

2019



WILD



EFL

ELITE FOOTBALL LEAGUE

2019

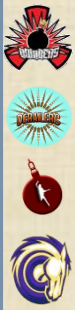


CARD



In our 12<sup>th</sup> season and still going strong!  
February 9, 2020

EAST



CHINO

0

VIRDEN

24



WILDCARD



TORONTO

38

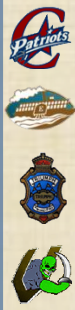
PICKERING

35

NORTH



CENTRAL



COASTAL



WEST



SOUTH



*Tyreek Hill*  
*Toronto Wolverines*

Toronto wide receiver *Tyreek Hill* flashes the peace sign at the pursuing secondary on his way to the third of his four TD receptions in the Wolverine's 38-35 upset of the Spartans. Hill was the single most explosive factor in Toronto's win, although picking off *Philip Rivers* 3 times helped. In other action, the Virden defence shone in a 24-0 shutout of Chino (see story inside).



Who was slick  
in Wildcard  
Weekend?

"Brylcreem" THE  
EFL'S FIRST SPONSOR



Tyreek Hill  
WR  
Toronto  
Wolverines

6 Rec., 166 yds, 27.7 Avg., 4 TDs.  
Explosive impact made the difference



Dexter Lawrence  
DL  
Virden  
Violators

4 T, 1 SK, 3 HUR, 1 FF. Contributed  
key pass rush pressure in shutout.



0

Chino



24

Virден

TEAM LEADERS				
Passing	Cmp	Att	Yds	TD
Prescott	25	37	184	0
Rushing	Car	Yds	Avg	TD
McCaffrey	14	46	3.3	0
Receiving	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD
McCaffrey	11	51	4.6	0

Team	1	2	3	4	OT	Total
Chino	0	0	0	0	-	0
Virден	7	10	7	0	-	24

TEAM LEADERS				
Passing	Cmp	Att	Yds	TD
Mahomes	20	36	248	2
Rushing	Car	Yds	Avg	TD
Elliott	21	89	4.2	1
Receiving	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD
Cooper	6	107	17.8	1

**Play of the Game**  
 In the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter, 14:09 left, 1<sup>st</sup> & 10 at Chino 25 after a turnover, **Patrick Mahomes** threw a strike to **Amari Cooper** on a medium fly that went for a score and made it a 14-0 lead.

## MAHOMES HELD TO 2 TD PASSES!

### VIRDEN DEFENCE DOMINATES DAK & Co. IN FIRST VIRDEN PLAYOFF WIN

**SUMMARY:** The Convicts entered the hostile home of the Violators, *TERRORDOME* focused on containing the aerial wizardry of the undisputed top quarterback of 2019, **Patrick Mahomes**. Strangely, it was not the Virден whiz kid who do them in, although he did his part. Instead, the Virден defence turned in its best performance of the year, holding Chino's top players in check and its offence completely off the score board and out of the red zone. **Dak Prescott** looked off his game from the start and the Violators' 'D' made sure he stayed off track with a relentless pass rush that notched 4 sacks and harried him constantly. The Convicts led with strength, attempting to get the ball to **Christian McCaffrey** on 13 of their first 19 plays, but the Virден line-backing corps led by **Anthony Barr** looked well-drilled in its plan to stop the dual-threat back. McCaffrey was unable to break a run or catch a pass for more than 9 yards in 25 touches. This lack of production put pressure on Prescott that he was not accustomed to experiencing and it showed in his inability to keep the chains moving. Chino opened the game with a three-and-out that started with a rare first-play delay of game penalty. The Violators answered with a 9-play, 79-yard scoring drive in which Mahomes spread the ball around to four different receivers before settling on **Eric Ebron** to take it in for the opening TD. Chino went three-and-out again on their next possession then Prescott fumbled away the ball on the drive after that. The mistake set up up Virден's second TD, a 25-yard fly pattern to **Amari Cooper** to make it 14-0. The next two Chino possessions featured desperation 4<sup>th</sup> down gambles in their own territory in an effort to spark a rally. The first was a success but was followed up by a loss of 13 yards on the next three plays; the second was a stone of McCaffrey on 4<sup>th</sup> & 3 that set up a Virден field goal to end the half. The Chino defence opened the 2<sup>nd</sup> half with a stop. **Takkarist McKinley** sacked Mahomes for an 8-yard loss to force a three-and-out. But **Dexter Lawrence** sacked Prescott for a 10-yard loss on Chino's first play from scrimmage, leading to another three-and-out. **Ezekiel Elliott** followed that with a 4-yard TD run, Virден's last score of the day. It turned out that 24 points was more than enough offence to give Virден its franchise first playoff win.

**QUOTES:** "I wanted to keep Patrick's arm warm so I had him throwing right up till the end. Pat's the kind of kid who needs to throw the ball at least 30 times a game. It stood out; I know. But who knew our defence was going to stop those guys like that?" – Virден coach, **Lance Barrate**.  
 "I was happy with our game plan on offence but not the execution, obviously. We preached ball security all year and it worked for us, but Dak let it get away from him a bit and he'd be the first to tell you that – at least he better be the first!" – Chino coach, **Rob Nazar**.

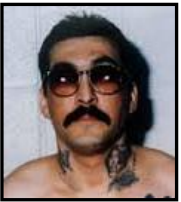


ANGRY FAN



titter

HAPPY FAN



**Quentin San Pedro @QSP**  
 ¡Caramba! What a shit game!



**Marquis de Sade @mdsviolate**  
 To see the opponent utterly helpless and completely subject to the will of @Violators was delightfully tantalizing to the senses.





