

The Inevitable Letdown of Being a Fan (The NFL on REO)

Perhaps the defining attribute of being a sports' fan is the ever-present feeling of being let down. As fans, it is our burden to bear. We cheer on our teams, year after year, and most of the time, walk away disappointed. Of course, there are the occasional high points: The big win against a rival. The post-season run. Even, a championship if we are really fortunate. The truth is though, we are rarely fortunate in our fandom.

Two times in the past five years, Aaron Rodgers has been injured and unable to complete the season. This year, his Green Bay Packers were 4-1 when he got hurt early in the game against the Minnesota Vikings. You could argue that with a healthy Rodgers, the Packers had as much of a chance to make it to the Super Bowl as any other team in the NFC. Now, the team is done – looking at another season down the drain due to an injury to their star quarterback. Before you feel too sorry for the Packers' fans, it is good to remember that they have had great success for the past few decades and have won multiple championships in that time. Even so, that fan base feels the letdown. They feel as if they are cursed. It is the natural state for the majority of fans across the globe.

Or, you could take a look at the Cowboys. They spent a decade with a legitimately great quarterback and were never able to advance at all come playoff time. Then, a rookie quarterback and a rookie running back led them to a 13-3 record and the future looked bright. Turn the page to 2017 and their star running back gets suspended for off the field problems and the team is fighting for a playoff spot. Where would they be in that playoff picture if Ezekiel Elliott had not missed any games this season? Even if the Cowboys win out, they still need all sorts of things to happen to make the playoffs. Their

chances are slim. I'm sure Cowboys fans feel let down after an amazing ride last season that only looked like the beginning of a great run.

And what about the fan base of the Philadelphia Eagles who are without a doubt, some of the most passionate and loyal fans in the league. This season was like something out of a dream. The second-year quarterback, Carson Wentz, had the offensive humming along. The defense was improved. The team was clearly the team to beat in the NFC. Then Wentz got hurt a few weeks ago and now the team will have to try to carry on with Nick Foles at QB. Foles is good, probably the best backup QB in the league, but he is not Wentz. The loss of Wentz has jeopardized a potential Super Bowl run. Eagles' fans know this feeling all too well. They have been so close so many times, I'm sure there were many of them that just knew something bad was hiding in the shadows. That is the curse of being a fan.

Being a fan of the NFL in general, and the Titans, in particular, has provided its fair share of disappointments. My boys are big fans of the Titans. Sadly, they have no detailed memories of the Titans making the playoffs. The two oldest are both teenagers if that gives you any indication how long it has been. A few weeks ago, the Titans were 8-4 and looked like a lock for the postseason. Now, after two bad losses to below average teams, they are on the outside looking in. Yes, they are technically still in the playoffs if they were to start today, but they need help to make it to the NFL's second season. I've mentioned before that my oldest son will not celebrate a good play by the Titans until a few minutes have passed because he is sure there will be a flag thrown that will wipe the whole thing off the board. That is how this entire season has felt to me. I've been waiting to fully celebrate. I've enjoyed the wins for sure, but there has always been the nagging feeling in the back of my mind that something bad was waiting around the corner. We are feeling

the letdown. Hopefully, the Titans can give their fans a better Christmas than last year and make a surprise push to the playoffs. Miracles do happen.

So, what letdown have you experienced as a sports' fan? Let us commiserate with one another. Share your stories and your pain. We want to read it all and experience the crushing weight of disappointment with you.

Two Tales of One City (The NFL on REO)

Power Rankings

I got some help this week for the NFL Power Rankings from fellow REO contributors Gowdy Cannon and Mike Lytle. I asked them to rank their top 15 teams. I then assigned a point value to each team based on where they were ranked and then added those points together to get the final product – The NFL on REO Top Ten. (Example for the ranking: A 1st place vote receives 15 points, a 2nd place vote receives 14 points, and a 15th place vote receives 1 point.) I've listed the total point value for each team so you can see how this all came together. For the tie-breakers, I listed the rationale for why one team was placed above the other.

1. New England – 45

Back when the Patriots were 2-2 with what was by far the last place team in defensive points given up, it looked like the rest of the league may have had a prayer of not having to deal with this constant playoff juggernaut this year. It was a testimony to how incredible the offense is that they were 2-2

since most teams would have been 0-4 giving up 38 points every week.

But as anyone could see coming, the Patriots turned it around on D. They have been the best team in the league on defense as far as giving up points for the last eight weeks and have a chance to do something very few teams have done the last 30 years – go nine straight games giving up 17 or less. They are now solidly a Top Ten defense in the league by this simple yet extremely important criteria. The 0 still deserves credit though – the Patriots give up a bunch of yards but recently had 94 straight drives by their opponents start in the opponent's territory. A record for the last 25 years. That is a credit to NE not turning it over and moving the ball when they have it.

This team is still the champ and the favorite until something major changes. – Gowdy Cannon

2. Pittsburgh – 40 (The Steelers had two number 2 votes while the Eagles only had one.)

3. Philadelphia – 40

4. Minnesota – 36

Just by stats and the eye test this team seems elite and poised to make a run in January. They have a Top 2 defense by the most basic measures and a solid running game and, to this point, excellent quarterback play by Case Keenum and at least for a game or so, Sam Bradford. I know the NFL stereotype is that you have to have an elite QB to win it all and this would cause concern for the Vikings, no matter how well Keenum or Bradford are playing. But seeing as how half the of the last twelve Super Bowls were won by Eli Manning, Joe Flacco, two of Ben Roethlisberger's most mediocre seasons and a wooden dummy that looked like Peyton Manning, I think the standard belief is often wrong. And while Keenum isn't anywhere close to Russell Wilson, he could at least be as effective as Wilson

was in 2013.

The bigger problem to me is Minnesota's history. I don't think it's by chance that Atlanta and Carolina didn't get it done the last two years. The NFL is very much the haves and the have-nots historically and it takes either a special QB like John Elway or Drew Brees or a historically great defense like Seattle to cut through years and years of losing and choking.
– Gowdy Cannon

5. New Orleans – 33

Giving Drew Brees that running game has been the just what this team needed. Ingram and Kamara have both been impressive this season and they will give the Saints something they have not had in some time – a strong running attack for bad weather games in the playoffs. – Phill Lytle

6. Seattle – 31

The Seattle Seahawks have been one of the top NFL teams for the last several years with two Super Bowl appearances and one win plus several other trips to the playoffs. Most of their recent success has been due to their league best defense and a strong running game. This season that script has been flipped. Their defense is still in the top 10, although much closer to 10 than 1. Their rushing offense ranks 21st in the league and many of those yards are from quarterback Russell Wilson. Wilson is currently accounting for over 80% of his team's offense. If he keeps up this pace he will set an all time record. Seattle may not be complete enough to challenge for a title this year, but with Wilson under center we would never count them out. – Mike Lytle

7. LA Rams – 27

I'm not sold. Sorry, I'm just not. I realize their offense has been historically good, but history shows us that great offenses don't always go far in the playoffs when faced with good defenses and bad playing conditions. Plus, while Goff has been good this season, and much better than his rookie season,

this is a guy that has never really played in a big game in his life. His University of California teams were never that great and some of them were terrible. I'm just not convinced he will play up to his regular season standard when faced with a tough opponent in the playoffs. – Phill Lytle

8. Carolina – 21 (There was no difference in voting between these two teams – each had the same votes: 10,9, and 8. I listed them alphabetically.)

