host of 'Hockey Night In Canada', and avid EFL Wrecking Balls radio play by play, David Hodgekinson, summarizes his pre-season look with NJ owner Bruce Springsteen.*

**2022 Record: 14-3** - NJ's first ever 1st place & playoff berth in Pacific Conference East Division

**The Skinny** – The WB's enter 2023 with 72% retention of last years elite roster – only two major changes as a result of player injuries: A switch at starting QB to Daniel Jones from Matt

Stafford after his throwing shoulder got hurt in last seasons playoff loss to Billtown; a trade for veteran tackle David Bahktiri to replace the injured Taylor Lewan. Still NJ is always active (trading wise) in the EFL off season and the WB's added veterans, DL Cam Heyward and CB Desmond King, and a swap of DT Grover Steward for S Quandre Diggs. The WB's were not very active in FA but they did sign vet MLB Nick Morrow and dealt away LB Kwon Alexander, plus NJ replaced its ST units, letting longtime P Pat O'Donell and PR/KR Dontae Spencer test FA plus releasing K Chris Boswell after his short FG attempt with 2:00 min left in the Billtown playoff game went wide left - NJ drafted rookie K Chad Ryland, WR Micheal Wilson, & CB Tyrique Stephenson who will get snaps this season.

**The Offense** – The WB's are coming off their best statistical O performance in franchise history (despite QB Stafford's high interception rate) and thus it's unlikely to be as good in 2023. While QB Daniel Jones is the best running QB NJ has ever had, is quite accurate, and has a knack (unlike Stafford) for possessing the ball (IE few turnovers) he doesn't have a longball arm and with the WB's G Ali Marpet retiring this off season there is a legit concern about sacks on longer developing pass plays. Jones is likely to be more of an advanced game manger which is why the WB's are stacked with both strong RB's in Montgomery/Robinson with elite backfield receivers such as Deebo Samuel and Jerick McKinnon. However while NJ's OL is young (save the vet Bahktiri) and with high ceiling 2024 and forward players the WB's collective OL may be the weakest part of the 2023 team. NJ has an above average core of WR/TE's if QB Jones can get them the ball however there is a concern about latent injuries to vet Keenan Allen, Deebo and Romeo Doubs.

**The Defense** – The WB's were strong last season and should be even better in 2023. It will be tough to run against their front 7 with Heyward/Armstead/Calais/Billings/Milano, and NJ has solid pass rushers in OLB Floyd & DE Armstrong/Hughes. The WB's secondary is solid to above average, but there are injury concerns to starting CB Awuzzie, Newsome, & S Winfield Jr that will test team depth.

**The Outlook** – There is an expectation on the Jersey Shore that the Wrecking Balls will compete against Bruxelles for the division title and against Peg City & Twin Cities for a WC berth. There is also hope for a 10+ win season, however projections are tempered by the reality that the 2023 roster simply isn't a 14-win team like last season but that 2023 is a bridge year of sorts to a potential dominant 2024 roster. There is hope a lot of NJ's draft picks like T Willis/Ekowunu, TE McBride, WR's Doubs/Wilson, DT Osa O, CB Newsome, & S Winfield Jr will blossom and QB Stafford injuries will fully heal. **DH**



*Legendary Sportscaster, former host of 'Hockey Night In Canada', and avid EFL Wrecking Balls radio play by play, Dave Hodge joins the equally legendary Bruce Springsteen on stage at Stone Pony Shore to sing 'Glory Days.' The Wrecking Balls were anticipating glory days ahead as they ramped up to make their first playoff appearance in team history in 2022, only to lose in the first round to Billtown. Not easily discouraged, Hodge's outlook for 2023 is optimistic, mirroring that of GM and co-owner Jeff Cohen and principal team shareholder Bruce Springsteen.*