

2014

Week One


**EFL NEWS**  
 ELITE FOOTBALL LEAGUE

2014

Week One

October 19, 2014



VIR	20	TCT	31	CAR	41	ICC	35	MVM	13	DTL	15	PIC	28	YOR	41	AUR	47	SBE	30
CHP	21	MOH	25	LAK	21	CHI	36	SCB	35	MAR	20	COW	35	SEB	26	SC	27	GWG	17

*College Rookie  
Playing....*



*...under Great Shadow*

**Blake Bortles** (below left) of the Patriots has been handed a near impossible task – follow a championship winning legend. Bortles picked up where he left off at UCF: leading his team to victory in a 21-20 opening day shocker over Virden.

### LATEST EFL NEWS INSIDE

- MAGIC MOMENT IN CHARLESWOOD
- SHOCKER AT TILLMAN FIELD
- WEEK ONE CURSE AT DAWG POUND
- CONVICTS STEAL ONE AT BIG HOUSE
- MUSTANGS SEND A MESSAGE
- JAY CUTS UP MOHAVE CORNERS
- AND MORE.....

Also in this issue

- EFL FAN BLOG 'NEW HOPE IN OLD SOUTH'
- SPATS FEATURE, 'THE RECLAMATION'
- JIMMY THE GEEK
- THIS WEEK IN THE EFL



*Who was slick  
in Week One?*

**"BRYLCREEM" THE  
EFL'S FIRST SPONSOR**



**CJ Spiller**  
RB  
Iowa City  
Cubs

23 carries, 246 yards, 1 TD, 55 Lg.  
3 yards short of all-time record.



**JJ Watt**  
DL  
Aurora  
Mustangs

6 tackles, 2 sacks, 3 stuffs, 1 PD, 1 FF. Strip of Romo turned tide.



0-1-0



## GAME OF THE WEEK



1-0-0

Viriden

20

MVP

Sammy Watkins

21

Charleswood

## TEAM LEADERS

Passing	Cmp	Att	Yds	TD
Stafford	20	29	305	1
Rushing	Car	Yds	Avg	TD
Tate	15	114	7.6	1
Receiving	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD
Jones	6	105	17.5	1

Team	1	2	3	4	OT	Total
Viriden	7	3	7	3	-	20
Charleswood	0	0	14	7	-	21

## TEAM LEADERS

Passing	Cmp	Att	Yds	TD
Bortles	16	25	226	2
Rushing	Car	Yds	Avg	TD
Ivory	15	65	4.3	1
Receiving	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD
Watkins	7	133	19.0	1

## Play of the Game

With 0:23 left on the clock, **Blake Bortles** under pressure dumped off to **Sammy Watkins**, who broke a pair of tackles and raced 71 yards for the winning TD.

**SUMMARY:** Violators' running back **Ben Tate** capped off an 81-yard 1<sup>st</sup> quarter drive with a 1-yard TD plunge and kicker **Mason Crosby** booted a 19-yard FG with no time left on the clock in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter to give Viriden a 10-0 lead at half time. The Patriots' offence that had struggled in the 1<sup>st</sup> half got aggressive in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half. The Pats gambled on 4<sup>th</sup> and 1 at the Viriden 5 yard line and converted. On the next play **Chris Ivory** bowled through a stacked line for a TD to get Charleswood on the board. The Violators could not answer that score as **Rob Bironas** executed a perfect onside kick that the Pats recovered at their own 45. On the ensuing drive, rookie QB **Blake Bortles** went 5 for 6 for 52 yards and a 5-yard TD pass to **Kellen Winslow** to give his team a 14-10 lead. The Violators made the most of their only possession of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, driving 77 yards in 2:54 and regaining the lead on a 19-yard TD pass from **Matt Stafford** to **Julio Jones**. A battle for field position followed with Viriden gaining the upper hand and kicking a FG with 0:46 left in the game. The Pats took over at their own 29 yard line with just 0:40 left and no timeouts remaining. With Viriden applying pressure, Bortles scrambled and found **Sammy Watkins** open. The rookie dodged two tacklers on the way to a stunning 71-yard game-winning TD.

**QUOTES:** "Today our loyal fans got a sneak peak at the future of this proud franchise! Rookie mistakes will happen, but I guarantee there will be more games like this to come. This is an exciting new beginning for us!" Charleswood coach, **Jason Findlay**.

"Once again we found a way to lose. Do I have all of the answers for you at this moment? No, I don't. But a lack of discipline is definitely hurting us. I am going to take the necessary steps to change that!" Viriden coach, **Lance Barrate**.



## ANGRY FAN



## titter

## HAPPY FAN



**Marquis de Sade** @mdsviolate  
@lancebarrate speaks of instilling discipline in his team. I agree. I can think of many very effective ways to do it.



**Charlie Wood** @Cwoodbannersun  
Just fell off my chair when @sammyw scored. It had nothing to do with alcohol. Is the second most amazing moment in #Patriots history.

10-15-2014 Patriot Place Temp: 75 Wind:

MVP: **Sammy Watkins**

## Scoring Summary

1 2:14 Viriden	TD Tate 1 run (Crosby) (10-81-5:30)	7-0
2 0:00 Viriden	FG Crosby 19 (11-79-5:38)	10-0
3 8:16 Charleswood	TD Ivory 1 run (Bironas) (14-73-6:39)	10-7
3 4:28 Charleswood	TD Bortles 5 pass to Winslow (Bironas) (7-55-3:42)	10-14
3 1:28 Viriden	TD Stafford 19 pass to Jones (Crosby) (5-77-2:54)	17-14
4 0:46 Viriden	FG Crosby 40 (8-32-3:19)	20-14
4 0:23 Charleswood	TD Bortles 71 pass to Watkins (Bironas) (1-71-0:17)	20-21

	VV	CHP
First Downs	22	19
Rushes	31-169	26-100
Passes	29-20-305	25-16-226
Sacked	2-13	2-15
Fumble	2	2
Penalties	9-78	3-25
Turnovers	0	2
Missed Tackles	5	4
Blitzes	19	22
Time	32:21	27:39
Third Down	4-11	4-10
Fourth Down	1-1	1-1
Red Att/Td/Fg	4/2/1	2/2/0
Net Offense	461	311

Blue 35, Blue 35, hut, hut hut! Red 23, 3, Red 23, 3, hut, hut, hut! Green 49, hut!


**CUBS**

0-1-0

7

14

7

7

0

**35**

OT

**CJ Spiller**

23 carries, 246 yards, 2 TDs


**CONVICTS**

1-0-0

0

17

6

13

0

**36**
**Cam Newton**

29 of 38, 313 yards, 3 TDs, 1 INT

With 5:19 still left in the 1<sup>st</sup> half, the Cubs' **CJ Spiller** had already rushed for 173 yards and 1 TD and Iowa City was leading Chino 21-7. The Convicts partially closed the gap to trail 21-17 by half time. An interception by **Malcolm Jenkins** to open the 3<sup>rd</sup> led to another Cubs TD before the Convicts' defence finally stabilized. Chino chipped away with FGs until the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter when **Danny Woodhead** caught an 8-yard TD pass from **Cam Newton** to take the lead. Spiller gave the Cubs back the lead on a 7-yard run, but the Convicts drove 88 yards for the winning TD – a 2-yard pass to Woodhead.


