

# WEEK 9



Shooting for the Stars in our 15th Season!

December 5, 2021

# SONY THE PONY!



*Sony Michel*  
*East Elmhurst Irish*

East Elmhurst running back, *Sony Michel*, acquired mid-season from Peg City, gallops down the sideline on his way to a spectacular 52-yard TD run in 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter action in Pickering. In a game with not a lot of scoring but a lot of highlight-reel plays, Michel's big burst brought the Irish even and contributed to a 20-17 comeback win. *(story inside)*

EAST



CENTRAL



WEST



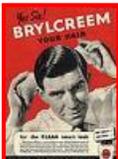
NORTH



COASTAL



SOUTH



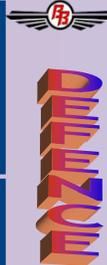
*Who was slick  
in Week Nine?*

**“Brylcreem” THE  
EFL’S FIRST SPONSOR**



Derek Carr  
QB  
Brooklin  
Hawks

37 of 51,489 Yds, 6 TDs, 0 INTs.  
Hammered 6 nails in PP's coffin.



Harrison Smith  
S  
Bruxelles  
Bombers

10 T, 4 PDs, 3 INTs (30-yds). Made  
Lamar's day miserable in big win.


**49**
**35**

It was a wild game in Virden with **Russell Wilson** and **Patrick Mahomes** lighting up the scoreboard at will. It took a forced fumble by Cubs' corner **Jaylon Johnson** with Virden down 42-35, but driving again into Cubs' territory, to finally decide the outcome. Johnson punched the ball from **TJ Hockenson** at the 34. It was picked up by **AJ Green** but he lost the handle and **Benjamin St-Juste** recovered for the Cubs and returned it 21 yards. Wilson scrambled for 30 yards on the next play to set up the game-clinching score, a 10-yard TD run by **Jerick McKinnon**, his fourth TD of the day.

12-04-2021 TERRORDOME Temp:82 Wind:Calm None Line:VV by 12 MVP:Wilson HFA:ON(4)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Iowa City (5-4)	14	14	0	21	49
2021 Virden (5-4)	7	7	14	7	35

**Passing**

 ICC: Wilson 39/29 360 Yds 3 TDs  
 VV: Mahomes 32/18 335 Yds 4 TDs

**Rushing**

 ICC: Conner 13/80, McKinnon 8/57 3 TDs, Wilson 5/51 TD  
 VV: Freeman 9/52 TD, Mahomes 3/20

**Receiving**

 ICC: Lockett 9/117, Brown 8/123 TD, Beasley 5/72 TD, McKinnon 4/17 TD, Njoku 1/4  
 VV: Chase 6/110, Davis 5/142 4 TDs, Hockenson 2/25, Green 2/22, Freeman 2/27

**Defense**

 ICC: Hargrave Sk FF 3-Tk  
 VV: Trevathan 16-Tk, Harris Jr. 13-Tk, Williams Sk FF 3-Tk, Peters 9-Tk

**Injuries**

 ICC:  
 VV: Johnson 5, Ximines 4, Atkins 4, Bryant 4, Campbell 3, Brown 2, Thomas 2

**Misc**

 ICC: 10/12 3rd Dwn, 7/7 Red Zn TD, St Juste 1-FR  
 VV: Green 1-F Lost

**24**
**20**

**JK Dobbins** swept in for a 19-yard TD run to put the Pats in front to stay in the 4<sup>th</sup>. The Patriots led 17-7 at half time after a 13-yard fade by **Gardner Minshew II**, caught in the end zone by **Robby Anderson**, capped a 16-play, 91-yard Seattle drive and sparked a 17-point 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter outburst. Pats' QB, **DeShaun Watson**, struggled a bit early and was picked twice, but got the Pats back in the game with a 1-yard TD pass to **Amari Cooper** in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and later converted a 3<sup>rd</sup> & long to Cooper that kept the winning TD drive alive in the 4<sup>th</sup>. After a good start, the Patriots' offence fell off in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half.

12-04-2021 Kingdome Temp:70 Wind:Calm Line:SEA by 12 MVP:Cooper HFA:ON(1)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Charleswood (8-1)	7	0	7	10	24
2021 Seattle (1-8)	0	17	3	0	20

**Passing**

 CHP: Watson 33/21 238 Yds 2 TDs 2 Int  
 SEA: Minshew II 34/23 203 Yds 2 TDs Int

**Rushing**

 CHP: Dobbins 9/54 TD, Hill 6/15, Kamara 5/14, Watson 1/5, Ozigbo 1/1  
 SEA: Hunt 10/29, Lamb 1/17, Akers 4/13, Brown 1/10

**Receiving**

 CHP: Cooper 7/78 2 TDs, Kelce 5/71, Smith-Schuster 3/27, Kamara 2/17, Metcalf 2/31  
 SEA: Lamb 6/48, Anderson 5/76 2 TDs, Hunt 4/22, Renfrow 4/24, Mims 1/11, Akers 1/12

**Defense**

 CHP: Richardson Sk 4-Tk, Darby 8-Tk, Landry III Int 3-Tk  
 SEA: Jenkins Int 5-Tk, Wright FF 6-Tk, Sorensen Int 3-Tk

**Injuries**

 CHP: Linder 3, Stanley 2, Kamara 1  
 SEA:

**Misc**

 CHP: Lutz 1/1 FG 33 Lg  
 SEA: McPherson 2/2 FG 54 Lg



28

38

**Yannick Ngakoue** knocked the ball from the arms of **Melvin Gordon II**, picked it up and ran it 38 yards for a TD to give the Assassins a two-score lead in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. That play tipped the balance in a closely-fought game that saw the lead exchange hands 9 times. Until the fumble, Gordon had been a main driver of the Triumph offence, scoring their first TD and carrying for over 100 yards. **Justin Herbert** was razor sharp, completing 24 of 28 for 290 yards to put **Dalvin Cook** in position to punch it home with 3 TD runs. The Assassins continue to run away with it in the West Division.

12-04-2021 Assassin's Den Temp:74 Wind:Calm

Line:LV by 12 MVP:Cook

HFA:ON

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Twin Cities (3-6)	7	7	7	7	28
2021 Las Vegas (8-1)	3	14	7	14	38

### Passing

TCT: Trubisky 26/19 213 Yds 2 TDs Int

LV: Herbert 28/24 290 Yds TD

### Rushing

TCT: Gordon III 27/154 TD, Trubisky 6/28, Edwards-Helaire 1/2 TD

LV: Cook 18/98 3 TDs, Herbert 1/14

### Receiving

TCT: Moore 9/147 TD, White 4/10, Bryant 2/18, Gordon III 2/10, Bateman 2/28 TD

LV: Fitzgerald 8/101, Graham 5/55 TD, Thomas 3/37, Pascal 3/44, Cook 2/8, Jeudy 2/45

### Defense

TCT: Alexander 9-Tk

LV: Davis 10-Tk, Ngakoue 2-FF 2-Tk, Heyward Sk 3-Tk, Surtain II 8-Tk

### Injuries

TCT: Brown 4, Brown 3, Golladay 2

LV:

### Misc

TCT: Gordon 1-F Lost, Bradbury 1-F Lost

LV: Ngakoue 1-FR TD, Heyward 1-FR, Fairbairn 1/1 FG 50 Lg



26

16

**Chauncey Gardner-Johnson** picked off **Mac Jones** on the Crusaders' second play from scrimmage to set up a 3-yard TD pass from **Teddy Bridgewater** to **Michael Gallup**. That gave Chino an early 10-0 lead and the cushion they needed to stay one step ahead of a feisty Peg City squad. The Crusaders fought to close the gap to 3 points early in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter on the third of 3 **Younghoe Koo** FGs, set up by a **Marlon Humphrey** pick, to trail 19-16. However, Bridgewater engineered an 84-yard TD drive in just 7 plays, icing the game with a TD pass to Gallup, his second of the day.

12-04-2021 True North Field Temp:72 Wind:Calm

Line:PCC by 12 MVP:Bridgewater

HFA

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Chino (6-3)	10	9	0	7	26
2021 Peg City (0-9)	0	10	3	3	16

### Passing

CHI: Bridgewater 34/29 253 Yds 2 TDs Int

PCC: Jones 33/18 173 Yds TD Int

### Rushing

CHI: Jones II 9/51, Jackson 5/31, Bridgewater 6/24

PCC: Bell 15/52, Hubbard 6/18, Jones 3/15

### Receiving

CHI: Byrd 6/76, Patrick 6/92, Gallup 5/35 2 TDs, Jackson 4/21, Jones II 4/-2

PCC: Aiyuk 6/54, Bell 5/21 TD, Higbee 3/52, Hubbard 1/5, Shenault Jr. 1/24

### Defense

CHI: Gardner-Johnson Int 3-Tk

PCC: Humphrey Int 5-Tk, Okereke 9-Tk

### Injuries

CHI: McCaffrey 3, Prescott 2, Mason 2

PCC: Sutton 6, Barkley 5, Okudah 5, Godchaux 4, Cohen 3, Jones 3, Bullard 2

### Misc

CHI: Butker 4/4/ FG 47 Lg

PCC: Koo 3/3 FG 54 Lg



**Brandon McManus** kicked a 46-yard FG as time expired in the 1<sup>st</sup> half to atone for an earlier miss and give the Coyotes a 10-7 halftime lead. His boot would prove to be the difference in this tight contest. Cobb County extended their lead to 17-7 mid-way in the 3<sup>rd</sup> on a 17-yard TD scramble by **Ryan Tannehill**. After foregoing a FG try from the Coyote 7 then missing the pass on 4<sup>th</sup> & 5, the Balls eventually matched that score on a 3-yard TD pass from **Matt Stafford** to **Terry McLaurin** with 4:01 left in the 4<sup>th</sup>, to pull within 3. But NJ never got the ball back as the Coyotes ran out the clock.

12-04-2021 Coyote Field Temp:61 Wind:0-5 None Line:CB by 8 MVP:Tannehill HFA:ON(5)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 New Jersey (4-5)	0	7	0	7	14
2021 Cobb County (6-3)	0	10	7	0	17

#### Passing

NJ: Stafford 35/22 189 Yds TD 2 Int  
 CB: Tannehill 22/15 171 Yds TD

#### Rushing

NJ: Montgomery 16/76 TD, Stafford 2/13, McKissic 2/7  
 CB: Harris 19/91, Tannehill 7/50 TD, Breida 3/2

#### Receiving

NJ: McLaurin 5/45 TD, Chark Jr. 5/51, Allen 4/36, Hooper 4/40, Montgomery 2/13  
 CB: Cooks 7/90, Parker 3/28 TD, Cook 3/40, Harris 1/7, Jones 1/6

#### Defense

NJ: Campbell Sk FF 4-Tk, Alexander 8-Tk  
 CB: Martinez Int 9-Tk, White Int 5-Tk

#### Injuries

NJ:  
 CB: Ridgeway 5

#### Misc

NJ:  
 CB: McManus 1/2 FG 46 Lg



Three Derailer turnovers on their first three possessions set the tone for a bad day in Bruxelles for visiting Buffalo. **Lamar Jackson** was picked off twice by **Harrison Smith** and lost the handle on a snap to set up all 16 of the Bombers' 1<sup>st</sup> half points. Jackson spearheaded two TD drives in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter to rally Buffalo to within 2 points. An **Andre Roberts'** 50-yard kick return to start the half set up a 3-yard TD run by **Leonard Fournette** then Smith picked off Lamar for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time in the game to set up another short TD. From there the Bombers' defence managed to hang on for their 3<sup>rd</sup> win.

