



The Final Four and some worthless trivia

Kerry Schmidt 01-21-2007

Last week was a first for me.

I won three of my four bets!

I was especially proud of how I said that even though the Chargers were definitely a better team than the Patriots, that Brady and Coach Belichick almost always found a way to win, no matter what.

Despite the legendary Brady throwing an unheard of three Int's and ending up with a playoff-worst QB rating of 57.6. They also completed just 4 of 17 third downs and rushed for a whopping 51 yards, while allowing MVP LaDainian Tomlinson 187 total yards.

San Diego pretty much dominated the game, but made crucial mistakes, including four turnovers of their own and dropping three potential INT's, deep in Pats' territory.

Add two really stupid plays. After recovering a fumble in Pats territory, Chargers lineman Terrence Florence kicked end Daniel Graham. First down Pats. Add in a head-butt, 15-yard penalty, and, well, you get the idea.

So, as bad as Brady played for three quarters, SD let the Pats hang around into the fourth. Then, luck or skill turned the tide. With 6 ½ minutes left, Brady's 4th down pass was intercepted, but Troy Brown stripped the ball from Marlon McCree, giving NE a new set of downs on SD's 32.

They scored, converted the 2-point conversion, held SD on their next possession, then Brady moved his team to the winning FG. Pats 24-21. Ho Hum.

Thus, for Coach Marty Schottenheimer, one of the winningest coaches in the NFL, added to his "Can't win the big one" resume

America's new team of destiny, the "Who Dat" Saints, defeated the Eagles 27-24, behind the tough running of Deuce McAllister, in an exciting and well played game.

Chicago also won 27-24 over Seattle, in a poorly played game by both teams. Seattle just sucked more.

Then you had the Colts. Neither team scored a TD. Five FG's by the Colts, two by the Ravens.

The shocker was the Colts defense. Last against the rush all year, and 23rd worst overall, they held Baltimore to just 240 yards, including a mere 51 rushing. This was after holding Larry Johnson and the Chiefs to just 44. This after they gave up 375 rushing yards to Jacksonville on December 10.

For the regular season, the Colts gave up 173 yards rushing per game for a 5.3 yard average. They gave up an average of 332 YPG in the season, just 185 in the two play-off games.

Thus, with Manning throwing only one TD pass and five INT's in two games, they won on great defense. Go figure.

So, they again go to the AFC Championship game. Again, they play Brady, Belichick and the Pats.

Thus, you have two very familiar foes in NE and the Colts meeting again. And Manning has another chance to get the monkey off his back and take his team to the Super Bowl



and perhaps win that. All he has to do is figure out how to get past Brady and Belichick. Again.

There have been a number of rivalries over the years between teams and individual players, but the current contest between Brady and Manning is personal. It is also the most visible and prominent.

Yes, they are friends off the field, but bitter foes on it. And Brady is 3-0 versus Peyton. Both QB's are in their prime and on good teams, so this one may well last for awhile. Peyton has the pet monkey, Brady has the three Super Bowl rings. Manning is as affable and likeable a person as you will find. A darling of endorsement, his persona resonates, and his future after football is limitless.

BUT, and it is a big BUT. He has to get over that hurdle. He must dispatch the B's, and lead his team to the promise land.

Indianapolis is the better team, again, but like last week, they can't allow the Brady bunch to hang around.

Again, Brady's history scares me, but I will take a chance and say that if the Colts' defense continues its sudden turn around, Peyton will finally get the Brady monkey off his back. He will then have his shot at the ever elusive "Big One."

Given the exciting history of this rivalry, it would normally be far and away the marquee championship game.

But wait a minute. The Saints. A team who was 3-13 last year, who played nary a home game all last season and at times practiced in a high school parking lot and dressed in sheds, went from worst to first.

If there ever was a team of destiny, it is the Saints, a team with 40 years of futility. Who can forget the years of the "Aint's," wherein fans donned paper bags over their heads with simply eye and nose slits. That has pretty much summed up the pitiful history of this franchise.

Listening to all the media hype nation-wide, virtually everyone outside of Chicago is pulling for the perennial sad sack of the NFL.

