

# WEEK 15



# EFL

ELITE FOOTBALL LEAGUE



Shooting for the Stars in our 15th Season!

January 23, 2022

# COOKED TO PERFECTION!



*Dalvin Cook*  
*Las Vegas Assassins*

Assassins running back, *Dalvin Cook*, breaks toward the sideline on his way to outracing the Cubs' defence for a 64-yard TD run in 4<sup>th</sup> quarter in Las Vegas. Cook's second touchdown of the night gave the his team a two-score lead late in the game, enabling them to weather a 22-point 4<sup>th</sup> quarter surge by the Cubs to hang on 27-25. (Story inside)

EAST



CENTRAL



WEST



NORTH



COASTAL



SOUTH



Who was slick  
in Week  
Fifteen?

“Brylcreem” THE  
EFL'S FIRST SPONSOR



OFFENCE

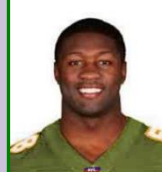


Derek Carr  
QB  
Brooklin  
Hawks

34 of 42, 399 yds, 5 TDs. Heroic performance in loss to Budapest.



DEFENCE



Roquan Smith  
CB  
Cowtown Corn  
Kings

9T, Sk, 4PDs, 2STFs, 2FF, 1 INT (9yds), Monster game when needed.


**33**
**7**

The usual slow start for New Jersey turned disastrous as two lost fumbles by **Keenan Allen** and **Wayne Gallman Jr** at their 31 and 9-yard lines, led to a short field goal and a **Ryan Tannehill** TD pass to **Brandin Cooks** to inflate an already dominant 1<sup>st</sup> half by the Coyotes. Tannehill threw 4 TD passes in the first 30 minutes, hitting Cooks twice from 9 yards out, **Kalif Raymond** from 15 and **Michael Pittman Jr** from 7 yards. **Matt Stafford** added an interception to New Jersey's woes. The Balls scored to start the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, but turned the ball over on downs twice after that to cede the uneven contest.

01-20-2022 Stone Pony Shore Temp:42 Wind:0-10 None Line:NJ by 7 MVP:Tannehill HFA:0

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Cobb County (11-4)	9	21	3	0	33
2021 New Jersey (6-9)	0	0	7	0	7

**Passing**

CB: Tannehill 32/23 291 Yds 4 TDs

NJ: Stafford 44/30 242 Yds TD Int

**Rushing**

CB: Peterson 16/70, Breida 5/24, Tannehill 2/4

NJ: Gallman Jr. 7/12, McKissic 2/11, Montgomery 1/1

**Receiving**

CB: Cooks 6/85 2 TDs, Jones 5/79, Parker 3/43, Peterson 2/10, Cook 2/26, Pittman Jr. 2/27 TD

NJ: McLaurin 8/75 TD, Allen 7/47, McKissic 6/38, Samuel 4/46, Hooper 3/20

**Defense**

CB: Lawrence Sk 3-FF 5-Tk, White Int FF 9-Tk, Mullen 9-Tk

NJ: Adams Sk 6-Tk

**Injuries**

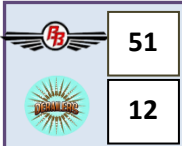
CB:

NJ: Norwell 2, Montgomery 1

**Misc**

CB: Jenkins 1-FR, Martinez 1-FR (39-yds), McManus 2/3 FG 31 Lg

NJ: Allen 1-F Lost, Gallman Jr 1-F Lost


**51**
**12**

**Josh Norman** forced a fumble by **Emmanuel Sanders** and **Jared Goff** connected with **Chris Godwin** for a 44-yard TD pass on the next play to give Bruxelles a 13-0 lead. It was the first of 8 turnovers for Buffalo on the day, 2 interceptions, 2 lost fumbles and 4 turnovers on downs, that created short fields and led to 36 of Bruxelles' 51 points. A 26-point Bomber flurry in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter featured a **Lamar Jackson** pick, a **DeAndre Carter** fumble, two failed 4<sup>th</sup> & long gambles inside the 30 and a 60-yard TD run by **Elijah Mitchell**. Jackson ran for 2 TDs, ending Buffalo's scoring drought at 9 quarters.

01-22-2022 New Era Stadium Temp:31 Wind:0-5 Light Snow No Line MVP:Mitchell HFA:ON(3)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Bruxelles (6-8-1)	13	26	10	2	51
2021 Buffalo (4-11)	0	6	6	0	12

**Passing**

BRX: Goff 18/12 150 Yds 3 TDs

BUF: Jackson 27/11 147 Yds 2 Int

**Rushing**

BRX: Mitchell 21/129 2 TDs, Williams 7/60, Gainwell 11/28, Fournette 3/3

BUF: Jackson 15/126 2 TDs, Booker 2/9, Woods 2/2

**Receiving**

BRX: Godwin 5/89 TD, Claypool 2/13 TD, Williams 2/15, Mitchell 2/18 TD, Valdes-Scantling 1/15

BUF: Sanders 5/105, Erickson 2/32, Johnson 2/4, Woods 1/3, Booker 1/3

**Defense**

BRX: Ogbah Sk 4-Tk, Walker Int 4-Tk, Grant 8-Tk

BUF: Brown 10-Tk, Hicks 9-Tk

**Injuries**


BRX: Howard 2, Quinn 1, Williams 1, Phillips 1

BUF: Tate 1, Johnson 1

**Misc**

BRX: Ogbah 1-Safety, Fuller 1-FR, Grant 1-FR, Prater 5/5 FG 38 Lg

BUF: 0/4 4th Dwn, Sanders 1-F Lost, Carter 1-F Lost

	<b>20</b>
	<b>32</b>

**Patrick Mahomes** hooked up with **Gabriel Davis** for a 37-yard TD pass, their ninth scoring connection of the year, to take a 23-6 lead into half time. Peg City turned the ball over downs in their own end to start the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, setting up a Virden field goal to extend their lead to 26-6. However, **Mac Jones** put together touchdown drives of 75 and 80 yards, finishing off both with TD passes of 5 yards to **Brandon Aiyuk** and 18 yards to **Kyle Pitts** to narrow the gap to 6. Mahomes responded with a crisp 8-play TD drive, tossing his 3<sup>rd</sup> TD pass to book to give Virden breathing room and the win.

01-20-2022 TERRORDOME Temp:62 Wind:Calm None Line:VV by 7 MVP:Mahomes HFA:ON(5)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Peg City (1-14)	0	6	7	7	20
2021 Virden (9-6)	13	10	3	6	32

**Passing**

PCC: Jones 58/30 313 Yds 2 TDs  
 VV: Mahomes 32/27 306 Yds 3 TDs

**Rushing**

PCC: Hubbard 12/46, Jones 1/1  
 VV: Elliott 15/42 TD, Ingram II 2/7, Freeman 1/7, Mahomes 2/3

**Receiving**

PCC: Shenault Jr. 11/114, Aiyuk 6/65 TD, Ingold 3/28, Boyle 1/9, Higbee 1/7  
 VV: Green 9/111 TD, Hamler 6/42, Davis 5/103 2 TDs, Hockenson 4/30, Elliott 2/10

**Defense**

PCC: Rapp 10-Tk, Allen Sk 3-Tk, Humphrey 8-Tk  
 VV: Ximines Sk 4-Tk, Lawson 8-Tk

**Injuries**

PCC: Davis 3, Burris 2, Godchaux 1, Sutton 1, Flowers 1  
 VV: Harris Jr. 4, King 4, Ford 1, Buggs 1

**Misc**

PCC: Koo 2/2 FG 56 Lg  
 VV: Badgley 2/2 FG 53 Lg

	<b>26</b>
	<b>16</b>

No.1 pick **Trevor Lawrence** debuted for the Triumph and struggled against a stout Pats' defence and 4 failures to convert 4<sup>th</sup> down. The Pats kicked two easy FGs off turnovers on downs and added a TD on a 21-yard pass to **J. Smith-Schuster** for an early 13-3 lead. Triumph safety **Juan Thornhill** kept the score close with a 23-yard pick-six of **DeShaun Watson** before halftime. The Pats took over in the 3<sup>rd</sup> on a 7-yard TD run by **Alvin Kamara**, set up by a Lawrence interception, and a 15-yard TD pass to **Jakobi Meyers** off a failed 4<sup>th</sup> down gamble. Lawrence threw his first career TD late in the 4<sup>th</sup>.

01-20-2022 Wilhalla Stadium Temp:70 Wind:Calm Line:TCT by 7 MVP:Kamara HFA:

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Charleswood (13-2)	10	3	13	0	26
2021 Twin Cities (3-11-1)	3	7	0	6	16

**Passing**

CHP: Watson 22/12 141 Yds 2 TDs Int  
 TCT: (player rumoured to be) Lawrence 37/17 164 Yds TD Int

**Rushing**

CHP: Kamara 15/61 TD, Hill 1/12, Dobbins 4/1  
 TCT: Edwards-Helaire 16/88, Gordon III 17/76, Henderson Jr. 2/8

**Receiving**

CHP: Smith-Schuster 5/61 TD, Cooper 3/31, Kelce 2/21, Meyers 1/15 TD, Kamara 1/13  
 TCT: Brown 5/70 TD, Duvernay 3/28, Edwards-Helaire 3/13, White 2/16, Moore 2/27

**Defense**

CHP: Sweat Sk FF 5-Tk, Landry III 13-Tk, Phillips Sk FF Tk, Lawson Sk 3-Tk  
 TCT: Ford Sk FF 4-Tk, Thornhill Int(TD) 3-Tk, Green Sk 3-Tk, Wagner 8-Tk

**Injuries**

CHP:  
 TCT: Crowder 3, Austin 3, Clark 1, Brooks 1

**Misc**

CHP: Rodgers 3/86 KR, Lutz 2/2 FG 49 Lg  
 TCT: 0/4 4th Dwn, 36:14 TOP, Hopkins 1/2 FG 30 Lg



**Gardner Minshew II** threw TD passes of 7 and 13 yards to **Robby Anderson** to give Seattle a 14-0 lead in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter. **Dak Prescott** replied for Chino with a 36-yard TD pass to **Damiere Byrd** before leaving the game in the 3<sup>rd</sup> due to injury. **Teddy Bridgewater** took over and handed off to **Christian McCaffrey** for TDs of 6 and 7 yards to give Chino a 24-17 lead in the 4<sup>th</sup>. But **Hunter Renfrow's** 40-yard punt return set up an 18-yard TD run by **Kareem Hunt** then back-to-back picks by Bridgewater set up the go-ahead and insurance TDs to complete a 21-point Seattle rally for the win.

01-20-2022 The Big House Temp:70 Wind:10-20 None Line:CHI by 6 MVP:Minshew II HFA:ON(

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Seattle (6-9)	7	7	3	21	38
2021 Chino (9-5-1)	0	7	10	7	24

Passing

SEA: Minshew II 34/21 207 Yds 3 TDs  
 CHI: Prescott 16/12 169 Yds TD, Bridgewater 19/10 115 Yds 2 Int

Rushing

SEA: Akers 15/84, Hunt 6/69 2 TDs, Minshew II 3/16  
 CHI: Bridgewater 6/45, Jones II 8/42, McCaffrey 7/22 2 TDs, Prescott 5/3

Receiving

SEA: Anderson 7/113 2 TDs, Renfrow 4/49, Hunt 3/5, Firkser 3/18 TD, Lamb 2/17  
 CHI: Jones Jr. 7/116, McCaffrey 5/24, Byrd 4/91 TD, Patrick 3/38, Gallup 1/6

Defense

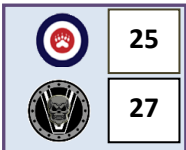
SEA: Jack Int 9-Tk, Mack Sk FF 5-Tk, Lattimore 10-Tk, Brockers Sk 3-Tk  
 CHI: Bostic 12-Tk

Injuries

SEA: Jenkins 2, Deguara 1, White 1  
 CHI: Jackson 4, Feliciano 3, Marpet 2

Misc

SEA: Sorenson 1-FR, McPherson 1/1 FG 37 Lg  
 CHI: Jones 1-F Lost, Butker 1/1 FG 36 Lg



A 2-yard run by **Dalvin Cook** to round off a 64-yard drive was the only major score of the 1<sup>st</sup> half as the Assassins went into the locker room up 7-3. Las Vegas extended their lead on their first two series of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, with **Justin Herbert** finding **Cameron Brate** for a 24-yard TD pass then cashing in with a 14-yard TD pass to **Adam Humphries**. The Cubs responded with consecutive TD drives. **Russell Wilson** threw a 2-yard TD to **Tyler Lockett** and scrambled 10 yards for another TD to make it 21-18. But then Cook provided insurance with a 64-yard TD run late in the 4<sup>th</sup> to clinch the win.

