



PLAYOFF EDITION CONFERENCE FINALS

January 25, 2009



Florida's Antonio Cromartie looks over his shoulder and sees his Patriots pursuers far behind as he finishes a thrilling 98-yard fumble return for a TD in 2nd quarter action in the Can-Am Conference Final. The Dragons held off a late Charleswood charge to win 27-24.

CAN-AM CONFERENCE FINAL

DOWN TO THE WIRE IN DRAGONMOUNT!

*NUGENT'S 32-YARD FIELD GOAL
WITH 17 SECONDS LEFT LIFTS
DRAGONS OVER PATS*



CHARLESWOOD

24



FLORIDA

27

FLORIDA – While many residents north of the 49th parallel hanker for a trip to sunny Florida this time of the year, the Charleswood Patriots did everything in their power during the regular season to avoid it. They almost succeeded. Although they finished tied with South Division winner Florida in wins and losses at 15-1, a regular season loss to the Dragons in the Florida heat in Week Ten ultimately meant a return to the unfriendly Dragon's lair known as 'Dragonmount' in the post-season. No amount of Florida sunshine could make the Patriots see the bright side of a trip that wound up denying them a hearty cheer and brought them a rowdy jeer when they needed a boost instead. Could it have been the difference in the game?

The much anticipated re-match between the EFL's two powerhouses started off much the same way their regular season game had ended; with Florida scoring and Charleswood snoring. After winning the coin toss and electing to receive, the Dragons' **Tom Brady** chose to test the vaunted Patriots' secondary immediately by looking for All Pro wide receiver **Brandon Marshall** at all depths – medium, long, then short – on his first three passing attempts. But in each case, another All Pro, cornerback, **Marcus Trufant**, was up to the task of defending Marshall and Brady's throws missed their mark. **DeAngelo Williams** had better luck on the ground, carrying the ball 8 times for 37 yards to account for most of the Dragons' offense on an opening drive that ended with a 26-yard **Mike Nugent** field goal after almost 8 minutes of ball possession.

When the Pats finally got their chance, they started conservatively, handing the ball off 3 times to **Adrian Peterson** and completing a short pass to **Jason Witten**. But Peyton Manning's first attempt to loosen up the Dragons' secondary turned suddenly awry when unseen **Lofa Tatupu** jumped between a Manning pass and intended receiver, **Chad Johnson** for a diving interception at the Florida 43 yard line. With the pumped up crowd at Dragonmount behind him, Brady connected with Marshall on a long crossing pattern for a 27-yard gain to quicken the march down field to the Charleswood 7 yard line. There, Brady took advantage of keying Charleswood linebackers to find **Heath Miller** wide open in the corner of the end zone for a touchdown and

a 10-0 Florida lead as the first quarter ticked away.

Charleswood's first play from scrimmage in the second quarter turned back the rising Florida wave like a breakwater. The Florida defense was caught over-pursuing when Pats' running back **Jerious Norwood** made a nifty move inside on a designed pitch wide left and broke through to the second level of the Dragon 'D.' A missed tackle by **LaRon Landry** left Norwood with nothing but green and the Charleswood back-up to Peterson galloped the distance, all 54 yards of it, to the Dragons' end zone.

While the sudden retaliatory strike appeared to re-energize a flagging Pats squad, it seemed to make the Dragons all the more determined to put the Pats out of the game early. Starting from their own 11 yard line after **Yamon Figurs** stumbled on the kick return, the Brady Bunch methodically pushed their way down field toward the Patriots' end zone. Brimming with confidence, and with the crowd egging them on, Florida Coach **Jim Heaton** elected to eschew a field goal attempt and gamble on 4th down and 1 at the Charleswood 24 yard line. With the Dragons running a 3-wide receiver set, the Pats deployed 7 defensive backs in a bold gamble to shut down the pass. It paid off as Brady stuck to his play and was forced to throw it away in the face of a swarm of Patriots defenders.

Now it was Charleswood's turn to churn out a drive – and they did. With Florida stubbornly determined to prevent a Manning Air Show, the Patriots turned to Norwood, who ripped off 3 straight runs of 10 yards or more to bring the Pats into Florida territory. Sticking with Norwood and the ground game, the Pats moved to the Florida 30 yard line where the Dragons finally brought their linebackers up to the line to stop the run. As if on cue, Manning connected on a pass of 12 yards to **Jason Witten**, forcing the Dragons back into their pass defense posture and setting up what was designed to be the back-breaking play of the drive – an end-around to receiver **Chad Johnson**. It worked like a charm. Johnson broke around the corner and appeared to be on his way to pay dirt, holding the ball up in triumph as he approached the goal line only to have it batted out of his hand by a pursuing **Terrell Suggs**. Swooping down like a hawk, **Antonio Cromartie** picked up the loose ball on the 2 yard line and ran like the wind along the sideline, all 98 yards to the Patriots goal for an electrifying turnaround touchdown and a 17-7 Florida advantage with one minute remaining in the first half. The fans at Dragonmount roared their approval while Johnson hung his head on the Patriots' sideline as the first half came to a close.

