

# WEEK 14



# EFL

ELITE FOOTBALL LEAGUE



Shooting for the Stars in our 15th Season!

January 16, 2022

EAST



CENTRAL



WEST



NORTH



COASTAL



SOUTH



# MAC ATTACK!



*Mac Jones*  
*Peg City Crusaders*

Peg City quarterback, *Mac Jones*, pumps his fist after delivering an 11-yard TD pass to *Brandon Aiyuk* in 4<sup>th</sup> quarter action in Week 14 versus Oshawa. The score put the Crusaders in front 34-24 with 4:28 left and put them on the road to victory for the first time in 2021. The rookie had his best day as a pro, finishing with 4 TD passes. (Story inside)



Who was slick  
in Week  
Fourteen?

“Brylcreem” THE  
EFL’S FIRST SPONSOR



OFFENCE



Mac Jones  
QB  
Peg City  
Crusaders

23 of 33, 382 yds, 4 TDs. His best day as a pro helped earn 1<sup>st</sup> win as a pro.

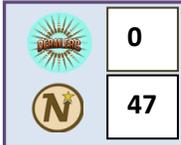


DEFENCE



Malcolm Butler  
CB  
York  
Excaliburs

7 T, 2 PDs, 2 INTs (2-32 yds). 2 picks turned around and sealed game.



The powerful North Stars controlled this game throughout. Buffalo punted after 5 plays to start the game then Budapest took over at their own 28 and zipped down the field in 8 plays, finishing with a 25-yard TD pass from **Aaron Rodgers** to **Nelson Agholor**. Trying to get back in it, the Derailers turned the ball over on downs at their own 45-yard line, setting up Budapest's second TD, a 44-yard pass to **Stefon Diggs**. Problems compounded for Buffalo after that, with two interceptions of **Lamar Jackson** and 3 more turnovers on downs leading to 27 Budapest points, leading to a total blowout.

01-11-2022 Temp:51 Wind:5-15 None Line:BUD by 18 MVP:Rodgers HFA:ON(0)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Buffalo (4-10)	0	0	0	0	0
2021 Budapest (14-0)	7	21	10	9	47

#### Passing

BUF: Jackson 25/14 59 Yds 2 Int  
 BUD: Rodgers 24/16 217 Yds 4 TDs

#### Rushing

BUF: Jackson 17/74, Booker 7/26, McKitty 1/5, Woods 3/2  
 BUD: Wilson Jr. 14/69 TD, Patterson 5/24 TD, Patterson 3/9, Taylor 4/8, Felton 1/2

#### Receiving

BUF: Woods 6/37, Booker 4/5, Sanders 2/10, Carter 2/7  
 BUD: Diggs 6/105 2 TDs, Jefferson 4/46, Patterson 2/16, Hollister 2/17 TD, Carter 1/5

#### Defense

BUF:  
 BUD: Suh Sk FF 4-Tk, Jordan Sk 5-Tk, David 10-Tk, Dean 8-Tk, Diggs Int 3-Tk

#### Injuries

BUF: Tate 2  
 BUD:

#### Misc

BUF: 3/9 4th Dwn  
 BUD: 4/4 Red Zn TDs, Myers 2/2 FG 42 Lg



**Miles Sanders** finished off a 75-yard opening drive with a 16-yard TD run to give Pickering the early lead. Two series later they would take over at their own 48 after a missed 58-yard FG attempt and **Philip Rivers** would make it a two-score lead with a 22-yard TD off play action to **Calvin Ridley**. **Matt Stafford** answered with an 8-yard TD pass to **Keenan Allen** to make it 14-7, where the score would remain until late in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, when **D'Andre Swift** took in a 13-yard screen pass to make it 21-7. A bad snap and a strip sack of Stafford returned for a TD by **Javelin Guidry**, ensured no NJ comeback.

01-13-2022 Thermopylae Stadium Temp:24 Wind:5-15 None Line:PIC by 4 MVP:Sanders H

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 New Jersey (6-8)	0	7	0	7	14
2021 Pickering (8-6)	14	0	7	10	31

#### Passing

NJ: Stafford 43/26 208 Yds 2 TDs  
 PIC: Rivers 24/13 190 Yds 2 TDs Int

#### Rushing

NJ: Montgomery 10/43, Gallman Jr. 7/16, Stafford 2/6  
 PIC: Sanders 25/122 TD, Swift 2/9, Sermon 3/3

#### Receiving

NJ: Allen 6/69 TD, McLaurin 5/57 TD, McKissic 5/13, Samuel 3/27, Sample 3/24  
 PIC: Brown 6/93, Ridley 2/40 TD, Ricard 2/11, Mooney 1/19, Swift 1/13 TD, Smith 1/14

#### Defense

NJ: Newsome II 11-Tk, Smith Sk FF 2-Tk  
 PIC: Schobert FF 14-Tk, Keke Sk 4-Tk, Stephen Sk FF Tk, Joseph 9-Tk

#### Injuries

NJ: Wills Jr. 1  
 PIC: Kearse 3, Ward 1

#### Misc

NJ: Stafford 2-F 2-Lost, Boswell 0/1 FG  
 PIC: Stephen 1-FR, Guidry 1-FR TD, Zuerlein 1/1 FG 39 Lg



31  
38

The first 6 series ended in scores, with the Coyotes' 3 TDs besting the Hawks' 2 TDs and 1 FG, giving the home team a 21-17 half time edge. The Hawks took the lead in the 3<sup>rd</sup> after a botched snap by **Ryan Tannehill** set up a short field and a go-ahead 5-yard TD pass from **Derek Carr** to **Austin Ekeler**. Tannehill responded with a 60-yard TD pass to **Brandin Cooks** but the Hawks pulled back in front after a 34-yard PI call set up a 1-yard TD run by Ekeler. The Coyotes tied it with a FG then took the lead to stay on a 16-yard TD pass to **Michael Pittman Jr.**, Tannehill's 5<sup>th</sup> TD of the day.

01-12-2022 Coyote Field Temp:58 Wind:0-10 None Line:CB by 6 MVP:Tannehill HFA:ON(3)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Brooklin (8-6)	7	10	14	0	31
2021 Cobb County (10-4)	14	7	10	7	38

Passing

BRH: Carr 49/31 348 Yds 3 TDs  
CB: Tannehill 30/20 302 Yds 5 TDs

Rushing

BRH: Ekeler 12/67 TD, Carr 2/1  
CB: Peterson 14/63, Harris 6/57, Tannehill 7/45, Breida 9/1

Receiving

BRH: Ekeler 12/107 2 TDs, Hopkins 9/118, Ingram 5/69 TD, Gronkowski 4/48, Perriman 1/6  
CB: Parker 8/117, Pittman Jr. 5/75 3 TDs, Cooks 4/85 2 TDs, Cook 3/25

Defense

BRH: Hubbard Sk FF 2-Tk, Highsmith 10-Tk, Ferrell 8-Tk  
CB: White 10-Tk

Injuries

BRH: McKinney 1, Robey-Coleman 1, Tate 1, Williams 1, Cobb 1  
CB:

Misc

BRH: Bullock 1/1 FG 24 Lg, Simmons 1-FR  
CB: 11/15 3rd Dn, Tannehill 1-F Lost, McManus 1/1 FG 28 Lg



37  
24

With York already in front 16-7, **Malcolm Butler** picked off **Drew Brees** returning it 32 yards to the Bruxelles' 27 and setting up the second of 3 TD runs by **Derrick Henry** on the day for a 23-7 lead. The Bombers were unable to recover this lost ground as the Excaliburs' offence moved easily on the ground, with Henry and through the air, with **Tom Brady** throwing for 335 yards and 2 TD passes. An injured Brees was replaced by **Jared Goff** in the 3<sup>rd</sup>. The Bombers' back-up was intercepted twice trying to lead a comeback, including a second pick by Butler. This was probably Brees' last game.

01-14-2022 The Fortress Temp:77 Wind:Calm Line:BRX by 7 MVP:Henry HFA:ON(3)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 York (8-6)	13	10	14	0	37
2021 Bruxelles (5-8-1)	7	7	3	7	24

Passing

YOR: Brady 32/25 335 Yds 2 TDs  
BRX: Goff 18/8 119 Yds TD 2 Int, Brees 12/10 104 Yds TD Int

Rushing

YOR: Henry 32/175 3 TDs, Williams 3/7, Brady 2/3  
BRX: Williams 12/67 TD, Fournette 9/36, Gainwell 2/17, Goff 1/1

Receiving

YOR: Davis 7/132 TD, Amendola 4/41, St. Brown 4/57, Kmet 3/32 TD, Ford 3/34  
BRX: Godwin 8/117 TD, Claypool 3/61, Williams 2/5, Juszczuk 2/10 TD, Shaheen 1/6

Defense

YOR: Butler 2-Int 7-Tk, Jewell 9-Tk  
BRX: Davis 10-Tk, Smith 8-Tk, Grant 8-Tk, Clark Sk 3-Tk

Injuries

YOR: Gary 1, Teller 1, Buckner 1  
BRX: Howard 3, Phillips 2, Brees 1

Misc

YOR: 36:40 TOP, Gould 1/1 FG 31 Lg  
BRX: Prater 1/1 FG 59 Lg



This contest started well for the visitors. They forced a punt from deep in Virden territory and exploited the short field for an 8-play, 46-yard scoring drive, **Najee Harris** scoring from 3 yards. The game completely reversed course after that. The Virden defence shut down the Caddies' offence, sacking **Kyler Murray** 5 times and holding them to just 3 1<sup>st</sup> downs for the remainder of the game. Meanwhile, Patrick **Mahomes** threw TD passes of 49-yard to **TJ Hockenson**, 51 yards to **KJ Hamler** and 13 yards to **Royce Freeman** to give Virden as much offence as they would need and the win.

01-13-2022 TERRORDOME Temp:69 Wind:Calm None Line:VV by 7 MVP:Mahomes HFA:ON(4)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Erieau (4-10)	7	0	0	0	7
2021 Virden (8-6)	3	14	7	0	24

#### Passing

ERI: Murray 23/13 63 Yds  
 VV: Mahomes 28/14 254 Yds 3 TDs

#### Rushing

ERI: Harris 10/21 TD, Hines 2/15, Murray 5/15, Moss 2/13  
 VV: Elliott 25/104, Mahomes 6/21, Freeman 3/7

#### Receiving

ERI: Moss 3/3, Andrews 3/26, Hines 2/5, Harris 2/6, Conley 1/11, Higgins 1/11  
 VV: Elliott 3/39, Campbell 3/41, Hockenson 2/65 TD, Hamler 2/69 TD, Green 2/21

#### Defense

ERI: Hewitt 10-Tk  
 VV: Williams 2-Sks FF 5-Tk, Nnadi 2-Sks 3-Tk, Ford Sk 6-Tk, Trevathan 8-Tk

#### Injuries

ERI: Ruggs III 2  
 VV: Harris Jr. 5, Buggs 2, Brown 1, Peters 1, Adderley 1

#### Misc

ERI: 7 1st Dwn  
 VV: 35:47 TOP, Badgley 1/1 FG 29 Lg



The Triumph held the ball for all of overtime, taking 18 plays to move 62 yards and set up a 31-yard game-winning FG attempt with 0:01 left. But **Dustin Hopkins** kicked it wide left to preserve the tie. The Gladiators held a 13-3 lead heading into the 4<sup>th</sup> but a 36-yard run by **Clyde Edwards-Helaire** set up his own 5-yard TD run to tie the game. Twin Cities took the lead on a 22-yard FG with 1:54 left but a kick out-of-bounds shortened the field for a 43-yard drive by the Glads and 35-yard FG by **Tyler Bass** to send the game to OT, where the Glads never got a chance on offence.

01-12-2022 Heinz Field Temp:27 Wind:0-5 None Line:GEO by 7 MVP:Edwards-Hela HFA:ON(1)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Twin Cities (3-10-1)	3	3	0	10	16
2021 Georgia (3-9-2)	3	7	3	3	16

#### Passing

TCT: Beathard 29/19 163 Yds, Trubisky 10/5 59 Yds  
 GEO: Roethlisberger 37/25 215 Yds

#### Rushing

TCT: Gordon III 20/82, Edwards-Helaire 11/66 TD, Moore 1/29, Beathard 3/17  
 GEO: Robinson 19/57, Jacobs 5/23 TD

#### Receiving

TCT: Bateman 9/74, White 6/39, Moore 6/82, Gordon III 2/23, Edwards-Helaire 1/4  
 GEO: Johnson 6/66, Fuller V 5/47, Landry 4/27, Ertz 3/26, Robinson 3/16, Fells 1/8

#### Defense

TCT: Wagner 10-Tk, Moseley 8-Tk  
 GEO: Edmunds 14-Tk, Tillery Sk 3-Tk

#### Injuries

TCT: Austin 4, Crowder 3, Clark 1  
 GEO: Joseph 2, Brown 1

#### Misc

TCT: Hopkins 3/5 FG 38 Lg  
 GEO: Bass 3/3 FG 35 Lg



**Baker Mayfield** found **Tyreek Hill** open for a 16-yard TD strike with 0:32 left in the 4<sup>th</sup> to complete a comeback victory for the Irish. The Pats led 24-14 early in the 3<sup>rd</sup> when **DeShaun Watson** connected with **Travis Kelce** for a 48-yard catch-and-run TD on a daring 4<sup>th</sup> & 7 past mid-field. The Irish answered with a 13-play, 75-yard drive, scoring on a 1-yard run by **Sony Michel** to pull within 3 points. The Pats were stopped twice trying to extend their lead, once on 4<sup>th</sup> down at the Irish 38 and the second on a 3<sup>rd</sup> & 3 sack by **Micah Parsons** to the Pats' 39 that set up the game-winning drive.

