

EMPTYWHEEL'S PRO FOOTBALL TURKEY DAY TRASH TALK

Well, here it is Turkey Day time and there is a big day of football scheduled to go with the bird and fixins. First off, all of us here, me. Marcy, Jim, Rayne and Roving Reporter Rosalind are thankful for your willingness to join us, help us work through difficult issues and support our work. Thank you. Okay, turkey trash talking time!

First game out of the chute is the Pack '0 Cheese at the Kitties in Detroit. Marcy wants me to talk about how Matt Flynn isn't worth squat except for in games like this and that he has gotten rich off of just a couple of them. Nope, not gonna do it; won't jinx Flynn like that. I WANT to say the Packers have a great chance of winning this game, but I can't. Lions are better at QB, at least as good at RB with Reggie Bush and have Megatron. Oh, and a killer (sometimes more than figuratively) defensive line. If Aaron Rodgers were back, it is a whole different story, but he is not. The one weakness of Detroit is the secondary; if Flynn can get some time, he may make some hay there. Still, unless Matt Flynn pulls another miracle out of his butt, edge to the Lions.

Second game is Raiders at Cowboys. This is just L-tryptophan time filler. Seriously, the Raiders suck. They were almost starting to gel with Terrelle Pryor, he of the Sweater-vest criminal Ohio State fame, at QB, but he is down and Matt McGloin is up. McGloin has actually not been horrible so far, but Dallas at home for Thanksgiving day is a tall order. Tony Romo and Dez Bryant are starting to click. Heck, there has even been a Demarco Murray sitting the last couple of weeks. Dallas needs a win, because the Eagles are also gelling behind Nick Foles and the NFC East is down to those two. How bout them Cowboys!

The night game is on NBC this year, not NFL Network like it was for so long, and features the Steelers at the Defending Champ Ravens. This could be a pretty decent game. Both teams a little spotty this year, but coming together in the second half of the season, especially the Stillers. Both teams are 5-6 and trail the slumping Bengals in the AFC North. The winner of this game has a shot at the playoff; the loser is in trouble. I think Big Ben is just playing better than Flacco right now and that is the difference. But the home field will help the Ravens. A pick em, with a slight edge to the Stillers for an upset in the Ravens home nest.

As you can tell, the tunes this time are supplied by the great John Cash. A superb version of Ghost Riders in the Sky. And here is an absolutely fantastic long form article by Roseanne Cash on her and her father. It is really wonderful, comes with beautiful pictures and is a highly recommended read.

Happy Thanksgiving folks!

THE QUARTERBACK WITH THE GOLDEN GUN TRASH TALK

For all the yammering about nuclear options and assassination anniversaries and other wild news, this weekend there is only one big bang. The big guns are being positioned on the battlefield.

Brady v. Manning. Manning v. Brady. Mano a mano. Bieber versus Sourface. The battle of the soon to be middle age bulges. Broncos and Pats at the Big Razor in Foxboro. Or is it Foxborough? I am liable to use either one, so watch out. Same joint.

But let's not dawdle, this is all about The Man

With The Golden Gun; i.e. Peyton Manning. Yes yes, I know some lady who won't send me a rhubarb pie will be along to talk about how Tom Brady is a pron god and Peyton is a sucky face, and all, but here in this post Peyton, and his golden gun, rulz! This careful salting of trash talk aside, the Donkos could easily get Lectric Shaved in the Big Razor. It really is maybe the most compelling game on the NFL season to date.

Despite a bump on the noggin triggering NFL concussion protocols, Wes Welker looks determined to try to give Bill Belichick hell. Ad who can blame him for that? Donks TE Julius Thomas is banged up and "questionable" with a knee strain. But that still leaves Peyton and his Golden Gun with Wes Welker, Eric Decker and Demaryius Thomas. Not to mention Knowshon Moreno. Sorry, that beats the Pats Gronk and Riddler. Even if he is healthy, Aqib Talib can't cover all the Bronco's threats, ergo advantage Donks. On defense, NEVER count out a Belichick designed scheme; however, on talent the matchup is again not in the Pat's favor. But Denver is starting to gel with Von Miller starting to settle back in to an already competent group. Bottom line is, the facts favor Denver all the way here, but it is in Foxboro and Pats have been inconsistent lately. Precisely when Belichick and Brady strike. So, it is a pick em, and worthy of all the build up.

Other pro jobs worth working are Cowboys at Gents. Shockingly, as lemon faced sucky as Eli and the Giants have been, if they beat the 'Boys, they will pull even with Philadelphia and Dallas in the loss column (hey, Skins ain't gonna beat the Niners). That is just stupid enough to mean it WILL happen, Eli and the Giants make a move. I'll be hoping for a third win in a row for the Bucs against the Lions, but won't hold my breath on that. Jets at Ravens could be a bruiser. Lastly, the real barnburner of the week may be Colts at the Cards in the Big Toaster. Colts are 7-3, but seemingly not invincible lately, and the Cards 6-4, but very tough at home. This really has the makings of a

superb game. My better instincts say Colts, but gonna go with the heart here and take Spidey Fitzgerald and the Cards.

Turns out that not ALL football this weekend involves Manning and Brady. No, there are student athletes playing ball as well. BCS busters Northern Illinois and University of Central Florida have both already won solidly. Which is very cool. A lot of people will say Texas A+M at LSU in baton rouge is the big game. They may be right. Johnny Football is playing for the Heisman, and has a chip on his shoulder. He will play like it and down the Tigers in a huge win.

