

# 2021

# Quarter Finals



# EFL

ELITE FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Shooting for the Stars in our 15th Season!

February 13, 2022

EAST

NORTH



CENTRAL

COASTAL



WEST

SOUTH



|             |    |             |    |           |    |               |    |
|-------------|----|-------------|----|-----------|----|---------------|----|
| VIRDEN      | 24 | LAS VEGAS   | 7  | SEBASTIAN | 34 | EAST ELMHURST | 3  |
| CHARLESWOOD | 31 | COBB COUNTY | 35 | BUDAPEST  | 55 | DURHAM        | 27 |

# LIGHTS...KAMARA...ACTION!



**Alvin Kamara**  
**Charleswood Patriots**

Charleswood running back, *Alvin Kamara* scoots into the end zone after reversing course on an 11-yard TD run in 2<sup>nd</sup>-quarter action at Patriot Place. The score was the second of 3 touchdowns on the day for Kamara and it gave the Pats a 14-3 lead. The Charleswood star finished with 189 yards on 23 carries to earn game MVP in a 31-24 win. (story inside)



*Who was slick in the Quarter Finals?*

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

**OFFENCE**



**Aaron Rodgers**  
QB  
Budapest  
North Stars

34 of 44, 390 yds, 5 TDs. Took apart Sebastian 'D' in 21-point rout.

**DEFENSE**



**Kenny Moore II**  
CB  
Durham  
Thunder Lizards

2 T, 4 PDs, 1 of 8 (12.5% completion)  
Played shutdown role in big Durham 'D'



24

Virден



31

Charleswood

| TEAM LEADERS |     |     |      |    |
|--------------|-----|-----|------|----|
| Passing      | Cmp | Att | Yds  | TD |
| Mahomes      | 19  | 48  | 264  | 3  |
| Rushing      | Car | Yds | Avg  | TD |
| Elliott      | 5   | 20  | 4.0  | 0  |
| Receiving    | Rec | Yds | Avg  | TD |
| Brown        | 6   | 78  | 13.0 | 1  |

| Team        | 1 | 2  | 3 | 4  | OT | Total |
|-------------|---|----|---|----|----|-------|
| Virден      | 0 | 3  | 0 | 21 | -  | 24    |
| Charleswood | 0 | 21 | 7 | 3  | -  | 31    |

| TEAM LEADERS |     |     |      |    |
|--------------|-----|-----|------|----|
| Passing      | Cm  | Att | Yds  | TD |
| Watson       | 16  | 19  | 211  | 1  |
| Rushing      | Car | Yds | Avg  | TD |
| Kamara       | 29  | 189 | 6.5  | 3  |
| Receiving    | Re  | Yds | Avg  | TD |
| Smith-Schu   | 5   | 75  | 15.0 | 0  |

**Play of the Game**  
 In the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter, on 3<sup>rd</sup> & 6 at own 42, up 7-3, *DeShaun Watson* scrambled away from pressure and lifted a 32-pass to *Juju Smith-Schuster* that led to their second TD of the game.

## PATS LEAVE LITTLE DOUBT!

### KAMARA 3 TDs, OUTSTANDING SECONDARY LIFT PATS OVER VIOLATORS!

**SUMMARY:** Virден received to start the game but had to punt away on 4<sup>th</sup> & 9 near mid-field. From their 11, the Pats drove steadily up the field, assisted by a 22-yard pass interference penalty on *Marcus Peters*, to reach the Virден 5. Peters then made up for his penalty by picking off *DeShaun Watson* in the end zone for a Virден touchback. The Violators were unable to capitalize, however, going 3-and-out and setting up another steady Patriots drive that consumed the rest of the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter and ended with *Alvin Kamara* punching it in from 1-yard out to give Charleswood a 7-0 lead. Virден strung together several first downs but faltered inside the red zone with 3 consecutive incompletions by *Patrick Mahomes*. They settled for a 31-yard *Michael Badgley* field goal to get on the board. Charleswood charged back, with a 32-yard pass to *Juju Smith-Schuster* on 3<sup>rd</sup> & 6 setting up Kamara's second TD run of the game, an 11-yard run off left tackle to make it 14-3. Backed up at their own 8 after a penalty on the kick return, Mahomes went deep for *Ja'Marr Chase* to open Virден's next series, but *Kendall Fuller* got a hand on it. Two more incomplete passes made it another three-and-out for Virден and the Pats took over at their opponent's 41. A 3<sup>rd</sup> & 3 pass from Watson to *Amari Cooper* put the ball at the 7, then Kamara took it in on the next play for his 3<sup>rd</sup> TD of the half and a 21-3 Patriots' lead. The Pats got the ball to start the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, and took advantage, driving 75 yards in 8 plays and finishing it off with an 8-yard TD pass from Watson to *Travis Kelce* to make it 28-3. Mahomes continued to struggle against blanket coverage by the Pats. He authored another three-and-out, his third of the game, and the Pats took over with a chance to bury Virден. Sticking with the ground game throughout, *JK Dobbins* and Kamara combined for 38 yards on 8 carries to set up a field goal try for *Wil Lutz*. He missed and Virден responded with a penalty-assisted 64-yard drive for a TD on a 14-yard check down to *Ezekiel Elliott*. After the Violators turned the ball over on downs at their own 46. Kamara busted loose for 25 yards to set up a 32-yard Lutz field goal to make it 31-10 with 3:59 left. The Virден attack suddenly came alive, hitting on a couple of big pass plays and recovering an onside kick to set up two TDs in 3:23, but it was too little too late.

**QUOTES:** "We were able to keep Patrick Mahomes in check for most of the game until the very end, but thankfully it turned out to be enough. Alvin had a great game! It was a little nerve-wracking at the end there, but I thought we played a great game today." –Charleswood coach, **Jason Findlay**.  
 "Congratulations to Charleswood on a well-executed game plan. They didn't give Patrick many windows today – outstanding defence by them. I am happy the guys did not give up at the end, but we can't take 56 minutes to get warmed up then expect to win!" – Virден coach, **Lance Barrate**.



ANGRY FAN



titter

HAPPY FAN



**Marquis de Sade** @mdsviolate  
 The Patriots' secondary was the cat;  
 @PatrickMahomes was the mouse. As  
 a Virден fan it was disturbing to  
 witness.



**Charlie Wood** @Cwoodbannersun  
 @A\_Kamara6 shot out of a cannon.  
 @EFL official stats counted 14 pass  
 deflections by Patriots. I counted 18.  
 Stunning and brilliant either way.



# Virdean 24 Charleswood 31



|             |   |    |   |    |    |
|-------------|---|----|---|----|----|
|             | 1 | 2  | 3 | 4  | F  |
| Virdean     | 0 | 3  | 0 | 21 | 24 |
| Charleswood | 0 | 21 | 7 | 3  | 31 |

\* Playoff \* 02-13-2022 Patriot Place Temp:75 Wind:Calm No Line MVP:Kamara H

|   |       |             |    |   |       |
|---|-------|-------------|----|---|-------|
| 2 | 13:16 | Charleswood | TD | Kamara 1 run (Lutz) (9-56-5:43)                   | 0-7   |
| 2 | 9:10  | Virdean     | FG | Badgley 31 (11-62-4:01)                           | 3-7   |
| 2 | 5:20  | Charleswood | TD | Kamara 11 run (Lutz) (6-75-3:50)                  | 3-14  |
| 2 | 1:53  | Charleswood | TD | Kamara 7 run (Lutz) (6-41-2:44)                   | 3-21  |
| 3 | 9:18  | Charleswood | TD | Watson 8 pass to Kelce (Lutz) (8-75-5:42)         | 3-28  |
| 4 | 14:28 | Virdean     | TD | Mahomes 14 pass to Elliott (Badgley) (6-66-1:59)  | 10-28 |
| 4 | 3:59  | Charleswood | FG | Lutz 32 (5-32-3:19)                               | 10-31 |
| 4 | 2:07  | Virdean     | TD | Mahomes 2 pass to Brown (no good) (9-75-1:52)     | 16-31 |
| 4 | 0:24  | Virdean     | TD | Mahomes 6 pass to Green (2 - Mahomes) (8-60-1:31) | 24-31 |

### Player Stats

| Passing | Att | Cmp | Yds | 25 | In | Td | Sk | Rate |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|------|
| Mahomes | 48  | 19  | 264 | 1  | 0  | 3  | 2  | 78.8 |
|         | 48  | 19  | 264 | 1  | 0  | 3  | 2  | 78.8 |

| Passing | Att | Cmp | Yds | 25 | In | Td | Sk | Rate  |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|-------|
| Watson  | 19  | 16  | 211 | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 108.6 |
|         | 19  | 16  | 211 | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 108.6 |

| Rushing | Att | Yds | Avg | FD | 10 | Lg | Td |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|
| Elliott | 5   | 20  | 4.0 | 3  | 0  | 6  | 0  |
|         | 5   | 20  | 4.0 | 3  | 0  | 6  | 0  |

| Rushing | Att | Yds | Avg  | FD | 10 | Lg | Td |
|---------|-----|-----|------|----|----|----|----|
| Kamara  | 29  | 189 | 6.5  | 12 | 6  | 25 | 3  |
| Dobbins | 10  | 44  | 4.4  | 2  | 2  | 13 | 0  |
| Rudolph | 1   | -1  | -1.0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  |
| Watson  | 2   | -4  | -2.0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  |
|         | 42  | 228 | 5.4  | 14 | 8  | 25 | 3  |

| Receiving | No | Dp | Att | Yds | Avg  | FD | 25 | Lg | Td |
|-----------|----|----|-----|-----|------|----|----|----|----|
| Brown     | 6  | 0  | 8   | 78  | 13.0 | 2  | 1  | 52 | 1  |
| Hamler    | 5  | 0  | 11  | 75  | 15.0 | 4  | 0  | 22 | 0  |
| Chase     | 4  | 1  | 11  | 69  | 17.3 | 3  | 0  | 23 | 0  |
| Elliott   | 2  | 0  | 4   | 23  | 11.5 | 1  | 0  | 14 | 1  |
| Green     | 1  | 0  | 2   | 6   | 6.0  | 1  | 0  | 6  | 1  |
| Hockenson | 1  | 1  | 11  | 13  | 13.0 | 1  | 0  | 13 | 0  |
| Penny     | 0  | 0  | 1   | 0   | 0.0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  |
|           | 19 | 2  | 48  | 264 | 13.9 | 12 | 1  | 52 | 3  |

| Receiving   | No | Dp | Att | Yds | Avg  | FD | 25 | Lg | Td |
|-------------|----|----|-----|-----|------|----|----|----|----|
| Smith-Schus | 5  | 0  | 5   | 75  | 15.0 | 5  | 1  | 32 | 0  |
| Cooper      | 4  | 0  | 5   | 62  | 15.5 | 4  | 0  | 17 | 0  |
| Kelce       | 4  | 0  | 6   | 50  | 12.5 | 3  | 0  | 17 | 1  |
| Kamara      | 1  | 0  | 1   | 4   | 4.0  | 0  | 0  | 4  | 0  |
| Metcalf     | 1  | 0  | 1   | 14  | 14.0 | 1  | 0  | 14 | 0  |
| Dobbins     | 1  | 0  | 1   | 6   | 6.0  | 0  | 0  | 6  | 0  |
|             | 16 | 0  | 19  | 211 | 13.2 | 13 | 1  | 32 | 1  |

| Fumbles | No | Rec | Td |
|---------|----|-----|----|
| Hamler  | 1  | 0   | 0  |
| Chase   | 0  | 1   | 0  |
|         | 1  | 1   | 0  |

| Fumbles | No | Rec | Td |
|---------|----|-----|----|
| Dobbins | 1  | 0   | 0  |
| Tunall  | 0  | 1   | 0  |
|         | 1  | 1   | 0  |

| Kick Returns | No | Yds | Avg  | Lg | Td |
|--------------|----|-----|------|----|----|
| Reed         | 1  | 13  | 13.0 | 13 | 0  |
|              | 1  | 13  | 13.0 | 13 | 0  |

| Kick Returns | No | Yds | Avg | Lg | Td |
|--------------|----|-----|-----|----|----|
| Smith        | 1  | 0   | 0.0 | 0  | 0  |
|              | 1  | 0   | 0.0 | 0  | 0  |

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

| Punt Returns | No | Fc | Yds | Avg  | Lg | Td |
|--------------|----|----|-----|------|----|----|
| Taylor       | 4  | 0  | 44  | 11.0 | 18 | 0  |
|              | 4  | 0  | 44  | 11.0 | 18 | 0  |

| Kicking | FG  | Lg | XP  | Pts |
|---------|-----|----|-----|-----|
| Badgley | 1-1 | 31 | 1-2 | 4   |

| Kicking | FG  | Lg | XP  | Pts |
|---------|-----|----|-----|-----|
| Lutz    | 1-3 | 32 | 4-4 | 7   |

| Punting | No | Yds | Avg  | Tb | 20 | Bk | Lg |
|---------|----|-----|------|----|----|----|----|
| Lee     | 5  | 236 | 47.2 | 0  | 1  | 0  | 54 |

| Punting | No | Yds | Avg | Tb | 20 | Bk | Lg |
|---------|----|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|
|         |    |     |     |    |    |    |    |

| Defense    | Tkl | Sk | Def | Stt | Hur | FF | Int |
|------------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| Trevathan  | 10  | 0  | 0   | 1   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Ford       | 6   | 0  | 0   | 2   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Adderley   | 6   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Peters     | 5   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 1  | 1-0 |
| Hooker     | 5   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Bolton     | 5   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Oliver     | 4   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Williams   | 3   | 1  | 0   | 1   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Lawson     | 3   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Barr       | 3   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Nnadi      | 2   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Thomas     | 2   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Atkins     | 2   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Dawson Jr. | 2   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Penny      | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Shelton    | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
|            | 60  | 1  | 0   | 4   | 0   | 1  | 1-0 |

| Defense    | Tkl | Sk | Def | Stt | Hur | FF | Int |
|------------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| Fuller     | 5   | 0  | 4   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Trufant    | 5   | 0  | 1   | 0   | 0   | 1  | 0-0 |
| Darby      | 4   | 0  | 2   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Floyd      | 2   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Lawson     | 1   | 1  | 0   | 0   | 4   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Sweat      | 1   | 1  | 2   | 0   | 1   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Edmunds    | 1   | 0  | 3   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Richardson | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 1   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Mills      | 1   | 0  | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Samuel Jr. | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Holland    | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Landry III | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Brown      | 0   | 0  | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
|            | 24  | 2  | 14  | 0   | 6   | 1  | 0-0 |



