

The Weekly Log, 5/8/09

by Joe Mulder

It was quite a week of fantasy sports for fans of the Minnesota teams, and I don't mean fantasy sports of the "get together with your buddies and draft various players to build your rosters and compete for a cash prize" variety. No, the fantasies this week involved the prospect of a quarterback and a sports columnist, respectively, riding into town to save half of the state's major professional sports franchises from oblivion.

First, we have Brett Favre. As of this writing, the latest news is that Favre has told the Minnesota Vikings that he will stay re-retired, and not come back to the NFL in purple and gold this fall. All statements from Favre regarding the future of his playing career must necessarily be taken with a grain of salt the size of medicine ball, of course; perhaps Favre will "change" his "mind" once the Vikings' offseason workouts are done with. I, for one, would love to see Brett Favre come to my beloved Vikings, if only because nothing would piss off Green Bay Packer fans more. And really, what's the worst-case scenario for Minnesota? The Vikings *don't* win a championship? Based on the outcomes of each of the team's previous 48 seasons, I think we can safely assume that Vikings fans are emotionally and psychologically equipped to deal with such an eventuality.

Rumors were rampant this week, though; sources initially claimed that Favre and Vikings head coach Vice Principal Brad Childress (as I long ago decided his full legal name should be; I mean, [look at him](#)) were to meet this week at an "undisclosed location" to discuss the quarterback's future. Then, midweek, reports had Childress getting in a chartered plane to Mississippi (where Favre lives), only see those reports contradicted by a Childress sighting at the Vikings training facilities in Eden Prairie. I'm not sure I buy that; I think that easily could have been a Childress double, a random middle-aged white guy with a moustache, a headset and a Vikings cap sent to Winter Park to throw reporters off the scent. I mean, you put any middle-aged white guy with a mustache in a Vikings hat and give him a headset, and very few people would be able to tell it wasn't Brad Childress. Childress could easily hire a small army of impersonators to dress up like him and make appearances in his stead, if he wanted to. People really just recognize the accoutrements, more than they recognize him (other famous people who could do this if they wanted to: Ronald McDonald, Slash, and Richard Petty).

Bottom line: we'll see. Earlier this week I – with no expertise on the matter, and bear that in mind before you do something stupid like listen to me on this – would have placed the chances of Favre opening the season as the Vikings' starting quarterback at 75%; now I'd say we're looking at about 37.2 (don't ask how I arrive at my figures; it's a really complicated process you wouldn't understand).

The other story, which really wasn't a story at all, was the "candidacy" of PoopReading.com favorite and ESPN.com sports columnist Bill Simmons for the Minnesota Timberwolves' vacant general manager job. Simmons threw his hat into the ring quite enthusiastically, and although I can't imagine his candidacy was seriously considered (or even noticed) by Timberwolves brass, I can't think of a better way to revive a franchise that could charitably be described as moribund. The Timberwolves haven't mattered at all for almost five years; they're in danger of becoming the Pittsburgh Pirates of the NBA, only without the tradition and fan base that would keep supporting them through a decade-plus of losing.

Simmons really seems to know his stuff, and hiring him would make the Timberwolves a nationally prominent franchise for the first time since... well, ever. Honestly, during the team's 2004 run to the Western Conference Finals, I sweated every possession, I called family and friends during the games, I was glued to the TV the entire time. Now, I literally can't name three Timberwolves, unless you accept "the guy who was dating Kim Kardashian's fat sister" as an answer. If that guy is even still on the team.

But guess what: you hire Bill Simmons, and I'm in. I'm way in. So are a lot of people. Again: what's the worst case scenario? Can it possibly be worse than the worst case scenario of *not* hiring Bill Simmons?

Sometimes, you just wish stuff would happen the way you want it to, don't you?

Something I wrote just now (never you mind exactly what it was) reminded me of something else; when I was a kid I used to watch a lot of professional wrestling. Standard operating procedure held (and continues to hold, from what I've seen lately) that wrestlers would be introduced just like this: "From Greenwich, Connecticut... weighing in at 275 pounds... Triple H!"

