

hope for. Four out of seven games were decided by 6.6 points or less. Even the biggest blowout still saw the losing team score within 75% of the winning team. Only four teams failed to score 100 points. There was a (somewhat disappointing) rivalry game and there were six divisional games. There were a minimal number of significant injuries to key players. All in all, a stupendorific beginning to the season.

Game of the Week: Death Valley Quix Draw (Chris), 102.9 vs. *Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes* (Meredith), 104.1. This one was a real nail-biter. Going into the Monday night games, Meredith led Chris, 90.9 to 81.6, each team had one player remaining, and those players were facing off against each other. Ben Roethlisberger scored 21.3 points for Chris, and DeSean Jackson scored 13.2 points for Meredith. This was *just* enough to give Meredith the win. The matchup saw repeated lead changes right up until the end. To make matters even more nerve-wracking, Meredith is a fan of the Steelers, so her real-world rooting interests

were directly at odds with her fantasy football rooting interests. It turned out that both her teams would go on to win.

Stinker of the Week: Dick Grayson's Bitches (Stef), 75.9 vs. *Schrödinger's Cats* (Ned), 76.3. This game was simply embarrassmentastic. Ned "won," inasmuch as anyone won this game, with a final score of 76.3-75.9. That 0.4-point gap made the difference between the lowest scoring team and the second-lowest scoring team – who happened also to be the third-least efficient and second-least efficient teams, respectively. Between the two teams, just eight players scored in the double digits. Ned's tight end even scored a big fat zero. Fittingly, the matchup was decided by an injury, as Stef's top wide receiver, Keenan Allen, tore his ACL in the middle of his game. To make matters even more boring, the game was decided by the end of Sunday night, so there weren't even any last-minute heroics.

WEEK ONE STATISTICS

Player	Record	Win %	PF	PA	WEff.	MW	Net	Avg. Net/W	Avg. Net/L	PFAB	CMBACK	Diff.	ExW
Bobby	0-1	.000	96.4	103	90%	1	-6.6	-	-6.6	-6.3	0	13	0.42
Chris	0-1	.000	102.9	104.1	100%	0	-1.2	-	-1.2	0.21	0	14	0.49
Colin	1-0	1.000	111.4	82.5	92%	0	28.9	28.9	-	8.71	0	9	0.81
Emily	0-1	.000	113.3	126.7	100%	0	-13	-	-13	10.6	0	3	0.37
Eric	1-0	1.000	130	102.9	89%	0	27.1	27.1	-	27.3	1	2	0.76
Jaime	0-1	.000	82.5	111.4	61%	1	-29	-	-29	-20	0	7	0.19
Jason	1-0	1.000	107.1	105.1	94%	0	2	2	-	4.41	0	8	0.52
Meredith	1-0	1.000	104.1	102.9	88%	0	1.2	1.2	-	1.41	0	5	0.51
Ned	1-0	1.000	76.3	75.9	78%	0	0.4	0.4	-	-26	0	10	0.51
Sam D.	1-0	1.000	126.7	113.3	89%	0	13.4	13.4		24	0	4	0.63
Sam M.	0-1	.000	102.9	130	84%	0	-27	-	-27	0.21	0	1	0.24
Stef	0-1	.000	75.9	76.3	80%	1	-0.4	-	-0.4	-27	0	11	0.49
Will	1-0	1.000	103	96.4	94%	0	6.6	6.6	-	0.31	0	12	0.58
Zakk	0-1	.000	105.1	107.1	80%	1	-2	-	-2	2.41	0	6	0.48
Average			102.7	102.7	87%			5.69	-5.7		0.07		

Some Notes on the Statistics: We did not include Efficiency, Points For/Game, Median Points For, Adjusted Points For, Points Against/Game, or Consistency this week, as they would all be redundant. We have also included four new stats, and modified a fifth. They are as follows:

Missed Wins (MW): This is the number of wins a team *could* have had, if it had started the best possible players and scored the maximum possible number of points (that is, if it had a 100% efficiency rating).

Net Points (Net): This is the net points the team has scored (total points for minus total points against).

Average Net Points per Win (Avg. Net/W): This is the average margin of victory when a team wins. A high number here shows that the team regularly blows out its opponents, while a low number means it barely scrapes by in a series of close wins.

Average Net Points per Loss (Avg. Net/L): This is the average margin of defeat when a team loses. This shows whether a team is often blown out, or whether it is more likely to lose by small margins.

Expected Wins (ExW): This has been modified. Now, it uses a version of the Pythagorean expectation, a formula developed by Bill James to project how many games a team should win. (James used it for baseball, but it has been adopted for use with basketball, football, and hockey, as well.) It shows how many wins the team "should" have had, and is a measure of luck. If this number is higher than actual wins, the team is unlucky; if it is lower, the team has been lucky. (For those who are interested, we are using a Pythagorean exponent of 4.85, which was found to be the most accurate over the last five seasons of League of Doom games.)

