



A FALL-SEASON LOOK AT THE SPORTS WORLD

By Kerry Schmidt 11-08-2004

Well, sports fans can finally turn their full attention to sports.

The elections are over, praise the Lord. I can turn on my favorite sports game and not have to listen to thousands of idiotic commercials. Who writes these things any, Forest Gump? Awful stuff.

Happily for myself, Bush won and also his Republican Party. Herman Munster can now go back to whichever one of the six, 12 million dollar houses his wife owns and continue to do nothing in the Senate, a task he has mastered for 20 years. At least his Red Sox won, about the only thing he and I had in common.

So, with politics past us, what's going on in sports?

The NFL is in mid-season, with some real surprises.

Pittsburgh is a football town! And their tail gate cook outs of bratwurst, kielbasa, and a variety of burgers are legendary. Hey a town that ends in burgh should have burgers. But the most popular burger in town today is not on a grill. He is on the field.

Ben Rothlisberger, the rookie out of Miami – tiny Miami of Ohio, not THE Miami.

He is 5-0 since starting and has his Steelers leading the AFC North at 6-1

Last week, he ended the Patriots 21-game winning streak. And today, his team hosts unbeaten Philadelphia, in what could be a Pennsylvania preview of the Super Bowl.

When Big Ben was set to make his first start, former LSU guard Alan Faneca said, "I don't like going to work with some little kid that just got out of college."

Faneca is a star in the NFL, but he did not represent LSU well in the smarts department.

Big Ben's reply was, "he's right. Who would want to play behind a rookie?" Now there is a politician.

First off, Rothlisberger is hardly small. At 6-foot, 5 and 241 pounds, he looks more like a lineman. Anyway, this weeks game is a "can't miss" for football fans.

It was not covered in the news much, but Florida got hit by its fifth hurricane last week.

For the first time since 1978, all three of Florida's powerhouse teams – Florida, Florida State and Miami got beat, and all were favored to win. Also, the Dolphins lost, but it only took a slight breeze to make that happen.

With Florida's loss, Ron Zook also lost – his job, although he will finish out the season.

I knew Zook when he was a defensive coach with the Saints, and he is a good guy. His lifelong dream was to be a head coach. Remember the cliché, be careful what you wish for. At press time, Steve Spurrier said no to a re-run for the Gators.

Zook walked into a no-win situation.

At least Zook joined a decent list.

Alabama is still looking for the next Bear Bryant, Ohio State for the next Woody Hayes, Michigan for another Bo Schembecker, Nebraska for Tom Osborn II and, 20 years from now, Florida will still be searching for the next Spurrier.

Hey, the gooks and the jocks have gotten together. Adidas is coming out December 1 with a basketball shoe that has a computer chip imbedded therein. It will automatically adjust to fit the foot. For Shaq, they probably will have to install a whole lap top. And all



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

you kids can run out and buy one for only \$250. Note to mom. They will not adjust well next year when your kid grows a foot – pardon the pun – taller.

Now for some really big, important news. The NHL Players Association announced last week that there are no solidarity cracks in the union. Some players had publicly complained about the lack of progress, but the union spokesman said they were all prepared to miss the season rather than submit to a salary cap.

I had to tell you this, since no paper bothered to carry it and I know you really care about hockey.

Locally, the Saints actually won a game. One player then, honestly, said, “I believe we can win 10 games this year.” Yea, and the SB.

If you want to go to a NFL game, for a family of four, the average cost to do so is \$312.62, and that only includes two beers.

The BCS is up and running, along with second guessers already. Southern Cal, Oklahoma, Auburn, California and Wisconsin are the top five. At press time.

But one controversial factor was added back in this year, the margin of victory.

This prompted Oklahoma coach Bob Stoops to leave his starters in and throw a Touchdown pass with 35 seconds left for a 31 point win over Kansas.

Southern Cal, on the other hand, played the entire fourth quarter against Washington and Washington State with their 2nd and 3rd strings and still won big.

But they dropped the strength-of-schedule rankings. So who among the top five have the toughest? USC has the 6th hardest and California has the 4th. Oklahoma’s is 23rd, Auburn’s is a whopping 87th and Wisconsin is better at 97th.

Keep piling up those points. Politics in sports.