

WEEK 11



EFL

ELITE FOOTBALL LEAGUE



Shooting for the Stars in our 15th Season!

December 19, 2021

TREY-IFFIC!



Trey Lance
Seattle Pilots

Rookie, **Trey Lance** starts to throw his first pass in relief of starter, **Sam Darnold** in 2nd quarter action in Sebastian this week. When he entered the game, the Pilots were trailing 14-7. Lance went 17 of 21 for 258 yards and 2 TDs and ran it in for another score to lead Seattle to a surprise 35-23 victory in one of the biggest upsets of Week 11. (Story inside)

EAST



CENTRAL



WEST



NORTH



COASTAL

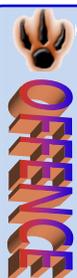


SOUTH



Who was slick
in Week
Eleven?

“Brylcreem” THE
EFL’S FIRST SPONSOR



Josh Allen
QB
Durham Thunder
Lizards

22 of 26, 355 yds, 4 TDs, 0 INTs, 2 TDs. 6 (4P/2R) and perfect QB rating.



Keanu Neal
S
Cowtown
Corn Kings

8 T, 1 FF, 1 INT (0yds). Forced fumble returned for TD, INT in 4th sealed win.


38

28

Ryan Tannehill threw 3 TD passes in the first two quarters, including a 52-yard slant to **Brandin Cooks**, to help build up a 24-7 halftime lead. The Coyote QB finished with 5 TD passes on the day while Cooks caught 3 TDs. **Damien Harris** balanced the attack and helped control the clock with 113 yards rushing on 22 carries. York attempted to battle back in the 2nd half, but by then **Tom Brady** was missing his top three wide receivers to injury, hampering the comeback attempt. **Derrick Henry** rushed for 134 yards and 3 TDs, but could not find the end zone fast enough to make up the deficit.

12-16-2021 Camelot Temp:40 Wind:0-5 None Line:YOR by 4 MVP:Tannehill HFA:ON(3)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Cobb County (7-4)	14	10	7	7	38
2021 York (7-4)	0	7	14	7	28

Passing

CB: Tannehill 33/25 363 Yds 5 TDs
 YOR: Brady 27/16 145 Yds

Rushing

CB: Harris 22/113, Breida 3/32, Peterson 6/24, Tannehill 3/21
 YOR: Henry 19/134 3 TDs, Brady 5/7 TD, Homer 1/4, Williams 1/3

Receiving

CB: Jones 7/92, Cooks 7/147 3 TDs, Pittman Jr. 5/77 TD, Harris 2/14, Cook 2/18 TD
 YOR: Smith 4/36, Kmet 4/41, Williams 3/19, St. Brown 2/28, Williams 2/20, Henry 1/1

Defense

CB: Reed Sk FF 3-Tk, Martinez FF 6-Tk
 YOR: Butler 14-Tk, Gary FF 9-Tk

Injuries

CB: Ridgeway 3
 YOR: Teller 4, Apple 2, Henderson 2, Guy 1, Douglas 1, Willis 1, Davis 1

Misc

CB: 35:08 TOP, McManus 1/2 FG 30 Lg
 YOR: Homer 6/161 KR,


24

38

Derek Carr slid a short pass to **Rob Gronkowski**, who took it 19 yards to the end zone for a 21-17 Brooklin lead late in the 2nd quarter. That TD was the last word in a see-saw 1st half that saw **Elijah Mitchell** run it in from 11 yards and **Drew Brees** connect on a 50-yard TD pass to **Chase Claypool** for Bruxelles; and **Evan Engram** rumble 73 yards to set up a score and catch one himself from 10 yards out for another. The Hawks got the 2nd half jump with a penalty-assisted opening drive for **DeAndre Hopkins'** second TD catch of the day, then held off the Bruxelles counter-attack for the win.

12-18-2021 Hawkeye Park Temp:40 Wind:0-5 None Line:BRH by 4 MVP:Carr HFA:ON(4)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Bruxelles (3-7-1)	3	14	0	7	24
2021 Brooklin (6-5)	7	14	10	7	38

Passing

BRX: Brees 30/17 236 Yds 2 TDs Int
 BRH: Carr 32/27 348 Yds 5 TDs

Rushing

BRX: Mitchell 16/55 TD, Williams 9/44, Fournette 6/38, Brees 1/2
 BRH: Scott 10/67, Smith 2/6, Jefferson 2/5

Receiving

BRX: Claypool 8/146 2 TDs, Valdes-Scantling 4/50, Collins 2/17, Fournette 1/4
 BRH: Hopkins 8/100 2 TDs, Engram 6/134 TD, Gronkowski 4/48 TD, Scott 3/16 TD

Defense

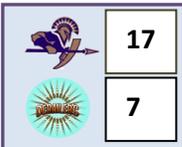
BRX: Odenigbo 2-Sks FF 2-Tk, Davis 8-Tk
 BRH: Robey-Coleman Int 5-Tk, Jones 9-Tk, Tuitt 8-Tk

Injuries

BRX: Howard 6, Robinson 3, Godwin 3
 BRH: Cobb 4, McKinney 1, Ferrell 1, Harrison Jr. 1

Misc

BRX: 10/111 Pen, Quinn 1-FR, Prater 1/1 FG 37 Lg
 BRH: Carr 2-F 1-L, Bullock 1/1 FG 45 Lg



Xavien Howard blocked a **Jake Elliott** FG attempt off the game's opening drive, setting up 79-yard, penalty-assisted Pickering push for the game's first score on a 3-yard TD run by **D'Andre Swift**. The Derailers answered with a 75-yard, 10-play drive, keyed by a 23-yard pass to **Emmanuel Sanders** and finished off with a **Lamar Jackson** TD pass to **Robert Woods** to tie it. The Spartans took the lead on a **Greg Zuerlein** FG and extended it on Swift's second TD run of the day late in the 3rd quarter. The Spartans' D took over, forcing 2 turnovers-on-downs to preserve the win.

12-14-2021 New Era Stadium Temp:39 Wind:Calm None Line:BUF by 3 MVP:Swift HFA:0

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Pickering (5-6)	7	3	7	0	17
2021 Buffalo (4-7)	7	0	0	0	7

Passing

PIC: Rivers 16/11 120 Yds
 BUF: Jackson 47/33 295 Yds TD

Rushing

PIC: Sermon 12/62, Swift 16/37 2 TDs, Shepard 1/8
 BUF: Woods 2/47, Davis 8/24, Booker 1/14, Jackson 7/4

Receiving

PIC: Shepard 3/37, Swift 3/20, Ridley 3/48, Mooney 1/8, Sermon 1/7
 BUF: Gage 13/133, Sanders 9/90, Woods 5/44 TD, Davis 2/6, Fant 2/20, Booker 2/2

Defense

PIC: Ward 11-Tk, Kinlaw Sk FF 3-Tk, Dugger 10-Tk, Okwara Sk 5-Tk
 BUF: Addison Sk 5-Tk, Hicks 8-Tk

Injuries

PIC: Roby 3, Shepard 2, Dennard 1
 BUF: Williams 2, Fant 1, Saffold 1

Misc

PIC: Zuerlein 1/1 FG 21 Lg
 BUF: 0/3 4th Dwn, Elliott 0/1 FG



Heavy rain soaked the field in NJ but not enough to stop North Stars WR, **Justin Jefferson**, who caught 10 balls for 178 yards, including a pair of 31-yard gainers and a 33-yarder. The potent Budapest offence generated just 1 TD in the game, a 10-yard dive by **Jeff Wilson Jr** in the 2nd quarter. However, **Jason Myers** kicked 4 FGs, the longest from 52 yards, to stay in front of a NJ offence that was thwarted by an interception of **Matt Stafford** and two turnovers-on-downs in the 2nd half. NJ found the end zone with 3:36 left on a 10-yard jet sweep by **Terry McLaurin**, but too little, too late.

12-17-2021 Stone Pony Shore Temp:68 Wind:5-15 Heavy Rain Line:NJ by 8 MVP:Jefferson HFA:0

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Budapest (11-0)	3	13	0	3	19
2021 New Jersey (5-6)	0	3	0	8	11

Passing

BUD: Rodgers 37/21 281 Yds
 NJ: Stafford 40/24 226 Yds Int

Rushing

BUD: Johnson 8/83, Wilson Jr. 4/7 TD
 NJ: Montgomery 13/32, McLaurin 2/13 TD, Stafford 2/12, McKissic 3/11, Gallman Jr. 1/1

Receiving

BUD: Jefferson 10/178, Diggs 4/42, Johnson 3/20, Thompson 1/14, Brown 1/8, Hollister 1/4
 NJ: McKissic 8/66, McLaurin 6/57, Allen 3/28, Chark Jr. 3/41, Callaway 2/18

Defense

BUD: Jordan Sk 4-Tk, Goodson 8-Tk
 NJ: Cunningham 13-Tk, Breeland 11-Tk, Smith Sk 6-Tk

Injuries

BUD:
 NJ: Alexander 2, Hughes 1, Allen 1

Misc

BUD: Myers 4/4/ FG 52 Lg
 NJ: Boswell 1/1 FG 40 Lg



The Violators found the end zone on their first two series, with **Ezekiel Elliott** scoring on a 3-yard run and **Patrick Mahomes** finding **TJ Hockenson** from 5 yards to take a 14-0 lead. Interceptions by **Adrian Phillips** and **Patrick Peterson** set up **Matt Ryan** TD pass to **Braxton Berrios** and a 48-yard jet sweep by **Julian Edelman** for a TD to get Oshawa back in it. Mahomes TD passes of 44 yards to **John Brown** and 29 yards to **Ja'Marr Chase** sandwiched a Ryan 35-yard TD to **Josh Reynolds** to highlight a 24-point 4th quarter that went in favour of Virden to finish off their 7th win.

12-14-2021 GM Megadome Temp:72 Wind:Calm Line:VV by 2 MVP:Mahomes HFA:ON(3)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Virden (7-4)	14	0	3	14	31
2021 Oshawa (2-8-1)	0	7	7	10	24

Passing

VV: Mahomes 41/32 438 Yds 3 TDs 2 Int
 OSH: Ryan 36/23 248 Yds 2 TDs

Rushing

VV: Elliott 10/42 TD, Mahomes 2/15
 OSH: Edelman 1/48 TD, Singletary 15/45, Rountree III 4/10, Ryan 1/4

Receiving

VV: Elliott 7/44, Brown 7/133 TD, Chase 6/139 TD, Davis 5/80, Hockenson 3/20 TD
 OSH: Edelman 9/109, Singletary 5/21, Reynolds 4/59 TD, Gesicki 2/17, Schultz 1/27

Defense

VV: Trevathan 11-Tk, Harris Jr. 10-Tk
 OSH: Peterson Int 8-Tk, Phillips Int 3-Tk, Johnson 8-Tk, Ward 8-Tk

Injuries

VV: Buggs 4, Johnson 3, Atkins 2, Campbell 1
 OSH: Goedert 1

Misc

VV: Badgley 1/1 FG 38 Lg
 OSH: Gonzalez 1/1 FG 49 Lg



Rhamondre Stevenson dove through the middle from 8 yards and **Josh Jacobs** cut back left from 7 yards, both for TDs to cap the Glads' first two series and give them a 14-0 lead. The Crusaders answered with consecutive TD drives of their own, finding the end zone on **Mac Jones** TD passes to **Tyler Higbee** and **Laviska Shenault** to make it 14-14 at the half. Peg City turned it over on downs to start the 3rd, setting up a **Tyler Bass** FG then **Big Ben** finished off the scoring with a 4th quarter TD pass to **Albert Okwuegbunam** to give Georgia the win and hand the Crusaders their 11th loss.

12-18-2021 Heinz Field Temp:55 Wind:5-15 None Line:GEO by 7 MVP:Jacobs HFA:ON(1)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Peg City (0-11)	0	14	0	0	14
2021 Georgia (3-7-1)	14	0	3	7	24

Passing

PCC: Jones 32/18 141 Yds 2 TDs
 GEO: Roethlisberger 33/28 260 Yds TD

Rushing

PCC: Hubbard 9/45, Bell 9/35, Jones 2/2
 GEO: Jacobs 22/111 TD, Stevenson 4/18 TD, Roethlisberger 3/12, Bernard 2/2

Receiving

PCC: Aiyuk 5/45, Higbee 4/41 TD, Hubbard 3/9, Shenault Jr. 2/21 TD, Ingold 2/7
 GEO: Landry 8/83, Johnson 8/65, Bernard 4/20, Okwuegbunam 3/35 TD, Snead IV 2/38

Defense

PCC: Humphrey 12-Tk
 GEO: Moreland 8-Tk

Injuries

PCC: Sutton 5, Barkley 3, Godchaux 2, Okudah 2, Cohen 1, Jones 1, Jones 1
 GEO: Ertz 2, Fuller V 2, Johnson 1

Misc

PCC:
 GEO: Bass 1/2 FG 26 Lg



DeShaun Watson threw TD passes of 25 yards to **Juju Smith-Schuster** and 75 yards to **Amari Cooper** and scrambled for a third TD to direct a 24-point 1st half for the Patriots. Erieau's **Kyler Murray** answered with TD runs of 13 and 5 yards to keep the Cadillac within a score at halftime, down 24-17. The Pats' **Brian Hill** scored on an 8-yard run to cap a 58-yard drive to start the 2nd half to extend their lead to 31-17. The Caddies went on a 19-play drive that ended with a turnover on downs at the Pats' 3-yard line early in the 4th. It was their last shot to get back in it and the Pats held on.