But the biggest game in these here parts is the ASU Sun Devils versus the UCLA Bruins in the Rose Bowl Stadium in Pasadena. Huge game, and I thought about going. Probably should have done so. Both teams are 8-2, but the Devils have only one conference loss so far to the Bruins' two. Simple enough: Devils win, they almost certainly go to the Pac-12 conference championship game, lose and they almost certainly do not. Big stakes. ASU is hard to figure out this year; sometimes they look really good, sometimes not so much and only lucky. Hard to read. Honestly, they outplayed Notre Dame, and should have won that game and been 9-1 now. but they did not. Still not sure they are that good though. This game will tell whether they belong or not.

There you have it. Roll this joint people.

AUSTIN CITY LIMITS TRASH TALK

The eyes of Texas, and the world, are on Austin this weekend. No, it is not for the big resurgence of Mack Brown and whether he and the Whorens can keep it up against those high flying

Cowboys from Oklahoma State. No, it is because it is United States Grand Prix week!

In the inaugural run last year at the Circuit of the Americas, I was pretty cautious about the sufficiency of both the course, and facility as a whole. I was clearly wrong, as the race, and reviews from all I know in the traveling circus that is F1 were spectacular. And, really, what is not to love about the music, food and scene in Austin itself? A one of a kind, unique American gem. So, the circus returns for year two. It is the penultimate race is a disappointingly boring season (at least in the second half of the year).

Here is a shocker, Vettel, Webber and the Red Bulls were fast at practice, with Rosberg, Hamilton and Lotus's Heikki Kovalainen trailing. One very huge note is that Kimi Raikkonen is absent, having undergone surgery in France on a long standing back problem (undoubtedly a problem that was speeded up by Kimi's salary dispute with the team he is leaving in the off season. to return to Ferrari). Qualifying today should be interesting. Alonso, Massa and the Ferraris are back in mid pack if practice is any indication.

So, let's get to some football. The Mack Brown line above was not a total crack, OSU and Texas will square off today, also in Austin. So, it really is quite a sports weekend for Austin, wish I was there. Hard not to think the Cowboys will roll the Whorens and put Brown back in the lurch, but I am going to predict an upset. Besides, how can you not root for Brown to hang on and keep the Longhorns mediocre? Other really interesting game is the Stanford Tree at the home of Tommy Trojan. USC has been MUCH improved since Lane Kiffin was bagged. Tempted to pick another upset here, but will stick with the Tree. Dawgs of Georgia at Auburn also could be interesting. Hard to believe Auburn is really as good as their record; Georgia will give a good test. In the late game, Oregon State visits the Sun Devils at Frank Kush Field. Devils should –

should – get by this, which would set up a HUGE game next weekend with UCLA.

As to the Pro Joes, the biggest buzz is the Chefs in Denver for some Mile High cooking. Sorry men in tall white toques, unlike your previous vanquished opponents, the Donks have a winning record and a real offense. hard to see how KC can score enough to beat Peyton and his ankles. Pats at Carolina should be more interesting. Cam Newton and the Panthers finally seem to be jelling and getting some consistency, and Carolina's defense is seriously tough nuts. Pats gonna get a third loss. Niners at Saints also notable. I rate it a pick-em, but if the Niners take another loss, they will be tied with the Cardinals (who ought to be able to take the Jags) and pretty hurting compared to Seattle. Surely Philly can get a home win, right? I know it has been a while, but Nick Foles is settling in and the Skins just seem feckless. Pack at Giants will depend entirely on whether or not GB can field a better QB than FB Jon Kuhn. Does not look good for the Cheese.

Off to the races we go, make some noise!

THE DOLPHIN CODE: NFL GANGSTA IN MIAMI

We are going to take a little detour in our weekly lighthearted football trash talk here at the Emptywheel Blog. I will return to the actual games at the end of this post, but for now I want to discuss a hideous and, hopefully, transformative moment in football – the abusive workplace environment to which the Miami Dolphins subjected Jonathan Martin.

As you may know by now, Jonathan Martin is the second year Miami Dolphins offensive tackle who has left the team because of harassment,

primarily by fellow offensive lineman Richie Incognito, but apparently by other teammates as well.

The official statement by Martin's lawyer, David Cornwell (a fantastic attorney by the way), gives a pretty fine synopsis of the situation:

Jonathan Martin's toughness is not at issue. Jonathan has started every game with the Miami Dolphins since he was drafted in 2012. At Stanford, he was the anchor for Jim Harbaugh's "smash mouth" brand of football and he protected Andrew Luck's blind side.

The issue is Jonathan's treatment by his teammates. Jonathan endured harassment that went far beyond the traditional locker room hazing. For the entire season-and-a-half that he was with the Dolphins, he attempted to befriend the same teammates who subjected him to the abuse with the hope that doing so would end the harassment. This is a textbook reaction of victims of bullying. Despite these efforts, the taunting continued. Beyond the well-publicized voice mail with its racial epithet, Jonathan endured a malicious physical attack on him by a teammate, and daily vulgar comments such as the quote at the bottom. These facts are not in dispute.

Eventually, Jonathan made a difficult choice. Despite his love for football, Jonathan left the Dolphins. Jonathan looks forward to getting back to playing football. In the meantime, he will cooperate fully with the NFL investigation.

Quote from teammate: "We are going to run train on your sister. . . . She loves me. I am going to f-k her without a condom and c- in her c-."

That was on top of the fact direct racial animus

evidencing epithets from Incognito to Martin were already known to be in play.

“Hey, wassup, you half n— piece of s—. I saw you on Twitter, you been training 10 weeks. [I want to] s— in your f—ing mouth. [I’m going to] slap your f—ing mouth. [I’m going to] slap your real mother across the face [laughter]. F—you, you’re still a rookie. I’ll kill you.”

