

WEEK 5



EFL

ELITE FOOTBALL LEAGUE



2022

ELITE FOOTBALL LEAGUE

November 6, 2022

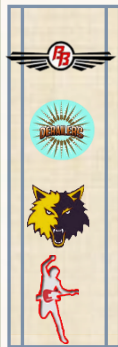
PATS BEAT BATS!



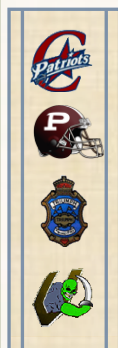
Ronald Darby
Charleswood Patriots

Patriots' corner **Ronald Darby** leaps in the air and picks off a pass from **Justin Herbert** in the very late stages of Week Five action in Charleswood. The takeaway came as the Bats were marching in field goal range, trailing by 3 points with 0:49 left in the 4th quarter. It helped the Pats salt away a stunning 19-16 upset and secure their first win of the season. Looking for an edge, the Pats sported their "alternate black" jerseys for this game. (Story inside)

EAST



CENTRAL



WEST



NORTH



COASTAL

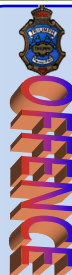


SOUTH



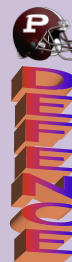
*Who was slick
in Week Five?*

**"Brylcreem" THE
EFL'S FIRST SPONSOR**



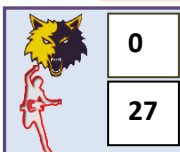
Breec Hall
RB
Twin Cities
Triumph

19 Car., 148 Yds, 3 TDs. Struck from close and far to lead Triumph 'O.'



Bobby Okereke
LB
Peg City
Crusaders

8T, 1 SK, 1 PD, 1 FF, 1 INT-7 His pick in 4th denied Pilot comeback attempt.



With no score in the 2nd quarter, **Leonard Floyd** picked off **Ryan Tannehill** and returned it to the Cobb County 14 to set up an 11-yard TD pass from **Matt Stafford** to **Terry McLaurin**. On their next series, player-of-the-game, **David Montgomery** ran it in from 4 yards to make it 14-0. On the Coyotes next possession, **JaMyca Hasty** fumbled and **Matt Milano** returned it 40 yards for a third New Jersey touchdown in a 6-minute span to make it 20-0. Tannehill would throw two more interceptions in the 2nd half and Montgomery would run out the clock as the Wrecking Balls coasted to victory.

11-06-2022 Stone Pony Shore Temp:71 Wind:0-10 None No Line MVP:Montgomery HFA:ON(1)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2022 Cobb County (1-4)	0	0	0	0	0
2022 New Jersey (5-0)	0	20	0	7	27

Passing

CB: Tannehill 38/20 144 Yds 3 Int
 NJ: Stafford 27/17 131 Yds 2 TDs

Rushing

CB: Strong Jr. 9/51, Tannehill 3/26, Hasty 7/25, Cook 1/5, Snell 1/4
 NJ: Montgomery 28/163 TD, Robinson 7/34, Stafford 1/8, Samuel 2/4

Receiving

CB: Strong Jr. 5/13, Pittman Jr. 4/29, Parker 3/63, Hasty 3/11, Howard 2/12
 NJ: McKissic 6/38, Allen 4/36, Hooper 3/27 TD, Samuel 3/19, McLaurin 1/11 TD

Defense

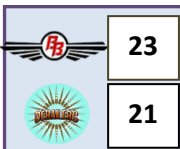
CB: Oweh Sk 9-Tk, Chaisson 8-Tk
 NJ: Campbell 2-Sks FF 4-Tk, Floyd Int 4-Tk, Hughes FF 5-Tk, Stewart Int 3-Tk

Injuries

CB: Alualu 10, Turner 7, Lawrence 5
 NJ: Blackmon 9, Alexander 1, Adams 1

Misc

CB: Hasty F-Lost, Berry 7/287 P
 NJ: Milano FR, Boswell 0/1 FG



Bruxelles QB **Jared Goff** fired a bullet to **Chris Godwin** for a 10-yard TD pass in the 3rd quarter for the score that would end up being the difference in the game. The Derailers found the end zone first on a 3-yard run by **Lamar Jackson** on a short drive set up by strip-sack of Goff by **Derek Barnett**. Jackson would then run it on from 1 yard to cap a 15-play, 75-yard drive to give Buffalo a 14-6 lead. From there, the Bombers' run game took over, with **Elijah Mitchell** finishing off a drive before the half with a 6-yard TD run and adding 31 yards on the drive that set up the game-winner.

11-06-2022 New Era Stadium Temp:54 Wind:0-10 None Line:BRX by 4 MVP:Mitchell HFA:0

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2022 Bruxelles (3-2)	3	10	10	0	23
2022 Buffalo (1-4)	7	7	0	7	21

Passing

BRX: Goff 26/12 123 Yds TD
 BUF: Jackson 40/26 237 Yds TD Int

Rushing

BRX: Mitchell 17/121 TD, Fournette 16/45
 BUF: Jackson 11/50 2 TDs, Dillon 9/28, Davis 7/11

Receiving

BRX: Godwin 5/59 TD, Fournette 3/10, Juszczyk 2/17, Dulcich 1/11, Claypool 1/26
 BUF: Woods 12/145 TD, Gage 4/24, Dillon 3/13, Fant 3/24, Robinson 2/17, Reynolds 2/14

Defense

BRX: Slay Int 10-Tk, Moreau FF 9-Tk, Quinn Sk 6-Tk, Ebukam Sk 5-Tk, Karlaftis Sk
 BUF: Barnett Sk FF 5-Tk, Abram 11-Tk, Madubuike Sk 5-Tk, Donald 9-Tk

Injuries

BRX: Anderson 8, Myers 7, Ragnow 5, Walker 1
 BUF: Flowers 7, Horn 7, Toney 4, Greenard 1

Misc

BRX: Goff F-Lost, Mailata FR, Prater 3/3 FG 34 Lg
 BUF: Oruwariye FR, Carter F-Lost



16

19

With Charleswood clinging to a 19-16 lead, **Ronald Darby** picked off **Justin Herbert** at the Pats' 24 and returned it to the 35 with just 0:49 left to play. Billtown used all their timeouts to get the ball back with 0:30 left, but sacks by **Jordan Davis** and **Montez Sweat** put an end to the comeback try as the Pats upset the Bats for their first win. After scoring a TD on the opening drive, the Bats offence laboured, which allowed the Pats to stay close until a 10-point 4th quarter, sparked by **Kenny Pickett**'s 47-yard pass to **Jakobi Meyers** and a **Nick Folk** 45-yard FG, put them over the top.

11-06-2022 Patriot Place Temp:75 Wind:Calm

Line:BB by 6 MVP:Pickett

HFA:ON(3)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2022 Billtown (2-3)	7	6	0	3	16
2022 Charleswood (1-4)	9	0	0	10	19

Passing

BB: Herbert 31/19 202 Yds TD Int

CHP: Pickett 34/25 294 Yds TD

Rushing

BB: Cook 16/84, Herbert 5/27, Harris 3/5

CHP: Singletary 10/23 TD, Pickett 2/6, Kamara 6/3

Receiving

BB: Beasley 6/70, Jeudy 4/60, Watkins 3/23, Conner 2/16 TD, Hardman 2/25, Cook 1/1

CHP: Singletary 8/36, Kelce 6/63, Bell 4/62 TD, Meyers 3/82, Beckham 3/51, Kamara 1/0

Defense

BB: Ngakoue 2-Sks 7-Tk, Davis Sk 5-Tk, Leonard 10-Tk

CHP: Sweat 2-Sks 10-Tk, Landry 2-Sks 7-Tk, Darby Int 6-Tk, Richardson Sk 4-Tk

Injuries

BB:

CHP: Peat 9, Ojemudia 9, Stanley 8, Tunsil 6

Misc

BB: Fairbairn 3/3 FG 52 Lg

CHP: Folk 2/2 FG 45 Lg



15

21

Ezekiel Elliott crashed into the end zone from 3 yards out for his second TD of the game to give Virden a 21-9 lead late in the 3rd quarter. Chino mounted a pair of FG drives in the 4th, pulling within 6 points with 4:01 left. The Violators got the ball and never gave it back again, stringing together four 1st downs to run out the clock. Both defences came to play. The Convicts' only TD was set up by a **Chauncey Gardner-Johnson** pick and 48-yard return to the Virden 18. **Patrick Mahomes** threw for 301 yards and a TD, but also threw 3 picks, while **Dak Prescott** struggled to stretch the field.

11-06-2022 TERRORDOME Temp:73 Wind:Calm None

Line:VV by 7 MVP:Elliott

HFA:ON(4)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2022 Chino (2-3)	6	3	0	6	15
2022 Virden (4-1)	7	7	7	0	21

Passing

CHI: Prescott 42/26 214 Yds TD Int

VV: Mahomes 40/22 301 Yds TD 3 Int

Rushing

CHI: Jackson 18/78, Jones II 3/13, Prescott 3/5

VV: Elliott 18/54 2 TDs, Mahomes 4/34, Penny 1/1

Receiving

CHI: Mooney 9/103, Jones 5/45 TD, Hurst 3/7, Abdullah 3/14, Williams 2/9, Reagor 2/19

VV: Metcalf 6/99, Elliott 5/42, Chase 5/104 TD, Olave 4/42, Hockenson 2/14

Defense

CHI: Jackson Int 7-Tk, Terrell Int FF 3-Tk

VV: James 9-Tk

Injuries

CHI: Maye 9, Smith 7, McCaffrey 7

VV: Barr 1

Misc

CHI: Butker 3/4 FG 47 Lg

VV:



6

11-06-2022	Kingdome	Temp:70	Wind:Calm	No Line	MVP:Okereke	HFA:ON(3)
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	1	2	3	4	Tot
2022 Peg City (2-3)	6	3	3	10	22
2022 Seattle (1-4)	3	3	0	0	6

SEA: Lock 17/8 73 Yds Int, Darnold 17/9 69 Yds 2 Int

SEA: Hunt 8/56, Walker III 4/24, Sermon 1/8

SEA: Renfrow 6/51, Lamb 4/60, Anderson 4/18, Hunt 2/11, Walker III 1/2

SEA: Jack 10-Tk, Nwosu FF 5-Tk

SEA: Akers 10, Mack 6, Joseph-Day 6

SEA: Renfrow 47 Yd PR, McPherson 2/2 FG 53 Lg



13

11-06-2022 Iowa City Superplex Temp:74 Wind:Calm No Line MVP:Hall HFA:ON(

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2022 Twin Cities (4-1)	7	10	7	7	31
2022 Iowa City (3-2)	3	3	0	7	13

ICC: Wilson 34/20 271 Yds TD

ICC: Mixon 12/45, Wilson 2/4

ICC: Moore 5/102, Kirk 4/52 TD, Brown 3/72, Carter 2/12, Mixon 2/8, Njoku 1/3

ICC: Chenal 11-Tk

ICC: Brown 5, Smith 3, Linderbaum 1

ICC: Tucker 2/3 FG 53 Lg



41



30

Josh Allen scrambled for an 8-yard TD run with 1:50 left in the 4th quarter to put Durham in front 34-30 to stay in this lively shootout. Allen rushed for 3 TDs and threw a 27-yard TD pass to **Cooper Kupp** to earn game MVP. He was nearly matched by **Kirk Cousins**, whose 3 TD passes, 307 yards, and perfect 3 for 3 conversion record on 4th down kept Sebastian in this game up until the end. The lead exchanged hands 8 times, with neither team leading by more than 7 until a pick-six by **Tyrann Mathieu** on a pass by **Gardner Minshew** with 1:13 left sealed the win for Durham.

11-06-2022 The Fish Tank Temp:76 Wind:Calm

Line:DTL by 6 MVP:Allen

HFA:ON(

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2022 Durham (5-0)	3	10	7	21	41
2022 Sebastian (2-3)	7	6	3	14	30

Passing

DTL: Allen 37/23 327 Yds TD Int

SS: Cousins 35/24 307 Yds 3 TDs, Minshew 3/1 8 Yds 2 Int

Rushing

DTL: Gibson 8/63, Allen 8/47 3 TDs, Mattison 2/11, Edmonds 5/10

SS: Chubb 14/46, Taylor 16/43, Cousins 1/6

Receiving

DTL: Boyd 6/96, Kupp 6/112 TD, Gibson 3/48, Edmonds 3/17, Waller 3/37, Knox 2/17

SS: Jones 9/145 2 TDs, Cooper 5/89 TD, Taylor 3/17, Smythe 2/16, Chubb 2/4

Defense

DTL: Simmons Int FF 5-Tk, Burns 11-Tk, McCourty FF 7-Tk, Mathieu Int(TD) 2-Tk

SS: Schobert Int 11-Tk

Injuries

DTL: Powers 1

SS: Vickers 8, Gallup 7

Misc

DTL: McCourty FR, York 2/2 FG 34 Lg

SS: Smythe F-Lost, Carlson 3/3 FG 56 Lg



33



10

Jimmy Garoppolo threw TD passes of 25 yards to **Allen Lazard** and 11 yards to **Mike Evans** to cap two short drives of under 60 yards each and give Cowtown a 14-0 1st quarter lead. The good field position was set up by a 26-yard punt return by **Isaiah McKenzie** and an interception by **Patrick Peterson**, the first pick for the Corn Kings this season. Scarborough never recovered from the early setback, as **Joe Burrow** struggled to find his wide receivers and the defence wilted under a relentless Cowtown run game that generated 200 yards. Cowtown held the ball for over 40 minutes.