**TRIUMPH**

1-0-0

0

14

7

10

0

**31**

OT

**Jay Cutler**

27 of 41, 354 yards, 4 TDs, 2 INTs


**HELLFIRE**

0-1-0

3

3

3

16

0

**25**
**Andrew Luck**

29 of 41, 272 yards, 1 TD

After a couple of false starts the Triumph offence got moving in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter. **Jay Cutler** capped off a 13-play, 91-yard drive with a 10-yard TD pass to **Antonio Brown**. The Triumph then executed a successful onside kick and capitalized with a 33-yard TD pass to Brown to make it 14-3. The Hellfire caught a break when **Reggie Nelson** picked off Cutler at the 34 yard line, but they managed only a FG. A sack of **Andrew Luck** at midfield on a 4<sup>th</sup> down convert attempt led to a 14-yard TD pass to **Kendall Wright**. The Triumph added 10 more points and withstood a late Mohave charge to win by


**CANNIBALS**

1-0-0

7

17

7

10

0

**41**

OT

**Philip Rivers**

25 of 36, 426 yards, 4 TDs, 2 INTs


**KNIGHTS**

0-1-0

7

7

0

7

0

**21**
**Brandon LaFell**

5 Receptions, 106 yards, 1 TD

The Knights' offence kept pace for one quarter on a 39-yard TD pass from **Mike Glennon** to **Andre Roberts** while their defence scored a TD on a pick-six by safety **Kenny Vaccaro** in the 2<sup>nd</sup> to stay temporarily within striking distance. But **Philip Rivers** and the high-powered Carthage air attack was too much for the LA secondary. Rivers threw 4 TD passes to 4 different receivers, including a 27-yard strike to **Jared Cook** to cap a 3-play 75-yard drive at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> half. **Josh Gordon** showed his play-making skill with a 75-yard catch-and-run for the final TD to top off this Week 1 blowout.





**EFL**  
ELITE FOOTBALL LEAGUE

# QUICK COUNTS!!

Blue 35, Blue 35, hut, hut hut! Red 23, 3, Red 23, 3, hut, hut, hut! Green 49, hut!



**MONARCHS**

0-1-0

0	3	3	7	0	13
OT					

DeMarco Murray  
17 Carries, 106 yards



**SLUGGS**

1-0-0

14	7	7	7	0	35
OT					

RGIII  
13 of 15, 236 yards, 3 TDs

**RGIII** threw TD passes of 27 and 6 yards to **Alshon Jeffery** on Santa Clara's first two possessions for an early 14-0 lead. Meanwhile the Sluggs' defence sacked **Ryan Tannehill** four times on his first two possessions to keep the Monarchs' offence contained. **Trindon Holliday** fumbled away a punt at the Santa Clara 46, leading to a 29-yard **Dan Carpenter** FG to get Mission Viejo on the board. But the Sluggs regained control right away, with Griffin connecting with **Andre Johnson** on a 40-yard bomb for a TD. The Sluggs scored twice more in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half and went into clock mode to finish.



**SPARTANS**

0-1-0

3	0	0	14	0	17
OT					

Joe Flacco  
24 of 38, 290 yards, 4 TDs, 2 INTs



**CORN KINGS**

1-0-0

10	10	7	7	0	34
OT					

Peyton Manning  
29 of 48, 298 yards, 3 TDs, 3 INTs

**Brandon Flowers** picked off **Peyton Manning** to launch a 64-yard drive that ended with **Joe Flacco** completing the first of back-to-back TD passes to **Larry Fitzgerald**. Then rookie linebacker **Marcus Smith** forced a Manning fumble and **Terrence Newman** returned it 64 yards to make it 21-0. Pickering scored on a 12-yard TD pass to **DeMaryius Thomas**, but the Corn Kings marched 80 yards in 1:37 to score again before the half. Cowtown widened its lead to 35-7 on a TD pass to **Mike Evans** to start the 2<sup>nd</sup> half then held off a determined 4<sup>th</sup> quarter charge by the Spartans to win by 7.



**T-LIZARDS**

0-1-0

6	3	0	6	0	15
OT					

Drew Brees  
26 of 35, 280 yards, 1 TD



**NORTH STARS**

1-0-0

3	7	0	10	0	20
OT					

Alex Smith  
138 pass yds, 65 rush yds, 2 TDs

Markham broke up an early FG battle and took a 10-9 lead on a 14-yard TD run by quarterback **Alex Smith** with 0:33 remaining in the 1<sup>st</sup> half. With **Calvin Johnson** injured the Durham offence struggled. After a scoreless 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, the North Stars extended their lead to 17-9 when Smith evaded the rush and hit **Jordy Nelson** for a 10-yard TD. The Lizards struck back with **Drew Brees** going 9 of 10 for 91 yards on their ensuing drive, scoring on a 10-yard pass to **Dwayne Bowe**. But the 2-point convert failed and Markham controlled the ball for the remainder, adding a FG to seal the win.

Blue 35, Blue 35, hut, hut hut! Red 23, 3, Red 23, 3, hut, hut, hut! Green 49, hut!



## EXCALIBURS

1-0-0

17

14

7

3

0

41

OT

Tom Brady

12 of 20, 237 yards, 3 TDs



## SWORDFISH

0-1-0

0

7

10

9

0

26

Andy Dalton

31 of 46, 341 yards, 1 TD, 1 INT

**Tom Brady** hit **Zach Ertz** for a 22-yard TD pass to open a 1<sup>st</sup> half scoring blitz by the Excaliburs. **Dwayne Harris** fumbled the ensuing kickoff and York capitalized with a FG then rookie **De'Anthony Thomas** returned a punt 87 yards for a score. The Swordfish mounted a 15-play, 80-yard drive, ending in a 1-yard TD plunge by **Zac Stacy**, to get on the board. But a **Chris Clemons** pick and a botched 4<sup>th</sup>-and-9 gamble by the Fish at midfield led to a pair of quick TDs that gave York a commanding 31-7 half time lead. Sebastian tried to play catch-up in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half but came up far short to drop a laugh.



## BLUE EAGLES

1-0-0

7

3

14

6

0

30

OT

Aaron Rodgers

23 of 29, 282 yards, 2 TDs



## GLADIATORS

0-1-0

0

3

0

14

0

17

Ben Roethlisberger

26 of 38, 297 yards, 2 TDs

**Aaron Rodgers** found **Brandon Marshall** open on a medium fly pattern for a 24-yard score, the only TD of a tightly contested 1<sup>st</sup> half. The game broke in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter when **Ray Rice** burst around right end for a 54-yard run to the Gwinnett 2 that set up a **Charles Sims** TD run off left tackle. Then **Derrick Morgan** sacked **Ben Roethlisberger** and forced a fumble at the Gwinnett 9. That set up a 7-yard TD pass to **DeSean Jackson** to make it 24-3 for Scarborough. A pair of **Jay Feely** FGs made it 30-3 before the Gwinnett offence got rolling late in the 4<sup>th</sup>, adding 2 meaningless TDs.



