

# WEEK 16



# EFL

ELITE FOOTBALL LEAGUE



Shooting for the Stars in our 15th Season!

January 30, 2022

# "NONE SHALL PASS!"



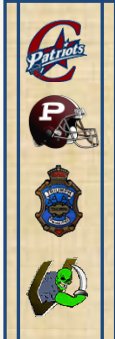
*Xavien Howard  
Pickering Spartans*

Spartans corner *Xavien Howard* lifts his arms and exhorts the fans at Thermopylae Stadium to make noise after intercepting Brooklin QB, *Derek Carr* for the second time in the 1<sup>st</sup> half. Howard caught his own deflection on a pass intended for *DeAndre Hopkins*, snuffing out a scoring chance and preserving a 10-0 half time lead. (Story inside)

EAST



CENTRAL



WEST



NORTH



COASTAL

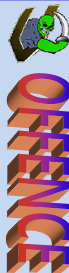


SOUTH



Who was slick  
in Week  
Sixteen?

“Brylcreem” THE  
EFL’S FIRST SPONSOR



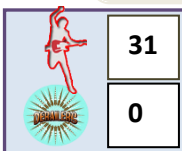
Patrick Mahomes  
QB  
Virden  
Violators

27 of 43, 317 yds, 4 TDs, 0 INT. Two 4<sup>th</sup> Qtr TD passes won it over the Pats



Xavien Howard  
CB  
Pickering  
Spartans

8T, 2PDs, 2 INT (35yds). Two picks kept Hawks down early in catch win.


**31**
**0**

After the teams exchanged punts to start the game, the Wrecking Balls went on a tear, scoring on three straight possessions. **Matt Stafford** threw TD passes of 20 yards to **Deebo Samuel** and 17 yards to **DJ Chark Jr** and **Wayne Gallman Jr** added a TD run, all in the 1<sup>st</sup> half, giving New Jersey more than they needed to subdue the ineffective Derailers. Buffalo's long drive at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> half came up short at the NJ 7-yrd line as time expired. Their last chance to erase the goose egg on the scoreboard came up short with a check down pass at the 6-yard line as the game and season expired.

01-27-2022 New Era Stadium Temp:35 Wind:Calm Light Snow No Line MVP:Stafford HFA:ON(3)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 New Jersey (7-9)	7	14	10	0	31
2021 Buffalo (4-12)	0	0	0	0	0

**Passing**

NJ: Stafford 25/20 232 Yds 2 TDs

BUF: Jackson 28/14 140 Yds Int

**Rushing**

NJ: Gallman Jr. 23/70 2 TDs, McKissic 5/16, Burton 1/2

BUF: Davis 11/35, Jackson 11/19, Booker 3/14

**Receiving**

NJ: Allen 4/53, Samuel 4/71 TD, McKissic 4/23, McLaurin 3/40, Chark Jr. 3/33 TD

BUF: Fant 5/49, Sanders 4/50, Davis 2/11, Gage 2/24, Woods 1/6

**Defense**

NJ: Adams 2-Sks FF 2-Tk, Winfield Jr. Sk 6-Tk, Murphy Jr. Int 5-Tk, Bradberry Sk

BUF: Barnett 8-Tk, Chubb 8-Tk

**Injuries**

NJ: Adams 2, Griffen 1, Blackmon 1, Norwell 1

BUF: Collins 2

**Misc**

NJ: Gallman Jr 1-F Lost, Boswell 1/1 FG 34 Lg

BUF: Sullivan 1-FR


**31**
**41**

Mishaps and turnovers by the Coyotes led to 21 Bruxelles points in a furious 1<sup>st</sup> half assault by the Bombers. **Samson Ebukam** blocked and recovered a punt and **Joel Bitonio** recovered a **Kalif Raymond** fumble on a punt return to set up 5 and 7-yard TD runs by **Kenneth Gainwell**. Down 24-14, **Ryan Tannehill** was picked off by **Darius Slay**, setting up a 41-yard TD pass from **Jared Goff** to **Chris Godwin** to make it 31-10. Cobb County came back and tied it up 31-31 in the 4<sup>th</sup> on a TD run by **Matt Breida**, but Bruxelles put it away on a short FG and a 42-yard TD pass to **M. Valdes-Scantling**.

01-28-2022 The Fortress Temp:77 Wind:Calm Line:BRX by 12 MVP:Gainwell HFA:ON

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Cobb County (11-5)	7	10	7	7	31
2021 Bruxelles (7-8-1)	17	14	0	10	41

**Passing**

CB: Tannehill 39/25 348 Yds 2 TDs Int

BRX: Goff 30/19 264 Yds 3 TDs

**Rushing**

CB: Peterson 12/75, Breida 7/36 TD, Tannehill 4/20 TD, Hasty 1/4

BRX: Gainwell 23/108 2 TDs, Goff 1/7

**Receiving**

CB: Parker 9/143 TD, Cooks 5/111 TD, Pittman Jr. 5/64, Peterson 2/5, Cook 2/21

BRX: Godwin 7/115 TD, Gainwell 5/26, Valdes-Scantling 2/66 TD, Claypool 2/47 TD

**Defense**

CB: Martinez FF 12-Tk

BRX: Slay Int 9-Tk, Robinson Sk 3-Tk, Odenigbo Sk 3-Tk

**Injuries**


CB:

BRX: Davis 1, Bolles 1, Howard 1

**Misc**

CB: Raymond 1-F Lost, Mullen 1-FR, McManus 1/1 FG 22 Lg

BRX: Ebukam Blk-Pt Rec, Bitonio 1-FR, Valdes-Scantling 1-F Lost, Prater 2/2 FG 39 Lg



31
28

The Pats and Violators put together three long TD drives that ate up much of the 1<sup>st</sup> half, with **JK Dobbins** and **Alvin Kamara** scoring on 7 and 10-yard TD runs for Charleswood and **Patrick Mahomes** throwing a 12-yard TD pass to **KJ Hamler** for Virden. The Pats led 14-10 at the half but the Violators opened the 2<sup>nd</sup> with a 75-yard TD drive to quickly take the lead on a 7-yard TD pass to **AJ Green**. **DeShaun Watson** countered with a 28-yard TD pass to **Travis Kelce** for the Pats, but a pair of TD passes to **TJ Hockenson** on back-to-back drives put Virden in the driver's and they held on to advance.

01-25-2022 Patriot Place Temp:75 Wind:Calm Line:CHP by 6 MVP:Mahomes HFA:ON(

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Virden (10-6)	0	10	7	14	31
2021 Charleswood (13-3)	7	7	0	14	28

Passing

VV: Mahomes 43/27 317 Yds 4 TDs  
 CHP: Watson 31/24 333 Yds 2 TDs

Rushing

VV: Mahomes 6/27, Elliott 4/11  
 CHP: Kamara 13/70 TD, Dobbins 6/28 TD, Hill 2/24

Receiving

VV: Chase 8/145, Hockenson 6/42 2 TDs, Green 6/62 TD, Hamler 4/42 TD, Elliott 3/26  
 CHP: Kelce 10/136 TD, Cooper 5/73, Smith-Schuster 4/50, Metcalf 3/69 TD, Kamara 2/5

Defense

VV: Williams 2-Sks FF 5-Tk, Trevathan FF 8-Tk, Moehrig 10-Tk, Nnadi Sk 3-Tk  
 CHP: Darby 8-Tk

Injuries

VV: Harris Jr. 4, King 3  
 CHP:

Misc

VV: Badgley 1/1 FG 30 Lg  
 CHP: Rodgers 2/55 KR



24
16

After falling behind 3-0 in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter, the Triumph blew the lid off the game with a 17-point 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter, sparked by **Juan Thornhill's** 25-yard pick-six of **Mac Jones** and punctuated by the quarterback's 23-yard TD pass to **Antonio Brown** to end the half. Peg City slowly crept back into the game with FGs of 47 and 41 yards by **Younghoe Koo** before the Triumph quarterback capped off a penalty-assisted 50-yard drive with a 9-yard TD pass to **Clyde Edwards-Helaire** to make it 24-9. The Crusaders added a late TD with 2:12 left but were unable to get the ball back as the Triumph ran out the clock.

01-24-2022 True North Field Temp:72 Wind:Calm Line:PCC by 12 MVP:Edwards-Hela HFA

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Twin Cities (4-11-1)	0	17	0	7	24
2021 Peg City (1-15)	3	0	6	7	16

Passing

TCT: [Quarterback believed to be Lawrence] 28/18 144 Yds 2 TDs  
 PCC: Jones 41/25 205 Yds TD Int

Rushing

TCT: Edwards-Helaire 22/129, Henderson Jr. 3/6  
 PCC: Hubbard 11/59, Jones 4/9, Boyle 2/6

Receiving

TCT: Brown 7/81 TD, Edwards-Helaire 5/21 TD, White 2/6, Trautman 2/13, Bateman 2/23  
 PCC: Shenault Jr. 6/47, Aiyuk 6/61, Boyle 4/36, Higbee 4/28, Ingold 1/-1

Defense

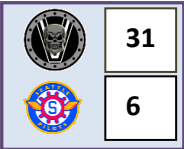
TCT: Danna 2-Sks FF 3-Tk, Thornhill Int(TD) 3-Tk, Sweat Sk 5-Tk, Hollins Sk 3-Tk  
 PCC: Jones Sk 3-Tk

Injuries

TCT: Austin 2, Crowder 1, White 1, Hopkins 1  
 PCC: Davis 2, Burris 1

Misc

TCT: Hopkins 1/1 FG 40 Lg  
 PCC: 35:10 TOP, Koo 3/3 FG 47 Lg



Needing a win to stay in the race for the West Division, the Assassins' D capitalized on a high snap on Seattle's opening series and **Matt Judon** recovered at the Pilots' 1-yard line. **Dalvin Cook** ran it in on the next play for the opening score. The Pilots were unable to mount any sustained offence and the Assassins gradually piled up points, with **Justin Herbert** throwing TD passes of 2 and 10 yards to **Adam Humphries** and Cook adding a second TD run off 8 yards late in the 3<sup>rd</sup>. 3 of Seattle's 6 points came off a 55-yard **Evan McPherson** off a Las Vegas fumble before halftime.

01-27-2022 Kingdome Temp:70 Wind:Calm Line:LV by 1 MVP:Herbert HFA:ON(1)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Las Vegas (10-6)	7	10	14	0	31
2021 Seattle (6-10)	0	3	3	0	6

Passing

LV: Herbert 38/28 280 Yds 2 TDs  
SEA: Minshew II 26/14 130 Yds

Rushing

LV: Cook 23/90 2 TDs, Herbert 5/31  
SEA: Hunt 11/46, Lance 1/1, Brown 1/1

Receiving

LV: Humphries 10/117 2 TDs, Thomas 7/53, Brate 4/32, Pascal 3/28, Watkins 1/27  
SEA: Anderson 6/52, Firkser 4/36, Lamb 3/40, Hunt 1/2

Defense

LV: Leonard FF 8-Tk, Surtain II 8-Tk  
SEA: Sheffield FF 8-Tk, Murphy-Bunting FF 6-Tk, Brockers Sk 4-Tk, Lattimore 8-Tk

Injuries

LV: Beck 2  
SEA: Jenkins 1

Misc

LV: 37:01 TOP, Jeudy 1-F Lost, Judon 1-FR, Fairbairn 1/1 FG 24 Lg  
SEA: 2/11 3rd Dwn, Minshew II 1-F Lost, Jackson 1-FR, McPherson 2/2 FG 55 Lg



After holding the Convicts to three-and-out on the game's opening drive, the Cubs churned out 79 yards in 14 plays and scored on a 12-yard TD run by **Jerick McKinnon** to take the early lead. They would not look back after that. Iowa City scored two TDs on their next two possessions, a FG on their third and opened the 2<sup>nd</sup> half with a 7-play, 53-yard drive after a failed Chino onside kick try to score on a 9-yard TD pass from **Russell Wilson** to **Tyler Lockett**. The run game never got on track for Chino and **Teddy Bridgewater**, starting for injured **Dak Prescott**, threw 2 interceptions.

01-24-2022 Joe Ferguson Stadium Temp:39 Wind:0-5 None No Line MVP:Wilson HFA:ON

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Chino (9-6-1)	0	0	0	0	0
2021 Iowa City (9-7)	7	17	7	14	45

Passing

CHI: Bridgewater 27/19 116 Yds 2 Int  
ICC: Wilson 36/30 332 Yds 3 TDs, Beasley 1/1 22 Yds TD

Rushing

CHI: Jones II 10/38, Grant 1/8, McCaffrey 2/7, Abdullah 1/4  
ICC: Carter 11/39, Conner 7/25, McKinnon 4/18 TD, Wilson 5/13 TD, Mixon 1/3

Receiving

CHI: Jones Jr. 5/36, McCaffrey 5/9, Patrick 4/23, Hurst 2/16, Gallup 1/17, Byrd 1/11  
ICC: Lockett 11/112 2 TDs, Brown 10/137 2 TDs, Beasley 4/40, Mixon 2/34, Kirk 2/22

Defense

CHI: Bostic 2-Sks 8-Tk, Moore 9-Tk, Terrell 9-Tk  
ICC: Pierre-Paul Int FF 4-Tk, Hargrave Sk 6-Tk

Injuries

CHI: Kroft 4, Jackson 3, Carter 2, Marpet 2, Feliciano 2, Jackson 1, Gardner-Johnson 1  
ICC:

Misc

CHI: Grant 1-F Lost, 13 MT  
ICC: Hall 1-FR, 35:01 TOP, Tucker 11 FG 29 Lg



The Thunder Lizards moved the ball well in the heavy rain. They controlled the time of possession and the scoreboard for the entire 1<sup>st</sup> half, following up a pair of 1<sup>st</sup> quarter FGs with 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter TD passes to tight end **Darren Waller** and **Dawson Knox** to take a 20-0 lead into halftime. Cowtown held Durham scoreless in the 3<sup>rd</sup> but **Ryan Fitzpatrick** was picked off by **Devin McCourty** at the 2 to end a Cowtown threat to start the 4<sup>th</sup>. After a lone Cowtown TD to **Mo Alie-Cox**, **Josh Allen** added 2 more TD passes to **Cooper Kupp** and **Kenny Moore** added a pick-six to complete the rout.