This is beyond ugly conduct, and, frankly, beyond simple “harassment”. Worse, it appears that it was a pattern of conduct not only encouraged, but requested by Dolphins’ management. They ordered a code red on Jonathan Martin.

Jason Whitlock had a very provocative take on the effect of incarceration and thug culture in general at play, a take that rings all too, uncomfortably, true. Dave Zirin at The Nation has a fine take on what the “Bully Solidarity” of the Dolphins organization in the Martin matter means.

So, this hideous and intolerable conduct is legally actionable against Incognito (and the Dolphins via vicarious liability) by Jonathan Martin, right? Sure, anybody can sue anybody else, and Martin can certainly bring a civil complaint here. But the chances of success are far more tenuous than you likely think (and far more difficult than ESPN’s legal idiot, er expert, Lester Munson thinks).

The most common theory mentioned is workplace discrimination, presumably under a Title VII racial animus hostile work environment claim. But this statement of the elements, and discussion of a somewhat similar factual scenario in *Carpenter v. Con-Way Central Express, Inc.*, 481 F.3d 611 (8th Cir. 2007) displays the difficulty Martin faces on this theory:

To establish a Title VII race-based hostile work environment claim, a plaintiff must show (1) he is a member of a protected group, (2) he is subjected to unwelcome race-based harassment, (3) the harassment was because of his membership in the protected group, and (4) the harassment affected a term, condition, or privilege of his employment. *Singletary v. Mo. Dep't of Corr.*, 423 F.3d 886, 892 (8th Cir.2005). A hostile work environment "is permeated with discriminatory intimidation, ridicule, and insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the victim's employment and create an abusive working environment" as viewed objectively by a reasonable person. *Tademe v. Saint Cloud State Univ.*, 328 F.3d 982, 991 (8th Cir. 2003) (internal quotation omitted). "To be actionable, the conduct complained of must be extreme in nature and not merely rude or unpleasant." *Nitsche v. CEO of Osage Valley Elec. Coop.*, 446 F.3d 841, 846 (8th Cir.2006) (citations omitted). "Allegations of a few isolated or sporadic incidents will not suffice; rather, the plaintiff must demonstrate the alleged harassment was 'so intimidating, offensive, or hostile that it poisoned the work environment.'" *Id.* (quoting *Tuggle v. Mangan*, 348 F.3d 714, 720 (8th Cir.2003)).

Hardy's racial insults were not shown to be connected to Hardy's misloading of or placing garbage in Carpenter's trailer. Carpenter testified Hardy "was an instigator to everybody" who "would instigate problems" such as "do[ing] things . . . intentionally" to "piss a driver off" and then run down the dock telling everybody he had just done something to someone's trailer. J.A. 98. While Carpenter was a favorite target of Hardy's childish pranks, another

employee testified Hardy played a practical joke on somebody "about daily." J.A. 253. This evidence does not show objectively hostile conduct. See, e.g., *Singletary*, 423 F.3d at 892-93 (finding job environs where the plaintiff had second-hand knowledge his co-workers and some managers referred to him as a "nigger" and where his vehicle had been vandalized on several occasions not objectively severe and pervasive); *Bainbridge v. Loffredo Gardens, Inc.*, 378 F.3d 756, 759 (8th Cir. 2004) (finding racial remarks, made directly to plaintiff, once a month for two years by owner and operators, was insufficient to render the workplace objectively hostile).

That is pretty common law across the various circuits from what I can tell, is generally consistent with what I have seen in the past in the 9th Circuit, and should hold in the 11th Circuit which covers Florida. It certainly does not preclude such a claim by Martin, but shows the burden he will be up against. And keep in mind the environment in *Carpenter* was far more benign and less testosterone and violence oriented than an NFL workplace, and such facts matter in a relative consideration of the claim, and circumstances of alleged discrimination.

Another theory I have seen bandied about is intentional infliction of emotional distress, one would presume via a pendant state law claim. That too may be problematic. The elements of the intentional infliction of emotional distress cause of action in Florida are:

The wrongdoer's conduct was intentional or reckless;

The conduct was outrageous, that is, as to go beyond all bounds of decency, and to be regarded as odious and utterly intolerable in a civilized community;

The conduct caused emotional distress;
and

The emotional distress was severe.

And Florida appellate law, which would putatively control such a claim even in Federal Court, is fairly strict:

Johnson v. State Dept. of Health and Rehab. Svc's, 695 So.2d 927 (Fla. 2d DCA 1997)], quoting Dominguez v. Equitable Life Assurance Soc'y, 438 So.2d 58, 59 (Fla. 3d DCA 1983).

Only conduct, which is "so outrageous in character, and so extreme in degree, as to go beyond all possible bounds of decency, and to be regarded as atrocious, and utterly intolerable in a civilized community," meets the standard necessary to state a claim for IIED.

Clemente v. Horne, 707 So.2d 865, 867 (Fla. 3d DCA 1998), citing Restatement (Second) of Torts, § 46 cmt. D (1965).

"It is not enough that the intent is tortuous or criminal; it is not enough that the defendant intended to inflict emotional distress; and it is not enough if the conduct was characterized by malice or aggravation." Id. citing State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co. v. Novotny, 657 So.2d 1210, 1213 (Fla. 5th DCA 1995).

Claims based solely on allegations of verbal abuse are also generally legally insufficient. De La Campa v. Grifols America Inc., 819 So.2d 940 (Fla. 3d DCA 2002) citing Ponton v. Scarfone, 468 So.2d 1009 (Fla. 2d DCA 1985) (statements made to induce employee to join sexual liason did not establish IIED).

