

CHAMPIONSHIP EDITION

2013

Championship



EFL
ELITE FOOTBALL LEAGUE

2013

Championship

February 16, 2014

True Patriot Love!



Adrian Peterson



24

STARS



41

PATS

Adrian Peterson of the Charleswood Patriots dodges Markham safety **Jonathan Cyprien** on his way to a 55-yard TD run in 4th quarter action in the 7th Gale Sayers Game. The Pats running back saw lots of action in the biggest win in his team's history, rushing for 214 yards and scoring 2 TDs.



15-4-0

24

EFL
CHAMPIONSHIP

GALE SAYERS



14-5-0

41

PATS FROM START TO FINISH!

PEYTON BESTS LITTLE BROTHER ELI TO WIN FIRST EFL TITLE!

NORTH STAR OF THE GAME

Percy Harvin

9 Catches, 83 yards, 2 TDs

Team	1	2	3	4	OT	Total
Markham	3	7	0	14	-	24
Charleswood	14	13	7	7	-	41

PATRIOT OF THE GAME

Jacoby Jones

2 PR, 147 yards, 2 TDs

LOS ANGELES (AP) – At 3:00 pm local time on the west coast the gates at Round Table Stadium opened up on the 7th EFL Championship, ushering in a throng of fans eager to witness history in the making. While a game of this magnitude, by its nature, is historical all on its own, this particular contest carried extra significance. It would be the first time in the history of the EFL and its predecessor the NFL that two brothers had faced each other in the Championship. Although neither would be on the field at the same time as the other, both would feel the other's presence as they tried to lead their respective teams to victory. In the eyes of the football world, this would be a battle between brothers as much as a battle between teams vying for football's highest prize.

Peyton Manning of the Charleswood Patriots was the more experienced. The first pick in the EFL entry draft and veteran of 13 EFL playoff appearances, including 2 Finals, he had long ago established himself as one of the best regular season quarterbacks in history. But the ultimate victory had eluded him in the post-season. He had faced great opponents in those games but the losses had given rise to a reputation that he could not win the big one. **Eli Manning** of the Markham North Stars was younger and had entered the league later, in 2009, as a free agent. Originally signed by the expansion Stars he was traded, before he had played a snap, to the Pickering Spartans and his career had been a roller coaster ever since. He played for three different teams in his first three seasons before returning to North Stars in 2012 and leading them to a surprise Championship. Presiding over that miraculous run while his brother had sat out the season with an injury had given birth to his reputation as a winner, a big game quarterback. Peyton and Eli were brothers, but as quarterbacks people saw them worlds apart.

The sibling rivalry at the center of most of the media stories was, in reality, just one piece of a much bigger picture. Despite the accomplishments of both Manning brothers, neither could lay claim to being the main reason their teams had reached the final. The North Stars boasted the best defence in the EFL in terms of efficiency and ability to take the ball away from their opponents. They also had a punishing running game led by speedy power back **DeAngelo Williams** running behind All Pro guard, **Evan Mathis**, which laid the foundation for much of Eli's success in the passing game. The Patriots had a highly skilled supporting cast behind Peyton, including the league's leading rusher, **Adrian Peterson**, who

QUOTES OF THE GAME

"This was a team effort. We had star performances from a couple of our players but the guys in the trenches on both sides of the ball were the unsung heroes of this game. Our defence, as a whole, gets a game ball from me." – *Charleswood coach, Jason Findlay.*

"They brought their 'A' game and we didn't, from the coach down to the kicker. I deserve some of the blame here – I didn't make enough adjustments on offence." – *Markham coach, Darrin Jones.*

"The MVP should be our team, baby! I know you guys have to give away a car or something, and we can't all drive that car. So, I'll drive it!" – *Championship MVP, Jacoby Jones.*



ANGRY FAN



titter

HAPPY FAN

**Big Greta @Row54**

I am never coming back to this crazy town. Everyone is skinny because there is no food.

**Charlie Wood @Cwoodbannersun**

It has been a long time coming for this franchise. Congratulations #Coach Findlay on a total Championship effort.

had broken more tackles and scored more touchdowns than any other running back. The Pats' patch-work defence had held up over the regular season and was proving to be tougher in the post-season in defiance of expectations. And although Markham had emerged from the regular season with the best record, Charleswood had gone 9-1, including playoffs, since the half way point of the regular season.

"The Patriots are the hottest team in football, Bill," proclaimed ESPN play-by-play announcer **Phil Winterall** to his booth partner, commentator, **Bill Badden**. "Do you think they can continue their hot streak today?"

"Well, if they keep scoring they will, Phil," replied Badden, "the Patriots can score all sorts of ways and that's what's winning games for them this year – the points they're scoring."

"Markham has, some say, the best defence in the league, Bill. How do you think they stack up against the balanced attack of the Patriots?" Winterall inquired.

"They're going to try to stop the Patriots, Phil; they're going to try to stop the run *and* the pass," Badden replied. "Ninkovich, their lineman, is the guy to watch. He goes hard on every play. He's a warrior. Watch him – if he's on, the defence will be on."

"A lot of people are saying that Eli is better in the clutch than his older brother Peyton, Bill," Winterall continued. "Do you think that belief is warranted?"

"What is the clutch, Phil?" Badden fired back indignantly. "On the football field there is no such thing as a clutch. A car has a clutch, my hand clutches things, but a football field has 22 players on it trying to rub each other into the dirt. Sometimes you get rubbed in it, sometimes you do the rubbing. Sometimes you get lucky, sometimes you don't. Clutch has nothing to do with it; it's whether you rub people out or get rubbed out."

Gene Steratore, the head official, called the team captains onto the field for the coin toss. **Peyton Manning**, in red, and **Eli Manning**, in white, faced each other with grins on their faces and shook hands as a thousand cameras flashed, for a fleeting moment illuminating their visages with a quasi-divine halo. In a moment, however, these two brothers would turn into devils, hoping for their teammates to rub the other into the dirt. In a game that promised many ups and downs throughout, Eli took Round One by winning the coin toss and electing to receive. One more hand shake, grim-faced this time, then the brothers departed for their respective sidelines; for the next three hours or so they would be enemies.

"Are you surprised that the North Stars chose to receive instead of putting their league-leading defence on the field first, Bill?" Winterall asked as the special teams units took the field.

"Not at all, Phil!" Badden replied. "Sure they have a great defence, but the Patriots have a great offence. The last thing **Darrin Jones** wants is to fall behind a team with Peyton Manning and Adrian Peterson on it. He thinks he can score first and put the pressure on. I like the call, Phil, and I'm surprised you asked such a stupid question."



THE GAME



1st QUARTER (Charleswood 14, Markham 3) – The kick by **Garrett Hartley** was a line drive that bounced once and right into the arms of **Percy Harvin** at the 3 yard line. He exploded into a gap up the middle and, for a moment, looked as if he might break it loose for a big-gainer; but **Jamie Collins** collared him at the 35 to quiet the swelling crowd noise from the Markham fans and prompt relieved applause from the Patriots fans. With good field position for their opening series the Stars immediately went to the air, but the Charleswood secondary was ready for them. With both wide receivers double-covered, **Eli Manning** tried to dump it off to **DeAngelo Williams** but he was unable to haul it in with **Bjoern Werner** hanging over him.

"Werner may have arrived early there, Bill," observed Winterall, "but no flag on the play, which brings up 2nd down."

"Sometimes you just have to let them play football, Phil," commented Badden, "especially in a big game like this one. You don't want the refs deciding a game like this. Eli had nobody open on that play, so they aren't going to penalize the defence in a situation like that. Steratore is one of the best refs in the game, and right there is an example of why he's one of the best."

Eli dropped back to pass on second down, but before he could make his read a blitzing **Shaun Phillips** brought him down hard to the turf for an 8-yard loss. A deep pass attempt on 3rd and long was tipped away from **Jordy Nelson** by **Desmond Trufant** and, after three plays from scrimmage, the North Stars were punting.

Markham punter **Adam Podlesh** boomed a high one 52 yards deep that **Jacoby Jones** had to back-pedal to track down. He quickly switched gears and shot like a cannon up the middle of the field, catching the angling Markham coverage unit flat-footed and sprinting 79 yards untouched to the end zone as thousands of red-clad Pats' fans went wild. The Pats suddenly led 7-0 and their offence had not touched the ball.