01-29-2022 Jurassic Park Temp:63 Wind:Calm Heavy Rain \*Internet\* Line:DTL by 13 MVP:Allen HFA:ON

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Cowtown (7-9)	0	0	0	7	7
2021 Durham (14-2)	6	17	0	21	44

#### Passing

COW: Fitzpatrick 32/17 211 Yds TD 3 Int, Mills 2/1 31 Yds Int

DTL: Allen 28/16 298 Yds 4 TDs

#### Rushing

COW: Murray 12/32, Boone 3/11, Fitzpatrick 2/8, Gore 3/7

DTL: Gibson 9/46, Samuel 12/40, Mattison 6/27, Edmonds 5/12, Allen 2/3

#### Receiving

COW: McKenzie 5/73, Alie-Cox 4/69 TD, Toney 3/24, Lazard 2/38, Murray 1/23

DTL: Samuel 5/73, Waller 3/36 TD, Boyd 3/42, Kupp 3/112 2 TDs, Knox 1/32 TD

#### Defense

COW: Watt Sk 6-Tk

DTL: Moore II Int(TD) 6-Tk, Simmons Int 7-Tk, Warner 10-Tk, Young Sk 3-Tk

#### Injuries

COW: Woods 2, Toney 2, Kennard 1, Bourne 1

DTL:

#### Misc

COW: Slye 0/1 FG

DTL: 34:49 TOP, Santos 3/3 FG 46 Lg



**Kirk Cousins** fired a 6-yard slant to **Odell Beckham Jr** for their second TD hook-up of the game to put Sebastian in control, 29-10 in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter. The Fish got off to a strong start, scoring TDs on their first three series of the game to lead 20-0 early. However, the Blue Eagles showed no quit by rallying for 10 points before the half. A pick of Cousins by Eagle safety **Landon Collins** to start the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter gave Scarborough needed life. But the offence could not exploit the turnover and the Fish regained the upper hand with Beckham's TD. Sebastian clinched a playoff spot with the win.

01-26-2022 The Fish Tank Temp:76 Wind:Calm Line:SS by 9 MVP:Cousins HFA:ON(3)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Scarborough (2-13-1)	0	10	0	0	10
2021 Sebastian (8-7-1)	12	11	6	7	36

#### Passing

SBE: Lock 46/24 285 Yds TD

SS: Cousins 25/15 218 Yds 4 TDs Int

#### Rushing

SBE: Johnson 6/47, Dallas 14/43, Lock 9/4

SS: Taylor 13/70, Cousins 2/13, Richard 3/11

#### Receiving

SBE: Robinson II 7/79, Jackson 4/28 TD, Ward 4/68, Dallas 4/22, Eifert 3/49

SS: Hilton 7/106 TD, Beckham Jr. 4/40 2 TDs, Marshall Jr. 2/54 TD, Richard 1/8

#### Defense

SBE: Hill 10-Tk, Collins Int 3-Tk

SS: Lewis Sk 2-FF 4-Tk, Clowney Sk 7-Tk, Gholston Sk 4-Tk, Jackson III 9-Tk

#### Injuries

SBE: Uzomah 3, Linsley 2, Gaskin 1, Burrow 1, Carson 1

SS: Chubb 2, Reid 1, Akins 1

#### Misc

SBE: Lock 3-F1 Lost, 35:48 TOP, Crosby 1/1 FG 40 Lg

SS: Clowney 1-FR, Stewart 1-F RET TD, Carlson 1/1 FG 44 Lg



The North Stars drove inside the York 10-yard line on three of their four 1<sup>st</sup> half possessions and each time elected to go with their kicker, **Jason Myers**. He delivered with field goals of 27, 23, 26 and 45 yards to give Budapest a 12-0 lead heading into half time. The Budapest defence put a stranglehold on **Tom Brady** and the York offence, allowing it just one deep penetration to the 3-yard line where the Stars then held on 4<sup>th</sup> & goal. York safety, **Khari Willis** scored the only TD of the game on a 24-yard pick-six, while Myers added 3 more FGs to tie the single game EFL record.

01-29-2022 Ferenc-Liszt Intl Temp:63 Wind:5-15 None Line:BUD by 14 MVP:Myers HF

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 York (8-8)	0	0	8	0	8
2021 Budapest (16-0)	6	6	3	6	21

Passing

YOR: Brady 36/18 164 Yds

BUD: Rodgers 24/16 209 Yds Int

Rushing

YOR: Henry 15/56

BUD: Johnson 17/66, Taylor 8/23, Patterson 6/17, Patterson 2/12, Felton 2/8

Receiving

YOR: Davis 7/88, Henry 5/17, Williams 4/37, Kmet 1/6, Johnson 1/16

BUD: Diggs 8/103, Jefferson 4/64, Johnson 2/11, Patterson 1/13, Agholor 1/18

Defense

YOR: Rousseau Sk FF 6-Tk, Willis Int(TD) 2-Tk, Butler 9-Tk, Holcomb 8-Tk

BUD:

Injuries

YOR: Ford 4, Scherff 2

BUD:

Misc

YOR:

BUD: 37:30 TOP, Myers 7/7 FG 57 Lg



With a playoff berth on the line the Spartans turned to their strength and kept the ball on the ground and away from the Hawks' **Derek Carr. Trey Sermon** tallied 27 carries for 103 yards a TD, 8 of those carries and 54 yards on the Spartans' 93-yard first possession scoring drive that ended with **Miles Sanders** running it in for a TD to give the Spartans a 7-0 lead. That was all the needed on a day when **Xavien Howard** made two clutch interceptions to end Brooklin scoring drives and the Spartans' defence made 3, 4<sup>th</sup> down stops to blank the explosive Brooklin offence and advance.

01-29-2022 Thermopylae Stadium Temp:19 Wind:5-15 None Line:PIC by 3 MVP:Howard H

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Brooklin (8-8)	0	0	0	0	0
2021 Pickering (10-6)	7	3	7	0	17

Passing

BRH: Carr 30/16 159 Yds 2 Int

PIC: Rivers 13/10 146 Yds

Rushing

BRH: Ekeler 20/101, Scott 4/23, Carr 1/3

PIC: Sermon 27/103 TD, Sanders 5/19 TD, Rivers 2/8, Shepard 1/7

Receiving

BRH: Hopkins 6/61, Ekeler 5/51, Cobb 2/16, Ingram 1/9, Scott 1/8, Perriman 1/14

PIC: Brown 5/83, Shepard 3/48, Sanders 1/6, Freiermuth 1/9

Defense

BRH: Vander Esch 8-Tk, Robey-Coleman 8-Tk

PIC: Howard 2-Int 8-Tk, Schobert FF 15-Tk

Injuries

BRH: Lewan 1

PIC: Carpenter 2, Kearse 1, Mack 1, Ridley 1, Ricard 1

Misc

BRH: 0/3 4th Dwn, Scott 1-F lost

PIC: Klein 1-FR, Zuerlein 1/1 FG 38 Lg



20  
21

The Pink Panthers mounted two long TD drives in the 1<sup>st</sup> half that took over 15 minutes off the clock, scoring on an 8-yard pass from **Matt Ryan** to **Davante Adams** and a 9-yard run by **Kenyan Drake**. A **Zane Gonzalez** FG was nullified by a holding penalty to limit the 1<sup>st</sup> half damage. The Glads took control in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, with **Big Ben** throwing TD passes to **Will Fuller V**, **Zach Ertz** and **Willie Snead IV** on consecutive series to take a 21-14 lead. Oshawa drove back 75 yards, scoring on a 3-yard run by **Devin Singletary** with 0:04 left. They went for the 2 points and the win, but came up short.

01-26-2022 Heinz Field Temp:24 Wind:Calm None Line:GEO by 12 MVP:Roethlisberg HFA:ON(2)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Oshawa (2-13-1)	7	7	0	6	20
2021 Georgia (4-10-2)	0	0	7	14	21

Passing

OSH: Ryan 35/26 243 Yds TD  
GEO: Roethlisberger 31/27 230 Yds 3 TDs

Rushing

OSH: Drake 22/99 TD, Singletary 3/28 TD, Ryan 4/8  
GEO: Robinson 14/46, Stevenson 1/6, Jacobs 1/3

Receiving

OSH: Adams 8/94 TD, Reynolds 8/76, Schultz 3/24, Goedert 2/14, Berrios 2/12  
GEO: Johnson 7/57, Robinson 7/39, Fuller V 4/71 TD, Snead IV 3/25 TD, Ertz 3/14 TD

Defense

OSH: Jones Sk FF 2-Tk, Kendricks 9-Tk  
GEO: Edmunds 9-Tk, Jones 9-Tk, Moreland 8-Tk

Injuries

OSH: Davenport 2  
GEO: Edmunds 1, Pouncey 1

Misc

OSH: 4/4 4th Dwn, Gonzalez 0/1 FG  
GEO: 10 MT



24  
31

**Raheem Mostert** bounced off left tackle for an 11-yard TD run with 0:50 left to lift the Irish to victory in a hard-fought game. The 1<sup>st</sup> half was a 10-10 draw, highlighted by a 42-yard TD pass from **Kyler Murray** to **Jaylen Waddle** for Erieau and a **Tre Boston** interception that set up a late 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter TD for East Elmhurst. The Irish started the 3<sup>rd</sup> with a 66-yard TD strike from **Baker Mayfield** to **Tyreek Hill**, but Erieau countered with a **Julius Peppers** strip-sack of Mayfield to set up a 20-yard TD pass to **Mark Andrews**, setting up a see-saw battle where the team that had the ball last won.

01-28-2022 Mgr McClancy Mem Sta Temp:37 Wind:0-5 None Line:EE by 12 MVP:Mostert

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Erieau (5-11)	7	3	7	7	24
2021 East Elmhurst (13-3)	3	7	14	7	31

Passing

ERI: Murray 23/16 199 Yds 3 TDs Int  
EE: Mayfield 28/20 268 Yds 2 TDs

Rushing

ERI: Murray 12/55, Harris 11/26, Hines 1/2  
EE: Mostert 18/117 TD, Jones 12/36 TD, Mayfield 5/8, Hill 2/2

Receiving

ERI: Andrews 4/42 2 TDs, Higgins 3/38, Waddle 3/74 TD, Hines 2/12, Harris 2/8  
EE: Robinson 5/78, Mostert 5/29, Jones 3/21, Thielen 2/26, Hill 2/86 TD, Everett 1/7

Defense

ERI: Peppers Sk FF 3-Tk, Hewitt 10-Tk, Garrett Sk 4-Tk, Poole Sk 3-Tk, Jones Sk 3-Tk  
EE: Smith 9-Tk, Graham Sk 3-Tk, Barrett FF 5-Tk

Injuries

ERI: Diggs 2, Moss 2, McLeod 2, Ruggs III 1  
EE:

Misc

ERI: Hurst 1-FR, Gostkowski 1/1 FG 34 Lg  
EE: Mayfield 1-F Lost, Blankenship 1/1 FG 23 Lg



<b>FINAL STANDINGS</b>
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# STANDINGS & STATS

## EFL 2021 - Week 16 Standings

East	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
y-Cobb County	11	5	0	.688	L1	456	28.5	318	19.9	8.6	7 1 0	4 2 0	9 3 0
Bruxelles	7	8	1	.469	W2	463	28.9	473	29.6	-0.6	4 4 0	4 2 0	6 5 1
New Jersey	7	9	0	.438	W1	308	19.3	361	22.6	-3.3	2 6 0	2 4 0	6 6 0
Buffalo	4	12	0	.250	L6	259	16.2	437	27.3	-11.1	3 5 0	2 4 0	4 8 0
Central	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
y-Charleswood	13	3	0	.813	L1	425	26.6	351	21.9	4.6	7 1 0	5 1 0	10 2 0
z-Virden	10	6	0	.625	W3	455	28.4	401	25.1	3.4	5 3 0	5 1 0	7 5 0
Twin Cities	4	11	1	.281	W1	314	19.6	387	24.2	-4.6	1 7 0	2 4 0	3 9 0
Peg City	1	15	0	.063	L2	274	17.1	464	29.0	-11.9	1 7 0	0 6 0	0 12 0
West	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
y-Las Vegas	10	6	0	.625	W2	413	25.8	325	20.3	5.5	5 3 0	5 1 0	9 3 0
z-Chino	9	6	1	.594	L2	371	23.2	395	24.7	-1.5	3 4 1	3 3 0	7 4 1
Iowa City	9	7	0	.563	W1	436	27.3	409	25.6	1.7	7 1 0	2 4 0	7 5 0
Seattle	6	10	0	.375	L1	340	21.3	375	23.4	-2.2	3 5 0	2 4 0	3 9 0
North	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
y-Durham	14	2	0	.875	W2	550	34.4	234	14.6	19.8	7 1 0	5 1 0	10 2 0
z-Sebastian	8	7	1	.531	W1	503	31.4	478	29.9	1.6	3 5 0	3 2 1	5 6 1
Cowtown	7	9	0	.438		373	23.3	419	26.2	-2.9	5 3 0	2 4 0	6 6 0
Scarborough	2	13	1	.156	L7	297	18.6	492	30.8	-12.2	2 5 1	1 4 1	2 9 1
Coastal	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
y-Budapest	16	0	0	1.000	W16	502	31.4	213	13.3	18.1	8 0 0	6 0 0	12 0 0
z-Pickering	10	6	0	.625	W6	325	20.3	300	18.8	1.6	3 5 0	3 3 0	7 5 0
York	8	8	0	.500	L2	351	21.9	383	23.9	-2.0	4 4 0	2 4 0	5 7 0
Brooklin	8	8	0	.500	L3	397	24.8	412	25.8	-0.9	4 4 0	1 5 0	6 6 0
South	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
y-East Elmhurst	13	3	0	.813	W9	403	25.2	269	16.8	8.4	6 2 0	6 0 0	10 2 0
Erieau	5	11	0	.313	L1	297	18.6	383	23.9	-5.4	3 5 0	4 2 0	4 8 0
Georgia	4	10	2	.313	W1	327	20.4	428	26.8	-6.3	2 5 1	1 4 1	2 9 1
Oshawa	2	13	1	.156	L9	328	20.5	460	28.8	-8.3	1 6 1	0 5 1	1 10 1