And as I mentioned last week, never, and I mean never, has an entire city, even a tri-state area of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, been so hyped.

But New Orleans itself right now is insane!

Chicago's population is over seven million. New Orleans, after the visit from Lady Katrina, boasts around 290,000. I say around, since no one can really find out the true population here right now.

Virtually no work was accomplished last week. Friday was a complete holiday. Anyone, from every school, work place on up to state judges and their courts stopped normality. Watching nearly 24/7 TV coverage, you could not find a single individual not attired in some sort of Saints outfits. And some were, well, as crazy as you see during Mardi Gras. My favorite shot was of a man boarding the "City of New Orleans" Amtrak to Chicago, carrying nothing but two twelve-packs of beer.

To show the party going on here, the judges have announced that no trials of any type would start Monday. Win or lose, the nation's greatest party town will have a hangover. Should they win, however, perhaps no hangover, since most everyone will stay drunk for several days. Maybe even for the two weeks to the Super Bowl.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

Even priests and other clergy are saying mass and sermons dressed in Saints' outfits. A great cartoon published in the local paper showed two people walking down the street – a drink in hand, of course, and one says to the other, “I think I will do most of my praying after church.”

Should they prevail, the party will rage, and I mean rage, to the Super Bowl. For two weeks, it will be as wild, if not more so, than Mardi Gras. You gotta root for these besieged, but ever so loyal crazies.

I cannot even begin to think there has ever been a town even closely so completely engulfed in their team possibly going to the Super Bowl. You have to be here to see it, to experience it. If you will pardon the sad pun, the town is drowning in Saints mania. Certainly, I am prejudice, but I honestly believe the Saints will prevail and make the trip to the holy land of football.

If so, as one individual said, “If they go and win it, I can die right after I stay drunk for a couple of days.” I’m now too old to do that, but I can remember.

If I am right, a Super Bowl with the Colts and the Saints will certainly have the home town flavor.

Manning was born and raised here, and his famous former Saints QB Archie and his family still live here.

Leading up to this week, Archie has received over 500 media requests for interviews. He has politely refused all of them except for the local leading TV/radio flagship station that covers the Saints.

Of course, he has been asked only about a zillion times on whom he would root for if they met. He was honest and succinct. “Blood is thicker than water, so of course I will be rooting for my son.”

Should the Saints somehow continue their destiny, however, at least Archie will not be totally at a loss.

As hard as it is to find anyone who even knows what else is going on around here, I will finish with a couple of worthless bits of trivia, just to change the subject. We all need distractions.

Giants All-Pro defensive end, Michael Strahan took a huge hit last week. His wife was awarded \$15.3 million – more than half his net worth, in his divorce. OUCH!

Atlanta’s Michael Vick just possible drinks a little different type of bottled water than anyone else – that we have heard of.

At Miami airport last Wednesday, Security Officials confiscated a 20-ounce bottle of drinking water from Vick.

According to reports, the bottle was found to have a compartment that contained “a small amount of dark particulate and pungent aroma closely associated with marijuana,” according to a Miami police report. Vick was not arrested.

Perhaps he was trying to give new meaning to “flying high in the sky.”

No results will be known for a couple of weeks. How can you have a secret compartment on a clear water bottle? Stay tuned.

Speaking of illegal substances, Barry Bonds apparently failed a drug test last summer for amphetamines. He originally said he got it from a teammate’s locker, but later denied it. Another fine mark on his image.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

I will finally shut up with another tidbit about marriage, in honor of Mr. Strahan.

A New Zealand bride and groom played 18 holes of miniature golf to decide who would give up their surname. OOOKIEDOOKIE!

I truly hope the Saints prevail. This town needs it. And Peyton also.

We shall see .

They have long said the Saints will win the Super Bowl when Hell freezes over.

Guess what? There is a town in Michigan called Hell. True. And the temperature all week has not gotten above freezing!!

Closing with the official Saints trademarked song. "Who dat? Who dat" Who dat say dey gonna beat dem Saints? Who Dat? Who dat?

You have to live here to understand that.