29 carries, 189 yards, 3 TDs. TD runs of 1, 11 and 7 yards in 1st half lead way to win

|                | Virdean   | Charleswood |
|----------------|-----------|-------------|
| First Downs    | 18        | 28          |
| Rushes         | 5-20      | 42-228      |
| Passes         | 48-19-264 | 19-16-211   |
| Sacked         | 2-14      | 1-6         |
| Fumble         | 1         | 1           |
| Penalties      | 4-40      | 6-56        |
| Turnovers      | 0         | 1           |
| Missed Tackles | 8         | 3           |
| Dropped Passes | 2         | 0           |
| Bad Passes     | 3         | 0           |
| Passes 25+     | 1         | 1           |
| Runs 10+       | 0         | 8           |
| Blitzers       | 1         | 8           |
| Time           | 17:38     | 42:22       |
| Third Down     | 5-13      | 8-11        |
| Fourth Down    | 1-2       | 0-0         |
| Red Att/Td/Fg  | 4/3/1     | 6/4/1       |
| Net Offense    | 270       | 433         |



7

Las Vegas



GAME CENTER  
2021  
Pacific Quarter Finals



35

Cobb County

### TEAM LEADERS

| Passing   | Cmp | Att | Yds | TD |
|-----------|-----|-----|-----|----|
| Herbert   | 24  | 39  | 211 | 0  |
| Rushing   | Car | Yds | Avg | TD |
| Cook      | 16  | 40  | 2.5 | 0  |
| Receiving | Rec | Yds | Avg | TD |
| Watkins   | 7   | 51  | 7.3 | 0  |

| Team        | 1  | 2  | 3 | 4 | OT | Total |
|-------------|----|----|---|---|----|-------|
| Las Vegas   | 0  | 0  | 7 | 0 | -  | 7     |
| Cobb County | 14 | 21 | 0 | 0 | -  | 35    |

### TEAM LEADERS

| Passing   | Cmp | Att | Yds  | TD |
|-----------|-----|-----|------|----|
| Tannehill | 9   | 12  | 110  | 2  |
| Rushing   | Car | Yds | Avg  | TD |
| Harris    | 8   | 95  | 11.9 | 0  |
| Receiving | Rec | Yds | Avg  | TD |
| Jones     | 3   | 42  | 14.0 | 0  |

### Play of the Game

Already ahead 28-0 with 3:25 left in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter, **Ryan Tannehill** scrambled on 3<sup>rd</sup> & 10, got to the sideline, shook off a tackle and ran 44 yards for a back-breaking TD.

## COYOTES RUN OVER ASSASSINS IN HOWLER!

### TANNEHILL 2 TD PASSES AND 44-YARD TD RUN CLEAR PATH TO VICTORY!

**SUMMARY:** On a mild day in Cobb County, the Coyotes were red hot while the Assassins could not have been colder. Las Vegas received the opening kickoff and, after a quick first down, punted on 4<sup>th</sup> & 1, pinning the Coyotes back at their own 5. **Damien Harris** rushed 3 times for 40 yards and **Ryan Tannehill** went a perfect 5 of 5 for 55 yards, including an 8-yard TD to **Brandin Cooks**, to cover the 95 yards in just 8 plays and take a 7-0 lead. The Assassins again went four-and-out after a one-play first down and punted the Coyotes back to their 33. Tannehill connected with **Julio Jones** for 17 yards then Harris and **Matt Breida** teamed up for 42 yards in 5 carries, with Breida completing the 67-yard drive with a 4-yard TD run to make it 14-0. Las Vegas went three-and-out and the Coyotes went back to work. Three straight carries by Harris for 29 yards got the drive started and led to a Tannehill 13-yard scramble and subsequent 20-yard TD pass to **DeVante Parker**. Trailing 21-0, the Assassins tried to settle down by handing the ball to **Dalvin Cook**. But on his third straight carry, linebacker **Tarell Basham** stripped the ball out and **Tre'Davious White** scooped it up, returning it 41 yards for a TD to make it 28-0. The Las Vegas struggles on offence continued. A holding penalty on center **Austin Reiter** nullified a first down and put them in a 2<sup>nd</sup> & 16 hole. Two plays later they were punting for the fourth time in 5 series. **Adrian Peterson** pounded the Vegas line for 24 yards on 4 carries before Tannehill scrambled the remaining 44 yards for a highlight-reel TD to make it 35-0 with 3:10 still to play in the 1<sup>st</sup> half. The Assassins got the ball twice in that short time span and punted two more times, giving them 6 punts in the 1<sup>st</sup> half alone and just 68 yards of offence. The Coyotes committed to running the ball in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half while the Assassins continued to stumble. The visitors finally got on the board after surviving two fumbles during a 17-play, 83-yard drive that ended with **Trayveon Williams** carrying it into the end one from 1 yard out. That would be their only score of the game. Vegas turned the ball over on downs their last two possessions while the Coyotes resolutely ran out the clock, running it 19 times and attempting just 2 passes in the entire 2<sup>nd</sup> half. The Coyotes never faltered over 60 minutes and now advance confidently to the Quarter Finals.

**QUOTES:** "I don't have a lot to say after that. You all saw the score. It could have been worse. They came ready to play and we didn't. You guys write what you want 'cause I'm done!" – Las Vegas coach, **Anthony Holguin**.

"Everything went our way early in the game and our defence never let them back in it. As a coach, I can't ask for anything more than that. Everyone did their part. Don't kid yourselves, they are a good team – had a great season – but we had their number today." – Coyote coach, **Eron Osman**.



ANGRY FAN



titter

HAPPY FAN



**Steve Cyprinidae** Cyo@LVRJ

Did somebody dress up the Crusaders in Assassins uniforms and put them on the field today?

**William E Cotoye** @Wile-E

Another coaching victory for [@ryantannehill1](#) "whisperer," Eron Osman.



# Las Vegas 7 Cobb County 35



|             |    |    |   |   |    |
|-------------|----|----|---|---|----|
|             | 1  | 2  | 3 | 4 | F  |
| Las Vegas   | 0  | 0  | 7 | 0 | 7  |
| Cobb County | 14 | 21 | 0 | 0 | 35 |

\* Playoff \* 02-13-2022 Coyote Field Temp:58 Wind:0-10 None No Line MVP:Tannehill HF

|   |       |             |    |   |      |
|---|-------|-------------|----|---|------|
| 1 | 7:05  | Cobb County | TD | Tannehill 8 pass to Cooks (McManus) (8-95-4:55)   | 0-7  |
| 1 | 0:15  | Cobb County | TD | Breida 4 run (McManus) (8-67-4:50)                | 0-14 |
| 2 | 10:06 | Cobb County | TD | Tannehill 20 pass to Parker (McManus) (7-61-4:05) | 0-21 |
| 2 | 8:22  | Cobb County | TD | White 41 yd fumble recovery (McManus)             | 0-28 |
| 2 | 3:10  | Cobb County | TD | Tannehill 44 run (McManus) (6-68-3:20)            | 0-35 |
| 3 | 0:29  | Las Vegas   | TD | Williams 1 run (Fairbairn) (17-82-8:58)           | 7-35 |

| Player Stats |     |     |     |    |    |    |    |      |  |
|--------------|-----|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|------|--|
| Passing      | Att | Cmp | Yds | 25 | In | Td | Sk | Rate |  |
| Herbert      | 39  | 24  | 211 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 2  | 75.9 |  |
|              | 39  | 24  | 211 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 2  | 75.9 |  |

| Player Stats |     |     |     |    |    |    |    |       |  |
|--------------|-----|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|-------|--|
| Passing      | Att | Cmp | Yds | 25 | In | Td | Sk | Rate  |  |
| Tannehill    | 12  | 9   | 110 | 0  | 0  | 2  | 0  | 142.4 |  |
|              | 12  | 9   | 110 | 0  | 0  | 2  | 0  | 142.4 |  |

| Rushing    |     |     |     |    |    |    |    |
|------------|-----|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|
|            | Att | Yds | Avg | FD | 10 | Lg | Td |
| Cook       | 16  | 40  | 2.5 | 1  | 0  | 9  | 0  |
| Herbert    | 6   | 40  | 6.7 | 3  | 3  | 14 | 0  |
| Williams,T | 1   | 0   | 0.0 | 1  | 0  | 0  | 1  |
|            | 23  | 80  | 3.5 | 5  | 3  | 14 | 1  |

| Rushing   |     |     |      |    |    |    |    |
|-----------|-----|-----|------|----|----|----|----|
|           | Att | Yds | Avg  | FD | 10 | Lg | Td |
| Harris    | 8   | 95  | 11.9 | 5  | 5  | 21 | 0  |
| Peterson  | 23  | 56  | 2.4  | 2  | 1  | 13 | 0  |
| Tannehill | 5   | 56  | 11.2 | 2  | 2  | 44 | 1  |
| Breida    | 7   | 16  | 2.3  | 1  | 0  | 9  | 1  |
|           | 43  | 223 | 5.2  | 10 | 8  | 44 | 2  |

| Receiving |    |    |     |     |      |    |    |    |    |
|-----------|----|----|-----|-----|------|----|----|----|----|
|           | No | Dp | Att | Yds | Avg  | FD | 25 | Lg | Td |
| Watkins,S | 7  | 0  | 11  | 51  | 7.3  | 1  | 0  | 11 | 0  |
| Judy      | 6  | 0  | 7   | 76  | 12.7 | 4  | 0  | 18 | 0  |
| Cook      | 5  | 0  | 7   | 23  | 4.6  | 0  | 0  | 7  | 0  |
| Graham    | 2  | 0  | 2   | 15  | 7.5  | 1  | 0  | 10 | 0  |
| Thomas    | 1  | 1  | 5   | 24  | 24.0 | 1  | 0  | 24 | 0  |
| Humphries | 1  | 0  | 4   | 4   | 4.0  | 1  | 0  | 4  | 0  |
| Hardman   | 1  | 0  | 1   | 11  | 11.0 | 1  | 0  | 11 | 0  |
| Guyton    | 1  | 0  | 1   | 7   | 7.0  | 1  | 0  | 7  | 0  |
| Pascal    | 0  | 0  | 1   | 0   | 0.0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  |
|           | 24 | 1  | 39  | 211 | 8.8  | 10 | 0  | 24 | 0  |

| Receiving |    |    |     |     |      |    |    |    |    |
|-----------|----|----|-----|-----|------|----|----|----|----|
|           | No | Dp | Att | Yds | Avg  | FD | 25 | Lg | Td |
| Jones,J   | 3  | 0  | 3   | 42  | 14.0 | 3  | 0  | 17 | 0  |
| Cooks     | 3  | 0  | 5   | 31  | 10.3 | 3  | 0  | 13 | 1  |
| Parker    | 2  | 0  | 2   | 28  | 14.0 | 2  | 0  | 20 | 1  |
| Cook      | 1  | 0  | 2   | 9   | 9.0  | 0  | 0  | 9  | 0  |
|           | 9  | 0  | 12  | 110 | 12.2 | 8  | 0  | 20 | 2  |

| Fumbles   |    |     |    |
|-----------|----|-----|----|
|           | No | Rec | Td |
| Cook      | 1  | 0   | 0  |
| Judy      | 1  | 0   | 0  |
| Herbert   | 1  | 0   | 0  |
| Van Roten | 0  | 1   | 0  |
| Thomas    | 0  | 1   | 0  |
|           | 3  | 2   | 0  |

| Fumbles |    |     |    |
|---------|----|-----|----|
|         | No | Rec | Td |
| White   | 0  | 1   | 1  |
|         | 0  | 1   | 1  |

| Kick Returns |    |     |      |    |    |
|--------------|----|-----|------|----|----|
|              | No | Yds | Avg  | Lg | Td |
| Pascal       | 3  | 60  | 20.0 | 34 | 0  |
|              | 3  | 60  | 20.0 | 34 | 0  |

| Kick Returns |    |     |      |    |    |
|--------------|----|-----|------|----|----|
|              | No | Yds | Avg  | Lg | Td |
| Smith        | 1  | 24  | 24.0 | 24 | 0  |
|              | 1  | 24  | 24.0 | 24 | 0  |

| Punt Returns |    |    |     |     |    |    |
|--------------|----|----|-----|-----|----|----|
|              | No | Fc | Yds | Avg | Lg | Td |
| Hardman      | 4  | 2  | 15  | 3.8 | 8  | 0  |
|              | 4  | 2  | 15  | 3.8 | 8  | 0  |

| Punt Returns |    |    |     |     |    |    |
|--------------|----|----|-----|-----|----|----|
|              | No | Fc | Yds | Avg | Lg | Td |
| Raymond      | 3  | 3  | 15  | 5.0 | 10 | 0  |
|              | 3  | 3  | 15  | 5.0 | 10 | 0  |

| Kicking   |     |    |     |     |
|-----------|-----|----|-----|-----|
|           | FG  | Lg | XP  | Pts |
| Fairbairn | 0-0 | 0  | 1-1 | 1   |

| Kicking |     |    |     |     |
|---------|-----|----|-----|-----|
|         | FG  | Lg | XP  | Pts |
| McManus | 0-0 | 0  | 5-5 | 5   |

| Punting |    |     |      |    |    |    |    |
|---------|----|-----|------|----|----|----|----|
|         | No | Yds | Avg  | Tb | 20 | Bk | Lg |
| Anger   | 8  | 363 | 45.4 | 0  | 2  | 0  | 53 |

| Punting |    |     |      |    |    |    |    |
|---------|----|-----|------|----|----|----|----|
|         | No | Yds | Avg  | Tb | 20 | Bk | Lg |
| Berry   | 6  | 282 | 47.0 | 0  | 1  | 0  | 54 |

| Defense     |     |    |     |     |     |    |     |
|-------------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|
|             | Tkl | Sk | Def | Stf | Hur | FF | Int |
| Leonard     | 22  | 0  | 0   | 3   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Vea         | 8   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Griffin     | 6   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Surtain II  | 5   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Ngakoue     | 4   | 0  | 0   | 1   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Williams,M  | 2   | 0  | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Davis       | 2   | 0  | 0   | 1   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Judon       | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Jackson     | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Witherspoon | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Wise Jr.    | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Pocic       | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Anderson    | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Shelvin     | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Golston     | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
|             | 57  | 0  | 1   | 5   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |

| Defense  |     |    |     |     |     |    |     |
|----------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|
|          | Tkl | Sk | Def | Stf | Hur | FF | Int |
| Nelson   | 12  | 0  | 1   | 0   | 0   | 1  | 0-0 |
| Martinez | 7   | 0  | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Mitchell | 5   | 0  | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Payne    | 4   | 0  | 0   | 1   | 1   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Reed     | 3   | 1  | 0   | 1   | 1   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Clark    | 3   | 0  | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Jones,B  | 3   | 0  | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Mullen   | 3   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Jenkins  | 3   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Basham   | 2   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 1  | 0-0 |
| White    | 2   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Johnson  | 2   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Smith    | 2   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Turner   | 1   | 1  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 1  | 0-0 |
| Lawrence | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 2   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Jones,E  | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Joseph   | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Golden   | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
|          | 56  | 2  | 5   | 2   | 4   | 3  | 0-0 |