12-14-2021 Patriot Place Temp:75 Wind:Calm Line:CHP by 10 MVP:Watson HFA:ON

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Erieau (3-8)	10	7	0	6	23
2021 Charleswood (10-1)	14	10	7	3	34

Passing

ERI: Murray 28/16 154 Yds
 CHP: Watson 25/18 300 Yds 2 TDs

Rushing

ERI: Murray 15/147 3 TDs, Moss 7/57, Vaughn 5/28, Hines 2/9, Harris 1/7
 CHP: Dobbins 15/90, Hill 10/46 TD, Watson 2/6 TD

Receiving

ERI: Waddle 4/43, Hines 3/41, Henry 3/18, Vaughn 2/7, Ruggs III 2/20, Arcega-Whiteside 1/8
 CHP: Smith-Schuster 6/73 TD, Cooper 3/101 TD, Kelce 3/51, Metcalf 3/37, Meyers 2/20

Defense

ERI: Houston Sk 4-Tk, Diggs 8-Tk, Hewitt 8-Tk
 CHP: Darby FF 5-Tk

Injuries

ERI: Hurst 3, Gilmore 2, Glasgow 2, Janovich 1, Harris 1, King II 1
 CHP: Ozigbo 3, Edmunds 1, Linder 1

Misc

ERI: Sloman 1/1 FG 29 Lg
 CHP: Rodgers 3/121 KR, Lutz 2/2 FG 41 Lg



After **Baker Mayfield** rounded off the game's opening drive with an 8-yard TD pass to **Adam Thielen**, the Triumph's **Mitch Trubisky** countered at the end of the 1st with a 52-yard TD strike to **Rashod Bateman** to tie it. The Irish exploded for 21 points in the 2nd quarter, beginning with an 85-yard drive capped by another TD pass to Thielen and finishing with a 44-yard TD strike to **Tyreek Hill** after an **Adam Trautman** fumble. In-between, **Aaron Jones** scored from 4 yards out. This outburst broke the will of the Triumph. They were shutout in the 2nd half as the Irish cruised to an easy win.

12-14-2021 Wilhalla Stadium Temp:70 Wind:Calm Line:TCT by 8 MVP:Mayfield HFA:

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 East Elmhurst (8-3)	7	21	3	3	34
2021 Twin Cities (3-8)	7	0	0	0	7

Passing

EE: Mayfield 28/21 267 Yds 3 TDs
 TCT: Trubisky 8/6 87 Yds TD

Rushing

EE: Michel 12/84, Mostert 13/70, Jones 12/31 TD, Mayfield 2/4
 TCT: Gordon III 10/40, Henderson Jr. 8/34, Edwards-Helaire 10/20, White 1/7

Receiving

EE: Thielen 7/87 2 TDs, Hill 5/98 TD, Everett 2/19, Olsen 2/15, Jones 2/23
 TCT: Gordon III 2/9, Bateman 2/69 TD, White 1/6, Trautman 1/3

Defense

EE: Smith FF 5-Tk, Parsons 8-Tk
 TCT: Wagner 13-Tk

Injuries

EE:
 TCT: Brown 2, Brown 1

Misc

EE: 36:15 TOP, Barrett 1-FR, Blankenship 2/2 FG 38 Lg
 TCT: 6 1st Dwn, Trautman 1-F Lost



A 6-yard scramble for a score by **Josh Allen** and TD passes to **Tyler Boyd** and the first of two on the day to **Darren Waller** had the Thunder Lizards out in front 24-10 and looking in control at the half. Durham kept pouring it on, scoring 21 points in the 3rd quarter on a 39-yard pass to Waller, his second TD, a 21-yard pass to **Cooper Kupp** and an **Antonio Gibson** TD run. They weren't done there, scoring one last major on another Allen scramble in the 4th. Chino scored their only TD on an 11-yard bootleg by **Teddy Bridgewater** in the 2nd quarter, making it 17-10 Durham at the time.

12-17-2021 The Big House Temp:91 Wind:Calm *Internet* Line:DTL by 4 MVP:Allen HFA:ON(4)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Durham (10-1)	7	17	21	7	52
2021 Chino (6-4-1)	3	7	0	0	10

Passing

DTL: Allen 26/22 355 Yds 4 TDs
 CHI: Bridgewater 23/11 107 Yds 2 Int

Rushing

DTL: Gibson 18/115 TD, Allen 4/30 2 TDs, Mattison 7/26, Edmonds 3/18, Evans 4/18
 CHI: Jones II 7/34, Bridgewater 3/26 TD, Jackson 5/13

Receiving

DTL: Kupp 7/129 TD, Waller 6/101 2 TDs, Boyd 4/60 TD, Samuel 3/31, Edmonds 1/7
 CHI: Jackson 4/44, Higgins 2/26, Jones Jr. 2/8, Gallup 1/19, Byrd 1/8, Jones II 1/2

Defense

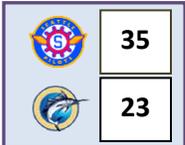
DTL: Burns Sk FF Tk, Hendrickson Sk 3-Tk, Simmons Int 3-Tk
 CHI: Bostic 13-Tk, Jackson 9-Tk

Injuries

DTL: Penny 1
 CHI: Patrick 1

Misc

DTL: 32 1st Dwn, 36:39 TOP, Santos 1/1 FG 24 Lg
 CHI: 15 MT, Butker 1/1 FG 57 Lg



With the Swordfish leading 14-7 early in the 2nd on 2 TDs by **Nick Chubb**, rookie Pilots QB, **Trey Lance** took over for **Sam Darnold** and led Seattle to a FG. Sebastian then turned the ball over on downs at their 31, setting up a 7-yard TD pass to **Anthony Firkser** to give Seattle a 17-14 halftime lead. **Daniel Carlson** tied it with a 48-yard FG but Lance regained the lead on a TD pass to **Robby Anderson**. The Fish looked to take the lead on a TD pass to **Terrace Marshall Jr** but missed the 2-point attempt. Seattle made it a 2-score lead on a Lance TD run and 2-point convert and held on.

12-13-2021 The Fish Tank Temp:76 Wind:Calm Line:SS by 5 MVP:Lance HFA:ON(3)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Seattle (2-9)	7	10	7	11	35
2021 Sebastian (4-6-1)	6	8	3	6	23

Passing

SEA: Lance 21/17 258 Yds 2 TDs, Darnold 12/7 65 Yds
 SS: Cousins 31/19 229 Yds 2 TDs 2 Int

Rushing

SEA: Akers 4/29 TD, Hunt 9/26, Lamb 1/15, Lance 9/12 TD, Darnold 1/10, Brown 4/5
 SS: Chubb 16/120 TD, Cousins 1/10, Richard 1/2

Receiving

SEA: Hunt 7/81, Anderson 5/92 TD, Firkser 4/46 TD, Mims 2/26, Akers 2/8, Brown 2/34
 SS: Marshall Jr. 5/42 TD, Miller 4/73, Ebron 3/22, Reagor 2/33, Richard 2/13

Defense

SEA: Jenkins Int 6-Tk, Jack Sk 5-Tk, Brockers Sk 4-Tk, Wright Int 3-Tk
 SS: Clowney Sk 8-Tk, Jackson III 9-Tk

Injuries

SEA: Deguara 5
 SS: Wallace 2, Beckham Jr. 2, Feiler 1

Misc

SEA: 10/67 Pen, McPherson 2/2 FG 40 Lg
 SS: Carlson 1/1 FG 48 Lg



21



31

Cowtown dominated the 1st half. A 33-yard run by **Todd Gurley II** on the game's first play set up a FG to open the scoring. Then **Justin Herbert** fumbled the snap on the Assassins' first play from scrimmage and **Akiem Hicks** recovered to set up a 13-yard TD pass to **Mike Evans**. A 41-yard run by **Latavius Murray** set up a Gurley TD run then Evans snared his second TD catch on a 19-yard out. **Jerry Jeudy** scored on a 76-yard catch-and-run for LV but gave it back later by fumbling into the arms of **Jeremy Chinn**, who returned it for a TD. 31-7 Cowtown at the half and LV never recovered.

12-17-2021 Tillman Field Temp:44 Wind:Calm None Line:COW by 8 MVP:Evans HFA:ON(

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Las Vegas (8-3)	0	7	7	7	21
2021 Cowtown (6-5)	17	14	0	0	31

Passing

LV: Herbert 53/35 381 Yds 3 TDs Int
COW: Fitzpatrick 22/14 136 Yds 2 TDs

Rushing

LV: Williams 4/6
COW: Murray 10/61, Gore 13/53, Gurley II 7/46 TD, Fitzpatrick 4/16, Toney 1/14

Receiving

LV: Graham 7/74 TD, Thomas 7/72 TD, Jeudy 7/156 TD, Fitzgerald 4/13, Lewis 3/11
COW: Evans 5/88 2 TDs, Murray 4/8, Lazard 3/33, Gurley II 1/0, Alie-Cox 1/7

Defense

LV: Davis Sk 10-Tk
COW: Neal Int FF 8-Tk, Williams 13-Tk, Watt 2-FF 3-Tk, Smith FF 5-Tk

Injuries

LV:
COW: Saubert 1, Bourne 1

Misc

LV: 16 MT, Herbert 1-F lost, Lewis 1-F Lost
COW: Hicks 1-FR, Chinn 1-FR TD, Slye 1/1 FG 35 Lg



19



33

The Cubs scored on their first 5 possessions of the game, with TD runs by **Jerick McKinnon** and **Michael Carter** and a 55-yard TD pass from **Russell Wilson** to **Elijah Moore** doing the damage as they jumped out to a 26-6 1st half lead. But the Blue Eagles came back with a TD pass from **Joe Burrow** to **Tyler Eifert** and a 57-yard **Mason Crosby** FG to open the 2nd half and pull within ten, 26-16, heading into the 4th. Crosby's fourth FG of the game brought Scarborough to within 3 before the Cubs regained the upper hand on an 18-yard TD pass to **Cole Beasley** to cement the win.

12-15-2021 Joe Ferguson Stadium Temp:50 Wind:0-5 None Line:ICC by 8 MVP:Carter

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Scarborough (2-8-1)	0	6	10	3	19
2021 Iowa City (7-4)	9	17	0	7	33

Passing

SBE: Burrow 36/20 195 Yds TD
ICC: Wilson 20/13 218 Yds 2 TDs

Rushing

SBE: Carson 13/80, Gaskin 7/39, Burrow 3/38, Dallas 1/5
ICC: Carter 20/156 TD, McKinnon 12/75 TD, Wilson 2/23

Receiving

SBE: Robinson II 7/71, Gaskin 3/17, Crowder 3/36, Carson 3/13, Eifert 2/42 TD
ICC: Beasley 5/70 TD, Lockett 3/69, Tremble 3/25, McKinnon 1/-1, Moore 1/55 TD

Defense

SBE: Lawson Sk FF 7-Tk
ICC: Pierre-Paul 2-Sks FF 10-Tk, Rhodes 9-Tk, Singleton 8-Tk

Injuries

SBE: Uzomah 5, Gaskin 5, Dantzler 3, Fowler Jr. 1, Jones 1
ICC: Cox 1, Peters 1

Misc

SBE: Crosby 4/4 FG 57 Lg
ICC: Tucker 2/3 FG 44 Lg



WEEK ELEVEN

STANDINGS & STATS

EFL 2021 - Week 11 Standings

East	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Cobb County	7	4	0	.636	W1	290	26.4	226	20.5	5.8	4 1 0	2 1 0	6 2 0
New Jersey	5	6	0	.455	L1	198	18.0	257	23.4	-5.4	2 5 0	1 2 0	4 4 0
Buffalo	4	7	0	.364	L1	226	20.5	257	23.4	-2.8	3 3 0	2 1 0	4 4 0
Bruxelles	3	7	1	.318	L1	280	25.5	336	30.5	-5.1	2 3 0	1 2 0	2 5 1
Central	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Charleswood	10	1	0	.909	W8	278	25.3	217	19.7	5.5	5 0 0	4 0 0	7 1 0
Viriden	7	4	0	.636	W2	332	30.2	275	25.0	5.2	3 3 0	3 1 0	5 3 0
Twin Cities	3	8	0	.273	L3	208	18.9	260	23.6	-4.7	1 4 0	1 3 0	2 6 0
Peg City	0	11	0	.000	L11	159	14.5	320	29.1	-14.6	0 5 0	0 4 0	0 8 0
West	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Las Vegas	8	3	0	.727	L2	300	27.3	197	17.9	9.4	4 1 0	3 0 0	7 1 0
Iowa City	7	4	0	.636	W4	323	29.4	293	26.6	2.7	5 1 0	1 2 0	5 3 0
Chino	6	4	1	.591	L1	264	24.0	269	24.5	-0.5	2 3 1	2 1 0	5 2 1
Seattle	2	9	0	.182	W1	218	19.8	286	26.0	-6.2	1 4 0	0 3 0	0 8 0
North	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Durham	10	1	0	.909	W6	373	33.9	161	14.6	19.3	5 0 0	2 1 0	7 1 0
Cowtown	6	5	0	.545	W2	267	24.3	250	22.7	1.5	4 1 0	1 2 0	5 3 0
Sebastian	4	6	1	.409	L4	350	31.8	382	34.7	-2.9	2 4 0	1 1 1	2 5 1
Scarborough	2	8	1	.227	L2	209	19.0	331	30.1	-11.1	2 3 1	1 1 1	2 5 1
Coastal	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Budapest	11	0	0	1.000	W11	331	30.1	141	12.8	17.3	5 0 0	4 0 0	8 0 0
York	7	4	0	.636	L1	274	24.9	246	22.4	2.5	4 2 0	2 2 0	5 3 0
Brooklin	6	5	0	.545	W3	275	25.0	276	25.1	-0.1	3 3 0	1 3 0	4 4 0
Pickering	5	6	0	.455	W1	194	17.6	240	21.8	-4.2	0 5 0	1 3 0	3 5 0
South	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
East Elmhurst	8	3	0	.727	W4	256	23.3	201	18.3	5.0	2 2 0	3 0 0	6 2 0
Georgia	3	7	1	.318	W2	270	24.5	311	28.3	-3.7	1 4 0	0 2 1	1 6 1
Erieau	3	8	0	.273	L3	198	18.0	273	24.8	-6.8	1 5 0	2 1 0	2 6 0
Oshawa	2	8	1	.227	L4	246	22.4	314	28.5	-6.2	1 5 1	0 2 1	1 6 1

