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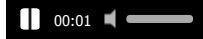
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FOOTBALL EXTRA POINTS - MONDAYS @ 9:00PM EASTERN

SUNDAY, MARCH 24, 2013

## MICHAEL STRAHAN HAS TIGER BLOOD: THE MOST IMPROVED NFC AND AFC TEAM POST FREE AGENCY



Michael Strahan is a pretty cool guy.



Not that I didn't expect that, but sometimes you just don't know for sure. Last Friday, I was attending the NYPLA's Annual Dinner in Honor of the Federal Judiciary in the Waldorf=Astoria (and yes, that equal sign is intentional and I have no idea why they do that). Normally I would never discuss this with anyone, ever, for fear of people making some random excuse to slip away ("um, I have this root canal I have to get to..."), which would be understandable since it's really a bunch of patent lawyers, judges and... whoops, looks like I'm already losing you. OK, so who should show up as the main speaker this time other than Michael Strahan, formerly of the New York Giants, and currently of Kelly & Michael (I swear, that's one show that I never thought would ever exist). Strahan basically told the story of how he went from only one year of high school football, to college football to the Giants, then to Fox NFL Sunday and then to Kelly & Mike. His theme was that, although it can be scary because you're moving on from something you're use to and comfortable with, sometimes change is good. Of course, sometimes change can also be bad (like what happened to Two and Half Men after Charlie Sheen left the show...), but here is the team from the NFC and AFC respectively that I think are, in the words of Charlie Sheen, "winning" the most after free agency.

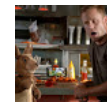
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**NFC -- Seattle Seahawks**

Well, I'm sure that you're on the bandwagon with everyone else regarding the Seahawks. I know I am. Let's talk about the Seahawks circa 2012.

In 2012, Seattle had the quarterback (Russell Wilson) with the fourth highest passer rating in the league (100.0), and the running back (Marshawn Lynch of "beast mode" fame) with the third most rushing yards in the league (1590 yards). So what's missing from this offense? Well, Seattle's wideouts with the most receiving yards in 2012 were Sidney Rice (748 yards), good for 48th in the league, and Golden Tate (688 yards), good for 58th in the league. Think about that for second. There are 32 teams in the league. Theoretically, you'd want your number one wideout to be somewhere in or around the top 32, right? So what do you do to fix that?

Percy Harvin is clearly a dangerous option to have. He'll stretch defenses vertically and confuse defenses in the backfield and over the middle. But did you know that Percy Harvin never had a year with over 1000 yards receiving? For all the talk, it's actually surprising that he hasn't. Admittedly, he did have over 1000 yards total from scrimmage (1312 yards to be exact) in his breakout 2011 campaign (also the only one in which he played in all 16 games), so he has an amazing ceiling. Regardless, assuming he stays healthy and doesn't have a migraine relapse, signing Harvin addressed the primary deficiency in the Seahawks' offense.

So now let's look at the defense. In 2012, Seattle had the player tied for 2nd in interceptions in the league, Richard Sherman. How about sacks you say? Chris Clemons was tied for 9th with 11.5. But Clemons tore an ACL in January during the playoffs, and won't be available any time soon. Bruce Irvin managed to gather 8 sacks last year, but that's with added pressure from Clemons opening the door. Did the Seahawks address this glaring issue? They sure did.

The Seahawks signed both Cliff Avril and Michael Bennett to help put pressure on opposing quarterbacks. Avril is an elite pass rusher that led the Lions in sacks in 2012 with 9.5, adding 2 forced fumbles. Bennett totaled 9 sacks and 3 forced fumbles for the Buccaneers in 2012. Sound like a good combination? You bet. And they certainly can keep opposing quarterbacks running for their lives until Clemons comes back - which will make this defense one of the most feared in the NFL.

Dynamic offense on the ground and in the air? Check. A thieving secondary with an impossibly fast pass rush? Check. Super Bowl in the near future? I'm hard pressed to think otherwise.

So climb aboard everyone, plenty of room on the bandwagon! (What's a bandwagon anyway?)



**AFC -- Denver Broncos**

OK, so the Broncos as the biggest AFC winner in free agency is no big surprise either. Let's see how they did in 2012.

an Elite 2013 Fantasy Quarterback?

