

EMPTYWHEEL'S FAMOUS TRASH TALK: ES CABALLOS DE LOS MUERTOS EDITION

Hey there sports fans, I love ya! Y'all got your swerve on? Because we have week three of the NFL on tap, not to mention the end of the MLB season and, if you are talking the biggest event worldwide, the Singapore Grand Prix. so there is some meat on the table.

If the F1 Driver's Championship was not already effectively in the capable hands of Sebastian Vettel, and the Constructor's Championship again to Red Bull, I would surely open with the F1 Circus. But, both of those are true, so we shall begin with NFL football. There are just a slew of great games this week but, really, how could you start anywhere other than with the greatest rivalry in the history of pro football?

That would, of course, be the Packers and Bears. The Cheeseheads return to Soldier Field where they won the NFC Championship last year. Expect the action to pick up where it left off. The Bears can't protect Jay Cutler for shit, but when he has time, dude can throw the ball. Matt Forte is way underrated, he is an elite back in the league. And Brian Urlacher and the D always comes to play. The loss of Nick Collins, the Pack's star safety, will really hurt an already porous secondary. It is tempting to take Da Bears for the upset. But I can't do it.

Another legendary rivalry on tap is the Cowboys and Redskins. Skins are surprisingly solid with Sexy Remy Grossman at QB and former Cardinal Tim Hightower slamming the run. But if Tony Romo and his ribs can stay on the field, the 'Boys also have a running game with Felix Jones and that should be enough to win a close one on Monday night. Giants and Eagles is yet another rivalry game, and has many of the same considerations in

that the outcome may depend on Mike Vick staying on the field. If he does, it is hard to see how the Gents win.

Okay, mom made me promise to do a couple of things and, really, it will be a pleasure. First the title to this post. It, I think, conveys dead horses. In this case in Indianapolis. Without Peyton Manning, the Colts have become like President Obama, i.e. spineless. This week Indy gets a break. Oh, wait, that break is the Stillers, who may be aging fast, but are still embarrassed about that opening debacle against the Ravens. By the time this game is over, Curtis Painter (who?) may be leading the Colts on their way to slaughter. The other marker left by Miss Marcy is the -gasp!!! – thought that the Circle The Wagons may beat the Patsies. Yeah, I dunno about that, although, to be sure, the Bills are WAY improved and looking solid with Harvard Man Ryan Fitzpatrick and Fred Jackson providing the goods on offense and a tough and fast defense on the other side of the ball. The Pats may give up 400 yards passing. But Brady will just throw for 500 and Belichick wins another one.

The Heidi game looks to be interesting, as it always is when the Jets and Raiders hook up; may be an upset in Oakland. And, of course, my favorite new team for the year, Teh Kitties. I'm telling ya, these cats are for real, and their confidence is going to grow some more this Sunday with a win over the rudderless Vikings. Say what you will about Grandpa, but the swagger and interest factor simply left with Favre. It is hard to believe that Donovan McNabb is really as done as he appears, but it looks time to put a fork in him if he doesn't come up big this week. But, I don't think the Boy Named Suh and Matt Stafford are gonna have any of that. Lions roll to a 3-0 start.

In the professional world of college athletics, the game to watch is the Old Hokeys versus the New Hokeys. Yep, the Randiego State Aztecs invade the Big House to meet the Wolverweenies.

Don't laugh, Brady Hoke built a pretty solid team at SDSU and they may just put a licking on the Maize and Blue, although the home field and crowd may be too much. Should be a great game. Hey, Jim White is going to be in Clemson, where the Seminoles will be taking on the Clemson Tigers in an excellent matchup of two good and ranked teams. Unfortunately, Jim is going to be at a horse show instead of the game, but it should be a good one. We will try to get an equine update. I get a little local excitement with the USC Trojans coming to visit Sun Devil Stadium. The Trojans will probably win, but I gotta tell you, night games in Tempe are really something. Big fun. Arkansas at the Crimson Tide is the only other game even worth noting on a slow Saturday. Tide should roll.

Hey, a shout out to the Arizona Diamondbacks, who clinched the NL West last night with a big win over the defending WS Champs, the SF Giants. We're gonna have playoff baseball in town! The Brew Crew also clinched in the central, their first division title since the Gorman Thomas years. I am so old, I actually remember that far back. Looks like the Sawx are going to back their way into the postseason, but Beckett and Lester do not look strong enough to take them very far.

And that leaves....The Singapore Grand Prix. The show from Marina Bay is the only night race on the Circus schedule. It is a rather garish track, but the racing under the lights makes for a strangely compelling, if goofy, scene. Would hate to see the concrete corridor in the daytime though. Well, at any rate, Mark webber and Jenson Button were fast in practice, followed by Vettel and Alonso. Qualifying is just about to go off as I post; I will update a little after Q3.

So that's it, let rip. Music this week is by the CDB. a couple of old but really great songs, Caballo Diablo and Birmingham Blues. It is not the greatest recording of the latter, but man was that a great piece live back in the day.

TRASH TALK: NCAA SHAME, EPHS AND JEFFS

Marcy is correct, the article this week in the Atlantic magazine by Taylor Branch is an absolute must read. Entitled *The Shame of College Sports*, the article opens with a 2001 investigatory hearing in front of the Knight commission, a NCAA oversight board where slimy promoter Sonny Vaccaro matter of factly tells the Commission exactly what is going on in their sport; the Commission is incredulous, in denial and clearly thinks Vaccaro is scum. The reverse is, of course, the truth.

The list of scandals goes on. With each revelation, there is much wringing of hands. Critics scold schools for breaking faith with their educational mission, and for failing to enforce the sanctity of "amateurism." Sportswriters denounce the NCAA for both tyranny and impotence in its quest to "clean up" college sports. Observers on all sides express jumbled emotions about youth and innocence, venting against professional mores or greedy amateurs.

For all the outrage, the real scandal is not that students are getting illegally paid or recruited, it's that two of the noble principles on which the NCAA justifies its existence—"amateurism" and the "student-athlete"—are cynical hoaxes, legalistic confections propagated by the universities so they can exploit the skills and fame of young athletes. The tragedy at the heart of college sports is not that some college athletes are getting paid, but that more of them are not.