12-04-2021 The Fortress Temp:77 Wind:Calm Line:BRX by 12 MVP:Smith HFA:ON(

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Buffalo (3-6)	0	14	0	8	22
2021 Bruxelles (3-6)	13	3	14	7	37

#### Passing

BUF: Jackson 40/24 186 Yds 2 TDs 3 Int  
 BRX: Brees 23/16 227 Yds 3 TDs

#### Rushing

BUF: Jackson 17/221, Davis 6/46 TD, Woods 2/4, Booker 2/3  
 BRX: Williams 9/38, Mitchell 9/31, Fournette 7/29 2 TDs, Brees 1/1

#### Receiving

BUF: Woods 8/44, Gage 7/66 2 TDs, Fant 5/63, Davis 3/5, Tate 1/8  
 BRX: Williams 6/50 TD, Godwin 5/104 2 TDs, Valdes-Scantling 2/27, Claypool 2/34

#### Defense

BUF: Hicks 9-Tk  
 BRX: Smith 3-Int 10-Tk, Fuller 11-Tk, Clark Sk 3-Tk

#### Injuries

BUF: Barnett 2, Mercilus 2  
 BRX: Howard 7, Robinson 5, Flowers 3, Wynn 2

#### Misc

BUF: Jackson 1-F Lost  
 BRX: Ogbah 1-FR, Roberts 2/88 KR 50 Lg, Prater 1/1 FG 19 Lg



After opening three-and-outs by both offences, the Thunder Lizards scored TDs on their next five possessions. **Josh Allen** connected twice for TDs of 10 and 24 yards to **Cooper Kupp**, 30 yards to **Darren Waller**, and ran it in himself for 2 more TDs to build an overwhelming 35-10 lead heading into the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. **Kirk Cousins** had to work for every yard of 177-yard, 2-TD effort against a stingy Durham secondary. **Jonathan Taylor** and **Nick Chubb** churned out 139 yards on the ground but it was not nearly enough to keep pace. With the win, Durham is in full control of the North.

12-04-2021 Jurassic Park Temp:3 Wind: None Line:DTL by 13 MVP:Allen HFA:ON(

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Sebastian (4-4-1)	0	10	0	7	17
2021 Durham (8-1)	7	14	14	3	38

Passing

SS: Cousins 26/15 177 Yds 2 TDs  
 DTL: Allen 31/21 294 Yds 3 TDs

Rushing

SS: Taylor 15/95, Chubb 12/44, Cousins 2/23, Perine 1/3  
 DTL: Gibson 13/59, Allen 8/37 2 TDs, Samuel 1/10, Edmonds 2/2

Receiving

SS: Beckham Jr. 4/57 TD, Akins 3/36 TD, Ebron 2/19, Chubb 2/17, Taylor 2/22  
 DTL: Waller 7/111 TD, Kupp 6/79 2 TDs, Boyd 4/53, Gibson 2/14, Edmonds 1/19

Defense

SS: Baker 8-Tk  
 DTL: Reed 12-Tk, Reader Sk 5-Tk, Armstead Sk FF 2-Tk

Injuries

SS: Feiler 2, Perryman 2, Jenkins 1, Taylor 1, Hilton 1  
 DTL: Penny 3

Misc

SS: Carlson 1/1 FG 24 Lg  
 DTL: Santos 1/1 FG 54 Lg



3 lost fumbles and a bad snap to the punter by the Corn Kings led to 24 Scarborough points in the 1<sup>st</sup> half. **Myles Gaskin** knifed through stunned Corn King defence for a 23-yard TD run on their first play after **Johnny Hekker** was dumped for an 11-yard loss on the bad snap. **Alex Anzalone** returned the first fumble 76 yards for a TD, **Ardian Amos** returned the second 37 yards to set up a 23-yard TD pass to **Jamison Crowder** and **Micah Kiser** recovered the third to set up a FG. Cowtown made it close in the end, but their 4<sup>th</sup>-quarter rally ended with a failed Hail Mary from the Eagles' 43.

12-04-2021 The Eagle's Nest Temp:49 Wind:Calm None Line:COW by 2 MVP:Anzalone HFA:

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Cowtown (4-5)	7	7	0	14	28
2021 Scarborough (2-6-1)	7	17	0	7	31

Passing

COW: Garoppolo 50/32 342 Yds 3 TDs  
 SBE: Burrow 21/8 70 Yds 2 TDs

Rushing

COW: Gurley II 14/85 TD, Gore 4/31, Murray 7/19, Garoppolo 6/19, Tevi 1/4  
 SBE: Carson 12/49, Gaskin 8/40 TD, Burrow 2/1

Receiving

COW: Evans 7/95 TD, Bourne 5/44 TD, Toney 5/43, Alie-Cox 4/26, Cephus 3/48  
 SBE: Gaskin 2/10, Crowder 2/31 TD, Carson 2/6, Ward 1/8, Robinson II 1/15 TD

Defense

COW:  
 SBE: Ryan Sk FF 7-Tk, Dantzler 2-FF 4-Tk, Anzalone 10-Tk, Amos 9-Tk, Fowler Jr. Sk

Injuries

COW: Saubert 2  
 SBE: Uzomah 7, Jackson 2, Bosa 2, Jones 2, Collins 1

Misc

COW: Gurley 1-F Lost, Cephus 1-F Lost, Garoppolo 1-F Lost  
 SBE: Anzalone 1-FR TD, Amos 1-FR, Kiser 1-FR

31  
10

**Aaron Rodgers** threw TD passes of 28 yards to **Justin Jefferson** and 15 yards to **Stefon Diggs**, his two main targets on the day, to stay in front of an early Erieau challenge and take a 17-10 halftime lead. An opening drive FG and a 15-yard TD scramble by **Kyler Murray** promised some life for the Cadillac with a brief 10-7 lead. However, Murray also got picked off 3 times deep in Budapest territory to take points off the board. The Caddies completely stalled in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half while **Jeff Wilson** scored on a 30-yard pitch in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and Rodgers added another TD pass to put the game away.

12-04-2021 Kelly-Burke Field Temp:46 Wind:10-20 None Line:BUD by 10 MVP:Rodgers HF

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Budapest (9-0)	7	10	7	7	31
2021 Erieau (3-6)	3	7	0	0	10

**Passing**

BUD: Rodgers 35/27 378 Yds 3 TDs  
 ERI: Murray 29/17 140 Yds 3 Int

**Rushing**

BUD: Wilson Jr. 17/108 TD, Rodgers 2/23, Patterson 2/12, Felton 2/2, Patterson 3/1  
 ERI: Harris 13/101, Murray 9/44 TD, Vaughn 3/26, Moss 1/18

**Receiving**

BUD: Diggs 13/191 TD, Jefferson 8/125 TD, Patterson 3/24 TD, Agholor 2/27, Hollister 1/11  
 ERI: Andrews 5/42, Henry 3/28, Conley 2/31, Hines 2/13, Waddle 2/21, Higgins 1/3

**Defense**

BUD: David Int 2-FF 8-Tk, Fitzpatrick Int 6-Tk, Attaochu 9-Tk  
 ERI: Hewitt 12-Tk, Crosby Sk FF 4-Tk, King II FF 9-Tk, Houston Sk 3-Tk

**Injuries**

BUD:  
 ERI: Gilmore 4, Bosa 2

**Misc**

BUD: Rodgers 1-F Lost, Agholor 1-F Lost, Myers 1/1 FG 33 Lg  
 ERI: Hewitt 1-FR, Gilmore 1-FR, Gostkowski 1/1 FG 42 Lg

45  
31

The Hawks kicked a FG with 0:06 left in the 1<sup>st</sup> half and capped a penalty-assisted 1<sup>st</sup> series of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half with a 16-yard TD pass to **Evan Engram** to take a 31-21 lead and create the two-score gap needed to stay in front of Oshawa in a shootout. **Kenyan Drake** and **Devin Singletary** combined for 191 yards rushing and TD runs of 53 and 32 yards respectively and **Matt Ryan** throw 2 TD passes, but they could not keep up with the Hawks' **Derek Carr** and **DeAndre Hopkins**, who hooked up for 199 yards and 2 TDs on 12 catches as part of 489-yard, 6-TD passing effort from Carr.

12-04-2021 GM Megadome Temp:72 Wind:Calm Line:BRH by 2 MVP:Carr HFA:ON(4)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Brooklin (4-5)	14	10	7	14	45
2021 Oshawa (2-6-1)	7	14	0	10	31

**Passing**

BRH: Carr 51/37 489 Yds 6 TDs  
 OSH: Ryan 39/23 240 Yds 2 TDs

**Rushing**

BRH: Ekeler 10/55  
 OSH: Drake 15/103 TD, Singletary 8/88 TD, Ryan 2/11

**Receiving**

BRH: Hopkins 12/199 2 TDs, Ekeler 11/104 TD, Engram 7/107 TD, Gronkowski 4/49 2 TDs  
 OSH: Adams 10/134 2 TDs, Drake 4/27, Reynolds 4/35, Schultz 2/22, Gesicki 2/17

**Defense**

BRH: Jones 10-Tk, Tuitt Sk 4-Tk, Bates III Sk 3-Tk  
 OSH: Ward FF 9-Tk, Thompson 11-Tk

**Injuries**

BRH: McKinney 5, Ferrell 4, Harrison Jr. 3, Hyde 1  
 OSH: Goedert 3, Edelman 1, Drake 1, Williams 1

**Misc**

BRH: Bullock 1/2 FG 24 Lg  
 OSH: Gonzalez 1/1 FG 30 Lg



13



42

Two interceptions of **Ben Roethlisberger** in the 1<sup>st</sup> half was all the Excaliburs could do to slow down a Gladiator offence that started well and scored on its first three possessions to build a 13-7 halftime lead. York erased that lead with a 5-yard TD run by **Javonte Williams** off the opening drive of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, then the wheels came off for Georgia. **Josey Jewell** strip-sacked Big Ben on the next series, setting up a **Tom Brady** TD pass to **Amon-Ra St. Brown**. It was the second of 4 Glads' fumbles on the day, all lost, that transformed the game into a blowout for York on just 269 total yards offence.

12-04-2021 Camelot Temp:48 Wind:Calm None Line:YOR by 10 MVP:Henry HFA:ON(2)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Georgia (1-7-1)	10	3	0	0	13
2021 York (7-2)	0	7	14	21	42

Passing

GEO: Roethlisberger 26/20 144 Yds TD 2 Int

YOR: Brady 29/17 177 Yds 3 TDs 2 Int

Rushing

GEO: Jacobs 15/66, Robinson 7/42, Stevenson 6/39

YOR: Henry 21/85 2 TDs, Williams 3/12 TD, Snell Jr. 1/1, Brady 4/1

Receiving

GEO: Johnson 5/55, Bernard 4/17, Fuller V 3/16, Jacobs 2/18 TD, Fells 1/8, James 1/9

YOR: Davis 5/51, Williams 3/34 TD, Smith 2/21 TD, Amendola 2/23, St. Brown 2/18 TD

Defense

GEO: Edmunds 10-Tk, Joseph Int 3-Tk, Moreland Int 3-Tk

YOR: Holcomb Int 10-Tk, Jewell Sk FF 5-Tk, Douglas 2-FF 5-Tk, Poyer Int 3-Tk

Injuries

GEO: Ertz 4, Fuller V 4, Robinson 1

YOR: Henderson 4, Apple 3

Misc

GEO: Johnson 1-F Lost, Roethlisberger 1-F Lost, James 1-F Lost, Snead IV 1-F Lost, Bass 2/2 FG 50 Lg

YOR: Holcomb 2-FR, Dickerson 1-FR, Byard 1-FR



20



17

Two big plays marked the scoreboard after a scoreless 1<sup>st</sup>. The Spartans struck first with an 87-yard catch-and-run by **Darnell Mooney** but the Irish came right back with a 52-yard breakaway TD run by **Sony Michel** to tie it. Both teams added FGs before the half to keep the score deadlocked. The Spartans opened the 2<sup>nd</sup> half with a 36-yard TD pass to **Calvin Ridley**. That lead stood until, with 1:24 left, **Baker Mayfield** found **Adam Thielen** for a 10-yard TD pass. The Irish got the ball with 0:33 left. **Tyreek Hill**'s 34-yard end-around helped set up a **Rodrigo Blankenship** 31-yard FG for the win.

