

sports

Poop Counter-Poop

Philly Phans: Cursed Whiners or Whining cursers?

“Philly fans enjoy wallowing in their own sadness, but comparatively speaking do they suffer as much as other cities?”

Philly Phans: Huge Bitches

By Eamon Stewart
STAFF CHOPS

Philadelphia sports fans have certainly had their share of bad breaks. Their teams have lost some close games, their stars at times have underperformed, and their organizations have made some foolish personnel decisions at times. But what The City of Brotherly Love fails to recognize is that the shortcomings of their organizations, while painful, is something that has afflicted virtually every other city in America at one point or another and not some weird voodoo curse put on them. The idea that they are the most championship starved city is ludicrous.

Part of Philadelphia's self-induced suffering has to do with the fact that they are the only sports fans more critical and less patient with their teams than New Yorkers and New Englanders. Philadelphia teams have a long and storied history of criticizing and running players out of town that other teams would kill to have (Allen Iverson, Reggie White, Eric Lindros, Charles Barkley, Bobby Abreu just to name a few). News networks in Philadelphia will either tell you that Donovan McNabb is the greatest quarterback of all time and will someday cure cancer, or that he is an utter piece of shit and that the Eagles would get equal value by trading him somewhere for a ham sandwich (these are paid professionals who say this kind of stuff, not just the

average fan on the street). What predictably results is a culture in which blame must be allocated to the best player on the team, rather than his supporting cast, and Philadelphia fans often wonder why their star players exit as soon as humanly possible. I expect fans to be calling for the head of Elton Brand if the 76ers don't at least finish third in the Eastern conference this year (which they won't).

There are several cities whose teams have suffered more, period. Teams from Cleveland have not won a championship in any sport since 1964. Seattle hasn't won a championship since 1979, and their one team that has brought them a championship is now in Oklahoma. There are other cities that have had defeats that were far more glorious than Philadelphia's. The team that comes to mind most is Buffalo Bills, who played in and were defeated in four consecutive Super Bowls, a feat that will probably never be repeated. Then there's the Atlanta Braves, who managed only one World Series while winning their division 14 con-

secutive times (Atlanta has only won 2 championships in any sport in the last 50 years, 4 less than Philadelphia). The big reason why Philadelphians whine more about their teams than any of these cities is

because of the typical East Coast bias within the media. Much more is said about the tragedy of Philadelphia than the struggles of Cleveland, Seattle, or Atlanta because Philadelphia is one of those Northeastern cities that can't imagine that most of the United States isn't actually in the Northeast and therefore feel compelled to compare themselves to New York City, Boston, and Baltimore (the last one not really being a paradigm of success either, but I won't get into that). So as long as Philadelphia fans continue to believe they are only one of four or five cities in the US and watch ESPN (a troll of New England who enjoys ripping the other Northeastern cities as frequently as possible) they will believe that they are the most tortured individuals in the world when it comes to

their teams. My counterpart will try to convince you of as much, mostly because he's already forgotten about how the Phillies won the World Series and is on to ripping Donovan McNabb and Elton Brand.



“Mr. Feeny, when will we be winners?”

“Seriously, kid, just shut up.”

Philly Phans: Totally Bitchin'

By Bill Donahue
CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Before anything else, let me first explain a bit about the sporting history of the City of Brotherly Love. This is not me masochistically reveling in painful memory, as some seem to think, but rather just some context to the celebrations that erupted after Eric Hinske flailed at Brad Lidge's final, devastating slider.

Prior to Mr. Lidge's jump and subsequent human burial on the infield of Citizen's Bank Park, it had been 25 years since one of the four sports teams in Philadelphia had won a national championship. That is, accounting for strike years, 98 seasons of epic futility by the Phillies, Eagles, Flyers, and Sixers. No other city with four sports teams is even close; a not-so-close second, San Francisco has had 54 combined seasons since the Niners won the Super Bowl. Over 9,000 professional sports games had been played since the last



“What do you know about suffering?”