It is a long article that stretches in time from the beginning of college football in the late 1800s through the Cam Newton sham “investigation and disposition” prior to last season’s BCS Championship game. Coming on the heels of the stunning article on the corruption surrounding the Miami Hurricanes football program, it is a pretty stark reminder of just how filthy big time college athletics really are.

Many people have taken to advocating that college athletes be paid – above and beyond their scholarship terms – for their “services”. College basketball analyst Jay Bilas rants about doing so near daily in his Twitter stream. Personally, I am not sure that is the solution either. Do athletes at USC and Notre Dame get paid more because their brands bring in more? How much do each athlete get paid? Does Andrew Luck get paid a lot more than his left tackle? What about the universities not in say the top 64 programs, whose programs may not even be profitable, what do they do? What about basketball, baseball and track athletes? What about the girls and Title IX? I don’t know what the answer is, but I don’t like this one.

Interestingly enough, two of the most notoriously dirty major programs square off today when the Ohio State Felons take on the Miami Hurriconvicts in Miami. Nearly ten years ago, these two teams played for the National Championship (which Ohio State, true to their criminal form, stole from the Hurricanes on a horrid no-call on interference in the end zone in the last seconds). Now it is just another game. If only they could both lose.

To try to find a ray of clean and hope in this sick muck, let’s talk about teams that still play for the love of the game and the sport. Or so I am told. That’s right, I’m talking Ephs and Jeffs! The Williams Ephs open their 2011 season today at the always tough Bowdoin at Whittier Field. While bitter arch rival, the Amherst Jeffs, open their season on the road against the fierce Bates Bobcats. Man, the stories we could

tell about these games. Hopefully Marcy, Neil and/or Adam Bonin will come along and tell those stories cause, well you know, the ASU Sun Devils didn't ever play those guys, I got nuthin!

In other games of note, Boise State already just tore up Toledo last night, and don't be fooled, Toledo is a pretty good team. The BCS needs to get their heads out of their asses and give Boise some love. And Kellen Moore is simply amazing. The one truly huge game this weekend is Oklahoma down in Seminole land to take on Florida State. Oklahoma is, as befitting the number one ranked team, the favorite; but I dunno, I think FSU may be a sleeper here and, if their QB picks up where Christian Ponder left off, will win. I am agains personally interested in seeing Arizona State, who travel to Illinois. Been quite a while since ASU has been able to withstand prosperity, so being ranked at number 22 is a little scary. If Brock Osweiler has another big game, they should be okay, but the running game is not that good right now.

As to the pros, well the Deetroit Lions are the story of the year! The Kitties get KC, who got their asses kicked last week, at home in Ford Stadium. Look for Deetroit to go 2-0! Bears and Saint and Pats versus Bolts are the only other real excitement this week. I am going to let Marcy and Randiego battle that preview out in comments.

SPECIAL UPDATE!! – Uh, it turns out we gots some restless natives in these here parts, and they been demanding extra coverage. In another CRITICAL game, likely rivaled in scope only by the epic Cowboys/49ers tilt, Colt McCoy and the Cleveland Brownies are on the road at the Colts, and the Brownies are road favorites by 3. Wow. I must say, however, the fate of this game lies with Peyton. Peyton Hillis that is;the other one ain't walking through that door. Oh, and speaking of Deetroit, Rosalind is right, the Tigers clinched their division yesterday. Congratulations, you gotta love Jim Leyland and Justin Verlander, who may yet be the first 25

game winner in MLB in decades (since Bob Welch).

Find more Jo Jo Gunne songs at Myspace Music

ITALIAN GRAND PRIX 1961-2011: MONZA, DEATH OF VON TRIPS & A YANKEE CHAMPION

When we started the 2011 Formula One season back in March, I noted that 2011 is the 50th anniversary of the magical 1961 F1 season in which Phil Hill, driving for Ferrari, became the first, and other than Mario Andretti in 1978, only American Formula One Grand Prix World Champion. From our season opening post in March, *Circus Starts Anew, 50 Years On From the Yankee Champion*:

As starts the 2011 Formula One season, so too started the 1961 F1 season fifty years ago. For all the differences brought by technology and time over five decades, there is much in common. The excitement and anticipation of the drivers, the longing to put the knowledge of the off season testing and tech changes finally to proof in actual race conditions, the first drivers' meetings of the season, the beautiful people and the eyes of the international sporting world focused. There is nothing like the Formula One circus; that was the case then as much as it is now.

Longtime regulars here at the Emptywheel Trash Talk threads will likely remember that I had the privilege of knowing Phil Hill as I was growing up. Phil was the first, and still one of only two (Mario Andretti), Americans to win the Formula

One Grand Prix World Championship and his career was immortalized in the excellent biography *Yankee Champion* by William Nolan. 2011 is the fiftieth anniversary of his championship season. In honor of that, I will be comparing and remembering the races and excitement of the 1961 season over the course of the current season. See here for some simply superb [Cahier Archive] photos from the 1961 season.

Phil was my friend, and my mentor. I miss him.

This will be the last formal installment in the 1961 retrospective series. While there are 19 races in this year's 2011 F1 schedule, with six remaining after the Italian, there were only eight races on the 1961 docket. The Italian was the seventh and penultimate race, and the one that will not only live in infamy, but in which the Championship was determined. Indeed, with both the Driver's and Constructor's Championships decided at Monza in the Italian, and in light of the tragic death of their star factory driver, Count Wolfgang von Trips, the dominant Ferrari team did not even travel the Atlantic to contest the final race, the inaugural United States Grand Prix at Watkins Glen, NY.

So, in 1961 all the marbles came down to the famed steep banked course at Autodromo Nazionale Monza, north of Milan in Italy. Brad Spurgeon has a wonderful setting piece in yesterday's New York Times:

Not many towns give the impression of being built around a racing circuit like Monza and the Autodromo Nazionale di Monza. Then again, Monza also happens to be one of the most historic racing tracks in the world, and, sitting as it does in a royal park, it has a national monument feel to it as well.

