

TRASH TALK: SWINGING IN THE NEW YEAR

Well, we made it through a painful decade and are into a new year, new decade and looking forward to the playoffs in the National Favre League. No Thursday Night game, no Monday Night game; they will all be swinging for the fences today. How about a little Big Bad Voodoo Daddy to get in the swing? Go on, you know you want to; you'll love it. Okay, now off to the games we go!

No Drew Fookin Brees. The Aints ain't gonna play Brees, Darren Sharper or tight end David Thomas in their meaningless season finale at Carolina. according to FoxSports. With Mark Brunell leading the offense for Nawlins, this game is a tossup. Colts owner Jim Irsay thinks tanking last week's game against the Jets was "courageous". Shockingly, I stand by what I said previously on this. Guess this means they will take another gutless unethical dive against Buffalo. This team is a disgrace.

Which begs the question what the Pats against the Texans in Houston and the Bungles against the Jets in New Yawk/Joisey will do. Jason Whitlock addresses this all nicely:

Oh, there will be a handful of AFC teams giving their all, making last-ditch attempts to secure one of two remaining playoff spots. The problem is, their opponent won't care much about winning or losing. Or, in the case of the Pats and Bengals, the opponent might have incentive to lose.

"Cincinnati is probably going to go into New York and lay down for the Jets and not play them hard just because they're not going to want to see Pittsburgh in (the playoffs)," Steelers linebacker LaMarr Woodley told the media on Wednesday. "No one wants to see

Pittsburgh in it. That's just how it is. Everybody knows we're a dangerous team once we get into the playoffs, no matter how we played the whole year."

It's true. Pittsburgh can't qualify for the playoffs if the Pats and Bengals both lose.

If you were Cincinnati or New England and had an opportunity to eliminate two-time Super Bowl winner and fourth-quarter assassin Ben Roethlisberger by keeping the playoff hopes of New York's Mark Sanchez and Houston's Matt Schaub alive, wouldn't you lay down?

New England plays at Houston. Cincy plays at New York. The Pats and Bengals, winners of their divisions, have secured playoff spots, and there's little difference between being a No. 3 or No. 4 seed. Bill Belichick and Marvin Lewis are expected to rest numerous starters on Sunday.

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Sound crazy? Did you see Roethlisberger's 503-yard masterpiece against the Packers two weeks ago? Did you see his game-winning dart to Mike Wallace as time expired?

If the Steelers qualify and safety Troy Polamalu returns for the playoffs, Mike Tomlin and the Steelers could raise the hell he promised a month ago. Smart football people know this. The Steelers are a great defensive team when Polamalu is on the field. If he'd remained healthy throughout the year, Pittsburgh is 13-3 rather than 8-7 and gasping for life.

Just about right I would say.

Pittsburgh *will* win in Miami; it is just who the Steelers are. Then we will have to see if they

get the help they need to make the show. Same with the Ravens, they will beat Oakland, and with a win they are in. I have no idea who will show up on either side in the Vikes and Giants game; you would hope the Vikings would have the pride to take care of business, but no basis for believing it.

That leaves Eagles hosting the 'Boys and Cards hosting the Cheesers. Arguably Cards and Cheesers has no implications either, but they are both capable of being electric and the Pack is theoretically still playing for position (not really though because the Vikes hold that tiebreaker) and if the Cards have ever won eleven games in a regular season, no one remembers it and it sure as hell was not while they have been in Arizona. So they have some motivation. The Iggles at Dallas is the game of the day. Both teams have something significant to play for, have a long history and rivalry, and both have been playing lights out lately. This is a pick em and I can't wait to see it.

Atlanta at Tampa Bay, Bears at Lions, Jags at Brownies, 49ers at Rams, Redskins at Bolts and Titans at Squawks are all squarely in the meaningless category, although it will interesting to see if the Titans can win on the road to finish at 8-8 after their disastrous start. My bet is they will, and that is pretty impressive.

Well, that's it for the NFL finale to the regular season. Still leaves the Fiesta Bowl and Orange Bowl, which this thread will still likely be active for, so bookmark it and meet back here Monday night too.