

# TRASH TALK - WEEK 15

I started on several versions of Trash Talk only in order to make it all less political. Trash will not always be non-political, but I will try. Kind of.

So, Eagles cannot play with the Ravens today. Maybe next year, but not today. Who cares about the Browns and Bills? The Cheese will be playing Da Bears is the "Coldest Game In Chicago History". Supposedly. Cheese is good cold, Bears hibernate. Jaguars/Texans is pretty much a who cares thing, much like Browns and Bills. Sorry Houstonian friends! But it is what it is.

Colts at Vikes may, curiously, be worth paying attention to. Colts have done better lately, but still are effectively the JV squad without Andrew Luck. Vikes are exactly the Colts, but with a better defense and no Luck. Exciting!

Steelers will beat the Bengals from all rights and appearances. Wish Scribe would still come around to chat about such things. Also, think Pittsburgh is a team that is scarily coming together late in the season, and needs to be paid heed to.

Saints and Cardinals are playing in the "who gives a flying fuck bowl". 49ers and Falcons are too, but the Dirty Birds think they are contenders. So did Marlon Brando.

The best game, hands down, this week is Patriots at Broncos. If you follow Pats and Donks beat writers, and I do, there has been a TON written about this game. All brilliant of course, from both sides. I am not so brilliant, but, having seen them in action, not sure how Donks can score enough points to overcome the Pats worst. But TB12 and Bill Bell are NOT so good in Mile High. So, I have no confidence in my pick. If I had to bet real money, it would still be on Brady and Bill Bell. Sorry about that.

If the Raiders cannot beat the Chargers in their once and (maybe not) future home, then the

Rayduhs are pretenders. I think the Silver and Black are, kind of, for real. Enough that they will not lose to the Bolts anyway.

Music today by BOC, with OD'd On Life Itself.

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## **SOS TRASH TALK, COLLEGE AND PRO**

So, having been completely bullied into this by our own beloved Roving Reporter, the one and only Rosalind, here we go.

Okay, the most "urgent" thing this weekend is the conference championships and seeding in the NCAA. Yes, the football playoff thing, the latest variation anyway, is supremely important. Or not. As much as the "final four" seem to be already identified, and as much as all the little Junior Nate Silver's on ESPN and Fox try to dilly dally differently, it all seems rather set, save for a truly unexpected upset, and the Pac-12 seems the only real shot at that.

Starts tonight with Washington versus CU. A while back I was a graduate student at Boulder. They could barely beat Drake, much less a college with a real football team. I loved CU games, they were all in the daytime, which was new to me coming from ASU, and they had copious liquor on sale in the stadium, also new to me. Their team was shit. Literally lost to Drake. Who subsequently disbanded their football team, as I recall, because it was horrible. The football games were a riot at Folsom Field, even if the Buffs always lost.

Fast forward to where we are tonight. Washington and CU are tied at 7 in the second quarter. I buy a tough Husky win, but we shall see.

And, onward we go to the other conference championship games, to the extent they matter

when the decision is in the hands of experts like – wait a minute WHAT THE HELL – genuine war criminals like Condi Rice. And, no, the current Trump fondness for other genuine war criminals like Henry Kissinger does not help my mood at being reminded of Condi Rice.

Okay, sorry, Washington is now clobbering Colorado, and I am guilty of having been watching that instead of cartaging the Trash.

So, in the “other”, bowl games past the PAC, which appears over, here are some predictions and results:

Western Michigan joined Alabama as the only notable undefeated team in college football. Listen, WMU may not be the Crimson Tide, but don’t sleep on what they have done this year, it is a great story.

In the Bedlam game, Oklahoma State and the Boomer Sooners are both 9-2 and on a bit of a roll. Oklahoma looks to be the better bet, but it is hard to bet on a Bob Stoops team when anything is on the line. Don’t feel good, but will take the Cowboys in an upset.