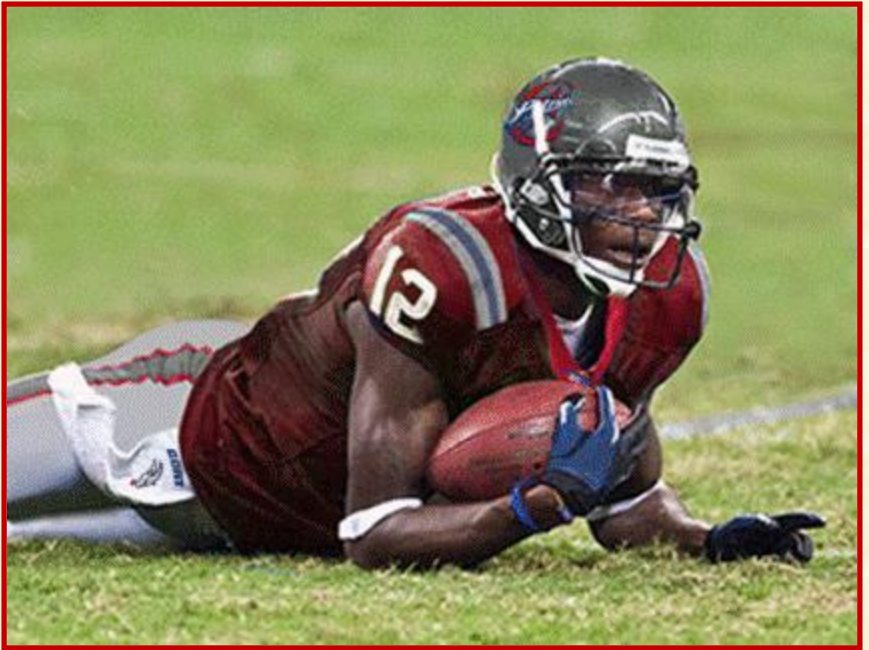
"You have to wonder if that was a blown coverage on that play, Bill," mused Winterall, "it looked like there was nobody there in the middle of the field for Markham."

"It looked that way, Phil because there was nobody there. You can be sure that they didn't design it that way, so I would expect that somebody is going to get a talking to on the Markham sideline," Badden replied.

Not wanting to experience the same fate, the Pats squibbed the ensuing kickoff. The ball took several Patriots' bounces through the Markham special teams unit and made it all the way to the goal line, where **Joe McKnight** picked it up and was quickly smothered at the 11-yard line by a converging Pats' coverage unit.

After a quick first down to gain some breathing room, the Stars turned to the running game with little-used **Christine Michael** getting the call on 3rd and 2. Veteran lineman **Ryan Pickett** read it well and, with a great individual effort, shed his block and stopped the rookie for no gain. Podlesh returned to the field to punt for the second time but never got the chance. Long-snapper **L.P. Ladouceur** sailed the snap high over his head, prompting a mad scramble for the ball that ended with **Marques Colston** falling on it at the Markham 12 yard line.

The Pats took over on downs with a short field in front of them. After slamming the Markham line for 7 yards with a pair of runs by rushing champion **Adrian**



Charleswood punt returner **Jacoby Jones** lies in the end zone after returning a punt 79 yards for a TD to open the scoring in the 7th EFL Championship. After an untouched run, Jones "pretended" to be tackled crossing goal line, but no flag for unsportsmanlike conduct was thrown.

Peterson, the Pats switched to the passing game as the Markham defence geared to stop the run. **Peyton Manning** made no mistake on his first pass of the day, hitting **Michael Crabtree** as he crossed the goal line for a 5-yard touchdown pass. It was hardly six minutes into the game and the Patriots were already two touchdowns in front.

"Markham hasn't been in a position like this all season, Bill," Winterall said as the Patriots set up to kickoff. "Still lots of time left, but they have to be concerned about the way this game has started. What do they do to get back in it?"

"First thing is, Phil, they have to score points. Second, they have to stop the Pats from scoring. They're only two touchdowns behind; if they can get those back and keep Peyton Manning off the board, they'll be tied," Badden said.

After another seeing-eye squib kick made it all the way to the Markham 3 and Harvin was bottled up on the return, the Stars took over at their 17 yard line. Pounding the ground with **DeAngelo Williams**, they made it into Patriots' territory before stalling on 3rd and 5 at the 25 on an incomplete pass by Eli into double coverage. But **Shayne Graham** came on to nail the field goal from 43 yards out to get Markham on the board, salvaging the drive and narrowing the deficit to 14-3. The Stars had moved the ball, but hadn't found the end zone, causing the announcers to echo the concern that was beginning to take root in the pro-Markham camp.

"It was important for Markham to come away with something there," **Bill Badden** pronounced solemnly. "But field goals are not going to beat these Patriots. Touchdowns beat field goals every time in this game. Right now the Patriots are getting the touchdowns and the North Stars are getting the field goals and that's why the Patriots are winning."

After a holding penalty on the subsequent kickoff return, the Patriots offence faced its first challenge of the day, taking over at their 16 yard line. Catching the Stars' defence guessing they managed a quick first down on a pair of 9 yard gains, one through the air and the other on the ground, then followed that up with a pair of tough runs by Peterson for another. The Pats were out of a hole and well in control as the whistle sounded on the end of the 1st quarter.

2nd QUARTER (Charleswood 27, Markham 10) – The second quarter picked up where the first had left off, with the Pats grabbing chunks of yardage on 1st and 2nd downs to move the chains. But inside the Markham red zone the Pats were finally checked when **Rob Ninkovich** broke through the line on a blitz and blindsided Peyton for a 5-yard loss on 2nd down, setting up a 3rd and long that the Pats could not convert. But after a long drive they looked quite content to settle for a 32-yard field goal to regain their two-touchdown advantage.

Harvin got a chance to return the ensuing kickoff. Starting from 5 yards in the end zone, he started fast but came to an abrupt end at the 22 yard line when he was wrapped up by **Louis Delmas**. The North Stars returned to the running game to get their offence moving again but did not enjoy their usual success this time. Three consecutive carries by Williams netted just 5 yards and again Podlesh came onto the field. Another high kick landed in the arms of **Jacoby Jones**, who stepped to the left to avoid a charging **Jon Bostic** and bolted up the center of the field. Again, there appeared to be no Markham defenders in the middle and soon Jones was taking on the punter. Podlesh lunged in a vain attempt to stop him but could not slow him down. To a delirious roar from the Patriots fans at Round Table Stadium, Jones crossed the goal line for a 68-yard punt return TD, his second of the game. The extra point made it 24-3 for Charleswood, and the North Stars were officially in a crisis situation.

"What do you say to your team at this point if you're Darrin Jones, Bill? Winterall asked after the crowd noise had diminished.

"Well, there's not much you can say other than to try and keep them from giving up, Phil. Remind them how much time is left and how quickly things can change. There's lots of game left to play and if they can get in the end zone before the half they are still in it." Badden replied.

"That's the wisest answer I've heard you give me in a long time, Bill," Winterall said.

"That's the smartest question you've come up with all year, Phil," Badden replied.

As if on cue, the North Stars' offence came out with an air of urgency. **Evan Mathis** laid a devastating block on Phillips to spring Williams for a 20-yard gain then Eli lofted a nice pass to **Heath Miller** for a 12-yard completion to convert a 3rd and long. Rarely-used **Joe McKnight** replaced Williams for a down and ripped off a 20-yard run that almost ended disastrously when **Leonard Johnson** stripped the ball out. But **Michael Roos** pounced on it for Markham at the 8 to keep the drive alive. On the next play Eli found Harvin open in a hole in the zone for an 8-yard touchdown. The Stars had answered the first Jones TD, but they still had two more to account for before they were back on even footing.

After a 29-yard kick return by Jones the Pats took over at their 36 with 3:37 left in the half. Taking their time they ran Peterson three consecutive times into the heart of a Markham defence that was looking for him but still he managed to gain a first down and reach the two-minute warning. With a fresh set of downs Peyton tested the Markham secondary and found it treacherous. But a hit by **John Abraham** on Peyton as he released a wobbler that was nearly picked off was deemed by the official to be too violent and the 15-yard penalty brought the Pats into Hartley's field goal range. Another pair of big runs by Peterson got them closer but a 3rd down stop by Markham at their 6 yard line brought out Hartley. The Pats' kicker finished off the half with a chip-shot field goal and the Pats went into the locker room with an impressive 27-10 lead.