Threw 2 TDs in just 12 pass attempts.  
44-yard scramble TD broke game open

|                | Las Vegas | Cobb County |
|----------------|-----------|-------------|
| First Downs    | 16        | 20          |
| Rushes         | 23-80     | 43-223      |
| Passes         | 39-24-211 | 12-9-110    |
| Sacked         | 2-16      | 0-0         |
| Fumble         | 3         | 0           |
| Penalties      | 5-45      | 3-25        |
| Turnovers      | 1         | 0           |
| Missed Tackles | 10        | 1           |
| Dropped Passes | 1         | 0           |
| Bad Passes     | 1         | 0           |
| Passes 25+     | 0         | 0           |
| Runs 10+       | 3         | 8           |
| Blitzers       | 2         | 0           |
| Time           | 28:29     | 31:31       |
| Third Down     | 5-15      | 3-9         |
| Fourth Down    | 0-2       | 0-0         |
| Red Att/Td/Fg  | 6/1/0     | 3/3/0       |
| Net Offense    | 275       | 333         |



34

Sebastian



55

Budapest

| TEAM LEADERS |     |     |      |    |
|--------------|-----|-----|------|----|
| Passing      | Cmp | Att | Yds  | TD |
| Cousins      | 16  | 24  | 264  | 3  |
| Rushing      | Car | Yds | Avg  | TD |
| Taylor       | 18  | 127 | 7.1  | 2  |
| Receiving    | Rec | Yds | Avg  | TD |
| Hilton       | 5   | 136 | 27.2 | 1  |

| Team      | 1  | 2  | 3 | 4  | OT | Total |
|-----------|----|----|---|----|----|-------|
| Sebastian | 0  | 14 | 6 | 14 | -  | 34    |
| Budapest  | 20 | 14 | 0 | 21 | -  | 55    |

| TEAM LEADERS |     |     |      |    |
|--------------|-----|-----|------|----|
| Passing      | Cmp | Att | Yds  | TD |
| Rodgers      | 34  | 44  | 390  | 5  |
| Rushing      | Car | Yds | Avg  | TD |
| Johnson      | 11  | 47  | 4.3  | 2  |
| Receiving    | Rec | Yds | Avg  | TD |
| Diggs        | 14  | 164 | 11.7 | 4  |

### Play of the Game

First play of the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, 4<sup>th</sup> & 7 at the Budapest 18 for Sebastian, down 34-20, **Quandre Diggs** picks off **Kirk Cousins** in the end zone, marking the end of the Swordfish 2<sup>nd</sup> half surge.

## NORTH STARS SEAR SWORDFISH! RODGERS 390 YARDS, 5 TD PASSES – 4 TO DIGGS – LEADS ROMP!

**SUMMARY:** The North Stars got off to a blistering start and never looked back. **Aaron Rodgers** threw TD passes of 5 yards to **Stefon Diggs** and 6 yards to **Justin Jefferson** on their first two possessions and corner **Jamel Dean** picked off **Kirk Cousins** and returned it 43 yards for a TD on Sebastian's second possession to give Budapest a 20-0 1<sup>st</sup> quarter lead. The explosive Swordfish offence got one back early in the 2<sup>nd</sup> after a 7-yard pass to **Travis Kelce** converted 4<sup>th</sup> & 5 from their own 30. **Jonathan Taylor** then took a short out pass 46 yards on the next play and two plays later he hauled in a check down from Cousins for a 15-yard TD to make it to 20-7. However, the Budapest offence was not finished. **Jeff Wilson Jr** rumbled for a 23-yard run on their next series and Rodgers scrambled for 19 yards more to set up an 8-yard TD pass to Diggs. The Swordfish punted again, on 4<sup>th</sup> & 12 from their own 38, and **Amari Rodgers** set the Budapest offence up with a 22-yard punt return to their own 33. A holding penalty set Budapest back but the Swordfish nullified it with back-to-back offsides penalties. On the next play, Rodgers hit **Nelson Agholor** for 20 yards and Diggs for 12. Four plays later Rodgers found Diggs for a 13-yard TD to make it 34-7. Sebastian countered with a quick TD before the half on a 6-yard run by Taylor, set up by a 55-yard checkdown to **TY Hilton** to make it 34-14 at the half. Sebastian got the ball to start the 2<sup>nd</sup> half and drove 78 yards in 11 plays, scoring on a 6-yard TD pass to **Odell Beckham Jr**. The extra point was blocked, preserving the North Stars' two-TD lead, 34-20. It was as close as Sebastian would get again. After stopping the Stars on 4<sup>th</sup> & 1 at the Fish 37, Sebastian pushed back to the Stars' red zone. But Cousins was picked off in the end zone by **Quandre Diggs**, marking the final turning point against the visitors, although there would be plenty of extra noise in the final minutes. The Stars drove back and found the end zone on Rodgers' 5<sup>th</sup> TD pass of the day, 4<sup>th</sup> to Diggs, but Taylor's 56-yard TD run a minute later made it 41-26 after the missed two-point convert. **David Johnson** then scored back-to-back TDs, the second coming after **Tim Settle**'s strip-sack of Cousins was recovered at the Sebastian 1. A 57-yard pass to Hilton gave Sebastian one final TD for the record as the North Stars advanced.

**QUOTES:** "Congratulations to the North Stars and coach Darrin Jones. As I watched quarterback, Rodgers dice up our defence I had to tip my hat to the GM who saw that this old vet had plenty of life left in that arm and went out and got him." – Sebastian coach, **Russ Lemmon**.  
"We got off to a fast start, which turned out to be fortunate because the Swordfish have a lot of fight in them. That's why they made it this far. You might look at the score and think this was an easy game for us, but you can't let your foot off the gas against them." – Budapest coach, **Darrin Jones**.



ANGRY FAN



titter

HAPPY FAN



**Jean Boisvert** @JB-SwamplandP  
Don't let the score fool you. This was not a competitive game. @northstars-bud underestimated tenacity of @RussLemmon and let up.



**Attila Hun**@AttilaHunBWGoulash  
Great general @AaronRodgers12  
attack, attack, attack!



# Sebastian 34 Budapest 55



|           |    |    |   |    |    |
|-----------|----|----|---|----|----|
|           | 1  | 2  | 3 | 4  | F  |
| Sebastian | 0  | 14 | 6 | 14 | 34 |
| Budapest  | 20 | 14 | 0 | 21 | 55 |

\* Playoff \* 02-13-2022 Ferenc-Liszt Intl Temp:45 Wind:10-20 None No Line MVP:Rodgers

|   |       |           |    |   |       |
|---|-------|-----------|----|---|-------|
| 1 | 9:21  | Budapest  | TD | Rodgers 5 pass to Diggs (Myers,J) (8-84-5:30)           | 0-7   |
| 1 | 2:37  | Budapest  | TD | Rodgers 6 pass to Jefferson (Myers,J) (7-52-3:49)       | 0-14  |
| 1 | 1:33  | Budapest  | TD | Dean 43 interception return (no good)                   | 0-20  |
| 2 | 12:25 | Sebastian | TD | Cousins 15 pass to Taylor (Carlson) (7-75-4:08)         | 7-20  |
| 2 | 7:37  | Budapest  | TD | Rodgers 8 pass to Diggs (Myers,J) (7-75-4:48)           | 7-27  |
| 2 | 1:37  | Budapest  | TD | Rodgers 13 pass to Diggs (Myers,J) (11-67-2:20)         | 7-34  |
| 2 | 1:00  | Sebastian | TD | Taylor 6 run (Carlson) (3-61-0:26)                      | 14-34 |
| 3 | 7:47  | Sebastian | TD | Cousins 6 pass to Beckham Jr. (no good) (11-78-7:06)    | 20-34 |
| 4 | 11:00 | Budapest  | TD | Rodgers 15 pass to Diggs (Myers,J) (8-80-3:50)          | 20-41 |
| 4 | 9:28  | Sebastian | TD | Taylor 56 run (2 - failed) (4-75-1:32)                  | 26-41 |
| 4 | 2:48  | Budapest  | TD | Johnson 15 run (Myers,J) (11-80-6:29)                   | 26-48 |
| 4 | 2:31  | Budapest  | TD | Johnson 1 run (Myers,J) (1-1-0:07)                      | 26-55 |
| 4 | 1:43  | Sebastian | TD | Cousins 57 pass to Hilton (2 - Beckham Jr.) (3-75-0:48) | 34-55 |

### Player Stats

| Passing | Att | Cmp | Yds | 25 | In | Td | Sk | Rate  |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|-------|
| Cousins | 24  | 16  | 264 | 3  | 2  | 3  | 3  | 108.3 |
|         | 24  | 16  | 264 | 3  | 2  | 3  | 3  | 108.3 |

| Passing   | Att | Cmp | Yds | 25 | In | Td | Sk | Rate  |
|-----------|-----|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|-------|
| Rodgers,A | 44  | 34  | 390 | 0  | 0  | 5  | 1  | 141.3 |
|           | 44  | 34  | 390 | 0  | 0  | 5  | 1  | 141.3 |

| Rushing     | Att | Yds | Avg | FD | 10 | Lg | Td |
|-------------|-----|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|
| Taylor      | 18  | 127 | 7.1 | 6  | 2  | 56 | 2  |
| Richard     | 3   | 22  | 7.3 | 2  | 1  | 13 | 0  |
| Beckham Jr. | 1   | 2   | 2.0 | 0  | 0  | 2  | 0  |
|             | 22  | 151 | 6.9 | 8  | 3  | 56 | 2  |

| Rushing     | Att | Yds | Avg  | FD | 10 | Lg | Td |
|-------------|-----|-----|------|----|----|----|----|
| Johnson,D   | 11  | 47  | 4.3  | 3  | 1  | 15 | 2  |
| Wilson Jr.  | 5   | 45  | 9.0  | 3  | 2  | 23 | 0  |
| Rodgers,A   | 2   | 20  | 10.0 | 1  | 1  | 19 | 0  |
| Patterson,C | 3   | 10  | 3.3  | 1  | 0  | 4  | 0  |
|             | 21  | 122 | 5.8  | 8  | 4  | 23 | 2  |

| Receiving   | No | Dp | Att | Yds | Avg  | FD | 25 | Lg | Td |
|-------------|----|----|-----|-----|------|----|----|----|----|
| Hilton      | 5  | 1  | 6   | 136 | 27.2 | 3  | 2  | 57 | 1  |
| Taylor      | 3  | 0  | 5   | 65  | 21.7 | 2  | 1  | 46 | 1  |
| Ebron       | 2  | 0  | 3   | 15  | 7.5  | 1  | 0  | 8  | 0  |
| Miller      | 2  | 0  | 2   | 18  | 9.0  | 1  | 0  | 10 | 0  |
| Beckham Jr. | 2  | 0  | 5   | 14  | 7.0  | 1  | 0  | 8  | 1  |
| Marshall Jr | 1  | 0  | 2   | 9   | 9.0  | 1  | 0  | 9  | 0  |
| Cole        | 1  | 0  | 1   | 7   | 7.0  | 0  | 0  | 7  | 0  |
|             | 16 | 1  | 24  | 264 | 16.5 | 9  | 3  | 57 | 3  |

| Receiving  | No | Dp | Att | Yds | Avg  | FD | 25 | Lg | Td |
|------------|----|----|-----|-----|------|----|----|----|----|
| Diggs,S    | 14 | 0  | 16  | 164 | 11.7 | 12 | 0  | 18 | 4  |
| Jefferson  | 6  | 0  | 7   | 75  | 12.5 | 5  | 0  | 20 | 1  |
| Thompson   | 3  | 1  | 5   | 30  | 10.0 | 1  | 0  | 14 | 0  |
| Johnson,D  | 3  | 0  | 3   | 41  | 13.7 | 2  | 0  | 22 | 0  |
| Kittle     | 3  | 1  | 5   | 21  | 7.0  | 2  | 0  | 10 | 0  |
| Agholor    | 2  | 0  | 3   | 33  | 16.5 | 1  | 0  | 20 | 0  |
| Wilson Jr. | 2  | 0  | 2   | 16  | 8.0  | 0  | 0  | 9  | 0  |
| Brown      | 1  | 1  | 2   | 10  | 10.0 | 1  | 0  | 10 | 0  |
| Rodgers,A  | 0  | 0  | 1   | 0   | 0.0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  |
|            | 34 | 3  | 44  | 390 | 11.5 | 24 | 0  | 22 | 5  |

| Fumbles | No | Rec | Td |
|---------|----|-----|----|
| Cousins | 1  | 0   | 0  |
|         | 1  | 0   | 0  |

| Fumbles | No | Rec | Td |
|---------|----|-----|----|
| Dean    | 0  | 1   | 0  |
|         | 0  | 1   | 0  |

| Kick Returns | No | Yds | Avg  | Lg | Td |
|--------------|----|-----|------|----|----|
| Ballentine   | 2  | 63  | 31.5 | 39 | 0  |
|              | 2  | 63  | 31.5 | 39 | 0  |

| Kick Returns | No | Yds | Avg | Lg | Td |
|--------------|----|-----|-----|----|----|
| Patterson,C  | 2  | 12  | 6.0 | 10 | 0  |
| Patterson,J  | 1  | 5   | 5.0 | 5  | 0  |
|              | 3  | 17  | 5.7 | 10 | 0  |

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

| Punt Returns | No | Fc | Yds | Avg  | Lg | Td |
|--------------|----|----|-----|------|----|----|
| Rodgers,A    | 2  | 0  | 38  | 19.0 | 22 | 0  |
|              | 2  | 0  | 38  | 19.0 | 22 | 0  |

| Kicking | FG  | Lg | XP  | Pts |
|---------|-----|----|-----|-----|
| Carlson | 0-0 | 0  | 2-3 | 2   |

