

The Behrend Beacon

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## The ugly NFL

The National Football League (NFL) is heading into week five and it looks like it is going to be a long season.

With new divisions and some old rivalries thrown out the window, the league and its perception are quite different from last year.

Let's examine some of the things we have been taking for granted in the past years.

One is that Curtis Martin will be healthy and one of the best running backs in the league. Unfortunately, Martin has been hobbling around since Week 1 and his Jets are quickly becoming the laughing stock of the league. They have decided to start Chad Pennington in place of long-time starter Vinny Testaverde at quarterback to see if anything can be turned around.

Another mainstay is that the St. Louis Rams will be atop their division and Marshall Faulk will be on his way to contending for another MVP prize.

Well, Faulk is not dominating the fantasy football ratings again, but Donald Driver (Green Bay), LaDainian Tomlinson (San Diego), and Drew Bledsoe (Buffalo) are leading the way. The Rams are 0-4 as a team, they lost to the Cowboys. That pretty much sums up quite a season. To add to it, Kurt Warner had surgery on his hand this past Tuesday. I think it may be time for him to retire. He had a few good years.

Another thing we had to look forward to is rivalries that have grown in recent years. Pittsburgh versus Jacksonville versus Seahawks? That may take a while to get me fired up about.

With the new divisions this year, now we have to look forward to Tampa Bay versus Carolina. How about Cardinals versus Seahawks? That may take a while to get me fired up about.

How about that television coverage? I want to know who made the Sunday night schedule. Faithful viewers had to endure Bengals and Falcons when everyone knew that Michael Vick would dismantle the Cincinnati defense.

How about the Vikings and Seahawks? That really doesn't do it for me, either. Randy Moss could not catch a ball and there was a 35-point gap at halftime.

The game is Baltimore and Cleveland this week. Thankfully, the schedule gets better as the season moves on.

There are a few trends that have continued. It looks like there are a lot of contenders thus far this year.

The question is will the San Diego Chargers continue their winning ways after starting 4-0. They were 3-0 at the beginning of last year and failed to make the playoffs.

The same goes for the Miami Dolphins. They feel as though Ricky Williams was the missing piece of the puzzle, but every year they fail toward the end of the season. We will have to wait and see on that.

There have been some superb personal performances as we come to expect. Shaun Alexander (Seattle) had a record five touchdowns in the first half this past Sunday night. Priest Holmes (Kansas City) had seven touchdowns going into last week. Bledsoe has had a bunch of 300-yard games. Tomlinson had a 200-yard rushing game last week.

Gary Anderson (Minnesota) continues to add to his total as the leading scorer in NFL history.

These performances make it easier to watch the NFL, but I still hope that the competition gets better. There are two undefeated teams in Oakland and San

Diego.

However, all the other undefeated teams lost last week. Cleveland is leading its division at 2-2. Only one division looks particularly strong and it is the one with the Carolina Panthers, a team that won only one game all of last year and that is led by a man (Rodney Peete) who won the Heisman Trophy when most of us were still in grade school.

Still, this is the best division in the league, because Vick plays in it. The Green Bay Packers are actually leading their division having allowed more points than they scored. In fact everyone in that division has allowed more points than they have scored.

Now I will take my shots by saying that I am a Steelers fan, even if it looks like their run to the conference championship game last year could have been a fluke. Hey, they're still in second place in the division. Oh, and Tommy Maddox is the starting quarterback, or at least I hope he is.

Maybe I am afraid of change. The NFL is very different from how I remember it last year. I don't mind the fact that the Chargers are undefeated.

I have teams that I can't stand, but even if they are supposed to be horrible, like the Cowboys, we can't count them out this year.

Okay, this column went everywhere and showed how confused I am. I am usually a good fantasy football player, but not this year.

Despite all of that, I will give you my prediction for the Super Bowl. Yes, I know it is the fifth week of the season, but these are the teams I had picked before the year started.

I say it will be Philadelphia versus Oakland. Of course, it doesn't matter whom Philadelphia plays. My dream Super Bowl would be New Orleans versus Pittsburgh, but like I said, that is a dream.

Pretty much everything I am used to is a dream this year in the NFL.

## Women's soccer team expects AMCC title



Kacie Burns is one of 12 freshmen on the team this year.

by Kevin Fiorenzo  
staff writer

Last weekend, the women's soccer team defeated rival La Roche, 1-0, to continue rolling through the conference season.

After a difficult non-conference season against strong opponents, the Lions are 2-0 in their conference and are beginning to peak at just the right time. Before the La Roche game, the women knew they would be facing a challenging opponent.

"La Roche is a very tough team. They are definitely a rival of ours," said sophomore Carrie Smock.

The team was right. The game was tightly contested until midfielder Erin Maurer was able to dodge defenders and score in the 60th minute. That goal was all the Lions needed to seal the victory.

It was also the team's second shutout in a row, as the women defeated Pitt Bradford by a score of 5-0 on Sept. 25.

"I think we have just been creating more chances for ourselves and we're passing a lot better," said Maurer.

With these two impressive victories, head coach Dan Perritano is starting to see some things that he likes.

"The team is playing much more aggressive and playing better as a team physically," he said.

Now that they are off to a good start, the team is gaining confidence and is optimistic about its chances to excel in the conference.

"I think that we really have a great shot at winning our conference," said Maurer. Before the Lions continue conference play, though, they will be tested against a strong Allegheny team that has only two losses.

"They are a very good regional team," coach Perritano said. "We are going to have to play faster and limit our mistakes."

Allegheny is a tough opponent and the women know they will have to work on some things to win.