01-12-2022 Mgr McClancy Mem Sta Temp:33 Wind:0-5 None Line:EE by 4 MVP:Mayfield H

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Charleswood (12-2)	14	3	7	0	24
2021 East Elmhurst (11-3)	7	7	7	7	28

**Passing**

CHP: Watson 30/21 298 Yds 3 TDs  
 EE: Mayfield 26/16 199 Yds 3 TDs Int

**Rushing**

CHP: Kamara 10/48, Watson 2/17  
 EE: Michel 15/107 TD, Jones 16/75, Mayfield 4/21

**Receiving**

CHP: Kelce 8/159 2 TDs, Smith-Schuster 6/56 TD, Cooper 5/74, Kamara 2/9  
 EE: Hill 5/78 2 TDs, Thielen 3/28 TD, Jones 3/25, Robinson 2/34, Michel 1/11

**Defense**

CHP: Fuller Int 7-Tk, Sweat Sk 3-Tk  
 EE: Vernon Sk FF 2-Tk, Boston 9-Tk

**Injuries**

CHP:  
 EE:

**Misc**

CHP: Lutz 1/1 FG 20 Lg  
 EE: 36:13 TOP



**Mac Jones** finished off a 10-play, 80-yard drive with a 17-yard TD pass to **Brandon Aiyuk** to give the Crusaders a 28-24 lead in the 4<sup>th</sup>. That would prove to be the winning score as interceptions by **Bobby Okereke** and **Taylor Rapp** on back-to-back drives kept Aurora off the scoreboard and led to 9 more Peg City points on Aiyuk's 3<sup>rd</sup> TD of the game and a 53-yard FG by **Younghoe Koo**. Oshawa led 24-15 at half time after a **Matt Ryan** to **Davante Adams** 35-yard TD bomb in the dying seconds of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter, but fell apart in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half as the Pegs pushed back for their first win.

01-14-2022 Temp:-2 Wind: None Line:PCC by 7 MVP:Jones HFA:ON(0)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Oshawa (2-11-1)	7	17	0	0	24
2021 Peg City (1-13)	6	9	7	15	37

**Passing**

OSH: Ryan 46/32 329 Yds 3 TDs 2 Int  
 PCC: Jones 33/23 382 Yds 4 TDs

**Rushing**

OSH: Drake 20/70, Singletary 2/11, Ryan 1/1  
 PCC: Bell 14/69, Hubbard 9/25, Jones 2/4 TD, Shenault Jr. 1/3

**Receiving**

OSH: Adams 12/148 2 TDs, Edelman 7/46, Reynolds 7/77 TD, Schultz 2/35, Goedert 2/17  
 PCC: Aiyuk 8/129 3 TDs, Shenault Jr. 6/102, Higbee 5/132, Ingold 1/3

**Defense**

OSH: Davenport Sk 2-Tk  
 PCC: Humphrey 16-Tk

**Injuries**

OSH: Davenport 4, Autry 1  
 PCC: Davis 4, Sutton 2, Barkley 1, Kelly 1, Flowers 1

**Misc**

OSH: 10 MT, Gonzalez 1/1 FG 35 Lg  
 PCC: Koo 2/2 FG 53 Lg



Three turnovers on the Cubs' first three possessions – a **Tyrann Mathieu** interception and two fumbles lost – led to 13 Durham points, including a 34-yard scoop and score by safety **Devin McCourty**. The Thunder Lizards' offence then got in on the action with a 10-play, 85-yard scoring drive ending in a 6-yard TD pass from **Josh Allen** to **Chase Edmonds** to give Durham a 20-0 lead at the half. A slow 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter yielded two more field goal drives by Durham, giving **Cairo Santos** 4 FGs on the day. **James Conner** scored on a 4-yard run early in the 4<sup>th</sup> for the Cubs' only points.

01-11-2022 Jurassic Park Temp:69 Wind:Calm \*Internet\* Line:DTL by 7 MVP:Allen HFA:ON(4)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Iowa City (8-6)	0	0	0	6	6
2021 Durham (12-2)	6	14	3	10	33

**Passing**

ICC: Wilson 28/17 132 Yds Int  
DTL: Allen 34/22 298 Yds TD

**Rushing**

ICC: Conner 15/86 TD, Wilson 5/55, Carter 2/1  
DTL: Gibson 17/92, Edmonds 8/47, Allen 3/20 TD, Mattison 2/2

**Receiving**

ICC: Coutee 5/32, Beasley 4/29, Lockett 3/31, Conner 2/26, Kirk 2/8, Brown 1/6  
DTL: Waller 6/65, Samuel 6/118, Kupp 6/95, Gibson 1/11, Knox 1/5, Edmonds 1/6 TD

**Defense**

ICC: Rhodes FF 8-Tk, Singleton 9-Tk, Cox Sk 3-Tk  
DTL: Warner 10-Tk

**Injuries**

ICC: Hargrave 1, Johnson 1  
DTL: Allen 2

**Misc**

ICC: Wilson 1-F Lost, Lockett 1-F Lost  
DTL: Simmons 1-FR, McCourty 1-FR TD, Santos 4/4 FG 55 Lg



A 25-yard punt return by **Jakeem Grant** set up great field position for Chino's second possession and **Dak Prescott** took advantage, hitting **Marvin Jones Jr** deep for a 28-yard TD pass to open the scoring. Two long FG drives wrapped up the 1<sup>st</sup> half scoring for Chino as they took a 13-3 lead into half time. The Blue Eagles went three-and-out to start the 2<sup>nd</sup> half and Grant replied with a nice punt return of 21 yards to set up a 39-yard TD strike from Prescott to Jones Jr for their second hook-up of the day. The Blue Eagles finally found the end zone late in the 4<sup>th</sup> but it was too little too late.

01-10-2022 The Eagle's Nest Temp:45 Wind:0-5 None Line:CHI by 4 MVP:Prescott HFA:

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Chino (9-4-1)	7	6	7	6	26
2021 Scarborough (2-11-1)	0	3	0	7	10

**Passing**

CHI: Prescott 29/17 203 Yds 2 TDs, Bridgewater 4/3 20 Yds  
SBE: Lock 35/17 126 Yds 2 Int

**Rushing**

CHI: Jones II 16/58, Bridgewater 2/22, Abdullah 6/15, Prescott 4/13, Jackson 1/2  
SBE: Carson 19/113 TD, Lock 1/8

**Receiving**

CHI: Gallup 4/35, Jones Jr. 4/89 2 TDs, Byrd 3/29, Abdullah 3/12, Patrick 3/35  
SBE: Robinson II 7/63, Jackson 4/15, Carson 3/8, Uzomah 1/6, Ward 1/8, Edwards 1/26

**Defense**

CHI: Maye Int 6-Tk  
SBE: Amos 10-Tk

**Injuries**

CHI: Jackson 4, Feliciano 4, Hall 1  
SBE: Gaskin 3, Burrow 3, Crowder 1

**Misc**

CHI: 9/65 Pen, Butker 4/4 FG 43 Lg  
SBE: Crosby 1/1 FG 54 Lg



10



22

A 56-yard pass from **Trey Lance** to **Robby Anderson** off play action set up the first of 3 **Evan McPherson** FGs for a 3-0 Pilots' lead. Two series later, **Todd Gurley II** was stripped by **KJ Wright** at the Corn Kings' 28-yard line, setting up the game's first TD on a 16-yard pass to **Kareem Hunt**. Cowtown scraped together a field goal drive, but could not get into rhythm offensively against a strong Seattle pass rush that sacked Corn Kings QBs 7 times, 3 of those by **Khalil Mack**. Lance took advantage of the threat of running to make some big plays in the passing game and lead his team to an easy win.

01-15-2022 Kingdome Temp:70 Wind:Calm

Line:SEA by 7 MVP:Lance

HFA:ON(

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Cowtown (6-8)	0	3	0	7	10
2021 Seattle (5-9)	10	3	6	3	22

#### Passing

COW: Mills 17/9 110 Yds TD, Garoppolo 13/11 79 Yds

SEA: Lance 22/17 213 Yds 2 TDs

#### Rushing

COW: Gurley II 13/27, Gore 5/21, Mills 1/6

SEA: Akers 4/24, Brown 9/23, Lamb 1/19, Hunt 11/19, Lance 7/1

#### Receiving

COW: Bourne 6/41 TD, McKenzie 5/26, Gurley II 3/30, Alie-Cox 2/12, Toney 2/60

SEA: Hunt 5/64 TD, Renfrow 3/41 TD, Lamb 2/15, Anderson 2/57, Harry 1/10, Mack 1/6

#### Defense

COW: Smith 16-Tk, Van Ginkel Sk 7-Tk

SEA: Mack 3-Sks 3-Tk, White 2-Sks 4-Tk, Wright Sk FF 5-Tk

#### Injuries

COW: Harris 3, Murphy 2

SEA: Deguara 2

#### Misc

COW: Gurley II 1-F Lost, Slye 1/1 FG 37 Lg

SEA: Jenkins 1-FR, McPherson 3/3 FG 58 Lg



29



7

After a first-possession FG by Sebastian, **Dion Lewis** fumbled the ensuing kickoff and **Sione Takitaki** recovered, setting up a 1-yard TD run by **Nick Chubb** for a quick 10-0 Swordfish lead. The Assassins could not get anything going offensively in the 1<sup>st</sup> half and Chubb's second TD run of the game gave Sebastian a 17-0 lead at half time. A **Scotty Miller** lost fumble to start the 3<sup>rd</sup> set up a 27-yard TD pass to **Jerry Jeudy**, but that would be the Assassins' only score of the game. The Swordfish defence stopped Vegas on 4<sup>th</sup> & 1 at their own 7 to highlight a strong finish and secure the win.

01-13-2022 Assassin's Den Temp:74 Wind:Calm

Line:LV by 7 MVP:Cousins

HFA:ON(

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Sebastian (7-6-1)	10	7	3	9	29
2021 Las Vegas (8-6)	0	0	7	0	7

#### Passing

SS: Cousins 30/21 345 Yds, Mond 1/1 11 Yds

LV: Herbert 31/20 243 Yds TD

#### Rushing

SS: Chubb 12/43 2 TDs, Taylor 14/43 TD, Cousins 1/8, Richard 1/6, Perine 2/4

LV: Cook 10/18, Herbert 3/7

#### Receiving

SS: Beckham Jr. 5/79, Hilton 5/82, Akins 3/43, Smythe 3/31, Miller 2/73, Perine 1/9

LV: Humphries 5/75, Cook 5/27, Graham 3/26, Fitzgerald 3/41, Pascal 2/29, Jeudy 2/45 TD

#### Defense

SS:

LV: Leonard 17-Tk

#### Injuries

SS: Cashman 2, Ebron 1, Schwartz 1

LV: Beck 4, Williams 1, Witherspoon 1

#### Misc

SS: Dunlap III 1-Safety, 36:53 TOP, Miller 1-F Lost, Carlson 2/2 FG 44 Lg, Takitaki 1-FR

LV: Lewis 1-F Lost, Williams 1-FR



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

EFL 2021 - Week 14 Standings

East	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home			Div			Conf		
y-Cobb County	10	4	0	.714	W4	392	28.0	270	19.3	8.7	7	1	0	3	1	0	8	2	0
New Jersey	6	8	0	.429	L2	270	19.3	328	23.4	-4.1	2	5	0	1	3	0	5	5	0
Bruxelles	5	8	1	.393	L1	371	26.5	430	30.7	-4.2	3	4	0	2	2	0	4	5	1
Buffalo	4	10	0	.286	L4	247	17.6	355	25.4	-7.7	3	3	0	2	2	0	4	6	0
Central	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home			Div			Conf		
y-Charleswood	12	2	0	.857	L1	371	26.5	304	21.7	4.8	7	0	0	4	0	0	9	1	0
Viriden	8	6	0	.571	W1	392	28.0	353	25.2	2.8	4	3	0	3	1	0	5	5	0
Twin Cities	3	10	1	.250		274	19.6	345	24.6	-5.1	1	6	0	1	3	0	2	8	0
Peg City	1	13	0	.071	W1	238	17.0	408	29.1	-12.1	1	6	0	0	4	0	0	10	0
West	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home			Div			Conf		
Chino	9	4	1	.679	W3	347	24.8	312	22.3	2.5	3	3	1	3	1	0	7	2	1
Las Vegas	8	6	0	.571	L5	355	25.4	294	21.0	4.4	4	3	0	3	1	0	7	3	0
Iowa City	8	6	0	.571		366	26.1	382	27.3	-1.1	6	1	0	1	3	0	6	4	0
Seattle	5	9	0	.357	W4	296	21.1	320	22.9	-1.7	3	4	0	1	3	0	2	8	0
North	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home			Div			Conf		
y-Durham	12	2	0	.857		468	33.4	221	15.8	17.6	6	1	0	3	1	0	8	2	0
Sebastian	7	6	1	.536	W3	461	32.9	430	30.7	2.2	2	4	0	2	1	1	4	5	1
Cowtown	6	8	0	.429	L3	329	23.5	344	24.6	-1.1	4	3	0	1	3	0	5	5	0
Scarborough	2	11	1	.179	L5	256	18.3	419	29.9	-11.6	2	5	1	1	2	1	2	7	1
Coastal	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home			Div			Conf		
y-Budapest	14	0	0	1.000	W14	441	31.5	168	12.0	19.5	7	0	0	4	0	0	10	0	0
York	8	6	0	.571	W1	327	23.4	336	24.0	-0.6	4	3	0	2	2	0	5	5	0
Pickering	8	6	0	.571	W4	282	20.1	284	20.3	-0.1	2	5	0	1	3	0	5	5	0
Brooklin	8	6	0	.571	L1	360	25.7	355	25.4	0.4	4	3	0	1	3	0	6	4	0
South	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home			Div			Conf		
y-East Elmhurst	11	3	0	.786	W7	344	24.6	235	16.8	7.8	5	2	0	4	0	0	8	2	0
Erieau	4	10	0	.286	L1	253	18.1	352	25.1	-7.1	2	5	0	3	1	0	3	7	0
Georgia	3	9	2	.286		306	21.9	388	27.7	-5.9	1	5	1	0	3	1	1	8	1
Oshawa	2	11	1	.179	L7	298	21.3	411	29.4	-8.1	1	5	1	0	3	1	1	8	1