12-04-2021 Thermopylae Stadium Temp:40 Wind:Calm None No Line MVP:Mayfield HFA:ON(

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 East Elmhurst (6-3)	0	10	0	10	20
2021 Pickering (4-5)	0	10	7	0	17

Passing

EE: Mayfield 31/15 178 Yds TD

PIC: Rivers 28/16 240 Yds 2 TDs

Rushing

EE: Jones 15/72, Michel 8/61 TD, Hill 2/43, Mayfield 3/9

PIC: Swift 20/29, Sermon 3/3

Receiving

EE: Thielen 4/37 TD, Hill 4/64, Michel 2/8, Everett 2/17, Robinson 2/16, Jones 1/36

PIC: Swift 6/29, Shepard 3/39, Ridley 2/51 TD, Sermon 2/12, Mooney 1/87 TD

Defense

EE: Vernon Sk 5-Tk

PIC: Okwara 2-Sks FF 7-Tk, Stephen Sk 4-Tk, Howard 8-Tk, Schobert 8-Tk

Injuries

EE:

PIC: Dennard 3, Sanders 1, Incognito 1

Misc

EE: Blankenship 2/3 FG 32 Lg

PIC: Zuerlein 1/1 FG 39 Lg



<b>WEEK NINE</b>
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## STANDINGS & STATS

### EFL 2021 - Week 9 Standings

East	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Cobb County	6	3	0	.667	W2	232	25.8	175	19.4	6.3	4 1 0	2 1 0	6 1 0
New Jersey	4	5	0	.444	L3	163	18.1	219	24.3	-6.2	1 4 0	1 2 0	3 4 0
Bruxelles	3	6	0	.333	W1	229	25.4	271	30.1	-4.7	2 3 0	1 2 0	2 5 0
Buffalo	3	6	0	.333	L4	184	20.4	212	23.6	-3.1	2 2 0	2 1 0	3 4 0
Central	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Charleswood	8	1	0	.889	W6	210	23.3	184	20.4	2.9	4 0 0	3 0 0	6 1 0
Viriden	5	4	0	.556	L1	261	29.0	238	26.4	2.6	2 3 0	2 1 0	4 3 0
Twin Cities	3	6	0	.333	L1	188	20.9	186	20.7	0.2	1 3 0	1 2 0	2 5 0
Peg City	0	9	0	.000	L9	135	15.0	262	29.1	-14.1	0 4 0	0 3 0	0 7 0
West	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Las Vegas	8	1	0	.889	W2	260	28.9	142	15.8	13.1	4 1 0	3 0 0	7 0 0
Chino	6	3	0	.667	W1	227	25.2	190	21.1	4.1	2 2 0	2 1 0	5 2 0
Iowa City	5	4	0	.556	W2	267	29.7	254	28.2	1.4	3 1 0	1 2 0	4 3 0
Seattle	1	8	0	.111	L2	155	17.2	228	25.3	-8.1	1 4 0	0 3 0	0 7 0
North	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Durham	8	1	0	.889	W4	304	33.8	138	15.3	18.4	5 0 0	2 1 0	6 1 0
Sebastian	4	4	1	.500	L2	298	33.1	315	35.0	-1.9	2 2 0	1 1 1	2 4 1
Cowtown	4	5	0	.444	L3	196	21.8	210	23.3	-1.6	3 1 0	1 2 0	4 3 0
Scarborough	2	6	1	.278	W1	169	18.8	263	29.2	-10.4	2 2 1	1 1 1	2 4 1
Coastal	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Budapest	9	0	0	1.000	W9	281	31.2	127	14.1	17.1	5 0 0	3 0 0	7 0 0
York	7	2	0	.778	W3	236	26.2	185	20.6	5.7	4 1 0	2 1 0	5 2 0
Pickering	4	5	0	.444	L1	174	19.3	202	22.4	-3.1	0 4 0	1 2 0	3 4 0
Brooklin	4	5	0	.444	W1	214	23.8	242	26.9	-3.1	1 3 0	0 3 0	3 4 0
South	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
East Elmhurst	6	3	0	.667	W2	190	21.1	165	18.3	2.8	2 2 0	3 0 0	5 2 0
Erieau	3	6	0	.333	L1	156	17.3	199	22.1	-4.8	1 4 0	2 1 0	2 5 0
Oshawa	2	6	1	.278	L2	209	23.2	266	29.6	-6.3	1 3 1	0 2 1	1 5 1
Georgia	1	7	1	.167	L5	211	23.4	276	30.7	-7.2	0 4 0	0 2 1	0 6 1

EFL 2021 - Week 9 Passing Leaders

			Att	Cmp	C%	Yards	In	I%	Lg	TD	TD%	Rate
1	Rodgers,A	BUD	294	220	74.8	2881	2	0.7	75	27	9.2	133.0
2	Cousins	SS	288	203	70.5	2642	5	1.7	76	27	9.4	123.1
3	Mahomes	VV	303	193	63.7	2866	3	1.0	72	26	8.6	119.1
4	Wilson,R	ICC	274	197	71.9	2235	6	2.2	54	22	8.0	113.6
5	Allen,J	DTL	326	219	67.2	2562	3	0.9	75	24	7.4	111.5
6	Watson,D	CHP	276	182	65.9	2279	3	1.1	47	20	7.2	111.1
7	Herbert	LV	302	213	70.5	2351	5	1.7	65	19	6.3	107.4
8	Tannehill	CB	238	153	64.3	2022	6	2.5	55	18	7.6	105.8
9	Brady	YOR	277	187	67.5	2293	9	3.2	84	20	7.2	103.4
10	Brees	BRX	223	134	60.1	1847	4	1.8	75	16	7.2	103.1
11	Bridgewater	CHI	196	145	74.0	1532	5	2.6	75	9	4.6	101.0
12	Roethlisbe	GEO	292	198	67.8	1965	5	1.7	60	17	5.8	98.9
13	Mayfield	EE	249	162	65.1	1882	3	1.2	48	12	4.8	98.8
14	Trubisky	TCT	217	135	62.2	1535	5	2.3	69	14	6.5	95.3
15	Carr,D	BRH	297	178	59.9	2129	5	1.7	54	18	6.1	95.1
16	Stafford	NJ	319	211	66.1	2420	7	2.2	75	14	4.4	94.3
17	Ryan,M	OSH	314	200	63.7	1955	6	1.9	57	16	5.1	90.1
18	Fitzpatric	COW	194	134	69.1	1363	7	3.6	52	9	4.6	89.3
19	Minshew II	SEA	180	115	63.9	1098	5	2.8	62	10	5.6	87.7
20	Rivers,P	PIC	260	156	60.0	1826	3	1.2	87	8	3.1	86.8
21	Jackson,L	BUF	306	199	65.0	1838	7	2.3	60	12	3.9	84.8
22	Burrow	SBE	273	157	57.5	1558	4	1.5	59	13	4.8	83.6
23	Murray,K	ERI	267	165	61.8	1555	7	2.6	47	7	2.6	75.7
24	Jones,M	PCC	303	168	55.4	1925	12	4.0	80	11	3.6	70.4
25	Goff	BRX	21	17	81.0	264	0	0.0	68	2	9.5	150.5

EFL 2021 - Week 9 Kick Return Leaders

			No	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD
1	Roberts,A	BRX	16	566	35.4	50	0
2	Johnson,D	SBE	12	366	30.5	41	0
3	Agnew	SEA	17	499	29.4	68	0
4	Duvernay	TCT	15	419	27.9	49	0
5	Rodgers,I	CHP	13	334	25.7	41	0
6	Carter,D	BUF	20	447	22.4	48	0
7	Atwell	OSH	16	336	21.0	38	0
8	Ballentine	SS	13	258	19.8	31	0
9	Cannon	BUD	5	168	33.6	42	0
10	Harris,D	COW	11	329	29.9	76	0
11	Adderley	VV	3	89	29.7	33	0
12	Homer	YOR	10	268	26.8	36	0
13	Patterson	BUD	11	286	26.0	39	0
14	Hubbard	PCC	4	103	25.8	29	0
15	Barner	PIC	8	203	25.4	39	0
16	Reed,J	VV	1	25	25.0	25	0
17	Webster,N	NJ	11	272	24.7	35	0
18	Powell	EE	7	170	24.3	31	0
19	Lewis,D	LV	10	241	24.1	43	0
20	Johnson,D	CB	4	96	24.0	28	0
21	Hines	ERI	3	72	24.0	29	0
22	Hill	DTL	8	191	23.9	38	0
23	Scott,B	BRH	10	237	23.7	32	0
24	Waddle	ERI	10	233	23.3	31	0
25	Abdullah	CHI	10	221	22.1	36	0

EFL 2021 - Week 9 Punt Return Leaders

			No	Fc	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD
1	Grant,J	CHI	20	5	299	15.0	62	1
2	Peppers	ERI	15	3	183	12.2	22	0
3	Harris,D	COW	20	3	228	11.4	20	0
4	Erickson	BUF	13	7	134	10.3	24	0
5	Taylor,T	CHP	20	3	202	10.1	27	0
6	Cooper,P	VV	12	9	118	9.8	41	0
7	Roberts,A	BRX	13	0	120	9.2	29	0
8	Proche	DTL	24	9	211	8.8	20	0
9	Moore	EE	17	9	145	8.5	17	0
10	Spencer,D	NJ	17	4	131	7.7	25	0
11	Hill,K	SBE	19	4	140	7.4	25	0
12	Peoples-Jo	SS	13	5	92	7.1	16	0
13	Raymond	CB	13	1	90	6.9	22	0
14	Hardman	LV	12	13	39	3.3	13	0
15	Amendola	YOR	12	2	13	1.1	5	0
16	Lamb	SEA	5	3	74	14.8	38	0
17	James,R	GEO	1	0	14	14.0	14	0
18	Hines	ERI	2	0	24	12.0	16	0
19	Cole Sr.	SEA	10	1	104	10.4	20	0
20	Atwell	OSH	8	3	82	10.3	22	0
21	Tate,G	BRH	3	13	28	9.3	19	0
22	Renfrow	SEA	5	4	44	8.8	20	0
23	Johnson,D	GEO	9	4	78	8.7	18	0
24	Rodgers,Am	BUD	9	16	75	8.3	20	0
25	Barner	PIC	6	8	48	8.0	14	0

## EFL 2021 - Week 9 Rushing Leaders

		Att	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD	
1	Henry,D	YOR	210	941	4.5	48	7
2	Cook,D	LV	174	863	5.0	49	8
3	Robinson,J	GEO	162	823	5.1	52	6
4	Drake	OSH	145	798	5.5	53	6
5	Taylor,J	SS	128	725	5.7	52	6
6	Jackson,L	BUF	103	706	6.9	41	7
7	Gordon III	TCT	127	672	5.3	45	1
8	Jones,A	EE	127	640	5.0	22	5
9	Chubb,N	SS	126	613	4.9	47	5
10	Sanders,M	PIC	118	586	5.0	25	2
11	Harris,D	CB	86	567	6.6	35	3
12	Elliott,E	VV	136	555	4.1	28	6
13	Harris	ERI	116	518	4.5	37	1
14	Murray,K	ERI	86	512	6.0	23	6
15	Conner	ICC	78	510	6.5	47	1
16	Edwards-He	TCT	70	497	7.1	46	6
17	Jones II	CHI	100	414	4.1	26	4
18	Montgomery	NJ	120	414	3.5	18	1
19	Wilson,R	ICC	55	402	7.3	30	4
20	Carson	SBE	86	398	4.6	13	3
21	Mitchell	BRX	86	387	4.5	34	4
22	Swift	PIC	77	351	4.6	38	6
23	Gurley II	COW	87	341	3.9	37	5
24	Davis,M	BUF	77	328	4.3	25	3
25	Williams,J	BRX	63	311	4.9	18	0
26	Ekeler	BRH	53	301	5.7	21	0
27	Akers	SEA	66	297	4.5	52	2
28	Peterson,A	CB	75	296	3.9	16	2
29	Wilson Jr.	BUD	55	294	5.3	30	2
30	Scott,B	BRH	53	287	5.4	20	1

## EFL 2021 - Week 9 Receiving Leaders

		No	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD	
1	Adams,D	OSH	72	803	11.2	57	10
2	Diggs,S	BUD	62	778	12.5	66	6
3	Gallup	CHI	54	745	13.8	75	6
4	Allen,K	NJ	54	524	9.7	35	6
5	Lockett	ICC	51	555	10.9	34	6
6	Jefferson	BUD	51	818	16.0	75	8
7	Hopkins,D	BRH	50	709	14.2	54	9
8	Hill,T	EE	48	697	14.5	40	6
9	Waller	DTL	48	602	12.5	43	7
10	Johnson,D	GEO	47	431	9.2	20	6
11	Anderson,R	SEA	45	467	10.4	35	4
12	Woods,R	BUF	44	479	10.9	60	5
13	Chase	VV	43	892	20.7	72	8
14	McLaurin	NJ	43	611	14.2	75	5
15	McKissic	NJ	42	356	8.5	29	1
16	Kelce,T	CHP	42	587	14.0	31	8
17	Gage	BUF	41	387	9.4	25	2
18	Kupp	DTL	41	664	16.2	75	5
19	Brown,A	ICC	41	742	18.1	54	5
20	Evans,M	COW	41	550	13.4	41	6
21	Andrews,M	ERI	40	397	9.9	47	2
22	Cooks	CB	40	547	13.7	24	5
23	Cooper,A	CHP	39	511	13.1	47	5
24	Claypool	BRX	39	663	17.0	75	8
25	Moore,D	TCT	39	687	17.6	69	5
26	Godwin,C	BRX	38	631	16.6	56	6
27	Amendola	YOR	38	482	12.7	31	3
28	Parker,D	CB	37	464	12.5	36	7
29	Shepard	PIC	37	466	12.6	29	4
30	Thielen	EE	37	426	11.5	26	3



# AROUND THE



# With Spats McChad

NEW YORK – Now that we are officially over the hump of mid-season the fog has dissipated from the banks of the swampy EFL river and we can begin to see clearly the teams that are about to emerge from the murk onto the dry, solid ground of the playoff bank. The rest continue to be visually obscured, but if one listens carefully, one can hear the closer ones splashing about, calling out for help...help that may never come. It's every team for itself now. Some will drown, if they haven't already.