3rd QUARTER (Charleswood 34, Markham 10) – Much like the first, the second half did not get off to a good start for Markham. After open speculation from the announcers that **Darrin Jones** might try an onside kick to start the 3rd quarter, the Stars smartly kicked it off and away from Jones, toward second-year man **Kendall Hunter**. For a breath-taking instant it looked like the Stars were about to get a huge break when Hunter muffed the kick; but he recovered almost instantly then showed he had some moves in the open field, returning it 30 yards to the Pats' 47. Picking up where they left off at the end of the 1st half, the Pats took their time moving up the field, leaning on the legs of Peterson and Manning's accuracy at short range to chew up yardage and valuable clock time. On the 12th play of the drive they came up short on 3rd down, bringing up 4th and inches at the Markham 4 yard line. But instead of going for the near-certain 3 points, **Jason Findlay** sent his offence back on the field. The next play was power-versus-power with a two-tight end Pats formation squaring off against a five-man Stars line. Peyton handed off to Peterson who stormed through the Markham line all the way into the end zone for another major. With half the 3rd quarter gone, the Pats now led 34-10 and things looked dire for Markham.

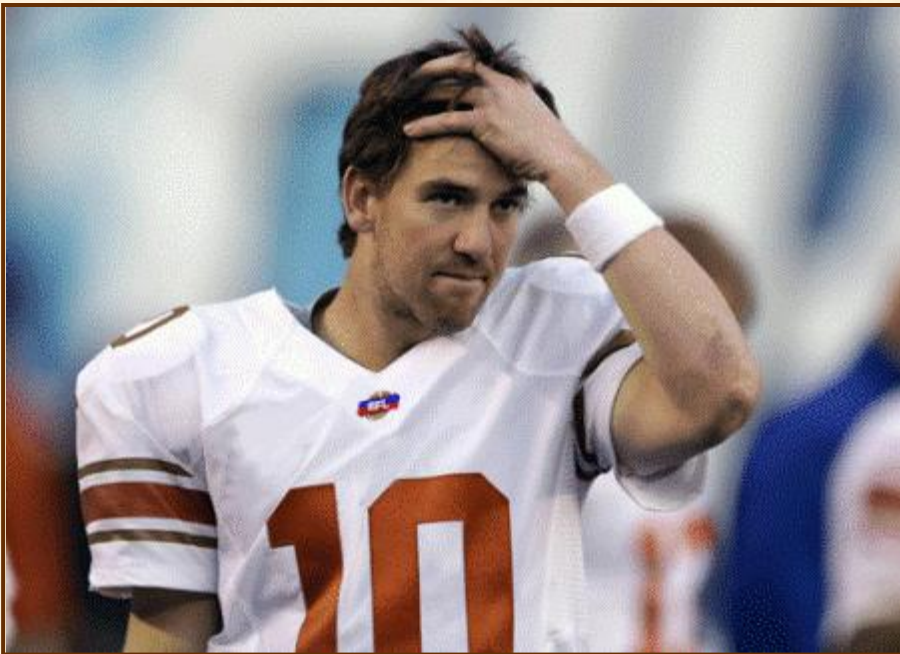
"The Patriots' line looks as good as they have looked all year, Bill," observed Winterall.

"That was power on power, Phil and the Patriots just showed everybody watching that they are charged up!" an animated Badden replied.

"That there was a back-breaking play. The Stars are going to need some kind of hullabaloo to get back in this one!"

There was a long pause on the network, then a quiet, "huh?" from **Phil Winterall**.

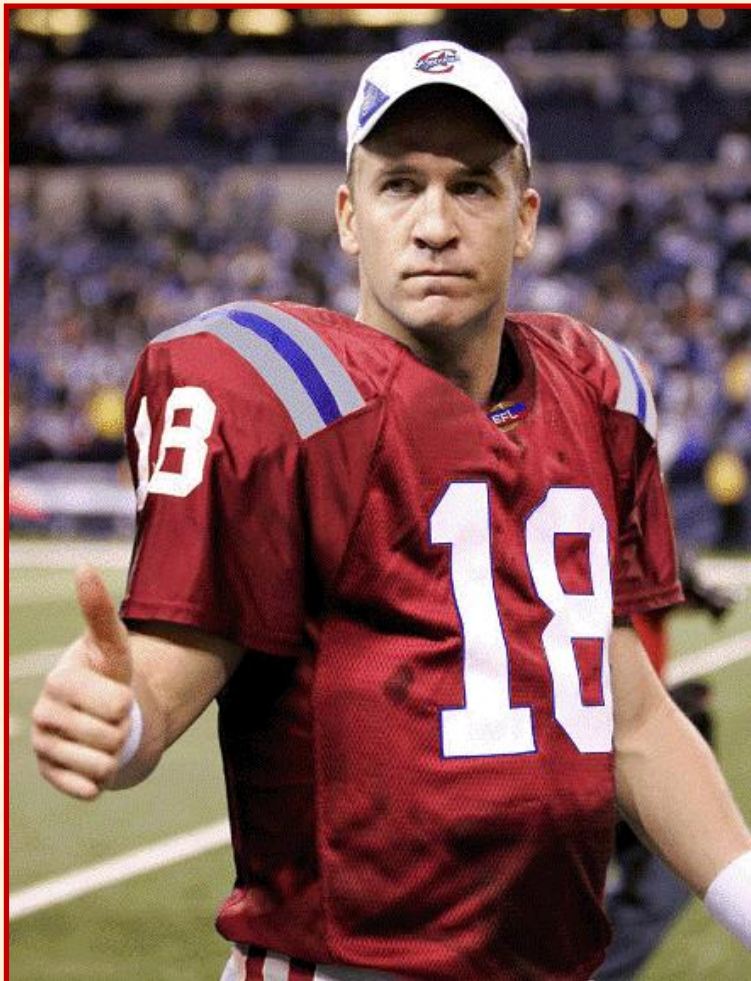
"They're going to need to try new things, Phil, so you need new words to describe new things," Badden dead-panned.



A frustrated **Eli Manning** looks on as his brother Peyton presides over another time-consuming drive. The Patriots got a big lead early and never looked back, while the Stars handed the ball over to Eli too late to make a difference.

Markham started the next possession at their 17 yard line. Facing a Pats' defence deploying 6 defensive backs the Stars kept running the ball, hoping to break a big play. They made it close to mid-field but were burning up valuable time. Finally, Eli tried to make things happen through the air but was stopped cold by the inspired play of the Pats defenders and a debilitating holding call on **Marques Colston**. On 4th and 16 the Stars were forced to punt, and the effort to keep the ball away from Jones resulted in just a 26-yard punt out of bounds.

Charleswood took over at their 36 and proceeded to send Peterson at the Markham line four straight times, grinding out 32 yards in those carries. With the Stars now fully committed to stopping the Patriots' all-star running back, Peyton seized the opportunity to sling a short pass to **Brian Hartline** that went for 17 yards before he was caught. The Pats were back inside the Markham red zone as the whistle blew to signal the end of the 3rd quarter. It certainly looked to both Charleswood and Markham fans alike, that the Pats were in control.



Peyton Manning gives his coach **Jason Findlay** the thumbs up after teammate **Adrian Peterson** ran 55 yards for a TD in the game's final minutes to seal certain victory. But Peyton's first championship came at the expense of his younger brother, Eli.

4th QUARTER (Charleswood 41, Markham 24) – The pause in play allowed the besieged Markham defence to rest. They came back and made a stop and got a bonus when Hartley missed the 31-yard field goal attempt.

Shedding the pretence of running the ball, the Stars adopted the passing game in earnest. Eli threw 11 times in the 12-play drive to the end zone that followed, completing the last to Harvin for an 11-yard touchdown. The two-point convert was good, making it 34-18 for the Pats. A kick-off out of bounds gave Charleswood good field position and they proceeded to eat up nearly 5 precious minutes before being forced to punt again.

The Stars continued their aerial assault but were forced to keep the ball underneath. It took them 15 plays to cover 80 yards but they found the end zone when Eli hit Miller on a hitch from 9 yards out. The two-point convert was not successful this time, however, and with 1:51 left in the game the Pats still led by two scores, 34-24.

Finally the time had come for an onside kick, but Charleswood was ready for it. **Marcus Gilbert** fell on the bouncing ball for the recovery, giving the Pats great field position at their 45 with 1:45 left in the game. For the 32nd time in the game Peterson received the hand off and bore through the Markham defence; except this time there would be no stopping him. Shedding tacklers in the secondary Peterson kept running until he reached the end zone 55 yards later to cap off an amazing day for him and his team. It was his longest run from scrimmage this year.

"What a fitting way to end it," **Bill Badden** declared. "Adrian worked all game for that. Look at him there celebrating. You don't think it matters to him? It matters! It matters to these professional athletes. They're like kids out there!"

Perhaps more fittingly, a late interception of his brother Eli allowed **Peyton Manning** to be the last Patriot to possess the ball and the first to signal final victory – his first EFL Championship.