So, to make a long story somewhat shorter, and not delve too deeply into legal minutiae when there is not even yet a complaint to analyze,

the litigation chances of success are certainly far from clear cut. And the types of “hey, NFL boys will be boys” defenses were aptly shown in the “Bully Solidarity” piece by Zirin.

But the Dolphin code red run on Jonathan Martin is but a symptom of a larger problem, the disposable gladiator thug mentality showcased and lionized by the NFL. From the NFL, by far the most popular sport in America, it oozes into the fabric of society. And the NFL has already shown its craven, arrogant, scorched earth litigation tendencies by their despicable strategy in the CTE (chronic traumatic encephalopathy) case brought by former players who are increasingly shown to be decimated by the NFL lifestyle.

The NFL does not just “have” a problem, they “are” the problem. The NFL does not just condone the thug life, they encourage it and sell it for profit. The way the NFL, and the Dolphins, have responded to date to the Jonathan Martin case is deplorable. If they have an ounce of social righteousness and moral ethics, they will allow their “special investigator” Ted Wells to do a real investigation with an eye toward cleaning up the league. It is the least they can do.

But don’t hold your breath. As Whitlock says:

It’s now time for Roger Goodell to render a verdict on wardens Ireland and Philbin and Cell Block D leader Incognito. The world is so upside down that I half expect Goodell to suspend Martin for conduct detrimental to American idiocy.

Yep, that’s about right. Especially when it comes to Roger Goodell and the NFL.

Okay,
I
promis
ed
some
actual
trash
talk.
Away
we go.
In the
bigges



t game last night, the Stanford Tree blew up the Quacks from Oregon. The nerds of Stanford showed in the post game press conference as shown to the right. The Tree deserved the win, though it undoubtedly will keep the Pac out of the BCS Championship Game yet again. Seriously, I have no idea how anybody could rate the cheap undefeated record of Ohio State over the one loss Tree. The Pac is simply a lot better conference than the BIG now and, top to bottom, may well be better than the SEC. Baylor left a mark on the Sooners and the Vikings beat the hapless Redskins (how can Shanahan still have a job after this year?).

Saturday's best game is unquestionably LSU at the Tide in Tuscaloosa. Short of a run in with Johnny Football in the SEC Championship, this is the best shot for a loss by Bama. Sorry, not happening. ASU visits the Utes of Utah, who managed a home win against Stanford earlier in the year. The Devils are on a little roll; I am going out on a limb and predicting they take care of Utah.

For the pros on Sunday, Lions at Bears is the class of the bunch. Cutler and his groin are cleared to play. I am sure he will, but I would stick with Josh McCown were it me; Cutler is not 100% and the Man Named Suh will be chasing him. Eagles at the Pack is suddenly far more a close call without Aaron Rodgers, take the Iggles in an upset. Oakland ant the Giants ought to be a fair fight between teams that can't get out of their own way. If the Bengals beat the Ravens in

Baltimore, they may take control of the division for good. But the Bengals regressed in a loss to Miami last week, so it is a toss em. It would be tempting to take Cam Newton and the Panthers over the Niners – except the game is in San Francisco. Donkos should take care of the inconsistent Bolts.

Also, why the Lions will beat da Bears: After seeing what she did to Matthew Stafford, the Kittehs have signed Bridget the Cat at Defensive back.

Well, there you have it. Talk some trash people!

BIG CHEESE AND TUNDRA MITTEN AND SEMINOLE TRASH TALK

MOVED UP AND FEATURED BITCHEZZ!!! FOR THE
OBLITERATION OF TEH BEARZZ.

This ain't no party, This ain't no disco. This ain't no fooling around. We got some big ass state rivalries starting this weekend. Since the Red Sawx Nation has already dispatched all the pretenders in baseball, we are down to football and Grand Prix and, frankly, the F1 Circus is boring right now. Off to football we go!

In the college ranks, ASU has already put a licking on Washington State and USC edged out Oregon State. But the big games of the weekend are in state affairs. First up is the Wolverweenies at Sparty. Michigan is rated higher in the polls, barely, at 21 in the polls to Michigan State's 22. On paper, however, the Spartans have the better defense and rushing offense. They are a more consistent team and are at home, so Sparty is the pick here.

The other big in state matchup, and real game of

the week, is Florida State hosting Miami in Tallahassee. Both teams are in the top 10, numbers 3 and 7 respectively, and both undefeated. But Miami has shown itself to be a little hollow by barely pulling out a win against the very mediocre NC State Wolfpack. FSU has the out of this world freshman QB Jameis Winston, who is like a prototype sized version of Johnny Football. Also good receivers. The Seminoles are the clear pick here. Other games to watch include Nevada versus Fresno State in the late game on ESPNU. Tough rivalry game, but look out for Derek Carr and Fresno, the Bulldogs are pretty good.

In the pros, it is a pretty unexciting slate of games. The best is the MNF clash between the Bears and Packers. Cutler is out and the game is on the Frozen Tundra at Lambeau. Cheese all the way. Sunday night game of Colts at Texans might surprise. Houston has abandoned Matt Schaub in favor of hometown youth Case Keenum. Good move at this point, needed to be done. This game will tell if the Texans are truly dead or not, I think they could upset the Colts, but wouldn't bet real money on it. Ravens need a win against a tougher than you think Browns squad. They should get it. Steelers are in Foxborough. Will Scribe's boys take out the Beautiful Brady? Steelers seem to be righting the ship, but this is an awfully tall task. Don't think so. Plus the Pats got themselves a plug for the injured Vince Wilfork by picking up Isaac Sopoaga from the Eagles. Saints at Jets and Bolts at Skins could both be interesting. That's about it really.