It is right around this time when football analysts in the media like to make their boldest predictions – while qualifying them with a raft of caveats – in order to stimulate controversy, gain attention and maintain interest in a narrative of their choosing. Collectively, this acts as a virtual wall of billboards to draw fans' attention to as many storylines as possible and away from the wreckage at the bottom of the pile. For those teams already out of the race, next year's draft and whether their coaches will be fired during or at the end of the season are the only storylines worth mentioning.

Well, Yours Truly is not going to play that game. I do not intend to insult my readers' intelligence by trying to sell a scenario where the Pink Panthers recover, run the table and **Matt Ryan** gets red hot in the playoffs to lead the franchise to its fourth championship. That is what senior *ESPN* writer, **John Claytown** is attempting to sell his readers on, while couching it in terms like, "could," "quite possibly," "not a stretch to imagine," and by throwing "if" in front of every second sentence. Using that technique, I could speculate that *if Lamar Jackson* developed the ability to throw effectively from the pocket on a consistent basis the Derailers would finish on top of the East. That is, of course, a big "if."

Rather than attempting to bamboozle you by using logic devices to make improbable scenarios look perfectly plausible, I am simply going to go on the record with what everyone paying attention assumes *will* happen based on the current nine-week sample size. These are the *easiest* predictions I, or anyone else, can make without any one of them being actual facts on the ground *yet*. And I make them notwithstanding the standard caveat that "anything can happen in the game of football." Yes, anything can happen, but in the case of these easy predictions, nothing will happen to derail the prediction.

The challenge of making easy predictions, however, is that *all of them have to be right* for the exercise to be deemed a success. No weaselly wiggle room to get out of any one of them later with reputation intact. Not a single one can be wrong. If *one* is wrong – they are *all* wrong. No credit for getting 9 out of 10. The pass mark for this test is 100%. No other writer, but me, would hold him or herself to such a high standard. So, with the rules in place, let's look into Spats' Crystal Ball:

## 10 EASY PREDICTIONS

- 1 – *Budapest will win the Coastal Division.* I did the math and they have not clinched yet. With a two-game lead on York, it *feels* like they have, though. Mathematically, both Pickering and Brooklin can catch them as well. But they won't.
- 2 – *Durham will win the North Division.* This one is even easier to predict than Budapest winning the Coastal. That is because the three stooges trying to keep up with them keep tripping over their over-sized clown shoes. The one team that has beaten them, Cowtown, went on to lose to Scarborough, taking away all their credibility. I thought Sebastian had a chance early on, but they are proving to be just another, slightly more exotic and dangerous-looking, flash-in-the-pan, flawed Swordfish team.
- 3 – *East Elmhurst will win the South Division.* This one would have been one of the boldest of bold predictions at the beginning of the season, but through nine weeks it is obvious that the South Division is going down the crapper and the Irish are, by far, the best of a bad bunch. In my post-Week One fantasy world I imagined the Cadillac in a dead heat with the Pink Panthers from beginning to end. Now that I have woken up to the harsh reality that they are both going nowhere this year, anointing the Irish is an easy call.
- 4 – *Peg City will go win-less in 2021.* It has been several years since the league has seen a team this bad, relative to its competition, disgrace the field. While arguments can be made for the Cadillac of 2016, the Violators of 2015 and the Knights of 2014 all being worse than the Crusaders of 2021, the fact there is arguing about it at all puts Peg City in some lowly, and win-less, company.
- 5 – *Seattle will finish last in the West Division.* Another easy call. (Geez, I'm on a roll!) While I am confident that the Pilots will win another game or two, there is no way they are running the table; which is what would be required to catch Iowa City or Chino, along with a complete collapse by one or both of those teams. Ain't gonna happen.
- 6 – *Aaron Rodgers of Budapest will win EFL Offensive MVP.* The North Stars could very well go undefeated. Durham has a chance to spoil their bid for perfection, but even if they do Budapest is staring at a 15-win worst-case scenario. When things go that well, it is often the quarterback who gets the credit and this case is no different. It will be well-deserved. Rodgers currently leads the league

in TD passes, with 27, and passer rating, at an extraordinary 133.0. He has also turned the historically stodgy North Stars into a passing team, which is a miracle in its own right.

7 – *Lamar Jackson will rush for over 1,000 yards again.* I am not even going to preface this prediction with the standard, “barring injury” get-out-prediction-free card. Injured or not, it will happen. The Derailers, for the second straight year, have saved on running back dollars by making Jackson their de-facto first-string running back as well as their quarterback. That means he is going to get the necessary carries to make it possible. His talent will take care of the rest.

8 – *The Durham defence will register over 50 sacks.* The league’s top three individual sack leaders are on Durham. Pressure feeds on pressure and, with three of their four starting linemen in the top three and a rotational back-up logging in at no.11 overall, it is almost too easy to predict they will hit the magic 50 mark; and easy is what this exercise is all about. Now, will they match or break the record of 59 set by Twin Cities in 2016? That’s not as easy to say and, since this is all about easy, I won’t.

9 – *Ja’Marr Chase will win Rookie of the Year.* The Violators’ wide receiver is the no.1 target of **Patrick Mahomes** and is second in the league with an average of 20.7 yards per-catch. He is also tied for 3<sup>rd</sup> with 8 TD catches. Some will argue for **Micah Parsons** of the Irish, but he won’t win it because his sacks numbers are not gawdy enough.

10 – *Mac Jones of Peg City will throw the most interceptions in 2021.* Another no-brainer. With 12 already, it is conceivable that he could not throw another pick over the next 7 weeks and still finish with the most. **Tom Brady**, next in the turnover line of shame with 9, would need to revert to an older form for that to happen. But, with no running game backing him up, I’m banking on Jones throwing many more picks on the Crusaders’ road to 0-16.

So, there you have my top ten easy predictions for 2021. A couple of them are perhaps not quite as easy as I could have made them, but I do like a tiny bit of tension as I wait for all of them to unfold as predicted. When they do, don’t pretend I was not the first to say so. Remember, I have to be perfect to “win.” I am confident I will be – and you can write that down as my 11<sup>th</sup> easy prediction!

### **NO MORE MR. CLEAN**

Last year it was no more Mr. Nice Guy for Cubs’ coach **Deron Redding** as he battled a critical media and his own players’ casual on-field effort in the rough early going of the 2020 campaign. For a period of weeks early in the season, Redding made a 180° turn from being a positive motivator to a highly negative critic of his players. He gave them credit for nothing and the blame for everything. It was as if his evil twin had taken over.

As this attitude did not come naturally to him, Redding could not hold the pose for long. Then, as the threat of being fired loomed over his head after a bad Week Six loss to Bruxelles, he was touched by his players’ reaction on the field in a big Week Seven victory over Brooklin. The team had used the rallying cry, “*For Coach!*” as they had poured on the offence to defeat the Hawks 42-28. Redding reverted back to his optimistic, supportive self and the Cubs went on to finish in first place by 3 games in the West before bowing out in the Quarter Final round, as they usually do.

Although it ended sadly for Cubs fans with another early playoff exit, it was the 11<sup>th</sup> time Redding had led the Cubs into the post-season in 14 years, a league record for a single coach and franchise. How could an owner fire a coach who had sustained such a level of success over such a long period? Yes, Redding had not won a championship and had only appeared in one final, but his teams were almost always in the hunt and playing meaningful games up until the end. The gate at Joe Ferguson Stadium was always full and the team made lots of money. From the outside, the Cubs have always appeared to be one of the league’s more successful franchises.

Ironically, it was Redding’s post-season appearance record that was being held up as a stick to beat him with by a disaffected faction of mostly urban Cubs fans, represented in the media by beat reporter, **Archibald Thacker** of the *Des Moines Register*. These people saw Redding as able to build, motivate and guide a team into the playoffs, but incapable of building and coaching a champion. He was the **Marty Schottenheimer** of the EFL, but softer and more clueless. When things were going badly, fans of this ilk could sometimes be heard chanting ‘*Marty, Marty!*’ in mocking tones from the stands.

The Cubs have been off to their usual slow start again in 2021, but with both the Las Vegas Assassins and Chino Convicts out-playing them to this point, the calls for Redding’s head from the urbanite faction of the Cubs’ fanbase are getting shrill. Thacker is more strident than ever in his criticism and he is being joined by a significant minority of similar-minded local and national media.

“*Coach Redding’s mastery of the regular season is beginning to fade as he ages,*” wrote Thacker after the Cubs had barely survived Seattle in Week Eight, to rise to a labored 4-4. “*As painful as it is to watch a kind, but simple man, slowly lose his grip on the one gift he possesses, it is perhaps a good development for the Cubs in the long run, because it will force ownership to take action. Empty seats in Week Ten would be a shock to the Alberhaskys, the kind of shock necessary to wake the family out of its stupor and see Redding for the fading has-been that he has become. Correction; see him for what he has always been: A loser.*”

The “loser” remark directed at the second winningest coach in EFL history may have been the last straw for the “kind, but simple man.” Sick of being targeted in this way by the “Archibald Thackers” of the Iowa and national media, Redding fired back directly at his critics through his media mouthpiece, **Sparky McGillicuddy** of *The Iowan*:

“*When asked about recent pointed criticism of his coaching by a Cubs beat reporter from the Des Moines Register, Redding simply chuckles and shakes his head. ‘Crotchety old Thacker is just sore that his book on how to scare kids off of his front lawn was never published, depriving him of recognition for the one gift he possesses,’ Redding replies, casually naming his would-be tormentor as if he were a harmless relic, rather than a determined gadfly seeking to turn Iowa football orthodoxy on its head,*” writes McGillicuddy in his article, ‘The Boss Speaks.’ “*Redding, the only coach the Cubs have ever known, has been around too long and been through too much to let his*

critics distract him from his endless mission to win football games in the toughest competitive environment in sports. But he does feel it is important for people to know who the boss is. 'I am the boss,' he says with a steely gaze when confronted with a quote from Ames Tribune sports writer, Nancy Kettleman, claiming he had lost control of the team. 'The players know who is, and always has been, in charge, and that's me!'"

To underscore the point and to set a new tone for the second half of the season, Redding decided he needed to change his image. The squeaky-clean, always smiling, part-time pastor look was an invitation to be trampled on by persons of low and bitter character, like Thacker and his acolytes. He needed to convey authority at first glance. Not some soft or quiet kind of authority that takes time to work its way into the social and political fabric, but a kind of instant authority that arouses fear and respect at the same time, like that of police officer, or a Marine. Obviously, he could not show up for work dressed like either of those.

He thought of his high school buddy, **Chuck Arnold**. He had always commanded that type of authority even before he became an airline pilot and started hanging around with those guys from Berlin. He had been a linebacker on the football team, a State Regional Champion wrestler, a Grade-A student and was of such a straight and pure character that he had never, to his knowledge, had a girlfriend (although he had taken **Lori Miller**, a star track athlete, to the prom). Chuck could have had any girl he wanted, but he chose to remain focused on his studies and athletic endeavours. Deron had admired him for that, even if he couldn't even to this day understand how he was able to do it. He certainly could not have kept his hands off of Lori Miller the night of the prom, but somehow Chuck had been able to resist. That only added to the impression that he was in control.