# Chino 0 Virden 24

Chino	1	2	3	4	F
Virden	0	0	0	0	0
	7	10	7	0	24



\* Playoff \* 02-08-2020 TERRORDOME Temp:58 Wind:Calm None No Line MVP:Mahomes HFA:

1	8:12	Virden	TD	Mahomes 8 pass to Ebron (Santos) (9-79-5:13)	0-7
2	14:09	Virden	TD	Mahomes 25 pass to Cooper (Santos) (3-37-1:03)	0-14
2	0:00	Virden	FG	Santos 21 (11-38-1:51)	0-17
3	4:48	Virden	TD	Elliott 4 run (Santos) (10-63-6:09)	0-24

### Player Stats

Passing	Att	Cmp	Yds	25	In	Td	Sk	Rate
Prescott	37	25	184	0	1	0	4	67.8
	37	25	184	0	1	0	4	67.8

Passing	Att	Cmp	Yds	25	In	Td	Sk	Rate
Mahomes	36	20	248	1	0	2	2	95.6
	36	20	248	1	0	2	2	95.6

Rushing	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	10	Lg	Td
McCaffrey	14	46	3.3	2	0	7	0
Prescott	4	16	4.0	1	0	8	0
Riddick	1	-2	-2.0	0	0	0	0
	19	60	3.2	3	0	8	0

Rushing	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	10	Lg	Td
Elliott	21	89	4.2	5	4	15	1
Mahomes	2	18	9.0	1	1	13	0
Blount	1	2	2.0	0	0	2	0
	24	109	4.5	6	5	15	1

Receiving	No	Dp	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	25	Lg	Td
McCaffrey	11	0	14	51	4.6	2	0	9	0
Fitzgerald	6	0	6	50	8.3	2	0	15	0
Agholor	3	0	3	42	14.0	3	0	21	0
Jones Jr.	3	0	8	35	11.7	2	0	12	0
Riddick	2	0	2	6	3.0	0	0	4	0
Gallup	0	0	2	0	0.0	0	0	0	0
Brown,J	0	1	2	0	0.0	0	0	0	0
	25	1	37	184	7.4	9	0	21	0

Receiving	No	Dp	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	25	Lg	Td
Cooper	6	0	12	107	17.8	6	1	25	1
Elliott	5	0	8	38	7.6	3	0	10	0
Smith-Schus	4	0	5	53	13.3	4	0	17	0
Ebron	2	0	6	17	8.5	1	0	9	1
Green	2	0	3	32	16.0	2	0	17	0
Blount	1	0	2	1	1.0	0	0	1	0
	20	0	36	248	12.4	16	1	25	2

Fumbles	No	Rec	Td
Prescott	3	2	0
	3	2	0

Fumbles	No	Rec	Td
Cooper	1	1	0
Waynes	0	1	0
	1	2	0

Kick Returns	No	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td
Grant	2	22	11.0	13	0
	2	22	11.0	13	0

Kick Returns	No	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td
Floyd,M	1	0	0.0	0	0
	1	0	0.0	0	0

Punt Returns	No	Fc	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td
Grant	0	1	0	0.0	0	0
	0	1	0	0.0	0	0

Punt Returns	No	Fc	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td
Ervin	1	1	8	8.0	8	0
	1	1	8	8.0	8	0

Kicking	FG	Lg	XP	Pts
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Kicking	FG	Lg	XP	Pts
Santos	1-1	21	3-3	6

Punting	No	Yds	Avg	Tb	20	Bk	Lg
Way	6	288	48.0	2	1	0	52

Punting	No	Yds	Avg	Tb	20	Bk	Lg
Bosher	5	198	39.6	0	2	0	54

Defense	Tkl	Sk	Def	Stf	Hur	FF	Int
Jackson,D	8	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
Johnson	7	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Short	6	0	0	2	2	0	0-0
Orakpo	6	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Jackson,J	5	0	2	0	0	1	0-0
McKinley	2	1	0	0	1	0	0-0
Jarrett	2	0	0	1	1	0	0-0
Bethea	2	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
Kindred	2	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Rankins	2	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Smith	1	1	0	0	2	0	0-0
Church	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Anderson	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Carter	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Evans	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Okafor	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Burnett	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Davis	0	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
Chung	0	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
	49	2	6	3	6	1	0-0

Defense	Tkl	Sk	Def	Stf	Hur	FF	Int
Barr	11	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Trevathan	8	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Amukamara	7	0	0	0	0	1	1-0
Waynes	5	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Lawrence	4	1	0	0	3	1	0-0
Fuller	4	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
Hankins	3	1	0	1	0	0	0-0
Ingram III	2	1	1	0	3	0	0-0
McCoy	2	1	0	0	1	0	0-0
Brooks	2	0	0	1	0	1	0-0
Floyd,L	2	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Adderley	2	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Nnadi	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Spence	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Van Ginkel	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Stewart	0	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
	55	4	3	2	7	3	1-0



70-yard FR for a impact.

### Team Stats

	Chino	Virden
First Downs	12	23
Rushes	19-60	24-109
Passes	37-25-184	36-20-248
Sacked	4-28	2-16
Fumble	3	1
Penalties	7-45	4-35
Turnovers	2	0
Missed Tackles	6	4
Dropped Passes	1	0
Bad Passes	2	4
Passes 25+	0	1
Runs 10+	0	5
Blitzers	20	2
Time	30:40	29:20
Third Down	3-15	3-10
Fourth Down	2-4	0-1
Red Att/Td/Fg	0/0/0	3/2/1
Net Offense	216	341



38

Toronto



35

Pickering

TEAM LEADERS

Passing	Cmp	Att	Yds	TD
Rodgers	11	17	226	4
Rushing	Car	Yds	Avg	TD
Barkley	20	158	7.6	0
Receiving	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD
Hill	6	166	27.7	4

Team	1	2	3	4	OT	Total
Toronto	14	7	14	3	-	38
Pickering	14	6	7	8	-	35

TEAM LEADERS

Passing	Cmp	Att	Yds	TD
Rivers	29	49	411	3
Rushing	Car	Yds	Avg	TD
Sanders	13	56	4.3	0
Receiving	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD
Shepard	8	153	19.1	1

**Play of the Game**  
 In the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, 3:59 left, Pickering taking over 1<sup>st</sup> & 10 at their own 5 after a red zone interception, Toronto's **Shawn Williams** picks off **Philip Rivers** to get the ball back at PIC13-yard line.