EFL 2021 - Week 11 Passing Leaders

			Att	Cmp	C%	Yards	In	I%	Lg	TD	TD%	Rate
1	Rodgers,A	BUD	351	251	71.5	3331	2	0.6	75	29	8.3	126.4
2	Mahomes	VV	376	246	65.4	3601	5	1.3	72	32	8.5	119.3
3	Watson,D	CHP	330	220	66.7	2942	3	0.9	75	26	7.9	117.3
4	Wilson,R	ICC	329	236	71.7	2757	6	1.8	66	26	7.9	115.5
5	Cousins	SS	349	241	69.1	3092	9	2.6	76	31	8.9	115.4
6	Allen,J	DTL	389	265	68.1	3210	4	1.0	75	30	7.7	114.7
7	Roethlisbe	GEO	350	247	70.6	2502	5	1.4	60	23	6.6	106.6
8	Mayfield	EE	298	200	67.1	2306	3	1.0	48	18	6.0	106.2
9	Tannehill	CB	318	202	63.5	2648	7	2.2	55	24	7.5	105.7
10	Herbert	LV	399	278	69.7	3021	7	1.8	76	22	5.5	102.8
11	Brees	BRX	284	172	60.6	2313	5	1.8	75	20	7.0	102.6
12	Carr,D	BRH	382	236	61.8	2821	5	1.3	73	25	6.5	100.7
13	Brady	YOR	338	223	66.0	2729	11	3.3	84	21	6.2	97.9
14	Trubisky	TCT	225	141	62.7	1622	5	2.2	69	15	6.7	97.3
15	Stafford	NJ	391	259	66.2	2869	8	2.0	75	17	4.3	93.8
16	Fitzpatric	COW	220	152	69.1	1545	7	3.2	52	11	5.0	92.3
17	Ryan,M	OSH	386	247	64.0	2428	6	1.6	57	19	4.9	91.5
18	Bridgewater	CHI	265	187	70.6	1899	7	2.6	75	9	3.4	91.1
19	Jackson,L	BUF	393	261	66.4	2436	7	1.8	60	16	4.1	89.4
20	Minshew II	SEA	193	124	64.2	1205	6	3.1	62	11	5.7	87.7
21	Burrow	SBE	330	190	57.6	1908	4	1.2	59	17	5.2	86.3
22	Rivers,P	PIC	290	175	60.3	2019	4	1.4	87	8	2.8	84.8
23	Murray,K	ERI	317	191	60.3	1849	8	2.5	67	8	2.5	74.5
24	Jones,M	PCC	355	201	56.6	2179	13	3.7	80	14	3.9	72.7
25	Goff	BRX	25	20	80.0	346	0	0.0	68	3	12.0	158.3

EFL 2021 - Week 11 Kick Return Leaders

			No	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD
1	Roberts,A	BRX	19	640	33.7	50	0
2	Harris,D	COW	15	477	31.8	76	0
3	Johnson,D	SBE	16	458	28.6	41	0
4	Rodgers,I	CHP	16	455	28.4	45	0
5	Agnew	SEA	21	594	28.3	68	0
6	Duvernay	TCT	16	445	27.8	49	0
7	Homer	YOR	16	429	26.8	38	0
8	Scott,B	BRH	16	399	24.9	40	0
9	Ballentine	SS	17	381	22.4	35	0
10	Abdullah	CHI	16	354	22.1	36	0
11	Webster,N	NJ	17	373	21.9	35	0
12	Waddle	ERI	14	300	21.4	31	0
13	Atwell	OSH	19	405	21.3	38	0
14	Carter,D	BUF	24	500	20.8	48	0
15	Cannon	BUD	7	236	33.7	42	0
16	Adderley	VV	3	89	29.7	33	0
17	Patterson	BUD	12	324	27.0	39	0
18	Lewis,D	LV	13	339	26.1	43	0
19	Hubbard	PCC	4	103	25.8	29	0
20	Hill	DTL	9	218	24.2	38	0
21	Hines	ERI	3	72	24.0	29	0
22	Peoples-Jo	SS	1	22	22.0	22	0
23	Barner	PIC	10	219	21.9	39	0
24	Johnson,D	CB	6	131	21.8	28	0
25	Carter	ICC	13	283	21.8	33	0

EFL 2021 - Week 11 Punt Return Leaders

			No	Fc	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD
1	Grant,J	CHI	22	7	320	14.5	62	1
2	Peppers	ERI	17	5	223	13.1	22	0
3	Harris,D	COW	24	8	276	11.5	20	0
4	Erickson	BUF	16	10	148	9.3	24	0
5	Cooper,P	VV	14	10	129	9.2	41	0
6	Taylor,T	CHP	25	4	216	8.6	27	0
7	Proche	DTL	27	11	226	8.4	20	0
8	Moore	EE	19	13	155	8.2	17	0
9	Roberts,A	BRX	18	1	146	8.1	29	0
10	Spencer,D	NJ	18	4	146	8.1	25	0
11	Peoples-Jo	SS	16	6	124	7.8	16	0
12	Raymond	CB	16	4	123	7.7	22	0
13	Hill,K	SBE	20	4	148	7.4	25	0
14	Hardman	LV	17	14	55	3.2	13	0
15	Lamb	SEA	5	3	74	14.8	38	0
16	James,R	GEO	2	2	26	13.0	14	0
17	Hines	ERI	2	0	24	12.0	16	0
18	Cole Sr.	SEA	10	2	104	10.4	20	0
19	Atwell	OSH	8	3	82	10.3	22	0
20	Renfrow	SEA	5	5	44	8.8	20	0
21	Tate,G	BRH	4	15	35	8.8	19	0
22	Johnson,D	GEO	9	5	78	8.7	18	0
23	Barner	PIC	6	11	48	8.0	14	0
24	Rodgers,Am	BUD	12	16	91	7.6	20	0
25	Kirk	ICC	8	4	53	6.6	12	0

EFL 2021 - Week 11 Rushing Leaders

EFL 2021 - Week 11 Receiving Leaders

		Att	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD			No	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD		
1	Henry,D	YOR	245	1108	4.5	48	10	1	Adams,D	OSH	79	875	11.1	57	11
2	Gordon III	TCT	166	883	5.3	45	2	2	Hopkins,D	BRH	69	955	13.8	54	11
3	Cook,D	LV	174	863	5.0	49	8	3	Diggs,S	BUD	68	855	12.6	66	7
4	Robinson,J	GEO	162	823	5.1	52	6	4	Allen,K	NJ	68	640	9.4	35	8
5	Jones,A	EE	157	807	5.1	39	6	5	Lockett	ICC	65	810	12.5	66	8
6	Chubb,N	SS	156	799	5.1	47	8	6	Jefferson	BUD	62	1014	16.4	75	8
7	Drake	OSH	145	798	5.5	53	6	7	Evans,M	COW	61	844	13.8	41	10
8	Jackson,L	BUF	128	773	6.0	41	9	8	Waller	DTL	60	789	13.2	43	10
9	Taylor,J	SS	128	725	5.7	52	6	9	Gage	BUF	59	607	10.3	41	3
10	Murray,K	ERI	109	700	6.4	32	10	10	Hill,T	EE	58	849	14.6	44	9
11	Harris,D	CB	108	680	6.3	35	3	11	Gallup	CHI	57	785	13.8	75	6
12	Elliott,E	VV	146	597	4.1	28	7	12	Woods,R	BUF	57	567	9.9	60	7
13	Sanders,M	PIC	118	586	5.0	25	2	13	Johnson,D	GEO	56	546	9.8	50	7
14	Conner	ICC	95	575	6.1	47	1	14	Chase	VV	55	1165	21.2	72	11
15	Carson	SBE	110	568	5.2	27	3	15	Anderson,R	SEA	54	675	12.5	53	5
16	Jones II	CHI	126	539	4.3	26	5	16	McKissic	NJ	53	452	8.5	29	1
17	Harris	ERI	129	537	4.2	37	1	17	Kupp	DTL	53	894	16.9	75	6
18	Edwards-He	TCT	85	524	6.2	46	6	18	McLaurin	NJ	51	694	13.6	75	5
19	Montgomery	NJ	148	506	3.4	18	1	19	Claypool	BRX	51	923	18.1	75	12
20	Mitchell	BRX	114	501	4.4	34	5	20	Kelce,T	CHP	50	745	14.9	54	9
21	Swift	PIC	104	437	4.2	38	8	21	Cooks	CB	49	715	14.6	52	8
22	Wilson,R	ICC	60	423	7.1	30	4	22	Cooper,A	CHP	47	694	14.8	75	6
23	Johnson,Da	BUD	76	421	5.5	34	4	23	Godwin,C	BRX	47	764	16.3	56	7
24	Gurley II	COW	105	420	4.0	37	8	24	Fant	BUF	46	487	10.6	44	0
25	Gibson	DTL	90	419	4.7	28	2	25	Thielen	EE	46	541	11.8	30	5
26	Scott,B	BRH	69	381	5.5	25	1	26	Aiyuk	PCC	46	617	13.4	58	4
27	Williams,J	BRX	78	381	4.9	18	0	27	Robinson,A	SBE	46	557	12.1	51	4
28	Davis,M	BUF	91	379	4.2	25	3	28	Samuel,C	DTL	46	416	9.0	34	2
29	Jacobs,J	GEO	95	376	4.0	27	2	29	Fitzgerald	LV	45	443	9.8	19	1
30	Dobbins	CHP	68	370	5.4	26	2	30	Brown,A	ICC	45	795	17.7	54	5



AROUND THE



With Spats McChad



NEW YORK – I refuse to let **OMICRON** kill my Christmas spirit! By “Omicron,” I don’t mean the virus; I mean the brand.

OMICRON is the Grinch that wants to steal Christmas from us. It hasn’t yet, but the people who brought us the new and improved DELTA variant are ramping up their marketing campaign to petrify hysterical coronaphobes among us into supporting new lockdown dictates by the authorities. These people in charge either have no real clue of what do to about something they don’t really understand, but which is really, *really*, scary; or know exactly what they are doing and are using the virus as a tool to achieve it.

Logically, trying to stop **OMICRON** at this stage is like trying to stop the flu or the common cold: Impossible. It is like trying to stop a tornado in the middle of a farmer’s field. And since **OMICRON**, as I predicted in this column weeks ago, is proving no more dangerous than a severe cold or mild flu, it is as needless and stupid to even try.

But try, we will, in the name of keeping everyone “safe” ...at home, to drink or medicate themselves into a stupor while watching *CNN* and *American Horror Stories* and ordering off *Uber Eats*. *Amazon* will make a killing brokering our Christmas shopping and more small businesses will fade away, to be replaced by Taco Bells and Walmarts.

As depressing as it is to think about the possibility of another lockdown, it is uplifting to focus more than even before on the Spirit of Christmas. Which is what I am doing this holiday season.

I now walk the streets mask-less by day, throwing \$5 bills at every Salvation Army bell ringer I can find while singing *Fa La La La La* at the top of my lungs. I enter every small retail business and restaurant within walking distance of my Manhattan condo and wish the proprietors a “Very Merry Christmas” to cheer them up. As I make my way along the sidewalks, I dial the numbers of property management companies on the ‘For Lease’ signs in windows of boarded up retail spaces and encourage them to lower their rates in the spirit of Christmas, so that the bustle of commerce may once again sound loudly at the center of the Greatest City on Earth. I hand over cash to the homeless and assure the more hard-pressed among them that the knife isn’t necessary. I write and actually *mail* Christmas cards to my family and friends...and even some of my rivals, just to show them I am bigger than they.

I even tried baking shortbread – I am unlikely to try again.

At night, I *Uber* my way around Manhattan, stopping in every bar I can find and making a point to order at least one drink at each establishment to support this suffering industry. By midnight I am at the Hibernia Bar in Hell’s Kitchen, spreading the Christmas cheer among the patrons until closing time, or a little past, before somehow finding my way home to repeat the same routine the next day.

Of course, a typical Sunday is different. When the EFL is playing I sit down in my ‘Command Center’ at home in front of a giant computer screen, from where I control the dozen monitors stacked two-high, arrayed in a semi-circle around my large office desk, which is covered in laptops, tablets, notepads, and take-out containers. A multi-line phone for my secret sources around the league to call in on sits to my right and a mobile bar sits in front of my desk to my left. For the Christmas season I have added spiced rum and peppermint schnapps to my bar stock and use it to spike hot cocoa and eggnog. Sweet drinks are not normally my thing, but it is a taste sacrifice I am willing to make for the sake of the Christmas Spirit.

For EFL games on Thursday and Monday nights I can be found at the Hibernia Bar (an Irish fan hangout), 123 Burger Shot Bar (a Wrecking Balls fan hangout) or Blondies Sports (all jerseys can be seen there) taking in the action and listening attentively to the reactions of fellow patrons. I admit, some of my more lucid thoughts on the sport are stolen from drunks at the bar, who tend to see the game more clearly and honestly through the lens of a dozen *Budweisers* and the practical necessity of their betting vices. No gambler I; but I sometimes feel like the adrenaline rush that accompanies the tipping point of a game upon which a large wager rides brings a perspicacious clarity to the bettor that mere football aficionados like me cannot match.

With drinking establishments open again this Fall and Winter (for now) I have availed myself of this source of football “street smarts” by going out for the prime-time games and striking up conversations with my fellow patrons at the bar. Some are chronic gamblers others are into online fantasy. All scrutinize the game with an eye to gaining an edge on the competition.

Fantasy GMs tend to be player-based in their assessments and see the game through the lens of individual effort. Those who pick teams against the spread tend to look at the bigger picture and assess the teams as a whole leading up to a particular game day situation. Combined, the two approaches can expose the most salient factors likely to affect both team and individual performance on

any given Sunday as well as over the course of an entire season.

Sports line bettors and Fantasy gurus as well as traditional team fanatics can be found in abundance at the sports bar on game day. All have something to offer, even the homers, who tend to know their teams inside out and can tell you about such obscure things as how well their long-snapper snaps the ball. Knowing a long snapper is shaky before he crumbles in the clutch could be an important piece of information down the road.

