

Sunday, January 7, 2007

### **Today's playoff picks / Why I'm not going to be an agent**

I have no documentation of this, but I had both the Colts and Seahawks in yesterday's games (the Colts because they're a vastly better team than the Chiefs and the Seahawks because they were playing at home). I figured the Seahawks game would be close, but obviously you can't anticipate the craziness that ensued.

I'll try to go 4-0 today as I pick Philadelphia and New England to win. Those aren't exactly controversial picks, although some people will get seduced by the Giants' offensive talent.

The Patriots-Jets game is tough because while I'm not a Patriot-hater, they're not my favorite team to root for, and I really like Chad Pennington and Eric Mangini, so I'd like to root for the Jets, but I just don't think they're ready to beat Bill Belichick in the playoffs.

Also, check out this story in Variety and/or Jerry Crasnich's book License to Deal to see why I've completely abandoned the idea of becoming an agent. It's a ridiculously cutthroat business, and I'm not the type of person that would succeed there, I think.

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in Books, Football, Law, Magazines, Movies, Non-Fiction, Reading at 12:39

## Blog Export: Beaneball, <http://beaneball.org/>

Friday, July 22, 2005

### **Joe Morgan vs. Moneyball**

Here's an article in the San Francisco Weekly about Joe Morgan and why he hates Moneyball. It's worth a gander.

I picked up the link from Aaron Gleeman.

Posted by jason in [Baseball](#), [Magazines](#), [Reading](#) at 16:17

Monday, May 30, 2005

### A few non-baseball things

On Saturday, we went and saw Mad Hot Ballroom, a documentary about public schools in New York City that have ballroom dancing programs. It was a pretty straightforward film, but I couldn't help but be impressed with the footage of the actual dancing competitions the kids entered. The crowd got very into it, awwww-ing at all the appropriate moments. I don't know whether it's playing widely outside of New York, but the opportunity to see 10 year-olds doing an impressive merengue and rumba should not be passed up.

Last night, as I mentioned, we saw Crash, the Paul Haggis (the writer of Million Dollar Baby) film that grew out of his experience being carjacked in L.A. It was as bad as all the reviews said, unfortunately. A lot of good talent, including Don Cheadle, Brendan Fraser, Ryan Phillippe, Sandra Bullock, Terrence Howard, and Larenz Tate, went wasted. The theme of the movie, racism, would have been better approached in a much more subtle way. Modern incarnations of racism, after all, are more under-the-surface, more quietly insidious, than the view presented in the film, where everything, while mixed up and "not quite what it seems" (if the movie is going to traffic in so much cliché, then so will I), is quite overt: Matt Dillon is a blatantly racist cop; Sandra Bullock insists that her locks be changed again because a Latino man who she believes to be a gang-banger changed them the first time; a gun-shop owner calls an Iranian customer "Osama."

We did get two great trailers, though: Hustle & Flow, also starring Terrence Howard as a pimp trying to make it as a rapper, which was all the rage at Sundance this year; and Rize, David LaChapelle's documentary about "krumping," a new dance form coming out of inner-city Los Angeles. The cinematography looks as fantastic as you'd expect out a renowned photographer and I expect that the dance moves will be as impressive as watching any extreme sports or And 1 video.

Finally, I read the article in Sports Illustrated about online poker last night. As Wilson points out in this comment, it's really just an article saying, "College kids play poker online." It talks about people who made money, mentions a kid who's lost over \$50k, and briefly says that colleges don't have gambling addiction programs, but that's really it. There's no real exploration of the issues of legality (that's relegated to a sidebar), no exploration of the addiction, no discussion of social and familial problems that are allowed to arise when money starts being lost hand over fist. Any or all of these themes would have made excellent articles on college kids playing online poker. Instead, we got something akin to Moneyball: a piece that was supposed to be about a larger point but devolved into a series of profiles of "interesting" people (the players were made much more intriguing in Moneyball).

Posted by jason in Magazines, Movies, Reading, The Blog at 18:09

## Blog Export: Beaneball, <http://beaneball.org/>

Saturday, May 28, 2005

### Ill-begotten Fame

So over at Superchicken.org, there's this:

In this week's Sports Illustrated, there is an article about how college students play online poker.

I don't subscribe to SI to read articles about online poker. If I cared at all about online poker, I would just play online poker. Even then I wouldn't want to read an article in SI about it. Probably the best part of the article is how several times it namedrops game theory, which is probably not a direction the majority of SI readers are comfortable with going.

I guess it's cool that the article was written by a former contributor to Beaneball.org, but basically SI is just crap that I throw in the recycling bin every Thursday night.

Well, ok, neat, except no, Daniel Habib isn't a contributor to my blog, nor has he ever been. Would that he were, because I think he's a good writer and one of the few forward-thinking minds that Sports Illustrated has going for them.

I can see where the confusion comes, though, because I once wrote this, with the title "Daniel G. Habib," which could cause confusion. It turns out, of course, that said post is the seventh result returned by Google for the search "Daniel G. Habib".

I happen, by the way, to be looking forward to reading that piece. The featured site in the artwork, Pokerroom.com, is where I do my poker playing, when it happens.