# WOLVERINES WIN WILD ONE!

## TYREEK HILL LEADS BIG-PLAY BARRAGE AS WOLVERINES UPSET SPARTANS!

**SUMMARY:** Both offences exploded out of the gate, combining for five touchdowns in the first 16 minutes. The home Spartans opened with a 69-yard drive on 7 plays without having to convert a third down, scoring first on a 2-yard TD run by **Doug Martin**. Toronto answered with a 42-yard run by **Saquon Barkley** on their first play from scrimmage, which set up a 22-yard TD pass to **Tyreek Hill** to even the score. The Spartans started to march back but the Wolverines broke serve when blitz pressure forced **Philip Rivers** to mis-fire into the arms of cornerback **Mike Hilton**, who returned the ball 19 yards to the Pickering 29. On the next play, **Aaron Rodgers** found Hill deep for a 29-yard TD pass and a 14-7 Toronto lead. The Spartans, unfazed, pounded the Toronto D-line with **Miles Sanders** before Rivers launched a deep ball on 3<sup>rd</sup> & short that **Sterling Shepard** gathered-in for a 32-yard TD catch. Toronto topped off the breathless flurry with Hill snaring a medium slant and cutting through the secondary for an electrifying 59-yard TD to make it 21-14 for Toronto. The defences regained their balance. Rivers threw another interception, but Toronto could not capitalize. The Spartans switched to the ground game and pieced together two field goals to draw within 1, 21-20 at halftime. Toronto got the ball to start the second half and faced 3<sup>rd</sup> & 10 at their own 38. Rodgers found a wide-open Barkley for a 20-yard gain then **Latavius Murray** caught the Spartan defenders flat-footed and exploded up the middle for a stunning 42-yard TD run. The Spartans answered with a well-blended drive of 75 yards, finishing with a 3<sup>rd</sup> & 6 dump-off to Martin for an 11-yard TD. Rodgers went back on the attack, hitting Hill three times for a total of 56 yards including a 24-yarder for his 4<sup>th</sup> TD catch of the game. **Greg Zuerlein** missed a 50-yard attempt on Pickering's next series but Toronto's **Adam Vinatieri** made good on a 54-yard boot to increase the Wolverines' lead to 11 points. A 32-yard completion to Shepard set up a **Marquise Brown** 8-yard TD catch and the two-pointer was good, trimming Toronto's lead to 3. The QBs exchanged picks in a 7-second span then Toronto tried to put the game away on a 4<sup>th</sup> & 1 gamble at the Spartan 4 but came up short. But Pickering turned the ball over on downs with 1:03 left and Toronto ran out the clock for the win.

**QUOTES:** "Tyreek Hill is a tank." – Toronto coach, **Ryan Preston**. "Tyreek Hill is a tank." – Toronto QB, **Aaron Rodgers**. "Tyreek Hill is, like, some kind of Ferrari tank!" – Toronto CB, **Jalen Ramsey**.

"This was not the result we were looking for, obviously. They made too many chunk-plays on us. They have the talent to do that. It's not as if we weren't aware that Tyreek Hill is a tank, but knowing a tank is coming and stopping it are different things." – Pickering coach, **Gus Konstantakos**.



HAPPY FAN



titter

ANGRY FAN



**Max 'Mini' Dood** @M-DTorMoon

This is the @wolverinesTO offence everyone expected to see when they traded for Rodgers. We saw superstars in action today!



**Aristedes** @AristedesKalogiannis

Tragedy has struck! The Spartans defence played the role of Ephialtes in betraying Coach Gus of his rightful place on the podium.



# Toronto 38 Pickering 35



	1	2	3	4	F
Toronto	14	7	14	3	38
Pickering	14	6	7	8	35

\* Playoff \* 02-09-2020 Thermopylae Stadium Temp:35 Wind:10-20 None No Line MVP:Hill

1	11:07	Pickering	TD	Martin 2 run (Zuerlein) (8-69-3:45)	0-7
1	8:31	Toronto	TD	Rodgers 22 pass to Hill (Vinatieri) (4-75-2:36)	7-7
1	4:43	Toronto	TD	Rodgers 29 pass to Hill (Vinatieri) (1-29-0:13)	14-7
1	0:42	Pickering	TD	Rivers 32 pass to Shepard (Zuerlein) (7-65-3:53)	14-14
2	13:53	Toronto	TD	Rodgers 59 pass to Hill (Vinatieri) (4-75-1:49)	21-14
2	7:22	Pickering	FG	Zuerlein 50 (7-41-3:03)	21-17
2	0:23	Pickering	FG	Zuerlein 31 (8-74-3:54)	21-20
3	10:41	Toronto	TD	Murray 42 run (Vinatieri) (7-75-4:19)	28-20
3	5:36	Pickering	TD	Rivers 11 pass to Martin (Zuerlein) (9-75-5:05)	28-27
3	2:22	Toronto	TD	Rodgers 24 pass to Hill (Vinatieri) (6-75-3:14)	35-27
4	9:48	Toronto	FG	Vinatieri 54 (5-24-3:09)	38-27
4	7:19	Pickering	TD	Rivers 8 pass to Brown (2 - Juszczyk) (10-87-2:18)	38-35

### Player Stats

Passing	Att	Cmp	Yds	25	In	Td	Sk	Rate
Rodgers	17	11	226	3	1	4	3	123.2
	17	11	226	3	1	4	3	123.2

Passing	Att	Cmp	Yds	25	In	Td	Sk	Rate
Rivers	49	29	411	3	3	3	0	81.3
	49	29	411	3	3	3	0	81.3

Rushing	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	10	Lg	Td
Barkley	20	156	7.8	8	5	42	0
Murray	5	58	11.6	1	1	42	1
Rodgers	2	-2	-1.0	0	0	0	0
	27	212	7.9	9	6	42	1

Rushing	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	10	Lg	Td
Sanders	13	56	4.3	2	1	11	0
Martin	10	55	5.5	4	0	9	1
	23	111	4.8	6	1	11	1

Receiving	No	Op	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	25	Lg	Td
Hill	6	0	9	166	27.7	5	3	59	4
Barkley	3	0	4	38	12.7	1	0	20	0
Thielen	2	1	4	22	11.0	1	0	14	0
	11	1	17	226	20.5	7	3	59	4

Receiving	No	Op	Att	Yds	Avg	FD	25	Lg	Td
Shepard	8	0	12	153	19.1	7	2	32	1
Snead IV	8	0	12	91	11.4	6	0	17	0
Brown, M	5	0	8	78	15.6	5	1	29	1
Higgins	3	0	4	53	17.7	3	0	19	0
Martin	3	0	6	23	7.7	1	0	11	1
Rivers	1	0	1	-3	-3.0	0	0	0	0
Juszczyk	1	0	2	16	16.0	1	0	16	0
Sanders	0	0	1	0	0.0	0	0	0	0
McDonald, V	0	0	3	0	0.0	0	0	0	0
	29	0	49	411	14.2	23	3	32	3

Fumbles	No	Rec	Td
	0	0	0

Fumbles	No	Rec	Td
Switzer	1	0	0
Shepard	0	1	0
	1	1	0

Kick Returns	No	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td
	0	0	0.0	0	0