Not many journalists make the effort that I do to go undercover and collect vital intelligence on the frontline of sports fandom. Most of my colleagues are content to dial up their league and team sources from the comfort of their home or work to develop relationships with coaches and executives in order to glean insider information. Most of them end up becoming stooges of the establishment, “breaking” stories that are deliberate leaks to an end.

Make no mistake: I have sources – plenty of them – in places both high and low. But I know there is much more to analysis than insider sources. Insiders only reflect the point of view of the inside, which is always important to know, but not always the final word on a topic.

Therefore, in the spirit of Christmas Giving that has engulfed me and caused me to wander the streets of Manhattan singing like a lunatic, to give money freely to strangers, to try to single-handedly kickstart the economy, to bake shortbread badly and drink peppermint schnapps (*ugh!*); I give to you, my Dear Readers, a handful of the best hidden gems that I have gleaned from listening to sports bar patrons. They are all duly verified and confirmed by my own independent analysis, and, given that this is supposed to be the Festive Season and there is enough ~~OMIGOD~~ negativity already in the air, I will emphasize the positive in this next piece. The following are the little-known facts, accomplishments and *unsung heroes* from every team (even Peg City). Make good use of the information and.... *Merry Christmas!*

SANTAS ELVES

At the end of the 2021 season there will be one Championship Winner, one Championship Loser, one Championship MVP and one Regular-season MVP. Those four will be remembered in gold and silver over the grand arc of history. The 200 games and individual accomplishments of the over 1,300 players that compose the rosters of the EFL's 24 teams will find their niche places in the history of the game, but the vast majority will fade with time.

Who now remembers anything significant from the 1955 NFL season, for example? Old Cleveland Browns fans will likely remember that the Browns won the NFL Championship that season. Most fans will not and will have to look it up on Google. Nobody apart from surviving relatives, for example, will likely remember that **Adrian Burk** was the starting QB for the Philadelphia Eagles that season, or that he once set the single game NFL record of 7 TD passes in a single game and was a first-round pick in 1950. Important accomplishments in the moment are like grains of sand on the beaches of time.

The 2021 EFL season has so far been defined by the exploits of the 30 players we deem to be first or second-team All-Pros, with honorable mentions going toward dozens of runner-up vote gatherers and, of course, the coaches and GMs of the dominant teams. Occasionally a bit player rises to the surface and is recognized on ESPN in prime time – a nice keepsake for the player and family, but not necessarily a sign of greater things to come.

The great Influencers on the EFL gridiron so far in 2021 are all well-known and highly-praised, as they should be. **Aaron Rodgers** of Budapest, **Josh Allen** of Durham and **Patrick Mahomes** of Virden are in a horse race for regular season MVP. **Derrick Henry** of York is literally running away with the rushing title and garnering dark horse votes for an MVP award normally awarded to quarterbacks. **Ja'Marr Chase** of Virden seems a lock to be Rookie of the Year, while **Davante Adams** of Oshawa is putting on a hero's performance as the league's top receiver in a down year for the former Mustangs. **Garret Bolles** of Budapest is the consensus choice for **Benny Clump**'s top blindside protector of the year and **Justin Tucker** of Iowa City is universally recognized as the deadliest kicker in the league, although **Harrison Butker** of Chino may beg to differ.

In an era of offensive dominance, the most stalwart defenders are to be found in Durham, where **Tyrann Mathieu**, **Fred Warner** and **Trey Hendrickson** all vie for recognition as the game's Great Deniers. Not to be forgotten, **Minkah Fitzpatrick** of Budapest and **Aaron Donald** of Buffalo will occasionally remind the football world that they can turn a game around single-handedly, while **Xavien Howard** of Pickering, **T.J. Watt** of Cowtown and **Jalen Ramsey** of East Elmhurst help to put their average-at-best offences in optimal positions. Defence no longer gets the respect it deserves but in subtler ways it continues to exert its influence.

The great players of 2021 have, and will have, more than enough accolades. There comes a point where constantly extolling the virtues of a **Patrick Mahomes** or an **Aaron Rodgers** becomes almost trite. Who are the players who get the job done behind the scenes? Who provides that critical helping hand to assist the team to become the best it can be? Who are the producers and make-up artists behind the stage that make the stars look good every Sunday?

Santa Claus never claimed to be able to deliver trees and presents to over 300 million households in a single night all by himself. It is well known that he has reindeer and elves to help him. It is no different on any EFL team. For every Santa like **Josh Allen** there are a few key Elves behind him. So, without further ado, I present to you the Head Elf on each EFL team:

Head Elves and Helpers

Brooklin Hawks – We all know about the importance of **DeAndre Hopkins** and **Derek Carr** in keeping the dream of a Hawks' playoff run alive. The offence in general is seen as the key to victory in this town. Don't look now, but the defence is not as bad as you think. The guy few fans and media are talking about, but opposing coaches certainly know about, is safety, **Jessie Bates III**. This

underrated defender watches opposing quarterbacks like a hawk and shades his coverage subtly to the play side to prevent more throws than he breaks up. With 37 tackles, 1 for loss, 6 pass break-ups, 2 interceptions and an outstanding 48.5% target rate, Bates is a sleepless sentinel in centerfield for Brooklin. He even has a sack! *Honourable mention: Stephon Tuitt, DE.*

Bruxelles Bombers – **Drew Brees** took over the role of Santa the moment he arrived in Belgium, stealing the mantle that would have gone to safety **Harrison Smith** had **Jared Goff** remained the starter. While Smith has been the greatest leader and performer on a shabby defence, the unit ranks near or at the bottom in almost every category and is the reason the Bombers are where they are. The pressure is on the offence like never before and the guy who is quietly paving the way for success in both the run and pass game is left guard, **Joel Bitonio**. One of the big reasons left tackle **Garrett Bolles** is on his way to the Pro Bowl is because of Bitonio's solid presence to his right. Bitonio has laid 19 key blocks leading to big runs and has not allowed a sack. In fact, Brees has been sacked just twice all season, by far the best rate in the league. Bitonio is a giant elf doing the heavy lifting onto Santa's sleigh.

Budapest North Stars – With so many "stars" on this team it is not easy to find the unsung hero in the bunch. **Aaron Rodgers**, **Minkah Fitzpatrick**, **Cameron Jordan** and the receiving corps need no introduction, nor any more ink. The Budapest defence continues to perform at a high level, despite losing key pieces in the off-season. People take the Budapest defence for granted, so it is easy to miss the rock at the center of it that allows **Darrin Jones** to focus extensively on shutting down the pass. The defence can be geared that way because of **Lavonte David**. He is the rocky steady presence supporting the trenches and calling the shots. Yes, we all know who David is, but how little he has been mentioned over the current course of this banner season for the North star franchise is curious. Just watch any North Stars game and you will see him somewhere around the ball on virtually every play. He has played 100% of the defensive snaps, leads the team in tackles with 76 (12 for loss), has forced 3 fumbles and defended 5 passes. He is the both the workman and captain of the defence – the Foreman of the Elves, who keeps the toy assembly line moving.

Buffalo Derailers – Santa **Lamar** and **Aaron** "Misses Claus" **Donald** garner all the attention in the national media, as well they should. It is hard to notice anyone else when they are on the field. But in upstate New York, where people have nothing else to do but watch football, fans are incensed that cornerback, **Jaycee Horn** is not being talked about as *Rookie of the Year*. It is distressing to contemplate where the Derailer secondary would be without Horn's 2 interceptions, 9 pass deflections, 3 fumble recoveries, 2 forced fumbles and shutdown-calibre 53.2% pass completion rate. Horn is a full-service corner, playing the run like a linebacker, with 39 tackles and is a danger on the corner blitz with 1 sack. Definitely an Elf with Santa-like mojo.

Charleswood Patriots – The bringer of joy to the fans of Charleswood this Christmas season is **DeShaun Watson** and the "Rudolph" lighting the way for him is unquestionably **Travis Kelce**. Finding a standout from the supporting cast is no easy task in a season where all eyes are resting on the quarterback waiting for the offence to explode to the top of the charts. The reason the offence is in no hurry to break out the razzle-dazzle is because the defence is holding its own, particularly the defensive front, where **Carl Lawson** leads a foursome that has the Pats second in the league with 23 sacks. Lawson has 6 of those, but also has a league-leading 18 QB pressures. His 36 tackles after 11 games is a high total for a defensive lineman and his 2 forced fumbles and 1 interception have him flirting with the reputation as a "game-changer." On a team with plenty of elves, Lawson wears the pointiest green hat of all.

Chino Convicts – With the twin Santas of this team currently out due to injury, the Elves have had to step in and deliver the presents to impatient Convicts fans. **Teddy Bridgewater** is currently wearing the red, tasseled cap well, but he is obviously no **Dak Prescott**. The defence is attempting to fill in the breach created by a sputtering offence and **Za'Darius Smith** is receiving due recognition for being a threat to opposing QBs coming off the edge. The guy almost nobody talks about until it is time to vote for the All-Pro team is the anchor of the defensive line, **Grady Jarrett**. He is a handful for opposing offensive linemen, eating up double teams routinely and contributing production as well, with 29 tackles, 6 of those for loss, 3 sacks, QB pressures and 2 passes defended. Jarrett is the big elf deep inside the toy factory who helps everybody else out and never takes a break.

Cobb County Coyotes – Who the Santa is on this team has always been up for debate, so isolating the most productive elf is no easy task. If we assume that **Ryan Tannehill** is jumping down the chimney on Christmas Eve and **Brandin Cooks** is 'Dasher' at the head of the line of reindeer that pull him along, then we have to survey the defence or the offensive line to find the elf that loads the sleigh. **Tre'Davious White** receives his due across the national media landscape and **David Bakhtiari**'s huge contract keeps him in the news. But the guy who, by the end of the year could surprise all those not paying attention with a first team All-Pro selection is right tackle **Tristan Wirfs**. He is the reason why the Coyotes run predominantly to the right side as he leads the league with a whopping 36 key blocks, according to *The Line. Pro Football Focal-Point* grades him at 95.3 run blocking grade and 92.3 overall. If you are still wondering how Tannehill has been able to resurrect his career, look no further than the Coyote offensive line, led by Wirfs.

Cowtown Corn Kings – On a team that now defines itself by its defence, the guy who wears the red pants is most certainly **T.J. Watt**. He and **Mike Evans** are the only two players random fan-in-the-street is likely to mention when put on the spot to name a good Corn King player. With so many no-names on the roster, it is always surprising when this team ends up in the playoffs every year. They get there because there a lot of Elves working behind the scenes to keep production moving. This year, the Elf doing the most work in relative obscurity has to be free agent corner, **Darius Williams**. People don't talk about him, but opposing quarterbacks definitely look for him pre-snap. Williams leads the league in passes defended with 19, six more than the next player on the list. His 2 interceptions and 51.6% completion rate have him ahead of some elite company as a shutdown corner.

Durham Thunder Lizards – Similar to the North Stars, a lot of Thunder Lizards are in the limelight in this, possibly their most dominant season. Certainly, this is the best defence the Durham franchise has ever fielded with an all-star cast all vying for Santa

status. On offence there is a quarterback, **Josh Allen**, who is in the running for Offensive MVP and has the biggest claim to the big red coat. But there are plenty of versions of Santa around the world, so there is certainly room in the Durham locker room for a *Krampus* (Central Europe), a *Belsnickel* (Germany) and a *Green Santa* (supposedly the original colour of Santa's coat before *Coca-Cola* holiday adverts). These would be played by **Tyrann Mathieu**, **Fred Warner** and **Trey Hendrickson** respectively. But if you're looking for the secret to the Lizard's success rushing the passer, apart from the obvious fact that their defensive line has moves, look no further than corner, **Kenny Moore II**. The corner working opposite Mathieu gets more attention from opposing QBs than he does the media and is teaching them to go elsewhere. Moore II's 4 interceptions have him tied for first in the league and his 53.2% completion rate is a source of frustration for opponents. No wonder opposing QBs are holding on to the ball longer and getting sacked. On a team full of Santas, Moore II is one Elf who deserves to have his story told. *Honourable mention: Justin Simmons, S.*

East Elmhurst Irish – The front-runner for this year's Christmas Miracle Team boasts one of the most dynamic defenders in the sport in corner, **Jalen Ramsey** and the flat-out most dangerous wide receiver with the ball in his hands in **Tyreek Hill**. Apart from those two clear-cut superstars, however, fans and even the sharpest pundits scratch their heads in wonder at how the defence has risen to become a top five unit in many key categories. There are plenty of stout elves working the defensive assembly line in Queens, including Rookie of the Year candidate, **Micah Parsons**, 2018 Gale Sayers MVP, **Shaq Barrett** and front-line terror **Brandon Graham**. But the guy who almost nobody is talking about other than a bar fly named Mickey, who pointed me to him during a deep discussion about the Irish at the Hibernia Bar, is defensive tackle **Jonathan Allen**. That is probably because his stats, just 22 tackles, 2 sacks and 7 QB pressures don't jump out at you and you rarely see him doing anything flashy. But I took Mickey's tip and went back to the *All-22* to have a closer look. Yep, the guy is a monster on the inside, swallowing up double-teams and keeping the interior of the opposing offensive line occupied, allowing the edges to fall prey to the Barretts and Grahams of the swarming Irish defence. This investigation alone has me doubting more than ever that *Pro Football Focal-Point* gets it right most of the time. Thanks, Mickey!

Erieau Cadillac – On a team that has stocked plenty of premium talent on its roster through the draft, media and fan attention tends to focus on what those players have *not* been doing to help the Cadillac rise out of obscurity. The lightning rod for criticism and the reason for hope for the future all rolled into one contradictory package is, of course, **Kyler Murray**. The Elves in Erieau appear to be unionized, so Santa Murray isn't getting much help. But on those days when he flashes the chops to be that ever-elusive franchise quarterback, the guy paving a route for him on a run or ably protecting his blindside in the pocket is left tackle **Morgan Moses**. The guy is not going to be an All-Pro candidate because of all the penalties he gets, but he is still the most underrated tackle in the league by a longshot. *The Line* has credited him with 21 key blocks in the run game and just 1 sack surrendered. On a team with little to cheer about on offence, Moses quietly gets the job done like good elf should.

