

TH3MAG

December 2016

The Chase for The
E.L.S.I.E. Playoff
Preview

PLUS:

Gel Kiper Jr.

Prank Gate?

Game Changers

Jibber Jabber

And More...



Who's
In?

The Chase for The E.L.S.I.E.





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Strongside Weakside



Ezekiel Elliott

After becoming only the third player in NFL history to rush for 1,000 yards in his first nine games, Dallas Cowboys rookie running back Ezekiel Elliott is an early candidate for league MVP as well as the Offensive Rookie of the Year award. And with Elliott taking the league by storm we ask..., Is he any good?

Name: Ezekiel “Zeke” Elliott

Height: 6’0”

Weight: 225 lbs.

College: Ohio St.

Drafted: 1st Round, 4th Overall Pick in the 2016 NFL Draft

STRONGSIDE

Getting domestic assault chapter of career out of way early

Soft feet

Old-fashioned running style a nice reminder of much simpler time 20 years ago

Has nose for the locker room at halftime

At least eight more seasons before his body turns 60

That smile good for at least one acquittal

WEAKSIDE

Lost entire binder of notes he took during NFL Rookie Symposium

Yards after contact suffer big drop-off when carrying third defender

Slow last step

League’s culture of homophobia prevents more teammates from admitting how unbelievably perfect his abs look

Held to just one carry per rushing attempt

Tony Romo could always come fuck everything up

QUIT YOUR JIBBER JABBER



with Stephen Gostkowski

PrankGate? Patriots' Gostkowski Terrorizing NFL Via Prank Calls

First there was SpyGate, then there was DeflateGate, and now... PrankGate?

It's common knowledge amongst NFL fans that the New England Patriots seek out innovative and creative ways to gain a competitive advantage - often blurring the line between gamesmanship and rule-breaking. We've all heard the rumors of helmet radio interference, or fire alarms sounding late at night in visiting teams' hotel rooms, or that Peyton Manning himself refused to ever speak aloud in the locker room at Foxborough. But now it is alleged that over the past decade, members of the Patriots' special teams unit have placed thousands of elaborate prank calls to opposing players and coaches in hopes of disturbing them mentally and emotionally.

Speaking anonymously, a former special teams assistant named 4-time Pro Bowl kicker Stephen Gostkowski as the ringleader of the operation: "The plan was to pose as solicitors,

family members, or even romantic partners".

According to our source, Gostkowski makes the majority of the calls himself, and finds considerable pleasure in hoodwinking his opponents.

"He refers to himself as Stephen Gotcha-kowski," confessed the whistleblower, "Stephen Gostkowski might be the best kicker in the world, but Stephen Gotcha-kowski is the greatest pranker on the planet. His words, not mine."

"When Stephen arrived in 2006, Bill [Belichick] told the special teams guys to find busywork while the offense and defense were watching game film," recalls the ex-assistant. "Stephen didn't even blink. He started dialing that day and never looked back. First we collected phone numbers of former Patriots and ex-teammates. Before the bye week, we had every number in the league."

Gostkowski took his craft seriously. Our source claims he hired a team of assistants to perform hours of research to craft the perfect call to suit each victim. When a video surfaced of Rex Ryan fetishizing his wife's feet, Gostkowski brought his own wife in and jumped on the opportunity:

"He had his wife, Hallie, flirting with Rex three or four times a week. She was just as into the pranking as Stephen was. She made up a character for herself, bought a bunch of high heels, and would act out scenes while she was on the phone with him. Rex loved that girl. He was ready to put her in his will." This prank may have backfired, however, by serving as motivation for Rex- the Jets beat the Patriots in the playoffs one month later.

Before the 2006 AFC Championship game, the shenanigans took a dark turn. Gostkowski called Colts head coach Tony Dungy, posing as a drug addicted college student.

"That got intense," our source remembers. "Coach Dungy was a sweetheart. They talked for hours and by the end of it, Steve was broken down in tears. I thought Dungy was wearing him down emotionally, but as soon as they hung up, he busted out laughing and got started on the next call. That one gave me the creeps."

Again, Gostkowski's ploy failed. Despite the lack of sleep, Dungy's warm and motivational demeanor helped his Colts to defeat the Patriots on the way to a Super Bowl victory.

More than just a conniving prankster, Gostkowski also became a master impersonator. In 2010, he spent weeks honing a spot-on impression of 49ers coach Jim Harbaugh. Gostkowski studied his dialect, inflections, and even began mimicking the coach's movements and style of dress while at home. He then called Harbaugh's brother, Ravens head coach John Harbaugh, and slipped into character.