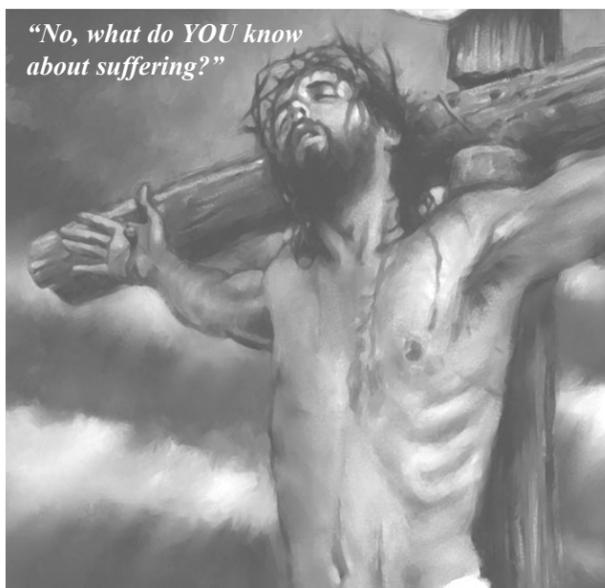
parade down Broad Street. I needn't go into the individual memories of Joe Carter and Shawn Bradley and fourth quarter Super Bowl time management; suffice to say, they were not enjoyable for anyone.

It certainly must be acknowledged that other cities have had plenty of hardship as well. Buffalo comes to mind, as do Seattle and Cleveland. Each of these towns, though with fewer teams, has gone through big losses, team departures, and extended droughts, just as Philadelphia has. Indeed, comparison is a difficult thing. To try to objectively quantify suffering is to fail to acknowledge the intimately personal side of sports fandom and the shared experience felt locally. But the one major difference, I would contend, is the shattered pride and utter embarrassment that comes from the knowledge that, amidst all this losing, Philly is a major metropolitan market with four clubs.

At least in the cities mentioned previously, the failure can be rationalized by their small market nature, by their inability to spend, or by their having only two or three sports teams. Though certainly painful, they are not the first and will likely not be the last small markets to suffer extended sports impotence. There are, to put it bluntly, no excuses for the tragically awful Philadelphia sports record. By all logic and (more importantly) in the minds of the fans, there is no reason why a city that ranks as fifth largest metro area in the nation should be so bad for such an extended period of time. If we are a big market like New York, Chicago, LA and New England,

why have we not had perennial winners like the Yankees, Bulls, Lakers, and Patriots?

The result has been a debilitating inferiority complex. Philadelphians look to the New Yorks and the L.A.s and the Chicagos with a burning jealousy, a kind



“No, what do YOU know about suffering?”

of “What are we doing wrong?” mentality. Pessimism permeates the entire region. We are so completely embarrassed that year after year after year we draw comparisons not to the other big markets, but rather to the smaller ones mentioned previously in this article. That is what is so crucially

important to realize when looking at the unhappiness of Philadelphia sports fans. It isn't the sub-.500 records or the big losses alone that causes the suffering; it's the feeling of absolute disgrace that we are a grownup sitting at the kids' table.

But, as any movie tough guy has taught us, Philadelphia sports tough guys don't like to talk about their deep-rooted feelings of inferiority. Instead, we get angry. Really angry. We boo everything, we cheer at injured players, we hurl batteries, we criticize their own superstars, and perhaps most importantly to my counterpart's assertion of enjoyment of “wallowing in sadness,” we take a perverse pride in our suffering. When you've had so little to cheer for for the past 25 years, what else can you take pride in?

Free Agency, Or How I Beat the Recession in One Winter!

By Robert Giannatassio
STAFF WORD COUNT GOD

This year's MLB free agent market is loaded with superstars. The MLB off-season is a time when teams can fill in big holes in their lineup or starting rotation. This year, the top name at each position could probably make a team better than any in the league today. Fans are anxiously waiting to see just which of the free agents their GMs will get to help their teams.

Before I start listing who I feel are the top free agents of the year, there are a few names worth mentioning. First are three starting pitchers that would be one, two and three if this article was written about 15 years ago. I hope that Greg Maddux, Tom Glavine and John Smoltz all decide to retire. Although they all still have some gas in their tanks, Maddux has already said he plans to retire and I think that it would be great for the game of baseball to have the HOF class of 2012 consist of those three greats. Speaking of the Hall of Fame, there are two free agents who have "juiced" themselves out of the HOF – and out of baseball: Roger Clemens (yes, still technically a free agent at 45) and Barry Bonds.

