

SPORTS

NFL teams vie for supremacy

By Chris LaFuria
sports commentary

In a year that contains one Presidential Inauguration and crises in the Middle East involving many American troops, it is only fitting that the two teams that will be vying for NFL supremacy are the New England Patriots, whose name literally means "one who loves, supports, and defends one's country", and the Philadelphia Eagles, the valiant and heroic symbol of our country. There are an abundance of reasons to assume that this year will be one of the most intense, electrifying, and exciting games in Super Bowl history.

The New England Patriots, led by Tom Brady, the most proficient quarterback in playoff history, are determined to attain their third Vince Lombardi Trophy in the last four years. On their way to the big game, the Pats have managed to surpass the league's most potent offense and the most tenacious defense. Averaging 357.6 yards of total offense per game, New England looks to overcome a steadfast secondary and a persistent line-backing core.

Philadelphia, the team that held up their bargain for an all-Pennsylvania Super Bowl, is satisfied with the mere thought of finally reaching the big game. After three failed attempts to win the NFC, the Eagles take one of the most deadly offenses into Jacksonville. With the dangerous Brian Westbrook in the backfield, Donovan McNabb can take advantage of an effective running game, which can lead to the deception of the play-action pass.

This may be one of the most evenly matched games in the history of the league. Both teams have exceptional quarterbacks who have passed for more than 3,500 yards this season. Each side has the big-play capability that can swing the game in either direction. Together, their defenses have maintained a level of domination over the offenses they have faced.

With each of these similarities, there are immense differences that, if fully taken advantage of, can lead to a championship. With the Patriots, the key to success is a hard-nose group of linebackers. Ted Johnson, Tedy Bruschi, Mike Vrabel, and Willie McGinest need to cover an enormous amount of ground to finish on top. The deadly attack of Westbrook and McNabb needs to be contained by these four men. If the Eagles can surpass the linebackers, then a depleted New England secondary has to do one better than their previous performances.

Offense is the key to the success of the Philadelphia Eagles. Westbrook has already proven that he has what it takes to perform in clutch

situations. Against the Falcons in the NFC championship game, Westbrook carried the ball 16 times for 96 yards and had five catches for 39 yards. He needs to improve in those categories in order to outshine the "Pats D". With the likelihood of star receiver Terrell Owens watching the game from Philly's sideline, wideouts Freddie Mitchell and Todd Pinkston have to pull an enormous load.

This leads to another factor that puts this game under much scrutiny. Injuries are something that each team has grown accustomed to. The Patriots have been without defensive back Ty Law and could miss defensive tackle Richard Seymour if his knee doesn't recover. The Philly "Iggles" have to play without tight-end Chad Lewis, who scored two receiving touchdowns against the Falcons. But the biggest injury saga that has been conferred plenty over the past weeks in Terrell Owens. As of right now, doctors have not cleared Owens to play Sunday. Eagles coach Andy Reid doesn't even know the fate of his receiver. It more than likely is a game-time decision.

The last time these two teams met each other was Week 2 of the 2003 season. In the game, the "Pats" defense forced six turnovers to achieve a 31-10 victory over the then-0-2 Eagles. McNabb was also sacked 7 times in the route.

What the game comes down to is the performance of the leaders. Tom Brady, who is 48-14 overall as the Pats QB and 8-0 in the playoffs, needs to make big plays and commit very few mistakes. Donovan McNabb agrees with the composure and ability of his counterpart. In an interview with ESPN, McNabb stated, "Tom Brady may not be the guy that people want to put in the upper echelon of quarterbacks, but in my mind, he should be number 1. He has something that all of us quarterbacks want, and that's the Super Bowl ring."

In response to the comments made by McNabb, Brady stated, I have had more attention than anybody in the league. I'm definitely not slighted for attention. We play some great opponents. You talk about McNabb, because he's been the best player on Philly's team for a long time. What an unbelievable player. He's overcome a lot. He's playing the best football of his career. He's the leader of the team."

Who will win the battle for football supremacy? Can the Eagles offense outperform the "Pats" suffocating defense? Will Terrell Owens make a cameo or an entire performance for Philly? So many questions lead us to the conclusion that this game has an unpredictable outcome. Even though New England is a touchdown favorite to win, the only way to even guess is to watch the game.

Morales makes history



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Melissa Pilewski, Emily Bodie, Whitney Marshall and Brittany Yost focus before start of meet.

By Samantha Cibula
sports co-editor

The men and women swimmers swam their last two regular season meets last week. On Jan. 26 they took on Washington and Jefferson in a meet, despite the loss, that made Behrend swimming history. The women loss 96-120 while the men loss 97-116.

Highlighting the meet was a standout performance by freshman Cyndi Morales.

Morales swam the 1000 yd. freestyle in a race that set a new team record and will be recorded in Behrend swimming history as being the first woman swimmer to qualify for the ECAC meet.

The 1000 yd. freestyle is 40 lengths of the pool. Morales has been on the verge of making ECAC cuts in a few events.

"I wanted her to swim the 1000 for pace but instead she came to me saying she wanted to go for it," said Head Coach Jen Slack. "So we figured out what pace she had to hold to make the ECAC qualifying time and went from there."

Morales quickly fell into a rhythm as she cruised passed Washington and Jefferson swimmers while her coaches and teammates helped keep her

on pace. Morales picked up the last 50 yds. of the race driving into the wall with a time of 10:55.25. The ECAC qualifying time was 10:55.99.

10:55.25 will be the time marked in record books alongside her name as the first Lady Lion swimmer to qualify for ECAC's.

Close to qualifying for ECAC's are sophomore captain Whitney Marshall in the 200 yd. freestyle and freshman Melissa Pilewski in the 200 yd. breaststroke.

For the men sophomore Brandon Thiel and freshman Dustin Fairchild have a shot in the 200 yd. freestyle, freshmen Matt Seiferth in the 200 yd. breaststroke and Anthony Spoto in the 100 yd. freestyle.

Highlighting the men's meet was Fairchild winning the 200 yd. freestyle 500 yd. freestyle and 200 yd. breaststroke. Freshman diver Dan Wiltrout also took two first place finishes in the one and three-meter diving competition.

Jan. 29 the men and women traveled to Grove City College swimming in the same pool they would swim their 'Championship' meet in. Grove City dominated both the men and women dropping the women's record to 2-8 and the

men's 3-7.

"For the most part no one felt really good at the meet but they were swimming ok times," said Slack. "Everyone is feeling a little sore right now but they are swimming fast."

The men and women were lead by distance swimmers Morales, sophomore Alexis Puhala, and junior captain Steve Schleicher: who each swam the 1650 yd. freestyle.

"We swam the mile at one meet earlier in the year and at the Wooster invitational," said Slack. "They were all right on or only a few seconds off what they swam at Wooster."

Marshall also won the 200 yd. fly and Pilewski took the first in the 200 yd. breaststroke. For the men Thiel won the 500 yd. freestyle, Seiferth the 200 yd. breaststroke and Wiltrout won the three-meter diving competition.

"The meet gave the swimmers an opportunity to race and get comfortable in the pool they will race in at their final meet," said Slack.

The swim team heads to their final meet of the season Feb. 10-12. Feb. 24-26 is the ECAC meet which Morales and any swimmer that hits the qualifying time at the Grove City Invitational will attend.

Behrend Lions Basketball

Behrend Lions Basketball

Men's vs. Women's

Mar. 18

Fairchild

with

Bra

Game

PM

Night

Admission with I.D.