## EFL 2021 - Week 16 Passing Leaders

			Att	Cmp	%	Yards	In	I%	Lg	TD	TD%	Rate
1	Rodgers,A	BUD	507	357	70.4	4663	4	0.8	75	44	8.7	124.7
2	Garoppolo	COW	175	131	74.9	1525	1	0.6	59	11	6.3	119.3
3	Watson,D	CHP	475	320	67.4	4267	4	0.8	75	37	7.8	118.1
4	Cousins	SS	477	328	68.8	4337	12	2.5	76	42	8.8	116.1
5	Mahomes	VV	549	357	65.0	5011	8	1.5	72	45	8.2	115.6
6	Tannehill	CB	455	296	65.1	3929	8	1.8	60	40	8.8	114.3
7	Wilson,R	ICC	499	359	71.9	4078	9	1.8	66	34	6.8	111.3
8	Allen,J	DTL	535	351	65.6	4408	7	1.3	75	41	7.7	111.2
9	Mayfield	EE	437	294	67.3	3438	4	0.9	66	31	7.1	110.8
10	Brees	BRX	348	221	63.5	2959	6	1.7	79	26	7.5	108.2
11	Prescott	CHI	161	114	70.8	1316	1	0.6	75	7	4.3	107.1
12	Herbert	LV	587	407	69.3	4387	9	1.5	76	31	5.3	102.2
13	Carr,D	BRH	576	368	63.9	4273	8	1.4	73	37	6.4	101.9
14	Roethlisbe	GEO	524	367	70.0	3422	7	1.3	60	28	5.3	99.9
15	Stafford	NJ	560	376	67.1	3975	10	1.8	75	26	4.6	95.6
16	Trubisky	TCT	302	190	62.9	2198	7	2.3	69	17	5.6	93.9
17	Minshew II	SEA	278	180	64.7	1794	6	2.2	62	16	5.8	93.1
18	Rivers,P	PIC	396	249	62.9	3074	7	1.8	87	16	4.0	92.9
19	Brady	YOR	518	330	63.7	3779	14	2.7	84	26	5.0	91.0
20	Ryan,M	OSH	559	359	64.2	3523	12	2.1	57	25	4.5	87.8
21	Bridgewater	CHI	343	242	70.6	2384	12	3.5	75	11	3.2	86.0
22	Burrow	SBE	343	195	56.9	1953	4	1.2	59	18	5.2	85.8
23	Fitzpatric	COW	290	188	64.8	1958	11	3.8	52	13	4.5	83.4
24	Murray,K	ERI	443	275	62.1	2645	11	2.5	67	16	3.6	80.4
25	Jackson,L	BUF	531	341	64.2	3051	13	2.4	60	16	3.0	79.4
26	Jones,M	PCC	566	319	56.4	3536	17	3.0	86	23	4.1	76.1
27	Lock	SBE	183	93	50.8	1009	11	6.0	47	6	3.3	53.3
28	Beasley	ICC	1	1	100.0	22	0	0.0	22	1	100.0	158.3
29	Goff	BRX	91	59	64.8	879	2	2.2	68	10	11.0	123.8
30	Lance	SEA	148	99	66.9	1183	2	1.4	56	10	6.8	108.0
31	Jones,D	BRH	10	4	40.0	77	0	0.0	54	1	10.0	100.8
32	McCarron	EE	3	3	100.0	24	0	0.0	9	0	0.0	100.0
33	Taylor,T	BUD	1	1	100.0	8	0	0.0	8	0	0.0	100.0
34	Trask	BUF	1	1	100.0	7	0	0.0	7	0	0.0	95.8
35	Beathard	TCT	50	32	64.0	311	0	0.0	20	1	2.0	88.0
36	Mills	COW	33	20	60.6	220	1	3.0	55	2	6.1	87.9
37	Daniel	LV	4	3	75.0	14	0	0.0	6	0	0.0	79.2
38	Tagovailoa	GEO	1	1	100.0	3	0	0.0	3	0	0.0	79.2
39	Lawrence	TCT	65	36	55.4	303	1	1.5	23	3	4.6	76.6
40	Mond	SS	7	4	57.1	33	0	0.0	12	0	0.0	69.3
41	Love	NJ	2	1	50.0	6	0	0.0	6	0	0.0	56.3
42	Darnold	SEA	20	11	55.0	104	1	5.0	19	0	0.0	48.8
43	Hurts	PIC	12	7	58.3	74	1	8.3	17	0	0.0	41.7
44	Meyers	CHP	2	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	39.6
45	Adams,D	OSH	1	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	39.6

## EFL 2021 - Week 16 Rushing Leaders

			Att	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD
1	Henry,D	YOR	351	1597	4.5	48	14
2	Cook,D	LV	264	1246	4.7	64	13
3	Gordon III	TCT	244	1229	5.0	45	3
4	Jackson,L	BUF	202	1178	5.8	58	12
5	Drake	OSH	237	1161	4.9	53	8
6	Robinson,J	GEO	243	1119	4.6	52	7
7	Taylor,J	SS	198	1025	5.2	52	9
8	Jones,A	EE	206	992	4.8	39	8
9	Murray,K	ERI	152	990	6.5	47	13
10	Chubb,N	SS	196	958	4.9	47	11
11	Carson	SBE	166	916	5.5	29	5
12	Sanders,M	PIC	180	896	5.0	25	5
13	Edwards-He	TCT	144	834	5.8	46	8
14	Elliott,E	VV	212	831	3.9	28	9
15	Gibson	DTL	154	817	5.3	29	2
16	Ekeler	BRH	137	783	5.7	27	2
17	Mitchell	BRX	153	765	5.0	60	9
18	Harris,D	CB	117	761	6.5	35	3
19	Conner	ICC	133	757	5.7	47	2
20	Jones II	CHI	165	707	4.3	26	5
21	Montgomery	NJ	196	705	3.6	56	3
22	Peterson,A	CB	177	696	3.9	16	2
23	Williams,J	BRX	119	631	5.3	21	1
24	Harris	ERI	165	629	3.8	37	2
25	Johnson,Da	BUD	116	611	5.3	34	4
26	Wilson,R	ICC	83	588	7.1	43	6
27	Hunt,K	SEA	126	564	4.5	37	3
28	Swift	PIC	128	556	4.3	38	9
29	Gurley II	COW	141	555	3.9	37	12
30	Mostert	EE	103	551	5.3	28	3
31	Kamara	CHP	154	531	3.4	19	7
32	Wilson Jr.	BUD	101	528	5.2	30	5
33	Akers	SEA	108	521	4.8	52	5
34	Michel	EE	83	496	6.0	52	4
35	Tannehill	CB	57	479	8.4	43	10
36	Fournette	BRX	111	459	4.1	17	5
37	Davis,M	BUF	113	448	4.0	25	5
38	Gore	COW	115	440	3.8	20	3
39	Jacobs,J	GEO	111	439	4.0	27	3
40	Singletary	OSH	76	434	5.7	34	3

## EFL 2021 - Week 16 Receiving Leaders

			No	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD
1	Hopkins,D	BRH	115	1496	13.0	54	16
2	Adams,D	OSH	108	1209	11.2	57	14
3	Diggs,S	BUD	100	1262	12.6	66	9
4	Lockett	ICC	98	1182	12.1	66	11
5	Jefferson	BUD	91	1460	16.0	75	12
6	Allen,K	NJ	90	856	9.5	35	9
7	Hill,T	EE	82	1265	15.4	66	15
8	Anderson,R	SEA	78	1047	13.4	59	9
9	Evans,M	COW	78	1055	13.5	44	13
10	Aiyuk	PCC	78	1038	13.3	58	8
11	Chase	VV	77	1517	19.7	72	11
12	McKissic	NJ	77	588	7.6	29	1
13	Kelce,T	CHP	76	1150	15.1	54	13
14	Waller	DTL	76	973	12.8	43	11
15	McLaurin	NJ	75	1018	13.6	75	8
16	Gallup	CHI	74	946	12.8	75	7
17	Johnson,D	GEO	74	696	9.4	50	7
18	Brown,A	ICC	74	1233	16.7	54	8
19	Cooks	CB	73	1109	15.2	60	14
20	Woods,R	BUF	71	647	9.1	60	7
21	Samuel,C	DTL	71	823	11.6	53	4
22	Robinson,A	SBE	71	884	12.5	51	6
23	Claypool	BRX	71	1200	16.9	75	16
24	Shenault J	PCC	70	802	11.5	42	8
25	Parker,D	CB	69	912	13.2	36	10
26	Cooper,A	CHP	69	1003	14.5	75	7
27	Kupp	DTL	68	1200	17.6	75	9
28	Godwin,C	BRX	67	1085	16.2	56	10
29	Gage	BUF	67	661	9.9	41	3
30	Sanders,E	BUF	67	772	11.5	51	4
31	Smith-Schu	CHP	65	821	12.6	36	7
32	Jones Jr.	CHI	62	782	12.6	39	3
33	Hockenson	VV	62	705	11.4	49	10
34	Thielen	EE	62	736	11.9	35	9
35	Andrews,M	ERI	60	569	9.5	47	8
36	Engram	BRH	59	823	13.9	73	6
37	Moore,D	TCT	58	970	16.7	69	6
38	Fitzgerald	LV	58	579	10.0	22	2
39	Landry	GEO	57	520	9.1	38	5
40	Ridley,C	PIC	55	970	17.6	75	6

## EFL 2021 - Week 16 Kick Return Leaders

		No	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD
1	Roberts,A	BRX	33	1148	34.8	51 0
2	Rodgers,I	CHP	29	984	33.9	100 2
3	Agnew	SEA	28	848	30.3	68 0
4	Duvernay	TCT	21	579	27.6	49 0
5	Patterson	BUD	23	632	27.5	48 0
6	Scott,B	BRH	26	665	25.6	43 0
7	Johnson,D	SBE	24	594	24.8	41 0
8	Webster,N	NJ	25	597	23.9	43 0
9	Ballentine	SS	22	517	23.5	35 0
10	Homer	YOR	22	505	23.0	38 0
11	Atwell	OSH	33	640	19.4	38 0
12	Carter,D	BUF	41	736	18.0	48 0
13	Cannon	BUD	8	267	33.4	42 0
14	Harris,D	COW	18	549	30.5	76 0
15	Adderley	VV	3	89	29.7	33 0
16	Hardman	LV	2	52	26.0	34 0
17	Smith,T	CB	5	127	25.4	45 0
18	Cole Sr.	SEA	1	25	25.0	25 0
19	Lewis,D	LV	19	448	23.6	43 0
20	Abdullah	CHI	19	439	23.1	36 0
21	Hubbard	PCC	6	138	23.0	29 0
22	Johnson,D	CB	7	160	22.9	29 0
23	Hill	DTL	12	266	22.2	38 0
24	Peoples-Jo	SS	1	22	22.0	22 0
25	Carter	ICC	16	352	22.0	33 0

## EFL 2021 - Week 16 Punt Return Leaders

		No	Fc	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD
1	Grant,J	CHI	37	8	502	13.6	62 1
2	Harris,D	COW	25	8	280	11.2	20 0
3	Peppers	ERI	28	6	301	10.8	22 0
4	Proche	DTL	35	18	349	10.0	39 0
5	Erickson	BUF	23	11	229	10.0	24 0
6	Peoples-Jo	SS	25	8	223	8.9	25 0
7	Roberts,A	BRX	21	3	182	8.7	29 0
8	Moore	EE	26	18	221	8.5	17 0
9	Spencer,D	NJ	29	8	232	8.0	25 0
10	Cooper,P	VV	22	15	174	7.9	41 0
11	Raymond	CB	24	8	181	7.5	22 0
12	Taylor,T	CHP	33	6	248	7.5	27 0
13	Hill,K	SBE	34	7	182	5.4	25 0
14	Hardman	LV	24	15	66	2.8	13 0
15	Lamb	SEA	5	3	74	14.8	38 0
16	Hines	ERI	3	0	37	12.3	16 0
17	Renfrow	SEA	10	6	115	11.5	40 0
18	Cole Sr.	SEA	15	5	162	10.8	20 0
19	Johnson,D	GEO	11	5	112	10.2	22 0
20	Tate,G	BRH	4	16	35	8.8	19 0
21	Atwell	OSH	12	3	104	8.7	22 0
22	James,R	GEO	7	5	55	7.9	15 0
23	Barner	PIC	7	24	53	7.6	14 0
24	Rodgers,Am	BUD	18	23	130	7.2	20 0
25	Toney	COW	2	3	14	7.0	15 0

## EFL 2021 - Week 16 Kicking Leaders

		FGA	FGM	FG%	40	50	Lg	Pts
1	Myers,J	BUD	34	33	97.1	18	8 59	152
2	Santos	DTL	25	25	100.0	16	9 55	142
3	Butker	CHI	35	33	94.3	11	5 57	137
4	Tucker,J	ICC	27	25	92.6	5	2 53	122
5	Blankenshi	EE	26	22	84.6	4	2 53	113
6	Koo	PCC	30	30	100.0	15	7 56	112
7	Prater	BRX	26	18	69.2	3	2 59	109
8	Fairbairn	LV	21	20	95.2	5	1 50	107
9	Lutz	CHP	19	18	94.7	6	0 49	105
10	McManus	CB	23	16	69.6	4	1 53	100
11	Boswell	NJ	24	23	95.8	10	5 58	100
12	McPherson	SEA	30	23	76.7	12	6 58	100
13	Carlson	SS	17	16	94.1	9	0 49	99
14	Zuerlein	PIC	23	22	95.7	9	3 56	99
15	Bullock	BRH	25	16	64.0	4	0 45	97
16	Badgley	VV	21	16	76.2	7	3 53	92
17	Crosby	SBE	20	20	100.0	13	5 57	91
18	Gonzalez	OSH	20	14	70.0	5	0 49	82
19	Slye	COW	21	11	52.4	5	1 54	77
20	Bass	GEO	14	12	85.7	4	2 52	75
21	Hopkins,D	TCT	17	13	76.5	3	0 46	72
22	Gould	YOR	14	11	78.6	3	0 47	69
23	Gostkowski	ERI	7	6	85.7	3	1 54	49
24	Elliott,J	BUF	10	4	40.0	1	0 40	41
25	Sloman	ERI	15	12	80.0	5	0 49	36

## EFL 2021 - Week 16 Punting Leaders

		No	Yards	Tb	20	Lg	Bk	Ave
1	Dickson	ERI	64	3175	7 30	61	0	49.6
2	Fox	PIC	58	2857	3 30	62	0	49.3
3	O'Donnell	NJ	45	2197	3 17	76	0	48.8
4	Niswander	YOR	42	2042	2 16	67	0	48.6
5	Bailey,J	SEA	60	2917	4 30	59	0	48.6
6	Way	CHI	49	2367	1 21	58	0	48.3
7	Huber	DTL	44	2099	5 24	68	0	47.7
8	Wishnowsky	TCT	51	2418	1 17	58	0	47.4
9	Long,T	SBE	69	3256	4 24	58	0	47.2
10	Martin,S	BUF	45	2123	0 21	60	0	47.2
11	Hekker	COW	68	3183	1 26	74	2	46.8
12	Anger	LV	50	2340	6 15	57	0	46.8
13	Johnston	BRX	42	1952	0 21	58	0	46.5
14	Haack	PCC	54	2483	2 8	70	0	46.0
15	Lee,A	VV	38	1729	2 15	54	0	45.5
16	Dixon,R	CHP	46	2088	2 17	53	0	45.4
17	Townsend	GEO	51	2300	1 16	59	0	45.1
18	Koch	OSH	52	2344	2 18	75	0	45.1
19	Pinion	ICC	36	1619	4 10	68	0	45.0
20	Morstead	BRH	51	2276	4 22	56	0	44.6
21	Mann	EE	55	2389	1 22	64	0	43.4
22	Colquitt,D	CB	12	564	1 4	68	1	47.0
23	Berry	CB	27	1265	3 8	60	0	46.9
24	Scott,J	SS	29	1353	1 6	56	1	46.7
25	Sanchez	BUD	26	1161	1 10	60	1	44.7