Baylor versus West Virginia...seriously, who cares? Actually, I do. Because of the jackass perfidy of Art Briles and Ken Starr, screw Baylor. That supposedly religious institution can rot for what they have done over many years.

Florida v. Alabama is...sorry Jim White...as big a mismatch as it looks like. Love to be wrong on that one!! Hard to see how Virginia Tech can knock off Clemson, and I do not think they will, but that seems to be the only possible upset in Saturday’s games. Wisconsin at Penn State is also nowhere near clear, but likely does not matter for the playoff grouping. The totally amazing thing is that neither Ohio State nor Harbaugh’s Khaki whiners are in the actual B1G championship game, in spite of both inveterate historical Rose Bowl game losers dominating the inane discussion on ESPN in the last week.

So, it is over and the Huskies of Washington

have dispatched the surprisingly pesky and bullish Buffaloes of Colorado. Saturday ought be great!

In the Pros: Gronk is down. That is a HUGE deal for the Pats. Maybe not Brady gone level, but close. Gronk, in games and situations when it counts, is THE go to, cannot be dealt with guy, for Tom Brady and the Patriots. Martellus Bennett will be there, but is far from perfectly healthy too. The Pats, along with the Rayduhs, are still the class of the AFC. Pittsburgh can still be scary in the playoffs, but they really do not seem to be themselves this year. Injuries suck when they overcome good teams.

In the NFC, I made a joke yesterday to Marcy that the Packers were coming for the Kittehs. It was taken more seriously than I intended, but that may be an indication of how unaccustomed the Lions are to being in the lead. I actually have always kind of liked Fatty Matty Stafford, and he is better than you think, but he is not Aaron Rodgers. The NFC Norske is, along with the NFC East, the fascinating division to watch down the stretch. Seattle may challenge for the actual Championship berth in the Super Bowl, but until then, there is a great battle going on in the East and Norske. And do NOT sleep on Lemon Sucking Face Eli Manning, he and the Gents are quietly having one of those kind of years.

In the AFC pros, the Chefs at the Dirty Birds ought be interesting. In an actual playoff game, I'd be inclined to take the Chefs to cook, but this weekend and through end of the regular season, I'll take the Falcons.

Lions at Saints, Gents at Stillers, Bucs at Bolts are all you could hope for. I'll take the Kittehs (but am NOT sure about this, the Second Line is strong in NOLA), Stillers and Bolts respectively. No, I do not think the Pats will have an issue with the Rams, even without Gronk, nor do I think the Raiders will have a problem with the Bills in the Black Hole.

Welp, that is it for this weekend's Trash. Nico

Rosberg SHOCKED THE WORLD by announcing his retirement from F1 Circus so quickly after his Drivers' Championship for Mercedes. Honestly, I was almost as stunned as everybody else. Kind of. But also remember Nico's father, Kiki, obtusely mentioned the possibility before the Abu Dhabi finale. Either way, it is what it is and Nico looks comfortably retired. I say put Alonso in the other Mercedes so that a truly great driver can eat Lewis Hamilton's whiny ass. Verstappen would work too, but, really, Alonso is still the best driver in the Circus, and deserves to go out with equipment as good as he is. Music by Aerosmith, Get Your Wings on.

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## POST TURKEY TRASH TALK

Welp, I am still wearing sweat pants because I am not sure any other pants fit again yet. Hope you all had a lot of good food, fun and family over the last few days too. So, how about some abbreviated Trash to round out the weekend?

First on the agenda, the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix from the stunningly beautiful Yas Marina Circuit. The race has been in the can for about three hours now, but holy crap, what a race! Hamilton won, with Nico Rosberg finishing second, thus assuring Rosberg the Driver's Championship for 2016. But what a race! Verstappen made another wild and incredible charge from the back of the pack all the way up to P3, before Sebastian Vettel made his own incredible and electrifying charge to overtake Verstappen and nearly catch up Rosberg. Hamilton was a jerk and intentionally drove slow in front hoping to screw his teammate Rosberg into getting passed by Vettel and Verstappen, which then would have given the championship to Hamilton. The racing and intrigue were edge of your seat thrilling the whole race. What a

finish to the F1 season.