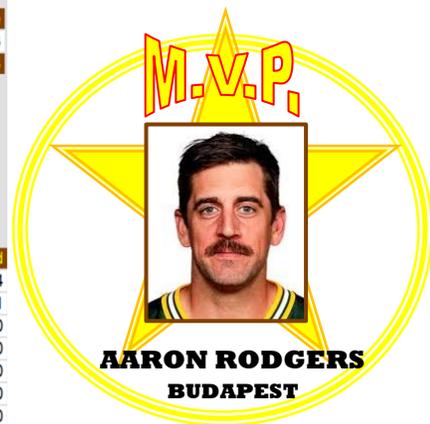
| Kicking | FG  | Lg | XP  | Pts |
|---------|-----|----|-----|-----|
| Myers   | 0-0 | 0  | 7-8 | 7   |

| Punting | No | Yds | Avg  | Tb | 20 | Bk | Lg |
|---------|----|-----|------|----|----|----|----|
| Scott   | 2  | 96  | 48.0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 51 |

| Punting | No | Yds | Avg | Tb | 20 | Bk | Lg |
|---------|----|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|
|         |    |     |     |    |    |    |    |

| Defense     | Tkl | Sk | Def | Stf | Hur | FF | Int |
|-------------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| Jackson III | 8   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Takitaki    | 8   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Baker       | 7   | 0  | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Wallace     | 6   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Perryman    | 6   | 0  | 0   | 1   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Clowney     | 5   | 0  | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Wilkins     | 2   | 1  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Yiadam      | 2   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Stewart     | 2   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Tuttle      | 2   | 0  | 0   | 1   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Lewis       | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 3   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Gholston    | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 2   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Shelley     | 1   | 0  | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Dunlap II   | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Jenkins     | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Ragland     | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
|             | 54  | 1  | 3   | 2   | 5   | 0  | 0-0 |

| Defense     | Tkl | Sk | Def | Stf | Hur | FF | Int  |
|-------------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|----|------|
| Haden       | 6   | 0  | 2   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0  |
| Fitzpatrick | 6   | 0  | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0  |
| David       | 5   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0  |
| Dean        | 4   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 1-43 |
| Fackrell    | 4   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0  |
| Suh         | 3   | 1  | 0   | 0   | 1   | 0  | 0-0  |
| Goodson     | 3   | 0  | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0  |
| Jordan      | 2   | 1  | 0   | 0   | 1   | 0  | 0-0  |
| Verrett     | 2   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0  |
| Settle      | 1   | 1  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 1  | 0-0  |
| Harris      | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0  |
| Gipson Sr.  | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0  |
| Diggs,Q     | 0   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 1-0  |
|             | 38  | 3  | 4   | 0   | 2   | 1  | 2-43 |



390 yards passing and 5 TDs was enough to out-score pesky Swordfish

|                | Sebastian | Budapest  |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|
| First Downs    | 20        | 33        |
| Rushes         | 22-151    | 21-122    |
| Passes         | 24-16-264 | 44-34-390 |
| Sacked         | 3-15      | 1-7       |
| Fumble         | 1         | 0         |
| Penalties      | 3-20      | 4-41      |
| Turnovers      | 3         | 0         |
| Missed Tackles | 6         | 9         |
| Dropped Passes | 1         | 3         |
| Bad Passes     | 1         | 0         |
| Passes 25+     | 3         | 0         |
| Runs 10+       | 3         | 4         |
| Blitzers       | 5         | 7         |
| Time           | 25:36     | 34:24     |
| Third Down     | 1-6       | 5-8       |
| Fourth Down    | 2-3       | 2-3       |
| Red Att/Td/Fg  | 4/3/0     | 7/7/0     |
| Net Offense    | 400       | 505       |



3

East Elmhurst



27

Durham

TEAM LEADERS

| Passing   | Cmp | Att | Yds  | TD |
|-----------|-----|-----|------|----|
| Mayfield  | 13  | 31  | 125  | 0  |
| Rushing   | Car | Yds | Avg  | TD |
| Jones,A   | 12  | 50  | 4.2  | 0  |
| Receiving | Rec | Yds | Avg  | TD |
| Hill      | 7   | 89  | 12.7 | 0  |

| Team          | 1 | 2  | 3 | 4 | OT | Total |
|---------------|---|----|---|---|----|-------|
| East Elmhurst | 0 | 0  | 3 | 0 | -  | 3     |
| Durham        | 7 | 10 | 7 | 3 | -  | 27    |

TEAM LEADERS

| Passing   | Cmp | Att | Yds  | TD |
|-----------|-----|-----|------|----|
| Allen     | 16  | 29  | 168  | 1  |
| Rushing   | Car | Yds | Avg  | TD |
| Gibson    | 17  | 84  | 4.9  | 1  |
| Receiving | Rec | Yds | Avg  | TD |
| Waller    | 4   | 62  | 15.5 | 0  |

Play of the Game

Opening series of the 2nd half, Irish down 17-0 facing 4th & 5 at the Durham 41. Tyrann Mathieu wraps up Tyreek Hill at the 1st down marker, bringing him down inches short.

NO CONTEST! DURHAM DOMINATES IRISH!

JOSH ALLEN 2 TDs, DEFENCE SHUTS DOWN MAYFIELD IN LOP-SIDED GAME!

SUMMARY: On a warm and relatively dry day in the micro-climate of Jurassic Park, the Thunder Lizards had no problem suppressing the Irish attack while building up a comfortable lead and advancing to the Atlantic Conference Championship game. Durham established the early edge by receiving the opening kickoff and marching up field without difficulty until they reached the Irish 24. That's where Olivier Vernon sacked Josh Allen at the 30 to set up 3rd & 16. Allen's 12-yard pass to Cooper Kupp fell short of the line of gain, but a facemask penalty on Jalen Ramsey kept the drive alive and placed the ball at the Irish 9-yard line. Two plays later, Allen scrambled up the middle for a TD and a 7-0 early lead. Surprisingly, that would be all the scoring Durham would require on a day when their defence was in control from start to finish. An intentional grounding penalty called on Baker Mayfield on East Elmhurst's first play from scrimmage set the tone. The Irish went three-and-out on their first series then had to punt again on their remaining three possessions of the 1st half. Meanwhile, the Lizards mounted a 76-yard drive to start the 2nd quarter, overcoming a holding penalty on David DeCastro at the Irish 31 with runs of 7 and 10 yards by Alexander Mattison and 20 yards by Antonio Gibson to set up a 4-yard TD pass from Allen to Tyler Boyd to take a 14-0 advantage. A long cross for 21 yards to Darren Waller set up a 28-yard Cairo Santos toward the end of the 1st half to give Durham a 17-0 locker room lead. The Irish received the ball to start the 2nd half and patched together a penalty-assisted drive to the Durham 38, where they faced 3rd & 2. Trey Hendrickson sacked Mayfield for a 3-yard loss, prompting a 4th & 5 gamble that came up inches short when Tyreek Hill was wrapped up firmly by Tyrann Mathieu. Durham marched back up the field, reaching the Irish 5-yard line on a 22-yard run by Allen. Gibson then pushed it across the goal line two plays later from 3 yards out to make it a 24-0 lead. The Irish got a small piece back on their next drive, settling for a 40-yard Rodrigo Blankenship FG to finally get on the scoreboard. That was the best their offence could do. Mathieu and Justin Simmons each picked off Mayfield in the 4th quarter to halt drives while the Durham offence added a FG and burned time off the clock to seal the win.

QUOTES: "There are days when things go one team's way and this was one of them. We did what we felt we needed to do to control the game. The defence was excellent and the offence controlled the ball well. They had a great season but it was our day today." - Durham coach, George Kaldis. "I am obviously disappointed in our performance today. We could have, should have done better than this. But I have to give credit to Durham for a good plan, well-executed. They played a great game and they are a great team." - East Elmhurst coach, Archbishop Thomas Molloy.



HAPPY FAN



titter

ANGRY FAN



Seamus McFly @LordFlyQG @IrishEE made a right bags of that one! Give me another pint of the black stuff!



Sir Reginald @RMClapham Bang up to the elephant display by the @ThunderLizardsDurham. A right batty-fang tumult!



# East Elmhurst 3 Durham 27



|               |   |    |   |   |    |
|---------------|---|----|---|---|----|
|               | 1 | 2  | 3 | 4 | F  |
| East Elmhurst | 0 | 0  | 3 | 0 | 3  |
| Durham        | 7 | 10 | 7 | 3 | 27 |

\* Playoff \* 02-13-2022 Jurassic Park Temp:63 Wind:Calm None No Line MVP:Allen H

|   |      |               |    |   |      |
|---|------|---------------|----|---|------|
| 1 | 7:30 | Durham        | TD | Allen 9 run (Santos) (14-75-7:30)         | 0-7  |
| 2 | 9:01 | Durham        | TD | Allen 4 pass to Boyd (Santos) (8-76-5:12) | 0-14 |
| 2 | 0:03 | Durham        | FG | Santos 29 (9-45-1:18)                     | 0-17 |
| 3 | 5:25 | Durham        | TD | Gibson 3 run (Santos) (8-64-5:12)         | 0-24 |
| 3 | 0:23 | East Elmhurst | FG | Blankenship 40 (12-53-4:55)               | 3-24 |
| 4 | 6:48 | Durham        | FG | Santos 39 (4-3-2:22)                      | 3-27 |

### Player Stats

| Passing  | Att | Cmp | Yds | 25 | In | Td | Sk | Rate |
|----------|-----|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|------|
| Mayfield | 31  | 13  | 125 | 1  | 2  | 0  | 3  | 26.9 |
|          | 31  | 13  | 125 | 1  | 2  | 0  | 3  | 26.9 |

| Passing | Att | Cmp | Yds | 25 | In | Td | Sk | Rate |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|------|
| Allen,J | 29  | 16  | 168 | 0  | 0  | 1  | 2  | 83.7 |
|         | 29  | 16  | 168 | 0  | 0  | 1  | 2  | 83.7 |

| Rushing  | Att | Yds | Avg | FD | 10 | Lg | Td |
|----------|-----|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|
| Jones.A  | 12  | 50  | 4.2 | 2  | 1  | 12 | 0  |
| Mayfield | 1   | 5   | 5.0 | 0  | 0  | 5  | 0  |
| Michel   | 3   | 1   | 0.3 | 1  | 0  | 3  | 0  |
|          | 16  | 56  | 3.5 | 3  | 1  | 12 | 0  |

| Rushing  | Att | Yds | Avg | FD | 10 | Lg | Td |
|----------|-----|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|
| Gibson   | 17  | 84  | 4.9 | 5  | 2  | 20 | 1  |
| Allen,J  | 8   | 37  | 4.6 | 2  | 1  | 22 | 1  |
| Edmonds  | 6   | 27  | 4.5 | 2  | 0  | 8  | 0  |
| Mattison | 2   | 17  | 8.5 | 0  | 1  | 10 | 0  |
|          | 33  | 165 | 5.0 | 9  | 4  | 22 | 2  |

| Receiving | No | Dp | Att | Yds | Avg  | FD | 25 | Lg | Td |
|-----------|----|----|-----|-----|------|----|----|----|----|
| Hill,T    | 7  | 0  | 12  | 89  | 12.7 | 5  | 1  | 25 | 0  |
| Everett   | 2  | 0  | 4   | 13  | 6.5  | 0  | 0  | 7  | 0  |
| Olsen     | 1  | 0  | 1   | 8   | 8.0  | 0  | 0  | 8  | 0  |
| Thielen   | 1  | 0  | 8   | 7   | 7.0  | 1  | 0  | 7  | 0  |
|           | 11 | 0  | 25  | 117 | 10.6 | 6  | 1  | 25 | 0  |

| Receiving | No | Dp | Att | Yds | Avg  | FD | 25 | Lg | Td |
|-----------|----|----|-----|-----|------|----|----|----|----|
| Waller    | 4  | 0  | 6   | 62  | 15.5 | 4  | 0  | 21 | 0  |
| Kupp      | 4  | 0  | 9   | 39  | 9.8  | 1  | 0  | 12 | 0  |
| Boyd      | 3  | 0  | 3   | 24  | 8.0  | 2  | 0  | 11 | 1  |
| Gibson    | 3  | 0  | 6   | 14  | 4.7  | 1  | 0  | 6  | 0  |
|           | 14 | 0  | 24  | 139 | 11.6 | 8  | 0  | 21 | 1  |

| Fumbles      | No | Rec | Td |
|--------------|----|-----|----|
| Jean-Charlie | 1  | 0   | 0  |
| Jones.A      | 1  | 0   | 0  |
| Remmers      | 0  | 1   | 0  |
|              | 2  | 1   | 0  |

| Fumbles    | No | Rec | Td |
|------------|----|-----|----|
| Armstead,A | 0  | 1   | 0  |
|            | 0  | 1   | 0  |

| Kick Returns | No | Yds | Avg  | Lg | Td |
|--------------|----|-----|------|----|----|
| Moore        | 1  | 28  | 28.0 | 28 | 0  |
| Powell       | 1  | 13  | 13.0 | 13 | 0  |
| Jean-Charlie | 1  | 2   | 2.0  | 2  | 0  |
|              | 3  | 43  | 14.3 | 28 | 0  |

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

| Punt Returns | No | Fc | Yds | Avg | Lg | Td |
|--------------|----|----|-----|-----|----|----|
| Moore        | 2  | 1  | 9   | 4.5 | 12 | 0  |
|              | 2  | 1  | 9   | 4.5 | 12 | 0  |

| Punt Returns | No | Fc | Yds | Avg  | Lg | Td |
|--------------|----|----|-----|------|----|----|
| Proche       | 4  | 1  | 65  | 16.3 | 21 | 0  |
|              | 4  | 1  | 65  | 16.3 | 21 | 0  |

| Kicking     | FG  | Lg | XP  | Pts |
|-------------|-----|----|-----|-----|
| Blankenship | 1-1 | 40 | 0-0 | 3   |

| Kicking | FG  | Lg | XP  | Pts |
|---------|-----|----|-----|-----|
| Santos  | 2-2 | 39 | 3-3 | 9   |

| Punting | No | Yds | Avg  | Tb | 20 | Bk | Lg |
|---------|----|-----|------|----|----|----|----|
| Mann    | 5  | 234 | 46.8 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 51 |

| Punting | No | Yds | Avg  | Tb | 20 | Bk | Lg |
|---------|----|-----|------|----|----|----|----|
| Huber   | 4  | 163 | 40.8 | 0  | 3  | 0  | 50 |

| Defense     | Tkl | Sk | Def | Stf | Hur | FF | Int |
|-------------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| Vernon      | 7   | 1  | 1   | 0   | 2   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Hilton      | 5   | 0  | 2   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Boston      | 5   | 0  | 2   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Parsons     | 5   | 0  | 1   | 0   | 1   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Lawrence II | 5   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 1   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Ramsey      | 5   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Graham      | 4   | 0  | 0   | 3   | 1   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Smith,J     | 4   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Allen       | 3   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 1   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Harmon      | 3   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Barrett     | 2   | 1  | 0   | 1   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Simon       | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Phillips    | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Epps        | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Ford        | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| O'Daniel    | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
| Smith,J     | 0   | 0  | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0 |
|             | 53  | 2  | 7   | 4   | 6   | 0  | 0-0 |

| Defense     | Tkl | Sk | Def | Stf | Hur | FF | Int  |
|-------------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|----|------|
| Mathieu     | 7   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 1-15 |
| Hendrickson | 4   | 1  | 0   | 1   | 1   | 0  | 0-0  |
| Warner      | 4   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0  |
| Young       | 3   | 1  | 1   | 0   | 1   | 1  | 0-0  |
| Dupree      | 3   | 0  | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0  |
| McCourty    | 3   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0  |
| Werner      | 3   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0  |
| Burns       | 2   | 1  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0  |
| Simmons     | 2   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 1-7  |
| Moore II    | 2   | 0  | 4   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0  |
| Barton      | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 1  | 0-0  |
| Reed        | 1   | 0  | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0  |
| Reader      | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 1   | 0  | 0-0  |
| Rochell     | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0  |
| Stems       | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0  |
| Armstead,A  | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0-0  |
|             | 39  | 3  | 7   | 1   | 3   | 2  | 2-22 |