Kick Returns	No	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td
Switzer	4	79	19.8	32	0
Sanders	2	47	23.5	26	0
	6	126	21.0	32	0

Punt Returns	No	Fc	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td
	0	0	0	0.0	0	0

Punt Returns	No	Fc	Yds	Avg	Lg	Td
Switzer	1	0	15	15.0	15	0
	1	0	15	15.0	15	0

Kicking	FG	Lg	XP	Pts
Vinatieri	1-1	54	5-5	8

Kicking	FG	Lg	XP	Pts
Zuerlein	2-3	50	3-3	9

Punting	No	Yds	Avg	Tb	20	Bk	Lg
Edwards	3	134	44.7	0	2	0	56

Punting	No	Yds	Avg	Tb	20	Bk	Lg
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Defense	Tkl	Sk	Def	Stf	Hur	FF	Int
Ramsey	12	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
Carr	7	0	2	0	0	0	1-0
Barron	7	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Smith	6	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Hilton	5	0	0	0	0	0	1-19
Weddle	5	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
Williams, K	2	0	0	0	1	0	0-0
Jefferson	2	0	0	0	0	1	0-0
Williamson	2	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Charlton	1	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
Allen	1	0	0	0	1	0	0-0
Harmon	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Bromley	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Vigil	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Graham	1	0	0	1	0	0	0-0
Jones, C	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Finch	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Humber	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Williams, S	0	0	4	0	0	0	1-2
Lawson	0	0	3	0	0	0	0-0
Williams, T	0	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
	57	0	13	1	2	1	3-21

Defense	Tkl	Sk	Def	Stf	Hur	FF	Int
Ward	9	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Howard	5	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
Kendricks	5	0	0	1	0	0	0-0
Armstead	3	1	0	1	1	0	0-0
McDonald, T	3	0	1	0	0	0	0-0
Smith Sr	3	0	0	1	0	0	0-0
Dunn	2	0	0	0	1	0	0-0
Whitehead	2	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
Hicks	1	1	0	0	0	0	0-0
Fackrell	1	1	0	0	0	0	0-0
Randall	1	0	0	0	0	0	1-0
Atkins	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-0
	36	3	2	3	2	0	1-0



273 yards, 5 TD passes pocket.

	Toronto	Pickering
First Downs	16	31
Rushes	27-212	23-111
Passes	17-11-226	49-29-411
Sacked	3-14	0-0
Fumble	0	1
Penalties	7-49	5-46
Turnovers	1	3
Missed Tackles	7	9
Dropped Passes	1	0
Bad Passes	1	1
Passes 25+	3	3
Runs 10+	6	1
Blitzers	12	5
Time	25:34	34:26
Third Down	4-9	3-10
Fourth Down	0-1	0-1
Red Att/Td/Fg	1/0/0	4/3/1
Net Offense	424	522





# AROUND THE



## With Spats McChad

NEW YORK – Mayor **Bill De Blasio** has declared war on plastic bottles. His executive order banning the sale of single-use plastic bottles on city-owned and leased properties took effect on Thursday. The total area affected is nearly equivalent to one-quarter of the city, according to technology and media news outlet, *The Verge*.

Well, it's about time somebody took action to clear up the ubiquitous plastic waste that defiles the city landscape and nature herself. Cheers to the Mayor for tackling this eyesore! I'm all for getting more glass bottles back into circulation – they are refillable, environmentally safe and natural. Sure, glass is heavier than plastic and tends to shatter into sharp, jagged shapes when tossed on the ground, but it does not carry toxic BPAs that turn men into women and there are few, if any, apocryphal stories of glass bottles finding their way into the stomachs of giant sea turtles or dolphins. Glass is the way back to the future. Or better yet, how about goatskins? Hmm...but PETA and other radical proponents of the animal rights movement would have a conniption. So, glass it is!

But maybe I am getting ahead of myself! There is no mention in the article or in the information from the city about exactly what they intend to replace plastic water bottles with. Apart from a glossed-over reference to reusable containers and a vague claim that New York City tap water is safe to drink, there is no clear plan beyond the ban, as far as I can tell, except to make it permanent. The Mayor's point man on the transition, Councillor **Ben Kallos**, declares why codifying this ban into law is so important:

“Take that Trump!” he stabs. “We can change what normal is and get to a more sustainable future! We are in a climate emergency and we can show Trump the right way to do it.”

*Whoa!* I thought this had to do with Mother Earth and dying sea turtles! But it turns out this has more to do with showing up **Donald Trump** – who ended restrictions on bottled water sales in U.S. National Parks back in 2017 – than saving the planet. I should have known better. After over 50 years of plastic bottles increasingly taking over our landscape, it took an election year and anti-Trump virulence to finally prompt action. I strongly suspect that big name corporate Democrats don't have any business interests in the plastics industry.

### ***BEST OFFENCE IS A GOOD DEFENCE***

The Violators of 2019 have spent an entire season reinforcing the adage that the best defence is a good offence. In the wildcard match-up versus Chino they turned that saying on its head. Although **Patrick Mahomes** grabbed another game MVP honour to go with the 8 awards he garnered in 12 Virden regular season wins, it was the unsung and marginalized Virden defence that rose up out of nowhere to pitch a 24-0 shutout in the historic first post-season victory for the franchise. It was the main and possibly only point of interest in an otherwise tedious mismatch – the kind of non-spectacle we have come to expect from the mishappen Frankenstein-like appendage to the playoffs we call 'Wildcard Weekend.'

If a gypsy fortune-teller had told me before the game that the Convicts would hold the potent Violators' offence to “just” 24 points, I would have put my money down on Chino without a second thought. The Convicts averaged just over 26 points per game during the regular season while the Violators gave up almost exactly 26 points per outing. But even without that stat at my fingertips, I would have jumped at the opportunity. The Chino offence was gearing up all week to score 30+ in a game widely anticipated to be an unfettered firefight. There was no reason to believe they would not score more than 24.

In retrospect the game-opening delay of game penalty by the Chino offence was a bright red flag that something was amiss. When was the last time a team couldn't get the first play of the game into the huddle on time? If you can't recall it ever happening that is likely because it never has. Certainly not in a playoff game.

