

WEEK 13



EFL

ELITE FOOTBALL LEAGUE



Shooting for the Stars in our 15th Season!

January 9, 2022

EAST



CENTRAL



WEST



NORTH



COASTAL



SOUTH

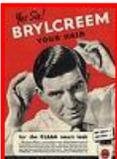


THIS "JUST IN": HE'S GOOD!



Justin Jefferson
Budapest North Stars

Budapest wide receiver *Justin Jefferson*, reaches out on a crossing route to snag a pass from *Aaron Rodgers* in second quarter action in Durham. The 16-yard completion was one of 11 catches on the day for him, with 2 of those going for touchdowns as the North Stars ran away from the Thunder Lizards in the 2nd half to win 34-27. (Story inside)



Who was slick
in Week
Thirteen?

“Brylcreem” THE
EFL’S FIRST SPONSOR

OFFENCE



Isaiah Rodgers
CB-KR
Charleswood
Patriots

5 KR's, 289 yds, 57.8 avg, 2 TDs.
Special teamer was the offence in win.

DEFENCE



Donte Jackson
CB
Chino
Convicts

6 T, 2 PDs, 1 INT (22yds). 4th quarter
pick of Mahomes helped clinch big win.


23
30

With Virden trailing 23-20 midway in the 4th, **Patrick Mahomes** was picked off in his own end by **Donte Jackson**, who returned it to the 19. That set up the third TD run of the day for **Dak Prescott**, a 1-yard dive, to put the Convicts up by 2 scores, 30-20. The Violators kicked a FG with 1:17 left but did not recover the onside kick. They got the ball back with 0:41 left, but no timeouts and went 4-and-out to end the game. Virden led 20-13 after 3 quarters, but the Convicts scored on their next three drives, while holding Mahomes in check, to get the win in Prescott's 1st game back from injury.

01-08-2022 The Big House Temp:83 Wind:Calm None Line:CHI by 4 MVP:Prescott HFA:ON(

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Virden (7-6)	10	3	7	3	23
2021 Chino (8-4-1)	3	7	3	17	30

Passing

VV: Mahomes 47/27 356 Yds TD 2 Int
 CHI: Prescott 28/20 190 Yds Int

Rushing

VV: Elliott 9/18 TD, Mahomes 3/17
 CHI: Jackson 19/82, Prescott 10/22 3 TDs, Abdullah 2/10, Byrd 1/6

Receiving

VV: Elliott 5/25, Hockenson 5/83, Chase 5/102, Brown 4/59, Green 4/21 TD, Davis 4/66
 CHI: Jones Jr. 8/135, Hurst 4/11, Jackson 3/9, Patrick 2/20, Gallup 1/6, Byrd 1/1

Defense

VV: Harris Jr. 10-Tk
 CHI: Jackson Int 6-Tk, Maye Int 5-Tk, Purcell Sk FF Tk

Injuries

VV: Buggs 2, Johnson 1
 CHI: Feliciano 5, Hall 2, Purcell 1

Misc

VV: Badgley 3/3 FG 31 Lg
 CHI: 35:17 TOP, Butker 3/3 FG 55 Lg


38
41

Wil Lutz kicked a 27-yard FG with no time in regulation to send the game into OT. Vegas got the ball first and was driving in Pats' territory when **Leonard Floyd** forced a **Justin Herbert** fumble and **Derrick Brown** recovered for the Pats. That set up a game-winning FG drive, with Lutz nailing it from 27 yards. The Assassins controlled the play, but kick return TDs of 100 and 95 yards in the 2nd half by **Isaiah Rodgers** kept the Pats in it. A failed 4th & 2 by the Pats from their own 36 set up **Justin Herbert's** third of 4 TD passes to give Vegas a 28-21 lead before Rodgers turned the game around.

01-08-2022 Patriot Place Temp:75 Wind:Calm Line:LV by 2 MVP:Watson HFA:ON(4

	1	2	3	4	5	Tot
2021 Las Vegas (8-5)	7	7	21	3	0	38
2021 Charleswood (12-1)	7	14	7	10	3	41

Passing

LV: Herbert 48/35 404 Yds 4 TDs Int
 CHP: Watson 36/24 306 Yds 2 TDs

Rushing

LV: Cook 23/102, Herbert 6/29, Williams 1/6 TD
 CHP: Watson 9/46, Kamara 12/24 TD, Dobbins 1/6

Receiving

LV: Watkins 9/119 2 TDs, Fitzgerald 9/90 TD, Jeudy 8/111 TD, Thomas 4/50, Cook 2/15
 CHP: Smith-Schuster 9/97, Cooper 7/105 TD, Kelce 3/41 TD, Metcalf 3/59, Kamara 2/4

Defense

LV: Carrie 9-Tk, Davis Sk 3-Tk
 CHP: Fuller Int 17-Tk, Darby 13-Tk, Lawson FF 6-Tk, Floyd 2-FF 3-Tk

Injuries

LV: Witherspoon 2, Watkins 1, Thomas 1, Jackson 1, Griffin 1
 CHP: Stanley 1, Ozigbo 1

Misc

LV: 42:03 TOP, Herbert 2-F 1 Lost, Fairbairn 1/1 FG 30 Lg
 CHP: Rogers 5/289 KR 100 Lg 2 TDs, Brown 1-FR, Lutz 2/2 FG 27 Lg



33



21

A Triumph turnover on downs at their own 34 and an interception of **Mitch Trubisky** by **Marshon Lattimore** set up 10 of 17 Seattle 1st quarter points. Trailing 20-7 at half time, the Triumph took a 21-20 lead in the 3rd on back-to-back TD drives, with Trubisky hitting **Clyde Edwards-Helaire** for a 13-yard TD pass then sneaking it in from a half yard for the go-ahead TD. Seattle broke the game in their favour with a **Janoris Jenkins** interception setting up a **Trey Lance** to **CeeDee Lamb** 15-yard TD pass to make it 26-21. **Kareem Jackson** cinched the win with a 66-yard fumble recovery TD.

01-05-2022 Wilhalla Stadium Temp:70 Wind:Calm

Line:TCT by 12 MVP:Lance

HFA

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Seattle (4-9)	17	3	0	13	33
2021 Twin Cities (3-10)	0	7	14	0	21

Passing

SEA: Lance 25/16 182 Yds 3 TDs Int

TCT: Trubisky 34/22 281 Yds 2 TDs 2 Int

Rushing

SEA: Hunt 9/70, Lance 6/47, Brown 15/47

TCT: Gordon III 22/81, Edwards-Helaire 3/10

Receiving

SEA: Lamb 4/58 TD, Mims 4/40, Anderson 3/45 TD, Hunt 1/7, Mack 1/19, Nall 1/10

TCT: Golladay 6/113, Bateman 5/60, White 3/14, Bryant 3/31 TD, Gordon III 2/9

Defense

SEA: White Sk 11-Tk, Wright Sk FF 7-Tk, Mack Sk FF 3-Tk, Lattimore Int 6-Tk

TCT: Sweat Sk FF 4-Tk, Wagner 11-Tk, Moseley Int 4-Tk

Injuries

SEA: Deguara 3, Lattimore 1

TCT: Clark 2, Maddox 1, Pride Jr. 1

Misc

SEA: Jackson 1-FR TD, McPherson 2/4 FG 51 Lg

TCT: Trubisky 2-F 1 Lost, Hopkins 0/1 FG



33



34

Justin Tucker booted home a 32-yard FG with 0:01 left to lift the Cubs over the Crusaders and deprive them of their first win. This back-and-forth game had many twists and turns, the last a pick of **Russell Wilson** and 47-yard return by **Bobby Okereke** that set up Peg City's go-ahead TD on a 14-yard jet sweep by **Brandon Aiyuk** with 3:35 left. Wilson atoned with a 9-play, 63-yard drive for the winning FG. In all, the lead changed hands 8 times, with the Cubs' 21-13 half time lead the largest lead for either team. **Mac Jones** threw for 337 yards, a season-high, while Wilson threw 3 TDs.

01-04-2022 Joe Ferguson Stadium Temp:32 Wind:0-5

None

Line:ICC by 11 MVP:Wilson

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Peg City (0-13)	3	10	7	13	33
2021 Iowa City (8-5)	7	14	3	10	34

Passing

PCC: Jones 44/28 337 Yds 2 TDs Int

ICC: Wilson 42/30 344 Yds 3 TDs Int

Rushing

PCC: Bell 9/45, Hubbard 8/22, Aiyuk 1/14 TD, Jones 2/5 TD, Cohen 1/4

ICC: McKinnon 12/41 TD, Wilson 3/27

Receiving

PCC: Aiyuk 9/113, Shenault Jr. 7/83 2 TDs, Higbee 6/75, Hubbard 1/6, Cohen 1/8

ICC: Lockett 8/103, Dissly 7/51 2 TDs, Moore 6/78 TD, Brown 5/68, McKinnon 2/31

Defense

PCC: Humphrey 8-Tk, Okereke Int 3-Tk

ICC: Pierre-Paul Sk FF 5-Tk, Rhodes 9-Tk, Cruikshank Int 4-Tk, Hooker 9-Tk

Injuries

PCC: Davis 5, Sutton 3, Barkley 2, Flowers 2, Cohen 1

ICC:

Misc

PCC: Koo 2/2 FG 37 Lg

ICC: Tucker 2/2 FG 32 Lg



A **Brandon McManus** 33-yard FG to top the game's opening drive and a 7-yard TD pass from **Ryan Tannehill** to **Hunter Long** on the Coyotes' second series closed the quarter out with a 10-0 lead for Cobb County. The Derailers answered with a nice drive to the Cobb County 33 before **Steve Nelson** picked off **Lamar Jackson** to set up a second Tannehill TD pass, a 17-yard cross to **DeVante Parker** that made it 17-0 at the half. The rain in Cobb County affected Jackson – he fumbled three times and rushed for just 59 yards as the Derailers failed to score and the Coyotes cruised.

01-06-2022 Coyote Field Temp:67 Wind:Calm Rain Line:CB by 10 MVP:Tannehill HFA:ON(4

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Buffalo (4-9)	0	0	0	0	0
2021 Cobb County (9-4)	10	7	3	3	23

Passing

BUF: Jackson 21/14 104 Yds Int
 CB: Tannehill 23/16 196 Yds 2 TDs

Rushing

BUF: Jackson 14/59, Booker 2/6, Schwartz 1/5, Davis 3/1
 CB: Peterson 19/51, Breida 7/47, Hasty 8/5

Receiving

BUF: Davis 5/17, Sanders 3/59, Woods 2/10, McKitty 1/2, Booker 1/1, Johnson 1/1
 CB: Parker 6/74 TD, Cooks 5/61, Pittman Jr. 4/54, Long 1/7 TD

Defense

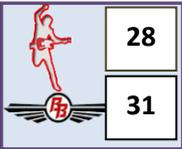
BUF: Madubuike 2-Sks FF 2-Tk
 CB: Lawrence 2-FF 8-Tk, Turner Sk FF 2-Tk, Nelson Int 3-Tk

Injuries

BUF: Tate 3, Williams 1, Davis 1
 CB:

Misc

BUF: Jackson 3-F 1 Lost
 CB: 35:02 TOP, White 1-FR, McManus 3/4 FG 39 Lg



After NJ had tied the game at 28 mid-way through the 4th on a **Matt Stafford** to **DJ Chark Jr** TD pass, the Bombers went on a 15-play, 64-yard drive to set up **Matt Prater's** 29-yard game-winning FG with 1:43 left. The Wrecking Balls then turned the ball over on downs with 0:49 left to essentially end the game. This was see-saw fight with big plays that saw **Drew Brees** connect with **M. Valdes-Scantling** for a 54-yard bomb to set up a score and 79-yard TD pass to take a 28-21 lead. Earlier, NJ had led 21-14 after a 77-yard run by **Wayne Gallman Jr** set up a **David Montgomery** TD run.