01-22-2022 Assassin's Den Temp:74 Wind:Calm Line:LV by 7 MVP:Cook HFA:ON(

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Iowa City (8-7)	0	3	0	22	25
2021 Las Vegas (9-6)	0	7	14	6	27

Passing

ICC: Wilson 37/26 339 Yds 2 TDs Int  
 LV: Herbert 33/24 263 Yds 2 TDs

Rushing

ICC: Wilson 6/31 TD, Conner 7/30, Mixon 3/15  
 LV: Cook 22/125 2 TDs, Herbert 7/45

Receiving

ICC: Brown 9/171 TD, Lockett 6/84 TD, Beasley 4/47, Mixon 3/18, Kirk 2/9, Conner 1/8  
 LV: Pascal 9/105, Graham 4/28, Humphries 3/35 TD, Lewis 3/17, Cook 2/32, Watkins 1/17

Defense

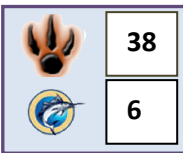
ICC: Singleton 12-Tk, Key Sk 4-Tk  
 LV: Callahan Int 8-Tk, Davis Sk 8-Tk, Surtain II 9-Tk

Injuries

ICC:  
 LV: Beck 3

Misc

ICC: Tucker 1/1 FG 32 Lg  
 LV:



**Josh Allen** ran for 3 TDs and passed for one to lead the Thunder Lizards to an easy victory over the Swordfish. After struggling through a scoreless 1<sup>st</sup> quarter that saw Sebastian go up by 3 on a **Daniel Carlson** 45-yard FG, **Antonio Gibson** got the Durham offence rolling with five straight carries for 45 yards, setting up a 9-yard TD run by **Chase Edmunds**. Allen would run it in from 5 yards before the end of the half to put Durham up 14-3. The 4<sup>th</sup> quarter was a blowout, with **Kenny Moore II** picking off **Kirk Cousins** to set up the second of Allen's 3 TD runs in a 21-point final frame.

01-22-2022 The Fish Tank Temp:76 Wind: \*Internet\* Line:DTL by 3 MVP:Allen HFA:ON(3)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Durham (13-2)	0	14	3	21	38
2021 Sebastian (7-7-1)	3	0	3	0	6

**Passing**

DTL: Allen 22/14 179 Yds TD  
 SS: Cousins 19/10 110 Yds Int

**Rushing**

DTL: Gibson 11/94, Edmonds 8/47 TD, Allen 12/33 3 TDs, Mattison 4/15  
 SS: Richard 3/16, Taylor 9/11, Cousins 1/5, Chubb 4/5, Perine 3/3

**Receiving**

DTL: Samuel 6/87, Gibson 2/11, Eskridge 2/14, Waller 1/17, Knox 1/22, Kupp 1/23  
 SS: Smythe 3/26, Marshall Jr. 2/17, Reagor 1/3, Richard 1/1, Taylor 1/1, Akins 1/10

**Defense**

DTL: Hendrickson 2-Sks 5-Tk, Dupree Sk 4-Tk, Oliver Sk FF Tk  
 SS: Wilkins Sk 5-Tk, Clowney 10-Tk, Yiadom 8-Tk

**Injuries**

DTL: Samuel 1, Kupp 1  
 SS: Reid 3, Akins 3, Jenkins 1

**Misc**

DTL: 5/5 TD Red Zn, Santos 1/1 FG 42 Lg  
 SS: Carlson 2/2 FG 45 Lg



Three early Scarborough turnovers turned into 17 Cowtown points and helped them vault into an early 27-0 lead. The Blue Eagles put up 10 before the half on a 19-yard TD run by **Chris Carson** and a FG set up by a **Ryan Fitzpatrick** pick but an interception thrown by **Drew Lock** to start the 2<sup>nd</sup> half led to the second TD run of the game for **Frank Gore** and a 34-10 lead. Two TD passes to **Allen Robinson** and a blocked punt return for a TD by **Deion Jones** put the Eagles back in it with a chance to go ahead late, but **Jeremy Chinn** picked off Lock at the 15 with 1:17 left to snuff out the rally.

01-22-2022 Tillman Field Temp:42 Wind:0-10 None Line:COW by 7 MVP:Smith HFA:ON(

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Scarborough (2-12-1)	0	10	7	14	31
2021 Cowtown (7-8)	7	20	10	0	37

**Passing**

SBE: Lock 42/20 281 Yds 2 TDs 4 Int  
 COW: Fitzpatrick 22/11 129 Yds TD Int

**Rushing**

SBE: Carson 15/100 TD, Lock 4/33, Dallas 4/31, Johnson 4/14  
 COW: Gore 21/80 2 TDs, Gurley II 5/38 TD, Fitzpatrick 5/10 TD, Boone 4/5

**Receiving**

SBE: Robinson II 6/107 2 TDs, Uzomah 4/54, Ward 4/67, Jackson 3/33, Dallas 2/16  
 COW: Evans 4/69 TD, Lazard 2/12, Alie-Cox 2/16, McKenzie 1/8, Gore 1/10, Toney 1/14

**Defense**

SBE: Hill Int 5-Tk, Jones Sk 4-Tk, Anzalone 9-Tk, Jones Sk 4-Tk, Crawford Sk 3-Tk  
 COW: Smith Int Sk 2-FF 9-Tk, Chinn Int 9-Tk, Mayowa Sk FF 4-Tk, Williams Int 7-Tk

**Injuries**

SBE: Gaskin 2, Burrow 2, Carson 2, Dantzler 1  
 COW: Harris 2, Murphy 2, Gurley II 1

**Misc**

SBE: Jones Blk PR TD, Johnson 1-F Lost, Hill 1-F Lost, Crosby 1/1 FG 25 Lg  
 COW: Van Ginkel 1-FR 39-yds, Turner 1-FR, Slye 1/1 FG 40 Lg



40



37

**Derek Carr** found **Brashad Perriman** open in the end zone from 4 yards out to tie the score at 23 early in the 4<sup>th</sup>, completing a 20-point comeback from being down 23-3. The score set off a furious 37-point 4<sup>th</sup> quarter that saw **Aaron Rodgers** and the North Stars regain the lead twice on TD passes of 3 yards to **George Kittle** and 44 yards to **Justin Jefferson**, only to see Carr respond to each with a 72-yard TD pass to Perriman and a 9-yard TD pass to **DeAndre Hopkins** to tie it at 37. With 1:47 left, Budapest drove into range for **Jason Myers**, who booted a 52-yarder for the win.

01-22-2022 Hawkeye Park Temp:33 Wind:0-10 None Line:BUD by 7 MVP:Rodgers HFA:ON(3)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Budapest (15-0)	13	10	0	17	40
2021 Brooklin (8-7)	3	7	7	20	37

**Passing**

BUD: Rodgers 34/20 336 Yds 5 TDs  
 BRH: Carr 42/34 399 Yds 5 TDs

**Rushing**

BUD: Johnson 11/75, Wilson Jr. 8/41, Rodgers 1/8  
 BRH: Ekeler 20/150

**Receiving**

BUD: Jefferson 5/120 2 TDs, Diggs 4/67, Thompson 4/33 TD, Kittle 3/11 2 TDs  
 BRH: Hopkins 14/160 2 TDs, Engram 6/65 TD, Perriman 4/118 2 TDs, Ekeler 4/20

**Defense**

BUD: Dean 17-Tk, Goodson 14-Tk  
 BRH: Vander Esch 8-Tk, Tuitt Sk 3-Tk

**Injuries**

BUD:  
 BRH: Williams 1

**Misc**

BUD: Patterson 5/145 KR, Myers 2/3 FG 52 Lg  
 BRH: 36:53 TOP, Bullock 1/2 FG 26 Lg



26



16

Pickering built an early 12-0 lead on a **Tyler Davison** safety, a TD run by **Trey Sermon** off a pick of **Tom Brady** and a **Greg Zuerlein** FG. Despite two **Philip River** interceptions, they managed to hang on to a two-score advantage into the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, before **Derrick Henry's** 28-yard run sparked a 75-yard TD drive to pull York within 3, trailing 19-16 with 5:15 left in the 4<sup>th</sup>. However, a 75-yard TD pass on a catch-and-run by **Calvin Ridley** on the Spartans' very next play broke the back of the Excaliburs comeback attempt. York answered with a missed FG and Pickering ran out the clock.

01-22-2022 Camelot Temp:46 Wind:0-5 None Line:PIC by 3 MVP:Ridley HFA:ON(3)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Pickering (9-6)	9	3	0	14	26
2021 York (8-7)	0	8	0	8	16

**Passing**

PIC: Rivers 25/17 245 Yds 2 TDs 2 Int  
 YOR: Brady 43/23 181 Yds TD Int

**Rushing**

PIC: Sermon 24/108 TD, Sanders 1/3, Rivers 1/3  
 YOR: Henry 24/145 TD, Snell Jr. 1/3

**Receiving**

PIC: Ridley 5/163 TD, Ricard 4/14 TD, Shepard 3/39, Swift 3/18, Sanders 1/5  
 YOR: St. Brown 6/76, Amendola 4/23 TD, Williams 3/3, Davis 3/27, Smith 2/20

**Defense**

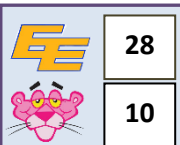
PIC: Wilson 10-Tk, Okwara Int 3-Tk, Davison Sk 3-Tk  
 YOR: Jewell 11-Tk, Butler Int 4-Tk

**Injuries**

PIC: Kears 2, Dugger 1  
 YOR: Ford 5, Clayborn 1, Jordan 1

**Misc**

PIC: Davison 1-Safety, Zuerlein 1/1 FG 36 Lg  
 YOR: Gould 0/2 FG



28

10

A roughing the kicker penalty on the Pink Panthers extended the Irish's opening drive and **Baker Mayfield** made them pay with a 35-yard TD pass to **Adam Thielen**. On their second series, a 36-yard catch-and-run by **Aaron Jones** helped set up his own 5-yard TD run to make it 14-0 then on their next series Mayfield found **Tyreek Hill** open along the sideline for a 16-yard TD for a 21-3 lead. The Panthers countered before the half with **Kenyan Drake** TD run, but had no answer for the Irish defence in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half. Mayfield threw his third TD pass to open he 3<sup>rd</sup> and the Irish cruised to the win.

01-22-2022 GM Megadome Temp:72 Wind:Calm Line:EE by 8 MVP:Mayfield HFA:ON(3)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 East Elmhurst (12-3)	14	7	7	0	28
2021 Oshawa (2-12-1)	0	10	0	0	10

Passing

EE: Mayfield 30/22 250 Yds 3 TDs  
OSH: Ryan 36/20 193 Yds Int

Rushing

EE: Mostert 19/93, Mayfield 6/48, Jones 5/24 TD, Hill 3/1  
OSH: Drake 14/42 TD, Ryan 1/11, Singletary 1/1

Receiving

EE: Hill 7/79 TD, Thielen 5/68 TD, Everett 3/30 TD, Jones 3/49, Robinson 2/17  
OSH: Reynolds 5/53, Washington 4/31, Goedert 3/54, Schultz 2/12, Berrios 2/16

Defense

EE: Vernon 2-Sks 3-Tk  
OSH: Kendrick 11-Tk, Ward 9-Tk

Injuries

EE:  
OSH: Davenport 3, Edelman 1

Misc

EE: 37:51 TOP, Blankenship 0/2 FG  
OSH: Gonzalez 1/2 FG 36 Lg



0

20

**Kyler Murray** took the game's opening possession 75 yards in 9 plays, finishing it off with a 9-yard TD pass to **Mark Andrews** for a 7-0 lead. The Glads attempted to match by going for it on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5 at the Erieau 42 but the Cadillac held then drove back 58 yards in 9 plays to finish with a Murray 2-yard TD run and a 14-0 lead. **Stephen Gostkowski** added a 53-yard FG before the Glads made their first strong push into the Erieau zone, but came up 1-yard short of end zone as time expired in the 1<sup>st</sup> half. The Cadillac defence took over in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, posting their first shutout of the year.

01-19-2022 Kelly-Burke Field Temp:33 Wind:Calm None Line:ERI by 3 MVP:Murray HFA

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Georgia (3-10-2)	0	0	0	0	0
2021 Erieau (5-10)	14	3	3	0	20

Passing

GEO: Roethlisberger 49/31 204 Yds 2 Int  
ERI: Murray 21/15 147 Yds TD

Rushing

GEO: Robinson 11/29, Roethlisberger 2/4, Sewell 1/2  
ERI: Murray 10/69 TD, Moss 9/48, Harris 15/45, Hines 1/2

Receiving

GEO: Bernard 8/37, Robinson 7/42, Landry 6/39, Johnson 5/27, Fuller V 2/37  
ERI: Andrews 5/45 TD, Higgins 3/25, Harris 3/27, Conley 2/24, Moss 1/19, Hines 1/7