Georgia Gladiators – This is **Big 'Papa Christmas' Ben's** team until he retires or **Dave Birdsall** thinks Tua is ready. Apart from Ben and sensational running back **James Robinson**, Gladiator players don't tend to come up in conversations about Fantasy studs or even sleepers, although somebody always seems to have **Jarvis Landry** as a no.2 WR on their team and those who do can be heard whining about **Diontae Johnson** and **Will Fuller V** sucking up too much of the action. The Glads' offence can hang with any team and one of the unsung reasons for that is the plug-and-play performance of rookie, **Penei Sewell** at left tackle. The no.2 overall pick in this year's draft is garnering almost no national media attention now that he is slaving away at his trade on the Glads, but the team's fans know that Sewell is performing as advertised and is one of the big reasons Ben is still healthy after 11 weeks. With 28 big holes opened, according to *The Line* and just 2 sacks surrendered, Sewell is playing at a pro bowl level.

Iowa City Cubs – Like the Glads above, this team belongs to one man, **Russell Wilson** and everyone else is an Elf or a reindeer. The Cubs, more than most teams, tend to have the team concept so ingrained in support of Wilson that few other names rise to the surface when pundits focus their attention on the stars of today's game. Even perennial All Pro guard **Quenton Nelson** tends to get ignored when discussion turns to the league's most dominant linemen, even if he is never forgotten at All-Pro voting time. It's a weird phenomenon. A Cubs' fan I met at Blondies made an interesting observation about **Xavier Rhodes** during the primetime game between Virden and the Cubs back in Week Nine. **Ja'Marr Chase** got a step on Rhodes on a bomb in the 1st quarter that **Patrick Mahomes** laid in perfectly. The fan said, "that'll be the last time Rhodes gets beat like that tonight." Sure enough, Mahomes kept going back to Chase but Rhodes was all over him from that point. He finished the game with 4 passes defended and a target completion rate of 45% in a Cubs victory. The fan pointed out to me something that even I had overlooked. After an off-year in 2020, opponents started looking at Rhodes like he's done. He got tested a lot early and he has risen to the occasion, with 13 passes defended, second-most in the league, a forced fumble and a stellar target completion rate of 49.2%. He is a full participant in the run game as well, with 64 tackles. Rhodes, once one of the best corners in the league, has resurrected his career and nobody has noticed. He's not tested much now. That's one magical elf!

Las Vegas Assassins – While analysts and fans argue over whether **Justin Herbert** or **Dalvin Cook** is the most important player on the Assassins, it is the defence where lies the secret of the team's surprising success in 2021. There, the focus is on the elite linebacking corps keyed by **Demario Davis** and **Darius Leonard**, who, along with **Cameron Heyward**, have helped make the Assassins the no.1 run defence in the EFL. However, the secret game-changer on the Assassins' backend is defensive end **Yannick Ngakoue**, whose 7 forced fumbles lead the league and have led to critical momentum shifts in games. His 3 sacks and 12 QB pressures aren't too shabby either. Ngakoue is one of those types of dangerous defenders who disappear for stretches but strike like vipers at the critical moment. The Assassins might not be where they are without Ngakoue's helping, fumble-causing hand.

New Jersey Wrecking Balls – Since everything the franchise does is high profile by design and by location – being the first EFL

team to situate itself close to the Big Apple – finding an under-the-radar star on the Wrecking Balls is like searching for water on Mars. Fortunately, there is water in the form of ice on Mars, and so is there an equivalent of Martian ice on the New Jersey roster. While local Jersey pundits eulogize **James Bradberry**, **Matt Stafford**, **Jamal Adams** and **Terry McLaurin** as if they are destined to all be future first-ballot hall-of-famers, and in a place where an average starter like **Beshaud Breeland** has his own talk show segment on local radio, it is more than shocking that the campaign to get linebacker **Zach Cunningham** into the Pro Bowl is practically non-existent at the official level. Wrecking Balls diehards certainly know who he is. Marty, who has his own “season” seat at the 123 Burger Shot Bar and drinks and breathes Balls, calls Cunningham, “*the best linebacker in football.*” He makes a good argument, based not just on Cunningham’s league-leading 111 tackles, 17 stuffs, 4 passes defended and 57.9% target rate (excellent for a linebacker), but on his “guts.” “*The guy is in on every friggin’ play!*” says Marty loudly. “*He won the Vegas game for us! Hands down better than Warner!*” Marty is obviously wearing homer goggles here, but he is not off base in pointing out that Cunningham is vastly underrated.

Oshawa Pink Panthers – There is no Christmas this year in Oshawa as far as the Pink Panthers are concerned. Football Santa dumped a proverbial truckload of coal onto their field at GM Megadome in Week One and they are still cleaning up the mess. While the TV cameras focus overwhelmingly on the sombre sideline expressions of the Mustangs’ traditional heroes, **Matt Ryan**, **Davante Adams** and **JJ Watt** in loss after loss, the breakout season of **Haason Reddick** is being overshadowed by the dark cloud of the Panthers’ disastrous debut in ‘the Shwa.’ Reddick is doing a bit of everything well from the right outside linebacker position, with 30 tackles, 6 of those for loss, 3 sacks, 4 QB pressures, 6 passes defended and a forced fumble. On a defence not playing up to its usual standard, Reddick is an unexpected bright spot.

Peg City Crusaders – It’s tough enough to find a Santa on the Crusaders’ roster, let alone an elf to lend him a helping hand, but I’ll roll with defensive tackle, **Chris Jones**, one of the few, veteran top-tier talents kept on the roster from last year’s 8-8 team as the guy eating the milk and cookies the kids have laid out on the table for Santa. Having a player like Jones is a boon to a young defence that is gamely holding its own propping up the league’s most feeble offence. The player who has Jones’ back most is a guy you have probably never heard of, but whose name pops up at the top of the run stuffs leader board, **Bobby Okereke**. The 3rd-year linebacker came over from Sebastian in a trade and seems to be the only one of the team’s off-season acquisitions to be truly excited about it. Okereke already has 76 tackles, 19 of those for loss to go with 4 passes defended and a blocked kick. On a team like this such a performance goes mostly unnoticed and uncared for. But it is the kind of young and hungry performance the Pegs will need to emerge from this rebuild as a force.

Pickering Spartans – The Greeks don’t have the overweight, jolly old materialistic Santa we have come to adore. Rather they have St. Basil, a less fun version more concerned about helping the poor than giving out gifts to rich kids. Not that any of that is relevant, I just thought I’d bring it up to underline that the Spartans tend to be unfriendly, even at Christmas time. They don’t have much to cheer about anyway. Their alpha cornerback has not had an interception yet and their venerable old quarterback is...well...old. A 5-6 record is not what they expected after 11 weeks but all is not lost. There is a stealth missile aimed at opposing quarterbacks lurking on every play at the end position by the name of **Romeo Okwara**. Besides having an interesting name, Okwara has interesting pass rush moves as well, having broken through for 6 sacks and 17 QB pressures. He also has 46 tackles, 4 of those for loss, a forced fumble and a fumble recovery. Some of his success is undoubtedly due to great coverage in the secondary, but *somebody* has to get to the quarterback and, so far, the only guy to do that consistently has been Okwara. Now, if we only knew how he came to be named *Romeo*...

Scarborough Blue Eagles – The team most in need of some kind of Christmas Miracle is not getting one from their young Santa, **Joe Burrow**. All Pro center **Corey Linsley** has not been able to make up for the injury to **Zack Martin** or for the gaping holes at left tackle and right guard, which is causing Burrow to be jittery in the pocket and hampering his ability to connect with his playmakers on the outside. The ultra-talented **Deion Jones** is holding up a defence that isn’t entirely respectable, despite having some high-grade talent. Other than Jones, the playmakers aren’t making plays and the “next man up” isn’t stepping up either. So, who is Santa’s little helper on a team that has been grotesquely out of synch since the Assassins put the boots to them in Week Four? Four out of five Scarborough fans will likely point to **Alex Anzalone**, and not only because his long flowing hair reminds them of *Wayne’s World*. “Double A” gets an extra ‘A’ for effort from every fan who bleeds blue and tan. That effort has resulted in 66 tackles and a league third-best 15 tackles for loss. His fumble recovery for a touchdown against Cowtown will be fondly remembered by Eagles’ fans as a highlight in a season of lows, even if few in the national media noticed or cared.

Seattle Pilots – It’s hard for Santa’s Elves to help Santa when nobody knows who Santa is. The quarterback carousel in Seattle has not only thrown the offence into confusion, it has caused the strength of this team – the defence – to come unhinged. Former game-wrecker-turned-lunch-pail defender **Khalil Mack** is not even in the discussion for All Pro these days, although his lack of consistent pass rush pressure is being talked about a lot. The MVP in their only two wins, **Trey Lance**, can’t even land a consistent starting gig on the team that drafted him in the first round. When players with high expectations aren’t getting the job done, noticing the no-names who are is not easy. One name emerging from the wreckage of the Seattle plane crash who is not exactly unknown but who was to this point unproven is linebacker **Myles Jack**. Jack came over from Budapest and after acclimatizing himself to the miserable Seattle weather has emerged as a quiet but vigorous force at the right outside linebacker position. He is simply a solid player with a versatility that will be even more useful when the Pilots take flight some day. His 42 tackles, 3 for loss, 2 sacks, 1 interception and 2 fumble recoveries aren’t eye-popping numbers on their own, but he has missed just 3 tackles seeing a lot of traffic. In a reduced-practice era when tackling is fast becoming a lost art, having that basic technique down can be more helpful than sacks...of the quarterback, not toys.

Sebastian Swordfish – With all eyes on **Kirk Cousins** and his pack of reindeer on the offence pulling their sleigh full of points

over the skies of the Florida east coast, finding that unsung, behind-the-scenes contributor on the Swordfish is a tall order. This is especially true when the defence is unbearable to watch, even for those who are paid to do so. Stuck without an answer popping to mind, I downed a couple of stiff shots of whisky and tackled the Sebastian film on *All-22*. It was indeed hideous to watch. The best “player” on the Swordfish defence is the offence that keeps them off the field. But I did notice that they are also put in difficult positions by that offence when 4th down gambles in their own end fail. That is one reason why the Swordfish are on pace to give up over 500 points this year. The other is that they are simply bad and their coach is well aware of that fact, so he shifts his assets around to stop a particular player or play on any given snap and if he guesses wrong, his defence is a sitting duck. But I promised I would keep this positive, so in the spirit of Christmas charity I will drop the hard line and give **Carlos Dunlap** his due. He is not really an Elf in the sense of lending a helping hand to the main guy – if there is a “main guy” on this defence, Dunlap is it, with his team-leading 3 sacks and 15 QB pressures, good for 6th best in the league. He is, however, the one sharp tooth on a toothless defence and worthy of recognition on a team that is, out of necessity, all about the offence.

Twin Cities Triumph – The Santas on this team are not hard to spot. **Melvin Gordon** leads the way on offence and perennial **Bobby Wagner** ably holds the defence and the team together. It is awful to imagine where the Triumph would be in the standings if it were not for their defence keeping the team in games and the running game keeping the defence rested so that the defence can keep the team in games. Yes, the two are that mutually dependent in this squad’s losing battle for respectability. After a down year in 2020, Gordon is definitely back on track, but he is not doing it by himself. A 4th-round pick out of LSU named **Damien Lewis** is just now beginning to get noticed as one of the big reasons Gordon has been able to return to 2019 form. The right guard has 24 big blocks, according to *The Line* and *Pro Football Focal-Point* has him ranked as a top five run-blocker. His pass protection is not shabby either, having been tagged with just 1 sack allowed and 3 QB pressures. This kind of trench support is exactly what is needed when a team is wary about throwing the ball but somehow still has to deliver a punch.

Virden Violators – There is only one Santa on this team and everyone knows who that is – **Patrick Mahomes**. His ‘Rudolph’ is rookie **Ja’Marr Chase** and his ‘Dasher’ is **Ezekiel Elliott**. The Chief Elf, however, is to be found on the defence...or what’s left of the defence. While **Leonard Williams** is now the star of the Violator’s back end, with the departure in the off-season of just about everybody else, the player doing the most thankless of jobs and keeping the banged-up defence from falling completely apart is **Danny Trevathan**. The middle linebacker simply tackles...a lot. He is second in the league in tackles, with an even 100, 8 of those for a loss, has 3 passes defended and 1 fumble recovery. He is all over the field because he has to be. There are games, such as the Week Nine loss to Iowa City, where he seems like the only defender out there for Virden. He’s not getting thanked for it. Virden fans are in a surly mood about the defence in general, seeing that it is the team’s Achilles Heel that will end up costing them a return trip to the Gale Sayers Game.

York Excaliburs – The debate rages over who is more important to the Excaliburs: **Tom Brady** or **Derrick Henry**? Let the debate go on – I won’t join in because to me it’s obviously Brady and I shouldn’t have to explain why to any grown up. (Kids, if you want to know why all-star quarterbacks are more important than human tanks at running back, I cover that in my Spats for Kids column on the Pop Warner website). It also doesn’t matter for this column because isolating the Santa or Santas on a team is merely the first step to identifying Santa’s Little Helpers, and there appear to be many of them on this York squad that has looked impressive out of the gate. While **DeForest Buckner** and **Jordan Poyer** continue to be the back-end stars of the show, the player on the defence who is quietly doing the most to keep it from falling into the abyss is corner **Malcolm Butler**. Yes, his name is not unknown, but few really understand how valuable he is to this team. You may have noted his 2 interceptions already, but it is likely you have paid less attention to his 76 tackles, 13 passes defended and impressive 56% completion rate. Butler is doing the work of a poor man’s **Xavien Howard**, with the added bonus that he intercepts the ball. If he continues to perform like this, don’t be surprised to see York in the playoffs.

