

2017



QUARTER



EFL

ELITE FOOTBALL LEAGUE

In our 1st season and still going strong!

February 19, 2018

2017



FINALS

EAST



CENTRAL



WEST



NORTH



COASTAL



SOUTH



BROOKLIN

27



VIRDEN

20



SCARBOROUGH

17



DURHAM

28



BRUXELLES

33



IOWA CITY

24



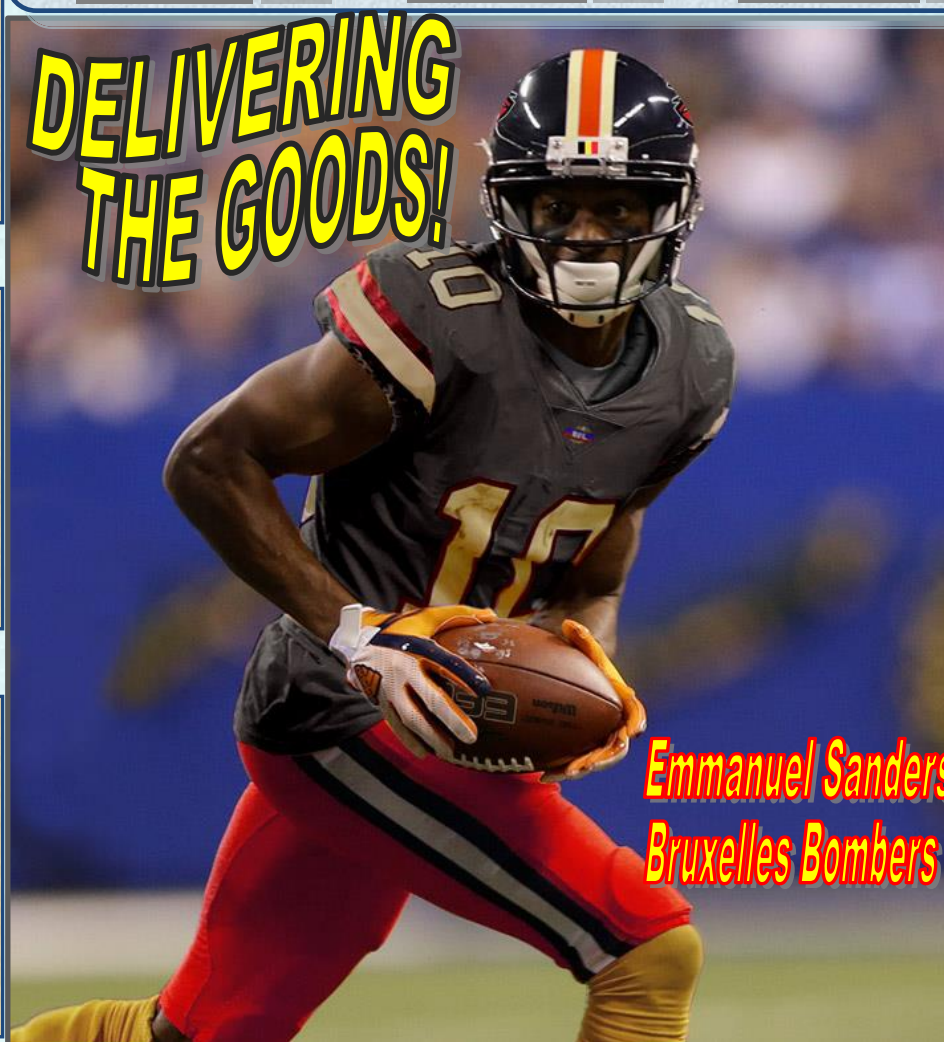
AURORA

28



BUDAPEST

42

DELIVERING
THE GOODS!Emmanuel Sanders
Bruxelles Bombers

Emmanuel Sanders has his eyes downfield as he turns to sprint to the Brooklin end zone in 1st quarter action in Bruxelles. Sanders was the main target of *Marcus Mariota* in a 381-yard passing performance that led the Bombers to a 33-27 overtime victory, the league's first playoff win in Europe. In other European EFL action the next day, the Budapest North Stars survived a 400-yard passing day by *Drew Brees* by picking him off 4 times, returning 2 for TDs in a 42-28 win. In Iowa, WR *Marqise Lee* returned a kick for a TD and caught a TD pass to lead the Cubs past Virden 24-20; and the Mustangs remained perfect after downing the Blue Eagles 28-17 at Magna Park in Aurora, thanks in large part to a 110-yard rushing day by veteran back-up *Danny Woodhead*.



Who was slick
in the Quarter
Finals?

"Brylcreem" THE
EFL'S FIRST SPONSOR



Marcus Mariota

QB

Bruxelles
Bombers

25 of 46, 381 yards, 3 TDs, 48 yds
rush. Led 2 TD drives to tie then win.



Robert Alford

CB

Budapest
North Stars

6T, 3 PD, 1 INT (67yards - TD) 1
Pick-Six and 1 tipped ball for INT.



27

Brooklin

EFL
ELITE FOOTBALL LEAGUE

GAME CENTER

2017

Pacific Quarter Finals



33

Bruxelles

TEAM LEADERS

Passing	Cmp	Att	Yds	TD
Smith	25	45	353	3
Rushing	Car	Yds	Avg	TD
Mathews	16	63	3.9	1
Receiving	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD
Hopkins	7	89	12.7	2

Team

Brooklin

1

2

3

4

OT

Total

0

14

0

13

0

27

Bruxelles

7

7

6

7

6

33

Play of the Game

In the 4th quarter, facing 3rd & 9, with 1:39 left and trailing 27-20, **Marcus Mariota** avoided the pressure and checked down to **Donte Moncrief**, who ran through the secondary for a 30-yard TD to tie it.

TEAM LEADERS

Passing	Cmp	Att	Yds	TD
Mariota	25	46	381	3
Rushing	Car	Yds	Avg	TD
Fournette	20	106	5.3	2
Receiving	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD
Sanders	7	117	16.7	1

BOMBERS BOUNCE BACK TO WIN IT OT!

MARCUS MARIOTA LEADS LATE RALLY TO TIE AND SETS UP O.T. TD

SUMMARY: In the final showdown of the year between these East Division rivals both came out trying to be the aggressor. The Hawks got the ball first and drove to near mid-field, where they faced a 4th & 2 at their 48. They did not hesitate to go for it but came up inches short. The Bombers replied in kind, attempting a 4th & 4 at the Brooklin 46, but a screen pass to **Leonard Fournette** for 1-yard was not enough and the Hawks had the ball back. The Hawks' drive resulted in a missed FG attempt and the Bombers rode the momentum to the opening score of the game; a short slant to **Travis Kelce** for 10 yards and a 7-0 lead. The Hawks replied almost immediately, with a 49-yard bomb to **Alshon Jeffery** setting up the tying score on a 21-yard medium slant to **Rob Gronkowski**. The teams exchanged punts before the Hawks got the game's first break, a tipped pass that **Brent Grimes** picked off at the Hawks' 20 to set up a quick 80-yard drive and the go-ahead TD on a 1-yard run by **Ryan Mathews**. The Bombers tied it up before half time when **Emmanuel Sanders** got behind coverage and took a long slant 25 yards for a TD to make it 14-14. After a tentative opening to the 2nd half by both teams, **Marcus Mariota** got the Bombers rolling with back-to-back passes of 25 and 13 yards to Sanders to help set up a 3-yard TD run by Fournette. But the extra point was blocked to hold their lead to 6 points. The Hawks struck back in the 4th quarter with help from a 56-yard cross to **Randall Cobb** that set up an 11-yard TD pass to **DeAndre Hopkins**. But **Cody Parkey** missed the extra point to keep the Hawks from taking the lead. The Bombers drove into the Hawks' red zone with 3:52 left, but another tipped Mariota pass was picked off by **Jairus Byrd** and Brooklin roared back to take a 27-20 lead on a 5-yard TD pass to Hopkins with just 2:12 left. With their season on the line, Kelce turned a medium cross into a 44-yard gain and two plays later, on 3rd & 9, Mariota avoided the blitz and threw underneath to **Donte Moncrief**, who raced 30 yards for the tying score. The Hawks got the ball first in OT, but their drive fizzled out quickly and Bruxelles took over at their 40. On 3rd & 10, Mariota dumped off to back-up RB, **Chris Thompson**, who found 45-yards of green to inside the red zone; two plays later Fournette burst through for the game-winning TD.

QUOTES: "I can't stand here and tell you with didn't have our chances to put this game away. Things went like they did all year with them – they made the plays when it mattered. Hats off to them, the better team won." – Brooklin coach, **Tom Jones**

"It all comes down to Marcus and his ability to keep plays alive. That's what won the game for us. The defence kept us in it after giving up some big plays and Marcus kept his head after two unlucky interceptions. Marcus never gives up and we never give up." – Bruxelles coach, **Ken Main**.



ANGRY FAN



titter

HAPPY FAN



Tom Jones @SirTomJones
Had to leave before OT. Forgive me DeAndre, I just couldn't take any more.



Kokopali @Crimpcarving
The heart of a Samoan Warrior still beats strong in the chest of the Great Marcus Mariota.