WEEK ONE POWER RANKINGS

Player	Rank	Last Week	Change	Notes
Meredith (1-0)	1	1	—	Meredith barely snuck by Chris in an inter-divisional matchup, but that's enough to keep her on top of the Power Rankings. Next week she faces a divisional foe for a chance to possibly take the lead in the Zombies Division.
Colin (1-0)	2	4	▲	Colin defeated Jaime, his top rival and a divisional opponent, and took the lead in the Ninjas Division. His quarterback, Andrew Luck, was also the highest scoring player of the week.
Will (1-0)	3	5	▲	Will held off a furious Monday night comeback by his brother (and divisional foe), Bobby, to take the Pirates Division lead. Surprisingly, his defense, the Minnesota Vikings, led all defenses (and his team) in scoring.
Eric (1-0)	4	7	▲	Eric scored the most points in the league, taking control of the Zombies Division in the process. His running back, DeAngelo Williams, was the highest-scoring running back this week – but how long can he rely on a player who will become a backup in week four?
Jaime (0-1)	5	2	▼	The good news for Jaime: she has the fourth-ranked running back and the third, fourth, and tenth-ranked wide receivers. The bad news: three of those players were on her bench in week one. Overall, Jaime left 53.8 points and a win on her bench, for a league-worst 61% efficiency rating.
Bobby (0-1)	6	3	▼	Bobby came within 6.6 points of completing an epic comeback to beat his older brother in his first-ever League of Doom game. Unfortunately for him, his defense, the Rams, just weren't up to the task. On the bright side, he has the top-ranked wide receiver for the week, Brandin Cooks.
Jason (1-0)	7	10	▲	Jason didn't have any major standouts, but with the exception of Todd Gurley, a total team effort carried him past Zakk. Next week, he takes on Colin for a shot at the top spot in the Ninjas Division.
Zakk (0-1)	8	6	▼	Despite his third-worst efficiency, at 80%, Zakk came within 2.1 points of beating Jason. With the fifth-ranked quarterback and running back, and the thirteenth and fourteenth-ranked wide receivers, Zakk has a solid core on which to build, but he needs to start the right guys.
Sam D. (1-0)	9	11	▲	Savvy waiver wire pickup Spencer Ware, the second-highest scoring running back of the week, carried Sam past Emily this week. Continued smart acquisitions like that should allow him to overcome his poor draft.
Ned (1-0)	10	12	▲	There was only one team that Ned could've beaten this week – Stef's. Beating the lowest scoring team in the league by less than half a point doesn't instill a lot of confidence. Nevertheless, a win – especially a divisional win – is still a win.
Sam M. (0-1)	11	8	▼	And so ends the longest run of dominance any owner in the League of Doom has ever had over another owner, with a 5-point lead turning into a 27.1-point loss after Monday's games. Not even remembering to start C.J. Anderson could've saved Sam.
Emily (0-1)	12	9	▼	The third-highest score in the league and 100% efficiency in her first game bode well for Emily. Too bad that she faced the <i>second</i> -highest scorer, who stole Spencer Ware right out from under her to take the win. Welcome to the League of Doom.
Chris (0-1)	13	13	—	Like Emily, Chris had a 100% efficiency rating and lost anyway. He's in what appears to be the weakest division, and has a divisional matchup next week, so he already has a chance to redeem himself.
Stef (0-1)	14	14	—	Sure, Stef lost to the second-lowest scoring team this week, but she left 19.1 points on the bench and saw her top wide receiver go out with an injury. Better roster management, some aggressive free agency and waiver wire moves, and a good helping of luck, and she might work her way out of last place.

Ass-Beating of the Week: Greg Grunberg (Jaime), 82.5 vs. *Barkevious Liaisons* (Colin), 111.4. This was a rivalry game, and a divisional matchup, but it absolutely didn't live up to its promise, as Colin dominated throughout. The final score doesn't really indicate how much of a blowout the game was, either: going into Monday night, Colin was up 111.4 to 53.9. A heroic performance by Antonio Brown made Jaime's score a little bit more respectable. Perhaps worst of all for Jaime, she *could* have scored 136.3 points, had she perfectly set up her roster; that would have beaten Colin even if he, too, had a perfect roster setup.

Comeback of the Week: Sparks *RAWLS DEEP!* (Eric), 130 vs. Fucking Magical (Sam M.), 102.9. Eric and Sam first played one another back in week one of the first season of the League of Doom, when Sam's last name was still Hackerman. Eric lost. Over the next 80 fantasy football weeks across five seasons, Eric and Sam played seven more times, and Sam won every single one of those games. Exactly five years later – 1,827 days – Eric *finally* beat Sam, in their ninth matchup. Sam was up by five prior to the Monday night games, but a monster 32.1-point

performance from DeAngelo Williams rocketed Eric past Sam and finally demonkeyfied Eric's back.

Genius Coaching Move of the Week: Sam D. picking up Spencer Ware. With Jamaal Charles still recovering from his ACL tear, the Chiefs had to start somebody, and that turned out to be Ware. Sam nabbed him on Wednesday, before the Chiefs even made a definitive statement on Charles. The ballsy move paid off in spades for Sam, since Ware went on to score 29.4 points, the second most by any running back.

Dumbass Coaching Move of the Week: Zakk benching Isaiah Crowell. In a game that Zakk only lost by two points, any number of moves might have gotten him the win, but starting the running back who faced last-year's 32nd-ranked run defense, the Philadelphia Eagles, seems like a no-brainer. Those five extra points would've won Zakk the game.

Honorable Mention: Sam M. benching C.J. Anderson. Anderson was Sam's third-round draft pick and his second-highest drafted running back. Anderson plays in Gary Kubiak's running back-friendly offense. Sam benched him anyway. Anderson scored 27.9 points, third most by a running back. The only reason this isn't the Dumbass

Coaching Move of the Week is because starting Anderson still wouldn't have been enough for Sam to overcome Eric.

Bizarrest Coaching Move of the Week: Will picking up Marshawn Lynch. An unnamed source told Pro Football Talk that Lynch is "up in the air" about retiring and *might* unretire sometime around week four or five. So Will

jumped on Lynch, taking up one of his precious three running back slots with a player who *might* unretire in a few weeks.

So there you have it. One can only hope that week two will be just as momentful and exciting as week one. •

CHRIS BASKERVILLE: SMASH MOUTH CHAMPION

Destiny's Favorite Football Purist, Master of the Playoffs, and Progressive Feminist

By **COACH CLYDE RALEIGH, Contributor**

Yankee Stadium, December 28, 1958. The NFL Championship game – Baltimore Colts and New York Football Giants. Twelve Hall of Famers between the two rosters, and another five stalking the sidelines. The first sudden-death overtime in a regular- or postseason game. The first two-minute drill. Colts receiver Raymond Berry already has 12 receptions for 178 yards and a touchdown, a record for receptions in a championship that would stand for 55 years.

Third-and-goal on the Giants' one. Johnny Unitas – perhaps the greatest quarterback to ever play the game – has called and executed a masterful 12-play, 79-yard drive to get to this point. A Colts field goal will win the game. But Colts kicker Steve Myhra doesn't take the field – instead, Unitas turns and hands it off to Alan "The Iron Horse" Ameche, his fullback. The Iron Horse rumbles right up the middle for one yard. Touchdown. Game over.