I believe that this year's free agent transactions will happen a lot faster than usual. President-Elect Obama plans to increase taxes and many free agents who will receive signing bonuses will save money by signing in 2008 before rates increase in 2009. I think this will lead to less drawn out contract negotiations and quicker, higher bids by teams who assume as I have of players signing before year end.

I have put together the players who I believe make up the best of the best of the 2008-2009 MLB free agents. These are the guys who will demand the most money and have the attention of every team. These players will be highly paid and highly sought after and I have given my opinion on which team they will end up with and the contract they will get.

Now on to the list...

1) C.C. Sabathia

The tall lefty was traded mid-season from the Cleveland Indians to the Milwaukee Brewers where he fell in love with the art of hitting. He went 17-10 with a 2.70 ERA combined and proved his reputation as a workhorse pitching almost every three days- and winning-down the stretch for the Brewers. Sabathia has already received offers from the Brewers and the Yankees, who are at the top of the list to get him in many analysts' views. If it were about money only, the Yankees would land this guy hands down. But Sabathia has said that he wants to hit and wants to be close to his home on the West Coast, which brings teams like the Angels and Dodgers into the mix.

Yankee Captain Derek Jeter was quoted saying how nobody needs to be convinced to come play for the Yankees, and for the Yankees to have made an offer of \$140 Million and it not be

immediately accepted, it shows that the other factors are extremely important to C.C..

The Dodgers, an NL West team, who do not look like they will get Manny (see below), have some money to spend with Furcal, Lowe, Garciparra and Penny also gone. They appear to be the likely choice for Sabathia.

Conclusion: LA Dodgers- 7 years \$120 Million

2) Manny Ramirez

Arguably the best right-handed hitter of our age, Manny is looking for a huge offer from the highest bidder.

Unlike Sabathia, who is considering other factors, Manny and his agent Scott Boras (known for the biggest contracts ever) have already said that they will be taking "serious offers" after being offered the highest contract in Dodgers history.

Manny hit .332 with 37 HRs and 121 RBIs last season for the Dodgers and Red Sox – keeping in mind that those numbers reflect months with the Sox where he gave 50% effort at best. Any team could use Manny in the outfield or as a DH but not many can afford him. His "Manny being Manny" antics may also turn off some teams who do not want to or who cannot control him. Although I know Joe Torre and the Dodgers could control him, I don't think they can afford him and he will need to find a team that can.

The San Francisco Giants were horrible last season and are no stranger to spending money on Scott Boras' clients. I believe this makes Manny a possible addition to their team even though they only allotted \$20 Million to spend on new players. No matter what happens the 12-time All Star will be sure to make an impact wherever he ends up.

Conclusion: SF Giants- 4 years \$85 Million

3) Mark Teixeira

I don't personally care for Mark



Pinstripes would at least be slimming.

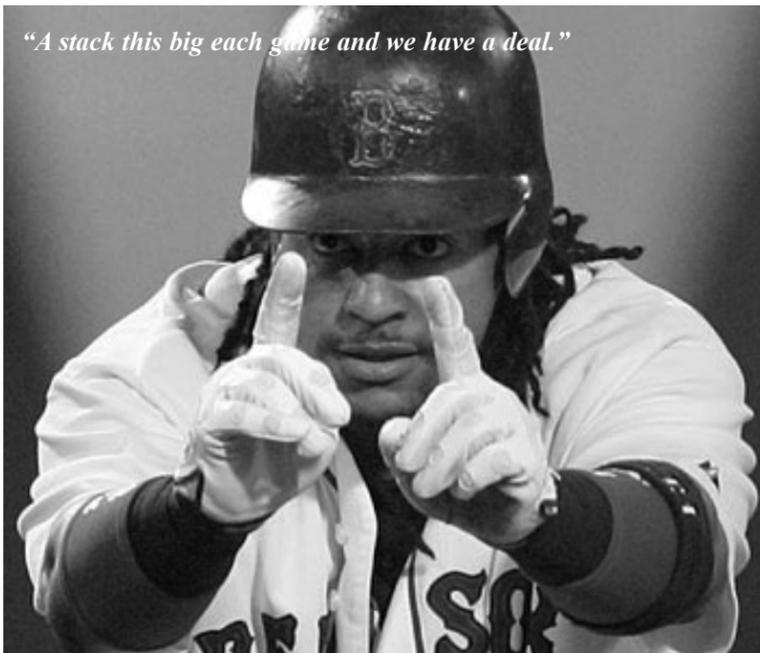
Teixeira. I believe that he doesn't want to win and he thinks he is better than he is; teams should be more honored to have him than he is honored to be playing for them. It is for this reason that I am glad the Yankees will not be getting him this offseason – nice job getting

Swisher by Brian Cashman.