9. Jacksonville – 21

10. Tennessee – 20

It's a good, yet frustrating, time to be a sport's fan in Nashville

Today, December 6th, 2017, Nashville has a first-place team in two different sports. In the NHL, the Nashville Predators are leading the Western Conference, as well as the Central Division. In the NFL, the Tennessee Titans are in first place in the AFC South. Both fan-bases have a lot to be excited about with the results they are seeing. Both teams are winning at a high percentage. Both teams look poised to make it to the playoffs, though the Predators have a long way to go before that becomes a reality due to the length of the NHL season. But beyond that, the reactions to these two first-place teams could not be any more different. The Nashville Predators are the darlings of the city while the Tennessee Titans seem like the often maligned, step-child. How did we get here?

The 2017-2018 Nashville Predators are one of the best teams in the NHL. They are the defending Western Conference Champions and appear to have improved since their impressive playoff run last season. They play an exciting, action-packed style that leaves the fans happy and satisfied. They win and they win with style. Simply put, they are a joy to watch.

The 2017-2018 Titans have the third-best record in the AFC and are in place as the 3rd seed for the playoffs. They barely missed the playoffs last year, going 9-7 in coach Mike Mularkey's first full season. They continue to win games even though the product on the field leaves a lot to be desired. They are inconsistent and seem to play down to their competition. Simply put, they are a constant frustration to watch.

I find myself in a weird spot when discussing the Titans with other fans. I acknowledge that the team has been erratic. I realize that this team should not consistently be in close games against many of their opponents. They should be able to handily beat a good number of the teams they have faced this season, but instead, they have struggled to put it all together until very late in many of these games. Their young, star QB, Marcus Mariota has been just as erratic and frustrating with his performance this season. Taken as a whole, the Titans have not made it easy for their fans to feel optimistic about this season.

Except for one thing: They just keep winning.

You can deduct style points all you want, but the truth of the matter is, the Tennessee Titans are 8-4. They are 4-1 in their division. They are one of only a handful of teams this season with a winning record against teams with records over .500. (They beat: 8-4 Seattle, 8-4 Jacksonville, and 7-5 Baltimore. They lost to 10-2 Pittsburgh.) The Titans find ways to win, week after week and at some point, the fans just need to accept them for what they are: A frustrating, erratic, hard-working, and successful team.

For all the fans of both teams out there, enjoy both kinds of winning. Enjoy watching the Nashville Predators dominate the ice. Titans' fans haven't seen that kind of dominance in a very long time. It reminds me a lot of the 2000 team that steamrolled through the regular season. Frankly, I have no

idea what this year's Titans' team reminds me of. (Insert your own joke here.) What I do know is that they are winning and that they have a few more winnable games left this season and a great shot at hosting a playoff game. How awesome is that? So, get on board people. Enjoy the ride, even if it is unpredictable and occasionally bumpy. It's better than it has been in a very long time

All Roads Lead to Nashville (The NFL on REO)

I'm too hyped about tomorrow's game between the Tennessee Titans and the Pittsburgh Steelers to get any real work done this week. It is easily one of the best matchups of the season with two division leaders squaring off in prime-time. If you have read this column before you know that I am a die-hard Titans fan. Have been since 1999. More on that in a bit. For today's edition of The NFL on REO, my brain naturally turned to all things Titans – even in ways that probably won't make much sense to anyone else. But, as I have said before, it's my article and I will do whatever I want.

The worst game of the week, even though it went to overtime and on the surface seemed exciting, was between the Los Angeles Chargers and the Jacksonville Jaguars. I am still struggling to understand how the Jaguars won that game. Down by three points, they turned the ball over twice in the final two minutes of the 4th quarter...and they still won. The Chargers had one simple job to do: run out the clock, and they could not do it. (Blake Bortles continues to prove that he is

terrible and will be the downfall of an otherwise talented team.) How does this relate to the Titans you ask? Easy, the Jags are fighting for the AFC South crown and are Tennessee's only real competition at this point. A loss against the Chargers would have been huge for the Titans. Also, Ken Wisenhunt is the offensive coordinator for the Chargers and I blame him completely for being unable to run out the clock at the end of the game. If you have already removed all memories of Wisenhunt from your mind I don't blame you. Even so, he was the head coach for the Titans for one and a half horrible, awful, terrible season. Somehow, his ability to pull defeat from the jaws of victory for the Titans has stayed with him even though he is now coaching on the West coast. Thanks a lot, Ken!

Peter King is Sports Illustrated's lead NFL writer. He writes a column every week called [Monday Morning Quarterback](#). These are massive, thousands of words articles. Unless I missed it, his most recent column had ZERO mentions of the Titans beating the Bengals. (He did mention Bengals player Vontaze Burfict getting ejected, though that had everything to do with Burfict being a moron and nothing to do with the Titans.) I realize the Titans are not a glamorous team. I realize they are not a great team at this point. But, they have won four games in a row and are leading their division over half-way through the season. Not to mention, Marcus Mariota has led the team on last-minute, game-winning drives in three of the last four games. But yeah, don't write one word about them in your NFL column. That seems logical.



This is the story of how the Tennessee Titans won my heart

I am confident that my story is not that unique. The 1999-2000 season was a magical one for those of us living in Nashville. The Houston/Tennessee Oilers finally had a home and a name. The Tennessee Titans captured the imagination of an entire city that first season. They moved into their new home, Adelphia Coliseum, and proceeded to shock the NFL and the world with their improbable run to the Super Bowl.

I do have a confession to make though: I was not a fully formed fanatic until the end of that season. I grew up a Cleveland Browns fan. (I know...) I lost that team to an awful, greedy move by an awful, greedy owner. When Cleveland was awarded a new franchise and created the Browns once again, it was too late for me. I no longer cared. I had moved on. So, the 1999-2000 season found me as more of a football fan and less of a fan of any particular team.

The first call to my heart occurred on January 8, 2000 – the fittingly named “Music City Miracle” game. At that time, I was working as a security guard to help pay for college. I had the sleep-depriving graveyard shift – 11 PM to 7 AM. I worked that Saturday, got home, and opted to try to sleep for a few hours before the game started. I overslept. I remember waking up, turning on the television and watching the Buffalo Bills’ kicker, Steve Christie drive a 41-yard field goal through the uprights to give his team a 16-15 lead. There were only

seconds left in the game, enough time for either a crazy kickoff return attempt or some sort of Hail Mary after the kickoff. Neither of those options seemed especially hopeful. I'll admit, I was depressed and frustrated. I hated to see the 13-3 season end like this. I hated that I had missed the entire game, only to watch them lose. I hated that they were losing to an inferior Buffalo team.

Then it happened. The short kick. Lorenzo Neal catching it and handing it to Frank Wycheck. Wycheck throwing a perfect lateral to Kevin Dyson. Dyson running down the sideline with an escort of blockers. I sat there in my bed with my arms above my head in celebration. To this day, I am so thankful that I woke up in time to see it.

But even that didn't completely win me over. I know, how could that play not win me over? I can't explain it, but I guess my only excuse is that I was being overly selective and careful with my next choice. I wanted to be sure that the team I picked to be MY team was worthy of my fandom.

The Titans became worthy, and then some, at Super Bowl XXXIV. The first half was an ugly one for the Titans and did little to bring me around to their cause. But once the second half started, and Steve McNair and Eddie George willed their team to tie the game, I found myself buying in. The final drive by the Titans, with impossible play after impossible play by McNair broke down all my other defenses. I was hooked. I was sold. I was a Tennessee Titans' fan. I realize they lost that game, but that didn't matter to me. I wanted to root for a team that had to work hard for success. I wanted to root for a team that played tough, physical football. I wanted to root for a team that left it all out on the field.