11-06-2022 The Eagle's Nest Temp:55 Wind:Calm None

Line:COW by 2 MVP:Garoppolo

HFA:

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2022 Cowtown (3-2)	14	10	3	6	33
2022 Scarborough (0-5)	0	3	7	0	10

Passing

COW: Garoppolo 25/18 217 Yds 2 TDs

SBE: Burrow 31/17 119 Yds TD Int

Rushing

COW: Williams 22/93 TD, Booker 17/70, Garoppolo 6/26, Bourne 1/11

SBE: Johnson 3/32, Gaskin 3/20, Haskins 3/12, Burrow 2/4

Receiving

COW: Lazard 5/65 TD, Evans 4/41 TD, Lewis 3/25, Bourne 2/45, Booker 1/12, Cephus 1/9

SBE: Robinson 3/36, Dallas 3/14, Gaskin 2/7, Crowder 2/13, Cobb 2/20 TD, Perine 2/10

Defense

COW: Smith Sk 5-Tk, Watt Sk 4-Tk

SBE: Jones 19-Tk, Hightower Sk 9-Tk, Suh 8-Tk

Injuries

COW: Hicks 3

SBE: Ryan 1

Misc

COW: 41:52 TOP, Slye 4/4 FG 50 Lg

SBE: Crosby 1/1 FG 37 Lg



24



33

Aaron Rodgers audibled on 3rd and 4 and hit **Nelson Agholor** for a 46-yard TD pass to put the North Stars up 33-24 early in the 4th. Agholor's third TD would hold up as the Budapest defence clamped down on a pesky Glads' attack the rest of the way. Budapest had been clinging to a 2-point lead after **Tua Tagovailoa** hit **Deonte Johnson** on a long go-route for a 25-yard TD late in the 3rd. Tua was picked off twice, but also kept the Glads from getting blown out early with a 45-yard TD pass to **Byron Pringle** in the 1st. **Justin Jefferson** had a 61-yard catch-and-run to set up a FG.

11-06-2022 Ferenc-Liszt Intl A Temp:69 Wind:0-10 None Line:BUD by 11 MVP:Rodgers

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2022 Georgia (2-3)	7	10	7	0	24
2022 Budapest (5-0)	17	6	3	7	33

Passing

GEO: Tagovailoa 28/18 168 Yds 2 TDs 2 Int

BUD: Rodgers 49/30 421 Yds 3 TDs Int

Rushing

GEO: Robinson 9/94 TD, Jacobs 7/45, Tagovailoa 3/26

BUD: Vaughn 9/33, Wilson 5/30, Johnson 3/21, Rodgers 3/17, McNichols 2/7, Ford 2/4

Receiving

GEO: Johnson 8/74 TD, Ertz 4/15, Pringle 2/52 TD, Watkins 1/10, Otton 1/4, Jacobs 1/2

BUD: Jefferson 8/158, Kittle 7/85, Agholor 6/104 3 TDs, Johnson 3/10, Thornton 2/20

Defense

GEO: Baker Int Sk 8-Tk, Smith 2-Sks 5-Tk, Johnson III 13-Tk

BUD: Dean Int 7-Tk

Injuries

GEO: Davis 2

BUD: Reynolds 7, Jenkins 4, Ramczyk 3

Misc

GEO: 0/7 3rd Dwn, Bass 1/1 FG 53 Lg

BUD: McManus 4/4 FG 40 Lg



38



17

Micah Hyde stripped **Dallas Goedert** of the ball and **Tariq Woolen** recovered at the Oshawa 36 to set up the game's first points – a 9-yard TD pass from **Jalen Hurts** to **DeVonta Smith**. From there, the Spartans built a 17-0 lead before the Pink Panthers got on the board just before the half on a 15-yard TD pass from **Matt Ryan** to **Davante Adams**. Oshawa's first drive of the 2nd half stalled at the Pickering 48-yard line after missing on 4th & 3. Two series later, **D'Andre Swift** scored from 4 yards for his second TD of the game and **Damien Wilson** added a late pick-six to run away with it.

11-06-2022 GM Megadome Temp:72 Wind:Calm Line:PIC by 2 MVP:Wilson HFA:ON(1)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2022 Pickering (3-2)	7	10	7	14	38
2022 Oshawa (0-5)	0	7	0	10	17

Passing

PIC: Hurts 21/15 148 Yds TD

OSH: Ryan 46/30 241 Yds 2 TDs 3 Int

Rushing

PIC: Swift 17/48 2 TDs, Hurts 3/33, Sanders 6/23, Carson 6/14 TD, White 1/9

OSH: Gordon 14/40, Ryan 2/9, Washington 1/4

Receiving

PIC: Freiermuth 6/51, Smith 3/42 TD, Pickens 2/22, Brown 2/22, Swift 1/4, Ricard 1/7

OSH: Adams 13/161 2 TDs, Goedert 5/21, Thielen 3/22, Berrios 3/14, Tolbert 3/13

Defense

PIC: Clowney 2-Sks 4-Tk, Hyde FF 9-Tk, Wilson Int(TD) 4-Tk, Ward 11-Tk, Howard Int

OSH: Williams 9-Tk, Kendricks 8-Tk, Reddick Sk 3-Tk, Simmons Sk 3-Tk, Walker 8-Tk

Injuries

PIC: Ridley 9, Carson 9, Shepard 8, Okwara 6, Gay 1

OSH: McCourty 8, Cominsky 7, Watt 6, Davenport 3, Harris 2

Misc

PIC: Woolen FR, Zuerlein 1/2 FG 37 Lg

OSH: Goedert F-Lost, Gonzalez 1/1 FG 29 Lg



19



24

Tom Brady connected with **Treyton Burks** for a 16-yard TD pass to make it 21-10 for York in the 3rd quarter. That would turn out to be enough to get the Excaliburs past the Irish in a sloppily played game. Brady threw a 21-yard TD pass to **Amon-Ra St. Brown** and guided the offence to a 1st quarter TD drive, capped by a 3-yard **Javonte Williams** run, but he also threw 3 interceptions – one in the end zone to end a scoring chance before halftime and two others in York territory that led to the only two TDs for the Irish. **Cole Holcomb** starred on 'D' for York with 13 tackles and his 3rd pick of the year.

11-06-2022 Camelot Temp:58 Wind:0-10 None Line:YOR by 4 MVP:Holcomb HFA:ON(3)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2022 East Elmhurst (3-2)	3	7	6	3	19
2022 York (3-2)	7	7	7	3	24

Passing

EE: Wentz 24/14 140 Yds TD Int

YOR: Brady 35/25 292 Yds 2 TDs 3 Int

Rushing

EE: Jones 13/65 TD, Wentz 3/18, Michel 7/14

YOR: Henry 27/101, Williams 6/21 TD, Brady 1/5

Receiving

EE: Hill 6/57 TD, Lockett 4/48, Jones 3/28, Landry 1/7

YOR: Kmet 7/77, Davis 5/39, St. Brown 4/74 TD, Burks 4/49 TD, Williams 2/12

Defense

EE: Baker Int 8-Tk, Hilton Int 7-Tk

YOR: Holcomb Int 13-Tk, Guy Sk 3-Tk, Buckner Sk 3-Tk

Injuries

EE: Griffen 5

YOR: Zuniga 9, Douglas 3, Scherff 2

Misc

EE: Blankenship 2/2 FG 48 Lg

YOR: Gould 1/1 FG 40 Lg



28



38

Rookie **Dameon Pierce** ran for an 11-yard TD and caught an 11-yard TD pass on back-to-back plays from scrimmage to crown a 21-point 3rd quarter for Erieau and break open what had been a close game. The feat was made possible by an **Andy Isabella** fumble of the kickoff return recovered by the Cadillac at the Hawks' 11. It was one of 3 Brooklin turnovers in the game. **Trevon Diggs** had a pick-six for Erieau. Brooklin led at the half after **Van Jefferson** broke a 68-yard pass on a dump off by **Derek Carr** to set up a 7-yard TD pass to **Drake London** to make it 21-17 at the time for Brooklin.

11-06-2022 Kelly-Burke Field Temp:56 Wind:5-15 None Line:ERI by 11 MVP:Murray HF

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2022 Brooklin (1-4)	6	15	0	7	28
2022 Erieau (4-1)	0	17	21	0	38

Passing

BRH: Carr 40/22 317 Yds 2 TDs 2 Int

ERI: Murray 42/27 271 Yds 3 TDs

Rushing

BRH: Ekeler 8/54 2 TDs, Carr 1/10

ERI: Pierce 17/72 TD, Harris 12/58, Murray 8/35

Receiving

BRH: Ekeler 6/89, London 5/78 TD, Jefferson 4/88, Conklin 3/29 TD, Hopkins 2/15

ERI: Waddle 6/90 TD, Andrews 6/61, Pierce 5/41 TD, Henry 4/34 TD, Higgins 3/36

Defense

BRH: Simmons Sk FF 12-Tk

ERI: Diggs Int(TD) 2-Tk, Leal Sk FF Tk, Hamilton Int 3-Tk

Injuries

BRH: Jones 7, Elliott 7

ERI: Glasgow 8, Pierce 7, Gilmore 3

Misc

BRH: Isabella F-Lost,

ERI: Hamilton FR, Myers 1/1 FG 43 Lg



WEEK FIVE

STANDINGS & STATS

EFL 2022 - Week 5 Standings

East	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
New Jersey	5	0	0	1.000	W5	136	27.2	66	13.2	14.0	2 0 0	2 0 0	4 0 0
Bruxelles	3	2	0	.600	W1	109	21.8	113	22.6	-0.8	1 2 0	2 0 0	3 1 0
Buffalo	1	4	0	.200	L2	74	14.8	126	25.2	-10.4	0 3 0	0 2 0	1 3 0
Cobb County	1	4	0	.200	L1	68	13.6	127	25.4	-11.8	1 2 0	0 2 0	0 4 0
Central	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Virden	4	1	0	.800	W1	133	26.6	95	19.0	7.6	2 1 0	2 0 0	4 0 0
Twin Cities	4	1	0	.800	W3	136	27.2	65	13.0	14.2	0 1 0	1 1 0	3 1 0
Peg City	2	3	0	.400	W1	87	17.4	85	17.0	0.4	0 2 0	1 1 0	2 2 0
Charleswood	1	4	0	.200	W1	76	15.2	170	34.0	-18.8	1 2 0	0 2 0	1 3 0
West	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Iowa City	3	2	0	.600	L1	154	30.8	142	28.4	2.4	1 2 0	1 1 0	2 2 0
Billtown	2	3	0	.400	L2	90	18.0	113	22.6	-4.6	1 1 0	2 0 0	2 2 0
Chino	2	3	0	.400	L3	119	23.8	107	21.4	2.4	0 2 0	1 1 0	2 2 0
Seattle	1	4	0	.200	L1	95	19.0	136	27.2	-8.2	0 3 0	0 2 0	0 4 0
North	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Durham	5	0	0	1.000	W5	178	35.6	71	14.2	21.4	3 0 0	2 0 0	4 0 0
Cowtown	3	2	0	.600	W1	123	24.6	101	20.2	4.4	1 1 0	2 0 0	3 1 0
Sebastian	2	3	0	.400	L1	120	24.0	136	27.2	-3.2	0 2 0	0 2 0	1 3 0
Scarborough	0	5	0	.000	L5	73	14.6	165	33.0	-18.4	0 3 0	0 2 0	0 4 0
Coastal	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Budapest	5	0	0	1.000	W5	154	30.8	76	15.2	15.6	4 0 0	2 0 0	4 0 0
York	3	2	0	.600	W2	142	28.4	113	22.6	5.8	2 0 0	1 1 0	2 2 0
Pickering	3	2	0	.600	W3	145	29.0	116	23.2	5.8	1 0 0	0 2 0	2 2 0
Brooklin	1	4	0	.200	L4	83	16.6	138	27.6	-11.0	1 2 0	1 1 0	1 3 0
South	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Erieau	4	1	0	.800	W4	142	28.4	96	19.2	9.2	2 0 0	1 1 0	3 1 0
East Elmhurst	3	2	0	.600	L2	124	24.8	105	21.0	3.8	2 1 0	2 0 0	3 1 0
Georgia	2	3	0	.400	L1	89	17.8	119	23.8	-6.0	0 1 0	1 1 0	1 3 0
Oshawa	0	5	0	.000	L5	87	17.4	156	31.2	-13.8	0 4 0	0 2 0	0 4 0

