

THE JOY OF REAL REFEREES FOR THE NFL TRASH TALK

The real refs are back, and the scabs are gone. This is a very good thing for the integrity of the sport; the cockup that cost the Packers the game in Seattle was just too much. After that, how in the world could the NFL send a team of scabs into Lambeau this Sunday for the game with the Saints? They couldn't. And now we have a deal.

One thing should be kept in mind. While the deal looks like the referees and their union won big, it is not quite as solid of a win if you look at the details. As Travis Waldron notes:

When the lockout began, the owners had three major asks: they wanted to eliminate the pension benefits current officials receive, add full-time officials, and add a back-up pool of officials. More details will come out, but the deal they reached last night added a group of full-time officials and a back-up pool of officials and grandfathered in pension changes that will eliminate the current defined-benefit retirement program for all officials by 2016. The owners got basically everything they wanted, and somehow they lost?

I'm not seeing it.

If anything, this deal is more evidence of the power corporate interests hold in labor disputes. Laden with cash and able to wait, the NFL spent the offseason moving the NFLRA's thin red line closer to what the owners wanted, to the point where the reasonable compromise was one that gave the league everything it wanted, if on a slightly slower timeline. That ensured that when fans

firmly took a side, the league would still get its way. That power is shared by corporations in lower-profile battles, where companies are locking out workers to pay them less and eliminate pensions and benefits just because they can.

I think Travis is exactly right. Not that an NFL official's life is a terrible lot, they are paid well for 6-8 months of work a year, and get other benefits. But if the point was to score a "win for labor", this really is maybe not the gleaming example it has been painted as.

But, as a football fan, I will take it; anything is better than the degraded product we saw culminated last Monday night. And, who would have ever guessed it could be possible for referees to get a standing ovation of love from a packed house of football fans? I do wonder, though, how long the newfound love and respect for the refs by the players and fans will last. We shall see.

Hey, here is a great story about Brian Dawkins the former Eagles and Broncos great who is being honored with a jersey retirement in Philly for the Giants game Sunday night. Do the Eagles have enough motivation to take it to the Gents? I think they do this time. For Dawk.

Other games that look good are Oakland at Mile High to visit the Broncos. Houston was too tall an order, but I think Peyton gets untracked on the Rayduhs and their secondary. The Niners are going to roll the Jets. Detroit is reeling, and the Vikings looked shockingly competent whipping San Francisco last week; these two are so unpredictable, it is a tossup. Can the Cardinals make it 4-0 with a win in Phoenix over Miami? I think so; who'd a thunk it? The Bears play Dallas on MNF, hard to see why anybody cares about these two at this point.

For the "student athletes", there was a huge upset Thursday night when the Washington Huskies

chopped down the Stanford Tree. There is not much else in the way of excitement on tap for Saturday. Maybe Florida State and USF will have a little juice. Maybe Baylor at West Virginia will be fun. Other than that, it is just kind of bleak by my scan.

Although it is an off week, there is some huge news in the F1 world. The circus silly season has begun with two huge moves. Lewis Hamilton is leaving McLaren after this season to go to Mercedes, where he will replace departing Michael Schumacher. Hamilton will team with the remaining Nico Rosberg Young and promising Sergio Perez will leave Sauber to replace Hamilton at McLaren and will team with Jenson Button. There is scuttlebutt Schumacher may not be done and may take a seat at Sauber, but I am not sure if I buy it. Lastly, one of the all time great auto racing announcers and commentators, Chris Economaki, has passed away at age 91.

In baseball, Jim white's TB rays are making a balls out stretch run at the playoffs, but they lost a tough one tonight, and they are running out of time and are three back of a wildcard slot. The Orioles are still one back of the Yanks for the AL East. Compelling stuff.

This weeks music is to honor the joy of real refs, and is a rare early live show, with surprisingly good sound, of Blind Faith.