My 6 thoughts on the Dolphins this week.

Contributed by Dave Blake
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MAYBE BRIAN HARTLINE SHOULD BE OUR MAJOR FA FOCUS

If you watched the game last weekend, and I am sure you did as the game was nationally televised, Brian Hartline was a star out there. In our dink and dunk offense he still averaged 16.8 yards per catch on 5 catches for 84 yards ... and that's not counting the two passes that were overthrown when he was wide-frigging open. 'Mando from the Miami Herald said that he was the best receiver on the field, and I do not have a case to argue. He made some fantastic catches and has the smarts to read defenses to know where the coverage holes are.

While he does not have the speed to be a serious deep threat, I consider he and Davone Bess to be two of our own young stars that this offense can build a future on. So, let's hope that Ireland has the smarts to pay him a good contract to keep him as he becomes a free agent at the end of this season. I know one thing: if we won't pay him the Patriots will. He is that valuable.

JAKE LONG ... KISS HIM BYE, BYE BABY.

I really hate to say this as until this year, Jake Long was my favorite current Dolphin player. He faced the opposing team's physical freaks and manhandled them play after play. He was ranked as the best LT in football.

Last year we started to see miscues, but I was too infatuated with him to really see that he is on the decline at a young age. This year his play has really dropped and we've seen him not only get beat but commit holding penalties and false starts as players are starting to get into his head.

It's not his fault as he has the heart of a lion. His body is falling apart. He's only 27 and should be in his prime, but the Dolphins just placed him on IR for the remainder of the year due to a torn triceps muscle. Another injury.

If you would have asked me last week I would have told you that despite his slide in performance this year it would be wise for the Dolphins to franchise him as he will be an unrestricted free agent at the end of this season. The fanchise tag is $15.365 million for next season, but you just don't let one of the best left tackles in the game that you invested the overall #1 pick in the draft go. This injury is just a sign that he may no longer be able to play a full season any longer ... and when he is on the field he physically isn't 100%.

You have to admire him as he always plays through his injuries and gives his best on every single play. You can't play through a torn triceps.

The Dolphins moved Jonathan Martin from the RT position over to Jake's LT position last week after the injury. It's his natural position as he protected Colts QB Andrew Luck last year at Stanford, but let's understand that he looked good last week but he was facing a backup DE last week. Let's see how he does this week against a very talented 49er front 4.

LET'S SEE SOME OF OUR YOUNG PLAYERS

Dolphins head coach Joe Philben said this week that he will not start our young players even though the playoffs are barely mathematically possible. With a 5-7 record the players still need to earn playing time.

While I respect that I still think you need to find time in games for our young, developing players. For example, why not sit RB Daniel Thomas down and let Lamar Miller get a few carries. He had suckish game last week. Don't take my word for it. This is what Pro Football Focus said about him :

Though he only played 43% of the team’s offensive snaps, Daniel Thomas (--4.0) had about as bad a game as a player can have. His work in the running game was disappointing; on five carries, he managed to gain only 10 yards, with most of that coming on his long run of nine. His second-quarter fumble deep in Miami territory, though luckily recovered by the Dolphins, was a critical mistake and nearly a devastating turnover in a game in which offense was hard to come by. And as bad as Thomas was in the running game, his efforts in the passing game were even more disappointing. While the second-year RB did catch two passes for 19 yards, he was abysmal in pass protection. On his five snaps in pass protection, Thomas was beaten three times for a hurry, a hit, along with a drive-killing sack on a 3rd-and-4midway through the fourth quarter. Aptly, his Pass Blocking Efficiency rating of 50.0 was the lowest of the week by any back, tight end, or offensive lineman.

Can Lamar Miller do any worst? And what about that fumble? I was surprised that Daniels was put back into the game after what Philben did to Reggie Bush a few weeks ago after he fumbled the ball.

A CIRCLE FITS IN A ROUND HOLE

I just don't get the mindset of Philben and OC Mike Sherman sometimes. You have one of the most dangerous backs in the passing game and you don't throw him the ball. Can you just imagine a linebacker trying to stay with Bush? How about a delayed screen to Bush. Wow, just the thought of it makes me excited. But, you have to call those plays if you want to win. I am not saying our coaches don't want to win, but I think they have their heads up ... well, you know where I am going with that. But what do I know? In their minds I am just a fan that doesn't see what they do all week. I do know what I see during the game and to me that is more important. All I am seeing is a big "L".

Sometimes I think offensive coaches are too enamored with their own system to utilize players to their strengths. They always want to plug a circle into a square hole and use the excuse that the player needs to execute better. What made Don Shula a great coach was his ability to change his philosophy to meet the talent that he had. Adjust, adjust, adjust, but continue to grow your team into your philosphy.

Do you want to know why the Patriots ran at will on the Dolphins on their drive of the game after we stopped them all game? The Dolphins had a play count to keep the players fresh and Dolphins starters Jared "Pee Wee Herman" Odrick and Cameron Wake were over their snap count, so, they got the luxury of watching the Patriots shove the same play down our throats at our backups. Forget the friggin snap count. In crunch time you put your best players on the field. Period.

KARLOS DANSBY & TONY MCDANIEL: SHUT YOUR PIE HOLES

After the Patriots killed the clock with a 16 play (13 runs) drive, Dansby complained about Wake/Odrick sitting on the bench and McDaniel said it was disrespectful to their defense for the Patriots to run the same play over and over. What??

While I totally agree with Dansby, you really can't say that out in the open. You have to show your coach a little respect and have a meeting with him for clarification. To the media and the fans you have to have a show of unity and let us all feel you are drinking the kool aid that Philben is giving you. Even though Dansby is not the best middle linebacker in the game, he is still very darn good and a big reason why we are stout stopping the run. One thing that is true is that Philben has not been shy about letting talented players that buck his system find a new home.

As far as McDaniel complaining about being disrespected by the Patriots for calling the same exact play over and over ... you should have stopped that play. Why shouldn't Belichick not use what works? I think this is one of the dumbest things I've heard from any NFL player in a long time.

RASHAD JONES

All I have to say about Rashad Jones is ... WOW! Give him a cape and call him Superman.

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