y-Clinched Division  
z-Clinched Wildcard

## EFL 2021 - Week 14 Passing Leaders

			Att	Cmp	C%	Yards	In	I%	Lg	TD	TD%	Rate
1	Rodgers,A	BUD	449	321	71.5	4118	3	0.7	75	39	8.7	126.0
2	Garoppolo	COW	175	131	74.9	1525	1	0.6	59	11	6.3	119.3
3	Watson,D	CHP	422	284	67.3	3793	3	0.7	75	33	7.8	118.7
4	Cousins	SS	433	303	70.0	4009	10	2.3	76	38	8.8	118.6
5	Mahomes	VV	474	303	63.9	4388	8	1.7	72	38	8.0	113.6
6	Tannehill	CB	384	248	64.6	3290	7	1.8	60	34	8.9	113.5
7	Allen,J	DTL	485	321	66.2	3931	7	1.4	75	36	7.4	109.7
8	Wilson,R	ICC	426	303	71.1	3407	8	1.9	66	29	6.8	109.5
9	Lance	SEA	147	99	67.3	1183	2	1.4	56	10	6.8	108.7
10	Brees	BRX	348	221	63.5	2959	6	1.7	79	26	7.5	108.2
11	Mayfield	EE	379	252	66.5	2920	4	1.1	48	26	6.9	108.1
12	Prescott	CHI	145	102	70.3	1147	1	0.7	75	6	4.1	104.6
13	Roethlisbe	GEO	444	309	69.6	2988	5	1.1	60	25	5.6	102.2
14	Carr,D	BRH	504	318	63.1	3715	6	1.2	73	32	6.3	101.6
15	Herbert	LV	516	355	68.8	3844	9	1.7	76	27	5.2	100.6
16	Brady	YOR	439	289	65.8	3434	13	3.0	84	25	5.7	96.2
17	Stafford	NJ	491	326	66.4	3501	9	1.8	75	23	4.7	95.1
18	Trubisky	TCT	302	190	62.9	2198	7	2.3	69	17	5.6	93.9
19	Minschew II	SEA	218	145	66.5	1457	6	2.8	62	13	6.0	93.8
20	Bridgewater	CHI	297	213	71.7	2153	8	2.7	75	11	3.7	93.2
21	Rivers,P	PIC	358	222	62.0	2683	5	1.4	87	14	3.9	92.2
22	Fitzpatric	COW	236	160	67.8	1618	7	3.0	52	11	4.7	90.3
23	Ryan,M	OSH	488	313	64.1	3087	11	2.3	57	24	4.9	88.9
24	Burrow	SBE	343	195	56.9	1953	4	1.2	59	18	5.2	85.8
25	Jackson,L	BUF	476	316	66.4	2764	10	2.1	60	16	3.4	84.1

## EFL 2021 - Week 14 Kick Return Leaders

			No	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD
1	Rodgers,I	CHP	24	843	35.1	100	2
2	Roberts,A	BRX	28	976	34.9	51	0
3	Harris,D	COW	18	549	30.5	76	0
4	Agnew	SEA	25	728	29.1	68	0
5	Duvernay	TCT	20	551	27.6	49	0
6	Scott,B	BRH	21	547	26.0	43	0
7	Webster,N	NJ	23	554	24.1	43	0
8	Lewis,D	LV	18	428	23.8	43	0
9	Homer	YOR	21	492	23.4	38	0
10	Ballentine	SS	18	414	23.0	35	0
11	Atwell	OSH	31	617	19.9	38	0
12	Carter,D	BUF	32	612	19.1	48	0
13	Cannon	BUD	8	267	33.4	42	0
14	Adderley	VV	3	89	29.7	33	0
15	Johnson,D	SBE	17	472	27.8	41	0
16	Hardman	LV	2	52	26.0	34	0
17	Patterson	BUD	16	405	25.3	39	0
18	Hubbard	PCC	6	138	23.0	29	0
19	Raymond	CB	2	45	22.5	24	0
20	Barner	PIC	13	292	22.5	39	0
21	Abdullah	CHI	16	354	22.1	36	0
22	Hill	DTL	11	243	22.1	38	0
23	Peoples-Jo	SS	1	22	22.0	22	0
24	Carter	ICC	16	352	22.0	33	0
25	St-Juste	ICC	1	22	22.0	22	0

## EFL 2021 - Week 14 Punt Return Leaders

			No	Fc	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD
1	Grant,J	CHI	33	7	470	14.2	62	1
2	Peppers	ERI	24	6	274	11.4	22	0
3	Harris,D	COW	25	8	280	11.2	20	0
4	Erickson	BUF	19	11	182	9.6	24	0
5	Proche	DTL	32	14	304	9.5	39	0
6	Spencer,D	NJ	26	5	225	8.7	25	0
7	Taylor,T	CHP	29	6	244	8.4	27	0
8	Roberts,A	BRX	20	2	168	8.4	29	0
9	Peoples-Jo	SS	20	7	168	8.4	25	0
10	Moore	EE	22	15	181	8.2	17	0
11	Raymond	CB	19	6	145	7.6	22	0
12	Cooper,P	VV	20	13	149	7.5	41	0
13	Hill,K	SBE	27	6	165	6.1	25	0
14	Hardman	LV	23	14	65	2.8	13	0
15	Lamb	SEA	5	3	74	14.8	38	0
16	Hines	ERI	2	0	24	12.0	16	0
17	Cole Sr.	SEA	14	5	158	11.3	20	0
18	James,R	GEO	4	4	43	10.8	15	0
19	Johnson,D	GEO	10	5	90	9.0	18	0
20	Atwell	OSH	11	3	98	8.9	22	0
21	Tate,G	BRH	4	16	35	8.8	19	0
22	Renfrow	SEA	7	6	61	8.7	20	0
23	Barner	PIC	6	19	48	8.0	14	0
24	Rodgers,Am	BUD	16	19	117	7.3	20	0
25	Toney	COW	2	3	14	7.0	15	0

## EFL 2021 - Week 14 Rushing Leaders

## EFL 2021 - Week 14 Receiving Leaders

		Att	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD			No	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD		
1	Henry,D	YOR	312	1396	4.5	48	13	1	Adams,D	OSH	100	1115	11.2	57	13
2	Gordon III	TCT	227	1153	5.1	45	3	2	Hopkins,D	BRH	95	1275	13.4	54	14
3	Robinson,J	GEO	218	1044	4.8	52	7	3	Diggs,S	BUD	88	1092	12.4	66	9
4	Jackson,L	BUF	176	1033	5.9	41	10	4	Jefferson	BUD	82	1276	15.6	75	10
5	Cook,D	LV	219	1031	4.7	49	9	5	Lockett	ICC	81	986	12.2	66	8
6	Drake	OSH	201	1020	5.1	53	6	6	Allen,K	NJ	79	756	9.6	35	9
7	Chubb,N	SS	192	953	5.0	47	11	7	Hill,T	EE	73	1100	15.1	44	13
8	Taylor,J	SS	176	944	5.4	52	9	8	Evans,M	COW	73	981	13.4	41	12
9	Jones,A	EE	189	932	4.9	39	6	9	Gallup	CHI	72	923	12.8	75	7
10	Sanders,M	PIC	174	874	5.0	25	4	10	Waller	DTL	72	920	12.8	43	10
11	Murray,K	ERI	130	866	6.7	32	12	11	Chase	VV	69	1372	19.9	72	11
12	Carson	SBE	151	816	5.4	27	4	12	Woods,R	BUF	69	638	9.2	60	7
13	Elliott,E	VV	193	778	4.0	28	8	13	Claypool	BRX	67	1140	17.0	75	14
14	Harris,D	CB	117	761	6.5	35	3	14	McKissic	NJ	67	527	7.9	29	1
15	Montgomery	NJ	195	704	3.6	56	3	15	Aiyuk	PCC	66	912	13.8	58	7
16	Conner	ICC	119	702	5.9	47	2	16	Gage	BUF	65	637	9.8	41	3
17	Gibson	DTL	134	677	5.1	28	2	17	Anderson,R	SEA	65	882	13.6	59	7
18	Mitchell	BRX	132	636	4.8	34	7	18	Kupp	DTL	64	1065	16.6	75	7
19	Jones II	CHI	147	627	4.3	26	5	19	Kelce,T	CHP	64	993	15.5	54	12
20	Edwards-He	TCT	106	617	5.8	46	8	20	McLaurin	NJ	64	903	14.1	75	7
21	Williams,J	BRX	112	571	5.1	20	1	21	Johnson,D	GEO	62	612	9.9	50	7
22	Harris	ERI	139	558	4.0	37	2	22	Cooks	CB	62	913	14.7	60	11
23	Swift	PIC	128	556	4.3	38	9	23	Cooper,A	CHP	61	899	14.7	75	7
24	Peterson,A	CB	149	551	3.7	16	2	24	Samuel,C	DTL	60	663	11.1	53	4
25	Wilson,R	ICC	72	544	7.6	43	4	25	Robinson,A	SBE	58	698	12.0	51	4
26	Ekeler	BRH	97	532	5.5	27	2	26	Sanders,E	BUF	58	617	10.6	51	4
27	Gurley II	COW	136	517	3.8	37	11	27	Parker,D	CB	57	726	12.7	36	9
28	Wilson Jr.	BUD	93	487	5.2	30	5	28	Fitzgerald	LV	57	574	10.1	22	2
29	Johnson,Da	BUD	88	470	5.3	34	4	29	Moore,D	TCT	56	943	16.8	69	6
30	Michel	EE	75	469	6.3	52	4	30	Smith-Schu	CHP	56	710	12.7	36	6
31	Fournette	BRX	107	456	4.3	17	5	31	Brown,A	ICC	55	925	16.8	54	5
32	Tannehill	CB	51	455	8.9	43	9	32	Godwin,C	BRX	55	881	16.0	56	8
33	Hunt,K	SEA	109	449	4.1	37	1	33	Thielen	EE	55	642	11.7	30	8
34	Akers	SEA	93	437	4.7	52	5	34	Jeudy	LV	53	905	17.1	76	6
35	Jacobs,J	GEO	110	436	4.0	27	3	35	Shenault J	PCC	53	641	12.1	42	8



# AROUND THE



# With Spats McChad

NEW YORK – My invitation to the “*This Week with your Budapest North Stars*” podcast hosted by **Peter Lakatos** and **Attila the Hun** (real name **Attila Horvát**) came as a surprise. I have not been invited as a guest on any show in a mainstream forum since I expressed views that cast doubt on the ridiculous “insurrection” narrative promoted by the media in the wake of the events of January 6<sup>th</sup> and started my series of columns expressing opposition to vaccine mandates and unscientific lockdown measures.

Not being invited to the “right parties” is the mainstream’s way of “cancelling” me since they are deprived of the conventional opportunity of doing so on *Titter*, *Instacrap* or *Faceplant*. I no longer waste my time and energy on any of those platforms. What started off as communication tools to facilitate exchanges, express views and opinions in the spirit of societal debate in a free society have in the past 6 years or so gradually metamorphized into narrative management tools to shape debate and, yes thought. The correct opinions are permitted, the wrong opinions are “fact-checked” into disrepute or blatantly suppressed.

When you have no compelling argument to make in support of your position; stifle debate. It is that simple. That so many people, especially young people, do not question this or seem to be okay with it, is one depressing indicator that we are headed in the wrong direction as a democracy.

Anyway...I resist the urge to continue my diatribe against the slowly encroaching totalitarianism in the western world and now turn to a subject touched on, but not pursued fully, in that podcast.

The expansion to Europe continues to be a head-scratcher, notwithstanding the astounding success of the North Stars and the modest success of the Bombers in grabbing attention in previously indifferent markets. It seems that a great deal of expense and effort has been sunk into an investment with a low ceiling of return and a fragile revenue stream. If the goal of the EFL is to eventually take over the world, planting seeds in foreign venues has to be done at some point – I get that – but when an army invades another country it usually does so *after* it has consolidated a solid and secure manufacturing base and supply chain at home. This is not the case currently in the EFL.