Although they had gone along separate career paths, they had stayed loosely in touch over the years. Chuck had once shown him pictures from his layovers in places like Amsterdam and Berlin and Deron had been struck by how tough and mean all of Chuck's friends appeared.

"Man, those are some badass-looking dudes, Chuck!" Deron had commented when shown a photo from outside a bar in Berlin called Tom's. He remembered the name of the bar because he had thought it odd that a bar in Germany would be called by a simple English name. "You hang with those guys? I'd run the hell away if I bumped into any of them in a dark alley."

"Ahh, they're really harmless, Deron!" Chuck had laughed. "Great guys, all of them! They dress that way for fun more than anything. But you know, they're all in pretty good shape, like me, and can handle themselves if they need to."



Cubs' coach, **Deron Redding**, watches closely as the official reviews replay from his challenge to the ruling of a completed pass to **Ja'Marr Chase** in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of Week Nine action between the Cubs and the Violators. The call was overturned, prompting Violators' coach **Lance Barrate** to protest that Redding had intimidated the referee. Redding's new authoritarian image, reinforced by wearing clothing matching that worn by Berlin buddies of an old high school friend, created quite a stir at **TERRODOME**.

Deron liked the image: Tough, strong, intimidating-looking guy, but sensitive deep down. Just like himself, he thought. But the white Polo shirts with the cutesy bear cub and cream-coloured Chinos he often wore around the office didn't project any of that. His outfits said "Chad" rather than something rough and tumble, like "Butch." Too prim and proper to make people pause and think for even a split-second that they might be in physical danger if they crossed him. That had to change if he was going to get any respect from the vultures circling around what they perceived as a dead coach walking. No more, Mr. Clean! Time for Mr. Nasty!

He made his preparations. For maximum effect, he did not reveal them until game day. He planned to appear at *TERRORDOME* dressed as closely as he could to a photo of one of Chuck's terrifying Berlin friends. The only thing he was missing was the leather biker cap with the chain, which had not arrived from the shop in Texas. That annoyed him, because the cap was the most intimidating part of the outfit. The rest was still pretty menacing though. He had the black leather button up top with pockets, leather tie and cross strap, black leather pants with a big hole and a giant snap up flap where the fly would normally be (easy access when going to the washroom and for style reasons, he guessed). The pants were very tight, but cinched with a black belt adorned with a gun metal steel buckle. A silver chain and metal rings with what looked like a handcuff key dangled from his belt. He topped it off with a big thick cigar. He didn't smoke, but the really tough guys in older movies all seemed to smoke cigars.

He looked at himself in the mirror. The evil teddy bear patch he had ordered had been sewn on perfectly by the team's tailor onto his right sleeve. The added touch pleased him. The Violators weren't going to face soft and cuddly Cubs on this day – they were going to slam into savage, mauling Cubs. He could hardly wait!

His appearance in the lobby of the hotel on Sunday morning had provoked the kind of reaction he had hoped for. He was turning heads wherever he went but people avoided his gaze and said nothing. *Yep, they're afraid*, he thought. His assistants, the staff at the hotel and the players all stared at him in dumbfounded silence for the longest time as they began boarding the team buses for the drive to *TERRORDOME*. Finally, offensive coordinator, *Alex Van Pelt* approached him.

"What's up with the outfit, Deron?" he whispered. "I think the players aren't sure if you're joking or have lost your mind."

Redding turned to his OC and a satisfied smile crept across his face. "Oh, I'm not joking, Alex!" he replied. "This is the new me. This is who I am now. If the players and coaches don't do as they're told from now on, they will be seeing me in private and they'll be in for a rough time!"

Word quickly got around. When the time arrived for his pre-game speech, Deron was ecstatic. Almost none of his players or coaches were able to look him in the eye and they weren't questioning anything he said. The thought of being called into the coach's office for a "counselling session" seemed to terrify them.

There were a couple of odd exceptions, however. Reserve defensive lineman, *B.J. Hill* had given him a curious wink and a smile when they had passed each other in a hallway. Deron had glared back at him, but instead of turning away, the massive lineman met his eyes and whispered, "They call me BJ for a reason."

Unsure what to make of the remark, and somewhat flustered that his new found power of nasty was not working on one of his younger players who was on the roster bubble and had a lot to lose by being a troublemaker, he disengaged with a warning. "I'll keep that in mind, Hill, but you had better play hard this afternoon!"

"I always play hard, boss man!" he answered with another wink.

*Boss man*, Deron thought and smiled to himself. Nobody had ever called him that before. A wave of exhilaration passed through his body. It was going to be a good day!

It indeed turned out to be a good day, for the Cubs' offence at least. They moved at will, covering 537 yards and scoring touchdowns on all of their 7 trips to the Virden red zone in submerging Virden 49-35. An exhausted and banged up Violator defence was practically helpless against the all-out offensive onslaught on the ground and through the air.

It was a good thing for the Cubs and for *Deron Redding's* job that the offence was up to making the most of Virden's defensive injuries. The Violators had no trouble navigating over and through the Cubs' defence for a big offensive day as well. *Patrick Mahomes* added 335 yards passing and 4 TD passes to his impressive 2021 resume, but fell short in the race on the scoreboard.

It was an all-out frenzy from start to finish. There was just one punt in the entire game, coming after Redding challenged a ruling on the field of a 3<sup>rd</sup> & 10 completion to *Ja'Marr Chase*. Cubs' corner, *Xavier Rhodes* had nailed Chase after the throw, but the receiver had seemed to maintain possession as he went to ground. A video review showed the ball hitting the ground as he landed and bouncing back up into Chase's arms, but it had been very hard to see on the first three angles. Yet, referee *Jerome Boger* had taken relatively little time to overturn the ruling on the field.

This quick decision drew the ire of Virden coach, *Lance Barrate*, who kept pointing to his opposite number on the Cubs' sideline as he verbally castigated Boger. He was obviously angry that Redding had sidled over to the video replay area, which happened to be on the Cubs' side of the field, and had stood in Boger's view and stared at him unwaveringly during the review. It was a move noted by the FOX broadcast team of *Joe Duck* and *Troy Acheman*.

"And Deron Redding is going over to the replay review area where Jerome Boger is watching the monitor," Duck announced. "And it looks like he's not trying to *say* anything, but he's standing pretty close to him, Troy. What do you make of that?"

"Well, I don't know what to make of that outfit, Joe, first of all," Acheman replied with a dry chuckle. "But I have to think that the Cubs' coach might be trying to send him a message. I am not going to...uh...speculate on what that might be...but I have to think that would be pretty disconcerting to Jerome Boger as he tries to concentrate on the video."

That single punt was enough for the irresistible Cubs offence to get in front of Virden by two scores. The Cubs drove back 77 yards in 12 plays and scored on an 8-yard pass from **Russell Wilson** to **Jerrick McKinnon** to make it 28-14, burning off the rest of the clock in the 1st half in the process.

It could have probably continued that way indefinitely, the teams scoring back-and-forth and the Cubs always a TD or two in front. However, the Cubs gave back that advantage when, up 28-21 in the 3rd quarter, they decided to go for it on 4th & 7 from their own 43-yard line. This was not a typical Redding decision, but it was not the typical **Deron Redding** making the decision. When one of his assistants questioned it, the new and nastier Cubs' coach snapped back, "We'll punt when I say we'll punt! And we're not punting! We're going to dominate them in their own building!"

The plan did not work. **Leonard Williams** broke through and sacked **Russell Wilson**, giving Virden a short field and the momentum after the turnover on downs. Mahomes made them pay with a 4-yard TD pass to **Gabriel Davis** to tie the game at 28. Nervousness gripped the Cubs' sideline, but Redding, intoxicated with the thrill of his newfound power, barked at his offence to get it back or he would whip their butts in practice. This seemed to light an unusual fire under Wilson and the offence.

In a game where the Cubs could not be stopped, except by themselves, Wilson was able to regain the lead and the initiative with another long scoring drive that ended with a 14-yard TD run by McKinnon. Mahomes came right back with another a 48-yard TD to Davis to tie, but the Cubs countered with another score, a Wilson keeper from 2 yards out to make it 42-35. It looked like this back-and-forth would continue until **Jaylon Johnson** forced a **TJ Hockenson** fumble at the Cubs' 34 and returned it to the Virden 45. On the next play, Wilson scrambled for 30 yards to set up McKinnon's third TD run, and 4th TD of the day with 1:03 left to put the game out of reach.

The Cubs had come into the Violators' house and administered a thrashing of a kind rarely, if ever, witnessed from a Cubs offence. There had been no pick-sixes or special teams scores to beef up the total. This was entirely the work of an offence that had imposed its will on a submissive Virden defence beset by injuries and caught off guard by the boldness of the Iowa attack. The media saw a connection between the shocking outfit Redding had been wearing and the performance of his team. It caused the Violators' beat reporter, **Marquis de Sade**, of the *Virden Eviscerator*, to take the unprecedented step of joining the opponent's post-game press conference to get to the bottom of a story that evidently intrigued him.

"Coach Redding, as you are aware, I think everybody was shocked – but not necessarily displeased – to see you in a leather fetish BDSM outfit on the sideline today," began **Marquis de Sade**. "I might have expected that from Coach Barrate, but not you. Was this to inspire your team to dominate and humiliate your opponent? Were you making a personal statement to encourage others to come out and feel pride to express who they are? Was it a combination of both, maybe, or something else?"

Coach Redding, who had adopted a permanent scowl for the occasion of his first press conference as a badass, nasty dude, appeared taken aback by the question. The scowl vanished briefly as he contemplated it. Then it hit him and he replied hastily and somewhat apologetically, "No, no, the black leather and chains had nothing to do with BLM – a group whose social justice goals I support wholeheartedly!" Redding fumbled. He recalled vividly the controversy around his former quarterback, **Colin Kaepernick**, when he had released him from the team. Redding had been criticized as racist for not keeping an African-American quarterback who had taken a stand for social justice and playing him over another African-American quarterback who had not. It had taken the murder of **George Floyd** for the "Woke" to forget about him and move on to defunding the police. He did not want to go back.

Some nervous chuckles, a couple of hearty laughs and smile from the **Marquis de Sade** greeted his response.

"You don't need to be so coy, Coach," de Sade offered reassuringly. "I can't speak for the State of Iowa, but in Canada we are accepting of the BDSM lifestyle and the leather subculture, whether it be straight, gay or queer. No judgement from me. I just wanted to explore your thoughts on bringing the dominance and submission dynamics of fetish play onto the football field."

Coach Redding looked like a deer caught in the headlights. His eyes, wide at the best of times, widened further. He seemed to be searching his brain for some deeply-buried clue as to what the Virden beat reporter was saying. He understood 'fetish' and its association to feet. The former Pastor of his church had been accused of having that affliction after he had performed the rite of foot washing for Maundy Thursday on a young and attractive new soprano in the choir. He had spent far more time "down there" than was customary and it had created a stir of controversy in the congregation that ultimately ended in the dismissal of the Pastor. Was De Sade saying he had a foot fetish?

"Absolutely not!" he declared abruptly and angrily, not answering the question. "Do you think I'm some kind of pervert?"

Some more nervous chuckles, a few more hearty laughs and a raise of an eyebrow from the **Marquis de Sade**.

"Well, I was hoping you were," he said titillatingly, to another round of nervous chuckles and a couple of hearty laughs.

A flustered and red-faced Redding realized that he was losing control of this conference. He was adrift and confused and willing to drop the façade of Mr. Nasty if he could simply get back to talking about football. That's when a trusty old friend came to his rescue:

"Coach Redding," interject **Sparky McGillicuddy** of the *The Iowan*, breaking protocol and not waiting his turn. "This was a back-and-forth game that looked like it could have gone either way. What do you see as the turning point in the game?"

It was a standard opening question – the kind Redding had fielded hundreds of times before. With a look of evident relief, he jumped on it: "Thank you Sparky! There were a lot of key plays in this game but the one that jumps to mind was Russell's scramble and throw to convert that third down late in the third quarter. They had just tied it up after my decision to go for it and the momentum

felt like it was going their way until Tyler came up with the ball on the pass from Russell. That play went for more than 30 yards I think and it kind of got us going again. I felt like that put us back on track for the win.”

The battle to get the line of questioning back to Redding’s leather outfit was on from that point, with De Sade and some other local reporters trying to steer him back to the hilariously uncomfortable topic. Everyone wanted to see his face live when he learned what BDSM stood for. But it was not to be. The friendly side of the Iowa reporting cadre kept the questioning safe until Redding had spent the minimum time in front of the Press required of a head coach, then he hastily bowed out of the room.