POST GAME

In a season that lacked a truly dominant team in either Conference, it is perhaps ironic that the final game of that season would see one team dominate the other from start to finish. Not since the 2008 Florida Dragons scorched the Iowa City Cubs 38-9 in the 2nd EFL Championship has the outcome of a final game been less in doubt for longer than it was in this, the 7th Gale Sayers Game. Had the final outcome been reversed, however, it may not have surprised as much. The North Stars finished with the best record in the regular season and won the league's toughest Division. If there was a dominant team in 2013, arguably they were it. This loss, and the manner of it, had to be disappointing for **Darrin Jones**. But a horrible 2012 season followed by a slow start in 2013 may have served to disguise the league's true premier squad until the end. From the season's halfway point to the finishing point of the post-season the Charleswood Patriots were as red hot as their home jerseys. They won 10 of their last 11 games, becoming more formidable each week as the team gelled around their superstar leaders. With rushing title winner **Adrian Peterson** setting the beat, the virtuosic **Peyton Manning** conducted an offensive symphony that was music to the ears of Patriots fans. The defence, patched together through trades and free agency, struggled initially but grew to become a respectable complement to the offence; in the Final they played with inspiration, surrendering little until the end when the conclusion was foregone. The Battle of Brothers that sold this contest to many outside the protagonist cities never really developed. Eli was kept under tight control until it was too late while Peyton rarely needed to play his hand. After so many seasons when the Pats were expected to win but fell short, the real story, and pleasant irony for **Jason Findlay** is, that when nobody expected them to win, they did.



Who was slick in the Conference Finals?

"BRYLCREEM" THE EFL'S FIRST SPONSOR



Adrian Peterson
RB
Charleswood Patriots

32 Carries, 214 yards, 2 TDs. Kept the Stars down and out throughout.



Ryan Pickett
DT
Charleswood Patriots

7 Tackles, 2 Stuffs, 2 Hurries, 1 FF. Held Stars running game in check.

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2012 Markham (2-1)	3	7	0	14	24
2012 Charleswood (3-0)	14	13	7	7	41

Scoring Summary

1 13:53	Charleswood	TD Jones 79 punt return (Hartley)	0-7
1 8:58	Charleswood	TD Manning 5 pass to Crabtree (Hartley) (3-12-1:24)	0-14
1 3:09	Markham	FG Graham 43 (10-60-5:40)	3-14
2 9:36	Charleswood	FG Hartley 32 (13-70-8:21)	3-17
2 7:13	Charleswood	TD Jones 68 punt return (Hartley)	3-24
2 3:45	Markham	TD Manning 8 pass to Harvin (Graham,S) (7-66-3:21)	10-24
2 0:00	Charleswood	FG Hartley 24 (10-58-3:34)	10-27
3 7:56	Charleswood	TD Peterson 4 run (Hartley) (13-53-6:59)	10-34
4 9:45	Markham	TD Manning 11 pass to Harvin (2 - Williams) (12-79-3:38)	18-34
4 1:51	Markham	TD Manning 9 pass to Miller (2 - failed) (15-80-3:03)	24-34
4 1:30	Charleswood	TD Peterson 55 run (Hartley) (1-55-0:15)	24-41

Markham North Stars

Passing	Att	Cmp	Yds	25	In	Td	Sk	Rate
Manning	39	23	189	0	1	3	1	86.4

Rushing	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	10	Lg	TD
Williams,D	18	110	6.1	6	5	20	0
McKnight	4	36	9.0	2	1	20	0
Manning	1	7	7.0	0	0	7	0
Michael	2	5	2.5	0	0	5	0
Jones	1	4	4.0	1	0	4	0
Podlesh	1	0	0.0	0	0	0	0

Receiving	No	Dp	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	25	Lg	TD
Harvin	9	0	10	83	9.2	6	0	15	2
Colston	5	0	8	38	7.6	3	0	12	0
Miller	5	0	7	49	9.8	4	0	12	1
Nelson	2	1	8	18	9.0	0	0	9	0
Williams,D	1	2	4	-2	-2.0	0	0	0	0
Mathis	1	0	1	3	3.0	0	0	3	0
Spaeth	0	0	1	0	0.0	0	0	0	0

Fumbles	No	Rec	TD
McKnight	1	0	0
Podlesh	1	0	0
Colston	0	1	0
Roos	0	1	0

Kick Returns	No	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
Harvin	4	90	22.5	32	0
McKnight	2	17	8.5	11	0
Pead	1	14	14.0	14	0

Punt Returns	No	Fc	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
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Kicking	Fg	Lg	Xp	Pts
Graham	1-1	43	1-1	4

Punting	No	Yds	Avg	Tb	20	Bk	Lg
Podlesh	3	119	39.7	0	0	0	52

Defense	Tkl	Sk	Def	Stf	Hur	FF	INT
Jackson	7	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Ninkovich	6	1	0	0	0	0	0-0
Cole	6	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Tillman	6	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Cromartie	5	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
Campbell	5	0	0	1	0	0	0-0
Cyprien	4	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Reed,E	2	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Byrd	2	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Bostic	2	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Williams,D	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Woodley	1	0	0	1	0	0	0-0
Abraham	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Angerer	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0

Charleswood Patriots

Passing	Att	Cmp	Yds	25	In	Td	Sk	Rate
Manning	15	11	104	0	0	1	1	114.3

Rushing	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	10	Lg	TD
Peterson	32	214	6.7	11	7	55	2
Manning	4	3	0.8	0	0	2	0

Receiving	No	Dp	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	25	Lg	TD
Crabtree	5	0	6	48	9.6	4	0	14	1
Hartline	4	0	4	43	10.8	3	0	17	0
Peterson	1	0	1	3	3.0	0	0	3	0
Witten	1	0	3	10	10.0	1	0	10	0
Holmes	0	0	1	0	0.0	0	0	0	0

Fumbles	No	Rec	TD
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Kick Returns	No	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
Jones,J	2	45	22.5	29	0
Hunter	1	30	30.0	30	0
Gilbert	1	0	0.0	0	0

Punt Returns	No	Fc	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
Jones,J	2	0	147	73.5	79	2

Kicking	Fg	Lg	Xp	Pts
Hartley	2-3	32	5-5	11

Punting	No	Yds	Avg	Tb	20	Bk	Lg
Huber	1	33	33.0	1	0	0	33

Defense	Tkl	Sk	Def	Stf	Hur	FF	INT
Pickett	7	0	0	2	2	1	0-0
Jackson	7	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Wilson	6	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Johnson,L	5	0	1	0	0	1	0-0
Delmas	5	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Harris	3	0	3	0	0	0	0-0
Trufant	3	0	2	1	0	0	1-0
Taylor	3	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
McFadden	3	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Werner	3	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Phillips	2	1	0	0	0	0	0-0
Barron	2	0	2	0	0	0	0-0
Redding	2	0	0	1	0	0	0-0
Hosley	2	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Gholston	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Collins	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Jones,J	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Williams,K	0	0	1	0	1	0	0-0



2 PRs, 147 yards, 2 TDs. Two early TDs gave Pats the fast start they needed.

	MAR	CHP
First Downs	24	20
Rushes	27-140	36-217
Passes	39-23-189	15-11-104
Sacked	1-8	1-5
Fumble	2	0
Penalties	5-40	4-48
Turnovers	1	0
Missed Tackles	8	6
Dropped Passes	3	0
Bad Passes	3	1
Passes 25+	0	0
Runs 10+	6	7
Blitzes	8	18
Time	28:18	31:42
Third Down	4-14	4-9
Fourth Down	3-4	1-1
Red Att/Td/Fg	3/3/0	5/2/2
Net Offense	321	316



AT THE EFL CHAMPIONSHIP *With Spats McChad*

LOS ANGELES – LA needs no introduction. Unlike the suburban sprawl of Gwinnett County, Charleswood, Durham or Garland, (the settings for four of the last five Gale Sayers games), LA is a real city, with real tall buildings, world class restaurants, a rich history, a distinctive culture, a thriving nightlife, large ethnic enclaves, heavy traffic, and lots of crime to keep the survival instincts of its residents sharp. As a New Yorker I have the “big city cred” that enables me to look down on, or appreciate, various aspects of LA while remaining secure in the knowledge that, like a younger brother, LA may carve its own identity and blaze its own path, but it will never catch up to NY as a repository of culture, nor shed the elder city's influence. It is not smugness that provokes me to point this out, just a respect for reality not always shared by my West Coast colleagues in the Media. No matter what they do, they are always at least three hours behind New York.