Defense

GEO: Edmunds 9-Tk  
ERI: Smith 14-Tk, Diggs Int 6-Tk, McLeod Int 4-Tk

Injuries

GEO: Pouncey 2, Joseph 1  
ERI: Ruggs III 1

Misc

GEO: 9/80 Pen  
ERI: Gostkowski 2/3 FG 54 Lg



WEEK FIFTEEN

# STANDINGS & STATS

## EFL 2021 - Week 15 Standings

East	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
y-Cobb County	11	4	0	.733	W5	425	28.3	277	18.5	9.9	7 1 0	4 1 0	9 2 0
Bruxelles	6	8	1	.433	W1	422	28.1	442	29.5	-1.3	3 4 0	3 2 0	5 5 1
New Jersey	6	9	0	.400	L3	277	18.5	361	24.1	-5.6	2 6 0	1 4 0	5 6 0
Buffalo	4	11	0	.267	L5	259	17.3	406	27.1	-9.8	3 4 0	2 3 0	4 7 0
Central	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
y-Charleswood	13	2	0	.867	W1	397	26.5	320	21.3	5.1	7 0 0	5 0 0	10 1 0
Virden	9	6	0	.600	W2	424	28.3	373	24.9	3.4	5 3 0	4 1 0	6 5 0
Twin Cities	3	11	1	.233	L1	290	19.3	371	24.7	-5.4	1 7 0	1 4 0	2 9 0
Peg City	1	14	0	.067	L1	258	17.2	440	29.3	-12.1	1 6 0	0 5 0	0 11 0
West	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
z-Chino	9	5	1	.633	L1	371	24.7	350	23.3	1.4	3 4 1	3 2 0	7 3 1
z-Las Vegas	9	6	0	.600	W1	382	25.5	319	21.3	4.2	5 3 0	4 1 0	8 3 0
Iowa City	8	7	0	.533	L1	391	26.1	409	27.3	-1.2	6 1 0	1 4 0	6 5 0
Seattle	6	9	0	.400	W5	334	22.3	344	22.9	-0.7	3 4 0	2 3 0	3 8 0
North	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
y-Durham	13	2	0	.867	W1	506	33.7	227	15.1	18.6	6 1 0	4 1 0	9 2 0
Sebastian	7	7	1	.500		467	31.1	468	31.2	-0.1	2 5 0	2 2 1	4 6 1
Cowtown	7	8	0	.467	W1	366	24.4	375	25.0	-0.6	5 3 0	2 3 0	6 5 0
Scarborough	2	12	1	.167	L6	287	19.1	456	30.4	-11.3	2 5 1	1 3 1	2 8 1
Coastal	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
y-Budapest	15	0	0	1.000	W15	481	32.1	205	13.7	18.4	7 0 0	5 0 0	11 0 0
Pickering	9	6	0	.600	W5	308	20.5	300	20.0	0.5	2 5 0	2 3 0	6 5 0
York	8	7	0	.533	L1	343	22.9	362	24.1	-1.3	4 4 0	2 3 0	5 6 0
Brooklin	8	7	0	.533	L2	397	26.5	395	26.3	0.1	4 4 0	1 4 0	6 5 0
South	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
y-East Elmhurst	12	3	0	.800	W8	372	24.8	245	16.3	8.5	5 2 0	5 0 0	9 2 0
Erieau	5	10	0	.333	W1	273	18.2	352	23.5	-5.3	3 5 0	4 1 0	4 7 0
Georgia	3	10	2	.267	L1	306	20.4	408	27.2	-6.8	1 5 1	0 4 1	1 9 1
Oshawa	2	12	1	.167	L8	308	20.5	439	29.3	-8.7	1 6 1	0 4 1	1 9 1

y-clinched division

z-clinched wildcard



EFL 2021 - Week 15 Passing Leaders

			Att	Cmp	C%	Yards	In	I%	Lg	TD	TD%	Rate
1	Rodgers,A	BUD	483	341	70.6	4454	3	0.6	75	44	9.1	127.1
2	Garoppolo	COW	175	131	74.9	1525	1	0.6	59	11	6.3	119.3
3	Watson,D	CHP	444	296	66.7	3934	4	0.9	75	35	7.9	117.1
4	Tannehill	CB	416	271	65.1	3581	7	1.7	60	38	9.1	115.7
5	Cousins	SS	452	313	69.2	4119	11	2.4	76	38	8.4	115.6
6	Mahomes	VV	506	330	65.2	4694	8	1.6	72	41	8.1	115.5
7	Mayfield	EE	409	274	67.0	3170	4	1.0	48	29	7.1	109.8
8	Allen,J	DTL	507	335	66.1	4110	7	1.4	75	37	7.3	109.5
9	Wilson,R	ICC	463	329	71.1	3746	9	1.9	66	31	6.7	109.2
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	Carr,D	BRH	546	352	64.5	4114	6	1.1	73	37	6.8	105.2
13	Herbert	LV	549	379	69.0	4107	9	1.6	76	29	5.3	101.6
14	Roethlisbe	GEO	493	340	69.0	3192	7	1.4	60	25	5.1	97.5
15	Minshew II	SEA	252	166	65.9	1664	6	2.4	62	16	6.3	95.7
16	Trubisky	TCT	302	190	62.9	2198	7	2.3	69	17	5.6	93.9
17	Stafford	NJ	535	356	66.5	3743	10	1.9	75	24	4.5	93.9
18	Brady	YOR	482	312	64.7	3615	14	2.9	84	26	5.4	93.2
19	Rivers,P	PIC	383	239	62.4	2928	7	1.8	87	16	4.2	92.2
20	Bridgewater	CHI	316	223	70.6	2268	10	3.2	75	11	3.5	89.2
21	Fitzpatric	COW	258	171	66.3	1747	8	3.1	52	12	4.7	88.1
22	Ryan,M	OSH	524	333	63.5	3280	12	2.3	57	24	4.6	86.8
23	Burrow	SBE	343	195	56.9	1953	4	1.2	59	18	5.2	85.8
24	Jackson,L	BUF	503	327	65.0	2911	12	2.4	60	16	3.2	81.0
25	Murray,K	ERI	420	259	61.7	2446	10	2.4	67	13	3.1	78.1

EFL 2021 - Week 15 Kick Return Leaders

EFL 2021 - Week 15 Punt Return Leaders

		No	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD			No	Fc	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD		
1	Roberts,A	BRX	29	1015	35.0	51	0	1	Grant,J	CHI	37	8	502	13.6	62	1
2	Rodgers,I	CHP	27	929	34.4	100	2	2	Harris,D	COW	25	8	280	11.2	20	0
3	Agnew	SEA	26	757	29.1	68	0	3	Peppers	ERI	26	6	288	11.1	22	0
4	Duvernay	TCT	21	579	27.6	49	0	4	Erickson	BUF	21	11	206	9.8	24	0
5	Patterson	BUD	21	550	26.2	41	0	5	Proche	DTL	33	16	322	9.8	39	0
6	Scott,B	BRH	22	560	25.5	43	0	6	Roberts,A	BRX	20	2	168	8.4	29	0
7	Webster,N	NJ	25	597	23.9	43	0	7	Spencer,D	NJ	28	5	230	8.2	25	0
8	Lewis,D	LV	19	448	23.6	43	0	8	Raymond	CB	21	7	171	8.1	22	0
9	Ballentine	SS	22	517	23.5	35	0	9	Peoples-Jo	SS	21	8	171	8.1	25	0
10	Homer	YOR	21	492	23.4	38	0	10	Taylor,T	CHP	31	6	250	8.1	27	0
11	Atwell	OSH	31	617	19.9	38	0	11	Moore	EE	23	18	182	7.9	17	0
12	Carter,D	BUF	40	724	18.1	48	0	12	Cooper,P	VV	21	13	162	7.7	41	0
13	Cannon	BUD	8	267	33.4	42	0	13	Hill,K	SBE	32	6	176	5.5	25	0
14	Harris,D	COW	18	549	30.5	76	0	14	Hardman	LV	23	14	65	2.8	13	0
15	Adderley	VV	3	89	29.7	33	0	15	Lamb	SEA	5	3	74	14.8	38	0
16	Johnson,D	SBE	18	508	28.2	41	0	16	Renfrow	SEA	8	6	101	12.6	40	0
17	Hardman	LV	2	52	26.0	34	0	17	Hines	ERI	2	0	24	12.0	16	0
18	Hubbard	PCC	6	138	23.0	29	0	18	Cole Sr.	SEA	15	5	162	10.8	20	0
19	Raymond	CB	2	45	22.5	24	0	19	Johnson,D	GEO	10	5	90	9.0	18	0
20	Hill	DTL	12	266	22.2	38	0	20	Atwell	OSH	11	3	98	8.9	22	0
21	Barner	PIC	15	332	22.1	39	0	21	Tate,G	BRH	4	16	35	8.8	19	0
22	Peoples-Jo	SS	1	22	22.0	22	0	22	James,R	GEO	7	5	55	7.9	15	0
23	Abdullah	CHI	17	374	22.0	36	0	23	Barner	PIC	7	21	53	7.6	14	0
24	Carter	ICC	16	352	22.0	33	0	24	Rodgers,Am	BUD	17	20	124	7.3	20	0
25	St-Juste	ICC	1	22	22.0	22	0	25	Toney	COW	2	3	14	7.0	15	0

## EFL 2021 - Week 15 Rushing Leaders

			Att	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD
1	Henry,D	YOR	336	1541	4.6	48	14
2	Gordon III	TCT	244	1229	5.0	45	3
3	Jackson,L	BUF	191	1159	6.1	58	12
4	Cook,D	LV	241	1156	4.8	64	11
5	Robinson,J	GEO	229	1073	4.7	52	7
6	Drake	OSH	215	1062	4.9	53	7
7	Chubb,N	SS	196	958	4.9	47	11
8	Jones,A	EE	194	956	4.9	39	7
9	Taylor,J	SS	185	955	5.2	52	9
10	Murray,K	ERI	140	935	6.7	47	13
11	Carson	SBE	166	916	5.5	29	5
12	Sanders,M	PIC	175	877	5.0	25	4
13	Elliott,E	VV	208	820	3.9	28	9
14	Gibson	DTL	145	771	5.3	29	2
15	Mitchell	BRX	153	765	5.0	60	9
16	Harris,D	CB	117	761	6.5	35	3
17	Conner	ICC	126	732	5.8	47	2
18	Edwards-He	TCT	122	705	5.8	46	8
19	Montgomery	NJ	196	705	3.6	56	3
20	Ekeler	BRH	117	682	5.8	27	2
21	Jones II	CHI	155	669	4.3	26	5
22	Williams,J	BRX	119	631	5.3	21	1
23	Peterson,A	CB	165	621	3.8	16	2
24	Harris	ERI	154	603	3.9	37	2
25	Wilson,R	ICC	78	575	7.4	43	5
26	Swift	PIC	128	556	4.3	38	9
27	Gurley II	COW	141	555	3.9	37	12
28	Johnson,Da	BUD	99	545	5.5	34	4
29	Wilson Jr.	BUD	101	528	5.2	30	5
30	Akers	SEA	108	521	4.8	52	5
31	Hunt,K	SEA	115	518	4.5	37	3
32	Michel	EE	75	469	6.3	52	4
33	Kamara	CHP	141	461	3.3	19	6
34	Fournette	BRX	110	459	4.2	17	5
35	Tannehill	CB	53	459	8.7	43	9

## EFL 2021 - Week 15 Receiving Leaders

			No	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD
1	Hopkins,D	BRH	109	1435	13.2	54	16
2	Adams,D	OSH	100	1115	11.2	57	13
3	Diggs,S	BUD	92	1159	12.6	66	9
4	Lockett	ICC	87	1070	12.3	66	9
5	Jefferson	BUD	87	1396	16.0	75	12
6	Allen,K	NJ	86	803	9.3	35	9
7	Hill,T	EE	80	1179	14.7	44	14
8	Evans,M	COW	77	1050	13.6	44	13
9	Waller	DTL	73	937	12.8	43	10
10	McKissic	NJ	73	565	7.7	29	1
11	Gallup	CHI	73	929	12.7	75	7
12	Anderson,R	SEA	72	995	13.8	59	9
13	Aiyuk	PCC	72	977	13.6	58	8
14	McLaurin	NJ	72	978	13.6	75	8
15	Woods,R	BUF	70	641	9.2	60	7
16	Claypool	BRX	69	1153	16.7	75	15
17	Chase	VV	69	1372	19.9	72	11
18	Cooks	CB	68	998	14.7	60	13
19	Johnson,D	GEO	67	639	9.5	50	7
20	Kelce,T	CHP	66	1014	15.4	54	12
21	Samuel,C	DTL	66	750	11.4	53	4
22	Gage	BUF	65	637	9.8	41	3
23	Kupp	DTL	65	1088	16.7	75	7
24	Robinson,A	SBE	64	805	12.6	51	6
25	Shenault J	PCC	64	755	11.8	42	8
26	Brown,A	ICC	64	1096	17.1	54	6
27	Cooper,A	CHP	64	930	14.5	75	7
28	Sanders,E	BUF	63	722	11.5	51	4
29	Smith-Schu	CHP	61	771	12.6	36	7
30	Godwin,C	BRX	60	970	16.2	56	9
31	Parker,D	CB	60	769	12.8	36	9
32	Thielen	EE	60	710	11.8	35	9
33	Fitzgerald	LV	58	579	10.0	22	2
34	Moore,D	TCT	58	970	16.7	69	6
35	Engram	BRH	58	814	14.0	73	6



# AROUND THE



## With Spats McChad

NEW YORK – The EFL's 15<sup>th</sup> season is winding down and not a week too soon. Five of the six divisions are already spoken for – have been for weeks now – and all that remains is to decide the West and to endure a few awkward auditions for the roles of extras destined to be killed off in the lead-up to the final climactic scene in Sebastian.

Yes, the dreaded wildcard races are still in full heat. It seems like every year since the Wildcard Weekend format was introduced, I find myself pointing out the pointlessness of having the two also-rans in both conferences beat each other up for the privilege of getting beaten up by a better and well-rested team in the Quarter Final round.

I concede that, in theory at least, this format permits strong teams in strong divisions a path for advancing should they fall short of the division title. This, in fact, is the case in the Pacific Conference's West Division this year, where three strong teams, each capable of beating the no.1 seed on a fair day, could potentially all make the post-season and the post-season would be better for it. But this happenstance has been, so far, uncommon in history. It is certainly not the case in the Atlantic Conference, where the playoff material after the two super powers, Budapest and Durham is of distinctly inferiority quality. East Elmhurst may have God on its side, which could blow off the top of the Atlantic pyramid, but needing God is *de facto* proof that your team cannot make the grade in the Devil's world.