By the time this goes to print, the world’s most naïve man will have had somebody explain to him the meaning of BDSM. We’ll never know how he reacted, but since I’m on a bit of a roll with making easy predictions, here is #12 for this week’s column: We won’t see **Deron Redding** on the field wearing a leather outfit ever again.

### **FOOTBALL**

Sometimes all you have say is “football” and everyone understands. They may not know the details, but details aren’t required when “football” is used as a noun, adjective, verb, adverb, definite and indefinite article all rolled into one. “Football” is what happened this week at The Eagle’s Nest in Toronto, where the Blue Eagles snapped a six-game winless streak with an improbable 31-28 win over division rival, Cowtown. That “football” happened was both fortunate and unfortunate, depending on which sideline you occupied.

It’s been a rough year for the Blue Eagles and while most of it has been their own fault, they certainly haven’t had many breaks. Well, they made up for it this week at home to Cowtown. The Corn Kings could not hang on to the ball, losing three fumbles, two of them to **Carmen Dantzer** punch moves, and had a bad snap sail over their punter’s head for a loss of 11-yards on 4<sup>th</sup> down. These mishaps led to 24 of the Blue Eagles’ 31 points, with 7 of those came directly on **Alex Anzalone**’s 76-yard fumble recovery TD and the rest on short fields resulting from the turnovers. Punch moves, a slip of the hand, lost footing, jarring hits, letting loose an oblong spheroid to take off on its unpredictable path to destiny is simply “football” in its most primal form.

This game was off the analytics charts, so don’t try to make sense of it with a calculator. Looking at just the final stat line, it is astounding that Cowtown still managed to lose, even with the fumbles. They out-gained Scarborough 474-153, gained 30 first downs to just 8 for the Blue Eagles, held the ball for over 37 minutes, ran 40 more plays from scrimmage and scored TDs on all three trips to the red zone. These are the stats of a blowout going the other direction. Instead, they lost 31-28.

A bad snap to end their first series led to a one-play Scarborough TD drive; that play being a 23-yard run by **Myles Gaskin** against a defence still in shock that it was starting the game with its back to its own red zone. Then back-to-back lost fumbles, including the one that led to Anzalone’s touchdown return, had Cowtown trailing 21-7 early in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter.

The Corn Kings took back one of those scores on a 39-yard TD pass from **Jimmy Garoppolo** to **Mike Evans** then the defence snuffed out the punch-less Scarborough counter-attack. Taking over at their own 35 with a chance to get back even, **Logan Ryan** forced a fumble on a Garoppolo scramble and **Micah Kiser** recovered, leading to a **Mason Crosby** field goal and a 24-14 Scarborough lead at the half.

The one touchdown generated by the Blue Eagles’ offence came at the start of the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter and even that was a patchy affair. A roughing the kicker penalty on **Johnathan Hankins** took a 56-yard field goal off the board but allowed the Blue Eagles to take another shot at finding the end zone. They made good on the opportunity with a 15-yard checkdown to **Allen Robinson II** on a daring 4<sup>th</sup> & 2 gamble to make it 31-14. From there it was an amazingly close foot race to the finish, as Garoppolo cranked up the dial, leading two quick touchdown drives. The Corn Kings had a legitimate shot to at least tie it, but ran out of gas at the 43-yard line of Scarborough. As Garoppolo’s desperate pass to the end zone fell short, the Blue Eagles flooded onto the field in celebration.

Cowtown coach, **Jim Coghlin**, keenly aware that his team has little room for error in a tight race if it is to reach the playoffs for a seventh-straight season, took to the podium afterwards clearly frustrated at how his team let the game get away. But he seemed to know at the same time that a sacred principle, an elemental force of sport, had been unleashed on the field that day.

When asked what he thought he or his team could have done better to change the outcome, he smirked and rolled his eyes in evident irritation before recovering and running for the safety of the philosophical high ground.

“You know...sometimes this game just comes down to making brute force plays, battling through adversity and yes, getting lucky. Their defence battled hard throughout the game and they got rewarded with those forced fumbles and those recoveries. Everyone knows: Me, you, the players more than anyone, that you can’t turn the ball over in this league and expect to not pay a price. We paid a pretty hefty price today and really kind of wasted a good game from Jimmy G and Todd. I thought Todd showed a spark today. He felt crushed after that fumble, as he should, but that’s football sometimes. What happened today to us was simply football!”

“Football” certainly had a lot to say and do on this day, as if it’s essence had been guided by the hands of the *Football Gods* to remind each one of us that no outcome can be taken for granted and that the game will never be a slave to statistics.

### **THE CONFIDENCE GAME**

At Coyote Field in Marietta, GA, Cobb County emerged 17-14 victors in an East Division dust-up with the Wrecking Balls. **Ryan Tannehill** threw a touchdown pass to **DeVante Parker** and scrambled 17 yards for another to spark the win and give his team a two-game lead in the division. While the Coyotes remain on top, their troubles in victory have created a league of skeptics who wonder just how long they can stay at the top. Judging from their competition, I vote for very long. The Coyotes will win the East because the rest of the division is populated by river boat gamblers who win by accident as much as design.

Case in point: Another **Sean McDermott** decision (suspected to have been influenced by owner **JC Cohen**) is in the crosshairs

after the Wrecking Balls, trailing 17-7, declined to try an easy field goal early in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. Instead, they went for it on 4th & 5 in a game where field goals mattered. **Matt Stafford** couldn't find an open man and threw it down at the feet of **JD McKissic** for a turnover on downs. It would have later outcome-altering implications.

"I like the call," commented **Daryl Johnston** of the FOX network at the time, as the Balls lined up to go for it.

All announcers these days default to supporting these types of bold 4<sup>th</sup>-down decisions that, until the analytics fad went mainstream and the charts started circulating, would have once seemed like nutty gambles. When the gamble failed, Johnston, not wanting to alienate rabid drunken fans who may have liked the decision or contradict himself, doubled down:

"I still like the call to go for it there. You have a team that has been struggling to score points, in striking distance of the end zone. You make that play and maybe that leads to a touchdown and you're only down by 3. At worst, you give the ball back to the Coyotes deep in their own end and force them to dig themselves out of a hole."

Johnston should have stopped his analysis at "*you have a team that has been struggling to score points*" then thought about it a bit more. This wasn't 4<sup>th</sup> & inches, or even 4th & a long one. This was 4th & 5 in a tight section of the field against the league's no.1-ranked red zone defence. Down by two scores late in the game, the first priority is to get one of them back and the Wrecking Balls had a golden opportunity to do just that. Instead, they opted for the splash play and ended up with mud on their faces.

The Balls eventually scored a TD on their next possession which would have tied the game had the earlier field goal try been made and on the board. Instead of being tied at 17, however, they kicked off, down 3, with 4:01 left and never got the ball back again as the Coyotes ran out the clock.

After the game, part-owner **JC Cohen** stepped to the podium in the middle of McDermott's Q&A and seized the mic when the question of the failed 4<sup>th</sup> down attempt came up.

"I have to support Sean on this," Cohen blustered. "Matt had found his mojo at that point. We're playing for first place. The penalty on the 4<sup>th</sup> down field goal try changed the equation. It wasn't 4<sup>th</sup> & 10 anymore it was 4<sup>th</sup> & 5. That's half of what we needed before. That's a 50% discount – you can't turn your nose up at that. It's a confidence call, confidence in the offence and confidence in the defence. And it worked. We got the ball back in good field position and went in to score with lots of time left. Take away all those first downs they got at the end to kill the clock and we would have got another shot. And if we get another shot, the way the offence was playing, we win, 'cause, like...we're grooving on offence finally! Bad luck! Bad luck continues to plague us!"

The beauty of football is that it requires a coupling of raw emotion with clear intellect to be successful. But the emotionalism belongs to the players, not the coaches. This was an emotional decision by the coach – the last thing an owner wants to see most of the time. When the owner supports it, the franchise ends up going where the adrenaline sends it. It's a "juice" call that may have resonated with the offence, but it ultimately failed them. The defence has "juice" as well, and they also see the gamble as an opportunity.

It made no logical sense to think that the lesser chance to score a touchdown outweighed the much greater chance of making the field goal when two scores – a touchdown and a field goal – were required. It was a gambler's call. And gamblers always lose in the end.

### **DEATH ROW**

At the Assassin's Den in Las Vegas, the home team survived a stiff challenge from the visiting Triumph to arise victorious, 38-28, cinching a dicey deal with three 4<sup>th</sup>-quarter takeaways. **Dalvin Cook** rushed for 98 yards and 3 TDs, while **Justin Herbert** continued to look like a veteran, completing 24 of 28 for 290 yards and a TD against a Triumph defence that didn't have a lot of answers. Yes, the Assassins won again, and continue to set the pace in the tightly-contested West Division; but they lost the battle for hearts and minds of all but their own fans against a spirited Triumph squad that played like they had nothing to lose. In Week 9, with the season's walls closing in, that was the attitude the Triumph needed to wipe the smug smiles off the faces of the Assassins. They still lost, mind you, but they stole the show.

As we wait patiently for the Saviour, I decided to focus on the quarterback that once carried the hopes of the Triumph franchise on his shoulders, but was deemed wanting then sentenced to death. As his days are numbered, I wanted to take a closer look while I still could. It was an interesting and revealing exercise. I may have found the reason why the Redeemer is still watching in street clothes.

There were times in the game where I had the sense that if, just *if*, they had a more...let's say...*confident* quarterback under center, the elements of a playoff run would be there for this Triumph team. However, **Mitch Trubisky** did show elements of swagger in his game, despite continuously being on death row for eight weeks now waiting for the Anointed One to replace him. A prime example came on the first series, when coach **Guy Williams** kept his offence on the field on 4th & 4 at the Vegas 35. The decision to go for it should have come as no surprise: **Dustin Hopkins** has only attempted 5 field goals all year, none from a distance greater than 40 yards (he's made them all by the way). With the chance to draw even at an early stage in the game, facing 4<sup>th</sup>-and-not-so-short, trying a field goal was not like admitting your manhood was stolen. Yet, true to form the Triumph coach radically threw the dice and Trubisky rewarded him with a dart to **DJ Moore** for 12 yards in the face of a **Matt Judon** blitz. The throw was impressive, but more impressive was Trubisky seeing the blitz, fixing the protection and having the trust to throw the ball to area vacated by the blitzing Judon. *Nice*.

It wasn't the only time Trubisky looked like the player Williams possibly envisioned when he selected him in the first round of the 2017 draft. His perfectly thrown short slant to **Rashod Bateman** in tight coverage on 3rd & 8 allowed the rookie's momentum to carry him past the defender. His speed did the rest, scoring from 16 yards. A ball thrown anywhere else would have likely resulted in a stop or even a chance at an interception. Instead, it put Twin Cities in front 14-10 in the back half of the 2nd quarter.

Trubisky was ultimately put in the best position to succeed thanks to the running of **Melvin Gordon II**, who carried the ball 27

times for 154 yards and a touchdown. Staying close on the scoreboard also kept the Assassins' defence somewhat honest. Maybe that is the real rub on Mitch. In an era when coaches believe they need a superstar who can do it all at quarterback to succeed, Trubisky requires pieces around him and complementary play from the defence to succeed. But hasn't that always been the case with most quarterbacks...*forever*? When did we start demanding a **Patrick Mahomes** and nothing less?

When the inevitable happened and the Triumph effort fell short, it was not because of Trubisky. It was Gordon who fumbled the ball that **Yannick Ngakoue** returned 38 yards for a touchdown to make it a two-score advantage in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. And it was **Garrett Bradbury** who snapped the ball over Trubisky's head that **Cameron Heyward** ultimately recovered to squash a 4<sup>th</sup> quarter drive to try and get back in it. His one interception at the end came trying to make a play in the dying minutes. Who can fault him for that? But they will.

So, it may just be that the Triumph may never be ready to remove the bubble wrap from **Trevor Lawrence** this season. With performances like this, there may be something for the rookie to learn from the "veteran" on Death Row.

#### **AROUND THE EFL**

The impressive offensive blitz by the Cubbies and the strange inverted victory by the Blue Eagles stood out as oddities in a Week Nine that went more or less as predicted. However, I will start my rundown of the rest of the league's action with a pair of not-so-predictable outcomes that are strong indicators of one team on the rise and another on the decline.