Brooklin 27 Bruxelles 33



	1	2	3	4	5	F
Brooklin	0	14	0	13	0	27
Bruxelles	7	7	6	7	6	33

Complete

* Playoff * 02-18-2018 The Fortress Temp:77 Wind:

No Line MVP:Mariota HF

1	1:21	Bruxelles	TD	Mariota 10 pass to Kelce (Catanzaro) (10-66-5:46)	0-7
2	14:49	Brooklin	TD	Smith 21 pass to Gronkowski (Parkey) (3-75-1:32)	7-7
2	3:01	Brooklin	TD	Mathews 1 run (Parkey) (8-80-3:37)	14-7
2	0:44	Bruxelles	TD	Mariota 25 pass to Sanders (Catanzaro) (7-75-2:10)	14-14
3	8:37	Bruxelles	TD	Fournette 3 run (no good) (7-71-3:46)	14-20
4	11:38	Brooklin	TD	Smith 11 pass to Hopkins (no good) (7-87-1:26)	20-20
4	2:12	Brooklin	TD	Smith 5 pass to Hopkins (Parkey) (6-73-1:30)	27-20
4	1:08	Bruxelles	TD	Mariota 30 pass to Moncrief (Catanzaro) (5-75-1:04)	27-27
5	11:57	Bruxelles	TD	Fournette 6 run	27-33

Player Stats

Passing	Att	Cmp	Yds	25	In	Td	Sk	Rate
Smith	45	25	353	3	0	3	2	103.3
	45	25	353	3	0	3	2	103.3

Rushing	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	10	Lg	Td
Mathews	16	63	3.9	4	2	35	1
Smith	3	33	11.0	1	2	15	0
	19	96	5.1	5	4	35	1

Receiving	No	Dp	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	25	Lg	Td
Hopkins	7	0	12	89	12.7	6	1	31	2
Gronkowski	5	0	6	68	13.6	4	0	21	1
Jeffery	4	0	9	82	20.5	3	1	49	0
Mathews	4	0	6	32	8.0	1	0	13	0
Cobb	3	0	8	71	23.7	1	1	56	0
Tye	2	0	4	11	5.5	0	0	6	0
	25	0	45	353	14.1	15	3	56	3

Fumbles	No	Rec	Td
Smith	1	0	0
Warford	0	1	0
	1	1	0

Kick Returns	No	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td
	0	0	0.0	0	0

Punt Returns	No	Fc	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td
Royal	2	0	3	1.5	2	0
	2	0	3	1.5	2	0

Kicking	FG	Lg	XP	Pts
Parkey	0-1	0	3-4	3

Punting	No	Yds	Avg	Tb	20	Bk	Lg
Norman	6	303	50.5	0	2	0	55

Defense	Tkl	Sk	Def	Stf	Hur	FF	Int
Foster	13	0	0	0	0	1	0-0
Burfict	11	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
Grimes	5	0	2	0	0	0	1-0
Demps	5	0	3	0	0	0	0-0
Golden	4	1	1	0	1	0	0-0
Gunter,L	4	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
Fairley	3	0	0	0	2	0	0-0
Tuitt	3	0	0	1	1	0	0-0
Hughlett	3	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Byrd	1	0	1	0	0	0	1-24
Jenkins	1	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
Johnson	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Parkey	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Jones	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Jackson	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Adams,M	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Adams,A	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
	59	1	10	1	4	1	2-24

Passing	Att	Cmp	Yds	25	In	Td	Sk	Rate
Mariota	46	25	381	6	2	3	1	85.5
	46	25	381	6	2	3	1	85.5

Rushing	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	10	Lg	Td
Fournette	20	106	5.3	7	3	18	2
Mariota	8	48	6.0	3	1	19	0
Thompson	2	9	4.5	1	0	9	0
	30	163	5.4	11	4	19	2

Receiving	No	Dp	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	25	Lg	Td
Sanders	7	0	13	117	16.7	7	2	25	1
Kelce	6	0	9	92	15.3	5	1	44	1
Thompson	5	0	9	76	15.2	2	1	45	0
Fournette	5	0	6	52	10.4	3	1	26	0
Moncrief	1	0	1	30	30.0	1	1	30	1
Pryor Sr.	1	1	8	14	14.0	1	0	14	0
	25	1	46	381	15.2	19	6	45	3

Fumbles	No	Rec	Td
Mariota	1	0	0
Pryor Sr.	0	1	0
	1	1	0

Kick Returns	No	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td
Westbrook	2	38	19.0	26	0
	2	38	19.0	26	0

Punt Returns	No	Fc	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td
Westbrook	3	1	38	12.7	19	0
	3	1	38	12.7	19	0

Kicking	FG	Lg	XP	Pts
Catanzaro	0-0	0	3-4	3

Punting	No	Yds	Avg	Tb	20	Bk	Lg
McAfee	3	132	44.0	0	2	0	51

Defense	Tkl	Sk	Def	Stf	Hur	FF	Int
Whitehead	7	0	1	1	0	0	0-0
Smith,H	6	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Burns	5	0	3	0	0	0	0-0
Suggs	5	0	0	3	1	0	0-0
Shaw	4	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Davis	4	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Dupree	3	1	0	0	0	1	0-0
Ogbah	3	1	0	0	1	0	0-0
Verrett	3	0	2	0	0	0	0-0
Gipson	1	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
Wilkerson	1	0	0	0	1	0	0-0
Jones,D	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Winchester	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Gaines	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Clark	0	0	0	0	1	0	0-0
Jones,C	0	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
	45	2	8	4	4	1	0-0



381 yards, 3 TD passes and 48 yards rushing – engineered comeback rally.

	Brooklin	Bruxelles
First Downs	21	30
Rushes	19-96	30-163
Passes	45-25-353	46-25-381
Sacked	2-12	1-3
Fumble	1	1
Penalties	3-20	4-24
Turnovers	0	2
Missed Tackles	9	9
Dropped Passes	0	1
Bad Passes	7	2
Passes 25+	3	6
Runs 10+	4	4
Blitzes	20	39
Time	26:06	36:57
Third Down	2-14	8-13
Fourth Down	3-4	1-2
Red Att/Td/Fg	3/3/0	4/3/0
Net Offense	437	541



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Viriden

GAME CENTER
2017
Pacific Quarter Finals

24

Iowa City

TEAM LEADERS

Passing	Cmp	Att	Yds	TD
Carr	15	24	233	1
Rushing	Car	Yds	Avg	TD
Elliott	35	136	3.9	1
Receiving	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD
Cooper	7	142	20.3	1

Team	1	2	3	4	OT	Total
Viriden	0	17	0	3	-	20
Iowa City	7	10	7	0	-	24

Play of the Game

In the 3RD Quarter, game tied at 17, facing 4th & 3 at Viriden 4- yard line, **Russell Wilson** threw a medium hitch to **Marqise Lee**, who sprinted the rest of the way for a 42-yard TD.

TEAM LEADERS

Passing	Cmp	Att	Yds	TD
Wilson	14	26	192	1
Rushing	Car	Yds	Avg	TD
Prosise	5	30	6.0	0
Receiving	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD
Lee	5	106	21.2	1

LEE MAKES HIS MARQ IN CUBS WIN!

MARQISE LEE'S SCORE 2 TDS TO LEAD CUBS PAST VIOLATORS.

SUMMARY: The Violators caught an early break when **Darian Stewart** intercepted a pressured **Russell Wilson** to thwart the Cubs' opening drive. But **Derek Carr** gave it right back and more on the very next play when he checked down to the running back only to be intercepted by **Xavier Rhodes**, who carried it back 50 yards for the game's first tally. Viriden responded by grinding out a 75-yard, 14-play drive that consumed over 8 minutes, rushing the ball 13 straight times to breach the Cub's end zone on a 4-yard run by **Ezekiel Elliott**. When the Violators got the ball back next, they switched the tempo, striking suddenly on a medium fly that **Amari Cooper** carried 79-yards for a go-ahead TD. On the ensuing kickoff, however, Cubs' return man **Marqise Lee** returned the favour with a 96-yard dash to the Viriden end zone to even the score at 14. The remainder of the 1st half was consumed by offsetting field goal drives, with the Cub's **Justin Tucker** hitting from 21 yards and the Violators' **Nick Folk** striking from 40 yards to deadlock the score at 17 at half time. A kickoff out-of-bounds to start the 2nd half was wasted by a Cubs three-and-out but the resulting punt pinned Viriden back at their 1-yard line. The Violators emerged from the shadow of their goal line with a prolonged but penalty-hampered drive to their 35, where a 49-yard punt by **Matt Bosher** punt put the Cubs back at their 24 after the return. The Cubs drove into Viriden territory but appeared to be stopped at the 42 after **CJ Prosise** was stoned for no gain on 4th & 3. The Cubs elected to go for it and turned the game in the process when Wilson targeted Lee on a medium hitch that the speedy wide receiver turned into a 42-yard TD to give the Cubs a 24-17 advantage. The Violators went back to the ground game and churned out 67 yards to reach the Iowa City 8-yard line. But on 4th & 1 the Cub's defence was ready for **Mark Ingram** and stuffed him for a 1-yard loss to force Viriden to come away empty. The Cubs punted the ball away soon after and the Violators tried again – this time reaching the 6 where they settled for field goal to narrow the gap to 4 points. The Viriden defence was able to prevent the Cubs from running out the clock, but in a last gasp drive with time running out Carr was picked by **Jamar Taylor** while attempting a bomb to Cooper to clinch it with 0:11 left.

