



FOOTBALL TIME! AND MUCH MORE CRAZY JUNK

By Kerry Schmidt

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I'm back.

Another hurricane down the drain. But IKE still affected this column.

While it was well west of me, the size of it still caused "storm surges," wherein the wind pushes the tides much higher than normal.

Thus, my office, where I have all my material and write my columns, had all the roads flooded, so I had to grab what stuff I had and come home to write this thing.

Besides the damage and carnage, a good number of college football games were either postponed or cancelled. No matter how good a team is, Mother Nature wins every time.

Week one of the NFL saw a whole lot of surprises, not many of them good.

I'm told Christmas in New England is beautiful. The Patriots will find out, as they will be "home for the holidays."

The reigning MVP and all world QB, Tom Brady, went down with a torn ACL. Talk about losing a key player!

His replacement? Matt Cassel. Who?!

Cassel's resume reads like a blank page.

He was the back up QB for five years at Southern California, behind first Carson Palmer, then Matt Leinart and John David Booty. Thus, he never started a college game at USC.

So on to the Patriots. He has been the back up to Brady for his first three years in the NFL. As such, he has not started a football game since high school.

When he replaced Brady, he played the final three quarters. When asked how long had it been since he played that much, he said, "It had to be high school."

Thus, the pre-season favorite for the SB – again – finds itself going from the all world QB to the "who is this guy" QB.

Certainly Brady's injury, along with some other notable payers – see Vince Young of the Titans – has rearranged the balance of power in the AFC.

Pats' fans can hope history will repeat itself. In 2001, All-Pro QB Drew Bledsoe went down with a knee injury and thus Belichick had to turn to a 6th round pick from Michigan, Brady. At that time, Belichick said of Brady, "I don't think we're talking about John Elway here, but there are not many Elways. He's got a good, strong arm, and he has potential."

Understatement of the century.

Throw in Peyton Manning's pre-season operation on his knee, and his rust showed, as they were upset by the Bears. Thus, you had arguably the top two teams in the league starting 0-1. Add in San Diego also being upset, and the AFC seems wide open.

Then you have Young, who is out for at least two weeks with a leg injury. Add the fact that Young was booed by Titans fans, Young further added to his problems by disappearing all night after the game and his family and the Titans calling the police to find him.

The titans will rely on 90 year old Kerry Collins to stay the course.

Then the Ravens unleashed their new QB, Joe Flacco, who had a good game, but no one knows who he is.

And doggie boy Vick's replacement, top pick Matt Ryan, showed much promise in his debut. His very first NFL pass was a 63 yard TD to Michael Jenkins. Not bad.

Let's just hope he doesn't own many dogs.



And, last, but certainly not least, you had Brett Favre in a Jets uniform. Seeing Favre in a different shade of green was really weird. But he did his magic, throwing two TD passes in a 20-14 win over powerhouse Miami (1-15 last year).

Then, there was some new guy playing QB for the Packers. Aaron Rodgers, replacing a legend. Only the second QB to start a game for the Pack in 15 years. Rodgers completed 18 of 22 passes for 178 yards and a TD. He also scored another TD on a 2-yard QB sneak. Showing that he is in the storied tradition, he immediately ran to the fans and did the “Lambeau Leap.” “I’ve been dreaming about that for four years,” he said.

So, the NFL is off to an up and down start. The rookies looked good and the all world guys were busted up and out.

One addition to the Colts. They lost in their first game in their new zillion dollar stadium. Must have cost that much, since a bucket of pop corn will set you back 12 bucks! The second worst team in the NFL, the Oakland Raiders, opened up as usual, getting blown out 41-14 by the Broncos, in Oakland.

But their fans are still the same. Horrible. I once took my son to a game and I was wearing my 49’er hat, and as I walked past some drunken scumbags, they used every foul word in the world, threatened me and my son, and one actually chased us. Wonderful bunch of nice young men. I lived in Malibu, CA for 20 years and back then the Raiders were the L.A. Raiders. And, way back then they “dressed,” or whatever you call it, in outrageous silver and black costumes resembling something like a cross between Godzilla and the “Creature from the Black Lagoon.” And yes, their actions have not changed.

Police arrested 45 “fans,” using stun guns and billy clubs to contain them.

The arrests included drunkenness, drugs, assaults, assaults with weapons and damage to property. And get this. An additional 13 people were stun-gunned and arrested for drunkenness and fighting – before the game! Three police officers sustained minor injuries.

Ah, nothing like the Raiders’ fans.

How about college football!

Now that the first 2-3 weeks of “run up the score” games – where top ranked teams play I-AA teams, or less, so they get highly ranked, we finally get to the real games.

And last night, you will have seen something virtually non-existent; a game where two teams ranked in the top five play each other this early in the season.

No 1 USC hosted No. 5 Ohio State.

Ohio State won their first two games against a couple of junior colleges, and Ohio University, a class 2-AA school, played Ohio State to a real close finish.

