

WEEK 1



EFL

ELITE FOOTBALL LEAGUE



Shooting for the Stars in our 15th Season!

October 10, 2021

OH NO! OH YEAH!



Michael Badgley
Virden Violators

Virden kicker *Michael Badgley* watches his kick curl to the left and no good as Patriots' safety *Jevon Holland* celebrates behind him. Badgley's 45-yard field goal attempt in OT would have tied the game with 1:48 left in the extra period. Instead, it sent the Patriots home with a Week One 27-24 win over their main Manitoba rival in the Central. Until the miss, the Violators and Patriots had matched each other score-for-score in an opening day classic.

EAST



CENTRAL



WEST



NORTH



COASTAL

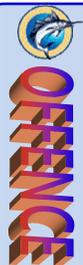


SOUTH



Who was slick in Week One?

“Brylcreem” THE EFL'S FIRST SPONSOR



Kirk Cousins
QB
Sebastian Swordfish

25 of 36, 406 yards, 4 TDs, 1 INT.
His deadly accuracy led to Wk 1 win.



Jaycee Horn
CB
Buffalo Derailers

5 T, 1 INT (0yds), 1 FF, 2 FR, 2/6 PD. Dynamic defender in BUF win.


37

9

The **Lamar Jackson** to **Emmanuel Sanders** duo hooked up for 13 catches, 175 yards and 2 TD passes over 30 yards while Derailer CB, **Jaycee Horn** starred with an interception, forced fumble and 2 fumble recoveries as Buffalo laid waste to the Wrecking Balls. After surviving a shaky 1st half down just 13-6, the New Jersey defence collapsed in the 2nd half while the offence kept giving the ball away. Three NJ lost fumbles led to 17 Buffalo points. While Jackson danced to 57 rushing yards and a TD, the Derailers' 'D' kept **Matt Stafford** dancing in the pocket and unable to come back.

10-09-2021 Stone Pony Shore Temp:77 Wind:0-10 None No Line MVP:Jackson HFA:ON(3)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Buffalo (1-0)	6	7	14	10	37
2021 New Jersey (0-1)	3	3	3	0	9

Passing

BUF: Jackson 32/25 265 Yds 3 TDs
 NJ: Stafford 27/17 198 Yds Int

Rushing

BUF: Jackson 11/57 TD, Davis 15/43 TD, Sanders 1/13, Booker 3/5
 NJ: Montgomery 10/36, Gallman Jr. 3/17, McKissic 4/14, Stafford 2/8

Receiving

BUF: Sanders 13/175 2 TDs, Woods 5/40 TD, Gage 3/23, Booker 2/9, Tate 1/9, Davis 1/6
 NJ: Allen 5/62, McLaurin 3/50, Samuel 3/38, McKissic 3/15, Hooper 2/29, Montgomery 1/4

Defense

BUF: Horn Int FF 5-Tk, Williams Sk FF 4-Tk, Oruwariye FF 5-Tk, Chubb FF 5-Tk
 NJ: Cunningham 12-Tk, Griffen Sk 6-Tk, Breeland 8-Tk

Injuries

BUF: Sneed 3
 NJ: Campbell 2

Misc

BUF: Horn 2-FRs, 35:02 TOP
 NJ: Montgomery 1-F lost, Webster 1-F lost, McKissic 1-F lost, Boswell 3/3 FG 58 Long


7
24

The Coyotes outgained the Bombers 555-232 and held the ball for 37 minutes but two **Ryan Tannehill** interceptions, one in the end zone, and a blocked FG attempt kept the final score from being a total blowout. Despite the two picks and no TD passes, Tannehill still won Game MVP thanks to 129 yards and 2 TDs rushing. Trailing 10-7 late in the 1st half, the Bombers drove 73 yards in 17 plays but **Matt Prater** missed the 25-yard FG attempt. **Damien Harris** scored from 35 yards out to gain separation to start the 2nd half and the Coyotes held Bruxelles in check the rest of the way.

10-08-2021 Coyote Field Temp:83 Wind:0-10 None No Line MVP:Tannehill HFA:ON(3)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Bruxelles (0-1)	0	7	0	0	7
2021 Cobb County (1-0)	7	3	7	7	24

Passing

BRX: Brees 30/11 121 Yds TD
 CB: Tannehill 28/16 249 Yds 2 Int

Rushing

BRX: Fournette 12/47, Williams 7/42, Mitchell 7/22
 CB: Tannehill 6/129 2 TDs, Harris 12/104 TD, Breida 7/34, Peterson 8/30, Holtz 2/9

Receiving

BRX: Claypool 4/78 TD, Valdes-Scantling 3/28, Fournette 2/8, Williams 1/1, Howard 1/6
 CB: Jones 5/82, Cooks 4/74, Parker 2/27, Cook 2/24, Holtz 1/7, Breida 1/5

Defense

BRX: Slay Int 6-Tk, Walker Int 5-Tk, Ebukam FF 7-Tk
 CB: Martinez 8-Tk

Injuries

BRX:
 CB:

Misc

BRX: Roberts 3/128 KR, Prater 0/2 FG
 CB: |



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In a see-saw classic the Patriots escaped **TERRORDOME** with a 3-point victory when **Michael Badgley** missed a 45-yard FG attempt that would have tied the game with 1:48 left in OT. The miss undid a dramatic 1-yard TD run by **Ezekiel Elliott** with 0:15 left that sent the game into OT and ended a pattern of tit-for-tat scoring that started with the Pats jumping out to a 7-0 lead in the 1st quarter on the first of 3 TD passes by **DeShaun Watson**, only to see every lead erased by **Pat Mahomes & Co.** Virden tallied 455 total yards to the Pats' 397 but also had the game's only turnover.

10-08-2021 TERRORDOME Temp:79 Wind:Calm None No Line MVP:Watson HFA:ON(4)

		1	2	3	4	5	Tot
2021 Charleswood (1-0)		7	3	7	7	3	27
2021 Virden (0-1)		0	10	7	7	0	24

Passing

CHP: Watson 36/24 260 Yds 3 TDs
 VV: Mahomes 42/27 311 Yds TD

Rushing

CHP: Dobbins 7/61, Kamara 13/47, Hill 4/30, Watson 1/3
 VV: Elliott 22/109 2 TDs, Mahomes 3/35

Receiving

CHP: Kelce 8/98 2 TDs, Metcalf 6/68 TD, Smith-Schuster 3/35, Dobbins 3/16, Meyers 2/22
 VV: Chase 8/112, Brown 5/64, Elliott 4/28, Hockenson 4/34, Davis 3/52, Green 1/12

Defense

CHP: Landry III 12-Tk, Darby 11-Tk, Collins Sr. FF 8-Tk
 VV: Trevathan 10-Tk, Williams Sk 3-Tk

Injuries

CHP: Trufant 7
 VV:

Misc

CHP:
 VV: Mahomes 1-F lost



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The Crusaders built up a 9-0 lead on 3 **Younghoe Koo** FGs but failure to find the end zone would cost them when the Triumph finally got rolling. **Clyde Edwards-Helaire** followed right tackle to a 15-yard TD run at the 1:53 mark of the 2nd then Twin Cities got the ball back with 1:13 left and went 68 yards in 8 plays to take a 14-9 lead on a 17-yard TD pass to **DJ Moore**. **Mitch Trubisky** made it 21 unanswered points when he hit for a 20-yard TD to **Kenny Golladay** to open the 3rd. **Mac Jones** replied with a TD to **Kyle Pitts** but the Triumph 'D' clamped down after that and held for the win.

10-05-2021 Temp:70 Wind:Calm No Line MVP:Trubisky HFA:ON(0)

		1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Peg City (0-1)		6	3	7	0	16
2021 Twin Cities (1-0)		0	14	7	6	27

Passing

PCC: Jones 32/17 192 Yds TD Int
 TCT: Trubisky 30/23 268 Yds 2 TDs

Rushing

PCC: Barkley 10/23, Cohen 10/23, Jones 2/5
 TCT: Gordon III 26/101, Edwards-Helaire 2/21 TD, Trubisky 2/9, White 3/5

Receiving

PCC: Shenault Jr. 6/86, Aiyuk 4/47, Higbee 3/26, Barkley 2/12, Cohen 1/7
 TCT: Golladay 6/85 TD, Moore 6/73 TD, Brown 5/47, Gordon III 2/7, Edwards-Helaire 2/13

Defense

PCC: Allen 2-Sks 7-Tk, Jones 2-Sks 3-Tk, Humphrey FF 8-Tk, Bush 10-Tk
 TCT: Alexander Int 5-Tk, Barmore Sk 3-Tk

Injuries

PCC: Rapp 5
 TCT: Moseley 2

Misc

PCC: 8 missed tackles
 TCT:



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Lorenzo Carter tipped a **Gardner Minshew II** pass into the arms of **Tyus Bowser**, who ran it back 34 yards for a TD to open up a 10-0 Convict lead in the 1st quarter. The Pilots responded with a pair of back-to-back FG drives to pull within 4 points but Chino extended their lead to 11 when **Ronald Jones II** carried it in from 4 yards out for his first of 3 TDs on the afternoon. **Evan McPherson** missed a 58-yard FG attempt on Seattle's opening drive of the 2nd half, setting up a **Dak Prescott** TD pass to Jones II after a 52-yard drive. A second pick of Minshew II, early in the 4th, sealed Seattle's fate.