## MUSTANGS

1-0-0

3

14

17

13

0

47

OT

Anquan Boldin

8 Receptions, 161 yards, 2 TDs



## REGULATORS

0-1-0

3

17

0

7

0

27

Tony Romo

24 of 42, 292 yards, 2 TDs, 2 INTs

A pick by **Will Shields** and a fumble recovery and blocked punt by **Vinny Curry** set up 13 of 20 first half points for the Regulators, giving them a 3-point lead at half time. But a 48-yard pass from **Matt Ryan** to **Anquan Boldin** on the first play off the 2<sup>nd</sup> half sparked an 83-yard TD drive, giving the Mustangs a 24-20 lead. **JJ Watt** sacked **Tony Romo** and **NaVorro Bowman** recovered the loose ball, setting up a 4-yard TD run by **Arian Foster** to make it 34-20. The Regs came within one score early in the 4<sup>th</sup>, but back-to-back picks by **Karlos Dansby** and **Patrick Peterson** put it away for Aurora.

## WEEK ONE

# STANDINGS

East	W	L	T	Pct	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Charleswood	1	0	0	1.000	21	21	20	20	1	1 0 0	1 0 0	1 0 0
Twin Cities	1	0	0	1.000	31	31	25	25	6	0 0 0	1 0 0	1 0 0
Carthage	1	0	0	1.000	41	41	21	21	20	0 0 0	0 0 0	1 0 0
Mohave	0	1	0	0.000	25	25	31	31	-6	0 1 0	0 1 0	0 1 0
Virden	0	1	0	0.000	20	20	21	21	-1	0 0 0	0 1 0	0 1 0
West	W	L	T	Pct	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Chino	1	0	0	1.000	36	36	35	35	1	1 0 0	1 0 0	1 0 0
Santa Clara	1	0	0	1.000	35	35	13	13	22	1 0 0	1 0 0	1 0 0
Iowa City	0	1	0	0.000	35	35	36	36	-1	0 0 0	0 1 0	0 1 0
Los Angeles	0	1	0	0.000	21	21	41	41	-20	0 1 0	0 0 0	0 1 0
Mission Viejo	0	1	0	0.000	13	13	35	35	-22	0 0 0	0 1 0	0 1 0
North	W	L	T	Pct	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Cowtown	1	0	0	1.000	35	35	28	28	7	1 0 0	1 0 0	1 0 0
Markham	1	0	0	1.000	20	20	15	15	5	1 0 0	1 0 0	1 0 0
York	1	0	0	1.000	41	41	26	26	15	0 0 0	0 0 0	1 0 0
Durham	0	1	0	0.000	15	15	20	20	-5	0 0 0	0 1 0	0 1 0
Pickering	0	1	0	0.000	28	28	35	35	-7	0 0 0	0 1 0	0 1 0
South	W	L	T	Pct	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Scarborough	1	0	0	1.000	30	30	17	17	13	0 0 0	1 0 0	1 0 0
Aurora	1	0	0	1.000	47	47	27	27	20	0 0 0	1 0 0	1 0 0
Gwinnett	0	1	0	0.000	17	17	30	30	-13	0 1 0	0 1 0	0 1 0
South Carolina	0	1	0	0.000	27	27	47	47	-20	0 1 0	0 1 0	0 1 0
Sebastian	0	1	0	0.000	26	26	41	41	-15	0 1 0	0 0 0	0 1 0

# PASSING

#	Player	Team	Att	Cmp	C%	Yards	In	I%	Lg	TD	TD%	Rate
1	Griffin II	SCB	15	13	86.7	236	0	0	65	3	20	158.3
2	Brady	YOR	20	12	60	237	0	0	55	3	15	141
3	Rodgers, A	SBE	29	23	79.3	282	0	0	30	2	6.9	130.2
4	Rivers, P	CAR	36	25	69.4	426	2	5.6	75	4	11.1	123.1
5	Newton, C	CHI	38	29	76.3	313	1	2.6	27	3	7.9	115.4
6	Stafford, M	VV	29	20	69	305	0	0	36	1	3.4	114.9
7	Wilson, R	ICC	27	18	66.7	194	0	0	44	2	7.4	112.3
8	Roethlisberger	GWG	38	26	68.4	297	0	0	46	2	5.3	109.2
9	Ryan, M	AUR	35	23	65.7	282	1	2.9	48	3	8.6	107.1
10	Brees	DTL	35	26	74.3	280	0	0	42	1	2.9	106.8
11	Cutler	TCT	41	27	65.9	354	2	4.9	33	4	9.8	105.1
12	Bortles	CHP	25	16	64	226	1	4	71	2	8	103.1
13	Flacco	COW	38	24	63.2	290	2	5.3	37	4	10.5	99.7
14	Luck	MOH	41	29	70.7	272	0	0	34	1	2.4	96.8
15	Dalton	SS	46	31	67.4	341	1	2.2	59	1	2.2	87.3

## RUSHING

#	Player	Team	Att	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD
1	Spiller	ICC	23	246	10.7	55	2
2	Moreno	SCB	23	118	5.1	24	1
3	Tate,B	VV	15	114	7.6	41	1
4	Murray	MVM	17	106	6.2	28	0
5	Morris,A	COW	22	91	4.1	18	0
6	Lynch,M	YOR	18	90	5	14	1
7	Rice,R	SBE	14	86	6.1	54	0
8	Peterson,A	CHI	21	82	3.9	15	1
9	McCoy,L	GWG	25	81	3.2	17	0
10	Ellington	MAR	13	78	6	19	0
11	Johnson,C	PIC	16	74	4.6	16	0
12	Newton,C	CHI	6	67	11.2	25	0
13	Smith,A	MAR	10	65	6.5	14	1
14	Ivory	CHP	15	65	4.3	17	1
15	Luck	MOH	6	63	10.5	15	1
16	Griffin II	SCB	8	60	7.5	21	1
17	Martin,D	TCT	11	56	5.1	15	0
18	Bell,L	LAK	10	49	4.9	30	0
19	Ogbonnaya	COW	5	43	8.6	20	0
20	Charles,J	VV	11	38	3.5	6	0