And there you have, my dear readers; 24 Santa’s Little Helper Elves from around the league! Remember, these come as much from me as they do from a sampling of dozens of anonymous and semi-anonymous drunks and gambling-addicted reprobates hanging around in sports bars in the center of Manhattan. You may or may not agree with these selections. Or you may wish to bring someone else to my attention. If you consider yourself a superior gambler or fantasy player; or you are a diehard fan who knows your team inside out and wish to share your insights, please drop me a line with your views. I will publish the best in the coming weeks.

CRYING AT KELSEY’S

It has been a rough year for the Bombers and things got a little rougher in Week 11 in the second game of their three-game road trip. At Hawkeye Park in Brookline, **Derek Carr** took advantage of a pylonesque Bomber secondary and 68 yards of penalties on the defence to finish with 5 TD passes in 5 trips to the red zone in a runaway 38-24 victory.

The Bombers were in this game early and led 17-14 with 6 minutes to go in the 2nd quarter before things started to unravel. A near-interception by **Kyle Fuller** while defending **DeAndre Hopkins** was ruled incomplete before the entire play was nullified by a personal foul penalty on **Frank Clark**. Three plays later, Carr fired a ball through a tight window to **Rob Gronkowski**, who snared it on the fly and ran it in from 19 yards out for the go-ahead touchdown. When the Hawks took a two-score lead off the opening drive of the 2nd half, the Bombers were forced into comeback mode and that’s when some strange drama began to unfold on the Bruxelles sideline.

Bomber coach, **Ken Main**, who apparently still resides in Samoa while coaching a team based in Belgium that travels back-and-forth to and from North America, has been under stress lately. Coaching a team with just enough talent, on paper, to get by but that needs everything to go exactly right in order to be successful, has proven to be too heavy a weight for him to carry. Reports that he was breaking down due to lack of rest caused by bouncing around between time zones 12 or fewer hours apart started surfacing after the

team's Week Six loss at home to the Assassins. After that loss, the team flew across the ocean three days later to Pickering, where they stayed at the two-star Comfort Inn on Kingston Road and practiced at a nearby Catholic High School, before somehow beating the Spartans on Sunday. That night they were back on a plane flying west to Manitoba to play Virden. There, they were forced to practice on the Golden Bears football field next to the Virden Collegiate Institute and stayed at a slightly better three-star Comfort Inn on Frontage Road West. That Sunday, after a strong start, they were pushed around in the second half in a loss. **Patrick Mahomes** threw 6 TD passes that game. Then the weary and beat-up Bombers were immediately off to Belgium on an overnight direct flight. The players would finally get to stay at their homes away from home in the Capitol of Bruxelles after splitting their two-game road trip.

During the road trip, Main had been irritable and withdrawn. Sometimes he would snap at coaches and players during practice; something he rarely, if ever, did before. He also stopped trimming his moustache and beard in his usual fastidious manner. Soon, long nose hairs began to form a bridge to the hair on his upper lip. He would sometimes stare at his play sheet for long periods of time, seemingly in a trance, start to say something then stop and look up with a confused expression on his face. Then, out of nowhere, he would come back to a semblance of normalcy for periods of as long as a day. His coaches finally dismissed his moodiness as road fatigue and went on with their business.

Upon arrival back in Bruxelles, **Kenny Main** reportedly sequestered himself in his office at The Fortress and did not come out for two days while he schemed a plan to stop **Lamar Jackson**. A one-game homestand ended in a win over the Derailers then three days later they were off crossing the ocean and the continent to Chino, before flying back east to Brooklin for the second leg of a three-game road trip. Accompanying them throughout, was a Belgian film crew filming a documentary titled, '*Bombardiers de Bruxelles*.'

The win over Buffalo had been a big one. Normally that was a cause for a postgame celebration with a pint, or several, of *Duvel*. This time, however, looking distracted and weary, Coach Main declined to join his staff and the sports executives from the *Duvel Moortgat Brewery*, part-owners of the Bombers, at the Bombardier Lounge. Citing an important *Webex* meeting with executives of his tuna cannery in Samoa, Main bowed out, flashing a faint, half-hearted smile. "Have one for me!" he urged, unconvincingly.

Declining a beer, especially a strong one expensed to the company, was completely out of character. It was the clearest sign Main's coaches had seen that something was very wrong with their head coach. Something big was troubling him, over and above the usual; his team's embarrassing ineptitude on defence and erratic offence. Maybe it was the losing; or perhaps the tuna cannery was in crisis and he didn't want anyone to know. Possibly, a relative had been eaten on the island by members of a long-lost tribe hidden deep within the National Park of American Samoa. That would have been horrifying but also immensely embarrassing for a Samoan coach and entrepreneur who was now trying to distance himself from the cannibalistic image of his homeland he had helped to create when the team was based there and subsidized by the US Navy. Speculation among Main's coaching staff and the brewery executives continued that night for several hours over beers. In the end, they reportedly agreed to "monitor the situation."

By roughly the 12:55 mark of the third quarter, 2:56 pm ET on Sunday, December 19th, 2021 in Brooklin, Ontario, it all started coming to a head. The thing that had been on **Ken Main**'s mind persistently since some time after the loss to Las Vegas in Week Six, was about to be revealed.

It was at the 12:55 mark of the third that **Randy Bullock**'s kick rose high over the crossbar between the uprights for the extra point to make the score 28-17 for Brooklin. Fans at Hawkeye Park cheered, holder **Thomas Morstead** tapped Bullock's helmet as a gesture of recognition for his success, and **Ken Main** dipped his head down to look at his play-sheet, his cheek's flush with rage or the cold – it was hard to tell which. It was a chilly day in Brooklin, just a few degrees over the freezing mark, yet the Bruxelles coach was wearing a black formal suit without a hat. Not being dressed for the weather conditions was another red flag that all was not well with him. The other was that he had never worn a suit on the sideline before. His usual attire in cold weather was his team's bomber jacket, cargo pants and a trapper's hat to keep his ears warm (he had very sensitive ears).

After nailing the extra point, Bullock sent the ensuing kickoff out-of-bounds, giving the Bombers good field position at their own 40-yard line to start the drive. Main was impassive on the sideline, however. He called in the play over his headset: "Soft-pitch bitch from Hell counter 1!" he snapped. It was the call for a wide sweep to the left side for the halfback, in this case, **Elijah Mitchell**, with the fullback blocking counter to the play direction to misdirect the linebackers. It didn't work. The Hawks strung it out to the weak side and **Stephon Tuitt** knocked Mitchell out of bounds after a 1-yard gain. Figuring that the attempt to probe the line was done, the Hawks went into a pass defence posture, but Main came back with another run, this time an off-tackle to the right side that found a crease for a 13-yard gain. On the next play, with the Hawks again defending the pass, Main called another off-tackle run with Mitchell, this time to the left side. Tuitt was the first Hawk defender to figure out what was going on. He doggedly pursued the Bomber running back and brought him down after a 2-yard gain.

Mitchell had carried the ball three straight times and needed a break, but when the offensive coordinator went to sub-in **Jamaal Williams**, Main held him back.

"Keep him in there!" he commanded then called the same play again.

Mitchell got a block from left guard **Joel Bitonio**, who rubbed out Tuitt, but linebacker **Alex Highsmith** had also sensed something was afoot in the run game and quickly filled the breach, hauling Mitchell down at the Hawk 40 after a 4-yard gain, bringing up 3rd & 4. Mitchell really needed a breather, but Main pre-empted any attempt by his assistant to put in Williams or **Leonard Fournette**, the team's primary third down backs. A heaving Mitchell not only stayed in the game but also got the call on 3rd down.

By this point, Hawks' coach, **Tom Jones** sensed what his players were sniffing-out up close. His opponent was in "head-banging mode" and seemingly determined to make some kind of bold statement. Or maybe he had just lost his senses. With a two-score

lead and the Bombers still 20 yards from the red zone, Jones felt comfortable gambling in a conventional passing situation, in what looked to be four-down territory, and went straight after Mitchell. It was the right call. Despite a pair of nice blocks from Bitonio and pulling guard, **Mike Onwenu**, the swarming Hawks simply out-numbered the blockers and Highsmith pulled Mitchell down after a 2-yard gain, bringing up 4th & 2.

Without hesitation, Main instructed his offence to stay on the field, keeping the same formation, including Mitchell. The talented rookie out of Louisiana, the Bombers' 8th round selection in the draft, had his hands on his knees in the huddle trying to catch his breath. He had been the lead back in the Bombers' running-back-by-committee in 2021, but had never been called on to be a true workhorse. On this drive he was being treated like he was **Adrian Peterson** all of a sudden. Not only did Main insist on keeping the rookie out there, he called another trap play...to Mitchell!

When his coordinator, **Joe Lombardi**, finally rose his voice and objected, insinuating that what his coach was doing was crazy, Main freaked out, ripping his headset off of his head and yelling at his assistant, "What the f&*k do you want me to do, Joe? Pass to the G*d damned tight end? Where in the f^#k did Kelce get to anyway?" He raised his head and looked around the sideline then toward the tunnel. "He's not f^*king injured, is he? G@d f^*king damn it if he is, we're sunk!"

Those within ear shot of the Bomber coach fell silent. They looked at the ground or surreptitiously at each other. *Did he say, Kelce?* every single one of them was thinking in that moment. Lombardi was visibly taken aback and speechless. The play went in as called, prompting a look from **Drew Brees** who, seeing that his head coach was busy yelling at his coaches and the play clock was ticking down, dutifully called the play in the huddle.

Despite an overwhelming effort from the top-grade Bomber offensive line, the weight of the Hawks' defence came crashing in on the rookie as he plunged deliriously into the line. He churned his legs – as he had been taught to do by Fournette – but they had no juice left in them. He wobbled then collapsed beneath the pile, one-yard short of the line to gain. It wasn't even close enough for a measurement. The Bombers turned the ball over on downs.

Confusion reigned on the Bomber sideline. The assistants and some of the players suspected their coach was either high, drunk, or having some kind of nervous breakdown. Yet nobody stepped forward to gently take the play-sheet and headset away from him. Instead, they kept their distance as Lombardi and two of the senior trainers discussed what they should do. They had some time before any more damage could be done, as Coach Main didn't bother calling plays on defence. He gave the impression that it was somehow beneath him. He let his defensive coordinator, **Gus Bradley** call the shots, which was a thankless job in a year when the pass rush had vanished in the off-season and the shaky offence forced it back onto the field earlier than in the past.

While the Hawks drove into field goal range and Bullock turned it into a 14-point deficit with a 45-yard field goal, **Ken Main** paced back and forth, muttering to himself, occasionally stopping to stare at the tunnel that led to the locker rooms. His



Bruxelles coach, **Kenny Main** mugs for the cameras of the 'Bombardiers de Bruxelles' film crew at Kelsey's Bar & Restaurant in Ajax, near Hawkeye Park in Brooklin. The Bombers' coach had a breakdown during his team's Week Eleven loss to the Hawks and thought he had found an answer to his team's predicament at Kelsey's, only to discover that his former all-star tight end was nowhere near the bar that, sort of, bore his name. Main is currently receiving counselling as he deals with the loss of one his team's great ones.

agitation reached a peak and suddenly he sprinted over to the team doctor as the Hawks prepared to kick-off after their score.

“Doc, what’s the status on Travis?” he asked in a panic. “We’re about to get the ball back. Are we going to have him on this drive?”

The doctor, who had been busy in the tent during Main’s first outburst, was confused. “You mean, Kyle?” he asked. “He’ll be fine, just cramped up is all.” **Kyle Fuller** had limped off the field after the last series, where he had broken up a pass for Hopkins.

“No, no! Not Kyle! Who cares about Kyle? Where has *Travis* been? If he’s been ruled out, why wasn’t I notified?” Main badgered, a wild look in his eyes.

“I don’t know who you mean, coach,” the bewildered doctor replied.

“*Oh...my...God!*” Main seethed, raising his head to look at the heavens. “Does nobody notice that our starting tight end is missing from the game?” he shouted. “*Travis Kelce*, doc! Travis f&*king Kelce!!”

The doctor, virtually expressionless, stared back at the coach in silence. He was probably making a diagnosis on the spot. We’ll never know what it was because Lombardi stepped in at that moment and put his hand on Coach Main’s shoulder.

“Kenny, you traded Travis to Charleswood in the off-season,” he said in a hushed tone, but loud enough to be picked up by the ‘*Bombardiers de Bruxelles*’ documentary film crew from the Belgian film studio following the team on its current three-game road trip. They were catching things on camera that even the EFL’s *Nasty Knocks* series often missed.

Main turned around sharply and looked at his coordinator. “Are you nuts, Joe?” he barked. “Why the hell would I trade Travis Kelce? Now quit being a smart-ass and get your ass to the locker room and find out where he is! We don’t have a lot of time left in this game and we’re not going to get back in this thing with Shaheen at tight end!”

Lombardi didn’t budge, but he did look like he was worried that his coach might start to get physical with him. “He’s not in the locker room, Kenny,” Joe said, as calmly as he could in an effort to reduce the tension. “He’s – .”

“Well then, where is he Joe?” Main interrupted. “He’s your guy for Crissakes! Where the f&*k is he?” he howled, his glasses fogging up with the steam coming off his red-hot cheeks.

“He’s...he’s,” Lombardi hesitated, as all at once he was as much concerned about his safety as telling his boss the truth he didn’t want to hear.

“That’s enough!” Main interjected suddenly. “You don’t have to say it! I think I know where he is!”

And with that revelation, the Bombers’ coach threw off his headset, handed his play-sheet to Lombardi and sprinted toward the tunnel that led to the locker room and the exit to the stadium. What followed was captured, choppily, by the camera crew of ‘*Bombardiers de Bruxelles*’ in hot pursuit of what they intuitively knew was the climax in a drama that had been building mysteriously over the past six weeks.