As much as I dislike Teixeira, he is the best first baseman in the game (just ahead of Jason Giambi), provides great defense and a switch hitter who belted 33 HRs while batting .302. The Angels and his hometown Baltimore Orioles will battle it out for Mark and it will have to come down to money or being home. Another Scott Boras client, I think he will take the money which should be less than the 20 million a year he wants because the Yankees are no longer in the market.

Conclusion: LA Angels- 8 years \$155 Million

"A stack this big each game and we have a deal."



4) Jake Peavy

I know Peavy is NOT a free agent, but when the Padres openly say they will trade him and he has a no-trade clause allowing him to decide where he goes – its close enough. The 2007 Cy Young award winner is somewhat prone to injury but still one of the best arms in the game. The Yankees have put pitching at the top of their list and if they do not get Sabathia, Peavy will be next on their list and Jake has already said he would be willing to go to NY. If the Yanks throw Melky Cabrera and Ian Kennedy to the Padres, I believe they can get Peavy.

Conclusion: NY Yankees – Contract 4 years \$70 Million

5) Rafael Furcal

The 2000 Rookie of the Year is back after a season plagued by injuries. I believe that Furcal is a catalyst for any team he plays on. With one of the quickest bats and strongest arms in the game, Furcal will be an asset to any team at short. I believe Atlanta needs to make some changes, which will include a trade, which will include their current SS Yunel Escobar. Furcal has been there before and although they had some problems in the past, I'm sure Atlanta would be happy to have him.

Conclusion: Atlanta Braves – 2 years \$25 Million

6) A.J. Burnett

Although a bit of a disappointment for Toronto, AJ Burnett still has one of the best arms in the game. He has a well-above average fastball, hitting 98 at times, and a devastating curveball (just ask anyone who plays me in PS2's MLB The Show). To make up for his below

expectation seasons in Toronto, I think there is a good chance he will stay on for another two years at a slight cut in pay. Burnett is considered by some to be a possible bargain but I disagree. In keeping with the Yankees promise of pitching, pitching and more pitching this off-season, I feel he is going to stay in the AL East.

Conclusion: NY Yankees- 3 years \$34 Million

7) Francisco Rodriguez

The 26 year old right-hander is coming of a record setting season where he recorded 62 saves. He is young and can

be a staple in the bullpen for any team. The Mets lost Billy Wagner to Tommy John surgery and need to fill his spot; they also have the cash necessary to obtain this hard-throwing closer. With Trevor Hoffman and other serious closers on the market, I believe K-Rod will accept a lower offer than the \$75 million he originally sought to get.

Conclusion: NY Mets- 5 years \$65 Million and a pair of orange sunglasses

8) Adam Dunn

Adam Dunn has been one of the most consistent players in baseball over the last five seasons; 40 HR and a .375+ OBP make him a productive player that would add to any lineup. His two major flaws are that he strikes out too much and his defense is poor. One of those problems can be changed by turning him into a first baseman, which his current team, the Diamondbacks need. Dunn was productive for the D-backs after they got him from the Reds in early August and although they missed the playoffs, they will need to keep him to stay competitive in the NL West.

Conclusion: AZ Diamondbacks- 2 years \$26 Million

9) Orlando Hudson

O-Dog is another player that the Diamondbacks need to keep in order to stay competitive in the NL West. He was a .305 hitter last season but only played in 107 games. A two-time Gold Glove in the field and a catalyst at the top of the order, I expect him to come back strong next year for the D-backs and be a productive and healthy player.

Conclusion: AZ Diamondbacks- 3 years \$19 Million

10) Ryan Dempster

Coming off a very good year for the Cubs going 17- 6 with a 2.96 ERA, Dempster is sure to attract a lot of attention on the free agent market. The Cubs would like to re-sign Dempster but I think he will be getting a lot of offers from the NL East. With Glavine possibly out of the rotation, the Braves could use the veteran right hander, and with Oliver Perez and Pedro possibly gone for the Mets, they might up the bid of the Braves and take Dempster for themselves.

