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NFL Season Concludes for Dallas, the Bucs and Miami - Florida H.S. Athletic Assn.

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE
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This NFL season has had its share of surprises and disappointments, not to mention bizarre moments. Today I want to concentrate on three stories from this NFL season: the Bucs, the Dolphins, and the Switzer Stumble.

This last weekend saw all three of these stories reaching a climax. In Philadelphia Barry Switzer made news with his questionable decision to go for a first down on fourth and less than one from inside his own thirty yard line in a tie game with about two minutes to play. The Cowboys had converted on these situations repeatedly and Switzer no doubt thought they would again. They did not, but then a referee's whistle allowed them a second chance. He again did not punt, came back with exactly the same play, with exactly the same result.

Under normal circumstances such a decision would have been seen as questionable, although courageous, and that would have been it. But these were not normal circumstances. First, Philly won the game with field goal shortly thereafter; second, this loss by the Cowboys took away home field advantage throughout the playoffs; and third, it was Barry Switzer who made this decision.

Throughout the land for the next several hours and days the critics unloaded on Barry. This blunder was denounced as a no-brainer, dumb and dumber, and something akin to a crime against humanity. Now I am no fan of Barry, but if this had been done by guys named Marty or Bill there would have been some questioning the move, but the firestorm that came down on Barry, would not have come down on them. It is clear that the national, as well as the local Dallas media, have been waiting for this chance, and they let the ridicule roll. It was an amazing display of hostility to this egomaniacal figure of the NFL.

Also on Sunday the Tampa Bay Bucs made news, and it was even on the field. After a full decade of double digit losing seasons the Bucs, by winning in overtime on Sunday guaranteed themselves a season with less than ten losses. What is most remarkable about this development is that they have managed to do it with what is essentially no offense. Trent Dilfer has not been anything much different than Vinny, Craig, or the Throw'in Samoan. Statistically he is one of the worst quarterbacks in the league. The Bucs offense is pathetic.

What the Bucs have achieved has been by virtue of a combination of good defense and an extremely weak schedule. They are now 7-7 against some of the poorest competition in professional football, with an offense that is weaker than most teams in the state: professional or college. The only way that Dilfer may be the answer in Tampa Bay, would be if the question is, who is the next major disappointment who will be instrumental in Sam Wyche's departure? It is still too early to tell if the curse of Doc Williams has ended.

Down the peninsula in Miami a bigger puzzle is unfolding. After a 4-1 start in which the Dolphins looked like Super Bowl contenders, they have done a belly flop triggered by Marino's injury and sustained by the defensive collapse of nearly everyone except Bryan Cox. And then just when it looked like it was safe to say bye-bye to Don Shula and his offensive defensive coordinator, the Fish turn it around with a Marino miracle against Atlanta, and a defensive gem against the best team the AFC has to offer in the Chiefs.

It now appears that the Dolphins may be on the road to recovery, and perhaps even the Super Bowl, although that road must go through Buffalo next week. And in December that is never an easy place to find a win.

There is one other bit of interesting non-football news out of Miami. Last week the Florida High School Activities Association which has distinguished itself with ludicrous and lunatic decisions in the past, struck again.

This time their collective wisdom led them to disqualify the women's track team from Miami Gulliver Prep School after the team placed third in a two mile race. Deputy Commissioner Ron Allen of the FHSAA along with a referee agreed that the team's briefs were too brief, risqué, and therefore inappropriate. Allen also said that the briefs "may lend an advantage to a runner."

The style of briefs worn by the Gulliver girls were the same style worn by the U.S. Olympic track team, and are designed for maximum aerodynamic effect. Gulliver's track team have been wearing the same track uniforms throughout the season, but only now at the State meet have they been accused of promoting eros rather than nike.

One can only wonder at this new level of silliness from one of the silliest groups in the State of Florida. They should stick

to what they do best: keeping academic standards for athletic competition as low as possible.

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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