01-08-2022 The Fortress Temp:77 Wind:Calm Line:BRX by 12 MVP:Brees HFA:ON(

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 New Jersey (6-7)	7	0	14	7	28
2021 Bruxelles (5-7-1)	7	7	0	17	31

Passing

NJ: Stafford 35/23 264 Yds 3 TDs Int
 BRX: Brees 30/19 328 Yds 2 TDs

Rushing

NJ: Gallman Jr. 4/97 TD, Montgomery 15/35, McKissic 3/12
 BRX: Fournette 14/79 TD, Williams 13/64, Gainwell 4/13, Mitchell 1/8

Receiving

NJ: McKissic 7/59, McLaurin 5/114 TD, Allen 5/47, Chark Jr. 2/20 TD, Sample 2/11
 BRX: Claypool 6/82 TD, Valdes-Scantling 4/155 TD, Williams 4/53, Fournette 3/18

Defense

NJ: Cunningham 24-Tk
 BRX: Walker FF 7-Tk, Grant Int 3-Tk

Injuries

NJ: Bradberry 1, Hooper 1, Breeland 1
 BRX: Howard 4, Slay 1, Robinson 1

Misc

NJ: McKissic 1-F Lost
 BRX: Clark 1-FR, Prater 1/3 FG 29 Lg



34



27

After tying the game at 10 on an 8-yard TD pass to **Justin Jefferson** with 0:05 left in the 1st half, **Aaron Rodgers** drove his team 71 yards in 7 plays to take a 17-10 lead on an 8-yard check down to **David Johnson** to open the 2nd half. From that point the Stars were able to stay in front and finish strong with two more TD passes by from Rodgers and two interceptions of **Josh Allen** thwarting a Durham comeback. The Thunder Lizards led 10-0 early in the game, but an offside penalty on 4th & 3 extended the Stars' first scoring drive and rash of injuries hobbled the defence down the stretch.

01-06-2022 Jurassic Park Temp:59 Wind:Calm None Line:DTL by 12 MVP:Rodgers HFA:ON

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Budapest (13-0)	0	10	14	10	34
2021 Durham (11-2)	3	7	3	14	27

Passing

BUD: Rodgers 45/32 333 Yds 4 TDs

DTL: Allen 36/21 258 Yds 3 TDs 2 Int

Rushing

BUD: Johnson 12/49, Rodgers 3/13, Patterson 3/7

DTL: Gibson 11/72, Edmonds 5/43, Samuel 4/18, Allen 6/16, Boyd 1/11

Receiving

BUD: Jefferson 11/135 2 TDs, Diggs 6/68, Johnson 6/22 TD, Agholor 6/87 TD, Patterson 1/5

DTL: Samuel 8/129 2 TDs, Kupp 5/76 TD, Waller 3/25, Knox 2/12, Edmonds 2/12

Defense

BUD: Diggs Int 6-Tk, Dean Int 4-Tk, Goodson 9-Tk, David 8-Tk

DTL: Moore II 11-Tk

Injuries

BUD:

DTL: Boyd 1, Burns 1

Misc

BUD: Myers 2/2 FG 44 Lg

DTL: Santos 2/2 FG 52 Lg



27



24

Carlos Hyde capped a 75-yard drive with 1-yard TD with 1:39 left in the 4th to give the Hawks a 27-24 lead. Cowtown drove to the Brooklin 32 with 0:03 left but **Joey Slye** missed the 50-yarder that would have sent the game to OT. After just 3 FGs in the 1st half, the teams combined for 6 TDs in the 2nd half, ignoring the wind and snow. Before Hyde's score, **Derek Carr** audibled to **Breshad Perriman** for a 40-yard TD pass to put Brooklin in front 20-17 then **Kendrick Bourne** beat a double for a 59-yard pass play to set up a 6-yard TD run by **Todd Gurley** to put Cowtown in front 24-20.

01-07-2022 Tillman Field Temp:31 Wind:10-20 Snow *Internet* Line:COW by 12 MVP:Carr HFA:ON(3)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Brooklin (8-5)	3	3	7	14	27
2021 Cowtown (6-7)	0	3	7	14	24

Passing

BRH: Carr 38/27 312 Yds 2 TDs

COW: Garoppolo 28/23 294 Yds TD

Rushing

BRH: Ekeler 14/63, Scott 2/10

COW: Gore 7/33, Gurley II 11/29 2 TDs, Lazard 1/15, Murray 5/13, Garoppolo 1/2

Receiving

BRH: Ekeler 9/90, Hopkins 7/76 TD, Engram 5/57, Gronkowski 3/27, Perriman 2/58 TD

COW: Bourne 7/133, Lazard 6/49 TD, Evans 5/66, Gurley II 3/29, McKenzie 1/10

Defense

BRH: Hubbard Sk FF 6-Tk, Vander Esch 9-Tk, Simmons Sk 4-Tk, Jones FF 5-Tk

COW: Kpassagnon Sk 3-Tk, Williams 8-Tk

Injuries

BRH: Tate 3, Williams 3, Eichenberg 1

COW: Murphy 4, Murray 2, Fitzpatrick 1

Misc

BRH: Bullock 2/2 FG 42 Lg

COW: Slye 1/2 FG 39 Lg



With 0:05 left in the 1st half, **Kirk Cousins** hit **Jalen Reagor** on a long comeback for a 16-yard TD and a 21-7 lead at half time. The two-score advantage set the stage for York to press in the 2nd half. Failed 4th down gambles on two drives to start the 3rd, the first near mid-field and the second at their own 28, set up a pair of Swordfish FGs to make it 27-7 entering the 4th. **Tom Brady** found **Isaiah Ford** down the seam for a 15-yard TD pass but after a Sebastian FG, a fumble by **Travis Homer** on the kick return set up a TD pass to **Eric Ebron**, Cousins' third TD, to salt the game away.

01-08-2022 Camelot Temp:44 Wind:Calm None Line:YOR by 5 MVP:Cousins HFA:ON(3)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Sebastian (6-6-1)	7	14	6	10	37
2021 York (7-6)	0	7	0	6	13

Passing

SS: Cousins 27/18 182 Yds 3 TDs
 YOR: Brady 32/18 187 Yds 2 TDs

Rushing

SS: Taylor 17/105, Chubb 13/74 TD, Cousins 1/11, Richard 1/5, Perine 1/2
 YOR: Henry 21/71, Williams 2/4, Homer 1/3

Receiving

SS: Miller 5/45, Ebron 4/38 2 TDs, Taylor 4/37, Reagor 2/34 TD, Marshall Jr. 1/12
 YOR: Ford 5/46 TD, St. Brown 3/43, Williams 3/15, Amendola 2/24 TD, Williams 2/34

Defense

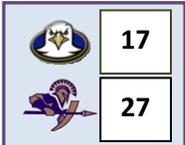
SS: Deablo FF 5-Tk, Baker Sk 3-Tk
 YOR: Alualu 9-Tk

Injuries

SS: Cashman 3
 YOR: Teller 2

Misc

SS: Gholston 1-FR, Carlson 3/3 FG 41 Lg
 YOR: Homer 1-F Lost



The Spartans took a 7-0 lead off the opening drive on a 12-yard pass from **Philip Rivers** to **Darnell Mooney**. The Blue Eagles tied it early in the 2nd quarter on an 11-yard pass to **Jamison Crowder** from **Joe Burrow**. Pickering regained the lead on an improbable 1-yard TD run by tackle **Patrick Mekari** on a busted play. From there the Spartans slowly gradually gained separation, adding a FG before the half and a TD early in the 4th on a 5-yard run by **Miles Sanders**. The Blue Eagles were hampered by the loss of **Joe Burrow** early in the 2nd quarter, who was replaced by **Drew Lock**.

01-06-2022 Thermopylae Stadium Temp:21 Wind:Calm None Line:PIC by 8 MVP:Sanders H

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Scarborough (2-10-1)	0	7	3	7	17
2021 Pickering (7-6)	7	10	0	10	27

Passing

SBE: Lock 26/14 149 Yds TD Int, Burrow 13/5 45 Yds TD
 PIC: Rivers 22/16 192 Yds TD

Rushing

SBE: Carson 13/89, Johnson 4/23
 PIC: Swift 21/97, Sanders 12/83 TD, Sermon 1/5, Mekari 1/1 TD

Receiving

SBE: Jackson 5/58, Ward 3/28, Eifert 3/34 TD, Carson 3/17, Crowder 2/21 TD
 PIC: Brown 5/52, Ridley 4/55, Mooney 2/27 TD, Swift 2/25, Smith 2/27, Ricard 1/6

Defense

SBE: Ryan 9-Tk, Anzalone 9-Tk
 PIC: Okwara Sk FF 3-Tk, Howard Int 4-Tk

Injuries

SBE: Gaskin 4, Burrow 4, Crowder 2, Kiser 1, McLendon 1, Phillips 1
 PIC: Ward 2, Hyde 1, Roby 1

Misc

SBE: Crosby 1/1 FG 30 Lg
 PIC: 35:59 TOP, Zuerlein 2/2 FG 43 Lg



Kyler Murray drilled a hitch to **Mark Andrews** in the back of the end zone for a 3-yard TD with 1:33 left to give Erieau the victory. It was the third TD for Andrews, who opened the scoring with a 17-yard catch-and-run TD off the opening drive. That set off a back-and-forth game that took off in the 2nd half with turnovers factoring in. **Matt Ryan** threw 2 TDs, including a 36-yarder to **Josh Reynolds** to keep pace. A **Rodney McLeod** interception set up the 2nd of Andrews' TD catches to make it 17-14 Erieau, while a 57-yard fumble return for a TD by **Erik Harris** put Oshawa in front, 28-24 late in the 4th.

01-06-2022 Kelly-Burke Field Temp:19 Wind:0-5 None Line:ERI by 4 MVP:Murray HFA

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Oshawa (2-10-1)	0	7	7	14	28
2021 Erieau (4-9)	7	3	7	14	31

Passing

OSH: Ryan 34/23 237 Yds 2 TDs 3 Int
 ERI: Murray 28/21 199 Yds 3 TDs Int

Rushing

OSH: Drake 20/100, Singletary 3/23, Ryan 2/10 TD
 ERI: Murray 11/110 TD, Moss 12/58, Hines 3/17, Vaughn 2/3

Receiving

OSH: Reynolds 8/111 TD, Edelman 7/47 TD, Gesicki 3/25, Adams 3/41, Schultz 1/7
 ERI: Andrews 8/59 3 TDs, Higgins 8/105, Hines 5/35

Defense

OSH: Ward FF 9-Tk, Autry Sk 4-Tk, Kendricks 8-Tk, Reddick 2-FF 2-Tk
 ERI: Diggs Int 10-Tk, McLeod Int 4-Tk, Poole 8-Tk, Bosa Sk 3-Tk

Injuries

OSH: Simmons 1
 ERI: Van Noy 1, Hurst 1, Henry 1, Waddle 1

Misc

OSH: Harris 1-FR TD
 ERI: Vaughn 1-F Lost, Sloman 1/1 FG 37 Lg



Irish RB, **Raheem Mostert** cracked the zeroes on the scoreboard with a 10-yard TD run to set off a 17-point spree in the 2nd quarter. Looking to get out of their funk, the Glads went for it on 4th & 3 at their own 43 and failed. That set up a short field for the Irish that a 28-yard Mostert run and a 16-yard TD pass to **Adam Thielen** erased to go up 17-0 before the half. A lost fumble overturned on review kept the Glads' only TD drive alive, as **Willie Snead IV** hauled in a 33-yard pass for the score. **Baker Mayfield** then put all drama to rest with 2 TD passes on the next two series to seal the win.