## RECEIVING

#	Player	Team	No	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD
1	Wayne	GWG	12	197	16.4	46	1
2	Woodhead	CHI	10	106	10.6	25	2
3	Brown,A	TCT	9	134	14.9	33	2
4	Wright,K	TCT	9	92	10.2	14	2
5	Garcon	PIC	9	92	10.2	15	2
6	Graham,J	MOH	9	90	10	28	0
7	Thomas,P	SS	9	58	6.4	22	0
8	Boldin	AUR	8	161	20.1	48	2
9	Gordon,J	CAR	7	186	26.6	75	1
10	Green,A	SC	7	105	15	21	1
11	Olsen	CHI	7	66	9.4	19	1
12	Nicks,H	MOH	7	63	9	30	1
13	Watkins,S	CHP	7	133	19	71	1
14	McCoy,L	GWG	7	39	5.6	9	0
15	Hilton	DTL	6	70	11.7	19	0
16	Hartline	CHI	6	69	11.5	27	0
17	Jackson,D	SBE	6	96	16	30	1
18	Jones,J	VV	6	105	17.5	34	1
19	Washingt,N	SS	6	62	10.3	24	0
20	Decker	DTL	6	61	10.2	17	0

## KICKING

#	Player	Team	FGA	FGM	FG%	40	50	Lg	Pts
1	Folk	AUR	4	4	100	2	2	55	17
2	Prater	MOH	4	4	100	1	0	47	13
3	Feely	SBE	4	3	75	2	0	49	12
4	Bailey,D	CHI	3	3	100	1	0	49	12
5	Walsh	YOR	2	2	100	1	0	45	11
6	Hauschka	CAR	2	2	100	1	0	43	11
7	Dawson	DTL	3	3	100	2	1	57	9
8	Tucker,J	SC	3	2	66.7	1	0	40	9
9	Vinatieri	SS	2	2	100	1	0	48	8
10	Crosby	VV	3	2	66.7	1	0	40	8
11	Brown,J	MAR	2	2	100	0	0	25	8
12	Gostkowski	TCT	1	1	100	1	0	49	7
13	Carpenter	MVM	3	2	66.7	0	0	32	7
14	Suisham	GWG	1	1	100	0	0	30	5
15	Henery	SCB	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
16	Zuerlein	ICC	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
17	Novak	COW	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
18	Janikowski	PIC	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
19	Bironas	CHP	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
20	Lindell	LAK	0	0	0	0	0	0	3

# Welcome to the **BLOGOSPHERE**



<http://rebelyell.com>



## **WHERE FANS SPEAK**

### **NEW HOPE IN OLD SOUTH!**

BY JASON TUDBULLY (CONTRIBUTOR) ON OCTOBER 18, 2014



It was a sure sign that professional football in Columbia had come of age when the EFL decided to host its 8<sup>th</sup> annual college rookie draft here at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Centre. Owners and staff from 20 franchises descended on our beautiful city, taking up more room and creating more traffic than you would have thought. But with Patti Sue Devereux handling all of the guest arrangements

what could possibly go wrong? Not much, actually, except for some confusion around the location and names of the local historical civil war sites featured on the Companions Tour itinerary.

Although all teams were represented at the table, not all of the owners were in town. But those who were enjoyed authentic southern hospitality – from getting the morning started right at the Lizard's Thicket, to the real Southern BBQ of Little Pigs to the Italian delicacies of the Travinia Restaurant – and managed to relax in down home comfort in the middle of the stress of last minute negotiations, research and film review.

It was gratifying to hear so many of the scouts and visiting media speak highly of the Regulators' chances this year. Luke Kuechly is regarded as the undisputed leader of our defence, a point Carolinians would not argue with. But he has some help this year. With Brandon Spikes and Tamba Hali we have one of the better line-backing teams in the league. People liked our move to get Mike Mitchell at safety and think Will Shields is looking good at cornerback. Tony Romo is the leader of the offence and will line up behind Jason Kelce, a great anchor of the offensive line. According to my informal survey, the Regulators will finish between 9-7 and 11-5 ahead of Scarborough in the South Division and make the playoffs.

Of course, the highlight of the whole weekend was when Swordfish GM Eron Osman stood up and announced the selection of Gamecocks alumnus Jadeveon Clowney as the first overall pick of the draft. "It was never in doubt," Johnny Rebb said with a wink. Too bad he couldn't be a Regulator.





# AROUND THE



## With Spats McChad

CANTON – I’m back. And I cannot say that I am any more refreshed for having spent my summer touring Antarctica looking for evidence of anything that might be worth seeing.

Having read extensively about the Antarctic as a growing tourist destination, I was curious to see for myself what was attracting people. So I signed up for a couple of cruises. I don’t really like cruises, but it is impossible to do the independent “off road” travel that I prefer, in such an inhospitable environment as the Antarctic. Technically, of course, everything in Antarctica is off road because there are no roads, but setting your own course there is beyond most. Antarctica is not your average wilderness trip; it is like visiting another planet.

Predictably, the people who accompanied me could have been from another planet themselves. The majority seemed to be quite comfortable staring for hours at miles and miles of ice and water looking for evidence of any life capable of existing in that forbidden landscape.

When somebody finally spotted the penguins there was uproar. Hearing the loud cries of excitement and seeing people rushing madly to gain the best vantage points, while frantically grasping for their cameras and I-phones, I was embarrassed for a moment to be human. The penguins looked unimpressed too; they hardly moved. They had no place to go anyway. I got the impression while looking at them that they were all, at some level, painfully aware that they were stuck on miles of ice and unable to fly away, and that most would have preferred to just die except that their natural animal instinct to reproduce kept overriding their undeveloped need for self-fulfilment. If you thought ‘March of the Penguins’ was the most boring movie ever to win an Academy Award, consider for a moment that it was a *dramatization* of the penguin mating ritual and that the real life of a penguin is much, much more boring than that.

When I finally realized that we would not be going ashore anytime soon to enjoy the local nightlife, I became a regular in the quaint little bar on the cruise ship. Without reliable access to the internet, which kept flitting in and out, I got reacquainted with simple pastimes such as cards, backgammon, and chess (that I played with some of the crew, who were also quite sick of penguins) and soon realized that the “simple” pastimes were not as simple as I remembered them.

I wonder if our reliance on things like computers and techno gadgets is not making us all just a little dumber even as it provides us with access to more information and things.

### **CHARLIE, THERE IS A SANTA CLAUS**

Maybe there *is* a Santa Claus after all, Mr. **Charlie Wood**.

The Patriots’ beat writer suggested, in his first post-Manning trade opinion piece, that dealing the face of the franchise after such a legendary season was like learning there is no Santa Claus all over again – more syrupy melodrama poured from the bottom of a bottle of *Jim Beam* through nicotine stained fingers and onto the internet for the entire world to choke on! Certainly, Charlie was playing to the guileless crowd in Charleswood, where belief in Santa Claus, elves, the Easter Bunny, and a flat earth are 23% above the national average, according to [WePollAnything.com](http://WePollAnything.com) figures. But did Charlie have to turn his back so completely on his own saturated sense of cynicism in order to make his point that he didn’t like the trade? There are plenty of logical reasons to hate the Manning trade if you are a Patriots fan without having to resort to lamenting “loss of innocence.” Growing up is all about losing innocence anyway, so that you have a clue what you’re really doing in the world! The sooner we all lose our innocence the better, I say.