The Buckeyes beat Michigan in overtime yesterday in a hell of a game. Harbaugh may be right that his team got jobbed by the refs. USC easily beat Notre Dame, and may truly be one of the four best teams in the country right now, though they will never make the playoff series. Colorado beat Utah, and will play Washington for the Pac-12 championship. That should be a fun game. The SEC championship will pit Jim White's improbable Gators against the goliath that is Alabama. Good luck Gators!

In the NFL, we have already been through the Thanksgiving Day slate so we will move on to the games left on the schedule. Cardinals are at the Falcons in an early game that merits watching. I think the Cards are dead, we shall see. Bolts at Texans could be interesting. Bolts are a little flaky, but so are the Texans, could be a great game. Patriots are at the Jets. Hard to see anything but a Pats win, but Brady and Gronk are both banged up, so you never know. The two night games are the really decent ones. SNF has the Chiefs at the Broncos, both sporting 7-3 records. Now THAT is a game to look forward to. MNF has the Packers at the Eagles. Neither team tearing it up right now, but the game seems like an even matchup where anything could happen, and the two QB's are worth watching.

So, that is it for today's games. Enjoy the rest of the weekend. Time for some leftover pie!

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## GRATITUDE

Helping my mom move out of her apartment made me grateful for far more than just turkey this year.

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# GIVING THANKS AND OTHER THANKSGIVING TRASH

Happy Thanksgiving denizens of the Wheelhouse. This is, by my groggy count, our tenth together as the Emptywheel Blog. The first five were at Firedoglake, and the last five here as a standalone. All of the contributors here – Marcy, bmaz, Rayne, Jim White, Ed “Masaccio” Walker, and our special assignment Roving Reporter Rosalind – have been around each other for even longer than that, in one status or another, going back to The Next Hurrah. It has been a long and wonderful, if not sometimes strange, trip. And it continues to be so daily. For that, we give thanks to you. Some of you have been around with us since The Next Hurrah, many are newer. You are all valued, and thank you for reading, joining us and sharing your thoughts.

Usually there is a big food post on Thanksgiving, but for extraneous travel reasons, I am not sure there will be this year. In that vein here is some food talk to make sure there is space here in this post to discuss at length what we are all gorging on. Mrs. bmaz HATES cooking traditional Thanksgiving dinners with all the fixins etc. She is Italian by descent, and insists on making giant pots of homemade spaghetti with meatballs and sausage. It is very good, but I very much miss the traditional meal. Daughter of bmaz is cooking a blueberry pie though, so we still have that going for us. What are you all up to as to food and cooking today?

Then there is football. Thanksgiving NFL is a tradition dating back to the mid 1930's, although the TV tradition of it all really grew in the 1960's. And grow it has done. There are three full games on the tube today, and, for

once, all teams participating have winning records and are in playoff contention. Now THAT is a change for the better!

First up on the docket is Minnesota versus Detroit. Detroit always plays on Thanksgiving, and for so many years that is why Thanksgiving Day games sucked. But Detroit is good this year. Both the Lions and the Vikes are 6-4 and, given how bad the Packers have been this year, this game is for sole possession of first place in the NFC North. The Vikings have a clearly better defense, but the Lions are far more prolific on offense, and have been playing as a team much better than Minnesota of late (horrible offensive line play is killing Sam Bradford). I'll take the Kittens at home.

Next up is Washington at Dallas. Kirk Cousins is on a roll again, and the Skins are really playing decent football. But the Cowboys at 9-1 have the best record in the NFL and are clicking on all cylinders. Dak Prescott is even opening up downfield a little, which was not the case early in the year. Ezekiel Elliott is playing like the second coming of Emmitt Smith and all the receivers, not just Dez Bryant, are getting in on the action. But as decent as they have been, the Dallas defense is neither great nor particularly deep. The question is whether Cousins and the Skins can outscore the Boys. I don't think so in Dallas.

