

# The NFL on REO: Football is Back! Sort of.

## Fake Football – Phill Lytle

Football is back!



Preseason football is here!



After the long, long offseason, we finally have actual football to watch. Except, it's not really football. Not in the true sense of the word. During the preseason, teams don't game-plan, they don't strategize, and they don't really care about winning or losing. The starters will usually only play a series or two, and the rest of the game is filled with a bunch of players that will rarely play when the games finally count for something.

Doesn't matter though, if you are a die-hard NFL fan. We still

watch. I watched every second of the first Titans' preseason snorefest. It was ugly. Neither team looked good. The Titans looked disinterested and bored. The Jets looked incompetent. The final score resembled an MLB game, but was less action packed and slower paced than any baseball game I have seen in some time. I'm sure the ratings were spectacular – no sarcasm intended. People love NFL football.

Here's to three more meaningless preseason games with no injuries!

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In our continued effort to get more voices and perspectives for our NFL coverage, we have asked Ben Plunkett to occasionally contribute his thoughts to various NFL matters. Disclaimer: Ben does not watch football, knows nothing about the current players, and literally does no research. But he stands by every word he writes! We proudly present:

### **Behind the Headlines by Benjamin Plunkett**

I have always admired personalities who have risen above adversity to greatness. For Marshawn Lynch that adversity came in the form of being an unexpected and unwanted child. Few people know that Marshawn is the second of identical twins. His firstborn brother, Shawn, was really all his parents expected. Then to the complete surprise of everyone present—including the medical staff—came his brother. They named him More Shawn because they were, like, “Hey, more Shawn!. Over time this became Marshawn. But for the purposes of this article to avoid any confusion we will simply call him More Shawn.

At birth, More Shawn bore gifts: A nerf football in one hand and a video of Raiders of the Lost Ark in the other. By seven

years of age he had mastered the fedora and bullwhip. By ten he vowed an unbreakable vow to wipe every last Nazi from the face of the earth. By 15 he had grown a lifelong hatred of snakes. All this considered, it is an understatement to say that after high school, More Shawn was ready to join the Oakland Raiders. Plus, he still had his nerf football, which he could throw, like, really, really far.

I'm a big Harrison Ford fan so it makes perfect sense that More Shawn should always be a poster child of greatness to me and my kind. Sadly, More Shawn's career was cut short at the age of 21, just after he had joined the Raiders. During that year some random lady he had just met shot him. This drove him out of the game for about 15 or so years. Now, girded with his prize nerf football which he has named "Wonderball," More Shawn is at 36 just now triumphantly returning to his beloved game.

In my opinion, More Shawn isn't that old. I think the rabid football fans of Ephesus of Paul the Apostle's day would agree. In that culture, anyone under the age of 40 was considered young. No, I don't think it will matter as long as he can throw "Wonderball" up to the top of the stadium and hit the lights. As long as he is able to do that and make sparks dance all over the field while he runs in slow motion, everything should be hunky dory. And despite his "advanced age", he has proven himself more than capable of doing so. The team mascot has been cited as declaring, "That boy can throw like really, really far."

No, there is not one iota of doubt in my mind that More Shawn could throw a football over them mountains. I think if Coach would have put him in for the fourth quarter, they would've been state champions. No doubt. No doubt in my mind.

Anyhoo, let me know what you think about all this. Can More Shawn still throw, like, really, really far? Does he still have skills with a bullwhip? What about a bow staff? All that

can be known for certain is that the future of mankind rests on his shoulders. I also know that More Shawn will prove to be the best thing since Baby Gays changed its name to Q-tips.

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### **A Possible Solution To an 18 Game Regular Season – Phill Lytle**

The buzz term for the NFL the past few years has been Player Safety. Rules have been changed. Fines levied. Research done. All in the name of Player Safety. Yet, the league office continues to float out the idea of an 18 game regular season. I won't regurgitate what I've already written about this awful idea – you can find that [here](#). And I won't belabor the point too much, because plenty has been said about this issue. But the truth of that matter is that the owners want more revenue and they believe adding games to the schedule will make that possible, so this idea is not going anywhere.

At the same time, I do believe the owners would be willing to forgo adding games to the regular season if they could add more teams, and therefore more games, to the playoffs. And for the sake of the integrity of the game, that is actually an idea I am willing to entertain. Perhaps it would dilute the quality of the playoffs a bit. As of now, only 12 teams make it to the postseason. If you added two more teams per conference, that would mean that half the league would make it to the playoffs. Maybe that is too much. I don't know. What I do know is that plan is far preferable to adding more games to the regular season – risking more injury and more attrition. If I were in charge of the players union, I would only agree to more playoff teams and games in exchange for less preseason games and whatever other items they deem important. I actually think this scenario is not only possible, but would considerably reduce the chances of any work stoppage at the next collective bargaining meetings.

Just my two thoughts. What do you guys think?

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# The NFL on REO: Dominance

## The Insane Ramblings of Gowdy Cannon

**On to 2017...**

Yes, I'm the guy who wrote a 2500-hundred word counseling session on how Tom Brady is the most overrated quarterback of all-time. But don't let that keep you from reading what I'm about to write. You should appreciate it primarily because I wrote the Brady article.

While players can be overrated or underrated to team success I do not think there is any way to get around claiming team superiority in an objective way. For example, we could argue all day whether Brady, Aaron Rodgers or Matt Ryan was the best QB in the NFL last year, but we cannot argue that New England was the best team. That was objectively settled on the field.

With that philosophy as a backdrop, I think it wise to give the Patriots their due for what they have accomplished the last 16 NFL seasons. Even more impressively than the 49er run of the 80s and 90s (due to the rise of things like free agency), the Patriots of the 2000s have owned the NFL. They have ruined the NFL's desire for parity, which the league is absolutely built to achieve.

You know they have won five Super Bowls and have barely lost two others. But the consistency goes way beyond that. Consider this list of accomplishments since 2001:

- New England has been one of the final four teams, playing 11 times.
- New England has failed to at least tie for the AFC East only once, 15 years ago.

- New England has outright won the AFC East 14 of 16 times.
- New England has won 25 playoff games, or as many as the Browns, Lions, Raiders, Texans, Bills, Jaguars, Redskins, Rams, Buccaneers, Chargers, Chiefs, Dolphins, Bengals, Titans, Cowboys and Bears have won...COMBINED.
- New England has won 11 or more games 13 times.
- New England has zero losing seasons.

And on and on it goes. This franchise doesn't just win the Super Bowl on average every three years but is always a contender. They are always either good or great or otherworldly. It has been a wonder to behold, even if most of the country hates them like I do.

Bill Belichick and for the most part Brady have been the constants. They have proven they can lose or get rid of anyone (Romeo Cornell, Randy Moss, Josh McDaniels, Jaime Collins, Vincent Wilfork, Rob Gronkowski) and not miss a beat as far as wins and losses. New England has been a tad fortunate that the AFC East has been terrible this century, with 22 different coaches and 40 starting QBs having had a turn for the other three teams. But the Patriots are so good versus everyone that I doubt it would matter which division they played in.

