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NFL After Four Weeks - NFL in Court - Fay Vincent Resigns as Comish- And More

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR ARETE
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Four weeks into the new National Football League season and already there are a number of surprises. First and foremost among them is the performance of the 3-1 Tampa Bay Bucs, who last Sunday won their first road game after 15 straight losses. The much maligned Sam Wyche seems to have his team going fairly well so far, especially the previously disappointing Vinny Testaverde, who seemed to be suffering from secondary illiteracy until the last few weeks. Before you go out and buy playoff tickets, or even a pair of orange pants, you might note that the Bucs victims are a combined three wins and eight losses, and the only team they played with a winning record, the Minnesota Vikings, beat them.

Other surprises include the Chicago Bears who have seldom lost in September during Ditka's reign, and this year have dropped two games; the New York Jets who sailed through the pre-season and are now 0-4; the once glorious Oakland-LA-Al Davis Raiders who are now 0-4, and seem to be confused about what they're doing at quarterback; and the Pittsburgh Steelers who are 3-1. Not surprising, but most impressive, are the Dallas Cowboys led by that bronzed-hair football genius Jimmy Johnson, and the Philadelphia Eagles led by Randall Cunningham, right now the most exciting player outside of Arena football. These two teams meet next Monday Night in the first real showdown of the young season.

The other excitement in the NFL has taken place in the courtroom where Judge Doty last week made four players free agents for a week. Of those four Defensive End Gerin Veris has signed with the 49's, Keith Jackson with the Dolphins, Webster Slaughter with Houston, with only the status of D.J. Dozier in doubt as he finishes the baseball season with the Mets. There should be plenty of action ahead at the bargaining table, in the courts, and in the media. This will get more attention here, as the story unfolds.

Meanwhile in baseball these have been exciting times as well. Off the field Fay Vincent has resigned, Bud Selig is King for a Day, realignment has been postponed, the status of the Tampa Bay-San Francisco Giants is unclear, the future structure of the game is up in the air, the jeremiahs are proclaiming doom, their may be a lockout in the spring, the TV contract is heading toward its renewal with the likelihood of falling revenues, and there will be a flood of over 120 free agents on the market this

winter. The only constant seems to be Jerry Reinsdorf's total lack of credibility.

On the field the four pennant races are nearly over with Pittsburgh, Atlanta, Oakland and probably Toronto headed into the playoffs. This year's version of the National League playoffs are a rematch of last year's seven game cliff-hanger. But this season the Braves are heading into the post-season with their starting pitching struggling, other than Pete Smith, and with the bats having gone suddenly silent. This may not continue when the playoffs begin and everybody gets their second wind, but what looked like a Braves lock five weeks ago, looks like a slight edge for the Pirates as the season ends.

In the American League Toronto is back, and after a year's absence so are the Oakland A's. Toronto looks better than ever with strong pitching- is their a better money pitcher than Jack Morris?- and excellent on-field leadership from Dave Winfield and several veterans of the post-season pressures. Speaking of veterans, there is no more veteran a team than the A's, led by Tony LaRussa, who has had his best managerial year ever, working skillfully around injury after injury. The A's are without Jose Canseco and some will say that represents what Branch Rickey used to call addition by subtraction. That remains to be seen.

Whatever you call it, one thing remains clear. The gods of baseball have never allowed the World Series to go outside the borders of the United States.

Tuesday night in Orlando two of the newest members of the National Hockey League, the Tampa Bay Lightning and Eric Lindros, were in town tuning up for next Tuesday's season openers. At 6ft. 4in. and 235 pounds with lightning speed and agility Lindros might be the next great player in the National Hockey League. But at age 19 Lindros has a lot to learn. His size and speed are tremendous assets, but he needs to develop his stick-handling and passing skills, which at this point leave much to be desired. I am sure there must be a few people in the Flyers organization more than a bit nervous at this point.

Speaking of superstars the big story this week must be the return of Magic Johnson. Whatever the motives, and the possibilities seem endless, the NBA certainly will benefit from his return. He is still big box office, and with Larry Bird gone, and an era obviously passing, Johnson's return will allow the new younger superstars a chance to establish themselves before they must carry the load for the NBA.

And finally, that ship of fools called the Florida High School Athletic Association sails on. Ken Adams an honor student at Colonial High missed a year of school because he had medical problems. The FHSAA has ruled him ineligible to play football this fall because Florida Law requires a 1.5 GPA for the semester prior to the season of competition. Last semester Ken had a 0.0 GPA because he was not enrolled, therefore he can't play. Commissioner Ron Davis--not the ex-Yankee ex-Twin pitcher, he was never this bad--and his executive committee remain the perfect bureaucrats, consistent and idiotic.

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you that you don't have to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

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