To summarize: the Bombers’ coach ran out of the stadium, leaving the rest of the game to his assistants. Once outside, he jumped into a waiting cab and ordered the cabbie to take him to “the Kelsey’s on Kingston Road.” Kelsey’s is a bar-restaurant in the town of Ajax, bordering Pickering and not far from Brooklin, where the Bombers had played in Week Seven. Main had visited the bar the week of the Spartans game and had come away morbidly morose. But nobody had picked up at the time, why that was.

Upon arrival at Kelsey’s, the Bombers’ coach ignored COVID protocols and stormed inside. Clearly off his rocker in the moment, for about five hair-raising minutes he frantically scurried from booth to booth, crying out ‘*Travis! Where are you, Travis! I know you’re here! Come out and let’s get back to the stadium!*’ as frightened patrons looked on. He was finally corralled by the restaurant manager, Bob, and one of the senior trainers on the Bombers, a Samoan, aptly named Samoa, who had been with the team since its inception in Carthage. Samoa had sensed a crisis involving his revered ‘head man’ and had joined the film crew in their pursuit.

Between Bob’s flat, officious recitation of the rules, delivered like the alphabet to pre-empt any debate on whether they were official or not; and Samoa’s Samoan soothings, the Bomber coach eventually calmed down and was convinced to take a seat at the bar to calm his nerves.

“You traded Travis because you had to, boss,” Samoa spoke to him matter-of-factly. “The community needed renewal and Travis was about to eat too many yams in a bad harvest,” he continued, attempting to draw a parallel between a tough salary negotiation in 2022 and issues that once arose in the traditional Samoan communal way of life during times of famine. “It was best to send him to the next island and take in the new warrior. Here, have another peaceful drink.”

Between whisky and the supportive words of an islander under the watchful gaze of the authorities and the cameras of ‘*Bombardiers de Bruxelles*,’ **Kenny Main** gradually uncoiled from the frenetic ravings of a troubled soul, to the drunken, contemplative musings of a man coming to grips with a loss. After a dozen shots of *Glenlivet*, chased down by half a dozen Abby style ‘Quadrupel’ ales, the Bomber coach was mugging for the cameras and acting somewhat like the carefree coach he used to back in the days when the Bombers ruled the East Division. Maybe...just maybe...trading *Travis Kelce* might not have been the unpardonable sin that had weighed on his soul and forced him into an alternate universe of denial and psychosis. Maybe...just maybe...better days were ahead....

On a personal note, it is good to see that **Kenny Main** appears, from the bootleg film in my possession, like he’s on the mend. I have always liked him as a coach and competitor. But there is also no question that trading a future hall-of-famer like Kelce *after* trading away his future heir apparent in *Darren Waller*, was a step over the ledge. With the Bombers now at 3-7-1 and looking destitute in the long term at the position that once held an abundance of riches, it is fair to ask whether the great game day Coach who challenged the Mustangs twice so ably, knows what he is doing as a GM.

AROUND THE EFL

I still have Christmas shopping to do and not a lot of time to do it. With apologies to Cowtown and Seattle for their big wins and to New Jersey for holding Budapest to under 20 points, I am limiting my coverage of the week's remaining games to the most salient details:

At Tillman Field in Cowtown, the Corn Kings stunned the West Division leading Assassins with 31 first half points on their way to a 31-21 victory. Simply put, everything went right for the home team early, including runs from scrimmage of 33 yards by **Todd Gurley II** and 41 yards by **Latavius Murray** against the league's top-ranked run defence heading into the game. Three Las Vegas turnovers led to 14 Cowtown points and the denial of a 4th quarter scoring opportunity. **Mike Evans** made the most of a limited Corn Kings passing game, with 5 catches for 88 yards and 2 TDs. The Corn Kings moved into the second wildcard spot with this win while the Assassins revealed their limitations without **Dalvin Cook** in the game at running back.

At The Fish Tank in Sebastian, the last-placed Pilots upended the high-powered Swordfish, 35-23 and in the process caught a glimpse of a potentially bright future for their 1st round rookie draft pick. **Trey Lance** relieved an inconsistent **Sam Darnold** in the 2nd quarter, down 14-7, and proceeded to go 17 of 21 for 258 yards and 2 TD passes in leading his team to 28 points and the win. He got some assistance from the defence that stopped the Swordfish on 4th & 3 at the Sebastian 31-yard line in the 2nd quarter with the Fish in front 14-10. The offence took over on downs and the ensuing two-play scoring drive ended with a 7-yard pass to **Anthony Firkser**, putting the Pilots in in the lead, 17-14. They would not trail again in the game. Coach **Russ Lemmon** took heat again for the maverick decision that, like so many of his decisions, seemed weighted to the downside over the upside. Once again, no real explanation as to why, leaving media to speculate whether it is cutting edge analytics, a complete lack of faith in his defence, or simple OCD.

At Stone Pony Shore in New Jersey, the North Stars completed Stage 11 of their mission to complete a perfect season by slaying out a 19-11 win over the Wrecking Balls in heavy New Jersey rain. **Justin Jefferson** was the early beneficiary of curious attention to the Budapest run game from the New Jersey defence, presumably because they thought anybody would be crazy to pass the ball in a monsoon. Well, **Aaron Rodgers** isn't just anybody and had no problem threading the ball to Jefferson for 10 catches for 178 yards. All the same, New Jersey did a good job overall of keeping this game close, which is kind of like a victory against this Budapest team.

At Camelot in Avalon, **Ryan Tannehill** threw for 363 yards and 5 TD passes to lead the Coyotes to a 38-28 lambasting of York. The Excaliburs were hampered by injuries to their receiving corps, losing **Corey Davis** on the first play from scrimmage and Mike Williams on the first play of the 2nd half. **Brandin Cooks** led Coyote receivers with 7 catches for 147 yards and 3 TDs. **Damien Harris** supplemented the attack with 113 rushing yards, although he did not find the end zone. This was an overall impressive performance by the Coyotes against a York team that has been tough all season, but may be wearing out down the stretch.

At GM Megadome in Oshawa, the visiting Violators continued to consolidate second place in the Central with a 31-24 win over the Pink Panthers. **Patrick Mahomes** had another big day, completing 32 of 41 for 438 yards and 3 TD passes to lead the Virden offence. He also got picked twice, letting Oshawa back in to tie the game after they had jumped out to a 14-0 lead. It was a tight contest from that point on but the Violators' weapons proved to be too much for the slumping Panthers.

At New Era Stadium in Buffalo, the Spartans out-bored the Derailers, 17-7 in a game that saw a player with 37 yards on 16 carries earn the Game Ball. **D'Andre Swift** was not prolific anywhere else, but inside the Buffalo 10 he was money, with TD runs of 3 and 6 yards to give Pickering all they would need on the scoreboard. The Derailers missed some opportunities in this one, mishandling time at the end of the 1st half on a possible scoring drive that came up empty and missing on all 3 of their 4th down attempts. The biggest stat of all, however, was the Spartans holding **Lamar Jackson** to just 4 yards on 7 carries. Advanced bootleg copies of the game film are making their way around the coaching circuit as I write.

At Wilhalla Stadium in Minneapolis, the Irish were all over the Triumph early and "held on" to prevail 34-7. The Irish exploded for 3 TDs in the 2nd quarter to jump out to a 28-7 1st half lead over the clearly shell-shocked Triumph. Any doubt about the final outcome was removed when the Triumph helped the Irish run out the clock by attempting just one pass in the entire 2nd half, which was officially nullified by a holding call. The rest were safe runs, making for an entirely unwatchable final two quarters.

At Heinz Field in Pittsburgh the winless Crusaders stayed winless after falling 24-14 to the Gladiators. Peg City's best chance for a win faded into woulda-coulda-shoulda after they turned the ball over on downs at the Georgia 43, giving the Glads a short field to mount the go-ahead field goal drive. Early in the 4th quarter, **Ben Roethlisberger** connected with somebody with an unpronounceable and unspellable name for a 9-yard TD pass to make it a two-score game and an impossible hill for the feeble Pegs; offence to climb.

At Patriot Place in Charleswood, the Pats walled off the Cadillac, 34-23 in a game that was not as interesting as the score indicates. Alright, it was a real game in the 1st half, with **Kyler Murray**'s legs falling narrowly to **DeShaun Watson**'s arm, 24-17 after 30 minutes. But after the Pats scored a TD on the opening drive of the 2nd half to take a 31-17 lead, the Caddies went small ball, killing almost 9 minutes off the clock on a 19-play, 76-yard drive that turned into zero points as they were eventually denied on 4th & goal at the Charleswood 3. The Pats went small ball in return and the entire 2nd half was over in just seven possessions.

At Joe Ferguson Stadium in Iowa City, the Cubs stayed hot by overcoming the Blue Eagles, 33-19 for their fourth straight win. **Michael Carter** stole the highlight reel in this one with 156 yards and 1 TD on 20 carries while **Jerick McKinnon** added 75 yards and a TD to a 254-yard rushing day for the Cubs. The Blue Eagles showed some life after falling behind 23-0 (at least they showed some life!) but it didn't matter and the Cubs moved to within 1 game of the Assassin on the West with the victory.

And finally, at The Big House in Chino, the Thunder Lizards laid a 52-10 beat down on the Convicts that got ugly for the Chino defence in the 2nd half. **Josh Allen** had a perfect day, completing 22 of 26 for 355 yards and 4 TD passes, with no interceptions, for a game day passer rating of 158.3. The Lizards are heating up as we head down the stretch and are gunning for the no.1 seed in two weeks.

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RECORD VS THE SPREAD AFTER WEEK 11:

74-53-5

PLAYOFF PICTURE AT A GLANCE

PACIFIC CONFERENCE								
EAST			CENTRAL			WEST		
IN	ALIVE	OUT	IN	ALIVE	OUT	IN	ALIVE	OUT
 3	 2  3  4		 1  W	 5		 2  W	 1	
ATLANTIC CONFERENCE								
NORTH			COASTAL			SOUTH		
IN	ALIVE	OUT	IN	ALIVE	OUT	IN	ALIVE	OUT
 3  W	 3  6		 1  W	 1  2		 2	 4  5  7	

Jimmy's WEEK TWELVE PICKS

BRUXELLES @ TWIN CITIES (line – BOMBERS by 1)

INJURIES: **Bruxelles** – Isaiah Wynn (PROBABLE), Trey Flowers (DOUBTFUL), Chris Godwin (OUT), O.J. Howard (OUT), A'Shawn Robinson (OUT); **Twin Cities** – Kenny Golladay (PROBABLE), Antonio Brown (OUT), Trent Brown (OUT).

Both of these teams remain mathematically alive in the wildcard race but, of the remaining contenders, are the farthest away from the prize. The Triumph are skating on the thinnest ice and would be eliminated with a loss here and wins by Iowa City and Virden. With the playoffs “on the line” it is probably not time to trot out the Holy One just yet, but you never know. Could he be seen as possibly providing the spark needed to rekindle some enthusiasm on the Triumph sideline after they threw in the towel last week in a bad loss to East Elmhurst? Twin Cities is certainly capable of handling this up-and-down (mostly down) Bombers team, but whether they can pluck up the guts to go a full 60 minutes is the surprising question being asked. No doubt, the Bombers seem to want it more and will call on their veteran QB, Drew Brees to craft a win in their second week without Chris Godwin. Last week they threw out a heavy dose of Elijah Mitchell and Jamaal Williams before falling behind and having to go airborne. The Triumph can slow down the run and will likely wait out such a strategy. Can Bruxelles go “bombs away” anymore? We’ll find out this week. **PICK: BRUXELLES**

BUFFALO @ CHARLESWOOD (line – PATRIOTS by 9)

INJURIES: **Buffalo** – Bradley Chubb (PROBABLE), Derek Barnett (QUESTIONABLE), Noah Fant (OUT), Whitney Mercilus (OUT), Rodger Saffold (OUT); **Charleswood** – Jamie Collins Sr. (QUESTIONABLE), Terell Edmunds (OUT), Brandon Linder (OUT), Devine Ozigbo (OUT), Ronnie Stanley (OUT).

The Patriots are pacing themselves to a fine finish and are now up two games in the pursuit of the no.1 conference seed. They are not blowing teams away but are getting the job done consistently each week, which must concern rivals who are already playing their best hands to stay in the race. The Derailers are the definition of a roller-coaster team but one constant has been the aggressiveness of their coach in trying to squeeze the most return from the team's investment in Lamar Jackson. I sound like a broken record, but Buffalo's chances in any game depend on how teams decide to handle Lamar and how Lamar responds. Last week he was held to a career-low 4 rushing yards by the Spartans, who put a spy on him and kept him in the pocket. Lamar attempted to win through the air and the result was a season-low 7 points of offence. The Buffalo QB will have to challenge the Pats' defence in both phases to be successful this week. On the other side, DeShaun Watson does not have to run around to be successful in this offence, but he will if needed. This is a dangerously fat line given the Pats' tendency to minimalism. Expect the Derailer's maximalism to make it close. **PICK: BUFFALO**

NEW JERSEY @ PEG CITY (line – WRECKING BALLS by 3)

INJURIES: **New Jersey** – Kwon Alexander (OUT), Keenan Allen (OUT), Jerry Hughes (OUT); **Peg City** – Devin Bush (QUESTIONABLE), Saquon Barkley (OUT), Jonathan Bullard (OUT), Tarik Cohen (OUT), Davon Godchaux (OUT), Chandler Jones (OUT), Chris Jones (OUT), Jeff Okudah (OUT), Courtland Sutton (OUT), Jalen Thompson (OUT).