10-08-2021 Kingdome Temp:70 Wind:Calm No Line MVP:Jones II HFA:ON(4)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Chino (1-0)	10	7	7	3	27
2021 Seattle (0-1)	3	3	0	0	6

Passing

CHI: Prescott 28/23 203 Yds TD, Bridgewater 3/3 24 Yds
 SEA: Minshew II 28/14 152 Yds 2 Int, Lance 4/2 17 Yds

Rushing

CHI: Jones II 12/32 TD, Jackson 7/24, Bridgewater 2/11, McCaffrey 2/9, Abdullah 3/3
 SEA: Lance 8/48, Hunt 7/26, Akers 1/12, Minshew II 2/1

Receiving

CHI: Gallup 10/100, McCaffrey 4/20, Jones Jr. 3/26, Jones II 3/21 TD, Patrick 3/30
 SEA: Mims 4/55, Renfrow 4/34, Lamb 2/24, Anderson 2/19, Firkser 2/24, Hunt 1/6

Defense

CHI: Jarrett Sk 6-Tk, Bowser Int(TD) Tk
 SEA: White 11-Tk, Brockers Sk 3-Tk

Injuries

CHI:
 SEA:

Misc

CHI: 37:59 TOP
 SEA:



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22



Dalvin Cook busted in from 4 yards out to give the Assassins a 7-0 lead. The Cubs ground out a couple of long FG drives that stalled in the red zone to pull within 1, but another Cook TD run, from 3 yards, made it 14-6. The Cubs added a FG before the half and opened the 3rd with an 89-yard TD drive that gave them a short-lived lead. Vegas scored back-to-back to jump in front 24-16, only to surrender an 18-yard TD pass to **Tyler Lockett**, but held their lead after a failed two-point attempt. The Cubs got the ball back with 1:53 left but a fumbled snap at their own 30 sunk their comeback shot.

10-08-2021 Joe Ferguson Stadium Temp:94 Wind:0-10 None No Line MVP:Herbert HFA:ON

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Las Vegas (1-0)	7	7	0	17	31
2021 Iowa City (0-1)	0	9	7	6	22

Passing

LV: Herbert 34/26 261 Yds TD Int
 ICC: Wilson 36/32 312 Yds 2 TDs Int

Rushing

LV: Cook 15/47 2 TDs, Herbert 3/27 TD
 ICC: Conner 10/33, Wilson 6/28, Carter 4/6

Receiving

LV: Graham 8/48, Fitzgerald 7/58, Cook 4/66, Watkins 3/32, Pascal 3/39 TD
 ICC: Lockett 9/83 TD, Brown 8/126, Beasley 6/52, McKinnon 3/13 TD, Coutee 2/10

Defense

LV: Surtain II Int 8-Tk, Griffin 11-Tk, Ngakoue 3-Tk FF
 ICC: Hayward Jr. Int 8-Tk, Rhodes 11-Tk, Johnson 8-Tk

Injuries

LV:
 ICC:

Misc

LV:
 ICC: Wilson 1-F lost



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Josh Allen rushed for 3 TDs and passed for another to earn Game MVP in a win over the Blue Eagles on a rain-soaked day in Durham. Joe Burrow struggled with accuracy against a tight Lizards secondary and was sacked 3 times by 3 different defenders. Trailing 10-0 in the 2nd, Scarborough got a break when Bryon Jones picked off Allen and returned it to the half-yard line of Durham. Chris Carson scored on the next play to narrow the gap to 10-7. That would be as close as the Eagles would get as the Lizards struck 3 more times before the 4th then coasted to victory.

10-08-2021 Jurassic Park Temp:98 Wind:Calm Rain No Line MVP:Allen HFA:ON(4)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Scarborough (0-1)	0	7	0	7	14
2021 Durham (1-0)	3	14	14	0	31

Passing

SBE: Burrow 31/15 127 Yds TD
DTL: Allen 38/22 269 Yds TD Int

Rushing

SBE: Carson 12/52 TD, Burrow 4/33, Dallas 5/12, Gaskin 3/6
DTL: Edmonds 5/48, Allen 8/47 3 TDs, Penny 6/18, Mattison 3/8

Receiving

SBE: Uzomah 5/57 TD, Ward 3/18, Gaskin 3/23, Robinson II 2/12, Crowder 1/9
DTL: Waller 6/87 TD, Boyd 4/26, Kupp 4/52, Edmonds 3/29, Samuel 3/43, Mattison 1/28

Defense

SBE: Jones Int Sk 9-Tk, Ryan 3 PD 2-Tk
DTL: Burns Sk 3-Tk, Hendrickson Sk 3-Tk, Armstead Sk 3-Tk

Injuries

SBE:
DTL:

Misc

SBE:
DTL: Proche 7/90 PR



28



35

Stout 'D' and the hot hand of Kirk Cousins caused the Swordfish to jump out to a 14-0 lead on a 4-yard jet sweep by TY Hilton and a 23-yard TD pass to Terrace Marshall Jr. Jimmy Garoppolo responded with TD passes of 8 and 41 yards to Mike Evans then got Joey Slye in position for a go-ahead FG to end the half but the kick was missed. The Swordfish dominated the 3rd as Cousins tossed a pair of TDs, one off a Garoppolo pick, to force Cowtown into 4th quarter comeback mode. They closed within 7, but Cousins' 4th TD pass of the day with 6:21 left cinched the win for Sebastian.

10-08-2021 The Fish Tank Temp:76 Wind:Calm *Internet* No Line MVP:Cousins HFA:ON(3)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Cowtown (0-1)	0	14	0	14	28
2021 Sebastian (1-0)	7	7	14	7	35

Passing

COW: Garoppolo 33/22 277 Yds 3 TDs Int, Fitzpatrick 4/3 32 Yds TD
SS: Cousins 36/25 406 Yds 4 TDs Int

Rushing

COW: Murray 5/23, Gurley II 5/21, Fitzpatrick 1/7, Garoppolo 2/4, Gore 2/4
SS: Chubb 16/65, Taylor 13/58, Hilton 1/4 TD

Receiving

COW: Evans 9/140 2 TDs, Lazard 4/50 TD, Bourne 4/37 TD, Gurley II 3/14, Toney 2/17
SS: Miller 9/154 TD, Akins 5/66, Ebron 4/73, Beckham Jr. 3/28 TD, Reagor 1/41

Defense

COW: Van Ginkel Sk 13-Tk, Smith Int 7-Tk, Watt Sk 3-Tk, Davis III 8-Tk
SS: Jenkins Sk FF 3-Tk, Wallace Int 4-Tk, Gholston Sk 3-Tk

Injuries

COW: Garoppolo 9, Hicks 2
SS: Massie 8, Clowney 8

Misc

COW:
SS: 517 Yds, 30 1st Downs, 36:59 TOP



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31



Aaron Rodgers hit **Nelson Agholor** perfectly in stride for a 71-yard TD strike on the game's opening drive to give Budapest a 7-0 lead. That sparked a 1st half of North Stars' dominance that was blemished only when **Pernell McPhee** blocked a **Rigoberto Sanchez** punt and **Jessie Bates III** recovered in the end zone. That would be the Hawks' only score as the North Stars' defence held the Brooklin passing game in check. Hawks' QB **Derek Carr** struggled, throwing for just 89 yards and getting sacked 3 times. Rodgers finished with 3 TD passes, two to Agholor, to lead the offence.