A trip to the locker room to cool off was not enough to snuff out the fire of the Dragons' attack. After forcing a Charleswood punt, Florida took over at their 33 yard line. Brady found Miller for an 11-yard pass, then handed the ball off six straight times, all to the left side behind All Pro tackle **Matt Light**, grinding out 37 yards to the Patriots' red zone. Then, with the Pats crowding the line, Brady play-action faked and lofted a rainbow over the head of safety, **Michael Lewis** to an open **Heath Miller** in the end zone for a 19-yard TD pass play. At that point, down 24-7 on the road, the situation looked grim for Charleswood as the Dragons danced and swaggered on the sideline and their fans hurtled red, orange, and yellow streamers

* Playoff * 01-23-2009 Dragonmount Temp: 63 Wind: 0-10 None MVP: **Brady**

2007 **Charleswood** (0-1) 0 7 7 10 - 24
2007 **Florida** (1-0) 10 7 7 3 - 27

1 7:08 Florida FG Nugent 26 (14-71-7:52) 0-3
1 0:26 Florida TD Brady 7 pass to Miller (Nugent) (7-71-3:38) 0-10
2 14:45 Charleswood TD Norwood 54 run (Gostkowski) (3-59-0:29) 7-10
2 1:00 Florida TD Cromartie 98 yd fumble recovery (Nugent) (0-0-0:00) 7-17
3 7:54 Florida TD Brady 19 pass to Miller (Nugent) (8-67-4:34) 7-24
3 1:48 Charleswood TD Peterson 2 run (Gostkowski) (16-86-6:01) 14-24
4 12:33 Charleswood TD Peterson 6 run (Gostkowski) (7-63-2:33) 21-24
4 4:13 Charleswood FG Gostkowski 33 (8-54-4:35) 24-24
4 0:17 Florida FG Nugent 32 (10-65-3:43) 24-27

< **Charleswood** >

< **Florida** >

Passing Att Cmp Yds Sk In Td Rate
Manning 26 16 181 1 1 0 66.3

Passing Att Cmp Yds Sk In Td Rate
Brady 24 15 202 1 0 2 117.0

Rushing Att Yds Ave FD Lg TD
Norwood 11 111 10.1 4 54 1
Peterson 17 79 4.6 6 14 2
Johnson 1 15 15.0 0 15 0
Jones 1 0 0.0 0 0 0
Manning 1 -1 -1.0 0 0 0
Welker 1 -5 -5.0 0 0 0
32 199 6.2 10 54 3

Rushing Att Yds Ave FD Lg TD
Jackson 22 111 5.0 7 10 0
Williams 15 71 4.7 2 12 0
Brady 1 2 2.0 0 2 0
38 184 4.8 9 12 0

Receiving No Yds Ave FD Lg TD
Witten 4 49 12.3 3 16 0
Driver 4 46 11.5 3 21 0
Johnson 4 54 13.5 3 22 0
Welker 3 25 8.3 1 10 0
Norwood 1 7 7.0 0 7 0

Receiving No Yds Ave FD Lg TD
Cotchery 4 51 12.8 2 14 0
Miller 4 48 12.0 3 19 2
Houshmandza 3 46 15.3 3 18 0
Marshall 3 49 16.3 3 27 0
Jackson 1 8 8.0 1 8 0

	CHP	FLD
First Downs	20	23
Rushes	32-199	38-184
Passes	26-16-181	24-15-202
Sacked	1-5	1-5
Fumble	1	1
Penalties	3-19	5-26
Turnovers	2	0
Time	28:11	31:49
Third Down	5-11	8-11
Fourth Down	1-2	0-3
Net Offense	375	381



GAME MVP
TOM BRADY
FLORIDA DRAGONS

AFTER THE GAME

"They are a really good team. They fought us hard the whole way. Some people will say we let up after grabbing that lead, but we didn't let up. They just came at us hard and they earned their way back. 'Cro' did it again for us. Man, he's our MVP! – **Tom Brady**

to create the illusion of fire in the stands.

To their credit, the Pats did not panic, but responded with bold determination on their next possession. After pounding at the Florida defensive line with limited success, Coach **Jason Findlay** put the game on the line for Charleswood with a daring gamble on 4th down and 2 at his 22 yard line. A strong second effort by stud running back, **Adrian Peterson** pushed the ball a full yard past the first down marker after it initially appeared he would come up short, keeping the Pats alive for another set of downs. Backing off slightly to avoid getting burned deep, Florida's defense started to give up yardage in small to middling chunks until Manning found the first half goat, **Chad Johnson**, open for a 22-yard pass play to the Florida 2 yard line. From there it took them 3 plays, but they finally found the end zone when Peterson snuck through the line behind **Mike Wahle**.