From the standpoint of **Dak Prescott** and the Chino offence this outing was a tour de *farce*. The Convicts' QB did not give his agent any additional leverage to use in negotiations for a contract extension next year. In fact, don't be surprised after this weekend's performance if Warden **Rob Nazar** balks at making a long-term commitment to the young QB until he sees a broader and more consistent body of work. Prescott was loose with the ball, fumbling 3 times. He struggled to see down field, missing all of his long throws and many of his medium ones. He held the ball too long at times and got rid of it too early others. Even his handoffs were sluggish – his pivots laboured and his exchanges far from crisp. He looked and played like a rookie.

To be fair, there were times when the Virden defence cranked up the gears. **Dexter Lawrence** and **Melvin Ingram III**



Get used to seeing more photos like this one of Virden's **Patrick Mahomes** celebrating a touchdown pass. The top-rated QB in the EFL threw 2 TDs, a modest number by his standards, but did not need more as the Violators shutout Chino 24-0.

were tough on **Nate Solder** and **Kelvin Beachum** all game. The Chino tackles turned in respectable performances, but simply could not hold off the pass rush consistently at both ends once it pinned back its ears. Linebackers, **Anthony Barr** and **Danny Trevathan** were tackling machines, zeroing in relentlessly on **Christian McCaffrey** and making him fight for every one of his 97 total yards.

In terms of game flow, it went entirely in one direction. The turning point, if there was one, came with the delay-of-game penalty to start the game. It was as if the Violators' defence knew at the moment that the Chino offence was as tight as a sphincter and could be bullied. The Convicts went three-and-out on the opening series and Virden responded with a touchdown drive in which Mahomes was nearly perfect, completing 6 of 7 for 75 yards, including an 8-yard TD pass to **Eric Ebron**. Two possessions later Prescott was stripped of the ball during a scramble. **Trae Waynes**

recovered for Virden at the Chino 37 and on the third play of the mini-drive Mahomes connected with **Amari Cooper** for a 25-yard TD pass to make the score 14-0.

The standard script in these situations, where one team jumps out to an early two-score lead, calls for the team on the ropes to put something together out of sheer urgency or desperation. But the script would not be followed in this game. Chino stayed on the ropes and soon found itself on the mat. If there was ever a moment of hope that Chino would mount a challenge after falling behind, it came mid-way through the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter with a 15-yard completion to **Larry Fitzgerald** on a daring 4<sup>th</sup> & 2 gamble at the Convicts' 46. The Virden defence went all-in to stop McCaffrey but, standing in a perfect pocket, Prescott drilled a ball against the grain of the zone and the veteran snared it for a nice gain. But on the next play, a deep shot for **Marvin Jones Jr** went too far and fell incomplete. Prescott was then dumped by **Johnathan Hankins** for a 7-yard loss then fumbled the shotgun snap for a 6-yard loss to bring on the punting unit. The tone never changed for the Convicts' offence after blowing that tire, making it somewhat miraculous that the high-octane Violators did not turn this into even more of a blowout.

It was not for lack of trying. Mahomes was attempted to throw the ball with purpose late into the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter – he just wasn't throwing with the same accuracy we are accustomed to seeing from him. In fact, Mahomes did not live up to the stratospheric standards he has set for himself so far this year. He threw for "only" 248 yards, two touchdown passes and completed a modest 55% of his passes. A lack of concentration brought on by the lack of challenge from his opponent, perhaps?

In the end, the only people who loved this game were Virden fans. And even they could not conceal their disappointment that their quarterback hero did not throw for 500+ yards and 7 TD passes in his first playoff game. The blood-curdling death metal growls of 'Throw-It! Throw-It!' coming from the diehards in the end zone seats of **TERRORDOME** known as the *Torture Chamber* would have set a veteran on edge, let alone a virtual kid in his third year in the league. The fans in Virden don't want to simply win, they want to *crush* their opponents. The failure of Mahomes to satisfy that bloodlust left the punks in the crowd hungry, and so their delirious celebration turned into a small riot by evening and the RCMP riot squad had to be bused in to quell the disturbance in tiny Virden.

#### **A HILL TO DIE ON**

A season that began with such promise came to a deflating finish for the Spartans when they fell to Budapest's guest QB, **Kyle Allen** in Week 16 and surrendered their division. The loss was not the end, of course. It was, however, the beginning of a longer and more grueling post-season journey. Now they would have to play an additional game for the privilege of facing a well-rested no.1 seed in the Quarter Finals. Those are long odds for most. But the Spartans consider themselves one of the elite teams of 2019. In the eyes of coach **Gus Konstantakos**, entering the playoffs as a wildcard was a degrading, but not a hopeless, situation.

The fact that Allen had been coaching high school girls flag football in Scottsdale Arizona when the season started was a further humiliation for the proud Greek. Had his team lost to such a neophyte earlier in the year it likely would have caused Gus to erupt and fly into a homicidal rage. But since the exorcism of the Greek God, **Ares**, back in Week 10, Gus was a new man. Most importantly, for perhaps the first time in his life, he was his own man. He no longer felt like a slave to the Spartan legend or cultural Greek orthodoxy. He became determined to forge a new path; a path that drew on the strength of his ancestry, but that was adaptable to the times in which he lived. He wanted to create his own legend.

At least that is how the boisterous toady, **Aristedes Kalogiannis**, sold the new, "kindler, gentler Gus" to the confused fans. They missed the threatening grimaces and maniacal, wild pro-wrestling style violence on the sidelines whenever things went against

the Spartans. It somehow made many of them feel better knowing their coach was suffering worse than they were when things went sideways. Plus, watching the ‘Gus Gun’ deployed with military precision and hitting its mark on Gus’ butt was always a treat.

Despite this alleged resolve to be a philosopher of football rather than a warrior coach, Gus could not conceal his deep irritation bordering on repressed fury at having been pushed out of a bye week by a rental quarterback. As he stood in front of reporters delivering his first Q&A of the week, a flickering glare lit up his eyes and a scowl creased his visage when he stated: “Had we known this hired sword better before taking the field against him, we would have *crushed* him like a bug!” he gritted his teeth as he enunciated the word ‘crush’, imparting a snarly, bestial tone. And then, as if catching himself falling back into old patterns, he added in a calmer tone: “But what is done is done. We know **Aaron Rodgers** and **Jalen Ramsey** better and will be ready on Sunday!”

Thermopylae Stadium was placed in lockdown for the week leading up to Wildcard Weekend. It wasn’t difficult to keep the media and the public out. Apart from the secret passageway that only Gus and a few officials knew about, there was only one known entrance to the stadium. The only team information available to fans in the lead-up to the game came at carefully managed post-practice media sessions. These did not last long. Gus would not elaborate on any point. His standard answer to almost every question was: “We have a plan and we will be ready.”