Eli Manning must feel a bit like LA in relation to his brother Peyton and his New York-like stature in the football universe. Eli has the glitz and glamour – a Championship to his name and a Gale Sayers Ring in his trophy cabinet – but people still refer to him as “Peyton's younger brother.” The legacy of **Peyton Manning** extends back to before the existence of the EFL. He was the last quarterback to win a Super Bowl before the NFL collapsed in scandal. He was the first pick of the EFL's inaugural draft and, as the face of the Patriots' franchise since its inception, has led them into the playoffs every season except the last which, not coincidentally, was also the only season in which he didn't take a single snap. His return in 2013 brought the Pats out of a deep slumber, more of a nightmare actually, and had their season ended abruptly against York the week after finishing in first place in the East Division, fans, scribes and personalities across the Continent would have declared his season a triumph anyway. The fact that he led his team to the Championship Game is all gravy, and fans in the Canadian Province of Manitoba are lapping it up.

CITY OF ANGELS

While waiting for my luggage at Los Angeles International Airport I could spot the Charleswood fans from hundreds of yards away. They were the ones carrying thick Canada Goose Down jackets trudging along in Timberland winter boots, faces red with exertion as they hauled their luggage and their bodies absorbed the shock of getting on a plane in -13 degree temperatures and getting off a plane in 80 degree temperatures. Do they not have the Weather Network in Canada?

It took me 30 minutes by cab to reach my room at the Best Western Dragon Gate Inn from LAX. Smack dab in the middle of LA's China Town, the Dragon Gate was a merely average hotel, not the 4-star venue I have grown accustomed to. But it turns out that I was lucky to have a room at all. The dazzling attractions and the balmy weather of the ‘City of Angels’ had lured football fans from all over North America, Europe, Polynesia and, bizarrely, China – particularly from the City of Foshan, where the populace of Markham's “friendship city” had adopted the Markham North Stars as their “Friendly Super Team.” This was shaping up to be the most well attended EFL Championship in the seven-year history of the game.

LA Knights' correspondent, **Gabrielle Laurent-Vainluven** had a hand in booking my room, as she had a hand in virtually all of the pre-game festivities in the week leading up to the big game. For a solid month she had been nearly impossible to reach by phone, leaving me to resort to Titter to keep abreast of her activities. She had involved herself with everything from dances, to cocktail parties, to harbour cruises, to beach parties, to theme nights, to guided bus and helicopter tours, to concerts and shows, match-making singles club crawls, and fashion shows – oh! the fashion shows – where football-themed apparel ranging from evening party gowns to pyjamas was paraded incessantly down runways at sparsely attended Football Fashion Galas. I could picture a human being purchasing a satin Monarchs evening gown. But what kind of entity would venture out in public wearing the *avant-garde* ‘Knights Evening Dress?’ That unsightly monstrosity was more costume than clothing, but apparently there are people on the west coast willing to wear something like it in public on days other than Halloween.

No sooner had I arrived at my hotel than my phone rang. It was Gabby.

“Spats, darling, I can't talk long. Did you get to your hotel in one piece?” She asked, sounding exhilarated but a touch hoarse. “When you arrive there will be package for you from me at the concierge's desk. It has your itinerary and your complimentary passes,” she continued, not waiting for me to answer. “The Knights are throwing a welcome party for the media at

the airport Marriott tonight. That's the first event on your list. See you there, Spats dear!" <click>

For all Gabby knew I could have dropped the call and never heard a word she said. She had a fleeting attention span at the best of times but the excitement of the biggest party week of the football season had cranked her up to '10' on the flutter dial.

People can say what they want about Gabby's football IQ (or lack of it) but her social IQ is off the charts. She may still think that an off tackle run is any ball-carrier running away from a defender, but she knows what makes any professional tick after work hours, from football player to neurosurgeon, to lowly journalist. Set up a writer with free food and drink and by the end of the night he or she will write any column you want.

The week before the game soon turned into a steady blur of activities, sights, sounds, flavours and intriguing smells, as I found myself sucked into the vortex of Gabby's game week social calendar. From the beach volley-football challenge (volleyball with footballs) on Dockweiler Beach, where **Grim Reaper** of Death Valley stole the show with his ability to instantly appear under the ball wherever it was hit, to 'James Bond Theme Night' at the Silo



DJ Deadmau5 sports his team's colours while performing at the Conga Room in LA on Friday night before the EFL Championship. North Stars fans had trouble getting into the packed event in support of their football team.

Vodka Bar on the eve of the Championship, and everything in between, my notes became sparser and harder to read as the week progressed. It was a bacchanalian orgy of excess that somehow managed to stay just inside the boundaries of respectability and good taste despite numerous opportunities for it to stray to the darker side of the LA party scene. Nobody got killed, or lost an eye, overdosed, or got stabbed, although millions of brain cells will be forever lost to the EFL Media Pool from the scorching effects of Grey Goose.

By Saturday night, I still had enough of my faculties left to question Gabby, who showed up at the Silo dressed as Miss Money Penny, about her choice of James Bond as the theme for a football party. "What does James Bond have to do with football, or sports writing, Gabs?" I asked. (I had started to call her Gabs by Thursday – the single syllable was easier).

"Don't be silly, Spats! Every man wants to be James Bond and every sensible woman wants James Bond. Journalists, hiding



Chad Kroeger of Nickelback belts out the lyrics to "See You at the Show" in a Patriots Support Concert at the Viper Room in LA. Kroeger, a huge Pats fan, set aside 200 free tickets for Charleswood residents.

behind their laptops and Blackberrys, observing the world but not participating in it, more than anything they secretly want to be *James Bond*! Look at everybody having fun! Tell me that James Bond wasn't the perfect idea!"

I was speechless. She was right. I had always wanted to be James Bond. It had taken a middle-aged (but 30s-something looking) wannabe fashion diva and ex-celebrity gossip columnist to point me to that insight. I looked at myself in the mirror behind the bar wearing my black cashmere Pierce Brosnan-era turtleneck from 'Die Another Day.' *I'd make a good James Bond*, I thought. I downed my dry martini, shaken not stirred, and got down to some serious partying that would last well past midnight.

After 6 days in LA, I hadn't written a single word about football....Mr. Finchley was going to fire me.

I woke up in the bathtub of my hotel room, a painful kink in my neck from sleeping in a deep porcelain bowl with a towel for a pillow. *Why the f-- am I in the bathtub?* I thought. I sat up then pushed myself out of the tub. The sudden rush of blood from my head made me dizzy for a moment, but the renewed circulation of blood

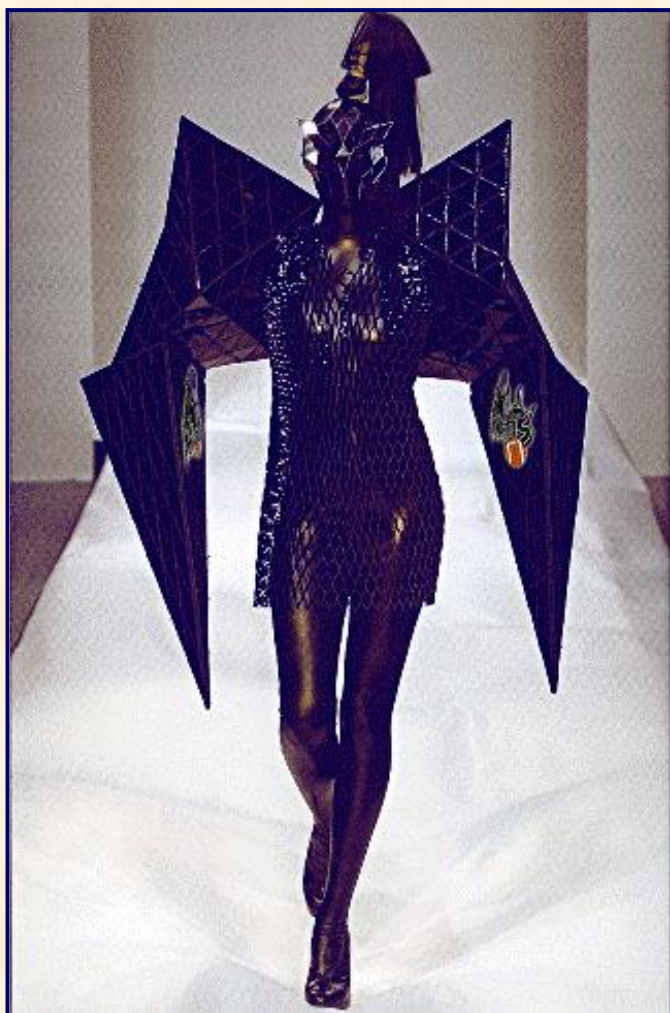
in my system started to bring back my memory – that and the loud rattling of grunts and snorts coming from the bedroom.