The miraculous Irish season continued at Thermopylae Stadium in Pickering, with two-minute magic from **Baker Mayfield** and **Tyreek Hill** dashing the Spartans' hopes and elevating East Elmhurst to a commanding 3-game lead in the South. If you did not watch this game, don't let the last-minute heroics and tight 20-17 final in favour of the Irish fool you into thinking this was a good game to watch. It was another turgid rendering from a distended Pickering offence that farted out almost half of its total offence, and 14 of its 17 points, on two TD plays: an 87-yard catch-and-run by **Darnell Mooney** and a 36-yard dime from **Philip Rivers** to **Calvin Ridley**. If all you saw was the highlight reel from this game you would think it was the 29-year-old Rivers behind center for Pickering and not the 39-year-old rusty remnant. This game would have been almost invisible on the Red Zone channel, as the Irish also scored on a homerun when **Sony Michel** hurdled a defender and careened down the sideline for a 52-yard TD run for the first Irish score. The money portion of this game really started with a decision by the Irish to go for it on 4<sup>th</sup> & 5 at the Pickering 32 with 3:03 left. Calculating that he did not have time for two scores, Coach **Archbishop Thomas Molloy** rolled the dice rather than attempt a field goal. A 9-yard completion to Hill kept the drive alive, leading the Irish to score three plays later on a 10-yard TD pass to **Adam Thielen** to tie the game at 17 with 1:24 left. The Spartans took over with a chance to have the final say or at least send the game to overtime. But an illegal block on the kick return and three flabby passes from Rivers that fell incomplete gave the Irish the ball at their own 38 with 0:33 left. That set up Hill's highlight reel 34-yard end-around to set up **Rodrigo Blankenship** for the 31-yard game-winning field goal.

At the GM Megadome in Oshawa, the Hawks confirmed their rebound and the Pink Panthers' ultimate demise with a masterly 45-31 victory, raising their record to 4-5 and keeping them in the playoff hunt. This was another crazy Week Nine offensive explosion with the teams combining for 52 1<sup>st</sup> downs and 942 yards of total offence. However, the balanced Oshawa attack, one of their best efforts of the year, could not keep up with an explosive Hawks squad that saw a familiar combo reunite in a stellar comeback. While all look aghast at the disintegration of the Pink Panthers, fantasy footballers are drooling at the sudden re-emergence of the **Derek Carr** to **DeAndre Hopkins** combo that exploded on the field in this game. Less than one week after I noted, fatalistically, that there were clear limits on how effective Carr-to-Hopkins can be, given the lack of other options, they proved me and a growing body of fantasy "gurus" wrong by shredding the Oshawa secondary for 12 receptions, 199 yards and 2 TDs. The return of **Austin Ekeler** certainly helped. He opened up the underneath passing game, giving Carr another viable option and helping him put in one of his best games as a pro, completing 37 of 51 pass attempts for 489 yards and 6 TDs in shearing the head off the top of the Oshawa secondary. By the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, rookie coach, **Scott Dennis** had tossed aside his play sheet and retreated to the locker room to, it is claimed, take care of nature's call. However, his florid complexion and rambling post-game press conference suggested that perhaps it was for some other reason – a stress reliever in the form of several shots of an intoxicating beverage.

At The Fortress in Bruxelles, the Bombers' defence forced five turnovers and made three 4<sup>th</sup>-down stops to help the offence push past **Lamar Jackson**, 37-22. This game was all about Lamar and the good and the bad (mostly bad) that he brings to the field each week. The Derailers' QB was picked off twice by Bombers' safety **Harrison Smith** in his first two series and fumbled the ball away to **Emmanuel Ogbah** on his third, to dig himself into a 16-0 hole in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter. Then the good Lamar came out to play, leading two 2<sup>nd</sup>-quarter touchdown drives to pull his team within 2 points at half time. Then the bad Lamar returned after a TD drive by the Bombers to open the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter put Buffalo behind 23-14. Trying to "make something happen" (isn't that what they are all trying to do?) Lamar fired a quick out in the direction of **Noah Fant**, ignoring, or not seeing, **Harrison Smith** cutting underneath. The former All-Pro safety snared his third interception and would have had a pick-six had he not fumbled the ball before recovering it at the Buffalo 12. **Drew Brees** put down his popcorn to enter the game and handed the ball off to **Leonard Fournette** for a touchdown and a 30-14 lead. Jackson continued to run all over the field, missing throws and making panicked decisions before finally leading his team to a cosmetic touchdown to **Russell Gage** with 0:13 left to *raise* his game-day passer rating to 56.9. Lamar finished with 221 yards rushing on 17 carries and came away with nothing to show for it all. But he sure is "electrifying" and that will keep everyone talking about him as if he's the MVP.

At Camelot in Avalon, 4 lost fumbles by 4 different Gladiators turned a good game and a prospective Georgia victory into a 42-13 blowout for York. It really did appear, at least early, that the Glads were going to give York everything it could handle and then some, as they took a 13-0 lead built on steady offence and sound defence. The game started to get strange after York finally got on the board

with a **Tom Brady** TD pass to **Javonte Williams**, that followed one play after a fumbled punt by **Diontae Johnson** was recovered by York at the Georgia 8-yard line. Brady and **Big Ben** went on to trade interceptions twice before half time, giving up and losing opportunities, to stoke a chaotic atmosphere that stayed on the field. However, that sense of chaos only affected the Gladiators in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half. Three lost fumbles in their own end doomed the visitors to an ignominious end. The Excaliburs scored three touchdowns off those turnovers, covering a grand total of 42 yards to do it. On top of the miserable ending on the scoreboard, *Fate* added injury to insult as **James Robinson**, **Zach Ertz** and **Will Fuller V** all had to leave the game with multi-game injuries. The Swords, now 7-2, continue to stab all comers not from Durham or Budapest, while the sorry Glads fall to 1-7-1. Saying they are better than their record starts to sound quite hollow at this point.

At Kingdome in Seattle, the lackadaisical Pats once again did just enough to get by as they rebounded from a 17-7 deficit to overtake the Pilots, 24-20. **Amari Cooper** was awarded the game ball for his two touchdown catches and for displaying the ability to get open while running predictable routes. **DeShaun Watson** didn't break a sweat in throwing two picks to pair with his two touchdowns and expressed relief after the game that he didn't have to run a two-minute drill, thanks to **JK Dobbins** running in the go-ahead TD from 19 yards with plenty of time left in the 4<sup>th</sup>. "Those hurry-ups are hard," he said to nervous laughter from the gallery. **Gardner Minshew II** brought some life to the Seattle attack, but unfortunately it came with a shelf life of about 30 minutes. Minshew II threw himself and his team out of the game with a dismal 2<sup>nd</sup> half effort. The Pats rise to 8-1, while the Pilots continue their nose dive, falling to 1-8.

On a rare clear day at Jurassic Park in Durham, the Thunder Lizards and **Josh Allen** took care of business against division rival Sebastian, handing the Swordfish a 38-17 loss. The top-ranked Swordfish offence was unable to keep up with a five-touchdown blitz by the Thunder Lizards. Allen threw three TD passes and rushed for two more scores in five consecutive possessions spanning the game's first three quarters. Facing a new level of secondary and pass rush. **Kirk Cousins** looked more like he has throughout most of his career, managing a season-low 177 yards passing. The Fish had to rely on their two big running backs and, while **Jonathan Taylor** and **Nick Chubb** made 139 yards of headway against the Durham front, they were unable to keep pace over the long haul. Three successful 4<sup>th</sup>-down conversions, one from their own 24-yard line early in the game, kept both of Sebastian's TD drives alive. Otherwise, it would have been an embarrassing 3-point effort from the league's most efficient offence. Meanwhile, Allen, who was involved in 331 of his team's 401 total yards, is getting serious mention in the national press as one of the front-runners for MVP.

At True North Field in Winnipeg, the hot hand of **Teddy Bridgewater** guided the Convicts to an uncomfortably close 26-16 win over the Crusaders. Bridgewater threw for 253 yards and 2 TD passes, both to **Michael Gallup**, and picked up 3 first downs with his legs to generate enough offence to survive another scare from the bad team that nobody really wants to play. On one hand, it was clear that Chino was the better unit and had the game somewhat under control throughout. On the other hand, the Pegs were able to hang around long enough to pose a real risk to the Convicts that that "football" thing that bit Cowtown and Georgia this week would bite them. With Chino hanging on by the score of 19-16 and 8 minutes still left to play, one mis-read, one quirky bounce or one bad call was all that potentially stood between a much-needed Chino victory and a humiliating defeat. Teddy got them out of the jam by going 3 of 3 for 41 yards and scrambling for 13 yards more on what would turn out to be an insurance touchdown in 3:33 left in the 4<sup>th</sup>. It was a wobbly win, but the Convicts won't complain. They side-stepped a possible catastrophe and stayed in the hunt for the West Division crown.

And finally, at Kelly-Burke Field in Erieau a half-hearted beatdown of the Cadillac by the all-powerful North Stars ended in a 31-10 Budapest win. Nothing personal, just business. **Aaron Rodgers** had another great day flinging the pigskin and **Kyler Murray** didn't as the North Stars continued their roll to perfection. Rodgers threw 3 TD passes, while Murray threw 3 interceptions in the mis-match. Interestingly, every time Murray was intercepted the Caddies were deep in Budapest territory, showing at least the ability of the offence to generate enough forward movement to get into scoring range against a very good Budapest defence. That is encouraging. One has to start looking for some hope if you're a supporter of the Cadillac and want to find a reason to stay in front of the set and avoid household chores. At some point, however, if the Car continues to stall on the road to football respectability, household chores will definitely seem more inviting.



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## *Jimmy's WEEK TEN PICKS*

### **BRUXELLES @ CHINO (line – CONVICTS by 5)**

**INJURIES:** **Bruxelles** – Jordan Phillips (QUESTIONABLE), Trey Flowers (OUT), O.J. Howard (OUT), A'Shawn Robinson (OUT), Isaiah Wynn (OUT); **Chino** – AJ Bouye (QUESTIONABLE), Mike Purcell (DOUBTFUL), Shaq Mason (OUT), Christian McCaffrey (OUT), Dak Prescott (OUT).

The Bombers' defence-in-name-only gave up over 200 yards rushing to a quarterback last week but still found a way to win. Call me crazy, but the "Main Magic" may be about to conjure up some amazing tricks for the second half. They have a chance to build on that win here against a banged-up Chino squad that looked a little winded after subduing the sick man of the conference last week. The suspect durability of the Chino rushing attack may be putting more pressure on Teddy Bridgewater than he can comfortably carry. The good news is that if he can avoid Harrison Smith, he should find space underneath the secondary to move the chains. The Convicts have to find a way to get Marvin Jones Jr. into the game plan. He has been a decoy to this point in the season and the Michael Gallup Show may be coming to an end. With Drew Brees still standing with one last shot at glory, I like the Bombers. **PICK: BRUXELLES**

### **SEATTLE @ BUFFALO (line – DERAILERS by 4)**

**INJURIES:** **Seattle** – None; **Buffalo** – Jaquiski Tartt (QUESTIONABLE), Derek Barnett (OUT), Whitney Mercilus (OUT), Emmanuel Sanders (OUT).

