

# SPRING TRAINING DIVISIONAL TRASH

It appears that bmaz is still grieving the Packers' loss last week and so has outsourced trash to me. As a courtesy to him, I'll refrain from loading up the Brady pron until around 1PM, at which point it will become too late. Settle in for 4 games played at or close to 40 degrees (though Gillette will be a sloppy mess), spring training for Divisional round football!

Rivers' Bolo v. Peyton's Head

They say this weekend marks the changing of the guard, with 4 elite QBs of old and 4 elite QBs of the future. But the Bolts-Broncos matchup pits an elite QB who has never reached that elite pinnacle, Philip Rivers, against the best QB of this generation, Peyton Manning.

Only, there's that troubling little problem that Peyton's own head tends to beat him once he gets to the playoffs.

Which is one of two reasons I think the Chargers will repeat their feat of several weeks ago, beating the Broncos at home. The other is Rivers has really grown comfortable with letting others carry the ball (which is how they beat the Broncos the last time).

Deion Branch Comes Home

Boy did I laugh my ass off when the Colts announced, earlier this week, that they had signed Deion Branch. That's the kind of thing BillBel would do, after all, hiring a longtime player from the opposing team just in time to learn signals and other neat details. But to do it with one of Brady's long-time partners? Priceless, even if it only serves as a head game.

I've been predicting for weeks the Pats would make it to the playoffs yet again but go nowhere, and I stand by that. I think three things will deliver that: Tom Brady lying on his

ass under Robert Mathis, Andrew Luck running through the holes where the Pats D used to be, and Adam Vinatieri kicking a game winner from a very sloppy field as time expires because why not? I hope I'm wrong, but I don't think I am.

#### The Young Guns

I think the Panthers are right to complain that commentators are underestimating them. They are a great team this year, with the D that has already proven they can hold the Niners – and especially Kap – in check.

But that was when Steve Smith was healthy and Michael Crabtree was out. He's back and hurting people. Now that the Panthers will have to account for him, it'll free up Anquan Boldin to do what he always seems to do in playoffs.

#### Who Says "Short" Men Can't Throw?

This game features the most poignant matchup, as Russell Wilson has modeled his game on the way Drew Brees succeeded as a sub-six footer before.

This game will be closer than the blowout earlier this year, because the Saints have been emphasizing the run. Still. It's Seattle. It's their D. I just don't think the Saints can beat Seattle in Seattle.