As for the four freaks destined for the wildcard round heading into Week 16, all we know is that one of Las Vegas or Chino will be among them and the other will win the West. The other three spots are up for grabs, with Iowa City and Virden still in the running in the Pacific, and five teams still fighting it out in the Atlantic. Of those five Atlantic teams, I will go out on a limb and declare the Spartans fit for the post-season...barely. And that is only if they are able to continue to protect Philip Rivers and Xavier Howard plays at the top of his game. I would add the Hawks, due to their fighting spirit, except that they do not have the depth to survive post-season play against a team capable of containing DeAndre Hopkins, and all of the division winners plus Pickering are capable of that.

Sorry Sebastian fans, but if the Swordfish swim into the post-season they will be one-and-done. Their defence is too atrocious to survive and Coach **Russ Lemmon** living on the edge with his offence will not be enough to compensate. God help us if somehow York and Cowtown slink into wildcard weekend. Both teams looked competitive early in the season but both have stumbled badly down the stretch. The Excaliburs no longer have the defence to prop up its ponderous offence, while the Corn Kings don't have the offence to protect its capable defence from getting worn down over four quarters. Best if both teams fade into the night and regroup for next year.

So, Week 16 is promising to be underwhelming. Still, I plan to settle in with a few lights beers to watch the early afternoon contest between Brooklin and Pickering; order some wings and crack open the IPAs for the afternoon showdown between Chino and Iowa City (always a treat to watch the facial expressions of both those coaches when they play each other); and break out the single malt scotch for the Sunday Night season finale between Charleswood and Virden. By the time the day is done, I likely won't care that all but one of those teams have no more than a snowball's chance in Hell of making it to the Gale Sayers game.

As for Week 15, here is what stood out to me:

### ***SPY VERSUS SPY***

At the Assassin's Den in Las Vegas, the home town's Killers outlasted the Cubs, 27-25 in this much anticipated rematch between two top contenders in the West Division. Flexed by the league to the *NBC Sunday Night Football* slot, the game did not disappoint the sponsors in the end, thanks to a furious charge by the Cubs in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, but failed to deliver the true classic the network had hoped and relentlessly hyped for.

There was truth to support the intense media build-up for this game, billed as a Black Hat versus White Hat confrontation, with the irreverent, bad boy, upstart in Nevada wearing the black hat and the noble, stoic, good old boy from the Elysian fields of Iowa wearing the white hat. On the surface, you could not find two more diametrically opposed personalities.

**Anthony Holguin** wore the black hat proudly through the first nine weeks of the season, seeking not only to beat his opponents on the scoreboard, but to humiliate them, seize their manhood, beat them emotionally and thereby give his team an edge in their next encounter. He had boldly lifted the middle finger to the veteran and widely respected Iowa coach in that Week One game, electing to throw a touchdown pass with no time left on the clock when a kneel down by his quarterback would have safely

sealed the win. By doing that, a narrow 24-22 Assassins win had turned into a 31-22 Assassins rout for purposes of the historical record, even though the game had been anything but uncontested by Iowa. The humbling of the Assassins came later, in the form of a five-game losing streak where everything seemed to go against the haughty Vegas coach. The Football Gods (yes, they exist!) have way of taking their revenge on those who would presume to turn their noble game into a vehicle for self-aggrandizement.

**Deron Redding** had always been one of the league's nice guys and a worthy bearer of the white hat. Always seeking the positive in any situation, even when his team was at its lowest ebb in the 2012 season – the year of the "Black Cubs" – the Iowa coach was frequently the target of negative energy in the media and on the football field. Such is the way evil tries to subjugate and corrupt the good. Although he had been on the verge of being fired countless times over the years, he had always found a way to stay focused on winning and his team had delivered, for the most part, failing only in its quest for ultimate glory of a Gale Sayers trophy.

Redding's official and off-line reaction to the blatant snub delivered by his opponent in Week One, however, betrayed his deep consternation and bewilderment. He had welcomed Holguin whole-heartedly into the league and once even shared pleasantries and a rare drink with the Vegas coach at the Coach-a-Thon Convention in Vegas in the off-season. He had not expected that his friendship would be betrayed by a gratuitous running up of the score in a game that had already been decided. To the degree that a forgiving and noble soul like that belonging to the Cubs' coach could feel resentment and a desire for revenge, Redding found himself indeed motivated by something more than just the practical need to stay close in the race for the West Division title. To his personal horror, he found himself fantasizing about stomping on the Vegas coach's face as he lay defenceless on the turf of the Assassin's Den. This was a very un-Christian thought that had prompted him to attend church on Sunday the day of the game to make his peace with God before entering battle with who he had determined was the Devil Incarnate. But his rancor seeped through in pre-game media addresses:

"This team has not forgotten how our first game against them ended," Redding said sternly during his Saturday update about that first week loss to the Assassins. "It's going to be pay-back time tomorrow!" The threatening message from the Iowa coach was not what fans and media had expected to hear from the supposed White Hat. But it definitely stoked up the fire of the pre-game narrative. '*REDDING SEEKS REVENGE*' was the Sunday morning sports section headline in *The Iowan* the day after.

By contrast, the Black Hat, possibly sensing that he had awoken a cobra by his impulsiveness in Week One, went out of his way to defuse the tension when he addressed the Las Vegas Media on Saturday:

"We have nothing but respect for the Cubs," **Anthony Holguin** said, attempting to keep a straight face. "What happened in Week One, stays in Week One. We are focused on the game tomorrow and finding ways to beat this legendary team. We are hopeful we can get it done."

The media was caught off guard by this statement. The normally unapologetic Holguin seemed to be obliquely apologizing for, or attempting to downplay the significance of the ending of their notorious Week One win. '*HOLGUIN HOPES FOR BEST AGAINST CUBS- APOLOGIZES FOR RUNNING UP SCORE*' was the Sunday morning sports section headline in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* the day of the game.

Personalities of the coaches aside, this promised to be a compelling match-up anyway. The Assassins who had dominated in the first half of the season, were in the process of taking on water in the second half and were coming off their worst offensive performance of the year in a 29-7 loss to the Swordfish in Week 14. The arrogance and swagger had completely vanished from the Vegas sideline over the past five weeks. They remained a talented team on paper, but were now fighting for their playoff lives.

The Cubs had been steadier over the course of the season but with just two weeks left, the time had come to make their push. The team had come up flat against Seattle in Week 12 and that slip-up promised to hurt them badly if they were unable to split the season series against Vegas this week. The oddsmakers favoured the Assassins, but most national pundits in the media favoured the Cubs. By the end of Sunday night, the football world would know who was right.

Perhaps it was the effect of the rabid, sellout crowd at the Assassin's Den. Perhaps it was the growing fatigue brought on by the emotional downs of the past three weeks. Perhaps it was just another case of the Cubs not being prepared to deliver or take a punch at the sound of the bell. Or perhaps it was simply that the better team was better prepared for this critical game. Whatever the reason, the Cubs started slowly and by the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter were down 21-3 and not looking like they were in a hurry to come back.

**Dalvin Cook** and **Zach Pascal** (of all people) were taking it to the Cubs' defence. Through three quarters, Cook had amassed 79 yards on 19 touches and scored a touchdown; while Pascal had snared 8 catches for 89 yards and was actually drawing double teams. **Justin Herbert** was looking largely unperturbed in the pocket and when he had been harassed, had managed to scramble effectively for a total of 39 yards and 3 first downs.

Offensively, the Cubs seemed to have no spark and no answer for the Vegas linebacking corps, the secondary, or the monstrous **Vita Vea**, who was consistently able to bend the middle of the pocket, forcing **Russell Wilson** to move off platform and miss key throws. The run game upon which so much of the Cubs' success on offence depended, was unable to establish a rhythm behind **James Conner** and **Joe Mixon**. The voices of the broadcast tandem of **Al Michaels** and **Cris Collinsworth** dripped with disappointment as the kickoff from **Ka'imi Fairbairn** sailed through the Cubs' end zone for a touchback after the Assassin had taken a 21-3 lead on a 14-yard TD pass to **Adam Humphries**.

"The Cubs have to get something going here, Cris, or this game is going to be over," Michaels declared as Wilson and the Cubs' offence jogged onto the field.

"This is simply bizarre that Russell Wilson can't find a way against this Las Vegas defence," Collinsworth jumped in. "I mean,

credit to the Assassins, but we're talking Russell Wilson here. He has got to do something on this drive and that might just mean playing some football. Go out and play football, Russell!"

On the Cubs' sideline, **Deron Redding's** frustration was coming to a boil. In a very uncharacteristic move, he physically tugged on his quarterback's jersey before he took the field after the Humphries touchdown had out Vegas up 21-3. He held his quarterback's gaze for an uncomfortably long 2.5 seconds (roughly the maximum time Wilson was getting in the pocket) and spat out two simple phrases:

"Wake the f\*\$k up! It's showtime!"

Wilson turned and pulled away from his coach without a word or any other acknowledgement that this normally steady and congenial person, who often treated him like a son, had uncharacteristically lost his temper in such a public way. But whatever he may have felt inside, it was certainly a visibly different **Russell Wilson** behind center for the final frame.

It took the Cubs' quarterback just six plays to cover 75 yards. He rifled crisp passes to **AJ Brown** and **Tyler Lockett**, handed off once to Conner for effect and a hard 2 yards, then slid an out pass to Lockett beyond the outstretched hand of corner **Patrick Surtain II** for a 2-yard touchdown.

"Russell drops back...he's got Lockett for the touchdown!" **Al Michaels** trumpeted with as much gusto as he might have had he been a Cubs announcer. "Just like that, the Cubs have life!"

"Well, it's just amazing what Russell Wilson can do!" gushed **Cris Collinsworth**. "There is nobody better in the league when the chips are down. And you know he's not finished yet!"

The quick touchdown drive did cause a palpable shift in the momentum. The Assassins' defence had looked like spectators on that Cubs drive, such was the visual effect of the dramatic shift in gears by the Iowa quarterback. When the Las Vegas offence stalled after gaining just one first down, the defence took the field with subtle signs of tension in their gait despite the Cubs being backed up at their own 2-yard line after the coffin corner punt by **Bryan Anger**. They knew what Wilson was capable of.

It took longer this time, but with the coolness of an assassin, the Cubs' quarterback led his team up the field, causing visiting Iowa fans in the stands to jump to their feet when he completed an 18-yard pass to Brown on 3<sup>rd</sup> & 16 then dropped a dime to Lockett for 21 yards to bring up 1<sup>st</sup> and goal at the Vegas 10-yard line. The Assassins brought **Matt Judon** on the blitz in a desperate bid to hold the advancing Cubs to a field goal, but Wilson saw it coming and rolled out. Unable to find anyone open he suddenly took off through a giant empty space on the right of the defence for a 10-yard touchdown run.

"Wilson will take it himself...he's in for the touchdown!" Michaels cried. "13 plays, 98 yards and the Cubs are back in this game, Cris!"

"They sure are!" Collinsworth agreed. "And now they are going for two to try and make this a 3-point deficit."

Wilson slung a quick pass to Lockett on a short comebacker for the two-point convert and, with 4:25 left to go, the Assassins' lead had shrunk to 3 points, 21-18.

On the Vegas sideline, **Anthony Holguin** glared at the scoreboard. The way Wilson was playing there was enough time on the clock for two Cubs' drives if his offence was unable to move the ball. As his quarterback prepared to take the field, Holguin reached out grabbed the sleeve of **Dalvin Cook's** jersey and pulled him back. He looked his running straight in the eyes and growled:

"If you can't hold on to the ball and score a touchdown here, Dalvin, you suck!"

The Assassins' star betrayed no emotion and said nothing. He simply nodded his head, turned and sprinted onto the field as over 60,000 fans cheered, hoping to light a spark under their offence. There was an understanding between the Assassins players and their ruthless coach. Players who didn't execute sucked. Coaches who made bad challenges, mis-managed the clock and took too long to get the plays sucked. It was okay to say it. It was their way of keeping each other accountable.

It did not take long for a coaching moment to take shape. On 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5 from his own 30, Herbert rifled a short pass to **Larry Fitzgerald** at the sticks for an apparent first down. But the replay cast doubt on where the veteran had the ball when his forward progress was arrested by **Casey Hayward Jr.** It was a close call and the official had given the veteran Fitzgerald the benefit of the doubt. Iowa coach, **Deron Redding** felt differently. His gut told him it was time to challenge and force his pompous opponent to check his own gut.

"And Deron Redding has thrown the challenge flag!" Michaels announced with surprise.

"This is a bold move, Al!" Collinsworth intoned gravely. "I don't know if there is enough to overturn this and if they don't the Cubs lose a valuable time out. I don't know about this..."

After what seemed like an interminable time, referee **Craig Wrolstad** emerged from under the hood and walked to the center of the field. He flipped on his mic and declared:

"Upon further review...the receiver was stopped short of the line to gain...we will re-spot the ball just short of the 35-yard line. Iowa City will not be charged a timeout."

The official spotted the ball approximately one foot shy of the 35. It was now time for the Assassin's coach to make a call. Herbert and Cook looked over at the sideline. It was only a foot, but a foot could be quite long with 11 opposing defenders crowded into the box. The line that got off the ball first would prevail. Did he trust his offensive line? Did he trust the ball carrier? Dare he even think about passing? Failure here and the Cubs, with **Justin Tucker** as their kicker, were virtually guaranteed a field goal. With **Russell Wilson** as their quarterback, they could easily get even more working with a 35-yard field.