This was the Greatest Game Ever Played, the game that put football in the national spotlight and set the sport on the path to becoming the dominant juggernaut that it is today. And this game was decided not by the safe, conservative decision (kicking the field goal), or a chess match between coaches (Unitas called his own plays), or even the precise route-running and immaculate hands of Berry. No, it was the brave – some would even say foolhardy or arrogant – decision to give the ball to a fullback.

A fullback.

That era of football is, unfortunately, long gone. Fullbacks are a joke, to the extent that some teams don't even carry them on their rosters. LaDainian Tomlinson and Adrian Peterson, probably the two greatest running backs of the last decade, have never even played in a Super Bowl. (And Tomlinson is retired, so he never will.) Arguably, the last time a truly great running back played in a Super Bowl was in 2008, when Edgerrin James, in the twilight of his career, touched the ball just 13 times in the Arizona Cardinals' loss to the Pittsburgh Steelers.

But one man bravely stands up and says, "No! The glorious days of the running back are not ended!" That man – that myth, that legend – is Chris Baskerville.



Pictured: Chris Baskerville, a microphone, and some random person in the background.

Chris adamantly refuses to give up on running backs. When the League of Doom switched to PPR, ever so briefly and tragically, in 2012, Chris drafted Adrian Peterson, Michael Turner, and Frank Gore with his second through fourth picks, and went on to also draft Jahvid Best, Felix Jones, LeGarrette Blount, and Rashard Mendenhall. His draft was a bold and courageous protest against the idiotic decision to go to PPR. "I didn't really research PPR leagues," he explains, "and I just asked someone and they told me running backs are still the bread and butter. They

[still] are . . . running backs, especially workhorse running backs that can catch and pass-block, are the most reliable scorers.”

“Nine times out of ten,” he says, “[I will] draft a running back with my first pick, and, truth be told, my second pick as well. I try to have a 20-plus point starter, and an 18-plus point flex, if I can . . . I generally covet running backs.”

Half of Chris’ first-round draft picks have been running backs, and in all but one instance, if he didn’t take a running back first, he took a running back in the second round. Fully half of his top-three picks over the past six seasons have been running backs.

Chris even predicts that the NFL will come back around to his line of thinking eventually: “There are still workhorse backs in the league, and I don’t think they’ll ever be truly phased out. The NFL goes through fads, same as fashion; right now, pass-happy is the thing to do. And once defenses are built specifically to stop five wide receiver sets, watch some coaches decide to go smash mouth because defenses no longer have the personnel to stop them.” (One might even make the argument that this process has already begun; the proliferation of the read-option, pistol offenses, and the spread offense all indicate that offensive minds are looking to use running backs to take advantage of the increased numbers of defensive backs that defenses regularly field.)

Of course, running backs are only half of the smash mouth equation: defenses are the other half, and Chris certainly doesn’t neglect defenses. Despite the fact that defenses are often drafted in the second-to-last round, Chris has never drafted his defense later than the 10th round. And unlike many owners, he actually *keeps* his drafted defense the majority of the time: other than in 2014 and 2015, the defense he drafted was still been on his roster at the end of the season.

He sees other owners’ habits of playing matchups with defenses every week to be asinine: “If you choose your defense wisely, it can be every bit as fruitful as having a first-round-graded running back on your team. They’ll score 18-plus points for you, week in and week out, like clockwork. [This,] as opposed to trying to read tea leaves and picking up scraps from what’s left in the free agency pile or on the waiver wire week in and week out and fighting with other owners over defenses that, in general, will only net you, on average, thirteen points or lower a week. Those five points make a hell of a difference.”

At first glance, it looks like this stubborn running backs-and-defenses strategy may not pay off all that well. Chris’ regular season record is 34-33, good for seventh in the league (or sixth out of the Original Ten). But that is misleading: Chris has been in the top-five for scoring four out of five seasons, and he is tied for second-most playoff appearances.

And once he gets to the playoffs, his smash mouth approach suddenly becomes significantly more formidable. He has played in the most playoff games, he has the most playoff wins (five), he is second in playoff win percentage (at .714), and he is tied for the most Gummy Bowl appearances ever.

Chris doesn’t credit his postseason success solely to his commitment to smash mouth football. He points to another one of his greatest strengths: his proactivity as an owner. “The waiver wire is cleaner in the playoffs,” he explains. “Teams have given up, free agents are easier to acquire, and it’s clear what every team in the NFL’s strengths and weaknesses are, so it’s easy to pick good matchups.”

His history of waiver wire and free agency pickups is long and profuse: he acquired Jordy Nelson, Laurent Robinson, and Antonio Brown from waivers in 2011; Brandon Myers in 2012; Alshon Jeffery and Anquan Boldin in 2013; Travis Kelce and Jeremy Hill in 2014; and Allen Hurns, Jordan Reed, and Gary Barnidge in 2015. This free agency success requires a sharp eye, an analytical mind, and the balls to take a big risk every now and then. “I look for injuries,” Chris reveals, “and find out who’s next on the depth chart, and then I look to see what the scouting report says on this player. In some cases, I see that a player had a not-quite-breakout game, but [that’s] enough to catch my attention. It might not be a position of need for me, but if I have room, I’ll pick them up and let them linger on my bench and see if that spark turns into a full-blown fire. Then they’ll be in my weekly lineup. Also, matchup-wise, some players are just nightmares for other teams in their divisions; they might not be so good against other teams, but, hey, that’s six games I can count on them for.”

Chris also uses trades to build his roster. He generally tries to make an impact trade every season, but perhaps his biggest blockbuster trade occurred in week ten of 2015, when he traded A.J. Green (the eighth ranked wide receiver), Jeremy Langford (the 29th-ranked wide receiver), and Tavon Austin (the 22nd-ranked wide receiver) to Sam M. in exchange for Antonio Brown (the top-ranked wide receiver and first-overall draft pick) and the Cincinnati Bengals defense (ranked 18th). He was very happy with the result of that trade, and it paid off; Chris made it to the Gummy Bowl that season. (Sam had only one more regular season win and did not make the playoffs.)

