

CHAMPIONSHIP SUNDAY 2019 LAISSEZ LE BON TEMPS ROULER

There are notable football weekends in the year, both for the Pros and the Joes. In college, it is the rivalry weeks, usually late in the season, and the CFB semi-finals. In the Pros, it is the last week or two of the regular season and, then the Wildcard and Divisional weekends. But nothing matches the conference championship games weekend nor the Super Bowl.

So, here we are at Conference Championship Sunday. The best four teams over the regular season are still standing and ready to play today. No outliers. It is really who should be playing today. When the "final four" are who they should be, that is a good thing, and so it is today. The national media is framing it as really old QB's versus young second year QB's. I am not sure that is fair, the coaching styles and defenses are every bit as important. Sean Payton has a lot more experience than Sean McVay, while Bill Belichick and Andy Reid are a lot closer (with Bill Bel having the edge historically).

Let's see what is on tap:

First up is Rams at Saints. They are the two best teams in the NFC, and New Orleans deserves the home site via a head to head earlier win. While most focus on the head to head Brees versus Goff passing matchup, I think it comes down to the running game. If the dual headed Rams attack of Gurley and C.J. Anderson get untracked, and the Rams outstanding O-Line run blocking might provide that, it could be a long day for the Saints in their home Superdome.

But the Rams have enough defensive line attack and pass rush to neutralize the incredible Drew Brees and make him throw into a very competent Rams secondary. It is really a great matchup. I have no idea who wins this, and would not want

to bet real money on it.

Second game is Pats at Chefs. While, as noted above, the coaching history favors Bill Bel by a mile, Mahomes is a more accurate and mobile Brett Favre freak, and Reid is truly a great coach. The Pats, still, are as healthy as they have been all season, are playoff pressure battle tested, and have the likes of Brady, Edelman, Gronk and many other players. If they get beat, it will not be because they were too new for the stage. And let's note again the relative health of the roster, which was not the case a lot of the regular season. The defense is picking up too.

As much as the Bolts were kind of compelling underdogs, the two best possible teams are playing today in KC. Note that the game is in KC where it will be seriously cold, but not as bleak as earlier thought as to weather. But it is not in Foxborough, it is in the cacophonous Arrowhead. On the flip side, if there is ever a well coached and experienced team to walk into that, it is Bill Bel, Brady and the boys. Something has to give.

For the Chefs, they cook on with their redshirt frosh Pat Mahomes blowing up the NFL passing game. He is really a freak. And really good. Tyreek Hill is in a similar category, and they still have a running game and Sammy Watkins on offense. Justin Houston and Eric Berry are back, apparently at full speed, which transforms the KC defense. Special teams seems to be a wash with both playing well. Also, remember, Belichick has a record of scheming for these kind of games. So, who wins? No clue! Chefs are home in the imposing Arrowhead, but if anybody can take them there, you would never bet against Bill Bel and Brady. I have no idea.

As we often do, I would like to notice a relevant sports story that is outside of the traditional games talk. Today, it involve a superb report by friend to this blog Adam Klasfeld at Couthouse News (he really is excellent, follow him). It involves NBA big man

Enes Kanter, and it is an ongoing story, but this is an absolutely great interview and report:

Sitting on the same sofa where he watched his teammates lose by a point the previous night in London, Turkish Knicks star Enes Kanter opened up about why he missed the big game – a story he wants to share with Sen. Lindsey Graham.

“First, I would talk to him about the issues in Turkey and then, just meet him and talk about what’s going on, talk about my experiences and share my own personal stories,” Kanter said in an extensive interview on Friday from the lounge of his apartment building.

With their star center an ocean away, the Knicks squandered a one-point lead at the buzzer to the Washington Wizards at a matchup in London on Thursday night. Kanter skipped the game after the Turkish government put out a red notice and sought his extradition and prosecution.

“I put on my jersey because I still wanted to feel like I’m part of the team,” the 6-foot-11 basketball player recounted, arriving for the interview in a Knicks shirt.

Read the whole thing. And then think about how Trump, and his closely held administration, relentlessly sucks up to the tyranny and authoritarianism of Erdogan. Sports really intersects life more often than people think, but this is a blaring example.

Okay, that is it for Championship Sunday. So, laissez le bon temps rouler. Music by BB King. Roll it baby.