With time still remaining in the third quarter, Findlay continued his aggressive play, calling for an onside kick. Florida was waiting for it with their "hands team" and **T.J. Houshmandzadeh** fell on the bouncing pigskin to give the Dragons excellent field position at the Charleswood 40. After moving it 8 yards in 3 plays, Florida was in no mood for compromise as Heaton once more turned his back on the field goal unit and elected to go for it on 4th down and 2 at the Pats' 32 yard line. But back-up defensive end **Darryl Tapp** came up big, sacking Brady before he could set up the screen pass and the Pats found themselves in good field position at their own 37 yard line.

Emboldened by the stand of the defense, Manning completed 4 of his next 5 passes, for 59 yards, to bring the Pats to the Florida 6 yard line. From there, **Adrian Peterson** gained the corner on a pitch to the left and clipped the pylon for his second touchdown of the game. For the first time all day, the Dragons and their fans felt like they were loosing their grip on the game. Jubilation turned to concern as the crowd quieted and the staccato crack of helmet-slaps echoed from the Charleswood bench.

Florida responded with a couple of first downs but stalled at the Charleswood 34 yard line, where they faced a 4th down and 5 situation. Instead of trying to pin the Pats back in their end, Heaton again elected to challenge the Patriots' defense. But **Steven Jackson** was tripped up short of the first down marker and the Pats took over at their 30 yard line with a full 8 minutes remaining in the game. With the Dragons' defense focusing on stopping **Adrian Peterson**, Manning found Witten twice for a total of 30 yards to spearhead the drive into Florida territory. After Peterson came up one yard short on 3rd down, the Pats brought **Stephen Gostkowski** out to attempt a 33-yard field goal. The kick was dead center and, dramatically and somewhat unbelievably, the game was tied at 24-24 with 4:08 remaining.

Figurs returned the kickoff to the Florida 20 where the offence took the field to a subdued but steady encouragement from the crowd. A quick slant to Marshall gained 10 yards and a first down, bringing a loud cheer from the stands. Then the Dragons turned to trench warfare, handing the ball five straight times to Jackson, who gained 31 yards to penetrate Charleswood territory, reaching the 36 yard line where they faced a 3rd down and 5. With his primary receiver double-covered, Brady found Houshmandzadeh open underneath, and the unsung hero of the Florida receiving corps sprinted to the Pats' 18 yard line for an 18-yard gain. A 3-yard run by Jackson with time ticking away brought them a little closer and Brady spiked the ball to stop the clock. With 12 seconds left, **Mike Nugent's** 32-yard field goal attempt snuck inside the left upright, sending the crowd at Dragonmount into a frenzy of ecstatic relief and lifting the Florida Dragons to the Can-Am Conference Championship and their first ever berth in the EFL Championship Game.

¶CONFERENCE FINAL NOTES¶

FLORIDA BOOTH GETS WIRES CROSSED – A technical glitch in the Florida broadcast booth and media room disrupted the audio and video game feed to the local television and radio audiences in South Florida and the Southern States. At first thought to be a power failure, the problems lasted well after a small short circuit had been fixed and appeared to be related to unstable or infected computer software. Several prominent Florida sports writers such as William Wyrmwright and Merlin Pendragon also lost entire stories and blog entries when a sudden power surge apparently fried hard drives on their laptop computers. Some Florida audiences and others receiving Florida stations were left without access to most of the game while others had to rely on their Cable companies to gain access to the audio-visual feed from Charleswood.

DRAGONS CELEBRATE WITH GRAPE JUICE – The Florida Dragons celebrated their Can-Am Conference Championship quietly with grape juice and egg salad sandwiches in the locker room after their nail-biting win over Charleswood. Media interviews were surprisingly brief and many of the players were unavailable. Tom Brady made a brief appearance, as did tackle, Matt Light and safety, Ken Hamlin. Coach Jim Heaton was a no-show for his regular post-game appearance on 'Curmudgeon's Corner,' being replaced by an Assistant Trainer who spoke only long enough to communicate that the Dragons were pleased to have won and were focusing on preparing for Iowa City." Nothing short of a Championship victory is acceptable to us," the AT read in a monotone from a prepared statement.

FLORIDA FANS DANCE IN THE STREETS – Florida fans gathered around Dragonmount after the game and danced in the streets, snarling traffic for hours around the stadium. Eventually, some fans were run over by angry truckers and bus drivers, resulting in dozens of injuries and one death. Video of the shocking incident is already appearing on YouTube but the local Police Chief will not confirm any of it, claiming that South Florida is merely celebrating with "energy and enthusiasm."