"Dude went balls out on that call," recounts the former assistant. "He drank 2 cans of Red Bull and threatened to set John's house on fire." With such a bold claim, one would think Harbaugh would catch on quickly, but that wasn't the case. "John totally bought it, almost as if the threats came as no surprise to him."

Public records do indicate that police visited both brothers' homes on January 9, 2010, but it did not hinder the Ravens' performance as Harbaugh's squad thumped the Pats 33-14 in the Wild Card Playoff game the next day.

This method however did not deceive another famous pair of brothers. Gostkowski called Giants quarterback Eli Manning prior to the Patriots devastating Super Bowl XLII loss, this time posing as legendary quarterback, Peyton Manning.

"Eli was really smart about it," our source discloses. "He was one of the first to catch on. He strung Steve along, discussing 'strategy' for a good 20 minutes or so. Then Eli started asking him personal questions with increasing specificity. Steve came prepared and nailed the stuff about Peyton's favorite sandwich and the suspicious spot on his [scrotum], but crumbled when Eli brought up a childhood story about a Manning family reunion that ended in tragedy. Gostkowski pretended to lose service and hung up the phone, but he was sweating bullets."

After locking up the stunning upset, Manning made sure to catch up with Gostkowski on the field. "Eli shook Steve's hand, brought him in close, and whispered 'I dropped the turd in the gumbo'. That really pissed him off."

Just how many prank calls has Stephen Gotcha-kowski made over the years? "I would say upwards of five thousand-that's just during practice. Who knows how much pranking he did in his spare time." The source alleges that Gostkowski once convinced former Bengals head coach Jon Gruden to buy into a pyramid scheme, and even tricked friend and former teammate Wes Welker into believing he was suffering from schizophrenia.

"I could write a book on this guy," declared the assistant. When asked if he thinks the Pats' kicker is still making these types of calls: "I would bet my kidney that he's still doing it, and I only have one kidney. Stephen can't live without pranking. He's got dossiers on every player in the league, plus guys scouting for dirt on college players. The guy has at least 20 burner phones at all times. I wouldn't doubt that he had a

hand in [Browns wide receiver] Josh Gordon checking into rehab just before they played the Pats. That reeks of Gotcha-kowski influence."

It remains to be seen if PrankGate will garner the same attention from mainstream news outlets as this team's previous scandals. Perhaps the league will be reluctant to pick at the Patriots' wounds so soon after an expensive and tiresome legal battle with Tom Brady. But if further evidence presents itself or more witnesses come forward, this story has the capacity to be the Pats' most shocking example of disregard for the spirit of the game. There are no specific rules in regards to making prank phone calls, but personal harassment of this magnitude is sure to violate the league's code of personal conduct policy. Who will get the last laugh in PrankGate? Probably Eli Manning.



Rams Give Jeff Fisher 5-year Extension After Hearing He's A Candidate for Open Job At Hilldale High School

by Gel Kiper Jr.



Jeff Fisher is now under contract to coach the Los Angeles Rams at least through the 2021 season after signing a 5-year extension with the team today. Team management extended Fisher in light of rumors that he was being considered for the defensive coordinator position at Hilldale High School in Markle, Indiana.

“Coach Fisher is obviously an in-demand coach and that’s the kind of talent we want to retain here with the Rams,” said Rams owner Stan Kroenke, announcing the deal. “We think that with a young quarterback in Jared Goff and Jeff’s leadership, we can begin contending for playoff spots by the end of the deal.”

Fisher’s new contract pays him \$7 million a year and includes a \$50 million buyout if he is fired before the end of the 2021 season. Hilldale High School was offering \$2,000 a year, a team sweatshirt and the opportunity to interview for a part-time gym teacher position at the middle school.

But Hilldale director of athletics Brian Watkins says Fisher was never formally offered the job.

“I reached out to him, yes, but I wouldn’t say he was even a top candidate,” said Watkins. “I figured he would be fired soon and looking for employment, but I also have been talking to Kenny Regald, a former linebacker here who played a couple of years of D-3 ball and works in concrete now but is interested in maybe getting into coaching. He’s my top choice, then some players’ dads who know football a little bit, and then it was Jeff. Mr. Fisher’s agent obviously used this offer to get the Rams to act.”