QUOTES: "We were able to execute our game plan on offence and the defence did a good job. We lost anyway....that's football! Marqise Lee played an inspired game for them and they were good at shutting us down once they had the lead in the second half." – Viriden coach, **Lance Barrate**.

"I was happy to see Justin Tucker make all of his kicks. That is where we need him to be if we plan to keep advancing here in the playoffs." – Iowa City coach, **Deron Redding**.



ANGRY FAN



titter

HAPPY FAN



Marquis de Sade @mdsviolate
The exquisite torture of E & M was not enough to break the Cubs.



Sparky McGillicuddy @SparkyM
An inspiring win for our Cubs. The players feel free to make plays for Coach Redding and we got three great plays to win the game.



Virden 20 Iowa City 24

	1	2	3	4	F
Virden	0	17	0	3	20
Iowa City	7	10	7	0	24



Complete

* Playoff * 02-18-2018 Joe Ferguson Satdium Temp:24 Wind:0-10 None No Line MVP:Lee

1	8:12	Iowa City	TD	Rhodes 50 interception return (Tucker)	0-7
2	14:55	Virden	TD	Elliott 4 run (Folk) (14-75-8:17)	7-7
2	12:09	Virden	TD	Carr 79 pass to Cooper (Folk) (1-79-0:17)	14-7
2	12:01	Iowa City	TD	Lee 96 kick return (Tucker)	14-14
2	5:59	Iowa City	FG	Tucker 21 (9-56-3:31)	14-17
2	0:00	Virden	FG	Folk 40 (10-38-5:56)	17-17
3	2:32	Iowa City	TD	Wilson 42 pass to Lee (Tucker) (7-76-3:49)	17-24
4	3:19	Virden	FG	Folk 24 (10-65-4:19)	20-24

Player Stats

Passing	Att	Cmp	Yds	25	In	Td	Sk	Rate
Carr	24	15	233	2	2	1	1	73.8
	24	15	233	2	2	1	1	73.8

Rushing	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	10	Lg	Td
Elliott	35	136	3.9	11	2	16	1
Ingram,M	15	52	3.5	4	1	11	0
	50	188	3.8	15	3	16	1

Receiving	No	Dp	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	25	Lg	Td
Cooper	7	0	11	142	20.3	4	1	79	1
Ebron	2	0	5	14	7.0	1	0	8	0
Elliott	2	0	4	12	6.0	1	0	9	0
Floyd,M	2	0	2	15	7.5	0	0	8	0
Smith-Schus	1	0	1	47	47.0	1	1	47	0
Morgan	1	0	1	3	3.0	0	0	3	0
	16	0	24	233	15.5	7	2	79	1

Fumbles	No	Rec	Td
	0	0	0

Kick Returns	No	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td
Smith-Schus	2	49	24.5	27	0
	2	49	24.5	27	0

Punt Returns	No	Fc	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td
Ervin	3	0	12	4.0	11	0
	3	0	12	4.0	11	0

Kicking	FG	Lg	XP	Pts
Folk	2-2	40	2-2	8

Punting	No	Yds	Avg	Tb	20	Bk	Lg
Bosher	3	121	40.3	0	1	0	49

Defense	Tkl	Sk	Def	Stf	Hur	FF	Int
Riley Jr.	7	0	0	0	0	1	0-0
Johnson,T	4	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
Barr	3	1	2	0	0	0	0-0
Ingram,M	2	1	0	0	1	1	0-0
Amukamara	2	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
Jones,J	2	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Waynes	2	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Odrick	2	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Hankins	1	0	0	1	1	0	0-0
Harold	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Hooker	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Berry	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Davis	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Fuller	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Williams	1	0	0	1	0	0	0-0
Stewart	0	0	1	0	0	0	1-0
	31	2	5	2	2	2	1-0

Passing	Att	Cmp	Yds	25	In	Td	Sk	Rate
Wilson	26	14	192	1	1	1	2	74.5
	26	14	192	1	1	1	2	74.5

Rushing	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	10	Lg	Td
Proise	5	30	6.0	0	1	17	0
Mixon	3	26	8.7	2	2	12	0
Wilson	2	11	5.5	0	1	12	0
Conner	1	-1	-1.0	0	0	0	0
	11	66	6.0	2	4	17	0

Receiving	No	Dp	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	25	Lg	Td
Lee,M	5	0	10	106	21.2	5	1	42	1
Wallace	4	0	9	45	11.3	3	0	17	0
Proise	2	0	3	21	10.5	1	0	13	0
Sherman	1	0	1	5	5.0	0	0	5	0
Mixon	1	0	1	5	5.0	0	0	5	0
Hjoku	1	0	1	10	10.0	1	0	10	0
Austin	0	0	1	0	0.0	0	0	0	0
	14	0	26	192	13.7	10	1	42	1

Fumbles	No	Rec	Td
Wilson	1	1	0
Mixon	1	0	0
Frederick	0	1	0
	2	2	0

Kick Returns	No	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td
Lee,M	3	141	47.0	96	1
	3	141	47.0	96	1

Punt Returns	No	Fc	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td
Lockett	1	0	8	8.0	8	0
	1	0	8	8.0	8	0

Kicking	FG	Lg	XP	Pts
Tucker	1-1	21	3-3	6

Punting	No	Yds	Avg	Tb	20	Bk	Lg
Anger	4	181	45.3	0	1	0	57

Defense	Tkl	Sk	Def	Stf	Hur	FF	Int
Ogletree	15	0	1	2	0	0	0-0
Pierre-Paul	8	1	0	0	0	0	0-0
Rhodes	7	0	0	0	0	0	1-50
Watkins	7	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Richardson	6	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Hayward	6	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Emanuel	4	0	0	1	0	0	0-0
Hargrave	3	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Jenkins	3	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Cox	2	0	0	1	2	0	0-0
Tomlinson	2	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Ambrister	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Bouye	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Johnson	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Glasgow,R	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Sherman	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Matakevich	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Price,S	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Taylor	0	0	1	0	0	0	1-0
	70	1	2	4	2	0	2-50



A 96-yard kick return TD and a 42-yard TD are the plays that mattered.

	Virden	Iowa City
First Downs	25	13
Rushes	50-188	11-66
Passes	24-15-233	26-14-192
Sacked	1-6	2-20
Fumble	0	2
Penalties	6-40	5-30
Turnovers	2	1
Missed Tackles	4	12
Dropped Passes	0	0
Bad Passes	0	0
Passes 25+	2	1
Runs 10+	3	4
Blitzes	25	1
Time	40:36	19:24
Third Down	8-16	1-8
Fourth Down	0-2	1-1
Red Att/Td/Fg	4/1/2	1/0/1
Net Offense	415	238



6

Scarborough



27

Aurora

TEAM LEADERS

Passing	Cmp	Att	Yds	TD
Rodgers	14	24	177	1
Rushing	Car	Yds	Avg	TD
Howard	16	35	2.2	0
Receiving	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD
Garçon	5	109	21.8	1

Team	1	2	3	4	OT	Total
Scarborough	0	10	7	0	-	17
Aurora	7	14	0	7	-	28

Play of the Game

2nd Quarter, facing 3rd & 4 at the Scarborough 36, **Danny Woodhead** pulled off back-to-back 18-yard runs to score what would turn out to be the winning TD.

TEAM LEADERS

Passing	Cmp	Att	Yds	TD
Ryan	19	33	240	1
Rushing	Car	Yds	Avg	TD
Woodhead	15	110	7.3	1
Receiving	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD
Adams	6	85	14.2	1

RYAN & WOODHEAD LEAD 'STANGS!

FORGOTTEN BACK-UP RUSHES FOR 110 YARDS A 1 TD

SUMMARY: The Mustangs got the ball first and took advantage. Using a balanced mix of runs and passes they overcame a first-play holding call to string together a series of second-down conversions and cash in 6 points on a 9-yard scramble by **Matt Ryan** to open the scoring. The Blue Eagles were unable to respond offensively and, on the Mustangs' third possession, a 14-yard rumble by **Kenyan Drake** and a 20-yard screen pass to **Rashad Jennings** helped to set up a 19-yard leaping TD catch by **Davante Adams** to give Aurora a two-score lead, 14-0. Scarborough recovered half of the deficit on their ensuing possession when **Pierre Garçon** snatched a check down pass from **Aaron Rodgers** and dodged and weaved his way 72 yards to the Aurora 3-yard line, where Rodgers himself took it on a bootleg three plays later to halve the gap to 14-7 Mustangs. But on the very next series, after a 44-yard kick return by Drake gave them good field position, the Mustangs surprised the Blue Eagles with back-up RB, **Danny Woodhead**, who carried the ball 3 times for 52 yards, including an 18-yard run off tackle for a TD to make it 21-7 Aurora. Scarborough answered with a long and involved 18-play drive that saw them convert three 3rd downs and one 4th down before stalling and having to settle for a 31-yard **Mason Crosby** field goal with 1:10 left in the first half. The Mustangs charged down field to recoup those points, but ran out of time and headed into the locker room in front 21-10. After a three-and-out by Scarborough to open the 3rd quarter, the Mustangs drove into Scarborough territory but were turned around when Ryan tried to force a ball into double-coverage and **Dre' Kirkpatrick** picked him off and returned it 32 yards to the Aurora 41. An apparent lost fumble by **TJ Yeldon** on the next play was overturned on video review and Scarborough went on to score a TD on an 8-yard pass to Garçon to close the gap to 21-17. A missed 49-yard FG attempt by **Wil Lutz** kept the score where it was, but a **Cliff Avril** sack helped snuff out the Blue Eagles' response. The Mustangs took over with 8:22 left in the 4th quarter and used the run and short pass game to burn almost 7 minutes off the clock and finish a 90-yard drive with a 1-yard TD run by **Mike Tolbert**. Down 28-17 with 1:34 left, the Scarborough comeback attempt fizzled quickly.