EFL 2022 - Week 5 Passing Leaders

			Att	Cmp	C%	Yards	In	I%	Lg	TD	TD%	Rate
1	Rodgers	BUD	169	116	68.6	1443	3	1.8	61	12	7.1	111.1
2	Wilson	ICC	150	96	64.0	1314	2	1.3	62	11	7.3	110.8
3	Allen	DTL	161	106	65.8	1386	1	0.6	72	9	5.6	108.9
4	Hurts	PIC	92	59	64.1	736	0	0.0	57	5	5.4	107.0
5	Murray,K	ERI	162	114	70.4	1319	2	1.2	51	8	4.9	106.0
6	Stafford	NJ	166	111	66.9	1270	1	0.6	51	9	5.4	105.2
7	Prescott	CHI	165	121	73.3	1318	3	1.8	40	7	4.2	103.0
8	Mahomes	VV	189	114	60.3	1547	6	3.2	75	11	5.8	92.6
9	Jones,M	PCC	159	99	62.3	1046	0	0.0	62	5	3.1	91.9
10	Brady	YOR	179	122	68.2	1475	8	4.5	90	9	5.0	91.4
11	Garoppolo	COW	145	92	63.4	1076	3	2.1	43	6	4.1	91.0
12	Wentz	EE	175	102	58.3	1104	4	2.3	55	11	6.3	88.4
13	Cousins	SS	176	105	59.7	1205	2	1.1	51	6	3.4	87.0
14	Lock	SEA	109	66	60.6	841	2	1.8	52	3	2.8	86.2
15	Goff	BRX	132	79	59.8	848	1	0.8	44	4	3.0	85.7
16	Winston	TCT	91	49	53.8	630	3	3.3	79	5	5.5	80.4
17	Ryan	OSH	202	125	61.9	1364	8	4.0	54	9	4.5	80.1
18	Carr	BRH	179	112	62.6	1290	7	3.9	68	6	3.4	79.1
19	Burrow	SBE	184	118	64.1	1100	8	4.3	29	8	4.3	76.8
20	Tagovailoa	GEO	78	50	64.1	575	6	7.7	49	5	6.4	75.5
21	Tannehill	CB	200	120	60.0	1204	6	3.0	48	6	3.0	74.7
22	Jackson,L	BUF	154	105	68.2	844	5	3.2	37	3	1.9	74.7
23	Herbert	BB	152	90	59.2	1002	4	2.6	48	3	2.0	74.5
24	Pickett	CHP	158	99	62.7	1142	8	5.1	54	4	2.5	71.8
25	Darnold	SEA	71	43	60.6	390	4	5.6	24	1	1.4	56.7

EFL 2022 - Week 5 Kick Return Leaders

		No	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD
1	Rodgers	CHP	12	390	32.5	102 1
2	Dallas	SBE	8	241	30.1	43 0
3	McCloud	PCC	12	350	29.2	37 0
4	Roberts	BRX	11	293	26.6	37 0
5	Carter	BUF	10	246	24.6	39 0
6	Pringle	GEO	7	167	23.9	31 0
7	Smith,T	CHI	8	189	23.6	28 0
8	Richard	SS	8	185	23.1	42 0
9	McKenzie	COW	7	154	22.0	37 0
10	Dulin	BB	9	161	17.9	30 0
11	Hasty	CB	11	186	16.9	30 0
12	Isabella	BRH	7	86	12.3	28 0
13	Ford	BUD	1	40	40.0	40 0
14	Moore	EE	6	200	33.3	92 0
15	Agnew	GEO	6	200	33.3	80 1
16	Patterson	BUD	1	31	31.0	31 0
17	Pierce	TCT	1	29	29.0	29 0
18	Berrios	OSH	5	145	29.0	40 0
19	White,R	PIC	1	28	28.0	28 0
20	Hines	ERI	1	28	28.0	28 0
21	McFarland	SS	1	26	26.0	26 0
22	Phillips	VV	5	118	23.6	31 0
23	Ballentine	YOR	2	45	22.5	28 0
24	Walker	SEA	2	44	22.0	27 0
25	Spencer,D	NJ	4	86	21.5	27 0

EFL 2022 - Week 5 Punt Return Leaders

		No	Fc	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD
1	Jones,V	PIC	7	3	124	17.7	76 1
2	Duvernay	TCT	8	6	123	15.4	23 0
3	Holland	CHP	7	1	96	13.7	36 0
4	Renfrow	SEA	9	4	122	13.6	47 0
5	McKenzie	COW	7	2	85	12.1	26 0
6	McCloud	PCC	7	3	77	11.0	19 0
7	Hines	ERI	11	7	120	10.9	20 0
8	Dotson	SBE	12	2	122	10.2	18 0
9	Peoples-Jo	SS	12	1	116	9.7	14 0
10	Berrios	OSH	8	4	66	8.3	15 0
11	Grant	CHI	10	0	81	8.1	18 0
12	Carter	BUF	13	4	90	6.9	13 0
13	Roberts	BRX	11	6	55	5.0	11 0
14	Robinson	CB	20	1	23	1.2	8 0
15	Philips	ICC	3	1	69	23.0	52 0
16	Powell	PCC	2	0	42	21.0	21 0
17	Harris	COW	5	4	73	14.6	20 0
18	Spencer,D	NJ	6	3	64	10.7	26 0
19	Swain	YOR	6	5	57	9.5	13 0
20	Hardman	BB	6	7	52	8.7	17 0
21	Erickson	VV	6	4	44	7.3	13 0
22	Agnew	GEO	4	0	25	6.3	7 0
23	Moore	EE	3	3	17	5.7	13 0
24	Shakir	GEO	5	4	28	5.6	8 0
25	Gray	DTL	4	17	20	5.0	9 0

EFL 2022 - Week 5 Rushing Leaders

			Att	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD
1	Mixon	ICC	104	540	5.2	30	5
2	Montgomery	NJ	92	494	5.4	46	4
3	Henry	YOR	112	487	4.3	63	3
4	Elliott	VV	89	476	5.3	49	4
5	Mitchell	BRX	78	462	5.9	45	3
6	Henderson	TCT	95	444	4.7	19	2
7	Sanders	PIC	72	411	5.7	43	1
8	Taylor	SS	99	405	4.1	40	5
9	Cook	BB	84	359	4.3	30	4
10	Fournette	BRX	70	345	4.9	62	3
11	Gibson	DTL	54	336	6.2	17	0
12	Robinson,J	GEO	52	300	5.8	38	3
13	Williams,J	COW	62	291	4.7	17	2
14	Ekeler	BRH	57	290	5.1	27	2
15	Jones,A	EE	60	288	4.8	50	2
16	Gordon	OSH	66	270	4.1	26	1
17	Cook	CB	51	262	5.1	37	2
18	Singletary	CHP	57	262	4.6	52	2
19	Hall,B	TCT	45	243	5.4	45	6
20	Allen	DTL	38	242	6.4	28	10
21	Pierce	ERI	54	241	4.5	31	1
22	Jacobs	GEO	55	237	4.3	28	0
23	Jackson.L	BUF	61	234	3.8	29	4
24	Michel	EE	54	225	4.2	26	0
25	Johnson,D	SBE	43	223	5.2	30	0
26	Walker	SEA	54	220	4.1	33	1
27	Booker	COW	43	214	5.0	22	2
28	Murray,K	ERI	44	212	4.8	37	4
29	Barkley	PCC	61	206	3.4	30	1
30	Dillon	BUF	48	194	4.0	24	1
31	McCaffrey	CHI	42	177	4.2	23	3
32	Patterson	BUD	32	176	5.5	19	4
33	Harris	ERI	41	170	4.1	17	0
34	Strong Jr.	CB	29	156	5.4	26	0
35	Chubb	SS	41	156	3.8	24	2
36	Hurts	PIC	28	148	5.3	31	2
37	Swift	PIC	47	143	3.0	11	5
38	Hunt	SEA	24	135	5.6	26	1
39	Herbert	BB	18	133	7.4	22	0
40	Tannehill	CB	13	131	10.1	23	0

EFL 2022 - Week 5 Receiving Leaders

			No	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD
1	Kupp	DTL	44	678	15.4	66	7
2	Adams	OSH	43	625	14.5	54	4
3	Pittman Jr	CB	38	401	10.6	29	2
4	Beasley	BB	34	413	12.1	30	1
5	Renfrow	SEA	34	420	12.4	28	2
6	Hill	EE	34	459	13.5	55	6
7	Ekeler	BRH	34	305	9.0	48	1
8	Patrick,T	CHI	33	480	14.5	40	4
9	Moore	TCT	32	422	13.2	30	3
10	Lamb	SEA	31	481	15.5	52	1
11	Johnson,D	GEO	31	350	11.3	49	2
12	Allen	NJ	31	392	12.6	51	3
13	Andrews	ERI	30	371	12.4	51	1
14	Jefferson	BUD	29	496	17.1	61	4
15	Kmet	YOR	28	236	8.4	20	0
16	Metcalf	VV	28	529	18.9	57	4
17	Chase	VV	28	568	20.3	75	4
18	Cooks	CB	26	328	12.6	45	3
19	Waddle	ERI	25	389	15.6	48	2
20	St. Brown	YOR	24	391	16.3	47	3
21	Hopkins	BRH	24	307	12.8	28	1
22	Meyers	CHP	24	301	12.5	47	0
23	Gage	BUF	24	189	7.9	28	0
24	London	BRH	24	293	12.2	37	2
25	Samuel	NJ	23	323	14.0	41	2
26	Green	SS	23	377	16.4	51	0
27	Lockett	EE	23	326	14.2	32	1
28	Mooney	CHI	22	227	10.3	23	0
29	Jones,M	CHI	22	287	13.0	38	2
30	Woods	BUF	22	247	11.2	28	1
31	Godwin	BRX	22	251	11.4	25	2
32	Kelce	CHP	22	259	11.8	38	1
33	Thielen	OSH	22	248	11.3	42	2
34	Burks	YOR	22	345	15.7	90	4
35	Cooper	SS	21	263	12.5	48	3
36	Hockenson	VV	21	180	8.6	14	0
37	Diggs	BUD	21	327	15.6	41	2
38	Uzomah	SBE	21	214	10.2	26	1
39	Elliott	VV	21	121	5.8	21	1
40	Bourne	COW	20	320	16.0	43	1



AROUND THE



With Spats McChad

NEW YORK – It's five weeks into the season and still too early to tell who is for real. It is enough of a sample size, however, to cause panic and over-exuberance, and everything in-between, in fanbases around the league. It's not too early to tell which teams are in serious trouble and – in a couple of cases – which of those are unlikely to pull out of their early dive. It is a little harder to tell if those teams that are off to great starts have it in them to maintain the pace over the long haul, because that long haul doesn't come into play until the number of weeks reaches double-digits. Nevertheless, in the age of social media, the capacity of platforms to generate instant crowd consensus have fans and media not just living in the moment, but unable to see past the moment and grasp the bigger picture. The fanbases certainly have a lot to say about what just happened and tend to extrapolate whatever that was as holding true for the remainder of the season, perhaps forever.

So, I decided to take the “temperature” of fanbases and beat writers across the league, within the context of their histories, based on the local media, social media and *YouTube* buzz, to measure where they are now, less than one-third, but more than one-fourth of the way through the season (damn 17-game sked!). It will be fun to compare the state of the fanbases now with their future condition at more than the two-thirds, but less than the three-quarters mark, around Week Eleven (damn 17-game sked!).

SURVEY SAYS...!

BILLTOWN BATS (2-3, *coming off a loss*): There is a schism in the fanbase between old Assassins fans in Las Vegas and new Bats fans in Pennsylvania. The former group continues to wear Assassins gear at home games and pickets the stadium before and after games demanding that the team remain in Las Vegas. The latter group has organized at the grassroots level using the slogan, “Bring the Bats Home,” even though home hasn't been built yet. This group proposes to alternate home games between Heinz Field in Pittsburgh and Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia while the new stadium planned for Williamsport is being built. Lost in this fan war is meaningful discourse about the performance of the football team on the field, which has fallen below expectations so far. Each side blames the other for the team's current woes. The embarrassing loss to the Pats this week just added fuel to the fire.

SENTIMENT: Negative / Angry

BROOKLIN HAWKS (1-4, *coming off a loss*): It is as if Brooklin fans and local writers know how lucky they are to have a pro football team at all. There has been little ill-feeling expressed toward the players or their coach as the team undergoes its worst five-week start of the Tom Jones Era. In fact, the underlying optimism that “*Tom will turn things around*” has me reflecting on how appropriate the name was for their original home park. Helpful hints abound on *Twitter* about how Tom can get that done – all offered without acrimony – such as taking the pressure off **Derek Carr** by running more with **Austin Ekeler**, or deploying more multiple-receiver sets to take the heat off **DeAndre Hopkins**. All of these are sensible suggestions. Brooklin seems a happy place.

