

The League of Doom

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MAJOR DIVISIONAL REALIGNMENT

Three Divisions of Four Teams Each

Old Rivalries Rekindled, Regular Season Extended, and Playoff Format Changed

By **BLOXX WAPP**, Contributor

YOUR LIVING ROOM COUCH – There was a surprise divisional realignment the night of Saturday, August 9th. It is very, very exciting! It was the third time this had happened in league history. The first one was in 2013, to make things more balanced. The second was in 2014 because of the expansion.

The League of Doom now has three divisions, and each one has four owners. These new divisions are the Pirates Division, the Ninjas Division, and the Zombies

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Division. Each team will play its division opponents twice per season, and each team will play all the other teams once.

The Pirates Division includes Chris, Ned, Stef, and Will. Colin was removed, and Chris and Will were added. This restores parts of the old Pirates Division of 2011 and 2012. Only Sam and Other Sam are missing from the old division. Thanks to the change, old rivals Chris and Ned will play each other twice a season again. Unfortunately, this means that the Colin and Ned rivalry will go back to a once per season game, unless they meet in the playoffs.

The Ninjas Division has Colin, Jaime, Jason, and Zakk. Colin was added. This move brings most of the old Ninjas Division back together, other than Eric. This restores the rivalries between Colin and Jaime and Colin and Jason.

The Zombies Division owners are Eric, Meredith, Sam, and Other Sam. Eric was added.

The Robots Division, which had included Chris, Eric, and Will, was totally broken up. This is sad because Eric and Will had a growing rivalry, but maybe they can still meet in the postseason!

Overall, the division change means that there will be a little bit more rivalry games during the regular season, which should be very, very great.

Also because of these moves, the schedule for the season will change. Instead of thirteen weeks of regular season games, there will be fourteen weeks of regular season games. This means that there will be a whole extra week of games that matter. That's six more games! It's a really exciting prospect.

The postseason will now happen in weeks fifteen and sixteen of the regular NFL season. There will be just four playoff teams. The division winner from each division will make the playoffs, and there will also be one wild card team. That means that the competition for the playoff spots will be even more fierce!

It also means that only the best teams in the league will make the playoffs. No more losing teams in the postseason! So there will never again be a fiasco like there was in 2013, when a losing team (Chris' Catonsville Hell Bound) won Gumby Bowl III. Hopefully it will also avoid a result like there was in 2015, when the whole Pirates Division had a losing record and the division leader (Colin's Saltney-Crundle Fantasy Cricket) made the playoffs with a sad 6-7 record.

Reports say that this change was Colin's idea which he suggested in an interview with *Times-Chronic Picayune* writer Hamrik Zink. (See page eight of this issue. – Ed.) "I think too many teams make the playoffs . . .," said Colin. "I'd rather see three divisions of four teams each, the division winners make the playoffs and

then you have one wild card team. A third of the teams in the league making it is plenty,” he said.

The League Managers must have been listening, because they asked the owners about the idea soon after the interview ended. When asked about the possible change, everyone seemed to really, really like the plan.

Eric said, “Yeah sure. I think the number of divisions is high anyway.”

“Sure, sounds good,” said Jason.

Will said, “Sounds good.”

“Sounds good to me,” Meredith said.

Seeing that the new idea sounded good, the League Managers approved the change. Their spokes-creature, Cho’tught the Obedient, announced the change on Saturday night. It also writes for this newspaper, so it was approached for more insight.

“There have always been three divisions, yes,” said Cho’tught the Obedient. “There always will be. You merely perceive there to be a difference because of the limited perspective afforded you due to your insignificant, mortal shells.”

“The League never changes, no,” he added.

Hopefully, these changes will restore some of the glory of the good old days. It is hard to deny that the awesome, close battles of the early Gumby Bowls, especially the legendary Gumby Bowl II, when Ned beat Jason by only 5.8 points, were way, way better than the blowouts of the last few seasons.

Back then, the great rivalries were created. Sam and Other Sam! Colin and Jaime! Ned and Chris! The more often you play an opponent, the more you hate them and the harder you compete when you face off. Maybe we will see even more rivalries appear in the next few seasons!

It’s always very, very good when things change, but you also respect tradition.