The Derailers, losers of four straight games, are probably looking at the Pilots with relief. They should not be as Seattle is, without question, the best 1-8 team in the league. By that, I mean that Seattle will battle to the end and that means last-minute field goal victories regardless of who is on the high end of the score. No doubt, Lamar Jackson is an amazing athlete, but last week demonstrated that being individually amazing is not enough in a team sport. Thinking that Lamar's super powers can easily overcome a 4<sup>th</sup> & 15 as if it was 4<sup>th</sup> & 2 and going for it for the hell of it does not help Lamar or anyone be his best self. The Pilots on the other hand, don't have to worry much about handling their stars, as they only have one, Khalil Mack. He has been the definition of a "silent leader" so far, with just 3 sacks. All the same, the Pilots are a team first and that should help them keep it close here. **PICK: SEATTLE**

### **LAS VEGAS @ NEW JERSEY (line – ASSASSINS by 8)**

**INJURIES:** **Las Vegas** – Greg Van Roten (PROBABLE); **New Jersey** – Osa Odighizuwa (PROBABLE).

The Wrecking Balls found a path to another loss last week, turning the ball over twice on interceptions and opting for Door no.2 in the red zone and turning it over on downs. Now they come home to face the music, where fans are increasingly grumpy and impatient. The arrival of the Assassins should do nothing to improve the ambience. Las Vegas is not struggling to find paths to victory each week, and when their conventional game plan stalls, they simply take the ball away. Vegas boasts a league-high +11 turnover differential on 17 takeaways while New Jersey wallows at -8 on 13 giveaways. Only Peg City is worse. Those two numbers are probably all you need to know about where this game is likely to go. Add in that NJ can't run the ball with a reputed stud at running back and the Assassins stop the run better than anyone, and Matt Stafford is likely in for a long day. **PICK: LAS VEGAS**

### **COBB COUNTY @ IOWA CITY (line – Pick 'Em)**

**INJURIES:** **Cobb County** – Hassan Ridgeway (OUT); **Iowa City** – None.

The denizens of the dunes obviously liked the oomph displayed by the Cubs' offence in their donnybrook against Virden last week. They enter this contest as an even bet to come out on top of a team five ranks ahead of them in the power rankings. If you believe the Cubs have turned a corner and their early struggles are behind them, then this is an attractive line. The Coyotes looked sluggish last

week and appeared content to let NJ beat itself. Coming off a flat outing vs Peg City the week before, they enter this game at a slowing pace that will need to be picked up to stay with the fully-loaded Cubs' offence. The solid Coyotes 'D' will need to be superlative to keep the Cubs under the 24-point range needed to give Ryan Tannehill the edge. Russell Wilson will have other ideas. **PICK: IOWA CITY**

### **TWIN CITIES @ VIRDEN (line – VIOLATORS by 4)**

**INJURIES:** **Twin Cities** – Antonio Brown (OUT), Trent Brown (OUT), Kenny Golladay (OUT); **Virden** – Geno Atkins (OUT), Anthony Barr (OUT), John Brown (OUT), Austin Bryant (OUT), Parris Campbell (OUT), Ezekiel Elliott (OUT), Malik Hooker (OUT), Lane Johnson (OUT), Kelechi Osemele (OUT), Solomon Thomas (OUT), Oshane Ximines (OUT).

Ezekiel Elliott has been ruled out for the second straight week. They hardly noticed his absence last week in a game that was hijacked by a daredevil air show, but expect it to be different this time. Mitch Trubisky will not be dialing up too many passes as the Triumph will rely on their ground assets to play keep-away from Pat Mahomes and to exploit a still very much banged-up Virden defensive front. The Violators have been aggressive through the air of late but could certainly use the option of running the ball if for no other reason than to give their defence a rest. Still, expect the Violators to launch more than their fair share of fearless deep shots against a Triumph defence that has only 2 picks so far this year and is last in the league in sacks. Would this analysis change if the Messiah made his first appearance? Possibly. But waiting for His first coming is like waiting for the Second Coming – don't hold your breath. **PICK: VIRDEN**

### **CHARLESWOOD @ PEG CITY (line – PATRIOTS by 7)**

**INJURIES:** **Charleswood** – Desmond Trufant (QUESTIONABLE), Alvin Kamara (OUT), Brandon Linder (OUT), Ronnie Stanley (OUT); **Peg City** – Josh Allen (DOUBTFUL), Saquon Barkley (OUT), Jonathan Bullard (OUT), Devin Bush (OUT), Tarik Cohen (OUT), Davon Godchaux (OUT), Chandler Jones (OUT), Jeff Okudah (OUT), Courtland Sutton (OUT), Jalen Thompson (OUT).

It wasn't exactly their finest hour the last time the Pats played their crosstown rivals but they came away with the 'W' because the Crusaders are just that bad. Nine weeks without a win is right about the time when opponents start to get a little nervous about playing the winless team, however. Nobody wants to lose to such a team and everybody knows that football is a funny kind of sport where a few bad bounces and a long surge of adrenaline from an emotional high can alter outcomes drastically, turning mice into men and bending nerves of steel. The Crusaders have kept games close at least until the half the past four weeks. One can clearly see their desire to win. However, they are too young and too light to go 60 minutes with a heavyweight, even a lazy one. **PICK: CHARLESWOOD**

### **DURHAM @ OSHAWA (line – THUNDER LIZARDS by 11)**

**INJURIES:** **Durham** – Rashaad Penny (OUT); **Oshawa** – Eric Kendricks (PROBABLE), Kenyan Drake (OUT), Julian Edelman (OUT), Dallas Goedert (OUT), Alijah Vera-Tucker (OUT), K'Waun Williams (OUT).

A double-digit line going against Oshawa at home would have been inconceivable even mere weeks ago. However, the Pink Panthers are buried in such a funk and the Thunder Lizards have looked so strong after losing to Cowtown that it seems a natural cushion at this point. Among the oddities nobody saw coming is the mediocrity of the PP passing attack, which, despite showing flashes, is producing in the bottom third of league in most categories. After Davante Adams, there is nobody stepping up to fill the gap; the loss of Julian Edelman is hurting even more than anticipated. Durham is starting to fire on all proverbial cylinders and is finding plenty of air in the passing game out of a conservative pro set. Darren Waller is proving to be the not-so-big secret to opening up all the aerial options to the wideouts. The struggling Oshawa defence is ripe for abuse, but I still think there is enough "Aurora" left in 'em to make this close. **PICK: OSHAWA**

### **COWTOWN @ ERIEAU (line – CORN KINGS by 1)**

**INJURIES:** **Cowtown** – Eric Saubert (OUT); **Erieau** – Joey Bosa (OUT), Stephon Gilmore (OUT).

The Corn Kings are losers of three straight after fumbling away a game they should have won last week. The return of Jimmy Garoppolo brought an uptick in offensive production but there still seemed to be a cloud over them. They now bring that cloud to Erieau where the skies always seem grey for the Cadillac. That might be changing. They ran into Budapest last week, but prior to that they were winners of two straight, with the offence kicking it into high gear. Perhaps the Cadillac that many felt would take a leap forward this year has arrived, just in time to make the division race a little more interesting. The Corn Kings, on the third leg of their road trip, look vulnerable. Even with Joey Bosa and Stephon Gilmore out, Erieau has the depth on 'D' to handle the inexplosive Corn King offence. Expect the game to come down to how well Kyler Murray plays and where the turnovers bounce and the zebra's flags fall. **PICK: ERIEAU**

### **EAST ELMHURST @ SEBASTIAN (line – IRISH by 1)**

**INJURIES:** **East Elmhurst** – None; **Sebastian** – Matt Feiler (OUT), T.Y. Hilton (OUT), Jordan Jenkins (OUT), Denzel Perryman (OUT), Jonathan Taylor (OUT).

One feels this is a pivotal game for the Swordfish. After all the swashbuckling do-or-die gambits and offensive fireworks of the "Greatest Show on Surf," their most notable achievement has been to achieve a dead-even 500-record over an odd number of games. If not for that great offence, it is terrible to think where they might be with that dreadful defence. The Fish have given up 315 points already, most of

those are through the air via a league-high 27 TD passes surrendered. Tyreek Hill is practising his end zone celebration as I write this. The Irish have been winning by playing tough defence and getting clutch plays on offence. They have not been blowing people away, but that might change this week. With TY Hilton out, I expect a slow down in Sebastian's ability to counter. **PICK: EAST ELMHURST**

### **GEORGIA @ SCARBOROUGH (line – BLUE EAGLES by 4)**

**INJURIES: Georgia** – Melvin Ingram III (QUESTIONABLE), Zach Ertz (OUT), Will Fuller V (OUT), James Robinson (OUT); **Scarborough** – Shaq Lawson (PROBABLE), Nick Bosa (OUT), Landon Collins (OUT), DeSean Jackson (OUT), Justin Jones (OUT), CJ Uzomah (OUT).

With the Glads getting soundly thrashed by York and the Blue Eagles playing under a lucky star last week, the professional odds-makers are playing up those last impressions by pumping up the line in favour of the home team. Looking at Georgia as a true underdog here could be dangerous, however. Take away the giveaways by the Corn Kings last week and the Eagles looked exactly like the one-win team they were when they entered the game. Unless the Glads are as generous, Scarborough will have to contend with a more complete Georgia offence and try to keep pace with their own, which has struggled to string together back-to-back first downs, forget back-to-back scoring drives. Expect the Glads to feature their three top-tier wideouts and challenge the Blue Eagles to guess right. **PICK: GEORGIA**

### **BUDAPEST @ PICKERING (line – NORTH STARS by 9)**

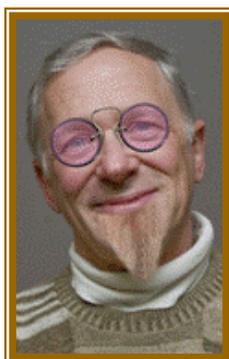
**INJURIES: Budapest** – None; **Pickering** – Darqueze Dennard (OUT), Richie Incognito (OUT), Miles Sanders (OUT).

If you are a team looking to get right or stay right, the last team you want to see coming up on your calendar is the North Stars. The Spartans need to get right in a hurry if they hope to rise up from their current state of mediocrity and claim a stake in the post-season. Once they are past this game, they have a manageable schedule. But this game will be a bugger. The Spartans do pose one unusual challenge to Budapest: They have the one cornerback capable of going one-on-one with Stefon Diggs. In their Week 2 match-up, Diggs was held to just 1 catch for 8 yards. That means Aaron Rodgers will have to work the ball around a bit more and get some help from the run game. It's not going to be a gamebreaker, however. With Miles Sanders out, the Spartans will be fatally one-dimensional. **PICK: BUDAPEST**

### **YORK @ BROOKLIN (line – EXCALIBURS by 2)**

**INJURIES: York** – Mike Williams (PROBABLE), Eli Apple (OUT), CJ Henderson (OUT); **Brooklin** – Clelin Ferrell (OUT), Ronnie Harrison Jr. (OUT), Carlos Hyde (OUT), Xavier McKinney (OUT).

As important as Derrick Henry is to the Excaliburs, nobody thought he would be this important. It is not just the numbers for the league's leading rusher, it is the effect he is having on Tom Brady and the passing game that is turning the York offence into a threat to score in any situation. This is proving enough to balance out a suspect defence that relies on takeaways and red zone tenacity to stay competitive. The Hawks are getting their wings under them after a sticky start to the season and appear capable of going either way down the stretch. Beating York would be a feather in their helmet. Losing to them would be confirmation of their position in the divisional pecking order after losing to York in Week 2. Expect Derek Carr to be bolder in targeting DeAndre Hopkins than he was then. **PICK: BROOKLIN**



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FROM THE EFL ARCHIVES – In Week 9 of the 2015 EFL season, many eyes were focused on the 6<sup>th</sup> battle between the Manning brothers, Peyton of the Charleswood Patriots and Eli of the Markham North Stars. There is something alluring about the Mannings because this mis-match between the 8-0 Pats and the 3-5 North Stars would not have garnered much attention otherwise. Peyton was a perfect 5-0 against his little brother heading into this game, which made the line more lop-sided. Strangely, this turned out to be one of the better games of Week 9 and a tragic loss for the younger Manning. Fast-forward to 0:16 left in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter

with the score, 21-16 for Charleswood. Markham had just converted a 4<sup>th</sup> & 2 from the Pats' 19-yard line and **Brandon Marshall** has been tackled short of the goal line. Facing 1<sup>st</sup> & goal, Markham coach **Darrin Jones** brought in QB, **Alex Smith** to replace Eli. With a mere foot to go, Smith incredibly attempted to pass and was sacked. Eli came back into the game with enough time for two quick passes. Both were errant, time expired and the Pats survived with their perfect record intact, while Peyton rose to 6-0- against his brother. It was a rare example of the famous North Star coach getting a little too cute.

The Pats were running away with the East Division by Week 9, as were the Thunder Lizards in the North. But in the West the Iowa City Cubs and Beaufort County Ravens were neck-and-neck at 6-2-1. The powerful Aurora Mustangs held just a two-game lead over the Gwinnett Gladiators.

In the big performance department, **Khalil Mack** of the Mission Viejo Monarchs registered 8 tackles and 3 sacks and was a big factor in his team's 27-21 upset of the Corn Kings. Running back **Tre Mason** of the Twin Cities Triumph earned recognition for his 13 rushing yards and 2 TDs on 28 carries as the Triumph attempted to keep the Patriots in sight with a 32-29 win over Sebastian.