10-08-2021 Ferenc-Liszt Intl Temp:79 Wind:0-10 None No Line MVP:Rodgers HFA:ON(4)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Brooklin (0-1)	0	7	0	0	7
2021 Budapest (1-0)	10	14	0	7	31

Passing

BRH: Carr 25/11 89 Yds
 BUD: Rodgers 35/28 343 Yds 3 TDs Int

Rushing

BRH: Ekeler 16/101, Smith 2/5, Carr 1/1
 BUD: Patterson 4/20, Johnson 3/14, Taylor 4/12, Patterson 3/10 TD, Rodgers 1/5

Receiving

BRH: Hopkins 4/42, Gronkowski 3/28, Ekeler 3/5, Cobb 1/14
 BUD: Diggs 6/43, Jefferson 5/66, Rodgers 4/45, Agholor 4/113 2 TDs, Kittle 3/34

Defense

BRH: Jones 9-Tk, Vander Esch Sk 3-Tk, McKinney Int 3-Tk
 BUD: Nichols Sk FF 3-Tk, Goodson 9-Tk

Injuries

BRH: Vander Esch 5, Turner 5
 BUD:

Misc

BRH: Bates III Blocked-PR TD
 BUD:



20
14



Tom Brady culminated a 75-yard opening drive with a 12-yard slant to **Mike Williams** for a TD to put York in front. Pickering responded halfway thru the 2nd with an 83-yard drive that finished with **D'Andre Swift** bouncing off right tackle for a 5-yard TD. The Excaliburs chewed up the remaining clock in the 1st half and added a FG to take a 10-7 lead into halftime. York added 10 points in the 2nd half while the Spartans' offence struggled under **Philip Rivers**. Back-up **Jalen Hurts** relieved him and scored a TD on a 10-yard scramble but also got picked and turned the ball over on downs.

10-09-2021 Thermopylae Stadium Temp:58 Wind:5-15 None No Line MVP:Brady HFA:ON(

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 York (1-0)	7	3	3	7	20
2021 Pickering (0-1)	0	7	0	7	14

Passing

YOR: Brady 27/18 210 Yds 2 TDs
 PIC: Rivers 20/9 97 Yds Int, Hurts 12/7 74 Yds Int

Rushing

YOR: Henry 22/94, Williams 5/20, Brady 6/4
 PIC: Hurts 7/77 TD, Sanders 9/66, Swift 1/5 TD, Rivers 1/4

Receiving

YOR: Amendola 8/101 TD, Kmet 3/32, Smith 2/28, Williams 2/26, Davis 1/7, Henry 1/4
 PIC: Shepard 5/78, Swift 4/23, Sanders 3/23, Brown 3/34, Mooney 1/13

Defense

YOR: Henderson Int 7-Tk, Jewell FF 8-Tk
 PIC: Schobert 9-Tk, Hyde 8-Tk

Injuries

YOR: Rousseau 1
 PIC: Mekari 1

Misc

YOR: 37:35 TOP
 PIC: Barner 3/82 KR



A 27-run by **Najee Harris** on the game's first play led to a 6-yard TD pass from **Kyler Murray** to **Hunter Henry** then **Trevon Diggs** picked off **Matt Ryan's** first pass and returned it 33 yards for a TD, sparking a 17-point Cadillac 1st. Oshawa got an opening when the Caddies failed to convert 4th & 1 at the 37 and capitalized with a 13-yard TD pass to **Braxton Berrios** with 7:09 left in the 2nd. But Erieau bled out the rest of the half and posted 10 more points in the 3rd, with Murray's 4-yard bootleg TD coming on the heels of Ryan's 2nd INT of the game to put the Panthers in an impossible hole.

10-08-2021 GM Megadome Temp:72 Wind:Calm No Line MVP:Murray HFA:ON(4)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 Erieau (1-0)	17	3	10	3	33
2021 Oshawa (0-1)	0	7	0	14	21

Passing

ERI: Murray 23/15 145 Yds TD

OSH: Ryan 39/24 247 Yds 3 TDs 2 Int

Rushing

ERI: Harris 16/71, Murray 12/49 TD, Vaughn 3/30, Moss 6/18, Hines 3/12

OSH: Drake 9/31, Singletary 1/16, Ryan 3/5

Receiving

ERI: Henry 5/40 TD, Andrews 4/47, Higgins 3/36, Harris 2/13, Waddle 1/9

OSH: Adams 6/54 TD, Goedert 4/54 TD, Edelman 4/54, Drake 4/42, Singletary 2/14

Defense

ERI: Peppers 2-Sks 2-FF 4-Tk, Van Noy Sk FF 4-Tk, Diggs Int(TD) 2-Tk, Gilmore Int

OSH: Thompson 11-Tk, Phillips 9-Tk, Kendricks 8-Tk

Injuries

ERI: Smith 6

OSH: Ward 1

Misc

ERI: Sloman 4/4 FG, 36:05 TOP

OSH: 8/66 Pen



Baker Mayfield was 4 of 4 for 55 yards on the game's opening drive and **Aaron Jones** punched it home from 8 yards to give the Irish the early lead. **James Robinson** came back for the Glads, ripping off a 52-yard on his first carry, but **Big Ben** could not take it further and Georgia settled for a FG. From there it was all Irish through the first two quarters, with rookie **Chub Hubbard** knifing through the line for a 12-yard TD run and Jones hitting paydirt from 4 yards out to stake East Elmhurst to a 24-3 halftime lead. By the time the Georgia offence got moving in the 4th it was too little, too late.

10-08-2021 Heinz Field Temp:64 Wind:0-5 None No Line MVP:Jones HFA:ON(1)

	1	2	3	4	Tot
2021 East Elmhurst (1-0)	14	10	0	7	31
2021 Georgia (0-1)	3	0	3	14	20

Passing

EE: Mayfield 30/20 290 Yds TD

GEO: Roethlisberger 36/24 213 Yds

Rushing

EE: Jones 16/107 2 TDs, Hubbard 12/35 TD, Mayfield 1/4

GEO: Robinson 16/110 TD, Bernard 2/7 TD

Receiving

EE: Thielen 8/103 TD, Everett 5/90, Hill 3/50, Jones 2/19, Hubbard 1/16, Robinson 1/12

GEO: Johnson 8/62, Robinson 7/18, Landry 4/64, Bernard 2/3, Fuller V 2/54, Ertz 1/12

Defense

EE: Graham Sk FF 3-Tk, Elder 8-Tk, Parsons 8-Tk, Ramsey 3 PD 3-Tk

GEO: Edmunds 11-Tk, Baker Sk 3-Tk

Injuries

EE:

GEO:

Misc

EE: Jones 1-F Lost, 35:14 TOP

GEO:



WEEK ONE

STANDINGS & STATS

EFL 2021 Official Standings

East	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Buffalo	1	0	0	1.000	W1	37	37.0	9	9.0	28.0	0 0 0	1 0 0	1 0 0
Cobb County	1	0	0	1.000	W1	24	24.0	7	7.0	17.0	1 0 0	1 0 0	1 0 0
Bruxelles	0	1	0	.000	L1	7	7.0	24	24.0	-17.0	0 0 0	0 1 0	0 1 0
New Jersey	0	1	0	.000	L1	9	9.0	37	37.0	-28.0	0 1 0	0 1 0	0 1 0
Central	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Twin Cities	1	0	0	1.000	W1	27	27.0	16	16.0	11.0	1 0 0	1 0 0	1 0 0
Charleswood	1	0	0	1.000	W1	27	27.0	24	24.0	3.0	0 0 0	1 0 0	1 0 0
Viriden	0	1	0	.000	L1	24	24.0	27	27.0	-3.0	0 1 0	0 1 0	0 1 0
Peg City	0	1	0	.000	L1	16	16.0	27	27.0	-11.0	0 0 0	0 1 0	0 1 0
West	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Chino	1	0	0	1.000	W1	27	27.0	6	6.0	21.0	0 0 0	1 0 0	1 0 0
Las Vegas	1	0	0	1.000	W1	31	31.0	22	22.0	9.0	0 0 0	1 0 0	1 0 0
Iowa City	0	1	0	.000	L1	22	22.0	31	31.0	-9.0	0 1 0	0 1 0	0 1 0
Seattle	0	1	0	.000	L1	6	6.0	27	27.0	-21.0	0 1 0	0 1 0	0 1 0
North	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Durham	1	0	0	1.000	W1	31	31.0	14	14.0	17.0	1 0 0	1 0 0	1 0 0
Sebastian	1	0	0	1.000	W1	35	35.0	28	28.0	7.0	1 0 0	1 0 0	1 0 0
Cowtown	0	1	0	.000	L1	28	28.0	35	35.0	-7.0	0 0 0	0 1 0	0 1 0
Scarborough	0	1	0	.000	L1	14	14.0	31	31.0	-17.0	0 0 0	0 1 0	0 1 0
Coastal	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Budapest	1	0	0	1.000	W1	31	31.0	7	7.0	24.0	1 0 0	1 0 0	1 0 0
York	1	0	0	1.000	W1	20	20.0	14	14.0	6.0	0 0 0	1 0 0	1 0 0
Pickering	0	1	0	.000	L1	14	14.0	20	20.0	-6.0	0 1 0	0 1 0	0 1 0
Brooklin	0	1	0	.000	L1	7	7.0	31	31.0	-24.0	0 0 0	0 1 0	0 1 0
South	W	L	T	Pct	Stk	Pts	Ave	Opp	Ave	Diff	Home	Div	Conf
Erieau	1	0	0	1.000	W1	33	33.0	21	21.0	12.0	0 0 0	1 0 0	1 0 0
East Elmhurst	1	0	0	1.000	W1	31	31.0	20	20.0	11.0	0 0 0	1 0 0	1 0 0
Georgia	0	1	0	.000	L1	20	20.0	31	31.0	-11.0	0 1 0	0 1 0	0 1 0
Oshawa	0	1	0	.000	L1	21	21.0	33	33.0	-12.0	0 1 0	0 1 0	0 1 0