Last game is Pittsburgh at Indianapolis. The QB matchup you've been waiting for: Big Ben Roethlisberger versus Scott Tolzien. Yeah, Andrew Luck is out with a concussion. That spells disaster to a Colts team that would already be a home underdog even with Luck. Both teams are 5-5, but one of them won't be after today!

So, there you have it folks. Good times and good eats today. Dessert today is some Savoy Truffle from the Lads from Liverpool.



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# NFL WEEK 11

Week 11 of the National Goodell League is upon us. Once again there was little of interest in the student athlete part of football, but I will summarize briefly.

In the NCAA, Houston unceremoniously dumped the once darling of big conference outsiders, Louisville, and did so before Saturday. So, that is over. The always mighty regular season chumps, Ohio State, eked out a win over the unusually lowly Michigan State Spartans.

No, Michigan did not look that good in holding serve against Indiana, but hold they did. Next week's meeting with OSU will now be portrayed as the most epic thing in the now Trumpian world. It is not. Colorado has quietly had a very good season, especially if you know Buffalo football (I do). Penn State and Oklahoma (I miss Freepatriot) are also showing some mettle. And, still, I wonder if USC may not, by playoff time be the team that, but for their early record, ought be there. Sam Darnold's emergence has put the Trojans on a different plane. After next week, heading into conference championships, I will really start to care.

In the NFL: Panthers topped the Saints on TNF; didn't think that would happen. Bills and Bengals may be a game to watch, Wagon Circlers have early lead. Brownies aint gonna beat the Stillers, even in wounded state Pittsburgh is. Ravens at Cowboys will be interesting in that Dak Prescott is newly and duly anointed as THE QB for Dallas. But Flacco has a SB ring and has been called out. Could be trouble for the Boys. No, the Eagles and their rook QB are not going to beat the Squawks in Seattle. Squaws are getting dangerous about now. Fish at Rams? Please.

Packers at Skins will be a truly telling game. For all the love of Rodgers, the Pack are in

disarray and nobody EVER questioned Favre's desire, heart and team camaraderie. Never. Mr. Olivia Munn Discount Doublecheck has a thing on his hands, and I am not so sure the Skins are not a better team right now. That will be fun. Texans at Raiders on MNF might be really fun. Gotta pick the Raiders here, but the Texans are better than you think, and if Osweiler ever starts clicking, they could be really scary. I really do look forward to this MNF game, for once.

Music this week by Pink Floyd wondering who the Trumpalos will be gunning for, and hoping it is not with nukes.

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## POST ELECTION TRASH TALK

Well here we are in the fifth day past the stunning election. That maybe was not that stunning at all. I don't necessarily have anything to add at this point. Success has many fathers, and failure is an orphan. Right now there are a lot of fathers jockeying for power around Trump, and a hell of a lot of orphans pointing fingers about around the Clinton campaign and Democratic party. Well, that should go on for a while I guess.

But enough of that rot, let's take a look at the sporting world:

As I write this, the Brazilian Grand Prix has just started on NBCSN. It is quite wet at Autodromo Interlagos, and the field started behind the safety car. Which is pitiful. F1 should either race in the wet (what they always used to do) or stop. Circling the track behind a safety car is asinine. Key race though for Lewis Hamilton, who is trying to close the championship gap to Nico Rosberg. One of these

two men will be champion, Nico if he wins today, and, likely the winner of Abu Dhabi, the last race of the season. next week, if not.

A bunch of top ten teams lost in college football, including Michigan to Iowa and Clemson to Pitt. Didn't see those coming, though Clemson has been flaky occasionally this year.