Toronto’s teenage coach, **Ryan Preston** was the complete opposite. He clearly enjoyed the attention of the media while attempting at the same time to be cool. He adopted a casual, indifferent approach while talking up a storm all the same.

“We don’t really care about that,” he said dismissively to a question asking him how the team felt about being 5-point underdogs. “That’s your opinion – we have our own opinion.” He added without saying what the opinion was.

When asked about how his team would deal with the powerful, top-ranked Pickering defence, he was off-hand and direct: “We’re going to run about 20 times with Saquon and when I feel like they’re getting frustrated trying to stop him we’re going to go deep to Tyreek. Adam will be mostly a decoy but if we really need a first down, he’ll be the guy.”

Baffled yet thrilled with the directness, the reporters followed up with a question about how his team would stop the high-scoring Pickering offence: “We’re not going to stop them,” Preston said matter-of-factly, to shocked faces in the room. “They’re going to stop themselves, as they always do. They’ll try something they haven’t done before to surprise us and they’ll have success with it. Then they’ll keep doing it until – wham! – suddenly it doesn’t work. We’re happy to wait for the mistakes and capitalize on those.”

The Spartans routinely scout opponents press conferences, so these words traveled back to the Pickering coach almost the moment they were uttered. While we don’t know Gus’ exact reaction, we can guess at it based on the writings of Spartans mouthpiece, **Aristedes Kalogiannis**: “*The arrogance of adolescence is well chronicled throughout history,*” Kalogiannis wrote of the Wolverines’ young coach, “*yet it repeats itself with every generation and Generation Z is no exception. The whelp in Toronto thinks he can outwit the sage of ages. Well, we shall see on Sunday. We shall see.*”

What we saw on Sunday was a Toronto team that backed up its coach and pulled off a stunning 38-35 upset on the road, suddenly and prematurely ending the Spartans’ season. We saw that the whelp may be as cocky as a kite, but he is guileless and has total confidence in his players. We also saw that the philosopher of football may have been a little too smart for his team’s own good.

Pickering indeed had a plan. The plan was to feature, at chosen moments, a four-wide set in a calculated attempt to exploit both the depth of the Spartan receiving corps and the shallowness of the Toronto corners after their top two. This was a formation very seldom used by the Spartans during the regular season, because it meant taking one of their most underrated but important assets off the field, **Kyle Juszczyk**, and also took away the play action as a weapon of deception. But they unveiled it as a feature in this game, running more than half of their plays from the four-wide set, in the hopes of gaining the match-up advantage and confusing the Wolverines’ defence with a new look.

In many respects this plan worked. As long as it was intermixed with the two-wide/full-half set and the occasional run was sprung out of it, the four-wide produced the desired effect of adding chunk plays to propel drives forward with speed. 522 yards of offence, 31 first downs and 35 points certainly looks like success on its face. But once the Spartans flipped into panic mode, the balance of plays shifted to this aggressive passing set and brought with it the one thing that could (and in the end did) do in the Spartans’ plans: The Rivers Interception.

The veteran leader has, in the golden years of his career, lost none of his fierce competitiveness. But he may have lost a touch of his physical ability. His three interceptions in this game were of the head-scratching and game-changing kind. After a season of relatively tight ball control – just 7 interceptions to 27 TD passes – at the head of a balanced offence operating primarily out of the two-back set, the ageing Rivers was thrown into an intense firefight with an opponent that had an answer for every Pickering touchdown. He got a little too excited, a bit too intense, a shred too cocky; and it bit him and his team in the behind.

This game may not have entered the ‘panic phase’ for Pickering, however, had it not been for the not-so-secret weapon known as **Tyreek Hill** and the guy feeding him the ball at precisely the right time. Years of languishing on a dysfunctional Scarborough team had done a psychological number on **Aaron Rodgers**, which had affected both his confidence and his reputation as a big-time QB. There had been plenty of criticism leveled at Coach Preston for convincing his father to foot the \$60 million bill of that long-term contract following the trade with the Blue Eagles. But nobody is criticizing that move now that the Wolverines have advanced to the Quarter Finals. The Rodgers-to-Hill combo was like taking a flamethrower to a tent – it burned the house down.

Both offences exploded out of the gate with surprising force. The Spartans charged up the field on 8 plays, all but two of them passes, and finished with a 2-yard **Doug Martin** TD run. The Wolverines countered with a four-play blitzkrieg that played out



exactly as **Ryan Preston** had described in the lead-up to the game. **Saquon Barkley** busted a 42-yard run on the first play to kick-off a three-run sequence that caused the frustrated Spartans to tighten up and play the run. On the fourth play, Rodgers went deep to Hill, who had a full step on **Denzel Ward**, and landed it perfectly to him on the run for a 22-yard touchdown pass.

There was not much to praise about either defence on this day, but one of the few defensive plays that made a difference came on Pickering's next series. On 3<sup>rd</sup> & 11, the Toronto defence turned aggressive, sending both linebackers on a rare blitz. The pressure collapsed the pocket as **Jonathan Allen** bore down on a back-peddalling Rivers. He flicked the ball in the direction of **Marquise Brown**, who had cut off his route and was circling back. But the throw was off and Toronto corner **Mike Hilton** picked it clean for the first Rivers turnover. Toronto did not bother to set up the pass with the run this time. With the Spartans again defending the run, Rodgers went deep to an unguarded Hill for a 29-yard touchdown pass and a 14-7 lead.

The Spartans responded with a tit-for-tat; pounding the ground four straight times with **Miles Sanders** before uncorking a long slant to speedster, **Sterling Shepard** for a 32-yard touchdown. The score was precisely what Rivers, the Spartans and their fans needed to boost morale and turn the momentum back on their favour. But the good feeling on the Pickering sideline was short-lived. On Toronto's next possession, Rodgers slung a spiral to Hill, who was cutting diagonally toward the middle of the field. He caught the ball in stride and turned on the afterburners, cutting through the Spartan secondary like they were standing still. 59 yards later, Tyreek was in the end zone and the Wolverines were back on top, 21-14.