History is everywhere at Monza, which has been hosting the Italian Grand Prix

since the 1920s. The old, banked oval track is still visible near the circuit used today. The 5.7-kilometer, or 3.5-mile, circuit has four long straights where speeds can reach 340 kph or more.

“Monza features the highest straight-line speeds of the year at around 350 kph, the highest average lap speed and, at 83 percent, the highest percentage of the lap spent at full throttle – not for nothing is it known as a ‘temple of speed,’” said Norbert Haug, vice president of Mercedes-Benz Motorsport.

Read the rest of Brad’s article to also get a fuller flavor of the actual locale, separate from the track itself.

As to the track, however, suffice it to say that, hands down, Monza is the fastest in F1. In 1961, unlike the shorter and safer current 4.3 mile configuration, Monza featured a 6.2 mile circuit featuring a siamesed set of steeply banked 180 degree curves, with up to a 45 degree slope. One of the the stories I remember most vividly Phil telling from his F1 days was of the incredible speeds and physical forces on the driver at Monza. Phil had a brilliant mind, was highly detailed in his descriptions of things and often extremely demonstrative physically while doing so. Which made for a memorable depiction of Monza, to say the least. When he would describe how going through the high banking put such forces on the suspension that it caused the bottom of the car to basically travel on the paved surface, and regularly meet the surface with attendant sparks and grinding, you could literally almost feel, with him, the intense heat on your seat and danger of mistake. That, and the flat out speed, made Monza a dangerous enterprise indeed. The photo to the right, by the incomparable F1 photographer Bernard Cahier, is of a Monza bank in 1961, with Phil Hill leading his fellow Ferraris of Richie Ginther, Ricardo Rodriguez and Giancarlo Baghetti.

So, that was the setting and, yes, it was truly 50 years ago to the day, as the 1961 Italian GP was run on September 10, 1961. The video up top, while certainly not perfect, gives a very complete rundown of where the season stood prior to the race, who the key contestants were, and what the grid looked like at the start of the race. The actual race coverage is fine, even if a little thin; still, very much worth watching.

The race immediately prior to Monza was the German Grand Prix at Nurburgring (the Bernard Cahier photo above is of Phil in the 1961 German GP), which was won by Stirling Moss in the underpowered, but well handling and superbly driven Lotus-Climax. After the German, and despite Sir Stirling's win, the Driver's Championship was still a battle between Ferrari teammates Hill and von Trips, with Trips leading in points with 33, Phil in second with 29 and Moss a distant third with 21 points. From F1 Fanatic:

Hill had won at Monza 12 months earlier, while von Trips suffered crashes in two previous visits to the circuit. Five years earlier his [von Trips] steering had broken at Curva Grande, sending him into the trees at 190kph (120mph). Two years after that he crashed into Harry Schell's BRM on the first lap.

The championship protagonists were two decidedly different characters. Von Trips, a German Count, was a natural talent but one with a slightly wild streak in his early years that led him to be dubbed 'von Krash'. Later his rivals referred to him more affectionately as 'Taffy'.

Hill was more technical in his approach and had great mechanical sensitivity. Earlier that year he won the Le Mans 24 Hours for the second of three times in his career.

Hill was also acutely aware of the

dangers of motor racing. It weighed heavily on his mind, and at times caused him to develop stomach ulcers from the stress, which disrupted his racing season in 1954.

So began the 1961 Italian Grand Prix at Monza. The start was smooth, with the Ferraris taking the lead, but by the second lap, things had grown more competitive and dicing among the drivers was well underway. During the fateful second lap, untold tragedy struck. Again, from F1 Fanatic:

At Parabolica Gerry Ashmore's Lotus spun off and hit the grass bank along the track and the driver was badly injured.

A trio of Ferraris led the field as they came off the Curva Sud Alta Velocita for the first time to complete lap one, Hill ahead of Ginther and Rodriguez. Clark lay fourth with Jack Brabham, von Trips and Baghetti behind him.

Halfway around the second lap, Clark had fallen behind von Trips and was trying to re-pass the Ferrari as they sprinted from Vialone to Parabolica.

"I was preparing to overtake him and my front wheels were almost level with his back wheel as he started to brake," Clark described afterwards.

"Suddenly he began to pull over towards me and he ran right into the side of me. I honestly don't think Taffy realised I was there. I am sure that, when he passed me earlier, he had decided his was the faster car and I would be left behind."

Clark was on the left-hand side of the track as von Trips moved across. The contact fired the Ferrari left towards the crowd.

It rode up a 1.5m-high bank and flipped

over. With only a chain fence between the spectators and the track, there was precious little to separate car from bodies.

The car gouged into the crowd before flipping back onto its wheels on the track. Following cars braked hard and ducked around the wrecked Ferrari.

Von Trips was thrown from his car and killed, 11 spectators died at the scene, and four others succumbed to their injuries over the following days.

The rest of the race was, well, relatively speaking, uneventful. Phil crossed the finish line in first place, his second year in a row victorious at Ferrari's home track of Monza, and with the win, and Trips disqualification, won the Driver's Championship and, correspondingly, the Constructor's Championship for Ferrari. The final race classification had American Dan Gurney second in a Porsche, followed by Bruce McLaren and Jackie Lewis, both in Cooper-Climaxes.

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he 1961 Championship season (remember Ferrari did not, under the circumstances, even compete in the final race at Watkins Glen).

Phil Hill, the Yankee Champion, was crowned while both the drivers, teams and world mourned the carnage wrought by the tragic accident involving two greats, Jim Clark of Lotus and Count Wolfgang von Trips of Ferrari, not to mention the 15 innocent spectators' lives taken in the path.

It was both one of the most glorious, and most tragic, days in motorsport history.

The photo at right, again from Bernard Cahier, is of Phil, this one posted as a toast to his 1961 F1 Championship, even though the photo is actually from his Le Mans triumph in 1962.

A.J. Baime has a very nice retrospective in Thursday's Wall Street Journal if you would like

some excellent further reading on the 1961 Italian.