While unquestionably the most successful of the pro leagues that sprouted up after the NFL collapsed in scandal prior to the 2007 regular season, the EFL is not yet on par with that old league in terms of gross revenue and market share. It gets closer each year, but it still has a long way to go. Interest in the EFL continues to be regional more than national due to gaping holes in market coverage. While the EFL can cynically claim that it spans the continent of North America and across the ocean to Europe in order to boost its image, the reality is that the center is hollow and the shell is thick as lead in some spots and paper thin in others.

Let’s look at the leading TV markets in the US and Canada and overlay the EFL’s coverage in those areas:

The biggest market in North America, at 7.5 million households, is New York City, which demographically includes New Jersey. The EFL now has two-team coverage in this area with New Jersey and East Elmhurst (Queens). Interestingly, neither team is named after the City of New York and neither chose to play at the largest stadium in the Meadowlands, where the Swamp Dogs played their one and only season in the first year of the EFL’s existence. The decisions of both franchises to understate their connection to New York has alienated a segment of the media and fan base, who long for a real New York team like the Giants. So, yes, the EFL is in the continent’s top market, but not exactly dominating it.

The next biggest market is in Los Angeles, with just over 5.7 million households. Until the departure of the LA Knights for Cobb County, the EFL had this area well-covered, with the Chino Convicts of San Bernardino County and the Mission Viejo Monarchs of Orange County all vying for the attention of football fans in the Greater Los Angeles Area during the period from 2012 to 2016. Now, only the Convicts remain in the area. Some fickle Knights fans have switched their allegiance, but for the most part the city of LA and most of the area outside of San Bernardino has forgotten football. So, while the EFL is in the LA market, like New York they are not dominating it.

The next four leading TV markets by household are in Chicago (3.5 million), Philadelphia (3 million), Dallas-Forth Worth (3 million) and San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose (2.7 million). The EFL is in none of these markets currently and has only occupied one of them historically, the Philadelphia market. Kutztown, a 71-mile drive northwest of Philly, had a franchise from 2007 to 2010. The Golden Bears, as a team, was not a great ambassador for the league and did not draw as well as expected. When they moved to South Carolina in 2011, football fans in Pennsylvania turned to college football and a handful of local semi-pro teams. Of the ten largest markets in the US, TV ratings for the EFL are lowest in this area in terms of per capita viewership.

The complete lack of coverage in Chicago and Dallas-Fort Worth are the biggest eyesores for the league's business model. Until the NFL vanished, Chicago was the home of the two oldest pro football franchises – the Cardinals and the Bears. The Windy City, while not the birthplace of pro football, was the first place pro football moved to outside of Ohio. The city is associated with the sport's archetypal image of rugged, tough physical defensive dominance. Dallas hosted "America's Team" for decades and is the metropolitan center of the football hungry State of Texas. The EFL could place a team just about anywhere in Texas and immediately absorb the two major markets, which includes Houston (2.6 million) as well as portions of San Antonio (1 million) and Austin (900 thousand). The rival Tex-Mex League currently controls the latter two markets, although that league has failed to make an impact on the larger two Texas market areas. The EFL enjoys the highest per capita ratings in the two major Texas markets of any of the top ten markets where the EFL does not have a team. The area is literally begging for expansion.

The 7<sup>th</sup> largest TV market by household is Atlanta (just under 2.7 million), which was covered exclusively by Georgia for years until 2020 when Cobb County entered the market. This has sparked a vicious battle between the Coyotes and Gladiators franchises for market dominance which the Coyotes, centered in Marietta, GA, closer to Atlanta, seem to be winning. Nevertheless, in terms of revenue from the State of Georgia, the EFL has this area completely blanketed and is drawing in viewership from neighbouring states in the deep south, such as Alabama and Tennessee. South Carolina, having had at one point two teams and lost both, is yearning for a return of the EFL to its State and is apparently trying to lure the Gladiators there.

The next three largest TV markets by household are Washington DC (2.55 million), Boston (2.5 million) and Phoenix (2.15 million). The EFL is currently not in any of those. For four years from 2016 to 2019 the St. Charles Chargers captured the Washington DC market and ratings were high in the area before the team as abruptly sold to Las Vegas. The Mohave Hellfire, one of the league's founding franchises, led the Phoenix market for 11 years from 2007 to 2017, but the lack of success by the Hellfire on the field caused a steady drop in ratings until, in their final year in Mohave, the Tex-Mex League was actually outperforming them. Boston has never been touched by the EFL, which is another wart on the EFL's business model.

The 12<sup>th</sup> largest market in the US, Seattle-Tacoma (2.1 million) is currently covered by the Seattle Pilots, who are making impressive inroads; while the 13<sup>th</sup> largest market, Tampa-St. Petersburg (2.03 million) and other large Florida markets like Orlando-Daytona Beach (1.73 million) and Miami-Ft. Lauderdale (1.7 million) have adopted the Swordfish, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, of course. For some Florida football fans, there will only be one "Florida's Team" and that is the Dragons.

The 14<sup>th</sup> largest market, Minneapolis-St. Paul (1.9 million) is ably covered by the Triumph. The team has won over the State of Minnesota and the EFL enjoys high ratings across the board there for virtually all EFL broadcasts, not just those involving the Triumph. However, the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> largest markets, Detroit (1.86 million) and Denver (1.8 million) respectively, are barely touched. The Colorado Thundersnow, who existed for just one season (2008) before moving to Garland, TX, introduced the league to the area and some residual interest remains in acquiring a team there. A tiny portion of the Detroit market was briefly snatched up by Erieau before COVID-19 shutdown the border traffic between Detroit and Windsor. The Cadillac have little Canadian support east of their location and rely on western centers like Windsor and Detroit to generate desperately-needed revenue. Interest in the team south of the border has waned considerably and is unlikely to return at all until after the pandemic.

Ohio, the birthplace of professional football, and its 19<sup>th</sup> largest Cleveland market is entirely unrepresented in the EFL, yet it is the home of the league's head office in Canton, OH. The 10<sup>th</sup> Gale Sayers Game was played in Canton, the only official regular or post-season EFL game to be played in the state. Charlotte, St. Louis, Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, San Diego, Baltimore and Nashville – nos. 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29<sup>th</sup> respectively – are seven other top markets and former NFL locations which have not seen an EFL team in the league's 15 seasons, except for the outlier of the Gladiators playing home games in Pittsburgh this year. Any of these places would have made more lucrative investments than Budapest or Bruxelles and brought none of the travel and time zone headaches created by placing two teams in Europe.

The only aspect of the EFL business model more absurd than being absent from a large swathe of premium football territory in the US while sending two teams to random homes across the Atlantic Ocean is the concentration of six teams in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and three teams in the Province of Manitoba. While the GTA is by far the largest TV market in Canada, and the fourth largest in North America (smaller than Chicago but larger than Dallas-Fort Worth), it is mad to expect so many teams to flourish in an area that is more hockey mad than football crazy. Sure, the close proximity to each other of Durham, Brooklin, Pickering, Scarborough, York, and Oshawa fuels ever more intense rivalries among the fans, creating no end of storylines and recreating a claustrophobic tension not unlike the harsh and strict soccer rivalries in tiny England. But there are only so many fans to go around. In pro sports, you want more fans rather than crazier fans.

Finally, as I have touched on before in this column, the most ludicrous clumping of pro teams in the history of pro sports can be found in Winnipeg, Manitoba, where Charleswood and Peg City share the city and Virden, just 190 miles west, poaches what they can of Winnipeg's urban fringe while trying to break into the Saskatchewan market, where the Roughriders of the CFL are king. The population of the Province of Manitoba is smaller than that of the City of Toronto and the Winnipeg market is ten times smaller than the GTA. Add the Winnipeg Blue Bombers of the CFL – somehow still alive – and you have the most heavily saturated market per capita in pro sports. It's easy to see why the Crusaders are having trouble drawing even 10,000 fans to games. It's a wonder they draw that many.

So, while the EFL is still the best pro football league going, there remain serious structural flaws in its market coverage. Its seemingly randomized business model, that expands willy-nilly, with no strategic thought given apparently to where the teams should

go, is unlikely to change the landscape, except by sheer happenstance. It is only a matter of time before some of these teams become no longer viable and have to move. Let's hope, when they do, that they go to Chicago or Texas and not some arbitrary place with no football history like Tel Aviv or Melbourne, AU. I wouldn't put it past the EFL Committee to let it happen.

### ***FLYING HIGH NOW***

The Week 13 contest between Iowa City and Peg City that ended in a close 34-33 victory for the Cubs did not make anybody happy, apart from those few inspired and intrepid souls who had taken the Crusaders at +11 on the road in hostile Joe Ferguson Stadium.

For the Cubs, the narrow escape they had experienced against winless Peg City was both humbling and a cause for alarm. For the Crusaders, the loss meant that they remained winless heading into Week 14 match-up at home against the Pink Panthers. Panic was setting in.

Finishing the season winless was a stigma that Peg City coach **Stephen Katopodis** desperately wished to avoid. Although such a stigma was unlikely to get him fired due to that "special" clause in his contract, it would remain an indelible black mark on his record as a coach and on the history of his team. He and his players were already showing up on trashy "worst of..." videos on *YouTube*. If the Crusaders were to complete the season without winning a game, they would feature forever in respectable media, such as *EFL Films*, presented as a cautionary tale about the pitfalls of tear-it-all-down rebuilds.

To be sure, the Peg City coach had put himself in this position. He had taken the core of a competitive team and smashed it to bits for no apparent reason. Not only had he traded away nearly all of his veterans in the off-season and replaced them with kids, he had fired his staff and hired in their place what was proving to be one of the worst coaching staffs in the league. In the lead-up to what the schedule was foretelling would be the team's last real shot at a victory in Week 14, it was this coaching staff that Katopodis was forced to turn to in order to salvage a win in 2021 and avoid being lumped in with the LA Knights of 2014, the Virden Violators of 2015, and the Erieau Cadillac of 2017. Why would he wait this long to consult the coaching staff that he, himself had hired?

Just prior to training camp, Katopodis had suddenly dumped Defensive Coordinator, **Keith Butler**, Offensive Coordinator, **Sean Payton** and Special Teams Coach, **Cameron Achford**. He had publicly declared that this was so the team "can head in a new direction." The reality was that these three coaches had all questioned – and in the case of Payton openly challenged – the roster changes Katopodis was making. According to sources, when the three had approached Katopodis as a group and politely suggested that he had no clue what he was doing, Katopodis fired them all the next day.

The 11<sup>th</sup> hour firings forced Katopodis to bring on board Defensive Coordinator **Rod Marinelli**, Offensive Coordinator and QB coach, **Adam Gase** and Special Teams Coordinator, **Derius Swinton II** at the last minute. To the outside world, the coaching overhaul, as with the player shake-up, was unexplained and seemingly without cause or purpose. It also backfired in a hurry as all three new coaches quickly sensed the rift between Katopodis and Crusaders' owner, **Carling Thule Richardson**. Not knowing about the "secret clause" in the Katopodis' contract, the three assistants believed that their Head Coach was not going to be the Head Coach for long. All were angling to be selected Interim Head Coach when the inevitable mid-season firing occurred.

When the Peg City coach caught on that his smiling and seemingly, dim-witted staff were each secretly plotting against him, he became withdrawn in team meetings and frequently intervened in the play calling on both sides of the ball to foil calls that he thought might make him look bad. This frequent overriding of the coordinators, however, created resentment in his staff and confusion among his players. The clear rift between the head coach and his staff was just another cause of dysfunction on a team built for it.

In spite of the ongoing Machiavellian machinations between the Head Coach and his staff, the players began showing more resolve beginning in Week 8, when they went into the locker room at half time up 16-13 on the potent Coyotes at Coyote Field. The game had not finished well for the Pegs, as young QB, **Mac Jones** melted down in the second half, throwing 4 interceptions. But the team around him had played well throughout the game. The young quarterback was simply guilty of trying to do too much. They had all seen the furrowed brow on the face of opposing coach **Eron Osman** as he stomped to the locker room down 3 points. No opponent to that point in the season had looked remotely worried before. Maybe they weren't so bad after all?

While the coaching staff argued amongst themselves, trying to claim credit for minor successes and lay blame on others for losses, the players persevered. Deprived of strong, united leadership, they had turned to themselves for support. They had begun to play for each other out of a sense of urgency that, collectively, all of their professional reputations and future marketability were in jeopardy due to their association with this laughing stock of a franchise. If the coaches were unable to lead them, they would lead themselves.

Measuring success not by wins, but by IMC (Increase in Minutes of Competitiveness) the team had showed incremental improvement in key areas from week-to-week. This upward trajectory had reached an unprecedented height in the Cubs loss. They had darn near beaten the Cubs in their own back yard! But rather than rejoice at having played their best game of the season and setting a new IMC record, there was a strange letdown in the locker room. The players had given it their best shot and had fallen short. *Something was missing.*

Head Coach **Stephen Katopodis** and his staff had been battling since Week 8 to claim credit for the gradual turnaround, although they could not point specifically to any single measure any of them had implemented that could have caused the improvement. They invented various reasons and tried to convince themselves that they were leading the team down the right path. However, when players started passing them in the halls without saying "hi coach," setting their own practice times, running their own drills, designing their own plays and eventually calling those plays in the huddle over the coach's call, it dawned first on Katopodis, and eventually on the others, that the players had moved on from them.