CUBS QUICK START HOLDS UP



CHINO

18



IOWA CITY

23

GARCIA THROWS 3 TD PASSES TO LEAD CUBS OVER “NEVER SAY DIE” CONVICTS

IOWA CITY – The team that specializes in knocking off the big boys got a taste of their own medicine this week in the Pacific-Atlantic Conference Final, but only a tiny taste. In the end, the Cubs prevailed as the odds-makers had expected they would, but not before they and their die-hard fans suffered a few breathless moments watching the Chino Convicts rebound from a 14-point deficit to take a one-point lead with only 5 minutes remaining in the game. A game that looked like it was shaping up to be a laugher early, turned into a nail-biter and made Conference Final Weekend a clean sweep for excitement on the gridiron.

The defending EFL Champions came into Joe Ferguson Stadium looking to prove that they belonged back in the EFL’s biggest game. All season they had taken a back seat to the “New Cubs on the Block” in the hearts and minds of most sports analysts and football fans across the continent. The Convicts were *last year’s* Cinderella; the glass slipper no longer fit. The Cubs were considered fresh, young, fashionable, and the “sexiest” team outside of Los Angeles. To make matters worse, the Convicts’ young starting quarterback, who had replaced a Legend, had come across as arrogant and boorish after seemingly brushing aside the Cubs and looking ahead to the EFL Championship Game during pre-game interviews. The conservative sports writers especially, “old schoolers” in their view of, as they would say, the “selfish puffed-up popinjays” of today’s media-obsessed athletic pool, were offended at Cutler’s lack of couth and



Larry Fitzgerald turns it up field after grabbing a pass from Jeff Garcia in first quarter Conference Final action against the Chino Convicts.

savvy in front of the microphone. Needless to say, **Sparky McGillicuddy** and other pro-Iowa City sports columnists had a field day ridiculing **Jay Cutler** and ratcheting up the hype around this contest that already had the entire State of Iowa caught in the grip of a kind of Mass Mania and that required no more hyping, thank you very much.

So the boos from the Cubs Faithful were particularly vitriolic when Cutler completed an 11-yard pass to **Anquan Boldin** on the game’s first play from scrimmage; and the cheers unsettlingly shrill and deranged when his next two pass attempts fell incomplete and his third down completion fell short of the first down marker to force a punt. And what a punt it was! **Shane Lechler** boomed it high and far and into the end zone for a touchback, giving the Cubs possession at their 20 yard line.

The Cubs looked determined to make short work of Chino, as they had in their first match-up of the regular season. Three punishing runs totaling 25 yards by bruising running back, **Brandon Jacobs**, set up the offensive play of the game – a 42-yard catch-and-run from **Jeff Garcia** to **Larry Fitzgerald**, who snagged the ball on the fly approximately 10 yards from scrimmage and sprinted the rest of the way, shooting past a mesmerized **Bernard Pollard** on the way to the end zone and a 7-0 Cubs’ lead.

After a three-and-out by the Convicts brought the mob at Joe Ferguson Stadium to its feet once more, Garcia and the baby bears fired another salvo at the shaken Chino squad. Mixing short and medium passes with a couple of good old-fashioned runs off tackle, the Cubs’ offense shrugged off a tense moment after a **Roy Williams** fumble on the first play of the drive to barrel 54 yards through the Convicts’ ‘D’ in 8 plays to score again, this time on a 2-yard hitch pass to **Kellen Winslow**. Two possessions, two touchdowns and a 14-0 lead for the home team. Things then went from bad to worse for the Convicts when Cutler lost a fumble on his own 34 yard line, putting the Cubs offense in virtual scoring position without having run a play. Chino could not wait to get out of the first quarter.

As so often happens with any Chino team, when the situation looks bleakest, that is when things turn suddenly around in their favour. With the Cubs driving for another score, **Terence Newman** came seemingly out of nowhere to make a rare red zone

interception of **Jeff Garica** to staunch the bleeding and prevent disaster. Then **LaDainian Tomlinson** burst free for a 36-yard run and Cutler found Boldin deep for a 28-yard pass on consecutive plays to vault the Convicts out of a deep hole and eventually to the Cubs' 26 yard line where they stalled and had to settle for a 43-yard field goal by **Jeff Reed**.

That score, and another field goal by Reed on Chino's next possession, seemed to steal away the Cubs momentum and the game turned into a slugfest from that point on. **Koren Robinson** made a nice return on the ensuing kickoff to give the Cubs good field position, leading to a 33-yard **Jay Feely** field goal to close the scoring for the first half. But the sense on the field was that this game was anything but over despite a 17-6 Iowa City advantage heading into the locker room.

