

TT: ARE YOU READY FOR SOME FOOTBALL??

Yep, it is that time of year again; football season is upon us. Not to mention that we are about to enter the stretch drive in MLB and the long summer break is over in F1. It has been a long week, starting with the IG Report release and ending with services for the Lion, Ted Kennedy. So, take yer shoes off, have a cocktail and let's have some fun.

NFL: Well, here comes another season, and it looks to be a doozy. Seriously, so many teams have got people back, have added key parts, and gained exciting rookies through the draft; there is simply a lot of excitement all across the league. The following are some random highlights as I see them at this early and somewhat unclear vantage point. Let us start off with the team I predict will win the Super Bowl, and that would be the:

New England Patriots: This pains me a little because of the natural inter-blog rivalry. And hey, my local professional football team was actually in the Super Bowl more recently than the Pats. No matter. Listen, the Pats were 11-5 last year with no Tom Brady all season, no Roidney Harrison and a rushing attack led by Sammy Morris. Oh yeah, and they sported a quarterback that had not started a game since high school. Harrison is gone, but they now have the closest thing to Joe Montana as far as cool (and with a better arm) I have ever seen back in the saddle and raring to go, and they have added Fred Taylor, a back that can still run wild if you don't run him down with overwork. And I still love the Law Firm. The defense looks healthier too. Oh yeah, and that Bill Belichick guy. and someone named Moss, Randy. The Pats are not the sexy darlings of the moment, but they don't care. They are the best coached team in the league and they have Brady back. Look out.

Some quick hits on the rest of the AFC: I wonder

how the Fish will make use of Pat White; I think the kid is a winner. The Bills have T0, but I just don't see them going anywhere. The Jets are a tough call. They really could be pretty tough if they run (love rookie pick up Shonn Greene, getting him and Sanchez in the same draft may make them the winners) and protect rookie Mark Sanchez, who is an awesome talent and great kid.

The Stillers are gonna be there at the end. You add up Big Ben, Hines Ward and the defense, plus the Pittsburgh savvy, and you know they will be there. Baltimore Ravens with Flacco and Ray Lewis too. The rest of the AFC North ain't happening; sorry Cleveland and Cincy (who knew Ochocinco could kick?). Indy and the older Manning look to battle the Titans in the AFC South, although Houston is a real sleeper, watch out for them. The AFC West? Forgetaboutit. The Bolts are the only team worth mentioning, and they still have Norval Turner coaching them. The Rayduhs are the best of the rest (believe it or not).

Cardinals, Packers or Vikings: Yeah, yeah I know, I am homering here. The Cheesers have been my team all my life, the Cards happen to have taken over my town and I love Brett Favrey. So shoot me. I honestly think it will come down to one of those teams. Laugh at the Cards; heck I made a cottage industry out of it for the better part of two decades before I met you all. You know the period since then, and they so deserved it. But attitude and winning are contagious and self perpetuating, and the Cardinals have way more of that than people think. If Kurt Warner, Boldin and Fitzgerald stay healthy (Boldin has issues with this; already has a hammy twinge), and Beanie Wells stays healthy and pounds the ball (he is down some weight and looks awesome except for the ankle sprain), the Cards defense looks like the crew it was down the playoff stretch last year of better. They may not win the NFC, but if not, it won't be because they aren't capable.

Same thing with the Vikes. Forget about Favre;

Minnesota was loaded for bear under the radar already. It's the defense silly, and they have what looks like a great one all through the positions. And Adrian Peterson. Percy Harvin is Dave Meggett from the old Parcells Giants' teams, except faster; watch out. The Packers are very under the radar and very good. Aaron Rodgers had a heck of a year last year and has looked way improved this preseason; receivers too. Defense looks much improved; if their running game returns with Ryan Grant – look out. Da Bears are improved greatly by Cutler, but Mike Brown gone, he was such a presence even when hurt – is bad for the defense and Urlacher is another year older and more battered. The Lions I think will be *much* better, but that only means 3-4 wins or so I am afraid.

Saints and Falcons will battle it out in the NFC South; slight edge to the Saints I think. Carolina slightly better than the Bucs; but neither amounting to much. In the West, it will be a fight between the 49ers and Seattle behind the Cards (unless Kurt Warner gets taken out) and the Rams still hurting.

Lastly, the NFC East. This conference is loaded for bear and volatile. They are all good teams. The Gents got Eli Manning, and now they have Osi Umenyiora back; that is literally huge. Battering ram running backs return. But they are gonna miss Plaxico. Bad. Philly looks great; and they really picked up some help in the backfield for Brian Westbrook, and their receivers are scary. How Vick fits in with team cohesion is going to determine how far they go. The Skins are also scary; if Jason Campbell plays like a solid NFL quarterback, they will be very good. So will the 'Boys. Tony Romo ought to be focused with no Simpson and no T.O. Dallas defense looks solid as does their running game with the return of Felix Jones to mate with Marion Barber. Receivers are an issue though, I am not sold on Roy Williams and he just got hurt a little. The winner of this division will play, and lose to, the team remaining between Arizona, Minnesota and Green Bay in the NFC Championship Game.

College Football: I am tired, Marcy is getting anxious to talk Pats, and there are too many teams to run through. Who ya got and why? Extra prize to anybody that beats Jim White to praise the Gators! After hiring Alberto Gonzales, I dunno how much leeway we can give the new Mrs. RanDiego and Texas Tech....

F1 Circus: This weekend is the Belgian GP at Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps. Rubens Barricholo won the European GP last weekend and the point race is tightening up with Button still up by 18 but fading and Rubens, Vettel and Webber gaining as a group fast. Spa is a great circuit and this should be a fast and good race.

That is it folks. Hoop it up and tear the place down. Get yer mojo and swerve back on; it's game time!