There is a lot of detailed deconstruction of the rest of the game available in other media and on the EFL Network. I invite my readers to get their full of it or, better yet, watch the tape of the game. There were plenty of ups and downs for both sides over the remaining 44 minutes of playing time. There was an out-of-the blue 42-yard touchdown run by back-up **Latavius Murray** to open the scoring the second half for Toronto. There was Hill's 4<sup>th</sup> TD catch of the day in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter. There was a missed 50-yard field goal by **Greg Zuerlein** followed by one made by **Adam Vinatieri** from 54 yards that the idiot, **Aristedes Kalogiannis** claimed in his post-game column to be the principal difference in the game. There was the controversial 4<sup>th</sup> & 1 gamble by Toronto at the Pickering 4-yard line with 2:21 left in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter that failed and looked like it might cost them the game. And there were, of course, two horrible **Philip Rivers** interceptions, one of them coming immediately after a potentially game-changing red zone interception by Spartan safety, **Damarious Randall** at his own 5-yard line.

As far as I am concerned, all of the above plays and moments provided nothing more than dramatic scenery for the viewers as the game progressed toward its inevitable conclusion. In my view, the Spartans were beaten on the third play of the second quarter, on that 59-yard TD pass to Hill. Had that play been able to speak, it would have said: "We told you what was coming and you can't stop it!" The Spartan players knew it – you could see it on the sideline – even if their coach was a little slower on the uptake.

"They say football is a game of inches," a surprisingly demure coach, **Gus Konstantakos** said to the gathered throng of reporters after the game. "In this case, we came within a foot of possibly tying or winning the game. Hats off to Toronto, though!"

The Pickering coach was referring to Hilton tackling **Willie Snead IV** just short of the first down marker to turn the ball over on downs at their own 37 with 1:03 remaining. The stop all but put a seal on the game. Pickering burned their timeouts to get the ball back with 3 seconds left at their own 15 and finish their season with a trick play that didn't work.

Of course, the fail on 4<sup>th</sup> & 8 near the end was an important play. But without **Tyreek Hill**'s 59-yard touchdown, perhaps we never get to that point. Perhaps Gus doesn't feel the need to lean on the pass-heavy four-wide set for the balance of the remainder of the game. Perhaps Rivers doesn't feel he has to pass his way out of trouble after spending the entire season overseeing one of the most balanced attacks, in terms of play selection, in the league. Perhaps the Toronto defence plays a little less cocksure, instead of sitting on the pass and waiting to pounce on errors.

There will be plenty of second-guessing in Pickering during the off-season. There are already rumours that a rebuild is in the offing. I don't know yet if those rumours are fueled by reliable sources inside the team or by a media looking to stir controversy and prolong the story of the Spartans failing again to meet pre-season expectations. All I know is that it would be highly uncharacteristic of the intensely competitive Konstantakos to willingly initiate a rebuild. But then again, when was the last time we witnessed such a devastating Spartans' loss pass without a raging tantrum from their head coach? Maybe change is real in Pickering.

#### **AROUND THE EFL**

Information on the St. Charles situation is trickling in from sources familiar with the negotiations between the league and black-balled owner, **John Clingan**. The outspoken and combative Chargers' owner filed a lawsuit in wake of the league's assumption of control over the team following its Week 11 loss to Durham. That lawsuit has apparently been withdrawn and Clingan has reportedly agreed to sell the team to Las Vegas casino owner, **Anthony Holguin**. Details of the deal have not been reported, but it is rumoured to be a stratospheric offer that only an idiot would refuse. EFL franchise values vary widely and are speculative until someone actually pays the price for one. The highest recorded franchise sale price in league history is the \$318,000,000 that Derail Corporation paid **Bobby Elder** for the Hellfire. Franchises such as Twin Cities, Durham and Los Angeles are currently valued at over twice that, but have never been tested on the market. Not much is known about prospective buyer, Holguin. He has ties to casino magnate **Sheldon Adelson**, having once held the position of Chief Security Officer for the overseas operations of Adelson's *Las Vegas Sands* corporation. He somehow came into a fortune while serving the company in the far east, enough to invest in his own casino in Las Vegas, named *Fortress Assassin*. Adelson is rumoured to have an interest in Holguin's casino. Holguin appears on a list of donors to the Trump Campaign, which should make for some interesting dynamics at owners' meetings.

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## *Jimmy's QUARTER FINALS PICKS*

### PACIFIC CONFERENCE QUARTER FINALS

#### **VIRDEN @ TWIN CITIES (line – VIOLATORS by 3)**

**INJURIES:** Virden – Deone Bucannon (OUT), Duke Dawson (OUT); Twin Cities – Chris Harris (PROBABLE), Montae Nicholson (DOUBTFUL), Kwon Alexander (OUT).

This Vegas line will not sit well with the grudge-holding, hot-tempered Triumph coach. To be the underdog at home in Wilhalla Stadium in the playoffs is more than simple motivational locker room material; it is a reason for three-a-day practices in pads and sleepless nights for a scheming coaching staff looking not just to contain Patrick Mahomes, but to contend with a Virden defence that showed a different side in its wildcard shutout of Chino. The memory of a resounding Virden victory over the Triumph in the season's final week clearly still resonates with bettors. But it was a meaningless game in which the Virden coach seemed intent on getting his QB as many TD passes as possible against an under-manned Triumph defence. This game will have a completely different atmosphere and – it appears likely – shutdown corner Chris Harris back on the field as well. The health of the Triumph defence is critical. The Violators have the most explosive offence in the league, bar none. But if there exists a defence that can limit its impact, it belongs to the Triumph. The boys in Cerulean blue did not live up to their top-four ranking in defensive efficiency in their regular season split versus Virden, giving up 1,014 yards at a 7.8 yards-per-play. However, those two contests may have taught them that blitzing only twice in 2 games is a tad too conservative and predictable against the best QB in the league. On the other side, the Violators don't need another shutout from their defence, but hope to keep Mitch Trubisky in the pocket and Antonio Brown on a leash long enough to build a lead before teeing up the pass rush with Melvin Ingram III. Virden is scary team, capable of going all the way from the wildcard slot. But the Triumph are proven in the clutch and that will make the difference. **PICK: TWIN CITIES**

