

Can Henne be the guy?

Contributed by Christopher Williams
Thursday, 18 September 2008

During last weekend's game, most things looked about the same as they have over the last 18 games: slow and non-urgent play which ultimately led to an ugly loss. Oh, and we also saw some truly gutsy, composed and inspiring QB play from an unlikely source; our rookie. "What?" You ask. "We haven't seen truly solid QB play since Fiedler at best, but more likely the Marino of the 80s and early 90s."

And you would be right. Of the 13 starting QBs that have passed through Miami's gates since Dan Marino's retirement, only one, the perfectly adequate yet completely uninspiring Jay Fiedler has led us to something that didn't end in utter embarrassment. But Sunday, even if only for one drive, we all saw something that we could be proud of: a guy who can throw the ball with some velocity, something that no QB has shown since Marino, and stand in the pocket with some poise and sense of purpose. We saw flashes of a real quarterback leading the aqua and orange.

Although he failed to throw a TD pass to Ronnie Brown when given the opportunity (it was a poorly pass thrown well behind him), Henne made a lot out of absolutely nothing, leading the team to a 89 yard scoring drive, the likes of which have not been seen in quite some time. But despite the empty TD to which he lead our team at the end of a blowout game, he gave us one thing that we have not had in years: hope.

He showed that he has poise, and the desire to lead though his play rather than simply in the huddle like our current starter. Although many might argue that he played during garbage time, I would argue that for a rookie QB there is no such thing as garbage time; all of it is meaningful. He can be the starter. He should be the starter.

Just not this week.

If the Patriots are known for one thing (besides their high scoring offense), it's their insanely complicated zone-blitz schemes in Bill Belichick's 3-4 defense. And although I'm a proponent of starting Henne sooner than later (particularly if he continues to actively take the reins from Pennington when he does get playing time), it would be a huge mistake to make his first start against arguably the most confusing defensive scheme in professional football (from a QB's perspective). I doubt that Henne has ever seen the NT drop into a short zone coverage, and he ought to see these things while holding a clipboard rather than on the field.

As a disciple of our vaunted leader Bill Parcells, Belichick has a simple defensive strategy: keep the QB out of the game by pressuring him from every angle possible. If one can keep the QB guessing where the pressure is coming from, one can make him ineffective. It's hard to get your reads when you're scared for your life. Simply put, his defense is made to stop the run, and get after the QB. And to start of Henne's career as a professional football player against the kind of defense employed by Belichick would be a disaster.