A tiny angel over coach Holguin's right shoulder urged prudence. *Trust your defence*, it said. A much larger devil over his left shoulder poked him in the ear with its pitch fork and sneered: *You aren't backing down from that pussy, are you?* As usual with the

Assassins' coach, the Devil got his way. And just to show that Devil that he was not afraid, Holguin chose to run the riskier of the two safest runs possible. He would have Herbert hand the ball off to Cook rather than keep it himself and the running back would buck the center of the Cubs' line, where the beefy boys hung out. If the Cubs line was able to penetrate it would be game over. If not, he trusted Cook to find a way through the mass of flesh at the scrimmage line.

On the snap of the ball, the Cubs' defensive line converged toward the center of the Vegas line while line-backer, **Jason Pierre-Paul** made a beeline for Herbert on the blitz. A white wall rose up in front of the Assassins quarterback that would have swallowed him up had he tried to advance the ball. Instead, he stepped back, turned and handed the ball off to Cook. The Assassins' running back took a half step to the right, lowered his head and shot through a tiny hole to the right of the guard, that quickly shut as the running back's momentum propelled him to the 36-yard line, more than enough for a first down.

"Cook with the handoff...forward...and he's brought down just shy of the 36! That'll be enough for a first down!" Michaels announced breathlessly.

"Any time you hand the ball off to your running back in that situation you are taking a big chance," Collinsworth cautioned. "But it shows you just how much faith Anthony Holguin has in his running back, Dalvin Cook to get the yard the needed to keep the drive going. That's a gutsy call and gutsy execution on the part of Cook!"

On the next play, left guard **Greg Van Roten** pulled to the right and joined up with **Zach Fulton** to double-team defensive tackle, **Dalvin Tomlinson**. Cook followed behind and shot through the hole created by the trap and into the second level. In less than a second, he was at speed, brushing past safety **Donovan Wilson** and angling toward the sideline as **Amani Hooker**, the safety on the far side, raced to cut him off. But Cook had reached top speed, which was far faster than an average running back, and he jetted down the numbers, 15...10...5..., outracing Hooker for the touchdown.

A rising crescendo of cheers as Cook ran away from the pursuing Cubs exploded into a deafening roar as Cook crossed the goal line and into the end zone for a touchdown. The stadium PA announcer shouted *TOUCHDOWN* over the PA system as foam throwing stars streamed out of end zone cannons and the giant scoreboard flashed *IN FOR THE KILL!*

"I guess you don't suck, Dalvin," Coach Holguin quipped as his running back returned to the Vegas sideline, the game ball he had carried into the end zone still in his arms.

"I guess you don't suck either, coach!" Cook replied with a smile. "Good call!"

The crowd and the Assassins' sideline sobered up when Pierre-Paul broke through the line to block the extra point – the Cubs' linebacker's 7<sup>th</sup> blocked kick of the season. The home team now had the slimmest of two-score leads, leading by 9 points, 27-18 and there was still over 2 minutes, 2:22 exactly, remaining. In the hands of Russell "*the Magician*" Wilson, this was still enough time.

The Cubs' quarterback legend looked composed as he took the field to attempt the improbable. The Cubs were starting at their own 25-yard line. They needed to score quickly, recover an onside kick or, failing that, make a stop in time to get the ball back. They still had all of their timeouts remaining. If they could somehow preserve them on this drive, they could use them as insurance in case they were unable to recover the onside kick. That was presuming, of course, they were able to score here.

"Hang in there, boys! We're still in this!" **Deron Redding** urged frenetically on the sideline. The defence gathered together in a group to discuss what they would do when they got the ball back. They didn't doubt their coach was right. They too knew that Russell would likely give them that chance.

In three plays it was done. After a 4-yard check down to **Christian Kirk** and a 25-yard scramble drill connection with **Cole Beasley**, Wilson took a deep drop and lofted a high, arcing pass that dropped in like a mortar shell into the waiting arms of **AJ Brown**, who carried it the remaining 5 yards into the end zone for a 46-yard touchdown pass.

"Wilson launches it high...and he's got AJ Brown for a touchdown! What a pass!" Michaels announced, unable to conceal a sense of disbelief. Even though it was Wilson, the ease with which he had recovered the points lost on the Cook touchdown run was breath-taking.

"This is just an incredible throw by Russell Wilson and an incredible catch by AJ Brown!" enthused Collinsworth as the replay ran on the TV screen. "That's good coverage by Patrick Surtain, the ball is just perfectly thrown to a spot where only Brown can get it and Brown doesn't have to break stride or adjust. You know, people have started to doubt Wilson in Iowa City. If this game doesn't prove them wrong, I don't know what else to tell you. It is just incredible what he is capable of doing with the game on the line!"

The Cubs attempted an onside kick but the ball bounced too far and was easily recovered by the Assassins with 1:23 left. All Las Vegas had to do now was get a first down and the game would be over. But the Cubs, with all of their timeouts left, survived an offside penalty and made a stop on 3<sup>rd</sup> & 2 when **Alex Singleton** stuffed Herbert on a designed sweep to the right for a 4-yard loss. Facing 4<sup>th</sup> & 6 at their own 41, it was time for Holguin to listen to the Angel and trust his defence.

Anger's punt was high and true. Cubs' return man **Elijah Moore** fielded it at the 15 but was immediately hemmed in and brought down by **Ethan Pocic** for no gain.

With 0:53 left and no timeouts, the two announcers delved into a discussion about what the Cubs needed to do to win the game. They needed roughly 45 yards to get into feasible range for Tucker. Reaching the 40-yard line of the Assassins would make it a 58-yard attempt. Tucker's career long was 57, which he had done twice as a member of the Cubs, most recently in the 2018 season. Conditions inside the dome were optimal, meaning he could probably kick it longer. Both agreed that covering the distance in the time remaining was well within Wilson's capabilities. In fact, it was given that he would come close to covering the ground needed. Before the first snap had even been made, it was practically decided by the broadcast team that the Cubs were about to win.

Then it happened. On 2<sup>nd</sup> & 10, Wilson took the shotgun snap as Judon came on the blitz. Nobody picked him up, forcing Wilson to lock onto his first read and get rid of the ball too early on an out to Lockett. **Bryce Callahan** read his eyes and closed, tipping the ball up as it arrived and catching it on the way down for an interception.

“Wilson in the shotgun...here’s the snap...they’re blitzing...Wilson gets it away...and it’s tipped...and *intercepted!*” Michaels announced in stunned disbelief. “Callahan...and he’s brought down at the 9-yard line. Unbelievable!”

“I don’t know, Al, there may be a flag,” Collinworth jumped in, sounding confused. “The officials are discussing something.”

“I don’t see a flag,” Michaels replied. “And the referee signals Assassins football and that just about does it!”

The crowd exploded in jubilation. **Anthony Holguin** hugged the first person next to him, who happened to be reserve wide receiver and special teamer **Ashton Dulin**, who had done nothing in the game, but who celebrated as if he had made the pick himself.

**Deron Redding** stood stalk still on the sideline, watching in disbelief as his quarterback walked slowly back to the sideline, his head hanging. He could not fathom what had just happened. The White Hat was supposed to win the re-match after losing to the Black Hat. Wasn’t that how it always went in *Spy vs Spy?*

Suddenly, a thought occurred to the Cubs’ coach. He turned to his dejected players and, with the faintest glimmer of hope in his eye, shouted, “We’re not out of this thing yet, boys! Quarter package on the field! Two can play at the interception game!”

Redding was expecting, in fact now he was *hoping*, that his hated opponent would attempt to twist the knife and go for the meaningless touchdown in the dying seconds of a game already won. It was uncanny that the last second scenario in Week One would repeat itself here in Week 15. But if the Assassins’ coach was arrogant and unkind enough to try scoring a late touchdown that they didn’t need, Redding’s team would be ready for him. It was their only hope.

Unfortunately for the Cubs, the Assassins’ coach suppressed his urge to rub his opponent’s nose in the dirt. Herbert knelt down twice to end the game, allowing the score that accurately reflected the titanic struggle between White Hat and Black Hat, to stand.

### CLOWN OUT

At New Era Stadium in Buffalo, a season low attendance of approximately 21,000 fans, many dressed in clown costumes, watched in disgust as their Derailers were whipped by the Bombers 51-12. This game was everything infuriated fans in Buffalo had expected to see

# Derailer Clown Out!



Derailer fans dress as clowns in protest against team owner and amateur GM/Coach **Daryl Brothers**, whose team is now suffering through a five-game losing streak after getting pounded by Bruxelles, 51-12 in Week 15. A fan group known as “D&D” organized the protest.

from their collapsing team, and then some. It came with the anticipated general ineptitude on offence (11 first downs), 4 turnovers on downs (3 of them from deep in their own end), 4 regular turnovers (2 interceptions and 2 fumbles), a totally burnt-out **Lamar Jackson** (who still somehow managed to score a highlight reel touchdown) and, fittingly, a safety for Bruxelles to cap off the scoring and push the Bombers' point total into the 50s. And, in case the subtlety is lost on you, dear readers, this pummeling was administered by the *Bombers* – a team with its own problems now that **Jared Goff** is running the offence. In fact, this game was the perfect Exhibit A in the open-and-shut case being made by fans in Upstate New York to have Derailers' owner **Daryl Brothers** do the honorable thing and fire himself as head coach of his own team.

Historically speaking, it is fitting that the franchise that provoked a fan strike in Mohave in 2012 by the Fans Liberation Association of Greater Mohave and Everywhere (FLAME), and had to ship in replacement fans from Mexico to cheer them on as a result, is the same franchise, under a different name, now inspiring fans in Buffalo to stage the league's first ever "Clown Out" to protest the zany strategies and player abuse of Brothers and his coaching staff.

This week's "Clown Out" stunt was organized by a group of angry fans calling themselves 'The Derailed and Deranged' (D&D), who complain that Derailer fans everywhere have been "driven off the rails and made crazy" by the way Coach **Daryl Brothers** has handled the team this year.

"There is no way this should be a 4-win team!" shouted season-ticket holder, Tuck of Cheektowaga, as to a local TV reporter covering the Clown Out for Channel 7, *WKBW* in Buffalo. "We have too much talent on this team! This team deserves better! We, the fans, deserve better! That's why I'm dressed as a clown today!"

The Buffalo circus act started off with conventional bobbles and mis-reads. **Emmanuel Sanders** fumbled away a nice gain on a 16-yard reception, Jackson was intercepted trying to check down on a scramble because he didn't see the defender standing between him and his target, and **DeAndre Carter** fumbled at his own 9 returning a kickoff. All this happened in the first 17 minutes of the game and helped to propel the Bombers into a 23-0 lead. This was more than enough to bring out the clown in the Derailers' coach.

The self-inflicted wounds started on the next Buffalo series, with a decision to go for it on 4<sup>th</sup> & 8 at their own 13. (Yes, you read that correctly). **Emmanuel Ogbah**, one of the last Mohicans remaining from the long-lost pass rush of the Bombers, sacked Jackson at the Buffalo 9-yard line for a 4-yrd loss. That set up an easy, two-play TD drive to make it 29-0 for Bruxelles.

The home crowd finally got something to cheer about on the Derailers' next series when the team scored its first *points* in 9 quarters on an 8-yard touchdown run by Jackson, set up by a nice 45-yard bomb to Sanders two plays earlier. (Yes, you read that right, first *points* in 9 quarters, not first touchdown) However, the Derailers coach would promptly erase the goodwill by having his quarterback kneel on the two-point convert attempt. Pure Vaudeville.

The circus act continued with a squib kick on the ensuing kickoff and deployment of the dreaded prevent defence on the first play from scrimmage. Goff saw six defensive backs 30 yards downfield and calmly handed off to **Elijah Mitchell**, who ran for 60 yards and a touchdown to make the score 36-6 with still five minutes to play in the first half. With the apparent goal of giving up 40 points in the first half and entering the record books one way or the other, Brothers elected to go for it on 4<sup>th</sup> & 4 from his own 29, only to see Jackson stopped for no gain on a bootleg. The Bombers were unable to exploit the 'prevent' defence a second time, however, and had to settle for a field goal to enter the locker room *only* up 39-6.

There was more insanity like this in the second half. There is no need to belabor any of it. The final score speaks for itself. However, it is worth noting from his postgame commentary and *laissez faire* attitude that the Buffalo owner/GM/head coach seems blissfully unaware of how close he is to being lynched on the streets of Buffalo if he is left unattended by his security detail. Much like Scarborough owner/part-time coach **Chris Dickinson** in the early years of running the former Dragons into the ground, Brothers has gone from beloved local hero, to public enemy number one when it comes to the city's most beloved sport. As the owner and CEO of the lucrative Derail Corporation, employer of thousands of Buffalonians, he remains a respected part of the community. But with regard to the Derailers Football Club™, fans are close to staging an intervention, the first steps of which took place in Week 15 with the "Clown Out."

### ***THE GREATEST FOURTH QUARTER EVER PLAYED...THIS YEAR***

At Hawkeye Park in Brooklin, the hometown Hawks went out in a blaze of glory, falling just 3 points short of toppling the league's top team, as the North Stars survived one of the best finishes of the season to prevail 40-37. Although the history of the close encounters between these teams tells a different story, many pundits had written off the Hawks before this game even started due to them being manhandled by Budapest in Week One and an expected letdown after their defensive collapse in the 4th quarter in a loss to the Coyotes last week. However, buoyed by a sellout crowd at the team's sparkling new stadium, **Derek Carr** made this a game to remember by coming back from down 23-3 to tie it up in the 4th quarter and go toe-to-toe with mighty Budapest in the most exciting final period played this year. When the Hawks get on a roll, it is next to impossible to stop them and, in the end, the North Stars were fortunate to get the ball last, driving 37 yards in 7 plays on the game's final possession to win on a 52-yard wind-assisted field goal by **Jason Myers**.