The Cubs have a big "For Sale" sign on them, should have trouble competing with other teams and Dempster might be made an offer he can't refuse.

Conclusion: NY Mets- 4 years \$30 Million

Dean of Soccer Farts Away the Competition

By Devin McNamara
STAFF S.B.D.

Two and a half months into the English Premier League season a cinderella story has already emerged. The Hull City Tigers have captured the hearts and raised the spirits of all those who dwell in Kingston upon Hull. Founded in 1904, the Tigers have had minimal success in the last century. Having never played football in the highest division, the Tigers are hardly a power house club. Just a few years ago in 2004 Hull City was in division two (three leagues below the Premiership). However, back-to-back promotions in 2004 and 2005 put them in the Championship, the second highest division in English football. After an unimpressive start and two managerial replacements the little known Phil Brown took over. Since then Hull have been nearly unstoppable.

Phil Brown had the foresight to bring Dean Windass back to his hometown club. Windass began his playing career at Hull City in their youth system. However, the Windass flare was not in him as a youngster. He was released and played non-league football for North Ferriby United. During his time at North Ferriby Windass developed his skills and earned a place back on Hull City. In two years he became a fan favorite but had to be sold to Aberdeen (Scottish Premier League) in 1995.

Windass also left his mark on clubs like Oxford United, Bradford City (twice), Middlesbrough, Sheffield United, and Sheffield Wednesday. But finally, Phil Brown put this to an end

declaring that he wanted Windass, and he wanted Windass badly. With the leadership of Windass, Hull City found themselves in the unlikely position of promotion to the Premiership May of 2008, just a year after fighting relegation from the Championship. Windass scored the winning goal against Bristol City to earn Hull City the final spot in the Premiership. Strangely enough, Windass, after being left out of a crucial game against Sheffield United, told Phil Brown that he, "will score the winning goal to get you in the Premier League." (James Stewart, The Guardian) After the contest Windass was awarded the man-of-the-match award, which he offered to Hull City's assistant manager Brian Horton, the man who cut Windass from the youth squad nearly 20 years ago.

The goal Windass scored for Hull City was estimated to be worth nearly £60 million. Now Hull City are playing in the top division of football for the first time in their 104 year history. Unfortunately Windass' age has caught up with him and he has been left out of a large number of contests this year. However, his leadership put them in the position they are in today. After nearly three months, Hull City current sits in sixth place among the top clubs in all of England. Their most impressive victory during this year's campaign came against one of

the four untouchables, Arsenal FC. Despite going down 1-0 in the 50th minute, Hull City retaliated with strikes from Marcio Geovanni and Daniel Cousin within the next 16 minutes. This gave Arsenal their first home loss in 17 months. Other impressive victories include Newcastle, Tottenham, West

without Windass in the lineup I don't see how. Hull City's soul rests entirely inside of Dean Windass. Recent reports have surfaced that a fight occurred between two Hull players, Dean Windass and Marlon King. According to the team, the fight was a private matter between the two players. It happened during mid-



Gusts up to 50 MPH expected.

week training in preparation for the Manchester City game. Assistant manager Brian Horton has downplayed the fight saying that it has already been dealt with and both players have put it behind them. It should be noted that both players have been wanted by other teams. Windass has been left out of most games this season and a few lower

division teams have shown interest. And Ham, and Fulham. All told, Windass and co. have taken 20 points in 12 games and are only one spot away from European qualification.

Unfortunately, the month of November has brought Hull City back down to reality. With fixtures against Chelsea, Manchester United, and Bolton, they have remained idle in the standings, losing all three. Hull City looks to turn around its fortune against Man City, Portsmouth, and Stoke, but

King, who is on loan from Wigan Athletic, is showing why he has been loaned out by three different teams.

Hull City has given EPL fans a great cinderella story this year. And Dean Windass has quite possibly the best name ever. The combination of the two makes for entertaining football. Hopefully Phil Brown's Hull City can keep their historic pace, and cement a position for next year's Premier League.

FORDHAM RAMS RUGBY: HUNKS, NOT DRUNKS

By Sam Wadhams
STAFF D.D.