Still, Chris feels like people don’t trade frequently enough. “I wish people traded with me more often,” he laments. “I offer fair trades. Point-wise they’ll be sound. I sometimes accept trades that aren’t really sound just to fill a need.” Why do his trades get rejected? “It is because [the other owners] are greedy. They want more than fair value.”

More than any other factor, though, Chris ascribes his success to destiny and his inherent greatness. He says that he was “destined” to reach the Gummy Bowl a second time. He is already “calculating [his] options on how to return the Gummy trophy to its rightful seat on [his] mantle.” When it comes down to it, he says he is so good at fantasy football because “I’ve been playing for a long time. And I have always been good . . . well, when I’m at least vaguely paying attention, anyway.”

That occasional lack of attention, driven by the petty distractions of his non-fantasy football life, is his greatest weakness: “I’d love to pay [fantasy football] more attention, as I used to in years past. But I have more pressing concerns, such as bills, sex, and fine-tuning and

honing the skills necessary to remove all obstacles from my destined path to rule this life-sustaining mudball.”

Previously, Chris made very in-depth draft lists, but hasn't recently, to his regret. “I probably wouldn't have to do so much waiver wire shopping and trade offering if I just drafted better,” he admits. On the failed first half of his 2014 campaign, when he started the season 1-6, he reflects, “Honestly, I think I just wasn't really changing my lineup on time . . . I was just fairly preoccupied with other things.”

When he can find the motivation to focus on fantasy football, though, he really tears things up. Although he didn't make the playoffs in the 2014 season, he did finish the season out by going an impressive 5-1. “My season started to turn around once Ned started talking shit to me and I was motivated to shut him up,” he explains.

Unfortunately, trash talk – as hallowed a football tradition as tailgating and the touchdown celebration – has been both a friend and enemy to Chris. Back in 2011, Chris had by far his best regular season, going 10-4, winning the Pirates Division, and scoring the most points in the league. His campaign featured two four-game win streaks. He started the season 9-2, and was seemingly unstoppable . . . and then things fell apart. He finished out the season 2-3, including the postseason, suffering two of his losses to Ned. Trash talk was to blame, at least in part: “That is the year I stopped talking trash halfway through the season because people complained, which kind of took some joy out of it for me. I made it a point to not talk too much at all the next two seasons. I still don't really talk any trash. My style of talking trash doesn't really jell with everyone else's.” He has only had one winning regular season since making the decision to talk trash less frequently, and even then his record was just 7-6.

Chris' Original Ten status, his sustained success, and his unique style of trash talk have all led to some pretty major rivalries over the years. He considers his primary rivals to be Ned (against whom he is 4-5), Will (against whom he is 6-3), and Jason (against whom he is 4-2): “They put real thought into their lineups and how they draft, scouring free agency and the waiver wire . . . I enjoy matching my football knowledge against Ned, Will, and Jason more than anyone else for these reasons. I think I'll like playing Will's brother [Bobby] for the same reason . . . I might dig a little more into injury reports and depth charts on weeks I play them than on other weeks.” Luckily for Chris, he has been placed into a revamped Pirates Division that includes Ned, Will, and Bobby this season, and he gets to match wits with Jason in week seven as well.

Surprisingly, Chris is just 3-7 against Sam M. and 2-7 (including a Gumby Bowl loss) against Other Sam. However, he doesn't consider them to be his true rivals. “I think the Sams give a shit to some degree,” he explains, “just not as much [as Ned, Will, and Jason].”

Chris has also enjoyed a long run of victories over Eric and Jaime, against both of whom he is 7-2. Why is he so good against them? “Well, Eric kind of depends on when you catch him in the season. See, Eric is particularly impatient with his drafted players; if they don't start the season already in prime form, he has a tendency of



abandoning them, thus severely weakening his team, so by the time I play him he just isn't very good.” As for Jaime, “I prepare for Jaime as if she has Ned in her ear giving her advice. I'm guessing that I've been lucky to have such a dominant reign over her.”

Despite his dominance over the only woman among the Original Ten owners and his adherence to the traditional principles of football, Chris has a bit of a feminist streak to him. He utterly rejects the notion that there are too many female owners in the League of Doom (four out of fourteen teams are owned by women), even though there's really no place for women in football. “One should question [anyone who doesn't think women belong in football],” is his retort. After someone pointed out the fact that women and football don't mix, Chris was quick to criticize, calling innocent empirical observations “bullshit you just tried to sell me about women.”

In fact, Chris is so confident that women have a “mind for [football]” that he is allowing a woman to co-manage his team with him this year. This is a massive risk, considering that only 10% of Gumby Bowl appearances – and 0% of Gumby Bowl wins – were female-owned teams, despite the fact that 28.6% of the league is composed of female owners. “My ex-girlfriend Kate is running my team with me this year. Or, well, she'll be co-owner – I'll still be making the decisions. But I say the more [women], the merrier.” It's blind misandry like this, masquerading as “feminism,” that has caused this county to deteriorate so much. And one can't help but notice that the increasing number of women in the workforce has directly correlated with the decline of the running game, although this doesn't seem to matter to Chris at all. To the contrary: “I like women a great deal,” he says.

“I like boobies,” he adds. “I like them a lot.”

Despite his dangerous socialist attitude towards women, Chris is still full of prime wisdom that other owners would be well-advised to pay attention to. Here are a few of his choicest nuggets of advice:

“I try to always have the highest scoring player for any given week in my starting lineup.”

“Just make better decisions next time to avoid another loss.”

“How many points are scored against you is a crap shoot; as long as I can get the most out of the team that I’ve assembled any given week, then I’ve done all I can do on my end.”

He ends his interview with a bold prediction for the 2016 season: “I think it’ll be an interesting season and it’ll be a dogfight to determine which of us represents our divisions in the playoffs . . . I will enjoy reclaiming the Gumby.” ●

SLOBBER-KNOCKER: WEEK ONE

All the Best Smack Talk of the Week

Curated by SAFFRON CANDYSPRINKLER,
Contributor

You know it, you love it, you miss it: the week in smack talk, assembled here just for you cats and chicks.