Few could have blamed the Hawks if they had packed it in after the first 25 minutes of game time. The Stars scored on their first four possessions. **Aaron Rodgers** started off on fire with a 61-yard completion to **Nelson Agholor** on the team's second play from scrimmage, followed by TD passes to **Chris Thompson**, **Justin Jefferson** and **George Kittle** to go with a 46-yard Myers field goal to get up 23-3. Trailing by 20, Brooklin went to work trying to salvage something from what had been a terrible start. They got a needed first spark, with the running of **Austin Ekeler** and crisp routes of **DeAndre Hopkins** setting up a 15-yard TD pass from Carr to **Evan Engram**. The touchdown might have been a mere footnote in the box score if not for the defence stepping up and preventing a Rodgers 1-minute



drill from cashing in before the half. Myers missed a 60-yard field goal attempt as time expired.

The first half had ended on a positive note for Brooklin on both sides of the ball, which carried over into the second half. The Budapest offence suddenly could not get anything done, going three-and-out on their first two series while the Brooklin offence chipped away with a pair of long touchdown drives to even the score at 23 early in the 4th quarter. When a scrambling Carr found **Breshad Perriman** open in the back of the end from 4 yards out to tie the game, Hawkeye Park shook with energy of 45,565 euphoric fans who had, not too long ago, feared their team was dead.

The impressive recovery had put the teams on even footing. Unfortunately for the home crowd, the jolt of the Perriman touchdown and thunderous roar of the fans seemed to wake up the league's top passer. Rodgers fired a 25-yard pass to Agholor and **David Johnson** ripped of a 26-yard run to set up a 3-yrd TD pass to Kittle to put the North Stars back in front, 30-23. The Hawks answered dramatically, three plays later. With the safety sliding over to double-cover Hopkins, Perriman found himself manned up with **Jason Verrett** with half a step and inside leverage. Carr saw him and delivered a strike on the money that Perriman took to the races for a 72-yard score.

If the reaction of the crowd to the first game-tying touchdown was impressive, this one was over the top. The crowd went berserk and for several minutes virtually nothing could be heard but the ear-splitting howl of rapture from the faithful. This atmosphere would likely have wilted a normal human being playing quarterback for the visitors. But Rodgers is not a normal human being. He handed off twice to **Jeff Wilson Jr** for gains of 6 and 12 yards to plant the seeds of doubt in the Hawks' defence. Then he drifted back, set his feet and delivered a bomb that Jefferson glided under and gathered in for a 44-yard score. Budapest had retaken the lead in kind, 37-30, and now would turn it over to their defence for the save.

If Rodgers is not a normal human being when facing a hostile crowd, the Hawks are not a normal team when their wings are against the wall. With the steely gaze of a killer, Carr methodically led his team back up the field, taking advantage of soft coverage to calmly convert a 4th & 2 at the Budapest 41 and connecting four plays later to Hopkins for a 9-yard TD pass with 1:47 left in the 4th quarter. When **Randy Bullock** nailed the extra point to tie the game at 37, Hawkeye Park exploded, the fans leaping to their feet and bellowing 'GO HAWKS!' at the top of their lungs. However, in their focus on getting the ball into the end zone one way or the other, the Hawks had been less mindful of the clock. With 1:47 left, Budapest had two timeouts and plenty of time to make something happen.

**Cordarrell Patterson** returned the ensuing kickoff 44 yards to the Budapest 41 for an apparent good start. But a phantom block-in-the-back penalty on the return team meant the North Stars would start at their own 29, instead. (I have poured over the All-22 on this play and still cannot find this illegal block. Oh well!) As it turns out, the extra yards made no difference. The North Stars pushed the ball 26 yards on 3 completions against the Hawks' quarter package then handed off twice to Johnson for a total of 11 more to bring up the final attempt to decide the game in regulation with 0:02 left on the clock and the ball on the 34-yard line.

As time ticked down to zero, Myers stepped into the kick and booted it high, long and straight for the game-winning score. The Budapest sideline erupted, while the very edifice of Hawkeye Park seemed to shrink as if collapsing in a vacuum. The North Stars' winning streak would continue. As for the Hawks, they would now need some help to advance.

### **WHO DAT?**

At Wilhalla Stadium in Minneapolis, the Patriots upped their conference-leading record to 13-2 by finding their way around a stubborn, bull-headed Triumph squad, 26-16. Despite the Triumph having long ago been eliminated from the post-season, there was an air of anticipation in the Twin Cities as fans filled the stands to capacity, for the first time since Week One, to witness the debut of the no.1 overall pick of last year's draft, **Trevor Lawrence**. Or, at least, so they thought.

Fans who watched this game cannot be absolutely sure who they saw at quarterback for the Triumph on Sunday. Was it the highly-touted rookie phenom from Clemson? Or was it somebody else? All we know officially is that a player who was *not* **Mitch Trubisky**, (he occupied the sideline with a clipboard) and widely believed to have *not* been **CJ Beathard** (undressed for the game), entered the game at the 13:37 mark of the 1st quarter as the Twin Cities offence took the field for the first time. This player, face invisible behind a dark helmet visor, wearing the number '0' with no name displayed on the back of the jersey, settled under center and proceeded to play the entire game at the quarterback position for the Triumph.

Numerous insider media at the local and national level have confirmed for me, off the record, that the player was, indeed, **Trevor Lawrence**. However, the team has not officially confirmed that the player under center was their highly-touted rookie. The team even took the unheard-of measure of refusing to certify the official game book until Lawrence's name was deleted from the quarterback stat line. They also withheld their active game day roster from league officials, claiming "competitive privilege" as justification, while threatening to sue the league if it tried to invoke the section of the rules that required the team to so do.

To characterize this behaviour as rare or highly irregular would be misleading; it is in fact unprecedented. When examined in the context of the entire Triumph season, however, it is not too surprising. Triumph owner, coach and GM, **Guy Williams** has been nothing if not eccentric in his handling of the team's affairs both on and off the field the past two years. It has led some in the media to speculate that he is having some kind of slow mental breakdown as he copes with the harsh reality of leading a team incapable of living up to the culture of winning that he has so carefully instilled in his franchise since entering the EFL in 2012. Others, like myself, have speculated that Williams is simply being a prick because his team sucks and his maverick decisions are backfiring and making him look like an idiot.

Whether it is one or the other or something more nuanced between the two, Williams' bizarre decision to attempt to "anonymize" his rookie quarterback in his first appearance in the pros has people demanding answers – answers that the Triumph Godfather refuses to provide in the face of direct questions.

“Unfortunately, I cannot provide you with that information at this time,” Williams responded to a question from ESPN *EFL Nation* reporter, **Courtney Cronin** requesting confirmation that it was **Trevor Lawrence** playing quarterback for the Triumph. When her follow-up asked why he would not openly declare his quarterback choice for the game, Williams stonewalled her with a glib, “The reason for why is privileged, as is the identity of our quarterback, who, by the way, I thought played well.”

The official stat line next to the word “QUARTERBACK” on the Triumph side of the stat sheet tells a different story. “**Quarterback**” completed 17 of 37 pass attempts, for 164 yards, 1 TD and 1 INT for a passer rating of 56.6. “**Quarterback**” was sacked 3 times and fumbled once, recovered by offensive lineman **Damien Lewis**, to avoid the turnover. It was definitely a rookie type of performance of the rougher kind, but it might have been a winning performance nonetheless had the Triumph coach not put his team in disadvantageous positions with reckless fourth down gambles in his own territory. Here is the summary of coaching gaffes:

Williams kept his offence on the field for 4th & 1 at their own 30 on his team's first possession. **Melvin Gordon III** was stonewalled for no gain on the play by **Jamie Collins Sr** and the Pats went on to kick an easy field goal. Early in the second quarter, he elected to go for it on 4th & 1 at his team's own 46, resulting in a stuff of “**Quarterback**” for a 1-yard loss. The Pats turned this into another field goal drive. With his team trailing 19-10 in the 3rd quarter, he sent **Clyde Edwards-Helaire** up the middle on 4th & 1 at his own 39, only to see him walled off and brought down at the line by **Sheldon Richardson**. This set up a 15-yard TD pass from **DeShaun Watson** to **Jakobi Meyers** six plays later to give the Pats a daunting 26-10 lead. His final fourth down gamble on 4th & 2 at the Patriots' 40 early in the 4th quarter was defensible, given the circumstances in the game at the time. However, it was no more successful than the others as “**Quarterback**” tried to surprise them with a sweep and was denied by **Harold Landry III**. I know we cannot assume that the game would have worked out differently had the Triumph coach judiciously punted in the first three situations, but we do know for certain that the 13 Patriot points facilitated from those failures would have made the difference between winning and losing if we subtract them from their final total of 26. The Pats did not play a strong game on offence otherwise. The Triumph defence was inspired by *something* (possibly the debut of their rookie QB?), and held the vaunted Charleswood offence to 192 total yards, while forcing 6 punts, and scoring on a pick-six by **Juan Thornhill** late in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter to keep the game within reach heading into half time. This was a defence that might have held had the coach not put them in difficult situations. But he did, and the Patriots reaped the benefits.

In the aftermath of the most surreal afternoon of them all in this bizarre 2021 Triumph season, the league officially announced that it would be moving swiftly to unblock the name of the Triumph's starting quarterback and complete the record books in accordance with existing rules. The league is likely to succeed, as legal experts declare that there is no precedent for this kind of action on the part of the Triumph and very likely no special circumstances to create an exception. The legal debate answers little, however, and begs the question, “why?” One notable EFL commentator ventured an explanation is a post-game broadcast:

“Guy Williams is merely protecting his rookie quarterback,” opined ESPN Insider, **Adam Shifty**. “He is trying to give Trevor an opportunity to grow like other rookies, without the pressure of the number one overall pick weighing him down. So, he is placing emphasis on the *team* by de-identifying his quarterback. Because of his high draft standing, the media and fans in Minnesota believe that the rookie is going to be the literal savior of the franchise. Their expectations are sky high. If Trevor does not deliver on the hype, there will be disappointment and criticism that could damage his confidence. Holding off his official “debut” until he has seen some live action is a smart move on the part of the Triumph coach. Now, will he get away with it? That is another story!”

This is as good an explanation as any. Given Shifty's access to insider information rivalling my own, it is likely true. But it is still batshit crazy.

I have no doubt that at some point in the foreseeable future, the Triumph will be back in the spotlight for the right reasons. The force of their spiritual leader, **Guy Williams**, is too strong to hold him, and the team he leads, down for long. But while we wait for Triumph's winning culture to thoroughly imbue this developing roster, demented days like the one this past Sunday will continue to be the norm at Wilhalla Stadium.

### **AROUND THE EFL**

The rest of the Week 15 EFL sked was not so much irrelevant as it was predictable and...let's say it...mostly boring. Not all of it was irrelevant, however. Let's take a look at the rest of the action:

At The Big House in Chino, the soaring Pilots dive-bombed the Convicts for 21 points in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter to overcome a 7-point deficit and win the game flying away, 38-24. This was a game of emotional ups and downs for the Convicts. They came back from down 14-0 mid-way in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter to take a 24-17 lead with 7:43 left to go in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, only to see their lead vanish and the game get away from them on big plays by the Pilots in all three phases. **Hunter Renfrow** got the 21-point, 4<sup>th</sup> quarter blitz started with a 40-yard punt return to the Chino 18. From there, **Kareem Hunt** ran it in on the next play from scrimmage to tie the game at 24. **Teddy Bridgewater**, in the game for an injured **Dak Prescott**, began pressing and was picked off on consecutive possessions, leading to a pair of Seattle touchdowns in the game's final 4 minutes, the last being a 31-yard TD run by Hunt for his second score of the game. In addition to losing the game, the early indicators are that the Convicts have lost Prescott for the season finale against the Cubs as well. This game was a chance to clinch the west and it slipped through their hands because of a Seattle team that won't stop playing hard. **Gardner Minshew II** got the start at QB for Seattle and threw for 203 yards, 3 TD passes and no interceptions. The Pilots appear to have a good problem on their hands, with Minshew II and **Trey Lance** both looking strong in the season's final weeks.

At Camelot in Avalon, the Spartans built a modest early lead and staved off York the rest of the way for a 26-16 win. The herky-jerky flow of this game made for an unpleasant viewer experience through most of three quarters, before it gave way to a relatively enthralling fourth quarter. The final frame was a condensed version of events in the first three quarters, but without all the bad plays that

punctuated the early efforts of both teams. The Spartans emerged from the 1<sup>st</sup> half holders of a precarious, and odd, 12-8 lead. The first score of the game was a safety by Spartan defensive tackle, **Tyler Davison**, who sacked **Tom Brady** in the end zone. At that point, York had possessed the ball three times and had gone backwards a total of 2 yards. York's **Malcolm Butler**, the team's defensive saviour last week, provided a spark this week with an interception of **Philip Rivers** on the Spartans' next series, but Brady gave it back six snaps later on an attempted screen pass, tossing a ball at defender, **Joe Schobert**, that bounced off his arm and into the arms of **Romeo Okwara** for an interception. The Spartans used the resulting short field to penetrate the end zone on a 3-yard run by **Trey Sermon**, to make it 9-0.