EFL 2021 Official Rushing Leaders

			Att	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD
1	Tannehill	CB	6	129	21.5	43	2
2	Robinson,J	GEO	16	110	6.9	52	1
3	Elliott,E	VV	22	109	5.0	13	2
4	Jones,A	EE	16	107	6.7	17	2
5	Harris,D	CB	12	104	8.7	35	1
6	Gordon III	TCT	26	101	3.9	13	0
7	Ekeler	BRH	16	101	6.3	21	0
8	Henry,D	YOR	22	94	4.3	12	0
9	Hurts	PIC	7	77	11.0	40	1
10	Harris	ERI	16	71	4.4	27	0
11	Sanders,M	PIC	9	66	7.3	14	0
12	Chubb,N	SS	16	65	4.1	15	0
13	Dobbins	CHP	7	61	8.7	26	0
14	Taylor,J	SS	13	58	4.5	13	0
15	Jackson,L	BUF	11	57	5.2	21	1
16	Carson	SBE	12	52	4.3	11	1
17	Murray,K	ERI	12	49	4.1	16	1
18	Edmonds	DTL	5	48	9.6	22	0
19	Lance	SEA	8	48	6.0	14	0
20	Kamara	CHP	13	47	3.6	18	0
21	Fournette	BRX	12	47	3.9	12	0
22	Cook,D	LV	15	47	3.1	17	2
23	Allen,J	DTL	8	47	5.9	13	3
24	Davis,M	BUF	15	43	2.9	8	1
25	Williams,J	BRX	7	42	6.0	18	0
26	Montgomery	NJ	10	36	3.6	7	0
27	Mahomes	VV	3	35	11.7	13	0
28	Hubbard	EE	12	35	2.9	12	1
29	Breida	CB	7	34	4.9	11	0
30	Conner	ICC	10	33	3.3	8	0

EFL 2021 Official Receiving Leaders

			No	Yds	Ave	Lg	TD
1	Sanders,E	BUF	13	175	13.5	37	2
2	Gallup	CHI	10	100	10.0	14	0
3	Evans,M	COW	9	140	15.6	41	2
4	Miller,A	SS	9	154	17.1	29	1
5	Lockett	ICC	9	83	9.2	18	1
6	Thielen	EE	8	103	12.9	26	1
7	Amendola	YOR	8	101	12.6	20	1
8	Brown,A	ICC	8	126	15.8	25	0
9	Kelce,T	CHP	8	98	12.3	16	2
10	Chase	VV	8	112	14.0	28	0
11	Johnson,D	GEO	8	62	7.8	16	0
12	Graham,J	LV	8	48	6.0	12	0
13	Fitzgerald	LV	7	58	8.3	10	0
14	Robinson,J	GEO	7	18	2.6	8	0
15	Metcalfe	CHP	6	68	11.3	16	1
16	Shenault J	PCC	6	86	14.3	42	0
17	Golladay	TCT	6	85	14.2	20	1
18	Adams,D	OSH	6	54	9.0	11	1
19	Beasley	ICC	6	52	8.7	12	0
20	Waller	DTL	6	87	14.5	26	1
21	Diggs,S	BUD	6	43	7.2	12	0
22	Moore,D	TCT	6	73	12.2	21	1
23	Shepard	PIC	5	78	15.6	27	0
24	Everett,G	EE	5	90	18.0	48	0
25	Uzomah	SBE	5	57	11.4	22	1
26	Jones,J	CB	5	82	16.4	28	0
27	Akins	SS	5	66	13.2	25	0
28	Jefferson	BUD	5	66	13.2	16	0
29	Brown,A	TCT	5	47	9.4	16	0
30	Brown,J	VV	5	64	12.8	15	0



AROUND THE



With Spats McChad

NEW YORK – Last year at this time I was bemoaning the fact that our society had lost its marbles. Fear of COVID-19 had gone straight to our brains – the part of our brains necessary for critical thought. As a result, as a society we submitted to ever-changing guidance from health officials and swallowed every bit of information brought to us by the mainstream media about the disease, few of us stopping to consider whether any of it made sense or to note the inconsistencies.

This year I am somewhat relieved to see that the EFL will be returning to a state somewhat resembling that of the pre-pandemic world. Fans will be in the stands – capacity crowds permitted in most parks – and there will be far fewer silly mask mandates for fans and none for players and staff on the sidelines on game day. The removal of this creepy reminder that we are all a mere six-feet away from death is a welcome change indeed, even if it is (and always was) cosmetic.

However, this “new normal” comes at a hidden cost – a virtual vaccine mandate that has made our pre-pandemic understanding of science, basic human rights and medical ethics practically obsolete.

At the risk of being banned for spreading “misinformation” about the vaccine, I am going to assume that the vaccines work as well as advertised – which is a big concession considering the track record of Big Pharma. It is also tricky because the stated benefits of the vaccines being promoted have subtly changed over the course of the pandemic. But let’s assume that, as of the latest from the CDC, the vaccines work and will “protect us from the severe complications” of COVID-19.

Nothing about the disease objectively warrants the abrogation of an individuals’ right to choose their medical treatment. This COVID-19 is a plague with a 99.5% survivability rate, skewed heavily by age, a rate similar to the regular flu (which seems to have disappeared all of a sudden). Nobody was forcing flu shots on society before 2020. It was a choice people made for themselves. They lived, or in rare cases died, with the consequences.

Taking the vaccine should remain a personal choice. A person who takes the vaccine enjoys its benefits while a person who rejects the vaccine does not. But the idea that the unvaccinated are a threat to the vaccinated is absurd and not based in science – at least science as it was practiced before the COVID cash cow entered the picture, corrupting the very institutions created to protect our health to the point where they now officially ignore anything that contradicts the vaccination mantra. Natural immunity has apparently disappeared. Alternate treatments officially do not exist in North America, regardless of data coming out poor countries without broad access to vaccines showing success with other remedies in treating and preventing COVID-19.

Vaccinate, vaccinate, *vaccinate!* It’s all about the vaccine now – no longer about the virus. And the methods being employed to “encourage” the hesitant ones to get vaccinated are outright coercive to the point of bordering on criminal. Get the vaccine or lose your job and be cast out of society.

If any of this was based on real evidence that the pandemic was slaughtering us in droves, there might be justification for such an approach (although the Nuremberg Code would disagree even on that point). But this is the least deadly worldwide pandemic in history leading any logical person to wonder what is the real agenda behind the vaccine mania. That we are being played is without doubt, in my view. An 8th-grader should be able to see that. The question is: To what end?

NEW YEAR – OLD WRECKING BALLS

Having been cooped up for far too long I decided to make the trip on the Garden State Parkway down to Stone Pony Shore to take in the Wrecking Balls’ home opener. I was willing to submit to the strictest entry conditions in the EFL just to get a taste of a live crowd once more. Had I known in advance what was involved and how it would affect the experience, I would not have bothered.

Fans had been advised to arrive at the park at least two hours before game time to ensure enough time to meet the entry requirements. Proof of vaccination was required for adults and children 12 years of age or older. (Just to be safe, children under the age of 12 were not permitted to attend the game). Proof of a negative COVID test was also required from everybody in order to gain entry to the testing tent, where another rapid test was conducted prior to actually entering the stadium. Masks were mandatory for all fans who had not received a third booster shot of the vaccine. For those who wished to go mask-less inside the stadium, booster shots of the FDA-approved Pfizer vaccine and “pre-FDA approved” Moderna and Johnson & Johnson boosters, authorized by President Biden, were available at any of the dozens of pop-up clinics conveniently located next to the concessions.

Fans with medical or religious exemptions to the vaccine were directed to a special room called the Testing Ground, where religious authorities from over two dozen religions and sects interrogated the claimant on matters of religious dogma and medical doctors conducted various tests for allergies and other conditions. In many cases these “tests of faith” took hours and laboratory test

results for medical conditions could take days to come back. This effectively meant that most fans with a religious or medical exemption were unable to watch the game and would have been better off staying at home and watching it on the TV.