How have they done it? By being good at everything.

Since 2001, they have finished in the Top 10 in offensive points per game all but one season and in the Top 10 in defensive points per game all but three times. They have proven that the adage "defense wins championships" is often too simplistic, although the other extreme is also false. Only twice have they failed to finish in the top half of the league in defensive points per game and those two seasons (02 and 05) were two of the worst seasons in the run, featuring "only" 19 total wins between the two seasons, a playoff miss and only

one playoff win total.

On a micro-level you can see it more clearly. While I will not rehash any of my Brady article since it is entirely unnecessary, I think looking at their success highlights how much of a team game football truly is and how it takes 35-40 players, multiple coaches and the occasional good break to have a run as New England has had.

For example, beyond the Tuck Rule break (ruled correctly to be clear) in that game, Adam Vinatieri still had to make two clutch FGs to pull that game out. Same for Vinatieri vs. Tennessee, kicking a block of ice football 48 yards to win that game on the way to another Super Bowl. Malcom Butler had to read and react perfectly in Super Bowl XLIX to pull that win from the jaws of defeat. Julian Edelman had to make a near impossible catch last year to keep the tying drive alive vs Atlanta. New England's defense had to shut Atlanta out over the last 20 minutes and force them to move backwards on two drives that could have been FGs to give the offense a chance. And of course Brady made some all-pro throws the last three scoring drives for New England last year to give them a chance.

What is special about this team is how they find a way to win when someone or some unit is off. The defense got torched by Smoking Jake Delhomme in the fourth quarter in the 03 Super Bowl and the offense bailed them out with 18 points in the final period to win. The offense was mostly ineffective in their first SB win vs St. Louis and the defense led them to the victory, scoring one TD on a pick 6 and setting up the other. Scott Kacsmar for Football Outsiders has studied and broken down stats for the NFL for years to find things that correlate to wins and losses. He says that when NFL teams fail to hit 7.0 yards per pass on offense, they win less than 25% of their playoff games this century. Yet New England is 9-7 in such games. In playoff games the last decade the team with the higher QBR rating by their quarterback wins 71% of the time.

The team with the most wins despite having the lower QBR by their quarterback? New England with 4.

New England once murdered Peyton Manning and the Colts record breaking offense in the playoffs in 2005 with Patriot wide receiver Troy Brown playing defensive back. That's how good this franchise is at plugging in pieces and winning no matter what.

What they have done since 2001 is in my opinion, the most impressive thing I have seen in professional sports. Because the NFL just doesn't get dominated like this. New England almost never misses the playoffs. They almost never go one and done. They never get blown out. They just win. The five championships are just part of the story. And as you can see below, they are in position yet again this year for us to see more of the same.

So even though I loathe them, I give them their due. They are the most dominant longterm franchise in pro sports in my lifetime. They deserve that recognition.

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## **Phill's Pre-Season Power Rankings**

Do you want to know why our power rankings are better than most of the others you will find out on the internet? Because we won't make you scroll through page after page to find out who is next on the list. We list them all on the same page. You're welcome.

Additionally, I am only going to be ranking the Top Ten. I have no interest in keeping track of all 32 teams because after you get past numbers 12 or 13, it's all just a gigantic



coin toss. I will post the power rankings periodically throughout the season – most likely quarterly. Use the comment section below to argue and tell me why I am wrong.

## **10. Kansas City**

Honestly, I don't love KC this year, but I couldn't justify putting anyone else in this spot. This is a team that can only go as far as Alex Smith can take them and he just can't take them that far.

## **9. New York Giants**

This is the year the Giants will make some noise in the league. They were 11-5 last year and while they might not win as many games (they probably will) they should be a tough out in the playoffs. And if Eli goes "Super Bowl Eli" mode, then we could be talking about three-time Super Bowl champ Eli Manning. Weird.

## **8. Tennessee**

It's playoffs or bust for the Titans after an eight season drought. By the end of the season, the drought will be over and the Titans will be starting their new streak: Playoff wins.

## **7. Dallas**

They will take a step back this season but still have enough talent to be competitive. Their offensive line will keep them in games.

## **6. Seattle**

They are almost unbeatable at home and are good enough to win some road games. That alone gets them into the playoffs. Plus, they play in the same division as the 49ers and the Rams.

## **5. Green Bay**

Aaron Rogers is the best QB I have watched in my life from a skills standpoint. He can throw the ball better than anyone in

the league. He is not a tactician like Manning and Brady though – he free-lances, ad-libs, and generally plays the position in a most unorthodox manner. But on the right team, that is enough to win and win big. This Green Bay team looks like it has the right parts to make a deep run.

#### **4. Oakland**

All the MVP talk last year for Carr was a little overblown but he did have a very solid season. He should only be better this season as long as his leg has healed well. Adding Lynch to the offense could be huge or it could be another aging running back that refuses to accept he has lost something.

#### **3. Pittsburgh**

They have one of the best QB, WR, RB trios in the league. Maybe the best. Is that enough for them to contend in 2017? I think so.

#### **2. Atlanta**

This is a team that should be the defending Super Bowl champs. That was a monumental collapse. I believe it will have lasting effects on the team this season. I have them at second for now because of how last season ended, not because I think they will remain the second best team in the league throughout the season.

#### **1. New England**

Is there any debate about this? They are the defending Super Bowl champions and they got better this offseason. This team will be scary good this season. Their aggressiveness in the offseason feels like a team that is doing everything they can to make one last push for a championship. This push will probably last two or three years and it is clear Belichick, Brady, and company intend to go out in a blaze of glory.

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## Final Thoughts

Thanks for reading. If you enjoy what we do with our NFL coverage, spread the word. Tell your friends, your neighbors, and your coworkers. We are doing our part to improve the conversation and dialogue about the NFL. And stick around because we have some pretty fun things lined up for this season.

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## [The NFL on REO: Five Predictions For the Upcoming Season](#)

Here at REO, we are in a constant state of evaluation and evolution. We do this because we want to create the best content possible for you, our readers. A few months ago, we launched The NFL on REO as a more comprehensive and complete look at the game of professional football. So far, it has been a successful decision on our part. But, we are not content to just let things remain the same and grow stagnant. We want The NFL on REO to be as informative, entertaining, and thought-provoking as possible, so we have decided to change things up a bit. Instead of this being just one man's perspective, we felt it would be a benefit to our readers to include more voices and more perspectives. So, from this point on, The NFL on REO will include contributions from many of the REO writers. We hope you enjoy the tweaked format.

For this week, Mike Lytle has gazed into the future and made five predictions for the 2017-2018 season.