The F1 circus has set up shop in Abu Dhabi. It is a beautiful circuit and a nothing race at this point. Vettel and Red Bull have already won everything. One interesting note, Felipe Massa has been consistently beating Alonso in everything lately. Kind of ugly end to a disappointing season for Ferrari, but good for Felipe, who is truly a nice and hard working guy.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER TRASH TALK

Okay, I admit it. I have let down the collective with terminally late Trash Talk. Was probing to see if Disco Bieber Brady showed up. Actually, I just had a hellish week, and when I finally had time to relax and have a beer last night, I just couldn't bring myself to write anything. Still a little slow this morning. But trash must be talked, so here is an abbreviated post in which to do so.

In an early college game of note, there was talk that Johnny Football may not be able to go today, but early in the 3rd he is already 20 of 27 for 242 yards and 3 TDs. Kid can flat out ball, and man is he a joy to watch. Most fun QB to watch since the 'Ole Gunslinger Favre. Texas Tech at the Sooners could be pretty interesting, as could UCLA at the Ducks. But UCLA has been exposed, and Autzen Stadium and the Quackers are very inhospitable; look for the Ducks to roll big. The most interesting game I see is South Carolina at the surprisingly solid Missouri Tigers. Mizzou often looks good early in the season, only to fall apart. Maybe not this year though, they seem to have even weathered the loss of star QB James Franklin. South Carolina is pretty solid, and their D-line should provide good pressure for Franklin's replacement, redshirt Freshman Maty Mauk. Going to jinx Mizzou and pick them for a home win to go to 8-0 on the season.

In the pros, there are several interesting games, but no great ones. Probably the best matchup is Dallas at Deetroit. Romo is hot lately, Kitties strike me as a better overall team; thus it is a pick-em. Giants at Iggles is interesting because someone has to win. Philly is 0 for the last 9 at home, and the Giants still looked like shit even though they beat the

Vikings last week. I'll take Philly with Mike Vick back. Jets and Bengals should also be interesting, and Don't think the Fish can swim in Foxborough. Skins may actually have a shot against the suddenly mortal Broncos. Ow, wait, it is at Mile High, so maybe not.

The world Series resumes today, with three games in a row in St. Louis. Much as I hate to say it, I think the Sox may be in trouble. The Cardinal's pitching just lines up way better the rest of the way, and not having the DH is a lot harder on Boston than it is St. Louis.

In other news, the guy who refused to shave until the Vikings won a Super Bowl has died with an extremely long beard.

GRONKS AND DONKS TRASH TALK BONANZA!

Been a huge week of activity, from the shutdown/default can down the road kicking, to new FISC apologia, to the stunning announcement of a new media venture. So, a lot of stuff, so to speak. Also, my retained palm tree trimmers think my palm trees are too unruly and nasty for their "talents". Say what you will, the last item is really troubling.

Anyhoo, I hear there are sports afoot this weekend. Let us start with the lead on the title of this post, the Gronk. The Gronk is back baybee! And that means we must celebrate the return of the Gronk Jesus. Since those nasty Patriots up and cut Baby Jesus. Brady has basically been pulling shit out of his ass with Julian Edelman and a cast of nobodies. Smurf Amendola still out and proving exactly how valuable Wes Welker really was (hey, even Giselle must want him back by now), but with Gronk back, maybe, just maybe, the Pats can

still take the Jets, Jets, Jets. I think they can make Rex suck on Gronk's toes!

Okay. On to the other NFL games and things of note. Apparently Adrian Foster of the hapless Houston Texans has decided NOW is the time to market his football career via an IPO stock offering. Gosh, I am no Goldman Scrotum Sacks level genius business expert, but maybe when your team sucks ass so bad you are turning to, effectively, your taxi squad quarterback, and the local fans think that is the only possible excitement in sight...maybe you are not an IPO genius. Just saying. And i say this with all love and due respect for our long time friend and matey, teh Gulf Coast Pirate. Arrrrrrr, don't but that there stock matey!

The Iggles will ride Nick Foles again with Michael Vick on the injury bench. Foles was down in the hated Old Pueblo of the Arizona Wildcats for 2.5 years, so I know him well. Kid has a great arm, and lots of natural talent. Never read off coverages so good, and is nowhere near the "mobile" quarterback Chip Kelly relishes. That said, he may well have NFL level talent, but as far as I have ever seen, it is as more of a classic drop back QB. We shall see. I actually think Matt Barkley is a better leader, but who knows what Kelly will do in Philly. If you ask me, Kelly's QB is not yet on the Eagles.

In memoriam, last rites must be given to Bad Eli and the Lost Gents of The Meadowlands. On a far happier note, HUGE congratulations to our good friend Pachacutec who was able to finally get married thanks to the rapidly un-bigoting of these here United States. I have never been more happy for a betrothed couple. Salute!

Unfortunately, the Giants will still suck this year; though there may be a wedding wedding gift from the Vikings if Adrian Peterson is not so pissed and charged up he rambles for 350 yards.

Oh yeah, Gronks at Jets is actually a game. I know the Mistress of the Distressed Song will be along to carp about how Pretty Tom and his band of Edelmans can not POSSIBLY beat Rex Toesuck

and the Jets, but I don't buy it. The Tom and Gronk Show is more fabulous. In other Big Mitten news, the Kittenhs should put the Bungles in the litter. Browns are a semi-real deal, but not in Lambeau. Bears and Skins are a pick em. Chefs look to have home cooking. Oh, yeah, about those Donkos in the title of this post. Peyton going back to Indianapolis. Irsay trying to get in Peyton's giant head. Who will win that? Um, think I will take Peyton's big head and the Donkos over Irsay's idiocy. Luck is a keeper, but not this time. Enjoy the Donkos (okay jackasses) in the Canyon music attached hereto.

