

Super Bowl contenders and pretenders

The NFL season is winding down and no one team seems to be leading the pack in any way. The NFC does seem to have the more dominant teams as the league nears the end of its regular season, but no one is sure who will step up and win the Super Bowl. I, for one, am rather clueless about it.

Let me preface this article by saying that I am very biased to the Pittsburgh Steelers. It does not matter who the quarterback is or if the defense is second worse in the league at stopping opponents on third down. I am still going to pull for them and think they have a shot at winning the Super Bowl.

With that out of the way I would first like to look at the AFC. The division leaders include Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, San Diego and Miami. Miami's division is pretty tight as are the teams from the West. Still there was no team showing that it can dominate.

Early on it looked like New England, Oakland, and San Diego were unstoppable. In the middle of the season Pittsburgh and the New York Jets looked invincible. Since then, all of these teams have shown their weaknesses.

If I had to pick teams from the AFC to make the playoffs, I would say Miami, Pittsburgh, Indianapolis, Denver, New England and the Jets. I highly doubt that all my picks will stand up.

My honest pick for the Super Bowl at this moment in time is Miami. They have more playoff experience than San Diego and will have an edge toward the end of the season.

However, from an unbiased as possible view, if Tommy Maddox can click again as starter for Pittsburgh starting this Sunday versus Houston, the Steelers have quite a chance to make a cold home field their biggest advantage. Still, no team is shining to say the least.

Let's look at the NFC now and then break it down further.

Teams in the lead include Tampa Bay, San

Francisco, Green Bay, and well, who cares about the other division. The Giants look like they might be making a late season surge toward the Eagles again this year. I like Philadelphia but something tells me that without Donovan McNabb they are only half the team they could have been.

The teams that look playoff bound are Tampa Bay, Green Bay, San Francisco, Philadelphia, New Orleans, and Atlanta. Don't be surprised if Philly misses the playoffs, though. Of course, like my picks for the AFC, I highly doubt I will be correct.

San Francisco has been the most dominant team of the year but no one seems to be talking about them. I suppose all the publicity that Terrell Owens got for pulling a Sharpie out of his sock to sign his touchdown reception against Seattle was enough for the Niners all year. They do have a legitimate chance of winning the Super Bowl.

Tampa Bay was looking superior, but everyone knows their troubles with cold weather in the playoffs and New Orleans showed the Buccaneers defense does have weaknesses. Once again those that were dominant early have shown signs of demise as Carolina, New Orleans, and Arizona have all fallen off in recent weeks.

With all of this in perspective, my pick from the NFC is Green Bay. They have a myriad of problems with injuries and undisciplined wide receivers, but anyone can be good with Brett Favre at the helm.

So I have probably offended some people now, but the confidence I have in my picks is low, simply because of the confusion the NFL has given to us all year. The Patriots and Rams both faltered along the way so far and the Rams look to not even be



Douglas Smith



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Can the Steelers led by quarterback Tommy "crazy legs" Maddox make it all the way to the big dance this year?

making the playoffs.

The Steelers and Bears' defenses have shown huge holes in their secondary. Fantasy leaders include Randy McMichael, Donald Driver, Priest Homes, and Garrison Hearst. The new alignment of the teams has thrown off the competition level.

Some teams look like Super Bowl teams one week, and like the Bengals the next. My preseason favorite of Tennessee has shown a team that can explode or do absolutely nothing. They are sitting pretty well and can make a run for the playoffs, but their consistency has been lacking. Many teams fall into this category.

The Chargers lead their division but were defeated by 27 points two weeks ago and have no offense when LaDainian Tomlinson is not producing.

The Eagles have shown signs of a downfall and I am not a believer in A.J. Feely, Tee Martin, or Koy Detmer. The Saints fall into this category,

too, as Duce McAllister needs to be healthy for them to survive. The Falcons are too young. The Colts do not have a good enough defense. The Saints are too generous with the ball. The Giants do not have enough fire power. I could keep going.

Still, in my eyes, there are only five teams capable of winning the Super Bowl despite the tight playoff records.

Those teams are the Dolphins, Steelers, Packers, Buccaneers, and 49ers. You can hiss at me all you want. I think the playoffs will shape pretty soon. The Buccaneers and Steelers play each other at the end of the year, so that could be a key game in the way the season plays out.

Once again I could be wrong, but I am going to stick to my guns on this. I know opinions differ but everyone shall see in January. Who knows? Maybe I will change my mind in a few weeks. No, I will defend my choices.

The teams need your support!

This weekend (Saturday, December 7) the men's and women's basketball team will take on AMCC RIVAL Pitt-Bradford at 6:00 p.m. (women) and 8:00 (men).

We are looking for the support of the student body to help cheer on the Behrend Lions Basketball Teams.

All students in attendance will receive a Penn State Athletic Decal for their windows.

The first 50 individuals to each game will receive a foam hand paw.

Drawing will be held throughout the game for FREE gift certificates to Roadhouse and Jr's Last Laugh.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

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half. The Saints kept the lead through the rest of the game, and it ended with a score of 71-53.

The next day, Dec. 1, Behrend faced Averett University as a consolation game. In their best win of the season, the Lions defeated Averett with 95-53.

Leading 39-25 after the first half, Behrend was able to hold on, boosting their record to 2-3.

Senior Amanda Mauser felt the game against Averett was a milestone in the Lions 2002 season, and gave the team some encouragement. "I think we are finally realizing how much potential we have together," she said.

"Things are definitely going to be improving next week."

She felt that the way they played on December 1 reflected how they want things to be the rest of the season. "Everyone contributed and we played well as a team."

Head Coach Roz Fornari agreed with Mauser,

and also added that the team played well because the team's strengths stayed with them throughout the entire game.

"We have a very talented team, one that is more talented than I've had in a long time," said Coach Fornari. "We have a lot of fun and we've definitely had some very good moments."

On Wednesday, Behrend lost to William and Jefferson, 70-41.

Fornari also mentioned that they are a very balanced team, and that is one of their strong points.

"They are a young group, but together we can work to help develop the strengths they have."

The Lion's next game is Saturday when they host Pitt-Bradford, for their first conference match-up. Fornari feels they are heading into conference competition on a good note, and are looking forward to facing the skillful team.

"We will be well prepared, and it's a big game. We are very excited to see how things go."

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Behrend coach earns local honors

Penn State Behrend's head men's and women's water polo coach Josh Heynes has been recognized as an Erie legend. The Fan, AM 1330 will be conducting a hall of fame show on Wednesdays.

On Wednesday, November 27, from 5:00-6:00 p.m. at Andy's restaurant, Jim Lecorchick interviewed and reminisced about the accomplishment of Heynes when he was an all-state performer at McDowell High School.

Later that evening, the Erie Alumni Water Polo Association held its alumni event at Penn State Behrend in the Lunker Center pool from 6:30-9:00 p.m.