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## Mike on the Mic

After my [NBA predictions](#) last season went so well I decided to look into my crystal ball and make some NFL predictions for the upcoming season. The NFL is much more unpredictable than the NBA so my crystal ball is a bit cloudy. Even so here are a few things I think could very well happen this season. They are in order of how likely I think they will happen, with one being the least likely and number five being the most likely.

**1. The New England Patriots will finish 15-1 this season.** Not 16-0, not 14-2. They will lose exactly 1 game in the regular season. Love them or hate them, the Patriots are always in the mix. They typically win 13 or so games each year regardless of who they add or subtract, who gets injured, or even what controversy they have created for themselves that particular year. Last season in games that Brady started they were 14-1 (including playoffs). They should have a healthy Rob Gronkowski this year and they've added quality players on both sides of the ball. They won't go 16-0 like they did in 2007. That is virtually impossible, but they will be very good and only have one slip up until the Titans take them out in the playoffs!

**2. A wide receiver will break the 2,000 yard mark this season.** This has never happened before in the history of the league. Calvin Johnson came the closest in 2012 when he totaled 1,964 yards. Teams pass more than ever before and the rules allow for a more wide open game. This record will fall at some point and this will be the year. Julio Jones, Antonio Brown, Odell Beckham Jr. are just three of the guys who are capable of breaking this record if things break right for them this year. Last season was actually a down year with no receiver even topping 1,500 yards. I expect to see those numbers trend up this year.

**3. The Panthers and Cardinals will both bounce back.** In 2015 these were the top two teams in the NFC going 15-1 and 13-3 respectively. They met in the NFC championship game with the Panthers winning and going on to lose in the Super Bowl. Last season they both regressed and finished under .500. I expect both to have winning records and fight for a playoff spot this season.

**4. Bill Belichick will be less than forthcoming at a press conference.** He may be angry about something that did not go exactly right in practice. Perhaps he will not like a question or the tone of a reporter after a 37-10 victory. He may even be having the best day of his life. Whatever the circumstances I am predicting that he will mumble and answer all questions in the shortest and least informative way possible.

**5. Media and fans will overact to wins and losses each week for the first two months of the season.** The NFL season is short. They only play 16 games and injuries are more likely than in other sports so it is difficult to predict anything or really be sure how good (or bad) your team might be. This leads to huge overreactions each week, especially early in the season. Your team loses a close game on a last second field goal and they are the worst team ever. They win a close game because the other team misses a field goal and they are suddenly great. My advice would be to give it time before rushing to judgment, but I don't expect that to happen.

Let me know what you think if these and if any loyal reader has a bold prediction they would like to make feel free to do so in the comments.

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# Five 20th Century Sports Moments That Would've Blown Up Twitter

**Imagine @FeuxBoPelini in 1992...**

I love Twitter. During big events in the U.S. I've discovered (and tweeted) that the worse the event, be it a presidential debate or basketball game, the funnier Twitter is. I'm on Facebook to get people to pay attention to me. I'm on Twitter to pay attention to other people.

So I also love it when a sports moment causes Twitter to explode. Like the LeBron block in the 2016 Finals. Or the last out of the Cubs World Series win. Or when Peyton Manning put Kevin Durant on blast at the ESPYs the other night[1. I don't know if I'm using this correctly, but I think it is a hilarious idiom that I try to work into every conversation with my wife these days. God bless her.].

And I've been thinking about moments before 2008 that would have caused the biggest Twitter meltdowns. Jordan's "I'm Back" in 1995 would be a huge one. Franco Harris' Immaculate Reception vs. Oakland has been replayed a billion times. Kirk Gibson's 88 World Series Game 1 home run certainly. And the list could go on and on.

And it would be endless. So instead of trying to narrow down this list, I want to write about a similar but distinct list. I want to write about moments that were not THE story, but were a footnote in reality yet still would have trended on Twitter. For fans like me, they are unforgettable. And just imagining the tweets that would have come from them brings joy to my mind. Here are five:

***The Major Story:* Dallas destroys Buffalo in Super Bowl XXVII 52-17, winning their first since the 70s and handing Buffalo their 3rd straight Super Bowl loss.**

***The Twitter Moment:* Don Beebe chases Leon Lett down from behind to prevent a meaningless TD at the end.**

This may be the loudest non-TD play in history for a game decided by 35 points. If you watched the game you remember it. Beebe instantaneously became a legend of team pride and hustle. He had no reason to keep running. The game was over. Lett became an instantaneous butt of jokes. He celebrated a few yards too early. The only thing it meant historically was that Dallas didn't set the record for most points in a Super Bowl. Yet as far as fan reaction, it meant a ton. Beebe's and Lett's names would have been at the top of the trending list and I can see the "Hold My Beer" tweets in my head.

***The Major Story:* Larry Bird steals Game 5 of the 1987 Eastern Conference Finals from Detroit and the Celtics go on to win in 7 to set up Celtics vs. Lakers III.**

***The Twitter Moment:* Dennis Rodman and Isiah Thomas say that Larry Bird would be just another player if he weren't white.**

Racial (and racist) comments are aplenty on social media and with U.S. History being as it is, that will always be the case. So I have little doubt that when Rodman made this comment that Thomas echoed that it would have caused a race war on Twitter the same way politics and athletes like Colin Kaepernick do today. The NBA in the 70s and 80s was a breeding ground for racial strife and I remember when this happened. It blew up. Thomas had to answer for it repeatedly to the national media, including to Bird's face at an impromptu press conference. Imagine how Twitter would have reacted.

To be honest, while it was not the wisest comment to make I do

believe Thomas was joking in some sense and it was completely overblown. You have to hand it to Bird, too. He told the media that he didn't think anything of the comment and that they shouldn't either.

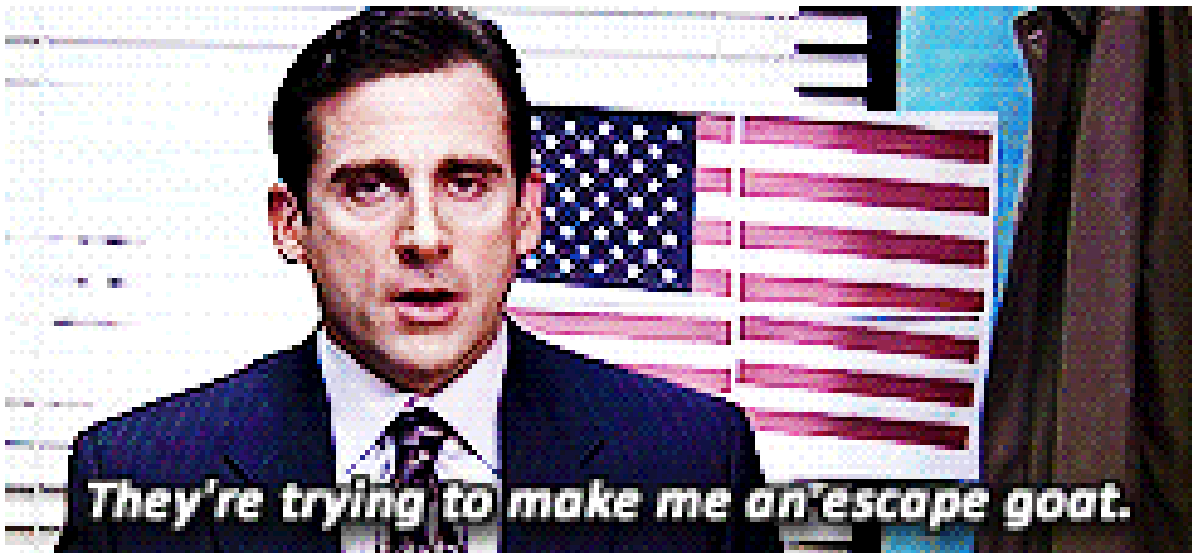


***The Major Story:* Hakeem Olajuwon averages 32-11-5, dominates Shaq and Houston sweeps Orlando in the 1995 NBA Finals**