As a side note, there are significant parallels between the glory and tragedy of Phil Hill's 1961 Championship with the other American F1 Championship season, 1978 with Mario Andretti. As with Phil and Trips, Mario's Championship run was marred by the death of his Lotus teammate, and closest points competitor, the great, and oh so fast, Ronnie Peterson. I had a chance to chat up Mr. Peterson briefly at the 1978 Long Beach Grand Prix; he was an immensely personable and jovial character, especially compared to the often stoic Swedes lately found in F1. Peterson, as with von Trips, died in flames at Monza. Again, as with von Trips, Peterson also, despite his death, still finished second in points, behind his eventual Championship teammate, in this case Andretti.

Well,
in the
immortal
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and this is now. And now we are at the 2011 Italian Grand Prix, at the once and future home of F1 speed, Monza. In Friday's Practice, the Red Bulls, Ferraris and McLarens were all fast under hot conditions. Saturday's Qualifying was uneventful and went mostly as you would predict from the recent few races. Red Bull's Sebastian Vettel took pole, his 10th of the year, followed by Lewis Hamilton and Jenson Button in the McLarens in P2 and P3 respectively, and Ferrari's Fernando Alonso in P4.

With his win last time out at Spa, it is nigh impossible that anyone will overtake Vettel for

the Driver's Crown, and completely impossible to keep Red Bull from repeating its Constructor's title. The warm weather looks to hold for the race, which should make for fast laps and increased tire wear, and that has been a pronounced variable this year with the new Pirelli tires. This is probably Sebastian Vettel's race to lose in the Red Bull, and I would look to him for the win. In spite of Lewis Hamilton's resurgence in the McLaren in the second half of the season, I would keep an eye on Alonso. Monza is, after all, the home of the Scuderia Ferrari. The Italian Red will be out in full force, and Fernando is still, when he wants to be, as fast a driver as there is in the Circus. Monza is a course of skill and speed, it should be a great race.

So, there is the Italian Grand Prix, both then and now. I would like to personally thank Paul-Henri Cahier of the Cahier Archive. The stills in this post are all from the Cahier Archive, taken by Paul-Henri's father and partner, Bernard. I personally contacted Paul-Henri and asked for permission to use the same, which he generously granted. If you are a F1 and international motorsport fan, you can literally die and go to heaven in the Cahier Archive. Collectively, the Cahiers have been covering F1 and top flite motor racing for going on 60 years, and continue to this very day. Please give them a look, they are friends to us here, and if you see something you like, and if a racing fan, you will, please support and buy their work.

[As an added bonus, and thanks to Nomolos for reminding me in an offhand way, I have added in a video clip from John Frankenheimer's 1966 classic movie *Grand Prix* that is the Monza footage from the movie. Frankenheimer was, until he died, a friend of Phil's. Additionally, Phil served as a technical consultant on the movie and did much of the driving of the camera car actually doing the filming for the movie.]

[As a second update bonus, I want to add in a

couple of pieces from the Road & Track Special for the 50th Anniversary of Phil Hill's 1961 Championship Season. I wrote most of the main post from memory as well as notes and articles I have had around for quite some time, except for a couple of things like the Brad Spurgeon piece on Monza. Unfortunately, that caused me to miss two absolutely fantastic pieces in Road & Track. Spectacularly good pieces, both by very good friends of Phil's, R & T writer and photographer extraordinaire John Lamm and the other by Sam Posey. John's is a wonderful race by race trip, as related by Phil, through the 1961 season. *Phil Hill: 50 Years Later – The 1961 Formula 1 championship year in Phil Hill's own words.* Great work and, independently, John is one heck of a nice man and a star on his own right. Posey's, (who I do not know much, but have always appreciated) is entitled *A Man Like No Other* is more of a biography as painted by Sam, and it too is really fantastic.]

TRASH TALK: THE NFL SEASON BEGINS PACKERS & SAINTS

It's Here!! It seemed like it may never happen the way things looked in the spring and early summer but, unlike those mopes in Washington DC, the NFL and the players figured out what needed to be done for the long term, and got it done. Not some freaking kick the can down the road for a couple of months, or pass the buck off to a "Super-Committee" of bribed up asshole politicians, but a comprehensive and fair agreement for the next ten years. The Congress and Executive Branch in DC could learn a few things from our mindless sports pastime.

There are a couple of other updates I would like to get out of the way before we get down to

business. First, in the biggest news of the day – and this is going to break Marcy’s heart – Peyton Manning is in a world of hurt. Manning had a cervical fusion operation today, and will be out 2-3 months. I would not bet against Peyton returning this year, but I find it unlikely. Unless the Colts are looking good for the playoffs late in the season, why would you put him out there? The surgery sounds very serious, and anything involving the spinal column is that, but it is fairly common actually. I have seen several personal injury clients through the process in the upper cervical area, all with good results and very little effective reduction in motion range. He will be back; just maybe not this year.

Secondly, good old Henry Waxman is again reaching his unneeded long hairy arm into the world of professional sports:

Today Rep. Henry A. Waxman sent a letter to National Football League (NFL) and National Football League Players’ Association urging them to put in place human growth hormone testing (HGH) procedures for the players without further delay. Despite agreements to test and impose penalties for HGH use, the NFL and the Players Association have failed to finalize HGH testing procedures in time to begin testing before tonight’s start of the 2011 season.

Here is the full letter. Waxman had no basis to be sticking his hand in the sports pie as head of House Oversight, and only slightly more as chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee. I guess the NFL is commerce but, really, that is a little thin; with all of the concerns in this country and Washington DC, this is not among the top of them. What really pisses me off is that Waxman is out there making a stink about this crap and, from what I am told, still pushing buttons behind the scene to maintain the prosecution of Roger Clemens.

What the Oh So Honorable Mr. Waxman, nor even any of his lesser staffers, manage to find time for is to discuss the issues behind the DOJ colluding with admitted felon obstructor of justice Scott Bloch to avoid any meaningful accountability. See this post for details, things have only gotten more absurd since then. If Waxman cannot bother to be concerned with a senior Administration legal department head like Scott Bloch, who WAS the Special Counsel, perjuring himself to Congress and destroying extremely material, nee critical, evidence regarding violation and dereliction of his duties to protect whistleblowers, then he has no business wasting the taxpayers' time with his juvenile fixation on being the Lord of All Sports.