These moves will keep the League of Doom as the “number one seed” out of all the fantasy football leagues!



DRAFT TIME CHANGED

Draft to Start at 2:30 PM, August 28th

By SAFFRON CANDYSPRINKLER, Contributor

AN ISOLATED AND PEACEFUL GROTTO – So, like, the draft time has changed.

And you're like, "Wait, when did we set the draft time? Was I even aware that the draft time had been set?"

But dig this – and don't come all unglued – but actually, yes, the draft time had been set.

I know, way out, right?

Apparently the draft was supposed to be 1:00 PM on Sunday, August 28th. But now it's going to be at 2:30 PM on Sunday, August 28th.

And it's like, 2:30 PM? That's far out, I guess. More time to scarf down some lunch before the draft.

All you cats and skirts have been encouraged to get in touch with the League Managers if you can't make the draft, or the time doesn't work for you. They already know Colin can't make it, but he'll be phoning it in – like, literally!

Hope every has a gas at the draft. Namaste!



SPOTLIGHT GAMES

The Most Anticipated Games of the Season

By **ALCYONE BALFOUR**, Contributor

ATOP YOUR MOM – There are going to be more than 80 fantasy football games in the regular season alone this year, and you're only going to be involved in fourteen of them. How in the world do you decide which games you should pay attention to?

Well, that's why I'm here. Or at least that is why Toadelbow told me to write this article. Here is your definitive, week-by-week guide to the games that will matter the most. (You should also, probably, pay attention to the games involving other teams in your division, and keep track of tie-breakers and stuff, but that sounds pretty boring.)

Week One (Sept. 8-12): In a week full of rivalry games, choosing just one is pretty much arbitrary. So, arbitrarily, the biggest game this week is between archrivals Jaime and Jason in the Ninjas Division. They have played each other nine times, and Jason currently leads the series, 5-4.

Week Two (Sept. 15-19): There are a bunch of rivalry games this week, too, but did you know that Eric has only beaten Other Sam once in five tries? Eric gets another chance this week, when Other Sam comes into town for a visit. Statistically, Eric still has an 80% chance of losing.

Week Three (Sept. 22-26): Speaking of Other Sam, this week includes one of those games that you've all been waiting for: Sam Bowl XI. Sam and Other Sam have played each other ten times, and each has won five games. Will Other Sam remain Other Sam, or will the titles change?

Week Four (Sept. 29-Oct. 3): Jason and Ned face off for the tenth time this week. Their rivalry has been a bit one sided – Ned has won six of their nine games, including Gumby Bowl II, the closest Gumby Bowl ever – but it's still a remarkable number of games played considering they've never been in the same division.

Week Five (Oct. 6-Oct. 10): Will plays against Eric this week. It certainly *feels* like they should be rivals, for whatever reason. They have played against each other ten times, after all. Will has won eight of those ten games, though, so it's probably only a rivalry from Eric's perspective. The smart money's on Will for this one.

Week Six (Oct. 13-Oct. 17): In the NFL, the season opener is often a Super Bowl rematch. Not so much in the League of Doom. This week sees a rematch of last year's Gumby Bowl, between Chris and Other Sam, which more people will pay attention to than they did the Gumby Bowl itself. In their nine games, Chris has only beaten Other Sam twice, so the result will probably be the same as it was in the Gumby Bowl: another win by Other Sam.

Week Seven (Oct. 20-Oct. 24): Eric and Zakk played against each other in the first ever Race to the Bottom™ Bowl, before it even had that name. (Zakk won.) Eric was also in the Race to the Bottom™ Bowl II, and Zakk was in the Race to the Bottom™ Bowl IV. (No one else has been to more than one.) Are we going to see a preview of the Race to the Bottom™ Bowl VI this week? Does anyone really care?

Week Eight (Oct. 27-Oct. 31): Ned and Colin play each other this week; they sort of have a rivalry. They've played eight games, and Ned leads the series, 5-3. This will be the first season since 2012 when Ned won't be distracted by law school, so maybe he will be **SCARY** good like he used to be. But probably not. **HAPPY HALLOWEEN!**

Week Nine (Nov. 3-Nov. 7): We've got another Gumby Bowl rematch this week – Gumby Bowl IV this time. Colin versus Will. Yup. That's happening.