#### **BRUXELLES @ IOWA CITY (line – BOMBERS by 2)**

**INJURIES:** Bruxelles – Emmanuel Sanders (OUT); Iowa City – None.

The Bombers coming in as favourites on the road is not as baffling as it first appears. Cubs boosters will take umbrage, of course, and point out that their team's Week Nine win over Bruxelles was not even close. True, but the Cubs relied on a pair of defensive touchdowns to inflate the final score in an otherwise modest victory. The Bombers were going through a bit of a rough patch at the time, but turned it around to win six of seven after that and finish the season on a four-game win streak. The last three wins were not very convincing, however. The offence struggled due to a haphazard run game that featured no particular back. In two of the final three games a wide receiver led the team in rushing yards. This is not close to the style we are accustomed to seeing from the Bombers, who usually rely on the power run game to set up Marcus Mariota's passing attack. The change in tactics may speak to the health of that power run game. Marlon Mack, who had lived up to his 'Mack Truck' moniker through the middle part of the schedule, finished the year injured and ineffective. Leonard Fournette is rumoured to be battling secret ailments and Kerryon Johnson is more of a pass-catcher. If the Bombers' run game is not what it used to be, that will put more pressure on Travis Kelce and a wide-receiving group missing Emmanuel Sanders, the team's most reliable route runner. The play of the Cubs' secondary has dropped off from last year, but the pass-rush presence of Dee Ford is a new feature that enables the Cubs' defence to be less predictable and more aggressive. Mariota will not get a free "pass" from the pocket. On the other side, the healthy Cubs (when are they not healthy?) will find their main challenge to be mounting a credible passing threat against one of the best secondary and pass-rush combos in the league. Look for Iowa to start slowly and establish the run game before Russell Wilson takes his shots down field to Tyler Locket. All of this points to a relatively low-scoring, risk-averse game in which a big play on special teams or a single turnover could alter the course of play. In this kind of situation, expect the Cubs to find a way. **PICK: IOWA CITY**

## ATLANTIC CONFERENCE QUARTER FINALS

### TORONTO @ AURORA (line – MUSTANGS by 8)

**INJURIES:** Toronto – Trey Quinn (OUT); Aurora – None.

The Mustangs may have secretly hoped for a Pickering victory in the wild card round; not because they are afraid of the Wolverines, but because in their last experience against their division rivals it took a miraculous fourth quarter comeback and a field goal in overtime to knock them off. In a season where the Mustangs have definitively reasserted their dominance, working so hard for a win is something they wish to avoid in order to stay fresh for the inevitable big showdown in the final. Toronto was not expected to come out of Pickering alive and their survival speaks to the value of Aaron Rodgers and his trio of highly-skilled stars at wide receiver and running back. The Spartans' defence is on par with that of the Mustangs yet Tyreek Hill was still able to get free to do severe damage and Saquon Barkley was still able to run through keys. These players will make their mark in this game, the only question is whether it will be enough. While the Toronto defence stepped up and made key plays last week, it also surrendered over 500 yards and gave up over 30 first downs. That translates into a lot of time on the field and weary muscles that will this week face an even greater threat from Matt Ryan, Davante Adams and a handful of strong supporting actors in the Aurora offence. Let's face it; when the Mustangs get into a gallop, offensively, they are almost impossible to stop. They will throw on any down, at almost any time, meaning the pressure is never off opposing secondaries. I cannot envision Toronto surviving this encounter with a well-rested Aurora team on its home turf. But I can picture this being a much tougher game than many expect it to be. Take the points. **PICK: TORONTO**

### COWTOWN @ BUDAPEST (line – NORTH STARS by 4)

**INJURIES:** Cowtown – Rodney McLeod (OUT); Budapest – Marcus Murphy (DOUBTFUL).

The scheduling formula prevented these teams from facing each other during the regular season, depriving fans of what is often a hard-fought, close game between these former division rivals. The North Stars prevailed the last time they faced, but that was back in early 2018 between teams that since then have fundamentally changed at the most important position: Quarterback. Young hot shot Baker Mayfield is back after missing the division-clinching season finale against York. Street free agent, Kyle Allen added to his audition tape for a full-time EFL gig with the type of clutch performance that Mayfield will have a tough time replicating against a Cowtown defence that, for all its other inconsistencies, has shown it can pressure opposing QBs with regularity. Such pressure on the first-year starter will be one of the keys to success for the visitors. Mayfield can be harassed into mistakes due to his aggressiveness. On the other hand, aggressiveness is one of the keys to his success; he is not afraid of risks, one of the hallmarks of potential greatness. The quarterback situation in Cowtown is somewhat bizarre, but so far it is working. Many believe this game to be the moment of truth for journeyman starter, Ryan Fitzpatrick. Like his counterpart, he is not afraid to take chances, but sometimes the chances he takes are off the wall. While Budapest lacks a impact blitz threat, they have two of the best pass-rushing ends in the game. The offensive tackles of the Corn Kings had better be on their game. If not, Fitz is a running threat as much as he is prone to throwing interceptions, so things might work out anyway...or they could end in disaster. The quarterbacks will turn this into a chaotic, all-or-nothing game that will feature many turns. Play the jet lag. **PICK: BUDAPEST**



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FROM THE EFL ARCHIVES – Looking back to the weekend that would have been Wildcard Weekend had it existed in 2013, we find the Quarter Finals. We will cover those games next week. let's take a look at what the media and Vegas bookies were saying in the lead-up to the games.

In the Pacific-Atlantic Conference, the no.1 seed Iowa City Cubs were just 2-point favourites at home against the no.4 seed Chino Convicts. Despite their separation in the standings, these teams were considered closely matched and had split the season series. Chino had the top rushing attack and Iowa the best defence against the run. Uncertainty about

whether *Russell Wilson* or *Colin Kaepernick* would start at QB for the Cubs made this one tough to predict, but many felt that a Chino upset was coming.

The no.2 seed Patriots were healthy 4-point favourites at home against the Excaliburs. The Pats had one of the league's best offences that year and had beaten York twice during the regular season. Although the Pats' defence had been mediocre, York did not have much of a running game and would be relying on the *Tom Brady-to-Victor Cruz* combo. The Pats were projected by most to win fairly easily.

In the Can-Am Conference, the 2012 champion North Stars were 5-point favourites against the no.4 seed Spartans. Markham was supposed to be there, but Pickering's post-season berth was a surprise. Nobody was buying that Pickering's *Matt Schaub* would overcome Markham's no.1 ranked defence in a meaningful game.

South Division-winning Garland weighed in as 3-point favourites at home against first wildcard, Durham. *Drew Brees* had thrown 23 interceptions for the Lizards coming off his record-setting year in Death Valley. The Mustangs had one of the best secondaries. For this, Garland got the nod.