01-08-2022 Mgr McClancy Mem Sta Temp:41 Wind:0-5 None Line:EE by 12 MVP:Mayfield

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Georgia (3-9-1)	0	0	0	7	7
2021 East Elmhurst (10-3)	0	17	0	14	31

Passing

GEO: Roethlisberger 23/16 135 Yds TD
 EE: Mayfield 30/20 212 Yds 3 TDs

Rushing

GEO: Robinson 17/79, Jacobs 5/2
 EE: Mostert 14/95 TD, Michel 14/92, Hill 1/23, Everett 1/5

Receiving

GEO: Snead IV 5/67 TD, Fells 3/22, Robinson 3/14, Okwuegbunam 2/12, James 1/8
 EE: Everett 5/47 TD, Hill 5/78 TD, Thielen 3/34 TD, Robinson 3/21, Dwelley 2/15

Defense

GEO:
 EE: Smith 9-Tk

Injuries

GEO: Joseph 2
 EE:

Misc

GEO: 1/10 3rdDwn
 EE: Blankenship 1/1 FG 21 Lg



WEEK THIRTEEN

STANDINGS & STATS

EFL 2021 - Week 13 Standings

East	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Cobb County	9	4	0	.692	W3	354	27.2	239	18.4	8.8	6 1 0	3 1 0	8 2 0
New Jersey	6	7	0	.462	L1	256	19.7	297	22.8	-3.2	2 5 0	1 3 0	5 5 0
Bruxelles	5	7	1	.423	W2	347	26.7	393	30.2	-3.5	3 3 0	2 2 0	4 5 1
Buffalo	4	9	0	.308	L3	247	19.0	308	23.7	-4.7	3 3 0	2 2 0	4 6 0
Central	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
y-Charleswood	12	1	0	.923	W10	347	26.7	276	21.2	5.5	7 0 0	4 0 0	9 1 0
Viriden	7	6	0	.538	L2	368	28.3	346	26.6	1.7	3 3 0	3 1 0	5 5 0
Twin Cities	3	10	0	.231	L5	258	19.8	329	25.3	-5.5	1 6 0	1 3 0	2 8 0
Peg City	0	13	0	.000	L13	201	15.5	384	29.5	-14.1	0 6 0	0 4 0	0 10 0
West	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Chino	8	4	1	.654	W2	321	24.7	302	23.2	1.5	3 3 1	3 1 0	7 2 1
Las Vegas	8	5	0	.615	L4	348	26.8	265	20.4	6.4	4 2 0	3 1 0	7 3 0
Iowa City	8	5	0	.615	W1	360	27.7	349	26.8	0.8	6 1 0	1 3 0	6 4 0
Seattle	4	9	0	.308	W3	274	21.1	310	23.8	-2.8	2 4 0	1 3 0	2 8 0
North	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
y-Durham	11	2	0	.846	L1	435	33.5	215	16.5	16.9	5 1 0	3 1 0	8 2 0
Sebastian	6	6	1	.500	W2	432	33.2	423	32.5	0.7	2 4 0	2 1 1	4 5 1
Cowtown	6	7	0	.462	L2	319	24.5	322	24.8	-0.2	4 3 0	1 3 0	5 5 0
Scarborough	2	10	1	.192	L4	246	18.9	393	30.2	-11.3	2 4 1	1 2 1	2 7 1
Coastal	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
y-Budapest	13	0	0	1.000	W13	394	30.3	168	12.9	17.4	6 0 0	4 0 0	10 0 0
Brooklin	8	5	0	.615	W5	329	25.3	317	24.4	0.9	4 3 0	1 3 0	6 4 0
York	7	6	0	.538	L3	290	22.3	312	24.0	-1.7	4 3 0	2 2 0	5 5 0
Pickering	7	6	0	.538	W3	251	19.3	270	20.8	-1.5	1 5 0	1 3 0	5 5 0
South	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
y-East Elmhurst	10	3	0	.769	W6	316	24.3	211	16.2	8.1	4 2 0	4 0 0	8 2 0
Erieau	4	9	0	.308	W1	246	18.9	328	25.2	-6.3	2 5 0	3 1 0	3 7 0
Georgia	3	9	1	.269	L2	290	22.3	372	28.6	-6.3	1 5 0	0 3 1	1 8 1
Oshawa	2	10	1	.192	L6	274	21.1	374	28.8	-7.7	1 5 1	0 3 1	1 8 1

y-Clinch Division
z-Clinched Wildcard

EFL 2021 - Week 13 Passing Leaders

			Att	Cmp	C%	Yards	In	I%	Lg	TD	TD%	Rate
1	Rodgers,A	BUD	425	305	71.8	3901	3	0.7	75	35	8.2	124.6
2	Garoppolo	COW	162	120	74.1	1446	1	0.6	59	11	6.8	121.1
3	Cousins	SS	403	282	70.0	3664	10	2.5	76	38	9.4	119.4
4	Watson,D	CHP	392	263	67.1	3495	3	0.8	75	30	7.7	117.5
5	Mahomes	VV	446	289	64.8	4134	8	1.8	72	35	7.8	113.4
6	Wilson,R	ICC	398	286	71.9	3275	7	1.8	66	29	7.3	113.2
7	Allen,J	DTL	451	299	66.3	3633	7	1.6	75	35	7.8	110.3
8	Tannehill	CB	354	228	64.4	2988	7	2.0	55	29	8.2	110.0
9	Brees	BRX	336	211	62.8	2855	5	1.5	79	25	7.4	108.4
10	Mayfield	EE	353	236	66.9	2721	3	0.8	48	23	6.5	108.1
11	Roethlisbe	GEO	407	284	69.8	2773	5	1.2	60	25	6.1	104.0
12	Carr,D	BRH	455	287	63.1	3367	6	1.3	73	29	6.4	101.2
13	Herbert	LV	485	335	69.1	3601	9	1.9	76	26	5.4	100.7
14	Stafford	NJ	448	300	67.0	3293	9	2.0	75	21	4.7	95.8
15	Trubisky	TCT	292	185	63.4	2139	7	2.4	69	17	5.8	94.8
16	Minshew II	SEA	218	145	66.5	1457	6	2.8	62	13	6.0	93.8
17	Brady	YOR	407	264	64.9	3099	13	3.2	84	23	5.7	93.4
18	Bridgewater	CHI	293	210	71.7	2133	8	2.7	75	11	3.8	93.3
19	Rivers,P	PIC	334	209	62.6	2493	4	1.2	87	12	3.6	92.3
20	Fitzpatric	COW	236	160	67.8	1618	7	3.0	52	11	4.7	90.3
21	Ryan,M	OSH	442	281	63.6	2758	9	2.0	57	21	4.8	88.4
22	Jackson,L	BUF	451	302	67.0	2705	8	1.8	60	16	3.5	87.3
23	Burrow	SBE	343	195	56.9	1953	4	1.2	59	18	5.2	85.8
24	Murray,K	ERI	376	231	61.4	2236	10	2.7	67	12	3.2	77.6
25	Jones,M	PCC	434	241	55.5	2636	16	3.7	80	16	3.7	70.6

EFL 2021 - Week 13 Kick Return Leaders

		No	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD	
1	Rodgers,I	CHP	22	773	35.1	100	2
2	Roberts,A	BRX	22	761	34.6	50	0
3	Harris,D	COW	18	549	30.5	76	0
4	Agnew	SEA	24	700	29.2	68	0
5	Duvernay	TCT	20	551	27.6	49	0
6	Scott,B	BRH	19	487	25.6	40	0
7	Homer	YOR	21	492	23.4	38	0
8	Webster,N	NJ	20	462	23.1	43	0
9	Ballentine	SS	18	414	23.0	35	0
10	Atwell	OSH	26	554	21.3	38	0
11	Carter,D	BUF	29	571	19.7	48	0
12	Cannon	BUD	7	236	33.7	42	0
13	Adderley	VV	3	89	29.7	33	0
14	Johnson,D	SBE	16	458	28.6	41	0
15	Hubbard	PCC	4	103	25.8	29	0
16	Patterson	BUD	16	405	25.3	39	0
17	Lewis,D	LV	15	379	25.3	43	0
18	Hines	ERI	3	72	24.0	29	0
19	Hill	DTL	10	232	23.2	38	0
20	Raymond	CB	2	45	22.5	24	0
21	Abdullah	CHI	16	354	22.1	36	0
22	Peoples-Jo	SS	1	22	22.0	22	0
23	St-Juste	ICC	1	22	22.0	22	0
24	Johnson,D	CB	6	131	21.8	28	0
25	Barner	PIC	12	262	21.8	39	0

EFL 2021 - Week 13 Punt Return Leaders

		No	Fc	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD	
1	Grant,J	CHI	29	7	399	13.8	62	1
2	Peppers	ERI	20	6	244	12.2	22	0
3	Harris,D	COW	25	8	280	11.2	20	0
4	Erickson	BUF	18	11	172	9.6	24	0
5	Proche	DTL	29	14	273	9.4	39	0
6	Spencer,D	NJ	21	4	187	8.9	25	0
7	Peoples-Jo	SS	18	7	159	8.8	25	0
8	Taylor,T	CHP	28	5	241	8.6	27	0
9	Moore	EE	20	15	166	8.3	17	0
10	Roberts,A	BRX	19	2	157	8.3	29	0
11	Raymond	CB	18	6	138	7.7	22	0
12	Hill,K	SBE	23	6	154	6.7	25	0
13	Hardman	LV	22	14	54	2.5	13	0
14	Lamb	SEA	5	3	74	14.8	38	0
15	Hines	ERI	2	0	24	12.0	16	0
16	Cole Sr.	SEA	14	2	158	11.3	20	0
17	James,R	GEO	4	3	43	10.8	15	0
18	Renfrow	SEA	5	5	44	8.8	20	0
19	Tate,G	BRH	4	16	35	8.8	19	0
20	Atwell	OSH	10	3	87	8.7	22	0
21	Johnson,D	GEO	9	5	78	8.7	18	0
22	Cooper,P	VV	15	11	129	8.6	41	0
23	Barner	PIC	6	16	48	8.0	14	0
24	Toney	COW	2	1	14	7.0	15	0
25	Rodgers,Am	BUD	14	19	97	6.9	20	0

EFL 2021 - Week 13 Rushing Leaders

			Att	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD
1	Henry,D	YOR	280	1221	4.4	48	10
2	Gordon III	TCT	207	1071	5.2	45	3
3	Cook,D	LV	209	1013	4.8	49	9
4	Robinson,J	GEO	199	987	5.0	52	7
5	Jackson,L	BUF	159	959	6.0	41	10
6	Drake	OSH	181	950	5.2	53	6
7	Chubb,N	SS	180	910	5.1	47	9
8	Taylor,J	SS	162	901	5.6	52	8
9	Jones,A	EE	173	857	5.0	39	6
10	Murray,K	ERI	125	851	6.8	32	12
11	Sanders,M	PIC	149	752	5.0	25	3
12	Harris,D	CB	111	704	6.3	35	3
13	Carson	SBE	132	703	5.3	27	3
14	Elliott,E	VV	168	674	4.0	28	8
15	Montgomery	NJ	185	661	3.6	56	3
16	Mitchell	BRX	132	636	4.8	34	7
17	Conner	ICC	104	616	5.9	47	1
18	Gibson	DTL	117	585	5.0	28	2
19	Jones II	CHI	131	569	4.3	26	5
20	Edwards-He	TCT	95	551	5.8	46	7
21	Swift	PIC	126	547	4.3	38	9
22	Harris	ERI	129	537	4.2	37	1
23	Williams,J	BRX	100	504	5.0	20	0
24	Gurley II	COW	123	490	4.0	37	11
25	Wilson,R	ICC	67	489	7.3	30	4
26	Peterson,A	CB	135	488	3.6	16	2
27	Johnson,Da	BUD	88	470	5.3	34	4
28	Ekeler	BRH	85	465	5.5	21	1
29	Hunt,K	SEA	98	430	4.4	37	1
30	Fournette	BRX	98	420	4.3	17	5
31	Wilson Jr.	BUD	79	418	5.3	30	4
32	Akers	SEA	89	413	4.6	52	5
33	Jacobs,J	GEO	105	413	3.9	27	2
34	Davis,M	BUF	102	413	4.0	25	5
35	Tannehill	CB	44	410	9.3	43	9

EFL 2021 - Week 13 Receiving Leaders

			No	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD
1	Adams,D	OSH	88	967	11.0	57	11
2	Hopkins,D	BRH	86	1157	13.5	54	14
3	Diggs,S	BUD	82	987	12.0	66	7
4	Lockett	ICC	78	955	12.2	66	8
5	Jefferson	BUD	78	1230	15.8	75	10
6	Allen,K	NJ	73	687	9.4	35	8
7	Evans,M	COW	72	971	13.5	41	12
8	Chase	VV	69	1372	19.9	72	11
9	Hill,T	EE	68	1022	15.0	44	11
10	Gallup	CHI	68	888	13.1	75	7
11	Waller	DTL	66	855	13.0	43	10
12	Gage	BUF	65	637	9.8	41	3
13	Claypool	BRX	64	1079	16.9	75	14
14	Woods,R	BUF	63	601	9.5	60	7
15	Anderson,R	SEA	63	825	13.1	59	7
16	McKissic	NJ	62	514	8.3	29	1
17	McLaurin	NJ	59	846	14.3	75	6
18	Cooks	CB	58	828	14.3	52	9
19	Kupp	DTL	58	970	16.7	75	7
20	Aiyuk	PCC	58	783	13.5	58	4
21	Cooper,A	CHP	56	825	14.7	75	7
22	Kelce,T	CHP	56	834	14.9	54	10
23	Johnson,D	GEO	56	546	9.8	50	7
24	Sanders,E	BUF	56	607	10.8	51	4
25	Samuel,C	DTL	54	545	10.1	42	4
26	Fitzgerald	LV	54	533	9.9	19	2
27	Brown,A	ICC	54	919	17.0	54	5
28	Thielen	EE	52	614	11.8	30	7
29	Jeudy	LV	51	860	16.9	76	5
30	Robinson,A	SBE	51	635	12.5	51	4
31	Hockenson	VV	50	568	11.4	43	7
32	Smith-Schu	CHP	50	654	13.1	36	5
33	Moore,D	TCT	50	861	17.2	69	6
34	Parker,D	CB	49	609	12.4	36	9
35	Ridley,C	PIC	48	767	16.0	47	4



AROUND THE



With Spats McChad

NEW YORK – Week 13 brought with it a single-game ratings high for 2021 with 23.2 million viewers for the *NBC Sunday Night Football* clash between the North Stars and the Thunder Lizards. It also brought with it an overall season low for ratings across the rest of the league, with the notable exception of the 4:25 tilt between Charleswood and Las Vegas, which fell just short of 20 million at 19.6 million viewers. Take away those two games and the average TV viewership for Week 13 came in at a well below average 12.7 million viewers, with the Oshawa-Erieau game pulling in a dismal 8.3 million viewers. That's still a lot of people willing to watch the Cadillac and Pink Panthers!