SENTIMENT: Positive / Hopeful

BRUXELLES BOMBERS (3-2, *coming off a win*): Interest in the Bombers inside the capitol of the EU has waned considerably since the pandemic. The prospects of another losing season worse than last year affected the gate during the team's recent three-game home stretch, when they failed to sellout a game. Belgians are more concerned about the cost of fuel and rising inflation than they are about the Bombers. Social media activity relating to the team in Belgium is down, as are sales of **Duvel**. Belgian fans blame coach and GM **Kenny Main** for the team's current state – trading both **Travis Kelce** and **Darren Waller** in the same year registered even on Europeans as lacking reason and strategic vision. Interestingly, the most animated discussion originates from Samoa, the team's former home. Pacific Islanders seem to have taken to **Elijah Mitchell** as the team's new hope and think the Bombers will make the playoffs: **SENTIMENT: Neutral / Indifferent / Delusional**

BUDAPEST NORTH STARS (5-0, *coming off a win*): The combination of winning back-to-back championships and the intense marketing efforts of **Darrin Jones**, that have involved embracing Hungarian culture and falsifying football history, have resulted in the emergence of the most rabid fanbase in the EFL. The North Stars are everywhere in Hungary, not just Budapest, where a myth has formulated around American-style football being actually invented in Hungary by **Attila the Hun** in the 5th century as a strategy game for his military field commanders. The *True Hungarian Football Society*, boasting over 2,000 members, has propped up an entire historiography on the subject. Name a platform, Hungarians are on it talking about the North Stars. **Darrin Jones** is a “son of Hungary,” **Aaron Rodgers** is a national hero, and fans are in love with **Justin Jefferson**, who they call *Szellem*, Hungarian for “ghost,” because nobody can catch him. As the North Stars embark on a two-week road trip, the main topic of fan discussion is whether or not the team will ever lose another game. **SENTIMENT: Supremely Confidant / Fanatical / Obnoxious**

BUFFALO DERAILERS (1-4, *coming off a loss*): The fanbase and most of the local media is unified in wanting to get rid of **Daryl Brothers** as the team's coach, but are divided on how best to achieve that without also losing the team he brought to Buffalo to another market. Buffalo fans fear losing the team. Diplomatic suggestions that Brothers should focus on building the roster rather than coaching it are built on the artificial premise that he has a keen eye for talent and that Xs and Os are beneath him. Good try! So far, those calls have fallen on deaf ears, as the Derailers' Owner/GM/Coach wants it all, and his close inner circle, including his brothers Darryl (two r's) and Derrick, support him. Buffalo football fans are accustomed to bad luck and underachievement, but even they are losing patience. Unable to penetrate the skull of the team's owner, they are beginning to turn on **Lamar Jackson** and **Aaron Donald** for failing to turn the team around. The only thing they seem to look forward to is the tailgate. **SENTIMENT: Negative / Pessimistic / Afraid**

CHARLESWOOD PATRIOTS (1-4, *coming off a win*): Patriots fans have always been the politest and the least expressive of EFL fanbases since the very beginning. The only time they truly revolted was when **Jason Findlay** traded **Peyton Manning** in 2014 as part of the Pats' first deliberate "tankathon." So, it is not surprising that fan chatter continues at a resigned but even keel, focusing on the incremental development of **Kenny Pickett** and the disappearance of **Alvin Kamara** as a factor in the offence. The presence of All-Pro tight end **Travis Kelce** is a source of pride, considering he came at virtually no cost, but he is frequently mentioned in theoretical trade scenarios in order to continue the rebuild. The win over Billtown did not alter the overall tone of resignation. A small but vocal minority, unhappy with the roller coaster rides of the past 8 years, has expressed disgust with the ownership, wondering if fans should be rooting for Virden this year, instead, "since we're the same team." **SENTIMENT: Neutral / Ambivalent / Resentful**

CHINO CONVICTS (2-3, *coming off a loss*): This is a nasty fanbase at its core, but one also capable of lifting the team with spells of fanatical devotion. Its dark side came out following the injury to **Christian McCaffrey** with a meme of the running back playing wheelchair football with the heading 'Traded to Wheelchair Football League.' A viral tweet called for the return of **Quinton Spain**, the secondary piece in the trade that brought **Darnell Mooney** to the team. Mooney has not bonded with the fanbase and is the object of scorn in the prison seats of The Big House, as the real convicts bare their posteriors mooning his arrival on the field. The Spartans picked up **Tariq Woolen** with the draft pick they received for Mooney, worsening the online vitriol. The three-game losing streak has made fans surly and put more pressure on **Dak Prescott**, who wilted under pressure against Virden, prompting a strange meme of Prescott in a dress fainting at a Victorian tea party. The fans see a golden opportunity to take control of the West slipping away and it makes them very angry. **SENTIMENT: Negative / Abusive**

COBB COUNTY COYOTES (1-4, *coming off a loss*): The barrage of criticism coming from football fans in Marietta, GA is the kind only a fanbase spoiled by back-to-back Cinderella seasons would make. Talk of being "Georgia's Team" has stopped. **Ryan Tannehill** has gone from being a future Hall-of-Famer to being a journeyman "bum" in the eyes of fans after throwing three picks against the Wrecking Balls this week. Even coach **Eron Osman**, venerated as a "football genius" as recently as this training camp, is being called out for his decision-making, both on and off the field. The only player worth keeping, according to the fans, is left tackle **Tristan Wirfs**. They are now ready to "tear it all down," apparently not having realized that the Coyotes already tore it all down and that is why they are in the state they are. This may be the most out-of-touch fanbase in all of sports. **SENTIMENT: Negative / Outraged / Clueless**

COWTOWN CORN KINGS (3-2, *coming off a win*): Social media chatter in Cowtown is muted, given that the town is located within that strange 'Historic Zone' in the Province of Ontario, where modern technological conveniences are available, but slow to catch on. Local radio talk shows remain the most popular form of sports gossip, with the local truck stop a close second. Fans in Cowtown were disappointed with the loss to Cobb County, but remain convinced after the win over the Blue Eagles that "*with TJ back*" the team can "*make some noise*." The principal topic of conversation remains the quarterback position, as it has been ever since the end of **Joe Flacco**'s heyday. Fans are concerned that **Davis Mills** is being paid almost triple the salary of starter, **Jimmy Garoppolo**. They understand that Jimmy G is out of favour with the owner, but think the situation is "*a little queer*" nonetheless. (Ed. Note: people in Cowtown don't have a common word for 'gay,' so "queer" is used in its original sense here) **SENTIMENT: Positive / Patient / Optimistic**

DURHAM THUNDER LIZARDS (5-0, *coming off a win*): Durham fans are accustomed to winning in the regular season, so all the *Twitter* talk at the moment revolves around whether or not what they see on the field in Weeks 1 thru 17 will translate into playoff success. As a result, any tiny imperfection in the team's performance is amplified in the eyes of the media and fans as "*something they will have to correct if they want to win the championship*." With the Thunder Lizards currently ranked no.1 in the AP Power Rankings, and in the top 5 in the most meaningful statistical categories, it is difficult to find anything to fix. However, the persnickety Durham fanbase has focused in on the 17th ranked third down conversion rate on offence as "*something they will have to correct if they want to win the championship*." That, and the inability to stop **Kirk Cousins** on 4th down, have the fanbase tied up in knots. There clearly will be no joy in Durham until they win, or at least appear in, a Championship. **SENTIMENT: Neutral / Critical**

EAST ELMHURST IRISH (3-2, *coming off a loss*): Like with any New York-based franchise, the Irish fans' default expectation is Championship – if not this year, then next year *because* of improvements this year. **Archbishop Thomas Malloy** has done a pretty good job assembling a roster to compete at the league's highest level, but as with all great football plans, the plan can all be undone by the quarterback. Fans in Queens are zeroing in on **Carson Wentz** as the weak link in this would-be champion, now and in the foreseeable future. They have not yet blamed the GM and coach for selecting him, but are peeved that they went "all-in" by refusing to sign a back-up. If the Irish fans *could* call for the back-up QB, they would; there just isn't one available. So, the entire focus of the fanbase right now is on Wentz and his imperfections, and they expect that if they boo him enough, things will improve. They have not yet caught on to the poor play of the defence the past two weeks, but when they do: watch out! **SENTIMENT: Neutral / Demanding**

ERIEAU CADILLAC (4-1, *coming off a win*): It is tough to measure the sentiment of a fanbase so small, but the detectable social media traffic and the content of local sports radio talk shows reveals that the Cadillac fans we know about are in love with **Kyler Murray** and **Myles Garrett** and excited about the prospect of winning at least as many games as they lose. That's right, fans in Erieau, and those nearby environs that gravitate toward it, are not even contemplating playoffs yet – they are thrilled for the moment to be the most powerful spoilers in the league. The win over Chino brought particular glee to the Cadillac faithful, not just because of its drama, but because it came against one of the league's storied franchises – the original EFL Champions. A thread on Twitter dubbed 'Cadillac for All' diverged from discussion about this week's win over Brooklin to controversy over the lack of gender-neutral bathrooms at Kelly-Burke Field. **SENTIMENT: Positive / Thankful / Inclusive**

GEORGIA GLADIATORS (2-3, *coming off a loss*): The Gladiators are on to their third home base in the State of Georgia after spending last year in Pittsburgh. Their fan footprint is large but diffused. Having not had a winning season since 2018, and no championship, they are not exactly ideal material for gaining a broad following. Yet, the Gladiators are popular among those who may liked the Steelers and the Falcons at some point in the distant past. Their pedigree as one of the original franchises also works in their favour. The aggressive power play by the Coyotes, backed by the Georgia Legislature, to kick the Glads out of the State alienated those traditional Glads supporters who make up most of the State of Georgia outside of Marietta. One can't just cancel a large following in such a high-handed fashion. So, despite the appearance of another losing season, Glads fans are raring to support their team. Gladiator fans on social media and call-in talk shows do the positive spin for the team, not the other way around. The switch to Tua after just two games created some fan dissension – more due to the way it was handled – but the desire to not appear disunited in the face of arrogant Coyote supporters, has most Glads fans on board with it now – at least publicly. **SENTIMENT: Positive / Collaborative / United**

IOWA CITY (3-2, *coming off a loss*): The opening of the Iowa City Superplex, nicknamed the "Fergy Dome" by the fans, is a positive distraction for a fanbase sharply divided in its view of the team's coach and current youth movement. Urbanites based in Des Moines, Cedar Rapids and Iowa City do not trust coach **Deron Redding** to oversee the rebuild. They point to the fact that the team is winning as proof that Redding is making a mess of things and cannot be trusted. They want him fired. Rural Iowans on the contrary are delighted by the spirit shown by the Cubs' "young'uns." They believe that the best way to rebuild a team is to "teach them how to win!" and, if they win, "*what's the problem?*" Debate now swirls around whether the Cubs should go all-in and trade **Russell Wilson**. Rural fans think he will play until he's 40, like **Tom Brady**; the urbanites think the Cubs should part ways with him while they can and roll the dice in the draft. One thing the fans on both sides of the divide agree on, though, is that the Superplex is indeed "super." **SENTIMENT: Neutral / Divided / Quarrelsome**

NEW JERSEY WRECKING BALLS (5-0, *coming off a win*): Follow only Wrecking Balls fan commentary on social media you would never know their team is undefeated. New Jerseyans, accustomed to failure most tragic, are in disbelief. They expect things to fall apart any moment, so their chatter revolves around predicting the when and how of that moment. Online comments after just one scoreless quarter this week against Cobb County ranged from pessimistic to outrage as fans pondered the potential humiliation of a loss to the woeful Coyotes. When it ended in a Jersey shutout and 27-point victory, a trending thread started by influencer [@AshburyJoe](#) lamented how the team had been too conservative and had relied too much on their defence, and that that would cost them if they made the playoffs. (*IF* they made the playoffs!) Fans who express cautious optimism that the team is for real this year are reminded by this same [@AshburyJoe](#) that the Wrecking Balls have had the easiest schedule in the league to this point, and not to get too excited. The fans continue to criticize traditional scapegoat, **David Montgomery**, despite his 5.4 yards per carry average and no.2 ranking among rushers, claiming that teams are focusing on **Matt Stafford**. Yet, these same fans are also critical of Stafford for a relative lack of production given the support of Montgomery. It seems the Wrecking Balls can't win for winning. **SENTIMENT: Negative / Skeptical**

OSHAWA PINK PANTHERS (0-5, *coming off a loss*): On top of having to endure the discontent of their own fans, the Pink Panthers are constantly subjected to a hail of criticism and ridicule from Aurorans, who still follow the team that brought their city three Gale Sayers Trophies. #PinkPanthers=ZeroHorsepower is the hashtag used by ex-Mustangs fans to categorize messages poking fun at or belittling the coaching of **Scott Dennis** and the play of the Oshawa incarnation of the team. Oddly enough, the attacks on the coach and the team by fans in Aurora may be the only thing keeping Dennis from having to go into protective custody. Oshawa fans aren't happy by a long shot, but they resent being mocked by their snobby northern neighbours. They are inclined to make excuses for the native Oshawa-an. Yet, there is no hiding from these new fans the fact of an unbalanced offence and the appearance of a defence going through the motions. Who can be blamed for this other than the coach? In the view of the fans in Oshawa, **Matt Ryan** is the main problem. Calls for **Mason Rudolph** are getting louder. The fans are so desperate after getting mauled by Pickering, that even a single win could dramatically swing the mood. **SENTIMENT: Negative / Defensive / Desperate**

PEG CITY CRUSADERS (2-3, *coming off a win*): Sharing an entire province that has a population less than that of San Antonio with three other pro football teams can make it tough for that team to generate a loyal fanbase, especially when that team is the last one in and coming off a one-win season. Nevertheless, a small but vocal clutch of free-spirited Winnipeegers have adopted this team as their own, reveling in their uniqueness. The team gets its own little corner of the sports page of the *Winnipeg Free Press* while garnering hardly a mention in either of the two Charleswood newspapers – the *Charleswood Sun* and the *Charleswood Banner* – each one owned by one of **Jason's Findlay's** twin sisters. On the whole, the city is indifferent to the Crusaders, while Blue Bombers fans envy their stadium, True North Field. #CrimsonCrusade is the hashtag to search Twitter for comments on the team. From the limited information available one can piece together a picture of a cautiously optimistic fan group, very proud of their team's defence and believing that last

year's 1st round pick, **Mac Jones** can eventually lead them to the promised land. They really want to beat Charleswood for past and current slights and are looking forward to their meeting next week. **SENTIMENT: Positive / Optimistic / Vengeful**