When, after all of this, you finally entered the stadium, took your booster of choice, removed your mask and began looking for a hot dog, a helpful stadium attendant would gently remind you that physical-distancing and mask-wearing was still required while standing in line in common areas and inside the bathrooms. The masks could come off once you were in your seat, provided your proof-of-booster pin was prominently displayed for ease of verification.

These rules were all declared with a straight face and a religious solemnity that defeated any attempt at logic. I had to wear a mask while standing six feet apart from somebody in line but could take it off when rubbing elbows with a stranger in my seat. Loss of logic and common sense was another casualty of COVID-19, a symptom not yet acknowledged by health authorities.

By the time I was seated my enjoyment of life had been significantly impaired. Was it going to be like this forever? Like removing one's shoes before boarding a plane had become routine? Or losing innumerable small personal items to the airport employees because they could, in some alternate universe ruled by a *Hollywood-esque* reality, be deemed a weapon or explosive? Did I want to live in a world where I felt like an extra in a dystopian science fiction film?

I was awoken from my personal reverie by the long-awaited arrival of the action. For the first time in over a year Stone Pony Shore was sold out, with over 38,000 bellowing, screeching fans in the seats. The noise reached a crescendo as **Chris Boswell** lowered his arm and stepped forward to launch a high, arcing kick that bounced at the 11-yard line and was fielded by **DeAndre Carter** just inside the goal line. The crowd noise abated as Carter made a move and broke toward the outside. For an instant it looked like he might have room down the sideline but suddenly his lane was shut down by **Byron Murphy Jr.** who brought him down hard at the 25. The crowd erupted at the moment of impact, impressed by the violence and relieved that the damage was no more than that of a touchback.

It had been over three years since I had been *in* a crowd like this. Immersed, as a fan, not watching it from the press box or on a telescreen. This closeness amplified the excitement of the moment and I suddenly realized that a good kick return was one of the most exciting and dangerous plays in football. It was that danger that was causing the league to slowly legislate it out of existence. The last bastions testing a man's toughness and endurance were being attacked from within in this increasingly risk-averse age.

There was nothing in the early action to suggest the Wrecking Balls would end up playing like puff balls. They created pressure and forced a quick three-and-out on the Derailers' first series. On their first possession **Matt Stafford** made a couple of nice passes to **Terry McLaurin** and threw open **Austin Hooper** in tight coverage, a pass that the tight end carried for 20 yards. If not for a **Keenan Allen** run-after-catch fumble that came up short on 3rd down at the Buffalo 4, the Balls could easily have scored a touchdown. Instead, they settled for 3 points. But heck, it was first blood even if it was merely a nick with a razor.

It was after this relatively happy start that the *Lamar Effect* started to take hold of the New Jersey defence. The Derailers' offence set up in spread formations, with three or four wide and, on one occasion, an empty backfield. When any other offence lines up in such a way the defence knows a pass is coming or, possibly, a draw. But with **Lamar Jackson** behind center this is not necessarily the case. That is because Jackson is, in reality, an RB-QB – a running back and quarterback rolled into one. It's like having **Barry Sanders** with a strong throwing arm in your backfield.

And so, the New Jersey brain trust, in the outward form of coach **Sean McDermott** but likely influenced by the team's neurotic part-owner, **Jeff 'JC' Cohen** – who stalks the sideline like a coach on game day and reacts emotionally to every twist and turn – looked at these obvious passing formations and declined to take what they saw as the bait. They met Buffalo's spread formations with heavier base sets or nickel packages with four down linemen minding of their running lanes. They were daring Lamar to pass and that's what Lamar did – better than anyone expected.

It started like Chinese water torture, with Jackson throwing short darts to his wide receivers and probing with the odd run that went for short or no gain. After 12 plays and 59 yards of slow and steady movement the dam suddenly burst. In the first sign that it would be a contrarian day for the Wrecking Balls, McDermott finally fielded his dime package to meet a four-wide Buffalo set. Lamar noted this and audibled to a short slant to **Emmanuel Sanders**. The 33-year-old veteran knifed 34 yards through the much younger Jersey zone after snaring the pass from Lamar and skirted into the end zone for a touchdown.

The crowd noise dipped to a level where only the sounds that could be heard were Derailer owner/coach, **Daryl Brothers** screeching 'YEEE HAAWW!' and the knot of 100 or so Buffalo fans in the end zone bleachers celebrating with noisemakers.

I had braced myself for the spray of a Bronx cheer from the loudmouth in a hard hat I had spotted sitting behind me but it never came. Instead, he seemed already deflated. "Ah geez, can someone make a tackle, please?" I heard him semi-whisper in disgust in a heavy Jersey accent.

Tackling has long been a problem for the Wrecking Balls. Some have attributed this to the way they practice. Loathe to risk injuries to his players except when absolutely necessary, **Jeff Cohen** set rules for incoming coach **Sean McDermott** last year limiting the number of padded practices to one per week. Most of what the Wrecking Balls rehearse is done in shorts, with flags around the waist or in "walk-throughs." One can see the results: players often in position but hesitating – in some cases not even attempting – to make a tackle. They say that under stress a player reverts to what he practiced. That would explain why New Jersey defenders can sometimes be seen swatting at the belt of a ball-carrier or simply running up and touching them without making the effort to bring them down.

The crowd was buoyed by the sight of **Calais Campbell** knocking down **Jake Elliott's** extra point attempt at the line. The optimistic fans at Stone Pony Shore seized on that as an omen that things would eventually turn around. The light celebratory mood that

sprinkled the atmosphere after the blocked extra point swelled to a ruckus when **Keenan Allen** snatched a short slant from Stafford and jettied through the secondary for a 35-yard gain to the Buffalo 21. Derailer corner **Jaycee Horn** saved a touchdown with a great open field tackle.

"Now that's how you tackle!" sneered the hard-hatted Jersey blowhard behind me.

A few plays later the situation was looking rosy for the home team, with the ball 2nd and goal at the Derailer 7. Despite appearances, a sixth sense warned me that danger was near. Years of pouring over the *All-22* of this team and decades of watching pro football in general had built a gut instinct in me that was as keen as science. Sure enough, on the next play disaster struck.

Stafford took a two-step drop and fired a short slant to his main man, Allen. But he hit Buffalo's main man in the secondary instead. Horn had been playing tight with a hint of inside leverage. The rookie guessed right and jumped the route, snagging the pass in the end zone and sliding down for the touchback.

A loud groan, quickly diminishing to a steady and prolonged murmur of discontent, issued from the crowd.

"You're a bum, Stafford!!" bellowed my obnoxious lunch pail friend behind me. The odd Bronx Cheer was now audible from places off in the distance.

The mood dampened further when the Derailers drove back up the field 80 yards on 9 plays, with Lamar finishing off the drive with a 21-yard scramble to the right pylon for Buffalo's second major. This time the extra point was good and unlucky '13' flashed on the scoreboard next to the visitors.

I have to give the Wrecking Balls' defence credit for recovering after the offensive ineptitude that followed the next two fruitless Jersey possessions. The second of these ended at the Buffalo 16-yrd line when **Wayne Gallman Jr** was stuffed by **Jordan Hicks** for a 2-yard loss on 4th & 2. The 'D' held Lamar to consecutive three-and-outs and a fired up special-teams unit seemed to induce a high snap that punter **Sam Martin** couldn't handle. He failed to get the punt off and was tackled trying to run with it at his own 11.

With 0:51 left in the half there was plenty of time to move the ball 11 yards into the end zone. Unfortunately for the Balls they had only four downs. On 3rd & goal at the 5, **Aaron Donald** shed a double-team and sacked Stafford for a 4-yard loss. Having been bitten once already by 4th down, McDermott sent on the field goal unit for the consolation prize; a 28-yard Boswell field goal.

The first half had ended positively for the Wrecking Balls, in theory at least. Despite the mishaps they were only trailing by a touchdown. Lurking like a dark shadow in the back of mine and every fan's mind, however, was the knowledge that they had penetrated deep into the Buffalo red zone four times and had a mere 6 points to show for the effort. This would probably come back to haunt them, if it wasn't haunting them already.

As the teams filed toward their respective tunnels for halftime, I contemplated getting out of my seat to use the facilities and grab another beer. Although nature was calling, I hesitated. I imagined the physically-distanced conga line to the washrooms stretching endlessly as attendants limited access to six people at a time because...well...*COVID!* The absurdity was practically unbelievable and I could sense that roughly half the crowd understood and felt this. Yet, we all went with it anyway because...well...*COVID!*



Tailgaters at Stone Pony Shore in New Jersey got to choose between Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson boosters at one of the many pop-ups clinics as they chugged spirits and enjoyed pre-game BBQ for the first time since COVID-19 hit.