The idea that a team comprised mostly of rookies and young veterans could coach itself to success, in this era of increasing complexity in the game, without more than token input from the coaching staff, called the whole organizational model of a pro football team into question and put it at risk. If it ever officially got out that Katopodis and his staff were along for the ride – that the team was improving *despite* them, not because of them – none of the Peg City coaching staff would be safe in football again. Even if Katopodis held on to his position with the Crusaders, he would be a pariah in the league. While the owner could not fire him without triggering the “nuclear clause” in his contract, nothing prevented the league itself from stepping in “for the good the game” and suspending him indefinitely.

The Peg City coach may have miscalculated severely on a number of fronts, but he was not a complete fool. He still had confidence in his strategic vision, even if now he was struggling to remember what it was. Regardless, his players did not need a strategic vision right now. They needed a *coach* to prepare them to face a vulnerable Oshawa team. So, Katopodis rolled up his coaching sleeves and studied the game film from the Cubs near-win in earnest, staying up all night after the game in an attempt to discern both what was making his team tick and what they had been missing that could have tilted the outcome in a better direction.

After immersing himself in every one of the 131 plays from scrimmage, 2 punts, 4 field goal attempts and 8 extra point tries, the Peg City coach knew what his players, in their instinctual moments, were doing that opposing schemes were blocking. He gathered his coaches together on Monday morning and delivered a ‘Come to Jesus’ speech.

We don’t know exactly what was said in this closed-door, coordinators-only meeting, but when Coach Katopodis and his three lieutenants emerged from it, they were united for the first time. “We sink or swim together!” Katopodis was overheard saying as they emerged from the board room at True North Field and headed to their individual offices to prepare the game plan.

At the all-team meeting Monday afternoon, the coaches stood together at the front of the room and laid out their plan for the week of practice. Usually, Katopodis would deliver his first speech of the practice week by himself. His coaching staff would sit at the back of the room or sometimes would not be there. This time, they stood together.

When **Le’Veon Bell** and **Chandler Jones**, who were enjoying their veteran status on a team full of kids, started to horse around in the back of the room as they had recently started doing, Katopodis snapped: “Shut-up, you two and pay attention!”

Bell and Jones did indeed shut up for an instant as they absorbed the shock of being called out in front of the team. Jones looked toward **Rod Marinelli** as if to make an appeal and Bell shot a glance at **Adam Gase** and muttered, “*Bruh...* what gives?”

“You heard what Coach Katopodis said!” Marinelli barked at the two vets. “How many tackles you get yesterday, Chandler?”

The linebacker who had once starred for the Swordfish but who had yet to record a sack in limited action due to injuries this year was caught off guard by the question. He paused a moment to consider but was not given a chance to answer.

“One, Chandler! One stinking tackle!” Marinelli snarled. “And that one *didn’t* come on that game-winning drive at the end of the game either! I’m not sure where you were on that drive actually. Tell me; how many sacks you got this year?”

The 30-year-old star knew the answer to that question. He slumped in his chair and said nothing.

“That’s right, Chandler! No sacks. Zero. Nada. Zilch. Zip!” Marinelli spat. “So, I don’t think you have anything to teach the room right now and probably a lot to learn by listening up. We’ll address this on the practice field!”

It was now Gase’s turn. “You want to get the ball, Le’Veon?” Gase chirped. “You better know the plays we’re running by the end of the week or you’re going to sit! No more wandering around in the backfield going wherever you like. You’re going to follow your blocks

or you are going to follow the exit signs right out of this building. Do you hear?”

Bell started to say something, seemed to think better of it, and finally slumped in his chair – a sullen expression creeping onto his face. There was a prolonged period of utter silence. The rookies on the Crusaders had not heard any of the veterans spoken to in this way. They did not know exactly what to do but wait and see where this was going.

Finally, Katopodis broke the silence. His voice resonated clearly and confidently through the classroom:

“Okay! We are going to teach you how to beat Oshawa this Sunday. Pay attention!”

The week of practice leading up to the game against the Pink Panthers was unlike any other the team had had over the course of their 13-game drought. They ran



Peg City coach, **Stephen Katopodis** discusses the game plan with offensive coordinator **Adam Gase** in the lead-up to their Week 14 match-up against Oshawa “I gave you my quarterback, don’t break him!” Katopodis is reported to have said to Gase at a special Monday morning coaches meeting. **Mac Jones** went on to have his best day as a pro.

coordinated drills, practiced in pads at full speed and were given spot quizzes on their assignments at any time of the day or night. When any player whined or complained or tried to slack off, all four coaches were on the offender. There would be no appeal to a divided coaching staff. Fines and other punishments were levied and, by Wednesday, when Katopodis began pumping 'Gonna Fly Now' and 'Hearts on Fire' from the Rocky I and IV soundtracks through the stadium PA at True North Field during practices, the entire roster realized that the coaches were serious about winning the coming game.

"Remember how you felt after the Georgia game!" Katopodis said in his final pre-game address to the players in the locker room. "Remember the let down after you let them get away from you in the second half. Remember how you felt last week after losing to a better team than that, the Cubs. You gave it your all and it wasn't enough because the guy on the other side knew how to finish! Well, what you felt then is exactly how the Pink Panthers are feeling right now about their *entire season*. You have a chance today to make them feel worse than you. We've given you the plays and the mental tools to have success today. The physical part is up to you! Now go out there and don't look back! *Go out and win!*"

With a dramatic shake of his fist in the direction of the tunnel, Katopodis unleashed his team. The players bellowed, "*Hearts on fire, baby!*" then charged out of the locker room into the tunnel and toward the field. They emerged in a frenzy onto the field where they were greeted by the desultory applause of scarcely more than two thousand fans, the lowest attendance of the year. "Fans" is probably not the correct term to describe the spectators that dotted the cavernous near-empty stadium. There was nothing *fanatic* about them.

By Week 14, the sole fanatic was the team's mascot, a paid actor dressed like a Knight Templar. He danced and weaved along the Crusaders' sideline waving his prop sword with both hands, trying unsuccessfully to get the fans to roar the '*Barritus*' war cry as it flashed on the giant scoreboard screen.

The fans had yet to successfully execute this strange battle cry from the late Roman Empire for which the only description comes from a Roman historian named *Tacitus*. The modern, Peg City version was supposed to sound like a low, guttural murmur – baah-ry...baah-ry...baah-ry – gradually speeding up and getting louder – *barri-barri-barri-barri* – then peaking with an ear-splittingly loud '*TOOOOSSSE!*' In theory, the idea of 50,000 fans in a dome gradually building up to a sound similar to a trumpeting elephant was kind of cool. But the fans had not been able to master it, while attendance had dwindled to the point where, even if they had, its potential could never have been realized anyway. The continued failed attempts had become another embarrassment for the franchise, not to mention the obscure fact that the real Crusaders, to the best of history's knowledge, had never used it.

Across the field a more sedate Oshawa team warmed up ritually on the sideline. **Matt Ryan** looked confident and poised as he tossed balls crisply to his receivers. One would not know from looking at him that his team had a record of 2-10-1, tied for the second worst in the league after Peg City.

Whatever was weighing on the team seemed to be entirely on the shoulders of the Pink Panthers' coach, **Scott Dennis**. His sunken cheeks, patchy chin stubble, and dark-rimmed bloodshot eyes told the story of a man who was not sleeping well at night. He stared blankly out at the middle of the field as the team captains headed there for the coin toss, lost in the type of thoughts that only a rookie coach who had inherited one of the league's greatest dynasties and run it completely into the ground in less than one season could be thinking. Perhaps he was wondering if things could get any worse. Perhaps he was contemplating what would have once been totally unthinkable, that things could indeed get worse if his team were to somehow lose to Peg City. He closed his eyes and shuddered just before the TV camera switched to the center of the field. (*Yep...that was probably what he was thinking!*)

The Crusaders won the toss and deferred – a confident move that sent a message to the legendary **Matt Ryan-to-Davante Adams** duo that they were ready for their best shot. The Pink Panthers delivered it on the opening drive, covering 75 yards in 12 plays and finishing it off with a 4-yard TD pass from Ryan to Adams. Perhaps it wasn't the duo's best shot, but it was a shot that resulted in 7 points and the early lead nonetheless.

The Crusaders responded with a shot of their own. Starting at their own 40 after a short kickoff and 29-yard return, they overcame a holding penalty on 2<sup>nd</sup> & 1 and crossed mid-field on five plays to the Oshawa 43yard line. From there, **Mac Jones** hit **Brandon Aiyuk** on a comebacker. The talented 2<sup>nd</sup> round pick of the 2020 draft secured the ball, found an opening and sprinted up-field a 43-yard score. Polite applause greeted the rare big play, mostly drowned out by a recorded version of '*Barritus*' echoing over the PA system. The fans knew not to get too excited by any flashes of success. When **Younghoe Koo** missed the extra point, they settled back into comfortable silence and continued to behave as if they were at church.

The teams traded punts to close out the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter. This exchange produced excellent field position for Oshawa and Ryan made short work of the short field. He drove his team 41 yards in 5 plays, finishing with a 15-yard TD pass to **Josh Reynolds**. After a short celebration Ryan strolled calmly back to the Oshawa sideline. 'Easy peasey!' He might have been thinking.

The Crusaders answered with a 26-yard field goal, set up by a highlight-reel 86-yard completion to **Tyler Higbee** to the Oshawa 3-yard line. **Haason Reddick** saved a touchdown on the play. Any thought of going for it on 4<sup>th</sup> down inside the Oshawa 10-yard line vanished from the head of Coach Katopodis when **Marcus Davenport** ignored a pay-action fake by Jones and knifed through the line to dump him for a 5-yard loss on 3<sup>rd</sup> & 3. The Pegs had had three shots from the 3 and had gone backwards. Better to salvage something. But the lurking recognition that starting the game with a touchdown and following up with nothing but field goals was a familiar and losing pattern for his team could not have made him happy about the call.

The Pink Panthers answered with a field goal of their own to re-establish their 8-point lead, 17-9. The Pegs had held on 3<sup>rd</sup> down inside their red zone, prompting a decision by the Oshawa coach on 4<sup>th</sup> & 4. He did not hesitate to send in **Zane Gonzalez** to drill home

the 3-pointer from 35 yards away. His team was playing with confidence – no need to mess with it by getting greedy against a team that was likely to give them a break or two at some point along the way.

The calm demeanour of the Pink Panthers' players was at odds with their record of futility this season and the nervousness of their embattled coach. Many of these players had appeared on football's largest stage and won. Despite their confounding low-ranking in the standings this year, that memory was with them and it made this contest feel for them like it was an exhibition game in some backwater town.

"Hearts on fire, boys!" bellowed **Stephen Katopodis** at his offence before it took the field. "Let's put one in the end zone! Mac...come here a sec!" He waved over his quarterback and leaned in to his helmet. "You're as good as he is, Mac! Matt Ryan was a rookie once too. It's all there, so let it loose!" he said. He gave him a knowing look, patted him on the back and sent him out.

The Crusaders' rookie QB indeed looked like a veteran on the next series. He calmly dropped back under intense pressure and lobbed a screen to Aiyuk for 14 yards. Back-peddalling in the face of another rush he delivered a strike to **Laviska Shenault** in stride that went for 25 yards and followed that up with a dime to Higbee for 15. On the next play he stood in the pocket and methodically went through his progressions, electing to take an easy 8-yard checkdown to the Oshawa 4 when his first two options were covered. Two plays later, he feathered a short out to **Kyle Pitts** off a perfect play fake for a 2-yard TD pass. Katopodis jumped for joy then held up two fingers to indicate a 2-point try. Trying the same play, but to Shenault this time, Reddick sniffed it out and took away the passing lane, forcing Jones to throw it high. The Pegs did not convert, but they had answered a field goal with a touchdown. If they could hold the Pink Panthers for the 1:38 remaining in first half, they would start the second half with the ball, down by just 2 points.

Ryan led his offence onto the field as if nothing had happened. He quietly and methodically moved his team up the field, calmly converting a 4<sup>th</sup> & 2 from the Crusaders' 41 with a six-yard hitch to Adams. Two plays later, he glided back in the pocket and launched a high, arcing pass that Adams ran under for the touchdown with just 0:05 left on the clock. Ryan flashed a broad, relaxed smile as he gave a gentle congratulatory fist bump to Adams on the way to the sideline. Just like that, the Pink Panthers had answered. They would head into the locker room up by 9 points, 24-15, making Peg City's climb back that much steeper.

The Crusaders sensed that the Pink Panthers weren't taking them seriously. The fallen superstars may have had just 2 wins coming into this game, but it was two more than the Crusaders had and that was enough to erase any worry from their brows. Katopodis could see his team's morale sinking as they entered the locker room. This was also a pattern: a strong first half followed by doubt and failure in the second half.

*Not this time*, he thought.

Katopodis gathered his coaches and the team together in the locker room. He had one of the trainers set up a portable Hi-Fi and cue up '*Gonna Fly Now*.' With the sound of the training montage from Rocky I playing in the background, he looked hard into the eyes of his players for about 30 seconds then delivered a stirring speech to his team that, due to their youth, none of them likely recognized:

"Let me tell you something you might not already know because you're all too young! [*Trying hard now...*] Pro football ain't all sunshine and rainbows. [*It's so hard now...*] It is a very mean and nasty place and it will beat you to your knees and keep you down permanently if you let it! [*Trying hard now...*] None of you is gonna hit as hard as football. But it ain't how hard you hit; it's about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward. [*Getting strong now...*] How much can you take and keep moving forward. That's how winning is done. [*Won't be long now...*] Now, if you know what you're worth, then go out and get what you're worth. [*Getting strong now...*] I'm telling you: You're worth a lot! I wouldn't have turned this team upside down to get you all if you weren't worth it! [*Gonna fly now...*] But you gotta be willing to take the hit, and not pointing fingers saying you ain't where you are because of anyone else. [*Flying high now...*] You hear me? Cowards do that and that ain't you. You're better than that! Now go out there and show me what I know you're worth!! [*Gonna fly fly...*] Now give me an **ADRIAN!**"

For a second there was confusion on the faces of his team after that last command. But **Rod Marinelli** stepped in and yelled: "You heard coach! Give him an *Adrian!*"

Not understanding what they were doing, but sensing it was important, they responded in unison with a thunderous '**ADRIAN!**' and stormed out on to the field...5 minutes too early. But what the heck...once they were out of the tunnel they stayed out, not wanting to suffer the embarrassment of retreating back inside.