The Titans were that team.

So that's it for today. What stood out to you in Week 10? What

is the story for how you came to love your favorite team? Comment below. We love to hear from our readers.

Who Watches the Watchmen? (The NFL on REO)

In *Watchmen*, the genre-defining masterpiece by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, there is a slogan that can be seen throughout the graphic novel, spray-painted on walls, “Who watches the Watchmen?” It’s a message about keeping those in power accountable and if that is even possible. While the things I examine this week are much less important in the grand scheme, I believe they belong in the conversation. It’s too often that we find incompetence or worse coming from those that are in a place of power in the sports’ world – whether it be the leagues, the teams, or the media that covers it all. So here is my attempt to watch the watchmen.

Media Incompetence

Reading and listening to sports media is a frustrating and sometimes exasperating use of my time. I don’t think I am alone in that reaction. I get it. There will be honest, and even logical, differences of opinion. I have no problem with those. I may not like it when my favorite teams get unfairly criticized or ignored, but on some level, I understand the reasoning behind those decisions. But sometimes, or a lot of the time, sports’ writers and talkers go too far. They make absurd declarations that no intelligent person can defend. (See: EVERY WORD FROM THE LIPS OF SKIP BAYLESS.) Or

sometimes, they seem to lack the simple skill of real analysis or evaluation. I'll give you an example.

Sports Illustrated does a weekly NFL Power Rankings Poll. There are typically 17 to 18 voters and most of them have voted throughout the season. Each submits their own Power Rankings and then the totals are compiled and the Official Power Poll is created.

In [this week's Power Rankings](#) (and last week's for that matter) my Tennessee Titans received a 30th place vote from one of the voters.

30th.

There are 32 teams in the NFL. And this person that purports to know the NFL voted the Titans as the 3rd worst team in the NFL. Look, I have no problem with the voters keeping the Titans out of the top half of the Power Rankings. They have not been a good team this year. They have been uneven and inconsistent. But even with all that, they are still 4-3, first in their division, and have wins over the Seahawks and the Jaguars – two teams that are numbers 5 and 13 respectively. The Titans' worst loss – the debacle in Houston – was to the number 11 ranked team according to the Power Ranking. They don't "show their work" on the Power Rankings so I don't know who to call out publicly but if I could I would. It's dumb and completely unsupportable.

It depends on what your definition of the word "catch" is...

Another week in the NFL, another controversial catch/no catch situation. This week's biggest offender – the Zach Miller no-catch call in the Chicago vs. New Orleans game. At this point, no one officiating an NFL game knows for sure what a catch is. For an exhaustive breakdown of some of the most

controversial calls in the past few years, [go visit this link](#). It has videos and gifs and everything.

I reached out to some of my fellow REO writers Mike, Gowdy, and Mark to get their opinions on this topic. Have it fellas!

Gowdy:

For the last seven years, the NFL has massacred logic and the English language over what the meaning of a “catch” is in football. It started with Calvin Johnson vs. my Bears in 2010, reached its controversial peak in a Dallas vs. Green Bay playoff game with Dez Bryant in January of 2015 and has continued until last Sunday when Zach Miller made (what is logically and semantically) a catch vs. New Orleans in the end zone for a TD. But no, the referees ruled that it’s not a catch with the NFL’s Pharisee-like definition of a very simple concept.

Look, I get it to some degree. When a player bobbles the ball as he’s falling to the ground, it can mean he didn’t catch it in that he didn’t procure it to a reasonable level, meaning he “dropped” it. I don’t want to throw the baby out with the bath water and leave it all to subjectivity. But give the referees some latitude to use some common sense. Any time you over-define words and concepts, you run a huge risk of leaving out a human’s ability to reason and interpret. That is exactly what has been happening in the NFL for years now. Their catch rule reads like a chapter in Leviticus. It needs to change. Because otherwise, it hurts people’s brains, creates injustice (in a sports sense) and takes some fun out of the game.

Mike:

I am usually not a “things were so much better in the good old days” type person, but when it comes to catching a football in the NFL this was so much better in the good old days. I remember a time when players, coaches, refs, and fans all had the same basic understanding of what constituted a catch. Now

we have to go through a checklist of questions like “Did he clearly possess the ball?” “Did he make a football move?” “Did he maintain possession all the way to the ground?” “At any point in the process of catching the football did the ball make any unnatural motion that could potentially leave an ounce of doubt in the minds of all those looking on as to the veracity of the aforementioned completion?”

I may have made one of those questions up, but you get my point. It should not be this difficult. I am not a Dallas Cowboys fan, but if what Dez Bryant did against the Packers in the 2015 playoffs can't be ruled a catch then we need to rethink the whole thing. It hasn't really improved since then despite the tinkering. The solution, as always, fire Roger Goddell.

Mark:

What exactly is a catch according to the NFL? Ah, one the great mysteries of the cosmos. Philosophers, scientists, and theologians have debated this topic for a millennium. Verily, this is an inescapable question that every man and woman struggles with at some point in their existence. Unfortunately, those who wrestle with this question are often NFL referees. In recent years the definition of catch according to the rule book has become so convoluted that refs might need a legal degree to fully comprehend the nature of a catch. As a result we've seen legal “loopholes” exploited (occasionally at the most inopportune of times in the post season!) to deny a team/player of what should have been a catch.

I think they all make very valid points, especially the part about firing Goodell. Mike is wise. Listen to Mike. Gowdy is no slouch either using words like massacre and semantically. This is an NFL column for crying out loud! That kinda talk is too fancy for us common folk! And Mark, well Mark decided to

take a more philosophical approach. Nothing wrong with that.

Titans Talk



Is there such a thing as a bad win? Or a good loss? According to Logan Ryan, Titans' cornerback, there are not good losses or bad wins. [Ryan has a radio show on 104.5 The Zone](#) in Nashville where he sits in with the guys from [The Midday 180](#). Yesterday, Paul Kuharsky vehemently pushed back against Ryan's assertion. In Kuharsky's view, the Tennessee Titans' overtime win against the Cleveland Browns was a bad win. Ryan made a lot of good points in his response about how hard it is to win in the NFL, how some games just don't go the way you want them to and you have to do everything you can to pull out the win. That's what the Titans did against the Browns. It was an ugly win. It was a disappointing game for Titans' fans because we had hoped to see the Titans dominate from the opening whistle. But, a win is a win. I tend to side more with Logan Ryan, an actual NFL player who has won a Super Bowl, than with a sports personality/writer.

Let me frame it this way (echoing what Ryan said on the show): Would the Houston Texans' 41-38 loss to the Seattle Seahawks be considered a good loss for the Texans? Or would it be considered a bad win for the Seahawks? My guess is, most

people (and Paul Kuharsky) would say that yes, it was a good loss because the Texans offense was so good in that game and it was very close. I also think that most people (including Paul) would say that it was a good win for the Seahawks. It was an exciting game, that's for sure, but does that make it a good loss and a good win? Both teams struggled to do anything on defense. Both teams allowed their opponents to move the ball almost effortlessly down the field. (Both QB's threw 4 TDs and over 400 yards. That's a sign of very poor defense.) So why would that be a good win for the Seahawks? One side of the ball played horribly – just like the Titans offense did against the Browns. One side played really well – just like the Titans defense did against the Browns.[1. Before you lose your mind yelling at me about the quality of the opponent, know that I understand that perspective. The Browns are an awful team. The Titans should have won that game by 10+ points. I was frustrated that they didn't. But at the end of the day, they won. To me, that is all that matters. I guarantee you that while Ryan and his teammates are happy with the win, they are well aware that they have to play much better in the future. Both of those things can be true. It's not an either-or scenario like some in the media or in the fan-base want it to be.] A win is a win in the NFL. You take them any way you can get them. Assigning style points is for fans and writers and has no bearing what happens on the field and in the locker room.