***The Twitter Moment:* With under 10 seconds left in Game One and the score tied, Nick Anderson of the Magic misses 4 consecutive FTs.**

Sports can make you a hero and a goat, often within the same time frame. Just a couple of weeks prior, Nick Anderson had a moment of glory, stealing the ball from Michael Jordan in a play that became an image of that series, the only one that Jordan lost as a Bull after 1990[2. Though it was the year he came back near the end.]. But then Anderson had a chance to give Orlando the lead late in the first Finals game and missed two free throws, got his own miss, got fouled again and missed the the next two. My brain tells me not to feel bad for professional athletes but my heart does. I can easily envision a slew of hilarious Michael Scott gifs in response.





***The Big Story:*** In 1998, rookie Kerry Wood for the Cubs strikes out 20 Houston Astros, an MLB record, and holds them to 1 hit in a dominant pitching performance

***The Twitter Moment:*** The hit could have been ruled an error, giving Wood 20 K's AND a no-hitter in the same game, a feat that has never been accomplished.

You can watch it below and make your own judgment and you can hear the announcers say it looked like an error. I agree. I was not a Cub fan yet, still 4 years away from moving to Chicago. And at the time I felt the same. I can only imagine the hours and hours of Twitter debate this would have sparked.

***The Big Story:*** In the 1993 Sugar Bowl, underdog #2 Alabama romps defending champion #1 Miami 34-13.

***The Twitter moment:*** With Bama fully in control, the Tide's George Teague walks down Miami's Lamar Thomas and strips the ball.

This is not like the Lett play to me. It is in some ways: the

game was a blowout and a player got caught from behind. But it was the inverse of the play above and more than that, it was a statement. Alabama was given very little chance in this game. Miami was a 4-time champ and cocky. And Bama's defense destroyed them and their Heisman QB Gino Torretta. Here it finally looked like Miami would break the invincible Bama D and score a TD. And then Teague emasculated Thomas. The next we saw of Miami's trash-talking receiver, he was on the bench with a towel on his head. The play didn't even count but it absolutely encapsulates what happened that night. It would have brought a feast of tweets in reaction.

So, that's my list. What are some that I missed that you would have included?

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## [The NFL on REO: The Deep Breath Before the Plunge](#)

In Peter Jackson's epic adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings*, there is a conversation that occurs early in the third film, *The Return of the King*, between the wizard Gandalf and Pippin the Hobbit. They have arrived at Minas Tirith, the last stronghold of man against the rising darkness of Mordor. After an eventful day, they stand at a balcony and look across the fields of Pelennor towards the dark mountains of Mordor. Pippin, restless and afraid, wonders why it is so unnaturally quiet. Gandalf, introspective and decidedly not full of assurances and hope, tells him that quiet is the "deep breath before the plunge." Gandalf then delivers this line, "The

board is set. The pieces are moving.”



The message was clear: This was the quiet of armies amassing for battle. War was coming. It was at their doorstep. Everything was set and ready to go.

That is where every NFL team and every NFL fan finds themselves today. “The board is set. The pieces are moving.” These NFL teams are not fighting to save the world, but ever since the season ended on February 5, 2017, they have all been planning, strategizing, and positioning their rosters to improve and compete for a championship. (I say “every,” but there are always a few teams that go into the season knowing full well they have no chance at all. Take a moment to laugh derisively at their expense, unless of course you root for one of those teams. In that case...this just got awkward.)

While *The Lord of the Rings* line is foreboding and ominous, this time of year is one of optimism and hope for most NFL teams and their fans. Hope does indeed spring eternal in July. Training camps are just around the corner and the fans will finally get a chance to see what all their new free agency and draft toys look like. While many teams will come crashing back to earth quickly once the season begins, right now, everyone has a chance. The odds might be worse than Lloyd Christmas had with Mary Swanson, but any little bit of hope will do for most of us.

Frankly, most fans, myself included, have that goofy grin on our faces right now, even if the facts about our teams don't back them up at all. Don't stop believing kids!

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## **How Do You Solve a Problem Like Colin?**

I hate it when I am reading a sports' article and the writer goes on a political tirade. If I wanted to read about hot-button, political issues, I would read political writers and websites. It drives me crazy and I will do my best to not get political in this column.

Now can we talk about the national anthem, Colin Kaepernick, and his never-ending crusade to destroy our country?

Joking.

I do want to talk about Kaepernick, though. I hope I can do so without bringing in all the baggage that seems to dominate every single conversation about him. As I see it, there are only three reasons why he is not on an NFL team today, starting with the least likely.

1. Every single team/owner is in collusion to keep him out of the league because they are a rich, white guy club that hates everything he stands for. Can we just take this one off the list right now? I've seen some writers argue that this is actually at play. Those writers need to get other jobs. I've heard radio commentators say the same thing. They need to do less talking and more thinking. Is it possible that some owners vehemently disagree with Kaepernick's stand and don't want to have anything to do with him? Absolutely. And that is their right as owners of a business. There are undoubtedly some owners that have no issue at all with Kaepernick's views. They probably even agree with them. So why have they not signed him then? That leads us to reason number two.

2. Colin Kaepernick, the player, is not a good fit for many/most teams. This is not to say that Kaepernick is a bad quarterback. He is not. He is talented and has had moments of brilliance in his career. The problem with Kaepernick is that his specific skill-set does not fit the role of the typical back-up quarterback in the NFL, which is exactly what he would be at this point. If he were to play in an offense that was built around his abilities, he could start and be successful, but you don't tailor an offense to a back up QB. I imagine many NFL teams feel that bringing him in to camp to compete for a back up role is not worth their time. For more on that, see reason number three.