In the Semi-Pro league, Florida State versus Clemson is by far the class of the offering. Game is prime time and in Clemson's Death Valley home. Still, I am hard pressed to not pick the Seminoles and their wonder child QB Jamels Winston in an upset. Really tough call; Tajh Boyd is pretty much the match, more experienced, and at home. I have bad misgivings about this, but have a hunch the 'Noles are on a roll. The Washington huskies are going to be the final straw for the ASU Sun Devils. Game is at Frank Kush Field, but i won't be there. Huskies are good; Sun Devils an anomaly. Pick em.

As I write and post this, it looks like the Cardinals are cleaning out the Bums, 6-0 in the 5th. for good in Busch Stadium. Bye bye Bums, that pissing in the DBack's pool was bad karma for you. Who couldda knowd? The Sawx are up 3-2, and have the last two games of the ALCS at home in Fenway. Still, the Tiger's pitching is a problem. Tigers are coming with Scherzer and Verlander in games 6 and 7. Bad ass stuff there. Sawx counter with Buchholz and Lackey respectively. Not the star glitz of the Tigers' pitching aces, but not bad at all. In Fenway, if the Sawx can't win one of the two, they don't deserve the pennant.

There you go. Let your hair down and trash this post with all your swerve and verve.

CONTINUING SHUTDOWN RESOLUTION SHAKEDOWN TRASH TALK

Whole lotta nothing going on in the nation's capitol. Guess that is not exactly news, but, still, it seems extra fubar currently. Ah well, what to do? Rock and roll baybee. And trash talk, of course. Seriously, as I look up at my TeeVee right this instant, Ralph Reed is on CNN blowing some perverted shit out of his ass. Really, Ralph Freaking Reed. It is just stupid out there. On MSNBC, Alec Baldwin looks like he is sitting in a Chicago steak/chop house yammering with some twit I don't immediately recognize. Oh, wait, it is Bill de Blasio, the soon to be chameleon new mayor of New York. Is he a Weatherman anarchist from the 60s or a neo-liberal from the present?? Who knows? Who cares? He will be far better than Mayor Bloombito, so teh New Yarkers are gonna have that going for them. Let's play games.

Gotta start with the pros this week. Lot to talk about, but first off I would like to not that right now, the 'Ole Geezer, Mr. Brett Favre, could play quarterback this Sunday better than what service the Bucs, Jags, Vikings and Giants at a minimum. And, arguably, maybe the Raiders, Bills, Cardinals and Steelers too. He is rested. And he is ready. And he is way more fun than the others. Bring back the FavRuh.

In case my lead has not exactly engrossed and hooked you, I guess we can talk about actual games. If we must. Okay. Here we go...I must admit I am strangely perplexed by weird games lately, as we are still early in the season and

the wheat has not yet completely separated from the shaft. Well, except for STRONG ARMED PEYTON MANNING AND THE DONKOS! While Bieber Brady is still looking for his next hairstyle, Happy Faced Peyton is rolling. As long as Peyton keeps a Jockey's Neck Like Bollocks, he could obliterate very sacred records this year. We shall see.

So, back to the offbeat games of interest. First up is Deetroit trying to shakedown the Brownies in the Dog Pound. Who are teh Kittenhs? Hard to tell, but they need Megatron to tell. And he is questionable (though I expect he suits up and plays, like the stud he is). But Cleveland has a sneaky good defense, and there is some momentum in mistake by the lake land. If Brandon Weedon can get the Brownies offense 28 points or more, they well could win. But you have to figure Matt Stafford and Reggie Bush can put up that.

Steelers at Jets, Jets, Jets is another goofy game. Steelers can't be as bad as they have shown so far, can they? Actually, maybe. And the Jets are a tougher D than some they have faced so far. This is a gut check game; if Big Ben and Stillers have any game at all, they will bring it. They might; but I am not betting on it. Cheese at Ravens is also interesting. League is sleeping on both right now, even though Baltimore is the defending Super Bowl champ and GB is, well still the Pack. Both seem still unsettled and adjusting to huge losses. Ravens lost by retirement and players moving on. Pack has lost by injury mostly except for Greg Jennings, who they let leave. Jennings ain't the problem, the injuries are. This is a pick em, whoever wants it more will win.

The super rejuvenated Saints, and man have Sean Payton and Rob Ryan turned that gig on a dime, roll into Foxborough to meet the Pats. Later in the year, with a little more gelling, Bill Bel, Major Tom and the Whoevers win this game at home. Not right now though, Saints and Drew Breeeezz got to much jazz. And on Sunday night, we got Skins at the 'Boys. Will take a heroic

effort from RG III to win this; I think Romo will cut the bad edge off of last week's disappointment.

In the student athlete category, seems like a somewhat quiet week. Guess the biggest interest is whether or not Mack Brown can pull a jackrabbit out of his ass, er hat, and upset Freepatriot's Boomer Sooners. If not, Mack may get knifed by the time that giant schooner can roll a circle. Game is in Austin though, so there is that. PolitiFact Check rates this: Orange Crushed!