Disclaimer: Like any collegian, I am a member of multiple clubs here at Fordham. So while I am a staff writer here at the paper, I am also a proud member of the Fordham University Rugby Football Club (FURFC). Because of this conflict of interest, and because of the sensitive nature of this topic, I claim to speak for neither organization in any way and hope that while this is a factual article, the opinions contained within are understood to be mine alone.

To those who follow or practice it, rugby is one of the most pure and exhilarating major sports in the world. The combination of monstrous forwards clobbering each other and speedy, agile backs running tactical plays provides an athletic experience that other sports would be hard-pressed even to echo. And while rugby is an organized, professional and well respected sport in the rest of the world, in the United States it is still thought of primarily as a collegiate endeavor, and is culturally connected to the drinking culture that fostered it.

This separation came into sharp relief recently, when New York Athletic Club (NYAC) assistant rugby coach Bruce McLane made comments on a national stage about the Fordham rugby team, of which I am a member. During an American Rugby News podcast discussion of the Northeast playoffs, McLane referenced Fordham's loss to Syracuse, saying, "As far as Fordham and Syracuse, Fordham, they have tal-

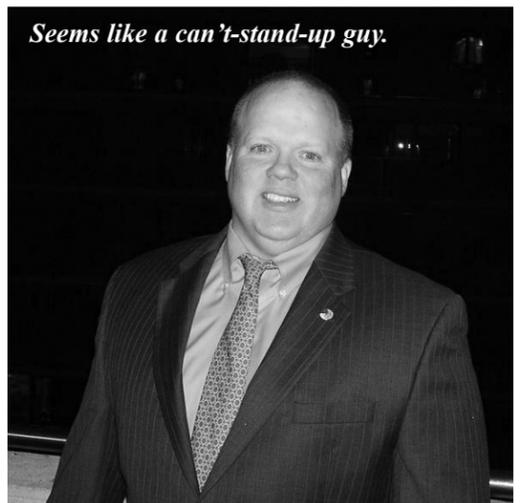
ent, they have guys that played on the [under 19 and 20 national sides], the bottom line is, the team is just loaded with drunks, and they probably just went up, took it as a joke, and got their heads handed to them."

While (with notable exceptions) college rugby teams, and the Fordham University RFC are sociable, Mr. McLane's comments were off-base and out of line. While McLane's standing as assistant coach to both the NYAC and Xavier High School programs grants him a physical proximity to the FURFC, it is apparent by the nature of his comments that his knowledge of the Fordham club is out-dated and based on hearsay. To be fair, in the 2007 season Fordham went 2-4 in the league, and had trouble with focus and commitment, but Mr. McLane was not commenting on the 2007 club. Instead, he was talking about a Fordham squad that went 4-1 in league play and 7-2 overall, with the two losses (one of which came down to the final seconds) coming to nationally ranked sides. While Mr. McLane is arguably correct to assert that the Met NY league that Fordham plays with is not one of the most competitive in the nation, a 7-2 record is by any measure an accomplishment. His assertion that the team took the Syracuse game "as a joke" is also erroneous. By the time of the Fordham-Syracuse game, the Fordham team was worn down from the injuries that are a natural part of a hard-fought season. The Fordham side that took on Syracuse was missing a full third of its starters, including Captain Evan Sheha and Junior National Team member Ryan McTiernan. While it was just bad

luck to have so many injuries to the backs, Fordham's front eight were also very outsized by the Syracuse pack. That is not a matter of alcohol, Mr. McLane. That's genetics. And despite being outsized and undermanned, the FURFC managed to put together a solid effort that only collapsed in the final minutes. With all that said, men's rugby is a tough game, and there is no room for excuses. While the score of the Syracuse game lends credence to Mr. McLane's claim that Fordham "got their heads handed to them," it is an atrocious insult and slanderously false claim for Mr. McLane to say that the team "took it as a joke" and that the loss was a result of the team being "full of drunks." Now, to be fair, on the next week's podcast, Mr. McLane did apologize, saying,

"I'd like to apologize to the Fordham university guys for calling them a bunch of drunks and the fact of the matter is I have a forum to speak and they don't have the same forum to reply to what I say. The guys have improved, they certainly don't play to level of talent that they have, but it's not my place to make personal comments against people who can't defend themselves on the show. I need to keep my comments to rugby alone and when it comes to people that don't have the same forum, what I said is unfair."