After New Jersey gave the North Stars a run for their money and the Crusaders extended their streak of futility with a loss to Georgia last week, this slim field goal line raises a few eyebrows, including mine. The Wrecking Balls are the better team, by far, and over the course of the last seven weeks have demonstrated better discipline and have avoided costly errors. They are still in the mix for a possible division win and are the second runner-up for a wildcard spot. Meanwhile, the Crusaders are already eliminated and have adjusted their season goal to getting one victory. It is unlikely to come this week, but the Denizens of the Dunes think the Pegs can make it come down to the wire. One reason for this perhaps lies in the one-dimensional nature of the New Jersey offence, which is last in the league in rushing, and will be missing Keenan Allen at WR. Another reason may be, simply, that the Wrecking Balls have still not shaken the image of being bumblers in key moments. A loss here would be "pure Wrecking Ball." There is a window here to get David Montgomery going with the Crusaders' best defender, Chris Jones out. I'll roll with the Balls in this one. **PICK: NEW JERSEY**

VIRDEN @ COBB COUNTY (line – COYOTES by 4)

INJURIES: **Viriden** – Austin Bryant (QUESTIONABLE), Solomon Thomas (QUESTIONABLE), Oshane Ximines (DOUBTFUL), Isaiah Buggs (OUT), Geno Atkins (OUT), Parris Campbell (OUT), Lane Johnson (OUT), Kelechi Osemele (OUT); **Cobb County** – Hassan Ridgeway (OUT).

The Violators have won six of their last seven games after Patrick Mahomes overwhelmed Oshawa in the 4th quarter last week. He has been on a hot streak since Week One but has really picked it up recently, with 16 TD passes in his last four games. This aerial dominance has been to compensate for a decimated defence that is slowly regaining its health, although it is still far from fully functional. That defence will be the target of Ryan Tannehill, whose stock is rising again after dismantling the York secondary for 5 TD passes last week. The Coyote run game should not lose a step against the undermanned Viriden front and they hope the play action off of it will allow them to keep pace with Mahomes, provided the Cobb County secondary rises to contain rookies Ja'Marr Chase and Gabriel Davis and veteran John Brown, who have together caught 22 of Mahomes' 32 TD passes this year. The Coyotes have limited the damage done to them through the air so far, ranked 3rd in passing yards allowed. This game will feature a test of strengths that should give both teams a gauge of how effective they will be come playoff time. Expect plenty of touchdowns but a field goal to make the difference. **PICK: VIRDEN**

IOWA CITY @ SEATTLE (line – CUBS by 1)

INJURIES: **Iowa City** – Fletcher Cox (OUT), Jason Peters (OUT); **Seattle** – Josiah Deguara (OUT).

The Pilots are officially out of the playoff hunt despite winning impressively over Sebastian last week. The emergence of Trey Lance as a two-phase weapon in relief of a humdrum Sam Darnold in that win may be the reason this line is incredibly razor thin in favour of the surging Cubbies, winners of their last four games and now just one game behind Las Vegas in the West Division. The other reason is likely because the Pilots seem to always hang in games against superior Cubs teams – as if their coach knows what is coming and how to attack them. If Lance gets the start – as expected – the Cubs will need to deal with a potential dual threat, an adjustment that their coach is hesitant to make on most plays, as demonstrated against Lamar in their Week Six overtime win. The Cubs tend to play their "system" and dare the opponent to work through it, something opponents have found easier to do this year against the ageing Cubs' defensive stars. One of those, Fletcher Cox, is out, a significant blow to their 19th ranked defence. A few words of caution, however, before

before betting your favourite Christmas sweater on the Pilots. Lance's fine showing came against a woeful Swordfish defence that was unprepared for him. Also, the Pilots are where they are for a reason. No reason to over think this. **PICK: IOWA CITY**

CHINO @ LAS VEGAS (line – ASSASSINS by 9)

INJURIES: Chino – Shaq Mason (QUESTIONABLE), PJ Hall (OUT), Christian McCaffrey (OUT), Dak Prescott (OUT), Tim Patrick (OUT); **Las Vegas** – Nick Williams (PROBABLE).

The Convicts are still limping considerably as they prepare to take revenge on their despised bad boy rivals on top of the West Division. They were laid low in their own house by the Assassins in round one of the Battle of the Bad Boys in Week Eight and hope to earn some redemption and get back in better playoff position with a win here. It is not going to be easy, despite the Assassins slumping suddenly. Las Vegas has lost two in a row – both road games where they were missing their star running back Dalvin Cook. If that was not proof of who wears the pants in the Assassins' offence, I don't know what is. Not to take anything away from Justin Herbert, who appears as capable as any QB to take advantage of the presence of one of the league's top running backs, but the Las Vegas offence runs through Cook, so to speak. This is bad news for Chino as the defence is not good enough to divide its attention and must "guess" right to succeed. The greater concern, however, is Dak Prescott and Christian McCaffrey still being out. Those are key losses as Teddy Bridgewater is unlikely to game-manage his way out of this mis-match. Can it be close? Yes, but don't bank on it. **PICK: LAS VEGAS**

DURHAM @ SCARBOROUGH (line – THUNDER LIZARDS by 12)

INJURIES: Durham – Rashaad Penny (PROBABLE); **Scarborough** – DeSean Jackson (QUESTIONABLE), Nick Bosa (OUT), Landon Collins (OUT), Cameron Dantzler (OUT), Dante Fowler Jr (OUT), Myles Gaskin (OUT), Justin Jones (OUT), CJ Uzomah (OUT).

Josh Allen is hitting his stride and wants everyone to know it, judging from the spanking he gave Chino last week in one of the season's bigger blowouts. This is bad news for a Blue Eagles team looking for positives to take away from a season that got away from them long ago. While Scarborough remains alive, it is only in the sense that they have not been officially declared dead yet. A running of the table, coupled with the mathematically improbable collapse of the five teams in front of them for the wildcard, would be more than a Christmas Miracle. Yet, the Blue Eagles do not want to get humiliated at home and deal their young quarterback another psychological blow. They will bring it here, as much as they can, and when they do that, strange things can happen – just ask the Corn Kings. Not that I expect the Blue Eagles to win. There is a chance, however, that weather and a hot Joe Burrow could shrink the difference to under double-digits. But the Lizards, hunting for the no.1 seed in the conference and needing the win to be in position to possibly secure the tie-breaker over Budapest next week, will not be messing around. Expect them to treat the Eagles much higher than their standing. **PICK: DURHAM**

SEBASTIAN @ COWTOWN (line – CORN KINGS by 7)

INJURIES: Sebastian – Denzel Perryman (DOUBTFUL), Odell Beckham Jr (OUT), Matt Feiler (OUT), Levi Wallace (OUT); **Cowtown** – Kendrick Bourne (OUT), Caleb Farley (OUT), Eric Saubert (OUT).

The Swordfish offence that passed all over the Corn Kings in Week One has been sagging a bit the past four weeks. While still dangerous, it has been unable to compensate for turnovers and continuing horrendous play from their defence over a four-game losing stretch. The loss to the Pilots last week has set off alarm bells and made this game a practical must-win for their playoff hopes. The Corn Kings are coming off a two-game win streak, including an upset over Las Vegas. They currently occupy the second wild card spot but are hanging on to it tenuously. They, too, need a win here against a division rival that is always tough on them regardless of where they are in the standings. The last time these teams met, the Corn Kings were ambushed by Kirk Cousins and fell behind early in both halves. If they can avoid getting into a hole, their on-and-off offence will be in a stronger "on" position later when the short-handed Sebastian defence is most vulnerable. The loss of Kendrick Bourne will hurt them, but the loss of Levi Wallace on the Swordfish side should compensate. While Swordfish 4th-down antics could turn this game into a fiasco, they could also help them win. **PICK: SEBASTIAN**

OSHAWA @ BUDAPEST (line – NORTH STARS by 18)

INJURIES: Oshawa – Davante Adams (DOUBTFUL), Dallas Goedert (OUT), Erik Harris (OUT); **Budapest** – None.

The Pink Panthers can thank the general inferiority of their competition for allowing them to stay technically in the wildcard hunt for another week. Officially now the last-place team in the Atlantic, expect them to be the first team to be eliminated from the post-season by the end of this early, Hungarian time, Sunday game. The North Stars' high-powered offence trudged slowly to victory in the heavy rain last week, but don't expect weather to be a problem as they return to milder Hungarian climes this week. Even if Aaron Rodgers scoffs down too many dumplings upon his return the Hungary, the steadfast North Stars' defence, that never takes a week off, should be more than enough to handle a Pink Panthers team that is expecting to be without Davante Adams. There is no sugar coating it: This season has been a disaster for the old Mustangs. But on the bright side, their new coach is remaining poised and the players are still playing. These two facts give a prognosticator reasonable hope that it will be closer than the odds-makers think. **PICK: OSHAWA**

ERIEAU @ BROOKLIN (line – HAWKS by 8)

INJURIES: Erieau – Ricardo Allen (QUESTIONABLE), Mark Andrews (OUT), Joey Bosa (OUT), Stephon Gilmore (OUT), Graham Glasgow (OUT), Najee Harris (OUT), Maurice Hurst (OUT), Andy Janovich (OUT), Desmond King II (OUT); **Brooklin** – Randall Cobb (OUT), Clelin Ferrell (OUT), Ronnie Harrison Jr. (OUT), Xavier McKinney (OUT), Pernell McPhee (OUT).

The Hawks have won three in a row while the Cadillac come in losers of three in a row. This is Kyler Murray's team now and that has proven to be of benefit only when facing sub-par competition – and sometimes not even then. The outside passing game continues to struggle and the run game, outside of Murray, remains stuck in the mud. With Najee Harris out for this game, don't expect that to improve against a Brooklin defence that is unexpectedly resilient for such a no-name group. The Hawks are a tie-breaker away from being in the wildcard spot they consider to be duly theirs, now that DeAndre Hopkins has awoken and the team is playing complementary football. They see the Caddies as a team they should beat as they gear up for Cowtown in Week 13. Can you say "trap game?" **PICK: ERIEAU**

PICKERING @ GEORGIA (line –SPARTANS by 2)

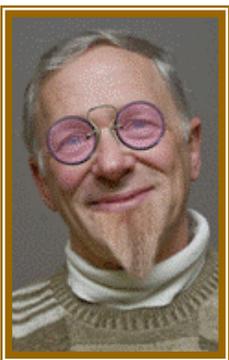
INJURIES: Pickering – Miles Sanders (DOUBTFUL), Darqueze Dennard (OUT), Richie Incognito (OUT), Bradley Roby (OUT), Sterling Shepard (OUT); **Georgia** – Jourdan Lewis (QUESTIONABLE), Andrew Wylie (QUESTIONABLE), Zach Ertz (OUT), Will Fuller V (OUT), Diontae Johnson (OUT).

The Spartans did a masterful job of containing Lamar last week and the powerful Budapest pass attack the week before. If only they could get Philip Rivers and the offence on track! The latter is possible against the 20th-ranked Gladiators' defence, but only if they can maintain the threat of the run, as they did last week against Buffalo. Miles Sanders is listed as 'doubtful,' which means D'Andre Swift will once again be called on to lead the ground assault. This should open up opportunities to exploit the mediocre Georgia corners and generate the big plays we know they are capable of. The Glads are just looking to survive another week but are missing two of their top 3 receivers. Jarvis Landry will be at the mercy of Xavien Howard, who is starving for an interception. Expect to see no.1 here. **PICK: PICKERING**

YORK @ EAST ELMHURST (line – IRISH by 5)

INJURIES: York – Danny Amendola (QUESTIONABLE), Mike Williams (QUESTIONABLE), Tyson Alualu (DOUBTFUL), Eli Apple (OUT), Corey Davis (OUT), Rasul Douglas (OUT), Lawrence Guy (OUT), CJ Henderson (OUT), Wyatt Teller (OUT), Khari Willis (OUT); **East Elmhurst** – Mekhi Becton (PROBABLE).

The Irish are in command in the South and are starting to look like a real division winner and not just a District 12 Tribute from *The Hunger Games*. The defence is earning recognition for being far stouter than advertised, ranked 2nd overall in third down efficiency and 6th in yards-per-play surrendered, while the offence is opportunistic, with Tyreek Hill's explosiveness a threat from any area of the field and the running tandem of Aaron Jones and Raheem Mostert keeping defences honest. This sounds like the formula that the Excaliburs once used to remain a thorn in the side of opponents during the Von Miller years. A fair one-on-one bout would be interesting to watch. But with York missing its receiving corps, this appears to be a mis-match unless Derrick Henry goes all-out. **PICK: EAST ELMHURST**



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This Week in EFL History
With Professor
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FROM THE EFL ARCHIVES – In Week 11 of the 2015 EFL season, the haves had hit the advanced stages of separating themselves from the have-nots and competition seemed to reach a new low. The Excaliburs were the only team to hit the 'upset' button when they out-scored the Gladiators, 38-31 with the help of *De'Anthony Thomas'* 4th punt return for a TD that year, tying a record set by *Adam 'Pacman' Jones* of the Convicts in 2007. Interestingly, it was the fourth time Jones' record had been tied. The first was in 2009 by the Cubs' *Reggie Bush*; the second in 2011 by Virden's *Mike Thomas* and the third in 2012 by

Garland's *Patrick Peterson*. That game was also *Tom Brady's* best day at the office in 2015, as he finished 21 of 27 for 320 yards and 4 TD passes to win Offensive Player of the Week.

The biggest race – in fact the only race – still going for a division was in the West, where the Beaufort County Ravens and the Iowa City Cubs remained deadlocked at 7-3-1 after both won their games in Week 11. The Ravens clung to the tie-breaker due to a better division record.

Two teams still on "death watch" for win-less seasons were the Virden Violators and the Sebastian Swordfish, who both sat at 0-11. They would not play each other that year, so at the time, the possibility of two 0-16 teams was a reality.

The defensive player of the week was South Carolina's *Luke Kuechly*, who recorded 8 tackles, 1 pass deflected, 2 stuffs and an interception in a 31-19 Regulator win over Markham. The win kept SC alive in the post-season discussion.

If the season had ended in Week 11, Charleswood, Beaufort County, Durham and Aurora would have won their divisions. Twin Cities and Iowa City would have won the wildcards in the PAC while Pickering and York would have snuck into the post-season in the CAC. Mohave, Virden and Sebastian were all, at this point, eliminated.