

TRASH TALK: PHRED'S HUBCAP FOR A STEAL!!

✘ Phred skipped town and forgot to take the hubcap she won last week, so you all have a chance to win it off of her while she's not looking. (She did, however, leave her picks behind—going with the home teams—so you still all have her picks, if not her trash, to contend with.)

Before we get to the Conference Championship games, though, I have to send my apologies to masaccio for stealing his Defensive Coordinator. My apologies, too, to Jim Schwartz. As Mitch Albom put it, this is where "coaches come to die."

Schwartz, 42, with an economics degree from Georgetown and 10 years in the Titans organization, is, by all accounts, a very smart guy. He inherits the worst team of all time. So you might ask how smart can he be? He said recently he never shrinks from a challenge. But he might want to tiptoe back a few steps and put Detroit in perspective.

Because here is what he walked into: This team is very thin in talent. It has no discernible leaders. It has a leftover defeatist attitude that found a home in many a locker. There are players here who will be going on their third or fourth Detroit coach with no success.

That doesn't inspire confidence.

More importantly, Schwartz has agreed to work for an owner who has shown no gift for football wisdom, and for a two-headed front office that has been here through season after season of failure.

Mmmmm. Self-flagellating trash talk!!

So. Now onto the teams that won some games this year.

Atrios' Eagles at bmaz' Cardinals: Hahahaha! Did you see that? **bmaz'** Cardinals?? What better way to drive bmaz nuts, then to make him root for the home team. Before I do any analysis, let me just ruin the ending. The Cards **have** to lose this weekend. bmaz is—finally—beginning to believe in Cardinals magic, so you just know he's going to get the failure to execute he's been predicting for the last several weeks.

Now, mr. ew just announced to me that our next dog will be named Fitzgerald (McCaffrey the MilleniaLab is named after the Broncos' Eddie McCaffrey). That was some unbelievable play from Larry Fitzgerald last week. And, as I said last week (even while picking them to lose), the Cardinals all of a sudden found a defense and their Edge. But this game is going to be decided by a chess match between Ken Whisenhunt and Jim Johnson. And I'm betting that chess match will result in Kurt Warner spending a lot of time on his ass, trying to crawl out from under a stack of Iggles. If the Iggles get to Warner as much as I think they will, I expect we'll be seeing the Warner of ouchy fingers from a few years ago.

cheflovesbeer Ravens at scribe's Stillers: I gotta tell you, scribe has been emailing just about every 20 minutes with an update on how cold it is in Pittsburgh. Comparing it to the temperatures in Alaska, and Siberia. To me. Sitting in Michigan. Actual temperatures of 13 below tonight. And then he sends a story about how Pittsburgh had to move inside "because the field is frozen." As if that makes the Stillers look studly? Also in the stud (not!) category is Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl who tried to officially change his name to Steelerstahl—but screwed it up, partly because he didn't pony up the \$108 to pay for it. Look. I know a guy who changed his name to Lucious N. Delicious. **That** took balls. Not-quite-Steelerstahl? Nut uh. That's like putting up crappy Wal-Mart blinds

instead of a Steel Curtain.

Now, scribe seems to think that all this indoors practice in Pittsburgh is somehow gonna get his team a trip to the Super Bowl. That's just not going to be the deciding factor—certainly not on Sunday, when it'll be a balmy 29 degrees. I do, however, think the Stillers will win this. Partly because I was way wrong last week about how studly **Rotty** is (and did you see him kick that fine pooch kick?). But also because the Ravens are still recovering from the beating the Titans gave them last week, with Samari Rolle doubtful and Terrell Suggs and Derrick Mason questionable. Sure, Ed Reed still owes me that touchdown he failed to score last week. But that's not going to be enough against Rotty and an apparently healthy Fast Willie.

Update: This is from Doc at First Draft. I had to include it in a probably futile attempt to shut scribe up about how studly his Stillers are.

It was -16 out where I live this week, with -40 wind chill in the air. I left the house exactly three times in the past four days. Once to put out the garbage, once to get groceries and once on the first day of the freeze when the temperature was announced as being -13. The reason? It was the exact temperature and wind chill of the famed Ice Bowl game and I had to see what it must have been like. What I learned is that it's a miracle that any of those guys lived. It hurt to breathe, it hurt to smile and it hurt to walk. The snow squeaked under my feet and refused to cling to my shoes it was so cold. My eyes teared up and then the tears froze between my eyelashes, effectively freezing my eyes shut. Bart Starr, the famed Packer quarterback, once said he got cold just talking about that game. I now understand more than I ever wanted to. Not like I didn't respect them before, but a big tip of

█ the cap to those guys. I get it now.

See, walking through similar weather doesn't make me all that impressed about the Stillers and their indoor practice efforts.

(Hubcap by ansik)