After falling behind 12-0, the York offence finally got moving thanks to **Derrick Henry**, who rumbled for a 15-yard gain to convert a 3rd & 6 then peeled off runs of 11 and 21 yards to set up a 13-yard TD pass to **Danny Amendola**. Watching his team punt five times, give up a safety and an interception in its first six series put York coach, **Jay Hammond** into one of his "F\*#k It!" moods and he decided to go for two points. They successfully converted on a pitch to Henry to make it 12-8. That is where the score would stay through the remainder of the 1st half and an entire third quarter of sloppy execution by both sides. Finally, the arrival of the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter seemed to spark some urgency in the offences. Rivers started hitting passes, completing all 4 of his attempts in a 7-play drive that ended with a flip to big fullback, **Patrick Ricard**, for a 2-yard TD pass. York answered boldly, with a 28-yard run by **Derrick Henry** and 24-yard pass to **Amon-Ra St. Brown** setting the table for a heavy dose of Henry over the next four plays. "The King" finished it off by bowling into the end zone on 3<sup>rd</sup> and goal from the 4. With the added two-point convert, the Excaliburs were now within a field goal, trailing 19-16. The Spartans flipped the script of another dogged comeback by Brady by delivering a shattering blow on the very next play from scrimmage. Rivers hit **Calvin Ridley** on a crossing route and the fleet-footed, dynamic route-runner exploded into the open space, taking it all the way for a 75-yard TD catch-and-run. The Spartans led 26-16 with just under five minutes left. One thing the Excalibur offence needs is time to build their Henry-centric drives and time was running out. It took them 14 plays to move 39 yards into position for a field goal try on 4<sup>th</sup> & 10 to make it a one-score game. But **Robbie Gould** missed his second field goal attempt of the game to end all hope. Although the Spartans get a leg up on York heading into the final week, it can all be reversed if they lose and the Excaliburs win in Week 16. The Atlantic Wildcard race will go down to the wire.

At **TERRORDOME** in Virden, the Violators finished off the Crusaders, 32-20, to keep pace in the race for a Pacific wildcard spot heading into Week 16. There was no let down on the part of Peg City after experiencing the high of their first win last week. Ultimately though, **Mac Jones'** 313-yard, two-touchdown passing day was not enough to overcome **Pat Mahomes'** 306-yard, three-touchdown passing day in a game that was, despite a very narrow separation on the stat sheet, a contest largely controlled by Virden. The Violators put the Crusaders on their back foot by scoring on four of their first five possessions to grab a 23-6 halftime lead. The Crusaders turned to the pass in the second half and, after turning the ball over on downs to start the third, managed to put together back-to-back touchdown drives that pulled them to within one score of the Violators, trailing 26-20. That's when Mahomes decided enough was enough and zipped down the field, completing 6 of 7 on the drive for 74 yards and a touchdown to log a much-needed insurance touchdown. The defence then did their job, yielding ground in small chunks until Jones came up empty inside the red zone, turning the ball over on downs for the third time and handing it over to Mahomes to assume the victory position.

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At Tillman Field in Cowtown, the Corn Kings got away with a hard fought 37-31 victory over the Blue Eagles. The win kept Cowtown's slim playoff hopes alive but did little to encourage fans to believe that, if they were to somehow advance to the post-season, they would be more than one-and-done. Cowtown caught all the breaks early and did not have to work very hard, or cover much ground, to jump out to a 27-0 lead by the 4:44 mark of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter. The two lost fumbles and early interception by **Drew Lock** that set up Cowtown's early raid on the scoreboard seemed their just due after they were on the other side of similar breaks going against them when they faced Scarborough earlier in the year. But this was a case of too much good fortune. The Corn Kings backed off and waited for Lock, starting for an injured **Joe Burrow**, to commit the football equivalent of seppuku trying to come back. The back-up did create more self-inflicted wounds, but he also made enough plays to cause discomfort, worry and eventually something approaching panic on the Cowtown sideline. After being up by scores of 27-0, 34-10 and 37-17 at different points as the game progressed, Coach **Jim Coghlin** watched in horror as **Neville Gallimore** blocked a **Johnny Hekker** punt and **Deion Jones** recovered in the end zone to shrink his team's lead to 37-24. It was the second blocked punt against Hekker this year – the first one also coming against the Blue Eagles in Week 9. The entire Cowtown sideline seemed to tense up after that. The offence went three-and-out on their next series and punted successfully, putting Scarborough back at its own 12. However, Lock was able to find the open man every time to move his team into position across

mid-field, from where he hit **Allen Robinson II** on a crossing pattern for a 47-yard TD. With 6:12 left, Scarborough was within one score, trailing 37-31, and had stolen the momentum. After another ugly effort on offence, with **Ryan Fitzpatrick** getting sacked twice by the Joneses (**Deion** and **Justin**), Cowtown punted away again. The sense of dread in Tillman Field was palpable as Lock took over under center at his own 15 with 2:34 remaining and all of his timeouts left. The trepidation felt by Corn Kings fans seemed well warranted after Lock scrambled for 15 yards and a first down then connected over the middle with **Greg Ward** for a 39-yard gain to land in Cowtown territory at the 25. However, three plays later on 3<sup>rd</sup> & 7 Lock locked on to **CJ Uzomah** and safety **Jeremy Chinn** read it perfectly, jumping the route for a game-saving pick. The tension and fear in the stadium washed away in a torrent of relief as Chinn celebrated his clutch play. Cowtown had dodged a bullet. Next week, the quarterback firing the gun will be **Josh Allen**.

At Stone Pony Shore in New Jersey, where home is not so sweet, the Wrecking Balls dropped their sixth home date of the season, free-falling to a 33-7 loss to the Coyotes. **Calais Campbell** blocking the extra point on the Coyotes' first touchdown of the game, his fourth blocked kick of the season, was the only thing that went right for New Jersey in a disastrous 1<sup>st</sup> half that ended with Cobb County up 30-0! Fumbles lost by **Keenan Allen** and **Wayne Gallman Jr** set up two short scoring drives to accelerate an already steady scoring pace by the visitors. **Ryan Tannehill** had 4 TD passes in the 1st half, setting him up for a potentially record-setting day if the Coyotes had it in them to run up the score. But with the division and the second seed locked up, and no room to move up or down in the playoff seeding, the Coyotes graciously let up on the gas pedal on offence and let their defence do the rest, holding New Jersey to one score in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half. Watching this fiasco in fast-forward mode on my recording I noticed how deserted the stadium was in the Wrecking Balls' last home date. North Korean-grade entry restrictions due to an overblown fear of COVID and a pathological tendency to give the ball away to their opponents has the fanbase completely demoralized or, worse, completely apathetic. It will be tougher for part-owner **JC Cohen** to sell hope to the fanbase in the pre-season again next year.

At the Fish Tank in Sebastian, the Thunder Lizards' defence thoroughly suppressed the dangerous Swordfish offence and **Josh Allen** ran for 3 touchdowns as Durham demolished Sebastian 38-6. After getting shutout through 15 minutes, the Lizards put together the game's first touchdown drive in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter by stringing together 6 straight runs, five of those by **Antonio Gibson** for 45 yards to set up the sixth, a 9-yard scoring run by **Chase Edmunds** to make it 7-3 for Durham. From there, the visitors gradually picked up speed and eventually blew away the home squad with a 21-point 4<sup>th</sup> quarter burst. This was highlighted by a **Kenny Moore II** pick of **Kirk Cousins** that he ran back to the Swordfish 5-yard line and cashed in one play later on an Allen TD pass to **Cam Sims**. The win does not change the playoff scenario for Durham, however, as they are locked in to the no.2 seed in the conference. The Swordfish are still in the hunt but will need to beat Scarborough next week and hope for some help from Brooklin and Budapest.

And finally, in one of the week's big surprises that almost nobody noticed, the Cadillac treated their fans at Kelly-Burke Field, (all 7,436 of them) to a rare complete game victory as they blanked the Gladiators, 20-0. This was the Caddies' version of a blowout – a bold 75-yard opening touchdown drive finished off by a **Kyler Murray** pass to **Mark Andrew**, followed by an adamant stop of the Glads on 4<sup>th</sup> down at the Cadillac 42, leading to another touchdown drive capped off by a Murray 2-yard TD run to make 14-0 with 2:21 still left in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter. Then the offence, evidently feeling it had done its part, went outside for a cigarette and to wash its hands while the defence did the dirty work of keeping Georgia in its place. The Glads had a chance to get on the board before half time, but decided to run a draw to **James Robinson** on 1<sup>st</sup> & goal at the Erieau 7 with just 0:08 left on the clock. Robinson almost got there but in the process of struggling to break a tackle by **Neville Hewitt** at the 1-yard line, allowed time to expire. They would never get so close again as the Erieau defence played its best ball, shutting down the Glads' run game and getting interceptions from Trevon Diggs and Rodney McLeod in the final quarter to preserve a rare, but well-earned shutout against a good offence. This game was the optimal blueprint for a successful Erieau season that might have been but wasn't, because it's...well...Erieau!



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PACIFIC CONFERENCE								
EAST			CENTRAL			WEST		
IN	ALIVE	OUT	IN	ALIVE	OUT	IN	ALIVE	OUT
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ATLANTIC CONFERENCE								
NORTH			COASTAL			SOUTH		
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## Jimmy's WEEK SIXTEEN PICKS

### GAMES TO WATCH

#### CHINO @ IOWA CITY (line – CONVICTS by 1)

**INJURIES:** Chino – PJ Hall (DOUBTFUL), John Feliciano (OUT), Justin Jackson (OUT), Ali Marpet (OUT), Dak Prescott (OUT); Iowa City – None.

Chino enters the final week of the season controlling their own destiny. A win and they are champions of the hotly-contested West Division. A loss and they are at the mercy of the Seattle-Las Vegas outcome. The bad news for Chino is that Dak Prescott is out. The good news is they have already clinched at least a wildcard spot. The Cubs no longer have a shot at the division and must win this game and hope for Virden to lose to Charleswood to advance. Despite their slim chances, the Cubs will lay it on the line here all the same. The hatred runs deep between these teams and depriving Chino of a bye would make the extra bumps and bruises of an all-out effort worthwhile. When these teams met in Week Three, Chino won the game but lost Prescott for 9 weeks on a controversial hit by B.J. Hill. That alone is enough motivation, as if they needed any more, for the Convicts to give it all they have to bury the Cubs. They will be trusting Teddy Bridgewater to exact that revenge. That has fans nervous as the Convicts' back-up turned in a rough performance in relief last week against Seattle and is being blamed for the loss. His recent penchant for throwing picks could blow this game up in a hurry, especially if the Cubs reduce the number of possession opportunities by leveraging the most efficient run

game in the league, at 5.7 yards per carry. Chino remains grim after letting the game get away from them last week. The Cubs aren't happy either. This is a grudge match with playoffs at stake; expect Russell to make the difference. **PICK: IOWA CITY**

### **BROOKLIN @ PICKERING (line – SPARTANS by 3)**

**INJURIES: Brooklin** – Xavier McKinney (QUESTIONABLE), Randall Cobb (DOUBTFUL), Ronnie Harrison Jr (DOUBTFUL), Golden Tate (DOUBTFUL), Drue Tranquill (OUT), Brandon Williams (OUT); **Pickering** – Denzel Ward (DOUBTFUL), Kyle Dugger (OUT), Jayron Kearsse (OUT).

Pickering can make this simple for themselves by just winning and clinching the top wildcard spot outright. Likewise, the Hawks are in with a win. If the Hawks lose, they are eliminated, one way or the other. Losing complicates the situation for Pickering but they still advance if York loses to Budapest. A loss coupled with a York victory, however, knocks them out as the intra-division three-way tie-breaker is unkind to them. Both coaches are already scouring the game film from their Week Six match searching for clues to victory. The Hawks controlled the pace of play in that contest but a devastating pick-six for the Spartans stole a possession and a score to tilt the balance in their favour. DeAndre Hopkins got his catches then, but was held to less than 10 yards per reception by a sticky Xavien Howard. Austin Ekeler did not play in that game; expect the unsung all-purpose back to play a key role in moving the Brooklin offence here. For the Spartans, ball control on offence will be the key. They will not ask Philip Rivers to do too much but he needs to deliver when they do, or the game could easily get away from them. Never doubt the Hawks with their wings to the wall. **PICK: BROOKLIN**

### **LAS VEGAS @ SEATTLE (line – ASSASSINS by 2)**

**INJURIES: Las Vegas** – Yannick Ngakoue (PROBABLE), Marcus Williams (PROBABLE), Akhelo Witherspoon (QUESTIONABLE), Andrew Beck (OUT); **Seattle** – Corey Peters (QUESTIONABLE), Cam Akers (DOUBTFUL), Josiah Deguara (OUT), Janoris Jenkins (OUT), Devin White (OUT).