I decided that nature was more powerful than my irritation at having to physically-distance myself from a person that, for the last 90 minutes or so, I could just as easily have been sitting next to. Led by my bladder, I got up and got in line. The wait gave me plenty of time to ponder that too many of us had become like sheep in the face of the pandemic. Those with common sense and who still retained enough umbrage at our dysfunctional government to bridle at the nonsense and recognize what was really at stake with COVID lockdowns and vaccine mandates were getting progressively boxed into a corner. The so-called ‘silent majority’ had become deafeningly silent when it came to freedom, saving their energy for the occasional bleat of protest directed at the mask-less barbarian who defied the non-sensical but socially-acceptable mandatory measures.

By the time I had relieved myself, bought another beer, grabbed a hot dog and returned to my seat the 3rd quarter was well under way. I could tell from the crowd noise while I was beneath the stands that something bad had happened, then two really good things, followed soon after by something bad again.

As I emerged from the steps into the open air of the stadium bowl I looked up at the scoreboard: It read WRECKING BALLS 9 VISITORS 13. I glanced down at the field and saw the Derailers lining up on offence at the New Jersey 25. As I headed to my seat Lamar took a short drop and fired complete to Sanders. He was spun down by rookie corner **Greg Newsome II** after a 10-yard gain.

The clock stopped as officials called timeout. A Wrecking Ball was lying on the field. I looked up at the scoreboard to see it was **Calais Campbell**, the \$7 million artifact we pried away from Budapest for a third-round pick and the opportunity to release **Corey Peters**. It did not look good. By the time the 34-year-old former All Pro was carted off the field I was back in my seat and had been filled in on what I had missed by my hard-hatted, glossy-eyed friend. His name was Ralph.

“Boswell kicked a 58-yawda after a hold on us,” Ralph informed me. *“Then that bum Montgomery fumbled and here we ah – they got the ball!”* he pointed to the field, where Jackson and the Derailer offence had a first down at the New Jersey 15. *“I’m telling ya, we’re gonna get scawed on here!”*

As Ralph predicted, the Derailers scored a touchdown on the next play. Jackson threw the same short cross he had thrown the play before against the same Wrecking Ball defensive formation. The only difference was that this time it was **Robert Woods** on the receiving end. He scooted through the gigantic hole in the middle of the field, unimpeded by the feeble gusts of wind produced by flailing New Jersey linebackers. Replays show he was untouched.

The crowd was quiet, unmoved toward any extreme expression of anger or disappointment. The odd shout or curse of frustration could be heard but the crowd, as an entity, seemed resigned to losing and we weren’t even in the 4th quarter.

“We’re not going to win a game this year!” Ralph muttered as he cracked open another can of Miller Lite.

I turned around to say something then it dawned on me that Ralph had not moved from his seat the entire game and – by my quick count of the crushed empties in the clear recycle bag at his feet – had quaffed down around 8-10 beers. He noticed me looking.

“You wanna beer?” he asked. *“I got plenty!”* He pointed to his cooler.

“Nah, I’m good,” I replied, showing him my half-full 20 oz cup of Michelob. *“I want to limit my trips to the washroom.”*

This comment made Ralph laugh. *“You didn’t come prepared, my friend!”* he chided. *“I knew the lines would be bad so I wore my Depends! Best decision I ever made! Now you know for next time!”*

He had shared with me, a total stranger, a disturbing secret and now I knew for next time. Except that I had already resolved there would not be a “next time” – at least not in the foreseeable future, as long as these pandemic measures remain in effect. This was even before the home team completely imploded and the contest turned into a total rout.

Two more lost fumbles would turn into 14 more Derailer points and a 10-minute, 18-play Buffalo touchdown drive would eat up most of the 4th quarter, leading to a final score of Buffalo 37, New Jersey 9. The Wrecking Balls would have the ball for just under 3 minutes in the final frame, making a comeback impossible. To add insult to injury, **Jordan Love** took the field for the final minute, depriving those frustrated fans who had remained in their seats the opportunity to mercilessly boo **Matt Stafford**. To make up for it they rained Bronx cheers down on Wrecking Balls owner, **Jeff Cohen** as the stadium scoreboard showed a close-up of him plodding slowly to mid-field, head downcast, to congratulate an ebullient **Daryl Brothers**.

Like so many of my sports-writing colleagues I bought into the off-season hype around the Wrecking Balls. This despite the team’s track record of failing to deliver on the hype. It is only Week One and nobody should overreact to one game – even one as lopsided and hopelessly depressing as this one was for the New Jersey faithful. But it is impossible to ignore the early signs that while this is a brand-new year, these are the same old Wrecking Balls.

AROUND THE EFL

While I was trapped on the ground in Stone Pony Shore watching the worst game of Week One unfold, the rest of the league went to battle across two continents and produced some interesting outcomes. My day-long trip deprived me of the opportunity to delve in-depth into the play-by-play and video of many of these games, but here are my quick takes on the Week One action:

The best game of Week One unfolded at the **TERRORDOME** in Virden, where the reigning Pacific Conference champs hosted their main regional “rival,” the Charleswood Patriots. At some point in a future column, I will address the reason why I put “rival” in quotation marks but for now I will focus on the game and not on the off-season shenanigans that helped make this game so competitive. A year ago, the Pats finished 4-12 and one game away from “winning” the Trevor Bowl (had they lost to the Triumph in Week 16). But if their 27-24 overtime victory in Week One over the Violators is a true indication of their pedigree, they will be among the teams fighting it out in the post-season to represent the Pacific Conference in the 15th Gale Sayers Game. **DeShaun Watson** has weapons now and he was not afraid to use them in keeping pace with **Patrick Mahomes** this week. Watson threw three TD passes, two to newly-

acquired **Travis Kelce**, while three different running backs, led by **JK Dobbins**, combined for 137 yards rushing to produce a balanced and effective attack. The Violators, led by Mahomes' passing, out-did the Pats offensively but fell short when kicker **Michael Badgley** missed a 45-yard field goal attempt in overtime that would have tied the game. Prior to that, this contest went back-and-forth, literally score-for-score until the missed kick broke the cycle in favour of the visitors. *Early assessment:* the Pats are for real; the Violators will go as far as Mahomes can throw them.

At the newly re-purposed GM Megadome in Oshawa, the Pink Panther Era of the Mustangs' Dynasty got off to a slow start as a freshly tuned-up Cadillac drove over **Matt Ryan & Co.** by the lop-sided score of 33-21. This was not so much a good game as it was a shocking one. Those who have undergone the self-inflicted torture of watching Erieau closely for the past five years will not have recognized the team in the sandy blue helmets with the inscrutable logo as the same sluggish, clumsy squad they are used to. Before the 1st quarter was over the Caddies held a 17-0 lead thanks to **Kyler Murray** TD pass on the game's opening drive and a pick-six by rookie **Trevon Diggs** to abruptly terminate the Mustangs' first series. The Pink Panthers were chasing their tails after that, unable to get into a rhythm offensively until it was too late. *Early assessment:* the Caddies bear watching; Oshawa may need time to gel with new coach.

At the Fish Tank in Sebastian, **Kirk Cousins** made his Swordfish debut a memorable one by throwing for 406 yards and 4 TD passes to lead his team to a 35-28 win over Cowtown. Cousins was so efficient that **Russ Lemmon's** early fourth down follies were all but forgotten in the afterglow of an impressive divisional win. The Corn Kings were slow off the mark and kicker **Joey Slye** was just off the mark, missing two field goals in the first half that would have given his team a lead at halftime. Once the Kings got going offensively, they made a game of it until an untimely **Jimmy Garoppolo** interception in the 3rd quarter opened the door for Sebastian to get two scores ahead. The game ended on an extra sour note for Cowtown as Jimmy G suffered a serious leg injury late in the 4th quarter. *Early assessment:* Cowtown 'D' needs to be better or it will be a long year; Cousins could be the x-factor in a surprise Swordfish push.

At Joe Ferguson Stadium in Iowa the Assassins showed plenty of killer instinct in beating the Cubs, 31-22. This was a much closer game than the score indicates, turning in favour of Vegas in the 4th quarter when **Patrick Surtain II** picked off **Russell Wilson** in Cubs' territory to set up a **Justin Herbert** touchdown run. That made the score 24-16 for Las Vegas but the game was far from over. Wilson did his thing and got the Cubs into the end zone but was unable to convert for two. Leading 24-22 and driving in field goal range, Herbert got aggressive and was picked off by **Casey Heyward**. That's when the game took a curious and unfamiliar turn. With plenty of time left and needing just a field goal to win, Wilson fumbled the snap and lost the ball at his own 30. Vegas took over and the Cubs ran out of timeouts with 0:47 left. Facing 2nd & 8 the Assassins could simply kneel to victory. Instead, they called a pass on 3rd & 6 which went for a TD with no time left. When asked afterwards about the risky play, coach **Anthony Hogluin** replied, "F**k it! You only live once, Dude!" *Early assessment:* the Cubs are still the team to beat in the West; the Assassins will be dangerous to others and themselves.