“Is anyone else looking forward to the colors and smells of fall? That is, falling from that first place tie! Boom! Feel the rough concrete of failure!”

– Eric, kicking off the smack talk for everyone.

“I’m just happy to be here. You’re all excellent fantasy athletes and owners. In the words of the future president of the United States: ‘Tremendous. Racism. Really very good. Great. I have a weird relationship with my daughter. Trump!’”

– Sam M., stealing Jason’s shtick.

“Did someone say racism? I get an alert on my phone anytime that happens . . . anywhere.”

– Jason, in response.

“Hey all, League Champ here. Just wanted to wish everyone good luck! Also, just a reminder: I’m League Champ and the best ever! You all suck!”

– Sam D., helpfully contributing.

“Shut it, Sam.”

– Will, possibly responding to Sam, approximately 57 hours later. Seriously.

“Fucking Magical: Making Racism Great Again. Of course I’m on record as only having racial biases with the following groups: Micronesians (with their little knees), Madagascar (full of hissing cockroaches and Malagasy), and middle-aged white men (the man). So, the following are OK in my book: Chris. Emily. Jason. Meredith. Stef. Everyone else is a piece of sub-unicorn trash, which in unicorn terms is sparkly confetti. You’re all sparkly confetti. Sparkfetti, if you will.”

– Sam M., making his biases known and objectively misunderstanding the meaning of the phrase “middle-aged.”

“I’m middle aged when I Goddamn say so. For now, I prefer to think of myself as a toddler. And I assumed Sam was discounting me as a hissing cockroach.”

– Jaime, on Sam’s reasons for leaving her off his list.

“I knew they would score a fucking touchdown as soon as I went out to let the dog go to the bathroom. Now the rules of luck dictate that I need to take the dog out every time the Ravens have the ball.”

– Zakk, after the Ravens scored a touchdown.



A Conversation, in One Act

Ned: I just instinctively tried to fast forward through the commercials because I forgot this was live TV.

Zakk: TV noob.

“You’re a pip. I’m glad you’re glad. We’re all glad over here.”
– Sam M., in response to Eric’s *gladitude* (get it?) as a result of Sam proxy-drafting for him.

“I am Philip Riversless. My fantasy football soul has been ripped from my body and left to die alone in a gutter.”

– Jaime, bereft of Philip Rivers.

“I may have made some bad decisions this week.”

– Jaime, upon recognizing her league-low, game-losing 61% efficiency rating on the week. ●

WEEK TWO PREVIEW

This Is All Going to End in Tears and Hurt Feelings, You Just Know It

By ANEMONE STARDREAM-SMITH, Contributing Editor

Everyone made it through week one in one piece, so that's nice. Hopefully nobody's feelings were hurt too much. Now pick yourselves up, dust off, and get ready for week two. Let the nearest mother, grandmother, or auntie know if you need someone to lick their thumb and wipe off your face.

This week sees two rivalry games and six division games. Why so many division games? Everyone will get all worked up and upset. They should spread those games out. Maybe they should just cancel all division games, so less people get anxious and distressed. Why, it might even make sense to forego all fantasy football entirely, come inside, and work on some puzzles or knitting or something safe like that.

This week, we're adding predictions to the games. A certain particularly intelligent member of the editorial board was opposed to this addition, but he or she was outvoted, so they're in. These predictions are based on the lineups at the time of publication, and do not reflect roster moves made after Wednesday afternoon.

Spotlight Game: Barkevious Liaisons (Colin; 1-0) vs. Make Doom Great Again (Jason; 1-0)

Jaime and Zakk both lost in week one, poor things, so this matchup will determine the leader in the Ninjas Division, even though it's only week two. Ninjas are sneaky and untrustworthy, and you should try to avoid them. Colin and Jason are long-time rivals, although they are very fond of one another, which is sweet. Jason leads the series, 6-3 (.667). They will meet up again in week 12. Hopefully they're still friends by then. *Our prediction: Jason 98, Colin 95.*

Schrödinger's Cats (Ned; 1-0) vs. Death Valley Quix Draw (Chris; 0-1)

Historically, Chris and Ned have been two of the absolute best players in the League of Doom, and they are archrivals and Pirates Division opponents. Neither team looks very good so far this year, though. Ned has the second-least points, and Chris lost his first game. We're only one week in, but one week is enough to set a precedent. Ned leads the series, 5-4 (.556), and they play again in week 12. *Our prediction: Ned 97, Chris 92.*

Trailer Park Wolf Spirit (Will; 1-0) vs. Dick Grayson's Bitches (Stef; 0-1)

Will is currently first place in the Pirates Division, but the Pirates are sure a sad crew. He would be third if he

were in the Ninjas Division, or fourth if he were in the Zombies Division. In any event, this being a divisional matchup, Will has an opportunity to solidify his control over the division if he wins. And after the miserable week one game that Stef produced, a win seems pretty likely for Will. The series is tied, 1-1, and they play each other again in week 9. *Our prediction: Will 97, Stef 81.*

My Ball Zach Ertz (Emily; 0-1) vs. Doom Did Nothing Wrong (Bobby; 0-1)

All of the other owners in the League of Doom are poor sports, so Bobby and Emily both lost their first-ever games. That's just mean! It's only fair to let people win the first time, or else they won't want to come back and play with you again. And now, after this game, one of them is going to start their fantasy career 0-2. It's quite disheartening. *Our prediction: Bobby 97, Emily 94.*

F*ing Magical (Sam M.; 0-1) vs. Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes (Meredith; 1-0)**

Samuel Abraham Manleigh, your team name is highly inappropriate. Unbelievable! Such a potty mouth, and on a grown man, too. It really speaks ill of your manners. Your mother must be absolutely horrified. That disgusting mouth needs a good washing-out. Such uncouth behavior should be discouraged. Meredith leads the series, 4-0 (1.000), and hopefully she continues her unbeaten streak against you, both this week and in week 13. *Our prediction: Sam 101, Meredith 99.*