What makes this so highly unusual is that a Big 10 school would risk taking a loss so early on, thus dimming their chance at the championship.

But then, the Big 10 is by far the most overrated conference in the land.

Somehow they get highly ranked in the pre-season, and then play the patsies, and then, for the most part, the overrated teams in their conference.

Just look at the last two BCS Championships. Ohio State played in both, getting killed each time by SEC teams.

The last four BCS title games have featured either Ohio State or USC, though the two teams have not played each other since 1990.

USC deserves its lofty No. 1 ranking. In the past 6 years, they have won two BCS titles, a record 6 consecutive Bowl Championship Series appearances, a record of 6 consecutive Pac-10 titles and an NCAA record of 6 consecutive seasons with at least 11 victories. They are a combined 69 and 7 in that time frame.

Cassel, who will take over for Brady, was not good enough to ever start a game at USC.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

Mark Sanchez is now the QB for USC, following two consecutive Heisman winners – Carson Palmer and Matt Leinart, and John David Booty, an All-American.

USC has 5 top receivers to go with arguably the best batch of RB's in the land.

They have 6 RB's and all 6 were ranked in the top 10 players in the nation during their senior high school seasons, by USA TODAY.

But perhaps THE highlight may just be the two LB's on each team. Ohio State boasts All-Americans James Laurinaitis in the middle and Malcom Jenkins on the outside.

USC counters with their two All-Americans, Brian Cushing and Ray Mauluga, hailed by sports writers as the best LB in the land.

It should be one hell of a game. Two good offenses and two great defenses.

Imagine, a game in just week 3 of the college season and it really means a whole lot!

If you only watch one college game before the bowl games, this is the one to see.

Speaking of Bowls.

Right now, there are 34 bowl games, 95% of which aren't worth a damn.

So, what do the BCS boys have in mind? Add a couple more. Maybe the Vomit Bowl, or the "Budreaux's Butt Paste Bowl. Note: Budreaux's Butt Paste started in LA and is now sold nation wide. True.

The rules state that for a team to play in a bowl game, they must have at least a 6-6 record. Last year, there were 71 teams that qualified. Add three more bowl games, and you may not have enough "qualified" teams to play in these ever so exciting contests.

Hey, if there's a buck to be made, there's a sucker born every minute.

The University of Washington lost last week to Brigham Young, 28-27.

So what, you say. After the Washington QB ran in for a score at game end, he lightly tossed the ball in the air and then jumped into a teammate's arms.

Some frickin' bone head official called a 15-yard penalty for "excessive celebration," Thus the extra point was, in effect, a 40 yard field goal, which was blocked. BYU wins.

There is no way in hell that penalty should have been called. Even BYU's coaches agreed and the powers that be in college football were quiet, but one said, "that was a case where most certainly there should have been some discretion used."

OK, let's give a couple of other sports their minute is the sun.

Remember Michelle Wei? At 13, she finished 4th in the 2003 Kraft Nabisco's LPGA Championship. She was hailed as the female Tiger Woods.

Well, with her father as her "coach and manager," Wei went on to, ta da, never win a tournament (not a pro tournament. The only one she won was the 2003 Women's Amateur when she was 13).

She entered several men's tournaments via sponsor's exemptions, but never made a single cut.

Last month, she ran out of sponsor's exemptions, and lost her LPGA card. Now 18, she must go back to the qualifying school to try to earn her LPGA card.

Her father says she will go back to Stanford, and then, well, who the hell cares. Talk about a bust.

The NBA. Every year, the NBA holds a one week "course" for rookies, teaching them how to handle the fame/fortune, whatever, and to stay out of trouble.

Well former Kansas teammates Darrell Arthur and Mario Chalmers were each fined \$20,000 and were banished from the league's symposium.

Seems that security at the resort, near New York City, where the event was held, found the two in a hotel room with two "scantly" clad young ladies, and the strong smell of marijuana was present.

Thus, these fine, intelligent young men, who were there to learn how to not misbehave, did just that.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

Arthur, a first round pick for Memphis, and Chalmers, a 2nd round pick by Miami, were told they must attend next year's symposium. Hey, maybe next year they can have several scantily clad women instead of just two.

HOCKEY!! It's always so boring because, like soccer, they don't score much.

Well, in the qualifying International Ice Hockey Federation for the 2010 winter Olympics, Slovakia eased past Bulgaria, 82-0! Yes, 82 goals.

Geeze, I wonder if Bulgaria had a goalie? In the tournament, Bulgaria was outscored 192-1. Hey, who the hell scored the lone goal to screw up a perfect tournament!?

Last but not least, Lance Armstrong has said he will come out of retirement and compete in the Tour de France next year. The French, still pissed because they could never get Lance to fail a drug test, stated that they may not allow him to enter, because he has not taken any drug tests lately.

Say What? I wonder. With only one testicle, do you think he can beat the tests? When asked about this, he just said, "Ah nuts, I mean, nut."

Single malt.