Peg City's near upset of Iowa City caused a late spike in viewership that put the total for that game at 10.6 million viewers. That was the second-highest number of people willing to sit for more than 5 minutes through a Crusader game since 12.5 million viewers watched them lose to the Assassins in Week 5. The Assassins were a hot commodity in the first half of the season, drawing the most viewership from outside their local area of any team through 8 weeks.

A dive into the numbers is pretty interesting as it shows that the first half of this season was one of the league's better first halves overall, ranking second out of the league's 15 seasons at an average of 17.4 million viewers per game, a mark bested only in the 2019 season when average viewership over the first eight weeks logged in at 18.1 million viewers. However, viewership dropped sharply beginning in Week 10 as the disparity between the few haves and the many have-nots became more apparent and the Week 10 slate of games offered few if any tantalizing match-ups.

A drop in overall EFL viewership is normal for this time of year as teams begin to fall out of the race, but the size of the dip has been greater this season than in the past. This has to do with the lack of division races. In the past, tight division and wildcard races combined to pull up viewership to compensate for the teams already, or about to be, eliminated. With four of the six divisions already clinched and the East Division about to be, casual fans are turning away from wildcard races involving a clearcut second-tier of teams. The one division still hot for viewers, the West, also has the teams most likely to advance to the wildcard, further hurting interest in games not involving teams from the west.

This has also made it more challenging for EFL schedule makers looking to "flex" late season match-ups into primetime slots. What happens when none of the games matter, except to fans of a marginal playoff team with little to no hope of making a deep playoff run anyway? Week 14 is shaping up to be one of those weeks, with marketers banking on the name recognition of **Russell Wilson** to draw viewers to a showdown with **Josh Allen** and the Thunder Lizards this coming Sunday night. This coming one week after the Cubs were nearly skinned by Peg City (more on that later).

For those who may be ready to push the panic button prematurely, relax. The numbers tuning in for the Budapest-Durham match are encouraging. That means that football is not the issue. People want to watch good football. The gap between teams like Durham, Budapest, Charleswood, Cobb County and now, suddenly East Elmhurst and the rest of the league is a problem, however. As we approach Week 14, there is a palpable impatience for the real headliners to arrive on stage. Two of those did this week for a sneak peek at what we are likely to see again come Conference Finals time.

THE INFINITY ROSTER

Durham coach & GM, **George Kaldis** has kept a low profile in 2021. He has let his team do the talking for him. For the most part they have been eloquent in expressing the quiet determination of a coach and franchise looking to complete an unfinished mission. In his fifteenth season, the Durham head man is the winningest coach of all time and tops in winning percentage of coaches with ten or more seasons under their belts. Yet, the Thunder Lizards have never made it to a Gale Sayers Game. They have had dominant franchises – in 2009 and 2012 – and excellent franchises – 2013 through 2015 and last season – but have never made it to the pinnacle. As impressive as is the coaching record of Kaldis in the regular season, his 5-10 post-season record is an eyesore that eats away at his insides like a six-pack of *Old Milwaukee* and plate of suicide wings. *That* is the unfinished mission: To make it to the final stage and then...come what may.

Anything can happen in a single game with everything on the line. To date, the Thunder Lizards' franchise has not performed on those special days when the record means nothing and the moment means everything. The great coaches take that failure personally. They think: *What could I have done to put my players in a better position to execute and win?* And despite the absence of a Gale Sayers ring on his finger, Coach **George Kaldis** is one of the greats.

By all accounts from Durham insiders, and hinted at in rare interviews with the man himself, coach Kaldis resolved to build the ultimate roster for a team in the modern era. A roster that could succeed, regardless of play calls that might not always fit the opponents' schemes. It would be a roster built on the principles of Max Pass + QB Mobility. The Roster of the Present and Future of Football. He would build *The Infinity Roster* – an assemblage of immortals for whom the normal rules of football would not apply now or in the foreseeable future. As the 2021 season approached, it did appear that such a roster (within the limits of the salary cap) had been built!

The Durham coach, a strategist and evaluator of talent like few others, had a plan. He had determined through hard experience and study, that building the back end of a defence was not enough to stop a good passer in today's game. His secondary, always among the best in the league, could only cover for so long. It needed a strong pass rush to realize its full potential. With this in mind, Kaldis set about acquiring the ultimate pass rush, drafting *Trey Hendrickson*, *Brian Burns*, *Ed Oliver* and trading up to draft *Chase Young* to build a front line that would forever collapse the pocket when most needed for a big play or to stop an offence in its tracks. This, and the ultimate *Badden 2021*-style video game quarterback, *Josh Allen*, would assure that both major phases of the game would be at maximum potential when his team took the field in a do-or-die game. *The Infinity Roster* would not fail!

Unfortunately for the Durham coach and his carefully-laid plan, across the ocean in Budapest a more traditional coach and GM, **Darrin Jones**, had been gifted one of the best quarterbacks in recent history by an impetuous new GM looking to put his stamp on his own *Rebuild for Eternity*. **Archbishop Thomas Molloy**, having consulted his medical analytics staff, determined that *Aaron Rodgers* was no longer medically viable as a near or mid-term option at quarterback and handed him over to a win-now franchise for the still unknown quantity that is *Baker Mayfield* and a draft pick that turned out to be tackle, *Christian Darrisaw*. While Mayfield had a cocky spark, neither of those two players qualified as a sure thing. But one thing was for sure in the bishop's mind: Rodgers was in his golden years and not much longer for the league. Best to package him off when he still had value and compete in two years with Mayfield. It may have been a slight miscalculation. After winning a championship, Rodgers was thoroughly rejuvenated and playing better than ever. Imagine an Irish team with Rodgers at the helm right now! They would likely be the no.2 or even the no.1 seed and not the no.3 seed and looking at elimination in the Conference Final at the very latest. That chapter has yet to be written, however...

While East Elmhurst's loss was Budapest's gain, it was not all due to that trade that Budapest, coincidentally, had managed to build a roster to compete with the *Infinity Roster*. The astute drafting of *Justin Jefferson*, *George Kittle*, *Ryan Ramczyk*, *Minkah Fitzpatrick* and *Stefon Diggs* went a long way to building an affordable core of new star players to complement veterans like *Cameron Jordan*, *Ndamukong Suh* and *Lavonte David*. Acquiring Rodgers was merely the key to unlock the potential of those stars. After twelve weeks, this rare agglomeration of talent had taken down all comers hard, with the ironic exception of East Elmhurst. Mayfield had played error-free against his former team while Rodgers had put on his most lacklustre performance of the season to date in a close 17-7 victory in Week Five. For the Irish, showing up and competing was something to hold on to if they ever were to face Budapest again.

The North Stars flew to Durham and took their rooms in the visitor's wing of the Dino-tel on the site of the Thunder Lizards' famous Jurassic Park home. They entered Canada with a 12-0 record and a solemn mission to complete the league's fifth perfect regular season. Florida (2010), Aurora (2014 & 2017) and Twin Cities (2016) already belonged to the '16-0 Club.' The Mustangs and Triumph had consummated their perfect regular seasons with Gale Sayers trophies, giving them 3 true Perfect Seasons between them. The Dragons had been sent home by Pickering in the semi-final round in 2010.

Championship or not, 16-0 was an impressive feat. It was a little surprising that the EFL had already recorded 4 such finishes in just 14 seasons, when it had taken the NFL 87 seasons to record three perfect regular seasons and only one Perfect Season. Two of those perfect regular seasons had been posted by the Chicago Bears in seasons lasting 13 games (1934) and 11 games (1942 during WWII). Both times, the Bears had lost in the Championship. And, of course, the legendary Miami Dolphins of 1972 had completed the NFL's only Perfect Season in a total of 17 games. The EFL's Perfect Seasons had been an even more impressive 19 games in length.

If there was one team that could replicate that feat and join the '16-0 Club' in 2021 it was Budapest. They had not shown any weaknesses in their 12 victories so far and had only been remotely tested once. They had simply over-powered their competition, without any serious doubt at any point as to the outcome, even on those days when their execution had not been as crisp as Coach Jones would have liked. They were good enough to beat just about anybody on a bad day.

But not everybody...

As much as the North Stars had shown themselves to be the class of the league through 12 weeks, the impression that they were a complete team was erroneous. There were chinks in the armour that had not been exposed. Their running backs were serviceable but not really capable of carrying the offence in a smashmouth game. The Stars had not needed such a game yet, so fans and media didn't bring it up often. But, the option to switch to a power run game was no more likely to succeed for them than for most teams. One of the reasons for that was a relatively weak right side of the offensive line. Rodgers' mobility and pocket presence had successfully papered over what *Pro Football Focal-Point* graded out as one of the more mediocre front fives in football. This less than championship-calibre line was a blemish obscured by the prevalent media narrative of Budapest dominance, but it was a topic of discussion in deeper analytical journals. How much greater would the Stars be if they had, for example, the front five of Bruxelles? It is scary to think about.

On defence, it was known in coaching circles that if an opponent could turn the corner against either of the North Stars' all-star defensive ends, the outside linebackers were vulnerable to broken tackles. Comparable to Rodgers on offence, *Lavonte David* worked extra duty to make up for average-at-best play from his co-workers on the edges. The Budapest defence could be ground down, but few teams found themselves in a position where this approach was a viable strategy, and so it was rarely attempted and almost never talked

about as a result.

The Durham coach knew all about Budapest's hidden weaknesses. He had been studying the team obsessively since the pre-season, carefully noting every missed tackle, every mis-step, every blown coverage, every tendency, every blocking adjustment, every pass route, every drop-back, every *everything*.... He even knew what **Aaron Rodgers** liked to eat on game day and had reportedly made sure that it was not available at the Dino-tel in Jurassic Park on Sunday.

Long before Week 13 rolled around, Coach Kaldis had known what his key to victory would be against the seemingly invincible Budapest passing attack. The key was to get to Rodgers before he could get an opportunity to dissect the Durham secondary. This was not the strategy of a genius – it was simple necessity and easier said than done. But if any team could pull off the impossible and pressure **Aaron Rodgers** into looking more like **Baker Mayfield**, it was Durham.

It was for the above reasons that the Durham coach had taken a rare and very personal interest in the well-being of his trio of pass rush specialists, Hendrickson, Burns and Young. From the beginning of training camp through every week of the regular season he attended to them before, during and after practices and games. He insisted on receiving detailed medical reports from team doctors twice a day and intervening in the players' diet and sleep schedules to ensure they were well-nourished and rested. At the first sign of an ailment or complaint, he took them off the field for evaluation and allowed them to skip practices out of an abundance of caution if anything negative was found. By Week Five, team doctors were worn out by the demands, so three personal physicians were hired to tend daily to the three pass-rushers. By Week Eight, personal masseuses were added and by Week Ten each player was assigned a driver and a man-servant. Most bizarre of all, however was the Coach Kaldis' insistence that the three players observe the strictest mask, isolation and hygiene protocols against the possibility of COVID-19 infection. This direction, coming from the league's most conspicuously unvaccinated coach (opting instead to wear the EFL's protective scarab and goats head amulet), was a clear sign that the coach had become obsessive about anything that could possibility interfere with the availability of those players leading up to the big Week Thirteen match-up against Budapest. And COVID-19, whether or not it was truly the danger people assumed it was, had a way of spreading anyway. A positive test would be enough to prevent an otherwise healthy Hendrickson, Burns or Young from playing.