The Convicts scored another field goal, this one from 48 yards out, on their first possession of the second half to pull within 8 points. Meanwhile, the Cubs looked flat. Well into the third quarter it became apparent that the Chino defense had figured out **Brandon Jacobs**. The Cubs went nowhere trying to establish the running game, being forced to punt twice after Jacobs failed to convert on third down. But the Convicts were slow to take advantage of some rare gifts handed to them by an apparently flustered Cubbies squad. A comedic series of mishaps near the end of the third quarter saw four turnovers in a four-minute span, two by each team, with the final one going to Chino as **Ernie Sims** stripped Garcia at Iowa City's 33 yard line as he left the pocket to run. Six plays later, Chino posted their only major score of the afternoon on an 11-yard isolation pass from Cutler to **Anquan Boldin** to narrow the Cubs' lead to less than a field goal, 17-15. Looking to tie the game, the Convicts went for two points but failed to convert the attempt.

After a couple of costly holding penalties set the Cubs back on their next possession, the Convicts took advantage of good field position to grab the lead, 18-17 on a 27-yard field goal by Reed, his fourth of the game. That forced the Cubs, who had been stuck in first gear offensively all second half, to wake up. But their offense still looked shaky as a couple of misfired passes brought about a 4th down and 5 situation at their 44 yard line with 3:13 remaining in the game. The Moment of Truth had arrived for Iowa City. Trust their defense to hold Chino to a three-and-out, or go for it? Redding decided to go for it, much to the crowd's nervous delight. The gamble paid off big with a 21-yard pass completion to Jacobs on a medium hitch route. Riding a wave of adrenaline, the Cubs would not be denied the big payoff. Four plays later they were in the end zone for the third time as Garcia lofted a spiral to the far corner where Fitzgerald made a leaping catch and kept his toes in bounds for the major. Joe Ferguson Stadium erupted in a frenzy of celebration, but the fans would be forced to quiet down before long. The Convicts, down by 5 points, still had a shot. Starting at their 20, **LT** pulled off a clutch 22-yard run to convert a third down. Then, somehow Cutler managed to move his team to inside the Cubs' red zone with 2 seconds remaining on the clock. With the Cubs fans on their feet, Chino's hopes for an upset ended with a Cutler pass glancing off the hands of **Tory Holt** in the end zone as the clock showed 0:00. It was over – the Cubs had won!

* Playoff * 01-25-2009 Joe Ferguson Stadium, Temp: 40, Wind: Calm MVP: **Robinson**

2007 Chino (0-1) 0 6 3 9 - 18
2007 Iowa City (1-0) 14 3 0 6 - 23

1 9:19 Iowa City TD Garcia 42 pass to Fitzgerald (Feely) (8-80-3:52) 0-7
1 2:52 Iowa City TD Garcia 2 pass to Winslow (Feely) (8-54-4:16) 0-14
2 9:56 Chino FG Reed 43 (7-67-3:36) 3-14
2 4:58 Chino FG Reed 37 (9-37-4:04) 6-14
2 1:34 Iowa City FG Feely 31 (7-44-3:08) 6-17
3 6:20 Chino FG Reed 48 (12-45-6:58) 9-17
4 11:49 Chino TD Cutler 11 pass to Boldin (2 - failed) (6-33-3:02) 15-17
4 5:09 Chino FG Reed 27 (8-34-4:33) 18-17
4 1:47 Iowa City TD Garcia 13 pass to Fitzgerald (2 - failed) (8-61-3:00) 18-23

< Chino >

< Iowa City >

Passing Att Cmp Yds Sk In Td Rate
Cutler 47 26 256 0 1 1 69.1

Passing Att Cmp Yds Sk In Td Rate
Garcia 26 15 187 1 1 3 102.6
Edwards 1 0 0 0 0 0 39.6

Rushing Att Yds Ave FD Lg TD
Tomlinson 25 130 5.2 9 36 0
Cutler 7 17 2.4 1 5 0
 32 147 4.6 10 36 0

Rushing Att Yds Ave FD Lg TD
Jacobs 21 98 4.7 4 15 0
Bush 1 4 4.0 0 4 0
Garcia 2 0 0.0 0 1 0
Edwards 1 -1 -1.0 0 0 0
 25 101 4.0 4 15 0

Receiving No Yds Ave FD Lg TD
Boldin 9 110 12.2 4 28 1
Holt 8 76 9.5 4 14 0
Tomlinson 4 30 7.5 1 11 0
Graham 3 19 6.3 1 7 0
Brown 2 21 10.5 2 11 0

Receiving No Yds Ave FD Lg TD
Winslow 5 47 9.4 4 14 1
Fitzgerald 4 74 18.5 3 42 2
Williams 4 38 9.5 2 15 0
Jacobs 2 28 14.0 2 21 0