**JOSH ALLEN**  
**DURHAM**

TD run and TD pass to open the scoring was all the Lizards would need.

|                | East Elmhurst | Durham    |
|----------------|---------------|-----------|
| First Downs    | 12            | 22        |
| Rushes         | 16-56         | 33-165    |
| Passes         | 31-13-125     | 29-16-168 |
| Sacked         | 3-16          | 2-14      |
| Fumble         | 2             | 0         |
| Penalties      | 4-29          | 8-61      |
| Turnovers      | 3             | 0         |
| Missed Tackles | 5             | 4         |
| Dropped Passes | 1             | 0         |
| Bad Passes     | 3             | 3         |
| Passes 25+     | 1             | 0         |
| Runs 10+       | 1             | 4         |
| Blitzers       | 12            | 2         |
| Time           | 24:50         | 35:10     |
| Third Down     | 4-14          | 9-15      |
| Fourth Down    | 1-2           | 0-0       |
| Red Att/Td/Fg  | 0/0/0         | 4/3/1     |
| Net Offense    | 165           | 319       |



# AROUND THE



## With Spats McChad

NEW YORK – The four games of the 2021 Quarter Finals displayed an uncanny and disheartening symmetry that, long before the gun sounded to mercifully end the mauling of the Assassin by the Coyotes on Sunday night, had me lamenting my “lost weekend” and contemplating excessive indulgence in the most desperate of writer’s remedies: single malt Scotch...by the *bottle!*

Yes, folks, the Quarter Final slate drove me to drink. Not that I need to make up an excuse to order a glass of *Lagavulin*, but to actually abandon my football throne at Blondie’s Sports Bar and stumble two blocks to the Caledonia Bar on Amsterdam Avenue to drown my sorrows in \$22 a shot scotch whisky signified a conspicuous departure from my usual binge-drinking pattern. I am usually a happy, celebratory drunk. Not so in the aftermath of the biggest quarter final flop in EFL history.

The panic set in shortly after the start of the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter in Cobb County, which was the final installment of, what I dubbed to myself, the *Unfortunate Four*. As it dawned on me that Game #4 was about to be Strike Four, I looked at my game notes and was overcome suddenly by a queasy feeling in the pit of my stomach. *I had barely written anything. “Coyotes mauling Vegas like tiny family pet left unattended in back yard,” “Holguin - PTSD face,” “Osman shit-eating grin :-))))” “Tannehill - 10 passes max(?) check,” “Leonard playing solo on Vegas D,” “Coyotes clocking it in 1<sup>st</sup> half!” and incoherent scribbles like “WTF? Shit show. Assissies!” and other stuff I can’t print here.*

I then looked back at the Budapest-Sebastian game. I had written more for that one, first of all noting the ridiculous start time of 11:00 am ET (5:00 pm in Budapest). My strategic and tactical football-related observations of the North Stars juggernaut, however, soon gave way to extensive study of **Russ Lemmon**’s unrestrained mania on the sideline accompanied by amateurish psychological diagnoses of the EFL’s most eccentric coach. *Not exactly what my readers expect from an elite football analyst*, I thought despondently.

The Durham-East Elmhurst “contest” was about as riveting as watching a competitive chess match between **Gary Kasparov** and some high school kid named Desmond. It was the worst kind of blowout – one without highlights. The best that can be said for the EFL Quarter Final weekend was that Virden managed to pull within a touchdown of Charleswood. Admittedly, it was a comeback in garbage time but at least we got to witness a meaningful onside kick in the dying seconds.

My principle and perhaps *only* significant insight after watching 14 hours of Quarter Finals football was that I saw the collection of games as evenly displaying one of two blowout patterns: Blowout A – loser gets blown out in 1<sup>st</sup> half and never recovers, Blowout B – loser gets blown out in 1<sup>st</sup> half but rallies enough in garbage time to partially conceal the blowout in the final score. Durham over East Elmhurst and Cobb County over Las Vegas followed the pattern of Blowout A. Charleswood over Virden and Budapest over Sebastian followed the pattern of Blowout B.

As I watched the cringe-inducing attempts of the collective mainstream media – both national and in certain cases local – to build retroactive, illusory storylines about competitiveness that had not, in reality, ever existed anywhere in this sorry slate of playoff games, I vowed not to stoop so low. I refuse to insult my readers’ intelligence. But in calling these gross mismatches what they were: gross mismatches, I was left with near-impossible task of drawing something of sporting interest from them. Like having to provide play-by-play for a hot dog eating contest between **Joey Chestnut** and **Calista Flockhart**.

Desperate circumstances call for desperate measures. Scotch has a way of unleashing a powerful, spiritual *sixth sight* in me that allows me to penetrate beneath the surface of the action and reveal the underlying vortex of psychological and esoteric forces influencing and guiding the activity that we see in the physical world. Among the reasons that I do not resort to the *Scotch Solution* more often is that, for one, my conscious mind is usually more than capable of isolating and expanding on the key factors of the games that matter, and dismissing those that don’t. The other is that I tend to get drowned in a good, peaty malt and end up passing out. But when all the games – *playoff* games to boot – are of the kind I would otherwise dismiss as unworthy of extensive comment there is no other choice. Enter the *Single Malt Realm* or write a 200-word short and sharp rant about how all four games sucked and let it go. (Hey...maybe the latter’s not such a bad idea, actually...!)

### **BATTLE OF MANITOBA**

Having put their gentleman’s agreement from their Week 16 clash behind them, the owners of the two most prominent Manitoba franchises, Media Magnate **Jason Findlay** of Charleswood and Oil Baron, **Vance Barrate** of Virden, resolved to observe their respective teams battle each other in the Quarter Finals from segregated luxury boxes at Patriot Place. It would be better that way.

While the two had sat together inside the plush *Bison Room* at Patriot Place to witness Virden's Rite of Passage into the playoffs against a slightly trimmed down Charleswood roster in the season's final week, the stakes were now significantly higher. One Manitoba team would move on; one Manitoba team would not. While the legacy of Manitoba was safe for the moment, should the "wrong" (i.e., the weaker) Manitoba team advance it could set up humiliation at the hands of one of the two teams most football analysts believed were the class of the EFL in Budapest and Durham – one of which was bound to advance to represent the Atlantic Conference in the Gale Sayers Game. In order to ensure proper decorum in the heat of the moment, the owners decided to separate themselves for the contest's duration.

The Patriots were the better team – both on paper and on the field – and had been carefully groomed to represent Manitoba in 2021. The Violators, however, had proven stubbornly uncooperative in letting go of the "Manitoba's Team" status they had enjoyed in 2020, when they represented the Pacific Conference in the 14<sup>th</sup> Gale Sayers Game. That 2020 Violator team had come within 7 minutes of being the second Manitoba franchise to win an EFL championship. However, a 4<sup>th</sup>-quarter rally by **Aaron Rodgers** and the North Stars coupled with a sudden seizing up of the Virden offence in the final quarter had turned near-victory into a deflating 35-27 defeat.

The fallout from that great loss had been a bitter pill to swallow for the Virden players and their coach, **Lance Barrate**. Star quarterback, **Patrick Mahomes** had had to endure the "choker" label from netizens of the virtual cheap seats during the off-season. The Virden coach had had to put up with persistent questioning and second-guessing of his decision to send **Cordarrell Patterson** on a jet sweep with the game on the line. Budapest lineman, **Shelby Harris** – playing like a man possessed in the game's second half – had sniffed out the play and had brought Patterson down by the ankles for a 7-yard loss on 4<sup>th</sup> & 4 with 1:00 remaining. Had the play worked it would have been hailed as genius. But since it had failed miserably, the Virden coach found himself backed into a corner trying to explain why he had not trusted his superstar quarterback in the most crucial 4<sup>th</sup> down conversion of the year. Barrate had stopped answering the questions, but the refusal to answer hadn't stopped the questions from coming.

Ironically, Patterson was now a member of the North Stars and running the ball more than ever. Budapest coach **Darrin Jones** had seen something in the player that transcended his failure in the game's biggest moment and had traded for Patterson – a deal the embittered Virden coach had been more than happy to make. Moving on...

So, the stage was set on Saturday to witness Manitoba's "chosen team" attempt to prove its worth against a Virden squad that obviously felt it had unfinished business from last season to attend to. If the eventual result were to run counter to what the behind-the-scenes manipulators of the Manitoba Club had designed during their careful off-season planning, the Virden players and Violators' fans did not care. Mahomes wanted another shot at Rodgers. What was left of the defence that had collapsed in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter in Gale Sayers XIV wanted redemption. The Violators – the players and coach more than their owner – wanted to remain "Manitoba's Team."

I admit that I got caught up in the pre-game hype leading up to the Charleswood-Virden showdown. Being more acutely aware of Manitoban politics and the psychological make-up of these two franchises than most football journalists I know (with the exception of **Charlie Wood** of the *Charleswood Banner*), I was keen to witness the first game between these venerable Manitoba franchises where both teams felt equal motivation to win. I expected to see a pitiless struggle driven by a ruthless desperation on the part of Virden to reclaim lost honour, pitted against a true "establishment" team in Charleswood that had all the advantages, including the home field. Would the Patriots' sense of entitlement – in evidence all season in their unenthusiastic game plans and on-field demeanour – make them complacent and ripe for being upset? Or would they come in ready to put down the rabid Virden dog by any means necessary, showing the ingenuity and energy of the Patriot teams of 2013 and 2015?

The Pats, for all their talent, had failed to impress me much in 2021. The Violators, facing injury and roster challenges all year, had impressed me more. Mahomes had led the league in touchdown passes (45) throwing to a pair of rookies, a creaky old vet, and a tight end with average speed. The defence – or what passed for one – had done just enough to keep the team close in critical games. This had been mostly due to the efforts of one man, **Leonard Williams**. Unfashionable though it was with the likes of **Tyrann Mathieu** and **Minkah Fitzpatrick** terrorizing quarterbacks, the Virden defensive lineman easily got my vote for Defensive MVP in 2021.

My heart and, to a partial degree, my head were pulling for the Violators. The seeds of an upset were not imaginary. On the other hand, my sense of league stewardship (a naïve and curious desire to see the EFL feature its best material in its showcase event) hoped to see a better version of the Patriots than I had seen all regular season taking care of business in the post-season. The Pats appeared to be the only hope to prevent a coronation of either Durham or Budapest in the final game. The Violators were plucky – heroic even – but suffered from serious structural defects that would certainly be exposed against the league's most complete rosters in the season's biggest moment. Regardless of which team emerged to play in the Conference Final, however, I expected to see a good game on Saturday.

Well, I was wrong. What I saw was a Charleswood team finally taking the gloves off and showing who is Boss. Unlike during Weeks one through sixteen of the regular season, the Pats were aggressive on defence and ran more than five different types of plays on offence. It was the defensive aggressiveness that set the tone for what would be a manifestly lop-sided first three quarters.

Watching film of and playing the talented but passive Pats defence during the regular season undoubtedly had conditioned Mahomes and his intrepid band of rookies and vets to believe they had time and space to develop and expand the passing game in the all-important Quarter Final. The Virden game plan clearly looked to exploit the apparent weakness in the Pats' secondary. As a result, **Ezekiel Elliott** turned out to be less than an afterthought, carrying the ball just 5 times for an inconsequential 20 yards. The Violators had decided to lead with their strength but, unfortunately for them, the Pats saw it coming all the way. Charleswood sold out to stop the pass and the result turned out to be an increasingly frustrated Mahomes, who saw windows closing faster than he had anticipated and protection breaking down a split-second earlier than his internal clock was calibrated for. Mahomes, one of the league's elite quarterbacks, completed

just 19 of 48 passes in the game for an abysmal 39.5% completion rate. This would have been a poor percentage in the 1970's.

More telling, however, were the early numbers. Prior to Virden's first touchdown drive of the game early in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, Mahomes completed just 8 of 23 pass attempts for 96 yards. That translates into a 44.75 passer rating during the period when the game was still being seriously contested. The Violators were trailing by four scores, 28-3 before Mahomes finally found the end zone, almost accidentally, on a check down to an unguarded Elliott.

On the other side of the ball, the Pats' offence looked animated, even if their play selection remained more or less their regular season *status quo* of hitch routes and of tackle runs. Their major adjustment was a commitment to the running game. This was due to multiple factors: The Virden defensive tendency early to defend the pass or remain neutral, a mortifying end zone interception thrown by **DeShaun Watson** to abruptly end what had been an electrifying opening possession for the Pats that threw cold water on any throw-early-throw-often strategy that may have been contemplated, and an energetic performance by running back **Alvin Kamara**. The oft-criticized Charleswood star chose the biggest moment of the year to that point to flash his dexterous, acrobatic moves behind the adept run blocking of **Laremy Tunsil** and **Laken Tomlinson**. Against such a concerted effort even the unwavering **Leonard Williams** wavered as his support crumbled around him. Kamara finished the day with an MVP-grade 189 yards rushing and three touchdowns on 29 carries.

It is hard to nail down a turning point in this game, as the Violators never appeared to be in it to begin with. Perhaps for the viewer the awareness that Virden was not up to the moment came on the drive after the Watson interception in the end zone. The Pats had had 1<sup>st</sup> and goal at the five-yard line after driving all the way from their own nine. Watson tried to force the ball to **Travis Kelce** into tight coverage. **Marcus Peters**, who had been flagged for a 22-yard pass interference penalty earlier in the drive, dove for the ball as it sunk in front of the tight end. Initially ruled incomplete, the call was overturned on review as video evidence showed Peters securing the ball before it touched the ground. Peters had brought the initial Charleswood thrust to a cruel end. Watson's intemperance had been costly.

This kind of turnover is the stuff that often sparks a team. Yet, the Violators were unable to take advantage. The Pats' defence played the first down with seven defensive backs deployed against a standard 21 offensive set. It was a rare and risky gamble. But the Pats had done their homework and knew that Mahomes invariably led with a pass after a turnover. Indeed, he did, attempting to connect on a slant to star rookie, **Ja'Marr Chase**. Roaming within a sea of defensive backs, **Ronald Darby** played tighter than usual and tipped the pass away. Virden took their time to the line, allowing the Pats to sub back into their standard alignment and stop Elliott after a five-yard gain. On 3<sup>rd</sup> & 5 an overtly aggressive Pats' secondary playing tight press man blanketed Mahomes' options while the pass rush forced him out of the pocket. In exasperation, the Virden quarterback threw the ball away to bring on the punting unit.