The Blame Game (The NFL on REO)

Titans Talk



Sunday's game in Miami was brutal to watch. The Titans were never able to find any offensive rhythm under backup QB, Matt Cassel. It is no surprise, that after a 16-10 loss to a painfully bad Miami Dolphins' team, many people in the Titans' organization are getting blamed. And there is plenty of well-deserved blame to go around. Unfortunately, most of the local writers, radio talkers, and fans are pointing their fingers in the wrong direction. That is where I come in. Consider this the official Blame Index for the debacle in South Florida.

Officials: 50% of the blame.

I am not a "blame the refs" kind of guy. I will complain about the refs. I will criticize the refs. I will yell at the refs. But in almost every game, the refs do not ultimately decide the outcome. There are always plays that can be made to overcome bad officiating. But what we witnessed in Miami was so awful and so game-changing, that it has to be number one on this list. There were multiple examples of incompetence throughout the game, but the sequence late in the 1st quarter

proved to be the most damaging so we will focus on that.

With less than a minute left in the 1st quarter, down 0-3, Matt Cassel did something no one watching that game thought he could do: He completed a pass more than 10 yards down the field. In fact, he threw a decent ball down the field to Delanie Walker for a 59-yard touchdown. Titans' fans celebrated. Then we saw the flag. As all fans of the Tennessee Titans know, you don't cheer for the team until you are completely sure there is no flag on the field. (On a personal note, my oldest son will wait a minute or two before he celebrates because he is convinced that the refs will never allow anything good to happen to the Titans. Thanks for killing my son's spirit NFL.) We waited for the call from the officials...and were rewarded with one of the most spectacularly wrong-headed penalties in the history of the game. Pass interference on Jonnu Smith, rookie Tight End of the Titans. "That doesn't seem like that bad of a call," you say. "If he interfered with the defender, perhaps that is how Walker got open." If only it were that simple. No, Smith and his defender (the defender who initiated contact by the way) were TWENTY yards away from the catch. (Watch the play [here](#).) There was less contact, less hand-checking than in virtually every pass play in every game in the NFL this season. That's only a slight exaggeration. It was minor contact, by both players, that literally had nothing to do with anything that happened on that touchdown pass and catch. But the officials think that everyone watches NFL games to see them throw flags and awkwardly talk to the crowd so...

It was a bad call. But it was a back-breaking call for the Titans in this game because that one play could have been the very play that allowed them to get the offense on track. I'll explain.

Up until that point in the game, and throughout the rest of the game, the Titans struggled to do much on offense. With Cassel as your QB, your options are limited at best. The Miami

defense did not respect the Titans' passing game and with good reason. So, they were stacking the box, daring the Titans to throw. If that TD to Walker stands, the entire defensive strategy changes for the Dolphins. Suddenly, they now know the Titans can throw the ball over the top. Putting eight or nine guys in the box is no longer an option on every play. That opens up the running game, which is exactly what the Titans wanted. If the TD stands, the Titans take a 7-3 lead and start to control the game on the ground. This serves two goals: Wear down Miami and keep your defense fresh. But the refs decided that an obvious no-call should take away the biggest play of the day for either team.

Two plays later, Cassel drops back and gets hit while he is throwing the ball. The ball travels a good 10-15 feet forwards in the air. Of the 22 players on the field, all but one stop playing. The pass is clearly incomplete. A lone Dolphin runs and picks up the ball and runs it to the end zone. Most of the refs have stopped officiating. One ref half-heartedly follows the Dolphin player but stops before he gets to the end zone. Dolphins' players from the sideline make their way onto the field while the ball is still being carried to the end zone. The refs huddle for two minutes and when it is all said and done, they announce that they ruled the ball a fumble and then a touchdown for Miami. (You can watch the play [here](#).)

There were probably 20 things wrong in how the officials handled that call. I don't really want to waste anyone's time going through all of them. I'll keep it simple by saying the refs were just as confused as the players and the fans and they really had no idea what happened in the play and they used the replay system to bail them out. It's the most cowardly and incompetent form of officiating out there and more and more NFL referees are doing it. They are relying more on the cameras than their own abilities and it is hurting the game.

Regardless of the details, this two-play sequence took 7

points off the board for the Titans and put 7 points on the board for the Dolphins. Without Marcus Mariota, the Titans just don't have enough offense to overcome that kind of scoring swing.

Coaches: 25% of the blame.

They ran the ball 18 times on Sunday. They threw the ball 32 times with a back-up QB. That's all you need to know about how the coaches did on Sunday. Unacceptable.

Matt Cassel: 10% of the blame.

I have heard way too many people put all the blame on Cassel. That's insane. He played poorly. But he did enough (before the refs pratfalled their way into the game) to win. IF the Walker TD stands, he ends up with 200 yards passing, 69% completion percentage, and 2 touchdowns. Not a bad day for a second string QB. But, he does deserve a little blame because he showed no pocket awareness, taking way too many sacks, and just didn't have the ability to make the big pass when his team needed him to in the 2nd half.

Offensive Line: 10% of the blame.

I realize they lost Taylor Lewan for the majority of the game and they were trying to protect a statue for QB, but this unit has to play better. If they don't get it figured out, this season will be a major disappointment and will set the Titans back a year in the development.

Roger Goodell: 10% of the blame.

Because in any conversation, Goodell deserves criticism.

Cracks in the Hull: Leadership

A few weeks ago I wrote about some things the NFL needs to do to improve its image. I highlighted a few areas, one of which was leadership. You can read that article [here](#). I've covered a [few of the issues](#) in the intervening weeks and would like to spend a little time on the leadership problem today.

Roger Goodell has finally issued a statement sort of saying that the players should stand for the National Anthem. Too little and too late. If Goodell was even average at his job, this is an issue he would have handled a long time ago. Instead, he tried to play politician for too long and it has cost the league dearly.

He needs to go. Now. I've been saying it for years. The decisions he has made as Commissioner will eventually ruin the league. We are starting to see the first signs of that. If the NFL wants to survive and thrive 20 years from now, they have to get rid of Goodell as soon as possible.

Quarter Season Power Rankings (The NFL on REO)

Phill's Quarter-Season Power Rankings!

We should probably call this edition: "Not Available." That will make more sense in a bit. This season has been unpredictable, which is one of the reasons the NFL is so much

fun. Contrary to some opinions, there have been some really good games this year and we are once again shaping up to have a good number of new playoff teams in the mix. As you will see below, the Top Ten has been invaded by many new faces this time around. And that's a good thing. I don't know if these teams will be able to keep it up for the next 12 games, but so far, they have earned their spots on my list. Feel free to tell me I'm an idiot in the comment section below. I can take it. (You can view the first Power Rankings right [here](#).)

10. Rams (Last Time: N/A)

I don't believe in them yet but you can't knock them too low with a 3-1 record. New coach Sean McVay has done wonders with the offense.

9. Patriots (Last Time: 1)

The Pats have too much talent across the board to be playing at their current level. They will get this figured out. Unfortunately...

8. Broncos (Last Time: N/A)

They did get their third win against an Oakland team that lost their starting QB, so things could look very different right now at 2-2. Still, they have played solid football through 4 weeks.