PICKERING SPARTANS (3-2, coming off a win): In the extreme world of Spartan fandom there is never a down moment. The fans are either fanatically pumped up or hysterically unhinged. They take their cue from the '300 Spartans' fan club, as insane a fan grouping as one will find in sports, whose motto 'Never Surrender' is applied equally to all fans as well as the players. Ravings on social media and by pro-Spartan YouTubers (of which there are many, for some reason) reflect a general state of pumped-up fanaticism after the Spartans won their third game in a row. Fans have taken to the **Jalen Hurts** offence more than the quarterback himself, appreciating the run-first, grind 'em down approach the team has adopted with him under center. Pickering fans love to see their team administer a punishing beat down and running the ball successfully more than they pass does just that. I wonder if they will be as stoked when the team needs to come from two scores behind late in the game. **SENTIMENT: Toxically Positive / Intense / Savage**

SCARBOROUGH BLUE EAGLES (0-5, coming off a loss): As the Blue Eagles play their third season at the renamed Eagle's Nest (the old Wolverine's Den) located in Toronto's Exhibition Place, with plans for a new facility in Scarborough terminally stalled by red tape and political interference, the fanbase has spread to the downtown core and west end of Toronto. All this has achieved is more widespread disgruntlement. While fans were patient during the first two seasons with **Joe Burrow** at quarterback, with each passing loss they become surlier and surlier. **Chris Dickinson** was permanently blamed long ago for any and all of the team's past and future problems, but very recently a portion of that blame is leaking to the third-year signal-caller. Once lionized, even before taking a snap, Burrow is now being greeted by caustic cries of "BOOO-RROW" by the not-so-faithful fans. Dickinson, who had enjoyed a period of relative safety as the fans had only quietly resented him during the Burrow development window, has resumed taking personal protective measures due to his culpability in failing to bring in new weapons and for his perceived interference in the decisions of head coach **Kyle Shanahan**. Then there is the schism between the original "Scarberian" fans and the newcomers in Etobicoke, who dislike each other and blame the other for the dark cloud that hangs over the franchise. **SENTIMENT: Negative / Belligerent**

SEATTLE PILOTS (1-4, coming off a loss): Fans in Seattle have no expectations for a franchise that has never had a winning season in its history, dating back to 2012 in Mission Viejo. They went through the five stages of grief over the first five years of **Mitchell Gangwish's** tenure as GM and coach and now they are in some kind of suspended state where they don't know whether to get mad again or just walk away. In the meantime, they seem to find the team humorous – a wild card, a Joker in the EFL deck. Fans don't know what to expect from week-to-week, down to who will play quarterback. The few serious fans still left in Seattle want to see **Trey Lance** on the field, but most seem to like the mystery and the randomness of the weekly coin flip to see if Thing 1 or Thing 2 gets the start at quarterback. The injury to fan-favourite **Khalil Mack** has shaken what little hope diehards had for a Cinderella run of the kind witnessed in 2020, when they set a franchise record with 7 wins. Now they take it one game at a time. **SENTIMENT: Neutral / Passive**

SEBASTIAN SWORDFISH (2-3, coming off a loss): **Russ Lemmon** is a polarizing figure in Florida football fandom. Where one stands on the issue of his coaching determines one's love or loathing for the Swordfish. Lemmon is too well-connected in Sebastian to be detested in the heart of the team's fanbase. In fact, he still enjoys celebrity status in the city, has powerful friends in the State of Florida, and has acquired somewhat of a cult following among nutbars on the fringe of football analytics. Some claim he is a play-calling and game-managing genius who created an offensive powerhouse out of marginal talent, made the playoffs against the odds, and nearly embarrassed Budapest in the quarter finals last year. Then there are those – like me – who think he does more harm than good, view last season as an outlier, and would like to see him retire and enjoy his fortune, made when he found the rest of the sunken Spanish treasure fleet of 1715 off the east coast of Florida. While fans took the good with the bad last year (when the good was outweighing the bad) this year the gambles aren't paying off so well. High expectations have been downgraded to caution as appalled fans witness lunatic-grade 4th down gambles from almost any place on the field in questionable circumstances. The coach's antics have become larger than the team itself, and many fans from the outside the city are getting antsy. **SENTIMENT: Neutral / Worried / Divided**

TWIN CITIES TRIUMPH (4-1, coming off a win): Minnesota has a proud football tradition. Triumph fans are a passionate and demanding group. Since the beginning, the Triumph have been fully backed by the entire State as well as neighbouring North and South Dakota. The team is aptly named. The hot-blooded, headstrong coach of the Triumph demands nothing less than victory. When he delivered a Championship in 2016, the State that had endured four Super Bowl losses by the Vikings in the 70s rejoiced. **Guy Williams** accumulated a lot of goodwill currency over his first eight seasons as head of the Triumph. Then, he went and blew a good portion of it over the past two seasons of team upheaval. From his uncharacteristic tolerance of a team cancer in **Antonio Brown**; to dropping off a cliff unexpectedly in 2020 to "earn" the first overall pick in the draft; to his refusal to play that no.1 pick until the final two games of his rookie year and in doing so not even acknowledge it was **Trevor Lawrence** on the field; to the baffling decision to start turnover machine **Jameis Winston** this year; all of it shook the foundations of the fans' faith in the coach who could have run for Governor after 2016 and won in a landslide. But the Triumph are now 4-1, their franchise quarterback is finally starting (albeit due to injury), and the coach looks like he is coaching to win again. Amazingly, the turmoil of the past two years has vanished and fans are once again flocking in droves to Wilhalla Stadium to cheer on the Triumph. It's a record built on a weak schedule, but nobody is talking about that. Right now, it's 2016 all over again! **SENTIMENT: Positive / Zealous / Clamorous**

VIRDEN VIOLATORS (4-1, coming off a win): Virden fans are an odd mix of conservative pioneer stock, spoiled progeny of "old oil money," Brandon residents, Dakota First Nations peoples, eastern Saskatchewan farmers and disaffected punks from Winnipeg attracted by the violence and comic-book grimness of mind inherent in the team's green-skinned slasher "Vlad" logo and *Hooded Hangman*

mascot. The team's main beat writer is named after an aristocratic French pervert and the team itself plays in an old refurbished Victorian Era insane asylum. There is hardly any unified fan sentiment to measure. The punks, Goths and Death Metal heads who flock to **TERRORDOME** do so regardless of how the team is performing. Conservative rural folk from Virden and environs are just glad to be able to do something after church on Sunday, as long as the aforementioned metal heads stay in the end zone 'mosh pits.' Dakota First Nations fans started showing up in year-two of the franchise and nobody knows why. They sit together to watch the games – filling entire sections – bang war drums, chant, cheer, and drink. They leave together in a fleet of buses and nobody sees them again until the next game. Right now, this eclectic fanbase is unified in its worship of **Patrick Mahomes** and hatred of the Patriots; the latter being ironic given the backroom connections between the team's owners. **SENTIMENT: Positive / Devoted / Vengeful**

YORK EXCALIBURS (3-2, *coming off a win*): This is the "No Excuses" year for **Jay Hammond** and his quarterback, **Tom Brady**. Veiled suggestions that Brady has rested on his laurels for too long are sprinkled here and there through social media threads, blog and media reports. Insinuations that Hammond is hungover or drunk on the sideline are more prevalent than ever after the team's Week One fiasco against Brooklin. Fans and media analysts look at the roster and see enough talent to succeed. They look at the quarterback and coach as both *capable*, in theory, of getting the most out of it. Expectations are high. It is time to succeed! So, it has been a bit of a roller-coaster through five weeks, with the fans reacting accordingly. Disgust and calls for Hammond's head after Week One; redemption and drunken jubilation after Week Two; disappointment and bitterness after Week Three; relief and reassurance after Week Four; confidence and hope after Week Five. Fan support is vocal and trending in the right direction, but behind the nervous smiles and false bravado lingers doubt that the team will deliver in a highly competitive division. **SENTIMENT: Neutral / Hopeful / Doubtful**

I hope you enjoyed my snapshot of fan feeling across the league through five weeks, in the context of the histories of the teams. Some of this sentiment will carry on, some of it will change, possibly dramatically, as the season evolves. I'll check in again as the playoff races heat up. Now, let's take a closer look at this week's big upset...

FOR BAT-TER OR WORSE

Billionaire industrialist, philanthropist, playboy, and now owner of the Billtown Bats, **Stephen Michael**, never saw himself as a football coach while growing up in Williamsport, Pennsylvania and later, as he was building his industrial empire, donating to noble causes worldwide, and jet-setting as the Forbes' List's most eligible bachelor. But when you have the world by its tail, have succeeded in every business endeavour, boast both a Wharton Doctorate in Applied Economics and a PhD in Physics and Astronomy from the University of Pennsylvania, and a close friend bets that you can't coach a football team, that's when plans change.

"My friend, Archer from Chestnut Hills [*Ed. Note: a wealthy neighbourhood in Philadelphia*] put me up to it," Michael explained recently in an interview with **Rich Eisen** on the EFL Network. "A bunch of us were in Las Vegas a couple of years ago, for some reason, and the Assassin's Den had just opened. Some of us got an invite from the Adelsons to join them in their private box to watch a game. I think it was against Peg City. Sheldon shared with us how difficult it had been to find the right coach for his team. I think I quipped something like, 'how hard can it be to coach 12 guys to slam into 12 other guys on every play?' Of course, I was corrected about the number of players – it is actually 11 on each side. Anyway, my comment provoked a bit of controversy. Some of the football people in the room took exception and explained to me that game plans had become very complex over the years."

"They certainly have," Eisen commented. "This isn't Pop Warner's game anymore."

"Ahh ha, yes, it is...I mean *no*, it isn't," Michael laughed nervously, before continuing. "Anyway, Archer remembered that conversation in the owner's box in Las Vegas and got in touch with me when he saw the ad for an EFL team for sale. '*Hey Batty*' – that's what my school buddies call me – '*Hey Batty*,' he said. '*Here's your chance to prove me wrong!*' Archer had been one of those who thought coaching was much more difficult than it looked. He bet that if I bought the team, took total control over it and hired myself as coach, I would grind the team into the ground in one season. '*It's supposed to be a playoff team, I hear*,' he added. '*Bet you can't make the playoffs with it*.' Well, I couldn't just back away from that, especially after he vowed to mow the lawn of my estate in Grampian Hills with a Budding push mower for an entire year if he was wrong. Let's just say my lawn is pretty big. So, I bought the team and here we are. I'm up for the challenge!"

That interview was given shortly before the start of the season. Nobody then knew what to expect. Many assumed that Michael would hire a coaching "consultant" and pretend to coach the team. Apparently, however, being true to his bet, he decided to go solo.

Heading into Week Five, the early reviews of the Bats' performance had been mixed. Coach Michael had garnered praise from Bombers' coach, **Kenny Main**, after the Bats fell to his team in Bruxelles. The beleaguered Main had been in a giddy and generous mood after that game, perhaps sensing his team would exceed expectations after a 2-0 start, thus saving his skin for another year. Neutral observers were not so impressed with the Bats' showing against a team they were expected to handle easily.

Sitting at 2-2, coming off an embarrassing loss to Georgia at home, the most recent of these mixed reviews was harshly critical. According to **Steve Cyprinidae** of the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, still covering the team while it resides in the desert, the Bats "*were not ready to play mentally*." The game plan was "*haphazard*." The sideline was "*disorganized*." He finished off with this zinger: "*Coach Michael was schooled by a veteran coach, coaching vastly inferior talent with a developmental quarterback. He looked overwhelmed in the moment.*"

Unlike sycophantic reporters in Williamsport, who all want to curry favour with a wealthy owner in order to obtain privilege, who effusively praise the Bats' coach's "novel innovations" and blame the players for all mis-steps, the hard-nosed Cyprinidae doesn't pull his punches about what he sees as "*an appalling experiment*."



Michael Manor, located in Grampian Hills, Williamsport, PA, home of billionaire industrialist and Billtown Bats owner, **Stephen Michael**. Apparently bored with running Michael Enterprises, the native of Williamsport purchased the Las Vegas Assassins, changed its name and appointed himself head coach. Although he has no coaching experience, he claims he is “up for the challenge.”

Cyrprinidae may also be bitter that in a year or two he will lose a premium pro writer’s beat and be back to writing about the Las Vegas Lights of the USL and the Las Vegas Aces of the WNBA. Bullying the new owner into selling his team back to a local syndicate is the only play he has left. The truth about the rookie coach’s performance is somewhere in the middle. The Bats are definitely going through some growing pains, but all is not lost. At least, that’s how it appeared before the Bats took the field against the team that **Charlie Wood** of the *Charleswood Banner* and *Charleswood Sun* calls, “the pathetic Pats.”