On their subsequent possession the Pats did not allow a repeat of their earlier red zone snafu. After Watson completed a 7-yard pass to convert 3<sup>rd</sup> & 6 followed by a 20-yard hitch to **Juju Smith-Schuster** to the Virden 25-yard line, the Pats went to ground with five straight carries, four of those to Kamara, to cover the remaining distance into the end zone. Kamara feinted to the left then dipped to the right through a hole for the major score from 1-yard away to draw first blood. The Pats would never trail after that.

The run-first strategy would be the Pats' red zone blueprint on their next two touchdown drives, leading to a 21-3 lead at half time. In a reversal of that strategy, Watson would end up notching his one and only TD pass on the opening drive of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, firing an 8-yard strike to Kelce to make it 28-3. This was set up by grinding down the Virden defence with Kamara and **JK Dobbins**, running for 47 yards on 5 carries. The Virden offence, meanwhile, continued to struggle, regressing badly as Mahomes' frustration grew.

FOX broadcasters **Kevin Burkharder** and **Greg Olsen** observed the tribulations of the Virden offence with bewilderment.

"Do you think perhaps Patrick Mahomes is trying to do too much, Greg?" asked play-by-play announcer Burkharder following an after-thought dump off to **AJ Green** that was knocked loose by **Kendall Fuller** to force another three-and-out.

"I don't think so, Kevin," replied Olsen. "Patrick Mahomes is used to carrying this team. But the Patriots defence is not backing down from his reputation. They're being very aggressive, not showing him any respect in their coverage. They know that Mahomes is going to throw. They aren't playing any attention to Ezekiel Elliott. Now, trailing by 25 points, the Violators no longer have the luxury of trying to establish a ground presence. It's going to be Patrick or bust from here on for Virden!"

Toward the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, Pats' kicker **Wil Lutz** missed a 44-yard field goal attempt following an 11-play drive. The miss felt academic at the time. The Violators still needed four scores – a situation which would not have changed with a field goal. The real damage of the drive had been in the 7:20 minutes of time it had taken off the clock. This put the Violators in a desperate situation with little more than sixteen minutes remaining.

With the adrenaline of the condemned man running through his veins, Mahomes went to the air with determination. An 18-yard pass interference penalty on **Asante Samuel Jr** gave the desperation drive a boost and, after six plays from scrimmage and just two minutes, the Violators were on the board.

The Pats were far from panicked, however. They went to work burning more time off the clock, shaving off another 6:30 before Virden's Williams put an end to the clock party with a sack of Watson to set up another Lutz missed field goal, this time from 51 yards out. Although it was not a critical miss, the morale boost and good field position it gave Virden, with still more than seven minutes remaining, prompted a cautionary comment from the booth.

"If there is still a chance for Virden, their odds just improved with that miss, Greg," observed **Kevin Burkharder**.

"I agree, Kevin," replied **Greg Olsen**. "That's six points the Pats have left on the field. It might not seem that important right now, but if anyone can bring a team back in a hurry, it's Patrick Mahomes. They still have time. The Pats cannot get complacent here."

The Charleswood defence, in keeping with its mindset from the start, did not let up in the face of what still appeared to be a

comfortable lead. They attacked the Virden receivers' routes as if they knew them by heart. There was precious little time for Mahomes to fit the ball in through tight windows. The Violators quickly went four-and-out, giving the Pats great field position at the Virden 46.

Kamara came through with a 25-yard run on 1<sup>st</sup> & 10 and three more carries brought up 4<sup>th</sup> down and a 32-yard field goal attempt for Lutz. This time he did not miss. With 3:59 left on the clock, the Pats led 31-10. The way the game had been going, 21 points appeared to be an insurmountable lead – even for an irrepressible talent like Mahomes.

This sense of security may have had a subconscious effect on the Pats' defence. Although schematically their tactical deployment on the field remained strong, a slight let up in intensity on a 4<sup>th</sup> down check down to **John Brown** set in motion a chain of unlikely events that created the only scintilla of drama to be had on this Quarter Finals Weekend. Brown snatched the ball from Mahomes and charged past a diving Darby to wind his way to the Charleswood 23-yard line for a 52-yard gain. The Pats' **Leonard Floyd**, unimpressed, delivered a late hit after a similar check down to **KJ Hamler** on the next play sailed incomplete, earning a personal foul. Four plays later, Mahomes checked down to Brown for a TD pass. The extra point was blocked, however, leaving the Pats with a 15-point lead, 31-16, with 1:55 left.

"Well, is the comeback on, Greg?" Burkharder, tasked with keeping viewers pinned to the set, asked his co-host with feigned sincerity.

"Well, it shouldn't be, Kevin!" Olsen replied with a snort. "But the way the games have played out in the dying minutes this year, anything is possible. If – and it's a big if – the Violators can recover an onside kick here, they could make it interesting."

Only the stubbornest Virden diehards would have held out hope that recovering the onside kick would have been likely in this scenario. After all, with a league recovery rate of less than 20% overall and less than 10% when the receiving team has their hands-team on the field, most observers, including me, were already moving on to Sunday. But Virden, being the only team in the league to carry a third kicker on its roster for the sole purpose of kickoffs, showed the value of having a true kickoff specialist. **Aldrick Rosas** bounced a high-hopper that was difficult to track. The wobbler went off the hands of **Jace Sternberger** and the result was a free-for-all. When the referees uncovered the pile, Virden's **Isaiah Oliver** had possession. The Violators were still alive!



Sebastian coach, **Russ Lemmon**, reacts to a 55-yard catch-and-run by **TY Hilton** on a check down late in the 1<sup>st</sup> half. The play set up a TD run by **Jonathan Taylor** to spark a determined push by the Swordfish to make a game out of a near-total rout.

On the next drive, Mahomes kept his team alive, albeit barely. Passes of 22 yards to Hamler and 23 yards to Chase set up a 6-yard check down TD pass to Green to make the score 31-22. A Mahomes bootleg for the successful 2-point conversion then made it 31-24. Incredibly, the Violators were now trailing by a manageable converted touchdown. However, there were just 24 seconds remaining and, to maintain a theoretical chance, the Violators would have to recover a second consecutive onside kick against the Charleswood hands-team.

"Can this fourth quarter get any crazier, Greg?" burst out an enthused **Kevin Burkharder**.

"This game has been over for a long time, Kevin, but the Violators refuse to believe it. They still have a pulse," **Greg Olsen** chuckled. "You know, having been there, I can tell you that the players on the Virden sideline still believe they can pull off this miracle. And make no mistake – this would be a miracle!"

It certainly would have. But in the compressed moment coming right after a couple of mini-miracles, a second Virden recovery did not feel far-fetched. It indeed turned out to be a close call. Another knuckler from Rosas found the mass of Patriot defenders but failed to land cleanly in the arms of any of them. The Violators coverage team converged like piranhas in a scramble for the ball. This time, when the referees uncovered the pile, it was the Pats' **Tre'Quan Smith** in possession of the ball. Patriot Place erupted in jubilation fueled by a large measure of relief.

Pats' owner, **Jason Findlay** – as was his custom – was on the Patriots' sideline for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter and was able to partake like a coach in the congratulatory ritual on the sideline. Players hugged, Kamara donned his MVP cap, and Findlay made the rounds shaking the players' hands. Up in the visitor's luxury box, a grim **Vance Barrate** chomped on the stub of a burnt out *Cohiba* as he rolled his glass of scotch on the rocks in his palms. On the sideline his son, Lance removed his headset and handed his play sheet to an assistant. Only quarterback **Patrick Mahomes** remained taut on the sideline, his gaze fixed on the field. His eyes burrowed into the action, as if seeking by sheer force of will to force a fumbled snap between center **Brandon Linder** and back-up QB, **Mason Rudolph**. But Rudolph had practiced this victory snap extensively, knowing it was likely the only play he would ever run (barring a Watson injury). His supple wrists fielded the snap flawlessly. He cradled the ball delicately in his gut and took a knee. The Violators, although they had a timeout remaining, declined to exercise it. The gun sounded to make it official: The Pats would advance to the Conference Championship and represent Manitoba on the penultimate stage, thus fulfilling the prophesy foretold at the Manitoba Club long before the season started.

### **LEMMONADE**

Sunday playoff football featured a rare 11:00 am ET start time for the game between the Swordfish and the North Stars. In Budapest, this translated into a relatively civilized 5:00 pm CET. However, the rest of the football world would find this time to be irritatingly inconvenient. In Eastern time zones the game corresponded to the start of church. Not that many people go to church anymore, but a good portion of those who do tend to also enjoy football. Fans in the West would tune it at 8:00 am PT, while a thousand or so diehard EFL fans in Samoa would have to stay up to 10:00 pm on Saturday to catch the opening kickoff for playoff Sunday. Now, that doesn't seem so bad, except that these same fans would need to stay up through the night until 3:00 am WST, to see the final game between Las Vegas and Cobb County. Yes, EFL Europe posed its challenges to the networks and fans throughout the EFL-o-sphere.

So, would it have been worth risking the wrath of the Lord by missing church to witness the start of the moment of truth between Sebastian and Budapest? In retrospect, no. One could have sung the hymns, chanted the prayers and listened to the preacher's sermon without a hint of distraction and remained in good standing with God Almighty while still managing to catch the most exciting part of this game. Make no mistake – the “most exciting” part of this game was no more than dressing on a grievous and fatal wound inflicted by the all-potent North Stars on the pointy-nosed but armour-less fish from Florida over the game's first 30 minutes and beyond.

Of all the frauds perpetuated by the mass media during the Quarter Finals Weekend, the idea that Sebastian “pushed the North Stars to the wall” (*EFL Today* take) in a 55-34 loss is the most egregious. I'm not sure what's behind it, other than the obvious media obligation to generate excitement at all times. Possibly, the “offence lobby” in the Rules Committee pushed behind the scenes to hype the offence-focused Sebastian. Also, possibly, the North Stars' coach's desire to cling to the underdog tag he has nurtured over many years by pretending that this game was something less than a blowout, despite all evidence to the contrary, led to widely-played media sound bites of him praising the Swordfish and tut-tutting his own team.

Looking like he had just bitten into a raw cabbage roll, Budapest coach **Darrin Jones** pointed out to the media gathering in the press gallery after the game that “giving up 34 points in three quarters is not championship football.”

Well, <duh!> of course it isn't. But scoring 34 points in two quarters and adding 21 points in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter *is* championship football. The players are only human. So dominant were the Stars coming out of the gate that they were unable to resist the natural human tendency to let up a bit. They also underestimated the resolve of the Swordfish and the rallying capabilities of the fervent maniac who is their coach, **Russ Lemmon**. Like the Black Knight in the scene from *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* the Sebastian coach refused to yield in spite of what appeared to be mortal blows delivered to his team in the early part of the game.

Frankly, however, the game was effectively over when **Aaron Rodgers** hit **Stefon Diggs** on a short hitch for a 13-yard TD pass to make the score 34-7 with 1:37 left in the *first half*! Now, I realize much happened after that to make this game more interesting before the final gun. The push back started right away, with **Jonathan Taylor** crashing into the end zone from 6 yards to reclaim that TD shortly after **TY Hilton** hauled in a dump-off from **Kirk Cousins** and scampered for a 55-yard catch-and-run in the final minute of the first half. That score gave the Fish faint hope and prompted CBS colour commentator **Charles Davis** to venture his opinion to his boothmate, **Ian Hawk** that the Swordfish had grabbed the momentum heading into the locker room.

“That was an important touchdown for the Swordfish,” Davis proclaimed. “They will receive the kickoff to start the second half and will be in position to make this a two-score game if they can score on the opening drive.”

Hawk responded by pointing out that Sebastian still had to stop the North Stars in the final minute for that to happen, which seemed unlikely given the steamrolling qualities of the Budapest offence to that point. But somehow, they did, with **Budda Baker** and **Duke Shelley** making two key deflections to disrupt the rhythm of Rodgers' passing game. The half ended with **Christian Wilkins** sacking Rodgers as he looked deep. The teams entered the locker room with Budapest in front 34-14 but the Swordfish still alive.

CBS sideline reporter, **Evan Washburn**, caught up with the Sebastian coach as he strode toward the tunnel on his way to the locker room.

“Coach Lemmon, what are you going to tell your team?” Washburn queried.

Without breaking stride, Lemmon glanced at him and smiled. “I'm going to tell them to go out there and play football! There's plenty of football left to play. We've got them where we want them! We're still in this thing!”

The thing that struck me most about Lemmon's answer was his manner of speech. This was not false bravado or a façade to keep up morale. The Sebastian coach seemed to really believe that his team had a comeback against all odds in them; or at least grasped that, practically, if his team stood any chance at all it required an unrelenting determination and throwing caution to the wind in order to execute the improbable. Wishful thinking born of irrationality and unrealistic optimism: or an astute assessment and practical approach

to a crisis scenario? Could it be, perhaps, a combination of both?

The Sebastian coach's off-field demeanour is as balmy as it comes – like that of a retired accountant with all of his financial affairs in order; whose greatest remaining stress in life is preparing for hurricane season in his otherwise comfortable beachfront community. One would expect such a person to stand back and shrewdly assess a sticky situation and prescribe the only practical remedy. This sedate image, however, is starkly at odds with the manic, bugged-eyed, random gesticulator that Lemmon transforms into on the sideline when his team is most hard-pressed. Was that a fleck of foam I saw flying from his lips as he barked out a call for 4<sup>th</sup> & 1 at the Budapest six-yard line after Taylor had been denied on 3<sup>rd</sup> & 2 on the Swordfish's opening possession of the second half? It must have been; because the television cameras began to focus more frequently – and closely – on the Sebastian coach after that close-up had betrayed a man possessed.

As the game hurtled forward toward its inevitable conclusion, more and more Lemmon appeared to be gripped by some kind of powerful, otherworldly force. The sight of the conservatively-attired, late-middle-aged, clean-cut Caucasian male exhorting his players with the intensity of a whirling dervish on amphetamines made for entertaining television in its own right, especially in a game that all realistic observers could see had been effectively decided early, despite the noise from the Swordfish bench.

“We can see there is at least one person on the Sebastian sideline who believes this game is far from over, Charles,” observed **Ian Hawk** as the camera panned over the sight of Lemmon racing along the sideline, violently high-fiving his players after **Kirk Cousins** had threaded the needle to **Odell Beckham Jr** to convert 4<sup>th</sup> & 1 with a 6-yard TD pass, making the score 34-20 for Budapest.

“He's not the only one, Ian,” **Charles Davis** replied. “You can see that his players believe as well. Look at them smiling at their coach. I mean, how can you help not being impressed with that crazy energy? I don't think he's on something, but if he is I want some of whatever it is!”