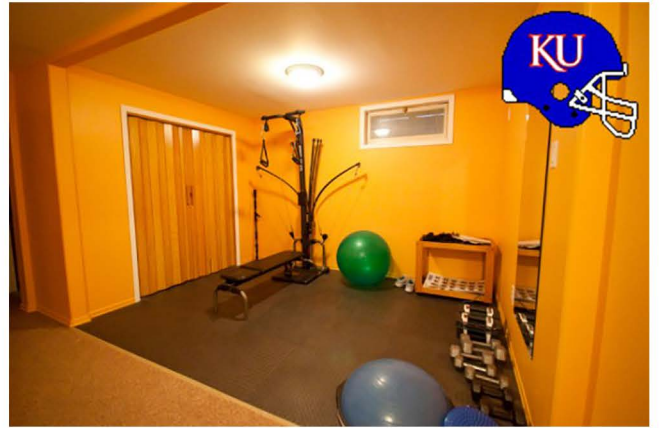
Rams sources say Fisher was also a candidate for the Oregon job, which the coach confirmed today.

“It wasn’t the Oregon football job, per se,” said Fisher. “But I was open to working as a FedEx driver in the state of Oregon. I personally referred to it as ‘the Oregon job.’ I guess the Rams misunderstood.”



Kansas Jayhawks Unveil New \$4,000 Football Facility Featuring Two Bowflex Machines

by Gel Kiper Jr.



The Kansas Jayhawks today granted media members an all-access look at their new football facility, The Kansas Jayhawks Football Basement and Performance Center, featuring more than \$4,000 in exercise equipment and technology.

The Performance Center, housed in a partially-finished basement in an off-campus house rented by the Jayhawks' strength and conditioning coach, features two used Bowflex machines, various free weights—including several pairs of the same 12-pound weight covered in protective, yellow rubber— three yoga mats, an exercise band, two exercise balls, a used ShakeWeight and a brand new Ab Blaster. A closet in the basement/Performance Center contains a mini-fridge stocked with Dasani water, as well as a panini maker and a big plastic barrel of hard pretzels. Rolls of paper towels from Costco sit in the corner, allowing players to dry themselves off and wipe down equipment.

“I’m really excited by this facility,” said Kansas head coach David Beaty. “We may not have what some of the SEC schools have, or what Oregon has, and football will always come second to basketball here at Kansas, but we can definitely work with this. It’s definitely better than our old workout facility, which was less a facility and more a sheet of paper we handed out to our players with directions on how to do push-ups and sit-ups in their dorm rooms.”

The facility is part of a major investment by Kansas into its athletic teams. Men’s basketball just opened a \$12 million basketball dorm, with deluxe housing, a media room, game room, basketball court and barbershop. The football facility has a pair of scissors that players could use to cut their hair if they would like to.

The football basement is not a finished product, however. A hat will be passed through the crowd during Jayhawks’ home games this season soliciting donations for further upgrades. For example, the basement could use a dehumidifier because the space takes on some water after heavy rains. There is also talk of investing in a TV/DVD player combo device that would play workout DVDs.

“Our defensive coordinator says his nephew has those P90X videos,” said Beaty.

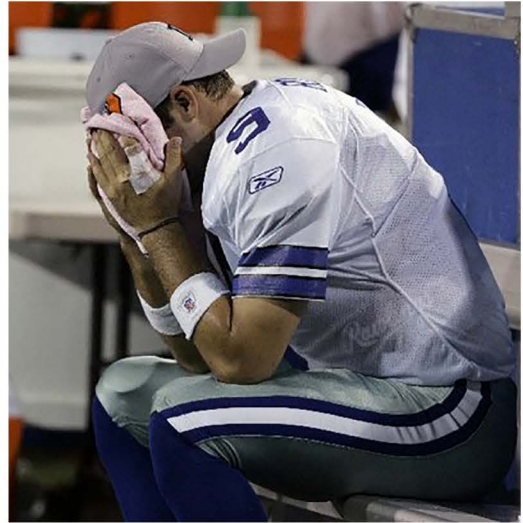
“It would be great if we could borrow those.”

Beaty believes his team has already seen benefits from the new facility.

“They had to move everything in here,” he said. “Carrying those Bowflex machines down the steps was no easy task. I think they got a good workout and bonded as a team.”

Cowboys To Euthanize Tony Romo To End His Suffering

by Gel Kiper Jr.



Cowboys owner and president Jerry Jones announced today that the franchise has decided to end the anguish of quarterback Tony Romo by putting him down.

“He was a good quarterback for a long time,” said Jones. “But he’s really been hurting the last few years and with Dak Prescott playing so well, you can see on his face that he knows it’s over. It was a tough decision, but it’s the right one.”