## EFL 2021 - Week 16 Interception Leaders

			No	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD
1	Mathieu	DTL	6	68	11.3	34	1
2	Moore II	DTL	6	146	24.3	34	2
3	Jackson,D	CHI	5	81	16.2	50	1
4	Butler,M	YOR	5	56	11.2	32	0
5	Bradberry	NJ	5	30	6.0	30	0
6	Simmons,J	DTL	4	71	17.8	42	0
7	Jenkins,J	SEA	4	64	16.0	35	0
8	Diggs,T	ERI	4	40	10.0	33	1
9	Fuller,K	CHP	4	23	5.8	17	0
10	Peterson,P	OSH	4	23	5.8	11	0
11	Smith,H	BRX	4	30	7.5	16	0
12	Howard,X	PIC	3	35	11.7	26	0
13	Nelson,S	CB	3	44	14.7	25	0
14	Hilton,M	EE	3	32	10.7	32	0
15	Jones,D	SBE	3	120	40.0	63	1
16	Williams,D	COW	3	6	2.0	6	0
17	White,T	CB	3	8	2.7	8	0
18	Chinn	COW	3	20	6.7	16	0
19	McLeod	ERI	3	25	8.3	16	0
20	Gardner-Jo	CHI	3	30	10.0	15	0
21	Fitzpatric	BUD	3	38	12.7	34	0
22	Fuller,J	LV	3	72	24.0	46	0
23	Smith,R	COW	3	20	6.7	11	0
24	Diggs,Q	BUD	3	4	1.3	3	0
25	Poyer	YOR	3	28	9.3	28	0
26	Martinez	CB	3	36	12.0	20	0
27	Joseph	GEO	3	18	6.0	14	0
28	Harrison,R	BRH	2	1	0.5	1	0
29	Lattimore	SEA	2	22	11.0	22	0
30	Pierre-Pau	ICC	2	28	14.0	15	0
31	Jones,J	BRH	2	0	0.0	0	0
32	Horn	BUF	2	32	16.0	32	0
33	Fuller,K	BRX	2	1	0.5	1	0
34	Rhodes,X	ICC	2	76	38.0	41	0
35	Davis III	COW	2	34	17.0	34	0
36	Poole	ERI	2	0	0.0	0	0
37	Mullen	CB	2	0	0.0	0	0
38	Williams,M	LV	2	46	23.0	26	0
39	Harmon	EE	2	0	0.0	0	0
40	Okereke	PCC	2	54	27.0	47	0
41	Ward,D	PIC	2	0	0.0	0	0
42	Sneed	BUF	2	55	27.5	55	1
43	Murphy-Bun	SEA	2	1	0.5	1	0
44	Verrett	BUD	2	0	0.0	0	0
45	Okudah	PCC	2	35	17.5	35	0

## EFL 2021 - Week 16 Fumble Leaders

1	Jackson,L	BUF	16
2	Trubisky	TCT	11
3	Carr,D	BRH	11
4	Murray,K	ERI	10
5	Wilson,R	ICC	9
6	Watson,D	CHP	8
7	Cousins	SS	7
8	Mahomes	VV	7
9	Herbert	LV	7
10	Roethlisbe	GEO	7
11	Stafford	NJ	5
12	Rodgers,A	BUD	5
13	Lock	SBE	5
14	Drake	OSH	4
15	Tannehill	CB	4
16	Allen,J	DTL	4
17	Bridgewater	CHI	4
18	Ryan,M	OSH	4
19	Erickson	BUF	4
20	Harris,D	COW	4
21	Garoppolo	COW	4
22	Henry,D	YOR	4
23	Cook,D	LV	3
24	Elliott,E	VV	3
25	Minshew II	SEA	3
26	Andrews,M	ERI	3
27	Jones,M	PCC	3
28	Burrow	SBE	3
29	Lance	SEA	3
30	Sanders,M	PIC	3
31	Breida	CB	3
32	Johnson,D	GEO	3
33	Cooper,P	VV	3
34	Hill,K	SBE	3
35	McKissic	NJ	3
36	Watkins,S	LV	3
37	Swift	PIC	3
38	Webster,N	NJ	3
39	Bradbury	TCT	2
40	Brown,A	ICC	2
41	Powell	EE	2
42	Valdes-Sca	BRX	2
43	Smith-Schu	CHP	2
44	Lewis,D	LV	2
45	Lockett	ICC	2

EFL 2021 - Week 16 Tackle Leaders			2021 - Week 16 Sack Leaders			EFL 2021 - Week 16 Blocking Leaders				
						Big Holes				
1	Cunningham	NJ	157	Hendrickso	DTL	12	1	Wirfs	CB	55
2	Schobert	PIC	135	Williams,L	VV	10	2	Sewell	GEO	36
3	Wagner,B	TCT	134	Sweat	CHP	9	3	Dawkins,D	BRH	35
4	Trevathan	VV	132	Okwara,R	PIC	9	4	Cosmi	TCT	30
5	Smith,R	COW	130	Mack,K	SEA	9	5	Bitonio	BRX	30
6	Fuller,K	BRX	117	Young,C	DTL	9	6	Corbett	ICC	30
7	Darby	CHP	113	Lawson	CHP	9	7	Lewis,D	TCT	30
8	Smith,J	EE	112	Burns	DTL	8	8	Moses	ERI	29
9	Humphrey	PCC	112	Donald	BUF	8	9	Smith,D	BUF	29
10	Jackson,D	CHI	110	Armstead	DTL	8	10	Armstead	DTL	27
11	Jewell	YOR	110	Barrett,S	EE	7	11	Tomlinson	CHP	26
12	Hewitt	ERI	108	Watt,T	COW	7	12	McGlinchey	YOR	25
13	Martinez	CB	107	Tuitt	BRH	7	13	Brown,D	OSH	25
14	Edmunds	GEO	106	Smith,Z	CHI	7	14	Kelly,D	LV	24
15	David	BUD	106	Adams,J	NJ	7	15	Villanueva	OSH	23
16	Landry III	CHP	105	Lawrence,D	CB	6	16	Becton	EE	23
17	Butler,M	YOR	104	Brockers	SEA	6	17	Linsley	SBE	21
18	Leonard	LV	103	Lewis,T	SS	6	18	Boettger	COW	21
19	Jackson,W	SS	103	Vernon	EE	6	19	Humphries	VV	21
20	White,T	CB	99	Graham,B	EE	6	20	Lindstrom	TCT	20
21	Jones,J	BRH	98	Jordan,C	BUD	5	21	Saffold	BUF	20
22	Rhodes,X	ICC	98	Garrett	ERI	5	22	O'Neill	SEA	20
23	Ward,C	OSH	97	Dunlap	SS	5	23	Edwards,D	COW	20
24	Breeland	NJ	96	Clark,F	BRX	5	24	Jones,B	EE	19
25	Anzalone	SBE	95	Smith,A	NJ	5	25	Nelson,Q	ICC	19
26	Harris Jr.	VV	95	Lawrence,D	EE	5	26	Dotson	BRH	19
27	Hill,T	SBE	95	Buckner	YOR	5	27	Mason	CHI	19
28	Surtain II	LV	93	Suh	BUD	5	28	Jackson,G	ERI	18
29	Amos	SBE	92	Autry	OSH	5	29	Leno Jr.	CHI	18
30	Wright,K	SEA	91	Pierre-Pau	ICC	5	30	Hunt,R	CB	18
31	Thompson,S	OSH	91	Richardson	CHP	5	31	DeCastro	DTL	18
32	Jones,D	SBE	91	Brown,D	CHP	5	32	Ifedi	ERI	18
33	Okereke	PCC	91	Payne	CB	5	33	Smith,B	ICC	18
34	Bostic	CHI	91	Cox,F	ICC	4	34	Bradbury	TCT	17
35	Davis,D	LV	89	Hargrave	ICC	4	35	Williams,T	PIC	17
36	Singleton	ICC	89	Sweat	TCT	4	36	Blythe	SEA	17
37	Lattimore	SEA	88	Bosa,J	ERI	4	37	Scherff	YOR	17
38	Ward,D	PIC	88	Reed,J	CB	4	38	Hopkins,T	TCT	17
39	Alexander	TCT	86	Wilkins,C	SS	4	39	Marpet	CHI	17
40	Goodson	BUD	86	Odenigbo	BRX	4	40	Gates	BUF	17
41	Warner	DTL	86	Campbell,C	NJ	4	41	Martin,Z	SBE	17
42	Peterson,P	OSH	85	Gholston	SS	4	42	Bolles	BRX	17
43	Howard,X	PIC	85	Jones,D	SBE	4	43	Feiler	SS	17
44	Peters,M	VV	84	Ogunjobi	SEA	4	44	Fisher,E	NJ	17
45	Slay	BRX	84	Allen,J	PCC	4	45	Fulton	LV	16



# AROUND THE



## With Spats McChad

NEW YORK – It's finally over! The season that felt finished at least three weeks ago is officially at an end. Done, terminated, dead and buried, a thing of the past, ancient history...you get the idea. I am speaking of the *regular* season, of course. The second season is about to begin and brings with it a bit of genuine suspense for serious football savants. Note that I wrote "a bit," not boundless.

First, we must get past the wildcard rounds. Taken in isolation, these can, and have been at times, rousing contests between somewhat evenly matched teams. Viewed in the big picture, they come off as opening acts for the headliners to come; bands with perhaps one hit and a developing fanbase, good enough to keep audiences from hurling refuse at the stage but not good enough to overshadow the big cat. For example: Sebastian is to Durham as *Tyler Bryant and The Shakedown* is to *AC/DC*; Pickering is to Budapest as *Marillion* is to *Rush*. Not that these opening bands are bad. They are just not as big or well-followed as the headliner.

Until a wildcard team, some day, emerges from this format to make it to final game, the Wildcard Weekend will continue to be a ritualistic exercise in preparing the field for the Big Boys to show off their superior talent and coaching. It remains mainly an opportunity for the networks to rake in more advertising dollars from the football-addicted among us and for Vegas and sites like *Draft Monarchs* to rake in more betting dollars.

On the topic of generating revenue for the sake of generating revenue; the long season we just experienced will get even longer next year with the introduction of the 17-game schedule. As I have pointed out in the past, there is certainly no football-related reason for expanding the schedule by a game. Adding one more game (soon to be two) is all about money.

Take this season for example: If there was still one more game to play, five of the six divisions would still be locked up and the West would still come down to one game to decide whether Chino or Las Vegas wins the West. The only difference would be that the Convicts would have *Dak Prescott* back to contest the final, *final* game. The wildcard situation would still come down to the Cubs and the Violators contending for the last wildcard spot in the Pacific; and we would have a truncated battle between York, Brooklin and Sebastian for the final wildcard spot in the Atlantic. (At least, Cowtown would no longer be complicating the calculus for those attempting to determine paths to the post-season). Seriously, though, does this sound like a great reason to extend a season? Would anyone other than fans of Chino, Iowa City, Brooklin and York care in the least?

The coming 17-game schedule promises, practically guarantees, that the vast majority of football played to close out the regular season will be sub-standard and meaningless. Imagine being an Erieau, Georgia, Buffalo, Peg City or Scarborough fan! While one can dismiss those poor souls as having only themselves to blame for latching on to perpetual mediocrity, in fairness to those diehards who actually live in the local area, they have no honourable choice but to support their team. They are to be pitied, not scorned. Adding a 17<sup>th</sup> game to their schedules simply adds another heavy stone to the weight crushing their fan spirit and ultimately serves the league no good purpose – apart from money, of course.

The EFL will officially release its plans for the 17-game regular season schedule upon conclusion of Gale Sayers XV. According to my sources inside the league, this will involve the 17<sup>th</sup> game being an inter-conference game played against equivalent seeds (determined from the previous season) in a division not pre-scheduled for inter-conference play in the current year. The extra home game will be awarded to one Conference one year, the other Conference the next, and so on. The only questions not yet resolved, apparently, are: Which Conference will be first to acquire the extra home date; and will the opposing division be that of the preceding year, or the one scheduled to come? Weighty matters, certainly, that will likely come down to a coin flip.

I am not waiting breathlessly for the answer to those questions, in any case. What occupies me presently is sorting through the chaff of Week 16 to separate for you, my dear readers, the few meaningful and nutritious kernels of football that redeemed the final week of the 2021 season. I was able to find a couple....

### ***THE MANITOBA CLUB***

In Week 16, fans in the Canadian Province of Manitoba were again called upon to set aside their greater loyalties to their small province and pick a side between the top two teams representing that portion of the world that, before 2007, was unknown to, and untouched by, American professional football...and most everything else.

It was to be another grand match between the Charleswood Patriots of the Winnipeg suburb of the same name, and the Virden Violators, based in the "Oil Capital of Manitoba," 100 miles west of Winnipeg. In most years, this grand match was a mismatch. This was due to the curious tendency for the Patriots to be up in years when the Violators were down, and vice versa. This

had been the case to greater and lesser degrees in every season since Virden entered the league in 2009, with the exception of 2016, the “season of mediocrity,” when both franchises posted identical 7-9 records. It was therefore uncommon that the head-to-head games between these provincial rivals meant something important to both teams at the same time. Although staunch Virden fans – rural, hard-nosed and plain, with a sizeable representation of disaffected youth from the urban centers in Winnipeg, Brandon and Regina – tended to detest Charleswood fans – well-heeled suburbanites with “big city” backers from Winnipeg’s financial district – the owners and backers of both these franchises appeared to be quite friendly with each other at the corporate level.