While the apology is appreciated, Mr. McLane simply apologizes for the personal nature of his comment, and for making it in a forum where the Fordham squad could not reply. It certainly takes a tremendous amount of



Seems like a can't-stand-up guy.

humility for someone with Mr. McLane's standing to swallow his pride and admit being wrong to a national audience. The apology rings hollow. An apology is nice, and while I will admit that he was right in his apology to say that he misused his forum, I still contest that Mr. McLane was wrong.

Mr. McLane has guest coached at Fordham and knows some current players through his coaching at Xavier, but the fact remains that in calling the Fordham team "loaded with drunks," he was talking out of his ass. As a player and as a writer it pains me that the last article I will write on rugby this semester has to be on some puffed up pundit so drastically misrepresenting the team, and I know that by writing this I will be bringing it more to the attention of the Fordham community. But having seen the level of work and commitment that the people I respect and look up to put in this season, I felt compelled to set the record straight and tell the Fordham community that they have every reason to be proud of the FURFC.

the paper's Sports

Phillies Fans Forced to Quit Their Bitchin'

City of Brotherly Love becomes city of mundane discontent:
pg. 21



the paper's Midseason ~~XFL~~ NFL Rundown

By Devin McNamara
STAFF WALTER CAMP

The Nation Football League is more than halfway its 2008-09 season and so far it hasn't gone at all as expected. Prior to anyone even playing a down, the Patriots were declared Super Bowl champions with a few other pundits giving the nod to the Chargers or Cowboys. As we have seen, anything can happen on the field. The immortal Tom Brady was taken down with a severe knee injury in the season opener and AFC East is wide open. Despite the Giants' recent Super-Bowl victory, the Cowboys were the favorite to win the NFC East. They started off decently at 4-2 while the Giants found themselves at 4-1. Then Romo went down and so too did the Cowboys. The Chargers began their season with two straight losses and have not fully bounced back yet. Essentially, all the pundits have been proven wrong and the NFL is truly wide open.

The greatest surprise of the season has to be the Atlanta Falcons. Once upon time these Falcons were the darlings of the NFL featuring the leagues most exciting player, Michael Vick. However, Vick violated a few PETA regulations and found himself in jail. He would've been better off killing a person than fighting dogs. People love dogs more than other people. Fact. Since that debacle the Falcons were the unanimous selection from journalists and fans alike for worst team in the NFL. However, a rookie quarterback is looking to change all that.

The third overall pick in the 2008 draft, Matt Ryan, has exceeded expectations. The addition of former Chargers' running back Michael Turner has contributed greatly to an offense that is both versatile and explosive. Other key players include back-up running back Jerious Norwood

(a great receiving threat), John Abraham (11 sacks), and Roddy White (80+ rec. yards per game).

Rather than picking one team, I'm going to pick the entire division. The AFC East, with the exception of the Bills (sorry Buffalo), is performing far better than anticipated. This is taking into account the Brady inci-

dent. Matt Cassel has proved to be an effective game manager with good running ability. Cassel has done more growing up in two months than he had the previous six years. The poise he showed against the Jets on Thursday night made him look like a seasoned veteran, with flashes resembling Tom Brady at the very end. His opponent that night, Brett Favre, also played superbly, silencing many critics about his ability to protect the ball and prevent turnovers. Brett's a gunslinger, always has been and always will be, but when he is able to tone that down mentality, he becomes one of the best quarterbacks in history. Despite a rocky month, with the exception of last Thursday, Brett is going to bounce back. Add this to one of the league's best Ds and you've got yourself a Super Bowl contender.

The Dolphins are literally changing the way professional football is played. The wildcat offense adds an element unseen to the professional game. Pundits would argue that this gimmicky style of football would only work on lower levels but the Dolphins are proving them wrong. Ronnie Brown can seemingly do anything when he is lined up back there. At 6-4 the Dolphins are not out of playoff contention, and with other teams implementing the offense (Chiefs, Browns, Cardinals, and Bears), the wildcat formation is only going to become more commonplace.

The Titans are truly amazing on defense. Giving up an average of 13 points a game, Tennessee is stifling opponents with the likes of Albert Haynesworth and their entire secondary (three players with four picks each). It seems that no one can beat them. But after beating Jacksonville, the Jets could maybe

prove to be a challenge. A solid run-defense will force Kerry Collins to throw, and it is not the Bears' secondary so he could have some problems.

