

Extreme Makeover: Pro Bowl Edition

Written by {ga=davekolonich}

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[Cleveland Frowns](#) has a great take on the current problems - or perhaps the eternal ones - that have plagued the NFL's Pro Bowl, reducing it to a game that has virtually no meaning for most people involved - players, coaches and fans included.

[How to Fix the Pro Bowl](#)

In a clumsy attempt to refocus the game for the NFL's vast fanbase, the league has moved the game a week before the Super Bowl, however the Pro Bowl still remains a week beyond the general interest of anyone who will tune in to watch a glorified punt, pass and kick contest.

Beyond the validating experience of seeing Cleveland's Joe Thomas and Josh Cribbs celebrated as two of the league's best, the rosters for today's "All-Star" game feature perhaps the conferences' seventh and eighth best players at a variety of positions. Or, in other words - for most NFL players who decided to stay home this week - the game really doesn't have much meaning.

Of course, [you can't lump all the players together](#) .

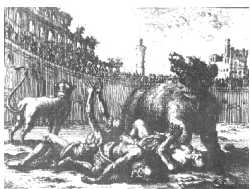
However, even the joys of celebrating such a player as Cribbs can easily be lost, as he will be running behind a cracked wall of misplaced blockers this evening. As for Thomas, his elite skills as a pass blocker will not really be tested, as he will no doubt play right tackle against a virtually blitz-free defense.

And that is basically the problem. The glory of the NFL as a Sunday experience does not lend itself to such a game.

The problem is that unlike the other major sports' all-star game, the NFL version can never function at half-speed. The NBA version is fun because it's an elite pick-up game, but the NFL - although it has basically regressed into flag football - is still predicated on the need for survival.

Part of the subconscious appeal for most fans is the idea that not everyone will finish the game. Those who do are rewarded - those who fall are basically left behind. Sure, it's a primitive allure, but it's also irresistible. In the Pro Bowl, there is really no threat of a player not walking away from the game.

In Cribbs' case, the "spiritual" nature of his play is handcuffed before he even takes the field.



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Also, because the NFL is the last major professional sports league where each game actually matters, to give fans one that doesn't is a self-defeating action.

This also explains why I'm very much against the league adding a seventeenth game...but that's a story for another time.

So, to channel Frowns' energy on how to improve the game, I offer the following. Unless the league shifts the Pro Bowl towards an old *Superstars* type of challenge, there's not much hope moving forward.

And can you only imagine Cribbs running through the obstacle course wall?

If the league wants to keep the game intact, I suggest that the game is moved to much later in the calendar year.

I remember as a kid feeling so depressed watching the Pro Bowl, because I knew the season was finally over. However, now there seems to be a yearlong NFL cycle, so the idea of a natural ending is kind of obsolete.

Having said that, I wouldn't mind seeing the game move to later in the year - tucked away after the draft and before the start of training camp. Call it a season preview, but I think the game could have some success during this void in the NFL calendar.

However, offseason training programs, labor issues and a littany of other legal issues will likely prevent this from happening. So, let's instead take a different course.

The NFL truly needs to modernize itself in order to better reflect the current culture that pervades many of its locker rooms - Indianapolis excluded. Instead of running from a culture that scares most older, white viewers, the NFL needs to embrace the charms of personality that make the league endlessly intriguing.

Having said that, how about a Pro Bowl that more reflects the *Jersey Shore* elements of the league?



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Here are some ideas....for *Money, Cash, Hoes: NFL Edition*.

1. Considering that Bryant McKinnie was recently dismissed from the NFC's Pro Bowl roster - and who knew such a thing was possible? - why not follow some of these players around 24/7 with cameras? Could you only imagine the cut shots of McKinnie in the club, then a shot of his empty bed, then that tearful scene in the airport where he walks away forever?
2. This next one should have started years ago, but how about a Northern Kentucky *Cops* series? Rey Maualuga smashes seven parked cars at three in the morning, then is hauled away as Marvin Lewis' head explodes.
3. How about an NFL *Bachelor* show, only set in a high-price strip club? Could you only imagine the look on Marshawn Lynch or Tony Romo's faces when it's revealed that their golden girls are actually....strippers?
4. *Law and Order: NFL*...where Plaxico Burress recites NYC legal statutes and Michael Strahan tries to figure out his post-marital situation.
5. A series called *Catch This*, where the likes of Braylon and Ochocinco have to lunge for whole fish at a seafood market. Whoever advances has to catch random hardware thrown at their feet by Derek Anderson and Brady Quinn.
6. And since the Mannings naturally have to be involved in any commercial NFL enterprise, let's have them team up to take on an inexplicably attractive all-female robot team of defenders. We'll call this one *Eli Gets an Urge*. I can only imagine the things that are revealed during the "confessional" segments.

On second thought, this could be a bad idea.