The Crusaders got the ball to start the second half. An illegal block on the kick return and a false start on the first play set them back at their own 5-yard line. The Pink Panthers could smell blood and set up to shut down Jones and the pass attack. The rookie would make a mistake – no need to force the issue with a blitz. However, like a team possessed, the Crusaders' offence marched down the field steadily, in small chunks, mixing in effective running plays to complement the steady hand of their rookie quarterback. On the 15<sup>th</sup> play of the drive, on 1<sup>st</sup> and goal at the Oshawa 5, Jones dropped back to pass, found nobody open, and suddenly sprinted through a gaping hole in the middle of the field for a touchdown.

A cry of '**ADRIAN!!**' erupted from the players on the Peg City sideline. It was audible above the polite clapping of the fans, who paused in their modest celebration to take in the strange reaction of their team. *Who is Adrian?* People were thinking.

Koo drilled the extra point, bringing the Crusaders back to within 2. The Peg City drive had taken almost 9 minutes off the clock. Shortening the game was appealing to the Oshawa coach. Drain the clock, force the rookie into a more stressful situation. So, **Scott Dennis** turned to the run and short pass game, looking to bleed some time and, if things worked out, set up the kill shot. Despite favorable schemes, **Kenyan Drake** was dropped for losses of 1 and 4 yards on back-to-back plays by rookie **Tommy Togia**, who either did not

know what defence he was supposed to be in, or simply sniffed out the runs. In any case, on 3<sup>rd</sup> & 15, Ryan delivered a bullet to Reynolds on a long crossing route for 18 yards and a new set of downs. It was the kind of play that usually generates momentum but, for some reason, failed to do so. The Crusaders took the hit and came back at the Pink Panthers, eventually stuffing Drake for a 1-yard loss on 3<sup>rd</sup> & 2 to bring on the punting unit. The stop invigorated the Peg City players. ‘ADRIAN!’ came the roar from the sideline.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter came to an end with the Crusaders in possession at their own 25 to start the 4<sup>th</sup>. Much like the opening drive of the half, Jones commanded the offence down the field. A pair of hard runs by **Chuba Hubbard** and a 14-yard gain by **Le’Veon Bell** to get into the red zone supplemented some nice passing from Jones. With a new set of downs at the Oshawa 17, Jones missed on his first two throws, but on 3<sup>rd</sup> & 10 stood in the pocket and delivered a strike to Aiyuk for a touchdown! This time, the two-thousand-plus fans at True North Field made themselves heard. A loud (at least loud for 2,000) cheer exploded from the seats and the feeble beginnings of a modest attempt at the ‘*Barritus*’ war cry could be heard. ...baah-ry...baah-ry...baah-ry...that dissipated quickly as the Crusaders lined up for two. They didn’t make it, but the miss did not detract from the fact that Peg City was now in the lead, 28-24, and tiny cracks were beginning to appear in the composure of the Pink Panthers.

Oshawa coach, **Scott Dennis** discreetly reached for the flask of “cough medicine” in his pocket and took a swig. He could feel the tremors coming on that had been plaguing him since the Week 8 loss to East Elmhurst, the first loss of his team’s current six-game losing streak. He no longer spoke during games. What would he say to his veterans anyway? He looked over at **JJ Watt**, the captain of the defence that had just allowed a rookie to gash them for a TD on 3<sup>rd</sup> & 10 – not a hint of pressure in his face. Watt was smiling as he chatted with **DJ Jones**. Did they not care that the sole occupant of the league’s basement – the only team without a win – was leading by more than a field goal with 10 minutes remaining? Or maybe Watt was confident that Ryan would finish off the pesky Crusaders in short order. Who knew? He took another shot of “medicine” and put the flask back in his pocket.

Ryan strode onto the field to take possession after a touchback. His face was a little sterner – perhaps irritated is a more accurate description. He handed the ball off to Drake for 10 and 9 yards, hit Adams for 8 then **Julian Edelman** for 17. In just four plays the Pink Panthers were into Crusader territory at the 31. He dropped back into a secure pocket and looked left in the direction of **Dallas Goedert** who was open near the sideline. He rifled a pass in his direction but it never got there. Ryan had failed to see **Bobby Okereke** lurking. The Crusader sensation leaped and made the pick, returning it 7 yards to the Crusader 30.

The tiny crowd burst into cheer then attempted another round of ‘*Barritus*,’ this time making to the quickening *barri-barri-barri-barri* part before quieting down for the arrival of Jones and the offence onto the field. The Peg City rookie had that calm and collected look that had graced the visage of his opponent Ryan in the 1<sup>st</sup> half. He settled under center and went to work. The first two plays sputtered, but on 3<sup>rd</sup> & 10 Jones dropped back, stood tall in the pocket and uncorked a strike to Shenault, who broke a tackle and jetted 39 yards to the Oshawa 31. He then converted two more third downs, the last an 11-yard TD to Aiyuk on 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4 off play-action.

‘ADRIAN!’ bellowed the players on the Peg City sideline. ...baah-ry...baah-ry...baah-ry... *barri-barri-barri-barri* ‘TOOOOOSSE!’ roared the crowd as the Crusaders’ mascot twirled his sword and vaulted into the stands to lead the chant. **Stephen Katopodis** looked up into the stands for the first time since the home opener in Week 2, the last time he had noticed the fans at a home game. There weren’t many of them. In fact, it was shocking to see how few there were. But those in attendance were making as much noise as possible. He felt a tingle race up his spine. *So this is what it’s like to have a homefield advantage*, he thought.

The Pink Panthers were visibly flustered now. Ryan stormed on to the field and went to work. But the Crusader defence swarmed like killer bees. After an encroachment penalty on the defence, it took Oshawa four plays to move 5 yards and gain a first down. Time was ticking away. Ryan went to the air in earnest and forced a ball toward Reynolds into tight coverage. Safety **Jalen Thompson** got a hand on the ball and it ricocheted to his teammate **Taylor Rapp** for the interception at the Oshawa 42. True North Field exploded in delirium. Had there been a full house, the sound would have brought down the house. Instead, a sound slightly more impressive than a loud racket filled the dome as the offence trotted on to the field to take care of business.

The Oshawa defence held them to 7 yards but it was enough to get Koo into position to kick a 53-yard field goal to make the score 37-24 with 2:24 remaining. That would have been enough time for Ryan and the Mustangs to put up a pair of touchdowns in their heyday. For Ryan and the Pink Panthers, it was a mountain too steep to climb. When safety **Juston Burris** tackled **James Washington** after a 3-yard gain on 4<sup>th</sup> & 10 with 0:08 left in the game, Coach **Stephen Katopodis** found himself the target of a cooler full of red Gatorade, delivered by linemen **Taylor Moton** and **Justin Skule**.

The sound of ‘*Gonna Fly Now*’ filled the stadium as 2,000 fans danced in the stands. The Peg City coach, drenched from head-to-toe in Gatorade, smiled from ear to ear. His coaches, the ones who had plotted against him for most of the season, gathered around him for a round of handshakes for a job well done. Oshawa coach, **Scott Dennis** drained the last drop of “cough medicine” from his flask and began the slow walk to the center of the field to congratulate his opponent. The Crusaders players looked like they had won the Gale Sayers Trophy. Who could blame them? This was their championship. Win-less no more. Winners...for a day!

### **AROUND THE EFL**

While the Crusaders were winning their “Super Bowl” – defying my easy prediction that they would not win a game all year – teams that have a real shot at the official glory of a Gale Sayers Trophy jockeyed for position in the post-season, while fringe playoff contenders battled on the fringes. It wasn’t a great week but two match-ups were both relevant and compelling and we witnessed one of the quirkiest ties you’ll ever see. Read on...

At Monsignor McClancy Memorial Stadium in East Elmhurst, the Irish overcame a 10-point deficit and rallied to defeat the

Patriots, 28-24. **Baker Mayfield** delivered the game-winning TD strike to **Tyreek Hill** from 16 yards out with 0:36 left in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter to complete the comeback. East Elmhurst fell behind 24-14 early in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter on a 48-yard catch-and-run TD by **Travis Kelce**. The score came on an unusually aggressive 4<sup>th</sup> & 7 gambit by the Pats, but the move paid off immediately with 6 points and appeared to set the visitors on course for their 13<sup>th</sup> win. The Irish did not panic and turned to the ground game to stabilize their attack. **Aaron Jones** and **Sony Michel** combined for 9 carries and 41 yards of a 75-yard drive, with Michel punching it home from 1-yard away to narrow the Pats' lead to a field goal. The Irish defence then stepped up with a pair of crucial stops, the first on 4<sup>th</sup> & 3 at their 38 as Charleswood looked to put the game away and the second on a 3<sup>rd</sup> down sack of **DeShaun Watson** by **Micah Parsons** to set up the game-winning TD drive. Mayfield, who had been picked off in the end zone trying to take the lead in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter, was clutch at the end, converting a 3<sup>rd</sup> & 15 with a 16-yard laser to **Demarcus Robinson** to his own 38 to keep their final drive alive. This win for the Irish, coming against the top team in the Pacific Conference, gives them much-needed credibility heading into the post-season. For the Pats, it was just their second loss, but a bit of a confidence-dinger as they search for that "signature win" against a top team to certify their standing as the no.1 seed.

At Coyote Field in Marietta, the Coyotes survived a thrilling back-and-forth shootout to outlast the Hawks, 38-31. **Ryan Tannehill** connected with a wide-open **Michael Pittman Jr** for a 16-yard TD pass for the difference-maker with 7:25 to go in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. It was Tannehill's fifth TD pass of the game. The Hawks tried to answer but a botched snap to Carr on 4<sup>th</sup> & 1 the Coyote 44 and a stand by the Coyote defence on 4<sup>th</sup> & 10 at their own 23 with 3:42 left prevented the Hawks' customary 4<sup>th</sup> quarter heroics. From there the Coyotes were able to run out the clock and bag the win, clinching the East Division in the process. The loss drops Brooklin to 8-6 and out of the wildcard picture as the loser in a three-way tie with Pickering and York.

In a game that was meaningless in the playoff picture but still curiously meaningful to stubbornly devoted fans in Minnesota and eastern Georgia/Pittsburgh, the Gladiators and Triumph battled to a 16-16 tie at Heinz Field in Pittsburgh. This contest was the kind of low-scoring, tedious display one would expect from two struggling teams playing in below freezing temperatures with nothing on the line but pride. However, it was notable and rare for fact that the Gladiators did not possess the ball for a single second in overtime and did not lose. Twin Cities possessed the ball for the entire overtime period, covering 62 yards in 19 plays to set up the game-winning field goal attempt from 31 yards away with 0:01 on the clock. But **Dustin Hopkins** simply missed the kick, hooking it wide of the left upright to send Georgia fans in Pittsburgh home relieved but unfulfilled.

At The Assassin's Den in Las Vegas, the Swordfish bowled over the Assassins, 29-7 and kept their playoff hopes alive in the process. The top-ranked Sebastian offence did their part but also got a rare assist from their defence, which held **Justin Hebert** and **Dalvin Cook** to just 7 points. It was by far the best showing of the season for the much-disparaged Swordfish 'D'. Vilified in the Sebastian press for holding the team back, they entered the game having given up a league-high 423 points. They bucked their usual course in this game. The unit played inspired ball, helped by the fact that more often than not their scheme was suited to the Vegas play-call. The Assassins have now lost five in a row as they freefall out of first place in the West and risk falling out of playoff contention should the trend continue in the season's final two weeks.

At Kingdome in Seattle, a bellicose crowd cheered on their Pilots to a 22-10 smack down of the Corn Kings. The lifeless Cowtown offence was manhandled by the Seattle front. **Jimmy Garoppolo** was sacked 5 times and pressured throughout the game. **Khalil Mack** came alive with 3 of those sacks. The Corn Kings turned to rookie **Davis Mills** to close out the game for an ineffective Garoppolo. He was sacked twice, giving Seattle 7 total sacks on the day. **Trey Lance** had another great game, taking advantage of opportunities provided by a run-keying Cowtown 'D' to hit on key passes. He found **Robby Anderson** for a 56-yard shot to set up a field goal, hit **Hunter Renfrow** for 29 yards off play action and threw 2 TD passes to finish with a 137.1 QB rating for the game. The Corn Kings are fading fast, having lost 3 games in a row, while the Pilots are simply letting it rip with nothing on the line over a four-game win streak.