In the pros this week, the obvious marquee game is the Squawks at the Pats in Foxborough. Pats are healthy and even get fleet running back Dion Lewis back, though probably in a limited role. Russell Wilson still seems hobbled for running purposes, but is leading the offense well. Dallas at Pittsburgh should be interesting. Dak Prescott still pulling the trigger for the Boys, but is a question as to the Steelers. I expect Big Ben, but we shall see.

Denver at the Saints seems like it may be good. Saints are actually playing well lately, and they can score points. Can the Broncos and Trevor Siemian score enough to hang? After last week, it is suddenly a good question. Vikings at Skins is interesting to see only as to whether Minnesota can stop its slide. The knee jerk is to say the Vikings and their defense are the better team, but I'll take Washington. Packers at Titans has the same morbid curiosity – Green Bay has looked horrid, can they get a grip again? Tennessee is still not very good, but they *are* improving. We shall see.

Music today is Sunday Mornin Comin Down. The song was really penned by Kris Kristofferson, but the Man in Black version by John Cash seemed more appropriate.

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## THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT

# TRASH TALK

Been in a rather heated matter all week, and Marcy has been traveling. Bottom line is, blogging has been thin here. Sorry about that. And this post will be only a band-aid, and I apologize about that as well. Problem is, while I was off heatedly litigating things, a friend eventually, who started out as judge who always treated me well while he was the Presiding Criminal Judge in Maricopa County....has died. This was one hell of a man.

As to college, Texas A+M versus Alabama.

Pros, Pack killed the Bears, and only amplified in the process the problems with Aaron Rodgers and the entire Cheese team. Sad!

In other NFL news, There are a lot of good games, but few great ones. And Roger Goodell and the NFL are losing ratings because the are craven pieces of unattractive shit dominating the news. Irrespective of the superlative play of the NFLPA players. Goodell needs to look in the mirror for "what's wrong" with the league he incompetently leads.

Frankly, screw the @NFL, baseball has some real and compelling excitement. The long suffering Cleveland Indians already have punched their ticket to the World Series. The battle between the Cubbies and Dodgers looks to be a League Championship Series for the ages. I grew up a Dodgers fan, but am firmly in the Cubs side now. Hey, if you have ever been to Spring Training in Phoenix, you KNOW the Cubbies rule. Let it so be this year in the NLCS.

Then there is the US Grand Prix. You'd think I would be all over this. And, yet, I never really have been. Austin is a great city, but COTA is a shitbag track, and as has been case for many decades, the US attempt at Formula One is total shit. Hey, they even tried it during the hottest part of the Phoenix heat once. Because THAT was a brilliant idea for "resurrecting" F1 in the United States. The Circus teeters between its

old greatness and a Donald Trumpian like death spiral shitshow.

That is Trash. Love it or leave it.

**UPDATE:** A few quick words: A lot has been made of the Josh Brown mess with Goodell and the NFL this week. Oh, my, even the NFL owners are upset!!

Yeah, Jesus Fucking H. Christ, it is oh so predictable that the "Billionaire" asshole "owners" would get "upset" when their precious profits are on the line. There is nothing, and I mean NOTHING, new on the line between the NFL and reality on the Josh Brown case that was not there geometrically as to the Ray Rice case. Roger Goodell and the NFL fucked up worse than a scumbag slimy Donald Trump Gropalo pick up artist in a classy bar.

When I say "mess", I am being kind. How the NFL and NY Giants Security Offices operated in the Josh Brown case bears no, that is NO, relation to what I have seen out of professional professional pros sports security offices, including those of the NFL, over decades of years. Hey, it has been a few years, "maybe" they all became completely incompetent and ineffectual in that time. Draw your own conclusions, but I will not bet on that one.

Goodell and the NFL perpetuated as completed, falsely litigated, and unmitigated fraud on the world public with the idiotic "Deflategate" case, that did not even track basic physics, as can be imagined.

But, now, you should totally believe the NFL and the Giants' John Mara that "Golly we never could have known that there was domestic violence here in the home of domestic violence and, yes, there is absolutely no difference between a white pasty ass kicker and a black running back."