I stumbled out of the bathroom and turned on the bedroom light to confirm my fears; yes indeed, there they were, in no better condition than I remember seeing them in when they stumbled into my taxi at an hour closer to 6:00 am than to the midnight that preceded it. **Charlie Wood** was on the bed, wrapped up in every one of its covers, while **Lanny McDonald** lay on the floor like a corpse, flat on his back with his mouth wide open. If it hadn't been for the unpleasant sounds rumbling out of his mouth I would have called 9-1-1 for fear he was dead.

Charlie and I had had to carry Lanny into my hotel room because he had passed out and wouldn't leave the taxi when we tried to drop him off at his hotel. He had been in and out of consciousness at the Silo since about 11:30 pm, his Sean Connery-era white dinner tuxedo stained with liquor and beer and his fly undone. He probably should have been taken to the hospital, but in the state we were in it seemed we were doing him a favour by going out of our way to bring him to his hotel. Why Charlie was with us wasn't clear to me – I didn't like him very much and I knew he was jealous of me. But there he was, hogging the blankets on my bed and drooling on the pillow. I looked at my phone.....it was 1:12 pm. Oh my God.....it was 1:12 pm on *Game Day*!!

ROUND TABLE STADIUM

Round Table Stadium, home of the LA Knights, looks like a fortress from a distance. The blue-hued faux-stone facade and streamer pennants lining the circumference give it a quasi-authentic Medieval appearance on the approach. Once inside, however, a more typical LA atmosphere dominates, with high end drink and food options and trendy boutiques interspersed with food stands offering more traditional game day fare of hot dogs and 2 litre cups of Coke. The only hint that there might have been a Feudal Lord nearby were the scantily clad “serving wenches” in the VIP sections and the tassel-capped jesters making the rounds selling beer and soft drinks. Otherwise, it was all LA – upscale and pretentious.



Gabrielle Laurent-Vainluven unveils her 'Knights Gown' at the LA Convention Centre to kick-off the '1st Annual EFL Fashion Gala.' The Knights' reporter was at the center of over 20 parties and events leading up to the 2013 EFL Championship. "Football is back in style in LA!" she declared, despite sparse attendance here.

It had been a mad scramble to get to the stadium. **Lanny McDonald** had been almost impossible to move. He was more than hung-over, he was virtually incapacitated. Finally, in desperation, we fed him a single of *Canadian Club* from the room's mini-bar. That got him up, but by the time we got him moving there was no longer time for him to go to his hotel and change his clothes.

Charlie Wood was hurting, but at least he was mobile. He had purchased a change of clothes from the souvenir shop in the hotel. With Lanny wearing his stained white tux and Charlie sporting his 'Chinatown' pullover and dragon sweat pants I donned my darkest sunglasses and Guinness flat cap in the hope that nobody would recognize me with this sorry-looking duo. If the teams they were covering were half as unprepared for the game as these two, the Championship would surely turn into a comedy of errors.

Traffic was brutal and security was tight, turning the 10-minute drive to the stadium into an hour of pure exasperation. By the time we got to the Media VIP lounge kickoff was a mere 30 minutes away and I hadn't even plugged in my laptop.

"Spats, dear, you're here!" cried Gabby the moment she set eyes upon me. She looked relieved, then appropriately concerned when she saw **Lanny McDonald**. "Is he okay?" she asked.

"Get him a screwdriver and a beer and he'll be fine," I answered. "Sorry we're late, but a couple of us overdid it last night." I tilted my head right toward Lanny then left toward Charlie.

"Spats slept in the bathtub," Charlie chortled, "I guess that makes three of us who overdid it."

"That's because you snore louder than helicopter, Wood," I shot back.

"You slept in the bathtub, Spats?" Gabby asked with the same tender concern she might have shown had I spent the night naked on the street.

"Oh never mind," I said. I wanted to change the subject to the real reason all of us were here in the first place. "The game starts soon. Where can I plug in?" I asked her, holding up my computer.

"Oh, I've got a special seat for you Spats. Follow me."



Grim Reaper had the time of his life at Dockweiler Beach in Playa del Rey in the week leading up to Gale Sayers Game VII. The Undertakers correspondent for the *Death Valley Obituary* never made it to Round Table Stadium for the big game after reportedly calling in sick. "I've never felt so alive in all my death, so I need to rest up a bit," he reportedly said.

Gabby took my hand and led me to the front of the lounge where three small tables and chairs were empty at the window looking out onto the field. They were prime spots in a first class lounge. *Gabby must really like me*, I thought. The other two were for Charlie and Lanny. Since they represented the two cities competing in this game, it was only appropriate that they get consideration as well.

I looked around and noticed that almost everyone else had made it here before me. But a solitary dark cowed figure in the back caught my eye as I did a mental head count. There should have been *two* solitary dark cowed figures in the back, not one (supernatural beings such as **Death** and **Grim Reaper** are solitary by nature and are properly referred to as being "solitary" even if they are

part of a group). The black void where a face should have been and the absence of a scythe in his hand told me the solitary thing in the back was **Death** of the *Death Valley Epitaph*.

"Where's **Grim Reaper**?" I asked.

"Oh, nobody knows for sure," Gabby replied as she helped Charlie prop **Lanny McDonald** up in his chair. "Somebody said he was hanging out at the beach. Nobody will ask Death if he knows; they're afraid of him. But he looks worried to me."

"How can you tell when a guy without a face is looking *worried*?" I asked her sceptically.

"Things are dying around him, Spats; small things like plants and insects. Beer is going flat, food is spoiling, and there's a bit of a bad smell. We had to move Orville and a couple of the other older folks far away from him for fear they might end up like the plants. Thank you," she said as a serving wench placed a beer in front of her. "Here you go Lanny, drink your beer," she said softly as she raised the can to his lips. The reporter for the *Markham Economist and Sun* sipped slowly at first then took the can in his hand and began to swig. "That's a good boy," Gabby crooned.

I wasn't afraid to ask Death anything (except, of course, when my final time was supposed to come) but my stomach was a tad upset and I was concerned that if I got too close to him in the worried state he was in I might need to find the bathroom in a hurry, so I filed the question away as something I would ask him later and turned my mind to the game.

The Game! It had been too easy to forget that there was an actual football game at the center of all this madness. What a difference a venue like LA made in the lead-up to the EFL Championship. Whereas in Garland last year people had nothing to do *except* talk about the game, this year in LA there was so much going on *around* the game, that the week-long festivities had become the main story. For those of us living that story, the game had become virtually irrelevant, apart from the fact that everyone we had met during the week of festivities were either going to the game, or trying to get tickets to the game.

When the subject of the game did manage to interrupt the celebrity gossip shows and hourly 'Championship Week' Party Reports from the local TV and radio stations, the focus was on the showdown between the Manning Brothers. Old home movies, Manning family photo albums, and interviews with grade school teachers and relatives dominated the media as journalists tried to trace the rivalry back to their childhood days when Eli smashed a model of a fire truck that Peyton had spent weeks assembling. Although great effort went into making these stories balanced, it was not hard to form the opinion that Eli had been a bit of a spoiled brat and that it would look good on him if Peyton took him to the woodshed in front of a national audience on Sunday.

Even hardcore disciples of football analytics were getting side-tracked by the charms of biggest city on the west coast. The drab and technical **Lazor Plonk** of *Scouts Ltd* gave a brief review of the DJ Deadmau5 concert at the Conga Room in the lead-up to a single paragraph on new formulas designed, in theory, to identify the most impactful player on the Patriots' defence. **Harry Schultz** of *FootballOutriders.Org* spoke the unspeakable when he said that he had a "feeling" this might be Peyton's year. While mainstream