Okay, now to tonight's game. And whoa nellie it's gonna be a doozy! Teh Nawlins Saints are in Titledown to take on deefendin World Champeens the Green Bay Packers. Hot damn baby, we gots ourselves a real barnburner to open the season with. The Saints are more than a little retooled for 2011. gone is Reggie Bush, and say what you will about Bush, dude is a game changer. Even if he does nothing, because he HAS to be accounted for and drives defensive coordinators nuts. In is Mark Ingram, rookie RB from the Crimson Tide. Ingram should be a great addition, and to semi-fill the Bush slot, the Saints have picked up Darren Sproles from the Lightning Bolts; between the two the Nawlins running game ought to be actually improved. The addition of Aubrayo Franklin and Shaun Rogers on the Saints D-Line should be huge because, well, they are huge.

While the Saints have added key new pieces, the Pack will be greatly improved simply by getting old pieces back. Tough running back Ryan Grant, stud tight end Jermichael Finley, and other pieces like Brad Jones and Desmond Bishop are all back and added to the same basic roster that won the Super Bowl last year. Oh yeah, they gots some dude named Aaron Rogers too. And the game is on Lambeau Field, even if the tundra is not yet frozen. This is gonna be a great game, no

matter what; hard to bet against the Cheesers at home though.

So, I have the beer chillin in the patio fridge, have the ice, tequila and special mix – with Himalayan Pink Salt – for the margaritas. Have a new, not quite as big as the old big screen, big screen plasma HD TeeVee and burgers for the grill. so, nothing could possibly get in between me and a full football experience tonight.

WHAT?? You have got to be fucking kidding me. Some lanky wanker named Obama is apparently going to be making a speech to Congress tonight. My chips are on the shit square, this speech will come up craps. What are the odds NBC would even fuck with this nonsense if the speech were not nominally about jobs and GE's Jeff Immelt Obama's Job's Czarette? Apparently the pregame show, Football Night in America, set originally to air on NBC, has been drop kicked to the NFL Network and cable affiliates such as the Versus Network. The fine CheeseFolks in Wisconsin said to hell with that:

Two NBC affiliates in Wisconsin have decided to choose the kickoff to the NFL regular season rather than President Obama's game plan on job creation. The President addresses the nation tonight at 7 p.m. E.S.T. before a joint session of Congress to talk about the unemployment rate, which continues to stand at 9.1 percent.

[Both] WTMJ-4 in Milwaukee, along with a sister station in Green Bay, has decided to not carry the President's speech, which could potentially conflict with the Packers' 8:30 p.m. kickoff as they look to defend their Super Bowl title against the New Orleans Saints.

Good for them. Get with the program Wheelheads, it is football time!

TRASH TALK: NCAA ON THE WAY TO SAVE THE DAY!

This joint needs some football, and the college kids are back to give it to us. We have already seen a couple of notable things. First, Wisconsin looked scary good, even though it was Podunk State (UNLV) they clobbered. No, the Runnin Rebs were not much of a substitute for the real power of the Big-10.2, schools like Michigan State, Iowa and Nebraska, but seeing the traditional Badger offensive juggernaut on the ground suddenly paired with a Cam Newton type of polished slick QB was something altogether new. They may have something good up there in Cheeseland. On a more local note, the ASU Sun Devils also tore apart a weaker foe from Nowheresville (UC-Davis), but again the thing to note is the QB position looks stabilized for once with Brock Orsweiller and the Devils may actually have some game this year.

Last night there was simply an awesome game, 14th ranked TCU at Baylor. TCU who went 13-0 last year and won the Rose Bowl, got beat in a barnburner by the Baylor Bears 50-48. And TCU had to score 25 points in the 4th quarter to get that close, but damn near pulled it out. Baylor had its own stud QB, Robert Griffin III and man was he lights out 21 for 28, 359 yards, 5 TDs and no picks. Oh, dude can run too.

So, the big game today everyone is waiting for is Western Michigan versus Big Blue in the Big House! Okay, not really. But, hey, you have to pay attention to these things lest the Wolverines nearly pull off an upset over a favored opponent like they almost did against Appalachian State. In other Big-10.2 news you can use, disgraced criminal Sweatervest has been picked up as a replay consultant for the Colts.

I wonder if he will be getting a tattoo to commemorate the occasion?

Eh, back to real football...the kind played in the Pac-10.2 and SEC.X (X=most players in the SEC cannot count high enough to know how many teams there are in the conference). Clearly the Big kahuna today is the Quackers from Oregon and the Tigers of LSU in the Jerry Jones Palace. You know, when the Chinese overrun us and invade in the name of democracy, you think they will loot Cowboys Palace, er Stadium? This is a HUGE game for the first week, as the Ducks are ranked 3rd and the Tigers 4th. Despite how hinky early preseason rankings are, that sounds about right, they are both superb teams. LSU has a bit of a QB problem though, as projected starter Jordan Jefferson is suspended after being charged with felony burglary; Jarret Lee will fill in, but has some experience (presumably in football, not felony crimes, but in the SEC you never know). Oregon QB Darron Thomas also has issues, but is going to play after convincing officials he was asleep and sober in that pot filled car going 118mph. Oh, the driver of that car was cornerback Cliff Harris, who is suspended for this one game. The net balance, after taking into account the respective criminal dockets, should favor Oregon who, with Thomas and tailback LaMichael James, just have too much firepower.

The other giant tilt is Boise State at Georgia. The Broncos have deadly accurate and savvy QB Kellen Moore and are always well coached and prepared by Chris Peterson. They spread you out and light you up which, coupled with a smart ball hawking defense, makes them consistently good. The Dawgs have been up and down the last few years, but look to have a decent team this year, and are ranked in the top 20 preseason. Here is the thing, the Broncos will, and do, play anybody anywhere. Oh, and Kellen Moore is 38-2 in his first three years as a starter. That militates in favor of Boise State, despite some of the TV pundits picking the Dawgs to upset.