There was one moment in this game when indeed it seemed, even to a rational and cynical observer like myself, that the door to a Swordfish comeback had opened a crack. That moment came on the ensuing Budapest drive when **David Johnson** was stopped by **Carlos Dunlap II** short of the line to gain on 4<sup>th</sup> & 1 at the Sebastian 37-yard line. It was the second consecutive stop by the much-maligned and marginally-capable Swordfish defence against the league's most efficient offence. It put the Swordfish in position to make this a one-score game heading into the final quarter, if they could continue to execute offensively.

Momentum was visibly swinging in Sebastian's direction. A 14-yard run by Taylor, a pass interference penalty on **Joe Haden** and a tough 4-yard run by Taylor to the North Stars' 21-yard line to convert 3<sup>rd</sup> & 1 made a dent in the barrage of sound produced by the rabid *Hun-stars* and the many intoxicated Budapestians crammed to capacity in Airport Stadium. Brimming with confidence throughout the entirety of the game to that point, a tiny sliver of doubt had lodged itself in the big toe of the crowd – not incapacitating, but definitely irritating. It would just a little easier for the Swordfish players to hear their quarterback's signals on the coming downs.

“Wouldn't this be something if the Swordfish could come away with points here, Charles,” Hawk noted as Cousins ambled to the line to begin a new set of downs.

“They have to come away with a touchdown here, Ian,” Davis added emphatically. “A field goal is not enough to make it a one-score game, which is what they need if they hope to keep pace in the fourth quarter. But a touchdown on this drive would certainly be a big blow. I can't see the Budapest offence being shut down in the final quarter, but you never know how a Sebastian touchdown here could affect the morale on both benches. Anything can happen in this crazy game called football.”

The third quarter ended on the cusp of the game's final defining moment. A check down to Hilton for a mere 3 yards brought up 4<sup>th</sup> & 7 at the Budapest 18 as the whistle sounded to end the frame. The fate of the Swordfish would have to wait until after the commercial break.

The Budapest crowd had recovered its mojo after the moment of pause, during which many refreshed their cups of *Arany Ászok* and remembered that while the Sebastian offence had proven to be dangerous, the Budapest defence was one of the league's best, behind only Durham in efficiency. The crowd roared with gusto as Cousins lined up in the shotgun and surveyed the defence.

“Cousins in the gun,” intoned Hawk gravely. “Play clock at five...the snap...pass is deep...its tipped...and *picked off* in the end zone! Quandre Diggs with the interception! The Swordfish are turned away on fourth down trying to pull within a score!”

“Cousins just tries to power that ball to Eric Ebron,” weighed in Davis as the replay ran on the screen. “So, it's a little flat, which allows Minkah Fitzpatrick to get a finger on it. Quandre Diggs finishes it off with the grab in the end zone to end the Swordfish threat. Huge play by the Budapest defence when they needed it. And that may be the play of the game at this point, Ian!”

The Budapest offence came on the field and played with a vengeance. Not a coach to run-up the score or attempt to embarrass his opponent, **Darrin Jones** nevertheless understood that his team needed a greater buffer against this most stubborn adversary. A message needed to be sent – both to the Swordfish and to his own team – that the North Stars would broke no further challenges from a team that had finished a mere half game over .500 and had been lucky to have achieved even that in the eyes of most serious analysts.

Budapest ran eight consecutive pass plays, including a pair of deep routes on their next series, quickly covering the 80 yards to the Sebastian end zone, where Diggs made his fourth touchdown catch of the day to boost the North Stars into a three-score, 41-20 lead. The Swordfish defence had anticipated a conservative, clock-killing approach from the Stars along the lines of their run-heavy first possession of the second half. The Fish were caught totally flat-footed by Jones' aggressive play-calling.

A sense of relief washed over the crowd at Airport Stadium. A 21-point lead felt comfortable with just 11 minutes remaining in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. However, that relief was short-lived.

Exactly 1:32 of clock time later, the Swordfish were back within two scores as a result of **Jonathan Taylor** causing a rare whiff

by **Lavonte David** and making it to the second level on a third down trap play. The powerful and speedy running back then brushed off both Diggs and Fitzpatrick and covered the remaining distance untouched to finish off a 56-yard touchdown run. It was his second massive chunk play of the day and it narrowed the gap to 41-26.

“The Fish are now just an extra point away from making this a 14-point deficit,” **Ian Hawk** proclaimed as the Swordfish players swarmed Taylor and **Russ Lemmon** bounced comically on the balls of his feet, frantically waving his hand and flashing two fingers in the air. It was not intended as a peace sign.

“Russ Lemmon is calling for two points here,” **Charles Davis** interjected. “I’m not sure I agree with this call, though, Ian.”

“Carlson had his last extra point attempt blocked,” Hawk reminded. “Do you think that is playing into his decision?”

“If it is, I still don’t understand it. The kick is still the safer call. If you miss the two-pointer here you put your offence in a situation where they are chasing extra points as well as touchdowns,” Davis explained. “I mean, if you’re going to make a high-stakes gamble to take down a better team, wait until it means what it means, if you get my drift. Say they get within 7 points and they score with hardly any time left to make it a 1-point deficit. A two-pointer for the win is still a little nutty, in my opinion, but it makes more sense at that point than it does now. I think this is an unnecessary gamble.”

The TV cameras circled like vultures around Lemmon, attempting through close-ups from various angles to amplify the storyline of an underdog coach going completely mad in his efforts to overcome the massive odds against him. Russ’s abnormally ruddy complexion, glassy eyes with the unfocused stare bulging out of their sockets, giant sweat stains on this shirt and loosened tie on a cool, windy day in Hungary, all appeared to confirm the diagnosis: Coach Lemmon had gone insane. He was now in a state of unrestrained mania. Moving forward as far as possible, whenever possible, was the only option he would contemplate. Had there been a rule allowing a three-point option scrimmaging from 15 yards away he would have taken it.

The Swordfish two-point play was easily quashed by the Budapest defence. Lemmon elected to stay with the “hot hand” by running Taylor on the same trap play that had just gone for 56 yards. Jones saw it coming. His defence, seeing the same play for the second time in a row, closed the gap against a fatigued Taylor and shut down the play for no gain. The score remained 41-26.

I will spare you the gory details of how the Budapest wolf finished off the Sebastian rabbit. In a nutshell, they scored...and scored again...both touchdowns in a seven-minute span to cut the jugular and make it 55-26 before Swordfish death spasms resulted in another unlikely big play and a touchdown in the final minute to make the final, Budapest 55, Sebastian 34. **Cordarrell Patterson** was given the honour of finishing off the noisy second half with a pair of mundane dives up the middle to burn the final seconds.

The final result, a 21-point Budapest victory, blew away the 13-point Vegas line. But it was an untidy win that did not sit well with **Darrin Jones** and a supremacist cadre of bellicose sports reporters in the Hungarian media. It was not enough that Rodgers and Diggs had shredded the Sebastian defence – that was to be expected. The shredding should have been accompanied by an equally emphatic statement by the defence. This ignored the reality that, however they were accomplishing it, the Swordfish offence during the regular season had averaged more yards per game than any other team and had scored 503 points, second only to Durham. All the same, the Swordfish accomplishments on offence were still not getting the widespread respect they deserved all the way up until game time. For many commentators, the Swordfish success had been a fluke. After this display on international television, however, there could be no more denying the magic of the Swordfish attack. And for the first time, many national pundits who had not bothered to watch them closely could see and begin to understand what lay behind the phenomenon: the maniacal gameday persona of coach, **Russ Lemmon**.

Lemmon had developed a small but devoted cult following over the course of this zany season. **Kirk Cousins** practically worshipped him. **Jonathan Taylor** stood in awe in his presence. **TY Hilton** referred to him as “the great leader to whom I give my life” in interviews. **Odell Beckham Jr** behaved himself. Even in defeat, the Swordfish players looked unbowed. They were already eager to get back to training camp and prepare for next year, **Anthony Castonzo** had said after the game.

Lemmon reverted, almost supernaturally, to his even-keeled, quasi-accountant personality as soon as the game ended. He congratulated his opponent and spoke lucidly in the post-game press conference about the need to be aggressive against a team like the North Stars. He was unrepentant about the seemingly gratuitous and unnecessary two-point convert attempt when down by two touchdowns in the fourth: “You don’t pass up any potential points when battling a team like this late in the game,” he had said with a straight face. Most outsiders would disagree with him on that point, but apparently few if any in the Sebastian locker room did.

“That was the right call,” Cousins had replied when asked if he was surprised that the coach had him go for two points. “We had just smacked them in the mouth with JT’s touchdown. Why not try another shot before they could recover?”

Whether they deserved it or not, the Swordfish and their coach earned a modicum of respect from critics this weekend while losing by a resounding three touchdowns. When it became clear that the Swordfish players had drunk the *Kool-aid* of **Russ Lemmon**’s boundless offence, a new group of believers became willing to partake of the same *Kool-aid*. Or should I say, the *Lemmonade*?

### **OF DINOS and DOGS**

Unfortunately, my dear readers, this is where my analysis, my interest, and my will to live life as a football analyst starts to break down. Fortunately, the *Lagavulin* is beginning to work its magic; although even such an esteemed libation as Islay’s Finest has its limits. One secret which it has just unlocked for me, of which I am now certain beyond all reasonable doubt, is that the crazy Abbott who roams the Irish sideline waving a gold staff is, in fact, the former owner of the Mission Viejo Monarchs, **Chris Ferraro**. This hit me like a Divine Revelation while watching the Abbott’s increasingly erratic escapades as the grim reality of the complete impotence of the Irish offence against the Durham defence made itself painfully apparent this Saturday. I had seen those very same tantrums before; they had been

commonplace and well-documented at His Majesty the King's Royal Coliseum in Mission Viejo during the Monarchs' five-year run of futility from 2012 to 2016.

The Monarchs franchise under its tyrannical overlord had never won more than 6 games in a season. Yet, the autocrat in charge of the team chose to believe that every year he had put together a championship roster that simply underperformed due to laziness, lack of discipline and incompetence. His punishments and public condemnations of his players and coaching staff only made things worse. Eventually, Ferraro's grasping ambition got the better of him. Hosting the EFL's ninth Championship at the end of the 2015 season, that culminated in the building of the great White Elephant known as 'Ferraroland,' bankrupted the would-be King of Portugal. He sold the team and disappeared from public view. Last year he apparently re-emerged as the likely silent owner (or part-owner) of the East Elmhurst Irish; although that fact was never confirmed in my mind until now.

Watching the Abbott was *déjà vu* all over again. I will be putting together a video analysis of Ferraro's very public sideline antics as owner of the Monarchs and his intemperate outbursts in Abbott costume on Saturday as his team failed to produce a single touchdown in a 27-3 loss to the Thunder Lizards. You will agree with me when you see the videos side-by-side that these two people are in fact one and the same. But, let's now turn to the "game."

To be fair, the Irish were not supposed to be in the Quarter Finals. While it is true that some analysts on the fringe, such as **Sperl Sponefritter**, saw potential in this team even before the start of the season, the consensus was that the Pink Panthers would own the South Division and advance in this position over the Irish. Astute moves to acquire running backs **Aaron Jones** and **Raheem Mostert**, and linebacker **Shaquil Barrett** to add complementary pieces to a tight but impressive core group of talent, paid off, as the Oshawa collapse and a light schedule vaulted East Elmhurst to a 13-3 regular season record. As a result, going into this game, the Irish appeared much more dangerous than they turned out to be. Even Yours Truly expected a closer contest.

The most shocking thing about this game given the balance of play was that the outcome was not more lopsided. Even so, it was very, very lop-sided – in a 1970's kind of way. The Durham secondary, which had been tough to crack all season, was truly Dominant (yes, with a capital 'D') in this game. **Tyreek Hill** was contained, **Adam Thielen** was shut down and **Baker Mayfield** looked frightened to throw by as early as the second quarter. It was clear by the end of the opening drive of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half that the Irish offence was not going to go anywhere. Despite plenty of "garbage time," and help from the refs, it was all they could muster to break the shutout with an otherwise meaningless third quarter field goal. They moved the chains just 12 times, piled up a mere 165 yards of total offence and turned the ball over three times. It must have been depressing as hell for Irish fans. Hell, it was depressing for me!

Under these circumstances, the Thunder Lizard offence did not have to do much. Nevertheless, this was also an opportunity to showcase the fancy new weaponry that had, to the surprise of many, failed to cross the line into the top three most prolific attacks in the EFL in 2021. With the assistance of single malt scotch, it crystallized for me while watching this game why this was the case.

Durham supporters are likely reading this and preparing to jump on me with the fact that the Lizards led the league in points scored by a wide margin, scoring 550. But I am not talking about points scored. One has to bear in mind that 42 of those 550 came from defensive scores and that a +19-turnover differential, made up of an eye-popping 29 takeaways, created many advantageous opportunities for the offence to pad the score with little effort. I am referring to the ability to strike quickly or move the ball steadily when needed, attributes that were not as readily apparent as they should have been during the season or in this game.

Despite being reasonably productive and often emphasized, the Durham run game rarely induced opposing defences to bite on play-action or draw 8 men into the box. The Irish defence in this game played the Lizards similarly to way others had; they did not over-commit to stopping the run. They were willing to allow **Antonio Gibson** and **Chase Edmunds** and other even less-recognizable names to gain yards if they could. After all, who are those guys anyway? What defences did not want was to give **Josh Allen** a free hand in the passing game or to allow **Cooper Kupp** to run wild through their secondary. And, while Allen has clearly improved immensely in his second year as a full-time starter for Durham, he is obviously not **Aaron Rodgers**...yet. The Budapest quarterback has transcended the need for a running game to support him. Allen seems to require a bit more support.

While the North Stars were battering the Swordfish, the Lizards were slowly suffocating the Irish without the need for fireworks. But make no mistake – they were looking to light a few Roman Candles and send a message to their Budapest rivals. The problem was, they couldn't. Granted, the Irish defence is a lot better than the neglected assemblage of bodies performing the same role in Sebastian, but with everything going in its favour, with so many opportunities to truly humiliate the second-year upstarts from Queens, the 319 total yards and 27 points produced by the Durham offence was a modest output to say the least.

**Josh Allen** finished with what would have been excellent numbers in the 70's, completing 16 of 29 for 168 yards and a TD with no interceptions. In the passing age, however, this was not an impressive line. He completed just a single deep throw for 21 yards, in 8 attempts. He was awarded game MVP anyway, thanks to a boost in production from his legs, which added 37 yards and a touchdown in 8 carries. **Antonio Gibson** contributed 84 yards and a touchdown on 17 carries, but since many of those yards had come relatively easily behind one of the stoutest offensive lines in football against an Irish defence looking elsewhere, no serious students of the game credited him with doing more than would be expected from an average running back.