QUOTES: "We just could not stop the run. Danny Woodhead and Wayne Gallman should not be the ones to end our season but they were. Good adjustments by Coach Liotta." – Scarborough coach, **Chris Dickinson**.

"Danny looked good in practice and we planned to use him even though he hadn't been part of our offence during the regular season. He's a veteran and can step in and contribute like that." – Aurora coach, **Rich Liotta**.



ANGRY FAN



titter

HAPPY FAN

**Mike Myers** @MikeMyers

Too bad Jordan Howard used up his legs last week.

**James Duthie** @efljamesduthie

Was all the pre-game talk about Davante Adams and Matt Ryan just a misdirection for Danny Woodhead? Danny Woodhead!



Scarborough 17 Aurora 28



	1	2	3	4	F
Scarborough	0	10	7	0	17
Aurora	7	14	0	7	28

Complete

* Playoff * 02-18-2018 Magna Park Temp:51 Wind:Calm None No Line MVP:Ryan HFA:

1	8:27	Aurora	TD	Ryan 9 run (Lutz) (11-82-6:18)	0-7
2	13:23	Aurora	TD	Ryan 19 pass to Adams (Lutz) (4-63-2:21)	0-14
2	10:06	Scarborough	TD	Rodgers 3 run (Crosby) (6-75-3:17)	7-14
2	7:05	Aurora	TD	Woodhead 18 run (Lutz) (6-58-2:56)	7-21
2	1:15	Scarborough	FG	Crosby 31 (18-62-5:47)	10-21
3	4:36	Scarborough	TD	Rodgers 8 pass to Garcon (Crosby) (6-41-2:45)	17-21
4	1:40	Aurora	TD	Tolbert 1 run (Lutz) (16-90-6:48)	17-28

Player Stats

Passing	Att	Cmp	Yds	25	In	Td	Sk	Rate
Rodgers	24	14	177	1	0	1	3	95.3
	24	14	177	1	0	1	3	95.3

Passing	Att	Cmp	Yds	25	In	Td	Sk	Rate
Ryan	33	19	240	1	1	1	0	77.8
	33	19	240	1	1	1	0	77.8

Rushing	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	10	Lg	Td
Howard	16	35	2.2	2	1	10	0
Yeldon	5	22	4.4	0	1	14	0
Sims,C	1	7	7.0	0	0	7	0
Rodgers	3	4	1.3	3	0	3	1
	25	68	2.7	5	2	14	1

Rushing	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	10	Lg	Td
Woodhead	15	110	7.3	6	6	18	1
Galman	5	33	6.6	2	1	16	0
Drake	4	27	6.8	1	1	14	0
Artis-Payne	6	21	3.5	2	0	9	0
Tolbert	4	11	2.8	2	0	6	1
Ryan	3	9	3.0	2	0	9	1
Wilson,A	1	0	0.0	0	0	0	0
	38	211	5.6	15	8	18	3

Receiving	No	Dp	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	25	Lg	Td
Garcon	5	0	7	109	21.8	4	1	72	1
Crowder	2	0	2	18	9.0	1	0	12	0
Jackson,D	2	0	7	18	9.0	1	0	11	0
Yeldon	2	0	3	19	9.5	1	0	16	0
Hill,J	1	0	2	4	4.0	0	0	4	0
Sims,C	1	1	2	3	3.0	0	0	3	0
Howard	1	0	1	6	6.0	0	0	6	0
	14	1	24	177	12.6	7	1	72	1

Receiving	No	Dp	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	25	Lg	Td
Adams	6	1	12	85	14.2	5	0	21	1
Edelman	4	0	7	61	15.3	4	0	17	0
Jennings	3	0	4	23	7.7	1	0	20	0
Miller	3	0	4	25	8.3	2	0	10	0
Rudolph	2	0	5	19	9.5	1	0	13	0
Coates	1	0	1	27	27.0	1	1	27	0
	19	1	33	240	12.6	14	1	27	1

Fumbles	No	Rec	Td
Rodgers	1	0	0
Martin	0	1	0
	1	1	0

Fumbles	No	Rec	Td
	0	0	0

Kick Returns	No	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td
Clement	1	5	5.0	5	0
	1	5	5.0	5	0

Kick Returns	No	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td
Drake	4	135	33.8	44	0
	4	135	33.8	44	0

Punt Returns	No	Fc	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td
	0	0	0	0.0	0	0

Punt Returns	No	Fc	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td
Edelman	2	1	30	15.0	27	0
	2	1	30	15.0	27	0

Kicking	FG	Lg	XP	Pts
Crosby	1-1	31	2-2	5

Kicking	FG	Lg	XP	Pts
Lutz	0-1	0	4-4	4

Punting	No	Yds	Avg	Tb	20	Bk	Lg
Colquitt	4	180	45.0	0	2	0	53

Punting	No	Yds	Avg	Tb	20	Bk	Lg
Koch	1	40	40.0	0	1	0	40

Defense	Tkl	Sk	Def	Stf	Hur	FF	Int
Collins,L	7	0	0	1	0	0	0-0
Morgan	6	0	0	0	2	0	0-0
Hightower	6	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
Jones	5	0	1	1	0	0	0-0
Suh	5	0	0	2	1	0	0-0
Peters	5	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
Kirkpatrick	4	0	1	0	0	0	1-32
Weddle	4	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Thomas	4	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Ryan	3	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Gilchrist	2	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Sims,E	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Hageman	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Condo	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Holmes	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
McGee	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Fowler Jr.	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Hull	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Sims,P	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Taylor	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Anzalone	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
	61	0	4	4	3	0	1-32

Defense	Tkl	Sk	Def	Stf	Hur	FF	Int
Orr	10	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Watt	4	1	0	0	1	0	0-0
Bowman	4	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Robison	4	0	0	1	0	0	0-0
Young	3	1	0	0	1	1	0-0
Jackson	3	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
Thompson,S	3	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Avril	2	1	0	0	0	0	0-0
Peterson	2	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Reddick	2	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
McCourt	2	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Thomas,E	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Norman	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Thomas,M	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Swearinger	0	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
	42	3	2	1	2	1	0-0



Ran for a TD and passed for another.
Field General set up the run game.

	Scarborough	Aurora
First Downs	15	30
Rushes	25-68	38-211
Passes	24-14-177	33-19-240
Sacked	3-20	0-0
Fumble	1	0
Penalties	4-31	7-43
Turnovers	0	1
Missed Tackles	4	6
Dropped Passes	1	1
Bad Passes	1	3
Passes 25+	1	1
Runs 10+	2	8
Blitzes	40	21
Time	24:36	35:24
Third Down	5-14	10-13
Fourth Down	0-2	0-0
Red Att/Td/Fg	3/2/1	6/4/0
Net Offense	225	451



28

Durham



42

Budapest

TEAM LEADERS

Passing	Cmp	Att	Yds	TD
Brees	32	63	416	3
Rushing	Car	Yds	Avg	TD
Riddick	5	25	5.0	0
Receiving	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD
Kupp	8	166	20.8	1

Team	1	2	3	4	OT	Total
Durham	14	7	0	7	-	28
Budapest	14	6	7	15	-	42

Play of the Game

1st Quarter, score tied 7-7, **Drew Brees** throws long and off-target and ball is batted up by **Robert Alford**, picked off by **Corey White**, and pitched back to Alford for a 55-yard pick-six.

TEAM LEADERS

Passing	Cmp	Att	Yds	TD
Hoyer	15	22	200	1
Rushing	Car	Yds	Avg	TD
Johnson	29	120	4.1	0
Receiving	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD
Diggs	10	150	15.0	1

STARS PICK APART LIZARDS!