Manitoba Oil Baron, **Vance Barrate**, whose son Lance is President, GM and coach of the Violators, and Winnipeg Media Baron, **Jason Findlay**, who owns the Patriots, are members of the same club. That club is the exclusive Manitoba Club, famous for having once entertained **Mark Twain** and **General William Tecumseh Sherman** back when those two were famous. It hasn’t hosted anyone contemporarily famous in a very long time. But that is the point of ancient private clubs whose membership prefer to remain out of the spotlight when making deals that enhance their private wealth and power at the expense of the common people.

**Carling Thule Richardson**, Arctic explorer and owner of the Crusaders, is also a member of the Manitoba Club. His recent purchase of the Cincinnati Crusaders and relocation of the team to Winnipeg is, according to sources inside and outside the club, creating friction with Findlay and Barrate, who rightfully fear that the Manitoba football market has become over-crowded to the detriment of all. As previously covered in these pages, what began as an attempted hostile takeover of the Manitoba football market by the infinitely rich, Richardson, has turned into a calamity for the new owner on the block. His team struggled to just one win in 2021 and its future prospects are uncertain. The palatial True North Field was mostly empty during its first season with fans allowed back in the stands. The coach of the Crusaders is receiving bad press (which is no wonder, since Findlay owns all of the local newspapers) and fans of the team are harder to find than Blue Bomber’ fans.

The worst thing of all for the new owner, according to insiders, is that Findlay and Barrate are refusing to let Richardson in on their “arrangement.” This despite common loyalties to the Manitoba Club and its hidden goals. This secret arrangement between Barrate and Findlay, the exact details of which are unknown because they are not written anywhere, amounts to a shared “understanding” that, while the Violators and Patriots are naturally subject to the same market forces, poor or unlucky draft choices and free agent traps as other teams, in the end *Manitoba* will be represented in the post-season every year, one way or the other.

Signs that an “arrangement” exists were particularly evident the past two off-seasons. An analysis of the balance of transactions between the clubs (of which there are an abnormal amount for teams sharing the same division ostensibly in competition with each other) showed uncommon outflows from Charleswood to Virden in preparation for the 2020 season, and a reverse of those flows back to Charleswood in the lead-up to the current season. It was as if they were not even trying to conceal it. Or, they were making a point of rubbing it in Richardson’s face in an effort to get him to pull up stakes and move further west. In any event, the Patriots duly dominated the Pacific Conference and the not-so-strong Central Division in 2021 and the Violators initially looked destined for obscurity with a season-long rash of injuries compounding a talent-deficit.

But the “arrangement” did not go fully according to plan. Virden, while not nearly as strong as last year, remained relevant in 2021 thanks to quarterback **Patrick Mahomes**, his sensational rookie receiver, **Ja’Marr Chase** and an MVP-grade defensive year from lineman **Leonard Williams**, who made critical plays at critical times to help win games when the rest of the defence was collapsing around him.

The above efforts, coupled with a relatively easy schedule, had propelled Virden to a 9-6 record heading into Week 16. They now controlled their own playoff destiny: Win and they were in a wildcard spot; lose and they might still be in, but would need help from Chino against the Cubs.

The Pats, without trying particularly hard, had built up a 13-2 record over the course of the first 15 weeks. They had created enough distance between themselves and Cobb County that the final game meant nothing to them in the playoff seeding. They came into the final week with the luxury of being able to rest star players if they chose. But with the prospect of Virden making the playoffs in a ‘Charleswood year,’ would they?

The “arrangement” was, for the first time, in uncharted territory. Could it tolerate both Charleswood and Virden in the post-season at the same time? It had never happened in the previous 12 seasons, since Virden had entered the league in 2009. Theoretically, this would be good for Manitoba – two strong teams making a post-season run. But there was a reason it had never occurred before. Anything could happen in the playoffs. What if the weaker team made it through and embarrassed Manitoba in the Gale Sayers Game?

No doubt, the potential dilemma was the subject of conversation in the Cigar Room on the upper floor of the Manitoba Club in the weeks leading up to the final game. At 7-6, the Violators had Erieau and Peg City on their schedule in Week 14 and Week 15. It would have been nearly impossible to lose to either of those teams. Knowing that Virden would face the Pats in Week 16 with a record that would put it in the mix for a playoff spot, how the Pats owner would handle his team was undoubtedly key to Virden’s chances.

The final game day decision was ambiguous at first glance. The Pats did, indeed, give some players the day off. **Laremy Tunsil**, **Ronnie Stanley**, **Brandon Linder**, **Kendall Fuller** all did not dress. Others, like **Jamie Collins Sr** and **Jaelen Phillips**, saw limited action. However, **DeShaun Watson**, **Alvin Kamara**, **Amari Cooper**, **DK Metcalf**, **Leonard Floyd** and other stars, the main keys to a Charleswood victory, all started. As the game continued and the competition heated up, they remained in the game.

Reading between the lines and, admittedly, resorting to pure conjecture, it appears to me as if the two owners came to the perfect gentleman’s agreement; to level the playing field slightly by having the Pats sit some of their more brittle, but important support

pieces, but allow the franchise players on both sides to decide the outcome. Whether the disposition of the players was so contrived or not, the Week 16 match-up delivered a classic for Manitoba football fans that served to stoke the rivalry between the fan bases and line the pockets of the two owners, who incidentally shared **Jason Findlay**'s *Bison Room* luxury box at Patriot Place to watch the game.

Despite Watson starting at quarterback, there were early signs that the Patriots were taking a devil-may-care approach to this game. After gaining a first down on a routine medium hitch to **Amari Cooper**, they broke away from their standard Five-Play Offence on the second play from scrimmage, calling a delayed draw to **Alvin Kamara** that was stoned for no gain by the ever-alert **Leonard Williams**. On the next snap, Watson lateralled to **Jakobi Meyers**, who looked downfield and underthrew **Juju Smith-Schuster** for an incompletion. On third down, Watson fired a low ball to a diving **Amari Cooper** that was initially ruled complete for a first down but was overturned on a replay challenge by **Lance Barrate**. It was the most exciting three-and-out of Pats' season.

The Violators started in a similar vein, but stuck to the plays they usually run. After an opening 16-yard completion to **Ja'Marr Chase** on a routine slant, a mix-up in the back field forced **Patrick Mahomes** to run it to the right but he was stopped by **Leonard Floyd** for a 1-yard gain. An attempt to go deep on the next snap was thwarted by good downfield coverage, prompting an errant check down. Then a high throw over the head of **AJ Green** on third down brought the punting unit on the field. The Violators were jittery, the Pats were too loose. Both had failed in their initial attempts to get on the board first. From that point on, however, they settled into a game.

The Patriots struck first, driving 88 yards in 13 plays, 8 of those effective runs by three different running backs. **JK Dobbins** performed the honours with a 7-yard TD run off – you guessed it – left tackle. The Violators replied in their typical fashion. Mahomes came out flinging the ball deep every second or third play and hoping something would stick. It did – a 14-yard scramble by Mahomes on an aborted bomb and two passes of more than 20 yards set up a 12-yard TD pass to **KJ Hamler** for the equalizer.

Unimpressed, the Pats took their time moving back up the field. They covered 75 yards in 13 plays, many of those runs, and finished the drive off with a Kamara 10-yard TD run off – you guessed it – right tackle to regain the lead, 14-7. The Violators continued to pass freely, with Mahomes connecting twice to Chase for 18 and 23 yards and Green for 12 yards before the Pats' secondary got warmed up. Two hurried check downs fell incomplete and Virden settled for a 30-yard **Michael Badgley** field goal.

The Pats looked to press their advantage in the last 1:40 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter, starting at their own 25 with all three of their timeouts left. They bungled it in the end. A fumbled snap and a 4-yard check down to **Travis Kelce** on 3<sup>rd</sup> & 1 burned 2 timeouts. At the Virden 42 with 0:16 left, Watson checked down to Kamara in the middle of the field for a 4-yard gain to the Virden 38 with 9 seconds left, forcing them to call their last timeout. It was simply a bad throwing decision; Kamara had no place to go. On the next play, an outside pass to Cooper was complete at the 27-yard line, but was not outside enough. **Isaiah Oliver** tackled him in-bounds as the clock ran out. Looking back, it would have been a 56-yard attempt for **Wil Lutz** from the 38 – no chip shot. Hard to blame the coach for wanting to get a little closer. But Watson messed it up. When my fellow pundits gush about **DeShaun Watson** being elite, it is little things like this bungled two-minute drill that I point to in dispute of that assertion. When the little things go wrong in crunch time that speaks to lack of focus. An opportunity to put the Violators in a hole was wasted. And it would come back to haunt the Pats later.

Virden recharged in the locker room, buoyed by having avoided damage at the end of the half. Mahomes came out more composed on the opening drive of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half. He continued to attack through the air, but this time the passes were shorter and in rhythm. It was a possession strategy without a ground game. Then, on the ninth play of the drive they ran, but the play was so awkwardly executed that rookie **Derrick Brown** was able to snuff it out, tackling poor **Ezekiel Elliott** for a 3-yard loss. The Pats had given up ground slowly, allowing the underneath passes, hoping for a mistake. But when Mahomes scrambled for 10 yards on 3<sup>rd</sup> & 10 to reach the Pats' 20-yard line, their morale caved in. Three plays later, Mahomes checked down to Green for a 7-yard touchdown pass to put Virden in front 17-14.

The score brought scattered cheers from an estimated one thousand Violators fans spread throughout Patriot Place. Pats' season ticket holders did not, as a rule, knowingly sell their tickets to Virden fans, but a few always fell through the cracks. Unlike at True North Field, where fans of the visiting Manitoba teams outnumbered Crusaders' fans by as much as 4 to 1, home partisanship was an important feature of games at Patriot Place and **TERRORDOME**. Homefield still belonged to the Pats.

The Patriots regained the upper hand two possessions later, fueled by the adrenaline of having side-stepped disaster when Cooper had jumped on a Smith-Schuster fumble earlier to retain possession at the Virden 43. Watson drilled a hitch pass to Kelce and the powerful, fleet-footed tight end easily escaped pursuit for a 28-yard scoring play. The undermanned, banged-up Virden secondary was playing a straight zone defence, unwilling to put its corners in man-coverage against the Patriots' wide receivers. That strategy left them sitting ducks for a player like Kelce, who infallibly knew where to find the weak spot in the zone.

Virden responded offensively with another chippy drive molded out of aborted medium and long pass plays. The Patriots' secondary was covering well, but Mahomes was able to keep plays alive and find the outlet receiver for modest but progressive gains. The time spent running around in coverage eventually took its toll on the Charleswood defence and Mahomes found **TJ Hockenson** open on a come-backer at the goal line for a 7-yard touchdown pass to put the Violators back in front, 24-21. The Pats, out of desperation, had deployed 7 defensive backs on the play and it was still not enough to keep tabs on the unsung Virden tight end.

The Pats lost serve on the next series. Starting at their 25, Kamara toughed out a 2-yard gain on 1<sup>st</sup> down before the Pats went to the air. Watson looked to Kelce on the open curl route against the Virden zone but the throw was low. The tight end dove and seemed to catch the pass, but the completion was overturned on another successful challenge by Coach **Lance Barrate**. On third down, the Pats came back to the same play, but Watson's pass was badly off line. It fell, incomplete. On 4<sup>th</sup> & 8, **Riley Dixon** came on to punt. The Pats would never be in the driver's seat again.



Taking over at their own 24-yard line, the Violators looked to press their advantage. Unlike their opponent had earlier, they did not bungle the opportunity. Mahomes boldly (perhaps brashly) lofted a deep ball into a sea of Patriot defenders on the first play from scrimmage and it found the mark, landing into the bread basket of *Ja'Marr Chase* for a 31-yard gain and a first down at the Charleswood 45-yard line. The Pats had been in all-out coverage with 7 defensive backs. Yet, Mahomes and Chase had beaten the coverage. Frustration on the Patriots' side boiled over 3 plays late when *Asante Samuel Jr.* mugged Green on a pass down the seam. He was caught by the official for a 12-yard pass-interference penalty. The infraction put Virden inside the Patriots' red zone. Four plays later, Mahomes hooked up with Hockenson on the same play as the one that went for a touchdown on the earlier drive. The Pats, in 'man' defence this time, had been playing off for some reason and the tight end turned, with plenty of room to step into the end zone. It was now 31-21 for the visitors.

With 4:23 remaining, down by 10 points, Watson took over at his own 25. He needed to cover a lot of ground to score and then get the ball back with enough time to get into field goal range, or the end zone, to avoid defeat. Theoretically, according to the latest analytics, there was more than enough time to do this. But the Pats' quarterback was indecisive in the pocket and the Violators elected to go with a four-man rush instead of a swarm of defensive backs. As a result, Watson was sacked four times in the next ten snaps, which should have finished him and his team off without debate. But somehow, incredibly, on 4<sup>th</sup> & 30 from the Virden 31-yard line, Watson was able to loft a bomb to *DK Metcalf* in the end zone for a touchdown to keep the Pats' hopes alive.

The Patriot faithful, who had been sitting on their hands for most of the second half and had betrayed perplexed irritation at the flurry of sacks that kept pushing the drive back, suddenly burst out in loud jubilation at the near-miraculous touchdown. For a moment they forgot there was just 0:49 left on the clock and their Pats were still down by 3 and had only 1 timeout remaining.

Reality set in as *Wil Lutz* teed up the ball and surveyed the Virden hands team opposite him. The one plausible path to victory was in the successful recovery of an onside kick. It was a faint hope. Successful onside kicks were rarer than Crusader wins these days. The ball bounced and tumbled into the arms of *Ezekiel Elliott*, who corralled it to preserve the Virden advantage. The Pats could not stop the clock more than once. They didn't bother doing even that. *Mark Rypien* came on to do the kneeling. The Violators had won.

Violators fans stood and cheered while grumbling Patriots fans filed slowly out of the stadium. Up in the *Bison Room*, **Jason Findlay** and **Vance Barrate** smiled, tipped their glasses to each other and took a swig of their beverage of choice – beer for the Pats owner, a Harvey Wallbanger for the Violators' owner. Manitoba would be well-represented this post-season. And, if Fate decreed it, their respective teams would meet again in two weeks.

### ***THE NEW SPARTANS***

It felt like a whole new season had opened up for the Spartans after the Greek God *Ares* had possessed Pickering coach, **Gus Konstantakos** and helped him lead the Spartans to victory over Cobb County in Week Four. To start the season, the Spartans had certainly looked like a much different team – a lackluster, demoralized, and confused team, closely resembling that shambolic animated corpse that had lumbered from loss to loss and finished with just 4 wins in 2020. Week Four had been an inflection point marking the start of a proverbial new day for the Pickering franchise.