	CHI	ICC
First Downs	22	15
Rushes	32-147	25-101
Passes	47-26-256	27-15-187
Sacked	0-0	1-6
Fumble	2	4
Penalties	9-55	4-35
Turnovers	3	3
Time	33:33	26:24
Third Down	7-18	4-10
Fourth Down	3-4	1-1
Net Offense	403	282



GAME MVP
KOREN ROBINSON
IOWA CITY

AFTER THE GAME

"I knew I had to make plays today and I did." – **Koren Robinson**

"It wasn't always pretty but we finished the job. I'm proud of our effort and determination. Koren stepped up huge for us today and Jeff really hung in there and competed. I am proud of this squad." – Iowa Coach, **Deron Redding**

NEW ASSOCIATED PRESS ANNOUNCES EFL ALL-PRO TEAM!

NAP – The New Associated Press named its 2008 EFL All-Pro Team yesterday. The winners are the players who garnered the highest number of votes at each position in a poll of 16 sports columnists across North America. There is one NAP sports writer for each of the 16 teams in the EFL, and each one was eligible to vote in this poll. The results are as follows:

ALL PRO OFFENSE		ALL PRO DEFENCE	
	QB – Tom Brady <i>Florida Dragons</i>		DT – Kevin Williams <i>Los Angeles Knights</i>
	HB – LaDainian Tomlinson <i>Chino Convicts</i>		DT – Darnell Dockett <i>Gwinnett Gladiators</i>
	FB – Lawrence Vickers <i>Iowa City Cubs</i>		DE – Osi Umenyiora <i>Florida Dragons</i>
	WR – Brandon Marshall <i>Florida Dragons</i>		DE – Mario Williams <i>Iowa City Cubs</i>
	WR – Chad Johnson <i>Charleswood Patriots</i>		ILB – Zach Thomas <i>Winnemucca Outlaws</i>
	TE – Jason Witten <i>Charleswood Patriots</i>		OLB – Mike Vrabel <i>Markham North Stars</i>
	LT – Matt Light <i>Florida Dragons</i>		OLB – James Harrison <i>Chino Convicts</i>
	LG – Logan Mankins <i>Florida Dragons</i>		CB – Antonio Cromartie <i>Florida Dragons</i>
	C – Jeff Saturday <i>Cowtown Corn Kings</i>		CB – Marcus Trufant <i>Charleswood Patriots</i>
	RG – Shawn Andrews <i>Cowtown Corn Kings</i>		S – Clinton Hart <i>Kutztown Golden Bears</i>
	RT – Joe Thomas <i>Los Angeles Knights</i>		S – Ed Reed <i>Charleswood Patriots</i>
	PK – Kris Brown <i>Los Angeles Knights</i>		
	Punter – Andy Lee <i>Gwinnett Gladiators</i>		
			Ret – Joshua Cribbs <i>Chino Convicts</i>

HONORABLE MENTIONS

The first runner-up at each position, according to votes cast, are: QB – **Peyton Manning**, CHP; HB – **Brian Westbrook**, MOH; FB – **Ovie Mughelli**, COW; WR – **Larry Fitzgerald**, ICC; TE – **Tony Gonzalez**, GWG / **Tony Scheffler**, COL (tie); C – **Olin Kreutz**, LA; G – **Chris Snee**, GWG / **Eric Steinbach**, COW (tie); T – **Chris Samuels**, CHP; DT – **Tommie Harris**, COW; DE – **Kyle Vanden Bosch**, CHP; ILB – **DeMeco Ryans**, ICC / **Lofa Tatupu**, FLD (tie); OLB – **DeMarcus Ware**, RCH; CB – **Asante Samuel**, CHP / **Antrel Rolle**, ICC (tie); S – **Ken Hamlin**, FLD.



AROUND THE



With Spats McChad

NEW YORK – With Barrack Obama now officially the President of the United States, my beloved New York is awash with T-shirts with his face on the front. At first I found them quaint, then amusing, and now I find them very irritating indeed. A new Presidency is always an exciting time for the Masses but this new Presidency is bordering on Cultish.

CHARLESWOOD JUST A FIELD GOAL AWAY FROM HISTORY

Godzilla almost got nuked on his own island by the Japanese Air Force. Whew! That was a close one in Florida! Looking back on it after the dust settled, it is clear, (to me anyway) that **Tom Brady** and the Dragons can thank **Antonio Cromartie** for saving their bacon yet again. Brady was named the Game MVP, as he usually is after showing up on the field and breathing, but Cromartie made the play of the game with his 98-yard fumble recovery touchdown that turned the tables on what looked like a sure score for the Patriots. If **‘Ocho Cinco’** doesn’t hold the ball out like a trophy to get an early start on his mandatory stupid celebration, and **Terrell Suggs** doesn’t swat it out, and Cromartie doesn’t snatch it up and run like the wind, its 7 points and a 14-10 Charleswood lead at half time instead of a 17-7 deficit. Who knows what happens after that, but one thing is certain – it would have been a much different game!