TWO PICK-SIXES, 4 INTS TURN GAME IN BUDAPEST'S FAVOUR

SUMMARY: An opening drive gamble on 4th & 1-foot at their own 39 backfired on the Stars when **Tyrod Taylor** was pulled down for no gain by **Eddie Goldman** and the Lizards capitalized, converting two 4th downs of their own to finish off a short scoring drive with a 3-yard TD pass to **TY Hilton**. **Tim Hightower** answered for Budapest on their next possession, returning a short kickoff by **Phil Dawson** 29 yards to the Stars' 44 and finishing off the drive 7 plays later with a 16-yard run off tackle for a TD to tie it at 7. On Durham's next series, **Drew Brees** attempted a deep pass that sailed off target and was deflected into the arms of cornerback **Corey White**. With no place to go, White lateralled the ball **Robert Alford** and he took off 55 yards for the go-ahead pick-six. Brees bounced back, completing 4 of 6 on Durham's next series for 62 yards and a 9-yard TD pass to Hilton. It was already 14-14 and still in the 1st quarter. The Stars slowed the pace on their next possession, running **David Johnson** and Hightower 9 times intermixed with a pair of completions to **Stefon Diggs** to set up a 25-yard **Kai Forbath** field goal. But Durham continued its air assault, with Brees completing a 38-yard bomb to Hilton and a 15-yarder to **Eric Decker** before being picked off in the red zone by Alford, who returned it to the Budapest 22. Two plays later Durham got it back when Johnson fumbled at the ball away at the 24. But Dawson missed the 33-yard field goal attempt after a three-and-out. The Durham defence held and they soon took the lead on a 29-yard TD pass to **Cooper Kupp**. The Stars added a field goal at the gun, but still trailed 21-20 heading into the locker room. The 2nd half started badly for Durham when Brees was picked off for the third time and Dawson missed another field goal try. The first points of the half were scored by the defence, when **Lavonte David** snared a tipped pass from Brees and charged 60 yards for the go-ahead touchdown. Brees bounced back again with a 73-yard drive that ended with Hilton catching his 3rd TD of the day to make it 28-27 Durham. Budapest's passing attack finally made a statement on the next series, with **Brian Hoyer** hitting Diggs for 44 yards then a 7-yard TD to take the lead. Durham had to punt on their next series and the Stars ground out a 76-yard TD drive that essentially sealed the victory.

QUOTES: "This is what our season has been all year. We just give the ball away over and over and what makes it worse is that when we give it away they score. Other than turning the ball over 4 times we played a good game according to our plan." – Durham coach, **George Kaldis**.

"We tried to be aggressive on that first series and it kind of backfired. But that was the only big setback for us. We caught some breaks on those tipped balls and played within ourselves. It worked out against a really good team." – Budapest coach, **Darrin Jones**.



ANGRY FAN



titter

HAPPY FAN

**Sir Reginald @RMClapham**

A right beano show by the tooling Budapestians! What fumble-famble will Drew come up with to explain this one to nickey fans?

Attila Hun @AttilaHunBWGoulash

The Cowbells showed today that Hungary is ready for football.



Durham 28 Budapest 42



	1	2	3	4	F
Durham	14	7	0	7	28
Budapest	14	6	7	15	42

Complete

* Playoff * 02-19-2018 Temp:59 Wind:0-5 None No Line MVP:Diggs HFA:ON(0)

1	9:09	Durham	TD	Newton 3 pass to Hilton (Dawson) (10-39-4:22)	7-0
1	5:30	Budapest	TD	Hightower 16 run (Brown,J) (7-56-3:33)	7-7
1	4:22	Budapest	TD	Alford 55 interception return (Brown,J)	7-14
1	0:03	Durham	TD	Brees 9 pass to Hilton (Dawson) (10-74-4:14)	14-14
2	7:37	Budapest	FG	Forbath 25 (14-72-7:20)	14-17
2	0:43	Durham	TD	Brees 29 pass to Kupp (Dawson) (7-56-1:30)	21-17
2	0:00	Budapest	FG	Forbath 46 (5-30-0:34)	21-20
3	2:03	Budapest	TD	David 60 interception return (Brown,J)	21-27
4	12:55	Durham	TD	Brees 11 pass to Hilton (Dawson) (10-73-4:03)	28-27
4	10:09	Budapest	TD	Hoyer 7 pass to Diggs (Brown,J) (5-67-2:38)	28-34
4	3:12	Budapest	TD	Hightower 3 run (2 - Johnson) (10-76-5:42)	28-42

Player Stats

Passing	Att	Cmp	Yds	25	In	Td	Sk	Rate
Brees	63	32	416	4	4	3	0	61.3
Newton	1	1	3	0	0	1	0	118.8
	64	33	419	4	4	4	0	67.1

Rushing	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	10	Lg	Td
Riddick	5	25	5.0	3	1	11	0
Hyde	6	15	2.5	1	0	5	0
Newton	1	1	1.0	0	0	1	0
	12	41	3.4	4	1	11	0

Receiving	No	Dp	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	25	Lg	Td
Decker	8	3	17	111	13.9	7	0	16	0
Kupp	8	0	12	166	20.8	7	3	54	1
Hilton	7	0	19	103	14.7	7	1	38	3
Riddick	5	0	9	14	2.8	0	0	5	0
Hyde	4	0	5	16	4.0	0	0	6	0
White	1	0	1	9	9.0	0	0	9	0
Boyd	0	0	1	0	0.0	0	0	0	0
	33	3	64	419	12.7	21	4	54	4

Fumbles	No	Rec	Td
Joseph	0	1	0
	0	1	0

Kick Returns	No	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td
Bray,Q	4	102	25.5	27	0
	4	102	25.5	27	0

Punt Returns	No	Fc	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td
Ross	1	0	7	7.0	7	0
	1	0	7	7.0	7	0

Kicking	FG	Lg	XP	Pts
Dawson	0-2	0	4-4	4

Punting	No	Yds	Avg	Tb	20	Bk	Lg
Morstead	1	47	47.0	0	0	0	47

Passing	Att	Cmp	Yds	25	In	Td	Sk	Rate
Hoyer	22	15	200	1	0	1	0	111.9
Taylor	2	1	13	0	0	0	0	70.8
	24	16	213	1	0	1	0	108.5

Rushing	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	10	Lg	Td
Johnson	29	120	4.1	8	3	13	0
Hightower	7	38	5.4	3	2	16	2
Olawale	1	5	5.0	1	0	5	0
Taylor	1	0	0.0	0	0	0	0
Hoyer	2	-2	-1.0	0	0	0	0
	40	161	4.0	12	5	16	2

Receiving	No	Dp	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	25	Lg	Td
Diggs,S	10	0	14	150	15.0	9	1	44	1
Thomas	5	0	8	49	9.8	1	0	20	0
Marshall	1	0	1	14	14.0	1	0	14	0
Johnson	0	0	1	0	0.0	0	0	0	0
	16	0	24	213	13.3	11	1	44	1

Fumbles	No	Rec	Td
Johnson	1	0	0
	1	0	0

Kick Returns	No	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td
Tate	3	65	21.7	26	0
Hightower	1	29	29.0	29	0
Ifedi	1	8	8.0	8	0
	5	102	20.4	29	0

Punt Returns	No	Fc	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td
Tate	1	0	5	5.0	5	0
	1	0	5	5.0	5	0

Kicking	FG	Lg	XP	Pts
Forbath	2-3	46	0-0	6
Brown	0-0	0	4-4	4

Punting	No	Yds	Avg	Tb	20	Bk	Lg
Way	2	81	40.5	0	1	0	49

Defense	Tkl	Sk	Def	Stf	Hur	FF	Int
Rodgers-Cro	9	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Murphy	8	0	0	1	1	0	0-0
Joseph	7	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Cushing	7	0	0	2	0	0	0-0
Sherman	7	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Chancellor	4	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Rowe	3	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Blair	2	0	0	0	0	1	0-0
Dumervil	2	0	0	1	0	0	0-0
Davis,T	2	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Goldman	2	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Dillon	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Jones,D	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Hendrickson	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Collins	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
McCourt	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Goodson	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
	59	0	0	4	1	1	0-0

Defense	Tkl	Sk	Def	Stf	Hur	FF	Int
Cyprien	8	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
Alford	6	0	3	0	0	0	1-67
Jordan	5	0	0	1	5	0	0-0
McKinney	5	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Scandrick	5	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
David	3	0	2	0	0	0	1-60
Campbell	3	0	0	0	1	0	0-0
Tabar	2	0	1	0	0	0	1-0
Iloka	2	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
Smith	2	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Logan	1	0	0	0	1	0	0-0
Swanson	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Jackson	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Wilson	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Rollins	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Dent	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
White	0	0	0	0	0	0	1-0
Howard	0	0	0	0	1	0	0-0
Reed,B	0	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
	47	0	9	1	8	0	4-127



10 catches, 150 yards, 1 TD, 9 1st downs. Caught game-winning TD.

	Durham	Budapest
First Downs	27	24
Rushes	12-41	40-161
Passes	64-33-419	24-16-213
Sacked	0-0	0-0
Fumble	0	1
Penalties	4-21	5-34
Turnovers	4	1
Missed Tackles	4	2
Dropped Passes	3	0
Bad Passes	11	4
Passes 25+	4	1
Runs 10+	1	5
Blitzes	26	26
Time	28:27	31:33
Third Down	6-16	5-10
Fourth Down	5-6	0-1
Red Att/Td/Fg	7/3/0	4/3/1
Net Offense	460	374



AROUND THE



With Spats McChad

NEW YORK – In a season promoted by the league as one of “firsts,” fans did indeed see another genuine first this weekend with two playoff games taking place in Europe. On Saturday, the Bombers hosted the Hawks at The Fortress in Belgium and on Sunday, the North Stars welcomed the Thunder Lizards to their makeshift raft of seating straddling an old Soviet-era runway at Ferenc-Liszt International Airport.