CHAMPIONSHIP MVPS

I – 2007

LaDainian Tomlinson
Chino Convicts

II-2008

Will Witherspoon
Florida Dragons

III-2009

DeAngelo Williams
Florida Dragons

IV – 2010

Chris Johnson
Pickering Spartans

V – 2011

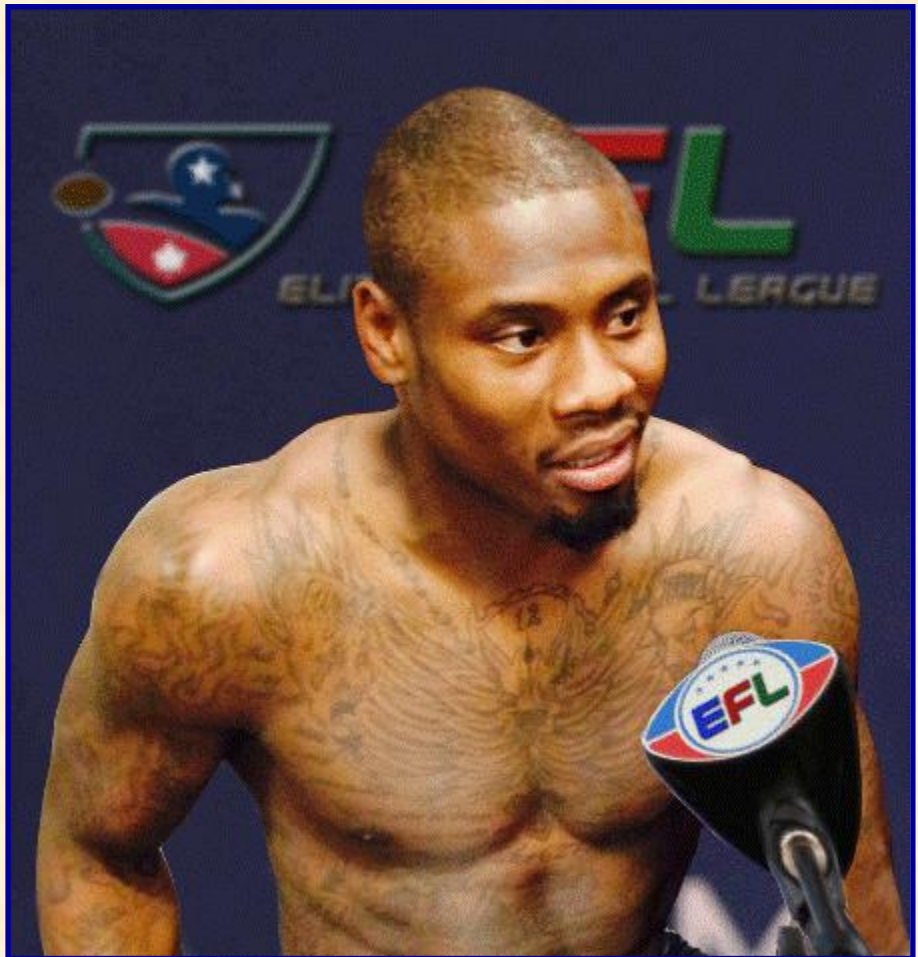
Josh Freeman
Los Angeles Knights

VI – 2012

Eli Manning
Markham North Stars

VII – 2013

Jacoby Jones
Charleswood Patriots



A shirtless and animated **Jacoby Jones** addresses the media after being named the MVP of the 7th Gale Sayers Game. Jones narrowly beat out teammate **Adrian Peterson** for the highest individual honour, but downplayed its significance, saying the win was a team effort.

network dinosaurs like **Bill Badden** and **Phil Winterall** may still have licence to *feel*, in the conventional way, about football and Peyton's or anyone else's chances, the new breed of "Stat Geek" fans enjoy no such privilege. If Peyton should be the subject of a "feeling," good or bad, there had better be numbers based on sophisticated formulas to back it up!

By the time the Patriots and North Stars were lining up for the opening kickoff, Lanny was alert, sort of, the rye and the Michelobs finally working their magic. "Elizgonnagethizshanceheer," he said to me.

"Huh?" I replied.

But before Lanny could attempt to clarify, the roar of the Markham faithful sounded over him as **Percy Harvin** fielded a line drive kick by Pats' kicker **Garrett Hartley** and sprinted like a bolt of lightning through a gap in the center of the field. It was quickly followed by a sharp bellow of approval from **Charlie Wood** as the Pats' defenders slammed the door shut on what had momentarily looked like a big play developing. Still, it was a nice return – 32 yards – giving Markham the ball at their 35 yard line.

Eli stepped up behind center, looking cool and committed, no discernible nervousness in his demeanour. The Stars had been in control of their destiny with little opposition all season, dominating often and finding ways to win when they were not bringing their 'A' game to the field of play. On top of that, their quarterback had occupied the centre of the EFL's biggest stage once before and had brought down the house. There was no reason to think they would falter this time, but many good reasons to bet they would continue their winning ways and become the second team to bring home the Gale Sayers Trophy two years in a row. But the air of confidence that permeated the Markham camp dissipated like fog in the wind over the ensuing 6 minutes.

The Patriots defence was flat-out ready for the Stars on the opening series to the point where it crossed my mind that they had been tipped off to the Markham game plan. Eli looked for Harvin on the first play but he was double-covered and a hurried dump-off to **DeAngelo Williams** went through his hands. On the next play Pats' linebacker **Shaun Phillips** timed his blitz perfectly and dumped Manning in the back field before he could make his first read. On 3rd down the Pats' secondary dropped back and closed the window on Eli's deep pass attempt with **Desmond Trufant** tipping the ball away from **Jordy Nelson**. Three-and-out for -8 yards was a poor enough start, but it became a disaster when **Jacoby Jones** exploded through the middle of the Markham coverage team to take the punt by **Adam Podlesh** all 79 yards back to the house for a stunning opening score.

In games of such magnitude as the Championship, the effect of a big play such as this one becomes magnified, especially in the excruciatingly tense early minutes. It is extremely exhilarating for the scoring team and equally dispiriting for the team that gets scored against. The effect of the opening haymaker by the Pats' special teams would carry over into the next series.

Having stumbled trying to pass the ball three times on their opening possession, the Stars followed up on their second try with three straight runs, introducing an element of trickery by bringing in rookie running back **Christine Michael** in an attempt to disguise their intention. On 3rd and 2, the Pats continued to guard against the pass while Michael ran straight into the enormous girth of tackle **Ryan Pickett** to stop himself cold.

"Funny about the brain, isn't it, Spats?"

I looked up and saw **Sir Reginald Malcolm Clapham** of the *Durham Diggatel and Pick* standing over my shoulder, a cup of tea in one hand and a smokeless pipe in the other. "It is full of such intoxicating ideas and if you listen to it too often you will certainly appear as if you are intoxicated."

I wasn't following his train of thought, but that could have been because I was still intoxicated from the previous night. It could also have been because Sir Reginald's inbred English arrogance had the effect of unpleasantly distracting one from the content of what he was saying and bringing attention to the way he said it. "Spell it out for me, Reggie; I don't have time for parlour talk."

An amused grin creased his visage and he answered, "Very well, Spats. I'm sure that Coach Jones thought it was a good idea at the time, but he must have felt foolish watching young Michael running blindly into the one body that could have stopped him on that play while the veteran running back stood with his hands on his hips on the sideline."

Sir Reggie had a point. Michael had carried the ball 73 times during the regular season for a 5.3 average – a respectable number of carries and an impressive average. But on an important 3rd down early in the most important game of the year, running out of a 3-wide set, experience mattered more than stats. Williams had that experience and Michael did not. Markham had failed to impose their will on the ground against 5 and 6-DB sets and was about to go three-and-out for the second consecutive possession.

Did their confidence take a sub-conscious hit as a result? The players on the Markham sideline will likely deny that to the day they die, but the proof that their pre-game swagger was fading fast came on the next play. **L.P. Ladouceur**, on the team for the sole purpose of snapping the ball accurately a long distance, sailed the snap high over the head of punter **Adam Podlesh**, setting off a chaotic scramble for the ball that ended with Markham covering it up at their 12 yard line. It hardly mattered; Charleswood took possession on downs inside the Markham red zone. Their offence strode onto the field for the first time and wasted no time putting the game plan into motion. They pounded the Markham line twice with **Adrian Peterson**, picking up 7 yards and bringing the Markham defenders into the box on third down to shut down the league's rushing king. But **Peyton Manning** was about to send a message to the North Stars that they did not have the luxury of gunning for AP on every play. He dropped back 3 steps and fired a bullet to **Michael Crabtree** in the end zone for a 5-yard TD pass. In devastatingly rapid fashion, the Pats had seized early control of the game with a 14-0 lead.

"Yeah, they're on their game I am telling you right now," **Charlie Wood** pumped his fist as he turned toward me and Lanny. "Write this down, Spats: Pats 24, Stars 0. That's my prediction. Eli's going to panic! Four interceptions minimum."

"Zillotsuvgameleftsharlee," replied **Lanny McDonald** before swiftly downing a scotch and soda.

"I'm writing that down Charlie," I chuckled. "And I'm also writing down that I think you're drunk."

The frenetic tempo of the first six minutes abruptly gave way to a more measured, but unnaturally slow pace. Neither offence looked to be in a hurry to score. Markham was simply being cautious as they tried to regain their balance. They settled for a field goal after a modestly efficient 60-yard drive ended with the Charleswood 'D' in perfect form to shut down a 3rd and 5 at their 25. The Pats offence appeared to already be in clock mode, taking their time and feeding Markham a heavy dose of Peterson.