While several challenges had arisen during the seasons' muddy mid-point, by the final week Pickering was on a roll. They came in winners of five straight as they contemplated the Hawks, another hot team that was coming off two tough losses and hungry for a win. Both teams were fighting for playoff positions.

"We are approaching this like any other game – one at a time," the Pickering coach said to the media on Saturday after delivering his injury report. "There are no easy games in this league. Both teams are playing at a high level. We are going to have to play sixty minutes of good football."

When asked by a reporter whether he had any preferences for the outcomes of other games that would affect his team's future opponent if they were to advance, Konstantakos did not hesitate to reply, "I'm not thinking about what the other teams are doing. We can't afford to look past this team. We're focused on the Hawks and we're not worried about all of that other stuff."

Since the turning point in Week Four, the Pickering coach had become noticeably more relaxed. He was less prone to temper tantrums and had cut back on the ouzo. He had resumed grooming himself in the fastidious manner he had done in the team's early years and it was noted that he appeared to have lost some weight. He had also toned down the Sparta rhetoric. Not that he had disavowed his and the team's ancient heritage – he still wore the Corinthian helmet lapel pin on his shirts – but his attempts to portray himself as the reincarnation of King Leonidas had been toned down considerably.

The word coming out of the Spartans' camp was that Gus was attempting to modernize his and his team's image. Defensive Coordinator, **General Pausanias** and Offensive Coordinator, **Commander Dercylidas** no longer wore Peloponnesian War campaign dress on the sideline. Instead, they wore stylish *Goat* sportswear and peaked ball caps like most of the coaches on the league's other 23 teams. The club had announced in December that plans for opening another public entrance to Thermopylae Stadium were being made and construction would take place during the off-season. The symbolic single entrance had been deemed an anachronism by modernizers in the Spartan front office (although not everyone agreed).

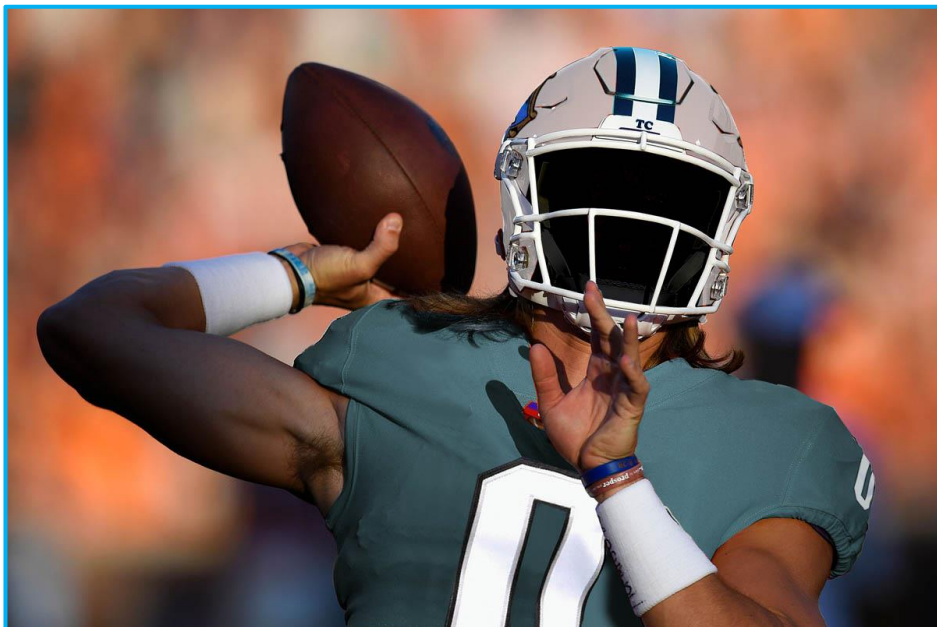
The decision to shift from a traditionalist – some would claim *archaic* – set of principles and values into a 21<sup>st</sup> century mindset had apparently been instigated by Konstantakos himself. Curiously, he had announced modernization plans soon after the Cobb County game. Sources close to the Pickering front office all explained the rationale in similar terms. One of them, team Vice-President, **Adeimantus Palaiologos** spoke on the record in a short interview with *Pickering Post* beat writer, **Aristedes Kalogiannis**:

"The team continues to draw its inspiration from the discipline and courage of the original Spartan elite. That is a legacy that will

never change because it runs through the blood of our organization,” Palaiologos explained. “But the most recent incident that drew a lot of attention and had the potential to get people seriously hurt or even killed really forced our board to re-evaluate the team’s relationship with the pantheon of Ancient Greek Gods. We had to examine whether that relationship was beneficial or detrimental to the Spartan football team brand. We determined that it would be prudent to move forward and cultivate a mindset of self-reliance, while maintaining all due respect and thankfulness for what the ancient Gods enabled our ancestors to achieve on the battlefield.”

One of my sources inside the team, however, who preferred to speak off the record, described the situation in blunter terms. I paraphrase here:

“The Old Gods have helped us to win a few games over the years. But at what cost? Our coach had the top of his head blown off for f^&k



The “Quarterback” for the Triumph cocks his arm to throw in Week 16 action. The still officially un-named player is believed to be no.1 pick *Trevor Lawrence*. A body shape expert with the FBI appearing on *FOX* this week suggested as much.

sake! He had to coach from inside a cage for almost two full seasons. The last crisis could have ended in disaster with every US law enforcement agency in a manhunt for our coach. You know how trigger-happy US cops are. We got lucky. The ancient Greek Gods work in really old and brutal ways. They think we’re still fighting the Persians. Gus and his coaching staff realized that by worshipping *Ares* every Sunday, they were kind of inviting this sort of thing. So, they’ve backed off the incense and ceremonial sacrifices and are focusing on the playbook. We’ve seen the results of that on the field – we’re winning without the help of the Gods.”

Accompanying this modernization effort, came a deliberate effort by Coach Konstantakos to communicate to the media in terms comprehensible to all journalists, not merely to the small clique of local beat writers, like **Aristedes Kalogiannis**; who understood, for example, that when Konstantakos would declare pompously at the podium, “*This is where we fight! This is where they die!*” he actually meant, “We intend to execute our game plan and play 60 minutes of great football.”

Over the past several weeks, Konatantakos had been gradually building up his lexicon of sports cliches. He had developed favourites, such as the above-mentioned “60 minutes of good/great football” and “there are no easy games in this league.” Those were the ones that most accurately reflected the ‘NEVER SURRENDER’ Spartan ethos and the reality that while the Spartans were finally winning, the turnaround had not come easily. They had indeed had to work hard for every victory. They had developed a particular formula, which was vulnerable to an opponent with an explosive offence. They were about to play such a team, with their playoff aspirations in the balance.

The Hawks had been another team that had started the season slowly. However, by Week Nine they appeared to be back on track and in 2020 form, peppering the scoreboard with a revitalized offence and getting timely stops and takeaways from their spirited defence. Along with the uptick in production, Hawks’ coach, **Tom Jones** had become more animated in his media addresses, the pitch of his voice creeping upward half a tone with each win and the speed of his sentences increasing, reducing press conference times by an average of 2½ minutes per victory. His mania had reached fever pitch with his team’s Week 13 come-from-behind victory in the snow over Cowtown, but his tone had dropped a full minor-third; and slower, demoralized run-on sentences had increased the length of his post-game press conferences back to Week Six levels. The day before the game he displayed a serious and business-like demeanor as he took to the podium to delivery his injury update, after which he took questions.

“We have to get back to playing Hawk football!” he said matter-of-factly, when asked what his team had to do to reverse its two-game skid. “When we play Hawk football, we can compete with any team in the league. This week we have focused on what we do best, which is playing Hawk football. If we do that, and prevent them from playing Spartan football, we will succeed.”

*[As an aside, I continue to wonder at the point of putting a coach in front of the media the day before a game. Apart from the injury update – which any team flunky could read, heck, post and be done with it – there is almost never any information of value to be gleaned. The coaches, understandably, are not about to lay out their game plan publicly. In the old days, the media could catch a coach with his guard down occasionally. That is no longer the case in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They teach classes to coaches and players on how to deal with the media these days. Therefore, we have cliches and abstractions like ‘Hawk Football’ to write about. Give me a break!]*

The expectations for this game in the national media were high. The contest had been “flexed” into the 4 pm ET slot from its originally-scheduled 1 pm start time to bring in more viewers. The Spartans were favored by a field goal, but many national pundits predicted an outright Hawks win. The reasons varied with each analyst, but the panel of commentators on CBS’s *EFL Today* pregame show broke down 3 to 1 in favour of a Hawks’ upset, with only **Boom Boom Esiason** buckling the trend and sticking with the favourite.

"I think Xavien Howard will come to play today," Esiason declared when it was his turn to predict the outcome. "All he has to do is contain DeAndre Hopkins – keep him from making a big play – to slow the Hawks down to a Spartan pace. Coach Konstantakos is determined to run the ball and won't ask Philip Rivers to do too much. Rivers is still a dangerous passer in this league. With enough protection he can inflict damage on a defence. So, I think this game will be more low-scoring than people think. Pickering wins, 20-17."

With the exception of the score, Esiason's analysis turned out to be prophetic. The all-star Pickering corner, who had borne his share of criticism throughout the season for not making enough plays on the ball, picked the right moment to snare his second and third interceptions of the season. Both came in the first half and both put an end to Brooklin forays into the Pickering red zone.

'Hawk Football' called for boldness in the passing game when the chips were down, usually in the form of **Derek Carr** to **DeAndre Hopkins**. Carr throwing Hopkins open and Hopkins making plays on 50-50 balls had been the bread and butter of every Hawk success to this point. In Week 16, it turned out to be their downfall.

"Carr drops back...he fires to Hopkins – and it's picked off by Howard!" shouted CBS play-by-play announcer, **Jim Nantz**. "He'll take it back...crosses the 25...the 30...and he's brought own by Engram just shy of the 33! What a big time for a big play!"

"Well, this is something Derek Carr can, and has, gotten away with many times this year, but not this time, Jim," commentator **Tony Romo** weighed in. "It's fourth down, he needs a big play so he goes to his big guy, Hopkins. Problem is he locks on to Hopkins right from the start. Howard sees it coming all the way, he knows where Carr is going, and he sets him up perfectly, playing outside leverage pre-snap but jumping the route inside with the snap. Carr doesn't see it and bingo it's a pick. And a big one too!"

The Spartans, who had been leading 7-0 before Howard's first interception, drove 47 yards to the Brooklin 20 where **Greg Zuerlein** tacked on a 38-yard field goal to make it 10-0. At that point, the Spartans had possessed the ball three times, running 23 plays from scrimmage. 18 of those had been run plays, just 5 passes, taking 12½ minutes off the clock. Four of those 5 passes were completions for a total of 64 yards. The Pickering game plan on offence was proceeding according to plan and exactly as Esiason had predicted.

Brooklin had faced 10-point deficits before and had overcome them. There was no reason to panic, especially given that the Spartans were moving steadily, but not particularly quickly – grinding away on offence. The Hawks' best moments usually came in the second half anyway. Nevertheless, a tense-looking **Tom Jones** kept his offence on the field for a 4<sup>th</sup> & 10 at the Pickering 27-yard line with 1:11 left in the 1<sup>st</sup> half. This prompted instant criticism from the CBS booth.

"And it looks like Tom Jones will keep his offence on the field here!" a startled-sounding Nantz observed. "What do you make of this decision, Tony?"

"Well, I understand what Jones *wants* to do here, Jim," Romo replied, "But sometimes you have to ignore what you want to do and do what's best for your team. Right now, getting points on the board is what is best for your team and if you don't get this first down, you're heading into the locker room without scoring in the first half."

"Carr under center...here's the snap...he drops back, under pressure...fires downfield...Howard gets a hand on it...he picks it off!" Nantz cried, evidently startled, even though he had questioned the 4<sup>th</sup> down call in the first place. "He fights for yardage...brought down at the 22! And that was exactly *not* the outcome the Hawks had in mind, Tony!"

"Well, I hate to say I told you so, but I told you so," Romo replied, with a tinge of dismay in his voice. "This is just a case of Carr getting a little greedy. He sees the safety playing a little off over the top and fires it hard to take advantage of the window, but the ball is a little flat. Howard is perfectly positioned underneath in the passing lane and he gets enough hand on the pass to hang it up long enough to grab it himself for the interception. And a key one, too!"

Having dodged a bullet, the Spartans ran out the clock to end the first half, happy to be in front 10-0. They were scheduled to get the ball to start the second half and did not need to quicken the pace and risk a turnover. It turned out to be a wise decision.

The Spartans took the opening drive of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 82 yards in 10 plays, 7 of those running plays and 3 passes, all complete to **Marquis Brown** for a total of 46 yards, to cash in with a touchdown on a 6-yard run up the middle by **Trey Sermon**. Pickering had burned up over 6 minutes of time and now led 17-0.

It was time for the Hawks to turn it on if they hoped to get back in the game, but instead they switched to the run game, hoping to catch the Spartans' defence off balance. After a first down completion to Hopkins for 16 yards, **Austin Ekeler** was handed the ball four straight times, gaining a first down on the first two carries but eventually running into a Spartan wall to bring up 3<sup>rd</sup> & 8. The third down checkdown to Hopkins was incomplete, as Carr threw away from Howard's coverage into a spot where even his star receiver could not get it. This brought on the Brooklin punting unit.

From that point on, the Spartans went into defence mode while the Hawks adopted a counter-intuitive siege strategy on offence. They repeatedly fed the ball to Ekeler and slowed the pace considerably, eventually being stopped on 4<sup>th</sup> & 3 at the Spartans' 38-yard line. It was their longest drive of the day – 60 yards – but it had chewed up over 6½ minutes of clock and, in the end, had given them nothing.

"And the turnover on downs will bring the Pickering offence onto the field, up 17 points with nine minutes left in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter," Nantz said dryly as **Philip Rivers** walked toward the huddle.

"I don't agree with the Hawks' strategy here. If it is a strategy at all," Romo said, with a shade of disgust in his voice. "They came out very aggressive in the first half when they didn't need to be and now, when they need to be aggressive, they slow the pace down and hand the ball to Austin Ekeler. I don't understand it. I know Xavien Howard bit them twice early in the game, but you don't move completely away from your best player and the passing game when you need to put points on the board. At this rate they are definitely going to lose this game."

The remainder of the game played out anti-climactically, with the Spartans going three-and-out twice and the Hawks going

through some pretty strange motions on offence. They ran the ball 5 out of 7 times on their second-to-last possession, turning it over on a **Boston Scott** fumble at the Pickering 45. Then for their last hurrah they started at their own 10-yard line with 1:31 left. They ran three deep pass plays, with Carr checking down on two of those and, for the final play of the day, threw short to Hopkins for a five-yard gain in the middle of the field as time expired.