Moon Knights (Sam D.; 1-0) vs. Sparks RAWLS DEEP! (Eric; 1-0)

Depending on how things play out in the game between Sam and Meredith, this divisional matchup between the highest-scoring team (Eric) and the second highest-scoring team (Sam) could actually determine the sole leader in the Zombies Division. However, it would be extremely unfortunate if Meredith lost to Samuel Manleigh, because Samuel's team name is ridiculously foulmouthed. This is not a reflection on Eric or Sam's character, certainly, but it would be better for everyone if they *weren't* in a position to take sole lead of the division. Sam leads the series, 4-1 (.800). Their next matchup will be week 11. *Our prediction: Eric 101, Sam 98.*

Shake It Up (Zakk; 0-1) vs. Greg Grunberg (Jaime; 0-1)

You hate to see this. Two perfectly reasonable people make some poor lineup decisions and, before you know it, they're both 0-1. The only thing worse than starting a season 0-1 is starting a season 0-2, especially when that

0-2 record is against divisional opponents. It's just so sad, but that is, unavoidably, the situation in which one of these two fine young people will find themselves after this game. At least *one* of them can't help but win a game this week. Jaime leads the series, 5-4 (.556), and they play again in week 12. *Our prediction: Jaime 96, Zakk 90.*

That's all for your week two preview. Play nice, and don't get any skinned knees. Don't forget to dress in layers and eat a hearty breakfast. •

RIVALRY PROFILE: CHRIS AND NED

The Epic Saga of a Pair of Fantasy Football Titans

By **ALCYONE BALFOUR, Contributor**

This week sees the renewal of one of the most storied rivalries in the League of Doom. This will be the tenth time that Chris and Ned have played against one another, and you would be hard-pressed to find a more successful (and hated) pair of fantasy football owners.

Sure, there are other rivalries that are nice and all. The Sams have quite a thing going. Colin and Jaime have been at it for some time. Will and Eric have been fighting to stay out of last place since the league was founded. But this, *this* is the real deal. Those other rivals can boast two Gumbys between them, combined; Ned alone has that many, and Chris has another.

In fact, Ned is first in total wins, total win percentage, regular season wins, regular season win percentage, playoff win percentage, Gumby Bowl wins, points scored, and points per game; tied for first in Gumby Bowl appearances; second in playoff games and playoff wins; and tied for second in playoff berths. Chris is first in playoff games and playoff wins; tied for first in Gumby Bowl appearances; second in total points, points per game, and playoff win percentage; tied for second in playoff berths and division wins; third in total wins; and fourth in total win percentage. Beat *that*, other rivalries.

There has been remarkable parity in the nine previous games that the two have played. Eight games took place in the regular season; the pair split those wins, 4-4. The tie-breaker was a playoff game, which Ned won, giving him a 5-4 record on the series. Over all nine games, Chris has scored 1007.1 points, and Ned has scored 1008.1, giving Ned a massive 1-point advantage on the series. That breaks down to just over one tenth of a point per game.

Given how close that is, statistical experts were consulted in order to try to parse out any useful difference between the two.

"Well, if you look at their overall points scored," explains our resident statistical maven, Synergy Cochran, "You would expect Ned to lead the series, 4.51 to 4.49 games. So their actual results fall *just barely* within expected parameters. These games have probably been the result of skill, not luck, although it's a small sample size."

"Where it gets interesting," she goes on, perhaps misusing the word "interesting" in this context, "is when you adjust their scores to reflect the league's current point-scoring scheme. You see, changing rules from season to

season . . . have resulted in a changing average score. To compare their performances across all five seasons, you need to adjust their scores to have them all on the same scale. Otherwise, it's like comparing meters and yards."

She is still talking. "After adjusting their scores, you actually find that Ned has scored 995 points, and Chris 1002 points, in 2016 points," she continues, making no real sense. "So if they went back and replayed all of those games using the current scoring system, Chris would probably be 5-4, not Ned. Their adjusted average score would be 126.8 to 95.1, so the average game would be won by over 30 points."

"You can glean some really fascinating information with the adjusted scores," she says, misleadingly. "Chris and Ned are very close to one another in mean and median scores, and both of them have a handful of really low-scoring games that throw off their means . . . Chris' scores are a little more predictable than Ned's, but only by just under two points per game. When Chris wins, the average score is something like 126.3 to 89.7, and when Ned wins, the average score is around 127.2 to 99.3 . . . This tells us that Chris is more likely to win when Ned is doing poorly, and Ned is more likely to win if both owners are playing well."

When asked why their games were so close, both Chris and Ned agreed that it was because they are both good at fantasy football, despite their differences.

"We are both pretty good at building and fine tuning our teams throughout the seasons, but we have different methods of doing so," replied Chris.

Ned was ever-so-slightly less magnanimous: "I'm good because of skill and in-depth analysis, and he's just good because of luck."

They also both think that their overall success contributes to the heat of their rivalry, although there is some disagreement regarding how good they both are.

"I think we are the best of the original owners," muses Chris, "[but] it's unfair to compare our overall number to newer owners, as they come in at a disadvantage just because they are new."

"I mean, yes, [Chris is] second in points per game, but he's *sixth* in regular season win percentage," said Ned, testily. "I am first in both. I think I'm *historically* the best in the league, but I don't know where to put Chris. In terms of regular season, he's, like, fourth . . . but he really turns it on in the playoffs, making him the second best playoff

owner. I guess he has poor luck in the regular season and good luck in the playoffs.”

As you might expect, both owners saw the other as their biggest rivals. However, when asked about the source of their rivalry, their responses differed significantly.

“I just like playing people that have shown themselves to be knowledgeable about the NFL. And Ned has done his homework, so I enjoy comparing my knowledge of the game and ability to predict how players will perform versus his,” explained Chris.

Ned lists less charitable reasons for the rivalry: “We’ve known each other for a long time – 17 years. He’s a smug, arrogant son of a bitch. We’re both highly competitive . . . Plus, we were in the same division together from the get-go . . . and we’ve repeatedly been in competition for playoff spots over the years.”