There is not much more to say about this tedious display. If you hate the Irish, or you simply like watching a defence bully its opponent through airtight pass coverage aided by a dangerous pass rush, then this was the game for you. Otherwise, there was nothing to see here – no great offensive plays, no contest, absolutely zero drama. I kept waiting for a highlight that never came. I guess, the closest thing to a turning point was **Tyrann Mathieu** wrapping up the most elusive receiver in football, **Tyreek Hill** and

bringing him down one foot shy of the line of gain on 4<sup>th</sup> down to abruptly end the first possession of the second half for the Irish while the game was still in reach. It was a great play by arguably the best defensive back in football. In another game it would have drawn more attention. On this day, it felt like par for the course.

The post-game presser was even less interesting. Irish coach, **Archbishop Thomas Molloy** looked divinely composed as he offered his compliments to his opponent. He even thanked the Durham defence for showing him and his players where they needed to improve in order to compete at the highest level of the EFL: “We will take these valuable lessons and apply them going forward, to make us a better team and a more worthy opponent,” he said with a serene smile.

Durham coach, **George Kaldis**, somber on a good day, added little to the experience. In fact, I cannot remember a thing he said apart from “the defence played well today.” I did not bother to write anything down. I do remember his face. He looked as if he was holding in an immense shit and could barely wait to get rid of it. I guess I’m going to have to dig up the video or transcript later to see if I missed something important. I doubt it.

In the unimpressive finale of Quarter Finals Weekend, the Coyotes chewed up the Assassins like a pack of wolves devouring a reindeer. It would have been horrible to watch, except that the victims were the Assassins; and nobody outside of Las Vegas and the Hell Angels has any sympathy for the Assassins. Indeed, it was kind of humorous to watch the haughty and overly confident Las Vegas coach, **Anthony Holguin**, dissolve into a quivering mass of impotent rage, then despair as he watched his team get humiliated on the national stage. Don’t get me wrong Assassins fans, I have plenty of respect for Holguin’s coaching ability and his achievements since taking over the old St. Charles Chargers. I’m a big **Justin Herbert** fan. But the guy who ran up the score early and often at the beginning of the year deserves – for the sake of his immortal soul – to eat a little humble pie. That the Coyotes force fed him humble pie doesn’t take away from the need for the basic lesson being given.

It was 35-0 for Cobb County at half time. How they got there was a blur – even on replay. The Coyotes started from their own 5-yard line after a near-perfect coffin corner kick by **Bryan Anger** partially redeemed an ineffective opening drive by the Assassins. The Cobb County offence made that punt moot. They moved 95 yards in 8 plays – every play but one a chunk play – to log the game’s first touchdown on an 8-yard strike from **Ryann Tannehill** to **Brandin Cooks**. Another punt by the Assassins led to better field position and another 8-play touchdown drive by the Coyotes; this one ending in a 4-yard TD run by **Matt Breida**. Then came the second quarter: Another LV punt followed by a 7-play Cobb County TD drive, then a **Dalvin Cook** fumble returned for a TD by Coyote cornerback, **Tre’Davious White**, then another Assassin punt followed by a Cobb County TD on a 44-yard *run* by Tannehill! The score was already 35-0 with 3:01 still left to play in the 1<sup>st</sup> half! Incredibly, the Coyotes began running out the clock with less than two minutes remaining after yet another punt by the Las Vegas offence.

This game was as one-sided as it gets. Unlike the reaction of the Swordfish when getting rag-dolled in Budapest, the Assassins were totally punch drunk by the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter and never recovered. Coyote coach, **Eron Osman**, stylishly and sportingly dressed in a dark blue blazer with beige turtleneck, calmly directed the embalming of his opponent’s corpse in a second half devoid of any real purpose other than to get off the field as soon as possible. This was possibly the most boring end to a game in the history of playoff football, as the Coyote coach apparently saw no compelling need to score again. Osman called just two pass plays in the second half and turned to old warhorse, **Adrian Peterson** 15 times to keep the ball in his team’s hands as much as possible and to dissolve the minutes. This tactic was even more humiliating for the Assassins than a strategy of piling up the points – they weren’t considered a threat and were not worth the exertion.

The above approach made sense from a tactical point of view. There were more reasons to get off the field in one piece than there were to run up the score. Trying to “make a statement” by pummeling Vegas further would have only aggravated the situation and put his players at risk. But it made for impossible-to-watch football when the victim on the receiving end of the beat down was unable to get off the ground.

Yes, the Assassins managed to find the end zone eventually. They survived two fumbles on their scoring drive and had to resort to third-string running back, **Trayveon Williams** to finish the job from half-a-yard away. The young free agent refugee from the Tex-Mex League celebrated with a hard spike of the ball and a somersault, unaware or uncaring that the score meant nothing to the final outcome. There were no cheers from the crowd, which meant if there were any visiting Vegas fans still left in Coyote Field they no longer cared.

As usual, the Coyotes’ stat sheet was not impressive or noteworthy on the surface, save for the fact that Tannehill attempted only 12 passes in the entire game. Yet, his presence was much greater than that. He completed 9 of those passes for 110 yards and 2 touchdowns and rushed for 56 yards, 44 of those coming on a thrilling scramble for his team’s final TD. **Damien Harris** rushed for 95 yards on just 8 carries before being given an early rest. Cornerback, **Steve Nelson** recorded 12 tackles and forced a fumble to stand out for the defence. The Assassins’ **Darius Leonard** made an astounding 22 tackles in the game, most of those on Peterson.

To be frank, I have run out of things to say about this travesty. I would mention the post-game presser except that I was making my way to the scotch bar when it was happening live and, as I write this piece at home, I have no desire or interest in digging up the video and hearing what the coaches had to say about a debacle which neither of them, I am sure, expected to endure and for which there is no intelligent comment to be offered. The Assassins got their butts kicked on a great day for the Coyotes.

The good news in all of this is that the four best teams are left standing for the season’s penultimate week. I expect to see, tight contest in both Conference Finals: Cobb County at Charleswood and Durham at Budapest should deliver the goods.

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## *Jimmy's CONFERENCE FINALS PICKS*

### PACIFIC CONFERENCE FINAL

#### **COBB COUNTY @ CHARLESWOOD (line – COYOTES by 1)**

**INJURIES:** Cobb County – None; Charleswood – None.

It is rare to see a no.1 seed as home underdog in a Conference Final. When breaking down this match-up closely, however, it is easy to see why the Coyotes have received a slim endorsement from the Oracles of the Oasis in Nevada. Cobb County whipped the Patriots good in their Week 3 encounter for starters. Then there is the clear statistical edge in most major offensive and defensive categories in favour of the Coyotes. There is also the touchy subject of the Patriots having piled up their many victories against the weakest schedule of opponents in the league. It turns out drawing the South Division for inter-conference play and getting to play Twin Cities and Peg City twice each are bound to boost the bottom line. The Pats were 3-3 versus teams with a winning record and 10-0 against the rest, confirming that they are a very good team, but calling into question whether they truly deserve to be considered one of the elite entries in the 2021 post-season. This is the Pats' chance to put to rest any nagging doubts about their bona fides. Coming off a convincing victory over Virden in the Quarter Finals, many believe Charleswood is peaking at the right time. Yet, the Coyotes laid an even more impressive beatdown on the Assassins last week, giving them plenty of confidence to deal with a rising Pats team that they have already beaten once this year. The Coyotes feel that they can impose their will on the Patriots' defence. They have one of the better road-grading offensive lines and the second-most prolific running attack in the league, while the Pats' defence has had difficulty stopping the run. Expect the Coyotes to attempt a repeat of the 40-carry steamroller they crushed the Pats with in their regular season match. This, they hope, will set up devastating play-action by Ryan Tannehill to put shock points on the board. On the other side, the Cobb County defence will continue to focus on taking away targets for DeShaun Watson by dropping linebackers into coverage and goading him into forced throws. This strategy worked like a charm once, but it could backfire if the Pats wise up and hand the ball off to Alvin Kamara. After a disappointing regular season, the star running back exploded for 189 rushing yards and 3 touchdowns last week against Virden. He was the best player on the field in that game. If he can be even half as effective in this game, he would give his quarterback the time and space he needs to be truly devastating through the air, rather than merely statistically efficient. While the Pats proved to have a good offence this year, it fell short of delivering the devastating payload many had expected to see from an offence with Amari Cooper, Travis Kelce and DK Metcalf running routes for their big-armed QB. Despite finishing third overall in passer rating on the season, Watson remains unproven in many people's eyes. He was distinctly the second-best quarterback on the field last week and wound up being a supplement to victory, rather than the celebrated cause of it. Watson has something to prove here and he can do so if he can spread the ball around against a Coyotes' defence that is ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in efficiency and tops in the league in the red zone. Whether he is successful will depend as much on the schemes he is given as his talent. The Pats have been rightly criticized for being too predictable in their play-calling, relying on their superior talent to win the match-ups. In a league where the real difference in physical ability between a top player and an average starter is wafer thin, winning consistently without an element of surprise is very difficult and doomed to fail. If the Pats bring the same playbook to the Conference Final that they brought to Week 3, they will be in trouble. While the talent edge goes to the Pats; the coaching edge must go to the side that has somehow managed to turn Ryan Tannehill into a household name. **PICK: COBB COUNTY**

### ATLANTIC CONFERENCE FINAL

#### **DURHAM @ BUDAPEST (line – NORTH STARS by 4)**

**INJURIES:** Durham – None; Budapest – None.

Here it is, the real championship. With no disrespect to the final two combatants in the other conference, the league's true heavyweights

are here. Either one of Durham or Budapest would make a worthy champion of the league. The no.1 ranked Durham defence is not only hard to score on; it will score on you, as it has done to opposing offences six times so far this year. The efficient Budapest offence attacking it, moves seemingly at will, with ruthless efficiency and air tight security under the guiding hand of Aaron Rodgers, the league's top quarterback. The high-scoring Durham offence prospers due to the efforts of a true dual-threat quarterback in Josh Allen, a young player flowering suddenly as a leader as well as a talent. The Budapest defence trying to stop him needs no introduction. The centrepiece of last year's championship squad remains the stingiest unit in the EFL in the one stat that matters most – points allowed, and enjoys such a fearsome reputation in the secondary that few quarterbacks dare to challenge it deep, or over the middle. Taken all together, this is a showdown of strength against strength on both sides of the ball. Expect a battle that will tolerate few, if any, mistakes by either side and could break suddenly and irrevocably to one side or the other on the slightest coaching miscalculation or player misstep. Talk about tension. When the gloves come off this coming week in Budapest, expect a much more competitive game than the one these teams played in the regular season. The North Stars planted their flag in Jurassic Park in Week 13 with the confidence and ease they have enjoyed in every other weekend of their current perfect season. However, their path to victory then was smoothed by a string of injuries to some of Durham's best players, three of those being critical contributors to their league-leading pass rush. While we will never know what might have happened if Trey Hendrickson, Chase Young and Brian Burns (with 29 sacks among them) had each played the entire game, it is not a stretch to conject that Rodgers would have been pressured more in the pocket and less composed than he turned out to be, while throwing 4 TD passes in that game. Both teams come into this game fully healthy. Whatever random injuries come into play will occur during the action. Barring a catastrophic player loss for either team, I see a close contest with defence playing a deciding role in the outcome. The Lizards lived on turnovers during the regular season, taking the ball away a league-high 29 times and naturally finishing with a league-leading +19 turnover differential. This propensity to win the turnover battle cannot be discounted, but it is unlikely to factor in as significantly as it would if the Lizards were facing a lesser quarterback. The North Stars turned the ball over just 6 times all season and have the league's smartest quarterback making decisions with the ball. Durham absolutely must generate pressure from their front four to create the conditions necessary to induce errors by Rodgers. Otherwise, it will be a game of pitch-and-catch when the Budapest offence is on the field. Interestingly, neither team has a running back with 200 carries or more. Both rely on the pass to set up the occasional run, or sequence of runs. But if the teams need to rely heavily on the run, for whatever reason, Durham has the edge. The North Stars proved relatively vulnerable to the run this season in those few games where their opponent had the luxury of establishing the ground game. While the running backs on both sides are comparable to each other, the Durham offensive line is better built to move the pile than the lighter, more agile Budapest line, one that is more focused on protecting their meal ticket in the pocket. The ground game will likely remain a secondary consideration for both squads, however. Their most impressive offensive weapons are in the passing game. Stephon Diggs and Justin Jefferson are the toughest split combo to defend against in the league. Leave Nelson Agholor alone, however, and he will cut a defence deep for huge gains. While not as prolific, Cooper Kupp and Curtis Samuel are just as talented and tight end Darren Waller plays like a slot receiver off the line. The chess pieces are there for both sides. This game will come down to coaching decisions – not necessarily brilliant or bad ones – simply ones that get executed well or not; adjustments that work, or not. The coach who keeps his head will have the edge. I'll take the big game experience here. **PICK: BUDAPEST**



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FROM THE EFL ARCHIVES – The Quarter Finals round of the 2015 EFL season was, as anticipated, not particularly competitive. There were two wrinkles: The stout challenge by the Gladiators in their tilt against the Thunder Lizards and the shocking 4<sup>th</sup> quarter collapse of the Ravens in their showdown against the Cubs. But, in the end, the better teams prevailed and advanced to the Conference Finals.

In Durham, a 4<sup>th</sup>-quarter roughing the kicker penalty on Gwinnett's *Kyle Williams* sealed the fate of the Gladiators in a 28-20 loss to the Thunder Lizards. Trailing 21-20, with 5:31 left in the game, Williams ran into punter

*Thomas Morstead* to give Durham a first down at the Glads' 40-yard line. Durham went on to score a TD and hold on in the final two minutes to prevail in a tighter-than-expected contest.

In Beaufort County, Ravens' starting QB, *RGIII* melted down in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, opening a window for the Cubs to comeback from a 20-10 deficit. Back-to-back interceptions on the first two Raven drives of the final frame led to 14 Iowa City points and possession of the momentum. The Cubs added a TD and a FG to round out a 24-point 4<sup>th</sup> quarter in a 34-20 win.

At Patriot Place in Charleswood, the favoured Patriots found themselves deadlocked at 17 with the Triumph heading into the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. In the end, the superior talent on Charleswood was the difference. *Jason Witten* turned a short hitch from *Peyton Manning* into a 41-yard gain to set up a *Lamar Miller* TD run for the go-ahead score in a 31-17 win.

In Aurora, the powerful Mustangs took care of business against the overmatched Corn Kings, as expected, but not before the underdogs gave them a bit of a scare. Tied at 14 in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, *Johnny Hekker* attempted a fake punt pass on 4<sup>th</sup> & 1 that fell incomplete. That was enough to turn the tide permanently against Cowtown and the Mustangs went on to score on their ensuing possession and eventually win 31-14.