At The Fortress in Bruxelles, the Bombers were officially eliminated by falling to York, 37-24. In what is expected to be his season, **Drew Brees** likely saw the last action of his career as well when he was knocked down in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter after completing a pass to **Marquez Valdes-Scantling**. The veteran was slow to get up and had to be helped off the field. He will miss at least next week with what the team is reporting to be a sprained knee. He is possibly done for the year. In what will likely be known to history as **Brees' Final Game**, the Bombers were unable to overcome a rocky start (mirroring their season) and clung to life 30-17 mid-way through the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter with Jared Goff at the controls. Any faint hope that remained was all but dashed when **Derrick Henry** bowled through the fatigued Bruxelles line for his third touchdown run of the day to make the score 37-17 late in the third quarter. Henry had a ginormous day, rushing for 175 yards and 3 touchdowns on 32 carries. York moves into a wildcard spot in the tight three-way fight in the Coastal.

At Thermopylae Stadium in Pickering, the Spartans rolled over the Wrecking Balls 31-14 to sneak into the second wild card spot in the Atlantic Conference. Pickering got the early lead on an opening drive 16-yard touchdown run by **Miles Sanders** and that allowed them to apply their formula for success, which consists of even more **Miles Sanders** until the defence tightens up then **Philip Rivers** is unleashed. This is exactly what happened on Pickering's second touchdown. With the New Jersey defence in tight to stop the run, a perfect play action fake by Rivers sprung **Calvin Ridley** wide open for a 22-yard touchdown pass to make it 14-0. The Wrecking Balls finally got on the board on their next possession, driving 75 yards in 10 plays and finishing with an 8-yard TD pass from **Matt Stafford** to **Keenan Allen**. The Spartans let New Jersey hang around after that and there was a nervous few minutes after Rivers was picked off early in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter. But the Wrecking Balls were unable to wreck the party with the turnover and eventually Pickering regained their two-score advantage late in the 3<sup>rd</sup> on a 13-yard screen pass to **D'Andre Swift** for a 21-7 lead. A strip-sack of Stafford by **Shamar Stephen** resulted in a 19-yard fumble return for a TD by **Javelin Guidry** for the icing on the cake. Once thought to be dead in the water, the Spartans have now won four in a row, while New Jersey is just barely hanging around in the Pacific Conference wildcard hunt.

At Jurassic Park in Durham, the Thunder Lizards rebounded from their tough loss in Week 13 to dominate the Cubs, 33-6. **Russell Wilson** scrambled for 43 yards on the game's very first play from scrimmage, but two plays later he was picked off by **Tyrann Mathieu** at the Lizards' 21, setting up a field goal drive and an early 3-0 lead. This was a sign of things to come for the visitors. Turnovers would play a critical role in putting the Cubs on their back paws. Trying to answer the Durham score, the Cubs got a reprieve on 3rd & 20 with a pass interference call on Mathieu, and drove into Durham territory, only to see **Tyler Lockett** get stripped of the ball by **Richard Sherman** after a 12-yard gain to the Durham 23. The Lizards turned this takeaway into another **Cairo Santos** field goal to make it 6-0. The hammer blow came on the Cubs' next series, when **Ed Oliver** poked the ball out of Wilson's arms as the quarterback took off to run and **Devin McCourty** scooped it up for a 34-yard fumble return touchdown to make it 13-0 Durham. That set the tone for the remainder of the contest. The Cubs went conservative and failed to make headway while the Lizards' offence put together a touchdown drive late in the 2nd quarter, finishing off a 10-play, 85-yard effort with a 6-yard TD pass from **Josh Allen** to **Chase Edmonds** for a 20-0 lead. A less-than-inspired comeback effort failed to change the narrative and the Thunder Lizards tromped on to a surprisingly easy win. The Cubs remain in the final wildcard spot in the Pacific, while Durham roars, uncontested at the top of the North.

At **TERRORDOME** in Virden the Violators smothered the Cadillac, 27-4. The game started well for Erieau; their defence put the Violators in a ridiculous 4th & 42 position on their first possession of the game after back-to-back holding penalties and a 12-yard sack on 3rd down by **Leki Fotu**. They took advantage of the good field position to march 46 yards in 8 plays, finishing off with a 3-yard touchdown run by **Najee Harris** for a 7-0 lead. And then things "went Erieau" on them. After holding Virden to a field goal in reply, the Cadillac offence went into reverse with a little help from **Leonard Williams**, who sacked **Kyler Murray** on back-to-back snaps to set up a 4th & 22 and great field position for Virden. **Patrick Mahomes** wasted no time, lobbing a deep pass to **TJ Hockenson** for a 49-yard touchdown to give them a 10-7 lead. The Cadillac went on to register just 3 first downs the rest of the game, for just 7 on the day. Murray was sacked 5 times and the Erieau offence as a whole netted less than 100 yards, with 95. Mahomes added a couple more highlight-reel touchdown passes; a 51-yard cross to **KJ Hamler** and a scramble drill checkdown to **Royce Freeman** for a 13-yard score to round out the scoring. The Violators took their foot off the gas at that point and the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter mercifully faded away. The win was not enough to nudge Virden into a playoff spot. They dropped tie-breakers to both Las Vegas and Iowa City to remain on the outside looking in...for now.

At the Eagle's Nest in Toronto, the Convicts took care of business on the road with a straightforward 26-10 win over the Burrow-less Blue Eagles. From the moment **Dak Prescott** broke the ice on their second possession with a 28-yard touchdown pass to **Marvin Jones Jr.**, Scarborough was never really in the game. The offence under **Drew Lock** floundered, putting pressure on a solid defensive effort that went on to force two punts and hold the Convicts to two field goals for the rest of the half to trail by the modest score of 13-3. After going three-and-out to start the 3rd quarter, however, the Blue Eagles fell behind further when Prescott and Jones Jr hooked up for their second TD on a 39-yard fly to make it 20-3. Scarborough finally found the end zone with 5:51 left in the 4th on a 2-yard run by **Chris Carson** to finish off a 75-yard drive. **Teddy Bridgewater** finished off the game for Chino, practicing his handoffs to back-up running back **Ameer Abdullah** to emerge unscathed and increase their lead in the West to 1½ games.

And finally, let's pause for a few extra moments to examine the battered and bloated corpse of the Derailers after they were stomped to death by the powerful North Stars at Ferenc-Liszt International Airport Stadium in Budapest. The North Stars bullied the Derailers to a 47-0 finish, the largest margin of victory for any team so far in 2021. It could have been worse and, frankly, Buffalo had this embarrassment coming. The way Buffalo played against a North Stars team that is hitting its immense stride here in the late stages of the season, it was never going to go well for them.

First of all, it is clear that **Lamar Jackson** is exhausted from carrying his team through the relatively competitive first half of the season. However, the offence has now gone two straight games without scoring points and, while the Budapest defence is well capable of shutting out an opponent, that Jackson could not find a way to even a field goal is a sign that he is all but shot – physically and mentally. And it is easy to see why. The Buffalo coach made the final score even worse by going for it on 4th down 9 times, making it on only three of those tries. Seven of those fourth-down attempts came in their own end and 5 of those inside their own 30-yard line. One of the few successful conversions came late in the game on 4th & 7 at their own 14! This is just insane and not justifiable under any circumstances when you consider the cumulative effect of failure on a team's morale and the bad position it puts the defence in. It was total dominance. Buffalo crossed into Budapest territory just three times all game, and one of those times was in the game's dying seconds of the game. Jackson was then promptly knocked back across the line into Derailerville on the next play by **Cameron Jordan**, who punctuated the beat down with a 12-yard sack on the game's last play.

Coach **Daryl Brothers** is squeezing every last ounce of effort from his star quarterback in a losing cause and it borders on athlete abuse. Jackson's legs are weary, his arm is done, his decision-making that of a punch-drunk boxer in the fifth round against George Foreman. He has thrown, run and been sacked a total of 680 times this year and there are still 2 more games to play! His passing numbers are steadily dropping. While he still gets some use out of his legs, it has not been enough to make up the passing deficit.

The North Stars under **Darrin Jones** are not a team to deliberately run-up the score on a beaten opponent, but the choices of the Derailer coach left him no choice. Add the two **Lamar Jackson** interceptions to the 4th down misadventures and it is nearly impossible for an offence led by **Aaron Rodgers** not to score 47 points. Buffalo fans are finally letting their dissatisfaction with Brothers be known. They had been holding off out of gratitude for the coach and owner bringing a pro team back to Buffalo, but now they see a team that is becoming as much of a laughing stock as those Bills teams of the 1970s. They see a superstar at quarterback and an All-Pro defensive tackle in **Aaron Donald** on a team with a 4-10 record. Something doesn't add up.

That's it for Week 14, folks! Hopefully, we will see something better out of the intra-divisional games in Week 15!

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FOR WEEK FIFTEEN EFL ACTION

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RECORD VS THE SPREAD AFTER WEEK 14:

95-67-6

## PLAYOFF PICTURE AT A GLANCE

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

## Jimmy's WEEK FIFTEEN PICKS

### GAMES TO WATCH

#### IOWA CITY @ LAS VEGAS (line – ASSASSINS by 7)

**INJURIES:** Iowa City – Javon Hargrave (QUESTIONABLE), Jaylon Johnson (DOUBTFUL); Las Vegas – Sammy Watkins (PROBABLE), Adoree' Jackson (QUESTIONABLE), Shaquill Griffin (DOUBTFUL), Michael Thomas (DOUBTFUL), Andrew Beck (OUT), Marcus Williams (OUT), Nick Williams (OUT).

When these teams met in Week 1, the Assassins ensured that the Cubs would be ready for this game by throwing the ball and scoring on the last play of a game that required only a kneel down to finish. Since that symbolic middle finger was raised, both of these teams have had their ups and downs on their way to identical records and current possession of the two wild card spots in the Pacific Conference. The outcome of this contest will have huge implications in the playoff picture as both teams are racing to catch Chino for the division title while also fighting each other. The Assassins, after starting the season as one of the league's hottest teams at 8-1 have not won a game since due to combination of bad luck, injuries and lacklustre play from Justin Herbert in three of those five losses. Last week's loss to Sebastian brought the offence to a new low as they managed just 7 points against one of the worst defensive units in the league. The recent history of the Cubs has hardly been rosier as they come in having lost two of their last three and needing last minute heroics from Russell Wilson to defeat Peg City. The line is very generous considering Vegas' recent struggles, but the Cubs

are 2-4 record on the road and a turnover risk against a takeaway team like Vegas. But the Assassins secondary is banged up and Russell Wilson has the weapons to pick it apart. Expect the Cubs to come out gunning for them and for revenge. **PICK: IOWA CITY**

### **PICKERING @ YORK (line – SPARTANS by 3)**

**INJURIES:** **Pickering** – Richie Incognito (PROBABLE), Micah Hyde (QUESTIONABLE), Javon Kinlaw (DOUBTFUL), Bradley Roby (DOUBTFUL), Denzel Ward (OUT); **York** – C.J. Henderson (PROBABLE), Mike Williams (DOUBTFUL), DeForest Buckner (OUT), Rashan Gary (OUT), Wyatt Teller (OUT).

These two teams currently emerge from the three-way tie-breaker with Brooklin as the wildcards in the Atlantic Conference. York can cement the three-way tie-breaker and gain a game on Pickering with a win. A Spartans victory will simply ensure they remain a post-season concern going into Week 16. In the first meeting between these teams, York picked off both Spartan quarterbacks to turn a close game on its head in the late stages. That was the start of an early season surge by the Excaliburs that has since given way to recent difficulties. Injuries gutted the York offence and the defence could not keep up over a four-game losing streak that just ended last week in Bruxelles. The Spartans appear to be peaking at the right time as they are riding a four-game win streak. The team has established a ground-based identity on offence upon which the strong, but sometimes unpredictable, arm of Philip Rivers relies. This is not a good time for DeForest Buckner to be injured. Derrick Henry is coming off his best game of the year, so expect both teams to pound the ground in this one. Who do I like if play-action ends up being the difference-maker? I think you know... **PICK: YORK**

## **GAMES OF NOTE**

### **SEATTLE @ CHINO (line – CONVICTS by 6)**

**INJURIES:** **Seattle** – Marshon Lattimore (DOUBTFUL), Kendall Sheffield (DOUBTFUL), Josiah Deguara (OUT); **Chino** – Mike Purcell (PROBABLE), John Feliciano (OUT), PJ Hall (OUT), Justin Jackson (OUT).

Chino got to pick on the Pilots in Week 1 when the quarterback situation in Seattle was unsettled. It was an easy win for the Convicts then but this is a different Pilots team in Week 15, winners of four straight. They like what they see of their rookie quarterback, Trey Lance, who has started three of the team's last four games and has 7 TD passes to just 1 interception in that span. Dak is back and has shaken off the rust from a subpar effort in his return two weeks ago. Christian McCaffrey is back as well, but how effective he will be remains to be seen. With a one-and-a-half-game hold on first place in the West and the certainty that one of the teams in hot pursuit, Las Vegas and Iowa City, will win this week, the Convicts can clinch the West with a win or wait for Week 16 to decide the division with a loss. Seattle is loose and dangerous and are mostly healthy, although Marshon Lattimore is doubtful. The Convicts are largely healthy as well and Marvin Jones Jr seems to be finally getting on track. Expect a much closer contest than the first time. **PICK: SEATTLE**

### **BUDAPEST @ BROOKLIN (line – NORTH STARS by 7)**

**INJURIES:** **Budapest** – Brian Bulaga (PROBABLE); **Brooklin** – Kwity Paye (DOUBTFUL), Randall Cobb (OUT), Xavier McKinney (OUT), Nickel Robey-Coleman (OUT), Golden Tate (OUT), Brandon Williams (OUT).