ESPN and some other cackling birds are clucking about Mizzou at the Dawgs in Athens Georgia. Nuh uh. Aaron Murray and the Hounds got WAY too much for the Tigers. Florida at LSU may actually be the best real contest of the day. Gators starting to live a little now that Driskel the water pistol is down for the count. Still, the Tigers in Baton Rouge in a big night game; gotta take the Po Boy home cooking there. Also the 'Ole Ball coach and the Cocks are going to Sooo-eee-pigeeee land in Ar-kansas. The okies from Muskogee were not cool with those wheat stalks on the Kansas license plates, so they seceded and called it Our Kansas. Or, if Old McDonald spelled it, Arkansas. Or something. Am tempted to take Brett Bielema and the Hogs here. Just because. But I can't, South Carolina is just a better team. Fighting Journalists may have a tough time in Camp Randall Stadium with teh Badgers. Wouldbe brutal to lose two in a row after such promise, but Wisconsin is a decent team and is at home.

This weekend is the Japanese Grand Prix at Suzuka. Which used to be a penultimate and deciding race in the Circus schedule, but no longer. And no drama at this point, it is another Vettel and Red Bull year. Hard to be excited, I am, however, excited about next year and the new car specifications.

Also, baseball. Sadly, the Pirates got keelhailed by the Cardinals in the deciding game 5 of the Divisional Series and are out.

Hopefully the Dodgers claim the Bum status of old and win the NL. As to the AL, hard to pick between the Tigers and Boston. Both great teams, both a lot of fun and interesting. But gonna be a Detroit Breakdown, so.....Go Sawx!!

That is it folks. Shut it down baybee!

MCCAFFREY THE MILLENIALAB'S TRASH TALK

[This week's Trash is by an esteemed guest poster, McCaffrey]

W000FFF!!

Hi there fine humans that inhabit and visit this here blog! My name is McCaffrey, and I allow Mr. and Mrs. Wheel to live with me in my house. Now, much like the grand Norma Desmond, I have always been "ready for my closeup". And, baybee it came today! Like butter, I am on a roll.

Yes, you probably have seen by now the feature story on meeeee that Newsweek Magazine came out with today. Yes yes, there was also mention of my mom, Emptywheel, but I was the star of the show. All teh bitchezz are gonna want to date meeeee! Also, I LOVE jerky and pizza.

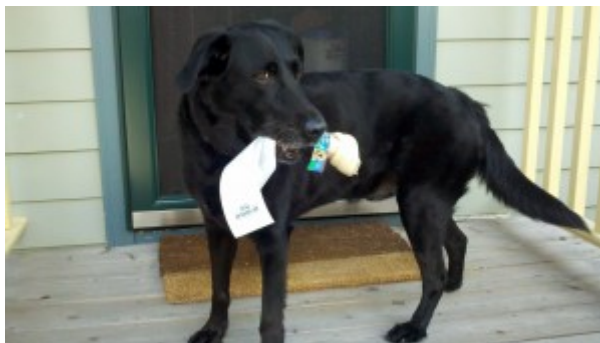
Well, enough about me, I hear we are supposed to talk trash here. I love talking trash. Even more, I love rummaging through trash. Oh, wait, I am getting word that is a different kind of trash. Jeez, all these rulz. Alright, let's see what is up then.

One of my favorite people in the world is my lawyer, bmaz (he gives me jerky! WOOF!), has his Sun Devils down in Texass at the Jerry Dome to play the Blighted Irish. But, no, that is not the biggest game. The biggest student athlete

game is the Fighting Journalists of Northwestern, versus those pernicious Sweaterests from THE Ohio State University. This is the biggest game in Evanston in a very long time and I think even the ESPN Game Day crew is there. OSU is a favorite by 7 points on the current line. I am pulling for the Journalists, but wouldn't bet real money on them.

The other tilt of note is the aforementioned ASU Sun Devils and Notre Dame. Number 22 ranked ASU is 4-1, with their only loss to Stanford on the road. The Devils had an abysmal first half, but outplayed the Tree in the second half. Still got whacked. Hard to tell if ASU is for real or just lucky (and man were they lucky against Wisconsin). The Irish have two losses and fell out of the top 25. Still, their losses were to Michigan and Oklahoma, both nationally ranked teams. I have no idea what will happen in this game, but it should be a great one to watch. Also interesting is the late night Saturday Pac-12 conference matchup of Washington and Stanford. The Huskies have a nice team this year under Steve Sarkisian (who may well bolt next season for his old haunts at USC), but they don't have enough to overcome the Tree.

In the Pros, we have already seen the Browns move to 3-2 with a win over the Bills on Thursday night. But they lost their sparkplug Brian Hoyer for the year to an ACL injury. Brandon Weeden, who had lost the starting job to Hoyer will have to lead them now. He did well against the Bills though. Game of the weekend has to be the Lions at Lambeau to meet the Cheese. Good luck with that, the Kittens are 0 for their last 22 visits to Tittletown. Don't think the breakthrough is coming this year either. Lot of noise about Denver in Dallas, but, man, Peyton is on fire. Dallas has always been a thorn for Peyton, but hard to see it this year.



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folks had the Colts dropping off this year, but they are really good once again. Luck versus Russell Wilson. Game on. Both teams have great QBs and both have punishing running backs. Indy is good on D, but I think Seattle is enough better to carry the day. Pats at Bengals could also be a good game. Bill Bel and Brady are getting their groove back though, so I will ride with them (also, they are Mom's team, so WOOF!!) Iggles at Giants....Hahahahahaha, jeez who cares anymore? Chefs at Titans also could be decent game. I'm going to take Alex Smith and Andy Reid here, they are just too steady.