As it turned out, the Pats gutted out an impressive comeback and forced the Dragons to put together a gutsy drive of their own against a fired up Charleswood defense late in the fourth quarter. Give Brady full marks for not trying to force the ball into double coverage and finding Houshmandzadeh open underneath for the key play of the winning field goal drive. A lesser pivot might have tried to thread the needle and likely would have been picked off.

GEEK ALERT

The announcement of the New Associated Press All Pro Team is causing excitement and disappointment for more than just the players and their agents. Hidden from most of the world, but unfortunately in plain view of Yours Truly, is the effect that the All Pro Team is having on the so-called, **“Action PC Football”** gaming community. This “community” is not to be confused with the mainstream, and somewhat sane, Madden Football gaming community. This is an entirely different group of people of which my four-eyed geek nephew, Byron is, sad to say, one.

I have actually seen Byron “play” this game on his computer and I am still not sure what it was that I actually saw. It did not look like a game to me, but then again I do not own a pocket protector, wear the same pair of pants for weeks at a stretch, or drink 10 liters of Coke a day, so maybe my perception of fun is off. It looked like he was reading text messages that would cause sudden violent changes in his mood. I never see Byron angry except when he “plays” this game – something to do with a “50 point run defense” allowing someone to run for a touchdown or something. Anyway, Byron was very unhappy that **Bob Sanders** did not get named to the EFL All Pro Team. When I asked why he would care, since he hates the Thunder Lizards anyway, he answered, (as if it were well-established and universally known fact) that he “had” Sanders on his “team,” the Hampton War Salad. Feeling like I was missing something, I probed further, only to be told, cryptically, that it meant Sanders would not get a “ten” in the “next set.” Apparently, **Clinton Hart** of Kutztown would get a “ten” instead and Sanders would be lucky to get a “nine.”

I think my nephew needs help....desperately, but I am not sure what to do about it or who to turn to. If you, my dear readers, have loved ones who are similarly immersed in this unhealthy “Action PC Football” game and know what to do, please drop me an e-mail.

“EXPANSION CURSE” COMPLETE WITH COLORADO EXIT

It's official. The EFL announced early this week that Colorado's **Kris Heaton**, the last of the original expansion team owners, has sold the Thundersnow to Garland printing tycoon, **Doug Shirley**. Shirley, who also owns several thoroughbred race horses and a priceless rare book collection, unveiled the new name of the Colorado franchise at a Press Conference on Wednesday. The new team will be called the **Garland Mustangs**, and Shirley, who has had prior experience running a professional football franchise with the now defunct Garland Gladiators of the old SFL is eager as can be to get started building on the solid foundation left by the junior Heaton. The former Colorado owner, who believed that perceived inequities in the expansion format and the college draft system in the EFL were significant barriers to the league's growth and ultimate health, apparently sees a much brighter future in professional Jai 'Alai and is investing heavily in courts across the State of Florida.

CUBS WIN THE WAY THAT WINNERS WIN

Much has been made about the **Chino Convicts** and their domination of the stat sheet and the balance of play in the Pacific-Atlantic Conference Final against Iowa City. Many feel the Cubs came far too close to choking away a golden opportunity at home against looser and more confident Chino. Those who do think that Iowa City, after a fast start, is starting to show its inexperience as the pressure of the games mount from week to week. That may be true of a few of the players, certainly youngsters like **Vince Wilfork**, whose inconsistent play in the middle of the line left the Cubs more vulnerable to the run as the season progressed. However, it is certainly *not* true about **Jeff Garcia** and **Larry Fitzgerald**, who have connected with each other for four TD passes in their two playoff games. Garcia and Fitzgerald know what it takes to win: make the plays that need to be made when they need to be made. Conversely, teams that make most of the plays, but fail to make the ones they need to make, invariably lose. That was the simple difference between the Convicts and the Cubs in the Pacific-Atlantic Conference Final – the Convicts made most of the plays but failed to make many of the key ones, while the Cubs did what they had to do to win.