The Assassins salvaged one last shot at the division and assured themselves of a wildcard berth by beating the Cubs last week. They still need some help to secure the division and a bye. First, they must end an amazing five-game Seattle win streak here then hope for help from the Cubs against Chino. Should they lose this game, they are locked in to a wildcard spot with a possible home date dependent on the result of Charleswood-Virden. The Pilots, eliminated long ago, have been playing playoff-grade football the past five weeks. They are enjoying their spoiler role, which they played to perfection against Chino last week. They enter the game mostly healthy but missing their sparkplug on defence, Janoris Jenkins, who has a knack for turning games around. Back in Week 3, the Pilots put a scare into the Assassins with a 4<sup>th</sup> quarter surge that erased a two-TD deficit before finally losing on a field goal. Since then, Seattle has learned how to finish and the Assassins have struggled. This is no gimme, as the line from the Sand Sages suggests. The Assassins may be emotionally drained after their narrow escape last week. The Pilots are having fun and have nothing to lose. Expect the upset. **PICK: SEATTLE**

### **VIRDEN @ CHARLESWOOD (line – Pick 'Em)**

**INJURIES: Virden** – Lane Johnson (QUESTIONABLE), Keleche Osemele (QUESTIONABLE), John Brown (DOUBTFUL), Marcus Peters (DOUBTFUL), Nasir Adderley (OUT), Isaiah Buggs (OUT), Dee Ford (OUT), Chris Harris Jr (OUT), Kevin King (OUT); **Charleswood** – Jalen Mills (PROBABLE), Brandon Linder (OUT).

Week 16 comes down to a simple win-and-you're-in scenario for the Violators. If they lose, they will need help from Chino to push the Cubs out of the picture; otherwise, they are out. Given their horrendous injury reports this year, it is a minor miracle they are still in the playoff hunt. It would be a major miracle, except they have one of the great offensive weapons on their side, Patrick Mahomes, who has found a way to overcome the wavering performance of a patchwork team from week-to-week on his way to 41 TD passes and a 115.5 passer rating on the year so far. With the season potentially on the line, Mahomes faces his near-equal in DeShaun Watson, who has benefitted from a fully-stocked arsenal of weapons at the skill positions on offence to guide the Pats into the no.1 overall seed in the Pacific Conference. They are locked into that spot, causing analysts to debate how long, or even if, the starters will play. It is for this reason that the wisemen of the wasteland in Nevada are flipping a coin on the outcome. When the teams met in Week 1, the outcome rested on one kicker making a field-goal and the other one missing in overtime. It should be just as close this time. **PICK: VIRDEN**

## **GAMES OF NOTE**

### **SCARBOROUGH @ SEBASTIAN (line – SWORDFISH by 9)**

**INJURIES: Scarborough** – Steve McLendon (PROBABLE), Jamison Crowder (DOUBTFUL), Joe Burrow (OUT), Chris Carson (OUT), Cameron Dantzler (OUT), Myles Gaskin (OUT); **Sebastian** – Mitchell Schwartz (DOUBTFUL), Jordan Akins (OUT), Blake Cashman (OUT), Jordan Jenkins (OUT), Justin Reid (OUT).

The Swordfish are in a manageable match-up here after getting smoked by powerful Durham last week. They remain alive and can advance with a win and York and Brooklin losses. A loss, however, and they are looking for golf courses. They are unlikely to lose. For

a team that has flirted coyly with the 500-line throughout the season, the Swordfish pack a potent punch, putting fear into teams twice their size because of it. Their defence is a problem, as was amply demonstrated when these teams combined for 84 points back in Week 5 in one of the most dramatic ties ever witnessed. Joe Burrow was at the helm for Scarborough in that game, but he is now out for the season. In his place, Drew Lock will attempt to keep pace with Kirk Cousins in one last bid to ruin somebody's season. Lock showed flashes of sharpshooter trying to ruin Cowtown's season last week, but was undone by 4 interceptions. That is two more picks than the Swordfish defence has all season! If Lock can air it out while avoiding the interception, this could be a better game than many think. However, with the Eagles' no.1 and no.2 running backs out, "better" won't likely be good enough. **PICK: SEBASTIAN**

### **COWTOWN @ DURHAM (line – THUNDER LIZARDS by 13)**

**INJURIES:** **Cowtown** – Carlton Davis III (QUESTIONABLE), Todd Gurley II (OUT), Deonte Harris (OUT), Trent Murphy (OUT); **Durham** – Cooper Kupp (PROBABLE), Curtis Samuel (PROBABLE).

With their season on the line, the last team the Corn Kings needed to face was the powerhouse in their division that they somehow found a way to beat back in Week 5 and which has been simmering, waiting to take revenge ever since. In the wake of that surprising upset, the Corn Kings looked like a team on the rise. Then reality hit and knocked them back in the race for a wildcard spot. After dropping a couple of close games against mid-contenders and coming up flat in games they should have won, Cowtown is hobbling toward the finish line, hoping for everyone in front of them to stumble. The path to the playoffs for the Corn Kings is a narrow one. They need a win here, while Sebastian, York and Brooklin all must lose. That scenario will push Cowtown through due to a better conference record. The three losses are plausible; beating Durham a second time is highly unlikely. After struggling to hang on to a huge lead versus Drew Lock last week, dealing with Josh Allen is almost certainly beyond their late-season capabilities. It won't even be close. **PICK: DURHAM**

### **YORK @ BUDAPEST (line – NORTH STARS by 14)**

**INJURIES:** **York** – DeForest Buckner (PROBABLE), Wyatt Teller (PROBABLE), C.J. Henderson (QUESTIONABLE), Adrian Clayborn (OUT), Isaiah Ford (OUT), Rashan Gary (OUT), Dion Jordan (OUT); **Budapest** – None.

Much like Cowtown, the Excaliburs must negotiate their fate with the football gods while trying to overpower one of the strongest teams on the planet. A win and they're in, but boy – what a win it would be! The undefeated North Stars, secure in the no.1 overall seed, will not be content to take a week off to rest and let the Excaliburs push them around in what for them is a meaningless game in the standings. They have their sights set on a perfect season and will do what it takes to get into position to achieve it. Unlike Cowtown, York is not necessarily eliminated with a loss. They enjoy the tie-breaker advantage in an 8-8 draw with Brooklin, should the Swordfish lose to Scarborough and Cowtown lose to Durham. Any other scenario in a loss and they are done. The line is perhaps larger than necessary to hammer home the point that York is up against a wall. Tom Brady counts for something in this fight, not to mention Derrick Henry's ability to grind down a defence. York will need to be perfect to win, but not necessarily perfect to keep it close. **PICK: YORK**

## **HOLIDAY LEFTOVERS**

### **NEW JERSEY @ BUFFALO (line – Pick 'Em)**

**INJURIES:** **New Jersey** – Jedrick Wills Jr (PROBABLE), Kwon Alexander (QUESTIONABLE), David Montgomery (OUT), Andrew Norwell (OUT); **Buffalo** – Bradley Chubb (QUESTIONABLE), Jaycee Horn (DOUBTFUL), Ty Johnson (OUT), Auden Tate (OUT).

I admit surprise when I saw this non-line out of the Desert. It seems the odds-makers have given up on trying to make sense of these teams. On one hand, I understand. Neither has lived up to expectations and strange things tend to happen when they play. But to me, the current three-game slide of the Wrecking Balls does not approach the five-game cliff dive by the Derailers for sheer travesty. Last week Buffalo got on the scoreboard in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter vs Bruxelles for the first time since Week 12, but found themselves down 36-6 at half time. Lamar Jackson had another terrible game through the air and the defence was put in too many bad positions to be effective. The Wrecking Balls looked sloppy last week in a loss, but there was coherence to their game plan and they managed to stabilize after a terrible start. There is no doubt in my mind which team is less bad than the other. Don't even blink. **PICK: NEW JERSEY**

### **COBB COUNTY @ BRUXELLES (line – COYOTES by 3)**

**INJURIES:** **Cobb County** – None; **Bruxelles** – Elijah Mitchell (QUESTIONABLE), Drew Brees (OUT), O.J. Howard (OUT), Jordan Phillips (OUT), Robert Quinn (OUT), Jamaal Williams (OUT).

The Coyotes are healthy and might want to stay that way heading into the post-season, so expect a few of their better players to sit this one out. They really have nothing to gain by risking injury except perhaps for keeping starters loose with a bit of action before heading into the bye. The Bombers announced that Drew Brees is out for this game. That likely means we will never see him on an EFL field again and Bombers fans had better get used to the sight of Jared Goff. The heir apparent, or placeholder for some unknown future heir apparent, was not asked to do much against Buffalo last week but still drew blood, with 3 TD passes in 18 pass attempts. Expect Goff to come out looking for something to prove. After all, he is auditioning for a job next year. **PICK: BRUXELLES**

## TWIN CITIES @ PEG CITY (line – Pick ‘Em)

**INJURIES:** **Twin Cities** – Carlos Basham Jr (PROBABLE), Darnell Savage (PROBABLE), DJ Moore (DOUBTFUL), Bless Austin (OUT), Jordyn Brooks (OUT), Kenny Clark (OUT), Tae Crowder (OUT). **Peg City** – Chandler Jones (PROBABLE), Ryan Kelly (PROBABLE), Le’Veon Bell (QUESTIONABLE), Kendrick Greene (QUESTIONABLE), Saquon Barkley (OUT), Juston Burris (OUT), Tarik Cohen (OUT), Ashtyn Davis (OUT), Tre Flowers (OUT), Davon Godchaux (OUT), Courtland Sutton (OUT).

Last week saw the long-awaited debut of The Anointed One behind center for Twin Cities and the team responded with a solid, if ultimately doomed effort, against the Pats. This week, Trevor Lawrence stands on more even ground against another rookie QB in Mac Jones. The latter has experienced a trial by fire trying to lead the youngest and still the most blundering team in the league and likely sees himself as the top dog rookie now. No doubt, the Crusaders think that they can take down the Triumph, even though their injury report is the longest it has been all year (they could enter the game with just four offensive linemen and one running back). The Triumph are also banged up, but as this otherwise forgettable season winds down those that remain feel part of a new era. I agree with the bigwigs in Nevada that this game is a toss up on paper. But I am not discounting the energy that comes with new hope. **PICK: TWIN CITIES**

## OSHAWA @ GEORGIA (line – GLADIATORS by 3)

**INJURIES:** **Oshawa** – Davante Adams (PROBABLE), Jeffery Simmons (QUESTIONABLE), Denico Autry (OUT), Marcus Davenport (OUT), Julian Edelman (OUT); **Georgia** – Kristian Fulton (PROBABLE), Malcom Brown (OUT), Kelvin Joseph (OUT), Maurkice Pouncey (OUT).

The season can’t end fast enough for the Pink Panthers. They enter the season’s final week bearing the emotional weight of an eight-game losing streak. They are capable of losing to anybody right now, as their Week 14 loss to Peg City attests. The Gladiators aren’t just anybody. They have some capable players on their roster and a lot of recent experience playing in meaningless late season games. Unable to differentiate Week 16 from Week 8, the Glads will give it their best effort and perhaps a little extra just to twist the knife into the team that bedeviled them and the South Division for so long. Yes, Oshawa has future hall-of-famers on its roster and pride, etc. It’s all blah blah at this stage as the players checked out long ago. Did I say the season can’t end fast enough for the Pink Panthers? **PICK: GEORGIA**

## ERIEAU @ EAST ELMHURST (line – IRISH by 12)

**INJURIES:** **Erieau** – Maurice Hurst (QUESTIONABLE), Henry Ruggs III (OUT); **East Elmhurst** – Micah Parsons (OUT).

The Irish cannot move out of the no.3 seed and won’t risk injury to any secretly hurting starters by putting them on the field to beat a team their back-ups could handle. So, expect a few well-known names to sit. Baker Mayfield won’t be one of them. He has stated he wants to play and he will probably get his wish, if only to just warm up for the playoffs against a pretty good sparring partner in Erieau’s defence, a group that held East Elmhurst to just 14 points in Week 3. The Cadillac are coming off one of their strongest defensive showings of the season in blanking the Glads last week. They hope to build on that performance to establish an identity on defence because, Lord knows, they have none on offence apart from whatever Kyler Murray brings – which hasn’t been much. **PICK: EAST ELMHURST**



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*This Week in EFL History*  
*With Professor Sterling Smitherman*

FROM THE EFL ARCHIVES – Week 15 of the 2015 EFL season was the week the EFL quietly admitted defeat in its EFL Asia project. The league decided to pull the plug on funding and sponsorship after the disappearance of the Pyongyang Sun and its coaching staff, led by prospective Corvallis Creeping Death owner, **Pat Crew**, in North Korea. This, and other problems, had turned the league into a high-risk, low-reward endeavor. Therefore, EFL Asia ended after five weeks, never to be resurrected. This experience did not deter the league from expanding to Europe 2 years later which just goes to show how stubborn the Committee can be.

In actual EFL action, Gwinnett narrowly survived an incredible comeback attempt by the Spartans to prevail, 29-27 and eliminate Pickering from the post-season. The Glads were starting to celebrate, up 29-7 with 3:52 left, when out of nowhere the Spartans put up 20 points on an 89-yard kickoff return TD by **Adam ‘Pacman’ Jones**, a TD pass from **Philip Rivers** to **Scott Chandler**, a recovered onside kick followed by an incredible 52-yard bomb to **Jordan Cameron** to make it 29-27 with 0:21 left. Needing just atwo-point convert to tie, Glads’ safety, **Morgan Burnett** came up big, swatting away a pass intended for Chandler to preserve the incredible win.

The Defensive and Offensive Players of the Week both came from the Mustangs in their 37-10 mauling of the Regulators. **Arian Foster** led the Aurora offence with 213 yards and 2 TDs, while **JJ Watt** guarded the trenches with 5 tackles, 3 sacks, 2 passes defended and a forced fumble.

With one Week remaining after Week 15, only one wildcard berth had not been decided. That last spot would come down to a winner-take-all Week 16 game between evenly matched Cowtown and Scarborough, both 8-7 after Week 15. The Cubs would be battling the Convicts for the right to improve their seeding. That was all for end of Week 15 drama in 2015.