"Allegheny is a really tough, physical team and they are also really fast, but I think we can beat them," said Maurer.

Among the things that the team still needs to do to help ensure success, the foremost is conditioning.

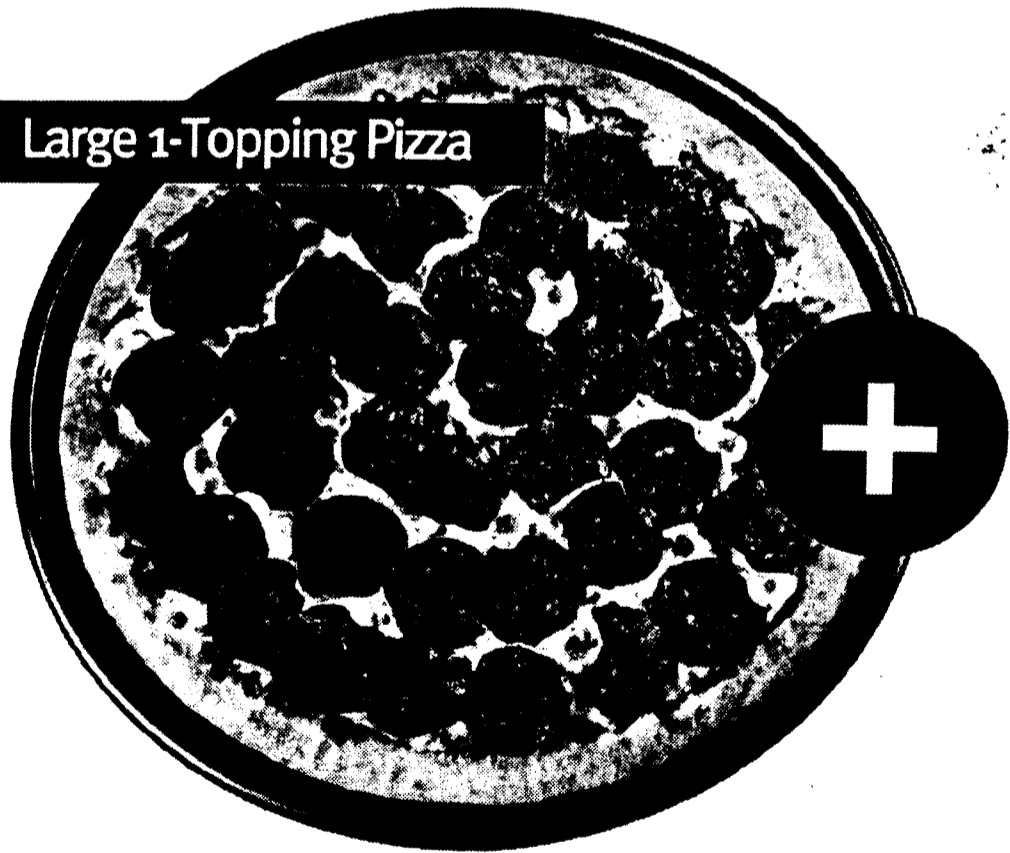
"We need to get some improved fitness and also we need to increase our speed of play," said Perritano.

Although work is still needed in some areas, things are looking much brighter for the Lions than a few weeks ago, when the team endured a three-game losing streak, where it didn't score a single goal.

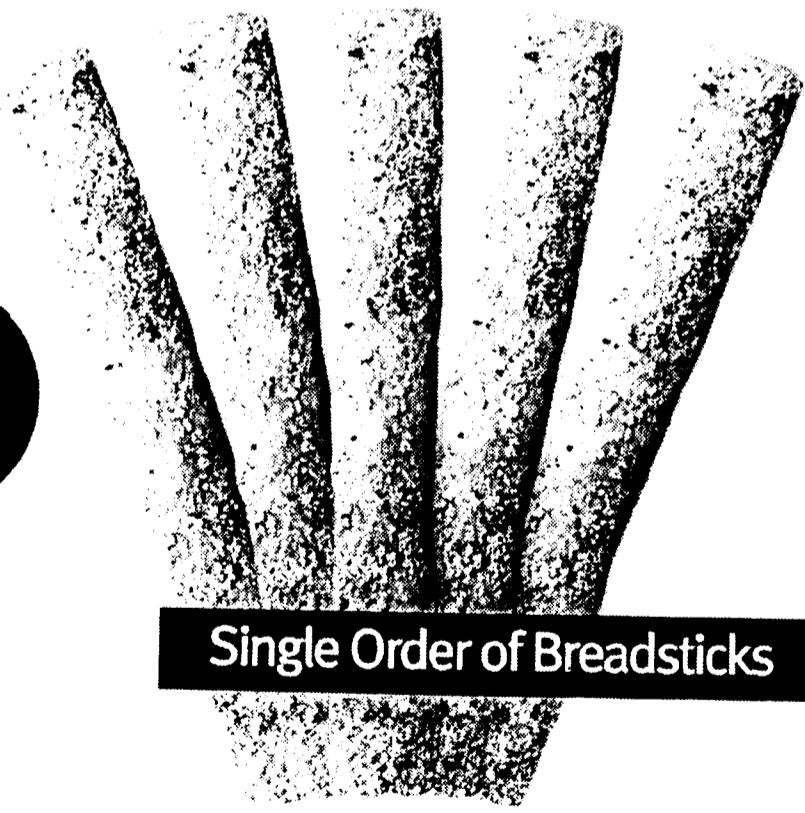
With its fast start in the conference season, the team's coach is clear about what he anticipates for the rest of the season.

"We expect that we will win the conference," said Perritano.

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