It is one thing to have a regular season game transpire in a time zone 6-hours removed from the eastern seaboard and 9 hours distant from the west coast; but when the “world” is watching, i.e., North America, and sponsors are aiming for prime exposure, it screws things up a bit. The practice in recent years of slotting the first game for a 4:30 pm start and the second in “prime time” had to be adjusted so that the European game started at 2:00 pm. ET and the North American game at 8:00 pm ET, creating a three-hour gap between the games.

For sports bars and home playoff parties this meant three extra hours of drinking and eating with nothing engaging to watch – unless you are into EFL Network shows like *‘Classic Quarter Finals’* and three hours of round table analysis from moronic windbags like **Russ Flont** and professional jerks like **Skope Boylezz**.

The social dangers created by idle drunkenness are well-documented but the more serious concern, from the network viewpoint, was that people’s attention spans would drift away from the TV screen during the three-hour “dead period.” Not to mention that the entire European market, such as it is, would be cut out of the prime time demographic – as who in Budapest would plan to stay up until two in the morning to watch the Cubs and Violators?

Interest in the new European venues clearly drew the attention of North American viewers as preliminary returns place Durham-Budapest and Brooklin-Bruxelles neck-and-neck at no.1 and no.2 respectively in ratings and household share among the four playoff games. Coming in at no.4, the Sunday Night boondoggle in Iowa City, where a sizeable portion of eastern time zone TV sets failed to tune in, on top of virtually all of the European market. A strong Cubs team has failed to captivate viewers outside of the State of Iowa; while the Violators are considered a small market team in Manitoba, where the Patriots own the loyalty of over 75% of football fans, and a “micro-market” team relative to the league’s continental span.

The league might have been smarter to go with the traditional 1 & 4 formula – at least for the Sunday games – but *Budweiser* is an influential sponsor and “prime time” is called that for a reason. As a result, while the presence of European teams generated discussion – most of it centered around the possibility of a “European Championship” in three weeks time – it also created the overall lowest total ratings and share results of any quarter final round since 2009.

CUBBED TO DEATH

The Violators’ ascent to the top of the Central Division had been a relatively quiet one; except in *TERRORDOME*, where a reinvigorated local fan base gradually had crowded out most of the skinheads, goths and street gang members that had been using the refurbished insane asylum as a hangout during football season the past two years. A small contingent of these fans made the 13-hour trek down the I-94 to watch their team play just the second playoff game in its history. But this group was barely noticeable in the sea of blue & red at Joe Ferguson Stadium, where a riled up partisan crowd was anticipating an easy beatdown of the best the suspect Central Division could offer.

The Cubs had finished the season strong, looking like the powerhouse most had expected them to be in demolishing LA and Chino in the final two weeks. But such power plays from the Cubs had been few over the course of the 2017. More often they “found a way to win” uncomfortably close games against weaker opponents while falling without much fight against peers from outside their division. Coach **Deron Redding** had turned kicker **Justin Tucker** into a sort of whipping boy for his team’s lack of consistency, but the problems ran deeper than the kicker. **Russell Wilson**, predicted to be a front-runner in the race for MVP, had shown more than once that he was human and, in the case of his dismal outing against Brooklin in Week 10 for example, even sub-human. The Cubs still ranked in the Top Five overall in team offence and defence for the season. Yet how they performed any given week was a game time decision and it almost always coincided with how Wilson was performing.

With the season ending on such a high note, Cubs’ fans were optimistic that, with the arrival of the post-season, any hint that their team was “saving” itself for bigger things would not be evident in its play. If the tone of the Iowa Press accurately reflected the general attitude of the local fans, they viewed the Violators as a soft target – the default winner of the division that nobody wanted – and not merely a team they should beat, but a team they should humble like they had the Convicts.

For any fans, who are not Mustangs fans, to feel cocky and entitled going into a playoff game was strange given the sometimes bizarre and unpredictable outcomes in the league this season. That held particularly true for Cubs fans, who had watched their team struggle to put down the 2-14 Seattle Pilots in their two meetings this year. Sure enough, the Cubs would find that they were in tough throughout this match and might have lost if not for some personal heroics from **Marqise Lee**.

That it would be another unconventional road to victory for the Cubs was apparent after the back-to-back exchange of interceptions in the 1st quarter, the second resulting in a 50-yard pick-six for **Xavier Rhodes** that put Redding's crew out in front 7-0. The Violators responded with a 14-play drive that featured 13 running plays. The Virden game plan could not have been more bluntly telegraphed. Yet the Cubs could not bring themselves to focus on stopping 2017 rushing leader **Ezekiel Elliott**. Elliott and sidekick **Mark Ingram** carried the ball 13 consecutive times on the way to their team's first touchdown: a 4-yard run off tackle to the left, a play that had been run 6 times already on the drive. A review of the defensive alignment of the Cubs over that segment reveals a defence seemingly haunted by the possibility of a big play, yet not willing to commit to stopping it or, conversely, to draw a line in the turf for Elliott and Ingram. The defence was simply there, reacting to what it saw rather than anticipating what might come. The result was a steady pounding of the Cubs backward, the kind of grind that hurts defences more than offences. The tenderizing of the Cubs in this way would have inevitably ended with their collapse, had not other factors come into play to save them.

That the Cubs would surrender the initiative in that way to a one-dimensional opponent, when they boast one of the more dangerous secondaries in the league, is curious. But Redding's concern about the Virden passing game lurking in the background was validated on the Violators' next drive, when **Derek Carr** connected with Cooper on a medium fly that went 79 yards for the go-ahead touchdown. Cooper was able to get behind defender **Casey Hayward** in part because the defence was focused on Elliott in the backfield. If the crowd at Joe Ferguson Stadium was nervous after seeing their defence pushed back like lightweights, they were edgy and sullen after watching a euphoric Cooper pretend to fly to the Virden sideline, arms outstretched like jet wings.

The crowd was reignited, however, when **Marqise Lee** returned the ensuing kickoff 96 yards for a TD to level the score at 14. Fans hooted in glee as Lee pretended to take a selfie in the end zone, holding the football in one hand and an imaginary camera in the other. The importance of this play cannot be overstated. It came at a time when the Cubs' offence was struggling to establish a working formula for moving the ball. It bought them time in a game where the Violators intended to use time as a weapon.

The pace of play slowed down after Lee's big play. The Cubs focused on a possession passing attack while Virden continued to trudge along on the ground. The result was an exchange of field goals that had the teams tied 17-all at halftime.

The drudgery continued in the second half. It was like watching two wary, defensive-minded boxers dipping and feinting while looking for possible openings. Then, out of nowhere, the Cubs landed a haymaker.

With the Violators playing close to the line, Lee settled in a hole in the zone and Wilson drilled the ball into his chest. Lee turned and exploded upfield like a jet engine, outracing **Eric Berry** on his way to a 42-yard score. The fans vaulted to their feet as Lee ran through the end zone and presented the football, as if on a silver platter, to the delirious crowd.

Down 24-17, Virden responded the only way they knew how; by running the ball. But this time the Cubs committed to stopping it, although they waited until Virden attempted a 4th & 1 at the Iowa City 8 to do so. With the Cubs loading the box, Carr handed off to Elliott. With the Virden running back in his sights, linebacker **Kyle Emmanuel** knifed through the Virden line into the



In contrast to Bruxelles, American Football in Budapest remains a niche market despite a successful season on the football field for the North Stars. Ferenc-Liszt International Airport Stadium (above) reflects the makeshift state of the franchise in its new "home."

backfield and spun him down for a loss. The crowd, sensing a turning point, roared its approval. Virden would come away with nothing and the clock was ticking now in the 4th quarter.

The Cubs could not put Virden away, however. **Anthony Barr** made hay of an attempted screen and sacked Wilson for a 13-yard loss, dooming the Cubs to a three-and-out.

Virden got the ball back and attempted to mix it up with a series of passing plays that bore fruit when **JuJu Smith-Schuster** cut through the secondary for a 47-yard catch-and-run to the Cub's 8-yard line. Back where they had been on their previous incursion into Iowa territory, Virden looked again to Elliott to bring them home but the Cubs would have none of it. The Virden star netted just 2 yards on 3 carries to bring up 4th & goal at the 6. Instead of coming

away empty, this time they kicked the field goal. But with just 3:19 left in the 4th quarter, they still needed a touchdown to win.

Viriden managed to get the ball back at their own 22 with 1:14 left and no timeouts. But with the Cubs deploying 7 defensive backs and the Violators not having the wide receivers to match, it was not surprising that the Viriden drive ended suddenly with a **Jamar Taylor** interception. The crowd erupted. The Cubs had hung on and would advance to face the Bombers.

I will come out and say it: neither team truly deserved to win this game. But based on the common yardsticks for measuring dominance: time of possession, yards, first downs and tackling, the Violators controlled the play and seemed in control by a big margin. Yet they lost in the way so many teams have lost to the Cubs this year: turnovers, special teams and the timely big play.