Couple of odds and ends. The Minnesota gophers at the USC Trojans might actually be a pretty interesting game. Tommy Trojan may be a sleeper this year, even though still finishing out probation. In F1 news, the weaker sister team to the dominant Red Bull team, Toro Rosso, is getting a seriously major cash infusion from Abu Dhabi's Aabar Investments, through their cut-out, Swiss bank Falcon Investments. Along with factory expansion and enhancements, this should make Toro Rosso much more competitive. One problem, however, Toro Rosso still depends on engines purchased on contract from Ferrari, and Ferrari will never give them quite exactly the same grade of motor as they use on the factory cars. Oh, and in the baseball/legal world, REggie Walton has denied Roger Clemens' motion to dismiss based on double jeopardy, and ordered him to stand for a retrial. Predictable, but disappointing, even though Walton lashed into the prosecutors for misconduct pretty hard in court.

One final note. Next weekend is the Italian Grand Prix at Monza, which was the last points race in 1961 and where the Driver's Championship was decided and awarded. It was a momentous race on a great number of levels historically, including the crowning of the first American champion, Phil Hill, and the tragic death of his main competitor, and teammate, Wolfgang von Tripps. I am going to try to get together a special presentation for the occasion (but do have a busy week, so we will see). At any rate, the Italian at Monza is always incredible, so buckle up folks!

TRASH TALK: BELGIAN GRAND PRIX A TRIP TO

THE SPA

Well, as Rosalind helpfully pointed out on the Gone Fishing thread, I am a bit of a late tease with the Trash Talk thread this weekend. Sorry about that, things got a bit catawampus yesterday. Today is my daughter Jenna's sweet sixteen birthday (scary!!), but somehow the big party got shifted to Saturday. This entailed taking her and a pack of friends to the waterpark. Couple of things notable here: The place is HUGE; it is like Disneyland with water. Second, and here is part of the rub on trash timing, it is literally like halfway to Flagstaff.

Anyway, once back from dropping them off, which was almost an hour drive each way, there were party preparations cake pickups etc. and then my wife picked the girls up and we had a pack of screaming 16 year olds. All very distressing and tiring. But, having survived all that and fallen asleep, I am now up for the Belgian Grand Prix and ready to trash.

This weekend is the Belgian and it is at the historic Spa, simply maybe the most kicks ass track on the Circus tour, featuring the famous Eau Rouge turn. Read about Eau Rouge and the history of Spa at the wiki entry, it is a good read, and you will be glad you did.

AS the Belgian was a key contest in 1961, we will take the customary look back in this the 50th anniversary of Phil Hill's Yankee Championship year. We have a killer video clip on the 1961 Belgian, just superb. 1961 found the Ferraris dominant in qualifying at Spa. Phil took pole in qualifying, with Von Tripps in P2, Olivier Gendebien P3 and fellow American Ritchie Ginther in P5 in the fourth Ferrari. The race was hotly contested with numerous lead changes, but at the end of the day it was still the Ferraris leading the pack with Phil winning the race, followed closely by Von Tripps, Ginther and Gendebien.

This year, the Red Bulls have again led the way in qualifying with points leader Sebastian Vettel claiming pole and Mark Webber in P3 split by Lewis Hamilton in P2. It was one of the most electrifying qualifying sessions in recent memory, and certainly the best this year by far. Wow, just wow. There was both wet early and dry late, which caused all the teams to have cars on track every second they could. It literally came down to the last seconds and was influenced by a fairly questionable move on the Williams of Pedro Maldonado by the ever more dickish driving of Lewis Hamilton. Hamilton is really not aging well from the humble and nice young man when he first joined the tour.

There is, of course also football in the air, even if it is still preseason. Last night the Cardinals looked pretty good, but then their scrubs let the Bolts' scrubs score a TD in the last five seconds to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. The other notable game saw the resurgent Lions really do a number on the Patriots. Man, you can just see the confidence growing in the Kitties, this is truly a team to be reckoned with now, and I think it will carry over into the regular season.

So, trash it up folks!

TRASH TALK: I'M STILL MAD IN MEMPHIS WEST EDITION

For any that carelessly stumble in here without having read the earlier Emptywheel blog ice pick into the temple of southern comfort regarding the West Memphis Three and the obliteration of fundamental fairness occurring in an American court right down the stinking street, go back to go. Do not collect jack squat on the way.

Seriously.

What happened today in Jonesboro Arkansas was just not right. And the addled morons in the citizenry and wooden bobbleheads in the media are pitching it as some triumph of justice. Get. The. Fuck. Out.

The West Memphis Three were railroaded into a guilty finding today – AGAIN – and, yes, it was far worse than the original lynch mob mentality religious paranoid bullshit because everybody, the entire world, knows the score this time. This is how US society dies and American Rule of Law dies. Take a good look people, because you are seeing it live like it was WWE Live!

Ooops, wait, I guess this was supposed to be Trash Talk huh? I musta got lost. Somewhere down the line of absurdity. First off tonight looks like the Hot'Lanta Dirty Bird are fouling some Jacksonville Jaguars on the old time broadcast TeeVee channel owned by Fox TV. Long as they ain't tape delaying Sebastian Vettel, Fernando Alonso and Formula One, that is all good. Hmm, seems the Falcons are up 3-0 as I write these words. I really like the Falcons. Matt Ryan has been better and more consistent than people give him credit for. Tony Gonzales is not what he once was maybe, but is still damn good. And Julio Jones paired with Roddy White as bookend receivers? Are you kidding me? Crikey. The Jags, on the other hand, have some growing issues. David Garrard has had some moments, but at this point, he is just a lead in for Blaine Gabbert and the future. MoJo Drew and a middlin defense is not enough to carry the franchise. The Dirty Birds are a force right here and now; the Jags, not so much.

But the game I am watching is the Cardinals at the hallowed tundra of Lambeau Field to visit the Pack. So far, Cards are holding their own, even are ahead 3-0; but the Pack and Rodgers are on the move. I will have to say, Darnell Dockett and the Cards defense is looking better than advertised.