This is a pile of shit schticht that makes Captain Renault in Casablanca look credible. But, then again, that is Roger Goodell's NFL, isn't it?

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# WEEK FIVE NFL TRASH TALK: THE RETURN OF BRADY

It may not be the biggest game of week five, but all eyes will be on Tom Brady and his return from the idiotic, dishonest and petulant suspension manufactured by Roger Goodell and the NFL. That is going to be the story.

What can we expect? I think I'll bet on Brady being Brady, especially with the Pats also getting Gronk and Rob Nincovich back. In fairness, Gronk suited up and played a few snaps last week as a test drive, but this will be his first real game back from hamstring recovery time out. Is there some analogue? Yes, there is! Ben Roethlisberger came back from a suspension against the same Cleveland Browns in 2010:

The only real parallel for Brady is two-time Super Bowl winner Ben Roethlisberger and his four-game suspension in 2010 for violating the league's personal conduct policy.

The Steelers went 3-1 in his absence. They won their first three games without Roethlisberger, but lost the fourth at home. His first game back came against the Browns. (How's that for a parallel?)

Roethlisberger said during his suspension he worked with his private coach, George Whitfield, four days a week. In the week leading up to the game, the Steelers extended individual drills in practice by 30 minutes to give Roethlisberger more work with his receivers.

Then came his season debut, a Week 6 game against the Browns (because of a

bye the previous week). On his opening drive, Roethlisberger threw an interception to Joe Haden inside the red zone.

"I just got a little antsy," Roethlisberger admitted after the game. "The ball was coming out what we call 'hot,' coming out high and strong."

But he settled down after the first drive, and completed 16 of 27 passes for 257 yards, three touchdowns, and an interception as the Steelers rolled to a 28-10 win.

The Steelers went on to finish the 2010 season with a 12-4 record, and Roethlisberger led them to an appearance in the Super Bowl.

I think Pats fans would be fine tracking that parallel.

In other games, on Thursday night the Cardinals rebounded with a solid win over the hapless 49ers, and look to have Carson Palmer back next week against the Jets on the Monday Night Football game. Hopefully the Cards have righted their leaky ship. We'll see.

The Falcons at Broncos could be a really good game. The Dirty Birds are flying high so far this year with Matt Ryan and Julio Jones. Last week, Ryan threw for over 500 yards, and Jones hauled in 300 yards worth of that. But this is the Broncos defense, not the suddenly porous Panthers, and the game is in Mile High. The really interesting thing here is that Denver is starting rookie Paxton Lynch even though Trevor Siemian is on the active roster. Be interesting to see if Siemian ever gets his job back.

The 3-1 Texans visiting the 4-0 Vikings is also a great matchup. The Texans are not flashy, but have been surprisingly solid on both sides of the ball so far. The Vikes all world on defense and surprisingly effective with Sam Bradford at

QB. Houston is a decent team, and Brock Osweiler will only get better as he settles into his job, but hard to see the Vikes not moving to 5-0. Have to admit, the Bills at Rams doesn't sound like a great game, but it may really be! Jets don't look like their bleak road is going to get any easier as they are visiting Big Ben and the Steelers, who are suddenly clicking on all cylinders. Then there is the Giants at Lambeau to see the Packers for the SNF game. Should be an easy call, but the Cheese have had some Swiss like holes in them, and are only 2-1 coming off an early bye. Pack are favored by 7, but this game worries me for Pack. Going to be hard to watch the debate with the Packers on the TV.

Okay, with all the Trumpian excitement, it is a short Trash Talk week, but off we go! Today's music is an awesome slow burn up to crescendo with I Ain't Got Nothing But The Blues by the great Joe Williams. It starts off slow, but watch out.

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## **THE TREES HAVE FALLEN AND THE STATE OF NFL LABOR**

As the NFL prepares for the return of Tom Brady, the issue of labor relation in the league still roil from the decision in #Deflategate.