The hysteria around **Peyton Manning** leaving the Patriots reached such proportions in Charleswood that for the first time in franchise history the home opener was not sold out. An official crowd of 47,356 turned out to see the game live according to the team – almost 11,000 less than capacity. Many of the fans who showed were there more for the pre-game championship banner raising ceremony than the game itself, which promised to be a stinker with a rookie starting at quarterback against one of the more terrifying defences in the East Division. But, depending on the account, either Virden was behaving in typically self-destructive fashion that day, or something truly magical occurred at Patriot Place in Week One.

After winning the championship in 2013, the Patriots are not expected to win more than two or three games this year. The deliberate dismantling of the team during the off-season is well-documented and I am not going to go into the details in this column except to make the point that it took a lot of work because there were a lot of good players. In my view, enough

good players to form the basis for a run at back-to-back championships. But that team is no more – replaced by one that boasts rookie **Blake Bortles** as its starting quarterback and rookie **Sammy Watkins** as its number no. 1 receiver, supported by a young and inexperienced offensive line and a B-movie cast on defence.

The unpromising offence delivered on its lack of promise by failing to score in the first half. But the Pats' defence proved a little stiffer, holding Virden to just 10 points and keeping the team in the game heading into the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> half had a completely different feel to it from the start. A touchdown to start the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter followed by a successful onside kick and another touchdown gave the Patriots a surprising 14-10 lead. The Violators quickly scored again to make it 17-14 and kicked a late field goal to give them what looked like a safe 20-14 lead with 0:40 left in the game. That is when either the "Miracle on Patriots Way" happened or, if you are a suffering Violators' fan, Virden "choked on its own chunks."

On the first play Bortles dropped back, facing intense pressure, scrambled to his right and threw across his chest to **Sammy Watkins** who, amazingly, broke a couple of tackles to take the ball all 71 yards for the game-winning touchdown. It was a breath-taking play. In the words of announcer, **Bill Macateetee**: *"It was like the whole stadium was charged with sudden energy and it was flowing into the legs of Watkins; thrilling to watch!"*

**Charlie Wood** devoted three exuberant paragraphs to



**Satan** (above) was apparently not happy with **Chris Worthley** after the latter decided to focus on the running game in 2014. "I already control the ground, you fool, the underground that is!" **Satan** bellowed. "I told you I wanted you to pass!" A security camera in the Death Valley head office captured Coach Worthley's last moments (bottom) as **Satan** reclaimed him.

the play, describing Watkins thusly: *"With the strength of a horse, the agility of a cat and the speed of a gazelle, Sammy ran straight into Patriots immortality; and this in his first NFL game."* The sentence might have made me puke if it wasn't, to some degree, true.

The first game of the New Era in Charleswood could not have been more mystical in its hidden messages and promise of hope. It was as if Santa was sending us all a message: *Believe*. But we also know that, if Santa Claus does exist, he comes but once a year. And for the Pats he came in Week One. If you are a fan, don't expect any more presents like this one under the tree for quite a while.

### **THE RECLAMATION**

The world as we know it has undoubtedly changed since the NFL imploded and was replaced by competing professional football leagues of which the EFL is just one. I'm not talking about just the football world, I mean the entire world. Take the birth, death, rebirth, and recent annihilation of the Death Valley franchise as a stunning example of my thesis. Created in the first EFL expansion in 2008, the original Death Valley franchise lasted two weeks before blatantly supernatural forces overtook the physical laws of this world and metamorphosed the team into the Pickering Spartans and placed the reincarnation of General Pausanias in charge. It was a very mysterious singular event and did not garner the attention it deserved after the initial shock wore off – almost as if nobody wanted to deal with the strangeness of it all – the same way that nobody writes about **Bobby Elder** and the Hellfire being a front for an esoteric underworld corporate entity known as Hellfire Consultants Ltd since **Bill Blatt**, extreme adventurer, risked his life to get the story many years ago (for the original article, see the EFL Preview 2010).

The return of **Chris Worthley** from Hell and the resurrection of the Undertakers in 2011 brought a return to weirdness that, to the league's discredit, was never properly addressed. Forget PEDs and whispers of genetic tampering in secret labs in Garland and Durham, the paranormal forces that were openly at work in Death Valley bring into question the validity of some of football's most scared passing records. **Drew Brees** is one of the EFL greats, but he also holds the record for bad passes, set as a member of the Anchorage Buccaneers in 2008, in addition to the EFL record for TD passes, 73, set in 2012. I confidently predict the latter will never be broken under current football rules or the normal laws of physics. He's good, but not *that* good! So entranced were we all by his fantastic performances that year that we failed to see the obvious red flags, such as deceased former NFL owner **Al Davis** standing on the Undertakers sidelines, real zombies in the bleachers, **Death** and the **Grim Reaper** alive and writing sports columns instead of fulfilling their duties and making sure people who died in Death valley actually died. And, of

course, Worthley's constant companion, a red-hued wraith with horns, wearing a cape and a funny moustache that occasionally could be seen hovering over his left shoulder – that should have been a strong clue that the man was in league with some kind of demon, if not the Devil himself.

Yet, somehow, we remained wilfully blind to all of this – laughing it off as ingenious marketing and advanced special effects. Well, there is nothing fake about the FBI and the Top Secret Military units swarming the area formerly known on the map as Hell, Michigan. Nor is there anything staged about the vast evacuation zone around that city, the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, the arrival of a battalion of Special Priests from the Vatican, and the oddly nuclear-looking explosion reported last week coming from the area.

The true story of what happened to **Chris Worthley** and Death Valley will come out eventually; I will make sure of that. But for now, details are sketchy and inside sources hard to come by. There is reportedly a security video showing Worthley's final moments on the Earth plane and indications that he was resisting Satan's attempts to reclaim him in order to oversee the ISIS charge in Iraq. Worthley was reportedly more interested in setting all of the league's rushing records and ignored the phone calls. Well, no more, apparently.

And now the team formerly known as the Undertakers is under the guidance of an enthusiastic, but somewhat scatter-brained Special Forces Major named **Cooper Gerow**. Gerow, who travels the world on special assignments, had his watch set to West Africa time and missed his team's opening 35-13 "slugging" of Mission Viejo. The players basically coached themselves, running plays they could remember from the confiscated Death Valley playbook. As if to remove the sinister vapors still swirling around the team, the US Military christened them the Santa Clara Banana Sluggs and requisitioned uniforms that include pink trim and soft pastel colours. Those unis may not last, but for now such contrarian football fashion is deemed necessary to purge the evil that had gripped this team and help the players heal psychologically. Of course, nothing helps players heal like winning football games; and expect the Banana Sluggs to do a lot of winning this year, in spite of their neophyte coach.