7. Eagles (Last Time: N/A)

Once again, it's still too early to know a whole lot about any team, but the Eagles look competitive. I fully expected them to make a move to the Top Ten during this season and they are not letting me down.

6. Bills (Last Time: N/A)

The Bills have very little offense. The Bills have an insanely smothering defense. They have only given up 54 points this

season. That is not sustainable but it earns them a spot in the Top Ten this week.

5. Panthers (Last Time: N/A)

They have the pedigree to be a very good team. I don't love them because their offense has been mostly MIA and losing Olsen won't help at all. Still, I think they have enough pieces on both sides of the ball to make this a good season.

4. Packers (Last Time: 5)

About what I expected from them. Good offense. Average defense.

3. Steelers (Last Time: 3)

They looked bad one game this season – against a bad Bears' team. Their offense will win them a lot of game this year but their defense has been more impressive so far.

2. Falcons (Last Time: 2)

I can't put them lower yet even though they have not looked great. They are 3-1. They are doing what they need to do to make a playoff push. But Matt Ryan has been inconsistent and if he doesn't improve, they will be one-and-done come postseason time. (Ryan is on my son's fantasy team and he is ruining everything.)

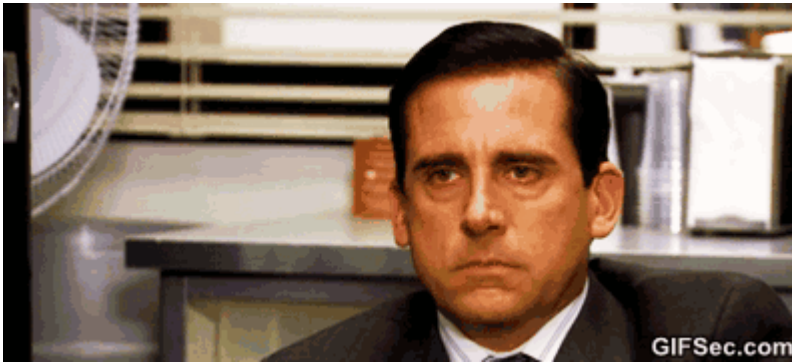
1. Chiefs (Last Time: 10)

I didn't see this one coming. I never expected Kareem Hunt to be such a game-changer. His addition to this offense has completely opened things up for everyone else. And the defense, which was good last year, hasn't lost a step. Can they keep this up, particularly when Hunt hits the rookie wall? We'll have to wait and see.

Titans Talk



Nope.



No.



Aaaahhh!!!11



That was the worst defensive performance I have seen from the Titans since the 59-0 loss to the Patriots back in 2009. They were out of position the entire game. It was as if Houston could read their minds before every snap. I will say this, if Mariota plays in the second half, the score is not that lopsided. Houston still wins, and wins by quite a bit, but the Titans probably score another 14-21 points in the game. It would have made it look a little respectable in the end but it still would have been a massive misstep in an otherwise promising season. Coach LeBeau has to get this figured out ASAP or this team is in real trouble.

And that's all I have to say about that game.

The NFL Needs To Change (The NFL on REO)

The NFL is in trouble. That's the bad news. The good news is that most of the problems with the league can be corrected, as long as the NFL acts decisively and quickly.

The NFL is best seen as a giant battleship. It's enormous and built to last, yet its size makes it unwieldy and difficult to change course quickly. Right now, it is the biggest and baddest ship on the water, but it is headed in the wrong direction. To make matters worse, it has dozens of small cracks along its hull that are slowly taking in water. Not one of those cracks is enough to sink it, but collectively, those cracks will eventually bring it down.

The Cracks

The NFL has multiple image problems, some real and some imagined but no less damaging. This includes player safety, a problem that is a little bit of both. On one hand, the NFL sustained a massive self-inflicted wound with the way they handled concussions in the past. That crack is big and the league has done very little to patch it. On the flip side, many paint the NFL as too dangerous and too violent and are doing everything they can to bring it down. Everyone associated with the NFL – owners, players, fans – knows that the sport is dangerous and violent. It is part of the deal, and most of us are good with it. The day the players are no longer good with the risks is the day the league goes under for good.

Another image issue, and one that dominates headlines, is the National Anthem protests. We live in a society where the media thrive on controversy and division. The more hyperbolic the report, the better for business. Colin Kaepernick is the poster boy for this issue, though it has grown to be much larger than just one man. The problem with it is you have people from both sides of the political divide that are now [tuning out](#) because of it. Those on the far left are demanding that the NFL force someone to hire Kaepernick. (Stupidest idea possible.) Those on the far right feel that the league is full of a bunch of rich, entitled, unpatriotic jerks that hate the

country and the flag. (Ignorant at best.) You know it is a huge issue when commentators as good as Al Michaels are going out of their way to update you on who did or did not stand for the anthem. The media in general is terrible and sports media is not that much better. They have decided that this controversy deserves ALL THE COVERAGE because of ratings, not realizing that their constant coverage is going to hurt the ratings for the NFL, which will then hurt their own ratings.

Ladies and gentlemen, I give you: THE MEDIA



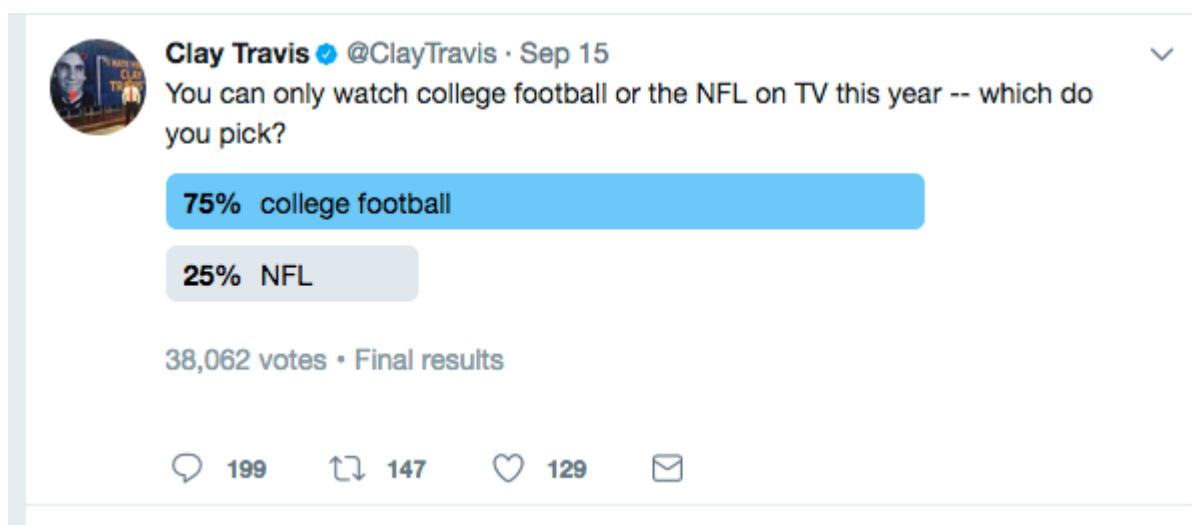
The League has a leadership problem.

I don't care for Jerry Jones. He comes across as boorish and arrogant. If Jerry takes a position on something, I am usually going to be on the other side. But, [reports indicate](#) that he is standing in the way of Roger Goodell's contract extension. I believe I have made my thoughts about Goodell very clear in my time writing for REO. This then becomes similar to the recent presidential election. Do we have to side with one of these two?