These efforts, though seemingly excessive, seemed to have worked in terms of production. The three Durham pass rush specialists were nos.1, 2 & 3 on the sack leader board heading into Week 13. No team had more sacks than Durham and no player on Durham had more sacks than any of the three Chosen Ones. It was a group primed and ready to attack the league's top quarterback after having been mentally conditioned by techniques devised by Psychology major, **George Kaldis**, to attack Rodgers on sight.



Durham coach, **George Kaldis** kneels over injured defensive end, **Chase Young** in the second quarter of the Thunder Lizards' showdown against the North Stars. Young would limp off the field and not return. He was one of four Durham starters injured in the first half and later ruled out for the game. These were no ordinary starters. **Brian Burns**, **Trey Hendickson** and **Tyler Boyd** joined him.

In the days that the North Stars were in town prior to the game, extra security precautions had to be implemented to ensure that Hendrickson, Burns and Young did not cross paths with the Budapest quarterback in or outside the stadium. The mere sight of Rodgers could have easily triggered a violent attack impulse that might not be controllable in an off-field setting.

When game time finally arrived, the sight of Rodgers on the opposite sideline did indeed induce violent convulsions in **Trey Hendrickson**, who had to be restrained by **Fred Warner** and **D.J. Reader** from running across the field. **Brian Burns** shuddered and growled while **Chase Young** stood stalk still and stared across the field with the look of murder in his eyes.

Coach Kaldis smiled. *They are ready*, he thought.

They were indeed. Perhaps too ready.

The Thunder Lizards took the opening drive 60 yards on 12 plays, all but one of them running plays before stalling at the Budapest 15. Facing 4th & 3 the decision was an easy one: Kick the field goal. If things went according to plan, field goals would make a difference. **Cairo Santos** came on and drilled the 33-yarder through the uprights for the 3-0 lead.

It was Budapest's turn. They started at their own 10 after an illegal block penalty. As the Durham defensive unit came onto the field a cordon of beefy interior linemen along with **Fred Warner** formed a blocking line to prevent Hendrickson from rushing Rodgers as he approached the huddle. Foam spouted out from the corners of his mouth as he snarled in the direction of the North Star offence. He looked like a rabid dog. Burns was hyper-ventilating in the huddle while Young stood apart from his teammates, staring down the Budapest quarterback menacingly. There was concern on the Durham sideline that the defence would start the game with an offside unabated to the quarterback penalty and who knows what else.

Mic'd up for the game, Warner was heard later trying to calm everybody down: "Go with Arik! Go with Arik!" he repeated, referring to defensive tackle **Arik Armstead**. The trio was being instructed to watch Armstead to know when to jump off the ball.

Somehow, the message got through to the higher brain of the defensive ends and Burns, who was making the start at split end in the five-down lineman nickel set, a rare formation that the Lizards had used perhaps half a dozen times all season.

Jumping off the ball with the defensive tackle successfully prevented an opening penalty, but it slowed down the pass rush. Rodgers glided back, stood tall in the pocket and delivered a strike to **Justin Jefferson**, who tried to make a move on **Kenny Moore II** and was tackled by a swiftly converging **Richard Sherman**. Jefferson had lost 2 yards after the catch but the reception was still good for a 12-yard gain.

"Complete to Jefferson...and he's brought down by Richard Sherman," observed Sunday Night Football announcer, **Al Michaels**. "That's good for 12 yards and a quick first down for Budapest."

"Well, that's how it's been all year for those two," analyst **Chris Collinsworth** bleated as the camera zeroed in on Rodgers in the huddle. "It's been like playing pitch and catch between Aaron Rodgers and Justin Jefferson all season – like they're the only two on the field. The Durham pass rush was unable to get any pressure on that play and Rodgers made it look easy."

A trail of drool followed Hendrickson into the huddle where it pooled into a small puddle at his feet as he listened to the play call. **DJ Reader** and Sherman had been called off the field, replaced by two linebackers as **George Kaldis** apparently did not like the look of just one linebacker in the middle of the field. Now in their 4-3 base set, the Lizards would play the pass again, which had Hendrickson excited. Rodgers took the snap under center, turned and handed the ball off to **David Johnson**, who slid past Hendrickson as the Durham lineman bolted in the direction of the quarterback. Realizing his error at the last instant, Hendrickson turned on a dime and sprung toward the Budapest running back, snaring him from behind and bringing him down after a 6-yard gain.

"The handoff to Johnson off the edge...and he's chased down by Hendrickson at the 30-yard line," Michaels announced.

"Well, I don't know how Trey Hendrickson was able to make that play!" Collinsworth raved. "He went full speed at Aaron Rodgers then turned around and went full speed after David Johnson and managed to get there before any of his teammates. He looks like he is ready to play tonight and that could mean trouble for the Budapest offensive front."

On the next play, Rodgers took a three-step drop and turned to look at Jefferson, who had moved to the slot and had cut diagonally across the front. Out of the corner of his eye he saw an impossibly quick Hendrickson cut inside right tackle, **Jonah Williams**. Feeling the pressure, he got rid of the ball a touch too early as he stepped up to avoid the rush. The ball went too far ahead of Jefferson and fell to the turf, incomplete.

Like he had been fired out of catapult, Hendrickson careened headlong in the direction of the spot Rodgers had occupied a split-second earlier. He twisted around in an attempt to grab hold of the North Stars' QB but his momentum carried him past and he spilled awkwardly to the ground, wincing in pain as he hit the thick *Mezanoiic* grass of the field at Jurassic Park.

"Rodgers felt the pressure on that play," Michaels observed as the camera briefly panned to Jefferson walking back to the line before switching to the Budapest side of the 30-yard line.

"And it looks like Trey Hendrickson is down after putting the heat on Aaron Rodgers," Collinsworth added in a concerned tone. "That would be a terrible blow for the Thunder Lizards if they were to lose their top pass rusher at this early stage of the game."

Hendrickson tried to get up and return to the huddle, but his limp told the whole story. He was guided to the sideline by trainers and patted on the helmet by teammates. He craned his head back to glare at Rodgers, a harsh guttural sound emerging from his throat.

Coach Kaldis rushed over to greet him at the sideline, "Doctor! Doctor!" he cried out frantically. "*Emergency!*" then he lowered his voice. Trey...oh my! How are you feeling Trey?"

"It hurts, coach!" Hendrickson replied, his voice suddenly small. "I don't know if I can go back in."

The Durham coach looked like he had been slapped in the face. His obsessive attentiveness to his player's health throughout the season had been for the purpose of preparing him for this particular game. He gathered himself and whispered, "But Trey, we talked about this, remember? You must destroy Aaron Rodgers no matter what! Aaron Rodgers wants to hurt you and your family, Trey. Aaron Rodgers wants to give you COVID, Trey. He wants to give everybody COVID. He needs to be taught a lesson, Trey. Remember?"

Hendrickson's face reddened with rage. He turned around to storm back onto the field but his right leg gave out and he fell to the ground. He appeared to be legitimately injured. The doctor arrived and Coach Kaldis was forced to step back and let the doctor and trainers deal with it, but he let out a curse under his breath as he stepped aside. With Hendrickson out for possibly the game, the job of getting to Rodgers just got more difficult. But at least the league's no.2 and no.3 sack leaders were still on the field.

The Budapest drive soon fizzled out and **Chris Jones** came on to punt. Even with Hendrickson out of the game, the Lizards' defence was buckling the Budapest line just enough to throw Rodgers a touch off his rhythm. The Durham secondary did their part, sticking closer to the Budapest receivers than Rodgers had been accustomed to seeing for most of the season. The Durham defence had suffered a big hit, but it was still formidable.

It happened to be a rare day without precipitation in the artificial micro-climate of the sunken valley of Jurassic Park, yet the pervasive and unseasonable humidity made it feel clammy and muddy. The offences certainly looked stuck in the mud. The teams traded punts again before Durham got the ball back at their own 29. They made slow progress until, out of the blue, **Josh Allen** stepped up and delivered a strike to **Cooper Kupp**, who was cutting in toward the post. The ball hit him in stride and his full head of steam caused **Joe Haden** to miss. 38 yards later he was in the end zone for a touchdown. The sellout crowd at Jurassic Park jumped to its feet and roared.

"...and Cooper Kupp is in for the touchdown! Just like that, Durham has a two-score lead!" trumpeted **Al Michaels** as the star Durham wideout held the ball high and circled around the pylon before flipping the ball in the air.

"It's just *amazing* what Cooper Kupp has been able to do with Josh Allen this year!" exclaimed **Chris Collinsworth** rapturously. "They kind of come at you out of nowhere even when you know they're coming! When that happens it's like they're the only two players on the field!"

Almost five minutes into the 2nd quarter it was 10-0 for Durham. Coach **George Kaldis** remained tense, however, knowing there was still a lot of game left. On the other sideline, Budapest coach, **Darrin Jones**, wearing a dark grey suit, trench coat and fedora for the occasion, gazed out at the field, his face betraying not a trace of emotion. He too knew there was a lot of game left. There would be no panic on the Budapest sideline. All the same, another illegal block on the kick return had the North Stars in less-than-optimal field position for their next drive. They needed some first downs or the Durham offence would be able to wear down their defence totally in the second half.

Four plays into the drive disaster would again strike for Durham. The play itself was a tidy 7-yard run by Johnson to bring up 3rd down and 3 – hardly a game-changing result. But the sight of **Chase Young** lying on his back and holding his leg caused an involuntary yelp to emerge from Coach Kaldis. Before the trainers could pick up their bags, the Durham coach was racing onto the field.

"Chase! Chase! Oh my!" he roared as he sprinted onto the field, his short legs churning hard to propel the disproportionately long torso to which his head was attached. He scrambled to his player's side and knelt. "What's wrong, Chase? How are you feeling?"

"I think it's my knee, coach," Young said in a young boy voice, his previously murderous eyes wrinkled in pain. "I think I have to go out of the game."

Kaldis let an involuntary, sharp "*AHH!*" before abruptly recomposing himself. He leaned over his star defensive and murmured in his ear: "But Chase, you remember what Aaron Rodgers said he was going to do to your girlfriend, don't you? Those things that only you should do...you know what they are...those very special and intimate things. And he wants to do them with her in your home, in your own bed, when you're out visiting your sick mom. What kind of man would do that, Chase?"

The look of murder returned to the young player's eyes and he attempted to raise himself. But as he lifted his right leg he winced again and slumped back. The training staff and Young's personal team-assigned doctor arrived at that point, forcing the Durham coach to rise and withdraw.

He walked slowly back to the sideline and looked up at the stadium clock. There was 6:58 left in the first half and he had already lost two, out of his three, star pass rushers. He glanced back toward the field and the huddle of players around the fallen Young. He searched for no.53 and found him standing over his teammate, hands on hips, his head bowed. At least he still had Burns. He would now draw a double team but if he put him next to **Arik Armstead**, then the defensive tackle might be able to break through and pressure Rodgers. **Ed Oliver** had some pass rush moves as well. All was not lost, but it certainly was going to be that much harder.

Five plays later, Coach Kaldis' theory would be tested. The Stars kept fullback **Pharaoh Brown** back to block an anticipated blitz. When the blitz did not come, he doubled up on Burns as Rodgers took a deep droop and scanned the field. The Durham coverage was good and Oliver finally broke through. But the vet saw it coming and scrambled to his right, throwing on the run through a slim corridor to Jefferson for a 23-yard gain to the Durham 28. It was Budapest's second long pass attempt of the game. The first had been rushed and incomplete. The second had had more time to develop as the push from the Durham front became weaker.

The Durham defence stiffened after that, however, holding the North Stars to net 2 yards on the next three snaps and forcing a 44-yard **Jason Myers** field goal. But the hold was a hollow victory because, on 3rd & 11, an enraged **Brian Burns**, tried to combine all three of his top pass rush moves into one fluid mega-move and ended up twisting his knee when he tried to drive and spin at the same time. At the very moment it appeared he would cut Rodgers down in the pocket he collapsed in a heap at his feet, bawling in pain.

