



To the multitudes of people upset by the absence of my Picks article last week, I apologize. You see, I had the article done, finished, ready to go - just not published. And what an article! I daresay it was probably the best article I've ever written - nay - that anyone has ever written. It was poignant, stirring... alternately hilarious and tear-jerking. It's difficult to imagine how it could NOT win the Nobel Prize for Literature.

But all for naught. My wife went into labor, sticking me at the hospital at the weekend with the article stranded on my home PC. Ah, iCloud, maybe I should've bothered to set you up.

Well, the Buckeyes and Browns are back this week after the rare double-bye. The Bucks we missed. The Browns... that was more like the torturer taking a potty break before he comes back and starts dumping starving rats down your trousers some more while breaking your knuckles with pliers.

DJC and I both went 9-5 two weeks ago, and BT hit a 7-7 for that time span. Last week's picks may not be on record, but they were made, and it was DJC extending his lead with an 8-5, followed by my 7-6 and BT's 6-7. For the year, that gives us records of 72-72 (DJC), 69-75 (Me), and 67-77 (BT), with the latter carrying a 5-5 with his Executive "Locks" (he scored with Tampa last week).

This week, I unveil the most nefarious weapon in my arsenal - the Hutchison Extravagant Ranking Order, or HERO. HERO will finally enable me to evaporate my competition and regain

my rightful place on top of Mt. Braggadocio.

HERO is a top-secret formula based upon wins, losses, points scored, and points allowed. I then extrapolate using the square root of pi and Avogadro's number and the current Kelvin temperature in Haiti. I could explain it to you, but then I'd have to kill you. And since the doctor has strenuously suggested that I refrain from killing any more... I mean, any... people, I'll just make it easy on all of us and just assure you that it's awesome.

Now, the HERO scale ranks the Cleveland Browns tied for 24 (somehow up from 29 last week, probably because they didn't play and allowed the other awful teams to slide on by), tied with the Jets and ahead of several teams that many would debate (like the Rams, Panthers, and Eagles). It raises many collective eyebrows to have them ranked anywhere above, say, 29, and I can't blame 'em. But if I had picked using this system last week, I would've gone 10-3, so, you see, this is unmitigated proof that HERO is infallible.

Stick with me, kid.

All odds are from VegasInsider.com :

OSU at WISC -2.5

Me - I don't use HERO for college games because that's just a burrito of a different flavor, so I'm going to have to use raw logic on this one. Buckeyes, on the road, always have trouble in Wiscy, stiff from trying to protect their record rather than playing to win. *Pick: Badgers*

DJC - Let's go Bucks. *Pick: Buckeyes*

BT - Hoping to put the Skidapa on 'em... *Pick: Badgers*

CLE at DAL -7.5

Me - When you invent your own system, you get to make up how you will use it. My way? Take the difference in the team's rankings. Divide by 1.5. Round to the nearest half. Add 3 points to the home team (since Vegas does it). Viola! So with Cleveland at 24 and Dallas 19, the 'Boys should be a 6.5 favorite. The money has them at 7.5, so take the visitors and the points. *Pick: Browns*

DJC - *Pick: Browns*

BT - Opened at 9, now 7.5 hmmm. Gimme the Dawgs! *Pick: Browns*

PHI at WAS -3.5

Me - The Skins are #22 and the Iggles be #29, helmed by a first-start rookie, and in full-on death spiral. HERO tells me that Washington should be a 7.5 favorite at home, and my ever-expanding gut tells me the same. *Pick: Redskins*

DJC - *Pick: Eagles*

BT - *Pick: Redskins*

GB at DET +3

Me - Green Bay is ranked a surprising 8, but Detroit is 17 - both somewhat disappointing. HERO's line is Pack by 3, which is exactly what Vegas has them at. So I guess I'm going to have to make an executive decisions here. Hmmm.... Matthew Stafford has been meh, Aaron Rodgers has not... *Pick: Packers*

DJC - *Pick: Lions*

BT - *Pick: Packers*

ARI at ATL -10

Me - The not-as-good-as-their-record-says-they-are-but-still-good Falcons are #3 whilst the Offense-free Cards are 20, making the line on this one 14.5. So even though my inclination is to take Arizona and the points (10 is a lot for a team with a decent D like the Redbirds), I'll listen to my hackneyed system on this one and go with Atlanta. *Pick: Falcons*