It would appear that, although they have been pretty quiet, the Packers are going to be just fine. Give a quality talent and personality like Aaron Rodgers the confidence of a champion, which he sure has now, and the consistency of coaching and awesomeness of fan support of Green Bay, and that is a potent mix. They are never going to be like the Pats and be vying for an undefeated season, but they will be a force to be reckoned with when the fall turns to winter and the games count extra.

Back to the Cards. As most of you know, I am uhhhhh usually rather skeptical of the Cards. Still am. But they have some pieces; some real good pieces. This Pat Peterson rookie they have is going to be a defensive Larry Fitzgerald; he has those kind of skills and intangibles. They have a shot. We shall see.

One last thing. My friend, our friend, Jim White is going to visit some doctors on Monday. That kind of thing happens as you get older, and I guess you just have to move with no fear. But my thoughts, and those of this blog, are with him every inch of the way. Hang tough bubba; we got a lot of football and sports in general to trash over.

TRASH TALK! PACKERS V BARACK OBAMA

I don't know whether it's because we almost didn't have a season, or because the accelerated pre-season is making things more interesting (or that the alternative was the clown show GOP Presidential debate). But I sat my arse down and watched hours of pre-season football last night.

Highlights included seeing Larry "Spidey" Fitzgerald, with a good looking QB again,

catching shit off his helmet, and watching BabyJesus Tebow thinking he had gotten a TD—only to have it called back for about 3 holds. He he he. (Though BabyJesus Tebow looked pretty good after that.)

Oh, and did I mention that BillBel managed to get the very last Lloyd Carr-coached QB available, ever, to back up Brady? And he looks damn good? Mind you, he had to spend a whole 3rd round pick to get Ryan Mallett, which for a tightwad like BillBel is unheard of.

That said, as good as I (hope) the Pats are going to be this year, the Iggles look as good as they should look (and that was even before Steve Smith became the latest former Giant to get the hell away from Tom Coughlin). And I even think backing Vick up might turn Vince Young into the QB he should be able to be.

According to Mark Knoller, Barack Obama is now the proud owner of 1 share (out of close to 5 million shares) of the Green Bay Packers. That's probably more valuable than all the shitpile the government has taken on from the banks. That said, as a Chicago guy, Obama probably doesn't understand what he's got a piece of.

Coming this weekend: We get to see how the Detroit Lions—who lost their entire rookie class to injuries—plays against the (likely) worst team in the league, Cinci, and how the runner-up Stillers play now that no one is allowed to hit anymore. Tomorrow, the Niners take on the Aints, Peyton will maybe get around to actually throwing his first pass of the year against the Rams, we get to see whether Aaron Rogers' head recovered from all the hits it took last year in a game, and whether Coughlin's beleaguered team has enough to welcome Cam Newton to that other pro league. (Speaking of professional college QBs, the decision of whether or not Terrelle Pryor will be eligible for the supplemental draft is still pending.)

TRASH TALK WITH STEVIE NICKS

Hello mothers, hello others; welcome to The Wheel, brothers. So, we are kind of in the ether, the no mans land, the void and vacuum between the end of basketball and the start of football again.

Yeah, yeah, that little soccer interlude was somethin, there is the comforting coo of baseball (well, unless you are a Dodger fan) and the big NFL lockout surrounding the draft was spectacularific and all that jazz.

But, other than the F1 Grand Prix Circus, ain't none of it means jack shit without the sugar plum Pro Football Fairy dancing in the graspable future. And, now, we have it.

We did a fair amount of jabbering about the initial free agent signings last weekend and, yes, somehow stodgy old Bill Belichick and the Pats seem to have scooped the tabloid news. Go figure. Well, except, of course, the Iggles. Andy Reid, apparently freed up from worrying about his errant sons, has gone all ape shit. You know they still have the juju in them to sign Favre or Terrell Owens.

I don't have a ton to throw out, other than to open the floor up for discussion. Well, okay, maybe one thing. Friday night, I watched something on ESPN called "Year Of The Quarterback". They had a proposed new rating system to take the place of the admittedly complex and somewhat screwbally NFL Quarterback Ratings Formula. Which always struck me as somewhat suspect when Chad Pennington could rate above Brett Favre. Of course, now that Pennington is again gone to injury, Favre may be the only hope for The Fish.

I think Miss Marcy may wander in and add some

material to this post, and heck I might add some later too; but I do not have a ton else to add right now.

The music this weekend is courtesy of Miss Stevie Nicks. The first video you may think was a Fleetwood Mac song (as it was indeed one of their most famous hits). But, huh uh mofos, Rhiannon was very much a Buckingham Nicks song before both of them joined up with Fleetwood Mac. As is Cathouse Blues, the second video. Stevie was, and still very much is, from Phoenix. She went to Arcadia High School (as did wonder Woman Lynda Carter and some dude named Steven Spielberg) where my daughter is about to start her junior year. If you find fault with all this local nostalgia, blame Jason Leopold, who started it by buying up some some Japanese masters of early albums by yet another very local in proximity artist named Alice.

WhaddaYaGonnaDo?? Rip this joint, that's what!

[Errata – As Rosalind points out, Nicks' Arcadia may actually be Arcadia High in California, although there are people around here who have said it is the Arcadia here. Stevie was born here though and her dad lived right here in Paradis Valley until he died a few years ago. Lots of Arcadia Highs out there, maybe she went to all of them!]

F1 HUNGARIAN GRAND PRIX AND THE RETURN OF FOOTBALL TRASH!!!

Well, you knew sooner or later the Masters of the Football Universe (MOTFUs) would prove their superiority to the mental midgets in Congress and get the deal done so as to not cook the golden goose. For once, Daniel Snyder is looking better than the other DC Deciders, although that

is a relatively pitiful spectrum of comparison. Well, whatever, we got the football back on the burner, and that is awesome. Before we get to that, however, there is the little matter of the Hungarian Grand Prix.