With that said, many of the NFL's problems can be directly traced back to Goodell or the overall leadership of the league. And even if the problems are not entirely Goodell's fault, sometimes it is just better to make a change in leadership for appearances. Most people don't care who the commissioner of the NFL is, but if they were to replace Goodell with someone with greater vision and self-awareness, it would do wonders for the overall image of the league.

The League has a product problem.

I saw a Twitter poll posted by Clay Travis recently that asked the question, "You can only watch college football or the NFL on TV this year – which do you pick?" And College Football won. Overwhelmingly.



Now, I realize this poll was posted by Clay Travis, someone who has made his career covering college football (and making fun of ESPN), but I think the results still have validity. There is a perception among many, right or wrong, that the college game is better than the pro game. I could post stats about blowouts in the college game, or how close games are in the NFL on average, but those stats usually fall on deaf ears. People see what they see and feel what they feel and stats and facts are rendered meaningless. The college game can be

incredibly exciting. I enjoy it. But I enjoy watching the best of the best playing the same sport on Sundays more. But there are issues built into the professional game that can be fixed or tweaked that will make the game more entertaining for fans, and the NFL needs to start working towards those soon or they will continue to lose fans.

Over the next few weeks, I will be doing my best to tackle a few of these issues and present some ideas for change. These cracks need to be fixed or the NFL will cease to be the powerhouse that it is. Let us know in the comment section what you would do to fix these issues. Or, if there are issues you have noticed that I have not addressed, let us hear about them.

Crack: The Diminishing Product

Thursday Night football is unwatchable.

I love the NFL. I can watch any real NFL game and be perfectly satisfied. I will watch a game between the New York Jets and the San Francisco 49ers and find plenty to enjoy.

But Thursday Night football is a completely different animal.

Thursday Night football is sloppy. TNF is ugly, poorly played, and worst of all, boring. TNF is a match-up between two teams that are tired and not recovered from the previous week. The product on the field completely supports my assertion – you only have to look at the most recent Thursday night game for proof.

Thursday Night football needs to be taken out back and put out of its misery. Effective immediately. It is a prime-time game that is as poor of a representation of actual professional

football as one can find. It will not create new fans. It will not engender good-will towards the league or the game itself. In fact, I contend it is doing the exact opposite. It is too much football. And it is football that is a poor representation of what the game is supposed to look like. It makes the NFL look greedy, ugly, and uninteresting.

NFL, if you want to keep your league at the top, get rid of Thursday Night football as soon as humanely possible. It is a blight on your league and your product. Focus your immense power and money on Sunday and Monday football. Make those games as good as they can be and stop diluting your sport with inferior product.

Titans Talk



That was fun. What we saw in the second half of the game against the Jaguars is what fans of this team are expecting this season. A physically dominant performance in all three phases of the game. And there is no Titans' player that better epitomized that physicality than Derrick Henry. Let me be clear about something – DeMarco Murray is the number one running back for the Titans. But until he is 100% healthy from the hamstring pull, Henry is the better option.

The Titans have the luxury of having two number one backs on their team and they need to take advantage of that starting Sunday against the Seahawks. Sit Murray and start Henry. Do that until Murray is completely healed. If they want to make a run late in the season and into the post season, they will need Murray. If you want to see what I mean by Henry being the best representation of Titans' football, go check out [this](#) article at [Music City Miracles](#). Those guys do great work covering the Titans.



There is a youth movement at work for the Titans and it should be very exciting for fans of the team. This year's draft is showing up all over the field, with players like Adoree' Jackson, Taywan Taylor, Jonnu Smith, Corey Davis, and Jayon Brown already playing big minutes and contributing in a number of ways. The future is very bright for the this team. Enjoy the ride Titans' fans.



This week poses a significant challenge for the Titans. The Seattle Seahawks are a good/great defense and they have a mobile QB that can extend plays with his legs. The Titans have struggled against mobile QB's in the past and Russell Wilson is better than most, so it will be imperative for the defense to stay on course and not deviate from their assignments. The good news is the Seahawks have a terrible offensive line and the Titans' pass rush should have plenty of opportunities to get to Wilson. For whatever reason, I have a similar feel about this game as I did for the Green Bay game last year. I am hopeful that the Titans' offense will pick up where they left off in the second half of the Jaguars' game. It should be a fun one.

The NFL on REO: Old Faces, New Places

Week 1

Week one is in the books.

Contrary to popular opinion, we don't really learn much after one week of play in the NFL. It is going to take a lot more to convince me that the New England Patriots are as bad as they looked on Thursday night against the Kansas City Chiefs. Similarly, it will take a lot to convince me that the Los Angeles Rams are as good as they looked against the hapless Indianapolis Colts.

Game one is never the strongest indicator of future performance. You just have to look at the two years Ken Whisenhunt coached the Tennessee Titans. If you only saw game one in those two years, you would have thought the Titans were a juggernaut of a team. Unfortunately for fans of the team, those two games were far and away the highlights of each season.

The point is, game one is not the be-all, end-all. Yes, it is important to start the season with a win. Yes, that one loss can come back to haunt a team at the end of the season as they fight for a playoff spot. But, many times game one will be viewed as an aberration by the end of the season. So, if your team won this weekend, congrats. If your team lost this weekend, there are still fifteen more games to get things on track. Of course, all of this is completely out the window for a team like the New York Jets. They are just the worst.

Old faces in new places

For this week, I want to spotlight three faces that found themselves in new environments. Three players that have excelled at their various positions that are now in different homes, with very different supporting casts. We will look at them in ascending order, from the most underwhelming debut in a new place to the most impressive. Let's start with Adrian Peterson.

Adrian Peterson is a bad fit for the New Orleans Saints. They are a pass first team, with very little desire to establish a consistent run game. Unless they have a big lead, Peterson is never going to be a 20 to 25 carry-a-game back in that offense. Peterson has been an above-average receiver in his career, but it is not his biggest strength. So, his chances will be limited in New Orleans and with that, his career is going to come to an ignominious end. He looks old and slow.

There is another veteran running back who has found a new home. **Marshawn Lynch** had been out of football for over 600 days. He returned this Sunday against the Tennessee Titans and looked very close to his old self. He ran hard. He ran aggressive. He made good defensive players look bad on more than one occasion. As a Titans' fan, it pains me to even mention this, but you can see below that Beastmode is still going strong.



Lynch is not going to lead the league in rushing. He is never

going to be a top 5 running back again. But, in that Oakland Raiders' offense, he is a perfect fit for what they need: a big, bruising back that can pick up tough yards when needed. He gives Derek Carr a much needed cushion to bolster the passing game, by taking some of the pressure off of it.

And finally, we have **Tony Romo**. I was the first to question the decision of CBS Sports to hire him and place him with their number one NFL commentary team. He has no experience in the booth. This is all new to him. Now, I was fine with Phil Simms being replaced as Jim Nance's partner. I like Simms and think he works much better in the studio – as he has proven with his work for Showtime's [Inside the NFL](#). In the booth, Simms was just too dry and uninteresting for me. And teaming him up with Nance, one of the least exciting play-by-play guys in the business meant that their games were always more boring than they needed to be. But replacing a known commodity like Simms with someone that had never even worked in the business was risky and felt a little desperate.

Evidently, CBS knew what it was doing. Or they just got really lucky. Romo was fantastic. He brought so much energy, intelligence, and passion to the broadcast. He added plenty of technical knowledge while still maintaining a sense of fun and excitement for the game. He sounded like a fan that happened to have played for over a decade in the league and knew the game better than any fan you have ever met. He was a little hyper at times, but as he said from the start, with a huge grin on his face, he was nervous and had butterflies. I won't fault him for his exuberance. It was a much-needed improvement to the CBS A-Team.