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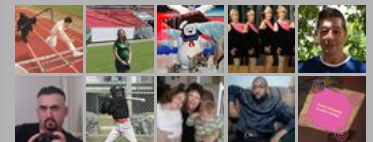
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First of all, they have Peyton Manning and two spectacular wideouts, Damaryius Thomas (1434 receiving yards, good for 4th most in the league) and Eric Decker (1064 yards, good for 17th in the league). (And of course, Decker is engaged to country music singer, Jessie James, which has to be worth something. Just Google her and I think you'll agree. But I digress...) Not that Brandon Stokley is chopped liver or anything, but adding Wes Welker makes this receiving core one of the most dangerous, if not THE most dangerous, in the NFL. ESPN Stats and Information provided this cool stat -- Peyton Manning completed 71.7 percent of his passes to slot receivers last year, best among all QBs with at least 50 targets to slot receivers. So imagine how Welker is going to do in that offense after running 82.2 percent of his routes from slot for the Patriots last season and amassing 1,354 total receiving yards. It's truly scary. And adding Louis Vasquez, who isn't a great run blocker, but is elite at pass protection (and is the 24<sup>th</sup> best guard in the NFL according to the Bleacher Report), will help Manning consistently get the ball to his triple receiver threat.

And what about the other side of the ball? Von Miller had 18.5 sacks in 2012, enough to rank 3rd in the NFL and just a measly 2 sacks off of the sack leader, J.J. Watt. However, with regard to interceptions, there really isn't any standout, with Wesley Woodyard leading the way with a measly 3 (good for 41st and tied with 10 others). One of those 10 was Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie from the Eagles. So Rodgers-Cromartie had a terrible tenure with the Eagles. Over two years, he averaged 1.5 interceptions and 11.5 passes defended per year. But remember that in his three previous years at Arizona, he averaged 4.3 interceptions and 20.3 passes defended per year. If he can get back to anywhere near those numbers, he's going to be a real steal for the Broncos. Of course, with the Broncos losing Elvis Dumervil to the Baltimore Ravens, they might need to get some pass rushing help from a defensive end or linebacker to pair with Miller. But overall, this should still be a defense to be reckoned with.

Broncos v. Seahawks in the Super Bowl? I'm not completely sold the breakout will come this year for both teams, but both were close in 2012 and with the improvements they've made, I wouldn't be surprised.

Are there other winners? Sure. But the Seahawks and the Broncos are sure to be among the most challenging to beat in 2013. Just think of them as the Seahawks and Broncos of 2012, but now with "tiger blood". And, Charlie Sheen, why do we play the game again? "Boom, crush. Night, losers. Winning, duh." Yeah, I'm not exactly sure what he's talking about either.



By Ha Kung Wong

(Twitter: @Rhihan)

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## 10 comments:



**Anonymous** March 25, 2013 at 11:29 AM

B.O.B.

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**Ha Kung Wong** March 25, 2013 at 12:19 PM

As noted by Strahan, those can be motivating words. Of course, BOB can mean many things "Baby On Board", "Bambi On BluRay", "Basketball Or Baseball", "Bangladesh Owns Bengals"...some of which are more motivating than others. (Bambi is awesome...)

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**Anonymous** March 25, 2013 at 11:32 AM

Interesting thoughts. I think there's plenty of room for disagreement about how well Welker will do for the Broncos. He was obviously the go-to for Brady (aside from the Gronk-Hernandez duo at TE), but with as much chemistry and success as Peyton had last year with Thomas and Decker, I'm not convinced he'll be as much of a factor as other might think.

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**Hakung Wong** March 25, 2013 at 12:20 PM

I most certainly agree with whether he'll be as much of a factor in Denver as he was in New England. But seeing as how Stokley managed over 500 yards in the slot last year, I'd say Welker could get the same exact looks and turn that 500 into 800...

---

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**Jason Johnson** March 25, 2013 at 11:41 AM

Obvious typo that needs to be corrected. Three and a half men should be Two and a half men. Duh. I assume the rest of your article is factually inaccurate. You're a hack. But I will still be your friend.

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**Hakung Wong** March 25, 2013 at 12:22 PM

Nice. Ever since TWO AND HALF MEN lost Charlie Sheen, I never watch the show. So you'll have to excuse the fact that I've completely forgotten the name. ;-) And yes, I agree, I am a hack. But amongst hacks, I'd say I was in the top 25% or so. And thanks for being a friend. :-)

---

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**Joe Ragusa** March 26, 2013 at 10:32 AM

Did he mention that he sets his watch 10 minutes fast now.

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**Hakung Wong** March 26, 2013 at 11:02 AM

Actually, he didn't. Kinda hard to keep fooling yourself though if it's always 10 minutes fast. I'd assume it would be better if he had an assistant set it some random time ahead every morning so he just doesn't know how fast it is. Now that would be an adventure!

---

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**Anonymous** March 26, 2013 at 11:20 AM

SportsJAM Network is more annoying than pop-up ads.

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**Hakung Wong** March 26, 2013 at 6:19 PM

And more annoying than that are nails on a chalk board. Sorry, nothing I can do about the Network, BUT as I

mentioned in another article, I've heard that if you listen to SKRILLEX - Bangarang (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJVmu6yttiw>) on your headphones while reading my article, it's a lot more enjoyable.

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