DJC - *Pick: Falcons*

BT - Too many points. *Pick: Cardinals*

TB at CAR +1.5

Me - The streaking Bucs are a very respectable 11 in the rankings and the Newtons are a horrific 28, scientifically making Tampa an 8.5 road fave. Which is as uncomfortable for me as it is for you, kind of like watching two old men make out on a park bench. Still, I'd take them giving only a point and a half, I don't care if they're playing in Charlotte or Budapest or the Moon. *Pick: Buccaneers*

DJC - *Pick: Buccaneers*

BT - *Pick: Buccaneers*

NYJ at STL -3.5

Me - In a game sure to be watched by millions, the 24th ranked Tebows go up against the 26th ranked Bradfords. Without looking at the ranks, I would take a tough Defense like the Rams at home against a team desperate to pack it in (the other team in this game). HERO makes St. Louis only a 1.5 point favorite, however, so I pick against my better judgment (which has failed me enough times in the past that it doesn't take much effort). *Pick: Jets*

DJC - *Pick: Jets*

BT - Rams in the Whiff of the Week (formerly known as the Executive Lock). *Pick: Rams*

IND at NE -9

Me - OK, I know that Indy's the flavor of the week and Andrew Luck has established himself as the cream of this year's decent QB crop (maybe the reason he would've gone #1 overall in every draft since he turned 17), but I don't buy them hanging on the road, outside, in November, against a SB contender. NE is 6, IND is 15, so HERO's line is 9. Bah! Tied with Vegas again. *Pick: Patriots*

DJC- *Pick: Patriots*

BT- *Pick: Patriots*

JAX at HOU -15.5

Me - This is just about the biggest line I've ever seen in an NFL game. And deservedly so. Jacksonville, a truly awful team, is #32. Houston, a truly good team, is #1. What does a line look like when you have the worst team in the league playing AT the best team in the league? It looks like a 23.5 point line, the max you can ever get in the HERO system. *Pick: Texans*

DJC - *Pick: Jaguars*

BT - Wow, that's a lot of points. Still like the Texans. *Pick: Texans*

CIN at KC +3.5

Me - The Kitties of Northern Kentucky resurrected themselves from dead last week in a shocking beatdown of the suddenly pathetic Giants, and KC had all the starts aligned to beat the Steelers and STILL managed to lose. Watching that game, I was pained by how poorly coached that team is. Scott Pioli should be fired immediately for even making that hire. Down to biz... Cincy is 18, KC is 31, making the Chefs a 5.5 point dog at home. *Pick: Bengals*

DJC - *Pick: Bengals*

BT - Go Dalton. *Pick: Bengals*

NO at OAK +4.5

Me - With New Orleans (#16) on a roll and Oakland (#30) being so craptastic, the inclination is to take the Saints no matter what the line is despite having to travel cross-continent and play in that pesky open air. HERO agrees, making NO a 6.5 point road winner. *HHHE Pick: Saints*

DJC - *Pick: Raiders*

BT - *Pick: Saints*

SD at DEN -8

Me - The Chargers are 14, but they're playing at the suddenly potent #5 Denver Horsies. This could be an interesting game, and I think the fact that San Diego will be playing for their collective lives could bring this down to the wire, but my system is saying Denver by 9. *Pick: Broncos*

DJC - *Pick: Broncos*

BT - What happened to SD? *Pick: Broncos*

BAL at PIT +3.5

Me - Rankings might not make a difference in this game since Big Douchebag is out with some kind of ouchy and that team ain't crap without him. So let's see... Baltimore is #7, Pittsburgh is 9, the Steelers should be a 1.5 favorite at home, but no way am I riding into proverbial battle with that number. I smell a flaw in the system, a fly in the ointment. Gonna have to figure out a QB injury deduction. *Pick: Ravens*

DJC - *Pick: Steelers*

BT - Baltimore by 10. *Pick: Ravens*

CHI at SF -5

Me - Cutler's out for the game, but Jay versus the SF D might be more of an advantage for the Niners than Chicago, since I can see The Pouty One throwing at least a couple picks, cuz that's what he do. Still, the #2 Bears would only be a 1.5 point dog against the #4 Niners in normal circumstances, but with Jason Campbell and the yet-to-be-determined backup QB calculation... you know, I'm going to go Chicago anyway. San Fran is ready to be exposed. *Pick: Bears*

DJC - *Pick: Bears*

BT - Who's better, Campbell or Kaepernick? Gimme 5 points and Campbell. *Pick: Bears*