Titans' fans, calm down. You never want to start 0-1 but the Titans lost to a better team on Sunday. It hurts to have that loss at home, but in the grand scheme, if this team plays to its potential, it won't affect them too much down the stretch. Just a few thoughts about the game – positives and negatives:

- **Positive:** Corey Davis' first catch was something the Titans haven't had in years. He went up and snatched that ball out of the air, came down hard and held on. He was not perfect in the game – running the wrong route a few times down the stretch, and he ran out of gas at the end, but overall, it was a very solid first game for the rookie. It is even more impressive when you consider he didn't even play a single snap during the preseason. This kid is going to be special.
- **Negative:** Running game/Offensive Line. This has to be fixed. Period. If it is not, this will be a very disappointing season. The O-Line was fine in pass protection, but they struggled to consistently open up lanes for the running backs. If the Titans are going to go where they want to go, they will get there behind this offensive line. We need to see some nastiness from this unit on Sunday against the Jacksonville Jaguars.
- **Positive:** [Adoree' Jackson's hurdle](#). He struggled early in the pass game but quickly made adjustments. He is a physical phenom the likes we haven't seen in Tennessee

in a long time. His late kick-off return where he hurdled a few Raiders and somehow ended up 25 feet down the field in one jump is staggering in its athleticism. This kid is going to be special as well. (Do yourself a favor and click that link to watch the video. It's impressive.)

- **Negative:** Missed opportunities. The Titans had chances to win this game. The Raiders are a very good team who I fully expect to be in the conversation for the Super Bowl all season. But the Titans could have beaten them if they had made a handful of plays. The onside kick is a perfect example. I don't love the call, but if Tye Smith gets his head turned around and moves a little, he makes that recovery. It was little things like that all game long. Eric Decker slipped on his cut late in the game for a 3rd down conversion, which meant the pass sailed a little outside. The poor tackling at times on defense cost valuable yards and time. Fix those little things and this team is right there with a chance to win at the end.

That's it for today. What did you guys think about Week One? Which teams stood out? Who do you think is fool's gold? Who is the real deal? Let us know in the comments section below.

The NFL on REO: Tennessee Titans Edition

The Tennessee Titans – High Hopes and Legitimate Concerns

This week, we are going to take a little break from our usual

league-wide coverage, and focus only on the Tennessee Titans. For those that think that seems unfair, too bad. It's my column and I can do whatever I want. Last season, the Titans finished second in the AFC South with a 9-7 record. They missed the playoffs in a tie-breaker to the Houston Texans. The Titans have made what look to be smart moves this offseason to improve the roster and hopes are high in Tennessee.

Or, they were high until the preseason started. The Titans were uninspired and seemingly bored the entire first preseason game against the New York Jets. Their offense was anemic and their first team defense gave up a quick score to an awful Jets' offense. The Titans rebounded and looked good the following week against the Carolina Panthers. Both sides of the ball made plays and they calmed the doubts and fears that had been festering in the hearts of the Tennessee fan base after the first game.

And then Sunday happened. The Chicago Bears, one of the worst teams in the NFL last season, came to Nashville and proceeded to make the Titans' first teams look out of sync and ill-prepared. Mike Glennon, veteran back-up QB, led the Bears on a 96-yard touchdown drive in the first quarter. The first team offense for the Titans didn't really fare any better. If you spent any time on social media during or after the game, you probably read more than one fan call for the firing of Mike Mularkey, the benching of Marcus Mariota, or the complete dismantling of the team.[1. I know I mentioned writing about attending the game with my boys and even including a few pictures, but the game was awful. I had a great time with my kids, but as far as football is concerned, there just isn't much to report.]

I am here to tell you that those lunatics need to be ignored. That is not to say there are not legitimate concerns with this team. There are, and I will address them below, but the concerns are getting blown out of proportion while any good in

the first three games is getting completely overlooked. So, let's tackle the concerns about this team based on the first three preseason games.

1. The offensive line is not getting any push. This same O-line took the league completely by surprise last season. They do not have that luxury this season. Everyone knows they are coming and are going to give them their best shot. It does not appear, through three preseason games, that the O-line has adjusted. If this unit does not step up in 2017, this team will not meet expectations.
2. The secondary is not in synch yet and it will take some time for that to happen. Buckle up. [I said this on July 9th](#) – "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." I stand by that today. Most of the time, an entire unit doesn't get a makeover of this magnitude and come out as crisp and as good as they will eventually be. Titans' fans need to give it time.

That's it. Those are my only real concerns at this point. I know some people are complaining about Mariota, and while he has not looked at the top of his game, his stat line proves he is playing at a high level, even in the preseason. For a guy who is eight months away from breaking his leg, I am more than happy with what he has done in these games. (For what it's worth, his passing numbers for the preseason are 20/32 or 62.5% completion percentage, 2 TD, 0 INT, 8.4 yards per attempts, 110.0 passer rating, and 27 yards on the ground.)

If you are worried about the receivers, I think you need to give that entire group an "incomplete." They have missed starters in every game. First round pick, Corey Davis, has yet to play. Free agent acquisition, Eric Decker, has barely

played. Tajae Sharpe, played in his first preseason game on Sunday. This unit, if healthy, will look substantially different in the regular season than they have looked in the preseason. Plus, the injuries have allowed us to see more of Taywan Taylor and he has done nothing but impress.

Let's all take some advice from Aaron Rogers and R.E.L.A.X.

Five Questions with Paul Kuharsky.

Even though we are a small operation here at RE0, we felt it was worth the effort to at least try to get some interaction going with those who have covered sports in the Nashville market for a long time. So, I reached out to Paul Kuharsky. "Paul Kuharsky is an award-winning writer who has covered the NFL for over 20 years in California, Texas, and Tennessee. He spent the last nine years helping build ESPN.com's NFL Nation covering the AFC South and then the Tennessee Titans and he's a popular radio personality in Nashville, where he's co-hosted The Midday 180 on 104.5 The Zone since 2012." [2. [Bio on his new website.](#)] He responded almost immediately that he would be happy to answer a few questions. We wanted to keep the format really simple, to take the least amount of his time as possible, so we kept it to five questions. No back and forth. No follow up questions. We hope that maybe down the road, we can make this a more comprehensive conversation, but this was a good way to get things started.

Q: In your time covering the NFL, which rookie has jumped out the most at training camp to you? Where you said – this guy is going to be special?

A: Jevon Kearse was unreal. As I recall the story, he was waiting in line for some testing related to vertical jump and asked a coach, "If I can touch the ceiling in here can I be done." And the coach said yes given that it was an awfully high ceiling and he didn't think it was possible. And Kearse jumped and got it and walked out. I think he may have even displaced a ceiling tile in the process. At one training camp drill where four linemen hit a sled and then turned and raced to gather one of three cones, the guy who didn't get a cone was the big loser. Except that Kearse once raced ahead and scooped up not two but all three cones, leaving everyone else empty handed.

Q: Is Marcus Mariota, barring injury, a top 5 QB by the end of the season. Why or why not?

A: I don't know. Brady, Rodgers, Roethlisberger, Ryan, Rivers, Stafford and Luck. I'd say those guys start ahead of him for sure. Can he get ahead of two of them? What defines top 5? Rating? QBR? TD-to-pick ratio? I think he will be very good. I think people should be happy if by most measures he's top eight or 10 in Year 3.

Q: Going into this season, what are the Titans' biggest weaknesses?