SIX DRAGONS NAMED TO ALL PRO TEAM

The Florida Dragons topped all EFL franchises with six players named to the New Associated Press All Pro Team. But the worthy Florida players on the team can thank almost everyone in the sports journalism world except *Miami Herald* NAP writer, **Merlin Pendragon**, for their honours. Pendragon earned the dubious distinction of being the only eligible voter to completely shut out the Dragons in his All Pro voting. Yes, that's right – a Florida writer was the only writer who did not vote for at least one Florida Dragons player. As strange as that is, it gets even more bizarre when you read his explanation for it. *“Why would I seek to raise the status of any Dragon player above that of another whose exploits rivaled his while toiling for a lesser team? Am I to heap praise and adulation upon those who, by virtue of their superior associations on a Team of the Ages, reap the rewards of happenstance through no extraordinary talent of their person, but rather through their happy and purposeful collaboration with others of ordinary stature raised through common will and brotherhood to a higher level of experience and achievement? I think not! Better to credit the efforts of the giants who toil among the pygmies, for they have a lonely and miserable existence and need a hand to raise them from the muck of fate.”*

So, if I read this correctly (and it is open to interpretation), Pendragon is not voting for Florida players because Florida is the best *team*, thereby making the individual contributions of its players less meaningful than they would be if they played for say, Anchorage. HmMMM.....I need a drink.

NEW YORK GRIPES

With the Big Game coming up I am feeling a little let down. I can't set aside the feeling that the *real* Championship was last week between Charleswood and Florida and that this week's tilt is more of an amusement for the fans. I am sure that Cubs fans across the Continent will do naughty things to me in effigy over what I about to say, but I truly believe the Cubs are going to get their asses handed to them by the Dragons in Gwinnett this weekend. Sorry, but it's going to happen. Go Dragons!

With all of the problems with expansion during the first go around, why would the EFL be considering, as they reportedly are, a second expansion this year? Idiocy perhaps? Obstinency, maybe? Detachment from reality, almost certainly. Or else maybe, just maybe, there is actually a demand for new franchises from high caliber prospective owners that we in the Media are not fully aware of?

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JIMMY'S EFL CHAMPIONSHIP PICK

(GALE SAYERS TROPHY)

GWINNETT COLISEUM, SATURDAY, 6:30 PM

IOWA CITY @ FLORIDA (LINE - DRAGONS BY 7)

The most interesting part of this match-up will be the highly intense so-called "Chess Match" between these two Head Coaches during the game. Both are known for their aggressive play-calling styles – Deron Redding more so on offense and Jim Heaton more so on defense – but both are capable and willing to roll the dice against the odds on both sides of the ball to score a big Pay Day. Redding, especially, will be tempted to gamble despite the inherent risks in doing so with a board stocked with weaker pieces. To sit by and watch Florida take his team apart would be like a slow death to a swashbuckler like Redding, so expect him to flame out hard in a blaze of glory if the game starts to get out of hand. The only time these two teams met this year, Florida took care of Iowa City handily at Dragonmount. With this game on a neutral field in Gwinnett, the Cubs are better positioned this time, but not by much. Florida is the class of the EFL and the Cubs had better come to terms with that first, before embarking on a game plan to prove it wrong.

WHEN FLORIDA HAS THE BALL: The Dragons got used to doing whatever they wanted during the regular season but have had to be more selective in the playoffs as their competition stiffens. They face a Cubs defense with 'bona fide' stars in the first two levels of defense but no superstar at cornerback. Although the 'Heaton Way' calls for lots of Steven Jackson and DeAngelo Williams, look for him to open things up sooner rather than later against the Cubbies Air Defense.

WHEN IOWA CITY HAS THE BALL: The Dragons were the most penalized defense in the league last year, but it was a relatively small price to pay for the type of aggression that also forced a league-leading 41 turnovers. The Cubs have a key component of their running game back in Ronnie Brown, who provides a nice change of pace to Brandon Jacobs. Iowa City has a stud receiver in Larry Fitzgerald, but he will be matched against All Pro corner, Antonio Cromartie, meaning that Jeff Garcia will have to look for Kellen Winslow and Roy Williams if he needs to move the ball through the air consistently. Look for the Cubs to work hard on establishing the run first, then work on stretching the field.

THE BOTTOM LINE: There is no escaping the disparity between these two teams on paper and in their respective regular season performances. But is the difference between them really so large that a well-executed or poorly executed game plan by either team would not make a difference in the outcome? I would say "no" to that for the simple reason that the Cubs have the horses to carry a big load on a good day and the Dragons have shown that, on at least one occasion this year, they were human. In order to win, Iowa City will need to take the ball away from Florida and hang on to it themselves. They will also need to put pressure on Brady to force some bad throws. The Dragons will just need to execute their game plan with reasonable precision to maintain the upper hand. I can see a game where the Cubs keep it close for a while but eventually crack and fall apart under the pressure.

PICK: FLORIDA

SHOULD YOU LISTEN TO A THING I SAY??????
HOW I'M DOING AGAINST THE SPREAD

LAST WEEK: 1-1-0

OVERALL: 99-35-0