The Cowboys got Romo in 2003 and he has been a loyal quarterback ever since, always happy and doing his best to make the team better. But he got hurt in 2010 and then again in 2015 and then again in the 2016 preseason. In recent weeks he has been just standing there or sleeping and he has not had much of an appetite.

“We’ve invested a lot of money in him and in hoping he could get healthy,” said head coach Jason Garrett. “But he’s old for a QB now and it’s just throwing good money after bad. We have to think about his quality of life as a quarterback. We know that he wouldn’t want to be a burden on us.”

The Cowboys had discussed taking Romo far away and letting him try to quarterback there for a few more years, but they ultimately decided against that.

“He would miss us too much to be happy anyplace else,” said tight end Jason Witten. “And where would he go? Cleveland? Chicago? No way. I would never do that to a quarterback I love. It will be hard to put him down, but we know it’s the right thing to do.”

The team will let Romo have one more practice this week and then they will take him in the trainers room and say goodbye.

“We’ll always have the memories of those two playoff games he won with us,” said Jones. “And now we have a new, young QB and that will help us get past the sadness. Dak really is great and we hope to have him for a long time.”



GAME CHANGERS



The Best Sports Video Games Of All Time

With titles such as FIFA 17 and NBA 2K17 expected to be popular gifts this holiday season, *TH3MAG* looks back on some of the best sports video games of all time.

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater: Groundbreaking in its gameplay as well as its hit soundtrack featuring Vivaldi, Stravinsky, and Chopin

Madden Lockout: The eighth edition of the franchise lacks any gameplay modes until the player successfully mediates a collective bargaining agreement between the AI owners and AI players' union

NHL '94: The first-ever hockey game to allow players to shoot the puck

NFL Blitz: While wildly popular, this over-the-top football favorite has been roundly criticized for its glorification of the painful flames that pour out of receivers' feet when they run too fast **See Above**

Wii Tennis: Mom liked this one

PGA Hunter: Players take aim from the bushes of some of the world's most famous courses to shoot down the biggest names in golf

Sports '14: The first sports video game to be entirely composed of create-a-player, create-a-team, and create-a-sport options

Michael Jordan's Global Domination: Users control the Chicago Bulls great as they forge alliances, amass troops, and wage war in a quest to exert control over the entire world

Mario Kart 7: The last edition of the franchise to feature Wario before his refusal to license his likeness

NBA Jam: Noteworthy for being the first basketball game to include the famed Coastal Offense, which emphasizes half-court shooting and dunks from the three-point line **BOOMSHAKALAKA!!!**

THE POINT ↓ After

The E.F.F.L. Beat Writers Bringing You Stories from Around The League!

Man Plans Trip To The Gym Tomorrow

After years of unhealthy eating and a sedentary lifestyle, Alex Witzgall, 26, told himself he would go to the gym. Tomorrow.

"Yeah, well, I'd go this evening after work, but I have to watch the Pats game," he thought to himself as he turned on his TV in anticipation of the opening kick off.

"I think I'll order a large pizza tonight, too. With cheesy crust. Hmm, and a side of chicken poppers. You know, because I'm going to the gym tomorrow and need the energy," he rationalized as he quickly worked his thumbs logging into the Dominos app conveniently stored on his smartphone.

"Yep, big things are happening tomorrow," he said out loud as he added a justified, and well deserved, 2-liter of Coke to his order.

The next day, sources confirmed the well-intentioned and seemingly motivated man had decided to wait until January 1st to start his workout regimen, just like everybody else.

Colin Kaepernick Becomes Expert In Discrimination After Spending Night at Holiday Inn

After spending the previous night at a Holiday Inn, Colin Kaepernick became enlightened to the plight of minorities in the United States.

"I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color. To me, this is bigger than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder." Kaepernick earlier announced.

After spending his entire life in the luxury of suburbia and professional sports fame, Colin needed the experience of spending one night in a regular hotel to understand what it's like to be an average minority in America. It helped that Holiday Inn is has the reputation of turning people into experts

at untried disciplines overnight.

The end result is Kaepernick's controversial show of protest during NFL games this season. With this, Colin proved that becoming an overnight expert at something doesn't always mean you know the best way to execute it.

Kaepernick burst on to the NFL scene with a number of electrifying performances that took the 49ers to a game away from the Superbowl in 2011. Unfortunately, after game film of him became available it became obvious that he couldn't hit the broad side of a barn. His career has been on the down slide ever since. After spending the last several off seasons on farms Colin is now capable of hitting the side of a barn, but unfortunately, the 49ers have not opted to draft any farm structures in that time frame.