### ROUND ONE

The battle that many pundits had predicted would be one of the most hard fought and bitter in the league this year got off to a roaring start at the Big House in Chino this week. The Convicts scored last to topple the Iowa City Cubs 36-35 in a thrilling contest that witnessed a near record-setting performance by **CJ Spiller** and a command performance from **Cam Newton**.

Rarely do we see a Week One game played with such intensity as was this one; a heavyweight fight that turned on will as much as skill. In retrospect, a blocked field goal by **Julius Peppers** on the Cubs' opening drive looks like it was an early sign that the Convicts were going to overcome the astounding efforts of a budding superstar and steal the edge in what will certainly be a season-long race for the playoffs between these two teams.

Spiller opened the scoring with a 46-yard TD run. Following a block from **Tyron Smith**, he cut back toward the middle and made **Bernard Pollard** miss, giving him an open run to the end zone. Thanks to Spiller, this would turn out to be a very bad day in run support for the veteran Pollard.

On the other side, a running back with a more impressive resumé, **Adrian Peterson**, struck back using power over speed, bursting through the Cubs' defensive line into the end zone from 1 yard away to tie the score. But Spiller was not done charging up his team. On the next drive he followed a block from right tackle **Riley Reiff**, slipped by Pollard again, pushed aside **Bruce Carter**, and sprinted 55 yards before **Darryl Sharpton** finally brought him down. The play winded the Chino defence and no doubt played a role in **Russell Wilson's** 29-yard scramble for a TD on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 20 three plays later to make it 14-7. The situation looked like it might get out of hand for Chino on the Cubs' next drive. No game-breaking runs, but many touches yielding 42 all-purpose yards for Spiller set up a 13-yard TD pass to **Mike Wallace** to make it 21-7.

Newton showed remarkable poise in response. He calmly and methodically led two scoring drives before the end of the first half – the first ending with a 5-yard TD pass to **Greg Olsen** and the second a 35-yard field goal by **Dan Bailey** – to make it 21-17 for the visitors heading into the Big House cells at half time.

The momentum shifted back to the Cubs early in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter when Newton made his only big mistake of the day by attempting a dump-off to Peterson, who was blanketed by the safety. He threw the ball straight into the arms of **Malcolm Jenkins**, who returned it 21 yards to the Chino 28 yard line. A pair of runs by Spiller set up another TD pass to Wallace, and the Cubs were back in the driver's seat ahead 28-17. But once again there was no panic on the Chino sideline. A nifty 19-yard completion to **Danny Woodhead** kept a drive alive that would result in a 49-yard Bailey field goal and a 22-yard scramble by Newton would help set up another Bailey field goal to bring the Convicts within striking distance. The defence settled down and kept Spiller in check, forcing another Cubs' punt.

As Spiller's star began to fade, Woodhead's began to shine. The plucky running back turned a 3-yard cross into a 25-yard gain to kick start the Convicts' next drive then a 15-yard facemask penalty on **Xavier Rhodes** put them in the red zone. This time there would be no field goal as an uncovered Woodhead snared a short hitch in the end zone from 8 yards out to give the Convicts their first lead of the afternoon.

With Chino concentrating on Spiller, the focus of the Iowa City game plan shifted to **Russell Wilson**. The Cubs' quarterback started throwing the ball and struck gold with a 44-yard completion to **Steve Smith** that set up a 7-yard TD run by Spiller to regain the lead for the Cubs, 35-30.



With little more than 5 minutes remaining in the game and poor field position, after an ill-advised run back by rookie return specialist **Drki Archer** put the ball at their 12-yard line, there was a sense that this would be the last possession for the home team. **Cam Newton**, in a sign that he has matured considerably since last year, calmly made the most of the opportunity. His clutch 12-yard completion to receiver **James Jones** to convert 3<sup>rd</sup> and 11 from his own 23 yard line was the play that sparked a steady drive down field, using short passes and the constant threat of **Adrian Peterson** to keep the Cubs' pass rush at bay. With just 59 seconds remaining, Newton found Woodhead for the 10<sup>th</sup> time on the day, connecting on a short hitch. The elusive running back ducked and dove into the end zone for the game-winning touchdown.

As usual, tear gas and rubber bullets had to be deployed by security forces during the customary post-game celebratory riot at the Big House, but Coach **Rob Nazar** has rarely been happier to spend money on overtime for the guards and stadium repairs: "Let them riot – it was an intense game and we won! They should riot. I would probably join them if I wasn't so busy talking to you," Nazar told reporters after the game. "But seriously, I can't say enough about this team right now, the entire team. That was a legendary performance by their back, CJ. Usually that kind of performance buries an opponent, but not today."

On the other side, cubs' coach **Deron Redding** appeared torn between beaming pride in his off-season acquisition from the Blue Eagles, and frustration that his defence could not hold off the Convicts' comeback. "We have some work to do to stick to our assignments and avoid those killer penalties in the future. We wasted a great, great performance by CJ today. All I can say is that you will see a different team when we get another shot at these guys at home."

I, for one, am looking forward to Round Two.

### **AROUND THE EFL**

Overall it was a thrilling and surprising opening week, featuring more than one big upset. Let's review the action:

At Tillman Field in Cowtown the '*Peyton Manning Express*' was temporarily knocked off track, dropping a 35-28 decision due to the combined play of a Corn Kings defence that did not appear at all over-awed by **Gus Konstantakos**' latest hired gun, and that of a highly motivated **Joe Flacco**, who looked very much on this day like the offensive MVP he was in 2011. Cowtown exploited a Pickering game plan designed to take away running back **Alfred Morris**, and that resulted in four touchdown passes and 290 yards for Flacco. **Peyton Manning** was picked off three times and was stripped of the ball by rookie **Marcus Smith**, leading to a 64-yard fumble return for a touchdown by **Terrence Newman**. At one point the Corn Kings were leading 35-7, and the ease with which they had gotten there caused them to let up and Peyton to wake up. The Spartans mounted a furious comeback, scoring 3 touchdowns in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, but fell short when **Trumaine Johnson** picked off Manning at the Cowtown 4 yard line. As for Morris, he managed to gain 91 rushing yards anyway. All in all, it was a bad day for the Spartans.

Speaking of bad days, the Thunder Lizards will likely petition the league asking never to open the season in Markham again after falling 20-15 to the North Stars. With confident talk of a Durham division title already dominating the Media, **Drew Brees** fell into his now familiar 'Dawg Pound Trance,' failing to deliver on the pre-game hype. Certainly, his numbers were an improvement over last year's opening day disaster, but that is because the Stars are a shadow of their former greatness. Just as embarrassing for Durham, chronic problems resurfaced in the running game on both sides of the ball. Coach **Darrin Jones** executed an offensive game plan that made full use of **Alex Smith** and the threat of playmaker **Andre Ellington**. "I never believe we are beaten before the game starts. People should know that by now," said Jones when asked if he was surprised at his team's confident performance. Durham coach **George Kaldis** offered no comment after the game.