3. With a limited skill set, a controversial background, and the fact that most NFL teams want to avoid bad press, it makes perfect sense that no team has signed him yet. It's a risk/reward scenario and right now, Kaepernick is not worth the risk. That is not to say some team is not willing to take that risk at some point before the 2017 season begins. I will not be surprised at all if he gets picked up soon. But there is no collusion. There is no scandal. Colin Kaepernick is not on an NFL team because he does not fit the role as a traditional and effective back up QB and he brings more baggage than what most NFL teams are willing to deal with. It's that simple.

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### **Celebrate Good Times, Come On!**

I'm late to the party on this but I figured since the NFL was so late to this party, it was only fitting. The league has finally adjusted and loosened their celebration rules. In typical, tone-deaf fashion, the NFL and Roger Goodell (fire him now) presented their new guidelines in a manner that suggested they had actually done something of great value – like cure cancer, figured out how to eliminate concussions, or solve the health care debate. Everyone else in the world read

the new celebration rules and said, "...okay." It was not revolutionary or groundbreaking. It was painfully obvious and average and many years too late. I guess that is an improvement though, as the NFL typically functions in the Upside Down of competence. (Completely incongruous *Stranger Things* mention because it's awesome! New season arrives exclusively to Netflix on Halloween.)


**When it made this announcement, the NFL and Goodell saw themselves like this:**


**When the rest of the world saw them like this:**


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## **Titans Talk**

I'll keep this brief with only a few predictions for the 2017 season:

 I fully expect the Titans to have a top 10 offense in 2017. If they don't, something has gone terribly wrong.

 I expect the secondary to struggle the first half of the season as they gel and learn to play together. This is a group that will have as many as three new starters from last season. That is a lot of turnover. Let's hope the rest of the team can hold on and do enough to win games during that transition.

 Marcus Mariota, if healthy, will be in the Pro Bowl and in serious consideration for MVP at the end of the season. I'll have more on him in a future column. My man-crush is stronger than ever.

That's it for today. I told you it would be brief.

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## Final Thoughts

Take us home Roger Goodell/David Brent:



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## Fool's Gold: Are the Golden State Warriors the Most Overrated Team of All Time?

The 2016-2017 Golden State Warriors are champions of the basketball world once again. This is their second title in three years, having defeated LeBron James and the Cleveland Cavaliers both times. They went 16-1 in the playoffs which is the highest post season winning percentage in the history of the NBA. By every conceivable measure they appear to be a

great team.

Unless you ask other NBA players.

Charles Barkely, Scottie Pippen, Rasheed Wallace, Robert Horry, Julius Irving, and Magic Johnson have all had less-than-kind things to say about this Warriors' team. All of them have publicly questioned their greatness, insinuating that they are the product of a watered down, less talented and more easily exploited league.

We here at Rambling Ever On decided to take a closer look into this controversy. What is it about this Warriors' team that causes all of these former (and current) players to withhold praise, or worse, to openly doubt? We have done our best to get a good sampling of reaction from various NBA players who have played in different eras.

We started our investigation with the players from the 80's and 90's, since they seemed to be the most vocal in their criticism. Craig Ehlo, a former Cleveland Cavalier from the 80's and 90's, noted "I have no doubt we'd take them. 5 games at most. We didn't win the championship but the league was tougher back then. And with the new rules Mark Price would hit 22 threes a game, minimum. Between me, Wilkins and Price, we'd have the Splash Triplets. Curry would ride the bench in the 90's NBA."

Patrick Ewing, Hall of Fame center for the New York Knicks bristled when asked if the current Warriors are better than the 1996 Chicago Bulls. "Man, we played those Bulls' teams! They were great. Best ever. And we played them close. These pretty boys from Oakland would be crying on the court if they had to play me, Mason and Oakley. We sweep them or they would give up. Whichever comes first."

It appears there is a level of skepticism about the Warriors. We dug deeper.



Michael Olowokandi, the number one pick in the 1998 draft has also recently spoken out. "I'm confident the 99 Clippers would take these Warriors. I know I only averaged 8 points per game for my career, but the league was tougher back then. Draymond Green wouldn't be able to touch me. I'd go for 30 every night."

The skepticism and verbal attacks are not reserved for players from the 80's and 90's. NBA players from every decade are stepping up and taking their shots at Durant, Curry and the Warriors. Fred Carter, the leading scorer on the 1973 Sixers had some choice words.[1.The 1973 Sixers went 9-73 – the worst record in NBA history.] "Back when I played, there were only 17 teams in the league. There are 30 teams today. Obviously that has watered down the league. And we didn't have any of those European players. Those guys should just stick to soccer." Carter continued, "We didn't have the three point shot in my day either. It didn't exist. If it had been around, I am confident that at least half of my team could have shot it at least as well as Stephen Curry. Probably better."

Fred "Curly" Neal of the Harlem Globetrotters added his own perspective. "Those guys are fancy. They dribble, they drive, they shoot from anywhere on the court. But we did all those things and we did them better. We looked better as well, you know what I'm saying? Don't give me that 16-1! The Globetrotters won 8,829 games in a row!"

Surely, we thought to ourselves, that at the very least, the current players would have a healthy respect for a team that has won 207 regular season games and two NBA championships in the past three seasons. So, we approached LeBron James, arguably the great player of his generation, to get his thoughts. James was thoughtful and political with his response, yet with enough negativity it was clear the questions about the Warriors extends beyond the older generations. "Well, they were a great team. No doubt. But they played in an era that honestly didn't have a lot of great

teams. And their style of play worked for them in that era but would not be as effective against the great teams of other eras.” We asked James if his Cavaliers team would beat the Kevin Durant led Warriors in a seven game series. LeBron smiled, “Absolutely. Our team could defend the perimeter which would have contained Curry and Thompson. We would have neutralized Durant completely. Our teamwork and passing would have made it impossible for their defense to key on any one player. And defensively, we played a physical and aggressive style that would have knocked them off their game. We would have won that series in 5, maybe 6 games.”

There you have it. The Golden State Warriors, who set the NBA record for the most regular season wins in a single season AND over a three year span, winners of two NBA championships, are just not very good. In fact, ask any player, past or present, besides Dell Curry and Mychal Thompson, and they would tell you that pretty much any team that has ever played in the NBA could beat these guys. Even some great college teams could probably give them a good run for their money. In fact, there have been rumors that members of the 1995 College of Charleston Cougars are saying they believe their team could also defeat the Warriors in a 7 game series, but none of them could be reached for comment.

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## **Why I Stopped Hating LeBron James**

I remember the Summer of 2010 quite well.

Especially July. My church puts on a huge basketball camp every summer and a church from another state always comes to

help us with it, normally the Rejoice Church in Owasso, OK. I remember being at the church one day working and then several of their adult workers gathering around the church soundbooth computer with me to watch "The Decision."

I remember my reaction to it: anger, confusion, repulsion. It was the same kind of reaction I'd have to a TV show that killed off my favorite character. I honestly didn't care that LeBron left Cleveland. I wanted him in Chicago but not choosing us didn't really draw the ire. No, I was mad because LeBron chose to play with Dwayne Wade, four years removed from a Finals MVP and Chris Bosh, a perennial all-star.