"What are they doing?" incensed Monarch's scribe **Michael S. Hickenbottom** of the *Orange County Register* cried. "Why doesn't Peyton go deep? He can put this game away right now!"

"He's putting it away right now," Cubs' stalwart **Sparky McGillicuddy** of *The Iowan* said softly. "Watch and learn, grasshopper."

Hickenbottom looked offended, but before he could say anything, **Mike Myers** of *The Scarberian* swooped in with a tray of B-52's. "Shooters, folks! Everybody has to have one, come on, help yourself!" In less than a minute they were all gone – party mode was setting in.

With the score 17-3 for the Pats, the Stars made a show of not panicking by continuing to grind it out on the ground with Williams. The Pats ignored him and stuck to their plan designed to keep Eli from sneaking a game-breaking deep TD-strike into the play mix. On 3rd and 3 the Pats boldly deployed 6 DBs and played the pass. Many teams had paid a steep price for ignoring Williams on third down, but on this day the Pats would not pay that fine. Eli pitched left to Williams but **Ryan Pickett** again read it the whole way. He made a beeline for Williams before the ball had even left Eli's hands and swallowed him whole, before he could get his legs pumping, for a 2-yard loss. The Pats fans cheered wildly, unaccustomed to watching their defence shut down anybody with such authority, let alone the top team in the league.

The Stars' body language as their special teams unit took the field sent a worrisome message to their fans, but most disregarded the warning, believing that things could not get much worse. Unfortunately for the Markham Faithful, things didn't get any better either. In a veritable replay of the game's opening score, Jones appeared to be launched from a bazooka after pulling in a

high punt from Podlesh and proceeded to jet along a familiar path up the center of the Markham coverage team for a 68-yard punt return for a touchdown.

"Holy F\$-k! This is turning ugly in a hurry!" **Randy the Desert Rat** of the Mohave Torch exclaimed.

"Ugly?" **Marquis de Sade** of the *Virden Eviscerator* cocked an eyebrow in the Rat's direction and the slightest of smiles appeared on his face, but it was not a warm smile. "The unpleasantness is just beginning for Markham. We are now entering the toying phase...yes, *the toying phase*." Marquis' eyes glazed over as he fell into a private and sick personal reverie.

"That guy creeps me out, big time," **Jean Boisvert** of the *Swampland Proof*, whispered in my ear. Jean was an old buddy from the early EFL days when his old team, the Florida Dragons, dominated the EFL. Now he wrote the odd piece covering the Sebastian Swordfish, but was finding the experience less than rewarding. "The Fish are a tough sell, Spats," he had told me earlier in the week. "They aren't that good and the economy on the east coast is in the tank, and I don't mean the Fish Tank."

The Marquis may have some serious personal issues that, for the sake of society, need professional help to remedy; but he hit the mark with his observation. I couldn't have come up with a more accurate, short way of saying it. The game appeared to have been decided with Jones' second TD. But nobody could openly acknowledge it, at least before the end of the first half. Second half confirmation was required, just in case there was a legendary half time speech up Darrin Jones' sleeve; or an arrogant gesture by a Patriots player or coach that would ignite the fire of indignation in the North Stars and inspire a comeback for the ages.

Second half confirmation came 7 minutes into the third quarter, when Peterson bowled over a run-keying Markham defence on 4th down for a 4-yard touchdown run to make the score 34-10 for Charleswood. It was the mortal blow. And everybody, with the possible exception of the Fat Lady – who continued to stuff her face with "Peyton Poppers" (her term for the pork rinds she was wolfing down by the bagful) and howl defiantly well into the 4th quarter – knew it. When Big Gretta became so sick to her enormous stomach that she had to be wheeled out of the stadium, the final sound of Markham resistance went with her. It was Party Time for Pats fans at Round Table Stadium and Charleswood danced.

THE LAST WORD

In retrospect, the DNA of this game was imprinted on the first two Markham possessions. The Stars couldn't pass, they couldn't run, and they couldn't stop the Pats' star skill players in any phase. The next 54 minutes was just playing out the inevitable.

I will always remember the 7th Gale Sayers Game for the hectic yet magical week in LA that preceded it. It was hedonism of a rare kind in that it left no permanent scars on my self-respect while it shook up and beat down my pretentious tendencies. Gabby had put together the perfect 'Camp LA' experience for uptight and inhibited grown-ups. Thanks for the good times, Gabs!

As for Championship itself, we have seen better games. But if you are a Charleswood fan you probably have not seen a better game from your team in its illustrious history. The Pats shed the stigma of perpetual bridesmaids – perennial underachievers who were often very good, but never the best. Peyton finally got the Championship he deserved and can once more hold his head high at family reunions. It was a complete victory and pure redemption for the team that just last year turned in one of the worst seasons in EFL history. Only in the EFL can this happen! Well done, **Jason Findlay**, well done!

BUG THE BOOKIE!

**JIMMY THE GEEK SAYS HE'LL BE BACK
AFTER THE TOUGHEST YEAR FOR PICKS**

Your source for fantasy and on-line betting solutions



FINAL RECORD V. THE SPREAD: 100-64-3

JIMMY'S ROUND UP

So, was it worth something to you to read my column every week? If you stuck with me through thick and thin, you BET it was! 2013 was a tough year for picks generally but everybody went through the same "parity pain." If you made less than you'd hoped to, or committed the sin of not going with ALL of my picks every week, you might not be totally pain free, but you should feel a little better about yourself knowing that my competition did much worse, overall, than me. And, therefore, much worse than YOU! So, come back next year, folks, and rule the Pros!



ANCIENT HISTORY CHANNEL

PRESENTS

This Week in EFL History

With Professor Sterling Smitherman

FROM THE EFL ARCHIVES – 2007 – I apologize profusely for the interruption in this column, but as anchorman for the Ancient History Channel I was taken away by recent developments in the history of Sumeria which could impact our history and therefore change the future. History is a living thing, remember, and ‘The Past is our Present.’ Thankfully, nothing new that happened over 6,000 years ago appears to have altered what occurred in the EFL during the 2007 playoffs, so let’s continue, shall we?

In the EFL’s inaugural season, more than half of the teams made it to the post-season. There were no byes, and some potentially lop-sided games between the 1st place finishers and the 4th place finishers in a division. Still, 12-4 Charleswood barely managed to get past 8-8 Gwinnett, winning a defensive struggle in OT, 13-10.

Elsewhere, things also went as predicted, but not always smoothly. The Hellfire out-flamed Florida 28-13 with the help of 4 turnovers by the Dragons. Chino struck down the Thunder Lizards 44-27 on the strength of three (count’em, 3!) touchdowns on punt returns by Adam ‘Pacman’ Jones. Finally, the Corn Kings shook off a stubborn challenge by the Cubs, scoring 2 TDs in the 3rd to lock up a 26-9 victory.

In the East Division Final the battle of the two pre-season favourites to win it all remained close for more than a half before the Pats pulled away from the Hellfire with 3 TD passes from Peyton Manning in the 2nd half to win 33-21. In the West Division, at Cowtown, the Corn Kings looked to be in control until a 61-yard TD run by LaDainian Tomlinson and two pick-sixes by the Convicts’ D led Chino to a 38-27 win. The stage was now set for the first ever EFL Championship.

The Patriots were favoured by 2 points and nominally were the home team, although the game was being played at the Meadowlands. In one of the closest struggles in EFL Championship history, the running of LaDainian Tomlinson tilted the balance in favour of the Chino Convicts. All year a team that had finished well, the Convicts overturned a 14-10 1st half deficit in the 2nd half, starting with a 70-yard kick return by Adam Jones that set up a 1-yard TD run by LT for the lead. Donovan McNabb added to that lead with an 8-yard Td pass to Torrey Holt, and Chino held off a late Pats’ surge to win 24-21.

EFL ANNOUNCES MOST VALUABLE PLAYERS



OFFENSIVE M.V.P.



ADRIAN PETERSON
CHARLESWOOD PATRIOTS

Adrian Peterson won the rushing title with 2,063 yards, the 1st running back to win the rushing title twice and only the 3rd to rush for more than 2,000 yards in a season. His 23 rushing TDs are the 3rd highest season total and his 406 carries just 1 short of the all-time record. He led all non-QBs with 135 first downs and 456 touches.



DEFENSIVE M.V.P.



ALDON SMITH
VIRDEN VIOLATORS

For the 2nd second year in a row a Violator has won the sack title and an M.V.P. award. Aldon Smith tied former teammate DeMarcus Ware with 21 sacks, a record, to highlight a season where he forced 7 fumbles, made 56 tackles, and generally anchored the D. His 7 sacks in a single game this year is another record.