In Columbia, South Carolina, rookie Aurora coach **Rich Liotta** got his first league win with a 47-27 drubbing of the Regulators. **Tony Romo** was smothered by the Aurora defence, getting dumped 6 times, pressured 7, fumbling 3 times and throwing 2 interceptions. The Mustangs' **JJ Watt** did a bit of everything on defence, but his 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter sack and strip of Romo at the Regs' 3 yard line marked the point where this game turned from being a competitive one into a runaway for Aurora.

At the Fish Tank, 1<sup>st</sup> overall rookie pick **Jadeveon Clowney** recorded his first EFL sack at the 11:51 mark of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter, dumping future hall-of-famer **Tom Brady** for a 6-yard loss. It was the highlight of the day for Swordfish fans as the Excaliburs exploded out of the gate to establish a 31-7 lead at half time. The Swords like what they see so far from **Marshawn Lynch**, who rushed for 90 yards on 18 carries and took some heat off Brady, who threw 3 TD passes.

In Los Angeles, the **Philip Rivers** to **Josh Gordon** combination got off to a good start with 7 completions for 186 yards and a TD as the Cannibals ate the Knights alive 41-21. Gordon was not the only target, however. Rivers threw 4 TD passes to 4 different receivers and amassed 426 yards through the air. It's early, but the Carthage QB is on track for a potential MVP season.

In scorching 108 degree heat in Mohave the Triumph cooled off Hellfire hopes of a quick start to the season with a spectacular air show. **Jay Cutler** completed 22 passes to his top three wide receivers for 313 of his 354 total yards and 4 touchdowns, hitting **Antonio Brown** and **Kendall Wright** for 2 TDs each. Cutler will have to make a habit of these types of games as last year's team rushing leader **Doug Martin** went down with a serious foot injury late in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter.

Finally, while it is far too early to uncork the Baby Duck in Scarborough, the Blue Eagles still impressed, going into the Coliseum at Gwinnett and dominating the Glads on the strength of a 282-yard, 2 touchdown performance by **Aaron Rodgers**. The Eagles offensive line dominated the ramshackle Glads' front four while the defence shut the door on **Big Ben** all afternoon until the final quarter, after the game was decided. Gwinnett may be going nowhere, but **Chris Dickinson** needs a confidence boost.



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### JIMMY'S WEEK TWO PICKS

#### **CHARLESWOOD @ TWIN CITIES (line – TRIUMPH by 6)**

**INJURIES:** Charleswood – None; Twin Cities – Doug Martin (OUT), Henry Melton (OUT).

The Patriots are coming off a thrilling and emotional last second home victory over Virden last week, making them feel as confident heading into their first road game as their marginal talent will allow. The Triumph accomplished what they set out to do in Mohave last week in the exact manner many pundits expected them to – through the air, with Jay Cutler throwing four touchdowns. Triumph running back Doug Martin went down for a long time, creating serious questions about the Twin Cities running game. This will allow the Pats defence to cheat a bit, but it may not matter much against what could arguably be the best receiving trio on the edges in the league. The Triumph offence may not need to be dominant in any event. Blake Bortles will be operating in a hostile environment for the first time in his short pro career and the Triumph have a smart and tough defence capable of exploiting rookie errors. Beginner's luck ran out for the rookies last week; expect a dose of reality this week. **PICK: TWIN CITIES**

#### **VIRDEN @ CARTHAGE (line – CANNIBALS by 9)**

**INJURIES:** Virden – None; Carthage – None.

The Violators did most of what they needed to do to win last week in Charleswood but they also took 9 penalties for 78 yards, carrying on a frustrating trend from 2013, and failed to do the little things when they needed to – like tackle Sammy Watkins before he covered 71 yards to reach their end zone with seconds left in the game. It is hard to escape the conclusion that the Violators are simply unlucky and need to be perfect to win most of the time. If true, their prospects look dim in the South Pacific this week going up against a team with a veteran quarterback and a positive attitude. Like Virden, the Cannibals started on the road against an inferior team but, unlike Virden, they laid a beating on their opponent. I don't expect either team to sustain a beating in this match-up, but the Violators should find the going tough at the Killing Field. Having said that, Virden has the edge in the trenches and that means the Cannibals will be in tough as well; tough enough that I am confident Virden will beat the spread. **PICK: VIRDEN**

#### **MOHAVE @ MISSION VIEJO (line – HELLFIRE by 3)**

**INJURIES:** Mohave – None; Mission Viejo – None.

Where the Hellfire will end up at season's end is a question on better's minds. There could be a lot of money to be made on a team with a hint of high level potential and enough superficial flaws to disguise it. But there has to be a trigger to cause a money move to Mohave, and the Hellfire did nothing to trigger such a move last week against the Triumph. Andrew Luck has shown flashes of why he was drafted no. 1 overall in 2012, but it is fair to say that he needs a lot more help to make an impact in this league. This offensive line is one of the better ones he has worked behind – although it is slightly below average by EFL standards – and the running back by committee has potential. Whether or not the Hellfire have what it takes to challenge for the Division remains to be seen, but they should be able to handle the Monarchs fairly easily even on the road. Mission Viejo put up a spirited effort last week against Santa Clara, but it was pretty clear that had the Slugs not been forced to draw up plays in the huddle because of an AWOL coaching staff, the result might have been quite embarrassing. The Monarchs have a pretty decent pass rush and could get to Luck with a little "luck" on their side. If they are able to do so and force some turnovers, the outcome might be surprising. But don't bet on it. The Luck that counts is firmly on the Mohave side. **PICK: MOHAVE**

### **SANTA CLARA @ IOWA CITY (line – BANANA SLUGGS by 7)**

**INJURIES:** Santa Clara – None; Iowa City – None.

The Sluggs did not suffer from not having a coach last week against Mission Viejo, but at some point they are going to need one. Whether Cooper Gerow will help to keep this talent-laden squad disciplined and on track or get in its way is the question that remains to be answered. This game will be a big test; not because the Cubs personnel can match up man-for-man against Santa Clara, but because Deron Redding is a veteran coach who has tended – with the exception of one woeful season in 2012 – to get the most out of his players. He has a lot to work with in Russell Wilson and CJ Spiller on offence, and with Patrick Willis on the defence his team is always capable of making a stop when needed. That doesn't mean that a win is the cards for the Cubs, but they could certainly give the Sluggs a game and stay within the generous 7-point spread. **PICK: IOWA CITY**

### **LOS ANGELES @ CHINO (line – CONVICTS by 11)**

**INJURIES:** Los Angeles – Le'Veon Bell (OUT), Mike Brown (OUT); Chino – John Conner (OUT).

Games between these teams tend to be close regardless of where either happens to be in the standings. But the Knights have some concerns about their offensive line and lack of playmakers in the passing game. Ryan Mathews is a good back who can find holes not necessarily made by his linemen and the Convicts' defence was heavily gashed for an incredible 273 yards last week; making success in the ground game a possibility. But the Knights are going to need more than Mathews to keep pace with a Chino offence that made the Cubs look silly in Week One. The Knights have an underrated defence that did not show as well as its talent last week against the Carthage juggernaut. A few stops by the Blue Shield at the right time might be enough to inspire the offence to find the end zone more than once, but it is more likely that the Knights' defence will be worn down by Adrian Peterson and a quarterback in Cam Newton who can take apart opponents with his arm and his legs. **PICK: CHINO**