Then, it got worse. I was housesitting for a lady at church and happened upon the Miami Heat pep rally celebrating *before the season had even started*, complete with the new Big 3 all in full uniform and LeBron predicting they'd win championship after championship.

I was disgusted. When the regular season finally started three months later, I was in full "I hate LeBron" mode (not real hate, but what I call "sports hate" – just a fun way to say I don't like them). I know I will never hate an athlete as much as I hate Tom Brady but he was becoming a sort-of NBA version.

So when Miami made the Finals every year from 2011 to 2014 I watched every second as though my life depended on it. I cheered Dallas' victory and gloated like a child to anyone who would listen. I blamed Harden and the refs for the 2012 Miami win. I thought they were finished again in 2013 in Game 6 until that unforgettable last minute. But at least I got to enjoy immensely the Spurs getting revenge in dominating fashion the next year.

One thing was sure though: Every year he was in Miami, I wanted LeBron to go down like I wanted Shooter McGavin in *Happy Gilmore* to go down.

But what he did after the 2014 season undid it all. He came back. And more importantly he gave his reasons, beautifully written, for coming home to Ohio. I was blown away. By it all. [By how thoughtful and honest the essay was](#). By the humility to forgive Dan Gilbert for all that he said after LeBron left. By the willingness to go back to an awful basketball franchise and try to win it all for the people. By the love for his home outside of basketball. By owning up to “The Decision” so we all could move on from it. Even by the inspirational Nike commercial he did with the city of Cleveland to give them an unforgettable way to celebrate his return. It was all admirable.

It was all so opposite of 2010. As many journalists have written, there is no reason to hold on to those two nights in July any longer. He cannot undo them. All he can do is move forward. And that is exactly what he’s done, with incredible life maturity. It reminds me of the way Jack and Sawyer changed on the TV show *Lost*, except it wasn’t scripted. It was raw and genuine.

So watching him pull Cleveland from Basketball Hell these last three years has not bothered me at all. It was the circumstances I hated in Miami, far more than the man. I was disappointed that Cleveland won it all last year, but solely because of Mike Lytle’s [article](#) on Golden State being better than the 96 Bulls. (Hey, what can I say? I’m a bigger fan of REO than any NBA result.) But a small part of me cheered that Cleveland finally won something. It was absolutely perfect that LeBron—being born in Akron, drafted by his hometown team, having forsaken them and then having returned with contriteness and realness you rarely see in professional athletes—was the one to lead them. If you juxtapose LeBron’s [“Together” Nike video](#) with the result of Game 7 from last year’s NBA Final, it feels like a superhero movie became real life.

I have opinions on LeBron as an athlete as far as his legacy

but those comments can wait for another article (or you can just look at my Twitter feed). But no matter how much I argue for or against him, none of it comes from the same extreme hatred I have for athletes like Tom Brady. What Lebron did three years ago is too special to me. It was significant way beyond sports. And as a human, more than a sports fan, I loved it. I'll never be a Lebron fan, but I'm not a hater either. I feel like he has earned that much.

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## [The NFL on REO: The Draft](#)

### **An Exhaustively Researched Hypothesis**

The NFL just concluded the 2017 draft. As usual, it was three days full of excitement, drama, and way too many opinions. It also helped confirm in my mind a little hypothesis I have been developing for some time: The NFL is the girl in high school that is socially oblivious, dumb as a box of rocks, kind of a jerk, but is pretty hot. Allow me to elaborate. That girl from high school had no problem getting dates. All the dumb, hormone driven, high school boys could easily overlook her lack of intelligence, her meanness, or her propensity to say or do publicly embarrassing things because...hotness. All those other negative qualities did nothing to lessen her popularity with the guys. That's the NFL. The NFL draft is three days of the NFL showing off, patting themselves on the back, and doing it all in the most bombastic and cringe-worthy manner possible. And we still watch. Because hotness. The NFL is hot, has been hot for a long time, and will be hot for many more

years to come. It will be hot until all the negatives about the sport finally surpass how attractive it is to fans. And believe me, that time is coming.

The NFL is socially oblivious because teams continue to draft players with awful character simply because they are good at football. Of course the Bengals drafted Joe Mixon. Because Mixon is really good at football. Nothing else matters to the league or to many of the teams. They will take any little PR hit in the hopes that players like Mixon can help them win. I'm all for second chances. I really am. As a Christian, second chances are pretty much built into the DNA of my faith, but giving someone like Mixon a "second chance" doesn't have to mean drafting him and paying him million of dollars. It could mean something entirely unrelated to football. Something that might actually help him become a solid, productive member of society.

The NFL is dumber than a box of rocks because it keeps letting Roger Goodell announce the name of each drafted player in the first round. Goodell doesn't do many things well, besides being the owner's dancing monkey, and his inability to correctly pronounce the names of the draft picks is the cherry on top of his curdled sundae. Beyond the fact that he struggles with pronunciation, he has no stage presence, makes the whole thing very awkward, and he gets booed vociferously every time he walks up to the podium. It's bad television and it's a bad look for the NFL. But we still watch. Because hotness.

And for the love, stop with the weird hugging!

Even with all this, and so much more, ratings were up from last year. That's because we are all a bunch of hormone riddled boys and the NFL looks good in a short skirt. I fear I may have taken this analogy to a very uncomfortable place. Moving on!

## **Draft Winners and Losers**

I think we can all safely say that Chicago giving up what they did to move up one spot to draft a completely unproven QB was a strange decision. I'll go one step further: It was a bad move. I officially declare the Bears as the biggest losers of the 2017 NFL Draft.

From my vantage point, I don't believe there was any one team that clearly won the draft – a lot of teams had solid drafts. If I were a draft expert (I'm not) I would hand out quite a few "A" grades this year. Many teams seemed to be working with actual plans to make their teams better. Novel approach for sure, but it looks like planning and strategy were more popular than usual. A few teams that got better this weekend: San Francisco, Houston, Arizona, and Philadelphia.

## **Travis Rudolph**

I'm sure you heard the story about the Florida State wide receiver, Travis Rudolph, that went to a local school and sat down with a boy who was eating alone. The boy was Bo Paske, who has autism. The story went viral and Bo was able to go to many FSU games and events after that, due to his new friendship with Travis. Look, I don't know Travis but from all appearances, he seems like a great guy. Sitting down and eating with Bo was such a small gesture, but something that clearly spoke to so many people across the country. If a little act of kindness can have that kind of an impact on people, imagine how much we can do by just being decent and kind.

I've since read that Travis' father was killed in an accident at work – the weekend before the draft. Rudolph did not get selected by any team in the draft this year, but has signed as an undrafted free agent with the New York Giants. I am rooting for him and praying for his family during this time of mourning. I'm sure this has been an incredibly confusing emotional rollercoaster for them.

If he can put up moves like this in the pros, he might just make it.