Despite being generally outplayed, the better team won. The Violators were hamstrung by subtle deficiencies in the make-up of their roster. The lack of diversity of targets in the passing game meant that **Lance Barrate** had to repeatedly beat the Cubs defence over the head with the ground game in order to set up the big play to **Amari Cooper**. This was something the Violators were more than prepared to do, as they have one of the best running games in the league. But the strategy had its limits in that the role of deception was essentially limited to choosing the right moment to attempt the big play through the air. Integrating a multi-faceted passing attack with the ground game to create a sustainable and flexible attack plan capable of truly subjugating an opponent was not viable game plan for the visitors.

A happy **Deron Redding** spoke animatedly after the game about the “grit and determination” his team had displayed and spoke vaguely about “playing Cubs football” when asked how he had approached this game from a strategic standpoint. It was typical feel good stuff designed to keep his young players “up” for the tough week ahead. On the other side, a matter-of-fact **Lance Barrate** praised his team’s efforts, saying they had executed their game plan well. When asked why, if they had executed their game plan, why they had lost, he replied simply: “They executed theirs better. They cubbed us to death!”

PLAYOFF EUROPE

The EFL’s European experiment has to be considered an overall success to this point, even if that success is not evenly distributed between the two transplanted teams. With Bruxelles and Budapest taking center stage in the Quarter Finals, football fans everywhere got a glimpse this weekend into the EFL experience across the sea and must have come away impressed, albeit for different reasons.

‘The Fortress,’ where the Bombers play, is a tight, high-tech, clean and comfortable facility that, for the game against Brooklin, was packed with international dignitaries, diplomats, American ex-pats, military personnel from the armies of NATO, wealthy businessmen, and local Belgian celebrities such as **Kim Clijsters** and **Jean-Claude Van Damme**. Tucked away in the very top of the south end zone, a couple of rows of grass-skirted Samoans, flown in for the game courtesy of the Samoan Embassy, chanted and danced to the beat of tiny wooden *nafa* drums. Samoans still consider the Bombers (former Cannibals) to be their team and the Embassy maintains the official position that they are being *shared* with their “good friends,” the Belgians.

Security for the game, like all events in Bruxelles, was extremely tight due to the very real threat of terrorism. Targets don’t jet much juicier than a uniquely American professional sporting event taking place in the host city of the EU and NATO. But the Belgians do a good job of keeping most of the security arrangements discreet and the people are cooperative at the dozens of checkpoints, knowing full well the potential ramifications of laxity. The high-security environment comes at a cost, however, and that is reflected in the cost of concessions. Food prices at the stadium are by far the highest in the EFL. A box of Belgian frites with mayonnaise and a ‘Vedett’ lager will set you back €20, approximately \$25 US. But people seem willing to pay that price to prevent getting blown up while being seen in what has become the trendiest event in the country: A Bombers game.

Contrast that scene with the one in Budapest, where network TV cameras had to be angled and focused with precision to minimize exposure to broad sections of empty seats in the drafty, provisional seating erected around a hard-scrabble football field situated near the old ‘Spitzplutz’ air traffic control tower at Ferenc-Liszt International Airport. That is what passes for an American football stadium in Budapest. The unofficial name for it is ‘The Runway.’ The sight of it gives the Hungarian capitol a bad name, but the reality is that the club is to blame for making plans to play in *Ferenc Puskás Stadium*, the Hungarian national stadium demolished just this year to make room for a new stadium scheduled to open in 2019.

As for the fans; the Budapest North Stars are starting off much like they did in Markham, with a small group of working class diehards forming their base. Drawn from the season tickets lists of Hungarian American football teams like Cowbells, Wolves and Hurricanes, Hungarian North Stars fans are rowdy, rough and in a perpetual state of drunkenness. American networks have learned to get their “live” crowd shots early in the game and can them to run later since, by the 4th quarter, the real live fans are invariably half-naked and battling stadium security. The few upscale North Star fans, made up mostly of mid-level businessmen and old sports celebrities, sit out of view in luxury boxes located slightly less than 500 meters from the field in the air traffic control tower. They enjoy creature comforts not available to the regular fans, but cannot really see the field and are forced to watch closed circuit monitors to make sense of the action. The impressive part of all this is that the North Stars team is playing well under such conditions. **Darrin Jones** has his players focused on their performance on the football field and his team’s steady success is very slowly building the North Stars brand from scratch in Central Europe.

But to say that the local atmosphere of either ‘Playoff Europe’ venue exudes close to the same level of tension and anticipation as their counterparts in North America would be a huge stretch. The well-heeled patrons of ‘The Fortress’ are happy to be there, cheering for their Bombers and drinking expensive beer, but life will go on should their team lose. For them it is a carnival, not

a religion. The Budapestians are similarly under-invested emotionally in the outcome of North Stars games. They cheer out of duty and for the cheap beer more than out of passion for their team or hate of their opponent.

These are market realities that are capable of changing over time with exposure to the game, but for now they make the prospect of a 'European' final this year between the North Stars and the Bombers a scary thought for networks. The original Markham fan base is now fractured and bitter, with almost the entirety of it wishing the worst on their former favourites. The original Samoan fanbase remains supportive, but it is, in the end, a *Samoan* fanbase and therefore small and unlikely to move sales graphs.

The league is nervously watching. One European finalist would be ideal – the publicity would be a boost for the league's investment in the "old" continent. But what if both made it? The game will be played in Camelot, thousands of miles away from their fans, in a country that sees them now as foreigners. Who will cheer?

AROUND THE EFL

I must confess to being sad that my prediction of a title for Durham is officially dead now that the Thunder Lizards are. They died far away from home in an austere and unfriendly environment by their own hand. Budapest's 42-28 victory at 'The Runway' had less to do with the North Stars (although they played their role to perfection) than it did with **Drew Brees** – Durham football's biggest asset and costliest liability. Brees was center stage directing all the players on both sides with his 63 pass attempts, 416 yards, 3 touchdowns and 4 interceptions, two of those going back the other way for Budapest touchdowns, the final difference in the score. Brees startled fans and detractors alike with his inspired brilliance and tempestuous recklessness, entwined as distinct threads in the rope with which Brees hung himself and his entire team. He was the main protagonist in a tragedy that immortalized supporting characters such as Budapest corner, **Robert Alford**, who returned **Corey White**'s interception for a touchdown in the 1st quarter and halted a Durham red zone advance with one of his own in the 2nd quarter; and teammate **TY Hilton**, who caught 3 touchdown passes and never gave up trying even when balls sailed too high and exposed him to threat of bodily harm from the North Stars safeties. **David Johnson** and **Stefon Diggs** kept the game going for Budapest in-between Brees Acts, but their steady efforts were mere foil to the extravagant excesses of our Tragic Hero, who fell on his own grenade to save the enemy. I am not sure that this kind of victory, as impressive as it looks, is good for Budapest moving forward. Feeling like they were part of an event, rather than the directors of it, cannot bestow the confidence needed to take on Aurora.

As for the Mustangs, they looked brilliant but also human while clipping the Blue Eagles 28-17 at Magna Park in Aurora. Brilliant because they were resourceful, playing the **Danny Woodhead** piece to check the Scarborough defence and create enough space in the suffocating Blue Eagle secondary for **Davante Adams** to put his stamp on the game. Human, because they needed to resort to a brittle vet like Woodhead to misdirect a dominating quartet of defensive backs that might have otherwise stolen the game away from league passing leader, **Matt Ryan**. The Blue Eagles did not really do anything else particularly well in this game, but still managed to prevent it from degenerating into another Aurora blowout thanks to the strength of their secondary. This was a team that was built to beat the Mustangs and they might have done so if they had gotten anything approaching competent play from their quarterback and their offensive MVP, **Jordan Howard**. The Blue Eagles' running back vanished in this game, unable to gain traction against a defense that was not shy about paying him the attention he was due. Had **Aaron Rodgers** been able to do more than the one really good play he made – smartly checking down to a wide-open **Pierre Garçon** for a 72-yard pass play that set up their first touchdown – this would have been a different outcome. But the Mustangs were never behind in this game and therefore never in a position to have to throw the ball against a fully-loaded Scarborough defence. Aurora moves on to face Budapest – a lesser team but a sterner test.

The most exciting game of the weekend took place in Bruxelles, where the Bombers downed the Hawks for the third time this season, prevailing 33-27 in overtime. The Legend of **Marcus Mariota** is growing in Belgium with every game. He is regarded as some sort of football *Robin Hood*, stealing the honour of the rich and favoured teams like Brooklin and giving it back to the underdogs. The Bombers have to be considered underdogs, spiritually if not literally, simply because nobody saw them making it this far and looking so good doing it. Okay, so we were all wrong about them. But a thousand professional analysts could not have been completely out in left field on this. So, how are they doing it? This game gives us a lot of clues. The offence, with 541 yards and 30 first downs, was all but unstoppable. It was that way because it did everything out of the same formation with capable personnel, starting with Mariota. It was actually a bit of a slow start for the Bruxelles QB. He botched a screen on 4th & 4 near mid-field and threw a costly interception to **Brent Grimes** that ended up setting up a touchdown that made it 14-7 for Brooklin at the time. Meanwhile, his opposite number, **Alex Smith**, looked competent and determined to win, despite the absence of **Jonathan Stewart** in the backfield. But as well as the Brooklin offence moved the ball, the Bombers consistently did it better. Mariota put his early mistakes behind him and, in the end, wound up keeping his team in the game and leading two critical touchdown drives: the first ending on a play Mariota extended long enough to get the ball to seldom-used **Donte Moncrief** for the tying TD with 1:08 left; and the second to win the game in OT, although it was **Leonard Fournette** who had the final honour of crossing goal line. The Bombers will host the strong but erratic Cubs next week.

