

Schneider: The NFL stands to lose many dedicated fans

dog in this year's Superbowl, much less have enough talent to compete with the 'Boys or 'Niners.

I don't expect a competitive Superbowl this year; I haven't since New York played Buffalo four years ago. I just want to go back to the days when there were more than two top-notch teams in professional football.

To understand the gross parity in the league right now, one only has to look at the standings at the end of week 12. Currently, 19 out of the 28 NFL teams are at or below .500. The AFC Central division is a perfect example of how far the level of competition has fallen this year. Only one team in the division has a winning record (Pittsburgh, 8-4) while Cincinnati, Houston and Cleveland are "fighting" for a wild card spot with 5-7 records.

The way things are going, there is a very good chance that one or more teams will make the playoffs with eight losses.

Another testimony to the utter ineptitude of pro football this season is the play of the two expansion teams. First-year squads should be pretty bad in their inaugural seasons. When the league added Tampa Bay and Seattle in 1976, it took more than two years for either squads to win more than two games. This year, Carolina and Jacksonville both have already won more games than any other NFL first-year teams.

The Panthers and Jaguars are pretty bad, don't get me wrong, but the rest of the NFL is making them look like established franchises. The infant Carolina

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team, at 5-7, has more wins than eight NFL teams that have each been around for decades. The Panthers might even beat out Atlanta and St. Louis for the a playoff spot in the NFC West. If that isn't a slap in the NFL's face, I don't know what is.

From top to bottom, the NFL is as weak as it has ever been. Why has the level of competition fallen so far? It is not because of a lack of overall talent in the NFL. The NCAA churns out bigger, stronger, faster and more talented players every year. I can even say that the skill level in pro football is at an all time high.

The problem is that all of these good players are distributed throughout the league, keeping the good teams mediocre and the bad teams horrible.

The salary cap has made out like Robin Hood, robbing the NFL's riches and distributing the wealth to the masses so quickly that Karl Marx would be proud. When the league installed the cap three years ago, the NFL owners figured that the smaller market teams, like Green Bay and Indianapolis, would be able to compete for the big money

players and keep up with their large market counterparts.

While distributing the talent to the little guys, the owners also drove down the price of attracting the big money free agents. The cap has kept salaries down for the most part and distributed the league's talent, but by doing so it has also created a lot of really awful football.

The owners forgot one crucial fact when they implemented the salary cap. The way to get to the Superbowl is not

"San Francisco's problems this season are good examples of how the cap has hurt the top NFL teams."

through signing the big time free agents but by having superior depth. It's true that a good team is judged by the overall talent on the squad, but since football is such a physical sport a team needs solid backups to step in when the stars get hurt. In the realm of multi-million dollar contracts, teams can just not afford to pay for quality reserves anymore.

San Francisco's problems this season are good examples of how the cap has hurt the top NFL teams. The 49ers assembled the best team the cap allowed last year and were hailed as masters of finding a salary cap loophole. San Francisco's creative accounting

last year earned the team its fifth Superbowl title, but left the team snake bitten this year.

Injuries have made the once mighty 49ers look mortal, losing to Detroit, Indianapolis, New Orleans and Carolina. When MVP quarterback Steve Young went down with a badly bruised shoulder in week three, San Francisco's fate rested on the green arm of untested third-year quarterback Elvis Grbac. When three-fifths of the offense line wound up on injured reserve, the lack of quality backups contributed to consecutive losses to the Saints and Rams.

My dream is for the NFL to dump the useless salary cap, as soon as possible. Football is a business and its business is making money. The owners thought that a cap would make the league more competitive, but the opposite has happened. With the cap preventing teams from signing even quality first stringers and unrestricted free agents flying from team to team like bees on flowers, the NFL is in a sorry state.

Unless the league abandons the salary cap in favor of another plan to help out the smaller market teams — perhaps a similar revenue sharing plan like the one Major League Baseball is considering — the NFL will only become less competitive and may experience a fan departure of epic proportions. It is time for the owners to go back to the drawing board if they want to save their sinking ship.

Pete Schneider is a sports reporter for the Emerald.

Pac-10 names Willingham top coach

WALNUT CREEK, Calif. (AP) — Stanford's Tyrone Willingham, who led the Cardinal to a 7-3-1 record in his first season, was named Pacific-10 Conference Coach of the Year on Tuesday.

When Willingham, who replaced Super Bowl-winning coach Bill Walsh, inherited the team in 1994, its record was 3-7-1.