## Titans Talk



I can honestly say that my initial reaction to the Titans taking Corey Davis with the 5th pick of the draft was confusion and a little bit of frustration. I thought it was a reach. I liked Davis, and have been reading up on his career at Western Michigan for the past few months. I even liked the



idea of the Titans drafting him, but 5th overall just seemed way too high. Then, the other two wide receivers with first round talent were taken before the 10th pick and I realized that Jon Robinson knew what he was doing. Perhaps picking Davis caused the run on wide receivers. Perhaps he knew that other teams were going to take a wide receiver early. Whatever the answer, Robinson bet that none of the best receivers were going to be available at 18 (the other first round pick for the Titans) so he had to get his guy at 5. I'll take that. It was definitely a "need" pick, but if Davis is as good as expected, he will help the offense tremendously.

I "bet" last week that Robinson was going to trade at least one of his first round picks. I was wrong. He kept both picks and added a lot of speed and explosiveness to the team. He did trade a lot after that though, which sort of made me right. No? Okay. That doesn't make me right at all. I did say he would take a receiver and a corner back though, so I should get some credit.

After watching and listening to the Nashville Predators in the playoffs, I can't agree more with [this](#) take. The Titans desperately need to develop more traditions at Nissan Stadium. This team is about to be one of the best in the AFC, and it's time the fans took their fanaticism to the next level. There are actually some great ideas listed in the comment section of the linked article on [Music City Miracles](#), ranging from borrowing/stealing a few ideas from the Predators or using the pre-game warm-up chant from the movie, *Remember the Titans*. (Disclaimer: I don't condone all the comments or language used in the above comment section.) The Titans fan-base needs to get serious about this and make Nissan Stadium a place opponents fear and the Titans love. Just imagine 69,143 fans doing this chant in unison on a Sunday afternoon!

## Final Thoughts

That's it for this week. From this point on, until closer to the start of Training Camp, this "column" will be sporadic. There is just not enough NFL news each week during the offseason to justify a weekly article. Things will start to ramp up the closer we get to the season starting. And once the season does start, this will be at minimum a once a week endeavor. I hope you guys enjoy it and will stick around for the ride. Thanks for reading.

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## [The NFL on REO](#)

[Titans Tuesday](#) is dead! Vaya con Dios Titans Tuesday!

It was fun while it lasted but after churning out two dozen amazing and insightful articles that focused on the Tennessee Titans, a few things became very clear:

1. I am probably not as amazing or as insightful as I think. Nah! That can't be it.
2. The REO readership doesn't care about the Tennessee Titans very much. The stats bear that out with depressing accuracy. Sad face.
3. The best performing editions were those that branched out and covered general NFL topics and not just things related to the Titans.

What that means is that instead of continuing Titans Tuesday, I have decided to let it evolve and become something that is more comprehensive of the whole league. That is not to say I will ignore my favorite team. The Titans will get their own section each week. If you have don't care for the Titans, you are more than welcome to not read that section.

With the table set, as it were, let's get to the topics of the day:

## **The 2017 NFL Regular Season Schedule**

Back when the Colts and the Patriots played nearly every season, you would hear a lot of talk about how the NFL manipulated the schedule to get those kinds of matchups. You still hear that kind of talk these days, when various fan-bases cry and moan about how their team got the short end of the stick, or how their rival team was gifted with one of the easiest schedules in the league.

If you are one of those conspiracy nuts, stop it. Just stop. There is no conspiracy. There never has been some grand conspiracy. The NFL doesn't sit back and attempt to devise ways to screw over this team or that. They don't conspire to make one team's schedule as easy as possible. Do you know how I can say this with utmost certainty? Because the NFL schedule is basically set in stone years in advance. Yes, there are two games every season that are fluid until the previous season ends, but for the most part, every other game was decided years in advance. Allow me to demonstrate using the Tennessee Titans schedule:

The NFL schedule is almost beautiful in its symmetry and logic. My only concern is that Roger Goodell is going to see how wonderful and perfect the schedule is and he will try to sabotage it in some way. I'm sure it tarnishes the shield or something. It's 2017 and Roger Goodell still has a job as the commissioner of the biggest professional sports league in the country. If that is not a sign of the end times, I don't know what is.

# The NFL Draft

The draft is tomorrow.



I am no draft expert but I have no problem pretending to be one on the internet. Not being an expert doesn't seem to have stopped thousands of others from spouting their draft wisdom. I do not follow the college game close enough to have a strong opinion about most of these players so I will condense my thoughts about the NFL draft and put them in bullet points

(nifty little footballs) to facilitate easy reading and comprehension:



As far as I can tell there are no great QB's in this year's draft. At least, there are no QB's that multiple teams are falling over themselves to draft. That's not to say that there will not be a handful of teams that convince themselves that they have to draft a QB high, which will create a mad frenzy at the top of the 1<sup>st</sup> round.



While there do not seem to be any "can't miss" type players, this draft does seem to be extremely deep in a variety of positions. I have a feeling that in a few years, this draft will be looked upon favorably outside of the QB position. Cornerback and Wide Receiver seem to be particularly deep this year, which bodes well for teams that need help at those positions. Yay for the Titans!



A recent [stat](#) was released that showed that more than 30 of the players that are hoping to be drafted have been arrested. That is nearly 1/7<sup>th</sup> of the total number of players that will be selected this year. So, for the last time, any people out there that are still beating the NFL for their off the field issues yet conveniently ignoring the problems in the college game, enough is enough. The NFL is importing their problems and they have very little choice in the matter. There is no other talent pool they can dip into to acquire players. If we are going to be fair about the real problems in the NFL we need to start by addressing the myriad of problems in College football. I need to hurry up and finish this article before a few more college players get busted for drug use or get arrested for domestic violence.

**Titans Talk**



I'll keep this brief because I really have no idea how Jon Robinson is going to operate in this year's draft. If I were a betting man, I would put money on Robinson trading one his two first round picks. I think he values picks and not having a second round pick is probably driving him crazy. If he can still get a player he likes by trading either the 5<sup>th</sup> or the 18<sup>th</sup> picks, he will do that in a heartbeat.

I don't see any way around the Titans drafting at least one cornerback this year. Adding Logan Ryan this offseason was a good move but they also lost Jason McCourty, which offsets the Ryan addition a little. McCourty had lost a step or two and he was certainly not worth the money his contract was due to pay him, but he was still a body in the rotation that could give you some quality minutes from time to time. The Titans need at least one starter in this draft and perhaps another nickel or dime corner.

Did anyone else get a surge of parental pride when you saw the video clip of Marcus Mariota arriving to the first day of OTA's? It was still mostly dark outside when our man got to Saint Thomas Sports Park. He was walking fine and looked ready to get to work. If he is 100% healthy this season, I think he will have a Pro Bowl type of year. He gets it. He gets all of it.