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PACIFIC CONFERENCE FINAL

IOWA CITY @ BRUXELLES (line – BOMBERS by 4)

INJURIES: Iowa City – None; Bruxelles – None.

Bruxelles has got the “Cinderella” thing going good for the second year in four, so far replicating with eerie similarity the team’s unpredicted run to the Championship in 2014. Back then the team also finished 13-3, knocked off an 11-5 team in the quarter finals, like last week, and faced a 12-4 pre-season favourite in the semis, as they are about to do this week against the Cubs. That 2014 Cannibals team, like the 2017 version, also possessed a multi-dimensional, quick-strike offence that never really sagged over the course of 16 games. The only aspect of the 2017 team that stands out as distinct from that surprising 2014 outfit is the defence; while 2014 saw stars on the field for Carthage, this year’s defence is a gang of mostly no-names that many experts predicted to be the team’s collective Achilles Heel. That dim view of the Bombers’ back-11 is somewhat borne out by the statistics, since they are ranked 21st in defensive efficiency. They over-achieve in the red zone, however, ranked 6th overall in TD% and 6th overall in points allowed. The Bombers don’t mind if their opponent kicks field goals because they are usually scoring touchdowns. The Cubs, a pre-season favourite to represent the Pacific Conference in the Gale Sayers Game are where we expected them to be, but the journey to this point has not been first class. While they finished the regular season on a high note, severely punishing their principal rivals in the West in the season’s final two weeks, last week they reverted to the shaky but opportunistic form they displayed in many of their wins this year. Virden controlled the play, but the Cubs made the plays. They managed to score on defence, special teams and offence to bat for the cycle and move past a skilfully-coached Virden squad. Two questions hang in the air now: can they stay lucky for two more games? If not, can they get good? We know the Cubs have the talent to win it all, but consistency has been lacking in 2017. The most surprisingly inconsistent performer on the Cubs to date, and a key to their eventual success or failure, is Russell Wilson. Overall, his numbers place him in the Top Five in passer rating, but he has had a few dreadful lapses of the kind one does not expect to see from a player of his calibre. It will take more than an average outing from Wilson for the Cubs to succeed here – the Cubs’ running game, although prolific due to its dominant offensive line, is not going to carry him and the team to victory. Similarly, his playmakers in the receiving corps are the kind that need to get “thrown open” more often than not; he’s got to be accurate. Going the other way, Marcus Mariota, his trio of deep threats and his high-speed bulldozer, Leonard Fournette will be up against an Iowa defence that doesn’t like to gamble up front, but sticks to its lanes and lays in wait in the secondary for the opportunity to pick off the ball. Mariota will have time to throw, but he will have less room to throw, especially downfield. Fournette should have some success against a bendy Cubs d-line, but if Bruxelles cannot make the big play in the passing game, or Mariota is picked off more than once, it is unlikely to be enough to compensate. These teams did not face each other in the regular season so there is no recent history to give us a hint of how this game will play out on the football field. The keys to a Cubs win will be containing the big play in order to put the game on the back of Leonard Fournette; and getting a steady version of Russell Wilson guiding the offence. The keys to a Bruxelles win will be the ability of their “Thrilling Three” – Emmanuel Sanders, Travis Kelce and Terrelle Pryor Sr. – to make plays against a ball-hawking, hard-hitting secondary; and the Bombers’ defence continuing to bend but not break – the way Justin Tucker has been kicking lately, forcing the kicking team onto the field could be a winning strategy. The Cubs are 4-point underdogs on the road in Belgium. This is not a reflection of their true status vs Bruxelles in the talent pool, rather one of the home field advantage combined with a growing feeling that the Bombers have something akin to “destiny” on their side. They may do. I just think that destiny, whichever way it goes, will be decided by a field goal. **PICK: IOWA CITY**

ATLANTIC CONFERENCE QUARTER FINALS

BUDAPEST @ AURORA (line – MUSTANGS by 11)

INJURIES: Scarborough – None; Aurora – None.

We have seen this Aurora script before and we all know how it is supposed to end: with the Mustangs galloping into the sunset with the ultimate prize and no blemishes on their record. It is almost as if the Triumph duplicating Aurora's feat of three years ago lit a fire under the 2017 edition of the Mustangs. No longer the only team to finish off a perfect season, they became determined to be the only team to do it twice. It has been an impressive year for Aurora, in some ways more impressive than when they overran the league in 2014. That is because no analyst predicted that any team would run the table in the new age of parity. It could be argued, however, that while the 2017 Mustangs are not close to their 2014 juggernaut on paper, their opponents have not been as daunting either. Playing in what turned out to be the weakest division in the league certainly helped their cause. But setting the easier schedule aside, when they have faced their equals the games have not been close. With perhaps two exceptions, Aurora has not been challenged this year, including when they faced the North Stars in Week Eight. Darrin Jones will be hoping that that earlier contest was in no way a predictive indicator of what will happen this week. The Mustangs did what they do best in that game: jump out to an early insurmountable lead, starting with the Big Pass and finishing with a running attack turned deadly by their opponent's fear of the pass. It was 24-0 at half time in that game and the Stars could not get out of Magna Park fast enough. Tyrod Taylor started that game for Budapest and he threw for just 68 yards. This time, however, it will be Brian Hoyer behind center, a much more adept passer than Taylor even if he can be somewhat of a statue in the pocket. The presence of Hoyer suddenly makes the North Stars' high-grade threesome at wide receiver, Stefon Diggs, Demaryius Thomas and Brandon Marshall, that much more dangerous. Paired with versatile running back David Johnson, the Budapest offence is capable of mounting a serious challenge against an Aurora defence that has at times looked vulnerable this year, although never as vulnerable as the Mustangs' offence makes their opponents look. Matt Ryan has been dominant relative to his peers all season and has to be the front-runner for offensive MVP. He has always managed to keep his offence one, or five, steps ahead of the competition. He has had plenty of help from touchdown leader Julian Edelman and big-play master Davante Adams in leading the league's most prolific offence, but it is Ryan who sets the tone and pace of the attack. If that is not enough to blow away opponents, he also has secret weapon Kenyan Drake, who always manages to do something to help his team win, and super-secret weapon Danny Woodhead, who was unleashed with great effect on an unsuspecting Scarborough last week. The North Stars' defence has its work cut out for it, but they are up to the task of at least slowing the Mustangs down. So, really it boils down to whether or not Budapest can keep this game close heading into the final quarter. The double-digit Vegas line does not like the odds of this, but I do. The Mustangs have to be the definitive favourite heading into this one, but they will have to get lucky in order to rout this particular opponent. The sting of having their post-season run last year aborted early by Kenyan Drake is still felt amongst the North Stars coaching staff. Darrin Jones will be ready for any surprises Rich Liotta has up his sleeve and will fight to the bitter or glorious end. **PICK: BUDAPEST**



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This Week in EFL History
With Professor
Sterling Smitherman

FROM THE EFL ARCHIVES – The Quarter Finals in 2011 featured a pair of playoff classics. The Death Valley Undertakers surprised the favoured Charleswood Patriots in a wild shootout at Patriot Place, winning 35-32 in a game that saw **Drew Brees** and **Peyton Manning** combine for 756 passing yards and 8 TDs (4 apiece). The Pats were forced to the air by both the pace of the Death Valley attack and the ineffectiveness of **Adrian Peterson**, who rushed for just 39 yards at a 2.2-yards per carry clip. Death Valley's **Andre Johnson** finished with 8 catches, 186 yards and 3 TDs.

At Tillman Field in Cowtown, the Corn Kings were

victimized by one of their own fans, "super-fan" **Davey Kochett**, who will go down in Cowtown lore as its most infamous fan. Trailing 24-21 to Durham, the Corn Kings reached the T-Lizards' 2-yard line with 0:31 left in the 4th. But the play that got them there was nullified by the officials after an overly excited and naked Kochett ran onto the field during the play. The down was replayed, only to see **Adrian Wilson** nail **Todd Heap** on a promising pass play and force a fumble that **Carlos Rogers** returned 96 yards for the game-clinching TD in a 31-21 Durham upset.

The brief Spartan Dynasty ended in Gwinnett with a convincing 42-21 victory for the Glads. **Vince Young** started in place of **Big Ben** and his 252 yards of passing with 2 TDs and no INTs validated that move completely. **LeSean McCoy** also helped out with 130 total yards and a TD and a pair of forced fumbles led to 10 points. **Matt Cassel** had a productive day in defeat, throwing for 283 yards and 1 TD.

Finally, in LA the Knights put away the Cubs with ease, slowly crushing them by the score of 27-7. The Cubs, the worst team by record to make the post-season in EFL history, looked it.