Week Ten (Nov. 10-Nov. 14): Um. So, there's nothing interesting happening this week. By the time we get here, there will almost certainly be a game worth paying attention to, which will be nice. As it is, Jason and Will are playing each other this week; they've played each other eight times, and each won four games. But there's no real rivalry there. Yawn.

Week Eleven (Nov. 17-Nov. 21): I swear things get more interesting in the next three weeks. This week, um, we've got Colin playing Other Sam; Colin has a 6-2 record against Other Sam, so if Other Sam is aware of that, he'll probably want to win this one, I guess.

Week Twelve (Nov. 24-Nov. 28): I'd thank God for the fact that we're back to interesting games this week, but there is no God and life has no meaning, so what's the point? There are a bunch of rivalry and divisional games this week, but let's focus on the matchup between Ned and Chris. They're in the same division, they've played each other nine times, and Ned has won five of those games – including a playoff matchup. If that's not a rivalry, I don't know what is.

Week Thirteen (Dec. 1-Dec. 5): By now, the playoff picture will be coalescing, and we have another week full of big-deal games. Long-time divisional foes Jason and Colin face off this week; Jason has a 6-3 record against Colin, and the Ninjas Division crown might hang in the balance here.

Week Fourteen (Dec. 8-Dec. 12): This is the last week of the regular season, and every game is a divisional game, so the competition will be quite fierce. If last week doesn't determine the winner of the Ninjas Division, this week will: Colin and Jaime face off in the season finale. They have played against one another ten times, and split the wins between them.

And there you go; fourteen weeks of spotlight games. It would be fun to look back at this list at the end of the season and see which matchups turned out to be the most exciting, but no one will, because no one read this far. ★

COLIN LIDSTON, ZEN MASTER OF FANTASY FOOTBALL

An Exclusive Interview with the Gumby Bowl IV Champion

By HAMRIK ZINK, Contributor

MANHATTAN – Colin Lidston is unassuming when you meet him. His build is slight, and he’s just a touch below average height. His dark auburn hair is unkempt, and an untidy mustache graces his upper lip. He’s wearing a striped button down shirt with a missing button, and a pair of Banana Republic khakis. He tells me that khakis are part of who he is; he went to prep school, after all. He gives off an insouciant air that belies his sharp mind.

This Baltimore-born, Brooklyn-dwelling Master of Fine Arts is an elementary school art teacher and the creator of *The Age of Elves* comic series. He is also the most dependably successful team owner in the history of the League of Doom.

Colin has the second most regular season wins, with 37, and the second highest regular season win percentage, at .552. (He shares both of these records with Other Sam.) He is one of only three owners to win 11 or more games in the regular season, along with Ned and Sam. He has the most division championships, having won the Ninjas Division in 2011 and the Pirates Division in 2014 and 2015. He has the most playoff appearances, making the postseason every year except for 2013. He is in a four-way tie for the second most playoff games played, along with Jason, Ned, and Will. His consistent string of victories has been nothing short of remarkable.

And what is the secret to his consistency? “I don’t do very much preparation,”

This is the paradox of Colin: he is an extraordinarily successful fantasy owner, and yet he seems to succeed effortlessly, putting the bare minimum amount of thought into what he does so very well.

* * *

Colin roared onto the fantasy football scene in 2011 as one of the ten original owners in the League of Doom. His first team, Al Davis’s Fifth Horcrux, won 11 games – the most in the league – and was the first-ever Ninjas Division champion. He used the first overall draft pick to select Adrian Peterson, and rode the Minnesota running back all the way to the playoffs, scoring the third most points in the league

on the way. However, Peterson's ankle injury devastated the Fifth Horcrux at the worst possible time, and Colin lost to Jaime in the first round of the playoffs.

He also feels "kind of" bad about killing Al Davis that year.

In 2012, his Vile Bodies team came in second in the Ninjas Division, after drafting Ray Rice third overall. Again, he lost in the first round of the playoffs to another owner from his division; this time, it was Jason, who vanquished him on the way to the Gumby Bowl.