Oftentimes, however, a character who wore a mask or had some other mysterious backstory would be introduced by the ring announcer as hailing from "parts unknown." And once in a great while, the ring announcer would introduce somebody thusly: "From parts unknown... weight unknown..." That never struck me as particularly hilarious until years later, when I realized what such an introduction implies. It implies, of course, that the wrestler being introduced is so terrifyingly badass that nobody, at any point in the man's life, has ever been able to coax him *anywhere near a scale*. And yet he somehow was able to travel to the city where the wrestling event was being held, find the arena, show up on time, and make his way to the ring when his name was called. You would have thought they could have taken a moment to try and weigh him at some point during all of that, but, apparently not.

I still get a kick out of "parts unknown... weight unknown," whenever I think about it now.

The Brett Favre thing got me thinking about something I hadn't thought of in a while and had never, to the best of my recollection, written about here: The Wife Test. This is not named after just a generic wife, mind you; this is named after my particular wife Karen. It's simple: if an athlete is famous enough for my wife to have heard of him, he passes The Wife Test. If he's not, he doesn't. There are a few notable exceptions; athletes my wife couldn't help but knowing because she's been living with me for the last half-decade. Athletes like Kirby Puckett, Adrian Peterson and Kevin Garnett. Them, she knows. But other than that, you really have to be world famous for her to have heard of you. I mean, this is a person who grew up outside of Detroit in the late '80s and early '90s and had not, when I met her, heard of Barry Sanders.

Anyway, with Brett Favre in the news, I was given to thinking about which active athletes pass The Wife Test (Favre, if he indeed becomes active, would be one of the few). It's an exclusive (and diverse) club: Tiger Woods David Beckham Alex Rodriguez Michael Phelps Tom Brady Derek Jeter Kobe Bryant Shaquille O'Neal LeBron James Yao Ming Venus and Serena Williams Ken Griffey, Jr. Oscar De La Hoya (officially "retired," but you know how that goes with boxers)

And I think that's it. I have nothing to add; I just think it's interesting. If I remember to, I'll take a look every five years or so and see how – and if – the list changes.

Speaking of lists of athletes, in the wake of Manny Ramirez testing positive for performance enhancing drugs and receiving a 50-game suspension, here's a complete and comprehensive list of current baseball stars who could surprise me by testing positive for steroids: Albert Pujols Derek Jeter Ken Griffey, Jr.

And that's it. Pujols seems so invested in being a role model, a paragon of virtue, that one suspects he might actually choose "being slightly worse at baseball" over "cheating." Jeter and Griffey, well, they got bad at baseball and fat, slow and bad at baseball, respectively, at just about the age you'd expect someone not taking steroids to get fat, slow and bad at baseball. So I'd be surprised if they were dirty.

This is relatively speaking, of course; both Derek Jeter and Ken Griffey, Jr. are much better at baseball than, say, I am.

This is not to implicate anyone else; I'm just saying I would not be even mildly surprised to hear about anyone else being linked to steroids.

The TV pick the week is MTV's "Real World/Road Rules Challenge," a sublime reality competition program featuring "Real World" and "Road Rules" alums; young, desperate fame whores who seem to have been cultured in a laboratory for the sole purpose of appearing this particular show. Really, it's as close as we'll ever legally get to *The Truman Show*, and if you're not watching every week, you're missing out.

One could easily write a doctoral thesis in the field of psychology using only "Real World/Road Rules Challenge" episodes as one's source material. All parents should watch the show with their kids, as every episode is essentially a microcosm for how life itself tends to play out, with cliques forming, the strong picking off the weak, the smart feeding on the stupid, the tenacious dominating the passive... the greatness of the show can scarcely be overstated. Sure, the final elimination challenges for this particular season of the show ("The Duel II") lack a certain panache, but other than that, everything that "Real World/Road Rules Challenge" fans have come to expect is in place.

Also, the opening credits for this season – which was shot in New Zealand – feature the cast performing the traditional Maori dance known as the *haka*, for Pete's sake. The first few times you see it, it looks ridiculous; now, four or five episodes into the season, it's something you can't help but watch a couple of times in a row. Suffice it to say that "take part in a *haka* has recently shot to the top of my "bucket list."

It's really a show everybody should watch. Why it's not at least as big as "Survivor" is beyond me.