### **MARKHAM @ PICKERING (line – SPARTANS by 3)**

**INJURIES:** Markham – None; Pickering – None.

The Spartans return to Thermopylae Stadium for their home opener not the conquering heroes they expected to be after being ambushed by the Corn Kings in Week One. While it was humiliating, it might turn out to be the best thing that happened to them. It certainly means that the Spartans will not be taking the North Stars or anyone else lightly for the remainder of the season. Not that any team would take Markham lightly after they wrestled down the Thunder Lizards to open the schedule. Alex Smith may turn out to be better in Markham brown than anyone expected with targets like Jordy Nelson and Marques Colston at his disposal. While the line is questionable, Smith can improvise in those situations and is capable of giving a defence fits. On the other side, it is not a secret that Peyton Manning must assert control in order for this Spartans team to realize its ambitions. We got a glimpse, too late, of what Gus Konstantakos imagined Manning could do to defences around the league in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half against Cowntown. This week he is going to have to show that kind of stuff early and often to put down the gutty North Stars. Expect a furious Manning to show off his best stuff in front of the home crowd. **PICK: PICKERING**

### **DURHAM @ YORK (line – THUNDER LIZARDS by 2)**

**INJURIES:** Durham – Calvin Johnson (OUT); York – None.

Vegas is obviously not scared off by the rotten dinosaur egg that Drew Brees and the Lizards laid last week in Markham. The Thunder Lizards come to Camelot as favourites, albeit by a slight margin, against a team that is arguably much better than the one that dispatched them last week. Unquestionably the Durham passing game is still dangerous even with Megatron out. No question the Durham secondary is dominating and showed off that quality in defeat last week. But George Kaldis has to be very concerned about the difficulty his team continues to experience in both running the ball and stopping the run. This could be a problem against York. Marshawn Lynch is not known as the "Beast" for nothing. Expect the Swords to sick the Beast on Durham until Kam Chancellor moves into the box to stop him. That's when Tom Brady will test his sniper arm against the Durham corners. For Durham the passing game has to take off, regardless of whether the running game can help out or not. This is a do-or-die game for Brees. If he stumbles again, Nick Foles is waiting in the wings. **PICK: DURHAM**

## **COWTOWN @ SCARBOROUGH (line – BLUE EAGLES by 8)**

**INJURIES:** **Cowtown** – Ace Sanders (PROBABLE), Ryan Clady (OUT), Terrence Newman (OUT), Cecil Shorts III (OUT); **Scarborough** – None.

The persistent pessimism pervading in pre-season Cowtown has been replaced with cautious optimism after the green and gold cut down the Spartans like corn husks at Tillman Field last week. While Joe Flacco had an impressive day, the team around him was struck by critical injuries, including the loss of left tackle Ryan Clady for an indefinite period. That means Austin Howard will get the nod at left tackle and that is good news for Justin Tuck and Terrell Suggs. Scarborough is looking for redemption after two troubled seasons and they will be up for their home opener at newly renovated Bluff's Stadium. Look for the Blue Eagles' defence to step up and make a statement against the teetering Cowtown offensive line while the offence grinds out first down after first down to wear down the defence. It won't be a blowout, but it will be convincing. **PICK: SCARBOROUGH**

## **GWINNETT @ AURORA (line – MUSTANGS by 14)**

**INJURIES:** **Gwinnett** – None; **Aurora** – None.

The Glads team that surrounds stars Ben Roethlisberger, LeSean McCoy and Joe Thomas looks very unimpressive. That means the Gwinnett stars will have to do it alone and that will be nearly impossible against Aurora on the road. Critics point to the 22 first downs the Regulators managed against them last week, but 7 sacks, 5 forced fumbles and 2 interceptions tell another side of the story. Even if Big Ben pulls a giant goofy-looking rabbit out of his helmet, it doesn't mean he will be able to keep pace with Matt Ryan and an offence capable of running all day against the feeble Gwinnett defensive line. This one could get ugly quickly or it could get ugly late, but ugly for Gwinnett it will get. **PICK: AURORA**

## **SEBASTIAN @ SOUTH CAROLINA (line – REGULATORS by 2)**

**INJURIES:** **Sebastian** – Lardarius Webb (OUT); **South Carolina** – Rob Housler (OUT).

The Regulators got a whopping on the scoreboard in their home opener, disillusioning the most fragile of the faithful. But stalwarts point to the first half of that game, won by the Regs 20-17, as a more reliable indicator of what Hal Corson's team is capable of than the 2<sup>nd</sup> half debacle set off by the superhuman play of giant JJ Watt. A recovery game at home against the Swordfish is just what the doctor ordered to get the Regulators up and at 'em again. Sebastian continues to garner little respect around the league, but there is some broad fan interest in the performance of no. 1 overall pick Jadeveon Clowney. He showed flashes against York, but not the kind to turn around a bad team's fortunes. A return to South Carolina might awaken in him another level of performance, enough to make an impact here. Andy Dalton can capitalize on a turnover. But, as usual, the "any given Sunday" thing is the only reason to believe this won't be a blowout for the Regs. **PICK: SOUTH CAROLINA**



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*With Professor*  
*Sterling Smitherman*

FROM THE EFL ARCHIVES – 2008 was an exciting time for the fledgling EFL. But it was also a difficult time. The league approved four new franchises, but filling them turned out to be more of a challenge than anticipated. The league had one exciting season under its belt, but stable owners were hard to come by – most of those were waiting in the wings to see which of the rival leagues developed the healthiest roots before making a commitment. The teams that were approved to play were the Death Valley Undertakers, the Brisbane Bay Sharks, the Winnemucca

Outlaws, and the Colorado Thundersnow.

The Sharks folded before their first game, leaving the league scrambling to find a new owner. The Sharks were awarded in haste to Darrin Jones and dubbed the North Stars of Markham for the Week One contest at Death Valley, wearing borrowed white jerseys and orange helmets with crudely painted novae as logos. The name would change later to Markham North Stars and the logo would change to the big 'N' we are familiar with today.

The Undertakers lasted two weeks, vanishing after a game at Round Table Stadium in a great psychic cataclysm and reappearing in Pickering, where they played the rest of the year as the Spartans under the direction of delusional Greek real estate tycoon, Gus Konstantakos, who believed himself the reincarnation of General Pausanias of Ancient Sparta.

The Winnemucca Outlaws and Colorado Thundersnow would survive the initial growing pains and finish the season. The league thought to encourage expansion competition by placing them all in the same Division. Keep reading my column to find out how that turned out.