In addition to drafting Ray Rice, Colin also drafted Michael Vick that year. Given that he drafted Adrian Peterson the year before, one might wonder about Colin's attitudes towards women, dogs, and children. He says that he loves women, and he probably would like dogs if he had grown up with one. Children, on the other hand, he hates. "I don't like [children] because of their appetite for cruelty, their huge heads and tiny, clasping hands, [and] the gracelessness of their movement," he explains.

His picks were less controversial the following season, but 2013 would turn out to be Colin's absolute worst fantasy season. That year, his Points on the Package team finished last in the Ninjas Division and last in the league overall, having scored the least points out of all of the teams. He finished the season on a seven-game losing streak, the longest of his fantasy football career. He went on to receive the Race to the Bottom™ "Winner" trophy, losing the Race to the Bottom™ Bowl by over 40 points, still a record.

Characteristically, he takes that terrible season in stride. When asked what happened, he says, "I don't know. From what I remember, everyone on that team was healthy and nobody panned out." His apathy is palpable.

* * *

Colin has an interesting take on the game for which he has demonstrated so much talent. "Fantasy football is a random number generator, and I think all that time that it's not possible to be 'good' at it in a way that's meaningful," he muses.

His attitude towards fantasy football is reminiscent of the Taoist concept of *wu wei*, which can be translated as "action without action" or "effortless doing." In the parlance of our times, Colin goes with the flow. And he wins.

"If I have a strength," he ponders, "It's that I don't get too high with the highs or too low with the lows. It's much more horrible to lose than it is fun to win, but I

just try to remember that I drafted these guys for a reason and not make rash decisions about what's working and what isn't."

He readily admits to certain weaknesses in his thinking. He feels like he can't escape the now-outdated mindset that running backs are the most important position in fantasy football. (He has drafted running backs with his first pick four out of five drafts.) He doesn't watch the waiver wire closely enough, falling for "the first name that's hot this week." He keeps getting stuck with "a shit leftover tight end" every year. He feels like he isn't very good at predicting quarterback success, which is why he drafted Peyton Manning in 2011, Michael Vick in 2012, Colin Kaepernick in 2013, and Robert Griffin III in 2014. (He went on to drop Manning, Vick, and Griffin, and describes his selections of Kaepernick and Griffin in particular as "brutal.")

But even his weaknesses turn into strengths. In 2011, he picked up Cam Newton from waivers. In 2012, he picked up Andy Dalton from free agency. And in 2014, he drafted Tony Romo as his backup quarterback in the ninth round; all three started for him in the playoffs. He has never drafted a quarterback higher than the fourth round, so he's never been truly hurt by poor quarterback play.

"I think the quarterback position is overvalued," he opines. "It's easy enough to find, in the later rounds and on waivers, someone who can start at quarterback for you and not kill you. He won't be Rodgers or Brady, but he'll be fine."

This approach is reflected in his general draft strategy. He doesn't spend much time planning the draft, and typically makes cautious, conservative selections. "I think in terms of limiting my exposure to players who are really, really bad," he explains. "My feeling has been – and it really is a feeling in that it's supported by my impression of numbers rather than actual numbers – that someone like Rodgers or Gronkowski doesn't do enough at a position that you only have to start one of, to offset the WRs and RBs you'll have playing for you. Of course, I might be wrong. When setting line-ups, I try not to outsmart myself, and unless there's some really compelling matchup reason, I start the guy who's scored more points or that I drafted higher."

Colin's risk-averse nature is especially apparent in his view of trades. In five seasons, he has never once executed a trade. When asked why he is so reluctant to make trades, he says, "It's really hard to know what's going to happen, and you have the feeling that you'd just be swapping one vulnerability for another, if it's a big-name player, or one WR that you can't predict week-to-week for another . . . how fucked-up would you feel if you traded away the marginal guy that hits this year for some other marginal guy?"

* * *

Following the disastrous 2013 season, Colin was transferred into the Pirates Division to accommodate the expanding league. He broke from tradition to draft a wide receiver, Demaryius Thomas, with his first pick, and drafted his top running back, DeMarco Murray, in the second round. He went on to draft Emmanuel Sanders, Demaryius Thomas' teammate in Denver, and Tony Romo, DeMarco Murray's teammate in Dallas. Drafting two wide receivers from the same team was intentional. "Taking Emmanuel Sanders after I had Demaryius Thomas was a conscious decision to buy into Peyton's air show, which I thought would be very successful and have free reign, football today being what it is," he clarifies.