Their rivalry really kicked off in week four of the 2011 season, their first game against one another in the League of Doom. Chris was undefeated at the time, and trounced Ned, 111 to 61, still the biggest margin of victory in any game between the two.

Chris doesn’t really remember that game, or that season, particularly well, but Ned sure does.

“Every week, after [Chris] won, he had been crowing about how his *bench* had outscored his opponent,” Ned recalls. “He kicked my ass that week, and then bragged about his bench outscoring me, and I just fucking lost it. I am not a good loser. I am highly competitive, and I have a temper, and I just ripped into him on the smack boards in a way that was, in retrospect, unnecessarily personal. He was genuinely hurt, and the aggravation spilled over into the real world, with mutual friends trying to mediate and my eventually writing him an apologetic message. I was angry about the situation in the first place (his smack talking, which I saw as rubbing it in, along with my inability to perform well), and I was even angrier when he took things personally and people who weren’t even in the league got involved. It definitely fueled the rivalry, at least from my end, and I desperately wanted to beat him after that.”

Obviously, Ned doesn’t overreact much. He also has clearly cooled down from the incident, and doesn’t hold grudges.

Chris and Ned met for the second time in week 13 of that year, and Ned got his revenge, winning 113 to 107, in what turned out to be the closest win in the series. This win also secured Ned a wild card spot – Chris had already won the division. “[That] win felt fucking great,” says Ned.

Two weeks later, the pair met in the playoffs for the first, and so far, only, time. Ned won again, 115 to 80 this time. Ned would go on to win the Gumby Bowl that year, but he was more pleased with this victory than the championship: “This was probably the most satisfying win of the season for me, even more so than the Gumby Bowl the following week. I got to knock that pompous ass down a peg.”

Chris finally earned his next win in the series 23 weeks later, in week four of the 2013 season. At that point, Ned was 4-1 against Chris. “I love ending other owners’ winning streaks, especially Ned’s, so I really enjoyed that,” recalls Chris.

“Meh,” says Ned, unconvincingly. “The streak had been so long that I wasn’t even really aware that there was a streak, so whatever.”

Chris picked up a streak of his own at the end of that season, beating Ned 130.7 to 98.7 in the final regular season game that year. Chris’ victory not only secured the final wild card spot for himself, but prevented Ned from reaching the League of Doom playoffs for the first time ever. (Chris would go on to win the Gumby Bowl.)

“Keeping Ned out of the playoffs is always kind of a goal, as Ned is a genuine threat, so it’s one last obstacle to deal with,” Chris reasoned.

Ned is not bitter about it or anything: “[That loss] pissed me off,” Ned fumes. “I hated that season, and Chris wasn’t actually any good that year, so it hurt even more. The fact that he went on to win the Gumby Bowl, despite his losing record, was just rubbing salt in the wound. That season should be stricken from the record books.”

Shockingly, Chris’ Gumby Bowl III victory, and the whole of the 2013 season, remains in the record books.

After the 2013 season, Chris and Ned were split up as a result of the league expansion. Ned remained in the Pirates Division, and Chris joined the new, now-defunct, Robots Division. Chris feels that this didn’t really hurt the rivalry, but Ned disagrees: “I still very much wanted to beat him whenever I played against him, but we played each other less, so that meant that there were less opportunities for memorable games that heightened the rivalry.”

The last really notable game between the two was in week seven of 2014. Going into the game, Chris was 1-5, and Ned was 4-2. Ned beat Chris, 119.2 to 69.9, in Ned’s biggest win in the series. After that game, Chris went on a 5-1 tear for the rest of the season, barely missing out on a playoff berth. Ned went 3-4 over the last seven weeks of the regular season, limping into the playoffs and promptly losing in the first round.

On that victory and the aftermath, Ned said, “I mean, I guess it was pretty sweet. I pretty much *expected* to beat his ass going into that game . . . Good for him for getting angry and turning it around, though.”

Chris, too, credits that game with turning around his season. “I think I actually set my lineup that game, and started really combing the waiver wire and free agents right after receiving that beating, which ultimately resulted in an epic turnaround.”

Now, in 2016, Chris and Ned have been reunited in the Pirates Division once more, providing extra opportunities to add to the history of great games in the rivalry and go on rage-fueled win streaks.

Chris isn’t all that excited about it, though: “While I like playing Ned . . . I’d rather just run someone else over, and see Ned in the playoffs, if he advances to have to face me.”

Ned has a similar take: “I am excited to renew the rivalry in full force, and I’m excited about *beating* him, but I’m not excited about playing him. I know I’m just going to get frustrated and anxious, and if I lose, I’m going to be *pissed*.”

The pair face off in week two and week 12 this season. “Week two will be blown out of proportion,” predicts Chris, “and week 12 will have playoff implications.”

Ned disagrees somewhat. “I think [Chris’] team kind of sucks this year,” he allows. “I think his lack of draft prep over the past few seasons has really hurt him . . . I think that we may split the games this year, with him winning early and me winning late, but I don’t think he’ll still be relevant in week 12, which will make it a less sweet victory for me.”

Both owners also have some parting shots for one another.

“I’ll be reclaiming my trophy this year and keeping it in Ned’s apartment, where he can both bask in the greatness that are my accomplishments and despair in the wallows of his inescapable defeat,” boasts Chris.

“Eventually, luck simply *has* to stop being a factor in Chris’ game,” Ned opines, “and considering that it hurts him in the regular season and helps in the playoffs, I think it’ll reveal that, in reality, he’s just kind of mediocre . . . So I’ll say this to Chris: ‘You’re overrated and all talk, and unless you actually get your shit together, you’re going down.’”