“And that will be all she wrote!” Nantz announced flippantly as the gun sounded and players started to move onto the field for the post-game gathering. “The Spartans will advance to the post-season after shutting out the Hawks. I don’t think anybody saw this coming. Did you, Tony?”

“I’m not surprised by the Spartans’ game plan, Jim,” Romo answered. “They executed what I think most of us expected to see from them. Xavien Howard played a great first half. That enabled them to stick to that game plan of run the ball first, pass for chunk yardage second. I am interested to hear what the Hawks’ coach Tom Jones has to say about some of his decisions here today. Especially in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. I mean, you go conservative in the 4<sup>th</sup>, down by 17 points. Then at the end, when you have 90 yards to go with one minute left you decide to try a bomb all of a sudden? I mean, what’s the point of that? Kudos go to the Spartans, but questionable approach by the Hawks.”

The Brooklin coach appeared peeved after the game. His postgame presser was snippy and laced with sarcastic undertones. It had not been one of his better days and he knew it. Furthermore, with the knowledge that Sebastian had beaten Scarborough, he was aware that his team was now eliminated. The Hawks’ up-and-down season had ended on a down note.

“We didn’t play Hawks football today,” he pronounced, when asked to summarize what went wrong.

A confident and beaming Coach **Gus Konstantakos**, dressed sharply in a blue *Goat* quarter-zip jacket and bronze visor, addressed the media throng after the game with recently-learned, upbeat-sounding platitudes:

“I’m really proud of our guys and how they battled out there, executed the game plan, and didn’t let up,” he began. “Both teams played at a high level today. The game was closer than the score indicated. If Xavien doesn’t make two amazing plays in the first half, maybe this game goes in another direction. It’s hard to win in this league and this game was no exception.”

The New Spartans are beginning to fascinate me. It has been a long time since I have seen such confidence and maturity from their coach. While I will soon grow tired of the cliches, for the moment it is amusing watching them come out of the mouth of the previously volatile Pickering coach. I expect I will eventually come to miss his infantile, emotional antics on the sideline if this trend continues. And, there is nothing like an appearance or possession by an ancient Greek God to liven up game day action. But it will be interesting to see how far the Spartans can go, adopting the focus and demeanor of a 21<sup>st</sup> century football team.

#### **AROUND THE EFL**

What remained of the playoff picture fell into place with little drama. Favourites won decisively. Many teams were embarrassed. With one notable exception, teams long ago eliminated went through the motions in desultory fashion, with few spectators to appreciate the effort. Clearly, many players’ minds had turned to the short two months of freedom to pursue whatever recreational pursuits pleased them before the resumption of team activities in April. Let’s start with the biggest bomb that meant something:

For the final time at Joe Ferguson Stadium in Iowa, the Cubs took to the field to face their bitter and hated rivals the Chino Convicts in a game that meant something to both teams prior to the weekend, but had become meaningful only to Chino after the Violators beat the Patriots on Sunday. This *Monday Night Football* showdown was a ratings disaster for *ESPN* and an on-field calamity for the Convicts, who for the second week in a row were in position to clinch first place in the West and failed to deliver. And, boy, did they fail to show up in this one! The Cubs, knowing they had been eliminated by the Violators, drew inspiration from a pre-game highlight video, shown on the big screen, of the most dramatic moments in Cubs’ history at the stadium. This included **Jeff Garcia**’s iconic touchdown pass to **Larry Fitzgerald** in the corner of the end zone against these same Convicts to give the Cubs their one and only Conference Championship and send them to the Gale Sayers Game to face the Dragons in 2008. The replay of Fitzgerald leaping and snaring the pass with his fingertips as he somehow managed to keep his toes in bounds brought a rousing and loud cheer from the crowd that seemed to carry through the game. This was a whipping of vicious proportions. The final score of Iowa City 45, Chino 0 tells the story. But to sit through it in real time, knowing that the Convicts had tangible motivation to win on multiple levels, was nothing if not surreal. **Teddy Bridgewater**, playing for the again-injured **Dak Prescott**, was tentative, confused and off-target all game, throwing 2 interceptions and passing for just 116 yards. **Russell Wilson** was in top form, shredding the Convicts’ secondary for 30 completions in 36 attempts, 332 yards, 3 touchdowns and no interceptions. The Cubs gained 31 first downs, 444 total yards, and controlled the ball for over 35 minutes. It wasn’t as if the Convicts had any excuses either. Not a single penalty was called against them. With the game well in hand at the start of the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, giddy and drunk Cubs’ fans began removing “souvenirs” from stadium, which included section signs, seat cup holders and, in one case documented by Police, an actual seat which had been somehow unbolted from the concrete by a burly fan with power tools. Of course, the goal posts came down as well as the field goal netting and chunks of outdated artificial turf were cut and kept by some of the mob. Joe Ferguson Stadium is no more. Next year, the Cubs will be in the Joe Ferguson Dome.

At the Fish Tank in Sebastian, the Swordfish did their part to stay in the playoff hunt by overwhelming the Blue Eagles, 36-10. **Kirk Cousins** threw 4 TD passes to give him 42 on the season, a mark good enough for third in the league behind All-Pros **Aaron Rodgers** (44) and **Patrick Mahomes** (45). This makes Cousins arguably the biggest single trade acquisition by any team this past off-season. Although it is unlikely that he will win the Offensive MVP, he is at least in the discussion as a sort of afterthought. The Blue Eagles displayed once more one of their better traits, which is an unwillingness to lay down for any opponent, regardless of who it is or where Scarborough is in the standings. Unfortunately for the would-be spoilers, nothing went their way, with the exception of a surprise

onside kick that they recovered to set up their only touchdown drive of the game, late in the 1<sup>st</sup> half. That made the score 20-10 for the Fish at the time, and it would be the closest the Blue Eagles would come to making a game of it after falling behind early to a ruthlessly efficient Sebastian offensive onslaught. With Brooklin losing later in the day to Pickering, and York losing earlier to Budapest, the Fish, with an 8-7-1 record, secured the second wildcard position and will face Pickering next week.

At Kingdome in Seattle, the high-flying Pilots fell to Earth in a lop-sided 31-6 loss to the Assassins. The Pilots came into the game one of the hottest teams in the league, having won five straight since being eliminated from the post-season in Week 10. The Assassins, on the other hand, had just last week recovered from a five-game swoon after seeming to have the West Division locked up after Week Nine. With the chance to play the ultimate spoiler and deprive the Las Vegas franchise of a division title in just their second season in Nevada, the Pilots crashed and burned with **Gardner Minshew II** at the helm. The Assassins' defence returned to early-season form to hold Seattle to just 9 first downs and 156 yards of offence. One of their two field goals came courtesy of a Las Vegas fumble at their own 37-yard line with just 3 seconds left in the 1<sup>st</sup> half. **Evan McPherson** came on and nailed the 55-yard kick. **Dalvin Cook** rushed for 90 yards and two touchdowns, one of them coming after a Minshew fumble at his own 1-yard line; while **Justin Herbert** threw 2 TD passes, giving him 31 on the season and putting him in a tie with **Baker Mayfield** for ninth in the league. With the win, the Assassins finish off what had, at one point, looked to be an early wrap-up of the West Division. They will face Cobb County in the Quarter Finals.

At Jurassic Park in Durham, the Thunder Lizards exacted revenge for a Week Five loss with a 44-7 mauling of the Corn Kings. **Josh Allen** starred once again for Durham, completing 16 of 28 passes for 298 yards and 4 TDs, giving him 41 on the season. Cowtown turned the ball over 4 times, including 3 interceptions by **Ryan Fitzpatrick**, whose miserable finish to the season may spell the last of his opportunities to start for Cowtown in the future. The team responsible for Durham's first of only two losses on the year had faint hope for a post-season berth heading in to the game, but you would never know the game meant anything to them from their play on the field. Sure, Durham did not hold back, while playing up to their level, which would have made it difficult for Cowtown to prevail against them even on a good day. But this was not a good day for the visitors. The Corn Kings had not looked particularly competitive down the stretch after dropping back-to-back barnburners to Sebastian and Brooklin. They managed to beat Scarborough, but even that win came with an asterisk as they came close to blowing a 27-0 lead. Their breakdown continued this week in a game played in cold and heavy rain, which simply magnified their misery on the field. Cowtown fails to make the post-season for the first time since 2014, while the Thunder Lizards claim their second straight North Division title.

At Ferenc-Liszt International Airport Stadium in Budapest, the North Stars completed their first perfect regular season with a strange but certain 21-8 victory over York. Assured in the ability of his defence to keep the Excalibur offence in check, coach **Darrin Jones** did not feel the need to play the analytics game inside York territory by gambling on 4<sup>th</sup> down. He was as confident in his kicker as he was in his defence, so he put **Jason Myers** to work booting 7 field goals, tying an EFL record set by **Josh Brown** of the Gladiators in 2011. The only touchdown in the game came on a rare pick-six off **Aaron Rodgers** by York safety, **Khari Willis**. The two-point convert was good, creating a rare 21-8 final – a score that has only occurred once before in pro football history. The fact that it came without an offensive touchdown by either team, makes it a one-of-a-kind game. This fun fact was small consolation for the Excaliburs who, with the loss and the Swordfish win, were eliminated from post-season play.

Heinz Field in Pittsburgh was the site of the only reasonably competitive "other" game, where the Gladiators inched past the Pink Panthers, 21-20 in the season finale. This game looked like it was heading for OT when Oshawa's **Devin Singletary** crossed the Glads' goal line from 3 yards out for the potential tying score with 0:04 left. With nothing to lose, except another game, Oshawa coach **Scott Dennis** went for two in an all-or-nothing gambit. He and his team came away with nothing when Georgia corner, **Jimmy Moreland** knocked the ball out on a pass for **Josh Reynolds** in the end zone. On the plus side for Oshawa, the loss gives them the no.3 overall pick in the upcoming draft. On the negative side, they finish the season with the same won-loss-tie record as Scarborough. *Ugh!*

At True North Field in Winnipeg, the Triumph, behind an undeclared quarterback believed to be **Trevor Lawrence**, handed the Crusaders their 15<sup>th</sup> loss of the season, 24-16. They did most of their damage in a 17-point 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter, highlighted by **Juan Thornhill's** 25-yard pick-six of **Mac Jones**. The Triumph defence had little difficulty holding the Pegs' offence in check, keeping them out of the end zone until late in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. Coach **Guy Williams** continues to play hardball with the EFL by withholding the name of 'Number 0' on his roster and refusing to certify official game sheets with the name of the no.1 pick in the draft under the passing stats. Fines are coming Williams' way and eventually, the stat book will be cleared up. But for now, the Triumph coach seems to be satisfied that he is protecting his investment by refusing to attribute him to what have been two rather shaky outings to start his career.

The rest of the action in Week 16 did not do much more than sort out draft order for the coming year. East Elmhurst took care of Erieau 31-24 to add to their franchise best finish of 13 wins; New Jersey pulverized Buffalo and a gimpy **Lamar Jackson**, 31-0 to bump the Derailers into the 4<sup>th</sup> pick of the draft; and Bruxelles blocked a punt and forced two early turnovers to take an early lead on the Coyotes then hung on in a rollicking 2<sup>nd</sup> half for a 41-31 victory. The pre-game at The Fortress featured a tribute to injured Bomber quarterback **Drew Brees**, who is believed to have played his last professional game and is likely to announce his retirement soon.

#### **DR. McCHAD'S POST-SEASON POST-MORTEM**

Before we finally and irreversibly shift our attention to the post-season, let us contemplate, as one would a recently deceased friend or loved one, the 14 teams that gave up their seasons so that ten could move on. The ugly side of success is the failure upon which it is built. So, what about those failures? How, and why, did they fail? As a certified Sports Coroner, it is my solemn duty to examine the fallen and determine what caused their death. Here, dear Readers are my findings:

**IOWA CITY (9-7)** – Cause of Death: *Assassination*. The Cubs entered the season favoured to win the West and were considered viable contenders for the Pacific Conference title. At times, they supported that pre-season view, with notable victories over Cobb County,

Buffalo (when the Derailers were still good), and a shellacking of Virden. But just as often they were unsteady in both victory and defeat. A loss to their nemesis, the Pilots, at a crucial late point in the season hurt. But it was their failure to knock off a reeling Assassins team in Week 15 that deprived them of control over their own destiny. It was their second loss to the Assassins and it proved ultimately fatal.

**YORK (8-8)** – Cause of Death: *Duomonucleosis*. The Excaliburs started with two things that no other team had: A Goat and a King. These rare masters gave York a chance – all they needed was to complement each other and get support from the defence. They got that balanced attack, while their defence took the ball away during an impressive 7-2 start. But starting in Week 10, **Derrick Henry** began to falter. **Tom Brady** started pressing to compensate and got picked off for his trouble. The offence went into a fitful sleep, exhausted, feverish and unable to keep up over 6 losses in 7 games. By the final week they were no match for anyone, let alone Budapest.

**BROOKLIN (8-8)** – Cause of Death: *Hopkins Disease*. It is counter-intuitive to think that the team's best offensive player is ultimately responsible for his team's demise, but when one examines the corpse of the Hawks' sudden death in Week 16, it cannot be ruled out. Without a reliable partner on the other end or in the slot, Hopkins was a double-team magnet. Early in the season, this caused **Derek Carr** to shy away but later he threw caution to the wind. It worked then it didn't. Hopkins, like a bright lure in a murky lake, transfixed his quarterback and eventually his own coach. They bit twice too often in the final game and ended hooked and reeled out of the post-season.

**BRUXELLES (7-8-1)** – Cause of Death: *COVID-19*. When a team is old, with multiple co-morbidities, best practice calls for the coroner to err on the side of COVID as cause of death. The Bombers were vulnerable to this insidious virus due to an unhealthy off-season. They shipped off two of football's best tight ends and allowed the defence to deteriorate in a half-assed rebuild attempt. Acquiring **Drew Brees** partially reversed the rebuild and made them pseudo-competitive. Ultimately, fans in Belgium were not amused by the mixed message.

**COWTOWN (7-9)** – Cause of Death: *Epileptic Fitz*. It is perhaps unfair to blame the Corn Kings' failure to make the post-season for the first time in 7 years on one person – especially when he was one of two quarterbacks who started for the team – but the numbers don't lie. In most of his starts **Ryan Fitzpatrick** was the "bad" Fitz, the sudden, uncontrolled electrical disturbances in his brain inducing interceptions at critical moments. Cowtown's delicate offence could not overcome such spastic giveaways and now they are at home.