Billtown came into this game as six-point favourites. Notwithstanding their bad loss to Georgia the week before, this was considered a light line; a possible overreaction to a simple “bad day” against the Gladiators. After all, the Pats were still even money in Vegas to go win-less on the season – that is how bad they looked with rookie **Kenny Pickett** learning on the job. This year’s ‘Community Coach’ of the Patriots, **Samson “Sam” Simpson**, an athletics program director at Booth University College in Winnipeg, had approached this challenge by setting what he called “achievable goals” for each game, that fell short of actually asking the team to win. For this game, the simple goals of the Patriots were: “to play 60 minutes of football and cut down on turnovers,” he told *CKY-DT* (Channel 7) in Winnipeg before the game. Coming off a second half collapse and four turnovers against York the week before, these seemed like reasonable goals, but achieving them would not be so easy against one of the top-ranked defences in the league.

Bats coach, **Stephen Michael**, exuded confidence in his pre-game address to the media. “This is an opportunity for us to reset,” he declared. “This week, I held focus groups among the players to reboot and refocus the team. We now have a clear vision for success and we are all onboard with it. Somebody told me the Patriots are not very good, which surprised me, because didn’t they go to the playoffs last year? I guess things change quickly in this league. Anyway, we plan to use them to get back on track this week.”

The “Patriots are not very good” comment of course spread like wildfire through both social and mainstream media. Obviously, it is true, but nobody actually *says* that about an opponent in the professional realm. The Pats may be looking at the top pick in the draft when this season is over, but they are still professionals. They reminded everyone about that in the shocker that followed.

The game started well for Billtown. They came out firing on all cylinders, deploying four-wide sets, with **Justin Herbert** slinging the pigskin with the accuracy of a sniper: A long cross to **Cole Beasley** for 28 yards; a mid-range cross to **Mecole Hardman** for

20 yards; a slant to **Jerry Jeudy** for 18 yards; and a perfectly-executed screen pass to **James Conner** for a 9-yard touchdown! It took four plays and 2:21 off the clock to move 75 yards and get on the board first. It looked like it would be a long day for the Pats.

“That’s what I’m talking about!” yelled coach **Stephen Michael** as he pumped his fist in the air and bounced along the sideline as his offence came off the field. The Bats had been running a lot of three and four-wide receiver sets out of the pistol, with mixed success through four weeks. They had been built to run the ball by their former coach, but Michael’s stated “vision” was of “*a team with no limits. A team with infinite possibilities. A team able to impose its will.*” He had been determined to open up the passing game and had finally succeeded beyond expectations on the game’s opening drive. He stood beaming on the sideline as his team prepared to kick off.

The Pats responded with nothing like the efficiency of their opponent, but were able to move the chains. **Kenny Pickett** hit **Travis Kelce** underneath the coverage for a 13-yard gain on 3rd & 11 to avoid a three-and-out. The Bats’ secondary had been playing way off, allowing the veteran Kelce in settle in comfortably at the first down marker and fall forward for a few extra yards. It was a rare 3rd & long conversion and it brought a spark to the offence. **David Bell** got loose on a pass to the outside and sprinted down the sideline for a 36-yard gain. Pickett followed that up with completions of 17 yards to **Odell Beckham** and 13 yards to Kelce. A 5-yard check down to **Devin Singletary** to convert 3rd & 2 brought first down at the Bats’ 11-yard line. From there it took one throw from Pickett to Bell inside the goal line to get on the board. The extra point was blocked by **Jason Pierre-Paul**, but that did not dampen the good feeling on the Pats’ sideline. They had responded immediately and effectively to the opening blow from the Bats.

“For f*\$k sake! What the f#@k was that?” bellowed coach Michael as his defence strolled off the field. “You call that defence? I thought you guys were supposed to be good! I can’t do everything. Geez! You let a rookie slice and dice you. Remember what we talked about! What should you all be saying before every play? ‘*Thou shalt not pass!*’ That’s what Gandalf told the Balrog. Now come on! Let’s play Bats football!”

Perhaps it was the simple fact of the Pats’ startling march back up the field for the score. Perhaps it was something more than that – something in the way the Patriots were moving, or something in their expression. Perhaps it was something in the Bats themselves. Whatever it was, it seemed to take hold of the Billtown offence and they never regained the swagger and confidence of that opening drive. They went three-and-out on their next possession and the game settled into hard labour for both sides.

A 29-yard pass to **Jakobi Meyers** and passes of 21 yards to Beckham and 13 yards to Kelce vaulted the Pats into the red zone on their next series. On 3rd & 3 at the Billtown 4, **Vita Vea** sacked Pickett to keep the Pats out of the end zone. **Nick Folk** then banged it in from 28 yards to give Charleswood a short-lived 9-7 lead. The Bats replied with a 46-yard **Ka’imi Fairbairn** field goal to regain the lead, 10-9, then added another from 52 yards to secure a 13-9 advantage before half time.

The situation had stabilized for the Bats after the Folk field goal. Their defence was gaining control of the line of scrimmage and the offence was getting points, even if they had been reduced to moving in fits and starts and lacked finish. The offence did look out of sorts. For example, prior to the second of Fairbairn’s field goals, the Bats had faced 3rd & 7 at the Pats’ 30. Herbert took the snap out of the shotgun, secured the ball with two hands, and plunged forward for a 1-yard gain. It looked in every way like a sneak, but without the concentrated power behind it. It was a strange call, and Herbert did appear to be baffled as he returned to the sideline. Coach Michael rolled his eyes and shook his head. “Execution!” he barked at Herbert.

The teams grunted out a scoreless third, with the Pats failing to gain a first down and the Bats all but abandoning the aggressive passing game after an 11-yard sack of Herbert by **Sheldon Richardson**. Maintaining their spread formations, the Bats started to run the ball, making incremental gains, but moving the chains all the same as the third quarter ticked away. Play resumed in the 4th with Herbert missing **Sammy Watkins** on 3rd & 6, to bring on Fairbairn for this third field goal of the game, this one from 42 yards, to give Billtown what felt, under the circumstances, to be a somewhat comfortable 16-9 lead. While the offence clearly had lost whatever edge it had once had, the defence had been in control since late in the 1st quarter. As the Charleswood offence set up at its own 20-yard line after a holding call on the kickoff return, the Bats’ defenders and many Bats fans envisioned a panicked rookie quarterback, trying to do too much, getting picked off for a score going the other way, or fumbling away the ball on a sack. This was the point in a game when great defences feasted on so-so-offences. What happened next, stunned them all.

Pickett took the snap out of the shotgun as **Demario Davis** came charging on the blitz. Singletary picked him up, but the rush flushed Pickett from the pocket. He moved to his right and with a quick flick of the wrist spun the ball to a hole in the zone, where it was snared by a curling Meyers. With no defender in his close vicinity, he turned up field, side-stepped a tackle and galloped all the way to the Billtown 33-yard line, where he was brought down by **Jordan Fuller** for a 47-yard gain. Half-empty Patriot Place exploded in glee, the sound of 30,000 fans reverberating in the dome, giving the illusion of many more. Their Pats were not going down without a fight.

Like many big plays at unexpected moments, the effect lingered long after the play itself. The Pats’ offence, overly excited at its achievement, false-started on the next two snaps. The miscues brought up 1st & 20, but when it came time for the Bats’ defence to be tested, they staggered. Pickett found Kelce for 10 yards, Bell for 15 yards and a first down, Singletary for 6 and Kelce for 8 to bring up 1st & goal at the Billtown 4. Three plays later Singletary swept into the end zone from 2 yards out, bringing the crowd to its feet and Coach Michael’s *Microsoft Surface* tablet to the ground as he hurled it in disgust.

“Where’s the defence?? Where’s the f^%king defence?” Michael bawled.

This time the extra point was good. With 10:39 left to play, the Pats had tied the game at 16. There was still plenty of time for the Bats to run away with the game, judging from how York had rag-dolled this same Pats’ defence late in the game last week, but to do so they would have to recapture that spirit of no-fear that had animated them on the opening drive. Where it had gone was a mystery.

The Bats came out in their four-wide set and took to the air, but the Pats' defence was ready for it and defensive line pinned their ears back. The Billtown line struggled against the rush, giving Herbert little time and space to find his receivers. On 3rd & 3, Herbert threw to an empty part of the field on a timing pattern where he threw out and his receiver turned in.

Coach Michael grabbed the Microsoft Surface of a nearby assistant and threw it on the ground. "I called for a complete pass on that play!" he screeched. "I did not call for a f!^k up!" For a split second he thought about going for it on 4th down then thought better of it when he saw that the line of scrimmage was already in field goal range. In disgust he sent on the punting unit.

The Bats' coach was clearly accustomed to things going his way in business and in life. A very charming man off the field, in interviews, in meetings, and reportedly on the cocktail circuit, he had been reduced to an abusive, irrational, tightly-spun ball of nerves by the unimaginable situation he found himself and his team in against what many pundits believed was the hands-down worst team in the league. He may have thought of his friend, Archer, in these moments of on-field setbacks. What had been the other side of that bet? If Archer had agreed to mow the gigantic lawn of his estate with an antique mechanical lawn mower, what had **Stephen Michael** agreed to give him if he did, indeed, fail to make the playoffs?

The Patriots were living high in the moment. For a brief time, they forgot they were supposed to be bad. They were, after all, professional football players and each one had been the best player on the field at some point in their lives. These memories helped guide them over the next 9 minutes and 33 seconds.

The Pats took over at their own 21, facing a rabid and angry Bats' defence. Like their coach, this proud and ostensibly elite group of defenders were well-aware of what the football world would think if they failed to stop the rag-tag Charleswood offence, led by a wet-behind-ears rookie. They came after him and came hard, but Pickett was playing with inspiration, not conscious thought. He side-stepped the rush, scrambling on back-to-back plays for a total of 6 yards, before coolly finding Singletary underneath for a 6-yard gain on 3rd & 4. He then handed off to Singletary on consecutive plays in an attempt to defuse the pass rush. The running back gained 9 yards on those two carries then moved the chains on 3rd & 1 by leaking to an empty space and snaring an outlet pass for 4 yards.

After failing to get off the field on two consecutive third downs, the Billtown defence had had enough. Davis came on a delayed blitz and his sudden appearance panicked the rookie. He threw early and off target behind the receiver a split-second before Davis slammed into him and brought him down hard to the ground. The late hit brought two yellow flags from two different officials. Pickett picked himself off the turf with the help of center **Lloyd Cushenberry** as the referee announced the foul to a roaring home town crowd.

The penalty brought the Pats to the Billtown 39, just beyond the cusp of Folk's field goal range. If the Pats failed to move another inch, it would set up a 57-yard attempt. Folk's career long was 55 yards, last made 8 years ago when his leg was a stronger. The Pats would need more than a couple of yards. They got it on the next three plays, with Singletary pushing forward 6 yards on 2 carries and Kelce circling back for a 6-yard check down. The Bats got their stop finally, when **Shaquill Griffin** tipped a pass intended to Beckham, bringing up 4th & 8 at the 27. Folk came on for a makeable, but nowhere near guaranteed, 45-yard attempt. The snap was true, the hold was clean and the kick went sailing through the uprights to give the Pats a 19-16 lead with 3:12 left on the clock.

As the network broke for a commercial and the special teams units took to the field, there was a commotion on the Billtown sideline. The Bats' coach was trying to talk but could not get the words out. His face was flushed and his eyes bugged out. He looked like he might be having a heart attack, but his swinging arms, knocking away anyone who got close enough to check on him, suggested it was something else – a kind of fit of apoplexy that had rendered him speechless. Finally, it came out, loud enough for the fans to hear:

"I CAN'T F\$KING BELIEVE THIS IS HAPPENING!"* He shrieked at the top of his lungs.

Ashton Dulin attempted to return the ensuing kick from two yards deep and was tackled at the 21. Herbert took over with the game on the line. He grimly surveyed the defence. The Pats were just as tense. **Montez Sweat** jumped into the neutral zone on the hard count for a 5-yard encroachment penalty. On 1st & 5, **Dalvin Cook**, who had played second fiddle to the passing game on this day, swept to the left for 8 yards for an easy first down. The Bats were in no hurry just yet and were content to run plays at a normal pace up to the two-minute warning and beyond, with a pair of 10-yard passes to Beasley and a 10-yard bootleg by Herbert racking up three first downs and bringing the ball to the Patriots' 30-yard line, well within Fairbairn's range, with 49 seconds left.

With a field goal all but secured, it was time to see if they could put the game away. Herbert jogged to the line to conserve time, barked a couple of quick signals and dropped back to pass. In his hurry he neglected to set his feet and his throw sailed high. Pats' corner **Ronald Darby**, reading Herbert's eyes the whole way, got a bead on it from the start. He timed his leap perfectly, launched himself in the air, and picked off the pass!

Patriot Place went nuts. And so did the Bats' coach. With no new tablet within reach, he stomped on his old one. He then tore off his headset, knocked over a cooler of Gatorade, kicked the bench...and immediately regretted it. He spent the rest of the game in intense pain on that bench holding his right foot as the team doctor tended to him. An unnamed assistant took over coaching duties.

The Bats had all three of their timeouts remaining. Theoretically, they could get the ball back. There was a remote possibility they could block the punt or even get a big return. And, of course, there was always the outside chance of the Patriots doing something really, really boneheaded – they had a 'Community Coach,' after all. But these were all faint hopes. The game was all but lost; or at least deserved to be, from the Billtown standpoint.