In Pickering, the Excaliburs spoiled the return of the '300 Spartans' fan club to the seats at Thermopylae Stadium by wearing down the Spartans 20-14. This game was a strangely low-key affair, with York coach **Jay Hammond** at one point pausing his play-calling to pay for a pizza he had ordered before the game, that arrived late due to vaccine protocol-related delays at the stadium's only entrance. Ever the polite host, Pickering coach **Gus Kontantakos** declined to accept the repeated delay-of-game calls against his opponent. "It would not be fair to penalize the other team for logistical delays for which we are to blame," he said. "We have to do a better job of getting people and materials into the stadium going forward!" On the field the action consisted of **Derrick Henry** colliding with and pushing back the Pickering line, **Tom Brady** picking apart the short middle parts of the secondary, and **Philip Rivers** missing easy throws. *Early assessment:* Pickering bandwagon temporarily paused to fix a broken wheel; anything is possible with **Tom Brady**.

At Coyote Field in Marieta, Georgia, **Ryan Tannehill** and the Coyotes dominated the Bombers under **Drew Brees**, 24-7. Unlike in 2020, when he dismantled opponents with surgical precision through the air, Tannehill used his legs to carry his team to victory, rushing for 129 yards and 2 TDs on just 6 carries. He was, however, picked off twice by the Bombers, which was the only reason this game was not a slaughter. The Bombers took a chance by signing the ageing Brees as a free agent in a last-ditch effort to stay relevant. The old warrior looked rusty in completing just 11 of 30 for 121 yards. *Early assessment:* too early to tell where either team is going.

At Heinz Field in Pittsburgh, the Pennsylvania Gladiators fell to the upstart Irish by the decisive score of 31-20. The Glads' temporary home did not bring them or **Big Ben** – who used to play in the park as a Steeler many years ago – any new luck. The Glads looked as befuddled on offence in this contest as they did all last year under the unsteady hand of **Tua Tagovailoa**. The Catholic Brotherhood known as the McClancy Boys spent a lot of money, draft capital and trade bait to put together a backfield in the off-season and it seems to have worked out. **Aaron Jones** rushed for 107 yards and 2 TDs on 16 carries to supplement a strong performance by **Baker Mayfield** behind center. *Early assessment:* the Irish have the pieces to put away bad teams; the Glads are still rebuilding.

The Convicts were unwanted guests at the Kingdome in Seattle this week as they trashed the Pilots 27-6. This outcome was somewhat surprising since the Chino defence has not been dominant for many years and **Gardner Minshew II** was viewed as the spark that would ignite a Seattle offence with more weapons at its disposal than ever before. That **Trey Lance** saw action late in this game tells you all you need to know about Minshew's struggles. *Early assessment:* 'Minshew Mania' may be short-lived; Chino is still Chino.

In the remaining 3 games, the two front-runners to win the Atlantic, Durham and Budapest, handled business as expected. The rain at Jurassic Park kept the score down as the Thunder Lizards continued to own **Joe Burrow** in a 31-14 win over Scarborough; while **Darrin Jones'** chivalric tendencies allowed an overmatched Hawks squad to escape Budapest with dignity, falling 31-7. The Triumph turned to an old flame, **Mitch Trubisky**, to dispatch the feeble Crusaders, 27-16, thereby protecting the Royal Jewels from early exposure to the harsh pro game. *Early assessment:* Durham and Budapest are meeting in the Conference Final; I will defer on Scarborough and Brooklin until they face teams they can handle; Triumph aren't the worst team in the league anymore; call it no.1 of 16 for the Pegs!

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7-5-0

Jimmy's WEEK TWO PICKS

COBB COUNTY @ SEATTLE (line – COYOTES by 10)

INJURIES: Cobb County – None; Seattle – None.

Seattle fans were not impressed with the performance of Gardner Minshew II in their home opener loss to Chino and are clamoring for the 13th overall pick Trey Lance to get the start this week against the Coyotes. The rookie appeared late in the game, when it was out of hand, and flashed signs of 'Lamar-lite' in the run game. But with only 4 pass attempts it is too early to gauge if his rifle of an arm will kill opponents or his own receivers. The QB situation in Seattle is tense. Until it is sorted out, getting a handle on the Pilots will be a challenge. The Coyotes looked strong on offence and defence last week while snuffing out the Bombers. Ryan Tannehill made up for a two-pick performance with a league-leading 129 yards and 2 TDs on the ground. Where did that come from? It is tempting to see a bounce back for Tannehill through the air and an easy Coyote win, but if the Pilots can turn Robby Anderson and Ceedee Lamb into factors in the offence, things could get interesting. Expect some extra effort from the bruised homies. **PICK: SEATTLE**

CHINO @ NEW JERSEY (line – CONVICTS by 8)

INJURIES: Chino – None; New Jersey – Calais Campbell (OUT).

This line opened at a ridiculous Chino -23 then quickly came down to Earth as the week progressed. The Wrecking Balls are radioactive at the moment after getting rag-dolled by Buffalo to start the season. I knew I would regret picking them to cover last week but I, like so many other professionals, keep seeing a 10-win team on the Wrecking Ball roster. Trying to keep one's head when one's instinct says that New Jersey is cursed by demons is proving difficult, even for a hardboiled Vegas bookie. So, as difficult as it is, I refuse to overreact to their Week One fiasco. Similarly, I am not planning to anoint the Convicts as the team to beat in the West after they dismantled the Pilots. Dak Prescott turned in a top-grade performance last week against a good Seattle defence. He should be able to put up 30 points. The key to a Wrecking Ball rebound will be Matt Stafford and play action off the run game to slow the game down and keep pace on the scoreboard. And, of course, the defence will have to get into Prescott's face. **PICK: NEW JERSEY**

IOWA CITY @ BRUXELLES (line – CUBS by 2)

INJURIES: Iowa City – None; Bruxelles – None.

The score in the Cubs' loss to the Assassins last week was not indicative of how well they played. One turnover too many deprived Russell the Magician of his shot at victory and handed their aggressive opponent an extra score at the end. The Cubs are fundamentally strong and remain the team to beat in the West Division. They will not dwell on the unlucky loss in Week One but will focus on a Bomber defence that has gained a lot of weight in the off-season. Bruxelles looked flat against Cobb County but managed to avoid total embarrassment on the scoreboard by winning the turnover battle. Of concern was the performance of Drew Brees, who looked his age in passing for just 121 yards and a 60.6 QB rating. It is a critical game for both teams as neither would-be contender wants to fall to 0-2 to start the season. I see a stronger, more methodical Cubs team prevailing to avoid that fate. **PICK: IOWA CITY**

BUFFALO @ LAS VEGAS (line – ASSASSINS by 1)

INJURIES: Buffalo – L'Jarius Sneed (OUT); Las Vegas – None.

Few saw the Derailers as a .500 team before the season started but after last week's demolition of the Wrecking Balls – a team many saw as a division threat – many are taking pause. It could have been one of those Week One aberrations that we see on occasion; or the Joker-in-the-deck factor that New Jersey often brings; or it could be that Buffalo is a wolf in sheep's clothing. This game at Las Vegas will provide a clue as to which it is as the Assassins are 1-0 and coming off a big division win over rival Iowa. Justin Herbert showed

why he won the starting job in camp, by completing 76.5% of his pass attempts, while their dangerous defence made game-changing plays in the 4th quarter. This will boil down to match-ups. Vegas' elite linebackers are capable of containing Lamar as much as he can be contained, which means the Derailer QB has to be accurate through the air. With Jaycee Horn looking like a menace in the secondary, Vegas must establish Dalvin Cook on the ground to set up play-action. Tough call goes to the home team. **PICK: LAS VEGAS**

TWIN CITIES @ CHARLESWOOD (line – PATRIOTS by 3)

INJURIES: Twin Cities – Emmanuel Mosley (OUT). Charleswood – Desmond Trufant (OUT).

Fans anxiously awaiting the debut of no.1 overall pick Trevor Lawrence will be disappointed if the rumours are accurate that the rookie won't even be active this week. There is no need to rush things as long as Mitch Trubisky posts numbers like he did last week. He will need to amp-up that performance against a Pats team that has the firepower to go very far indeed and showed it in a dramatic overtime win over Virden. The acquisition of Travis Kelce to complement a dangerous receiving corps is the key piece in placing this offensive outfit potentially at the top of the league in production going forward. Throw in Alvin Kamara and it is hard to imagine the Triumph stopping the Pats other than by sheer luck or by Charleswood self-inflicted wounds. As talented as he is, DeShaun Watson does have the occasional tendency to implode. Don't expect that to be the case this week. Take the Pats and sleep well. **PICK: CHARLESWOOD**

VIRDEN @ PEG CITY (line – VIOLATORS by 2)

INJURIES: Virden – Nick Bolton (DOUBTFUL); Peg City – Taylor Rapp (OUT).