There was no Grand Prix in Hungary in 1961, so we will pick up with the season long retrospective of the 1961 Yankee Champion with the Italian GP at Monza in early September. This week's tilt is at the Hungaroring, just outside of Budapest. It is a dusty course that has many of the limitations on overtaking and competitiveness of Monaco without an ounce of the charm and elegance. In other words, as a circuit, it is blech.

Sebastian Vettel still has a 77 point lead over his Red Bull teammate Mark Webber, and 82 points over a resurgent Lewis Hamilton of McLaren. They simply are not going to catch Vettel, but the remainder of the season looks to be much more competitive across the board and the race for all positions but the Championship will be fierce. Practice revealed Hamilton still fast, followed by Alonso and Button. The other marques waited just a little too late to catch up Red Bull, but they clearly have as to speed.

The BIG news is the continued Murdochization of F1, and it is not welcome:

The bad news comes from Britain, where the country's F1 fans are seething over the announcement that the BBC and Sky Sports have signed a joint deal to show Formula One from 2012 to 2018, with only half the races being shown on free-to-air TV and the other half on pay TV.

More coverage of the SkyTV deal with F1 [here](#); and the sad truth on where all the riches of F1 are going is to a spoiled little rich bitch. Well, at any rate, at least the race is back to live broadcast in the US again, with coverage starting at 7:30am EST and 4:30am PST on SpeedTV.

Now, and without further adieu (i.e. before Marcy kills me), we move to NFL FOOTBALL!!! Yea! It's back! Thanks to universe masters that actually can cut a deal without screwing the pooch royally, the NFL is back and the agreement mandates a whole decade of uninterrupted football free of labor disputes. And with that, we are off on a flurry of signings trades and activity. Let's take a look at what is up with that.

As Ms. Wheel has already pointed out, and somewhat unexpectedly, Bill Bel and the Pats have pulled another fast one and made a huge splash by signing both Fat Albert Haynesworth and Ochocinco. Even money on whether this is genius or catastrophe. Just to throw a little water on the parade, here is Jason Whitlock:

Albert Haynesworth has no love for football. He plays the game because he's good at it and it financially rewards him. The money he bilked the Redskins for is all he ever wanted from the game. Mission accomplished.

He has no desire to be an all-time great. His effort will always be inconsistent. He is not Randy Moss, an edge player whose penchant for taking plays off can be worked around. Haynesworth, a defensive tackle, is a cancer at the heart of a defense. His unwillingness to work breaks down the entire unit. Defenses are built on trust, gap control and every man filling his lane. You can't have trust with Haynesworth in the middle of your defense.

....

And I don't get Ochocinco, either.

It's a myth that Ochocinco has some great love of football. Ochocinco has a love of attention. He spent the entire offseason attention-whoring. He rode bulls and race cars. He tried out for soccer. He did whatever he could to

attract the attention of ESPN cameras.

Sound familiar?

It's the same act he pulls on the football field. The alleged Patriots Way is that no man is bigger than the team. From the name on the back of his jersey, Ocho Cinco contradicts Belichick's philosophy.

Well, okay, okay then. The good news for the Pats is, despite earlier predictions, the Jets Jets Jets didn't really get as much done as they hoped. Read, they could not pull off signing Nnamdi Asomugha. They resigned Santonio Holmes, but that isn't enough to separate from Belichick and Bieber Brady (Ooops, Scribe informs me Giselle mad Tom get a haircut, and he will now be known as "Dancin Queen Brady"). The Fish picked up Reggie Bush but still have a hole at quarterback. Still may be in play for the only real story left in free agency, Kyle Orton, but less likely with their signing of journeyman Matt Moore. Bills are still lame. A team that did get some immediate help at QB is the Titans, who signed Matt Hasselbeck, who will lead them and groom Jake Locker for the future. With Peyton Manning ailing, and the Colts nothing without him, the AFC South could be up for grabs.

In the NFC, the sleeper team may be the Falcons. The Dirty Birds picked up defensive end extraordinaire Ray Edwards, late of the Vikings; and added stud receiver Julio Jones in the draft. Both are going to really solidify an already very good team. The Cardinals didn't do a lot, but the one significant move was a huge one in getting starting quarterback Kevin Kolb from the Iggles. Kolb is young, schooled by Andy Reid and has a cannon for an arm. That alone puts the Cards back in the mix in the NFC West and will make Spidey Fitzgerald a happy man. Still a weak division, but is going to be a lot of fun to watch, especially if Jim Harbaugh can firm up Alex Smith and the Niners and Sam

Bradford continues to progress for the Rams

The Eagles have made themselves quite a bit better with the addition of star cornerback Nnamdi Asomugha, who left the Raiders and could not be landed by the salivating Jets. Eagles also picked up Antonio Cromartie-Rogers in the Kolb trade with the Cards, and have gone from weak to very strong at CB. With their linebackers and Asante Samuel, the Eagles will be tough on defense. Better hope Mike Vick stays healthy though, because they now have Vince Young as backup, and Young cannot run the West Coast offense for shit. Andy Reid might want to risk getting a wang shot from Brett late at night and keep Favre on speed dial. Giants look like they may just resign Plaxico, which would be a decent move; but their draft was horrid and Eli is more bad than good lately. Redskins still suck, although they jettisoned the Haynesworth lead anchor and contract. Cowboys get Romo back, but jettisoned a LOT of talent, including on their O-Line; that is gonna hurt.

Oh, and the Cowboys also dumped flighty prima donna wideout Roy Williams. Williams was not exactly a genius, was a malcontent and had ping pong paddles for hands. So pairing Rock For Brain Roy with the sterling personality and self absorbed bonehead Jay Cutler is an obvious stroke of Einstein for the Bears. McNabb ain't enough to help the Vikes, so the Pack should get another title in the NFC Central/North/Whatever. I actually think the Lions may be the second best team in the division at this point.

There are a lot of other moves and grooves, but I will leave that up to you folks in the comments.

Oh, and as a parting shot, the US State Dept has refused visas for the Ugandan Little League team; crushing their hopes of being the first African team to ever qualify for Little League World Series. Sad.