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THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2014

WHERE'S THE BEEF, VERONICA MARS?: THE PACKERS IN FREE AGENCY - PART III

Why didn't I have a Veronica Mars at my high school?



To those who don't know, Veronica Mars is the old defunct TV show come Kickstarter movie starring a wise-cracking Kristen Bell as a high schooling (and later college going) private detective. Sure, I thought it was kinda goofy at first, but since I'm a slave to Rotten Tomatoes (the movie review site) and always troll the site for what new movies are "fresh", I ran across the remarkably "fresh" review of the new Veronica Mars movie. This movie, if you didn't know, was actually made on money raised on Kickstarter. So you know the show must be good if there are enough people who want to blindly donate money just to see a movie made seven years after the TV show was cancelled.



Now I know it's been a long time since I've been in high school, but I really don't remember having a resident detective in my high school. But I imagine it would have made life a lot easier. Like I could have finally figured out where I left my favorite pen. Or where all the doors on all the bathroom stalls went. No kidding, you'd think that of all the things you'd want to save money on in a school, the doors on the bathroom stalls wouldn't be one of them. Or perhaps I'd finally figure out why the school cafeteria only served Grade D beef. I mean, I'm not expecting Grade A Prime here, but Grade D? Seriously? I'm not even 100% sure what that is, or whether it actually qualifies as beef. I've heard some

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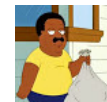
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Pickups



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have said there's no such thing as Grade D beef. I've also heard that it meets only one requirement: "fit for human consumption". Conspiracy? Where was Veronica Mars then?



I not 100% sure if these are burgers or some sort of new leather Frisbees.

OK, so you probably figured out that my high school wasn't among the most exciting places. And it's usually more likely that you've managed to dream up a conspiracy than there actually being one. But some might disagree when it comes to sports. Anyone ever hear of "Suck for Luck"? Yeah, I know you Indianapolis Colts fans have. And how about Philadelphia 76ers tanking to get a high draft pick? Well, OK, that team just might not be capable of winning games, so perhaps I'm wrong on that one, but you get what I mean. Packers fans might be thinking there's some conspiracy in Green Bay right now, as management doesn't seem to be taking free agency very seriously. Conspiracy? Or all part of the plan? Now that we've talked about who the Packers **Kept** and **Ditched**, let's see who they Picked Up.

Picked Up



Unfortunately for Packers fans (and perhaps fortunately for Bears fans, save for those who purchased Julius Peppers' Bears jersey -- oops, spoiler alert!), there's really not much to discuss here. Sure, there have been some minor additions, like DT Letroy Guion and RB Michael Hill, both after being cut from their respective teams, but those are really more for depth, and heck, they might not even make the final roster. There's really only one significant pick up so far in the off season.

Julius Peppers - DE

Interestingly, Julius Peppers was also cut from his former team, the Bears. So clearly, the Packers have not been aggressive in free agency. Part of the reason may be that they don't have to be aggressive since their base offense and base defense don't require significant overhauls. And part of the reason might be they're waiting for the draft. Either way, picking up Julius Peppers is a bit of mixed bag.

As I mentioned in my article concerning who the **Bears Ditched**, Julius Peppers used to be one of the most feared DE's in the NFL with amazing burst off the line. As I also mentioned, he's probably past his prime, as was shown in a relatively down year in 2013. He wasn't terrible (with 7 sacks and 2 forced fumbles), but he certainly wasn't a standout. Peppers does bring a veteran presence to the Packers. As I also mentioned previously, in 2013, the Packers were 25th in defensive yards allowed (5956 yards) and 24th in defensive points allowed (26.8 points per game). I'm not sure if Peppers can help much here, as he comes from the league worst Bears run defense, but perhaps his ability to teach younger players proper defensive skills and build a team work ethic will help. This may be particularly true if the Packers seek to solve their defensive woes in the upcoming draft.

an Elite 2013 Fantasy Quarterback?

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Regardless, Peppers can still play at a high level, and one more near-Pro Bowl year isn't out of the question. Plus Peppers will have extra incentive during the two games in which he'll be facing his old team, and now rival, Chicago Bears. He'll be of greatest benefit as a strongside 4-3 DE, but he has enough experience to operate a variety of other positions. All in all, a safe pick up by the Packers that could really pay off in a Super Bowl run.

So that wraps up our discussion of the Packers in free agency. We'll check back later in the season to see what they've done in the draft. In the meantime, stay away from the burgers in school cafeterias. Trust me, Veronica Mars is going to blow this whole thing open any day now.



By Ha Kung Wong (Twitter: @Rhihan)

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