“Well, Aaron Rodgers made that look easy!” bubbled over Collinsworth as the North Stars celebrated. “That’s the thing about Aaron Rodgers. He comes in to a hostile environment, on the road, and takes apart the league’s best defence as if he is playing pitch-and-catch. The great ones make it look easy but, trust me, it isn’t easy. Aaron Rodgers made that look easy and that’s why he’s one of the great ones who’ll be going to the hall some day!”

One could feel the energy in Jurassic Park evaporate with that drive. The crowd made a commendable effort to regather that energy to cheer on the Durham attempt to answer on the next series. However, when the drive ended with Coach Kaldis pulling his offence off the field on 4th & 2 at the Budapest 34 and opting for a long field goal, the suspicion that their team was backing down on all fronts was too strong to ignore. The crowd became audibly restless and grumpy five minutes later when the North Stars finished off a 56-yard drive in five plays and two minutes of game time, scoring on a 7-yard hitch to Jefferson to make the score 24-13. This time the Lizards finally blitzed **Bud Dupree** in a desperate attempt to generate pressure. It resulted in the biggest play of the game for Budapest, a 34-yard completion to Diggs, who settled in the zone vacated by Dupree for the catch and took off for extra yardage.

“It’s just amazing how well this Budapest offensive line has played!” enthused Collinsworth as a shot of Rodgers celebrating with tackle **Ryan Ramczyk** after the TD pass replayed on the screen. “They come in to a hostile environment, on the road, facing by far the top pass rush in the league, and give Rodgers all the time he needs to find his receivers. Just amazing how well this line has played!”

Durham drove back down the field in what felt like a do-or-die push. They had to come away with points to get back to within one score then pray for a stop from their defence. With the help of a pass interference penalty on Budapest, they made it to inside the red zone where they faced 1st & goal at the 6-yard line. The crowd was starting to believe again and making noise between snaps. Perhaps a comeback for the ages was developing?

No. Coach Jones brought **Chase Winovich** on the blitz and the Durham line failed to pick him up. With the North Star linebacker bearing down on him, Allen was forced to throw off his back foot and the ball sailed over the head of **Curtis Samuel** into the arms of safety **Quandre Diggs** for the interception in the end zone.

It seemed at that point that game was devolving into a rout. That feeling was confirmed after the North Stars took over at their 20 and proceeded to drive 80 yards in 9 plays, finishing with a 25-yard touchdown pass from Rodgers to **Nelson Agholor** to widen their lead to 31-13. All but one of the plays called on the drive had been passes. Rodgers had not been pressured even once. The Lizards’ secondary, as elite as it is, were sitting ducks for a pro like Rodgers when he had time to throw and good receivers to throw to. It was no longer a game; it was a display.

Durham coach **George Kaldis** had not moved since the Allen end zone pick. He merely stared out at the field, his arms rigid at his side, his head still pointed toward the back of the Budapest end zone where Diggs had made his interception. His eyes moved occasionally – that was all. This was surely not the game he had envisioned back in August when he had begun planning for it. Clearly, he had no back-up plan for losing the heart of his defence in the first two quarters of play. He had no answer, no contingency plan for that. Who would have? Then the loss of his no.2 wide receiver made coming back that much harder. It really felt like a small-minded and nasty higher power was reminding the Durham coach who was in charge. *The Infinity Roster* was mortal after all. As are all rosters...

I won’t continue with the depressing final details of how the game wound down to a 34-27 Budapest victory because they are...well...*depressing*, especially if you are a Durham fan or simply a fan of football who tuned in hoping to see a great game between the league’s most talked-about teams. Budapest fans, of course, enjoyed every minute of it. The last formidable barrier in their quest for a perfect season had been removed. A message had been sent to their rival and the rest of the league: *We are the best! F**k You!*

Budapest coach, **Darrin Jones**, always a class act but also a coach who came from roster-poverty in the old days, walked the line between acknowledging the misfortune of his opponent and not detracting in any way from his team’s achievement: “It was unfortunate for them that they lost some important players,” Jones said in the post-game presser. “But injuries are part of the game and we took a hit in this game too, with George Kittle and Bryan Bulaga going down early. You got to do your best with what you have and I am proud as always of the way our guys responded to hardship.”

Durham coach, **George Kaldis**, was very subdued in the media room following the game. Not one to speak at length about any topic on a good day, he kept his comments short and to the point: “We got injured! It hurt us! We couldn’t play our game!” summarized his opening address. When asked, stupidly, by a mainstream media sports hack from the local CTV channel about whether he thought the injuries affected the outcome of the game, the Durham coach chuckled humourlessly and asked him: “Are you an idiot? Seriously! Would you know if you were? Probably not, so I’ll tell you: You’re an idiot!”

These two teams are most likely to meet again in the Conference Championship game. Of that, I am willing to bet my reputation and a bottle of rare scotch from my collection. Let’s hope for that game that we get to see the full *Infinity Roster* in action.

AROUND THE EFL

With only three weeks remaining in the regular season the playoff picture is crystallizing in both conferences. It is interesting to see that each conference has its dominant team in the standings (Charleswood and Budapest), a strong runner-up (Durham and Cobb County) and a tight race for the wild card positions centered on one of the three divisions (the West and the Coastal). There are still many questions marks, however. So let us review the rest of the Week 13 action and see which teams are stable, which are rising and which are fading as the crunch time fast approaches:

Las Vegas (fading) versus Charleswood (stable) – At Patriot Place in Charleswood, the Pats got a key contribution from an unexpected source to survive an attempted murder by the Assassins and prevail 41-38 in overtime. It is not often these days we get to

point to a kick returner as the difference-maker in the game. But Patriots kickoff return specialist **Isaiah Rodgers** certainly was the difference-maker, compensating for a sluggish Charleswood offence with 2 kick returns for touchdowns in helping lead his team to the win. When he wasn't scoring, he was setting up his team in good field position. Rodgers returned 5 kicks a total of 289 yards, for an average of 57.8 yards per return. The Assassins' kickoff strategy seemed pre-determined and remained unadjusted throughout the game. After gauging the capabilities of the coverage team with returns of 35, 30 and 29 yards, Rodgers broke his fourth attempt, bringing it back 100 yards to the house. That should have been a signal. But midway through the 4th quarter, with Vegas seemingly in control with a 38-28 lead, **Ka'imi Fairbairn** kicked deep again, getting under the ball slightly and allowing it to be fielded at the 5-yard line. From there, Rodgers found two large green patches in front of him, knifing into the first at the 15 and cutting back to the second at the 35. From there it was a foot race with the kicker. Disgusted fans took to *Twitter* calling for the head of special teams coach, **Steve Crosby**. Who can blame them? The Assassins played their best game in both phases since they took apart Chino in Week Eight. They finished with 34 first downs, 541 yards of offence, possessed the ball for 42 minutes and scored 5 touchdowns and 1 field goal in six trips to the Charleswood red zone. They held the talented Pats' offence to 378 yards and **Alvin Kamara** to a measly 2 yards per rushing attempt. Rodgers' channeling of **Devin Hester** and two **Justin Herbert** turnovers late in the game – an interception and a critical fumble in overtime – tipped the game to the home team. The Pats continue to do the minimum required to win but it continues to work for them.

Brooklin (rising) versus Cowtown (fading) – At Tillman Field on a snowy, windy day in Cowtown, the Hawks ignored the weather and subdued the Corn Kings 27-24. A slow start for both offences turned into a fast finish as the teams put up three touchdowns apiece in the second half. **Carlos Hyde** capped a 13-play, 75-yard drive with a plunge into the end zone from half a yard for the eventual winning touchdown with 1:39 left. Out of timeouts, the Corn Kings scratched together a hurry-up drive to the Brooklin 32-yard line but were forced to spike the ball and attempt a field goal prematurely after **Nickel Robey-Coleman** made a fine tackle to keep **Kendrick Bourne** from getting out of bounds. The inconsistent **Joey Slye** hooked his 50-yard field goal attempt to send the Corn Kings home losers for the second week in a row. The Hawks' got another strong performance from **Derek Carr** but their secret weapon in this contest was running back **Austin Ekeler**, who gained 153 all-purpose yards, 63 on the ground and 90 through the air, to keep the offence rolling. The win puts the Hawks squarely in the first wild card position, a full game in front of York and Pickering chasing them.

Peg City (rising) versus Iowa City (stable) – At Joe Ferguson Stadium in Iowa City, the Crusaders fell to the Cubs 34-33 on a last second field goal by **Justin Tucker**. No, that "rising" is not a typo in brackets next to Peg City. When considering the Crusaders' status, one has to include the fact that a single win will make it a successful season for the most inexperienced, least-capable roster in football. The Crusaders gave it everything they had in this game and it was almost enough to pull off what would have been the biggest upset of the season in the EFL. In the end, Cubs' perennial all-star **Russell Wilson** led a disciplined 9-play, 63-yard drive that consumed 3:17 of the final 3:18 of the game and put Tucker in position for the winning boot. The Cubs had dodged a bullet. Well...maybe it had nicked them a bit. Post-game radio in Iowa City afterwards conveyed the impression that the Cubs had lost. In the court of public opinion, they had. Even pragmatists wedded to the bottom line, the brusque callers and analysts who reduce all effort and dramatics on the field to wins and losses, found it desperately difficult to convince a shocked fanbase that "*the Cubs came away with the win and that's all that matters!*" While it may be true that the standings don't have a column for 'moral' victories or losses, it certainly matters for a team and its fanbase how a team achieved, or failed to achieve its objectives on the field. Something had happened that had put the Cubs 1-second and a 32-yard Tucker kick away from losing to a team that entered the game at 0-12 and that was dead last in 8 of the 12 major offensive categories and no higher than 21st in any of the remaining 4. The fire had been put out, but people still demanded to know how the lowly Crusaders had managed to nearly burn down the house at good old Joe Ferguson Stadium in the Cubs' second-to-last home date at the venue. You know, Cubs fans; sometimes its not about you and your team. Sometimes it's about the other team. Peg City came to play on Sunday. It's Week 13 – they're beginning to get a feel for what they might become some day. They took it to you. Thanks to your team's experience and focus, they survived. Be thankful and worry about making the playoffs.

Viriden (fading) versus Chino (rising) – At The Big House in Chino, the Convicts got 3 TD runs from **Dak Prescott** to surpass the Violators, 30-23. The visitors lost their grip on this contest in the 4th quarter after taking a 20-13 lead late in the 3rd on a 4-yard TD run by **Ezekiel Elliott**. Prescott went long on 3rd & 1 at the Viriden 34 and connected with **Marvin Jones Jr** for a 20-yard completion. That play brought the bench alive and ignited a 17-point outburst that began with Prescott running the ball in on a designed run from 9-yard out to tie the game at 20. Prescott later converted a 4th & 1 at the Viriden 38 with a 3-yard dive up the middle that helped set up a go-ahead 52-yard **Harrison Butker** field goal. The 'Lockdown Crew' struck next, with **Donte Jackson** snaring his league-leading fifth interception, setting up the Convicts at the Viriden 15-yard line. Six plays later, Prescott was burrowing forward through the line for a 1-yard touchdown to give Chino a two-score lead with 4:19 left. Viriden recouped a field goal, but that was all. By the 4th quarter the Convicts had **Patrick Mahomes** and the Viriden offence figured out. The Violators came out trying to make a statement through the air, calling pass plays on their first 13 offensive snaps. The trend continued throughout, but the Convicts adjusted and finished with two pick-offs of Mahomes while holding him to just 1 TD pass. Having now lost two-in-a-row, the Violators on the outside looking in at the playoffs. The Convicts now cling to a half-game lead in the Wild West.