If you haven't jumped on the bandwagon yet, you need to do so soon. After going 9-7 last season the Titans are poised to be one of the breakout teams of 2017. Don't wait too long to get on board or you are going to be left behind.

Finally, thank you and good luck to Paul Kuharsky. Paul has covered the Titans and the AFC South for a long time. He announced on Monday that he has been let go by ESPN. While I disagreed with Paul at times in how he covered things, or his opinion on certain players or situations, I truly believe he wrote with integrity and passion. He will be missed in that role but hopefully this will be the beginning of a new, more fulfilling chapter in his life. He can still be heard on The Midday 180 on [104.5 The Zone](#).

See you next week as I recap the draft and address a few more reasons why Roger Goodell needs to be fired.

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## [Dear Cleveland, You'll Regret Passing on Deshaun Watson](#)

*"If they [the Browns] pass on Deshaun Watson, they're passing on Michael Jordan."* (Clemson coach Dabo Swinney)

Since I was a child, my dad has made the same joke about how to punish me when I've done something not too serious but still displeasing to him: "I'm writing you out of the will!" He told me this in 2010 when I rooted for Auburn over Oregon in the College Football National Championship game after the NCAA gave America a big middle finger by letting Cam Newton play. He said it again in 2015 when I did a Facebook tournament on fantasy-fiction giants and didn't include Mark

Twain. He said when I was a teenager more times that I can count.

I fear this article may bring one more.

The Cannons are Gamecocks. It's our sports DNA. And to be a Gamecock you can no more support Clemson than you can take the square root of a negative number (and yes, anyone who claims to pull for both probably believes in unicorns and other imaginary things)[1. That's a joke. Root for sports however you want.]. Yet I cannot deny any of what I'm about to write. So much so that I'm writing it.

I agree in essence with what Dabo says above. Dabo says it in his own hyperbolic Dabo way but the man won a National Championship in large part because he says things like this often and people buy it and play up to it. So don't let the name dropping detract from the truth of the statement. Dabo probably believes Watson will be Jordan but at minimum I know he thinks he's a can't miss prospect and will be an exceptional NFL quarterback. I do too.

The fact I believe this is a testimony to its truth. This is undoubtedly the biggest anti-bias piece I've ever written. I am supposed to loathe Deshaun Watson and wish him the worst at the next level. But I can't. I respect him too much. By sports fan contract I am supposed to hate the Green Bay Packers and St. Louis Cardinals, but I can't deny how good Aaron Rodgers and Yadier Molina are, both I'd say are Top 5 at their position of people I've ever seen play.

Same for Watson, even though I doubt I'll ever sports hate Green Bay or St. Louis the way I do Clemson. But after three years of seeing him lead a complete turn around of the Gamecock-Tiger rivalry and vault Clemson to the next and highest level, I have a decent grasp of DW as an athlete. I've watched him play dozens of times. As the saying goes, my two favorite teams are USC and whoever is playing Clemson. He as



real a deal as I have ever seen.

Here's what I mean: In November 2013, we had just finished our fifth straight win vs. Clemson which hadn't been done by either school in nearly a century. Then Watson showed up. His freshman year they beat us 35-17 as he played on a torn ACL. He missed part of the game or it would have been 42-10 at best. The following year we rallied from down 28-10 to pull within 28-25 in the fourth quarter and the next drive Watson calmly led them down the field, converting three backbreaking 3rd downs, ran for the eventual touchdown and put the game away. In 2013 I was crowing about that five game winning streak over our hated rival. Within two years we were 3-9 and they were on onside kick away from winning the whole thing. Within three years they beat us 56-7 and did beat Alabama to win it all. Football teams of course have many moving parts. You couldn't have watched Clemson the last two years and not been blown away by their D-line, their receiving corps (watch the game-winning drive vs. Bama to see a clinic of how to catch a football) and everything else. But Watson was the Alpha Dog. The Superhero. The [\*I'm Keith Hernandez\*](#) on the team. "He's a program changer," says Dabo. Gamecock fans cannot argue.

Clemson was in much better shape when Watson arrived in 2014 than the Browns are presently, but if there is any QB in this draft that can be the most crucial piece to turning around a sadsack franchise like Cleveland, it's him. I am not going to throw an avalanche of stats at you. If you want those they are easily accessible on the internet. If you want someone to talk about throwing motion or release time, you'll have to go elsewhere.

No, my opinion on Watson comes not just from his known ability to lead an offense to score almost at will on even the best defenses in the country, but also from a word I often disparage in talking about quarterbacks: intangibles[2]. Since I know many of our readers will know what I've written about

Tom Brady, let me go ahead and anticipate some objections. I believe the QB is the most important position in football. Yet I believe they control maybe 20% of what happens. I believe intangibles are a real thing in quarterbacking (See: Cutler, Jay), but I don't think Tom Brady has some intangible that Dan Marino didn't that causes him to win Super Bowls. I do not think Brady is a bum. He's clearly one of the 15-20 greatest ever. Just not near the greatest to me. Intangibles don't cause Atlanta to fall out of FG range twice and the Atlanta safety to deflect an interception off his hands so Edelman can make a near physically impossible catch. There's no contradiction here. As great as Watson is, I don't think he could come back for his senior year and play for Wake Forest and win the championship. That's the essence of the Brady argument.]. After watching Watson time and time again on the biggest stages it is painfully obvious to me that he thrives under pressure. It's obvious that he cannot be rattled. It's obvious that he can throw an interception and shake it off and come back and throw a gorgeous long ball the very next drive.

Watson smiles a lot. Watson exudes confidence that can be felt on a 2D TV screen. Watson is exactly the kind of athlete that can look at a 53 year NFL Championship drought and but completely unfazed by it. He's basically the anti-Jay Cutler in this regard. I have no doubt his teammates will love him. Coaches will adore working with him. For all his similarities to Cam Newton, I cannot imagine him leaving in the middle of a press conference even after losing the Super Bowl. It is this, far more than throwing motion or TD to Int ratio, that I think makes him can't miss.

Talent matters of course. Danny Wuerffel of Florida was the best college QB I've ever seen (had Watson stayed four years he could have passed him) and he flopped in the NFL. But Watson isn't a system QB and he has the right tools to play at the next level. I have zero doubt.

After the 56-7 mauling by Clemson over us a few months ago,

Watson said, "It was like a daddy spanking their child." I want to be angry at Watson for that, but I can't. I texted my brothers that quote and Ashley replied, "You have to admit that's funny right there." And it's also true[3. Not be outdone, Clemson WR Mike Williams threw the ultimate shade at my school by saying he didn't know any of our secondary players' names. Sometimes in sports you just have to take it. Gamecocks have no comeback to that right now.]. I'm proud to be a Gamecock but Clemson gets the football accolades for this time. The most important position on a football field is the quarterback. Cleveland desperately needs one. They need Deshaun Watson. Or else they will regret it far more than I will regret being written out of my dad's will for saying so.