Though the Cardinal was picked in the preseason to finish last in the Pac-10, the team finished fourth with a 5-3 record in the league. Stanford was ranked as high as No. 16 nationally this season.



ON THE TUBE

November 29

- 4 p.m. ESPN — NCAA Basketball, Great 8 Basketball, game No. 3, Wake Forest vs. Oklahoma St., at Auburn Hills, Mich.
- 5 p.m. TBS — NBA Basketball, Philadelphia at Atlanta
- 6:30 p.m. ESPN — NCAA Basketball, Great 8 Basketball, game No. 4, Virginia vs. Kansas, at Auburn Hills, Mich.

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Horoscope by Frances Drake

For Wednesday, Nov. 29, 1995

ARIES

(March 21 to April 19)

You're rather lethargic and have a hard time getting your enthusiasm going for routine tasks. The cure for your doldrums is an exciting dose of social activity. This goes a long way to improve your mood.

TAURUS

(April 20 to May 20)

You've been counting on a certain special time but will have to postpone it. Extra responsibilities at work arise. What you consider innocent expenditures start to add up.

GEMINI

(May 21 to June 20)

If outshopping, you and your mate are in direct disagreement over a certain purchase. On the work front, compromise is the key to a business concern. At night, opportunity knocks.

CANCER

(June 21 to July 22)

You're feeling very sorry for yourself and oh-so-misunderstood. This could lead you to a binge of impulsive shopping. At night, you're likely to have unexpected company.

LEO

(July 23 to Aug. 22)

It's not a good idea to mix friendships with finances. Something being proposed on the business end needs to be explored further. Sudden romance beckons for singles in the evening.

VIRGO

(Aug. 23 to Sept. 22)

You are wisely cautious about spending money. A situation involving your business partner is the cause of some concern. At night, it's best to be spontaneous.

LIBRA

(Sept. 23 to Oct. 22)

That plan you think is so brilliant isn't capturing the imagination of family members. Some receive an unexpected gift or favor. At night, it's best to tend to domestic chores.

SCORPIO

(Oct. 23 to Nov. 21)

Be sure you know your prices before honoring that hefty price tag for that special item you want. Some rethink travel plans made a while back. Evening socializing is romantic and thrilling.

SAGITTARIUS

(Nov. 22 to Dec. 21)

You are somewhat dissatisfied with the progress being made on the job. At the same time, there is nothing really major going wrong. At night, you're delighted by the unexpected news you receive.

CAPRICORN

(Dec. 22 to Jan. 19)

You start the day feeling tired and sluggish. However, this wears off as the day wears on and you accomplish much. Minor disagreements occur in the evening with a loved one.

AQUARIUS

(Jan. 20 to Feb. 18)

Your main focus of attention is on matters at home. Consequently, it's not a good idea to entertain guests. At night, couples seek some quiet romantic moments for themselves.

PISCES

(Feb. 19 to March 20)

What occurs on the job, though unexpected, is ultimately to your benefit. You need to think twice before whipping out that credit card while shopping. At night, you eschew socializing.

YOU BORN TODAY look to see the larger picture and don't get too bogged down in details. You are concerned about your fellow man and could be drawn to a political career. Your philosophy is based on a strong sense of history and right and wrong. When challenged, you will not back off from a fight. Some look on you as a rather unconventional type who likes to shake up the status quo.

Birthdate of Sen. Paul Simon, D-Ill.; Madeleine L'Engle, author; Rebecca De Mornay, actress.

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085 GREEK ANNOUNCEMENTS

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE NEW EXECUTIVE COUNCIL 1995-96:

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Chaplain	Carin S.
Social	Colby S.
Treasurer	Kelly L.
Scholarship	Lauren S.
Co-House Managers	Hilary R. & Melissa M.
Philanthropy	Anna S.
Administrative Assist.	Jamie B.
Public Relations	Niki H.
Recording Secretary	Sally M.
Panhellenic Delegate	Eryn S.
Corresponding Secretary	Renee D.
COB Chair	Lauren T.
Activities	Laura B.
MAP	Melanie B.
Historian	Lindsay J.

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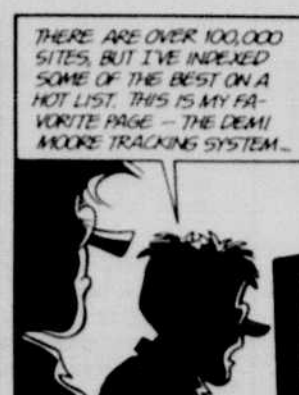
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