

TRASH TALK: OLD MAN RIVER SHOWDOWN

Um, we're a bit tardy throwing up trash this week, seeing as how Pittsburgh already has a 31-17 lead on Cincinnati. Only, we're not that tardy—the game in question is in the Big East, not the AFC North, where Pittsburgh has already lost twice to Cinci this year.

Florida v. Alabama. Anyway, the big game this weekend, if you're a football fan rather than an NFL fan, starts in just a few hours. Jim White has been gloating all year, and we'll soon see whether his gloat continues. I'll be rooting for 'Bama, but I suspect Jim White will still be gloating come dinner time. In rather curious news, there were reports last week that at least a few winning NFL coaches are determined to take Tebow in the first round, so maybe this won't be the end of his illustrious football career. Any guesses on what winning NFL program wants him? Pittsburgh? Indy?

Vikings at Cardinals. Now, if you're an NFL fan—and particularly if you're bmaz—then the highlight of the weekend comes when Old Man River North, Brett Favray, heads down to the sunny clime of AZ to meet Old Man River South, Kurt Warner, in bmaz' backyard. Of course, with so many prominent old farts in this game, it may come down to who actually plays. Warner is still questionable with a two-week old head injury. And Antoine Winfield may not be back yet for the Vikes, either (admittedly, Winfield is not quite as old as the other two). Meanwhile, Adrian Peterson apparently hasn't gotten enough speed on the field this with Brett Favre around, so he took it upon himself to drive 109 MPH on surface roads in Minnesota (funny, he doesn't actually get caught when he's speeding on his day job). Then Bernard Berrian joined the fun. I think Old Man River North wins this, only because he's playing more consistently than Old Man River South, and with the Cardinals this year, home

field advantage doesn't amount to much.

Dallas at Gents. Does anyone actually care about the NFC East anymore? Does anyone think these teams are more interesting than Favray's team or Drew Fookin' Brees' team? Eh. I say the Gents start turning their season around with this one, if only because the NFC East seems destined to remain in turmoil right until the end of the season.

Titans at Colts. When you think about it, Vince Young has almost as long a win streak going as Peyton does at the moment, if you count last year's playoffs and discount the 2007 playoffs. And **someone** is bound to beat the Colts—no matter how good Peyton is, the team as a whole just can't compare with the NFC's leaders. That said, I've been burned so many times by teams failing to put enough points up against Peyton in the first half (am I really the only one who has noticed the Colts don't show up for the first half this season?), that I'll say the Colts win this, if only to avoid jinxing the Titans.

Pats at Fins. Really, after the Saints kicked the living daylights out of the Pats last week, who really cares about the AFC East, either? And given that Joey Porter is questionable, it ruins one of the story lines I was looking forward to. You see, Brady got some press this week for his newly active role in the Player's Union.

New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady is taking on a more active role in the NFL players' union, becoming the team's assistant players' representative. And while many high-profile players avoid speaking publicly about labor issues, Brady says he's glad to publicly support the efforts of NFLPA Executive Director DeMaurice Smith.

"I'm excited to see DeMaurice Smith heading our union. He's a great thinker and what we need," Brady told the *Boston Herald*. "What's upcoming is challenging for the players. We're very short-term

focused. That's the nature of the sport. We need to have a leader who sees the bigger picture."

Brady said he believes strongly that the players deserve to be fairly compensated for putting their bodies on the line, mentioning former Bills player Kevin Everett, who suffered a serious spinal cord injury on the field, as a reason he thinks the union needs to fight for players' rights.

And I thought it'd be interesting to see how Porter responded to Brady's defense of players' safety given Porter's jawing about Brady's whining for calls earlier this season. Then again, Porter couldn't match that jawing with decent play the last time they played, so maybe it's just as well. The Pats have yet to win a real away game, and the Jets just pulled to 6-6 with a win against Buffalo on Thursday. Which means Miami really needs this win for a chance to stay in the hunt to win another division in turmoil.

Big Upset. Call me crazy, but I think we'll see at least one big upset this week, with one of the loser teams (Detroit, Oakland, KC, 'Skins, or Cleveland) surprising the winning team they're playing (Cinci, Stillers, Denver, Saints, Bolts, respectively). It's just that time of the season. Obviously Oakland's done that already a couple of times this year, but Heinz Field is tough. And, with Pittsburgh now up 38-24 in Heinz Field, the Stillers had better win against Oakland tomorrow if they want to avoid playing second fiddle to the local college team in Pittsburgh.

Update: Then again, with Cinci coming from behind to beat Pitt 35-34, maybe Heinz Field will be the place for some surprises this weekend.