**NEW JERSEY (7-9)** – Cause of Death: *Fumbilitis Fatalia*. Yearly examinations of the tortured corpse of the Wrecking Balls often reveal multiple causes of death and this year is no exception. They ranked last in rushing, which led to an unbalanced offence and a less-effective **Matthew Stafford**. While this contributed to a weakening of the body, it might have been survivable if not for a fatal -12-turnover differential. This league-worst number was inflated by a whopping 12 lost fumbles. *Fumbilitis* laid a good team low.

**SEATTLE (6-10)** – Cause of Death: *Pilot Error*. The Pilots of 2021 were not expected to be a bad team but they certainly played like one over the first ten weeks. Three different starting quarterbacks, all three sometimes appearing in the same game, led to lack of direction on offence, like handing over controls multiple times in mid-flight. By the time they got their bearings and started flying in the right direction, it was too far to reach the playoff runway. Eventually the fuel tank emptied and they glided helplessly to ground.

**GEORGIA (4-10-2)** – Cause of Death: *Exposure*. The only team to finish with 2 regular season ties in EFL history will be remembered for that bit of trivia and nothing else. Those who paid attention to the Glads, however, might have found them interesting to watch, as long as their hearts were not bound by unreasonable expectations. This team had enough offensive talent to compete, but not enough armour to survive the battlefield long term. Their defence was repeatedly exposed as the offence tried to advance and finally, they fell.

**ERIEAU (5-11)** – Cause of Death: *Eriosity*. Occasionally, even a seasoned coroner will encounter a difficult case and have to make something up. The offence was again the main source of woe for the Cadillac but the reason is harder than ever to peg down. **Kyler Murray** has a great arm, the tight ends are sure-handed and the top two wide receivers are future stars, yet the Cadillac still couldn't pass the ball. This put pressure on their defence and things often broke down in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter each week. But why? Chalk it up to Eriosity!

**TWIN CITIES (4-11-1)** – Cause of Death: *Mis4tune*. After spending last season positioning themselves to get rid of **Mitch Trubisky**, the Triumph went with Trubisky as their starter. If this was to give no.1 pick **Trevor Lawrence** an example to follow, it sure was strange as Trubisky hardly passed the ball. The worst passing attack in the league was offset by the most prolific run game in the league. But then this conservative approach was re-offset by an analytics-fueled frenzy of grotesque 4<sup>th</sup> down gambles that failed 55% of the time. WTF?

**BUFFALO (4-12)** – Cause of Death: *Athlete Abuse*. Rather than seeing the birth of a super-star in 2021, the league witnessed the cruel abuse of one of the league's top talents and did nothing about it. Somebody, please call the Quarterback's Aid Society, **Lamar Jackson** may not have more than one season left! The inexperienced Derailer coach must learn that having a quarterback who can do it all, does not mean that he can, literally, *do it all*. Buffalo was shutout 3 of their last 4 games as Jackson was a burnt-out husk by season's end.

**OSHAWA (2-13-1)** – Cause of Death: *Spontaneous Combustion*. The new coach of the former Mustangs was placed in a no-win situation. In order to emerge from his rookie season unscathed, a trip to the Conference Championship was likely the minimum he would have had to achieve. Was it a fair expectation? No. The utter collapse of this team, however, is beyond any explanation. Like spontaneous combustion, we are left with a vaporized corpse and no understanding of how the body ignited. This will take some time to unravel...

**SCARBOROUGH (2-13-1)** – Cause of Death: *Multiple Blunt Force Trauma*. A patient in the final stage of psychosis is at high risk of suicide or misadventure and this appears to have been the case in another brutal Blue Eagles demise. Whether running off the cliff was intentional, or due to a belief that his team could fly, the Scarborough coach took a no-holds barred approach to the game plan that his players could not execute. Chronic gambles resulted in a league-worst 492 points against and a horribly inefficient offence, a bad combo.

**PEG CITY (1-15)** – Cause of Death: *Stillborn*. In the worst traditions of the Violators of 2015 and the Patriots of 2012, the Crusaders of 2021 were never given a chance to succeed on the football field. As with the others, this was by design and not due to necessity. The Crusaders of 2020 performed well on other teams in 2021 while the seedlings that replaced them on the roster struggled to take root. It is miraculous that they won a game, which proves that it is just as hard to 0-16 as it is to go 16-0.

# BUG THE BOOKIE!

JIMMY THE GEEK GIVES YOU HIS PICKS  
FOR WILDCARD WEEKEND EFL ACTION

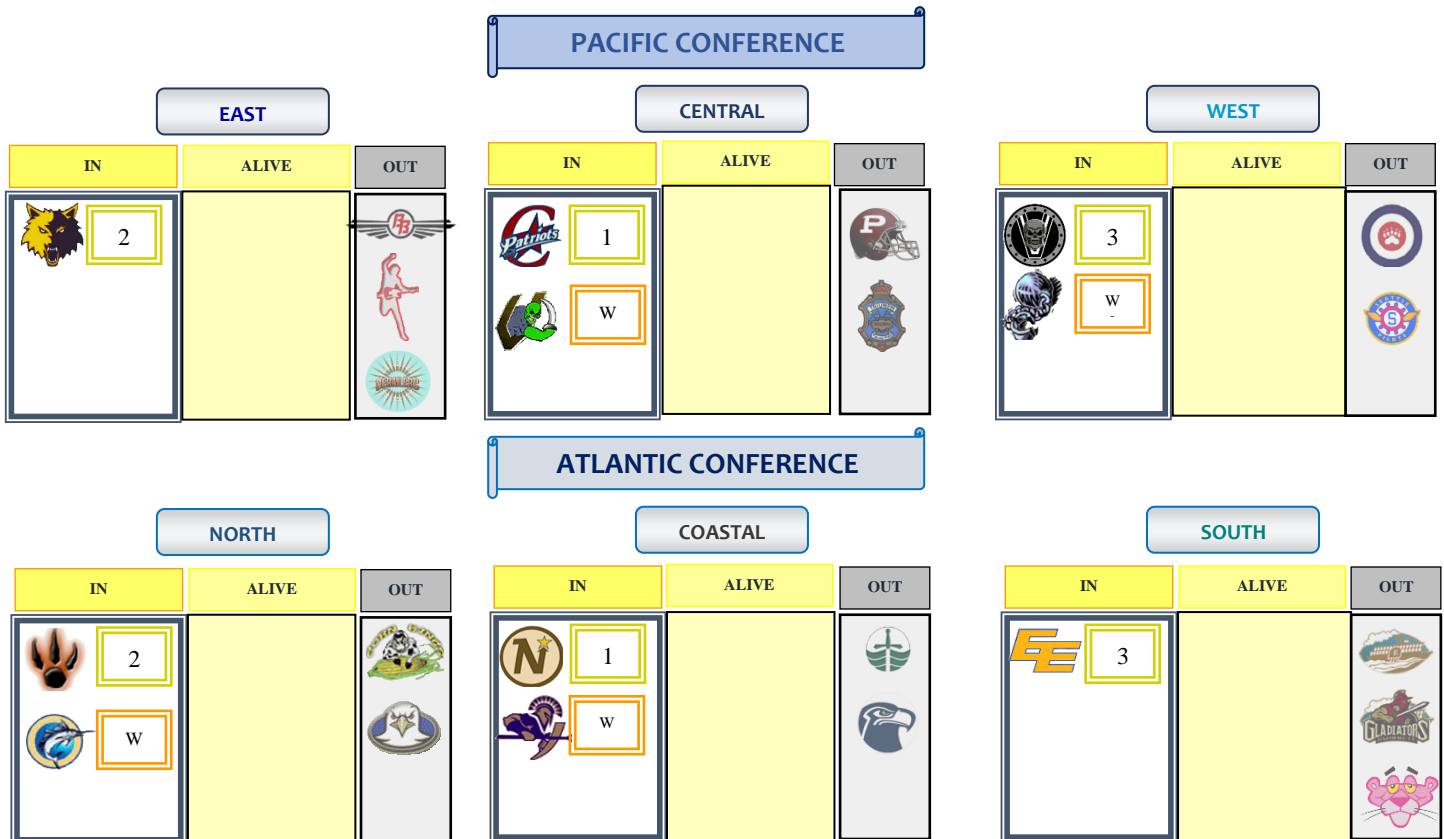
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RECORD VS THE SPREAD AFTER WEEK 16:

110-76-6

## PLAYOFF PICTURE AT A GLANCE



## Jimmy's WILDCARD WEEKEND PICKS

### PACIFIC CONFERENCE WILD CARD

#### CHINO @ VIRDEN (line – VIOLATORS by 4)

**INJURIES:** **Chino** – Lorenzo Carter (OUT), John Feliciano (OUT), Justin Jackson (OUT), Chauncey Gardner-Johnson (OUT), Done Jackson (OUT), Justin Jackson (OUT), Tyler Kroft (OUT), Ali Marpet (OUT), Jimmie Ward (OUT); **Virden** – Oshane Ximines (PROBABLE), Anthony Barr (DOUBTFUL), Dee Ford (OUT), Lane Johnson (OUT), Chris Harris Jr (OUT), Kevin King (OUT).

When these teams last met, not too long ago in Week 13, the Convicts controlled the time of possession and got two timely interceptions to take down Virden convincingly. Since that game, however, the Convicts have not looked like a playoff team. They are coming off a bitter loss to the Pilots and a terrible season finale, where they were beaten badly by the Cubs, both physically as well as on the scoreboard. In that game they lost one of their most important defenders, corner Donte Johnson in addition to productive corner, Chauncey Gardner-Johnson and steady safety, Jimmie Ward. As a result, this week they must turn to nickel and dime backs to put in the starting reps against one of the top quarterbacks in the league, Patrick Mahomes and his phenomenal rookie receiver Ja'Marr Chase. While injuries have plagued the Convicts late in the season, the Violators have been a walking MASH unit since

Week Two. With six players on the injury report for this game, they are healthier than they have been since Week One. They will still be missing key pieces, like Chris Harris Jr and Kevin King. Anthony Barr, their best linebacker, is listed as 'Doubtful.' This could give the finally healthy Dak Prescott the opening he needs to survive a shootout with the mobile gunslinger Mahomes, who will make no secret of going right after the banged-up Chino secondary. The Convicts will try to slow the game down by running, but with key injuries to both defences and two good quarterbacks on either side, expect the pace to quicken early. This will be a high-scoring affair. The 'over' is given, but the spread is right where it should be to force a tough decision. Mahomes may well light it up, but if Prescott can match, this could come down to a 1-minute drill for one or the other to get into field goal range for the win. I'd like to see that. **PICK: CHINO**

## ATLANTIC CONFERENCE WILD CARD

### SEBASTIAN @ PICKERING (line – SPARTANS by 4)

**INJURIES:** **Sebastian** – Blake Cashman (QUESTIONABLE), Denzel Perryman (DOUBTFUL), Jordan Akins (OUT), Nick Chubb (OUT), Justin Reid (OUT); **Pickering** – James Carpenter (OUT), Kyle Dugger (OUT), Jayron Kearse (OUT), Alex Mack (Out), Patrick Ricard (OUT), Calvin Ridley (OUT).

After getting smacked down by Durham in Week 15, the Swordfish finished the season on a high by smacking down the Blue Eagles without much trouble to put themselves in position to advance. The Swordfish enter the post-season as the most feared barely-500 team in the history of the playoffs. This is due to an offence that just does what it wants most of the time and puts opponents in the dilemma of choosing how they want to be dominated. Will it be Kirk Cousins slicing and dicing, or Jonathan Taylor and Nick Chubb grinding and pounding? The Spartans are catching a bit of a break defensively, as Chubb is 'out' for the game. This will not stop the Swordfish from trying to establish the run with Jonathan Taylor performing solo. As I said before, the Fish do what they do – and they will do it especially against a Pickering defence that comes in ranked 20<sup>th</sup> against the run. The Spartans' defence, however, is coming off the high of having shutout a pretty good Hawks' defence in Week 16. They are playing their best football right now, and given their talent on both sides of the ball, that bodes well for them. When these teams in met in Week 8, Sebastian did attempt to control the ball on the ground to avoid the demon in the Pickering secondary, known by his mortal name, Xavien Howard. With the pace of that game slowed, the Spartans were able to keep up, as Philip Rivers had one of his better days against the shaky Swordfish defence. In a nutshell, the Spartans will have to replicate those conditions here in order to win this rematch. The moment this devolves into a shootout, the advantage flips to the Swordfish because they are comfortable when throwing caution to the wind, as their record of fourth down gambles demonstrates. It will be interesting to see how aggressive they get here. That is the 'x'-factor that could determine the outcome. **PICK: SEBASTIAN**



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FROM THE EFL ARCHIVES – Week 16 of the 2015 EFL season saw **Joe Flacco** and the Corn Kings prevail 27-23 over Scarborough in a winner-take-all match for the final available wildcard berth. Flacco tossed 3 red zone TD passes, the last an 11-yard slant to **Mike Evans** with 5:45 left to give Cowtown the go-head score. **Marcus Burley** would preserve that lead with an interception at the Cowtown 11-yard line with 0:22 left. It was the third interception thrown by Scarborough's **Aaron Rodgers** in the game.

Apart from the above game, the only meaningful contests on the Week 16 slate involved teams jockeying for

playoff seedings. And both of those game were anything but enthralling. The Cubs blasted the listless Convicts 42-0 to clinch the no.3 seed in the PAC. (It appears this week's 45-0 outcome was not the first time the Cubs blew out Chino in a shutout in Week 16). In the other conference, the Gladiators ensured they would not have to take on Aurora in the first round by slamming the door on the Regulators, 31-7. The Regs were led by back-up **Ryan Findlay** in that game, turning this "meaningful" game into an academic exercise.

Regular season notables included Durham QB, **Drew Brees**, who finished with 38 TD passes to lead the league; and Beaufort County QB, **Robert Griffin III**, who finished with a top passer rating of 116.7. He did this in just 233 attempts.

The league's leading rusher was Gwinnett's **LeSean McCoy**, who finished with 1,849 yards and 13 TDs on 352 carries, for an average of 5.3 yards. Believe it or not, he was out-carried by Chino's **DeMarco Murray**, who toted the rock 390 times for 1,656 yards and 11 TDs. Three other RBs had over 300 carries, showing it was not that long ago that workhorse running backs had a place in the game.

The top receiver was **Antonio Brown** of the Triumph, who finished with 120 catches, 1,605 yards and 19 TDs.