New Jersey (stable) versus Bruxelles (rising...sort of) – At The Fortress in Bruxelles, the Bombers rode the big play-making ability of **Marquez Valdes-Scantling** and the running of **Leonard Fournette** and **Jamaal Williams** to overcome the Wrecking Balls 31-28. **Matt Prater** kicked a 29-yard FG with less than two minutes remaining for what would be the winning score and the much-maligned Bomber defence held off **Matt Stafford**, forcing a turnover on downs to basically end the game. This game might have ended differently if not for two critical turnovers by New Jersey. **JD McKissic** fumbled away the ball at the Bruxelles 8-yard line to take away a prime

scoring opportunity and **Matt Stafford** was picked off in the 4th quarter at the Bomber 21 by **Richie Grant**. **Drew Brees** would connect with Valdes-Scantling on the next play for a 79-yard TD pass that put Bruxelles in front at the time, 28-21. New Jersey is still in the race but falling back, giving the impression of fading. But the bumpy win-one, lose-one road they have been on the past four weeks is just an accelerated version of the win-three, lose-three roller coaster they were on in the first half of the season. The Bombers are not so much rising, as they are just managing to keep their heads above water...barely...thanks to some desperate recent play.

Oshawa (plummeting) versus Erieau (fading) – At Kelly-Burke Field in Erieau, the Cadillac scored first and last to best the Pink Panthers, 31-28. **Kyler Murray** inflicted the first damage of the game with a 17-yard TD pass to **Mark Andrews** to cap a 75-yard opening drive. He found find Andrews again on Erieau's final drive in the 4th quarter, hitting him in the back of the end zone for a 3-yard TD pass that proved to be the game-winner. Late in the 3rd quarter, Murray found Andrews near the sideline halfway into the end zone for a 4-yard TD pass, to give the Murray-Andrews connection 3 touchdowns for the game. This would have been a nice look earlier in the season when the Cadillac still had a shot at the division. But Murray and Andrews did not connect for their first TD until Week 7 against Peg City and now have just 5 joint efforts on the year. Murray's clutch drive was necessary after Oshawa safety, **Erik Harris**, scooped up a **Ke'Shawn Vaughn** fumble and returned it 57 yards for a touchdown. The defensive score was a much-needed shot in the arm to support the erratic Oshawa offence, which features an increasingly frustrated **Matt Ryan**. The veteran pushed the envelope in this game trying to make something happen and was picked off a season-high 3 times. What is there to say about the Pink Panthers at this stage? Getting swept by the Cadillac drops this season into a new category of disaster. Peg City is coming up next week. Could it get even worse?

Seattle (rising) versus Twin Cities (fading) – At Wilhalla Stadium in Minneapolis, the late season surge of the Pilots continued as they got the better of the Triumph, 33-21. With **Trey Lance** back under center for Seattle, coach **Mitch Gangwish** applied a run to set-up the pass game plan for the rookie that opened up optimal passing opportunities inside the red zone to close out drives with touchdowns. The Pilots blew a 20-7 lead in the 3rd quarter and might have lost if not for **Janoris Jenkins** picking off **Mitch Trubisky** with just 3:11 left in the game. That set-up the game-winning TD on a play-action pass from Lance to **CeeDee Lamb** from 15 yards out to make it 26-21. The Pilots closed the scoring with a 66-yard fumble return for a touchdown by safety **Kareem Jackson** on a strip-sack of Trubisky by **K.J. Wright** with 0:33 left. Seattle has now won three straight and fans are wondering where this fire was in the first half of the season. Sure, they got some help from the Triumph in this one: 3 turnovers and a failed conversion on 4th & 1 at their own 34 which backfired, setting up the second Pilots' TD; but the rookie Lance is making plays and the defence is starting to emerge just in time to drop about five positions in the upcoming draft.

Sebastian (rising) versus York (fading) – At Camelot in Avalon, a dark horse MVP candidate got a little lighter with another multi-TD pass performance as the Swordfish submerged York, 37-13. **Kirk Cousins** threw for just 182 yards but three of his completions were touchdowns as he continued to be deadly in the red zone. Well, not always. On 4th & 7 at the York 9-yard line on the game's opening drive he missed a pass to **Jalen Reagor** to turn the ball over on downs. Yes, it was another bold gamble when they didn't need it from the Swordfish, but what the heck! It did not matter one iota in the end. The Excaliburs could not get anything going offensively and the Swordfish had plenty of gas in the tank. They went on to blow out York in convincing style, even inducing the Swords to dig their own graves with high-risk 4th down gambles of their own, three of four of which were unsuccessful. **Jonathan Taylor** and **Nick Chubb** combined for 179 yards on the ground, showing how the Swordfish can skewer a defence in more ways than one. The Excaliburs are now in a bad place after going 7-2 to start the season. They have lost four in a row and are looking more dysfunctional with each loss.

Scarborough (left for dead long ago) versus Pickering (rising) – At Thermopylae Stadium in Pickering, the Spartans won their third game in a row by pushing over Scarborough, 27-17. The Spartans have the formula down pat now: run the ball *a lot* and use **Philip Rivers** sparingly in optimal situations. This works well when they have the lead or it is early in game. It breaks down when they fall behind, especially by a touchdown or more. Things never got to that point in this game, however. The Spartans never trailed and cruised to victory in the second half after taking a 17-7 lead at half time, thanks in part to **Joe Burrow** getting carted off the field at the end of the first drive of the second half. **Drew Lock** took over and...well...this is a family column. The Blue Eagles' back-up did notch a touchdown pass when the game was theoretically still within reach, so it wasn't all bad. Nevertheless, the Eagles look finished with Lock at quarterback. This week's national highlight reel features a handoff from Rivers to right tackle, **Patrick Mekari** on a busted play, but the big guy rose to the occasion and pounded the ball across the goal line for Pickering's second score. It's hilarious to watch, so take a look.

Buffalo (fading) versus Cobb County (rising) – At Coyote Field in Marietta, Georgia, the home team's defence put on a clinic in how to stop **Lamar Jackson** in a 23-0 whitewash of the Derailers. A steady rain seemed to be the secret ingredient in a formula that also included a linebacker assigned to Lamar on virtually every single play, forcing him to stay in the pocket and expose an arm that throws a mean fastball but can't find the strike zone. The rain did seem to take more of a toll on the Derailers than the Coyotes as a slick track and slippery ball contributed noticeably to Lamar's woes. He fumbled three times and threw a wobbly interception. The offence consequently sputtered to 0 points, 9 first downs and just 155 total yards, 51 of which came on a flea-flicker to **Emmanuel Sanders** that went to the Cobb County 6 but with no time left on the clock. **Ryan Tannehill** had his usual efficient outing, finishing 16 of 23 for 196 yards, 2 TDs and no interceptions. The Coyotes, winners of 3 straight, are starting to look like that 2020 unit that almost went to the dance.

Georgia (fading) versus East Elmhurst (sky-rocketing) – And finally, at Monsignor McClancy Memorial Stadium in Queens, the Irish slammed down the Gladiators, 31-7. The balanced attack of the Irish kept the Gladiators on their heels while **Big Ben** had no answer for the Irish defence that blanketed his receivers and kept **James Robinson** from taking control of the game. **Raheem Mostert** and **Sony Michel combined** for 28 carries and 187 yards on the ground while **Baker Mayfield** threw 3 TD passes in limited action. It was another complete performance by the team currently riding 6-game winning streak. Only Budapest is hotter right now.

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RECORD VS THE SPREAD AFTER WEEK 13:

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PLAYOFF PICTURE AT A GLANCE

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

Jimmy's WEEK FOURTEEN PICKS

GAMES TO WATCH

BROOKLIN @ COBB COUNTY (line – COYOTES by 6)

INJURIES: **Brooklin** – Liam Eichenberg (PROBABLE), Randall Cobb (OUT), Golden Tate (OUT), Stephon TUITT (OUT), Brandon Williams (OUT); **Cobb County** – Hassan Ridgeway (QUESTIONABLE), JaMycal Hasty (DOUBTFUL).

The Hawks are hot, winners of five straight, and have set their sights on holding their position as the first wildcard team in the Atlantic Conference. They cannot set their sights any higher, with Budapest in their division, but can fall lower with York and Pickering in hot pursuit. The Coyotes, winners of their last three, can clinch the East Division and hold on to the no.2 seed with a win. The defence has stepped up in the past two games, holding Virden to just 13 points and shutting out Buffalo last week. It will need to stand strong again this week against a Hawks offence that is averaging 32 points per game since being shutout by Durham in Week Eight. It's no coincidence that over that five-game period DeAndre Hopkins is averaging slightly under 10 catches per game, with 7 touchdowns; and that Derek Carr has thrown 17 of his 29 touchdown passes. Even the snow in Cowtown could not slow him down for long last week. The better weather in Cobb County will provide a more stable environment for both teams, meaning lots of offence. The Hawks in their two-tight end set, with Hopkins, checkdown nuisance Austin Ekeler and deep threat Breshad Perriman, can keep pace with the Coyotes' Ryan Tannehill and the league's third most prolific run game. The Coyote QB has thrown 10 TD passes in 3 games and the

offence under him is averaging 34 points per game in that span. The Coyotes are healthy favourites here, as they should be with Brooklin saddled with several key injuries. But don't be surprised if the Hawks find a way to keep it close...or more. **PICK: BROOKLIN**

SEBASTIAN @ LAS VEGAS (line – ASSASSINS by 7)

INJURIES: Sebastian – Jadeveon Clowney (PROBABLE), Levi Wallace (PROBABLE), Jordan Jenkins (QUESTIONABLE), Blake Cashman (OUT), Christian Wilkins (OUT); **Las Vegas** – Shaquill Griffin (OUT), Adoree' Jackson (OUT), Michael Thomas (OUT), Sammy Watkins (OUT), Ahkello Witherspoon (OUT).

Over their four-game losing streak the Assassins have gone from masters of the West to fighting to hold on to a wildcard position. They are coming off a devastating loss to the Pats that would have, should have, gone the other way if not for some Devin Hester-like moves from the Pats' kick-off return man. They are up against a Swordfish team currently in a rising phase of a roller coaster season. It is not hard to spot the trend in Sebastian. They have scored 35 points or more in five of their six wins and scored less than 30 in all of their 6 losses. As Kirk Cousins and the offence goes, so go the Swordfish. That is because the defence cannot stop a runaway chicken with its head cut off. Despite slipping in the rankings along with the losses, the Las Vegas defence remains a solid unit that stops the run cold and takes the ball away from their opponent. Their secondary is banged up so they will need to compensate by putting the Fish in third/fourth and long situations by stoning the run. Expect the Swordfish to vary the depths of their passes and attack the Assassins secondary to set up the run game. This is a must-win for both teams: for Sebastian to keep its playoff hopes from being more than a prayer; for Vegas to hold on to their standing in the cage match in the West. Expect a much closer game than the Desert Dudes predict. **PICK: SEBASTIAN**

IOWA CITY @ DURHAM (line – THUNDER LIZARDS by 12)

INJURIES: Iowa City – Trill Williams (DOUBTFUL); **Durham** – Tyler Boyd (OUT), Brian Burns (OUT), Trey Hendrickson (OUT).

TV network hype and a flex into the Sunday night primetime slot has this game looking more competitive than it likely will be. Russell Wilson always makes good flash in the promo spots and the emergence of Josh Allen has given him a worthy opponent to sell it as a rising star versus perennial all-star showdown. The reality is that the Lizards are a powerhouse, despite losing to Budapest last week, while the Cubs are on some shaky ground coming off a heart-stopping scare against Peg City. While Durham wants the win to maintain its seeding edge over the Irish, the game is more important for the Cubs, who cannot afford another step back in the race for their division, or a potential wildcard. The door to an upset is open a crack with the injuries to Durham's two best pass rushers and their no.2 wideout, Tyler Boyd. However, this will have to be a score-fest for the Cubs to pull it off, as the stand-pat-and-mind-your-lanes defense of the Cubs can't seem to get off the field on third down. Mistakes will be made trying to keep pace and the Lizards are excellent at taking advantage of mistakes. Expect a first half worthy of the primetime slot and reality to set in in the second half. **PICK: DURHAM**

GAMES OF NOTE

NEW JERSEY @ PICKERING (line – SPARTANS by 4)

INJURIES: New Jersey – James Bradberry (OUT), Bashad Breeland (OUT), Austin Hooper (OUT); **Pickering** – Darqueze Dennard (PROBABLE), Sterling Shepard (DOUBTFUL), Micah Hyde (OUT), Bradley Roby (OUT), Denzel Ward (OUT), Derek Wolfe (OUT).