"Very successful" would be an understatement. Thomas was the number two wide receiver in all of fantasy football that year; Sanders was number six. DeMarco Murray, a pick that Colin says was just luck, was the number two running back. Romo was only the eleventh-ranked quarterback for the season, but he was on fire during the fantasy playoffs, when it really mattered.

Colin's team that season, the Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Homo Sapiens (a name which Colin says "is a comment on the kind of disassociation I think is necessary to watch [football] and enjoy it."), scored the second most points in the league, winning Colin a career-high six games in a row on the way. They won the Pirates Division, earning Colin a first round bye in the playoffs. In the second round, he faced off against former division-foe Jason, winning by less than three points in order to finally make it into the Gumby Bowl.

Gumby Bowl IV was an utter annihilation. Colin beat Will's Trailer Park Wolf Spirit 141.3 to 97.5, the biggest blowout in Gumby Bowl history at the time. It was only Colin's third highest scoring game of the season. That offseason, he won the Bill Parcells Memorial Trophy for Most Improved Team. I asked him what was more satisfying – being one of the few owners to win 11 games in the regular season, or winning the Gumby Bowl. Without hesitation, he replied, "The Gumby Bowl, definitely. Even though the rest of the league had tuned out by then, I know what we accomplished."

The following season was almost necessarily a letdown – although a letdown for Colin still meant a playoff berth. His Saltney-Crundle Fantasy Cricket won the Pirates Division once again, despite a 6-7 record. (The rest of the teams in the division were just 5-8.) He was sixth in points scored, having fallen into his old habit of

drafting a running back in the first round. (It should be noted he didn't take a quarterback until the sixth round, but the quarterback he took, Cam Newton, turned out to be NFL MVP, so a quarterback selection finally panned out for Colin.) Once again, Colin lost in the first round of the playoffs, this time to Meredith.

And now Colin prepares for the sixth season of the League of Doom. He has the first overall pick in the draft, as he did back in 2011. (When asked about the evidence that the draft order may be fixed, Colin dodged the question, and would neither confirm nor deny any knowledge of a conspiracy. Regarding the sources of these rumors, he says, "These people, I don't know what their problem is. I worry about where people get information." It is intriguing that one of the most successful owners, and an apparent beneficiary of the draft order this year, is so evasive and dismissive about the possibility of corruption at the highest levels of the league.)

He says that he expects "to have a good season," in a typically understated way. He has been reunited with his old Ninjas Division rivals, Jaime and Jason, which should make the season a little more meaningful for him. He sees Jaime as his primary rival; he says that he gets "a little more emotionally invested in 'Jaime Week.'" He won't be facing off against Ned as frequently this year, an owner whose long relationship with Colin makes their matches a little more emotional. However, he's "always happy to play Jason, because he's a good dude," so Colin will have more opportunities to have rivals this season than he has since 2013.

(Colin insisted that I write "Hi Jason!" at some point in this profile. And so I have.)

Reflecting on fantasy football in general, Colin seems of a bittersweet mind. "Naming the team is my favorite part of the fantasy season. It's all downhill from here," he says wistfully. He puts a lot of work into his team names, and the actual season seems to engage him less. (His team this season will be Barkevious Mingo, since his first choice, Southern Motherfucking Democratic-Republicans, did not fit into ESPN's name field.)

He sees the NFL as shifting towards what he calls "basketball on grass," and bemoans the fact that a viewer can no longer tell "what is or isn't pass interference." He finds the defenseless receiver rule to be a "hollow gesture," and thinks contemporary football games are "heavy with referees deliberating about what just happened." He feels like the game itself may be getting a little worse. He also laments the phenomenon of his fellow fantasy owners "kind of check[ing] out, especially late in the season or if their team isn't doing very well."

Nonetheless, he misses seeing everyone wearing purple on Fridays, and waxes nostalgic about Baltimore sports radio. “In Baltimore you could be listening to sports talk radio at night, and the caller could have his mouth full of Juicy Fruits when he comes on the air, and then the next caller could be Ed Reed.”