The Violators pushed Charleswood to the wall last week, demonstrating that the Pacific champs are alive and kicking despite a quasi rebuild in the off-season. The Crusaders put up a spirited fight against Twin Cities but, if that was the best they could do when healthy and still motivated, how bad will they look when the reality of their talent-starved roster kicks in? This match-up will do nothing to improve their confidence. The Violators have them beat in every important area. Nick Bolton is doubtful, which would not normally rate a mention except he is one of only four linebackers on the roster. This is a potential vulnerability that the Pegs could exploit for an extra field goal or two. The homefield should be good for an early touchdown and a brief illusion of hope and little else. **PICK: VIRDEN**

OSHAWA @ COWTOWN (line – CORN KINGS by 5)

INJURIES: Oshawa – Charvarius Ward (OUT); Cowtown – Jimmy Garoppolo (OUT), Akiem Hicks (OUT).

The change of scenery from Aurora to Oshawa did not get off to an auspicious start last week. The Pink Panthers were soundly thumped by Erieau after breaking slow out of the gate and at no point looked like the league's premier dynasty. Few expect Oshawa to dominate as the Mustangs once did, but they remain the favourite to win the South Division despite some chinks in the old armour. The Corn Kings are well aware of the danger posed by Matt Ryan and Davante Adams and are now doubly concerned after their defence was torched by Kirk Cousins last week. Part of that failure was scheme but a good portion of it was lack of execution as well. Cowtown needs a better showing by their defence if they hope to go anywhere this year. Look for a bounce-back here but will it be enough? Ryan Fitzpatrick will get the start for injured Jimmy Garoppolo and that could mean anything at all. **PICK: OSHAWA**

SEBASTIAN @ GEORGIA (line – SWORDFISH by 8)

INJURIES: Sebastian – Jadeveon Clowney (OUT), Bobby Massie (OUT); Georgia – None.

Kirk Cousins announced his arrival in the Atlantic Conference with a 400-yard passing performance in an impressive win over Cowtown. Fans in Sebastian are now saying, "Drew who?" While Russ Lemmon could not have asked for a better start from his new QB, how far Cousins can take the Fish remains a big unknown. Last week he benefitted from his opponent focusing on the run game; this week he will likely benefit from targeting the Gladiators' typically rag-tag gaggle of corners. Georgia – now in Pennsylvania – looked worryingly like the same team that won three games last year without Big Ben at the helm, but with Big Ben at the helm in their loss to East Elmhurst. While pieces are slowly falling into place in Georgia, they still lack that star player to lead them when Big Ben is injured or off his game. The Glads fell behind early last week and had to pass the ball. This week they must avoid a shootout by getting the run game going against a Swordfish defence that is soft in the underbelly. The Glads may not win, but they can cover. **PICK: GEORGIA**

ERIEAU @ SCARBOROUGH (line – CADILLAC by 3)

INJURIES: Erieau – Josh Myers (PROBABLE), Tyron Smith (OUT); Scarborough – None.

Fans of the Cadillac (yes, they exist) are reacting to the team's Week One blowout of Oshawa as if they had won a championship. It was the first time Erieau had beaten the "Aurora" franchise and they did it with authority – no inclement weather or lucky bounces involved. Of note was the play of Kyler Murray. He did not pass for a lot of yards, but he was efficient through the air and made plays with his feet to earn the Game MVP. The defence generated a touchdown and the secondary stuck to the Pink Panther receivers like barnacles. The Caddies hope to build on that great start by repeating that performance against a Blue Eagle team that failed to pass a stern test against Durham in Week One. Joe Burrow struggled in the rain against a raptorial Durham defence and, while he did not throw a pick, was

unable to sustain drives early. The Erieau defence is a light version of Durham's but cannot be taken lightly. But expect the Blue Eagles to find more room in the secondary this week and use the jolt of the home opening crowd to their advantage. **PICK: SCARBOROUGH**

DURHAM @ EAST ELMHURST (line – THUNDER LIZARDS by 3)

INJURIES: Durham – None; East Elmhurst – None.

It wasn't picture-perfect but the Lizards took care of business in the steady rain against Scarborough. Durham is simply better than most teams and has the talent to prevail on an off-day. East Elmhurst's "upset" of the Gladiators in Week One has Irish fans already abuzz with excitement and high expectations. Local media is calling for coach Archbishop Thomas Molloy to properly "christen" Monsignor McClancy Memorial Stadium with a win over one of the top teams in the conference. This will be the true home opener for the Irish, as they played to empty seats in their new stadium throughout 2020. The energy of the fans needs to be strong and the divine intervention real in order to topple Durham. There are some intriguing pieces on this Irish squad but the jerry-rigged offensive line could prove to be fatal against the deadly Durham pass rush and shutdown secondary. It may be close for a while but not in the end. **PICK: DURHAM**

PICKERING @ BUDAPEST (line – NORTH STARS by 12)

INJURIES: Pickering – Patrick Mekari (OUT); Budapest – None.

The Spartans enter the season with cautious optimism that they are ready to re-enter the ranks of the relevant. But last week's loss to York showed why the optimism was cautious. Philip Rivers simply looked older as the game went on, to the point where Gus Konstantakos made the surprise move of relieving him for Jalen Hurts. What the second-year pro showed was that he can run. What he did not show was that he could be trusted through the air. This puts Pickering in a quandary heading in to face the reigning champs on their home turf. The North Stars will not struggle to put up points against the Spartans, although appropriate caution will be observed when throwing the ball anywhere near Xavien Howard. That will put pressure on whoever is at QB for Pickering to put points on the board. Whether it is the turnover-prone vet, or the inexperienced youngster, Minkah Fitzpatrick cannot wait. **PICK: BUDAPEST**

BROOKLIN @ YORK (line – EXCALIBURS by 7)

INJURIES: Brooklin – Trai Turner (OUT), Leighton Vander Esch (OUT); York – Gregory Rousseau (OUT).

Derek Carr and the Hawks were grounded in Week One, which was depressing given Brooklin's traditional route to victory is through the air. The reality is that Budapest is in a different league and the Hawks' air corps has dwindled to Carr and DeAndre Hopkins when the chips are down. Since the Brooklin defence has not gotten any better, it is hard to see this team repeating the success they enjoyed last year. The Excaliburs surprised last week with a convincing win over Pickering that was not as close as the score indicates. But then, York is unlikely to pull away from anyone with Derrick Henry as the engine of their offence and Tom Brady having to pick and choose his spots to stretch the field. York will slow the game down to a pace they can manage and take the Hawks with them. **PICK: YORK**



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This Week in EFL History
With Professor Sterling Smitherman

FROM THE EFL ARCHIVES – Week One of the 2015 EFL season was overshadowed somewhat by fans' curiosity at the experimental phenomenon known as EFL Asia. The developmental league, hosted by four major East Asian cities and populated by mostly US-born semi-pro players, was created to exploit the popularity of the Markham North Stars in Guangdong Province in mainland China. The EFL saw an emerging market and aggressively seized an opportunity that few thought existed. In addition to promoting American football in the far east, the final finish of the league's four teams – the Taipei Sharks, the Beijing

Red Dragons, the Pyongyang Sun and the Seoul Calm – would determine the order in the upcoming EFL Expansion Draft. Note the original corporate names of the parent EFL expansion teams affiliated with each of the Asian teams: The Erieau Cadillac (Seoul) and Toronto Wolverines (Taipei) were the same. The future Wrecking Balls team was first known as the Golden Horseshoe Hootenannies (Beijing), while the Corvallis Creeping Death (Pyongyang) never ended up being commissioned and were later replaced by the Mission Viejo Monarchs.

Meanwhile, in the real EFL the dominant news item was the return of *Peyton Manning* to Charleswood. After spending 2014 in Pickering and failing to bring the Spartans their coveted second title, the Original Patriot and no.1 overall pick of the Inaugural EFL Draft of 2007 returned for the relatively cheap price of a 3rd round pick (no.42 overall). The league had wanted this to happen and to make sure 'The Return' was a triumphant one, they scheduled the Pats to open the season against the LA Knights, a team that had gone 0-16 the year before. The game nearly turned into an unimaginable embarrassment for the Pats. They led just 6-3 going into the 4th, but *Dez Bryant's* 36-yard TD catch finally broke the ice and Manning triumphed in his homecoming by the score of 20-10.