A: Perimeter play. That's ball skills at corner and ability to get open and go get it at receiver. They addressed both in a big way through the offseason. Now we need to see the additions succeed at improving the team in those areas.

Q: Based on what we have seen so far with the new ownership structure, Jon Robinson as GM, and Mularkey as HC, do you

believe this leadership team can bring the Lombardi trophy to Nashville?

A: Yes, this group is capable of winning a Super Bowl IF it continues on the current track. It'll help somewhere in the next five years if the Patriots stop being the Patriots for a year or two.

Q: Who was your favorite Titan to cover all time?

A: It's hard to pick just one guy. There are a lot of them over such a long stretch. Frank Wycheck was great to me in the locker room, and I'd get in trouble with him now if I didn't mention him. Samari Rolle was a really great guy who understood my job and we shared a very nice mutual respect.

We want to thank Paul for taking the time out of his incredibly busy schedule to answer our Five questions. We hope you enjoyed them. We are hoping to do more of this sort of thing in the future. Paul has now ventured out on his own and has his own website where he covers all things Titans. You can visit Paul's new website by clicking the logo below. If you are a Titans' fan, it's worth checking out for sure.



Reader Response

This is your time to get involved. Next week, the REO staff will once again post our predictions for the season. For what its worth, [we did very well last season](#) – with most of us within a game or two from the actual record. But first, we want to see what you are thinking about this year's team. Vote below and tell us about it in the comment section at the bottom of the article.

Predict the Tennessee Titans' 2017 Regular Season Record

- 16-0
- 15-1
- 14-2
- 13-3
- 12-4
- 11-5
- 10-6
- 9-7
- 8-8
- Below .500

[View Results](#)

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The NFL on REO: Are We There Yet?

My Final Preseason Thoughts

I wrote about preseason football last week – you can find those remarks right [here](#). I feel I should add a few more thoughts about it before we move on to more important matters.

Let's deal with the problems first:

Problem: Preseason football is not very fun to watch. Outside of the diehard fans, not many people can sit through an entire preseason game. The starters play one or two series and then the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th string guys get on the field and attempt to make their case for getting on the team. By their very nature, the preseason games are going to be less interesting because they do not count for anything. There is no real drama. Plus, the guys at the bottom of the roster aren't as good, which is why they are at the bottom, and the quality of football suffers.

Problem: There are some that believe that less preseason games will mean worse football. I disagree. Preseason football is not necessary. I concede, this might lean towards opinion, but if college and high school teams can get by without preseason games, then I am confident the NFL could as well.

Problem: Preseason football is in place to help the players get back into football shape. This one is dumb and we need to take it out of the conversation. Back in the 20's and 30's, the players had other jobs during the offseason. They did not train year-round. A lengthy preseason schedule helped them get acclimated to the rigors of the professional football schedule. This is no longer the case.

Problem: Preseason football is a rip-off for the fans. Season

ticket holders are required to pay full price for two home games in the preseason. That is reprehensible and borderline highway robbery. The owners should be ashamed of forcing their loyal fans to pay full ticket price for something that is less-than real football. This is absolutely a problem and needs to be fixed.

Preseason football is not going away. At least, not completely. I do think, given enough time and pressure, the NFL will cave and reduce the number of games on the schedule. That is the optimist in me talking though. Even so, they will never give up that easy revenue completely.

Solution: I believe most of these problems can be corrected easily and the solutions all work hand-in-hand. Since we all know that the preseason will never go away completely, how do we fix it? Well, my solution to all the problems listed above is pretty simple:

- Cut the preseason down to two games – one home and one away.
- The owners could continue to charge full price for the preseason games.
- Each team would be required to schedule a week of practice with two other NFL teams – one at home and one away.
- These practices would include an end of the week scrimmage that would be played at the venue of their choice. The home team could play the scrimmage in their home stadium, or perhaps choose an alternate venue such as a high school stadium.
- At least half of the joint practices would be open to the public – free of charge.
- The scrimmage would not be free – but the entrance fee would be substantially less than a regular season game.

I attended a practice at Nissan Stadium, home of the Tennessee Titans, with my boys a few weeks ago. It was free. There was

an extended autograph season before the practice time where the players lined the field and fans were able to go down to the rails and interact with them. It was a very fun environment and one that can be recreated with the above suggestions. But the bonus would be the fans getting the chance to see one visiting team every offseason. Put the fans as close to the players and the game as you can and you will connect a fan base to its team. My suggestions would still allow teams ample time to prepare for the season. It would still provide additional revenue to the owners – but they would have to take a small loss initially. And it would add excitement to an otherwise stale preseason system.

The absurdity of the Colin Kaepernick conversation

Every time I hear or read a new opinion on the Colin Kaepernick debate, I look a lot like this:





We have now scraped the bottom of the barrel with the Atlanta chapter of the NAACP calling for a boycott of the NFL unless a team signs Colin. And the NAACP is not alone in this insanity. I have seen at least one prominent sports' writer call on the NFL to intervene and force someone to sign him, and I've heard national sports radio shows do the same.

Have we all lost our minds?

In no universe should any team ever be forced to sign a player. Before you get angry and try to present the alternate perspective, let me save you some time.

"The NFL owners are racist and will not sign Kaepernick because he's black!"

That is essentially what the NAACP is saying. Their entire

reason to exist is to fight for equality for people of color. They wouldn't be in this fight if they believed that Kaepernick's race had nothing to do with his lack of a job. This is an assertion so dumb, so ignorant, and so devoid of logic that I was hesitant to even address it. NFL owners have ZERO problem signing black players. Over 70% of the NFL is black. The NFL owners, the coaches, and front office people that run each team want what is best for their team. They will choose talent over just about any other metric, including off the field issues, but they will not choose talent if they believe it will damage goodwill from the fans. It is obvious that most NFL owners believe Kaepernick is too big of a distraction to warrant a spot on the team, no matter how talented he is.

Colin Kaepernick will be on an NFL roster in 2017. Injuries happen. A team will need him. He will be willing to sign for non-starter money, something that has been reported has been a sticking point with more than one team. This whole "controversy" will simply be one more example of the media's penchant for blowing a story so out of proportion that it causes everyone to lose brain cells in trying to make sense of it.

Titans Talk



Hey Titans' fans, you guys okay? Have you stepped away from the ledge after the awful first preseason game against the Jets? Good. I don't want to make too big of a deal out of it, but I followed the reaction to that game in real time on Twitter and you would have thought the Titans had just lost their 16th straight game. Fans overreact. Now, after the second preseason game, fans are back on board and buying tickets to Minneapolis for the Super Bowl. Slow your roll kids! No preseason game will tell us that much about a team. We don't know what the team even wants to see in the preseason game. Without knowing what the goals are, we can't really judge the results we see. So coming to any hard-and-fast conclusions based on what are essentially practice games is impossible. Stop doing it.

With that said, it was nice to see the Titans look like they actually cared about the game. Mariota looked great – and his leg looks 100% healthy, which to me, is the most important thing going into the season. They were missing multiple weapons on offense – Matthews, Davis, Sharpe, and Decker – and they still moved the ball effectively.

Next Week

I'm taking my boys to see the game this Sunday against the Bears. Next week I will post some in-depth commentary about the preseason game typically considered the dress rehearsal for the season. I hope to see improvement and no injuries. Hopefully, I can take some pictures as well. (Shout out to one of the coolest guys in the world and one of the biggest Titans' fans I know, Marvin Briggs, for the tickets!)

Also, we will have a special Q&A with someone that has been covering the Titans for years. We will post more about that as the week progresses.