This weekend is also the Korean Grand Prix. Yeongam is not a bad circuit, especially considering the boys just escaped the ugly Marina Bay in Singapore. Vettel and Red Bull already pretty much have the crowns locked up, the jousting behind them is all there really is of interest left. And Alonso looks pretty firm in second place for that matter. By the way, Sebastian Vettel is turning into a bit of a consistent dick. Weather outlook is improving from possible typhoon status, but still could be dicey.

And, finally, baseball. Divisional playoffs are in full swing, and all the series are looking interesting. Hard not to root for the Pirates.

Well humans, that is it for my guest star role here. Remember, I LOVE cute girl dogs, pizza and jerky! Oh yeah, the music, ahem, what else did you think a black dog would play??

REAL DEAL EXIT THE SANDMAN AND MOM ROCK AND ROLL TRASH TALK

Errr, some of you may have seen some illegitimate Trash Talk on a so called "Stub". Illegitimate stuff. Please disregard the same. It was perpetrated by a "perp" that thinks Tom Brady Porn is teh awesomenest. Not sure that last word is really a word, but I'm gonna roll with it. Man, I tell ya, this job is hard work, hard work I tell ya. Also, to get the stain out of your brain, I am immediately referencing some classic real music. And for good reason: Sandmans and moms. This will be explained in due course, but please take a listen to the music.

More than that, let there be real football talk. Okay, Madam Wheel may have had some good shit actually:

And I'm going to admit ahead of time that BillBel is playing games with injury reports heading into Atlanta.

Also, Da Bears-Kitties game will come down to whether Stafford can find someone besides Megatron to throw to, with Nate Burleson out.

Also, I think Stillers will beat Matt Cassell (!)'s Vikings under Big Ben.

Okay, granted, I didn't say it was a lot of good shit. Just a little. And as to the Stillers, man, I dunno, that is a fair fight. Given the respective O-Lines, Cassel may for a game be equal to Big Ben. And Cassel has one hell of a lot better running back. I might be tempted to give this turd of a game to the "home team", but

the thing is being played in London. Where, hopefully, they don't give a shit about two once proud, but now joke, teams.

The Pats are at the Dirty Birds. Will Gronk play? Will Beavis and Butthead show up two weeks in a row to catch passes from Major Tom Brady without Gronk...or any other person you ever heard of other than Edelman? Yeah, inquiring minds want to know. But the Dirty Birds are tough in their dome home, think they may win this one. Who is more pathetic, the Skins or the Rayduhs? Yo, right, dead heat there. Jeebus, what tough times for proud brands.

Eagles in Mile High against Peyton's massive arm, which is just starting to warm up? Fuhgettaboutit. I'd take the Fins if it was in South Beach, but in the Super Dome, take the Krew from Nawlins. Maybe the best game is Bears at Deeetroit. Lions I think they call them there in BK City. People yammer about how great and awesome Jay Cutler has been this year. but he has not been shit compared to Matt Stafford. Take a real look. I am rolling with Stafford, MegaTron and company at home against Da Bears.

Enough of this, let's look at the students. Who are also athletes. But only marginally human for settlement purposes in craven class actions run by assholes. I have done a lot of things for a living as a lawyer, but never class actions. Not because I wouldn't, just because I have not. That said, it seems often completely greasy. All deserve their day in court, and love the people that give it to them. But sometimes you have to wonder who the real winners are, and here it is certainly not the athletes.

So, on to the games, since the rest is depressing at best. Best game of the day is Georgia at LSU. I was surprised that the Dawgs whipped the Cocks on opening weekend. But the game is in Atherns, not the bayou. If you look at the paper, it seems no contest, Dawgs all the way. Don't be fooled though, LSU is every bit the match, and if the game was in the Baton Rouge, I would be tempted to take LSU. But this

game is in the Dawgpound. I will take the home boys, but it is that close.

The Sooners of our once and always friend, Freepatriot's, love take on the Blighted Irish of Notre Dame. But the game is in Domerland, not on the Prairie. Frankly, I do not trust either of these teams. So, I will roll with the one at home. NOT! I will take the wagon circling Schooners in a road upset. If 'Ole Miss were not in Tuscaloosa, I might be tempted to take them over the Tide. Nope. If the Badgers were in Cheeseland against the Sweaterests of THE Ohio State University instead of Columbus at the Horseshoe, I would be tempted to take them. But nope. There is not that much else out there that is exciting on the front end before they play the games.

No F1 this weekend, and the "America's Cup" between two boats full of Aussies and Kiwis has ended (I have no idea where the fuck "America" was in the equation, other than it took place in a bay of San Francisco).

So, a word about the music and the Sandman. They are interrelated. The greatest reliever of all time, Mariano Rivera, is retiring. Indeed, had his farewell ceremony at Yankee's Stadium Thursday night. By a sad coincidence, our good friend Spencer Ackerman's mother, who was a consummate Yankee's fan, passed away just before Mariano Rivera's walk off the storied mound in the Bronx. I only wish that I had had the pleasure of meeting Spencer's mom. Maybe even more, I wish my mom had had the opportunity. They were unique women in a time before that was necessarily quite so acceptable to see or admit. Heroes. And I will leave it at that. Mine is long gone, but Spencer's loss is real; he is in my thoughts, and I hope yours.

With that, on somewhat melancholy note, we wrap up the Trash for this week. From very long ago- I think - I recall that Spencer's mom had a thing for Jackson Browne's music. So, we led off with that. We close with, as the Yankees did for Mariano Rivera, Enter (or Exit) the Sandman by

Metallica. Number 42 for the Yankees is, and was, in a league of his own. It is fitting that he is the last player to wear the number 42 after it was retired for Jackie Robinson. No two men have ever worn a number better. Let 42 now rest and live in perpetuity as the mark of greatness.