The Hawks would have welcomed a date against the North Stars at a critical point in the regular season last year as they seemed to have their number. Not so, this year. With the Hawks now a lost tie-breaker out of the playoffs and their rivals playing each other, a win will vault them into a wildcard spot. A loss, of course, will keep them on the outside looking in. The North Stars clinched the division weeks ago and now the no.1 seed in the conference, so it appears they have nothing to play. If the Hawks are hoping that Budapest lightens the workload of their top players, they will be disappointed. Budapest seems intent on entering the ranks of the legendary teams that have accomplished perfect seasons. Aaron Rodgers will start and through him goes one of the league's top offences, held back only by their own success at getting in front early and choosing to run out the clock late. The Hawks are looking much better than when they were smoked by Budapest in Week 1. But are they better enough to stand a chance against the league's no.1 team? I expect Brooklin to stand up to their rivals, but injuries to two of their top 3 receivers will be too much to overcome. **PICK: BUDAPEST**

### **COBB COUNTY @ NEW JERSEY (line – COYOTES by 4)**

**INJURIES:** **Cobb County** – Brandin Cooks (PROBABLE), Steve Nelson (DOUBTFUL), Damien Harris (OUT); **New Jersey** – Bashad Breeland (PROBABLE), James Bradberry (OUT), Jerry Hughes (OUT), Jedrick Wills Jr (OUT).

The Coyotes have clinched the East and can still snatch the no.1 seed in the conference if they win out and the Pats lose out. For this reason, they are unlikely to rest anybody important, at least to start, and will put forth a strong effort against a Wrecking Balls team facing elimination with a loss. The path to the playoffs for New Jersey is a narrow one across a gorge with large crocodiles in the stream below. They must win their remaining two games and hope for two of Virden, Las Vegas and Iowa City to drop their final two games in order to sneak in on the conference record tie-breaker. When these teams met fairly recently in Week 9, the Coyotes won a close one thanks in large part to a pair of Matt Stafford interceptions and a questionable 4<sup>th</sup> down decision by New Jersey in the Cobb County red

zone. The loss of James Bradberry will hurt, but a clean game from Stafford gives the Balls a real shot. **PICK: NEW JERSEY**

### **DURHAM @ SEBASTIAN (line – THUNDER LIZARDS by 5)**

**INJURIES: Durham** – Tyler Boyd (QUESTIONABLE), Brian Burns (DOUBTFUL), Zach Allen (OUT); **Sebastian** – Odell Beckham Jr (QUESTIONABLE), Blake Cashman (OUT), Eric Ebron (OUT), Mitchell Schwartz (OUT), Levi Wallace (OUT).

The Swordfish are a half-game behind a trio of Coastal Division teams cluttering up the wildcard picture. They will stay within striking distance with a win but will be eliminated with a loss, a Brooklin win and a non-tie between Pickering and York. The Thunder Lizards can no longer capture the no.1 seed in the conference and are not secure in the no.2 seed with the Irish knocking off the Patriots last week. Durham controls its own destiny, so expect them to hold nothing back here as the Irish face an easy finish down the stretch. The Swordfish are coming off a very strong win over Las Vegas last week that was notable for the play of their much-criticized defence. If that success was more than a match-up issue involving scheme, it makes Sebastian a much more dangerous team. Their top-ranked offence continues to roll in concert with a streak of success on fourth down. Reverse that and perhaps we aren't talking about their playoff hopes this late in the season. Expect Sebastian to continue pushing the envelope, as they have nothing to lose, but don't expect the same success against the league's top-ranked defence with a flair for sacking and intercepting the quarterback. **PICK: DURHAM**

### **SCARBOROUGH @ COWTOWN (line – CORN KINGS by 8)**

**INJURIES: Scarborough** – Micah Kiser (QUESTIONABLE), Steve McLendon (QUESTIONABLE), Darius Phillips (DOUBTFUL), Joe Burrow (OUT), Jamison Crowder (OUT), Myles Gaskin (OUT), Shaq Lawson (OUT); **Cowtown** – Latavius Murray (PROBABLE), Deonte Harris (OUT), Trent Murphy (OUT).

The Corn Kings' season took a turn for the worse three weeks back and last week they hit the rocks with an underwhelming offensive effort against the Pilots. Rumours of an undeclared injury to Jimmy Garoppolo abound as Ryan Fitzpatrick prepares to start a must-win game in a desperate bid to save their season. They will need lots of help just to get into a tie-breaking scenario. The Blue Eagles are banged up and wallowing in the basement but one of their two wins came against this Corn King team in a game the Cowtown faithful still shudder about. There will be no sleeping on Scarborough this time around, but if they can hang on to the ball and not snap the ball over Johnny Hekker's head they should be fine. Drew Lock has shown over the past three games exactly why the Blue Eagles moved away from him quickly and drafted Joe Burrow at the first opportunity. He is anxious to put together some good tape just to stay in the league at this point. The Corn Kings' defence has softened recently, but should be able to handle Lock. **PICK: COWTOWN**

### **PEG CITY @ VIRDEN (line – VIOLATORS by 11)**

**INJURIES: Peg City** – Saquon Barkley (OUT), Tarik Cohen (OUT), Ashtyn Davis (OUT), Tre Flowers (OUT), Ryan Kelly (OUT), Courtland Sutton (OUT); **Virden** – Ja'Marr Chase (PROBABLE), Lane Johnson (PROBABLE), Nasir Adderley (OUT), John Brown (OUT), Isaiah Buggs (OUT), Chris Harris Jr (OUT), Marcus Peters (OUT).

This game has a "leftover" look at first glance but when one considers how important this game is to the Violators' chances of advancing and how well the Crusaders have been playing the past two weeks, it is possible that this game could be closer than people think. Virden has been hobbled by injuries all season and this week they are missing their two starting corners and, possibly, their star rookie Ja'Marr Chase. Mac Jones amazed last week by dropping dimes all over the Oshawa secondary in the team's first win. That victory came one week after they had pushed the Cubs into a corner and were only undone by Russell Wilson magic. Patrick Mahomes backed off the throttle a bit last week against Erieau but still lit up the scoreboard with 3 TD passes. He is comfortable in a shootout if his rookie opponent is able to exploit the wounded Virden secondary and repeat last week's success. The idea that the Crusaders are capable of staying close against a playoff contender is not intuitive at all. In fact, it's crazy. Call me nuts! **PICK: PEG CITY**

## **HOLIDAY LEFTOVERS**

### **BRUXELLES @ BUFFALO (line – Pick 'Em)**

**INJURIES: Bruxelles** – A'Shawn Robinson (QUESTIONABLE), Drew Brees (OUT), O.J. Howard (OUT), Jordan Phillips (OUT), Darius Slay (OUT); **Buffalo** – Jaycee Horn (PROBABLE), Quinnen Williams (PROBABLE), Mike Davis (QUESTIONABLE), Jaquiski Tartt (OUT), Auden Tate (OUT).

We begin our peak into the darkest part of your post-holiday fridge with a couple of cold and moldy turkeys that looked far more appealing early in the season. The Bombers could not overcome a poor start despite playing in desperation mode after the halfway point and enter this game eliminated and with Jared Goff at QB. The Derailers have not scored in two games and Lamar Jackson looks shot, his numbers plummeting as his team's losses rise. Handing the ball over to Kyle Trask to try live reps is probably not a good idea, but when one looks at Lamar's shell-shocked face these days, as his coach repeatedly keeps him in for 4<sup>th</sup> & long deep in his team's end, it feels like the humane thing to do. Since nobody in upstate New York wants to see Trask, Lamar will get a chance to beef up his numbers against the horrendous defence of the Bombers. It still might not be enough to resuscitate the Buffalo offence. **PICK: BRUXELLES**

## CHARLESWOOD @ TWIN CITIES (line – PATRIOTS by 5)

**INJURIES:** Charleswood – None; Twin Cities – Avonte Maddox (QUESTIONABLE), Troy Pride Jr (QUESTIONABLE), Darnell Savage (QUESTIONABLE), Mitchell Trubisky (DOUBTFUL), Bless Austin (OUT), Kenny Clark (OUT), Tae Crowder (OUT).

The impossibly healthy Pats are favoured by less than a TD in a game that should have blowout written all over it. Instead, with the lamest two-digit win team in history going against the no.1 overall pick in the draft, the hype machine is in overdrive painting this as a match-up that could threaten the Pats' stranglehold on the no.1 seed in the conference. Yes, we can finally name Trevor Lawrence as the Triumph starter, just 15 weeks into the most pointless season in Twin Cities history. Finally, some meaning has been injected into the catatonic ritual of just trying to get through the season. It took an injury to Mitch Trubisky to make it happen, but at least its happening. As for the Pats, they just got beat by the no.3 seed in the other conference. They will hope to regain some street cred. **PICK: CHARLESWOOD**

## EAST ELMHURST @ OSHAWA (line – IRISH by 8)

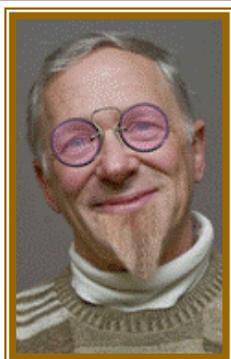
**INJURIES:** East Elmhurst – Shaquil Barrett (OUT); Oshawa – Davante Adams (QUESTIONABLE), Jeffery Simmons (QUESTIONABLE), Denico Autry (OUT), Marcus Davenport (OUT).

Now that we know the Irish are for real and the Pink Panthers wish they weren't, the game that might have been projected a long time ago as the game Oshawa needed to keep them in the hunt for the no.2 seed is exactly the opposite. The Irish, after beating the Pats last week, have a theoretical shot at a home game in the quarter finals if they can keep the winning streak going and Sebastian can find a way past Durham. The Pink Panthers are coming off their worst humiliation ever after falling to Peg City. They have hit rock bottom and there is no place to go but up. Oshawa has lost seven in a row; East Elmhurst has won seven in a row. Considering the numerological mysticism angle as a last resort to make sense of a crazy world: Could this clash of magic sevens reverse the polarity of the current courses of the involved teams just enough to scuttle one's grandiose dreams and redeem the other's pride? Nah...probably not. **PICK: EAST ELMHURST**

## GEORGIA @ ERIEAU (line – CADILLAC by 3)

**INJURIES:** Georgia – Jourdan Lewis (QUESTIONABLE), Malcom Brown (OUT), Kelvin Joseph (OUT); Erieau – Hunter Henry (QUESTIONABLE), Stephon Gilmore (DOUBTFUL), Maurice Hurst (DOUBTFUL), Jaylen Waddle (DOUBTFUL), Dre'Mont Jones (OUT), Henry Ruggs III (OUT), Van Noy (OUT).

When these teams first faced each other in Week 8 few people watched the Caddies' drive smoothly to a rare win. This week, even fewer will be tuning in. Erieau has lost 5 of their last 6 games and wishes the season was over just to avoid losing any more money opening up a nearly empty stadium. Georgia, coming off a bizarre tie with Twin Cities in which their offence did not touch the ball in the entire overtime period, is also ready to say goodbye to this season, as well as Heinz Field, and return to peach country where they belong. Presuming, for argument's sake, that enough players and coaches on both these teams care about the outcome, this contest should unfold with the Cadillac trying every trick they know in order to generate a turnover on defence and handing the ball off to Najee Harris as much as it takes to give Kyler Murray a fighting chance to make something happen on offence. The Glads' strategy will be to simply score as many points as possible with Big Ben out there and hope for the Caddies to stall on their own, as they often do. **PICK: GEORGIA**



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*This Week in EFL History*  
*With Professor Sterling Smitherman*

FROM THE EFL ARCHIVES – In Week 14 of the 2015 EFL season, the league confirmed that Mission Viejo would be the site of the ninth Gale Sayers Game. Although the city won the bid over a year before, beating out the only other competitor in Iowa City, concerns that Ferraroland would not be finished in time had the league hedging its bets. With the completion of the contract for the all-inclusive theme park, the EFL signed off on the deal, making the Monarchs the first of the expansion franchises to host the final.

In the only division race still going, the Beaufort County Ravens moved into first place by bumping off the

Cubs, 30-27. **Randall Cobb** starred for the Ravens with 7 catches for 146 yards and 2 TDs, including a 67-yard catch-and-run from **RGIII** to open the scoring.

The most blisteringly exciting contest of Week 14 involved two unlikely candidates for Game of the Week. The Blue Eagles and **Aaron Rodgers** out-gunned the Regulators and **Tony Romo** by the gawdy score of 43-32. Scarborough scored 26 points in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter in the comeback. Rodgers piloted the game-winning drive, starting at his own 16-yard line with just 2:13 remaining, trailing 42-36. It was classic “clutch” Rodgers, as opposed to the erratic has-been role he often played on those Blue Eagle teams in those days. He culminated the 84-yard drive with a 4-yard TD pass to **Mohamed Sanu** with 0:22 left for the game-winning score. Starting at his own 20, Romo could not lead the Regulators back and the game ended with Scarborough still alive in the playoff race.

Rodgers won Offensive Player of the Week with his 34 of 54, 342 yards and 4 TD pass performance in that game. 3 of those 4 TDs came in the furious 4<sup>th</sup> quarter.

The Defensive Player of the Week was Johnathan Hankins, who notched 3 sacks in the Patriots 35-21 victory over rival Twin Cities.