The Wrecking Balls stumbled in Bruxelles last week. Their defence gave up big plays and their offence gave the ball away – a bad combination. They still managed to keep the score close, which speaks to a talented roster that has, in the truest sense, the ability to beat any team on a given Sunday. The Spartans are in the same category, capable but not always competent on any given Sunday. Both are on the outside looking in at the playoffs but close enough to smell the playoff atmosphere. New Jersey will be practically, if not technically, eliminated if they come up empty in this game. The Spartans cannot be eliminated, but will be in a tough spot with a loss. Their secondary took an injury hit last week, which could be a problem as the New Jersey offence moves well through the air. The Wrecking Balls' defence is above average against the run, meaning that Philip Rivers will be called upon to carry a bigger load. The good news for him is that Jersey's top corner James Bradberry is out. Expect the Spartans to prevail in the comfort of their home. **PICK: PICKERING**

CHARLESWOOD @ EAST ELMHURST (line – IRISH by 4)

INJURIES: Charleswood – Devine Ozigbo (OUT), Ronnie Stanley (OUT); **East Elmhurst** – Anthony Sherman (OUT).

My community in the Nevada oasis continues to downgrade the Patriots for purposes of wagering, despite having the second-best record in the league. While it is prudent to approach the Pats' won-loss record with caution, it is still true that they somehow find a way to win games, even if it is just by a field goal. The Pats have won by 3 points five times so far in 2021 and this match-up has the look of a field goal swing either way if I ever saw one. Let's put to rest any suggestion that the Irish are not worthy of their record. They have blown away their last three opponents and won the close games when called upon before that over the course of a six-game winning streak. This week they face a real contender for the Gale Sayers trophy and will be called upon to test their chess skills. Both teams are as healthy as can be expected for such a late date in the season. The question will be how hard each coach wishes to press his starters in a game that

means surprisingly little with three weeks still to play. A COVID-19 strike against either team could significantly alter the outcome, which I expect to be a tight defensive struggle with the Pats winning by a field goal...again! **PICK: CHARLESWOOD**

BUFFALO @ BUDAPEST (line – NORTH STARS by 18)

INJURIES: Buffalo – Noah Fant (DOUBTFUL), L’Jarius Sneed (DOUBTFUL), Mike Davis (OUT), Auden Tate (OUT), Quinnen Williams (OUT); **Budapest** – Brian Bulaga (PROBABLE), George Kittle (PROBABLE), Kyler Fackrell (DOUBTFUL).

This game properly belongs in the leftovers pile but there is genuine interest league-wide in seeing how the North Stars’ defence handles Lamar Jackson and how “Superman” responds. Despite the Derailers being eliminated last week, media pundits around the league continue to discuss the Buffalo quarterback in ‘MVP-esque’ tones. Certainly, as a specimen of rare talent, Jackson deserves study, but given that the Derailers as a team remain somewhat of a basket case, it is hard to see how he can be properly evaluated as a true MVP, since MVPs tend to have a supporting cast around them. Speaking of MVP, Aaron Rodgers strengthened his bid for that honour last week by shredding the top-ranked Durham defence. Yes, the Lizards were missing their pass rush before the first half was done, but why quibble about the details when there is a narrative to sell? Buffalo will no win this game, but keeping it to a two-score deficit is not beyond them if Lamar doesn’t self-implode and the coach doesn’t go for it on 4th & long inside his own 30. **PICK: BUFFALO**

YORK @ BRUXELLES (line – EXCALIBURS by 3)

INJURIES: York – Eli Apple (DOUBTFUL), Wyatt Teller (OUT); **Bruxelles** – Trey Flowers (OUT), O.J. Howard (OUT), Elijah Mitchell (OUT), A’Shawn Robinson (OUT), Darius Slay (OUT).

The Bombers refuse to lay down and die. Their post-season hopes hang by a thread, however, and a victory, while necessary to keep the thread from snapping, does not guarantee that it won’t. The Excaliburs, on the other hand, refuse to stay healthy on offence and have dropped their last four games as a result. They have everybody back this week, except for Pro Bowl guard Wyatt Teller, which should give Tom Brady more than a fighting chance against the 11 football players on the Bombers who self-identify as defenders. Drew Brees has been in “last stand” mode for several weeks now and that is the only reason they are still afloat since the defence continues to get pounded like a flank steak in a chef’s kitchen. Shootout remains the only viable path to a Bombers’ victory and fortunately for them they are facing a York defence that has been pretty ordinary this year and an offence that takes a while to warm up. York has a tie-breaker hold on the last wildcard spot in the Atlantic and has to turn it around now. Brady vs Brees – what a show! **PICK: BRUXELLES**

COWTOWN @ SEATTLE (line – CORN KINGS by 2)

INJURIES: Cowntown – Jeremy Chinn (DOUBTFUL), Benson Mayowa (DOUBTFUL), Ryan Fitzpatrick (OUT), Deonte Harris (OUT), Trent Murphy (OUT), Latavius Murray (OUT); **Seattle** – Larry Ogunjobi (PROBABLE), Michael Brockers (DOUBTFUL), Josiah Deguara (OUT), Marshon Lattimore (OUT).

These teams are going in opposite directions. Unfortunately for the Pilots their recovery has come too late to buy them a ticket into the post-season. Now, they play for pride which has not been unusual or a problem for them in the past. The past two weeks have shown the Corn Kings what happens when their defence goes AWOL. The offence has not been bad, but is not built to win a shootout, even against a lowly defence. The Pilots, if reliable anywhere, have a sturdy defence that generally gets the job done and is one of the best in the league at getting off the field on third down. They are missing their top corner, but that should not be much of a problem against a Corn Kings offence that is unlikely to attempt to bomb them into submission. Cowntown has a sprinkling of injuries on both sides of the ball that could play a factor later in the game. The Pilots’ quarterback dilemma has recently turned into a nice problem. Both Gardner Minshew II and Trey Lance have looked good in alternating starts over their three-game win streak. The one who the coach feels has the best chance against the Corn Kings’ defence will start, but at time of writing a starter has not been identified. A healthy Corn King team probably pulls this one out regardless. But I sense the air escaping from their balloon as the season winds down. **PICK: SEATTLE**

HOLIDAY LEFTOVERS

ERIEAU @ VIRDEN (line – VIOLATORS by 7)

INJURIES: Erieau – Stephon Gilmore (PROBABLE), Malcolm Smith (PROBABLE), Graham Glasgow (QUESTIONABLE), Myles Garrett (DOUBTFUL), Hunter Henry (OUT), Maurice Hurst (OUT), Kyle Van Noy (OUT), Jaylen Waddle (OUT); **Virden** – Anthony Barr (PROBABLE), Geno Atkins (PROBABLE), Isaiah Buggs (OUT), Lane Johnson (OUT), Oshane Ximines (OUT).

With post-season hopes dashed and a lengthy injury list, it is hard to imagine the Cadillac making a strong show of it on the road against a desperate Violators team. Virden, still in the hunt but flailing a bit, has thrown caution to the wind recently and is riding their thoroughbred quarterback to the winner’s circle or into the ditch in the attempt. Since Virden released the Kraken during a 1-2 road trip, Mahomes’ interceptions are up while his touchdown passes are down, a concerning sign for those who still believe the Violators can make a deep post-season run. If Myles Garrett stays out, the deep vertical strategy could be a winner this week, as the Caddies’ secondary seems to need the pass rush to be most effective. Virden has the most to lose and will pull out the stops. **PICK: VIRDEN**

CHINO @ SCARBOROUGH (line – CONVICTS by 4)

INJURIES: **Chino** – John Feliciano (OUT), PJ Hall (OUT), Christian McCaffrey (OUT), Mike Purcell (OUT); **Scarborough** – CJ Uzomah (PROBABLE), Landon Collins (DOUBTFUL), Joe Burrow (OUT), Jamison Crowder (OUT), Myles Gaskin (OUT), Micah Kiser (OUT), Steve McLendon (OUT), Darius Phillips (OUT).

With Dak Prescott back and Christian McCaffrey close to being healthy, the Convicts may be peaking at the perfect time to rob the Cubs and Assassins of the West Division both had claimed at the start of the 2021 campaign. The schedule is cooperating with them, as the Blue Eagles are entering the game with a back-up quarterback and nagging injuries that will reduce their overall effectiveness. Seeing as the Blue Eagles were severely underperforming when healthy, this paves the way for the Convicts to at least hang on to their razor thin edge in the West Division standings if they can seize this opportunity and take care of business against a beat-up team. Weather could change the dynamic, of course, but on a normal day the advantage goes one way; and that is straight to jail for the Blue Eagles. **PICK: CHINO**

OSHAWA @ PEG CITY (line – Pick 'Em)

INJURIES: **Oshawa** – Davante Adams (PROBABLE), David Onyemata (DOUBTFUL) Jeffery Simmons (OUT); **Peg City** – Jeremiah Owusu-Koramoah (DOUBTFUL), Saquon Barkley (OUT), Tarik Cohen (OUT), Ashtyn Davis (OUT), Tre Flowers (OUT), Jeff Okudah (OUT), Courtland Sutton (OUT).

The fall of the Pink Panthers has been awful to behold but the most outrageous indictment of all is this line that makes it an even bet to pick them over the hapless Crusaders. To be fair, the best version of this win-less team showed up as recently as last week to put the fear of death into the Cubs. It was certainly a performance to build on for the team whose “Super Bowl” is now every remaining game until victory is achieved. But it could also be that the Pegs shot their load in that all-out effort to ruin the Cubs’ season. There is nothing for them to ruin for Oshawa, except to add to the barrage of rotten tomatoes coming from old Mustangs’ fans telling them they suck. Losing to Peg City would be the rotten cherry on top of the poop sundae that has been their season. I, for one, still have faith that Matt Ryan and a likely healthy Davante Adams won’t let the unspeakable happen. They are by far the better team and will show it. **PICK: OSHAWA**

TWIN CITIES @ GEORGIA (line – TRIUMPH by 3)

INJURIES: **Twin Cities** – D.J. Moore (PROBABLE), Antonio Brown (OUT), Kenny Clark (OUT), Avonte Maddox (OUT), Troy Pride Jr (OUT) **Georgia** – Zach Ertz (PROBABLE), Will Fuller V (PROBABLE), Melvin Ingram III (QUESTIONABLE), Kelvin Joseph (OUT).

The season that has in some ways been even worse for the Triumph than the season that brought them the no.1 overall pick in the draft is finally winding down. Illusions about competitiveness are now long gone and the only illusion that remains surrounds the no.1 overall pick in the draft, who has yet to see the field. Clearly, the Triumph coaching staff thinks we would be shocked at what we would see, since there is no other reason to hold him back any more. Similarly, Georgia has nothing to play for except to possibly re-visit the development of Tua for the near future when Big Ben can no longer throw the ball. What a depressing situation to contemplate! **PICK: GEORGIA**



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PRESENTS
This Week in EFL History
With Professor Sterling Smitherman

FROM THE EFL ARCHIVES – By the end of Week 13 of the 2015 EFL season, the Durham Thunder Lizards and Aurora Mustangs had both clinched their respective divisions in the Can-Am Conference. Interestingly, they also faced each other in Week 13 in what analysts touted as a Conference Championship preview. Does that sound familiar for those following this week’s action in 2021?

In a case of history repeating itself. Or, more accurately, history setting the precedent, the Thunder Lizards were blown away in that 2015 match-up as well, but far worse than the modern version we just saw. The Mustangs’

Matt Ryan shredded the Durham defence, going 20 of 25 for 244 yards and 3 TD passes while *Arian Foster* toted the rock 30 times for 143 yards and 2 TDs as Aurora whipped Durham 35-7. It, too, had been telecast on *Sunday Night Football* and it, too, was a ratings flop after 30 minutes of game time.

The game that captivated audiences most was in Gwinnett, where the Blue Eagles mounted a furious 4th quarter comeback, only to fall when *Mike Nugent* missed a 39-yard field goal attempt as time expired to permit the Gladiators to escape with a 28-26 win. Safety *Morgan Burnett* played his part, earning Defensive Player of the Week honours for his two red zone picks of *Aaron Rodgers* that helped to keep Gwinnett in the game. That Scarborough team seemed to be cursed that year, more than in many years before and since. The victory allowed Gwinnett to hold on to the no.3 seed in the Conference for at least another week.

The Offensive Player of the Week was *Russell Wilson* of the Cubs, who threw 7 TD passes in a 66-24 shellacking of the LA Knights. The 66 points set a new EFL record for most points by one team in a single game. Wilson and the Cubs were unusually aggressive on ‘Go-Out-And-Win-Day’ in Iowa. The Knights, accustomed to getting whipped, took it all in stride.