Our current projections suggest that Ned will win this week’s game, 97 to 92, but that is a small margin, and the bulk of both owners’ players won’t see the field until Sunday, so it may not hold. Is Chris going to win and tie up the series? If he does, is Ned going to maintain his famously even temper, or will he show a rare moment of anger? Is Ned going to up-end his own prediction and beat Chris? We will all have to wait until Monday night to find out. One thing is for sure: this is a rivalry built to last. ●

A NOTE ON ESPN’S IDIOCY

League Managers Angered by Outage on Sunday, Late Waiver Processing Wednesday

By CHO’THUGHTH THE OBEDIENT, Contributing Homunculus

The League Managers are displeased. ESPN has, once again, failed to adequately prepare for the first week of fantasy football, and is generally demonstrating its incompetence. If the “Worldwide Leader in Sports” is not careful, it will soon come face to face with the *true* Worldwide Leaders, and it will not likely survive the encounter, no.

This past Sunday, the first full day of NFL games this year, much of ESPN’s fantasy website and mobile app was inoperable, aside from a few brief moments. This meant that team owners could not do simple things like check their scores, pick up new players, or even rearrange their rosters. This is Unacceptable. It is conceivable that one or more owners attempted to move a player from their bench to their starting roster, and were unable to do so, resulting in a Loss, yes.

Thankfully, the League Managers are not aware of any such tragedy occurring, no, but it still could have happened, and that is the Point.

ESPN eventually managed to get the website and app up and running by the night game, but by then, 13 games were already over and any damage inflicted had already been done. This is Embarrassing. ESPN issued an apology on Monday, which read as follows: “We apologize for the outage that occurred in fantasy football on Sunday. All services have been restored and stats and game matchups for Week 1 are current and correct. If your lineups were affected by the outage, your League Manager can adjust them retroactively.”

This apology is unsatisfactory for several reasons, yes. First, any failure to adequately support the League of

Doom endangers your delicate mortal Existence. Second, an apology without an explanation is insufficient. Third, it is improper for ESPN to expect – nay, demand! – that the League Managers do anything, retroactively or no. One should never hold another accountable for one’s own mistakes. And fourth, the League Managers are many, not one.

The League Managers do not accept ESPN’s apology.

Worse still, ESPN did not process the waiver wire claims until 7:53 AM Wednesday morning. According to its own website, ESPN is to process the waiver wire claims “around 3 AM EST” on Wednesdays, yes. While 7:53 AM is, admittedly, “around” 3:00 AM when viewed from Their position outside of time, the League Managers are quite aware that Human perception of the Fourth Dimension differs from Theirs, and do not feel that 7:53 AM is sufficiently “around” 3:00 AM for these purposes.

The League Managers are seriously considering putting a curse on ESPN, all who are associated with it, and their offspring. They will give ESPN another chance, though, because They are Merciful.

Henceforth, if ever the ESPN website or app suffers another outage and an owner wants to make a move during the period of that outage, the League Managers request that the owner in question contact Them, through Their Earthly representatives, and inform Them of the move that the owner desires to make. The League Managers will retroactively ensure that the move is carried out, as long as it would have been possible at the time the request was made if ESPN actually functioned correctly.

Any attempts to cheat and take advantage of the League Managers’ generosity will be met with fierce and merciless punishment, yes. ●

THE QUICK COUNT: WEEK TWO

By **MARY ELLEN JONES, Intern**

Scrumdiddlyumptious newsy tidbits from Week Two!

- You'll all be relieved to learn that Colin picked up a kicker on an actual NFL roster, **Mike Nugent**, Cin. Good for you, Colin!
- An all-new, all-improved draft grade was released on the league message boards Saturday. If you're curious, check it out: <http://goo.gl/gOaEoC>
- The Denver Broncos tried to kill **Cam Newton**, Car QB, on Thursday night, with an assist from the NFL officials. Thankfully, cutie Cam is still alive, despite the repeated blows to the head.
- **Sammy Watkins**, Buf WR, has a foot ouchie. Oh no! It looks like Colin has another problem on his hands!
- **Jack Del Rio**, head coach of the Raiders, has huge, pendulous labs. After scoring a late touchdown against New Orleans, he went for two, and his Raiders won, 35-34. Remember: you play to win the game!
- **Robert Griffin III**, Cle QB, fractured the "coracoid bone," whatever that is, in his left shoulder when he tried to truck a tackler. The Browns put him on IR, so the earliest he can come back is week 10. Absolutely no one is surprised.
- According to a guy, **Marshawn Lynch**, Sea RB (retired) might become **Marshawn Lynch**, Sea RB (*un*retired) around week four or five. Who's up for some more Beast Mode?!
- **Chris Ivory**, Jac RB, was hospitalized and in pain due to a "general medical issue." Hope you feel

better soon, Chris! **T.J. Yeldon** started in his place. Good for Colin, not good for Jason.

- **Terrance Williams**, Dal WR, is an idiot.
- **Zach Ertz**, Phi TE, is apparently "week-to-week" with a displaced rib. Ouch! Bad news for Emily!
- **Dez Bryant**, Dal WR, and **Odell Beckham Jr.**, NYG WR, had a tickle-fight before their Sunday afternoon game. Adorable! But who won? Decide for yourself: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvxt_IFYWxY
- **Russell Wilson**, Sea QB, hurt his ankle. Some people think he might miss his week two game. Other people, like **Pete Carroll**, Seattle's head coach, and Wilson himself, think he'll be fine. Just keep taking those nanobubbles, Russell!
- In other **Dez Bryant**, Dal WR, news, Eric is reportedly looking to get rid of Dez in exchange for an "able-bodied contribution" to his team. Any takers?
- **Keenan Allen**, SD WR, tore his ACL. Is that better or worse than a lacerated kidney? Either way, it certainly doesn't help Stef any.
- In a surprise move, the New Orleans Saints cut **C.J. Spiller**, FA RB. Is Spiller no longer productive, or just a jerk? Will any team sign the poor guy?
- **John Harbaugh**, head coach of the Baltimore Ravens, has helpfully clarified that his brother, **Jim Harbaugh**, head coach of the Michigan Wolverines, does not eat his own boogers. One certainly hopes not! Ew!
- Speaking of booger-eating, **Lady Gaga** is reportedly in talks to perform during the halftime of Super Bowl LI. Where my Little Monsters at?! •