He left me with a quote from the Enchiridion of Epictetus, which encapsulates his entire perspective on fantasy football: “Do not seek to have events happen as you want them to, but instead want them to happen as they do happen, and your life will go well.” ★

EXPLORING THE NEW DIVISIONS

What Can We Expect from Each Division After the Realignment?

By TIMMY O'BRIEN, Intern

THE BOILER ROOM – A division realignment is more than just an arbitrary rearrangement. Given that each team plays its in-division opponents twice, and the out-of-division opponents only once, it has a huge impact on an owner's chances of success.

Each division has its own, unique dynamic, with established rivalries and expected difficulties. Here is the *Times-Chronicle Picayune's* analysis of each division.

Pirates Division: The Pirates Division consists of Chris (34-33, .507 in the regular season; three playoff appearances, two Gumby Bowl appearances, one Gumby Bowl win), Ned (38-29, .567, three playoff appearances, two Gumby Bowl appearances, two Gumby Bowl wins), Will (34-33, .507; three playoff appearances, one Gumby Bowl appearances), and Stef (11-15, .423).

This is likely to be the powerhouse division. Its owners have the highest combined regular season win percentage, the most Gumby Bowl appearances, and the most Gumby Bowl wins.

However, the division is also quite top heavy, with Chris and Ned carrying much of the weight for the other owners. They are the only owners to have appearances in more than one Gumby Bowl, and are tied for second most playoff appearances overall.

Internally, the Pirates Division boasts a couple of rivalries. Chris and Ned have played nine games against each other; Ned leads the series, 5-4. Chris and Will have also played nine games against each other, with Chris leading that series 3-6.

Ned has the best record against in-division opponents (13-6, .684), and Stef has the worst (3-7, .300). Chris also has a winning record in-division (.571), and Will a losing in-division record (.353).

This places Stef and Will in difficult positions, having to fight two perennial powerhouses in order to come out on top. If trends hold true, this division will likely go either to Chris or Ned, with their Week Twelve matchup possibly determining the division winner.

Ninjas Division: The Ninjas Division includes Colin (37-30, .552 in the regular season; four playoff appearances, one Gumby Bowl appearance, one Gumby Bowl win), Jaime (31-36, .463; three playoff appearances, one Gumby Bowl appearance), Jason (35-32, .522; three playoff appearances, one Gumby Bowl appearance), and Zakk (31-36, .463; one playoff appearance).

This may be the most competitive division. Each owner in the division has played at least seven games against each other owner, and, shockingly, every matchup except one is within one game of .500. (The one exception: Jason is 6-3 against Colin.)

The Ninjas Division owners have the smallest variance out of all the divisions when it comes to in-division games; Jason has the best record, at 15-11 (.577), and Colin has the worst, at 11-15 (.423), so it is really anyone's division to win.

This division also boasts the most total playoff appearances, at eleven, and a surprisingly balanced 134-134 overall record.

If history is any indication, the Ninjas Division will come down to the last three weeks of the regular season, when each owner plays every other owner, and there's a good chance that the number two team in the division will lock up the only available wild card spot.

Zombies Division: The owners in the Zombies Division are Eric (24-43, .358 regular season record; one playoff appearance, one Gumby Bowl appearance), Meredith (14-12, .538; one playoff appearance), Other Sam (37-30, .552; two playoff appearances, one Gumby Bowl appearance, one Gumby Bowl win), and Sam (35-32, .522; two playoff appearances).

This is the weakest division, with the worst combined record and the least playoff appearances. However, these owners, for the most part, have only limited exposure to one another, and several have been gradually improving over the last few seasons, so things could change this year.

There is really only one rivalry in the division: Sam and Other Sam, who have a 5-5 all-time record against each other. (Sam and Eric have played eight times, but Sam has won all eight games, so that's not really a rivalry.)

Meredith and the Sams all have winning records against in-division opponents, while Eric has an abysmal 2-13 against other Zombies Division owners, promising quite a challenge for him in the upcoming season.

It is exceedingly difficult to project who might win the Zombies Division; history suggests a three-way competition between Meredith and the Sams, so once again, we're likely to see things come down to the wire. ★