Darby had returned the interception to the Pats' 35. That was where the offence took control. Their 'Community Coach,' following the advice of his professional paid assistant, responsibly handed the ball off to the sure-handed **Alvin Kamara** three straight times. Kamara dutifully ran behind his blocks and did not try to stretch the play when he was in the defender's grasp. The result was a

net of 2 yards on 3 carries and another appearance by punter, **Riley Dixon**. He booted it high and to the 14-yard line, where the speedy Hardman hauled it in and took off through a big hole in the coverage. For a moment the crowd held its breath. The Bats' return man was known for his blazing speed. He picked up a full head of steam across the 20-yard line. Playing like a man possessed, however, Darby came jetting across the field at an angle and lassoed Hardman's legs to bring him down at the Bats' 31, with 0:30 left on the clock.

The Bats had to cover 34 yards in 30 seconds, with no timeouts, to get into the edge of Fairbairn's known range. His career long was 53 yards, which he had made in 2019 with the Knights. It was not an impossible task, but nothing that had been witnessed since the game's opening drive hinted that the Bats were up to the task against a confident Pats' defence playing hard to the whistle.

Herbert took the snap, stepped to the right, and was sacked by the mountainous rookie **Jordan Davis**, who bulled through the middle of the Bats' line and swallowed the quarterback before he could get his feet set. With no timeouts, the Bats scrambled to line up. As the clock hit unlucky 0:13, Herbert set up deep in the pocket, looked downfield and was blindsided by Sweat for a 13-yard loss. The fans at Patriot Place jumped to their feet. The Bats would not be able to get a play off. It was over – the Pats had beaten the Bats, a result that nobody saw coming.

After the game, Patriots' owner **Jason Findlay** was gracious in victory, while taking a bit of a jab at those in the national media who had predicted his team would not win a game all year: "I am proud of this team, not because they won a game, but because they played their hearts out against a very good team that was also playing their hearts out. One can never predict what will happen on the football field. I think all of us who think we know what players can do should remember that."

Billtown owner and coach, **Stephen Michael** hobbled up to the podium, a cast on his right foot, looking far more composed than he had looked on the sideline during the game. He smiled a beguiling smile and slid smoothly into the biggest pile of bullshitting you are likely to hear at an EFL post-game presser: "This loss today was the best thing that could have happened to us, and to America," he began. "The Patriots gave us an example of what you can achieve when you believe in yourself. They gave us an example of how to overcome adversity. They won more than a game today – they won the hearts of a nation that knows what its like to have to fight for survival. To fight for freedom. To fight for the American Way. God Bless America! God bless the Billtown Bats! Now, go home and hug your children. Tell them you love them. Tell them to cheer for the Bats, because now, with America, we're going all the way!"

It was a virtuoso performance from a man who knows how to work a room. It was complete crap, but it successfully diverted attention away from his team's shoddy performance on the field and his own embarrassing discomposure on the sideline. Now everyone is talking about how the coach of the Billtown Bats is happy to have lost to arguably the worst team in the league, for the sake of America! The coach may have bought him and his team some time with that deflection. However, at 2-3, the Bats are heading in the wrong direction and look to be stuck with their neophyte coach, for bat-ter, or worse!

AROUND THE EFL

The new Bats coach was not the only one to melt down in Week Five. A confounding decision by *You-Know-Who* turned what might have been a second big celebratory upset into a mob of unhappy fans. Let's go to the Fish Tank...

Memories of 2021 came back to life in Week Five for Swordfish fans, at least temporarily. **Kirk Cousins** threw for 307 yards and 3 TDs, and his offence converted perfectly on 4th down to keep the Fish in the game against the Durham powerhouse until the final two minutes. The Lizards had just taken a 34-30 lead with 1:50 remaining on **Josh Allen**'s third touchdown run of the game (each for 8 yards!). For some inane reason, Coach Russ decided to insert **Gardner Minshew** into the game at QB to lead the prospective game-winning drive. The result: A 27-yard pick-six for **Tyrann Mathieu** on Minshew's second official pass attempt. Now down 41-30 with hardly a hope in hell, Minshew was sent back in again, only to immediately throw another pick, which iced the game for Durham. After the game, Coach Lemmon was besieged by the press. He explained his decision with a guilty mumble: "I thought Minshew would provide a spark." It was a baffling statement to accompany a baffling call. His team had been sparking like a downed power line under Cousins. If the Swordfish defence could actually stop anybody, this would have been a different outcome. It was not as if Cousins had turned cold after a hot start. On Sebastian's previous possession, he had thrown passes of 48 and 10 yards to **Amari Cooper**, the latter for a TD to put the Fish in front 30-27. Cousins had not played better all season – his performance coming against one of the league's top defences on top of it. This decision to pull his hot QB may have been a bridge too far for the eccentric Lemmon. Cousins was visibly angry on the sideline, throwing his helmet while being restrained from approaching his coach by back-up tight end **John Bates**. The offence that took the field with Minshew looked deflated. It wasn't fair to Minshew either. Of course, there are plenty of Lemmon cultists on Florida's Treasure Coast who will defend whatever daft idea gets expressed by their hero on and off the football field. On cue, **Horatio Spoonwad** of the 'Lemmon for President Club,' a free association of patriotic citizens dedicated to assisting the Swordfish coach make a presidential run whenever he is ready, came out with a public statement on behalf of the club, stating: "*It was because Kirk was hot up until that point that it was the perfect time to remove him from the game. Why wait until he throws his first bad pass to second guess yourself? Russ was not going to do that to Kirk, his team, or his fans. The only way to avoid that was to put in Gardner and hope that the unexpected would create some Minshew Magic.*" There is no arguing with that, because anyone who could think that way cannot be reasoned with. God help America if Russ ever became President.

In his first start after taking a back seat to **Davis Mills** in Week Four, the Corn Kings' **Jimmy Garoppolo** sent a message to his team and to his fans about who "the man" really is in Cowntown. Okay, we all know "*The Man*" is **TJ Watt**, but the *second* man, "the man," is Jimmy G. Against Scarborough at The Eagle's Nest, he showed why, completing 18 of 25 for 217 yards and 2 TDs. He even converted four first downs with his legs, rushing for 26 yards. He was helped along by a stout running attack led by **Jamaal Williams** and

Devontae Booker, who combined for 163 of the Corn Kings' 200 rushing yards, but when Jimmy G needed to be on his game against a persistent Scarborough blitz, he was. This was supposed to be the “get right” game for Scarborough, and it quickly turned into a disaster after **Isaiah McKenzie's** 26-yard punt-return set up Cowtown in excellent field position. A short out pass to **Allen Lazard** turned into a 25-yard scoring play after corner **Michael Davis** tried to jump the route but missed. That gave Lazard free reign down the sideline for the opening score. It was all downhill from there for Scarborough. The Corn Kings gave them no chance, controlling the ball for 42 mins.

At Camelot, the Excaliburs survived three interceptions by **Tom Brady** to overcome the Irish, 24-19. That was because **Carson Wentz** was even less productive, throwing for just 140 yards and converting just 1 of 9 third down attempts. Had it not been for the Brady miscues setting them up, the Irish might never have found the end zone. Linebacker, **Cole Holcomb** picked off his third pass of the season to continue to shine for the York defence. Wentz does not look like the answer in East Elmhurst.

At the Iowa City Superplex in Iowa City, the Triumph ran right through the Cubs, piling up 279 yards rushing and racking up 28 first downs on the way to a 31-13 victory. Rookie, **Breece Hall** stood out, with 148 yards on 19 carries and 3 TDs, the third coming on a 45-yard run on the first series of the second half to put Twin Cities in the driver's seat. **Darrel Henderson Jr** also rushed for an even 100 yards on 18 carries. That the Cubs have one the worst defences in the league is not a surprise. However, its highly permeable properties were not as obvious in the first four weeks due to a knack for creating turnovers, that ranked second only to the Triumph heading into this game. Surprisingly, neither team turned the ball over in this contest, exposing the marked inferiority of the Cubs' back end when put up against a team capable of running the ball. Coach **Guy Williams** is being very careful with **Trevor Lawrence**. His quarterback protégé attempted just 20 passes in 64 official plays from scrimmage. Against a defence as pitiful as that of the Cubs, this conservative game plan can work. Against a better team, it will struggle if Lawrence can't execute the full playbook.

At New Era Field in Buffalo, the Bombers came from behind to knock off the Derailers, 23-21. After falling behind 14-6, **Kenny Main** turned to **Elijah Mitchell** and **Leonard Fournette** to stabilize the offence. Mitchell rushed for 121 yards and a TD on 17 carries, while Fournette battled for the tough yards, with 45 on 16 carries to set up the comeback. **Jared Goff** completed only 12 passes, but one was a TD to **Chris Godwin** that turned out to be the difference. That the Derailers' offence had a respectable outing against an underrated Bruxelles defence is no consolation for suffering fans in Buffalo forced to watch another loss at home. Buffalo played well for three of four quarters, but an offensive drought in the third, that included an interception of **Lamar Jackson** by **Darius Slay**, turned the momentum over to the Bombers and eventually cost them the game.

At **TERRORDOME** in Virden, **Ezekiel Elliott** did just enough to neutralize the effect of 3 **Patrick Mahomes** interceptions as the Violators ran past the Convicts, 21-15. When Virden got close, they turned to Elliott, who ran it in for TDs from 2 and 3 yards out. It is not often that a quarterback throws 3 interceptions and still wins the game, although it happened with Brady in York as well. Fortunately for Virden, their defence played well against **Dak Prescott**, picking him off once and limiting his options downfield.

At Ferenc-Liszt International Airport Stadium in Budapest, **Aaron Rodgers** threw for 421 yards and 3 TDs to lift the North Stars over the Gladiators, 33-24. While statistically, this was a mis-match, Georgia somehow managed to hang in, trailing just 26-24 after three quarters. Rodgers then connected with **Nelson Agholor** for a 46-yard TD, their third scoring hook-up of the day, to give Budapest the breathing room they needed. The refs certainly did their part to move the game along – not a single penalty was called on Georgia and only two on Budapest. **Justin Jefferson** continued to make plays in double-coverage, with a 61-yard catch-and-run that set up a FG.

At Kelly-Burke Field in Erieau, a sellout crowd watched the revved-up Cadillac drive by the slumping Hawks, 38-28. **Trevon Diggs** had a pick-six, rookie **Dameon Pierce** scored two TDs, on an 11-yard run and on an 11-yard pass, and **Kyler Murray** added 3 TD passes to bring his season total to 8. For Brooklin it was a tale of two halves. They led 21-17 at half time, but were shell-shocked into submission by a 21-point Erieau third quarter. The Caddies have now won four in a row after losing the season opener to East Elmhurst.

Four turnovers by the Coyotes sealed their fate, as New Jersey strolled to a 27-0 win at Stone Pony Shore. This game was decided in the 2nd quarter when the Wrecking Balls exploded for 20 points after sputtering offensively for the first 20 minutes. With that done, **David Montgomery** was given the task of getting both teams off the field as soon as possible. He rushed for 163 yards and a TD on 28 carries to earn player-of-the-game honours. **Ryan Tannehill** was intercepted three times and **JaMyca Hasty** fumbled into the arms of **Matt Milano**, who ran it back for a TD. A 27-point win is nothing to sneeze at, but one gets the feeling that the Wrecking Balls are doing just enough to get by and nothing more. They remain unbeaten after facing teams with a combined winning percentage of .160. We won't know just how tough this team actually is until they meet Billtown in Week Ten. Then again, the way the Bats are playing, that game might not be the test we thought it would be.

At Kingdome in Seattle, the “young” leg of **Younghoe Koo** and the stout Peg City defence lifted the Crusaders over the Pilots, 22-6. Koo went a perfect five-for-five from the field, with his longest coming from 47 yards to give his team a 9-6 lead at half time. **Drew Lock** got the start at QB this week for Seattle but was relieved by **Sam Darnold**, who might have preferred to sit on the bench against the top-ranked Crusader ‘D.’ Darnold was sacrificed by his coach on 4th & 10 at the Peg City 43-yard line on Seattle's opening drive of the second half. **Chris Jones** went full bore and sacked him for a 7-yard loss. He was picked off later by **Bobby Okereke**, which set up the game's only TD – a 4-yard run by **Saquon Barkley**. It was the first rushing touchdown of the season for the Crusaders.

And finally, the boobirds were loud at the GM Megadome on Sunday, as the Pink Panthers dropped their 15th straight game, 38-17 to Pickering. Oshawa has not won since prevailing 21-19 over Twin Cities in Week Seven of 2021. Although the score was lop-sided, this was not a stellar performance by the Spartans' offence. Four Oshawa turnovers, three of those interceptions by **Matt Ryan**, tilted the field in favour of the run-dominant Spartans' attack. With Ryan now playing like **Jameis Winston**, what are the Panthers to do?

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Jimmy's WEEK SIX PICKS

IOWA CITY @ NEW JERSEY (line – WRECKING BALLS by 6)

INJURIES: Iowa City – Tre Brown (OUT), Tyler Linderbaum (OUT), Braden Smith (OUT); New Jersey – Jamal Adams (OUT), Kwon Alexander (OUT), Julian Blackmon (OUT), Dalton Risner (OUT).