An unnamed representative from XAM Sports, the company that represents Kaepernick stated, "With as bad as he's been on the field, one of our team members floated the idea to Colin that it might not be a bad idea to get the press talking about something other than his play. This probably wasn't exactly what they had in mind when they suggested it to him."

Colin Kaepernick has since stated that in a related move he will no longer listen to "I'm the Man" and will switch to "Fight the Power", although Chuck D from Public Enemy has been quoted as saying, "DON'T."

Chances that Kaep's recent publicity stunt will do anything other than provide a bored press cycle some cannon fodder has been described as "not likely."

Redskins Owner Finally Agrees to New Name

The Washington Redskins will soon have a new name says Danny Snyder, the team's owner. "It's about time I realized that this was a racist name that demeans our Native American population."

In an apology-laced announcement, made in front of a smoking tee pee at a local Indian reservation, Snyder asserted, "these primitive peoples that we turned into alcoholics deserve a better nickname!"

The owner says he's already dismissed as racist the two nicknames he first thought of-"Scalpers" and "Tontos."

And he is inviting public input in his decision on the new name.

Snyder ended his photo op at the reservation by handing out free whiskey and tobacco. After most reporters had left, the owner muttered to reservation resident: "I'm a rich guy, so I can afford these treats that will keep your tribe inactive for a while, you poor damn drunken redskins. You don't deserve to be the nickname of our fine franchise."

Ray Rice Scores Endorsement Deals For Dating Site, Workout Video

Exiled NFL running back Ray Rice has landed a couple of endorsement deals after being fired from the Baltimore Ravens after video surfaced of him beating his future wife in an elevator years ago.

Rice inked a deal earlier today with a new online dating site that is hoping to compete with Match.com and eHarmony. The new site is called "I'd Hit That!" The dating site already has tens of thousands of clients and allows men to rate women before they go on their first date.

According to Ray Rice, the best way to win a woman is to find one the man feels comfortable taking down with one punch.

Rice's wife, by virtue of the fact that she went on to marry the man who cleaned her clock, has proven that many women must be comfortable with the practice too.

Once on the site, chauvinistic pigs will be able to rank women as either:

- 1) I'd Tap That, indicating a mild attraction**
- 2) I'd Hit That!, indicating a strong attraction, and**
- 3) I'd Knock That Bitch Out!, indicating the couple will probably hear wedding bells in the near future.**

Rice was paid an estimated \$2 million to become the new face of the dating website.

Rice's second deal so far is as an instructor for a new fitness video. The video is tentatively titled "Next Time, Take the Stairs, Bitch!"

Rice will combine step aerobics with chasing female fitness models up and down flights of stairs, creating a new type of regimen that hits the major muscle groups of the lower body and triggers the adrenaline system for an awesome workout. If Rice catches a participant on the stairs, well, you know what happens next.

The soundtrack for the workout video features hits such as, "Love in An Elevator" by Aerosmith, "Knock Me Down" by The Red Hot Chili Peppers, "Hit Me With Your Best Shot" by Pat Benatar, "Attack Me With Your Love" by Cameo, "Seeing Stars" by Jack Ingram and "Love TKO" by Teddy Pendergrass.

It appears that Mr. and Mrs. Rice have already started over and both vow not to stay down for the 10-count.

Church Tells New Orleans SAINTS To Change Team Name

The Catholic Church is petitioning the owners of the New Orleans Saints to "please, already, drop the word Saints from the name of the football team."

"You can call yourselves the New Orleans Devils," the petition asserts, "but erase our non-violent icons of compassion and kindness from the title of your brutal team."

It is not yet known how the Saints organization will respond. Will it tell the church to buzz off, or will it comply with the Church's request? And what about the citizens of this strongly catholic city? Does their primary allegiance lie with the Church--or their Football team?

It is rumored, furthermore, the City of New Orleans will also have to consider a name change because the Duke of New Orleans, for whom the city was named, admitted to having 4 illegitimate children.

What, we wonder, would the new New Orleans be called?

NFL Commissioner Reveals Email That Started Inflation Investigation

NFL commissioner, Roger Goodell, explained today that his investigation into ball pressure was sparked by an email. "I was at the stadium watching the game and dodging calls from Terrell Owens, then I received a mysterious email."

The commissioner expounded, "I want to publish the email in its entirety, as a way of thanking the person for saving the integrity of our game."

We obtained a copy of the email below:

Hey Rodg, check their balls, and tell Mr. Perfect Hair, I mean Tom, to choke.

-PManning18@Broncos.com

P.S. Papa Johns pizza is good stuff.