The Giants look nearly as unbeatable as the Titans. Despite a Monday Night Football slip-up against the Browns, the Giants have dominated most opponents.

Eli Manning has continued his form from last year's post season by minimizing interceptions and Brandon Jacobs is arguably the most talented running back in the league (5.3 yards a carry). They also have the best pass rush in the league despite the loss of Michael Strahan and Osi Umenyiora. Steve Spagnola is a genius and would probably make a fine head coach.

It would be easy to pick on the Lions, Rams, Raiders or 49ers. They are all really bad. This is evident. But we knew that coming into the season. In fact, these teams are so bad they make other teams around them look better than they are, i.e. Arizona Cardinals. Not that Kurt Warner, Anquan Boldin, Larry Fitzgerald and Tim Hightower aren't super sweet, but their defense is average at best and average defenses don't

win playoff games. I believe two teams really stand out as failing to meet pre-season expectations. The Seahawks and the Browns are both terrible. Each team went 10-6 last year but only the Seahawks made the playoffs. Each team was ranked in the top half of the league before the season started and now both are considered among the worst. The only positive moments for the Browns came in a fluke game against the Giants and Brady Quinn's impressive debut against the NFL's worst pass defense (don't get too excited just yet Cleveland). The Seahawks have been plagued by injuries so perhaps it's unfair to put them on the Loser's pedestal. But they have not done anything worth noting this season. With their two wins coming against the hapless Rams and the confused 49ers, things probably won't get much better even with Hasselbeck's return. The Bengals also deserve recognition, but Ocho-Cinco and company were looking bad since July, so 1-8 is not that surprising.

In the end all I can hope for is a New York Super Bowl. The Giants match up well against any possible contender while the AFC remains more wide open. Other than the Titans, the Steelers look like the early favorite, but "Big Ben" has not been himself as he deals with a shoulder injury. The Colts have bounced backed nicely as Peyton Manning improves every week. A lot of questions will be answered within the next two weeks, especially the Titans-Jets. Who knows? Maybe the Falcons are ready to make a miracle run themselves.

Favre, America's Favorite Golden Retriever.



Tom Brady Says: "Knees: they're pretty fucking important."



the paper's Super Smart Guru-ish Expert NFL Picks

If anyone tells you not to gamble tell them to shut the hell up. It's fun. Here's our help to you for Week 12 of the NFL season:

Cincinnati at Pittsburgh	Beej	Mullface	Wilhelm	Pat the Patriot	Alex Joe Gibbons
Tampa Bay at Detroit	Steelers	Steelers	Dunno	Belichick	The Robbers
NY Jets at Tennessee	Lions	Red Wings	Couldn't Tell Ya	The American People	Simbas
Buffalo at Kansas City	Titans	Predators	Drawin' a Blank	The Continentals	Jefferson Airplane
Chicago at St. Louis	Bills	Sabers	You Pick	John McCain	The Williams
New England at Miami	Bears	Blues	Ask Again Later	John Adams	Timothy Treadwell
Minnesota at Jacksonville	Pats	Bruins	It Is Certain	Dah Pats	Androgynies
Philadelphia at Baltimore	Vikings	North Stars	Tell Ya Monday	Samuel Adams	The Big Cats
Houston at Cleveland	Eagles	Flyers	Who Knows?	Homeland Security	Dick Hair
San Francisco at Dallas	Texans	Pencils	Still Asking?	Hamburgers	Skid Marks
Oakland at Denver	Cowboys	Sharks	Don't Care	Ameircan Values	69ers
Washington at Seattle	Broncos	Magnets	Who?	The xXx Franchise	Ponies
NY Giants at Arizona	Redskins	Canucks	I Think Not	Arbies	Seagulls
Carolina at Atlanta	Giants	Devils	We'll Talk	The Patriot (film)	Red Flying Things
Indianapolis at San Diego	Falcons	Hurricanes	Think About It	Tom Hanks	The Other Big Cats
Green Bay at New Orleans	Chargers	Pacers	Bitch Please	Manifest Destiny	Horsies
	Saints	Jazz	Get Out of My Face	Poor Richard	Funny Cheese Hats