The turnover tree bore no fruit last week for the Cubbies. The result was total exposure of its defence for the fraud that it is, as the Triumph ran all over them for over 275 yards on the ground in a loss. Russell Wilson was unable to keep up despite concerted efforts to stretch the field with bombs and long passes. This week the Cubs face a better Wrecking Balls defence coming off a shutout. Yes, it came against Cobb County, but keeping any team off the board is an achievement in this era. New Jersey is unbeaten, but one has the feeling they haven't really started anything yet. They were slow to start last week and never really hit a high gear offensively, relying on four turnovers to pave the way to an easy victory. They will have to pick up the pace here against a Cubs team that ranks second in points scored and is unaware of its own badness. It should not be hard for NJ to score more than 30 points. **PICK: NEW JERSEY**

BRUXELLES @ CHINO (line – Pick'Em)

INJURIES: Bruxelles – Henry Anderson (OUT), Josh Myers (OUT), Frank Ragnow (OUT), Anthony Walker (OUT); Chino – Marcus Maye (OUT), Christian McCaffrey (OUT), Za'Darius Smith (OUT).

Both teams started the season with back-to-back wins then followed up with back-to-back losses. The divergence occurred last week when the Bombers climbed over the Derailers, powered by the league's most prolific run game and the Convicts fell to Virden, in part, because they could not establish the run as a viable threat. The Convicts miss Christian McCaffrey. Justin Jackson and Ronald Jones will not make up the loss, so it has to be Dak Time or bust for the foreseeable future. The chance to run away with the West is slipping away from the Convicts and they feel it, so this is a "must win" in the psychological, not literal sense. The Bombers are still relevant, even if few predicted they would be. The Bombers have to manage their quarterback and rely on an improved, but imperfect defence to stay close. Expect them to stick close to the Convicts until the end, before falling to Dak in the final minute. **PICK: CHINO**

SEATTLE @ BUFFALO (line – PILOTS by 1)

INJURIES: Seattle – Cam Akers (IR), Sebastian Joseph-Day (OUT), Khalil Mack (OUT); Buffalo – Trey Flowers (OUT), Jonathan Greenard (OUT), Jaycee Horn (OUT), Kadarius Toney (OUT).

I was surprised to see that the Nerds in Nevada gave the Derailers +3 points at home and relieved to see the public push that down the slightest of underdog lines. Still, the fact that Buffalo is a more talented team across the board, a pre-season favourite to be in contention with New Jersey in the East, yet is an underdog in its home park against the one-win Pilots, forces one to pause. The 'Drew Lock Effect' was dispelled last week against Peg City while Sam Darnold borders on unusable. So, who is going to play quarterback for Seattle? Certainly, nobody on the roster, including Trey Lance, is in the same league as Lamar, even a Lamar used and abused by his clueless coach. Buffalo has been a game-day disappointment almost every week to this point while the Pilots have tended to surprise. That is the lure to catch pro-Seattle fish. Don't be fooled, this is Buffalo's chance to get back on track. **PICK: BUFFALO**

COBB COUNTY @ BILLTOWN (line – BATS by 5)

INJURIES: Cobb County – Tyson Alualu (OUT), DeMarcus Lawrence (OUT), Payton Turner (OUT); Billtown – None.

Both teams are coming off, arguably, their low-points of the still very young season. The Bats losing to Charleswood calls into question every pre-conceived notion held by the vast majority of the Football World relating to the capabilities of this team. The star-studded defence has not lived up to expectations. Last week they were pecked to death in the final quarter by the rubber-tipped beak of

Kenny Pickett, giving up a 7-point lead in the 4th quarter against one of the league's worst offences. Worse, their young phenom at quarterback was picked off in a critical moment as they pressed to tie or win the game. The Coyotes were shutout last week and lost by 27 points. Reality is arriving for the undermanned Coyotes, but they can still be a pain in the a**. **PICK: COBB COUNTY**

VIRDEN @ TWIN CITIES (line – TRIUMPH by 4)

INJURIES: Virden – D.J. Humphries (QUESTIONABLE), Anthony Barr (OUT); **Twin Cities** – Spencer Brown (QUESTIONABLE), Jaire Alexander (OUT), Antonio Brown (OUT), Danielle Hunter (OUT), Emmanuel Moseley (OUT), Jameis Winston (OUT).

My stomach is still sore from laughing from when I saw this line from my Brethren in the Barren Lands. Take Virden – don't dwell too long on it. Having delivered the bottom-line up front, I will now offer the caveats, the thoughts that may be prompting professionals to think that the Triumph should be favoured by more than a field goal. The Triumph defence leads the league in red zone defence, not to mention run defence and, critically, points allowed. This is the result of good coaching, rather than loads of talent. On the other side, the Violators lead the league in passing yards per game and rushing average, yet are 9th in points scored. They rank no.15 in red zone scoring. On defence, they are not adept at stopping either the pass or the run. In other words, the Violators are not efficient at translating their strengths into results, while the Triumph are. Still, Patrick Mahomes vs Trevor Lawrence offers just one result. **PICK: VIRDEN**

CHARLESWOOD @ PEG CITY (line – CRUSADERS by 13)

INJURIES Charleswood – Asante Samuel Jr. (DOUBTFUL), Michael Ojemudia (OUT), Andrus Peat (OUT), Ronnie Stanley (OUT), Laremy Tunsil (OUT); **Peg City** – Alec Ingold (OUT).

How things have changed since last year! The Pats are now rebuilding while the Crusaders are simply building. The Pats notched their first win last week against one of the powers in the west. While impressive on the surface, analysts viewed the win as a product of Bats ineptitude more than Pats power. On the other hand, the Crusaders' submersion of Seattle – the same team that had beaten the Irish on the road – speaks loudly about which of these teams has the true winning trajectory behind it. There is no doubt in my mind that the Crusaders are ascendent and the Pats are just happy to play loose and pick-off opponents in a funk, or those that take them too lightly. As long as they don't win too many games, the Pats' future is fun. I like the Pegs to win here, but their safe, plunky offence moves at a glacial pace, one that may not have enough time to stretch the point differential into double-digits. **PICK: CHARLESWOOD**

ERIEAU @ DURHAM (line – THUNDER LIZARDS by 9)

INJURIES: Erieau – Stephon Gilmore (OUT), Graham Glasgow (OUT), Justin Houston (OUT), Michael Pierce (OUT); **Durham** – Trey HENDRICKSON (PROBABLE), Malik Reed (PROBABLE), Ben Powers (OUT).

It was a rare kind of win for the Cadillac last week. They outgained an offensive-minded team and added a pick-six to outlast the Hawks and take control of the South Division. For the Thunder Lizards, they had to dodge the football stylings of the league's most unpredictable team, Sebastian, to arrive at the most predictable result, another Durham win. The Lizards are undoubtedly the league's most powerful team after five weeks, but the long season is not always a reflection of the early season trajectory. There will be lulls in any power push. This game has the potential to put a brake on the runaway Lizard train. The Caddies have a true ballhawk in Trevon Diggs, who will let Cooper Kupp get his catches with the goal of setting up a pick or two. Antonio Gibson will struggle to maintain his league-leading 6.2 yards-per-carry average against a stingy Erieau run defence. A switched-on Kyler Murray brings a third dimension to the offence that will challenge the Durham line. All this translates into a much closer game than many think. **PICK: ERIEAU**

OSHAWA @ SEBASTIAN (line – SWORDFISH by 9)

INJURIES: Oshawa – John Cominsky (IR), Marcus Davenport (OUT), Erik Harris (OUT), Jason McCourty (OUT), J.J. Watt (OUT); **Sebastian** – Michael Gallup (OUT), Kendal Vickers (OUT).

We got a taste of the Swordfish offence of 2021 last week. Kirk Cousins finally broke out with a 300-yard/3 TD pass game. Sadly, it was not enough to overtake Durham and Josh Allen, who barreled through the undermanned Sebastian line for 3 TD runs. The neglected Swordfish defence is holding its own against long odds, but as the season wears on it will break down. We could see the first signs of that break down here. Yes, the win-less Pink Panthers have done nothing well so far. Their freefall continued with a feeble effort against Pickering last week. Yes, it's been ugly, but they are not as bad as they look. They will remind us of that this week. **PICK: OSHAWA**

SCARBOROUGH @ GEORGIA (line – GLADIATORS by 11)

INJURIES: Scarborough –Dustin Jones (OUT), Ryan Logan (OUT); **Georgia** – Kristian Fulton (QUESTIONABLE), Dalvin Tomlinson (DOUBTFUL), Nate Davis (OUT).

The Blue Eagles are a team in a deep funk. They thought they would get right against Cowtown last week, only to be handed their lunch. The problems start with quarterback, Joe Burrow, who has not looked comfortable, but they certainly don't end with him. Receivers aren't getting open, D'Ernest Johnson is not a full-time running back, and Orlando Brown Jr is struggling in pass protection. The defence

is giving up 33 points per game and the secondary is getting torched every week. The Gladiators are coming off a proud, if losing effort against Budapest. The Tua Era is proceeding more or less according to plan as the young quarterback develops on the job. This game has the potential to bring him a boost of confidence. More likely, it will be a tougher test than he thought. **PICK: SCARBOROUGH**

COWTOWN @ EAST ELMHURST (line – IRISH by 3)

INJURIES: Cowtown – Akiem Hicks (OUT); East Elmhurst – Everson Griffen (OUT).

The Corn Kings corrected a two-game slide by roughing up the Blue Eagles last week – nothing to crow loudly about, but at least no repeat of the no-show versus the Coyotes. It is hard to gauge what this team is capable of. Hints of playoff pedigree blended seamlessly with spots of comic bumbliness. The Irish met a top-rate defence last week against York and discovered, to their consternation, that their quarterback was not up to the challenge and there is only so much Tyreek Hill and Aaron Jones can do to help him. The defence, however, is for real, even if it is statistically unapparent in categories like yards surrendered. The Irish defence is no.1 in getting off the field on 3rd down, which means opposing punters have to be on their game. Cowtown has a good one. **PICK: EAST ELMHURST**

BUDAPEST @ YORK (line – NORTH STARS by 3)

INJURIES: Budapest – Elgton Jenkins (OUT), Ryan Ramczyk (OUT), Craig Reynolds (OUT); York – Rasul Douglas (OUT), Brandon Scherff (OUT), Jabari Zuniga (OUT).

The North Stars continue to win, although not with the same self-assuredness of the early dynasty version. They controlled the game against the Glads last week yet still found themselves leading by only 2 points heading into the final quarter. This week they face a familiar divisional foe in York, one still looking for that defining moment that will vault them into the ranks of the elite. This game is an opportunity to establish themselves as a true contender and gain back a game in the race for the Coastal Division. To be successful they will need a more reliable ground game than they have had so far. Tom Brady attempting 35 passes a game is not the desirable Excalibur formula for success, even with his shiny new targets. They will, of course need a turnover or two as well – something tough to come by against Aaron Rodgers. In any case, I expect this game to be a bit of a brawl and an ugly experience for both teams. **PICK: YORK**

BROOKLIN @ PICKERING (line – SPARTANS by 10)

INJURIES: Brooklin – Azeez Al-Shaair (PROBABLE), Jonathan Jones (OUT), DeShon Elliott (OUT); Pickering – Chris Carson (OUT), Willie Gay (OUT), Romeo Okwara (OUT), Calvin Ridley (OUT), Sterling Shepard (OUT).

While York has its hands full this week, the Spartans look to continue adding to the ‘W’ column with a home date against the struggling Hawks. Brooklin turned the ball over three times last week and Derek Carr ran out of gas in the second half against Erieau. Since a 135-yard effort by Austin Ekeler in Week One, the run game has been a non-factor in the offence. Meanwhile, the defence is surrendering four football fields of real estate per game. Expect the Pickering run game to plough through them like a Deere. **PICK: PICKERING**



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This Week in EFL History
With Professor Sterling Smitherman

FROM THE EFL ARCHIVES – In Week Five of the 2016 EFL season, the upstart St. Charles Chargers scored what was viewed as a major upset over the heavily-favoured Brooklin Hawks, beating them 20-13 at Optimist Park. **Carson Wentz** earned Game MVP by tossing 3 TD passes and making better use of his team’s red zone opportunities than his counterpart, **Alex Smith**, who did not throw a TD pass but ran it in from 8 yards for his team’s only TD. Prior to this loss, the high-flying Hawks had scored 35 points or more in each of their previous four games.

Rumours that the Markham North Stars had been

looking for a new home across the ocean were given credence when the personal aide to the Hungarian Prime Minister and the Assistant Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade were spotted enjoying the North Stars’ 40-7 beatdown of the Wolverines as guests of **Darrin Jones** in a luxury box at the Dawg Pound. Stout denials of such a potential deal from both Jones and the EFL Head Office followed.

Kelvin Sheppard, linebacker for the Regulators, earned Defensive Player of the Week for his 61-yard fumble return TD with 2 minutes left that vaulted South Carolina over York, 14-10. It was the Regs’ miraculous third straight win, while it halted York’s two-game win streak.

Todd Gurley of the Corn Kings garnered Offensive Player of the Week honours for his role in leading Cowtown over slumping Scarborough, 36-20. Gurley rushed for 142 yards and 3 TDs on 21 carries. It was Scarborough’s third straight loss.

At Jurassic Park in Durham, the Swordfish claimed sole possession of the North Division with their fourth straight victory, 30-24 over Durham. Rookie QB, **Jameis Winston** started for an injured **Andy Dalton** and was expected to struggle against the top-notch Durham secondary. Instead, young Jameis threw 3 TDs to lead his team to the win.