Posted by jason in Corrections, Magazines, Personal, Reading, The Blog at 23:32

## Blog Export: Beaneball, <http://beaneball.org/>

Wednesday, February 2, 2005

### Rolling Stone: 2/10/05

Feeling a bit like I haven't written anything in a while, I'm going to take a page from Entertainment Weekly Review and let you know whether or not you ought to buy the latest issue of Rolling Stone.

Though I wonder, first, whether anybody still buys the venerable music magazine. Is it still relevant? Does anybody care? Of my six readers, are any of you subscribers? Regular newsstand buyers? Occasional buyers? Or am I being too generous about the size of my readership?

With an Erik Hedegaard cover story on Johnny Depp, there's an immediate pull, though the story turns out to be a bit boring. There's just not much that hasn't already been said about Depp, and it's hard to plumb new depths because he hasn't been particularly closed-off about his past before. It's not like getting the first truly candid interview with (insert star here), and, Hedegaard not being a critic but a professional profiler, we don't really get interesting insights or observations about Depp's role in modern America. On the other hand, I shouldn't fault Hedegaard for not being Tom Carson or somebody, because that's unfair. As we say in baseball analysis, look for what the player (here, story) does, not what it doesn't do. And in this case, the piece is well-written and engaging in a way that escapes the majority of RS's writers.

Gavin Edwards on Dominic Monaghan (of Lord of the Rings and, now, Lost fame) is sort of the opposite. The piece is straightforward and can basically only be applauded for staying out of the way of the subject, but that subject is interesting and fresh, at least in the sense that I hadn't read anything before on Monaghan.

The National Affairs desk produced a piece on the likelihood of a return to the draft. This being RS and not Fox News, you can guess that it's not an article full of happy reassurances that it'll never happen. The only really interesting bit of information is the note that a memo was uncovered in which two minor members of the Bush administration discuss how a draft might proceed. It's noted that the memo was made public with a Freedom of Information Act appeal, but it's unclear who asked for it. The story's author, Tom Dickinson? Some other (unnamed) writer? Regardless, it doesn't seem like it took a Hersh-ian level of sleuthery to pick up this tidbit, and it's not all that revealing anyway. Sure, it puts lie to the administration's claims that a draft hasn't even been discussed, but who cares, really? They've lied before, and they'll do it again. We know they're evil, and there doesn't really appear to be much to be done about it at this stage in the game. On a more substantive level, I'm glad these people are having these discussions. As the piece points out, if the administration keeps going as it's going and invades Iran or something, we're going to need some new soldiers. It's pure numbers. Thus, the fact that some new ideas are being bounced around for how to draft is good news, because I'd rather see them lying about it than have to have a draft with only a month to prepare.

Peter Wilkinson contributed a piece on a police informant who's now in a no-man's land. The police won't use him or help him and various low-lives throughout the Western United States want him dead. It's a bit astounding, actually, because the man allowed himself to be photographed for the story and, apparently, his real name was used (there was no note about names being changed to protect the not-so-innocent). The piece itself is sort of blah, par for the RS course. If you're jonesing for a bit of police-informant-and-drug-crazed biker action, go watch Beyond the Law, with Michael Madsen (following up Reservoir Dogs and who, by the way, is in nine movies (!) slated to hit in 2005), the ever-intense Charlie Sheen, and Linda Fiorentino.

Sebastião Salgado's series of beautiful black-and-white photos of the natural world of South America continues this issue with a piece on whales. The pictures are, of course, beautiful, but I'll cop to not bothering to read the accompanying piece written by Salgado.

The music reviews are nothing to write home about, and in this case, that means both that none of the albums sound terribly exciting and that none of the reviews provide any particular pleasure in themselves. On the other hand, it's pretty much only a Rob Sheffield review that I can really look forward to reading in any given issue, and his handful in this issue are as straight-forward as he can make them. His forté really seems to be the hilarious review of the forgettable teen pop album. Maybe I'm damning with faint praise here, but what else should I do? I'm a blogger.

I saw the trailer for Bride and Prejudice this weekend, before Finding Neverland (a small ugh, by the way), and I was absolutely stunned by Aishwarya Rai. I'd read about her before, in a sort of teaser article meant to inspire all of us to get excited about her big American splash, but I didn't really buy the hype. Lots of people who are considered beautiful by

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the world-at-large aren't really my type, but for Rai, let's say that I'm on the bandwagon. Anyway, Peter Travers gave the film (wait, there's a movie involved here?) three stars (out of four), which sounds unlikely. Travers is notorious (to me) for giving star ratings that are wildly out of line with his actual reviews (of course, that his reviews are wildly out of line with reality is a separate issue which will, undoubtedly, be broached at a later date). In this case, he refers to Martin Henderson looking lost and the script falling apart when the action leaves India. Can a movie that falls apart in what I'm assuming is at least the last third really deserve 75% of the possible stars? Especially when he allows himself the luxury of half stars? I mean, if he was that in love with Rai (he is), he could give it two and a half and still be satisfied that she might acknowledge his presence at a screening or something, but he had to go overboard and hope she doesn't read.

Posted by jason in Magazines, Reading at 16:08